



St. Louis Symphony
Orchestra

stéphane denève : music director

19:20
140th season

Edo de Waart, conductor
Joyce Yang, piano

Friday, October 4, 2019, at 10:30AM
Saturday, October 5, 2019, at 8:00PM

RACHMANINOFF

(1873–1943)

Piano Concerto No. 3 in D minor, op. 30 (1909)

Allegro ma non tanto

Intermezzo: Adagio—

Finale: Alla breve

Joyce Yang, piano

INTERMISSION

ELGAR

(1857–1934)

Symphony No. 1 in A-flat major, op. 55 (1908)

Andante. Nobilmente e semplice; Allegro

Allegro molto—

Adagio

Lento; Allegro

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The 2019/2020 Classical Series is presented by **The Steward Family Foundation** and **World Wide Technology**.

These concerts are presented by the **Thomas A. Kooyumjian Foundation**.

Edo de Waart is the **Sid and Jean Grossman Guest Conductor**.

Joyce Yang is the **Ellen Atwood Armstrong Guest Artist**.

The concert of Friday, October 4, is underwritten in part by a generous gift from **Doug and Vicki Hill**.

The concert of Saturday, October 5, is underwritten in part by a generous gift from **Mr. and Mrs. David L. Steward**.

Pre-Concert Conversations are sponsored by **Washington University Physicians**.

PROGRAM NOTES

BY PAUL SCHIAVO



SERGEI RACHMANINOFF

Born April 1, 1873, Semyonovo, Russia

Died March 28, 1943, Beverly Hills, California

Piano Concerto No. 3 in D minor, op. 30

We start with extremes of pianistic virtuosity. Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 3 originated with the Russian-born composer's first visit to the United States, which he would eventually adopt as his homeland. In accepting an invitation to undertake a concert tour in this country, Rachmaninoff agreed to compose a new piano concerto that he would perform with American orchestras. All through the spring of 1909, various obligations prevented him from working on the piece, and it was not until June that he set to work on it. The composition went smoothly, however, and the concerto was finished before the end of summer. But Rachmaninoff had not had time to learn the demanding solo part before his departure. He therefore brought a practice keyboard along on the voyage, and on this device worked to master the concerto's intricacies. This unusual method proved sufficient. Rachmaninoff played the concerto with consistent success throughout his American tour. A particularly notable performance occurred on January 16, 1910, at Carnegie Hall in New York, when the orchestra was led by Gustav Mahler.

The challenges that occupied Rachmaninoff during his trans-Atlantic crossing did not go unnoticed as the concerto became known. One of the earliest reviews of the composition noted that its "extreme difficulties bar it from performance by any but pianists of exceptional technical powers." The work has indeed become famous as an Everest for pianists, so much so that it served as an emblem for daunting pianistic challenge in *Shine*, the film about the Australian pianist David Helfgott. Apart from its obvious virtuosity, the concerto's musical character derives chiefly from two traits that inform Rachmaninoff's output as a whole: an unabashedly lush and effusive Romanticism, and a certain Russian melancholy.

The composer establishes the latter quality at the very outset of the work, with a theme given out by the piano as a spare melodic line over minimal orchestral accompaniment. The minor-mode contours of this subject suggest an old Russian song or Russian Orthodox Church chant, though Rachmaninoff insisted that it "is borrowed neither from folk song nor from liturgical sources. It simply wrote itself." A brief solo passage and orchestral interlude precede the appearance of the second subject, a warmly romantic idea announced by the piano alone. The development of these themes leads to a thunderous climax and a long, highly demanding cadenza. An abbreviated reprise of the initial subject then brings the movement to a quiet conclusion.

The ensuing Intermezzo is imbued with that peculiarly Russian melancholy Rachmaninoff expressed so well. The finale, which follows without pause, is the concerto's most spirited movement, and it provides a dazzling display of keyboard virtuosity. Rachmaninoff recalls some of the thematic ideas from the opening movement, then concludes the concerto with a soaring coda.

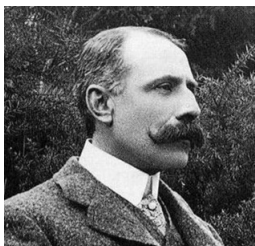
First performance: November 28, 1909, New York, Walter Damrosch conducting the New York Symphony Orchestra with the composer as soloist

SLSO premiere: January 27, 1928, Bernardino Molinari conducting with Vladimir Horowitz as soloist

Most recent SLSO performance: April 23, 2017, John Storgårds conducting with Nikolai Lugansky as soloist

Scoring: solo piano, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (bass drum, cymbals, snare drum, suspended cymbal), strings

Performance time: Approximately 39 minutes



EDWARD ELGAR

Born June 2, 1857, Broadheath, England

Died February 23, 1934, Worcester, England

Symphony No. 1 in A-flat major, op. 55

Edward Elgar was past the age of 50 and at the height of his powers when he at last produced the symphony for which his friends and admirers had long been hoping. The creative mastery that the composer now commanded had not come easily. From late adolescence, Elgar worked as a musical journeyman, teaching violin and piano, playing in local orchestras, occasionally conducting, and writing pieces for musicians in his area whenever he could. As a composer he was almost entirely self-taught, and his early musical essays were hardly distinguished. But Elgar persevered, developing assurance and skill through that most honest of methods: trial and error.

