APR. 28–30 classical series

SEGERSTROM CENTER FOR THE ARTS
RENNÉ AND HENRY SEGERSTROM CONCERT HALL

ORANGE COUNTY'S
Pacific Symphony
CARL ST. CLAIR | MUSIC DIRECTOR

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.

BRAMWELL TOVEY • CONDUCTOR | MIDORI • VIOLIN
WOMEN OF PACIFIC CHORALE:
JOHN ALEXANDER • ARTISTIC DIRECTOR | ROBERT ISTAD • ASSOCIATE CONDUCTOR AND CHORUSMASTER

Claude Debussy (1862-1918)
Arr. Leopold Stokowski

Erich Wolfgang Korngold (1897-1957)

Claire de Lune

Concerto in D Major for Violin and Orchestra, Op. 35
Moderato nobile
Romance: Andante
Finale: Allegro assai vivace
Midori

INTERMISSION

Gustav Holst (1874-1934)

The Planets
Mars, the Bringer of War
Venus, the Bringer of Peace
Mercury, the Winged Messenger
Jupiter, the Bringer of Jollity
Saturn, the Bringer of Old Age
Uranus, the Magician
Neptune, the Mystic
Women of Pacific Chorale

The appearance of Midori is generously sponsored by Tina and Tony Guilder.

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The Saturday, April 30, performance is being recorded for broadcast on Sunday, July 17, at 7 p.m. on Classical KUSC.
Claude Debussy (1862–1918)

Instrumentation: 2 flutes, 2 oboes (second doubling on English horn), 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, trumpet, percussion, harp, strings
Performance time: 6 minutes

Background

If Debussy were not so often cited as “the father of musical Impressionism,” we might invent the phrase based solely on the titles of his most famous compositions. Atmospheric and visual, they suggest color, light and water, and could just as easily name Impressionist paintings as musical works: Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun, La Mer and Clair de Lune (moonlight).

Clair de Lune was originally composed around 1890, early in Debussy’s career, as the third movement of a piano suite of four movements. By far the most popular of the four, it has been excerpted and orchestrated more than any of the other three.

Though music dictionaries trace the term “bergamasque” to rustic dances from the Italian town of Bergamo, the sound of Clair de Lune seems to contradict that designation in every possible way: it does not suggest dancing and is elegant and luminous, rather than countrified.

What to Listen For

In Debussy’s music, he showed us how evocations of mood and atmosphere could function as light does in Impressionist paintings. By now we are comfortable viewing the paintings of Renoir, Monet and their colleagues, and their works have gained such widespread popularity that we must remind ourselves how Impressionist paintings shocked the eye back in the 1870s: The colors seemed strangely bright, the shadowy neutrals were gone, and the paintings rendered impressions of light rather than the world of objects in space. Yet somehow that world materializes before us as we simply relax and look.

Debussy’s compositions sounded similarly unfamiliar at first: His instrumental color, texture and meandering harmonies ignore traditional combinations. Where Impressionist paintings leave the world of objects behind, Impressionist music goes beyond earlier conventions of harmonic and rhythmic development, moving from one bar to the next in a spontaneous, organic flow.

Though Debussy edged away from traditional major and minor keys, he did not eliminate traditional tonal centers, but “blurred” them. Employing exotic harmonies and the “perfect” scale comprised only of whole steps—with only seven integral notes in play, we can’t even use the term “octave”—Debussy’s music accustoms us to tonal evocations of mood and atmosphere that function as light does in Impressionist paintings.

That said, Impressionist music continues to challenge us as listeners a bit more than Impressionist painting does. If we are less comfortable with Debussy and Ravel than with Renoir and Monet, that may not be such a bad thing; as the art critic Sister Wendy Beckett reminds us, the trick is to come to each work of art as something new, approaching it with courage and without preconceptions, opening ourselves to the experience it offers.

