

PENINSULA *symphony*

Symphony Sounds

April 2010

43^d Season, Number 3

Editor: Kenneth Gash

Concert III

Sunday, April 18 at 7:00 PM

Rolling Hills Covenant Church
2222 Palos Verdes Drive North
Rolling Hills Estates

PROGRAM

Divine Comedy

J. Strauss Jr.	<i>Artists Quadrille, Op. 201</i>
Mozart	<i>A Musical Joke, K. 522</i>
Schickele	<i>Eine kleine Nichtmusik</i>
Tchaikovsky	<i>Francesca da Rimini, Op. 32</i>

CONCERT DETAILS

Symphony Association members admitted at 6:00. Center-section priority seating is reserved for members at the Patron level and above.

Concert Preview by **Gary Berkson** at 6:15 PM

General public will be admitted at approximately 6:50 PM

POST-CONCERT MEET THE CONDUCTOR

After the concert, the audience is invited to remain in the auditorium and meet informally with our Conductor, Gary Berkson, who may make a few remarks about himself and the program, then the audience will have an opportunity to ask questions.

Those of you who have heard our maestro talk may have noticed that he takes his music very seriously, but he also has a decided sense of humor. He has titled the April concert "Divine Comedy" and has chosen musical selections to illustrate both his humorous and his serious perspectives.

Music Preview

Johann Strauss Jr. (1825-1899)

Everyone knows that Strauss composed waltzes and polkas, but what about a composition written by Strauss in which all of the music was composed by someone else?

To explain how this piece came about, we have to have some understanding of what a "quadrille" is. The term quadrille came to exist in the 17th century within military parades, where four horsemen and their horses performed special square-shaped formations or figures. This performance became very popular and in the 18th century people began to dance quadrilles (without horses). If you have ever seen a period movie where there is a formal ball, you probably saw groups of four pairs of dancers describing intricate patterns and movements - the quadrille. When the quadrille moved to the New World, it evolved into the square dance.

This dance form became so popular that composers had to continually write music for

it. Johann Strauss Jr. composed approximately 88 quadrilles. The music was usually adapted from popular tunes and was arranged in such a way as to accommodate the intricate dance steps.

As you listen to the Artist's Quadrille, you will recognize many familiar tunes but, since each consists of only eight (or sometimes sixteen) bars, you have to be quick to identify them.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

Anyone who has seen the play or the movie *Amadeus* knows that Mozart was well aware of his own abilities and he was quite contemptuous of composers who didn't measure up to his standards. He was also known as a practical joker, often at the expense of his friends.

During Mozart's time, music was well structured and audiences knew what to expect. If he was composing music to be played in Paris, for example, it had to comply with certain structural rules which made it sound French. Imagine how such an audience might react on hearing this piece in which Mozart intentionally violates elementary laws of composition, such as creating consecutive fifths and octaves. He also doubles parts without accounting for texture, to create overly intrusive accompaniment in some sections. Twice in the Finale, music goes on for thirty bars without any real motivation, making it sound as if the composer is lost and doesn't know how to progress any further.

Some of the jests are very subtle, such as rhythmic imbalances in the second movement, which would have made a sophisticated listener very uncomfortable while producing a vague sense of *wrongness* in others. Playing the very carefully designed "wrong" notes and rhythms requires great skill from the players

who, if they didn't hit the notes that he wrote, it might make it sound "right."

Because of its sophisticated simplicity, *A Musical Joke* amuses theorists and laypeople alike. The piece is very skillfully written and perhaps Mozart just wanted to be able, for once, to abandon the rules and have some musical fun.

Peter Schickele (born 1935)

The composer of the third piece of this concert is still very much alive. Peter Schickele is still composing and his current concert tour, from January through May, consists of fifteen concerts in fourteen cities (Pasadena got him twice in February) throughout the country.

Many people know of him through his parodic persona, P. D. Q. Bach. According to legend, in 1954, Professor Peter Schickele, rummaging around a Bavarian castle in search of rare musical gems, happened instead upon a piece of manuscript being employed as a strainer in the caretaker's percolator. This turned out to be the "Sanka" Cantata by one P.D.Q. Bach. The musical world has never been the same since then.

He actually is an internationally recognized composer, musician, author and satirist, who blends all levels of American music in his compositions. His works (not including those of P. D. Q. Bach) number over one hundred, many of which were produced on commission from major orchestras and chamber groups. He graduated from one of the most prestigious liberal arts colleges, Swarthmore, where he was the *only* music major. He went on to graduate from the Juilliard School with an M. S. in musical composition; he also taught at Juilliard for four years.

Eine Kleine Nichtmusik was published under his own name, Prof. Peter Schickele. It is a brilliant musical parody of *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik* written as a tribute to another musical joker, W. A. Mozart. (Mozart's *Eine Kleine* was written at the same time as his *Musical Joke*.) Like the *Artist's Quadrille*, it is a medley of snippets from well over fifty compositions, classical, popular and folk. The difference is that these are "intrusions" (some only a few notes long) superimposed on the Mozart serenade which is played "straight."

