

Symphony aims to amaze with ‘Symphonic Surprise’ - Highland Community News: Entertainment

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The up-coming third installment in the San Bernardino Symphony Orchestra’s 88th consecutive season, “Symphonic Surprise,” will be presented on Feb. 11, 2017, at the historic California Theatre of the Performing Arts.

The baton drops at 7:30 p.m. on this concert which will feature acclaimed young violinist Usha Kapoor performing Mozart’s Violin Concerto No. 3 in G major. Also on the playbill are Stravinsky’s Puccinella Suite and Haydn’s Symphony No. 94 in G major, also known as the “Surprise Symphony” for its use of unexpected musical elements.

“We encourage everyone to come out and share this marvelous concert with us,” said Symphony Maestro Frank Paul Fetta, adding, “It was lovingly designed and is, in a sense, our Valentine’s Day gift to the community.”

This concert will be presented, in large part, through a grant from the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians.

As with all concerts this season, attendees at the Feb. 11 evening concert may also attend the Symphony’s “Meet the Composers” pre-concert event featuring members of the Inland Valley Repertory Theatre Company. All pre-concert events begin at 6:30 p.m. and are included with your ticket.

Two back-to-back one-hour versions of this concert, also sponsored by the San Manuel Band, will be performed on the morning of Feb. 10 for over 3,400 local students.

“Our annual free concerts for the schools allow us to share live symphonic music with literally thousands of students who would not otherwise have the opportunity to attend,” said Symphony Executive Director Dr. Anne Viricel. “We are incredibly grateful to our sponsors, and to the local school leaders who are our partners in this important annual project and we believe Miss Kapoor will be an inspiration to all the aspiring young musicians in the audience.”

Praised for her “confidence and bearing” (Culver City Observer), violinist Usha Kapoor made her solo debut at age 17 with the Phoenix Symphony. The recipient of many awards, including top prizes in the 2011 International Schmidbauer Young Artist Competition and the Phoenix Symphony Concerto Competition, she made a number of debut performances with the Culver City Chamber Orchestra and the Culver City Symphony Orchestra and gave recitals throughout Southern California, and solo performances at the Innsbrook Institute in St. Louis, MO. She also served as co-concertmaster of the Aspen Philharmonic Orchestra at the Aspen Music Festival and School. Her previous engagements include solo performances with the Shardad Rohani Concert Orchestra and the Phoenix Symphony.

In addition to her solo career, Ms. Kapoor currently serves as co-concertmaster for the Colburn Orchestra and was a participant in the 2011 New York String Orchestra Seminar. She has performed in Carnegie Hall, Walt Disney Concert Hall, Segerstrom Center for the Arts, and Ambassador Auditorium under the batons of James Conlon, Gustavo Dudamel, Sir Neville Marriner, Esa-Pekka Salonen, and Robert Spano. In 2015, Ms. Kapoor was one of four violinists to be awarded the “Talented Students in the Arts Initiative” fellowship at the Aspen Music Festival and School’s Center for Orchestral Leadership.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Three beautiful compositions have been chosen for “Symphonic Surprise.”

Mozart’s Violin Concerto No. 3 in G major, was written with the composer was only 19. The piece is presented in three movements. The first, Allegro, is in sonata form, opening with a G major theme, played by the orchestra. The main theme is a bright and happy discussion between the solo violin and the accompaniment, followed by a

modulation to the dominant D major, then its parallel key D minor. It experiments in other keys but does not settle and eventually heads back to the tonic, G major, in the recapitulation with the help of the cadenza.

In the second movement, the orchestra begins by playing the beautiful main theme, which the violin imitates one octave higher. The winds then play a dance-like motif in A major, which the violin concludes by its own. After the cadenza, and in a quite unusual thing for Mozart to do, the violin plays the main theme again, thus concluding the movement in D. This is the only movement in five violin concertos by Mozart where instead of oboes a pair of flutes are used.

The third movement is a Rondeau Allegro, and opens with an orchestra theme. After a lonely, short passage by the oboes, the solo violin enters with a different melody which modulates to D, followed by the orchestra imitating the violin line. Instead of ending the concerto with his traditional ascending flourish, Mozart chose to end it instead with the lonely oboe theme so the audience experiences the music "disappearing".

