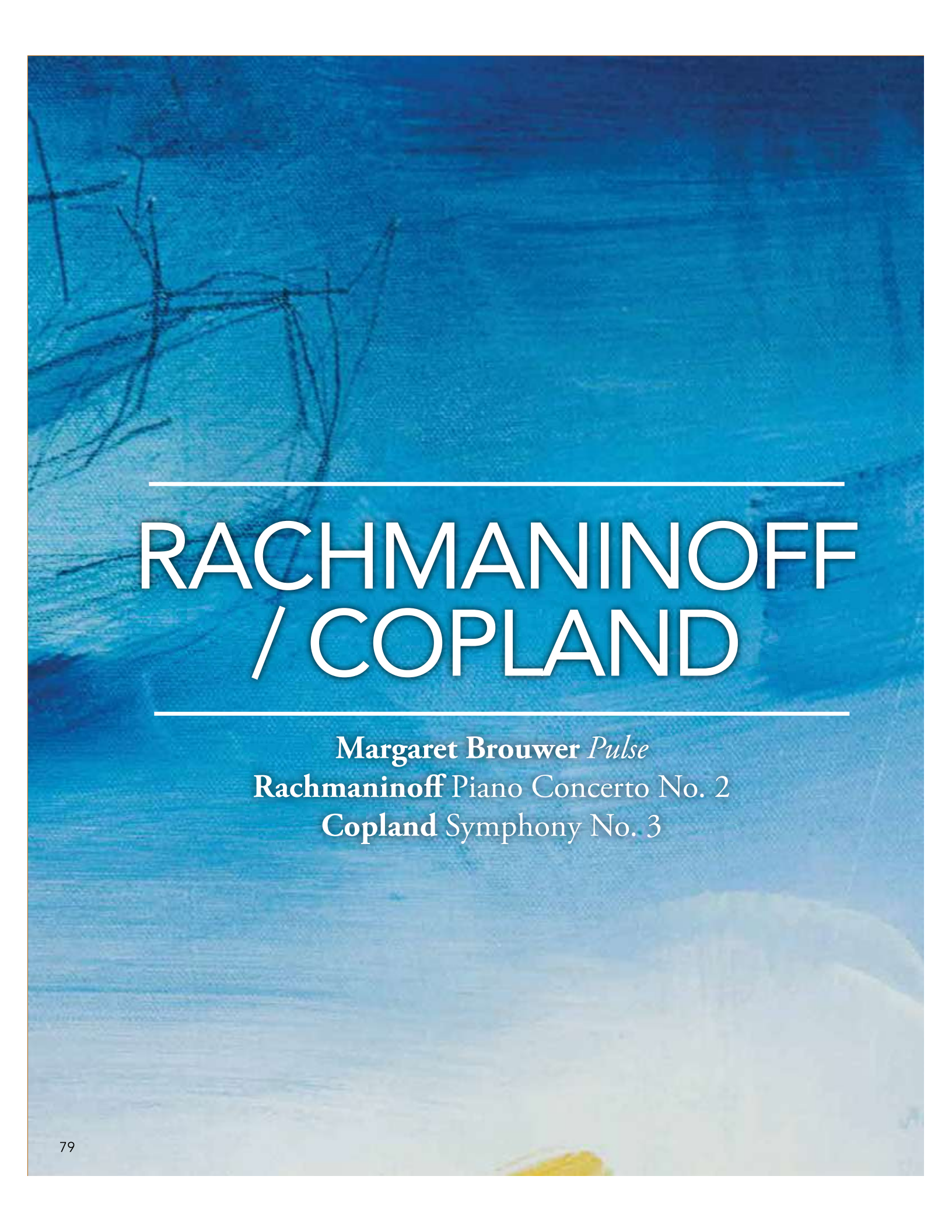




RACHMANINOFF / COPLAND

Margaret Brouwer *Pulse*
Rachmaninoff Piano Concerto No. 2
Copland Symphony No. 3

Sat.
MAY 22
at 7:30pm

Sun.
MAY 23
at 2:30pm

Pikes Peak Center for the Performing Arts

Ramón Tebar *conductor*
Olga Kern *piano*

The Philharmonic's Centennial Season concludes with music that moves from deep reflection to radiant optimism. Recovering from a three-year-long depression, Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2 emanates with the hope of a composer who has rediscovered his muse and is overflowing with romantic passion. Copland's Symphony No. 3, though written during the last years of WW2, is not a war symphony; instead, it was meant to reflect the high-flying optimism of the U.S. in the post-war period. This same joyful energy emanates from Margaret Brouwer's *Pulse*, which alternates between explosion of dynamic rhythmic beats and anticipatory moments of calm.

