

# AMERICAN CANVAS

---

HIGDON\RAN\ZHOU\CLEARFIELD

---

**DOLCE SUONO TRIO**

---

Lucy Shelton, soprano

---



# AMERICAN CANVAS

## Dolce Suono Trio

Lucy Shelton, soprano

JENNIFER HIGDON (1962) [14:57]

American Canvas for Flute, Cello, and Piano (2015)

1. O'Keeffe [6:30]

2. Pollock [4:20]

3. Wyeth [4:07]

*Stillman, Vickery, Abramovic*

ANDREA CLEARFIELD (1960) [14:07]

Spirit Island for Flute, Cello, and Piano (1996)

4. I. Variations on a Dream [9:23]

5. II. Rowing [4:44]

*Stillman, Vickery, Abramovic*

ZHOU TIAN (1981) Live in concert [9:41]

6. Viaje for Flute, Cello, and Piano (2015)

*Stillman, Cabezas, Abramovic*

SHULAMIT RAN (1949)

Moon Songs: A Song Cycle in Four Acts for Soprano, Flute, [25:00]

Cello, and Piano (2011)

7. Act I: Creation [5:41]

8. Act II: Li Bai and the Vacant Moon [8:04]

9. Entr'acte I [1:14]

10. Act III: Star-Crossed [3:52]

11. Entr'acte II: Prayer to Pierrot [1:17]

12. Act IV: Medley [4:52]

*Shelton, Stillman, Gerlach, Abramovic*

Total: 63:47

© Dolce Suono Ensemble. All Rights Reserved, 2018.

innova® Recordings is the label of the

American Composers Forum.

[www.innova.mu](http://www.innova.mu) [www.dolcesuono.com](http://www.dolcesuono.com)



