

PENINSULA *symphony*

Symphony Sounds

February 2012

45th Season, Number 2

Editor: Kenneth Gash

Concert II

Sunday, February 19, 2012, 7:00 p.m.

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

PROGRAM

Immortal Beloved

Mendelssohn **Wedding March from A
Midsummer Night's Dream**

Beethoven **Violin Concerto in D Major**
Sean Lee, Soloist

Goldmark **Rustic Wedding
Symphony**

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 with our soloist, Sean Lee. 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.

Judging from the title Maestro Berkson has given his second concert of his third season as Music Director of the Peninsula Symphony Orchestra, we will be in store for a very romantic program. Clearly weddings, which often begin with *Dearly beloved...*, are romantic but how does Gary fit a violin concerto into his concert theme? Our Maestro's program titles are always provocative and we eagerly await his pre-concert lecture during which he will explain all with his usual skillfulness and wit.



Maestro Berkson conducting Vaughan Williams. Photo by Lorenzo Locsin

Look forward to an evening of music, some which is familiar and some possibly new to our ears, but all wonderfully appealing.

Music Preview

All of the music for this concert was composed in the nineteenth century which is generally classified as the Romantic period. Romantic music evolved from the musical ideas established in earlier periods, such as the Classical period. Romanticism does not necessarily refer to romantic love, though that theme was prevalent in many works composed during this time period. The music is characterized by a freedom in form and design and a more intense personal expression of emotion with an emphasis on lyrical, songlike melodies and richer harmonies.

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)



The first piece on the program should be instantly recognized by everyone in the audience. I wonder how many people are also aware that the music was composed by Mendelssohn as an entr'acte to

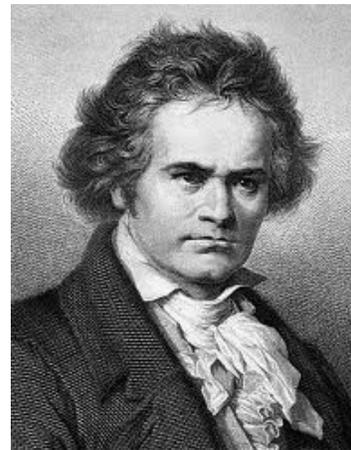
the last act of the incidental music for Shakespeare's comedy *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Mendelssohn has been called *The Gentle Genius* whose artistic precocity was recognized at a very early age. He showed the true talent of a prodigy - excelling in music performance and composition, painting (during his life he produced more than 300 serious art works), and languages. When he was sixteen, he composed his extraordinary *Octet for Strings* about which one annotator said "the sixteen-year old Mendelssohn's creative voice had attained a level of maturity and invention that exceeded that of any prodigy before him, including Mozart."

The following year, he composed the remarkable Overture to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in which (at seventeen!) he created a musical language and expression unlike any that had come before. It was the first concert overture or tone poem which portrayed a literary work, or story, or place. This very Romantic musical form became very popular in the nineteenth century through composers like Tchaikovsky and Liszt and Mendelssohn's teenage work started it all.

Sixteen years later Mendelssohn was asked to write incidental music for Shakespeare's play and Mendelssohn was able to capture the mood established by his youthful overture and expand it into an entirely appropriate set of pieces to accompany this fanciful story about fairies and elves.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)



It is well known that Beethoven's life was filled with tragedy, starting with an unhappy childhood (a brutal and drunken father) and ending in deafness that ultimately left him unable to even hear his own compositions

performed. Alas, his love life was also quite unhappy. He fell in love many times and most of the time his love was unrequited. In July of 1812 he wrote (but apparently never sent) a ten-page love letter to someone only identified as *Immortal Beloved*. Who that person was has never been determined, although Beethoven scholars have identified at least five candidates. A sixth candidate was put forward in a 1994 film (*Immortal Beloved*) starring Gary Oldman.

Nineteenth century music lovers viewed Beethoven as their ideal of a heroic artist who was able to triumph over the restraints

of social conventions. According to one annotator his violin concerto has “a hauntingly poetic and subjective quality which is the essence of Romanticism.” The second movement particularly is one of complete serenity, poise and simplicity and the soloist is given space to soar and sing some of the most lyrical music ever penned by Beethoven.

