

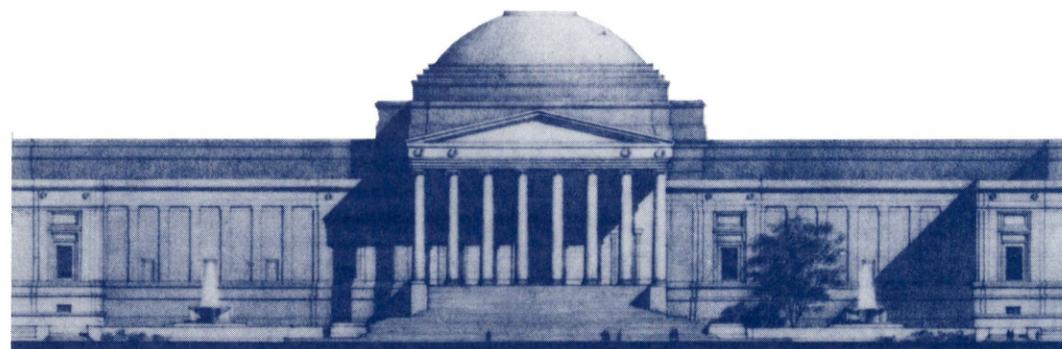
Towards the end of World War I, Ravel gave us his last work for piano solo—twenty years before his death. He was not to write anything more for piano, other than the two concertos, fifteen years later. Published in 1917, *Le tombeau de Couperin* had been sketched, in part, well before the war. Conceived not so much as an homage to Couperin as a tribute to eighteenth century French music, the *Tombeau* was to serve another purpose after the war, each of the six pieces being dedicated to a friend who fell on the field of battle. In this suite, which is one hundred per cent Ravel, we shouldn't expect to find any imitation of the harpsichordists. Only in its utilization of grace notes could it begin to recall the florid style that was the rage in France at that particular epoch. After the *Prélude*, a delicate *mouvement perpétuel*, comes an enigmatic fugue—the only one Ravel ever wrote outside of harmony class. The *Forlane* as a dance originated in Italy, and was at one time banned by the Church for being too indecorous! Ravel's *Forlane* doesn't go this far, but is certainly very sensual and full of charm and abandonment. The energetic *Rigaudon* has a very rustic flavor, interrupted in the middle by an innocent and naive trio. Then comes Ravel's fourth and last *Menuet* for the piano. It makes one think of the *Pavane pour une infante défunte*, not only because it is in the same key (G major), but also because they both share an unusual feeling of regret. The final *Toccata* is a brilliant *pièce de résistance* in which Ravel shows off his fondness for repeated notes. But surely this piece has a tragic quality behind all the virtuoso acrobatics. It is not hard to imagine the relentless foot-stamping of soldiers, only slightly interrupted by a melody which is first heard as an entreaty, then as something suggesting savage despair, and finally—at the end—promising triumph.

—notes on the music by Angela Hewitt

THE WILLIAM NELSON CROMWELL and
F. LAMMOT BELIN CONCERTS

at the

National Gallery of Art



2076th Concert

ANGELA HEWITT, *pianist*

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 is not allowed.

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

Sunday Evening, February 21, 1993
at Seven O'clock
West Building, West Garden Court

PROGRAM

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685–1750)

Partita No. 5 in G Major
BWV 829

Praeambulum
Allemande
Corrente
Sarabande
Tempo di minuetto
Passepied
Gigue

Frédéric Chopin
(1810–1849)

The Four Impromptus

Opus 29 in A-flat Major
Opus 36 in F-sharp Major
Opus 51 in G-flat Major
Opus 66 in C-sharp Minor (Fantaisie-impromptu)

INTERMISSION

Enrique Granados
(1867–1916)

Spanish Dances, Volume 2

Villanesca
Andaluza
Rondalla aragonesa

Maurice Ravel
(1875–1937)

Le tombeau de Couperin
(1915)

Prélude
Fugue
Forlane
Rigaudon
Menuet
Toccata

Canadian pianist Angela Hewitt is rapidly gaining international recognition as one of the leading musicians of her generation. Born into a musical family (her father was a cathedral organist), Ms. Hewitt began piano studies at age three and six years later gave her first recital at Toronto's Royal Conservatory of Music, where she studied from 1964 to 1973. She went on to the University of Ottawa, where her teacher was French pianist Jean-Paul Sévilla. Ms. Hewitt has won first prize in Italy's Viotti Competition and in the Toronto International Bach Piano Competition, and has been a top prize winner in the International Bach Competitions of Washington, D.C. and Leipzig, as well as the Schumann Competition in Zwickau, the Casadesus Competition in Cleveland, and the Dino Ciani Competition at La Scala in Milan. A Steinway artist, Angela Hewitt records for Deutsche Grammophon and appears at the National Gallery by arrangement with Shaw Concerts, Inc., of New York City.

The six *Partitas* form the first part of Bach's *Clavierübung* (*Keyboard Practice*), and, after being published separately beginning in 1726, were issued as a set in 1731. Like most of his keyboard works, they were no doubt written for didactic purposes, and indeed versions of two of them appear in the notebook that Bach put together for teaching his second wife, Anna Magdalena. The original title page, however, dedicates them "to music lovers, in order to refresh their spirits."

Chopin's life and music have so often been romanticized beyond recognition that it is very important to remember that he was a classicist at heart, and detested affectation, artifice, and sentimentality. He worshipped Bach and Mozart above all other composers, and had little use for the music of his contemporaries. From Bach came his love of counterpoint, and from Mozart a sense of delicacy, fluency, refinement, and simplicity. His other source of inspiration, besides his native Poland, was the human voice as mastered by the Italian *bel canto* school, and he urged all his pupils to learn how to sing (and not just with the fingers!). Alfred Cortot suggests in his edition of the *Impromptus* that "the music should seem in some way to be born under the fingers of the interpreter." Certainly all four demand a feeling of spontaneity, but are nevertheless in ternary form. Only the second, in F-sharp major, is a little more elaborate (with a hint of variation form) and has a ballad-like quality that makes it more emotionally intense than the others. The third, which was said to be one of Chopin's favorite compositions, has a beautiful middle section with the left hand imitating, no doubt, a 'cello.

Enrique Granados, who died in the torpedoed SS. *Sussex* in 1916 at the height of his career, wrote his twelve *Spanish Dances* between 1892 and 1900. The rhythms of the dance, of course, lie at the heart of all Spanish music and give to it its remarkable vitality. The other important element is folk-song, and when dealing with Spain that means both passion and melancholy—all accompanied by the thrum of the guitar, the stamping of feet, and the clicking of castanets!