



2024-25 Hal & Jeanette Segerstrom  
Family Foundation Classical Series

# RACHMANINOFF & BEETHOVEN

Preview Talk at 7 p.m.  
KUSC midday host Alan Chapman  
Thursday, Sept. 26, 2024 @ 8 p.m.  
Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 @ 8 p.m.  
Saturday, Sept. 28, 2024 @ 8 p.m.

Carl St.Clair, conductor  
Claire Huangci, piano  
Pacific Symphony

**FRANK TICHELI:** *Shooting Stars*  
**RAVEL:** *Alborada del gracioso*  
**RACHMANINOFF:** *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, Op. 43*  
Claire Huangci, piano

—INTERMISSION—

**BEETHOVEN:** *Symphony No. 7 in A Major, Op. 92*  
Poco sostenuto - Vivace  
Allegretto  
Presto  
Allegro con brio

This concert is being recorded for future broadcast  
on Classical California KUSC.

Performance at the Segerstrom Center for the Arts  
Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall

The 2024-25 season piano soloists are generously  
sponsored by The Michelle F. Rohé Fund



# PROGRAM NOTES

Frank Ticheli

## ***Shooting Stars***

**Born:** 1958

**Composed:** 2003

**Premiered:** Oct. 8–9, 2003 in Segerstrom Hall, commissioned and premiered by Pacific Symphony for the opening concert of our 25th anniversary season

**Most recent Pacific Symphony performance:** Sept. 29, 2018 in the Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall with Carl St.Clair conducting

**Instrumentation:** three flutes including piccolo, two oboes, three clarinets including e-flat clarinet, two bassoons, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, one tuba, timpani, percussion, piano, and strings

**Approximate duration:** 5 minutes



American composer Frank Ticheli was Composer-in-Residence with Pacific Symphony from 1991–98. Born in 1958 in Monroe, LA, he received his doctoral and master's degrees in composition from the University of Michigan. His orchestral works have received considerable recognition in the U.S. and Europe with

performances by the Philadelphia Orchestra, Atlanta Symphony, Detroit Symphony, Dallas Symphony, American Composers Orchestra, the radio orchestras of Stuttgart, Frankfurt, Saarbrücken, and Austria, and the orchestras of Austin, Bridgeport, Charlotte, Colorado, Haddonfield, Harrisburg, Hong Kong, Jacksonville, Lansing, Long Island, Louisville, Lubbock, Memphis, Nashville, Omaha, Phoenix, Portland, Richmond, San Antonio, San Jose, Wichita Falls, and others.

In addition to composing, Ticheli has appeared as guest conductor of his music at Carnegie Hall, at many American universities and music festivals, and in cities throughout the world, including Schladming (Austria), Beijing and Shanghai, London and Manchester, Singapore, Rome, Sydney, and numerous cities in Japan. His compositions have been described as "optimistic and thoughtful" (*Los Angeles Times*), "lean and muscular" (*The New York Times*), "brilliantly effective" (*Miami Herald*) and "powerful, deeply felt, crafted with impressive flair and an ear for striking instrumental colors" (*South Florida Sun-Sentinel*).

Ticheli's music often contains no strings at all; his works for concert band are among his most widely programmed, displaying an astonishing mastery of color and texture achieved with only brasses, winds, and percussion. But he has also written many works for full orchestra that demonstrate the same coloristic skill. This is evident in *Shooting Stars*, an orchestral symphony. Representing variations of celestial light—shooting stars, the moon, and the sun—its three movements seem to glow as we listen.

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Michael Clive is a cultural reporter living in the Litchfield Hills of Connecticut. He is program annotator for Pacific Symphony and has written numerous articles for magazines and newspapers in the U.S. and U.K. and hundreds of program notes for orchestras and opera companies. [Operahound.com](http://Operahound.com)

Maurice Ravel

## ***Alborada del gracioso***

**Born:** Mar 7, 1875, in Ciboure, France

**Died:** Dec. 28, 1937, in Paris, France

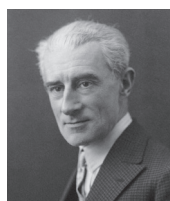
**Composed:** 1905

**Premiered:** May 17, 1919, in Paris, with Rhené-Baton conducting

**Most recent Pacific Symphony performance:** May 20, 2017 in the Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall with Carl St.Clair conducting

**Instrumentation:** three flutes including piccolo, three oboes including English horn, two clarinets, three bassoons including contrabassoon, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, one tuba, timpani, percussion, two harps, and strings

**Approximate duration:** 8 minutes



Sprightly and a bit mysterious, Ravel's intoxicating *Alborada del gracioso*—usually translated as "Morning Song of the Jester"—sparkles with the early light of a summer morning. It is the fourth movement of *Miroirs*, a five-movement suite that Ravel originally scored for solo piano and later orchestrated. He

composed it in 1905, when he was producing important work that was distinctively his own but was still highly influenced by Debussy, 13 years his senior.

