

# Coming to Terms with Persichetti's *Pageant*

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## Introduction, with a Refresher Course in Quartality and Pentatonicism

Vincent Persichetti's third work for wind band, published by Carl Fischer in 1954 as the composer's Opus 59, is a large-scale two-movement essay informed by two radically different compositional strategies and unified by a single germinal motive. The work was written a year before its publication and was premiered on 7 March 1953 with the composer conducting.

To launch an analysis of *Pageant*, it might be wise to begin with a refresher course on how pentatonicism relates to quartality and how those relationships are expressed in set-theoretical terms. This is no place for a dissertation on set theory; my remarks are intended for clarification only and will by no means exhaust the topic.

The work's opening motive, played by solo horn, already suggests a quartal vocabulary: this is easily enough seen by the fact that the three pitch classes used (B $\flat$ , F & C) can be spelled as a stack of perfect fourths. That this motive could easily be transposed to the black keys of the piano (e.g. D $\flat$ -A $\flat$ -E $\flat$ ) means that the motive is also based on a subset of the pentatonic scale. And in fact the black keys of the piano – which constitute a pentatonic scale – can be re-spelled as a stack of perfect fourths: B $\flat$ , E $\flat$ , A $\flat$ , D $\flat$ , G $\flat$  (the order of flat signs in key signatures). The close relationship, then, between quartality and pentatonicism is surely obvious.

The intervallic structure of the pentatonic scale – which, as we have just seen, is also a quartal collection – may in set-theoretical terms be spelled from G $\flat$  as (02479) or, if one starts on D $\flat$ , (02579). (You will find only the first of these listed in a comprehensive set-theory catalog, as it is in “best normal order” – i.e. with the smallest intervals clustered toward the beginning of the list; nevertheless, it is useful to list both spellings for reasons that should become clear shortly.)

These two spellings of the pentatonic scale exhaust the possibilities so far as easy identification of subsets is concerned. We can thus see that the three-note sets (024) and (025) are both pentatonic – i.e. quartal – sets but (036) is not. And as we look carefully at Persichetti's *Pageant* and discover how often we encounter sets (025) and (027), the usefulness of the foregoing refresher course will become readily apparent.

## Movement I: An Essay in Modal Counterpoint

Once the solo horn has set forth the germinal motive B $\flat$ -F-C<sup>1</sup> (027), Persichetti is positioned to give us a slow-paced essay in such counterpoint as might have been written during the sixteenth century: this is very archaic-sounding music (note: the hornist's last note must be held *into* the clarinet entrance, as written). Although the horn solo suggests B $\flat$  as tonic (and until confronted with evidence to the contrary, one assumes the *major* mode), the three-part counterpoint that follows confirms that supposition only loosely. It would, in fact, be more accurate to say that we have a contrapuntal section based on either B $\flat$  Ionian or G Aeolian: both interpretations are equally supportable. The phrase structure is just as much in doubt as the tonic: I am most inclined to hear measure three as an extended upbeat to measure 4, where the structural downbeat lies; at the end of the day, however, I really can't be sure. The counterpoint is managed so as to set forth a

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<sup>1</sup> In this article, all pitch references are to *sounding* pitch unless expressly noted otherwise.

great line of parallel thirds in the “secondary” voices (in a sense this is an enriched two-voice counterpoint) and a composite rhythm of ceaseless quarter notes.

Whatever the phrase structure, the 1st clarinet line in these eight measures is ingenious. The opening motive (027) in measure 3 is immediately sequenced at a higher pitch level and in rhythmic augmentation, but intervallically compressed (025) in measures 4 f.<sup>2</sup> Two quarter-note passing tones in measure 5 set up a complete sounding of the F-pentatonic collection (02479) in measures 6–8, with a sequence in turn of that material, rhythmically *diminished*, down to C (mm. 8–9). This last sequence is so cleverly and beautifully elided that any attempt at parsing is out of the question.

With the arrival of E $\flat$ s in measure 8, we move into somewhat brighter modal territory: either B $\flat$  Lydian is in view, or G Dorian, or perhaps something else (this stretch of music seems to have as much a transitional quality as a cadential one). The consequent phrase that is set up thereby, much more fully orchestrated than the first and marked *calore* in high contrast to the clarinets’ *semplice*, moves into even more distant modal territory, albeit still in three parts (or two, with the lower voice richly presented in parallel thirds as before). There is a formal similarity to the first phrase: measure 11 can be read as an upbeat, with the structural downbeat at 12. In this case, the three melodic notes G–A $\flat$ –F, in the same rhythm as the 1st clarinet’s F–B $\flat$ –G in measures 4 f., must represent a further intervallic diminution of the opening motive, now (013), clearly non-quartal but with the original motivic contour preserved. As the first phrase’s modal content turned progressively brighter, this answering (or extending) phrase moves into progressively darker territory, with the restoration of E $\flat$ s at the midpoint of measure 12, A $\flat$  first appearing a beat later, then D $\flat$  surfacing a little over a measure after that. Measure 13 begins with a particularly beautiful suspension, tied E $\flat$  against an F “foil.” All of this prepares a cadence on a C minor chord at measure 18, which supports a lovely melodic bridge, only three beats long, to this opening movement’s alternative idea (perhaps we should call it “B,” or maybe “the Chorale”).

Before leaving the opening section – we may now call it “A” in retrospect – it seems advisable to notice a couple of fine points. In the clarinets’ phrase, the three voices are easily enough distinguished; in the more fully-orchestrated consequent phrase from measure 11 – where the pitch-class collection becomes increasingly enriched – that’s not so easy to do. Let us number the voices, then, starting with Voice 1 – a continuation of the 1st clarinet’s line from before. It begins with a half note on D and is found in two octaves in flutes, oboes, E $\flat$  clarinet, 1st alto saxophone and 1st cornet (this must be played on a cornet not a trumpet!). Voices 2 and 3 are the voices in parallel thirds, as before. Voice 2 takes up where the 2nd clarinet left off, on A, and is found in a single octave in alto clarinet, 1st bassoon, 2nd alto saxophone and 1st & 3rd horns. Its companion voice begins where the 3rd clarinets left off, on F, and is also found in a single octave in bass clarinet, 2nd bassoon, tenor saxophone and 2nd & 4th horns. A little reflection on the way the pairings are managed will lead to the conclusion that Persichetti had a very fine ear for timbre and balance and wrote accordingly. Despite the great chains of parallel thirds, the voice leading in this “A” idea is managed in such a way that the *coup de grace* of parallel fifths occurs only once: into the cadence at measure 18. Parallel fifths, rare in this opening movement, will be a prominent feature of Movement II, in which the most radical contrasts possible will be exploited.

A word now about performance: Persichetti’s use of Italian terms of expression is rich, evocative and *exact* (how remarkable that he eschewed the usual Italian tempo indications, however). In the clarinets’ portion of the “A” section, it is clear to me that the *crescendo* nuances in no respect trump his *semplice* marking, which applies to the entire phrase. This must mean, then, that

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<sup>2</sup> By “measures 4 f.” I mean “measure 4 plus one measure following.” Later we will encounter “178 ff.” which denotes “measure 178 plus additional measures.” Within parentheses, “measure” will be abbreviated “m.” while “measures” will appear as “mm.”

the hairpin nuances given in the consequent phrase must be played very differently, occurring as they do in a *calore* context. The director should not allow his players to ignore these markings and their implications.

