

SEGERSTROM CENTER FOR THE ARTS
RENÉE AND HENRY SEGERSTROM CONCERT HALL



presents

**2015-16 HAL & JEANETTE SEGERSTROM
FAMILY FOUNDATION CLASSICAL SERIES**

Performance begins at 8 p.m. Preview talk begins at 7 p.m.

CARL ST. CLAIR • CONDUCTOR
CONRAD TAO • PIANO

SERGE PROKOFIEV (1891-1953)

**Concerto No. 3 in C Major for Piano and
Orchestra, Op. 26**

Andante-Allegro
Andantino
Allegro ma non troppo
Conrad Tao

INTERMISSION

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

**Symphony No. 3 in E-flat Major, Op. 55,
"Eroica"**

Allegro con brio
Marcia funebre: Adagio assai
Scherzo: Allegro vivace
Finale: Allegro molto

2015-16 Piano Soloists are sponsored by **The Michelle F. Rohé Distinguished Pianists Fund.**

The appearance by Conrad Tao is generously sponsored by **Sam and Lyndie Ersan.**

The Thursday, Dec. 3, concert is generously sponsored the **Board of Counselors.**

The Friday, Dec. 4, concert is generously sponsored by **The Thompson Family Foundation**
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The Saturday, Dec. 5, concert is generously sponsored by **Michelle F. Rohé.**

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The Saturday, Dec. 5, performance is being recorded for broadcast
on Sunday, Feb. 28, 2016, at 7 p.m. on Classical KUSC.



SERGE PROKOFIEV
(1891-1953)

Piano Concerto No. 3 in C Major, Op. 26

Instrumentation: 2 flutes (second doubling on piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 2 trombones, bass trombone, timpani, percussion, strings, solo piano
Performance time: 27 minutes

Background

It's difficult to know exactly why Prokofiev's thrilling piano concertos are not heard more often. But in considering what makes these concertos masterworks, Beethoven is a good place to start.

We rightly think of Beethoven as the Promethean composer who engaged with the great philosophical ideas of his time, struggling with—and against!—existing Classical forms in a way that radically changed and expanded them. The symphony is the *sine qua non* of this idea, but we hear it in his concertos as well. While Beethoven's earliest symphonies bear the hallmarks of Haydn and Mozart, by the time he wrote his Ninth he was grappling with something monumentally different. Later composers of symphonies were said to write them in Beethoven's shadow, and the number "nine" almost became a jinx.

Though Beethoven's concertos figure less prominently in the popular imagination, the pattern is much the same: His first two concertos sound intentionally Classical and Mozartean, while the later ones evolve into something far more grandiose. Beethoven's last concerto for piano—No. 5, "The Emperor"—set the standard for the Romantic concerto as a heroic statement pitting the instrumental soloist against the massed forces of the orchestra. After Beethoven, most concertos required spectacle and struggle as well as beauty and elegance, and "five" became the number of special significance among composers daring to compose them. But unlike the symphonic form, Beethoven's expansion of the concerto seemed to invigorate his successors.

Prokofiev, like Beethoven—and like his famous contemporaries Rachmaninoff and Shostakovich—was a pianist, and also like Beethoven, he produced five piano concertos. Together, these five

works comprise one of the most remarkable groups of concertos since Beethoven, and probably the greatest grouping of concertos for a single instrument written in the past century. Composed between 1911 and 1932, their style is often described as "muscular," "powerful" or "percussive," though Prokofiev's music incorporates sweeping, lyrical phrases, his writing for the piano is more precise and astringent than that of Rachmaninoff, who was far more popular as a piano soloist in the U.S. than Prokofiev was. In more recent years, controversy over Shostakovich's tortured relationship with Stalin has shifted focus onto compositions including his excellent concertos for piano and violin, perhaps at the expense of Prokofiev's.

Always more cosmopolitan and more of a world traveler than Shostakovich, Prokofiev was living on the coast of Brittany in 1921, when he composed most of his Piano Concerto No. 3. His work on the concerto was a time of retrenchment and renewal; a tour of the U.S. had not gone well and proved a setback for his career, but things had begun to improve with the success of his ballet *The Tale of the Buffoon in Paris* in May of that year. At age 30 he was no longer a young phenom and found himself making up lost ground just to recoup the success he had enjoyed in his twenties. In framing the concerto he went back to sketches he had produced while still in conservatory as early as 1913, framing them in a grandly virtuosic concerto that demands furious power and speed. Watching the soloist in this concerto has been called "frightening" by more than one critic.

