

Trio (1993)

William Bolcom

"I have always been interested in the binary form in which both parts are mutually exclusive or nearly so; the first G minor nocturne of Chopin is one of the few pure examples I know of, but I suppose the first two movements of Mahler's *Fifth* taken together become a binary form of sorts. So I will discuss the two pairs of movements as just that—pairs that comment on each other, just as each half faces its counterpart musically within each double movement.

Twist of Fate–Mazurka, the first binary movement, begins loudly and dramatically and ends quietly in sadness. Between these extremes come two very different tempos and moods. *Twist of Fate* clambering ahead in blows and screams and followed by an ironic *Mazurka*. The whole is a meditation on the seeming inevitability of war and tragedy in human existence.

The first of the next pair, *Apotheosis of J.V.*, requires separate explanation. John Verrall (born 1909, Britt, Iowa) studied at the Budapest Conservatory and the Royal College of Music in London; he taught me composition, counterpoint, orchestration and so much else from 1949 on through my teens in Washington State. While not utilizing any of Verrall's thematic material, this music is reminiscent of his style; we move directly into *Dithyramb* after a short transitional passage. Here, headlong and frenetic, the music's forward drive is only slightly held back toward the midpoint by a recall of the mysterious section from *Twist of Fate*; then we return to the main tempo, which leads to a frenetic coda.

Trio was commissioned by Michigan State University for the Verdehr Trio."

—William Bolcom

The world premiere of *Trio* was on March 24, 1994 at Wigmore Hall (Park Lane Group), London, England.

William Bolcom (born 1938, Seattle) is a composer and pianist who exhibited an early proclivity for music, entering the University of Washington at age 11. He studied composition with John Verrall and piano with Berthe Poncy Jacobson, earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1958. His piano concerts were heard throughout the Northwest at this time. Further studies followed with Darius Milhaud in California at Mills College and in Paris at the Conservatory of Music. He completed his doctorate in composition at Stanford University in 1964.

Compositions from every period of his life have earned him many honors including a BMI award; two Guggenheim fellowships; several Rockefeller Foundation awards and NEA grants; the Marc Blitzstein Award from the Academy of Arts and Letters (for *Dynamite Tonite*, an opera for actors written with his longtime collaborator, Arnold Weinstein); the Pulitzer Prize for Music in 1988 (for his *12 New Etudes for Piano*); and two Koussevitzky Foundation Awards (for *Piano Quartet* and *Lyric Concerto for Flute and Orchestra*)

Bolcom received commissions from the Vienna Philharmonic (Salzburg Mozarteum), Philadelphia Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Berlin Domaine Musical, Koussevitsky Foundation, Saarländischer Rundfunk, American Composers Orchestra, St. Louis, National and Pacific Symphonies, Lyric Opera of Chicago and many others. As composer, piano soloist, and accompanist (primarily to his wife, Joan Morris, mezzo-soprano and a member of the Musical Theatre faculty), Bolcom is represented on recordings for Nonesuch, Deutsche Grammophone, RCA, CBS, MHS, Arabesque, Cala, Jazzology, Vox, Advance, CRI, Phillips, Laurel, First Edition, Newport Classics, Omega Vanguard, Argo, Koch Classics, Crystal, New World, Centaur, Folkways, 1m1 and others.

As a writer about musical subjects, Bolcom is published by several music magazines, by Viking in

a book about Eubie Blake (with Robert Kimball) and in articles in *The New Grove Dictionary*. His editions of essays by George Rochberg, *The Aesthetics of Survival*, was published by the University of Michigan Press.

Bolcom joined the University of Michigan faculty in 1973, having previously taught at the University of Washington, Queens and Brooklyn Colleges of the City University of New York, and at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts. *A View from the Bridge*, the second of four Chicago Lyric Opera commissions, was premiered in October, 1999. Recipient of fellowships and grants from numerous major foundations, Bolcom has been admitted to the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and holds honorary doctorates from the San Francisco Conservatory, Albion College, and the New England Conservatory. In the fall of 1994, he was named the Ross Lee Finney Distinguished University Professor of Composition at the University of Michigan. In 2006, he was awarded the National Medal of Arts.

Additional information is available at www.williambolcom.com.