



**LONDON PIANO TRIO**

# **KALEIDOSCOPE SKY**

**American Chamber Works by  
Arnold Rosner & Carson Cooman**

## TRACKLIST

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## PROGRAMME NOTES

### *Chamber Music by Arnold Rosner*

#### Piano Quintet No. 2, Op. 103

Rosner's Piano Quintet No. 2 dates from 1995. Its premiere took place the following year in Northbrook, Illinois. Roderick Teh was the pianist with the Ad Hoc String Quartet. The Quintet is a multi-sectional work in one movement. Its basic structure comprises an introduction, followed by an exposition of the main thematic material, several developmental sections, and concludes with a modified recapitulation of the exposition. Although there is much interesting melodic and harmonic activity, rhythm is perhaps the quintet's most salient element. The work utilizes a technique that fascinated Rosner in his later years. He called it *stile estatico*, and it refers to the use of multiple rhythmic meters simultaneously. Though notated within a standard score, with uniform bar lines, the meters and note-values overlap

in such a way that the beats often do not coincide, as each instrument seems to be pursuing a course rhythmically independent of some or all the others. The aesthetic purpose is to create an effect analogous to the coincidental overlap of heavenly bodies each moving at its own pace and in its own orbit

The mysterious introductory section, *Lento*, suggests a recitative in which the work's main motifs are presented in fragmentary fashion. This leads to an *Allegro* in which the motifs just heard coalesce into a vigorous primary theme, presented by the first violin, with the cello in contrary motion. After this basic exposition, the theme is elaborated developmentally. The cello, soon joined by the viola, introduces a *pizzicato* hemiola (two against three) pattern against the main theme. The theme soon becomes a persistent *ostinato* as the piano presents

full chords again in metric opposition to the string *pizzicato* as well as to the theme itself. The energy subsides during a brief, calm interlude. A hushed tone cluster in the depths of the piano introduces the next section, based on a triplet figuration subjected to vigorous contrapuntal activity. Soon the piano enters with chorale-like material that provides a textural conflict with the rapid string counterpoint, which gradually subsides. In the next section, a meditative *Poco meno mosso*, the strings pick up the chorale-like material just heard in the piano, which now provides gentle reminiscences of the triplet motif in its high register, accompanied by soft tone clusters in the bass. A subdued *Andante* elaborates some of the material first heard in the introduction. Then the first violin introduces a new idea in a sudden *Allegro*, treated canonically by the other strings. The piano enters, with open fifths in the bass, creating a hemiola rhythmic conflict against the strings, while in a high register the piano also plays reminiscences of the triplet motif in an independent ten-beat rhythmic cycle. The activity intensifies as the music builds toward a major climax, with the strings playing open fifths in rhythmic

opposition to the piano's open fifths, while the high-register triplets continue in their independent rhythmic cycle. The emotional arc subsides with another contemplative episode, *Andante*, reminiscent of the introduction, with an emphasis on descending fourths. A modified recapitulation of the exposition of the main theme follows, *Allegro*, until a subdued coda brings the work to a peaceful close.

### Sonata No. 2 for Violin and Piano, Op. 54

Rosner composed his Sonata No. 2 for Violin and Piano in 1972, dedicating it to his friends Bob and Sue Salzman. (The Sonata No. 1, composed in 1963 and revised later, can be heard on Toccata Classics 0408.) The work, which was conceived also as an oboe sonata, largely displays a light-hearted neo-classicism, although it has its somber moments as well. With a stylistic heterogeneity typical of Rosner, the three-movement Sonata opens with a simple, warmly bucolic melody in a modally inflected C Major, marked *Allegro grazioso*, accompanied by folk-like triadic arpeggios in a gently rocking figuration. The second movement, *Passacaglia (Lento e*

*mesto)* is based on the bucolic theme of the first movement, now modified chromatically, to create a marked contrast with its predecessor. It is a darkly somber elegy reminiscent of Vaughan Williams at his most austere, and culminates in a powerful climax. The *passacaglia* was a favorite form of Rosner's, one that gave voice to some of his most distinctive and personal expressions. He used it to stunning effect in his Horn Sonata, his String Quartet No. 4, and his Requiem, to name just three examples. The concluding movement, *Allegro*, is a loose but highly developmental sonata rondo that opens with a coolly Hindemithian theme, immediately followed by a lightly syncopated motif with a decidedly "pop" flavor. This material is developed quite extensively, until a fugato raises the intensity to a tempestuous climax that culminates in, of all things, a bluesy, proto-minimalist cadenza, after which the sonata drives forward to an exuberant conclusion.

