

ANTHONY HEDGES - A LIFE IN MUSIC

by Paul Conway

The music of Anthony Hedges is as varied as his career and indeed reflects the many paths this most hardworking of composers has chosen to take. Hence, alongside the very fine orchestral works, an opera, chamber music and solo instrumental works, there are many pieces for amateur musicians, pieces for children and a fine body of work in the category of "light music". The prolific output of Anthony Hedges (he wrote his op100 as far back as 1985) seems even more impressive when considered in conjunction with his many achievements in other fields.

He was born in 1931 in Bicester where he was brought up and educated. He left Oxford University with a first class honours degree and a postgraduate degree in composition. His National Service years were spent in the Royal Signals Band, where he used his skills as a solo pianist and arranger. He then spent five years as a lecturer at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music, during which time he wrote articles on music for many national newspapers and journals. In 1962 he was offered a lectureship at Hull University where he became Reader in Composition until his retirement in 1995. Elected chairman of the Composers' Guild of Great Britain in 1972, he served as Joint Chairman of the Guild the following year. As a council member of the Central Music Library he instigated its publishing scheme for contemporary British scores. As a pianist, he has accompanied, among others, Martyn Hill and Jane Manning. He founded the Humberside Sinfonia and conducted them on many occasions, including a fine LP on Meridian of his Humberside Cantata "Bridge for the Living", Scenes from the Humber, and Kingston Sketches. His music has received over three hundred broadcasts in this country and abroad. In 1991 he was the featured composer in the Riga Festival of British Music and Film and he returned to Latvia the following year to conduct performances of his op100, the cantata "I Sing the Birth". He wrote his Second Symphony in 1997 and continues to compose and receive performances of his work. His new version of "Bridge for the Living" received its first performance on April 22nd 1999 and his recently revised version of the Sinfonia Concertante will be performed by the Hull Philharmonic in May 2000 at Hull City Hall.

Hull Central Library houses a comprehensive archive of the music of Anthony Hedges, including not only all the scores (original and revised versions), but also working sketches, juvenilia, works started and then abandoned, cassettes of many performances, notes of broadcasts and programmes of performances. It constitutes one of the most complete and thorough records of the work of any composer. The address of Hull Central Library is Albion Street, HULL, HU1 3TF.

In 1997 a CD of some of the best of his light music was released (Marco Polo 8.223886 [buy here](#)). The composer conducted the RTE Sinfonietta in these delightful performances. In the summer of 1999 his Divertimento for String Orchestra will be part of the programme of an ASV CD devoted to modern English string orchestral works. Another CD, due out in July 1999 and produced by Rhinoceros Records, will include Hedges' Exchanges for cello and piano (1982) played by Oliver Gledhill and Julian Mitchell. Five Aphorisms for solo piano (1990) will form part of a disk by Hisayo Shimizu and is due out in October 1999.

The following selection of pieces by Anthony Hedges is a brief survey of his contribution to a variety of genres. I have included the most characteristic examples of his work in all the forms of composition he has worked in.

Four Miniature Dances (1967) was the first of his light music pieces for orchestra. It was written at the suggestion of his wife, Joy, who remarked on the amount of new British Light Music being broadcast by the BBC in the 1960s. Taking up his wife's suggestion, Anthony Hedges made his first contribution to this market - it was a great success. Scored for small orchestra, each of the four movements is named after one of his (then) young children - "Simon's Samba", "Fiona's Fancy", "Nicholas's Notion"

and “Debbie’s Delight”. These titles (and hence the music) reflect the character of each child at the time. *Four Miniature Dances* was first performed in 1968 by Hull University Orchestra conducted by the composer. It received its first broadcast on February 27th 1969 by the BBC Concert Orchestra. Included on the recent Marco Polo CD, the work makes a charming introduction to the composer’s lighter compositions. There are many solos for the woodwind instruments and the memorable tunes stay with the listener. This is particularly true of the opening “Simon’s Samba” whose sinuous and suave theme the composer later transcribed for solo woodwind instrument and piano.

