



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

National Gallery of Art
2,708th Concert

Leon Bates, pianist

Presented in honor of African American History Month

February 25, 2009
Wednesday, 12:10 pm
East Building Auditorium

Admission free

Program

Edward MacDowell (1861–1908)

Sonata in E Minor (1901)

Maestoso

Semplice, teneramente

Molto allegro con fuoco

H. Leslie Adams (b. 1932)

Two Etudes

G Minor (1998)

G Major (1998)

Pat Metheny (b. 1954)

Arranged by Leon Bates

So May It Secretly Begin

R. Nathaniel Dett (1882–1943)

Barcarolle Morning

Juba Dance

(From *In the Bottoms*, 1913)

The Musician

A versatile and exciting artist, Leon Bates has performed in major concert halls in the United States and on five continents. Since winning the Philadelphia Orchestra Senior Auditions as a student, Bates has emerged as one of America's leading pianists. His performances at Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, and Philadelphia's Academy of Music and Kimmel Center, have warranted accolades from critics and audiences alike.

A native of Philadelphia, Bates began his formal study of music at age six on both piano and violin. The late Irene Beck formulated his early training at the Settlement Music School, and he continued his studies at Temple University's Esther Boyer College of Music. Among the awards he has received are the Collegiate Artist Award from the Music Teachers National Association, the National Association of Negro Musicians Competition, the Symphony of the New World Competition, and the National Endowment for the Arts Solo Recitalists Fellowship Grant. His extensive work with children was honored with the Raoul Wallenberg Humanitarian Award.

Bates has appeared with the Czech National Symphony Orchestra, the Quebec Symphony Orchestra, the Sinfonica dell'Academia di Santa Cecilia in Rome, and the symphony orchestras of Strasbourg and Vienna. He toured South Africa after apartheid and performed in Johannesburg with the National Symphony Orchestra and the Natal Philharmonic. His large repertoire includes over thirty works by major composers, including several contemporary concerti, and music by Duke Ellington. In the United States he has performed with the American Symphony Orchestra, the Chicago Sinfonietta, and the symphony orchestras of Atlanta, Cleveland, Detroit, Los Angeles, New York, and Philadelphia.

Some of Bates' career highlights include performing with Lorin Maazel and the Orchestra of France; participating in the Steinway Foundation's Gala Celebration commemorating the building of their 500,000th piano at Carnegie Hall; and appearing in a televised program from La Scala in Milan. Leon Bates appears at the National Gallery by arrangement with Joanne Rile Artists Management, Inc., of Jenkintown, Pennsylvania.

Program Notes

Edward MacDowell was born in New York City to a father whose own artistic leanings had been squelched by his Quaker parents, and to a mother who insisted that her son study music. At age eight he began his formal studies and quickly surpassed the abilities of his teacher. As was often the case with American musicians of this period, the fifteen-year-old MacDowell went to pursue his studies in Europe, complete with a scholarship at the Paris Conservatoire. After two years in Paris he moved to Germany, where he continued piano and also began to study composition. The music that MacDowell composed during the years he was in Germany (1885–1888) established him as one of America’s finest composers of the time. He returned to the United States in 1888 and settled in New England, where he would stay until his death twenty years later. His dream of establishing a colony for artists was realized a year before he died in Peterborough, New Hampshire, where he and his wife had a home. The MacDowell Colony was the first of its kind, and has been a haven for many great artists and composers since its founding.

The majority of MacDowell’s compositions are for piano, and they include transcriptions of eighteenth-century keyboard pieces. MacDowell gave each of his four piano sonatas a suggestive title—“Tragica,” “Eroica,” “Norse,” and the fourth, in E Minor, “Keltic.” Though he was strongly influenced by the European romantic style, the flora and fauna of New Hampshire were a great inspiration for him as well. Both these aspects can be heard in the *E Minor Sonata*—the German *sturm und drang* combined with the uniquely American landscape to create MacDowell’s idiom.

