

CHILDREN'S PROGRAM NOTES FOR FESTIVAL CONCERTS

AUGUST 7 • ASPEN FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA

WHO IS PERFORMING TODAY?

Aspen Festival Orchestra
Miguel Harth-Bedoya *conductor*
Stephen Hough *piano*

WHAT IS BEING PLAYED TODAY?

CHABRIER: España, rhapsody
RACHMANINOFF: Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, op. 43
LUTOSŁAWSKI: Paganini Variations for Solo Piano and Orchestra
BRAHMS/SCHOENBERG: Piano Quartet No. 1 in G minor, op. 25

LEARN ABOUT THE MUSIC!

RACHMANINOFF: Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, op. 43

Russian composer Sergei Rachmaninoff composed Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini in 1934. The work consists of twenty-four variations on the last of composer Niccolò Paganini's Caprices for solo violin.

In music, variations are repetitions of a single tune over and over, but with some changes. These changes might involve slight changes in rhythm, melody, or harmony.

This work by Rachmaninoff was written for piano and orchestra, and in fact Rachmaninoff played piano at the piece's first performance. Many other composers have written original works based on Paganini's Caprices, and you'll hear one more of these next!

- While you're listening, try to notice the little differences between each variation. Can you hear how each variation is based on the same theme? What differences do you hear?

LUTOSŁAWSKI: Paganini Variations for Solo Piano and Orchestra

Polish composer Witold Lutosławski was also inspired, like Rachmaninoff and many others, to compose variations on Paganini's Caprices for solo violin.

- Are you able to hear the theme repeated but still notice the little differences between each variation? What are the differences?
- How do Lutosławski's variations differ from Rachmaninoff's?

BRAHMS/SCHOENBERG: Piano Quartet No. 1 in G minor, op. 25

Today, you'll be hearing an orchestrated version of this piano quartet by Johannes Brahms. In the original version, though, the piece was played by piano, violin, viola, and cello, like most piano quartets. In 1937, another composer, Arnold Schoenberg, arranged the piece for orchestra. So all three pieces on today's program started out as chamber music—that is, music for one or just a few musicians. It takes real genius to make a chamber piece work for the orchestra. It's a little like taking a thirty-minute TV show and making it into a full-length movie!

Eventually, this orchestrated version was made into a ballet by famous dance choreographer George Balanchine. This makes the piece a perfect fit for the Aspen Music Festival and School's season theme, Invitation to Dance.

- Can you imagine how this piece might sound with only four musicians playing it as opposed to the full orchestra you're seeing today? What might be different?
- Can you picture a ballet that goes along with this piece? What do you think it would look like?

music is what feelings sound like