

*Double Concerto No. 2 for Violin and Clarinet (2007)*

James Niblock

“The first movement is based on a single theme that appears in several forms, both rhythmical and lyrical. The development is based on several short motives that are extracted from the theme. These motives are also quoted in the other three movements giving a feeling of unity to four highly diverse movements.

The short *Scherzo* is unique in that it utilizes mainly augmented fourths and minor seconds which is in distinct contrast to the material used in the other three movements.

The *Adagio* is a three-part song form with a long lyrical melody that opens the movement. The contrasting middle section uses the short motives from the development section of the first movement. The first lyrical melody then returns to end the movement.

The fourth movement presents two contrasting themes: one rhythmic, stated mainly in the orchestra, the other melodic, presented mainly in the solo instruments. These ideas are restated throughout giving the feeling of a traditional rondo form. A feature of the final movement is the rhythmic structure which consists of alternating 12/8 and 9/8 (four beat and three beat) measures throughout.”

—James Niblock

The world premiere of the *Double Concerto No. 2 for Violin and Clarinet* was on November 17, 2007 in a concert honoring the 90<sup>th</sup> birthday of James Niblock at the Wharton Center, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan.

James Niblock (1917–2018) was a composer, conductor, violinist, and music educator. Born in Scappoose, Oregon, he received a Bachelor of Arts degree and a Bachelor of Education degree from Washington State University. After serving in the US Air Force in World War II, he earned a Master of Arts degree from Colorado College and a doctorate from the University of Iowa. He studied violin with Franck Eichenlaub, Jascha Brodsky, and Josef Gingold; composition with Roy Harris and Paul Hindemith.

From 1948 until 1985, Niblock was a faculty member at Michigan State University where he taught theory and composition, performed as violinist in the Beaumont String Quartet, and served as Chairman of the College of Music. During his fifteen years as Chairman, a new music building was constructed to expand departmental facilities, student enrollment doubled, the number of graduate assistants tripled, eighteen new full-time faculty positions were added, and the Juilliard String Quartet became visiting artists on campus for nine years. For many years of his service at the University, Niblock was also Concertmaster of the Lansing Symphony Orchestra.

Following his retirement, Niblock remained active as a conductor, performer, and composer. He also had a long association with the Blue Lakes Fine Arts Camp in Muskegon County, Michigan and continued to serve as Senior Vice President and life member of the Board of Trustees until his death. In 2006, MSU honored Niblock with the first ever Distinguished Emeritus Faculty Award for his continuing work in Fine Arts Education, and in 2012 he was presented Washington State University’s highest award, the Alumni Achievement Award.

Niblock’s more than one hundred compositions are housed at the Michigan State University Library Archives. Many of these were written and performed for the anniversary celebrations at the Blue Lake camp, e.g., the opera *Ruth* for the thirty-fifth anniversary and the chamber opera *The Last Leaf* for the fortieth. His works have been frequently performed both in America and Europe and are available through Harrock Hall (choral works) and Brotons & Mercadal Edicions (instrumental works). Recordings available on CD include the six trios for violin, clarinet, and

piano and the *Double Concerto for Violin, Clarinet and Orchestra*, all of which were written for the Verdehrs.