

Next week at the National Gallery of Art

Dan Zhu, violinist

Jie Chen, pianist

Music by Schubert, Schumann, Webern, and Chinese composers

June 7, 2009

Sunday Evening, 6:30 pm

West Building, West Garden Court



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

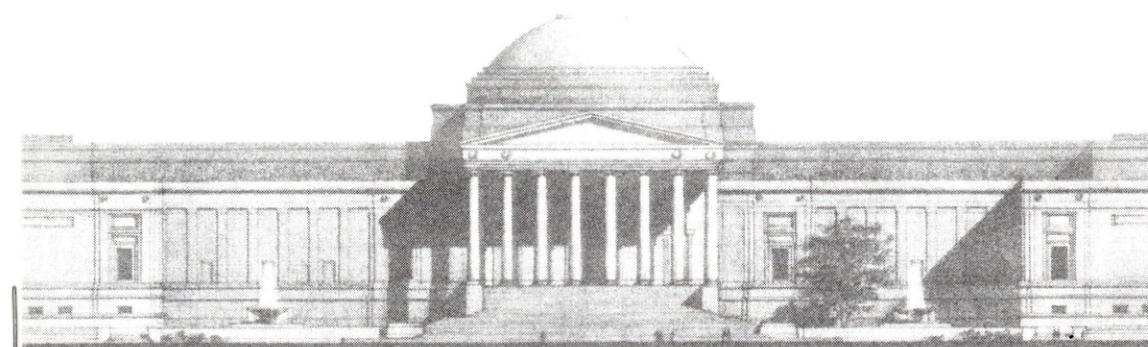
The use of cameras or recording equipment during the
performance is not allowed. Please be sure that cell phones,
pagers, and other electronic devices are turned off.

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

Music Department
National Gallery of Art
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Washington, DC

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

National Gallery of Art
2,730th Concert

National Gallery Chamber Orchestra
Vladimir Lande, *guest conductor*
Stephen Ackert, *harpsichord*

May 31, 2009
Sunday Evening, 6:30 pm
West Building, West Garden Court

Admission free

Program

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)

Concerto for Klavier and String Orchestra in F Minor, BWV 1056 (c. 1720)

Allegro moderato

Largo

Presto

Alfred Schnittke (1934–1998)

Suite in the Old Style for Chamber Orchestra (1972)

Pastorale: Moderato

Ballett

Menuett: Tempo di Menuetto

Fuge: Allegro

Pantomime

INTERMISSION

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906–1975)

Sinfonia for String Orchestra, op. 110a (1960)

(Transcribed by Rudolf Barshai from String Quartet no. 8)

Largo

Allegro molto

Allegretto

Largo

Largo

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893)

Serenade for Strings, op. 48 (1880)

Pezzo in forma di sonatina: Andante non troppo

Walzer: Tempo di valse

Élégie: Larghetto elegiaco

Finale: Tema russo; Andante

The Musicians

NATIONAL GALLERY ORCHESTRA

The National Gallery Orchestra was founded in 1943 and initially consisted of approximately twenty-five players drawn from the National Symphony Orchestra. Gradually growing in numbers, the Gallery orchestra eventually reached the size and status of a large chamber orchestra. The ensemble has undertaken the full range of chamber and symphonic repertoire and has frequently presented first performances of works by American composers, most notably the 1953 premiere of Charles Ives' *Symphony no. 1* under the direction of Richard Bales, the 1990 premiere of Daniel Pinkham's *Symphony no. 4* under George Manos, and the 2007 premiere of *Later the Same Evening: An opera inspired by five paintings of Edward Hopper*, under guest conductor Glen Cortese. In September 2008 the orchestra completed a highly successful concert tour in North Carolina, under the direction of guest conductor Vladimir Lande.

VLADIMIR LANDE

Vladimir Lande is music director of the COSMIC (Chamber Orchestra of Southern Maryland, in Concert) Orchestra, Washington Soloists Chamber Orchestra, Maryland Conservatory Orchestra, and director of the Hopkins Symphony Chamber Orchestra. He is the principal guest conductor of the St. Petersburg (Russia) Symphony Orchestra; regularly conducts the Donetsk Ballet Company in Europe and the United States; has conducted at the Ravello Festival in Italy; and has guest conducted the National Gallery Orchestra several times. Since 1996 he has been principal guest conductor of the Bach-analia Festival Orchestra in New York. In summer 2004 Lande was invited to conduct the opening concert of the internationally renowned White Nights Festival in St. Petersburg, Russia, including a performance in Grand Philharmonic Hall. In 2006 he made his conducting debut with the Baltimore Opera Orchestra, and in 2008 he conducted the Tulsa (Oklahoma) Symphony Orchestra.

STEPHEN ACKERT

Stephen Ackert has been head of the music department at the National Gallery since 2004. In this capacity, he plans and presents the weekly concerts for the public and presents lectures and lecture-recitals on subjects that bring together the visual arts and music. He is also an adjunct teacher of organ at Northern Virginia Community College in Alexandria, Virginia. A graduate of Oberlin College, Northwestern University, and the University of Wisconsin, Ackert studied organ and harpsichord as a Fulbright scholar in Frankfurt, Germany, where his teachers were Helmut Walcha and Maria Jaeger-Jung. Ackert has performed organ and harpsichord recitals and presented lecture-recitals in many of Washington, DC's prime venues, including the Austrian and German Embassies, the Kennedy Center, the National Cathedral, and the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. In 1999 he was a featured performer in the renowned "Thüringer Orgelsommer" recital series, playing on six historic instruments in Thuringia, and in 2007 he returned to Germany for his eighth recital tour of historic concert halls and churches in that country. Ackert has served three Washington area churches as organist and director of music: St. Margaret's Episcopal Church (Washington, DC), The Falls Church (Falls Church, Virginia), and The United Church (formerly Concordia Church, Washington's first German-language congregation). At the United Church, he founded a series of Bach concerts that continued for thirteen years, included more than forty concerts, and developed a loyal following of Bach enthusiasts.

