

# Three Piano Concerti

Orchestra Seattle

Shorecrest Performing

Arts Center



*Saturday*

*January 20, 1996*

*8:00 p.m.*

# *Upcoming Concerts!*

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**BWV 159 Sehnet, wir geh'n hinauf gen Jerusalem**

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**Friday, April 5, 7:30 pm - Good Friday**

*The Saint Matthew Passion*

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**Saturday, May 11, 8:00 pm**

**Saint Saens Symphony No. 3 "The Organ Symphony"**

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**Call 682-5208 for tickets and information.**

# Orchestra Seattle and the Seattle Chamber Singers

George Shangrow, music director and conductor

present

*Orchestra Seattle*

## Three Piano Concerti

Saturday, January 20, 1996, 8:00 p.m.

Shorecrest Performing Arts Center

**Malediction for Piano and Strings, G. 121**

**Franz Liszt**

Ann Cummings, solo piano

**Piano Concerto No. 1 in C Major, Opus 15**

**Ludwig van Beethoven**

*Allegro con brio*

*Largo*

*Rondo: Allegro*

Mark Salman, solo piano

### *Intermission*

**Piano Concerto No. 3 in d minor, Opus 30**

**Sergei Rachmaninoff**

*Allegro ma non tanto*

*Intermezzo: Adagio*

*Alla breve; Scherzando; Alla breve*

Peter Mack, solo piano

The concert is co-sponsored by Prosser Pianos and Classic KING-FM

# Program Notes

## Liszt:

### Malediction, G. 121

The "Malediction" was actually first begun as a piano concerto when Liszt was but 19 years of age. The work was not completed until 1940 (he is then 29). The title Malediction, or curse, stems from the word having been written by Liszt over the violently dramatic opening motif in the first publication of the work.

It is perhaps erroneous that the entire work should hold this moniker as Liszt also wrote the words pride, mockery, tears, anguish, and dreams at later parts of the score. This would certainly seem to indicate a wider range of expression than just "curse". So the work actually consists of a dramatic intermingling of five or six basic themes: like the famous Totentanz of 25 years later it mixes ideas of surprising modernity and dissonance with those of a more conventional 19th century nature.

The opening of the work is forward-looking for Liszt to *Orange* from the first book of the *Years of Pilgrimage* to the 2 piano concerti and the third *Valse oubliée*. The harmonic dissonance in the short cadenza which follows the opening flourish remains unparalleled in its clashing tones until Stravinsky's *Petrushka* of 1911 in a passage Igor called Malediction a Petrouchka!

The art work and mask which accompany tonight's performance will be discussed and described by our guest artist, Ann Cummings.

## Beethoven:

### Piano Concerto No. 1 in C Major

The young man comes to Vienna, the music capital of the world, at age 25 to impress, to win his fortune, to assure his fame. Beethoven comes to Haydn and Mozart land and he comes with his "first" concerto, the B-flat, Op 19, now known as No. 2. He performs at the Burgtheatre to great acclaim. But it is the "second" concerto, the C major, Op. 15 that he takes on tour: first to Prague, then Dresden, Leipzig, and Berlin, only to appear in Vienna in April of 1800, a year and a half after its composition.

It was Beethoven's fashion to "own" his

concerti for the first couple of years as he added to them, improvised on them, recomposed their cadenzas, and eventually readied them for publication. He mostly performed them without a written out piano part (a page-turner's nightmare!) thus allowing the inspiration of the moment to contribute to spontaneous revision. It is noteworthy that he wrote three different cadenzas for the first movement of tonight's concerto. It is the latest of these cadenzas that will be played by Mr. Salman. The work was finally published (and thereby available to other performers) in March of 1801.

In sending this manuscript to the publisher he enclosed an apology: "The only feature of genius I possess is that my stuff is not always in very good order and yet I am the only one in a position to do anything about it. Thus, for instance, the piano part for the Concerto was still not written into the score, as is my wont, and I have only just written it, which is why for the sake of speed you are receiving it in my own rather illegible handwriting."

