

PENINSULA *symphony*

Symphony Sounds

April, 2015

48th Season, Number 3

Editor: Terri Zinkiewicz

Concert III

Sunday, May 3, 2015, at 7:00 PM

Redondo Union High School Auditorium
222 North Pacific Coast Highway
Redondo Beach, CA 90277

From Russia, With Love
Robert Thies, piano

Britten	<i>Russian Funeral</i>
Prokofiev	Concerto No. 3 for Piano and Orchestra in C major, Opus 26
Tchaikovsky	Symphony No. 2 in C minor, Opus 17 ("Little Russian")

Concert Details

Doors open at 6:00 PM. Center-section seating is reserved for members at the Patron level and above.

Pre-concert lecture by **Maestro Berkson** begins at 6:15 PM for Symphony Association members.

General public admitted at approx. 6:50 PM.

Post-Concert Meet the Performers

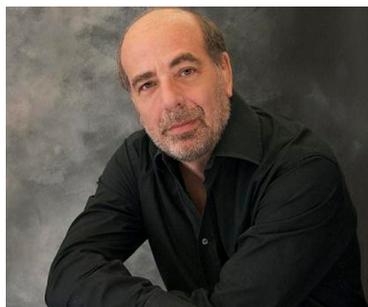
After the concert, the audience is invited to remain in the auditorium and meet informally with our conductor, Gary Berkson, and with our soloist. The artists may make a few remarks about the performance, and then the audience will have an opportunity to ask questions. Please call our office at 310-544-0320 if you have any questions about this event.

Spring Melodies are in Full Bloom

It's springtime, and the Peninsula Symphony's musical activities are in full bloom, with the Edith Knox Young Artists Performance Competition Finals on April 19 and the third symphony concert of the season on May 3.

The February 22, 2015 concert at Redondo Union High School auditorium continued to excite our audiences. The next concert, named "*From Russia, With Love*," featuring Los Angeles-based pianist Robert Thies, is on Sunday, May 3, 2015, at 7:00 PM at Redondo Union High School auditorium. Symphony Association members are invited to the always-engaging pre-concert lecture beginning at 6:15 PM. All concert attendees are invited to remain after the concert for a short, informal talk and then a question-and-answer session with both Maestro Berkson and Robert Thies.

This edition of ***Symphony Sounds*** includes short previews of the pieces that will be performed on May 3, a profile of our guest artist, an article on our February 22 concert, and various symphony events since that date plus a short tutorial on different musical tempi.



Maestro Gary Berkson is currently in his sixth season as Music Director and Conductor of the Peninsula Symphony.

Music Preview (Please see the 2014-2015 Program Book that is distributed at all concerts for more detailed program notes.)

Russian Funeral

Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)

Written in 1936, the seven-minute piece, *Russian Funeral*, will provide an opportunity for many Peninsula Symphony concertgoers to hear a composition for the first time. It is scored for just brass and percussion – no strings or woodwinds. Britten referred to his piece as “War and Death.” The main theme is a Russian funeral song, and a march section provides some contrast. The piece was premiered in London in 1936. After that, it was not published or performed until 1980.

Benjamin Britten was a twentieth-century British composer, conductor, and pianist. He studied at the Royal College of Music in London, and his first taste of fame was with the opera *Peter Grimes* in 1945. He wrote fifteen operas in all. Britten was also interested in writing music for children and amateur performers. He performed and recorded many of his own compositions.

Concerto No. 3 for Piano and Orchestra in C major, Opus 26

Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953)

Prokofiev began collecting thematic material during a ten-year period before incorporating some of it into his Concerto No. 3 for Piano and Orchestra in C major, Opus 26. The concerto was completed in 1921, and the composer was soloist with the Chicago Symphony at its premiere performance. Prokofiev personally made the first recording of the concerto, collaborating as soloist with the London Symphony in 1932. It is the only concerto that Prokofiev recorded himself.

