

Nickitas Demos, DMA

Professor of Composition, Artistic Director, *neoPhonia New Music Ensemble*

School of Music • Georgia State University

I believe the work of Cavafy has universal relevance and continues to have an impact on modern society. It has certainly influenced my work as a creative artist. Perhaps my most profound encounter with Cavafy occurred in the Spring of 2007. I attended a lecture given by the noted scholar, Gregory Jusdanis, on Cavafy's poem *Myris: Alexandria A.D. 340*. The work is a masterpiece that has become a singular exemplar of Cavafy's genius for me. In his lecture, Dr. Jusdanis drew attention to Cavafy's astonishing ability to describe the epochal shift in the Western world from paganism towards Christianity within the seemingly small confines of a simple poem. He also noted the deep underlying question of friendship posed by the piece: How well do we really know one another? For me, however, the poem touched upon yet another level. My initial question was "Am I Myris?" But upon reflection, I refined the question to: "Which Myris am I?" I am certainly the Myris who outwardly lives a life according to the carnal pleasures of the world. However, do I ever evidence for anyone the fact that I am a Christian as Myris did, if even in retrospect? The character of Myris stands as a stark image of how I lead my life. In response to this poem, I was moved to compose a musical work that explores the compelling stories of the West in transition, our underlying assumptions of friendship as well as my personal identification with the character of Myris. That Cavafy was able to achieve so much within one small poem, and this piece being only a small sampling of his creative output, inspires me as a composer and continues to impact my work.