CHARLIE CHAPLIN’S: “THE GOLD RUSH”
NORTHWEST SINFONIETTA TO PRESENT 1925 MASTERPIECE
WHILE PERFORMING ORIGINAL ORCHESTRAL SCORE

Performance information
Friday, March 15 - Nordstrom Hall at Benaroya, Seattle, 7:30 pm
Saturday, March 16 - Temple Theater, Tacoma, 7:30 pm
Sunday, March 17 - Liberty Theater, Puyallup, 2 pm

CHAPLIN  The Gold Rush (1925 original version)
Score arranged for small orchestra by Timothy Brock in 2007, Christophe Chagnard, conducting

Following its initial highly successful experiment in 2009 with Chaplin’s A Dog’s Life and Shoulder Arms, Northwest Sinfonietta returns to the king of silent films. The orchestra will perform Timothy Brock’s arrangement of Chaplin original score while showing the film.
AS GOOD AS GOLD by Luc Sante

_The Gold Rush_ is unique among Chaplin’s silent-era films in that he began production with a more or less complete story. (His working methods only fully came to light posthumously, as a result of the outtakes collected and analyzed by Kevin Brownlow and David Gill for their 1983 television series _Unknown Chaplin_. Chaplin, singularly, was able to use the studio as his sketch pad, beginning vaguely with an image and then filming, retaking, undoing, and revising as a story gradually began to take shape, resulting in such extraordinary shooting ratios as _The Kid_’s 53 to 1.) He was spurred by reading a book about the tragic Donner Party of 1846–47, and then by looking through Douglas Fairbanks’s collection of stereoscope cards, which included a series on the Klondike Gold Rush of 1897–99. He re-created the latter with astonishing fidelity in the opening shots, showing the crossing of the Chilkoot Pass, which was arranged by assistant director Eddie Sutherland, using six hundred extras (apparently hobos Sutherland had rounded up in Sacramento), in the Sierra Nevada range, near Truckee, California. Chaplin had intended to shoot all of the exteriors on location, but although at least two other scenes were filmed there and discarded (except for one shot of Charlie sliding down a hillside, which remains), the rest of the picture was filmed on elaborate sets—made from wood, burlap, chicken wire, plaster, salt, and flour—in his studio on the southeast corner of La Brea and Sunset in Hollywood.

Production covered seventeen months, from spring 1924 to summer 1925. Fifteen-year-old Lita Grey (who was twelve when she appeared in _The Kid_) was originally cast as the female lead. She became pregnant, however, so Chaplin married her instead and, after shutting down production for three months, substituted Georgia Hale, who had starred in Josef von Sternberg’s debut film,
The Salvation Hunters. (During the course of the production, the marriage fell apart, after a son had been born and with a second one on the way, and Hale replaced Grey in Chaplin’s affections as well.) The other three principals, Mack Swain (Big Jim McKay), Tom Murray (Black Larsen), and Henry Bergman (Hank Curtis), had all appeared in The Pilgrim, the previous Tramp movie. Swain, whom James Agee memorably described as looking like “a hairy mushroom,” had made many shorts with Chaplin at Keystone; when his career flagged in the early 1920s, Chaplin rescued him. Bergman, a veteran vaudevillian, appeared in almost every Chaplin movie from 1916 to 1936, and in addition worked as assistant director on City Lights (1931). Near the end of his life, Chaplin set him up with a restaurant.