Each of the three movements is approximately nine minutes in length. The piano part is virtuosic, and the orchestra has a greater role than in some of the other concerti where it is just “accompaniment.”

Sergei Prokofiev was born in Russia and graduated from the St. Petersburg Conservatory. A pianist, composer, and

conductor, he moved to San Francisco in 1918 following the Russian Revolution, but he lived there only a short time. He completed his Third Piano Concerto in 1921 while living in France. In 1936 he returned to Russia permanently.

The Peninsula Symphony performed another Prokofiev work, his popular *Peter and the Wolf*, in 2011, with Gail Eichenthal as narrator.

Symphony No. 2 in C minor, Opus 17 (“Little Russian”)

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)

Tchaikovsky’s Symphony No. 2 in C minor, Opus 17 (“Little Russian”), was composed in 1872 while the composer was on summer vacation in Ukraine. The symphony incorporates three Ukrainian folk songs - hence, the nickname - because at the time Ukraine was often called “Little Russia.” It was premiered in Moscow in 1873. Although the performance was a success, Tchaikovsky elected to make several revisions in 1879-80, and the revised premiere was in St. Petersburg in 1881.

The first movement begins with the principal horn playing a variant of the folk song “Down by Mother Volga.” The second movement was initially written as a bridal march for an unpublished opera, and it includes the folk song “Spin, O My Spinner.” Although the third movement doesn’t have any actual folk songs, Tchaikovsky maintains the folk character. The finale begins with a fanfare and then incorporates the folk song “The Crane,” with several variations.

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky was born in 1840, and he was one of the first graduates of the St. Petersburg Conservatory. His study of Western European music enabled him to incorporate both Russian and Western elements into his compositions. This caused some mixed critical opinions at home, but his music was successful with audiences worldwide. His personal life was not as happy, as he had many personal crises and suffered from depression.

Tchaikovsky’s music is a favorite with Peninsula Symphony audiences. The most recent performance was selections from *Swan Lake* last November.

Soloist – Robert Thies, Piano

Robert Thies, a New Jersey native, was raised in Palos Verdes and currently resides in the Los Angeles area. He is on the faculty at the Colburn School of Performing Arts in downtown Los Angeles.

Thies performed as soloist with the Peninsula Symphony in 1997 and again in October, 2008, when he played Ravel's Concerto for Piano and Orchestra in G major. In addition, he volunteered as guest performer in a salon fundraising event.

Thies' international reputation as a top pianist was assured in 1995 when he won the Gold Medal at the Second International Prokofiev Competition in St. Petersburg. Prior to that win, Van Cliburn had been the only American pianist to win first prize in a major Russian piano competition, and Van Cliburn's win was thirty-seven years earlier.

Thies is a very active performer, and his 2014-2015 season includes recitals, chamber music concerts, coaching, and lecturing. He is scheduled to play concertos with the Santa Cecilia Orchestra, the Des Moines Symphony, and the Louisville Orchestra, in addition to his engagement with the Peninsula Symphony. He is also planning to record violin and piano music of Ravel and Messiaen and piano music of Gernot Wolfgang.



Robert Thies, a Steinway artist, and former Palos Verdes resident, will perform Prokofiev's Concerto No. 3 for Piano and Orchestra in C major, Opus 26 with the Peninsula Symphony on Sunday, May 3.

Past Events

Second Concert on February 22, 2015

The second regular concert of the 2014-2015 season, entitled "Czech-Mate," featured Andrew Sords as violin soloist playing Dvořák's Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in A minor, Opus 53. The music lovers who ventured out on a rainy Academy Awards evening received a real treat.

The evening began with Maestro Berkson's pre-concert lecture. He made extensive use of the piano to demonstrate certain aspects of "The Moldau" that we should listen for, such as icicles dropping at the beginning of the piece, a wedding ceremony, white-water rafting, moonlight, and the river's arrival in Prague.

