HOLIDAY CLASSICS: NUTCRACKER SWEET
2018-19 HAL & JEANETTE SEGERSTROM FAMILY FOUNDATION CLASSICAL SERIES

Pacific Symphony
Carl St.Clair, conductor
Markus Groh, piano

Brahms
PIANO CONCERTO NO. 2
Allegro non troppo
Allegro appassionato
Andante
Allegretto grazioso
Markus Groh

Vaughan Williams
FANTASIA ON A THEME BY THOMAS TALLIS

Intermission

Tchaikovsky
SELECTIONS FROM TCHAIKOVSKY’S THE NUTCRACKER
AND ARRANGEMENTS OF TCHAIKOVSKY’S MUSIC BY
DUKE ELLINGTON AND BILLY STRAYHORN
Overture – Original & Ellington/Strayhorn Versions
March of the Toy Soldiers – Original
Sugar Rum Cherry – Ellington/Strayhorn
Trepak (Russian Dance) – Original
Volga Vouty – Ellington/Strayhorn
Coffee (Arabian Dance) – Original
Tea (Chinese Dance) – Original
Toot Toot Tootie Toot – Ellington/Strayhorn
Dance of the Reed Flutes – Original
The Waltz of the Flowers/Dance of the Floreadores – Original & Ellington/Strayhorn

Preview talk with Alan Chapman at 7 p.m.
Thursday, December 6, 2018 @ 8 p.m.
Friday, December 7, 2018 @ 8 p.m.
Saturday, December 8, 2018 @ 8 p.m.
Segerstrom Center for the Arts
Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall

This performance is generously sponsored by the Michelle F. Rohé Distinguished Pianists Fund.

This concert is being recorded for broadcast on Sunday, Feb. 24, 2019, at 7 p.m. on Classical KUSC.
JOHANNES BRAHMS: 
PIANO CONCERTO NO. 2

When Brahms began sketching themes for his Piano Concerto No. 2 in 1878, he was 44 years old and already a revered composer. Despite his relatively young age, he was adopting the posture of a grand old man of music, urson and curmudgeonly. Yet he remained sensitive to public and critical opinion, harboring a nervousness he never really outgrew. Even successes did not put him at ease—much less the very unenthusiastic reception that his first piano concerto had received in 1859, when Brahms, still in his mid-20s, was already a respected pianist.

His nerves are evident in the long time he spent developing his second piano concerto and his almost superstitious reluctance to discuss it except in ironic terms. Three years after he began composing it, he described it in a letter to his friend Elisabeth von Herzogenberg as “a tiny little piano concerto with a wisp of a scherzo.” Hardly! It was, as he well knew, one of the most expansive and ambitious concertos since Beethoven’s “Emperor,” and its scherzo—anything but wispy—poses interpretive hurdles for any pianist who attempts it. Like Beethoven, whose shadow he couldn’t seem to escape, Brahms was once again pushing a classical form beyond its traditional boundaries.

The concerto made its way into the world gradually, first in a two-piano version (A-B-A-C-A-B-A). It brings the concerto to a grandly scaled rondo of seven parts, with a playful, even stormy. In contrast with Beethoven’s concerto and his almost superstitious reluctance to discuss it except in ironic terms, Brahms was acutely aware that it was the most grandly scaled concerto since Beethoven’s, and his self-effacing comments on it only emphasize the burden of music history he felt. Ellington, too, reached back about 70 years in adapting Tchaikovsky’s Nutcracker. In composing his Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis, the 20th-century English composer Ralph (pronounced “Rafe”) Vaughan Williams was inspired by sacred music dating from 1557 by Thomas Tallis—his hymn “Why Fumeth in Fright?,” the third of nine chants Tallis compiled for the Archbishop of Canterbury in that year.

Tallis was one of the greatest composers England ever produced, and fortunately for the monarchs he served—from Henry VIII to Elizabeth I—he was long-lived and prolific. Vaughan Williams encountered the Tallis psalm settings early in his career, while editing a new English hymnal. His setting of Tallis’ chant was an immediate success when it premiered in 1910 at England’s annual Three Choirs Festival, and it remains one of Vaughan Williams’ most popular works.