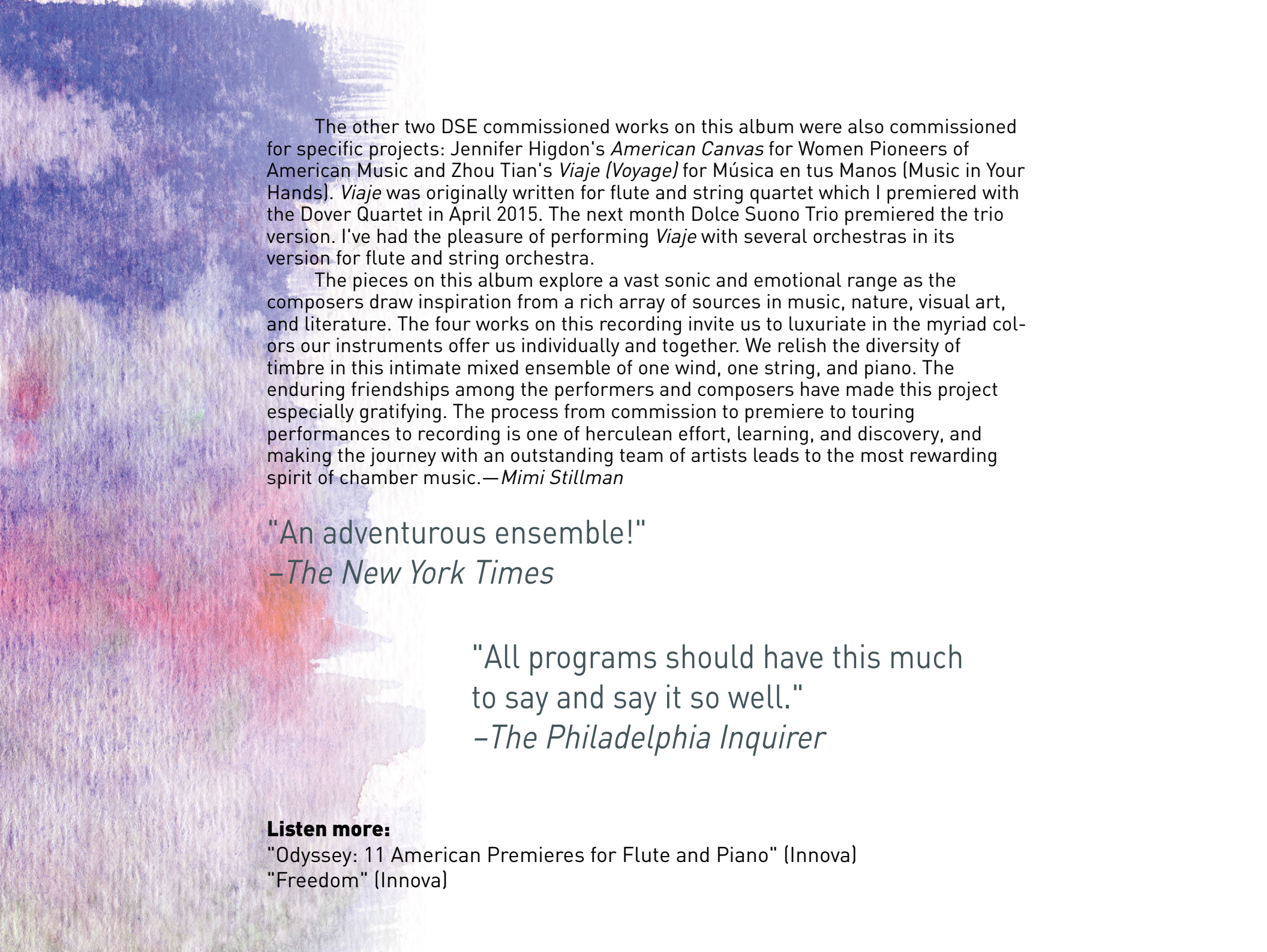


## PROGRAM NOTES

*American Canvas* introduces premiere recordings of four works, three commissioned by Dolce Suono Trio. Each of the pieces by Jennifer Higdon, Shulamit Ran, Andrea Clearfield, and Zhou Tian is a remarkable work of chamber music and an important contribution to the repertoire for flute, cello, and piano. The earliest major works for this trio combination are by Haydn (1790), not surprising as he was an initiator of other genres such as the string quartet and the symphony. In the more than 200 years since Haydn wrote these pieces, other composers have contributed staples to our repertoire, among them Weber, Gaubert, Martinu, Rorem, Crumb, and Danielpour. With a grounding in this existing repertoire, building our trio's repertoire through commissions and arrangements has been one of our primary goals. We have often partnered with extraordinary singers on existing and new repertoire for trio with voice, inspired by Ravel's *Chansons madécasses*. Our pianist Charles Abramovic, also an accomplished composer, has written two trios for this combination, including his *Laus D (A Haydn Tribute)*, his reflection on the genius of Haydn and, written in 2009, a look back at one of the founders of our trio genre on the bicentennial of his death in 1809.

Dolce Suono Trio was born shortly after I founded Dolce Suono Ensemble (DSE) in 2005, and soon became our flagship ensemble and most active touring group. We think of Dolce Suono Ensemble as a repertory theater company with a cast of artists that expands and contracts depending on the repertoire. We emerged as a trio from the very fruitful collaboration of Charles Abramovic and myself, performing together as a duo since 2002. This album brings together the phenomenal talents of cellists Nathan Vickery, who joined DSE in 2012, Gabriel Cabezas, who joined in 2014, and Alexis Pia Gerlach, who did a project with us focused on Ran's *Moon Songs*. Our ensemble is thrilled to collaborate again with Lucy Shelton in this recording of the Ran, which we commissioned and premiered as part of our Mahler 100 / Schoenberg 60 project in 2012.





The other two DSE commissioned works on this album were also commissioned for specific projects: Jennifer Higdon's *American Canvas* for Women Pioneers of American Music and Zhou Tian's *Viaje (Voyage)* for Música en tus Manos (Music in Your Hands). *Viaje* was originally written for flute and string quartet which I premiered with the Dover Quartet in April 2015. The next month Dolce Suono Trio premiered the trio version. I've had the pleasure of performing *Viaje* with several orchestras in its version for flute and string orchestra.

The pieces on this album explore a vast sonic and emotional range as the composers draw inspiration from a rich array of sources in music, nature, visual art, and literature. The four works on this recording invite us to luxuriate in the myriad colors our instruments offer us individually and together. We relish the diversity of timbre in this intimate mixed ensemble of one wind, one string, and piano. The enduring friendships among the performers and composers have made this project especially gratifying. The process from commission to premiere to touring performances to recording is one of herculean effort, learning, and discovery, and making the journey with an outstanding team of artists leads to the most rewarding spirit of chamber music.—*Mimi Stillman*

"An adventurous ensemble!"

—*The New York Times*

"All programs should have this much  
to say and say it so well."

—*The Philadelphia Inquirer*

**Listen more:**

"Odyssey: 11 American Premieres for Flute and Piano" (Innova)

"Freedom" (Innova)



An abstract painting on the left side of the page, featuring a dense, textured composition of green, purple, and white. The colors are layered and blended, creating a sense of depth and movement. The texture appears to be built up with many small brushstrokes or layers of paint.

### **Jennifer Higdon, *American Canvas* (2015)**

Three American artists... each with a distinctive palette and artistic process... each with a style that is recognizable with even the quickest glance.

Georgia O'Keeffe (1887-1986) – Every image painted by O'Keeffe has clean lines and is very articulated (as opposed to the chaos of Pollock). She would observe the simplest items: skulls, bones, flowers, the door in the inner courtyard of her Abiquiu house. When studying her paintings, one can sense the air that surrounds each object so I've made sure that there are moments of "breath" in this movement. To reflect her lifetime of repeatedly painting certain objects, with a slightly different "framing" of color or perspective, I've used a smaller amount of musical material and reframed it in different musical contexts.

Jackson Pollock (1912-1956) – As all elements are very equal in value in a Pollock canvas...balance of color, shape of gesture, ever-swirling, lots of layers... so are the musical gestures of equal importance here. No one voice stands out; but the entire "whole" of the movement reflects the "energy" in sound equivalent to the "energy" of the image on canvas.

Andrew Wyeth (1917-2009) – This painter spoke frequently of his need to capture the intense emotion of each scene...to make a striking image. What appears to us as an ordinary object becomes an amazing canvas full of light, even with the darkest subjects. Wyeth managed to create meticulously detailed paintings filled by a million minute brush strokes, often done at high speed (because he painted with the temperamental method of fast-drying tempera paint). Wyeth's constant balancing act between elements, colors, and immense detail causes a canvas to come alive, appearing almost more life-like than the real thing. Commissioned by Dolce Suono Ensemble with grants from the Musical Fund Society of Philadelphia and the William Penn Foundation.—*Jennifer Higdon*

### **Andrea Clearfield, *Spirit Island* (1996)**

*Spirit Island* was inspired by a canoe trip on Maligne Lake, located in Jasper National Park in the Canadian Rocky Mountains. Spirit Island is a small island on the south end of the lake. This piece, a fantasia on the natural world of the island, explores the light and dark qualities of the landscape; tranquil, ethereal and timeless as well as haunting and foreboding in its mystique. The first movement takes the form of a loosely woven set of variations based on a four-note theme. The variations move through different moods and colors reflecting the changing light and weather. The second movement, with its syncopated rhythms and jagged harmonies, recalls the experience of traveling through choppy waters. Premiered by the Temple University New Music Trio.—*Andrea Clearfield*





