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Paul Cooper’s *Sinfonia*: An Analysis

by

Minyoung Lee

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
Doctor of Musical Arts

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ABSTRACT

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The piano music of Paul Cooper (1926-1996) has recently become more recognized through two newly released compact discs, *Paul Cooper: The Complete Piano Works* by pianist John Hendrickson, and *New American Masterworks for Solo Piano* by pianist John Perry. Cooper’s piano music truly deserves more attention. Apart from its extraordinary beauty and expressiveness, it is immediately accessible and communicative.

Among Cooper’s piano works, *Sinfonia* (1989), the largest work written in the late period of his compositional career, can be considered a landmark piece. This paper will examine how Cooper successfully integrates classical values with a contemporary language and how such synthesis makes the music more accessible and challenging. More specifically, this paper will discuss Cooper’s use of already existing compositional tools such as cyclic form, traditional formal structures, including sonata and ternary form, and a unifying rhythmic motive, as well as his highly personal way of blending them with unconventional uses of atonality and rhythmic formation. In addition, the paper will discuss how Cooper balances the dichotomy of the general atonal scheme and tonal harmonic references through implied harmonic progression and tonal center. Finally, the
paper will also explore the various pianistic aspects of *Sinfonia*, including its remarkable orchestral effects and challenging virtuosity.
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Introduction

Paul Cooper (1926-1996) has been acknowledged as a distinguished American composer and pedagogue, yet he has been relatively lesser known to most pianists. However, Cooper’s piano music recently became more recognizable with the release of two compact discs. One is the recording of a live performance of Cooper’s complete piano works from 1998 by pianist John Hendrickson, and the other is a recording of *Sinfonia* from 1999 by pianist John Perry, who commissioned and premiered this piece.

Cooper’s piano music truly deserves more attention as contemporary concert repertoire because of its accessibility and communicativeness as well as its extraordinary beauty and expressiveness. The “accessibility” in Cooper’s music reflects his unique standpoint in music history of the second half of the twentieth century. While the compositional trends in the second half of the twentieth century often fall to either extreme of avant-garde music or conservative music, Cooper never pursues any of these extremes: his music stands in-between. He certainly uses contemporary compositional tools, notably atonality and often serial techniques, while he also adopts the traditions of the Classic and Romantic periods to make his music more accessible to his audience. In a recent *Fanfare* review of the compact disc, *Paul Cooper: The Complete Piano Works*, the writer commented as follows:

He is a great traditionalist, in that he embraces fundamental musical assumptions and practices of the past two centuries with unabashed love, but renders them highly personal, and is unafraid of the effect that our constantly changing and evolving contemporary culture might have on his art.¹

Paul Cooper received numerous awards and honors in music in the United States following his professional debut with a commission from the Los Angeles Philharmonic in 1953: a Fulbright Fellowship, two Guggenheim Fellowships, and awards or grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Ford, Rockefeller and Rackham Foundations, the National Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, as well as yearly awards from ASCAP since 1966.

Cooper also led a distinguished career as an academician throughout his professional life: he was a Professor at the University of Michigan (1955-1968), the University of Cincinnati (1968-1974), Rice University (1974-1996), and a guest professor at the Royal Academy of Music in Stockholm (1985) and the Royal Conservatory of Music in Copenhagen (1988). In addition, Cooper published several pedagogical works, including *Perspectives in Music Theory* and *Dimensions in Sightsinging*, that have been used at numerous universities and music schools.

A large amount of Cooper's music has been published, performed and recorded throughout the United States and Europe. His published catalogue includes six symphonies, six concertos, six string quartets, four oratorios, and numerous instrumental and vocal chamber works.

Cooper's piano music, however, represents a rather small percentage of his entire output. Perhaps the reason Cooper is lesser known in the piano world can be attributed to the fact that only six solo piano works have been published. Moreover, most of the six pieces – four out of six – are thinly textured, impressionistic, often pedagogic and small-scale. They are *Partimento* (1967), *Cycles* (1969), *Four Intermezzi* (1980), and *Frescos* (1994). Only two works, *Sonata* (1963) and *Sinfonia* (1989), are large-scale, virtuoso
concert pieces that have characteristics similar to Cooper's works on other genres. *Sonata* and *Sinfonia*, along with his large-scale works, contain not only virtuoso and dramatic aspects, but also diverse impressionistic colors.

Among Cooper's piano works, *Sinfonia*, the largest work written in the late period of his compositional career, can be considered a landmark piece. In this paper, the accessibility – the most significant characteristic of Cooper's music – will be discussed by examining various aspects in *Sinfonia*.

Cooper achieves accessibility by combining traditional elements with modern language. He employs already existing compositional devices throughout *Sinfonia*, such as cyclic form, traditional formal structures including sonata and ternary form, and unifying rhythmic motive. Yet, he uses these devices in highly personal and unique ways, blending them with unconventional uses of atonality and twelve-tone technique: twelve-tone technique is employed only for the highly chromatic main theme, but in an extremely free manner. Within its general atonal scheme, there are many tonal harmonic implications including harmonic progressions and tonal centers. The thematic transformations, which he uses in the cyclic design, consistently present main thematic materials in different characters. Cooper's conception of time span is reflected in an abbreviated return section in the ternary structure, which dominates all three movements and creates great momentum. In addition, when a section is repeated, it is always modified, adding a great energy. Finally, diverse rhythmic formations and texture achieve a great rhythmic flexibility.

As for pianistic writing, the piano in *Sinfonia* creates remarkable orchestral effects. It demands highly advanced techniques for pianists. The various piano writing
for the orchestral effects and the challenging difficulties in piano technique will be discussed later in this paper.

*Sinfonia* is a hidden gem waiting to reward both the pianist and the audience: its drama, poetry, and pianistic virtuosity will capture and satisfy them infinitely.
I. Cyclic form and thematic transformations

The use of cyclic form in Sinfonia is highly distinctive. Cyclic form is a musical form in which two or more discrete movements employ the same or very similar thematic material.² It was developed by the Romantic composers who often dramatized music with programmatic ideas. In cyclic form, a recurring theme represents a specific character in various situations and moods. For example, in Hector Berlioz's Symphonie fantastique (1830), the opening theme of the first Allegro, the idée fixe, returns in many different transformations, thus expressing the shifting moods of the hero's beloved. It creates unity and develops the dramatic idea throughout the five movements. Cooper adopts cyclic form with the same intention as the Romantic composers: to express dramatic development. The recurring themes in Sinfonia reflect "principal characters." and Cooper's program notes on Sinfonia confirm it:

I rejected several working titles to finally choose that of Sinfonia, which seemed to me to embrace the totality of the work with its sharp contrasts of tempi, moods, and emotions. The work might be compared to a three-act drama with a few principal characters whose identities gradually unfold, entwine with each other, and together explore the aspects of sorrow and joy, of anger and love.³

In Sinfonia, there are two themes in the first movement which are used in all three movements: they will be designated as Theme A and B throughout this paper. The themes are introduced in the very beginning of the first movement, immediately following one another (see Example 1).

Example 1 measures 1-16 from the first movement

Theme A

Theme B

These two themes have contrasting characters. **Theme A**, the primary theme of *Sinfonia*, is a melodic statement, which consists of a complete chromatic scale and a return of the first pitch. Only one pitch, E, in measure 2 (circled in Example 1), occurs twice, while the other eleven pitches occur only once as in a twelve-tone row. The melody of the theme unfolds with a large leap between adjacent notes covering a wide register span. In contrast, **Theme B**, the second primary theme of *Sinfonia*, is a harmonically conceived statement. It always appears as a pair of phrases in which each phrase consists of four reversed dotted motives. The second phrase is transposed from the first a perfect fourth higher, except for the atypical change in the last reversed dotted motive in measure 14 (circled in Example 1).
These themes recur throughout, and the reappearances of the themes vary from notably explicit statements to more oblique ones. The most evident examples occur in the third (last) movement where Theme A and B recur in nearly identical form. They are immediately recognizable. However, the order is reversed: Theme B occurs first, followed by Theme A in a slightly modified, but still recognizable version.