Each movement of *Miroirs* is named in a concrete way. There are no literal mirrors in any of its movements, but each provides a glimpse through the musical looking glass—an evocation of something sensual that can be imagined for the way it looks, sounds, or both. In this movement we hear the mischief of the jester, a curious figure who appears throughout European painting and literature. He is Shakespeare's fool, the harlequin of commedia dell'arte, the joker in a deck of cards, and the *gracioso* depicted in Spanish paintings and stage comedies.

The writing is a miracle of fluidity. When played on the piano, it seems to require boneless hands; orchestrated, it flashes with color and light. Hearing either version, we can't imagine it existing in any other form. The *Alborada* is full of sun, sea, and sounds reminiscent of strummed guitars, all of which bewitched Ravel, here gathered episodically in a way that his biographer Alexis Roland-Manuel described as "the swooning flow of the lovelorn melodic line which interrupts the angry buzzing of guitars." To some, Roland-Manuel's reference to "angry buzzing" seems curious, but Ravel's love of Spain was a constant in his life from childhood; he grew up near the Spanish border, and his mother sang Spanish lullabies to him from infancy. Like Flamenco, the *Alborada* buzzes with energy and lilts with the soft breezes of morning. It is also a remarkable example of imitative writing, evoking the staccato spray of Flamenco guitar technique.

# PROGRAM NOTES

Sergei Rachmaninoff

## ***Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, Op. 43***

**Born:** Apr. 1, 1873, in Semyonovo, Russia

**Born:** Mar. 28, 1943, in Beverly Hills

**Composed:** 1934

**Premiered:** Nov. 7, 1934 at the Lyric Opera House in Baltimore, MD, with the composer as soloist and Leopold Stokowski conducting

**Most recent Pacific Symphony performance:** Apr. 30, 2022 in the Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall with Joyce Yang as soloist and José Luis Gomez conducting

**Instrumentation:** three flutes including piccolo, three oboes including English horn, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, one tuba, timpani, percussion, harp, and strings, and solo piano

**Approximate duration:** 22 minutes



Even though we have recordings and piano rolls of Rachmaninoff interpreting his own works, the extent of his mastery is best judged by the music itself, which he tailored to his own formidable gifts. From his compositions and from direct accounts of his performances, we know he had tremendous hands and was capable

of thundering power and speed, but that he was also a poetic, aristocratic interpreter whose subtleties in performance matched the dense layering and structural ingenuity of his compositions.

In his *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* we have a perfect convergence of all the elements of instrumental virtuosity: a melodic subject drawn from a violin caprice by Niccolò Paganini, the violinist who helped invent the very idea of the classical virtuoso superstar; an extraordinary set of 24 variations designed to showcase both compositional and performance skills; and a heroic expansion of the original melody's scale and dynamic range. There's something devilish, too, about that catchy tune upon which the variations are based...and where virtuosos of legend are concerned, the devil is often thought to be lurking in the musical shadows.

Rachmaninoff composed the *Rhapsody* in 1934, when he had already written four full-length concertos, and despite his frequent bouts of self-doubt, he had every reason to be confident of its success and formal excellence. Not just a collection of variations on a theme, the *Rhapsody* is a concertante that is formally constructed, with the 24 variations dividing themselves into three movements in which most of the variations, like Paganini's original theme, are stated and developed in A minor. The result closely resembles a concerto with traditional fast, slow, and faster movements.

Listeners who cannot quite place the formal title of the *Rhapsody* will immediately recognize Paganini's familiar main subject, which is the best-known and -loved of his set of 24 violin caprices. In Rachmaninoff's treatment of this theme, the first ten variations form an opening movement, with another theme—a quotation of the *Dies irae* theme of the Latin mass—arising in variations 7, 10, 22, and 24. Variation 11 consists of a slow, poetic transition that leads us into a slow movement that moves

gradually from D minor to D-flat minor, culminating in the most famous musical interlude in the entire *Rhapsody*, variation 18. You'll be lost in the beauties of Rachmaninoff's lush romanticism when this variation, vernal and ecstatic, soars forth, literally turning the original theme on its head—a direct inversion of Paganini's original A-minor subject. Understanding its potential popularity, Rachmaninoff is reported to have quipped “this [variation] is for my agent.”

