2010–2011 HAL AND JEANETTE SEGERSTROM FAMILY FOUNDATION CLASSICAL SERIES

ZUKERMAN PLAYS BEETHOVEN

PINCHAS ZUKERMAN, CONDUCTOR AND VIOLIN

STRAVINSKY (1882–1971)
Concerto in D (Basler)
Vivace
Arioso: Andantino
Rondo: Allegro

HAYDN (1732–1809)
Symphony No. 83 in G Minor (The Hen)

— INTERMISSION —

BEETHOVEN (1770–1827)
Concerto in D Major for Violin and Orchestra, Op. 61
Allegro ma non troppo
Larghetto
Rondo: Allegro

PINCHAS ZUKERMAN

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SEGERSTROM CENTER FOR THE ARTS
Concerto in D, Basler
IGOR STRAVINSKY
(1882-1971)

Instrumentation: strings.
Performance time: 12 minutes.

Written on commission from conductor Paul Sacher to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the founding of the Basler Kammerorchester, the Basler is not a concerto in the familiar sense, but most certainly in its fundamentals. Like the Baroque concerto grosso, it is an ensemble work with its players arrayed in two groups, a small concertino of first-chair equivalents playing primary parts and a larger ripieno for thematic restatement and accompaniment. The arrangement of movements, too — the familiar fast-slow-fast — reminds us of our favorite concerti grossi by Bach and Handel. But the music we hear is even less about “sensational effects” and more about a seamlessly braided ensemble. The scoring is exclusively for strings.

As for the sounds and textures of the concerto — well, for all its beauty and elegant clarity, even tentatively discussing its style can be tricky. Stravinsky himself was reticent to analyze his own works and was famously contemptuous of its prevailing characterizations by critics. “A poem should not mean, but be,” said Archibald MacLeish in “Ars Poetica,” and that seems an accurate summation of Stravinsky’s attitude toward music. Still, the critical assessments do help us to codify and understand what our own ears tell us about him, confirming that the Basler is one of this cerebral master’s most sensuous and accessible works.

Stravinsky composed the concerto in the fullness of his maturity (he was 64 when he finished writing it in August of 1946), and it was his first European commission following his emigration to America (he settled in Hollywood). In the 20th century, a critical consensus seemed to treat Stravinsky as it did Picasso, analyzing his oeuvre in terms of “phases” — neoclassical versus atonal, modern versus old-fashioned, vigorous versus tired. Within this critical rubric, some listeners heard in the Basler a work of almost neurasthenic fatigue by a composer who was running out of tonal ideas, but did not know where to go next. Small wonder Stravinsky rejected critical analysis.

Today we hear something very different. Though infrequently programmed in recent years, the Basler immediately sounds familiar to us, with a spare elegance that transcends time. Its glistening harmonies and spiky rhythms are uniquely Stravinsky’s. The central movement, a radiant arioso, incorporates long-phrased melodies that have a retrospective quality; but the introduction of harmonically unrelated cadences gives the tonality a freshness that has nothing to do with “old” or “new.”

Stravinsky had a close association with the New York City Ballet, and the Basler concerto is familiar to balletomanes as the music for Jerome Robbins’ The Cage.

Symphony No. 83 in G minor, (The Hen)
FRANZ JOSEPH HAYDN
(1732-1809)

Instrumentation: flute, 2 oboes, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, strings. Performance time: 20 minutes.

Symphonies’ nicknames can be usefully descriptive, or totally misleading, or sometimes both at once — as in the case of Haydn’s Symphony No. 83, known as “The Hen.” Though Haydn himself had nothing to do with creating this title and probably never even heard it applied, we can hear the reason for it fairly early in the symphony’s brisk, spirited first movement: the emergence of a buffa second subject in B-flat major with abrupt, dotted rhythms and upward slurs that seem uncannily evocative of a hen strutting, pecking and scratching her way around the barnyard.

Descriptive, yes. But the humor of this music is part of a rather grandly scaled and seriously framed symphony — one that represented something of a departure for Haydn. He composed it at age 53 on commission for the Concert de la Logue Olympique, a French concert society, at a time when he was well-
established as Kapellmeister for the Esterhazy court. It was the second of his six “Paris symphonies.”

This juicy outside assignment gave Haydn the chance to deploy much larger musical forces than those available at the house of Esterhazy, particularly in the strings (40 violins and ten basses), and his vigorous use of them suggests that Haydn relished the opportunity; like the other Paris symphonies, “The Hen” is full of musical incident. One of those incidents just happens to be a theme that suggests a clucking hen — whimsy that provides relief from the symphony’s dark, almost stormy opening in G-minor, and a foil for its return.

