

The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts

STEPHEN A. SCHWARZMAN, *Chairman*
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TERRACE THEATER

Saturday Evening, November 19, 2005, at 7:30

The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts
presents

Post-Classical Ensemble

In collaboration with
Wesleyan University Theater Department
and Puppetsweat Theater

in

Celebrating *Don Quixote*

Post-Classical Ensemble
Angel Gil-Ordóñez, music director
Joseph Horowitz, artistic director

Chris Pedro Trakas, baritone
Awet Andemicael, soprano
Peter Burroughs, tenor

Wesleyan University Theater Department
Puppetsweat Theater

Theater at the Kennedy Center is presented with the generous support
of Stephen and Christine Schwarzman.

International Programming at the Kennedy Center is supported through the generosity of
The Kennedy Center International Committee on the Arts.

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The taking of photographs and the use of recording equipment are not allowed in this auditorium.

Program

Manuel de Falla: *Fanfare* (1921)

Jacques Ibert: Songs for *Don Quichotte* (1931)

“Chanson du départ” (Don Quixote’s Song of Departure)

“Chanson à Dulcinée” (Song for Dulcinea)

“Chanson du Duc” (Song of the Duke)

“Chanson de la Mort” (Song of the death of Don Quixote)

With interpolated readings from Cervantes’ novel, as translated by Edith Grossman (HarperCollins, 2003)

Maurice Ravel: *Don Quichotte à Dulcinée* (1934)

“Chanson Romanesque” (Romanesque song)

“Chanson Epique” (Epic song)

“Chanson à Boire” (Drinking song)

Intermission

Manuel de Falla: *El Retablo de Maese Pedro* (Master Peter’s Puppet Show) (1923)

Robert Bresnick, director

Marcela I. Oteiza, scenic designer

Leslie Weinberg, puppet/costume designer

John Carr, lighting designer

Lily Whitsitt, stage manager

Puppeteers: Kenton Atta-Krah, Johan Båge, Gedney Barclay, Gabriel Fries, Molly Gaebe, Quinn Hechtkopf, Rebecca Josue, Kieran Kredell, Jess Lane, Garrett Larribas, Anna Moench, Erin Smith, Hayley Stokar, Randa Tawil, Corinna Zeltsman

The audience is invited to a post-concert discussion with the artists.

This program is made possible with support from the Spanish Ministry of Culture.

*Additional sponsorship provided by Wesleyan University
and the Cultural Office, Embassy of Spain in Washington, D.C.*

Notes on the Program

By Joseph Horowitz

The Jacques Ibert *Don Quixote* songs we hear originate with G. W. Pabst's remarkable 1933 film version of Cervantes' novel, with the supreme Russian bass Fyodor Chaliapin in the title role. Chaliapin was widely admired, even by Stanislavski, as one of the great actors of his time. Don Quixote, wrote Vladimir Nabokov, "stands for everything that is gentle, forlorn, pure, unselfish, and gallant"—and Chaliapin's Quixote, never a cartoon, is all of these things. As a dimension of his eccentricity, he occasionally bursts into song. Ibert's songs, then, are never digressions; as sung by Chaliapin, they serve as a vehicle for self-disclosure. Ravel's famous *Don Quixote* songs, which we also hear, are by comparison concert works—a self-sufficient mini-cycle.

A commission from the Princess de Polignac set Manuel de Falla's *Master Peter's Puppet Show* in motion. The first staged production took place in her palace in Paris in 1923—with Wanda Landowska at the harpsichord and the composer conducting. The use of puppets pointed Falla toward *Don Quixote's* puppets (part two, chapter 26). Falla himself turned this episode, whose interpenetration of humor and pathos so typifies Cervantes's novel, into a libretto, preserving Cervantes' own language to a great degree. The musical idiom abandons the Andalusian flavor of Falla's earlier work in favor of medieval and Renaissance sources; for his narrator, Falla adapted the sung public proclamations, or *pregones*, of the medieval times.

