

Dancing and Dynamite!

October 18, 2024

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Daniel Black, Conductor
Natasha Paremski, Piano

Jessie MONTGOMERY
(b. 1981)

Coincident Dances

Sergei RACHMANINOFF
(1873–1943)

Piano Concerto No. 3 in D minor, Op. 30
Allegro ma non tanto
Intermezzo: Adagio
Finale: Alla breve

INTERMISSION

Ludwig van BEETHOVEN
(1770–1827)

Symphony No. 7 in A major, Op. 92
Poco sostenuto–Vivace
Allegretto
Presto
Allegro con brio



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MEET THE MAESTRO Daniel Black

Montreal-based American conductor **Daniel Black** has earned a reputation as a conductor capable of delivering “vital and engaging” performances. A music director finalist with the West Virginia Symphony, Daniel recently completed a highly-successful four-year tenure as Resident Conductor of the Florida Orchestra. After joining as Assistant Conductor in 2018, he was quickly promoted to Associate Conductor and then Resident Conductor as his contract was twice extended. With The Florida Orchestra, he conducted over fifty performances per season, including Masterworks, Pops, film concerts, Coffee Concerts, Family and Youth concerts, and more. Prior to his engagement with The Florida Orchestra, Daniel served as Assistant and then Associate Conductor of the Fort Worth Symphony in Texas, conducting over 150 performances.

Passionate about expanding the core orchestral repertoire, in recent seasons Daniel has led the world premiere of Pulitzer Prize-winner Kevin Puts’ triple concerto “Contact” with the string trio Time for Three, the U.S. premiere of Eleanor Alberga’s dramatic work “Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs,” and has conducted the works of Gabriela Lena Frank, Florence Price, Jesse Montgomery, Philip Glass, Jennifer Higdon, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, Jimmy Lopez, Lembit Beecher, and more. In 2016, he conducted the Midwest premiere and first professional recording of John Harmon’s Crazy Horse Symphony to great acclaim.

Fluent in Russian, and having studied at the famed St. Petersburg Conservatory, he has a particular affinity for the Russian repertoire, having led performances of Tchaikovsky’s First Symphony, Rachmaninov’s “Rhapsody on a Theme of Corelli” and Shostakovich’s Fifth Symphony, among many others. In 2022 he conducted Galina Ustvolskaya’s little known gem “Symphonic Poem No. 2” with The Florida Orchestra.

Equally at home in the opera pit, Daniel had a successful debut with Bernstein’s *Candide* at Michigan Opera Theatre, and has conducted the Dnipro State Opera in Ukraine, Coleridge-Taylor’s *Dream Lovers* with Chicago’s South Side Opera Company, and Northwestern University opera. In 2017 he was assistant conductor for the China premiere of Bright Sheng’s *Dream of the Red Chamber*, touring China with the composer. In 2017-2018, he received opera conducting fellowships from the Solti Foundation U.S.- working with Opera Theatre St. Louis and the Florentine Opera Company, respectively.

Daniel has been active as a guest conductor, having appeared with the Buffalo Philharmonic, Hamilton Philharmonic, San Antonio Symphony, Owensboro Symphony, Texarkana Symphony, St. Petersburg Symphony “Classica”, Rockford Symphony, Savannah Philharmonic and the Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra, among others. An innovative programmer, he has offered works such as Honneger’s *Pacific 231*, Stravinsky’s *Dumbarton Oaks Concerto* and Mason Bates’ *Mothership*. In 2022-23, Daniel will return to the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra and the Florida Orchestra, among other engagements.

Daniel has thrice been awarded the Solti Foundation U.S. Career Assistance Award, and was a conducting fellow at the Aspen Music Festival, the Kurt Masur Conducting Workshop, and the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music. He has studied with Kurt Masur, Edo de Waart, Robert Spano, Hugh Wolff, Larry Rachleff, Marin Alsop, Daniel Lewis, David Effron, and Gunther Schuller. Daniel has studied conducting at the St. Petersburg Conservatory, Eastman School of Music, and Northwestern University, counting among his mentors Leonid Korchmar, Neil Varon and Victor Yampolsky. He has studied composition with Richard Danielpour.

