



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

National Gallery of Art
2,611th Concert

Thomas Mastroianni, *pianist*

March 25, 2007
Sunday Evening, 6:30 pm
West Building, West Garden Court

Admission free

Program

Franz Liszt (1811–1886)

From *Années de pèlerinage, deuxième année, Italie* (1837–1849)

Sonetto 47 del Petrarca

Sonetto 104 del Petrarca

Sonetto 123 del Petrarca

Après une lecture du Dante

INTERMISSION

Claude Debussy (1862–1918)

Préludes pour piano, Book 2 (1910–1912)

Brouillards

Feuilles mortes

La Puerta del Vino

Les Fées sont d'exquises danseuses

Bruyères

General Lavine—Eccentric

La Terrasse des audiences du clair de lune

Ondine

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

Canope

Les Tièrces alternées

Feux d'artifice

The Musician

Thomas Mastroianni is active as a chamber musician, concert soloist, lecturer, and recitalist throughout the United States and in Europe, Latin America, Russia, South America, and the Far East. He recently performed with the National Symphony Orchestra; appeared in Bulgaria, Italy, and Spain; and gave master classes, lectures, and recitals in New York City and Rio de Janeiro. His many workshops and lecture-recitals have covered such topics as “Performance Anxiety,” “The Team Approach to Wellness for the Performer,” “Chopin and Bel Canto,” “The Italian Aspect of Liszt,” and “Musical Memory.” Mastroianni spoke at the National Museum of American History’s *Piano 300* exhibition, and he has been a frequent preperformance lecturer at Wolf Trap Farm Park. He is a cofounder of the Amalfi Coast Music Festival in Italy, where he teaches, performs, and gives master classes each summer.

Mastroianni’s interest in researching pianists’ physiological problems has led him to work closely with members of the medical profession and appear with them in workshops and panel discussions to present findings. He has coauthored two articles on the problems of performing musicians’ with Richard Norris, MD, and presented a series on wellness at the 2002 World Piano Pedagogy Conference. His article “Memory and Anxiety” recently appeared in the *International Society for the Study of Tension in Performance Journal*, published in London.

A native of Pittsburgh, Mastroianni earned bachelor and master of science degrees from The Juilliard School, where he was a scholarship student of Beveridge Webster’s. After military service, he earned a doctorate in piano performance from Indiana University, where he worked with Sidney Foster and Bela Nagy. Before becoming a professor emeritus of piano at The Benjamin T. Rome School of Music at The Catholic University of America, he served there as dean of music for nine years and as chairman of the piano department for twenty-five years. He previously served as chairman of the applied music division and professor of piano at Texas Tech University in Lubbock.

Program Notes

The first half of the program that Thomas Mastroianni has chosen explores connections between the music of Franz Liszt and poetry, and the second half demonstrates some parallels between the music of Claude Debussy and the aesthetics of several visual artists whose works he knew.

Liszt read and admired the works of the great Renaissance poets Petrarch and Dante, which were much on the composer's mind as he wrote a musical "pilgrimage" based on his travels in Italy. The Petrarchan sonnets after which three of the movements of *Années de pèlerinage, deuxième année, Italie* are named are also among the texts that Liszt set for solo voice in the late 1830s. The translations projected during the performance are not poetic renditions but are intended as faithful translations of the poetry Liszt realized in music.

Dante's *Divine Comedy* was the inspiration for *Après une lecture du Dante* (After a Reading of Dante). During their Italian sojourn in the 1830s, Liszt and Marie d'Agout were said to have read aloud to each other from Dante's masterpiece on a daily basis. The movement captures Liszt's vision of suffering souls, salvation, and earthly love. Several interpreters of Liszt's music have recognized the symbolism in his use of pianistic figures, such as high tremolo (a symbol for things celestial) and the tritone (a symbol for things diabolical), and particularly key signatures. Following the poem's course, the movement's opening passage begins with tritone figures, recalling Dante's gates of hell, and concludes in the key of A-flat major, Liszt's key for earthly love. (A-flat major is also the key of two of Liszt's important love songs, *Liebstraume* (Dream of Love, 1839) and *Pace non trovo* (I Find No Peace, 1839), the latter of which provides another reference to Petrarch, since its text is his *Sonnet 47*.) The passage that follows the opening is similar but finishes with a cadence in the key of B major, Liszt's symbol for salvation. In the course of these two brief introductory passages, he presents three principal themes from the *Divine Comedy*—temptation, love, and salvation—that are the essence of the entire work.

