

Atlanta Symphony Orchestra*A founding member of the Robert W. Woodruff Arts Center***ROBERT SPANO**, Music Director**DONALD RUNNICLES**, Principal Guest Conductor**DELTA CLASSICAL SERIES CONCERTS**

Thursday, Friday and Saturday, February 25, 26 and 27, 2010, at 8 p.m.

MEI-ANN CHEN, Conductor
 JON KIMURA PARKER, Piano

PAUL HINDEMITH (1895-1963)

Symphonic Metamorphosis on***Themes of Carl Maria von Weber*** (1943)I. *Allegro*II. *Turandot, Scherzo; Moderato*III. *Andantino*IV. *Marsch*

SERGEI RACHMANINOV (1873-1943)

Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, Opus 43 (1934)

JON KIMURA PARKER, Piano

INTERMISSION

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK (1841-1904)

Symphony No. 8 in G Major, Opus 88 (1889)I. *Allegro con brio*II. *Adagio*III. *Allegretto grazioso*IV. *Allegro, ma non troppo*

“INSIDE THE MUSIC” preview of the concert, Thursday at 7 p.m.,
 presented by Ken Meltzer, ASO Insider and Program Annotator.

The use of cameras or recording devices during the concert is strictly prohibited.

Atlanta Symphony Orchestra

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NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

By Ken Meltzer

Symphonic Metamorphosis on Themes of Carl Maria von Weber (1943)

PAUL HINDEMITH was born in Hanau, near Frankfurt, Germany, on November 16, 1895, and died in Frankfurt on December 28, 1963. The first performance of the *Symphonic Metamorphosis on Themes of Carl Maria von Weber* took place at Carnegie Hall in New York on January 20, 1944, with Artur Rodzinski conducting the New York Philharmonic. *The Symphonic Metamorphosis on Themes of Carl Maria von Weber* is scored for piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, snare drum, tambourine, tom-tom, field drum, orchestra bells, chimes, cymbals, suspended cymbal, small gong, bass drum, wood block, triangle and strings. Approximate performance time is twenty-one minutes.

*First ASO Classical Subscription Performances: May 12, 13 and 14, 1977,
Robert Shaw, Conductor.*

*Most Recent ASO Classical Subscription Performances: February 8, 9 and 10, 1996,
Franz-Paul Decker, Conductor.*

Hindemith in America

In 1938, German composer Paul Hindemith left his native country. He first moved to Switzerland, and then, in February of 1940, to the United States. The following month, Hindemith attended a performance by a ballet company led by the famous dancer and choreographer, Leonide Massine. After the performance, Massine told Hindemith that he wanted to stage a new ballet, featuring arrangements of music by the German early-Romantic composer Carl Maria von Weber (1786-1826).

Hindemith immediately began work on the project. It was not long, however, before the composer had misgivings about Massine's conception of the piece:

We worked at the piano for two hours on a projected Weber ballet. I do not think the idea is any good at all. (Massine) thinks of it only as a plain ballroom dance (in Metternich's palace, so he says) with good people milling around with bad people. He has some funny ideas about the music but I will write what I want to write, namely, music based upon those charming piano duets by Weber.

It soon became clear that Hindemith and Massine held quite different views as to the handling of Weber's music. Hindemith wanted to use Weber's pieces as the starting point for rather free orchestral adaptations. Massine, according to Hindemith, "simply wanted an exact orchestral

arrangement of the original Weber. I am not just an orchestrator and furthermore I had already told them what I was going to do.”

Massine and Hindemith met once again in Boston, following the American premiere of the composer’s Violin Concerto. Hindemith reported to his wife, Gertrude:

I have finally broken off with Massine and it was high time ... I was not going to say a word about the Weber fiasco, but when he more or less blamed me for it and said it was a “pity” it did not come off. I said it was a “stupidity” but certainly not on my part.

Although the Hindemith-Massine Weber project never came to fruition, the composer’s efforts were not wasted. Three years after the fallout with Massine, Hindemith used the intended ballet music as the basis for his most popular work, the *Symphonic Metamorphosis on Themes of Carl Maria von Weber*. Hindemith completed the orchestral piece in the summer of 1943. The *Symphonic Metamorphosis* received its premiere at New York’s Carnegie Hall on January 20, 1944. Artur Rodzinski conducted the New York Philharmonic. The audience greeted the work (and the composer, who was in attendance) with a stirring ovation.

