

CEREUS



CHAMBER MUSIC BY KAY RHIE



Kay Rhie

Kay Rhie (이 규림)

CEREUS

1 **Cereus** (2019) 13:09

Winsor Music Trio

Gabriela Diaz, violin

Rane Moore, clarinet/bass clarinet

David Russell, cello

I Hear the Sound of Trees (2007/2024)

for soprano, alto saxophone & piano

- | | | |
|---|---|------|
| 2 | I. After the dazzle of the day (Walt Whitman) | 3:37 |
| 3 | II. Reflective (A.R. Ammons) | 0:43 |
| 4 | III. Cascadilla Falls (A.R. Ammons) | 3:05 |
| 5 | IV. Perfections (Walt Whitman) | 1:45 |
| 6 | V. Love Song (A.R. Ammons) | 3:40 |

Leela Subramaniam, soprano

Rachel Wolz, alto sax

Andreas Foivos Apostolou, piano

...in the dreams of another... (2020)

for violin & viola

- | | | |
|----|-------------------------------------|------|
| 7 | I. After you | 2:36 |
| 8 | II. Circular | 2:18 |
| 9 | III. ...in the dreams of another... | 2:49 |
| 10 | IV. Game | 1:55 |
| 11 | V. If I don't see you, I feel you | 1:35 |

Aperture Duo

Adrianne Pope, violin

Linnea Powell, viola

Suite from Quake (2023/2024)

Libretto by Amanda Hollander

- | | | |
|----|--|------|
| 12 | I. Introduction, and Otis Builds a World | 4:08 |
| 13 | II. I Soon Learned Men's False Ways | 3:02 |
| 14 | III. You're Caught in Angeleno Fantasy | 2:47 |
| 15 | IV. The City Sings in Silhouette | 4:02 |

Leela Subramaniam, soprano • Jennifer Jo, flute

Sierra Allen, clarinet • Xenia Deviatkina-Loh, violin

Niall Taro Ferguson, cello • Brandon Zhou, piano

Chris Kim, conductor

Total Time: 51:29

NOTES

by Chris Gendall

These works by composer Kay Rhie present artistic explorations of *place* and *situation*.¹ Place, in this context, refers to the way in which a scene reveals itself through vivid musical depictions of the activity within it. Situation reflects the way these places change, morph or transform through Rhie's compositional process, as well as those spaces that feel more imaginary, liminal or psychological in nature. The latter category, in her work, is often a response to a sense of displacement, intended to confront, console or comprehend the instability associated with dislocation. The clarity and lyricism of Rhie's writing, evident throughout this collection of works, reinforces the establishment or subversion of the place or situation in play.

Rhie sets some of these works in locations that exist both geographically and in the composer's memory or experience. *Quake Suite*, from the opera of the same name, amplifies the humanity of Los Angeles – the city Rhie calls home. “Cascadilla Falls” (from *I hear the sound of trees*) references one of the picturesque gorges in Ithaca, New York (Rhie's former home), with swift, asymmetrical cascades.

The sung texts mirror this aural scenery, through Whitman and Ammons' dynamic extrapolations of natural

phenomena between *Quake* and *The Odyssey*. These texts defy stasis, traversing space and perspective: as Ammons moves between the terrestrial and the cosmic in “Cascadilla Falls,” for example, the reader feels a sense of movement not only in perspective but in the spinning of the planet.² Rhie reflects this planetary motion with rhythmic change, engaging multiple accelerating polyrhythmic pulse levels – the duplet, eighth note, and sixteenth note. “The City Sings in Silhouette” (from *Quake Suite*) behaves like a siren song, sliding between false-relation harmonies, and reverberating the play of words and phrases in Hollander's intoxicating poetic cocktail. The semantic flux in all these texts affords the composer maximal ambiguity in rhythm, gestural shape and harmonic colour, with music and subject matter in collective transit between natural and supernatural.

