

Trio (1999)

Kurt Rohde

I. Calling

II. Elegy

III. Yield

IV. In Memoriam

“The work opens with a *Calling*, a type of call and response. The bold, opening declamation in the piano is answered by the violin and clarinet with an out-of-phase, dream-like response. It was intended that this ‘calling’ in the piano actually draws the clarinet and violin voices nearer with each statement. At the movement’s conclusion, all three instruments arrive at the same place and are ready to proceed.

A brief *Elegy* follows the first movement. The simple opening clarinet tune is nothing more than a disjunct scale in wide, yearning intervals. Accompanied by slow moving chords in the violin and piano, this tune reappears in the final movement. The ‘elegy’ here is more a state of mood, emphasizing the difference in types of space, both vast and very close together.

The final movement, *In Memoriam*, opens with the music that closed the first movement. As it unfolds, the music gradually changes into a melody that is borrowed from another work altogether. The C minor theme from the middle section of the *Rondo* of Mozart’s *Kegelstatt Trio* (written for the same instrumental combination) appears as if being heard through a veil of ages, or viewed through the distorted lens of a 250-year-old telescope. In the midst of this reference there is the strange disjunct tune from the *Elegy*, bringing these two different worlds closer together. Throughout the movement, the clarinetist gradually leads the other instruments offstage, finally playing at a distance; two worlds which orbit the same star, connected but nonetheless separate. The music returns to the far-away place from where the piece began. This movement attempts to pay tribute to the lovely and innovative work of Mozart’s, which was probably the first trio combination of its kind.”

—Kurt Rohde

The world premiere of *Trio* was on October 23, 1999 at the Music Teachers National Association (MTNA) Conference, Detroit, Michigan. It is an MTNA commissioned work.

Kurt Rohde (born 1966, New York, New York) is a violist and composer in the San Francisco Bay area. He is a graduate of the Peabody Institute at Johns Hopkins University, the Curtis Institute of Music, and SUNY, Stony Brook. He has studied viola with Karen Tuttle, John Graham, and Caroline Levine; composition with Donald Erb, Joan Tower, Oliver Knussen, Ned Rorem, and Andrew Imbrie.. He has attended the Yaddo, D’jerassi, Willapa Bay, Montalvo, and MacDowell resident artists programs and participated as a Fellow at the Tanglewood Music Center and Wellesley Composer Conference.

Rohde has been the recipient of the Rome Prize, the Berlin Prize, a Guggenheim Fellowship, a Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Studies Fellowship, and an Arts and Letters Award in Music from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. He was the winner of the 1998 Lydian String Quartet Composition Contest which resulted in a commission for that ensemble. In 2015, he was keynote speaker at the Festival of New American Music at Sacramento State University.

Rohde has received commission awards from New Music USA, the NEA, and the Barlow, Fromm, Hanson, and Koussevitzky Foundations. He has created new works for the Lyris Quartet, ZOFO Duet, eighth blackbird, the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, the Scharoun Ensemble, the Left Coast Chamber Ensemble, the Brooklyn Art Society, the Aldeburgh Festival, and the Pacific Rim Festival. With a grant from the Aaron Copland Fund for Music, his music for strings has been recorded by the New Century Chamber Orchestra.

Rohde is Professor of Music Composition and Theory at the University of California at Davis where he was co-director of the Empyrean Ensemble until 2015. He is a violist with the Left Coast Chamber Ensemble and serves as Artistic Advisor for the group. He is also a curator at the Center for New Music. From 1994 to 2014, he was a member of The New Century Chamber Orchestra.

In 2017, Rohde embarked on a multi-year commissioning project to create and perform new works for solo viola; viola and electronics; and viola and piano by thirty under-recognized composers. As a new music initiative, the project is called *Kurt's Farewell Tour: Parts 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6*. The anticipated year of completion is 2028, at which time Rohde will retire from playing and donate his instrument to "some talented whipper-snapper who wants to play viola."

Additional information is available at www.kurtrohde.com.