**Symphony in two movements for symphonic brass and percussion**

My Symphony in two movements was originally written for brass band in 2012, and jointly commissioned by the National Youth Brass Band of Great Britain and the National Youth Brass Band of Wales to celebrate their 60th and 30th anniversaries respectively.

In 2014 I was asked, whilst attending a performance of the symphony in the USA, about the possibility of writing a new version for symphonic brass, something I responded to with enthusiasm as I knew the nature and style of the work would suit a symphonic brass instrumentation rather well. The symphony lasts for some 19 minutes and is structured in two linked movements. The form is based on that used by Beethoven in his final piano sonata (Op.111), which is in two movements only: a compact sonata-form allegro, followed by a more expansive theme and four variations. Prokofiev also adopted this same model for his 2nd Symphony of 1925.

The opening Toccata is highly dramatic but compact, whilst still retaining the ‘traditional’ structural elements of exposition, development and recapitulation; indeed, it also has the ‘traditional’ element of a contrasting second subject – a gentle, lyrical modal melody first heard on flugel horn. In contrast, the longer and more substantial second movement Variations is built around a slowly unfolding chorale-like theme, followed by four variations which in turn are mercurial (fast, starting with all instruments muted), march-like (menacing, with short rhythmic articulations underpinning a strident melody), serene (a series of solo ‘romances’ alongside echoes of the chorale), with an emerging theme eventually bursting into a climax of passionate intent; whilst the final variation is a dynamic concertante-like scherzo, with the music gradually incorporating elements of the main ideas from the first movement, thus acting as a recapitulation for the whole work. It reaches its peroration with a return to the very opening of the symphony, ending as it began, with dramatic intent.

The work is scored for a large brass ensemble (six trumpets, four horns, three trombones, euphonium, and two tubas), with timpani and percussion. Most of the melodic material of the symphony is derived from the opening eleven-note ‘row’, which contains various intervallic sets, and although the work is not serially conceived it does use some typical quasi-serial procedures. The music is both technically and musically challenging, but besides exploiting the dramatic ‘up front’ nature of brass instruments, it also shows another side of their nature: the lyrical and expressive.