The *Holiday Overture* of 1968 was first given by the London Studio Orchestra, a performance which was broadcast by the BBC on Radio 4. Although the piece received several subsequent broadcasts, the composer felt that the work’s four brief minutes’ duration did not do full justice to the material contained within it. His instincts were proved right for the resulting reworking produced a little masterpiece - the *Overture “Heigham Sound”* (1978). This ebullient and superbly crafted miniature is every bit the equal of such British overtures as *Portsmouth Point*, *Derby Day*, *Beckus the Dandipratt* and *Street Corner*. A typical Hedges theme opens the work and the more relaxed middle section, though clearly derived from the introductory material, provides the necessary contrast before the main theme returns to bring the piece to a suitably upbeat conclusion. Although the overture is named after a beauty spot in the Broads in East Anglia, the composer having spent a holiday there with his family, *Heigham Sound* is not programmatic. Indeed, the pun (intended) in the title is as good an indication of the work’s character - witty, high-spirited and unashamedly melodic - as any East Anglian connection. The first performance was given on 20th January 1979 with the BBC Concert Orchestra under Ashley Lawrence. Fortunately for us, it was included on the Marco Polo CD in a bright and affectionate performance under the composer’s authoritative direction.

In 1969, Anthony Hedges wrote his first unqualified masterpiece in the field of orchestral music: the *Variations on a Theme of Rameau*. The work was first performed by the Northern Sinfonia under David Haslam in October 1971, whilst it received its first broadcast in December 1973 with the same orchestra this time under the baton of Sir Neville Marriner. At fifteen minutes’ duration and scored for a small orchestra of 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, trumpet, timpani, percussion and strings, one’s initial impression of the work as a jolly miniature is deceptive. From the same stable as (and of commensurate quality as) Vaughan Williams’ *Tallis Fantasia*, Tippett’s *Corelli Fantasia*, Edmund Rubbra’s *Farnaby Improvisations* and Ian Parrott’s *Dufay Variations*, this fine, witty and at times deeply searching orchestral work makes the most of its apparently simple theme. The theme is taken from the A minor *ordre* of the second book of *Pieces de Clavecin*, 1731, by Rameau. Over a series of eleven superbly orchestrated variations, the composer takes elements from the theme (a couple of demisemi-quavers in the opening bar, a stepwise progression in the flutes in the fifth bar and some unusual cadences) and exploits their potential for development with great skill and imagination. The structure is more than just a series of variations since they form groups which correspond to movements of a symphony: hence, variations 3 and 4 form a scherzo, Variations 5, 6 and 7 make an extended and searching slow movement, whilst the 9th variation is a second scherzo in the form of an extended gigue. Variation 4 contains remarkable five bars where the upper strings are divided into 13 parts - a brief but telling effect and indicative of the quality and imagination of the work as a whole. Variation 5 sounds almost microtonal in its whirring semitonal clashes, whilst Variation 6 is the emotional kernel of the piece, its second half being particularly powerful. Variation 10 is sparsely orchestrated and meditative in feeling, whilst Variation 11 (*Allegro energico*) is a brilliant fugal *Finale*. It contains a ruminative *Poco lento* section within it which is cut short by the intrusion of the return of the *Allegro energico*. The thoughtful nature of these variations even extends to the conclusion which, instead of the usual barnstorming climax, fades away on a triple piano chord for clarinet and upper strings. The punchy fourth variation starts off like the scherzo from Prokofiev’s *Fifth Symphony* and the *Finale* has some Shostakovich-like string writing but the work is far from derivative and speaks the language of Anthony Hedges at his most impressive. He even occasionally captures something of the Baroque splendour of the age in which the original theme was composed. It deserves to be part of every orchestra’s repertoire (and not just in this country).

In 1969, Anthony Hedges composed *Kingston Sketches*, one of his most popular pieces, certainly in terms of performances: it received 35 broadcasts between 1971 and 1979 alone. Each of the three movements reflects the moods suggested to the composer by the street names of Hull. The *Whitefriargate Waltz* is both wistful and graceful. The reflective central *Romance: Silver Street* was the last of the movements to be written and the suite closes with the rather impudent and jaunty *Ferensway March*. As miniature tone poems the three movements manage to capture the essence of the Hull streets whilst not being programmatic in any literal sense. The piece received the first of its many broadcasts in 1971 by the Orchestra of the Light Music Society on 28th December 1972.