### **Zhou Tian, *Viaje* (2015)**

*Viaje (Voyage)* was commissioned by Dolce Suono Ensemble, with a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. My gratitude goes to Mimi Stillman, without whose awesome musicianship and commitment the work would not have been possible. Experiencing Spain for the first time and learning about the legendary Spanish nobleman and military leader El Cid (c. 1040-1099) inspired me to compose this 9-minute thrill ride. I was particularly drawn to the relationship between El Cid and his two daughters as they went through an innocent childhood, separation, distrust, and finally, reunion. I imagined the flute as the voice of the daughters and the cello as the voice of their father. A musical dialogue between the two instruments emerges in the middle of the piece, as if recalling a long-overdue conversation between father and daughters. It wasn't until the piece was finished that I realized that I had unconsciously married my musical roots as a Chinese-American with my new found love of Spanish music. "*Viaje* fused the composer's Chinese-American sensibility with the lore of ancient Spain so convincingly that the exotic flute solos for Mimi Stillman sounded like the most natural thing in the world" (The Philadelphia Inquirer).—*Zhou Tian*

### **Shulamit Ran, *Moon Songs* (2011)**

The invitation from flute virtuoso Mimi Stillman to compose a work for her Dolce Suono Ensemble's Mahler 100 / Schoenberg 60 project that could serve as an homage as well as a companion piece to Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*, one of the 20th-century's seminal compositions, was as challenging as it was intriguing. Creating this work for Lucy Shelton, for whom *Pierrot Lunaire* has been a signature role, was inspiring. *Moon Songs* uses a selection of texts which refer to the moon. The texts set are in Hebrew and English, the two languages that have been dominant in my life. The Hebrew texts include passages from the Bible, medieval Hebrew poetry by Shlomo Ibn Gabirol, Yehuda Halevi, and Shmuel Hanagid, and modern Israeli poetry by Haim Gouri and Almog Behar. The English-language texts range from the Renaissance to today - Philip Sidney, William Wordsworth, Matthew Arnold, and Samuel Menashe.

*Moon Songs* is organized in four "acts", with two entr'actes following Acts II and III. Each "act" uses different devices, both textually and musically, to create coherence and continuity, with texts I selected around a unifying theme. The music ranges from mysterious and incantational in Act I to folk-like and fantastical in Act II, contemplative in the solo cello Entr'acte I, and darkly foreboding in Act III. Entr'acte II is a mournful piccolo solo with a stylized vocal recitation of the ninth poem of *Pierrot Lunaire*. Act IV brings the piece to a jubilant, climactic close. *Moon Songs* was commissioned by Dolce Suono Ensemble with a grant from the Pew Center for Arts & Heritage.—*Shulamit Ran*



## Moon Songs: Texts and Translations

### Act I. Creation

Lu lo haya lo laila mi'leylot ka-ele  
L'lo ulai v'alelai.  
Al harekhovot.  
Al megilot ha'esh ha'ele.  
V'khol ha'khalomot hayu v'nivre-u.  
Ata holekh mimena v'eleyha.  
Mosif gshamim azim,  
Bore l'ma-ankha yareyakh... (1)  
Asa yare-akh l'mo-adim  
Shemesh yada mevo-o (2)  
Mi yazkir tehilatekha  
Ba'asotkha ha'yareyakh  
Rishon l'kheshebon mo-adim u'zmanim  
U'tkufot v'otot l'yamim v'shanim (3)

1 Haim Gouri (b. 1923) from *Liheyot Akher II (To Be Different II)*. Translation by David Stillman

2 Psalms, 104:19

3 Shlomo Ibn Gabirol (1021-1058?) from *Keter Malkhut (A Crown for the King XII)*. Translation by Shulamit Ran

### Act II. Li Bai and the Vacant Moon

Li Bai tried to embrace the full moon  
and fell into the river, and he died...  
...The world spoke to him:  
intoxicated, he drank to understand.  
He knew there's no time for philosophy.  
I, too, like him, the full moon I love,  
but I have no courage to encircle it.  
I embrace the vacant moon, and my heart -  
so it won't fall, so we won't fall!  
Sh'lo yipol, sh'lo nipol.

Almog Behar (b. 1978) from *Li Bai V'Hayare'akh Hareik (Li Bai and the Vacant Moon)*. Excerpts chosen and translated by Shulamit Ran

If he hadn't had a night like this one out of his  
nights  
Without maybe and woe is me.  
About the streets.  
About those scrolls of fire.  
And all the dreams were and were created.  
You go from her and to her.  
Adding mighty rain,  
creating for yourself a moon...  
[The Lord] made the moon to mark the holidays.  
The sun knows its way.  
Who will recite your praises  
Your having made the moon?  
First in calculating holidays and times,  
And seasons and signs for the days and the years.

Li Bai [an eighth-century Chinese poet] tried to  
embrace [encircle, surround, hug] the full moon.  
[He was known as a drunk!] He fell into the river  
and he died. [He died at the age of sixty-one.]  
Li Bai tried to embrace the full moon  
*The tide is full, the moon lies fair*  
*The sea is calm tonight.*  
The world spoke to him:  
intoxicated, he drank to understand. *Listen!*  
*Begin, and cease, and then again begin*  
...and he knew there is no time for philosophy.  
I, too, like him, the full moon love,  
but I have no courage to encircle it.  
*Upon the straits... glimmering and vast...*  
I embrace the vacant moon, and my heart,  
*...The eternal note of sadness bring.*  
"I drink alone beneath the bright moonshine."  
Sh'lo yipol, sh'lo nipol.