In 1898, Elgar began writing a symphony. Whether because he really felt that there was no financial justification for the endeavor or because he was not yet sufficiently confident in his handling of large-scale orchestral composition, he soon abandoned this project. But the following year, his *Enigma Variations*, symphonic in stature if not in form, was performed to great acclaim in London. The success of this piece must have removed much of Elgar's doubt as to his readiness for symphonic composition. The subsequent completion of several oratorios and some smaller orchestral pieces provided further preparation. Finally, Elgar began sketching a new symphony in the summer of 1907 and finished it in September 1908.

The premiere performance, which took place in December of the same year, in Manchester, was perhaps Elgar's greatest public triumph. The audience burst into applause after the Adagio and again at the close of the work, calling the composer repeatedly to the stage to receive their accolades. Hans Richter, the celebrated

conductor who led the performance, pronounced the piece “the greatest symphony of modern times, and not only in this country.”

The Music

Listeners who associate Elgar only with the straightforward, relatively simple music of his popular *Pomp and Circumstance* March, or even the genial musical portraits of friends and family presented in the *Enigma Variations*, may be surprised at the thoughtful construction and complex sentiments of this symphony.

Despite its considerable length, this is a tightly knit work, thanks to thematic links between the first and final movements and between the two inner movements. The most important subject appears immediately following the anticipatory drum roll of the opening measures. This melody, at once march-like and hymn-like, dominates the slow introduction of the first movement and serves as a “motto” theme for the entire symphony. Its character, aptly described by Elgar’s expression marking as “noble and simple,” is sharply contradicted by the impassioned *Allegro* that follows. Here the mood is one of agitation, despite the appearance of several lyrical subsidiary melodies. Contrast is provided mainly in two brief references to the opening motto theme during the development section, and by the triumphant return of that idea during the closing coda section.

The second movement begins as a nervous, scurrying scherzo, proceeds to a slightly sinister march passage, and arrives at a pastoral episode scored for violins, harp, and flute. These varied ideas are then juxtaposed and combined, leading without pause to the *Adagio*.

The smooth transition is no accident, for this third movement is really an extension and transformation of the second. The theme announced by the strings in the opening measures is composed of the very same notes as the running passage heard at the start of the scherzo, though its more relaxed tempo and rhythm render it almost unrecognizable as such. Deeply poignant and tender, this music is the heart of the symphony, and more than one commentator has compared its religious serenity to the great adagios of Beethoven.

The finale returns to the restless drama, and to some of the thematic material, of the symphony’s opening. Both the angular melody heard as a bass clarinet solo at the beginning of the prefatory *Lento* section and the motto theme, which soon appears in the strings, are recollections of the initial movement. As in the opening portion of the symphony, the slow introduction gives way to an intense *Allegro*. The music drives forcefully to its climax, at which point the motto theme once again appears, emerging majestically in the winds while string figures swirl ecstatically around it.

First performance: December 3, 1908, Manchester, England, Hans Richter conducting The Hallé Orchestra

SLSO premiere: February 20, 1975, Alexander Gibson conducting

Most recent SLSO performance: November 14, 2009, Sir Andrew Davis conducting

Scoring: 3 flutes (3rd doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (bass drum, cymbals, snare drum), 2 harps, strings

Performance time: Approximately 50 minutes



EDO DE WAART

Sid and Jean Grossman Guest Conductor

Music Director of the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, Edo de Waart also holds the positions of Conductor Laureate of the Antwerp Symphony Orchestra and Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra, and Music Director Laureate of Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra.

In addition to his existing posts, he was previously Music Director of the San Francisco Symphony, Minnesota Orchestra, Hong Kong Philharmonic, Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra and Sydney Symphony Orchestra, and Chief Conductor of De Nederlandse Opera.

As part of the Beethoven 250th birthday celebrations in 2020, de Waart will conduct all the composer's symphonies with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, and several Beethoven programs with the San Diego Symphony, with whom he will be joined by soloists Emmanuel Ax and Leila Josefowicz. He will make his annual appearance with the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra and return to the Chicago, Dallas, and Indianapolis Symphony orchestras. Other guest conducting highlights this season include the New Japan Philharmonic, KBS Symphony, and Hangzhou Philharmonic.

As an opera conductor, de Waart has enjoyed success in a large and varied repertoire in many of the world's greatest opera houses. He has conducted at Bayreuth, Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, Grand Théâtre de Genève, Opéra Bastille, Santa Fe Opera, and The Metropolitan Opera. With the aim of bringing opera to broader audiences where concert halls prevent full staging, he has, as Music Director in Milwaukee, Antwerp, and Hong Kong, often conducted semi-staged and opera in concert performances.