Margaret Brouwer *Pulse*

Rachmaninoff Piano Concerto No. 2

- I. Moderato
- II. Adagio sostenuto
- III. Allegro scherzando

Copland Symphony No. 3

- I. Molto moderato; with simple expression
- II. Allegro molto
- III. Andantino quasi allegretto
- IV. Molto deliberato — Allegro risoluto

Season presented by:



Series sponsored by:



Lodging provided by:



Kathleen Fox Collins Fund at the Colorado Springs Philharmonic Foundation • Dr. Timothy and Marie Ryan

Lance and Brenda Miller • Bruce Smith and Anndel Kininmonth

Lauren Ciborowski and Ben Harvey • Timothy Fuller • Jim Lauer in Memory of Ann Lauer • Vivian Teets • Mary T. and Victor L. Thacker





CONDUCTOR

Ramón Tebar

Spanish conductor Ramón Tebar currently serves as Principal Conductor and Artistic Director of Opera Naples and Artistic Director of Spain's Arantzazu Festival, following previous tenures as Music Director of the Orquesta de Valencia and of Florida Grand Opera in Miami, and as Principal Guest Conductor at Valencia's Palau de les Arts Reina Sofía.

His latest season carries him across four continents: a return to the Teatro Colón for *Werther*, a debut at Opera Hong Kong with *Aida*, *Turandot* and *L'Elisir d'amore* at his home company in Naples, and a debut at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis with *Roméo et Juliette*. On the concert stage, he returns to the Cincinnati Symphony and the Calgary Philharmonic — the latter in a program featuring Lang Lang — and makes his debut with both the Orchestra Filarmonica di Verona and the Orchestra Sinfonica di Cagliari.

Tebar's opera-pit career has taken him to the Vienna State Opera, where he has led *Madama Butterfly*, *La Bohème*, *Turandot*, and *Don Pasquale*; to Barcelona's Gran Teatre del Liceu and Berlin's Deutsche Oper; and to the Savonlinna Festival and the Teatro Municipal de São Paulo, both for *Carmen*. As a company conductor, his repertoire spans *La Traviata*, *Aida*, *Nabucco*, and *Don Carlo* at the Palau de les Arts; a broad Puccini-to-Levy range — including *Mourning Becomes Electra* — during his Florida Grand Opera tenure; and a similarly wide-ranging catalog at Opera Naples, from *Die Zauberflöte* to Daniel Catán's *La Hija de Rappaccini*.

Equally in demand on the concert podium, Tebar has led the Spanish National Orchestra multiple times, along with the Barcelona Symphony and RTVE Orchestra, and has guest conducted internationally with the Philharmonia in London, the Malaysian Philharmonic, the Armenian Philharmonic, and the St. Petersburg Symphony, among many others. He previously served as Artistic Director of the Santo Domingo Music Festival in Puerto Rico.

His recordings include collaborations with tenor Joseph Calleja and the Orquesta de la Comunitat Valenciana for DECCA, and with tenor Gregory Kunde and the Orquesta Sinfónica de Navarra for Universal.



PIANO

Olga Kern

Pianist Olga Kern brings a vivid onstage presence and dazzling technique to a repertoire built on Rachmaninoff and the great Romantics, earning her a reputation as one of the defining artists of her generation. Born into a family of musicians, she began at the piano at five and won first prize at the Rachmaninoff International Piano Competition at seventeen. In 2001 she launched her U.S. career with a historic Gold Medal at the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition — the only woman to win it in the past fifty years.

A Steinway Artist and Spirio piano ambassador, Kern has since built a parallel career shaping the next generation of competitors: she chaired the jury of the Cliburn International Amateur Piano Competition and the inaugural Chopin Animato International Piano Competition in Paris, and in 2016 founded the Olga Kern International Piano Competition, where she remains Artistic Director. She has served on the piano faculty of the Manhattan School of Music since 2017, the same year she received the Ellis Island Medal of Honor, and in 2019 was named the Connie & Marc Jacobson Director of Chamber Music at the Virginia Arts Festival.

She has appeared with the St. Louis, Baltimore, Detroit, and Pittsburgh symphonies, the National Symphony Orchestra, the Czech Philharmonic, Orchestra Filarmonica della Scala,

Tokyo's NHK Symphony, and the Cape Town Philharmonic, and served as Artist in Residence with the San Antonio Symphony. Recent seasons have brought a season-long survey of all four Rachmaninoff piano concertos and the Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini with the Austin and Virginia symphonies, a nationally televised performance with the Czech Philharmonic, and tours of South Africa and Asia.

