

HOLST'S FIRST SUITE IN E^b FOR MILITARY BAND:
AN ANALYSIS

by 500

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A MASTER'S REPORT

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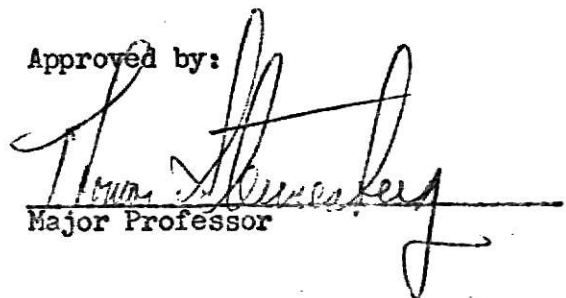
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INTRODUCTION

The First Suite in E^b for Military Band, Opus 28a, written in 1909, was the first composition that Holst created for the band.¹ Gustav Holst had begun his teaching career in 1903, and, through his music composed for his amateur students, he had learned to keep the music simple and economical in form and content. The military band might have contained instrumentalists more capable than his students had been, but the music still had to be simple and scored for the average player. Further, Holst's experience playing the trombone in a student band and in an opera company had taught him combinations of instrumental color he could not have learned from the memorization of Berlioz's book on orchestration. And the First Suite in E^b is written with the assurance of the bandsman who through personal experience knows how a band must sound and the kind of music other players will enjoy hearing and performing.

The Suite is a part of the standard repertoire of the Wind Ensemble, and although it does not represent the finest of Holst's compositions, the analysis which follows reveals some of the strengths and weaknesses of the composer, some of the problems a composer experiences, and the way Holst mastered these problems.

¹ Imogen Holst, Gustav Holst. (London, 1938), p. 172.

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of this report is to make a formal analysis of the complete Suite by marking the phrases, noting the harmonic changes, marking the cadences, and tracing the original first phrase of the bass ostinato in the three movements of the Suite. The first movement will be studied as a unit for musical form, harmony, and rhythm, and the second and third movements will be related to the Chaconne.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The term, theme, is used to refer to a melody which, by its design, becomes a basic factor in the composition. It is marked by prominence of position, or by special developmental treatment or use. As a formal unit of analysis, the theme is complete within itself.

The term, ostinato, is used to refer to a clearly defined melodic phrase which is repeated persistently. The ostinato is distinguished from such other devices of repetition as imitation and sequence, by the fact that it is repeated in the same voice and at the same pitch. The terms, theme and ostinato, can be interchanged in the study of the first movement of the suite.

In the rhythmic analysis of the Chaconne a chart was compiled which reduced all the parts of the eight-measure bass ostinato statement to the total rhythmic line. The cumulative rhythm is the sum total of the individual rhythms. An example of the cumulative rhythm yielded by two eighth notes and a triplet executed simultaneously would

give (♩♩♩) as a cumulative rhythm pattern. The rhythmic motives used in sequence in the Chaconne are good examples of cumulative rhythm.

The term, Chaconne, refers to a form of music which uses continuous variations in moderately slow triple meter. Generally the Chaconne exhibits a harmonic rhythm changing with the measure.

APPROACH IN THIS ANALYSIS

Imogen Holst wrote The Music of Gustav Holst, a book about her father's compositions, in 1948-50. At this time little of Holst's music was known to the public with the exception of his compositions, The Planets, and the St. Paul's Suite.² Since 1962 there has been a rebirth of interest in the music of Gustav Holst, but because her book is the only chronological study of Holst's music, it has been used as the primary source for research.

The analysis of this Suite was done in this order: Each movement of the Suite was analyzed for the musical form, harmonic changes, or polyphonic techniques used to develop the harmony, and rhythmic development. As the First Suite in E^b was an experiment in form, each movement being founded upon the first phrase of the bass ostinato in the Chaconne,³ this phrase was traced through the complete Suite and the second and third movements were related to the Chaconne. Next, a rhythmic analysis for the Chaconne was made, and the development and

² Imogen Holst, The Music of Gustav Holst. (London, 1951), p. xi.

³ Holst, The Music of Gustav Holst. p. 34.