Violin Concerto

ERICH WOLFGANG KORNGOLD (1897–1957)

Instrumentation: 2 flutes (second doubling on piccolo), 2 oboes (second doubling on English horn), 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, trumpet, percussion, harp, celeste, strings, solo violin
Performance time: 24 minutes

Background

Erich Wolfgang Korngold is widely known as a “famous composer,” but just how famous—and why—depends upon whom you ask. Musicologists regard him as one of the most remarkable prodigies in the history of classical music, the boy wonder who at age 9 was declared a genius by Gustav Mahler. Mahler secured him a position studying with the eminent pedagogue and composer Alexander Zemlinsky, who had also taught Schoenberg, the leader of the revolutionary “Second Viennese School” that also included Alban Berg; while his colleagues looked to Schoenberg as the movement’s father, Schoenberg looked to Zemlinsky.

Under Zemlinsky’s tutelage Korngold progressed from writing complex piano compositions to a ballet score, Der Schneemann, when he was 14, and did not look back—producing his first two operas, Der Ring des Polykrates and Violanta, when he was 17. At 23 he reached the height of his fame as a composer of opera and concert music with his haunting opera Die tote Stadt, which achieved success throughout the world and is still widely produced in the U.S.

Aficionados of Hollywood film music, who know the name Korngold well, are sometimes unaware that the wunderkind who created a sensation in European classical music circles just before and after World War I is the same person who became famous for his film scores. The late opera director Bliss Hebert, who was an expert on Korngold and directed American productions of his operas, credited him with virtually inventing the feature film score in the golden age of the Hollywood studios.
Charismatic woman, it’s quite possible that Korngold did, too. Considering all the European culturati who nursed bad crushes on this standard repertory. It is dedicated to Alma Mahler, Gustav’s widow; championed by Jascha Heifetz, the concerto soon entered the
The Prince and the Pauper.

The violin concerto is composed in Korngold’s characteristically lush, melodic style, and is most often cited as the cornerstone of his classical reputation—though opera fans put his operas on equal footing. But it is in the concerto that Korngold bridges the concert hall and Hollywood: its opening Moderato nobile movement is built around themes from his scores for Another Dawn and Juarez; in the central Romanze movement, the main theme is a quotation from his Anthony Adverse; and in the final Allegro assai vivace, an energetic movement with plenty of virtuoso licks, the proceedings build to a rollicking climax based on a melody from The Prince and the Pauper. Championed by Jascha Heifetz, the concerto soon entered the standard repertory. It is dedicated to Alma Mahler, Gustav’s widow; considering all the European culturati who nursed bad crushes on this charismatic woman, it’s quite possible that Korngold did, too.

The Planets
Gustav Holst (1874-1934)

Instrumentation: 4 flutes (third doubling on piccolo, fourth doubling on alto flute and second piccolo), 3 oboes (third doubling on bass oboe), English horn, 3 clarinets, bass clarinet, 3 bassoons, contrabassoon, 6 horns, 4 trumpets, 2 trombones, bass trombone, tuba, tenor tuba, 2 timpani, 2 harps, 4 percussion, celeste, organ, strings

Performance time: 51 minutes

Background

His name may not sound English, but his music certainly does. Gustav Holst is among the best loved of all 20th-century English composers. Born in Cheltenham, an ancient town in the Gloucestershire countryside, Gustav was the scion of a musical family. His father, Adolph von Holst, was a professional musician who became organist and choirmaster at Cheltenham’s All Saints’ Church; his mother, Clara Cox, was daughter of a respected solicitor and a talented singer and pianist in her own right. On his father’s side, Gustav’s forebears were professional musicians going back three generations—to the court of Imperial Russia, where his great-grandfather was composer and harp teacher.

Despite all that, we might surmise that Adolph was none too pleased when Gustav gravitated toward a composing career. When the boy demonstrated his precocity, undertaking grandiose compositions at an early age—perhaps as early as age 12—Gustav’s father tried to steer him toward piano performance. But Adolph also funded Gustav’s study of counterpoint at Merton College, Oxford, when he was 17; upon his return, he was appointed as an organist and choirmaster at Wyck Rissington in Gloucestershire, a position that included responsibilities as a choral director.