The two purely instrumental works featured here occupy fluid, mobile spaces. ...*in the dreams of another...* constructs a counterpoint in slippage, where figures fight the physical isolation, geographic distance, and digital latency that so many of us confronted during the Covid-19 pandemic. Violin and viola lines interact in dynamic ways: sometimes echoing each other, with incredible shifts in

timbre and intonation; at other times they seem inert, aghast, and paralysed by the drama at play.

Cereus, Night Blooms presents a highly personal exploration inside the memory and imagination of Rhie's late father. The work is poignant, elegant, and – most significantly – surprising: the playful discourse of fragments and ideas unfolds through development and interruption with equal measure. Ideas appear, evolve, accumulate or escape, sometimes arriving at the edge of a void. The use of temporal space, silence, and fragile instrumental colour underscores formal and gestural shapes that feel at once spontaneous and powerful.

As a South Korean composer living in Los Angeles, Rhie's aesthetic and cultural identity resists a singular definition. She is not alone in this: Isang Yun scholar Jeongmee Kim notes the “social and cultural conflicts inherent in the life of an immigrant artist in a foreign society,” and the ways in which hybridity provides a diasporic composer an avenue to expressive identity.³ How, then, does situating the musical action in real, transitional or imagined spaces reflect this sense of identity?

For me, Rhie's exploration of imagined spaces, or the transmutation of real places into fantastical ones, engages her artistry in a very personal mode of expression. Cultural theorist Stuart Hall says that cultural identity “is always constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative, and myth,”⁴ located, according to Homi Bhabha, in “the realm of the *beyond*.”⁵ More than Rhie's sense of lyricism and clarity, the sense of liminality, which evolves from dis-

location, invites the listener into vivid sound-worlds, while bending, morphing and subverting the sonic picture they create. I hear Rhie's imagined situations as insights into a creative mind and point of view formed by her unique set of experiences – in Hall's words: “not an essence, but a *positioning*.”⁶

Chris Gendall is a composer and senior lecturer at the University of Auckland

ENDNOTES

1. Jeff Malpas, Annika Schlitte, and Thomas Hünefeldt, *Situatedness and Place* (Springer International Publishing AG, 2018), 28-29.
2. Kevin Hart, “Poetry as Spiritual Exercise: On A. R. Ammons” in *CR* 22, no. 2 (2022), 21-22.
3. Jeongmee Kim, *The Diasporic Composer: The Fusion of Korean and German Musical Cultures in the Works of Isang Yun*, University of California, Los Angeles (1999), 46.
4. Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora” in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford (Lawrence & Wishart, 1990, 226.
5. Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (Taylor & Francis Group, 2004), 1.
6. Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” 226.

Cereus (Night Blooms), written for Winsor Music Trio, is a piece dedicated to my late father, In-young Rhie. He was a writer, most active during the 1960-80's in South Korea until my family immigrated to the States. Since the move, he had taken odd jobs until he started working for a local Korean newspaper in Los Angeles. He never returned to creative writing after immigration. I don't think I ever asked why. Spending many late hours in the quiet hospital room where he lived his last weeks, an image formed in my head: the flowers that bloom only during the night. This was especially after I found a large collection of articles and scribbles going through his medical papers – all of which were obviously possible source materials for his to-be written stories. I witnessed bursts of desires there that I did not notice growing up. Like the night flowers that bloom when people are asleep, I imagined that my father, like many immigrants, dreamed of beautiful “blooms” in non-celebrated ways. I wanted to pay tribute to those quiet hours of un-applauded beauty. In the beginning of the piece, fragmented gestures are driven with energy but often interrupted by silence, even frustratingly so, until longer and continuous gestures start to emerge, as if short-lived blossoms. The sweeping motion then evolves into longer melodic materials, or an elegiac dance, ending with a peaceful celebration of quietude.