H. Leslie Adams was born in Cleveland, Ohio, and studied at the Oberlin College Conservatory of Music (composition with Herbert Elwell and Joseph Wood, voice with Robert Fountain, and piano with Emil Danenberg), where he earned a bachelor of music degree in 1955; at California State University at Long Beach, (composition with Leon Dallin) where he graduated with a master of music degree in 1967; and at Ohio State University, Columbus, (composition with Marshall Barnes), where he earned a Ph.D. in 1973. He also studied

orchestration with Edward Mattila, Eugene O'Brien, and Marcel Dick (1978–1983) and composition with Robert Starer (1959) and Vittorio Giannini (1960). He spent years as a musical show director, choral conductor, and teacher before dedicating himself full-time to composing in 1979. Adams' compositions have been performed by the Cleveland Orchestra, the Detroit Symphony, the Iceland Symphony, and the Prague Radio Orchestra, among others, and he has been on the faculties of Florida A&M University and the University of Kansas in Lawrence.

Best known for his opera, *Blake*, Adams incorporates jazz rhythms, neoromantic harmonies, and a strong sense of melody into his work. He has composed many pieces for voice, but his twenty-six *Etudes for Solo Piano* stand out among his works for keyboard instruments. The *Etude in G Minor* and *Etude in G Major* are numbers one and two of the twenty-six etudes, published in 1998.

Pat Metheny was born in Kansas City, Missouri, into a musical family. Starting on trumpet at age eight, Metheny switched to guitar at age twelve. By age fifteen, he was working regularly with the best jazz musicians in Kansas City. Metheny first burst onto the international jazz scene in 1974. Over the course of his three-year stint with vibraphone great Gary Burton, the young Missouri native already displayed the playing style that eventually became his trademark, which blended the loose and flexible articulation customarily reserved for horn players with an advanced rhythmic and harmonic sensibility—a way of playing and improvising that was modern in conception but grounded deeply in the jazz tradition of melody, swing, and the blues. With the release of his first album, *Bright Size Life* (1975), he reinvented the traditional “jazz guitar” sound for a new generation of players. Throughout his career, Pat Metheny has continued to redefine the genre by utilizing new technology and constantly working to evolve the improvisational and sonic potential of the guitar.

The descendant of slaves who settled the town of Drummondville, Ontario, Robert Nathaniel Dett began taking piano lessons in 1901, and three years later was admitted to the Oberlin Conservatory, where he majored in piano and composition. His biggest professional achievement was the work he did at the Hampton Institute in Hampton, Virginia, where he trained the choir. He would eventually become the first African American to rise to the position of director of music at that school. Dett continued his education throughout his life, completing a master of music in 1932 at the Eastman School of Music, and receiving honorary doctorates from Howard University and Oberlin. After retiring from the Hampton School, he continued working as an advisor to various choral groups, including the United Services Organization.

Dett's greatest contributions as a composer are his choral works and the numerous folksongs and spirituals he arranged for his choir at the Hampton School. He also wrote many pieces for organ and piano, and a volume of his complete piano works was published in 1973. The suite *In the Bottoms* gained widespread popularity in the years following his death, and incorporates his belief that musicians should seek out their folk roots. Rich in color and imagery, each of the movements of this suite describes the life and spirit of the African American farm workers in the south. One section, *Juba*, became so popular that it came close to making Dett a household name.

Program notes by Danielle DeSwert

Next Week at the National Gallery of Art

Ellen Hargis, soprano

Paul O'Dette, lutenist

Music by Camphuysen, Huygens, Vallet, and van den Hove

Presented in honor of *Pride of Place: Dutch Cityscapes of the Golden Age*

March 1, 2009

Sunday Evening, 6:30 pm

West Building, West Garden Court



The 63rd American Music Festival, concert one of five

David Amram, composer and pianist

Music by Amram

Presented in honor of *Looking In: Robert Frank's "The Americans"*

March 4, 2009

Wednesday, 12:10 pm

West Building Lecture Hall

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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