

*Symphony No. 1* by Richard Wilson

Mozart composed his first symphony by the age of ten; Mendelssohn, by eleven; Saint-Saëns, by fifteen. Spending the year 1983-84 in London away from teaching responsibilities, I had ample opportunity to reflect upon these depressing statistics. I would walk along the Thames, or Regent's Canal and I would think, is it too late? Shall I jump? Then the radiant example of Zoltan Kodaly came to mind: he completed his first and only symphony at age seventy-nine. That's more like it! I set to work.

My Symphony No. 1 exhibits four movements. But it differs in one important respect from the traditional model: its first movement is an introductory, somewhat oblique mood-setting piece--not the assertive center of gravity that one might expect. The second movement is in tone and design a scherzo. The third, an expressive slow movement, features a choir of trombones playing in their upper register. The finale, motoric and directional, provides some further suggestions of the scherzando manner.

The subtitles--Preparation, Action, Contemplation, Reaction--are not evidence of a hidden program or story; rather, they are intended to convey a sense of the relative function of the movements within a larger unity.

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