In 2012, Kern established the Kern Foundation "Aspiration" to support promising musicians worldwide. Her discography includes a Harmonia Mundi recording of Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto with the Rochester Philharmonic, a Grammy-nominated album of Rachmaninoff's Corelli Variations and other transcriptions, Chopin's First Concerto with the Warsaw Philharmonic, and a 2022 Delos release of Brahms and Shostakovich quintets with the Dalí Quartet. Her Van Cliburn victory is documented in three award-winning films: *The Cliburn: Playing on the Edge*, *They Came to Play*, and *Olga's Journey*.

True to her stage presence, Kern's performance wardrobe is as distinctive as her playing — her gowns designed by Alex Teih and her jewelry by Alex Soldier, both of New York.



Margaret Brouwer

Pulse

Title: *Pulse*

Duration: Approximately 6 minutes

Composer: Margaret Brouwer (Born in Ann Arbor, Michigan on February 8, 1940)

Work composed: The work was composed in 2003 to fulfill a commission from the Roanoke Symphony Orchestra (Virginia) to celebrate its 50th Anniversary. The commission was in part made possible with a Grant from the National Endowment for the Arts

World premiere: The first performance occurred on April 14, 2003 with the Roanoke Symphony Orchestra conducted by David Wiley

Instrumentation: 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion: [xylophone, low Bass drum, tom toms, vibraphone, glockenspiel, suspended cymbal], strings

American composer Margaret Brouwer has been an important voice in American music, as both a respected composer as well as a distinguished professor of music, most notably at the Cleveland Institute of Music. As one of the most gifted woman composers of her generation, she's won several important prizes, including a Guggenheim Fellowship, a residency at the MacDowell artists' colony, and numerous other awards and recognitions around the country. Her compositions span an array of genres and have been performed across America and recorded often. Many were written on commission, such as the work we hear tonight, *Pulse*, written in 2003 for the Roanoke Symphony Orchestra (Virginia) to celebrate its 50th Anniversary.

Brouwer has described *Pulse* as filled with a multitude of almost-alive pulses:

"Rhythmic pulses of differing values exist over a steady grand pulse that is the same for all. The spirit motive emerges; mysterious, rustling, and whispery, flowing through with melody - and in the end becomes infused and strengthened by connections of differing values and pulses."

And in a 2014 interview she described this as being a joyfully pulsing piece:

"... [having] a strong beat to it and little rhythmic patterns that overlay, that have lots of layers to it, of different instruments ... [There] is a lot of rhythm and melody in it. It's a happy piece."

Functioning primarily as a celebratory work, *Pulse* is indeed packed with energy and joyful surprises. The very opening bars of this six-minute curtain raiser immerse us in a world of impactful and continuous rhythms. Brouwer addresses her use of a "pulse," a persistent reference point of uniformly perceived beats, that informs the entire piece and is its title. Rather than conjuring a metronomic pulse, like a heartbeat, she allows the listener to perceive music's pulses through consistently repeating short ostinatos (a repetitive motive) that themselves are pulsating. *Pulse* begins with a four-note kernel of rhythmic material that anchors much of the piece, starting with a quickly played set of four notes heard in the violas and which swiftly branches outwards into a delightful farrago of layered pulsing ostinatos from all over the orchestra. And the effect is like motoring into high speed quickly, yet Brouwer keeps the orchestral machine moving uncannily

forward. Amidst all this virtuosic rhythm-making, the percussion simultaneously grounds the pulse and intensifies it. The xylophone is the first of them to be heard extensively, and then the timpani, tom-toms, and bass drum enter into a bold solo trio cadenza, rock-band like in its rhythmic ferocity. The orchestra answers in kind for about a minute until all this energy turns abruptly quieter.

Now in the winds, metallic percussion, and strings, the rhythmic pulses become opaque and apparitional, ebbing and flowing in a free-form of sounds and short melodic lines. The music is crafted in an *aleatoric* manner – with some of the players directed to repeat short motives somewhat randomly (this technique begins with the first clarinet, followed quickly by the strings and other instruments). The music turns softly lyrical as short melodies in the woodwinds glitter like fireflies over restless nocturnal noises from the strings and percussion. Brouwer here evokes the impression of being witness to the beginnings of a primordial pulse that will soon break free all around us, which it soon does.

