

# **SPRUNG RHYTHM**

# inscape\*

richard scerbo, director

#### A Collection of Sand — Nathan Lincoln-DeCusatis

- 1. I. An Ocean of Words [3:27]
- 2. II. Herd Mentality [3:31]
- 3. III. Melodic Abvss [5:44]

#### Three Poems of Jessica Hornik — Joseph Hallman

- 4. I. East Hill Road [7:13]
- 5. II. Pleasant Bay [2:40]
- Interlude [1:27]
- 7. III. Postscript: The Harebell [3:43]
- Epilogue [1:54]
- 9. Con slancio Justin Boyer [12:32]

#### Chopin Syndrome — Nathan Lincoln-DeCusatis

10. Part One

Theme-Prelude

Variation 1: Scherzo

[3:49]

11. Part Two

Variation 2: Chorale

Variation 3: Nocturne

[3:41]

12. Part Three

Theme-Intermezzo

Variation 4: Quasi Alla Polacca

Theme-Postlude

[6:55]

#### imagined landscapes: six Lovecraftian elsewheres — Joseph Hallman

13. one [3:10]

14. two [2:52]

15. three [1:36]

16. four [2:37]

17. five [4:34]

18. six [2:26]

#### Total Time (CD) — 73:41

\*\*Bonus Tracks (Blu-ray™ only)

#### Auguries - Justin Bover

19. I. Attus Navius loses his pig [3:46]

20. II. Finds it and thanks god(s) [2:16]

21. III. Decides birds will show him the way [2:53]

#### Total Time (Blu-ray™) — 82:36

## inscape

- n. 1. the essential, distinctive, and revelatory quality of a thing
  - 2. a chamber orchestra

Sprung Rhythm is a poetic rhythm designed to imitate the natural and varied rhythm of speech.

The composers heard here express three new and diverse voices in American music. The works included on this album represent selections from Inscape's ongoing commissioning and performance activities.

#### A Collection of Sand

A Collection of Sand—scored for strings, woodwinds and percussion—is a motley assemblage of three movements, each one embodying a unique harmonic universe. An Ocean of Words is built out of floating clouds of sound that emerge, recede, interact and bleed into each other. Each cloud is the sum of tiny melodic particles moving in contrasting tempos in each instrument so that a harmonic haze slowly accumulates and becomes more defined as the movement evolves. This idea of many small parts coalescing into an emergent mass originated in my thinking about a modern information age freak-out, where the pace of media chatter becomes so hyperactive that it drives itself out over a cliff, hence the abrupt ending.

If the first movement is like a cloud, then *Herd Mentality* is a raucous, buzzing hive. This movement was conceived while sitting in traffic and feeling like a participant in some kind of mystic, unknown migratory ritual that plays itself out on a daily basis. The middle section of the movement sets up an ostinato pulse in the bass from which each voice strives unsuccessfully to break free. After a final uncoordinated frenzy, they all seem to become resigned to their subservience to the whims and patterns of the herd.

**Melodic Abyss** is the most idiosyncratic of the movements in that it is really a piece-within-a-piece. I composed a deliberately operatic melody that would not sound out of place in the most plaintive of late-Romantic symphonies and then placed it into a contradictory auditory environment of sporadic blips, pops, and squeaks. This melodramatic aria is subjected to ambient sounds as if it were being played through static-prone speakers, here represented by gurgling harp passages, pizzicato glissandi in the strings, and cymbal scrapes.

As this piece is a collection of three different sound worlds existing together under a single roof, I originally intended to steal the title of the 1984 collection of short stories by my favorite Italian author, Italo Calvino (*Una Collezione di Sabbia*). However, I started to interpret the idea of collecting sand as a metaphor for the act of composing itself: a solitary and laborious enterprise in which tiny grains (read "notes") are assembled one by one with painstaking detail into some sort of design (read "piece").

Calvino describes his unlikely collection in a way that could just as well sum up my own work: "In an exposition of strange collections held recently in Paris...the display of the collection of sand was the least striking but also the most mysterious; that which seemed to have the most to say, even beyond the opaque silence imprisoned within the glass of the vials."

