

Mykola Kolessa, who recently celebrated his ninety-sixth birthday, is a father figure among living Ukrainian composers. A conductor and pedagogue as well as a composer, he was honored with the title of People's Artist of the Ukraine, membership in the Academy of Arts of the Ukraine, the Taras Shevchenko State Prize, and an emeritus professorship at the Lysenko Musical Academy in Lyiv. Kolessa studied composition under Vitezslav Novak, a pupil of Dvořák. Kolessa's musical style combines the unique elements of Ukrainian folk music and the compositional techniques of Béla Bartók and the French composers of the first half of the twentieth century. The title for the second prelude, *Hutsulian*, honors the Hutsuls, a Ukrainian mountain people.

Sigismond Thalberg (1812–1871) was Franz Liszt's only rival as a pianist. Their musical "duel" in 1837 in Paris drew considerable attention. Although he lost the competition, Thalberg continued to build his reputation as one of the greatest nineteenth-century piano virtuosos. He toured the United States in 1856, only the second European pianist to do so (Henri Herz, 1803–1888, was the first). Using popular operas as the basis for extended piano solo fantasies (*Moses in Egypt* is one of Rossini's operas), Thalberg brought to the art of piano playing the same kind of emotional intensity that the great singers of his time aroused.

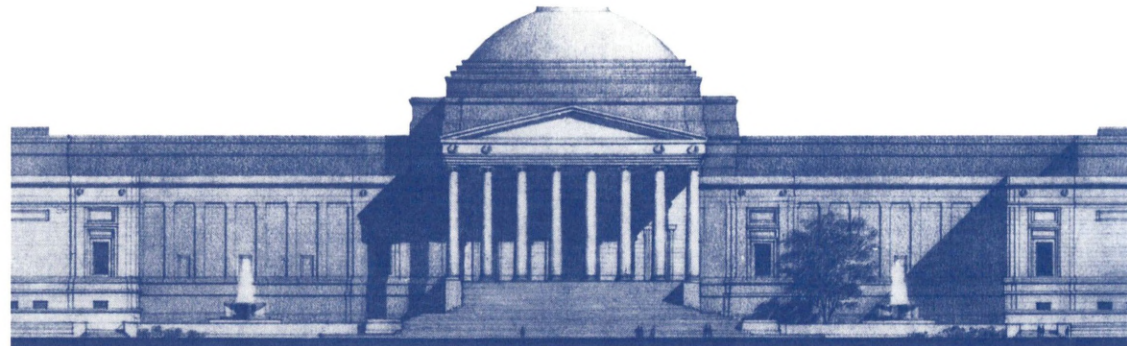
Liszt's *Sonata in B Minor* was dedicated to Robert Schumann, in return for his dedication to Liszt of his well-known *C Major Fantasy*. The sonata contained so many daring innovations that many who attended the first performance could not endure it to the end. The work has been characterized by some critics as technically self-defeating and sophisticated to the point of vagueness, but it is nevertheless acknowledged by pianists as a monumental work of prophetic cleverness and intellect. The visionary coda, with its bells tolling in the distance, brings the sonata to a mystical close that calls to mind Liszt's lifelong vacillation between the secular and spiritual emotional worlds.

Program notes by Elmer Booze

The Fifty-ninth Season of

THE WILLIAM NELSON CROMWELL and
F. LAMMOT BELIN CONCERTS

National Gallery of Art



2377th Concert

MYKOLA SUK, *pianist*

Sunday Evening, 18 March 2001
Seven O'clock
West Building, West Garden Court

Admission free

PROGRAM

Joseph Haydn
(1732–1809)

Sonata in E-Flat Major
Hob. XVI: 49 (1789–1790)

Allegro con brio
Adagio e cantabile
Finale: Tempo di minuet

Mykola Kolessa
(b. 1903)

Two Preludes

Autumnal
Hutsulian

Washington premiere performance

Sigismond Thalberg
(1812–1871)

Fantasy on “Moses in Egypt,” Op. 33

INTERMISSION

Franz Liszt
(1811–1886)

Sonata in B Minor

Lento assai; allegro energico
Andante sostenuto; allegro energico
Stretta quasi presto; allegro moderato

(Movements played without pause)

*The use of cameras or recording equipment during
the performance is not allowed.*

*For the convenience of concertgoers
the Garden Café remains open until 6:30 p.m.*

Two of the numerous enthusiastic reviews that Ukrainian pianist **Mykola Suk** has received were written after his performance of the Liszt *Dante Sonata* at the Franz Liszt Festival in Hamilton, Ontario: “It was some of the finest Liszt playing I have ever heard....He will surely prove to be one of the more formidable talents to have appeared in this country in years” (John C. Tibbett, *American Record Guide*); “Indeed, I have seldom heard Liszt playing in which such an impressive technique was so completely subsumed in the task of musical characterization” (William Littler, *The Toronto Star*). Mykola Suk gained international recognition as the winner of the first prize and the gold medal at the 1971 International Liszt-Bartók Competition in Budapest. Since then he has concertized to great acclaim both as soloist and chamber musician throughout the former USSR, in North America, Australia, Europe, and the Middle East. He has premiered a number of concertos and solo works by Ukrainian composers, including Valentin Silvestrov, Ivan Karabyts, and Myroslav Skoryk. Born in Kiev into a family of musicians, Suk has been awarded the title of Outstanding Artist of the Ukraine. Formerly on the faculty of the Kiev and Moscow Conservatories, he currently teaches at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston and is an artist-in-residence and director of the Institute Series for the Ukrainian Institute of America. Mykola Suk has recorded for the Melodya, Russian Disc, Hungaraton, and Melda labels, and appears at the National Gallery by arrangement with Shupp Artists Management, Inc., of Port Jefferson, New York.

Haydn’s *Sonata in E-flat Major* has been dubbed “*Genzinger*,” as it was purportedly written for Marianne Genzinger, the wife of Peter L. von Genzinger, a prosperous Viennese physician. Her extended correspondence with Haydn gave him great pleasure, and she is believed to have been a motivating force behind his eventual move from the Esterhazy estate to Vienna. The second movement of the sonata (*Adagio cantabile*) is the heart of the work, projecting soulful joy. Haydn wrote to Marianne Genzinger that this movement had “deep significance,” and intimated that he desired to perform it for her when the opportunity presented itself.