Among the reappearances of the themes in the last movement, measures 112-127 are most striking, since they restate not only Theme B but also a considerable portion of the first movement (see Example 2). This section is almost an exact restatement of measures 7-22 of the first movement, except for minor changes. For instance, the left-hand part in measures 112-119 is notated as tremolos instead of the trills in the same part of the first movement. In addition, the rhythms in measure 121 and 127 are slightly simplified. Perhaps these changes are made for the convenience of playing, since the tempo of this section is faster: the tempo is M=132-144 per eighth note in the first movement, but it is M=152-160 per eighth note in the last movement. Thus, measures 112-127 of the last movement can be considered as just a faster version of measures 7-22 of the first movement.
Example 2  measures 112-121 from the third movement

The reappearance of Theme B in measures 61-80 of the last movement is another clear example of cyclic form (see Example 3). Theme B interrupts the thirty-second note passages, which are continued throughout the first half of the movement, making the restatement very clear. The dynamic contrast between Theme B in *forte* and the thirty-second note passages in *piano* highlights the return even more.
Example 3  measures 61-67 from the third movement

In measures 134-140 of the last movement, Theme A returns in a fragmented yet still recognizable form (see Example 4). As in Example 3, it is clearly distinguished from the embellishment-like figures. In this case, the contrast between Theme A in the very low register and the embellishment-like figures in the very high register highlights the return of Theme A.
Finally, *Sinfonia* concludes with the reappearance of **Theme A** at the very end of the piece in measures 166-173 (see Example 5), where it has a clear resemblance in its texture, *maestoso* character, and the use of a pedal tone to the original **Theme A** at the very beginning of the piece (compare it with Example 1). However, this is a modified version of the original **Theme A**: two phrases are combined using only the first ten notes.
of Theme A, beginning on the note D in measure 166, and another ten notes of Theme A, beginning on the note E♭ in measure 169. The motivation of this modification is drawn from the main thematic idea of the last movement, which is similarly broken up into two phrases.

Example 5 measures 166-173 from the third movement

Aside from these most evident returns of Theme A and B discussed above, there are numerous transformations of them in all three movements. They reveal how Cooper uses his material in continuously imaginative and creative ways. For example, in the first movement, Theme A, in measures 23-36, shows a more lyrical and expressive character, a sharp departure from the original maestoso character completed by its dynamic of fff, wide leaps, and octave doublings of both the melody and the pedal tone. Measures 23-36, as shown in Example 6, can be analyzed as three different transformations of Theme A in succession: measures 23-26, 27-30, and 32-36. All of them consist of an expressive yet incomplete statement of Theme A with its accompaniment part. However, each version is
distinct from the other in various ways. The first excerpt, in measures 23-26, is an expressive melody accompanied by a trilled counter-melody. The beginning four notes of the counter-melody (C♯-D♯-E-B♭) are also similar to the beginning motive of Theme A (C♯-D♯-E-C), but expanded in rhythm. The second excerpt, in measures 27-31, augments the melody even more broadly, while the irregular sixteenth-note accompaniment passage flows in the left hand. In the third excerpt, in measures 32-36, the melody and accompaniment parts switch their registers from measures 27-31: now the left hand has a melody while the right has an accompaniment. and the melody, along with its flowing accompaniment, moves more quickly than the two former ones. The third variation is set further apart because of the reversed dotted rhythm at the beginning of the melody.

These unique individual characteristics help the transformations be differentiated even more. The first phrase emerges from the previous passages: however, the trills, which prevail as an accompaniment figure in the former section (measures 7-22) now become an essential feature of the counter-melody. In the second phrase, the augmentation of melody with flowing accompaniment enhances its expressive character. The last phrase achieves a vivid character by the thrust from the dotted rhythm, the running accompaniment passage now in a high register, and finally by the dynamic of mf and its crescendo.
Example 6  measures 23-36 from the first movement

A lyrically transformed Theme A, as in measures 23-36 of the first movement, also appears in other movements. It appears in the left-hand part of measures 21-27 in the second movement, under the chordal theme of the right-hand part. Since the entire former section of the movement (measures 1-20) is chordal, this melodic theme creates a poignant impression. In measures 43-47 of the third movement, the lyrical theme is interwoven with the moto perpetuo thirty-seconds (Theme A fills in the rests in the left hand). In fact, it is almost identical in form of transformation to measures 27-31 of the first movement (see Example 7, compare with Example 6).
Example 7 measures 43-47 from the third movement

A lyrical Theme A is often interwoven between two or more voices, as seen in Example 8.

Example 8 measures 148-153 from the first movement

Theme A, by its fragmentation, appears in both the first and the last movements.

They have almost an identical texture. Both measures 93-100 of the first movement and
measures 134-143 (see Example 4) of the last movement contain the fragmented theme with embellishment-like figures in-between, using highly distinctive registers for each.

As well, an extreme change of register is employed for some thematic transformations. Measures 54-58 of the last movement, for example, have a portion of Theme A in the top voice with abrupt registral displacement of each note of the theme (see Example 9).

Example 9  measures 54-58 from the third movement

Cooper also develops a motive or a fragment of the theme. In measures 62-71 of the second movement, the theme is drawn from the beginning four-note motive of Theme A. It does not take exact pitches of the motive but takes the contour of the motive and stretches it out as an expressive melody (see Example 10).
Example 10 from measure 62 of the second movement

Finally, there are examples of a rather oblique transformation of Theme A and B. First, the theme of perpetual thirty-second notes in the last movement is a transformation of Theme A (see Example 11). This is rather difficult to recognize at first hearing. It not only appears in the newly introduced continuous thirty-second-note rhythm but also in a considerably lower register, with soft dynamics, and with the pedal which blurs the sound: it is more like a gesture or a sound wave. Also, it uses only the first ten notes from Theme A, always paired with its transposed first nine notes, a half step higher. This internal structure of the theme in the last movement is the reason for the previously discussed modification of the final Theme A in Example 5.

Example 11 measures 1-2 from the third movement
Another example of the implicit transformations is the chordal theme in measures 1-20 of the second movement. The chord structure in this theme comes from Theme B. If each of the four-note motives in reversed dotted rhythm of Theme B (see Example 1) is put vertically together as one chord, it makes four different four-note chords (see Example 12). Further, each of these chords can be grouped into two basic chord structures: one a chord by a pair of major/minor seconds (a), the other by a major/minor triad with an added note (b).

Example 12 from measures 1-20 of the second movement

Chordal theme from the second movement. Measures 1–11

*Transposed freely without rhythm for convenience of comparison
All of the chords in measures 1-20 of the second movement belong to one of these two chord structures derived from Theme B. Since measures 12-20 are a retrograde form of measures 3-11, only the chords in measures 1-11 are illustrated. Likewise, the embellishment-like figures between the fragments of Theme A in measures 93-100 are a transformation of Theme B. If examined in the same way as above, all the chords in measures 94, 96-97, and 99-100 belong to either the chord structures of (a) or (b).

The examples of Theme A and B shown previously are deeply integrated and highly developmental variations. In addition, we can see another way in which the cyclical nature of the formal design in Sinfonia is enhanced: this is a quotation from the earlier movements without deep assimilation. For example, measures 21-23 of the last movement are the same material as measures 130-131 of the first movement (see Example 13.1-2). Only the rhythm is expanded. Although it quotes only a small portion from the first movement, the unique tremolo-like texture of this quotation makes an immediate connection with the Tranquillo section (measures 126-140) of the first movement.

Example 13.1 measures 130-131 from the first movement
Example 13.2 measures 21-23 from the third movement

The measures 144-148 of the last movement are also a quotation from measures 84-89 of the second movement. While the developmental section featuring Theme A and the embellishment-like figures continues, the reminiscence of the second movement takes the place of Theme A (see Example 14.1-2).

Example 14.1 measures 154-165 from the first movement
Example 14.2 measures 68-69 from the second movement

Measures 154-165 of the first movement and 68-69 of the second movement show another connection, even though they are not an exact quotation. The connection is achieved purely by their unique texture and timbre (see Example 15.1-2). Both parts have only two single voices that are played in alternate rhythm. This thin texture and the use of a high register create a transparent timber that is rare in Sinfonia. Thereby, they become associated with each other regardless of their actual thematic materials.

Example 15.1 measure 144 from the third movement
Example 15.2 measure 84 from the second movement

These secondary materials of cyclic form are brief reminders of the former movements, which enhance the unity of all movements. However, there are additional motivations for these quotations. They not only look back at the earlier movements but also dramatize and develop the music further. In the first movement, the *Tranquillo* section creates a dramatic effect by the abrupt interruption of the previous section through the tempo, texture and dynamics. Now, in the third movement, the quotation from the *Tranquillo* section consistently interrupts the *moto perpetuo*, and it is further expanded and developed by adopting Theme A. The insertion of the climax section of the second movement into the highly developmental section of the third movement adds a great burst of energy. Finally, the quotation from the coda in the second movement also offers an exceptional dramatic effect. It holds back from reaching a climactic moment in measure 67 so that the real climax in measures 84-89 becomes more striking.

In summary, *Sinfonia* employs cyclic form mainly by using Themes A and B, as well as their transformations, in all three movements. While it certainly creates unity as a whole, the various ways of transformation obtain diverse characters within this unity. Several other materials are also shared among movements, aside from the two main thematic ideas. As brief reminders of the other movements, they increase the unity and
dramatic effects in *Sinfonia*, bringing both to a higher level. In the next chapter, the
structure of *Sinfonia* will be discussed to show how Cooper approaches tradition in his
own creativity.
II. Structure

The clear structural plan of *Sinfonia* is based on traditional formal designs. As a whole, the piece adopts the traditional fast-slow-fast framework of classical three-movement sonatas. The individual movements make use of sonata form, ternary form, and developing form, creating the sense of coherency and structural unity. The structure of *Sinfonia* not only contains traditional features but also numerous unconventional unique characteristics.

