Piano Rhapsody
Sunday, March 18, 2001 • 3:00 PM
Meany Hall
Duane Hubert, piano
Orchestra Seattle
Justin Cole, conductor
George Shangrow, conductor

MAURICE RAVEL 1875-1937
Ma Mère l’Oye
Pavane des la Belle au bois dormant
(Pavane of the Sleeping Beauty in the Woods)
Petit Poucet
(Tom Thumb)
Laideronette, Impériatrice des Pagodes
(Laideronette, Empress of the Pagodas)
Les entrées de la Belle et de la Bête
(Conversations of Beauty and the Beast)
Le jardin féerique
(The Enchanted Garden)

SERGEI RACHMANINOV 1873-1943
Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, Op. 43
Duane Hubert, piano
George Shangrow, conductor

INTERMISSION

ROBERT SCHUMANN 1810-1856
Symphony No. 4 in D minor (1841 version)
Andante con moto – Allegro molto
Romanza: Andante
Scherzo: Presto – Trio – Largo – Finale: Allegro – Presto

George Shangrow, conductor

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Use of cameras and recording equipment is not permitted in the concert hall.
PROGRAM NOTES

MAURICE RAVEL

Mélodie en forme de Bagatelle (Mother Goose)

Joseph-Maurice Ravel was born in Ciboure, Basque Pyrénées, France, on March 7, 1875, and died in Paris on December 28, 1937. He originally composed this suite for piano four-hands in September of 1908 and published the solo violin version later in 1910. Later he returned to the solo violin. In 1911, Ravel expanded the work into a ballet, the first performance of which was given on January 28, 1912 at the Théâtre des arts in Paris, under the direction of Gabriel Cot. The orchestral suite is scored for pairs of flutes (one doubling piccolo), oboes (one doubling English horn), clarinets, bassoons (one doubling contrabassoon), and horns, timpani, bass drum, triangle, tam-tam, xylophone, glockenspiel, celesta, harp, and strings.

Among Ravel’s closest acquaintances were Xavier Caryon Godebski, his wife Ida, and their two children, Mimie and Jean. Ravel would rent a room in the hotel opposite their apartment when he was in Paris, and he was a regular at the Sunday evening artistic gatherings hosted by the Godebskis. In September of 1908, Ravel composed a brief work for piano four-hands which he called Prélude à ‘Mélodie en forme de Bagatelle’, for the entertainment of the Godebski children, whose parents were vacationing in Spain. In April of 1910, he added four more pieces on fairy-tale themes to the Prélude, forming a five-piece suite that he called Mélodie en Fête (Mother Goose). At the suggestion of his publisher, Durand, Ravelorchestrated these five pieces not long after; then, at the request of the Théâtre des Arts, he expanded the music as a ballet, changing the order of the original five pieces and composing a fair amount of new material.

In the suite (the version heard this afternoon), the opening Pavane of the Sleeping Beauty is a mere 20 bars in length; its quiet but captivating evokes the initial work sleepwalks through an enchanted forest. (In the original piano piece, each of the four hands plays only a single note at a time.)

Tom Thumb relates the story of a young child who wanders through the forest in search of breadcrumbs, only to discover that the crumbs he has eaten are crumbs, and he has lost his way. The opening bass line of this movement vacillates between 2, 3, and 4 beats per measure as Tom ensors off course; he is pursued by solo oboe and English horn. By the end, birds are evoked by harmonics from solo violins and by piccolo and flute.

Laidermessette, Empress of the Pagodas, is serenaded by her little creatures playing lutes made of nutshells and viola made from almond husks. Ravel employs a pentatonic (five-note) scale (in this case, the pitches corresponding to the black keys on the piano) to conjure images of the Far East.

Conversations of Beauty and the Beast opens with a native Waltz (in the style of Erik Satie’s Gymnopédies) for Beauty, played by clarinet; song, the body of the instrument, in the form of a Brahmsian harp glissando and the appearance of the Beast’s theme in harmonics on solo violin indicates that he has been transformed into Prince Charming.

The final movement, The Enchanted Garden, returns to the sedate tranquility of the opening movement, but slowly builds to an eruption of orchestral color, perhaps meant to be the wedding bells of Sleeping Beauty and her Prince Charming.