Ran's expansion of Behar's text interjects footnotes and elaborations (in brackets), excerpts (in italics) from *Dover Beach* by Matthew Arnold (1822-1888), and one line (in quotes) from *Drinking Alone Under the Moon* by Li Bai (701-762).



### Act III. Star-Crossed

With how sad steps, O Moon, thou climb'st the  
skies,  
How silently, and how wan a face! (1  
This lunar air  
Draws me to you,  
The moon's magnet  
Aligns that pair  
Whom dragons slew,  
Whose course was set  
Before they knew (2  
She who saw the moon last night  
She who swayed with the chant  
Died in her sleep or dreams—  
To say she is dead seems scant. (3  
I see her now, denied to lay her head,  
On cold blue nights, in hut or straw-built shed,  
Turn to a silent smile their sleepy cry,  
By pointing to the gliding moon on high...  
...all light is mute amid the gloom  
The interlunar Cavern of the Tomb. (4

### Act IV. Medley

Ya-alat khi v'khetem Ophir  
Bi'm-orah m'or yom takhpir  
U'levana k'livnat safir  
U'khe'etzem ha'shamayim (1

Shemesh v'yare-akh l'olam shertu (2

Ehi kofer l'ofar  
ba'leil l'kol kinor v'ugavim meitivim  
Asher ra-ah kos b'yadi v'amar:

"Shte mi'bein sfatai dam anavim"  
V'yare-akh kmo yod  
Nikhteva al ksut shakhar  
Bi'meimay ha'zehavim (3  
[Ya-alat khi...  
[Mi yazkir tehilatekha...  
[Shemesh v'yare-akh l'olam...

1. Yehuda Halevi (1075–1141) from *Yona al Afikei Maim - Dove Beside The Water Brooks*. Translation by Nina Salaman, from *Selected Poems of Yehuda Halevi*, The Jewish Publication Society of America 2. Yehuda Halevi from *Ad Yom Va'leil Yishbetu - Until Day and Night Shall Cease* 3. Shmuel Hanagid (993-1056) *Ehi Kofer l'Ofer - I would be ransom for the fawn*. Translations by Shulamit Ran

### Entr'acte II. Prayer to Pierrot

Pierrot! My laughter—I have forgotten how to  
laugh.  
The image of splendor has melted away, melted  
away.  
Black on the pole the flag now waves to me.  
Pierrot! My laughter—I have forgotten how to  
laugh.  
Oh, give it back to me, you medic of the soul, you  
snowman of verse  
Your Serene Highness Moon, Pierrot, my laughter!

1. Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586), from *Astrophil and Stella* 2. Samuel Menashe (1925-2011), *Star-Crossed* 3. Samuel Menashe, *She who saw the moon last night* 4. William Wordsworth (1770-1850), from *An Evening Walk*

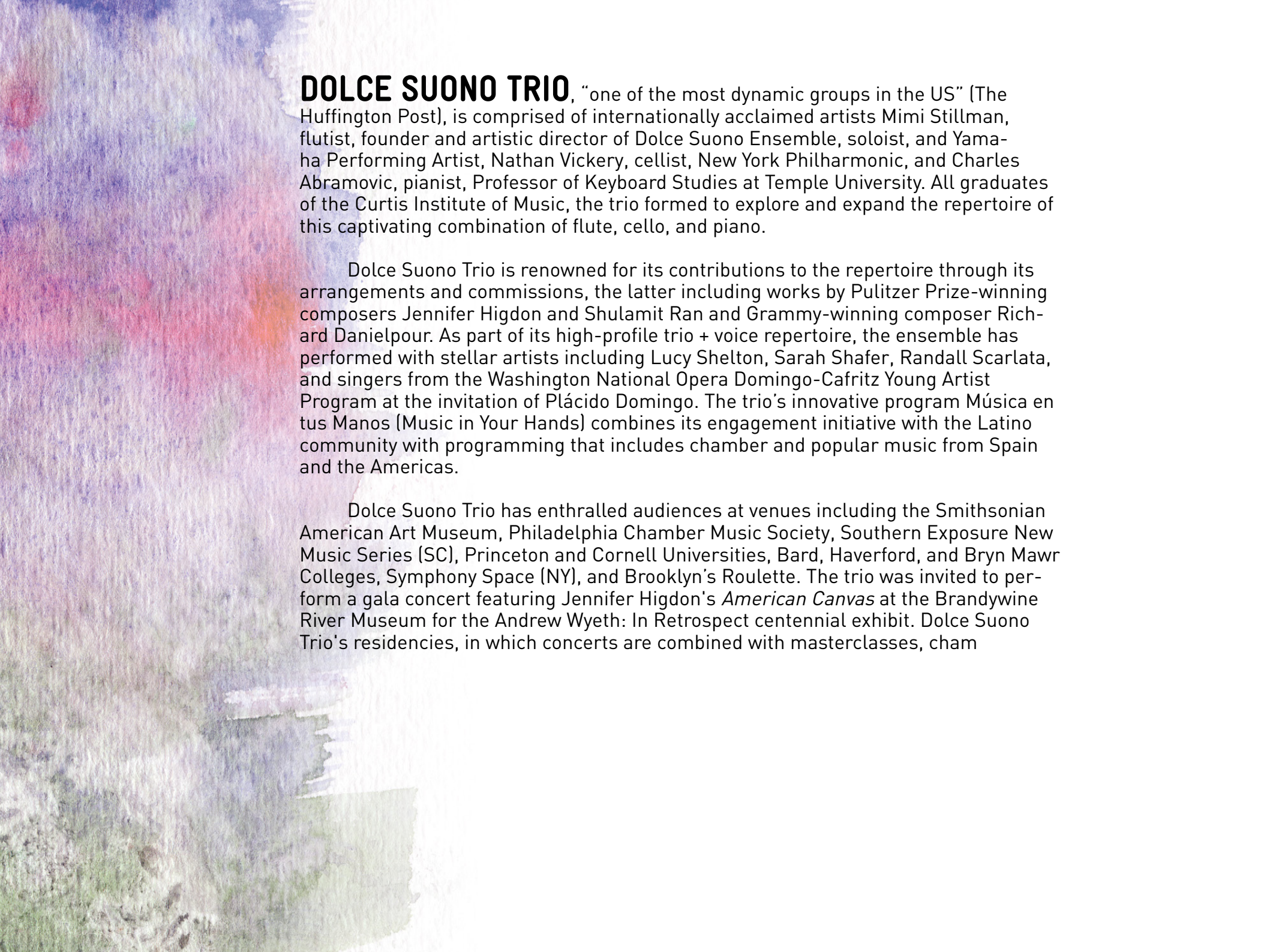
Albert Giraud (1860-1929) *Supplique* (from *Pierrot Lunaire*) in homage to Arnold Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* (No. 9). Translation by David Stillman