*The first movement*

The first movement employs sonata form as its basic structure. Although the tonal scheme of sonata form does not exist—*Sinfonia* is an atonal work—the thematic treatment of each section clearly shows its use of sonata form. The movement is divided into three main sections and a brief codetta; each of the main sections corresponds to the exposition, development, and recapitulation. In the exposition, measures 1-92. **Theme A** and **B** are introduced in contrasting character and established as main thematic materials. Although the themes undergo repetitions and modifications, the essential development of the themes takes place in the section which follows, the development in measures 93-125. Here, **Theme A** appears in its most obscure form. The recapitulation section in measures 141-153 contains the evident return of **Theme A**, and the final codetta employs a new four-note motive, $B^\flat-F-A-F$, and a two-voice texture in the high register of the piano (see Example 15).

Cooper, however, modifies the traditional design of sonata form. First, it is not governed by the tonal scheme of the sonata form as mentioned earlier. No tonal
relationship between the first and the second theme exists and Theme A returns a half step higher in the recapitulation.

Second, the exposition in Sinfonia has a written-out repetition, while expositions in most classical sonatas are repeated by the use of a repeat sign at the end of a section. The exposition is divided into measures 1-51 and its repetition in measures 51-92. The subsections of these measures are based on the same idea. For example, both measures 1-5 and 51-56 present the original version of Theme A, and measures 6-24 and 57-73 present the original version of Theme B. Similarly, both measures 25-36 and 74-78 present a transformed Theme A as melodies with accompaniment parts. In both measures 37-42 and 79-82, Theme B is compressed rhythmically, while both measures 43-49 and 84-89 present a transformed Theme A as interwoven melodies in two voices along with their accompaniment parts. Finally, both measures 50 and 91-92 present the same transitional materials.

However, the repetition is not literal. It is modified by transposition, rhythmic change, and use of a more complex texture, thereby increasing the intensity. In the first subsection, the registral span is expanded: the lower register becomes even lower by its transposition to a major 2\textsuperscript{nd} lower, and the upper register becomes even higher by an octave inversion of B-flat in measure 51. The rhythm is also modified: the theme now begins on a strong downbeat, in contrast to the anacrusis beginning in measure 1 (see Example 1). A pedal tone creates a consistent reversed dotted rhythm by playing a thirty-second note behind each note of the right hand, unlike the irregular placement of pedal tone at the very beginning. The repetition of notes such as C-sharp in measure 51, and B and A in measures 54, extends and further intensifies the passage (see Example 16).
Example 16  measures 51-55 from the first movement

In the second subsection in measures 57-73, Theme B in the left-hand, is played simultaneously with the transformed Theme A in the right-hand, and becomes an accompaniment. While it is played as a main melody with an accompaniment of trills in measures 6-24 (see Example 17).

Example 17  measures 57-60 from the first movement

The theme in measure 74-78 is hidden in a chordal texture, unlike a simple texture of melody and accompaniment in measures 23-36. It appears in the lower voice of the chords. The melody itself is also slightly modified by the note G-natural (instead of E-natural) in the last eighth note of measure 74 (see Example 8). In the fourth subsection in measures 79-82, Theme B is further compressed in its rhythm, but the length of the subsection is extended by an additional beginning phrase of Theme B. In a pair of phrases that begins on the downbeat of measure 78, Theme B is overlapped with the
previous melodic passage. Then the added phrase of the theme begins on the second beat of measure 81 (see Example 18).

**Example 18** measures 78-82 from the first movement

The measures 84-90 are transposed only a minor second lower from measures 43-49.

Finally, the transition in measures 91-92 is extended to two measures from a one-measure transition in measure 50.

Another unique feature of sonata form in *Sinfonia* is its abbreviated recapitulation. Unlike the recapitulation in the classical sonatas, in which both the first and second themes are restated, **Theme B** is omitted. The recapitulation consists only of **Theme A** in measures 141-146, and the transformed **Theme A** in measures 147-154. However, the return is clear, and efficiently resolves the tension of the development section. The returned **Theme A** is broader, steadier than the earlier hearing. The melody is augmented in measures 143-146 and enhanced even further by the tempo indication of *molto ritardando*. The two added notes, D and C, in measure 141 also extend the beginning ascending line of the theme. Moreover, the pedal tone’s rhythm is gradually expanded: a
thirty-second note behind the theme in the right hand in measure 142, a sixteenth note behind in measure 143, and an eighth-note behind in measure 144 (see Example 19).

**Example 19** measures 141-146 from the first movement

Such a shortened recapitulation in *Sinfonia* reflects Cooper's view of psychological time span. Cooper expresses the idea in an interview with Elizabeth Ann Bennett:

> Although the real time or materials in a return section may not equal that of the initial statement, the psychological time span is appropriate. Further, as the return passage has the function of summing up elements from the movement or work, a single note or motivic abbreviation becomes a symbol to the mind or an automatic association with the previous material (Bennett 1979. 298).\(^4\)

This concept of recapitulation as a psychological time span plays a significant role in the structure of Cooper's compositions, especially throughout all three movements of *Sinfonia*.

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The modified written repetition in Sinfonia becomes an opportunity to dramatize the contrast between the themes and their transformations, while the abbreviated recapitulation substitutes for the tonal scheme of a conventional sonata. In a conventional sonata, the return of the second theme in the recapitulation helps to resolve harmonic tension established in the exposition by the dominant key, but in Sinfonia. Theme B does not have this role; therefore, it is omitted. Instead, the return of Theme B is fulfilled in the second movement.

The codetta in measures 154-165 also demonstrates an atypical character. It is contradictory in its function as a closing section, since it closes the movement with an open and unresolved impression. The new four-note motive creates a cadential gesture only by its repetition and expansion, instead of any resolution or conclusion. The motive itself does not have a completed feeling. The textural writing is also a departure from the rest of the movement. The very final interval of a minor sixth by the motive and its counterpart further enhances the unsettled feeling (see Example 15.1-2).

The second movement

The second movement of Sinfonia employs a ternary form. Since the return section is slightly modified, it is designated as A-B-A'.

The beginning section in measures 1-20 (A section) and its return in measures 93-112 at the end of the movement (A' section) are clearly distinguished from the middle section. They are almost identical. Both sections are written in the same texture in which both hands play persistent and obstinate successions of the same chords, or their
inversions, most of the time simultaneously. They also have the same pitch materials: measures 3-20 and 93-107 consist of exactly the same chords (see Example 20.1-2).

**Example 20.1** measures 1-20 from the second movement
Example 20.2 measures 93-112 from the second movement

The several subtle changes made in the A' section create a steadier, calmer and vanishing character as it approaches the end of the movement. For instance, the downbeats are more stressed by simultaneously played chords at measures 101, 103, 105, 107. as compared to the corresponding measures of 14, 16, 18, 20. The dynamic stays in piano throughout, in contrast to the rapid dynamic changes of the chords in the left hand in the A section. The register is moved an octave lower as well. The tempo is slower also, as indicated by M=48 per an eighth note, rather than M=56 of the A section. In addition, the two phrases of the A section (measures 3-11 and 12-20) are now united into one long phrase by the shortened pivot chord in measure 100. This pivot chord was four measures long before, which enabled the division into two phrases in the A section.

In contrast to the chordal and steady A section, the B section, in measures 21-92, flows in a more melodic and flexible way. Theme A is now lyrically transformed.
immediately highlighting the change of character. Even the chordal materials from the A section are blended in the B section with different characters. For instance, the first phrase of A section becomes a connected chordal melody in the right-hand part of measures 21-27. In measures 28-33, the second phrase of A section becomes a fuller sounded chordal melody by the chords in the right hand, since forte in both hands gives a predominant position to the longer and connected chords in the upper register (see Example 21).

**Example 21** measures 28-33 from the second movement

![Musical notation]

In further analysis, the B section shows its own ternary structure that is parallel to the overall structure of the movement. The three sections are designated by b1 (measures 21-61), b2 (measures 62-71), and b1' (measures 78-91). The flexible character of the B section reaches its highest point in the b2 section, and is distinguished clearly from the outer sections. The meter is not given here, and a new kind of notation of *crescendo decrescendo* shape is employed for the sixteenth-note-groups. The *tempo rubato* enhances this character. In addition, the b2 section employs an expressive new melody as its theme, which is transformed from a portion of **Theme A** (see Example 22).
Example 22 measures 62 from the second movement

The b1 section consists of the three passages and their modified repetitions, and only two passages return in b1' section. These are the same features as in the sonata form of the first movement: a written-out exposition and an abbreviated return.

In the b1 section, measures 21-27 contain a transformed Theme A in the left hand and the first phrase of the A section in the right hand. Measures 28-33 are the rhythmically compressed second phrase of the A section. The following measures 34-38 are new chordal passages in the expanded registral span using four staves. This creates a bell-like sonority by the parallel chords, with dissonances of a minor second in the high register, and the pedal chords in the low register, which resonate throughout the passage (see Example 23).

