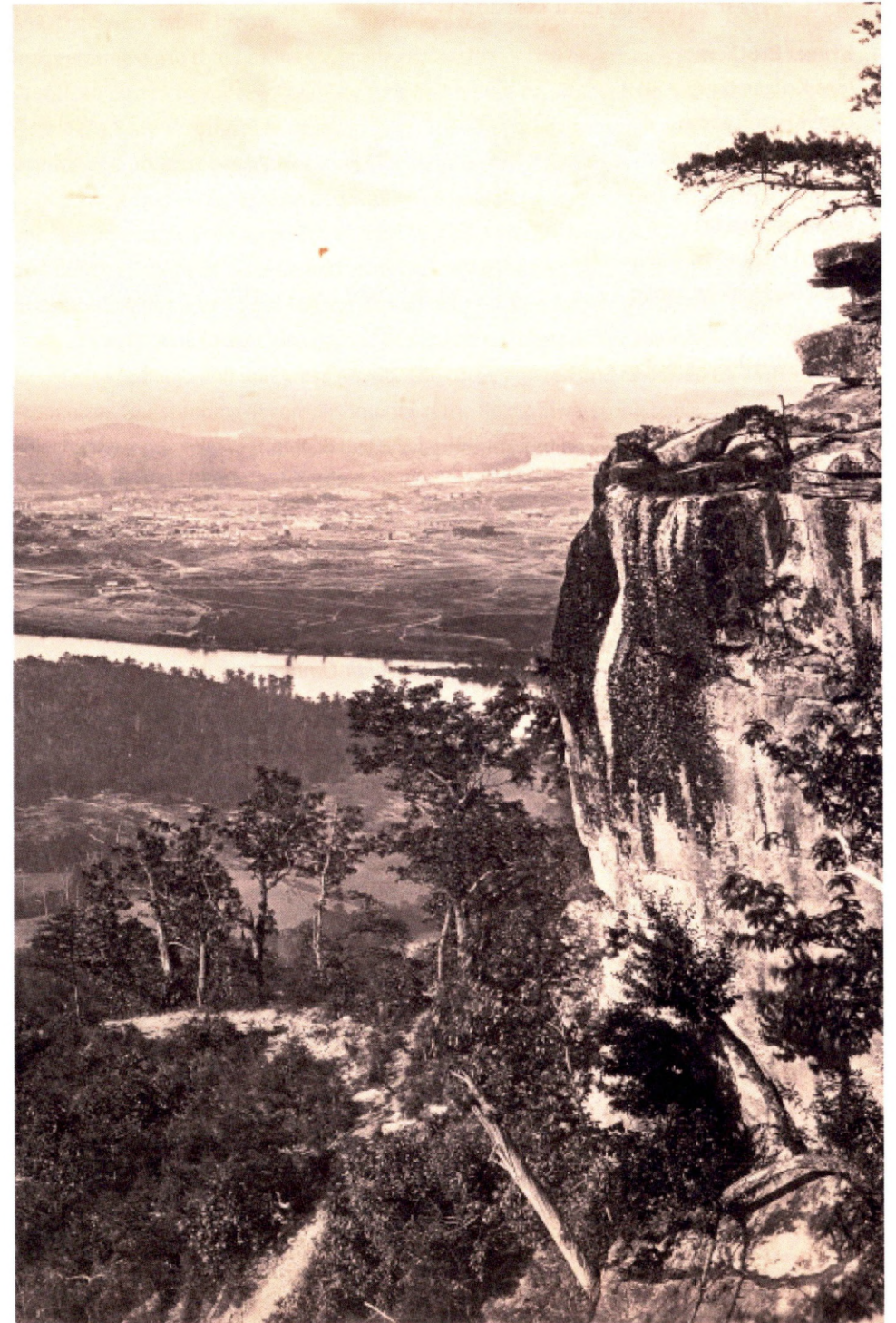
