

CONCERT PROGRAM
April 17-18, 2015

Vasily Petrenko, conductor
Simon Trpčeski, piano

RACHMANINOFF Piano Concerto No. 3 in D minor, op. 30 (1909)
(1873-1943)

Allegro, ma non tanto
Intermezzo: Adagio—
Finale: Alla breve

Simon Trpčeski, piano

INTERMISSION

SCRIABIN Symphony No. 3, “Le Poème divin,” op. 43 (1902-04)
(1872-1915)

Introduction: Lento—
Luttes (Struggles): Allegro—
Voluptés (Delights): Lento—
Jeu divin (Divine Play): Allegro

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

These concerts are part of the Wells Fargo Advisors series.

Vasily Petrenko is the Charles V. Rainwater III Guest Artist.

Simon Trpčeski is the Robert R. Imse Guest Artist.

The concert of Friday, April 17, is underwritten in part by a generous gift from Jeanne and Rex Sinquefield.

The concert of Saturday, April 18, is underwritten in part by a generous gift from Mr. and Mrs. Michael F. Neidorff.

Pre-Concert Conversations are sponsored by Washington University Physicians.

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FROM THE STAGE

Lorraine Glass-Harris, second violins, on Scriabin's Symphony No. 3, "Le Poème divin," op. 43: "Scriabin has a very personal language, a personal harmonic vocabulary. No one sounds like him.

"Rachmaninoff and Scriabin knew each other well, which is part of what makes it such a nice pairing. This is an opportunity to visit the way life felt before the First World War—to taste and hear and feel what it felt like to them.

"The Divine Poem' has some really audacious writing for first trumpet. There's some sumptuous birdsong writing and some terrific concertmaster solos. Scriabin pushes the high and low tessitura of the orchestra, opening up the range of the orchestra.

"Spoiler alert! The last part of the symphony has three chords—it's very easy to applaud before it is over. This is a very unfamiliar work, which makes it an exciting proposition."



Vasily Petrenko

DIVERGENT PATHS

BY PAUL SCHIAVO

TIMELINKS

1902-04

SCRIABIN

Symphony No. 3, "Le Poème divin," op. 43
Russian Social Democratic Workers Party, exiled by Russian government, meets in Brussels and London

1909

RACHMANINOFF

Piano Concerto No. 3 in D minor, op. 30
Gustav Mahler makes New York Philharmonic conducting debut

The two composers on this program began their musical journeys from literally the same place. Serge Rachmaninoff and Aleksandr Scriabin were students together of pianist Nikolay Zverev at the Moscow Conservatory. Zverev's pedagogy was demanding but effective, and both Rachmaninoff and Scriabin became virtuoso pianists. Initially the latter was deemed the superior player, but in 1892 Rachmaninoff took first place, and Scriabin second, in the Conservatory's piano competition. Meanwhile, both studied theory and composition with the same teachers.

During these formative years, Rachmaninoff and Scriabin formed a friendship that endured beyond their time at the conservatory. But they soon took divergent paths, both musically and personally. Rachmaninoff remained active as a pianist, composer, and conductor, excelling especially in the first two of those endeavors. Scriabin might have had a career as a concert artist, but he abandoned performance in favor of composition.

Both men began writing music in a Romantic manner indebted to Chopin and Liszt. As he matured, Rachmaninoff broadened that style, suffusing it with a Russian soulfulness, but never veered from it. His writing for the piano exploited his own transcendent virtuosity. Scriabin, by contrast, moved into new musical territory, developing a highly original idiom that paralleled the musical innovations of other early modernists. His motivation for doing this lay in what became for him a consuming interest in metaphysics, something in which Rachmaninoff took scant interest. In their very different ways, Rachmaninoff and Scriabin became two of the most distinctive musical voices of the early 20th century.

SERGE RACHMANINOFF

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

A KEYBOARD EVEREST Early in 1909 Serge Rachmaninoff received an offer to undertake an extensive concert tour of the United States. Then living in Germany, the Russian musician initially hesitated to accept, not wishing to absent himself from his family for a period of months. But the financial terms of the offer were too generous to pass up. Rachmaninoff was particularly tempted by the possibility of purchasing an automobile during his stay in America. Accepting the invitation, he agreed to compose a new piano concerto that he would perform with American orchestras. Rachmaninoff wrote this work during the summer, finishing it shortly before his departure for America, and played the concerto with consistent success throughout his tour. A particularly notable performance occurred on January 16, 1910, at Carnegie Hall in New York, when the orchestra was led by Gustav Mahler.