A renowned orchestral trainer, he has been involved with projects working with talented young players at the Juilliard and Colburn schools, and the Music Academy of the West in Santa Barbara.

De Waart's extensive recording catalogue encompasses releases for Philips, Virgin, EMI, Telarc and RCA. Recent recordings include Henderickx's Symphony No. 1 and Oboe Concerto, Mahler's Symphony No. 1, and Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius*, all with the Royal Flemish Philharmonic.

Beginning his career as an Assistant Conductor to Leonard Bernstein at the New York Philharmonic, de Waart returned to Holland where he was appointed Assistant Conductor to Bernard Haitink at the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra.

In 1973 he was appointed Chief Conductor and Artistic Director of the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra.

De Waart has received a number of awards for his musical achievements, including becoming a Knight in the Order of the Netherlands Lion and an Honorary Officer in the General Division of the Order of Australia. He is also an Honorary Fellow of the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts.

This weekend's concerts mark de Waart's first time returning to the SLSO since December 1979.



JOYCE YANG

Ellen Atwood Armstrong Guest Artist

Blessed with “poetic and sensitive pianism” (*Washington Post*) and a “wondrous sense of color” (*San Francisco Classical Voice*), Grammy-nominated pianist Joyce Yang captivates audiences with her virtuosity, lyricism, and interpretive sensitivity.

Born in Seoul, South Korea, Yang quickly took to piano after receiving her first lesson at age four. She has won several piano competitions, including the silver medal at the 12th Van Cliburn International Competition, as well as Best Performance of Chamber Music (with the Takács Quartet), and Best Performance of a New Work. In 2006, Yang made her New York Philharmonic debut alongside Lorin Maazel before joining the orchestra's tour of Asia, making a triumphant return to her hometown, Seoul. Yang graduated from The Juilliard School and went on to receive the school's 2010 Arthur Rubinstein Prize and 2011 William A. Petschek Piano Recital Award.

In the last decade, Yang has blossomed into an “astonishing artist” (*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*), showcasing her colorful musical personality in solo recitals and collaborations with the world's top orchestras and chamber musicians. She received the 2010 Avery Fisher Career Grant and earned her first Grammy nomination for her recording of Franck, Kurtág, Previn, and Schumann with violinist Augustin Hadelich. (“One can only sit in misty-eyed amazement at their insightful flair and spontaneity.” —*The Strad*)

Notable orchestral engagements have included the Chicago, San Francisco, Toronto, Vancouver, Sydney, Melbourne, and New Zealand Symphony Orchestras, as well as the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, Deutsches Symphonie-

Orchester Berlin, and the BBC Philharmonic. She also collaborated in a five-year Rachmaninoff concerto cycle with Edo de Waart and the Milwaukee Symphony, to which she brought “an enormous palette of colors, and tremendous emotional depth” (*Milwaukee Sentinel Journal*).

Yang is also active as a solo artist, chamber music collaborator, and recording artist. Her innovative solo recital programs have been praised as “extraordinary” and “kaleidoscopic” (*Los Angeles Times*). She has collaborated with the Guarneri, Takács, Emerson, and Pacifica String Quartets, and has fostered an enduring partnership with the Alexander String Quartet, including highly celebrated recordings of Brahms, Schumann, and Mozart Piano Quartets (“by far...the most amazing performances of Mozart’s two piano quartets that have ever graced these ears” —*Fanfare Magazine*). *International Record Review* called her recording of Tchaikovsky’s Piano Concerto No. 1 with Denmark’s Odense Symphony Orchestra “hugely enjoyable, beautifully shaped...a performance that marks her out as an enormous talent,” and *Gramophone* praised her “imaginative programming” and “beautifully atmospheric playing,” on her 2011 debut album *Collage*.

In 2019/2020, Yang shares her versatile repertoire in over 70 solo engagements, including the Dallas, Phoenix, Milwaukee, Fort Worth, and Melbourne Symphony Orchestras, among others, and presents solo recitals in Boston, St. Paul, and Rochester. An advocate of new music, she will give the world premiere performance of Jonathan Leshnoff’s Piano Concerto—written expressly for her—with the Kansas City Symphony.

Yang is passionate about introducing new audiences to classical music. She was the Guest Artistic Director for the 2018 Laguna Beach Music Festival in California, curating concerts that explore the concept of art-inspiring-art—highlighting the relationship between music, literature, and dance, while simultaneously curating outreach activities to young students. This season, Yang continues her cross-disciplinary project with the Aspen Santa Fe Ballet with performances of *Half/Cut/Split*—a “witty, brilliant exploration of Robert Schumann’s *Carnaval*” (*The Santa Fe New Mexican*) choreographed by Jorma Elo.

Yang appears in the film *In the Heart of Music*, a documentary about the 2005 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition. She is a Steinway artist.

This weekend’s concerts are Yang’s debut performances with the SLSO.

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The SLSO will not perform on the program with the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis.

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