SERGEI RACHMANINOV

Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, Op. 43

Sergei Vasilievich Rachmaninov was born in Semyonovo, district of Makariev, Russia, on April 2, 1873, and died in Los Angeles, California, on March 20, 1943. He composed this work between July 3 and August 18, 1914. The first performance was given in Baltimore, Maryland, on November 7 of the same year, by the Philadelphia Orchestra under the direction of Leopold Stokowski, with the composer as soloist. In addition to solo piano, the score calls for 2 flutes, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, snare drum, triangle, cymbals, bass drum, and glockenspiel.

Rachmaninov composed five works for piano and orchestra, four concertos (the second and third of which are the most well known) and this “rhapsody” – really a set of 24 variations on a theme drawn from Paganini’s Caprice No. 24 solo violin. Rachmaninov was influenced by Liszt, Brahms had all written variations on this same tune before Rachmaninov, and many others would follow – notably, the Polish virtuoso, Władysław Szpilman who made his own set of wittier variations on this theme in 1941. A brief introduction leads not to the theme, but to the first variation, a skeletal outline of the tune. Fittingly, it is the violin section that states the theme promptly. The remaining variations are divided into four sections that mirror the standard symphonic structure: exposition and development; several scherzo-like variations in the middle section; and the coda, one of the most gorgeous melodies in all of classical music (this is recognizable of all Rachmaninov’s tunes is in fact an inversion of the Paganini theme); and an energetic finale in which each succeeding variation ratchets the tempo up an additional notch.

ROBERT SCHUMANN

Symphony in D Minor, Op. 120 (1841 version)

Schumann was born in Zwickau, Saxony, on June 8, 1810, and died, insane, at the Endenich asylum, near Bonn, on July 29, 1856. He composed this symphony between May 29 and September 9, 1841. On December 6 of the same year, it was premiered at his Symphony No. 2 by the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra under the direction of Daniel Siemssen. Schumann’s symphonies were originally intended for publication, but the failure of the December 15, 1851, reissuing (as his Symphony No. 6) with the Düsseldorf Municipal Orchestra on March 3, 1853. The symphony is scored for four flutes, clarinet in A, bassoons, and horns, 4, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani, and strings.

For Robert Schumann, 1840 was a year of chamber music, and 1841 a year for the symphony; it saw the creation of his Symphony No. 1 (Spring), the Overture, Scherzo and Finale (essentially, a symphony that ended up as a slow movement of his Piano Concerto). Many of his later works (which would later become the first movement of his piano concertos) and a second symphony, in D minor. Built upon a recurring theme, he published in his Op. 120. Johannes Brahms, a lifelong friend of Schumann, considered it a present on the occasion of their wedding anniversary in November, it was premiered three months later.

Schumann was disappointed with the work’s reception, but this likely had little effect on the work itself, as it was followed on the program by a performance from Franz Liszt, than any inherent weakness in the score. A decade later, the composer reworked the symphony, incorporating a number of structural changes, but more concerned with mollifying the orchestration by doubling many of the wind passages, lending a heavier texture to the work. It was this version that became known as the “Die Neue” version, published as No. 2, or 4. Robert and Clara, believed the original score 1840 to be superior and – despite protests from Clara – succeeded in having it published.

The “Clara” theme makes its first appearance in the slow introduction to the first movement. It is the only movement in the symphony which features a lovely duet for oboe and cello, followed by a central section containing a triple-divided passage for solo violin. The theme of the scherzo is so difficult to play, that it is in fact an inversion of the Clara theme; its more relaxed B-flat major retrograde is a passage from the second movement. Both scherzo and trio are in the key of A minor, but in place of a coda, a brief Largo (quoting the theme of the first movement’s Allegro) leads to an exciting finale.

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— Jeff Elledge
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Pianist Duane Hulbert has toured the United States and Europe, winning enthusiastic audience response and critical praise. He has been a prizewinner in the Leeds Competition; in Carnegie Hall's American Music Competition; and Grand Prize winner of the 1980 Gina Bachauer International Piano Competition. Mr. Hulbert has been a distinguished soloist with leading American orchestras, including the Seattle, Minnesota, Dallas, Tacoma, and North Carolina Symphonies. His strong commitment to the performance of new music has led to important west coast premieres of works by Toru Takemitu, Alfred Schnittke and John Corigliano. In addition to his busy schedule of local performances, Mr. Hulbert has performed in the American States Hall Series in Washington, DC, the Ambassador Recital Series in Pasadena, the Myra Hess Series in Chicago, and as a guest artist with the Aspen Music Festival at the Kennedy Center. He has twice been invited to appear at the prestigious Gina Bachauer Festival and was featured in a television documentary about the Bachauer competition. A Minnesota native, Duane Hulbert received his Bachelor and Masters degrees from the Juilliard School and his doctorate from the Manhattan School of Music. He is presently Professor of Piano at the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma. Mr. Hulbert has recorded for the Opus One label, CBC radio, and Bridge Records.

