

By the mid-1890s, Rachmaninoff's mature style of writing was beginning to emerge: brilliant soaring passages, robust, expansive climaxes, and pensive, yearning melodies reminiscent of those of his idol, Tchaikovsky. It was during this youthful period that Rachmaninoff wrote one of his least performed suites, the *Moments musicaux*, *Op. 16*, a work that is musically enjoyable but technically demanding. Each of the six pieces in *Op. 16* is an exhilarating collage of emotional music. Heard at one sitting, they become a mosaic that reveals the inner warmth of a composer whose external demeanor was morose. The *Moments musicaux* provide a splendid exhibition of Rachmaninoff's sweeping lyricism as well as a stunning display of romantic piano virtuosity.

Program notes by Elmer Booze

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.

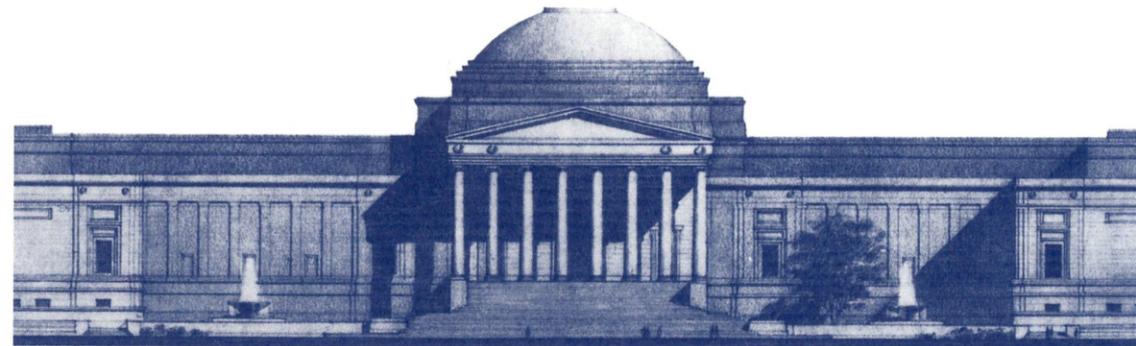
Selections from concerts at the Gallery can be heard on the second Sunday of each month at 9:00 p.m. on WGMS, 103.5 FM.

During the months of January and February 2002, recent performances by the National Gallery Orchestra can be heard Wednesday evenings at 9:00 p.m. on WETA, 90.9 FM.

The Sixtieth Season of

THE WILLIAM NELSON CROMWELL and
F. LAMMOT BELIN CONCERTS

National Gallery of Art



2403d Concert

JAMES TOCCO, *pianist*

Sunday Evening, 30 December 2001
Seven O'clock
West Building, East Garden Court

Admission free

PROGRAM

Johannes Brahms
(1833–1897)

Sonata No. 1 in C Major
Op. 1 (1852–1853)

Allegro
Andante
Scherzo: Allegro molto e con fuoco; più mosso
Finale: Allegro con fuoco

John Corigliano
(b. 1938)

Etude Fantasy (1976)

(Movements played without pause)

Etude No. 1: For the Left Hand Alone
Etude No. 2: Legato
Etude No. 3: Fifths to Thirds
Etude No. 4: Ornaments
Etude No. 5: Melody

INTERMISSION

Sergei Rachmaninoff
(1873–1943)

Six moments musicaux
Op. 16 (1896)

No. 1 in B-flat Minor (Andantino)
No. 2 in E-flat Minor (Allegretto)
No. 3 in B Minor (Andante cantabile)
No. 4 in E Minor (Presto)
No. 5 in D-flat Major (Adagio sostenuto)
No. 6 in C Major (Maestoso)

Pianist **James Tocco** enjoys international distinction as a recitalist, orchestral soloist, chamber musician, and educator at the peak of his powers. In command of a vast repertoire from the entire standard piano literature, he is also widely regarded as the foremost interpreter of American masterworks, including Leonard Bernstein's *Age of Anxiety* and Corigliano's *Piano Concerto*, which he recorded with Leonard Bernstein and the BBC London Symphony. Corigliano acknowledges Tocco as the definitive interpreter of his concerto.

The son of Italian immigrant parents, Tocco started the study of piano in his native Detroit at age six and made his orchestral debut at age twelve, performing Beethoven's *Second Piano Concerto*. He won a scholarship for study at the Salzburg Mozarteum and a French government grant to study in Paris with the Brazilian pianist Magda Tagliaferro (1893–1986). He completed his musical education under the guidance of the eminent Chilean-American pianist, Claudio Arrau (1903–1991). Tocco gained international prominence with his first prize victory in the International ARD (German Radio Union) Competition in Munich, followed by a major triumph as a last-minute replacement for the celebrated Italian pianist and teacher Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli (1920–1995) in a performance of Tchaikovsky's *First Piano Concerto* at the Vienna Festival. Tocco's voluminous discography reflects his varied tastes and astonishing versatility. It includes, among others, the world premiere recording of Bernstein's complete solo piano music, and an all-Copland disc, including the first recording of the solo piano version of the *Suite* from *Rodeo*. Just released to unanimous acclaim is Tocco's recording of Corigliano's *Etude-Fantasy* on the Sony Classical label.