Into this quietude, a new dominant pulse begins to rise up and assert itself. First come a few short, dry notes peppering the soundscape which are then incrementally infiltrated by more and more instruments. Rapidly, everything begins revving up into a wildness that is both toe-tappingly glorious and yet controlled. A brief interlude hints at a new, calmer melody with middle-Eastern *melismas* (long and meandering, tuneful melodies), but then layers of rhythmic pulses – beginning with that set of quickly played four notes from the opening of the piece – return and lead the work boldly to its ending. The excitement builds until the entire orchestra suddenly melds together, with every instrument playing the same pitch and same rhythm, to ultimately end in an unexpectedly exultant unison.

Piano Concerto No. 2

Title: Piano Concerto No. 2 in C minor, Op. 18

Duration: Approximately 35 minutes

Composer: Sergey Vasilievich Rachmaninoff (Born in Semyonovo, Russia on April 1, 1873; died in Beverly Hills, CA on March 28, 1943)

Work composed: Begun in June 1900 and completed in April 1901

World premiere: The premiere was held on November 9, 1901, with Alexander Siloti conducting the Moscow Philharmonic Society and Rachmaninoff playing the piano solo. Rachmaninoff dedicated the Concerto to Dr. Nikolai Dahl who helped the composer conquer a debilitating three-year bout of depression/writer's block that preceded this work

Instrumentation: solo piano, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, strings

Piano Concerto No. 2

- I. Moderato
- II. Adagio sostenuto
- III. Allegro scherzando

In 1891, the 19-year-old Russian pianist and composer Rachmaninoff had just started his Moscow Conservatory studies with Tchaikovsky when he wrote a piece that would launch his international fame, his *Prelude in C# minor* for solo piano. Quickly beloved by audiences, it put heaps of pressure on the young composer to live up to his own masterpiece. As Russia was still applauding its new favorite composer, in 1897 Rachmaninoff unveiled his *Symphony No. 1*, but the reception of this new piece was a terrible disaster – the work was horribly performed, hated by its first audience, and panned by critics. Rachmaninoff remembered its premiere as the most horrific hour of his life, hiding in the stairwell of the concert hall, hands clamped over his ears. Although today his *First Symphony* is considered a great work, in 1897 it felt to Rachmaninoff as if all his great hopes as a composer had been dashed. His world came crashing down around him, as he was consumed by depression, excessive drinking, followed by almost three years of unremedied writer's block.

To his great fortune, Rachmaninoff's family intervened and convinced the young musician to see Dr. Nikolai Dahl of Paris, a neurologist who had found success in treating alcoholism and depression through hypnosis. Beginning in January 1900, Rachmaninoff and Dr. Dahl embarked on a journey back to creativity, by talking music and planning Rachmaninoff's next work (a piano concerto), amending his sleep and eating habits, and repeating the hypnotic mantra: "*You will begin your concerto . . . it will be excellent.*" And when that writer's block came down, it's as if a wellspring of lyrical melody making broke through. By April 1900, the young composer was filling up with musical ideas far surpassing what was needed for his concerto and by spring of 1901, Rachmaninoff had completed his beloved *Piano Concerto No. 2*. Beyond grateful, Rachmaninoff dedicated the piece to Dahl. The *Concerto's* premiere took place in Moscow that same year, with Rachmaninoff as the soloist, and its wildly exuberant reception has never really ceased – so balanced is its form and pace, so exquisite its themes, so dark and restless its tone and yet, so filled with invention and hope.

The first movement, *Moderato* (moderately paced), begins with the solo piano playing a series of eight chords, each answered by a bell-like note deep in its bass register. From a hush, they grow through a wide range of harmonies, becoming more complex, and growing with volume and might, until they break into a set of restless arpeggios. Evocative and stirring, it's tempting to hear this introduction as a musical portrayal of the composer crawling free from his demons – but certainly, it sets a magnificent stage for the first theme that next appears in the clarinets and strings. This main theme – the kind of Romantic melody that Rachmaninoff would become especially famous for – is dark and lyrical,

long, and restless. Underneath, the solo piano remains in the background providing dense filigree behind that rich orchestral theme, but at about two minutes, the solo piano comes out to shine with its own, sensuous, yearning, and rhapsodic new theme. These two contrasting themes will constitute much of the rest of the material in this movement. Through virtuosity and tenderness, the solo piano and orchestra will use these themes to take us through some sublime moments, both cosmic and menacing, until at about nine-and-a-half minutes when the music builds up with vigor into a resolute conclusion.

