

74TH SEASON OF CONCERTS

NOVEMBER 1, 2015 • NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART



PROGRAM

3:30 • West Building, West Garden Court

Inscape

Richard Scerbo, conductor

Nina Young (b. 1984)

Vestigia Flammae

Edmund Finnis (b. 1984)

in situ

I. (after Perotin)

II. (after Locke)

III. (after Josquin des Prez)

IV. (after Brumel)

V. (after Rameau)

Joseph Hallman (b. 1979)

imagined landscapes: Six Lovecraftian elsewhere

I.

II.

III.

IV.

V.

VI.

Intermission

Alexander Scriabin (1872 - 1915)

*Piano Sonata no. 9, the Black Mass**

(transcribed by David Plylar)

Henryk Górecki (1933 - 2010)

Kleines Requiem für eine Polka, op. 66

I. Tranquillo

II. Allegro impetuoso

III. Allegro

IV. Adagio cantabile

*World premiere performance of the transcription

The Musicians

Inscape

Founded in 2004 by artistic director Richard Scerbo, Inscape is pushing the boundaries of classical music in riveting performances that reach across genres and generations, and also 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 times. 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 premiere 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.

Elise Blake, *violin*

Sarah D'Angelo, *violin*

Megan Yanik, *viola*

Carrie Bean Stute, *cello*

Ali Cook, *bass*

Cara Fleck, *harp*

Timothy McReynolds, *piano*

Susanna Loewy, *flute*

Evan Ross Solomon, *clarinet and bass clarinet*

Jeremy Eig, *clarinet and E-flat clarinet*

Bethany Slater, *oboe and English horn*

Benjamin Greanya, *bassoon*

Brandon Almagro, *trumpet*

James Anderson, *trombone*

Laura Brisson, *horn*

Eric Plewinski, *percussion*

Richard Scerbo

In 2004, artistic director Richard Scerbo founded Inscape with the intent of introducing audiences to diverse chamber and ensemble repertoires. Under Scerbo's leadership, Inscape has commissioned and premiered numerous new works, including, in 2012, a performance of Dominick Argento's opera *A Water Bird Talk*, as part of a month-long festival celebrating the composer's music at the University of Maryland. In 2013, Scerbo led Inscape in the National Gallery of Art's program that highlighted Ballets Russes music, including Igor Stravinsky's *Renard* and Manuel de Falla's *El corregidor y la molinera*.

In 2000, Scerbo cofounded his first orchestra, the Philharmonia Ensemble, while studying at the University of Maryland. As music director, he led the orchestra in a series of diverse and exciting programs that included collaborations with such artists as pianist Rita Sloan, soprano Carmen Balthrop, and the Prism Brass Quintet. In 2003, he made his operatic debut conducting Dominick Argento's *A Water Bird Talk* with the Philharmonia Ensemble and G. F. Handel's *Xerxes* with the Maryland Opera Studio. That same year he conducted Igor Stravinsky's *L'Histoire du soldat* in a fully staged production at the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center.

A graduate of the University of Maryland, Scerbo studied conducting with James Ross and bassoon with Daniel Matsukawa, Sue Heineman, and Linda Harwell. He has attended conducting programs in Austria and the Czech Republic, working with the International Festival Orchestra, in Kromeriz, and the Bohuslav Martinů Philharmonic. He has also been guided in his studies by classes with Leonard Slatkin, Heinz Fricke, Gustav Meier, and Johannes Schlaefli in Zurich.

In addition to his work with Inscape, Scerbo is the associate artistic director and general manager of the National Orchestral Institute, a training program for orchestra musicians on the threshold of their professional careers. He serves concurrently as assistant director for artistic planning and operations at the University of Maryland School of Music.

Program Notes

Vestigia Flammae

In Virgil's *Aeneid*, Book IV, Dido — long in grief over her husband's death — is awakened suddenly by the visiting Trojan hero, Aeneas, who proclaims, "*Agnosco veteris vestigia flammae*" ("I recognize the traces of an ancient fire").

Vestigia Flammae is not explicitly narrative in nature; like other recent works, it deals with the central concepts of lost memories, vestigial emotions, and melancholy for the passage of time. In contrast to those other works, a strain of optimism characterizes this piece: here, renewal is the driving force — the idea of recollecting, reexperiencing, and rekindling traces of old fires. This piece searches, through ritual and repetition, for remnants of vanished memories and forgotten music. The mind has difficulty remembering — fragmented fossils are pieced together — much is lost and gained in the process. Ultimately an entirely new experience emerges, fraught with nostalgia, complexity, optimism, and simplicity. It's a new beginning. *Program Notes by Nina Young*

in situ

in situ is inspired in part by the mirror sculptures of the late American artist, John McCracken. These reflective pillars alter our perception of the landscapes they inhabit in fascinating ways, each one simultaneously merging into its surrounding while mirroring back on itself, creating angular incisions of spaces and uncanny perspectives on otherwise familiar scenes.

