



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

National Gallery of Art

2,513th Concert

Leon Bates, *pianist*

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

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28 November 2004
Sunday Evening, 6:30 pm
West Building, West Garden Court

Admission free

2,513th Concert
28 November 2004, 6:30 pm

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.

Franz Schubert (1797–1828)
Sonata in B-flat Major, D. 960 (1828)

Molto moderato
Andante sostenuto
Scherzo: Allegro vivace con delicatezza
Allegro ma non troppo

Intermission

Frédéric Chopin (1810–1849)
Ballade in A-Flat Major, Op. 47 (1840–1841)
Barcarolle in F-Sharp Major, Op. 60 (1845–1856)

Maurice Ravel (1875–1937)
Gaspard de la nuit (1908)

Ondine
Le gibet
Scarbo

The Musician

Leon Bates' career is marked by all the elements of a star performer. He has performed in virtually all the major venues in the United States as well as many prestigious concert halls abroad, and his frequent return engagements include the National Gallery, where he has played twice before, in 1972 and 1991. Since winning the Philadelphia Orchestra Senior Auditions as a student, Bates has emerged as one of America's leading pianists. He often appears on national and local radio and television programs, among them NBC's *The Today Show* and CBS News' *Sunday Morning*, and he took part in the filming of the *Music in the Twentieth Century* telecast on PBS. In addition, he hosted a radio series funded by the Pew Foundation, entitled *Notes from Philadelphia*.

A favorite at summer festivals, Leon Bates has performed in Chicago at Grant Park, in Nevada at the Lake Tahoe Festival, and with the Boston Pops under Keith Lockhart. Bates' large repertoire includes more than thirty concerti by major composers, as well as several concerti by contemporary composers. His latest recital project presents the music of Duke Ellington.

Leon Bates' work with young people is extraordinary. He has undertaken more than fifty residency programs in conjunction with orchestra engagements and recitals to open the hearts and minds of young people to the love of music. Recently he has begun composing music for very young students who are working with a new, progressive method devised by the Lorenz Publishing Company. Bates' contributions to the world of music education were acknowledged by an honorary doctorate from Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Virginia. He also received the Raoul Wallenberg Humanitarian Award from the Greater New York Wallenberg Committee for his extensive work with children.

Bates is a favorite on college campuses, thanks to his broad interests beyond the world of classical music. An aficionado of architecture, dance, theater, and every style of music, he is also a sports enthusiast and a disciplined body builder, which he feels enhances his playing ability. A native of Philadelphia, he began his formal study of music at age six on both the piano and violin. The late Irene Beck formulated his early training at the Settlement Music School, and his advanced study was under the renowned pianist Natalie Hinderas at Temple University's Ester Boyer College of Music. A prolific recording artist on the Orion, Performance Records, and Naxos labels, Leon Bates appears at the National Gallery by arrangement with Joanne Rile Artists Management, Inc., of Jenkintown, Pennsylvania.

Program Notes

Schubert wrote his *Sonata in B-flat Major*, D. 960, on September 26, 1828, some sixty days before his death. Although critically ill, he performed the sonata two days after its completion. It was not published, however, until 1839. Working in the sonata-allegro form, Schubert imbues the opening movement with sensitivity and mysticism, as expressed in its contemplative principal theme (*Molto moderato*). A unique feature of this theme is the bass trill on a low G-flat that punctuates it intermittently. The second theme is presented in F-sharp minor, bringing a lighter, more mellifluous mood, and the extended development section continues in the same vein. The second movement (*Andante sostenuto*) is in three-part song form (ABA) and begins in the key of C-sharp minor. Its melancholy disposition reminds the listener of the first theme in the opening movement. However, the B segment (in the key of A major) displays a jovial spirit until the A segment returns.

The third movement (*Scherzo: Allegro vivace con delicatezza*) diverges from the earlier movements, projecting a much more harmonious and peaceful state of mind. As Charles Burr wrote in his essay on the sonata: "Schubert could not be gloomy forever, even on his deathbed. A gay, dancing, and sometimes humorous spirit prevails here, with delicacy." The finale (*Allegro ma non troppo*) is in rondo form (ABACA) with an exhilarating coda. Although the key for the movement is B-flat major, the opening theme is in the key of C major. This incredibly forceful music is full of drama, beginning with the octave G in the bass, a remnant from the sonata's opening theme. "By the final movement, Schubert the musician has taken over completely and charmed himself out of his own sorrows" (Charles Burr).

If one were to identify a miniaturist among romantic composers, it would be Chopin. He created numerous short musical masterpieces, of which the *Ballade in A-flat major*, Op. 47, and the *Barcarolle*, Op. 60, are examples. The *Ballade* has a primary and secondary theme in the opening

segment, followed by a development section, the theme of which is extracted from the second subject. The work concludes with a brief recapitulation based on the first theme. In spite of its apparently delicate façade, the *Ballade* carries an air of elegant gallantry. In the words of musicologist Herbert Weinstock (1905–1971), "[The *Ballade*, Op. 47.] is one of Chopin's masterpieces....Nothing else he composed has [its] special quality of exultance....[It] seems to glow upon the piano."

In his remarkable *Barcarolle in F-sharp Major*, Chopin eschews the 6/8 time signature, the hallmark of the Venetian gondoliers' songs that inspired the genre. Instead of the shorter phrase line associated with that meter, Chopin employs the compound meter of 12/8, producing a depth and breadth of melodic line that transcend the Venetian original. After a three-bar introduction, the piano presents a song that is both a lovelorn lament and a comforting lullaby.

Ravel borrowed the title *Gaspard de la nuit* from the eponymous collection by Aloysius Louis Bertrand (1807–1841), an exponent of chimerical poetry. Bertrand attributed the poems in the collection to the devil, alias Gaspard. Ravel creates in this music the satanic elements inherent in all three poems: *Ondine*, a water nymph with her contemptuous laughter; *Le gibet*, a bell tolling at sunset as a corpse hangs from the gallows (Ravel's paraphrase); and *Scarbo*, a goblin appearing as a frightening apparition. Ravel's stated intention was to "write a piano piece that is even harder to play than Mily Balakirev's oriental fantasy, *Islamey*." Each piece teems with Herculean requirements: double notes that are effervescent and unrelenting (*Ondine*); repeated bell-like notes, requiring extraordinary control (*Le gibet*); and forward-surging runs, creating an inexorable charge (*Scarbo*).