More recent historical notes on Prokofiev's Third Piano Concerto include the dramatic return of Argentine pianist Martha Argerich to perform in March of 2000 after an absence of 19 years. Argerich, a cancer patient, dispelled any doubts about her recovery by blazing through this concerto's bristling demands, creating total pandemonium in Carnegie Hall. Her performance cemented the work's associations with special occasions and pyrotechnical brilliance. It is the longest and most powerful of Prokofiev's five piano concertos and remains his most popular.

What to Listen For

The calm, controlled opening of the Concerto No. 3 does not prepare us for the tumult that develops later on. It begins with a lyrical clarinet solo that gradually gathers momentum in the orchestra. But the stakes rise as the strings join in an accelerating allegro. With the entry of the piano's solo voice, it becomes clear that the music will proceed with a high level of energy and will include a lively discourse between soloist and orchestra. With the introduction of a second theme, the tonality of the concerto becomes more adventurous. Scales swooping through the orchestra and the keyboard give us a sense of almost explosive energy.

The second movement is marked *tema con variazioni*, a theme with (five) variations—a form traditionally employed to demonstrate what both composer and soloist can do. In this case, the movement showcases Prokofiev's wit and inventiveness, with a range of moods and tempos that range from a lilting gavotte to jazzy syncopations and propulsive passagework. The moods range from seeming sarcasm to outright jubilation.

Astonishingly, the final movement surpasses everything that has preceded it for sheer virtuosity, consolidating a controlled interplay between piano and orchestra as the tempo and momentum build. Listen for the famous double-note arpeggios as the concerto draws to its spectacular close—considered one of the most difficult passages in the concerto repertoire.

Prokofiev offered his own notes for this concerto. “The first movement,” he writes, “opens quietly with a short introduction (Andante, 4/4). The theme is announced by an unaccompanied clarinet and is continued by the violins for a few bars...” He continues in this manner for a blow-by-blow narrative of the movement, which, while accurate, scarcely conveys a sense of its excitement or its technical demands. But as they progress, his descriptions gain color and clarity. “The second movement consists of a theme with five variations,” he writes. “...In the first variation, the piano treats the opening of the theme in quasi-sentimental fashion, and resolves into a chain of trills, as the orchestra repeats the closing phrase. The tempo changes to Allegro for the second and third variations, and the piano has brilliant figures, while snatches of the theme are introduced here and there in the orchestra...”

Finally, he suggests the energy and flair of the concerto’s closing movement. “[It] begins with a staccato theme for bassoons and pizzicato strings, which is interrupted by the blustering entry of the piano. The orchestra holds its own with the opening theme, however, and there is a good deal of argument, with frequent differences of opinion as regards key. Eventually the piano takes up the first theme and develops it to a climax. With a reduction of tone and a slackening of tempo, an alternative theme is introduced in the woodwinds. The piano replies with a theme that is more in keeping with the caustic humor of the work. This material is developed, and there is a brilliant coda.”

Symphony No. 3 in E-flat Major, “Eroica”

Instrumentation: 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 3 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani, strings; Performance time: 47 minutes

Background

Our modern idea of symphonic heft starts with Beethoven. Haydn wrote 104 symphonies; Mozart, who died when he was only 35, wrote 41. Yet Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony was his last. After that, the form seemed more formidable, and many composers began to think of the number nine as an upper limit for symphonic composition, or even a jinx. Clearly, Beethoven had done something to change the way the music world thought about symphonies. What was it?

If one symphony can be called a turning point in the way Beethoven and the world viewed the form, it is the “Eroica.” Where Beethoven’s first two symphonies are graceful and decorously Classical, with the influence of Haydn and Mozart clearly heard, the Symphony No. 3 is a bold musical utterance that is longer in duration and bolder in its ideas than were its predecessors—literally a “Sinfonia Eroica,” or heroic symphony.

But this title, which Beethoven himself appended to the symphony, was a last-minute revision of his original idea. Always concerned with the important ideas and events of his time, Beethoven had Napoleon Bonaparte in mind as the hero of this work. Like many intellectuals who opposed the oppressive regimes of central Europe, Beethoven saw Bonaparte as a potential savior. As early as 1798, Beethoven considered writing a symphony inspired by Napoleon. Significantly, he composed much of the music for it during the summer of 1803, the year after he wrote the *Heiligenstadt Testament*—the unsent letter to his brothers that revealed the depths of his feelings about his life, art and encroaching deafness. In our modern understanding of Beethoven’s lifetime of achievement, the *Heiligenstadt Testament* marks his

transition from a young Classical composer to a unique musical mind grappling with ideas in a way no composer had done before.

