

Simon Trpceski

piano



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---The New York Times



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Simon Trpčeski
Biography
2011—2012 Season

With the ability to perform a diverse range of repertoire—from Haydn and Chopin to Debussy and Stravinsky—Macedonian pianist Simon Trpčeski has established himself as one of the most remarkable young musicians to have emerged in recent years, performing with many of the world's greatest orchestras and captivating audiences worldwide. Mr. Trpčeski is praised not only for his impeccable technique and delicate expression, but also for his warm personality and commitment to strengthening Macedonia's cultural image. *The New York Times*' Anthony Tommasini praises Trpčeski's dazzling musicianship, saying "He tore through the double-octave outbursts with arm-blurring speed and no sense of strain. Yet in tenderly lyrical moments he caressed the phrases, playing with naturalness, never milking anything."

Mr. Trpčeski has appeared with many of the world's finest orchestras. In North America, he has performed with the New York and Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestras, The Philadelphia and Cleveland Orchestras and the Symphony Orchestras of Boston, San Francisco, Pittsburgh, Chicago, Toronto and Baltimore, among others. In the United Kingdom, he is a frequent soloist with the London and City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestras, the Philharmonia and Halle Orchestras and the London Philharmonic. Other engagements with major European ensembles include the Royal Concertgebouw, Russian National and Bolshoi Theatre Orchestras, *NDR Sinfonieorchester* Hamburg, *Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester* Berlin, the Danish National Symphony Orchestra and the Rotterdam, Strasbourg, Royal Stockholm, Royal Flanders and St. Petersburg Philharmonics. In Asia he has performed with the New Japan, Seoul and Hong Kong Philharmonics. In South America he has performed with the Orchestra of the National Theater of Brazil and the Sao Paulo State Symphony Orchestra. In Australia he has been featured with the Sydney and Melbourne Symphony Orchestras, and has toured with the New Zealand Symphony. Mr. Trpčeski has worked with a prominent list of conductors, including Marin Alsop, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Lionel Bringuier, Andrew Davis, Gustavo Dudamel, Charles Dutoit, Vladimir Jurowski, Lorin Maazel, Antonio Pappano, Vasily Petrenko, Robin Ticciati, Yan Pascal Tortelier and David Zinman.

Mr. Trpčeski's 2011-2012 season features a robust schedule of orchestral and recital performances. Of particular note to North American audiences is his National Symphony Orchestra debut with Lorin Maazel at the Kennedy Center and his Carnegie Hall recital debut, an eagerly awaited return after last season's triumphant debut with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra. Mr. Trpčeski returns to the San Francisco Symphony in their centennial season and to the Milwaukee Symphony, both with Edo de Waart conducting. He also performs Ravel's Piano Concerto in G major with the Indianapolis and Seattle

symphonies and gives the American premiere of Macedonian composer Damir Imeri's *Fantasy on Two Folk Themes* with Orchestra in Seattle. Worldwide orchestral highlights include engagements with the Royal Flemish, Rotterdam and Royal Liverpool Philharmonic orchestras, the Australian Chamber Orchestra, Barcelona and Bamberger Symphonies, Philharmonia Orchestra of London, China Philharmonic Orchestra and the Guangzhou Symphony. Mr. Trpčeski gives recitals in Paris, Hong Kong, London and Milan.

March 2010 saw Mr. Trpčeski's concerto recording debut on the Avie label, showcasing Rachmaninov's notoriously challenging *Piano Concertos Nos. 2 and 3* with Vasily Petrenko and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra. The album was positioned in the Top 10 of both the Billboard Classical Chart and the UK's specialist classical chart, and additionally won *Diapason d'Or de l'année* and *Classic FM's* "Editor's Choice" Awards. In June 2011, the Avie label released the second concerto album from Trpčeski, Petrenko and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra; the completion of Rachmaninov piano concerti, Nos. 1 and 4 alongside *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*. Geoffrey Norris, for *Gramophone Magazine* remarked, "This is a riveting disc, another major landmark for Trpčeski and one on which Rachmaninov finds interpreters thoroughly attuned to his emotional world. It was clear that Trpčeski was put on this earth to play this music and Petrenko to conduct it." The second disc has been recognized with *Classic FM*, *Gramophone* "Editor's Choice" and *Diapason d'Or* distinctions.

In December 2009, the President of Macedonia H.E. Gjorge Ivanov honored Simon Trpčeski with the Presidential Order of Merit for Macedonia. This decoration is given to foreign and domestic dignitaries responsible for the affirmation of Macedonia abroad. Upon awarding Mr. Trpčeski with this honor, The President stated "By bringing his artistic talent to classical music halls around the world, Simon Trpčeski is among the greatest ambassadors of the Republic of Macedonia, demonstrating to the world that Macedonia is a land of exceptional artists. Through his subtle mission he has confirmed that, although the Republic of Macedonia is geographically small, it is a spiritually and artistically great country, with inexhaustible creativity to offer the cultures of the world." Mr. Trpčeski is the youngest recipient of a medal of any kind in Macedonian history. In September 2011, President Ivanov bestowed upon Mr. Trpčeski the title - National Artist of the Republic of Macedonia, the first such recognition in Macedonia's history.

A superb recitalist, Simon Trpčeski has given solo performances in such cultural capitals as New York, San Francisco, Atlanta, Seattle, Washington, D.C., Toronto and Vancouver in North America; and abroad in London, Paris, Amsterdam, Milan, Munich, Prague, Hamburg, Bilbao, Dublin, Tokyo and Sao Paulo. He has performed on the main stage of the Concertgebouw, as well as at the United Nations headquarters on the occasion of the closing of the sixty-second session of the U.N. General Assembly, at the invitation of the session's President, H.E. Srgjan Kerim. Simon also performs chamber music as often as he can, having performed at such festivals as Aspen, Verbier and Risor and with musicians from orchestras such as the New York Philharmonic and Seattle Symphony.

Mr. Trpčeski often collaborates with artists working in other genres such as sculptors, painters, poets and writers. From as early as eight years of age he performed in the theater as an accordion player and actor

and throughout his career he has continued to develop this broad range of interests, organizing and performing different kinds of multimedia events. The latest multi-disciplinary project in which he participated was at the 2011 Tuscan Sun Festival in Cortona - Italy, with his involvement in the project “Seduction, Smoke and Music” dedicated to the life of Frédéric Chopin. In the main role of Chopin – the pianist, he performed works by Chopin alongside the Academy award winner Jeremy Irons (as Chopin – the composer) and Sinead Cusack (as George Sand). In addition, he has composed pop and children’s songs and been heavily involved in the creation of new contemporary works.

With the special support of KulturOp—Macedonia’s leading cultural and arts organization—and the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Macedonia, Mr. Trpčeski works regularly with young musicians in Macedonia in order to cultivate the talent of the country’s next generation of artists. Together with a several Macedonian contemporary composers Mr. Trpčeski works towards the aim of broadening Macedonia’s musical heritage.

Simon has received widespread acclaim for his recital recordings on the EMI label. His first recording, released in 2002, featured works by Tchaikovsky, Scriabin, Stravinsky and Prokofiev, and received both the “Editor’s Choice” and “Debut Album” awards at the *Gramophone* Awards. His 2005 Rachmaninoff and 2007 Chopin discs both received extensive praise from critics. In 2008, he released an all-Debussy disc entitled *Debussy: Images*, which was equally applauded. London’s *Independent on Sunday* described Trpčeski’s interpretations as “subtle, clever, imaginative pianism of the very highest quality.”

Born in the Republic of Macedonia in 1979, Simon Trpčeski has won prizes in international piano competitions in the United Kingdom, Italy and the Czech Republic. From 2001 to 2003, he was a member of the BBC New Generation Scheme, and in May 2003, he was honored with the Young Artist Award by the Royal Philharmonic Society. Mr. Trpčeski is a graduate of the Faculty of Music at the University of St. Cyril and St. Methodius in Skopje, where he studied with Professor Boris Romanov. In addition to his international engagements, he currently serves on the faculty of his alma mater and gives master classes in Europe, Asia, New Zealand and the United States. Simon Trpčeski and his family make their home in Skopje.

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Simon Trpčeski
Program Biography
2011—2012 Season

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Simon Trpčeski, piano

Critical Acclaim



“Mr. Trpčeski has formidable technique and energy to spare. He dispatched volleys of thick, crashing chords with steely tone and power, and conveyed contrasting passages of scampering runs with clarity and lightness. He tore through the double-octave outbursts with arm-blurring speed and no sense of strain. Yet in tenderly lyrical moments he caressed the phrases, playing with naturalness, never milking anything.”

Anthony Tommasini, *New York Times*

“His concerts and EMI Classics CDs have demonstrated a range of strengths rarely united in a young pair of hands. Electrifying virtuosity, but no whiff of show-off. The most delicate feelings, yet nothing precious or lacy. Head plus heart, lots of heart. What more could a music lover ask?”

Geoff Brown, *The London Times*

“Mr. Trpčeski’s playing was finely focused and often dazzlingly speedy, and he tempered the steeliness of Prokofiev’s writing with a welcome suppleness and warmth.”

Allan Kozinn, *New York Times*

“Trpčeski is honest, direct and fully committed to every note, bringing a sharp clarity to his performance. He can dance and dream, cry and console to the demands of the music with subtlety and style.”

Jane Jones, *Classic FM*

“Macedonian pianist Simon Trpčeski is clearly the real thing – and *then* some. It was obvious that Trpčeski not only possesses a gigantic technique, but also temperament, musicality, and intelligence in even more impressive proportions.”

Jim Svejda, KUSC FM Los Angeles

“There’s a grand romanticism about Trpčeski’s interpretations, as well as an attention to detail in which he picks out powerful bass lines and unusual inner voices or chooses unexpected yet convincing rubatos. His phrasing of the songful trio embedded in the manic second movement is simply magical. There’s also something ideal in the intimacy of Trpčeski’s identification with the music and the beauty he finds in the breadth of contrast between nightmare and reverie.”

Jessica Duchon, *BBC Music Magazine*

“Just as awe replaces critical scrutiny when faced with Trpčeski’s formidable mastery, you remember how such towering virtuosity is complemented by an equally remarkable refinement. If few pianists have stormed Chopin’s Second Sonata’s first movement more heroically, even fewer have played the Funeral March’s central Elysian Trio with such poise and concentration. Such unfaltering style and assurance are enough to make lesser pianists weep with envy.”

Bryce Morrison, *Gramophone*

“He is a distinctly modern artist, playing with illuminating clarity, high intelligence, complete technical assurance, and textural accuracy. Listening to this Chopin program, one has an illusion of musical architecture floating in space. This is a pianist who always has clever ideas about music; nothing seems

wayward, routine or arbitrary. His sense of structure is impeccable; everything sounds logical, inevitable and supremely musical.”

Jack Sullivan, *American Record Guide*

“The qualities that make Trpčeski’s playing so distinctive – the finely judged balance between muscularity and sensitivity, his delight and affection – allow him to be strikingly extrovert, witty and at times even playful in Debussy, without ever losing sight of the profundity and mystery.”

Tim Ashley, *The Guardian*

“Simon Trpčeski’s luminous sound and technical ease make this recital of Debussy piano favourites positively irresistible. This is subtle, clever, imaginative pianism of the very highest quality.”

Anna Picard, *The Independent*

“The best thing to come out of Macedonia since Alexander the Great is pianist Simon Trpčeski. The thorniest musical scores just seem to fall over when Trpčeski approaches, their most difficult challenges handled with such ease that technique is simply never an issue. This pianist is pretty good at conquering audiences as well as scores, not only with his playing but also with an engaging manner that connects with his listeners.”

Melinda Bargreen, *Seattle Times*

“In this Debussy repertoire he harnesses the subtlety and spontaneity that mark his playing with an infallible ear for atmosphere. He transcends the technical challenges that bestow most of the pieces, to find the music’s defining traits and conjure up images that are profoundly evocative. These images can be elusive, evanescent or swathed in mystery, but Trpčeski’s performances have the ability to encapsulate an idea, however fleeting, and to fix it in the mind as part of a larger, more complex, more all-embracing picture.”

Geoffrey Norris, *The Daily Telegraph*

“Trpčeski’s clarity was striking, and no matter how many notes he was playing, they never lost their fleet purposefulness. Trpčeski plays the big lyrical variation with a degree of classicism Rachmaninoff would have admired.”

Mark Kanny, *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*

“The interpretive balance is precise and inspired, the thrill of experience the (Rachmaninoff) Concertos played in this way immeasurable. Trpčeski was born to play this music.”

Geoffrey Norris, *The Daily Telegraph*

“Macedonian pianist Simon Trpčeski, making his HSO debut, played with impeccable technique and musicality, and the all-French program was a delight from start to end.”

Concertonet.com

“A formidable technician with a flair for melodrama.”

Sumi Hahn, *The Seattle Times*

“Trpčeski shimmered over the keys, his nimble articulation lightening and illuminating hackneyed passage-work until phrases began to sing with fantasy once more.”

Edward Seckerson, *The Independent*



The New Zealand Herald

July 9, 2011

NZSO with Simon Trpceski

By William Dart



When Simon Trpceski made his debut with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra three years ago, he gave us Rachmaninov's *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* with the impetuosity and zeal of a youthful athlete.

Next week, Prokofiev's Third is the allotted concerto and, although the Macedonian pianist jests that "it has a lot of notes which make my life very difficult", I suspect we can expect a seamless blend of art and athletics.

When we chat, Trpceski has yet to meet Pinchas Steinberg, but he hopes the Israeli conductor will agree that, above all, Prokofiev needs a light touch.

"People so often point out the steel-like energy of Prokofiev's music and his aggressive style," Trpceski explains.

"However, this concerto is also full of joy and humour - after all, it was written during a more or less happy period of his life.

"And people forget that melody was so important to Prokofiev, especially in the second theme of the final movement."

I am talking to a man who feels that tune is what music is all about, an attitude Trpceski can trace back to his Macedonian childhood.

"My first love was the accordion," he recalls. "I used to spend every other night gathering together with family and friends, dancing and singing and playing. This helped me so much to appreciate the natural power of the lyrical.

"Now when I'm practising classical music, I find it an enormous help to sing through the themes; it's the most authentic way of feeling their shape."

Visit Trpceski's website and you will find it headed by the Latin proverb, "Per Aspera Ad Astra".

"This means 'to the stars through difficulties or struggle'," the pianist explains.

"It's something my father taught me as it was very much his life story, working his way from a small rural village to the capital, Skopje, where he went to law school and eventually became a judge.

"It was also a struggle for me in the beginning. Our country was in a state of transition with limited resources. I'm



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PRESS REPRESENTATIVE

very aware of the success I've achieved, coming from such modest beginnings."

Trpceski's first taste of success came in the 2000 London International Competition. He was given second prize, but the general consensus was that the young Macedonian deserved to have won. A succession of fine recordings on EMI followed, featuring the music of Rachmaninov, Chopin, Scriabin and Debussy.

These days, Trpceski is more keen to talk about his most recent CDs on the smaller Avie label, where he is in the illustrious company of musicians such as Trevor Pinnock and Imogen Cooper. Last year's coupling of Rachmaninov's Second and Third Piano Concertos was awarded gold by the French *Diapason* magazine and a superb second disc of the First and Fourth Concertos, with the *Paganini Rhapsody*, has just appeared.

Trpceski has enjoyed the partnership with conductor Vassily Petrenko, who is

also touring with the NZSO in a few weeks.

"I'm so sorry we're missing one another," he says. "And the Rachmaninov Fourth is going to be played by a New Zealand pianist.

"Vassily is just amazing. We both come from the Russian school. I had Russian teachers who had moved to Skopje; he's from St Petersburg.

"We don't like to mess around with the score," he laughs.

"The important thing is just to bring out what the composer is saying in the music."

I press Trpceski for his favourite of the Rachmaninov Concertos and it turns out to be the First.

"The melodies are breathtaking. I adore it," is his immediate response.

"Rachmaninov wrote it when he was 19 and, even though he revised it later, this music comes straight from the heart of a young composer."



The Boston Musical Intelligencer

April 21, 2011

Macedonia Marvel, Simon Trpceski, Pianist with BSO

By Bettina A. Norton



The Macedonian pianist Simon Trpceski will make his debut with the Boston Symphony Orchestra in the Liszt Piano Concerto No. 2 in a concert conducted by Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos on April 28, 29, and 30. This interview was conducted by telephone from Boston to Macedonia on Wednesday morning, April 13. Besides his obvious enthusiasm for music, Trpceski's gratitude for being part of the relatively new Republic comes out in his responses. (Asked for the right pronunciation of his name, he responded "SEE-mon Trrrrp'CHESky.")

BAN: First, congratulations on the Diapason D'Or — for your Rachmaninoff?

ST: Yes. I was a little bit surprised; I didn't expect it. But when I heard, while in New York for my Carnegie Hall debut with the Baltimore Orchestra, I flew back to Paris for two days to receive it,

then went on with my tour schedule, to Chicago and Estonia.

BAN: And in 2009, when you were 31, you received the Presidential Order of Merit for Macedonia, one of the country's highest honors.

ST: Yes.

BAN: What part of Macedonia do you come from? Vardar? Pirin? Aegean?

ST: That's a difficult question. I was born in Skopje, Vardar Macedonia. But still I consider myself ethnically Macedonian. My grandparents came from the Greece part [Aegean], and the Asian part [Pirin].

BAN: So your name is ...

ST: Completely unique Macedonian. Lots of people mix it with Polish. but it's not. I have never met anyone in Poland with the same name.

BAN: The *Seattle Times* said you are "the best thing to come out of Macedonia since Alexander the Great." He is probably the ONLY person the interviewer know who came out of Macedonia. But it is a great line... So — how many world-traveling musicians have come out of Macedonia?

ST: "We have a couple of singers. Tenor Blagoj Nacoski [who has sung throughout Europe and Asia but evidently not in the US], and two others who sing primarily in Austria and Germany. And we have pop singers very popular in the Yugoslavia area.



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BAN: You have performed with major symphonies in the UK, Germany, Russia, Denmark, Holland, Japan, Seoul, Hong Kong, New Zealand... And in the US, you have performed with the New York and Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestras, the Philadelphia and Cleveland Orchestras, the Pittsburgh, Atlanta, San Francisco, Chicago, and Baltimore Symphony Orchestras, et cetera. So what took so long for you to perform with the BSO?

ST: [laughter]. This is not a question for me! But — I am so glad I got an invitation now. I will try my best, presenting myself before the very sophisticated Boston audience. I am glad it is the Liszt because one can show both virtuosity and lyricism.

BAN: On that note, *The New York Times's* Anthony Tommasini praises your dazzling musicianship, saying “He tore through the double-octave outbursts with arm-blurring speed and no sense of strain. Yet in tenderly lyrical moments he caressed the phrases, playing with naturalness, never milking anything.” You seem very lyrical, very romantic, a big proponent of Rachmaninoff, and I gather Prokofiev and Scriabin... others? Mostly the romantics?

ST: I would say I am a romantic person. But I have to say I was really taught to find myself in any piece I play, starting from Bach onwards, to try to feel the music, between my soul. There is really a lot of romantic stuff in Bach, and really before Bach. From my teachers I had well-built [instruction]. The Russian influence was natural, but on the other hand they were really open to build my repertory in different directions, my education. For the last several years, now working by myself, I really try to broaden my repertory. It's very healthy.

BAN: You will be playing the Liszt *Piano Concerto No. 2*. How often do you perform the Liszt?

ST: Since this is the Liszt year, the invitation for the BSO was a reason to go back to him more seriously.

BAN: You've never done the First?

ST: No. I have always loved him as a composer especially because of his free spirit. I have always loved his concertos, planned to play them at some time... The BSO suggested the first, but I suggested the second, and they agreed.... I have been adding repertory apart from the Russian, — the Brahms horn trio, with Philip Myers and Glenn Dickterow of the NY Philharmonic, and the Hindemith Quartet with Julian Bliss, Dmitry Sitkovetsky, and Sol Gabetta,... I went back to Beethoven and Mozart lately. And Grieg, ...

BAN: When I was 14, I thought he was *the* greatest composer..

ST: [laughter], Very understandable. Lots of people think his concerto is more or less easy, but it is not easy at all, to put together with an orchestra.

BAN: Your handlers suggested to ask you about Macedonian folk songs. There's a great debate on YouTube on a Macedonian folk song: “it's really stolen from Albania,” “it's Turkish,” “For God sake stop claiming exclusivity on something if you use it. You also use doorknobs, it doesn't mean it is Turkish....”

ST: [laughter] Two things about it: its unique melody and its rhythm from the language itself. I am happy to come from here, because the folk music is in our blood and helps me a lot in my profession. My grandmother, my father's mother, knew a lot of songs, folk song and dance. The fact that I had a chance to sing a lot, the way I grew up, all the other difficult rhythms, definitely sophisticated rhythm, that helped my technique. The singing helped in developing a natural feeling, lyrical... I

sometimes do an encore that uses Macedonian songs.

BAN: and it is?

ST: *In Struga*. The name means “town of poetry” — it’s in the southwest of Macedonia,

BAN: Is this the one I heard you do on YouTube, that you played for KDFC in San Francisco?

ST: Yes! It is part of a suite *Bsni I Shepoti* — “Songs and Whispers” — by Bande Shahov, in honor of Chopin. He has two quotes from Chopin, the other four are transcriptions of folk songs. It received its premier in London at the opening of the International piano

season, at Queen Elizabeth Hall, in October of 2009. I have performed it several times in Canada, DC, LA, Seattle, Brazil, Europe, ...

