AN ANALYSIS OF QUARTET (1950) BY BERNARD H. GARFIELD

A CREATIVE PROJECT

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE

MASTER OF MUSIC

BY

MICHAEL MAJORS

DR. KEITH SWEGER - ADVISOR

BALL STATE UNIVERSITY

MAY 2016
Introduction

Although best known for having served as the principal bassoonist of the Philadelphia Orchestra for nearly half of the twentieth century, Bernard Garfield is also known among bassoonists for his editions of well-known bassoon works in addition to his own compositions. Of his earlier compositions, *Quartet (1950)* has become an often-performed work for bassoonists, not only because of the attractive quality of the piece, but because of the unique opportunity it provides to play chamber music with a string trio. This instrumentation is one of the primary reasons that Garfield composed this piece, and a certain point of discussion in this paper concerning performance matters.

While Garfield’s career as a performer is somewhat unprecedented in length, playing with Philadelphia from 1957-2000, his career as a composer was interrupted for the over forty years he spent with the Philadelphia Orchestra. This career began when Garfield was only ten years old and beginning to play piano, when he would compose “simple piano pieces for [his] own enjoyment.”1 As a pianist studying at the High School of Music and Art, Garfield was required to play a different instrument in order to participate in the orchestra. This was his introduction the bassoon, which was foisted upon him during his freshman year, and it made a lasting impression. Upon graduation from high school, Garfield continued his bassoon studies with Simon Kovar at Juilliard, while pursuing a degree in literature from New York University.

Garfield’s study was suddenly interrupted by the draft for World War II, which took Garfield to England where he served with the 70th Infantry Band. After being discharged, he continued musical studies in London at the Guildhall School of Music, then the Royal College of Music. 

---

Music, earning an Associate Diploma. It was upon his return to America and finishing of studies at NYU, that Garfield pursued a master’s in composition at Columbia University. At Columbia, Garfield was able to convince Otto Luening, one of his composition professors, that composing *Quartet (1950)* should stand in place of the requisite symphony usually demanded for graduation.

**The Music**

*Quartet (1950)* features a rarely seen pairing of bassoon with a string trio of violin, viola, and cello. Garfield’s intention was to utilize the distinct qualities of these three instruments in a sonata-like accompaniment to the bassoon, taking the place of a typical piano-bassoon duo. Moreover, the difficulties presented in having a bassoon accompanied by a piano were to be addressed, as Garfield was originally a pianist and intimately aware of the issues present. The most simple of these issues is the much wider dynamic capability the piano can create in contrast to what the bassoon can generate, which makes both soft and loud passages difficult for both musicians to perform evenly. Intonation becomes an issue, as well, for the lower register of the piano is tuned in direct opposition to the natural tendencies of the bassoon, the piano tending to be flat in comparison to the same notes leaning sharp on a bassoon.

In performing this piece, I found both of the previous issues, dynamics and intonation, to be quite easily addressed by the arrangement of the trio. As far as intonation is concerned, the difficulty of matching the fixed pitches of a well-tempered piano are easily addressed with the string players present, who are able to adjust pitches quite easily to create just-intoned chords. Concerning dynamics, the balance between the stringed instruments and bassoon is far easier to

---

manage than that between a piano and bassoon. Although any one of these stringed instruments
can generally achieve a softer dynamic than the bassoon, collectively the ensemble can produce
the desired effect. On the opposite side of the dynamics coin is the better balance of louder
dynamics, with strings more equally matched to the volume of the bassoon.

Another aspect of the string trio that adds to the discussion of dynamics is that of
sustained pitches. A piano is unable to alter the dynamics of a sustaining pitch, for once the
hammer strikes the string the only control that can be exercised over the tone is if the pianist
wishes for it to end before the natural taper. Wind and string players are able not only to sustain
for as long as breath or bow will allow, but can adjust crescendo, decrescendo, vibrato and many
other aspects of the pitch. This, naturally, leads to options in a composition that would not be
possible with a bassoon-piano duet, and Garfield uses this to great effect.