Also in 1969, the composer wrote his delightful *Ayrshire Serenade*. In three movements, the work was commissioned by the Craigie College of Education in Ayr and first performed by the Ayrshire Symphony Orchestra in May 1971. Once again, it is hard to find any evidence of programme music here but the composer's personality is stamped on every bar, not least in the opening theme of the first movement (*Allegro moderato*) - an archetypal Hedges theme with its heady combination of forward momentum, unexpected harmonic twists and brilliant scoring. The following *Andantino* has a beautiful, slightly rustic theme for oboe which is taken up by the strings. There is a spirit lifting *Tierce de Picardi* ending. The good-humoured *Vivace Finale* contains some fugal writing and shares the ebullient mood of the opening movement. It is good news indeed that this attractive work may soon be recorded for a 1999 CD release.

At this time in his career, the composer decided to experiment with serialism. He has said that he has "no love for the Second Viennese School", but by the end of the 1960s, Anthony Hedges felt dissatisfied with the idiom of his serious works and wanted to explore new avenues of expression. The resulting works (*Four Pieces for Piano* (1967), *Sonata for Violin and Harpsichord* (1967), *Three Songs of Love* (1968) and the *String Quartet* (1970)) are all strictly serial pieces. Of these the *String Quartet* is a powerful, compact one-movement work under twenty minutes in length. It was first performed by the Lancaster University String Quartet, who commissioned it and to whom it is dedicated.

The *Rhapsody for Violin and Piano* of 1971 is an intense and searing miniature written in appreciation of happy times with David Roth of the *Allegri String Quartet*. Roth gave the premiere performance of the ten-minute piece with the composer accompanying.

Psalm 104 (1973) provides a good example of the high quality of Anthony Hedges' choral writing. Originally scored for soprano chorus and brass band, the composer revised the work and produced a version for choir and orchestra. Lasting 18 minutes and divided into four main sections, the work is a powerful and moving extended setting of the Psalm. The opening *Allegro vivo* begins with a fanfare-like phrase and the choral writing is varied, containing canonic as well as incantatory passages. The following *Allegretto grazioso* section has an immediately attractive theme which is interrupted by a more animated central passage. The third section (*Andante con moto*) includes onomatopoeic writing (rasping trombone glissandi at the line "young lion's roar"). The opening fanfare returns at the line "The earth is full of Thy riches". The brief *Moderato Finale* has a brass chorale-like opening passage and makes a bright, jazzy conclusion. The fanfare returns for the last time and the ending of the piece is bold and positive. *Psalm 104* was first performed by the massed forces of East Riding School Choirs and York Brass Band at Beverley Minster in April 1974. Two years later the work was performed in the Royal Albert Hall.

Although Anthony Hedges had written a symphony as a student in 1954, he later withdrew the piece. His opus 1a is a *Sinfonietta* (1955) which was also later withdrawn. In 1963 he wrote a *Sinfonia Semplice* which was given its first complete performance by Bryden Thomson with the Glasgow Schools First Orchestra in July 1963. In 1975, he completed his *Symphony no 1*. Building on the symphonic strengths already present in such works as the *Rameau Variations* and using the skills in orchestration so evident in his lighter works, the *Symphony* is an outstanding achievement. First performed on 27th February 1978 by the BBC Northern Orchestra under that great champion of

Hedges' work, Bryden Thomson, a concert performance of the Symphony took place not long after at the Royal Northern College of Music. The piece is a taught and powerful work in three movements, which lasts just over twenty minutes. The composer began the Symphony in 1973 and worked at it in between the many commissions he had at his time.

The first movement (*Allegro Scorrevole*) was inspired by an extra-musical idea: namely, the desire to promote new ideas coming up against the entrenched views of the status quo. The strings and later the woodwind represent the pushing forward aspect of Hedges' idea whilst the status quo is represented by static brass chords which halt the rushing strings and woodwind. The work begins with a stealthy string theme which forms the basis of the movement and much of the rest of the symphony's argument. The brass enters at fig 2 with menacing chords. The strings continue at fig 4 with an intricate fugal passage. At the height of the strings' argument the brass chords return (fig 10). At fig 13, woodwind and percussion enter for the first time, the woodwind spinning arabesques. The clarinets play a rising figure at fig 14 which will reappear in the Trio of the following movement. At fig 16, the string theme reappears on first violins, joining the woodwind flourishes. After fig 23, the brass chords join in. The first movement ends abruptly, its arguments unresolved with the two elements of movement and stasis locked in opposition.