-Nathan Lincoln-DeCusatis

#### Three Poems of Jessica Hornik

I had been asked to write a work for Inscape and Abigail Lennox. For a very long time I eschewed writing any vocal music, or at least setting text. I was at a moment in my life where I thought poetry was an intimate yet complete art on its own. I had become frustrated listening to so many musical settings of poetry and text that really did not suit the original poems. However, the exquisite artistry of Inscape and Abigail Lennox inspired me to reconsider this assertion.

Three Poems of Jessica Hornik is about emotion. Specifically, the song cycle deals with the emotion of love. Jessica Hornik is one of my favorite poets and collaborators. These brilliant and beautiful poems come from her collection, The Chosen Guide.

The work is scored for soprano, oboe, clarinet, violin, viola, cello, bass and harp.

-Joseph Hallman



Members of Inscape with soprano Abigail Lennox.

#### East Hill Road

The mourning dove in the apple tree meets the solitary apple that refused to fall. The tree's last patients. they commiserate in the empty blue. Snow patches the dun path, a crumb-trail of cold. By the pond two cattails. having missed their cue to burst. now stand helpless as popsicles. In love there is no such thing as choice. but unlimited supplies of regret. There, in your citrus-circled house. on your canyon perch, the need for me subsides like heat at evening. Here, a whitening aisle through a field, a river parted from its current.

#### Pleasant Bay

Because it rained all day, everyone grew sad. Those already sad grew sadder.
The cupped blossoms of the woodstrawberries
broadcast through the fields
drained as quickly as they filled,
while we were filled up
and kept on filling, like clocks ticking
after the end of the world

#### Postscript: The Harebell

The harebell, on her lissome, now stooping stem, goes on and on into the weather of snow and lonely evergreens.

She presides over the frozen garden, an orphan in the only house her colors know.

I hear her sing of an earthly everlastingness—a woman's chivalry toward all she loves.

To her my dreams go begging... as if to wrestle free of what they know is in store for me.

#### Con Slancio

Meaning "with impetus", Con Slancio is a three movement work composed during the winter of 2008-2009. Written at the request of Evan Solomon who premiered the work in early 2009, this piece's instrumentation is highly unusual (bass clarinet + string quartet); from the outset, I knew that the usual solutions to the challenges of marrying a woodwind lead to strings would not suffice. I recall composing the work with the image of the 'uninvited guest at the party' fixed in my mind – a guest who, while likely never fully blending with the others, is eager to find his place and sets about doing so with dynamic contrast and individuality. The full range and resources of the bass clarinet are exploited to show the great effort it makes to assert itself within the whole. I wanted to showcase the instrument from all sides: joyful, romantic, violent, self-conscious. At times deferential, at others antithetical, the bass clarinet's evolving and complex relationship to the strings is at the heart of Con Slancio. This unfolding process is neatly contained within a traditional ternary A-B-A movement structure whose finale is a reinvigoration of the beginning rather than a simple recap. In this way the piece reveals its dramatic evolution while maintaining cohesion. The tale has come full circle by that point with all parties agreeing to disagree – with acceptance, with joy, with warmth – free from the need to 'change' each other – and throughout, with impetus.

—Justin Boyer

#### Chopin Syndrome

The Chopin Syndrome is a psychosomatic illness that causes rapid heartbeat, dizziness, fainting, confusion and even hallucinations when an individual is exposed to Chopin, usually when his music is particularly beautiful or a large amount of it is experienced at one time.

The idea for The Chopin Syndrome goes back to the summer of 2010 when I attempted to learn Chopin's Ballade no. 1 note for note. My particular motivation to learn this piece was singular: an eight measure passage (mm. 36 – 43) standing in a formal no-man's-land between the two main themes. This short transition, poised on the border between melody and figuration, is a poignant tangle of diatonic dissonance and suspensions resolving in different registers at different times. When pedaled, these dissonances, as so often happens chez Chopin, take on a bold harmonic richness that seems to come from the world of Bill Evans and Herbie Hancock rather than the nineteenth century. Unfortunately, the transitional nature of this passage condemns it to a one-time-only appearance, never developed further. The Chopin Syndrome rectifies this situation. The opening "Theme – Prelude" presents my own mashed up version of these fleeting eight measures (condensed into one 5/8 measure, that repeats throughout this section) that will then be spun through a variety of musical landscapes (scherzo, chorale, nocturne, etc.). The original figure, as Chopin wrote it, does make a final appearance at the very end,

but orchestrated clumsily and unwinding into a series of "wrong notes". This is perhaps an evocation of my own early, strained attempts to stumble through this beautiful passage, slightly under tempo, and sacrificing accuracy for melodramatic effect. The Chopin Syndrome is, in a way, yet another side-effect of this uncurable affliction (see definition above).

