

# Orchestra Seattle

George Shangrow, Music Director

Presents

## Orchestral Feasts II

October 31, 1992

Night on Bald Mountain, by Modeste Moussorgsky (Rimsky-Korsakoff version)

Danse Macabre, Symphonic Poem, Op 40, by Camille Saint-Saens

Fritz Klein, violino scordatura

Totentanz (Dance of Death), by Franz Liszt

Peter Mack, piano solo

### INTERMISSION

Symphonie fantastique, Op 14, by Hector Berlioz  
An episode in the life of an artist

- I. Visions and Passions
- II. A Ball
- III. In the Country
- IV. March to the Scaffold
- V. The Witches' Sabbat



The Kawai concert grand is the official piano of Orchestra Seattle and Seattle Chamber Singers.  
Pianos supplied by Western Pianos, Paul Scott, piano technician.

Special thanks to Western Pianos and Pike Place Brewery, co-sponsors of this concert.

## Night on Bald Mountain

Modeste Moussorgsky

"I have received extremely interesting work...a whole act to take place on Bald Mountain...It may turn out to be a very good thing." In 1860 when the talented Mussorgsky wrote these words to his teacher and fellow member of the Russian Five, Mili Balakirev, he had no idea that his piece, inspired by Gogol's story "St. John's Eve," would take years to finish and, unfortunately, never be performed in his lifetime.

After setting it aside, his interest in the piece was revived by an inspiring performance of Liszt's **Totentanz** and Matvei Khotinsky's book on witchcraft which included the testimony of Jeanne Hervilliers, an alleged witch who was burned at the stake in 1578 for consorting with the Devil. Inspired by the graphic description of a witches' sabbat, or festival of the evil spirit where sorcerers and witches gathered on isolated mountains, he began an initial sketch of this musical picture in 1866. The actual score of this



"original Russian" piece, however, was not completed until June of 1867, and quite coincidentally, on St. John's Eve — the traditional night for the annual sabbat.

"I would wish that if my composition is performed the handbill should also indicate the plot, for the comprehension of society." Folk fantasy has it that, at night, witches mount their brooms, or oven forks (whichever is handiest) and fly up their chimneys to the sabbat on Bald Mountain, near Kiev. As they assemble, they chatter and gossip with the sorcerers until the Cortège of Satan. This is followed by the glorification of Satan, and finally, the fiery witches' sabbat.

## Danse Macabre, op 40

Camille Saint-Saens

The Third Symphonic Poem **Danse Macabre**, Op. 40 (1874, published 1875), it one of the best known of all Saint-Saens' works. At its first performance it was as well-received as a cold, damp hand on the back of one's neck! The shouts and boos from the audience were so thunderous that the composer's aged mother fainted away. Apparently it was a bit too innovative for concert goers, although today the musical effects seem fairly standard.

It is based on a poem by Henri Cazalis, a minor Parisian writer, which describes a spectral waltz danced in a wintry graveyard by skeletons, who behave conventionally by beginning their revels after the clock has struck midnight and then decorously return to their tombs at daybreak. The work began life as a song, but many singers claimed it was too difficult, so the composer turned it into an orchestral piece.

Saint-Saens succeeds in realistically translating the grisly verses into

## Totentanz

Franz Liszt

**Totentanz** occupied Liszt from 1838 to 1859. The first performance was given in 1865 at the Hague, with Hans von Bulow (to whom it is dedicated) playing the solo part.

It was inspired by the Orcagna fresco **The Triumph of Death** which the 27-year-old Liszt had seen while traveling through Italy with Countess d'Agoult. The fresco depicts a series of horrid scenes. Death flies toward her victims swinging a scythe, a heap of corpses lie at her feet. Some lucky souls are rising toward heaven while others, less virtuous, are being dragged down to hell's licking flames. To make matters yet more gruesome, there are open graves with decaying bodies. The fresco can be described as a set of variations on the theme of death. Liszt, therefore, composed his music into the form of a set of variations on the Dies irae theme. This is not the first time Liszt had worked with Dies irae. A few years earlier he had made a piano arrangement, appropriately enough, of Berlioz's **Symphonie Fantastique**, where the plainchant melody dominates the last movement. He may have had this work of Berlioz at the back of his mind when he composed **Totentanz**.