When Bonaparte declared himself emperor, Beethoven viewed his gesture as a denial of the very ideals he saw as heroic—the spirit of equality, brotherhood and freedom we would later hear enshrined in the “Choral” Symphony. According to one popular account circulated by Beethoven’s student Ferdinand Ries, the composer dramatically “undedicated” the Symphony No. 3, tearing Bonaparte’s name from the score, and what might have been the “Sinfonia Bonaparte” became the “Sinfonia Eroica.” But as the eminent music historian Phillip Huscher points out, Beethoven himself was not entirely beyond personal politics; his decision to drop Bonaparte’s name from the score quickly followed his learning that Prince Lobkowitz would pay him generously for the honor. Later, after the dedication page had been destroyed, Beethoven temporarily changed his mind once again, understanding that a “Sinfonia Bonaparte” might augur well on his planned trip to Paris. Either way, this idea for a symphony was something new. Other composers were beginning to find ways of incorporating ideas and happenings in their music, but not like this. Beethoven had produced a symphony that was not merely abstract and decorative, but bound up in philosophical ideas and world events, with suggestions of theatrical narrative and the concerns of oratorio.

The “Eroica” Symphony received its premiere performance in December 1804 in a private concert at the home of Prince Lobkowitz in Vienna. It was brought before the public at Vienna’s Theater an der Wien in April 1805.

What to Listen For

With stentorian E-flat chords rumbling through the orchestra, the “Eroica” Symphony opens onto the largest orchestral movement composed up to that time. And though in those hugely scaled opening moments we don’t know how long the movement may last, the symphony already sounds “big” in its beginnings. These sonic blasts are followed by cello voices that suggest a main theme. But does this movement really have a “main theme” at all? The musical phrases we hear seem more concerned with movement and with a



LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN
(1770-1827)

NOTES

sense of tension, and it is through these means that the symphony builds a feeling of fateful importance within us.

In the slow movement that follows, the sense of building tension continues, as if the symphony were brooding over the events of history as they take shape. This movement has come to be known as a funeral march; the critic Paul Bekker, for one, described it as conveying “the emotions of someone watching the funeral procession from afar, passing by, and then fading in the distance.” But this is a halting rhythm—slow, yes, but not conducive to marching. Its solemnity seems to freeze and overwhelm us. Do we hear the sound of mourning for the past, or does the movement point us toward a dark, challenging future? This is one of the first symphonic movements whose slowness and gravity send a hush through the concert hall, and it remains one of the most seriously affecting movements in music. It is accorded a special reverence among musicians. Tellingly, when the news of George Szell’s death reached Leonard Bernstein at Tanglewood in July 1970, Bernstein led the players of the Boston Symphony Orchestra in an unscheduled, emotion-charged performance of this movement in tribute to the Hungarian-born conductor. Reportedly, there were not enough scores to go around—but the players did not need them.

With the third movement, the shape of the symphony begins to emerge as an Orphic struggle through darkness and toward light. It begins with surprising softness opening onto a trio dominated by horns. The effect refreshes us and provides a sense of hope. And it propels us toward a fourth movement that surges with triumphant energy.

Listeners who know their Beethoven are more than familiar with the melody that dominates the fourth movement of the “Eroica”; it is also heard in his ballet *The Creatures of Prometheus* and in the piano variations of Opus 33. But this melody, framed for the ballet, is just a catchy, danceable tune, cheerful and lyrical. In the “Eroica” it is something much more—an expression of apotheosis, joyful and heroic. Many listeners have described this movement as the awakening of a sleeping giant, but surely it is the symphony’s hero rising up. As the movement takes shape into a triumphant march, we can imagine the hero marching into a historic destiny as the symphony’s finale blazes with light.

Michael Clive is a cultural reporter living in the Litchfield Hills of Connecticut. He is program annotator for Pacific Symphony and Louisiana Philharmonic, and editor-in-chief for The Santa Fe Opera.

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

Michelle Rohé and The Michelle Rohé Distinguished Pianist Fund

Michelle Rohé is one of the great patrons of the arts in Orange County. She has invested in Pacific Symphony’s artistic excellence and has a particular love of great pianists. Her kind spirit and willingness to support the arts make much of what we do possible. We are grateful to The Michelle Rohé Distinguished Pianist Fund for sponsoring our piano soloists this concert season.

Sam and Lyndie Ersan (artist sponsor)

We are grateful to our generous patron, Sam B. Ersan and his wife Lyndie, for their artist sponsorship of Conrad Tao. An avid lover of classical music since childhood, Mr. Ersan is an enthusiastic and passionate supporter of chamber and orchestral music in San Diego and Orange County. He serves on the Board of the San Diego Symphony and has established a chamber music series at UCSD. Thank you, Sam and Lyndie Ersan!

