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Music Department
National Gallery of Art
Sixth Street and Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC

www.nga.gov

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COVER: El Greco (Domenikos Theotokopoulos), *Laocoön*, c. 1610/1614,
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Samuel H. Kress Collection



The Seventy-Third Season of
The William Nelson Cromwell and F. Lammot Belin
Concerts

National Gallery of Art
3,038th Concert

National Gallery of Art New Music Ensemble
Steve Antosca, Artistic Director

February 15, 2015
Sunday, 3:30 pm
West Building, West Garden Court

Program

David Plylar (b. 1978)

*Laocoön** (2014–2015)

Michael Jacko, conductor

Linda Dusman (b. 1956)

*Lake, Thunder** (2015)

David Smooke (b. 1969)

*Transgenic Fields, dusk*** (2012)

Steve Antosca (b. 1955)

elements—five transfigurations for cello and computer (2009–2014)

flow = water

drift = time

float = cloud

Commissioned by the Fromm Foundation at Harvard University

This concert is made possible in part by support from the Randy Hostetler Living Room Music Fund.

*World premiere

**Washington premiere performance

The Musicians

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART NEW MUSIC ENSEMBLE

Formed in 2010 to present new music in the vibrant architectural environments of the National Gallery of Art, the Gallery's resident New Music Ensemble has offered critically acclaimed concerts that feature strategic placement of musicians throughout the spaces and utilized computer controlled transformations and spatialization of sound. The group's 2011 tribute to the Gallery's seventieth anniversary, staged in the West Building's Rotunda, was hailed by the *Washington Post* as "a spectacular, wonderfully provocative" concert, which transformed the Rotunda into "an immense temple of sound, presenting a program of theatrical new works that married humans with computers, and ancient myths with contemporary aesthetics."

Members of the National Gallery of Art New Music Ensemble performing in this afternoon's concert are violinist Lina Bahn, computer musician William Brent, flutist Lisa Cella, and clarinetist Bill Kalinkos. Guest artists include pianist Audrey Andrist, trombonist Patrick Crossland, oboist Alison Lowell, and cellist Tobias Werner.

STEVE ANTOSCA

Named artistic director of the National Gallery of Art New Music Ensemble in 2010, composer Steve Antosca was the Gallery's composer-in-residence in the fall of 2013. His residency included his work *HABITAT*, composed for performance in the East Building Atrium, and *my end is my beginning*, commissioned by Chamber Music America. Antosca has received awards and commissions for new works from the American Composers Forum, Argosy Foundation Contemporary Music Fund, Bourges International Competitions, Chamber Music America, Fromm Foundation at Harvard University, Johansen International Competition, Kennedy Center, Maryland State Arts Council, McKim Foundation at the Library of Congress, Meet the Composer, National Endowment for the Arts, and Randy Hostetler

Living Room Music Fund. Recipient in 2011 of the National Academy of Music's International Music Prize for Excellence in Composition, Antosca has a master's degree in computer music composition from the Peabody Conservatory of Johns Hopkins University. Formerly the artistic director of VERGE ensemble, with which he performed numerous times at the National Gallery and at the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Antosca was a codirector of the 2012 John Cage Centennial Festival Washington, DC.

MICHAEL JACKO

Hailed by the *Washington Post* for his "fascinating and illuminating" programming, Michael Jacko is a conductor in the Washington area. He is music director for Maryland Sinfonietta and the University of Maryland Repertoire Orchestra. He also serves as assistant conductor for the Capital City Symphony and the University of Maryland Symphony Orchestra. At the National Gallery, he works in the Music Department and is cover conductor for the Gallery's orchestra.

Program Notes

The idea for a chamber work based on the story of Laocoön came from a fascination with the Hellenistic sculpture *Laocoön and His Sons* (c. 27 BC–68 AD), in the Vatican Museums' collection. Unearthed in 1506 and originally created about two millennia ago, most likely by a trio of Rhodian sculptors (if it is indeed the same Laocoön group—or perhaps a copy—admired by Pliny the Elder). An essential part of the Vatican's collection, the sculpture manages to capture the beautiful dynamism of a tragic moment—the imminent death of the Trojan priest Laocoön and his sons at the hands of the gods in the guise of serpents, after Laocoön's failed attempt to warn his fellow citizens of the treacherous gift from the Greeks—the Trojan Horse.

Several types of music struggle against each other; the free-sounding but prescient bass clarinet and its more rigid (at times) wind acolytes work against or in consort with the infinitely variable yet perpetually renewing streams of the violin and piano. As the piece progresses the content of the work is simultaneously vigorously active and straining the bonds of a frozen mythology. The fate of Laocoön represents more than might be immediately evident: the fall of Troy paved the way for the rise of Rome and the forces that ultimately preserved *Laocoön and His Sons*. The National Gallery of Art has in its collection another famous Laocoön—El Greco's eponymous oil painting from about 1610.

