



The Sixty-fifth Season of
The William Nelson Cromwell and F. Lammot Belin
Concerts

National Gallery of Art
2,602nd Concert

Roger Chase, *violist*
Michiko Otaki, *pianist*

Presented in honor of
The Artist's Vision: Romantic Traditions in Britain

February 4, 2007
Sunday Evening, 6:30 pm
West Building, West Garden Court

Admission free

Program

York Bowen (1884–1961)

Melody for the C String, op. 51, no. 2

Sir Arnold Bax (1883–1953)

Concert Piece (1904)

Benjamin Dale (1885–1943)

Phantasy, op. 4 (1911)

INTERMISSION

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958)

Romance

Sir Arthur Bliss (1891–1975)

Viola Sonata (1933)

Moderato

Andante—Andante poco maestoso

Furiant: Molto allegro

Coda: Andante maestoso

Bowen

Melody for the G String, op. 47

The Musicians

ROGER CHASE

Born in London, violist Roger Chase studied at the Royal College of Music with Bernard Shore, later studied in Canada with Steven Staryk, and worked for a short time with the legendary Lionel Tertis. Chase made his debut in 1979 with the English Chamber Orchestra, and in 1987 he appeared as a soloist at a Promenade concert at the Royal Albert Hall in London. He has been invited to play as principal violist with every major British orchestra and with many others in North America and Europe, including the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. Composers, too, have taken an interest in Chase, writing solo pieces, concertos, and chamber works for him. His recordings for Cala, CRD, EMI, Floating Earth, Hyperion, and Virgin records demonstrate his diverse interests: playing an amplified viola with a folk group, performing as a soloist on a historically authentic instrument, and promoting avant-garde music. A long-standing member of many ensembles, Chase has played with the Esterhazy Baryton Trio, Hausmusik London, the London Chamber Orchestra, the London Sinfonietta, the Nash Ensemble of London, and the Quartet of London.

MICHIKO OTAKI

Pianist Michiko Otaki was born in Japan and studied in the United States, receiving advanced performance degrees from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, the Manhattan School of Music, and the University of Miami. She is currently a professor and director of keyboard studies at Clayton State University in Atlanta. A noted chamber musician, she has performed with such world-class ensembles as the Gideon String Trio, the Kodály Quartet, the Martinů String Quartet, and the Swiss Wind Quintet. Her unique association with the Warsaw Wind Quintet has involved numerous extensive tours of Europe and the United States, which in 1993 included a concert at the National Gallery, and two critically acclaimed CD recordings, one of which received the Polish Grammy for the best chamber music recording of 1996.

The Exhibition

The Artist's Vision: Romantic Traditions in Britain, on view in the West Building's prints and drawings galleries through March 18, 2007, is composed of selections from the Gallery's permanent collection. The exhibition highlights many fine British prints and drawings from the late eighteenth through the early twentieth centuries. Trends in British romantic art of the time included a fascination with the individual and the visionary, a revival of interest in medieval art and subject matter, and a revolt against conventional ideas and styles.

In both music and art, romanticism peaked before the middle of the nineteenth century, but many of its major trends lingered to the end of the century or reappeared in the next. Twentieth-century artists such as F. L. Griggs (1876–1938) and the early Graham Sutherland (1903–1980), both influenced by William Blake and Samuel Palmer, have their counterparts in composers Sir Arnold Bax, York Bowen, and Benjamin Dale. All three were students of Frederick Corder's (1852–1932)—a lesser figure among romantic composers but a highly influential teacher at the Royal Academy of Music in London—and owe a deep debt to romantic masters Johannes Brahms (1833–1897), Edward Elgar (1857–1934), and Richard Wagner (1813–1883).

Program Notes

The legendary English musician Lionel Tertis (1876–1975) is recognized as one of the greatest violists of all time. Due to his efforts, the viola was elevated from its former status as “the Cinderella of the string family” to a respected solo instrument. In the early part of the twentieth century, he lobbied a number of English composers to write for the instrument, but many of the resulting compositions are rarely heard today. Violist Roger Chase and pianist Michiko Otaki have consequently initiated a series of recitals, a “Tertis Project,” to introduce these pieces to contemporary audiences. Because the composers Tertis encouraged had a special relationship to the romantic movement, this concert has been chosen to complement the exhibition *The Artist’s Vision: Romantic Traditions in Britain*.

