



Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra

40th Anniversary

Jalbert
Beethoven

with generous support from
Los Angeles Philanthropic Committee for the Arts



YARLUNG ARCHIVAL RECORDINGS
BOB ATTIEH, PRODUCER

Producer's Notes: by Bob Attiyeh

The Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra has a way of getting under your skin. LACO got under mine, and I am grateful. There is something intimate and personal about this Orchestra, something that brings audiences and musicians closer together. No doubt this electricity existed when Neville Marriner founded the ensemble as its first music director 40 years ago. Now that Sir Neville has been knighted, it is fun to think of the royal succession of music directors from him to Jeffrey Kahane and realize that LACO's special charm remains unbroken across the dynasties of leadership.

Jeff grew up in Los Angeles and was twelve years old when he heard Sir Neville conduct LACO for the first time. It had been Jeff's dream to perform with Sir Neville ever since, and the collaboration in Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 1 on the opening night of LACO's 40th anniversary season was a great pleasure for him and for everyone who heard that remarkable performance. In fact, it was witnessing that friendly collaboration of musical titans which inspired us to release this archival recording. A few months after that concert, The Recording Academy asked LACO to include this concerto on the program when Sir Neville, Jeff and the Orchestra were honored by the GRAMMY™ Salute to Classical Music at Walt Disney Concert Hall during the 2009 Awards week.

Like Jeff, I will never forget the first times I heard this Orchestra live. John Adams conducted his *Shaker Loops* and then led the ensemble while Jeff played Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*. What a night. The second performance I attended included the magnificent Lorraine Hunt Lieberson and Allan Vogel as the soloists in Bach's cantata, *Mein Herze schwimmt im Blut*, with Jeff at the podium. After hearing these two concerts, I was hooked for life.

LACO returned from a triumphant European tour last season, playing to delighted audiences in the great concert halls of Vienna, Berlin and Paris. The Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra has entered another golden period, and we are delighted to celebrate this status and continuing international renown.

We include two selections on this album – one Classical and one contemporary commission – both favorite performances of mine that reveal the flexibility and scope of this Orchestra. My friend Ted Ancona, LACO's longtime recording engineer, captured these performances in two halls closely associated with the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra. And each piece reveals this ensemble's trademark suppleness and clarity. These are archival recordings, which means they include the sounds of an excited (and sometimes coughing) audience, and there were no alternate takes or patch sessions. This music is entirely real, in all of its transcendent glory. If you have not yet heard this Orchestra live in concert, this recording gives you a taste of what Alan Rich appreciated as its "sheer vitality." And we hope you agree with Jim Svejda of Classical KUSC when he describes LACO as "America's finest chamber orchestra."

Pierre Jalbert's *Chamber Symphony* follows next on this recording. Pierre wrote this work in 2004, specifically for the unique qualities and extraordinary talents of the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra. It was commissioned by LACO's Sound Investment, a "commissioning club" of audience members who participate in a musical laboratory of sorts throughout the season, enabling them to witness and discuss the creative process while the composer writes the music. I remember



Jeffery Kahane



Sir Neville Marriner & Jeffery Kahane

one such evening when concertmaster Margaret Batjer led a quartet of musicians through some unfinished sections, and Pierre tested various mutes with brass players to see what timbres worked best. For more information about Sound Investment, please visit www.laco.org. Ted recorded this world premiere performance of Pierre's finished work on May 16, 2004, in beautiful Royce Hall, where the Orchestra performs its Westside subscription series.

We conclude with Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 1, with current music director Jeffrey Kahane at the keyboard and founding music director Neville Marriner conducting. On this recording, Jeff plays a Fazioli 9-foot grand kindly provided to the Orchestra by Pierre's Fine Pianos in Los Angeles. This 40th season opening night concert took place on September 27, 2008 at Ambassador Auditorium in Pasadena, a hall long associated with the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra and its fine series of concerts there from 1975 to 1995.

What a treat it was for the Orchestra to return to this august concert hall for this 40th anniversary celebration.

I hope you enjoy this recording and many more from this extraordinary ensemble. I am personally grateful to Audre Slater and the Los Angeles Philanthropic Committee for the Arts for making this anniversary album possible.

