

And so, it has been quite a journey to arrive at this point today. Adding even more poignancy is the fact that the Ravel is the first piano concerto I ever attempted, after I'd finished lessons (badly) as a 16-year old. I've never had the opportunity to perform it until now (unlike the Gershwin, which I played 20 years ago in the UK). I would therefore like to thank all players, conductors, administrators, family members, employers, and you, the audience for your contribution to this unique environment, that somehow gives rise to what it is I do, once a year, here in Devonport.

ORCHESTRA

Conductor	Ashley Hopkins
Violins I	Rachel Hopkins Brecon Carter, Alex Cowdell, Mary O'Brien, David Choi, Fiona Murray, Helen Lewis, Ashley Ayton
Violins II	Alison Sorley, John Choi, Tsui-Wen Chen, Averil Griffiin, Heidi Bowmast, David Kayrouz, Ben King
Violas	Judith Gust, Emily Allen, Pat Roderick, Dora Tsao, Daniel Pohola
Celli	Jason Hopkins, Janet Robinson, Hannah Jemmett, Luke Choi, John Early, Mary Greig-Clayton
Basses	Andrew Kincaid, Edward Malan
Flutes	Pene Brawn-Douglas, Gail Nathan, Priscilla Scanlan (piccolo)
Oboes	Eugénie Middleton, Matthew O'Ryan, Carolyn Hyde (cor anglais)
Clarinets	Julia Cornfield, Claire Turner, Frank Talbot (bass clarinet)
Bassoons	Jacqui Hopkins (contrabassoon), David Nation
Horns	Miriam Robinson, Lilla Dittrich, Tom Chester, Christine Breeden
Trumpets	Matthew Verrill, Dominic Cornfield, Mollie Cornfield
Trombones	Michael Tidbury, Steve Taylor, Bob Latimer
Tuba	Adrian Raven
Percussion	Jenny Raven, Ella Cornfield, Roger Booth

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Next Concert: 2pm Sunday, 27th July, Holy Trinity Church. For further information or to be on our mailing list, visit our website: <http://dco.net.nz/>

Devonport Chamber Orchestra

Conductor:
Ashley Hopkins

Soloist:
Patrick Cornfield

PADDY'S 10TH ANNIVERSARY

Gershwin: Concerto in F
Ravel: Concerto for Left Hand

Sunday 8th June, 2pm
Holy Trinity, 20 Church St, Devonport
Admission \$20, Children under 12 free

Maurice Ravel (1875 - 1937): Piano Concerto for the Left Hand

World War I changed the face of Europe and changed the way people thought and felt. Ravel no longer cared to write in his previous style and his sound became more sharply sculpted. When in 1929, the rich Austrian pianist Paul Wittgenstein, who had lost his right arm during the war, asked Ravel to compose a concerto for him, Ravel eagerly took up the challenge. The concerto is a masterpiece that Wittgenstein came to regard as a great work, but his first encounter with it was unhappy. "I wasn't overwhelmed by the composition", Wittgenstein said many years later. "I suppose Ravel was disappointed, and I was sorry, but I had never learned to pretend." When Wittgenstein argued with Ravel demanding he alter his music and exclaiming: "Performers must not be slaves", Ravel calmly responded: "Yes performers *are* slaves." Wittgenstein had similar 'underwhelmed' reactions to the music of several composers whose works he'd commissioned and he succeeded in offending many of them. Benjamin Britten wrote in a letter to his sister: "I have been commissioned by a man called Wittgenstein. The man really is an old sour-puss, but he pays gold so I'll do it."

The *Concerto for the Left Hand* is very different from other works and contains many jazz effects which Ravel had picked up in 1928 on a trip to the USA where he spent several nights visiting jazz clubs with George Gershwin. However it is a solemn work opening with one of the darkest passages Ravel ever composed. It begins with the double basses softly arpeggiating an ambiguous harmony as the background to an unusual solo in the contrabassoon. One reviewer noted that from the opening measures we are plunged into a world into which Ravel has rarely led us, while Marguerite Long, a pianist and friend of Ravel, described this passage as evoking a Goya-like phantasmagoria. The basses, contrabassoon and bass clarinet, along with low brasses, create an atmosphere of foreboding which suggests the anguish of war. Eventually the orchestra rises in both pitch and intensity, bringing us out of the darkness into a brighter, almost triumphal realm in which the soloist announces the first theme with a powerful and virtuosic cadenza. Ravel's biographer Arbie Orenstein describes this concerto as Ravel's most dramatic work, combining expansive lyricism, tormented jazz effects, a playful scherzo, and driving march rhythms, all of which are crafted into one movement.