The beautiful little melodic bridge in measure 18 leads directly to the 1st trombone melody that begins in 19, harmonized in chords all belonging to E $\flat$  major – a “corrective” to the C minor cadence that set it up. This chorale tune’s head motive is readily enough identified as a variant of the opening horn solo: if it’s not perfectly obvious here, compare the top voice from measure 23, or most especially that from measure 39. What we have in these three identified instances is a case of “contour preservation” – a feature of much twentieth-century music where the musical argument is carried by something other than the strong tonal undercurrent that drove music of the preceding era.

The chorale is presented and harmonized in four parts, with a half cadence in measure 22 and a continuation in what sounds more like C minor (a modal version, to be sure). In fact, modal counterpoint is still the order of the day: the “intervening” chords that move the music from the tonic chord in measure 19 to the dominant in 22 do not constitute the strong fifths-related progression that we would expect to find in Tchaikovsky, say. All of the parts are marked in such a way as to suggest that this music must be absolutely *continuous* to the conclusion of its phrase in measure 27 (again, on a half cadence, if E $\flat$  has been accepted as the new “tonic” – a supposition that is only loosely supported). One of the most remarkable things about this “B” section is that despite the four-part harmony, not so much as a single seventh chord is anywhere to be found.

Although the “B” section is only nine measures long, it bears a structural similarity to “A” by being constructed *periodically* – that is, in antecedent and consequent phrases, with the consequent phrase being more richly orchestrated. So one may, from measure 23, identify the four voices in the consequent phrase as follows:

Voice 1: oboes, 1st clarinet, 1st alto saxophone

Voice 2: alto clarinet, 2nd alto saxophone

Voice 3: 1st bassoon, tenor saxophone

Voice 4: bass clarinet, 2nd bassoon, baritone saxophone, euphonium

Two “stray” instruments (2nd & 3rd clarinets) amplify the primary voices in selective alternation. All of these voices are sounded in a single octave.

The entire “B” section is to be played *dolce* – again, the increased dynamic and the hairpin nuances in no way overrule this fundamental consideration.

A three-note upsweep in a single octave, marked *espressivo*, leads directly onto a modified return of the “A” section’s three-part counterpoint, with many of its features preserved from earlier. This is only a partial presentation, with its *espressivo* quality quickly yielding to sadness (*doloroso*) and its pitch range greatly extended by the addition of the piccolo, even as its length is reduced by almost two-thirds. By measure 29, the A $\flat$ s that served the preceding section are dropped and we are once again in B $\flat$  Ionian/G Aeolian territory. Assuming G Aeolian to be the predominant “tonic” (the case can be made), we are set up for a truly beautiful modal shift to G major for a second statement of “B” beginning at measure 35.

Almost everything I said earlier about the first presentation of “B” applies here as well. The orchestration is particularly gorgeous, and the more brightly-hued trumpets finally get to add their sound to a chorale that already glows.

At the point where they enter, however, we find other instruments (1st cornet, 1st trombone) restoring the B $\flat$ s of G Aeolian: the purpose of this is to return us – via a *plunging* and very carefully-regulated *diminuendo* from *mf* to *pp* (don’t let any of the players guess at this) – to a full statement of “A,” much as from measure 3.

The antecedent phrase of this second full statement (mm. 43 ff.) is identical to its initial presentation with two exceptions: the first measure's material – which I earlier identified as a probable structural upbeat – is pitched off F major not G minor (this means that the “melody” is compressed to resemble the opening notes of “B”), and a curious countermelody, marked *sereno*, is offered by the flutes. This time, as the three-voice counterpoint turns “brighter” with the addition of E $\natural$ s (from measure 48), the brightness is further heightened by the obligato flutes' B $\sharp$  in measure 49 – in other words, a “white-key diatonic collection” has been achieved for the first time in this material.

Some new things begin to happen in the consequent phrase, which begins at 51. The B $\flat$ s are restored; not only in the polyphonic lines themselves (m. 52, beat 2), but in a curious substratum in bass voices – a feature that brings to mind the vacillation between B $\flat$  Ionian and G Aeolian identified earlier. The beautiful suspension first heard in measure 13 is even more prominent here (m. 53) on account of a more obvious instrumental placement, and the “key” is generally brighter than in 11–19. The cadence at measure 58 is richer than before: most of the instruments end in A minor, but a couple of bass voices have headed for a low D at the same time; this is the first instance of a harmonic feature that will inform large stretches of the movement that follows. There are two ways of understanding this feature, and perhaps both are true. On the one hand, we have an instance of bitonality, with D and A both expressed as chord roots. On the other, we also have an incomplete ninth chord on D, and ninth chords will be a prominent feature of Movement II. I have more sympathy with the first interpretation, for the simple reason that in measure 18, a cadence on C minor set up the first appearance of “B” in E $\flat$  major. By analogy, a cadence here on A minor sets up the final appearance of “B” in C major, and the momentary D in the bass voices is therefore a foretaste of what's to come rather than a definitive cadential tonic pitch.

From the melodic link into “B” (m. 58), now played by the 1st cornet (not a trumpet!), we have a new marking, *cantando*. (The melodic link is intensified noticeably by the entrance of bass voices on a B $\flat$ –F empty fifth against the prevailing A minor triad, resulting in surprisingly dissonant set 01378. In a sense, this empty fifth *completes* a triad implied by the bass-voice D noted above. The foreshadowing of the second movement's bitonality is thus made more complete by this beautiful harmonic enhancement.) The *cantando* marking applies to the entire chorale, beautifully set for cornets and trombones, later augmented by trumpets and horns and handed over to a very full woodwind chorus reinforced by euphoniums and solo tuba. It is when these latter instruments take up the project, *forte*, at the upbeat to measure 63, that the head motive of the chorale is finally identical intervallically with the horn's opening solo (027). This time around, “B” is allowed even less closure than on previous appearances and the continuing project is handed over to saxophones and horns who, midway through measure 66, inaugurate the closing passage which also serves as a bridge to Movement II. As if in summary, the solo horn is once again allowed to play his opening motive and the clarinets finish the passage in three-part counterpoint as from measure 3, with a Mixolydian inflection just before the cadence. The final chord is that of B $\flat$  major, skewing the modal argument in favor of a B $\flat$  tonic for the entire movement.

Before moving on to what the composer referred to as a “parade” section, I'd like to offer two final observations on the 72 measures we've just examined. First, even though I've repeatedly referred to this as a “movement,” in some ways it does behave like a slow introduction in a symphonic first-movement context. The listener may be reminded of such monumental slow introductions as those for Beethoven's Seventh Symphony, Schubert's Great C-Major Symphony, Tchaikovsky's Second and Fifth, the introduction to Brahms's First, and so forth. Certainly there are structural similarities with all of these examples, and they cannot be lightly dismissed. The differences, however, are worth noticing as well. In the examples I just cited, each of those slow introductions (about as long as Persichetti's first 72 measures) sets up a gigantic sonata-form fast movement whose length far outstrips that of the introduction. In the Persichetti composition this is

not the case: the two sections are of roughly equal length, and the entire composition – assuming one observes the composer’s metronome markings (and one *does!*) is only about seven and a half minutes long (not six and a half, as suggested by an editorial note in the score). Furthermore, this first section ends on a chord that has, all along, been a leading candidate for “tonic.” In each of the other cases cited, the final chord of the introduction is the dominant, setting up the first theme of the movement proper in the tonic key. The fact that Persichetti has so far brought his music “full circle” to closure on tonic suggests that he intended it to be heard as independent – at least to some degree.