Stravinsky's *The Soldier's Tale* (1918), also an intimate entertainment for narrator and actors, is an inescapable point of reference. But unique to Falla is the singular inspiration of a puppet show within a puppet show. In Cervantes, the story of Melisendra's rescue from Moorish clutches by Don Gayferos is played for Don Quixote and Sancho by Master Peter's puppets, with narration supplied by an apprentice (or Trujamán) in Master Peter's employ. (See the synopsis elsewhere on these pages.) In Falla's version, *all* the characters are puppets. The big puppets, on a big puppet stage, include Don Quixote, Master Peter, and Trujamán, whose words are sung by unseen vocalists situated in the pit (in our production, they appear onstage). The small puppets, on a small puppet stage, include Melisendra and Don Gayferos; they mime the action the Trujamán describes. The outcome of this comprehensive stylization is Cervantes rarified and miniaturized—and supported by an exquisite miniature (but real life) orchestra whose 20 members (including harp and harpsichord) furnish an unending and varied feast for the ear.

And the whole affair, lasting 28 minutes, occupies a miniature frame: *Don Quixote* reportioned, but with every aspect—the contrasting rude and delicate personalities, the rustic comedy and elegant drama—refined, compressed, and yet vividly etched. To the narrative layers already ingeniously supplied by Cervantes, Falla here adds a final façade of artifice.

A Falla paradox routinely pondered is that so ascetic a man could produce music as earthy as *El Amor Brujo*. Late Falla is not earthy, but the paradox remains. Of Falla's two operas, *La Vida Breve* (1905) is clumsy and bulky in comparison to *Master Peter*. The latter work, from the composer's years of unworldly seclusion, is by far the more theatrical. It bristles with wit and limitless panache. It percolates with such subtle details as Don Quixote's long and ungainly legs—the only part of him which remains visible once Master Peter's production begins; "during the show," Falla specifies, "they will remain in view, sometimes at rest, sometimes crossed over one another." Beyond praise is Falla's juxtaposition of his two puppet casts and the pacing that propels their climactic convergence when Don Quixote rises to intervene for Melisendra (at which point the other puppet spectators crane their necks to better observe the action). This peak, cunningly scaled, recedes to an equally precise denouement: Don Quixote's closing salutation to knights errant (culled from a different chapter of the novel), with which he finally and fully pre-empt center stage.

Notes on the Program

But then all his life the hermetic Falla was, after all, a man of the theater. His first compositions included five zarzuelas (the 19th-century Spanish operetta form). His dance creations included one—*The Three-Cornered Hat*—for Diaghilev, with choreography by Massine and sets by Picasso. He even helped to plan the puppet movements of the stage premiere of *Master Peter*. The refinements he imposed on Cervantes were comprehensive, even ruthless; the result is not denatured, but sublime.

MASTER PETER'S PUPPET SHOW SYNOPSIS

In the courtyard of an inn, Don Quixote and Sancho Panza witness a puppet show presented by Master Peter, with narration by his apprentice. The parts of Don Quixote, Master Peter, and the apprentice are taken by large puppets. The respective singers are a baritone, tenor, and boy soprano. (At our performance, the part of the apprentice is taken by a high soprano—a common practice.) Smaller puppets enact the following:

SCENE 1: The palace of Charlemagne. Melisendra, the emperor's daughter, is held captive in Saragossa. Charlemagne appeals to her husband, the knight Gayferos, to rescue her.

SCENE 2: A tower at Saragossa. A Moorish soldier steals a kiss from Melisendra, and is to be punished by the king, Marsilius. The apprentice, narrating, is chided by Don Quixote and Master Peter.

SCENE 3: The Moorish soldier is punished.

SCENE 4: Don Gayferos rides to Saragossa.

SCENE 5: Melisendra is rescued by Gayferos. They ride off toward Paris.

SCENE 6: Don Quixote is enraged to see Moors in pursuit of the Christian couple. Convinced the puppets are real, he attacks them, destroying the puppet theater. He declares himself a knight errant in thrall to the fair Dulcinea.

