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3/11 • Organ Recital Hall • 7:30 pm

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3/25 • Griffin Concert Hall • 7:30 pm

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Special Guests Svet Stoyanov, Percussion & Brook Ferguson, Flute

3/26 • Organ Recital Hall • 7:30 pm

The Merry Widow By Franz Lehar

Presented by the Charles and Reta Ralph Opera Center

Directed by Tiffany Blake & Conducted by Wes Kenney

3/29 & 30, 4/6 • Griffin Concert Hall • 7:30 pm

4/7 • Griffin Concert Hall • 2:00 pm

Virtuoso Series: CSU Faculty Rachel Ellins, Harp

4/1 • Organ Recital Hall • 7:30 pm

Virtuoso Series: Austin Piazzolla Quintet

4/2 • Organ Recital Hall • 7:30 pm

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CSU SINFONIA AND CSU CONCERTO COMPETITION

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WITH THE
CSU CONCERTO COMPETITION FINALISTS

Saturday, March 9, 2013

GRIFFIN CONCERT HALL, UNIVERSITY CENTER FOR THE ARTS

CSU Sinfonia CSU Concerto Competition

Wes Kenney, *Conductor*
Hannah Barnes, Violin
André Short, Piano
Yolanda Tapia, Piano

Prokofiev (1891-1953)

Violin Concerto No. 2 (1935)

I. Allegro moderato

Ms. Barnes

Shostakovich (1906-1975)

Piano Concerto No. 1, Op. 35 (1933)

II. Lento

III. Moderato

IV. Allegro con brio

Mr. Short

Ravel (1875-1937)

Piano Concerto in G (1931)

II. Adagio assai

III. Presto

Ms. Tapia

INTERMISSION

Beethoven (1770-1827)

Symphony No. 2, D Major, Op. 36 (1802)

I. Adagio Molto; Allegro con brio

II. Larghetto

III. Scherzo: Allegro

IV. Allegro Molto

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Tony Whitehead
Chealsea Bernhardt
Lydia Demi-Smith
Guillermo Mireles
Megan Brooks

PROGRAM NOTES

Violin Concerto No. 2 (1935)

Sergei Prokofiev is regarded as one of the most important composers of the twentieth century. He was born in a province of eastern Ukraine in 1891 and died in Moscow in 1953 on the same day as Joseph Stalin. Like Shostakovich, his life and artistic production was marked by the influence of the communist Russian government and the rapid changes of the era in which he lived.

Many scholars agree on three stylistic periods in the music of Prokofiev. These periods were marked by two important events in the life of the composer: his departure from Russia in 1918 and his return from the West in 1935. Prokofiev wrote two violin concertos. Violin Concerto No. 1, op. 19 in D minor, begun in 1917, and the Classical Symphony, are prime examples of the composer's first stylistic period. A masterpiece in the violin repertoire, Concerto No. 2 was composed in 1935, the same year as Romeo and Juliet. The concerto moves away from earlier twentieth century practices, using more modern resources to expand the harmonic palette. Prokofiev himself wrote that he wanted to "make it completely different from no. 1 in terms of both music and style." Notice the first entry of the orchestra in the first movement where the key drastically changes from the original violin statement. Violin Concerto No. 2 is very important because it was one of the first works written in a new musical language in which the violin retains its position as virtuoso soloist in the midst of a new found lyricism, and is accompanied by new tonal implications and orchestral colors. It was only years later that Shostakovich and Khachaturian published comparable violin concertos.

Prokofiev wrote most of the first movement while in Paris and, not coincidentally, it opens with a nostalgic folk tune. The G minor setting may mirror Prokofiev's homesickness for his native land. The irregular meter suggests a Russian flavor, but the composer did not need to worry about the work's initial reception by the Stalinist government. His commission from French-Belgian violinist Robert Soetens included a stipulation of exclusive performance rights for a full year after the concerto's premiere.

Program notes by Guillermo Mireles

Piano Concerto No. 1, Op. 35

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975) lived his life during the tumultuous political time period in which Joseph Stalin rose to power and Russia eventually became the USSR. Shostakovich's music is an embodiment of his nation's culture and uses musical satire and quotations to express the life experiences of his people. Shostakovich's Piano Concerto No. 1, Op. 35 is a work for piano, trumpet, and string orchestra that was premiered on October 15, 1933 by the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra with Shostakovich himself at the piano and Alexander Schmidt playing the trumpet part.

The work uses musical parody by quoting works such as Beethoven's "Appassionata" Sonata, Haydn's D major Piano Sonata and Shostakovich's own "Hamlet" suite. Shostakovich's ability to seamlessly incorporate these different themes was groundbreaking, and the success of the work can be attributed in part to this skill, along with his talent as a solo pianist. This concerto was written in the year before Shostakovich premiered his infamous opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtensk District*, which spurred an intense relationship with the Soviet government that would affect both Shostakovich's personal life and his compositions.

