Friday ACCESS Concert
Emanuel Ax Plus Tchaikovsky 3

Friday, November 18, 2011 7 pm
Jones Hall

Evening Schedule:
• 6 pm Pre-Concert reception with Houston Symphony musicians and Miles Hoffman. Beverage service available with complimentary hors d’oeuvres.
  Location: Main Lobby
• 7 pm Concert
• 8:30 pm Post-Concert discussion with the artists
  Location: in the theater

Hans Graf, conductor
Emanuel Ax, piano
Miles Hoffman, host

Mozart
Piano Concerto No. 25 in C major, K.503
I Allegro maestoso
II Andante
III Allegretto

Tchaikovsky
Symphony No. 3 in D major, Opus 29 (Polish)
I Introduzione e Allegro: Moderato assai (Tempo di marcia funebre)—Allegro brillante
II Alla tedesca: Allegro moderato e semplice
III Andante: Andante elegiaco
IV Scherzo and Trio: Allegro vivo
V Finale: Allegro con fuoco (Tempo di Polacca)

PIANO CONCERTO NO. 25 IN C MAJOR, K.503
Wolfgang Amadè Mozart (1756-1791)
Recording: Leon Fleisher, with George Szell conducting the Cleveland Orchestra (CBS great performances)
Instrumentation: flute, two oboes, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, timpani and strings

Beyond the sheer number and quality of his piano concertos, Mozart’s great achievement in this medium consisted in merging the soloistic principles inherited from the baroque concerto with the organic logic inherent in classical symphonic form. That success is nowhere more apparent than in the great C major Concerto, K.503, that crowned a string of 15 piano concertos Mozart composed during the five-year period 1782-86.
While it may not be the most popular concerto among this group, it is certainly one of the grandest and most probing concertos of the set. Its tonality of C major prompts a spirit of boldness in the music, immediately announced in a martial introduction full of the sound of trumpets and drums. Amazingly, Mozart anticipates some of Haydn’s symphonic experiments by using this introductory theme to punctuate major sections in the first movement—the entrance of the piano, the recapitulation and the end of the coda following the solo cadenza.

Like many a Mozart sonata-allegro form, the first movement contains numerous short themes. In the case of this concerto, they provide unity as well as variety, for most of these themes stem from a common rhythm of three eighth notes followed by one or more quarter notes. The movement is also one of the most contrapuntal examples of Mozart’s concerto writing, for the orchestra is heavily involved in thematic display and development, sometimes with several different melodic lines competing for the listener’s attention. Chiaroscuro harmonies shade the brilliant character of the music, as the prevailing C major unexpectedly gives way to C minor episodes and thematic sequences suddenly leap to remote tonalities.

The Andante stands nicely in the company of poetic slow movements found in many of Mozart’s mature concertos. The poignant theme of this song form is fully stated by the orchestra before the piano enters with a more decorative version. The large seven-part rondo concluding the concerto is a typically bubbling Mozart finale. Once again, the orchestra leads off and, once the piano enters, there is almost a steady stream of decorative figuration, again unexpectedly changing its rhythmic values to provide delightful variety to the music.

Though Mozart apparently composed the concerto for an Advent concert in 1786, there is no documentation that the concert took place. It may have been performed at a Lenten concert in 1787, and it was included in a concert at Leipzig’s Gewandhaus on May 12, 1789, during a tour Mozart made of northern Germany. Sadly, the concert was so poorly subscribed that Mozart had to give away most of the tickets.

SYMPHONY NO. 3 IN D MAJOR, OPUS 29
(POLISH)
Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)
Recording: Neeme Järvi conducting the Gothenburg Symphony (BIS)
Instrumentation: two flutes, piccolo, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani and strings

Tchaikovsky’s Third Symphony is one of his least known symphonies, despite the fact that it was composed in the summer of 1875—right between two of the composer’s most famous masterworks: the First Piano Concerto and the ballet, Swan Lake. Biographer David Brown theorizes that, in reaction to the critical lashing Tchaikovsky had received from Nikolai Rubinstein, his mentor at the Moscow Conservatory, over structural freedom of his piano concerto, he strove for greater restraint in the formal design of the symphony.

The large forms of opening and closing symphonic movements were always a challenge for Tchaikovsky, and it was not until the Fifth Symphony a decade later that he ideally blended his talent for beautiful melody and passionate expression into the inherited traditions of symphonic form. The D major Symphony marks a step in that progress, and it is unique for being his only symphony in a major key and the only one with five movements, rather than the customary four.
The work begins with a long, dark, shadowy slow introduction, not in the major key, but in D minor. Its thematic fragments gradually evolve and accelerate as they pass from the strings to the horn and then the woodwinds, emerging as the bold opening theme when the tonality turns to D major in the Allegro section of this sonata movement. Three themes are set forth, followed by a long, contrapuntal development, and an expanded restatement of the themes, ending in a vigorous coda.

Tchaikovsky was a master of waltz music, and his designation, “alla tedesca,” for the second movement reveals a charming piece in the hesitation-waltz style of an Austrian Ländler. Tiptoeing woodwinds provide a contrast of tone colors in the Trio section.

The heart of the symphony is found in its exquisite slow movement, a lyrical idyl which builds to a passionate, full throated climax at the height of its central song form. It is enhanced with a lengthy introduction, whose pensive themes are colorfully distributed among solo winds and horn, and are recalled in a coda balancing the end of the movement. The fourth movement Scherzo is one of Tchaikovsky’s icy little marches, whose light, dashing passagework in the strings and flutes is punctuated by tart interjections from the woodwinds—and eventually a noisy trombone.