Jessie Montgomery, born in Manhattan, has degrees from Juilliard and New York University and is currently a Ph.D. candidate in music composition at Princeton University. Her compositional style is born of her hometown, a melting pot of ethnic music and rhythms, popular dance styles including electronic dance music (EDM), rhythm and blues, and jazz, all expressed through classical mediums such as orchestra or chamber group. Added to the mix, according to her website, are poetry and social consciousness. Her father was a musician and her mother a “theater artist and storyteller” so Jessie grew up in a world of arts and activism. Since 1999 she has been a part of the Sphinx Organization that supports young Latinx and African-American string players (Montgomery is also a violinist). In the composer’s own words: “**Co-incident Dances** is inspired by the sounds found in New York’s various cultures, capturing the frenetic energy and multicultural aural palette one hears even in a short walk through a New York City neighborhood. The work is a fusion of several different sound-worlds: English consort, samba, mbira dance music from Ghana, swing, and techno. My reason for choosing these styles sometimes stemmed from an actual experience of accidentally hearing a pair simultaneously, which happens most days of the week walking down the streets of New York, or one time when I heard a parked car playing Latin jazz while I had rhythm and blues in my headphones. Some of the pairings are merely experiments. Working in this mode, the orchestra takes on the role of a DJ of a multicultural dance track.”

At age fourteen **Sergei Rachmaninoff** (1873–1943) moved by himself from his home near Great Novrogod, Russia, to study at the Moscow Imperial Conservatory. At his

1892 graduation, he was a co-winner of the Gold Medal for Piano along with Josef Lhévinne and Alexander Scriabin. That same year, Rachmaninoff achieved great success with the famous Prelude in C-sharp minor, Op. 3, No. 2, which sold thousands of copies. He grew to hate the piece because it was requested so often during his performance tours. **Piano Concerto No. 3 in D minor** was composed in 1909 specifically for Rachmaninoff’s North American Tour, and he was the soloist at its premiere on 28 November 1909 with the New York Symphony conducted by Walter Damrosch. When the Rachmaninoff family lost their estate and aristocratic way of life during the 1917 Russian Revolution, the composer, his wife, and two daughters traveled by open sled to Finland that December, taking only a few of his compositions and sketchbooks. In 1918 they moved to the United States. He was often homesick, and after buying a home in 1921, the Rachmaninoffs set up housekeeping with Russian customs, Russian servants, and Russian guests. Since his primary means of supporting his family was concertizing, he only completed six more compositions between 1918 and his death in 1943.

Piano Concerto No. 3 in D minor begins almost tentatively with a muted pulse, and the piano soon enters with a stepwise folk melody. This “Russian” theme with its introspective nature is an unusual opening for a concerto, but the pianist has ample time to display her technical skills, such as during the cadenza when the orchestra is silent near the end of the first movement. **Intermezzo** is slow and frequently brooding, like so much of Rachmaninoff’s music. Stravinsky famously referred to his countryman as “a six-and-a-half-foot scowl.” The featured oboe in this movement adds to the melancholy. One of the most delicious aspects of Rachmaninoff’s music is the

abundance of countermelodies, heard here between the pianist’s own two hands, as well as between the soloist and the orchestra, and interwoven among the orchestral instruments themselves. After an impassioned mini-cadenza for piano, the orchestra plays an unexpected whimsical waltz accompanied by rapidly repeated notes in the piano. Eventually the oboe’s plaintive solo returns, but the somber mood is abruptly interrupted when the pianist begins the **Finale** without pause. Yearning melodies are juxtaposed with stunningly difficult bravura displays, providing an emotionally wrenching but richly satisfying concluding movement.

DID YOU KNOW?
 In 1909, when Rachmaninoff was composing his third piano concerto, the name of Florida Female College was changed to Florida State College for Women. It became the coeducational Florida State University in 1947.

German-born composer **Ludwig van Beethoven** (1770–1827) made his living primarily as a teacher and performer, but by the time he was thirty, his deafness made it increasingly difficult for him to concertize. Sketches for **Symphony No. 7** date to 1811, when the composer was still searching for cures and “taking the waters” at Teplitz, a Bohemian spa. The symphony was well received at its December 1813 premiere, and the audience even insisted that the second movement be repeated. If you saw the film *The King’s Speech*, this movement enhanced the scene where King George VI, who struggled with stuttering, delivered a radio speech to the British public on the eve of World War II. What is it about this symphony that is so enthralling? Is it the way the **Poco sostenuto** begins with a forte chord out of which

the first theme emerges in the oboe? The contrast in volume and timbre is striking. Or is it the energy generated by the detached scales that start in a low register and ascend repeatedly through various instruments? Perhaps it is the sweet secondary theme played by the woodwinds, undergirded by repeated notes that eventually lead to the important dotted rhythm pattern that distinguishes the start of the **Vivace**, “the first movement proper.” Yes! All this rich variety of timbre, dynamics, and thematic ideas, as well as the motific germ of a repeated pitch/rhythm occurs in the first three and a half minutes of a “somewhat sustained” introduction! In the joyous **Vivace**, Beethoven continues to surprise us with his dialogues between various instruments, his creative use of rhythm as a thematic element, and dynamic contrasts. The latter include extended crescendos, often punctuated by timpani, as well as sforzando (suddenly loud) chords, all of which make the silences even more effective. Beethoven often reveals more in silence than others express with notes.

