

PENINSULA *symphony*

Symphony Sounds

April 2012

45th Season, Number 3

Editor: Kenneth Gash

Concert III

Sunday, April 29, 2012, 7:00 p.m.

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

PROGRAM

Awakening Emotions

Ives **Symphony No. 2**

Brahms **Piano Concerto No. 2**
Esther Keel, Soloist

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 **Maestro Berkson** at 6:15.
General public admitted at approximately 6:50.

POST-CONCERT MEET THE PERFORMERS

After the concert, the audience is invited to remain in the auditorium and meet informally with our conductor, Gary Berkson, and our soloist, Esther Keel. The artists may make a few remarks about themselves and their program, and then the audience will have an opportunity to ask questions. Please call our office at 544-0320 if you have any questions about this event.

You may notice two things that are different about the upcoming third concert of the season. First, there are only two pieces on the program, and second, the piano concerto is to be played *after* the intermission rather than before. We have learned that Maestro *Berkson* is constantly developing new and unique ways to prepare his programs to provide entertaining and enlightening musical experiences for his audience. Once again we can expect a delightful pre-concert talk that will enhance our enjoyment of the evening's music.



Sean Lee performing at February, 2012 Concert

Music Preview

Charles Ives (1874-1954)



You may remember that Gary Berkson's inaugural concert in October, 2009, opened with *Variations on America* by Charles Ives. Now we are privileged to hear a major work by a man who is considered by many

to be the greatest of all American composers.

During his lifetime, Ives composed six symphonies (one unfinished), fourteen sets or suites for orchestra, seven overtures, six marches (plus other music for band), two string quartets (plus dozens of other chamber works), five violin sonatas, five works for keyboard and more than two hundred songs and choral works. Not bad for an insurance entrepreneur who composed when he found time on weekends and evenings.

Charles Ives father was a cornet player and band director. One day he came to find the five-year-old Charles banging out the band's drum parts on the piano, *using his fists*. In one of his later pieces for piano, the *Concord Sonata* he found his fists were not enough to get the sound he wanted so he required the use of a wooden board to play parts of it – thus inventing the *tone cluster* – a term coined by another American composer, Henry Cowell, years later.

Ives started studying piano formally after initial instruction by his father and soon discovered his love for the organ. At the age of fourteen, he became the youngest salaried church organist in Connecticut. When he was twenty, he entered Yale University where he studied counterpoint, harmony, history, orchestration, and form under one of the foremost music teachers and composers in America, Horatio Parker.

While at Yale, Ives earned a B average in musical courses, D+ in other academics and a resounding A in "Campus Life." He spent his four years enjoying himself in various clubs, playing intramural sports, frequenting vaudeville theaters and sitting in for the pianists, playing ragtime and his own pieces at parties.

When he left Yale, instead of pursuing his musical studies, he headed for New York to begin as a \$15-a-week clerk with the Mutual Life Insurance Company. He wanted the prospect of financial security which the conservative musical establishment of the time would not provide. As Ives put it, if a composer "has a nice wife and some nice children, how can he let them starve on his dissonances?"

Ives Second Symphony represents the pinnacle of his success as a "respectable" composer, meaning that in this symphony Ives was working within the confines of a clearly defined formal tradition. In plain English, "respectable" means that this work is quite acceptable with folks who are most familiar to Romantic composers like Brahms, Dvorak, and Tchaikovsky – Ives without the "cranky" eccentricities. Thus it serves as a great introduction to the large body of music Ives composed. Ill health caused him to stop composing at about age fifty, even though he lived until he was eighty. Perhaps the surprising orchestral "tone cluster" which ends the work was his mischievous way of letting us know what he had in mind for the future.

Optimistic, idealistic, and fiercely democratic, Charles Ives unified the voice of the American people with the forms and traditions of European classical music. Ives pursued his goal of a musical pioneer, creating at the highest level, while making a fortune in the life insurance business. Perhaps this could only have happened in the United States. And perhaps only there could such an isolated, paradoxical figure make himself into a major artist.