Program Notes

Johann Sebastian Bach frequently rearranged or transcribed works that he had written earlier in his life. *The Concerto for Klavier* (i.e. keyboard instrument) *in F Minor* is thought to be a transcription of a lost concerto for oboe or violin. Originally written during Bach's Cöthen period (1717–1723), the concerto was likely to have been played in the Collegium Musicum concerts that Bach organized in the 1730s at the Café Zimmerman in Leipzig. Its first and third movements are in ritornello form—the theme is presented several times in different keys, with extended passages of new material between each repetition of the theme.

The slow movement (Largo) features a melody that unfolds in ever lengthening phrases, the last of which is six-and-one-half measures long. It would certainly have tested the breath control of any wind player, if the original version of this concerto was, in fact, for a wind instrument. The elaborate ornamentation, written out by the composer, represents the epitome of the art of decorating a vocal or instrumental line, as it was practiced in the baroque period. The finale (Presto) is a vigorous, flowing movement in triple time. It features a back-and-forth exchange of chords between the solo instrument and the orchestra that is unique for Bach's time and looks forward to Mozart and other masters of the classical concerto. After whispering patiently in the background throughout the whole work, the orchestra is finally allowed to take the lead with the main melody in the last eight measures.

Born into a Jewish family in the Soviet Union in 1934, Alfred Schnittke began his musical education in Vienna, where his journalist father was posted, and completed it at the Moscow Conservatory, after his family relocated there in 1948. After teaching at the conservatory from 1962–1972, Schnittke turned to composing music for films, and supported himself doing this for many years. Though he was influenced early on by composers such as Shostakovich, he later developed “polystylistic” techniques, combining old and new music styles. His film music bled into the concert music that he produced, blending “serious” and “light” musical ideas. Despite constant ill health, Schnittke was a prolific composer, writing more than seventy film scores in thirty years. His music became widely known abroad in the 1980s, when Soviet musicians brought it to the West. In addition to film music, he composed nine symphonies, several concerti grossi, piano and violin concerti, and many chamber works.

Composed in 1972, Schnittke’s *Suite in the Old Style* is a nod to composers of the early to mid-twentieth century, such as Stravinsky, who composed pieces in a neoclassical style, often closely modeled on baroque music. The five movements, conceived as a whole, were borrowed from the baroque period, but one would never mistake this work as anything but a twentieth-century composition. Part of Schnittke’s significant contribution as a composer of the post-modern era was his use of older music within the modern idiom.

Dmitri Shostakovich’s compositional style was deeply affected by the political unrest, persecution, and suffering that he experienced personally in World War II and throughout the Soviet Union’s Stalinist period. He is said to have written his *String Quartet No. 8*, op. 110, in three days, shortly after a visit to Dresden in 1960, where he was shocked by the devastation that was still evident. As he did in his *Second Piano Trio*, which dates from 1944, Shostakovich used music as a way to mourn the victims and honor those who died and were buried in unmarked graves far from those they loved.

The quartet was, in fact, initially subtitled “To the Memory of the Victims of Fascism.” Full of self-quotations from his newly famous *Cello Concerto No. 1* and his suppressed opera, *Lady Macbeth of Mtensk*, as well as from his *First*, *Fifth*, and *Tenth Symphonies*, the *String Quartet No. 8* represents Shostakovich’s view of himself as a victim of political tyranny.

Equally well-known is Rudolf Barshai’s transcription for string orchestra of Shostakovich’s *Quartet no. 8*, marked opus 110a. Taken quite literally from the quartet, but expanded into a larger-scale work, this arrangement does great justice to the original, retaining the composer’s original emotional intensity.

In yet another nod to composers of the past, Tchaikovsky’s *Serenade for Strings* was a direct homage to Mozart, who was Tchaikovsky’s most idolized composer. The serenade, originally “night-time” music, meant to be sung under a beloved’s window accompanied by a lute, emerged in the eighteenth century in operas by Rossini and Mozart. Eventually the serenade evolved into a form in its own right, being featured in works such as Mozart’s *Eine kleine Nachtmusik*, Brahms’ *Serenades*, opp. 11 and 16, and the serenades for strings by Edward Elgar and Antonin Dvořák.

The first movement, a *sonatina*, is an intentional imitation of Mozart’s mannerisms, though certainly more passionate than the typical classical *sonatina*. In the second movement, Tchaikovsky uses his skills to craft both an elegant and graceful melody within the whirl of the waltz. The meditative *Élégie* is the longest of the four movements and shows the composer’s mastery of expressive writing. In the final section, the listener hardly misses Tchaikovsky’s typical blazing brass and crashing cymbals, because the character of Russian music is so brilliantly conveyed through strings alone. A rare change from his typical bombastic orchestral works, this *serenade* remained one of Tchaikovsky’s favorites long after he wrote it.

The National Gallery extends its thanks to the Music Division of the Library of Congress for the loan of the Hubbard and Broekman harpsichord used in this concert.