ALEXANDRE Tharaud pianist

with the University Symphony Orchestra
Nobuyoshi Yasuda, conductor

Thursday, October 23, 2008
Gantner Concert Hall
Haas Fine Arts Center
7:30 pm

2008-2009 ARTISTS SERIES
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire
www.uwec.edu/activities
ABOUT ALEXANDRE THARAUD

Alexandre Tharaud graduated from the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique in Paris and started his international career in earnest when he won the second Prize at the ARD Music Competition in Munich.

As a soloist, he has performed with the Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, Münchner Rundfunkorchester, Japan Philharmonic Orchestra, Tokyo Metropolitan Orchestra, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio-France, Orchestre National de France, Orchestre National de Lille, Orchestre National de Bordeaux-Aquitaine, Taïwan National Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre du Capitole de Toulouse, Orchestre Philharmonique de Nice, Singapore Symphony Orchestra, the Orchestre National de Lyon, Netherlands Chamber Orchestra, Estonian National Symphony Orchestra, and Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Saarbrücken.

In recent seasons, Tharaud has performed at such festivals as 'Piano aux Jacobins,' La Roque d'Anthéron, BBC PROMS, Lufthansa Festival of Baroque Music, Sacrum-Profanum in Krakow, Schleswig-Holstein, Rimini, Festival de musique ancienne de Saintes, Printemps de Monte-Carlo and the Festival Verano Musical de Canarias.

He has made his recital debut at the Köln Philharmonie, the Essen Philharmonie, the South Bank piano series and the Rudolfinum in Prague. He has also appeared at the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées, Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires, Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., Bern Casino, Cité de la Musique, Krakow Philharmonie, and Hoam Art Hall in Seoul.

Tharaud's adventurous approach to programming has resulted in a number of commissions and premiers; he has toured extensively in Europe with his 'Hommages à Rameau' program, and premiered his 'Hommage à Couperin' featuring works by the composer with pieces by Gagneux, Pesson, Mâche,
PROGRAM

MUSIC BY MAURICE RAVEL 1875–1937

Sonantina (1903–1905)
Modéré
Mouvement de menuet
Animé

Miroirs (1904–1905)
Noctuelles
Oiseaux tristes
Une barque sur l’océan
Alborada del gracioso
La vallée des cloches

Le Tombeau de Couperin (1914–1917)
Prélude
Fugue
Forlane
Rigaudon
Menuet
Toccata

INTERMISSION

Piano Concerto in G major (1929–1931)
Allegramente
Adagio assai
Presto

Hersant and Lenot at the Théâtre de la Ville in Paris in May 2008. In October 2006, he gave the world premiere of Thierry Pécou’s piano concerto, l’Oiseau Innumérable, at the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées.

His Harmonia Mundi recordings dedicated to the music of Rameau, Ravel, Bach, Chopin and Couperin (the celebrated Tic, Toc, Choc) have received great critical acclaim. The Ravel was greeted with the highest awards from the press and resulted in invitations for performances worldwide.
Ravel's inspiration for composing his Sonatine was a 1903 competition sponsored by a fine arts and literary magazine called Weekly Critical Review. Ravel's close friend, critic M. D. Calvocoressi, was a contributor to the publication and encouraged Ravel to enter the competition. The requirement was a first movement of a piano sonatina no longer than 75 measures, and the prize offered was 100 francs. The magazine was nearing bankruptcy at the time and ultimately the publisher canceled the competition. Ironically, Ravel would have probably won the competition since he was the only entrant, but his first movement was a few measures too long.

Ravel dedicated the Sonatine to his dear friends Ida and Cipa Godebski. Madame Paule de Lestang gave the world premiere of the work in Lyon, France on March 10, 1906. It was premiered in Paris shortly afterward by Gabriel Grovlez at a concert on the series of the Société Nationale de Musique at the Schola Cantorum. The Sonatine quickly became popular with audiences and Ravel performed the first two movements regularly on concert programs across Europe and during his tour of America in 1928.

The Sonatine is Ravel's homage to late 18th-century musical elegance and classical structure. It is a cyclical work that uses a recurring motive. The opening theme of the first movement is transformed in the two subsequent movements—a technique refined by Liszt, whom Ravel greatly admired for that compositional device as well as for his virtuosity (c.f. Jeux d’eau and La valse).