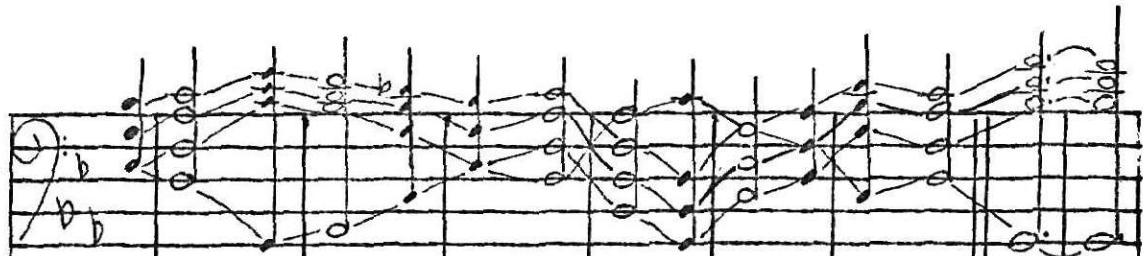
relationships existing in the rhythm of the three movements were shown. The charts used in this analysis were made to better understand the techniques that developed within the composition. It is suggested that a complete score be used when reading this analysis.

Historically, the upper voice accompaniment to the bass theme is polyphonic, and through the use of rhythmic motives, a sequentially increasing developmental accompaniment occurs. The Chaconne employs a progressive dynamic development which achieves the necessary contrast for the two climaxes. The use of melodic and rhythmic motives in support of the bass theme, the use of extensions occurring to lengthen the dominant (N), and the tonic pedal point (P) are traditional.⁴

In order to best trace the form of the Chaconne, Chart I has been compiled. At the top of the chart the original bass ostinato (1a), the imitation of the ostinato a third higher (1b), the ostinato a fifth higher (1c), and the inversion of the ostinato (1d) are shown. The different statements of the theme are lettered alphabetically so that the melody can be more easily traced. The Chaconne begins with the theme appearing alone. The next five statements (B, C, D, E, F) end with the half cadence on the dominant, with the imperfect authentic cadence ending the (G) statement. The (H) statement uses a half cadence again, and the only perfect authentic cadence ends the (I) statement. The (J) statement uses the exact inversion (1d) of the original ostinato ending with the half cadence in c minor, and the (K) statement uses the inversion of the ostinato again with the cadence being on the dominant

⁴ This form, as used by Gustav Holst in the Chaconne, is described in The Larger Forms of Musical Composition by Percy Goetschius as the ideal form of the Passacaglia (p. 39). On page 40, however, this book states that the artistic or idealized Chaconne often resembles the modern passacaglia and has been confounded with, or regarded as identical and interchangeable with the passacaglia. Holst undoubtedly considered the terms chaconne and passacaglia as interchangeable, and, with the exception of using both the major and the minor mode, has followed the historical outline of the passacaglia for his first movement chaconne.

CHART I



lc																
lb																
la																
ld																
A	The original statement of the bass ostinato															
B	E ^b	f ₉	c	B ^b	g	c ₅	f ₉	B ₇	g	c ₇	d ₇	g	f ₇	B ^b	Half	
C	c ₇	F	a ^o	B ^b	g	E ₉	F ₇	E ^b	g ₇	c ₇	B ^b	g ₇	F ₇	B ^b	Half	
D	E ₇	F	a ^o	B ^b	g ₇	c	F ₇	B ^b	g	c	D	g	F ₉	B ^b	Half	
E	E ^b	f	c	B ^b	g	E ^b	F ₇	B ^b	g	c	d ₇ ^o	g	f ₉ ^o	B ^b	Half	
F	E ^b	B ^b	A ^b	B ^b	g	c	F ₇	B ^b	g	c	B ^b	E ^b	F ₇	B ^b	Half	
G	E ^b	f	f	g	E ^b	A ^b	f	g	g	A ^b	g ₇	E ^b	B ^b	E ^b	IAC	
H	E ^b	f	c	B ^b	E ^b	c	f	B ₇	g	c	B ^b	E ^b	f	B ^b	Half	
I	E ^b	f	d ₇ ^o	c	B ^b	g	c ₇	F ₇	B ₇ ^b	e ^o	A ^b	d ^o	g ₇	f	B ^b E ^b PAC	
J	E ^b	f	G ₇	c	c	c	d ^o	f	B ₉ ^b	d ^o	c ₇	d ^o	A ₇ ^b	d ^o	G ₇ Half c minor	
K	c	g	g	f	c	f	d ^o	f	c	c	f	f	c	B ^b	E ^b cA ^b cE ^b IAC	
L	c	A ^b	A ^b	f	g	g	g	A ^b	f	g	g	A ^b	f	g	f ₉ ^o	d ₇ ^o Half
M	E ^b	f	B ₉ ^b	g ₇	E ^b	c	f	B ^b	B ₇	g	c	B ^b	c	d ^o	B ^b	B ^b Half
N	E ^b	B ₇ ^b	A ^b	g	B ^b	g	E ^b	B ₇ ^b	B ^b	E ^b	A ^b	B ^b	E ^b	B ₇ ^b	B ^b Half (1 ext.)	
O	E ^b	f	c	B ^b	E ^b	E ^b B ^b	a ^o	B ^b	g	c	d ^o	g	f	B ^b	Half	
P	B ^b	A ^b	A ₇ ^b	D ^b	D ^b	E ^b	c	f	d ^o	E ^b	A ^b	A ^b	E ^b	d ^o E ^b	IAC (2 ext.)	