Release of a kind comes with the unhindered momentum of the brief but intensely rhythmical Scherzo second movement marked *Allegro Ritmico*. This movement starts with timpani and percussion only, making great use of the percussion section. A four-note motif on the xylophone assumes significance, especially after it is expanded into a five-note motif in a speeded up version on the vibraphone. At figure 5 the violins play a distorted version of the main theme of the previous movement. The Trio is characterised by a chromatic figure for woodwinds over harp chords. It is a development of the florid woodwind material from the opening movement. The Scherzo is reprised and after a climax at fig 21, the movement fades away, its mechanical whirring spent.

The Finale is a searching *Andante* which reflects on the earlier material. The opening phrase is a distorted version of the main motif. The movement builds in intensity up to a triple forte climax. After a tutti pause (fig 5), the horns play another version of the main theme. The lower strings at a bar before fig 6 play a pizzicato version of the main theme of the Scherzo. The following brass chords are now subdued, literally muted. Fragments of the Symphony's main theme flit about the orchestra, passing from oboes to flutes to horns and violas, to trumpets, to violins, ending up on clarinets. The horn chords sound for the last time - still quiet, but this time without mutes. The work ends on a question mark, a string chord dying away to nothing. The Symphony is a work of its time: it has failed to find an optimistic conclusion, achieving repose without resolution.

"Bridge for the Living" was written for the official opening of the Humber Bridge. It is a cantata setting for tenor soloist, chorus and orchestra of the poem by Philip Larkin "A Living Bridge". It was commissioned by the Hull firm J H Fenner and Co Ltd in 1975 and written that year in the confident expectation that the Humber Bridge would be completed shortly. In fact, when the work received its belated premiere on April 11th 1981 by the Hull Choral Union, the official opening of the Bridge was still some three months away. This was an important commission, not just because it marked the opening of the Bridge but it was the only time Philip Larkin had written a poem specifically for a musical setting. Indeed, "Bridge for the Living" is the first ever extended setting for chorus and orchestra of any of Larkin's poems. The text is quite different from Larkin's usual style with its atmospheric imagery which almost cries out for musical treatment. As the moods change dramatically between most of the ten four-line stanzas, the composer wrote brief orchestral interludes as transitions between them. The setting opens with a slow orchestral prelude establishing the mood of the poem and this prelude, together with the motif with which the chorus enters provides the basis for the entire work's material. The first verse is spare, sung by a semi-chorus, taking its general character from the words "Isolate City". An orchestral link changes the mood ready for the entry of the full chorus in verse two, which homes in on the words "working skyline" to provide a battery of busy percussion,

particularly in the lustrous new orchestration. Verses three and four are given to the tenor soloist, the chorus taking over in the second part of verse four. The quiet opening of verse five gives way to bell-like sounds expressed chorally in a brief seven-part canon, after which another orchestral link changes the mood for verse six. The dramatic change of mood in the poem at this point is reflected in the music by a change in tempo and dynamics, together with an increase in dissonance. The choir treats verses seven and eight as one unit. Verse nine starts as a meditation for soloist and male voices, but the full choir re-enters halfway through. At this point the music begins its ascent (in the form of a steady crescendo) to a final climax, the unashamedly tonal conclusion mirroring the optimism of the poem's conclusion. The score is both exciting and sensitive to the poetry it constantly enhances. The performance on the 1981 Meridian LP with the Hull Choral Union and the Humberside Sinfonia does the original score full justice. The Hull Choral Union performance of the revised version on April 22nd 1999 was even more impressive, showing that the composer has lost none of his orchestrating skill. The imaginative percussion writing in particular has added even more sparkle to this already dazzling score.

The Festival Dances of 1976 is arguably the composer's masterpiece in the field of Light Music and one of his most enjoyable and masterly scores in any category. It was commissioned by the Borough of Milton Keynes for the Jubilee and was first performed by the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra under Sir Charles Groves on June 7th 1977. It received its first broadcast by the BBC Northern Symphony Orchestra under Bryden Thomson who was a strong advocate of the music of Anthony Hedges. The first dance, *Allegro vivace*, contains one of its composer's most irresistible melodies. After a brilliant fanfare, the first subject is a bright and vivacious tune, all harmonic twists and turns. The second subject, first heard on woodwind, is an offshoot of the first - it is remarkable how often, like Haydn before him, Anthony Hedges uses the same material from his main themes for his second subjects - both composers being men in a hurry whose invention skips along at a bewildering rate. The central dance, *Lento ma non troppo* contains a middle section with a modal chorale for brass and strings which is reminiscent of the second movement of Respighi's *Pines of Rome* - both themes are monumental and rise to a hypnotic climax before dying down again like a spent force of Nature. The concluding *Allegro assai* is upbeat and brightly scored, the irrepressible main theme from the opening movement returning to round off a gem of a piece which deserves to be heard in the concert halls and released on CD. Its continuing absence from either medium does British Light Music a great disservice.

