

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.

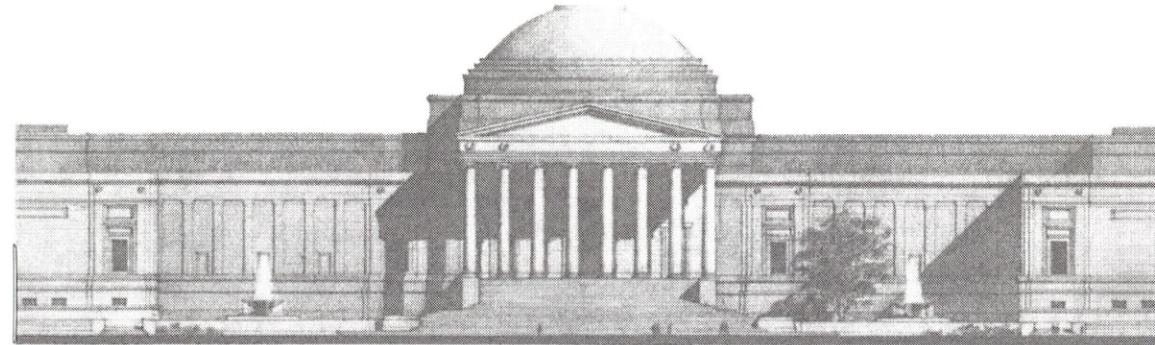
For the convenience of concertgoers, the Garden Café remains open for light refreshments until 6:00 pm on Sundays.

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

National Gallery of Art
3,017th Concert

National Gallery of Art Orchestra
Philippe Entremont, guest conductor
Michel Lethiec, clarinetist

October 12, 2014
Sunday, 6:30 pm
West Building, West Garden Court

Admission free

Program

Claude Debussy (1862–1918)

Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune

(*Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun*) (1894)

Camille Saint-Saëns (1835–1921)

Sonata for Clarinet in E-flat Major, op. 167 (1921),

transcribed for orchestra by Franck Villard

Allegretto

Allegro animato

Lento

Molto allegro; allegretto

INTERMISSION

Georges Bizet (1838–1875)

Symphony no. 1 in C Major (1855)

Allegro vivo

Andante; adagio

Allegro vivace

Finale: Allegro vivace

The Musicians

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART ORCHESTRA

Founded in 1943, the National Gallery of Art Orchestra began with a small cadre of musicians drawn from the National Symphony Orchestra. Over time the Gallery orchestra reached the size and status of a large chamber ensemble, performing the full range of chamber and symphonic repertoire. It has frequently debuted works by American composers, most notably the 1953 premiere of Charles Ives's *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 John Musto's *Later the Same Evening: An opera inspired by five paintings of Edward Hopper*, under guest conductor Glen Cortese. Other guest conductors who have appeared with the orchestra in recent years include Bjarte Engeset, Vladimir Lande, George Mester, Otto-Werner Mueller, and José Serebrier.

PHILIPPE ENTREMONT

Philippe Entremont gained international attention at age eighteen when he played his New York debut in Carnegie Hall, performing piano concertos by Franz Liszt (1811–1886) and André Jolivet (1905–1974). The first concert in Entremont's concurrent American debut tour took place on January 4, 1953, at the National Gallery of Art. This evening's concert marks his fourth appearance at the Gallery in the course of his eminent career spanning more than sixty years.

Chosen to perform in the "Piano Extravaganza of the Century" at the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, Entremont serves as president of the International Certificate for Piano Artists and the Bel'Arte Foundation of Brussels. He has been active the past thirty years as both a conductor and a performer. He has led the Deutsche Staatsphilharmonie, the Israel Festival Orchestra, and the Munich and Shenzhen Symphony orchestras. He is the principal conductor of the Boca Raton Philharmonic Symphonia, artistic director and conductor of the Santo Domingo Music Festival Orchestra, and lifetime

laureate conductor of the Israel Chamber, Munich Symphony, and Vienna Chamber orchestras. From 1981 to 2002, he served as music director of the New Orleans Philharmonic, the Denver Symphony, and the Netherlands Chamber orchestras.

Entremont has been awarded Austria's Arts and Sciences Cross of Honor and Great Cross of the Republic and France's Legion of Honor, Order of Merit, and Order of Arts and Letters, in which he holds the title of Commander. He appears at the National Gallery by arrangement with Columbia Artists Management, Inc.

MICHEL LETHIEC

Michel Lethiec stands as one of the finest clarinetists in the world, performing internationally as a soloist with orchestras, as a recitalist, and as a chamber musician. Born in France, he studied at the Paris Conservatory, where he earned first prizes in both clarinet and chamber music. He went on to win the interpretation prize in the international competition in Belgrade. Following his Carnegie Hall debut in 1980, Lethiec has toured extensively in Europe, the United States, the Middle East, and Asia. Recent and upcoming appearances include concerts at the Budapest and Prague Festivals, Alice Tully Hall in New York, Champs Élysées Theater in Paris, Hamburg's Philharmonie, Munich's Herkulesaal, Vienna's Musikverein, and Moscow's Tchaikovsky Hall.