Conductor Justin Cole has studied conducting with Michael Morgan and Larry Rachleff and is a former member of the conducting faculty at Rocky Ridge Music Center in Estes Park, Colorado. He has assisted Mr. Morgan at the Oakland East Bay Symphony and is former assistant conductor of the Orchestra of the Pines. Mr. Cole earned a Bachelor of Music degree in trombone performance from the University of Arizona, where he was awarded the prestigious Presser Scholarship by the School of Music. While in Arizona he received a grant from the University to conduct a concert of 20th Century works for chamber orchestra. In 1996 the noted American composer Grace Brown asked that he conduct the world premiere of her work, To Ancient Evenings and Distant Music. Mr. Cole has studied trombone with Tom Ervin, Gerrard Pagano, George Krem, and William Stanley, and performed with a variety of ensembles, including the Rapids Symphony Orchestra, the Tucson Jazz Orchestra, the Piney Woods Brass Quintet, the Northwest Mahler Festival, and the Corona Brass Quintet. In addition to his musical pursuits, he is an avid outdoorsman. Mr. Cole has held the post of Assistant Conductor with Orchestra Seattle since the beginning of the 1999-2000 season.

In recognition of her 70th birthday, these friends of Barbara Kidder have donated over $2000 to Orchestra Seattle and the Seattle Chamber Singers.

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PROGRAM NOTES

MAURICE RAVEL

Méditation (Mother Goose)

Joseph-Maurice Ravel was born in Ciboure, Basque Pyrenees, France, on March 7, 1875, and died in Paris on December 28, 1937. He originally composed this suite for piano four-hands in September of 1908 and added the violin part later. In 1911, Ravel expanded the work into a ballet, the first performance of which was given on January 21, 1912 at the Théâtre de drame in Paris, under the direction of Gabriel Matras. The orchestral suite is scored for pairs of flutes (one doubling piccolo), oboes (one doubling English horn), clarinets, bassoons (one doubling contrabassoon), and horns, timpani, harp, and strings.

Among Ravel’s closest acquaintances were Xavier Cyprien Godebski, his wife Ida, and their two children, Mimié and Jean. Ravel would rent a row of rooms in an hotel opposite their apartment when he was in Paris, and he often stayed on a regular Sunday evening at artistic gatherings hosted by the Godebski. In September of 1908, Ravel composed a brief work for piano four-hands which he called ‘Meditation’. It was written for the entertainment of the Godebski children, whose parents were vacationing in Spain. In April of 1910, he added four more pieces on fairy-tale themes to the piano duet, forming a five-movement suite for two pianos, 2/4 (Mother Goose). At the suggestion of his publisher, Durand, Ravel orchestrated these five pieces not long after; then, at the request of the Théâtre de drame, he composed the music as a ballet, changing the order of the original five pieces and composing a fair amount of new material.

In the suite (the version heard this afternoon), the opening Pavana of the Sleeping Beauty in the Woods is a mere 20 bars in length; its quick pace evokes the image of the work’s sleepwalking queen slipping through an enchanted forest. (In the original piano duet, each of the four hands plays only a single note at a time.)

Tom Thumb relates the story of a young child who wanders through the forest seeking breadcrumbs, only to discover that the crumbs have eaten the crumbs and he has lost his way. The opening bars of this movement vacillate between 3, 4, and 5 beats per measure as Tom errs off course; he is pushed by solo oboe and English horn, and onward and, birds are evoked by harmonics from solo violins and by piccolo and flute.

Laiderommete, Empress of the Pagodas, is seated at her bath by little creatures playing lutes made of nuts and violin made of almonds. Ravel employs a pentatonic (five-note) scale (in this, the pitches corresponding to the black keys on the piano) to conjure images of the Far East.

Conversations of Beauty and the Beast opens with a native waltz (in the style of Erik Satie’s Gymnopédies) for Beauty, played by clarinet; song, the beauty here, is entrusted, in the form of a solo clarinet, to the harp, and theääss of the Beauty’s theme in harmonics on solo violin indicates that he has been transformed into Prince Charming.

