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# On Writing Symphony Movement 1

A Study of Technique and Craft

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David Isaac

[www.davidimusic.com](http://www.davidimusic.com)

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# On Writing Symphony Movement 1

## A Study of Technique and Craft

### Introduction

I began writing the first movement of the symphony in fall 2005 and finished in the fall of 2009. Although it lasts 18 minutes, it is a study in efficient and clear use of motives, key structures, and long-range thinking.

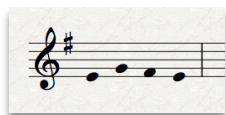


*Transition Motive #1, measure 491*

The idea behind this movement is conflict: the conflict between a hero and an antagonist or possibly between two warring sides within the hero. These two warring sides are represented by two motives, which appear in the introduction, and are constantly battling for supremacy. The rhythm, primarily through hemiola and syncopation, emphasize the conflict. In the great German tradition, the movement is in sonata form. As a big believer in the mythic structure for storytelling, the movement outlines the journey, crisis, climax, and resolution of the conflict.

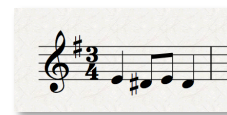
### Motives of the Symphony and the Introduction Melody

Two primary motives are the basis for this piece. The e-g-f#-e motive is generally characteristic of the hero while more chromatic e-d#-e-d# belongs to the antagonist, whether it be someone else or from within. Tension from these two motives builds as both struggle through the piece to gain supremacy. Both take on multiple functions as the movement progresses. Sometimes they are accompaniment material and ostinato patterns, other times, they will outline a new theme, or shape new material.



*Hero's Cell  
(Motive B)*

While the e-g-f#-e motive is more technically a cell, as it lacks a rhythm, the antagonist motive has a distinct dactylic character (in 3/2 meter): ♩ ♩ ♩ .



*Antagonist Motive  
(Motive A)*

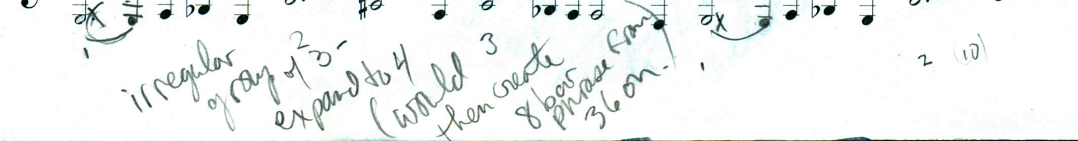
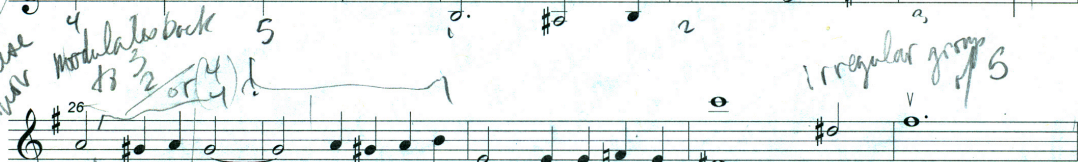
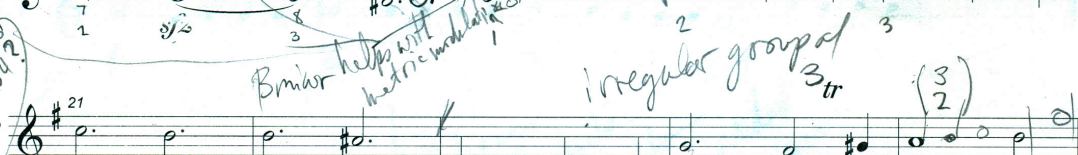
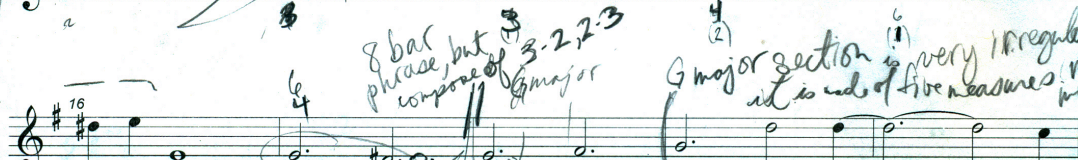
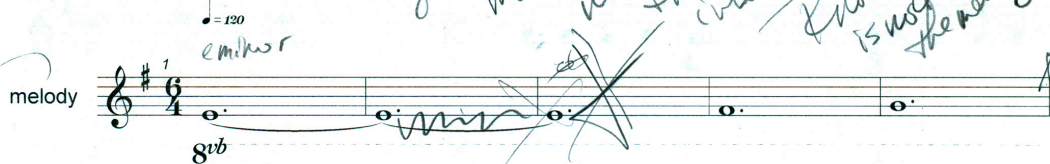
The next two pages are initial sketches of the introduction melody, and show the initial use of the two motives, the foundation for the exposition.