By 1892, Gustav, though still a teenager, composed an accomplished and successful Gilbert-and-Sullivan-style operetta. At an age when he might reasonably be considering his college options, he now had a musical portfolio of unusual breadth. Throughout his career, he continued to combine an awareness of the practicalities of the professional musician’s life in England with the changing aesthetics of the international classical music scene—most especially the impact of German, Austrian and Russian composers.

We can hear the full range of Gustav Holst’s musical background and education in his best-known composition, The Planets. It is enduring, charming and full of the openness of the English plainsong tradition; yet it is also executed with the sophistication and cosmopolitanism of a composer well acquainted with the latest international music of his day. But if the confident exuberance of The Planets suggests that this suite was easy for him to compose, Holst has actually accomplished something extremely difficult with it, sustaining our rapt attention for seven movements spanning almost an hour with no content other than the personalities and moods represented by each planet. Every movement is intensely colorful and specific, with each planetary subject so clearly in view that we feel ready to land our NASA module on the surface. Yet there is no story line, no overarching form... nothing but mood and the richness of the melodic subjects and rhythmical figures that Holst employs, including many folk songs from his beloved England.

What to Listen For

It’s hard to beat a luminous night sky as a source of inspiration for philosophers, physicists, poets and kings through the ages. Are the heavens for artists to understand, or do they lie within the realm of science? Like so many of the great classical thinkers, the ancient
Greek mathematician Pythagoras saw no separation between the two. On the scientific side, he defined the numerical ratios by which vibrating strings produce tones that are octaves apart. But he also speculated about “music of the spheres,” the subtle sounds of heavenly bodies expressing the ineffable qualities of the Greek Zodiac according to orbital ratios. Those inspiring celestial lights? Yes, they were physical objects obeying scientific laws, but they were also the embodiments of characters in Greek myths. We could hear their personalities if we really listened.

Composing “for large orchestra” between 1914 and 1916, Holst placed himself firmly in this Pythagorean tradition, giving us one of the most remarkable of all orchestral suites. From its enormous popularity and persuasiveness—is it possible not to have a great time listening to this music?—one might think that this suite would exert a gravitational pull of its own, influencing other composers to write orchestral suites and tone poems that draw on its success.

Expansive in every sense, The Planets is catalogued as a “Suite for Large Orchestra” and also calls for a chorus of female voices; Holst uses these resources to the hilt, giving the suite a sense of astronomical space and the swirling energy of a spiral nebula. Though he denied that the suite has any connection to the classical Zodiac other than the names and traits of the personified planets, that connection by itself is enough for the music to conjure strong images of the mythological deities associated with each. We hear seven movements in all: Mars, the Bringer of War; Venus, the Bringer of Peace; Mercury, the Winged Messenger; Jupiter, the Bringer of Jollity; Saturn, the Bringer of Old Age (purportedly Holst’s favorite!); Uranus, the Magician; and Neptune, the Mystic. Earth is not among those profiled; nor is Pluto, which was discovered and then ejected from the planetary club after Holst composed. Now that another “ninth planet” has been discovered, and a huge one at that, we can only wonder if any of the suite’s movements can be said to suggest a conventional narrative line, it is Saturn—Holst’s favorite—in a life’s journey toward reconciliation. What might sound like hints of despair in its beginnigs are later subsumed by the wisdom and harmony of old age. But in this suite, if wisdom has an opposite, it’s not ignorance, but the sass of Uranus, the magician—smart-alecky and unpredictable. Uranus is a prankster, and in this movement we hear not only the evidence of tricks, but also of the prankster’s smug satisfaction in his own cleverness.