Example 23 measures 34-38 from the second movement
Then, in the repetition section of b1, the transformed Theme A and the phrases of the A section are blended with their interesting modifications. The right hand of measures 45-50 employs the second phrase of the A section (measures 12-20), instead of the first phrase as in measures 21-27. In addition, the dynamic markings are changed. While in measures 21-27, Theme A in the left hand is stressed more than the chordal passage by the forceful dynamics piano to pianissimo, in measures 45-50 the chordal melody in the right hand is stressed more by its mezzo piano than Theme A in piano. The following repeated passage in measures 51-56 is transposed a minor second lower, and in measures 57-61, only the pedal chord is changed.

The b1′ section consists of a modified return of the two passages. The bell-like third passage is omitted. In measures 78-83, the same pitches of measures 45-51 appear an octave lower, and the transformed Theme A in the left hand unfolds with wider leaps between adjacent notes by their inversion. Then the following measures 84-92 unexpectedly climax through the chordal passage in broken chord style, using four staffs to cover enormous registral space. A gigantic dynamic marking of ffff is assigned (see Example 14.2). After the climactic point, the sudden return of the A section becomes more striking by the omission of the third passage.

The third movement

The third movement is divided into two parts, measures 1-111 and measures 112-173. The first part, a moto perpetuo, uses developing form, and it is divided into nine sections: an initial thematic statement and its eight variations. The initial thematic statement, in measures 1-10, consists of five two-measure phrases, which become the
basic materials of variations. Each phrase begins with a pair of motives from Theme A, which are a ten-note motive and another nine-note motive (see Example 24).

Example 24 measures 1-11 from the third movement

The variations start more literally and become more obscure. Each variation utilizes some or all of the basic five phrases of measures 1-10. They are varied by accents, sustained notes, lengthened or shortened phrases, the insertion of Theme A and Theme B, and changes of tonal center. For example, in the first variation in measures 12-24, all five phrases of measures 1-10 are repeated exactly, but accents are placed on certain notes without any apparent pattern (see Example 25).
Example 25 measures 13-14 from the third movement

The second variation, in measures 25-40, is transposed a minor second higher from the initial thematic statement, beginning with D instead of C-sharp. It only utilizes Phrase 3 in measures 25-26, Phrase 4 in measures 27-29, and just one measure of the basic thematic motive in measure 30. Phrase 4 is extended to three measures by measure 29, a transposed (a minor second higher) and retrograded version of measure 28. As in the first variation, some notes are unpredictably accented while others are sustained. Also, the entire register is higher than in the previous variation (see Example 26).

Example 26 measures 25-30 from the third movement

The third variation, in measures 41-46, is modified even further. It begins with Phrase 3 in measures 41-42, which is transposed a major second lower than the initial statement, beginning with B-natural. Then the following measures 43-46 are different
from other *moto perpetuo* passages, since none of the basic five phrases of the movement is utilized. Instead, the freely written brief passages continue a *moto perpetuo* by filling rests with the transformed **Theme A** of the right hand (see Example 7).

The fourth variation, measures 48-60, is the same as measures 25-30, the second variation, except for the differently sustained notes.

The *moto perpetuo* in the fifth and sixth variations, measures 61-74 and 75-89 respectively, returns to the initial statement of the five phrases, beginning with C-sharp and continuing to the second variation beginning with D. However, the major change in both variations is the insertion of **Theme B**, which breaks into the continuous thirty-second notes. The theme either replaces thirty-second notes or is added to them.

The seventh variation, in measures 90-102, is unique because, unlike the previous variations. Cooper employs shifting tonal centers. It consists of two statements of **Phrase 4** in measures 90-93; one of **Phrase 5** in measures 94-95, beginning with B-flat: one of **Phrase 4** in measures 96-97; and one of **Phrase 5** in measures 98-99, beginning with C-sharp. The seventh variation also repeats the usage of the unpredictable accents and sustained notes.

The final, eighth variation, in measures 103-111, utilizes only **Phrase 4** out of the basic five phrases. It only contains two extended versions of **Phrase 4** – one beginning with C-sharp (measures 103-105) and the other with D (measures 106-108) – immediately followed by the original two-bar version of **Phrase 4** and the final one measure of thematic motive, beginning with D. In the extended version of **Phrase 4** in measures 103-105, measure 105 is the retrograde of measure 104, a minor second lower. Measure 108 is the retrograde of measure 107, and played before the original version. It
is also transposed from measure 107 a minor second higher, except for the last pitch B♭
(see Example 27).

**Example 27** measures 103-108 from the third movement

![Example 27](image)

The use of the fundamental five phrases in the course of the variations reveals the
idea of another abbreviated return. While the first variation begins with all five initial
phrases, the final variation ends by utilizing only **Phrase 4**.

Further, this first part of the third movement can be grouped as another ternary
structure: measures 1-40, 41-89, and 90-111. The middle section differs from the outer
sections by its insertion of **Theme A** and **Theme B**. The outer sections primarily utilize
the basic five phrases. However, the return, in measures 90-111, is a false return,
beginning with B-flat instead of C-sharp. The true return occurs six measures later, in
measure 96, beginning with C-sharp.

As discussed briefly in the first chapter, the harmonically conceived passages
constantly interrupt the *moto perpetuo* and they are drawn from the *Tranquillo* section of
the first movement. These interruptions occur five times: measures 21-22, 31-36, 54-58,
71-72 and 100-101. Measures 21-22, 71-72 and 100-101 are exactly the same material as
measures 130-131 of the first movement (see Example 13). Only their rhythm is
expanded, with a minor register change in measures 71-72, and a dynamic change in measures 100-101. On the other hand, measures 31-36 and 54-78 employ Theme A in the same texture (see Example 28). In these passages, the texture in which the chords are played simultaneously with trills of inner voices becomes the only consistent element that could put them in the same category.

**Example 28** measures 31-36 from the third movement

However, in measures 83-89, the transition plays a role of interruption (see Example 29). While the other transitions such as measures 24, 37-40 and 59-60 are brief passages which immediately follow the passages of interruption, the transition in measures 83-89 are further extended and developed. The contour in Example 29 shows
several curves of up-and-down, unlike the one downward motion of the other prior
transitions. Also, another voice is added in the left hand, making a cross-rhythm. The
irregular phrasing of each voice makes the transition even more complex. Therefore, this
transition itself interrupts the flow of the thirty-second notes effectively.

**Example 29** measures 83-89 from the third movement

When the continuously moving thirty-second-note *moto perpetuo* is cut off by the
return of the first movement material at measure 112, it comes as a remarkable structural
surprise. The return makes an even stronger impression, since it restates not only the
theme but also a portion of the first movement: measures 112-127 in the third movement
literally restates measures 7-22 of the first movement, except for only a few minor
rhythmic changes.

The entire second part of the third movement, including this beginning portion,
recalls the first movement. As discussed above, the first section in measures 112-133 is a
restatement of some portion of the exposition of the first movement. Measures 112-127 are the same as measures 7-22, and the following measures 128-130 are the same as measures 40-42. Although the transition in measures 131-133 is not an exact quotation from the first movement, it still relates to the transition in measures 90-92.

The middle section, in measures 132-165, recalls the development section of the first movement. The texture in both sections is identical, including the fragmented Theme A and the embellishment-like figures that occur in-between (see Example 30, compare it with Example 4).

Example 30 measures 93-94 from the first movement

Not only does the middle section have the same texture as the development section of the first movement, but it also employs the same function. The embellishment-like figure is developed along with the scale-like left-hand passages throughout the entire middle section. In measures 153-158, it is even extended for seven measures, with extremely irregular phrasing.

The last section of the third movement, in measures 166-173, is a return of Theme A. Even though Theme A in this section has a different phrase structure.
followed by the theme in the beginning of the third movement, the same texture and character certainly connects it to the very beginning of the piece (see Example 5).

The use of ternary structure as a whole in *Sinfonia* is revealed by the entire second part of the third movement, which turns out to be a return of the first movement. The return section is abbreviated again, presenting a compressed version of the entire first movement. The exposition section, in measures 1-92 in the first movement, returns only by the citations of measures 7-22, then measures 40-42, and finally, the transition of measures 90-92. The development section in the first movement corresponds to measures 134-165. The recapitulation section is suggested by the final return of *Theme A* in measures 166-173.

