

“When Walter Verdehr, violinist in the Verdehr Trio, emailed me with the idea of my composing a work for the group, I responded by asking if he had any specific thoughts about the sort of piece that would best meet their needs. He replied, ‘Since our concerts have taken us around the world—to China, India, Australia, Europe, Russia and all the States in the USA—you might find some musical inspiration from the idea of visiting some of these places. I have enjoyed your musical language and world very much and would trust your ideas and inspiration.’

Immediately I thought of Corsica, the most intriguing and one of the most beautiful places I have visited. I remembered the jagged mountains, the scrubby Arizona-like landscape, the tiny, sleepy stone villages, the crumbling Genoan watchtowers scanning the amazingly blue Mediterranean, the pristine beaches, the chestnut forests, the fierce local culture, the strong wine and cheese and salads laced with the bacon of wild boars. And I remembered the smoke and the flames of forest fires deliberately set by separatists, the mysterious prehistoric sculptures, the long, proud, sad history of the island, birthplace of the dictator Napoleon yet also of Paoli, the champion of democracy who inspired the framers of the American constitution. And I remembered the Corsicans I had met, proud and fierce, yet possessed of a good humor.

Most of all I remembered the intense, dry heat and my nearly desperate thirst when I foolishly set out on a hike from the capital city, Corte, with too little water. I’ve never been thirstier than I was that day! It was getting downright scary by the time I got back to the city and found some water.

And I remembered the incredible aroma that pervades the island as the hot breezes carry the scent of herbs growing wild on the mountainsides—oregano, rosemary, sage, and thyme. They say fishermen in their boats, forty miles downwind from Corsica, can catch the smell of herbs on the wind. I believe this.

All these impressions came together in a three-movement work, the best evocation I can fashion of my very distinct memories of that strange, timeless and enchanting place. The movements are:

1. *Arid Heat*: slow, almost static, jagged, ‘empty,’ and a little harsh, all of which will create a ‘thirst’ for the refreshing second movement
2. *Aromatic Breezes*: lively, tuneful, rich, breezy, fresh, wonderful, like a drink of cool water after a hot, dry hike
3. *Ardent Souls*: the irrepressible Corsican spirit, quick to anger, quick to laugh.”

—Rick Sowash

The world premiere of *Trio No. 3: Memories of Corsica* was on November 16, 2008 in the Music Room, The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.

Rick Sowash (born 1950, Mansfield, Ohio) lives by his wits as a full-time freelance speaker, humorist, author, and composer. He holds the Bachelor of Science degree in music composition and comparative literature, from what he calls “a prestigious American School of Music which I hated so much that I refuse to name.” He describes himself as an “outsider composer” in that he is not associated with any academic institution or commercial organization, and he has lived much of his life outside a major metropolitan area. He currently resides in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Sowash has composed one hundred sixty-five works, mostly for chamber ensembles and choral ensembles, but also including art songs and orchestral works. He wrote the soundtrack for the PBS documentary, *Ohio: 200 Years*, for the Ohio Bicentennial in 2003. In the same year, two of his chamber works won acclaim at the Cannes Film Festival. His *Clarinet Quintet* was premiered in Paris in 1996; his *Clarinet Concerto* was first heard in Cincinnati in 2008. The *Concerto for Cello with*

*Strings and Clarinet* was premiered in Carnegie Hall in 2007. He was a featured composer at the Adirondacks Festival of American Music in 1995. He is a member of ASCAP and the American Music Center.

Sowash is an independent producer of compact disc recordings, and he also works with Gasparo Records. Twelve of his chamber works have been commercially recorded and broadcast on many American classical music stations. He has self-published a number of his musical scores.

As a successful speaker-humorist, Sowash performs about one hundred engagements annually for a wide variety of audiences. He is the author of *Critters, Flitters & Spitters*, *Heroes of Ohio*, *Ripsnorting Whoppers: Humor from American's Heartland*, two novels, a book of family reminiscences, a non-fiction book on reading choices, and numerous essays, both humorous and serious. He is also a silent film accompanist, providing live, improvised film scores on the piano for silent film classics at cultural centers, colleges, resort areas, and historic theatres. He presented a festival of American silent film classics at the Taipei Culture Center, Republic of China in 1988 and 1990. Sowash takes pride in being one of the few American composers ever to be elected to public office.

Additional information can be found at [www.sowash.com](http://www.sowash.com).