BAN: Do you have another piece you like to use as an encore?

ST: Yes! Dance from Skopje, *Skopsko Oro*, arranged by Damir Imeri.

BAN: Encores are, if not nonexistent at the BSO, exceedingly rare. Programs have to end at a set time. Union rules,...

ST: Ah well, yes. Music is a live thing, though. You cannot frame it, make limits. Sometimes it is hard to shut it off.



February 12, 2011

Trpčeski Returns to Disney Hall



Simon Trpčeski returns to Walt Disney Concert Hall for a solo recital on Tuesday, Feb. 22. The program includes music by Haydn, Chopin and Prokofiev, as well as fellow Macedonian Pande Shahov.

Culture Spot interviewed Trpčeski before his performance last spring with the LA Phil and conductor Jaap van Zweden at Disney Hall. We followed up with him to see what he's been up to during the past year and find out what to expect at the recital.

The program includes a California premiere of "Songs and Whispers," a suite for piano by Pande Shahov, who is a friend of yours. Tell us how this piece came to be, what your role in its creation was, and what audiences can expect.

I like Pande not only as a very talented composer, but as a wonderful human being as well. The collaboration was as

smooth as someone could wish for. We have known each other since our student days, although he is older than I. He was a great supporter from the early stages in my career, when he just moved to the U.K. One of the qualities that I respect is that he is open to the ideas of the performer and I think that my suggestions in a few parts made a point, and the overall result is more than positive — at least at the places where I have performed it.

I was invited to open the season of the International Piano Series at Queen Elizabeth Hall in London, and since it was the starting season of Chopin anniversaries and I chose to play Chopin's Nocturnes, I suggested to Pande to write a piece connected to Chopin somehow, but which would include Macedonian roots too. I insisted on a piece not too contemporary but with obvious signs of today's "way" of thinking, which in its creation and development included a wide range of styles and influences, from Bach to Scriabin, Debussy, Prokofiev, Satie and jazz musicians. The combination of Chopin's soul with the Macedonian soul in the folk songs, made in his own vision, was a good source of inspiration I think. I added a small cadenza of my own in the last piece, Quasi Toccata, for even greater dramatic momentum. The



potential of Macedonian folk music is huge and I personally believe that it can lead to a newer, if not a completely new, perception of contemporary classical music. I hope that the audience, especially the folk and jazz lovers, will like it. I expect Pande to be present himself, which is an honor for me.

Why did you select the other pieces in the program?

I always try to make a varied program which will show the diversity of my capabilities and tastes. I try to accommodate to the promoter's wishes as well. It is really not easy at all because in different periods, the artist performs different programs which are very demanding, although both artists and management try to make it more sensible as a plan.

I wanted to play Haydn. I had to move Mozart's two sets of Variations to the other recitals because L.A., like Washington, D.C., wanted a major work. So, to the Chopin Nocturnes and Pande's piece, I added Prokofiev's Sonata No. 7. I think that this program covers a large amount of tastes, so I hope that most of the audience will be satisfied. Haydn is soft and "minor," but also dramatic in a language suitable for that time — the Sturm und Drang period — as is the atmosphere in Chopin, especially with the ending of the Nocturne in c-minor, like Haydn.

Shahov is suitable to both Chopin and Prokofiev because it quotes Chopin in two movements of the Suite, and the language and the year suits Prokofiev as well. Let's hope for the best!

How do you feel about returning to L.A. and Disney Hall since your concert last spring?

How can one feel? Wonderful, inspired, motivated and honored. I am very happy that the L.A. Philharmonic is presenting me in their Recital Series, which is great support and trust, but at the same time responsibility. Having great memories from there, I will do my best to make people satisfied and be left with a

memory which will keep them "hungry" until my next performance there.

How has the last year (since you've been in L.A.) been? Do you think you have grown musically through your many concerts in North America?

I have had some very nice projects since then. For example, I went to Houston after L.A. and had a very nice time there. Same state, Texas, but different than Dallas. I like diversity, which included a visit to Milwaukee, for example. Then I played with the Strasbourg Philharmonic in France. Being in Europe always brings a kind of charm.

I was very glad to be involved in two Schumann projects. One in Macedonia, which was organized by the non-governmental organization which I collaborate with back home — KulturOp — and was supported by the German Embassy, where I brought top-class musicians from Ukraine, Russia, Germany and Norway, including the wonderful violist Maxim Rysanov. The other one was in Seattle with the Seattle Symphony.

I opened the 50th anniversary concert of the Ohrid Summer Festival in Macedonia with the Russian National Orchestra and Mikhail Pletnev, followed by a sold-out Royal Albert Hall concert at the Proms and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic with Vasily Petrenko in London. I also visited Brazil for the first time in my life, and that was amazing in many ways.

Other highlights filled the autumn, like the Carnegie Hall debut with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra and Marin Alsop — which was really successful and received a standing ovation — and receiving the Diapason d'Or Award in Paris for the Best Concerto CD in 2010 for the Rachmaninov Concertos Nos. 2 and 3 with Petrenko and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic.

The calendar year finished with two concerts in two days, in two countries

with two concertos. London Symphony and Pappano in Rachmaninov 1 and the following day — an event of historical dimension — the first-ever British orchestral visit to Macedonia, with the London Philharmonic and Jurowski in Prokofiev 3. That was an event of significant importance for such a small country like Macedonia, so I am really proud of it.

Prior to L.A., I finished recording all of the Rachmaninov concertos in Liverpool with Petrenko for Avie Records, and I continued my Hong Kong Philharmonic cycle of the Rachmaninov concertos as well as gave recitals in Seattle, D.C. and Vancouver.

All of these concerts — as well as every public performance — mean a lot to an artist, since each of them is a story on its own that must be perceived by the artist in its whole dimension because of the once-in-a-lifetime experience. This might sound philosophical, but it is true. And that is why we, the musicians, are blessed with this privilege. In that sense, my experiences in the U.S.A., with the sincerity of the audience that I am wrapped in, is an important part of my life because it gives me inspiration to go on.

What music have you been working on recently, and have

your tastes or interests changed at all?

I have been working on Rachmaninov's Concerto No. 4 in the last period, apart from all the other pieces that I have played (and there have been many, including a huge chamber music program that I played in Chicago — trios by Rachmaninov, Shostakovich and Tchaikovsky). Rachmaninov No. 4 was the last one that was missing in my repertoire of his pieces for piano and orchestra, and the last one to be recorded in the set of all of them with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic and Vasily Petrenko for Avie Records.

My interests have always been big enough to satisfy my needs as a personality in general. So, I was glad that I had a rare chance to return to Haydn and Mozart. I also learned Liszt's Concerto No. 2, which I am performing in my debut with the Boston Symphony in April. I have always wanted new things which will refresh everyday life, which is I guess very normal for every person. I am looking forward to more of them in the next season, when I will play more of Liszt and Schubert as well. I am also looking forward to greater variety in my repertoire in the future, which I hope will be interesting for the audiences as well. We are here for them, after all.



February 2011

Pianist Simon Trpčeski catches up with iCadenza!

We first met Macedonian pianist Simon Trpčeski last April, when we got to know him through [this video interview](http://bit.ly/dzBRZO) (<http://bit.ly/dzBRZO>). We recently learned that he is coming back to LA on February 22, for a solo recital at the Walt Disney Concert Hall presented by The Los Angeles Philharmonic's Colburn Celebrity Series. This recital will mark the California Premiere of a Suite for Piano, *Songs and Whispers*, written by a Macedonian composer, Pande Shahov, who is a close friend of Simon's.

iCadenza caught up with Simon to discuss how he's been over the last year, his latest projects, and how his active career has affected the music scene back home in Macedonia.

iCadenza: We last talked to you when you were in Los Angeles to perform with the Los Angeles Philharmonic as well as at Classical Underground in April 2010. How have you been since then? What are some of the highlights or projects you have been involved in?

Simon Trpčeski: I have had some very nice projects since then. For example, I went to Houston after L.A. and had a very nice time there. Same state – Texas, but different than Dallas. I like diversity, which included a visit to Milwaukee, for example. Then I played with the Strasbourg Philharmonic in France.

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The calendar year finished with two concerts in two days, in two countries with two concertos. London Symphony and Pappano in Rachmaninov 1 and the following day -- an event of historical dimension -- the first-ever British orchestral visit to Macedonia, with the London Philharmonic and Jurowski in Prokofiev 3. That is an event of significant importance for such a small country like Macedonia, so I am really proud of it.

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iC: The program that you are performing at Walt Disney Concert Hall on February 22 is so varied, obviously centered on the CA premiere of Pande Shahov's "Songs and Whispers." How do you plan your recital programming in general, and what motivated the programming of this concert?

ST: I always try to make a varied program which will show the diversity of my capabilities and tastes. I try to accommodate to the promoter's wishes as well. It is really not easy at all because in different periods, the artist performs different programs which are very demanding, although both artists and management try to make it more sensible as a plan.

I wanted to play Haydn. Had to move Mozart to the other recitals because L.A., like Washington D.C., wanted a major work. So, to the Chopin Nocturnes and Pande's piece, I added Prokofiev Sonata No.7. I think that this program covers a large amount of tastes, so I hope that most of the audience will be satisfied.

iC: What was your experience collaborating with Pande Shahov on his pieces? This suite encompasses a wide range of musical styles and influences. How do you relate to these works?

ST: I like Pande, not only as a very talented composer, but as a wonderful human being as well. The collaboration was as smooth as someone could wish for. We have known each other since our student days, although he is older than me. He was a great supporter from the early stages in my career, when he had just moved to the U.K. One of the qualities that I respect is that he is open to the ideas of performers and I think that my suggestions in a few parts made a point, and the overall result is more than positive -- at least at the places where I have performed it.

The opening of the International Piano Series in London connected to Chopin in a way, because the program included Nocturnes, and I suggested Macedonian presence as well. So, I insisted on a piece not too contemporary but with obvious signs of today's "way" of thinking, that in its creation developed a wide range of styles and influences (as you say), from Bach to Scriabin, Debussy, Prokofiev, Satie and jazz musicians. The connection to Chopin was due to the anniversary year, because in that season I gave the world premiere at the Queen Elizabeth Hall in London. And the combination of Chopin's soul with the Macedonian soul in the folk songs made in his own vision, was a good source of inspiration I think. I added a small cadenza of my own in the last piece -- Quasi Toccata, for even greater dramatic momentum. The potential of Macedonian folk music is huge and I personally believe that it can lead to a newer, if not a completely new, perception of contemporary classical music. I hope that the audience, especially the folk and jazz lovers, will like it.

iC: Who would you consider your greatest musical influences?

ST: This is a difficult question. Certainly my teachers, the Romanov couple, including a great variety of pianists, as well as Macedonian folk music.

iC: Has the musical culture in Macedonia changed as a result of your tremendous international success?

ST: One would like to believe so! I think that I definitely helped to usher in a new era of classical music happenings. Macedonia always had a circle of great music lovers, no doubt about it. After Yugoslavia crashed, the transition period limited the number of high-level performances and performers. But we are trying to improve. I am doing my best and I believe that I have changed at least the way of thinking to some degree. What is rewarding is the behavior of the audience and the passion and warmth they give me during and after my performances.

iC: Your recordings have been extremely well-regarded. How do you choose the repertoire for recordings and what music do you hope to record in the future?

ST: This is always a deal between the record company, management and me. It depends also on the periods in my

schedule and the needs in the market, if one can say that at all. But in any case, I think that we have made the right choices so far. I would certainly like to record a bit of classical repertoire as well as 20th century, like Gershwin and Ravel. But for the audience, it would be nice to hear Macedonian music as well. So, we will see what will happen. I don't forget Schumann and Brahms, for example!

iC: What's coming up next on your schedule?

ST: I have concerts with the Montreal Symphony and, in the coming months, concerts in Belgrade, Zagreb, Oslo, and Copenhagen. I am looking forward to my debuts in Atlanta and Boston. I am glad that in the Liszt year I was given a chance to play Liszt No. 2 in Boston with Maestro Fruhbeck de Burgos. I am also excited for my Tokyo concerts with the NHK Symphony and Philharmonia in London with Petrenko. I will finish my concert season with a return tour to Australia and New Zealand.



November 12, 2010

Simon to Play at Carnegie Hall



Pianist Simon Trpceski will be the first Macedonian soloist to perform at the grand stage of New York-based Carnegie Hall, one of the most prestigious global concert halls.

Under the baton of Marin Alsop and accompanied by the Baltimore Symphonic Orchestra, Trpceski will play Saturday Concerto for Piano and Orchestra No.3 by Sergei Prokofiev.

"As an institution, with its history and beauty, Carnegie Hall gives an artist prestige and big motivation. The opportunity to perform in it is an honor for every artist. This is a dream. As a child and student I secretly asked myself what would be the feeling to play in it and now I have that opportunity", Trpceski told the Macedonian Radio before latest concert challenge.

Trpceski's recent tour includes performances in Brazil, Ireland, China, Netherlands, Great Britain, Italy, France and the United States.



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The Seattle Times

June 5, 2010

Preview: Pianist Simon Trpceski combines technical prowess with elegance at the keyboard

Macedonian pianist Simon Trpceski will perform twice at Seattle's Benaroya Hall in the coming days: at an all-chamber Schumann Birthday Celebration on Tuesday, then an all-French SSO bill, conducted by Seattle Symphony music director Gerard Schwarz.

By Tom Keogh

A sense of mission permeates pianist Simon Trpceski's career, from his preparation for playing a particular piece in concert to his philosophy behind interpreting composers' intentions.

Of his upcoming performance of Charles-Camille Saint-Saëns' Piano Concerto No. 2 in G minor, Op. 22, this week in Benaroya Hall, Trpceski, 31, speaking by phone from his home in Skopje, Macedonia, says he "learned it during my school days, but have never played it whole. It's a great responsibility to play it with the Seattle Symphony Orchestra and for a knowledgeable audience."

Concerning his widespread reputation for conquering the most technically demanding pieces with ease while, as a concert review in April in the Houston Chronicle put it, "distinguish[ing] his playing [with] grace and luminosity ...," Trpceski says he's "honored critics notice this.

"So many artists are capable of everything we could think of in terms of technique. But the meaning in notes is not just playing them. I've always

thought, since childhood, to find myself in every piece I play."

Stellar career

For such effort, Trpceski (pronounced Terp-CHESS-kee), to perform in two programs this week in Benaroya (an all-chamber Schumann Birthday Celebration Tuesday, then an all-French SSO bill, conducted by Gerard Schwarz, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday), is enjoying a stellar career.

He is regarded as a genuine master, "set to dominate the pianistic world for a long time to come," according to The Times of London.

In the past decade, Trpceski won international competitions in the United Kingdom, Italy and the Czech Republic, then had wide exposure during 2001-03 on Britain's BBC.

From there, his career as a soloist and guest performer with the finest orchestras in the world built rapidly.

Trpceski looks forward to double duty this week at Benaroya. His participation in the Schumann evening includes the composer's Piano Quintet in E-flat major, Op. 44.

"It's an excellent example of Schumann as a deep thinker, with a great range of



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emotions," says Trpceski. "It's a fascinating combination of instruments and an amazing incorporation of piano, which he loved so much."

Born in 1979, Trpceski received his music degree from the University of St. Cyril and St. Methodius in Skopje, where he now teaches.

His music education began with "learning lyrical themes in folk music" through the accordion.

"Macedonia is small, with no deep tradition in classical music," Trpceski says.

Trpceski's sense of mission is nowhere stronger than for Macedonia itself, a landlocked country that was one of the successor states of the former Yugoslavia.

He was 12 when the republic was born in 1991.

"My generation has found the 20 years of transition difficult," he says, citing a low economy and the political situation on the Balkan Peninsula.

In 2009, Macedonia's president, H.E. Gjorge Ivanov, presented Trpceski with the Presidential Order of Merit for being "among the greatest ambassadors of the Republic of Macedonia ... confirming it is a spiritually and artistically great country with inexhaustible creativity."

"I was very honored to receive it," says Trpceski. "I try to play in my country often, and involve my students and colleagues from Macedonia in what I do here. I'm proud of it."



AMERICAN CHRONICLE

April 24, 2010

UMD Inaugurates Los Angeles Operations and Awards World-Acclaimed Pianist Simon Trpčeski

On April 18, 2010, the United Macedonian Diaspora officially inaugurated its Los Angeles operations with a reception honoring UMD Outstanding Achievement Award recipient the world-acclaimed pianist Simon Trpčeski at the Omni Hotel in the heart of downtown Los Angeles. With over 200 guests in attendance, the evening was a great success thanks to the support of our sponsor and benefactor Niagara Bottling, LLC, our members, and friends. Guests enjoyed an evening of networking surrounded by the art work of California-based Macedonian-American artists Daniel Peci and Blagojce Stojanovski and Skopje-based artist Rumen Kamilov.

Emceed by journalist Sonja Magdevski, the evening featured remarks by His Excellency, the Consul General of the Republic of Macedonia, Jovica Palashevski, who flew in from Chicago, newly appointed UMD Los Angeles Regional Representative, Dimitar Nasev, UMD Co-Founder Steve Gligorov, St. Mary Macedonian Orthodox Church Board President Cane Carovski as well as UMD President Metodija A. Koloski who flew in from Washington, D.C.

In presenting the UMD Outstanding Achievement Award to Simon Trpčeski in recognition of his excellent and outstanding achievements in the arts,

UMD President Koloski noted with great honor Trpčeski's phenomenal musical talents. "Simon is truly beyond musical talent; I have attended several of his performances but Saturday's performance at the Walt Disney Concert Hall alongside the Los Angeles Philharmonic was exceptional, especially his pianist-version of the Macedonian folk song 'Na Struga Dujkan Da Imam,'" stated Koloski. "Simon is Macedonia's most prominent cultural Ambassador - a national treasure - and we are proud of his accomplishments and to have celebrated them in Los Angeles together with the Macedonian-American community of California." According to Melinda Bargreen of the Seattle Times, Trpčeski is the best thing to come out of Macedonia since Alexander the Great.

Trpčeski was also presented a Certificate of Special Congressional Recognition in honor and recognition of his contributions to the arts and to global culture from Congresswoman Linda T. Sanchez, representing California's 39th District. In addition, he received a California Legislature Assembly Certificate of Recognition in recognition and appreciation for outstanding commitment to promoting, preserving and strengthening Macedonia's cultural image through his generous gift of musical expression from



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Assemblymember Ted W. Lieu,
representing California's 53rd District.

"The inauguration of UMD Los Angeles Operations signifies UMD's dedication to branch out and reach out to local Macedonian-American communities throughout the United States," stated UMD Los Angeles Regional Representative Dimitar Nasev. "We are honored UMD has bestowed upon us the important task of uniting Macedonian-Americans in Los Angeles and throughout California." Assemblymember Lieu also sent California Legislature Assembly

Certificate of Recognition to UMD to
celebrate UMD's inauguration of its Los
Angeles operations.

The UMD Los Angeles Operations will be responsible in coordinating all of UMD's activities in Los Angeles and throughout California. Its purpose is multi-faceted and includes advocating on issues of concern to Macedonian-Americans; promoting and preserving Macedonian identity, language and culture; undertaking charitable activity at home and abroad; and supporting the educational and social advancement of Macedonians.



April 8, 2010

Q&A: Simon Trpčeski

By Julie Riggott

Simon Trpčeski will perform Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 1 with the LA Phil and conductor Jaap van Zweden April 16-18 at Walt Disney Concert Hall. Trpčeski and van Zweden have been making the rounds with this piece; the two performed the concerto in Dallas with van Zweden's Dallas Symphony Orchestra and in Europe with the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic this spring.

Trpčeski (pronounced terp-CHESS-kee) is an award-winning pianist who has proven himself among classical music's best young talent in concerts throughout the world. His celebrity is perhaps nowhere as strong as in his native Macedonia, where he still lives and teaches at the Faculty of Music of the University of St. Cyril and St. Methodius in Skopje, from which he graduated in 2002. (Not familiar with Macedonia? It's a small, landlocked republic in southeastern Europe surrounded by Kosovo, Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece and Albania.) In December, the President of Macedonia honored him with the Presidential Order of Merit for Macedonia. Born in 1979, Trpčeski is the youngest Macedonian to receive this honor bestowed on dignitaries who affirm the republic abroad.

Though he will perform Rachmaninoff's First Piano Concerto in LA, his Avie CD



with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic and Vasily Petrenko, just released in March, features Rachmaninoff's Piano Concertos Nos. 2 and 3. It debuted in the top 10 on the UK's specialist classical chart.

No matter what the program, it seems, audiences are bound to enjoy his playing. The London Times wrote of Trpčeski: "His concerts and EMI Classics CDs have demonstrated a range of strengths rarely united in a young pair of hands. Electrifying virtuosity, but no whiff of show-off. The most delicate feelings, yet nothing precious or lacy. Head plus heart, lots of heart. What more could a music lover ask?"



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Culture Spot LA: Tell us about the First Piano Concerto.

Simon Trpčeski: It is not played very often. I really love it because it's the first one and it's full of freshness and youthful energy that Rachmaninoff shows as a composer and a musician in general. And I believe that it will be a refreshment both for the musicians and the audience in LA.

CS: What about your interpretation of the piece, what can the audience expect?

ST: A lot of passion, and a lot of smile.