Second, I have so far said nothing about the percussion. Persichetti uses a limited *batterie* throughout this work, with timpani notably absent. During the opening movement, only two of the instruments are used, and for the most subtle of reinforcements. The bass drum, played (I presume) with timpani mallets, provides a barely audible “presence” to the “B” section in measures 22 and 25, then again a slightly elaborated one in 38–40. The tenor drum’s contribution begins as reinforcement for the consequent phrase of the second full statement of “A” (mm. 51–58); what it – with assistance from the bass drum – is “reinforcing” is actually that strange bass-voice substratum noted above. Their final contribution, in which the two instruments enjoy a degree of independence from each other, is during the final appearance of “B” (62–66). This is all very subtle writing, and requires the keenest musical sensibilities from the two players who will manage these instruments. The drums must not call attention to themselves: their job is to enhance the color of a slowly-moving, archaic-sounding essay in modal counterpoint.

## **Movement II: A Celebration of Bitonality**

The opening sonority in Movement II suggests that we’ve “fast-forwarded” several hundred years, abandoning the modal counterpoint of the sixteenth century in favor of the neoclassical tonal language of the twentieth. (It is also apparent from the first four measures of this movement that the percussion instruments will play a very different role here from the one they played in Movement I.) For reasons that will become clear not many paragraphs hence, I divide this movement into four large sections. I will justify this division later.

### **1. “Exposition” (mm. 73–121)**

The initial sonority alluded to above includes both a continuation of the clarinets’ cadence chord from before – now taken over by the horns – and an “A<sub>b</sub>” foil in the basses (an open fifth A<sub>b</sub>/E<sub>b</sub>). The result must either be heard as an extremely high tertian – an incomplete 13th chord on A<sub>b</sub> – or, what is more probable (and corroborated throughout this movement) – a bitonal sonority including two chords whose roots are a major second apart. In the fourth measure of this section, a flaring *crescendo* spills the pitch material into a G major chord over “C” – a bitonal sonority which (because its roots are a perfect fifth apart, yielding a common tone) actually can be heard as a ninth chord (see earlier).

An analysis of the phrase structure of the opening paragraph (mm. 73–88) yields the conclusion that the first structural downbeat of this movement actually is on the first note of the snare drum solo: the first four measures, in other words, are in no sense introductory. What we have, then, are two eight-measure phrases, each of which exhibits internal periodicity – i.e., the material that begins at measure 77 is actually an answer to the snare drum solo not the inauguration of a theme (note that the snare drum’s *crescendo* must not be started earlier than printed: to do so is to invite the audience to hear it as *introductory*, which it clearly is not). It follows, then, that the material in measures 81–84 stands in relation to that in 85–89 as antecedent to consequent. The happiest corroboration of this interpretation lies in the fact that the two consequent phrases (77–80 and 85–89) are almost identical, while the two antecedent phrases are very different from each other. There’s subtlety here also, however: it must not go unnoticed that the material in 83 f. (part of an

antecedent phrase) is the same as that in 79 f. (part of a consequent phrase). Persichetti has thus “covered his seams” and given persuasive evidence of being an extremely capable artisan with a subtle musical mind.

There’s relatively little to be said about the first four measures of Movement II – let’s look now at the next four (the first “consequent” phrase). The first two measures of the upper woodwinds’ *deciso* melody are purely pentatonic (and thus quartal), their first three notes being a kind of (025) permutation (an inversion, roughly) of the opening horn solo from Movement I. The harmonic underlay in brass instruments other than 1st trumpet takes as its point of departure the “G major over C” that ended the first four measures. We quickly move to a B $\flat$  major chord over an E $\flat$ , a C major chord over an F, an E $\flat$  major chord over an A $\flat$  and an F major chord over a B $\flat$  – all in the space of four fast measures. Each of these, of course, can be read as either a bitonal feature or an incomplete ninth chord, and their quartal relationship to each other will not go unnoticed.

From the inauguration of the second 8-bar phrase (beginning at measure 81), we get complete triads in both layers, as a close look at the trombones and cornets will make clear (the horn interjections amplify first the cornets, then the trombones, then both). That is, in measure 81 we see B $\flat$  major/E $\flat$  major then C major/F major; in 82, E $\flat$  major/A $\flat$  major then F major/B $\flat$  major; and at the beginning of 83, B $\flat$  major/G major. The harmonic material of the first two of those measures can obviously be read as both bitonal and as a series of ninth chords; the last sonority named, however, is just as obviously bitonal and nothing else (that’s the one where the horns have a foot in both worlds – as witness the 1st horn’s written F $\sharp$  against the 4th horn’s F $\sharp$ ). It will be understood that the harmonic content in these measures, engaging as it is, is actually only an enhancement of the snare drum solo: that instrument, as before, presents the four-bar antecedent, in relation to which the material in 85–88 will be heard as “consequent.”

Earlier I indicated that the material in 83 f. is identical with that of 79 f. In fact, that’s only true of the top voice: here, a second voice has been added, moving generally contrary to the upper voice and contributing to the sense of a dominant prolongation in B $\flat$  major. Accordingly, we get a cadence at measure 85 – but it’s more than a garden-variety PAC, for the B $\flat$  that resolves the preceding two measures is overridden by an E $\flat$  in the horns and 3rd cornet (it is they who now present the melody – *marcato* – at a new pitch level) while trombones explore darker harmonies (D $\flat$  then E $\flat$ ). All of the participating brass instruments cadence out onto an F major chord with a conspicuous G added in the horns and 3rd cornet (i.e. an incomplete ninth chord) while woodwinds supply the final two measures, a reinterpretation of measures 83 f. Note that the 2nd alto saxophone is missing a measure’s worth of material here – it should undoubtedly continue in the same manner as the 2nd flute, 2nd oboe, 2nd & 3rd clarinets, alto clarinet and tenor saxophone.

The high incidence of parallel fifths in certain passages (e.g. 81–83, 85–87) will certainly be noted. These result, of course, from moving all of the members of root-position triads in the same direction – a technique often identified as “planing” when it occurs in the compositions of, say, Debussy.

The foregoing is a pretty thorough summary of sixteen measures’ worth of material – a passage that could easily enough constitute a complete statement of a primary theme in a sonata-form composition. It will soon become clear, however, that the rubric of this composition doesn’t much resemble sonata form, a few parallel features notwithstanding. Most notably, the strong tonal argument that is necessary to propel a sonata-form construct to its inevitable conclusion is not present here: Persichetti has different harmonic aims. This work might be said to resemble a cubist painting more than a canvas from the 18th century: background and foreground simply run into each other willy-nilly, and tonal “progress” is hardly to be traced.

The 12-measure passage that begins at measure 89 seems to serve a transitional function, despite the fact that the theme that ended in the previous measure by no means “cadenced.” The phrase structure of this passage is ambiguous: it consists of nothing so straightforward as “three four-bar phrases.” A more likely parsing views the passage as a two-part structure – five measures plus seven measures – with extensions and a brief *stretto* distorting the form. The passage is something of a harmonic hodgepodge as well: we begin with “F major/B $\flat$  major” yielding to “D major/C major” twice (measures 89–92), with an appended bar (93) giving us “A major/D major” before moving on to the second part of the transitional project. Needless to say, a small majority of these sonorities can be read as either bitonal structures or complete ninth chords; “D major/C major,” however, recalls the first sonority of this movement and is clearly bitonal and nothing else.