Each of the five parts of *in situ* takes a preexisting piece of music and treats it as a kind of landscape, into which analogous distorting mirrors are placed. Fragments of the original pieces are spliced, freely reassembled, recomposed, dwelt upon, as if being folded into new shapes or reflected back on themselves. The attitude towards the source material is never one of irony or subversion, but instead comes out of a deep fondness, a desire to live and move around for a while in these musical spaces. *Program Notes by Edmund Finnis*

imagined landscapes

imagined landscapes brings my experience of reading the works of H. P. Lovecraft to life. I wanted to experiment setting scenes in which the stories of Lovecraft might unfold. There are six scenes, and each is completely different than the other. The work calls on the musician to sing, chant, whisper, shout, stamp the feet, and use other non-musical techniques to create a creepy tableau of ominous possibilities. It was written for Inscape and will be on their upcoming recording debut with Sono Luminos. It is scored for flute, clarinet, bassoon, harp, two violins, viola, and cello. *Program Notes by Joseph Hallman*

Black Mass

Alexander Scriabin is one of music's celebrated synesthetes, but the visual connections between color and sound are not easily translatable to an audience. A musical means of communicating color of a different sort — and one perhaps more practical and accessible — was through the art of orchestration. Scriabin, like Debussy, is widely admired for his piano writing; also like Debussy, his timbral sophistication yielded idiosyncratic and effective orchestral works. The care with which the composer developed sound relationships in an orchestra are also evident in his piano writing — the piano is not a monochromatic instrument, and Scriabin's compositional choices in the piano works were often wedded to an orchestrational conception of the piano's range of color.

Black Mass exemplifies Scriabin's late works; it is compactly cast in a single movement and bathed in mystery. The starkness of much of the main material contrasts significantly with the richness of its development. The majesty of Scriabin's composition certainly requires no alteration, yet I hope that this orchestration offers a new way to engage with the music and at the same time shares some of the ecstatic and profound experiences that a pianist enjoys when performing the sonata with the intimate communicative possibilities of a chamber ensemble. *Program Notes by David Plylar*

Kleines Requiem für eine Polka

With the ascendance of his *Symphony no. 3* onto the best-seller charts, Henryk Górecki became world famous. *Kleines Requiem für eine Polka* was composed in 1993, the year of the composer's sixtieth birthday. Aside from his *Concerto-Cantata* for solo flute and orchestra, it was his only instrumental composition in more than a decade for an ensemble larger than string quartet. The title has led to much speculation. "Polka" is of course a dance, which does make an appearance in the piece, but the word also refers to "a Polish woman." Górecki never spoke of the title's meaning, but it is easy to imagine a personal element behind this poignant, powerful piece.

The first of the four movements opens with tubular bells and piano, softly tolling a plaintive, modal phrase. After a number of repetition-variations, the piano shifts to a gentle ostinato, joined by the violin. This is intercut with a contrasting passage, a simple melody harmonized with biting dissonances in parallel. The high point is reached with an extended statement of this material. The movement closes with a return to the opening bells/piano.

The second movement is fast and rhythmic, yet bleak in character. The music winds itself up on a short, chromatic motive. The repetitions often shift meter, throwing the rhythmic flow off balance. A modally contrasting motive is deployed, and it is this influence that becomes most prominent. The fuller ensemble, including brass, at last gives way to the piano alone, relaxing the momentum of the asymmetrical rhythms. The clarinet enters with a singing phrase before the bells take over, again, joined by the second chorale-like string passage.

The third movement — a delirious and frenetic polka — begins without a break. The underlying "oom-pah" is overlaid with harsh chromaticism, although a forthright diatonic melody is also heard. There is one interruption of silence, as if the entire dance-floor had frozen in peril. The music then continues as before, until brusquely cut off.

A short silence leads to the final movement, a fuller treatment of the chorale music already heard, primarily in the strings. The stately hymn eventually settles on a D-flat triad, sustained for almost two minutes, colored by touches from the bells and piano. This final movement is luminous, as if the prior dark, hysterical tone has been transcended, leaving an impression of hope and faith. The "requiem" may perhaps be understood in a generalized sense, the music conveying a range of emotions from love to grief to anger then reconciliation. *Description by James Harley, from Allmusic.com*

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

David Hardy, cellist
Lisa Emenheiser, pianist
Music for cello and piano by
Britten and Rachmaninoff
November 8, Sunday, 3:30
West Building, West Garden Court

United States Army Chorus
Songs of the Soldier: A Salute to Veterans
Veteran's Day concert
November 11, Wednesday, 12:10
West Building, West Garden Court

National Gallery of Art Wind Quintet
Music by French composers
Presented in honor of
Louise Bourgeois: No Exit.
November 15, Sunday, 3:30
West Building, West Garden Court

National Gallery of Art
New Music Ensemble
Music by Morton Subotnick
Presented in honor of
The Serial Impulse at Gemini G.E.L.
November 22, Sunday, 3:30
West Building, West Garden Court

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.

Concerts are made possible in part through the generosity of donors to the National Gallery of Art through The Circle. Reserved seating is available in recognition of their support. Please contact the development office at (202) 842-6450 or circle@nga.gov for more information.

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Cover Heinrich von Förster, *The Music Room of Archduchess Margarete, Princess of Saxony, in Schloss Ambras* (detail), 1870s, National Gallery of Art, Washington

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