Haydn's Symphony No. 94 in G major is the second of the Austrian composer's 12 London symphonies. Written in 1791, it is popularly known as the Surprise Symphony. The premiere took place in London on March 23, 1792, with Haydn leading the orchestra seated at a fortepiano. Haydn's music contains many jokes, and the Surprise Symphony includes probably the most famous of all: a sudden fortissimo chord at the end of the otherwise piano opening theme in the variation-form second movement. The music then returns to its original quiet dynamic, as if nothing had happened, and the ensuing variations do not repeat the joke. (In German it is commonly referred to as the Symphony "mit dem Paukenschlag"—"with the kettledrum stroke").

In Haydn's old age, his biographer George August Griesinger asked him whether he wrote this "surprise" to awaken the audience. Haydn replied: "No, but I was interested in surprising the public with something new, and in making a brilliant debut, so that my student Pleyel, who was at that time engaged by an orchestra in London (in 1792) and whose concerts had opened a week before mine, should not outdo me. The first Allegro of my symphony had already met with countless Bravos, but the enthusiasm reached its highest peak at the Andante with the Drum Stroke. Encore! Encore! sounded in every throat, and Pleyel himself complimented me on my idea."

The work was popular at its premiere. The Woodfall's Register critic wrote: "The third piece of Haydn was a new Overture [i.e. symphony], of very extraordinary merit. It was simple, profound, and sublime. The andante movement was particularly admired." The symphony is still popular today, and is frequently performed and recorded.

Russian-French-American composer, pianist, and conductor Stravinsky's Suite from the ballet Pulcinella, was written after themes by Giovanni Battista Pergolesi (1710-1736). The ballet was completed 1920 and was first performed May 15, 1920, in Paris. Scored for chamber orchestra, the suite was completed in 1922, revised in 1949, and was first performed December 22, 1922, in Boston.

Pulcinella has an interesting background. In the spring of 1919, Serge Diaghilev, the impresario who had collaborated with Stravinsky on such successes as The Rite of Spring, The Firebird, and Petrushka, suggested to the composer that he write a ballet based on some of Pergolesi's music. At first Stravinsky demurred, not being particularly fond of Pergolesi's works, but Diaghilev showed him some little-known manuscripts which caught his fancy, and so he agreed to the idea.

Pulcinella was an important turning point in Stravinsky's career, for it led him into the neo-classical style which was to dominate his output for the next several decades. Unlike his earlier ballets which were characterized by huge orchestras and innovative rhythms, Pulcinella is relatively simple and sparse, but inclusive of the composer's own unmistakable stamp on the ballet through his use of then-modern harmonies and occasional rhythmic modifications. Despite minor squabbles between the various principals, the first production (with costumes and scenery by Picasso) was a huge success.

UPCOMING CONCERTS THIS SEASON

Two additional concerts are planned as part of the 2016/17 season.

On March 18, 2017, audiences will enjoy a “Spring String Fling” through a concert highlighting both the orchestra’s string sections and the piano strings of the incomparable Steven Vanhauwaert. Offerings include Shostakovich’s Piano Concerto No. 1 in C minor, Bach’s Keyboard Concerto No. 1 in D minor, and Tchaikovsky’s Serenade for Strings in C Major, Op. 48.

All these concerts begin at 7:30 p.m. with a pre-concert “Meet the Composers” lecture at 6:30 p.m. provided by actors from the Inland Valley Repertory Theatre Company.

On May 14, 2017, the Symphony will perform 3 p.m. matinee – “Music for an Elegant Afternoon” - in honor of Mother’s Day. Symphony principal flutist Patricia Cloud will be the featured soloist for Ibert’s Flute Concerto. The concert will also include Schubert’s Symphony No. 6 in C Major, “The Little Symphony” and Beethoven’s Symphony No. 1 in C major. All mothers attending the concert will receive a special gift, and to make the holiday even more special, the Symphony will be offering a special pre-concert luncheon.

TICKET AVAILABILITY

Three-concert season packages are now on sale, as well as single tickets for each concert. Tickets can be purchased online at www.sanbernardinosymphony.org or by calling the box office at (909) 381-5388, and, with limited availability at the Theatre on the date of each event. Single ticket prices are \$25, \$40, \$50, and \$60, depending on seat location; students and military with ID are always \$10. Contact the box office to obtain a new season brochure. All regular season concerts are performed at the historic California Theatre of the Performing Arts, 562 W. 4th Street, San Bernardino.