The first four of these measures set forth an important rhythm, shared in a rapid-fire exchange between trombones and the cornet/trumpet group. We will encounter this in various guises on numerous future occasions. Underlying this antiphonal exchange is a tenor drum line that can only be described as “entertaining.”

The second part of this 12-bar transition, from measure 94, is occupied by very different material. In measure 94 to the downbeat of 95, and again from 96 to the downbeat of 97, we have “F-major stuff” in eighth notes served over a quarter-note foundation of parallel fifths built on E $\flat$  and D $\flat$ . This material is presented in alternation with a unison tune in two octaves, marked *insistendo*, which in its two subphrases exhibits clear periodicity over a very short span of time (the first subphrase ends with an “open cadence” at the downbeat of 96; the second is “closed”). We will see this four-measure phrase in three other places, beginning at measures 178, 240 & 276. In the present instance, it is practically buried in a transitional passage of irregular and extended phraseology; in those other places, however, it will stand in bold relief against its surroundings, clearly intended to be understood as *heraldic*: it ushers in “the next big thing.”

Three additional measures (98–100) complete this “transition” with the brief *stretto* mentioned above. The latter is “touched off” by a simple bitonal figure in cornets and trombones (F major/ E $\flat$  major alternating with G major/F major, m. 98), and consists of a compressed sounding of the germinal motive (now 025) in the euphonium and tuba against a foreshadowing of the “second theme” in trombones. It should not go unnoticed that the 2nd & 3rd trombones, who inaugurate the *stretto* proper, complete their contribution with a retrograde inversion statement of the euphonium/tuba (025) motto, in measure 100 to the downbeat of 101. With the downbeat of measure 101 on pitch classes F, G & C (027), we are set to hear the “second theme.”

It is during this “second theme’s” first presentation that we begin to be disabused of any erroneous expectations of sonata form that we might thus far have entertained. The theme begins (m. 101) in C major, with a C-major subsidiary line in thirds presented by the clarinets and horns (the counterpoint beginning in measure 3 of Movement I is thereby invoked). But the mode begins to shift as it did back in measure 8 – this time towards the Lydian – and the theme itself “breaks out” of its C-major grounding and heads to “D” in 105. This is only the beginning of what will prove to be a lengthy digression away from the neat formal rubrics of a bygone era. In measure 108 (the theme having failed to achieve a satisfactory cadence), parallel triads moving in opposite directions usher in a new *stretto* somewhat like that in measures 99 f., but this time expanded to four measures. This in turn sets up a second statement of this wayward theme, now in odd diatonic parallels and strangely apportioned between families of instruments (mm. 114–21), touching off yet another sounding of the transition material first heard from measure 89 (this time with an instrumental reversal: the upper voices now lead). Familiar material passes in review until an apparently *new* theme is heard beginning at measure 130. A little reflection on its content, though, leads quickly to the recognition that this is once again the transition material in a new guise. There’s more: this *grazioso* transformation of transitional material is played in alternation with what we had hoped would serve as a second theme, now played *cantando*. And so forth.

Clearly we are, formally-speaking, at sea; and any remaining expectations of sonata-form conventions must now be dismissed. Therefore, rather than pursue a fruitless line of investigation, we will retrace some steps and look more closely of material we passed over too quickly. We begin with what we had hoped might turn out to be a proper second theme; in retrospect, we will call it “B” as opposed to the opening material of this fast movement, “A.” The first thing we will want to notice is that Theme B initially exhibits a C-major bias, and is set over C-major material in clarinets and horns. Its “spirited” quality is to be realized in the players’ performance. Its first four notes constitute another instance of set (025) – in other words, it is quartal/pentatonic. That pentatonic flavor remains in force so long as the music stays in C: once it strays to D (beginning at measure 105) a diatonic quality slips in, in the cornet line (m. 107). That diatonic quality has, of course, been present all along in the clarinet/horn “accompaniment” – it’s just that the theme itself was innocent of it until this point. The mixture of modes is worth noticing: in measure 103, the B<sub>♭</sub>s in clarinet and horn parts lend a Mixolydian quality to the music; that quality is overruled in favor of the much brighter Lydian with the F<sub>♯</sub>s in the following measure. One small detail of the piccolo part deserves special mention: where that instrument surges to the highest note in its line (mm. 106 f.), the pitch-class collection D–E–A yields, once again, set (027).

The amazing skein of parallel triads moving in contrary motion, (mm. 108 ff.) deserves a close accounting. The basic plan is a simple one: woodwind triads move upward while trombone triads move downward; the articulations, dynamics and *crescendo* are the same in both groups of instruments. Here is what the procedure yields, starting with the second quarter note’s worth of material in measure 108: G/b–A/A–b/G–C/F–D/e–e/d–F<sub>♯</sub>/C–G/b. The penultimate juxtaposition is the most dissonant one, containing two triads whose roots are a tritone apart; the final collection, then, is exactly the same as the first, except that two octaves have opened up between the two components of that collection in the meantime.

At the point where the horns break out of their accompanying role (the last half-beat of m. 108), they simply join the woodwinds for a moment. They then play an impressive unison statement of the composition’s opening horn motto, accented and in a *crescendo*, compressed to set (025). Against their presentation another *stretto* is sounded similar to the one that occurred at measures 99 f., this time worked out to twice the previous length. It begins in the 1st trumpet with a presentation of (025) and is extended so that, by the downbeat of 114, that instrument has sounded a complete pentatonic collection (02579). The 1st trombone – the second voice in this abbreviated *fugato* – also completes the pentatonic collection on G (the pitch-class collection is the same as the 1st trumpet’s, but the trumpet started from a different position within that collection). The remaining instruments (2nd cornet then 1st cornet paired in parallel tenths with euphonium), having progressively less time to extend their head motive, will of course cover less of whatever project they seem to be embarking on.

Two sonorities in this passage stand out and call for comment: the whole-note chord in measure 113, consisting of pitch-classes D, E, G & A (0257), and the remarkable sonority on the downbeat of 114, which contains all the pitch classes of the D major scale! We here have a notable instance of a purely pentatonic collection resolving – if that’s the word – onto a complete diatonic collection. The common-practice aesthetic – in which musical tensions resolve to consonances – clearly does not apply here.

A second statement of Theme B begins at this point, in “D” as from measure 105 but harmonized in parallel, diatonically-realized quartal stacks, yielding music of quite dissonant quality. The mordents in measures 115, 117 & 119 should be played in such a way as to line up with the snare drum’s rhythmic values in those same places. By “passing off” the melodic material to members of the brass family while retaining their “arrival chords” in measures 117 & 119, the woodwinds contrive to ratchet up the level of dissonance as this theme proceeds, making the



transition that bursts forth at measure 122 practically inevitable. And as it is that transition – and what follows it – that ultimately *forces* us to reconsider our understanding of what the form of this movement may be, it would be a good idea to digress from the present course of the discussion in order to consider exactly that.

I propose that a solution to the formal problem is found both in the composition's title and the program note published in the score. That is to say, this is not an essay of the standard abstract type: it's a *pageant*. My *Webster's* defines *pageant* as, among other things, "a spectacular procession." And the note in the score describes the movement under consideration as a *parade*. I've seen quite a few parades in my lifetime, and have even been involved in some (in the high school marching band, armed with – of all things – a tenor saxophone). They've always struck me as *an art form*, but one that has never been very closely defined (or *refined*). There are too many disparate elements in the garden-variety parade to make "sense" to a formalist: National Guardsmen, Gulf War veterans, Boy Scouts, Shriners driving dangerous little cars while playing Chinese oboes and throwing candy, political candidates, the mayor, the Homecoming Queen and her court, the high school cheerleaders and their beloved football team, horses (and, where undiapered, their steaming, malodorous leavings, to be avoided at all costs by the next band in the lineup), floats, antique cars, and, of course, the marching bands themselves – so spaced, if the Grand Marshall has been prudent, so as not to "compete" with each other within audible range. That, I believe, is something like the effect Persichetti wished to achieve – or at least to evoke – in this movement: *Pageant* is a symphonic poem.

