

78TH SEASON OF

CONCERTS

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART | OCTOBER 27, 2019



PROGRAM

Slavic Soul Party!

David Leon, saxophone, clarinet

John Carlson, trumpet

Kenny Warren, trumpet

Adam Dotson, trombone

Tim Vaughn, trombone

Kenny Bentley, tuba

Matt Moran, percussion

Chris Stromquist, percussion

Peter Stan, accordion

Far East Suite

Duke Ellington (1899–1974) and Billy Strayhorn (1915–1967) Reimagined

October 27, 2019 | 3:30

West Building, West Garden Court



Slavic Soul Party!, photo by Jason Schaltz

THE MUSICIANS

Fiery Balkan brass, irresistible beats, virtuoso jazz chops, and Roma (Gypsy) accordion wizardry make Slavic Soul Party! (SSP!)—New York City’s official, “Number One” brass band for Balkan, Soul, Gypsy, and Funk. These nine musicians pump the sounds of New York life through a Balkan brass filter, making new music out of immigration, integration, and ingenuity. The band’s Tuesday night residency in Brooklyn has become a destination for music fans from around the world, and is famous for “delivering a great time” (*The New York Times*). In over a decade of touring North America, Europe, and beyond, SSP! has performed extensively in Serbian schoolyards, prison courtyards, Turkish palaces, Russian baths, dive bars, and Carnegie Hall. The band’s most recent record *SSP! Plays Duke Ellington’s Far East Suite* (Ropeadope) is its sixth album. Reviews have praised it for honoring “the tunes and spirit of the Ellington opus while adding [the band’s] own flavor” (*Chicago Reader*); “[It’s] a pretty heavenly match” (*TimeOut NY*); and “[It’s] a manifesto on cultural boundaries, historical lineage and how they play into individual creativity” (*Wall Street Journal*).

PROGRAM NOTES

Far East Suite

Slavic Soul Party! has reimagined Duke Ellington’s iconic *Far East Suite* as an East European brass band discovering a uniquely American sound, reversing the “exotic tinge” and reveling in this subtle, funky, and brilliant music. Ellington’s suite (created with Billy Strayhorn) was inspired by a 1963 State Department tour to the Middle East, South Asia, and the Balkans cut short by the Kennedy assassination—they never made it to the “Far East”—and serves as a perfect foil for SSP!’s blend of East European, Romani, and American sounds.

The essence of Ellington and Strayhorn’s collaboration is apparent from the first notes—the pulsing, harmonically rich chords of *Tourist Point of View*—but there’s something clearly different here. The sleight of hand that Slavic Soul Party! achieves with deft arrangements and strong Balkan playing is wonderfully disorienting. This is music that has taken several trips across the Atlantic and is played by a brass band that has fallen in love with the sound of jazz. But where is this music from? Slavic Soul Party! has an answer to that question, enthusiastically entangling issues of originality, expression, and identity. In our view, we are a rambunctious Balkan party band reinterpreting Ellington’s earthy, yet endlessly sophisticated music. We take a beloved big-band score, reconfigure it for a much smaller group and execute it with precision—and dazzling energy.



Edmond Lebel, *Still Life of Musical Instruments*, c. 1863, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Robert B. Menschel Fund, 2006.109.1

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

Unless otherwise noted, concerts are held in the West Building, West Garden Court.

Gaelynn Lea, singer-songwriter and violinist

*Presented in honor of Disability Employment Awareness Month**
October 29, 12:10
West Building Lecture Hall

Jenny Scheinman and Allison Miller

*Parlour Game**
November 3, 3:30

Gewandhaus Woodwind Quintet

With the Musik Tanztheater Kids from the German International School, Washington, DC
Celebrating the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the finale to the year of German-American friendship, "Wunderbar Together." Presented in collaboration with the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany.
November 10, 3:30

Winners from Washington Performing Arts 48th Annual Joseph and Goldie Feder Memorial String Competition

November 16, 3:00

* This concert is part of a series of performances by female violinists, showcasing the brilliance and stylistic versatility of the instrument.

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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