in the key of E^b . In the next development in the musical form, the original ostinato is imitated a third higher (1b) through the next two statements (L, M), and the addition of the dominant pedal tone is simultaneously sounded to further establish the tonic-dominant relationship which exists in this movement. The use of the one-measure extension to the (N) statement prolongs the dominant pedal tone. The original bass ostinato (1a) is restated next, ending with the half cadence, and the first movement ends with the final statement (P) of the ostinato at the interval of the fifth higher. In both of the last two statements, the pedal tone of the tonic underlies the tonality of E^b . The two-measure extension of the (P) statement prolongs the pedal point of E^b and makes a short cadential reiteration of the triple meter. Since Holst followed the accepted traditional outline in his musical form, the harmonic and polyphonic analysis can be done with the continued use of Chart I.

Holst's chords are the result of his use of the polyphonic, melodic, and rhythmic motives developed in support of the bass ostinato. The chords shown measure by measure through the sixteen repetitions evolve mostly from the original ostinato and its forms shown in examples (1a, 1b, 1c, 1d). The chords show traditional use and their movement develops the strong dominant-tonic relationship which is one of the characteristics of the harmony in the Baroque period. The key centers of A^b and c minor are developed, but only for brief periods. Holst strengthens the dominating tonality of E^b in the following ways.

The E^b tonality is emphasized by the use of the twelve half cadences at the end of the (B, C, D, E, F, H, L, M, N, O) statements, by the use of the three imperfect authentic cadences (G, K, P), and

by the one perfect authentic cadence at the end of the (I) theme. Another technique of prolonging the dominant and the tonic pedal tone sections within the first movement strengthens this tonality. Only once does the music cadence in some other tonality than E^b, and the half cadence in the closely related key of c minor (J) is used. The Harvard Dictionary of Music states that it was in the Baroque period that the tonic and the dominant became the principal chords of harmony.⁵ Holst utilized the suite and the Baroque forms within the suite, and he developed the harmony of the same era. This use does not completely hide his own romanticism, and the analysis reveals a large number of seventh and ninth chords. Imogen Holst gives a possible answer to the question of why he used these chords so frequently when she says: "Holst dreamed, ate, drank Wagner, and Wagner's music was continually with him, swirling around in his brain."⁶

The frequent use of seventh and ninth chords, and sometimes the eleventh or thirteenth extension of the chord, is the Romantic weakness that continued to harass Holst most of his life.⁷ In the study of the chords in support of the second statement (B) bass theme, ten of the possible fourteen chords used are either sevenths, ninths, or chords which have an embellishing four-three or two-one suspension. By choosing the chaconne form with its recurrent melody, Holst forced himself to control the harmonic development within the tonality.

⁵ Willi Apel, Harvard Dictionary of Music. (Cambridge, Mass.,

⁶ Holst, The Music of Gustav Holst. p. 5.

⁷ Holst, The Music of Gustav Holst. p. 8.

