

RHAPSODY IN BLUE

2019-20 HAL & JEANETTE SEGERSTROM FAMILY FOUNDATION CLASSICAL SERIES

Mei-Ann Chen, conductor
Aaron Diehl, piano

Chadwick **"JUBILEE" FROM SYMPHONIC SKETCHES**

Price **DANCES IN THE CANEBRAKES**
Nimble Feet
Tropical Noon
Silk Hat and Walking Cane

Price **PIANO CONCERTO IN ONE MOVEMENT**
Aaron Diehl

Intermission

Gershwin **RHAPSODY IN BLUE**
Aaron Diehl

Gershwin **AN AMERICAN IN PARIS**

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Thursday, November 14, 2019 @ 8 p.m.
Friday, November 15, 2019 @ 8 p.m.
Saturday, November 16, 2019 @ 8 p.m.
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This concert is being recorded for
broadcast on Sunday, Feb. 16, 2019, at
7 p.m. on Classical KUSC.

PROGRAM NOTES

In looking for the connections between the important American composers George Chadwick, Florence Price and George Gershwin, we can draw a timeline from the last-born, Gershwin, straight back to the earliest, Chadwick, and extend it further, surprisingly, to Antonin Dvořák. That line has special relevance this year, the 400th anniversary of the year when Africans were first brought to the colonies in chains and the American slave trade began.

Born seven years before the Civil War's opening shots, Chadwick rose to prominence in Boston, a bastion of high culture and progressive thought that was home to the young nation's best orchestra and its leading music school, the New England Conservatory. As Chadwick went on to become an instructor and then director of the conservatory, his students went on to become the most important American composers of the 19th Century. One of the conservatory's brightest stars was an African-American woman from Arkansas named Florence Price.

George Gershwin was born in Brooklyn in 1898, eleven years after Price. Though New York lagged Boston in highbrow classical music, as a center of commerce and entertainment it was a cultural crossroads. There, in the home of the original Tin Pan Alley, every conceivable kind of music filled the air, and Gershwin absorbed everything he heard. He was fascinated by similarities between the sounds of jazz and blues and the Jewish folk songs he'd grown up with. And that, surprisingly, brings us back to Dvořák.

Dvořák had come to New York in 1892 at the invitation of the progressive-minded Jeannette Thurber to serve as director of her newly-founded National Conservatory of Music. Thurber was a strong believer in

cultural diversity, and knew Dvořák was an advocate for incorporating folk sources in classical music. For his part, Dvořák—when he heard the richness of what we now call “roots music”—was baffled by the American intelligentsia's dismissal of folk music as primitive. In interviews he insisted that the future of American music should be founded on what were called “Negro melodies,” a classification that also included American Indian tunes. “These can be the foundation of a serious and original school of composition, to be developed in the United States,” he told an interviewer in the *New York Herald*. “These beautiful and varied themes are the product of the soil. They are the folk songs of America and your composers must turn to them.” In Chadwick, Price and Gershwin, we can see that slow turn: Chadwick, strongly influenced by German composers, formal and programmatic; Price “pushing the envelope” with spiritual themes and folk idioms; and Gershwin, the autodidact, breaking rules and using jazz and blues elements without limit.

George Chadwick: “Jubilee” from *Symphonic Sketches*



Born in 1854 in Lowell, Mass., George Chadwick studied organ and music theory in Boston, and at age 22 moved to Germany for studies at the Leipzig Conservatory.

Returning to the U.S. three years later, he joined the faculty of the New England Conservatory, teaching music theory. In 1897 he was appointed

director, a post he held for almost 35 years. During that time, he emerged not only as a leader of the “New England Group” of American composers, but also as a leader in the development of American classical music, teaching composers including Horatio Parker, Henry Hadley and Frederick Converse.

Chadwick's easy way with melody and his skill as an orchestrator are evident in his “Symphonic Sketches,” a suite of four movements he composed between 1895 and 1904. Chadwick's music is often programmatic, and here each movement is keyed by a poem; the descriptively titled “Jubilee” is the first movement, and is dominated by a beautiful tune that sounds palpably American, but it also incorporates a Spanish *habanera* rhythm. Writing for the website ArtsFuse.org, commentator Jonathan Blumhofer astutely notes that the result “...smells pretty strongly of Dvořák's influence. It shares an exuberant mood and key signature with the *Carnival Overture*...” High praise, piquantly phrased.

Florence Price: “Dances in the Canebrakes” Piano Concerto in One Movement



Born in Little Rock, Ark., Florence Price had a childhood that might have resembled that of any European musical prodigy—except that she was American, black and female. When no one in

town would accept her for early music instruction, her mother gave her lessons. She graduated high school when she was 14

George Chadwick

Born: 1854. Lowell, Mass.

