

The Time is Right

(In Westminster also)

for organ

Anthony Skilbeck

Composed in June, 2002.

*First performed by David Goode in St John's, Smith Square, Westminster
on Thursday, October 17th, 2002, on the Johannes Klais organ.*

Material for a programme note

Born in Coventry (1947), Anthony Skilbeck's composing life has been supported by work as a teacher, pianist, organist and choir trainer. Musical studies were begun during Skilbeck's childhood in Bournemouth, where his principal musical mentor was Michael Peterson. First professional qualifications were obtained whilst studying at the Royal College of Music and London University Institute of Education. Since 1977 he has resided in Nottinghamshire. In 2000, composition studies with David Harold Cox and George Nicholson culminated in a Ph.D. degree for original composition being awarded by The University of Sheffield. During his time as a mature student, for a short period, Skilbeck also studied the interpretation of organ music with Nicolas Kynaston.

Of his compositional language (usually atonal, but "listener-friendly") Skilbeck writes:

The pianoforte music of Debussy and works from Schoenberg's 1908 to 1912 period have had a particular influence on my harmonic language, which is not based on and has not evolved into a text-book schema. Only comparatively rarely does my music find itself in a key, creation and release of tension in harmony and melody holding a greater interest for me than the use of keys and their relationships. This gives rise to compositions often starting in one area of harmony and ending in another. Justification for a language neither tonal nor serial was strengthened on the discovery of Liszt's *Bagatelle without Tonality*.

The tritone, whole tones and the bitter-sweet intervals of minor and major sevenths figure prominently. Practical knowledge of contrapuntal organ works has been significant, but I have not been drawn to overtly mathematical processes, though frequently changing and unusual time signatures are often employed.

Planning a structure, or letting one evolve, gives me much pleasure, as does finding that a passage of my music has an evocative quality. The expression of moods and human temperaments fascinates me.

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Listeners are called to attention by the opening Trumpet solo. In the first two sections of the work, two atonal themes are presented: the first is marked *energico* and the second (played on the pedals), *teneramente*. The central part is subdivided into three portions, marked respectively *like a jazz vibraphone player improvising*; *quasi jazz bass* (work for the feet!) and *quasi jazz flute (or trumpet)*. The following section combines three melodies; the atonal Theme 2 (previously heard in the Pedal department, but now in a high register) and two versions of a certain easily-recognisable new tonal theme - Theme 3 (marked *nobilmente*) which has, in fact, already been alluded to in some previous sections. It is here that, for the first time in the work, some lower-pitched sounds of the pedal are heard. What follows is a section (again combining Themes 2 and 3 - the latter now marked *con dignita*), in the manner of a French baroque movement for organ. This Gallic reference is a reminder that the French organist-composer Louis Vierne (1870-1937) used what is here Theme 3 (the Westminster Chime) as a basis for one of his best-known organ works. A Coda (incorporating the opening Trumpet solo) concludes the work.

The title derives from the fact that before June 2002, when the work was composed, quite some time had elapsed since composer and performer had been in contact.

Structure and detailed notes

Intro.; **A** (from bar 5); **B** (from 30); **Central i** (60), **ii** (79), **iii** (94); **Westminster Chime 2** (124); **Coda** (139)

Page 5, bar 1 ♩ = 84 *maestoso* to bar 4. "A" melody next heard near the end at bar 145.

5, bar 5 ♩ = 104 *energico* to bar 29. Material including the atonal Theme 1 (bar 16), which is in jazz style. Random sections of the 16-note Westminster Chime are incorporated into this theme. Taken with further appearances of sections of the chime, what can be seen here is the start of a piece-within-a-piece - one in which a heavily-disguised melody is made gradually more obvious to the listener as the work progresses, almost like a set of variations with the overt statement of the theme at the end, instead of at the beginning. That the work was to receive its first performance in Westminster and because it had been used by Louis Vierne (1870-1937) in his "Carillon de Westminster" for organ, Skilbeck felt that it would be a good idea to use the Westminster Chime in this work (hence the subtitle). Other reasons were the composer's fascination with mixing atonal and tonal material and the recent completion of his fifteenth work for carillon, ten of which had recently been published.

Page 7, bar 30 ♩ = 96 *dolce* to bar 59. Theme 2 (bars 31 to 44) - also atonal) is presented in the Pedal, the left foot providing an accompanying second part in the fifth and sixth phrases (i.e. double pedalling). In bar 43, the left hand lower part plays the first two phrases of the theme (after the fifth note, different note values are employed), overlapping with the end of the Pedal statement. The last three notes of the theme are used in bars 49 to 53.