Also in 1976, Anthony Hedges wrote his one and only opera (so far). "Shadows in the Sun" is a two-act opera for soloists, children's chorus and orchestra of two hours' duration. It was first performed by Kelvinhall School, with the Humberside Sinfonia conducted by the composer in June 1977. The composer, together with his librettist, a locally based TV writer called Jim Hawkins, developed the idea of writing an opera which would involve professional soloists and orchestra, but whose plot would demand a chorus of young children. Hence, the resulting work is not a children's opera but rather an opera which includes a children's chorus, thus giving young people a chance to experience real opera from the inside. Three different choirs from the Hull region were used in the three first performances so as to involve the maximum amount of children in the area. Sadly such schemes are rare. They demonstrate Anthony Hedges' passionate commitment to music education and his profound belief in the importance of a composer's place in the community.

Prayers from the Ark (1976) is an excellent example of Anthony Hedges' sensitive writing for voice and piano. In this case, the piece is a setting of nine poems of Carmen Bernos de Gasztold in the form of a song cycle for tenor (or soprano) and piano. The nine poems are the prayers of the different animals in the Ark, their individual characters expressed in musical terms sounding occasionally human. The piece has a telling wit and makes a delightful addition to the repertoire. Martyn Hill, who gave the first performance of the work with the composer accompanying on the piano, commissioned the work.

The Piano Trio of 1977 demonstrates the strength of the composer's writing for chamber music forces.

It is dedicated to the Leonardo Trio (Maureen Smith - violin, Anna Shuttleworth - cello, Ian Brown - piano), who gave the first performance in 2nd November 1978. The pounding chorale-like opening sets the scene and provides some of the subsequent material of the work, the Allegro section taking the repeated-note thematic fragment from the Andante con moto introduction. The central Lento section contains dramatic harmonies and is notable for its ecstatic, Messiaen-like piano chords. After the whirlwind of the penultimate pages, the closing passage is the slowed-down version of the main repeated-note motif with which the work began. On many occasions in the piece Anthony Hedges contrasts the lyrical nature of the string instruments with the percussive quality of the piano. Another of the composer's compact and closely argued one movement works, the Piano Trio manages to pack a great deal of matter into its fourteen minutes. The Leonardo Trio gave a Radio3 broadcast of the piece whilst the Tunnel Trio has broadcast it twice.

The Temple of Solomon (1979) is another important work for Chorus and Orchestra. It is a setting of the story of Solomon's Temple taken from Biblical sources compiled by the composer himself. Divided into four sections (Prologue, The Building of the Temple, The Dedication and Celebrations), the piece is a brilliantly scored piece which tests the musicianship of the chorus to the full, whether in the work's many powerful climaxes or in the joyous laudatory Celebrations. The orchestra is not without its own virtuosic passages, including representing the sawing and stone-laying of the Building of the Temple or depicting swarming locusts in the solo tenor section "If there be dearth..." The work is dedicated to the Huddersfield Choral Society and they gave the first performance of the work at Huddersfield Town Hall on April 2nd 1982. When the work was first reviewed, some critics unfairly compared it with Walton's Belshazzar's Feast, a lazy comparison displaying a lack of understanding of the Hedges style which is at all times true to itself and never a pale imitation of other influences - it is too strong in character for that. Taken on its own terms, surely the best form of appraisal of any work of Art, The Temple of Solomon is a powerful and inventive piece which will appeal to anyone who can respond to melody and well-crafted orchestration.

The suite Four Breton Sketches was written in 1980 and first performed and broadcast by the BBC Concert Orchestra under Ashley Lawrence On 7th July of that year. It was written after a holiday the composer spent with his family in Brittany. Each of the four movements expresses a mood suggested to the composer by a location or event on that holiday. Thus, Anthony Hedges is careful not to claim any programmatic content in the work. However there is one place where the composer is clearly depicting an actual event: in the third movement, a mini rondo entitled "Promenade: a Dinard", sounds of car hooters intrude into a relaxed saunter along the promenade. Four Breton Sketches is an enchanting work and makes a great curtain raiser on the Marco Polo CD.