The work is best described by Bartok, in an address given in 1934:

This composition, which is simply a set of variations on the Gregorian melody 'Dies irae,' is startlingly harsh from beginning to end. But what do we find in the middle section? A variation hardly eight bars long, of almost Italianate emotionalism. Here Liszt obviously intended to relieve the overwhelming austerity and darkness with a ray of hope. The work as a

whole always has a profound effect upon me, but this short section sticks out so from the unified style of the rest that I have never been able to feel that it is appropriate.

In the end, however, this is not so important; this fleeting disturbance of the unity is merely external, and is dwarfed into significance beside the wealth of power and beauty that form the essence of the work.

## Symphonie fantastique An Episode

### in the life of an artist

Hector Berlioz

The following is a translation of the program notes written by Berlioz for this symphony.

#### Programme of the Symphony

A young musician of an unhealthy sensitive nature and endowed with vivid imagination has poisoned himself with opium in a paroxysm of love-sick despair. The narcotic dose he has taken is too weak to cause death but it has thrown him into a long sleep accompanied by the most extraordinary visions. In this condition his sensations, feelings and memories find utterance in his sick brain in the form of musical imagery. Even the beloved one takes the form of melody in his mind, like a fixed idea which is ever returning and which he hears everywhere.

#### 1st Movement

##### Visions and passions

At first he thinks of the uneasy and nervous condition of his mind, of somber longings, of depression and joyous elation without any recognizable cause, which he experienced before the beloved one had



musical terms. The twelve strokes of the witching hour are sounded by harp and horn, and muted violins are used in their best "mystical" manner. One of the most original ideas in the Poem is the E string of the solo violin, tuned a half-tone down, that sets the eerie scene by repeatedly playing diminished fifths – guaranteed to give goose bumps. Death's fiddle plays a slithering waltz to the accompaniment of wailing chromatic passages by the clarinet, flute and bassoon. Clattering bones are played by the xylophone and the oboe does the honors of that latter day alarm clock, the cock crow. All of these effects are both tricks and treats!

It is only appropriate that this spooky piece by Saint-Saens should

appear on the same program as one by Liszt. Saint-Saens was very much influenced by the creative genius of Liszt. In turn, Liszt was fascinated by **Danse Macabre** and made a piano transcription of it, remarking to the composer, '... please forgive my inability to reproduce on the piano its marvelous orchestral colour. No man is bound to do the impossible, and to play the orchestra on the piano is not yet given to anyone. Nevertheless we must always reach towards the ideal...' To which Saint-Saens replied, 'You have produced a real masterpiece and I never tire of admiring your "inability." Since, after all, its difficulty is quite accessible, I have no doubt that your piece will achieve great success.'

appeared to him. Then he remembers the ardent love, he thinks of his almost insane anxiety of mind, of his raging jealousy, of his reawakening love, of his religious consolation.

### **2nd Movement**

#### **A ball**

In a ballroom, amidst the confusion of a brilliant festival, he finds the loved one again.

### **3rd Movement**

#### **In the country**

It is summer evening. He is in the country musing, when he hears two shepherd lads playing the ranz des vaches in alternation. This shepherd duet, the locality, the soft whisperings of the trees stirred by the zephyr-wind,...all unite to impart a long unknown repose in his heart and lend a smiling color to his imagination. And then she appears once more. His heart stops beating, painful forebodings fill his soul. "Should she prove false to him!" One of the shepherds resumes the melody, but the other does not answer...loneliness, silence.

### **4th Movement**

#### **The Procession to the stake**

He dreams that he has murdered his beloved, been condemned to death, and is being led to the stake. A march that is alternately somber and wild, brilliant and solemn, accompanies the procession. The tumultuous outbursts are followed without modulation by measured steps. At last the fixed idea returns, for a moment a last thought of love is revived — which is cut short by the death-blow.

