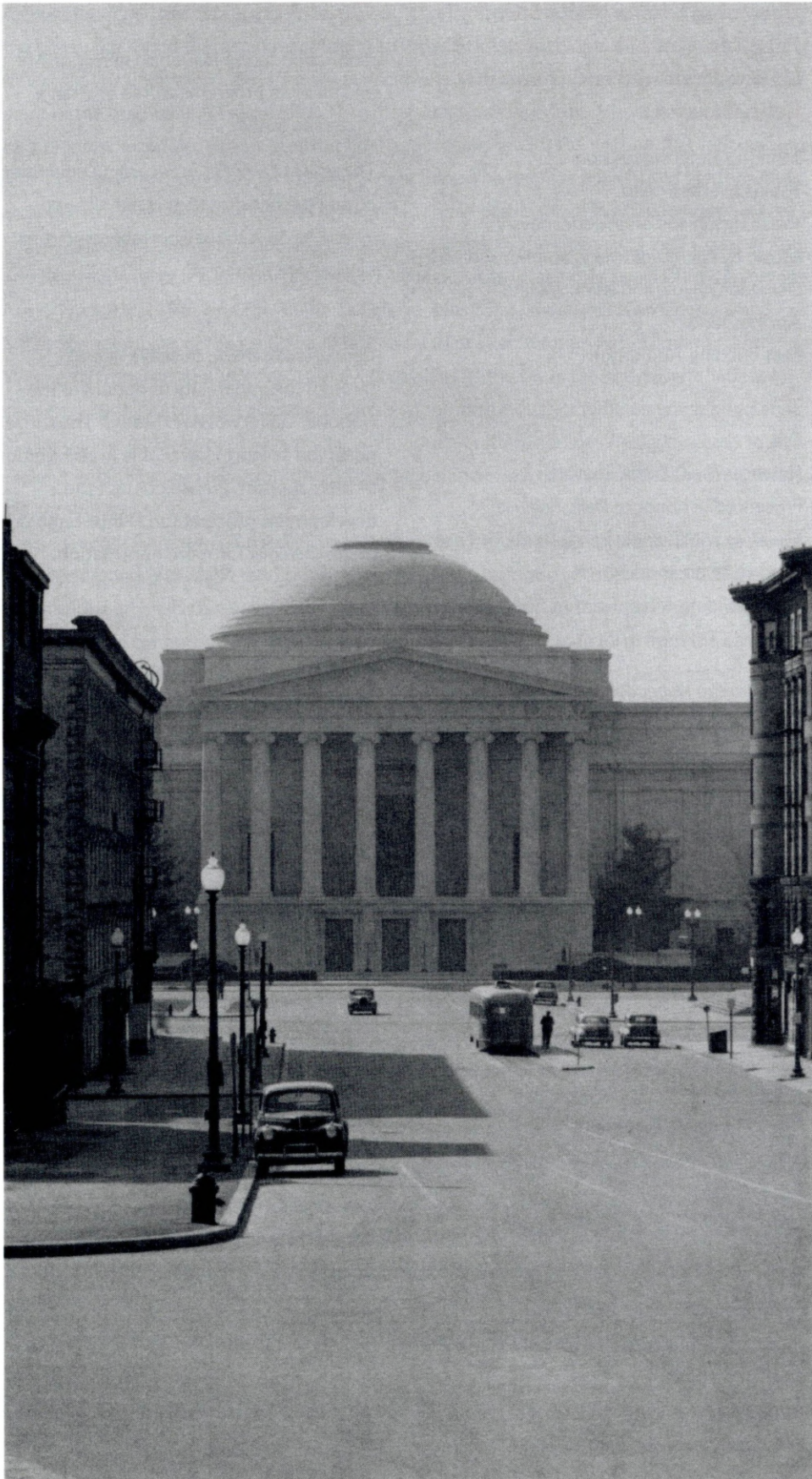


75TH SEASON OF CONCERTS

APRIL 9, 2017 • NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART



PROGRAM



Alliage Quintett. Photo by Ira Weinrauch - Weinrauch Fotografie

3:30 • West Building, East Garden Court

Alliage Quintett

Daniel Gauthier, soprano saxophone
Koryun Asatryan, alto saxophone
Simon Hanrath, tenor saxophone
Sebastian Pottmeier, baritone saxophone
Jang Eun Bae, piano
With guest Nurit Bar-Josef, violin

Dancing Paris

Leonard Bernstein (1918–1990)
Overture from *Candide*
Arr. Itai Sobol

Darius Milhaud (1892–1974)
Le Boeuf sur le toit
Arr. Sebastian Gottschick

Jun Nagao (b. 1964)
Rhapsody on Carmen (Bizet)

Intermission

George Gershwin (1898–1937)
An American in Paris
Arr. Sylvain Dedenon
Allegretto grazioso
Andante ma con ritmo deciso

Erik Satie (1866–1925)
Gymnopédie no. 1
Arr. Sebastian Pottmeier

George Enescu (1881–1955)
Romanian Rhapsody no. 1, op. 11
Arr. Sebastian Gottschick

The Musicians

The Alliage Quintett is one of Europe's most creative and successful saxophone ensembles. *Alliage* — the French word for alloy — refers to the saxophone as an alloy of copper and zinc. Similarly, the musicians carry this blend into the diversity of styles and eras of music they perform. In a broader sense, *alliage* stands for the musical ideal of the five musicians forming one homogeneous whole and for their perfectly balanced playing.