Died: 1931. Boston, Mass.

“Jubilee” from *Symphonic Sketches*

Composed: 1895-1904

World premiere: Feb. 7, 1908, with Karl Muck conducting

Most recent Pacific Symphony performance: April 17, 2002

Instrumentation: 2 flutes including piccolo, 2 oboes including English horn, 3 clarinets including bass clarinet, 2 bassoons; 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones; timpani; percussion; harp; strings

Estimated duration: 8 minutes

Florence Price

Born: 1887. Little Rock, Ark.

Died: 1953. Chicago, Ill.

Dances in the Canebrakes

Composed: 1953

First Pacific Symphony performance: Today

Instrumentation: 2 flutes including piccolo, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets including bass clarinet, 2 bassoons; 3 horns, 3 trumpets, 2 trombones; timpani; percussion; harp; alto sax; strings

Estimated duration: 9 minutes

Piano Concert in One Movement

Composed: 1932-34

World Premiere: 1934, with Price as soloist

First Pacific Symphony performance: Today

Instrumentation: 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons; 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 2 trombones; timpani; percussion; strings; solo piano

Estimated duration: 18 minutes

as valedictorian of her class. For advanced musical study, there was only one possible choice: the New England Conservatory, where she enrolled in 1904 and distinguished herself, earning diplomas in organ studies and education.

Price's career as a composer was, and remains, a perplexing combination of creative achievement and public neglect. In the music world, she was acclaimed, becoming the first African-American woman to have a major work performed by a major American orchestra (her first symphony, premiered by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra). But accomplishment did not bring wider recognition or financial security and to cover expenses she was forced to accompany silent film screenings and compose advertising jingles. In a 1943 letter to the conductor Serge Koussevitzky, she wrote, "I have two handicaps. I am a woman and I have some Negro blood in my veins."

"Dances in the Canebrakes" is one of Price's late works, composed the year she died and later orchestrated by the American composer William Grant Still. A canebrake can refer to any marshy stand of dense, high-growing grasses, but the title takes on added meaning when we know that Price was referring to stands of sugar cane. Her music is imbued with the African-American experience, in this case expressing the tradition of music and dance as ways of sustaining backbreaking farm work.

Price herself performed the premiere of her Piano Concerto in One Movement with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in 1934. Its title notwithstanding, the concerto proceeds in the traditional three sections, fast-slow-faster, like movements without pause—possibly reflecting Chadwick's influence. The final movement offers a juba, a folk dance popular before the Civil War.

George Gershwin

Born: 1898. Brooklyn, N.Y.

Died: 1937. Los Angeles, Calif.

Rhapsody in Blue

Composed: 1924

World Premiere: Feb. 12, 1924, with Paul Whiteman's band and Gershwin on piano

Most recent Pacific Symphony performance: April 10, 2016, with Carl St.Clair conducting

Instrumentation: 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 3 clarinets including bass clarinet, 2 bassoons; 3 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba; timpani; percussion; 2 alto sax, tenor sax; banjo; strings; solo piano

Estimated duration: 16 minutes

George Gershwin: "Rhapsody in Blue"



George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* is usually cited as the most popular and widely performed of all American classical works. Gershwin composed it as a commission for the influential

conductor Paul Whiteman, who asked him for piece with the characteristics of a classical piano concerto, but suitable for inclusion in an all-jazz concert. Scored for solo piano and jazz band, *Rhapsody in Blue* combines elements of classical music with jazz effects and formal elements including "blue notes"—especially flatted third and seventh notes of the diatonic scale.

Its premiere, when Gershwin was 25, took place in New York with the Palais Royal Orchestra under Paul Whiteman's baton. Billed as "An Experiment in Modern Music," the event attracted such luminaries as John Phillip Sousa and Sergei Rachmaninoff. The "experiment" proved long and tedious, with the audience's attention reportedly wandering until the *Rhapsody's* opening clarinet glissando brought an electrified hush to the hall. Not surprisingly, the work's melodic richness and the rhythmic drive kept everyone spellbound.

According to the account that Gershwin reported to his first biographer, Isaac Goldberg, the *Rhapsody* was inspired by a train ride he took only five weeks before the piece was due. "It was on the train, with its steely rhythms, its rattle-ty bang, that is so often so stimulating to a composer—I frequently hear music in the very heart of the noise... And there I suddenly heard, and even saw on paper—the complete construction of the *Rhapsody*, from beginning to end."

George Gershwin: "An American in Paris"

"An American in Paris" is rhapsodic and buoyant, a combination of characteristically French textures and can-can rhythms, a traditional tune or two, and Gershwin's usual melodic and harmonic inventiveness. It's not surprising that Gershwin manages to make American blues scales sound Gallic, as French composers were already using the flatted third and seventh notes of the scale in their own works. Besides, remember—this is an *American* in Paris, so we hear the Parisian scene through Yankee ears.