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)



The stature of Johannes Brahms among classical composers is well illustrated by his inclusion among the "Three Bs" triumvirate of Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms. Of all the major composers of the late Romantic era, Brahms can be viewed as the

guardian of the Classical tradition of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven in a period when the standards of this tradition were being questioned or overturned by other Romantic composers.

Brahms is often considered both a traditionalist and an innovator. His works were labeled old-fashioned by the 'New German School' whose principal figures included Franz Liszt and Richard Wagner. Brahms admired some of Wagner's music and admired Liszt as a great pianist, but the conflict between the two schools, known as the War of the Romantics, soon embroiled all of musical Europe.

Below are two excerpts from an obituary of Brahms which appeared in the *New York Times* on April 3, 1897.

The opponents of Brahms declared that his music was machine-made; that it was without inspiration; that it was acid and uninviting.

When contemporaneous misapprehensions have died out and the world gets far enough away from Brahms to view him with a fair perspective, critical historians will probably award him a seat of honor among the Titans of music.

It seems that the prediction in the obituary has indeed come to pass.

Brahms was a relentlessly private man with an oblique and often wounding sense of humor. His ironic and self-deprecating humor was evident in a letter he sent to his publisher of the Second Piano Concerto in which he said "You ought to be enormously pleased with me: not only, for a trifling sum, are you getting four movements instead of three you're getting metronome marks too." This is the concerto that he wrote to his friend Elisabeth von Herzogenberg describing: "a tiny, tiny piano concerto with a tiny, tiny wisp of a scherzo." (The "trifling sum" mentioned was certainly an understatement since Brahms became a very wealthy man from the sale of his music).

This work, which Brahms further characterized as "some little piano pieces." is one of the grandest piano concertos in the entire repertoire and it calls for a soloist with considerable technical skill and stamina. Unlike many concertos written at the time, it is devoid of the expected virtuoso passages and is not showily brilliant. Indeed, the very demanding piano part at times cedes the spotlight to the french horn, in the first movement, and to the cello, in the beautiful third movement.

Esther Keel

There is a very good biography of Esther's professional life in the Program Book. As I do with all our soloists, I asked her for some additional information that I could use to personalize that bio for *Symphony Sounds*. Esther's response was so captivating that I decided to use it without change to introduce our charming and very talented piano soloist for this concert.

I was born and raised in Torrance, CA. I was born into a musical family - mother is a concert pianist, who performed with the Peninsula Symphony many years ago, father is an amateur violinist, and my brother used to play the piano. He performed with the Peninsula Symphony as well, as a winner of the Edith Knox competition.

I was a winner of the Edith Knox competition at the age of 11, performing Beethoven Piano Concerto No. 1. This was especially memorable, because it was my first experience of performing a complete concerto.

I attended Chadwick School from 5th-12th grade. I was on the cross-country team at Chadwick. I picked up the habit of eating spaghetti the day before a cross-country meet... now I always eat spaghetti the day before a big concert.

I am a huge foodie - constantly trying new restaurants.

I love listening to music. Favorite classical musicians are Argerich, Lupu, and Sokolov.

Favorite composer/piece: whichever piece I am currently working on.

Favorite non-classical musicians are Norah Jones, Alicia Keys, and Ella Fitzgerald.

Favorite authors are CS Lewis, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Timothy Keller.

One of my favorite places in Los Angeles is the Getty Museum.

Favorite artists include Renoir and Degas.

My two favorite sports to watch are basketball and tennis. I am a huge Laker fan and a Roger Federer fan.

I enjoy traveling and learning about new cultures and their food.

I have a passion for teaching piano to young aspiring musicians.

