



The Sixty-fourth Season of
The William Nelson Cromwell and F. Lammot Belin
Concerts

National Gallery of Art
2,550th Concert

Awadagin Pratt, *pianist*

November 27, 2005
Sunday Evening, 6:30 pm
West Building, West Garden Court

Admission free

Program

Joseph Haydn (1732–1809)

Sonata in B-flat Major

Allegro

Allegro di molto

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

Sonata in E Major, op. 14, no. 1 (1798)

Allegro

Allegretto

Rondo: Allegro commodo

Beethoven

Sonata in A-flat Major, op. 110 (1821–1822)

Moderato cantabile molto espressivo

Allegro molto

Adagio ma non troppo

Fuga: Allegro ma non troppo

INTERMISSION

Frédéric Chopin (1810–1849)

Nocturne in B Major, op. 62, no. 1 (1846)

Sergey Rachmaninoff (1873–1943)

Moment Musical in B Minor, op. 16, no. 3 (1896)

César Franck (1822–1890)

Prelude, Fugue, and Variation, op. 18

Transcribed by Harold Bauer

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)

Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue in D Minor, BWV 903

Johann Sebastian Bach

Chaconne from the *Partita no. 2 in D Minor* for solo violin

Transcribed for piano solo by Ferruccio Busoni (1866–1924)

The Musician

Born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and raised in Normal, Illinois, Awadagin Pratt began studying piano at age six and three years later took up the violin as well. At age sixteen he entered the University of Illinois, where he studied piano, violin, and conducting. He subsequently enrolled at the Peabody Conservatory of Music in Baltimore, Maryland, where he became the first student in the history of the school to earn diplomas in three performance areas. In 1992 Pratt won the Naumburg International Piano Competition, and in 1994 he received an Avery Fisher Career Grant. He has played recitals at the Kennedy Center as well as in Chicago's Orchestra Hall, Los Angeles's Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, and New York's Lincoln Center. He has been the featured concerto soloist with the Minnesota Orchestra, the National Symphony, the New York Philharmonic, the Orchestra of Saint Luke's, and the symphony orchestras of Detroit, Pittsburgh, and Saint Louis. Summer festivals in which he has performed include the Aspen, Blossom, and Caramoor Festivals and the Hollywood Bowl, Ravinia, and Wolf Trap. Outside the United States, Pratt has appeared in Braunschweig (Germany), Osaka and Tokyo (Japan), and various venues in Israel, Italy, Poland, South Africa, and Switzerland.

A great favorite on college campuses and a strong advocate of arts education, Pratt participates in numerous residencies and outreach activities. He was named one of fifty "leaders of tomorrow" in *Ebony Magazine's* fiftieth anniversary issue. A featured guest on radio programs such as "Performance Today," "Saint Paul Sunday Morning," and "Weekend Edition," Pratt has also performed on many television programs, including "Live from the Kennedy Center—A Salute to Slava" as well as "Good Morning, America," "Sesame Street," and "The Today Show." His recordings, all on the Angel/EMI label, include all-Bach and all-Beethoven CDs as well as *Live from South Africa*, *A Long Way from Normal*, and *Transformations*. An assistant professor of piano and artist-in-residence at the College Conservatory of Music at the University of Cincinnati, Awadagin Pratt appears at the National Gallery by arrangement with Cramer/Marder Artists of New York City.

Program Notes

Joseph Haydn, one of the most prolific composers in Western music, created more than fifty piano sonatas. His *Sonata in B-flat Major* (no. XVI: 41 as catalogued by Anthony van Hoboken [1887–1983]), is one of three that Haydn published in 1784. He dedicated the set to Princess Marie Hermenegild Esterhazy (née Liechtenstein), the bride of Prince Nicolaus Esterhazy, eldest son of Haydn's patron. The contrast between dotted rhythms and triplets is an important feature of both of the sonata's two movements. To enhance one's appreciation of this music today, one should understand that Haydn was not composing for the modern piano. Until about 1750 the harpsichord was the keyboard instrument of choice for most composers, and the fortepiano, invented in 1710 by Bartolomeo Cristofori (1655–1731), was basically a harpsichord with hammers. By the end of Haydn's life, the harpsichord had been replaced by the fortepiano, and the latter had undergone many improvements. But even the largest such instrument was made entirely of wood, had a range of no more than six octaves, and produced much less sound than the steel and wood behemoth on today's concert stage.

Twenty-three years elapsed between the dates of composition of the two Beethoven sonatas that Awadagin Pratt has included in this program. The *Sonata in E Major*, op. 14, no. 1, comes from the composer's early period and strongly reflects the influence of his teacher, Joseph Haydn. Beethoven later transcribed the sonata for string quartet, a natural transformation, as the piano work has a fairly consistent four-voice texture from beginning to end. The *Sonata in A-flat Major*, op. 110, is one of his great late works, completed on Christmas Day in 1821 and published in 1822. By this time Beethoven had developed the custom of providing instructions in the tempo markings. In addition to specifying *moderato cantabile* (in a moderate tempo and singing style) over the opening bars, he indicated *molto espressivo* (very expressively) and *con amabilità* (amiably) to encourage performers to play the music as warmly as possible. The second movement, *Allegro molto*, is a scherzo with a

trio that features a wide range of dynamics. For the final movement, *Fuga: Allegro*, Beethoven turned to contrapuntal writing, in a departure from traditional sonata form. In what at first seems to be the final cadence, a quiet major chord is repeated nine times. But it grows in strength as it is repeated and leads into a coda based on the inversion of the fugue subject. The coda gathers momentum, and the sonata builds to a triumphant ending.