Although clearly "Beethoven" this concerto gives quite a nod to both Mozart and Haydn, and, indeed, nods to the future of Chopin and Schubert in the 2nd and 3rd movements respectively. The opening movement reminds us of Mozart's great C major concerti, K. 415, 467, and 503, but it does seem that Ludwig wanted to "out-Mozart" Mozart. I always think of the opening as a secret among a group of playing kids, which just becomes more and more playful until the second theme enters.

The slow movement is sort of an Italian song-form movement, both a precursor to the slow movement of the *Emperor* concerto, and a big hint toward the beautiful sensitive piano writing of Chopin. There are some wonderful duets between the piano and the clarinet.

The last movement, one of my favorites in all piano concerti, is a Haydn-like romp. Wonderful themes, contrasts, and rhythms abound, and the energy never wanes. The frequent tone shifts look forward to Schubert, but the jokes, interruptions, and high degree of humor are pure Beethoven. It was following a performance (and publication) of this concerto that Beethoven penned these remarks concerning music critics:

"Far be it from me to think that I have achieved a perfection which suffers no adverse criticism. But your reviewer's outcry against me was at first very mortifying. Yet when I compare myself with other composers, I could hardly bring myself to pay any attention to it but remained calm and said to myself: 'They don't know anything about music.'"

## **Rachmaninoff: Piano Concerto No. 3 in d minor**

Rachmaninoff had a dream: he wanted a car. In many ways this was his prime motivation for the concert tour to the U.S. in 1909 that gave birth to this concerto. This work was composed in record time for Rachmaninoff, it was written in full during the summer months. In fact, it was just completed before he had to get on the boat to America, and thus he had to practice the extremely difficult piano part on a silent dummy keyboard on the ship.

The premiere took place on Sunday afternoon, November 28, 1909 with the composer as soloist with the New York Symphony Orchestra, Walter Damrosch conducting. Since we've been talking about reviews, the reviews of the performance were generally favorable, but one of the monuments to musical taste remarked that many pianists could have done "greater justice to the piano part" (!), nevertheless they felt that in many ways Rachmaninoff was a master pianist.

Rachmaninoff had his idols as do most of us: Chekhov as a writer, Chaliapin as singer, Rimsky-Korsakov as orchestrator, Tchaikovsky as composer, and Anton Rubinstein as pianist. He also held a belief that "a composer's music should express the country of his birth, his love affairs, his religion, the books that have influenced him, the pictures that he loves. It should be the sum total of a composer's experience." Certainly the Third Concerto is such a work.

The score features a piano part of transcendental difficulty and was highly original and inventive for its time. Although extremely difficult, the solo part is *pianistic* and suggests that only a phenomenal pianist could have conceived and written out all the figurations and special piano effects that abound in the work. One aspect of the writing is due only to the physical configuration of Rachmaninoff's hands: he could span four notes more than an octave!

The entire score bubbles with ideas and innovations, indeed, it seems that perhaps

Rachmaninoff had almost too many ideas and effects he wanted to use. There is a remarkable balance between orchestra and piano in this work — there are solo sections for each, and the solo/accompaniment aspects of the ensemble writing are among the best in any piano concerto.

The work is over forty minutes long, and apparently the composer felt in 1931 that there were just "too many notes." He made considerable cuts in the work, and his own recording of the work with the Philadelphia Orchestra uses this abbreviated version. Most musicians today disagree with Rachmaninoff and restore the cuts — it is the full original version that we present this evening.

In the late 1930's Rachmaninoff showed reluctance to play the *Third Concerto* since, as he put it, there were at least two younger pianists who could do greater justice to its technical difficulties: Horowitz and Gieseking. In fact a phenomenal broadcast recording in 1939 of Gieseking performing the work prompted the composer's refusal to play the work for the last three years of his life.

Notes by George Shangrow

# **Our Soloists**

## **Ann Cummings**

Ann Cummings holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree at the University of Florida, where she graduated with honors in piano performance. Among numerous awards Ms. Cummings has received, highlights include the Edith Pitts and Marion Funk memorial scholarships, being named a Friends of Music Scholar at the University of Florida and winning the Florida Gulf Coast Symphony Young Artist Contest. Ms. Cummings has performed throughout the United States and has appeared as guest artist with the Florida Orchestra under Erwin Hoffman and the University of Florida Symphony Orchestra with Raymond Chobaz.