### String Quartet No. 6, Op. 118

Rosner composed six string quartets, the last dating from 2004. He dedicated the Quartet No. 6 to Mattias Vanderwerf. For

the occasion of its 2011 premiere by the S. Darling Quartet at Harvard University, Rosner wrote a program note from which the following is adapted:

*I have often noticed that many American composers, having compiled a substantial body of work that adheres to traditional notions of formal development and personal expression, turn late in their careers to works of greater severity and tighter formal structures, while utilizing melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic techniques they may have previously shunned as overly complex and unappealing to listeners. Examples of such composers include William Schuman and Vincent Persichetti, along with many others. One may speculate about possible explanations for this change: an attempt to "catch up" with their peers; a wish to broaden their expressive range; a concern not to repeat themselves; or perhaps an effort to demonstrate their own ability to utilize such techniques for their own expressive purposes.*

*I had a mixed reaction when I was first introduced to serial composition, and I still do. Initially it struck me as a "game" — something that had no place in serious musical composition as I conceived it, and*

*this remains my general reaction. Yet in spite of this, 12-note melodies have found their way into many of my works, although they are not treated according to serial principles.*

*I had composed five string quartets (and a string sextet) by the time I reached the age of 32. I was and am still quite pleased with those works, but after 1977 experienced no further inspiration to pursue such compositions. Then during the early 2000s I began to reconsider the string quartet genre, and found myself drawn to the dark atmosphere of my Quartet No. 4, while considering some usage of the 12-tone idiom. Let me hasten to point out that the “row” material in this quartet is well under 50% of the music (though more than in any of my other pieces) and I still stand by the aesthetic principles that have underlain the body of my work.*

*The Quartet No. 6 uses two 12-note “rows,” presented at the outset by viola and cello, which recur according to the customary permutations of this mode of composition. This lends some degree of melodic unity to the work. Other aspects, however, are free, and it is in those aspects that the real personality of the piece lies.*

*One device that occurs in many of my works becomes very prominent here: Three instruments play a series of entirely consonant harmonies. They fit neither any one tonality nor any pattern found in either of the rows. But a fourth instrument holds a single note (or at times two notes), almost like the drone of a bagpipe, while the harmonic progression goes in and out of consonance and various degrees of dissonance with that drone. There are also passages where two instruments move in identical rhythms starting on an open fifth and moving stepwise in opposite directions. This creates dissonances that cloud the tonal focus.*

*The quartet comprises one rather uncompromising movement. As consonant and dissonant sounds are used at will, and sometimes in combination, absolutely precise intonation is required; this constitutes the work’s chief performance difficulty. A conscientious reading should leave the listener with an impression that may range from a tragic darkness to a strangely arresting meditative state.*

#### **Notes by Walter Simmons**

*Author, Voices in the Wilderness: Six American Neo-Romantic Composers (Scarecrow Press)*

## PROGRAMME NOTES

### *Chamber Music by Carson Coman*

#### **Kaleidoscope Sky**

*Kaleidoscope Sky* (2020) was written for the London Piano Trio. It is one of a very large number of pieces that I have written inspired by the landscape and environment of Nantucket Island, Massachusetts. The work unfolds in a single movement across sections of changing harmonic and textural color.

#### **Sonata No. 3 for Violin and Piano**

*Sonata No. 3 for Violin and Piano* (2012) was written for violinist Warren Davidson and pianist Donna Amato. The first movement, Canto, is an extended “song” that develops through a variety of textures. The second movement, Lamento, is a “fierce lament”

in the tradition of an old Irish “caoine.” The third movement, Variazioni, is structured as two presentations of the theme surrounding five free variations. The theme serves both as the basis of the musical material for each variation as well as the structural template. Each variation also contains material referring back specifically to the previous variation. The opening theme is declamatory. The first variation is fast and limber. The second variation is introspective and stratified. The third variation is fleeting. The fourth variation is distant and spare. The fifth variation is fast and driving. The final theme begins whispered and slowly regains its declamatory nature before an intense coda ends the work.

#### **Notes by Carson Cooman**

## BIOGRAPHIES

### Arnold Rosner

During his fifty-year career, the American composer Arnold Rosner (1945–2013) produced a body of work that combined diverse influences into a powerful, distinctly personal musical voice. His catalogue comprises compositions in nearly every genre, including three operas, eight symphonies, numerous works for orchestra and wind band, several large-scale choral works and many chamber, solo, and vocal pieces.

Rosner's musical language was founded upon the harmonic and rhythmic devices of the polyphonic music of the Renaissance and early Baroque periods. These roots can be found, to a greater or lesser extent, in virtually all his music. To them he added a free triadicism and exotic modalities, intensified in some works by more contemporary harmonic dissonance, enriching this language with the lavish orchestration and emotional drama of late-nineteenth-century Romanticism. Yet despite its fusion of seemingly incongruous elements, most of Rosner's music is readily accessible, even to untutored listeners.

What makes his music worthy of serious consideration, rather than being merely an integration of earlier styles, is the way he shaped his unusual language to encompass a wide expressive range — wider than one might imagine possible — from serene beauty to violent rage.

