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World Premiere Duke Performances Commission: Ari Picker of Lost in the Trees Lion and the Lamb

March 5, 2015, Durham, NC — Duke Performances presents Ari Picker of acclaimed orchestral indie rock band Lost in the Trees in the world premiere of a newly-commissioned song cycle, *Lion and the Lamb*, on Friday, March 27, and Saturday, March 28 at 8 PM. *Lion and the Lamb* brings together an outstanding local ensemble of eleven indie rock and classical musicians in a new work inspired by *Book of Hours*, Rainer Maria Rilke's masterpiece of devotional poetry.

Best known for his work with Lost in the Trees, Picker also studied composition at the Berklee School of Music. *The Huffington Post* enthused that “Ari Picker has Nick Drake speaking to him in one ear and Handel whispering in the other.” *Lion and the Lamb* finds the Chapel Hill native expanding his compositional palette, drawing new inspiration from minimalism and jazz improvisation, while maintaining his knack for writing “extraordinary arrangements for strings and choral voices [that] find no precedent in rock and pop” (*The Wall Street Journal*). For the world premiere of this piece — which will be performed in the round at the Nelson Music Room on Duke University’s East Campus — Picker is joined by an ensemble of eleven players: vocalists Skylar Gudasz and Phil Moore (Bowerbirds), saxophonist Matthew Douglas (Hiss Golden Messenger), percussionist Peter Lewis (Lost in the Trees), pianist Jesse Kapsha, and the New Music Raleigh String Quartet.

“The *Lion and the Lamb* song cycle is an expression of my emotional response to Rilke's work,” says Picker. “As I read and re-read the poetry, I was inspired to make a 'soundtrack for Rilke'. Putting poetry to music sometimes required that I create my own translation, as was the case with ‘Panther,’ and sometimes the music only required a snippet of poetry to convey Rilke's spirit. The song cycle describes my own experience with the poetry and provides a musical companion for Rilke's reflections on life and mysticism. Songwriting has always been an opportunity for me to connect with something spiritual, something that I can only touch by creating art. Rilke speaks of life in death in a manner that resonates with me. The poetry includes all the shadows and ruff edges of life, along with glimpses of golden colors and a vast openness.”

Duke Performances is at the forefront of university performing arts presenters nationwide, attracting artists of the highest caliber and commissioning, incubating, and producing a growing number of new works for the world stage. In 2014/15, Duke Performances presents world premiere commissions not just from Ari Picker, but from the Campbell Brothers (a sacred steel reimagining of John Coltrane’s *A Love Supreme*); The Bad Plus (playing Ornette Coleman’s masterpiece *Science Fiction*); William Tyler (*Corduroy Roads*, a work inspired by photographs of the Civil War); Ron K. Brown/Evidence Dance Company & Jason Moran and the Bandwagon (the premiere with live music of *The Subtle One*); and Jenny Scheinman & H. Lee Waters (*Kannapolis: A Moving Portrait*).