



75TH SEASON OF CONCERTS

APRIL 23, 2017 • NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART



PROGRAM

3:30 • West Building, East Garden Court

East Coast Chamber Orchestra

Christopher Theofanidis (b. 1967)

A Thousand Cranes

Stars and Sonnets

Wind Spirit

Sadako

André Caplet (1878 - 1925)

Conte Fantastique

Intermission

Witold Lutosławski (1913 - 1994)

Five Folk Melodies

Josef Suk (1874 - 1935)

Serenade for Strings in E-flat Major, op. 6



Tadashi Nakayama, *Crane in Flight*, 1957, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Rosenwald Collection

The Musicians

In 2001, a group of musicians — colleagues and friends from leading conservatories and music festivals across the country — collectively envisioned the creation of a democratically run, self-conducted chamber orchestra that would thrive on the pure joy and camaraderie of classical music making. This organic approach and high level of passion and commitment resulted in the East Coast Chamber Orchestra (ECCO), a dynamic collective that combines the strength and power of a great orchestral ensemble with the personal involvement and sensitivity of superb chamber music.

ECCO is comprised of some of today's most vibrant and gifted, young string players — soloists, chamber musicians, principals of major American orchestras, and Grammy Award winners. ECCO members play with the symphony orchestras of Philadelphia, Minnesota, San Francisco, Chicago, St. Louis, Seattle, and Boston, among others. Members also play with the Enso, Jasper, Jupiter, and Parker Quartets, as well as the Horszowski Trio, Trio Cavatina, Sejong Soloists, Time for Three, and Chamber Music Society II. For a few concentrated periods of time each year, the members of ECCO meet for rehearsal and musical exploration. Cooking, eating, enjoying close friendships and sharing tips for raising the next generation of ECCO are important aspects of their gatherings. Along with musical exploration, there is always an intense discussion to be had about the joys and challenges of maintaining a truly communal, creative organization.

In 2012, ECCO members celebrated their first decade of friendship and discovery with the release of their first commercial recording. It includes Tchaikovsky's *Serenade for Strings* in C Major, op. 48, Shostakovich's *Chamber Symphony in C Minor*, op. 110a, and the exuberant and surprising "La Follia" Variations for String Orchestra, arranged by ECCO's own Michi Wiancko after Francesco Geminiani's *Concerto Grosso no. 12 in D Minor*.

ECCO's 2016 - 2017 season includes debuts at the Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center, the National Gallery of Art, and Ithaca College Concerts, and return visits to Naumburg Orchestral Concerts, the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, and Peoples' Symphony Concerts.

<i>Violin</i>	<i>Cello</i>
Anna Elashvili	Kee-Hyun Kim
Ken Hamao	Alberto Parrini
Nicolas Kendall	Raman Ramakrishnan
Alexi Kenney	
Jessie Montgomery	<i>Bass</i>
Miho Saegusa	Nate Farrington
Michi Wiancko	
Ying Xue	<i>Harp</i>
Sandy Yamamoto	Sivan Magen

<i>Viola</i>
Maurycy Banaszek
Dov Scheindlin
Jonathan Vinocour
Cong Wu

Program

A Thousand Cranes

A Thousand Cranes is a piece I long-wanted to write. Many years ago, on a visit to Japan, I encountered the story of Sadako Sasaki, a young girl who suffered radiation poisoning from the atomic bomb in Hiroshima during World War II. There have been many artistic efforts written in response to that horrific event, most of which have had an understandably intense and dark impulse. The story of Sadako seemed to me to have a different focus: her short life met the unspeakable with the only response that can reflect true good — hope and faith in the future.

After Sadako became sick, she followed an old custom that said if she folded one thousand origami cranes, her deepest wish would come true. In an effort to heal herself, she folded the one thousand cranes, and then, when she didn't get better, she started to fold another one thousand. This hope and belief in a better future, even in response to such a tragedy, is what attracted me to the subject, and it is what underpins the impulse of my piece.

A Thousand Cranes is also in some ways a fulfillment of a promise that I made to my friend, Masakazu Hoshima, who hosted me and many others in Hiroshima. He took us to the memorial museum there, introduced us to a survivor who shared his story, and showed us many other facets of life in that remarkable city.

This work was originally written for the East Coast Chamber Orchestra with Sivan Magen on harp, and it premiered in December 2015 in Dallas, Texas. *Program notes by Christopher Theofanidis*

Conte Fantastique

Caplet's *Conte Fantastique* for harp and strings, inspired by Poe's tale "The Masque of the Red Death," was published in 1924, but was based on an unpublished "symphonic study" dating to 1909. It is impossible, therefore, without seeing this study, to be certain of what material in the *Conte* is postwar and what is prewar. What is unmistakable, though, is Caplet's determination to rethink instrumental capabilities. Just as he did with the solo instrument in the *Épiphanie* for cello and orchestra of 1923, and before that with the voice in the *Inscriptions Champêtres* of 1914, so here he liberates the harp from its traditional role of being purely pastoral, decorative, and decorous.

