

## MILTON BABBITT:

### Composition for Four Instruments (1948)

John Wummer, *flute*

Stanley Drucker, *clarinet*

Peter Marsh, *violin*

Donald McCall, *violoncello*

### Composition for Viola and Piano (1950)

Walter Trampler, *viola*

Alvin Bauman, *piano*

MILTON BABBITT is Professor of Music at Princeton University, and also has been a member of the faculties of the Salzburg Seminar in American Studies, and the Berkshire Music Center (Tanglewood). He has received the Joseph Beams Prize, a New York Music Critics' Circle Citation (for *Composition for Four Instruments*), an Award from the National Institute of Arts and Letters, and a Guggenheim Fellowship. Outside of the United States Babbitt's works have been performed in Austria, England, France, Germany, Italy, Norway, and Switzerland. He has contributed articles and reviews to numerous periodicals in this country and England, and is a member of the Committee of Direction of the Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center.

The following comments are by the composer:

"The *Composition for Four Instruments* was the second work (the first was my *Three Compositions for Piano*) written after a long, enforced 'vacation' from musical composition, occasioned by World War II. When I was able to return to sustained compositional activity, my prewar works seemed many stages removed from me, and therefore, I 'retired' them; I had, so to speak, 'thought' myself through a whole compositional phase during the war period, with no works to show for it. My new works, though employing as did many of my earlier works—the twelve-tone system, were concerned with embodying the extensions, generalizations, and fusions of certain techniques contained in the music of Schoenberg, Webern and Berg, and above all with applying the pitch operations of the twelve-tone system to non-pitch elements: durational rhythm, dynamics, phrase rhythm, timbre, and register, in such a manner as to preserve the most significant properties associated with these operations in the pitch domain when they are applied in these other domains.

"The *Composition for Four Instruments*, though a one-movement work, easily will be heard to divide into fifteen 'sections' as defined by the different instrumental combinations which characterize each of these sections. Correspondingly, this instrumental distribution will be heard to reflect, for example, the registral structure of the opening clarinet solo with regard to its initial three-note unit. Such interrelations of structure in the small and in the large provide, I believe, immediate means for the perception of the continuity of the work.

"My *Composition for Viola and Piano* usually has been regarded as a more 'accessible' work than that for four instruments, probably because the rhythmic materials make for a more easily comprehended rhythmic continuity on the surface. Also a one-movement work, this composition too can be heard to subdivide into clearly articulated sections; the first and last are characterized by the use of muted

viola, and, together with the piano and viola solo 'cadenzas,' serve to frame the three large-scale sections.

"I have applied the descriptive term 'composition' to many of my works in an attempt not only to avoid titles with inappropriate 'historical' and 'formal' connotations, but to convey relevant information about the works themselves. Since the word 'composition' is used to denote the process of forming the product of permutations, and also a partition in which the order of parts is significant, the word is, for the first reason, appropriately applicable to any twelve-tone work, and, for the second reason, particularly applicable to my music, in which the twelve-tone sets and aggregates are partitioned by differentiated timbres, registers, dynamics, and so on. I might add that I do not find the properties of abstractness and 'formalism' commonly associated with the word 'composition' displeasing."

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THE American Academy and its parent organization, the National Institute of Arts and Letters, are honorary societies with a distinguished membership of creative artists. They are chartered by act of Congress, and devoted to the furtherance of the arts in the United States.

Through joint committees of selection, these societies every year award fifteen grants of one thousand dollars each to young artists in recognition of distinction and promise. Three of these grants go annually to composers.

In the spring, an exhibition of the works of award winners in painting and sculpture is held at the Academy building. In 1956, it was decided to inaugurate a series with the similar purpose of calling attention to the works of award winners in music.

This release, presented with the collaboration of Composers Recordings, Inc., introduces to the public works by Milton Babbitt and John Bavicchi, 1959 award winners.

—DOUGLAS MOORE

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**JOHN BAVICCHI**

**Trio No. 4, Op. 33**

**David Glazer, *clarinet***

**Matthew Raimondi, *violin***

**Assunta Dell'Aquila, *harp***

**Short Sonata for Violin and Harpsichord, Op. 39**

**Robert Brink, *violin***

**Daniel Pinkham, *harpsichord***

JOHN BAVICCHI was born on April 25, 1922 in Boston, Massachusetts. His early studies were in the field of Civil Engineering and it was not until 1948 when he entered the New England Conservatory of Music that he became a serious musician. His later musical studies include three years at Harvard as a graduate student of Walter Piston.

The list of Bovicchi's music contains four trios, two violin sonatas, two cello sonatas, four works for full orchestra, a concerto for clarinet and string orchestra, two works for voice and chamber orchestra, a full length ballet, and several assorted chamber works.

In addition to the grant from the National Institute of Arts and Letters, Bovicchi received a commission for a string quartet from The Harvard Musical Association in 1960.