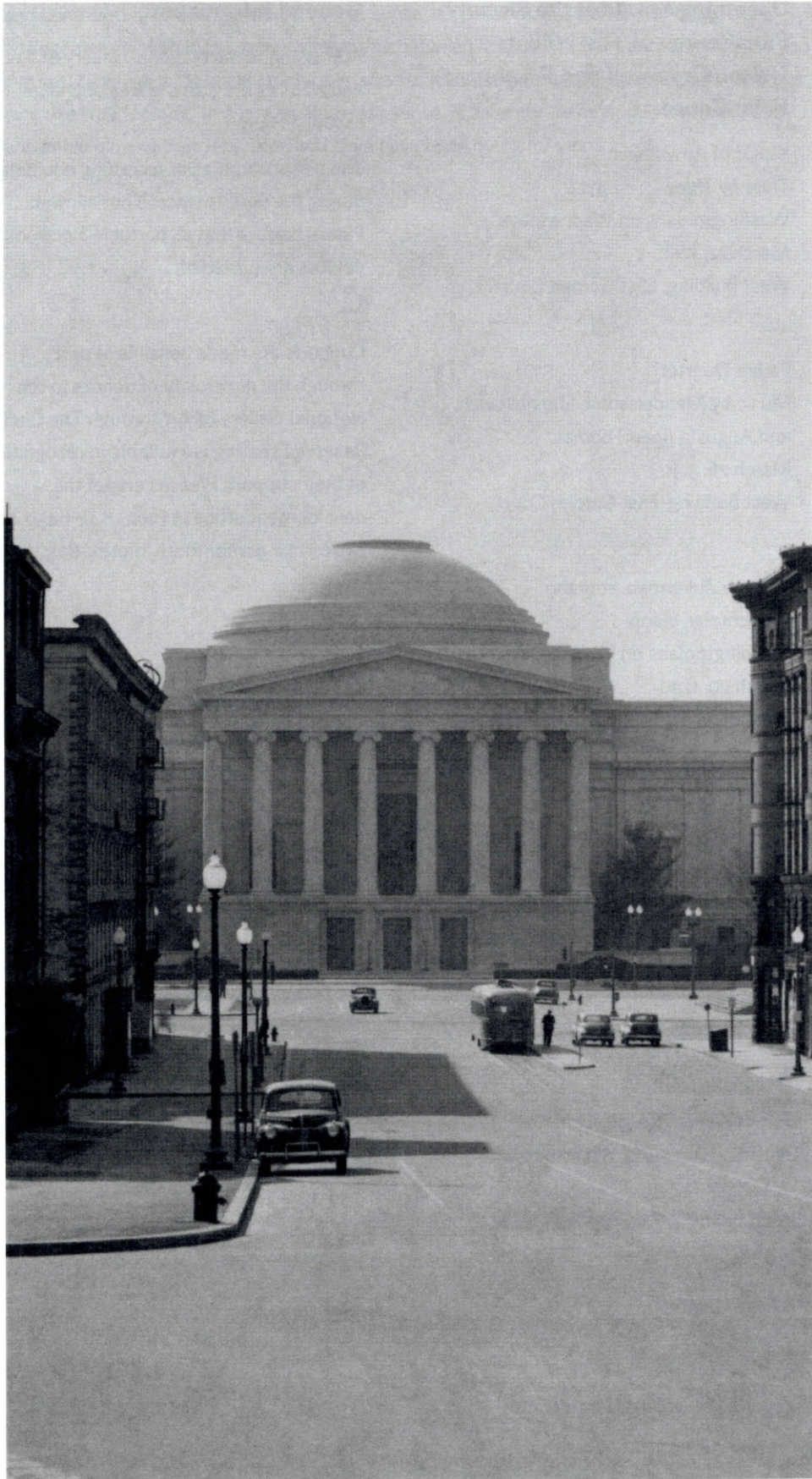