In light of this understanding, I believe the movement under consideration should be taken in four large parts, whose elements relate to one another roughly as those of a street parade relate:

1. A sort of "exposition" of Themes A and B, measures 73–121
2. A large section, partly developmental, focused on "B" and "transition" material, 122–89
3. A second large section that includes a reprise of "B" in its entirety plus a revisiting of much of the material from section 2, 190–243
4. The "final stretch," which includes an interrupted simultaneous statement of Themes A and B in a bitonal relationship plus a brief coda, 244–95

Within these sections lies much material to be examined closely; indeed, I have already so examined the material in part 1, and will therefore resume my analysis at measure 122, where the parade's "second act" may be said to begin.

2. Developmental section 1 (mm. 122–89)

The four measures' worth of material from 122 to 125 are closely parallel to that found in 89–92, minus the quirky piccolo solo, sequenced to a brighter key area, reversed as to its "antiphonal" presentation (the higher voices now lead), and taking an unexpected turn in its last measure. Its sonorities, bar-by-bar, are "C/F" with "G/F" in the second half of the bar, "A/D<sub>b</sub>" yielding to "B<sub>b</sub>/D<sub>b</sub>," a more-or-less literal repeat of 122 in 124, and then, in measure 125, the rich sonority A/B<sub>b</sub> – (014578) – a rather dissonant chord as this composition goes (I have placed in quotation marks those sonorities in which the lower "triad" is missing its third). A consequent phrase, related to measures 94 ff. but without the *insistendo* interjections, completes this 8-bar transition to the apparently new theme beginning at 130.

As I indicated above, this "new" material is in some respects a reworking of the transitional material first heard in measures 89–92. That is certainly not the whole story, however. This permutation is set in three-part counterpoint (recalling earlier uses of the same texture), with all of the voices moving in "first species." The chords that result in measures 130–33 are all functional in B<sub>b</sub> Mixolydian; namely, B<sub>b</sub>, f & g (modal counterpoint accounts for this music's archaic quality).

Most remarkably, those four measures are succeeded by a new casting of Theme B, this time in the kind of “enhanced two-part counterpoint” that informed much of Movement I, and underlain, moreover, by a bass drum roll like those we saw at measure 22 and similar. Like measures 130–33, these four bars are likewise set in a form of B $\flat$  major, but with Lydian inflections in 137. At measure 138 an eight-measure response begins, with the “B” portion this time turning towards brighter tonalities – starting with A major.

A third statement of this material, now harmonized in parallel triads A, G, A & F begins in 146; at measure 148 we are returned to the original pitch level and modal harmonies related to B $\flat$ . The course of the music is the same as previously, until suddenly “broken into” by a *vigoroso* statement of Theme B in E $\flat$ . (Note that the two-bar *crescendo* from *piano* to *fortissimo* is carefully regulated, with new voices entering at 151 at the *mezzo-forte* level.) That vigorous presentation is harmonized just as “vigorously,” with bitonal collections in the cornets, trumpets and horns (F/B $\flat$ , or B $\flat$  major ninth chords). It must not go unnoticed that the material in 152–81 will be brought back in its entirety, structurally unchanged but harmonically and orchestrally enhanced, in 214–43.

At the point where this vigorous presentation of Theme B turns “diatonic” (m. 158) we are launched into rather remote tonal territory: here, the accompanying chords in cornets, trumpets and horns are superimposed triads G/a, or set (01358) – fairly dissonant, as *Pageant* goes. The material in measures 159–61 is, of course, related to transition material we’ve seen earlier; here, however, a familiar motive is little by little emerging from it. The first indication we have of that emergence is in measure 160, where bass instruments play G–B $\flat$ –C (025) and the music proceeds with literal quotations of the opening horn solo in a tight *stretto* with eventual rhythmic augmentation, all gorgeously harmonized (with parallel fifths and ninths prominent).

From the point where the harmony becomes full-fledged (measure 164), we need to notice some chords – among which are high tertians and other bitonal structures. Measure 164 gives us F and C in succession; 165 yields D/G (i.e. G $^9$ ) then A; 166 gives us only E/D; in 167, B/A followed by f $\sharp$ <sup>7</sup>. The four measures 168–71 present, against a memorable tattoo in the snare drum, another collection of very dissonant collections in alternation: G $\sharp$ /F (01478) and D/A $\flat$  plus pitch class B $\flat$  (01247810) (the last two digits will be read as a “ten” not as a “one and a zero”). A general performance rule that predictably yields good results certainly applies here: in such a passage, where one harmony is clearly far more dissonant than the other, stress the more dissonant of the two – in this case, the one on the off-beats.

Measures 172–73 appear to continue the project begun two measures earlier, and measure 174 clearly presents us with a structural downbeat. This also presents us with a phrasing conundrum, for the downbeat at 168 was surely no less structural. How, then, shall we parse these six measures? It seems to me most likely that we have a two-bar phrase elision, with 170–71 both completing one four-measure project begun at 168, and inaugurating another that will conclude at the finish of measure 173. This is another example of Persichetti’s suave “seam-covering,” parallel instances of which can be found at 159–61, 197–201, 209, 221–23, 232–33 and 263–65. It seems possible that this represents more than just good compositional technique: the composer may have had in mind something of the “aesthetic *stretto*” that happens in parades generally, when we’re not quite finished admiring Queen Elberta and her Peachy Court before the next high school band’s sousaphones are thrust upon our attention.

The four measures that begin at 174 give us yet another statement of motivic material harmonized in parallel triads, this time enhanced by a couple of unexpected bonuses: the clarinet material in 174 (a restatement of the piccolo’s material in 106 f.), “led into” by a scale with a Lydian inflection, and a divided cornet figure that both recalls Theme A and finishes with a familiar-sounding example of (025). The chords in these four measures are E $\flat$ , then B $\flat$ , F then C, G, and A:

here we have a bracing instance of progressive “brightening” through the circle of fifths, until we reach that point as far away from the starting line as possible. It so happens that all this contrives to set up a reversed transition, with “b” leading “a” (that is, structurally speaking, 178–81 = 94–97, while 182–85 = 89–92).

We need to look more closely at this reversed transition. The material in 178–81 received some attention above. Here it is presented as horn/euphonium answers to strikingly bitonal material in 178 & 180: B<sub>b</sub>/A<sub>b</sub>, then F/E<sub>b</sub>. In some respects, the following four measures bear a strong resemblance to 122–25, but there are some reversals and tonal re-castings: here, the bitonal structures (one per measure not two as before) are F/B<sub>b</sub>, D/C, F/E<sub>b</sub> and D<sub>b</sub>/G<sub>b</sub>, respectively.

I indicated above that the “b” portion of the transitional material, when found in measures 178 ff., 240 ff. & 276 ff., would be used to inaugurate “the next big thing.” In the instance just now under examination, that inauguration is deceptive, for – structurally-speaking – the strange reappearance in 186–89 of Theme A in “A<sub>b</sub>” over a D<sub>b</sub> major chord is more nearly a “last gasp” than a “new beginning,” the superficial appearance of structural significance notwithstanding. These four measures have always struck me as one of the oddest passages in *Pageant*; perhaps they represent a brief interlude; perhaps instead a kind of “divider.” At any rate, the flaring *crescendo* that underpins the passage’s final measure propels the music, in the most forceful way imaginable, into the second large developmental section.

