

Next Week at the National Gallery of Art

Carmina

Instrumental music from the Golden Age of The Netherlands

October 21, 2009
Wednesday, 12:10 pm
West Building Lecture Hall
Presented in honor of
Judith Leyster, 1609–1660



The use of cameras or recording equipment during the performance is not allowed. Please be sure that cell phones, pagers, and other electronic devices are turned off.

Please note that late entry or reentry of the West Building after 6:30 pm is not permitted.

Music Department
National Gallery of Art
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Washington, DC

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COVER: Félicien Rops, *Gaspard de la Nuit* (detail), 1868,
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Rosenwald Collection



The Sixty-eighth Season of
The William Nelson Cromwell
and F. Lamot Belin

Concerts

National Gallery of Art
2,740th Concert

National Gallery of Art Piano Trio

Luke Wedge, *violinist*
Benjamin R. Wensel, *cellist*
Danielle DeSwert Hahn, *pianist*

Presented in honor of
The Darker Side of Light:
Arts of Privacy 1850–1900,
and in collaboration with the
Embassy of Belgium

October 18, 2009
Sunday Evening, 6:30 pm
West Building, West Garden Court

Admission free

Program

César Franck (1822–1890)

Trio de salon, op. 1, no. 2 (1840)

Allegro moderato

Andantino

Minuetto

Final: Allegro molto

Henri Vieuxtemps (1820–1881)

Trio concertant sur l'Africaine (1866)

INTERMISSION

Joseph Jongen (1873–1953)

Trio pour piano, violon, et violoncelle, op. 10 (1896–1897)

Allegro appassionato

Andante molto sostenuto

Allegro deciso

The Musicians

LUKE WEDGE

Luke Wedge received a master of music degree in violin performance from Northwestern University and a bachelor of music degree in English literature from the University of Kansas. His principal instructors included David Perry, Gerardo Ribeiro, and Ben Sayevich. Wedge has made solo and recital appearances in Chicago, Illinois; Lawrence, Kansas; and Washington, DC. He is an experienced orchestral musician and has been engaged by the National Gallery of Art Orchestra, the National Symphony, and the Ravinia Festival, among others. Since 2003 he has been a member of the Covington String Quartet, which was the quartet-in-residence at Gettysburg College in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania from 2003–2006. Wedge is also a member of the United Air Force Strings.

BENJAMIN R. WENSEL

Benjamin R. Wensel holds degrees from the Cleveland Institute of Music and the Eastman School of Music. He has performed in seminars and master classes for members of the Cleveland, Guarneri, Juilliard, Miami, and Ying quartets; studied chamber music with Peter Salaff and members of the Audubon and Cavani Quartets; and participated in solo master classes with Clemens Michael Hagen, Steven Isserlis, and Michel Strauss.

Wensel has performed with the National Symphony Orchestra, the ProMusica Chamber Orchestra, the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Syracuse Symphony as well as with many fine local ensembles. A founding member of the Tarab Cello Ensemble, Wensel performed in the premieres of more than twenty new works written by established and emerging American composers, and participated in the ensemble's residencies at Princeton University, Stetson University, and the University of South Florida. He taught chamber music and maintained a studio at the Hochstein School of Music in Rochester, New York, where he was the cellist of the Hochstein String Quartet. Currently a member of the faculty at the Washington Conservatory, Wensel maintains a private studio in Arlington, Virginia, and plays with the

newly formed Messaien Quartet as well as the National Gallery of Art Piano Trio. He can be heard on recordings produced by the Bridge, Harmonia Mundi, and Summit record labels.

DANIELLE DESWERT HAHN

Brussels-born pianist Danielle DeSwert Hahn is a freelance collaborative pianist and coach and the music program specialist at the National Gallery of Art. She has worked as a pianist and coach with the Ash Lawn Highland Opera Festival, Chautauqua Opera, Indianapolis Opera, Kentucky Opera, the New Orleans Opera Association, Portland (Oregon) Opera, the San Francisco Opera Center, Sarasota Opera, and the Washington National Opera. From 2004–2006 she was the principal repetiteur with the Baltimore Opera Company and Washington Concert Opera.

She performs regularly in chamber music and voice recitals, including performances at the Arts Club of Washington, the Jewish Community Center of Greater Washington, the Kennedy Center, the Mexican Institute of Culture, the National Gallery, the Russian Embassy, and the White House. She is principal pianist with the Inscape Chamber Music Project. She holds a master of music degree from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, where she studied with Martin Katz, and a bachelor of music degree from the University of California, Santa Barbara. She also studied with Warren Jones and Anne Epperson at the Music Academy of the West and was an apprentice coach with the Washington Opera, working with Plácido Domingo.

Program Notes

The art of the late nineteenth century largely connotes impressionism, paintings of café-concerts and the open air that invoke the entertainments of city life and the pleasures of the landscape. A less familiar side to the story exists, one in a realm of sober contemplation and *recherché*. These sometimes enigmatic and often melancholy subjects explore an altogether different dimension of aesthetic experience and appreciation. In this discreet world of individual collecting, prints, drawings, and small sculpture were kept aside in portfolios or stored away in cabinets for more purposeful, private study, much like taking a book from the shelf for quiet enjoyment.

