Carter Simmons, Music Director
presents

“RHAPSODY AND ROMANCE: LEGENDS OF THE PIANO”

Sunday, May 5, 2019
2:00 PM
The Pabst Theater
144 E Wells St

FRANZ LISZT (1811–1886)
Hungarian Rhapsody no. 2, S. 359

FRANZ LISZT (1811–1886)
Les Préludes, S. 97

INTERMISSION

FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN (1810–1849)
Piano Concerto no. 1 in e minor, op. 11
I. Allegro maestoso
II. Romanze-Larghetto
III. Rondo-Vivace
Jeannie Yu, Piano
Festival City Symphony Music Director, Carter Simmons, is a long-time member of Milwaukee’s close-knit arts community. The well-known Artistic Director of the Milwaukee Youth Symphony Orchestra (MYSO) has served for 25 years with the organization that has nurtured, challenged, and inspired young people since 1956. During his association with MYSO, the organization has grown to serve 6,000 students and received recognition as an awardee of the National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award, the nation’s highest honor for out-of-school arts and humanities programs.

Mr. Simmons has been invited to work with the Milwaukee Ballet, the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, the Starry Nights Orchestra featuring artists of Milwaukee’s Florentine Opera, and the Wisconsin Philharmonic among other orchestras. He has conducted the Milwaukee Youth Symphony Orchestra throughout China, most notably in Beijing’s Forbidden City Concert Hall, and also in Orchestra Hall in Chicago’s Symphony Center. He has also accompanied the orchestra for its performances in New York’s Carnegie Hall, Valencia’s Palau de la Música, Prague’s Dvořák Hall, Budapest’s Béla Bartók National Concert Hall, in Argentina and Uruguay, and the Musikverein, home of the Vienna Philharmonic.

Pianist Jeannie Yu was awarded first prize in the Frinna Awerbuch Piano Competition in New York, the Flint Symphony International Concerto Competition, the Portland Symphony International Concerto Competition, and the Kingsville Piano Competition in Texas. She also earned the prestigious Gina Bachauer Memorial Scholarship Award, a full scholarship for a Master’s Degree program at the Juilliard School where she also received a Bachelor’s Degree. Subsequently she was awarded an accompanist fellowship at the Peabody Conservatory of Music where she received her Doctor of Musical Arts Degree.

Dr. Yu has performed as soloist with the Flint Symphony, Portland Symphony, Marina del Rey-Westchester Symphony, Des Moines Symphony, Des Moines Brandenburg Symphony, the Xiamen Symphony Orchestra in China, Sheboygan Symphony Orchestra, Festival City Symphony, and the Milwaukee Ballet Orchestra.

As a soloist and collaborative artist she has performed on WQXR in New York, WOI in Des Moines, IPR in Interlochen, WFMT in Chicago, and numerous chamber music series such as the Northwestern University Winter Chamber Music Series, the Green Mountain Chamber Music Festival, Chamber Music North, Three Bridges Chamber Music Festival, Frankly Music Series, Chamber Music Milwaukee, MidSummers Music, and the Rembrandt Chamber Players Series in Chicago.

Dr. Yu has performed and taught masterclasses as a faculty member of the Alfred University Summer Chamber Music Institute, the Ohio Wesleyan Summer Chamber Music Festival, the Milwaukee Chamber Music Festival, and the Troy Youth Chamber Music Institute. She is the pianist in the cello/piano duo called the Florestan Duo in
JEANNIE YU, PIANO CONT.

Milwaukee, WI who has recently recorded the complete works for cello and piano by Beethoven. She has also recorded numerous volumes of music for various instruments for Hal Leonard Publishing Company, the largest music publisher in the world.

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PAJAMA JAMBOREE FANS Families who attend our children’s “pops” concerts and earn an opportunity to sample one of our “Symphony Sundays” programs.
Festival City Symphony would like to take this opportunity to thank its sponsors, without whom these programs would not take place.