I don't know what prompted Prof. Schickele to compose this piece, but perhaps he saw that Mozart used only string players in his serenade, and he wanted the brass and woodwinds to have something to do as well.

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)

The full title of the final piece of this concert is *Francesca da Rimini: Symphonic Fantasy after Dante*. In this symphonic poem Tchaikovsky presents an interpretation of the tragic tale of Francesca da Rimini, a beauty who was immortalized in Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Francesca was a noblewoman who fell in love with Paolo, the brother of her ugly husband. After the lovers were discovered and killed in revenge by the husband, they were condemned to Hell for their adulterous passions. In their damnation, the lovers are trapped in a violent storm but separated from each other, never to touch again.

How did Gary decide to include this tragic music in a program devoted to comedy? Our conductor, as you may have noticed, does not always take the conventional approach. The theme he chose for this concert, *The Divine Comedy*, provides us with the link.

When Dante Alighieri created the work

during the last fifteen years of his life (from 1308 to 1321), he called it simply *Commedia*, which translates as "Comedy" in English. It wasn't until over two centuries later that the word "Divine" was added presumably to stress the importance of the work. Within this work, Francesca and Paolo are only two of many hundreds of characters portrayed and their story is anything but comedic.

Classical Greeks and Romans used the word "comedy" to describe stage plays with happy endings; in the Middle Ages, the term expanded to include narrative poems with happy endings. Hence, since Dante's epic journey through Hell, Purgatory and Paradise ends with him meeting God, it has a happy ending, and qualifies as comedy.

Tchaikovsky was not the only creative soul to be inspired by this tale. Among other artistic portrayals of this tragic pair is Auguste Rodin's statue *The Kiss* which he originally titled *Francesca da Rimini*.

Past Events

Second Concert

The second concert with our new Music Director/Conductor took place on February 21, 2010, with a program entitled "An Intimate Evening." The orchestra forces employed did not include any trombones or tubas and, although the orchestra was "intimate" in size, it produced a beautiful sound that filled the hall.

The lively (and lovely) music of Vaughan Williams, *The Wasps*, opened the program and this was followed by Haydn's *Farewell Symphony*. Even though Gary warned the audience about what to expect in the final movement, many audience members were

surprised and amused when the orchestra gradually disappeared from the stage.

After intermission, principal clarinetist David Nicholson assumed the role of soloist to perform Mozart's Clarinet Concerto. Mozart's love of the smooth and sensuous clarinet is well known, and David brought



that love into his playing. David appeared totally relaxed as he articulated the demanding passages contained in the music while the beautiful ensemble work of the orchestra provided a perfect balance.

For many in the audience, the final piece of the evening's program, *Dances of Galanta* by Zoltán Kodály, was a brand new musical experience. Nevertheless, they were delighted by the intricate gypsy melodies and dance rhythms as well as by the exuberant playing of the orchestra. This delight was evidenced by a standing ovation at the conclusion of the piece.

After the performance about fifty members of the audience remained behind in the auditorium to engage the conductor and the soloist in a lively question-and-answer session.

Dress Rehearsal

Students from the 15th Street Elementary School of San Pedro were able once again to attend the dress rehearsal preceding the concert. There were also a few adults in attendance but there are still plenty of seats left. If you have children or grandchildren that you would like to help introduce to classical music, you should consider bringing them to a dress rehearsal. The informal setting and the opportunity to ask questions provides a relaxed atmosphere to hear some great music and see how an orchestra prepares to perform it.



The dress rehearsals are held in the same auditorium as the concert. They start at 2:00 PM and are open to the public. Please consider joining us at the next one on April 18.

2009 - 2010 Schedule

All regular concerts are held at:

**Rolling Hills Covenant Church
2222 Palos Verdes Drive North
Rolling Hills Estates**

Young Artists Showcase

**April 25, 2010, 2 PM
ARMSTRONG THEATER
3330 CIVIC CENTER DRIVE, TORRANCE**

The finalists in the Edith Knox Performance Competition will play with their accompanists in a full-dress stage performance for professional judging. The first prize winner will be selected at the end of the program, and will perform as soloist with the Peninsula Symphony Orchestra at our June 27 concert.

Concert IV

**The Norris Foundation Concert
June 27, 2010, 7 PM**

Brahms	Academic Festival Overture
TBA	Concerto chosen by winner of the Knox Competition
Schumann	Symphony #3, "Rhenish"

Young Artists Showcase

You will note that we have only two events scheduled following April's concert. The first of these events is entitled the Young Artists Showcase, otherwise known as the Edith Knox Performance Competition. This program is sponsored by the Peninsula Symphony Orchestra, and the winner becomes the soloist at the second of these events, the final orchestra concert.

Each year dozens of young performers apply and about ten to twenty are chosen to compete in a preliminary trial, from which six are chosen for the finals. Each of these young persons, ages 11 to 24, must perform a full concerto, with accompanist, for their instrument.

