

THE YORK SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

CONCERT PROGRAM

FIRST SUBSCRIPTION CONCERT OF THE

SEVENTY-SEVENTH SEASON

“Power & Passion”

Robert Hart Baker, Music Director

John Eaken, Concertmaster

Norman Nunamaker, Assistant Concertmaster and Assistant Conductor

Strand-Capitol Performing Arts Center

Saturday, October 10, 2009, at 8:00 PM

Grateful Appreciation to Tonight’s Concert Sponsor:

Guest Artist: DR. RICHARD KOGAN, Piano

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CARL MARIA VON WEBER *Overture to Euryanthe, Op. 81*

PETER I. TCHAIKOVSKY *Piano Concerto No. 1 in B^b Minor, Op. 23*

I. Allegro non troppo e molto maestoso – Allegro con spirito

II. Andantino semplice – Prestissimo – Tempo I

III. Allegro con fuoco

..... Dr. Richard Kogan

--- INTERMISSION ---

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN *Symphony No. 6 in F Major, Op. 68 “Pastorale”*

*I. Awakening of cheerful feeling on arriving in the country: Allegro
ma non troppo*

II. Scene by the brook: Andante molto mosso

III. Merry gathering of country-folk: Allegro

IV. Thunderstorm: Tempest: Allegro

*V. Shepherd’s song; Happy, thankful feelings after the storm:
Allegretto*

PROGRAM NOTES

Overture to Euryanthe, Op. 81

Carl Maria von Weber
(1786 – 1826)

The brilliance, spontaneity, and imaginativeness of this overture have made it a favorite in concert halls. As a result of the success of Weber's *Der Freischütz* in 1821, he was commissioned to write a new opera for the Kärnthnerthor Theater in Vienna. He was enthusiastic and began to look for a librettist and a suitable subject. According to Donald Jay Grout in his "Short History of Opera" the story for *Euryanthe* originated with Boccaccio's "Decameron" (second day, ninth story) and Shakespeare's "Cymbeline." Weber had recently met a poetess, Helmine von Chezy, at the Dresden Opera where he was a conductor. At first, the two got along well and came to an agreement to be a team for the new opera. But things did not work smoothly as the project got underway and a number of complications ensued. But the opera was completed and had its first performance at the Kärnthnerthor Theater on October 25, 1823.

Some ideas from the opera are heard in the overture. The story was to have taken place in the early twelfth century and developed around issues of Euryanthe's faithfulness to Adolar. It begins with a gallant phrase taken from a first act aria that the hero, Adolar, sings, affirming his reliance on God and his beloved Euryanthe. This is followed by a tender melody in the violins from a second act aria in which Adolar again sings of his love for and confidence in Euryanthe, "O bliss which I scarce can grasp." One of the well-known passages, sometimes cited as romantic ghost music, occurs at the beginning of the development section. After a pause, a change of key, and a change to a very slow tempo, Weber divides the violin section into four voices, muted, and very soft. It comes from a passage in the first act of the opera in which Euryanthe relates that a ghost has appeared in a funeral vault that holds the remains of a woman, Emma, who poisoned herself after her lover was killed in battle. The violins' passage is in the style of a chorale in memory of Emma's spirit. In the seventh measure of this passage, the viola section begins a very soft tremolo underlying the ethereal sound of the violins. At the end of this passage the first tempo is resumed with a further development of the opening themes.

The work is scored for 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani, and strings. YSO and Dr. Baker last performed the work on November 18, 1984.

Piano Concerto No. 1 in B^b Minor, Op. 23

Peter I. Tchaikovsky
(1840 – 1893)

IV. Allegro non troppo e molto maestoso - Allegro con spirito

V. Andantino semplice - Prestissimo - Tempo I

VI. Allegro con fuoco

The remarkable history of this piano concerto is a legend among pianists. The work received its world premiere at the Music Hall in Boston on October 25, 1875. Hans von Bülow, to whom the work is dedicated, was the pianist and Benjamin Johnson Lang the conductor. The orchestra was a freelance group with many members from the Harvard Musical Association. According to all reports, Bostonians were delighted with the concerto, the pianist, and the Boston Chickering piano. The early American newspaper, Dwight's Journal of Music, commented on, ". . .the extremely difficult, strange, wild, ultra-modern Russian Concerto. It is the composition of a young professor at the Conservatory of Moscow, a pupil of Nicolai Gregorievich Rubinstein and is dedicated to Bülow, who complimented Boston with its very first performance . . . It opens richly and the first Allegro is full of striking passages and brilliant, but sometimes bizarre, effects of instrumentation. One peculiarity is the frequent indulgence of the pianoforte in rhapsodical, cadenza-like flights of startling execution, while the orchestra waits, as it were, outside. This lends quite a bravura character to a movement which seemed also melodramatic rather than in the Classical concerto spirit . . . In the finale we had the wild Cossack fire and impetus without stint – extremely brilliant and exciting . . ." The Boston Symphony Orchestra was founded six years later and when they first played this work, it was the conductor-pianist B.J. Lang who played the piano with them.

The work begins with an impressive four-note motif sounded by the entire horn section in unison. The motif is repeated two times and moves from the key of B^b minor to D^b major. Once this dramatic introduction is accomplished, violins introduce the first theme, one of Tchaikovsky's most memorable melodies. The introduction dies away with soft sustained chords in the brass section. If Tchaikovsky was a lender of his ideas in the

introduction, he claims to have been a borrower in the main section of the movement. He said that the principal theme, a ‘hopping’ melody, was a Ukrainian folk song. More lyrical ideas are added to the hopping melody. One of a melancholy nature, serves nicely to balance or complete the hopping melody. Motives from this melodic material provide ample foundation for a brilliant cadenza that closes the movement.

