

74TH SEASON OF CONCERTS

FEBRUARY 14, 2016 • NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART





Photo by Rich Winslow

PROGRAM

3:30 • West Building, West Garden Court

The Cann Duo

Celebrating Love and Commemorating History

Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873–1943)

Suite for Two Pianos, op. 17

Waltz

Romance

Margaret A. Bonds (1913–1972)

Troubled Water (Wade in the Water)

Jeffrey Mumford (b. 1955)

Four Dances for Boris

Maestoso e sonoro — Impulsivo

Variation: *Urgente*

Variation: *Pensieroso ma grazioso*

Variation: *Insistente*

Michael Leibowitz (b. 1981)

Let My People Go

Intermission

Dolores White

Rock-a-My-Soul

Arthur Benjamin (1893–1960)

Jamaican Rumba

Leonard Bernstein (1918–1990)

Selections from *Symphonic Dances from West Side Story*

Vincent Millie Youmans (1898–1946)

Tea for Two

Arr. J. Louis Merkur

Richard Rodgers (1902–1979)

Falling in Love with Love

Arr. Arthur Whittemore and Jack Lowe

Witold Lutosławski (1919–1994)

Variations on a Theme of Paganini

The Musicians

Sisters Kimberly and Michelle Cann are young artists with a deep musical commitment to performing a wide range of multicultural repertoire throughout the United States and to bringing the arts to their local communities.

Although Kimberly is six years older than Michelle, they have been studying and performing together ever since Michelle began lessons. Both made their orchestral debuts around age thirteen, Kimberly performing Beethoven's *Emperor Concerto*, and Michelle playing Schumann's *Concerto in A Minor*. Kimberly received her master's degree from the Eastman School of Music, studying with Barry Snyder. In 2006, she accepted the positions of Visiting Professor of Music and Artist-in-Residence at Northern Caribbean University in Jamaica. Her students excelled and received national awards for their work. Michelle received her masters of music from the Cleveland Institute, studying with Paul Schenly and Daniel Shapiro, and went on to study at the Curtis Institute with Robert McDonald, receiving an Artists Diploma in 2013.

Kimberly is married to fellow Eastman musician, double bassist Aaron Brown, and the two live in Asheville, North Carolina, with their daughter, Isabella. Kimberly is the founding director of Piano Lab Studios and Keys for Kidz, a program that provides group piano lessons to underserved children and partners with local universities to mentor young teachers. Kimberly also performs as both a soloist and a chamber musician.

Michelle resides in Philadelphia, where she teaches and performs. She also has given solo and chamber recitals throughout the United States, China, and South Korea. In her hometown community, she is a leader in creating opportunities for music education. She served as the choir director for two children's choruses in the El Sistema-inspired program, Play On Philly, and is the founder of the new program, Keys to Connect, which strengthens the bond between parent and child through the shared study of piano.

Kimberly and Michelle began performing professionally as the Cann Duo in 2010, and since then have toured extensively throughout the United States. Their electrifying performances are fused with the unmistakable sound of their lifelong hereditary connection.

Program Notes

In Rachmaninoff's *Suite for Two Pianos*, op. 17, the second movement is a sparkling waltz that integrates the parts for the two pianos so that they can hardly be distinguished. During the middle of the waltz, we get a ripely romantic melody, characteristic of the composer. The beautifully crafted third movement, *Romance*, overflows with lyricism and fantasy. Most of the movement is introspective, but the impassioned central climax revisits the expressive world of the waltz's middle section.

Pianist and composer Margaret Bonds was born in Chicago before the First World War, and by the time she was twenty, she was the first African American to solo with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. At the time, the orchestra did not yet have any full-time female members, and it wasn't until eight years after Bonds's performance, in 1941, that the orchestra hired a woman player. Bonds went on to become a successful composer, known for infusing jazz and Negro-folk elements in her neo-romantic compositions. She wrote everything from orchestral, choral, and chamber music, to spirituals and many piano pieces, virtually all of which she committed to memory, never writing them down. Bonds's *Troubled Water* is based on the spiritual "Wade in the Water."