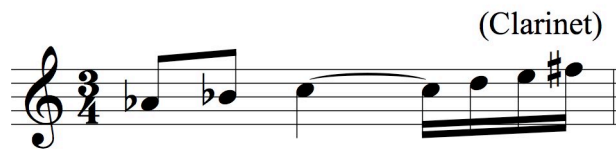
Following are the composer's comments on the *Trio No. 4, Op. 33* and the *Short Sonata, Op. 39*:

"In the first movement I use a 'pyramid' form involved with the statement of four themes  $A B C^D C B A$ . The structure is enlarged by the insertion of a short development section after each theme is stated and further enlarged by episodic material forming transitions. The form is extended even more by combining two or more of the melodies when they return. Also added, from material in the themes, are an introduction and a coda.

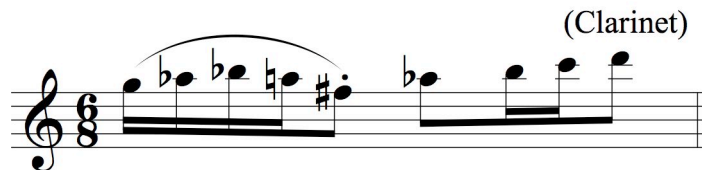
"The second movement is cast in the usual ABA mold. Theme A is stated at the outset in the clarinet and is taken up and extended by the violin. The harp then states Theme B which slides into a development section culminating in a big climax. Theme A returns, is extended, all the while combining with a new countermelody, and the movement closes quietly.

"The last movement of the Trio is built on a formal principle or device which is exciting to work with, and, to my knowledge, original in concept. The fundamental idea is one of expanding 'elements' of musical material, which is certainly not unique as a developmental device; but here I have attempted to use it as a formalistic principle. "There are four 'elements':

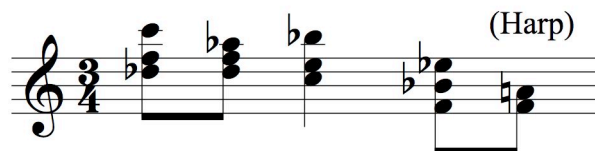
A



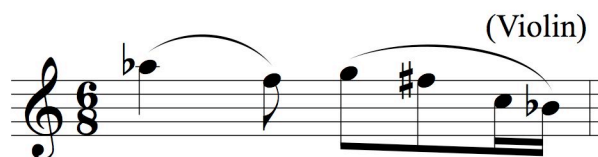
B



C



D



“These elements are stated in succession and then treated to a series of ‘expansions,’ with either the melody, rhythm or harmony being extended on each, eventuating in a flowering of each idea.

“The theory behind this construction is that the listener hears the same material in constant growth—ever new while still familiar.

“There is a middle section that is built on an augmentation of the melodies in the original elements taken in the order A-B-C-D. Counter-themes are introduced which are augmentations this time of the first movement themes. As the counterpoint runs its course the tempo gradually quickens, and sets the stage for a return to the elements of the original shape.

“The final section presents the elements first in reverse order, and then in combination.

“It is to be noted that the over-all form, while essentially ternary is entirely dependent on the four elements, and their development, first singly, then by transformation, and then by combining them.

“Erard’s ‘double-action pedal’ harp, as universally used today, presents as stimulating challenge to a contemporary idiom. In spite of the ingenious mechanism, it remains a ‘seven notes to the octave’ rather than a chromatic instrument, with the inescapable result that two forms of the same note can never be present at the same time (say, a B<sup>b</sup> and a B<sup>♯</sup>), and there must be time for a change of the B pedal when the two notes are

used in close juxtaposition. What is intriguing, of course, is the presence of A# which can be substituted for Bb; however this in turn eliminates A# , and the complexities which result from a chain of this type of manipulation can easily be perceived.

“I have attempted to adapt the harp to my own style of composition which is quite chromatic, and thus opposed to the classic concept of writing for the instrument. Needless to say, this requires a re-interpretation of the function of the pedals; heretofore the general idea was to ‘set’ the pedals and write music including only the resulting notes, resetting the pedals for another section of music. In the Trio the concept is one of constantly fluid pedal manipulation, the harpist changing some pedals while playing notes on the others already set. I feel the technique, though not particularly endearing me to harpists, is obviously within the potential of the instrument, and greatly increases its musical adaptability.

“The first movement of my *Short Sonata* is a free fantasy, concerned with the development of a series of three intervals treated harmonically, and a characteristic rhythm in 16th notes, partly melodic. This serves as introductory to a quietly flowing movement, which is actually in the form of one long continuous melody, interrupted twice by dramatic *fortissimo* interjections. A ternary last movement contains a twelve-tone melody in the opening section, moves to a contrasting second theme, and returns to the opening melody through a section that makes short reference to the first movement, in combination with diminutions of material in the third movement itself. The work comes to a close with a coda which makes quick reference to all three movements.”

—D. J.

*(Original liner notes from CRI LP jacket)*