Like most of the American composers of the first two decades of the twentieth century, Charles Griffes was judged and defined by his contemporaries solely in terms of what was happening musically in Europe. His only piano sonata represents a determination on his part to move out from under the shadow of the Europeans and come up with a work at once abstract and original. Among the new devices he employed was a synthetic eight-note scale, containing more half steps than the major or minor scale. Unfortunately, Griffes' movement in a new direction was cut short by his untimely death in 1920, just two years after the *Sonata* was completed.

Albéniz' *Iberia* complements the Chopin *Barcarolle* and the Griffes *Sonata* in this program in that, like them, it was written late in the composer's career and represents an apotheosis of his skills. *Iberia* consists of twelve pieces arranged in four books, and most of the pieces are named after provinces or locales in Andalusia, the southern part of Spain. *Almeria* is a province known for its hot, dry weather, and *Triana* is the gypsy quarter of Seville. *Rondeña*, on the other hand, is a dance, a variant of the fandango distinguished by its syncopated rhythms.

CONCERTS AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

April 1993

Dates and Performers		*Programs* (Subject to change)
11	The Howard University Chorale Dr. Weldon Norris, *Conductor*	Easter Concert

THE 50TH AMERICAN MUSIC FESTIVAL
(April 18 through May 9, 1993)

18	National Gallery Orchestra George Manos, *Conductor* Beverly Benso, *contralto guest soloist*	Richard Bales: *National Gallery Suite No. 5* (World premiere) Menotti: *Sebastian Suite* MacDowell: *Lamia*
25	Phyllis Bryn-Julson, *soprano* Donald Sutherland, *pianist* Rudy Vrbsky, *oboist*	Songs by Ives, H. Stevens Brewster, Ronald Perera, Gunther Schuller, and Lee Hoiby

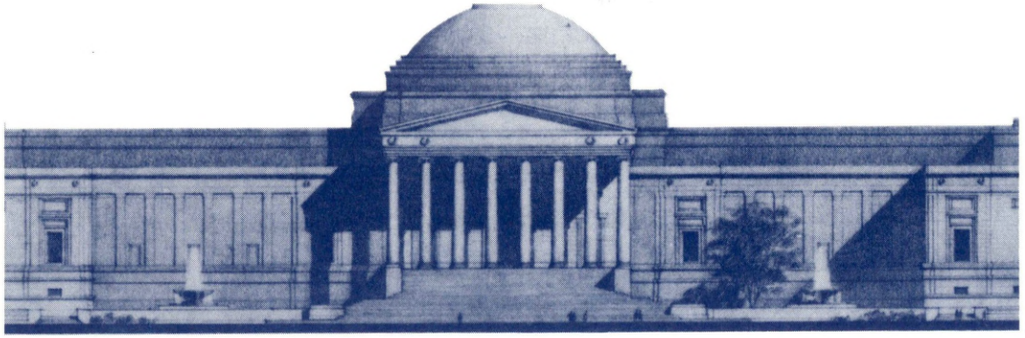
Concerts from the National Gallery are broadcast in their entirety at 7:00 p.m. on Sundays on radio station WGTS, 91.9 FM, four weeks after the live performance. The use of cameras or recording equipment is not allowed.

For the convenience of concertgoers, the Garden Café remains open until 6:30 p.m.

THE WILLIAM NELSON CROMWELL and
F. LAMMOT BELIN CONCERTS

at the

National Gallery of Art



2082nd Concert

RALPH VOTAPEK, *pianist*

Sunday Evening, April 4, 1993
at Seven O'clock
West Building, West Garden Court

PROGRAM

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827) — Sonata in E-flat Major, Opus 7 (1797)

Allegro molto e con brio
Largo, con gran espressione
Allegro
Rondo: Poco allegretto e grazioso

Frédéric Chopin (1810–1849) — Nocturne in C Minor, Opus 48, No. 1 (1841)

Tarentelle, Opus 43 (1841)

Barcarolle, Opus 60 (1846)

INTERMISSION

Charles Griffes (1884–1920) — Sonata (1918)

Feroce; allegretto con moto
Tranquillamente; molto tranquillo
Allegro vivace

Isaac Albéniz (1860–1909) — Iberia, Book II (1906)

Rondeña
Almeria
Triana

After winning the gold medal in the first Van Cliburn Piano Competition in 1962, RALPH VOTAPEK has gone on to become a winner in the even more competitive world of professional concertizing. Critics and audiences are united in extolling his artistic maturity, technical proficiency, and easy charm on the stage. He is a favorite soloist with the Chicago Symphony, with which he has enjoyed many repeat engagements, and with the Boston Pops, with which he recorded a Gershwin album under the direction of Arthur Fiedler. In addition to having developed loyal audiences in many cities in the United States, Mr. Votapek plays to sold-out houses on his biannual tours of Latin America. He has performed with similar success in Europe and the former Soviet Union.

A native of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Ralph Votapek began his musical studies there, enrolling at the Wisconsin Conservatory at the age of nine. He continued his studies at Northwestern University, the Manhattan School of Music, and at Juilliard, where his teachers were Rosina Lhevine and Robert Goldsand. He presently serves as artist-in-residence at Michigan State University in East Lansing, and has been a juror in both the Van Cliburn and the Tchaikovsky Piano Competitions.

Beethoven's *Sonata in E-flat Major*, his fourth piano sonata, is the first to substantiate his unique genius as a composer of works for that instrument. Its first movement, with its long melodic lines and extended thematic development, is grander in scope than any single sonata movement up to its time. The slow movement, with its broken accents, short chords, tense pauses, and sudden juxtaposition of *fortissimi* and *pianissimi*, expresses grief in music more dramatically than any of its predecessors. The *Rondo* is regarded as one of the masterpieces of that form, with its tragically stoic central section and its peaceful conclusion, which resolves all of the conflicting passions of the earlier movements.

Heroism is not a characteristic that one expects to find in a nocturne, which is traditionally a lyrical elegy, suitable to the moods of the night. It is the genius of Chopin, however, that he was able to transform each of the established forms with which he worked, and in his *C Minor Nocturne* the heroism is unmistakable. After increasing the intensity of the texture in the second section of this three-part work, Chopin does not return to the tranquility of the opening section, as might be expected, but proceeds to an even more intense final section, marked *doppio movimento*.

The *tarantella* is a rapid dance of Neapolitan origin which was reputed to have the power to cure the bite of the tarantula. Chopin's only foray into this form, his *Tarentelle in A-flat Major*, is a whirlwind of perpetual motion made even more exciting by twice increasing the tempo toward the end.

As is the case with the *Tarentelle*, the *Barcarolle* is Chopin's only piece in that form. As is the case with the *Nocturne, Opus 48*, the *Barcarolle* has length, breadth, and brilliance that go far beyond the implications of its title, which leads the listener to expect a lilting song in the style of those sung by Venetian gondoliers. The counterpoint, harmony, and thematic transformations of the work are highly dramatic and foreshadow what was to come later in the music of Liszt, Wagner, and Franck.