One of the earliest reviews of the concerto 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.

MUSIC THAT “WROTE ITSELF” 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. Indeed, one musicologist has proposed that it derives from a 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



Born

April 1, 1873, in Oneg, Russia

Died

March 28, 1943, in Los Angeles

First Performance

November 28, 1909, in New York, the composer was the soloist, and Walter Damrosch conducted the New York Symphony

STL Symphony Premiere

January 27, 1928, Vladimir Horowitz was soloist, with Bernardino Molinari conducting

Most Recent STL Symphony Performance

May 6, 2012, Stephen Hough was soloist, with Peter Oundjian conducting

Scoring

solo piano
2 flutes
2 oboes
2 clarinets
2 bassoons
4 horns
2 trumpets
3 trombones
tuba
timpani
percussion
strings

Performance Time

approximately 39 minutes

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 second movement, which Rachmaninoff describes as an “intermezzo,” entails two highly contrasted types of music. Its initial section considers a quiet theme, introduced by the strings but worked up by the piano into an almost vehemently impassioned expression. Suddenly, however, the tempo quickens, the texture becomes gossamer, and the music assumes the manner of an animated scherzo. Here the orchestral woodwinds give out a variant of the main theme of the first movement.

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.

ALEKSANDR SCRIBIN

Symphony No. 3, “Le Poème divin,” op. 43

MUSICIAN AND MYSTIC A hundred years after his death, Aleksandr Scriabin remains important for the originality of his work and for his role in the artistic revolution that transformed music in the early modern era. He is intriguing also for the quasi-religious, quasi-mystical ideas that came to dominate his thinking. Born in 1872, Scriabin wrote his first compositions in a Romantic manner indebted to Chopin and, later, to Liszt and Wagner. The quality of those early works, along with his exceptional ability as a pianist, made Scriabin one of Russia’s most promising musicians at the start of the 20th century.

But Scriabin did not intend—or was not intended, as he claimed—to be merely a musician. He had a higher calling. As a young man he had delved into different strains of esoteric philosophy, passing from Nietzsche through Hindu teachings to the theosophy of Madame Blavatsky, the occultist who became renowned and influential in pre-revolutionary Russia.

In 1902 Scriabin left his homeland and moved to Switzerland. There he synthesized various mystical traditions with his own concepts about divinity and the nature of the universe, creating an elaborate personal philosophy that combined art, religion, and eroticism in a quest for enlightenment. Scriabin’s metaphysical ideas, which he confided to a series of notebooks, entailed an ever-increasing strain of narcissism. He repeatedly identified himself as a divine force and the creator of the cosmos. (The motto “I am God” appears repeatedly in his journals.)

Scriabin’s ego-bound mysticism seems laughable at best, and repugnant at worst. But it cannot be dismissed out of hand, since it became a principal influence on his music. The composer’s unorthodox philosophical ideas, and especially his desire to express an erotically charged ecstasy, eventually led him away from the relatively conventional harmonies and rhythmic patterns of the 19th century. Experimenting with unusual scales and altered harmonies,

Scriabin eventually transformed the Romantic style of his early works into a new and quite original idiom that shared certain traits with the nascent modernism of Schoenberg and other progressive composers of his day.

Scriabin also began writing his music to freely composed poems that gave voice to his metaphysical philosophy. Eventually, he conceived a gigantic composition-cum-ritual performance called *Mysterium*. With a huge ensemble of singers and instrumentalists, and lasting 12 days, this piece was to conclude with audience and performers joined in a rite leading them to Nirvana. Scriabin had finished only cursory sketches for *Mysterium* by the time he died, in 1915. He was, by any measure, quite mad. (He had become convinced that he could will himself to levitate and once attempted to walk on Lake Geneva.) The most ambitious composition he actually did complete is his Symphony No. 3 in C major, which bears the title “Le Poème divin” (“The Divine Poem”).

Scriabin wrote this work between 1902 and 1904. The music constitutes something of a crossroads in the evolution of the composer’s style. Its harmonic language and orchestration still belong fundamentally to the 19th century, but unusual inflections in both its melodic lines and harmonies look forward to Scriabin’s later work, where the bonds of traditional major-minor tonality become decidedly loosened.

