

The initial conception for my *Septet* lay in the idea of an instrumentation that would provide me with a kind of miniature orchestra. Including three stringed instruments in the ensemble would furnish a small string section, the viola and cello providing richness and depth. The flute and clarinet, the most agile of the woodwinds, form the wind section. Piano was desirable for thicker textures and for its bass register, and the percussion would provide splashes of orchestral color. The limitless possibilities for variety of sound color available to me helped shape the septet's sections, leading, for example to the central episode for strings and piano, flanked by two wind/percussion duets, the first for flute and vibraphone, the second for clarinet and marimba. This was also the first piece in which I used a melodic concept in composing for a group of drums graduated in size and "pitch" from low to high. In certain sections of the piece the drums are equal participants in the counterpunctal flow, and the percussionist must play them with his hands for subtlety and balance. The first music I composed was the section following the introduction, in which the violin plays a long, cantabile melody accompanied by a rich fabric of counter-melodies constantly shifting from one instrument to another. A strong current of lyricism flows through the piece from start to finish, and the many-layered textures are ever transparent, like a multi-faceted crystal. The *Septet* was written in 1987 for the Earplay ensemble, who gave the World Premiere performance in November of that year.