

record-breakingly fast velocity, rapidly executed activity, juggernaut-like motion, driving in a hurry, a fast-talker, the pace of modern life, amphetamine-based drugs...

SPEED: Before you hear the first note, when you read the title of this work, various connotations such as those above may come to mind. Hindson's **SPEED** allows for any or all of these interpretations. Like other works of his that I've heard, **SPEED** sounds like it comes from the mind of a present-day equivalent of the Romantic-era, introverted artist/visionary in the garret, or even the eccentrically brilliant Frankensteinian scientist inventing god-knows-what-new-horror in the lab. But the creator from the last century was locked away in self-imposed exile from the machinations of "real" life, which were too superficial and soulless for such a sensitive nature. Hindson conversely — perversely even — celebrates both the idea of the deepest, philosophical contemplation (**SPEED** is a meditation on speed), as well as the full gamut of postmodern life with all its ever-accelerating, all-senses-impacting, jolting sensation of *rush*.

It is part of his perversity that Hindson uses the primary nineteenth-century instrumental force — the symphony orchestra — to create this metaphor for life in the late twentieth century, characterised surely by the increasing prevalence of information technology and digitally synthesised sound. With **SPEED**, Hindson demolishes modernist pronouncements of the death-of-the-orchestra as a viable, present-day ensemble. He offers a further reading of his piece: he relates that 'it started out as a techno piece for orchestra, and largely remains that.' Techno music and its derivatives — the music of dance and rave parties — contain the following characteristics, which appear in **SPEED**: repetition, a mainly steady beat, many parallel triads flavouring the harmony, and of course a fast to very fast tempo.

Techno music has a singular energy, which speaks for a certain facet of "underground" society or "street" culture. This is an aspect of great importance to Hindson, who is concerned to acknowledge the wide range of contemporary Australian society's musical interests. The energy peculiar to more 'hard-core' forms of techno has found its way into Hindson's writing, focussing in particular on its freneticism, which is translated into the intensely gestural, rapid instrumental writing for the instruments, and which the listener can hear in other works by Hindson such as *Chrissietina's Magic Fantasy*, *AK-47*, and *Mace*. Perhaps the most over-riding characteristic common to the "popular" musical forms and Hindson's **SPEED** is the level of stamina needed by the musicians to sustain the energy and momentum throughout the work: the composer even suggests it could well have been entitled *STAMINA* rather than **SPEED**.

Linked with techno music through the rave party scene are the murky speed/ecstasy types of drugs. While this association is of secondary importance to the inspiration and intended effect of the piece, Hindson captures a sense of the psycho-physical consequences induced by these drugs: invincibility/indestructibility, ecstasy, hyperactivity, paranoia, and again, stamina.

And yet, despite all the hyper-ness qualities of the work, not much stamina is required to experience the piece. Hindson manages — perversely again — to make **SPEED** an engaging aural treat; it is not hard-going: the sonic-blasting sections are not in any way repellent. One is left with the impression at the conclusion of the work that it's all over in a big, first-time-on-the-big-dipper, flash.