

The School of Music
presents the 5th program of the 1990-91 season.



The
University Symphony
Orchestra

S99
1990
11-1

Peter Erös

Director

Guest Soloist
Rudolf Firkusny

Anatol Ljadov
Eight Russian Folksongs

Wolfgang A. Mozart
Piano Concerto No. 16 in D Major

Johannes Brahms
Symphony No. 2 in D Major

Thursday, November 1, 1990
8:00 PM, Meany Theater

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DAT# 11,691

CASS# 11,692

Program

DAT
ID 2 Eight Russian Folksongs, Op.58 12:05 ANATOL LJADOV
(1855 - 1914)

Chant religieux
Chant de Noël
Complainte
Chant comique - J'ai dansé avec le moucheron
Légende de L'oiseaux
Berceuse
Ronde
Choeur dansé

ID 3 Piano Concerto in D Major, K. 451 WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART
21:33 (1776 - 1791)

Allegro assai
Andante
Allegro di molto

Rudolf Firkusny, piano

Cass side A
side B

Intermission

ID 4 Symphony No. 2 in D Major, Op. 73 34:29 JOHANNES BRAHMS
(1833 - 1897)

Allegro non troppo
Adagio non troppo
Allegretto grazioso
Allegro con spirito

Program Notes

Anatol Konstantinovich Ljadov, born in St. Petersburg on May 11, 1855 and died in Polinovka (Novgorod district) on August 28, 1914, may be included in the *Moguchaya Kuchka* ("The Mighty Five"), as most of his work follows the ideals of that nationalist group. Like Rimsky-Korsakov and the other members of the group, this Russian composer, teacher, and accomplished pianist was always very much interested in promoting the music of his country. An examination of his relatively small output reveals that, except for the piano compositions, the majority of his works exploit Russian folk-like tendencies. The best examples of these tendencies are the three descriptive orchestral pieces based on Russian fairy tales *Baba-Yaga*, *Kikimora*, *Volshhebnoye ozero* (The Enchanted Lake), and the delightful *Eight Russian Folksongs*.

Eight Russian Folksongs, Op. 58 (1906) is one of the few orchestral works that the composer wrote. In this enjoyable succession of folksongs, artfully juxtaposed and ingeniously harmonized, Ljadov manifests his creative genius and mastery of orchestration technique. The absence of text does not constitute a barrier to the understanding of the content of the different songs of this suite-like masterwork. According to the original French edition, the succession of different titles is: *Chant religieux* (Religious chant), *Chant de Noël* (Christmas Carol), *Complainte* (Lamentation), *Chant comique - J'ai dansé avec le moucheron* (Comic song - I have danced with the midge), *Légende de L'oiseaux* (A Bird's Legend), *Berceuse* (Lullaby), *Ronde* (Rondo), and *Choeur dansé* (Choral dance). The effective and balanced characterization of the above titles through orchestral forces is also responsible for the unification of the piece as a whole. We may certainly imagine ourselves in a Russian countryside listening to this marvelous music.

The *Piano Concerto in D Major*, Köchel 451, is part of the group of four concertos Mozart composed in early 1784 when he was at the peak of his career as a piano performer. From that group, K. 449 and 453 were composed for his pupil Babette Ployer and K. 450 and 451 for himself. In a letter to his father, dated May 26, 1784, Mozart refers to the twin concertos he wrote for himself saying: "No one possesses these Concertos in B flat and D. . . I am unable to choose between the two

concertos; I believe both are capable to make one perspire. . . Of course it is necessary to perform them with their complete parts and with care. . . ." Mozart's words are definitely connected with the virtuoso nature and symphonic quality of the two mentioned works, especially the D Major Concerto. This latter, justly included in the symphonic category, requires larger orchestral forces than any other previously composed. It calls for an expanded orchestra of flute, two oboes, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, timpani, and strings. Moreover, it represents the first work of the genre in which Mozart makes use of the woodwinds as solo obbligato parts: here they not only reinforce strings in octaves, but also share dialogues with them and the piano solo.

The three-movement plan of this concerto (*Allegro assai - Andante - Allegro di molto*) is a formula which Mozart applied to previous works of the same kind. The first movement, *Allegro assai*, is in concerto form and presents the following basic structure: orchestral exposition, piano exposition, development of the music material, orchestral recapitulation of main subjects on the tonic key area interpolated by piano embellishments (arpeggios and secondary material), piano cadenza, and coda. A remarkable point in this movement is that the piano never takes over the second main subject which is played only by oboes and horns. Furthermore, the original cadenza is short and neither develops any of the presented main subjects nor has the customary potpourri-like character. Contrasting with the vigorous fanfare-like character of the first movement, the *Andante* opens with a sensuous chromatic motif introduced by the strings, restated by strings, flute, and bassoon, and finally confirmed by the piano solo. The chromatic motif generates three different sections which are nothing but an expansion of the same original material. This movement is actually a Song-Rondo form (A-B-A-C-A-CODA). Section C has a *Variante* suggested by Nannerl (Mozart's sister) who thought that the original texture of that section was too rarefied. Finally, the last movement, *Allegro di molto*, is based on the Sonata-Rondo form. Its formal structure is larger than that of the previous movement: A-B-A-C (development)-A-B-A-CADENZA-CODA. Surprisingly, the Coda is in a different meter (3/8) from that of the body of the movement, which has the effect of bringing all previous material to a meteoric conclusion, capping a work characterized by brilliance and virtuosity.

