

“Several times during the 1990s Walter Verdehr, my Michigan State University colleague, invited me to write a piece for the renowned Verdehr Trio, the clarinet-violin-piano trio that he founded with his wife, Elsa Ludewig-Verdehr in 1972 (just one year, coincidentally, before I joined the MSU faculty). I regret that it took me so long to compose something for the Verdehrs, but the delay wasn’t due to lack of interest. I’ve been a great admirer of Elsa and Walter as solo performers and of their superb trio for many years, and I’m honored that they asked me to contribute to the distinctive repertoire that their talents and hard work have brought to life during the past three decades, but a variety of other exigent projects during the 1990s prevented me from working on a piece for the Verdehr Trio until the fall of 2001.

For years now both Elsa and Walter have been attracted to the paintings of my daughter Maria Fiorenza Ruggiero Sidiropoulos. Not only have the Verdehrs purchased several of Maria’s paintings for their home, but they also have used a few of her images on Verdehr Trio posters and as part of their website. Every now and then, when I’d run into Walter in the halls of MSU’s School of Music or chat with him after one of the trio’s summer performances at MSU’s Wharton Center, he would say something like, ‘About that piece we’d like you to write...wouldn’t it be wonderful if you could tie it in with some of Maria’s paintings?’ And at one point Walter suggested that it would be delightful to have a number of Maria’s paintings exhibited at the site of the premiere of my composition for the Verdehr Trio.

I liked Walter’s idea that I relate my composition in some way to my daughter’s work, but I did not want to write a ‘pictures-at-an-exhibition’ type of piece. And I especially did not want to try to convey my impressions of Maria’s depiction of some idyllic landscape located in a region of the world I’d never set foot in. After considerable thought, I decided to try to develop a musical composition using techniques or procedures analogous to those Maria has been using in some of her recent (2000–2001) paintings.

Collage-1912 isn’t based on any particular painting or paintings, nor is it intended to impart my musical impressions of, or responses to, the things and places represented in any of Maria’s paintings; rather, this musical composition was created using steps analogous to those my daughter has used to transform some of her smaller still-life paintings into larger, more abstract landscapes. Maria’s still-life paintings, like many traditional still-lives, are representations of more-or-less common household objects—glasses, dishes, candlesticks, vases, pieces of fruit, etc.—arranged in a very ‘artificial’ manner. That’s to say, arranged not as they would be if someone were preparing for a dinner party, but arranged as a composition of shapes, colors, shadings, etc. Quite often in Maria’s still-life paintings, compositional motifs take precedence over ‘reality.’ For example, in one painting the pattern of a tablecloth is imprinted upon objects that sit on top of the cloth instead of being obscured by them. Although these small still-life paintings are already somewhat abstract, a more marked abstraction takes place in the next phase of the process, where various elements from some of these still-life paintings are used in the development of enlarged companion works.

Maria has produced a series of works in which she has attempted, quite successfully I believe, to transform original but somewhat conventional still-life paintings into bold landscapes that can (should?) be viewed in multiple ways. For example, a large piece might be perceived as an autonomous, rather loose, rhythmic, and intense post-impressionistic landscape and simultaneously seen as a radical permutation of the still-life painting with which it is paired.

How did the creation of *Collage-1912* relate to the process outlined above? I started my piece for the Verdehr Trio by fashioning a musical still-life of sorts. I snipped many passages from a dozen compositions (all of which were either composed or published in 1911 or 1912—hence the title) and rather ‘artificially’ arranged them into a musical ‘still-life.’ This part of the process took about two

months—much more time than I had anticipated! In the next step of the compositional process, I modified the musical still-life by rearranging, supplementing, subtracting from, distorting, overlapping, fusing, etc. the snippets to create the final composition.

Every measure of *Collage-1912* is based on one or more snippets (including a few fairly substantial excerpts) taken from one composition by each of the following twelve composers: Béla Bartók, Irving Berlin, Claude Debussy, W.C. Handy, Charles Ives, Gustav Mahler, Maurice Ravel, Arnold Schoenberg, James Scott, Richard Strauss, Igor Stravinsky, and Joaquín Turina. A diverse group of snippets, to be sure, but perhaps not as diverse as one might guess from reading any standard college textbook on the history of Western music! The use of existing music to create a new work is, of course, nothing new. Not only were numerous European medieval, renaissance, and baroque pieces constructed with borrowed materials, but many twentieth-century composers, including some of the twelve composers whose music is used in *Collage-1912*, particularly Ives and Stravinsky, have quoted and parodied music from various sources extensively in certain compositions.

Collage-1912, which is approximately eleven minutes in duration, consists of two parts that are performed with no pause between them. This work is dedicated to the Verdehr Trio, to my daughter Maria, and to all twelve of the composers whose raw materials I mined for the ‘still-life’ and consequent collage (or ‘abstract musical landscape’) by which, I must admit, I’ve attempted to depict a significant chunk of the Western music world circa 1912.”

—Charles Ruggiero

The world premiere of *Collage-1912* was on May 30, 2002 in the Verdehr Trio Summer Chamber Music Concert Series at the Wharton Center, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan.

Charles Ruggiero (born 1947, Bridgeport, Connecticut) holds degrees from the New England Conservatory and Michigan State University where he received the Ph.D. in composition in 1979. He has been a university instructor since 1971, teaching in four disciplines: composition, music theory, jazz studies, and percussion. He joined the faculty at Michigan State in 1973. Early in his tenure he served as director of the jazz and new-music ensembles. From 1988 until 2001 he was chairperson of the music theory area. He retired as Professor of Music in 2016.

In the 1970s, Ruggiero became interested in computer technologies and their applications in music, and in 1983 he founded the MSU College of Music's first computer-music studio. In the 1990s, Ruggiero's *Set Analysis Programs* and *CASAP: Computer-Assisted Set Analysis Program* for the analysis of atonal music were used at many colleges and universities in North America, Korea, and Australia.

Ruggiero has composed music for orchestra, wind ensemble, chamber groups, solo instruments, and voice. Although his compositional style is eclectic, much of Ruggiero's music reflects his lifelong interest in jazz. (He is active as a jazz drummer and has performed with many notable jazz artists.) In many of his works, he has fused elements from jazz and pre-twentieth-century Western “classical” music with materials, techniques, and formal concepts of twentieth-century European and North American art music. His compositions have been performed in Asia, Europe, South America, and throughout North America. Compact disc recordings have been released on the AUR/Arizona University Recordings, Centaur, Channel Crossing/Channel Classics (The Netherlands), Mark Recordings, CRI/Composers Recordings, Inc., Klavier, and Sunrise Music (Japan) labels.

Ruggiero has received grants and awards including a National Endowment for the Arts Consortium Commissioning Grant; ASCAP Special Awards and ASCAP PLUS Awards every year

since 1987; and several MSU All-University Research Grants. In 2011, he was honored with the MSU College of Music's Dortha J. and John D. Withrow Excellence in Teaching Award.

Additional information is available at www.charlesruggiero.com.