Carl Goldmark (1830-1915)



Not all weddings are formal affairs as composer Karl Goldmark proved in his *Rustic Wedding Symphony*. Filled with folk-like idioms, this

romantic symphony is a hidden gem of the repertoire. Goldmark takes the listener to the countryside where his lilting melodies are ideal for a pastoral wedding.

Goldmark was once among the most important composers in Europe and America during the latter half of the nineteenth century. His music is filled with captivating melodies and lush, romantic scores.

Once a staple of the symphonic repertory a generation or two ago, this work has fallen somewhat out of fashion. The Boston Symphony, to take a single example, performed it on seven occasions between 1885 and 1909 but not once in the hundred plus years since. Nevertheless, with its spirit of simple joy and enchantment, it remains a wonderful audience pleaser.

Musical tastes come and go but isn't it nice that we can still enjoy our “old-fashioned” music through recordings and even downloads.

Sean Lee



Many of our long-time concert goers will remember the evening of June 19, 2005, when a seventeen-year old young man stepped onto the stage and performed one of the most formidable concertos in the violin repertoire -- the Brahms Violin Concerto. His name was Sean Lee, the 2005 winner of the Edith Knox Performance Competition.

Now a mature twenty-four, Sean returns to the Peninsula Symphony Orchestra to perform another concerto in the group of four which are considered to be the greatest German violin concertos - the Beethoven Violin Concerto. Beethoven did not write any cadenzas for his concerto but almost sixty have been written by others. Sean has chosen to use the cadenzas written by Fritz Kreisler which he will play on his 1728 Antonius Stradivarius on loan from the Juilliard School.

In the years between his visits to us, he has been extremely busy. Very soon after his 2005 performance, Sean entered the Juilliard School to complete both the Bachelor and Master of Music degrees. During this time he performed dozens of concerts, recitals and chamber music projects as well as teaching under the tutelage of famed violinist Itzhak Perlman. Sean Lee's recording of the Strauss Violin Sonata with pianist Sean

Chen will be released by EMI Classics in March 2012.

Sean was born and raised in Southern California and he now resides in New York, where he lives with his brother. When he's not teaching at Julliard or on a concert or recital trip, he finds time for amateur photography. He who especially enjoys taking photographs with cameras that are older than he is and processing the film in his darkroom.

Past Events: First Concert

The first concert of Maestro Berkson's third season was entitled "Rule Britannia." It opened with a waltz by Johann Strauss, Sr. which included several very recognizable British tunes. This was followed by the Walton Viola Concerto beautifully played by Brett Deubner. After intermission, Gary led the orchestra in Symphony No. 5 by Ralph Vaughan Williams.



BRETT DEUBNER AT NOVEMBER 2011 CONCERT (Photo by Lorenzo Locsin)

During his opening remarks, Gary was as informative and humorous as usual but he also told us of his particular affection for the Vaughan Williams symphony. The orchestra played with precision and clarity that matched Gary's enthusiasm for the music.

After the performance Symphony members at the Patron level and above attended a reception for Gary and Brett Deubner at the Rolling Hills home of Marion Ruth.

Join our Symphony Team - Become a Volunteer

The Symphony Association could not function without the help of volunteers. There are many opportunities for you to use your talents. Some examples are helping us with mailings, ushering, intermission refreshments, receptions, the membership campaign, pre-concert set up, and maintaining files. This is only a partial list, but it shows the diversity of tasks that must be done. If you have any questions or are ready to become a volunteer, please contact Marion Ruth, Concerts Committee Chair, (310) 541-4144.

Matching Gift Programs Membership contributions also qualify for employer matching gift programs. Call the Peninsula Symphony Association office for details.

2011 - 2012 Schedule

All regular concerts are held at:
Rolling Hills Covenant Church
2222 Palos Verdes Drive North
Rolling Hills Estates

Young Artists Showcase

April 15, 2012, 2 p.m.

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 17 concert.

Admission is free. Join us and bring the family.

Concert III
Awakening Emotions
April 29, 2012, 7 p.m.

Ives Symphony No. 2
 Brahms Piano Concerto No. 2
Esther Keel, Soloist

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

Fauré *Pavane*
 TBA Concerto chosen by
 winner of the Knox
 Competition
 Debussy *Syrinx*
 Debussy *La Mer*

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

An afternoon of familiar (and not so familiar) music to be chosen by our distinguished Guest Conductor, Wayne Abravanel.

