

THE ARTISTS OF THE HALL

Joy, thou source of light immortal,
Daughter of Elysium,
Touched with fire, to the portal
of thy radiant shrine we come.
Thy pure magic frees all others
Held in custom's rigid rings;
Men throughout the world are brothers
In the haven of thy wings.

— from Friedrich von Schiller's *An die Freude*,
adapted by Ludwig von Beethoven
for the choral movement of the Ninth Symphony

Angels ^{emerged} from Texas limestone. Painted images of twin eagles in flight ^{appeared}, gliding ^{near} the periphery of a domed sky wreathed in stylized feathers. Other epiphanies ^{occurred} during the late 1990s as three artists created unifying iconography for the Nancy Lee and Perry R. Bass Performance Hall.

In their collaborations and in their camaraderie, Texan painters Scott and Stuart ^{have} Gentling and Hungarian sculptor Márton Váró reflected the transcendent unity they sought to achieve in their commissioned works. The Gentlings and Váró are of the same generation, but come from different worlds. The integration of their contributions to the program of visual arts for the hall was necessary; their friendship and their mutual respect was fortuitous.

Universal and regional, Old World and New World, classical figures in relief and postmodern drapery fragments, filigreed symmetry and the curling of a grapevine, Apollonian logic-order-harmony and ^{Dionysian} intuition-feeling-pleasure, male and female, generalized myths and the Hale-Bopp Comet, sunrise and sunset, heaven and earth come together in the dance of life. The imagery created by the Gentlings and their assistants, and by Váró single-handedly, is at once obvious and symbolic, wordlessly accessible by anyone who revels in both the natural world and the flight of imagination. Váró's strong, graceful angels welcome the audiences, and the Gentlings' murals shelter and encircle them in an environment honoring the shared experience of memorable performances.

Masterworks

The angels' garments flow across their very human forms; their mysterious feathers fan out around them. They are soft, yet they are stone. They stand in generous relief, emerging from the Grand Façade, lifting their gilded trumpets. In classical beauty they invite ^{and compel} muses and music, artists and patrons, to the hall.

Quarried from Central Texas and carved, section by section, at three sites in two states, they now stand in unity, in celebration, 48 feet tall, with wingspans 18 feet across and 30 feet rising. Just blocks away from their older, more stylized sisters of justice, the angels of the hall are messengers of the artistic spirit in the heart of a city.

Julien, see the yellow page paragraph A

★ Patrons who come into the hall through either of the corner entrances will discover the muralists' assembly of natural and mythic elements in opposition and in harmony. Under the East Dome, an early morning golden sky is seen above Texas red bay laurel leaves and ringed by the sensuous wings of the snow goose. The West Dome, crowned with the sky of a setting sun, ^{the great stairs} framed within the wings of the roseate spoonbill, is in its lower shell adorned with a softened, almost abstract, tapestry-like network of Texas mustang grapevines. The two ^{corner} small domes contain and represent the symbols of Apollo and Dionysus in the natural terms of this region. On permanent loan from the Amon Carter Museum, Augustus Saint-Gaudens' sculpted Diana stands at the center of the entry area.

Enhanced by

Within the Founders' Concert Theater — the hall's central space — in two 70-by-10-foot panels running underneath the Great Dome that is dedicated to Rosalyn and E.M. Rosenthal, another moment of natural and eternal conflict is played out in blue-green tones against a native landscape of Texas red oak, ^{MUSTANG GRAPES,} Nopal cacti, and sumac leaves. On one panel, four white-tailed deer seem to be running. They are does, and one of them has turned her head. On the other side, a white-tailed buck, the reason for her hesitation, stands.

Although observers may read the panels as simple scenes from nature, they will find references, as well, to layers of symbolism from myth and faith. The antlers of the deer, in early European perception, were seen as tree forms linking heaven and earth and resembling the tree of life. ★ Patrons seated at eye level with the woodland murals may imagine themselves witnessing the ancient Greek dramas that were held in open groves.