The symphony continues to alternate between light and dark. The dramatic contrasts of its opening movement are followed by a restrained Andante; but this in turn opens onto a rather serious, weighty Minuet brightened by a Trio for violin and flute. The concluding movement, a driving Vivace, reprises thematic materials from the opening Allegro — eventually resolving them in G major.

Violin Concerto in D Major
LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN
(1770–1827)

Instrumentation: flute, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani, strings, solo violin.
Performance time: 49 minutes

We apparently can’t believe everything we learned in school about Beethoven. The Violin Concerto in D Major, one of his towering compositions and one of the most beloved concertos in the classical literature, was supposedly the subject of a rash boast by the master; he was said to be so confident in its lasting merit that when he wrote it at age 36 (it bears the early-middle Op. no. 61), he went so far as to predict that violinists would still be playing it 50 years after his death. This picturesque story was told to illustrate both the scale of Beethoven’s talent — the concerto is a universal favorite more than two centuries after he wrote it — and his outsized ego, fueled by determination and unconfined by seemingly modesty.

But the facts surrounding composition of the work belie the lore, or at least some of it. Beethoven was persuaded to write the concerto for one of the best-known violin virtuosos of his day, Franz Clement, and everything about the circumstances of its creation seems to have contributed to a circus-like atmosphere at the premiere. Clement was by all accounts a remarkable soloist who had been a spectacular child prodigy, but he never outgrew a penchant for daredevil showmanship. There are no definitive firsthand reports of his first performance, but according to some hearsay accounts he insisted on sight-reading it and inserting a sonata of his own composition in the middle or at the end of Beethoven’s work. In performing his own sonata, he is said to have held the violin upside-down and played on one string.

Another surprising circumstance was the haste of the concerto’s composition. We know that Beethoven often agonized over his music, but for this benefit concerto (with Clement himself as beneficiary) there was no time for indecision, or even for preparatory conferences with the soloist. The orchestra, too, was said to be unrehearsed. Small wonder that the initial commentary was unenthusiastic. One contemporary critic, Johannes Moser, described Beethoven’s thematic material as commonplace, confused, wearisome and repetitious. It’s difficult to reconcile that description with the concerto that we know and love today, but not with its performance history — which included only three public hearings between 1806 and 1844.

What we hear when we listen to Beethoven’s violin concerto today is part and parcel of his genius: a composition that was pushing the boundaries of the concerto form, as Beethoven was also doing with his piano concertos and his symphonies. He imbued these works with a grandeur and dignity that earlier composers had only begun to suggest. The violin concerto is also written with a sympathy for the instrument that is not always evident in Beethoven: while some of his compositions for piano, voice, and strings (in the quartets) seem written to challenge or contradict their usual modes of expression, a cantabile quality that pervades the violin concerto is the very essence of violinistic writing, like a song without words.

This sense of instrumental sympathy and singing line is achieved without cliché. The first movement declares its gravitas by opening with four startling beats on the timpani, and though it is marked “Allegro,” there is an air of statelessness and a poetic introduction to the much-loved main theme — a six-note ascending scale that begins on the third note of the scale, F#, and ascends to the tonic of D before dropping back down to the dominant A. This simple melody, one of the most familiar in the violin repertoire, could have been built around a central triplet, but Beethoven achieves a more poetic effect by using only half-, quarter- and eighth-notes without triplet figures.

While the concerto’s second movement, a Larghetto, is in G major, the third (and final) returns to D major, framing the concerto in moods of similarity and contrast. The opening movement Allegro is dignified and almost solemn (the “allegro” pace is marked “ma non troppo” — “but not too much”), built grandly upon a four-beat motif. Where it sings, the closing rondo, with a full-out Allegro, dances with a six-beat motif that is charged with energy and a sense of celebration. Its finale, a soaring arpeggiated phrase that ascends an octave and a fourth to end on a single blast of the tonic D major, is a short summation for Beethoven — but powerfully emphatic.

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ABOUT THE MUSIC DIRECTOR

CARL ST.CLAIR

In 2010–11, Music Director Carl St.Clair celebrates his 21st season with Pacific Symphony. 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. St.Clair’s lengthy history with the Symphony 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 40 years—due in large part to St.Clair’s leadership.

The 2010–11 season, the “Year of the Piano,” features numerous masterworks for keyboard performed by a slate of internationally renowned artists. The season also features three “Music Unwound” concerts highlighted by multimedia elements and innovative formats, two world premieres, and the 11th annual American Composers Festival, featuring the music of Philip Glass.