# 75TH SEASON OF CONCERTS

MARCH 19, 2017 • NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART



# MARCH 19

3:30 • West Building, East Garden Court

## **Kruger Brothers**

Jens Kruger, banjo  
Uwe Kruger, guitar  
Joel Landsberg, bass

## **Kontras Quartet**

Dmitri Pogorelov, violin  
François Henkins, violin  
Ben Weber, viola  
Jean Hatmaker, cello

The program will be announced from the stage and will include the following works composed by Jens Kruger, as well as other songs from the Kruger Brothers' repertoire.

*Roan Mountain Suite*  
*Lucid Dreamer* (commissioned by the Kontras Quartet)  
*Appalachian Concerto*

Presented in honor of *East of the Mississippi: Nineteenth-Century American Landscape Photography*

## **The Musicians**

### **Kruger Brothers**

Originally from Switzerland, brothers Uwe and Jens Kruger began playing North American folk music at an early age and were particularly inspired by recordings of Doc Watson, Flatt and Scruggs, Bill Monroe, and other progenitors of country, bluegrass, and folk music. Their first public performances were as a duo, busking on the streets of cities throughout Eastern and Western Europe. After gaining a recording contract and a radio show on SRG SSR, the Swiss public broadcaster, the brothers teamed up with bass player Joel Landsberg, inaugurating a trio that has been playing professionally together since 1995. Landsberg is an American citizen from New York City. The first recording project to include Landsberg was *Behind the Barn*, Volume 2, released in 1997. The Kruger Brothers moved to the United States in 2002 and are based in Wilkesboro, North Carolina.

The group is highly regarded within the world of acoustic music in North America and has also gained the attention of such musicians as Bill Monroe, Doc Watson, Tut Taylor, and Bobby Hicks, who once served as models. Watson has said, "The Kruger Brothers are just about as fine a band as I've ever played with... I love to play music with them."

In 2013, Jens Kruger was named the fourth recipient of the Steve Martin Prize for Excellence in Banjo and Bluegrass Music. The prize, created and endowed by Martin, recognizes "outstanding accomplishments in the field of five-string banjo." Jens was selected by a committee that included Martin, Pete Wernick, Béla Fleck, Alison Brown, J.D. Crowe, Tony Trischka, and others.

Jens Kruger has been inducted into the Blue Ridge Music Hall of Fame and in 2014 was nominated for Banjo Instrumentalist of the Year by the International Bluegrass Musician Association (IBMA). He has received commissions for his ensemble compositions, including from the National Endowment for the Arts and Chamber Music America.

### **Kontras Quartet**

Admired for their "superlative artistry" (*CVNC Arts Journal*), the Kontras Quartet has established an international following for its vibrant and nuanced performances. The "superb Chicago-based ensemble" (*Gramophone Magazine*) has been described as "a tightly crafted and beautiful instrument" (*CVNC Arts Journal*) and has been lauded for its "crisp precision" (*Palm Beach Daily News*) and "enjoyable musical personality" (*Fanfare Magazine*). Kontras means contrasts in the Afrikaans language — fitting for a string ensemble whose colorful repertoire spans centuries, genres, and continents.

The Kontras Quartet records for MSR Classics and recently released two critically acclaimed albums. The first, *Origins*, features new and lesser-known works from the quartet's home countries, including the world premiere recording of Dan Visconti's *Ramshackle Songs*. *Gramophone Magazine* commended the quartet's "scrupulous shading and control" on the recording. The second release, *Lucid Dreamer*, features a septet that Kontras commissioned in 2013 with a generous grant awarded by Chamber Music America. The work treads the line between classical music and American folk and invigorates Kontras' ongoing collaboration with the esteemed Kruger Brothers trio.

The Kontras Quartet's recent and upcoming performances include multiple broadcasts on classical radio stations nationwide, including *Performance Today* and *Concierto* on NPR; concerts at Chicago's Symphony Center, the Farnsworth House, and the Juilliard School; television appearances on NBC and PBS; regular appearances on concert series throughout the Midwest and Southeast; and sold-out performances at the Telluride, International Bluegrass Music Association, and MerleFest festivals.

Kontras enjoys educational work of all kinds, and has been the Professional Quartet in Residence at Western Michigan University for two years. In addition to the ensemble's concert schedule, it holds teaching residencies at Elmhurst College and Appalachian State University. The musicians will also continue their work in the Chicago Public Schools with the support of a grant from the Boeing Company. Outside of the Chicago area, Kontras has made a significant educational impact in North Carolina, bringing over 200 innovative and interactive outreach programs to 40,000 students.

Formed while the group's members were string principals in the Civic Orchestra of Chicago, the quartet began pursuing a professional career in 2009. Kontras enjoyed immediate recognition, holding their own against seasoned string quartets from around the country to win a four-year chamber music residency with the Western Piedmont Symphony in North Carolina — a full-time position established through Chamber Music America's Residency Partnership Program. The quartet has received continued training with the Vermeer Quartet and Juilliard String Quartet.

## Program Notes

### Roan Mountain Suite

The Kruger Brothers are joined by the Kontras Quartet for a very special original work, commissioned to honor the region, history, and legacy of Tennessee's Roan Mountain.

