



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

National Gallery of Art
2,529th Concert

Philippe Entremont, *pianist*

Presented in honor of
Toulouse-Lautrec and Montmartre

March 27, 2005
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

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 late entry or reentry after 6:30 pm is not permitted.

Program

Claude Debussy (1862–1918)

From *Préludes* Book I (1907–1910) and Book II (1910–1913)

Danseuses de Delphes

La sérénade interrompue

La cathédrale engloutie

Minstrels

Feux d'artifice

Debussy

Images Set I (1905)

Reflets dans l'eau

Hommage à Rameau

Mouvement

Debussy

Suite: Pour le piano (1894–1901)

Prélude

Sarabande

Toccata

INTERMISSION

Maurice Ravel (1875–1937)

Sonatine (1903–1905)

Modéré

Mouvement de menuet

Animé

Ravel

Pavane pour une infante défunte

Ravel

Gaspard de la nuit

Ondine

Le gibet

Scarbo

The Musician

Philippe Entremont is internationally renowned for his remarkable technique and flair, a reputation he has maintained throughout a career that now spans fifty-five years. A pupil of Marguerite Long and Jean Doyen, Entremont made his professional debut in 1950 at age sixteen. In 1953 his first United States tour began with a recital at the National Gallery. He traveled to New York the next day to play his American debut as a concerto soloist with the National Orchestral Association under Leon Barzin. Since then, Entremont's career has included many appearances with major orchestras and recitals in all the world's cultural capitals.

Concurrent with his accomplishments as a pianist, Entremont has made his mark as an orchestral conductor. In the past two concert seasons, he has conducted the Seattle Symphony, the Vienna Chamber Orchestra, the Strasbourg Philharmonic, the Iceland Symphony, the Budapest National Philharmonic, and the Czech National Orchestra, among others. In 2004 he was appointed principal guest conductor of the Munich Symphony Orchestra, which he will bring to the United States on tour in autumn 2005.

Philippe Entremont's recorded legacy, as both a pianist and a conductor, is vast. In addition to the standard piano solo works and concertos of Mozart, Beethoven, Haydn, Saint-Saëns, Chopin, Gershwin, Rachmaninoff, Brahms, and Tchaikovsky, he has recorded most of the piano works of Debussy and Ravel. In addition to his busy schedule as a performer and conductor, Entremont has served as director of the Ravel Academy in Saint Jean de Luz, France, and the American Conservatory in Fontainebleau, France, which was founded by the legendary Nadia Boulanger. He appears at the National Gallery by arrangement with Columbia Artists Management, LLC, of New York City.

The Exhibition

Toulouse-Lautrec and Montmartre, which opened March 20 in the East Building of the National Gallery, focuses on artists' fascination with the decadent spirit and glamour of bohemian life in the Parisian district of Montmartre at the turn of the twentieth century. More than 250 works, primarily by Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (1864–1901), are exhibited, including paintings, drawings, posters, prints, sculptures, zinc silhouettes from the Chat Noir cabaret, and printed matter, such as illustrated invitations, song sheets, advertisements, and admission tickets. The exhibition ranges from dance halls, *cafés-concerts*, and cabarets, with a section devoted to the Chat Noir and its entertainment stars, including singers Aristide Bruant and Yvette Guilbert, and such song and dance performers as Jane Avril, May Belfort, May Milton, Loïe Fuller, and Marcelle Lender. The artist loved the music and entertainment these performers provided and enjoyed a close personal relationship with several of them.

Among the works by contemporaries of Toulouse-Lautrec that are included in the exhibition is *Erik Satie (El bohemio; Poet of Montmartre)*, 1891, by Ramón Casas. In the early 1890s, the painting's composer-subject, shown dressed as a gentleman who is down at the heels and casting a quizzical sideways glance at the viewer, began frequenting Montmartre in the company of his close friend, the poet Contamine de Latour. The two men took up lodgings there, but neither could afford the gentlemanly lifestyle to which Satie was accustomed. Eventually he exhausted his resources and to make ends meet began to play regularly in the *cafés-concerts*, an uncomfortable fit for a composer whose aspirations were formed in the Paris Conservatoire. Satie's bohemian lifestyle continued until 1905, when French publishers and audiences, influenced to a great extent by Debussy and Ravel's enthusiasm for his work, were finally ready to accept his iconoclastic music.