Has Holst been leading us outward in the solar system? Not in a strict astronomical sense, but perhaps in an aesthetic one—from the martial strains of Mars to Neptune, the mystic, whose very mystery conveys a sense of endless space. The musical materials here are not melodic themes so much as cryptic figures that play off each other, like intersecting rays of astronomical light. A wordless chorale of women’s voices shimmers, swelling from inaudibility to a veil of sound, then recedes into the stars. In the end, after our exuberant tour of the skies, we are left at the very edge of all that we know, looking out at a thrilling but unfathomable universe.

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.
JOIN THE ZHANG CHALLENGE!
We are honored to have received a $500,000 challenge grant from Pacific Symphony Board Member and Orange County philanthropist Charlie Zhang, and his wife Ling, who have offered to match dollar-for-dollar every new or increased gift received by June 30.

Over 60% of the Symphony’s operating budget is covered by gifts and memberships. Consequently we depend on Annual Fund contributions to provide the core financial support necessary to perform an extraordinary range of concerts and a rich array of education, family and community engagement programs. Pacific Symphony is the largest orchestra created in America in the last half century and dedicates 10% of its budget to educational initiatives, the highest percentage of any orchestra in the country.

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Grammy and Juno award-winning conductor/composer Bramwell Tovey was appointed music director of the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra (VSO) in 2000. Under his leadership, the VSO has toured to China, Korea, across Canada and the United States. Tovey is also the artistic adviser of the VSO School of Music, a state-of-the-art facility and recital hall which opened in downtown Vancouver in 2011 next to the Orpheum, the VSO’s historic home. His tenure has included complete symphony cycles of Beethoven, Mahler and Brahms as well as the establishment of an annual festival dedicated to contemporary music. In 2018, the VSO’s centenary year, he will become the orchestra’s music director emeritus.

In the 2014-15 season, Tovey made guest appearances with several U.S. orchestras, including the Philadelphia Orchestra, New York Philharmonic and Kansas City Symphony. In Europe, he performed with the BBC Philharmonic and the Helsingborgs Symfoniorkester and traveled to Australia on two separate occasions for engagements with symphonies of Melbourne and Sydney.

During the 2013-14 season, Tovey’s guest appearances included the BBC and Royal Philharmonics, the New York and Los Angeles Philharmonics, the Boston Symphony, Philadelphia and Cleveland Orchestras and the Toronto Symphony. In the summer of 2014, he made his debut with the Chicago Symphony at the Ravinia Festival.

In 2003, Tovey won the Juno Award for Best Classical Composition for his choral and brass work *Requiem for a Charred Skull*. Commissions include the New York and Los Angeles Philharmonics and the Toronto Symphony and Calgary Opera which premiered his first full-length opera, *The Inventor*, in 2011. A recording of the work by the VSO with UBC Opera and the original cast was issued on the Naxos label in 2014. Earlier in 2014, his trumpet concerto, *Songs of the Paradise Saloon*, was performed by the L.A. Philharmonic with Alison Balsom as soloist, who also performed the work with the Philadelphia Orchestra in December 2014.

A talented pianist as well as conductor and composer, he has appeared as a soloist with many major orchestras including the New York, Sydney, Melbourne, Los Angeles, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, Toronto and Royal Scottish orchestras. In the summer of 2014, he played and conducted Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue* at the Hollywood Bowl with the L.A. Phil and in Saratoga with the Philadelphia Orchestra. He has also performed his own *Pictures in the Smoke* with the Melbourne and Helsingborg Symphonies and the Royal Philharmonic.

Maestro Tovey was music director of the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra from 1989 to 2001 where he founded the WSO’s now celebrated New Music Festival. From 2002-06 he was music director of Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxembourg, leading tours of Europe, the USA, China and Korea. He opened Luxembourg’s Salle Philharmonie with the world premiere of Penderecki’s 8th Symphony.