The second movement minuet lacks the traditional trio section, perhaps in keeping with the abbreviated nature of a sonatina. Its modal inflections recall an earlier Ravel work, the Menuet antique of ten years before. Ravel told his pianist friend Marguerite Long to play this minuet “in the tempo of the minuet of Beethoven’s E-flat Piano Sonata, Op. 31 No. 3” (which is marked Moderato e grazioso). Ravel emphasizes the upbeat accents of the theme (as he did in the first movement). These accents, coupled with an aristocratic tempo, prevent this movement from becoming a waltz.

The last movement is a tour de force of brilliant virtuosic writing for the piano. It is a perfect example of a toccata and is the musical descendant of the works of the French claveciniste composers to whom Ravel felt spiritually connected (Rameau and Couperin). It is strikingly similar to Debussy’s Mouvement from the first book of Images and the Toccata from his Pour le Piano suite. Ravel would later enlarge the proportions of this sonatina’s toccata to become the Toccata of Le Tombeau de Couperin, a work of Lisztian virtuosity.
Ricardo Viñes first performed *Miroirs* (Mirrors) in 1906. Each movement was intended to manifest the visual images and ambience evoked when a certain person (those who received the dedications) looked into the mirror. With further insight into the piece, it might be surmised that the reflections are revealing parts of Ravel himself being projected onto these separate beings.

- **Noctuelles** (Night Moths), dedicated to Léon-Paul Fargue — This piece begins with highly chromatic pianissimo scampering across the keyboard. The calmer middle section makes use of chordal melodies and a pedal point; this is followed by a return to the introductory material.

- **Oiseaux tristes** (Sad Birds), dedicated to Ricardo Viñes — A lone bird sings its sad song at the beginning; other birds reluctantly join. The wild and raucous middle section is offset by a slow, solemn cadenza, which returns the piece to the solitude and loneliness of the opening.

- **Une barque sur l’océan** (A Boat on the Ocean), dedicated to Paul Sordes, a painter and fellow member of the Apaches — This piece is based around a flowing arpeggio, with simultaneous melodies in the upper and middle registers. The next section changes key abruptly, and a muted climax is followed by a striking passage: a tremolo in the right hand is accompanied by a tremendous arpeggio in the left hand; when the two meet at fortissimo at the top of the register, they cascade back down the piano. The central section of the piece is based around an ostinato in the extreme upper register; this forms the accompaniment for a Spanish melody. The accompaniment and melody become more insistent, until a fortississimo climax is reached. The tension slowly gives way, and the opening theme returns, providing the piece with a sense of calm and closure.

- **Alborada del gracioso** (The Comedian’s Aubade), dedicated to M. D. Calvocoressi, the provider of the text to Ravel’s *Cinq mélodies populaires grecques* — This piece is heavily influenced by Spanish themes, with the introductory chords reminiscent of guitars. The piece is marked by sharp dynamic and textural contrasts; it contains both stunning melodies and passages of considerable virtuosity.

- **La vallée des cloches** (The Valley of Bells), dedicated to Maurice Delage, Ravel’s first pupil — It is believed that the inspiration of the piece lay in the sound of church bells, though it is unknown whether Ravel’s “Valley” is Swiss or French. Ravel evokes many different bells throughout this piece; from the delicate bells of the opening to the quietly booming bells of the close. Some of Ravel’s most striking melodies occur in this piece, often with lush harmonizations.
LE TOMBEAU DE COUPERIN

In this extraordinary work, which is conceived as a Baroque suite, Ravel pays homage to the rich tradition of French Baroque music for the harpsichord, as exemplified by the works of François Couperin. It was certainly not Ravel's intention to imitate Couperin, or any other Baroque composer; instead, he included elements of Baroque style without altering his own unique style.

While Ravel's pianism is unmistakably modern, his refined, meticulous approach to the keyboard clearly shows an affinity with the French Baroque masters. However, the word "tomb" in the title also had a deeper personal significance for Ravel, who dedicated each movement of the suite to a friend who died in World War I.
The manuscript is dated 1914–1917, so it is difficult to determine if any significant portions of the work were written before the war. At any rate, Ravel intended the composition as a memorial to his friends; while there are moments of lightness and humor in this music, which prompted some to criticize the composer’s supposedly irreverent attitude toward death, beneath the flashes of wit one hears profound melancholy tones in the returning soldier’s tribute to his fallen comrades.