Through the study of the harmony used in the Chaconne and through the use of Chart I, the relationship existing between the harmony and the rhythm can be easily shown. As Holst developed the upper voices through the use of polyphonic motives that are supported by a planned rhythmic motive, the developing rhythm can be shown by the individual motives and cadential patterns as shown in Chart II.

The development of the rhythm occurs through gradually increasing the cumulative rhythm in the first six statements (A, B, C, D, E, F) of the bass ostinato. Holst begins with the half note-quarter iambic rhythmic statement of the (A) theme, uses three quarter notes to the measure in the (B) statement, adds an additional note impulse in the eighth notes in the (C) statement, uses sixteenth notes in the (D) statement, maintains a short rhythmic plateau in the (E) statement, and then climaxes rhythmically with his seventy-two note impulses to the eight-measure bass theme in the (F) statement of the bass ostinato. He then uses a diminishing number of rhythmic pulsations in the (G, H, I, J, K, L, M, N, O, P) statements so that the final (P) statement is the return to his beginning iambic meter.

This Holst technique of rhythmic contrast illustrates his use of dynamic contrast also. He demonstrates the technique of using the ebb and flow of dynamic intensities so that the climaxes in the composition are more effective. The first climax in the (F) statement of the theme is made more effective by the slow increases in the dynamic level (Chart III) through the first five reiterations. Starting with the dynamic level of piano, and increasing to the fortissimo level in support of the rhythmical peak, Holst builds the first climax with tension in both the rhythm and dynamics. Then, by dropping the dynamic level

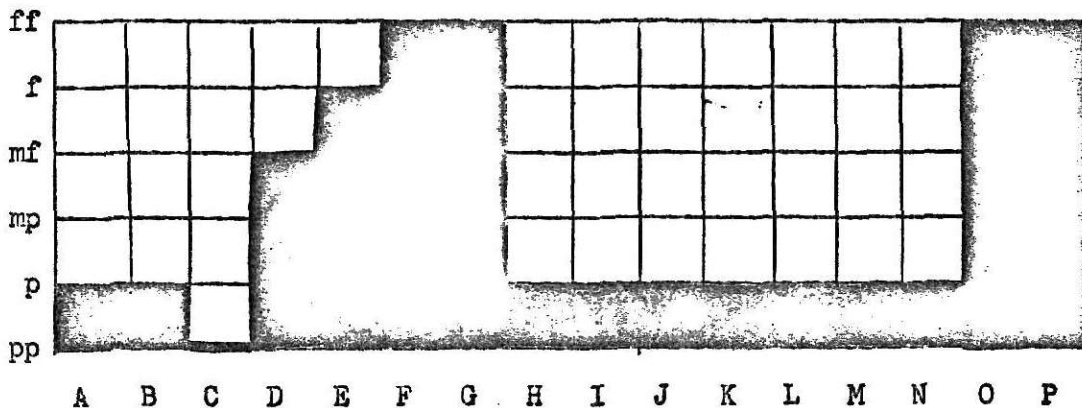
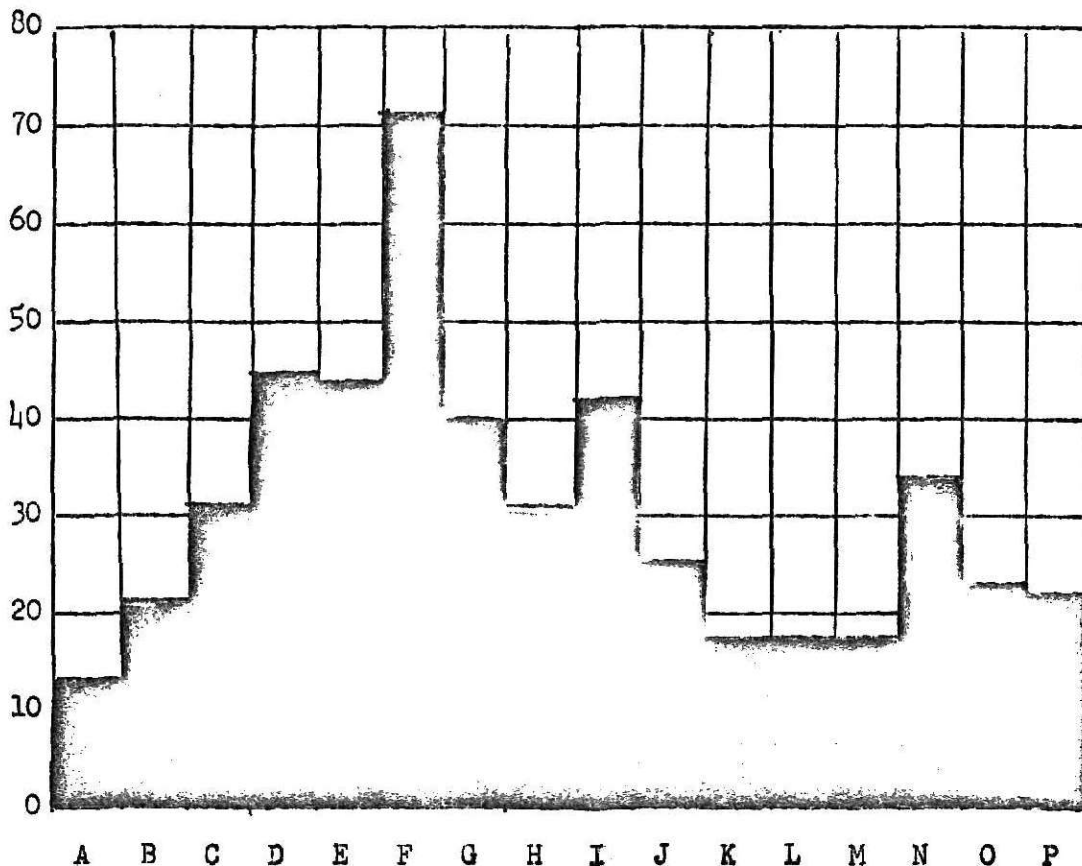
CHART II

