

typical sonata. The first movement (*Allegramente*) is in sonata-allegro form. The second movement (*Tempo di passacaglia*) is a typical Koppel movement in which the cello sings beautifully and expressively, while the third (*Allegro giocoso*) is a virtuosic romp for both cello and piano. Koppel was one of the most important Danish composers of his generation. He was an outstanding pianist and a member of the faculty at the Royal Danish Conservatory of Music for many years. Influenced in his youth by Carl Nielsen (1865–1931), Bartók, Stravinsky, and others of the 1930s avant-garde, he later developed a very personal tonal language and style. Koppel proved to be an ardent disciple of his contemporary models, composing seven symphonies, four piano concertos, chamber music for many different ensembles, operas, vocal works, and twenty-nine film scores, to mention only a part of his oeuvre.

Chopin's *Sonata in G Minor, Op. 65*, was begun in the autumn of 1845 but not completed until the following year. It carries a dedication to the noted French cellist Auguste-Joseph Franchomme (1808–1884). At its first public performance on 16 February 1848 at the Salle Pleyel in Paris, Chopin and Franchomme were the performers, playing only the second, third, and fourth movements. The first movement was omitted at that time because of a disagreement among Chopin's closest friends as to its compositional integrity. Ironically, Chopin did not live to revise the sonata or perform it in its entirety. Shortly after the Paris performance he became too ill to perform in public and died in October 1849.

The sonata, one of Chopin's last works, gives no evidence of the delicate state of his health while he was writing it. It is certainly his grandest and most important work for cello and piano, full of virtuosic display for both instruments in the faster movements. About the slow movement (*Largo*), the late Harold C. Schonberg wrote: "It is as songful as anything he composed. The chromatic last movement is [the] concentrated essence of Chopin."

Programs notes by Elmer Booze

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

The Sixty-second Season of

THE WILLIAM NELSON CROMWELL and
F. LAMMOT BELIN CONCERTS

National Gallery of Art



2473d Concert

ERLING BLÖNDAL BENGTTSSON, *cellist*

NINA KAVTARADZE, *pianist*

Presented in honor of the Exhibition
Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg, 1783–1853

Sunday Evening, 23 November 2003
Seven O'clock
West Building, West Garden Court

Admission free

Program

Johannes Brahms
(1833–1897)

Sonata No. 2 in F Major
Op. 99 (1886)

Allegro vivace
Adagio affettuoso
Allegro appassionato
Allegro molto

Claude Debussy
(1862–1918)

Sonata for Cello and Piano
(1915)

Prologue: Lent; sostenuto e molto risoluto
Sérénade: Modérément animé
Finale: Animé

Herman D. Koppel
(1908–1998)

Ternio
Op. 53b (1951)

Allegramente
Tempo di passacaglia
Allegro giocoso

Intermission

Frédéric Chopin
(1810–1849)

Sonata in G Minor for Cello and Piano
Op. 65 (1845–1846)

Allegro moderato
Scherzo: Allegro con brio
Largo
Finale: Allegro

The Musicians

Now enjoying the sixth decade of his career as a world-class cellist, **Erling Blöndal Bengtsson** has achieved the status of “favorite son” among Danish musicians. He has appeared with most of the world’s leading orchestras, including the Royal Philharmonic, Saint Petersburg, English Chamber, Mozarteum, Detroit Symphony, and Royal Danish Orchestra. A champion of works by Scandinavian composers as well as contemporaries from other parts of the world, he has performed the Scandinavian premieres of cello concertos by Britten, Barber, Khatchaturian, Delius, Lutoslawsky, and William Walton. A consistent recording artist with more than fifty albums to his credit, Bengtsson has received recorded music awards from the American magazine *Fanfare*, the Danish recording company Danacord, and the survey known as the Guinness Classical 1000. He received the Manchester International Cello Festival’s Award of Distinction and England’s Hyam Morrison Gold Medal for cello. A member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Music, Bengtsson has been awarded the Knight, First Class, of the Order of Dannebrog in Denmark and Grand Knighthood of the Order of the Falcon in Iceland, his mother’s birthplace. A larger-than-life bronze sculpture of Bengtsson by Olöf Palsdottir stands in front of Reykjavik’s University Concert Hall, a solid testimonial to the exalted esteem in which this legendary cellist is held by all of Scandinavia.

