

# JAN. 12-14

classical series

**SEGERSTROM CENTER FOR THE ARTS**  
RENÉE AND HENRY SEGERSTROM CONCERT HALL



presents

## **2016-17 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 | **HAOCHEN ZHANG** • PIANO

Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)

### **Concerto No. 1 in B-flat Minor for Piano and Orchestra, Op. 23, TH 55**

Allegro non troppo e molto maestoso  
Andantino semplice  
Allegro con fuoco  
*Haochen Zhang*

INTERMISSION

Serge Prokofiev (1891-1953)

### **Symphony No. 5 in B-flat Major, Op. 100**

Andante  
Allegro moderato  
Adagio  
Allegro giocoso

The 2016-17 Piano Soloists are sponsored by **The Michelle F. Rohé Distinguished Pianists' Fund.**

The Thursday night concert is generously sponsored by **Ellie and Mike Gordon.**

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The Saturday, Jan. 14, concert is being recorded for broadcast on Sunday, March 5, at 7 p.m. on Classical KUSC.



**PIOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY**  
(1840-1893)

## Piano Concerto No. 1 in B-flat Minor

PIOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY (1840-1893)

*Instrumentation: 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 2 trombones, bass trombone, timpani, strings*

*Performance time: 32 minutes*

### Background

**T**rained as a pianist as well as a composer, Tchaikovsky was born into the great age of virtuosic concerto composition—the Romantic era of classical music—and his spectacular Concerto No. 1 for Piano and Orchestra is one of the staples of the genre. Concertos had been written for centuries, but Beethoven (born 1770) had raised the stakes; by 1875, when Tchaikovsky was 35 and was composing his Piano Concerto No. 1, pianos and piano concertos had grown in size. Composers followed Beethoven's lead, relishing the chance to create large-scaled, serious concertos of spectacular difficulty. More than just popular hits, they also expressed a basic principle of the Romantic age: the individual's struggle against opposition, the one versus the many. But they were also vehicles for sheer spectacle and elevated the soloist to a sort of cult-virtuoso status. Often seemingly unplayable, they helped make Paganini and Liszt into musical superstars.

Oddly, “unplayable” turns out to be a fateful word in the performance history of concertos by the hapless Tchaikovsky, who lacked both luck and self-confidence. The concerto literature is rife with works that are now popular, their greatness undisputed, that were condemned by critics and soloists back in the day. Most often, they were described as having been written “against the instrument” or as technically unplayable. Were soloists hedging their bets? It's hard to know; playing the unplayable was right on their calling card. Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1 and the Violin Concerto in D both suffered this characterization, and both are now among the most beloved concertos in the standard repertory.

When it came to the violin, Tchaikovsky was on less-than-familiar ground, and he proceeded with nervous caution after being inspired by Edouard Lalo's exuberant five-movement concerto. (Tchaikovsky's

work with violinists in crafting the score didn't help ease its way into the world.) But Tchaikovsky was a respected pianist, and though he lacked the encyclopedic technique of Russia's foremost soloists, he could be confident of his knowledge of the instrument and how to write for it. For it he created a concerto in which towering grandeur and poetic utterance are abundant and unmistakable—earmarks of a hit concerto. The melodies are gorgeously lyrical and take advantage of the instrument's expressive capabilities. So why did Tchaikovsky's friend and intended dedicatee for the score, the great pianist Nikolai Rubinstein, dis it as artistically crude and, yes, unplayable? Musicologists are still speculating about the reasons, though after its quick success with the public and critics, Rubinstein changed his mind and praised it effusively.

### What to Listen For

We can hear a characteristically Romantic spirit of heroic rebellion in the Concerto No. 1 for Piano and Orchestra. It bursts upon us with an opening that is explosive and iconic: a moment of brassy orchestral fanfare introducing thunderous piano chords grouped in threes. They are played in unison with both hands as they move in bold, multi-octave leaps up the keyboard.

Even if you had never heard this concerto before, this stunningly dramatic, oft-quoted opening would be instantly recognizable. But listen again and notice Tchaikovsky's remarkable musical calculation here: The piano soloist grabs the primary role, even entering alone. But once the orchestra enters, it has the melody. Those chords, so full of life and confidence, actually accompany the orchestra's statement. They can be heard as a heroic response to the melodic lifeline. Once it has been introduced, the piano takes up the melody in a manner that is vigorous but more moderated and less tumultuous, setting up a pattern of alternating grandeur and lyricism that prevails throughout this concerto.