CS: Do you smile while you play?

ST: Yes, yes. In the place where the music needs that, absolutely. Of course, the music requires that of me. I believe that this is just a natural feeling and there is no acting. So far my experience is that the audience actually feels something while watching me. I am not doing anything special, don't get me wrong, I am just enjoying the music. Whether that involves melancholy or pain or awe or a smile depends on the character of the music at the very moment. But I am just trying to be as natural as possible and I am very happy if the audience and the musicians feel that.

CS: Have you performed with Gustavo Dudamel?

ST: Yes, in his first performance after [it was announced that] he was appointed [music director of the LA Phil] in March 2008, and I was chosen to be his first soloist. ... It was really, really wonderful to work with him because we are more or less the same age, I think he's a year or two younger than me. We have a very similar temperament and mentality, although he is from Venezuela and I am from Macedonia, but that Mediterranean temperament and character came along very well. The feeling was like we had known each other for a long time. Communication between us of course was very good, and we performed Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No. 1, which is also a very

young and full-of-life piece, so it was suitable for both of us.

CS: How did you become interested in playing and studying piano?

ST: My first love was the accordion, and the accordion is used for folk music in Macedonia, nowadays for classical music as well, but much more for folk music. At that time at the music school there was no [program to study] the accordion. To me as a child it seemed that I should transfer myself to the piano because of the similarity of the keyboard. ... At that time when I was 8, the teachers Romanov [Boris and Lyudmila] came from Moscow... which was great luck for all the pianists in Macedonia because this couple came from the old good Russian school and they raised the level of the piano in Macedonia, really put it on a much higher level. Macedonia is a small country, but it has a lot of talented people, and I was one of the lucky ones who had a chance to work with them. I was going deeper into the classical music world, which is a great thing because Macedonia does not have a very deep tradition in classical music, although ... the first institution [the Macedonia Philharmonic] was founded around 1944.

CS: What do you consider your area of musical specialty?

ST: Nothing. My teachers, because they are Russians, were paying attention to Russian music, but they were also paying attention to [many other kinds of music].... I was taught to find myself in every piece I played. I like to hear a variety of repertory because it fulfills me and I find it very useful for the development of a musical personality in general. The most important thing is to try to feel the music in a very natural way. Of course, one has to have considerable technical command. I was lucky to learn about that from my teachers.

Simon Trpčeski

GRAMOPHONE

April 2010

Interview | Soundbites

A conversation with...



Simon Trpčeski

The pianist talks to Geoffrey Norris about committing his Rachmaninov interpretations to disc

Anyone who has heard Trpčeski in Rachmaninov will know of the special qualities of humanity, freshness and insight, not to mention technical command, that the young Macedonian master brings to the music. Now, having just turned 30, the time seems ripe for him to commit his profoundly-thought interpretations to disc. And so, following his four incomparable recital CDs for EMI, Trpčeski is now embarking on a major project with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic and Vasily Petrenko to record all of Rachmaninov's works for piano and orchestra on the Avie label. The project begins with a coupling of the Second and Third Piano Concertos. "I have been in touch with Rachmaninov's music since I was very little," Trpčeski says. "One of my first pieces was the C sharp minor Prelude and the 'Polichinelle' (Op 3 No 4). I learned the Second Concerto when I was 15 years old, and the Third came a little bit later when I was 17-and-a-half. But I guess after playing them around the world – the Third, I think, more than the Second – it's a different phase in my life."

Trpčeski is well aware of his responsibility in recording such a well-known corpus of music, but his affinity runs deep. "There must be something about the Slavic soul", he says. "The fullness of the sound creates a feeling that goes

through every particle of my body. Then there are the different dimensions to Rachmaninov's music – the melancholy, the nostalgia, the very subtle moments, the passion. There is incredible strength in his music as well." Our conversation touches on the undeniable technical challenges of both concertos, but Trpčeski characteristically keeps coming back to the question of interpretation.

"As with everything one plays", he says, "especially such a popular composer as Rachmaninov, the interpretation has a lot to do with taste. Although his music

The harmonic language comes even into the 21st century

represents late Romanticism from one point of view, the harmonic language comes even into the 21st century if we look particularly at his later pieces.

"I do believe that this is something one has to be careful of – not to exaggerate things too much, but to try to be as true as possible to the music. If one can put aside the technical difficulties – which of course take an effort to be resolved – one can give them a role within the context of the

music itself, and I think that that is an easier way of conquering the mountain."

Rachmaninov was a composer who could summon a whole kaleidoscope of colour from the piano alone, but in the concertos the orchestra is by no means a mere background support. "He is one of the best orchestrators in terms of writing for piano and orchestra", Trpčeski says. "It's amazing how he can combine all the possible orchestral colours with the piano. It just seems he made the perfect choice of which instrument to use in connection with the character of the theme, and so on. In that respect I was very happy to have Vasily Petrenko as conductor, because he also comes from that wonderful Russian tradition. He could take from the orchestra a sophisticated range of sound, because he has built the quality of the RLPO to a very, very high level. And then there is the wonderful contribution of John Fraser, who is such an experienced producer in judging the sound, colour and balance."

All of which chimed in with Trpčeski's heartfelt response to the sincerity of Rachmaninov's music. "Obviously", he says, "a man who could write these concertos, and who was such an amazing pianist as well, was an extremely special human being." ©

Trpčeski's recording of Piano Concertos Nos 2 and 3 is released by Avie on March 8

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March 31, 2010

SFist Interviews: Pianist Simon Trpčeski



Simon Trpčeski (pronounced Terp-chess-ki) would have us believe he's just a regular guy. Don't be fooled, he's such an amazing pianist he's hardly over thirty and has already been invited to perform for the fourth time with the SF Symphony (here are reviews of his last visit). He'll play Grieg's famed piano concerto starting tomorrow, one of the most beloved Romantic pieces in the repertoire.

He was just performing it in London last week, and we quote: *"The gifted Macedonian pianist Simon Trpčeski was [the] soloist and, between them, he and [25yo conductor Robin] Ticciati gave us the most beautiful and unhackneyed account of this ubiquitous concerto that I have heard in a very long time."*

The conductor here will be Vasily Petrenko, in his SF Symphony debut, with whom Trpčeski is currently recording the orchestral piano works of Rachmaninov. The first cd of this project actually just got released this month, which they'll sign for you after the concert tomorrow and Saturday. Trpčeski also takes great pride on being Macedonian, the small former Yugoslavia republic with a fierce nationalistic fervor. He's quite the rock star there, and he took our call from his home in Skopje early last week.

What attracts you to the Grieg piano concerto?

Simon: The Grieg concerto was the 2nd piano concerto I learned in my life, when I was 15yo, together with the Rhapsody in Blue by Gershwin.



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Obviously, it's full of captivating melodies, very easy to listen. Although I'm coming from the South of Europe and Grieg is from Scandinavia, I find it very natural in a way. Grieg is actually the founder of Norwegian classical music, but I find him very close to the language of the nature which I experienced as a child back in my father's village in the mountain of Macedonia. The simplicity of these tunes, the freshness, and the calmness are just incredible. It's a really sophisticated piece of music. I can't agree with some people, who, because it's such a well known piece of music, because it's almost even naive, they say that's it's easy. On the contrary, it's complicated and the musician should put a considerable amount of effort in making a good story out of it. Sure, the orchestration is not the same as the virtuoso piano concertos of the other Romantic composers, nor the piano writing maybe. But there are a few challenging places in the concerto given to the pianist, that can make the life difficult.

You'll play with Vasily Petrenko, with whom you've been collaborating regularly recently.

Simon: We have been performing many times, regularly in the last three years. He's the chief conductor of Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra. Also he works a lot with the youth orchestra of Great Britain. He's one of the really serious, wonderful examples of the young generation of conductors. What I like about him is the cool personality, and the depth in the music that he can bring. So far we have worked on some Russian pieces of course, and then also Ravel piano concerto. Our appearance in Grieg will be our first collaboration on that concerto. But since we know each other so well, we're working on a Rachmaninoff concerto series recording with the Liverpool Philharmonic. The first one is out already, the 2nd one is coming out next year.

You started with the accordion, the "poor man's piano."

Simon: The accordion is my first love, and will always remain so. I'm surprised I haven't yet surprised the audience with an encore on the accordion. That might happen in the future. I'm coming from a small country, but very important country with a great history, Macedonia. The accordion is used here for folk music, but also for classical music. The country has a rich folk heritage, very interesting, and unique rhythms from the rest of the world. Having that intensive social life in my childhood, it's part of the mentality of the people, the way people live. I was lucky to grow up in a wonderful family with a great warm atmosphere. Every other day either we were visiting people or we were welcoming them home and we were singing and dancing. So my knowledge of the Macedonian old folk good songs was very helpful. It gave me a natural flow, a natural control of the lyrical themes in the classical music, as well as the rhythm. Our rhythm is full of uneven metrics, with several different rhythmic patterns, 3-2-2 or 2-2-3, or 3-2-2-2, we have million of different combination, and this is a strength of my rhythm. My personal capabilities played a role here, but the folk music I was playing and singing and dancing helped you with my natural understanding of the classical music, which I find very natural. All the composers in the classical music world certainly knew their own folk music and folk music from other nations as well, which were included as quotes or as inspiration for their music. Including Grieg for example. Grieg is full is of the Norwegian folk quotes. We were playing the Norwegian dances with Leif-Ove Andnes on one piano and he was positively surprised that I understood the rhythm and character of these dances. There is something in this folk music that unifies the other European folk music.

I have to be careful because of the way you produce sound on the accordion, and with the left hand, my wrist stretches, that's how you produce the sound, it can be painful for the wrist, you have to be careful. Nowadays when we've a home party, I just sit at the piano and play folk music.

Do you take any other steps to protect your hands?

Simon: I'm careful, I don't play basket ball, I'm careful with the suitcases for example. If they are too heavy, I have to have a technique to take care of them at the airport. On the other hand, there are not many specific things that I do to prevent myself from playing the piano. We're just careful in general. I hear that some artists hardly ever shake the hands of people. I can't close myself in a glass bell and live on my own. I can't agree with that. I'm a normal human being, and I do the normal things in life, a part from playing the piano. I believe that the every day life is actually the thing that motivates us and inspires us for what we bring on the stage. If you just play music all the time non-stop and don't have the chance to enjoy the life, in my opinion, something is missing.

Your concerto repertoire has a lot of Russian composers in it, any other pieces you'd like to add to it?

Simon: I was really lucky to have great teachers back home, and that I was learning very fast. I have a considerable amount of pieces in my repertoire with a great variety, from Bach onwards to the 21st century. Sure I have a good amount of Russian music, my teachers were Russian, but they were giving me different pieces by different composers. They believed that I should have tried to find myself in every piece that I play, nevertheless the period of the musical history. Being a pianist coming from a Slavic country, it's true, I am addicted to the Romantic music. This can't be generalized. You can find Romantic

moments in every period of the musical history, it depends on the way you understand it. Sure, there are lot of pieces, concertos, that I'd love to play. I'm glad I went back to the classical piano repertoire, to Beethoven concerto no5. and in the solo repertoire to Haydn and Mozart. I do try to make my repertoire wider, since that's very helpful for building the musical personality. I would feel limited if I just stick to one style or one period.

How about living composers?

Simon: That is a bit of a difficult question. I haven't played much of contemporary music. I'm trying to be a bit careful about the choice of the music I play. Lately I play a new suite by a Macedonian composer, Pande Shahov, who is 26yo and is living in London. He wrote a suite for me to honor Chopin's anniversary, *Songs and whispers*. It included six pieces, two of them are quotes from Chopin pieces and the rest are arrangements of Macedonian folk songs, in jazz music and classical music. That's my latest piece by a living composer. I would definitely need to consider more of the current repertory that is written. I'm very careful as I said because I do thing that contemporary composers nowadays do understand and realize that they have to come back to the point of the melody that would capture the ears and get that auditive dimension for the audience. It's definitely very understandable that we're in a difficult situation for all composers. So much has been done so far that what else can be done? Searching for musical ideas, expressions, harmonic language, everything is somehow connected. I'm glad that in my situation at the moment, I have a chance to present something from my country which is done in a very professional way based on the Macedonian folk music.



ArtsJournal

arts, culture, ideas

March 31, 2010

Guest Blog: Pianist Simon Trpceski on Music, Macedonia and Making His Way



I asked the the superb, young Macedonian pianist Simon Trpceski jotted down some thoughts for lies

like truth about his world. Mr. Trpceski kindly indulged me with the following...

Whenever I am asked to describe the Republic of Macedonia in a few words, I say that it is:

The land of Alexander the Great
A country with an incredibly picturesque landscape
A land of both deep religion and vibrant culture
Full of tasteful wine and irresistible food...and beautiful women!

What more can one ask for? :-)

I grew up in Macedonia during the years after the former Yugoslavia was crushed. I come from a very modest family, and grew up during a great transition period for the country. The economy was weakened due to all the turmoil, and it was very hard to get visas for travel,

which made performing outside the country a great challenge.

Considering all of these obstacles, I find it miraculous that I was able to get onto the classical music circuit. But of course, I owe that to several strong influences in my life. I was very lucky to have studied piano at the University of St. Cyril and St. Methodius in Skopje with Boris Romanov. The Russian influence he brought to the music school there has had a great impact on how I developed as a player. And the spiritual and psychological support from my family and close friends is still a priceless gift. I know I could not have begun such an exciting musical career without the combination of these support systems.

I am proud to come from such a small, but historically important, country. Macedonia is home to a very lovely nation of people and traditions. Although Macedonians have struggled throughout the country's history, a high spirit and sense of humor has always survived, which I think contributes to the great creativity in the arts that I see here.

So, whenever you have a chance to come to Macedonia, expect to be immediately



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welcomed with warm smiles. You will have a chance to walk on roads made of antique stones, visit numerous churches, monasteries and historical theaters, have a glass of fruitful and delicious wine and enjoy irresistible food. (Including my mom's homemade pie...you can choose either cheese or leek!)

Speaking of which, I should mention that Macedonians love to eat! As a child I use to stuff myself with the fresh tomatoes, cucumbers, apples, peaches, apricots, plums, watermelons and melons from the villages where my parents came from. Of course, I still do that when I am at home! Apart from the great variety of cooked meat, you should also try a special trout from Ohrid Lake, a touristic pearl and the place where the first Slavic university was founded.

Growing up, my family was always singing and dancing - that is a strong part of the social culture at home. The old Macedonian folk songs, which date back many centuries, are full of soul and heart, and growing up with those melodies helped me in expressing the emotions found in classical music. The uneven rhythms of the folk music, and its dancing character, also helped me develop a sense of rhythm that can be applied to classical music as well!

The great heritage of folk music can have an impact on classical music in many ways. I have been working to incorporate the Macedonian folk traditions into playing for several years, and I am planning to continue this on a larger scale in the future because there are several Macedonian composers of different generations, well-educated both at home and abroad, who can combine the folk melodies with classical music in a very sophisticated way. It's exciting to see these composers using the traditional folk melodies of Macedonia in contemporary classical music, because it can touch many different people. My experience so far says that both the critics and audiences love hearing this combination!

In the end, I hope that through music, I can express my love and pride for Macedonia to others, and show how one small--but in many ways big-- country can be a wonderful new place for audiences to discover.

Simon Trpčeski performs Grieg's Piano Concerto in A minor with the San Francisco Symphony and conductor Vasily Petrenko April 1-3, 2010. Future performances include those with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the symphonies of Houston, Milwaukee, Montreal and Atlanta, among others.



March 29, 2010

Pianist Simon Trpčeski: Romantic at Heart

By Lisa Petrie



Known as a phenomenon both in his native country of Macedonia and increasingly around the globe, pianist Simon

Trpčeski makes his third appearance with the San Francisco Symphony on April 1-3, performing the Grieg Piano Concerto in A Minor, Op. 16. On the podium will be his favorite collaborator, conductor Vasily Petrenko, with whom he has just released his latest CD in a series of Rachmaninov complete piano concerts.

Could you tell us a bit about your childhood and how you came to be interested in music?

I consider myself a very normal human being, coming from a very normal family. I was born in the capital of Skopje, in the small country of Macedonia, and showed my interest for music as a young child. My father bought a small accordion for me when I was 3 years old and it seemed to somehow come naturally. I grew up in modest surroundings but in a large and warm family with a huge circle of friends, singing and dancing a lot, typical of the Macedonian folk heritage.

What about university? You studied at the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Skopje and are on the faculty there now.

My teachers, Ljudmila Romanova and Boris Romanov, came to Skopje from Moscow right at the crash of the former Yugoslavia and the former Soviet Union, which was quite welcome for the piano school at Skopje. Macedonia didn't have a very big tradition of classical music, although it started to develop there from the 1940s after the war. But I'm very proud that I got my education in Skopje. I was quite happy to be there at home, close to the family, and get a really high-level education.

How did the politics of the day affect your career?

I grew up in a very difficult period because, after Yugoslavia crashed, Macedonia went into a bad transition period of about 20 years, which is still ongoing. It was hard to get visas to leave the country, and only through the incredible efforts of my parents was I able to leave to enter competitions and get some international experience, to judge my level. In 2000 I got the prize in London and my career started. [Trpčeski won the London International Piano Competition in 2000; he was a member of the BBC New Generation Scheme from 2001 to 2003, and in 2003 was



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awarded the Young Artist Award by the Royal Philharmonic Society.] A lot of people can't imagine living in such limited surroundings, but on the other hand the spirit of the people is so amazing and warm. I guess in life there is a balance between something you lose and something you gain.

Romantic repertoire seems to be your choice. How does it speak to you?

I am a romantic person, and, being a Slav, Romantic music is close to my heart. On the other hand, as a student I had to start with Bach, Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven. I was always taught to find myself in any piece that I play. I don't associate with certain periods in musical history; rather, I feel happier with a variety of composers because that builds my musical personality.

How did your collaboration with Vasily Petrenko begin?

In 2007 I was invited to perform with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, where he had just become the conductor. When we met to discuss the music, I really liked his wonderful sense of humor and authority. Somehow, we got on together like we had known each other for a long time. This is his debut with the San Francisco Symphony, and I do believe they will find him very interesting. He works very calmly with a clear vision of what he wants. I believe he'll come back to San Francisco

because he deserves it; he'll be legendary in this generation of conductors.

In an interview from early 2006, you remarked that you were doing 35 to 40 concerts a year and said you didn't "want to spend your life in airplanes and hotels." How has that changed since then?

The number of concerts has increased maybe 10 or 15. But I certainly don't play as much as some of my colleagues, who play hundreds per year. I don't understand how they do it; you don't have time for anything else! I'm careful with the number, because one has to enjoy everyday life in order to deliver something on stage. It's just crazy otherwise.

Do you have a family of your own?

I have a 3½-month-old daughter, Lara, and my wife, Daniella. It's nice to share moments in life with those closest to you.

Do people recognize you on the streets in Macedonia as they would a football star?

Something like that [laughs]. It's a small country, and having this kind of career as a classical musician is a rare thing. Coming from a country of two million, it's possible for everyone to know your name. They are proud of a positive example from their own country. I play as often as I can here. I did a recital tour inland recently, and I invite local musicians and my students to play with me. People appreciate that very much.

March 26, 2010

by Janos Gereben



Young Macedonian piano star at S.F. Symphony

Simon Trpceski is both a world-trotting hot young pianist and a devoted homebody.

Before and after his San Francisco Symphony appearances next week, his itinerary includes London, Houston, Los Angeles, Strasbourg, St. Petersburg, Brussels and Seoul.

But to reach him, you have to call Skopje, the small capital town of Macedonia. Why?

“It’s home,” Trpceski says, “where my parents came from a village in the mountains in Yugoslav times. My father became a judge, my mother a pharmacist, but there was a time when six of us lived in an apartment.”

He quotes Pavarotti: “We had so little, but no one had more than us.”

A large family is still part of Trpceski’s life, but now he takes them with him to attend his far-flung concert appearances. How many? “Once there were seven,” he says, with a chuckle.

The family just got bigger. Trpceski and his wife, both 30, had a daughter three months ago. “Lara is too young to travel,” he admits, but surely she’ll be attending concerts soon.

The San Francisco Symphony concerts — featuring 33-year-old Vasily Petrenko of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic conducting the Grieg Piano Concerto and



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Shostakovich's relatively rarely performed Symphony No. 8 — will mark Trpceski's fourth appearance here.

His debut was in 2003 with San Francisco Performances. He was a soloist with the San Francisco Symphony in 2004 and 2006.

Trpceski, educated in Macedonia, started winning international piano competitions at age 20.

His recital CD debut received several awards, and he has just released a recording of Rachmaninoff's Second and Third Piano Concertos, also conducted by Petrenko.

Of the Grieg he will play in Davies Hall, Trpceski says it was the second concerto he ever performed ("Rhapsody in Blue" was first), and "its peace, calmness and lyrical nature" captured his heart.

Grieg, he says, had a "gentle way" and knew how to shape melody.

Although the concerto is not as showy as those of such contemporaries as Liszt, Trpceski says, "It's not easy at all."

So far, reviews indicate that Trpceski — conqueror of the famously tough Rachmaninoff Third Piano Concerto — makes the Grieg concerto look easy.