The quintet was founded by Daniel Gauthier, currently the only professor for classical saxophone in Germany (Hochschule für Musik, Cologne) and the ensemble's leader and soprano sax player. He is joined by three of today's best soloists on saxophone: Koryun Asatryan, alto, Simon Hamrath, tenor, and Sebastian Pottmeier, baritone. The quintet is completed by the Korean pianist Jang Eun Bae, an experienced and well-versed chamber musician.

The quintet's core repertoire consists of well-known masterpieces of all epochs, cleverly arranged for the ensemble with exceptional sensitivity. With its unique programs, the Alliage Quintett performs successfully as it straddles the fine line between subtle chamber music and sophisticated entertainment. It fills major concert halls throughout the world, and in June 2015, the quintet was honored to perform the opening concert at the World Saxophone Congress in Strasbourg, France.

In addition to several radio broadcastings, the Alliage Quintett has released five CDs, one of which — *Una voce poco fa* — received the renowned ECHO Klassik award in 2005. On their second CD, *À la recherche du rêve perdu*, the five musicians traveled back in time to Adolphe Sax, inventor of the saxophone, to confront his instrument with works of his contemporaries Mendelssohn and Schumann. *Masquerade*, with arrangements of J. S. Bach and recompositions of Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*, was released on SONY Classical. The group's *Voyage Russe* recording was released, also for SONY, with a musical focus on the Belle Époque Russe and was accompanied by an extensive European concert tour. The ensemble again won the renowned ECHO Klassik award in 2014 for their fourth release, *Dancing Paris*. In February 2016, the quintet released their new CD *Fantasia* with the renowned clarinetist Sabine Meyer as guest, featuring works by Borodin, Stravinsky, Bernstein, Shostakovich, and Dukas.

Program

Dancing Paris

The starting point of the libretto of Leonard Bernstein's *Candide* was no less a work than Voltaire's satirical tale *Candide, ou l'Optimisme*. Its overture is one of the composer's most frequently heard works in the concert hall. Both in the original and in the arrangement for the Alliage Quintett, the score moves easily between light music and its more serious counterpart, adopting a tone that is by turn lively, virtuosic, and witty. The present arrangement is by Itai Sobol, who particularly values the Alliage saxophones' ability "to play delicate lines, something we rarely hear from these instruments on such a high level of attainment. But they can also sound like powerful brass instruments, notably in the first few bars of the piece." The piano underpins and extends the range of possibilities inherent in the instruments' sonorities, while also defining the work's rhythmic contours, imitating a harp, and in its highest register taking over the quiet and virtuosic figures of the original, which it does to impressive effect.

At its first performance in 1956, Bernstein's operetta failed to impress audiences, a problem due less to its music than to its libretto. A revised version laid greater emphasis on the songs and, reworked as a musical, it proved a hit on Broadway. Voltaire's ironic tale about "the best of all possible worlds" was intended as a bitter satire of German philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz's optimistic world view. As soon as it was published, *Candide* was placed on the Vatican's list of proscribed texts, and in many places it was banned completely because of the absurd humor of his literary source. Bernstein succeeded in creating a witty survey of the European musical tradition with his caricatures of potpourri overtures to comic operas, Bach chorales, and coloratura showpieces.

Between the two great world fairs of 1889 and 1900 in Paris, the city experienced stormy times — political, social, and economic — which coincided with the cultural heyday of the Belle Époque. The opulent shows at the Moulin Rouge and the Lido set a new benchmark for revue drama, while cultural life on the Seine vibrated in the opera houses and theaters, and productions at the Théâtre des Champs Élysées were regularly surrounded by scandal. This was an era of lightness before the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. A new sensuality of sound evolved in music: composers played with elements of jazz and folk and light music, making use of classical forms that were then robbed of their strictness by alienation and parody. Bold harmonies characterize the compositions of the time as much as crazy changes of tempo and complex rhythms. Musicians, poets, and painters met regularly in restaurants and bistros to share the new-found artistic freedom, which was derived from the search for a new feeling of simplicity, combining everyday life with the refinement of earlier eras.