-Nathan Lincoln-DeCusatis

#### imagined landscapes: six Lovecraftian elsewheres

Howard Phillips Lovecraft (August 20, 1890 – March 15, 1937) was an American author of horror, fantasy and science fiction, especially the subgenre known as weird fiction.

Lovecraft's guiding aesthetic and philosophical principle was what he termed "cosmicism" or "cosmic horror", the idea that life is incomprehensible to human minds and that the universe is fundamentally inimical to the interests of humankind. As such, his stories express a profound indifference to human beliefs and affairs. Lovecraft is best known for his Cthulhu Mythos story cycle and the Necronomicon, a fictional magical textbook of rites and forbidden lore.

Well-known fiction author Joyce Carol Oates states, "I admire him for his style, his monomaniacal precision, the 'weirdness' of his imagination, and the underlying, intransigent tragic vision that informs all of his work." I too developed an attraction to his monomaniacal weirdness. After some weeks of insomnia, I found the only way to put myself to sleep was reading Lovecraft. I had dreams filled with the images of these landscapes. The actions in the dream were always forgotten. I was left with only creepy, weird ambiances.

I recreated these ambiances in aural tableaus that call on the musicians to create "creepy" sounds. They were not heres, or theres, but "elsewheres". Some of the techniques used in the work include obfuscating the instruments' natural timbres in various ways, speaking, whispering, shouting, stamping feet, breathing audibly, and singing.

The work is in six short movements and scored for flute, clarinet, bassoon, harp, and string quartet, and was written in 2012

-Joseph Hallman

#### Auguries (Blu-ray™ Bonus Tracks)

**Auguries** is a three movement work for bassoon and string trio. The title refers to the ancient Roman practice of divination by observing the flight patterns of birds. This superstitious practice survived well into the late Republic era and is a well-documented phenomenon. I chose to focus on the legendary origin of this practice as related by Cicero. The story informs us that a swine-herder named Attus Navius lost his prized swine one day; searching in vain for his main source of livelihood, Attus lamented his bad luck and appealed to the gods for direction. To secure their assistance, he promised his finest grapes as an offering. Eventually he found the pig in his vineyard. Believing that birds would point the way to his finest grapes, he divided the field into four sections: wherever the birds decided to land signaled the location of the best vintage.

The titles of this piece's three movements were worded in such a way so as to show my bemused fascination with the practice of augury and its origins. Basically, in three "acts", he loses his pig, mourns, and then finds it again, somehow connecting bird flight to its rediscovery. Musically, the story provided an inspiring set of images: the personal anguish of Attus Navius, then his joy at being reunited with his beloved pig, and finally the comings and goings of birds "pointing the way" – and his unshakeable belief in their ability to deliver heaven-sent omens.

-Justin Boyer



#### Personnel List

#### A Collection of Sand

Susanna Loewy, flute | Bethany Slater, oboe | Evan Ross Solomon, clarinet & bass clarinet |
Benjamin Greanya, bassoon | Rebecca Racusin, violin | Sarah D'Angelo, violin | M. Bryce Bunner, viola |
Douglas Jameson, cello | David George, bass | Cara Fleck, harp | Matthew Robotham, percussion |
R. Timothy McReynolds, piano | Richard Scerbo, conductor

#### Three Poems of Jessica Hornik

Abigail Lennox, soprano | Bethany Slater, oboe | Evan Ross Solomon, clarinet | Sarah D'Angelo, violin | M. Bryce Bunner, viola | Douglas Jameson, cello | David George, bass | Cara Fleck, harp | Richard Scerbo, conductor

#### Con Slancio

Evan Ross Solomon, bass clarinet | Rebecca Racusin, violin | Sarah D'Angelo, violin | Megan Yanik, viola | Jessica Sammis, cello