The New York Times

THE Arts

September 26, 2007

by Vivien Schweitzer



Playing Accordion for Fun, but Piano for Macedonia

For a young pianist looking not only to establish himself but also to put his country on the musical map, it appears to be a breakout moment. Tonight Simon Trpceski, a 28-year-old Macedonian, begins a series of performances of Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto with Lorin Maazel and the New York Philharmonic to help begin that orchestra's three-week festival "The Tchaikovsky Experience." And just after Mr. Trpceski's run there ends on Saturday, he is to play a recital at the

Metropolitan Museum of Art on Sunday.

"I am almost a pop star in Macedonia," Mr. Trpceski (pronounced terp-CHESS-kee) said of his status as flag bearer, laughing. An organized classical music scene developed late in Macedonia (part of Yugoslavia until 1991, when it became independent), compared with most other European countries. The Macedonian Philharmonic Orchestra formed in 1944; the



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Macedonian Opera in 1947; and the Faculty of Music, part of the Saints Cyril and Methodius University, where Mr. Trpceski studied and now teaches, in 1966.

Pianism in Macedonia received a boost in the early 1990s with the arrival of Boris Romanov and Lyudmila Romanova, his wife, both prominent teachers from Moscow. They took along “the old traditional Russian school,” said Mr. Trpceski, who studied with them.

He has inherited some of the best traits of that school, including powerful virtuosity and a deeply expressive, singing approach, along with an unsurprising affinity for Russian and Romantic repertory. “I am a very romantic guy,” he said with a quick grin. “I have a romantic personality.”

Mr. Trpceski has recorded a Rachmaninoff CD and works by Stravinsky, Scriabin, Prokofiev and Tchaikovsky. He also shows a particular affinity for Chopin, as in his latest EMI Classics recording: a passionately muscular and soulful account of the four scherzos and the Piano Sonata No. 2.

Mr. Trpceski’s first instrument was the accordion, used in Macedonia for folk music; he still occasionally plays for fun. “We don’t have a big tradition of classical music,” he said, “but we have rich folk music, which is very challenging and interesting because of its melody and rhythms.”

The youngest of three children, Mr. Trpceski grew up in Skopje, the capital. No one else in his family had formal musical training, but his mother, a pharmacist, sings, and his father, a judge, played the tambura, a traditional string instrument. A

grandmother lived with the family, and Mr. Trpceski heard a lot of old stories and songs, he said.

“Although we didn’t have much room,” he added, “we were happy.” During family holidays in Moscow before the collapse of the Soviet Union, he bought recordings of Sviatoslav Richter and other pianists.

Mr. Trpceski is rarely nervous when performing, he said, perhaps because he did so often as a child. “We had guests every other day, as social life in that part of the world is intense,” he said. “There were lots of people coming, dancing and singing, and I played the accordion.”

Sociable, energetic and direct, he said he enjoyed composing pop music for fun (his brother writes the lyrics); some of it is sung by singers in Macedonia. He is particularly interested in folk music from many countries, as “a lot of the roots of classical music come from that,” he said.

Mr. Trpceski promotes Macedonian composers and frequently performs a work called Prelude and Pajduska, by the contemporary composer Zivojin Glisic. “It’s an amazing example of Macedonian folk music incorporated in a 21st-century way,” he said. “I’m glad to have a piece like this to show Macedonian heritage.”

Borce Nikolovski, the deputy director of the British Council in Macedonia, said that even Macedonians who have never attended a classical concert now know about Mr. Trpceski, whose concerts sell out before they are announced. “Any concert of his here in the country is a distinctive event,” Mr. Nikolovski said. “People like Simon help promote classical music in

Macedonia.”

While evangelizing for the art form at home, Mr. Trpceski also likes to promote his country while traveling. “I meet a lot of people who have never heard of Macedonia,” he said, “or have heard of it, but have never met a Macedonian.”



THE TIMES

February 29, 2008

by Geoff Brown



Simon Trpceski, the Macedonian Magician

The pianist Simon Trpceski insists modestly that he is "abnormally normal", but at home he ranks as a national hero

Simon Trpceski - the accent falls on the "chess" - calls himself "abnormally normal". You can see why. In his late twenties, with the world at his feet, Macedonia's star classical pianist carries himself with an easy confidence - and no braggadocio.

That's quite a contrast from some others on the international circuit, those peacock pianists or frozen haddocks who keep their real selves

hidden. Trpceski is supremely WYSIWYG: what you see is what you get.

Yet in this lazy age, easily seduced by the meretricious, there's nothing

normal about Trpceski when he plays. That much was obvious when he caught the world's ear at the London International Piano Competition in 2001: he took the second prize, but should have come first. Since then, his concerts and EMI Classics CDs have demonstrated a range of strengths rarely united in a young pair of hands. Electrifying virtuosity, but no whiff of the show-



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off. The most delicate feelings, yet nothing precious or lacy. Head plus heart, lots of heart. What more could a music lover ask?

We'll find out perhaps on Tuesday, when he delivers a London recital of Chopin, Prokofiev and Debussy, the subject of his latest EMI Classics CD, Debussy - Images.

Where do these strengths come from? Two sources, I think. The Soviet bloc's collapse and the Yugoslav federation's splintering in 1991 may have brought economic strife for the emerging Republic of Macedonia, but it also brought as émigrés from the Moscow Conservatory Boris Romano and his wife Lyudmilla, two distinguished piano teachers soaked in the Russian school. "I was very lucky to have these teachers, very lucky," Trpceski says when we meet at the Royal Festival Hall. "It's one thing to have some talent and to be able to resolve all the technical problems. But to bring out the emotional interpretation with good taste: I was taught that that's the most important thing."

Invited to name the pianists he listens to with most respect, he quickly alights on the past Russian giants: Sviatoslav Richter, Emil Gilels; from a later generation, Vladimir Ashkenazy. The Romanian Radu Lupu hits the spot too; so, among others, does our own Paul Lewis.

The other source of the Trpceski bounce is obviously Macedonia itself - a small but proud republic of two million people, hemmed in between Greece, Albania, Bulgaria and the newly independent Kosovo. "Macedonia doesn't have a deep classical musical tradition, it's mostly folk, but the Macedonia Philharmonic was formed in 1944.

The opera and the ballet followed, and the faculty of music, where I studied, in the 1960s. I'm now an assistant professor there. Things are improving. It was a difficult, turbulent time, growing up in Skopje. And our apartment was very small."

It housed six: his father, a judge; his mother, a pharmacologist; the three children (he's the baby), and his father's mother, a fount of folk songs and tales. At four Trpceski was playing the accordion, struggling a bit with his left hand but easily picking out melodies with the right. By seven he was off on the piano. "My upright piano was in the living room: I had to practise, but the rest of the family had their needs too. But the understanding I got, and the warmth, was irreplaceable, and very important.

"Everyone was musical in some way: my father and grandmother knew a thousand songs. And there'd be lots of people visiting, there'd be singing and dancing. The social life in Macedonia is very important, very intensive, even more so then. Times change. The tempo of life's become crazy!"

Especially for a hot concert pianist. Macedonian pride and respect for culture have made Trpceski a big hero at home. "My cousins have a running joke about Skopje naming a street after me!"

Recently he inspired an art project in Skopje, with three sculptors using his performances as springboards. One created Trpceski masks, dangling from the ceiling. Another, the most cryptic, dreamt up nine vertical posts housing small brass balls engraved with composers' names. The third, Slavco Spirovski, created a quirky masterpiece: a blue Plexiglass piano with goldfish where the strings

should be, triggering sounds each time they swim into a laser beam, in honour of Debussy's piano piece Poissons d'or.

Besides the Macedonian hothouse, international promoters are always on the prowl. Airports, hotels, another set of acoustics, another strange piano to get to know: it's easy to get stuck on the treadmill. "I'm trying to find the right balance in my life between the professional life and the private," he says. "That's so important. Luckily my management understands that."

At least he's abandoned the pummelling round of competitions: seven years ago the London International Piano Competition, as well as his participation in the BBC's New Generation Scheme, gave him

all the lift he needed. "I attended a respectable number of competitions, but never with the goal of winning. I went to get experience and to see where I was. I learnt a lot. Including, unfortunately, the dirty parts of the business. People who deserve don't always get what they deserve. And it goes even to the point that some of them give up playing. Isn't that sad?"

Outside, his sister and his sculptor friend Spirovski are waiting. They flew in for a surprise visit, bringing the gift of a scarf patterned like a piano keyboard. But Trpceski now has a real piano to try, for his free recital in the Festival Hall's Clore Ballroom. "OK," he grins, "it's sound test time! I've no idea what the piano's like." It doesn't matter. Even if he played the scarf, Trpceski would make beautiful music.

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Simon *the Great*

At the age of 32, Alexander the Great had conquered the ancient world. At the age of 26, another young Macedonian, Simon Trpčeski, seems to be well on his way to conquering today's classical music world. Jessica Duchen meets him



Few pianists have captured their audience's hearts as quickly as has Simon Trpčeski. Hailing from Skopje, Macedonia, at just 26 Trpčeski is the darling of pianophiles at every level. He scooped the Royal Philharmonic Society's Young Artist Award in 2003; his EMI debut disc won Editor's Choice and Debut Album accolades from *Gramophone*, and

along the way he consistently draws the kind of reviews of which most musicians his age can only dream. 'People will be auctioning tickets for Simon Trpčeski soon,' said the *Independent*, following his sensational Proms debut in 2004.

Now there are even more firsts in the pipeline: this winter Trpčeski is making his South Bank recital debut in the International Piano Series at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, and he'll be performing with the London Philharmonic Orchestra for the first time since the orchestra accompanied the competition final that shot him into the limelight five years ago.

Trpčeski's playing combines the best of many worlds. He manages to create that rarest of pianistic delights, an individual sound – bright, singing, strong, well-articulated, but always flowing and engaging. There's a sense of tremendous personality – but his vivid individuality is never pushed forward at the expense of fidelity to the composer and the score. His latest recording, an all-Rachmaninov CD that marks his arrival in EMI's mainstream, bursts with kaleidoscopic colour and conviction.

I caught up with him backstage at London's Wigmore Hall after a June BBC lunchtime concert. The Wigmore has a special significance for him, as it was his debut recital there in 2001 that did so much to consolidate the acclaim he'd drawn at the London competition. 'The visceral energy of the Prokofiev [Sonata No 7] brought the house down,' wrote Geoffrey Norris in the *Daily Telegraph*, 'the Tchaikovsky [Pletnev's transcriptions from *The Nutcracker*] induced gasps of wonderment at the sheer wizardry and panache. But it is not simply that he has a phenomenal technique. Crucially, he has the innate

'Everything will come in its own time and I don't want to be under pressure. Why rush? The music is there to enjoy and I think about the music, not the music business'

musical intelligence to know how to apply it and, at the same time, can convey such joy in doing so.'

Most musicians would probably rather take a nap than be interviewed after performing a demanding programme on a steaming hot afternoon, but Trpčeski seems fresh as the proverbial daisy. Bubbly, charming and refreshingly 'normal', he is keen to stress, on one hand, how lucky he feels to be where he is today; yet he is equally eager to explain that he's anything but a young man in a hurry.

'I'm not rushing in my life,' he declares. 'Everything will come in its own time and I don't want to be under pressure. The LPO is coming this winter; I've already played four times with the Philharmonia; the Proms came; and this season I'm playing with the New York Philharmonic for the first time. Why rush? The music is there to enjoy and I think about the music, not the music business.'

There's plenty to think about in the music he has chosen for his South Bank recital. It's an extraordinary programme, incorporating Brahms's op 117 and 118 piano pieces, Scriabin's Second Sonata and both of Debussy's books of *Images*. 'You will not believe me,' he exclaims, 'but all of it is new to my repertoire! The Debussy is complex, subtle music, full of different colours. I'm looking forward to performing it in London and, as always, I'll try just to enjoy it.' He should have ample opportunity to enjoy his LPO date as well, taking centre stage for the exuberant Shostakovich Piano Concerto No 1 on 2 December under the baton of the LPO's dynamic young principal guest conductor, Vladimir Jurowski.

Fresh and unaffected

Trpčeski's evident enjoyment of music making, and his fresh and unaffected manner of communicating it to his audience, must account for much of his meteoric popularity. He was only 20 when he stole the show at the 2000 World Piano Competition, London. Although he was the audience's hot favourite for the top prize, the jury ultimately placed him second. It wasn't exactly a disaster. 'It probably seemed more dramatic to everyone else than it did to me,' he laughs. 'First of all, I was very lucky to be chosen to take part at all. There were 600 applicants and only 24 places in the competition! The most important thing, he says, was to be in the final, by which time the competitors have been whittled down to just three.

'Obviously if you're in the final you are going to get one of the three prizes, but I wasn't thinking about that. I was in a Brahms sandwich – the other two were playing the Brahms First Piano Concerto and I played Prokofiev's Third. I was enjoying it very much, and I think the audience could see that. When they announced the results, I was second and there was an extremely uncomfortable feeling from the audience, which must have been awkward for the first prizewinner and the jury. But anyway,' he adds with an extra ►

If you were...

...a fictional or historical character?

My fellow countryman Alexander the Great

...a book?

An anthology of French love poetry

...a film?

Roman Holiday and The Barber of Siberia; also The Day After Tomorrow, because powerful countries are not paying attention to global warming and its consequences

...a type of food?

My mother's Macedonian cuisine! But I also like Italian and Chinese

...a wine?

I'm not really a drinker but I do like French cabernet sauvignon and pinot noir, and I've been amazed by certain Spanish rijoas.

I also love Baileys.

And vanilla coke

...a piece of music?

Céline Dion singing These Are The Special Times

...a tempo?

Amoroso! Or adagio, or dolce gracioso. Sometimes vivo risoluto, or furioso. Maestoso definitely included

...a quality?

Being honest

...a fault?

Sometimes being too honest

twinkle, 'I was really happy!' Trpčeski was snapped up by his current agency, IMG, on the spot and the critics lavished praise upon him. They've never stopped.

So much, then, for competitions. 'I've never entered competitions to win; I just hoped to have one more positive experience,' he insists – though he won a number of them, in Italy and the Czech Republic besides the London prize. 'I had been well informed about things that can happen in piano competitions – unpleasant stuff that can be disappointing for musicians.' The crucial matter is to keep learning as you go along: 'In the London competition, I felt I was getting better and better in every round. That was important.'

Trpčeski has been much in the forefront of British musical life since then, not least thanks to the BBC New Generations scheme for young artists. 'That was a fantastic opportunity,' he recounts. 'It gave me the chance to play several times at Wigmore, to make some recordings and to play with two of the BBC orchestras. All these new experiences were incredibly helpful and I very much enjoyed those years. We had a whole day of chamber music concerts at the Wigmore in July 2002 – all the artists played in several concerts in a real marathon starting at 11am. I was on first, playing *The Nutcracker*! That was great fun.'

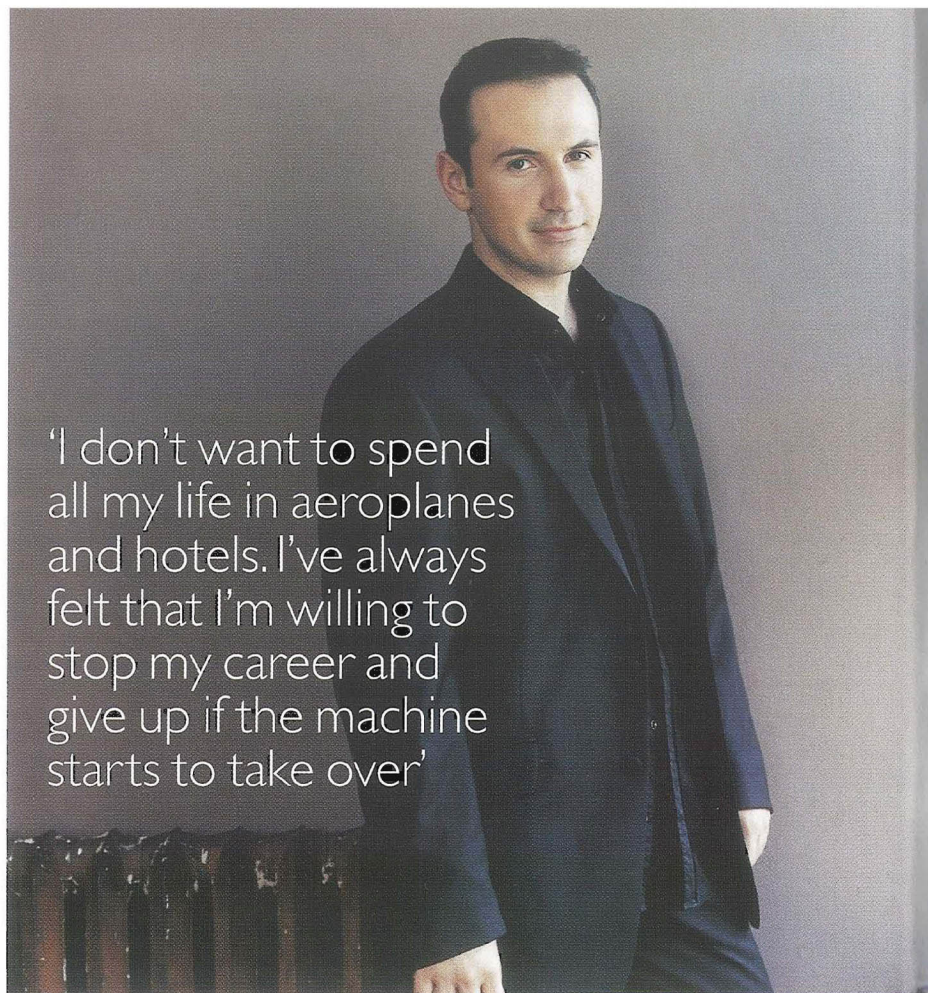
Accordion to Simon

Trpčeski's first musical love wasn't the piano but the accordion. Growing up in Macedonia, folk music played an important part in his life – it still does, and he takes every opportunity to include in his recitals a piece entitled *Prelude and Pajdushka* by Zivoin Glisic, a work written especially for him and based on traditional Macedonian folk-dance rhythms. The accordion is a central instrument in Macedonian folk music. 'But at the music school in Macedonia at that time, you could not take accordion as a subject, so as a child it seemed to me that the closest thing to it would be the piano. Now I can see that that isn't quite true. But at least there was a keyboard!'

His family was musical, but not professionally: 'My parents both sang extremely well and my father played a stringed folk instrument, the tambura. My sister sings in a choir and my brother writes lyrics. So we're all connected with music, but I was the only one who had the right conditions to study professionally. My parents unfortunately never had that opportunity, but they tried to make it happen for me; I'm very grateful for that. My father was a judge and my mother is a pharmacist; my brother and sister work in law and economics. I'm the baby of the family!' He doesn't play the accordion often these days, he adds, 'but it's nice, when we have parties at home, that I can play folk or pop music on the piano. I compose pop music myself sometimes.'

'I like to listen to lots of different musical styles. The great composers knew the folk music not only of their own nations but of others as well. I like to hear old Macedonian and Yugoslavian folk music – we used to be the same country – and I love ballads, soul, blues, jazz and Latin music.' Among his classical idols on record are Rachmaninov as pianist – 'Amazing!' – as well as Richter, Gilels and Michelangeli; among current pianists, he loves to listen to Lupu, Argerich and Brendel, plus younger pianists including Leif Ove Andsnes and Paul Lewis. As for pop, his taste extends to Céline Dion, Mariah Carey and Norah Jones. Even Dean Martin gets a look in.

As far as Trpčeski's own playing is concerned, however, the Russian influence has been especially vital. The Russian teacher Boris Romanov moved from the Moscow Conservatory to Skopje, and it was under his guidance that the nine-year-old Trpčeski set about his serious piano studies. 'He and his wife, Ludmilla, decided to come to Macedonia in 1991. This was a turning point in the country's pianistic life. They gave the students there, and the teachers too, the chance to come into contact with the old Russian school – Romanov had been a student of Konstantin Igumov, among others. We were really



'I don't want to spend all my life in aeroplanes and hotels. I've always felt that I'm willing to stop my career and give up if the machine starts to take over'

lucky! I learned a lot, especially as I was studying certain things that were not usual for kids of my age.'

Many musicians of Trpčeski's age are still students, but Trpčeski has now become a teacher himself. At the faculty of music in Skopje's university, he has 14 students: 'That gives me a different pleasure from performing because it adds a totally different dimension to what I do. It's one thing to sit at the piano and play, but quite another to sit next to your student and try to find the most appropriate way to explain to them about the composer and the music. It helps me a lot in my analytical approach and I find it very interesting – not least because I am only three or four years older than most of them.'

'In the Balkan countries people are very closely connected in family life and I think this is very important. The life of an artist is not an easy one. I'm not like other artists, who are playing a lot – I do only 35 to 40 concerts a year and of course there are musicians who do twice as many. I don't want to miss the other beauties of life. I don't want to spend all my life in aeroplanes and hotels. I've always felt that I'm willing to stop my career and give up if the machine starts to take over. I'm glad that I have a stable life and that I'm a psychologically healthy person, thanks to my family.' And the rewards of this add to the musical outcome, he adds: 'My agent understands me very well, because she can see the results in my concerts.'

Trpčeski's next CD will be a Chopin programme, including the Sonata No 2 in B flat minor, one of the works that inspired such enthusiasm for him in the London competition. And although we've heard him mainly in 19th- and 20th-century repertoire so far, he's every bit as eager to play Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven and Bach – 'I played the Bach French Overture at my Concertgebouw recital debut,' he points out. 'But generally the most important thing to me is to follow the composer's score, because this is the basis of everything: this is what the composer gave us. We should follow that and respect it.'

