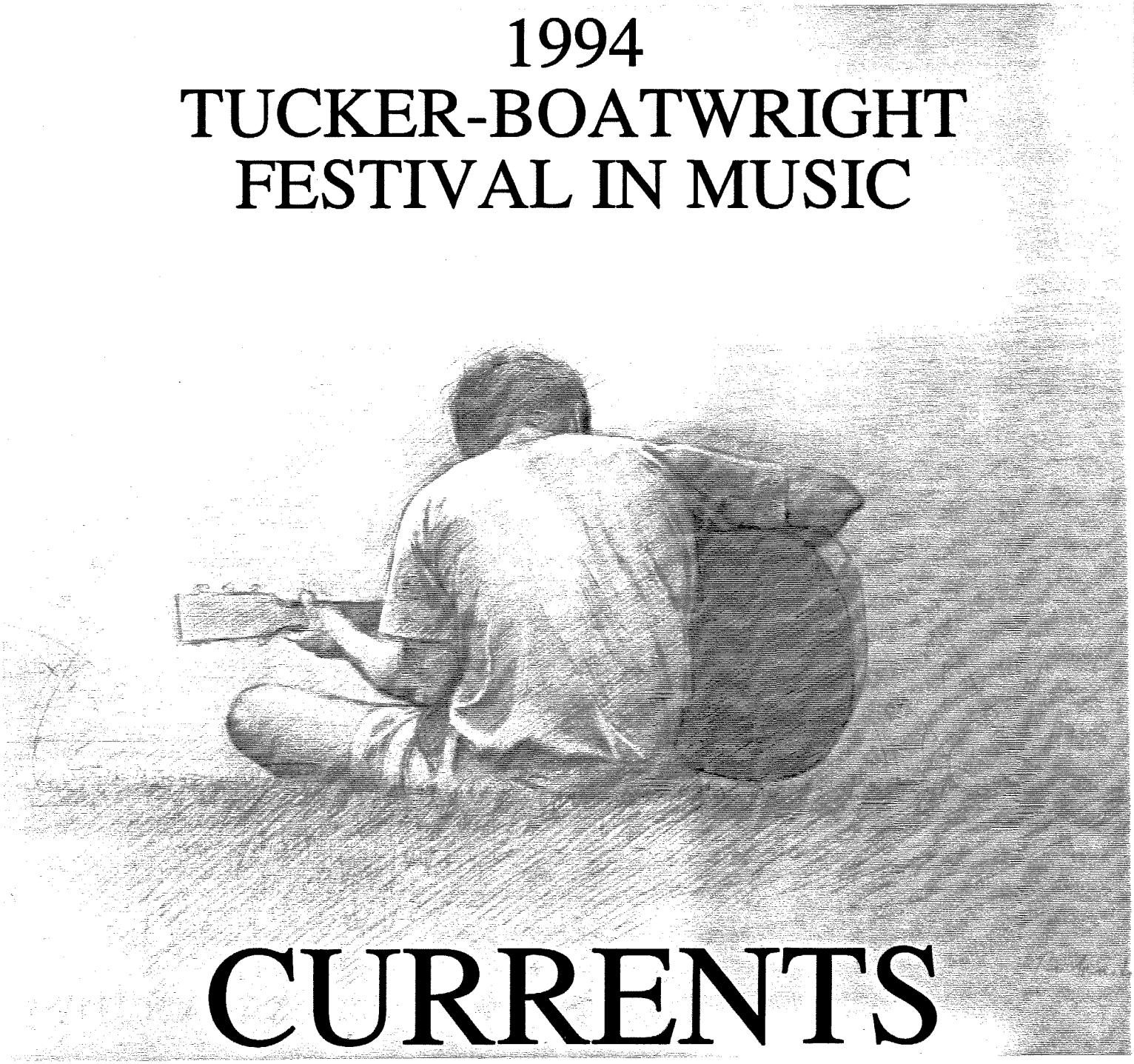
1-29-1994

Currents

Department of Music, University of Richmond

1994
TUCKER-BOATWRIGHT FESTIVAL IN MUSIC



CURRENTS

The Ensemble for New-Music in Residence
at the University of Richmond
Fred Cohen *Artistic Director*

JANUARY 29, 1994
CAMP THEATER
8:15 pm

PROGRAM

HORN TRIO, Op. 40 (1865)

Johannes Brahms
(1833-1897)