The perennially popular second movement, **Allegretto**, features a distinctive rhythm of long—short—short—long—long in the low strings. It begins in A minor and quickly introduces a solemn countermelody in the violas. As these two themes interweave, the increased levels of dynamics and instrumentation are so musically fulfilling. A contrasting middle section in the major mode lends an air of optimism even as the basses continue an octave repetition of the long—short—short—long—long motive. Next, with its lighthearted staccato passages, the **Presto** provides the “scherzo” element of humor in the symphony. A slightly slower trio section features the horns in a dignified theme that contrasts with the rollicking main section. Scherzo movements usually appear in

A B A format, scherzo-trio-scherzo, but Beethoven extends this third movement to include an additional appearance of each section, A B A B A. In a brief coda, he further teases his listeners with a third entrance of the horn theme, but this is abruptly silenced by fortissimo chords, making way for the non-stop motion of the fourth movement. The **Allegro con brio** lives up to its tempo marking —“fast with brilliance.” There are occasional passages where the woodwinds seem to momentarily encourage a slower meditative state, but the rest of the orchestra rushes headlong to the frenzy. Rapidly-tongued wind passages, flurries of strings, and syncopated timpani propel us to the end of the symphony. One understands why Richard Wagner called this music “the apotheosis of the dance.”

DID YOU KNOW?

The second movement of Beethoven’s Seventh Symphony is heard not only in *The King’s Speech* but is also part of the soundtracks of *Mr. Holland’s Opus*, *The Immortal Beloved*, and *X-men Apocalypse*.

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Dr. Akers has a Master of Music degree in Piano Performance from Indiana University and a Ph.D. in Historical Musicology from Florida State University

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With her consistently striking and dynamic performances, pianist **Natasha Paremski** reveals astounding virtuosity and profound interpretations. She continues to generate excitement from all corners as she wins over audiences with her musical sensibility and a powerful, flawless technique.

Natasha is a regular return guest of many major orchestras, including Minnesota Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, Grant Park Festival, Winnipeg Symphony, Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony, Oregon Symphony, Elgin Symphony, Colorado Symphony, Buffalo Philharmonic, Virginia Symphony, and Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. She has performed with

major orchestras in North America including Dallas Symphony Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, San Diego Symphony, Toronto Symphony, Baltimore Symphony, Houston Symphony, NAC Orchestra in Ottawa, and Nashville Symphony. She has toured extensively in Europe with such orchestras as Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, Vienna's Tonkünstler Orchester, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Orchestre de Bretagne, the Orchestre de Nancy, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Tonhalle Orchester in Zurich, Moscow Philharmonic, under the direction of conductors including Thomas Dausgaard, Peter Oundjian, Andres Orozco-Estrada, Jeffrey Kahane, James Gaffigan, JoAnn Falletta, Fabien Gabel, Rossen Milanov and Andrew Litton.

As a recitalist, Natasha has performed at the Auditorium du Louvre in Paris, Wigmore Hall, Schloss Elmau, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Festival, Verbier Festival, San Francisco Performances, Seattle's Meany Hall, Kansas City's Harriman Jewell Series, Santa Fe's Lensic Theater, Ludwigshafen BASF Series, Teatro Colon in Buenos Aires, Tokyo's Musashino Performing Arts Center, and on the Rising Stars Series of Gilmore and Ravinia Festivals. A passionate chamber musician, Natasha is a regular recital partner of Grammy winning cellist Zuill Bailey, with whom she has recorded a number of CDs. Their Britten album on Telarc debuted at No. 1 on the Billboard Classical Chart in addition to being featured on The New York Times Playlist.

Natasha was awarded several prestigious prizes at a very young age, including the Gilmore Young Artists prize in 2006 at the age of eighteen, the Prix Montblanc in 2007, the Orpheum Stiftung Prize in Switzerland. In September 2010, she was awarded the Classical Recording Foundation's Young Artist of the Year. Her first recital album was released in 2011 to great acclaim, topping the Billboard Classical Charts, and was re-released on the Steinway & Sons label in September 2016 featuring Islamey recorded on Steinway's revolutionary new Spirio technology. In 2012 she recorded Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1 and Rachmaninoff's Paganini Rhapsody with Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and Fabien Gabel on the orchestra's label distributed by Naxos.

Born in Moscow, Natasha moved to the United States at the age of eight, becoming a U.S. citizen shortly thereafter, and is now based in New York City. Natasha began her piano studies at the age of four at Moscow's Andreyev School of Music. She then studied at San Francisco Conservatory of Music before moving to New York to study at Mannes College of Music, from which she graduated in 2007. Natasha made her professional debut at age nine with El Camino Youth Symphony in California. At the age of fifteen she debuted with Los Angeles Philharmonic and recorded two discs with Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra.