

*SHEPHERD SCHOOL
SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA*

LARRY RACHLEFF, music director

BRIAN CONNELLY, piano

Saturday, October 4, 2003

8:00 p.m.

Stude Concert Hall

RICE UNIVERSITY

the
Shepherd
School
of Music

PROGRAM

Overture to "Béatrice et Bénédict"

Hector Berlioz
(1803-1869)

Piano Concerto No. 3 in C Major, Op. 26

Sergei Prokofiev
(1891-1953)

Andante - Allegro

Theme and Variations. Andantino

Allegro, ma non troppo

Brian Connelly, soloist

INTERMISSION

Second Essay, Op. 17

Samuel Barber
(1910-1981)

The Pines of Rome

Ottorino Respighi
(1879-1936)

I pini di Villa Borghese. Allegretto vivace

Pini presso una Catacomba. Lento - Più mosso

I pini del Gianicolo. Lento

I pini della via Appia. Tempo di Marcia

The reverberative acoustics of Stude Concert Hall magnify the slightest sound made by the audience. Your care and courtesy will be appreciated. The taking of photographs and use of recording equipment are prohibited.

PROGRAM NOTES

Overture to "Béatrice and Bénédict" Hector Berlioz

Completed in 1862, *Beatrice et Bénédict* is the last opera written by Hector Berlioz. This two-act comedy was loosely based upon Shakespeare's play *Much Ado About Nothing*, with the composer's own adaptations and libretto. The orchestral overture begins with a scurrying Allegro, which soon gives way to a lyrical melody taken from Béatrice's aria in Act II, in which she realizes she is in love with Bénédict. As the rhapsodic mood begins to take control, the Scherzando first theme begins to reappear, growing in strength until it becomes an equal partner with the love theme. As the overture concludes, the audience is filled with anticipation of a drama in which love and humor are equally important.

Piano Concerto No. 3 in C Major, Op. 26 Sergei Prokofiev

Composing was often a straightforward task for Sergei Prokofiev, but in the case of his *Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 26*, the process was not so simple. The composer completed the majority of the first movement and two variations on the theme of the second movement in 1916-17, but then set the piece aside. It was not until 1921, long after Prokofiev had emigrated from his homeland in the midst of the Russian Revolution and established a successful musical career in the United States, that he resumed work on this piece, which he premiered that December in Chicago.

The first movement of this concerto begins unexpectedly with a slow, melancholy clarinet solo. However, soon after the orchestra takes charge, the tempo accelerates to a lively Allegro, providing plenty of opportunity for dazzling technical display on the part of the pianist. The solo material seems to be free-form improvisation, but in reality the movement is tightly constructed in sonata form. The second movement begins with an original theme from 1913. The chromatic, dark nature of the theme provides sharp contrast to the bright, open nature of the first movement. Although parts of the variations that follow are brilliant and active, the movement ends in the dark, meditative state with which it began. The third movement draws material from a failed attempt at a "white note" string quartet, in which the composer limited all pitches to the notes of the C major scale. Although Prokofiev found the original project uninspiring, in the concerto the material forms a vibrant rondo that brings the work to a scintillating conclusion.

In some regards, the Third is the most conservative of the five Prokofiev concertos. It is the only one to conform to the Classical three-movement fast-slow-fast structure, and the harmonic language and sweeping orchestral lines at times resemble the traditionalist Rachmaninoff. At heart, however, this piece is vintage Prokofiev, filled with his characteristically acerbic wit and awe-inspiring pianistic virtuosity.

Second Essay, Op. 17 Samuel Barber

In 1942 most composers had dispensed with Classical form and tonality in music. Samuel Barber composed a set of three Essays to explain his thoughts about form. The *Second Essay*, the most widely known, begins with

a simple theme, presented first by the solo flute. As the piece progresses, one hears two other themes that provide stark contrast to the original idea. At the end, however, all three are brought together, and it becomes evident that the second and third themes are derivatives of the first. At this point, the harmony also comes into focus, concluding magnificently in F Major. This is a common feature of the music of Samuel Barber; although he would use unusual forms and a degree of harmonic novelty, at heart he was a tonal composer.

