

The Broadway Symphony and Seattle Chamber Singers

George Shangrow, music director and conductor

present

Musical Feasts II

The Broadway Symphony

Sunday, November 18, 1990 - 3:00 p.m.

Kane Hall, University of Washington

Lieutenant Kijé Symphonic Suite

Serge Prokofiev

The Birth of Kijé
Romance
Kijé's Wedding
Troïka
The Burial of Kijé

Matt Dalton, solo cornet

Concerto for Flute with String Orchestra

Alexandr Nicolayevich Kholminov

Allegro moderato
Largo
Allegretto

Paul Taub, flute

Intermission

Quiet Music

Sergei Slonimsky

Piano Concerto No. 2 in c minor, Opus 18

Sergei Rachmaninoff

Moderato
Adagio sostenuto
Allegro scherzando

Peter Mack, piano

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

Kawai is the official piano of the Broadway Symphony and Seattle Chamber Singers. The Concert Grand Kawai for today's concert is graciously provided by Western Pianos.

Serge Prokofiev - Lieutenant Kije, Suite for Orchestra

Prokofiev was the last great Russian composer who lived and worked in the West as well as in his homeland. In May of 1918, the young musician, recently turned 27, set off from Petrograd (now Leningrad) on an eastward journey to New York that took him four months. That voyage was the result of a commission for an opera, **Love for Three Oranges**, which kept him in America for a few years. In 1922, not long after the opera's premiere, he decided to make his home in Europe rather than in America, and little by little his travels took him to the United States less often and to the Soviet Union more. When he was in Moscow in the spring of 1933, he accepted an invitation to compose the music for a film based on a story by Yuri Tynyanov entitled *Lieutenant Kije*. He finished the score later that year, and by July 1934, he had completed a five-movement symphonic suite based on music from the film.

The satirical comedy is set at the imperial court of the mad Czar Paul I, who reigned from 1796 to 1801. A clerical error, or something like that, had resulted in the appearance on the military rolls of a non-existent officer, whose name, if a similar error were made in English, might be "Lieutenant Whosis" or "Lieutenant Whatchamacallit". When the czar requests information about him, the courtier, not daring to admit a mistake has been made, invent a character for whom they fabricate a splendidly heroic history. But when the czar asks that the lieutenant be presented at court, matters have gone too far, and the courtiers report his death on a remote battlefield.

The first movement of the concert suite is *The Birth of Kije*, in which the scene is set by a distant bugle call - a ghostly sound conveying insubstantiality and militarism in one telling moment. A piccolo tune soon takes over, followed by fanfares, a soldier's song, and the occasional boom of a cannon. Next is a *Romance*, or song. In the film (as in some performances of the suite) a baritone sings it as a setting of an old poem about a dove mourning his lost love. It is scored for a saxophone which lends its own particular touch - satire again, and this aspect is further emphasized with the lush string writing which closes the movement.

A song and march depict *Kije's Wedding*, in which saxophone and cornet are used to add a touch of vulgarity to what is clearly a somewhat bucolic celebration, and the music continues with the hoof beats and the sleigh bells of the *Troika*, a three-horse sleigh. (Perhaps this is intended to be the honeymoon!) The music is colorful, frothy, and altogether invigorating. But this is the end of our paper hero's happiness. The finale, *The Burial of Kije*, is a musical summing up of our hero's brief fictional life, recalling all of the principal tunes heard earlier (with some shocking and clever combinations and quodlibets!), ending with the cornet call - appearing with ghostly timing, as though to remind us how it all began.

Notes on the Flute Works

Leningrad composer **Sergei Slonimsky** is one of the leading composers of his generation. Along with his compatriots Sofia Gubaidulina, Alfred Schnittke, and Edison Denisov, Slonimsky was at the cutting edge of musical experimentation during the cultural thaw that took place in the Soviet Union in the 1960's. Born in Leningrad in 1932 (and nephew of the great Russian-born American conductor, lexicographer, and composer Nicolas Slonimsky), Sergei Slonimsky's opus includes symphonies, operas, chamber music, and stage and cinema works. His style is influenced by the great Russian romantics and Russian folk music, by Prokofiev, and by such diverse elements as American jazz, dodecaphony, aleatory composition, and electronics.

Quiet Music, written in 1982 and, to our knowledge, receiving only its second performance this afternoon, is a short work for large orchestra with prominent solos for the flute and alto flute. The writing is essentially straight-forward, and colorful in a way that sometimes reminds the listener of the French impressionists. The composer exploits the timbral character of the string, brass, and woodwind sections to their utmost, interspersing colorful orchestral sections with solo passages for the flute. The final

section of the work features two harps and celesta in a passage where the performers have a chance to decide what musical material to play.

After hearing the premiere of Slonimsky's opera **The Master and Margarita** in Moscow in 1989, I commissioned a trio from the composer for the 1990 Goodwill Arts Festival and have enjoyed an almost two-year collaboration with him in the creation of the piece. In April of next year, I will travel to Leningrad to perform the commissioned work in the city's International Spring Festival, in a program that will otherwise feature contemporary American music.

Alexandr Nicolayevich Kholminov was born in Moscow in 1925, and is a graduate of the Moscow Conservatory, where his teacher, Yevgeny Kirillovich Golubev has trained many of the USSR's leading composers of today. Like many of his colleagues, Kholminov has written extensively for the cinema and for the stage, and includes among his works seven operas, three symphonies, and a variety of choral and instrumental works.

The **Flute Concerto** was written in 1978. At times rhapsodic, at times dizzyingly virtuosic, it is always quintessentially Russian (with an occasional jazz chord thrown in for good measure). Influence of Prokofiev and Shostakovich is clear, as well as a strong affinity for the flute and its possibilities. The score was a gift to me from Alexandr Korneev, Flute Professor Emeritus at the Moscow Conservatory; I took many American scores as gifts to Soviet Musicians on my 1989 tour, and the Kholminov was a present in return.