As we listen to the Fantasia, reverberations of Elizabethan England seem to surround us. In its orchestration we can hear the influence of Vaughan Williams’ studies with Maurice Ravel, one of the greatest of all orchestral colorists. With the originality and boldness of youth, Vaughan Williams scored the Fantasia for

Johannes Brahms
Born: 1833. Hamburg, Germany
Died: 1897. Vienna, Austria

Piano Concerto No. 2
Composed: 1881

World premiere: Nov. 9, 1881, with the Budapest Philharmonic Orchestra and Brahms as soloist

Most recent Pacific Symphony performance: Sept. 23, 2012, with Andre Watts as soloist

Instrumentation: 2 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons; 4 horns, 2 trumpets; timpani; strings; solo piano

Estimated duration: 46 minutes

Ralph Vaughan Williams
Born: 1872. Gloucestershire, England

Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis
Composed: 1910

World premiere: Sept. 10, 1910, at Gloucester Cathedral, with Vaughan Williams conducting

Most recent Pacific Symphony performance: Feb. 27, 1987, with Carl St.Clair conducting

Instrumentation: strings

Estimated duration: 15 minutes
three string ensembles of differing sizes to play simultaneously: a full string section, a group of nine players, and a quartet. Hearing this unusual tripartite scoring transports us to the resonant listening spaces of the great English cathedrals. It is a listening experience to be cherished that cannot be duplicated at home.

**PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY/EDWARD KENNEDY “DUKE” ELLINGTON SELECTIONS FROM THE NUTCRACKER**

Tchaikovsky's entry into the world of ballet came in 1875 with the commission for Swan Lake. He was inspired by the French composer Leo Delibes, whose innovative scores for the ballets Coppélia (1870) and Sylvia (1876) showed that the music for danced dramas could be more interesting than had earlier been supposed. But the scenarios for those ballets were less ambitious than those for Swan Lake and The Sleeping Beauty. By the time Tchaikovsky received the commission for The Nutcracker, in 1890, he was Russia's most esteemed composer and had surpassed Delibes by sheer necessity. Compare the scope of Coppélia and The Nutcracker: both are based on stories by E.T.A. Hoffmann and include magical toys. But Coppélia unfolds as a modest, rustic romance with a twist, while The Nutcracker lays far heavier emphasis on fantasy, magic and the imagination. Its ambitious scenario is like an international travelogue.

Since the 1960s, productions of The Nutcracker have been a holiday staple in cities throughout America, and its music is equally popular in the concert hall. But neither Tchaikovsky nor his critics were easy on it. "Tchaikovsky did not think highly of the music he wrote for The Nutcracker," the authoritative 1980 edition of The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians tells us, "rightly ranking it below that of The Sleeping Beauty." Still, Tchaikovsky appreciated its appeal well enough to compose an orchestral suite based on 20 of its most popular numbers. And so did the great Duke Ellington, America's incomparably debonair genius of jazz.

Ellington led his famous orchestra from the keyboard for five decades, a remarkable achievement for any maestro, introducing jazz compositions that have become classics and presenting them with sophistication and verve. Behind the scenes, his longtime collaborator was the equally remarkable Billy Strayhorn, a brilliantly talented composer and arranger who was classically trained. It was Strayhorn who, in 1960, came up with the improbable idea of a swingin’ adaptation of Tchaikovsky’s Nutcracker.

In composing for the ballet, Tchaikovsky was hemmed in by numbers and colleagues with competing interests on the production team. But instead of counting frames or seconds of film elapsed, he was expected to cue a dramatic leap or precisely time a mimed sequence to fit the dancers’ needs and limits. His rhythms and tempos had to conform to the demands of choreographic convention, and his seemingly inexhaustible gift for melodic invention was tailored to fit dance steps. Strayhorn and Ellington’s inspired adaptation liberates The Nutcracker from the musical confines of ballet choreography. Listen as Tchaikovsky’s tunes explode with the rhythms of jazz, which shift the beat within the bar, and with imported jazz harmonies. The result? The “Dance of the Reed Pipes” becomes “Toot Tootie Toot;” the “Waltz of the Flowers” becomes the “Dance of the Floreadores” and the “Chinese Dance” becomes “Chinoiserie” (note Ellington’s elegant French touches); the “Arabian Dance” becomes a witty “Arabesque Cookie;” and most famously, the beloved “Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy” becomes a suggestive “Sugar Rum Cherry.” Care for a canapé with that highball?