Interestingly, a sudden stopping moment is found right before a return of the A section throughout all the ternary structures in *Sinfonia*. This stopping moment emphasizes the return of the A section by unexpectedly holding back the excitement and tension from the previous section. The examples include measures 126-140, the *Tranquillo* section in the first movement, and the thinly-textured measures 68-69 in the second movement. Especially in the last movement, the *moto perpetuo* is paused completely by the chords in measures 81-82. In fact, this is a signature chord of Cooper that also appears in his other compositions, such as the violin concerto and the organ concerto (see Example 31).
In conclusion, Cooper makes use of traditional forms in *Sinfonia*, especially ternary form. The sonata form of the first movement is based on the same principle of a ternary form. In the second movement, a ternary form governs even the inner section of the movement as well as the overall A-B-A' structure of movement. The same structure is also found in the *moto perpetuo* section of the last movement. Furthermore, the return of the first movement in the second part of the third movement reveals the use of ternary form on a large scale. In all ternary structures, Cooper’s view for the abbreviated return is applied; also the other unique features, such as the written-out repetition and a stopping moment, occur systematically.
III. The Tonal Reference

_Sinfonia_ is primarily an "atonal" work, which is not based on a traditional diatonic concept of tonality. However, numerous places in _Sinfonia_ suggest tonal implications, such as tonal centers and harmonic progressions. In addition, a triad-based vertical sonority and a synthetic scale also help in establishing tonal references.

There are strong implications of tonal centers in the first and the third movements of _Sinfonia_. In both movements, it is created by the use of Theme A. First, the original version of Theme A in the first movement contains a pitch center since it begins and ends with the same pitch. For example, in measures 1-4, the theme begins with C-sharp, then after presenting all twelve pitches with only one repeated pitch E, it ends with C-sharp. The pitch center is also re-emphasized by a C-sharp pedal tone in the left hand.

Each section in the first movement begins with Theme A, but it has a new pitch center for each. They are as follows: C-sharp (measure 1-50, the exposition), B-natural (measure 51-92, the repetition of the exposition), B-flat (measure 93-140, the development), and D (measure 141-153, the recapitulation).

The implication of a tonal center in the moto perpetuo of the third movement is also generated by the use of Theme A, but in a different way. Now Theme A itself does not have a pitch center, because only the first ten notes from the original Theme A are used. Here, the repeated statement of the theme helps highlight the pitch as a temporary tonal center. For example, in measures 1-10, C-sharp begins the theme five times in measures 1, 3, 5, 7, and 9, confirming C-sharp as the tonal center of the section.

Likewise, each subsection of the entire moto perpetuo has tonal centers as follows: C
sharp (measure 1- ), D (measure 25- ), B (measure 41- ), D (measure 48- ), C sharp (measure 61- ), D (measure 75- ), B flat (measure 90- ), C sharp (measure 96- ), and D (measure 106-111).

The implied tonal centers in the first and the third movements resemble each other in two ways. First, both movements use the same pitches as their tonal centers, C-sharp, B-natural, B-flat, and D. In fact, these four pitches are from the same pitch class set as the first four-note motive of Theme A: C-sharp, D-sharp, E, and C (Example 32). They have the same normal form of (0,1,3,4).

**Example 32** pitch class set of the first four-note motive of Theme A

Second, the implied tonal center begins in C-sharp and ends in D in both movements. Clearly, this is mirroring the twelve-tone row of Theme A, which begins and ends with these same pitches.

On occasion, the tonal centers are harmonically suggested in their previous subsections. For example, in the exposition of the first movement, the subsection in measures 43-46 foreshadows the tonal center of the following section (measure 51- ). B-natural, by employing B minor-like harmony: the passage in the left hand forms a B minor natural scale. Correspondingly, the subsection in measure 84-88 foreshadows the tonal center of the following section. B-flat, by employing B-flat minor-like harmony. Here the passage in the left hand forms a B-flat minor natural scale.
In addition, an implied traditional harmonic progression appears. Such examples include measures 99-101 and the *Tranquillo* section in the first movement, as well as the two transitions in the second movement. Measures 99-101 of the first movement create an effect of traditional dominant seventh to tonic progression in E-flat minor (Example 32). First, the long, pedaled bass note B-flat in the lower staffs moves to E-flat, creating a strong sense of arrival despite a big registral gap of more than three octaves between these two notes. The upper voice in the lower staves, A-flat, moves to G-flat in measure 101, presenting a conventional voice leading. In the upper staves, the chord progression from measure 99 to 101 implies a progression from a minor dominant chord (B^b, D^b, F, A^b) to a tonic chord in E-flat minor. Moreover, there are two linear voices that enhance the sense of resolution. The notes on the downbeat of each measure form these two lines: A^b (measure 99), G (measure 100), G^b (measure 101) in the top voice; and C (measure 99), D (measure 100), and E^b (measure 101) in the bottom voice. Both lines show chromatic voice leadings into measure 101.

**Example 33** measures 99-101 from the first movement
The measures 34-44 and 75-77 in the second movement also show the implication of a minor dominant to tonic progression in E major. In measures 34-39, the five notes, which form a B minor scale, are put together vertically as the pedal chord, while the upper chordal melody also utilizes a B minor scale with consistent dissonances of a minor second, creating a unique bell-like sonority. Measures 39-42 in the transition continue a B minor harmony, repeating the motive of A-G-F♯-D, then finally reach low B and D in measure 42. On top of these low pedal tones that are kept by the use of a damper pedal, unexpected E major triad-like chords are played. The chords contain five notes simultaneously: E F♯ G♯ A B, but a triad is still strongly implied. Then the feeling of E major dissolves quickly when F-natural, instead of F-sharp, is used in measure 44 (Example 34.1-2). Measures 72-77 are almost identical to measures 39-44. The only major difference is that the E major triad is prolonged for two measures, firmly establishing it as a tonic. The implication of E major in this second transition becomes stronger by the use of a pure triad. This is the only pure triad used in the entire Sinfonia.

**Example 34.1** measures 42-44 from the second movement
Example 34.2 measures 75-77 from the second movement

The *Tranquillo* section of the first movement provides a different example from the previous two. In this section, a deceptive harmonic progression as well as a dominant to tonic progression is suggested, creating an enormously dramatic effect (see Example 33). The major harmonic material of this section is a D major seventh chord. The passage begins with this chord, and all four short phrases, measures 126-129, 130-132, 133-136, 137-139, end with this chord. This repeated return to a D major seventh chord without any resolution, increases anticipation of a G major/minor resolution. Thus, the abrupt twist in measure 139 comes as a great surprise. The last phrase arrives in a D major seventh chord in 139, but only momentarily. The second chord on the fourth beat of measure 139 changes harmony by altering only one note from the D major seventh chord (from F-sharp to E) in the left hand. then suddenly both hands are led into the transition in measure 140. Even though both the transition in measure 140 and Theme A in measure 141 are not harmonically presented, the clear pitch centers of the A in the transition and D in Theme A create the same effect as a dominant to tonic progression.
Example 35 measures 126-141 from the first movement

It is clear so far that the reference is largely indirect. The tonal center is implied only by the stress on certain pitches, and the harmonic progression is implied but only briefly. Tonal thinking is hovering in the background.

Then, the structure of the vertical sonorities shows even more oblique tonal reference. The chord which contains a triad is used as important harmonic material, although a dissonance is added, making it more obscure. In Sinfonia, the two main themes, Theme A and B, are the main sources that provide these triad-based sonorities. They appear in the form of a major/minor triad with an added major/minor second, or with an added major/minor third forming a major/dominant seventh chord.

The harmonically-conceived Theme B expresses these sonorities in more obvious ways than Theme A. As shown in Example 12, vertically lined motives of Theme B are
either a major/minor triad with an added note, or a chord by a pair of major/minor seconds. On the other hand, Theme A provides a triad-based sonority in a rather complex way. Theme A has to be seen as a twelve-tone row. However, the several segments of Theme A formulate these important vertical sonorities. As shown in Example 36, there are three segments in the row of Theme A that contain a triad with an added second: ECGF\(^\#\) (1), EGBB\(^b\) (2), FAG\(^b\)D (3). Also, the last five-note segment provides a major seventh chord, B\(^b\)FAD (4) and a dominant seventh chord, B\(^b\)FG\(^b\)D (5).

**Example 36** Theme A

The transformed Theme B, in measures 1-20 of the second movement, illustrates triad-based sonorities clearly in its chordal texture. The major seventh chords in measure 94, 96-97, 99-100 of the first movement are originated from Theme B. In measures 74-78 of the first movement, the chords, in which Theme A is hidden in the alto line, are also the vertical sonorities from Theme B (Example 37). The chords in measure 74, 75, 77, 78 are a major triad with a minor second, a chord by a pair of major seconds, a major seventh chord, and a fifth with a major second, which implies a triad with a major second.
Example 37 from measures 74-78 from the first movement

These sonorities are not only used in the thematic materials but also in the transitional materials. For example, in the transitions in measures 48-49 of the first movement, every six thirty-second notes, which are divided in two hands, form either a major triad with a second, or a major seventh chord (Example 38). Thus, measure 48 presents a F-sharp major chord with B, and a D major seventh chord, while measure 49 presents a G major chord with C, and an E-flat major seventh chord. Measures 89-90 are just a transposition of measures 48-49 a minor second lower (some notes are enharmonicallynotated).