The *Roan Mountain Suite* honors the 50th anniversary of the inaugural meeting to conserve the Roan, an effort initiated by the late Stanley A. Murray, husband of patron Judy Murray of Kingsport, Tennessee. Dedicated to the memory of Stanley A. Murray (1923–1990), the *Roan Mountain Suite* is a musical experience honoring the treasured landscape of the region.

Stan Murray was chairman of the Appalachian Trail Conference for fourteen years and a visionary and champion of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail and Highlands of Roan. He founded the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy. The *Roan Mountain Suite* is a new example of the Kruger Brothers' brilliant ability to enlist the illustrative power of music to tell a story in eloquent detail.

"Roan Mountain resonates in a deep and personal way with all those who visit it, and by the same token, the Kruger Brothers' music reaches into the hearts and souls of its listeners in profound and stirring ways." — Judy Murray

### Lucid Dreamer

*Lucid Dreamer* is a musical interpretation of experiencing a waking state of reverie. The music is a delicate idea that gathers strength and takes flight, releasing the listener from the surly bonds of earth as it soars, dips, and glides like a flock of birds. "I think the new concerto is more musically complex, than anything I've ever written," said Jens Kruger about the piece that took more than a year to write. "I don't think it's less accessible, but it has a lot more complex parts."

In the relativity of life, Jens said, "My dreams were just as important in my memory as actual events. . . . [In dreams] I see endless beauty overshadowing the immediate. All my dreams have been filled with sounds and music. . . . It seems to me that all life is unfolding like a dream, swirling like dance in flight. For all things that have a beginning, I assume they must also have an end. I have a strong sense that dreams don't need a beginning." *Lucid Dreamer* was composed for banjo, guitar, and bass with string quartet, resulting in a thirty-three-minute work with seven movements.

### Appalachian Concerto

Composed in 2010, the *Appalachian Concerto* is a work for banjo, bass, guitar, and string quartet. It was composed in the form of a classical concerto and written to reflect the cultural history of the Appalachian region. The concerto is a very different kind of work for the Kruger Brothers and is without any true precedent within their catalogue to date. Having made a name for themselves as primarily a roots trio, this offering is nevertheless exactly what the title suggests: a concerto in which the classical concerto format is applied faithfully. Still, if there are any real surprises here, perhaps the greatest is how entirely natural and obvious it was to pair the Kruger Brothers with a string quartet. The Kruger Brothers' sound, after all, is principally an ensemble sound, with each of the players refining

and contributing to a single cause. In that sense, it's as far from a traditional bluegrass arrangement — with instruments alternating between accompaniment and soloing — as you can get. Likewise, a classical string quartet, with its close harmonies, counterpoint, and the lack of a true “soloist” in a jazz or bluegrass sense, is an accurate analogue for the kind of ensemble playing that Jens, Joel, and Uwe have been doing for years.

### Upcoming Events of the Seventy-Fifth Season of The William Nelson Cromwell and F. Lamot Belin Concerts

Music of Amy Beach

*Three by Three*

“Washingtonians on Wednesdays”

March 22, 12:10

West Building, East Garden Court

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Parker Quartet

Music by Mendelssohn, Shostakovich,  
and Augusta Read Thomas

March 26, 3:30

West Building, East Garden Court

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Arianna Zukerman, soprano

Joy Schreier, piano

“Washingtonians on Wednesdays”

March 29, 12:10

West Building, East Garden Court

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Apollo's Fire

*Sugarloaf Mountain: An Appalachian  
Gathering*

Presented in honor of *East of the*

*Mississippi: Nineteenth-Century American  
Landscape Photography*

April 2, 4:00

West Building, East Garden Court

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Ben Williams Trio

“Washingtonians on Wednesdays”

April 5, 12:10

West Building, East Garden Court

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Alliage Quintett

*Dancing Paris*

April 9, 3:30

West Building, East Garden Court

### General Information

Admission to the National Gallery of Art and all of its programs is free of charge, except as noted.

The use of cameras or recording equipment during the performance is not allowed.

Please be sure that all portable electronic devices are turned off.

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**Cover** Isaac H. Bonsall, *Chattanooga, Tennessee, from Lookout Mountain* (detail), 1863–1865, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Collection of Paul Sack

**Back cover** *West Building, Constitution Avenue entrance, viewed from Sixth Street NW*, 1941, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gallery Archives