RHYTHMIC MOTIVES OF THE CHACONNE

Total Impulses								Cadence
14	A							
22	B							
32	C							
46	D							
45	E							
72	F							
40	G							
32	H							
43	I							
26	J							
18	K							
18	L							
18	M							
35	N							
24	O							
23	P							 Trock Lamb

CHART III

COMPARISON OF RHYTHMIC IMPULSES AND DYNAMIC LEVEL



to piano through the (H, I, J, K, L) statements, he establishes a pianissimo from which to crescendo into the stark, basic iambic rhythm of the bass ostinato. The second climax is achieved by the reemphasis of the bass ostinato on a constantly increasing dynamic scale. This accomplishes a two-fold scheme--the domination of the bass theme played at the fortissimo level, and secondly, the contrast necessary for the middle movement of the suite.

The melodic motives that Holst used in the development of the accompaniment for the statements of the bass melody are shown in Chart IV. The motives are easily seen in the actual score, but because he sometimes uses two or more motives to one statement of his themes, the chart simplifies the tracing of these motives. The statements are lettered alphabetically in the chart, and the motives are shown corresponding to the alphabetically listed bass ostinato.

Holst once stated that "he liked everything to grow out of the original inspiration."⁸ In the Chaconne the bass ostinato furnishes him with the beginning inspiration, and he builds and develops the complete Chaconne from this theme. It is part of his genius that he chose the Chaconne as the variation form for his first movement.

The first movement could be summarized as follows: (1) Holst followed the traditional form of the Chaconne (passacaglia). (2) The bass ostinato is the thematic basis for the complete movement from which the harmony develops. (3) Holst's use of melodic and rhythmic motives to develop the movement is traditional to the form. (4) Holst limits his own Romantic compositional techniques to the strict musical form of the Chaconne.

⁸ Holst, The Music of Gustav Holst. p. 116.

CHART IV

MELODIC MOTIVES OF THE CHACONNE

A Bass ostinato

B B¹

C C¹ C²

D D¹ E

F G H

I J K

L M N

O P

INTERMEZZO: SECOND MOVEMENT OF THE SUITE

Holst does not use any new thematic, harmonic, or rhythmic material in the second and third movements of the E^b Suite. From the study of the first four charts it can be easily traced that his experiment was to use three different music forms growing from one original inspiration. Since the melodic motives, the rhythmic motives, the resulting chords have been studied in detail, both from the actual score and from the charts, the study of the last two movements of the Suite, of necessity, will center around the actual musical form and the further development of the techniques exhibited in the Chaconne.

