The German Society of Pennsylvania presents

EStrella Piano Duo

Sunday, May 18, 2014 at 3:00 pm

The German Society of Pennsylvania
www.germansociety.org

611 Spring Garden Street
Philadelphia, PA 19123
Calendar of Events

**May 2014**

Wed. May 21  Lecture: Dr. Lynne Tatlock - “German Romance in America: The Translations of Annis Lee Wister and the Americans who Read Them (1868-1907)”, 6.30pm
Sat. May 31  Spring Fling at the Grange Estate in Haverford, 5pm

**June 2014**

June 5-8  Humble Treasure Productions presents “Michael the Rebel” (in English)
Sun. June 8  Annual Meeting/ Volunteer Appreciation Event
June 14 -  World Cup: Screening of All Germany and U.S. Games
July 13  Mon. June 16 at 12pm: Germany v. Portugal
         Mon. June 16 at 6pm: Ghana v. USA
         Sat. June 21 at 3pm: Germany v. Ghana
         Sun. June 22 at 6pm: USA v. Portugal
         Thurs. June 26 at 12pm: USA v. Germany
Sat. June 14  Lectures starting at 10.30am:
         Dr. Birte Pfleger - “The Other Germans: German-Speaking Veterans of the Revolutionary War, 1775-1840”
         Lisa Minardi - “From Pastor to Patriot: Frederick Muhlenberg, Lutheran Minister and First Speaker of the U.S. House”
         Dr. Bethany Wiggin - “Printer-Publisher Christoph Sauer (the Older), Separatism, and the Founding of the German Society of Pennsylvania”
Sat. June 21  Bus trip to Trappe, Topic: German-American Muhlenberg family, 9.30am-4.30pm
Sat. June 28  Summer of Riesling with Sommelier Marnie Old in the Garden, 4pm

...Our 2014/2015 Season will begin in September 2014:

Sun. Sep 21  The Wister Quartet, 3.00pm
         Selections will include: Haydn String Quartet in C Major, Lloyd Smith Piano Quartet, Op. 20 (World Premiere), & Dvorak String Quartet in F Major
Sun. Oct 26  Concert Operetta Theater presenting “The Best of Vienna”, 3.00pm
Sun. Nov 16  The Delius Society and the German Society present the Wister Quartet, 3.00pm
Sun. Dec 14  Cantus Novus presenting “What Sweeter Music”--a varied selection of choral offerings for the Christmas season, 3.00pm
EStrella Piano Duo

PROGRAM: “From Russia with Love!”

                                                                         (1873-1943)
                              (arr. G. Anderson)                        Sergei Rachmaninoff
                                                                         (1873-1943)

II. Polovestian Dances from *Prince Igor* (arr. N. Sokolova)         Alexander Borodin
                             1. Andantino                                                        (1833-1887)
                             2. A llegro V ivo
                             3. A llegro
                             4. Presto
                              (1833-1887)

III. From *Rite of Spring*                                      Igor Stravinsky
                              1. Dance of the young maidens                                      (1882-1971)
                              2. Ritual of abduction
                              3. Spring Rounds
                              (1882-1971)

IV. From *The Seasons*, Op. 37b                               Pyotr Tschaikovsky
                              1. March: “Song of the Lark”                                      (1840-1893)
                              2. April: “Snowdrop”                                              (1840-1893)

V. From *Petrushka*                                           Igor Stravinsky
                              1. Petrushka’s Room                                    (1882-1971)
                              2. Russian Dance
                              (1882-1971)

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VI. From *Scheherazade*, Op. 35                              Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov
                              IV. Festival in Bagdad. The Sea. The Ship Breaks
                             against a Cliff Surmounted by a Bronze Horseman
                             (1844-1908)
VII. From *Six Pieces* Op. 11
   1. Barcarolle
   2. Romance

Sergei Rachmaninoff
   (1873-1943)

VIII. From *Sketches*
   1. Chimes
   2. Imitation of Antiquity
   3. Valse

Valery Gavrilin
   (1939-1999)

IX. Blue Danube Fantasy
   “A New Account of the Blue Danube Waltzes”

Johann Strauss
   (1825-1899)

Greg Anderson
   (b. 1981)

There will be one 15-minute intermission. We offer refreshments from our bar during that time.

Your ticket to our concert also invites you to a complimentary reception with the artist in the Ratskeller (downstairs) following the performance.
Program Notes
By Svetlana Belsky

Russian Masterpieces (and more)

Sergei Rachmaninoff: “Vocalise,” Opus 34, No. 14

“Vocalise,” a song entirely without words, is the crowning glory of Rachmaninoff’s glorious vocal output. Written in his wife’s peaceful country estate in 1912, at the height of Rachmaninoff’s popularity, this masterpiece of hypnotic beauty has become irresistible to performers of other genres, and now exists in numerous versions for various instruments. The transcription offered here, by Greg Anderson, goes far beyond simply transferring the notes of the original to the piano, but also paraphrases, comments, embellishes and enchants.

