

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 with Alan Chapman begins at 7 p.m.

CARL ST. CLAIR • CONDUCTOR
DAVID FRAY • PIANO

Bright Sheng (b. 1955)

Black Swan after Johannes Brahms'
Intermezzo, Op. 118, No. 2

Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

Concerto in A Minor for Piano and Orchestra,
Op. 54

Allegro affettuoso
Intermezzo: Andantino grazioso
Allegro vivace
David Fray

INTERMISSION

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Symphony No. 1 in C Minor, Op. 68

Un poco sostenuto; Allegro
Andante sostenuto
Un poco allegretto e grazioso
Adagio; Più andante; Allegro non troppo,
ma con brio

David Fray's appearance is made possible by the **Nicholas Family Foundation**.

The Friday, Oct. 23, concert is generously sponsored by **Symphony 100**.

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Official Classical Radio Station



The Saturday, Oct. 24, performance is being recorded for broadcast on Sunday, Feb. 14, at 7 p.m. on Classical KUSC.

Black Swan—after Johannes Brahms' Intermezzo, Op. 118, No. 2

BRIGHT SHENG (B. 1955)

Instrumentation: 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 2 trombones, bass trombone, timpani, harp, strings
Performance time: 12 minutes

Background

The Chinese-American composer Bright Sheng is regarded as one of the foremost composers of our time. His stage, orchestral, chamber and vocal works are frequently programmed throughout North America, Europe and Asia.

A native of Shanghai, Sheng began piano studies with his mother at age 4. During China's repressive Cultural Revolution, the 15-year-old Sheng was sent to the province of Qinghai, where for seven years he performed as a pianist and percussionist in provincial music and studied folk music of the region. When China's universities reopened in 1978, Sheng was among the first students admitted to the Shanghai Conservatory of Music where he studied composition from 1978-82.

Sheng moved to New York City in 1982; and, at Queens College, CUNY, he studied composition with George Perle and Hugo Weisgall, and musical analysis with Carl Schachter. He earned his M.A. in 1984 and his D.M.A. in 1993 from Columbia University, where he studied composition with Chou Wen-Chung, Jack Beeson and Mario Davidovsky. In 1985, as a student at Tanglewood Music Center, he met Leonard Bernstein, who later became his mentor. Sheng studied composition and conducting with Bernstein privately until Bernstein's death in 1990.

Sheng is on the composition faculty of the University of Michigan, where he is the Leonard Bernstein Distinguished University Professor of Music.

What to Listen For

In recognizing his creativity and eclectic musical style, the MacArthur Foundation described Sheng as "an innovative composer who merges diverse musical customs in works that transcend conventional aesthetic boundaries." *Black Swan* is a prime example of Sheng's ability to synthesize wide-ranging musical sources. It is a reimagining of a work by Brahms: his Intermezzo in A Major, Op. 118 No. 2, composed for solo piano, transcribed by Sheng for full orchestra.

Black Swan was commissioned in 2006 by the Seattle Symphony, where Sheng was composer-in-residence from 1992 to 1994. In Sheng's transcription, Brahms' beautiful, introspective intermezzo takes on a narrative quality—songlike and tinged with smoky hues.

Piano Concerto in A Minor

Instrumentation: 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani, strings, solo piano
Performance time: 31 minutes

Background

The chronology of Schumann's Piano Concerto is straightforward enough, but the story behind it is not so simple: Schumann's only piano concerto began as a single-movement work, his *Fantasie*, composed in 1841. Then, in the spring and summer of 1845,



ROBERT SCHUMANN
(1810-1856)

he added two movements to create a complete concerto. His wife, the great pianist Clara Wieck, introduced the concerto at a New Year's Day concert in Leipzig in 1846.

Looking deeper, we find that the concerto is a touchstone for Schumann's creative turmoil and eventful marriage, one of the great love stories in music history. Schumann felt drawn to music but was pushed by his family toward a legal career. He was studying at the University of Leipzig when he was drawn into the Wieck family—first as a student of Clara's father, the revered piano pedagogue Friedrich Wieck. When he began his lessons in 1828, Schumann was 18 and Clara, who was only 9, was a piano prodigy who had already performed publicly. Two years later Schumann finally won his own family's approval to prepare for a career in music, and he moved into the Wieck household.

Abandoning his law studies hardly ended Schumann's troubles. His friendship with young Clara seems to have been one of the few bright spots in a life marked by dark moods made worse by deaths in his family and by injuries to his right hand that hindered his playing. He drank heavily. Yet he somehow managed to compose prolifically, especially for the piano. And he wrote incisive, statesmanlike criticism, founding a music magazine that became known as the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*.