Meet the Artists

Post-Classical Ensemble, “more than an orchestra,” breaks out of classical music, with its implied notion of a high-culture remote from popular art. Its concerts regularly incorporate folk song, dance, film, theater, poetry, and commentary in order to cultivate adventurous new listeners. Of the orchestra’s past programs, *Csárdás!*—with the participation of the Gázsa Folk Band of Budapest—was recorded for national broadcast via Chicago’s WFMT, and has also been heard over National Public Radio. In June 2005, in association with the American Film Institute, Post-Classical Ensemble presented two classic American documentaries—*The River* and *The Plow that Broke the Plains*—whose scores, by Virgil Thomson, were performed live. These presentations will generate a state-of-the-art DVD produced by Naxos and currently in production.

The former Associate Conductor of the National Symphony Orchestra of Spain, **Angel Gil-Ordóñez** (music director) has conducted in recent seasons the American Composers Orchestra, Boulder Philharmonic, Brooklyn Philharmonic, Hartford Symphony, Opera Colorado, and Pacific Symphony. He led the opening concert of the National Gallery Orchestra in Washington last season. Abroad, he has been heard with the Munich Philharmonic, the Solistes de Berne, at the Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival, and at the Bellas Artes National Theatre in Mexico City. In summer 2000 he toured the major music festivals of Spain with the Valencia Symphony Orchestra in the Spanish premiere of Leonard Bernstein’s *Mass*. A specialist in the Spanish repertoire, Mr. Gil-Ordóñez has recorded four CDs devoted to Spanish composers with the Radio and Television Symphony Orchestra of Spain, the Madrid Symphony Orchestra, the Galicia Symphony Orchestra and the Camara XXI chamber orchestra. Born in Madrid, he worked closely with Sergiu Celibidache for more than six years in Germany. He is also Director of Orchestral Studies at Wesleyan University and Music Director of the Wesleyan Ensemble of the Americas.

Joseph Horowitz (artistic director) has long been a pioneer in classical music programming, beginning with his tenure as Artistic Advisor for the annual Schubertiade at the 92nd Street Y. As Executive Director of the Brooklyn Philharmonic Orchestra, resident orchestra of the Brooklyn Academy of Music, he received national attention for “The Russian Stravinsky,” “American Transcendentalists,” “Flamenco,” and other festivals exploring the folk roots of concert works. Now an artistic advisor to various American orchestras, he has created more than three dozen interdisciplinary music festivals since 1985. Called “our nation’s leading scholar of the symphony orchestra” by Charles Olton, former President of the American Symphony Orchestra League, Mr. Horowitz is also the award-winning author of seven books dealing with the institutional history of classical music in the United States—most recently, *Classical Music in America: A History of Its Rise and Fall* (Norton), supported by fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, Columbia University, and the National Endowment for the Humanities. For the National Endowment for the Arts, Mr. Horowitz serves as Artistic Advisor to an annual national institute for music critics, based at Columbia University. A former *New York Times* music critic, he writes for the Sunday *New York Times* and for the *Times Literary Supplement* (U.K.), and contributes frequently to scholarly journals. As Artistic Director of “The American Piano,” he presides over a unique week-long piano festival at the University of Maryland at College Park this spring, featuring special events on Ives, Copland, and the “Black Virtuoso Tradition.”

Baritone **Chris Pedro Trakas** previously appeared as Falla’s Don Quixote with New York’s Eos Orchestra, and also with the Brooklyn Philharmonic conducted by Angel Gil-Ordóñez. A Naumburg Award winner, he has sung in Strauss’ *Ariadne auf Naxos* at the Metropolitan Opera under James Levine, Ravel’s *L’enfant et les sortilèges* with the Boston Symphony Orchestra under Seiji Ozawa, and the title

Meet the Artists

role in Mozart's *Don Giovanni* with the Saint Louis Symphony under Hans Vonk. As a recitalist, he has collaborated with James Levine, among other pianists. His many recordings include Hyperion's Complete Songs of Ernest Chausson with Felicity Lott, Ann Murray, and pianist Graham Johnson. He is currently artist in residence at SUNY Stony Brook.