#### Chopin Syndrome

Susanna Loewy, flute | Evan Ross Solomon, clarinet | Sarah D'Angelo, violin | Douglas Jameson, cello | R. Timothy McReynolds, piano

#### imagined landscapes: six Lovecraftian elsewheres

Susanna Loewy, flute | Evan Ross Solomon, clarinet | Benjamin Greanya, bassoon | Rebecca Racusin, violin | Sarah D'Angelo, violin | Megan Yanik, viola | Jessica Sammis, cello | Cara Fleck, harp | Richard Scerbo, conductor

#### Auguries

Benjamin Greanya, bassoon | Sarah D'Angelo, violin | Megan Yanik, viola | Jessica Sammis, cello

## inscape\*



Founded in 2004, Inscape performs concerts that aim to engage audiences and provide a compelling way to explore both standard and non-standard works. With its flexible roster of musicians, Inscape programs explore a variety of styles. Praised by *The Washington Post* for their "guts and musicality," Inscape's energetic concerts are well-established in the Washington DC region and continue to garner praise from audiences and critics alike. Inscape has worked joyously and often with emerging American composers and has a commitment to presenting concerts featuring the music of our time. Since its inception, Inscape has commissioned over twenty works, including those heard on this album. Inscape members regularly perform with the National, Philadelphia, Virginia, Richmond, and Delaware symphonies, the Washington Opera Orchestra, and are members of the premiere Washington service bands. Former Inscape performers are currently members of orchestras across the United States and abroad. Inscape regularly performs at the The Episcopal Church of the Redeemer in Bethesda, Maryland, the National Gallery of Art, Strathmore Music Center, as well as other local and national venues. Inscape records exclusively for Sono Luminus.

### richard scerbo

artistic director



In 2004, Artistic Director Richard Scerbo founded Inscape with the intent of introducing audiences to diverse chamber and ensemble repertoire. This unique brand of programming has made Inscape one of the most exciting ensembles in the Washington Metropolitan area. Under Mr. Scerbo's leadership, Inscape has commissioned and premiered numerous new works. In 2012, Mr. Scerbo conducted members of Inscape in a performance of Dominick Argento's opera A Water Bird Talk for the composer as part of a month-long festival celebrating his music at the University of Maryland. In 2013, he led Inscape in multiple performances at the National Gallery of Art, including a program highlighting the music of the Ballets Russes featuring Igor Stravinsky's Renard and Manual de Falla's El corregidor v la molinera.

Mr. Scerbo co-founded his first orchestra, The Philharmonia Ensemble, in 2000 with violinist Dale Barltrop 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 artists such 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. Mr. Scerbo helped launch the Londontowne Symphony Orchestra (Maryland) in 2003 when he was invited to conduct their inaugural concert, and returned again in 2004 to conduct their season opening concert.

Mr. Scerbo is a graduate of the University of Maryland where he 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 both with the International Festival Orchestra, Kromeriz, and the Bohuslav Martinu Philharmonic. He has also been guided in his studies by classes with Leonard Slatkin, Heinz Fricke, Gustav Meier. and with Johannes Schlaefli at the Musikhochschule Zurich.

In addition to his work with Inscape, Mr. 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.

#### evan ross solomon

executive director & associate artistic director



Evan Ross Solomon is widely-known for his versatility, depth of tone, and technical brilliance on both clarinet and bass clarinet. He has performed in recital at the Kennedy Center, Strathmore, National Gallery of Art, The Smithsonian Institute, and Montgomery College. He is a freelance artist in the Washington DC area and appears frequently with the Delaware Symphony Orchestra. He has also performed with The National Symphony Orchestra, The Kennedy Center Opera House Orchestra, and the Mid-Atlantic Symphony. Mr Solomon has performed under such conductors as Valery Gergiev, Leonard Slatkin, Eri Klas, and Michael Stern. Last season, Mr. Solomon appeared as soloist in John Adams' *Gnarly Buttons*. He has worked with eminent composers such as Dominick Argento and Bruce Adolphe.

Mr. Solomon holds the BM degree from The Peabody Conservatory of Music, and the MM from the University of Maryland. His principal teachers include Anthony Gigliotti, Loren Kitt, and Paul Cigan. He is currently on the faculty of Montgomery College in Rockville. MD.

