

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.

For the convenience of concertgoers, the Garden Café remains open for light refreshments until 6:00 pm on Sundays.

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

www.nga.gov

Concerts are made possible in part through the generosity of donors to the National Gallery of Art through The Circle. Reserved seating is available in recognition of their support. Please contact the development office at (202) 842-6450 or circle@nga.gov for more information.

COVER: East Garden Court in the West Building of the National Gallery of Art © 2014, Photograph by Rob Shelley, National Gallery of Art



The Seventy-second Season of
The William Nelson Cromwell and F. Lamot Belin
Concerts

National Gallery of Art
3,000th Concert

Míceál O'Rourke, pianist

May 18, 2014
Sunday, 6:30 pm
West Building, West Garden Court

Admission free

Historical Note

With tonight's concert, the music program at the National Gallery of Art reaches a major milestone: the 3,000th in the series of free concerts that have been presented, primarily in the Garden Courts of the West Building, over the past seventy-two years. The first director of the National Gallery of Art, David E. Finley, augmented the Gallery's service to the public with music shortly after the United States entered World War II in December 1941. He was inspired by reports he had received of the recitals presented in 1940–1941 by the great English pianist Myra Hess, who entertained the troops and the public with evening recitals at London's National Gallery during the Blitz. By May 1942 Finley was ready to do for Washington what Hess had done for London. He arranged for the Gallery to remain open until 10:00 pm on Sundays and for a performance by the Budapest String Quartet to inaugurate the endeavor on May 31 of that year.

Concerts continued on a weekly basis throughout the summer of 1942, played by an orchestral ensemble made up of members of the National Symphony Orchestra. As the series continued, locally available soloists and ensembles were engaged, some resident in Washington because of their military service. Among the performers from the United States Armed Forces who played at the Gallery during World War II and subsequently went on to international fame were cellists Bernard Greenhouse and Howard Mitchell; organist Virgil Fox, who performed on the piano; pianists György Sándor and Earl Wild; violinist Oscar Shumsky; and violist Emanuel Vardi.

In 1943 Richard Bales was placed in charge of music programs at the Gallery. In the course of his forty-two year tenure, he organized 1,786 performances, some of which contained his own compositions, and many of which were orchestra concerts that he conducted. Under Bales' direction, the National Gallery of Art Orchestra frequently presented first performances of works by American composers, most notably the 1953 premiere of Charles Ives' *First Symphony* (which had waited fifty-one years to receive its first public hearing). The concerts were broadcast live on radio station WGMS from 1950 to 1992, and each broadcast between 1950 and 1985 included an intermission feature

consisting of recorded commentary on the music by Bales and information about current exhibitions at the Gallery.

From 1985 to 2003, concerts at the National Gallery were under the direction of composer, conductor, and pianist George Manos. He added three new formations to the Gallery's roster of resident ensembles: the National Gallery of Art Vocal Ensemble, the National Gallery of Art String Quartet, and the National Gallery of Art Wind Quintet. He also initiated jazz concerts at the Gallery, inviting George Shearing, Dizzy Gillespie, and the Modern Jazz Quartet, among many other jazz luminaries. On March 17, 1991, Manos had the honor of conducting the concert that was the culminating event in a day of celebrations of the Gallery's fiftieth anniversary. That concert, which included Beethoven's *Consecration of the House* overture and Richard Strauss' *Four Last Songs*, was by sheer coincidence the 2,000th in the gallery's numbered series.

Since 2004 the concerts have been directed by Stephen Ackert, who was named head of the music department after seventeen years as the Gallery's music program specialist. He has continued the process of incorporating the work of resident ensembles into the concerts, adding the National Gallery of Art Chamber Players for early music and the National Gallery of Art New Music Ensemble for contemporary music. Concerts in honor of exhibitions and installations at the Gallery have become more numerous during his tenure, now averaging approximately one third of each season's offerings. Ackert also collaborated in the creation and premiere performance at the Gallery of three operas — *Later the Same Evening: An opera inspired by five paintings of Edward Hopper* by John Musto (2008); *Max and Moritz: A Cartoon Opera in Seven Pranks* by Gisle Kverndokk (2010); and *Supersize Girl*, also by Kverndokk (2013). Under Ackert's guidance, the Gallery music department took the lead in a September 2012 city-wide celebration of the 100th birth anniversary of composer and printmaker John Cage. The five-day festival, which began and ended with concerts at the Gallery and included an exhibition of Cage prints from the Gallery's permanent collection, proved to be the most extensive and complete of all observations of Cage's centenary.

