



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Boulder Philharmonic Orchestra Presents “French Impressions”**

*The 2011-2012 season, “The Spirit of Boulder,” continues January 14, 2012, with pianist Benjamin Hochman performing Ravel Piano Concerto in G*

The Boulder Philharmonic Orchestra continues its 54<sup>th</sup> season, *The Spirit of Boulder*, on Saturday, January 14, 2012, at 7:30 p.m., with “French Impressions,” at CU-Boulder’s Macky Auditorium. Michael Buttermann, music director with the Boulder Phil, conducts, with guest pianist Benjamin Hochman, winner of 2011’s prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant. This program repeats on Sunday, January 15, at 6:30 p.m. by invitation at the Vilar Performing Arts Center in Beaver Creek.

“French music, like its visual art, is all about color: blending timbres, contrasting tones,” says Maestro Buttermann. “Many of the greatest orchestrators in history have been French, including Maurice Ravel, whose ‘Piano Concerto in G’ is the featured work on the program.”

Having emphasized the French penchant for colorful orchestration, Buttermann points out that the concert also includes music written by American composers George Gershwin and Howard Hanson. “Gershwin’s ‘An American in Paris’ reflects his impression of Paris after a visit there, and the Hanson ‘Romantic’ symphony is colorful, cinematic, and evokes vivid images in the imagination, not unlike those created by the other works on the program,” says Buttermann.

The concert opens with two ‘Gymnopédies’ by French composer Erik Satie, written in 1888. “I have always thought of Satie as an early minimalist,” says Buttermann. “In these pieces, he sets up pleasant harmonic progressions in which chords are valued for their pure sound and do not ‘function as normal chords.’ In traditional tonal harmony, dominant chords resolve to tonic chords and so on—not necessarily so in the case of Satie, and this approach was to have a profound influence on composers such as Ravel and Debussy, whose orchestration of the ‘Gymnopédies’ we hear.”

The quasi-jazzy Ravel “Piano Concerto in G” closes out the first half of the concert. Ravel completed this concerto in 1931, incorporating parts of pieces he had written in the past and reflecting the sounds of jazz he heard during a tour of the U.S. Performing this concerto and making his Boulder Phil debut is pianist Benjamin Hochman, recipient of a 2011 Avery Fisher Career Grant, awarded to talented instrumentalists believed to have great potential for solo careers. Previous recipients of the Avery Fisher Career Grant for piano have included Yuja Wang, Jonathan Biss, and Orion Weiss.

“Although I have not worked with Benjamin before, I have heard wonderful things about his playing,” says Buttermann. “From listening to his recording samples, I have the sense that his blend of youthful vigor and colorful approach to touch will match beautifully with the challenges of the Ravel concerto.”

After the intermission, we hear Howard Hanson’s “Symphony No. 2,” commissioned by Serge Koussevitsky for the 50th anniversary of the Boston Symphony Orchestra in 1930. “Hanson’s ‘Romantic’ symphony was written at about the same time as the Ravel and Gershwin, and would seem to be a score in search of a film,” says Buttermann. “It builds drama palpably and revels in lush themes and heroic use of the French horns from which I’m sure John Williams learned a thing or two.”

George Gershwin’s classic, “An American in Paris,” written in 1928, brings the evening to a lighthearted conclusion. “Gershwin’s ability to bring together the worlds of jazz, popular song and ‘classical’ music was groundbreaking and found many imitators on the continent,” says Buttermann. “Ravel himself, in his piano concerto, writes passages that make use of what could be called jazzy harmonies and rhythms. So, while Gershwin was inspired by Paris, it would also appear that he did a little inspiring of the French himself,” says Buttermann.



The concert is repeated on Sunday, January 15, 2012, at the Vilar Center in Beaver Creek, a prestigious venue hosting world-class orchestras and soloists every year. “The management at the Vilar Center has become aware of the success we’ve been enjoying in recent years on the artistic and audience-building fronts,” says Butterman. “The venue is smaller than Macky by quite a bit, so it will offer a rather different, and more intimate, sort of experience than in Boulder. Regardless, it is always great for the orchestra to have an opportunity to perform a program multiple times.”

**Program Information: *French Impressions***

**Saturday, January 14, 2012, 7:30 p.m.**  
**Macky Auditorium, CU-Boulder**

**Boulder Philharmonic Orchestra**  
Michael Butterman, Music Director  
Benjamin Hochman, piano

**SATIE (arr. DEBUSSY): *Two Gymnopédies***  
**RAVEL: *Piano Concerto in G Major***  
**HANSON: *Symphony No. 2, “Romantic”***  
**GERSHWIN: *An American in Paris***

*Additional activities on January 14:*

10:00 a.m., SuperListening Club with author Don Campbell, Macky Room 102  
6:30 p.m., Pre-Concert Talk with Don Campbell and Benjamin Hochman

Tickets for this performance are \$13-\$70 (\$5 for students) and available online at [www.boulderphil.org](http://www.boulderphil.org) and by calling 303-449-1343, ext. 2.

**Sunday, January 15, 2012, 6:30 p.m.**  
**Vilar Performing Arts Center, Beaver Creek**

Tickets for this performance are available online at <http://vilarpac.org/Online/> and by calling 888-920-2787.

*This program is sponsored in part by  
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