Tovey is a fellow of the Royal Academy of Music in London and the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto and holds honorary degrees from the universities of British Columbia, Manitoba, Kwantlen and Winnipeg. In 2013, he was appointed an honorary Officer of the Order of Canada for services to music.

In August 2011, he was described by *Musical America* as “one of the most versatile and charismatic musicians in the world.”
Midori is one of the most legendary violinists of this generation. In addition to performing at the highest levels internationally, she has also been recognized by the United Nations and the World Economic Forum for her exceptional commitment to education and community engagement throughout the USA, Europe, Asia and the developing world. More recently, Midori has been making a sustained commitment to the violin repertoire of the future, commissioning several new concerto and recital works.

In the last few seasons, Midori has added several new recordings to her extensive catalogue of discs—a recording of Bach’s complete Solo Sonatas and Partitas and a forthcoming release of the violin concerto DoReMi written for her by Peter Eötvös and recorded with the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France. In 2014, a recording featuring Midori’s performance of Hindemith’s Violin Concerto with NDR Symphony Orchestra and Christoph Eschenbach won a Grammy Award for Best Classical Compendium.

Midori is recognized as an extraordinary performer, a devoted and gifted educator and an innovative community engagement activist. In 1992 she founded Midori & Friends, a non-profit organization in New York which brings music education programs to underserved New York City schoolchildren in every borough each year. Two other organizations, Music Sharing, based in Japan, and Partners in Performance, based in the U.S., also bring music closer to the lives of people who may not otherwise have involvement with the arts. Her commitment to community collaboration and outreach is further realized in her Orchestra Residencies Program. In 2007, she was named a Messenger of Peace by U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

Midori was born in Osaka, Japan in 1971 and began studying the violin with her mother, Setsu Goto, at an early age. Zubin Mehta first heard Midori play in 1982 and it was he who invited her to make her now legendary debut—at the age of 11—at the New York Philharmonic’s traditional New Year’s Eve concert, on which occasion she received a standing ovation and the impetus to begin a major career. Today Midori lives in Los Angeles, where, in addition to her many commitments, she continues her position as Distinguished Professor of Violin and Jascha Heifetz Chair at the University of Southern California’s Thornton School of Music.

Midori’s violin is the 1734 Guarnerius del Gesù ‘ex-Huberman.’ She uses three bows—two by Dominique Peccatte, and one by Paul Siefried.
Founded in 1968, Pacific Chorale is internationally recognized for exceptional artistic expression, stimulating American-focused programming, and influential education programs. Pacific Chorale presents a substantial performance season of its own at Segerstrom Center for the Arts and is sought regularly to perform with the nation’s leading symphonies. Under the inspired guidance of Artistic Director John Alexander, Pacific Chorale has infused an Old World art form with California’s hallmark innovation and cultural independence.

Pacific Chorale comprises 140 professional and volunteer singers. In addition to its long-standing partnership with Pacific Symphony, the Chorale has performed with the Los Angeles Philharmonic in Disney Hall on numerous occasions. Other notable collaborations include the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra, the Boston Symphony, the National Symphony, and the Long Beach, Pasadena, Riverside and San Diego symphonies. John Alexander and the Chorale have toured extensively in Europe, South America and Asia, performing in London, Paris, Belgium, Germany, Estonia, Russia, Spain, Brazil, Argentina, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Beijing and Hong Kong, and collaborating with the London Symphony, L’Orchestre Lamoureux of Paris, the National Orchestra of Belgium, the China National Symphony, the Hong Kong Sinfonietta, the Estonian National Symphony and the Orquesta Sinfonica Nacional of Argentina.

Pacific Chorale’s chamber choir, the John Alexander Singers, is a fully professional vocal ensemble of 24 singers recognized for their musical excellence across a broad range of musical periods and styles. The John Alexander Singers perform regularly in concert venues throughout Southern California. In addition to extensive collaborations with Musica Angelica, Southern California’s premier period instrument orchestra, the John Alexander Singers have performed with the Kronos Quartet, Mark Morris Dance Company, The Royal Ballet of London, the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra and Pacific Symphony, and on the Los Angeles Philharmonic’s “Green Umbrella” new music series. In 2012, the John Alexander Singers presented the Paris premiere of David Lang’s Pulitzer Prize-winning The Little Match Girl Passion.