The remainder of this paper will be separated by movement, with a discussion of general
music analysis and performance experience with particular attention paid to advantages and
challenges presented in the playing of this piece.
Movement I - Allegro con Spirito

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Measure Numbers</th>
<th>Keys Emphasized</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>1-16</td>
<td>F-Major, a-minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>17-26</td>
<td>C-Major, Ab-Major, C-Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>27-33</td>
<td>Bb-Major, A-Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>34-41</td>
<td>A-Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>42-52</td>
<td>Db-Mixolydian, Ab-Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>53-61</td>
<td>Modulatory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>62-73</td>
<td>G-Major, mod., C-Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>74-90</td>
<td>F-Major, D-Major, mod.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>91-106</td>
<td>Bb-Major, C-Major, F-Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>107-120</td>
<td>F-Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>121-123</td>
<td>F-Major</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Formal Diagram of Movement I.

The first movement of this quartet is in a Rondo form that appears as A-B-A-C-B-A-C-A-B-C-A, and begins with a lively melodic introduction from the strings in octaves. This simple line starting the A section, of four sixteenth-notes followed by seven eighth-notes, is the basis for much of the harmonic structure throughout the remainder of the movement (see Example 1). Immediately after the piece is launched by this string melody, the bassoon introduces a triplet
feature in m. 2 that appears only twice in the movement: in mm. 2 and 5-6, and again in mm. 75 and 78-79 (Example 2). This triplet feature is not the only important aspect of this measure, as we see the inversion of the inceptive sixteenth-note melody. Garfield employs a back-and-forth of these sixteenth-notes simply, but effectively, to enhance the upward and downward motions of the melodic phrases that follow these initial notes. Especially notable is the use of this during the transition from the end of A into B, in mm. 13-16, where Garfield follows the sequential downward leading sixteenths with a scale passage, which he uses as accompaniment gestures throughout the movement and in each successive transition out of A sections.

While the melody and harmonies of the A section bounce back and forth between slurred sixteenths and articulated eighths, the B section stands in opposition with a very smooth quarter-note melody in the violin accompanied by the same sixteenth gesture from m. 1 shared between the cello and viola (Example 3). This trading of the same gesture across instruments and octaves creates a gentle rocking that continues to move the music forward, as a moored boat against the shore driven but without picking up speed. This rocking helps to build tension as the violin is joined by the bassoon in octaves in m. 23, growing through a crescendo to a transition based on the A section with an extended passage of sixteenths in the violin, similar to m. 13 in the bassoon.

These sixteenth-notes in the violin create a harmonic underpinning that elides into the next melodic section, mm. 34-41, which draws a juxtaposition of pizzicato viola and cello against the athletic bassoon melody of staccato sixteenths and eighths. This short, merry interlude turns quickly to the B melody in m. 42 with the bassoon seemingly interjecting over top of the strings finishing the C section. In this second B section, and carrying on into the coming A
section, Garfield chooses to momentarily forgo the near constant motion of sixteenth-notes that have been present across the movement. While the landscape of the score is temporarily changed, the forward motion continues with the use of *pizzicato* eighth-notes in the cello in mm. 44-47.

This change to the harmony also signals the beginning of Garfield varying the original harmonic material associated with each section. The next transitional A section, beginning in m. 53, introduces a different violin line of an octave displacement followed by an eleven-tuplet, and additionally Garfield lengthens the passage from seven measures, previously seen in mm. 27-33, to nine by adding another measure of the eleven-tuplet followed by a measure of harmony similar to m. 17. Garfield continues to encroach coming thematic melodies upon the harmonies of the current section, as in m. 68, where the B theme in the bassoon is interposed above the second measure of C theme in the violin, which brings about a series of scale passages that lead to an abrupt cesura.