Alexander Borodin: Polovetsian Dances from Prince Igor

Borodin’s best known work, his opera Prince Igor (with libretto adopted from the Slavic Epic The Lay of Igor’s Host), was almost eighteen years in the making, but was unfinished at his death, and was completed by Rimsky-Korsakov. (Borodin was a chemist by trade, and spent much of his time additionally supporting various women’s causes). The Polovetsian Dances, which are part of the 2nd Act, have fully entered popular culture, often used in movies, musicals and even commercials. In mood they run the gamut from the exquisitely melodic, to wildly boisterous.

Igor Stravinsky: The Rite of Spring

Europe of 1913, on the brink of the Great War, saw an artistic flowering no other single year can equal. Yet, the work that had the greatest impact, the one whose premiere is still vividly remembered a hundred years hence, is Stravinsky’s The Rite of Spring. To be fair, it was the only premiere that resulted in a full-blown riot.

Stravinsky wrote the ballet for the 1913 Paris season of Sergei Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes as
a complete work of art, with choreography by the legendary Vaslav Nijinsky, and stage
designs and costumes by the artist Nicholas Roerich. By some unpredictable alchemy, all
the elements came together to stun the audience. If those who came expected lovely girls
in white flitting gracefully about to the sound of lilting tunes, they must have been discon-
certed at the least by the spectacle that unfolded before them, of the “scenes of Pagan
Russia”, with a group of “knock-kneed and long-braided Lolitas jumping up and down,” to
quote Stravinsky himself. So the listeners threw garbage and punches, and police had to
intervene. The Riot at the Rite, in the end, probably served to bring the music even earlier
fame and notoriety than it might have achieved otherwise. Stravinsky published his fa-
mously difficult Piano Duo transcription, meant mostly to train the dancers, along with the
orchestral score. We have chosen to add even more complexity to the version (as Stravin-
sky himself does in his transcription of Petrushka) by incorporating more elements from
the orchestral score.

Auguries of Spring — Dances of the Young Girls. The curtain opens and the first dance
begins, the one that must have so unnerved that first audience. The boys tell fortunes,
accomplished by stomping and jumping up and down, to the sound of the famous, irregu-
larly accented bi-tonal chords. The girls appear, to a sweet melody that sounds so much
like a folk song; finally all join together in a rauous finale.

The Mock Abduction. Once again the boys take over, with much ado and mayhem, but
mostly harmless fun. For the first time in the ballet we hear Stravinsky’s original take on bi-
modality—simultaneously appearing major and minor versions of the same tune.

Spring Round Dance. The women restore order with a series of hypnotic trills. A beautiful
melody emerges, as we hear more and more dancers join in the dance. After a hilarious
interruption by the incorrigible boys the trills come back and dissolve.

Pyotr Tchaikovsky: The Seasons, Opus 37b

In 1875, between the premieres of his celebrated Piano Concerto and the even more cele-
brated ballet Swan Lake, Tchaikovsky received a commission to write 12 short piano pieces,
one for each month of the year, for the St. Petersburg magazine *Nouvellist*. These were meant to be entertaining and pedagogical in nature, each with an assigned subtitle and a poem, and according to at least one biographer, Tchaikovsky wrote each one right at the deadline, after being reminded by his valet. And yet, each is a masterpiece of melodic invention. We have chosen the three pieces representing Spring, a vision as different from Stravinsky’s as day from night.

March: Song of the Lark  
*The field shimmering with flowers, the stars swirling in the heavens, the song of the lark fills the blue abyss.* (A. Maykov)

April: Snowdrop  
*The blue, pure snowdrop — flower, and near it the last snowdrops. The last tears over past griefs, and first dreams of another happiness.* (A. Maykov)

May: Starlit Nights  
*What a night! What bliss all about! I thank my native north country! From the kingdom of ice, snowstorms and snow, how fresh and clean May flies in!* (A. Fet)

**Igor Stravinsky: From *Petrushka***

Before there could have been the *Rite of Spring*, there had to be *Petrushka*. Composed also for Diaghilev’s *Ballets Russes*, this ballet premiered in 1911. It was a stunning success, and a musical revolution in its own right. The libretto depicts the Shrovetide Fair, a traditional part of the pre-Lenten Carnival festivities in Russia, where a group of puppets, in a Russian version of *commedia dell’arte*, comes magically to life to entertain the revelers. *Petrushka* is the clown; his role in the puppet show is to be the object of endless abuse from fellow puppets, his master, and the heartless crowd. *Petrushka’s Room* opens with a drumroll, as a foot kicks him onstage. He curses to the sound of the famous “Petrushka chord”, the most celebrated early use of bi-tonality. The music turns more lyrical as Petrushka thinks of his love for a fellow puppet, who, alas, loves him not. The energetic, angular *Russian Dance*, based on two folk tunes, is from the first Tableau of the ballet, where we meet the puppets for the first time.
The piano 4-hands version is Stravinsky’s own, and, much as the *Rite*, requires a significant amount of adaptation and embellishment. Stravinsky himself showed the way in 1921, when he made his famous piano solo arrangement for Artur Rubinstein, which makes no attempt to reproduce the sound of the orchestra, but rather to create a pianistic masterpiece in its own right.

**Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov: *Scheherazade, Opus 35***

Rimsky-Korsakov’s orchestral suite *Scheherazade*, based on *The Arabian Nights*, hardly needs an introduction, so beloved has it become by audiences everywhere since its premiere in 1888. It is without a doubt the greatest masterpiece of the Russian Orientalist movement, a work of melodic richness and rhythmic vitality, and absent symphonic complexity, instead painting alluring pictures and telling thrilling tales. Rimsky wrote a brief introduction that he intended for use with the score, as well as the program for the premiere:

> The Sultan Schariar, convinced that all women are false and faithless, vowed to put to death each of his wives after the first nuptial night. But the Sultana Scheherazade saved her life by entertaining her lord with fascinating tales, told seriatim, for a thousand and one nights. The Sultan, consumed with curiosity, postponed from day to day the execution of his wife, and finally repudiated his bloody vow entirely.

**Sergei Rachmaninoff: From *Six Pieces, Opus 11***

Written in 1894, the lovely set of pieces for piano duo is among Rachmaninoff’s earliest published works, and fully representative of his young piano style — they boast hypnotic spun-out melodies, lush harmonies, and imaginative uses of instrumental sonority.
Valery Gavrilin: From Sketches

Well respected in Russia for his profound melodic gift and the ability to absorb folkloric elements organically into his compositional style, Valery Gavrilin is becoming better known in the West, especially for his treasure trove of attractive neo-Romantic piano works. Among them is Sketches, a set of 18 masterpieces for piano 4 hands. Each miniature paints a vivid picture drawn from life. The image of the coachman has always been important in Russian popular culture. “Chimes” recalls jingling bells on the harness. The witty and ironic “Imitation of Antiquity” hides modernist rhythms and harmonies beneath the façade of a courtly ancient dance. The “Waltz” continues a long and glorious tradition of the 20th century Russian waltz and is among Gavrilin’s most popular works. An entire ballet (Anyuta, after Chekhov’s Anna around the Neck) grew around it.

Johann Strauss/ Greg Anderson: A New Account of the Blue Danube Waltzes

We conclude tonight’s program with the most famous waltz of them all — Johann Strauss’s Blue Danube. Many composers have tried their hand at making adaptations, paraphrases and variations of this ever-popular masterwork. But none approach this version by Greg Anderson, which blends elements of the concert hall, the circus and the insane asylum in this uproarious creation. It truly needs to be seen to be believed.
The **EStrella Piano Duo** burst onto the musical scene in 2011 with a series of concerts celebrating the great Russian masterpieces for piano duet. Elena Doubovitskaya and Svetlana Belsky share both their Russian heritage and training, and their enthusiasm for playing together. Their first performance evoked raves of “technical brilliance” and “infectious joy in music making”. The second drew a standing-room-only crowd. Since then they have presented concerts and masterclasses throughout the United States. A highlight of the 2014 season will be an exciting collaboration with the Clinard Dance Theater company for live performances of Stravinsky’s *Rite of Spring*.

A native of Russia, **Elena Doubovitskaya** performed her debut recital in Carnegie Hall’s Weill Recital Hall as part of Artists International Presentations, followed by numerous engagements in United States, Germany, Austria, Czech Republic and Russia. Currently Dr. Doubovitskaya is a member of the piano and chamber music faculty at the Merit School of Music in Chicago, and serves as the Chairman of its Piano Department.

Critically acclaimed as "a passionate pianist and scholar", **Svetlana Belsky** is an in-demand recitalist and chamber pianist, noted for her remarkable rapport with audiences and stylistic versatility. She has appeared in the Ukraine, Russia, Poland, China, Taiwan and Hong Kong, and throughout the United States. As the Coordinator of Piano Studies at the University of Chicago, Dr. Belsky teaches students from four continents, among many other academic responsibilities.
History of the German Society of Pennsylvania

In 1683 thirteen families from Krefeld under the leadership of Frankfurt lawyer, Franz Daniel Pastorius, founded the first German colony in America: Germantown — today part of Philadelphia. Many of these immigrants formed clubs that enabled them to preserve their cultural heritage. They also formed clubs that emphasized a specific geographic area, such as the Swabians, Bavarians, Saxons, Danube Swabians, Plattdeutsche, Tyroleans, and many others.

The German Society of Pennsylvania, founded in 1764, is the oldest German organization in the United States. It was founded to protect German immigrants from unscrupulous shipping agents and to ensure just treatment on their arrival here.

Since that time, the German Society has dedicated its efforts to preserving German heritage. This it does, for instance, by offering a full-fledged German language program as well as scholarships and prizes to students of German. In addition, the Society is a source of cultural programs, lectures, film series, and seminars. These events build bridges and strengthens relations among individuals, organizations, businesses, and governments.

The fine arts program also includes presentations that feature European music and literature as well as access to the Joseph P. Horner Memorial Library for education and research. The newly restored Library, holding over 70,000 volumes, is the largest private German library outside the Federal Republic of Germany.

In serving its members and the community, and in all its undertakings, the Society strives to benefit anyone in need of its resources.

Since the time of Pastorius, more than 7,000,000 Germans reached these shores. Today, 15% of the total population in the United States claims Germany ancestry.
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