

Duo (1999)

David Diamond

"Elsa and I visited David Diamond in August, 1999 at his Rochester, New York home for the purpose of videotaping an interview with him for our 'Verdehr Trio Special Collection' in the Michigan State University Library. We had become good friends in the course of commissioning him to compose a trio for us (1994) which we performed in Kennedy Center and later recorded. Upon our question, 'What are you composing now?' he explained that he was in poor health and did not feel up to working on a large piece. 'But,' he said, 'I might like to compose a duo for violin and clarinet.' We were delighted at his suggestion and within two months he sent us the *Duo* with the inscription: 'I wrote this work as an 'hommage' to my friends, Elsa and Walter Verdehr in recognition and thanks for their wonderful performance and recording of my *Trio*.'"

—Walter Verdehr

The world premiere of *Duo* was on January 25, 2000 at the Oklahoma City Community Theatre in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

David Diamond (1915–2005) was born in Rochester, New York and began his compositional studies with Bernard Rogers at the Eastman School of Music while still a teenager. He continued his studies at the Cleveland Institute of Music and later had lessons with Roger Sessions in New York City and Nadia Boulanger in Paris.

Diamond won numerous awards including the Juilliard Publication Award, three Guggenheim Fellowships, the American Academy in Rome Award, the Paderewski Prize, a grant from the National Academy of Arts and Letters, and the 1944 New York Music Critic's Circle Award for *Rounds*, his composition for string orchestra. In 1995, he was awarded the National Medal of Arts.

Diamond is considered one of the preeminent American composers of his generation. Many of his works are tonal or modestly modal. His early compositions are typically triadic, often with widely spaced harmonies, giving them a distinctly American tone, but some of his works are consciously French in style. His later style became more chromatic. Diamond's music is known for its sense of pitch even within the realm of twelve-tone music, which he employed without conforming to strict dodecaphonic rules. This aspect has enabled his works to enjoy tremendous success with musicians and audiences alike.

In addition to *Rounds*, his most popular work, Diamond wrote eleven symphonies, nine concertos (three for violin), eleven string quartets, and music for wind ensemble, chamber ensemble, piano, and voice. He composed the musical theme heard on the CBS radio network broadcast *Hear it Now* (1950-1951) and its television successor *See it Now* (1951-1958).

According to an obituary in *The Guardian*, "He enjoyed enormous success in the 1940s and early '50s with champions that included Koussevitzky, Bernstein, Munch, Ormandy, and Mitropoulos but, in the 1960s and '70s, the serial and modernist schools pushed him into the shadows." *The New York Times* similarly referred to Diamond as "a major American composer whose early brilliance in the 1940s was eclipsed by the dominance of atonal music...He was part of what some considered a forgotten generation of great American symphonists, including Howard Hanson, Roy Harris, William Schuman, Walter Piston, and Peter Minnin."

Diamond taught at Columbia University and was a long time member of the Juilliard School faculty. He was an honorary Composer-in Residence with the Seattle Symphony.