SPRING CONCERT
PACIFIC SYMPHONY YOUTH ORCHESTRA

Roger Kalia, conductor

Rogerson

LUMINOSITY

Pause

Shostakovich

SYMPHONY NO. 5 IN D MINOR
Moderato
Allegretto
Largo
Allegro non troppo

Monday, March 23, 2020 @ 7 p.m.
Segerstrom Center for the Arts
Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall

This evening’s performance is generously sponsored by an Anonymous Donor and Pacific Life Foundation.
Chris Rogerson: Luminosity

Born in Amherst, New York, Chris Rogerson (born 1988) is making a name for himself in music circles, both at home and abroad. Educated at Curtis Institute of Music, Yale University School of Music and Princeton University, his music has been performed by some of the world’s most prestigious instrumentalists and ensembles. Among his many distinguished awards and achievements, he served as composer-in-residence at the Amarillo Symphony from 2014–17 and at the Lake George Music Festival from 2017–18. He is also one of two composers for the Manhattan Chamber Players and co-founded Kettle Corn New Music in New York, where he serves as co-artistic director. He is currently on the faculty at Curtis.

Luminosity, written in 2010, was commissioned by the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra. The piece was commissioned in honor of Paul Ferington’s 25th anniversary of conducting at the Buffalo Philharmonic. As a close friend of Ferington, the composer stated, Ferington “is one of those rare people whose joy for life is contagious to every person around him.” In Luminosity, Rogerson expresses Ferington’s joyful personality through music.

Dmitri Shostakovich: Symphony No. 5

Born in St. Petersburg to a comfortably upper-middle-class family, Dmitri Shostakovich (1906–75) is now generally considered the greatest symphonist of the mid-twentieth century. He enjoyed a fairly comfortable background—his father served as a senior administrator at the Institute of Weights and Measures in St. Petersburg, and the family lived in relative luxury—they had two cars, a dacha, servants, a German tutor and a nanny at their disposal. Shostakovich attended private school from 1915 until 1919, where his classmates included children of the intelligentsia. Beginning in 1919 he attended Gymnasium (the higher-level high school common in the German- and Slavic-speaking world).

Music was a constant presence in the Shostakovich home. The family owned a piano, and Shostakovich was introduced to opera in 1915 when he attended Rimsky-Korsakov’s Tale of Tsar Saltan. He began formally studying music in the same year and was playing simple pieces by Haydn and Mozart within a month of starting. He soon enrolled in a private music school and began composing his own music.

Despite the young musician’s budding talents, the teacher at Shostakovich’s music school was unimpressed by his early compositions. As a result, Shostakovich began studying piano privately with his mother’s former piano teacher at St. Petersburg Conservatory. Shostakovich soon formally enrolled in the conservatory as a piano major, where his course of study included ear training, harmony, orchestration, fugue, form, violin, conducting and composition.

When Shostakovich was a student there, the conservatory was still heavily influenced by the legacy of its former director Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, who had imbued its composition department with history and academicism. At the same time, Shostakovich was active in composition student circles, meeting in the school’s cafeteria to discuss the latest developments by Western composers, which introduced Shostakovich to the music of Stravinsky.

This opened the door to other contemporary composers like Hindemith, Bartok and Krenek. Thus, Shostakovich’s musical education combined a solid grounding in tradition with a healthy appreciation for artistic freedom and experimentalism.

On his graduation from the conservatory in 1926, Shostakovich failed to gain entry to the post-graduate piano program—ostensibly due to a “lack of maturity.” He considered transferring to the Moscow Conservatory but instead decided to remain at St. Petersburg and transfer into the post-graduate program in composition. In the following year, he earned a position as a semi-finalist in a prestigious piano competition and decided that a career as a concert pianist would be unfeasible. Although he continued performing chamber music, his compositions and a few concertos, he turned his primary attention to composing.

While his career was gaining momentum, the Russian Revolution changed important policies regarding the arts. During the first years of the Soviet Union in the 1920s under the leadership of Vladimir Lenin, it was felt that revolutionary politics should be allied with revolutionary music and art—modernist innovations in art were seen as challenging cultural norms in the same way that Bolsheviks sought to overthrow the political establishment. However, in the totalitarian country the USSR would soon become, every aspect of public and private life, including art and recreation, would eventually be subsumed by ideology. As art came to play a central role in official state ideology, tolerance for avant-garde music was short-lived.