The Gallery music department looks forward to growing with the institution as a whole as it moves toward its seventy-fifth anniversary in 2016.

Program

Baldassare Galuppi (1706–1785)

Sonata no. 5 in C Major

Andante

Allegro

Allegro assai

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

Sonata in D Minor, op. 31, no. 2 (“The Tempest”) (1801–1802)

Largo–Allegro

Adagio

Allegretto

John Field (1782–1837)

Nocturne no. 8 in E Minor (1818)

Chanson russe variée (c. 1818)

INTERMISSION

Gabriel Fauré (1845–1924)

Nocturne no. 6 in D-flat Major (1894)

Claude Debussy (1862–1918)

Trois Estampes (1893)

Pagodes

La soirée dans Grenade

Jardins sous la pluie

Frédéric Chopin (1810–1849)

Ballade no. 4 in F Minor (1842)

The Musician

Internationally regarded as the leading interpreter of the music of Dublin-born composer John Field (1782–1837), Irish pianist Mícéál O’Rourke is equally at home with the music of Beethoven, Chopin, Debussy, Fauré, Mussorgsky, and Ravel. A graduate of University College, Dublin, O’Rourke pursued his musical studies in Antwerp and Paris, where he now lives. A student of pianist and Debussy pupil Marcel Ciampi, O’Rourke has appeared in concert at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory, the National Concert Hall in Dublin, Philharmonia Hall in Saint Petersburg, Queen Elizabeth Hall and Royal Festival Hall in London, Salle Pleyel in Paris, and Symphony Hall in Boston, as well as the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. He returns for the third time to the Gallery, having previously performed with the National Gallery of Art String Quartet and in a multi-media presentation of the Debussy *Preludes*, Book I, narrated by Stephen Ackert.

O’Rourke’s most recent performances with orchestra include concertos by Ravel, Mozart, and Rachmaninoff with the Saint Petersburg Philharmonic, Moscow Symphony, and National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland, respectively. He has also played with the Boston Pops; the Istanbul, Moscow, and Saint Petersburg symphony orchestras; and the Hong Kong, Moscow, Netherlands Radio, and Slovak chamber orchestras.

O’Rourke’s command of a wide variety of styles is reflected in his extensive discography on the Chandos label. His eight best-selling CDs featuring the complete works of John Field have won many awards, including the Classic CD Award (Great Britain), Disques de l’Année of *Le Monde de la Musique* (France), and Penguin Awards (Great Britain). Recipient of the 1994 Chopin Medal from the Warsaw Frédéric Chopin Society, O’Rourke has given master classes at the Beijing and Nanjing Music Academies, Chopin Academy of Music in Bialystok, Hong Kong College of Fine Arts, Royal Irish Academy of Music, and the state music academies in Minsk, Riga, and Vilnius as well as the Juilliard School of Music in New York.

Program Notes

Born on the island of Burano (outside Venice) in 1706, Baldassare Galuppi was a prolific composer of opera and church music. His long period of service to Saint Mark's Cathedral in Venice was interrupted by two lengthy periods abroad, first in England and then in Saint Petersburg, Russia, at the invitation of Catherine the Great. In his time he was held in even higher esteem than his compatriot Antonio Vivaldi (1678–1741). His special talent was his ability to transfer the operatic *bel canto* idiom to the piano (a new instrument at the time).

