

## *Trio* (1980)

Leslie Bassett

“My *Trio* was composed late in 1980 during a sabbatical leave in Santa Barbara, California. The work bears some resemblance, at least in instrumentation, to the much earlier *Trio for Viola, Clarinet and Piano* (CRI 149), yet it differs markedly in the bright nature of the recent work as opposed to the darker mood of the former.

The new *Trio* is in five movements. It begins with a dramatic assertion of A, stated in rapidly increasing units. The first of these is A itself, followed by A plus one note, then A plus two notes, A plus three notes, etc. up to A plus seven. The growth of phrase size, if it may be called such, is one of several readily-identified elements present in the work. Others are characteristic turns of phrase, recurrent sonorities or gestures that may be found occasionally in some form throughout the piece. In one respect the *Trio* might almost be a duo, for the violin and clarinet usually act together, with the piano as their opposing or supportive force—two against one.

The opening movement is highly energetic, a forceful and dramatic beginning that ends comparatively soon, so soon, in fact, that the energy generated by it spills over into the fast and assertive second movement. The third movement, in contrast, begins quietly and lyrically, yet rises to a dramatic middle area. The fourth is entirely placid, reflective and uncomplicated, while the ending movement is again highly charged and energetic.

Each movement picks up some aspect of the ending passage of its predecessor as its own point of departure. The first movement, for example, closes with the clarinet and violin playing two conspicuous intervals, F-A and E-B, the same pitches with which the second movement opens in the piano. The third movement ends with D-flat and F, and the fourth begins with them. The fourth closes with a conspicuous high A in the violin, the root of the violin-clarinet interval, and the final movement opens with that same A, which was also the root and primary tonal level of the opening movement, the primal center. Personal means toward expressive ends.”

—Leslie Bassett

The world premiere of *Trio* was on October 6, 1981 at the University of Notre Dame, South Bend, Indiana.

Leslie Bassett (1923–2016) was born in Hanford, California, and as a youth, studied piano, trombone and cello. He earned a bachelor’s degree in music from Fresno State College followed by a master’s degree and a doctoral degree in composition from the University of Michigan. He studied composition with Ross Lee Finney, Roberto Gerhard, Nadia Boulanger and Arthur Honegger; he later studied electronic music with Mario Davidovsky.

Bassett’s compositions include orchestra, chamber, choral, vocal, piano, organ and electronic works that have been heard in the Americas, Asia and Europe. His music has been performed by the orchestras of Philadelphia, New York, Cleveland, Boston, Los Angeles, Chicago, Baltimore, Detroit, Indianapolis, Syracuse, Zurich, Rome, Oporto, Netherlands Radio, Seattle, Montreal, and Toledo. It has been programmed by numerous regional orchestras, concert bands, professional ensembles, choruses, soloists, civic groups and university ensembles.

Bassett received the 1966 Pulitzer Prize for Music for his *Variations for Orchestra*. His music also brought him the Prix de Rome, a Naumburg Recording Award, two Guggenheim Fellowships, a Fulbright Fellowship, a Koussevitsky Award, James Phelan Prize and prize from the John Philip Sousa Foundation. He received recognition from the Society for the Publication of American Music, League of Composers, National Endowment for the Arts and International Society for Contemporary Music. He was awarded the Major Composer Award and membership in the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and was twice named composer-in-residence at the

Rockefeller Foundation's Bellagio Center. He received a Distinguished Artist Award from the State of Michigan.

Much of Bassett's professional life was associated with the School of Music of the University of Michigan where he was Albert A. Stanley Distinguished Professor of Composition. He was a co-founder of the University's electronic music studio and Contemporary Directions Performance Ensemble. In 1984, he was named Henry Russel Lecturer, the University's highest faculty honor.

Most of Bassett's music is published by C.F. Peters Corporation. Recordings are available on many labels, among them New World, Composers Recordings, MMC, Crystal Records and Albany.

Additional information is available at [www.lesliebassett.com](http://www.lesliebassett.com).