

Sinfonietta op. 7

While the *Sinfonietta* is a youthful work – the composer was just in his early twenties when he penned it – it is already the music of a highly sophisticated creative artist secure in the knowledge that he has found his own individual style. This is music of “super-complex” chromaticism teetering on the edge of tonality – in other words, a tonality stretched almost to the breaking point. The first movement in E minor is in sonata form, but the harmony becomes so chromatic that it is unquestionably difficult for the ear to parse the correlation between the form and structure. This complexity of the harmony notwithstanding, three *sforzando* chords marked by a *ritard* clearly announce the lyrical second subject or subordinate theme in C major. A brief closing theme, assigned to the solo second violin placed over “flowing water” figuration, closes out the exposition. The “flowing water” accompaniment is designed to lead smoothly into the development, which energetically develops motivic elements freely derived from the material of the opening section of the exposition. The second subject in the solo first violin (*scherzando*) then unfolds, again in C major, against *pizzicato* chords in the rest of the ensemble. A strange homophonic chorale briefly interrupts the development’s vigorous contrapuntal argument. References to the opening herald the extended retransition over a tremolo low C pedal. As in the exposition, the cello introduces the main theme in the recapitulation. For the second subject, the tonality changes from E minor to E major, which is confirmed by the coda. The second movement is a ternary ABA’ form in C major heavily inflected with Kletzki’s own idiosyncratic type of “hyperchromaticism.” The A section itself features a sudden diatonic lyrical intrusion that gradually decays back into intense chromaticism. The B section (*poco allegretto*), putatively in A major, features a high violin solo. At the end of this part, the solo violin, in dialogue with solo violas and cellos, hovers in a stratospheric register high above swirling figuration in the rest of the ensemble. The last movement begins with an energetic theme, ostensibly in the home key of E minor, which leads immediately to a *fugato*. A more lyrical subordinate theme (*un poco meno mosso*) in the key of the lowered tonic E flat major leads, unexpectedly, to a “quasi cadenza” for the first violinist (*molto rubato*), which rounds out the exposition. The first part of the development, which is based on new motivic elements freely derived from the initial group of subjects – especially from the *fugato* –, then takes up the subordinate theme beginning in G flat major. Several allusions to the opening gesture prepare the recapitulation, which is initiated in E major (after a general pause) and also brings back the *fugato*. But instead of moving directly to the subordinate theme, material from the development is extensively transformed; only then is there the briefest of references to the second subject. The movement concludes with an exuberant *presto* coda in E major.

~Timothy Jackson