

Robert Thies, Piano

A heroic guest artist – the first American to win first prize in a Russian piano competition since 1958 – takes center stage at Swords and Chivalry

When pianist Robert Thies joins Cal Phil at “Swords and Chivalry” on July 25 and 26, the orchestra will be breaking new ground. (Something Cal Phil loves to do!) While all of our guest artists are extremely talented and highly acclaimed, Rob just may be the first who has had a *day* named after him.

Yes, the Los Angeles City Council declared February 16, 1996 “Robert Edward Thies Day” – after Rob won the Gold Medal at the Second International Prokofiev Competition in St. Petersburg, Russia. With this victory, Thies became the only American pianist to win first prize in a Russian piano competition since Van Cliburn’s famed triumph in Moscow in 1958.

Since then, Rob has continued to earn accolades from those in the musical world. Conductor Jorge Mester – Music Director of the Louisville Symphony, Naples Philharmonic and Pasadena Symphony – hails the pianist as “a genius” while JoAnn Falletta, Music Director of the Buffalo Philharmonic, declared, “Conducting the Brahms Second Piano Concerto with Robert Thies was one of the most beautiful and deeply satisfying musical experiences of my life,” after a recent performance.

Audiences agree. “Thies has the chops to play any piece,” wrote Robert Thomas of the Pasadena Star News. “Compelling...wonderfully played by Robert Thies,” added the LA Times. Meanwhile, across the world, the Waikato Times of New Zealand described Rob’s performance as a “cohesive vision that was reflective, rhapsodic and graceful without being sentimental.”

Rob has performed over 35 concertos with orchestras not only in New Zealand but worldwide, including the Saint Petersburg Philharmonic, Liepāja Symphony (Latvia), Mexico City Philharmonic, and the National Symphony of Mexico. In addition, his concerts have been broadcast throughout the United States, Russia, Estonia, Latvia, Bolivia, Hungary, Mexico, and New Zealand.

Cal Phil audiences who are looking forward to “Movie Magic” will be intrigued to learn that, in 2002, in conjunction with the Hollywood premiere of Roman Polanski’s film *The Pianist*, Rob performed Wladislaw Szpilman’s *Concertino for Piano and Orchestra* with the Los Angeles Jewish Symphony. Rob has also worked with many top studio musicians and film composers including James Newton Howard, James Horner, Danny Elfman, and Lalo Schifrin.

Rob, a New Jersey native, has appeared at the music festivals of Ravinia, Aspen, Sedona, Cape May, and the Music Academy of the West, as well as the San Luis Obispo Mozart Festival. In 2001, to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of Arnold Schoenberg’s death,

Rob was invited to Mexico City's Palacio de Bellas Artes to perform the composer's seldom-heard *Piano Concerto* with the National Symphony of Mexico.

Rob's recordings can be found on the Centaur, Albany, and Golden Tone labels. Recently, a chamber music recording, *Common Ground*, was released – featuring works by LA composer Gernot Wolfgang. In February 2006, Robert released his debut solo recording *Live in Recital*. In June 2006, he recorded a crossover improvisational CD, *Difference*, with the Croatian flutist, Damjan Krajacic.