

Next Week at the National Gallery of Art

Chatham Baroque
with
Rosa Lamoreaux, soprano

“La cetra amorosa:” Love Songs from Eighteenth-Century Italy

April 6, 2008
Sunday evening, 6:30 pm
West Building, West Garden Court



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

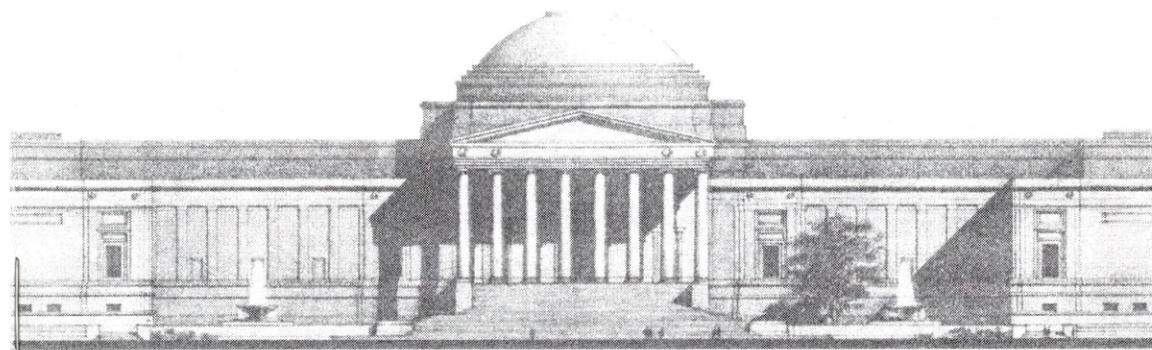
The use of cameras or recording equipment during the
performance is not allowed. Please be sure that cell phones,
pagers, and other electronic devices are turned off.

Please note that late entry or reentry of
the West Building after 6:30 pm is not permitted.

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

National Gallery of Art
2,669th Concert

Elina Vähälä, *violinist*
Mika Rännäli, *pianist*

Presented in honor of *In the Forest of Fontainebleau:*
Painters and Photographers from Corot to Monet

March 30, 2008
Sunday Evening, 6:30 pm
West Building, West Garden Court

Admission free

Program

Claude Debussy (1862–1918)

Sonata for Violin and Piano in G Minor (1915)

Allegro vivo

Intermede: Fantastique et léger

Finale: Très animé

Aaron Copland (1900–1990)

Sonata for Violin and Piano (1942–1943)

Andante semplice

Lento

Allegretto giusto

INTERMISSION

Gabriel Fauré (1845–1924)

Sonata for Violin and Piano no. 1 in A Major, op. 13 (1875–1876)

Allegro molto

Andante

Allegro vivo

Allegro quasi presto

Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971)

Suite italienne (1932)

Introduction: Allegro moderato

Serenata: Larghetto

Tarantella: Vivace

Gavotte con due variazioni

Scherzino: Presto alla breve

Minuetto: Finale

The Musicians

ELINA VÄHÄLÄ

Born in the United States and raised in Finland, Elina Vähälä began her violin studies at the age of three at the conservatory in Lahti. She later studied with Zinaida Gilels, Ilja Grubert, and Pavel Vernikov at the Kuhmo Violin School. She studied at the Sibelius Academy with Tuomas Haapanen and in Munich with Ana Chumachenko. Vähälä made her concerto debut at the age of twelve with the Sinfonia Lahti, and was named “Young Master Soloist” of the ensemble for 1993–1994. She continues to perform with them as well as with other major orchestras in Finland including the Helsinki, Tampere, and Turku Philharmonic orchestras, the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Ostrobothnian Chamber Orchestra, the Tapiola Sinfonietta, and the Virtuosi di Kuhmo Chamber Orchestra. She was the winner of the 1999 Young Concert Artists International Auditions in New York, and gave her critically acclaimed New York recital debut. She has also won prizes in the Lipinsky-Wieniawski competition in Lublin, Poland, and the Joseph Joachim Violin Competition in Hanover, Germany.

