74TH SEASON OF CONCERTS

NOVEMBER 1, 2015 • NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART
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

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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 Schlafeli 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
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