A graceful doe, like gold of Ophir,  
With her light, she shameth the light of day;  
Like the moon, like paved work of sapphire,  
As it were the very heaven.

Sun and moon forever serve.

I would be ransom for the fawn who, awakening at  
night  
to the melodious sound of strings and pipes,  
and seeing the cup in my hand says:  
"Drink from between my lips the blood of grapes."  
And the crescent-shaped moon  
was inscribed upon the garments of dawn  
in golden water.  
A graceful doe... (repeat of first stanza)  
Who will recite your praises... (reprise from Act I)  
Sun and moon forever!! (repeat of 2nd "stanza")



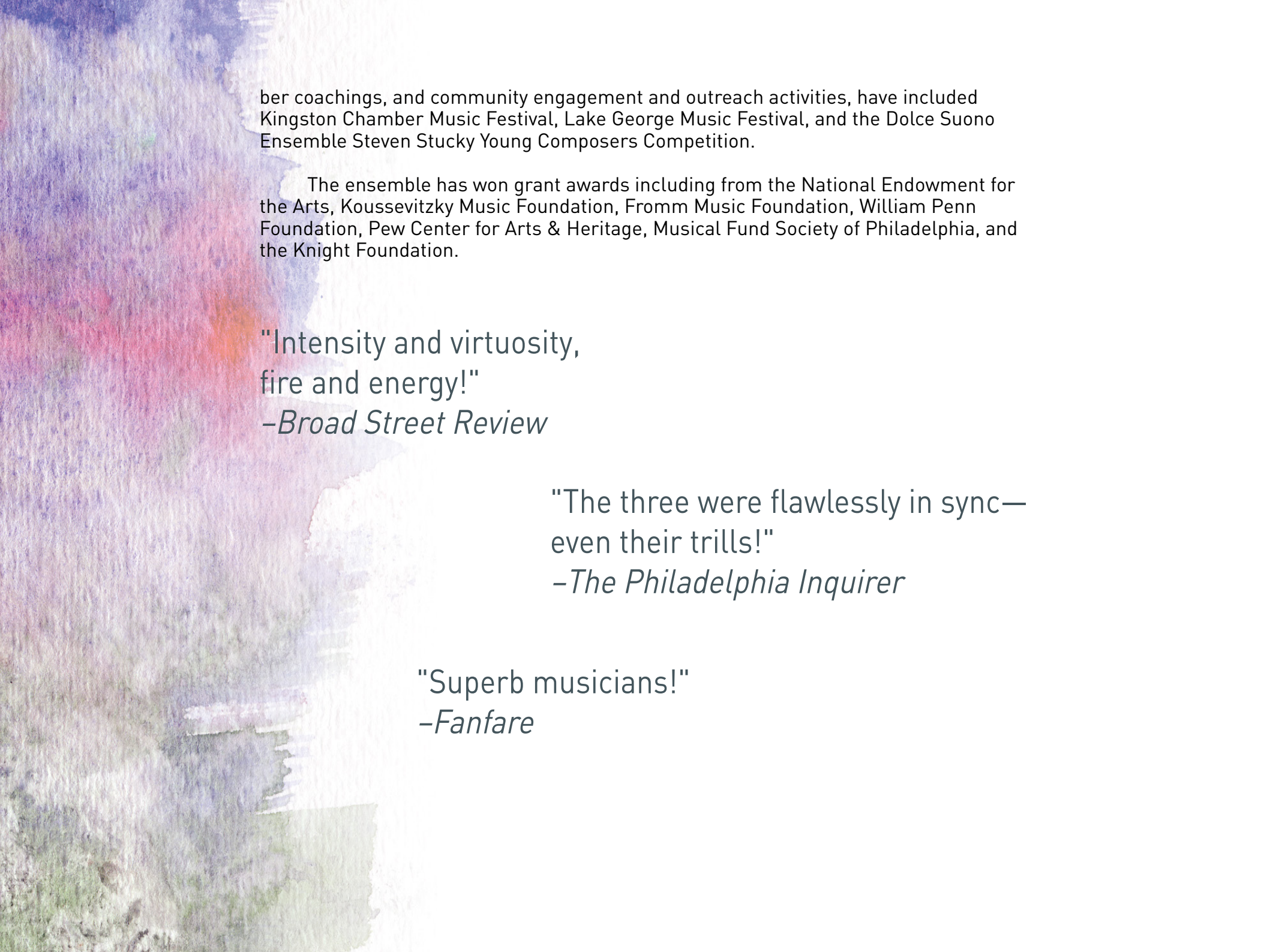


**DOLCE SUONO TRIO**, “one of the most dynamic groups in the US” (The Huffington Post), is comprised of internationally acclaimed artists Mimi Stillman, flutist, founder and artistic director of Dolce Suono Ensemble, soloist, and Yamaha Performing Artist, Nathan Vickery, cellist, New York Philharmonic, and Charles Abramovic, pianist, Professor of Keyboard Studies at Temple University. All graduates of the Curtis Institute of Music, the trio formed to explore and expand the repertoire of this captivating combination of flute, cello, and piano.

Dolce Suono Trio is renowned for its contributions to the repertoire through its arrangements and commissions, the latter including works by Pulitzer Prize-winning composers Jennifer Higdon and Shulamit Ran and Grammy-winning composer Richard Danielpour. As part of its high-profile trio + voice repertoire, the