

*Verdehr Trio, Op. 72 (Rock Valley Trio) (2007)*

Lee Hoiby

"My latest piece is always my favorite, but even now, a year after I finished it, I feel that the long melody of the *Rock Valley Trio* is one that I can never hope to top. It seems that the challenges inherent in the combination of violin, clarinet, and piano could best be overcome by my creating a strongly involving, singing melody that any instrument would want to play. So taken was I with my melody that I have snipped it out of the *Verdehr's* trio and transformed it into a short encore piece with appropriate transpositions for other solo instruments with piano. Coming full circle, it has recently been performed by bassist Allan von Schenkel, who first introduced me to the *Verdehrs*.

I decided to call the work *Rock Valley Trio*, but an alternative title could be 'You *Verdehr* and suddenly my heart stopped beating'."

—Lee Hoiby

The world premiere of *Verdehr Trio, Op. 72 (Rock Valley Trio)* was on June 26, 2007 in a Program of Contemporary Music Written for the *Verdehr Trio*, Fontana Chamber Arts Series, Cooper's Glen Auditorium, Kalamazoo, Michigan.

Lee Hoiby (1926–2011) was born in Madison, Wisconsin. A child prodigy, he began playing the piano at the age of five. He studied at the University of Wisconsin with the notable pianists Gunnar Johansen and Egon Petri. He then became a pupil of Darius Milhaud at Mills College and continued his studies at the Curtis Institute of Music where he was mentored in music composition by Gian Carlo Menotti.

His works have been recognized by awards and grants from the Guggenheim Foundation, the National Institute of Arts and Letters, the Ford Foundation, the Fulbright Commission, and the National Endowment for the Arts. In 1989, his work was the subject of a retrospective concert at the Kennedy Center on the American Composer Series, and a two-week festival of his work was presented by the Music Department of the University of California at Long Beach.

Hoiby was also a noted pianist who appeared in recitals featuring the standard repertory as well as his own works. He appeared as soloist in his own concertos, and frequently as an accompanist to singers and instrumentalists who performed his music. His principal works include the operas *The Scarf* (1958), *A Month in the Country* (1964), *Summer and Smoke* (1971), *The Tempest* (1986) and *Romeo and Juliet* (2004). He composed nearly one hundred songs in addition to chamber music, music for orchestra, solo instruments, chorus, and the theater.