As 21st-century listeners we are the beneficiaries of this concerto's unusual performance history and the landmark interpretation of the great American pianist Van Cliburn. When Cliburn won the first International Tchaikovsky Piano Competition in Moscow in 1958 (he was a tall, rangy, young-looking 23), the Cold War was at its height; Sputnik had been launched the previous year, and the space race and the arms race were on. His victory came with this concerto, and it had an impact we can scarcely imagine now. He received a tickertape parade down Broadway and instantly became an American hero. But the response was even more dramatic in Moscow, where weeping listeners rushed the stage and mobbed him. Why?

In a sense, the answer goes back to the concerto's duality—the alternation of heroic and poetic sound that Tchaikovsky gives us with unique deftness as he mixes powerful, pounding chords and parallel octaves with rippling passages of rapid fingerwork that require flawless legato. Superbly trained Soviet-era pianists combined accuracy and power. But where was the bold, passionate, dramatic individuality of the Russian pianists of yore? Under the Soviet system, such highly personalized expressiveness was shunned. But in Cliburn's performance, the judges heard this kind of interpretive artistry combined with superb technique, and the conclusion was undeniable; listeners heard a cherished part of their national patrimony being restored to them by the unlikeliest of artists.

As we hear tonight, post-Cliburn pianists play this concerto their own way—not his, but always striving to meet a very high and very public standard that has become art of classical music mythology. In soloists such as Haochen Zhang, Gold Medal winner of the 13th

# NOTES

International Van Cliburn Competition, we are privileged to hear a modern-day interpreter who is the heir of all these great performance traditions as he puts his personal stamp on one of the great concertos of the piano repertoire.

## Symphony No. 5 in B-flat Major

SERGEI PROKOFIEV (1891-1953)

*Instrumentation: 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, E-flat clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 2 trombones, bass trombone, tuba, timpani, 5 harps, piano, strings*

*Performance time: 46 minutes*

### Background

The greatness of Prokofiev's Symphony No. 5 has never been in doubt. But in 1979, with the publication of the book *Testimony*, a controversy began that has reshaped our view of the relative positions of Russian composers, including Prokofiev's as a symphonist. Though Dmitri Shostakovich is the composer at the center of the controversy surrounding *Testimony*, Sergei Prokofiev is just outside the eye of the continuing storm. We now realize that Prokofiev, too, was deeply affected by censorship, composing in the shadow of Soviet cultural regulation. As in Nazi Germany, a breach of stylistic decorum—a bureaucratic judgment that a composition was degenerate in style, or counterproductive to state interests—could cost a career or a life.

When Prokofiev was at conservatory in St. Petersburg, his instructors were the most distinguished pedagogues of the Russian old guard: Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, of course, along with Anatole Liadov, Alexander Glazunov and Alexander Tcherepnin. Accounts of their attitudes toward the young Prokofiev make it clear that he was viewed as a disaffected youth out to make trouble. He seemed to announce his own brilliance with an early composition: his first symphony. About the last thing the musical community expected from him was a symphony so drenched in traditional symphonic techniques and so full of delectable humor that it could make listeners laugh out loud. But by the time he composed it, Prokofiev was already 26 and had established his reputation as a rising young composer and a musical intellect who had already survived resistance in the face of modernism. His music was heard as highly percussive, occasionally abrasive and often noisy. The year was 1917, with the horrors of World War I drawing to a close and the Bolshevik Revolution about to shake Russian and World history.

His position in the forefront of modern music conferred prestige on the Soviet Union, and he was allowed to live abroad (mainly in Paris), but the government's feelings about his reputation were not unmixed. After completing the first symphony, he traveled extensively in the West and lived as an expatriate from 1918 through the mid-1930s. This kind of cosmopolitanism was always suspicious to Soviet authorities. Some densely difficult compositions that missed the mark critically, most notably his second symphony and violin concerto, extended his reputation as a bad boy of the avant-garde and his own self-doubts as a composer. But Prokofiev's first symphony was not written as a gesture toward his critics; it showed that the disaffection was actually on the side of his elders, and not his own. His later symphonies, particularly the fifth, would prove him to be one of the greatest of post-Beethoven symphonists.



