



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

National Gallery of Art
2,643rd Concert

Jon Manasse, *clarinetist*
Jon Nakamatsu, *pianist*

October 28, 2007
Sunday Evening, 6:30 pm
West Building, West Garden Court

Admission free

Program

Johannes Brahms (1833–1897)

Sonata in F Minor for Clarinet and Piano, op. 120, no. 1 (1894)

Allegro appassionato

Andante un poco adagio

Allegretto grazioso

Vivace

Carl Maria von Weber (1786–1826)

Grand Duo concertante in E-flat Major for Clarinet and Piano, J. 204 (1817)

Allegro con fuoco

Andante con moto

Rondo: Allegro

INTERMISSION

Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847)

Rondo capriccioso in E Major, op. 14 (1830)

Béla Kovács (b. 1937)

Hommage à Manuel de Falla (1994)

Maurice Ravel (1875–1937)

Pièce en forme de habanera (1907)

(Transcribed for clarinet and piano by Gaston Hamelin)

John Novacek (b. 1964)

Four Rags for Two Jons

Schenectady

Fourth Street Drag

Recuperation

Full Stride Ahead

The Musicians

JON MANASSE

Clarinetist Jon Manasse is internationally recognized for his inspiring artistry, unique sound, and charismatic performing style. He has been a guest soloist with a number of orchestras in the United States and abroad, including performances with Gerard Schwarz and the Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra at New York City's Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts; fourteen tours of Japan and Southeast Asia with the New York Symphonic Ensemble; and debuts in Jerusalem, Osaka, Tel Aviv, and London, where he played Mozart's *Clarinet Concerto* with Gerard Schwarz and the Academy of Saint Martin in the Fields.

An avid chamber musician, Manasse has been featured in programs with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, and at Alice Tully Hall, Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall, Merkin Concert Hall, the Sylvia and Danny Kaye Playhouse, and the Walter Reade Theater as part of Lincoln Center's "Great Performers" series. He has also been the guest soloist with many leading chamber ensembles, including the Amadeus Trio and Germany's Trio Parnassus as well as the American, Borromeo, Colorado, Lark, Manhattan, Moscow, Orion, Rossetti, Shanghai, and Ying String Quartets. Manasse has also collaborated with violinist Joshua Bell and pianist Jon Nakamatsu.

Manasse is a graduate of the Juilliard School, where he studied with David Weber. Since 1995 he has been associate professor of clarinet at the Eastman School of Music. In 2007 Manasse joined the faculty of Juilliard as well.

JON NAKAMATSU

One of the most sought-after pianists of his generation, Jon Nakamatsu appears frequently throughout Europe, Japan, and the United States as a concerto soloist, chamber musician, recording artist, and solo recitalist. Highlights of Nakamatsu's current season include return engagements with the Lexington, Reno, and Rochester Philharmonic Orchestras, the Annapolis, Bozeman, and Greenwich Symphony Orchestras, and Santa Fe Pro Musica.

In 1997 Nakamatsu was named gold medalist of the tenth Van Cliburn International Piano Competition, and subsequently appeared as soloist with the Boston Pops at Tanglewood and the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl, which led to performances with many other orchestras in the United States and abroad. The recipient of the Steven De Groote Memorial Award for his chamber music performances at the Cliburn competition, he has subsequently collaborated with various chamber ensembles and has made three United States tours as the guest soloist with the Berlin Philharmonic Woodwind Quintet.

Nakamatsu's festival appearances include the Bravo! Vail Valley and Tanglewood Music Festivals. Named Debut Artist of the Year in 1998 by NPR's *Performance Today*, Nakamatsu has been profiled by *CBS Sunday Morning* and *Reader's Digest* magazine and is featured in the PBS documentary *Playing with Fire*, the story of the tenth Van Cliburn International Piano Competition. A former high school German teacher, Jon Nakamatsu is a graduate of Stanford University.

Jon Manasse and Jon Nakamatsu appear at the National Gallery by arrangement with Parker Artists of New York City.

Program Notes

Johannes Brahms' chamber music is considered by many to represent his true voice and his most creative output. Written three years before his death, the opus 120 clarinet sonatas are part of the last group of chamber works Brahms wrote, which also includes a clarinet trio and a clarinet quintet. He wrote both sonatas for master clarinetist Richard Mühlfeld, who is said to have renewed the composer's inspiration for writing chamber music. Brahms and Mühlfeld collaborated on the first performances of the clarinet sonatas, and in 1895 the two embarked on a joint concert tour.

In these late works Brahms began to experiment with tonal and structural boundaries. The opening theme of the first movement, both dark and lyrical, is tonally ambiguous—it could be in either F minor or D-flat major—and the movement strays from conventional sonata form by not repeating the exposition. Every movement of this sonata is built upon complex thematic groups, from the dreamy second movement (*Adagio*) to the folk-influenced *Allegretto* to the energetic *Vivace*. Throughout the piece there is a constantly increasing interplay between the two instruments, which take turns accompanying each other.

Carl Maria von Weber loved the sound of the clarinet, and was inspired by clarinetist Heinrich Baerman. In 1811 he wrote two concertos for the instrument as well as other works, including the *Grand Duo concertante* for clarinet and piano. In contrast to Weber's earlier compositions, the works for clarinet give the pianist a much more interesting role than mere accompanist. A full-scale concert work, the *Grand Duo concertante* requires virtuosic performances on the part of both musicians.

Like his contemporaries Frédéric Chopin (1810–1849), Robert Schumann (1810–1856), and Franz Liszt (1811–1886), Felix Mendelssohn was a master pianist. Composed in two parts—an *Andante* in 4/4 time in E major followed by a presto in 6/8 time in E minor—Mendelssohn's *Rondo capriccioso* reveals the elegance of his writing and the balance he strikes between melodic directness and a formal sense of structure. The first portion is lyrical and songlike, bringing to mind another of Mendelssohn's favorite genres, the song

without words. The melody becomes more and more embellished, until the texture thins out and the tempo quickens as the piece culminates in a presto, filled with flashy arpeggios and musical fireworks.

The Hungarian clarinetist and composer Béla Kovács wrote nine homages to other composers for clarinet solo, among them the *Hommage à Manuel de Falla*, which has the character of a written cadenza based on themes of Falla. Kovács became a clarinet virtuoso by default rather than by design. As a boy, he wanted to play the oboe. When there was no oboe available, he found a clarinet, and his love affair with that instrument began. Maurice Ravel, having been born to a Basque mother, had Spanish influence in both his genes and his upbringing. The Habanera, a Cuban dance and song style, became popular in Europe in the late nineteenth century. Ravel originally wrote *Pièce en forme de habanera* as a vocalise, in response to a commission from a professor of voice at the Paris Conservatory. It has undergone many transcriptions throughout the years, among them this one for clarinet and piano by Gaston Hamelin, completed in 1930.

Although he enjoys a successful career as a classical pianist, John Novacek—who is also a composer and arranger—holds a special place in his heart for ragtime, the music that initially brought him to the piano. Having written more than thirty rags before he was eighteen, he has continued throughout his career to use this style in his work. Jon Manasse asked the composer to write some rags for the Manasse-Nakamatsu duo, and the four pieces that close this program were the result.

Program notes by Sorab Modi

Next Week at the National Gallery of Art

The Alexandria Symphony Orchestra

Kim Allen Kluge, *music director*

Music by Beethoven and Brahms

Presented in honor of *J. M. W. Turner*

November 4, 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.

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