Awet Andemicael first sang Falla's Trujamán with the Brooklyn Philharmonic under Angel Gil-Ordóñez; she subsequently performed the same role with the Boston Symphony under Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos. Her other recent engagements include her European debut as Clara in *Porgy and Bes* with the Kammeroper Schloss Rheinsberg and *Carmina Burana* with the Milwaukee Symphony.

Tenor **Peter Joshua Burrough's** 1999 Washington Opera debut was as Ezekiel Cheever in *The Crucible*. He has since appeared several times with the company. His upcoming performances include Nanki Poo in *The Mikado* with Washington Savoyards.

Robert Bresnick is a freelance director based in New Haven. In the 1970s he founded and was artistic director of the Protean Theater, an experimental theater in Hartford. In 1996, with Leslie Weinberg, he co-founded **Puppetsweat Theater**. Puppetsweat has since performed in New York City at La Mama E.T.C., Miller Theater, P.S. 122, Theater for The New City, Dia Arts, and as part of The Jim Henson International Puppet Festivals and The Great Small Works Toy

Theater Festivals, as well as through the northeast. It will be seen this Spring at the Walker Arts Center in Minneapolis.

Marcela I. Oteiza is a theater designer of wide experience. As a Multidisciplinary Visual Artist, she has been exhibited internationally. She is currently working on an interactive performance installation, "The Crossing," in collaboration with Damla Hacagelolu of Mimar Sinan University in Istanbul.

Leslie Weinberg has designed costumes, puppets, and scenic projections for dance, music and theater events in the Connecticut and New York region for 20 years. She has worked with Martin Bresnick, Bill Francisco, Judy Dworin, Jennifer Miller, and Annabelle Gamson. She is the Co-Artistic Director with Robert Bresnick of Puppetsweat Theater. A Puppetsweat animation based on "The Gate of Paradise" by William Blake is currently touring internationally.

John Carr is the resident lighting designer for theater and dance and chairman of the theater department at Wesleyan University. Over the past 30 years he has designed lighting and scenery for numerous professional and academic institutions, including almost 100 productions at Wesleyan since 1984. Recent non-Wesleyan designs have been for The Theater for The New City and the Cunningham Studio in New York and The New Wolsey Theatre in the U.K.. He has designed numerous premiere productions for choreographers and directors such as Richard Bull, Deborah Hay, and Robert Wilson.

Meet the Artists

Post-Classical Ensemble Roster

Violin I:

David Salness, *concertmaster*
Laura Knutson

Flute/Piccolo

Nicolette Oppelt

Trumpet

Phil Snedecor
Robert Birch

Violin II

Sally McLain
Sarah Sherry

Oboe

Mark Hill
Wesley Nichols

Trombone

George Allen

Viola

Lisa Ponton,
Paul Swantek

English Horn

Dan Doescher

Tuba

David Brown

Cello

Gita Ladd
Kerry van Laanen

Clarinet/Alto Sax

Edward Walters

Timpani

Bill Richards

Bass

Ed Malaga

Clarinet/Bass Clarinet

Marguerite Baker

Percussion

Tom Jones

Flute

Sara Stern

Bassoon

Barry Trent
Vanessa Ferrari

Harp

Rebecca Smith

French Horn

Mark Hughes
Paul Hopkins

Harpsichord

Jeffrey Watson

Post-Classical Ensemble

Angel Gil-Ordóñez, music director
Joseph Horowitz, artistic director
Susan Kelly, personnel manager
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5104 44th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20016-4039
T & F: (202) 966 8778
E: info@post-classicalensemble.org
W: www.post-classicalensemble.org

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Texts and Translations

Jacques Ibert

Songs for *Don Quichotte* (1931)

Chanson du départ de Don Quichotte
by Pierre de Ronsard (1524-1585)

Ce château neuf, ce nouvel édifice
Tout enrichi de marbre et de porphyre
Qu'amour bâtit château de son empire
où tout le ciel a mis son artifice,
Est un rempart, un fort contre le vice,
Où la vertueuse maîtresse se retire,
Que l'oeil regarde et que l'esprit admire
Forçant les coeurs à lui faire service.