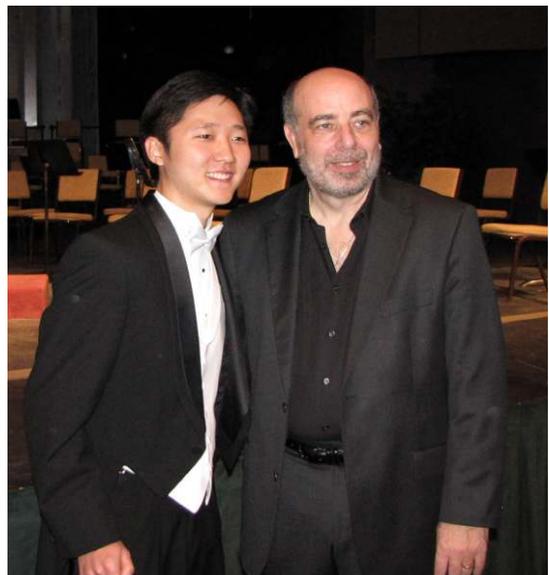
Esther Keel

Past Events: Second Concert

On Sunday, February 19, 2012 we were treated to a concert entitled *Immortal Beloved*. Our Maestro's always enlightening pre-concert talk provided us with interesting and humorous insights into the upcoming music.

The concert opened with the very familiar Wedding March from Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. This led to the major work on the program, Beethoven's Violin Concerto which was masterfully performed by Sean Lee.

After intermission, we heard a relatively unfamiliar orchestral piece which continued the *Beloved* theme - the *Rustic Wedding Symphony* by Carl Goldmark.



Members of the audience remained in the auditorium after the performance to engage Gary and Sean in a lively question-and-answer session.

Spring Salon

About fifty of our members attended a recital on March 11, 2012 in the magnificent home of Linda & Mel Rowan. There we got an opportunity to appreciate

the extraordinary talent of the soloist who will perform at the April 15 concert, Esther Keel.

Ms. Keel performed two pieces by Frédéric Chopin, the *Andante Spianato et Grande Polonaise*, Op. 22 and the Ballade No. 1 in g minor Op. 23. These familiar and beautifully played pieces were followed by a rarely-heard piano solo, *La Valse* by Maurice Ravel. *La Valse* was written by Ravel as an orchestral tribute to the waltz. He later transcribed the work for



piano, doing both a solo version and a version for two pianos. Watching Ms. Keel perform the piece had me, and the rest of the audience, on the edges of our seats the entire time as the music became ever more propulsive and ever more violently unstable until, in a final piano-threatening cataclysm, it crashed to a catastrophic conclusion.

Edith Knox Performance Competition

On February 15, 2012, eighteen young performers (and their accompanists) each played a full concerto for their instrument in front of a panel of judges. At the end of the day, the judges picked the best six who will compete as finalists on April 15, 2012. By the time you read this, the winner of the competition will have been chosen. This first-place winner will receive a

check for \$1,500 and will become the soloist at the June 17 concert.

The finalists are:

Jonathan Mamora, 17, Beaumont, Prokofiev Piano Concerto #3

Jesse Chen, 17, Palos Verdes Estates, Sibelius Violin Concerto

Jeffery Li, 22, Santa Monica, Prokofiev Symphony-Concerto in E minor for Cello

Yifan Zhou, 21, Los Angeles, Brahms Violin Concerto in D

Isabella Ma, 15, Rancho Palos Verdes, Grieg Piano Concerto in A minor

Michelle Tseng, 20, Huntington Beach, Tchiakovsky Violin Concerto in D

The name of the winner will be announced at the April 29th concert.

Friends of the Peninsula Symphony

Mona Gifford, Chair of the *Friends*, would like to announce that the third and final salon of the season will be on Sunday, June 3, at the home of new Board member, Jacqueline Glass.



The performer at the salon will be Mimi Jung who was the co-winner of the Edith Knox Performance Competition held on February 27, 2011. Ms Jung will be the

featured soloist with the Peninsula Symphony Orchestra at the February, 2013 concert.

This salon will feature a brunch and will take place at 1:00 p.m. The theme of the brunch and also of the music played by Ms. Jung will be French to coincide with the June 17 program of the Peninsula Symphony Orchestra, *Celebrating Debussy*. As soon as the final details have been worked out, *Friends* members will receive their formal invitations.

For further information, contact the Peninsula Symphony Office at (310) 544-0320 or contact Mona Gifford at: monagee@cox.net

2011 - 2012 Schedule

All regular concerts are held at:

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

Concert IV The Norris Foundation Concert June 17, 2012, 7 p.m.