In 2008-2009, St.Clair celebrated the milestone 30th anniversary of Pacific Symphony. In 2006-07, he led the orchestra’s historic move into its home in the Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall at the Orange County Performing Arts Center. 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. The Symphony received rave reviews from Europe’s classical music critics—22 reviews in total.

He recently concluded his tenure as general music director and chief conductor of the German National Theater and Staatskapelle (GNTS) in Weimar, Germany, where he recently led Wagner’s “Ring Cycle” to great critical acclaim. St.Clair 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 orchestras in Europe. He has also served as the general music director of the Komische Oper Berlin.

St.Clair’s international career has him conducting abroad numerous 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 successfully 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.

St.Clair’s commitment to the development and performance of new works by American composers is evident in the wealth of commissions and recordings by Pacific Symphony. St.Clair has led the orchestra in numerous critically acclaimed albums including two piano concertos of Lukas Foss on the harmonia mundi label. Under his guidance, the orchestra has commissioned works which later became recordings, including Richard Danielpour’s An American Requiem on Reference Recordings and Elliot Goldenthal’s Fire Water Paper: A Vietnam Oratorio on Sony Classical with cellist Yo-Yo Ma. Other composers commissioned by St.Clair and Pacific Symphony include William Bolcom, Philip Glass, Zhou Long, Tobias Picker, Frank Ticheli and Chen Yi, Curt Cacioppo, Stephen Scott, Jim Self (the Symphony’s principal tubist), Christopher Theofandis and James Newton Howard.

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.

Under St.Clair’s dynamic leadership, the Symphony has built a relationship with the Southern California community by understanding and responding to its cultural needs. A strong advocate of music education for all ages, St.Clair has been essential to the creation and implementation of the symphony education programs including Classical Connections, arts-X-press and Class Act.
Pinchas Zukerman has remained a phenomenon in the world of music for four decades. His prodigious technique and unwavering artistic standards are a marvel to audiences and critics. His devotion to teaching has resulted in innovative programs in London, New York, China, Israel and Ottawa. Zukerman is equally respected as a violinist, violist, conductor, pedagogue, and chamber musician.

Zukerman’s 2010-11 season includes over 100 worldwide performances across North America, Europe and Asia. He performs a recital tour with pianist Yefim Bronfman in New York’s Carnegie Hall, Chicago, Boston, Princeton and Kansas City. His chamber ensemble of eight years, the Zukerman Chamber Players, appears on 92nd Street Y’s Distinguished Artists series, and in the European cities of Vienna, Paris, Milan, Naples, Istanbul, Budapest, Warsaw and Eindhoven. In his second season as principal guest conductor of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra in London, he leads the ensemble on an extensive tour of China, as well as Italy, England, Israel and Switzerland. Orchestral appearances include the New York and Israel Philharmonic Orchestras, Gulbenkian Orchestra Lisbon, Moscow Virtuosi, Duisburg Philharmonic and the Boston, Seattle, and Vancouver Symphony Orchestras.

Over the last decade, Zukerman has become as equally regarded a conductor as he is an instrumentalist, leading many of the world’s top ensembles in a wide variety of the orchestral repertoire’s most demanding works. Currently in his 12th season as music director of the National Arts Centre Orchestra in Ottawa, Zukerman is recognized for heightening the ensemble’s caliber and reputation and inaugurating the prestigious National Arts Centre Summer Music Institute. In addition to the National Arts Centre and Royal Philharmonic Orchestras, Maestro Zukerman maintains long-term conducting relationships with such esteemed ensembles as the Chicago Symphony, Israel Philharmonic and Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestras. In North America he has led the New York and Rochester Philharmonics, the National Symphony, The Florida Orchestra, and the symphonies of Atlanta, Dallas, Toronto, Milwaukee, Saint Louis, Madison, Oregon, Utah and Colorado, among others. Internationally he has conducted the Staatskapelle Berlin, the Radio France and Nagoya Philharmonics, and the Barcelona, São Paulo and Singapore Symphony Orchestras. 2009 saw his operatic conducting debut of The Magic Flute with Opera Lyra.

A devoted and innovative pedagogue, Zukerman chairs the Pinchas Zukerman Performance Program at the Manhattan School of Music. To maintain close relationships with his students while fulfilling the travel demands of his concert engagements, Zukerman has pioneered the use of distance-learning technology in the arts. Zukerman’s extensive discography contains over 100 titles, and has earned him 21 Grammy nominations and two awards.