Poe's tale can be read as a development of his poem "The Haunted Palace." Whereas in the poem the evil force invades arbitrarily, in the tale it is present from the start, giving the "deep seclusion" of Prince Prospero's "castellated abbey" a provisional air. Caplet's choice of the harp may initially seem odd, but in fact, it works wonderfully well exactly because of the instrument's nineteenth-century connotations — and indeed, early twentieth-century ones, as in the two *Danses* by Debussy and Ravel's *Introduction and Allegro*. Caplet employs traditional language and textures in the central part of the piece in order to give it the feeling of a fairy tale: the cut of the melodies here is modal or pentatonic — both traditionally signifying "far away and long ago."

His depiction of the Red Death, by contrast, draws on the most recent melodic and harmonic sources. The very first page of the score shows how far Caplet has moved in twenty years from orthodox, Prix de Rome platitudes. The harp's first notes are marked "haletant" — "breathless." Since the harp cannot breathe, and not breathing will hardly help

the harpist, this may seem a nonsensical instruction. But Caplet's idea is surely that the phrase should give the impression of the harp as a wind instrument, whose breath is abruptly cut off after just six notes, where the player is ordered to damp the strings ("étouffez"). Admittedly, the structure of this opening, of an idea gradually burgeoning between silences, is borrowed from Debussy (see the opening bars of *Pelléas et Mélisande*), but Caplet's chromaticism comes nearer to Schoenberg; and it is perhaps relevant to note that Caplet conducted the first performance in France of Schoenberg's *Five Orchestral Pieces* in 1922, before a scandalized audience. The harp's third phrase here uses ten of the twelve chromatic notes to paint the picture of the Red Death stalking the countryside.

Any composer would have to incorporate somehow the chiming of the ebony clock to mark the hours of the revels, at which "the dreams are still-frozen as they stand." Caplet chooses to give the harpist only the chimes of eleven o'clock and the more fateful ones of midnight, upon which the masked figure of the Red Death appears, "tall and gaunt, and shrouded from head to foot in the habiliments of the grave." The "buzz, or murmur" of the assembled company at this apparition is expressed in string tremolos, glissandos, and harmonics that truly look forward to the textures imagined by Boulez thirty years later. Caplet's death was indeed a great tragedy.

Five Folk Melodies, composed in 1945, initiated Witold Lutosławski's interest in Polish folk music. These twelve piano miniatures, full of peculiar charm, are based on simple folk melodies from different regions of Poland and are taken from Jerzy Olszewski's collections of folk melodies, which were perfectly set into a sophisticated harmonic substance and pulled into interesting metro-rhythmic adventures. In principle, they were intended for pedagogical purposes and aimed to bring young performers closer to contemporary music. Thanks to a unique perspective and sublime artistic values, the folk melodies are impressive stage compositions. Five of the melodies from this cycle (numbers 1, 2, and 10–12) were arranged and adapted by Lutosławski for a string band.

When dismissing his Prague Conservatory composition class for the summer 1892, Antonín Dvořák told eighteen-year-old Josef Suk, "It's summertime now, so go and make something lively for a change, to compensate for all those pomposities in minor." Suk took that advice and that summer created what is still his best-known work, a sunny and uncomplicated serenade of substantial dimensions, lasting nearly a half hour. In mood and mastery it is worthy of comparison with other great nineteenth-century string works, such as the Serenade by Tchaikovsky, the Holberg Suite by Grieg, and the String Serenade by Dvořák himself. The line of sunny string works would continue with compositions by the likes of Elgar, Holst, Britten, and Diamond.

Little in the way of analysis is required to absorb and appreciate this gentle and beautiful piece, though it is worth noting that the main subject of the first movement is practically identical with part of the main theme of Brahms's Violin Concerto. The most substantial movement is the lyrical slow movement, at over ten minutes. One of the main pieces in the romantic string orchestra repertory, the Serenade for Strings was premiered as a whole on February 25, 1895, by the Prague Conservatory Orchestra, conducted by Antonín Bennewitz, to great acclaim; two movements had been heard fourteen months earlier in Tabor, conducted by Suk himself.

Upcoming Events of the Seventy-Fifth Season of The William Nelson Cromwell and F. Lamot Belin Concerts

West Garden Trio
"Washingtonians on Wednesdays"
Music by Kenji Bunch, Charles Ives,
and Paul Schoenfield
April 26, 12:10
West Building, East Garden Court

Matt Haimovitz and Christopher O'Riley
All-Russian program
April 30, 3:30
West Building, East Garden Court

Tonality of Culture
Multidisciplinary Estonian concert
Presented as part of the
European Month of Culture
May 3, 12:10
East Building Auditorium

Margaret Leng Tan
The Three Cs: Cage, Cowell, Crumb
Metamorphoses, world premiere
of a new work by George Crumb
May 7, 3:30
East Building Auditorium

Laura Falzon, flute, and Rupert Boyd, guitar
Presented as part of the
European Month of Culture
May 10, 12:10
West Building, East Garden Court

General Information

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The use of cameras or recording equipment during the performance is not allowed. Please be sure that all portable electronic devices are turned off.

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