The second movement begins with a melody first heard in solo flute with muted, pizzicato string accompaniment. This melody is then repeated by piano and then elaborated upon by both piano and orchestra. A fast scherzo-style middle section in a new key is based on a cabaret song "Il faut s'amuser, danser et rire" (One must amuse one's self by dancing and laughing), a favorite of a singer, Désirée Artôt, with whom Tchaikovsky had once been infatuated. The melody is heard softly in octaves by muted violas and cellos. The movement ends with a brief return to the beginning key, tempo, and melody.

The finale starts in the key of the symphony, B^b minor, with another Ukrainian folk song, "Viydi, viydi Ivanku," (Come, come Ivanku), in a fast triple meter with strongly accented syncopations on the second beat of the measure. This is part of the “wild Cossack fire’ referred to in Dwight’s Journal account. A second, more broadly lyrical theme in the violins replaces the virtuosic piano line. Attention is drawn to the new melody and style by stretching the first note of the melody. In a suddenly soft passage reminiscences of the hopping melody from the first movement appear. In a great flourish of octaves in the piano the tonality works its way to B^b major and stays there until the end. When the concerto was being heard for the first time on its 1875 American tour, audiences often became so excited by the finale that they demanded repetitions of that movement.

The United States has had a love affair with Tchaikovsky’s irresistible concerto for a long time. In 1941 bandleader Freddy Martin popularized the opening melody of the first movement with lyrics, a change of meter, and altered instrumentation as “Tonight We Love.” In the same year Hollywood produced the film, “The Great Lie,” that begins and ends with that same melody. Mary Astor won an Oscar for best supporting actress in which she melodramatically portrayed an imaginary pianist, Sandra Novak, an indomitable diva who sacrificed anything for the sake of her art. In 1958 the young Texan concert pianist, Van Cliburn, competed and won the First International Tchaikovsky Competition with this work, much to the astonishment of people worldwide, since he was an American competing in Moscow at the height of the Cold War between Russia and the United States. The concerto was used again during the final leg of the Olympic torch relay during the Opening Ceremonies of the 1980 Summer Olympics in Moscow, Soviet Union.

The work is scored for solo piano, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani, and strings. YSO and Dr. Baker last performed the work on November 15, 1997, with pianist Leonid Kuzmin.

Symphony No. 6 in F Major, Op. 68 “Pastorale”

Ludwig van Beethoven

- I. *Awakening of cheerful feeling on arriving in the country: Allegro ma non troppo* (1770 – 1827)
- II. *Scene by the brook: Andante molto mosso*
- III. *Merry gathering of country-folk: Allegro*
- IV. *Thunderstorm: Tempest: Allegro*
- V. *Shepherd’s song; Happy, thankful feelings after the storm: Allegretto*

The “Pastorale” Symphony was written during 1807 and 1808 in Heiligenstadt on the outskirts of Vienna. At the first performance in Vienna, in 1808, it was listed as “A Symphony entitled: Recollection of Country Life, in F major.” Beethoven gave the five movements their titles, virtually the same as those in a symphony for fifteen instruments called *Le Portrait musical de la nature* by the composer, Justin Hienrich Knecht (1752 – 1817), a pioneer of annotated programs. The French composer, Vincent d’Indy said that: “Nature was to Beethoven not only a consoler for his sorrows and disenchantments; she was also a friend with whom he took pleasures in familiar talk, the only intercourse to which his deafness presented no obstacle.” Beethoven himself said:

He who has ever had a notion of country life can imagine without too many descriptive words what the composer has intended. Even without a description, the whole thing, which is more an expression of feeling than a tone painting, is easy to recognize . . . How happy I am to be able to wander among bushes and herbs, under trees and over rocks. No man can love the country as I love it. Woods, trees and rocks send back the echo that man most desires.

The quiet and peaceful opening melody of the first movement prepares the listener for a leisurely and meditative walk in the country, just as Beethoven suggests. There is no introduction. The harmony and rhythm are simple enough to permit concentration on the beauties of the melody and Beethoven's somewhat playful developments of motives that especially interest him – quite in contrast to the beginning of the first movement of *Symphony No. 5*. A second slightly contrasting melody in continuous eighth notes and in a shape different from the first theme plus a brief motive for a closing idea supply the melodic materials for the movement. Variety of textures are provided through delicate changes of orchestration.

The atmosphere of the second movement is similar to that of the first. Gently rolling water of the brook is suggested by eighth note patterns in second violins, violas, and two muted cellos. The remaining cellos and basses keep the beat with pizzicato. The movement closes with specific figures for nightingale (flute), quail (oboe), and cuckoo (clarinet).

The third movement, *Peasants' Merry Making* provides a change of mood to a scherzo in triple meter, full of energetic humor. The dance music in the trio changes to duple meter. This movement makes much of the woodwinds and their unique tone colors.

The festivities of the third movement are interrupted by a storm in the fourth movement. Piccolo, trumpets, trombones, and timpani are added to increase the effects of lightning, thunder, and wind in the storm.

Calm returns to the final movement. There is a hymn in praise of God and the beauties of nature. The music settles into a peaceful radiance.

The work is scored for piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 trumpets, 2 trombones, timpani, and strings. YSO and Dr. Baker last performed this work on October 16, 1994.

Program notes by Jim Mohatt