Chopin was the quintessential composer/performer, a favorite of the salons in his adopted home city of Paris. Almost all of his works premiered in these informal settings, as he rarely appeared in concert halls. His nocturnes, preludes, and impromptus have a characteristic intimacy and improvisatory quality, exemplifying romantic piano music. On August 30, 1846, Chopin delivered the manuscript for his sublime *Nocturne in B Major*, op. 62, no. 1, to a friend, the cellist Auguste Franchomme (1808–1884), with this decidedly unromantic note: “Dear friend, here are my three manuscripts for Brandus [a Paris publisher]... Deliver the manuscripts only at the moment of payment... and tell Brandus to send me two proof-sheets to keep.” The composer who originated the nocturne as a genre was John Field (1782–1837), an Irishman who spent many years in Russia. His unique style of writing made an impression on Chopin and Liszt, both of whom heard Field during his 1832 European tour (Liszt brought out an edition of the Field nocturnes in 1859).

Along with Sergey Prokofiev (1891–1953), Béla Bartók (1881–1945), and George Gershwin (1898–1937), Sergey Rachmaninoff ranks among the greatest composer-pianists of the first half of the twentieth century. Pianists hold his works in equally high regard with those of Liszt and Chopin, whose styles he emulated. Rachmaninoff followed the example of Franz Schubert (1797–1828) in writing numerous short pieces in free form and calling them *Moments musicaux* (musical moments).

César Franck first composed his *Prelude, Fugue, and Variation*, op. 18, as a piano-organ duet for two of his pupils, Louise and Geneviève Deslignières. Later he produced a version for organ solo, which was then transcribed for piano solo by pianist Harold Bauer (1873–1951), a specialist in the repertoire of the romantic period. In the *Prelude* the soaring melody in the style of a barcarolle holds the listener's interest. A brief interlude, marked *lento*, unveils the head of the fugue theme. This is followed by the fugue itself, which unfolds in a leisurely tempo (*allegretto ma non troppo*) and builds to a convincing *stretto* climax without ever losing its lyrical quality. The *Variation* is actually a repeat of the prelude with arabesques in the left-hand accompaniment. These present a special challenge when the work is played as a piano solo: in the version for organ and piano, the bass line and the arabesques are divided between the pianist's left and right hands while the organist plays the melody, but in the piano solo version, the left hand must take on both the arabesques and the bass while the right hand plays the melody.

There is evidence that Johann Sebastian Bach performed and refined his *Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue* over a period of ten years (1720–1730) before publishing his final revision of the work in Leipzig. It presents a dramatic contrast between passionate improvisation and logical development. The toccata-like flourishes in the opening section are followed by deceptively simple arpeggiated chords in the second section, a passage that calls for mature and sensitive interpretation on the part of the performer. Although the fugue that makes up the third section is in only three voices, it builds in intensity as the polyphony becomes freer and culminates in a final statement of the theme over full chordal harmony.

Ferruccio Busoni was not the only composer who took on the task of transcribing Johann Sebastian Bach's monumental *Chaconne* from his *Partita no. 2* for solo violin. Brahms made a piano transcription of the work for the left hand only, and Andrés Segovia transcribed it for the guitar. Busoni's original works include four operas, several concertos (including a massive five-movement concerto for piano and orchestra), numerous

chamber works, and a considerable body of music for solo piano, but it is his transcriptions of works of Bach that are heard most often in concert. His rendering of the *Chaconne* was written while he was living in Boston and teaching at the New England Conservatory of Music. It is dedicated to the pianist and composer Eugène d'Albert (1864–1932). The tonal effect of the transcription resembles that of the organ. Busoni deviates frequently from the original, adding doublings, elaborating and inscribing numerous tempo changes, and suggesting performance instructions.

Some devotees of the music of Bach decry Busoni's approach, calling for an interpretation that is as close as possible to what the original composer wrote. Yet Bach was himself an active performer who transcribed and adapted the works of several seventeenth-century composers and of his contemporaries. In fact, there is good evidence that all of the composers whose works are here represented often deviated from the original when they performed their own works, not to mention those of other composers.

Program notes by Sorab Modi

For the convenience of concertgoers
the Garden Café remains open until 6:00 pm.

The use of cameras or recording equipment during the
performance is not allowed. Please be sure that cell phones,
pagers, and other electronic devices are turned off.

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

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

Mailing address
2000B South Club Drive
Landover, MD 20785

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