Measure 74 reintroduces the A theme more forcefully as a *fortissimo* and *marcato* entrance of all four voices, doubling many parts that were single voices before, until falling into the same arrangement for mm. 78-87 as the opening. This transition point, mm. 88-90, transposes the previous two measures down a minor 2nd, which introduces a different key center and begins the dismantling of the themes. The next B theme only appears in the violin, while the bassoon plays a variation of the C theme as the two voices continue to trade melodic snippets back and forth until the final C theme. Here, at m. 107, the C section is presented similarly to its initial introduction in m. 34, although transposed, but moves into an elongated transitional area at m. 112. After a long trip through various harmonic changes, this area clearly and emphatically
establishes the key of F Major through the use of transitional material scale passages leading to m. 121. The last two measures employ the same octave emphasis as the opening and m. 74, but Garfield alters the resolution of m. 122 in order to follow a series of perfect-5th leaps until using C# as a neighbor tone to bring about a clear V-I resolution across the voices.

With all of the play in themes, especially as the movement progresses toward the end, the bassoonist must be acutely aware of his role in the ensemble. While the opening of the piece certainly favors the bassoon as a soloist voice with string accompaniment, the first B section has the violin introducing the new melody with violin and bassoon in octaves to complete the theme. This only grows more complicated as the movement proceeds through the various sections and begins to overlap many melodies. One such consideration during my preparation of this movement was to discuss bowings amongst the string players, not as a consideration of visual pleasure with bows moving in the same direction, but as a means of melodic emphasis. This is an important consideration on the part of a wind performer who must be aware of the different tendencies of the upward and downward traveling bow as it affects the production of sound.

**Movement II - Andante espressivo**

Garfield continues in a traditional sonata structure with a slow second movement that is rich in sonority and wrought with tension. It is in this movement that Garfield utilizes the advantages of sustained pitches, in all of the instruments, that would otherwise not be available to the composer in a sonata written with piano as the accompanying voice. The only theme of this monothematic movement is an utterly simple one, and presented in unison across three octaves by the strings (Example 4). In this short, four-measure introduction, Garfield has only given himself an eighth-note theme to expound upon, so in order to create interest and variation
in the movement, he eschews any sort of tonal center from the very beginning, although maintaining a tonal sound. The notes of the first two measures outline an E-dim chord, with A as a passing tone, which is then immediately followed by an Fm9 chord. In the next measure, the bassoon reiterates the first two measures over top of an harmonic presentation by the strings, then repeats this all transposed up a minor second in mm. 7-8.

In these opening eight measures the harmonies have appeared as such: E diminished, F-minor 9, G-minor, A-minor, G♯-minor, B♭-augmented to B♭-minor. This confusion of harmony continues through to m. 11, where the violin and viola settle on a minor third that seems to point our ear to an A-minor chord, but we are deceived. The cello joins the two voices with a C♯ in direct opposition to the minor chord, with the bassoon presenting the fifth of the chord in an example of the sustained chords that can be used by this ensemble. The pathos of this section continues with a cello-bassoon duet that pushes us into another voicing of mm. 5-6 by the violin over the same harmony from that section.

The *piu mosso* section at m. 22 shows a sudden shift as the bassoon presents what appears as a momentary melody, but is mere arpeggiation over the theme in the cello. This is intensified with another measure of arpeggiation across all voices leading to a *fortissimo piano* tremolo in violin and viola against the cello and bassoon pitted against each other in minor seconds. By this point in the movement we are able to see that Garfield wishes to guide us through a harmonic maze. At the Tempo I, beginning in m. 36, Garfield has contrived a “circle of tritones” progression of minor seventh chords, none of which give any hint toward the coming long sustained F7 chord. This has the same affect as the harmonic planing for which Debussy and Ravel were known a mere 40 years before this piece was written.
For the return of the theme in m. 48, Garfield augments the melody by lowering the pitches of the last three notes by a minor second and presents a new harmonic function in the strings (Example 5). These two measures serve as a prelude to the only V-I relation in the entire movement in mm. 65-67, but because of the lack of any previous tonal center, it does not sound like a resolution. As well, the presence of a raised seventh in m. 67 makes the tonal function sound more similar to a I-IV\(^7\) when this A major to D\(^\#\)\(^7\) chord is presented. All of the tension and tragedy depicted in this movement are given a final, but gentle, release in the pianissimo F\(^\#\) major chord in the last measure.