C'est un château, fait de telle sorte
Que nul ne peut approcher de la porte
Si des grands rois il n'a sauvé sa race
Victorieux, vaillant et amoureux.
Nul chevalier tant soit aventureux
Sans être tel ne peut gagner la place.

Chanson à Dulcinée
by Alexandre Arnoux (1884-1973)

Un an me dure la journée
Si je ne vois ma Dulcinée.

Mais Amour a peint son visage,
à fin d'adoucir ma langueur.
Dans la fontaine et le nuage,
dans chaque aurore et chaque fleur.

Un an me dure la journée
Si je ne vois ma Dulcinée.

Toujours proche et toujours lointaine,
étoile mes longs chemins.
Le vent m'apporte son haleine
quand il passe sur les jasmins.

Un an me dure la journée
Si je ne vois ma Dulcinée.

Don Quixote's Song of Departure

This new castle, this new building,
enriched with marble and porphyry,
where love built a castle for his empire
and all of heaven added their skills,
a rampart, a fortress against vice,
is whose virtuous mistress hides herself away,
that the eye beholds and the spirit admires,
forcing hearts to her service.

It is a castle, made in such a way
that none may approach its door
unless he has saved his people from the
Great Kings,
victorious, valiant and loving.
No knight, no matter how adventurous,
can enter without being such a person.

Song for Dulcinea

A day lasts a year
if I don't see my Dulcinea.

But Love, to sweeten my languishing,
has painted her face
in the fountain and the cloud,
in each dawn and each flower.

A day lasts a year
if I don't see my Dulcinea.

Ever near and ever far,
star of my long journeys.
The wind brings me her breath
when it blows over the jasmine flowers.

A day lasts a year
if I don't see my Dulcinea.

Texts and Translations

Chanson du Duc

by Alexandre Arnoux

Je veux chanter ici la Dame de mes songes,
 qui m'exalte aux dessus de ce siècle de boue.
 Son coeur de diamant est vierge de mensonges,
 La rose s'obscurcit au regard de sa joue.
 Pour elle j'ai tenté les hautes aventures.
 Mon bras a delivré la Princesse en servage.
 J'ai vaincu l'enchanteur, confondu les perjures.
 Et ployé l'univers à lui rendre l'hommage.
 Dame par qui je vais, seul dessus cette terre,
 Qui ne soit prisonnier de la fausse apparence.
 Je soutiens contre tout chevalier téméraire
 Votre éclat non pareil et votre précellence.

Chanson de la mort de Don Quichotte

by Alexandre Arnoux

Ne pleure pas Sancho, ne pleure pas mon bon.
 Ton maître n'est pas mort, il n'est pas
 loin de toi.
 Il vit dans une île heureuse
 où tout est pur et sans mensonges.
 Dans l'île enfin trouvée,
 où tu viendras un jour.
 Dans l'île désirée O mon ami Sancho!
 Les livres sont brûlés et font un tas de cendres.
 Si tous les livres m'ont tué,
 il suffit d'un pour que je vive.
 Fantôme dans la vie et réel dans la mort.
 Tel est l'étrange sort du pauvre Don Quichotte.

Song of the Duke

Here let me sing the lady of my dreams,
 who raises me above this muddy century.
 Her diamond heart has never known a lie,
 The rose hides itself at the sight of her cheek.
 It is for her that I attempted high adventures.
 My arm freed the princess from servitude.
 I defeated the enchanter and confused
 the forsworn.
 I bent the universe to pay her homage.
 Lady for whom I roam alone on this earth,
 the only one not a prisoner of false appearances,
 I maintain before any foolhardy knight
 your peerless brilliance and excellence.

Song of the death of Don Quixote

Don't cry, Sancho. Don't cry, my good
 fellow.
 Your master isn't dead, he hasn't left you.
 He lives on a happy island
 where everything is pure and there are
 no lies.
 He has found his island at last,
 and some day you will join him on this
 long-desired island, Friend Sancho!
 Books burn to piles of ashes.
 If books killed me,
 I just need one to live.
 A phantom in life and real in death -
 such is the strange fate of poor Don Quixote.