Clara and Robert's friendship turned to love, but not before he became romantically involved with another of Friedrich Wieck's pupils, one Ernestine von Fricken. Even when that entanglement ended, Friedrich Wieck objected strenuously to their engagement and blocked it with every means at his disposal. Clara and Robert finally married in 1840, and Clara, by then a renowned soloist, wanted to play a concerto by her husband—for his sake as well as her own. When his initial attempts at a concerto failed, she recognized that the *Fantasie* could be part of something larger, and it was at her urging that it became the basis of Schumann's beautiful Concerto in A Minor.

What to Listen For

Schumann's style of piano composition is often described as mercurial. It seems certain that Clara Wieck, noted for the poetic subtleties of her interpretations, was the perfect pianist for his music. But concertos call for drama as well as poetry, and this one opens with a gesture that has been described as ripping away a curtain: a fusillade of chords from the piano. The boldness of this introduction clearly influenced the young Edvard Grieg in composing his own Piano Concerto in A Minor.

In transitioning from the first movement to the second we can hear Schumann's moodiness, which is apparent in the concerto's extremes of color. In the second movement, an intermezzo, a melody of great delicacy takes shape, with the piano relegated mainly to accompaniment. But in the more energetic third movement, marked *allegro vivace*, the piano part shows majesty, energy and variety. The concerto concludes by drawing together the thematic materials we have heard into a cohesive finale, climaxed by a dramatic sounding of timpani and a dramatic chord that echoes through the orchestra.

Symphony No. 1 in C Minor

Instrumentation: 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 2 trombones, bass trombone, timpani, strings
Performance time: 45 minutes

Background

By the time he completed his first symphony, Johannes Brahms had successfully negotiated the "promising" phase of his career and was recognized as a master—an heir of the Viennese tradition who earned his place in the distinguished lineage of Romantic composers that started with Beethoven. No critic held Brahms' music to a higher standard than the composer himself. Yet the idea of the symphonic form bedeviled him throughout his career. Why?

To get a perspective on the expectations of Brahms' public and his unease, it's interesting to compare the premiere of his first symphony

to the publication of Harper Lee's novel *Go Set a Watchman* in July of this year and the continuing media ballyhoo that surrounds it. This work, like Brahms's first, entered the world under a very long shadow. For Harper Lee, it was her own *To Kill a Mockingbird*. For Brahms, it was Beethoven's Ninth. Both artists were haunted, or perhaps hounded, by public expectation and media speculation. Both were intensely private about their respective crafts.

The premiere of Beethoven's Ninth was in 1824. In the 52 years that elapsed between that concert and the one that introduced Brahms' First, the Ninth came to be recognized as one of the most significant of all classical compositions. Other composers followed with more symphonies, but none that satisfied the Austrian-German popular sense that classical music was an art of ever-widening horizons. Enthusiasts still waited for the composer who could continue the symphonic tradition in a way that would be worthy of Beethoven, expanding upon his achievements. How do you follow up another artist's masterpiece?

Brahms rejected talk of "Beethoven's Tenth," but could not avoid the listening public's hopeful expectations of gravitas for his First. He worked on the symphony for more than two decades, though one could say that the last 14 years were the hardest, as the most intensive periods of composition date from about 1862. The earliest sketches of the symphony, which were in D minor, later became the basis for his D minor piano concerto.

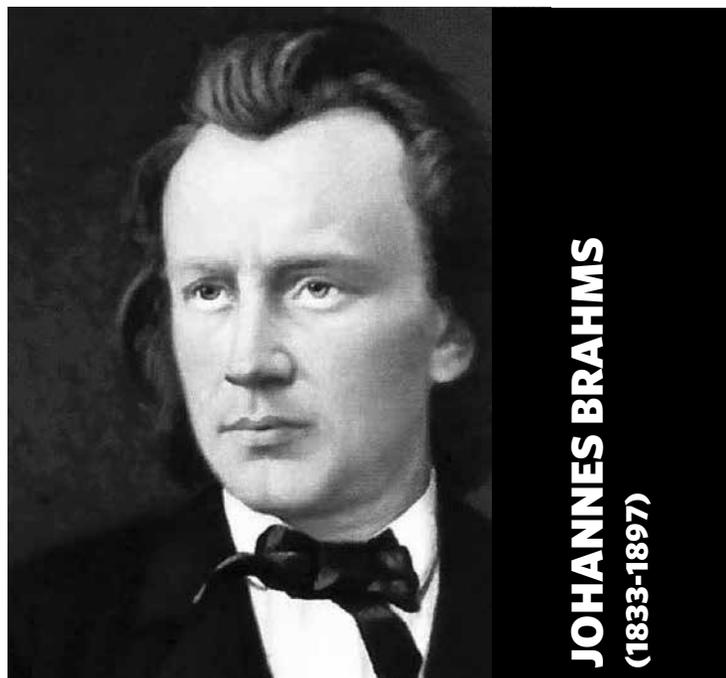
The premiere of Brahms' Symphony No. 1 occurred in the duchy of Baden in southwestern Germany rather than a musical capitol such as Vienna or Berlin—perhaps a strategy to lower the stakes—and was an unqualified success, with responses ranging from dignified approval to outright elation. Brahms went on to write three more symphonies, but the nervousness he felt regarding the form never left him.