### **5th Movement**

#### **The witches' sabbath**

He dreams that he is present at a witches' dance, amidst sorcerers and monsters in many fearful forms, who have come to assist at his funeral. Strange sounds, groans, distant yells... The beloved melody is heard again, but it has its noble character no longer, it has become a vulgar kind of dance. The beloved comes to attend the witches' meeting. Friendly howls and shouts greet her arrival...She joins the infernal orgy...a burlesque parody of the Dies irae.

## **SOLOIST**

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**Peter Mack**, a native of Dublin, Ireland, has developed a reputation for powerful and sensitive performances and playing technique that the **Los Angeles Times** describes as "perfect...all but infallible." He has won a number of competitions: the 1989 Young Keyboard Artists International Piano Competition (with a Lincoln Center recital as the prize); the 1985 Sherman Clay Piano Competition (with a Steinway grand piano as the prize); and the 1985 Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music Concerto Competition. Mack's orchestral, chamber, and solo performances range from recitals at the National Performance Hall in Dublin to the Governor's Mansion in Olympia. He received his training at

Dublin's Trinity College, the University of Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music, and the University of Washington. Mr. Mack has made several appearances with Orchestra Seattle, including Prokofiev's **Piano Concerto #3** in the Fall of 1991. This fall he has appeared several times as a guest performer on "Live, By George," a live week-night radio show on Classic KING FM.

Mr. Mack immigrated to the U.S. as an "alien of exceptional merit and ability in the performing arts." He is a faculty member at Cornish College of the Arts in Seattle, and plans to continue combining his concert career with teaching.

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# ORCHESTRA SEATTLE

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Orchestra Seattle operates on a basis of rotating seating, therefore personnel are listed alphabetically in each section.

## VIOLIN

Susan Abrams  
Sheila Bristow  
Dean Drescher  
Susan Dunn  
Kristin Fletcher  
Sue Herring  
Elizabeth Kim  
Deb Kirkland,  
principal second  
Fritz Klein, concert  
master  
Diane Lange  
James Lerczak  
Eileen Lusk  
Mark Lutz  
Sally Macklin  
Avron Maletzky  
Gregor Nitsche  
Phyllis Rowe  
Sondra N. Schink  
Miriam Scholz-  
Carlson  
Janet Showalter  
Rebecca Soukup

## VIOLA

Leesa Dahl  
Debra Daoust  
Beatrice Dolf  
Alice Leighton  
Katherine  
McWilliams  
Timothy Prior,  
principal  
Karen Stella

## CELLO

Evelyn Albrecht  
Gary Anderson  
Rosemary Berner  
Julie Reed  
Valerie Ross  
Maryann Tapiro,  
principal  
Margaret Wright

## BASS

Richard Edwards  
Alan Goldman,  
principal  
Josephine Hansen  
Anna Pal  
Jay Wilson

## FLUTE

Kate Alverson  
Janeen Shigley,  
principal

## PICCOLO

Lauane Wolch

## OBOE

Huntley Beyer  
M. Shannon Hill,  
principal

## ENGLISH HORN

M. Shannon Hill

## CLARINET

Susan Dejka  
Gary Oules,  
principal

## BASSOON

Jeffrey Eldridge  
Tricia Gabrielson  
Chris Harshmann  
Judith Lawrence,  
principal

## CONTRA

## BASSOON

Jeffrey Eldridge

## HORN

Jennifer Crowder  
Laurie L. Heidt  
MaryRuth Helppie  
William Hunnicut  
Tiku Majumder

## TRUMPET

Matthew Dalton,  
principal  
Gary Fladmoe  
Drew Fletcher  
Larry Wells

## TROMBONE

Kari Giorgi  
Daniel Wolch,  
principal

## BASS

## TROMBONE

William Irving

## TUBA

David Brewer  
James Christensen

## TIMPANI/

## PERCUSSION

Owen Bjerke  
Daniel Oie, principal  
Pat Roulet

## HARP

Naomi Kato,  
principal  
Marianne Sussman

