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Music Department
National Gallery of Art
Sixth Street and Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC

www.nga.gov

COVER: Paul Stevenson Oles, *Sketch of the East Building Exterior*, 1971,
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The Sixty-ninth Season of
The William Nelson Cromwell and F. Lamot Belin
Concerts

National Gallery of Art
2,825th Concert

William Chapman Nyaho, piano

“Music of the African Diaspora”

Presented in honor of African-American History Month

February 16, 2011
Wednesday, 12:10 pm
East Building Auditorium

Admission free

Program

Performed without intermission

Florence Price (1887–1953)

Dances in the Canebrakes

Nimble Feet

Tropical Noon

Silk Hat and Walking Cane

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (1875–1912)

From *Twenty-Four Negro Melodies*, op. 59

No. 10 “Deep River”

Margaret Bonds (1913–1972)

Troubled Water

Fred Onovwerosuoke (b. 1960)

Four Studies in African Rhythm

Udje

Okoye

Iroro

Agbadza

Bongani Ndodana-Breen (b. 1975)

Flowers in Sand

Part 1: “After the First Rain”

Part 2: “Colours in the Dunes”

Oswald Russell (b. 1933)

Three Jamaican Dances

Alberto Ginastera (1916–1983)

Sonata no. 1, op. 22

Allegro marcato

Presto misterioso

Adagio molto appassionato

Ruvido ed ostinato

The Musician

William Chapman Nyaho studied at Saint Peter's College, Oxford University, where he graduated with a bachelor of arts degree. He continued his piano studies at the Conservatoire de Musique de Genève, Switzerland, the Eastman School of Music, and the University of Texas at Austin, where he received master of music and doctor of musical arts degrees, respectively. A North Carolina visiting artist for four years, Chapman Nyaho has taught at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, where he was the recipient of the Distinguished Professor Award and held the Heymann Endowed Professorship. He was the recipient of the Acadiana Arts Council Distinguished Artist Award, and served as visiting professor of music at Colby College in Maine and visiting artist at Willamette University in Oregon. His summer teaching appointments include Adamant Music School and Interlochen Summer Arts Camp. He has compiled and edited *Piano Music of Africa and the African Diaspora*, a five-volume graded anthology published by Oxford University Press.

Chapman Nyaho's performances have taken him to Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Europe, and North America. He has performed as a soloist with various orchestras, including the chamber orchestras of Moscow and San Francisco. Chapman Nyaho has been featured on radio and television broadcasts in Ghana, Switzerland, and on American Public Media's *Performance Today*. He also developed and hosted "The Bach Show" for classical radio station KRVS in Louisiana. The Nyaho/Garcia Duo has released the critically acclaimed CD *Aaron Copland: Music for Two Pianos* on the Centaur Label.

Music from Chapman Nyaho's solo CD, *SENKU: Piano Music by Composers of African Descent*, a groundbreaking compilation of music of the African Diaspora, was recently choreographed by Tony Award winner Garth Fagan. *SENKU* was named one of the "Best of the Year" by the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, which called it "altogether enthralling," and claimed, "this music deserves a regular place on concert programs." A companion CD, *ASA: Piano Music by Composers of African Descent*, released in 2008 on the MSR Classics Label, has also received critical acclaim. William Chapman Nyaho appears at the National Gallery by arrangement with Lisa Sapinkopf Artists of Emeryville, California.

Program Notes

The first African-American composer, concert pianist, and organist to reach national recognition, Florence Price earned an artist degree in organ music and a teacher's diploma in piano from the New England Conservatory of Music. She taught at the Cotton-Plant Arkadelphia Academy and Shorter College in Little Rock before becoming head of the music department at Clark University in Atlanta. Price returned to Arkansas where she taught privately and wrote several teaching pieces for piano. She later moved to Chicago where she became known nationally and internationally as a composer and concert pianist. In 1933 she became the first African American to have her work performed by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. She also gained international recognition for her art songs and arrangements of Negro spirituals that were premiered by Leontyne Price. *Dances in the Canebrakes* is one of three hundred compositions by Florence Price, a body of work that includes shorter pieces for piano, symphonies, concertos, chamber works, art songs, and settings of spirituals for voice and piano.

Born to parents from Sierra Leone and Britain, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor studied at the Royal College of Music in London and held prestigious music posts in that city. Early in his career, he met African-American poet Paul Lawrence Dunbar, with whom he collaborated on several songs. Dunbar encouraged Coleridge-Taylor to promote his African heritage in his compositions. The composer took the poet's advice to heart, using African elements in his subsequent compositions to such an extent that it earned him the title "the African Mahler." In his notes for the collection *Twenty-Four Negro Melodies*, op. 59, Coleridge-Taylor wrote, "What Brahms has done for the Hungarian folk-music, Dvořák for the Bohemian, and Grieg for the Norwegian, I have tried to do for these Negro Melodies."

A pupil of Florence Price, composer, pianist, and teacher Margaret Bonds received the bachelor and master of music degrees from Northwestern University. In 1933, while still a student, she became the first African American to perform as guest soloist with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Upon graduation, Bonds worked in Chicago, collaborating with writer Langston Hughes and other poets and musicians in cantatas, musicals, and song cycles. She later moved to New York and continued her studies in composition at the Juilliard School. A highly successful composer, Bonds wrote orchestral and choral music, chamber music, art songs, and popular songs and often included her own works and improvisations in her recitals. Like her teacher Florence Price, Bond received encouragement and commissions from Leontyne Price, who sang many of her songs in concert. Bonds received numerous awards during her lifetime for her contributions to African-American music. "Troubled Water" comes from a multi-movement work, *Spiritual Suite*, which also includes "Valley of the Bones," "The Bells," and "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands."

