

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

COVER: Auguste Renoir, *Oarsmen at Chatou*, 1879,
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Sam A. Lewisohn



The Seventieth Season of
The William Nelson Cromwell and F. Lamot Belin
Concerts

National Gallery of Art
2,877th Concert

Pascal and Ami Rogé, pianists

**Presented in honor of the
Reopening of the
Nineteenth-century French galleries**

March 4, 2012
Sunday, 6:30 pm
West Building, West Garden Court

Admission free

Program

Music by Claude Debussy (1862–1918)

Six Épigraphes antiques (1914)

- Pour invoquer Pan, dieu du vent d'été
- Pour un Tombeau sans nom
- Pour que la Nuit soit propice
- Pour la Danseuse aux crotales
- Pour l'Égyptienne
- Pour remercier la Pluie au matin

From *Préludes*, Book I (1909–1910)

- Voiles
- Le Vent dans la plaine
- Les Collines d'Anacapri
- La Sérénade interrompue
- La Cathédrale engloutie
- Minstrels

Petite Suite (1886–1889)

- En Bateau
- Cortège
- Menuet
- Ballet

INTERMISSION

En Blanc et noir (1915)

- Avec Emportement
- Lent et sombre
- Scherzando

La Mer (1903–1905)

- De l'Aube à midi sur la mer
- Jeux de vagues
- Dialogue du vent et de la mer

The Musicians

Known worldwide for their interpretation of French piano music, Pascal and Ami Rogé specialize in music for two pianos four hands. A frequent guest at major music festivals, this husband-and-wife team has appeared at the Australian Festival of Chamber Music, the Beijing International Piano Festival, England's Petworth, Salisbury, and Thaxted Festivals, Hong Kong's Joy of Music Festival, Ireland's Music for Galway, and Italy's Incontri in Terra di Siena.

Their recent tour of Japan included the premiere of *Ami Suite*, a new piece for piano four hands, written especially for them by the Japanese-American composer Paul Chihara. Invited with increasing frequency to perform with orchestras, the duo has played with the Hong Kong Sinfonietta, Jyväskylä (Finland) Symphony Orchestra, Metropolitan Orchestra of Lisbon, Poznan Philharmonic Orchestra, and Shanghai Symphony Orchestra. Last year they performed the premiere of a commissioned concerto for two pianos by Matthew Hindson with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Vladimir Ashkenazy.

Reflecting on the privilege of touring professionally with his spouse, Pascal Rogé says: "I have always said that my ambition was to play the music I love with the people I love; with [Ami] I have been able to continue my search of sounds and colors throughout the French repertoire, but now with four hands and two hearts . . . Our emotions transform the black and white of a double piano recital into a single colorful dream."

Pascal and Ami Rogé appear at the National Gallery by arrangement with MusicVine Arts Management, www.musicvinearts.com.

Program Notes

One of the predominant composers in the history of French music, Claude Debussy is linked with Maurice Ravel at the heart of the symbolist literary movement's manifestation in music. Sometimes labeled "the Impressionist composer," Debussy did not consider himself an Impressionist; the spirituality and imagination fueling his work was more universal, although he often alluded to symbolist poetry in his writings about his music. He had an inquisitive eye and ear that led him to such influences as the late romantic Russian composers Balakirev, Mussorgsky, and Tchaikovsky; the German musical colossus Wagner; and, late in his career, oriental music, including Javanese gamelan music. Debussy's wide-ranging curiosity also led him to compose around themes rooted in literature and visual art—many of his works explicitly refer to visual images, and one of his goals was to translate images into a soundscape. He seldom constructed entire pieces around one tonal area, and his lush sonorities were meant to appeal more to the senses of his listeners than to their intellect.

Debussy composed many works for orchestral ensembles, but his compositions all began at the piano, where he was particularly skilled as a performer. According to Debussy biographer León Vallas (1879–1956), "He was an original virtuoso, remarkable for the delicacy and mellowness of his touch. He made one forget that the piano has hammers." Pianist, composer, and conductor Alfredo Casella (1883–1947) noted that Debussy "used the pedals in a way all his own. He played...like no other living composer or pianist." Debussy's singular playing technique is reflected in the tender, wispy textures characteristic of his music for piano and orchestra.

