

10-26-1999

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Recommended Citation

"Local Scholars to Select and Reflect on Arts Giants of the 20th Century" (1999). *News Releases*. 8357.
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Oct. 26, 1999
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NEWS RELEASE

LOCAL SCHOLARS TO SELECT AND REFLECT ON ARTS GIANTS OF THE 20th CENTURY

DAYTON, Ohio – Is it Igor Stravinsky or Claude Debussy? How about Pablo Picasso or Henry Moore? Or could it be William Faulkner or Franz Kafka?

Given the plethora of phenomenal artists whose works have graced our senses during this last century, selecting the one “most important” would be a mind boggling endeavor at best. Yet that is exactly what three local scholars have been challenged to do for a millennium-inspired First Tuesday Series event at the University of Dayton.

Maestro Neal Gittleman, art scholar Dominique Vasseur and literary scholar James Farrelly will present reflective thoughts on the “Giants of the 20th Century” at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 2, at Sears Recital Hall in the Jesse Philips Humanities Center at UD. Each speaker has been asked to select and then defend his choice of this century’s most important composer, visual artist and writer, respectively.

The lecture is free and open to the public and is part of UD’s First Tuesday Series of lectures and discussions in the arts and humanities.

Traditionally, First Tuesday lectures are held in conjunction with and designed to highlight and illuminate selected arts events in the Dayton area, said Richard Benedum, First Tuesday founder and professor of music at UD. For instance, an upcoming lecture will feature three UD professors speaking on “The Transformation of ‘*Les Miserables*’ into ‘*Les Miz*,’” and will be held in conjunction with Dayton Opera’s production of “*Les Miz*” in the spring.

“Giants of the 20th Century” will be an exception to that tradition, Benedum said, in that it is not tied in to any one particular arts event.

“The end of the 20th century and the end of the millennium provided an opportunity in the biggest sense of chronology to do a retrospective on what artists have accomplished in the last 100 years,” Benedum said. “We’ve challenged three scholars to select and speak about their choice of the century’s most important composer, visual artist and writer, and believe the topic will surely lead to a lively discussion and debate with members of the audience.”

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Gittleman, now in his fifth year as music director of the Dayton Philharmonic Orchestra, will select the 20th century's most important composer. Prior to his arrival in Dayton, Gittleman served as music director of the Marion Philharmonic in Indiana; as associate conductor of the Syracuse Symphony in New York, and as assistant conductor of the Oregon Symphony Orchestra. He also served for 10 seasons as associate and resident conductor of the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra. After graduating from Yale University in 1975, Gittleman continued to study extensively in Paris; at the Manhattan School of music; at the Pierre Monteux School in Hanover, New Hampshire; and at the Hartt School in Hartford, Connecticut.

Vasseur, who will offer his choice of most important visual artist, is senior curator of the Dayton Art Institute. A native of Paris, France, and raised in Springfield, Ohio, Vasseur received a bachelor of arts degree in art history from Oberlin College in 1973 and a master's degree in art history from the University of Chicago in 1976. His impressive background includes three years at the Art Institute of Chicago before joining the Dayton Art Institute in 1979 as registrar and assistant curator of European art. He was promoted to curator of European arts and prints, drawings and photographs in 1985; and in 1994 to the position of senior curator at DAI. During his 20 years in Dayton, Vasseur has organized a number of significant exhibitions and lectured and written extensively on the institute's European collections.

Farrelly, who will offer his thoughts on the most important writer, is a professor of English and former chair of the English department at UD. During his 32 years at the University, Farrelly's specialty has been Irish literature and drama, but he also teaches courses in British, American and popular literature and film and literature. He also serves as coordinator of the Arts and Human Experience cluster, a general education sequence of arts and arts-related courses; and as coordinator of film studies, a new minor at UD.

For more information about the First Tuesday series, call Richard Benedum at (937) 229-3986.

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For media interviews, call **Neal Gittleman** at (937) 224-3521, **Dominique Vasseur** at (937) 223-5377, and **James Farrelly** at (937) 229-3435.