

Sunday Music Series at the Howard Center

SMSO featuring Larry Schanker on Sunday, Oct. 6

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Larry Schanker (Photo by Southwest Michigan Symphony Orchestra)

By: Information courtesy SMSO

On Sunday, Oct. 6, at 4 p.m., the Southwest Michigan Symphony Orchestra (SMSO), with Larry Schanker, will perform as part of the Sunday Music Series at the Howard Performing Arts Center on the campus of Andrews University. The pre-concert conversation will begin at 3 p.m.

The program, titled “Beethoven and All That Jazz,” features Schanker’s “Concerto for Jazz Piano,” commissioned and premiered for the SMSO in 2011, with Schanker at the keyboard.

In his program notes, Schanker commented, “I have always wanted to write this piece. It includes styles that are a result of a lifetime of musical influences, ranging from Oscar Peterson, to Rachmaninoff, to TV music of the 1970s, to European film music, to Ragtime and Gospel. My goal was to bring these styles into a coherent whole that would be enjoyable for the musicians to play and entertaining for the audience to listen to.”

Schanker also explained the form of the piece, saying, “It is a four-movement work, with the first movement and fourth movements bookending the work in a fast tempo, the second much slower, and the third in waltz time, like the scherzo movement of countless symphonies and concertos.

Preceding and following Schanker’s performance in the concert, the SMSO will perform Weber’s “Der Freischutz Overture” and Beethoven’s “Symphony No. 7.”

Carl Maria Von Weber was a transformative figure in the history of European music, possessing a passion for legend and folk song. Weber has noted that “Der Freischutz Overture” contrasts two ideas: “the life of the hunter” and “the rule of the demonic powers.” These ideas are symbolized by both French horns in the beginning of the piece and bassoons, clarinets and strings during the allegro section.

The Seventh Symphony initially premiered in 1813 at the University of Vienna and served as a benefit concert for Austrian and Bavarian soldiers who had been wounded in the struggle against Napoleon at the battle of Nanau. The concert proved to be a success and was performed three times.