

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.

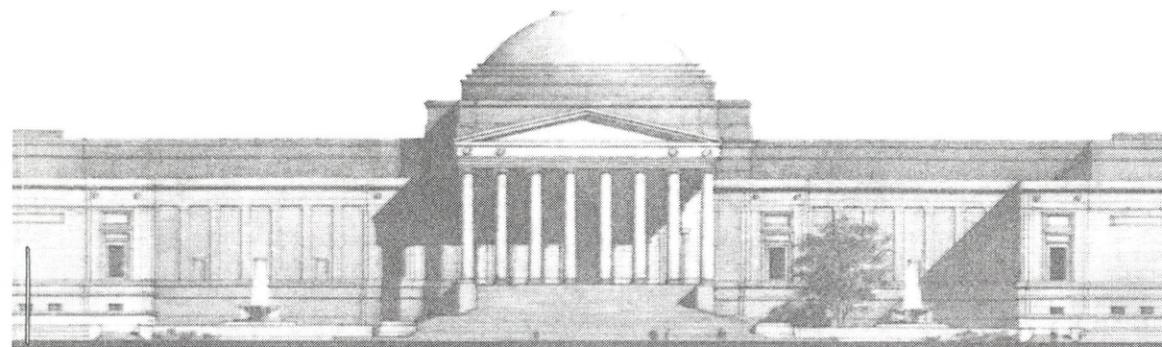
Please note that late entry or reentry of the West Building after 6:30 pm is not permitted.

For the convenience of concertgoers the Garden Café remains open for light refreshments until 6:00 pm on Sundays.

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

National Gallery of Art
2,792nd Concert

Joaquín Achúcarro, pianist

June 6, 2010
Sunday Evening, 6:30 pm
West Building, West Garden Court

Admission free

Program

Robert Schumann (1810–1856)

Symphonic Studies, op. 13 (1834/1852)

Theme: Andante

Variation 1: Un poco più vivo

Variation 2: Marcato il canto

Étude 1: Vivace

Étude 2

Étude 3

Étude 4: Agitato

Étude 5: Allegro molto

Variation 3

Étude 6: Presto possibile

Variation 4

Variation 5: Con espressione

Finale: Allegro brillante

Isaac Albéniz (1860–1909)

Sevilla

From *Iberia*, Book I (1906)

Evocación

From *Iberia*, Book I

El Albaicín

From *Iberia*, Book III (1907)

This concert is presented in collaboration with the Embassy of Spain in observance of Spain's presidency in 2010 of the European Union.

INTERMISSION

Maurice Ravel (1875–1937)

Valses nobles et sentimentales (1911)

Modéré

Assez lent

Modéré

Assez animé

Presque lent

Vif

Moins vif

Epilogue: Lent

The Musician

Internationally acclaimed pianist Joaquín Achúcarro has performed with many of the world's leading orchestras, including the BBC Symphony Orchestra, the Berlin Philharmonic, the Chicago Symphony, La Scala Orchestra of Milan, the London Symphony and London Philharmonic Orchestras, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the New Philharmonia Orchestra, and the New York Philharmonic. He gives solo recitals regularly in Europe and the United States and performs in the dual role of soloist and conductor with many chamber orchestras throughout Europe.

In his home country, Achúcarro has achieved the highest honors in the arts. In 1992 the Spanish government awarded him the Premio Nacional de Música, and in 1996 he was knighted by King Juan Carlos with the Gold Medal of Fine Arts. In 1997 he was awarded the Premio Larios for Musical Excellence and performed at the inauguration of the Bilbao Guggenheim Museum. UNESCO named him "Artist for Peace" in recognition of his "extraordinary artistic achievement," and in 2003, the king presented him with the Great Cross of Civil Merit, honoring a lifetime of achievement. He is also Commendador of the Order of Isabel la Católica and member of the Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando.

Achúcarro is the subject of a DVD just released by Opus Arte that commemorates the fiftieth anniversary of his debut with the London Symphony Orchestra and features a performance of Brahms' *Piano Concerto No. 2* with that ensemble under the baton of Sir Colin Davis. The DVD also includes a solo performance filmed among the paintings in the Goya gallery of the Prado Museum in Madrid. In 1997, following the express wish of composer Joaquín Rodrigo (1901–1999), Achúcarro completed and recorded for Sony Classical his revision of Rodrigo's *Piano Concerto*. His discography also features prize-winning BMG-RCA recordings of Enrique Granados' (1867–1916) *Goyescas* and the complete piano works of Manuel de Falla (1876–1946), including *Nights in the Gardens of Spain* and *Harpsichord Concerto*.