Since 2005, Mr. Solomon has served as Executive Director of Inscape. During this tenure, he has worked exhaustively to commission, promote, and perform new works by emerging American composers. This has resulted in over 20 world premieres.

## abigail lennox

soprano



Quoted as angelic and stylish in her interpretations of Bach and Mozart, Abigail Lennox, soprano, is equally at home with genres ranging from early plainchant to 19th-century mélodie to improvised avant-garde. Originally from Bartlett, Tennessee, she began her vocal studies at Ann Arbor, Michigan, where after finishing her bachelors degree in vocal performance at the University of Michigan, she served as music director for the Wesley Foundation of First Methodist, performed with the Michigan Opera Theater under Stephen Lord, and was a frequent soloist appearing on premier recordings of contemporary works. In 2007 Lennox completed her master's degree study in voice at the Yale Institute of Sacred Music where she studied under James Taylor, Ted Taylor, and Judith Malafronte.

In addition to participating in masterclasses with Martin Katz. Stephen

Layton, and David Daniels, she has performed as soloist in such performances as Bach's *St. John Passion* and Buxtehude's *Membra Jesu Nostri* under Simon Carrington, Mozart's *Vespers* with Sir David Willcocks and again with Sir Neville Marriner, Bach's *Magnificat in E-flat Major* with Helmuth Rilling, Beethoven's *Mass in C* and multiple Bach cantatas with Yale ensembles, a program of French Baroque music with the Ensemble Européen William Byrd, Steve Reich's *Daniel Variations* with the New World Symphony, Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* with Apollo's Fire, and Bach's *Weihnachts-Oratorium*, Bach's *B minor Mass*, and Monteverdi's *Vespers of 1610* with the American Bach Soloists under Jeffrey Thomas. Abigail Lennox has also appeared as a soloist on *The Vanishing Nordic Chorale* (DSL-92128) with Musik Ekklesia, and on *Johann Sebastian Bach: Motets* (DSL-92119) with The Bach Sinfonia.

Inspired by her experiences, Lennox enjoys teaching young musicians and engaging in collaborative projects with fellow artists in addition to pursuing a solo career.

## joseph hallman



Joseph Hallman is a prolific young composer based in Philadelphia who has worked with some of today's most talented musicians and artists. Known for his generosity of collaboration and joy for composing, he is quickly becoming a noted name on concert programs both nationally and internationally. In addition to teaching a studio of young composers, he has been invited to conduct master classes and lectures, sit on panels, and serve as an adjudicator at home and abroad. He has been named, by NPR, as one of the Top Composers under 40. He has also been named Best Musician by several Philadelphia magazines and newspapers.

Hallman's recently completed series of chamber concerti were composed for members of the Philadelphia Orchestra, New York Philharmonic,

Pittsburgh Symphony, and Cleveland Orchestra. Akin to Bach's *Brandenburg Concertos* and Hindemith's *Kammermusik*, these pieces have won acclaim for their wit and strength.

Among his most prominent collaborations, Hallman has composed multiple concerti and chamber and solo works for the internationally acclaimed cellist Alisa Weilerstein, winner of a 2011 MacArthur "Genius" Grant. He is currently working on a Second Sonata for cello and piano for Ms. Weilerstein. Hallman's work with poets, in particular Jessica Hornik, has inspired strong relationships and beautiful works for voices and chamber ensembles. He is currently working on two song cycles for soprano and string quartet (Mudtime and Vermont Seasons) with the Vermont Poet Laureate, Sydney Lea. He has had the distinct pleasure of working with the English horn icon Thomas Stacy, of the New York Philharmonic, bassoonist Pascal Gallois, organist Kevin Bowyer, principal clarinetist of the Columbus Symphony, David Thomas.

Hallman has also worked in the downtown New York music scene with the experimental group ThingNY. His *Suite for Boombox and Piano* was composed for Kathy Supové, who premiered the Suite at the Tribeca Music Festival. His *Aphorisms* was written for the dramatic pianist, Anthony DeMare. He has also collaborated with the poet and screenwriter Antwone Fisher. Cultivating his special love for chamber music, Hallman has worked with the Avian Ensemble, Chamber Music Now, Network for New Music, Dolce Suono and several chamber groups. His *Alice*, a ballet based on Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, was premiered in San Diego in April 2010 and has been produced on two other occasions since its premiere.