Texts and Translations

Maurice Ravel
Don Quichotte à Dulcinée (1934)
Poems by Paul Morand (1888-1976)

Chanson Romanesque

Si vous me disiez que la terre
à tant tourner vous offensa,
je lui dépêcherais Pança:
vous la verriez fixe et se taire.

Si vous me disiez que l'ennui
vous vient du ciel trop fleuri d'astres,
déchirant les divins cadastres,
je faucherais d'un coup la nuit.

Si vous me disiez que l'espace
ainsi vidé ne vous plaît point,
chevalier dieu, la lance au poing,
j'étoilerais le vent qui passe.

Mais si vous disiez que mon sang
est plus à moi qu'à vous, ma Dame,
je blémirais dessous le blâme
et je mourrais, vous bénissant.

O Dulcinée.

Chanson épique

Bon Saint Michel qui me donnez loisir
De voir ma Dame et de l'entendre,
Bon Saint Michel qui me daignez choisir
Pour lui complaire et la défendre,
Bon Saint Michel veuillez descendre
Avec Saint Georges sur l'autel
De la Madone au bleu mantel.

D'un rayon du ciel bénissez ma lame
Et son égale en pureté
Et son égale en piété
Comme en pudeur et chasteté:
Ma Dame.

O grands Saint Georges et Saint Michel,
L'ange qui veille sur ma veille,
Ma douce Dame si pareille
A Vous, Madone au bleu mantel!
Amen.

Romanesque song

If you told me the eternal turning
Of the world, offended you.
I would send Panza:
you would see it motionless and silent.

If you told me to be bored by
the number of stars in the sky.
I would tear the heavens apart,
Erase the night in one swipe.

If you told me that the, now
Empty space, doesn't please you.
Chevalierdieu, with a lance at hand
I would fill the passing wind with stars.

But, my Lady, if you told me
that my blood is more mine, then yours.
That reprimand would turn me pale
and, blessing you, I would die.

Oh, Dulcinea.

Epic song

Dear Saint Michael, who gives me the chance
to see my Lady and to hear her.
Dear Saint Michael who gracefully
chose me
to please and defend her.
Dear Saint Michael will you descend
With Saint George to the altar
Of the Virgin in the blue mantle.

Bless my sword, with a beam from heaven
And his equal in purity
And his equal in pity
As in modesty and chastity:
My Lady.

O Great Saint George and Saint Michael
The angel who guards my watch
My sweet Lady, so much like you
Virgin in the blue mantle.
Amen.

Texts and Translations

Chanson à boire

Foin du bâtard, illustre Dame,
 Qui pour me perdre à vos doux yeux
 Dit que l'amour et le vin vieux
 Mettent en deuil mon cœur, mon âme!

Je bois à la joie!
 La joie est le seul but
 Où je vais droit...
 Lorsque j'ai bu!

Foin du jaloux, brune maîtresse,
 Qui geind, qui pleure et fait serment
 D'être toujours ce pâle amant
 Qui met de l'eau dans son ivresse!

Je bois à la joie!
 La joie est le seul but
 Où je vais droit...
 Lorsque j'ai

Drinking song

Fig for the bastard, illustrious Lady
 Who, for loosing me in your sweet eyes
 Tells me that love and old wine
 Put my heart and soul in mourning.

I drink
 To pleasure!
 Pleasure is the only goal,
 To which I go straight... when I've drunk!

Fig for the jealous, dark-haired mistress
 Who moans, who cries and swears
 Always being the pallid lover,
 Watering down his intoxication

I drink
 To pleasure!
 Pleasure is the only goal,
 To which I go straight... when I've drunk!

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The Big Break

The Kennedy Center's Conservatory Project brings in the next generation of great performers.



Karina Canellakis performs at the Curtis Music Institute.

Many musicians have been honing their craft from a young age—learning, practicing, and performing, followed by more practicing. The difficulty for a majority of these aspiring superstars is in getting the opportunity to perform in the “right” places and being heard by the “right” people.

