

SCARBO

"He looked under the bed, up the chimney, and in the cupboard - nobody there. He could not understand how he had got in or from where he had escaped."

François Benoît Hoffman: *Nocturnal Tales*

Oh, how many times have I seen and heard him, Scarbo, when at midnight the moon is shining in the sky like a piece of silver on an azure banner sprinkled with golden bees!

How many times have I heard the rumble of his laugh in the shadow of my bedroom, and heard the scratching of his nail at the silken curtains around my bed! How often have I seen him climb down from the ceiling, pirouette on one foot, and roll round the room like the spindle fallen from a witch's spinning wheel?

Then did I think he had vanished? The dwarf would grow taller and taller, looming between the moon and myself like the bell-tower of a gothic cathedral, a golden bell swinging at the tip of his pointed bonnet! But soon his body would turn blue, translucent like the wax in a taper, and his face grow pale like the tallow of a candle-end - and suddenly, he would vanish.

Notes edited and adapted from materials provided by Gordon Fergus-Thompson and Bryce Morrison.

The recital to be played next Sunday, June 29 by cellist Jeffrey Solow and pianist Doris Stevenson will be the last concert of the National Gallery's 1996-1997 season. Concerts will resume on October 5, 1997 with a performance by the National Gallery Orchestra, George Manos, conductor.

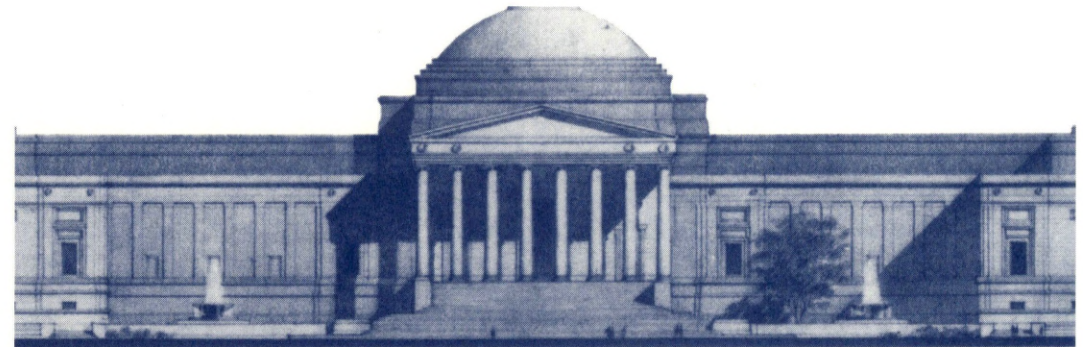
Concerts from the National Gallery are broadcast in their entirety at 7:00 p.m. on Sundays on radio station WGTS, 91.9 FM, four weeks after the live performance. The use of cameras or recording equipment during the performance is not allowed.

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

The Fifty-fifth Season of

THE WILLIAM NELSON CROMWELL and
F. LAMMOT BELIN CONCERTS

National Gallery of Art



2238th Concert

CANCELLED

GORDON FERGUS-THOMPSON, pianist

Sunday Evening, June 22, 1997
at Seven O'clock
West Building, West Garden Court

Admission Free

PROGRAM

Robert Schumann
(1810-1856) Papillons, Opus 2
(1832)

Alexander Scriabin Sonata No. 3 in F-sharp Minor
(1872-1915) Opus 23 (1897-98)

Drammatico
Allegretto
Andante
Presto con fuoco

INTERMISSION

Sergey Rachmaninoff Prelude in E-flat Major
(1873-1943) Opus 23, No. 6 (1903)

Etude-Tableau in E-flat Minor
Opus 39, No. 5 (1917)

Mikhail Glinka The Lark
(1804-1857) (Transcribed for piano by Mily Balakirev)

Maurice Ravel Gaspard de la nuit
(1875-1937) (1908)

Ondine
Le gibet
Scarbo

Following a sensational debut at London's Wigmore Hall in 1976, British pianist GORDON FERGUS-THOMPSON quickly went on to establish himself as a major recitalist and concerto player, specializing in the French impressionist and Russian romantic repertoire. He has appeared as soloist with all of the BBC Orchestras and the Royal and Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestras, as well as with the City of Birmingham Symphony and the Philharmonia, English Chamber, Hallé, and Bournemouth Orchestras. In addition to the major concert halls of Britain and Europe, Mr. Fergus-Thompson's concert career has taken him to such far-flung venues as Australia, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey. This evening marks his first recital appearance in Washington, although he has played elsewhere in the United States. Mr. Fergus-Thompson has recorded the complete piano works of Debussy and has completed several volumes of what will eventually be a seven-CD series of the complete works of Scriabin. Both recordings have received the "Best Instrumental Recording of the Year" award from Great Britain's Music Retailers' Association. He appears at the National Gallery by arrangement with Summit Artists International, Inc. of Croton-on-Hudson, New York.