In his autobiography, *My Viola and I*, Tertis wrote, “It was pure generosity in those days—at the beginning of the [twentieth] century—to write for the solo viola. Publishers would not consider anything of the sort; to them it was a distinctly bad commercial proposition. However, my composer friends continued to write a number of works for me. The style of their music belongs to the period, but it was beautiful, and was a powerful influence in the advancement of the viola. Benjamin Dale and York Bowen were the first to make contributions to the new solo literature, followed soon after by Arnold Bax.” After Bowen’s death, Tertis wrote in an article in the *Royal Academy of Music Magazine*: “[Bowen] and the late Benjamin Dale were the closest friends. They were both crazy about Wagner and went to every Covent Garden performance. I shall always feel indebted to both of them for their generosity in writing compositions for the viola.” Bowen’s and Dale’s unique musical languages shared some common traits, such as extremely colorful and complex chromaticism, highly unusual (but perfectly logical) modulations, and uncommonly long but singable melodic lines.

York Bowen studied piano with the world-renowned pedagogue Tobias Matthay (1858–1945) and composition with Frederick Corder at the Royal Academy. Bowen won no fewer than seven prizes as a pianist and composer while at the academy and was appointed professor there in 1909. He was a

frequent recital partner of Tertis's and considered the viola to be far superior in tone to the violin. Among the many works Bowen wrote for Tertis are a viola concerto and two viola sonatas. Both Bowen's *Melody for the G String*, op. 47, and his *Melody for the C String*, op. 51, no. 2, are dedicated to Tertis, who wrote, "Bowen was always full of exuberance, and this characteristic permeated his works."

Sir Arnold Bax also studied piano with Matthay and composition with Corder at the Royal Academy. Tertis described Bax as very shy and reticent—a person who had no intention of or interest in becoming a concert pianist—although many stories are told of his extraordinary talent. Though not of Irish descent, Bax was fascinated by Ireland and its folklore, and his compositions often reflect this fondness. He first visited Ireland in 1902, lived there for a few years after his first marriage, learned Gaelic, and returned frequently throughout the rest of his life. The *Concert Piece* was written in 1904, shortly after Bax's first visit to Ireland, and shows just how powerful an impression that country had made on him.

Benjamin Dale came from a musical family, and his father, C. J. Dale, was the principal of the North Metropolitan College of Music, the first school Bowen attended. Like Bowen and Bax, Dale studied composition with Corder at the Royal Academy and won many prizes for his works. His *Phantasy*, op. 4, was commissioned by W.W. Cobbett in 1911. The extended one-movement composition opens with a slow introduction that reappears as a coda following the main body of the piece, which has a fast-slow-fast format. Tertis and many others who heard the unusually dramatic and expressive work—full of exquisite melodies and rich harmonic colors—regretted that Dale was not a more prolific composer.

Ralph Vaughan Williams was another admirer of Tertis's artistry and had him in mind when he wrote his *Suite for Viola* and *Flos campi* for solo viola, orchestra, and chorus. The *Romance* for viola and piano was discovered after Vaughan Williams' death and was edited by Tertis's favorite student, Bernard Shore, who played its premiere on January 19, 1962, with pianist Eric Gritton.

Sir Arthur Bliss studied composition and conducting at Pembroke College in Cambridge and at the Royal College of Music. His composition teachers included Gustav Holst (1847–1934), Sir Charles Villiers Stanford (1852–1924), and Ralph Vaughan Williams. Bliss served as director of music at the BBC from 1942 to 1944, was knighted in 1950, and succeeded Bax as Master of the Queen's Musick in 1953. Bliss's *Viola Sonata* was written in 1933 for Tertis, who played the premiere at the composer's home in Hampstead Heath. The sonata consists of four movements and expresses a wide range of temperaments, from elegiac to passionate and nearly violent. The fervent *Furiant* is followed by monologues for the viola and the piano that lead into a repeat of the opening theme of the first movement. The cyclical composition is completed with a return to the same material that concluded the first movement, presented fortissimo this time, rather than pianissimo.

Program notes based on material provided by Michiko Otaki

Next Week at the National Gallery of Art

Till Fellner, *pianist*

Music by J. S. Bach, Beethoven, and Schubert

February 11, 2007

Sunday Evening, 6:30 pm

West Building, West Garden Court

For the convenience of concertgoers
the Garden Café remains open until 6:00 pm.

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.

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