ORANGE COUNTY PERFORMING ARTS CENTER  
RENEE AND HENRY SEGERSTROM CONCERT HALL  
Tuesday, January 25, 2011, at 8:00 p.m.

PRESENTS

LANG LANG  
CARL ST. CLAIR, conductor  
LANG LANG, piano

SHOSTAKOVICH  
(1906–1975)  
Festive Overture, Op. 96

TCHAIKOVSKY  
(1840–1893)  
Suite from Swan Lake  
(Lebedinoye ozero; Le Lac des cygnes), Op. 20a  
Scène  
Valse  
Danse des cygnes  
Scène  
Danse hongroise (Czardas)  
Danse espagnole  
Danse napolitaine  
Mazurka  
Finale, Act IV

— INTERMISSION —

PROKOFIEV  
(1891–1953)  
Concerto No. 3 in C Major for Piano and Orchestra, Op. 26  
Andante - Allegro  
Andantino  
Allegro ma non troppo  
LANG LANG

SEGERSTROM CENTER FOR THE ARTS
**Festive Overture**

**DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH**

(1906–1975)

Instrumentation: 2 flutes, piccolo, 3 oboes, 3 clarinets, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, strings.

Performance time: 6 minutes

Dmitri Shostakovich’s descriptively titled *Festive Overture* is often compared to another fast-paced, buoyant work: the overture to the opera *Ruslan and Ludmilla* by Mikhail Glinka. In fact, Shostakovich, who wrote his overture in 1954 for a concert at Moscow’s Bolshoi Theatre — more than a century after Glinka wrote *Ruslan* — is thought to have based the structure and ideas in his overture directly from Glinka’s. Which may come as a surprise if you know *Ruslan*, and especially if you were lucky enough to hear the energetic performance at the Tchaikovsky Spectacular concert last summer.

In their opening bars, at least, the two works sound quite different. Glinka bolts from the starting gate with a fusillade of shots from the timpani and a rolicking string theme that starts fast and gets faster, while Shostakovich greets us with a fanfare of deceptive solemnity voiced by two trumpets. This brassy announcement, which the trumpets seem in no hurry to dispatch, eventually delineates the overture’s first presto theme. Only when this theme is finally taken up by the winds does the *Ruslan*-like fun begin: a sense of rushing momentum, with the orchestra’s choirs chasing each other at a breakneck pace.

The overture combines a casual, fun-loving spirit with a formal sense of classical structure. The rollicking presto eventually resolves into a stately, lyrical theme in the horns and cellos. But behind this courtliness, a driving beat is still at play, and when the two themes are played in counterpoint, boisterous energy wins out: the fanfare theme returns in the brasses, giving rise to an exuberant coda.

In fact, speed and energy could be the themes of Shostakovich’s compositional process, as well as those of the work itself. He was commissioned to write the overture only days before it was needed for a concert to celebrate the 37th anniversary of the October Revolution of 1917. The assignment came shortly after he had completed a symphony and in the midst of an exhausting stretch of piano recitals; he felt plagued by “composer’s block.”

Shostakovich was at home with his friend Lev Lebedinsky, a musicologist, when he received the commission, and considered this a good omen. “Dmitri… had the notion that I brought him good fortune,” according to Lebedinsky, “though to my knowledge I never brought him any particular luck. He said, ‘Lev… sit down here beside me and I’ll write the overture in no time at all.’”

Lebedinsky’s surprise did not end there. He describes Shostakovich writing the overture at astonishing speed, laughing and talking as he worked. Within two or three days, composition was complete and the overture was ready for the copyists to prepare for rehearsal. If the process sounds like a madcap scramble, so does the music — in Lebedinsky’s words, “like uncorked champagne.”

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**Suite from Swan Lake**

**PIOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY**

(1804–1893)

Instrumentation: 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 2 cornets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, harp, strings.

Performance time: 37 minutes

In ballet, choreography and music combine to transport our imagination. But if the experience is dreamlike and seemingly airborne in its aesthetic effects, the meshing disciplines of the ballet are as worldly and precise as engineering, and just as deeply rooted in numbers. In *Swan Lake*, you enter a dark, enchanted world where the music is suffused with poetic mystery that sounds perfect unto itself, but is written — beat by beat, bar by bar — as a foil for dramatic expression. Only in this way can dance steps, mimed gestures and music combine to tell a story without words.

This painstaking process of composition was not unlike that of the immigrant composers who wrote music for the Hollywood studios in the 1930s and 40s, for whom tempos and timings were often prescribed to the second — one reason why today’s listeners can so readily appreciate Tchaikovsky’s spectacular craftsmanship as a composer. The rich-
ness of his three great story ballets — Sleeping Beauty, Swan Lake and The Nutcracker — is generally considered without equal in the annals of dance music, and why all three scores stand alone as popular concert works, choreographic constraints notwithstanding.