Scenes from the Humber (1980) was commissioned by the BBC for a concert to celebrate the official opening of the Humber Bridge on 17th July 1981. It was first performed on that occasion in Hull City Hall by the BBC Northern Symphony Orchestra under Gunter Herbig, the first of many performances. The work rivals Kingston Sketches as the most frequently played of Anthony Hedges' orchestral works. A companion piece to the Kingston Sketches, Scenes from the Humber is another evocative piece of light music which captures the very spirit of Hull and its environs. It was recorded as part of the Meridian LP and later re-recorded on the Marco Polo CD. In four movements are entitled Petuaria Patrol, Spurn Point Elegy, The Lincoln Castle and Humber Keel Hornpipe. Petuaria was the Roman name for Brough, ten miles west of Hull. This opening march-like movement begins quietly and gradually increases in intensity before receding again into the distance - a musical device known as a "patrol" - once again Anthony Hedges delights in puns in his titles. The movement describes the Roman cohorts who used to cross the north bank of the Humber approaching and passing by and is a highly evocative piece of writing. Spurn Point is a deserted promontory of land at the mouth of the Humber which provides a sanctuary for seabirds. Cries of these birds can be heard in the introduction and in the wake of the stormy climax of this sparsely orchestrated and evocative movement. "The Lincoln Castle" was the last of the paddle steamers to serve as a Humber ferry. Its design and atmosphere suggested the 1920s even though it was built two decades later. Hence the jazzy style of the movement.

The chugging rhythms of the ferry are also captured. Humber Keels were flat-bottomed sailing barges that plied their trade up and down the Humber in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Their annual regatta formed an important event in the life of the river and an oil painting of the first of these regattas, showing the Humber Keels provided the starting point for this final movement with its typically ebullient and high-spirited main theme, entirely characteristic of its composer.

The Jackdaw of Rheims (1980) is another hugely enjoyable choral piece composed for amateur forces but never obviously “written down”. Requiring soprano choir, speaker and orchestra, the work was commissioned by the Solihull Education Department and first performed by the Solihull Youth Orchestra with massed junior choirs from local schools. A brass fanfare announces the start of the work and a stirring march accompanies the chorus. A memorable theme accompanies the words for the chorus: “In and Out” as the jackdaw flies around. There is a timpani-led scherzo-like episode as the jackdaw makes off with the Cardinal’s ring. As the jackdaw is rendered lame, there is a fractured version of the opening march - a good example of how Hedges always gives the best of himself to every work, whether destined for professional or amateur forces. The upbeat ending is suitably joyful with tambourine and tubular bells adding to the colourful score. At about fifteen minutes, the piece is great fun, both to perform and to listen to, doesn’t outstay its welcome and finds the composer at his sunniest and most genial.

The Sinfonia Concertante was commissioned by the Hull Philharmonic Orchestra for its centenary in 1982. The orchestra gave the first performance of the work on February 22nd 1982 and will give the premiere of the revised version of the work in the spring of the year 2000 in Hull City Hall. Compact and sparkling, the work is suitably celebratory in style. The Hull Philharmonic performance will be one to savour if their outstandingly committed recent performances of symphonies by Arnold, Josephs and Joubert are anything to go by.

Exchanges is a ten-minute piece for cello and piano. Composed in 1982, its tempo marking “Poco lento e flessibile” characterises the work. Moray Welsh and Anthony Goldstone commissioned “Exchanges” and gave the premiere of the original version of the work at the Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester on the 5th December 1982. The composer revised the piece the following year. This revised version, played by cellist Oliver Gledhill and pianist Julian Milford is soon to be released on a Rhinosauros Records CD.

Also in 1982, the composer wrote his Flute Sonata. A ten-minute work in three short movements for flute and piano, it shows Anthony Hedges at his sunniest and best. The first movement (Moderato) is Shostakovich-like in its triplet-ridden main theme. The jazzy second theme is closely related to the first and has the composer’s fingerprints all over it. Semitonal clashes in the piano part add spice to the texture. The Poulenc-like purity of the Andantino second movement is deceptive since the movement rises to an impassioned climax before falling back to the Gallic charm of the opening melody. The fleet-footed, virtuosic Finale (Allegro scherzando) has a scampering, wide-ranging opening theme and a witty second subject entirely characteristic of Anthony Hedges. The throwaway ending is a perfect finishing gesture and rounds off one of the most enjoyable pieces of chamber music I have yet heard. The first performance of the Flute Sonata took place on 14th May 1982 with Ian Denley as flautist and the composer accompanying. In 1984 Anthony Hedges made an orchestral version (Flute Concertino for flute and chamber orchestra) which demonstrates the basically large-scale nature of all his works, no matter how small-scale the forces may be.