Following the lecture, the first piece in the concert was Smetana's "The Moldau," from *Má Vlast*. Earlier, Berkson had characterized this piece as "cinematic – you can follow everything that happens." The orchestra employed a full set of dynamic contrasts in the characterization of the rapids.

Mozart has long been a Peninsula Symphony audience favorite, and the Symphony No. 38 in D major, K. 504 ("Prague") did not disappoint. Following a slow introduction that suggested many different keys, the Allegro was a full confirmation of the key of D major. The finale went at lightning speed, and more than a few "Bravos" were heard at its conclusion.

Following intermission, Andrew Sords played the Dvořák violin concerto. This work is not performed frequently, but it is a beautiful piece. The first movement is the heaviest musically, in the key of A minor, with full orchestration. The second movement is lyrical. The third movement is light and somewhat playful. After a couple curtain calls, Mr. Sords played an encore, *Souvenir d'Amérique*, Opus 17, an 1843 work by Belgian Henri Vieuxtemps, composed at age 23 while on a concert tour in the United States. This piece consists of variations on "Yankee Doodle," and employs several crowd-pleasing violin techniques, including rapid-fire harmonics.



Berkson leads the orchestra at its February 22, 2015 concert.



Andrew Sords performing the Dvořák violin concerto.

Post-Concert Meet the Performers

Audience members were invited to meet informally with Maestro Berkson and soloist Andrew Sords in the auditorium following the performance. Sords was asked about his practice habits as a child, and he indicated that, like most kids, he did not like to practice and preferred reading his *Hardy Boys* books. He became more serious after attending a summer arts camp at Interlochen, Michigan when he was eleven, and he saw how advanced some of the other young musicians were.

Another audience member commented that Sords and Concertmaster Rebecca Rutkowski seemed to be having a good time during the third movement of the Dvořák, and the response was that, "Yes, music is supposed to be fun!"



Maestro Berkson, soloist Andrew Sords, and Symphony Association President John Williams during the post-concert "Meet the Performers" session.

Event for Special Supporters of the Symphony

Each year Peninsula Symphony members at the Founder level and above (\$500+) are invited to a special evening musical event with Maestro Berkson. Last year we were treated to excerpts from each of this year's concerts in a piano four-hands format. The prior year, attendees received a short lesson in conducting technique from the Maestro. This year, retired symphony violinist Dorothy Lay and her husband Allen invited the members to their Rolling Hills home on March 19 for "Under the Ink."

The journey from paper to performance is not a simple one. Maestro Berkson and the approximately thirty attendees explored the process of giving life to the printed page. Berkson explained that music is *not* the notes written on the pages of scores, but these symbols are just a script that musicians can decode to produce music. Using the piano to illustrate examples of songs by Schubert and Brahms, symphonies by Mozart and Tchaikovsky, and "The Moldau" by Smetana, he led the audience through the painstaking process of interpreting the code.

In addition to the actual coded notes, scores often include indications of rhythm (tempo, meter, syncopation) and dynamics (loud, soft, crescendo). Even when the score contains detailed markings, a performer must still interpret further. For example, just how loud should it be played if there is a marking of *ff* (*fortissimo*) or how fast if marked *allegro*? There are considerations such as style, mood, intentions of the composer, and others that must be included in the final interpretation leading to the performance of a piece of music.

Following the lecture/demonstration, there was ample time for the guests to socialize and chat with Maestro Berkson and to enjoy the delicious array of desserts.

Thanks to Mona Gifford, Inga Liden and Dorothy Lay for organizing this fun event.

2015 Edith Knox Young Artists Performance Competition

The seventeen entrants in the 2015 competition ranged from age 12 to 24. Preliminaries were held Saturday, February 7 at Harbor College. Each contestant performed, from memory, a work for solo instrument and orchestra in its entirety from the standard repertoire.

For the first time, Symphony Association members at the level of Benefactor and above were invited to attend the preliminary competition. Parents and teachers were permitted to hear their children and students but not the other competitors.