What to Listen For

This symphony opens with a complex, nearly chaotic introduction that seems to part like storm clouds revealing a distant landscape. From there on we have a sense that Brahms is in total mastery of complex forces—that the scale and seriousness of this symphony are heard not in its length, but in the superb control and flow of its layered rhythms and inner voices.

Throughout the symphony we hear a voice that is uniquely Brahms, with its sense of perfect flow no matter how many different elements are in play. Yet despite this distinctiveness, the talk of "Beethoven's Tenth" continued, with some listeners noting similarities to various Beethoven works, including the finale of the Ninth. While some intentional quotations are embedded in Brahms' music, including the rhythm of the "fate" theme from Beethoven's Fifth, this symphony leaves us with a grandly scaled melody that is triumphant yet serene, and entirely Brahmsian.

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.





DAVID FRAY
PIANO

Described as, “Perhaps the most inspired, certainly the most original Bach player of his generation,” French pianist David Fray maintains an active career as a recitalist, soloist and chamber musician worldwide. He has collaborated with leading orchestras and distinguished conductors such as Marin Alsop, Pierre Boulez, Semyon Bychkov, Christoph Eschenbach, Asher Fisch, Daniele Gatti, Paavo Järvi, Kurt Masur, Riccardo Muti, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Yannick Nézet-Séguin and Jaap van Zweden. Orchestral highlights in Europe have included performances with the Royal Concertgebouw, Bayerischer Rundfunk, Budapest Festival Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, Academy of St. Martin in the Fields, London Philharmonic, Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen, Deutsche Sinfonie Orchester, Salzburg Mozarteum, Orchestra del Teatro alla Scala, Orchestre de Paris, Orchestre National de France and Orchestre de l’Opéra national de Paris.

Fray made his U.S. debut in 2009 with the Cleveland Orchestra which was followed by performances with the Boston Symphony, San Francisco Symphony, New York Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony and the Los Angeles Philharmonic. Recital debuts followed in Carnegie Hall, at the Mostly Mozart Festival in New York and the Chicago Symphony Hall.

This past summer, Fray returned to perform with the Philharmonia Orchestra and Esa-Pekka Salonen at the BBC Proms. In the current season, he gives two Schubert recitals at the Park Avenue Armory and appears again with the Dallas Symphony Orchestra and Jaap van Zweden both in Dallas and on a European tour. Other engagements in 2015-16 include performances with the Moscow Chamber Orchestra, DSO Berlin, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, RTÉ National Symphony and Orchestre National de France under Riccardo Muti as well as recitals at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées and Chicago Symphony Hall.

Fray’s latest release, called *Fantaisie*, an album of Schubert’s late piano works, was recently included in Gramophone Editor’s Choice and has been called “exceptionally thoughtful and touching” and “one of the most appealing listening experiences of present times.” He records exclusively for Warner Classics and his very first CD with works of Bach and Boulez met with great critical acclaim. The disc was praised as the “best record of the year” by the *London Times* and *Le Soir*. Fray’s second release was a recording of Bach keyboard concertos with the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen awarded by the German Recording Academy followed by *Schubert’s Moments Musicaux* and *Impromptus*. Fray’s recent releases include a Schubert recital, Mozart piano concertos with the Philharmonia Orchestra and Jaap van Zweden and Bach Partitas Nos. 2 and 6 along with Toccata in C Minor. In 2008 the TV network ARTE +7 presented a documentary on David Fray directed by the renowned French director Bruno Monsaingeon. The film *David Fray records Johann Sebastian Bach* was subsequently released on DVD.

Fray holds multiple awards including the prestigious German Echo Klassik Prize for Instrumentalist of the Year and the Young Talent Award from the Ruhr Piano Festival. In 2008 he was named Newcomer of the Year by the *BBC Music Magazine*. At the 2004 Montreal International Music Competition, he received both the Second Grand Prize and the Prize for the best interpretation of a Canadian work.

Fray started taking piano lessons at the age of 4. He furthered his studies with Jacques Rouvier, who is also featured on his latest Schubert album, at the National Superior Conservatory of Music in Paris.

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THE NICHOLAS FAMILY FOUNDATION

The Nicholas Family Foundation, founded in 2002, has provided an endowment to Pacific Symphony to underwrite distinguished guest pianists’ appearances with the Symphony. We are grateful to the Nicholas Family for assuring the continuing appearances of world renowned artists each season.

SYMPHONY 100

Symphony 100 is an exclusive membership group that offers adult music education opportunities and several unique events or field trips available only to members. Membership is limited to 100 women, who support special projects of the Symphony through an annual contribution of \$1,000.