ensemble has performed with stellar artists including Lucy Shelton, Sarah Shafer, Randall Scarlata, and singers from the Washington National Opera Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program at the invitation of Plácido Domingo. The trio’s innovative program *Música en tus Manos* (Music in Your Hands) combines its engagement initiative with the Latino community with programming that includes chamber and popular music from Spain and the Americas.

Dolce Suono Trio has enthralled audiences at venues including the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, Southern Exposure New Music Series (SC), Princeton and Cornell Universities, Bard, Haverford, and Bryn Mawr Colleges, Symphony Space (NY), and Brooklyn’s Roulette. The trio was invited to perform a gala concert featuring Jennifer Higdon’s *American Canvas* at the Brandywine River Museum for the Andrew Wyeth: In Retrospect centennial exhibit. Dolce Suono Trio’s residencies, in which concerts are combined with masterclasses, cham





ber coachings, and community engagement and outreach activities, have included Kingston Chamber Music Festival, Lake George Music Festival, and the Dolce Suono Ensemble Steven Stucky Young Composers Competition.

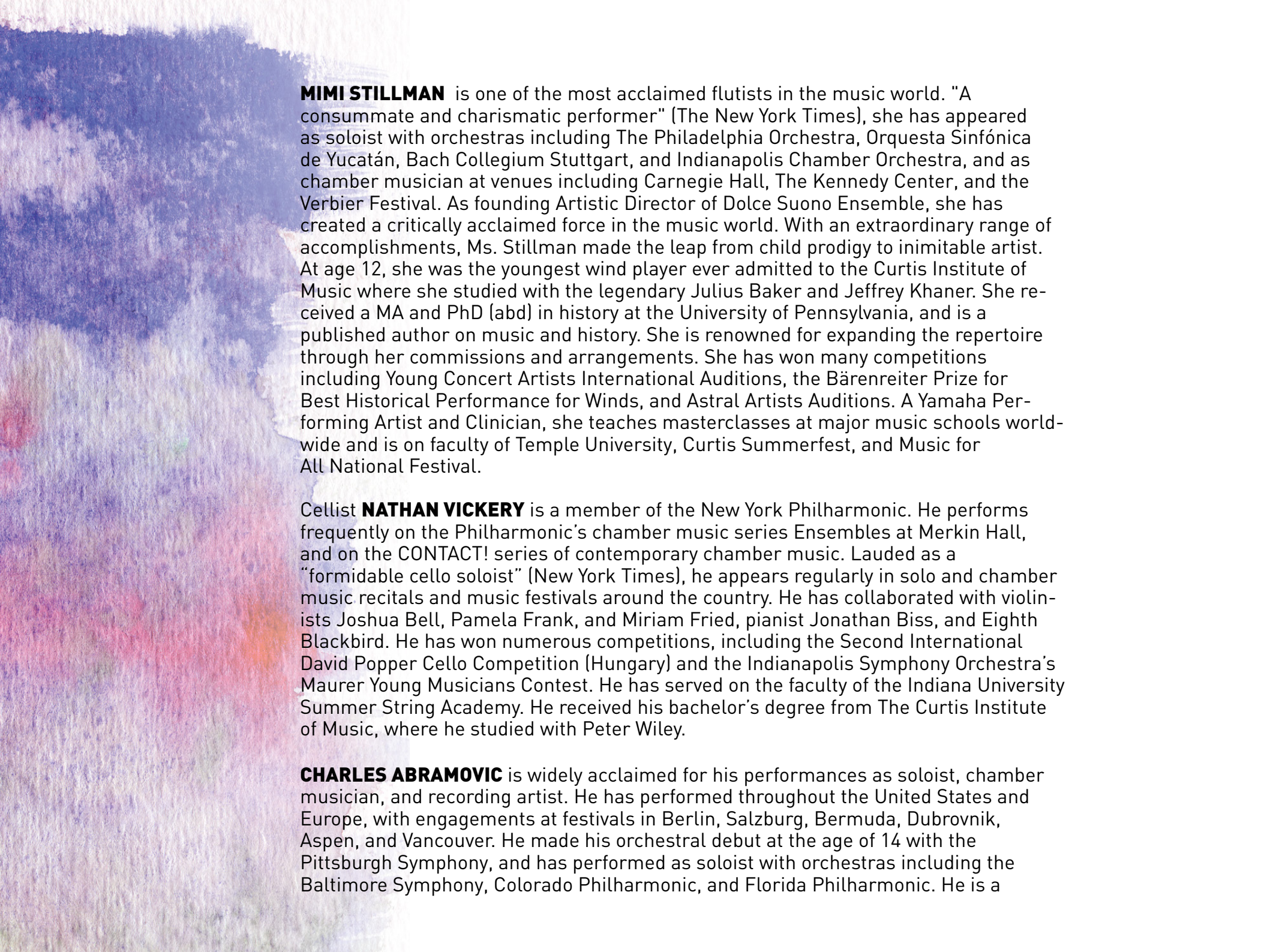
The ensemble has won grant awards including from the National Endowment for the Arts, Koussevitzky Music Foundation, Fromm Music Foundation, William Penn Foundation, Pew Center for Arts & Heritage, Musical Fund Society of Philadelphia, and the Knight Foundation.