George Gershwin (1898 - 1937): Piano Concerto in F (Allegro, Adagio - Andante con moto, Allegro agitato)

Although George Gershwin and Arnold Schoenberg had such very different musical styles, the two became good friends and, in 1937, when Gershwin died of a brain tumour (the same year that Ravel also died of a brain tumour), Schoenberg wrote of Gershwin: "Music to him was the air he breathed, the food which nourished him, the drink that refreshed him. Music was what made him feel, and music the feeling he expressed. Directness of this kind is given only to great men, and there is no doubt that he was a great composer."

Gershwin's true greatness was in the natural way he closed the gap between commercial and serious music, and he was talented enough to succeed brilliantly in both worlds. After the success of his first big hit with the song *Swanee* in 1919, Gershwin had a steady stream of hits and made the kind of money that is unheard of in the classical music business. However he was determined to write serious music that was equally popular and even asked Ravel and Stravinsky for lessons. Ravel declined, but when Stravinsky learned that Gershwin earned \$100,000 a year, he allegedly suggested that Gershwin give him lessons instead.

George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* entered music history, and changed it. In 1924, the morning after the triumphant premiere of *Rhapsody in Blue*, the conductor Walter Damrosch

contacted Gershwin and asked him to compose a fully-fledged piano concerto. Gershwin accepted this new commission immediately but felt so insecure in traditional musical forms that he armed himself with textbooks on musical form and orchestration before starting to write the music. The resulting *Concerto in F* stands with the even more ambitious opera *Porgy and Bess* as Gershwin's most successful fusion of classical music with jazz and popular music. The three-movement layout is familiar from the great concertos of the repertoire, but the all-American themes and rhythmic patterns were fresh, and still sound that way today.

Gershwin's own notes on the concerto point out the "Charleston" rhythm of the opening. He described the slow movement with its haunting muted trumpet solo over a sinuous woodwind accompaniment as reflecting, "the poetic, nocturnal atmosphere ... which has come to be referred to as the American blues." He thought of the energetic finale, which brings back themes from the first two movements, as an "orgy of rhythms."

Only a week before his death, Gershwin complained to a friend about the indifference he had encountered in Hollywood, remembering Sam Goldwyn's comment: "Why don't you write hits like Irving Berlin?" However, few composers were as widely loved during their lifetime as was Gershwin. His premature death came as a shock to the American public and was recognised as an incalculable loss to American music.

- Programme notes compiled by Roger Booth from several sources including Steven Schwartz, Phillip Huscher, Richard Dyer, Elizabeth Schwartz, Michael Steinberg and Wikipedia

Patrick 'Paddy' Cornfield writes ...

I thought I'd start preparing these program notes for my 11th annual DCO concert by reviewing those I'd written during the past decade. 'Normal' soloists need not do this, of course, because they sensibly *present the same material each time they perform*. No tales of farmer's daughters or musical demi-goddesses in their biographies. Still, I have always strived to uphold Devonport's tradition of being just a little bit different - a tad eccentric even. Thus, I can inform you that it was for the cathartic Rachmaninov 3 concert of 2009 when I started writing in the First Person. And also that I'd first considered presenting today's similarly ambitious program for the 2008 concert.

Why has it taken 8 years to bring today's program to life? The reasons are many and daunting; Ravel's music only became public domain in 2007 (enabling us to download parts from the Internet); the Gershwin still isn't and very hard to obtain cheaply (many thanks to Roger Booth for scouring the planet); both works require huge orchestral forces (my sincerest apologies to every squashed player, for what I put you through); the Ravel is very hard to play (for soloist, orchestra and conductor alike). It therefore seems fitting we are finally tackling these works for my 10th Anniversary Concert.

Even after the project had taken shape, the problems kept on coming: there are many other clashing events on this weekend (robbing us of some key players); we didn't have room for a truck-load of percussion instruments (the opening 2 bars of the Gershwin needs 4 players just to hit things); I have been sick (that usually happens after the concert!); my father died only a month ago (Ella and I performed at his funeral in England). You may recall our spontaneous embrace at the end of last year's concert. Sadly, that was his last he and my mother only missed 2 since we moved the venue to Holy Trinity in 2006.

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