I Hear the Sound of Trees

This song cycle was inspired by a collection of poems about finding oneself in the moments of self reflection

when we become one with nature. The cycle starts out with busy-ness and slowly moves towards introspection of an inner voice found in stillness. Written while I was living in Ithaca, NY, the songs were originally for voice and piano and later revised for voice, horn, and piano. Movements 1, 3, and 5 are the main songs and call for the entire trio, while 2 and 4 are concise interludes for voice and piano only.

... in the dreams of another..., is about distance between dislocated individuals, wanting to connect. Conceived during the pandemic time, this piece depicts efforts to synchronize with each other by imitating, shadowing, and listening deeply. The idea of the piece started with noticing how people talk over one another on Zoom followed by awkward silences. This piece is humorous, mournful (from yearning to connect), and joyous (at finding the connection) at times.

Quake Suite

When I was asked to write an opera about Los Angeles by Opera UCLA, I had just returned from 15 years of living in Ithaca, NY, and found my once-home to be quite different and changed. But then again, I was a transplant in Los Angeles from South Korea to begin with, and the meaning of “home” was always an elusive concept. There began an idea of “homecoming” to a city of L.A. for the opera *Quake*.

Los Angeles is a city filled with myths: happy sunshine, beaches, stars and aspiring stars, ethnic neighborhoods... And importantly, the idea that an earthquake can hit us anytime gives Angelenos an image that we are dreamers with a certain light-heartedness about life. After all, things can disappear under our feet any moment. We must keep faith that we can somehow rebuild and reinvent again and again.

The storyline of *Quake* follows the ending of *Odyssey* where Odysseus (Otis) and Penelope reunite, albeit with a modern LA twist. While an adaptation of a myth, the tale highlights myth-shattering. People in LA are no different from any other place in the world. Most of us wake up in the morning and go through our daily routine of hard work, long hours of traffic, and dealing with crossed emotions. What keeps us going is perhaps the desire to be with, and making the commitment to be there for, the one(s) you love.

Quake is an opera about raising questions: what does “home” or “homecoming” mean for each of us? What could chasing dreams in a city like Los Angeles look like?

— Kay Rhie



I HEAR THE SOUND OF TREES

1. **After the dazzle of day** (Whitman)

After the dazzle of day is gone,
Only the dark, dark night shows to my
eyes the stars;
After the clangor of organ majestic, or
chorus, or perfect band,
Silent, athwart my soul, moves the
symphony true

2. **Reflective** (A.R. Ammons)

I found a
weed
that had a
mirror in it
and that
mirror
looked in at
a mirror
in me that
had a
weed in it

3. **Cascadilla Falls** (A.R. Ammons)

I went down by Cascadilla
Falls this
evening, the
stream below the falls,
and picked up a
hand sized stone
kidney-shaped, testicular and
thought all its motions into it,
the 800 mph earth spin,
the 190-million-mile yearly
displacement around the sun,
the overriding
grand
haul
of the galaxy with the 30,000
mph of where
the sun's going:
thought all the interweaving
motions
into myself: dropped
the stone to dead rest:
the stream from other motions
broke
rushing over it:
shelterless, I turned

to the sky and stood still:
oh
I do
not know where I am going
that I can live my life
by the single creek.

4. **Perfections** (Whitman)

ONLY themselves understand
themselves, and
the like of themselves,
As Souls only understand Souls.

5. **Love Song** (A.R. Ammons)

Rings of birch bark
stand in the woods
still circling the nearly
vanished log: after
we go to pass
through log and star
the white song will
hug us together in the
woods of some lover's head

QUAKE SUITE *libretto by Amanda Hollander*

I. Otis Builds a World

Otis builds a world of dream and smoke.
Ghostly harmonies and clever notes.
A maker of mirage.
He wiled away in fantasy
I did not have the luxury
In my old neighborhood, now gentrified,
I do not recognize my childhood streets
now that outsiders come to sift us out.
Those bastards even threaten to unroot
The olive tree that Otis planted there for me.
Though why do I protect the memory?
He fled and left our hope and fights behind.
Can people change as cities are reborn?

