



The National Gallery of Art and the
Westminster Chamber Orchestra Present

Crosscurrents in Art and Music

Linda Cherniavsky and James Plondke, conductors

Monday, March 19, 2012

3:30 pm

National Gallery of Art

West Building, West Garden Court

PROGRAM

Music for the First President

adapted by Kate Van Winkle Keller after David and
Ginger Hildebrand; orchestrated by James Plondke

“A Toast to Washington” (Francis Hopkinson, 1778)

“General Washington” (Jonathan M. Sewall, 1776,
to the tune of “The British Grenadiers”)

“The President’s March” (Philip Phile, 1789)

String Quartet in D Minor

Allegro

Charles Hommann

John Brown’s Body

William Steffe

arranged by Arthur Luck

An American Landscape

From the *New World* Symphony

Antonín Dvořák

arranged by James Plondke

“Home! Sweet Home!” for Winslow Homer

arranged by James Plondke

PROGRAM NOTES

Music for the First President

This medley of tunes from the age of George Washington is inspired by the Gallery's portraits of the first president. The music reflects the naive artistry of early America and its youthful, spirited optimism.

String Quartet in D Minor

A historic New Hampshire avalanche, which took nine lives and became etched in the American psyche, inspired both a short story by Nathaniel Hawthorne and Thomas Cole's autumn landscape *A View of the Mountain Pass Called the Notch of the White Mountains (Crawford Notch)* of 1839. Composed at about the same time as Cole's painting was made, Hommann's music mirrors the brooding, anxious "storm and stress" atmosphere of Cole's scenery and Hawthorne's short story.

John Brown's Body

In the 1990s, the National Gallery of Art undertook a major project to restore and preserve a plaster cast of the Civil War memorial to Robert Gould Shaw and the Massachusetts Fifty-fourth Regiment. The heroism of these African American Union troops would be celebrated for generations in music, poetry, and art. At the unveiling of the bronze monument on Boston Common its sculptor, Augustus Saint-Gaudens, witnessed surviving veterans of the regiment "passing the very spot where they left for the war so many years before... They faced and saluted the relief, with the music playing 'John Brown's Body.' They seemed as if returning from the war, the troops of bronze marching in the direction in which they had left for the front, showing these veterans the vigor and hope of youth. It was a consecration."

An American Landscape

Jasper Francis Cropsey's immense landscape *Autumn — On the Hudson River* (1863) conveys a celebratory, nationalistic mood. A wandering stream, which empties into the Hudson, charts a course suggesting American progress and harmony with nature. Dvořák evokes a similar spirit in his masterful *New World Symphony*. The orchestra's "landscape" is taken from the inner movements of the symphony. An expressive passage, original to Dvořák but modeled on the melodic character of an African American spiritual, frames musical scenes inspired by Longfellow's *Song of Hiawatha* — for example, a feast in the wood where American Indians dance, and the awakening of animal life on the prairie. A grand theme, which recurs throughout the symphony, suggests the vastness and majesty of America and leads back to a reprise of the expressive leitmotif.

"Home! Sweet Home!" for Winslow Homer

Home, Sweet Home (1863) is the first oil painting ever displayed by Winslow Homer. It portrays a scene of camp life, with two Union soldiers in a reflective pose as a band plays in the background. Confederate lines can be seen in the distance. In a letter, Union General Nelson A. Miles described a similar scene: "Late in the afternoon our bands were accustomed to play the most spirited martial and national airs, such as 'Columbia' to be answered along the Confederate lines by bands playing 'The Bonny Blue Flag' with equal enthusiasm. These demonstrations frequently aroused the hostile sentiments of the two armies, yet the animosity disappeared when, at the close, some band would strike up that melody which comes nearest the hearts of all true men, 'Home, Sweet Home,' and every band within hearing would join in that sacred anthem with unbroken accord and enthusiasm."

MUSICIANS

The Westminster Chamber Orchestra

The Westminster Schools in Atlanta have inspired, challenged, and developed the gifts of young people since 1951. A Christian school community with students in kindergarten through grade 12, Westminster combines the best of traditional and innovative educational practices, developing lifelong learners prepared to serve and lead in a changing world. High school students enjoy numerous opportunities for international travel, with study-abroad, exchange, and service-learning programs across the globe. Robust arts and athletics offerings round out student educational experiences. The Westminster Chamber Orchestra, a high school course offered in the performing arts department, comprises forty-five students and is one component of Westminster's instructional string program, which includes five orchestras and approximately two hundred students in grades 3 through 12.

National Gallery of Art

Since 1989, the summer Teacher Institute has provided information about art in its cultural context and techniques for incorporating art across the curriculum. After attending the 2011 program "American Art of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," music educator James Plondke returned to Westminster High School in Atlanta, Georgia, stirred by the connections made at the institute between American art and music. The thematic and stylistic correspondences between these "sister arts" inspired the musical arrangements performed today. Earlier in the day, these young musicians toured the American collections, seeing the original works of art they had previously known only in reproduction.