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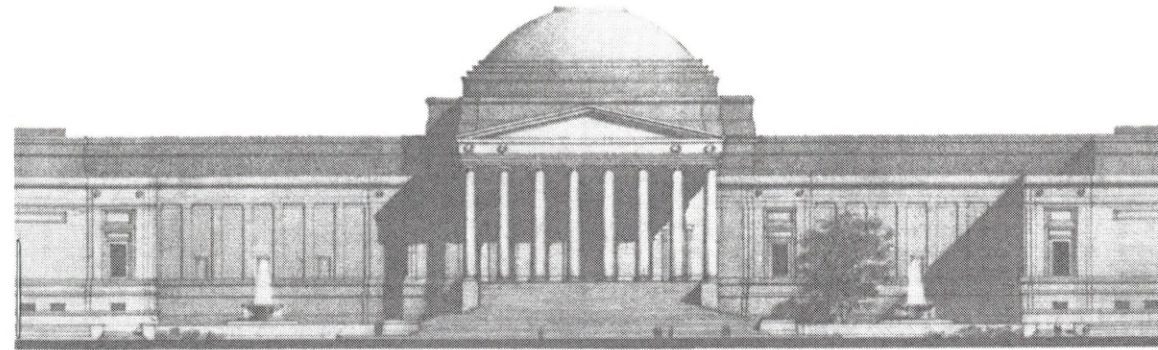
Please note that late entry or reentry of the West Building after 6:30 pm is not permitted.

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

Music Department
National Gallery of Art
Sixth Street and Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC

www.nga.gov

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

National Gallery of Art
2,910th Concert

Michael Lewin, piano

November 11, 2012
Sunday, 6:30 pm
West Building, West Garden Court

Admission free

Program

Claude Debussy (1862–1918)

Préludes, Book II (complete)

Brouillards (Mists)

Feuilles mortes (Dead Leaves)

La Puerta del vino (The Gate of Wine)

Les Fées sont d'exquises danseuses (Fairies are Exquisite Dancers)

Bruyères (Heather)

Général Lavine — eccentric

La Terrasse des audiences du clair de lune

(The Balcony Where Moonlight Holds Court)

Ondine

Hommage à S. Pickwick Esq. P. P. M. P. C.

(Homage to S. Pickwick, Esquire)

Canope (Canopic Jar)

Les Tierces alternées (Alternating thirds)

Feux d'artifice (Fireworks)

Debussy

L'isle joyeuse (The Isle of Joy)

INTERMISSION

Franz Liszt (1811–1886)

Vallée d'Obermann

From *Années de Pèlerinages*, vol. I ("Suisse")

Sonetto del Petrarca no. 123

From *Années de Pèlerinages*, vol. II ("Italia")

Mendelssohn/Liszt

Auf Flügen des Gesanges (On Wings of Song)

Liszt

Concert Paraphrase of the Waltz from Gounod's Faust

The Musician

Launched with victories in the Franz Liszt International Piano Competition, the American Pianists Association Beethoven Fellowship, and the William Kapell International Competition, pianist Michael Lewin's career has taken him to more than thirty countries, playing with orchestras and in recital in the Athens Megaron, Holland's Muziekcentrum Vredenburg, Hong Kong's City Hall Theater, London's Wigmore Hall, Moscow's Great Hall, and Taipei's National Concert Hall. In the United States, Lewin has been heard at the Ambassador Auditorium in Pasadena, Lincoln Center in New York, the Library of Congress in Washington, and Symphony Hall in Boston. Additional appearances include concertos with the Bucharest Enescu Philharmonic; Cairo Symphony; Filarmónica de Guadalajara; Mongolia State Opera Orchestra; the Colorado, Illinois, Indianapolis, Jupiter, Miami, Nevada, North Carolina, Phoenix, Puerto Rico, and West Virginia Symphony Orchestras; the Sinfonia da Camera; and the Youth Orchestra of the Americas.

Deeply committed to guiding and nurturing gifted young pianists, Lewin is one of America's most sought-after teachers. He is on the piano faculty of the Boston Conservatory of Music, where he is also artistic director of the Piano Masters Series, and a visiting artist at Boston University. A native New Yorker and Juilliard graduate, Lewin's teachers include Leon Fleisher, Irwin Freundlich, Adele Marcus, and Yvonne Lefébure.

Selected for prestigious career grants from the Martha Baird Rockefeller Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, and the Aaron Copland Recording Fund, Michael Lewin was the artistic director of Steinway's Gala 150th Anniversary Concert, held in 2003 in Boston's Symphony Hall. A Steinway Artist, he appears at the National Gallery by arrangement with Jonathan Wentworth Associates, LTD, www.jwentworth.com.

Program Notes

Written within a relatively short period of time between 1909 and 1913, Claude Debussy's twenty-four *Préludes* are divided into two *livres* (books). Short, improvisatory, and free-form, they are vignettes filled with character, tending to concentrate on a specific figuration. Unlike Chopin and Bach, Debussy did not arrange his set of preludes in chromatic order according to the keys in which they were written. The titles assigned to each *Prélude* were printed at the end of each piece, perhaps so the listener's imagination would not be clouded by the imagery provided by the composer.

"Brouillards" (Mists or Fogs) opens the set quietly, suggesting dense fog with brief moments of luminosity, and features bitonality between the two hands.

