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PRESENTS

ALEXANDER GHINDIN

Piano

Music Recital Hall

November 9, 2016

7:30 pm

OREGON
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AT SOUTHERN OREGON UNIVERSITY

Biography

A native of Moscow, the Russian pianist ALEXANDER GHINDIN has rapidly established himself as a seasoned artist and a major force on the international piano scene. In 1994 at age 17, he became the youngest winner ever of the prestigious International Tchaikovsky Competition, later gaining Second Prize at Brussels' Queen Elisabeth Competition. He won the First Prize of the 2007 Cleveland International Piano Competition and the First Prize of the 2010 International Piano Competition of Santa Catarina in Brazil. Alexander Ghindin's current season includes over 100 performances throughout the United States, Europe and Russia. Since 2006, Mr. Ghindin has been Artistic Director of his own concert series in Moscow.

Alexander Ghindin joined the Moscow State Philharmonic as soloist in 1999, performing throughout Russia, as well as in Europe and Japan.

In addition to touring with Vladimir Spivakov and The Moscow Virtuosi Chamber Orchestra, Mr. Ghindin has collaborated with a host of today's leading maestri, including Vladimir Ashkenazy, Vladimir Fedoseyev, Alan Gilbert, Paavo Järvi, Vladimir Jurowski, Dimitry Kitayenko, Krzysztof Penderecki, Tomasso Placidi, Saulus Sandeczki, Thomas Sanderling, Yuriy Simonov, Vasily Sinaysky, Leonard Slatkin and Vladimir Verbitsky.

Alexander Ghindin has recorded over 24 CDs - on the labels of Capriccio, CD Accord, Decca, DML Classics, Naxos, Ondine, Piano Classics, Tri-M Classics, Russian Season - including the original versions of Rachmaninoff's first and fourth piano concertos, with Vladimir Ashkenazy and the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra (2001, Ondine). His debut album on the Naxos label - an album devoted to sonatas and short pieces by Scriabin - was released in 2011. He has also appeared on television and radio throughout the United States, Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Poland, Russia, Japan and elsewhere.

Alexander Ghindin wrote an original piano transcription of Maurice Ravel's La Valse, which was published in Tokyo (2001) and St. Petersburg (2008).

In 2006, Alexander Ghindin was named an "Honored Artist of Russia."

heralds the atmospheric setting for the next picture The Old Castle. The myriad, shifting moods continue in such pictures as the light-hearted children's quarrels in the Tuileries and a hilarious Ballet of Unhatched Chicks.

Mussorgsky's pesante designation captures the heavy, plodding Oxen in rural life. He also writes a haunting and mysterious setting for Catacombs, and captures the grandeur of Hartmann's unbuilt design for the Great Gate of Kiev.

When Maurice Ravel began orchestrating Mussorgsky's Pictures at an Exhibition in 1922, he tried to find the original edition of the work. He knew that well-meaning composers such as Rimsky-Korsakov altered much of Mussorgsky's output after his death, including 'Pictures.' These men held the common 19th-century view that Mussorgsky needed to be 'corrected' - that he was "brilliant but inept" (2001 New Grove Dictionary). However, the Dictionary continues that this view is thankfully "long out of date and discredited." In fact, Russian musicologist Richard Taruskin writes that Mussorgsky's early alcoholic death in 1881 deprived him of much influence on his contemporaries. But his "anti-conventional stance and remarkable powers of psychological penetration were "profoundly influential on Debussy, Ravel, Janacek, Prokofiev and Shostakovich."

Program notes by Ed Wight

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Seregow), light capricious treatments, and a couple variations in different keys (E Major and G-sharp Minor). Early Schumann manuscripts originally referred to the C-sharp Minor theme as a funeral march, but Schumann transforms it into a brilliant, triumphant conclusion in the opposite mode D-Flat Major.

Also contributing to the absence of permanent structure are the five additional variations Schumann omitted, which his wife Clara edited and published in 1873. Artists are free to play any or all of these as well - they are included tonight - and to place them wherever they wish. Whatever versions and movements are performed, Schumann contributed a monumental set of variations to a century which sorely needed reminding of the glories of this genre.

MUSSORGSKY PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION (1874)

After years of struggle, the primarily self-taught Modest Mussorgsky began finding success with a mature compositional technique in the late 1860s. He finished St. John's Night on Bald Mountain in 1867, his first successful extended composition for orchestra. To a greater extent than other members of the 'Mighty Five' (Cui, Balakirev, Borodin, and Rimsky Korsakov), Mussorgsky sought music naturalism, events from real life, and authentic Russian speech accents in his vocal and operatic music – traits which dominate his one-act opera The Marriage from 1868. He also began working on his masterpiece at this time, Boris Gudunov, which after several revisions opened to sold-out performances in St. Petersburg in January 1874. The New Grove writes that “its success marked the peak of Mussorgsky's career.”

His friend Victor Hartmann, an architect, scenic designer and painter, shared Mussorgsky's reverence for the depiction of an authentic Russian folk style. Hartmann's early death in 1873 deeply affected Mussorgsky, and the memorial exhibition of Hartmann's works in 1874 inspired him to quickly write Pictures at an Exhibition. One of the techniques he picked up from Western opera was the effective use of a recurring theme. Mussorgsky's fashioned this primary theme, “Promenade” to accurately depict real life – unpredictably alternating between 5/4 and 6/4 meter which reflects the inconsistent pace of looking at pictures. That theme returns four more times in different moods, which reflect the marvelously wide-ranging styles he chose for these ten pictures.