Fred Onovwerosuoke was born in Ghana to Nigerian parents. Although he received his first degrees in electrical and electronic engineering, he was self-taught in piano and violin and became a professional musician after his undergraduate studies were finished. He turned to composition in 1984, when he was invited to conduct the Terra Choral Group and Chamber Orchestra at the University of Ife in Ife-Ife, Nigeria. Much of his music is influenced by his research in traditional African instruments, such as *gonje*, *kontingu*, *kora*, and *kraar*. A devoted student of Africa's many harmonic languages and rhythm traditions, especially the music of the Forest and Sand peoples of central and northern South African regions, Onovwerosuoke writes, "My compositions are informed by my travels around the world, and each piece is harnessed and nurtured by an African sensibility that is unmistakable and genuine. . . . I see hidden across Africa a gold mine of unlimited musical scales and modes, melodic and harmonic traditions, and, yes, rhythms—abundant, yet largely untapped." His *Four Studies in African Rhythms* for piano is from a collection of twenty-four such pieces.

Bongani Ndodana-Breen grew up in Queenstown, South Africa. He studied music at Rhodes University and composition with Roelof Temmingh at the Conservatory in Stellenbosch. The recipient in 1988 of the Standard Bank Young Artist Award for Music, one of South Africa's most prestigious arts prizes, Ndodana-Breen has received commissions from the African Music Rights Organization (SAMRO), the Cape Town City Ballet, the Emancipation Festival in Trinidad and Tobago, the Kazbah Project in New York City, the Madam Walker Theater in Indianapolis, Playhouse Company Durban, the UNISA International Violin Competition, and the Vancouver Recital Society. His multimedia works have been performed by orchestras and chamber groups worldwide. He is presently the artistic director of Toronto's MusicaNoir/Ensemble Noir. Influenced by the lyricism and rhythms of Africa, Ndodana-Breen's music blends African elements with an eclectic, post-modern approach to contemporary music. He draws from the sounds of his childhood, reinterpreting and altering them, sometimes beyond recognition. His musical landscapes contain many layered voices, some of which are invented, and some of which are genuine African folk motifs.

Jamaican pianist and composer Oswald Russell studied at the Royal Academy of Music in London, the Juilliard School of Music in New York, and at the music conservatories of Geneva and Paris. He holds the distinction of taking first prize in both the classical and jazz categories at the first International Improvisation Contest in Lyon, France. A versatile composer, concert pianist and improviser, Russell creates innovative concert programs that usually include his own works, music from Western classical repertoire, and jazz improvisations. His style is a subtle blend of Caribbean and European musical idioms, and his gift for melody is characterized by long, beautifully balanced phrases. Utilizing harmonic language that ranges from simple diatonic to complex jazz harmonies to atonality, his music is marked by frequent and startling tonal shifts. Russell has held teaching positions in Jamaica and Switzerland and has been visiting professor of music in Kinshasa, Zaire.

Although he has no known African roots, Argentine composer Alberto Ginastera enjoys a place of honor in today's program because of his lifelong interest in music of African origin, particularly the Creole tradition. He borrowed from and made explicit references to dance and song styles from the folk traditions of his native Argentina, other parts of Latin America, and Africa. Written in 1952, his *Piano Sonata no. 1, op. 22*, exemplifies the stylistic traits associated with earlier works, such as the *Creole Faust Overture* from 1943. The sonata fuses lively dance-derived rhythmic figurations, evocative textures, and modern musical forms and idioms. The dramatic first movement of the sonata, marked *Allegro marcato*, begins with aggressive chordal gestures emphasizing the extremes of the piano's range. The subsequent lyrical theme undergoes a series of transformations organized in carefully paced arcs of intensity and repose. When the opening material returns at the end of the movement, it is intensified by a subtle shift upwards in its tonal orientation. The second movement, *Presto misterioso*, conveys a palpably nervous energy, not only through its striking melodic material—a slithering line constituting a twelve-tone row—but also through its unique texture. Both hands play the same line in octaves at opposite ends of the keyboard, occasionally diverging for chromatic runs in contrary motion. The busy angst and relentless rhythmic drive of the second movement is sharply contrasted by the dreamy languor of the third, marked *Adagio molto appassionato*. The movement begins with arid ascending tonal arcs alternating with lyrical, introspective passages. In the driving syncopations and stylized bravado of the final movement (*Ruvido ed ostinato*), the right hand articulates angular repeated figures while the bold octaves in the bass constantly shift between 6/8 and 3/4, conveying an indelible Latin flavor.

Program notes on African Diaspora composers by William Chapman Nyaho

Program notes on Ginastera by Stephen Ackert, head of the music department, National Gallery of Art

Next Week at the National Gallery of Art

The Vivaldi Project

Music by Vivaldi and other Venetian composers

Presented in honor of *Venice: Canaletto and His Rivals*

February 20, 2011
Sunday Evening, 6:30 pm
West Building, West Garden Court



Sara Stern, flutist
Lisa Emenheiser, pianist

Music by Jongen, Liebermann, and Schoenfeld

February 23, 2011
Wednesday, 12:10 pm
East Building Auditorium