

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.

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

[www.nga.gov](http://www.nga.gov)

COVER: Paul Gauguin, *Musique barbare* (*Barbaric Music*), 1893, Kunstmuseum Basel, Kupferstichkabinett, Gift of Richard Doetsch-Benziger



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

National Gallery of Art  
2,833rd Concert

**François Chaplin, pianist**

Presented in honor of  
*Gauguin: Maker of Myth*

March 20, 2011  
Sunday Evening, 6:30 pm  
West Building, West Garden Court

*Admission free*

## Program

Frédéric Chopin (1810–1849)

*Nocturne in B-flat Minor*, op. 9, no. 1 (1833)

Gabriel Fauré (1845–1924)

*Nocturne no. 1 in E-flat Minor*, op. 33, no. 1 (1875)

Chopin

*Étude in A-flat Major*, op. 25, no. 1

Claude Debussy (1862–1918)

From *Études*, Book II (1916)

*Pour les arpèges composés*, L. 136/11

Debussy

From *Préludes*, Book I (1910)

*Les Sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir*

*La Cathédrale engloutie*

*Des pas sur la neige*

From *Préludes*, Book II (1913)

*Feux d'artifice*

Debussy

From *Suite bergamasque* (1905)

*Clair de lune*

Chopin

*Barcarolle*, op. 60 (1845–1846)

Debussy

*L'Isle joyeuse* (1904)

## The Musician

Described by French music critic Alain Cochard as “one of the most original and engaging of all French pianists,” François Chaplin won the International Piano Competition in Senigallia, Italy, in 1987 and the Mozart and Robert Casadesus Prizes at the International Competition in Cleveland two years later. He studied piano at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique under Ventsislav Yankoff and Jean-Claude Pennetier and accompaniment and chamber music under Jacqueline Robin.

Chaplin has appeared as a soloist in many of the world's capitals, including Berlin, London, Mexico City, Moscow, Paris, and Tokyo, and with the French National, Japan Philharmonic, and Saint Petersburg Philharmonic orchestras. He appears regularly at the Cervantino Festival in Mexico; France's Chopin at Nohant, Chopin at Paris Bagatelle, Flâneries Musicales, La Roque-d'Anthéron, Pontlevoy, Reims, and Saint-Bertrand-de-Comminges festivals; and in music festivals in Japan, Kazakhstan, Latvia, and Russia. As a chamber musician, Chaplin has collaborated with the Debussy, Elysées, Psophos, and Talich String quartets as well as with cellists Emmanuelle Bertrand and François Salque, clarinetist Patrick Messina, and pianists Marie-Joseph Jude and Cédric Tiberghien. Chaplin's recordings have met with great critical acclaim, and his recording of Debussy's complete piano works received a Diapason d'Or and the *BBC Magazine* and *Télérama* awards. He has also recorded works by Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, Chopin, Mozart, Poulenc, and Schumann.

Born in Paris into a family of painters, Chaplin often accompanied his parents on visits to the Barbizon Museum, and quickly grasped the link between music and the colors of nature. He vividly remembers having a strong attraction as a beginning pianist to the exercise *Chant arabe* in the method book *La Méthode rose*. His precocious taste for tone color and modal sound needed only the stimulation of Charles Baudelaire's (1821–1867) *Correspondances* to turn him into a dedicated Debussy performer. Professor of piano at the Versailles National Music Conservatory, he regularly gives master classes in French music at the Conservatory of Saint Petersburg and the University of Montreal as well as in Japan, Kazakhstan, and Norway.

## Program Notes

The early twentieth century was a period of rigorous innovation and iconoclasm in France, as artists such as Paul Cézanne, Odilon Redon, and Henri Rousseau and composers Claude Debussy and Maurice Ravel expanded the aesthetic concepts that had been formulated by nineteenth-century symbolist authors and poets such as Baudelaire, Stéphane Mallarmé (1842–1898), and Paul Verlaine (1844–1896). Paul Gauguin (1848–1903) lived only three years into the twentieth century, but his late works set the stage for what was to come in the post-Impressionist and early modern periods. The exhibition *Gauguin: Maker of Myth* examines the artist's use of religious and mythological symbols to tell stories, reinventing or appropriating narratives and myths. Drawing from the symbolism in his European cultural heritage and from Maori legend, Gauguin invested his art with deeper meaning, ritual, and myth—a fusion that continues to mesmerize viewers of his works. The exhibition remains on view in the East Building until June 5, 2011.

In honor of the exhibition, pianist François Chaplin has selected music by French composers who accomplished a similar synthesis. Chopin was born in Poland, but spent most of his adult life in France and was profoundly influenced by French literature and art. He did not invent the nocturne—Irish composer John Field originated the genre—but in his three *Nocturnes*, op. 9, he surpassed all previous examples. Chopin's nocturnes stand out for their original melodies, rich harmonies, and distinct pianistic style. Op. 9 is dedicated to Marie Pleyel (1811–1875), wife of the Austrian piano maker Camille Pleyel (1788–1855).