Tchaikovsky composed Swan Lake on commission for the Bolshoi Theatre in 1875 and 1876. He worked rapidly, completing the score in about a year and a half, and dance rehearsals — which began before he was finished — took eleven months, with Tchaikovsky bending his seemingly inexhaustible gift for melodic invention in order to fit dance steps. It is known that he admired the score of the earlier French story-ballet Giselle by Adolphe Adam and was further influenced by Leo Delibes, who composed the ballets Sylvia and Coppélia. As in these works, he used leitmotifs in Swan Lake — melodic themes that stand for individual characters, moods and dramatic recurrences. But the result is more densely constructed, with a dramatic tension that is sustained beyond individual scenes.

With its thick orchestral textures and minor-keyed melodies, Swan Lake envelops us in a realm of enchanted forests and palaces populated by nobly born humans, half-human spirits and villains with magical powers, all caught between two worlds that are far removed from everyday reality. For Tchaikovsky, the challenge was to create music that combines with the actions of wordless dancer-actors and stage designers to transform this distant fantasy into a theatrical experience of authentic human emotion and conflict — themes we can hear in the music and identify in our own lives. For example, there is the duality of love, embodied in the twin figures of Odette and Odile, creatures of darkness and of light, an innocent and a temptress in the thrall of an evil magician. And any family with teenage boys will recognize Prince Siegfried, a maturing adolescent caught between physical passions and a calling to duty and responsibility.

Performed simply as music without dancers and sets, the Suite from Swan Lake suggests not a suite of dance movements, but a deeply atmospheric musical narrative depicting magic, menace, sacrifice and transfiguration. It is all pure music and pure Tchaikovsky, endlessly tuneful and thrillingly danceable.

**Piano Concerto No. 3 in C Major**

**SERGEI PROKOFIEV**

(1891–1953)

**Instrumentation:** 2 flutes (1 doubles on piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani, percussion, strings, solo piano. **Performance time:** 27 minutes

The range and brilliance of Prokofiev’s compositional voice can be heard most fully in his five great piano concertos. Like Shostakovich and Rachmaninoff, Prokofiev was himself a concert pianist, and he shared the Russian affinity for music that showcases the piano’s power and sweep. Today his piano concertos are among the most widely appreciated, but perhaps not quite as widely as their superb quality would suggest. But of the five, the third is the most popular, and probably the most classical in its structure. In it, all of Prokofiev’s expressiveness and sophistication is accounted for: lyricism, glittering textures, humor, and propulsive moments that never let us forget the piano is a percussion instrument.

Prokofiev was precocious and was composing works that would prove popular while still at conservatory; his work on the Concerto No. 3 began in 1913, when he was only 22, with a theme to be the basis for a set of variations. But he tabled these ideas until 1916, eventually completing the concerto in 1921. He was by then recognized internationally as a leading composer, and was soloist in the premiere performance with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

The concerto opens in the clear light of C major with a long, lyrical theme voiced by the clarinet that expands throughout the orchestra. But the solo piano’s participation in the ensemble is characteristically percussive, refracting the initial theme in complex, jagged harmonies. A dialogic pattern of development continues between soloist and ensemble until a second theme is introduced and developed through a series of virtuosic keyboard techniques including quick parallel octaves and scale work.

In the concerto’s central movement we hear the theme and variations that sprang from Prokofiev’s first sketches in 1913. While some listeners hear satire or even sarcasm in this movement, the repeated variations afford Prokofiev the opportunity to work in many different styles, from a classically tinged gavotte to jazz-inflected passages that sound far looser and nearly improvisational — and even a clarinet glissando similar to the one George Gershwin would later use in the opening of his Rhapsody in Blue. As in the first movement, the exchange between piano and orchestra is dialogic and energized, ranging through major and minor modes, slow and fast tempos. Its wandering modulations start and end in E minor, finally resolved with an E-minor chord by the soloist.

The final movement, like the second, is structured to introduce new themes in sequence, this time in rondo form (A-B-A-C-A-D, et seq.). It contrasts some of the concerto’s most lyrical passages with its most spectacularly virtuosic demands in highly ornamented lines that frame the orchestra. The concerto ends where it began — in the clear light of C major — with emphatic chords for both piano and orchestra.

Michael Clive is a cultural reporter and critic who lives in the Litchfield hills of Connecticut.
Heralded as the “hottest artist on the classical music planet” by The New York Times, 28-year-old Lang Lang has played sold-out recitals and concerts in every major city in the world and is the first Chinese pianist to be engaged by the Vienna Philharmonic, Berlin Philharmonic and all the top American orchestras.