STRUGGLE, SENSUALITY, BREATHLESS JOY Scriabin wrote a characteristically effusive program which this symphony allegedly expresses, a scenario whose general outline can be gleaned from the titles Scriabin gave to its main movements: “Struggles,” “Delights” and “Divine Play.” Each conveys an important aspect of Scriabin’s conception of divinity.

The initial moments of the Introduction bring a memorable sonority: a rough-hewn theme that begins as an utterance by the low brass and continues with a bold melodic leap in the trumpet. According to Scriabin, the melodic idea thus articulated represents the self-assertion of the divine in man. From a purely compositional perspective, this theme functions as a



Born

January 6, 1872, Moscow

Died

April 27, 1915, Moscow

First Performance

May 29, 1905, in Paris, conducted by Arthur Nikisch

STL Symphony Premiere

September 24, 1970, Walter Susskind conducting

Most Recent STL Symphony Performance

October 16, 1975, Jerzy Semkow conducting

Scoring

3 flutes
piccolo
3 oboes
English horn
3 clarinets
bass clarinet
3 bassoons
contrabassoon
8 horns
5 trumpets
3 trombones
tuba
timpani
percussion
2 harps
strings

Performance Time

approximately 49 minutes

motto subject, one that sounds repeatedly and in myriad forms during the course of the symphony.

The first variant of the motto comes with the opening measures of the true first movement, “Struggles.” Scriabin identified the agitated melody given out by the strings as representing mankind in a benighted state, estranged from its divine nature and afflicted by emotional turmoil. He counters it with several more hopeful themes, emblems of that happiness which seems either fleeting or just out of reach. Scriabin juxtaposes his various subjects and combines them in counterpoint, creating passages that alternately rise in feverish excitement or swoon dramatically. A final peroration leads to a mighty reassertion of the motto idea in its original form, after which the movement subsides to a quiet conclusion.

Whereas this movement conveys striving and battling obstacles, the music of the ensuing Lento, which Scriabin titled “Delights,” imparts a lush sensuality. Extended passages of instrumental birdsong link erotic experience to the natural world. Apart from these, the melodic ideas here are almost all variants of ones established in the preceding movement, including the motto theme.

A brief accelerando at the end of this second movement leads directly into the finale. Scriabin called this concluding portion of the symphony “Divine Play,” echoing a concept that recurs often in his diaries. (“I am freedom’s play, I am life’s play, I am the playing streams of unknown feelings,” reads one entry; “I am the blind play of powers released.”) At this point in the symphony’s program, the composer writes, “the Spirit is released from all ties of submission, it creates its own world by dint of its own creative will.”

The music surges ecstatically on prancing rhythms, with subliminal, and sometimes explicit, references to the leaping trumpet motif of the motto theme. Later the composer recalls the main melodic ideas of the earlier movements, culminating in a triumphant statement of the motto just before the close. Years after he had written it, Scriabin said of this movement, “I truly love that finale. ... This was the first time I found light in music, the first time I knew intoxication, flight, the *breathlessness* of happiness.”

VASILY PETRENKO

CHARLES V. RAINWATER III GUEST ARTIST

Vasily Petrenko was born in 1976 and started his music education at the St. Petersburg Capella Boys Music School—the oldest music school in Russia. He then studied at the St. Petersburg Conservatory and has also participated in master classes with such major figures as Ilya Musin, Mariss Jansons, Yuri Temirkanov, and Esa-Pekka Salonen. Following considerable success in a number of international conducting competitions including the Fourth Prokofiev Conducting Competition in St. Petersburg (2003), First Prize in the Shostakovich Choral Conducting Competition in St. Petersburg (1997), and First Prize in the Sixth Cadaques International Conducting Competition in Spain, he was appointed Chief Conductor of the St. Petersburg State Academic Symphony Orchestra from 2004 to 2007. He served as Principal Conductor of the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain from 2009-13

The 2013-14 season marked his first as Chief Conductor of the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra, alongside which he maintains his positions as Chief Conductor of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, and Principal Guest Conductor of the Mikhailovsky Theatre, where he began his career as Resident Conductor from 1994 to 1997.

Highlights of the 2014-15 season and beyond include return visits to the Rundfunk Sinfonieorchester Berlin, Netherlands Radio Philharmonic, London Philharmonic, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Chicago Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, and San Francisco Symphony, tour periods in Europe and Asia with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic and Oslo Philharmonic, and his debut performances with the Israel Philharmonic and Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestras.