'My interpretation has to be in close connection with the logic and nature of the music – and if that finds good results, then I feel I've been successful. And when I see happy faces in the audience and I know that people are satisfied, then I'm happy too. That's the most important thing.' ■

On disc

- **RACHMANINOV**
Sonata No 2 in B flat minor op 36; plus various preludes and transcriptions
EMI Classics 557943 2

- **VARIOUS**
Tchaikovsky/Pletnev: Concert Suite from *The Nutcracker*; Scriabin: Sonata No 5; Stravinsky: Three movements from *Petrouchka*; Prokofiev: Sonata No 6
EMI Classics Debut Series 575202 2

In concert

- Simon Trpčeski gives his debut International Piano Series recital on Sunday 4 December (15.30) at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, London. He plays works by Brahms, Debussy and Scriabin. He also appears with the London PO on 2 and 7 December, in Shostakovich's Piano Concerto No 1 under Vladimir Jurowski. Other upcoming appearances include tours of Japan (5-14 December), Singapore (20-24 January) and northern Spain (16-25 February); and UK tours with the Bournemouth SO (1-4 March) and then with the Philharmonia Orch (14-21 March)



Simon Trpčeski

GRAMOPHONE

September 2011

Orchestral reviews

Rachmaninov

Piano Concertos – No 1, Op 1; No 4,
Op 40. Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, Op 43
Simon Trpčeski *pf* Royal Liverpool
Philharmonic Orchestra / Vasily Petrenko
Avie © AV2191 (77' • DDD)



**A pianist and conductor who were surely
born to play Rachmaninov's concertos**



Trpčeski, Petrenko and the RLPO here join forces for the eagerly awaited follow-up to their Avie recording of Rachmaninov's Second and Third Piano

Concertos (4/10). Expectations are fully realised in performances of the highest order. Listening to the earlier disc, it was clear that Trpčeski was put on this earth to play this music and Petrenko to conduct it. The RLPO's sound has been finely fashioned to Rachmaninov's needs; it phrases with a breadth, warmth and sensibility that form an ideal counterpart to the piano's solo role.

Rachmaninov himself spoke of the "youthful freshness" that he retained in the 1917 revision of the 1890-91 First Concerto and that is precisely the quality that comes through here, coupled with Trpčeski's mature, judicious, thoroughly natural way of coaxing out the music's melodic content, and his phenomenal command of the concerto's bravura demands – demands that he meets with such a well-chosen kaleidoscope of colour and wondrous variety of touch. In the Fourth Concerto (here played in the customary "definitive" version of 1941) the aura of nostalgia and brooding is voiced with a rare understanding of the music's light and shade and its ominous undercurrents. These are offset by firmly harnessed energy and expressive subtleties, which in the *Paganini* Rhapsody fuel a luminous performance of delicacy, sparkle and poignancy. This is a riveting disc, another major landmark for Trpčeski and one on which Rachmaninov finds interpreters thoroughly attuned to his emotional world. **Geoffrey Norris**



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Simon Trpčeski

BBC
MUSIC

August 2011

ORCHESTRAL REVIEWS



RACHMANINOV

Piano Concertos Nos 1 & 4; Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini

Simon Trpčeski (piano); Royal
Liverpool PO/Vasily Petrenko
Avie AV 2191 77:09 mins

Available Arkivmusic.com/bbcmusic

Simon Trpčeski established himself six years ago as a Rachmaninov-interpreter to be reckoned with in a thrilling solo recital from EMI. His recording of Concertos Nos 2 and 3 for Avie, to which the present CD is the follow-up, garnered glowing opinions from the UK musical press. Concertos Nos 1 and 4 (both heard here in the customary revised versions) have never been such sure-fire crowd-pleasers, but Trpčeski certainly plays them with fire and passion. No. 1 emerges as big-boned and compelling, while he plays up the leanly modernist aspects of No. 4 the work that really announced a sea-change in Rachmaninov's aesthetic. Trpčeski is aided throughout by the unanimity of feeling produced by Vasily Petrenko's direction of the orchestra, conductor and pianist working hand in glove. The development section and drive to the first-movement climax in Concerto

No. 4, for instance, taken at what seems a hair-raising speed yet crystal clear and very exciting, would hardly be possible without an instinctive sense of partnership between them.

The *Paganini Rhapsody* is a superb interpretation, all muscle and sinewy rhythm but also has great warmth (though without an ounce of undue sentiment) in the slow and lyrical variations. The 'big tune' of the 18th variation has a kind of ecstatic sobriety. The field is very crowded in these works, with, for example, a stunning *Paganini Variations* from Yuja Wang, a Fourth Concerto from Leif Ove Andsnes that sounded definitive, not to mention Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli in this work, and the composer himself, peerless in all three pieces. But this is a generous coupling, squeezing all three big works onto one disc, and there's no doubt that Trpčeski is a splendid contender. *Calum MacDonald*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
PICTURE & SOUND ★★★★★



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August 2011

 EDITOR'S CHOICE

Russian rhapsody

Rachmaninov ★★★★★

Piano Concertos Nos 1 and 4; Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini
Simon Trpčeski (pf), Royal Liverpool PO/Vasily Petrenko

ORCHESTRAL AVIE AV 2191



The Music Sometimes dismissed as 'the others', the first and last of Rachmaninov's piano concertos might be less familiar than his two blockbusters, but they represent his musical transition from Imperial Russia to downtown Hollywood.

The Performance Pianist Trpčeski relishes Rachmaninov, thrilling his audience with virtuosic passages which easily demonstrate why these pieces in particular were important vehicles for Rachmaninov the exiled pianist. Petrenko maintains timing and tension, whilst never allowing lush lyricism to become stodgy or overwhelming. The *Paganini Variations* are delivered with both wit and warmth, with a strong melodic line. In fact, all three works sound fresh, dynamic and vital.

The Verdict Already attracting labels like 'dream team', this is a musical combination which works superbly, and this much anticipated follow up to their earlier Rachmaninov recording demonstrates a fabulous level of skill, artistry and appreciation.

WANT MORE? Trpčeski and the RLPO's first Rachmaninov CD is dazzling (Avie, AV 2912). JANE JONES

WHY YOU'LL LOVE THIS

■ TOPS AND TAILS

So you've got 2 and 3? Complete the set to get an insight into the beginning and end of an extraordinary career from a teenager's student concerto to the game playing of the mature, world-aware composer.

BRILLIANCE AND BALANCE

From the opening fanfare, the orchestra declares its intentions and Petrenko delivers terrific pace and imagination, combining drama and sensitivity. A delicately balanced, involving sound provides Trpčeski with the perfect platform.

SUPER SOLOIST

Trpčeski is honest, direct and fully committed to every note, bringing a sharp clarity to his performance. He can dance and dream, cry and console to the demands of the music with subtlety and style.



the **arts** desk

August 27, 2011

Rachmaninov

Piano Concertos Nos. 1 and 4, Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini

Simon Trpčeski, piano

**Vasily Petrenko, Royal Liverpool
Philharmonic Orchestra**

AV 2191



Vasily Petrenko and Simon Trpčeski complete their cycle of Rachmaninov's music for piano and orchestra in some style. Trpčeski seems to relish the edgier, mercurial aspects to these three works, and his approach makes the neglected *First Concerto* really glitter. We're a world away from the more familiar *Second* and *Third Concertos*— the cantabile melodies are largely absent and there's an exuberant, loveable flashiness about the work. Starting with doomy Tchaikovskian fanfares which suggest a tongue-in-cheek response to Grieg's *Piano Concerto*, the mood quickly lightens. Trpčeski is alive to the sheer fun to be had, and

his impetuosity is neatly matched by Petrenko's Liverpool players. The last movement's capricious changes of metre here sound unerringly modern, but the slushy lyrical interlude is treated with tender affection. It's an unpretentious minor masterpiece, and so much more fun than the two concertos which followed.



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The Daily Telegraph

June 18, 2011

Rachmaninoff: Piano Concertos Nos 1 and 4: Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini

*Simon Trpceski (piano), Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, cond Vasily Petrenko. Rating: * * * * **

By Geoffrey Norris



As with their Avie coupling of the Second and Third Concertos (AV2192) last year, Simon Trpceski, Vasily Petrenko and the RLPO bring understanding and instinct to their performances, and take to heart the different temperaments that each of the three works on this recording manifests.

If the First Concerto is essentially music of

youthful optimism, the Fourth is shot through with far more hints of deep nostalgia and, at times, agonised brooding. The Fourth Concerto in the “definitive” 1941 version, played here, is markedly different from the one Rachmaninoff conceived in the 1920s. The concerto’s outer movements have a new, almost menacing energy and darker undercurrents that this performance brings out.

Here, as in the First Concerto and Paganini Rhapsody, the judicious variety of touch and colour, and ability to reveal important details of the music, combine with an expressive maturity to make these performances utterly compelling.



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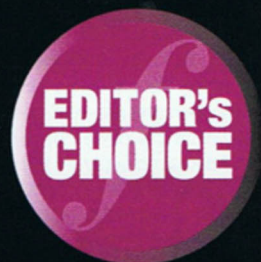
PRESS REPRESENTATIVE

May 2010



The perfect partners

Simon Trpčeski and Vasily Petrenko hit it off in Rachmaninov



Rachmaninov Piano Concertos Nos 2 & 3

*Simon Trpčeski (piano),
Royal Liverpool Philharmonic
Orchestra/Vasily Petrenko*

If you want to fall in love afresh with Rachmaninov's most popular piano concertos, go and get this disc right now. Trpčeski as soloist offers the ideal meld of glittering, fleet-fingered clarity and spontaneous romanticism; like Rachmaninov himself, he nevertheless keeps his cool and his beauty of tone at all times. In Petrenko he meets his perfect match, a conductor who delivers the music's super-sensitive *rubato* and frequent gear-changes with delicious aplomb. The RLPO plays its socks off for them and the poetry of even the most famous moments shines out as if new-minted. Exciting, stirring, wonderfully played and simply sublime. JD

Avie AV 2192

LISTENING NOTES

■ Making music together

Trpčeski, Petrenko and the RLPO seem to feed each others' inspiration. Petrenko exhorts the Liverpool strings to a blistering intensity like Russia's finest.

■ Romance minus schmalz

It's not easy these days to be romantic without being accused of schmalziness, but they've done it: Trpčeski's phrasing and the way he articulates each note of the melodies, speaks love poetry from the heart. Ditto the

beautiful, portamento-rich string playing.

■ Freshness for warhorses

Even if you think you know these works backwards, these performances are so fresh and inspired that it's almost like hearing them for the first time.



Simon Trpčeski (left) and Vasily Petrenko join forces for Rachmaninov



San Francisco Chronicle

March 28, 2010

CD: Rachmaninoff, Piano Concertos Nos. 2, 3

By Joshua Kosman

Classical



The great thing about these performances of Rachmaninoff's Second and Third Concertos by the Macedonian pianist Simon Trpceski is not merely that he can deliver these formidable virtuoso showpieces with vigor and technical polish - who can't, nowadays? It's that he makes you hear beyond the glitter to the dimly flickering musical inspiration beneath it, and that is a much harder and more rewarding task. In partnership with conductor Vasily Petrenko (whom he joins in Davies Symphony Hall this week for the Grieg Piano Concerto), Trpceski turns these potentially garish creations into something serious and emotionally urgent. The Second Concerto is especially fine, launched by a stirringly eloquent series of opening piano chords and proceeding through a dark-hued and tempestuous account of the first movement's main melody. The playing of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra is slightly patchy here and there, but Petrenko shepherds his players firmly through the rough spots.



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PRESS REPRESENTATIVE

The Daily Telegraph

March 6, 2010

Classical CD of the week



Rachmaninov: Piano Concertos Nos 2 and 3

Simon Trpčeski (piano),
Royal Liverpool Philharmonic
Orchestra, cond Vasily Petrenko

AVIE AV2192, £13.99 ★★★★★

It is only a fortnight ago that a disc of Rachmaninov's orchestral music performed by the RLPO and Vasily Petrenko featured here as CD of the Week. But these things happen, and it would be quite wrong not to give this new one of the Second and Third Piano Concertos pride of place as well. Within the orchestra's evolving Rachmaninov series for Avie, Simon Trpčeski will be soloist in all four of the concertos

and the *Paganini Rhapsody*, and this superb coupling attests to a partnership and vision of distinction.

After the four recital CDs that Trpčeski has produced for EMI, his admirers have long been hankering after a concerto disc, and, if it now arrives via an unexpected route, Avie can certainly congratulate itself on having backed a winner.

Trpčeski launches the Second Concerto with uncommon emotional intensity and with a judicious observation of the music's phrasing, dynamics and direction that is shared by the RLPO and Petrenko. These qualities underpin the performances of both concertos. Trpčeski balances a broad sweep with an extraordinarily lucid exposition of salient detail, the sheer beauty of his playing matched by powerful dynamism, the episodes of



Thrilling: Simon Trpčeski was born to perform the Rachmaninov concertos

poetic rhapsody in the music held sensitively within the bounds of the concertos' structure.

In the Third Concerto's first movement, he plays the bigger of the two cadenzas, with a bravura that is thoroughly integrated into

the scheme of things. There is nothing overstated in these performances, and yet there is nothing that goes unnoticed either: the interpretative balance is precise and inspired, the thrill of experiencing the concertos played in this way

immeasurable. Trpčeski was born to perform this music and Petrenko to conduct it. With the addition of the warm Russian sound that the RLPO adopts, the mix is exceptionally potent.

Geoffrey Norris



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The **Guardian**

February 8, 2008

Debussy: Images; Arabesques; Children's Corner; Clair de Lune; L'Isle Joyeuse, Trpčeski

★★★★★(EMI)

Tim Ashley

This has claims to being Simon Trpčeski's finest disc to date. The qualities that make his playing so distinctive - the finely judged balance between muscularity and sensitivity, his delight and affection - allow him to be strikingly extrovert, witty and at times even playful in Debussy, without ever losing sight of the profundity and mystery. The centrepiece is Images, in which Trpčeski traverses a vast yet subtle emotional spectrum from the deep nostalgia of Hommage à Rameau via the exotic disquiet of Et la Lune Descend Sur la Temple Qui Fut to the shimmering ebullience of Poissons d'Or, which he plays with abandon. Children's Corner is very gleeful, meanwhile, the Arabesques supremely gracious and Clair de Lune at once sweet, slow and very sad. The disc is rounded off with L'Isle Joyeuse, done with tremendous panache. Throughout, Trpčeski is acutely alert to Debussy's colouristic range, and the whole disc comes over as marvellously fresh. Recommended.



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The Daily Telegraph

January 26, 2008

Classical CDs

Debussy: Arabesques; Children's Corner; Images; Clair de Lune; L'Isle joyeuse

Simon Trpčeski (piano)

EMI 5 00272 2, £12.99

The luminous quality of Simon Trpčeski's playing in this magically light-imbued music is the immediately striking feature of his enthralling new disc. It radiates in a myriad different ways.

In "Reflets dans l'eau" from the first book of Images, for example, the colours glisten and sparkle, the eddies of the music creating scintillating whirlpools and washes of sound. "Et la lune descend sur le temple qui fût" from the second book, and the famous "Clair de lune" from the Suite bergamasque, shimmer with silvery tranquillity. In "Poissons d'or" the rippling undercurrents and surges yield up darting flecks. That singular masterpiece "L'Isle joyeuse" exudes the glow of elation.

Not that these generalised descriptions convey anything like the full extent of Trpčeski's interpretative inspiration. In this Debussy repertoire he harnesses the subtlety and spontaneity that mark his playing with an infallible ear for atmosphere. He transcends the technical challenges that bestrew most of the pieces, and especially "L'Isle joyeuse", to find the music's defining traits and conjure up images that are profoundly evocative.

Being Debussy, these images can be elusive, evanescent or swathed in mystery, but Trpčeski's performances have the ability to encapsulate an idea, however fleeting, and to fix it in the mind as part of a larger, more complex, more all-embracing picture.

This is as true of the "Images" and the delicate filigrees of the "Arabesques" as it is of the charming inventions of "Children's Corner", subtly and affectionately characterised with no hint of deliberate point-making. As ever, the clarity of Trpčeski's textures and articulation, coupled with the spectrum of sonorities he elicits from the keyboard, are factors that are allied to his innate musical sensibility to make his playing utterly compelling. Hearing this disc, you are transported into the very heart of Debussy's imaginative world. **Geoffrey Norris**



Compelling: Simon Trpčeski transports the listener



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The Daily Telegraph

February 2007

This striking disc shows Simon Trpceski broadening his outlook and at the same time using his characteristic insight to throw Chopin's stylistic traits into sharp focus. There is no shortage of Chopin recordings on the market, but this one leaps to the forefront.

The restless urgency in the opening movement of the Second Sonata is immediately arresting, but so too is the extraordinary clarity of Trpceski's textures. No matter what music he is playing, one of Trpceski's gifts is to illuminate it afresh. And so it is here: a familiar-enough sonata is presented with wonderful new perspectives and telling emphases, the bravura dazzling but always deployed with discretion and sensitivity.

Trpceski's assured sense of structure in the four-movement sonata is applied with equal security and vision in the multi-sectional scherzos. Momentum, dynamism, contemplation and lyricism are held in perfect equilibrium in these fantastic pieces.

The reason they are so stimulating to listen to here is not simply because of Trpceski's command of the virtuosity, but also because he brings such an apt spectrum of colour, phrasing, touch and vitality to the music.

Only a few weeks into 2007, this is already a disc of the year.

Geoffrey Norris



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BBC
music
MAGAZINE

July 2006

THE BEST RECORDINGS
RACHMANINOV
PIANO SONATA NO. 2

TOP CHOICE



SIMON TRPČESKI

EMI 557 9432 (revised version) £12.99

As well as the necessary scintillating virtuosity, Trpčeski plays with delicate poetry, glorious sound and, above all, shares the composer's own ability to make the music sound almost improvised.



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The New York Times

August 20, 2010

Mozart as Appetizer, Schumann as a Main Course

By Steve Smith

Hearing music by Mozart among the offerings presented by the Mostly Mozart Festival at Lincoln Center on Tuesday night took a bit of extra effort, since neither of the two concerts scheduled for that evening featured anything he wrote. The festival's resident orchestra, playing in Avery Fisher Hall, offered Weber, Mendelssohn and Schumann, the last in a nod to his 200th birthday this year. Another 200th birthday, that of Chopin, was recognized in an after-hours recital by the Macedonian pianist Simon Trpceski at the Kaplan Penthouse...

Later, in another sold-out event, part of the Little Night Music series, the Kaplan Penthouse served as an appropriately intimate forum for Mr. Trpceski's intense, highly personal approach to Chopin's music. Opening with the four Op. 24 Mazurkas, he demonstrated a technique well suited to Chopin: muscular, clear and unfussy, with a firm grasp of chiaroscuro and an abundant capacity for invention.

As important, Mr. Trpceski left no doubt as to his temperamental affinity for Chopin's music. Within the wistful Op. 24 pieces, and even more in the

Mazurka in A minor (Op. 17, No. 4) that followed, Mr. Trpceski offered sighing elongations, giggly tumbles and temperamental flashes, admirably serving Chopin's mix of the earthy and the ethereal.

Brighter and more affirmative, the three Op. 70 Waltzes brought out a more easeful elegance in Mr. Trpceski's playing. Intensity returned, redoubled, in a concluding group featuring the paired Nocturnes of Op. 32 and Op. 48. Mr. Trpceski proved himself a master of Chopin's subtle shock tactics, those sudden hollows and unsignaled sharp turns that leave you momentarily disoriented within Chopin's dreamy terrain.

Now and then you might have wished for just a shade more momentum; still, it was impossible to remain unswayed by Mr. Trpceski's careful consideration and thoroughness, which extended to his reversal of the order of the Op. 48 Nocturnes to give his recital a more heroic ending.

For his encore he offered Chopin's Waltz in A minor (Op. posth.), reveling once more in the composer's incomparable intermingling of sun and shade.



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The New Zealand Herald

July 18, 2011

Concert Review: NZ Symphony Orchestra, Auckland Town Hall

By William Dart



The New Zealand Symphony Orchestra's Russian Soul concert came courtesy of The Radio Network, a company specializing in what it describes as "result-driven accountable advertising solutions" for the commercial radio sector.

Accordingly, Peter Walls, the NZSO's chief executive, made it clear in the programme booklet that the priority was music with a broad appeal.

A roster of Russian favourites might not have seemed so adventurous, but with the orchestra at its streamlined best, a star soloist and a conductor with a individual and fervent point of view, it was a memorable evening.

Pinchas Steinberg stirred up a zesty cauldron in Rimsky-Korsakov's showy version of *Night on Bald Mountain*. Woodwind shrieked while chattering dissonances made one feel that Stravinsky's *Sacre* might burst from the pot at any moment. Only in the final pages, despite exquisite playing, did one pine for the uncompromising wildness of Mussorgsky's original. Simon

Trpceski is a born showman, gazing over the audience during rare snatches of respite in Prokofiev's Third Piano Concerto. With no technical problems to worry about, his passagework was a gleaming marvel.

Trpceski also tuned into Prokofiev's humour in a pert castanet-laced march and, taking a lead from his orchestral colleagues, invested his melodies with a wistful melancholy, especially when spiked with a dash of the composer's harmonic bitters.

For an encore, Vesa-Matti Leppanen and Andrew Joyce joined him in a dizzying, tavernish transcription of a dance from *Skopje*, a tavernish romp.