The emotion of this movement cannot be understated. The massive and sudden dynamic shifts must have close attention paid in order that the effect may be properly transmitted to the audience. Garfield uses many aspects of the bassoon knowing the tendencies of the instrument, such as in m. 51 where the low B is played at a forte level over pizzicato strings. The tension intended here is benefited by the natural disposition of that note on the bassoon, which is usually brash and buzzy. As well, the last two measures are notes that the bassoon does not play very quietly with the normal fingerings, but Garfield has chosen these notes purposefully in order to use what are called muted fingerings, which he provides in the bassoonist’s part. This helps to produce a magnificently quiet closing to this beautiful movement, but it must be practiced in context in order to prepare for the differences in pressure and response that occur in the instrument.
Movement III - Allegro scherzando

In the opening of this sonata-form movement, Garfield contrasts the previous two movements, which open with strings in octaves, with a lively bassoon melody over a minimal string accompaniment. This melody explores the different directions tonality can quickly take by using rapidly transitioning perfect-fifths and oscillating chromatic movement, but both the melody and harmony eventually point us to a key center of F Major. This reflects back to Mvt. I, which had a far more distinct tonality than that of the undulating tonal centers in Mvt. II. While the key centers are typically more clear in this movement, the focus of Garfield’s sonata form is not on key centers, as the classical era espoused, but on the expansion of melodic devices instead.

There are a few repeated melodic devices, derived from this first melody, that occur frequently throughout the movement. The first is two sixteenth-notes followed by a succession of eighth-notes, with the first three pitches outlining a circle-of-fifths progression, and the following eighths moving in generally stepwise motion (Example 6). The second is a sequence of two sixteenths followed by one eighth moving chromatically upward, then restarting, but a minor second below the preceding pitch (Example 7). A third device is based on aspects of the first, with perfect-fifths occurring across eighth-notes, but ending on a sustained pitch of a major second above the preceding note (Example 7). As is typical for a sonata movement, nearly all of the content of this piece is based on some derivation from this initial melody from mm. 1-12.

Between mm. 15-50, Garfield refers to that third perfect-fifth device, although prolonged, again taking the listener through a maze of chord changes that eventually return to F Major. A different tone for the first two-sixteenth-note device appears at m. 50, where the melody
turns from a bouncy introduction to a heavy, persistent theme over a C# drone in the cello. The intensity continues to build until m. 62 when the bassoon settles on a low B-natural as the strings continue falling through a diminuendo to land on a boat-like, swaying motion similar to Mvt. I. Measure 70 becomes lyrical, with the bassoon continuing perfect-fifth leaps in the upper range of the instrument with the swaying strings underneath. The downward leap of the end of this melody is passed back and forth from the violin to bassoon in a constant diminuendo until an abrupt forte passage of accented eighths enters in mm. 82-85. Not to be dismayed, the lyrical melody returns to the strings in mm. 86-96, with the bassoon taking up the swaying motion until another forte interjection occurs in mm. 97-105, but with this one ending in diminuendo. Another raucous moment occurs between mm. 106-111, with the cello playing double-stop, utilizing the lowest string, and all other voices sustaining long forte and sforzando notes. A return of the initial theme, transposed down a major second, comes in m. 112 in the bassoon, and then violin, as a light-hearted interlude before the return of the content from m. 50, which ends not in a repeat of material from m. 70, but with a reworking of mm. 39-49, as if the movement were moving in regression. This is, instead, a prelude to the coming development section.

The first half of the development section, mm. 156-187, is marked by major seventh chords moving back and forth, offset by a major second. The only melody between mm. 158-172 is that of outlining chord structures in the bassoon and cello while the violin and viola play near continual double-stop eighth-notes. Measure 173 marks a more audibly obvious vacillation between E#7 and D#7 in unison rhythm across all voices, with a G# sforzando in both bassoon and cello offering an intense release from the energetic eighth-notes. There is a sudden change
with a bassoon entrance in the extreme lower register playing half-notes into a fermata with strings playing *pizzicato*.