"Intensity and virtuosity,  
fire and energy!"  
—*Broad Street Review*

"The three were flawlessly in sync—  
even their trills!"  
—*The Philadelphia Inquirer*

"Superb musicians!"  
—*Fanfare*



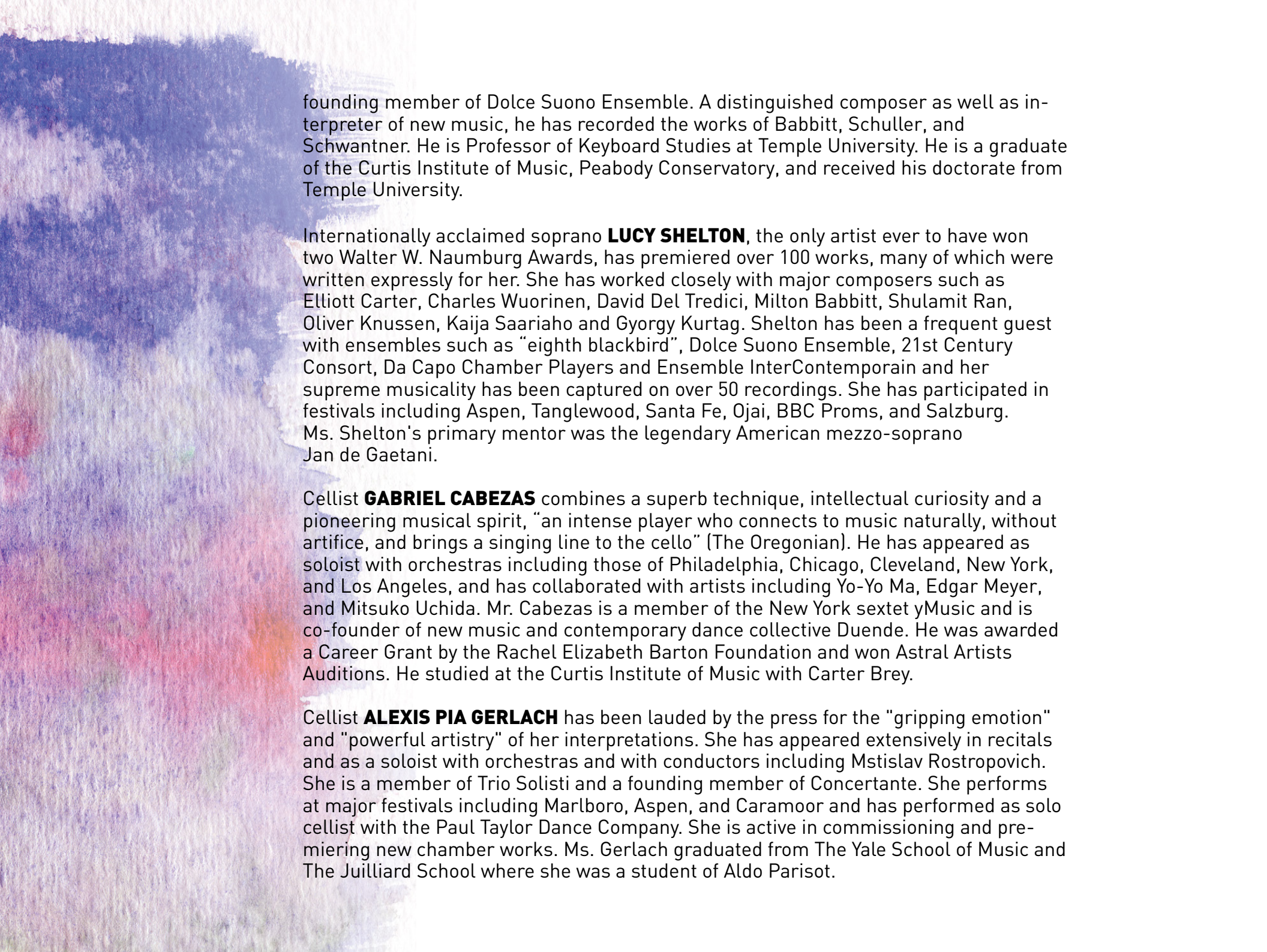


**MIMI STILLMAN** is one of the most acclaimed flutists in the music world. "A consummate and charismatic performer" (The New York Times), she has appeared as soloist with orchestras including The Philadelphia Orchestra, Orquesta Sinfónica de Yucatán, Bach Collegium Stuttgart, and Indianapolis Chamber Orchestra, and as chamber musician at venues including Carnegie Hall, The Kennedy Center, and the Verbier Festival. As founding Artistic Director of Dolce Suono Ensemble, she has created a critically acclaimed force in the music world. With an extraordinary range of accomplishments, Ms. Stillman made the leap from child prodigy to inimitable artist. At age 12, she was the youngest wind player ever admitted to the Curtis Institute of Music where she studied with the legendary Julius Baker and Jeffrey Khaner. She received a MA and PhD (abd) in history at the University of Pennsylvania, and is a published author on music and history. She is renowned for expanding the repertoire through her commissions and arrangements. She has won many competitions including Young Concert Artists International Auditions, the Bärenreiter Prize for Best Historical Performance for Winds, and Astral Artists Auditions. A Yamaha Performing Artist and Clinician, she teaches masterclasses at major music schools worldwide and is on faculty of Temple University, Curtis Summerfest, and Music for All National Festival.

