

Concerts at the National Gallery of Art
March and April 2002

March

- 17** **Amsterdam Loeki Stardust Quartet**

Music for recorders by Merula, Locke, Sammartini, Pachelbel, and other composers

- 24** **Alicia de Larrocha, pianist**

Presented in honor of the exhibition *Goya: Images of Women*

Granados: *Goyescas, Part II*
Works by Soler, Albéniz and Montsalvatge

- 31** **No concert**

April

- 7** **Elena Martín and José Melitón, duo pianists**
Presented in honor of the exhibition *Goya: Images of Women*

Works for two pianos four hands by Granados, Albeniz, de Falla, and Soler

- 14** **National Gallery Orchestra
George Manos, conductor** Sibelius: *Karelia Suite, Op. 11*

Borodin: *In the Steppes of Central Asia*

Grieg: *Lyric Suite, Op. 54*

Beethoven: *Symphony No. 8*

The use of cameras or recording equipment during the performance is not allowed. Please be sure that cell phones, pagers, and other devices are turned off.

The Sixtieth Season of

THE WILLIAM NELSON CROMWELL and F. LAMMOT BELIN CONCERTS

National Gallery of Art



2413th Concert

EARL WILD, pianist

Sunday Evening, 10 March 2002
Seven O'clock
West Building, West Garden Court

Admission free

PROGRAM

Alessandro Marcello
(1686–1739)
(Arr. Earl Wild)

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
(1756–1791)

Allegro
Adagio
Allegro assai

Ludwig van Beethoven

Thirty-two Variations on an Original Theme
in C Minor
WoO 80 (1806)

Felix Mendelssohn
(1809–1847)

INTERMISSION

Frédéric Chopin
(1810–1849)

Nocturne in F-sharp Major
Op. 15, No. 2 (1830–1831)

Ballade No. 1 in G Minor
Op. 23 (1831–1835)

Fantaisie-imromptu
Op. 66 (1835)

Andante Spianato and Grand Polonaise
Op. 22 (1834)

Scherzo No. 2 in B-flat Major
Op. 31 (1837)

Considered by many “the last of the great Romantic pianists,” **Earl Wild** is often heralded as a “super virtuoso.” One of only a handful of living pianists to merit an entry in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, he is therein described as a pianist whose technique “is able to encompass even the most difficult virtuoso works with apparent ease.... Wild’s success is based on the popular appeal of the image of the ‘Romantic giant.’” Recently included in the Philips Records series, *The 100 Great Pianists of the Twentieth Century*, Wild is a legendary figure, performing throughout the world for more than seven decades. He has been featured on two occasions in *Time* magazine, the more recent of which honored his eighty-fifth birthday.

Wild showed outstanding musical ability at an early age in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where he was born 26 November 1915. At age three, he was discovered to have absolute pitch; at six, he had a fluent keyboard technique and could read music easily. Before his twelfth birthday, he was accepted as a pupil of the famous teacher Selmar Janson, who had studied with Eugen d’Albert (1864–1932) and Xaver Scharwenka (1850–1924), both students of the great Franz Lizst (1811–1886). He was placed into a program for artistically gifted young people at Pittsburgh’s Carnegie Institute of Technology, now known as Carnegie Mellon University. In his early teens, he played piano and celeste with the Pittsburgh Symphony under Otto Klemperer and stepped in at the last minute to play Liszt’s *First Piano Concerto* with the Minneapolis Symphony when it was on tour in Pittsburgh. Throughout his teenage years, the young pianist transcribed and arranged many orchestral works for piano and played them on radio broadcasts. By age nineteen, he was a concert hall veteran.

Wild’s other teachers included the eminent German pianist and pedagogue of Dutch descent, Egon Petri (1881–1962), who was a student of Ferruccio Busoni (1866–1924); the distinguished French pianist Paul Doguereau (1908–2000), who was a pupil of Paderewski and Ravel; and Madame Helene Barere, the wife of the great Russian pianist Simon Barere (1896–1951).

Earl Wild has been a pioneer in the world of television broadcasting since 1939, when NBC began transmitting the first live musical telecasts. He continued to appear regularly on radio and television as a contracted performer for NBC until 1944 and for ABC until 1968. At ABC he conducted and performed many of his own compositions, including an oratorio for chorus, orchestra, soloists, and dancers, entitled *Revelations*. In 1986 his artistry was the subject of a TV documentary entitled *Wild about Liszt*, which received the British Petroleum Award for best musical documentary.

During World War II, Wild served in the United States Navy as a musician, playing flute in the Navy Band as well as solo piano recitals and concertos. One of those recitals was the second concert performed at the National Gallery. It took place on 3 January 1943 and included works by Bach, Medtner, Kreisler, Ravel, Dohnanyi and Liszt. During the ensuing five months, Wild appeared five times at the Gallery, either as soloist or in collaboration with violinist Oscar Shumsky and violist Emanuel Vardi. While he was in the Navy, Wild was frequently requested to accompany First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt on her speaking engagements, at which he performed the national anthem as a prelude to her speeches. He has the singular honor of having played at the invitation of six consecutive presidents, beginning with Herbert Hoover.

