

## PROGRAM NOTES

A former trombonist, Leslie Bassett studied composition at the University of Michigan with Ross Lee Finney; he also studied with Boulanger, Honegger, and Davidovsky. He has written a great many works for various combinations. He has taught at the University of Michigan since 1952, and has received several awards, among them are the Prix de Rome; Pulitzer Prize; Naumberg Award; and two Guggenheim Fellowships. This Suite, like much of his music, is carefully structured and its formal processes clear. Similarly, a strong religious feeling is evident in the serious and often serene tone of this work. Understandably, he has written many works including the trombone; trombonists invariably find them a pleasure to play.

William Bergsma writes about his Fourth Quartet:

The themes which are varied short—fragments, really—are presented in immediate opposition: a troubled, singing phrase in the first violin and viola. The cello echoes the singing phrase, and the variations begin. Three scherzo variations aside, they have in common not only the themes, but the contradictions of musical expression implied in the opening bars; tempos change in quick contrast, thick textures are opposed by a remote single line. The concluding variation builds with the first violin in impassioned discourse against his more objective colleagues.

The first Entertainment has a story. By the Spring of 1970, I had completed the first movement, and was about to embark on the rest of the quartet. I interrupted the writing for a couple of USIA-sponsored concerts of my music in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv (I was in Rome that year, on sabbatical). One of the works performed was a song to George Peele's Bethsabe bathing, sung by Bathsheeba while King David spies on her charms—it delighted me to program that song in the City of David—and about all the piano plays is a rhythmic pattern on middle C. To me, this was a high African drum. To some of my extremely articulate Israeli audience it was a bone of contention; a piano should not be treated that way. All right, I thought, if they don't like middle C, let me try high G#, hence this piece.

What that did was to knock my plans for the rest of the piece galley-west. I had planned, and did write, a rather square finale, which bombed. Over the next few years, I tried fixing up the 1st movement, sketching an additional slow movement; filling up more sketch pages than the present bulk of the quartet, all to no avail.

So, beaten down, I set to figure out what could follow my G# incubus, and wrote the second Entertainment, followed the same procedure and found the third.

My Fourth Quartet was commissioned by the University of Alabama for the Cadex Quartet, and was first performed by them in 1971. The Philadelphia String Quartet gave the first performance of the revised version in 1975.

Regarding One, William O. Smith writes: The text is in your pocket! In these five short movements I have utilized the words, letters, and numbers found on a one dollar bill. The first and last movements explore latin phrases; the second and fourth emphasize numbers and letters; the third plays with the names of the (then) Treasurer of the United States, Dorothy Andrews Kabia and Secretary of the Treasury, John B. Connally. No romantic involvement is necessarily implied.

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About his two works, the composer states:

FOUR DESULTORY EPISODES for oboe and tape is my first attempt at combining live and taped sounds. New oboe techniques utilized include multiphonics, timbre trills, pitch bending, and alternating trill fingerings. Each episode explores a "mood" and a facet of the oboe's "personality" as I perceive it. The tape, realized at the Michigan State University Electronic Studio, acts as a background "wash" against which the oboe plays. Sounds were mainly realized on a Putney with a few sounds from the Moog.

MUSIC for CHIEF JOSEPH grows out of an increasing fascination with and study of Northwest Native Americans. Having refreshed my memory of Chief Joseph in recent reading, I felt I must compose a piece to honor the memory of a noble and great American. As I recalled past visits to White Bird Canyon, the Lolo Pass, and thought of his unfulfilled wish to return to his beloved Wallowa Valley, the metaphor of an oboe as Chief Joseph and a trombone "orchestra" as his milieu occurred to me. Thus, this commentary represents, metaphorically, Chief Joseph calling out to a world not yet ready to accept nor understand a people who were native to the land . . . a call which echoes to us today . . . can we now not only hear . . . but also listen?

Carlos Chávez, the leading figure in Mexico's musical life, has used percussion instruments significantly in many of his orchestral works; but the Toccata (1942) is his only work for percussion alone. Of the eleven types of instruments employed, only the glockenspiel, xylophone, chimes, and tympani have definite pitch. The others have only relative pitch — that is, the small Indian drum has the highest pitch (though it is not total) and the bass drum the lowest. Thus all the elements of music (melody, rhythm, and harmony) are possible even with this tonally limited ensemble; from the composer's point of view the limitations are in fact opportunities. The Toccata is organized along normal musical lines. There is a normal three-movement plan. The first movement uses only the drums. The second exploits the metallic instruments (bells, cymbals, chimes, gongs) and xylophone. The third movement is scored for the complete battery. Throughout, there are primary and secondary thematic ideas and they are stated, varied, and repeated just as in "normal" music. The expressive content of the piece is Amerindian, evocative of the old Aztec civilization predating the Spanish invasion of Mexico. It is worth noting, however, that Chávez uses few exotic instruments — even the claves, maracas, and Indian drums are practically normal equipment for percussionists nowadays.

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Wallingford Riegger was born in Albany, Georgia, and moved to New York at the age of fifteen. His parents were musical, and he studied cello and composition, continuing his education in Germany, where he also conducted professionally. Following his return to the United States in 1917, he occupied a number of teaching positions, including posts at The New School for Social Research and Northwestern University. His recognition grew steadily, and at the time of his inopportune death at the age of 75, he was widely recognized as the dean of American composers.

Riegger's compositional style was noted for its individualism and independence, and resulted in works of great originality and distinction, frequently austere but not humorless, marked by a new and often startling resonance, great rhythmic vitality, and a serious preoccupation with formal structure. Both the "Three Canons" and the "Concerto", although separated by almost a quarter-century, display his fascination with and affinity for contrapuntal writing, and find themselves in accord with the opinion of a leading critic who described Riegger as ". . . an advanced and highly independent musical thinker who speaks his piece with terse, uncompromising language that says exactly what it means and stops at the right place, when it has no more to say."

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