

# PIANIST FREDERICK MOYER TO PERFORM 'RACH 3'

Conductor: Concert with the 'truly brilliant' musician and devilishly difficult piece was years in the making

By Elizabeth Marie Himchak  
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Pianist Frederick Moyer will return for his third performance with the Poway Symphony Orchestra this afternoon, this time playing the challenging Rachmaninoff Piano Concerto No. 3.

"I'm especially delighted to present the 'Rach 3' — the first time our orchestra has performed this stunning piece," said John LoPiccolo, the orchestra's conductor and music director. "It requires a soloist with exceptional technique and power, and Fred Moyer is truly brilliant."

The concert has been in the planning stages for a long time.

"John and I have talked about doing the Rachmaninoff for years," Moyer said. "I have played with the Poway Symphony Orchestra two times before (in 2019 and 2021) and it was such a pure delight."

Moyer, whose four-decade long professional career as a pianist has taken him around the world to perform roughly 200 concerts annually, said he learned the 40-minute piece in 1978 while a college student when he joined a six-week tour with the Japanese Philharmonic. It took him three months to learn.

"It is such a unique work and you can ask any pianist who will say it is the most challenging of the concertos in the standard repertoire," Moyer said. "It is the most technically difficult ... a legendary piece."

He said the concerto is featured in the 1996 movie "Shine," an Australian biographical psychological drama in which the main character learns the piece, but the experience leads to him having a mental breakdown.

"It is a real landmark in the classical music repertoire," Moyer said, describing the music as taking the listener to an abyss and glorious heights. "It's an emotional journey ... and much longer than most concertos."

LoPiccolo said Moyer is a favorite guest among Poway Symphony Orchestra audiences and has built up a "tremendous following" throughout San Diego.

"We have become close friends over the years ... he is phenomenal, a brilliant classical player who does jazz crossover," LoPiccolo said. "I have been aware of his career since 1979."

While LoPiccolo said it took a few decades before having an opportunity to work with Moyer, he said the experience has been wonderful.

"The orchestra loves him ... he is someone who is friendly and nice ... and it is always a rewarding experience," LoPiccolo said.

Conducting an orchestra playing Sergei Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 3 has been a long-held dream of LoPiccolo, who said he could not imagine doing it with any other pianist other than Moyer.

"It's going to be an absolutely beautiful concert that you won't want to miss," LoPiccolo said. "And you can expect a few surprises, too."

The concert will open with a lively "Polonaise" by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky from the opera "Eugene Onegin." It is described as "a spirited and elegant piece full of Russian grandeur" of about five minutes.

"It is a fun piece to do," LoPiccolo said.

After that will be Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's Symphony No. 39, a 30-minute piece which



Pianist Frederick Moyer will perform Rachmaninoff Piano Concerto No. 3 concert at 4 p.m. today in Poway. MICHAEL J. LUTCH

## POWAY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA WITH PIANIST FREDERICK MOYER

**When:** 4 p.m. today

**Where:** Poway Center for the Performing Arts, 15498 Espola Road, Poway

**Tickets:** \$15 to \$45 **Phone:** 858-748-0505

**Online:** powaycenter.com

LoPiccolo described as "a light and uplifting work that conveys the composer's genius in every note ... It is one of my favorites because it is joyous, happy and fun.

"You do not get so emotionally involved, but can just sit back listening to this incredible piece."

Both are not super challenging for the 73 orchestra musicians, which is what LoPiccolo said he wanted since they would be concluding with the very difficult Rach 3 that he predicts will "bring the house down."

The concerto is "a virtuosic tour de force renowned for its emotional depth and technical challenges," according to LoPiccolo, who called the piece "the most celebrated — and difficult — piano concertos in classical music."

The audience will not only hear the piece, but get a close-up look at Moyer's hands and piano keyboard due to the Moyer Cam, a device he patented and to which he holds exclusive rights.

A small camera is placed to get a close look at his hands and the image is projected onto a special screen he attaches to the open lid of a grand piano.

It is one of several devices Moyer has invented and patented over the years. Some of his other inventions pertain to software that he uses to help him practice and arrange his schedule.

He also created an elegant and durable, 100% recycled CD case that resembles a hardcover book.

Moyer said he comes from a musical family. His mother, Betsy Moyer, was a pianist who graduated from Oberlin Conservatory. His father, William Moyer, was with the Boston Symphony and his paternal grandfather, David Moyer, was an acclaimed pianist.

"He was a very illustrious child prodigy, who played for President Theodore Roosevelt when he was 9 years old," Moyer said. "He was with a vaudeville act, known as the Marvelous Midget and toured the United States.

He also studied piano in Berlin prior to World War I with a legendary pianist. I was always very close to my grandfather."

Frederick Moyer's musical journey began at age 7 during a family vacation to Cape Cod.

"It rained the whole time and we were in a rented house that had a piano," Moyer said. "I told my mom I was bored and she asked if I wanted to learn how to play the piano. I innocently answered 'sure.'"

Moyer said he had no idea that would set him on a lifelong career path.

While he, his brother and two sisters all studied music — their parents said they had to continue until age 13 — he is the only one of the four who stuck with it.

"We had music all over our household," Moyer said.

Moyer said his mother was "a very good teacher," but by junior high he also started studying with Theodore Lettvin.

During high school entered the Curtis Institute of Music, where he studied with Eleanor Sokoloff.

"At age 14 I really started to put on the gas," Moyer said of his music studies, recalling a summer program with the "very charismatic" André Watts as a turning point.

He continued his studies at Indiana University and was also coached by his grandfather.

"The piano demands a tremendous amount of time to master, so other things were simply swept aside," said Moyer, who still practices eight hours a day unless he is traveling. "You have to be extremely vigilant to have the relaxation, proper hand positioning, sitting position and motion at the keyboard."

He added, "To be a pianist is more than a full-time job, it is a calling. It is something you devote your waking life to, an obsession."

For more than four decades, his career has included playing hundreds of concerts annually around the U.S., including at the Carnegie Recital

Hall in New York City, Tanglewood Music Center in Massachusetts and the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. Moyer has also performed in 44 countries at venues such as Suntory Hall in Tokyo, Sydney Opera House in Australia and Windsor Castle in England.

Moyer lives in New Hampshire and this month is on his annual West Coast tour, playing at venues throughout California.

His tour will also include private concerts at several retirement facilities in La Jolla and Escondido, he said.

Moyer also plans to

perform a free concert at 6 p.m. Tuesday at the Rancho Bernardo Library at 17110 Bernardo Center Drive.

The program will include works by Mozart, Beethoven, Debussy Liszt and Gershwin's piano solo version of "Rhapsody in Blue."

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