Example 38 measures 48-49 from the first movement

The transitions in measure 16, 22, 42, 73 of the first movement even present a dominant seventh chord linearly. For example, F-sharp, B-flat (enharmonically A-sharp), C-sharp, E, make a F-sharp from the top voice in measure 16 forms a dominant seventh chord.
Example 39 measure 16 from the first movement

Finally, a synthetic scale of D-E\textsuperscript{b}-F\textsuperscript{#}-G-A-B\textsuperscript{b}-C\textsuperscript{#}-D by the composer is used repeatedly to create further the tonal reference and structural coherency. The scale consists of two tetrachords that have the same interval structure of a minor second, an augmented second, and a minor second (D E\textsuperscript{b} F\textsuperscript{#} G / A B\textsuperscript{b} C\textsuperscript{#} D). They are the combinations of the last four notes from a G minor harmonic scale and from a D minor harmonic scale. The scale is first introduced as a minor element of the piece, but it becomes important in the last movement.

In the first movement, the scale appears as transitional material in most cases. After it first occurs in the very beginning part of the piece, in measure 15 (see Example 1). It is transposed in measures 41 and 82: the scale begins with F-sharp. F\textsuperscript{#}-G-B\textsuperscript{b}-B-C\textsuperscript{#}-D-F-F\textsuperscript{#} (B\textsuperscript{b} is enharmonically A\textsuperscript{#}, and F is enharmonically E\textsuperscript{b}). However, measures 125 and 140 show more complex uses of the scale. In measure 125, the left hand plays a tetrachord from the original scale, D E\textsuperscript{b} F\textsuperscript{#} G, with a modified version, F G\textsuperscript{#} A\textsuperscript{#} B, while the right hand plays simultaneously the complete synthetic scale (Example 40).
Example 40 measure 125 from the first movement

In measure 140, both hands play only one tetrachord instead of an entire scale, and the tetrachord in the right hand. A G♯ F E. is transposed a major second higher and reversed in order, while the left hand plays the original tetrachord. A B♭ C♯ D (Example 41).

Example 41 measure 140 from the first movement

In the last movement, this scale becomes ostinato material in the left hand of the development section in measures 134-165 (see Example 4). By the long and constantly repeated up-and-down scale passages, a D tonal center is achieved. It anticipates the very end of the piece, the conclusion of the D-centered Theme A in measure 166.

In summary, Cooper incorporates numerous tonal harmonic references in Sinfonia through the implications of tonal centers, harmonic progression, the use of a triad-based sonority and a synthetic scale. Triad-based sonorities chiefly originate from both Theme
A and B. These tonal harmonic references link tradition and modernism, providing more appeal to the typical listener who may be more accustomed to the familiar tonal music.
IV. Rhythm and Meter

In Sinfonia, two aspects of rhythm strike listeners even at the first hearing. One is a reversed dotted rhythm which appears throughout the entire work as a unifying motive. While this rhythmic motive is a traditional aspect, the other aspect of rhythm is more contemporary: rhythmic flexibility through diverse rhythmic formations.

The reversed dotted rhythm occurs in all three movements of Sinfonia. This particular motive is favored by Cooper and was employed in many other compositions including the Piano Sonata (1961) and the Organ Concerto (1982). Cooper himself described this rhythmic figure of reversed dotting as "Lombardian snap." Lombard rhythm designates a reversed dotting in which the short note of the dotted figure comes on the downbeat. The following is a typical use of the Lombard rhythm (see Example 42).

Example 42  a reversed dotting

\[ \cdot \cdot \]

The main themes of Sinfonia, Theme A and B, are highly contrasted: however, they are strongly connected by this brief rhythm. As shown in Example 1, the beginning portion of Theme A, in measure 1 of the first movement, employs this rhythm between the note E and C. The entire statement of Theme A in measures 1-5 also contains this rhythm by playing a pedal tone in the left hand a thirty-second note or a sixteenth-note.

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1 C.C. Naylor, "The Organ Concerto of Paul Cooper: An Analysis" (MM thesis. Rice University, 1987), 4.
behind the note of the theme in the right hand. **Theme B** is a more obvious example of the Lombard rhythm. It consists of a succession of eight reversed dotted rhythm motives.

In general, the appearance of this motive throughout the piece enhances the sense of continuity between movements. In addition, it helps more easily to relate rather remote transformations to the original theme. For example, it is difficult to decipher the origin of the theme in measures 62-71 in the second movement. However, the reversed dotted rhythm brings in an immediate association between this theme and the beginning portion of **Theme A** (see Example 10).

As discussed in the first chapter, the transformation of **Theme B**, in measures 1-20 of the second movement, is difficult to recognize. Once again, the motive of reversed dotting helps to identify its thematic origin. In this section, the reversed dotted rhythm is not written. However, it is heard when the left and right hands play simultaneously, but in rather different ways – when the left hand plays chords much louder and shorter, the right hand plays much softer and longer. When the two hands are put together, it creates the effect of reversed dotting: the chord in the left hand is heard first (short), and the chord in the right hand is heard immediately following the chord in the left hand (long).

In addition, Cooper utilizes the reversed dotted rhythm as a way of increasing rhythmic thrust and excitement. For example, in **Theme A** in measure 51-55 in the first movement, reversed dotting occurs more consistently in the rhythm between the right and left hand, making it more animated than measures 1-5. Also, in the development section of the first movement in measures 103-120, the consecutive use of this rhythm builds up more tension and excitement. Likewise, in measures 15-18 of the *moto perpetuo*, this rhythm, created by accented notes, adds rhythmic force.
Aside from a unifying rhythmic motive, the use of diverse rhythmic formations is characteristic in *Sinfonia*. First, the conventional metric implication, in which bar lines come between beat patterns and before the metric accents, is strictly applied in some places. However, often the shifting meter creates a constantly changing pulse. Each bar line is given by its need to define a metric unit and stress pattern. For example, the meter is changing in almost every measure in measures 1-20 of the second movement. The meter changes as follows: $\frac{3}{8}$ (measures 1-4), $\frac{2}{8}$ (5-6), $\frac{3}{8}$ (7), $\frac{2}{8}$ (8), $\frac{3}{8}$ (9), $\frac{4}{8}$ (10), $\frac{2}{8}$ (11), $\frac{3}{8}$ (12), $\frac{1}{8}$ (13), $\frac{3}{8}$ (14-15), $\frac{2}{8}$ (16), $\frac{3}{8}$ (17), $\frac{2}{8}$ (18), and $\frac{3}{8}$ (19-20).

The use of an asymmetric meter further enhances the complex pulse of the music. In measure 27 of the second movement, a $\frac{5}{16}$ meter, which consists of a quarter note and a sixteenth note suggesting a 4-1 division, breaks the regularity of the two former measures in $\frac{2}{8}$ meter, which consists of the four sixteenth notes. The unexpectedly added sixteenth note increases the dramatic effect of the following sudden "*subito forte*" section (see Example 43).

**Example 43** measures 25-27 from the second movement

![Example 43](image)

In addition, the rhythm itself in *Sinfonia* often has some irregularity within the strict metric sense. In many of the accompaniment parts, rhythmic figures of a regular division and an irregular division are freely mixed. In measures 27-36 of the first
movement, the basic rhythm of sixteenth-note-triplet is combined with a four thirty-second note group.

Second, even though meter and bar lines are presented, the music works against the given meter and bar line in many places of Sinfonia. In these cases, meter and bar lines are employed only for notational convenience. The stress pattern of the music is constantly shifting, and it is indicated by the grouping of notes, the use of accented or sustained notes, and irregular phrases.

Cooper breaks the metric sense by grouping notes by the use of a beam or tie over a bar line. For instance, in Theme A in measures 1-4 of the first movement, the given meter is 4/8. However, the theme implies 4/8 meter only from the second beat in measure 2, when a quarter note appears immediately followed by two two-eighth-note groups (see Example 1). It is as if a bar line is given right before the second beat of measure 2, creating a downbeat feeling. The transformed Theme A, in measures 22-27 of the second movement, is also a clear example that shows the different stress pattern from the given 3/8 meter by the use of a beam over the bar lines.

The unpredictable pattern of accents and sustained notes also breaks the metric sense of a given meter, even within a consistent regular pulse. For example, the accents on the fractions of the beat interrupt the expected regularity of constant beats in the moto perpetuo in measure 15-18 of the third movement. In measures 25-30, the notes on the fractions of beats are evenly sustained as well as accented.

The asymmetrical phrase lengths also distort the metric sense even within a continuous, steady pulse. In measures 102-112, the phrase lengths of the left hand part are determined by the changes of the four-note motive, which occur without any
consideration of meter and bar line. However, these have a particular system: they become shorter each time. The first phrase has nine repetitions of the four-note motive, then the second phrase has eight repetitions of the four-note motive, and so on. Thus, the four-note motive is repeated only twice in the last phrase in measure 112. The proceeding measures 113-124 use the same pitches as measures 102-112 by enharmonic notation but do not follow the system of successive shortening.