In addition to his rigorous international performing itinerary, Tocco is the eminent scholar/artist-in-residence at the University of Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music, professor of piano at the Musikhochschule in Lübeck, Germany, and artistic director of the Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. James Tocco appears at the National Gallery by arrangement with Matthew Sprizzo of Staten Island, New York.

Brahms' *Sonata No. 1 in C Major, Op. 1*, was one of three piano compositions he wrote during his late teen years, later designated as his virtuoso period. He dedicated it to his friend, the Austro-Hungarian violinist Joseph Joachim (1831–1907). A youthful and energetic work, the sonata made an immediate impression on Robert Schumann. After Brahms played his first sonata for him and was about to play his second, Schumann called to his wife, Clara, saying: "Come quickly and listen. I want you to meet a young composer of genius."

The opening movement (*Allegro*) is brilliantly laid out with a vigorous and exhilarating motif that functions as an opening theme. It is wrapped in a festoon of octaves and chords that are executed by both hands. After this motif has been well worked out, a mellifluous and contemplative second theme emerges. The driven development section is based on material that is an offshoot of the second theme. The recapitulation is famous for its attenuated and arduous coda that can be a pianist's nightmare. It is full of monstrous leaps, devilish stretches, and flashing arpeggios that present an almost impossible task for small hands. The coda creates a degree of anxiety and agitation that is unexpected in the work of a composer still in his teen years.

The second movement (*Andante*) is a theme with four variations that is based on an old German *Minnelied*. The third movement (*Scherzo*), with its imposing momentum, also presents myriad technical difficulties that require a prodigious digital technique. Its theme, extracted from the last four notes of the *Andante* that precedes it, is so imaginatively written that it elicited from the late pianist Eugene List (1918–1985) the statement: "Here is Brahms, the young hurler of thunderbolts."

The finale (*Allegro con fuoco*) borrows a theme from the exposition of the opening movement, with the meter changed to 9/8. It carries the challenge to even further heights for the virtuoso pianist. List observed that "this movement is filled with numerous booby-traps for even the most wary of pianists (the wild leaps are notorious), and I have often thought that a sharpshooters' medal should be bestowed on the successful traversal of this Scylla and Charybdis of the piano literature."

A study of Brahms essays on the subject of his own music reveals that he never wrote difficult piano music merely as a showcase of coruscating effects. The difficulty inherent in the music is an expression of Brahms' mental and emotional state at the time. Again quoting Eugene List: "Make no mistake, however, [the *Sonata, Op. 1*] is a monumental and powerful work! A revealing portrayal of the *Sturm und Drang* of the young Brahms."

John Corigliano is widely acknowledged as one of American's most significant living composers. His description of the *Etude Fantasy*, an imposing set of piano studies formulated to supplement the repertoire of the virtuoso pianist, has been synopsisized by pianist Stephen Hough as follows: "The first etude is for the left hand only—a three and a half minute, bold, often ferocious statement, which introduces both an opening six-note row (the first six notes of the work) and a melodic germ (marked 'icy' in the score), which follows the initial outburst.... In [the] short second etude, both hands slowly float downward as a constant crossing of contrapuntal lines provides melodic interest. The sustaining of sound, as well as the clarity of crossed voices, is important here. The third etude is a fleet development on the simple pattern of a fifth (fingers one and five) contracting to a third (fingers two and four). In this section there is much crossing of hands and, during the process, a melody emerges in the top voices.... The fourth etude is a study of ornaments. Trills, grace notes, tremolos, glissandos, and roulades ornament the opening material [from *Etude No. 1*] and then [there is a development of] the first four notes of the third etude into a frenetically charged scherzando where the four fingers of the left hand softly play a low cluster of notes (like a distant drum) as the thumb alternates with the right hand in rapid barbaric thrusts.... After a sonorous climax comes the final etude, a study of melody. [Here] the player is required to isolate the melodic line, projecting it through the filigree [that] surrounds it; here the atmosphere is desolate and non-climactic, and the material is based entirely on the melodic implication of the left hand, with slight references to the second (legato) etude. The work ends quietly with the opening motto, heard in retrograde, accompanying the mournful two-note ostinato."