Pinchas Steinberg approached Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony with remarkable freshness.

The opening brass theme was more portent than fanfare; sighing violins and cellos injected the first theme's tentative waltz with a telling irony.

And when the various musical ideas started firing around the orchestra, you realised the conductor was arguing for this composer to be taken much more seriously as a symphonist.

The Andantino, with a beautifully contoured oboe solo, let the notes speak for themselves and after an occasionally angry showering of pizzicato in the Scherzo, a shattering Finale released Tchaikovsky's inner demons with a tumultuous roar.



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The Boston Globe

April 29, 2011

Trpceski's fresh path to Liszt

By Jeremy Eichler



Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos, in a program featuring pianist Simon Trpceski.

Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos, surely one of the Boston Symphony Orchestra's most frequent guest conductors, has returned to the BSO's podium for his second week of the season.

His programs tend to gravitate toward big-boned populist works such as Orff's "Carmina Burana" or toward the opposite corner of the repertoire — that is, little-known or neglected scores like Rossini's "Stabat Mater" or Falla's "Atlántida."

This week's program appears to combine these two approaches, opening with Reger's seldom encountered Variations and Fugue on a Theme of

Mozart (Op. 132) and closing with Ravel's ever-beloved "Bolero."

In between comes Liszt's Piano Concerto No. 2, which was for me the highlight of last night's Symphony Hall performance, in large measure due to the Macedonian pianist Simon Trpceski's fresh, glittering performance.

Liszt's Second Concerto tests not just a pianist's technical arsenal but also his poetic resources, and Trpceski, an accomplished young pianist making a somewhat belated BSO debut, showed himself equal to every Lisztian task.

Phrasing in the work's many lyrical moments was highly imaginative, full of



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air and light, and an audible sense of lift in the sound. Even rapid passagework that can sometimes sound generically virtuosic was here dispatched in distinctively characterful ways, and the many moments in which the piano embroiders themes from the orchestra were played with unerring sensitivity. One hopes that Trpceski, now that he has come to the BSO, will return soon.

Reger composed his Mozart Variations in 1914 after the famous theme from Mozart's A-Major Piano Sonata (K. 331). Some of the eight variations catch the ear with their harmonic invention, taking Mozart's genial theme to places

far beyond its 18th-century ken, and the closing fugue demonstrates Reger's masterful craftsmanship. Last night's performance was surely paced and solidly executed, notwithstanding a few misjudged balances.

Still, I'm not sure many in the large crowd present headed into intermission feeling that this work's relative obscurity — the BSO had programmed it just three times before — was a great injustice.

By contrast, at the other end of the program, Ravel's "Bolero," taken here at a relatively brisk clip with some fine solo contributions from the orchestra, drew a prolonged and vigorous ovation.



February 24, 2011

Music Review: Simon Trpčeski in Recital

The Macedonian pianist Simon Trpčeski (pronounced SIM-mun terp-CHESS-kee) first appeared at Disney Hall almost one year ago with the LA Phil under the direction of Dallas Symphony Orchestra Principal Conductor Jaap Van Zweden in a performance of Rachmaninoff's Third Piano Concerto.

On Tuesday night, Trpčeski returned to Disney Hall for a solo recital of works by Haydn, Chopin, Prokofiev and Macedonian composer Pande Shahov.

Trpčeski opened the recital with a hauntingly beautiful and almost ethereal rendition of the Haydn Piano Sonata in C minor Hob XVI/20 that kept the audience so spellbound, one could have literally heard a pin drop. Trpčeski caressed the keys as a lover would his beloved, sometimes so delicately that it was difficult to believe that any sound could come out. In fact, it's hard to imagine how this sonata could have been performed more perfectly. Trpčeski's performance made the Haydn sonata sound more like a Beethoven sonata. Of course, Haydn also helped a bit with this particular sonata, definitive of his *Sturm und Drang* (storm and stress) period, with its changing dynamics and minor key.



Trpčeski closed the first half of the recital with four nocturnes by Chopin, the Nos. 1 in B major and 2 in A-flat major, Op. 32, and Nos. 2 in F-sharp minor and 1 in C minor (in that order), Op. 48. Trpčeski permitted the audience to travel with him through the sweet lyrical landscape of the Op. 32 nocturnes and then to plumb the emotional depths of the Op. 48 nocturnes. Even though the Op. 48 nocturnes include more dynamic variations than the Op. 32, the first half of the recital was demanding for the audience because of its relative lack of keyboard fireworks. Trpčeski even acknowledged this by describing the first half as melancholy when he introduced the *Suite for Piano – Songs and Whispers* by Shahov at the beginning of the second half of the recital. He went on to announce that the second half of the recital would be very



much different than the first half — and it was.

In introducing the Shahov, which received its California premiere, Trpčeski explained its origin: he asked his friend to compose a piece using Macedonian folks songs and commemorating the 200th anniversary of Chopin's birth. Trpčeski then asked the audience if they would allow him to sing the folk songs briefly so they would be more easily recognized when they appeared in the piece. His informality on stage was a welcomed relief from the almost stilted formality often seen from soloists. Not surprisingly, Trpčeski performed the classical- and jazz-inspired Shahov with the exhilaration and feeling that only a landsman could.

Trpčeski concluded the recital with Prokofiev's most popular piano sonata, the No. 7 in B-flat major, Op. 83. After taking a bow for the Shahov, he immediately launched into the first movement of the Prokofiev — Allegro inquieto (fast and restless or uneasy) — and took the audience on a wild rhythmic ride, with a brief respite for the second movement — Andante caloroso (with warmth) — and then a thunderous romp through the third movement —

Precipitato (hurried) — which, as usual, brought the audience to their feet.

It is clear that Trpčeski loves playing the piano and performing, because it didn't take much coaxing for him to perform two short encores, Variation 6 from the Variations on a Minuet by J.P. Duport, by Mozart, and the Waltz in A Minor by Chopin, which he dedicated to his father.

The Disney Hall staff, perhaps predicting that Trpčeski would not sell out the hall (after all, he is not yet a household name), did not sell seats in the Orchestra View (behind the orchestra) or Terrace East and West sections of the hall. This made for a much more intimate recital experience.

But, although Trpčeski is not yet a household name, he likely will be. His playing ranges effortlessly between the most subtle and the most vibrant, and his repertoire is broad. That coupled with his easygoing and genuine demeanor on stage will only increase his name recognition among lovers of piano music.

I predict that next time he plays Disney Hall, seats in every section will have to be opened up.



Los Angeles Times

February 23, 2011



Culture Monster

ALL THE ARTS, ALL THE TIME

Music review: Simon Trpčeski in recital debut at Walt Disney Concert Hall

By Rick Schultz



There may have been three firsts at Walt Disney Concert Hall on Tuesday. Two were expected: Macedonian pianist Simon Trpčeski made his recital debut at the hall, and after intermission gave the California premiere of compatriot Pande Shahov's piano suite, "Songs and Whispers." The unexpected occurred when Trpčeski introduced the piece by singing four short sections of the rhythmically challenging Macedonian folk songs that inspired the work, accompanying himself at the piano. His voice is surprisingly good, warm and direct. When he performed the mostly tonal suite of six pieces, the score turned out to be a pleasant hodgepodge of

Chopin and Keith Jarrett-like jazz flourishes, with the pianist adding his own formidable cadenza to the "Quasi toccata" finale. He dedicated the suite to his loyal Macedonian following in the audience.

The recital opened with Haydn's Sonata in C minor, given a gentle, spacious and very romantic reading. It led into four moody Chopin Nocturnes, two each from Op. 32 and Op. 48. Trpčeski's sound was consistently rounded, even dreamy. But the recital's aura of quiet consolation and the pianist's unvaried beauty of tone suggested something more personal was going on here. His playing felt distant.

In Prokofiev's Sonata No. 7, Trpčeski displayed tremendous virtuosity in the toccata finale, but in the andante middle movement, a Chopinesque melancholy dominated.

Trpčeski's two encores were similarly low-key: the sixth of Mozart's nine "Variations on a Minuet by J.P. Duport," and Chopin's Waltz in A minor, which the pianist dedicated to the memory of his father.



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SEEN AND HEARD INTERNATIONAL

MusicWeb International's Worldwide Concert and Opera Reviews

February 23, 2011

Simon Trpceski Recital:

Haydn, Chopin, Pande Shahov, Prokofiev. Walt Disney Concert Hall, Los Angeles.

22.2.2011 (LV)

By Laurence Vittes

Haydn: Piano Sonata in C minor, Hob. XVI/20

Chopin: Nocturne in B major, Op. 32, No. 1

Nocturne in A-flat major, Op. 32, No. 2

Nocturne in F-sharp minor, Op. 48, No. 2

Nocturne in C minor, Op. 48, No. 1

Pande Shahov (b. 1973): Songs and Whispers - Suite for piano (California premiere)

Prokofiev: Sonata No. 7 in B-flat major, Op. 83

Simon Trpceski's return to Disney Hall after a triumphant appearance last season with the Los Angeles Philharmonic playing Rachmaninoff was a triumph itself. Armed with the tools and charisma of the great Romantic virtuosos, Trpceski, almost incongruously at times, chose to explore the interior of Haydn and Chopin before delighting the audience with a folk music-based Suite by fellow Macedonian Pande Shahov and finishing with the mechanistic charms and power of Prokofiev's last sonata.

Trpceski's method, although it hardly felt like it, was not to overpower the music or overwhelm the audience. Instead he drew the listeners into the music with performances that might have seemed improvisatory but turned out to be deeply revealing. The Haydn C Minor, which has been used by pianists as apposite as Richter and Brendel, served its purpose here, acclimatizing the audience to Trpceski's quiet poetry. No need for stylistic verity when the simple blueprints laid out by Haydn are so self referencing and profound. The

Chopin Nocturnes were in a similar vein, the occasional gorgeous melodies played with hesitation leading to sublime illumination.

Shahov's 15-minute *Songs and Whispers*, introduced by Trpceski from the stage as a hybrid of Macedonian folk songs and Chopin reflection, caught up both the pianist and the audience in its subtle typically cross-hatched Macedonian rhythms and there was much shouting and many bravos at the end.

In the mighty Prokofiev, Trpceski softened the composer's steely intentions until exploding in the last movement. The result focused on the composer's human side instead of employing the usual incendiary tactics. Two gentle encores sent the audience out into an unusually cold Los Angeles night: one of the variations from Mozart's Duport set, and a small Chopin waltz.

Disney Hall provided Trpceski with an audiophile sound that was rich and full and warm, yet precisely detailed.



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February 20, 2011

SUPERB PIANISM AT THE CHAN

*Simon Trpceski, piano: Haydn, Mozart, Chopin, and
Shahov, Chan Centre, February 20, 2011*

By Geoffrey Newman

The solo recital of Simon Trpceski, the acclaimed 31-year old pianist from the eastern-European Republic of Macedonia, turned out to be one of the real highlights of this year's Vancouver Recital Society concert season. In a recital ranging from Haydn to contemporary Macedonian composer Pande Shahov, we saw a wonderful combination of a finely-tuned keyboard control, intellectual strength, and an acute sensitivity to the emotional dimensions of the music played.

From the contemplative opening of Haydn's Sonata No. 33, it was evident just how elegant this pianist is and how he could use his beautiful tone to give meaning to each note. His playing is exact, but it is his thoughtful control of dynamics and his ability to point phrases with just the right emphasis and weight that makes his playing so involving and 'alive'. The two slower movements of this work showed great subtlety in emotional expression and awareness of fine detail, while the quick finale flowed from beginning to end, blending wit with intelligence.

I would have never thought that a performance of two middle-period Variations by Mozart could be an engrossing experience, but Trpceski

gave these minor works a stature that is rare. He developed both with a wide emotional range, bringing the playful and serious elements together into a telling whole. Here and in the Haydn, one noted that the pianist always brought out this variety within the bounds of 'classical' style. Often, young pianists who perform grand romantic works (e.g., Rachmaninoff) cannot find much emotional content or sense of style when turning back to classical composers. Here it was the opposite: a good test of the extent of Trpceski's resources, since he has also been widely-praised for his recordings of Rachmaninoff (EMI Classics 724355794352 and Avie 2192).

There was atmosphere aplenty in the four Chopin Nocturnes that followed, developed in a most concentrated, sculpted way. Pianistic control of the highest order indeed and what wonderful tonal hues and soft playing he produced! However, like Claudio Arrau's classic Philips interpretation, these were clearly Nocturnes set in a granite-like foundation. With less rubato and caprice than others might employ, they may not be for all tastes or moods. Hearing these four pieces together was illuminating but I doubt that a complete set of Nocturnes could



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take this weight and intensity. The pianist's recent Chopin recital is on EMI Classics 94638795254.

The final 'Songs and Whispers' is a recently-premiered joint collaboration between the pianist and composer Shahov, a work that celebrates Macedonian folk history as well as Chopin's 200th anniversary. In his introduction, the pianist actually sang for us the four Macedonian songs involved (a rare occurrence -- perhaps he will have another career before long!), also noting the quotations from Chopin. This work was a superb vehicle

for Simon Trpceski's talents -- his fingering is simply remarkable -- but it remains a pleasant piece rather than anything more. Some of it has the feel of Dvorak's Slavonic Dances, though with modernist touches thrown in.

This concert was an instructive example of how much maturity, vision and mastery a young performer can have. Simon Trpceski gave us a fully memorable and engaging recital with no ostentatious display whatsoever and in fact without performing one really major work. This is a pianist that the world must watch very carefully.



Simon Trpčeski

The Washington Post

February 20, 2011

Music Review: Simon Trpceski at the Kennedy Center

By Robert Battey

Simon Trpceski has slowly, almost quietly arrived at the top tier of concert pianists today. His path was hardly the usual one; born and trained in Macedonia, he now teaches at his alma mater in Skopje. He was never "discovered" or publicly mentored by some world-famous artist. He traveled the competition circuit in his early 20s, winning some of them but not setting the world on fire. Gradually, though, year by year, his combination of deft, subtle musicianship allied with virtually infallible fingers began to take him places, and now, in his early 30s, he regularly plays with the great orchestras of the world and has made several highly-praised solo recordings for EMI. Trpceski has achieved all this without pandering. While his repertoire is heavy on Rachmaninoff, he is an unassuming player who focuses calmly on the task of making music come alive through sound, not visuals. In an offbeat program Saturday afternoon at the Kennedy Center's Terrace Theater, Trpceski displayed fascinating and sometimes conflicting facets of his art. He reminds me a little of Michelangeli - note-perfect and seemingly aloof, but with hidden depths.

A mostly quiet Haydn sonata was followed by four of the less-well-known Chopin Nocturnes. The second half consisted of a work by Pande Shahov, a fellow Macedonian, and then the

explosive Prokofiev Seventh Sonata. His tempos were always measured, some too slow for these ears, but the range of expression was extremely wide, thundering climaxes withheld until almost too late and thus even more effective.

Right away in the Haydn, there was a distinctive touch, like cat's paws - staccato but with a little fur around the notes. I didn't hear the "con moto" designation in the slow movement, but the passagework in the finale was wonderfully alive. In the Chopin set, Trpceski was clearly in his element, the many challenges of drama and voicing masterfully handled. Though he does not rid himself completely of the clichéd practice of separating right- and left-hand notes for added "clarity," he keeps it to a minimum. Otherwise, every nuance came logically and organically from the shape of the overall phrase.

Shahov's "Songs and Whispers" is an appealing, soigne mash-up of new-agey jazz (Keith Jarrett), Macedonian folk songs, Chopin quotes and impressionism. Portions of it anticipated the Prokofiev that was to follow, though that was likely just clever programming on Trpceski's part. The piece was easy listening in both good and bad senses, though it was nice to see the artist having fun.

There was certainly no question of Trpceski's ability to wrestle the fearsome



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Prokofiev Seventh to the ground, but he used jujitsu rather than brute strength. Instead of attacking the work head-on, he surrounded and outmaneuvered it. Whether this approach is ultimately satisfying is a personal matter; for those of us used to sparks flying from the steel hammers of Richter, Horowitz and Argerich, last Saturday's reading lacked the frightening, machines-out-of-control element that makes the piece so compelling. But there was no gainsaying

Trpceski's complete command of his own arsenal and intentions.

As it always does, the Prokofiev brought the audience to its feet. Trpceski had his listeners eating out of his hand, and could then have regaled us with several more barn-burners. Instead, he figuratively turned the house lights on with a gentle, whispered Haydn encore and made a courteous exit. As with everything else, he did it his way.



January 28, 2011

Celebrated pianist Simon Trpceski impresses Liverpool Philharmonic Hall audience

By John Sutton



The epic music of one of Russia's composing giants was heard at Liverpool's Philharmonic Hall.

The celebrated young Macedonian pianist Simon Trpceski played Rachmaninov's fourth piano concerto last night.

Following this, chief conductor of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra Vasily Petrenko conducted the great composer's, and his fellow countryman's second symphony.

Vasily Petrenko and Simon Trpceski have become something of a dream team for the RLPO, with their foray into Rachmaninov's piano concertos on

stage and CD generating many column inches of rapturous praise and similarly rapturous capacity crowds.

And their fine bromance manifested itself here in another hugely classy performance, this time in the Russian composer's Jazz Age Piano Concerto No 4, part of a programme brimming with passion and vibrancy.

Audiences didn't really take the concerto to their hearts on its first outing in the late 20s. If Trpceski had been around though, they surely would have been hard-pressed to resist either his big-hearted enthusiasm or his easy, glistering touch.



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The 20s was the age of speed, and the Macedonian moved through his gears in effortless, floating style without losing any clarity, and with the Phil, particularly in the opening allegro, creating a big, juicy Lawrence of Arabia-style crescendo below him.

Terrific stuff.

As an added bonus, Trpceski produced a 'premiere' for an encore, roping orchestra leader Jim Clark and cellist Jonathan Aasgaard into what he described as a "dance from Skopje", full of irresistible syncopated piano and some frisky strings.

The concerto was cleverly paired in the first half with one of its 1920s contemporaries, Prokofiev's Symphonic Suite from his ballet Le Pas d'acier (The Steel Step) set in a Soviet factory.

The thud of its relentless machinery was well-realised through the basses and cellos, while its bold second

movement, The Officials, showcased flashes of shiny brilliance.

But it was back to Rachmaninov after the interval, with a performance of his Symphony No 2, immaculately judged from the brooding opening bars of the exhilarating first movement, with expansive, arching movements from Petrenko and the lush sweep of the strings, to the romantic melody of the concluding allegro vivace.

In between the Phil offered an second movement which was the equivalent of a musical embrace, and an adagio full of iridescence.

Of course Petrenko the perfectionist is even now probably thinking of ways he can improve the performance for tonight.

But if so, it's surely just tinkering with something that, like Mary Poppins, appeared practically perfect in every way.

Chicago
CLASSICAL REVIEW

November 20, 2010

**Trpčeski and colleagues deliver
shattering Shostakovich at Mandel Hall**

By Lawrence A. Johnson



The three Russian piano trios presented Friday night at Mandel Hall may have spanned just 62 years but made for a striking journey through the course of the nation and its music.

It helped that the University of Chicago Presents program—also presented as part of the ongoing Soviet Arts Experience festival—received such remarkable, intensely committed performances. The gifted Macedonian pianist Simon Trpčeski was the headliner but with equally fiery playing by compatriot, violinist Gjorgji

Dimcevski, and Kenneth Olsen, assistant principal cello of the CSO, this was an extraordinary, often riveting evening.

Rachmaninoff's early *Trio elegiaque* does not possess the stature of the two other works on the program but with Trpčeski—one of our leading Rachmaninoff pianists—at the helm, one is unlikely to hear better advocacy.

The Trio in G minor was not meant as a musical memorial—though, confusingly, Rachmaninoff's second, identically titled trio was written as a specific homage to



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Tchaikovsky upon the older composer's death.

Yet here too there are clear thematic links to Tchaikovsky's own Trio, in the melodic contour of Rachmanioff's opening theme and the overall somber atmosphere. At times one wanted a more ample sound from Dimceviski's violin to match the more ripely Russian sonority of his colleagues, but the three men provided a deeply felt performance with Trpčeski, in particular, finding surprising depth in this student work.

While Tchaikovsky's Piano Trio was written to honor his colleague, the departed pianist and teacher Nikolai Rubinstein, Shostakovich's Piano Trio No 2 is a broader lament for the victims of World War II.

Trpčeski, Dimceviski and Olsen delivered a shattering performance of this anguished 1944 score. Rarely will one hear the unsettling effects so harrowingly rendered as with the eerie, high muted cello notes that begin the work or the col legno bow taps rattling like dry bones.

The intention of the composer to honor Jewish victims of the Nazis is manifest in the pungent klezmer-like folk element. The Allegretto—a virtual dance of death—was put across with full force and knife-like accents, and equally compelling was the bleak introspection and concentrated intensity of the playing in the passacaglia. A haunting and memorable performance.

Tchaikovsky's Trio in A minor received a more openly virtuosic approach befitting its bravura writing for all three players, with the musicians frequently smiling at each other as they tossed phrases back and forth in the extended set of variations that concludes the work.

Yet the valedictory expression was not slighted either as in the dirge-like opening section and its return at the coda as the music slowly ebbs away to silence, done here with great sensitivity. The dimming of the stage lights to darkness was an unnecessary bit of theatrical stage management, however, with the eloquent and expressive playing of Trpčeski, Dimceviski and Olsen speaking well enough by itself.