Plylar is an accomplished composer, scholar, pianist, and educator. He was appointed as a music specialist/concert producer at the Library of Congress in 2012, after serving as the Artistic and New Music Coordinator of the KwaZulu-Natal Philharmonic Orchestra in South Africa. Plylar has received recognition from Meet the Composer, ASCAP, the American Music Center, the Minnesota Orchestra Reading Sessions and the Hanson Institute for American Music. He holds degrees from Duke University, the University of Louisville, and the Eastman School of Music, where he earned his PhD in composition. He is also active as a writer, focusing on new and nineteenth-century music. A disc of Plylar's transcriptions will be released this summer by the Inscape Chamber Orchestra.

An *I Ching* hexagram entitled “Lake, Thunder” describes energy in a state of rest: thunder drops below the lake in winter to restore itself. This composition of the same title explores the concept of evoking energy without movement. Compositional analogues include the color changes in clarinet “same note” trills; the trombone as a “natural” instrument, without equal tempered adjustments; and the rhythm of beating patterns that result from coupling equal and nonequal tempered unisons. The piece was composed during a residence at the Gardarev Center in Point Reyes, California, with valuable suggestions from Patrick Crossland and E. Michael Richards.

Linda Dusman’s compositions and sonic art explore the richness of contemporary life, from the personal to the political. Her solo CD, *I Need No Words*, contains sonic reflections on a variety of texts, from Joan Retallack to Emily Dickinson. *Thundersnow*, a piano trio, was premiered by Trio des Alpes in Italy in 2014. Her music has received awards from the International Alliance for Women in Music, the State of Maryland, and the Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation. Her compositions are published by Neuma Records and Publications and are recorded on the NEUMA, Capstone, and New Albany labels. Dusman is a Professor of Music at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County.

Transgenic Fields, dusk (2012) presents a quiet portrayal of a sound world that is simultaneously bucolic and unnatural. Artificial birds hover over a musical landscape that twists familiar sounds into aberrant shapes. Contemplative melodies weave within synthetic underpinnings that threaten their relatively placid surfaces. As light turns to dusk, the harmonies fade into silence, seeming to strive towards the pure beauty that they find impossible to attain.

While developing the harmonies that would function as the basis for this new piece, the ear kept being drawn towards those sounds that involved an element of impurity—that appeared to be based on a single interval but involved one or more tones that came from seemingly unrelated sonic spaces. These hybrid sonorities then became the basis for controlled mutations, a sort of transgenic manipulation of the harmonic fields. *Transgenic Fields, dusk* is dedicated to the memory of Peter Marvit.

Composer David Smooke currently teaches rock music history and chairs the music theory department at the Peabody Conservatory of Johns Hopkins University. The *Washington Post* writes that “Smooke has some of the most uninhibited brain cells around” and describes his music as “superb... a kaleidoscopic sonic universe where anything could happen.” Smooke has been recognized by the Maryland State Arts Council, the Greater Baltimore Cultural Alliance, BMI, the MacDowell Colony, and Yellow Barn. He has composed commissions for groups including the International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE) and Rhymes with Opera, and has worked with ensembles including the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, the Pacifica Quartet, eighth blackbird, Ensemble Dal Niente, and the California E. A. R. Unit. He earned an MM from the Peabody Conservatory, a BA from the University of Pennsylvania, and a PhD from the University of Chicago, having studied with Shulamit Ran, David Rakowski, Robert Hall Lewis, and Richard Wernick.

Steve Antosca’s *elements~five transfigurations for cello and computer* was composed for and is dedicated to cellist Tobias Werner. William Brent developed the technology for the piece, in close collaboration with the composer. Each movement explores aspects of extended techniques and sonic characteristics of the cello, as evolving textures and spatialization emerge from this delicate interaction among performer, technology, and performance space.

The symbol \approx represents asymptotic equivalence, meaning that acoustic and transformed sonic elements approach equivalency, eventually becoming essentially equal, but never quite the same. It can be read as “like.”

flow like water introduces multiple extended techniques in *elements*. These include harmonic glissandi, indeterminate pitch boxes, and extended glissando gestures, both smooth and irregular. Exploitation of various bowing styles, placement, and pressure are played with throughout the movement. *drift like time* and *float like cloud* continue the application of extended cello performance techniques and multiple bowing styles for the cellist. Although these two movements are nearly identical, the degree and style of computer processing differs in each movement.

Program Notes are based on materials provided by the composers.