The Intermezzo of the E^b Suite is called a "scherzando variation."⁹ Holst's second movement is a compound form. The following diagram illustrates the actual form used.

First Song Form

c minor	$\frac{2}{4}$	Introduction	(2m)
		A	(1m)(1m)(1m)(1m)(1m)(3m) IAC (1m)
		B	(1m)(1m)(1m)(1m)
		A'	(1m)(1m)(1m)(1m)(1m)(1m) PAC

Second Song Form (Trio)

c minor	$\frac{4}{4}$	Introduction	(1m)
		C	(1m)(1m)(1m)(1m)(1m)(1m)(1m)(1m) PAC in f minor

First Song Form

c minor	$\frac{2}{4}$	Introduction	(1m)
		A	(1m)(1m)(3m)(1m)(1m)(1m)(1m) IAC in C major

Coda

C major	$\frac{4}{4}$		(1m)(1m)(1m)(3m)(1m) PAC
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⁹ Holst, The Music of Gustav Holst. p. 34.

Holst, as in his choice of the Chaconne form for his first movement, chooses another very simple musical form for the second movement-- the three-part song form with trio. The first and the second song forms are developed equally. The first song form cadences with an imperfect authentic cadence in c minor at the end of the (A) section, builds the (B) section on the extension of the c minor chord, and ends with a perfect authentic cadence in c minor.

The second song form (trio) uses the melodic phrase to develop the form. The complete trio has eight four-measure phrases with a perfect authentic cadence. The trio is in the Dorian mode on f. The melodic regularity of the legato phrases furnishes the contrast in the musical style, and the one-measure transition at the end of the cadence returns the music to the first song form.

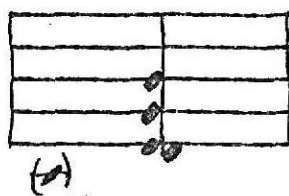
With the return to the c minor tonality, the (A) section of the first song form is reestablished, and the imperfect authentic cadence leads directly into the C major coda.

Since the second movement is built on the first phrase of the Chaconne ostinato, the phrase (Chart V) must be traced through the complete form of the Intermezzo. In the (B) section of the first song form Holst uses third relationships through chords on c minor, E^b Major, and B^b Major. These third relationships over the double pedal point seem to amalgamate into one overall harmony.

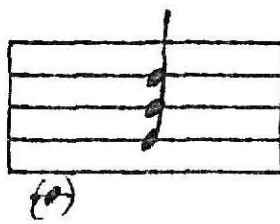
m. 27



m. 31




m. 35

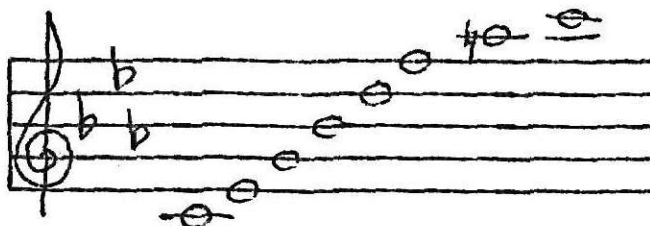


m. 39



Over the C and G pedal tones, and with the help of the rhythmic motive,

(, the following chord appears:



Holst's use of pedal tones, rhythmic and melodic motives, first phrase of bass ostinato as thematic material, regularity of four-measure phrase, all have been observed before, but need to be reemphasized. He uses the same basic material from his first movement, but his compositional techniques keep the music from becoming monotonous. This is his strength in composition for this movement.

The second movement can be summarized as follows: (1) Holst bases the complete development of the Intermezzo on the first phrase of the bass ostinato of the Chaconne. There are no chords used that were not used in the Chaconne, and there are no melodic or rhythmic motives that were not used in the first movement. (2) Holst uses the alternating notes of C and G as pedal tones to undergird both c minor and C Major tonalities. (3) Holst uses the extension of the c minor chord to build the B part of the first part song form. (4) Holst accented the regularity of the four-measure phrase.