Pieces of Eight (1982) was a work commissioned by eight distinguished pianists. It is scored for eight pianists and four pianos. A year after the first performance, the composer re-scored the slow movement under the title of “Cantilena”. This beautifully orchestrated and understated four-minute piece is thankfully included on the Marco Polo CD. It is an exquisite microcosm of all the virtues of Anthony Hedges as a composer of light music and the haunting theme stays in the mind long after the music has finished.

The Viola Sonata (1982) is another well-crafted chamber piece of about ten minutes’ duration.

Tougher in its language than the Flute Sonatina, for example, it has moments of great solemn beauty nonetheless. The first movement (Moderato con moto) is at times almost orchestral in its grand sonorities. The brief scherzo-like Molto Vivace second movement is like a moto perpetuo with a memorably attractive Trio section, whilst the Finale is a beautiful slow movement (Poco lento e molto flessibile). It was first performed by Keith Lovell and Brian Newbould at Hull University in November 1984.

Six Moods (1984) are six short pieces for piano. They are written for different standards of player, the first two being within the Grade 4 range, the second two being suitable for Grade 5 whilst the final two are more exacting. The pieces have explanatory titles: Contentment, Assertion, Whims, Energy, Reflection and Aggression and expertly convey the moods suggested by their titles. The work lasts nine minutes.

The Cleveland Overture was composed in 1984, having been commissioned by the Cleveland Youth Orchestra, who gave the first performance under Anthony Hedges in March 1985. A month later, the work received its first broadcast with the BBC Concert Orchestra under Ashley Lawrence. The main theme is another excellent example of the composer's seemingly inexhaustible supply of first-rate tunes. Once again, the oboe-led secondary theme is closely related to the opening melody. This brilliantly orchestrated six-minute work makes a perfect curtain raiser and would grace the start of any concert programme.

The Fantasy Sonata for bassoon and piano (1986) is another well-written piece of chamber music which deserves to be heard. Unusually, this short twelve-minute work is cast in five movements - lento-allegro, moderato-allegro molto, lento, allegro vivace and lento. Once again the writing for solo instrument is entirely idiomatic, emphasising the enormous range of the bassoon from growling bass to its highest register. The piece enhances this repertoire, exploiting the lyrical as well as the comic potential of its solo instrument and provides a test of the musicianship as well as the technique of the soloist. It was commissioned by Hull University Music Department and first performed by Richard Moore, the dedicatee, accompanied by the composer on 17th June 1987.

Refractions (1987) is a piece for clarinet and string quartet, a fine example of Anthony Hedges' late style in the field of chamber music. The fragments of melody and harmony set out in the slow introduction are combined and recombined throughout the rest of the work, revealing their different facets, shades of colour and changing moods. It is dedicated to James Campbell and the Allegri String Quartet and first performed by them on 15th June 1988. A compact work in a single span of just under 15 minutes, the work is cast in three sections (Lento- moderato con moto-andante-allegro vivo). The variants on the initial material include a fugal variation and canonic writing. A variant near the end of the piece, characterised by spiccato triplets in the lower strings, sounds like the negative image of the second subject of the Heigham Sound Overture. The piece is in the composer's most serious vein, yet it remains a darkly attractive and approachable work.

Five Aphorisms for piano (1990) shows the composer at his toughest and least compromising. These brief, epigrammatic pieces have their lighter moments and display a mastery of the instrument. The central Allegro vivace is a McCabe-like moto perpetuo which is loud, brief and angry but which slows down and fades into silence. The following Lento contains some Messiaen-like chordal writing. Five Aphorisms was recently recorded by Hisayo Shimizu as part of a forthcoming CD released by Rhinoceros Records. The movements are: Vivace, con moto, Flute, Allegro vivace, Lento and Allegro.