### 3. Developmental section 2 (mm. 190–243)

To call this a “developmental section” is, however, at least partly misleading, for it begins with music that is more recapitulatory than developmental in tone (this sort of structural incoherence, now noticed several times on several levels, is surely intentional: we are experiencing a *parade* not a dissertation). That is to say, what immediately engages our attention is a full statement of Theme B, harmonically more “settled” than in its initial presentation: what’s begun in C major, remains in C major. This presentation (mm. 190–209) can be mapped onto 102–21 almost exactly. The fact that the present instance is one measure shorter than the earlier is accounted for by the fact that although the closing material in 197 ff. is extended over the previous example (cf. mm. 108 f.), the four-measure *stretto* in 110–13 is missing here. Otherwise, a measure-by-measure comparison is both valid and valuable.

The first part of that comparison supports the claim made above: this time, Theme B, once begun in C major, remains there (and therefore sounds more definitive than earlier). The orchestration is much fuller than before and the presentation is *fortissimo*. This time, the closing material that begins in measure 197 is expanded to four measures as opposed to the original two, yielding the following bitonal collections:

- m. 197: D<sub>b</sub>, e/a, f<sup>#</sup>/G (this last is symmetrical set 013578)
- m. 198: G/F, A/g, B/d, C/C (the second is symmetrical set 023679)
- m. 199: G/F, A/e, G/F
- m. 200: A/e, B/d, C/C

The goal of all this activity is the pair of *sforzando* G<sup>9</sup> chords in measure 201, set up also by a brief but powerful reminiscence of the horn motive that opened Movement I.

Now, without benefit of the *stretto* interlude found earlier in 110–13, we embark upon a second presentation of Theme B as before. This time the trombones offer it in parallel quartal collections (the quarter-note stacks are 025s; the half-note stacks are 027s). These players’ lines are marked *violento* – perhaps of all the wind instruments, trombones are best capable of this effect. The supplemental chords – again with mordents as in 115 ff. – are merely “high quartals.” The quartal/pentatonic quality of this passage is probably the most thoroughgoing in the entire composi-

tion, with at least three pitch classes in a quartal relationship being sounded at all times and moving in inexorable parallels.

A notable phrase elision at measure 209 – at exactly the Golden Section division of Movement II, for whatever that may be worth – inaugurates the most memorable transitional passage in the entire composition, five measures in length. This passage basically consists of a climb-by-degrees – beginning in the euphonium in apparent G major (D–E–F<sup>#</sup>–G), moving through 1st trombone in B<sub>b</sub> (F–G–A–B<sub>b</sub>), horns in G Aeolian (D–E<sub>b</sub>–F–G), and cornets 1 & 2 in B<sub>b</sub> an octave above the earlier trombone line – to a great string of parallel thirds reminiscent of the “enhanced lower voice” first encountered in Movement I as in measure 4. While all this has been going on, the bass line has moved generally downward by steps from C to A<sub>b</sub>, before yielding to a quartal stack in horns and trombones in measure 212. This is a very striking passage – one of the finest, to my ear, in the entire composition.

From the downbeat of measure 214, launched by one of the most dissonant chords in all of *Pageant* – a stack of triads roughly identifiable as B<sub>b</sub>, a, C, e & D, yielding symmetrical set (0123578910) – an almost literal reprise of the material in 152–81 commences. This passage is structurally identical to the former, and the succession of tonal centers is also the same. The orchestration, however, is considerably enhanced (almost always augmented), the implied triads “fleshed out” and the dynamic level raised. Be it noted in passing that the dissonant chord that inaugurates this passage returns in transposition as “hammered” quarter notes in the second halves of measures 221–23. There is also some material missing in this passage, as compared to the previous instance: namely, the high woodwinds’ heraldic line beginning in 166 (cf. 228 f.) and the clarinets’ and cornets’ “bonus” material mentioned before (mm. 173 ff.; cf. 235 ff.). In the interest of having a well-corrected score, the conductor will want to add a half rest to the bass drum part in measure 223, and then notice how that instrument is treated in the three measures that begin at 221.

At measure 240, there begins once again a transitional passage that I have earlier identified as being structurally significant. In its most recent appearance, it was presented by the woodwinds (with trombone assistance) and horns in alternation (mm. 178–81); here, the orchestration is more or less reversed, and serves to usher in the final large section of the second movement.

#### **4. The final stretch (mm. 244–95)**

The concluding section of *Pageant* surely owes something to Paul Hindemith’s *Symphony in B flat*, a composition very much on American composers’ minds around mid-century (the Hindemith work appeared in publication – and in many performances – in 1951). The feature I have in mind is of course the simultaneous reprise of Themes A & B in two different keys (even Hindemith’s B<sub>b</sub>/E<sub>b</sub> relationship is preserved here). This section begins with an eight-measure phrase in which the highest voices of the band present Theme A more or less in B<sub>b</sub> (see below) against the lowest voices’ E<sub>b</sub> presentation of Theme B. This is accompanied by an “oom-pah” exchange in middle voices, whose harmonic content climbs in every succeeding measure, beginning in bar 245 (E<sub>b</sub>–B<sub>b</sub>; F–C; G–C; A<sub>b</sub>–E<sub>b</sub>; B<sub>b</sub>–F; C–G; this last takes us through measure 250). I indicated above that Theme A is presented “more or less” in B<sub>b</sub>. The caveat applies to measures 248–50, where the music appears to head into the Lydian version of D, only to be wrenched back into B<sub>b</sub> at the last moment (m. 251). This measure also contains other surprises: the bass line, which includes music that in all earlier appearances had touched off an extending or transitional passage (e.g. 108, 159, etc.), is now rewritten so as to end – albeit inconclusively – as Theme A did in measure 84 (note that Theme A, conversely, is here tweaked in the opposite way). The two chords in measure 251 – presented twice – are simply very full diatonic collections (the first contains all of the members of the B<sub>b</sub> major scale except G, while the second contains those members plus the

missing G; as in Stravinsky's pandiatonic or "wrong note" style, we often see diatonic neighbors exchanged by pairs of instruments, ratcheting up the sense of directionless dissonance).

Another unexpected four-bar "interlude" begins at 252: perhaps a "street cadence" – a particularly interesting and colorful one – is here invoked (Theme A is certainly present in it). Structurally, this proves to be the opening volley of a considerable stretch of music (mm. 252–79) that serves in its entirety as an interlude (some of it is distinctly parenthetical) within the simultaneous reprise. The most *continuous* portion of that interlude is yet another presentation of Theme B (mm. 256 ff.), this one with almost all of the wind group playing in first species counterpoint, in a presentation that is strikingly pandiatonic (the quartal flavor is now "enriched" to the point of obfuscation). This presentation sports a four-measure extension, begun as a structural elision, at the moment the snare drum re-enters with Theme A played *fortissimo* on the rim (m. 262). The mordents return with the piccolo in the following bar, even to be moved to offbeats in the second of these measures (264), in a "white-key pentatonic" presentation, and a trilled D-major collection in woodwinds over mordent-inflected half notes in cornets, trumpets & horns (same collection) lands squarely on *the* most dissonant chord of the composition, set (01234578910), on the downbeat of 266.