**SERGEI PROKOFIEV**  
(1891-1953)

### What to Listen For

Prokofiev composed his fifth symphony more than 25 years after his youthful sojourn in St. Petersburg, in what must have been a burst of inspiration borne of national suffering that is almost impossible for us to imagine now. The year was 1944, and with World War II raging, Prokofiev said he intended the symphony as "a hymn to a free and happy Man, to his mighty powers, his pure and noble spirit." He composed it as if possessed. "I cannot say that I deliberately chose this theme," he wrote. "It was born in me and clamored for expression. The music matured within me. It filled my soul." The symphony's sound combines Prokofiev's gift for dramatic narrative with a sense of gathering heroism punctuated by humor and even satire, along with lyricism and even tragedy—everything, seemingly, is here, yet nothing is random. Small wonder this work is recognized as one of the great symphonic outcries of the 20th century, an expression that both embodies the greatness of the human spirit and expresses its deepest longings.

*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.*

### 2017 LANTERN FESTIVAL

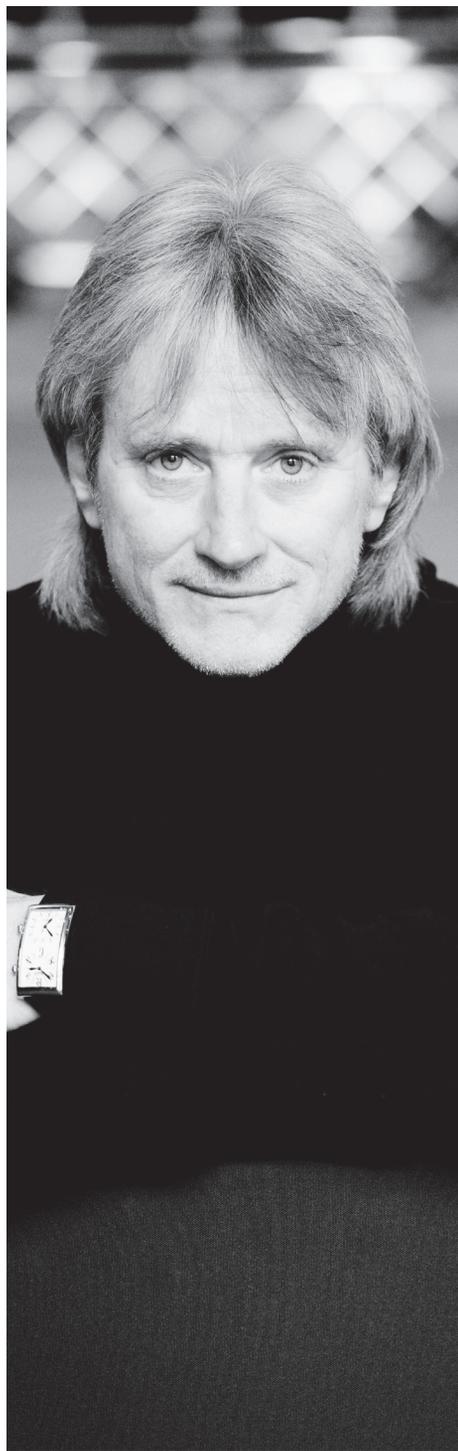
Saturday, Feb. 4, 11 a.m.–4 p.m.  
Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall



Bring the entire family and join us for Pacific Symphony's second annual Lantern Festival, celebrating the Year of the Rooster! This free family-friendly festival commemorates the end of the Lunar New Year with music, dance, art making, riddles and food. You'll have the opportunity to decorate your very own lantern, listen to live music, try your hand at solving a riddle, take a Chinese folk dance lesson and more! Reserve your FREE ticket at [www.PacificSymphony.org](http://www.PacificSymphony.org) or (714) 755-5799.

*Co-hosted by Pacific Symphony and the South Coast Chinese Cultural Assoc./Irvine Chinese School, in cooperation with Segerstrom Center for the Arts.*

Supported by:  The James Irvine Foundation

**CARL ST. CLAIR**

WILLIAM J. GILLESPIE  
MUSIC DIRECTOR CHAIR

The 2016-17 season marks Music Director Carl St. Clair's 27th year leading 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 opera initiative, "Symphonic Voices," which continues for the sixth season in 2016-17 with Verdi's *Aida*, following the concert-opera productions of *La Bohème*, *Tosca*, *La Traviata*, *Carmen* and *Turandot* in previous seasons; and the highly acclaimed American Composers Festival, which, now in its 17th year, celebrates the 70th birthday of John Adams with a performance of "The Dharma at Big Sur," featuring electric violinist Tracy Silverman, followed by Peter Boyer's "Ellis Island: The Dream of America."