I. Andante
II. Scherzo: Allegro
III. Adagio mesto
IV. Finale: Allegro con brio

Laura Leigh Roelofs *violin*
Alan Paterson *French horn*
Richard Becker *piano*

SONNETS TO ORPHEUS (1991)

Richard Danielpour
(b.1956)

I. Prologue (Sonnet XIX)
II. "Dance the Orange" (Sonnet XV)
III. Elegy (Sonnet IX)
IV. Tarantella (Sonnet XXII)
V. Anthem (Sonnet VII)
VI. Epilogue (Sonnet XXIX)

Carmen Pelton *soprano*
Patricia Werrell *flute*
Charles West *clarinet*
Jennifer Hudson *French horn*
Paul Hanson *piano*
Laura Leigh Roelofs *violin*
Joan Cantor *violin*
Philip Clark *viola*
Alyssa Moquin *cello*
Delbert Williams *bass*
Craig Lawyer *percussion*
Fred Cohen *conductor*

****intermission****

TRIO FOR VIOLIN, HORN AND PIANO (1982)

György Ligeti
(b. 1923)

I. Andantino con tenerezza
II. Vivacissimo molto ritmico
III. Alla Marcia
IV. Lamento. Adagio

Laura Leigh Roelofs *violin*
Alan Paterson *French horn*
John Walters *piano*

Twentieth-Century Reflections of Romanticism in Music, Poetry, and the Visual Arts is the 1994 Tucker-Boatwright Festival in Music at the University of Richmond. Organized by the Department of Music, in cooperation with the Department of Art and the Marsh Art Gallery, the festival received additional support from the University's Cultural Affairs Committee.

TEXTS

THE SONNETS TO ORPHEUS

by Rainer Maria Rilke

(translated by Stephen Mitchell)

I. Sonnet XIX

Though the world keeps changing its form
as fast as a cloud, still
what is accomplished falls home
to the Primeval.

Over the change and the passing,
larger and freer,
soars your eternal song,
god with the lyre.

Never has grief been possessed,
never has love been learned,
and what removes us in death

is not revealed.
Only the song through the land
hallows and heals.

II. Sonnet XV

Wait. . ., that tastes good. . .But already it's
gone.
. . .A few notes of music, a tapping, a faint
hum--: you girls, so warm and so silent,
dance the taste of the fruit you have known!

Dance the orange. Who can forget it,
drowning in itself, how it struggles through
against its own sweetness. You have
possessed it.
Delicious it has converted to you.

Dance the orange. The sunnier landscape--
fling it *from* you, allow it to shine
in the breeze of its homeland! Aglow, peel
away

scent after scent. Create your own kinship
with the supple, gently reluctant rind
and the juice that fills it with succulent joy.

III. Sonnet IX

Only he whose bright lyre
has sounded in shadows
may, looking onward, restore
his infinite praise.

Only he who has eaten
poppies with the dead
will not lose ever again
the gentlest chord.

Though the image upon the pool
often grows dim:
Know and be still.

Inside the Double World
all voices become
eternally mild.

IV. Sonnet XXII

We are the driving ones.
Ah, but the step of time:
think of it as a dream
in what forever remains.

All that is hurrying
soon will be over with;
only what lasts can bring
us to the truth.

Young men, don't put your trust
into the trials of flight,
and the hot and quick.

All things already rest:
darkness and morning light,
flower and book.

V. Sonnet VIII

Only in the realm of Praising, should Lament
walk, the naiad of the wept-for fountain,
watching over the stream of our complaint,
to keep it clear upon the very stone

that bears the arch of triumph and the altar.--
Look: around her shoulders dawns the bright
sense that she may be the youngest sister
among the deities hidden in our heart.

Joy *knows*, and Longing has accepted--
only Lament still learns; upon her beads,
night after night, she counts the ancient curse.

Yet awkward as she is, she suddenly
lifts a constellation of our voice,
glittering, into the pure nocturnal sky.

VI. Sonnet XXIX

Silent friend of many distances, feel
how your breath enlarges all of space.
Let your presence ring out like a bell
into the night. What feeds upon your face

grows mighty from the nourishment thus
offered.
Move through transformation, out and in.
What is the deepest loss that you have suffered?
If drinking is bitter, change yourself to wine.

In this immeasurable darkness, be the power
that rounds your senses in their magic ring,
the sense of their mysterious encounter.

And if the earthly no longer knows your name,
whisper to the silent earth: I'm flowing.
To the flashing water say: I am.

