



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

National Gallery of Art
2,506th Concert

The New York Chamber Soloists

Jennifer Grim, *flute*, Melvin Kaplan, *oboe*
Allen Blustine, *clarinet*, Andrew Schwartz, *bassoon*
Curt Macomber, *violin*, Ynez Lynch, *viola*
Adam Grabois, *cello*, Elizabeth Metcalfe, *keyboard*

October 24, 2004
Sunday Evening, 6:30 pm
West Building, West Garden Court

Admission free

Music Department
National Gallery of Art
Sixth Street and Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC

Mailing address
2000B South Club Drive
Landover, MD 20785

www.nga.gov

2,506th Concert

October 24, 2004, 6:30 pm

Walter Piston (1894–1976)

Sonatina for Violin and Harpsichord (1946)

Allegro leggiero

Adagio espressivo

Allegro vivo

Mel Powell (1923–1998)

Eight Miniatures for Baroque Ensemble (1959)

Moderato

Mosso

Giusto

Brioso

Freely, but very slow

Allegro ritmico

Moderato

Energico

Arthur Berger (1912–2003)

Quartet in C Major for Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, and Bassoon (1941)

Allegro moderato

Andante

Allegro vivace e leggermente

Intermission

Elliott Carter (b. 1908)

Sonata for Flute, Oboe, Cello, and Harpsichord (1952)

Risoluto (un poco rubato)

Lento

Allegro

Leonard Bernstein (1918–1990)

Sonata for Clarinet and Piano (1941–1942)

Grazioso

Andantino; Vivace e leggiero

Hugh Aitken (b. 1924)

Ferdinand the Bull

For flute, oboe, violin, cello, and piano

Ynez Lynch, narrator

Washington Premiere Performance

The Musicians

For more than three decades, the New York Chamber Soloists have been acclaimed as an outstanding ensemble of distinguished virtuosi, performing widely diverse repertoire in creatively programmed concerts. An eleven-member ensemble of strings, winds, and keyboard, increasing to as many as twenty with the addition of guest artists, the Chamber Soloists have the flexibility to offer many works that are seldom heard due to the unusual instrumental combinations for which they were written.

With more than 250 works in their repertoire, the Chamber Soloists have made a valuable contribution to the musical life of the United States and have helped to expand the audience for chamber music. The ensemble has added substantially to the catalog of twentieth- and twenty-first-century works, with more than twenty-five compositions written for the Chamber Soloists by such significant composers as Gunther Schuller, Mario Davidovsky, Ezra Laderman, Elliott Schwartz, and Mel Powell. The ensemble has compiled an impressive record of repeat engagements in the United States and abroad, including eleven European tours, six Latin American tours, and numerous tours of the Far East and South Pacific. It undertook an extensive tour of South America in the fall of 1995 and performed throughout Spain in May 1996 and October 2000. In the United States, the Chamber Soloists have appeared frequently at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Library of Congress in Washington, major universities across the country from Boston to Berkeley, and at the Mostly Mozart, Sun Valley, and Caramoor Festivals. They have been in residence at the Vermont Mozart Festival every summer since its inception in 1972. This is the ensemble's second appearance at the National Gallery; it opened the Gallery's 2000–2001 concert season on October 1, 2000.

Program Notes

The texture of Walter Piston's *Sonatina for Violin and Harpsichord* is thinner than that of most of his compositions, revealing the composer's sensitivity to the strengths and limitations of the harpsichord. In the notes for the first long-playing record that included this work, Piston wrote: "[This piece is] an etching, in that it is concerned with expression through line and design. The forms of the movements are not complex, the first being that of the sonata with little development, the second consisting of five long phrases in dialogue between the two instruments, and the third a rondo with two themes." If the work were a full-blown sonata, an additional movement might have taken the form of a *scherzo*. The lack of such a movement is addressed by a brief *scherzando* interlude in the first movement.