Born in Bilbao, Spain, and a descendant of Edvard Grieg through a Norwegian great-grandfather, Achúcarro displayed exceptional musical talent as a child, but, following a family tradition of scientific pursuits, he entered La Autónoma University in Madrid to prepare for a future in physics. His musical proclivity prevailed, however, as the physics major took gold medals in a succession of international piano competitions, including the Gontaut Biron in Paris, the Geneva International Competition, and the Viotti International Competition in Italy. Since September 1989 Achúcarro has held the specially endowed Joel Estes Tate Chair at Southern Methodist University. He is also a professor of piano at the Accademia Chigiana in Siena, Italy.

Program Notes

Robert Schumann's contributions to the literature of the piano study (étude)—a genre just beginning to blossom in the mid-nineteenth century at the hands of Chopin and Liszt—came in three productive bursts, after which he abandoned the genre forever. With the twelve studies that make up his opus 13 (1834, rev. 1852), Schumann achieved a remarkable level of expressivity and technical achievement that has made the work a perennial if digitally formidable recital favorite. Schumann originally provided eighteen studies, but he found the set so exhausting for the pianist that he removed five of the pieces prior to publication. Johannes Brahms selected five of the missing six études for publication during the 1890s, and these have since joined the original twelve in many performances and recordings.

Schumann presented the studies as "Études en forme de variations" (Studies in the form of variations). The theme, a melody in C sharp minor, was composed by the Baron von Fricken, an amateur musician and the father of Schumann's first fiancée, Ernestine. The first and second variations enhance the tragic atmosphere of the theme, and the third variation, entitled Étude I and marked Vivace, draws upon energetic staccato textures. The next four variations (all called Études) employ different musical and technical tools,

including canon, imitation, syncopated rhythms, major modulation, and repetitive finger-work. The eighth employs a thinner texture but is filled with intricate ornamentation. The ninth variation, a scherzo of sorts marked *Presto possibile* (as fast as possible), is one of the most challenging of the set; the theme is present only in the vaguest outline. The tenth is articulate and humorous, and the eleventh is the only one cast in a key other than C-sharp minor; its foreboding left-hand texture taking the listener into the despairing depths of Schumann's troubled mind. The final variation is cast in the enharmonic key of D-flat major, and employs an energetic theme from an opera by Heinrich Marschner (1795–1861) as its basic material.

Ravel's *Valses nobles et sentimentales* received its premiere performance under unusual circumstances. At the concert in which it was first played, the identity of each composer on the program was kept secret from the audience. At the end of the concert, the listeners were invited to guess who had written each work. For the *Valses nobles*, the registered guesses were evenly divided among Ravel, Erik Satie (1866–1925), and Zoltán Kodály (1882–1967). Ravel placed a prefix in the original score that reveals the extent to which he was influenced by the symbolist poets and the bohemian eccentricity of his hero, Satie: “Le plaisir délicieux et toujours nouveau d'une occupation inutile” (The delightful and always novel pleasure of a useless occupation). Satie, always ready to enter into witty repartee, soon published a work of his own entitled *Trois valses distinguées du précieux dégoûté* (Three Distinguished Waltzes of a Jaded Dandy), a gentle poke at Ravel's reputation for fussiness in dress and grooming and at Satie's own habit of wearing fine clothes in a disheveled condition.

The suite of twelve characteristic pieces titled *Iberia* is the magnum opus of the Spanish composer Isaac Albéniz. Each movement is inspired by a place in Spain or a traditional Spanish dance. The composer called the city of Seville a “rainbow of all the human joys,” but the march tune he employs in the movement titled *Sevilla* is actually from Burgos, a city in northern Spain that is, like Seville, a destination of religious pilgrims. The piece depicts the progress of a religious procession, heard first in the distance

as the piano imitates drumbeats gradually coming closer. The excitement builds, bells peal in the high and low registers of the keyboard, and the pious revelers join in singing the hymn *Tantum ergo*. This forms the movement's central section, a soaring, quiet melody with restless Spanish counter-rhythms. The piece ends with a long, serene coda.

The first piece from Book I of *Iberia*, *Evocación*, lacks a geographically specific title. It could be understood as a general introduction to the suite, although it does include elements of the *jota*, a characteristic dance from the region of Navarra, and the *fandanguillo*, one of the variants of singing in the flamenco tradition. *Evocación* features a drifting, drowsy theme that is accompanied by rich harmonies and adorned with a constant filigree of notes.

El Albaicín is the gypsy quarter of Granada, where mournful guitar and violin music is heard wafting out of many doorways. Albéniz, though raised in a different part of Spain (Catalonia), was a frequent visitor to Granada and this exotic neighborhood.

*Program notes by Stephen Ackert, head, music department,
National Gallery of Art*

Concerts at the National Gallery of Art
resume in September 2010

Carlos Rodriguez, pianist

Music by Latin American composers
Presented in honor of Hispanic Heritage Month

September 26, 2010
Sunday Evening, 6:30 pm
West Building, West Garden Court