Testimony to his success, Lang Lang recently appeared in the 2009 Time 100 — Time magazine’s annual list of the 100 most influential people in the world. In 2008, over five billion people viewed Lang Lang’s performance in Beijing’s opening ceremony for the Games of the XXIX Olympiad, where he was seen as a symbol of the youth and the future of China. This status has inspired over 40 million Chinese children to learn to play classical piano — a phenomenon coined by The Today Show as “the Lang Lang effect.” Recognizing Lang Lang’s powerful cultural influence, in 2008 the Recording Academy named him their Cultural Ambassador to China. Most recently, Lang Lang has been chosen as an official worldwide ambassador to the 2010 Shanghai Expo.

Continuing his presence on the world stage, Lang Lang was featured at the 2008 Grammy Awards, pairing up with jazz great Herbie Hancock for an astounding performance that was broadcast live to 45 million viewers worldwide. The two pianists continued their collaboration with an inaugural world tour in summer 2009.

Lang Lang has made it his mission to share classical music around the world with an emphasis on training children and young musicians through education and outreach programs. To that effect, he launched the Lang Lang International Music Foundation in New York with the support of The Recording Academy and UNICEF. In May 2009, Lang Lang and his three chosen scholars from the foundation, ages 8–10, performed together on The Oprah Winfrey Show on “Oprah’s Search for the World’s Smartest and Most Talented Kids.”

Lang Lang continues to give master classes regularly throughout the world at the invitation of the most prestigious music institutions, including the Curtis Institute of Music, Juilliard School, Manhattan School of Music and Hanover Conservatory, as well as all the top conservatories in China where he holds honorary professorships. He has held music residencies, which include master classes for exceptional students, in Chicago, Toronto, San Francisco, London, Rome and Stockholm.

In the 2009–10 season, Lang Lang was a featured highlight of the Carnegie Hall festival “Ancient Paths, Modern Voices: Celebrating Chinese Culture,” where he premiered Chen Qigang’s new piano concerto, “Er Huang,” and closed the festival with a performance of Rachmaninoff’s second piano concerto with the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra. He presented “Lang Lang and Friends,” a concert featuring rising talent from the United States and China, performing works by Western and Chinese composers. In addition, the Musikverein in Vienna presented the “Lang Lang Fest,” which included a joint concert between Lang Lang and Cecilia Bartoli. As the youngest instrumentalist to ever receive an invitation, Lang Lang was also in residence with the Berlin Philharmonic, which had several concerts including the New Year’s Eve concert and a concert with 100 school children in the spring. In the 2010–11 season, Lang Lang performed at the opening night of Christoph Eschenbach’s inaugural season with the National Symphony Orchestra as well as the opening of Carnegie Hall season. He will also hold residencies in London, Paris, Milan, Madrid and Sydney.

Continuing his work with world-famous conductors, Lang Lang has performed under the baton of Sir Simon Rattle with the Berlin Philharmonic at the Waldbühne, Daniel Barenboim with the Staatskapelle Berlin at the Philharmonie, and Seiji Ozawa for the New Year’s Eve gala opening of the National Center for the Performing Arts in Beijing.

In December 2007, Lang Lang was guest soloist at the Nobel Prize concert in Stockholm, an event attended by Nobel Laureates and members of the Royal Family. He returned as soloist for the 2009 Nobel Peace Prize award ceremony and concert for President Barack Obama.

Lang Lang began playing piano at the age of 3, and by the age of 5, he had won the Shenyang Competition and had given his first public recital. Entering Beijing’s Central Music Conservatory at age 9, he won first prize at the Tchaikovsky International Young Musicians Competition and played the complete 24 Chopin Études at the Beijing Concert Hall at age 13. Lang Lang’s break into stardom came at age 17, when he was called upon for a dramatic last-minute substitution at the “Gala of the Century,” playing a Tchaikovsky concerto with the Chicago Symphony.

Lang Lang has performed for numerous international dignitaries including the former Secretary-General of the United Nations Kofi Annan, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, President Barack H. Obama, George H. W. Bush, George W. Bush, William J. Clinton, Queen Elizabeth II, President Hu Jin-Tao of China, President Horst Koehler of Germany, Prince Charles, Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, French President Nicolas Sarkozy and Poland President Lech Kaczynski.

In 2004, Lang Lang was appointed International Goodwill Ambassador to the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), he is Chairman of the Montblanc de la Culture Arts Patronage Award Project, and serves on the Weil Music Institute Advisory Committee. He has been added as one of the 250 Young Global Leaders picked by the World Economic Forum and received the 2010 Crystal Award in Davos.