The panel of three judges selected five individuals to perform in the competition finals in Redondo Beach on Sunday, April 19. All finalists will receive cash prizes following their Redondo Beach performances. Symphony Association members and the general public are invited to this Young Artists' Showcase.

A special edition of ***Symphony Sounds*** was sent to all Peninsula Association members in early April. This May 3 concert issue of ***Symphony Sounds*** went to the printer before we had the results of the competition, so we will report on the results in our June 21 concert

edition. The names of the finalists, short excerpts from their preliminary auditions, and more information on the competition and prior winners can be found on the Symphony's website at www.pensym.org. A special thanks to Bruce Erickson for filming and producing the excerpts from the preliminary competition.

General Meeting of the Peninsula Symphony Association

The Symphony Association's annual meeting was held Monday, March 23, 2015.

The primary item of business was the election of new Board members for the 2015-2016 term that begins July 1, 2015. The nominating committee presented two proposed new candidates, Dale Korman and Sophia Momand, and both were accepted by acclamation.

Carol Schamp was once again the chair of the nominating committee. Members who are interested in serving on the Board in the future are encouraged to contact the Symphony Association office, and your request will be forwarded to Ms. Schamp. The standard Board term is three years.

Meet a Community Player

Symphony Sounds continues its new column called "Meet a Community Player." Approximately half of the Symphony musicians are community players who attend weekly rehearsals for the joy of making music with their colleagues. Many were music majors who moved to careers in other fields. All have interesting stories to tell. The last issue highlighted cellist Sophia Momand. This issue features Dr. Claudia Medl-Rilling, a violinist.

Languages came naturally to Claudia. She was born in Germany, and grew up speaking German. At age five, her family moved to Turkey where she learned Turkish, and taught herself to play the recorder. At age eleven, Claudia learned English and took up the violin. A music career was strongly discouraged by her family, so Claudia attended the University in Heidelberg to study medicine, Cleveland Chiropractic College, and Southwestern Law School. She is the author of several health-

through-nutrition books: *Obesity Appetite and Endocrine Disruptors*; *The Cure*; *Codon 356*; and soon-to-be published, *The Champagne Diet*. Claudia has been playing violin with the Peninsula Symphony for thirty-one years. Without a formal music education, she says she struggled with sight-reading and timing. “Then a very lucky thing happened: Gary Berkson was chosen to be conductor. Now every Tuesday is a private music lesson. Gary knows music inside and out, and he has the ability to make each musician want to improve. Just like a great sports coach, Gary connects with each player and teaches them how perform.”

“Playing the violin with two symphonies, PV and Beach Cities, and joining the Corelli ensemble started by Sophia Momand is life-enhancing. With music, life has direction and purpose. Playing music is not just about pitch and timing, but also making a connection with the other players. Like a good team, a joint effort is mandatory to get a cohesive sound.”

Claudia also likes to paint impressionist oils, portraits, landscapes, and still-lives. She is a twenty-year docent at the Getty Museum where she gives architecture, garden and gallery tours.

Claudia has two grown children. Her husband owns a cattle ranch, where Claudia enjoys landscaping, collecting bones and rocks, and watching the baby cows. She also likes to be immersed in some remodeling project. Currently she is creating a mosaic-tile pool with a musical theme.



Future Event

Concert IV The Norris Foundation Concert June 21, 2015 at 7:00 PM *Brave New World* 2015 Edith Knox Young Artists Competition Winner Soloist

Sousa	<i>The Dwellers in the Western World</i>
TBA	Concerto performed by the Knox Competition winner
Dvořák	Symphony No. 9 in E minor, Opus 95 (“From the New World”)

Are Music Tempi Confusing?

Many of the movements of classical and romantic symphonies, concerti, and other pieces include tempo markings, such as *allegro* or *andante*. Have you ever wondered what these words mean? Most of the tempi are Italian words, although German, French and other languages are also used.