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Joshua Fleming
   *Principal*
Andrew Jackson
Franz Liszt  
b. October 22, 1811; Raiding, Hungary  
d. July 31, 1886; Bayreuth  

Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2 in D minor, S. 359  

Combining his romantic vision, Hungarian heritage and an epoch-making virtuoso approach to piano playing, Liszt created nineteen Hungarian Rhapsodies for solo piano. Combining authentic Hungarian tunes and gypsy melodies of his own invention, these works form artistic reflections of the Hungarian gypsy. Liszt calls them “rhapsodies” to emphasize the “fantastically epic elements” contained within.

Featured on his barnstorming concert tours, Liszt’s Second Hungarian Rhapsody was immediately and universally appealing as well as being one of the most technically challenging works for pianists. Written in 1847 and dedicated to Count László Teleki, this music was soon orchestrated by Liszt and his friend, the flutist and composer Franz Doppler.

For many years, this music served as a sort of litmus test of piano virtuosity. It became so popular that, in his later years, Liszt refused to hear it played by the stream of students who clamored for piano lessons.

In the 20th-century, the music was frequently utilized in animated films; Bugs Bunny, Woody Woodpecker and Daffy Duck all cavorted to its strains. The Marx Brothers used it in a variety of films, while Danny Kaye and Victor Borge employed it to memorable comedic effect.

The music itself consists of two basic sections, one slow, the other quick. The first is a lassan, an improvisatory minor wail of gypsy grief. Sadness is suddenly cast aside in the vivacious friska, a fiery, headlong, uninhibited Hungarian dance.
Franz Liszt

*Les Preludes, Symphonic Poem No. 3, S. 97*

The life of Hungarian virtuoso-pianist and composer, Franz Liszt, provided many of the elements that were later blended into the stereotype of the romantic artist. In addition to his keyboard prowess, Liszt was a cultured, urbane individual who lived the life of the romantic virtuoso to the hilt. He had numerous affairs, the most notable of which was with the Countess Marie d’Agoult. She bore him three children out of wedlock (one of whom, Cosima, later became the wife of conductor Hans von Bülow and, subsequently, Richard Wagner). Liszt ended his concert career around 1847; he settled in Weimar and began composing and conducting. This period of fantastic compositional productivity closed when he resigned his Weimar post in 1859. He traveled for a while, finally settling in Rome, where he joined the Franciscan brotherhood and was invested with the minor orders. Abbe Liszt remained active as a musician, enjoying enormous celebrity until his death from “weakness and inflammation of the lungs.”

Liszt’s major contribution to the symphonic genre was his set of thirteen *Symphonic Poems*. These single-movement programmatic works are generally constructed around various permutations of a principal theme. This concept, known as cyclic development, proved to be a potent force for subsequent generations of composers. The third of his Symphonic Poems, *Les Preludes*, is the most famous of these works. Written in 1848 as a prelude to an ultimately unpublished choral work, *Les Quatre Elemens*, *Les Preludes* was promoted to the status of an independent work. Seeking to attach it to a text, Liszt approached Victor Hugo in the hope of having something written…unfortunately, Hugo was distinctly apathetic to the composer’s plan. Liszt finally settled upon Lamartine’s *Meditations poetiques* (second series, 1823). The opening line of the poem provided a title, while the general flow seems congruent with the peaceful and martial alternations of Liszt’s music:

“What is our life but a series of preludes to that unknown song, the first solemn note of which is sounded by death? Love forms the enchanted daybreak of every life; but is the destiny where the first delights of happiness are not interrupted by storm, whose fatal breath dissipates its fair illusions, whose fell lightning consumes its altar.

“And what wounded spirit, when one of its tempests is over, does not seek to rest its memories in the sweet calm of country life? Yet man does not resign himself long to enjoy the beneficent tepidity which first charmed him on Nature’s bosom.

“And when the trumpet’s loud clangor has called him to arms, he rushed to the post of danger, whatever may be the war that calls him to the ranks, to find in battle the full consciousness of himself and the complete possession of his strength.”