Born in New York City in 1945, Rosner took piano lessons as a boy, and soon developed a voracious interest in classical music. Some sounds in particular appealed to him — juxtapositions of major and minor triads, as well as modal melodies — and before long he was working these sounds into music of his own. His family, fully aware of the remote prospects for success offered by a career in classical music composition, encouraged him to pursue more practical endeavors, and so he attended the Bronx High School of Science, whence he graduated at the age of fifteen, and then New York University with a major in mathematics. But all the while he was composing: sonatas, symphonies, concertos and more — not that anyone was especially interested in hearing the fruits of his labors. His composer-heroes at the time were Hovhaness, Vaughan Williams, and



Nielsen, and their influence is evident in much of his earlier creative work.

Graduating from NYU before he turned twenty, Rosner then spent a year at the Belfer Graduate School of Science, continuing his studies in mathematics. But, no longer able to resist the inner drive to pursue musical composition as his primary activity, he entered the University of Buffalo the following September, with a major in music composition. This was in 1966, when serialism was the dominant style in university music departments, and young

composers were often coerced, directly or indirectly, into adopting it. Rosner often recounted how the Buffalo faculty dismissed his creative efforts with varying degrees of contempt. Later, in describing his educational experience there, he would say that he 'learned almost nothing' from these pedants. Although most of his peers capitulated to the pressure to embrace the style *du jour*, Rosner was adamantly opposed to serialism and stubbornly refused to accept a view of music that violated his most fervently held artistic values. And so, in response, his department repeatedly rejected the large orchestral work he had submitted as his dissertation. Realizing that they would never accept the kind of music he considered meaningful, he gave up the notion of a doctorate in composition, and decided instead to pursue a degree in music theory, with a dissertation — the first ever — on the music of Alan Hovhaness. He completed this task successfully, and in the process became the first recipient of a doctorate in music granted by the State University of New York.

Rosner devoted the rest of his life to writing the music that represented his personal aesthetic ideals, supporting himself through academic positions at colleges in



and around the New York City area. His most enduring position was as Professor of Music at Kingsborough Community College (of the City University of New York), which he held for thirty years, until his death. During the course of his compositional career, his musical language gradually expanded from its idiosyncratic and intuitive beginnings. Arnold Rosner died in Brooklyn, in 2013, on his 68th birthday.

[arnoldrosnermusic.com](http://arnoldrosnermusic.com)

## Carson Cooman

Carson Cooman (b. 1982) is an American composer with a catalog of hundreds of works in many forms—from solo instrumental pieces to operas, and from



orchestral works to hymn tunes. His music has been performed on all six inhabited continents in venues that range from the stage of Carnegie Hall to the basket of a hot air balloon. Cooman's music appears on over forty recordings, including more than twenty-five complete CDs on the Naxos, Albany, Artek, Gothic, Divine Art, Métier, Diversions, Convivium, Altarus, MSR Classics, Raven, and Zimbel labels. Cooman's primary composition studies were with Bernard Rands, Judith Weir, Alan Fletcher, and James Willey. As an active concert organist, Cooman specializes in the performance of contemporary music. Over 300 new compositions by more than 100 international composers have been written for him, and his organ performances can be heard on a number of CD releases and more than 3,000 recordings available online. Cooman is also a writer on musical subjects, producing articles and reviews frequently for a number of international publications. He serves as an active consultant on music business matters to composers and performing organizations, specializing particularly in the area of composer estates and archives.

[carsoncooman.com](http://carsoncooman.com)



## London Piano Trio

*"Simply World Class"* is the description made by the German press of the London Piano Trio. For the past 20 years the London Piano Trio have been touring, recording, and teaching across the globe to rave reviews. Upcoming tours include a 10 city tour of China in 2020 and a Far East Tour in 2021.

At home they have been described as a "National Treasure". They were artists in residence at the Gibbs Music Festival from 2008 - 2014 and from 2014 - 2016 had a residency at St John's Smith Square in

London, featuring a critically acclaimed 2015 Beethoven Cycle and are artists in residence at the Festival Jalesnes, Venantes, France.

Their interest in promoting English music has resulted in them recording the complete trios of Donald Francis Tovey, Henry Cotter Nixon, and Cecil Armstrong Gibbs, with many premiere performances in places such as Dubai, Singapore, Manila, Naples, and Paris. They have actively commissioned works by composers such as Christopher Gunning, Jed Balsamo, Gavin Bryers, Clement Ishmael, Christopher Weeks and Carson Cooman.

[londonpianotrio.com](http://londonpianotrio.com)

# KALEIDOSCOPE SKY

**American Chamber Works by  
Arnold Rosner & Carson Cooman**

Performed by **London Piano Trio**

violin 1: **Robert Atchison** cello: **David Jones** piano: **Simon Callaghan**  
with violin 2: **Jacqueline Hartley** & viola: **Elisa Bergersen**

Recorded and engineered by **Adaq Khan** with  
producer **Michael Whight** at **SJE Arts**, Oxford on the 25th - 27th September 2020

Artwork & photography by **Mike Cooter**  
Cover image "Beach Under Nimbus Clouds" by **Quang Nguyen Vinh** via Pexels

Executive Producer: **Adrian Green**

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