Vähälä has appeared in chamber music concerts in Boston and New York City. She has played with the Danish Radio Sinfonietta, the Dortmund Philharmonic Orchestra, the Deutsche Kammerakademie, the English Chamber Orchestra, the Israel Camerata, and the Northwest Chamber Orchestra. She has performed in the Caribbean Islands, England, Finland, Greece, Poland, South Africa, Spain, and Turkey, working with conductors Giordano Bellincampi, Ralf Gothóni, Juha Kangas, Jean-Jaques Kantorow, Sakari Oramo, John Storgårds, Jukka-Pekka Saraste, Joseph Swensen, and Osmo Vänskä, among others. The long list of festivals at which Vähälä has been a guest artist includes the Forbidden City Music Festival in Beijing, the Helsinki Festival, the International Classical Music Festival in South Africa, the Kuhmo Chamber Music Festival, the Naantali, Turku, Oulu and Korsholm music festivals, La Roque d'Antheron, and the Pablo Casals Festivals in Prades and Paris.

Vähälä's repertoire ranges from baroque to contemporary. She gave world premieres of Aulis Sallinen's *Chamber Concerto* and Curtis Curtis-Smith's *Double Concerto*, both of which were written for her and pianist-conductor Ralf Gothóni. Her current season includes the Finnish premiere of John Corigliano's *Violin Concerto* ("The Red Violin") with the Turku Philharmonic; appearances with the Korean Chamber Ensemble, Sinfonia Lahti, the Tampere Philharmonic, and Virtuosi di Kuhmo; and performances at the Naantali Music Festival in Finland, the Cartagena International Music Festival in Colombia, and the MIAGI festival in South Africa. In addition to her National Gallery recital, her appearances in the United States this season include concertos with the Boise Philharmonic, the Minnesota Orchestra, the Oregon Symphony, and the West Virginia Symphony; and a recital in San Antonio, Texas.

Elina Vähälä plays a 1678 Stradivarius violin, generously loaned by the Finnish Cultural Foundation, and appears at the National Gallery with Mika Rännäli by arrangement with Jonathan Wentworth Associates of Mount Vernon, New York.

MIKA RÄNNÄLI

Mika Rännäli is one of the most extraordinary and intriguing pianists of his generation. In December 1999 Rännäli won the Artist International Auditions in New York City, then played his New York debut at Weill Recital Hall. The concert received a rave review by Harris Goldsmith of *The New York Concert Review*, who wrote: "Mika Rännäli gave a truly impressive account of himself... He is, without a doubt, destined to become an influential denizen in the Music World."

Rännäli has toured extensively in Scandinavia, central and southern Europe, Japan, and the United States. He has appeared with Finland's Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra, Kuopio Symphony Orchestra, Ostrobothnian Chamber Orchestra, Oulu Symphony Orchestra, Sinfonia Lahti, Tampere Philharmonic, and Tapiola Sinfonietta; and Switzerland's Biel-Bienne Symphony Orchestra and Flawiler Chamber Orchestra. He has worked with conductors Tibor Boganyi, Bjarte Engeset, Howard Griffiths, Okko Kamu, Juha Kangas, Vasili Sinaiski, Ulf Söderblom, Jan Söderblom,

Marc Tardue, and Arvo Volmer. Rännäli has won many competitions in his native Finland, including the first national Leevi Madetoja Piano Competition at age eighteen, and the Helmi-Vesa Competition. He has performed at many festivals, including the Espoo International Piano Festival, the Helsinki Festival, the Kuhmo Chamber Music Festival, Les Boreales de Normandie, the Mikkeli Music Festival, the Shandeleer Music Festival, the Sonkajärvi Soi, and the Tuusulanjärvi Chamber Music Festival.

Mika Rännäli is also a composer. His works are mainly for the piano with the exception of a song cycle called "The Ice Mirror." His first solo disc, *Music of Love and Death* (2002), contains music by Englund, Ginastera, Rachmaninoff, Schumann, Scriabin and Wagner-Liszt, as well as his own works. His newest release, *Intimate Garden*, is a live recording of the world premiere of the complete piano works by the Finnish composer Leevi Madetoja on Alba Records (2005). The recording has received critical acclaim in the classical magazines *Gramophone* and *American Record Guide*.