Cellist **NATHAN VICKERY** is a member of the New York Philharmonic. He performs frequently on the Philharmonic's chamber music series Ensembles at Merkin Hall, and on the CONTACT! series of contemporary chamber music. Lauded as a "formidable cello soloist" (New York Times), he appears regularly in solo and chamber music recitals and music festivals around the country. He has collaborated with violinists Joshua Bell, Pamela Frank, and Miriam Fried, pianist Jonathan Biss, and Eighth Blackbird. He has won numerous competitions, including the Second International David Popper Cello Competition (Hungary) and the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra's Maurer Young Musicians Contest. He has served on the faculty of the Indiana University Summer String Academy. He received his bachelor's degree from The Curtis Institute of Music, where he studied with Peter Wiley.

**CHARLES ABRAMOVIC** is widely acclaimed for his performances as soloist, chamber musician, and recording artist. He has performed throughout the United States and Europe, with engagements at festivals in Berlin, Salzburg, Bermuda, Dubrovnik, Aspen, and Vancouver. He made his orchestral debut at the age of 14 with the Pittsburgh Symphony, and has performed as soloist with orchestras including the Baltimore Symphony, Colorado Philharmonic, and Florida Philharmonic. He is a





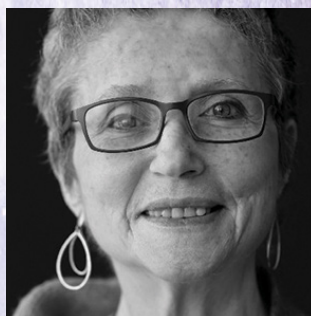
founding member of Dolce Suono Ensemble. A distinguished composer as well as interpreter of new music, he has recorded the works of Babbitt, Schuller, and Schwanntner. He is Professor of Keyboard Studies at Temple University. He is a graduate of the Curtis Institute of Music, Peabody Conservatory, and received his doctorate from Temple University.

Internationally acclaimed soprano **LUCY SHELTON**, the only artist ever to have won two Walter W. Naumburg Awards, has premiered over 100 works, many of which were written expressly for her. She has worked closely with major composers such as Elliott Carter, Charles Wuorinen, David Del Tredici, Milton Babbitt, Shulamit Ran, Oliver Knussen, Kaija Saariaho and Gyorgy Kurtag. Shelton has been a frequent guest with ensembles such as "eighth blackbird", Dolce Suono Ensemble, 21st Century Consort, Da Capo Chamber Players and Ensemble InterContemporain and her supreme musicality has been captured on over 50 recordings. She has participated in festivals including Aspen, Tanglewood, Santa Fe, Ojai, BBC Proms, and Salzburg. Ms. Shelton's primary mentor was the legendary American mezzo-soprano Jan de Gaetani.

Cellist **GABRIEL CABEZAS** combines a superb technique, intellectual curiosity and a pioneering musical spirit, "an intense player who connects to music naturally, without artifice, and brings a singing line to the cello" (The Oregonian). He has appeared as soloist with orchestras including those of Philadelphia, Chicago, Cleveland, New York, and Los Angeles, and has collaborated with artists including Yo-Yo Ma, Edgar Meyer, and Mitsuko Uchida. Mr. Cabezas is a member of the New York sextet yMusic and is co-founder of new music and contemporary dance collective Duende. He was awarded a Career Grant by the Rachel Elizabeth Barton Foundation and won Astral Artists Auditions. He studied at the Curtis Institute of Music with Carter Brey.

Cellist **ALEXIS PIA GERLACH** has been lauded by the press for the "gripping emotion" and "powerful artistry" of her interpretations. She has appeared extensively in recitals and as a soloist with orchestras and with conductors including Mstislav Rostropovich. She is a member of Trio Solisti and a founding member of Concertante. She performs at major festivals including Marlboro, Aspen, and Caramoor and has performed as solo cellist with the Paul Taylor Dance Company. She is active in commissioning and premiering new chamber works. Ms. Gerlach graduated from The Yale School of Music and The Juilliard School where she was a student of Aldo Parisot.





This project has been made possible by the National Endowment for the Arts,  
the William Penn Foundation, and the Musical Fund Society of Philadelphia.  
Ran recorded January 4-5, 2016 and Higdon recorded June 4-5, 2016  
at Rock Hall, Boyer College of Music and Dance, Temple University, Philadelphia  
Clearfield recorded January 28, 2017 and Zhou recorded May 9, 2017  
at Gould Rehearsal Hall, Curtis Institute of Music, Philadelphia  
Producer and Recording Engineer: Drew Schlegel

Innova Director: Philip Blackburn / Operations Director: Chris Campbell /  
Publicist: Tim Igel  
Innova is supported by a grant from the McKnight Foundation

Graphic Design: Mark Willie  
Dolce Suono Trio photo: Pete Checchia