Hallman teaches Composition at Drexel University. He is the Composer-in-Residence of the Pikes Falls Chamber Music Festival and has served in similar roles at the Rosenbach Museum in Philadelphia, The Traverse Arts Project, Strings Music Festival, and others. He has worked with the American Composers Forum in multiple capacities.

### nathan lincoln-decusatis



Nathan Lincoln-DeCusatis is a Washington, DC-based composer and jazz pianist whose music synthesizes a wide array of influences from popular, minimalist and jazz idioms with a deep grounding in classical forms and traditions. His work is often guided by psychological narratives that unfold through references to past musical traditions, communal improvisation, cult films, iconic works of art, and the ambient sounds of the urban landscape. In this way, his music produces a dense network of postmodern meanings that the listener is invited to unravel through their own interpretation. His music has been described in *The Washington Post* as "a kind of kaleidoscope...each moment bringing a shift in the harmonic feel and flow, from jazzy licks to piled-up counterpoint to independent chords."

This inclusive musical voice has resulted in a wide range of recent works and commissions that encompass evening-length improvised multi-media suites, electro-acoustic pieces and traditional chamber and orchestral music. His work has been performed nationally by such groups as The Chesapeake Orchestra, Inscape Chamber Orchestra, Pikes Falls Chamber Players, The Left Bank Quartet, and saxophonist Noah Getz. Recent awards and accolades include an American Music Center CAP award, the Walsum Prize, an SCI commission regional finalist, an Atlantic Center for the Arts residency, and the Smadbeck Prize. Originally from Baltimore, MD via the Lucania region of Italy, Nathan Lincoln-DeCusatis holds degrees in composition from Ithaca College and University of Maryland. His primary teachers have included Henry Threadgill, Dana Wilson, and Robert Gibson. In the Washington, DC area he is active as a jazz pianist performing at local venues such as Bohemian Caverns, Twins Jazz, the Kennedy Center, and An Die Musik.

## justin boyer



Justin Boyer is a noted composer and pianist in the Washington D.C. Metropolitan area. In his music, whether formally composed or extemporized, he applies classical precision to an expressive blend of genres, imbuing his sonic prose with an unlimited range of styles. He believes that a composer should master a wide array of musical languages; in this way, the act of composition remains spontaneous and sincere – in other words, fluency is liberation from technique. In varying proportions, his music combines the counterpoint and balance of classical music with the expanded tonal and rhythmic palette of the twentieth-century. Often infused with elements of popular styles, his music creates a rich experience for the listener.

Upon completing his degrees at the Peabody Conservatory of Music in Baltimore, Justin Boyer began his career as a freelance composer collaborating with prominent artists including members of the National Symphony Orchestra, the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, and many other regional ensembles. He has participated in workshops with Pierre Boulez, Joan Tower, David Del Tredici, and John Corigliano. His music has been commissioned and performed throughout the country for the past 15 years. Most notably, his longtime association with Inscape has resulted in numerous premiere works for a multitude of unique instrumental combinations. Justin Boyer has been on the faculty at the Peabody Conservatory and is currently professor of music theory at Montgomery College.

#### DSL-92170 - Sprung Rhythm - inscape

Recorded at Sono Luminus, Boyce, Virginia - January 8-10, 2013.

Producer: Dan Merceruio

Recording Engineer: Daniel Shores

Editing Engineer: Daniel Shores, Dan Merceruio

Mixing Engineer: Daniel Shores
Mastering Engineer: Daniel Shores

Piano Technician: John Veitch

Piano: Steinway Model D Concert Grand — provided courtesy of Steinway & Sons, New York, NY

Cover Photography: Kalle Jipp - acquired through PHOTOCASE (http://www.photocase.com)

Session Photography (pp. 5 & 9): Strider Jordan

Photo of Inscape (p. 11, booklet back): Jennifer White-Johnson Photo of Richard Scerbo (p. 12): Jennifer White-Johnson

Photo of Evan Solomon (p. 13): Jennifer White-Johnson

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Graphic Design: Brandon Bloodworth



Mixed and Mastered on Legacy Audio speakers www.legacyaudio.com



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## inscape\*

n. 1. the essential, distinctive, and revelatory quality of a thing 2, a chamber orchestra