The New York Times

November 14, 2010

Cool Restraint Leading the Way to Explosiveness

By Allan Kozinn



Baltimore Symphony Orchestra: Marin Alsop conducted works by Barber, Prokofiev and Beethoven at Carnegie Hall on Saturday evening.

With three seasons behind her and a fourth under way, Marin Alsop appears to have settled in comfortably as the music director of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, and the orchestra itself seems to have mellowed. The relationship started unpromisingly when it was announced in 2005, with some players protesting Ms. Alsop's appointment. But it warmed up as Ms. Alsop, the musicians and the orchestra's management quickly addressed pressing

problems like expanding the audience and trimming a longstanding deficit.

They have made innovative moves. For Ms. Alsop's inaugural season, 2007-8, the orchestra significantly cut ticket prices to \$25. Management has addressed budget problems by paring down the administrative roster, and last year the players offered to forgo about \$1 million in wage and pension increases. The ensemble's home, the Joseph Meyerhoff Symphony Hall, has just had a \$5 million makeover, and the



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budget is expected to be balanced this season.

Not incidentally, the orchestra sounds terrific these days, a point Ms. Alsop made quickly at Carnegie Hall on Saturday evening. In the opening pages of Barber's "Second Essay for Orchestra" the woodwinds played with uncommon richness and character, and the string sound was gracefully shaped. If there was anything to quibble about, it was in Ms. Alsop's interpretation, which at first put the music's tension and drama at arm's length. As it turned out, those qualities were merely delayed, not jettisoned: by the time brass and percussion sections made their assertive entrances, Ms. Alsop had gradually brought an urgent edge to her reading.

By the end of the evening it became clear that this approach, patience slowly giving way to explosiveness, was a stylistic thumbprint of Ms. Alsop's. She handled Beethoven's "Eroica" Symphony in much the same way, keeping the smooth, polished surfaces and careful balances her players produced fully in the spotlight and letting the implications of Beethoven's vivid score capture listeners once they

were wrapped in the sheer beauty of the sound.

Ms. Alsop's restraint was occasionally mannered, and you don't want to hear the "Eroica" that way every time. But it was a fascinating alternative view. The same can be said of the edition Ms. Alsop used, which embodied tweaks by Mahler. The changes — thickened textures, expanded dynamics (whispered pianissimos in the "Eroica"?) and octave doublings, mostly — were neither especially revelatory nor the desecrations one might imagine. Yet with the commemoration of the centenary of Mahler's death this season, his excesses are being celebrated rather than clucked over.

Between the Barber and the Beethoven, the Macedonian pianist Simon Trpceski joined Ms. Alsop and company for a galvanizing account of Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No. 3. This work demands both elegance and fire, and Mr. Trpceski and Ms. Alsop agreed fully on how those qualities had to interact. Mr. Trpceski's playing was finely focused and often dazzlingly speedy, and he tempered the steeliness of Prokofiev's writing with a welcome suppleness and warmth.



The Washington Post

November 15, 2010

MUSIC REVIEW

For Baltimore Symphony Orchestra's Alsop, fireworks lie in American program

By Anne Midgette

The Baltimore Symphony Orchestra is a veritable poster child for the pros and cons of the contemporary American orchestra. It's experimenting with different ways to reach its community. It's struggling with financial difficulties. Its most popular recent music directors, David Zinman and Marin Alsop, have championed new works. And it makes an athletic, sinewy and not unduly large sound (particularly in the strings), something it demonstrated again on Saturday night, when it appeared with Alsop at Carnegie Hall.

It didn't offer a typical American program, though. Having done Leonard Bernstein's "Mass" for her last BSO Carnegie appearance, in 2009, Alsop, or the powers-that-be, opted this time for convention -- that is, music written mainly by dead white European men, presented without comment from the podium. (To Alsop's credit, unlike many conductors known for talking to the audience during concerts, she doesn't espouse such conversation as a blanket prescription; on Saturday, she kept things formal.) The program, which Alsop and the orchestra offered in Baltimore earlier in the week, featured Prokofiev's Third Piano Concerto and Beethoven's Third Symphony, "Eroica." The Beethoven was given in Gustav Mahler's cover version, one of a number of Beethoven arrangements Mahler made that are emerging with some frequency this year, the 150th anniversary of his birth. (Leonard Slatkin offered a couple of them in his

years with the NSO.) Beefing up the winds and brass, adding dynamic shadings and rhetorical pauses and exaggerations, Mahler created a relic of another style and era. It's not one to which Alsop is especially attuned, in that her approach was more about taut focus than Mahlerian sweep, and the sound, even with all those extra instruments, was more driven than lush. But she audibly relished some of the details and mood changes in the score.

The BSO presented Lang Lang's Carnegie Hall debut in 2001; on Saturday it was the turn of the rising 31-year-old Macedonian pianist Simon Trpčeski, who is his temperamental opposite in his deliberate lack of showiness. The Prokofiev is a fiendishly hard piece with plenty of fireworks, but Trpčeski emphasized its elegance and even gentleness, keeping a contained, soft sound even in the bravado flourish of the opening. It was thus an unflashy debut but an appealing one; the finger-twisting barrage of notes at the end of the work showered down like falling stars, distant and wonderful.

The orchestra, though, sounded best in the evening's sole American work, Barber's Second Essay for Orchestra, which opened the program. The orchestra gave it with a sense of freedom that wasn't always present in the two other pieces. What Alsop has to offer that's musically distinctive lies, I think, in this area. But it was a solid evening from an orchestra that sounds, if not breathtaking, in pretty good shape.



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July/August 2010

SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY

Trpceski and Petrenko



Simon Trpceski

For Grieg's Piano Concerto, Petrenko found an ideal guest soloist in his frequent collaborator—shorter, more strongly built 30-year old Macedonian pianist Simon Trpceski. Heard on April 3, the last night of Petrenko's three-night visit to Davies Symphony Hall, the duo pulled out all the romantic stops. Tempos shifted often, with the artists reveling in extremes of volume and dynamics.

"I am a romantic person, and, being a Slav, romantic music is close to my heart", Trpceski told *San Francisco Classical Voice's* Lisa Petrie. So, it seems, is technical perfection. His first movement cadenza was quite the display, followed by an awe-inspiring coda.

The duo achieved maximum contrast with their slow Adagio. Trpceski drew out the lyrical



Vasily Petrenko

With Michael Tilson Thomas on tour with the San Francisco Symphony in the last half of March, then off through early May, San Franciscans enjoyed a succession of guest orchestras, conductors, and artists. Chief among them was *Gramophone's* 2007 Young Artist of the Year, tall, thin Russian conductor Vasily Petrenko. Not yet 34, and known for his leadership of Russian and British orchestras and recent recordings of Shostakovich, Rachmaninoff, and Tchaikovsky, Petrenko's buttoned-up appearance concealed a passionate spirit that made for rousing Shostakovich and compelling Grieg.

passages to such an extent that one might have thought that this was another piece entirely. SFSO Principal Cellist Michael Grebanier's solos were also compelling. The Allegro finale sounded like every ultra-romantic movie score rolled into one. I loved it. In a "modern" era where conductors and artists tend to shy away from romantic displays and instead let "the music speak for itself" (whatever that means), Petrenko and Trpceski's Grieg seemed from an earlier era when unabashed romance was A-OK.

It certainly came from a different era than Russia in the late 1940s, when Shostakovich's

Symphony No. 8 was singled out for attack by Andrei Zhdanov of the Central Committee of the Communist Party as "a 'composition' that has nothing to do with art".

Petrenko's take on the five-movement work reveled in extremes. Beginning in restrained fashion, searing strings soon gave way to subdued despair. Petrenko made the most of the first movement's howls and screams.

The second movement's clatter of militarism at its most detestable and nihilistic painted a no-win situation. Capped by three damning timpani strokes of finality, the music gave way to the sounds of the relentless machine. Although the cellos and basses could have been stronger (the SFSO is not the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra), David Herbert's timpani thwacks were tremendous. Whimpers from the orchestra signaled that no victory could undo the damage.

After Concertmaster Alexander Baratschik's lovely, sweet solo, the symphony's concluding bars of affirmation and hope seemed hollow. What lingers in the mind are not the symphony's more subdued passages, which are not uniformly compelling, but the absolute horror of life under fire. It was a great performance.

JASON VICTOR SERINUS



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London Evening Standard

July 20, 2010

Business as usual at the 2010 Proms

By Nick Kimberley

After the razzle-dazzle of the opening weekend, the 2010 Proms season last night returned to business as usual. Not that the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra lacks allure; since Vasily Petrenko became its chief conductor, it has become a Premier League orchestra, although London rarely has the chance to see it.

Rachmaninov's Second Piano Concerto is a guaranteed crowd-pleaser, and an expectant hush fell as the Macedonian pianist Simon Trpceski took his seat. Trpceski nonchalantly allowed the tension to build but when the opening chords finally arrived, his spell was instantly cast.

Some pianists like to blast their way through the concerto's more turbulent passages; even at his most forceful, Trpceski seemed to caress the keys.

If his silvery tone sometimes threatened to sink beneath the orchestral swell and its disturbing woodwind undercurrents, it only underlined the precarious musical drama. His was a performance that looked inwards, finding delicacy in even the most Hollywoody passages while the accompaniment from Petrenko and his orchestra had nothing too lush, nothing too brash. The rest of the programme was taken up with responses to Lord Byron's Manfred. Mahler's re-orchestration of Schumann's Manfred overture adds little to the original but the RLPO caught the moody restlessness. Tchaikovsky's Manfred Symphony works on a larger scale, and the opening interplay between bassoons and bass clarinet set the sulphurous mood for a performance in which fizz and bubble only occasionally brushed aside the menace and misery.



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May 28, 2010

Review: The MSO, Trpceski and Saint-Saens

By Tom Strini

None of the composers in the Western classical pantheon are bad. But some are better than others, for reasons some of us can spell out.

Friday, music director Edo de Waart devoted an entire Milwaukee Symphony program to Camille Saint-Saens (1835-1921). I'm not alone in placing the French third-generation Romantic in the rear guard of Greatness. On a workaday level, I always thought he relied far too much on sequences — play a tune or fragment then play it again at a different pitch level — to extend ideas and build tension. This obvious trick often yields tedious results.

On a deeper level, previous generations of Romantics hammered out a musical language that expressed their moment; Saint-Saens did not. He received that language and manipulated it expertly. He was marvelously articulate, but had nothing of his own to say often went for cheap, spectacular effects. His music is to Romanticism what the Las Vegas Luxor Hotel is to ancient Egypt.

As *Danse macabre*, Opus 40, the *Piano Concerto No. 2* and the *Organ Symphony* (No. 3, in C minor) passed by at the MSO matinee Friday, I had plenty of time to revisit my opinion of this composer's music. I was right; Saint-Saens does use too many

sequences and his music doesn't run very deep. He loves to end with a bang; you get the feeling he composed those endings with standing ovations in mind, in a way that a true heavyweight — Brahms, say — would not.

But what's the point in resisting such music? In any case, it is irresistible when played as brilliantly as it was Friday. It was fun to hear Frank Almond, the MSO's concertmaster, dig in at the bridge to give a devilish snarl to the big solo violin part of *Danse macabre*.

The rhythmic precision De Waart and the orchestra brought to all this music, particularly to the *Organ Symphony*, brought out metric subtleties that had previously escaped me. All sorts of ingenious combinations and juxtapositions of duple and triple feeling, many deep in the orchestral mix, jumped out of this reading. I'm thinking especially and the cartoonish trio in the third movement, but it permeated the whole piece. De Waart balanced the orchestra to make all this legible. He also managed tempos and volumes to a razor's edge to create enormous momentum overall and a world of subtle surges and subsidences along the way.

The trick to the concerto lies in making the insanely difficult solo piano part sound easy. Soloist Simon Trpceski



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soared high above the technical difficulties and played joyfully. He generated enormous power without banging and enormous speed with no sense of haste or any loss in articulation. He was fleet and light and witty in the Scherzando — people chuckled at the musical punch line at the very end — and was fleet and driven and powerful in the presto finale. My favorite among the many jaw dropping details in Trpceski's performance came in the odd theme made of strings of very fast trills and shakes. Trpceski endowed every last one

of them with rhythmic clarity down to the nanosecond. Instead of blurs, they were showers of diamonds, with each facet cut just so.

Of course de Waart, the MSO and Trpceski were more than up to Saint-Saens' big finish, which is of course the stuff of standing ovations. They got a rousing one from the big afternoon crowd, and they earned it. So did Saint-Saens. Maybe his music is all surface, but my goodness, what a glittering, dazzling surface it is.



April 23, 2010

French Romanticism reigns with Houston Symphony

By Everett Evans

The prodigiously accomplished Macedonian pianist Simon Trpceski made a memorable Houston Symphony debut on Thursday with his inspired rendition of Camille Saint-Saëns' Piano Concerto Number 2.

The program conducted by Ukrainian maestro Kirill Karabits, returning after his North American debut here last year, concluded with a second audience favorite, Hector Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*, in a vivid rendition every bit the aural spectacular the work was intended to be.

The concerto is somewhat atypical, with its andante first movement essentially one vast cadenza with orchestral asides, its brisk scherzo-style middle movement, and even faster finale.

Trpceski, 30, who during the past decade has been gathering plaudits, prizes and a growing reputation, conquered the work's technical demands handily. Yet what really distinguished his playing was its grace and luminosity, his sense of being truly in tune with the work's wide-ranging moods, from his most thunderous chords to his most delicately articulated ornamental lines.

He brought buoyant energy to the bounding main theme of the second movement, with a lightly skimming

touch. His ultimate show of virtuosity was the breathless finale, maintaining ease and fluency despite the dizzying pace.

Karabits' decisive conducting made the most of the orchestra's role in punctuating early solo passages, expanding to lush sound when involved more extensively at full strength. At a few brief moments with tricky changes of time signature, the orchestra/soloist interplay could have been a shade tighter. Overall, the collaboration was smooth and skilled.

Inspired by Berlioz's obsession with Shakespearean actress Harriet Smithson, *Symphonie fantastique* was revolutionary in its format, programmatic content and expansive use of the orchestra (including novel techniques such as the *col legno* passage for violins in the finale.) What listeners chiefly care about is that it's one of the splashiest orchestral showcases, with arguably the most vivid musical scene-painting in any large-scale programmatic work.

Karabits carefully built the opening *Reveries and Passions* movement, developing the *idée fixe*, the recurring theme representing the beloved, which goes through so many permutations as it



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recurs in the five movements. The orchestra captured the ever-more dizzying sweep of the swirling waltz theme in the second movement (*A Ball*.) The crisp, fresh playing sustained the pastoral *Scene in the Country*, the most restrained movement, its intensity gathering gradually.

The last two movements are the most extroverted and fantastical. The weirdly jaunty *March to the Scaffold* showcased the formidable brass section, in brash and robust form. Karabits heightened the effect by dramatically accelerating in the movement's last measures.

The Dream of a Witches' Sabbath made a grand (albeit ghoulish) finale, right

from the tremolo violins of its eerie opening to the profane resurrection of the *idée fixe*, mockingly tooted on woodwinds, and the ominous blast of the *Dies Irae*. You could almost see the imps, trolls and devils cavorting as the unearthly movement raced to its volatile wall-of-sound finish.

With two signature works by icons of the Romantic era, each adeptly realized, the only question is which of these two different highlights is the highlight of the concert. For music lovers, it's not a bad dilemma to have. This program repeats tonight and Sunday.



SAN FRANCISCO
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April 1, 2010

St. Petersburg Buddies Lay It On

By Heuwell Tircuit

Two up-and-coming talents, the Macedonian pianist Simon Trpčeski and Russian conductor Vasily Petrenko, took over last week's San Francisco Symphony subscription concerts, and in the process sounded like major stars of the future.

Only pieces two were on offer: Grieg's Piano Concerto in A Minor, Op. 16, and Shostakovich's Symphony No. 8 in C Minor, "Stalingrad," Op. 65. As that symphony runs a bit over an hour, no encore was forthcoming, though much of the audience would have loved hearing Trpčeski play again.

The effectiveness of Grieg's sole concerto is undeniable. Rachmaninov, who knew a thing or two about such forms, called it "the perfect concerto." Yet many people will turn up their noses at the very mention of its title, as if to say, "Oh, that old thing." In a refreshing performance such as was heard in Davies Symphony Hall on Thursday, it should be enough to convert all doubters.

The method used by Trpčeski was simple enough. Rather than cheapen the piece with tawdry, hard-sell tempos and exaggerated dramatics, Trpčeski and his conductor highlighted the gentility in the music. Partly that was a matter of excellent tempo selections. Both fast movements, for instance, have their Allegros softened by qualifications such

as "... molto moderato" on the first movement and "... moderato molto a marcato" on the finale. In each case, the artist is being cautioned not to hurry — something that all too many pianists do, but not Trpčeski.

Grieg's Concerto contains its share of thunderous bravura, yet on the whole this concerto is dominated by lyrical music. More-relaxed tempos, such as those that Trpčeski and Petrenko applied, are essential to bringing forward that virtue. That, and the ability to sustain soft, quiet passages, which is extremely difficult. Being quiet for long periods is hard in all endeavors (especially for cell-phone users).

At Davies, the ensemble work between pianist and conductor was flawless. Of course, the fact that both trained at the St. Petersburg Conservatory more or less ensured uniformity. Then too, they have performed and recorded together, as well as toured as a unit.

Trpčeski possesses a full, virtuosic technique so complete that he can display it without making an issue of it. His crisp, staccato playing twinkled like fireflies, and his smooth legato playing virtually purred. That last quality made for a scrumptious account of the great Adagio. The warmth of sound from both pianist and orchestra was as fine as I've ever encountered. I'll bet they could do terrific Debussy or Ravel.



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FrontRow

A DAILY REVIEW OF THE DALLAS ARTS

February 14, 2010

Van Zweden's Rachmaninoff Presents Sweeping Melodies and Brilliant Colors Without Apology

By Wayne Lee Gay

It takes a certain amount of faith in both the composer and the audience for a conductor to present a concert devoted entirely to one composer. And, though "Romance and Rachmaninoff" made a self-evident advertising campaign for Valentine's weekend, Dallas Symphony music director Jaap van Zweden took a bit of an artistic gamble when he paired Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 1 with the same composer's Symphony No. 2.

The ploy paid off well at the box office—I overheard one concert goer Saturday night at Meyerson Symphony Center, surveying the packed house, comment aptly that Beethoven and Rachmaninoff are the two composers who can always fill the hall. But, though it's easy to bring a crowd in when the Rachmaninoff's name on the metaphorical marquee, keeping them awake and interested once

they're in their seats can be a little more challenging; the characteristic lush harmonies and gorgeous melodies that have made Rachmaninoff so popular with music lovers can also work against the need for variety within a concert.

Van Zweden thus steered clear of the most familiar of Rachmaninoff's works—the Second and Third Piano Concertos and the Paganini Rhapsody—and turned to worthy pieces that, while clearly appealing, haven't been overworked in the repertoire.

The Piano Concerto No. 1, here presented with Macedonian pianist Simon Trpceski, as soloist, is a glittering essay in lyricism and piano sonorities, and can be reduced, by less sensitive performers, into a glossy show piece. But Trpceski, who exudes an appealing combination of flair and solid competency onstage, and who tosses off



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excruciatingly difficult technical passages with seeming effortless, searched out the warmth and sincere expressiveness of the more subtle passages. He made the outer movements shine, but he was at his most impressive in the quieter middle Andante, bringing an arresting serenity to the long unaccompanied passage at the beginning of that movement. Whatever else he may be in terms of a broader repertoire, Trpceski is clearly a major interpreter of Rachmaninoff.

After intermission, van Zweden took on the gigantic challenges of the Second Symphony. For decades, many conductors opted for a set of composer-sanctioned cuts in this hour-long tapestry; van Zweden chose, as is now the custom with major orchestras, to present an uncut reading. The complete version is clearly preferable: though Rachmaninoff may have allowed the omission of a few passages, he clearly

announces in musical terms, in the titanic utterances of the opening passages, a symphonic epic.

Van Zweden presented the sweeping melodies, the grand harmonic gestures, and the brilliant colors without apology—and, at the same time, constantly attended to the meticulous counterpoint that supports those more obvious elements. While detractors of Rachmaninoff's music used to dismiss it as a collection of soupy melodies and dripping harmonies, a broader consensus in our time has come to recognize and admire the universality of the passions and energies he captured in his music. In a reading such as van Zweden's, Rachmaninoff's Second Symphony becomes the musical equivalent of Gogol or Tolstoy, in which small details build into a towering and profound expression of passion, joy, and sorrow.



Simon Trpčeski

The Daily Telegraph

May 18, 2009

Moscow's Bolshoi Theatre Orchestra / Simon Trpčeski in Skopje

By Geoffrey Norris

In Britain we tend to be fairly blasé about orchestras visiting from abroad, so often do they pop in the course of a European tour. In Macedonia, however, it is a different matter. This concert, the first to be given in Skopje by Moscow's Bolshoi Theatre Orchestra, was also one of those rare occasions on which any major foreign classical ensemble had made an appearance in the city. The paparazzi were out in force; the 2,500-seater venue was packed; dignitaries and members of the public clamoured for tickets.