See paragraph B yellow sheet

See paragraph C yellow page

In the Great Chamber, a 52-foot mural adorns the proscenium arch. Portrayed in terra cotta tones, two human figures ^{appear} regard each other over the arch: Apollo, in a sun-draped cape, ^{reaches out at this moment} touches Daphne, who wears a grape-leaf tunic. In the Greek myth, Daphne ^{appears} turns into a laurel tree, becoming evergreen and thus immortal; ^{appears} the woman in the painting already is transforming. Here, as in the deer tableaux, the dance of life is expressed.

See paragraph D yellow page

Consider
★ The painters ^{relate} relate to each of the hall's three domes as "a sacred area in which the imagination literally takes flight." It is in the Great Dome that all their evocative imagery finds an [↑] etheral resolution. Through the ribs of the dome's

A mystical

framework, white clouds float in a brilliant blue heaven, encircled by great wings and gold leafwork. Within the dome is the unity, the goal for which *The* disparate forces in nature yearn. As the music carries up into the chamber, the mural of the Great Dome conveys transcendent harmony in the simple, soft drifting of *the wings* the clouds and the flight of two eagles.

Scott and Stuart Gentling

The resemblance of the dome's double winged motif to a wreath of victory is an intentional conceit and is my tribute to the sensibilities of both the audiences and the performers who will enter this place. In its significance as a triumph of the spirit, or rather, as a part of that triumph, the winged idea was chosen for other associations as well. Symbolically wings also represent imagination and thought and ascendancy in general.

— Scott Gentling
from sketchbook notes for the Great Dome,
Nancy Lee and Perry R. Bass Performance Hall

The Gentling brothers, Minnesota natives raised in Fort Worth, are lifelong colleagues and collaborators. The twin artists live with creations that infuse their works: collections of 18th-century clothing constructed with intricately embroidered textiles; treasured originals by their mentor in the depiction of birds, John James Audubon; ancient Greek and pre-Columbian artifacts; a harpsichord; and Scott Gentling's series of composers' portraits.

Best known for their monumental publication *Of Birds and Texas*, a critically acclaimed folio with an essay by John Graves, the Gentlings began painting as teenagers. Each has studied at Tulane University and at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts; each is an independent and eclectic scholar.

The hall represents a complex canvas for the Gentlings. Accepting Ed Bass' invitation to serve as principal artists for the structure meant making a departure from ongoing work in other areas: preparing an exhibition on the Aztec capital Tenochtitlán for the Kimbell Art Museum and the Museo del Templo Mayor in Mexico City; painting for individual patrons and exhibiting at the Gerald Peters Gallery of Santa Fe; extensive research into several cultures; collecting; and writing. On the other hand, creating for the hall represented a culmination of the brothers' many interests, a multi-planed outlet of expression. They said yes.

Coming full circle in terms of bringing to the hall their synthesis of beloved tributary influences, the brothers designed their mural for the interior of the Great Dome in a tribute to their late mother, *Stuart and I want to personally*

honor our mother, Barbara Gentling Smith, with this work," Scott Gentling said. "She literally introduced us to the arts; she took us to hear our first symphony at the Will Rogers Auditorium, and she bought us our first art history book. She has fostered our talent throughout our lives, and, to her, we owe a great deal of gratitude." Two other interior murals will be dedicated to several important Fort Worth artists' and early Gentling patrons." Stuart's hand (identical to Scott's) is Apollo's in the richly sanguine proscenium mural; it touches the hand of Daphne as she begins to change into a laurel tree, and her hand is that of friend and assistant Nancy Gish Ferguson, to whom the mural is dedicated. The Gentlings have even symbolically placed themselves in the dome scene as the two golden eagles.

Reactions to the painters' works-in-progress have given affirmation and momentum to the artists and the art program. The French designer Jean-Louis Renaud, on a recent tour of the hall, commented that he found something healing in the images. The symmetrical grillwork design of the Great Dome's main lamp — *fibonacci* — is derived from an ancient Greek pattern depicting the golden section, from which the musical octave was designed. "Every feather is laid off in harmony with it," Stuart Gentling noted. Count Paolo Marzotto, whose quarry in Italy is the source for the marble tiles of the lobby floor, recognized the pattern on a visit to Fort Worth. Delighted, he donated the labor and artistry of special swirling cuts of tiling for the two corner entrances, to echo the design.