Friends of the Peninsula Symphony

The *Friends* have a full schedule of events for this concert season, several of which have already taken place. Our membership party at the Palos Verdes Interpretive Center followed the theme of the first concert "Rule Britannia." Tasty bits of sweet and savory British fare was served while guests were entertained by folklorist Paul Tracy. A special thanks to the Whale and Ale of San Pedro which donated prizes for the drawing.



Our January salon, "Immortal Beloved" featured Stephanie Ng, winner of the Edith Knox competition last spring. She played a full recital of Beethoven and Schumann and the audience was thrilled to hear her in her pre-audition performance for graduate school. Lenita and David Witherspoon of Palos Verdes Estates hosted the event. Guests enjoyed a champagne toast before the performance and delicious desserts afterwards.



Stephanie Ng receiving the applause of the audience.



Friends Chair Mona Gifford, and hosts David and Lenita Witherspoon with Stephanie Ng.

The *Celebrate Mozart* programs were given in ten Palos Verdes elementary schools in January. For the first time this year, first-grade children were included with the second-graders. You can see by the photo how engaged the children were in the performance.



Flutist Pat Maki demonstrating her instrument. Photo by Nancy Wilcox.

The mission of the *Friends* is to raise funds for the Peninsula Symphony Association, to encourage membership in the Association, and to promote music education in the schools and appreciation in the community.

The *Friends* is not an exclusive group. We are enthusiastic supporters of the Peninsula Symphony and are a committee on the Symphony Board. We plan several events during the year. You can read all about our activities in the program notes and see the pictures from last year. We would like to have more members and we will be very visible in the lobby before the February 19 concert. Any member of the symphony association is invited to join. Remember, all contributions are tax-deductible.

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

General Meeting of the Peninsula Symphony Association

The Symphony Association's annual meeting is scheduled for Monday, March 26, 2011. The Board meeting begins at 7:30 p.m. and the annual membership meeting will begin at approximately 9:00 p.m. (at the conclusion of the Board meeting).

All Symphony Association members are eligible to attend either or both meetings.

The primary item of business at the annual meeting is the election of new Board members for the 2011-2012 term. The Nominating Committee will present a list of candidates. Association members attending this meeting may nominate additional candidates and may also vote. Please call the Symphony Association office (310-544-0320) if you plan on attending. This is necessary to ensure that we will have sufficient capacity for all attendees. Details about the meeting location will be given when you call.

Wish List

Our surveys indicate members prefer to have a concert with a soloist. The preferred solo instrument is the piano followed by the violin. The February concert features Sean Lee playing his 1728 Antonius Stradivarius instrument. The next concert in April will feature Esther Keel playing the Brahms Piano Concerto. Unlike Sean's violin, Esther cannot bring her piano to the auditorium and we will have to rent a concert grand piano for her performance.

It will cost the Peninsula Symphony Association **one thousand seven hundred dollars** to rent a Steinway piano, have it delivered and have it tuned twice.

This is an ideal opportunity for one of our supporters to provide a significant contribution to help defray the ever-increasing costs of bringing great music to our community.

I will be happy to answer any questions or receive any suggestions any of you may have.

Ken Gash
(310) 541-3516
kgash@cox.net.

Legacy Event for Bill Finkel

In October of 2011, Bill Finkel, one of the founders of the Peninsula Symphony Orchestra, passed away. There will be a Legacy Luncheon Honoring Bill Finkel on Sunday, March 18, 2012. It will be held in the Ner Tamid synagogue, 5721 Crestridge Road, Rancho Palos Verdes, CA 90275. This event is sponsored by the five organizations that were closest to Bill: City of Hope, Help the Homeless Help Themselves, Norris Theater, Peninsula Symphony Association, and Ner Tamid.

Many of our long-term members will remember Bill and the generous support he gave during the founding and development of our orchestra. The event is open to all and no reservations are necessary. There will be a small charge for the luncheon buffet. This memorial event is not a fund raiser, however, forms will be available at tables if attendees wish to contribute by making checks payable to one of Bill's organizations.

Further specifics, such as the time the event starts, can be obtained by calling the Symphony office at (310) 544-0320.



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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