PROGRAM NOTES

Along with the clarinet, the horn seems to have been Brahms' favorite wind instrument. He particularly favors these instruments in his large orchestral works, and his only chamber works featuring wind instruments include either a clarinet or a horn.

The instrumental combination of the "Horn Trio" op. 40, is unique among Brahms' works, and perhaps (until Ligeti's piece for the same combination) unique in all chamber music. Yet this piece is among the most favored of his many works for small instrumental ensemble. The latest comprehensive record catalogue lists seventeen recordings currently available.

The piece has the standard four-movement layout of most large Viennese classical forms; but the similarity scarcely goes much deeper than that. Brahms reverses the normal succession of movements in a Viennese instrumental piece (sonata form-slow movement-minuet scherzo-rondo) to rondo-scherzo-slow movement-sonata form. In addition to this deviation from the inherited external formal layout, Brahms characteristically takes up where Beethoven left off. He devises movements in which themes serve as both main melody and as accompaniment to other main melodies. On occasion the work also forewarns his listeners of an approaching theme. For example, at the close of the third movement, where a slow reference to the theme of the fourth movement makes a short, portentous appearance.

Brahms' historical position as a conservative non-innovative composer is inaccurate and unjust. Arnold Schoenberg considered him a "progressive" for his explorations of the outer limits of tonality, but also for the tendency toward even greater economy of means as his career progressed--a tendency that led to Schoenberg's pervasive technique of composing large-scale works upon a single motive comprising all twelve notes of the octave. In the works of both men the details of this economy of means will perhaps escape the casual listener; but the coherence that results from it in pieces like the "Horn Trio" leave a satisfying impression of variety and wholeness that at least in part account for its relative popularity.

notes by James Erb

Sonnets to Orpheus is a six-movement song cycle for soprano voice and ten instruments. It was composed from June 3 to October 31 1991, and while it was one of a few projects that required my attention, it was my major focus during that period. The cycle was commissioned by The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center for performance with Dawn Upshaw.

The six translations comprising the text are from Rainer Maria Rilke's *Sonnets to Orpheus*, a two-part set of 55 poems. Written in 1922, four years before Rilke's death, they stand along with the *Duino Elegies* as the crowning achievement of his life's work.

I have chosen an English translation of the work because I feel that while I have nothing personal against German, (and certainly not the German of Rilke), it is not the language I speak. I feel most honest and free setting the language which is second nature to me just as the language of music must be in some sense natural to a musician. I also want the words I set to reflect the musical language I have chosen.

What made the choice for a translation of *Sonnets to Orpheus* relatively easy was Stephen Mitchell's work, which for me found the balance between the letter of the text and the heart of it. Also present in his English is at once a courteous but clear authority, and at the same time a contemporary unadorned fluidity.

The important questions for me to answer before beginning the work were: What held these sonnets together? What was the underlying theme? And specifically, what do the six sonnets that I have selected share with each other?

Rilke was using in Orpheus an archetype for all those who choose to descend into a form of spiritual, emotional or psychic darkness in order to know themselves and see their lives more clearly. "Only he whose bright lyre has sounded in shadows may, looking onward, restore his infinite praise." (from the ninth sonnet, first part). But in order to make that descent one must first be open to a letting go or surrender - and surrender in its various forms is what seems to be an underlying thread in the Sonnets. In the introduction to his translation, Stephen Mitchell states, "Orpheus is a symbol of absolute connection. Perceiving the world without desire he realizes that, moment by moment, the whole universe is transformed. Because he can let go, he is free. He willingly steps into the transforming flame and enters the Double Realm, a mode of being in which all the ordinary human dichotomies (life/death, good/evil) are reconciled in an infinite wholeness." Whether it is a surrender to death in the Epilogue (Sonnet XXIX, Part 2) or to a celebration of sensuality and nature in Movement II (Dance the Orange), or to the process of grief and lament in Movement V (Sonnet VIII, Part 1) there is in each movement a subtle but ever present invitation to "let go" and allow for the inevitable transformation. This becomes a kind of credo for Rilke, who speaks of the acceptance and renunciation of love as one and the same as they both invoke a sense of surrender.

The general tone of these poems is not violent, unlike the Elegies; instead one senses a softness and simplicity that is woven into and throughout the entire cycle. They are more Appollonian than Dionysian, more yin than yang. It was for this reason that I felt a setting of the text for soprano voice, and specifically Ms. Upshaw's voice, was appropriate.