Dedicated to Lieutenant Jacques Charlot, who worked for Ravel’s publisher Durand, the Prélude is a veritable whirlpool of sound, the sensation of fluidity created by elegantly executed triplet figurations.

A triplet figure also appears in the noble, marmoreal Fugue, dedicated to Lieutenant Jean Cruppi, whose mother had played an important role in the production of L’Heure espagnole. Deceptively simple, this movement is a demanding polyphonic construction which Ravel executes with his characteristically brilliant nonchalance.

The Forlane, the French variant of an old Italian dance, bears a dedication to Lieutenant Gabriel Deluc, a friend from St-Jean-de-Luz, in Ravel’s native Basque region. As Vladimir Jaklevitch remarked, this noble and melancholy movement is like a lullaby. However, there is something slightly jarring and manic in this lullaby, and the manic energy turns into a nervous — but infinitely charming — narrative, the Rigaudon.

Dedicated to Ravel’s St-Jean-de-Luz friends Pierre and Pascal Gaudin, two brothers who were killed by the same shell on their first day of combat, the Rigaudon is named after an ancient Provencal dance. This movement opens with a poignant figuration, which, recurring with the power of an irresistible fixation, defines the identity of the entire piece.

Ravel dedicated the Menuet to Jean Dreyfus, step-brother of the composer and critic Roland-Manuel. Unfolding with the calm pace of an unassuming narrative, this movement, despite its apparently peaceful simplicity, unveils, if only for a moment, feelings of mournful foreboding.

The final movement, Toccata is dedicated to Captain Joseph de Marlviave, husband of Marguerite Long and devoted admirer of Faure’s music. In this movement, the half-hidden disquietude of the entire composition finally comes to the fore. While the percussive, obsessively recurring figurations may define this movement as a composition dominated by technical demands, there are, trapped in a carapace of busy, hammering gestures, enchanting moments of quiet lyricism.

Marguerite Long gave the first performance of Le Tombeau de Couperin in 1919; that year, Ravel completed his brilliant orchestration of the Prélude, Forlane, Menuet and Rigaudon, adding splendid orchestral color to these exquisite musical creations.

SOURCE: ALL MUSIC GUIDE
PIANO CONCERTO IN G MAJOR

Ravel's two concertos for piano — this one in G and the one in D for the left hand alone — were composed in the years 1929–1931. Except for the song-cycle Don Quichotte à Dulcinée, which followed in 1932, they were his last compositions in any form. The Concerto in G was begun first, but the Left-Hand Concerto was the first to be completed. At about the time he finished the two scores, Ravel spoke of them in an interview with a correspondent for the Daily Telegraph of London:

It was an interesting experience to conceive and realize the two concertos at the same time. The first [the G major], which I propose to play myself, is a concerto in the strict sense, written in the spirit of Mozart and Saint-Saëns. I believe that a concerto can be both gay and brilliant without necessarily being profound or aiming at dramatic effects. It has been said that the concertos of some great classical composers, far from being written for the piano, have been written against it. And I think this criticism is quite justified.

At the beginning, I meant to call [the G major] a “divertissement,” but afterwards I considered that this was unnecessary, as the name Concerto adequately describes the kind of music it contains. In some ways my Concerto is not unlike my Violin Sonata; it uses certain effects borrowed from jazz, but only in moderation.

According to M.D. Calvocoressi, the musical scholar and friend of Ravel, the G-major Concerto was “the belated materialization of a plan that ever since his youth Ravel had kept at the back of his mind. His intention was to play the solo part himself, and in 1931 he had an extensive tour all mapped out: it was to carry him as far as Japan.”

The tour never took place. Ravel acknowledged that he was not a virtuoso in the league of Mozart and Saint-Saëns, and he gave the Concerto in G to Marguerite Long. She introduced it at the Salle Pleyel, with Ravel conducting, on January 13, 1932, just five days after Paul Wittgenstein gave the premiere of the Left-Hand Concerto in Vienna, and then recorded it with Ravel and performed it with him all over Europe.

