

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART CONCERTS

January and February, 1990

January

- 14 National Gallery Orchestra
George Manos, *Conductor*
Works by Mozart, Borodin and Ravel
- 21 Coleman Blumfield, *piano*
Works by Schubert, Mussorgsky and Babin
- 28 The Charleston String Quartet
Works by Mozart, Castaldo and Schumann

February

- 4 National Gallery Orchestra
George Manos, *Conductor*
Concert in honor of Richard Bales' 75th birthday
Works by Bales, Franck and Debussy
- 11 Ben Holt, *baritone*
John Keene, *piano*
Works by Spohr, Ravel, Nathaniel Dett and Hall Johnson
- 18 Dmitry Feofanov, *piano*
Works by Sergey Prokofiev
- 25 National Gallery Vocal Arts Ensemble
Works by Hindemith, Debussy and Ravel

Concerts at the National Gallery are open to the public, free of charge.

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

THE WILLIAM NELSON CROMWELL CONCERTS

National Gallery of Art

1953rd Concert



NATIONAL GALLERY ORCHESTRA
GEORGE MANOS, *Conductor*

Sunday Evening, January 14, 1990
at Seven O'clock
West Building, East Garden Court

PROGRAM

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart Overture to "The Impresario"
(1756-1791) K. 486 (1786)

Symphony No. 38 ("The Prague")
K. 504 (1786)

Adagio; allegro
Andante
Finale: Allegro

INTERMISSION
(Twelve minutes)

Alexander Borodin In the Steppes of Central Asia
(1833-1887) (1880)

Maurice Ravel Le tombeau de Couperin
(1875-1937) (1919)

Prélude
Forlane
Menuet
Finale

These concerts are broadcast live on Radio Station WGMS, 103.5 FM.

With the collaboration of the Viennese actor and librettist Gottlieb Stephanie, Mozart produced the comedy with music entitled *The Impresario*, based upon an old Italian story first brought to the stage by Metastasio. A perfect vehicle for showing off virtuoso singers, the plot grows out of the experiences of a theater director who is trying to recruit an adequate troupe for a production in Salzburg. Each candidate offers a sample of his or her ability, with the process culminating in a singing contest and a fist-fight between the winner and the runner-up. Harmony is finally restored in the finale, which is sung by the entire ensemble, each singer remaining completely in character.

Mozart's *Symphony No. 38* was first performed on January 19, 1787, in Prague, where Mozart was visiting at the time. This work, and in fact everything Mozart presented in Prague, was well received in that city, which led to the attachment by subsequent generations of the symphony's nickname. It is also known as the symphony "without a minuet", which refers to the fact that Mozart returned in this work to the three movement format, after having composed a number of symphonies in the new "Viennese" style, with four movements. The first movement begins with a majestic slow introduction leading to an *Allegro* which is rich in subtle polyphony, so subtle that it does not strike the listener as a polyphonic movement. The slow movement reveals Mozart's deepening concept of the *Andante*. No longer is it simply an intermezzo between two animated movements of greater interest; rather, this movement has its own inner animation, combining in complete synthesis a lyrical singing quality and polyphonic texture. The *Finale* is one of those movements which appear more and more frequently in Mozart's late works, in which there is an undertone of the sense of the mortality of both life and beauty, in spite of the cheerful motives and perfect fulfilment of the musical form.

Borodin's *In the Steppes of Central Asia* is best described as an orchestral sketch, especially in light of the fact that he provided a verbal description in the score of the scene he sought to evoke: "Out of the silence of the sandy steppes of central Asia come the sounds of a peaceful Russian song. Along with them are heard the melancholy strains of Oriental melodies, then the stamping of approaching horses and camels. A caravan, accompanied by Russian soldiers, traverses the measureless waste. With full trust in its protective escort, it continues its long journey in a carefree mood. Onward the caravan moves, the songs of the Russians and those of the Asiatic natives mingling in common harmony. The refrains curl over the desert and then die away in the distance." Central Asia held a lifelong fascination for Borodin, as is witnessed by the subject he chose for his magnum opus, the opera *Prince Igor*, which deals with the exploits of that Russian prince among the Polovtsians. *In the Steppes* was enthusiastically received in Europe and led to Borodin's acceptance by the musical public of Austria, Germany and France, which was at that time the full measure of success for a Russian composer.

Each of the movements of Ravel's *Le tombeau de Couperin* is dedicated to one of Ravel's fellow Frenchmen who died in World War I. It is intended to be a tribute to eighteenth century French musical style, rather than to the keyboard music of Couperin specifically. This suite of French dances marks a return by Ravel to the kind of clarity and elegance that prevailed in eighteenth century French music, as well as being a prime example of his skill in transcribing keyboard works for orchestra.