The story is a stew of elements drawn from dime novels, Jack London, and nineteenth-century blood-and-thunder melodrama, conventions that at the time of the picture’s release were as familiar to audiences as their own homes. The Gold Rush wasn’t the first time Chaplin inserted the Tramp into a historical framework—that would have been 1918’s Shoulder Arms, if not 1917’s The Immigrant—but by 1925, the Klondike had entered the realm of romantic adventure, even though it lay within living memory. Chaplin’s Tramp is here called the Lone Prospector, his costume unaltered except for the knapsack on his back, with attached pickax and frying pan. We are introduced to him as he slides along a precipitous mountain path with his trademark waddle, completely unaware of the bear that briefly shadows him (and will later reappear). As ever, only perhaps more so, he is the little man in a world populated by giants, kin to Till Eulenspiegel, Svejk, Josef K., Happy Hooligan, Popeye—the audience’s surrogate amid the confusion of the early twentieth century, before the tide turned toward supermen around the time of World War II. He has washed up in the Yukon the way thousands of others did, out of dreams and unclear ambitions, although he is motivated by romance—in both senses—rather than greed. Even at the end, when, having hitched a ride on Big Jim’s good fortune, he sports two fur coats, one atop the other, you sense that this is less a matter of mere luxury than of banishing cold, including the cold of his immediate past.

Unsurprisingly, perhaps, for a movie inspired in part by the Donner pioneers (who, stranded in the mountains for months by snow, turned to cannibalism for sustenance), some of the most memorable sequences involve food. When the Lone Prospector is starving in the cabin with Big Jim, he resorts to boiling his shoe. After sacrificing the upper to Jim, he makes his own meal of the sole, nails, and laces, rolling the laces on his fork like spaghetti and relishing each individual nail as if they were the bones of a quail (the shoe and laces were made of black licorice, the nails of hard candy). Big Jim later hallucinates the Lone Prospector turning into a giant chicken (played by Chaplin in a chicken suit; the transitions were all done in the camera by his extraordinary cinematographer, Roland Totheroh). And when the Lone Prospector falls asleep waiting for Georgia and her friends to come over for New Year’s Eve dinner, he dreams of entertaining them with a soft-shoe dance staged with rolls impaled on forks, a turn first briefly employed on-screen by Fatty Arbuckle in The Rough House (1917) but made iconic here.

And there is so much else. No one who has seen the picture can easily forget the cabin, come to rest on the lip of a chasm, teetering back and forth as Charlie and Big Jim move from one side to the other within (the transitions between the full-size set and the miniature are immaculate). Charlie’s victory—by proxy—in the dance hall brawl is one of the classic little-man triumphs.
TICKET INFORMATION:
For Reserved Seating: Visit www.nwsinfonietta.org or call the box office at each of the venues listed below. Reserved seating can be purchased online, 24-hours a day. Single ticket prices range from $19-49.

Seattle: Nordstrom Hall at Benaroya Hall - 866.833.4747
Tacoma: Temple Theater (Landmark Convention Center) - 800.838.3006
Puyallup: Liberty Theater - 800.838.3006

Student Rush tickets will be made available 90-minutes prior to each concert. Student may purchase $10 RUSH tickets with student ID.

Northwest Sinfonietta
Northwest Sinfonietta (NWS) is a highly-acclaimed professional chamber orchestra consisting of 35 virtuoso musicians performing a full season of classical music concerts. Now in its 22nd year, the orchestra maintains residencies in Seattle, Tacoma, and Puyallup and also performs in nearby communities. As a major regional presence, NWS fulfills a unique role as the only professional chamber orchestra established in multiple cities. NWS is also known for its very broad and innovative artistry, equally adept at orchestral, opera and ballet repertoires. NWS has shared its stage with some of the world's greatest soloists including Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg, Richard Stoltzman, Lynn Harrell, Lara St. John and Awadagin Pratt.

Bernard Jacobson of The Seattle Times wrote, "The music sounded fresher, and in a fascinating way more modern, than ever. This was a performance emphasizing once more that he [Chagnard] and the Sinfonietta are a combined force to be reckoned with on today's orchestral scene."

NWS recently conducted its second international tour to Cuba in January 2013, making history as the first American orchestra to perform jointly with a Cuban ensemble since the 1959 Revolution. For the continuation of the reciprocal cultural exchange, musicians from Orquesta de Cámara Concierto Sur traveled to Seattle to join Northwest Sinfonietta at the season opening concerts in October 2012. This historical event marked the first time these Cuban musicians travel abroad and the first time American and Cuban orchestral musicians shared a stage in the US.