

75TH SEASON OF CONCERTS

NOVEMBER 26 - 27, 2016 • NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART



NOVEMBER 26

3:00 • West Building, West Garden Court

Eliot Fisk, guitar

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)
Six Suites for Unaccompanied Cello, BWV 1007–1012

Suite No. 1 in G Major, BWV 1007

Prelude
Allemande
Courante
Sarabande
Minuets I & II
Gigue

Suite No. 5 in C Minor, BWV 1011

Prelude
Allemande
Courante
Sarabande
Gavotte I & II
Gigue

Suite No. 3 in C Major, BWV 1009

Prelude
Allemande
Courante
Sarabande
Bourrée I & II
Gigue

NOVEMBER 27

3:00 • West Building, West Garden Court

Eliot Fisk, guitar

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)

Six Suites for Unaccompanied Cello, BWV 1007–1012

Suite No. 2 in D Minor, BWV 1008

Prelude

Allemande

Courante

Sarabande

Minuet I & II

Gigue

Suite No. 4 in E-flat Major, BWV 1010

Prelude

Allemande

Courante

Sarabande

Bourrée I & II

Gigue

Suite No. 6 in D Major, BWV 1012

Prelude

Allemande

Courante

Sarabande

Gavotte I & II

Gigue

The Musician

Eliot Fisk is known worldwide as a charismatic performer famed for his adventurous and virtuosic repertoire. He is also celebrated for his willingness to take art music into unusual venues (schools, senior centers, and even logging camps and prisons). After nearly fifty years before the public, he remains as his mentor Andrés Segovia once wrote, “at the top line of our artistic world.”

Fisk has performed as soloist with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Houston Symphony, the Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra, the Pro Arte Orchestra, the American Composers Orchestra, and numerous others around the world. He also has performed with many chamber music colleagues, including flutist Paula Robison, clarinetist Richard Stoltzman, cellist Yehuda Hanani, the late violinist Ruggiero Ricci, and the Shanghai, Juilliard, Borromeo, and Miro String Quartets. He has invented numerous crossover projects with Paco Peña (flamenco guitar), Joe Pass and Bill Frisell (jazz guitar), chanteuse Ute Lemper, and Turkish music specialist Burhan Ocal.

The repertoire of the classical guitar has been transformed through Fisk’s innumerable transcriptions, including works by Bach, Scarlatti, Haydn, Mozart, Paganini, Schubert, Mendelssohn, Granados, and Albéniz. In addition, numerous new works have been dedicated to him by composers as varied as Luciano Berio, Leonardo Balada, Robert Beaser, Nicholas Maw, George Rochberg, Daniel Bernard Roumain, and Kurt Schwertsik.

Fisk was the last direct pupil of Andrés Segovia and also studied interpretation with the legendary harpsichordist Ralph Kirkpatrick at Yale University, from which he graduated summa cum laude in 1976, and where he founded the guitar department at the Yale School of Music.

Described by one *New York Times* headline as a “Fiery Missionary to the Unconverted,” Fisk is a professor at the Universität Mozarteum in Salzburg, Austria, and at the New England Conservatory in Boston, where he received the Krasner Award as “Teacher of the Year” in 2010. Fisk founded and serves as artistic director of Boston GuitarFest, an annual cross-disciplinary event cosponsored by the New England Conservatory and Northeastern University. In summer 2014, Fisk toured China, performing with his wife, classical guitarist Zaira Meneses, and the couple’s young daughter, pianist Raquel Fisk.

Program Notes

The great Dutch painter Rembrandt van Rijn (1606 – 1669) and the father of Western music Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 – 1750), have always seemed to me to be kindred spirits. Although separated chronologically — Rembrandt was a contemporary of Bach’s illustrious predecessor and occasional inspiration, Johann Jakob Froberger (1660 – 1667) — the two artists seem united by a seriousness of purpose, a unique combination of discipline and depth of feeling, and above all an ability to speak a sort of subjective truth about the human condition. In his sense of rectitude, order, proportion, and formal perfection, Rembrandt seems to me to be Bach’s true counterpart in the history of art.

Death was a constant companion for both artists: Bach was orphaned by the age of ten, lost his first wife to an illness, and saw many of his numerous children die before adulthood. The shadow of death pursued Rembrandt as well, and while he survived various epidemics, he lost many family members.

Bach did not face the dramatic financial reversals or public condemnation of his private life that Rembrandt endured, but he had more than his share of run-ins with less-cultured authority. He was accused of playing “too long” or “too short” in church services, “confusing” the congregation with “strange” harmonies, insulting a bad bassoon player, and losing a portion of his public because of his impenetrable counterpoint and fearless contemplation of the dark side of human nature.

The *Six Suites for Unaccompanied Cello* are one of many examples of Bach’s ability to leapfrog his contemporaries into the future. These unique works that span the entire gamut of human feeling, from darkest depression to exultant joy, remain unrivaled in the entire literature for solo cello. Ironically, not a note of the cello music has survived in Bach’s own hand, only his score of his transcription for baroque lute of the Fifth Suite, the renamed “*Pieces pour la luth*,” BWV 995. Still this genius transcription gives us an idea of what sort of revision Bach might have made had he arranged the entire set.

In my own efforts to embrace these epic masterpieces I have tried to fill out harmonies and add counterpoint and ornaments in a way that seems consistent with baroque practice and Bach’s own penchant for revisiting and transforming both his own works and that of others. Nothing I have done in over a half a century of study of the guitar has been more challenging or rewarding than this effort.

My thanks to the National Gallery for the opportunity to offer these versions in this magical and inspiring space, in this indispensable cathedral of the arts that reminds us so powerfully of the best of our shared humanity.

Program notes by Eliot Fisk

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

Donal Fox, piano
Presented in honor of
Stuart Davis: In Full Swing
December 3, 12:30, 2:00, and 3:30
West Building, Gallery M78

Fox Wolf Duo
Virtuosos in Dialogue
December 4, 3:30
West Building, West Garden Court

Washington Performing Arts
Children of the Gospel Choir
Holiday Caroling
December 10, 1:30 and 2:30
Rotunda

Georgetown Day School
Holiday Caroling
December 11, 1:30 and 2:30
Rotunda

Tempesta di Mare
Philadelphia Baroque Orchestra
Baroque Holiday Concert
December 11, 4:00
West Building, West Garden Court

Xaverian High School
Holiday Caroling
December 17, 1:30 and 2:30
Rotunda

Danú
A Christmas Gathering: Féile Na Nollag
December 18, 2:00 and 4:00
West Building, West Garden Court

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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Cover Rembrandt van Rijn, *Man with a Sheet of Music* (detail), 1633, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Corcoran Collection (William A. Clark Collection)

Back cover *West Building, Constitution Avenue entrance, viewed from Sixth Street NW*, 1941, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gallery Archives