This was a signal event as well as a musically rewarding one. A vital catalyst in its happening at all was Simon Trpčeski. His exceptional pianism might be well-known worldwide, but that is nothing compared to his fame in Macedonia, where, as any taxi-driver will tell you, he is a national figure to match any football hero or pop star. His friendship with Alexander Vedernikov, the Bolshoi's music director and chief conductor, had clearly been a crucial factor in initiating the concert, and it was only natural - not to mention a positive public expectation - that he should be part of it.

Moves are afoot to give Skopje the new concert hall it merits, and work is underway at a site in the city centre on the north bank of the River Vardar between the Music Academy and the

Macedonian Opera and Ballet Theatre. The Metropolis Arena, chiefly a conference centre, was not actually designed for symphony concerts, but the acoustics stood up surprisingly well. Somewhat on the matt side, they nevertheless fostered clarity of definition in the orchestral sonority, and the Bolshoi's distinctive, rich, pungent timbre asserted itself.

They began with Tchaikovsky's "Hamlet" overture and ended the advertised programme with Prokofiev's Fifth Symphony. Both performances generated strongly profiled playing, combining gravitas with animated, fully formed instrumental detail and a mature command of the music's emotional ebb and flow. In between, with Trpčeski as soloist, came Rachmaninov's "Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini". This was a true interpretative coalition. Trpčeski's art, echoed by Vedernikov and the orchestra, is to probe deep beneath the notes and elicit the essential character and substance of a score. Here in the "Paganini Rhapsody", darkness and light, shadows and brilliance, deftness and passion made for a performance that was extraordinarily compelling in its freshness and in its capacity to expose the music's very heart.

Despite the intensity of Skopje's early summer heat, there was no wilting of



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artistry or energy. There were three encores. Trpceski played, with limpid poise, a Mendelssohn "Song without Words" and the orchestra let rip with the Trepak from Tchaikovsky's "Nutcracker". They came together for a new arrangement for piano and orchestra of a piece that Trpceski has played before in its solo version. "In Struga" by Pande Sahov draws on the lyrical lilt and rhythmic conundrums of Macedonian folk music, a genre in

which Trpceski is steeped and which, I have long been convinced, contributes to the impulse and warm sensibility that his playing evinces.

The piece had particular resonance here on home soil, and made an apt envoi to what had been billed as a "spectacular concert". It was precisely that, not in any crass, superficial sense but rather in the superb display of musicianship on stage and the rapt attentiveness with which it was witnessed.



PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE-REVIEW

April 3, 2009

PSO soloist strings along composer's brilliance

By Mark Kanny

The Pittsburgh Symphony's "Rediscovering Rachmaninoff" festival began Friday night at Heinz Hall with a masterpiece that should fuel anyone's desire for musical exploration and concluded with a reward for that curiosity.

Sergei Rachmaninoff's "Rhapsody on a theme of Paganini," written in 1934, began the rediscovery with familiarity. The theme is from Nicolo Paganini's Caprice No. 24 for solo violin, which had already inspired many other composers. Rachmaninoff's Rhapsody subjects the theme to brilliant, sometimes diabolically brilliant, variations arranged in a powerful arch of experience.

Fortunately, soloist Simon Trpceski and conductor Gianandrea Noseda gave a scintillating performance. Trpceski's clarity was striking, and no matter how many notes he was playing they never lost their fleet purposefulness.

Trpceski plays the big lyrical variation with a degree of classicism Rachmaninoff would have admired, I think. And when the orchestra took the theme as the soloist played amplifying chords, Noseda shaped the line with a refinement of feeling that did not preclude intensity.

After the well-deserved standing ovation, Trpceski's encore was a poignant and patrician account of a Waltz in A minor by Frederic Chopin.

The first discovery last night was a 15-minute cantata called "Spring" on the

subject of a man with murderous urges after his wife is unfaithful. The Mendelssohn Choir was surprisingly effective given the relatively small number of singers in the ensemble. Vasily Ladyuk departed at the right spots from a stentorian style.

After intermission Noseda spoke to the audience about the evening's big discovery, what the program booklet said was the Pittsburgh Symphony's first performance of Rachmaninoff's Symphony No. 1. Written in 1895, it was a horrifying failure for the composer at its premiere.

Rachmaninoff was so upset he stopped writing and later burned the score. It was reconstructed after his death in 1943 from orchestral parts discovered in Russia.

Noseda's spoken introduction to the performance mentioned that at the premiere the conductor was drunk. Rachmaninoff merely mentioned in a letter that the conductor led without passion.

The degree of displeasure the premiere aroused can be felt from a review the composer Cesar Cui wrote of the new piece - that it would have fulfilled an assignment in hell to write a musical description of the "Seven Plagues of Egypt."

Cui would have had felt differently if he had heard a performance with the commitment and understanding that Noseda and the musicians brought to the music.



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The Daily Telegraph

March 11, 2009

Simon Trpceski and the London Philharmonic, review

Macedonian pianist Simon Trpceski confronts the formidable challenge of Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Louis Langré.

By Geoffrey Norris

In the quarter of a century that I have been writing about concerts for *The Daily Telegraph*, the enduring joy has been to witness talented young musicians on the foothills of their careers and to follow them as they steadily rise in stature to become key exponents of their art. There are many performers and conductors who have enriched my life in this way, but one of the foremost among them is the Macedonian pianist Simon Trpceski.

In this concert with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Louis Langrée, he confronted one of those formidable challenges of playing a work so central to the repertoire that its familiarity is often in danger of making it seem commonplace.

Commonplace, however, is not a word in Trpceski's vocabulary. On the several occasions I have heard him in Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto, the music has always been infused with freshness, suppleness and expressive sophistication.

Not for him any vacuous grandiloquence or run-of-the-mill display. Rather, as in this performance, he is able to tap the concerto's grandeur and nobility, its excitement, drama and poignancy to fuel an interpretation that fuses taste with a

lucid exposition of the score's palette of colouring and emotion, together with sinewy, assured bravura in which every note has its proper place.

There was palpable, communicative depth of thought here, allied to all the deft virtuosity, brilliance and power that the concerto demands. The interaction with the orchestra was spontaneous and steadfast, igniting those sparks of electricity and the surges of current that Tchaikovsky's writing implies, with a peroration in the final bars that was all the more satisfying for seeming to burgeon naturally from all that had gone before.

Trpceski received an ovation for his performance, and as an encore played the athletic, ebullient Struga by his fellow-Macedonian, Pande Sahov.

It might be that the sheer force and finesse of the Tchaikovsky cast a shadow over the rest of the programme, but the textures of Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique* did not always gleam with their intrinsic lustre. Messiaen's *Les Offrandes oubliées* made for an unusual though intriguing curtain-raiser, but Trpceski in Tchaikovsky was unquestionably the high point of the evening.



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The New York Times

September 28, 2007

Music Review | New York Philharmonic

A No-Nonsense Approach to the Work of a Master

By Anthony Tommasini

In a program note for the New York Philharmonic's concert at Avery Fisher Hall on Wednesday night, Lorin Maazel calls Tchaikovsky a "very well-known but not completely understood composer." You might quibble with the idea that any composer can ever be completely understood. Moreover, the idea that appreciation of Tchaikovsky is lacking may come as a surprise to concertgoers who hear his works constantly.

In any case, Mr. Maazel has begun a three-week festival called "The Tchaikovsky Experience," including the symphonies, the famous concertos and music from "Swan Lake." He is right that some Tchaikovsky scores are heard infrequently, notably the First Symphony, "Winter Dreams," which concluded Wednesday's program. It was paired with the First Piano Concerto, perhaps Tchaikovsky's best-known work, a terrific piece that needs rescuing from its own popularity. Programming agendas aside, both performances were outstanding.

In interviews over the years Mr. Maazel has objected to the overemotional interpretations of Tchaikovsky and other Romantics that have become

fashionable. He may be overstating his case. I have heard many Apollonian accounts of Tchaikovsky. And sometimes Mr. Maazel's performances of this repertory are marred by his penchant for making interpretive points in the way he shapes phrases and manipulates tempos.

But he was at his best on this night, and he had an ally for his no-nonsense approach to the concerto in Simon Trpceski, a 28-year-old Macedonian pianist who seems poised for a significant career. Mr. Trpceski has formidable technique and energy to spare. He dispatched volleys of thick, crashing chords with steely tone and power, and conveyed contrasting passages of scampering runs with clarity and lightness. He tore through the double-octave outbursts with arm-blurring speed and no sense of strain. Yet in tenderly lyrical moments he caressed the phrases, playing with naturalness, never milking anything. He seemed at one with Mr. Maazel in treating this war horse as a majestic, shrewdly structured and substantive score. In the orchestra, Mr. Maazel voiced sonorities and textures in ways that revealed the tartness of



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Tchaikovsky's harmonies. Rhythmic articulation was always crisp and incisive.

Tchaikovsky was 26 and in the fledgling stage of his career when he began his First Symphony in 1866. The score has the earmarks of an earnest young composer thinking big and putting to use what he learned as a student. The whimsical scherzo comes across like music by a Russian Mendelssohn, until Tchaikovsky forces the thematic materials through a long series of sequences. The main theme of the finale is wonderfully brassy and exuberant, though the movement soon breaks into rather dutiful counterpoint: a fugue of sorts.

Tchaikovsky retained great fondness for this work — probably, I think, because the music is so guileless and directly expressive, especially the rustic, pensive first movement and the soulful Adagio. In later years Tchaikovsky's inner torment found expression in his tortured music. But not in this score, especially as it came across in the vibrant and brilliant performance that Mr. Maazel drew from the Philharmonic.

This program is repeated in part this afternoon and tomorrow night, with Tchaikovsky's "Manfred" in place of the First Symphony; (212) 721-6500, nyphil.org.



The New York Times

October 2, 2007

A Suave Night of Chopin, Finished Off with Brahms

By Anne Midgette



Simon Trpceski at the Metropolitan Museum of Art on Sunday night. The first half of the program was an all-Chopin recital.

Elegant. Debonair. Chopin.

On Sunday night the pianist Simon Trpceski gave a recital at the Metropolitan Museum of Art that offered the flip side of the Romantic coin from Tchaikovsky's First Concerto, which he played with the New York Philharmonic the night before.

While Mr. Trpceski (pronounced terp-CHESS-kee) has a firm, warm touch, his Chopin was above all gentle and urbane, playing down the virtuosity he unquestionably has at his fingertips.

Chopin himself mentioned that the English used to comment on his playing

with the accolade "like water," meaning that the music flowed; Mr. Trpceski is indeed in that Chopin tradition.

Here he offered a very specific look at Chopin, focusing on the early 1830s, with the four Opus 24 Mazurkas, the two Opus 26 Polonaises, a single mazurka from Opus 17 and the three Opus 70 Waltzes. Though these Waltzes were written from 1829 to 1842, Mr. Trpceski played them as a fluid whole, a wash of slightly brighter energy at the end of an elegiac set.

The overall tone of the pieces was a gentle wistfulness, to the point of a



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slight sameness, as he played them. The fourth of the Opus 24 Mazurkas evoked "La Valse" of Ravel in looking back through a golden frame at a past world, a tension underlined at the end in the pull between major and minor keys. Mr. Trpceski kept the tone gentle even in the pained, dark intensity of the E flat minor Polonaise, which moved from thunder to martial crispness but ultimately died out in a quiet final gasp.

In the second half of the program, the coin flipped yet again, as the New York Philharmonic, evidently unwilling to let its newest soloist go, sent Glenn Dicterow and Philip Myers, its concertmaster and principal horn

player, to join Mr. Trpceski in a performance of Brahms's E flat Horn Trio.

It was an unusual conclusion to a piano recital and a move back into the realm of showiness, particularly thanks to Mr. Dicterow, whose violin playing brought to mind a description of Chopin's contemporary Henri Herz: "His execution is elegant, agreeable and coquettish but without subtlety."

Mr. Myers, by contrast, played gorgeously, and the whole thing was robust and rousing. But Mr. Trpceski was rather drowned out, and a listener was left wishing for more of a sense of him.



March 29, 2008

Dudamel parties with the Phil

By Timothy Mangan

Gustavo Dudamel, who conducted the Los Angeles Philharmonic Friday night for the first time since being named its next music director last April, is a musician for our times. Understatement may not be his thing, but then he's only 27 and let's not get ahead of ourselves. For now, he seems to want to go for the "more" in music, *con brio* and *con gusto*, and he is brilliant enough and intelligent enough a musician to get it. His concerts are in-your-face entertainments and, not incidentally, he's great fun to watch.

His program took over where Esa-Pekka Salonen has yet to leave off (Dudamel's tenure officially starts in September 2009). It began with Salonen's own "Insomnia," proceeded through a cheekily modern piano concerto and wound up with Berlioz's "Symphonie fantastique" (a Salonen specialty). It's music that tends toward the razzle-dazzle and so did Dudamel's readings. "Juice it up" may be his motto; even quiet and lyrical passages were probed with intensity.

Dudamel's account of the "Symphonie fantastique" was equal parts invigorating and exhausting. Call it a good workout. His beat was incisive, his phrasing persuasive and he never met an accent that he didn't *really* like. The wow moments were so much so that a listener had a tendency to wait for them and may not have noticed that Dudamel,

in the meantime, left no expressive stone unturned.

The music seems to be explained to the listener in a Dudamel performance, and perhaps digested too. He does the work so you don't have to.

Vulgarity doesn't enter into it. There doesn't seem to be an ounce of cynicism in the dimpled Dudamel. He conducts with a smile on his face, soaking it all in, enjoying it to the maximum. The Berlioz was all there, its breathless expressivity, its graceful lilts, its weird instrumental effects and polyrhythms, its outlandish bombast.

In his signals, he'll do whatever it takes. Friday, one witnessed double-handed ax slams, saber jabs, swaying hips, spread eagles, and, head down, whipping the horse to the Kentucky Derby win by a nose. He was also airborne more than any conductor I have seen. If Pierre Monteux (whose student, Sir Neville Marriner, was in the audience to see the phenom for the first time) once admonished conductors to "never conduct for the audience," Dudamel missed the memo.

His approach may take some time for the Philharmonic to get used to. The orchestra answered his calls with enthusiasm, and played with tremendous rhythmic vitality, but one noticed more than once the strings getting lost in the onslaught of brass and percussion.



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Salonen's "Insomnia," a 20-minute etude in racing rhythms, merging textures and stretching sonorities, became a playground of thrills in Dudamel's care, fast and electric, compact in gesture and spectacular in color.

At concerto time, the 28-year-old Macedonian pianist Simon Trpceski arrived for Prokofiev's 1911 Piano Concerto No. 1. It's a comedic work that subverts expectations, following its nose

instead of logic, indulging in vaudeville where utter serious should be, sending up Rachmaninoffian lyricism with a little wink. Or at least it was here. Trpceski dispatched the knotty solo part lightly, frothily and blithely and Dudamel supported with ebullient finesse. The pianist's encore, Debussy's Arabesque No. 1, went the other direction and he dedicated it to his parents. Lovely.



April 2, 2008

Simon Trpceski conquers great works in President's Piano recital

Simon Trpceski performed an exquisite recital of works by Debussy, Rachmaninoff and Prokofiev in the President's Piano Series at Seattle's Meany Theater; review by Melinda Bargreen.

By Melinda Bargreen

The best thing to come out of Macedonia since Alexander the Great is the 28-year-old pianist Simon Trpceski, who returned to Seattle for Tuesday's President's Piano Series — and, like his long-ago predecessor, did some conquering.

The thorniest musical scores just seem to fall over when Trpceski approaches, their most difficult challenges handled with such ease that technique is simply never an issue. This pianist is pretty good at conquering audiences as well as scores, not only with his playing but also with an engaging manner that connects with his listeners. (He announced the dedication of one of his three encores to Evelyn Simpson, one of Seattle's most indispensable artist aides, in a classy gesture.)

The recital program opened and closed with Debussy, a composer to whom Trpceski clearly feels close; EMI Classics has just released his exquisitely nuanced disc of Debussy pieces, which sounded even better live in Meany Theater. The opening "Children's Corner" was full of puckish humor, and surprises in both dynamics and phrasing.

Prokofiev's seldom-heard four "Tales of an Old Grandmother" emerged as

charming character pieces, moody and dreamy or angular and acerbic. You don't hear Prokofiev's Toccata in D Minor much on concert programs, either, and it's clear why: It's a work of staggering technical complexity. Trpceski tossed it off as if it were just a trifle.

The pianist's command of pedalling was particularly clear in a Rachmaninoff set, which included some relative rarities as well as some of the big-moment preludes (including the famous one in C-sharp minor, which Rachmaninoff himself was called on so often to play that he came to hate the piece).

The terrific finale, Prokofiev's much-played Sonata No. 7, was one wild ride, with Trpceski's famous clarity transforming the final "Precipitato" movement, in which other players often mash together the fast-arriving and percussive chords. Not this time. You actually could hear every note — what a concept!

The pianist met an ovation with three Debussy encores: the Arabesques Nos. 1 and 2, and "The Girl with the Flaxen Hair," with some of the loveliest playing of the evening.



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Rocky Mountain News

January 20, 2007

Smooth as Ivory on the Ivories

By Marc Shulgold

Pianos must love Simon Trpceski.

While many a keyboard soloist resorts to pounding away on the black-and-whites, the Macedonian pianist caresses the keys - gliding effortlessly over them.

Such kindness will not go unrewarded, as Friday's ecstatic Colorado Symphony audience can attest.

His piano happily responding with shimmering, transparent sounds, Trpceski (pronounced Terp-CHESS-kee) returned to Boettcher Hall in a triumphant reading of Saint-Saens' Second Concerto.

With a smiling Jeffrey Kahane presiding over the CSO, this joyous work unfolded with a naturalness that masked the gargantuan difficulties of the piece.

Yes, there are big, loud passages, including the requisite thundering double-octaves - yet the soloist made them seem musical.

There is, in his virtuosic approach, an understated muscularity, if there is such a thing. And, when the music bubbles with good feelings (as in the transparent, Mendelssohnian Second Movement), the soloist can bring out the childlike simplicity of the music. In the blistering Tarantella-like Finale, the temptation to knock 'em dead with speed was resisted, resulting in a romp that never spun out of control.

It was the sort of playing that draws instantaneous standing ovations. Which

it did on Friday, leading Kahane to sit his soloist down for a solo encore, an obscure Waltz in A minor by Chopin.

The program opened with a rarity - the complete ballet *The Wooden Prince*, an early success by Béla Bartók.

In introducing this colorful score, Kahane said that, as far as he could ascertain, this was the first-ever such performance "anywhere between Los Angeles and St. Louis."

Under Kahane's spirited leadership, the CSO played brilliantly, unfazed by the demands of the music. There were plenty of bouncing bows on strings, lots of massed chords in the brass, an abundance of crystalline tinkling from the celesta (often requiring two pairs of hands) and a host of percussion effects.

All that was missing was a stageful of dancers to bring cohesiveness to Bartók's shenanigans. The music shifted continuously: It purred and exploded, started and stopped, rose and fell - suggesting that something was going on in this quirky fairytale about a princess, a prince, a wooden substitute and a forest fairy. Just what, alas, was left to our imaginations.

Still, it was fun to watch Kahane and a stageful of players (led by Bil Jackson's bubbling clarinet) bring to life an unjustly negelected work.



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Simon Trpceski Discography

AVIE

- AV2191 **Rachmaninov** (June 14, 2011): Piano Concertos Nos. 1 and 4; *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*; (Simon Trpčeski, piano; Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra; Vasily Petrenko, conductor)
- AV2192 **Rachmaninov** (March 9, 2010): Piano Concertos Nos. 2 and 3; (Simon Trpčeski, piano; Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra; Vasily Petrenko, conductor)

EMI Classics

- 5099950027224 **Debussy: Images** (February 5, 2008): *The Deux Arabesques* (L. 66); *Children's Corner* (L. 113); *Images*, Book 1 & 2 (L. 110); *Clair de lune* (L. 75); *L'isle joyeuse* (L. 106)
- 0094637558621 **Chopin** (March 6, 2007): Sonata No. 2; 4 Scherzos
- 0724355794321 **Simon Trpceski Plays Rachmaninoff** (February 1, 2005): Prelude Op 23 No 2 in B flat major; Siren Op 21 No 5 Transcribed from *Romances for voice & piano*; Prelude Op 23 No 1 in F sharp minor; Prelude Op 23 No 10 in G flat major; Prelude Op 32 No 12 in G sharp major; *Lullaby* (transcribed by Rachmaninoff); Prelude Op 32 No 2 in B flat minor; Margaritki Op 38 No 3 Transcribed from *Romances for voice & piano*; *The Flight of the Bumblebee* (transcribed by Rachmaninoff); Prelude Op 23 No 5 in G minor; Prelude Op 23 No 4 in D major; *Scherzo* from "A Midsummer Night's Dream" (transcribed by Rachmaninoff); Prelude Op 3 No 2 in C sharp minor; Piano Sonata No. 2 in B flat minor
- 0724357520225 **Simon Trpceski Plays Tchaikovsky, Scriabin, Stravinsky, Prokofiev** (January 29, 2003): **Tchaikovsky**: Concert Suite from the ballet *The Nutcracker*: March, Tanech, Tarantella, Intermezzo, Trepak, Kitaisky Tanez, Andante maestoso; **Scriabin**: Piano Sonata No. 5 in F sharp, Op. 53; **Stravinsky**: *Pétrouchka* : Three Movements: Transcribed for piano solo by the composer; **Prokofiev**: Piano Sonata No. 6 in A Op. 82