The dictionary defines a Gnome (the first picture) as a “small, misshapen dwarf” and in Russian lore it also emits ‘savage shrieks’ – all captured in Mussorgsky's “awkward leaps and bizarre harmonies” (Philip Huscher). A soft “Promenade” passage

Program

I

Venezia e Napoli, S. 159

Franz Liszt
(1811-1886)

Gondoliera
Canzone
Tarantella

II

Symphonic Etudes, Op. 13

Robert Schumann
(1810-1856)

Intermission

III

Pictures at an Exhibition (1874)

Modest Mussorgsky
(1839-1881)

Recordings: Capriccio, CD Accord, Decca, DML Classics, Naxos, Ondine, Tri-M Classics, Russian Season

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Ars longa vita brevis

Program Notes by Ed Wight

LISZT VENIZIA E NAPOLI (1840 / 1859)

In 1986, for the centennial of Liszt's death, virtuoso Australian pianist and Liszt scholar Leslie Howard began a 14-year quest to record all of Liszt's piano works. It eventually totaled 99 compact discs for the label Hyperion, the largest single recording project in history. Liszt certainly merited such attention. The 1988 Norton / Grove Encyclopedia states that "he was "the greatest pianist of his age, composed some of the most difficult piano music ever written...and invented the modern piano recital." About tonight's piece, Howard wrote that "Liszt's years of travel took him very often to Italy in the mid-1830s. His response to the country was a vast body of works" including "Italie" - the second volume of *Annales de pelerinage*. These trips also inspired the first, 4-movement version of *Venezia e Napoli*, written 1838-40, but then withdrawn from publication by Liszt.

Liszt revised two of the movements and added another for tonight's 3-movement final version in 1859. (The theme of one of the original movements he discarded became the primary theme in his 1849 symphonic poem *Tasso*.) All three movements of the new version draw on Italian arias and songs "familiar in the streets of Italy" (Howard). While instrumental transcriptions of vocal music exist since the 14th century, a new element now appears. "The Romantics permanently enlarged the role of sound and tone color" as an element of structure (pianist and musicologist Charles Rosen). Even for these simple vocal melodies, Liszt's "concentration on tone color [make him] the most radical musician of his generation."

He bases *Gondoliera* on a song by G.B. Perucchini, and treats the delightful melody "in a much gentler way than in the earlier version. Yet the delicate, 16th-note arpeggios in the introduction, and the complex arabesques in the higher registers of the new pianos add a wonderfully atmospheric touch. The *Canzone* comes from Rossini's aria 'Nessun maggior dolore' in *Otello*. Fearing for her life, Desdemona hears its haunting text ("no greater sorrow than to recall past happiness in a time of misery") sung by a passing gondolier. Liszt's new emphasis on pure tone color – constant tremolo 64th-notes – adds structure (and unrelenting darkness) to the aria.

His typically lively *Presto* setting for the 3rd-movement *Tarantella* opens the most extensive piece in the set. Liszt's G minor setting of "Fenesta vascia by G. L. Cottrau returns at the end in G major triumph. But Cottrau certainly didn't write the 16th-note arpeggios that briefly change the mood, courtesy of Liszt. And these two appearances frame a gentler 'Canzona napolitana' in E-flat major.

Its modulation to E Major reminds of us of some of Liszt's revolutionary harmonic experiments, before he re-establishes a typical *Tarantella*-style frenzy to close the work.

In addition to his many fantasies and transcriptions of highlights from Italian operas and songs, Liszt also wrote many pieces inspired by Italian scenery, or works of art and literature. Leslie Howard writes that with such a "vast body of work...it would not be unreasonable to consider it in toto the greatest of 19th-century Italian keyboard works."

SCHUMANN SYMPHONIC ETUDES, OP. 13 (1837 / 1852)

In 1834, Schumann founded the influential music journal *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*. In April that year, he also met Ernestine von Fricken, a student of his former teacher Frederick Wieck. By the summer they were engaged. Ernestine's father was an amateur flutist and composer, and sent Schumann a set of variations on his own theme. Schumann responded with his own set of six variations (which he called *etudes*) on the theme. Schumann titled the first version "Fantasies and Finale on a Theme of Baron von Fricken." He intended it as wonderful gift involving his fiancée's entire family – a theme written by her father in a variation set dedicated to her mother, to be performed by Ernestine. But after Schumann broke off the engagement in 1835, he made some minor changes to the theme, doubled the number of variations, and published it as 12 *Etudes symphoniques* in 1837.

Like many of his contemporaries, Schumann lamented the current state of the variation genre. Variation scholar Elaine Sisman writes that he usually found them "irredeemably trite and vapid... [comprised of] empty virtuosity and mechanical figurations." He held a much higher standard for his own variation sets, and published a second edition of this work in 1852. He now titled it *Etudes en forme de variations*, and established a distinction between the fairly strict treatment of the theme in C-sharp Minor (which he now labeled as 'variations') and the freer, more varied structures that he called 'etudes' (nos. 3 and 9) and which address specific technical problems, as in the simultaneous staccato and legato articulations in no. 3.

The contrasting printed editions (1837 and 1852) with different movements and titles (along with other less authentic versions) reflect the fact that this work never settled into a permanent form. But Schumann's glories remain ever present, alternating between his favorite extrovert (*Florestan*) and introspective (*Eusebius*) mood states. We get Paganini-like 32nd-note virtuosity in the right hand, stately legato variations, a theme "ingeniously transformed into a strict canon at the octave" (critic Michael