Faure	Pavane
TBA	<i>Concerto performed by the winner of the Knox Competition</i>
Debussy	Syrinx
Debussy	La Mer

Summer Pops Concert July 22, 2012, 4:30 p.m.

A wonderful selection of old and familiar favorites including Fiddle Faddle by Leroy Anderson, *On the Trail* from Grand Canyon Suite, *Porgy and Bess Suite*, *Carousel Waltz* by Richard Rogers, Glenn Miller's *Moonlight Serenade*, *Wizard of Oz Medley*, *West Side Story Suite*, *America the Beautiful*.

Guest Conductor, Wayne Abravanel.

Peninsula Symphony Association Board of Directors

On March 26, 2012, the General Membership of the Peninsula Symphony Association met to receive nominations for positions on the Board of Directors. There were five persons nominated for new Board positions and nine persons whose current Board terms had expired. The slate of nominees was moved and seconded and all of them were elected by a unanimous vote.

The new Board members are:

Jacqueline Glass
Daniel Keller
Dorothy Lay
June Sung
Larry Zinkiewicz

The Board members elected for an additional term are:

Dianne Bishop
Duane Conover
Jackie Crowley
Kenneth Gash
Charles Klaus
Nancy Mahr
Carol Schamp
Jack Trost
John Williams

The term of office is three years and these Board members will serve until June, 2015. The fourteen newly elected Board members will be formally installed on July 21, 2012, prior to the first Board meeting of the new fiscal year.

A full report of the Peninsula Symphony Association Board of Directors, including Officers, will be presented in the Fall, 2012 issue of *Symphony Sounds*.

Notes from the Editor

Like many of you, I recently completed filing my Federal and State income taxes. While this is not usually a very pleasant task, I knew that I would be receiving a modest refund and that made the job a little easier.

The Peninsula Symphony Association is a *non-profit* organization and, as such, we pay no income taxes. This, of course, means that we will not get a nice check from the government in the middle of our fiscal year. This is a time when we fret about being able to cover our expenses for upcoming concerts. It is also the time when we begin planning for the budget for the 2012-2013 concert season and beyond, which includes a possible Pops Concert in July of 2013.

A year and a half ago when I became president of the Peninsula Symphony Association, I wrote an article for the Program Book which contained detailed information about our income and expenses. In it I indicated that our largest expense was, of course, the concerts themselves. I showed that the cost of a concert had doubled over the past fifteen years leading to an average of about \$21,000 per concert.

Since that time, costs have continued to rise rapidly. The average cost of the last three concerts (July Pops, November and February) was over \$25,000 - a jump of twenty percent! At this rate, concert costs will double in less than ten years.

This brings me back to the subject of tax refunds. I would like you, our Members, to consider sharing part of any refund you may have received with your orchestra. This is really just my clever(?) way of asking you to make a mid-year donation to the Peninsula Symphony Orchestra.

Fortunately, the projections for the current season indicate that we will be able to meet our expenses without running a deficit. Nevertheless, we are always worried about unexpected expenses. For instance, the June concert will feature the winner of the Knox Competition. If that person is a pianist, the additional expense of the piano rental will need to be included in this year's expenditures.

There are many ways you can contribute. You can raise your current membership to the next level; you can "adopt" one of the first-desk players for the rest of the season; you could pay the rent for the use of the church auditorium for a concert; or you could simply make an unspecific donation to help the orchestra.

Another way you can help is by volunteering. We always need ushers at the concerts as well as volunteers at the intermission refreshment tables. There will shortly be an opening on the Board of Directors for someone who can assume the treasurer's responsibility.

We have made it easy to contribute money. Just go to our Website at www.pensym.org and click on Gifts/Donations where you will be able to use PayPal (or the US Mail) to help the Symphony.

For further information, you may call the office at 310-544-0320. You may also contact me by 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, Kenneth B. Gash
310-541-3516 kgash@cox.net

Friends of the Peninsula Symphony, Mona Gifford, Chair
310-377-7711 monagee@cox.net

Music Director/Conductor, Gary Berkson conductor.pensym@verizon.net