Fall Concert of the Chapman Symphony Orchestra

Chapman Symphony Orchestra

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CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF MUSIC

presents the

Fall Concert
of the
Chapman Symphony Orchestra

Mark Laycock, Music Director and Conductor
Aaron Valdizan, Student Conductor
with
Louise Thomas, piano

Saturday, November 22, 2003 – 8:00 p.m.

Memorial Auditorium
Chapman University
Orange, California
Overture of the Season, op. 89
Tomas Svoboda
(b. 1939)

Symphony No. 2 (“Mysterious Mountain”), op. 132
I. Andante con moto
II. Double Fugue: Moderato Maestoso
III. Andante espressivo
Alan Hovhaness
(1911-2000)

Oh, Lois!
Louise Thomas, piano
Michael Daugherty
(b. 1954)

Piano Concerto No. 2 in C Minor, op. 18
I. Moderato
II. Adagio sostenuto
III. Allegro scherzando
Sergei Rachmaninoff
(1873-1943)

Intermission

Program Notes

Tomas Svoboda’s musical talents were nurtured from an early age. Though of Czechoslovakian heritage, he was born in Paris in 1939. He began piano studies at the age of three. At nine years of age, he completed his first composition, A Bird for solo piano. It was later published and is still in print. He entered the Prague Conservatory at the tender age of 14, specializing in percussion, conducting, and composition. The success of his First Symphony, completed at age 16, cemented his reputation as one of Czechoslovakia’s most important composers. His family immigrated to the United States in 1964, where he undertook graduate study at the University of Southern California. His primary teacher was Halsey Stevens. Svoboda taught composition and music theory at Portland State University in Oregon for 27 years, retiring in 1998. In addition to the First Symphony, his most popular works are those for solo piano, two piano concertos, a marimba concerto, and Overture of the Season. Composed in 1978, Overture of the Season has received over 200 performances worldwide. Defying easy categorization, the work bears many traits of minimalism, including repetition of short melodic cells, dense layering of musical elements, and static harmonic motion. Other characteristics include striking antiphonal effects between instrument groups, frequently involving metrical displacement. Though a relaxed central section delineates a clear ABA form, the underlying rhythmic pulse remains constant throughout the work.

Unlike Svoboda, Alan Hovhaness (b. 1911) garnered no parental encouragement for his musical proclivity. Referring to his teenage years, the composer said, “My family thought writing music was abnormal, so they would confiscate my music if they caught me in the act. I used to compose in the bathroom and hide the manuscripts under the bathtub.” Also an avid painter, Hovhaness preferred landscapes and other natural subjects. His first formal training in composition came in 1932 under the tutelage of Frederick Converse at the New England Conservatory of Music. He developed an affinity for the music of Jean Sibelius, later traveling to Finland to meet the composer. A lasting friendship ensued, and the Finnish master became godfather to Hovhaness’s first child. Hovhaness also felt drawn to Eastern musical styles, most notably those of Armenia (his father’s homeland) and India. His career was spent balancing and juxtaposing these opposing influences, resulting in a true “multicultural” approach long before the word became a popular term. The work bears many traits of minimalist, including repetition of short melodic cells, dense layering of musical elements, and static harmonic motion. The oboe introduces a chant-like melody to begin the central section. Harp and celesta interject dissonant arpeggios and scales derived from non-Western modes. The opening chorale returns, this time with solo trumpet intoning the melody above. Baroque contrapuntal techniques abound in the central movement, Double Fugue. The subject of the first fugue, smooth and conjunct with a single, gentle syncopation, is introduced in 5- and 7-measure phrases. Later entries, including one in inversion, are reinforced by the woodwinds. The second fugue ensues without pause. The subject begins with four-fold repetition of a nervous rhythmic motive outlining a minor third. After the initial statement, this theme is always accompanied by a counter-subject: an even-note figure which features interval expansion from a fourth to an octave. Later, the first fugue subject reappears in augmentation. The chorale textures of the symphony’s opening form the basis of the final movement. Hovhaness interpolates two contrasting sections: a dramatic con moto crescendo created by means of additive orchestration and a plaintive cantabile featuring woodwind solos and celesta and harp filigree. A stunning valedictory climax builds from the faint strains of eight solo strings.
Michael Daugherty is one of today’s most renowned American composers. His works, uniquely influenced by American pop culture, have been performed throughout the United States and Europe. Having grown up as the son of a dance-band drummer and the eldest brother of four other professional musicians, Daugherty has been engrossed in America’s musical life since birth. His unusual upbringing led him to pursue work as a keyboardist for various jazz, rock, and funk bands before he began composing orchestral music. Leaving the garage bands behind, he went on to study composition with such contemporary giants as Pierre Boulez and György Ligeti. He currently serves as Associate Professor of Composition at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