While the first half of the development played with the harmonic aspects of the movement, mimicking the trading of seventh chords from mm. 70-81, the second half, mm. 187-224, makes light of the melodic devices we have seen throughout the movement. The first change to melodic motives begins immediately with a shift of weight on the first two sixteenth-notes from being the pick-up to the melody, to occurring on the downbeat. While subtle, this shift encompasses the remainder of the development. After the four-bar introduction, the bassoon is joined by the viola repeating the previous four bars, and in m. 195 the bassoon plays a measure of sixteenth-notes that are an exact reduction of the notes from the preceding four measures. With another repeat of this most recent introduction Garfield begins to confuse rhythms by obfuscating the meter in mm. 200-201 with slurs that carry support to the coming $\frac{3}{8}$ measures’ rhythm. Garfield continues to play with these rhythms, elongating some portions of the introduction and others truncating, in order to fit within the irregular meters here.

The development comes to a close with two contrasting sections. Measures 219-224 contain a dissonant selection of perfect-fourth and perfect-fifth motions in the voices, reflecting on mm. 8-9, while following a *molto accelerando* and *crescendo*. This is a wild and furious race over the course of only six measures that ends abruptly. Juxtaposed to this section are the rich, reflective harmonies of mm. 225-227, whose diminution of mm. 174-175 come in stark contrast to the measures whence they came. With a small reference to the first three notes of the movement in mm. 231-232, the bassoon heralds the coming of the recapitulation.
From mm. 233-270, the harmonic structure of the recapitulation is exactly as it appeared at the opening. There are a few slight differences, especially in the first four measures of the recap, but the most notable is a viola solo in mm. 247-259 that is now present where the viola had no part in the opening. From mm. 271-349, Garfield has given a nod to the classical era by transposing the exposition section down a minor third in some places, and up a perfect-fifth in others, and while not a perfect mirror of the conventional sonata form, the intention is clear.

We are treated to a final coda in mm. 350-366 based on a blending of aspects from all three melodic devices. In addition, Garfield has hidden the *accelerando* pattern from the development inside of the string parts during their *accelerando* from mm. 353-356. Again, in mm. 357-360, Garfield insists on one last confusion of tonality as he puts the bassoon through a series of fifths, then transposes the part up a minor second to bring the bassoon, viola, and cello to a sustained G#-minor chord while the violin furiously arpeggiates the chord through sixteenth-notes. After this, Garfield relents to allowing the whole ensemble a unison resolution, which seems to give a half-cadence of sorts on a C, if we may say the overall tonality of the movement is F.

The third movement requires close attention to detail on technique for the quick passages, but demands just as much attention to dynamic contrast and melodic accent throughout. Garfield uses massive dynamic shifts to draw attention to new iterations of melodic ideas, and these must be treated with care. One of the most important aspects of attention to the melodic accent is ensuring that the downbeat of the altered theme in m. 187 is given the proper weight. If it is performed in the same way as the initial theme at the beginning of the movement, the emphasis is lost when this development section moves further along the track of developing these
melodies. As to the technical passages for the bassoon, most figures sit quite comfortably, but special scrutiny should be paid to playing mm. 86-89 as smoothly as possible in order to properly imitate the strings who had this figure just a few measures earlier.

This piece is a wonderful example of small ensemble literature, not just for the bassoon, but for strings as well. It is an attractive piece worthy of being performed for its aural beauty and for the valuable learning experience of performing with strings in a setting that is not usually afforded to wind players.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Music Examples
All examples from Bernard Garfield’s *Quartet (1950) for Bassoon, Violin, Viola and Violoncello.*

Example 1: Mvt. I, violin, mm. 1-2.

Example 2: Mvt. I, bassoon, m. 2. (Bass Clef)

Example 3: Mvt. I, viola and cello, mm. 17-18. (Tenor and Bass Clefs, respectively)

Example 4: Mvt. II, violin, mm. 1-4.
Example 5: Mvt. II, score, mm. 48-49.

Example 6: Mvt. III, bassoon, mm. 1-2.

Example 7: Mvt. III, bassoon, mm. 4-7.

Example 8: Mvt. III, bassoon, mm. 8-9.