

# ORCHESTRA MYTHOLOGICA

## FIVE SELECTIONS WITH DRAMATIC CONTEXTS AND LYRICS

1. *Prologue* (from *Dionysus Filius Dei*) instrumental, Michael Sirota, composer  
Heather Paauwe, violin solo

The god Zeus descends from Olympus upon seeing the dance of the mortal woman, Semele, and proceeds to seduce her. The goddess Hera, being jealous, deceives Semele into asking Zeus to reveal his face – the face of the sun unbeknownst to her. Zeus reveals himself and Semele is consumed in flame. But she is with child. The god Hermes rescues the unborn child and plants him in the leg of Zeus from whence he will be born as the demi-god Dionysus. The *Prologue* accompanies Semele's dance and seduction.

2. *Choronys Serenades Apollo* (from *Asclepius*) music by Ellen Stewart and Michael Sirota; Yukio Tsiji, shakuhachi  
Benjamin Marcantoni, vocal solo

On a beach, Chorony, a mortal woman, intoxicated by sunlight and moonlight, sings a hymn to Apollo:

Choronys: I am stretched out on the earth, watching the sunrise  
You Apollo, I wish just one time to ride your chariot of fire  
I sit by the sea watching the moon  
The moon is my lover  
Moon can you hear me, I just want to see your face one time  
Let me love you

3. *Poseidone* (from *Herakles via Phaedra*) music by Genji Ito and Michael Sirota  
Cary Gant, vocal solo

Theseus discovers that Hippolytus, his son, has been sleeping with his mother (Phaedra, who administered a drug of seduction to her son). He calls upon Poseidon to kill Hippolytus. Poseidon sends a bull to frighten Hippolytus' horses, which drag him to his death in his chariot. The song is Poseidon's response to Theseus' call.

Poseidon: Aegeus was not your father.  
You sprang from the seed I planted in your mother's womb  
Aegeus forgave this trespass  
I granted you three wishes when you were born  
Theseus, you chose to use my bequest to destroy your son  
Your request shall be granted and the deed shall be done by my hand  
But my heart cries out in bitter sorrow, in bitter pain.

4. *Thios Ite emei* (from *Antigone*) music by Elizabeth Swados  
Cary Gant, vocal solo

King Kreon of Thebes mourns the suicide of his wife Eurydice, who has killed herself after learning of her husband's murder of their son Haemon and his betrothed, Antigone (translation unavailable).

5. *Final Scene* (from *Asclepius*) music by Ellen Stewart and Michael Sirota  
Cary Gant, vocal solo (with descants by Benjamin Marcantoni)

Asclepius, son of Apollo, has taken his healing arts to a new level: he is able to resurrect the dead. He is commanded by King Minos to revive his mortally ill son Glaucus, who is beyond saving. Asclepius achieves the resurrection. This infuriates the god Hades for disrupting the universal order of mortality. Hades makes complaint about this to Zeus, his brother. Zeus orders Apollo to kill his son. Apollo refuses, whereupon Zeus commands the Cyclops to provide a thunderbolt which he hurls from the sky to slay Asclepius. Apollo in return slays the Cyclops. Upon the appeal of Leto (mother of Apollo), Zeus raises Asclepius to Olympus and he becomes a constellation in the night sky, while his staff, the Caduceus, becomes the universal symbol of the healing arts.

Chorus: Apollo could not kill his son  
Zeus threw a thunderbolt, fashioned by the Cyclops, from the heavens  
Apollo could not kill his son.  
Apollo raced to the heavens.  
He slew the Cyclops that fashioned the thunderbolt that killed his son.

## THE ORCHESTRA MYTHOLOGICA

### Instruments:

MICHAEL SIROTTA	Digital keyboards, Marimba, Vibraphone, Percussion
YUKIO TSUJI	Percussion, Guitar, Shakuhachi (Japanese flute)
HEATHER PAAUWE	Violin

### Vocals:

CARY GANT	Tenor
BENJAMIN MARCANTONI	Countertenor

Musical Direction by MICHAEL SIROTTA

Studio tracks composed and produced by Michael Sirota  
Studio recordings and mixes engineered by Michael Sirota and Yukio Tsuji

The La Mama Theater in New York, since the 1960's, has provided a venue for experiments in storytelling for the stage. Its founder and artistic director, Ellen Stewart (1919 –2011), favored producing plays by playwrights who wanted to tell their stories more through music, imagery and movement, rather than through a preponderance of the spoken word. "I don't want to read your script", Ellen would say to aspiring playwrights who asked her to read their manuscript. "Just show me". For Ellen a story was best communicated through visceral, sensory experience rather than through the thought processes involved with language and ideas.

*Fragments of a Greek Trilogy*, a 1976 La Mama production created by Andrei Serban and Elizabeth Swados, won critical acclaim for its unique rendering of three Greek legends using this storytelling approach. In fact, in *Trojan Women* (the third *Fragment*), the audience became part of the staging, a first for modern American theater. The text was performed in ancient Greek and other dead languages, which most New York audiences would not understand, but the staging, movement and music told the story with clarity and energy. The use of unfamiliar language for the vocal writing was in keeping with another Ellen Stewart philosophy: that the plays could be understood by any audience around the globe, no matter what their local spoken language.

Swados and Serban founded the "Great Jones Repertory Company" (a La Mama resident company) to perform *Fragments*. In 1984, Ellen assumed the artistic directorship of the Great Jones company and began creating and directing new theater works for the ensemble, most of them dealing with Greek mythological legends. In keeping with her philosophy, Ellen eschewed the scripted plays of Sophocles and Aeschylus, did her own research into the Greek myths and found divergent storylines that were hitherto untold in the classic plays. For example, in her researches into the *Oedipus* myth, she discovered that Hera the goddess was angered and cursed Laios (father of Oedipus) because he was in a conjugal relationship with a prince of Peloponnesia. The curse was the source of all Oedipus' subsequent troubles, she found. That story was told in vivid detail in *Mythos Oedipus*, Ellen's first "Great Jones" production (1985). Other Greek myths staged by Ellen and performed by the Great Jones company include: *Seven Against Thebes*, *Perseus*, *Dionysos*, *Tancredi*, *Orfei*, *Asclepius* and *Herakles*.

The *Orchestra Mythologica* repertoire is drawn from the Great Jones productions whose musical accompaniment was provided by the Michael Sirota, Yukio Tsuji and Heather Paauwe Great Jones "pit band". Music played a prominent role in these shows, was ever-present, and required musicians flexible enough to provide accompaniment for the vocal music as well as create original music for movement, ritual, staging and transitions. The vocal music and music for some of the movement was written or dictated by composer Elizabeth Swados or by Ellen herself. Composer Michael Sirota would embellish these by providing the musical setting. Additional music, when required, was composed by Mr. Sirota, to which Yukio Tsuji and Heather Paauwe often contributed original music for their own instruments in a collaborative process.

— Program notes by Michael Sirota

**The Myths Come To Life**

**IN MUSIC**

**Tragedy and Comedy**

**Treachery and Loyalty**

**Divinity and Humanity**

**ORCHESTRA MYTHOLOGICA**

**The Musical Storytellers Of the La Mama Great Jones Repertory Company**

**IN CONCERT**