Ann has been a regular performer on several series in the Northwest, and has recently been featured live on Seattle radio station Classic KING FM for her CD entitled "Inside the Music".

## Mark Salman

Mark Salman achieved a musical milestone during the 1990-91 concert season when he performed the cycle of 32 Beethoven piano sonatas in a series of eight recitals in New York City. At the age of 28, he became one of the youngest artists to join the ranks of the handful of master pianists who have played the complete cycle. His first CD, featuring the music of Beethoven, Alkan, and Liszt was released in the spring of 1994 on Titanic Records.

Mr. Salman has been described as "a brilliant musical mind" and "a born public performer" by David Dubal, author of "The Art of the Piano" and "Evenings with Horowitz". One of the few pianists of his generation to avoid competitions, he has opted instead to concentrate on his development as a pianist and musician. He is presenting a series of recitals each year which encompass rarely heard masterpieces as well as the staples of the repertoire.

Mr. Salman is a native of Connecticut, where he began his studies at the age of eight. Since making his recital debut at eleven, he has been a frequent performer as a recitalist, chamber musician and soloist with orchestras throughout the United States. He has performed in Carnegie Hall and Alice Tully Hall in New York City as well as on WNCN, WQXR and Classic KING-FM radio, and has been the subject of profiles in the New York Times and Kick magazine. In October 1989 he was presented in his New York debut recital at Carnegie's Weill Recital Hall, which included the New York premieres of three Liszt works.

A graduate of the Juilliard School, he studied with Richard Fabre and Josef Raieff, and also counts David Dubal as a significant influence. He previously attended the Massachusetts Institute of Technology for two years, where he concentrated on chamber music and composition, studying with the noted composer, John Harbison. Mark relocated to Seattle in the Summer of 1994 and has plans to present the Beethoven Sonata Cycle here next season under the sponsorship of Orchestra Seattle.

## Peter Mack

Peter Mack was born in Dublin, Ireland on July 4th, 1961. His early training was with Miss Mae Somerville and Professor Frank Heneghan at the Dublin College of Music, where he was a double gold medalist. He graduated with a B.A. (Mod.) from Trinity College, Dublin in 1984. In the following year he received the degree of Master of Music from the University of Cincinnati, where he was a pupil of the renowned Hungarian pianist Bela Siki, with whom he subsequently studied at the University of Washington.

Peter Mack has proven successful in many national and international competitions. He won a Steinway grand piano at the Sherman Clay competition in Los Angeles and has also taken first prizes at the Pacific, Young Keyboard Artists, and most recently the New Orleans international piano competitions. He has performed extensively throughout the United States and Europe, as well as in Africa, Australia, and the former Soviet Union.

In January of 1994 he gave the first performance of *Ballynure*, a set of variations for piano and orchestra written especially for him by American composer Robert Kechley. This work was commissioned as part of the 25th year anniversary celebrations by Orchestra Seattle conducted by George Shangrow. He last appeared in Ireland in October 1994 with the Radio Telefis Eireann Concert Orchestra under the direction of Proinnsias O'Duinn in a performance of the Schumann Concerto which was broadcast live on Irish national radio.

In 1990 Peter Mack emigrated to the United States of America as an "alien of exceptional merit and ability in the performing arts", receiving what is colloquially known as the "Mick Jagger visa" after its most famous recipient. Peter Mack is currently on the faculty of Cornish College of the Arts.

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George Shangrow, Conductor

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Dean Drescher  
Susan Dunn-Ovens  
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Eileen Lusk  
Pam Macheledt  
Avron Maletzky  
Gregor Nitsche  
Druska Salisbury-Milan  
Sondra N. Schink  
Janet Showalter, principal 2nd

## Viola

Deborah Daoust  
Beatrice Dolf  
Saundrah Humphrey, principal  
Shari Peterson  
Robert Shangrow

## Cello

Evelyn Albrecht  
Rosemary Berner  
Valerie Ross  
Mary Ritzmann  
Julie Reed, principal  
Karen Thomson

## Bass

Glen Caspar  
Kerry Fowler  
Allan Goldman, Principal  
Heather Hoskins

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David Holmes

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David Brewer

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Daniel Oie

## Percussion

Owen Bjerke

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

☎ For tickets and information about all Orchestra Seattle/  
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