Upcoming events of the Seventy-Fourth Season of The William Nelson Cromwell and F. Lammot Belin Concerts

National Gallery of Art Vocal Ensemble
Songs inspired by mythology. Presented in honor of Power and Pathos: Bronze Sculptures of the Hellenistic World
January 31, Sunday, 3:30
West Building, West Garden Court

Cantus
The Four Loves
February 7, Sunday, 3:30
West Building, West Garden Court

Cann Duo
Music from the African diaspora, including works by Leonard Bernstein, Margaret Bonds, Stephen Foster, Astor Piazzolla, and George Walker. Presented in honor of African American History Month
February 14, Sunday, 3:30
West Building, West Garden Court

Bennewitz Quartet
Music by Czech composers
February 21, Sunday, 3:30
West Building, West Garden Court

General Information
Admission to the National Gallery of Art and all of its programs is free of charge, except as noted.
The use of cameras or recording equipment during the performance is not allowed.
Please be sure that all portable electronic devices are turned off.

Concerts are made possible in part through the generosity of donors to the National Gallery of Art through The Circle. Reserved seating is available in recognition of their support. Please contact the development office at (202) 842-6450 or circle@nga.gov for more information.

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Cover Anonymous, Concert of Birds (detail), 1660/1670, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of John Dimick
Program

3:30 • West Building, West Garden Court

Aspen String Trio
David Perry, Violin
Victoria Chiang, Viola
Michael Mermagen, Cello

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 - 1750)
The Goldberg Variations, BWV 988
Transcription for string trio by Dmitry Sitkovetsky

Performed without intermission

Aria
Variation 1
Variation 2
Variation 3: Canon on the unison
Variation 4
Variation 5
Variation 6: Canon on the second
Variation 7
Variation 8
Variation 9: Canon on the third
Variation 10: Fughetta
Variation 11
Variation 12: Canon on the fourth
Variation 13
Variation 14
Variation 15: Canon on the fifth

Variation 16: Overture
Variation 17
Variation 18: Canon on the sixth
Variation 19
Variation 20
Variation 21: Canon on the seventh
Variation 22: Alla breve
Variation 23
Variation 24: Canon on the octave
Variation 25
Variation 26
Variation 27: Canon on the ninth
Variation 28
Variation 29
Variation 30: Quodlibet

Aria da capo

The Musicians

Sold-out houses and standing ovations characterize the performances of the renowned Aspen String Trio. After more than twenty years of friendship and music-making, Aspen String Trio members David Perry, Victoria Chiang, and Michael Mermagen are an ensemble with magical synergy. These three world-class instrumentalists each have a long-time association as artist-faculty with the Aspen Music Festival; combined they have performed across the globe in the world’s most prestigious venues. “The energy, spontaneity, and sheer enjoyment we find together is a constant inspiration to us, and a joy to our audiences!”

The ensemble delights in offering — with humor and insight — virtuoso performances of the rich string trio repertoire, including works by Beethoven, Mozart, and Schubert, as well as lesser-known blockbuster works by Dohnányi, Hindemith, Martinů, Rozsa, Klein, Veress, Villa-Lobos, and Ysaye, among others. Recent and upcoming performances and residencies include Chicago, the Los Angeles Music Guild, Texas, Georgia, South Carolina, Alabama, the University of Delaware, and Baltimore, where for six seasons the trio was the ensemble-in-residence at the University of Baltimore. A notable upcoming recording project includes the string trios and other music of Martinů for the Naxos label. A regular on Baltimore’s classical station WBWC, the Aspen String Trio is regularly featured on Face the Music and Music in Maryland.

Program Notes

Johann Sebastian Bach’s monumental work, the Goldberg Variations, BWV 988, was composed in 1741. The story of the work’s origin, perhaps apocryphal, is nonetheless compelling: Bach received a commission for a set of keyboard variations from Count Kaiserling, the insomniac Russian ambassador to the Saxon Court. Johann Gottlieb Goldberg, a talented harpsichordist and one of Count Kaiserling’s musicians, performed the work for the count at his bedtime to help aid his sleep.

This complex work of genius consists of an aria and a set of thirty variations, based on the bass line of the theme. Every third variation is a canon: variation three is a canon at the unison, variation six is a canon at the second, variation nine is a canon at the third, and so on until variation twenty-seven, which is a canon at the ninth. The variations following each canon are genre pieces of different types, including some Baroque dances, a fugue, and a French overture. The variations following the genre pieces are virtuosic movements.

Inspired by the 1981 Glenn Gould recording, Russian violinist Dmitry Sitkovetsky transcribed Bach’s masterpiece for string trio in 1984. This transcription was then followed by a version for string orchestra that has been performed worldwide.

Program notes by Victoria Chiang