

GENEVA CONCERTS

presents

SYRACUSE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Daniel Hege, Conductor

Peter Serkin, Piano



Thursday, October 2, 2003

8:15 PM

Smith Opera House

GENEVA CONCERTS, INC.

2003-2004 SEASON

SYRACUSE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Daniel Hege, Conductor

Peter Serkin, Piano

Barber, Beethoven, Brahms

Thursday, October 2, 2003

BALLET JÖRGEN

Coppélia

Friday, November 8, 2003

SYRACUSE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Grant Cooper, Conductor

Corey Cerovsek, Violin

Copland, Corigliano, Ravel, Tchaikovsky

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Thursday, October 2, 2003
8:15 p.m.

SYRACUSE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Daniel Hege, *Conductor*
Peter Serkin, *Piano*

Samuel Barber
1910-1981

Overture to *The School for Scandal*

Ludwig van Beethoven
1770-1827

Symphony No. 7 in A Major, Op. 92
Poco sostenuto - Vivace
Allegretto
Presto
Allegro con brio

Intermission

Johannes Brahms
1833-1897

Concerto No. 1 in D Minor for Piano
and Orchestra, Op. 15
Maestoso
Adagio
Rondo: Allegro non troppo

Mr. Serkin

Patrons are requested to silence signal watches, pagers and cell phones. The use of cameras and recording equipment is prohibited by law.

DANIEL HEGE

Music Director and Conductor



Daniel Hege is widely recognized as one of America's finest young conductors, earning critical acclaim for his fresh interpretations of the standard repertoire and for his commitment to creative programming.

Mr. Hege was named Music Director of the Syracuse Symphony Orchestra in 1999. His previous positions include Music Director of the Haddonfield Symphony (New Jersey), Associate Conductor of the Kansas City Symphony, Music Director of the Encore Chamber Orchestra in Chicago and Music Director of the Chicago Youth Symphony, where he was twice honored by the American Symphony Orchestra League for innovative programming. In June 2001, he finished a six-year tenure with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, where he held the titles of Assistant, Associate, and Resident Conductor.

Mr. Hege first began making headlines when he won a national conducting competition and became Music Director of the Young Musicians Foundation Debut Orchestra in Los Angeles. He was appointed Assistant Conductor of the Pacific Symphony Orchestra and Director of Instrumental Music for the Orange County High School of the Arts in the spring of 1991. He also served as Principal Conductor of Disney's Young Musicians Symphony Orchestra, where he worked with such artists as Henry Mancini, John Williams, Branford Marsalis, Doc Severinsen and Dudley Moore, leading concerts televised nationally by the Disney Channel to more than 50 million viewers.

Mr. Hege's guest conducting engagements include the Baltimore, Charlotte, Colorado, San Diego, North Carolina, Detroit, Houston, Phoenix, San Antonio, and Seattle symphony orchestras; the Calgary and Rochester philharmonic orchestras; and the Aspen and Grand Teton music festivals. He led the Syracuse Symphony Orchestra in Carnegie Hall in 2003.

Under the artistic leadership of Mr. Hege, the Syracuse Symphony Orchestra has released its first recordings in over 20 years: a live Classics Concert CD of works by Verdi, Barber, Debussy, Respighi, and James Johnson, released in 2000, and the SSO's latest release, Holiday Pops.

PETER SERKIN

Piano



Peter Serkin's musical heritage extends back several generations. His father was famed pianist Rudolf Serkin, and his grandfather was violinist/composer Adolf Busch. In 1958, at age 11, the younger Serkin entered the Curtis Institute of Music, where he studied with Lee Luvisi, Mieczyslaw Horszowski, and Rudolf Serkin. He later studied with Ernst Oster, Marcel Moyse and Karl Ulrich Schnabel.

Mr. Serkin made his Marlboro Music Festival and New York City debuts with conductor Alexander Schneider in 1959 and was subsequently engaged for concerto performances with Eugene Ormandy and George Szell. He has since performed with the world's major symphony orchestras and played chamber music with Yo-Yo Ma, the Budapest String Quartet, Guarneri String Quartet, Orion String Quartet and TASHI, of which he was a founding member. He was the first pianist to receive the Premio Internazionale Musicale Chigiana for outstanding artistic achievement.

The celebrated Japanese composer Toru Takemitsu wrote seven works for Mr. Serkin, including three works with orchestra, a solo piano piece, and several chamber works. In 1980, the pianist premiered Peter Lieberon's First Piano Concerto with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and in 1982 he performed the world premiere of the composer's King Gesar with Yo-Yo Ma and Emanuel Ax—a project recorded for Sony Classical. Serkin's landmark 1989-90 recital program featured 11 commissions from ten composers.

Mr. Serkin's rendition of the six Mozart concertos composed in 1784 was nominated for a Grammy and received the Deutsche Schallplatten Prize. The album was selected "Best Recording of the Year" and one of the best recordings of the past two decades by *Stereo Review*. Other Grammy-nominated albums include Messiaen's *Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant Jesus* and *Quartet for the End of Time*, and a solo recording of works by Stravinsky, Wolpe, and Lieberon.

In 2001, Mr. Serkin received an Honorary Doctoral Degree from the New England Conservatory of Music. He lives in Massachusetts with his wife Regina, and is the father of five children.

OVERTURE TO THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL

Samuel Barber (1910–1981)

Samuel Barber, the 20th century composer, and Richard Brinsley Sheridan, the 18th century English dramatist and politician, come together in Barber's work, with the young composer's musical encapsulation of the playwright's satirical comedy of manners, *The School for Scandal*. Sheridan's play is a work of biting humor, which exposes the foibles of supposedly polite society in 18th century London. Barber's Overture summarizes the moods of the play rather effectively, with a bright rhythmically alert theme at the outset, followed by breezy woodwinds, and a lovely lyrical melody for oboe. We hear all these themes again after a middle section which might well be the musical equivalent of the farcical proceedings that lead to the public exposure of the smarmy Joseph Surface.