The first years of the nineteenth century were extremely difficult for Ludwig van Beethoven. His deafness was reaching the point where conversation was becoming nearly impossible, forcing him to face the reality of his isolation and inability to lead a normal life. He lamented his blighted hopes for a cure and a normal future in the famous *Heiligenstadt Testament*, the letter he wrote—but never sent—to his siblings and other family members. Beethoven's *Piano Sonata no. 17 in D Minor*, op. 31, no. 2, is usually referred to as "The Tempest" (or *Der Sturm* in his native German), but it was not given this title by Beethoven or even referred to as such during his lifetime. The name was given later by his friend and first biographer Anton Schindler—a notorious fabricator—who also claimed that the stormy first movement of the sonata was inspired by Beethoven's reading of Shakespeare's play *The Tempest*.

Set in three movements, the "*Tempest*" sonata lives up to its moniker. The first movement opens slowly—*pianissimo* with an arpeggiated chord reminiscent of the introduction to an operatic recitative. The storm breaks without warning, setting up a movement of violent contrasts in tempo and dynamics. The tempo is repeatedly broken by a recurrence of the arpeggios from the slow introduction. The second movement also opens with an arpeggiated chord, but in this instance it is one of Beethoven's most serene utterances, especially the second theme, introduced after a gently rising scale. Yet, despite the lyricism of the themes, there is a periodic ominous rumbling accompaniment in the bass, which Beethoven at times echoes high in the piano's range. The Finale brings back the restless mood in a

dramatic rondo, but without the violent mood swings of the opening. Here the arpeggios serve as the main accompanying figure throughout. The end of the movement simply fades into the distance.

Irish pianist and composer John Field was born in Dublin in 1782, the son of a violinist, but moved with his family to London in 1793, perhaps taking violin lessons from Haydn's friend Johann Peter Salomon (1745–1815). He became an apprentice of the virtuoso pianist and teacher Muzio Clementi (1752–1832), appearing in a series of important London concerts, and later touring widely. In 1802 Field went to Saint Petersburg, Russia, where he became a fashionable teacher and performer, moving to Moscow in 1821. In 1830 illness brought him again to London, but he eventually returned to Moscow, where he died in 1837. Field has been credited with the invention of the nocturne, a form later adopted and developed by Chopin. Although Field wrote seven piano concertos and a series of chamber compositions for piano and strings, his chief claim to fame lies in his eighteen nocturnes.

The manuscript of Field's *Nocturne in E Minor* bears a footnote in French: "Saint Petersburg, Christmas Day, 1818... it's snowing." While snow at Christmas is normal in that part of the world, Field's use of the minor mode perhaps expresses nostalgia for a warmer place. The story behind Field's *Chanson russe variée* is that one of his pupils, Mikhail Glinka (1804–1857) complained that he had been kept awake the night before his lesson by rowdy students bawling out a popular tune. Field took note of the tune, refined the material, and produced this charming set of variations.

Outstanding among Gabriel Fauré's solo piano works, *Nocturne in D-flat Major* is one of the finest in the genre up to that time and remains one of his most popular pieces, a masterpiece of the piano repertoire. Written after a creative gap of ten years, during which the composer lost both parents, it features an opening theme that is initially serene and lovely, but which reveals itself to be a melancholy air accompanied by dark and imaginative harmonies. Considerable tension is created in its exposition, after which two additional themes appear in the livelier middle section, the latter theme dreamy and auguring Debussy. Both themes are imaginatively developed, the former's dissonances heightening the sense of conflict.

In 1903 Claude Debussy published a set of three brief piano pieces that he called *Estampes*. That title translates as “engravings” or “prints,” and the notion of creating a visual impression through sound is central to these quite different movements—each offers a different subject, and Debussy presents each in a quite different musical style. The work also hints at Debussy’s lifelong preoccupation with the visual arts, his close friendships with sculptors and painters, and (as is revealed in letters) his at least partially serious regret over having chosen the life of the composer over that of the artist.