The Pines of Rome Ottorino Respighi

The Pines of Rome is so entitled because, as Ottorino Respighi wrote, the ubiquity of these trees in city landscaping causes them metaphorically "to become testimony for the principal events in Roman life." Indeed, in this four-movement tone poem, the listener is transported to four different locations in the Eternal City, each with its own atmosphere. In addition to the spatial progression, the suite has a clear temporal component. The first movement features children playing in a courtyard in the early evening and is thus bright and energetic. The second and third movements take place at night and are darker and more somber, the former suggesting the deathly quiet of a catacomb, and the latter the stillness of an empty city at night. In the final movement, the sun rises on a new day, and a majestic army marches into view from afar. This lends an extremely effective contour to the piece; it begins and ends at high points of dynamics, texture, and tempo, while the middle movements feature fewer instruments, generally slower music, and lower volumes. Throughout the piece, the composer skillfully exploits the variety of timbres available to him in a large Romantic orchestra. Since its first performance in 1924, *The Pines of Rome* has received great acclaim and has become an integral part of the orchestral repertoire.

— Notes by Rebecca Combs

BIOGRAPHY

BRIAN CONNELLY is recognized as a pianist of unusual range and accomplishment in both historical and modern repertoires. He has premiered works by composers William Albright, William Bolcom, Paul Cooper, David Diamond, Ross Lee Finney, and many others. Mr. Connelly has appeared as guest artist with groups such as the Pittsburgh New Music Ensemble and the Chicago Contemporary Players, and was featured in the Carnegie Hall series *Making Music* in a tribute to composer William Bolcom. He has given many performances of the complete *Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant-Jesus* by Olivier Messiaen, most recently for Piano Festival Northwest in Portland. Mr. Connelly plays with pre-eminent artists such as violinist Sergiu Luca, flutist Carol Wincenc, clarinetist Charles Neidich, cellists Roel Dieltiens and Gary Hoffman, pianists Ian Hobson and André-Michel Schub, and he has shared ragtime recitals with jazz pianist Marcus Roberts. He played nearly 150 solo and chamber works for the acclaimed *Da Camera* of Houston in its path-breaking first six seasons, and appears regularly at the Cascade Head and Grand Teton music festivals. Mr. Connelly is a member of the ensemble *CONTEXT*, performing on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century pianos, as well

as on the modern Steinway. His three-CD recording with *CONTEXT* of music by Robert Schumann and Prince Louis Ferdinand has just been released.

Born in Detroit, Mr. Connelly attended the University of Michigan, where he studied with pianists György Sándor and Theodore Lettvin. After graduation, he was invited to join the faculty of the Shepherd School of Music, where he teaches piano and chamber music. On Saturday, October 11, he will perform Schubert's "**Wanderer**" *Fantasia* on an 1825 Conrad Graf piano in a recital with violinist Sergiu Luca, a special concert presented by *CONTEXT* and the Shepherd School of Music. Beginning on Tuesday, October 21, Mr. Connelly will present a series of three lecture-recitals entitled "Perspectives on Pianos," with three early nineteenth-century Viennese pianos. Presented by the Houston Seminar, this series will be held at the Shepherd School.

UPCOMING ORCHESTRA CONCERTS

Saturday, November 1, 8:00 p.m. - SHEPHERD SCHOOL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Larry Rachleff, conductor; Marlon Chen, guest conductor PROGRAM: Bartók - *Viola Concerto, Op. Posth.* (Milan Milisavljevic, soloist); Bram Barker - *The Jebediah Jones Mystical Montrose Tour* (1999, Premiere); and R. Strauss - *Death and Transfiguration, Op. 24.* Stude Concert Hall. Free admission.

Sunday, November 2, 8:00 p.m. - SHEPHERD SCHOOL CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
Larry Rachleff, conductor ALL-MOZART PROGRAM: *Overture to "The Magic Flute," K. 620; Sinfonia Concertante in E-flat Major, K. 364* (soloists: Kenneth Goldsmith, violin; Karen Ritscher, viola); *Overture to "The Marriage of Figaro," K. 492;* and *Sinfonia Concertante in E-flat Major, K. 297b* (soloists: Robert Atherholt, oboe; Benjamin Kamins, bassoon; Michael Webster, clarinet; William Ver Meulen, horn). Stude Concert Hall. Free admission.



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