The title *Papillons (Butterflies)* is apt if punning, for most of the twelve pieces in the suite underwent an elaborate process of metamorphosis, like larvae, before emerging in full butterfly grace and charm. Schumann claimed as his main source of inspiration for *Papillons* the last chapter of the novel *Flegeljahre (Hooligan Years)* by his early literary idol, Jean Paul. The novel concerns a masked ball (in German *Larventanz*,) and *Larven* can mean larvae as well as masks. The rising octave motive of the first piece (prefaced by a six-bar introduction) recurs in the finale and appears as well in Schumann's *Carnaval* and *Davidsbündlertänze*, and is identified with Jean Paul's words: "He felt like a hero, thirsting for fame, who goes forth for his first battle."

Scriabin was among the most ambitious of composers. A romantic alchemist, he saw his music as profoundly regenerative and transmuting. Through its influence, grief would become happiness and hate would become love, culminating in a phoenix-like rebirth of the universe. The *Third Sonata* embraces, in the words of the composer, a series of states of the soul: heroism, reminiscent of Schumann and Chopin, colors the first movement, while the *Allegretto* sets forth contrast and repression; the *Andante* evolves to a magical, haunting conclusion, and the final *Presto* is a reeling, tempestuous drama, in which the original musical idea is twisted into the most unexpected forms.

Rachmaninoff looked to the model of Chopin's *Twenty-four Preludes* as he undertook his piano preludes, and eventually completed the same number. The *Opus 23* preludes were written shortly after Rachmaninoff's marriage in May 1902 to Natalia Satin. He dedicated them to the pianist Alexander Siloti, who had been best man at the wedding. The *Etudes-Tableaux* of Opus 39 were written in the few months before February of 1917, when the composer left Russia for the last time. The harmonic language is modal and the thirds are frequently omitted from what would otherwise be major or minor chords. Chordal clusters give the music an exotic flavor, calling to mind the music of some of Rachmaninoff's Eastern European contemporaries.

The Lark is one of the songs in a cycle Glinka entitled *A Farewell to St. Petersburg*, and it was no doubt a favorite of Balakirev, who thought very highly of Glinka's music. The two men met only two years before Glinka's death and Balakirev was younger by thirty-four years, but they established a relationship of mutual respect and admiration. Balakirev arranged or transcribed a number of Glinka's songs and used his music as a model when coaching the next generation of Russian composers, and Glinka entrusted to Balakirev the musical education of his niece.

Aloysius Bertrand, the author of the book of poems in prose entitled *Gaspard de la nuit*, named as his source for the poems a stranger by the name of Gaspard, whose real identity proved to be Satan. With his typical dry wit, Ravel wrote of his musical response to these poems: "After all too many months, *Gaspard de la nuit* will see the light of day.... It has been the very devil to write, which is only logical, since he is the author of the poems." Ravel considered the relationship between the poetry and the music to be essential to the listening experience, and saw to it that the poems were published in the original score.

ONDINE

"I thought I heard music vaguely in my sleep, and near me the murmur of a tender and sad voice singing."

Charles Brugnot: *The Two Spirits*

"Listen! Listen! It is I, Ondine, sprinkling with drops of water the sounding panes of your window lit by the pale moon's rays, while over there, robed in watered silk, the lady of the manor is gazing from her balcony at the beauty of the starry night and the lovely slumbering lake.

Every little wave is a water-sprite swimming with the current, and every current is a path that leads to my palace, and my palace is built of water at the bottom of the lake, within the triangle of fire, earth, and air.

Listen! Listen! My father beats the bubbling waters with a branch of green alder, while my sisters are caressing with their arms of foam the cool islands of herbs and water-lilies and irises, or laughing at the old and bearded weeping willow fishing in the stream."

Having murmured her song, she begged me to put her ring upon my finger to show that I was wed to an Ondine, and to go with her to her palace to be king of the lakes.

And when I told her that I loved a mortal, she, sulky and discomfited, let fall a few tears, burst out laughing, and vanished into a shower of drops that descended in white streams the length of my blue window-panes.

THE GALLOWS

"What do I see stirring around these gallows?"

Goethe: *Faust*

Ah! What is that sound I hear? Is it the night wind howling, or the hanged man sighing on the gallows?

Is it a cricket singing in the moss and barren ivy, which, in pity, clothe the gallows-wood?

Is it a questing fly sounding its hunting horn in those ears deaf to the funeral bell?

Is it a cockchafer that plucks in its blundering flight a bloody hair from that bald pate?

Or is it some spider weaving a length of muslin as a cravat for that strangled neck?

It is the sound of a bell tolling from the walls of a town far away on the horizon, and a corpse hanging from a gallows reddened by the rays of the setting sun.