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

Unless otherwise noted, all programs take place in the West Building, West Garden Court.

The 6821 Quintet
Music by Michael Djupstrom, Mamiko Hirai, and Kunihiko Murai
Presented in conjunction with the National Cherry Blossom Festival and the Ryuji Ueno Foundation
March 26, 12:10
East Building Auditorium

Richard Stoltzman, clarinet
Mika Stoltzman, marimba
Duo Cantando
Music by Bill Douglas, Chick Corea, Toru Takemitsu, and John Zorn
April 1, 3:30

Heinavanker Ensemble
Featuring ancient Estonian songs and folk hymns
Celebrating Michel Sittow: Estonian Painter at the Courts of Renaissance Europe
April 8, 3:30

Tamagawa University Taiko Drummers and Dancers
April 13, 12:10
East Building Atrium

Fretwork
Featuring music by Alexander Goehr and J. S. Bach
April 15, 3:30

Inscape Chamber Orchestra
Saint-Saëns, Carnival of the Animals, with new verses by Marc Bamuthi Joseph
Mahler, Symphony no. 4, chamber version
April 22, 3:30

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.

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Cover: Paul Cézanne, Boy in a Red Waistcoat (detail), 1888–1890, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon, in Honor of the 50th Anniversary of the National Gallery of Art
Program

Benedetto Lupo, piano
Celebrating Cézanne Portraits

MARCH 25, 2018 / 3:30
WEST BUILDING, WEST GARDEN COURT

Claude Debussy (1862 – 1918)

Images oubliées
Lent
Dans le mouvement d’une “Sarabande,” c’est-à-dire avec une élégance grave et lente, même un peu vieux portrait, souvenir du Louvre, etc.
Quelques aspects de “Nous n’irons plus au bois,” parce qu’il fait un temps insupportable

Estampes
Pagodes
La soirée dans Grenade
Jardins sous la pluie

Images, première série
Reflets dans l’eau
Hommage à Rameau
Mouvement

Intermission

Images, deuxième série
Cloches à travers les feuilles
Et la lune descend sur le temple qui fut
Poissons d’or

Masques

D’un cahier d’esquisses

L’île joyeuse
The Musician

Benedetto Lupo has been heralded by critics as an “exceptionally fine pianist…who has a remarkably fine touch and beautiful tone control” (The Oregonian). Praised for his “keen musical intelligence and probing intellect” (Miami Herald) and for combining “meticulous technique with romantic sensitivity” (Birmingham News), he continues to gain worldwide recognition.

Lupo has performed with prestigious orchestras worldwide, including the Los Angeles, Malaysian, Louisiana, and Naples Philharmonic Orchestras, I Musici de Montreal, the National Symphony Orchestra of Mexico, and the Orquesta Sinfónica de Mineria; and with the symphony orchestras of Chicago, Toronto, Calgary, Colorado, Jacksonville, Kansas City, Philadelphia, Montreal, Oregon, San Antonio, Seattle, St. Louis, and Vancouver. Festival appearances include Tanglewood with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, the Domaine Forget International Festival with Les Violons du Roy, and Le Festival de Lanaudière.

In Europe, he has appeared in his native Italy with the Orchestra della Svizzera Italiana, Santa Cecilia Symphony, Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano Giuseppe Verdi, Orchestra Sinfonica Abruzzese, the National Rai Orchestra (Toro), and the festivals of Brescia and Bergamo. He celebrated Liszt’s 200th birthday by performing the composer’s Piano Concerto no. 1 in E-flat Major and Totentanz with the Gewandhaus Orchestra in Leipzig. He also performed Nino Rota’s Concerto Soirée with the Spanish National Orchestra (Madrid) to mark the composer’s 100th birthday. Lupo has appeared with the London and Slovak Philharmonics; the orchestras of Limburg (Netherlands), Odense (Denmark), Hallé (Norway), Rotterdam (Netherlands), and Liège (Belgium); and the Orquesta Sinfónica de Navarra (Spain).

Lupo won the silver medal in the 1985 Cleveland International Piano Competition and the bronze medal in the 1989 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition. In 1992, he made his New York City recital debut at Alice Tully Hall, won the Terence Judd International Award, and subsequently performed at London’s Wigmore Hall.