There is a strong sense of the eternal feminine present in these poems. One feels it with the ever- present archetype of Eurydice and most especially Rilke's reaction to the death of Vera Knoop, the nineteen-year-old daughter of Dutch friends, While Rilke knew little about her, he was deeply shaken by the news of her death, and the idea of this young girl as an archetype became a catalyst for the creation of the Sonnets and an idea around which they revolve.

There is also something gentle about Rilke's relationship to death. With perspectives on death ranging from an inflated grotesqueness on the one hand to a cosmeticized, denial-oriented notion of death on the other, Rilke chooses the path of unadorned honesty: "I reproach all modern religions for having provided their believers with consolations and glossings-over of death, instead of giving them the means of coming to an understanding with it, and with its full, unmasked cruelty: this cruelty is so immense that it is precisely with *it* that the circle closes; it leads back to a mildness which is greater, purer, and more perfectly clear (all consolation is muddy!) than we have ever, even on the sweetest spring day imagined mildness to be." [Letter from Rilke to Countess Margot Sizzo-Noris-Croug, January 6, 1923].

notes by the composer

György Ligeti wrote his Trio after a four year hiatus from composing. In 1977 he had completed his opera *Le Grand Macabre*, followed by two short works for harpsichord in 1978: *Hungarian Rock* and *Passacaglia ungherese*. Built on a generous scale, the Trio is a four-movement piece modeled on the Brahms Trio. In fact, the score bears the dedication "Hommage to Brahms." Ligeti's hommage can be understood more in terms of a recognition of Brahm's invention of the genre and sense of musical development than in literal terms of musical quotations (as in Colgrass's *The Schubert Birds*, for example).

The Ligeti Trio begins with an easily recognized musical icon: We hear the well-known "horn fifths" as heard, for example, in Beethoven's piano transcription in the *Les Adieux* sonata. And just as Brahms begins with a central idea (*Grundgestalt*) to which the development of his entire score may be referred, so too does Ligeti make these fifths the central idea of his Trio. However, Ligeti gives these fifths a characteristic twist. He shifts the perspective by lowering the fifth by one semitone, creating a tritone (augmented fourth) and introducing a mixture of diatonic and chromatic elements. We hear this idea throughout the work: at the end of the second movement, during the trio of the third movement, and developed à la Brahms in the theme of the closing movement where the "horn fifth" motive is expanded into a succession of five chords.

Ligeti, like Brahms, begins his Trio with a slow movement. Here the double-stopped violin plays in 4/4, the horn often in 12/8, and the piano in 20/8, so that one has the sense of time passing at varying speeds with the musical materials coming into and out of sych. There is a short middle section where all three instruments play in the same meter, and then the first part is repeated in its entirety but with a shift of bar-lines(!).

A pastiche idea forms the second movement of the Trio. Says Ligeti, "It is a dance inspired by various kinds of folk music from non-existent peoples; as if Hungary, Rumania, and all of the Balkan countries lay somewhere between Africa and the Caribbean." The rhythm is divided into 3+3+2--it depends on your "angle of hearing" whether it seems Balkan or Afro-Caribbean.

The third movement begins with a frantic and grotesque march in which the piano and violin begin with a limping and shifting rhythm, joined later by the horn for a faster trio. The march section is then repeated, now with the horn adding its confusing part.

An adagio lament is expressed in the final movement, a passacaglia. While Brahms' slow movement, the third in his Trio, had been an Adagio mesto reputedly written in memory of his recently deceased mother, Ligeti has no particular object for his lament. Verbal interpretation is hazardous. Certainly, grief, pain, and resignation are present, but perhaps too a more distanced consideration of a musical symbol: the chromatic descent portraying grief, usually giving way to silence (Purcell's *When I Am Laid to Rest* is a good example, as is the *Crucifixus* from the Bach B-minor mass). Ligeti approaches his silence through extremes: the very highest notes on the violin and the very lowest notes of the horn moving in parallel tritones in chromatic descent.

notes by Fred Cohen

THE ARTISTS

Possessing a voice that has been hailed as "...emotional, tender and pure-toned" (Andrew Porter, *The New Yorker*), **Carmen Pelton** has rapidly secured the respect and admiration of critics with a sound that "...already rivals almost any soprano you can think of today" (*The Guardian*, London). First heard at the Aldeburgh Festival in England, Carmen Pelton came to international attention when she assumed the role of Konstanze in *Abduction from the Seraglio* with the Scottish Opera. Additionally, Ms. Pelton has gained a recognition as a powerful singer of contemporary music, in works for the theater and twentieth-century ensembles. She was cast by Virgil Thomson in the lead role of *Mother of Us All*, which she sang in major revivals around the United States and in the national telecast at the "Kennedy Center Honors" in tribute to Mr. Thomson. She has appeared with symphonies across America and in Europe, including the San Francisco Symphony, the Phoenix Symphony, the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, and the Rochester Philharmonic. She is a former student of Jan DeGaetani, and can be heard on the CRI and Word labels.