The concluding polonaise gives the symphony its nickname, Polish, and it is one of many such dances strewn throughout Tchaikovsky’s operas, ballets and orchestral works. Despite some weighty contrapuntal episodes that slow the center of the movement, this spirited polonaise regains its energy in a quite bombastic ending.

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Biographies

Miles Hoffman, host


Hoffman has been a featured speaker for universities, orchestras, festivals, chamber music series and community organizations throughout the United States. He has presented keynote addresses for the International Viola Congress, the American String Teachers Association National Conference and the National Conference of the Association of Music Personnel in Public Radio.

In 2003, he gave the commencement address at Centenary College of Louisiana in Shreveport and was awarded an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters. The previous year, Hoffman served as host and commentator for the National Symphony Orchestra’s Festival of Favorites.

On several occasions, he has delivered the Bach Lecture at the Annual Winter Park Bach Festival and served in residence to perform a solo recital (2005). He has also delivered the President’s Lecture at the University of Montana and a University Convocation address at Southern Adventist University.

During the 1999-2000 season, Hoffman appeared as onstage host and commentator, as well as pre-concert lecturer, for the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra. He has given special lectures for the National Symphony Orchestra, the Phoenix Symphony Orchestra and the Richmond Symphony,
in addition to numerous talks in connection with his solo viola performances and his appearances with the American Chamber Players.

**Hans Graf, conductor**

Known for his wide range of repertoire and creative programming, distinguished Austrian conductor Hans Graf—the Houston Symphony’s 15th Music Director—is one of today’s most highly respected musicians. He began his tenure here on Opening Night of the 2001-2002 season.

Prior to his appointment in Houston, he was music director of the Calgary Philharmonic, the Orchestre National Bordeaux Aquitaine, the Salzburg Mozarteum Orchestra and the Iraqi National Symphony Orchestra.

A frequent guest with all of the major North American orchestras, Graf has developed a close relationship with the Boston Symphony and appears regularly with the orchestra during the subscription season and at the Tanglewood Music Festival.

He made his Carnegie Hall debut with the Houston Symphony in January 2006 and returned leading the Orchestra of St. Luke’s in March 2007. He and the Houston Symphony were invited to appear at Carnegie Hall in January 2010 to present the New York premiere of *The Planets—An HD Odyssey* and will return in May 2012 to participate in Carnegie’s Spring for Music Festival.

Internationally, Graf conducts in the foremost concert halls of Europe, Japan and Australia. In October 2010, he led the Houston Symphony on a tour of the UK to present the international premiere of *The Planets—An HD Odyssey*.

He has participated in the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, Bregenz, Aix en Provence and Salzburg Festivals. His recent U.S. festival appearances include Tanglewood, Blossom Music Festival, Aspen Music Festival and the Grant Park Music Festival in downtown Chicago.

An experienced opera conductor, Graf first conducted the Vienna State Opera in 1981 and has since led productions in the opera houses of Berlin, Munich, Paris and Rome, including several world premieres. Recent engagements include *Parsifal* at the Zurich Opera and *Boris Godunov* at the Opera National du Rhin in Strasbourg.

Born in 1949 near Linz, Graf studied violin and piano as a child. He earned diplomas in piano and conducting from the Musikhochschule in Graz and continued his studies with Franco Ferrara, Sergiu Celibidache and Arvid Jansons.

His career was launched in 1979 when he was awarded first prize at the Karl Böhm Competition. His extensive discography includes recordings with the Houston Symphony, available through houstonsymphony.org: works by Bartók and Stravinsky, Zemlinsky’s *Lyric Symphony*, Berg’s Three Pieces from the *Lyric Suite* and a DVD of *The Planets—An HD Odyssey*.

Graf has been awarded the Chevalier de l’ordre de la Legion d’Honneur by the French government for championing French music around the world and the Grand Decoration of Honour in Gold for Services to the Republic of Austria. Hans and Margarita Graf have homes in Salzburg and Houston. They have one daughter, Anna, who lives in Vienna.

**Emanuel Ax, piano**

Born in Lvov, Poland, Emanuel Ax moved to Canada when he was a young boy. His studies at The Juilliard School were supported by the sponsorship of the Epstein Scholarship Program of the Boys Clubs of America, and he subsequently won the Young Concert Artists Award. He
attended Columbia University, where he majored in French. Ax captured public attention in 1974 when he won the first Arthur Rubinstein International Piano Competition in Tel Aviv. In 1975, he won the Young Concert Artists Michaels Award, and four years later, the coveted Avery Fisher Prize.

This season, he visits leading orchestras through the U.S. and Europe. He collaborates with the San Francisco Symphony in the American Mavericks Festival presented in San Francisco, Ann Arbor and New York. And he will serve as curator and participant with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra for a two-week spring residency “Keys to the City.” In London’s Wigmore Hall, he performs a series of Beethoven Sonata programs with violinist Leonidas Kavakos.

Ax has been an exclusive Sony Classical recording artist since 1987. Recent releases include Mendelssohn Trios with Yo-Yo Ma and Itzhak Perlman, Strauss’ Enoch Arden narrated by Patrick Stewart and discs of two-piano music by Brahms and Rachmaninoff with Yefim Bronfman. He has received Grammy® Awards for the second and third volumes of his cycle of Haydn’s piano sonatas and for recordings of the Beethoven and Brahms sonatas for cello and piano with Yo-Yo Ma. In 2004-05, he contributed to an International Emmy® Award-Winning BBC documentary commemorating the Holocaust that aired on the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz.

Emanuel Ax lives in New York City with his wife, pianist Yoko Nozaki. They have two children, Joseph and Sarah. He is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and holds honorary doctorates of music from Yale and Columbia Universities.