Earl Wild is one of the world's most recorded pianists, having made his first disc in 1937 for RCA. Since then he has recorded for more than twenty different record labels, among them EMI, CBS, RCA/BMG, Vanguard, Nonesuch, and Reader's Digest. Since 1998 he has recorded exclusively for the Ivory Classics label. In 1986 the People's Republic of Hungary awarded the Liszt Medal to Wild in recognition of his long and devoted association with the music of Franz Liszt. He presently holds the title of Distinguished Visiting Artist at his alma mater, Carnegie Mellon University. In 1996 Carnegie Mellon accorded Wild the Alumni Merit Award and in 2000 further honored him with the prestigious Distinguished Achievement Award. Earl Wild appears at the National Gallery by arrangement with Mayfair Artist Representatives of New York City.

The second movement from Alessandro Marcello's *Oboe Concerto in D Minor* is the high point of a work that has been described as conceivably the most melodic and significant oboe concerto of the baroque period. The *Adagio*, with its stately melody accompanied by a steadfast rhythmic pattern in eighth notes, makes an impression of elevated deportment and grandeur that is equaled only by some passages in baroque operas.

Written and published in Vienna, Mozart's *Sonata in F Major, K. 332*, reflects none of the tragedy and sorrow he experienced during his stay there between 1781 and 1784: money problems, the loss of his first child (a son), and friction over his hasty marriage to Constanza Weber that arose between him and his father. On the contrary, the sonata radiates zeal and craftsmanship, belying the fact that it was written within a few months. The opening movement (*Allegro*) is in sonata allegro form and abounds with seemingly unrelated melodies that have been judiciously juxtaposed by Mozart. The fact that he was able to create a logical solution that renders these melodies compatible is remarkable. Moreover, the music is bright and jaunty, attesting to his unique genius. The second movement (*Adagio*), in binary form, is pure melodic poetry in ascension, while the third movement (*Allegro assai*), like the first movement, contains a series of themes. After a delightful display of scales and cheerful hunting-calls, it ends with a brief coda, played *pianissimo*.

Thirty-two Variations on an Original Theme in C Minor, WoO 80, is one of the twenty themes with variations that Beethoven wrote for solo piano. Of this number, however, only five are based on original themes; the rest are constructed on themes by other composers. The opening theme in this case is eight bars long and lends itself well to the ensuing variations, which offer a daring display of virtuosity calculated to impress the listener. But, as stated by pianist Alfred Brendel: "[The virtuosity] is no longer aimed only at elegance, rather it is one more difficulty to be overcome in a grandiose combat."

Mendelssohn wrote the *Rondo capriccioso, Op. 14*, when he was just fifteen years old. It is a delicate and delightful example of his gift for writing lighthearted music that has, among its many virtues, a diaphanous texture inherent in the enchanted world of the fairy tale.

Of the three nocturnes in Chopin's *Op. 15* (dedicated to the German pianist, composer, and conductor Ferdinand Hiller, who lived from 1811–1885), *Nocturne No. 2 in F-sharp Major* is the most popular and most often played. Its melody line is highly vocal and well ornamented, and seems to stem directly from melodies in Bellini's operas, which Chopin adored. Within its sixty-two measures, Chopin managed to pen one of his most exquisite keyboard miniatures in a tripartite (ABA) format. The opening melody (A), marked *larghetto*, ends with an ornamental lacework of the most frangible weave that is followed by an interlude of a broader tonal palette. The middle section (B) is marked *doppio movimento* (twice as fast). Here the music is less colorful than before, although it is quite dramatic and presents a brief but ferocious climax. The returning *larghetto* melody (A), while shorter in length than its initial appearance, is no less enchanting. The work ends with a rapturous coda that exudes imagination as well as serenity.

The *Ballade No. 1 in G minor, Op. 23*, according to many Chopin experts, alludes to the poem *Konrad Wallenrod*, by Chopin's compatriot Adam Mickiewicz. It tells of a young Lithuanian prince who is captured and then adopted by a knight of the Red Cross in the late fourteenth century. The boy subsequently escapes to his native land, only to find himself sent back among the enemy knights as a spy. In the end, he dies a traitor's death. James Huneker writes that Chopin's *Ballade* is written in "true narrative tone," but concedes, "With such a composition, any program could be sworn to."

The *Fantaisie-imromptu in C-sharp Minor, Op. 66*, was published after Chopin's death. The melodic beauty of the work, the opening pianistic dialogue, and the gorgeous middle section marked *moderato cantabile* provide a perfect balance. In 1918, the team of Harry Carroll and Joseph McCarthy borrowed Chopin's masterpiece for their popular song hit, *I'm Always Chasing Rainbows*.

The polonaise is a Polish processional dance in $\frac{3}{4}$ time and moderate tempo. According to *Grove's Dictionary*, the French name dates from the seventeenth century. In its numerous forms, the polonaise served both as a peasant dance and in ceremonies for the court. To the *Grande polonaise brillante, Op. 22*, with orchestral accompaniment, Chopin

added an introductory unaccompanied piece, which he entitled *Andante spianato*. The composite work can be performed with an orchestral accompaniment or as a piano solo, spinning out its dazzling effects with the utmost showmanship.

The *Scherzo No. 2 in B-flat Minor, Op. 31*, is one of Chopin's unquestioned masterpieces. The Italian word *scherzo* refers to a joke or a bit of whimsy. Chopin departed entirely from the idea of humor and made his four scherzos into larger pictures of human struggle and repose. In *Op. 31* Chopin allows complete abandon to prevail amidst the never ceasing fast $\frac{3}{4}$ rhythm, almost as though his creative thought had led him to a bizarre and dramatic waltz. The work ends with one of the most unrelenting climaxes in piano literature.

Program notes up to and including the first Chopin work by
Elmer Booze

Notes on the remaining Chopin works by Michael R. Davis,
adapted and edited by Elmer Booze