At this point, the case might be made that we have yet another instance of the compound transition first encountered in measures 89–100: both of its primary components are present, and in the right order. Those two components (I have called them "a" and "b") are, however, separated by a musical parenthesis alluded to above. The "a" portion, familiar from earlier presentations, is here presented with the lower voices leading; the general plan involves an alternation of such extremely dissonant structures as the one discussed above, and ninth chords on F and D in successive measures. The parenthesis, six measures in length, begins at 270. It bears an expressive marking not seen since measure 11 in Movement I, and features a succession of flaring *crescendi* demarking triadic sonorities that rise by whole-tone degrees (D<sup>9</sup> in 270 f., E in 272 f., G<sup>b</sup> and A<sup>b</sup> in mm. 274 & 275). These last two measures bear a striking resemblance to measures 238 f., and in fact set up the same material – the "b" portion of the now-resumed transition, with trumpets and cornets leading the charge.

At the big arrival, in measure 280, the project of simultaneous reprise is likewise resumed. The trumpets lead the presentation of Theme A, assisted by the snare drum, with the woodwinds entering *in medias res* after a measure's worth of hesitation. Again, the tonalities are those of B<sup>b</sup> superimposed on E<sup>b</sup>, with the same sort of middle-voice "oom-pah" accompaniment in evidence. This time, Theme A is held to the B<sup>b</sup> collection, and the inconclusive bass-voice Theme B sets up a brief and powerful coda.

Here, we encounter Persichetti's final structural ambiguity. Skipping over, for the moment, measure 288 (which sets up the final bars), it is clear enough that the downbeat of 289 on B<sup>b</sup> major (with pentatonic flavor), grants the kind of closure we associate with perfect authentic cadences. All other things being equal, we would expect this to inaugurate the coda. If that is the way we are to hear it, and if four-measure phrasing is still to be considered normative (as it has been throughout most of this movement), then measure 293 will no doubt be understood as a written-out *fermata* of measure 292, with the final chord (marked *fermata lunga*) furnishing the four-measure consequent: this would not be at all nonsensical. The problem is, all other things are *not* equal, and this reading is gotten only by neglecting measure 288 (as I just intentionally did, for illustrative purposes). But measure 288 is hardly to be ignored, for it happens at a structural juncture that is as important (even *apparently*) as any in the entire composition. In addition to its strong structural placement, every wind part in this measure is marked *rinforzando*, a marking not to be taken lightly; a flaring *crescendo* in the tenor drum and a *fortississimo* diatonic upswing in the piccolo, moreover, provide the finishing touches on an already powerful cadence (that power guaranteed by its doubly-plagal quality – note the D<sup>b</sup>s of bass instruments underpinning the overlying subdominant-flavored

structure). But the first chord of that cadence pattern – that is, the complex sonority of measure 288 – is *itself* made necessary by the inconclusive quality of the bass line in 287, a measure that completes an eight-bar phrase. Structurally, all the evidence points to a fresh *beginning* at measure 288 not a mere (and nonsensical) phrase extension. If that is indeed the case, then we must hear a structural downbeat at 288, and the phrasing of the coda – which will then be understood to begin *here* not at 289 – will be as follows: mm. 288–91, antecedent; mm. 292–95, consequent. If at first this seems counterintuitive, I urge the reader to try hearing it that way several times before dismissing it: it does seem to me that the coda gains a certain “elegance” in this reading, that the standard reading (“standard,” to judge from performances I’ve heard) does not convey.

A word about the final chord: it seems clear to me that this chord, too, constitutes the goal of a perfect authentic cadence (the chord in the previous two measures having been an unambiguous V<sup>6</sup>/B<sub>♭</sub>). This is surely, however, one of the richest PACs I’ve ever encountered! The chord in question is symmetrical set (01235678), and the high B<sub>♭</sub>s in the first two cornet parts probably have more to do with our hearing this as an arrival on some sort of B<sub>♭</sub> chord than any other single factor (note: it must *not* be performed with a cheap *forte-piano-crescendo* effect, as I have often heard: it is a loud chord, getting even louder at the very end). Perhaps Persichetti had in mind, with reference to parades in general and pageantry in particular, a well-known truism concerning works of art: they are never finished, only abandoned.

### **A Synoptic Outline of *Pageant***

The thirteen pages I’ve just filled in order to give a more or less complete account of Persichetti’s *Pageant* may contain too much detail to be useful to a conductor trying to come to terms with the piece. An outline may therefore be in order. I have discussed the virtues of outlining in an earlier article (“Nurturing Your Inner Artist/Conductor”), and offer here a somewhat pared-down example dealing with the present composition.

### **Vincent Persichetti: *Pageant*, Op. 59 (1953) Published 1954 by Carl Fischer, Inc.**

#### **1–72 Movement I, An Essay in Modal Counterpoint**

- 1–3 Germinal motive, quartal (pentatonic) in solo horn, based on B<sub>♭</sub>. Note: the horn C must be held *across* the barline, into the first sound of the clarinets.
- 3–18 “A,” 3-part modal counterpoint (or 2 parts, with lower voice enriched by parallel thirds), loosely periodic.
  - 3–10 Antecedent phrase of “A,” presented by clarinets, *piano semplice*. Generally B<sub>♭</sub> Ionian/G Aeolian (Dorian flavor present from m. 8). Head motive is identical to horn solo, but rhythmically diminished.
  - 11–18 Consequent phrase of “A,” more fully orchestrated. 3-part modal counterpoint continues; modal mixtures now richer. Dynamic level is raised a notch; interpretive marking is *calore*. Last measure features a melodic bridge into “B.”
- 19–27 “B,” or “Chorale.” Roughly, 4 antecedent measures in trombones & basses answered by 5 consequent (but non-conclusive) measures in woodwinds and euphonium with subtle bass drum enhancements. The tonal center is E<sub>♭</sub>, the counterpoint is still modal but now first-species, and the section ends on the dominant. *A dolce* treatment is called for, in *mezzo forte*.
- 28–34 Partial statement of “A” (approximately its second half) inaugurated by lower reeds and trombones but soon taken over by higher woodwinds, *doloroso*. The music turns towards G as tonic.

- 35–42 Second statement of “B” now in G major, turning to G Aeolian in its second phrase (earlier observations still apply). The orchestration is generally brighter, to complement the brighter key. The *diminuendo* that begins on the last beat of 41 must *plunge* from *mf* to *pp*, very carefully paced in all sounding voices.
- 43–58 Second full statement of “A,” begun almost identically to the first, but with a flute obligato countermelody marked *sereno*. This passage is structurally identical to 3–18, but its consequent phrase (from 51) is set at a brighter pitch level and yields a brighter outcome. The percussion enhancements are augmented, reinforcing a strange B $\flat$ –G bass substratum.
- 59–66 Third statement of “B,” now in C major (earlier observations still apply). The orchestration is more like that of the first statement than that of the second. The ending is even less conclusive than before; in fact, it cannot be definitively fixed at measure 66.
- 66–72 Concluding statement of Movement I, with the third Chorale statement trailing off into references to “A” and a restatement of the opening horn motto. The final sounds are those of the clarinets’ three-part modal counterpoint, and the final chord is tonic.