The three *Estampes* reflect several of Debussy’s enduring interests: the musical traditions of Asia and Spain, depictions of water, and portrayals of nocturnal scenes. In a letter to a friend, the composer referred to *Estampes* as an imaginary vacation. Its first movement, *Pagodes* (Pagodas), appears to have had its inspiration in the music of the Javanese gamelan ensembles Debussy heard in Paris during the International Exposition in 1889. Unlike many other French composers who used Asian sounds as mere exotic spice, Debussy was drawn to the non-Western musical scales and the melodic uses of percussion.

Among the Debussy works most admired by the Spanish composer Manuel de Falla (1876–1946), *La soirée dans Grenade* (Evening in Granada) conjures Spanish music authentically without actually quoting folk material. The inspiration for the piece may have come from Debussy’s compatriot Maurice Ravel. Debussy had borrowed the score of the original two-piano version of Ravel’s *Habanera* following its first performance in 1898, and paid subtle tribute five years later by titling *La soirée dans Grenade* as “mouvement de Habanera.”

Jardins sous la pluie (Gardens in the Rain) has proven to be one of Debussy’s most popular piano pieces, and has called forth a wealth of fanciful interpretations—some listeners have actually invented a program for this short piece that has the sun breaking through the clouds at its close. It references two French children’s songs, *Dodo, l’enfant do* (Sleep, Child, Sleep) and *Nous n’irons plus au bois* (We’ll Go No More to the Woods). The latter must have occupied a special place in Debussy’s heart, as it turns up in at least two other compositions: the last of the three *Images* for piano and in the last of the three orchestral *Images*.

One of the favorite idioms of nineteenth-century romantic poetry, the ballade was an ideal medium for storytelling. Chopin was the first to use the term as a title for a musical composition, and his ballades inspired Liszt and Brahms among others to explore this form and compose ballades of their own. Each ballade has its own unique form and tells its own story, and scholars and critics have often sought Chopin’s extra-musical inspiration for his works in this genre. Chopin, however, thought that the music itself should tell the story, and discouraged any speculation about a possible political, dramatic, or literary basis for his ballades.

Coming from Chopin’s mature period—1835 to 1842 (when he was between twenty-five and thirty-two years old!)—his ballades were composed in various parts of France and Spain. Many regard the *Ballade in F Minor* as Chopin’s finest creation. Dedicated to Madame la Baronne Charlotte de Rothschild (1825–1899), it is the longest and most technically challenging of the four Chopin *Ballades*. A brief introduction leads to the waltz-like opening theme, marked *Andante con moto*, which gradually evolves into music of extraordinary animation. The texture becomes increasingly rich and polyphonically intricate as it progresses. There are incredible harmonic modulations and effects, and the structure and its thematic developments are complex and fascinating. A lilting second subject is swept into the ballade, and the two themes alternate in an atmosphere of increasing tension, leading to a grand climax and a brilliant close.

Program notes by Mícheál O’Rourke

Upcoming Concerts at the National Gallery of Art

Robin Verheyen, saxophonist and Marc Copland, pianist

Jazz concert

May 25, 2014

Sunday, 4:00 pm

West Building, West Garden Court



National Gallery of Art Chamber Players

Music by composers from the Czech Republic,
Malta, Lithuania, and Slovenia

May 28, 2014

Wednesday, 12:10 pm

West Building, West Garden Court



Emmanuel Ceysson, harpist

Music by 19th-century French composers

Presented in honor of *Degas/Cassatt*
and in partnership with the
Cultural Service of the Embassy of France,
through a grant from SAFRAN

June 1, 2014

Sunday, 6:30 pm

West Building, West Garden Court

United States Army Chorus and St. Alban's School Chorale

Music by Virgil Thomson and other composers

June 5, 2014

Wednesday, 12:10 pm

West Building, West Garden Court



National Gallery of Art Vocal Ensemble

Music by French composers

Presented in honor of *Degas/Cassatt*
and in partnership with the
Cultural Service of the Embassy of France,
through a grant from SAFRAN

June 8, 2014

Sunday, 6:30 pm

West Building, West Garden Court



Carmina

Music for vocal chamber ensemble

June 12, 2014

Wednesday, 12:10 pm

West Building, West Garden Court