One of Daugherty’s most famous works is the Metropolis Symphony (1988-1993), a musical tribute to the Superman comics that was performed in its entirety at Carnegie Hall in 1995 by the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra under the baton of David Zinman. The Metropolis Symphony consists of five movements that each portray a character or theme from the Superman myth. **Oh, Lois!** is the fourth movement of this work and is a tribute to the Lois Lane character. This challenging piece, brazenly marked with the tempo “Faster than a speeding bullet,” contains very difficult string passages that employ non-traditional techniques such as string harmonics (a technique of creating high frequency pitches by lightly touching the string over the fingerboard) that rapidly fluctuate and slide across the instrument’s range. Other interesting musical features include sudden extreme dynamic contrasts, frequent meter changes, and the prominent use of two “flexatones” (rather comical percussion instruments that produce a “wobbling” sound when shaken) placed on opposite sides of the stage to create an exciting antiphonal effect. In his own words, the composer says: **“Oh, Lois! invokes Lois Lane, news reporter at the Daily Planet alongside Clark Kent (alias Superman). This five-minute concert for orchestra, using flexatone and whip to provide a lively polyrhythmic counterpart, alludes to a cartoon history of mishaps, screams, disasters, and, all in rapid motion.”**

Rachmaninoff began sketching his second piano concerto in the course of traveling with the great Russian bass Fyodor Chaliapin. In April 1900, the pair journeyed to Yalta, where they visited Chekhov and the composer Vasily Kalinnikov, then moved on to Italy for Chaliapin’s debut at La Scala. By July, when Rachmaninoff returned to Russia, work had begun in earnest on the new concerto. Five difficult years had passed since the completion of his last major composition, the Symphony No. 1. Devastated by the poor reception of the work (now generally attributed to an inferior performance), Rachmaninoff started an extended depression, during which time he struggled in vain to compose. Desperate, he sought the help of Dr. Nikolai Dahl, an internist with a keen interest in clinical hypnosis. Rachmaninoff began regular visits to the doctor in January. Through a combination of hypnotic suggestion and therapeutic conversation, Rachmaninoff soon regained the confidence to return to his craft. The second and third movements of the concerto were completed and performed in December of that year, and the work in its finished form debuted in November 1901. The score is dedicated “À Monsieur N. Dahl.”

The first movement, the last to be composed, begins with a sparse but effective chord progression in the solo instrument. Utilizing a pedal F in the lowest octave of the keyboard, Rachmaninoff increases dissonance—and tension—en route to the tonic key of C Minor. The orchestra enters with a simple yet passionate theme, characterized by its dark sonority and narrow range. In contrast, the second theme is more expansive, its initial ascending arpeggio exquisitely balanced by a gentle stepwise descent. The sublime second movement, a lyrical song form in E Major, luxuriates in rich, colorful harmonies and muted string timbres. The piano assumes an accompanying role through much of the movement. The animated finale, as playful as it is virtuosic, features an initial theme group in C Minor replete with syncopation and persistently propulsive rhythms. The activity gradually subsides, setting the stage for the secondary theme, a passionate, wistful melody in Bb Major. Irresistible counterpoint dominates the central development section as fragments of a fugal subject are passed between orchestral instruments and the soloist. The Coda accelerates to a thunderous conclusion in C Major.

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# Anna Komandan
Anastasia Dudar
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Violin II
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*Olga Goija
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Viola Cello
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Cello
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Brent Dickson
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Jennifer Hu
Hilka Natri
Alex Wilson

Bass
*David Weniger
James Bennett
Stan Gray
Robert Klatt
David Yokoy

Flute
*Laura Recendez
*Hiroko Yamakawa
Charla Camastro-Lee

Oboe
*Elizabeth Beeman
*Pamela Curtis
Douglas Hachiya

Trumpet
*Eric Jay
Asst.-Webster Peters
Evan Meier

Trombone
*Jeremy DelaCuadra
Lindsay Johnson
Michael Fisk

Horn
I-Aubrey Acosta
Asst.-John Acosta
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III-Piotr Sidork
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