# Introduction Melody

6 3  
4 2  
♩ = 60

Notes:  
Melody needs to be more figured to give identity.  
Melody as of yet does not really help determine the tonalities and is not intelligible by itself.  
Knowing the meter, it is not so easy to figure the melody.

break into phrases so where intelligible



expand melody to 6 bar phrase

avoid use of A minor

is this section necessary?

expand melody to 8 bars

Point of further move

irregular group of 3- expand to 4

3 bar phrase

irregular group of 3- expand to 4

irregular group of 3- expand to 4

8 bar phrase, but composed of 3-2, 2-3

irregular group of 3- expand to 4

irregular group of 3- expand to 4

G major

irregular group of 3- expand to 4

irregular group of 3- expand to 4

G major section

irregular group of 3- expand to 4

irregular group of 3- expand to 4

very irregular

irregular group of 3- expand to 4

irregular group of 3- expand to 4

make more regular

irregular group of 3- expand to 4

irregular group of 3- expand to 4

irregular group of 3- expand to 4

irregular group of 3- expand to 4

irregular group of 3- expand to 4

irregular group of 3- expand to 4

irregular group of 3- expand to 4

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irregular group of 3- expand to 4

irregular group of 3- expand to 4



# Introduction Melody

motives: a - chromatic wed Jan 11, 06  
b - scale motive



16 bars a trice

♩ = 100

melody  
g bars



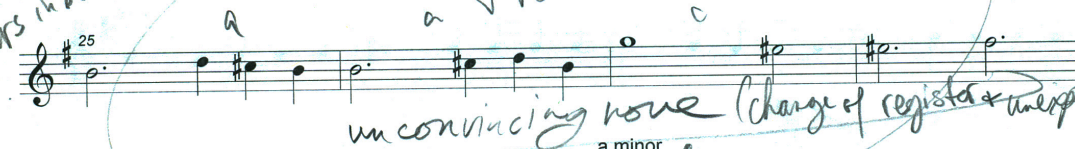
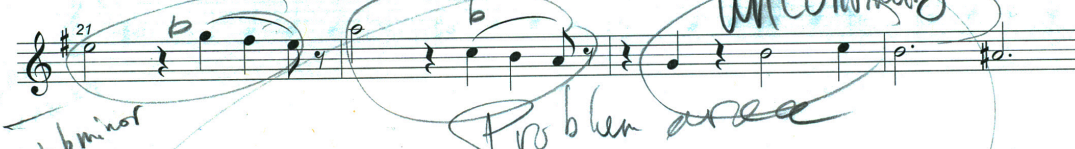
rit.



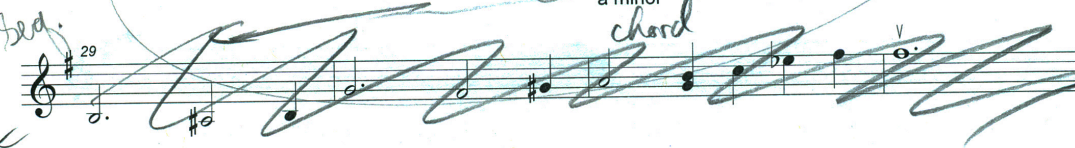
8 bars  
g - major  
- minor



8 bars in minor

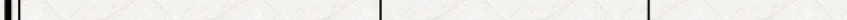


Seq.



a minor  
chord

Violoncello



The image shows the musical score for the Violoncello part, measures 1 through 4. The staff is in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 6/4. The notes are: Measure 1: G2 (half note), A2 (quarter note), B2 (quarter note), C3 (quarter note). Measure 2: D3 (half note), E3 (quarter note), F#3 (quarter note), G3 (quarter note). Measure 3: A3 (half note), B3 (quarter note), C4 (quarter note), D4 (quarter note). Measure 4: E4 (half note), F#4 (quarter note), G4 (quarter note), A4 (quarter note).