Lethiec's discography includes many recordings of the solo and chamber music clarinet repertory, played with Concentus Hungaricus, Moscow Virtuosos, the Lindsay Quartet, and the Scottish Ensemble. An enthusiastic performer of contemporary music, he has premiered concertos and pieces by Ballif, Boucourechliev, Corigliano, and Risset. Artistic director of the Pau Casals Festival in Prades, France, Michel Lethiec appears at the National Gallery by arrangement with Dispeker Artists.

Program Notes

Presented in honor of the exhibition *Degas's Little Dancer*, which opened on October 5 in the West Building, Main Floor, gallery 52, this evening's concert features works by French composers written during the adult life of Edgar Degas (1834–1917). The program represents a broad spectrum of French dance music, which was an important part of the artist's cultural milieu.

Claude Debussy called his *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* a "free illustration" of Stéphane Mallarmé's eponymous poem. Debussy described his work as a "succession of scenes through which pass the desires and dreams of the faun in the heat of the afternoon. Then, tired of pursuing the timorous flight of nymphs and naiads, he succumbs to intoxicating sleep, in which he can finally realize his dreams of possession in universal Nature." Vaslav Nijinsky (1890–1950) used the *Prélude* as the basis for a dance piece with the Ballets Russes in 1912. In this form it became one of the ballet company's early sensations, contributing significantly to the artistic hotbed of fin-de-siècle Paris during Degas's later years.

Debussy's meditation on youth and discovery meanders rhapsodically through various scenes linked by recurring musical motives. He evokes the sound of nature from the very first note: the flute's held C-sharp is the most open note on the instrument, played without depressing any keys. This effect warps time, giving the modern flute the sound of a set of simple panpipes. Peppered throughout the piece are pentatonic and whole-tone scales that infuse the music with exoticism. French composer Pierre Boulez considers the work "the beginning of modern music... a work that barely grasps onto tonality and harmonic function." Two examples of Debussy's flexible, wandering, harmonic language occur in the first few measures. The opening flute solo descends chromatically over the range of a tritone, generally known as the most dissonant interval. Then, the first point of digression from the flute solo is a revoiced statement of Richard Wagner's famously ambiguous first chord from *Tristan und Isolde* (1859). Both Wagner and Debussy use this unresolved chord to suggest a directionless longing.

In 1921, when he was eighty-five years old, Camille Saint-Saëns composed the *Sonata for Clarinet in E-flat Major*. He continued to be active as a composer and performer, traveling frequently between Algiers and Paris. Aiming to complete six sonatas for wind instruments before his death, he was able to complete three—one for oboe, one for bassoon, and one for clarinet. He wrote in a letter to a friend in his final year of life, “I am using my last energies to add to the repertoire for these otherwise neglected instruments.” While these three sonatas were published before the composer’s death, performances took place only posthumously.

Saint-Saëns’s *Sonata for Clarinet* has four movements, which is more characteristic of the Classical sonata tradition than the three-movement Romantic tradition. The first movement is brief but varied, with some moments of calm and others of great passion. The lively spirit of the second movement *scherzo* contrasts sharply with the plodding, dirgelike character of the third movement *lento*. Following the *lento* without pause is the *molto allegro* finale, in which the clarinet plays the most demanding and dazzling virtuoso passages of the entire sonata. The work concludes, however, with the same hushed, placid *allegretto* music from the first movement.

For all the acclaim Georges Bizet’s *Symphony in C* has enjoyed, the composer never considered it among his important works. He wrote the symphony as a student project within the span of a month, while studying with Charles Gounod (1818–1893) at the Paris Conservatoire. The symphony’s stylistic, orchestrational, melodic, and harmonic similarities to Gounod’s own *Symphony no. 1 in D Major* (1855) may also explain why Bizet buried the work in his stack of manuscripts. It was not until Austrian conductor Felix Weingartner (1863–1942) came into possession of the manuscript that the work received its premiere in 1935. It was first recorded two years later, facilitating the symphony’s introduction into the Romantic repertoire.

Immediately recognizable in Bizet’s symphonic music are its balletic features. A certain melodic charm, rhythmic vitality and consistency, and catchy repetition give his *Symphony in C* a dancelike quality. George Balanchine (1904–1983), a lead dancer and choreographer with the Ballets Russes in the 1920s, noticed this feature of the music, adapting it in 1947

into a ballet named *Le Palais de cristal*. The first movement begins with a terse three-note theme, which eventually gives way to a more lyrical second subject. This lyricism dominates the rest of the movement, though the first theme persists throughout as a recurring motive. The *adagio* begins and ends with a hauntingly beautiful oboe solo. The middle section consists of luxurious operatic string passages and a slow fugal section. The *scherzo* features lively, snapping rhythms in the Scottish style, and the finale is a nimble *allegro vivo* that highlights the exuberance of Bizet’s youth.

*Program notes by Michael Jacko, music program assistant,
National Gallery of Art*

Upcoming Concert at the National Gallery of Art

National Gallery of Art Piano Trio

Music by Brahms and Piazzolla

October 19, 2014

Sunday, 3:30 pm

West Building, West Garden Court