Mel Powell wrote *Eight Miniatures for Baroque Ensemble* for the New York Chamber Soloists' European tour of 1959. Powell began his musical life as a prodigious jazz artist, working as pianist and arranger with the Benny Goodman Orchestra and Glenn Miller Army Air Force Band. Soon a strong compositional instinct prompted his matriculation at Yale University, where he studied with Paul Hindemith. Under Hindemith and subsequently throughout the late 1940s and 1950s, Powell composed primarily in a neoclassic style. By 1959, however, he had developed an affinity for the music of Anton Webern that manifested itself in brevity of forms and transparency of textures. He introduced such innovations as extended string techniques, novel notations that presented chords, pitch sequences, rhythms, and colors in musical blocks, and electronically produced sounds on tape. Powell was one of the principal founders of the California Institute of the Arts. He served as dean of the institute's music school from 1969 to 1978. At the time of his death in 1998, he held the Roy E. Disney endowed chair in music composition.

Arthur Berger's *Quartet in C Major for Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, and Bassoon* was commissioned for a performance by members of the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra and is dedicated to Aaron Copland. Because of the conservative style and easy accessibility of this work, the casual listener might miss the great skill with which its intricate rhythms and contrapuntal lines are created and controlled. The three movements of the quartet are an extended *Allegro moderato*, followed by a calm *Andante* and a finale, *Allegro vivace e leggiermente*. Berger's career as an influential composer, critic, and teacher lasted more than half a century. He exhibited a consistent preference for short musical forms and produced numerous pieces for chamber and symphony orchestras, chamber ensembles, voice with piano, and piano solo. He studied at New York University, the Longy School, and Harvard University, as well as with Nadia Boulanger. In addition to his long tenure at Brandeis University, he also taught at Mills College, Brooklyn College, the Juilliard School, the New England Conservatory, and Harvard University.

Elliott Carter's *Sonata for Flute, Oboe, Cello, and Harpsichord* was commissioned by the Harpsichord Quartet of New York and uses the instruments played by that ensemble. The composer provided the following notes for the Nonesuch recording of the sonata: "My idea was to stress as much as possible the vast and wonderful array of tone colors available on the modern harpsichord (the large Pleyel, for which this was first written, produces thirty-six different colors, many of which can be played in pairs, one for each hand). The three other instruments are treated for the most part as a frame for the harpsichord. This aim of using the wide variety of the harpsichord involved many tone-colors which can only be produced very softly and therefore conditioned very drastically the type and range of musical expression, all the details of shape, phrasing, rhythm, texture, as well as the large form. At that time (in 1952, before the harpsichord had made its way into pop) it seemed very important to have the harpsichord speak in a new voice, expressing characters unfamiliar to its extensive baroque repertory.

The music starts, *Risoluto*, with a splashing dramatic gesture whose subsiding ripples form the rest of the movement. The *Lento* is an expressive dialogue between the harpsichord and the others with an undercurrent of fast music that bursts out briefly near the end. The *Allegro*, with its gondolier's dance fading into other dance movements, is cross-cut like a movie—at times it superimposes one dance on another."

Leonard Bernstein's *Sonata for Clarinet and Piano* dates from the winter of 1941–1942, when he was a student at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. Bernstein's first published work, the sonata was premiered on April 22, 1942, in Boston by clarinetist David Glazer, with the composer at the piano. The first of the two movements is reminiscent of the music of Paul Hindemith in its counterpoint and melodic line. The second, with its $\frac{5}{8}$ rhythm and jazz characteristics, shows the influence of Igor Stravinsky's *Three Pieces for Solo Clarinet* (1919) and hints of the Bernstein to come, particularly *West Side Story*.

The New York Chamber Soloists played and Ynez Lynch narrated the world premiere performance of Hugh Aitken's *Ferdinand the Bull* on August 1, 2004, at the Vermont Teddy Bear Factory in Shelburne, Vermont. It is a retelling in music and narration of Munro Leaf's classic children's story of a bull that prefers peace and contentment.

Program notes provided by Melvin Kaplan, Inc.

For the convenience of concertgoers the Garden Café remains open until 6:00 pm.

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.

Please note that concerts now begin at 6:30 pm. Late entry or reentry after 6:30 pm is not permitted.