

# 74TH SEASON OF CONCERTS

APRIL 24, 2016 • NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART



# PROGRAM

## 3:30 • West Building, West Garden Court

Inscape

Richard Scerbo, conductor

Toru Takemitsu (1930–1996)

*Rain Spell*

Asha Srinivasan (b. 1980)

*Svara-Lila*

John Harbison (b. 1938)

*Mirabai Songs*

It's True, I Went to the Market

All I Was Doing Was Breathing

Why Mira Can't Go Back to Her Old House

Where Did You Go?

The Clouds

Don't Go, Don't Go

Monica Soto-Gil, mezzo soprano

Intermission

Chen Yi (b. 1953)

*Wu Yu*

Praying for Rain

Shifan Gong-and-Drum

Toru Takemitsu

*Archipelago S.*

## The Musicians

Founded in 2004 by artistic director Richard Scerbo, Inscape Chamber Orchestra is pushing the boundaries of classical music in riveting performances that reach across genres and generations and transcend the confines of the traditional concert experience.

With its flexible roster and unique brand of programming, this Grammy-nominated group of high-energy master musicians has quickly established itself as one of the premier performing ensembles in the Washington, DC, region and beyond. Inscape has worked with emerging American composers and has a commitment to presenting concerts featuring the music of our time. Since its inception, the group has commissioned and premiered over twenty new works. Its members regularly perform with the National, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Virginia, Richmond, and Delaware symphonies and the Washington Opera Orchestra; they are members of the Washington service bands. Inscape's roots can be traced to the University of Maryland School of Music, when Scerbo and other music students collaborated at the Clarice Smith Center as the Philharmonia Ensemble.

Inscape regularly performs as the ensemble-in-residence at the Episcopal Church of the Redeemer in Bethesda, Maryland, as well as at the National Gallery of Art, Strathmore Music Center, Kennedy Center, and other local and national venues.

Praised in the *Washington Post* for her "fluid mezzo soprano" and "delicious acting," Monica Soto-Gil is gaining recognition on the operatic, recital, and concert stage. Most recently, Soto-Gil made her debut in Mexico at Palacio Bellas Artes in Mexico City with guitarist, Roberto Limón, performing the works of Falla, Guastavino, Theodorakis, and Granados. Also in the 2015 season, Soto-Gil made her role and company debuts as Maddalena in *Rigoletto* with Hubbard Hall. The past season's highlights include solo performances with the Inscape Chamber Orchestra and a concert of Mahler's work with the University of Maryland Symphony Orchestra. Soto-Gil was also a member of the ensemble in the Santa Fe Opera's 2014 Festival Season's *Fidelio*. Other career highlights include being a guest soloist with the Young Artists of America orchestra and chorus, Mrs. Balandard in *M. Choufleuri restera chez lui* with Bel Cantanti Opera, the alto soloist in the Mozart *Requiem* with Capital City Symphony, Rosina in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, and Marva in the world premiere of *Shadowboxer* with the Maryland Opera Studio. Soto-Gil received her bachelor of music degree from the New England Conservatory of Music under the tutelage of the late Edward Zambara. She earned her master of music as a member of the Maryland Opera Studio, where she studied with Delores Ziegler.

## Program Notes

Scored for flute, clarinet, harp, piano, and vibraphone, and running about ten minutes in duration, *Rain Spell* is one of Toru Takemitsu's pieces expressing his fascination with rain and the random flow of water (*Rain Coming*, *Water-Ways*, *Riverrun*, *Waterscape*, *Rain Tree*, *Garden Rain*, and others), a theme also shared by one of the composer's main influences: Claude Debussy. Written for the Sound Space Ark in Tokyo, *Rain Spell* opens with isolated arpeggios and gentle flutterings like splashes of water. Strange multiphonics sound like electronic insects. The melodies become longer with increased eerie effects accompanied by muted harmonics on harp and piano. These describe the deep "spell" woven by the rain more than the sound of falling rain itself, and that is the genius of Takemitsu's spiritual insight expressed in his art.