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 2016-17 season features commissions by pianist/composer Conrad Tao and composer-in-residence Narong Prangcharoen, a follow-up to the recent slate of recordings of works commissioned and performed by the Symphony in recent years. These include William Bolcom's *Songs of Lorca* and *Prometheus* (2015-16), Elliot Goldenthal's *Symphony in G-sharp Minor* (2014-15), Richard Danielpour's *Toward a Season of Peace* (2013-14) Philip Glass' *The Passion of Ramakrishna* (2012-13), and Michael Daugherty's *Mount Rushmore* and *The Gospel According to Sister Aimee* (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 James Newton Howard, Zhou Long, Tobias Picker, Frank Ticheli, 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*.



**HAOCHEN ZHANG**  
PIANO

Since his gold medal win at the 13th Van Cliburn International Piano Competition in 2009, 26-year-old Chinese pianist Haochen Zhang has captivated audiences in the United States, Europe and Asia with a unique combination of deep musical sensitivity, fearless imagination and spectacular virtuosity.

Zhang has already appeared with many of the world's leading festivals and concert series. He received rave reviews following his performance of Liszt's Concerto No. 1 at the BBC Proms with Yu Long and the China Philharmonic: "He made the Allegretto dance with Mendelssohnian lightness and Lisztian diablerie, and played the melody of the Quasi Adagio with melting softness," wrote Ivan Hewitt from *The Telegraph*.

A popular guest soloist for many orchestras in his native China, Zhang made his debut in Munich with the Munich Philharmonic and the late maestro Lorin Maazel in April 2013, preceding their sold-out tour. Zhang has also toured in China with the Sydney Symphony and David Robertson, in Tokyo, Beijing and Shanghai with the NDR Hamburg and Thomas Hengelbrock, and following a performance in December 2014 with Valery Gergiev and the Mariinsky Orchestra in Beijing, Maestro Gergiev immediately invited him to his Easter Festival in Moscow, Russia.

Highlights of the 2016-17 season include a new recital CD to be released by BIS Records in February, which includes works of Schumann, Brahms, Janáček and Liszt; extensive recital and concerto tours in Asia with performances in China, Hong Kong and Japan; return engagements with The Philadelphia Orchestra, Osaka Philharmonic and Singapore Symphony. Zhang will also give recitals in San Francisco, Palma de Malloca, Imola, Helsingborg, among others. He makes his debuts with the RTV Slovenia and Asturias Symphony Orchestras and tours Europe with the Hangzhou Philharmonic Orchestra having been their resident artist in the previous season.

In past seasons, Zhang has performed with the Philadelphia Orchestra, Munich Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, LA Philharmonic, Pacific Symphony, Kansas City Symphony, Seattle Symphony, Israel Philharmonic, Sydney Symphony, London Symphony, Japan Philharmonic, Singapore Symphony and Hong Kong Philharmonic orchestras. In recital he has performed at Spivey Hall, La Jolla Music Society, Celebrity Series of Boston, CU Artist Series, Cliburn Concerts, Krannert Center, Wolf Trap Discovery Series, Lied Center of Kansas and University of Vermont Lane Series, among others. International tours have taken him to cities including Beijing, Hong Kong, Tokyo, Tel Aviv, Berlin, Munich, Paris, Dresden, Rome, Tivoli, Verbier, Montpellier, Helsingborg, Bogota and Belgrade. Zhang is also an avid chamber musician, collaborating with colleagues such as the Shanghai String Quartet, Benjamin Beilman and is frequently invited by chamber music festivals in the U.S.

Zhang's performances at the Cliburn Competition were released to critical acclaim by Harmonia Mundi in 2009. He is also featured in Peter Rosen's award-winning documentary chronicling the 2009 Cliburn Competition, *A Surprise in Texas*. His complete competition performances are available on [www.cliburn.tv](http://www.cliburn.tv).

Zhang is a graduate of the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia where he studied under Gary Graffman. He was previously trained at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music and the Shenzhen Arts School, where he was admitted in 2001 at the age of 11 to study with Professor Dan Zhaoyi.

## THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

### THE MICHELLE F. ROHÉ DISTINGUISHED PIANISTS' 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 F. Rohé Distinguished Pianists' Fund for sponsoring our piano soloists this season.

### MIKE AND ELLIE GORDON

Pacific Symphony is deeply indebted to Mike and Ellie Gordon, who have been generous and loyal supporters of the Symphony for more than 20 years. The Gordons have endowed the Symphony's Concertmaster Chair in perpetuity, and annually support one of our classical concerts. They have our most sincere gratitude!