The final competition is open to the public and you are urged to attend. Where else can you listen to some of the world's greatest musical works performed by supremely talented young artists - for free? This year the following concerti will be heard: Mendelssohn Violin Concerto, Schumann Piano Concerto, Elgar Cello Concerto, Wieniawski Violin Concerto #2, Tchaikovsky Piano Concerto #1, and Sibelius Violin Concerto.

For more information about this Showcase, including pictures of the finalists, go to the Peninsula Symphony Web site at www.pensym.org and look under What's New.

An Intimate Soiree

On Friday evening, March 26, a group of over thirty members of the Peninsula Symphony Association gathered in the beautiful Rolling Hills home of Dorothy and Allen Lay for a Soiree featuring our conductor, Gary Berkson.

The musical entertainment provided by Gary was the highlight of the evening. Gary gave one of his insightful pre-concert talks and explained something of the history and popularity of four-hand piano music. He then pointed out that since he had only two hands, he would be joined at the piano by his friend and colleague, Wayne Abravanel.

Wayne, a celebrated musical director and producer originally from New York, has spent many years on Broadway producing, arranging, composing and conducting musicals. He also was the associate conductor for the Radio City Music Hall Christmas Show, starring the world famous Rockettes.



Before Gary and Wayne sat down to play, Gary introduced the “fifth hand,” Christina Sjöblom who would turn the pages while the other hands were busy playing.

The delightful music ranged from Beethoven to Rachmaninoff to Gershwin and included solo performances by Gary and Wayne (who

played and *sang* a Nat King Cole favorite “There Will Never Be Another You”).

After the performances, desserts and coffee were served while the guests chatted with the artists.

Since only members at the Founders level or above are invited to these events, you might consider increasing your membership level so that you can be included in the future.

Friends of the Peninsula Symphony

This forty-third concert season has brought about a transition for our Symphony with the energetic leadership of our Music Director/Conductor Gary Berkson. The Friends of the Peninsula Symphony organization has been supporting activities of the Symphony for the past fifteen years. Events have been organized for members to gather at social, educational and music performances while raising funds which are donated annually to the Symphony Association.

Most recently, in late January-February of 2010 the Friends organization provided the funding to support the annual “Celebrate Mozart” program offered to the second grade classes in Peninsula Schools. Our volunteers, Maude Landon and Caroline Hyde, presented a narrative of Mozart at a young age, while



musicians performed portions of Mozart's compositions and demonstrated their instruments and sounds. Again this year, members of the Symphony Association and Friends visited the schools to observe and volunteer their help during this music enrichment program.

The date of April 13, 2010, is set for Friends members to enjoy An Afternoon with Annika L f Berkson, wife of Maestro Gary Berkson. As the honored guest, Annika will share highlights of her dance career performing with the Royal Swedish Ballet. Invitations have been mailed to Friends members and we urge a prompt reply, as space is limited.

Details of the Friends annual spring fundraising event will be presented soon. In planning for the next concert season of 2010-1011, active leadership will be necessary to carry out the various responsibilities which the Friends organization has established over the years. This is an invitation for you to step forward and offer to serve in a position for next year. Leadership is needed on the Friends Executive Committee to serve as an Officer or as a Committee Chair. Call President Harriet Servis at 310-832 3791, email harrietservis@hotmail.com or mail to the PO Box noted below. We look forward to your response and to the future activities of the Friends.

Membership in the Friends is open to all members of the Symphony Association. Prior to the concerts our membership information is available in the lobby. Contact Membership VP Anita Gash 310/541-3516, or you may mail your membership support donation (\$50, \$75, \$125) to Friends of the Peninsula Symphony, PO Box, 3961, Palos Verdes Peninsula, CA 90274

Want Ad

Wanted - Boeing Employee

Our chances of receiving a small grant from Boeing would be increased if we were "sponsored" by a current Boeing employee.

If you can help us please contact the Symphony Office, 310-544-0320, musicsensym@verizon.net or John Copper, 310-375-1176, johncopper@cox.net

How many of you have visited the Peninsula Symphony Association Web site at www.pensym.org? There is an abundance of information there about your orchestra and it is well worth a visit. You can also join us on Facebook; you can find the link on our homepage.

A Web site redesign committee has just been created by the Board of Directors and the new site will be ready for the 2010-2011 season announcements.

We have an excellent Webmaster but we need people who are experienced in Web design to assist us. If any of you would like to participate in this project or if you have any suggestions, please send me an email at kgash@cox.net



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Contact Information

Any questions or requests about the Peninsula Symphony, the Peninsula Symphony Association, **Symphony Sounds**, or the Friends of the Peninsula Symphony should be sent to the Peninsula Symphony Association office (we will route your message to the appropriate person):

The Peninsula Symphony Association
Post Office Box 2602
Palos Verdes Peninsula, CA 90274

The office is normally staffed from 9:00 to noon on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. You may call at any time (310-544-0320) and leave a message on our answering machine, but phone replies will usually be made only during normal staffing hours. You can e-mail us at music.pensym@verizon.net. General information about the Symphony (current season schedule, etc.) can be found on our website www.pensym.org

Other Contacts are:

Peninsula Symphony Association President, John Copper
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