In this section, irregular phrase lengths and constantly changing rhythmic pattern in the right hand part in measures 103-124 add a greater complexity. There are three phrases of Theme A in different lengths and transpositions: the first phrase beginning in B-flat lasts seven measures, the second phrase in G-sharp lasts three measures, and the last phrase in C-sharp lasts twelve measures. All three phrases present Theme A as the departure but soon are transformed. The phrases begin on the constantly varying fraction of a beat and unfold without any apparent pattern (see Example 44).
Example 44 measures 102-112 from the first movement

Measures 134-165 of the third movement also contain exceptional complexity by asymmetric phrases. First, the up and down pattern of a scale in the left hand does not correspond with the expected placement of a beat. The turns of scale happen on unpredictable fractions of beats. In measures 161-165, accents are even added at unexpected places. Moreover, scales are not always consecutive but they are often interrupted by a fragment of scale as in the last beat of measure 161. Throughout this section, the phrases of the right hand are also moving freely between three broken chords of A-G\(^\flat\)-E, G-F\(^\natural\)-D, and D-C\(^\natural\)-A (see Example 45).
Example 45  measures 161-165 from the third movement

Third, the meter is implied but not notated by time signature. In the third movement, the 4/8 meter is not specified but the music is organized to reflect 4/8 meter. The *moto perpetuo* (measures 1–111) is constructed by sixteen thirty-second notes per measure, implying 4/8 meter except for the transitions. The second part of the movement also reflects 4/8 meter, the time signature of the first movement, since it is a return of the first movement.

Finally, there are places that are completely free from conventional metric sense. For example, in measures 62-71, the middle section of the second movement, the music does not have a time signature or any implied metric sense. This is very much like an improvisation. Moreover, the new notations add an extremely flexible sense to the rhythm. For example, a rhythmic notation that indicates a change of rhythmic speed is employed: the *crescendo*-shaped rhythm indicates increasing speed of the rhythm, and
the *decrecendo*-shaped rhythm indicates decreasing speed of the rhythm. Both rhythmic indications also imply *crescendo* and *decrecendo* of dynamic (see Example 46).

**Example 46**  measures 23-24 in third movement

The rhythmic indication as in measure 125 of the first movement (see Example 40) instructs the passage to be played as fast as possible. In the *Tranquillo* section in the first movement, the similar rhythmic notation indicates a fast, trill-like rhythmic figure within the duration of rhythm. In measure 140 of the first movement, both of these two new notations are combined (see Example 41). Furthermore, the composer requests different speeds for the right and left hand by inscribing “not together.”

The various rhythmic formations discussed above enhance the great intensity of the structural design of *Sinfonia*. For example, in the development sections in both the first and third movements, the metric sense which fights against the music by asymmetric phrase lengths, constantly changing rhythmic patterns, and unpredictable accents, all create a great sense of momentum. In the second movement, the rhythmic formation becomes gradually freer from the metric sense in the course of the ternary structure. **A-B-A’**. The A section has frequently shifting meters, but in a highly strict metric sense. Then the first section (**b1** in inner ternary structure **b1-b2-b1’**) of the B section combines the strict metric implication and the liberated metric implication by the use of a beam or tie.
Finally, the middle section (b2) is completely free from the conventional metric sense as shown above.

In summary, Cooper’s rhythm is again a mixture of old and new. Cooper has created a unifying motive that generates an overall coherency while promoting rhythmic thrust and excitement as well. Cooper also uses diverse rhythmic formations and textures, developing a whole panorama of rhythmic changes. A great deal of rhythmic thinking is reflected in the structural design of the piece.
V. Pianistic Writing

Sinfonia is an extremely virtuosic and grand-scale work, which has probable models from the Romantic, and early twentieth century piano works. However, as Cooper used these models, he developed a highly personal, unique and vivid work. Most of all, there is no question that he intended orchestral sound in Sinfonia.

A number of excerpts in Sinfonia show the probable models of Cooper’s piano writing. First, we can find a resemblance with the piano writing of Brahms. His two piano sonatas, No. 2 in F-sharp minor and No. 3 in F minor, begin with an impressive chordal passage encompassing a wide range (see Example 47) as in the beginning of Sinfonia. In addition, there are more similar features: Three staff lines are used for certain passages. The density of texture suggests the orchestral treatment of piano. Their rhythmic complexity is also a prominent feature. The second sonata even has an emphasis on cyclic form.

Example 47 measures 1-4 from the first movement of Brahms Sonata No. 3.

Op. 5 in F minor

On the other hand, the beginning of the moto perpetuo section in the last movement illustrates a resemblance to the last movement of Sonata No. 2 in B-flat minor.
Op.35 by Frédéric Chopin. Both are more like a wave of motion than a statement of every note. The perpetual rhythm, low register, soft dynamic, and the use of pedal in both pieces make the individual notes indistinguishable, and rather create a gesture and mood (see Example 48).

Example 48 measures 1-3 from the Finale of Chopin Sonata No. 2 Op. 35

We can also find a comparable multi-layered texture in Debussy’s piano works. The four-staff writing and the parallel chords in measures 57-61 of the second movement are very similar to many passages in Debussy’s pieces, even though Debussy employs three-staff more frequently. The arabesque beginning of Debussy’s Prelude No. 5 from Book I. Ce qu’a vu le vent d’Ouest is particularly similar to the passages of the moto perpetuo with some accented notes (see Example 49)
Example 49 measures 1-4 in the Prelude No. 5 from Book I by Debussy

In this prelude, there are a few more examples that show the resemblance to the passages in Sinfonia. Measures 5-6 are similar to the descending transition passages in the moto perpetuo section (see Example 50).

Example 50 measures 5-6 in the Prelude No. 5 from Book I by Debussy
In addition, Debussy’s tremolo accompaniment in the low register in measures 7-10 can be associated with the tremolo or trill accompaniment in the first movement of Cooper’s *Sinfonia*, or its return in the third movement (see Example 51, compared to Example 2)

**Example 51** measures 7-14 in the *Prelude No. 5* from Book I by Debussy

As shown in above examples, Cooper adopted both German Romantic tradition and French Impressionism. Particularly, he amplified the orchestral texture of the piano from these models and developed his own intense, passionate, and subjective, yet impressionistic drama.

The immediate use of a wide range of register creates orchestral texture in *Sinfonia*. Even a single melodic passage covers a wide range of register by the use of an octave transposition. For example, **Theme A** in the very beginning utilizes over four octaves (from C to f⁴*)⁷ of register by putting the adjacent notes in different registers:

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⁷ see Appendix for an octave identification.
the beginning three notes C⁴-D⁴-E are placed as c⁴-d⁴-e⁴. Most of the transitions in the first and the third movement also make use of a wide range of register within short duration. For example, in measure 125 of the first movement, the ascending passage moves from D⁴ to d⁴ covering six octaves (see Example 40).

The multi-layered texture in the distinctive registers is another element that creates an orchestral effect. The juxtaposition of the different materials within the wide range of register implies orchestration in a symphony. For example, measures 93-100 of the first movement in the four-staff notation not only expand the register but also make a contrast in timbre. The layers are characterized in different ways. The big, and sustained sound of the fragments of **Theme A** in the lower register evoke brass instruments, while the fast-moving embellishment-like figures in the higher register imply strings or high-register wind instruments. A similar texture in measures 134-165 in the last movement shows even broader expansion, although it uses two staves. Sometimes, the layering occurs only by the use of dynamic. The examples include the accents, or the insertion of **Theme B** in the *moto perpetuo*.

The layered texture also intensifies the music. For example, in measures 84-91 in the second movement, the material that was played simultaneously before in measures 28-30 is now presented consecutively in four-staff score covering a wide span of register. It dramatizes the section a great deal.

There are more specific examples of effects that evoke orchestral sonority. For example, the series of chords with different attacks at the beginning of the second movement create a string pizzicato effect. The short chord sounds are like an actual pizzicato note, then the long chord sound is like the resonance. The accelerated and
decelerated tremolos, such as in measures 23-24 in the third movement, produce a string
tremolo effect. The very wide leaps to the high notes in the top voice of measures 54-56
in the third movement imitate wind instruments (see Example 9). In addition, the
repeated six notes of the left and right hands in the low register in measure 140 of the first
movement produce a percussion instrument effect.

The orchestral effects in *Sinfonia* generate various technical difficulties for a
pianist. Since the wide range of register is consistently utilized, a pianist often has to
move quickly between the opposite extremes of the piano. Many octave passages with
wide leaps are also challenging. The widespread chords are problematic, particularly for a
small-handed pianist. The ninth interval appears very often and it even includes a triad
between the ninth, as shown in measures 85-89 in the second movement (see Example
14). Especially with a loud dynamic indication, it becomes extremely difficult to play. In
measures 34-38 of the second movement, even the minor tenth chords with an included
major third occur in parallel motion. The deliberate use of pedal is also important,
especially for the sections in layered texture. For the sustained low register, the *sostenuto*
pedal can be used, or the damper pedal can be used, if the sound in each register is well
balanced.