II. I Soon Learned Men's False Ways

I soon learned men's false ways.
They will say that I'm a star
yet draw away my light while I'm the one that burns.
Do men think that they're gods?
Men draw away my light while I'm the one that burns.
I'm the one that burns.
Are you lord of the sky above
lord of the sky above
in which I'm but one spark?
A man-made shimmer in the dark?
I am Athena.
Will you make empty promises?
Will you abandon, abandon me again?
I have not changed.
Will you make empty promises?
I have not changed.
Don't parade your arrogance.
Our futures weave
together on the loom.
Athena will transform and soar
as Otis steers the way.

III. You're Caught in Angeleno Fantasy

You're caught in Angeleno fantasy.
Dreams rupture like the over-ripened seeds
that farmer's market pomegranates burst.
This burning land of palm catastrophe.
This ever-shaking world beneath our feet.
You push against the earth but she'll push back again.
That is the gravity of living here.
I am the phoenix- not the star- that burns.
A fallen star does not ascend again,
but I will rise from the ash so shadow me
to suit your purpose but remember this:
It was not you who made me a goddess.

IV. The City Stands in Silhouette

The city stands in silhouette,
Her voice flung from the waves
Seducing shipwrecked souls with tales
Of glory, wealth, and graves.
She's fantasy and tragedy.
The siren of the sand
Who promises endless sun.
The city stands in silhouette
Her voice flung from the waves
Desert the thirsty land or swim to her shore if you would dare
And listen to her song.
She'll tantalize with reverie
until the day is gone.

Kay Rhie is a composer of contemporary classical music who often explores the issues of belonging and the science of acoustics. Currently Assistant Professor of Composition and Theory at UCLA, she finds her experience of living in Los Angeles and previously in Ithaca, New York, as well as growing up in South Korea to be continuously influencing her voice as a composer. Her musical studies began in South Korea on the piano from the age of seven, and continued at the University of California at Los Angeles and Cornell University. Her composition teachers include Steven Stucky, Roberto Sierra, Paul Chihara, Ian Krouse, David Lefkowitz, John Harbison, Samuel Adler, Stephen Hartke, and Donald Crockett. She received her Doctorate of Musical Arts in Composition from Cornell University in 2009.

Rhie was a recipient of the Charles Ives Fellowship given by the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 2008, which said her music has “vehemence and reticence,” where “intimacy and plainness co-exist.” She was awarded the Grand Prize for Student Compositions at the Ojai Music Festival in 2001. Residences have included the Aspen Music Festival (2003), the Chamber Music Conference and Composers’ Forum of the East (2004), and Banff Centre for the Arts (2005). At the Tanglewood Music Center, she was the Otto Eckstein Composition Fellow and the winner of the Geffen-Solomon New Music Commission in 2007. From 2008-2009, she was a Rieman and Baketel Music Fellow at the Radcliffe Institute of Advanced Study at Harvard University. The recently completed orchestral

work, *H’on*, commissioned for the Los Angeles Philharmonic premiered in June 2025.

Her music has been performed at the London Festival of American Music, Banff Centre for the Arts, the Hear Now Festival, Seal Bay Festival of American Chamber Music, Tanglewood Music Center, Tongyeong International Music Festival, the Ars Nova Series in Korea, Composers Conference at Avaloch Farm Music Institute, and Berkeley Symphony Chamber Series. Performers include the BBC Singers, Ensemble TM+ (Paris), Ensemble X, In Mulieribus, the Moscow Contemporary Music Ensemble, the Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra, TIMF ensemble, Winsor Music, Left Coast Chamber Ensemble, Brightwork Newmusic Ensemble, Aperture Duo, New Thread Saxophone Quartet, and Opera UCLA.

PERFORMER BIOS

Lauded for their “precision and interpretation” and “distinct sense of unity and independence” (icareifyoulisten.com), Los Angeles-based **Aperture Duo** curates fearless programs that explore new sounds, voices, and techniques through the lens of violin and viola chamber music. Founded in 2015 by violinist Adrienne Pope and violist Linnea Powell, Aperture Duo is equally at home performing old and new music. Aperture Duo actively commissions diverse new works to expand the violin and viola duo repertoire.