The final movement, The Enchanted Garden, returns to the sedate tranquility of the opening movement, but slowly builds to an eruption of orchestral color, perhaps meant to be the wedding bells of Sleeping Beauty and her Prince Charming.

SERGEI RACHMANINOV

Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, Op. 43

Sergei Vasilievich Rachmaninov was born at Semyonovo, district of Staikov, Orel Province, on April 1, 1873. A Temple of the theme of the sonata movement of the Piano Concerto, California, on March 28, 1943. The first performance was given in Baltimore, Maryland, on November 7 of the same year, by the Philadelphia Orchestra under the direction of Leopold Stokowski, with the composer as soloist. In addition to solo piano, the score calls for 2 flutes, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, snare drum, triangle, cymbals, bass drum, and glockenspiel.

Rachmaninov composed five works for piano and orchestra, four concertos (the second and third of which are the most well known) and this “Rhapsody” – really a set of 24 variations on a theme drawn from Paganini’s Caprice No. 24. Rachmaninoff’s Caprice was the most elaborate(R) of Brahms had all written variations on this same tune before Rachmaninoff, and many others would follow – notably, the Polish composer Wladyslaw Szpilman composed his own set of wittier variations on this theme in 1941.

A brief introduction leads not to the theme, but to the first variation, a skeletal outline of the tune. Fittingly, it is the violin section that states the theme presented in an unornamented fashion. Subsequent variations are divided into four sections that mirror the standard structural exposition: development; and several scherzo-like variations to the recapitulation. One of the most gorgeous melodies in all of classical music (this is recognizably all of Rachmaninov’s tunes is in fact an inversion of the Paganini theme); and an energetic finish in which each succeeding variation ratchets the tempo up an additional notch.

ROBERT SCHUMANN

Symphony in D Minor, Op. 110 (1841 version)

Schumann was born in Zwickau, Saxony, on June 8, 1810, and died, insane, at the Endenicher asylum, near Bonn, on July 29, 1856. He composed this symphony between May 29 and September 9, 1841. On December 6 of the same year, it was premiered at his Symphony No. 2 by the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra under the direction of his brother-in-law, Robert. One year later, on December 15,1841, reinterpreting (as his Symphony No. 4) with the Düsseldorf Municipal Orchestra on March 3, 1853. The symphony is scored for four flute, clarinet, violin, and basson; 4, 2 saxes, trombones, trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani, and strings.

For Robert Schumann, 1840 was a year of chamber music, and 1841 a year for the symphony; he saw the creation of his Symphony No. 1 (Spring), the Overtures, Scitara and Finita (essentially, a symphony associated with a slow movement); and the six Scherzos, the result of which would later become the first movement of his piano concertos) and a second symphony, in D minor. Built upon a recurring theme, he eventually presented the symphony as a present on the occasion of their wedding anniversary in September; it was premiered three months later.

Schumann was disappointed with the work’s reception, but this likely had more to do with how it was followed on the program by a performance from Franz Liszt, than any inherent weakness in the score. A decade later, the composer rewrote the symphony, incorporating a series of structural changes, but more crucially, by modifying the orchestration by doubling many of the wind passages, lending a heavier texture to the work. It was this version that Schumann presented as a present on the occasion of his wedding anniversary in September; it was premiered three months later.

Schumann was disappointed with the work’s reception, but this likely had more to do with how it was followed on the program by a performance from Franz Liszt, than any inherent weakness in the score. A decade later, the composer rewrote the symphony, incorporating a series of structural changes, but more crucially, by modifying the orchestration by doubling many of the wind passages, lending a heavier texture to the work. It was this version that Schumann presented as a present on the occasion of his wedding anniversary in September; it was premiered three months later.

Two scherzo and trio are scored for flute, clarinet, and bassoon; 2, 2 saxes, 2 reports. A burst of activity on the transition of the Allegro leads to an exciting finale.

--- Eldridge
Piano Rhapsody
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Meany Hall
Duane Halbert, piano
Orchestra Seattle
Justin Cole, conductor
George Shangrow, conductor

MAURICE RAVEL
1875-1937
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1810-1856
Symphony No. 4 in D minor (1841 version)
Andante con moto – Allegro di molto –
Romanza: Andante –
Scherzo: Presto – Trio – Largo –
Finale: Allegro – Presto
George Shangrow, conductor

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