

***New Beginnings* program note**

This work was commissioned by Bronson Hospital in Kalamazoo, Michigan, to celebrate the opening of *The New Bronson*, its wonderful, nearly-\$200-million facility. It was premiered by the Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Raymond Harvey, on September 22, 2000.

New Beginnings is in one movement, which falls into four clearly delineated sections. The first section, in a fast tempo, is dominated by a fanfare which begins immediately in the trumpets and horns. This fanfare leads to a percussion flourish, and a swell of sound in which the entire orchestra gradually enters. A relentlessly repeated rhythmic figure begins in the strings (here divided into twelve parts instead of the customary five), and continues for some time, while the brass punch out figures derived from the fanfare, and the flutes and clarinets add a busy filigree. “Pyramids” of sound, built up from bottom to top, appear in the brass, and the energy of the first section begins to subside, ushering in the second section. This is in a slow tempo (exactly half that of the first), and is dominated by a melody which is first played by a solo oboe. This simple, “folk-like” tune is the most important melody in the work. After the oboe, it is played by a solo trumpet, followed by the strings and horns in canon, while the fanfare motive is tossed around above it by the piccolos. A short duet for English horn and flute follows. The flute plays the beginning of the melody, then introduces a rhythmic idea which accelerates into the third section, which is in a moderate tempo. The horns introduce a new melody here, while the rest of the orchestra provides a busy accompaniment. The energy of this third section gradually dissipates, until all that remains is the flute and a few violins.

This leads to the fourth and largest section of the piece, which is characterized by mixed meters. Two prominent mixed meters used here are 7/8 (always 3+2+2), introduced by shaker, triangle and congas; and later, 10/8 (always 3+3+2+2), introduced by flutes. In this section, both the opening fanfare motive and the previous horn melody recur, in new rhythmic guises. Percussion features prominently in this section. There is a gradual buildup of energy, which leads to a return of the formerly “folk-like” tune, now played in grand fashion by the trumpets and strings, with a number of busy accompanying figures in the rest of the orchestra. This leads to the return of the complete opening fanfare, now in a new, brighter key, following which the percussion punctuate the orchestra’s final flourish.

— Peter Boyer