



# 74TH SEASON OF CONCERTS

MAY 8, 2016 • NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART



# PROGRAM



Photo by John Abbott

3:00 and 4:15 • West Building, West Garden Court

Oran Etkin, clarinet, bass clarinet, saxophone

Steve Nelson, vibes

Helen Sung, piano

Rudy Royston, drums

Presented in honor of *In Celebration of Paul Mellon*

*What's New? Reimagining Benny Goodman*

Program to be announced from the stage

## The Musicians

Oran Etkin moved from Israel to the United States at age four. Surrounded by classical and Israeli music, he heard Louis Armstrong at age nine and became entranced by the trumpeter's soulful sound, swing, and melody. Armstrong inspired Etkin to search for a way to express himself through music with honesty and integrity. Etkin's search led him to Benny Goodman, a musician also raised in a Jewish immigrant home and transformed by hearing Armstrong.

Like Goodman, Etkin is a clarinetist and bandleader who calls upon classical, Jewish, and African musical traditions. Described as "a composer of eminent individuality" by his mentor Yusef Lateef, Etkin's unique sound emanates from an openness to discovering the world within himself and exploring it through his music. On this imaginative tribute to Goodman, Etkin taps into the melodicism of Armstrong and the bandleader statesmanship of Goodman while remaining true to his own creative voice. Etkin is riding a career high with this unique recording, which follows three previous award-winning Motéma Music releases.

Etkin studied classical clarinet and composition at Brandeis University and received his masters in jazz performance from the Manhattan School of Music. He has a robust international career as a leader, and has collaborated with many artists including Mike Stern, Gonzalo Rubalcaba, and Wyclif Jean. Etkin's music was featured on a Grammy Award-winning children's compilation, and his previous Motéma releases *Kelenia*, *Wake Up Clarinet!* and *Gathering Light* have garnered international acclaim and multiple awards. This year Etkin presented *Gathering Light* at the Montreal International Jazz Festival and was invited by Herbie Hancock to perform at UNESCO's International Jazz Day celebration.

## Program Notes

When National Gallery of Art founder Andrew Mellon died in 1937, only months after the Gallery had been approved by Congress, his thirty-year-old son Paul saw the museum to completion. In 1941, Paul Mellon presented the building and his father's collection of art to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who accepted it on behalf of the American people. Some 1,027 works of art given by Paul Mellon and his wife Bunny form an extraordinary legacy. During this year of the 75th Anniversary of the National Gallery, an exhibition celebrating Paul Mellon's generosity will be shown between May 8 and September 18. Featuring a hundred of the finest pastels, watercolors, drawings, prints, and illustrated books given to the Gallery by Paul Mellon, *In Celebration of Paul Mellon* attempts to honor his personal approach to collecting. The exhibition is not ordered by formal museum chronology or separated by geographical schools. Rather, it shows works grouped in a domestic style, in an attempt to share Paul Mellon's delight in and personal relationship to each of these extraordinary works.

Benny Goodman was famously Paul Mellon's favorite musician, and on his ninetieth birthday, Bunny surprised him with a party at the National Gallery. It was reported in the *New York Times* this way:

Just in front of his table was an unwonted sight at the National Gallery — an unmistakable dance floor. As dinner ended, a small but select company of jazzmen was seen to be heading his way. After a moment or two, they were joined almost subliminally by a distinguished old gentleman who was carrying the kind of bag that was once the mark of a country doctor on his rounds. Taking his time, he opened his bag, took out a clarinet and put it together. When Paul Mellon saw who it was, a 400-watt smile broke out on his face. "I don't believe it!" he said. "I just don't believe it! It's Benny Goodman!"

*What's New? Reimagining Benny Goodman* is inspired by two historic moments when Goodman used music to transform American society. The first was Goodman's famous concert at the Palomar Ballroom in Los Angeles on August 21, 1935, a show cited by historians as launching the Swing Era.

A few months after the Palomar show, the newly ordained King of Swing revolutionized society again by inviting pianist Teddy Wilson to join him and drummer Gene Krupa to form America's first mainstream racially integrated band — the Benny Goodman Trio — which would soon expand to a quartet with the addition of Lionel Hampton on vibraphone. Inspired by Goodman's contribution to a struggle for freedom that continues to this day, Etkin penned the composition, "When Every Voice Shall Sing" and dedicated the album to that groundbreaking trio/quartet. He wrote about the work:

I see the swing era as a spiritual awakening in the midst of the Great Depression. Through his clarinet, Goodman brought the swinging rhythms of black America, the soulful cry of the blues, and the wailing moan of the Jewish prayer into American homes, creating a positive movement of music and dance that carried the country through a difficult period and quickly spread throughout the world.

Program notes by Oran Etkin

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

Ariel Quartet, with Alon Goldstein, piano  
Music by Brahms and Mozart. Made possible by the Gottesman Fund in memory of Milton M. Gottesman  
May 15, Sunday, 3:30  
West Building, West Garden Court

Aphrodite Mitsopoulou, pianist  
Music by Chopin, Liszt, Konstantinidis, and Skalkottas. Cosponsored by the Embassy of Greece for the European Month of Culture  
May 19, Thursday, 12:30  
West Building, West Garden Court

Jenny Scheinman's  
*Kannapolis: A Moving Portrait*  
Original score accompanying a documentary  
May 22, Sunday, 4:30  
East Building Auditorium

Winners of the 2016 Joseph and Goldie Feder Memorial String Competition and Misbin Family Memorial Chamber Music Competition  
Presented in cooperation with Washington Performing Arts  
June 5, Sunday, 2:00 and 4:00  
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](mailto:circle@nga.gov) for more information.

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**Cover** William H. Johnson, *Blind Singer* (detail), c. 1940, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Reba and Dave Williams Collection, Florian Carr Fund and Gift of the Print Research Foundation

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