

# *Ocala Symphony Orchestra*

Thirty-Third Concert Season, First Subscription Concert

## *“All Time Favorites” October 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup>, 2009*

Matthew Wardell, conductor  
Michael Shane Wittenburg, piano

### *PROGRAM*

Presentation of the Colors  
Vanguard High School NJROTC

Overture to *Candide*

Leonard Bernstein  
(1918–1990)

Piano Concerto No. 1 in F minor, Op.1

Sergei Rachmaninov  
(1873–1943)

- I. Vivace
- II. Andante cantabile
- III. Allegro scherzando

Michael Shane Wittenburg, piano

### *INTERMISSION*

Victory at Sea Selections

Richard Rodgers  
(1902–1979)  
Arr. R. R. Bennett  
(1894–1981)

Romeo and Juliet Overture Fantasy

Peter Illich Tchaikovsky  
(1840–1893)

# PROGRAM NOTES

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Overture to *Candide*

Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990)

Premiered January 26, 1957 by the New York Philharmonic;  
Bernstein conducting.

Leonard Bernstein's *Overture to Candide* contains all the youthful vitality, energy, and jollity that the composer himself embodied throughout his life. Originally written for Bernstein's 1956 Operetta based on Voltaire's work of the same name, the overture is built from the songs *The Best of All Possible Worlds*, *Oh, Happy We*, *Glitter and Be Gay*, and the operetta's *Battle Music*, in addition to some melodies written solely for the overture. Bernstein doesn't spend much time developing any of the themes, jumping quickly from one to the next. This rapid succession of different melodies and moods combined with Bernstein's expert use of compound meters and uneven phrase lengths leave his listener constantly "on the wrong foot." Hearing the piece for the first (or even hundredth) time is a bit of a whirlwind much like the work's subject – young love. In the piece's final 30 seconds, Bernstein gives up all four of the previously presented songs in quick succession before bringing the short overture to its wild conclusion.

Piano Concerto No. 1 in F minor, Op. 1

Sergei Rachmaninov (1873-1943)

Premiered March 17, 1892 by the Moscow Conservatory with Berstein conducting and Rachmaninov playing the piano.

Sergei Rachmaninov, just 18 years old, composed the first movement to his *Piano Concerto No. 1* in 1890 and dedicated it to Alexander Siloti, the composer's teacher at the Moscow Conservatory. The second and third movements were completed a year later in 1891, with the work's first performance taking place on a student concert. Never totally satisfied with the first draft of the concerto, Rachmaninov found it worthwhile to revise the work's structure and instrumentation in 1917, with further minor revisions in 1919. The monumental first movement (performed without the second and third movements in 1892) contains all the romantic melodies, rich harmonies, and emotional longing that would mark the majority of Rachmaninov's output as a composer. The second movement, a nocturne, brings the listener into a dream-like soundscape, complete with rising and falling chromatic figures in the orchestra while giving the soloist extreme expressive freedom. Waking the audience from the second movement's contemplative mood, the third movement begins with a loud, rhythmic explosion and leaves the listener constantly guessing as to where the pulse actually is. True to his emotional nature, Rachmaninov propels his first piano concerto towards its inevitably bombastic conclusion with an accelerated tempo and galloping rhythm, leaving both soloist and orchestra to fend for themselves, out of breath, and often happy to meet together on the final chord.

Victory at Sea Selections

Richard Rodgers (1902-1979)

Arr. Sir Richard Rodney Bennett (1894-1981)

Premiered on NBC on October 26, 1952 as part of 13-hour documentary series.

While Richard Rodgers is often given credit for composing the music for the NBC documentary series *Victory at Sea*, he only composed about six and a half minutes of its themes and melodies. It was his chief arranger, R. R. Bennett, who transformed those mere minutes of fractured melodies into over ten hours of brilliantly orchestrated music to the extremely popular 26-part World War Two documentary. Rodgers' melodies combined with Bennett's orchestrations are as memorable as the powerful and evocative images of the America's Victory ships on the horizon as seen by millions during the documentary's nearly six month run.

Romeo and Juliet Overture Fantasy

Peter Illich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)

Premiered on March 16, 1870; 3<sup>rd</sup> version on May 1, 1886 in Tbilisi, Georgia.

Like many romantics, Tchaikovsky had a strong love and admiration for the works of William Shakespeare. At the time of the piece's conception, Tchaikovsky was a young professor at the Moscow Conservatory and had recently completed his first symphony. During this time in his life, and arguably throughout, Tchaikovsky was not confident in his compositional voice. When his mentor Balakirev (whom the piece was dedicated to) criticized the work after its premier, the self-conscious composer drastically altered the form of the piece. In the second version of the piece, the opening was changed to something closer to its current form: an orthodox-sounding chant bringing to mind Romeo and Juliet's co-conspirator, Friar Laurence. Even though the music is church-like, processional, and clean, one cannot escape its foreboding grasp – the feeling that all is not well and that this timeless story of our brave Romeo and his fair Juliet is indeed a tragedy. After the introduction, Tchaikovsky introduces a rhythmic theme of conflict that will return again and again, reminding the listener of the warring Montagues and Capulets. The sword fighting is interrupted by the recognizable love theme of the English horn. While initially calling the original opening "too academic," Balakirev responded to this love theme by writing Tchaikovsky, "I play it often, and I want very much to hug you for it." It is these three themes: the orthodox procession, the clashing of two powerful families, and the hug-worthy love theme, that Tchaikovsky uses alone, together, and in contrast to embody Shakespeare's tragedy. At the end of the tone poem, Tchaikovsky does not leave us with a feeling of loss, regret, or overbearing sadness, but rather triumph – the triumph of love over conflict, over tragedy, and over life itself.

*Notes by Matthew Wardell*