The title of the next piece, composed of two Sanskrit words — *svara*, meaning musical note, and *lila*, loosely meaning play — refers to methods of manipulation of an eight-note pitch collection, which is derived from a conflation of two closely related Indian modes (ragas). More than just notes in a scale, a raga traditionally evokes strong emotions and moods. The exceedingly lovely and expressive ragas used to form this pitch collection are generally associated with sadness and longing. Thus, the piece begins with an expansive, slow progression of dissonant harmonic sonorities that explore various intervallic relationships within the pitch collection. Simultaneously, the top notes of the progression form the basis of a recurring modal theme that guides the entire structure of the piece. As the slow and dramatic growth unfolds, the modal nature of the pitch collection is gradually revealed through increasingly active melodic and rhythmic gestures. The piece remains harmonically driven to the very end when the previously unresolved main theme returns in full force only to have its final resolution undermined by aching conflicting sonorities whose colliding dissonances linger in the air to the last moment, denying the much anticipated release.

John Harbinson's *Mirabai Songs* celebrate the famed sixteenth-century Indian poetess, singer, and religious devotee — Mirabai, or Meera (c. 1498–1546). These six songs, with texts translated into English by Robert Bly, portray Mirabai's complex mixture of religious devotion and sensuality. When her husband was slain in battle, Mirabai rejected the typical widow's fate: death on the funeral pyre alongside her husband. Instead she devoted herself entirely to Krishna by singing and dancing in the Hindu temple of Chitor. Harbinson composed the *Mirabai Songs* in 1982 for voice and piano. In that form, mezzo-soprano Susan Larson and pianist Craig Smith gave the world premiere on September 9, 1983, at Emmanuel Church in Boston. The composer subsequently reworked the score for voice and chamber ensemble.

### **It's True, I Went to the Market**

My friend, I went to the market and bought the Dark One.  
You claim by night, I claim by day.  
Actually I was beating a drum all the time I was buying him.  
You say I gave too much; I say too little.  
Actually I put him on the scale before I bought him.  
What I paid was my social body, my town body, my family body,  
and all my inherited jewels.  
Mirabai says: The Dark One is my husband now.  
The Dark One is my husband now.  
Be with me when I lie down; you promised me this in an earlier life.

### **All I Was Doing Was Breathing**

Something has reached out and taken in the beams of my eyes.  
There is a longing, it is for his body for every hair of that dark body.  
All I was doing was being, and the Dancing Energy came by my house.  
His face looks curiously like the moon, I saw it from the side, smiling.  
My family says: "Don't ever see him again!"  
And imply things in a low voice.  
But my eyes have their own life: and they know whose they are.  
I believe I can bear on my shoulders whatever you want to say of me.  
Mira says: Without the energy that lifts mountains, how am I to live?

### **Why Mira Can't Go Back to Her Old House**

The colors of the Dark One have penetrated  
Mira's body; all the other colors washed out.  
Making love with the Dark One and eating little, those are my pearls  
and my carnelians.  
Meditation beads and the forehead streak, those are my scarves and  
my rings.  
That's enough feminine wiles for me. My teacher taught me this.  
Approve me or disapprove me.  
I praise the Mountain Energy night and day.  
I take the old ecstatic path.  
I don't steal money, I don't hit anyone.  
What will you charge me with?  
I have felt the swaying of the elephant's shoulders; and now you want  
me to climb on a jackass?  
Try to be serious.

### **Where Did You Go?**

Where did you go, Holy One, after you left my body?  
Your flame jumped to the wick, and then you disappeared and left  
the lamp alone.  
You put the boat into the surf, and then walked inland, leaving the boat  
in an ocean of parting.  
Mira says: Tell me when you will come to meet me.

### The Clouds

When I saw the dark clouds, I wept, O Dark One, I wept at the dark clouds.  
Black clouds soared up, and took some yellow along; rain did fall, some  
rain fell long.

There was water east of the house, west of the house; fields all green.  
The one I love lives past those fields; rain has fallen on my body, on my  
hair, as I wait in the open door for him.

The Energy that holds up mountains is the energy Mirabai bows down to.  
He lives century after century, and the test I set for him he has passed.

### Don't Go, Don't Go

Don't go, don't go. I touch your soles. I'm sold to you.

Show me where to find the bhakti path, show me where to go.

I would like my body to turn into a heap of incense and sandalwood and  
you set a torch to it.

When I've fallen down to gray ashes, smear me on your shoulders and chest.

Mira says: You who lift the mountains I have some light, I want to mingle  
it with yours.