Eight years later, Hindemith’s *Symphonic Metamorphosis on Themes of Carl Maria von Weber* finally served as the basis for a ballet. The choreographer was not Leonide Massine. Rather, George Balanchine staged the work at New York’s City Center. Hindemith attended the production, which he praised as “beautifully done.”

Musical Analysis

For the 1944 premiere, Hindemith refused to disclose the precise origin of the various Weber melodies included in the *Symphonic Metamorphosis*. Subsequently, various musicologists identified the pieces, which are noted below.

I. *Allegro* — The first movement, a vigorous *Allegro*, is based upon Weber’s piano duet, Opus 60, No. 4.

II. *Turandot, Scherzo; Moderato* — The second movement employs music from Weber’s 1809 Overture to *Turandot*. The original Weber piece was part of incidental music he composed for Friedrich Schiller’s translation of Carlo Gozzi’s 1762 play (Gozzi’s *Turandot*, the story of a Chinese princess, also served as the inspiration for Giacomo Puccini’s final opera of the same name). In contrast to the opening movement, the *Scherzo* begins quite delicately, but soon generates its own momentum and power. In addition to the evocation of Chinese atmosphere, jazz elements also make an engaging appearance.

III. *Andantino* — The work’s slow movement, based upon music from the Six Pieces for piano duet, Opus 10, highlights the winds of the orchestra.

IV. *Marsch* — The finale, a boisterous march, features music from Weber’s piano duet, Opus 60, No. 7.

***Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*, Opus 43 (1934)**

SERGEI RACHMANINOV was born in Semyonovo, Russia, on April 1, 1873, and died in Beverly Hills, California, on March 28, 1943. The first performance of the *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* took place in at the Lyric Opera House in Baltimore, Maryland, on November 7, 1934, with the composer as soloist, and Leopold Stokowski conducting the Philadelphia Orchestra. In addition to the solo piano, *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* is scored for piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, orchestra bells, suspended cymbals, snare drum, triangle, cymbals, bass drum and strings. Approximate performance time is twenty-four minutes.

First ASO Classical Subscription Performance: March 31, 1956, Artur Rubinstein, Piano, Henry Sopkin, Conductor.

Most Recent ASO Classical Subscription Performances: November 29 and 30, and December 1, 2007, Dejan Lazic, Piano, Roberto Minczuk, Conductor.

Paganini and Rachmaninov

While the legendary Italian violinist Nicolò Paganini (1782-1840) is acknowledged as one of the greatest virtuosos of all time, his compositions have not enjoyed a similar level of adulation. Still, composers as diverse as Robert Schumann, Franz Liszt, Johannes Brahms, Boris Blacher, Witold Lutoslawski and George Rochberg have all made Paganini's music the basis for their own compositions. One Paganini composition in particular — the last of his 24 *Caprices* for Solo Violin, Opus 1 — has served as the inspiration for several works, including Sergei Rachmaninov's *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*, Opus 43.

In certain respects, it is ironic that the Russian composer, pianist and conductor would focus his attention upon Paganini and his music. While both were among the most accomplished instrumentalists of their respective eras, perhaps no two figures in music history have projected such diametrically opposed personas. Well before the age of the intense marketing efforts that attend many of the superstars in today's music industry, Paganini understood the value of publicity, particularly of the sensational variety. Paganini did little to stifle incredible rumors that he learned to play the violin on a single-stringed instrument while serving a prison sentence for murder, or that his unique talents resulted from a pact with the devil. In fact, Paganini encouraged these stories, and others, at every turn. The violinist's shoulder-length hair, and gaunt, black-attired figure, only served to reinforce the diabolical imagery.

In public, Rachmaninov was as reserved as Paganini was flamboyant. Igor Stravinsky once described his friend as "a six-and-a-half-foot-tall scowl." In his book *The Great Pianists*, Harold C. Schonberg begins his chapter on Rachmaninov (entitled "The Puritan") in the following manner:

The tall, dour, lank, unsmiling figure of Sergei Rachmaninov, with its seamed face and head of close-cropped (almost shaved) hair invariably reminded the public

of a convict on the loose. No audience ever saw him unbend, ever saw that sorrowful Russian face relax, ever saw the least crack in his gravity.

On the other hand, Rachmaninov's friends and family knew a side of the musician's personality never divulged to the general public. Rachmaninov was, according to those close to him, a warm and generous man. Music critic Olin Downes recalled that Rachmaninov "was also capable of what many never suspected: of uproarious humor. 'But,' he once said to us, 'when I took my desk at the Imperial Opera House, as long as I was there, they never saw me smile!' And laughed as he said it."

