Career as Composer

In my first year at college I found a clubroom with a piano and manuscript. This kindled the desire to compose and many hours were spent there experimenting with the sounds of the piano. Dissatisfied with a general major, I dropped out of the University of Wisconsin and attended the Wisconsin Conservatory of Music, studying harmony with Olive Andress. I returned to the university to finish my B.A. degree in music, studying composition with Cecil Burleigh. I then spent three months in New York studying violin with Madame Fonaroff.

I met Arthur Olaf Anderson in the summer of 1935 and showed him my first string quartet, following him to the University of Arizona to major in composition and to finish a master's degree. I also returned for another year toward my doctorate. I wrote a composition for male chorus and String Trio No. 1, and toured the state with Rolland Pease and the University of Arizona choruses, playing violin in the trio and singing in the choruses.

At the University of Arkansas, I wrote a manual for strings, for use in my classes there, and really started composing in earnest, especially after switching to the viola. The quality of the viola suggested the sound of ancient modes and the compositions of this period reflect the effort to find a certain archaic sound. Gradually this led to discarding

the traditional countrapuntal practices in favor of a kind of parallelism of open intervals reminiscent of the ancient organum. The more I worked with this kindof voice relationship the more fascinating it became. I now feel I have a great enough command of this idea to write a truly significant symphony that will avoid the percussive dramaticism of post Stravinsky music and present what might be called a new romanticism.

In California, I have written mostly for viola and small ensembles, because I believe in writing for myself and for the people with whom I am playing. A great many of these compositions were written for individual students as a challenge, both creatively and artistically; others were written for my own performances.