By the 1930s, it was decided that the primary purpose of art should be to uplift people’s spirits. According to Marxism-Leninism, society functioned best when all individuals used their
talents and abilities for the common benefit. Since artists and composers received compensation from society at large, the government dictated that their works should be understandable to as many people as possible. These dictates were strictly enforced by the government. Composers were expected to write uplifting music in a simple style, reflective of either local folk traditions or the great Russian musical tradition. Difficult, modernist music was not tolerated.

In the Stalinist artistic policy that was codified in 1946 by Andrei Zhdanov, Soviet Minister of Art, Zhdanov argued that since “the people” were supporting composers, “the people” should be able to benefit from the music composers produced. Thus, he advocated (or, more accurately, forced) a style of music that would appeal to as wide an audience of peasants and workers as possible, rather than to a small audience of intellectuals. Soviet composers were strongly encouraged to emulate the “good” aspects of the great Russian tradition, particularly certain stereotyped characteristics of the music of Glinka and Tchaikovsky. Zhdanov’s policies were strictly enforced: composers who wrote music according to their proclivities instead of what the government approved saw their music banned, became ridiculed and were fired from positions.

By 1936, Shostakovich found himself at the height of national prestige and national controversy. At the ripe old age of 29, he had come to be seen as the leading composer of the Soviet Union. All this was to suddenly change. On January 28, 1936, an article entitled “Chaos instead of Music” appeared in the Orwellian-named newspaper Pravda (meaning “truth” in Russian). The editorial reviled Shostakovich for writing dissonant, “formalist” music in his opera Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk, which was “inaccessible to the masses.” Although this opera is not particularly dissonant and even was somewhat representative of the then-current official ideology, Shostakovich was heavily criticized anyway. The most likely reason was because of his huge degree of success and fame. The editorial chose this work because by singling out the most famous and influential composer in the Soviet Union, the government could prove that nobody was safe from official censure. Shostakovich was in huge trouble and had good reason to fear arrest. Accounts tell us that he kept his bags constantly packed so that he could leave at a moment’s notice. Although these stories are apocryphal, they are exaggerated only slightly if at all.

Shostakovich finished writing his Symphony No. 4 just as his music was being slammed by Soviet authorities for its “formalism.” He canceled the premiere of this highly dark, dissonant, modernist work—a work he later claimed as one of his greatest symphonies.

In 1937, Shostakovich wrote and published his Fifth Symphony. In an article for Pravda, he called this piece “a Soviet artist’s response to justified criticism.” (Although these words came in a letter signed by him, opinions differ in musicological circles as to whether they were his. Though, it is possible that Shostakovich was terrified enough to write a public apology for his earlier music.) According to the official review, his Fifth Symphony was a real improvement over the Fourth, although hardly perfect. The second movement was considered a failure because it was too dark and depressing; however, the third movement was said to be much better.

Overall, the review stated Shostakovich’s Fifth is a kind of Soviet Beethoven’s Fifth, mirroring Beethoven’s depiction of how hope overcomes despair. Furthermore, Shostakovich’s symphony was said to convey the glorious triumph of Communism over the forces of bourgeois capitalist oppression.

However, there is an alternative interpretation. Many modern critics and listeners passionately argue that the finale is not at all meant to express genuine optimism. Quite the contrary, they believe it to be the ultimate expression of ironic wit, enforced celebration, and painfully fake exuberance. To these critics, it is the expression of the worst type of pain of all—the pain of compulsory cheerfulness in the face of terror. It is the ironic recognition of a sham.

From this viewpoint, Shostakovich wrote the symphony in a way that superficially conformed to the official dictates of Socialist Realism but also contained features that would dramatically alter its interpretation. Like much of Shostakovich’s music, the Fifth Symphony includes numerous veiled references—termed “Aesopian” by Shostakovich scholars.

For example, the piece’s climax includes the same melody that the composer had used in the first movement of a song cycle based on texts by Pushkin—a controversial poet at the time.

Which one of these interpretations did Shostakovich intend? Was he a Stalinist collaborator or a closet rebel? These are some of the most hotly contested issues in musicology today. Regardless of politics or polemics, the symphony premiered on Nov. 21, 1937, to enormous success. Many audience members wept openly during the slow movement, and the applause following the finale lasted half an hour.

