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Galan Trio

performing Kinesis

Special thanks to Voss Violins for providing the cello.



Performance supported by a grant from the
MTSU Distinguished Lecture Fund

Monday, March 16, 2026
8:00 p.m.

T. Earl Hinton Music Hall, Wright Music Building

Game Changers
I. Tiger's Eye
II. Cityscape #3

Chelsea Loew

Piano Trio #2 Éna Dóro (A Gift)

Richard Lavenda

Through Stone Door

Michael K. Slayton

Ictus

Martin Gendelman

Intermission

Sylvan Awakening

Michael Mathenia

Icarus

Paul Osterfield

Three Essays
I. Ride the Manifold Winds
II. The Darkest Riddle
III. Unbroken

Mark D. Volker

Ictus – In musical conducting, ICTUS (derived from Latin: to blow) refers to the very instant when a beat occurs. At a higher level in the rhythmic structure of a composition, the term may as well be interpreted as “the recurring stress in... a metrical series of sounds” (Merriam-Webster). At the same time, the term is also used in medicine to describe a sudden attack or seizure. As sudden attacks appear repeatedly and as accents and metric patterns shape this composition from the first moment to the last, both interpretations of the word become relevant.

Sylvan Awakening – While I often write pieces on themes of nature, the imagery in this particular work truly took my mind to another place as I worked on it. Being written for the Galan Trio of Greece, I began my^{8*} preparation for this piece by studying some of the translated poetry of an early Greek poet by the name of Theocritus, who is considered the creator of pastoral poetry. In reading through his work, I came across a short poem entitled “A Sylvan Scene”. Immediately, my imagination transported me to a woodland scene, where I was lying on my back and looking up at the sky through the wafting branches above. That serenity and ambience became the starting point for my own piece, entitled “Sylvan Awakening.” Another inspiration for this piece was Arvo Pärt’s “Fur Alina,” which to me elicits that same meditative atmosphere. Over the course of this piece, the music builds and “awakens”, though the exact meaning of that I leave to the imagination of the performers and listeners alike. It concludes with a brief reminder of what once was.

Icarus – According to Greek myth, Icarus (represented by the violin) and his father Daedalus (represented by the cello) were imprisoned in a labyrinth that Daedalus created. With wings that Daedalus made, they escaped the prison. Before escaping, Daedalus warned Icarus not to fly too high or too low. Unfortunately, Icarus flew “too close to the sun,” and the wax holding the wings together melted, plunging Icarus to his death. Daedalus looked back to see his son drowning below, and flew down to bury Icarus. Icarus (2025), one of Osterfield’s few programmatic works, is commissioned by and dedicated to the Galan Trio.

Three Essays for piano trio is not specifically programmatic but explores distinct existential experiences through evolving musical ideas. The first movement, “Ride the Manifold Winds,” features rising arpeggios and scales that evoke moments when we are lifted by promise and possibility. “The Darkest Riddle” meditates on mortality, its gradually unfolding material asking why we cling so fiercely to life despite uncertainty about death. The final movement, “Unbroken,” is rhythmically driven and affirms that we are the sum of our experiences; we fight for life because it embodies all we are and all we may become.

Galan Trio

Known for the passionate and energetic spirit of its performances, the Athens-based Galan Trio is active both in Greece and internationally. Focused primarily on presenting new compositions, the trio creates original, concept-driven programs, the most recent being *Kinesis*. For this project, Galan Trio commissioned five distinguished composers from the United States to write works on the theme of movement and transformation, leading to the trio's first U.S. tour in October 2021. Since then, they have presented *Kinesis* at more than 30 American universities.

Galan Trio's discography includes seven albums: *Switch* (Akanthos Int. LTD), *Sonnets of Midwinter*, *Ararat* (Melism Records), *Kinesis* and *Kinesis Vol. 2* (Neuma Records), *De Chirico* (Phasma Music), and *Embrace* (Neuma Records).

Their debut album, *Switch*—a musical blend of cultures featuring works composed for and dedicated to the trio by Thomas Bramel (U.S.), David Haladjian (Armenia), Vincent Kennedy (Ireland), Vasco Pereira (Portugal), Harald Weiss (Germany), and Nikos Xanthoulis (Greece)—received critical acclaim and was broadcast on radio stations in Greece, Switzerland, the United States, Portugal, Germany, and Armenia.