Board of Counselors (Thursday night)

The Board of Counselors is celebrating more than a decade of advocacy and financial support for Pacific Symphony. The Board of Counselors is comprised of Pacific Symphony subscribers with a passion for great music, who are elected by the Symphony’s Board of Directors. The Board of Counselors act as ambassadors on behalf of the Symphony and expand the presence and leadership of the Pacific Symphony into Southern California. Members enjoy many insider opportunities, while providing significant financial support for Pacific Symphony. Select members serve on the Governing Board and work closely with the Board of Directors.

The Thompson Family Foundation in honor of Carl St.Clair’s extraordinary contributions to Orange County (Friday night)

The Thompson Family Foundation aims to improve the lives of individuals and families affected by autism and neurodevelopmental disorders through world class programs that integrate research, clinical service delivery, education and public policy. The Foundation is pleased to support Pacific Symphony and its Heartstrings Program at the Center for Autism.

COMING IN THE NEW YEAR!

LIN PLAYS MOZART

Thursday-Saturday, Jan. 7-9, 2016
Cho-Liang Lin, conductor and violin

MOZART: Violin Concerto No. 4
WAGNER: Siegfried Idyll
DVORÁK: Romance in F Minor
MOZART: Symphony No. 35, “Haffner”

Critics say “his technique is magnificent, his intonation immaculate, with a glittering top, breadth and radiance below.” Violinist Cho-Liang Lin serves as conductor and featured soloist for this delightful program, which includes both Mozart’s Violin Concerto No. 4 and his grand and festive “Haffner” Symphony.

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CARL ST. CLAIR
WILLIAM J. GILLESPIE
MUSIC DIRECTOR CHAIR

In 2015-16, Music Director Carl St. Clair celebrates his 26th season with Pacific Symphony. He is one of the longest tenured conductors of the major American orchestras. St. Clair's lengthy history solidifies the strong relationship he has forged with the musicians and the community. His continuing role also lends stability to the organization and continuity to his vision for the Symphony's future. Few orchestras can claim such rapid artistic development as Pacific Symphony—the largest orchestra formed in the United States in the last 50 years—due in large part to St. Clair's leadership.

During his tenure, St. Clair has become widely recognized for his musically distinguished performances, his commitment to building outstanding educational programs and his innovative approaches to programming. Among his creative endeavors are: the vocal initiative, "Symphonic Voices," which continues for the fifth season in 2015-16 with Puccini's *Turandot*, following the concert-opera productions of *La Bohème*, *Tosca*, *La Traviata* and *Carmen* in previous seasons; the creation six years ago of a series of multimedia concerts featuring inventive formats called "Music Unwound"; and the highly acclaimed American Composers Festival, which highlights the splendor of the William J. Gillespie Concert Organ in 2015-16 with music by Stephen Paulus, Wayne Oquin and Morten Lauridsen.

St. Clair's commitment to the development and performance of new works by composers is evident in the wealth of commissions and recordings by the Symphony. The 2015-16 season continues a slate of recordings of works commissioned and performed by the Symphony in recent years, including William Bolcom's *Songs of Lorca* and *Prometheus* and James Newton Howard's *I Would Plant a Tree*, plus his Violin Concerto featuring James Ehnes. These join Elliot Goldenthal's Symphony in G-sharp Minor, released in 2014-15; Richard Danielpour's *Toward a Season of Peace*, released in 2013-14; Philip Glass' *The Passion of Ramakrishna*, and Michael Daugherty's *Mount Rushmore* and *The Gospel According to Sister Aimee*, both released in 2012-13. St. Clair has led the orchestra in other critically acclaimed albums including two piano concertos of Lukas Foss; Danielpour's *An American Requiem* and Goldenthal's *Fire Water Paper: A Vietnam Oratorio* with cellist Yo-Yo Ma. Other commissioned composers include Zhou Long, Tobias Picker, Frank Ticheli and Chen Yi, Curt Cacioppo, Stephen Scott, Jim Self (Pacific Symphony's principal tubist) and Christopher Theofanidis.

In 2006-07, St. Clair led the orchestra's historic move into its home in the Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall at Segerstrom Center for the Arts. The move came on the heels of the landmark 2005-06 season that included St. Clair leading the Symphony on its first European tour—nine cities in three countries playing before capacity houses and receiving extraordinary responses and reviews.

From 2008-10, St. Clair was general music director for the Komische Oper in Berlin, where he led successful new productions such as *La Traviata* (directed by Hans Neuenfels). He also served as general music director and chief conductor of the German National Theater and Staatskapelle (GNTS) in Weimar, Germany, where he led Wagner's *Ring Cycle* to critical acclaim. He was the first non-European to hold his position at the GNTS; the role also gave him the distinction of simultaneously leading one of the newest orchestras in America and one of the oldest in Europe.