Born in Tel Aviv, Zukerman came to America in 1962, where he studied at The Juilliard School with Ivan Galamian. He has been awarded a Medal of Arts and the Isaac Stern Award for Artistic Excellence. He was appointed as the Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative’s first instrumentalist mentor in the music discipline.
Pacific Symphony, celebrating its 32nd season in 2010–11, is led by Music Director Carl St. Clair, who marked his 20th anniversary with the orchestra during 2009–2010. The largest orchestra formed in the U.S. in the last 40 years, the Symphony is recognized as an outstanding ensemble making strides on both the national and international scene, as well as in its own burgeoning community of Orange County. Presenting more than 100 concerts a year and a rich array of education and community programs, the Symphony reaches more than 275,000 residents — from school children to senior citizens.

The orchestra paid tribute to St. Clair’s milestone in 2009–10 with a celebratory season featuring inventive, forward-thinking projects. These included the launch of a new series of multimedia concerts called “Music Unwound,” featuring new visual elements, varied formats and more to highlight great masterworks.

The Symphony also offers a popular Pops season led by Principal Pops Conductor Richard Kaufman, celebrating 20 years with the orchestra in 2010–11. The Pops series stars some of the world’s leading entertainers and is enhanced by state-of-the-art video and sound. Each Pacific Symphony season also includes Café Ludwig, a three-concert chamber music series, and “Classical Connections,” an orchestral series on Sunday afternoons offering rich explorations of selected works led by St. Clair. Assistant Conductor Maxim Eskenazy brings a passionate commitment to building the next generation of audience and performer through his leadership of the Pacific Symphony Youth Orchestra as well as the highly regarded Family Musical Mornings series.

Since 2006–07, the Symphony has performed in the Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall, with striking architecture by César Pelli and acoustics by the late Russell Johnson. In September 2008, the Symphony debuted the hall’s critically acclaimed 4,322-pipe William J. Gillespie Concert Organ.

In 2006, the Symphony embarked on its first European tour, performing in nine cities (including Vienna, Munich and Lucerne) in three countries — receiving an unprecedented 22 highly favorable reviews. Later that same season, the Symphony also performed, by special invitation from the League of American Orchestras, at its 2006 National Conference in Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles.

Founded in 1979 by Keith Clark with a $2,000 grant, the Symphony made its debut in December 1979 at the Plummer Auditorium in Fullerton, with Clark conducting. By 1983, the orchestra had moved its concerts to the Santa Ana High School auditorium, made its first recording and begun to build a subscriber base. Through Clark’s leadership, the Symphony took residency at the new Orange County Performing Arts Center in 1986, which greatly expanded its audience. Clark served in his role of music director until 1990.

Today, the Symphony offers moving musical experiences with repertoire ranging from the great orchestral masterworks to music from today’s most prominent composers, highlighted by the annual American Composers Festival. The Wall Street Journal said, “Carl St. Clair, the Pacific Symphony’s dynamic music director, has devoted 19 years to building not only the orchestra’s skills but also the audience’s trust and musical sophistication — so successfully that they can now present some of the most innovative programming in American classical music to its fast-growing, rapidly diversifying community.”

The Symphony is dedicated to developing and promoting today’s composers and expanding the orchestral repertoire through commissions, recordings, and in-depth explorations of American artists and themes at its American Composers Festival. For this work, the Symphony received the prestigious ASCAP Award for Adventurous Programming in 2005 and 2010. In 2010, a study by the League of American Orchestras, “Fearless Journeys,” included the Symphony as one of the country’s five most innovative orchestras. The orchestra has commissioned such leading composers as Michael Daugherty, James Newton Howard, Paul Chihara, Philip Glass, William Bolcom, Daniel Catán, William Kraft, Tobias Picker, Frank Ticheli, and Chen Yi, who composed a cello concerto in 2004 for Yo-Yo Ma. The Symphony has also commissioned and recorded An American Requiem, by Richard Danielpour, and Elliot Goldenthal’s Fire Water Paper: A Vietnam Oratorio with Yo-Yo Ma.

The Symphony’s award-winning education programs are designed to integrate the Symphony and its music into the community in ways that stimulate all ages and form meaningful connections between students and the organization. St. Clair actively participates in the development and execution of these programs. The orchestra’s Class Act residency program has been honored as one of nine exemplary orchestra education programs in the nation by the National Endowment for the Arts and the League of American Orchestras. Added to Pacific Symphony Youth Orchestra on the list of instrumental training initiatives since the 2007–08 season are Pacific Symphony Youth Wind Ensemble and Pacific Symphony Santiago Strings.

In addition to its winter home, the Symphony presents a summer outdoor series at Irvine’s Verizon Wireless Amphitheater, the organization’s summer residence since 1987.