-notes by Paul Taub

Sergei Rachmaninoff - Concerto for Piano and Orchestra in c minor, No. 2, Op. 18

By the end of 1899 the compositional career of Sergei Rachmaninoff had, for all practical purposes, come to an end. That the second piano concerto or any subsequent works ever came into being was the result of a remarkable occurrence in Rachmaninoff's life. With the dawn of 1900 Rachmaninoff was deeply depressed and exhibiting something

approaching total apathy toward music. Fortunately, he was persuaded to see Dr. Nikolai Dahl, a psychiatrist noted for his treatment of alcoholics. The results are described in Rachmaninoff's own words:

"My relatives had informed Dr. Dahl that he must at all costs cure me of my apathetic condition, and bring about such results that I would again be able to compose. Dr. Dahl had asked of them what manner of composition was desired of me and he was informed 'a piano concerto,' because I had promised one to people in London and had given it up in despair. In consequence I heard repeated daily the same hypnotic formula as I lay half asleep in Dr. Dahl's study. 'You will start to write your concerto.....You will compose it with the greatest of ease.....The concerto will be of excellent quality.'

"Always the same, without interruption. Although it may be impossible to believe, this cure really helped me. Already at the beginning of the summer I began again to compose. The material grew in bulk, and new musical ideas began to stir within me - far more than I needed for my Concerto. By autumn I had finished two movements...and a sketch for a suite for two pianos.....The two movements of my Concerto had a gratifying success when I played them that same season at a charity concert....By the spring I had already finished the remaining movement of the Concerto. I felt that Dr. Dahl's treatment had strengthened my nervous system to a miraculous degree. Out of gratitude I dedicated my Second Concerto to him."

Rachmaninoff could hardly realize the immense popularity the Second Concerto would achieve. It has come to rival the Grieg piano concerto as the most popular classical composition ever written. Unfortunately, some of that popularity is due to the commercialization of thematic material from the concerto. The familiar theme of the first movement appeared in numerous motion picture scores to set the mood for important romantic interludes. The equally famous theme from the third movement has been immortalized(?) as *Full Moon and Empty Arms*. Who among us has not heard these themes promoted

as some of music's greatest melodies?

The concerto is a pianistic showcase revealing Rachmaninoff as a moody and somewhat pessimistic composer who could pour out his deepest and most typically Russian musical sentiments. It is Romantic music at its zenith, and it is unlikely that even the most casual listener can avoid being caught up in the expressive power of the music. For the Romantics among us it provides a sonic bath with few equals, while at the same time furnishing significant substance to those who look beyond the emotionalism.

The work opens with a *Moderato* movement. The soloist begins, stating eight brooding chords which give way to the first theme in the strings, a restless, Russian-sounding melody. The viola and clarinet provide an introduction to the second theme which is stated by the soloist. Divorced from its motion picture connotations, the second theme is a melody of vast charm. The development centers in the first theme. The recapitulation is highlighted by the appearance of the second theme in the solo horn and beautifully by the soloist.

The second movement, *Adagio*, is a tender and introspective contrast to the first movement's intensity. Solo flute and clarinet state the main theme over the equally important but accompaniment-like material in the piano. The roles become reversed as the orchestra accompanies the solo. While there was no cadenza in the first movement, the second has two, one very brief and the other structured so that the customary concluding trill becomes the accompaniment to a statement of the main theme in the strings.

The final movement, *Allegro scherzando*, begins with an orchestral introduction which gives way to a brilliant flourish by the soloist closing the introduction and bringing on the first thematic material, a darkly moving "Slavic" melody. A dashing fugato is stated twice as an alteration with the "Full Moon" melody. The work drives to a close on four tense chords, a device that is regarded by some scholars as Rachmaninoff's signature.

- notes by Gary Fladmoe

What's Up at Christmas Time?

This December the Seattle Chamber Singers will present a very special program of seasonal music in the intimate setting of the University Unitarian Church. The program will feature music from the last several centuries including arrangements of Praetorius' beautiful *Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming*. A complete performance of Benjamin Britten's *Ceremony of Carols* for treble voices and harp and the *Four Advent Motets* of Francis Poulenc will also be a part of this program. At the end, a singalong of favorite songs will join performers and audience in a fun music-making experience — traditional carols interspersed with fancy arrangements and exciting harmonizations will give this concert an ending to bolster even the most serious humbug for a joyous holiday season. December 8th and 9th at 8:00 p.m. - University Unitarian Church - 6556 35th N.E. - seating is extremely limited (only 275 per night!) so order your tickets early.

The traditional performance of Handel's **Messiah** this year will be held in Kane Hall on the UW campus on December 16th at 3 p.m. and on Monday and Wednesday the 17th and 19th at 8 p.m. By popular request we will feature a performance similar to last year's sell-out with George Shangrow conducting from the harpsichord with Robert Kechley playing the full continuo keyboard. The George Shangrow Chorale will bring the choruses to life with members of the Broadway Symphony as the fine instrumental chamber ensemble. Our four soloists are: Catherine Haight, *soprano*, Sara Hedgpeth, *alto*, Stephen Wall, *tenor*, and Brian Box, *bass*. The **BS/SCS Messiah**, a Seattle tradition for twenty years! Please join us for Handel at his best! For tickets to both of these events, please call the office at 682-5208.

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The Broadway Symphony operates on a basis of rotational seating, therefore personnel are listed alphabetically in each section.

☎ For tickets and information about all Broadway Symphony/Seattle Chamber Singers events, call 682-5208.

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