In 2014, St. Clair became the music director of the National Symphony Orchestra in Costa Rica. His international career also has him conducting abroad several months a year, and he has appeared with orchestras throughout the world. He was the principal guest conductor of the Radio Sinfonieorchester Stuttgart from 1998-2004, where he completed a three-year recording project of the Villa-Lobos symphonies. He has also appeared with orchestras in Israel, Hong Kong, Japan, Australia, New Zealand and South America, and summer festivals worldwide.

In North America, St. Clair has led the Boston Symphony Orchestra (where he served as assistant conductor for several years), New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic and the San Francisco, Seattle, Detroit, Atlanta, Houston, Indianapolis, Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver symphonies, among many.

A strong advocate of music education for all ages, St. Clair has been essential to the creation and implementation of the Symphony's education and community engagement programs including Pacific Symphony Youth Ensembles, Heartstrings, Sunday Casual Connections, OC Can You Play With Us?, *arts-X-press* and *Class Act*.

**CONRAD TAO**

PIANO

Conrad Tao has appeared worldwide as a pianist and composer, and has been dubbed a musician of “probing intellect and open-hearted vision” by *The New York Times*, a “thoughtful and mature composer” by NPR, and “ferociously talented” by *Time Out New York*. In June 2011, the White House Commission on Presidential Scholars and the Department of Education named Tao a Presidential Scholar in the Arts, and the National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts awarded him a YoungArts gold medal in music. Later that year, Tao was named a Gilmore Young Artist, an honor awarded every two years highlighting the most promising American pianists of the new generation. In May of 2012, he was awarded the prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant.

During the 2015-16 season, Tao performs with the Philadelphia Chamber Orchestra, Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, Cincinnati Symphony, Dallas Symphony Orchestra, Buffalo Philharmonic, Brazilian Symphony and Calgary Philharmonic, among others; he also performs recitals in Europe and throughout the United States with repertoire ranging from Bach to Frederic Rzewski to Rachmaninoff to Julia Wolfe. Past notable symphonic engagements have included the San Francisco Symphony, Baltimore Symphony, Toronto Symphony, St. Louis Symphony, Detroit Symphony, National Arts Centre Orchestra, Indianapolis Symphony and Nashville Symphony. Tao maintains a close relationship with the Aspen Music Festival, and has appeared at the Sun Valley Summer Symphony, Brevard Music Center, Ravinia Festival and Mostly Mozart Festival.

In June of 2013, Tao kicked off the inaugural UNPLAY Festival at the powerHouse Arena in Brooklyn, which he curated and produced. The festival, designated a “critics’ pick” by *Time Out New York* and hailed by *The New York Times* for its “clever organization” and “endlessly engaging” performances, featured Tao with guest artists performing a wide variety of new works. Across three nights encompassing electroacoustic music, performance art, youth ensembles and much more, UNPLAY explored the fleeting ephemera of the Internet, the possibility of a 21st-century canon and music’s role in social activism and critique. That month, Tao, a Warner Classics recording artist, also released *Voyages*, his first full-length album for the label, which was declared a “spiky debut” by *The New Yorker’s* Alex Ross. Of the album, NPR wrote: “Tao proves himself to be a musician of deep intellectual and emotional means—as the thoughtful programming on this album...proclaims.” This October, Tao released his newest album, *Pictures*, which slots works by David Lang, Toru Takemitsu, Elliott Carter and Tao himself alongside Mussorgsky’s familiar and beloved *Pictures at an Exhibition*.

Tao’s career as a composer has garnered eight consecutive ASCAP Morton Gould Young Composer Awards and the Carlos Surinach Prize from BMI. In the 2013-14 season, while serving as the Dallas Symphony Orchestra’s artist-in-residence, Tao premiered his orchestral composition, *The world is very different now*. Commissioned in observance of the 50th anniversary of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, the work was described by *The New York Times* as “shapely and powerful.” Most recently, the Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia commissioned a new work for piano, orchestra and electronics, *An Adjustment*, which received its premiere in September 2015 with Tao at the piano. *The Philadelphia Inquirer* declared the piece abundant in “compositional magic,” a “most imaginative [integration of] spiritual post-Romanticism and ‘90s club music.”

Tao was born in Urbana, Ill., in 1994. He has studied piano with Emilio del Rosario in Chicago and Yoheved Kaplinsky in New York, and composition with Christopher Theofanidis.