Since 2013, Lupo has taught at the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia in Rome, in addition to giving master classes and serving as a competition jurist internationally. Lupo’s recordings include Nino Rota’s Concerto Soirée with the Orchestra Sinfonica Siciliana (Nuova Era), and a new release of the same work (Harmonia Mundi), for which he received the prestigious Diapason d’Or award. He recorded Schumann’s complete works for piano and orchestra with Peter Maag and the Radiotelevisione svizzera, as well as the first CD recording of the piano version of Schumann’s Konzertstück, op. 86 (Arts label). Lupo is featured on the Emmy-award-winning PBS documentary, Here to Make Music: The Eighth Van Cliburn International Piano Competition, and also on the seven-part series Encore! The Final Round of Performances of the Eighth Van Cliburn International Piano Competition.

Program Notes

It is commonly regarded that French artist Paul Cézanne (1839–1906) is one of the distinguished elders of twentieth-century art, a view reflected in a statement credited to Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse that “Cézanne is the father of us all.” That same sentiment may be applied to French composer Claude Debussy, a contemporary of Cézanne. Both men created masterpieces built with layers of color and a reliance on light and nature; they also heavily influenced the shift from old artisanic practices to the birth of fresh and dramatic approaches to their art.

Written in 1894 but ultimately published as a suite in 1977, Claude Debussy’s Images oubliées was titled so as to avoid confusion with his other two sets of Images for piano. He charmingly spoke of this work as “not for brilliantly lit salons…but rather for conversations between the piano and oneself.” Even though the opening movement, Lent, carries no descriptive title, it is nonetheless characterized by emotion, grace, and suppleness. The second movement, Sarabande, appeared first in a supplement to the 1896 Grand Journal du Lundi, with the inscription: “In the rhythm of a ‘sarabande,’ that is, with a slow and solemn elegance, a bit like an antique portrait, Remembrance of the Louvre, etc.” The final piece of the set is reminiscent of a toccata and pays tribute to the French nursery song Nous n’irons plus au bois, (We’ll Go No More to the Woods), as reflected in the work’s very title. Opening with driving energy and joy and interspersed with harp-like sonorities, the movement winds down as if the children of the nursery gradually fall asleep.

Using a title which translates as “engravings,” Debussy published his Estampes in 1903. In his own words, he explains the nature of these three short “engravings”: “If one cannot afford to travel, one substitutes the imagination.” The first movement of this musical journey, Pagodes (Pagodas), was likely inspired by the sounds of the Javanese gamelan ensembles Debussy heard at the 1889 Paris International Exposition—sounds which drew him to the non-Western musical scales and melodic use of percussion. It is said that Spanish composer Manuel de Falla (1876–1946) admired Debussy’s second Estampes, titled La soirée dans Grenade (Evening in Granada), with its authentic depiction of Spanish music. The final movement, Jardins sous la pluie (Gardens in the Rain), is one of Debussy’s most popular piano pieces and features two French children’s songs, Dodo, l’enfant do (Sleep, Child, Sleep) and another inclusion of Nous n’irons plus au bois.

In 1911, Debussy said to composer Edgard Varèse: “I love pictures almost as much as music.” His genius and passion are evident in the way he fashioned today’s featured Images, première série (1905) and Images, deuxième série (1907). On the surface and as reflected in each movement’s title, the music truly paints a picture with sounds...
Debussy often drew inspiration from other forms of art, as in the case of *Masques*, a musical setting of Antoine Watteau’s (1684–1721) painting *Le Mezzetin*. Here, a guitar player is shown, recognizable by his costume as Mezzetin from the cast of the *Commedia dell’arte*, a character who is forever frustrated in love. In the background is a woman’s silhouette with her back turned to Mezzetin. In Debussy’s piece, an understated but palpable tension prevails throughout, underscoring the duality between tragedy and comedic irony. Debussy’s friends and pupils commented that he often wore a metaphorical mask to suppress his poignant feelings, and surmised that this trait found musical expression in *Masques*.

*L’isle joyeuse*, written in 1904, was inspired by Debussy’s summer vacation on the island of Jersey in the English Channel—a vista which no doubt provided him with striking visual images as he perfected his work. In Debussy’s setting, the introduction is followed by a rhapsodic sequence that builds in volume, speed, and intensity with shorter, lyrical interruptions, all culminating in a rousing finale. *L’isle joyeuse* is a true virtuoso piece. Debussy himself wrote, “Heavens! How difficult it is to play....This piece seems to embrace every possible manner of treating the piano, combining as it does strength and grace.”

Adapted from program notes by Michael Jacko, concert aide, National Gallery of Art, from the February 26, 2012 program.