Frederic Chopin

b. February 22, 1810; Zelazowa-Wola, near Warsaw
d. October 17, 1849; Paris

*Concerto No. 1 in E minor for Piano and Orchestra, Opus 11*

The product of a French father and a Polish mother, Chopin combined in his personality a Gallic sophistication and a Middle European vitality. As a precocious youth in a cultivated family, Chopin began writing verses at the age of six and soon began a non-pedantic course of musical instruction that allowed his creative ingenuity to blossom. His affinity
for poetry carried over into musical expression. Drawn to lyric arabesques for solo piano, Chopin captured the essence of romantic pianism without resorting to the virtuosic bombast that characterized the performances of his contemporaries, Liszt and Thalberg. Chopin was a private artist of varied interests; it is amazing to realize that his formidable reputation as a pianist was based upon only about thirty public concerts.

Chopin steadfastly refused to be persuaded by those who wanted him to compose in larger forms. In a letter of 1834, he wrote: “Mozart encompasses the entire domain of musical creation, but I’ve only got the keyboard in my poor head. I know my limitations, and I know that I’d make a fool of myself if I tried to climb too high without having the ability to do it. They plague me to death urging me to write symphonies and operas, and they want me to be everything in one: a Polish Rossini and a Mozart and a Beethoven. But I just laugh under my breath and think to myself that one must start from small things. I’m only a pianist, and if I’m worth anything, that is good, too…”

He composed only six works for piano and orchestra. All written during a short period (1827–1831) toward the beginning of his career, they are: two concertos, a set of variations on La ci darem from Mozart’s Don Giovanni, a fantasia, a concert rondo and the Grand Polonaise. As an attempt on the composer’s part to cast his revolutionary concepts into the limitations of the classic mold, the works are primarily focused upon the solo instrument; Chopin’s orchestra largely provides dutiful accompaniment.

At the age of nineteen, Chopin played a pair of concerts in Vienna. His performance and compositions were very well received; the urbane Viennese were particularly fond of the Polish folk elements in Chopin’s works. He returned to Warsaw and set to work on two concertos, both of which alluded to Polish dances in their final movements. A work in F minor was completed in 1829, but was not published until three years after the present E minor concerto of 1830; thus the earlier work became known as the Second Concerto because the E minor was already published as Concerto No. 1. Completed in time for a public rehearsal on September 22, 1830, the concerto was copied by Chopin himself. Although the rehearsals went poorly because of copying mistakes, the performance, with Chopin as soloist (October 11, 1830, in the Warsaw National Theater), was, in the composer’s opinion, “a great big success…Deafening applause.”

I. Allegro maestoso; E minor, 3/4. Following classical traditions, Chopin began the work with a long tutti section in which all the themes are expounded. Some modern performances omit most of this on the grounds that Chopin is at his most persuasive in his writing for solo piano. There are two major themes; the first is lyrically assertive and the second is expressive (dolce legato). The development of these materials is both brilliant and enchanting.

II. Romance: Larghetto; E major, 3/4. Writing to his friend, Titus Woyciechowski, Chopin described this pastel nocturne as being “of a romantic, calm and partly melancholy character. It is intended to convey the impression which one receives when the eye rests on a beloved landscape that calls up in one’s soul beautiful memories—for instance, on a fine moonlit spring night. I have written for violins with mutes as an accompaniment to it. I wonder if that will have a good effect? Well, time will show.”

III. Rondo: Vivace; E major, 2/4. In the finale, a rondo theme of cultivated vigor is interwoven with episodes of tuneful energy and lively rhythm. Abounding with glittering virtuosity, the movement derives some of its rhythmic elements from the Krakowiak, a popular Polish dance originating near the city of Krakow.
“Songs With and Without Words” Spring Pajama Jamboree

Monte Perkins, Conductor | Jayne Perkins, Host

Wednesday, May 8, 2019 7:00 PM | Marcus Center for the Performing Arts
in the Bradley Pavilion | *Use 929 N. Water Street entrance* | FREE ADMISSION

Festival City Symphony will conclude its season with a free “Spring Pajama Jamboree” concert titled “Songs With and Without Words” on Wednesday, May 8, 2019, at 7:00pm in the Bradley Pavilion of the Marcus Center for the Performing Arts. In a program including children’s songs, patriotic tunes, and other well-known favorites, area guest vocalists will teach the audience members how to sing the songs the orchestra will be performing. As always, FCS will close its season with children from the audience conducting the orchestral finale “On Wisconsin.”

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