In July 2016, the ensemble traveled to Gulangyu, known as “Piano Island,” to participate in Greek Inspirations in China, the first festival in the country dedicated to Greek music. Galan Trio has collaborated with distinguished composers and musicians, including mezzo-soprano Alexandra Gravas, flutist Jessica Quinones, and composers Dirk Brosse, Igor Vorobyov, Yiorgos Vassilandonakis, Paul Richards, Arthur Aharonian, Martin Gendelman, Philip Blackburn, Patricia Alessandrini, and Richard Lavenda, among others.

In 2019, the trio composed and recorded the original soundtrack for the documentary *Y1: Silence of the Deep*, directed by Philippos Vardakas. Schott Music published “Secret Dancing” by Harald Weiss, a work dedicated to the trio.

Galan Trio has performed in the United States, Spain, Italy, Armenia, the Netherlands, Austria, China, Albania, and Greece, appearing at prestigious events such as the Athens & Epidauros Festival, the Komitas Festival, the 4th online festival of the Greek National Opera, the Onassis Foundation “Open Day,” and the Athens Megaron “Music Portraits” series. In December 2021, the trio premiered *Ararat* at the National Archaeological Museum. They also performed at the Mozarteum University Salzburg as guest artists at the “Mikrotöne: Small is Beautiful” Symposium.

Their most recent project, *Women in Front*, was presented in October 2025 in Athens in collaboration with the New York Women Composers Association. Future plans include the release of *Kinesis Vol. 3* (Neuma Records), a performance at the Athens & Epidauros

Festival in collaboration with the Greek Composers Union, and a *Kinesis* concert series in California and Oregon.

Game Changers is a two-movement work composed in direct conversation with the Game Changers exhibition on view at the Cameron Art Museum. The piece was largely composed in the gallery, in close dialogue with the artwork. The work is a musical interpretation of the visual language and artistic techniques of two paintings that hung side by side: *Tiger's Eye* by Helen Frankenthaler and *Cityscape #3* by Richard Diebenkorn. The first movement, *Tiger's Eye*, freely unfolds in sweeping, fluid gestures that echo Frankenthaler's veils of motion, which drift and pool with an almost vapor-like quality. Delicate textures and resonant harmonies emerge and dissolve, evoking the painting's atmospheric nature and organic flow. In contrast, the second movement, *Cityscape #3*, channels Diebenkorn's architectural forms and geometric clarity. Structured yet playful, it weaves familiar harmonies through a shifting, rhythmically driven landscape shaped by polyrhythms and metric modulations. These techniques create moments of temporal disorientation that mirror the painting's elusive spatial perspective, which feels both grounded and aerial.

Piano Trio #2 Éna Dóro (A Gift) – In 2023, I had the pleasure of presenting the Galan Trio in a recital at Rice University in Houston that included their performance of my Piano Trio. I very much liked the way they played, and it didn't take long for us to become friends. After they recorded the piece on their *Kinesis Volume 2 CD*, I decided to write a new trio for them, which I titled "Éna Doro," Greek for "a gift." It is about seven minutes long, built from two highly contrasted ideas, one high energy and quite aggressive, the other more lyrical and restrained. I wanted to feature their ability to play together as an ensemble but also to express their individual characters, so sometimes they play together, sometimes they pair-off in various combinations, and sometimes they go off on their own. Sometimes they support each other, and sometimes they interrupt each other, although by the end of the piece the two different ideas are merged and the players combine to harmoniously conclude.

Through Stone Door – "Stone Door" is the name of what is now a hiking trail near the Savage Gulf in South Cumberland State Park (part of the Appalachian Mountain Chain's Cumberland Plateau). The "Great Stone Door" is a natural doorway—a ten-foot wide crack in the rim of one of the canyons—used by generations of Cherokee and Chickamauga as a means of passage to the river at the bottom of the gorge. As Native peoples were eventually driven from the area, it is believed that passing through Stone Door served as their primary exit (or escape route). This work makes an effort to capture not only my own nostalgia for the place and my feelings of wonder about it, but also the pervasive sense of melancholy stemming from all that has happened there in its long history. To my mind, the idea of one's moving through Stone Door is both literal and figurative, both physical and spiritual.