Gabriel Fauré was a close contemporary of Gauguin, and his music was revered by the artists and intellectuals of his generation as well as by his fellow musicians. Fauré's *Nocturne no. 1* for piano is believed to have been written between 1875 and 1877, but it was not available to the public until 1883, when the composer's second and third nocturnes were also ready for publication. The first nocturne exhibits the influence of Chopin in form as well as in its dark romantic sonorities. The main theme is gentle and reflective, permeated with a sweet gloom, as the music seems to be continually descending in pitch. The lengthy middle section starts almost as if it

were a new piece: after a pause, an ominous swirling figure in the bass is heard, over which a mysterious theme appears in the upper-middle register, both stately and agitated. Tension gradually builds and is only slowly released when the main theme returns for a reprise.

Chopin's *Étude in A-flat Major* has been dubbed both the "Aeolian Harp," on account of its continuously undulating arpeggios, and the "Shepherd Boy," based on Chopin's remark to a student that when playing the piece he thought of a scene—a shepherd boy takes refuge from an approaching storm in a quiet grotto; as the rumblings of the storm approach in the background, the shepherd plays a simple tune on his flute.

One of a set of twelve études that Debussy composed in 1915, *Pour les arpèges composés* is a study in arpeggiated chords and harmonies. The collection is dedicated to the memory of Chopin, whose famous études served as models for Debussy. Both composers succeeded in simultaneously tackling a particular technical feature of pianism and producing a satisfying and entertaining piece of music.

Each of Debussy's préludes is a short but substantial work that conveys a particular mood or impression. In accordance with the composer's practice of assigning a title only after the completion of a work, the title of each prélude is placed at the end of the piece, rather than at the beginning. Inspired by a line from the poem *Harmonie du soir* (Evening Harmony) by Baudelaire, *Les Sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir* (Sounds and Odors Waft in the Evening Air) is the fourth prélude in Book I. It is among the most evocative and compelling of these miniature masterworks. In *La Cathédral engloutie* (The Sunken Cathedral), Debussy offers a striking musical evocation of the mythical submerged Cathedral of Ys with modality and parallel harmonies that are at once mysterious and archaic. The rhythmic stasis and massive sonorities create a sense of awe and grandeur. In *Des pas sur la neige* (Footsteps in the Snow), a barren winter snowscape is represented by a plaintive, harmonically static dirge. The slow, sustained legato underpins the powerfully hypnotic atmosphere. The prélude that concludes Book II, *Feux d'artifice* (Fireworks), is the musical equivalent of a fireworks display over Paris. Brilliant arpeggios, trills, and rapid chord passages characterize

this, the most technically challenging of the *préludes*. The work comes to an effective close with a distant quote of “La Marseillaise,” sounded over a hushed tremolo.

Inspired by the eponymous poem by Paul Verlaine (1844–1896), *Clair de lune* (Moonlight) is the third piece of Debussy’s *Suite bergamasque* for piano. The title of the suite quotes a line from the poem (*...ou vont masques et bergamasques... where masqueraders and dancers go*), and the middle section of *Clair de lune* evokes the surging flow of the fountains to which the poem also refers (*...les grands jets d’eau sveltes parmi les marbres... the grand, graceful fountains among the marbles*).

In the latter part of Chopin’s career, his health was deteriorating from tuberculosis and his relationship with George Sand, one of the most successful novelists of her day, was beginning to crumble. During this troubled period he remained fairly productive and produced, among other compositions, the upbeat *Barcarolle*, op. 60. While it exhibits the rocking lilt associated with songs sung by gondoliers, it goes far beyond the level of a song without words, delving deeply into romantic emotion and musical development.

Debussy’s *L’Isle joyeuse* was inspired by Antoine Watteau’s (1684–1721) painting *Embarcation for Cythere*. Consisting of a single movement in a highly modified sonata form, the work uses a technique similar to the alteration of sonata form that Chopin used in his ballades. The lyrical second subject returns in *fortissimo* at the conclusion as a fervent paean. *L’Isle joyeuse* has an almost orchestral quality, as a number of hallmarks of Debussy’s mature style—parallel sonorities, whole-tone structures, multiple layers of sound, atmospheric effects, and melodic fragmentation—are in full evidence.

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

Next week at the National Gallery of Art

**Tanya Anisimova, cellist**  
**Lydia Frumkin, pianist**

Music by  
Anisimova and Schubert

Presented in honor of  
Women’s History Month

March 23, 2011  
Wednesday, 12:10 pm  
West Building Lecture Hall



**Women and Children of the  
Washington Performing Arts Society Gospel Choirs**

Gospel music

Presented in honor of  
Women’s History Month

March 27, 2011  
Sunday Evening, 6:30 pm  
West Building, West Garden Court