Performance credits include the LA Phils *Noon to Midnight Festival*, Tuesdays @ Monk Space, the Main Stage at the *Carlsbad Music Festival*, *Music at Boston Court*, *L.A. Signal Lab*, Nadia Sirota’s podcast *Living Music*, Brooklyn’s *Home Audio Concert Series*, *UC Santa Barbara Summer Music Festival*, and Hear Now Music Festival.

Aperture Duo is a 2021 recipient of the Fromm Foundation Commission, and is a project of the Fulcrum Arts’ Emerge Fiscal Sponsorship Program. Their self-titled debut album, released in 2021 on Populist Records, can be found on bandcamp.

Gabriela Díaz and Rane Moore are Co-Artistic Directors at **Winsor Music**, contributing significantly to its mission of fostering community through innovative chamber music. Gabriela, known for her dynamic performances, has brought her rich musical heritage to Winsor Music, en-

hancing its repertoire with her family’s traditional and contemporary pieces. Her work extends beyond performances, engaging in educational initiatives and community outreach to connect music with healing and social discourse. Rane Moore complements this with her versatile musicianship and dedication to new music, often collaborating in the creation and premiere of works that challenge and inspire. Together, they’ve helped Winsor Music become a beacon for diversity in music, offering scholarships, mentorship, and concerts that resonate with audiences across Boston, making the organization a hub for cultural and musical exchange.

Sierra Allen, a Los Angeles-based clarinetist and educator, has contributed to films like *Encanto* and *The Call of the Wild* as principal clarinet. She’s performed with orchestras including the LA Philharmonic and Seattle Symphony. Sierra holds a BM from Biola University, MM from CSU Fullerton, and a DMA from UCLA, where her dissertation focused on clarinet doubling. She teaches at several universities and privately, emphasizing the clarinet as both a physical and mental practice, with a studio spanning multiple states. Her mentors include Ray Guyll, Joshua Ranz, and Boris Allakhverdyan.

Xenia Deviatkina-Loh, an acclaimed violinist, has graced stages worldwide, from Sydney Opera House to Wigmore Hall. She performs with LA ensembles like Dilijan and MEC, and is part of ECHOI. A winner of the 2009 Gis-

borne Competition, she's also a radio regular. Her teaching spans across continents, currently at MSMU and UCLA. She holds degrees from Sydney Conservatorium, Royal Academy of Music, and UCLA, with her debut album *Soliloquy* showcasing contemporary works. She's also active in music education leadership.

Niall Taro Ferguson, a Los Angeles native, is a versatile cellist, composer, and orchestrator. He's freelanced in both concert and commercial music, working with cellists like Antonio Lysy and Lynn Harrell. Niall has been featured on "The Voice" and performed at the 2019 Grammy Awards with Shawn Mendes and Miley Cyrus. He studied composition at UCLA, earning his bachelor's in 2017 under mentors like Ian Krouse and Bruce Broughton.

Jennifer Jo, an award-winning flutist, is based in Los Angeles and renowned for her work on the intersection of traditional East Asian flutes and contemporary Western music. She has won first prizes in numerous competitions and holds degrees from Carnegie Mellon and UCLA. Her students excel in national and international competitions and prestigious orchestras. Jennifer is committed to education, serving on faculty at California Summer School for the Arts, and her teaching integrates various musical styles, enhancing student growth both musically and personally.

Chris Kim, currently the Choi Family Director of Instrumental Activities at Occidental College has received multiple awards for adventurous programming from the League of American Orchestras/ASCAP and The American Prize. He has premiered over 250 new orchestral works and highlighted compositions. Chris has appeared with orchestras in the United States and abroad, including ensembles such as the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra, Delta Festival Ballet, Symphoria, Divertimento Ensemble of Milan, Italy. He has appeared in music festivals such as Kinhaven Music Center, Skaneateles Music Festival, and International Bartók Festival in Szombathely, Hungary among others. Each summer he is a part of the faculty at Cortona Sessions for New Music, where he teaches conducting and helps premiere new works by composers from around the world.