"Feuilles mortes" (Dead leaves) sounds like a continuation of "Brouillards" as the two opening chords expand the previous closing chords. Manuscripts from 1911 suggest that Debussy conceived the pieces as a pair.

"La Puerta del vino" (The Gate of Wine) provides dramatic contrast. Inspired by a postcard he received from Manuel de Falla, Debussy depicted Granada's "Gate of Wine," a Gypsy meeting place. Despite never having visited Spain, he knew flamenco music with its alternating sections of frenzied strumming and soulful singing.

"Les Fées sont d'exquises danseuses" (The Fairies Are Exquisite Dancers) is Debussy's musical response to Arthur Rackham's illustration for J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*. Rackham's little fairy dances on a cobweb between two branches, depicted in a delicate style that Debussy captures with a filigree of broken chords, trills, and tremolos.

"Bruyères" (Heather) projects a simple, pastoral atmosphere with its diatonic melodies and harmonies.

"Général Lavine—eccentric" was an American clown who performed at the Marigny Theater on the Champs-Élysées. One of Debussy's more amusing *Préludes*, it features a "cakewalk" rhythm and shows the influence of minstrels on the café life in Paris.

"La Terrasse des audiences du clair de lune" (The Balcony Where Moonlight Holds Court) is an evocative *Prélude*, inspired by an Oriental moonlit evening.

“Ondine” (Undine) presents the mercurial mood of a water sprite. Debussy masterfully depicts the swelling of the waters as the mortals were lured to their watery graves by the sprites’ beauty and captivating songs.

“Hommage à S. Pickwick Esq. P. P. M. P. C.” pays tribute to one of Debussy’s favorite characters by his beloved Charles Dickens. The piece begins with an irreverent reference to the British national anthem, “God Save the King.”

“Canope” (Canopic Jar) was probably inspired by some of Debussy’s own collection of Egyptian funeral urns. The composer evokes a mysterious, ancient atmosphere, even suggesting some Eastern instruments he may have heard at the 1889 Paris exposition.

“Les Tierces alternées” (Alternating Thirds) is something of an étude, and stands out as the only purely abstract rather than pictorial piece of the set.

“Feux d’artifice” (Fireworks) is one of Debussy’s most difficult and impressive works for piano. Truly living up to its name, it encompasses the entire range of the piano and dynamics from very soft to very loud, with glissandos, arpeggios, and even a nod to the “Marseillaise” before the fireworks come to an end.

Among the sunniest and most extroverted of his works, Debussy’s *L’isle joyeuse* does not betray the turmoil that had taken hold of his personal life during the year he composed it. In 1904 the composer left his first wife and had taken up with Emma Bardac, the wife of a banker. Paris was giddily scandalized by the affair. In spite of it all (or perhaps because of it), Debussy was inspired by a painting by Jean-Antoine Watteau, entitled *The Pilgrimage to Cythera*, in which young couples are depicted on the mythological island of love. The virtuosic piece, with its rippling textures and lush harmonies is the perfect musical description of the painting.

The title of Liszt’s three volumes of *Années de pèlerinage* (Years of Pilgrimage) refers to Goethe’s novel of self-realization, *Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship*. The first two books were inspired by the composer’s travels through Switzerland and Italy. In his introduction to the entire work, he wrote, “Having recently travelled to many new countries, through different settings and places consecrated by history and poetry; having felt that the phenomena of

nature and their attendant sights did not pass before my eyes as pointless images but stirred deep emotions in my soul, and that between us a vague but immediate relationship had established itself, an undefined but real rapport, an inexplicable but undeniable communication, I have tried to portray in music a few of my strongest sensations and most lively impressions.”

Published in 1855, the first book, “Suisse,” contains the most extended piece, “Vallée d’Obermann.” Liszt’s *Années de pèlerinage* enshrines many of the central features of romanticism: the desire to wander; the search for solitude within beautiful landscapes and a sense of oneness with nature; the cross-fertilization of music and literature; and the journey of discovery, both outward (the physical exploration) and inward (the sense of personal pilgrimage). Liszt conveys Obermann’s sense of wonder at nature’s impenetrable grandeur with impressive effect.

“Sonetto del Petrarca no. 123” comes from Liszt’s second volume of *Années de pèlerinage*, “Italy.” The title is taken from Petrarch’s 123rd Sonnet, *I vidi in terra angelici costumi* (I beheld on earth angelic grace and heavenly beauty unmatched in all the world.) Angels come to earth, and the beloved’s beauty takes the poet’s breath away as the air is filled with sweetness. The music, with its restless harmonies, achieves a lightheaded stasis.

From Liszt’s vast output of almost 600 works, more than a third are transcriptions, fragments, fantasies, or variations based on works by other composers. One of the many songs he chose to transcribe was Mendelssohn’s *Auf Flügeln des Gesanges* (On Wings of Song). Setting a love poem by Heinrich Heine, the song describes a journey to an exotic land, well-suited to the lovers’ “dream of bliss.” As with most of Liszt’s transcriptions, this is a virtuosic work requiring formidable technique.

Liszt’s lifelong fascination with the Faust story inevitably led him to transcribe selections from Gounod’s opera. As with the Mendelssohn transcription, Liszt’s version of the “Waltz” from the opera’s second act carries the original music to a new level of passion and excitement.

*Program notes by Danielle DeSwert Hahn, music program specialist,
National Gallery of Art*