The Rhapsody's Premiere

The *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*, Rachmaninov's final work for solo piano and orchestra, was completed in 1934 and premiered that same year in Baltimore on November 7. Rachmaninov was the piano soloist, performing with Leopold Stokowski and the Philadelphia Orchestra. That Christmas Eve, those same musicians recorded the work for RCA. This invaluable historical document (think of what we would give for recordings of Mozart, Beethoven or Chopin interpreting their own compositions!) is available on compact disc.

Rachmaninov's famed prodigious technique, which allowed him to negotiate the most difficult passages with ease and clarity, is evident throughout the 1934 recording. Equally striking is a lack of the interpretive indulgences and excesses many assume to be integral to the performance of late-Romantic repertoire. In truth, Rachmaninov's taut, straightforward (and flawlessly executed) rendition of his *Rhapsody* is ideally suited to a work notable for its unity of construction, logical sequential argument, inexorable forward movement, and admirable partnership of soloist and orchestra.

Musical Analysis

While the term "Rhapsody" traditionally suggests a rather free-flowing piece, Rachmaninov's composition is, in fact, a tightly organized series of twenty-four variations on the principal theme of the Paganini *Caprice* No. 24. Although the *Rhapsody* is performed as a single continuous movement, it actually divides rather neatly into four sections: Variations I-XI constitute the opening fast portion (with cadenza), Variations XII-XV are a combination minuet and scherzo, Variations XVI-XVIII offer a slow interlude, and Variations XIX-XXIV constitute the lively, concluding portion.

The *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* teems with felicities that, at every turn, display Rachmaninov's skill and imagination as a composer. Take, for example, the work's opening measures, in which the first variation precedes the introduction of the theme itself!

Rachmaninov's preoccupation with the ancient *Dies Irae* chant is well documented, and it is fascinating to see how the composer weaves this music into Variations VII, X, and XXIV. Certainly the inclusion of the *Dies Irae* ("Day of Wrath"), as well as the use of the bone-rattling *col legno* effects in Variation IX, inject a diabolical (Paganinian?) element into the *Rhapsody*. Even the unforgettable *Andante cantabile* melody in Variation XVIII is the product of a bit of compositional legerdemain, as it is derived from an inversion of the original Paganini theme.

Rachmaninov believed that each musical piece contained what he termed “the point,” the work’s culminating moment. In the *Rhapsody*, “the point” bursts onto the scene in the concluding variation, with the Paganini theme overwhelmed by a blazing account of the *Dies Irae*. Still, Rachmaninov, the inventive composer and private humorist, offers one last delightful surprise, as the *Rhapsody* ends not with the expected orchestral bang. Instead, the soloist teases the listener with a hushed fragment of the Paganini theme.

Symphony No. 8 in G Major, Opus 88 (1889)

Antonín Dvořák was born in Mühlhausen, Bohemia (now Nelahozeves, the Czech Republic), on September 8, 1841, and died in Prague on May 1, 1904. The first performance of the Symphony No. 8 took place in Prague on February 2, 1890, with the composer conducting the Prague National Theater Orchestra. The Eighth Symphony is scored for piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, two trombones, bass trombone, tuba, timpani and strings. Approximate performance time is thirty-five minutes.

First ASO Classical Subscription Performances: October 30, 1951, Henry Sopkin, Conductor.

Most Recent ASO Classical Subscription Performances: January 20, 21 and 22, 2005, Donald Runnicles, Conductor.

“The melodies simply pour out of me”

While working on his Piano Quartet, Opus 87, Czech composer Antonín Dvořák told his friend, Alois Göbl: “It’s going unexpectedly easily and the melodies simply pour out of me.” On August 26, 1889, one week after finishing the Piano Quartet, Dvořák began work on his Symphony in G Major. And it appears a similar level of inspiration attended the new orchestral work. Dvořák began to note ideas for the Symphony, and started the composition sketch on September 6. Dvořák completed the sketches for all four movements by September 23, and finished the orchestration on November 8.

On February 2, 1890, Dvořák conducted the Prague National Theater Orchestra in the premiere of his Eighth Symphony. A few months later, the composer again presented the Symphony in honor of his election as Member of the Franz Josef Academy for Science, Literature and Art in Prague. On June 16, 1891, the University of Cambridge bestowed an honorary Doctorate of Music upon Dvořák, who again offered his G-Major Symphony in commemoration of the event.