The second movement, *Adagio sostenuto* (slowly and sustained), is one of Rachmaninoff's most beautiful movements. After an ethereal set of chords from the strings introduce the movement, the piano gently plays arpeggiated chords in triplets, over which the flute adds color. Then, the clarinet emerges and sings one of the composer's most memorable and lyrical tunes. (This theme later became a big hit in 1975 when it was repurposed by pop singer, Eric Carmen, for his hit song "All By Myself.") Here, in this Concerto, the theme captures a certain kind of enchanting alchemy, blending misty nostalgia with deep contentment. A particularly lovely moment arises at about two minutes when the piano and bassoon have a heart-melting duet. A cadenza of sorts arises, featuring challenging playing, but often with the orchestra involved, and all of it in the service of this movement's poetic feel. Eventually, the piano plays alone until the last measure, lost in reverie, ending with one last, quiet, rippled chord.

The final movement, *Allegro scherzando* (fast and lively), begins playfully before launching into a spirited march-like scherzo, full of muscle and splashy effects. Immediately comes extended passages for the piano, virtuosic and cadenza like. At two minutes, the oboes and lower strings present yet another of Rachmaninoff's great themes, surging and soaring and disarmingly tuneful. So tuneful, that this theme as well has since been used several times in popular songs – the first, and likely most famous, "Full Moon and Empty Arms", from 1945. In this Concerto, this tune becomes heroic when the piano takes the reins, but soon, the music gravitates back into the original high-energy march. At almost hyper speed, the music then breaks into a brief and impressive *fugato* (fugue like) section at about four-and-a-half minutes, first in the strings then handed off to the piano, in music so frantic it feels like there ought to be sparks. The two main themes will return, each more valiant and more colossal, until a brief piano cadenza sets off the final section into a sprint of pure volume and pyrotechnics, ending in bravura and exhilarating joy, and a million miles away from the Concerto's dark and turbulent origins.

Piano Concerto No. 2

Title: Symphony No. 3

Duration: Approximately 40 minutes

Composer: Aaron Copland (Born in Brooklyn, NY on November 14, 1900; died in Westchester, NY on December 2, 1990)

Work composed: The *Symphony* was commissioned in 1944 by Copland's friend, Serge Koussevitzky, conductor of the Boston Symphony, and enabled through his charity called the Koussevitzky Music Foundation. Copland completed the Symphony in 1946 and dedicated it "to the memory of my good friend, Natalie Koussevitzky," wife of Serge, whose death in 1942 inspired the creation of the Foundation

World premiere: The premiere performance occurred on October 18, 1946 in Boston with Serge Koussevitzky conducting the Boston Symphony Orchestra

Instrumentation: 2 piccolos, 3 flutes, 3 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, E-flat clarinet, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contra-bassoon, 4 horns, 4 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion: [anvil, bass drum, chimes, claves, cymbals, glockenspiel, ratchet, slapstick, snare drum, suspended cymbal, tam tam, tenor drum, triangle, wood block, xylophone], celeste, piano, 2 harps, strings

Symphony No. 3

- I. Molto moderato
- II. Allegro molto
- III. Andantino quasi allegretto
- IV. Molto deliberato (Fanfare) – Allegro risoluto

By the age of 15, the young American musician Aaron Copland had decided he was going to be a professional composer, and to his credit, he accomplished his dream as grandly as any other American composer ever has. His compositions became associated with what is often called the "American" sound, which would bring him immense popularity and fame. Alongside composing, he was an avid writer about music, a life-long teacher and tutor, as well as steadfast in his commitment to helping other composers and musicians thrive in the music world, ultimately becoming known as the "Dean of American Composers." But even as late as his 40's, Copland was typically struggling financially. In order to make ends meet, he depended on teaching and lecturing, students, commissions, prize money, and wealthy patrons. One of those patrons, and who was also a friend, was the magnanimous Serge Koussevitzky (1874 – 1951).

Koussevitzky was the conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra and was hugely influential in the American music scene. When his wife, Natalie, died suddenly in 1942, he created a charitable fund in her memory, the Koussevitzky Music Foundation, dedicated to commissioning new music, and which guaranteed its grantees a performance with the Boston

Symphony which assured their further visibility. In 1944, Copland was commissioned by the Koussevitzky Music Foundation for a new symphony. It would become his *Symphony No. 3*, completed in 1946, and its premiere later that year, conducted by Koussevitzky with the Boston Symphony, was a titanic success. Copland explained,

"I knew exactly the kind of music he [Koussevitzky] enjoyed conducting and the sentiments he brought to it, and I knew the sound of his orchestra, so I had every reason to do my darndest to write a symphony in the grand manner."