Andreas Foivos Apostolou, a versatile musician from Thessaloniki, Greece, has made significant contributions in music composition, production, and performance. After mastering violin and voice, he expanded his skills to include drums and guitar during high school. Despite pursuing Chemical Engineering, his passion led him to Berklee College of Music, where he graduated with top honors. Now based in Los Angeles, Apostolos is known for his work in film and TV, including *Palm Royale* and *Star Trek: Lower Decks*, alongside producing and arranging for various artists. His background blends classical and contemporary music.

David Russell, lauded by The Boston Globe as a “superb cellist,” is active in both solo and collaborative performances across the US and Europe. Since joining Wellesley College’s faculty in 2005, he directs chamber music and performs regularly with Boston’s top ensembles like Boston Modern Orchestra Project and Emmanuel Music. Russell is a fervent new music advocate, having premiered works by composers like Lee Hyla, David Lang, Eric Moe and Laurie San Martin. His recordings span labels like Tzadik, BMOP/Sound and New World Records, showcasing a diverse repertoire.

Leela Subramaniam, a “gleaming soprano” according to Opera News, has performed with major opera houses like the Metropolitan Opera and LA Opera. Passionate about new music, she has been featured in five world premieres, notably by women of color. She’s a first-prize winner of the Joan Taub Ades Competition and a finalist in several prestigious competitions. Her recent roles include Annu in *Thumbprint* and Turan in *Threshold of Brightness*. A Los Angeles native, Leela holds degrees from UCLA and Manhattan School of Music, and continues to perform and teach in LA.

Rachel Wolz, a Los Angeles-based musician and educator, has graced stages with groups like the UCLA Philharmonia and The Colburn Orchestra. As the alto saxophonist for the Gold Line Quartet, she’s committed to community engagement in LA. Her accolades include third prize at the 2023 International Artists Competition and the Eugene V. Cota-Robles Fellowship at UCLA. Rachel has also toured with the Zoto Saxophone Quartet, offering educational clinics and masterclasses across Arizona.

Brandon Zhou, an LA-based pianist and composer, excels in both classical and contemporary music. He has collaborated with notable artists like Hilá Plitmann and organizations including American Contemporary Ballet. His piano work appears in Kerry Candaele’s documentary *Love and Justice*. Winning the 2020 Atwater Kent Concerto Competition, he performed Beethoven’s First Piano Concerto with the UCLA Philharmonia. His compositions and arrangements, like the acclaimed ‘Egyptian’ Concerto, have been featured in various U.S. venues. Brandon holds degrees from UCLA, studying under Inna Faliks and Richard Danielpour, and currently works as a coach, organist, and pianist in multiple institutions.

Recorded at Evelyn & Mo Ostin Music Center
Recording producers: Sergey Parfenov, Jose Carrillo (for Cereus)
Sound engineer: Sergey Parfenov
Editing, mix and mastering: Sergey Parfenov

Cover Image: Photo by Hà Nguyen on Unsplash
Kay Rhie photo: Joy Cha
Design, layout & typography: Marc Wolf, *marcjwolf.com*

Proofreader: David S. Lefkowitz

“After the dazzle of day,” and “Perfection” from Walt Whitman’s poetry collection *Leaves of Grass* in the public domain.

“Reflective” © 1990 from *The Really Short Poems of A.R. Ammons*

“Cascadilla Falls,” and “Love Song (2)”. © 1986 from *A.R. Ammons, The Selected Poems, Expanded Edition*. Used by the kind permission of W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.

© & © 2025 Kay Rhie
kayrhie.com



DDD FCR426 ©&© 2025 KAY RHIE
NEWFOCUSRECORDINGS.COM

NEW FOCUS
RECORDINGS