Just as Béla Bartók took the raw materials of East European music and alchemically forged them into works such as *Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta*, so does Chen Yi transform the traditional music of China into her own individual aesthetic in works such as *Wu Yu*. Commissioned and premiered by Boston Musica Viva on March 15, 2002, in Boston, directed by Richard Pittman, *Wu Yu* is a sextet for flute, clarinet (doubling bass clarinet), bassoon, violin, cello, and percussion (vibraphone, bongo, Japanese high woodblock, cymbal, two Chinese gongs, tom-tom, and bass drum), in two movements. The composer explains:

*Wu Yu* was a ritual rain dance in ancient China, which includes song and dance performed with oxtails in hands. In the first movement Praying for Rain, I use the flute, clarinet, and bassoon to play in heterophonic style, imitating the tunes played by a group of suona players in the village ceremony (the double-reed instrument suona is a shawm, made with wood), while using other instruments to create sheng-like sustained chords (the Chinese traditional instrument sheng is a free-reed mouth organ, made with a gourd). The music starts slowly and gets faster and faster toward the coda. In the second movement, Shifan Gong-and-Drum, I imitate a whole group of Chinese traditional percussion instruments played in the folk ensemble music Shifan Gong-and-Drum in Southeast China, which is often used in ceremonies and village gatherings.

However straightforward this explanation may appear, the actual sound of the music is anything but that. In the first movement, the violin, cello, and percussion deftly weave gossamer lines that seem entirely unrelated to the intricate heterophonic melodies in the winds, yet everything somehow meshes. A ritualistic piece, the music begins declaratively, becoming gradually more intense as the tempo increases, until at the end, the music is twice as fast as at the beginning. Chen bases the structure for this movement, both at the larger and smaller levels, on the golden ratio, also used in Bartók's work. The second movement is marked "energetically," and begins with a lively chromatic sixteenth-note passage in the clarinet that is picked up in the flute. The sixteenth notes are nearly omnipresent through-

out the entire movement, being passed by the performers from one instrument to another, like jugglers or acrobats. We also sense something a bit diabolical here, not least because of the sonic echoes of Stravinsky's *L'Histoire du soldat* in the interplay of violin and percussion.

Takemitsu composed *Archipelago S.* in 1993 on commission from the Aldeburgh Festival. He explained that the "S." of the title referred to "the initial of Seto Inland Sea of Japan, Stockholm, and Seattle, which has beautiful islands. This work was inspired by these seascapes. The orchestra is divided into five groups and dispersed about the hall like an archipelago." The first three of those groups are located separately on the stage, while the fourth and fifth entities (each consisting of a single clarinet) are placed along the side of the audience. "Although form is very important to me," Takemitsu explained in a 1984 lecture, "how it is realized in sound is more important. The ordinary concert hall is built with the expectation that the orchestra will be blended into a single instrumental sound. I am much more interested in an orchestra that, in any given moment, can create as many different sounds as possible."

*Program notes contributed by Inscape*

## Upcoming Events of the Seventy-Fourth Season of The William Nelson Cromwell and F. Lamot Belin Concerts

PostClassical Ensemble  
Music by Daniel Schnyder and  
Min Xiao-Fen. Presented in honor  
of Asian Heritage Month  
May 1, Sunday, 3:30  
West Building, West Garden Court

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Oran Etkin, clarinet  
"Re-imagining Benny Goodman"  
Presented in honor of *In Celebration of  
Paul Mellon*  
May 8, Sunday, 3:00, 4:15  
West Building, West Garden Court

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Ariel Quartet, with Alon Goldstein, piano  
Music by Brahms and Mozart. Made  
possible by the Gottesman Fund in  
memory of Milton M. Gottesman  
May 15, Sunday, 3:30  
West Building, West Garden Court

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Aphrodite Mitsopoulou, pianist  
Music by Chopin, Liszt, Konstantinidis,  
and Skalkottas. Cosponsored by the  
Embassy of Greece for the European  
Month of Culture  
May 19, Thursday, 12:30  
West Building, West Garden Court

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Jenny Scheinman's *Kannapolis:  
A Moving Portrait*  
Original score accompanying  
a documentary  
May 22, Sunday, 4:30  
East Building Auditorium

## General Information

Admission to the National Gallery of Art and all of its programs is free of charge, except as noted.

The use of cameras or recording equipment during the performance is not allowed. Please be sure that all portable electronic devices are turned off.

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**Cover** Mary Cassatt, *The Banjo Lesson* (detail), 1938, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Mrs. Jane C. Carey as an addition to the Addie Burr Clark Memorial Collection