In his authoritative little book on Ravel, Alexis Roland-Manuel (1891–1966), who was his pupil, friend and confidante for some 26 years, and whose judgments are candid as well as affectionate, expanded upon Ravel's own remarks on this work:

The Concerto in G major follows out the composer's intentions very closely. It is a virtuoso “divertissement,” brilliant, clear and light, with sharp contrasts which navigate with Mozartean ease the classic difficulties presented to free recapitulation by the formal sonata.
The initial Allegramente, with its astounding vigor, imposes a hard and energetic harmonic “climate” upon melodic lines which, in their delicacy and capacity for easy adjustment, are related not so much to the Sonata for Violin and Piano as to Ma Mère l’Oye and Ondine.

Some critics have professed to find the contrast of the Adagio assai and the two movements which bound it incongruous. In a work free of “cyclic” writing, it is as legitimate a contrast as the precisely similar example in the Larghetto of Mozart’s Clarinet Quintet, which Ravel took as his model. The Adagio is really a Lied whose calm contemplation brings it unusually close to Fauré’s musings. The composer confessed to Mme. Long, when she praised the free development of the leisurely melody, which she felt came on naturally, that he had written it “two bars at a time, with frequent recourse to Mozart’s Clarinet Quintet.” But, once again, the original had become absorbed into the pastiche and entirely disappeared.

The conclusion is heralded by a terse Presto, at once brilliant, brief and scintillating — a chase goaded by galloping fanfares and not to be halted by the nasal tattoo of jazz. It is a violent struggle between meter and rhythm — the apotheosis of tonality.

SOURCE: RAVEL, BY ROLAND-MANUEL, TRANSLATED BY CYNTHIA JOLLY. PUBLISHED IN PAPERBACK BY DOVER PUBLICATIONS, INC., THROUGH ARRANGEMENT WITH DOBSON BOOKS, LTD., LONDON.
ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Under the direction of Nobuyoshi Yasuda, the University Symphony Orchestra is a 60-member student ensemble performing the symphonic repertoire of the 18th century to the present. The orchestra presents an on-campus concert each semester, performs annually in a tour to high schools in Wisconsin and Minnesota and accompanies one fully staged opera or musical play each year. USO was the featured ensemble at the inauguration of Chancellor Brian Levin-Stankevich in October 2006, and we are honored to have them as a part of this evening’s concert.
PERSONNEL
UNIVERSITY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Nobuyoshi Yasuda, conductor

VIOLIN I
** Mary Heimerman
   Emily Schneider
   Peter Chang
   Jesse Traner
   Naomi Hasan
   Craig Heckner
   Adam Warmansenn
   Anthony Reed
   Ezra Frater

VIOLIN II
* Kim Drewiske
  Sasha Payne
  Danielle Smith
  Lyndsey Waldburger
  Kathleen Nottingham
  Kylene Brisch
  Liz Krickhahn
  Emily Teetzen
  Yingsu Her
  Jerry Noth

VIOLA
* Martha Seroogy
  Christiane Stagg
  Callie Keaton
  Veronica Lewis
  Laura Kahlow
  Elizabeth Siebers
  Steven Ethington
  Emily Spanjers

CELLO
* Amanda Spindler
  Nate Brunette
  James Wesson
  Leah Sparks
  Brandon Ruef
  Andrew Piehl
  Jory Tuftin

FLUTE
* Nich Handahl*

PICCOLO
* Angela Roehl

OBOE
* Alexandra Esser

ENGLISH HORN
Lauren Zernlicka

E-FLAT CLARINET
* Jennifer Tinberg

CLARINET
* Jim Skaleski

BASSOON
* Matthew Kruszka
  Arica Hoppe

HORN
* Charles Willcutt
  Mike Renneke

TRUMPET
* Loren Endorf

TROMBONE
* Rachel Carter

PERCUSSION
* Peter Hanson
  David Power
  Nick LaMuro
  Mary Imsdahl

HARP
* Kristen Roberts

** Concertmaster
* Principal
† Community Member

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The current It boy of young French pianists is Alexandre Tharaud. ... At times you wonder how human fingers can achieve such delicate playing.

— TORONTO STAR
UNIVERSITY ARTISTS SERIES COMMITTEE
This administrative committee recommends policies for the operation of the Artists Series, including student attendance, and participates in the selection of artists for the Artists Series.