Richard Danielpour was born in New York City on 28 January 1956. He began his professional training at the New England Conservatory of Music, and received his Master of Music and Doctor of Musical Arts degrees from the Juilliard School, where his composition teachers included Vincent Persichetti and Peter Mennin. He has also studied composition with John Heiss and conducting with Benjamin Zander. Danielpour is also a pianist, having studied with Lorin Hollander, Theorore Lettvin, and Gabriel Chodos; he appeared as soloist in the premiere of his own *First Piano Concerto* with the Caracas Philharmonic in 1981. He taught at the College of New Rochelle (1985-86) and, from 1984 to 1988, Marymount Manhattan College.

Among Danielpour's many awards are a Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship (1989-90), the Bearns Prize of Columbia University (1982), the Charles Ives Fellowship from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters (1983), an ASCAP Award (1984), five MacDowell Colony Fellowships, five Yaddo Fellowship Residencies, residencies at the American Academy in Rome (1982, 1990), a Jerome Foundation Award (1987), a Barlow Foundation grant (1989), four Vollmer Foundation grants (1980-82, 1984), an Astral Foundation grant (1989), and a Rockefeller Foundation grant for a 1988 residency in Bellagio, Italy. At the invitation of Leonard Bernstein, Danielpour served as guest composer at both the 1989 Festival of the Academy of Santa Cecilia in Rome and the 1989 Schleswig-Holstein Festival in Germany.

Richard Danielpour's music has been heard throuthout the United States and abroad in performances by the orchestras of San Francisco, Milwaukee, Seattle, and Baltimore, as well as the Caracas Philharmonic, the Denver Chamber Orchestra, the New York Chamber Symphony, the American Composers Orchestra, and the Santa Cecilia Orchestra in Rome. He has received commissions from St. Paul the Apostle Church in New York City, the San Francisco Symphony, jointly from the orchestras of Akron, Jacksonville and Stamford, the New York Chamber Symphony and the Hoboken Chamber Orchestra, the Baltimore Symphony, Musica Sacra, and Chamber Music America.

Composer and conductor **Fred Cohen** received his doctorate in music composition from Cornell University in 1987, where his principal teachers were Karel Husa and Steven Stucky. He earned his undergraduate degree from the University of California at Santa Cruz in 1980, where he studied with David Cope and Gordon Mumma. His works have been commissioned and performed by organizations such as the Richmond Symphony, the Cleveland Chamber Orchestra, the El Cerrito Youth Orchestra, and the Washington Singers (a professional chamber chorus directed by Paul Hill). As a conductor and artistic director, Mr. Cohen has directed orchestras and new-music ensembles since 1978. Between 1978 and 1980 he was the director of Ensemble Nova in Santa Cruz, CA. He founded the Cornell Contemporary Ensemble and directed it from 1982 to 1986, and founded CURRENTS, the professional new-music ensemble in residence at the University of Richmond, upon his appointment in 1986. Mr. Cohen is currently Associate Professor of Music at the University of Richmond.

The CURRENTS new-music ensemble is an ensemble of professional musicians devoted to outstanding performances of the music of our time. Founded in 1986 by Dr. Fred Cohen, CURRENTS has introduced concert music of regional, national, and internationally noted composers to the central Virginia community in formats ranging from chamber music to orchestral works to opera. CURRENTS offers an annual series of concerts in locations thoughout Virginia, including the Carpenter Center for the Performing Arts, the College of William and Mary, the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Randolph-Macon College, and the University of Richmond. The ensemble has performed American premieres of works by such composers as György Kurtág, Sofia Gubaidulina, Alfred Schnittke and Edison Denisov, and has commissioned a number of American composers. CURRENTS' recent performance at the Katherine Bache Miller Theater in New York City won the following praise: "The young musicians performed with polish and assurance" (Allan Kozin, The New York Times). CURRENTS has received support from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Virginia Commission for the Arts, the Best Products Foundation, the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Downtown Presents, Inc., the Frances and Sydney Lewis Foundation, individual patrons, and the University of Richmond.