### **73–295 Movement II, A Street Parade**

#### 73–121 First large section, “Exposition”

- 73–88 Theme A, in “B $\flat$ ,” not so much a double period as periodic on two levels.
- 73–80 First half of Theme A, with a 4-bar antecedent played by the snare drum over a bitonal structure and a 4-bar mostly pentatonic consequent in high woodwinds,
- 81–88 Second half of Theme A, same structure. Here the 4-bar antecedent is enhanced by an assortment of brass instruments answered by woodwinds; the consequent, set in darker tonalities, follows the same structure.
- 89–100 Transition, in two parts.
- 89–93 5-measure “a” section, setting up an important rhythm.
- 94–100 7-measure “b” section, consisting of an internally periodic *insistendo* figure and an extension recalling the opening horn solo.
- 101–21 Theme B, in two statements with interposed “parenthesis.”
- 101–09 First statement of “B,” beginning in C and moving to D. The theme is eight measures long (4 + 4), but a phrase elision at 108 sets up a 2-bar extension, resulting in an “extra” measure.
- 110–13 An interposed “parenthesis” consisting of a *stretto* on Theme B’s head motive.
- 114–21 Second statement of “B” including parallel quartals, mounting dissonance and mordents.

#### 122–89 Second large section, “First Developmental Section”

- 122–29 Transition, four bars of “a,” above, followed by four measures of material related to that in 94 ff.
- 130–51 An apparently new theme, based on Transition “a” (three-part 1st-species counterpoint) plus separated phrases of Theme B, also treated in three voices reminiscent of Movement I.
- 130–37 First compound phrase in B $\flat$ /g.
- 138–45 Second compound phrase; music turns toward brighter harmonic regions.
- 146–51 Third compound phrase; music begins in a brighter region, returns to B $\flat$ /g, is then “broken off.”
- 152–89 Further development, beginning with a fresh statement of Theme B and ending with an allusion to Theme A
- 152–59 Theme B in a *vigoroso* treatment based in E $\flat$  “accompanied” by B $\flat$ <sup>9</sup> chords. There is a phrase elision at 159.
- 159–83 Development of transitional material from earlier, in three parts.

- 159–67 Transition material gradually yields to a richly-harmonized “celebration” of the solo horn’s germinal motive.
- 168–77 An “emphatic” section of music with a *piano subito* echo again gives way to more development of the germinal motive.
- 178–85 The entire transition appears, but in reversed order.
- 184–89 An unexpected and almost gratuitous reappearance in A<sub>1</sub> (over D<sub>1</sub>) of the consequent phrase of Theme A prepares the next large section.
- 190–243 Third large section, “Second Developmental Section”
- 190–209 Two statements of Theme B, structurally similar to 101–21.
- 190–201 First statement, begun in C and kept there. The diverging triads that begin at 197 are here extended, with an additional reference to the germinal motive and two *sforzando* G<sup>9</sup> chords.
- 202–09 Second statement of Theme B, a quartal presentation, *violento*, with mordents. There is a phrase elision at 209.
- 209–13 A new transition, the most engaging of the entire composition. It begins at the Golden Section division of the movement.
- 214–43 A complete reprise of the developmental section 152–81, with harmonic and orchestrational enhancements as noted in the prose account above. This leaves the “b” portion of the transition unencumbered, so that it can announce the final section.
- 244–95 Fourth large section, “The Final Stretch”
- 244–51 A simultaneous reprise of Themes A & B in B<sub>1</sub> & E<sub>1</sub> respectively, against a steadily rising “oom-pah” accompaniment in middle voices.
- 252–79 A lengthy and multifaceted digression.
- 252–55 A percussion “break,” perhaps evoking a street cadence.
- 256–65 A thoroughly quartal presentation of Theme B, deteriorating into a dissonant, pounding section with mordents over the snare drum’s Theme A, played on the rim (262 ff.)
- 266–79 The final appearance of the transition, its two parts interrupted by a *calore* parenthesis (270–75)
- 280–87 The simultaneous reprise of Themes A & B is resumed, as before.
- 288–95 An 8-bar coda with a very rich final chord.

### **In Praise of *Pageant***

Vincent Persichetti was neither the best composer for wind band who ever lived, nor the worst. If his music never attained the vast sweep and Olympian contrapuntal heights of Hindemith’s *Symphony in B flat* or the sheer imaginative virtuosity of Percy Aldridge Grainger’s best wind works, neither did it ever stoop to the banalities of Claude T. Smith or worse. His *oeuvre* and his reputation lie somewhere in between.

From a formalist perspective (which is unquestionably the perspective I am best able to offer), *Pageant* is an uneven composition. Its first section, identified above as “Movement I,” is quite good: the counterpoint is of uniformly high quality, the paragraphs balance nicely with each other within the enhancing global context that they mutually create, and the tonal trajectory is convincing and satisfying. The entire movement seems to follow naturally from the opening horn motto, and the bringing back of that motto in the same instrument in measure 69 is a deft and ingratiating compositional touch. From that same perspective, Movement II is a bewildering hodgepodge that resists accurate accounting and theoretical justification. But as I have indicated above, a formalist critique is probably not the proper critique to apply to this music, as – to judge from its title and the note published in the score – its aim is descriptive (or at least *representational*) not logical. If this last is correct – and I hope I am not overstating the composer’s case – I am



probably not the best person to comment on this music, for I generally loathe parades and most of what they stand for, and am therefore incapable of judging their “quality.”

Having fully disclosed, here is a brief accounting of what I consider to be *Pageant*'s best features – those features that, in my view, ought to guarantee the work a permanent place in the repertoire of the wind band:

- ***Stylistic purity*** Once having struck his pose, Persichetti maintains it to the end. This applies to the two movements individually as well as to the composition as a whole. From the very beginning, the first movement's collection is quartal/pentatonic, the counterpoint is modal, the lines are highly chiseled and for the most part conjunct; throughout the entire movement, these descriptors continue to apply, without the tiniest momentary lapse. There are no cheap tricks here: no rhythmic “stumbles,” no syncopation, no harmonic “purple patches,” no saccharine melodies: only pure diatonic, modal counterpoint, presented consistently as either three-part (or two, with a parallel-thirds-enhanced lower voice) or four-part (first species, or “chorale-style”) for its two contrasting skeins of material. This kind of artistic parsimony is much to be admired. The second movement begins with the starkest contrasts the composer could write while still honoring certain compositional ideals that would find “universal application” through both movements; those contrasting features (e.g. bitonality) are also held tenaciously to the end, and again, there are no cheap tricks.
- ***Structural sophistication*** This consideration generally applies more to Movement I – with its melodic and formal elisions so skillfully managed that the music often eludes parsing – than to Movement II (certain elegant touches, however, noted – as, for example, the best transitional passage of all occurring at exactly the Golden Section division of the movement).
- ***Motivic integration*** The opening horn solo, in both its actual interval content and its melodic contour, supplies a great deal of the material in the composition that follows. And it is an arguably beautiful motive, for all its “coolness” and “aloofness.”
- ***Cyclicity*** The momentary returns of Movement I material in Movement II lend a satisfying sense of cohesiveness and integrity to the whole. Instances include the *stretti* built on the solo horn's germinal motive (mm. 161 ff., 223 ff. & 236 ff.) and some small but notable stretches of counterpoint that could almost have been “lifted” from the earlier movement (mm. 150 f. furnish one brief example).
- ***Orchestration*** Persichetti's fine ear for the timbral qualities of the wind band's instrumental families has yielded a composition whose constantly-shifting colors engage the listener from beginning to end without fail. And again, the composer never resorts to cheap effects: the writing for the various wind groups and for the *batterie* that supports them (this last used in the most sparing and engaging way) is always honest and forthright.

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