The Eighth Symphony proved to be the source of an unfortunate rift between Dvořák and his German publisher, Simrock. Dvořák had previously granted Simrock the right of first refusal for publication of all his works. Despite the success of Dvořák’s Seventh in London, Vienna and Berlin, Simrock was not convinced that the Czech composer’s Symphonies were profitable. Simrock offered 1,000 marks to publish the Eighth Symphony, one-sixth of the fee paid for the Seventh. Dvořák interpreted this low offer as an outright refusal. Novello in England published

Dvořák's G-Major in 1892. Because of the Cambridge performance and publication by Novello, the G-major has, from time to time, been referred to as Dvořák's "English" Symphony.

Of course, there is nothing particularly English about the music of Dvořák's Eighth Symphony. As with most of his works, the G-Major Symphony is brimming with the influence of Czech folk melodies and rhythms. It is also in many ways a highly innovative work, suggesting new possibilities for traditional symphonic forms. According to Dvořák biographer, Otakar Sourek, the composer (by his own admission) consciously strove to create "a work different from his other symphonies, with individual thoughts worked out in a new way." This, Dvořák achieved in the context of energetic and optimistic music that offers a seamless flow of unforgettable melody.

Musical Analysis

I. *Allegro con brio* — The Symphony begins with a somber introduction, played by the winds and cellos. This music serves as a unifying force throughout the movement, returning as a bridge to the development and recapitulation of the principal themes. Out of the shadows emerges the sprightly main theme, first played by the solo flute and soon, triumphantly, by the full orchestra. The flutes and clarinets, over triplet string accompaniment, play the minor-key second theme. The woodwinds then introduce a *pianissimo*, chorale-like melody, played with great force by the entire orchestra. A stormy, contrapuntal development leads to the English horn's recapitulation of the initial theme. The other themes return in sequence. The movement concludes with a brief, dramatic coda, prominently featuring the brass and timpani.

II. *Adagio* — The slow movement, in rather free form, presents a series of episodes essentially based on upon the opening four-note motif, consisting of rising sixteenth-note triplets and a quarter note. Especially captivating is an extended C-Major episode with a shimmering, *espressivo* violin solo. The *Adagio* explores a variety of moods and colors before achieving its peaceful conclusion.

III. *Allegretto grazioso* — Instead of the scherzo then in fashion, the third movement is in the character of a melancholy waltz. The first violins sing the principal melody, closely related to its counterpart in the *Adagio*. The lilting, major-key trio prominently features the woodwinds. The traditional repeat of the waltz leads to an unexpected, joyful *Coda (Molto vivace)* in 2/4 time, serving as a bridge to the finale.

IV. *Allegro, ma non troppo* — A trumpet call heralds the opening of the final movement. The cellos introduce the theme (*Un poco meno mosso*) that serves as the basis for a series of diverse and often thrilling variations. In the midst of the variations, the trumpet-call motif returns. A series of lyrical variations finally yields to a jubilant coda (*Tempo I*), as the G-Major Symphony sprints to a rousing close.

MEI-ANN CHEN, Conductor

The first woman to win the Malko International Conductors Competition (2005), Mei-Ann Chen is one of America's most promising young conductors. Having recently concluded a highly successful tenure as assistant conductor of the Atlanta Symphony, she began a one-year appointment as the League of American Orchestras' conducting fellow and assistant conductor of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra in the fall of 2009.

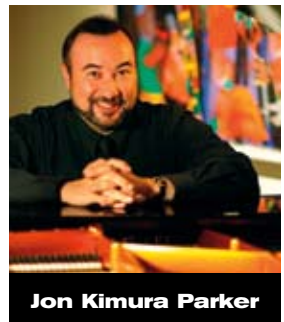
Ms. Chen's guest conducting appearances include all the principal Danish orchestras, the Atlanta Symphony, Bournemouth Symphony, Eugene Symphony, Honolulu Symphony, Lexington Philharmonic, Norwegian Radio Orchestra, Oregon Symphony, Princeton Symphony, Rochester Philharmonic, Seattle Symphony, Taiwan National Symphony, Toledo Symphony and the Trondheim Symphony. Awarded the Taki Concordia Fellowship in 2007, she appeared jointly with Marin Alsop and Stefan Sanderling in highly acclaimed subscription concerts with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, Colorado Symphony and Florida Orchestra.