Program Notes

Claude Debussy, using techniques of clarity, balance, precision, and proportion, and avoiding musical cliché, revolutionized the music of his day and influenced almost all the composers who came after him. He was actually not fond of writing for the piano, but his works for that instrument are among the most beautiful in the repertoire. He wrote twenty-four preludes for piano as an homage to Chopin, who had produced the same number in his *Préludes*, op. 28. Debussy took special care to place the title of each prelude at the end of the piece and to enclose it in parentheses and quotation marks, perhaps to give the essence of the private, self-communing nature of the music, or to prevent the musician from forming any preconceived notions of interpretation based on the title. At any rate, it is important to observe that Debussy drew the title from the piece, rather than the piece from the title.

Danseuses de Delphes (Dancers of Delphi) was inspired by an ancient Greek relief in the Louvre known as *Danseuses Borghèse*. The languid and mysterious melody passes from archaic modality to diatonic, pentatonic, and eventually chromatic harmony. *La sérénade interrompue (The Interrupted Serenade)* is a miniature sketch of a nocturnal scene in which a Spanish suitor's attempts to serenade his beloved are repeatedly interrupted. Over the pianistic imitation of plucked strings and strummed chords, one hears a plaintive Moorish melody as well as fragments from Debussy's own *Iberia*.

Based on a legend from Brittany, *La cathédrale engloutie (The Sunken Cathedral)* tells of the Cathedral of Ys, submerged beneath the sea in the fourth or fifth century as punishment for the sins of its inhabitants. According to legend, the cathedral rises from the depths at each sunrise as a warning and example to others before it returns to its oceanic slumber. Three motifs come into play: an ascending chordal melody for the placid sea, a chant treated as a medieval *organum* that symbolizes the cathedral,

and a rumbling configuration in the left hand, symbolizing the tide as it surges with increasing strength to engulf the cathedral once again. The music is punctuated throughout by the tolling of bells.

Minstrels depicts an American form of entertainment that gained popularity at the turn of the twentieth century in the dance halls and cabarets of Montmartre. It was characterized by old songs from the American musical theater of the 1840s and the shuffling dance steps of black-faced minstrels. In this prelude, which is actually a cakewalk, Debussy captured the shifting moods of the characters, careening from bawdy comedy to heartfelt pathos to jovial cavorting. The fifth and last prelude selected by Philippe Entremont, *Feux d'artifice (Fireworks)*, pays tribute to the French tradition that the final shot in a fireworks display should be the most powerful, colorful, and varied of the evening. Indeed, this prelude is the crowning achievement, both artistically and aesthetically, of the *Préludes*.

The last two of the three pieces that comprise Debussy's *Images Set I* can be related to earlier works of the composer, but the first piece, *Reflets dans l'eau (Reflections in the Water)*, has no clear ancestry. It serves as a perfect example of impressionism in music. The monotonous, hypnotic rhythms and sounds of water and even the feel of water are palpably present. Debussy used a large area of the keyboard and a quiet dynamic level, constructing his material from short phrases. Luminous chords and flowing arpeggios in succession provide a drowsy, flickering effect, suggesting inverted images in a pool. The composer referred to *Reflets* as embodying "the newest discoveries in harmonic chemistry."

Hommage à Rameau, composed while Debussy was revising the score of Rameau's ballet opera *Les fêtes de Polymnie (1753)*, can be interpreted not only as a tribute to Rameau but also to the French genius in general. The French writer André Suarés asserted: "With the *Sunken Cathedral*, *Hommage à Rameau* is the most beautiful piece for the piano... since the last three sonatas of Beethoven." The third *Image*, *Mouvement*, is a piece in perpetual

motion and can be related to Debussy's *Jardins sous la pluie* (*Gardens in the Rain*) from *Estampes* (1903). Uninterrupted triplets stream forth until a slower theme is introduced in the middle of the work. This theme in octaves and fifths is exchanged from one hand to the other, concluding in a whole-tone scale ascending toward the end of the keyboard.

