

"I composed the *Serbelloni Serenade* at the Villa Serbelloni in Bellagio, Italy. This wonderful place, run by the Rockefeller Foundation as a retreat for scholars and artists, is beautiful and peaceful. As I had previously been writing a book on music and post-modernism, I had little time before coming to Bellagio to plan what music I would compose. I knew only that it was to be a trio for clarinet, violin, and piano for the magnificent Verdehr Trio.

My first day at the center I went to the composer's studio in the woods overlooking Lake Como. I stared at blank music paper. Three weeks later, I drew a double bar at the conclusion of the piece. Freed from concerns of daily existence and living far away from the outside world, I was able to work uninterrupted for eight to ten hours a day, seven days a week.

Since one of the theses of my book is the demise of structural unity in post-modern music, I wanted the music to have a healthy degree of disunity: *non sequiturs*, 'discontinuities,' unrelated materials, surprises. But pieces have minds of their own. Probably because I wrote it in one intense period, thinking of little else, the *Serbelloni Serenade* ended up tightly unified. I kept discovering that different parts of the piece, which had tricked me into believing that they were unrelated, were actually thinly disguised variants of each other. I saw that the form, far from being the free association of ideas I had wanted, was quite logical. To my amazement, I found the piece beginning and ending in the same key!

This serenade is nonetheless post-modern in its use of different styles, references to various historical periods, and surprising juxtaposition. But, because of how it was written, it is more integrated than I had expected or planned it to be. I am amused when I compare it to another recent chamber piece, *A Game*, for cello and piano (1988-1992). When I wrote that short piece, I was not so consciously interested in disunity. However, it came out delightfully chaotic, because it was composed over a four-year period of considerable change in my life: I moved from a small Midwestern city to a large Northeastern one, and from a music conservatory to an academic music department. Just as *A Game* unintentionally reflects my chaotic life when I wrote it, so the *Serbelloni Serenade* shows how orderly my existence was when I composed it. It resolutely refused to become the statement on disorder I had tried to make it.

Also, the Verdehr Trio had wanted a piece with aspects of jazz as in several of my earlier composition. I tried to incorporate jazz elements, but again, the piece was not going to allow me to dictate to it. Almost every time I tried to inject some swing, *Serbelloni* rejected it. Thus, the piece has only a few small hints of jazz.

With the help of the *Serbelloni Serenade*, I have discovered my love of chamber music. This music is not jazz, and it is not a statement of ideas that properly belong in a book. No, it is simply a piece of chamber music, composed for some wonderful chamber musicians. That is what it insisted on becoming throughout its three-week gestation period, and—despite its composer's intentions to the contrary—that is what it ultimately is."

—Jonathan D. Kramer

The world premiere of *Serbelloni Serenade* was on January 12, 1997 at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.

Jonathan D. Kramer (1942–2004) was born in Hartford, Connecticut. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree *magna cum laude* from Harvard University followed by a master's degree and PhD from the University of California at Berkeley. His composition teachers included Karlheinz Stockhausen, Roger Sessions, Leon Kirchner, Seymour Shifrin, and Andrew Imbrie.

Kramer's instrumental music has been performed in twenty-three countries by such ensembles as the London Philharmonic, Warsaw Philharmonic, Seoul Philharmonic, and National Orchestra of El Salvador. Three times his works were featured at the World Music Days Festival of the International Society for Contemporary Music (Israel, Holland, and Poland). Performances across the United States have been given by orchestras in Cincinnati, Seattle, Cleveland, Sacramento, St. Paul, and St. Louis among others.

Kramer's honors include a Barlow Endowment Commission, the Ohio Governor's Award for Individual Artists, three Composer Fellowships from the National Endowment of the Arts, an Independent Research Grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, a fellowship from the New York Foundation for the Arts, the Aliénor Harpsichord Composition Award, and three individual Artist Fellowship Grants from the Ohio Arts Council.

An active writer on music, Kramer published numerous articles and the books *The Time of Music* and *Listen to the Music*. At the time of his death, he had just completed the book *Postmodern Music, Postmodern Listening* which was published by Bloomsbury Press in 2016.

Kramer taught at the Oberlin Conservatory, Yale University, and the University of Cincinnati where he was also the Cincinnati Symphony Composer-in-Residence 1984-1992. From 1988 until his death in 2004, Kramer was Professor of Composition and Theory at Columbia University. Two funds at Columbia were named in honor of Kramer: The Jonathan D. Kramer Memorial Fund for Young Composers and The Jonathan D. Kramer Legacy Fund.