Pierre Jalbert's *Chamber Symphony*, which he wrote for the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, proved a pivotal work in the young composer's prolific output. I asked Pierre about this evolution:

BA: How does *Chamber Symphony* relate to your other writing?

PJ: *Chamber Symphony* relates tangentially to my earlier *Symphonia Sacra*. You hear a few references in the second movement. *Symphonia Sacra* comments on the complex interrelationship between sacred and secular music. *Chamber Symphony* was inspired by the spiritual writings of three philosophers: Aquinas, Augustine, and Thomas Merton. This commission for the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra broke new ground, especially in my orchestration. I wanted to combine a very big orchestral sound with delicacy and intimacy. These are real strengths for the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, and this style of orchestration started for me with this work and has continued in my more recent writing.

BA: How does writing for a chamber orchestra differ from commissions for an orchestra of say, 106 musicians?

PJ: Other than the sheer difference in the number of players in a chamber orchestra, I find that chamber orchestras need a different balance and color. It particularly affects the way I write for string and percussion sections. And in *Chamber Symphony's* case, I was writing for people who were already associates. I was fortunate to serve three years as LACO's composer-in-residence, and this close connection meant that I wrote the solo passages for my friends. I had Margaret Batjer specifically in mind for the violin solo in the first movement, for example, and I wrote the violin duet passages for Margaret and Josefina Vergara. Woodwind solos the same: I wrote a major oboe solo for Allan Vogel in the second movement, and snuck in a short horn solo for Richard Todd as well. The final movement features intense percussion for Tom Raney and Wade Culbreath. [Wade recently succeeded Tom as LACO's principal timpani.] Not only do I enjoy writing



LACO rehearsing, Konzerthaus, Grosser Saal, Vienna. photo: Bill Cooney



Ambassador Auditorium, September 27, 2008

music for friends, but these connections proved helpful. I originally planned for Wade to play the bass Conga drum. He took me to a warehouse of percussion instruments and Wade played many hand drums for me from all over the world. I settled on the *Djembe*, from Africa.

BA: I loved that particular sound.

PJ: Good! That was my goal. But this part works well played on bass Conga as well. In one of the Sound Investment meetings we also experimented with a series of brass mutes. After trying various options we chose a Harmon mute, made famous by Miles Davis in his later career.

So this particular evolution in my style of writing for soloists within a chamber orchestra will continue.

In the first movement of *Chamber Symphony*, which I describe in the score as “joyous, ecstatic, with great energy,” I repeat an opening gesture, and bring it back throughout the piece as a kind of marker, similar to the repeated use of *ergo* (“therefore”) in Aquinas’ writings. I chose to make the second movement, “ethereal, suspended” more lyrical. It features the percussion section bowing their instruments (vibraphone and crotales). At one point in the movement I divide the strings, creating a string quartet which plays separately from the rest of the ensemble. In the third movement, indicated as “rhythmically driving,” I feature the percussion section performing antiphonal rhythmic patterns against the orchestra’s syncopated rhythms.

Pierre writes for small ensembles as well as for large orchestras. Just before our conversation, Pierre returned from Paris, from a sold out performance at the Louvre, where Escher Quartet performed Pierre’s *Icelandic Sonnets*. With his characteristic modesty, Pierre expected no one to be in the audience. Instead, he reported that it was a superb audience—intent and absolutely silent during the music. This performance followed one by Emerson Quartet the night before, for which Pierre is writing a new string quartet, his fifth. Pierre also wrote a work for Janaki String Trio that premiered in September, 2008. Among his many honors are the Rome Prize, the BBC Masterprize, and the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center’s 2007 Stoecker Award, given biennially in recognition of significant contributions to the chamber music repertory.”

Many remember Pierre’s piano recitals at Oberlin, where he studied with Sedmara Rutstein. Pierre performed mostly new music, but is also remembered for his Beethoven, Schoenberg, Prokofiev, Ravel and Bach.

Pierre has written comparatively few works for solo piano, but I heartily recommend his *Toccata*, and his new *Sonata for Piano*, commissioned for Brian Connelly.