Page 9, bar 60 ♩ = 144 *con alcuna licenza* to bar 77. This is the first of three jazz-like portions forming the central part of the work. It starts with a quintuplet of notes used in the previous six bars. The performer is instructed to be "like a jazz vibraphone player improvising", and a change of manual (and therefore colour) is required for each bar. In bars 68 to 74 a retrograde version of the music in bars 60 to 67 (omitting a version of bar 65) is played, and each block of material is now played on a different manual than before.

Compare this style of writing with bars 271 to 325 of my *Variations on Three Original Themes* for organ.

Page 10, bar 78 ♩ = 126 *con agilita* to bar 93. The central part's second portion. Theme 1 is now placed (modified) in the Pedal, which is to be "quasi jazz bass". More obvious manifestations of parts of the Westminster Chime are now heard.

Page 11, bar 94 ♩ = 126 *L'istesso tempo*to bar 108. Portion three of the central part. Contained in the melody of the right hand part, marked "quasi jazz flute (or trumpet)" is the complete Westminster Chime in retrograde motion.

Page 13, bar 109 *nobilmente e sonore; sereno and spianato* to bar 123. The first of two sections overtly stating the complete Westminster Chime (Theme 3) in the same (tonal) key - F major - as that of the bells in St Stephen's Tower ("Big Ben"), albeit in different tessitura. Here, it is heard in the stately Pedal, which, for the first time in the work, uses pitches lower than 8' (pitches not used again until the final chord). Concurrently, the right hand has the atonal Theme 2 (which was first heard in the Pedal) and the left hand (on a different manual) plays a diminutive triplet form of the chime, heard in its complete form three times. Each time it is played in a different key, so in addition to atonal and tonal material being mixed, there is an element of bitonality.

Page 14, bar 123 ♩ = 52 *con dignita; spianato* to bar 138. In the second "Westminster Chime" section, the chime melody, played on the Pedal Trumpet in the tenor register, is treated as if it is the "cantus firmus" of a movement from a French Classical organ Mass. Vierne (a Frenchman), did not treat the chime in this way in his famous organ piece! Over this, the right hand again states the atonal Theme 2, but an octave lower than before. The left hand has free atonal counterpoint making a bass line.

Page 15, bar 139 ♩ = 104 *energico* to the end. The Coda, using material from bars 5 to 8 and 27 to 29. From the fifth beat of bar 144, the notes have augmented time values compared with their original ones. At bar 145, the tempo marking is ♩ = 84 *maestoso* and the left hand restates, an octave lower, the melody which opened the work (not used elsewhere).

For David Goode, who gave the premiere at St John's, Smith Square, Westminster,
on 17th October, 2002, on the Johannes Klais organ.

Eight Generals needed - see list on the last page.

I (Ruckpositiv): to Scharff (no 16') *f*

II (Great): Trompete 8' *ff*

III (Swell): Cornet, box open (*f*)

} General 3
without Ped. Quint

Ped: Octave 8' & Tenoroctave 4' *f* (independent)

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Duration ca. 5'

1 $\text{♩} = 84$ *rit.* $\text{♩} = 104$

II { *ff maestoso*

I { *f energico*

3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

Gb

I 5 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

9

I { *mf*

II { *mf*

I: - Scharff
(to balance with Ped. from bar 15)

II

Ped: - Tenoroctave *mf*

mf

mf

Musical score for "The Time is Right" by Skilbeck, measures 16-23. The score is written for piano and features a complex rhythmic structure with frequent time signature changes between 3/4 and 2/4. Measure 16 is marked with a forte *f* dynamic and a section marker **III**. The right hand contains intricate passages with triplets and slurs, while the left hand provides a steady accompaniment with long notes and rests. Measure 23 begins with a section marker **III** and a *schierzando* marking. It includes a key signature change to G-flat major (Gb) and features more complex rhythmic patterns with slurs and triplets. The bottom staff shows a bass line with rests and some notes.

General 1

♩ = 96

27

III { *mf dolce* *mp*

mf

32

teneramente

General 1: I: Cromorne 8' *mp* II: Rohrflute 4' *p* III: Strings (inc. Voix celeste) *mf* Ped.: Octave 8' coupled to II (Rohrflute 4') (Poss. + another stop) *mf*

8

38

poco rallentando

A tempo (♩ = 96)

47

rit.