Mika Rännäli has an extremely varied musical and artistic background having studied the trumpet and the violin as well as the piano. In addition, he has been a three-time champion in Latin American-style and ballroom dancing in Finland. Rännäli earned a master of music degree at the Sibelius Academy, where he studied with Eero Heinonen, Matti Raekallio, and Ralf Gothóni. He then continued his studies at the Manhattan School of Music under the guidance of Nina Svetlanova. He is also the artistic director of the Oulu Music Festival, which takes place annually near the Arctic Circle in Finland.

The Program

The name of the exhibition *In the Forest of Fontainebleau: Painters and Photographers from Corot to Monet* refers to an area outside Paris that served as an inspirational landscape for French master painters and photographers of the nineteenth century. This forest has also witnessed historically unique musical activity. In 1921, with help from the United States, the Schools of Fontainebleau were established to improve the quality of United States military band music. After World War I, it was decided that this successful operation should continue. With the full support of the French authorities, the “American Conservatory” was granted permission to open in the Louis XV wing of the Chateau Fontainebleau.

The teaching staff of the American Conservatory has included such luminaries as Henri Dutilleux, Maurice Ravel, Camille Saint-Saëns, and one of the composers whose music is included in this program, Igor Stravinsky. Many renowned American musicians received guidance at the American Conservatory, including Aaron Copland, whose *Sonata for Violin and Piano* is also included on this evening’s program. Gabriel Fauré, although he had no direct connection with Fontainebleau, was a renowned educator, whose pupils over the years included Maurice Ravel, George Enescu, and Nadia Boulanger, the long-time director of the American Conservatory.

Claude Debussy’s last work, the *Sonata for Violin and Piano*, was intended as a part of a set of six sonatas. Debussy was only able to complete three of them before his death—this sonata, a sonata for cello and piano, and a sonata for flute, viola, and harp. There is a shift in Debussy’s style in this sonata—he has moved toward a leaner and simpler structure, but he still uses the full range of both instruments. The mood in the first movement is dreamy and rippling; the second has a repetitive playfulness to it; and in the third, reflections from the first movement can be heard, accompanied by mercurial thirty-second-note patterns and tremolos.

Aaron Copland created “the American sound” in concert music, and was one of the most important composers of the twentieth century. He lived a long life, during which time he gained recognition not only as a composer, but also as a conductor, pianist, teacher, author, and concert promoter. Copland found his own voice by absorbing everything around him, including jazz, folk-tunes, and hoedowns, and he turned those influences into music that was nationalistic and at the same time sophisticated. The *Sonata for Violin and Piano* combines both sides of Copland—the populist and the aesthetic. A clearly neoclassical work in three movements with traditional titles, the sonata is appealing and full of good tunes. The work is dedicated to Lieutenant Harry H. Dunham, a close friend of Copland’s who died in battle in World War II.

The first of two violin sonatas by Gabriel Fauré, the *Sonata for Violin and Piano no. 1 in A Major*, is optimistic and full of drive and energetic character. The piano part is highly virtuosic, and the violin gets to sing throughout the work. The sonata is in four movements, with the piano opening the piece by introducing the main theme. The violin soon joins the piano by presenting the contrasting second theme. The mood in the second movement is darker and more sustained, but one can feel the constant “heartbeat” in the background. The scherzo is full of life and brilliance, with a more relaxed F-sharp minor section. The finale presents some dramatic moments, but maintains a good-humored swing throughout.

Russian composer Igor Stravinsky is sometimes compared to his near contemporary Pablo Picasso, in that he mastered a number of contrasting styles throughout his long career. Stravinsky’s *Suite italienne*, consists of six dances from his ballet *Pulcinella* (1920), and begins the composer’s neoclassical period. The original music belonged to an eighteenth-century *Comedia dell’arte*, attributed variously to Gallo, Monza, Parisotti, and Pergolesi, but Stravinsky added modern rhythms, cadences, and harmonies to this older music, to make it his own.

Program notes by Elina Vähälä