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National Gallery of Art Presents 3,000th Concert of Its Free Weekly Series, Begun in 1942



Pianist **Mícheál O'Rourke** performs music by Field and other composers on Sunday, May 18 at the National Gallery of Art.

Washington, DC—On Sunday, May 18, at 6:30 p.m., the National Gallery of Art presents the 3,000th concert in its weekly series of free Sunday concerts. Launched in 1942, the Gallery's program is one of the longest-running concert series of its kind in the United States, and one of the few that is still open to the public, free of charge.

The May 18 program—played by Irish pianist Mícheál O'Rourke—includes compositions by Beethoven, Chopin, and John Field. The event also represents Ireland in a series of concerts associated with the Month of European Culture, presented in collaboration with the Delegation of the European Union to the United States.

In the early years of the series, which coincided with World War II, the Gallery drew heavily on talented performers from the United States Armed Forces who were stationed in or near Washington. Among those featured musicians who went on to international fame were pianists György Sándor and Earl Wild, violinist Oscar Shumsky, violist Emanuel Vardi, cellists Bernard Greenhouse and Howard Mitchell, and organist Virgil Fox, who performed at the Gallery on piano.

In 1943, Richard Bales took charge of music programs at the Gallery. During his 42-year tenure, he organized more than 1,700 performances, some of which included his own compositions. Bales also arranged for first performances of works by many other American composers—most notably the 1953 premiere of Charles Ives' *First Symphony* (which was 51 years old by the time of its first public hearing). Gallery concerts were broadcast live on the radio station WGMS from 1950 to 1992, and each broadcast included an intermission feature with recorded commentary on the music and information about current exhibitions at the Gallery.

From 1985 to 2003, the concerts were under the direction of composer, conductor, and pianist George Manos. On March 17, 1991, Manos had the honor of conducting the 2,000th concert, which was the culminating event in a day of celebration of the Gallery's 50th anniversary.

Since 2004, the concerts have been directed by Stephen Ackert, who was named head of the music department after 17 years as the Gallery's music program specialist. In 2004, Ackert initiated the first festival of art education and music at the Gallery in connection with the exhibition *Gerard ter Borch*. He 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*

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Edward Hopper by John Musto; *Max and Moritz: A Cartoon Opera in Seven Pranks* by Gisle Kverndokk; and *Supersize Girl*, also by Kverndokk. In 2006, Ackert expanded the Gallery's offerings to include weekday concerts, allowing patrons to enjoy special exhibitions, the permanent collection, and world-class music in a single visit.

Recently, the Gallery's music department spearheaded an anniversary celebration of the 100th birth anniversary of composer and printmaker John Cage, presenting the first and last concerts of the September 2012 citywide celebration. The five-day festival was the most extensive and complete observance of Cage's centenary in the nation.

Concert Information

Concerts at the National Gallery of Art are free of charge and open to the public on a first-come, first-seated basis. Seating begins 30 minutes prior to the concert. The entrance to the West Building is located at Sixth Street and Constitution Avenue NW, and the East Building entrance is Fourth Street and Constitution Avenue NW. Sunday concerts begin at 6:30 p.m. in the West Building's West Garden Court, unless otherwise indicated. For weekday midday performances, the seating begins at 12:00 p.m. and the concert starts at 12:10 p.m. Monthly listings of concert programs may be obtained by calling (202) 842-6941 or by visiting the Gallery's website at www.nga.gov/music.

General Information

The National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden are at all times free to the public. They are located on the National Mall between 3rd and 9th Streets at Constitution Avenue NW, and are open Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Gallery is closed on December 25 and January 1. With the exception of the atrium and library, the galleries in the East Building will remain closed for approximately three years for Master Facilities Plan and renovations. For specific updates on gallery closings, visit <http://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/Collection/modern-art-during-renovation.html>.

For information call (202) 737-4215 or the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (202) 842-6176, or visit the Gallery's Web site at www.nga.gov. Follow the Gallery on Facebook at www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt and on Twitter at www.twitter.com/ngadc.

Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon entering. Checkrooms are free of charge and located at each entrance. Luggage and other oversized bags must be presented at the 4th Street entrances to the East or West Building to permit x-ray screening and must be deposited in the checkrooms at those entrances. For the safety of visitors and the works of art, nothing may be carried into the Gallery on a visitor's back. Any bag or other items that cannot be carried reasonably and safely in some other manner must be left in the checkrooms. Items larger than 17 by 26 inches cannot be accepted by the Gallery or its checkrooms.

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