No less lively than Enescu's Rhapsody is *Le Bœuf sur le toit* (The ox on the roof) by Darius Milhaud. This fantasy for orchestra dates from 1919, and was originally composed as accompanying music for a silent film. It became a huge hit through the pantomime performed by Jean Cocteau. Shortly after the première, a café of the same name opened in Paris and became a popular artists' meeting place; to this day, there is a restaurant of this name near the Champs-Élysées where live jazz is played. *Le Bœuf sur le toit* is basically a dashing rondo based on a Brazilian folk song that Milhaud learned during his time as cultural attaché in Brazil. Sebastian Gottschick used all of Milhaud's three versions for his arrangement: the original orchestral version, the *Cinéma-Fantasia* for violin and orchestra with a cadenza by

Arthur Honegger, and the piano score. But Gottschick didn't interfere with the basic form of the piece: the rondo theme appears fourteen times in all twelve keys, and nearly all the intermezzos are left unchanged. But he does play cleverly with superimposition, very much in the spirit of the original film-music idea. Thus, he takes a passage from Honegger's cadenza, to quote one example, abbreviates the theme, dovetails it with the section that follows, and lets it creep early on and in 4/8 time into triple time. The result is a lively and lighthearted arrangement that takes up the ideas of the time, and in particular, of the Groupe des Six (Les Six). This group of French composers was given its name by the journalist Henri Collet in 1918 and was made up of the composers Darius Milhaud, Arthur Honegger, Louis Durey, Georges Auric, Francis Poulenc, and Germaine Tailleferre, plus their "mentors" Jean Cocteau and Erik Satie. The members of the group were united by their search for an anti-Romantic, anti-Wagnerian music that had its roots in everyday life. At the time, the self-taught Satie was causing a sensation in the cabarets of Paris's Montmartre district with his uninhibited style of piano playing. He quoted light music without reservation, adding cheeky discords to make it unfamiliar and incorporating fashionable dances like the foxtrot and the waltz into his compositions.

George Gershwin's *An American in Paris* gives a vivid impression of how Paris probably sounded around 1928. With this brilliant composition, he transports the listener to this charming and exciting city, which he explored himself on an extensive tour through Europe. We hear the honking of car horns as well as the jazz and dance music pouring forth from the cafés and cabarets. The arrangement played here comes from the pen of Sylvain Dedenon. He, too, does not interfere with the structure of the work, but nonetheless manages to successfully transfer the energy of the orchestral writing and the colorful instrumentation of Gershwin's original to the Alliage Quintett. To achieve this, he exploits the full tonal range of the saxophones. The piano is given much more than simply accompanying duties, making all the facets and colors of the original audible.

Erik Satie originally wrote his *Gymnopédies* between 1888 and 1890 as piano pieces. Today they are familiar to many people, thanks in part to film and TV. The exact meaning of Satie's titles is unknown, but they elicit associations with the mysteries of classical antiquity.

George Enescu composed his famous Romanian Rhapsody no. 1 in Paris in 1901, making use of a good dose of folk melodies from his native Romania. Enescu himself claimed that he had simply thrown a handful of harmonies together, nothing more. But a look at his sketches reveals how meticulously the composer, at the tender age of nineteen, fiddled around with the orchestration of the Rhapsody. In his arrangement for saxophone quartet, piano, and violin, Sebastian Gottschick sticks as closely to the orchestral score as possible and at the same time highlights the unusual instrumental line-up. Gottschick comments: "For much of the time, the Rhapsody's melodies are dictated by the first violin, so that the responsibilities are clearly allocated for the most part: the first violin on one side and on the other the gypsy band, from which different soloists regularly step into the limelight. For this variety of voices, which is not genuinely polyphonic but nevertheless very colorful, the saxophone quartet and the piano, which often takes the role of the cymbal or the harp, are perfectly suited."

Program notes by Franziska Franke, translated by Clive Williams

Upcoming Events of the Seventy-Fifth Season of The William Nelson Cromwell and F. Lamot Belin Concerts

John Kilkenny, percussion
Tobias Werner, cello
"Washingtonians on Wednesdays"
Music by Nick Didkovsky, Stephen Gorbos,
Osvaldo Golijov, and Marc Mellits
April 12, 12:10
East Building Auditorium

Eya
Florence: The Cultural Crucible
Presented in honor of *Della Robbia:*
Sculpting with Color in Renaissance Florence
April 15, 12:00 and 2:00
West Building, West Garden Court

The Sarajevo Haggadah: Music of the Book
Merima Ključo's multimedia work for
accordion, piano, and video
April 15, 3:00
East Building Auditorium

Musical Dialogues: An Exploration of Hope
April 16, 3:00
West Building, East Garden Court

Sound Impact
"Washingtonians on Wednesdays"
Music by Polina Nazaykinskaya,
Sergei Prokofiev, and Dmitri Shostakovich
April 19, 12:10
West Building, East Garden Court

East Coast Chamber Orchestra
Music by Caplet, Lutosławski, Suk,
and Theofanidis
April 23, 3:30
West Building, East Garden Court

General Information

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Cover Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *Marcelle Lender Dancing the Bolero in "Chilpéric"* (detail), 1895–1896, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Collection of Mr. and Mrs. John Hay Whitney

Back cover *West Building, Constitution Avenue entrance, viewed from Sixth Street NW*, 1941, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gallery Archives