In March 2003 Kennedy Center President Michael M. Kaiser announced the creation of The Conservatory Project, a program dedicated to developing and presenting young talent from the nation’s leading music conservatories.

A new component of the Kennedy Center Performing Arts for Everyone (PAFE) initiative’s Millennium Stage program, The Conservatory Project “creates an ongoing showcase for our nation’s exceptional young musical artists,” says Kaiser, “and is a wonderful opportunity for them to be heard on a national stage.”

One of the principal aims of the program is to build strong, enduring relationships between the Kennedy Center and a select group of top-tier music education programs, establishing a mutually beneficial collaboration resulting in critical

recognition for the institutions’ most talented young performers.

Washington audiences will have the opportunity to hear free performances twice a year by premier young talent in classical music, jazz, musical theater, opera, and more, while the students will have the chance to perform for audiences and arts leaders in the nation’s center for the performing arts.

Participating institutions include The School of Music at Indiana University, Manhattan School of Music, Oberlin Conservatory of Music, Cleveland Institute of Music, University of Michigan School of Music, New England Conservatory of Music, The Juilliard School, Northwestern School of Music, Eastman School of Music at the University of Rochester, The Curtis Institute of Music, The San Francisco Conservatory of Music, Berklee College of Music, The Shepherd School of Music at Rice University, and The Peabody.

Performances are broadcast live on the Internet and then archived on the Kennedy Center Web site. For more information about The Conservatory Project, please visit kennedy-center.org/conservatory.

Friends of the Kennedy Center

The Friends of the Kennedy Center is an organization of more than 500 volunteers who contribute 100,000 hours of service around the building each year. The purpose of the Friends program is to provide Kennedy Center visitors and patrons with timely, accurate, and consistent information about the Center's programs and activities, and to be a primary source of administrative assistance behind the scenes at the Center.

Friends volunteers lead tours of the Center's theaters, lounges, and artworks every day of the year except Christmas, Thanksgiving, and New Year's Day. They also staff the Center's Visitors Center, offering help on topics ranging from performance schedules to the locations of the Center's restaurants.

Friends volunteers also work in the Kennedy Center Gift Shops, concession stands, and in the member lounges that are open during performances. On the day of the Open House Arts Festival each fall, volunteers serve as guides directing foot traffic, as elevator operators, and as entertainers. Behind the scenes, they work in the Center's administrative offices, performing tasks necessary to the Center's continuing operation.

If you are interested in becoming a Friends volunteer, please call the Friends office at (202) 416-8301 to receive an application form or apply online at kennedy-center.org/support/volunteers/.



Friends volunteers help out at the annual Open House Arts Festival.

Golden Rules

Almost weekly, we get calls asking about audience etiquette. These calls come from orchestras and theaters, opera and ballet companies all over the United States and Canada. The message seems to be a cry for help: American audiences are out of control. Are they?

Here's a primer. Please read on, and remember, part of one's agreement as an audience member is to take seriously the pleasure of others, a responsibility fulfilled by quietly attentive (or silently inattentive) and self-restrained behavior. After all, you can be as demonstrative as you like during bows and curtain calls.



1. Take it easy with the atomizer; many people are highly allergic to perfume and cologne.

2. If you bring a child, make sure etiquette is part of the experience. Children love learning new things.

3. Unwrap all candies and cough drops before the curtain goes up or the concert begins.

4. Make sure all cell phones, beepers, and signal watches are OFF. And don't jangle the bangles.

5. The overture is part of the performance. Please cease talking at this point.

6. Note to lovebirds: When you lean your heads together, you block the view of the person behind you. Leaning forward also blocks the view.

7. THOU SHALT NOT TALK, or hum, or sing along, or beat time with a body part.

8. Force yourself to wait for a pause or intermission before rifling through a purse, backpack, or shopping bags.

9. Yes, the parking lot gets busy and public transportation is tricky, but leaving while the show is in progress is discourteous.

10. The old standby: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.