During the 2009-2010 season, Ms. Chen will make debuts with the Alabama Symphony, Chicago Sinfonietta, Fort Worth Symphony, Kalamazoo Symphony, Memphis Symphony and Toronto Symphony, as well as return engagements with the Atlanta Symphony and Taiwan National Symphony.

A native of Taiwan, Ms. Chen has lived in the United States since 1989. She holds master's degrees in both conducting and violin from the New England Conservatory, and a doctorate of musical arts in conducting from the University of Michigan, where she was a student of Kenneth Kiesler. She was a participant in the National Conducting Institute in Washington, D.C. and the American Academy of Conducting in Aspen. During her five-year tenure as music director of the Portland (Ore.) Youth Philharmonic, she led its sold-out debut in Carnegie Hall, received an ASCAP award for innovative programming and was honored with a Sunburst Award from Young Audiences for her contribution to music education.

**Mei-Ann Chen****JON KIMURA PARKER, Piano**

Internationally acclaimed concert pianist Jon Kimura Parker's extraordinary career has taken him from Carnegie Hall and London's Royal Festival Hall to Baffin Island and Zimbabwe. A true Canadian ambassador of music, Mr. Parker has given two command performances for Queen Elizabeth II, special performances for the United States Supreme Court, and has performed for the Prime Ministers of Canada and Japan. He is an officer of The Order of Canada, his country's highest civilian honor.

**Jon Kimura Parker**

In recent seasons, Jon Kimura Parker has performed as guest soloist with the New York Philharmonic, The Cleveland Orchestra, The Philadelphia Orchestra, the Warsaw Philharmonic, the NHK Tokyo Orchestra, and with major orchestras in Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Cincinnati, Dallas, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, Montreal, San Diego, Salt Lake City and Toronto. This season, Mr. Parker performs as concerto soloist with 15 symphony orchestras in North America and conductors including Hans Graf, Jeffrey Kahane, David Robertson, Michael Stern and Pinchas Zukerman. He also returns to Vail with the Philadelphia Orchestra next summer.

Recent summer orchestral festival appearances have included the Hollywood Bowl, Minnesota Sommerfest, Mainly Mozart, Sun Valley and Vail, as well as chamber music festivals in Amelia Island, La Jolla, Santa Fe, Seattle, Steamboat Springs and Orcas Island. Jon Kimura Parker also collaborates regularly with the Tokyo Quartet and Lynn Harrell. An unusually versatile artist, Mr. Parker has jammed with Doc Severinsen in Calgary and Bobby McFerrin in Philadelphia and Baltimore, and has performed with Audra McDonald and the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. As a member of the outreach project PianoPlus, Mr. Parker toured remote areas including the Canadian Arctic, performing classical music and rock 'n' roll on everything from upright pianos to electronic keyboards.

An active media personality, Mr. Parker has hosted the classical music television series "Whole Notes," on Bravo! Canada. He also hosted CBC Radio Two's five-part series "Up And Coming," showcasing young musicians. He has played himself in a guest appearance on the Disney Channel's "Under the Umbrella Tree." Mr. Parker also was seen on CNN performing in war-torn Sarajevo and documented on PBS's "The Visionaries."

A committed educator, Jon Kimura Parker is professor of piano at The Shepherd School of Music at Rice University in Houston. His former student Jade Simmons was recently named the first new music/new places fellow by New York's Concert Artists Guild. Mr. Parker is the E. Stephen Purdom distinguished visiting artist at the Schwob School of Music at Columbus State University, as well as honorary co-chair of the Piano Pedagogy Research Laboratory at the University of Ottawa. Mr. Parker has given master classes and lectures at The Juilliard School, The Steans Institute and Yale University. Jon Kimura Parker also is the artistic advisor of the Orcas Island Chamber Music Festival.

Jon "Jackie" Parker received all of his early education in Canada, training with his uncle Edward Parker and his mother Keiko Parker. He studied with Lee Kum-Sing at the Vancouver Academy of Music and University of British Columbia, Marek Jablonski at The Banff Centre and with renowned pedagogue Adele Marcus at The Juilliard School, where he received his doctorate. He won the Gold Medal at the 1984 Leeds International Piano Competition.

Mr. Parker has recorded for Telarc with Yoel Levi, Andre Previn and Peter Schickele. He was born, raised and educated in Vancouver. He lives in Houston with his wife, violinist Aloysia Friedmann and their daughter Sophie. For further information, please see Kimura.com and Oicmf.org.