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COVER + PAGE 8 — Alexandre Tharaud photo by Eric Manas

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UNIVERSITY CENTERS
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire
The Artists Series is funded primarily through an allocation of student segregated fees by the Finance Commission of the Student Senate. Additionally, it receives grant support from the Wisconsin Arts Board with funds from the State of Wisconsin and the National Endowment for the Arts. The Artists Series thanks Best Western Trail Lodge Hotel and Suites Eau Claire, the exclusive accommodations partner for the Artists Series, and its media partners Wisconsin Public Radio and Community Television for their generous promotional support.

According to Wisconsin State Statute 36.09(5), students shall have the primary responsibility of recommending the allocation of student segregated fees. A portion of every student's tuition is contributed to over 20 organized activities that include the Artists Series, The Forum, and other entities via allocation through the Finance Commission of the Student Senate. The Artists Series is funded primarily by the students of the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire and is committed to the concept of non-discrimination as related to race, creed, sexual orientation, age and physical disability.

The Wisconsin Arts Board is the Wisconsin state agency that nurtures creativity, cultivates expression, promotes the arts, supports the arts in education, stimulates community and economic development and serves as a resource for people of every culture and heritage. Creation and Presentation grants provide artistic program and operational support to established nonprofit arts organizations whose primary mission is to create or present ongoing arts programming that makes a significant local, regional or statewide impact on the cultural life of Wisconsin, and that furthers the Arts Board's community development and arts education goals. The Artists Series is very appreciative of the support it receives from the Wisconsin Arts Board with funds from the State of Wisconsin and the National Endowment for the Arts.
The Best Western Trail Lodge Hotel and Suites (3340 Mondovi Road, Eau Claire, WI 54701, the first hotel off I-94 at Exit 65) is situated approximately 70 miles from the Minneapolis/St. Paul International Airport. In addition to such hotel amenities as free local telephone calls, high-speed Internet access, complimentary continental breakfast, airport courtesy shuttle, and business center, guests may also enjoy the indoor pool, hot tub, exercise room, and game room. Since 2003 the hotel has served as the exclusive accommodations partner for the Artists Series.

Wisconsin Public Radio is a civic and cultural resource which exists to enlighten and enrich the quality of life for the people within its listening area. WPR’s mission is to realize the Wisconsin Idea by producing, acquiring and delivering high quality audio programming that serves the public’s need to discuss ideas and opinions, and that provides cultural enrichment, intellectual stimulation, and intelligent, enlightening entertainment. In keeping with this mission, WPR provides a very valuable in-kind contribution to all Artists Series programs and often hosts or cosponsors specific events.

Founded in 1978, Community Television (Eau Claire Public Access Center, Inc.) is a non-profit community television station serving the Chippewa Valley with civic and government meetings, local educational, information and entertainment programs on Cable Channels 96/97 and 993/994. Its goal of “discovering, reflecting and illuminating the rich variety, depth and vitality that glows within our community” makes CTV an ideal partner in the Artists Series. CTV hosts the interview program “On Stage” which highlights the Artists Series, The Forum, and other events at the university and throughout the city.

The Artists Series is administered by the Activities and Programs office of the University Centers.

www.uwec.edu/activities
AVALON STRING QUARTET

Blaise Magniere, violin • Marie Wang, violin
Anthony Devroye, viola • Cheng-Hou Lee, cello

Wednesday, November 12, 2008
Gantner Concert Hall • Haas Fine Arts Center
7:30 PM

A group of coltish young musicians: eager, full of vim, full of ideas, following one another with enthusiasm.

— THE NEW YORK TIMES

Since it was founded in 1995, the Avalon String Quartet has won many notable competitions and secured coveted residencies — most recently a position at Northern Illinois University formerly occupied by the distinguished Vermeer Quartet. "The sound they make is big, strongly projected, with inner parts that speak, or rather sing," wrote The New York Times. Avalon's performance will include a recently premiered composition by UW-Eau Claire composer Ethan Wickman. "The piece will be a conceptual one, inspired in part by the Hindu greeting Namasté, which roughly means the light (or divine) within me salutes the light within you," Wickman says. "I started thinking about a piece in which the color of one instrument anticipates and salutes the color of the next."

www.avalonquartet.org

TICKETS AT THE SERVICE CENTER + THE DOOR
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Tickets for all campus events are also on sale at the Service Center's ticket office in the main lobby of Haas Fine Arts Center. The ticket outlet is open Monday through Friday from 10:30 AM to 1:30 PM., and is closed during holidays and academic breaks.