Ludwig van Beethoven

## **Symphony No. 7**

**Born:** Dec. 1770, in Bonn, Germany

**Died:** Mar. 26, 1827, in Vienna, Austria

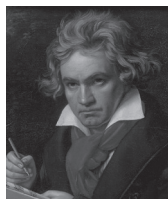
**Composed:** 1811-12

**Premiered:** Dec. 8, 1813 in the Great Hall of the University in Vienna with the composer conducting

**Most recent Pacific Symphony performance:** Dec. 7, 2019 in the Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall with Carl St.Clair conducting

**Instrumentation:** two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, timpani, and strings

**Approximate duration:** 36 minutes



When we think of Beethoven as the Promethean composer who broke boundaries and reinvented forms, his symphonies immediately come to mind; the word “fun” does not. Yet “fun” is a word often seen in critical appreciations of his seventh symphony. Its exuberance makes it seem like a symphony of joyful

first movements and exciting climaxes. Richard Wagner called it an “apotheosis of the dance;” this does not suggest that the symphony's emphatic rhythms lend themselves to particular dance steps in classical choreography, but rather that their intense energy captures the feeling of explosive, spontaneous movement. And most commentators agree that it's the propulsive beat that gets us: not the more intimate, rustic suggestions of country dances as in the *Pastorale*, but large-scale, buoyant, driving meters. Despite the appeal of this symphony's elemental melodies, its powerful rhythms are its emotional driver, thrilling us with a feeling of freedom, like riding in a convertible with the top down on an empty road.

Four years elapsed between the pastoral lyricism of Beethoven's Symphony No. 6 and his seventh symphony in 1812, a longer interval than between any of his other consecutively numbered symphonies. During that time, he suffered setbacks including his engagement to Countess Theresa Brunswick, which had been announced in 1806. But if his romantic life was in stasis, his music was progressing during this period. It saw the completion of many important chamber and theatrical works. Beethoven's engagement with the great ideas of the day, and his impulse to express them in musically dramatic terms, are reflected in his major works that we associate with Napoleon, such as the *Emperor Concerto* (No. 5) and *Eroica Symphony* (No. 3). In this context, it's worth noting that Beethoven chose another such work—“Wellington's Victory”—for the premiere of his Symphony No. 7.

# ABOUT THE ARTIST

**Claire Huangci, an American pianist of Chinese descent, was a winner of the 2018 Geza Anda Competition.** She continuously captivates audiences with her “radiant virtuosity, artistic sensitivity, keen interactive sense, and subtle auditory dramaturgy” (*Salzburger Nachrichten*). With an irrepressible curiosity and penchant for unusual repertoire, she proves her versatility with a wide range of repertoire spanning from Bach and Scarlatti via German and Russian romanticism to Bernstein, Gulda, and Corigliano.

Huangci began her international career at the age of nine with concert performances and competition victories. After studying with Eleanor Sokoloff and Gary Graffman at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, she moved to Germany in 2007 for further studies with Arie Vardi at the Hannover Musikhochschule, graduating with honors in 2016 and assisting him. Early in her artistic career, she stood out as an expressive interpreter of Chopin, winning first prizes at the European Chopin competition and US National Chopin competition in 2009 and 2010. She was also the youngest participant to receive second prize at the International ARD Music Competition in 2011. In 2019, Huangci was awarded the grand prize at the Chambre Orchestre de Paris Play-Direct academy.

Her extensive discography again shows her keen interest in a diverse pool of repertoire, with her latest albums (Mendelssohn works with Marc Bouchkov, Howard Griffiths and the Basel Chamber Orchestra as well as the complete Bach toccatas) again receiving high acclaim. In the 2022-23 season, Huangci released Mozart concertos with Howard Griffiths and the Mozarteum Orchestra Salzburg, to be released on Alpha Classics. After recording her debut CD in 2013 with solo works of Tchaikovsky and Prokofiev and her prizewinning double album of Scarlatti sonatas (German Record Critics' Award and Gramophone Editor's Choice), her solo albums included complete recordings of Chopin's *Nocturnes* and Rachmaninoff's *Préludes*, followed by her first chamber music album with Trio Machiavelli in 2020. Concerto recordings include Beethoven's violin concerto in his piano version with the Brandenburgisches Staatsorchester, Schubert's *Fantasy* for piano and orchestra with the Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra and Chopin and Paderewski concertos with the Deutsche Radio Philharmonie Saarbruecken.

She is a proud ambassador of the Henle Verlag.

