

BEETHOVEN³

SUNDAY, MARCH 14, 2004 – 3:00 PM
MEANY HALL – UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

Povilas Stravinsky, piano
ORCHESTRA SEATTLE
George Shangrow, conductor
Justin Cole, conductor

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)
Consecration of the House Overture, Op. 124

George Shangrow, conductor

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN
Piano Concerto No. 3 in C minor, Op. 37

Allegro con brio

Largo

Rondo: Allegro

Povilas Stravinsky, piano
Justin Cole, conductor

– Intermission –

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN
Symphony No. 3 in E-flat major, Op. 55 (*Eroica*)

Allegro con brio

Marcia funèbre: Adagio assai

Scherzo: Allegro vivace

Finale: Allegro molto

George Shangrow, conductor

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Friedrich Nietzsche

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William Shakespeare

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LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Die Weihe des Hauses, Op. 124

Beethoven was born in Bonn on December 16, 1770 and died in Vienna on March 26, 1827. He composed this overture for the reopening of the newly remodeled theater in the Viennese suburb of Josefstadt on October 3, 1822. The score calls for pairs of woodwinds, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani and strings.

Late in the summer of 1822, Beethoven's assistance was requested to celebrate the reopening of the Josefstadt theater. Since there was not enough time to create and mount a new play, Kotzebue's *The Ruins of Athens* was chosen, for which Beethoven had provided incidental music 11 years earlier. The drama was revised and retitled *Die Weihe des Hauses* ("The Consecration of the House"), and the composer added a chorus and a new overture for the occasion.

Although this overture was composed late in his career, Beethoven looked backwards, taking his inspiration from Baroque composers generally—in adopting the style of the French overture with its slow introduction followed by a lively fugue—and Handel in particular. At the time, Beethoven confided in his friend and future biographer, Anton Schindler, that he had devised two possible fugue themes for the work: one in a rather free style and the other in a more strict Handelian style. Handel won out and it is this theme from which the grand fugue that closes the work is developed.

It is interesting to note that in the stately, chorale-like opening, Beethoven uses the three trombones of the orchestra to great effect, but they only play during the first 37 measures of the work. The eminent British musicologist Donald Francis Tovey provided the following evocative description of the overture:

It consists of a solemn slow march, followed by a passage of squarely rhythmic fanfares for trumpets, through which bassoons may be faintly heard in a sound suggestive of hurrying footsteps; then there is the tread of some concourse not less excited, but more certain of its goal; a moment of solemn calm; silence, and the first faint stirring of a movement impelled from some vast distance by a mighty rushing wind, which then seizes us in the career of a great orchestral fugue, rising from climax to climax in a world which is beyond that of action or drama because all that has been done and suffered is now accomplished and proved not in vain.

Piano Concerto No. 3 in C minor, Op. 37

Beethoven began sketching his third piano concerto during the 1790s, but most of the composition took place in 1800. The composer was the soloist at the first performance, in Vienna on April 5, 1803. The score calls for pairs of woodwinds, horns and trumpets, timpani and strings.

Beethoven's first two piano concertos look back to Haydn and Mozart, yet while Beethoven likely modeled his third

concerto for the instrument after Mozart's own C minor piano concerto (No. 24, K. 491), the style is clearly Beethoven's own, looking ahead to works such as the *Eroica* symphony.

The concert at which the concerto was introduced was the sort of marathon affair often favored by Beethoven: in addition to the concerto, the Symphony No. 2 and the oratorio *Christ on the Mount of Olives* were also given their premieres, along with the already-familiar Symphony No. 1.

On the day of the performance, Beethoven was discovered at 5:00 AM copying out trombone parts for the oratorio. The one and only rehearsal for the event commenced at 8:00 AM, running non-stop until mid-afternoon when Prince Carl von Lichnowksy, Beethoven's patron, sent out for cold cuts and wine to soothe the disgruntled musicians; after their meal, the Prince requested that they run through the oratorio "just one more time." The concert, which was to have begun at 6:00 PM, was so long that music scheduled for the program was dropped.

Nevertheless, the fame of the young 32-year-old composer drew a sold-out house, even though the usual prices had been doubled—and, for the box seats, tripled—for the occasion.

In Thayer's *Life of Beethoven*, Ignaz von Seyfried recalls how he was recruited to turn pages for Beethoven while the composer played the solo part in his new concerto...

...but heaven help!—that was easier said than done. I saw almost nothing but empty leaves; at the most on one page or the other a few Egyptian hieroglyphics wholly unintelligible to me scribbled down to serve as clues for him; for he played nearly all of the solo part from memory, since, as was so often the case, he had not had time to put it all down on paper. He gave me a secret glance whenever he was at the end of one of the invisible passages and my scarcely concealable anxiety not to miss the decisive moment amused him greatly and he laughed heartily at the jovial supper which we ate afterwards.

The first movement opens with a lengthy exposition of the principal themes by the orchestra alone, a passage so thoroughly symphonic in character that Tovey called it "something that dangerously resembled a mistake," because "it rouses no expectations of the entry of a solo instrument." After a quick return to the tonic key of C minor and a dramatic fermata, the piano finally enters with three explosive scales, leading to its own rendition of the opening theme.

In contrast to the energy of the opening movement, the central slow movement—in the distant key of E major—seems to make time stand still. The finale, a combination of sonata and rondo forms, returns to C minor, although Beethoven briefly flirts with E major in the middle. The delightful coda is in C major—and moves to a new time signature, 6/8, just as Mozart did in his own C minor concerto.

