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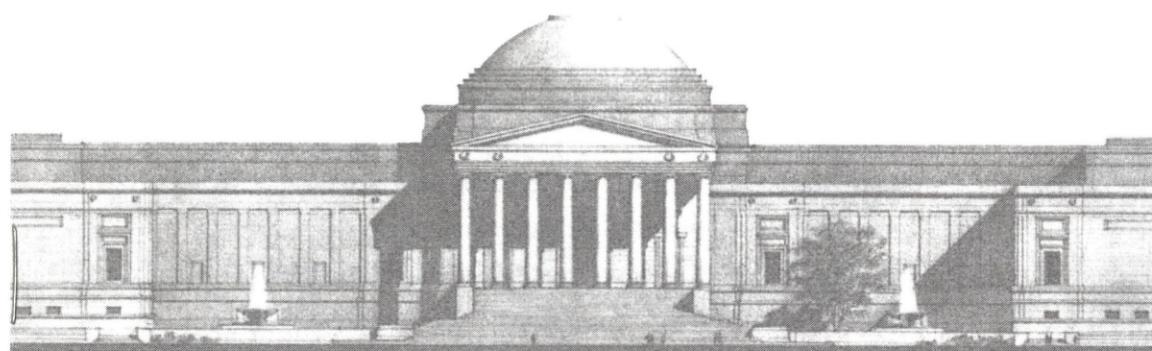
For the convenience of concertgoers, the Garden Café remains open for light refreshments until 6:00 pm on Sundays.

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

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

www.nga.gov

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The Seventy-first Season of
The William Nelson Cromwell and F. Lamot Belin
Concerts

National Gallery of Art
2,955th Concert

Michael Arnowitt, pianist

Presented in honor of
*Diaghilev and the Ballets Russes, 1909–1929:
When Art Danced with Music*

June 16, 2013
Sunday, 6:30 pm
West Building, West Garden Court

Admission free

Program

“1913”

Claude Debussy (1862–1918)

Préludes, Book 2 (1913)

Brouillards (Mists): Modéré

Les Fées sont d'exquises danseuses (Fairies Are Exquisite Dancers)

Ondine: Scherzando

Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873–1943)

Sonata no. 2 in B-flat Minor (1913)

Allegro agitato

Erik Satie (1866–1925)

Embryons desséchés (Dessicated Embryos) (1913)

of a Holothurian (Sea Cucumber)

of an Edriophthalma (Crustacean)

of a Podophthalma (Gastropod with Protruding Eyes)

Jeffrey Chappell, narrator

Leo Ornstein (1893–2002)

Suicide in an Airplane (1918–1919)

INTERMISSION

Charles Ives (1874–1954)

Sonata no. 2 (“Concord, Massachusetts, 1840–1860”) (1911–1915)

The Alcotts

Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971)

“The Adoration of the Earth” from *The Rite of Spring* (1913)

Transcribed for piano solo by Michael Arnowitt

Adoration of the Earth

Introduction

Augurs of Spring

Ritual of Abduction

Spring Rounds

Ritual of the Rival Tribes

Procession of the Sage: The Sage

Dance of the Earth

This concert is sponsored in part by the Billy Rose Foundation

MICHAEL ARNOWITT

Known for the beauty, clarity, and elegance of his musical ideas, Michael Arnowitt is one of the most creative and imaginative pianists performing today. Frequently praised for his abilities to coax new articulations and colors from the piano and construct innovative and thought-provoking programs, Arnowitt connects naturally with audiences of all ages. In 2004, Arnowitt's life and music became the subject of *Beyond Eighty-Eight Keys*, an award-winning documentary by Susan Bettmann. The film has been broadcast twice on public television and has been shown at film festivals and venues including the Rode Pomp, an arts center in Ghent, Belgium and the Anthology, a theater in New York City's East Village.

In 1989 Arnowitt began his presentation of the complete Beethoven piano sonatas, matching his age as he performs the various sonatas with Beethoven's age as he composed them. The eight concerts in the project, spaced out over 26 years, thereby become a study in the psychology of aging and development. He has performed these "Beethoven and Arnowitt" concerts throughout the United States and in Canada and Germany, where the Rheinische Post of Düsseldorf wrote, "he played with a striking virtuosity and deeply felt passion." He has performed as piano soloist with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the Kiev Chamber Orchestra under Roman Kofman, and the Savannah Symphony Orchestra, among others.

Arnowitt's spoken commentary illuminates the music by drawing connections between the various works on the program. He enjoys researching the social, political, religious, or artistic contexts of a piece of music and sharing insights and anecdotes that reveal relationships between the compositions and the world in which they were created. Born in Boston, Massachusetts, Arnowitt has lived in Montpelier, Vermont since 1983.

Universally acknowledged as the most innovative dance company of the twentieth century, the Ballets Russes propelled the performing arts to new heights through groundbreaking collaborations among artists, composers, choreographers, dancers, and fashion designers. Founded by Russian impresario Serge Diaghilev (1872–1929) in Paris in 1909, the company combined Russian and Western traditions with a healthy dose of modernism, thrilling and shocking audiences with its powerful fusion of choreography, music, and design. Showcasing more than 130 original costumes, set designs, paintings, sculptures, prints and drawings, photographs, and posters, the National Gallery of Art exhibition *Diaghilev and the Ballets Russes* also incorporates film clips in a theatrical, multimedia installation. The exhibition remains on view in the East Building until September 2, 2013.