The Darker Side of Light: Arts of Privacy 1850–1900, the exhibition currently on view in the National Gallery's prints and drawings galleries, includes more than a hundred works in the Gallery's extensive collections that reflect this late-Romantic sensibility. Such an encounter with art was a private affair that often encouraged the investigation of highly suggestive, sometimes disturbing subject matter. These complex states of mind and symptoms of deep social tension surfaced in opium dreams, obsessions over a lover, despairing contemplations of suicide, and abject meditations on violence and death. By no means restricted to the visual arts, this somber aesthetic found voice in poetry, prose, theater, and, not least, music, and attracted the talents of academically trained artists, realists, impressionists, and especially symbolists. Much like their musical counterparts, symbolist artists in particular sought to dissolve any simple equation between the experience of art and the empirical world.

Composers also responded to the various moods of symbolism, especially in their chamber music. The most famous music of Gabriel Fauré (1845–1924), César Franck (1822–1890), and Henri Duparc (1848–1933), for example, is characterized by balance, pleasant sonorities, and flowing lines, but these composers also explored the darker side of musical expression. One thinks of the contemplative *Andante* from Fauré's *String Quartet*, op. 121, the enigmatic *Scherzo* from Franck's *String Quartet in D Major*, or such Duparc songs as *Chanson triste* (Sad Song), *La Vie antérieure* (The Former Life) and *Soupir* (Sigh).

Among the artists represented in the exhibition are a number of Belgians, including James Ensor (1860–1949), Fernand Khnopff (1858–1921), and Félicien Rops (1833–1890), whose work is featured on the cover of the concert program. In this last of four concerts dedicated to *The Darker Side of Light: Arts of Privacy 1850–1900*, all of the music is by Belgian composers.

César Franck was born in Liège to a father whose ambition was to have two sons who were instrumental virtuosi. Though the young Franck was a gifted pianist, his interests lay elsewhere. After graduating from the Paris Conservatoire he decided to give up any career aspirations as a concert pianist and made his living teaching and as a church organist. It was after he gained the position of organist at the Saint Clothilde Basilica in 1858 that he began to attract attention as a composer. Franck left a great legacy, not only in his body of work, but in the development of a style that was passed down through his many influential students, including Ernest Chausson, Henri Duparc, and Vincent d'Indy. His output was not enormous, but his instrumental chamber works are masterpieces of form and style.

Franck's first published opus consists of three piano trios. Not well known (and difficult to find in print), these youthful pieces show signs of what would later become the composer's signature style, including the use of cyclic themes. The *Trio de salon*, op. 1, no. 2, is a charming four-movement work that is easy on the ears. Franck wrote the *Trio*, op. 1, no. 1, of his own volition, but nos. 2 and 3 came about only after some pressure from his father, who wanted a significant opus that he could dedicate to Leopold I of Belgium (reigned 1831–1865), and thus introduce his son at court.

Best known for his contributions to the Belgian school of violin technique, Henri Vieuxtemps also composed seven violin concertos, two cello concertos, a number of pieces for violin and piano, and some chamber music. As a performing member of quartets and an organizer of chamber music recitals, he contributed significantly to this genre. Sometimes verging on the theatrical and the saccharine, Vieuxtemps' music nevertheless has an engaging sense of nobility. His *Trio concertant sur l'Africaine* is another work that is almost impossible to find in print, and recordings of it, if they exist, are not included in any standard catalogs. The score used for this performance was

located in a library in Italy by Jonathan Frohnen, a researcher and collector of nineteenth-century violin music. No composition date is given in the score, published by Milan F. Lucca, but it was probably composed in 1866. The previous year, Meyerbeer's opera *L'Africaine* had its Paris premiere. A record of a performance of Vieuxtemps' Trio was found in the November 30, 1866, issue of the *Journal de Toulouse* in which the piece was listed on the program for the following night, with the composer performing. It is possible that this evening's performance at the National Gallery of Art is the first in North America for this previously forgotten gem.

Born in Liège about fifty years after César Franck, Joseph Jongen followed in Franck's footsteps, attending the Liège Conservatoire from a very young age. Jongen began composing at age thirteen and went on to win numerous composition prizes, including the Grand Prix de Rome in 1897. This award gave him the opportunity to study abroad for four years. He chose to begin in Germany, as he was a great devotee of Brahms as well as the new German school, represented by Richard Strauss. Subsequently he went to France, in order to gain maximum exposure to the music of Franck, who was teaching in Paris at the time, as well as Debussy. French mentors proved to have more influence on Jongen than German ones, but he developed his own unique musical language.

Jongen's *Trio in B Minor for Piano, Violin, and Cello* employs the cyclical form pioneered by Franck. The stormy first movement, *Allegro appassionato*, contains two themes. Initially stated separately, the themes merge in the development section as a duet. In place of a recapitulation, there is a unison restatement of the opening theme, a slow winding down, and an explosive ending. The expansive second movement, *Andante molto sostenuto*, pays homage to another Belgian composer, Guillaume Lekeu, who died tragically at age twenty-four. In the second theme we hear a figure, marked *misterioso*, that is to become the main theme for the third movement. Translated into an angry, tempestuous unison in the strings, this motif opens the finale (*Allegro deciso*). A syncopated second theme leads into a quiet central section—the calm before the storm of the frenzied coda.

Program notes by Danielle DeSwert Hahn