Debussy wrote his three-movement *Suite: Pour le piano* between 1894 and 1901. This music brings new life to the pattern evolved by the old masters through its exotic tonal effects and rich harmonic canvas, completely personal to Debussy. The whole-tone scale heard in the *Prélude* was novel for its time, as was the succession of augmented triads. This piece is thought to be the predecessor of *Jardins sous la pluie*. The *Sarabande* is a serene work similar to Erik Satie's composition of the same name. Both share an archaic aura, due in part to the use of Aeolian modality and antiphonal sections. When it was published in its earliest version in 1894 in the *Grand Journal de Lundi*, another contributor to the journal described it as "[possessing] a slow, serious elegance, rather like an old picture, or a memory of the Louvre." The *Toccata* requires brilliant and dexterous finger work. Exhilarating in its mood, it is a fresh reminder of youthful vitality. It ends with a passage that is particularly emphatic for Debussy, whose great dread was appearing blatant. The music stops far short, however, of indulging in overemphasis.

Maurice Ravel was born in Ciboure, in the Basque region of France. When he was three months old, his family moved to Paris, which was his home for the rest of his life. At age fourteen he entered the Paris Conservatoire, where he continued his studies for the next fifteen years. He was a star student and a consummate composer, but his somewhat unorthodox style prevented him from winning the coveted Prix de Rome during that period, despite four attempts. His *Sonatine* is also a student composition, one that seems embodied with classical musical forms primarily to mock the conservative Prix de Rome jury. The work demonstrates the influence of Debussy, with its cascading arpeggios and whole-tone modulations. The first movement (*Modéré*), though built on a foundation

of driving thirty-second notes, is endowed with lyricism and lilting flow, in keeping with its dynamic marking "soft and expressive." The gentle *Mouvement de menuet* is traditional in its rhythm but certainly not stodgy. It rises to a fortissimo just before an impassioned *rallentando* in the trio section. The breathless third movement (*Animé*) is written in the form of a toccata and recalls thematic material from the first movement. The alternation between contrasting meters gives the movement a constant sense of acceleration and excitement—a musical rollercoaster.

It was a classmate and friend of Ravel, the pianist Ricardo Viñes (1875–1943), who first brought to his attention the book by Aloysius Bertrand entitled *Gaspard de la nuit*. The book contains a collection of tales spun out of the colorful history of Dijon, the capital of Burgundy. According to the tales, the devil, in the form of a poet fallen on hard times, gives a manuscript to a fellow poet under the pen name Gaspard de la Nuit. Ravel was particularly taken with three of the tales and produced a three-movement work based on them. They can be paraphrased as follows:

Ondine (Water Sprite): I believed I heard a vague harmony haunting my sleep and spreading like a murmur the intermittent songs of a sad and tender voice: "Listen, listen! It is I, Ondine, brushing these water drops against the sounding diamond-panes of your window, gleaming in the moon's wan rays; and see how, in watered silk, the lady of the castle watches the starry night and the lovely sleeping lake from her balcony. Each wave is a spirit swimming on the streaming current, each current a path snaking to my palace, and my palace is built of liquid, deep in the lake, in the triangle of fire, of earth, and of air." Having murmured her song, she begged me take her ring upon my finger, to be the spouse of an Ondine, and to go to her palace with her, to be the king of the lakes. When I told her that I loved a mortal, sulky and spiteful, she wept a tear or two, then laughed out loud and sped away in showers that trickled for a while down my long blue windows.

Le gibet (The Gallows): Ah, what do I hear? Could it be the night-blast yelping, or the hanged man heaving a sigh on the gallows' fork? Could it be a fly a-hunting, blowing round these dear ears his fanfare of tallyhos? Or perhaps a spider weaving half a yard of muslin as an ascot for this strangled neck? It's the bell tolling at the city walls below the horizon; and the corpse of a hanged man, red in the setting sun.

Scarbo: Oh, how many times I've heard and seen him, Scarbo, when the midnight moon shines in heaven like a silver dollar on an azure banner sewn with bees of gold! How many times I've heard his laughter buzzing in the darkness of my nook, and his fingernail scratching the silk curtains of the bed! How many times I've seen him coming down from the ceiling, spinning on one foot, and rolling around the room like a bobbin dropped by a witch! And then I thought he'd gone? The dwarf grew huge between the moon and me, like the steeple of a Gothic church, tossing a golden bell on his pointed hat! But soon his body paled, transparent as candle wax; face whitened like the wax of the candle end, and suddenly snuffed out.

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