Like Mozart’s Magic Flute, Duke Ellington’s adaptation of The Nutcracker proves that fairy tales are not just for kids. Reaching across the decades, Strayhorn and Ellington have added a very grown-up dimension to a child-friendly favorite.

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.
The 2018-19 season marks Music Director Carl St.Clair’s 29th 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-budgeted 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. In April 2018, St.Clair led Pacific Symphony in its Carnegie Hall debut, as the finale to the Hall’s yearlong celebration of pre-eminent composer Philip Glass’ 80th birthday. He led Pacific Symphony on its first tour to China in May 2018, the orchestra’s first international tour since touring Europe in 2006. The orchestra made its national PBS debut in June 2018 on “Great Performances” with Peter Boyer’s *Ellis Island: The Dream of America*, conducted by St.Clair. Among St.Clair’s many creative endeavors are the highly acclaimed American Composers Festival, which began in 2000; and the opera initiative, “Symphonic Voices,” which continues for the eighth season in 2018-19 with Puccini’s *Madame Butterfly*, following the concert-opera productions of *The Magic Flute*, *Aida*, *Turandot*, *Carmen*, *La Traviata*, *Tosca* and *La Bohème* in previous seasons.

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 featured 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 Matinées, OC Can You Play With Us?, arts-X-press and Class Act.
Pianist Markus Groh gained immediate world attention after winning the Queen Elisabeth International Competition in 1995, the first German to do so. Since then his remarkable “sound imagination” and astonishing technique have confirmed his place among the finest pianists in the world. Sharing the same birthday with Alfred Brendel, Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli and Maurizio Pollini, he has proven himself worthy of their company.

During the current season, Groh made his debut with the National Symphony Orchestra of Costa Rica under Carl St.Clair, performing the Brahms Piano Concerto No. 1. Later this season, he returns to the U.S. on tour with the Berlin Philharmonic Piano Quartet, in the Morgan Library Chamber Music Series. In 2019-20, he will make a debut with the National Symphony of Colombia, as well as return appearances with the Omaha Symphony and the National Symphony Orchestra of Costa Rica.


Among the conductors with whom Groh has collaborated are Jesus López Cobos, Andreas Delfs, Ivan Fischer, Miguel Harth-Bedoya, Marek Janowski, Neeme Järvi, Fabio Luisi, Ludovic Morlot, Kent Nagano, Jonathan Nott, David Robertson, Kwamé Ryan and Stefan Sanderling.

A spellbinding recitalist, Groh draws from the piano shapes, textures, and colors that one seldom hears in live performance. In addition to his stunning debut on the Hayes Piano Series at Kennedy Center in 2013, he has appeared at the Friends of Chamber Music Denver, Friends of Chamber Music Kansas City, Vancouver Recital Society, and several times at The Frick Collection in New York. Chamber music activities include regular tours with the Tokyo String Quartet and the newly founded Berlin Philharmonic Piano Quartet.

Widely acclaimed for his interpretations of Liszt, an all-Liszt CD (including the Totentanz and B Minor Sonata) was released by AVIE in 2006. Showered with rave reviews, it was also named “Editor’s Choice” in Gramophone Magazine. In the words of the Philadelphia Inquirer, “Among the pianists laying claim to Liszt as a central figure in their repertoires, Groh’s fingers and sense of comprehension set a new modern standard.” A highly acclaimed all-Brahms CD was released by AVIE in June of 2008. Other recordings include a CD of Debussy, Prokofiev, and Britten cello sonatas with Claudio Bohórquez on Berlin Classics and a CD of Liszt’s Totentanz with the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, conducted by Fabio Luisi on Cascavelle.

A frequent guest at international festivals such as Grant Park, Festival Cultural de Mayo/Mexico, La Folle Journée, Ruhr, Ludwigsburg, Bad Kissingen and the Schubertiade, Groh is the founder and artistic director of the Bebersee Festival near Berlin. He has appeared frequently on radio and television throughout Europe, and in Japan (NHK), Mexico, Canada and the United States (NPR).