The concerto is in four movements, with the trumpet playing an important role throughout. In the Lento movement, the trumpet quotes the children's folk song "Poor Jenny." Traditionally, this tune was associated with a rhyme in a game similar to "London Bridge" and exhibits the same innocent yet dark nature. The third movement of the work, *Moderato*, serves as a brief introduction to the energetic and satirical final movement: *Allegro con Brio*.

Program notes by Lydia Demi-Smith

Piano Concerto in G (1931)

In 1929 Ravel had just returned from a concert tour in America where he was astonished to receive overwhelming support for his music. With the sounds of jazz and Gershwin still fresh in his mind, the composer started on his Piano Concerto in G Major, which he planned to tour as far as Japan with himself as soloist. Soon after Ravel started work on this concerto, he received a commission from Paul Wittgenstein, a pianist who had lost his right arm during World War I, for a left-hand piano concerto. The two concertos ended up having conflicting moods even though they were written simultaneously. The composer writes this about his Piano concerto in G Major:

The music of a concerto should, in my opinion, be lighthearted and brilliant, and not aim at profundity or dramatic effects . . . I had intended to entitle this concerto "Divertissement." Then it occurred to me that there was no need to do so, because the very title "Concerto" should be sufficiently clear. In some ways my Concerto is not unlike my Violin Sonata; it uses certain effects borrowed from jazz, but only in moderation.

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The second movement, titled Adagio, begins with an extended waltz-like piano solo that seems to daydream and meander effortlessly. The melody finds direction and is given a chance to resolve once the flute and strings join in. After another wandering interlude, the piano melody starts to rise with the strings and eventually finds a pleasant resolution as it accompanies the English horn. The movement ends with a trill and the ever-constant waltz rhythm in the pianist's left-hand. Though this piece sounds tranquil, it was painstaking work for the composer. He admitted composing it one or two bars at a time in order to achieve the desired effect.

The riveting Presto Finale is a truly virtuosic movement for the piano. This movement seems to be perpetually moving like a machine and includes particularly difficult passages for the bassoons and the trumpet. Jazz inspired motives, rhythms, and "blue" notes (lowered 7th and 3rd scale degrees) unabashedly populate this fun and exciting final movement.

Ravel, unfortunately, was never able to perform this concerto since his failing health would not allow him to practice. Consequently, Ravel asked Marguerite Long to perform the premiere that he conducted. Though Ravel never had the opportunity to tour with the work as far as originally planned, it is now a favorite of pianists and audiences, and has been performed the world over.

Program notes by Tony Whitehead

Symphony No. 2, D Major, Op. 36 (1802)

Likely the least well-known of Beethoven's symphonies, the second was written at an important crux in the composer's life. During 1801 and 1802, Beethoven was slowly beginning to accept the cruel joke of fate—that he was losing his hearing. Much of his inner-anguish and tribulation can be seen in the letters he wrote to his brothers, but never sent. The famous *Heiligenstadt Testament* was written in the latter part of 1802, when Beethoven was completing this symphony. In the testament Beethoven tells his brothers, Carl and Johann, of his deafness and admits he is struggling with depression and the need to complete his life's work.

... with joy I hasten towards death - if it comes before I shall have had an opportunity to show all my artistic capacities it will still come too early for me despite my hard fate and I shall probably wish it had come later - but even then I am satisfied, will it not free me from my state of endless suffering?

In spite of this, Beethoven found the will to persist, and much of his wit and artistic expression can be seen within the motives of Symphony No. 2. The simple scoring—2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani, and strings—and prominent use of ornamentation simulates the work of his predecessors; however the incredible exploration of color and dynamic contrast is a precursor to subsequent symphonies. Maynard Solomon, a Beethoven biographer, calls this combination "both retrospective and prospective."

Overall, the symphony maintains a sort of optimism. Berlioz went so far as to describe it as "noble, energetic, and proud." There are moments throughout the symphony that challenge this sunny disposition. One example can be found in the introduction, *Adagio Molto*, in which the orchestra plays in unison, presenting a full and ominous chord, which is then relieved by a chorale-inspired line in the winds. At the time of composition, this introduction was the longest ever written—even longer than entire movements by Mozart. As the *Allegro con brio* begins, the joyous nature of the piece comes to light. The *Larghetto* theme is initially presented as innocent and lyrical; as it evolves through canonical passing, and embellishments are continually added. Unexpected resolutions to minor chords once again challenge the optimism.