A quick sketch of the form of *Après une lecture* (a single-movement sonata) reveals a manipulation of tonalities that grows out of Liszt's exploration of Dante's text. The exposition begins with a D-minor theme containing serpentine chromaticism that suggests Dante's chain of suffering souls. The second theme includes majestic octaves in the key of F-sharp major, a key totally unrelated to D minor, but one that also has symbolic connotations: it represents heaven or eternal life. The third and final theme of the exposition recalls the story of Francesca da Rimini, a contemporary of Dante's whose sad story is recounted in the *Divine Comedy*. Liszt poignantly retells the story of Francesca and her lover, who were doomed to experience heavenly bliss for only a brief time and then to suffer, using the key of F-sharp major. As Dante expressed it, "There is no greater pain than to glimpse happiness while in misery."

The final element of the sonata, the recapitulation, also has a symbolic undertone. It includes a fleeting glimpse of the exposition's first theme, this time in D major rather than D minor, where D major is the key Liszt used to symbolize Jesus Christ. This theme fragment is also presented amid angelic tremolos in the high register of the piano, resulting in a Wagnerian sound that creates a glow not unlike those that artists of Liszt's time frequently painted around the figure of Christ. The third theme is also recapitulated in D major, and the piece ends firmly in this key.

Claude Debussy is popularly identified as the great impressionist composer. He was profoundly affected by the work of Edgar Degas, Edouard Manet, Claude Monet, Auguste Renoir, and Alfred Sisley, even though Debussy actively composed between 1895 and 1915, long after the impressionist period in art had waned. Although he was interested in the work of contemporary artists, known today as post-impressionists (among them Paul Cézanne, Paul Gauguin, Odilon Redon, and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec), Debussy's personal art collection consisted of Japanese woodcuts and copies of paintings by J.M.W. Turner and James McNeill Whistler. Debussy and all of the artists mentioned here had one very important interest in common: symbolist poetry and the philosophy behind it. They studiously read the works of Charles Baudelaire, Stéphane Mallarmé, Edgar Allan Poe, Arthur

Rimbaud, and Paul Verlaine, and subscribed to the theory of correspondences as set forth by Baudelaire, who maintained that all artistic endeavor is related and was fond of saying, “Music is poetry without words; art is poetry without sound.”

Debussy assigned a word or phrase to each of his *Préludes* (and to many of his other works as well) that generally refers to something other than music—a scene, an aspect of human nature, or a phrase from a symbolist poem. He added these as postscripts, at the end of his musical scores, using parentheses and ellipses to imply that the ideas were incidental or peripheral. Some of the postscripts are quotes or characters from literature that Debussy was reading when he wrote the *Préludes*: *Les Fées sont d'exquises danseuses* is the title of an illustration in J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* (1906); S. Pickwick Esq. is the main character in Charles Dickens' *The Pickwick Papers* (1836); and *La Terrasse des audiences du clair de lune* is a phrase from a description of the coronation of George V as emperor of India in the December 1912 issue of *Le Temps*. *La Puerta del Vino* (The Wine Gate) is one of the entrances to the Alhambra Palace in Grenada, a picture postcard of which Debussy received in 1910 from the Spanish composer Manuel de Falla. It inspired Debussy to write a prelude with distinctly Spanish rhythms and a melody that imitates *cante jondo*, the wailing, mournful singing of flamenco vocalists.

The images shown during Thomas Mastroianni's performance of Debussy's *Préludes*, Book 2, were selected by Stephen Ackert, head of the National Gallery's music department. They include paintings by Turner, Whistler, and various impressionist artists, as well as illustrations and drawings from contemporary publications that Debussy might have had in mind as he wrote the pieces.

Program notes on Liszt by Thomas Mastroianni

Program notes on Debussy by Stephen Ackert

Next Week at the National Gallery of Art

Mark Kosower, *cellist*

Jee-Won Oh, *pianist*

Ginastera, *Cinco canciones populares argentinas*, op. 10

Khachaturian, *Sonata*

Stroppa, *Ay, There's the Rub*

Mendelssohn, *Sonata no. 2 in D Major*, op. 58

April 1, 2007

Sunday Evening, 6:30 pm

West Building, West Garden Court

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 of
the West Building 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

www.nga.gov