

## *Terzina* (1995)

James Niblock

"*Terzina* is the fifth in an opus of six trios for the Verdehr Trio. (There are also three double concertos for violin and clarinet.) The title *Terzina* implies a unit of three parts such as a triplet or, in this case, the double meaning of 'trio' for three instruments or a short composition with three related movements.

The first movement, *Presto*, is a rondo utilizing two contrasting themes, one with rhythmic vitality and one sustained and lyrical. These themes grow and change as the movement progresses and are woven together to form a mosaic-like texture.

The second movement, *Adagio*, is a traditional three-part song form with a long singing line supported by moving accompaniment figures. All three instruments share equally in projecting the melody and the accompaniment figures.

The third movement, *Allegro*, is unique in that it utilizes brief quotations from traditional American fiddle themes (such as *Georgia Moon*, *28th of January*, etc.) as the basis for the thematic material. The themes appear in all three instruments and are woven together in contrapuntal textures, changed, developed, and occasionally, two or three fiddle tunes are welded together into one theme. The movement, and the trio, ends with an exploitation of the driving rhythmic content of all the themes."

—James Niblock

The world premiere of *Terzina* was on June 27, 1995 in the Verdehr Trio Summer Chamber Music Concert Series 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.