Symphony No. 3 in E-flat major, Op. 55 (*Sinfonia eroica*)

Beethoven began sketching his third symphony in 1802, but most of the composition took place in the latter half of 1803; it was completed in early 1804. After a series of private and semi-private performances, the first public performance was given at Vienna's Theater an der Wein on April 7, 1805 with the composer conducting. The score calls for pairs of woodwinds, 3 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani and strings.

Beethoven had planned his Symphony No. 3 as an homage to Napoleon Bonaparte, but had become so disillusioned with the French ruler by the time of the work's premiere that he violently scratched out the original dedication with a knife, calling the work instead merely a "Heroic Symphony."

As was the case with his piano concertos, Beethoven's first two symphonies recalled those of Mozart and Haydn; there were innovations, to be sure, but nothing that radically challenged the concertgoers of the day like his monumental third symphony would.

The massive opening movement alone is of a scale and length previously unknown to the audiences that first heard the work. Eschewing a traditional introduction, two bold chords are sounded, then Beethoven launches into the principal theme, constructed out of a simple major triad. Throughout the movement meter and tonality are questioned through the use of misplaced accents and striking dissonances.

It is difficult in a world where Stravinsky's and Schoenberg's most shocking music is nearly a century old to understand just how revolutionary Beethoven's *Eroica* symphony was and just how strange it must have sounded to its first listeners.

The slow movement is a funeral march, one that has become even more familiar than the symphony as a whole because of its frequent use to memorialize fallen public figures (although Barber's *Adagio for Strings* has in recent years largely assumed this role). The movement begins and ends in C minor, with a major-key central episode. Listen in particular to the closing bars, when the principal theme literally disintegrates in the violins.

The third movement, a lightning-quick scherzo, returns to E-flat major. Beethoven had written a scherzo—literally "joke," and usually in 3/4 time like a Haydn or Mozart minuet, but much faster—for each of his first two symphonies, but neither was like this one: faster than the wind, with offbeat accents blurring the distinction between strong and weak beats and often throwing the meter itself into question. Beethoven heightens the tension by sustaining a quiet dynamic through much of the movement, making the loud outbursts even more alarming. The tempo slows slightly at the trio—at which point we realize at last why Beethoven has scored the symphony for three horns instead of the usual (at the time) two. The scherzo material returns, although with some important changes—including a brief, albeit shocking—change of meter from three beats in a bar to four.

The finale begins with a furious outburst before settling down to a set of variations on a theme that Beethoven had used several times before—in fact, the first several variations come more or less verbatim from his incidental music for *The Creatures of Prometheus*. Toward the end, the tempo slows, not for a moment of quiet repose, but to scale even more monumental heights, before subsiding. One of the most exciting codas in the literature rounds out the work.

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Conductor JUSTIN COLE has studied conducting with Michael Morgan and Larry Rachleff and is a former member of the conducting faculty at Rocky Ridge Music Center in Estes Park, Colorado. He has assisted Mr. Morgan at the Oakland East Bay Symphony and is former assistant conductor of the Orchestra of the Pines. Mr. Cole earned a Bachelor of Music degree in trombone performance from the University of Arizona, where he was awarded the prestigious Presser Scholarship by the School of Music. While in Arizona he received a grant from the University to conduct a concert of 20th century works for chamber orchestra. In 1996 the noted American composer Grace Brown asked that he conduct the world premiere of her work *To Ancient Evenings and Distant Music*. Mr. Cole has studied trombone with Tom Ervin, Gerrard Pagano, George Krem, and William Stanley, and performed with a variety of ensembles, including the Rapides Symphony Orchestra, Tucson Jazz Orchestra, Piney Woods Brass Quintet, Northwest Mahler Festival, and Corona Brass Quintet.

Conductor and Music Director GEORGE SHANGROW founded the Seattle Chamber Singers in 1969 and Orchestra Seattle (formerly the Broadway Symphony) in 1979. A musician with a broad range of skills, Mr. Shangrow studied conducting, Baroque performance practice, harpsichord, and composition at the University of Washington. He began his professional conducting career at age 18 and has since concentrated his musical efforts with OSSCS. He has appeared as guest conductor with the Seattle Symphony, Northwest Chamber Orchestra, Tacoma Opera, Rudolf Nureyev and Friends, East Texas University Opera, Oregon Symphony and the Sapporo (Japan) Symphony. He was Music Director and Conductor of Pacific Chamber Opera from 1976 to 1978 and has conducted world premieres of six operas and numerous

other orchestral and choral works. Mr. Shangrow has taught at Seattle University and Seattle Community College and is a frequent lecturer throughout the Northwest. He is currently on the faculty of the Seattle Conservatory of Music, where he teaches Music History, Conducting, and Literature. He concertizes frequently as part of the Cohan-Shangrow Duo with flutist Jeffrey Cohan. Having toured Europe several times as keyboardist and conductor, he is a sought-after accompanist and has appeared in concert on the piano and harpsichord with many noted soloists and ensembles such as El Trio Grande, the Kronos Quartet, Northwest Chamber Orchestra, and the Seattle Symphony.

Internationally renowned pianist POVILAS STRAVINSKY is a Lithuanian native who began his musical career at age six at the Ciurlionis School of Fine Arts in Vilnius. He made his debut with the Vilnius Symphony at 10 and won a national completion and scholarship to the prestigious Central School of Music in Moscow at 12, eventually earning the equivalent of a Ph.D. in piano performance from the famous Tchaikovsky State Conservatory. Mr. Stravinsky has been principal soloist of the Lithuanian State Philharmonic, and Professor of Piano at the State Conservatory of Vilnius. He holds the title of "Honored Artist of Lithuania." Mr. Stravinsky has made several recordings on the Melodiya label, and has regularly appeared on radio and television. He also plays extensively throughout Europe and the United States. He has lived in Seattle for the past several years and regularly performs and teaches in the greater Seattle area.

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