Originally, and ironically, the Gentlings did not favor architect David Schwarz' vision of angels for the hall facade. Many alternatives were presented, but Schwarz insisted on angels, in forms the principal artists could not approve. "If we had any influence," Stuart Gentling reflected, it was in seeking another solution to the 'angel problem.' Finally, I think because we went around and around with it, a sculptor with a more sensuous, Donatellan vision was selected. Márton is exactly right."

* Bill Bomar, John Chumley, Blanche McVeigh, Flora and Dickson Reeder, Emily Guthrie Smith, and Bror Utter.

** Betsy and Sam Cantey, Nancy Luther Holmes, Shirley Lupton Holmes, Ruth Carter Stevenson, Anne Burnett Tandy, Gloria Lupton Tennison and Harry Tennison, and Ted Weiner.

facade

Márton Váró

... echoes and cross-references make Váró a typically post-modern artist. ... What he lacks, fortunately, is the cynicism which informs so much post-Modernist art. All his work shows his eye for finely calculated formal relationships. But always, even in the works which are apparently entirely non-figurative, there is a feeling for flesh — in particular for the ripeness of the female body. The fact that Váró prefers to depict this draped rather than nude is perhaps a symbol of his reverence for the mysteries this image contains.

— Edward Lucie-Smith

Crossing the street that lies just north of the hall and his angels, Márton Váró has often entered the café called Angeluna laden with Córdoba cream limestone dust. "I designed my life around these angels for the last three years," he reflected. For him, angels are "the embodiment of human creative impulses and humanity's guardians."

The Hungarian artist, born in Székelyudvarhely, Transylvania, is attuned to the need for guardians of the human spirit. He recalls the stultifying aspects of a totalitarian communist state that kept his educated parents in menial jobs; his father, an intellectual, labored in a mine miles from home, and his mother, who held a doctoral degree, embroidered collars to earn money. "If you do what you like, you are happy. The cruelest thing," he reflected, "is to stop the talented people. You have to believe in what you do; you have to have your standards; money cannot be enough motivation. You must come to a fatal attraction to your profession."

His parents provided, even in the tiny apartment where they raised him, a thousand books, music, and love for learning and for all the arts. There were so many original paintings and woodcuts, "They did not need to paint the walls," he remembers. Váró balanced the life of the mind with physical labor and acquired woodcarving skills from farmer-craftsmen during working summers in rural Transylvania. Although he played the cello in a young people's orchestra and appeared in many operas as a student extra, in his teenage years he determined "to be a sculptor or to be nothing." During studies at the Ion Andreescu School of Fine Arts in Cluj, Romania, he won the praise of an exacting teacher with a precursor of the draped female figures with which he now is identified. A Fulbright Scholarship allowed him to come to the United States in 1988. It also opened the door through which he brought his wife and

two younger children, and gave access to medical care and a climate beneficial to his son, whose vision is threatened by a rare disorder.

Váró's sculptures reside in many public collections, including the Peace Memorial in Palm Desert, California; the City of Volos, Greece; the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam; the National Gallery of Budapest, Hungary; and the Plaza of the Americas in Dallas. Germany, Romania, and Hungary have hosted solo exhibitions, and he has taken part in group shows in France, Spain, Austria, Italy, Canada, Finland, Sweden, and the U.S.

His hope for the performance hall rests in its potential for bringing people together. "In a nation of many faiths, there are many sacred places. A temple of culture could be the unifying center for a community. A universal gathering place for all can make a difference."

In contrast to the experience of Váró's parents, his wife Ilona, a geneticist, works as a research associate in the prenatal counseling field. His older daughter, Kata, is in the midst of graduate work in English literature at the University in Debrecen, Hungary. His son, Márton, wants to enter the film industry, and the younger daughter, Ilona, aspires to be a psychologist.

Váró found the Gentlings to be "incredible intellectuals" whose names "should be in big, big letters" in any published work on the hall. The rapport between the three, he said, "is worth mentioning." From the time of his arrival in Fort Worth, Váró discovered "the instant beginning of a friendship. It could have been otherwise."

— Juliet George