How fitting that Jeffrey Kahane and Neville Marriner selected **Ludwig van Beethoven’s Piano Concerto No. 1 in C major, op. 15** for LACO’s 40th anniversary opening night concert. Before orchestras tuned with equal temperament, the key of C major sounded festive and celebratory, and this key has since retained its association with majestic occasions.

Beethoven’s creation evolved over a period of years to become the work we know today. Beethoven struggled with and



Jeff and Muse, Hamburg. photo: Julie Gigante

obsessed over this concerto, as he did with much of his great music, and he refused to publish the monumental work until 1801. It seems he wrote the first version in 1793, and some scholars maintain that Beethoven didn't perform it until 1798 in Prague, with the composer himself at the piano. It is likely, however, that Beethoven premiered this concerto, or an early version of it, when he made his grand musical entrance to the city of Vienna on March 29, 1795, as soloist in a benefit concert for the Society of Musicians — a performance that made his career. Beethoven continued to fine tune the concerto, likely performing it in Berlin, Budapest and Bratislava, before the famous 1798 "premiere" in Prague. Beethoven continued his revisions and published it again in 1809.

The Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra first performed this work on December 14, 1979, with Bella Davidovich at the piano and Gerard Schwarz conducting. Many also remember the series of Beethoven concerto cycles Jeff conducted from the keyboard at the Hollywood Bowl in 1993 and 2003, and for LACO subscription audiences in 2001.

Live concert recordings often capture special magic that musicians struggle to recreate in a studio. You may also want to search for my other favorite live recording of Beethoven's first piano concerto. Martha Argerich performed with Ozawa and Sinfonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks in Munich, June 17, 1983. If you are lucky you might find a pirate recording of this concert or see the Japanese DVD of this broadcast.

As we celebrate the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra during its venerable 40th anniversary season, we also take great pride in the ambassadorial role the Orchestra played during its 2008 tour, representing the cultural life of Los Angeles in the great musical capitals of Europe. Critics in Germany and France noted several qualities that set LACO apart:

"In Germany, one rarely encounters an orchestra whose members take the stage smiling happily, almost radiantly. Not only did the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra do just that at its appearance on Monday, it worked itself up into even higher spirits with every measure...." *Die Welt*, Hamburg, March 5, 2008.

"The orchestra's reputation for subtlety and precision, which had preceded it, came through in its elegant and clear phrasing. The sensitive paraphrasing of the themes and the transparency... along with its warm tone, gave the orchestra's sound an unexpected fullness... The woodwinds... displayed exemplary virtuosity and musicality (flute, oboe, trumpet...), and the violins were perfect." *Resmusica.com*, Paris, March 14, 2008.

LACO delights audiences in similar ways, whether home in Los Angeles or on tour in Hamburg, Paris, Berlin or Vienna.

A very special thank you to Jeffrey Kahane & Sir Neville Marriner who generously gave us the rights to the performances on this album, and to the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra and staff, who regularly give us so much to celebrate in our great city.

Bob Attiyeh, producer



this page and tray photos: Michael Burke

Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra

40th Anniversary Album

1-3	Pierre Jalbert	<i>Chamber Symphony</i> *	27:36
		Jeffrey Kahane, conductor	
		<i>joyous, ecstatic, with great energy</i>	08:50
		<i>ethereal, suspended</i>	11:46
		<i>rhythmically driving</i>	07:00
4-6	Beethoven	Piano Concerto No. 1 in C major, op. 15	35:11
		Sir Neville Marriner, conductor; Jeffrey Kahane, piano	
		<i>Allegro con brio</i>	16:38
		<i>Largo</i>	09:52
		<i>Rondo, Allegro scherzando</i>	08:41

*World premiere recording

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Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra

Jeffrey Kahane, Music Director

live in concert

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1-3 Jalbert

Chamber Symphony *

Jeffrey Kahane, conductor

*World premiere recording

4-6 Beethoven

Piano Concerto No. 1 in C major op. 15

Sir Neville Marriner, conductor Jeffrey Kahane, piano

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