The most challenging virtuoso writing of *Sinfonia* is found in the third movement.
First, the continuous thirty-second notes that are unpredictably divided between two
hands demand extraordinary dexterity and coordination. The constantly varying accent
and sustained note patterns make the perpetual rhythm even more difficult to control.
Then, toward the end, measures 134-165 of the second movement, the developmental
section, is extremely challenging. It demands endurance for the right hand, since the same figure is repeated constantly for 32 measures in a very uncomfortable high-register position. Here, keeping the thumb light is technically essential. The four against five cross-rhythm passages are extremely complex due to the unapparent pattern of the scale in the left hand as well as the unpredictable pattern of right hand chord changes.

In summary, Sinfonia is a truly rewarding piece for a pianist. It makes use of the piano in exceptionally grand scale. The diverse colors and virtuoso writing make Sinfonia a remarkably effective work in the pianist's concert repertoire. In addition, references by the composer to works written in the nineteenth and the early twentieth century such as piano pieces by Brahms. Chopin and Debussy. make Sinfonia more accessible.
Conclusion

Paul Cooper's largest piano work, Sinfonia, is a masterwork that deserves its rightful place in the great canon of piano literature. Sinfonia exemplifies the composer's brilliance in integrating classical values with a contemporary language. Cooper may not be an innovator, but he is nevertheless a remarkably successful assimilator. Indeed, in Sinfonia, he successfully uses traditional tools at the service of modern musical language. His highly personal and unique way of blending them always enhances the intensity and drama of his music.

The result of such a hybrid is a powerful concert piece that satisfies both the audience and the performer alike. The audience finds the traditional elements of the piece accessible and communicative, while the modern aspects of the piece still challenge them. The performers appreciate the virtuoso piano writing that maximizes the piano's capability in terms of dynamic, textural range, and orchestral possibility. Meanwhile, the coherency and compositional economy achieved by the composer through the atonal framework, the tight structural design, and motivic unity create abundant richness which rewards repeated listening.

Sinfonia will soon receive the recognition it deserves as a milestone that convincingly connects music of the past and the future.
Bibliography

Bennett, Elizabeth A. "The Six String Quartets of Paul Cooper: an Analysis and Interview with the composer." MM. diss., Rice University, 1979.


Score


Sound Recording


Cooper, Paul. Sinfonia. John Hendrickson. CRI Compact Disc CD776CRI.
Appendix A

An octave identification follows this chart:

\[ C' - B' \quad C - B \quad c - b \quad c' - b' \quad c'' - b'' \quad c''' \]
Appendix B – Program for world premiere concert of Sinfonia

JOHN PERRY, piano

A concert celebrating
Steinway & Sons'
Landmark 500,000th Piano

Wednesday, October 4, 1989
8:00 p.m.
Gus S. Wortham Theater Center
Lillie and Roy Cullen Theater

RICE UNIVERSITY
the
Shepherd
School
of Music
PROGRAM

Sonata in C Minor, K. 457
  Molto allegro
  Adagio
  Allegro assai


Sinfonia for solo piano * (World Premiere)
  Tempestoso
  Mesto
  Volando

Frédéric Chopin
(1810-1849)

Paul Cooper
(b. 1926)

INTERMISSION

Sonatine
  Modéré
  Mouvement de Menuet
  Animé

Maurice Ravel
(1875-1937)

Romanze in F* Major, Op. 28 No. 2

Sonata No. 32 in C Minor, Op. 111
  Maestoso - Allegro con brio ed appassionato
  Arietta - Adagio molto semplice e cantabile

Robert Schumann
(1810-1856)

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770-1827)

* Commissioned by John Perry
  in celebration of the 500,000th Steinway piano.

In consideration of the performing artist and members of the audience, those who must leave before the end of the performance are asked to do so during intermission. The taking of photographs and the use of recording equipment are prohibited.
PROGRAM NOTE

Sinfonia for solo piano .......... Paul Cooper

In mid-February, John Perry approached me with the idea of commissioning a work in celebration of Steinway's 500,000th piano. Immediately, I posed two questions: how long a composition was desired, and what was the proposed premiere date. I flinched slightly when John Perry asked for a 21-minute work, and more than flinched when informed that the first performance would be in mid-October at the latest.

Clearly, to compose a large-scale work for solo piano in less than four months was both a stimulating and an intimidating assignment. Equally clear was the fact that it needed to be a work that extensively explored the ranges, dynamics, and coloristic possibilities of the keyboard as well as providing for markedly contrasting tempos.

I discarded the options of character pieces, the five-part arch form, and through-composed variations in favor of the classical three-movement fast-slow-fast structure. Similarly, I rejected several working titles to finally choose that of Sinfonia, which seemed to me to embrace the totality of the work with its sharp contrasts of tempi, moods, and emotions. The work might be compared to a three-act drama with a few principal characters whose identities gradually unfold, entwine with each other, and together explore the aspects of sorrow and joy, of anger and love.

-- Note by Paul Cooper

BIOGRAPHIES

JOHN PERRY, distinguished artist and teacher, was educated at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York. Recipient of a Fulbright Scholarship, he continued studies in Europe with Władysław Kedra, Polish concert artist and professor at the Akademie für Musik in Vienna, and Carlo Zecchi, renowned conductor and pianist at Santa Cecilia Academy of Music in Rome.

In addition to appearances with major symphony orchestras, John Perry is also a respected chamber musician. He has performed with violinist Ray Still, violinist Steve Staryk, bassoonist Milan Turkovic, cellist Paul Olefsky, and tenor Seth McCoy.

John Perry is the winner of numerous awards including Special Honors
at the Marguerite Long International Piano Competition in Bolzano, Italy, and the Viotti International Piano Competition in Vercelli, Italy. His repertoire is broad, and while he is well known for interpretation of Beethoven and Mozart, his performances of the Romantic concerti have been highly praised. He has successfully introduced several important new works to the piano literature.

As a teacher, he enjoys an enviable reputation and is in constant demand at universities and conservatories throughout the U.S. His students have won prizes in the Queen Elizabeth, Van Cliburn, Naumburg, and Rubinstein Competitions. In fact, during recent Cliburn and Naumburg Competitions, more of the candidates were former students of John Perry than of any other teacher in the world.

Currently on the faculty of The Shepherd School of Music and the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, John Perry is a frequent guest artist at many of the prestigious music festivals including Aspen, Austin Music Festival, the Gina Bachauer International Festival, and Sarasota, to name a few. His recordings are available on the Telefunken, Musical Heritage Society, and Vox labels.

PAUL COOPER made his professional debut as a composer as a result of a commission from the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra in 1958, and since that time has built an impressive reputation as a composer, author, critic, and teacher. He has received virtually every award and honor offered in the United States: a Fulbright Fellowship to Paris, two Guggenheim Fellowships to London, and awards or grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, Ford, Rockefeller, Rockefeller, and the National Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, as well as yearly awards from ASCAP since 1966.

Educated at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, and at the Conservatoire National and the Sorbonne in Paris, his illustrious teachers included Ingolf Dahl, Ernest Kanzig, Roger Sessions, Halsey Stevens, and the famed Nadia Boulanger.

The music of Paul Cooper includes six symphonies (the fifth commissioned by the Houston Symphony), four large oratorios, six concertos for various instruments, and a large variety of chamber and vocal music. He is recorded on the CRI, Crystal, and Lyric labels.

Paul Cooper is presently Lynette S. Autrey Professor of Music and Composer-in-Residence at The Shepherd School of Music.
STEINWAY & SONS’
LANDMARK 500,000th PIANO

Steinway & Sons’ 500,000th piano is attracting great attention as it is displayed in major musical centers throughout the world. Only three occasions have warranted the crafting of a landmark instrument during the company’s 136-year history. In 1903, having built 100,000 pianos, the Steinway family created their first commemorative piano. It was presented to the American people and installed in the White House during the Theodore Roosevelt administration. Thirty-five years later, Steinway & Sons created its second commemorative instrument having produced 300,000 pianos. This piano was also presented to the American people and installed in the White House during the administration of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. To make room for the new Steinway, the first commemorative Steinway was transferred to the permanent collection of the Smithsonian Institution where it still resides. Both instruments have subsequently been declared National Artifacts by the Smithsonian Institution.

The 500,000th Steinway contains the same design and construction features found in regular production Steinway concert grands. Its dramatic looking case was designed by the noted American furniture designer, Wendell Castle. Crafted out of rare East Indian ebony and dyed Swiss pear, and trimmed with Bubinga wood and Gaboon ebony, it is adorned with the hand-etched signatures of over 800 living Steinway artists, including John Perry’s. The instrument has the distinction of being the most valuable piano ever made. It is provided for this evening’s concert by Forshey Piano Company, Houston’s exclusive Steinway dealer.