The third movement, entitled *Scherzo*, appears to be a rebuttal to the gloomy interjections in the previous movements; this one appears to be laughing. The three-note motif—which some interpret as "ha-ha-ha"—is passed through the ensemble, often with stark contrasts in dynamics. Beethoven continues with the joking nature in the Finale. This movement has various interpretations from critics. There are some that say the "hiccup" motif, followed by the quick, gurgling trills are intended as a parody of the gastrointestinal issues the composer was experiencing at the time. Alternatively, there are those who translate the statement (followed by an even louder repetition) as the often heard response from someone with poor hearing, "Can you repeat that?" or as the pointed, "What?!" that Beethoven might have said. After the premiere, one Viennese critic went so far as to say the piece resembled "a hideously writhing, wounded dragon that refuses to die, but writhing in its last agonies and, in the fourth movement, bleeding to death."

No matter which interpretation you find yourself agreeing with this evening, it is evident that Beethoven met great adversity with strength and conviction for his art. If anything, this symphony can be seen as a testament of the human spirit and the power of music.

Program notes by Chealsea Bernhardt



Wes Kenney is celebrating his tenth year as Professor of Music and Director of Orchestras at Colorado State University. He conducts the CSU Symphony and Chamber Orchestra as well as CSU Opera productions and teaches graduate conducting. Mr. Kenney has led the orchestra to many new milestones, including first ever at CSU performances of Mahler symphonies No. 1 and 5, two Strauss tone poems, and this spring the Bartok Concerto for Orchestra.

Mr. Kenney is also currently in his tenth season as Music Director of the fully professional Fort Collins Symphony. In the summer of 2004 he was named to an additional post of Music Director of Opera Fort Collins helping that organization establish a full season of three productions a season. Mr. Kenney was recognized as the 2009 Outstanding Teacher by the Colorado American String Teachers Association. He was also awarded the Grand Prize in the Summer 2007 Varna (Bulgaria) International Conducting Competition. He traveled back to Bulgaria in March 2008 for concerts in Vidin and to conduct *La Traviata* in Stara Zagora.

Mr. Kenney is a frequent guest conductor of professional and educational ensembles. He has appeared with orchestras both nationally and internationally including Europe and Asia. He has also given orchestra clinics in all corners of Colorado as well as being sought after for sessions at the Colorado Music Educators Association Conference. He is a former president of the Conductors Guild and serves currently on their advisory board.

Hannah Barnes is currently a senior at Colorado State University, majoring in Violin Performance. She has been studying the violin since she was eight years old, and has been trained in both classical and alternative styles of music. She has been a student of Ron Francois for the past four years and is hoping to pursue a graduate career in music performance at the Peabody Conservatory. She has also been the concertmaster of the CSU Symphony since Spring 2011, and has been featured as a soloist in Rimsky-Korsakov's Scheherazade during her time at the university. Her favorite violinist has been and always will be David Oistrakh, one of many great 20th century violin virtuosos. In addition to her musical interests, Hannah enjoys running, cooking, and spending as much time as she can with animals.

André T. Short was born in southern California, where he began studying the piano at age six. These lessons did not last long, however, due to a family move to Hawaii. After a lot of convincing, his parents at last allowed him to continue his piano studies at age eleven, six months after returning to California. By age 16 he was convinced that music was to be his lifelong pursuit and joy. He was recently selected as a finalist in the Coeur d'Alene Symphony's Young Artist Competition, and was awarded a silver medal in the collegiate group of the International Keyboard Odyssey and Festival in August 2012. André is a junior currently studying piano performance with Dr. Janet Landreth at Colorado State University, and he hopes to become a professor at an institution of higher learning.

Yolanda Tapia is currently in the first year of the Master of Music in performance at CSU. Originally from Xalapa, Veracruz, Mexico, she finished her Bachelor Degree at the Faculty of Music of Veracruz University. Ms. Tapia was a finalist at the "Maria Clara Cullel" international piano competition in both 2006 and 2008. As winner of another competition, she earned the opportunity to perform with Xalapa Symphony Orchestra. She received the "Manuel M Ponce" prize for best chamber music group at the Chamber Music Festival in Aguascalientes, Mexico. Ms. Tapia has attended the San Miguel de Allende Chamber music festival and the Academy Musical du Morges, in Switzerland. In her professional experiences she worked for 4 years as a collaborative pianist at the Higher Institute of Music of Veracruz State. Yolanda is a Fulbright Scholar and is studying with Dr. Silvana Santinelli. Ms. Tapia began her piano studies at age seven and gives credit to her mother, "the most amazing singer I've ever heard and she never studied music," as have the greatest impact on her as a musician.