Many musicologists say the piece was such a resounding success because it aired emotions that were impossible to express in less abstract ways, allowing people to grieve communally over Stalin’s Great Terror of the 1930s.

Joshua Grayson, Ph.D., is an historical musicologist and graduate of the USC Thornton School of Music, and the program note annotator for Pacific Symphony Youth Ensembles.

Dmitri Shostakovich in the audience at the Bach Celebration of July 28, 1950.
Photo by Roger & Renate Rössing.
Dynamic and innovative, Indian American conductor Roger Kalia is acclaimed by the press as “one to watch.” A respected collaborator with orchestras and artists alike, in May 2019 Kalia was named Music Director of New Hampshire’s 96-year-old orchestra, Symphony NH (Symphony New Hampshire). Since July 2018 he has served as Music Director of California’s Orchestra Santa Monica. In January 2019, Kalia’s contract with the 40-year-old Pacific Symphony was extended to August 2020, and he was promoted to Associate Conductor, having served a three-year tenure as the orchestra’s Assistant Conductor and Music Director of the Pacific Symphony Youth Orchestra. August 2019 marks Kalia’s ninth season as Music Director and co-founder of the celebrated Lake George Music Festival in upstate New York.

Highlights of Kalia’s 2019-20 season include two orchestra premiers with Symphony NH: American composer Chris Roger’s Luminosity and Jacobson Aghaei’s Ascending Bird: a collaboration with pianist/composer Murray Hidary in a unique, multi-sensory concert with Orchestra Santa Monica; the Pacific Symphony’s first-ever Día de los Muertos concert featuring a variety of groups from around the community and a reprise of the successful 2018 benefit concert “From Classical to Rock,” featuring John Rzeznik of the Goo Goo Dolls, Nancy Wilson of Heart, singer/television personality Randy Jackson and Madonna’s long-time guitarist Monte Pittman with musicians from the China Philharmonic Orchestra in Beijing, China. Notable guest engagements include returns to the Spokane Symphony and to Poland’s Szczecin Philharmonic for subscription series concerts, and debuts with Ohio’s Lima Symphony and Indiana’s Evansville Philharmonic. Of note in summer 2020 is a four-concert tour of the Czech Republic and Austria with the Pacific Symphony Youth Orchestra featuring performances in Prague’s Smetana Hall and Vienna’s Musikverein.

Recent guest engagements include the symphony orchestras of Bakersfield, Redlands, Spokane, Symphony NH and Wheeling, the Camarada Chamber Orchestra, and Poland’s Szczecin Philharmonic. Past season highlights include engagements with the National Symphony Orchestra at Washington DC’s Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the Chicago Sinfonietta at Symphony Hall, the symphony orchestras of Long Beach, Adrian, Great Falls and Owensboro, and the Boise Philharmonic.

In 2011, Roger Kalia co-founded the Lake George Music Festival—an original, ground-breaking, two-week, nationally-recognized music festival that presents cutting-edge artists and composers performing classical and new music, traditional and experimental concerts, and recitals of various sizes, as well as open rehearsals, informational talks and a variety of community outreach programs. He serves as music director.

A native of New York State, Roger Kalia holds degrees from Indiana University, the University of Houston and SUNY Potsdam’s Crane School of Music. His primary mentors include David Effron, Arthur Fagen and Franz Anton Krager. Among his honors and awards are three Solti Foundation U.S. Career Assistance Awards, a Project Inclusion Conducting Freeman Fellowship with the Chicago Sinfonietta under Mei-Ann Chen, an American Academy of Conducting fellowship at the Aspen Music Festival with Robert Spano, and Second Prize in the 2011 Memphis Symphony International Conducting Competition, which led to his debut with the orchestra the following season and launched his professional career. Kalia’s early posts were with the Young Musicians Foundation (YMF) Debut Orchestra, the Charlotte Symphony and the Columbus Symphony Orchestra.

PACIFIC SYMPHONY YOUTH ORCHESTRA

Founded in 1993, Pacific Symphony Youth Orchestra (PSYO) has emerged as the premier training orchestra of Orange County. Under the artistic direction and guidance of Pacific Symphony’s renowned music director, Carl St.Clair, PSYO is quickly being recognized as one of the most outstanding youth orchestras in the country.