Violin I

*ff marcato e espress.*

Flutes

1. *solo*  
*with Ob. 1*

*mp* *espress.*

*f*

Bassoon 1

1. solo

*mp*

*mf*

2. #

Violins

al tallone

*ff*

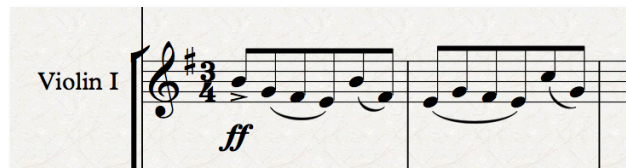
4

## The Exposition

The exposition begins at measure continues to develop the two motives, within a standard sonata form structure. Below is a list of several iterations of these motives and the modifications that they take.



*Measure 83-86, Violins: Introduction to the exposition. This section spans mm. 81-90 and it acclimates the listener to the new Vivace tempo.*



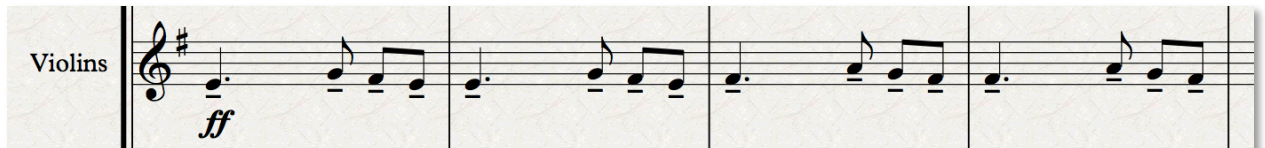
*Measure 91-92, Violins: The first thematic group is constructed from motive B.*



*Measure 105-108: A version of the hero's motive similar in rhythm to the motive's use in the introduction.*

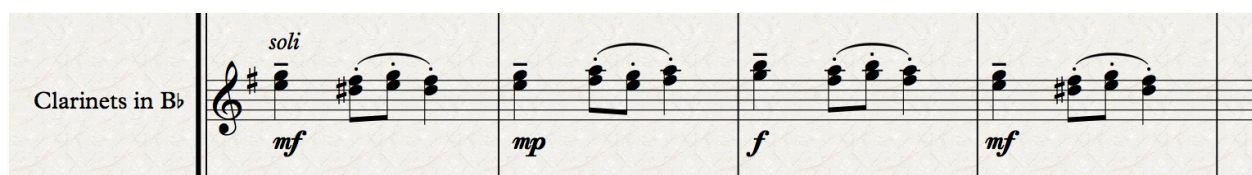


*Measure 111-117, Violas: This pattern accompanies the primary theme (3<sup>rd</sup> thematic group) of the exposition. Notice that it includes the original, the inversion, and the retrograde inversion.*



*Measure 130-133, Violins: This part of the thematic group gives a break between iterations of the primary theme.*





*Measure 171-174, Clarinets: This is a more whimsical version of motive A.*



*Measure 183-186, Trumpets: The whimsical clarinet passage quickly changes to a brash orchestral tutti.*

### Other Motives in the Exposition

It would, of course, be an oversimplification to say that these motives make up all the material of the piece. The exposition's primary theme is an all new motive, even though it is derived from the hero's cell. Also, the transition section contains at least 3 distinct motives, and the exposition's subordinate theme contains all new material.

*Measure 113-130, Woodwinds: Main Theme*

The above main theme of the movement is announced by a complex combination of woodwinds. It began as an inversion of the hero's cell, but went through many versions and changes before taking this final form. Notice the symmetry between sections of the melody. The notes of the first three measures (mm. 114-116) of the melody are the same as the last measures (mm. 127-129), but vary in phrase structure and function. Measure 118 contains an upward fourth, while measure 122 contains a downward fourth. In accordance with classical principles, the melody outlines the tonic triad, but in a descending motion instead



of upward, which gives it a decisive, adamant feel. The theme exemplifies classical sentence structure with its presentation (mm 113-120) and continuation (mm. 121-130).<sup>1</sup>

After the primary thematic group of the exposition, there are three transitional motives used in the transition to the secondary thematic group. These motives play a primary role at the end of the development.

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The top staff is for Trumpets, marked 'a 2', and the bottom staff is for Violin I, marked 'pizz.' and 'p'. Both staves show a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, and a pizzicato figure in the Violin I part.

*Measure 187-191, Violins and Trumpets: Transition Motive #1: The trumpets emphasize certain notes of the violin passage, giving shape to this melody.*

The image shows a single staff of musical notation for Violoncello, marked 'pizz.' and 'p'. The part features a prominent pizzicato figure with eighth and sixteenth notes, moving upwards.