I'll Make me a World (1990) was commissioned by Coventry Centre for the Performing Arts and first performed by Coventry Youth Orchestra and massed local choirs in May 1991. Of the same high quality as "The Jackdaw of Rheims", the piece is one-movement twenty-minute work for chorus and orchestra. It begins mysteriously with hushed strings in their upper register and an exotic repeated phrase on xylophone. The bass soloist joins with the words "And God stepped out in Space". The

chorus enters with a recurring descending two-note phrase on the words "I'm lonely". A lively and punchy theme accompanies the words "And God said 'That's good!' ". There is a march-like section where God walks upon the earth. The punchy theme is also used at the "Amen" closing section. Skilfully written and well-judged in relation to what young voices can manage, this piece speaks with the unmistakable voice of its composer and is one of his most enjoyable works in any medium.

"In Such a Night" was written for string quartet in 1990 and received its first performance by the Allegri String Quartet at Hull University in November 1990. The piece is a rhapsodic, atmospheric nocturne with frequent solos for violin and cello. The modal-sounding writing and the soaring violin solo make the main theme a second cousin to Vaughan Williams' "The Lark Ascending". The recurring motif takes the four syllables of the title and turns them into a yearning arch-like figure. The beautiful, rich sonorities drawn from the quartet would seem ready-made for expanding to a larger string ensemble and the composer subsequently created a string orchestra version which was given its first performance by the Hull University Orchestra at St Mary's Church, Beverley in February 1992.

Showpiece (1994) is an East Riding Youth Orchestra commission and joins the ranks of the Heigham Sound and Cleveland Overtures as brilliantly orchestrated concert openers. The composer derived the opening theme from ERYO. It is in loose sonata form, but in place of the normal development section, the composer wrote a mini Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra, giving each instrument a solo spot, starting with the piccolo and the rest of the woodwind over a string tremolo. The strings are introduced from the double basses upwards and there is a splendid fugue for the string section as a whole. The main theme of the piece is vintage Hedges, jazzy but quintessentially English, all harmonic twists and turns, swiftly changing keys with the sleight of hand of a true Master. It all works perfectly and is great fun to play and to listen to.

The Symphony no 2, opus 130, composed in 1997 awaits its first performance. I hope this event will not be long forthcoming since it appears to be a work every bit as well-crafted as its predecessor. It bears a superscription from Wilfrid Owen:

"With news of all the nations in your hand
And all their sorrows in your face".

The Owen quote came to the composer's mind in the early stages of composing the symphony, arising from the music he was writing. It continued to haunt him and is perhaps an indication of the character of the piece. It is scored for piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, B flat clarinet, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 2 trombones, bass trombone, tuba, timpani, percussion (2 players), harp and strings. A one-movement work of much substance, it deserves a champion to bring it before the public.

The Divertimento for String Orchestra (1998) is a revised and rescored version of Four Diversions for string orchestra composed in 1971. The second subject of the charming opening Allegro comodo sounds very similar to the opening theme of the second movement of Sibelius's Fifth Symphony. This theme recurs throughout the work. The Presto Finale boasts a typical Hedges theme, second cousin to the first Festival Dance. A fugal passage initiates the recapitulation and the work ends adroitly and without fuss. It is due to be released on an ASV CD in summer 1999 as part of a disc celebrating modern English works, conducted by David Lloyd Jones. The composer was impressed with the players (taken from the Birmingham Royal Ballet orchestra) and this certainly is a release to look out for.

With performances and recordings in prospect and both new compositions and re-orchestrations of previous works produced in the last decade, Anthony Hedges is still very active in the world of British Music. He now publishes most of his own works, which may be bought or hired direct from him. The composer has a website (<http://www.westfieldmusic.karoo.net/>) and an e-mail address: (ahedges@westfieldmusic.karoo.co.uk). Though there are many neglected British composers to be

found throughout the 20th Century, the most recent examples are perhaps the most unforgivable. It may be that Anthony Hedges' decision to stay in the North of England has cost him some of the adulation and exposure afforded those composers who ply their trade in the Capital. Nonetheless, the quality of his music will live on: it shines through in a whole series of impressive scores. Though it is splendid to have the Marco Polo CD and the prospect of more light pieces and a raft of chamber works on CD in the near future, the absence in the catalogue of pieces such as the Symphonies, the Rameau Variations and any of the choral works and concertos is a sore omission which any right-thinking record company would do well to put right. The continuing unavailability of the pinnacles of Anthony Hedges' work on CD is a major disappointment and one can only hope that future generations, luckier than our own, will one day have an opportunity to re-discover his greatest compositions and thus re-evaluate his achievement as a composer.

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