Pacific Chorale has received numerous awards from Chorus America, the service organization for North American choral groups, including the prestigious “Margaret Hills Achievement Award for Choral Excellence,” the first national “Educational Outreach Award,” and the 2005 ASCAP Chorus America Alice Parker Award for adventurous programming.

The Chorale’s outstanding performances can be heard on eight CDs, including Nocturne, a collection of American a cappella works conducted by John Alexander; Songs of Eternity by James F. Hopkins and Voices by Stephen Paulus, conducted by John Alexander and featuring Pacific Symphony; a holiday recording, Christmas Time Is Here, released on the Gothic Records label; a live concert recording of Sergei Rachmaninov’s Vespers; and four recordings released by Pacific Symphony, including Elliot Goldenthal’s Fire, Water, Paper: A Vietnam Oratorio, Richard Danielpour’s An American Requiem, Philip Glass’ The Passion of Ramakrishna, and Michael Daugherty’s Mount Rushmore, all conducted by Carl St.Clair. Pacific Chorale’s newest recording, featuring the complete choral music of Frank Ticheli, was released in 2013. Forthcoming projects include works by Jake Heggie.

John Alexander, artistic director of Pacific Chorale

Artistic Director of Pacific Chorale since 1972, John Alexander is one of America’s most respected choral conductors. His inspired leadership both on the podium and as an advocate for the advancement of the choral art has garnered national and international admiration and acclaim. Alexander’s long and distinguished career has encompassed conducting hundreds of choral and orchestral performances nationally and in 27 countries around the globe. He has conducted his singers with orchestras throughout Europe, Asia, the former Soviet Union and South America and, closer to home, with Pacific Symphony, Pasadena Symphony, Musica Angelica and the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra. Alexander retired in spring 2006 from his position as director of choral studies at California State University, Fullerton, having been awarded the honor of professor emeritus. From 1970 to 1996, he held the position of director of choral studies at California State University, Northridge.

Robert Istad, associate conductor and chorusmaster of Pacific Chorale

Robert Istad is the associate conductor of Pacific Chorale and director of choral studies at California State University, Fullerton, where he conducts the University Singers and Concert Choir, in addition to teaching courses in conducting, advanced interpretation and literature. He has prepared choruses for Esá-Pekka Salonen and the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Carl St.Clair and Pacific Symphony, Sir Andrew Davis and the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Nicholas McGegan and the Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra and Keith Lockhart and the Boston Pops Esplanade Orchestra, as well as conductors Bramwell Tovey, Eric Whitacre, Giancarlo Guerrero, Marin Alsop, George Fenton, John Alexander, William Dehning, David Lockington and Mark Mandarano. Istad received his Bachelor of Arts degree in music from Augustana College in Rock Island, Ill., his Master of Music degree in choral conducting from California State University, Fullerton, and his Doctor of Musical Arts degree in choral music at the University of Southern California. Istad is also the artistic director of the Long Beach Camerata Singers and Long Beach Bach Festival.

WOMEN OF PACIFIC CHORALE

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Kellee King
Barbara Kingsbury
Susan Lew
Kathryn Lillich
Rita Major
Megan Malone-Franklin
Jennifer Mancini
Hien Nguyen
Erin Riesebieter
Joslyn Sarshad
Sarah Thompson
Andrea Zomorodian

ALTO
Sarah Beaty
Tina Chen
Kathryn Cobb-Woll
Denean Dyson
Ernesta Guzaite
Eleen Hsu-Wentlandt
Michele M. Mulidor
Pat Newton
Bonnie Pridonoff
Loraine Reed
Jane Shim
Angel Yu