I: Change to Flute 4' and Nazard only *

mp

(I)

III { *p* (quasi echo)

A tempo (♩ = 96)

54

pochiss. rit.

ritardando

General 2

mp

misterioso

cresc.

* If this registration is not possible, play the right hand an octave higher from bar 54 to 59

perdendosi

St John's, Smith Square: Play r.h. 8ve with Quintadena (or possibly Rohrflöte)

♩ = 144

General 2: I: combination (without Tierce), but including Larigot *f* II: Trompette 8' *ff* III: to Plein jeu *f* Ped.: not used

Con alcuna licenza (like a jazz vibraphone player improvising)

60 (loco)

64 (senza rubato

68

71

Skilbeck: The Time is Right

rallentando General 3 $\text{♩} = 126$

(senza rubato)

(Open III box) quasi jazz bass

con agilita

$\text{♩} = \text{♩}$ (sempre)

mf

f

General 3: I: to Scharff (no 16') mf II: Trompette 8' ff III: Cornet (no Larigot) f Ped: Principal 16', Octave 8', Tenoroctave 4' (independent - possibly using 5 1/3) f

L'istesso tempo (♩ = 126)

I: Rohrflöte 8' & Hohlflöte 2' only

General 4 ↓

General 4: I: Rohrflöte 8' & Hohlflöte 2' *mp* II: Rohrflöte 4' *p* III: Flute harmonique 8' & Flute 4' (or Trompette harmonique 8') *mf* Ped. Octave 8' coupled to II (Rohrflöte 4') *mf*

quasi jazz flute (or trumpet)

96 **III** *mf* **3** **I** **III**

101 **I** **III** **3** **4** **1**

rallentando♩ = 52

106

I

mp

sereno

III

mf

spianato

mp

f nobilmente e sonore
(Westminster Chime)

General 5

General 6

111

f

General 5: I: Rohrflöte 8' *mp* II: Principal 8' *f* III: Cornet (possibly without Tierce) *mf* Ped.: Octave 8' *mp*

General 6: manuals as for General 5 Ped.: add 16' & 32' flues & quints *f*

118 L'istesso tempo (♩ = 52)

mf *spianato* **II** *mf*

General 7 ↑ *f con dignita*
(Westminster Chime)

125

General 7: I: to Scharff (no 16') *f* II: Principal 8' (+?) *mf* III: as for General 6 Ped.: Trumpet 8' *f*

♩ = 104

ritardando

134

f *energico*

molto rallentando General 8

141

molto rallentando

I: possibly + Dulcian 16'

I is the Ruckpositiv; **II**, the Great and **III** the Swell

Page 2 **General 1:** **I:** Cromorne 8' *mp* **II:** Rohrflute 4' *p* **III:** Strings (inc. Voix celeste) *mf* **Ped.:** Octave 8' coupled to II (Rohrflute 4') (Possibly + another stop) *mf*

4 **General 2:** **I:** combination (without Tierce), but including Larigot *f* **II:** Trompete 8' *ff* **III:** to Plein jeu *f* **Ped.:** not used

5 **General 3:** **I:** to Scharff (no 16') *mf* **II:** Trompete 8' *ff* **III:** Cornet (no Larigot) *f* **Ped.:** Principal 16', Octave 8' & Tenoroctave 4' (independent - possibly using 5 1/3) *f*

6 **General 4:** **I:** Rohrflote 8' & Hohlflote 2' *mp* **II:** Rohrflute 4' *p* **III:** Flute harmonique 8' & Flute 4' (or Trompete harmonique 8') *mf*

Ped.: Octave 8' coupled to II (Rohrflute 4') *mf*

7 **General 5:** **I:** Rohrflote 8' *mp* **II:** Principal 8' *f* **III:** Cornet (possibly without Tierce) *mf* **Ped.:** Octave 8' *mp*

7 **General 6:** manuals as for General 5 **Ped.:** add 16' & 32' flues & quints *f*

8 **General 7:** **I:** to Scharff (no 16') *f* **II:** Principal 8' (+?) *mf* **III:** as for General 6 **Ped.:** Trumpet 8' *f*

9 **General 8:** **I:** not used (unless coupled to Pedal) **II:** Trompete 8' (possibly coupled to III - or with Bourdon 16') *ff* **III:** full, including 16' *ff*

Ped.: independent (or coupled to I?); flues 8' (with 4' & 2?) and lower (including quints). No mixtures or reeds *ff*