Bengtsson was accepted at age sixteen at the famed Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, where he studied under the distinguished cellist Gregor Piatigorsky (1903–1976). A year later he became Piatigorsky’s instructing assistant and the following year, at age eighteen, was appointed to the faculty of that prestigious institution. Since 1990 he has been a professor of cello at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. Erling Blöndal Bengtsson appears at the National Gallery by arrangement with Maxim Gershunoff Attractions, Inc., of Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

Born in Moscow, pianist **Nina Kavtaradze** began her musical studies there at the age of six at the Central Music School of the Moscow Conservatory. By the age of eight, she had already performed in the

Colonnade at the House of the Union, one of Moscow's prestigious venues. At nineteen, she entered the Moscow Conservatory, joining the class of the eminent pianist Lev Oborin, who later wrote of her: "She is a musician who possesses talent of the very highest order, with considerable artistic depth and brilliant individuality." Kavtaradze has given concerts throughout Russia and the other countries of the former Soviet Union, the United States, and many European countries. Included in her vast repertoire of familiar and lesser known piano compositions are the complete piano works of Richard Wagner, which she recently recorded on the Kontrapunkt label. She and Erling Blöndal Bengtsson formed their duo in 1986 and have toured extensively in this capacity.

Program Notes

While Hans Christian Andersen (1805-1875) and Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) are the most famous names in Danish culture in the early nineteenth century, the period is also known as the "Golden Age" of Danish painting. The Danish artists and composers who flourished during that period are not widely known outside that country, but their works are loved and respected by those who are familiar with them. Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg (1783-1853), whose paintings are the focus of an exhibition that opens today at the National Gallery, is considered the father of the "Golden Age" of Danish painting. He was not only a master portrait and landscape artist but also a professor at the Copenhagen Academy, and as such a primary influence in Denmark at a time of intense artistic activity. One of his most noted portraits is that of the Danish sculptor and musician Bertel Thorvaldsen (1770-1844), whose circle of admirers included Felix Mendelssohn, Gaetano Donizetti, and Gioacchino Rossini. No notable compositions by Thorvaldsen survive, but three of his contemporaries, Christoph Ernst Friedrich Weyse (1774-1842), Friedrich Kuhlau (1786-1832), and Johann Peter Emilius Hartmann (1805-1900), wrote operas on texts by Hans Christian Andersen and contributed worthy cantatas, concertos, chamber music, and piano sonatas to the repertoire of works in classical style. The exhibition *Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg, 1783-1853*, is

organized by the National Gallery of Art in collaboration with the Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen, and the Royal Danish Embassy, Washington. It remains on view until 29 February 2004.

Four of Brahms' most intricate and demanding chamber works, the *Sonata No. 2 in F Major for Cello and Piano, Op. 99*, the *Violin Sonata in A Major, Op. 100*, the *Piano Trio in C Minor, Op. 101*, and the *Violin Sonata No. 3 in D Minor, Op. 108*, were begun and nearly completed during the summer of 1886, while Brahms was ostensibly on vacation in Thun, a city southeast of Bern, Switzerland. The *Cello Sonata, Op. 99*, is an example of the compact style honed by Brahms in his mature period. The sonata is tightly drawn, with an explosive disposition. In addition, Brahms gives more attention to the idea of equal partnership between the two instruments than he did in his first cello sonata, thus placing an assignment of great difficulty on the pianist in the fugal final movement. According to writer and critic James Lyons, "The mature Brahms liked his instruments to do battle....However, he knew how to make them sing together as well."

In 1914 Debussy, who was in failing health, planned a series of six small sonatas for various instruments. Only three were completed before his death in 1918, one of which is his *Sonata for Cello and Piano*, his only published work in this genre. The *Prologue* takes its inspiration from medieval music. A melismatic *vox principalis* (a voice that carries the melody in the flowing style of Gregorian chant) is assigned to the cello, while the piano imitates an accompanying *vox organalis* (a medieval innovation that features two voices singing in parallel fifths). The *Sérénade* can be heard as a forlorn love song to the moon on the part of Pierrot, a comic character from ancient French pantomime, as he accompanies himself on a mandolin. (Debussy's original subtitle for the sonata was *Pierrot Angry with the Moon*.) The *Finale*, following without a break, reiterates material from the *Sérénade* and the work's opening movement. Gregor Piatigorsky, who premiered the sonata in 1919 and played it throughout his long career, pronounced the work "exciting, original, and...challenging....I still marvel at its subtle descriptiveness, compactness of form, and translucent beauty."

Composed in 1951, Herman Koppel's *Ternio* was written for Erling Blöndal Bengtsson. The term *Ternio* refers to a work in three movements, which, in this case, resembles a concerto more than the