Groh was a student of professor Konrad Richter in Stuttgart and professor Hans Leygraf in Berlin and Salzburg. He has recently been named professor of piano at the University of the Arts in Berlin.
Pacific Symphony, led by Music Director Carl St.Clair for the last 29 years, has been the resident orchestra of the Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall for over a decade. Currently in its 40th season, the Symphony is the largest-budgeted orchestra formed in the U.S. in the last 50 years and is recognized as an outstanding ensemble making strides on both the national and international scene, as well as in its own community of Orange County. In April 2018, Pacific Symphony made its debut at Carnegie Hall as one of two orchestras invited to perform during a yearlong celebration of composer Philip Glass' 80th birthday, and the following month the orchestra toured China. The orchestra made its national PBS debut in June 2018 on “Great Performances” with Peter Boyer’s Ellis Island: The Dream of America, conducted by St.Clair. Presenting more than 100 concerts and events a year and a rich array of education and community engagement programs, the Symphony reaches more than 300,000 residents— from school children to senior citizens.

The Symphony offers repertoire ranging from the great orchestral masterworks to music from today’s most prominent composers. Eight seasons ago, the Symphony launched the highly successful opera initiative, “Symphonic Voices,” which continues in February 2019 with Puccini’s Madame Butterfly. It also offers a popular Pops season, enhanced by state-of-the-art video and sound, led by Principal Pops Conductor Richard Kaufman. Each Symphony season also includes Café Ludwig, a chamber music series; an educational Family Musical Mornings series; and Sunday Matinées, an orchestral matinée series offering rich explorations of selected works led by St.Clair.

Founded in 1978 as a collaboration between California State University, Fullerton (CSUF), and North Orange County community leaders led by Marcy Mulville, the Symphony performed its first concerts at Fullerton’s Plummer Auditorium as the Pacific Chamber Orchestra, under the baton of then-CSUF orchestra conductor Keith Clark. Two seasons later, the Symphony expanded its size and changed its name to Pacific Symphony Orchestra. Then in 1981-82, the orchestra moved to Knott’s Berry Farm for one year. The subsequent four seasons, led by Clark, took place at Santa Ana High School auditorium where the Symphony also made its first six acclaimed recordings. In September 1986, the Symphony moved to the new Orange County Performing Arts Center, and from 1987-2016, the orchestra additionally presented a Summer Festival at Irvine Meadows Amphitheatre. In 2006, the Symphony moved into the Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall, with striking architecture by Cesar Pelli and acoustics by Russell Johnson—and in 2008, inaugurated the Hall’s critically acclaimed 4,322-pipe William J. Gillespie Concert Organ. The orchestra embarked on its first European tour in 2006, performing in nine cities in three countries.

The 2016-17 season continued St.Clair’s commitment to new music with commissions by pianist/composer Conrad Tao and former composer-in-residence Narong Prangcharoen. Recordings commissioned and performed by the Symphony include the release of William Bolcom’s Songs of Lorca and Prometeus in 2015-16, Richard Danielpour’s Toward a Season of Peace and Philip Glass’ The Passion of Ramakrishna in 2013-14; and Michael Daugherty’s Mount Rushmore and The Gospel According to Sister Aimee in 2012-13. In 2014-15, Elliot Goldenthal released a recording of his Symphony in G-sharp Minor, written for and performed by the Symphony. The Symphony has also commissioned and recorded An American Requiem by Danielpour and Fire Water Paper: A Vietnam Oratorio by Goldenthal featuring Yo-Yo Ma. Other recordings have included collaborations with such composers as Lukas Foss and Toru Takemitsu. Other leading composers commissioned by the Symphony include Paul Chihara, Daniel Catán, James Newton Howard, William Kraft, Ana Lara, Tobias Picker, Christopher Theofanidis, Frank Ticheli and Chen Yi.

In both 2005 and 2010, the Symphony received the prestigious ASCAP Award for Adventurous Programming. Also 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 Symphony’s award-winning education and community engagement programs benefit from the vision of St.Clair and are designed to integrate the orchestra and its music into the community in ways that stimulate all ages. The Symphony’s Class Act program has been honored as one of nine exemplary orchestra education programs by the National Endowment for the Arts and the League of American Orchestras. The list of instrumental training initiatives includes Pacific Symphony Youth Orchestra, Pacific Symphony Youth Wind Ensemble and Pacific Symphony Santiago Strings. The Symphony also spreads the joy of music through arts-X-press, Class Act, Heartstrings, OC Can You Play With Us?, Santa Ana Strings, Strings for Generations and Symphony in the Cities.
The musicians of Pacific Symphony are members of the American Federation of Musicians, Local 7.