The word *tempo* (plural: *tempi*) means “time” in Italian, and it is the speed of a section of music. There is often a numerical marking of beats per minute (BPM), in addition to the descriptive word(s). For example, *andante* (♩ = 85) means the piece is intended to be played at a walking pace, with 85 quarte-notes (beats) per minute. *Allegro* (♩ = 120) indicates fast, quick, and bright, with about 120 beats per minute, or two per second, like a quick walk.

Once the initial tempo or speed is established, it can be changed. There are various words used to modify the speed, with *ritardando* and *accelerando* being the most common. The former indicates a gradual slowing down, and the latter is a gradual speeding up. The words *a tempo* indicate a return to the previous tempo.

Here are some of the more common Italian tempo markings, along with a short description

and a rough guideline for the number of beats per minute. They are arranged from slowest to fastest.

Larghissimo – very, very slow (<24 BPM)

Lento – slowly (45-50 BPM)

Largo – broadly (50-55 BPM)

Adagio – slow and stately (60-72 BPM)

Andante – at a walking pace (84-90 BPM)

Moderato – moderately (96-108 BPM)

Allegro – fast, quick, bright (120-128 BPM)

Vivace – lively and fast (132-144 BPM)

Presto – extremely fast (168-200 BPM)

Prestissimo – faster than *Presto* (>200 BPM)

Buy Groceries, Dine at Restaurants, Shop, and Support the Symphony!

The two programs below were introduced to Peninsula Symphony Association members in the last edition of ***Symphony Sounds***. However, some of you may not have seen that article, or may have deferred action. Maybe you would like to consider signing up now. It only takes a few minutes to do so, and it doesn't cost you anything extra. The past few seasons the symphony has run at a fiscal deficit, and this is one new way to generate additional funds.

• **Ralphs Community Contributions Program**

The Peninsula Symphony is now a participant in Ralphs Community Contributions Program. Participants pay nothing; Ralphs will donate between 1% and 4% of your eligible purchases, based on a sliding scale. Simply register your Ralphs Rewards card online at **www.ralphs.com** in order to link it to the Peninsula Symphony Association. Then every time you shop for groceries at Ralphs and swipe your card, the Peninsula Symphony will automatically receive a donation. You should see the following note at the bottom of your Ralphs receipt, "At your request, Ralphs is donating to the Peninsula Symphony Association." Ralphs will not share your personal information with anyone.

Some of you may already be signed up for this program with other charitable organizations. Ralphs only allows its rewards card to be linked to one organization at a time. However, you

may switch your linkage periodically to benefit another organization.

• **eScrip Program**

The Peninsula Symphony is also a new participant in the eScrip program. This is a well-established program in use across the country. As with the Ralphs program, participants pay nothing; merchants such as Vons, Pavilions, Bristol Farms, and Hof's Hut will donate a percentage of your eligible purchases. Register your cards online at www.eScrip.com in order to link them to the Peninsula Symphony Association. Vons has its own loyalty card that needs to be enrolled; most other stores and restaurants require your enrolling the credit card that you will use to make your purchases. Some of you may already be signed up for this program with other charitable organizations. eScrip allows your card(s) to be linked to up to three organizations at a time, so please consider adding the Peninsula Symphony Association. Vons and Pavilions purchases need to be paid via cash, gift cards or debit cards to generate the donations.

Enjoy the Next Concert!

From Russia, With Love
Robert Thies, piano

Sunday, May 3, 2015 at 7:00 PM
Redondo Union High School Auditorium
222 North Pacific Coast Highway
Redondo Beach, CA 90277



Post Office Box 2602
Palos Verdes Peninsula, CA 90274

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Contact Information

Any questions or requests about the Peninsula Symphony, the Peninsula Symphony Association or ***Symphony Sounds*** 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 AM to noon on Monday 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 also e-mail us at music.pensym@verizon.net. General information about the Symphony (current season schedule, maps and directions, etc.) can be found on our website (www.pensym.org).

Other contacts are:

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