Diaghilev's success depended primarily on his ability to identify and bring together the most creative artists of his day. Recognizing the vitality of contemporary art, he called upon Léon Bakst, Natalia Goncharova, Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, and Giorgio de Chirico, among others, to create dynamic set designs and exquisitely decorated costumes that shared a unified aesthetic. They in turn brought the most important artistic developments of the early twentieth century—including futurism, cubism, and surrealism—to the ballet stage. Diaghilev also featured dancers noted for their technical brio, making the company a breeding ground for choreographic innovation: Mikhail Fokine, Vaslav Nijinsky, Léonide Massine, Bronislava Nijinska, and George Balanchine all dramatically expanded the vocabulary of movement. In addition to the composers featured on tonight's program, the Ballet Russes premiered significant works by Manuel da Falla, Darius Milhaud, and Serge Prokofiev.

This evening's program presents contrasting pieces of piano music written by major composers in and around the year 1913. The second decade of the twentieth century witnessed an unparalleled creative explosion in all the arts. The world situation was equally rich in change, with the end of aristocracy, the birth of new technologies such as the automobile, the

airplane, and electricity, and mass social unrest over the issues of equal rights for women and the working conditions of factory laborers. Tensions were further heightened by a series of diplomatic and military crises that would ultimately lead to the outbreak of World War I the following year.

With the romantic era in its twilight years, new and original music was emerging everywhere. These new musical currents included responses to expressionist and impressionist visual art, nationalist styles using energetic folk music elements, compositions aiming to create a mystical experience, and what was dubbed at the time “futurist” music—pieces that foreshadowed the developments of the next one-hundred years.

The most sensational artistic event of 1913 was the premiere of Stravinsky’s *The Rite of Spring* in Paris, which shocked the audience so intensely that the performance was interrupted by a riot in the theater. Featured on today’s program is the complete first half of the ballet “The Adoration of the Earth.” The Dances of the Young Girls, Spring Rounds, Ritual of the Rival Tribes, and Dance of the Earth suggest themes of brutal violence and primitivism in both dance and music that would permeate the entire decade musically. Stravinsky’s ad-infinitum repetition of a chord outlining two simultaneous tonalities (E major and E-flat dominant) in the Dances of the Young Girls precludes the tone-cluster techniques used a few years later by Leo Ornstein to depict the horror of warfare.

One of the most controversial and important figures in American music at the time, Ornstein was a stylistic radical. One of his most distinctive works, *Suicide in an Airplane*, incorporates a quick-moving bass ostinato pattern intended to capture the sensation of airplane engines in flight, as well as tone clusters to depict the horror of warfare. More distant from the performance scene was fellow American composer Charles Ives, who wrote his mature works in relative obscurity during the same decade. The “Hawthorne” movement of his *Concord Sonata* calls for a 14 3/4-inch wooden board to produce certain chord clusters. “The Alcotts,” however, is a more consonant movement filled with quotations of the opening theme to Beethoven’s *Fifth Symphony*.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, the first movement of Sergei Rachmaninoff’s lush, nostalgic *Sonata no. 2* is the epitome of late-period romanticism. This tragic work begins with a dramatic downward sweep from the middle to the bottom of the piano keyboard, setting the stage for what is to come. It unfolds in sonata form, though Rachmaninoff spins out each melodic idea so expansively that the piece begins to resemble a rhapsody. Following a long and exhausting tour as a concert pianist, Rachmaninoff composed this sonata while on vacation in Rome, even as he concurrently orchestrated his large choral-orchestral work, *The Bells*. Only nine years Stravinsky’s senior, Rachmaninoff shared with his younger contemporary an admiration for the masterworks of Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov (1844–1908). Remaining in the romantic tradition, Rachmaninoff did not respond to Rimsky-Korsakov’s push toward the threshold of modernity, whereas this became Stravinsky’s claim to fame.

Also rooted deeply in the romantic tradition, Claude Debussy wrote a series of short, impressionistic movements in 1913. Debussy longed to be called a symbolist rather than an impressionist, and his two books of *Préludes* for piano showcase his vivid imagination for musical symbolism. Each movement is named for an image, an object, a person, a place, or an idea; and the title appears at the bottom right corner following each movement. This way the player is able to discern the image directly from the music before reading the description.

Erik Satie’s *Embryons desséchés*, also dating from 1913, indulge in musical representation that is more whimsical, even comical. In deliberately rejecting established musical trends—and satirizing some of them—Satie anticipated the surrealist movement in art. His music attracted the attention of Serge Diaghilev when he was ready to incorporate surrealism into the work of the Ballets Russes. In 1917 he invited Satie to compose the score for *Parade*, which featured revolutionary choreography by Léonide Massine (1896–1979) and costumes by Picasso.

Program notes based on materials provided by Michael Arnowitz