Vasily Petrenko is only the second person to have been awarded Honorary Doctorates by both the University of Liverpool and Liverpool Hope University, and an Honorary Fellowship of the Liverpool John Moores University, awards which recognize the immense impact he has had on the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic and the city's cultural scene.



Vasily Petrenko most recently conducted the St. Louis Symphony in October 2011.

Photo: Michael Duran / Wikimedia



Simon Trpčeski debuted with the St. Louis Symphony in April 2007. He signs CDs in the foyer during intermission of both performances.

SIMON TRPČESKI

ROBERT R. IMSE GUEST ARTIST

Macedonian pianist Simon Trpčeski has established himself as one of the most remarkable musicians to have emerged in recent years, performing with many of the world's greatest orchestras and captivating audiences worldwide. Trpčeski is praised not only for his impeccable technique and delicate expression, but also for his warm personality and commitment to strengthening Macedonia's cultural image. Trpčeski works regularly with young musicians in Macedonia in order to cultivate the talent of the country's next generation of artists.

The 2014-15 season sees Trpčeski continuing to perform at the highest level around the world. As always, he makes regular visits to London, giving performances with the London Symphony and Philharmonia orchestras, as well as performing chamber music at Wigmore Hall. Elsewhere, he returns to play with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Seattle and Baltimore symphonies, Minnesota Orchestra, Netherlands Radio Philharmonic, RSO Berlin and NDR Hamburg, Russian National Orchestra, St. Petersburg Philharmonic, and the Armenian Philharmonic among others. He also undertakes a tour of Australia and New Zealand with Vasily Petrenko.

Born in the Republic of Macedonia in 1979, Trpčeski has won prizes in international piano competitions in the United Kingdom, Italy, and the Czech Republic. From 2001 to 2003, he was a member of the BBC New Generation Scheme, and in May 2003, he was honored with the Young Artist Award by the Royal Philharmonic Society. In December 2009, the President of Macedonia, H.E. Gjorge Ivanov, honored him with the Presidential Order of Merit for Macedonia. Most recently, in September 2011, Trpčeski was awarded the first-ever title "National Artist of the Republic of Macedonia."

Simon Trpčeski is a graduate of the School of Music at the University of St. Cyril and St. Methodius in Skopje, where he studied with Professor Boris Romanov. Trpčeski makes his home in Skopje with his family.

A BRIEF EXPLANATION

You don't need to know what "andante" means or what a glockenspiel is to enjoy a St. Louis Symphony concert, but it's always fun to know stuff. For example, what is an "intermezzo"?

Intermezzo: Rachmaninoff calls his second movement an intermezzo, played adagio, meaning leisurely; intermezzo is an Italian word that literally means "entr'acte," which gives it a theatrical slant, something that goes on between the acts of a play or an opera; for Rachmaninoff, it is more of an interlude between the showy first and third movements; *Intermezzo* is also the name of a classic Ingrid Bergman movie

PLAYING Scriabin:

LORRAINE GLASS-HARRIS, SECOND VIOLINS

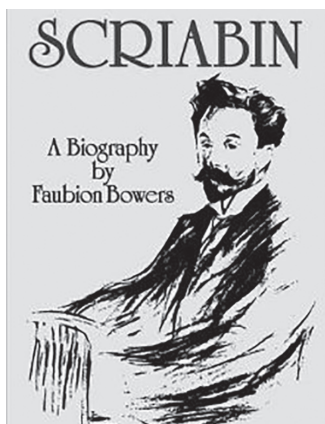
"After 43 years, I don't remember playing this symphony. It's a once-in-a-career piece! Eight horns, five trumpets, three trombones—this is part of why Scriabin doesn't sound like anybody else. He's pushing the orchestra. He's opening up the 19th-century orchestra. Very soon the orchestra will seemingly break apart. Scriabin will be followed by Stravinsky, another Russian composer who found fame in Paris. Stravinsky starts to articulate the 20th century."



Lorraine Glass-Harris

YOU TAKE IT FROM HERE

If these concerts have inspired you to learn more, here are suggested source materials with which to continue your explorations.



