The Sixty-second Season of
The William Nelson Cromwell and F. Lammot Belin
Concerts

National Gallery of Art
2,499th Concert

Mischa Maisky, cellist

6 June 2004
Sunday Evening, 7:00 pm
West Building, West Garden Court

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

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

2,499th Concert
6 June 2004, 7:00 pm

Music for Solo Cello by Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)

Cello Suite No. 1 in G Major
BWV 1007 (1720)
Prélude
Allemande
Courante
Sarabande
Menuett 1
Menuett II
Gigue

Cello Suite No. 3 in C Major
BWV 1009 (1720)
Prélude
Allemande
Courante
Bourrée 1
Bourrée II
Gigue

Intermission

Cello Suite No. 5 in C Minor
BWV 1011 (1720)
Prélude
Allemande
Courante
Sarabande
Gavotte 1
Gavotte II
Gigue
Mischa Maisky has the distinction of being the only cellist in the world to have studied with both Mstislav Rostropovich and Gregor Piatigorsky. Rostropovich has lauded him as "one of the most outstanding talents of [his] generation. His playing combines poetry and exquisite delicacy with great temperament and brilliant technique." Mischa Maisky has been enthusiastically received in London, Paris, Berlin, Vienna, New York, and Tokyo, to mention only a few of the major music centers of the world. After winning the prestigious Gasper Cassado International Cello Competition in Florence, Italy, Maisky made his debut at Carnegie Hall in November 1973 with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra under William Steinberg. In 1974 he was awarded an America-Israel Cultural Foundation scholarship for study with Gregor Piatigorsky, becoming his last student. At the Rostropovich Cello Competition in Paris, Maisky was awarded the special prize for his interpretation of the commissioned work.

Mischa Maisky began his studies in his native Riga, Latvia, and continued in Saint Petersburg (then Leningrad), where he won the All-Russian Cello Competition at age seventeen. A year later he won a prize at the International Tchaikovsky Competition, which led to studies with Mstislav Rostropovich at the Moscow Conservatory. While still a student, Maisky launched an active concert career throughout the Soviet Union. In 1972 Maisky emigrated to Israel, where he soon established himself as one of the leading European cellists of his generation. His love for chamber music led him to Gidon Kremer's Lockenhaus Festival, where he is a regular guest and performs with pianists Martha Argerich, Radu Lupu, Peter Serkin, Malcolm Frager, and Nelson Freire.
Program Notes

Johann Sebastian Bach wrote all six of his suites for unaccompanied violoncello around 1720. He composed them with the cellist Christian Bernard Linike (1673–1751) in mind. Until 1717 principal cellist of the Hofkapelle in Berlin, Linike was hired that year by Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Cöthen, who at the same time placed Bach in charge of his court musicians as kapellmeister. The suites are secular in nature, even though they were intended to be played during communion services in the court chapel. The genesis of the suite form lies in the idea of joining different types of dances together to provide artistic balance and contrast. The resulting dance movements in Bach’s suites bear little resemblance to the simple eighteenth-century dance tunes that were actually used to accompany dancers.

Suite No. 1 in G Major, bwv 1007, makes liberal use of the open strings of the cello. There are pedal points on the open A and D strings throughout the opening Prelude, and the constant presence of sixteenth notes in the movement suggests improvisation. The Allemande of this suite is somewhat unusual in having been written in cut time (2/2) instead of the customary 4/4 meter, and it is typically performed slightly faster than the Allemande movements in the other suites. The Courante is in Italian style and, like the Prelude, is characterized by running sixteenth notes. The Sarabande makes frequent use of double and triple stops, calling on the performer to play two or three notes at once. By means of this device, Bach implies intricacies in the contrapuntal lines that the listener’s ears may fill in. This is followed by two light and charming minuets. The final movement, the Gigue, is full of rhythmic and harmonic subtleties that are not immediately apparent in what seems to be a simply conceived movement.

The opening movement of the Suite No. 3 in C Major, bwv 1009, the Prelude, begins with a series of toccatalike running passages that soon narrow to a rocking movement. This episode gradually expands and reaches a climax in a magnificent passage over a pedal point on the open G string.