*Measure 196-199, Celli and Bases: This pizzicato figure plays a prominent role in the last section of the development and in the coda of the movement. The upward motion helps build toward the brighter and optimistic secondary theme.*

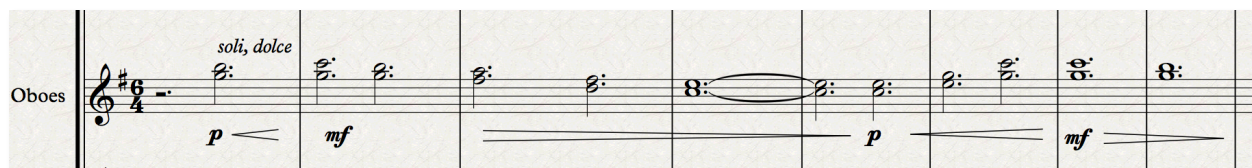
The image shows a single staff of musical notation for Viola, marked 'sol' and 'p espress.'. The part features a long, sustained note with a fermata, followed by a series of eighth notes.

*Measure 202-209, Violas: This motive can be found only in the transition sections of the exposition and recapitulation, and it does not play a prominent role in the development.*

The image shows a single staff of musical notation for Violins, marked 'div.'. The part features a syncopated rhythm with eighth and sixteenth notes.

*Measure 210-211, 2<sup>nd</sup> Violins: This syncopated rhythm becomes an important rhythm in the development and coda.*

<sup>1</sup> William E. Caplin, *Classical form: a theory of formal functions the instrumental music of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) 35-48.



Measure 219, Oboes: Secondary Theme.

This secondary theme is optimistic, hopeful in the relative major key. It is a foreshadowing of the fourth movement of the symphony, and also an important respite from the other dramatic parts of the exposition.

### The Development

When writing the carefully planned development section, I began with a Gustin Graph of the pieces movements then later a piano sketch. (This graph can be found on the following page.) The Gustin Graph lays out the basic keys of the piece. Solid lines represent the major tonality, and double lines represent the relative minor.<sup>2</sup> The crisis is the lowest point on the graph, and corresponds to the parallel minor of the submediant.

The development is a study in classical structure. For the most part the development themes follow the order of the themes in the exposition and expounds upon all motives, even some that are not discussed here. The beginning of the exposition transitions to the subdominant, then by way of sequence to the dominant's dominant. This is then counterbalanced by a movement to the flat keys, which eventually leads to B-flat minor. This is the point of furthest remove.<sup>3</sup> B-flat minor is actually the furthest removed from the original tonic, e-minor. The main theme is stated again in this key, in a4 horns, with tutti marcato chords punctuating the melody. After this most dramatic statement of the theme, there are a couple modulations up the circle to c-minor. This next dark point is marked with Bartók pizzicato and a dark quarter-time rendition of the main theme in the Celli and Basses. This is the crisis of the movement.

After the crisis, the core begins, which continues the modulation back up the circle of fifths. This is *Sturm und Drang* in character and some of the most intense writing in the symphony. It is mostly one long tutti from measures 469-550. An extended dominant prolongation begins at measure 573 building up tension to measure 609, when the recap begins.

<sup>2</sup> Molly Gustin, *Tonality* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1969) 57.

<sup>3</sup> Leonard Ratner, *Classic Music* (New York: Schirmer books, 1980) 225-226.





### Recapitulation and Coda

The recapitulation follows the common classical procedure of abbreviation, while it follows a more Romantic procedure of varying the orchestration. The beginning of the recapitulation is much more subdued, while the end of the recap has a much fuller and dramatic orchestration than its counterpart in the exposition.

The transition after the recap begins with a deceptive cadence from the major mode to a flatted submediant chord (C-major). After a sole occurrence of the main theme in measures 767-775, the theme never returns. It's as if it is blotted out by the sheer force of the other motives. Every other motive appears in the remaining bars of the score 776-854. The coda itself is a mini-recap of the exposition.

### Conclusion

Really, this analysis of my technique and craft is very superficial. It doesn't go into the countless ideas, brainstorming, and permutations of the motives that were not used. Neither does it go into the countless hours spent composing, then rewriting by reduction, re-organization, and re-thinking this movement, and the other movements that make up this symphony. Writing this symphonic movement was like constructing a 17,000-note puzzle. Every note, dynamic mark and articulation had to be in the right place, fulfilling its function to give a listener—what I hope—is a remarkable musical experience, filled with passion, fury, and hope.

For more information about the symphony, please visit:

[www.DavidiMusic.com/symphony](http://www.DavidiMusic.com/symphony)



# Bibliography

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