**Scott Hicks, director, *Shine*
DVD**

1996 film about Australian pianist David Helfgott, whose personal struggles center on his attempt to perform Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 3, starring Geoffrey Rush, with the incomparable John Gielgud in one of his last great roles as Helfgott's teacher

**Igudesman & Joo, "Rachmaninoff Had Big Hands"
YouTube**

Just for the fun of it, enjoy this YouTube hit in which the small-handed pianist inventively compensates, Google "Rachmaninoff Had Big Hands"

**Faubion Bowers, *Scriabin, a Biography*
Dover Books, Second Revised Edition**

Currently the definitive biography in English

Read the program notes online. Go to stlsymphony.org. Click "Connect," then "Program Notes."

Learn more about this season of anniversaries with **videos and podcasts**. Click "Connect," then "10-50-135."

Keep up with the backstage life of the St. Louis Symphony, as chronicled by Symphony staffer Eddie Silva, via stlsymphony.org/blog.

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The St. Louis Symphony is on



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The Employee Community Fund of Boeing St. Louis is an employee owned and managed charity fund founded in 1947. It is funded by Boeing employee donations of which 100 percent are invested back into the St. Louis community in collaboration with local nonprofits.

What are the Employee Community Fund's philanthropic interests/priorities?

The funding goal of the Employee Community Fund is to strengthen the St. Louis metropolitan community and support all those who live in it. Approximately \$2 million in grants are awarded annually in the following focus areas: Health and Human Services, Education, Arts and Culture, and Civic and Environment.



Picture the Music 2015 Maestro Award winners JaDen Beasley and Alex Hutsell

The ECF of Boeing St. Louis has supported our Picture and Express the Music programs for well over a decade. How does this support fit into your strategy?

The Picture and Express the Music programs allow students to both experience the arts and to participate in them through self-expression. Promoting art to youth in this way fits with the ECF belief that art is an important part of a strong community in itself. Additionally it can be beneficial to other academic subjects such as math, as well as character and mental well-being.

Being that we are celebrating our 135th "birthday," this season, what is your wish for the orchestra?

We wish you continued success in being one of the leaders bringing quality music and promoting music appreciation to the St. Louis community! We are proud to have such a long history of partnering with the St. Louis Symphony.

CLASSICAL CONCERT: BOLERO



May 1-3

David Robertson, conductor; Allegra Lilly, harp; Michael Sanders, tuba

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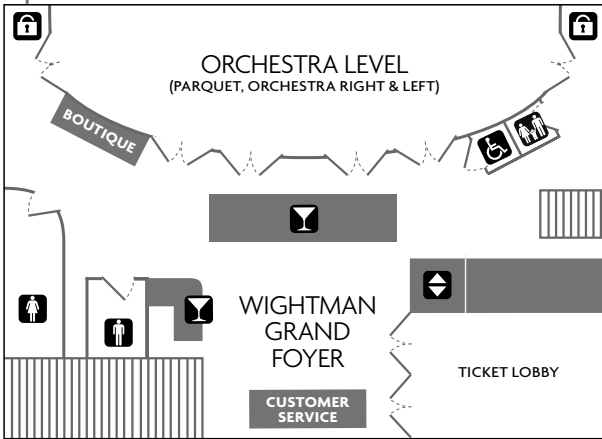
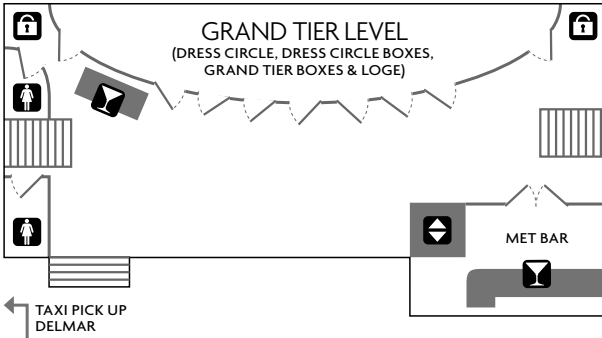
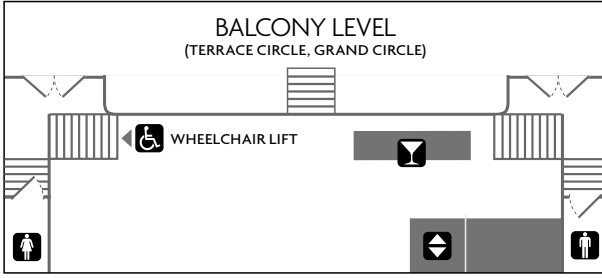
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