Indeed, we may wish to hear whom we will in the music as it races along—Lady Sneerwell, Sir Peter Teazle, Sir Benjamin Backbite, Mrs. Candour and the rest, all of whose names are obvious references to unfortunate dominant character traits—while the songlike oboe tune may well remind us of Maria and her devotion to the misunderstood Charles Surface. True love wins in the end of course, and throughout, Barber's cheerful Overture briskly captures something of the spirit of Sheridan's sharp and brilliant wit. No doubt the Curtis Institute, where Barber was a student, took note of the inventiveness and imagination at work in this piece. With or without Sheridan, it is well able to hold its own in the concert hall.

SYMPHONY NO. 7 IN A MAJOR, OP. 92

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

First Movement. Beethoven's spacious introductory section is quite remarkable in combining a sense of grandeur and lightness, and veers gently into the vibrant lilting theme, which dominates from here on. Buoyed by the sheer rhythmic energy underpinning it, this joyous theme presses its vigorous way forward with some interesting developments along the way. The coda, which utilizes the theme's opening phrase, involves an exciting crescendo above those rolling basses, which had provoked Weber's skeptical remark about Beethoven's sanity. The music builds inexorably from its mysterious, hushed beginnings to the forthright flourishes from the horns, which conclude the movement.

Second Movement. The Allegretto is one of Beethoven's most memorably haunting movements, and again (after an ambiguous opening chord) it is the rhythm which seems to act as the motivating power behind all else that occurs: the main theme itself, so close to being somber and funereal, yet detached, constrained and thoughtful; the lovely variations the strings weave around it; and later on (after the middle section), the marvelously sustained fugal writing in the hushed strings. Even when the hypnotic rhythm changes to steady gentle triplets during the middle section, just after the clarinets and bassoons have announced a new theme which seems so full of solace, we still feel the presiding power of the rhythmic pulse.

Third Movement. An exuberant upbeat spirit returns with this Scherzo. The scherzo theme itself is full of delightful interplay between strings and winds, sometimes robustly energetic sometimes lighthearted, with Beethoven using his middle trio section as a kind of restraining device. Here, to coin an oxymoron, Beethoven creates static motion, as in a chandelier that swings within limits from its fixed position in the ceiling.

Fourth Movement. The Finale foregoes all restraint. Abrupt opening chords ignite the rhythmic fuel, the principal theme's enormous energy in part deriving from the accents given to the third and fourth quarter-notes in the measure. This leads spontaneously into a second theme, which the French horns, then the strings, proclaim with joyous abandon. The third theme calms things down a little with its infectious, skipping lilt; but only a little and not for long. Those ignition chords, heard at the outset, spark off a few faulty starts at the beginning of the development section, but once into the recapitulation there's no holding back: This is passionate Dionysian energy at its most exhilarating.

CONCERTO NO. 1 IN D MINOR FOR PIANO AND ORCHESTRA, OP. 15 Johannes Brahms (1833–1897)

The D Minor Concerto is an extremely dramatic work, fraught with extra-musical implications. It also marks a turning point in Brahms' career both emotionally and musically. The work was born out of an inner struggle that occupied Brahms' youthful energies for nearly five years. It began with the tragedy of another composer, Robert Schumann. On February 27, 1854, Schumann attempted to take his life by throwing himself into the River Rhine and, although rescued, he remained mentally incapacitated for the rest of his life. Some months previous to this event the

young Brahms had become a close friend of the Schumanns. Both Robert and Clara were very fond of him and encouraged his talent as a composer.

The older composer's attempted suicide, followed by his insanity and early death in an asylum, came as a profound shock to Brahms. In a sense he never fully recovered from it. But before he built about himself that armor of stoicism, which henceforth would hold his emotions in check, he gave vent to his grief in one great musical outpouring, the D minor Piano Concerto.

Complicating the distressing situation was the internal conflict occasioned by Brahms' feelings for Clara. He had faithfully supported Clara by taking the burden of all kinds of tiresome business off her shoulders during the time of her husband's illness. Such heartfelt devotion for both Robert and Clara, however, amounted to more than just friendly affection in the case of Brahms' feelings for Clara. Fourteen years older than he, she always maintained the closest of friendships with the younger composer, but the question of marriage, once raised, was shelved and never reopened. The first movement of the Concerto may be viewed as an expression of Brahms' tormented reaction to Schumann's breakdown and his own confused feelings for Clara. The eruptive opening and subsequent frenzied measures are enough to suggest the deep wound. Yet, as is often the case with Brahms, there is also a glimmer of light, a hopeful ray that shines hesitantly from the orchestra and piano, temporarily banishing the dark turbulence.

The slow movement's romanticism is more reflective, lyrical, and with a melodic warmth that seems to be paying heartfelt tribute to both Robert and Clara Schumann.

To some, the healthy robust nature of the Rondo Finale has seemed out of keeping with the rest of the work—too brilliant and lighthearted, with its dance-like echoes of gypsy music; certainly not the natural culmination and drawing together of the emotional strands that Brahms has been wrapping around the listener in the previous movements. Assuredly, Brahms provides the pianist with a sparkling final movement, yet it is not too lighthearted or relaxed as the brilliance is contained.

"I no longer have either judgment or power over this piece," Brahms wrote about the Concerto. And no wonder. This one work had borne the burden of all his recent sorrows and frustrations, and the result in this case is a remarkable, even unique, work in the total output of Brahms' compositions.

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