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) wrote four symphonies which are respectively labeled by some theorists and analysts as "Appassionata" (first) "Pastoral" (second), "Poetic" (third), and "Melancolic" (fourth). As with most such labels appended by others to composers' works, they should not disguise for us the true nature of the composition. Brahms himself experienced a similar problem when, during the premiere of his Second Symphony, the Viennese audience encored the third movement. Nonetheless gratified, Brahms declared that "Their enthusiasm was due to two movements of the symphony being in 3/4 time." He certainly knew that the Viennese audience was charmed by the Ländler characteristic of the first and third movements of the symphony, but was very far from understanding the essential *filo* and overarching structure of the composition as a whole.

Brahms Symphony No. 2 in D Major, Op. 73 is undoubtedly the most accessible of the set of four. Regarding this point the critic Hanslick wrote: "The Symphony No. 2 extends its warm sunshine to connoisseurs and laymen alike." Apart from all these aesthetic comments, one might also admire how freely and effectively Brahms treated the sonata-like first movement (*Allegro con brio*). It is safe to say that he does here what Beethoven did in the first movement of his famous Fifth. No doubt, the D, C#, D motif is here the main generator of the whole body of the movement, sometimes assuming the most important role in the context, other times supporting and generating new thematic ideas. The following *Adagio non troppo* brings a dark atmosphere to the work through its intense chromaticism and passionate theme played by the cellos. It is a short ternary song form where juxtaposition and expansion of analogous ideas are the principal devices. The third movement, *Allegretto grazioso*, is a gracious Scherzo-Rondo (A-B-A-C-A-CODA). It is so well written that the tempo changes of sections B and C are practically hidden by the natural flowing of the music. The Symphony ends with a brilliant and festive sonata-form *Allegro con spirito* where Brahms shows once more his mastery of the art of building gigantic developments and big climaxes through his thorough knowledge of compositional techniques. From the climactic point of the recapitulation, he transports us to the radiant Coda Finale which happily and joyously ends the symphony.

— Program notes by José Nilo Valle

Rudolf Firkusny

Rudolf Firkusny was born in Czechoslovakia, where he studied with Leos Janacek, Artur Schnabel, Vilem Kurz, Josef Suk, and Alfred Cortot. He left his homeland in 1946 as a protest against totalitarian rule.

In May, 1990, Mr. Firkusny ended a 44-year voluntary exile to celebrate the return of democracy to the country by performing at the Prague Spring Festival. His performance of Martinu's Piano Concerto No. 2 with the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra received a standing ovation led by President Vaclav Havel. He has received numerous musical and academic honors as well as honorary citizenships.

Mr. Firkusny has been hailed for his masterful performances of the Classic, Romantic, and early 20th century repertoires, and is considered the world's foremost exponent of Czech music. Throughout his long and distinguished career, he has championed the works of Smetana, Dvorak, Janacek, and Martinu.

For more than five decades, Mr. Firkusny has performed on five continents in recital and as soloist with virtually every major symphony orchestra under some of this century's leading conductors, such as Sir Thomas Beecham, Otto Klemperer, Serge Koussevitzky, Fritz Reiner, George Szell, Leopold Stokowski, and Bruno Walter. He also performs regularly with many of today's leading conductors, including Jiri Belohlavek, Pierre Boulez, James Levine, Zubin Mehta, Riccardo Muti, Andre Previn, Gerard Schwarz, Leonard Slatkin and Sir Georg Solti. He has collaborated in chamber music performances with such distinguished artists as Gregor Piatigorsky, William Penrose, Lynn Harrell, and the Juilliard Quartet.

Mr. Firkusny can be heard in a large and varied repertoire on record labels such as Supraphon, Candide, Columbia, CBS, Decca, Deutsche Grammophon, RCA, Seraphim, and Vox. His most recent disc is Franck's *Symphonic Variations*, performed with Claus Peter Flor and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.

Mr. Firkusny comes to the University of Washington as the first *Hans and Thelma Lehmann Distinguished Professor* and will spend three residencies at the UW School of Music where he will perform and

give master classes. His second residency during 1990-91 will be from February 20 to February 26 and the third from April 10 to April 17. The master classes are open to the community; information about them can be obtained from the School of Music at 543-1200 one week before the scheduled residency.

Mr. Firkusny will be playing with the Seattle Symphony in February 1991 under music director Gerard Schwarz. Other highlights of his engagements during the 1990-1991 season include performances with the Philadelphia Orchestra and the National Symphony. He will also appear in two recitals at New York's Lincoln Center and Chicago's Orchestra Hall.

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Soni Ventorum Wind Quintet; November 2, 8:00 PM, Brechemin Auditorium

Keyboard Debut Series; November 8, 8:00 PM, Brechemin Auditorium

**Musical-Poetical Club: Classical and Romantic Lieder and Sonatas on
Period Instruments;** November 16, 8:00 PM; November 18, 3:00 PM,
Brechemin Auditorium

Contemporary Group; November 26, 8:00 PM, Meany Theater

Collegium Musicum and Madrigal Singers; December 1, 8:00 PM;
December 2, 3:00 PM, Brechemin Auditorium

University Singers; December 3, 8:00 PM, Meany Theater

Jazz Combos I & II; December 3, 8:00 PM; December 4, 8:00 PM, Brechemin
Auditorium