In 1897 Debussy attended a staging of twelve "living tableaux" based on Pierre Louÿs' (1870–1925) *Chanson de Bilitis*, which he had published in 1894, claiming the poems to be translations of newly discovered autobiographical poetry of Sappho. The event inspired Debussy to compose incidental music for six of the tableaux for two flutes, two harps, and celesta in the form of *Six Épigraphes antiques*, an atmospheric set of small movements without a definite narrative. The theme of the first movement, "Pour invoquer Pan, dieu du vent d'été" (For Invoking Pan, God of the Summer Wind), recalls

the idyllic setting of *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* in its depiction of a leisurely summer day while also referring directly to Pan, who shares the physical attributes of a faun. "Pour un Tombeau sans nom" (For a Tomb without Name) is an understated elegy with high chromaticism, and "Pour que la Nuit soit propice" (So That the Night May Be Propitious) is a delicate nocturne. "Pour la Danseuse aux crotales" (For the Dancer with Castanets) contains piano figuration designed to imitate the clicking sound of Spanish castanets. "Pour l'Égyptienne" (For the Egyptian Woman) bears a rhapsodic character, similar to music that Debussy sometimes transcribed from his free-improvisation sessions. "Pour remercier la Pluie au matin" (For Thanking the Morning Rain) resembles a piano etude with its fast chromatic patterns continuing underneath a variety of different melodies.

Although pianist Jane Mortier began a tradition in 1911 of performing Debussy's first book of *Préludes* as a full set, Debussy himself preferred to perform only three or four of these miniature works at a time, and Pascal and Ami Rogé follow the composer's example in tonight's concert. The titles of the preludes are sometimes ambiguous, as in the case of "Voiles," which can mean either "sails" or "veils." This prelude finds Debussy looking eastward, as he uses whole-tone scales. The opening measures of "La Cathédrale engloutie" (The Sunken Cathedral) reflect Debussy's affinity for the pentatonic scale and parallel fifths. Each of the *Préludes* intends to convey a musical image, but the title does not appear until the end of the movement. Presumably the listener can develop his or her own perception of the music before reading Debussy's description. The other movements on tonight's program evoke the wind in the plain ("Le Vent dans la plaine"), the hills of Anacapri ("Les Collines d'Anacapri"), an interrupted serenade ("La Sérénade interrompue"), and the singing of minstrels.

Petite suite comes from early in Debussy's career, and it embodies a late Romantic style similar in character to Massenet or Delibes. It is certainly a piece for entertainment without the same virtuosic demands as Debussy's other works, and for these reasons it has become a very accessible and popular piece. The first movement, "En Bateau" (By Boat), is highly melodic and carefully voiced, and it briefly employs the whole-tone scale, as Debussy would do with increasing frequency in his later work. The second movement,

“Cortège” (Procession), like “Fêtes” from *Images*, suggests the brilliant procession of a marching band at a festival. In the “Menuet” Debussy hints at his mature voice, incorporating accompaniment figures that dance around the main melody, yielding a dreamlike sound. The final movement is a lively dance alluding to late nineteenth-century French theater music.

Three poetic epigraphs comprise *En Blanc et noir*. Debussy wrote these movements along with his *Études* for piano in 1915 in a quick burst of creativity. All three exhibit great originality within the forms of a waltz, an elegy, and a scherzo. “Lent et sombre” (slow and somber) is a memorial to Jacques Charlot, a friend of Debussy who died in World War I. It evokes a wide range of emotions, with the slow passages framing an allegro section in the middle. The final movement, “Scherzando,” is a tongue-in-cheek characterization of Igor Stravinsky, who by 1915 was gaining some notoriety in Paris. This humorous setting does not necessarily resemble Stravinsky’s music, although it does recall the impish dwarf from Ravel’s *Gaspard de la nuit* (1908). Debussy likely intended the reference as a good-natured barb at Stravinsky’s short stature.

La Mer (The Sea) holds a place in the orchestral repertoire as a marvel of colorful orchestration. The overwhelming effect of the full orchestra can distract the listener from the work’s thematic unity and radical harmonic progressions, but these are clarified when it is played on two pianos. A 1909 review in *The Chicago Tribune* indicates how dramatically *La Mer* ushered in a new age in orchestral composition: “It is safe to say that few understood what they heard and few heard anything they understood . . . There are no themes distinct and strong enough to be called themes. There is nothing in the way of even a brief motif that can be grasped securely enough by the ear and brain to serve as a guiding line through the tonal maze.” Stated positively, there are, of course, themes and motifs repeated in the work, but the rhapsodic development allows them to come and go as if they were being tossed by the ocean’s waves. The evocative titles of the three movements can be translated: “From Dawn to Afternoon on the Sea,” “Games of Waves,” and “Dialogue of the Wind and the Sea.”

Program notes by Michael Jacko, concert aide, National Gallery of Art

Upcoming concerts at the National Gallery of Art

Carmen Balthrop, soprano
José Cáceres, pianist

Music by Dvořák, Greenleaf, Tchaikovsky,
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Presented in honor of
Women’s History Month

March 11, 2012
Sunday, 6:30 pm
West Building, West Garden Court



Cyrus Forough, violinist
Stephen Ackert, pianist

Music by J. S. Bach, Beethoven,
Fallá, and Handel

March 18, 2012
Sunday, 6:30 pm
West Building, West Garden Court