The work *Four Dances for Boris* was written for pianist Lura Johnson to perform as part of *Enter Race*, a dance piece commissioned and choreographed by Boris Willis. One of the most important elements of these dances, particularly the third, marked *Pensieroso ma grazioso*, was to provide a vehicle for Johnson to express her considerable lyrical and rhythmic gifts. Formally, the work is a set of variations that pay homage to the kind of transparent music characteristic of a many mid-twentieth-century, neo-classic American works.

Michael Leibowitz says that *Let My People Go* is a theme and variations based on three African American spirituals: "Down By the Riverside," "Go Down Moses," and "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands." These spirituals have a deeper history than belonging to the American folk-song tradition. They originated as protest songs, coded-message carriers, and also as music to be sung to elevate an enslaved people and remind them that a better future awaited. In "Go Down Moses" for instance, the lyric "let my people go" applies just as much to the slaves working in the fields in the American South as it does to the slaves toiling in ancient Egypt.

All three spirituals are treated to a plethora of compositional variation — harmony, rhythm, meter, articulation, and genre are all played with and exploited to create a varied and engaging sonic palette. Sometimes the theme comes first, as in the opening "Down By the Riverside," where a syncopated jazzy accompaniment supports the unaltered melody; and sometimes the variation precedes it — atonal polyrhythmic gestures introduce melodic ideas from "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands." Sometimes the melodies are obfuscated by lush, rolling chords, sometimes they devolve into aggressive rhythmic punches, and occasionally they transform themselves into something entirely new. The climax of the piece pits all three spirituals against each other, when they are played simultaneously in a four-part counterpoint with one spiritual in canon and one in rhythmic augmentation, creating a rollicking frenzy of syncopated ferocity.

Rock-a-My-Soul is a Negro spiritual, probably first published in 1867 in *Slave Songs of the United States*, with no known composer. Delores White's rendition came more than one hundred years later. White, a trained pianist with degrees from Oberlin College Conservatory and the Cleveland Institute of Music, was inspired by the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater to compose her version of the spiritual in 1996. White stated, "They always end their [dance] concerts with 'Rock-a-My-Soul.' It is always so spectacular." White's arrangement of the spiritual does not veer far from the literal quotations of the existing melody. The originality of the arrangement exists in her treatments of key centers, rhythm, and texture.

Rumba is rooted in the Cuban-Afro music genre, but *Jamaican Rumba* was written by the Australian Arthur Benjamin, born in 1893. He made his first public appearance as a pianist at the age of six. *Jamaican Rumba* is one of his best-known compositions and is part of a work for two pianos called *Two Jamaican Pieces*.

Bernstein's suite opens with the "Prologue," the famous opening confrontation between the Jets and the Sharks. The haunting strains of "Somewhere," the play's anthem to the dream of a better life, contrast with the lively Latin dance of the "Mambo" and "Cha-cha." The "Cool Fugue" segues into the final, deadly fight between the gangs in "Rumble," and the suite's finale "I Had a Love" is Maria's lament on the death of Tony.

Vincent Millie Youmans was an American Broadway composer and producer. "Tea for Two" was featured in the 1925 musical comedy, *No, No, Nanette*. The song later became a jazz standard and was recorded by numerous jazz artists, including Art Tatum and Thelonious Monk.

Richard Rodgers was an American composer of more than nine hundred songs and forty-three Broadway musicals. "Falling In Love with Love" is a show tune from the Rodgers and Hart musical *The Boys from Syracuse*, which premiered on Broadway in 1938.

Witold Lutosławski began work as a composer shortly before the outbreak of World War II, which disrupted his career path. During the German occupation of Poland, cultural life went underground. Lutosławski and his friend Andrzej Panufnik played piano duets in a Warsaw café, as the Germans had banned public concerts. The duo wrote some two hundred arrangements, among them Paganini's *Caprice No. 24*. Lutosławski follows this scheme closely in his two-piano version, but added a harmonic dimension embracing a chromatically spiced tonality, if not a gently clashing polytonality.

Upcoming Events of the Seventy-Fourth Season of The William Nelson Cromwell and F. Lamot Belin Concerts

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Beethoven Trios

February 28, Sunday, 12:00 and 2:00

West Garden Trio

National Gallery of Art Orchestra

Dingwall Fleary, guest conductor

Triple Concerto

February 28, Sunday, 4:00

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