Representing over 24 schools in the SoCal region, PSYO offers performance opportunities to instrumentalists in grades 9-12 and is one of three Youth Ensemble programs offered by Pacific Symphony. PSYO provides members with a high quality and innovative artistic experience and strives to encourage musical and personal growth through the art of performance. Each season students enjoy an interaction with Maestro Carl St.Clair, as well as regular interactions with guest artists and professional musicians of Pacific Symphony. Students also engage in an annual weekend retreat and are offered free and discounted tickets to Pacific Symphony performances throughout the season. PSYO also enjoys international touring, including to Bulgaria in 2011 and China in 2016, with an upcoming July 2020 tour of the Czech Republic and Austria.

Each season PSYO presents a 3-concert series, generously sponsored by individual donors. Members also participate in a Side-by-Side performance with Pacific Symphony, where students perform in concert with their professional counterparts as part of Pacific Symphony’s Family Musical Mornings. Performances take place at the Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall at the Segerstrom Center for the Arts. The final performance of each season features the winner(s) of the annual concerto auditions, for which auditions are exclusive to current PSYO members.

Weekly rehearsals are held at UC Irvine between September and May each season and members are selected through annual auditions each June.
PACIFIC SYMPHONY YOUTH ORCHESTRA

Roger Kalia • Music Director

Sections listed alphabetically under principal

VIOLIN 1
Sarah Liu
acting co-concertmaster
Gabriel Tsai
acting co-concertmaster
Kaden Choi
Richard Feng
Justin Heo
Angela Huang
Rachel Kim
Stephanie Liao
Rebecca Liu
Sarah Liu
Alex Qu
Aaron To
Austin Wang
Matthew Wong
Isabella Yuan
Jayden Yeung
Sein Yun

VIOLIN II
Hannah Velez
co-principal
Mengshu Zhang
co-principal
Christian Byun
Evan Chan
Eva Chen
Annie Huang
Adam Lin
Yuqi Liu
Kevin Lu
David Min
Gloria Park
Jaemin Song
Wonyoung Song
Angela Tang
Rachel Tian
Kaley Wong
Curtis Yang
Hannah Zhao

VIOLA
Sol Choi
co-principal
Chris Lee
co-principal
Kristina Abyad
Leo Baek
Elaine Chi
Joon Choi
Julia Im
Lexi Kim
Zoe Lee
Michael Moon
Wesley Tjangnaka
Eleas Vrahnos
Max Wang
Jonny Xi

CELLO
Sedong Hwang
principal
Timothy Chen
Jaden Kim
Madeleine Kim
Ian Lee
Chloe Lim
Tiana Lin
Amy Palm
Eric Park
Brandon Shin
Chloe Tjangnaka
Kenneth Yeh

BASS
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co-principal
Jun Yun
co-principal
Carly Bunim
Kathy Chun
Tara Nguyen
Cody Nakatsuksa
Chris Sterling
Sean Treichler

FLUTE
Jolie Fitch
principal
Amanda Lee
Karen Peng
Christina Zhou

OBOE
Esther Liu
co-principal
Annabelle Park
co-principal
Aaron Jin

CLARINET
Alex Chun
co-principal
Jay Hong
co-principal
Luis Becerra
Lawrence Chen
Heera Kamaraj

BASSOON
Austin Wegener
principal
Kevin Bae
Justin Chan
Tyler Simpson Pounçéy

FRANCEY HORN
Cassandra Jeon
principal
Katelyn Chan
William Luo
Engelbert Mejia
Yolanda Zheng

TRUMPET
Daichi Saka
principal
Ethan Kim
Justine Sato
Jordan Sitea

TROMBONE
Leo Sui
principal
Terrance Cowley
Grant Penderghast

BASS TROMBONE
Kylie Heidal

TUBA
Johnathan Stetson
principal

PIANO
Benjamin Kim
principal

HARP
Lois Hansen

PERCUSSION
Sean Yan
principal
Justin Ahn
Chris Gaw Gonzalo
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Joshua Qin

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Sammi Lee
Youth Orchestra & Santiago Strings
Manager
Maranda Li
Pacific Symphony Youth
Ensembles Intern

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Pacific Academy
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