

Franz Liszt is recognized as the father of our present-day concept of concert pianism and virtuosity at the keyboard, and *Après une lecture du Dante*, popularly known as the *Dante Sonata*, is a full demonstration of Liszt's accomplishments. As were all of the works in Book II of *Années de pèlerinage*, the sonata was inspired by a work of art in another medium, in this case a poem by Victor Hugo.

The *Variations on a Theme by Corelli* turned out to be Rachmaninoff's last work for piano solo, and have the unusual feature of being simpler in form and less technically demanding than his earlier *Variations on a Theme by Chopin*. Nevertheless, they present remarkable variety in the contrasts of mood and color among the variations. The theme is the famous *La folia*, and in composing variations on it, both Corelli and Rachmaninoff stepped into company with a roster of composers which stretches back to the seventeenth century and includes such masters as J. S. Bach, Alessandro Scarlatti, Grétry, and Liszt.

CONCERTS AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

MARCH 1994

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| 6 | National Gallery Orchestra
George Manos, Conductor | Vaughan Williams: <i>Fantasy on a Theme of Thomas Tallis</i>
J.S. Bach: <i>Concerto for Two Violins and Orchestra</i> |
| 13 | The Ysaye String Quartet
Honoring the 200th Anniversary of the Louvre Museum | Haydn: <i>Quartet in G Minor</i>
Debussy: <i>Quartet in G Minor</i>
Pascal Dusapin: <i>Quartet No. 3</i>
(Washington premiere) |
| 20 | Beverly Benso, <i>contralto</i>
George Manos, <i>pianist</i> | Songs by Handel, Poulenc, Webern, and Joseph Marx |
| 27 | Marcantonio Barone, <i>pianist</i> | Grieg: <i>Lyrical Pieces</i>
Liszt: <i>Ballade No. 2</i>
Brahms: <i>Sonata No. 3</i> |

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 WILLIAM NELSON CROMWELL and F. LAMMOT BELIN CONCERTS

at the

National Gallery of Art



2113th Concert

DMITRI RATSER, *pianist*

Sunday Evening, February 27, 1994
at Seven O'clock
West Building, East Garden Court
Admission free

PROGRAM

I

Frédéric Chopin
(1810-1849)

Polonaise in C-sharp Minor
Opus 26, No. 1 (1834-35)

Two Mazurkas
(1832)

Opus 6, No. 2, in C-sharp Minor
Opus 7, No. 1, in B-flat Major

Two Waltzes

Opus 34, No. 2, in A Minor (1831)
Opus 64, No. 2, in C-sharp Minor (1847)

II

Franz Liszt
(1811-1886)

Après une lecture du Dante, fantasia quasi sonata
from *Années de pèlerinage*, Second Year, Italy

INTERMISSION

III

Sergey Rachmaninoff
(1873-1943)

Variations on a Theme of Corelli
Opus 42 (1931)

Two Preludes

Opus 32, No. 12, in G-sharp Minor (1910)
Opus 23, No. 5, in G Minor (1901)

Two Etudes Tableaux
(1911)

Opus 33, No. 2, in C Major
Opus 33, No. 6, in C-sharp Minor

Discovered by American impresario and artists manager Maxim Gershunoff while on business in Moscow in 1989, DMITRI RATSER was performing on *World Radio Moscow* in a "live" broadcast, which Mr. Gershunoff thought was a recording of the late Vladimir Horowitz. When the performer and circumstances were announced, the American manager contacted the artist and auditioned him to reassure himself that he had indeed heard Dmitri Ratser and not a recording of Horowitz. Convinced, Mr. Gershunoff proceeded to arrange United States concert tours for Ratser, of which the current one is his fourth. He has been re-engaged to perform in consecutive seasons in more than three-quarters of the venues in which he has performed in America.

Born in Moscow in 1953, Dmitri Ratser comes from a family of musicians. He was one of a select few to be allowed to study under the legendary Jacob Flier at the Moscow Conservatory, and brought honor to his teacher and his school by taking first prize at the 1983 All-(Soviet) Union Rachmaninoff Competition and the 1986 Liszt International Jubilee Competition in Budapest. A Steinway artist, Dmitri Ratser records for Melodiya Records and appears at the National Gallery by arrangement with Maxim Gershunoff Attractions, Inc., of Hollywood, Florida.

Chopin's *Polonaise in C-sharp Minor* may seem somewhat short and underdeveloped to those acquainted with his later works in this *genre*. His grand concept of the *polonaise* was just beginning to take shape in the years when he was in his early twenties, and came to its full flowering in the *polonaises* that appeared after 1838, that fateful year in which he fell in love with Aurore Dudevant (George Sand). Due in no small measure to her inspiration, all of his creative activity reached new heights of passion and imagination at that time, resulting in a stretch of feverish activity that lasted almost nine years.

Among the several musical forms which for Chopin had patriotic overtones, his *mazurkas* stand out on account of both their compactness and their variety. Originally a Polish dance of heroic cast, the *mazurka* has a basic rhythm in triple meter with the principal accent on the second or third beat of the measure, rather than the first. The *mazurkas* chosen by Mr. Ratser are among Chopin's early ones, and are close in spirit and character to those that would have been played for dancing. The later *mazurkas* tend to be more elegiac in nature, presenting several moods in one piece of music. The same can be said of the contrast between Chopin's early and late waltzes. The early ones could indeed be danced to, but the later ones are definitely for listening, as they are full-blown, free-ranging concert pieces.