Hailed at the time as the finest symphony ever written by an American composer, the *Symphony's* huge success solidified Copland's popularity and importance in American music for the first time in his career. And the work has remained enduringly popular ever since as one of Copland's signature pieces, employing the same attractive "American" sounding harmonies and melodies as others of his popular works, like *Billy the Kid* (1938), *Rodeo* (1942), and *Appalachian Spring* (1944). Though Copland worked on the *Symphony* through the last years of World War II, he expressly did not create a "War Symphony," nor give the *Symphony* a story to follow, although he did write a finale to "reflect the euphoric spirit of the country at the time [of the end of the War]." In this regard, Copland not only created a wonderfully victory-infused finale, but on the suggestion of his composer friend, David Diamond (1915 – 2005), Copland overtly mingled into the finale's thematic material his *Fanfare for the Common Man* – a piece he had written in 1942 but that had not yet reached a wide public.

The first movement, *Molto moderato* (very moderately paced), opens quietly and expressively. Copland uses the interval of a descending fourth, first introduced by several of the winds and upper strings, to recall his signature evocation of expansiveness with their open intervals and harmonies. The main theme then begins with reserve and stateliness, at first played mainly by the strings. This theme's melody ventures out slowly, often not progressing more than three or four notes at a time before holding onto a longer note, and as more instruments gradually join this theme, a hymn-like polyphony emerges with an unexpected forward-moving energy. Two additional themes get introduced: one of them, more lyrical, beginning at about two-and-a-half minutes and first heard in the oboes and violas, and the other theme, more menacing, appearing at one-and-a-half minutes later and first played by the horns and trombones. Despite their differences, these three main themes seem to all be crafted out of the same organic material, as if each is a continual unfurling out of the others. As they grow in complexity, they ultimately culminate into a mighty climax just before seven minutes with goose-bump raising blasting brass and smashing drums. After this outburst, the music begins to recede back into itself, with diminishing amounts of instruments and less rhythmic activity, finally returning to the quietness of the movement's opening moments, now pitched high in the stratosphere.

The second movement, *Allegro molto* (Very fast), is a boisterous scherzo, a slightly discordant and tumbling fanfare, filled with jazzy rhythms, changing meters, and cantankerous underlying orchestral gestures. The energy is so high and its effect at times so brash that everything seems to border on anxiety. The contrasting middle section, beginning with the winds at about four minutes, at first ruminates on the wandering melodic material of the first movement, but soon develops into an interlude of delightful lyricism. This middle-section music then begins to rush ahead until it blends into the jazzy fanfare music that this movement opened with, but now it has become more forthright, ending with militaristic drums and fanfares and a sense of regality.

The third movement, *Andantino quasi allegretto* (roughly translating as "neither too slow nor too fast") then arrives in a somber, elegiac garb, remembering one of the dramatic passages from the first movement. The music yearns and searches, it feels, as if unable to escape. A more joyful middle portion begins at about six minutes, delightfully reminiscent of passages from Copland's Pulitzer-prize winning (1945) ballet, *Appalachian Spring*, but the music soon transitions back to that of the first part, now, freighted with eeriness and pathos. The final bars muster a moment of quiet and tender harmony, and holds on to it for some time.

Without pause, the last movement, *Molto deliberato* (very deliberate), begins with a portion of *Fanfare for the Common Man*, first emerging in the flutes and clarinets in an airy, enchanting way, as a delicate response to the prior movement's pathos. These musical wafts soon blossom into a full recitation of the *Fanfare* with the brass and percussion, and as this fanfare always does, its effect is hair-raisingly noble. The next section pivots and the winds rhapsodize on bits of the *Fanfare* and then turn them into a new theme, jaunty, upbeat, and virtuosically demanding of the orchestra. Then themes from previous moments throughout the *Symphony* return and join in as variations, including a charming variation on the *Fanfare* theme played between the horns, piccolo, and upper violins, as well as a surprising and delightful minimalism-meets-rag-time variation of the jaunty second movement theme that here includes woodblock.

The closing section of the *Symphony* then begins at about eleven-and-a-half minutes, growing from a quiet place and then building in power. Combining the *Fanfare* with the main theme of the first movement, Copland weaves them into massive sounds, even including an anvil to be struck to create the feeling of brute power, until the *Symphony* ends in a blinding blaze of triumph.

© Max Derrickson