By the time Francis Poulenc wrote his *Trois pièces* in 1928, impressionism in French music was considered passé. According to musicologist Alfred Frankenstein, what emerged as a counterfoil to impressionism was "clear, sharply defined planes, often clashing polytonally but all the more specific for their clash; everything is crisp, pointed, 'motoric' in rhythm and in texture.... The [Poulenc] *Toccata* is clearly in that [class]." Poulenc was counted as one of *Les Six* (a group of six antiromantic French nationalist composers). Unlike his colleagues, who were looking ahead, Poulenc was a classicist, with Mozart and Scarlatti as his models. Disposed as well toward impressionism, Poulenc often took a more lyrical approach. The *Nocturne No. 4 in C Minor* exemplifies this side of his musical personality.

Alborada del gracioso (Morningsong of the Jester) is the most performed work of the five pieces comprising the suite Miroirs, one of Ravel's major works for solo piano. The Spanish flavor and rhythm inherent in the work stem from his sympathetic link to the Iberian Peninsula, the birthplace of his mother.

Liszt's Sonata in B Minor, published in 1854, was dedicated to Robert Schumann in return for the 1838 dedication to Liszt of Schumann's well-known C Major Fantasy. The Liszt work contained so many daring innovations that many who attended the first performance could not endure it to the end. Its technical hurdles are Herculean and sometimes criticized as self-defeating. In addition, Liszt's musical ideas were touted as being sophisticated to the point of vagueness. At one time belittled as improvisatory and episodic, the B Minor Sonata, with its intricately laced inner workings, is now viewed as a monumental work of prophetic cleverness and intellect. Liszt's cyclical use of material and his way of modulating through lengthy passages that border on the self-indulgent have come to be accepted for their originality. His coda to the sonata is visionary, with its bells tolling in the distance, bringing the work to a mystical close that reflects his lifelong vacillation between flamboyant self-indulgence and spiritual fervor. While the extent to which the work relates to Liszt's personality is debatable, there is no denying that it brought the romantic sonata to a point where it existed on its own as a genre, without need of further definition or justification.

Program notes by Elmer Booze

The use of cameras or recording equipment during the performance is not allowed.

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

The Fifty-eighth Season of

THE WILLIAM NELSON CROMWELL and F. LAMMOT BELIN CONCERTS

National Gallery of Art



2334th Concert

MARK MARKHAM, pianist

Sunday Evening, 30 January 2000 Seven O'clock West Building, West Garden Court

Admission free

PROGRAM

I

Franz Schubert (1797–1828)

Sonata in A Minor, Op. 42 (D. 845) (1825)

Moderato Andante poco mosso Scherzo: Allegro vivace Rondo: Allegro vivace

II

Claude Debussy (1862–1918)

Two Preludes from *Douze préludes, Book I* (1910)

Les collines d'Anacapri Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir

Francis Poulenc (1899–1963)

Toccata from *Trois pièces* (1928)

Nocturne No. 4 from 8 nocturnes (1938)

Maurice Ravel (1875–1937)

Alborada del Gracioso from *Miroirs* (1904–1905)

INTERMISSION

Ш

Franz Liszt (1811–1886)

Sonata in B Minor (1851–1853)

Selections from concerts at the Gallery can be heard on WGMS-FM, 103.5, on the second S unday of each month at 9:00 p.m.

During the months of January, February, and March, recent performances by the National Gallery Orchestra can be heard on WETA-FM, 90.9, on Wednesdays at 9:00 p.m.

Mark Markham was born in Pensacola, Florida. He began studying piano at the age of eight and was already accompanying singers the following year. In 1980, as a student of Robert and Trudie Sherwood, Markham made his debut as soloist with the New Orleans Symphony. In 1988 he won first prize and the contemporary music prize at the Frinna Awerbuch International Piano Competition in New York City. Markham has given recitals throughout the United States, including performances in New York's Weill Recital Hall, the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, DC, the Getty Museum in Los Angeles, and the Baltimore Museum of Art. Critics have described his playing as "dazzling and spellbinding," and "intelligently organized with a disciplined technique and a delicate sensibility." Since 1985 Markham has accompanied the renowned soprano Jessve Norman in recital in many of the world's most prestigious venues. He has also worked extensively with countertenor Derek Lee Ragin, mezzo-soprano Theodora Hanslowe, with whom he performed at the National Gallery in 1990, and bass-baritone Andreas Lebeda, who will be heard as soloist with the National Gallery Orchestra in the next concert of this series (6 February, 2000).

As was the case with almost all of his works for piano, Schubert himself was the pianist who played his Sonata in A Minor, Op. 42 for the first time. The performance took place in Styria, Upper Austria, in 1825. The first movement (*Moderato*), with its reverberating nostalgic motif, fans out into disjointed harmonies. Strange as the harmonies may be, most pianists agree with the late eminent Schubert interpreter Walter Klien that "the writing is not technically difficult...and the entire movement retains its delicate, sad air." The second movement (Andante poco mosso), with its unadorned theme written in the key of C Major, has two sets of variations, one in C Minor and the other in A-flat major. The first has a projected dramatic pulse, while the pulse of the second is more dreamlike. The movement closes with a return to the beguiling opening C Major theme, accompanied by chordal figures in triplets. The Scherzo, marked Allegro vicace, is apparently influenced by scherzos of Beethoven, but differs from them, according to Eugene Bruck, who says, "Whereas Beethoven might have had a hand in the energetic art of the movement, only Schubert could have written so touching, so wonderfully innocent a trio section." The finale (Rondo: Allegro vicace), in sonata-rondo form, has variations in its length of phrases, with an economy of musical substance unique to Schubert's genius.

Debussy wrote twenty-four preludes for solo piano in two books. *Prélude No.* 5 from Book I, *Les collines d'Anacapri* (*The Hills of Anacapri*) depicts the effulgence of the landscape of that beautiful island. *Prélude No.* 4 from the same book, *Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir (Sounds and Perfumes Swirl in the Exening Air)* was inspired by a line from the poem *Harmonies du soir* by the French poet and essayist Charles Baudelaire (1821–1867).