The work is structured in five rough sections that form a loosely arched structure, A-B-A in form. But it is best heard without an awareness of these formal elements. Gershwin's music takes us to jazz joints and dance clubs, and it begins with one of the most vivid streetscapes in all of music, an evocation of a Parisian traffic jam that is simultaneously beautiful and hilarious in its verisimilitude.

Though he was already doing well as a songwriter, he young Gershwin had so far experienced only mixed success with his serious compositions, and critics were less than enthusiastic about "An American in Paris." But its joy and piquant realism enthralled listeners. Gershwin had even brought a passel of authentic Parisian car horns for the premiere.

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An American in Paris

Composed: 1928

World Premiere: Dec. 13, 1928, at Carnegie Hall with Walter Damrosch conducting the New York Philharmonic

Most recent Pacific Symphony performance: July 20, 2014, with Carl St.Clair conducting

Instrumentation: 3 flutes including piccolo, 3 oboes including English horn, 3 clarinets including bass clarinet, 2 bassoons; 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba; timpani; percussion; celesta; alto sax, tenor sax, baritone sax; strings

Estimated duration: 16 minutes



MEI-ANN CHEN

Praised for her dynamic, passionate conducting style, Taiwanese-American conductor Mei-Ann Chen is acclaimed for infusing orchestras with energy, enthusiasm and high-level music-making, galvanizing audiences and communities alike. Music director of the MacArthur Award-winning Chicago Sinfonietta since 2011, Chen has been named principal guest conductor of Austria's Recreation Grosses Orchester Graz, and the first-ever artistic partner of Houston's River Oaks Chamber Orchestra (ROCO), both effective September 2019. She also has served as artistic director and conductor for the National Taiwan Symphony Orchestra Summer Festival since 2016. Highly regarded as a compelling communicator and an innovative leader both on and off the podium, and a sought-after guest conductor, she continues to expand her relationships with orchestras worldwide.

Upcoming highlights for 2019-20 season include debuts with Germany's NDR Radiophilharmonie and Darmstadt Staatsorchester, Interlochen Arts Festival in Michigan, Netherlands Residentie Orkest at The Hague, New York Philharmonic's Young People's Concerts, Norway's Oslo Philharmonic, Spain's Basque National Orchestra, Switzerland's Luzerner Sinfonieorchester and at Taiwan's National Kaohsiung Center for the Arts (Weiwuying, the world's largest performing arts center since 2018) with Kaohsiung Symphony Orchestra. In her ninth season as music director of the Chicago Sinfonietta, Chen returns to Styriarte's Recreation Grosses Orchester Graz for multiple programs as the new principal guest conductor and to ROCO as

the new artistic partner. Chen will also lead National Taiwan Symphony Orchestra's 2019 Summer Festival Youth Orchestra on a four concert Tour in Taiwan and Vietnam, as well as return engagements with the symphony orchestras of America's Detroit, Pacific and Tucson, Sweden's Gävle, Helsingborgs, Malmö and Norrlands Operan, and Finland's Tampere Filharmonia.

North American guesting credits include appearances with the symphony orchestras of Atlanta, Baltimore, Cincinnati, Chicago, Houston, Indianapolis, National, Nashville, Oregon, San Diego, San Francisco, Seattle, Toronto and Vancouver, to name a few. Among her overseas guesting credits are the symphonies of Austria's Tonkünstler in Vienna; BBC Scottish; Brazil's São Paulo (OSESF); Denmark's National, Aalborg, Aarhus, Odense and Copenhagen Philharmonic; Germany's Badische Staatskapelle Karlsruhe; Mexico's National; Norway's Radio and Trondheim; Sweden's Gothenburg and Norrköping; the Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra at the Concertgebouw; Switzerland's Basel; Turkey's Bilkent; and Taiwan's Philharmonic. Chen's U.S. summer music festival credits include Aspen, Grant Park, Grand Teton, Ravinia, Texas and Wintergreen.

As music director of Chicago Sinfonietta, Chen has made two recordings for Cedille Records: "Project W - Works by Diverse Women Composers" (March 2019), featuring the world premiere recordings of newly commissioned American works by Jennifer Higdon, Clarice Assad, Reena Esmail and Jessie Montgomery, and William Grant Still's orchestral arrangement of Florence Price's *Dances in the Canebrakes*; and "Delights and Dances" (June 2013) featuring world

premiere recordings of works by Michael Abels, An-Lun Huang, Randall Craig Fleischer's arrangement of Bernstein's *West Side Story* Concerto for String Quartet and Orchestra and Benjamin Lees' Concerto for String Quartet and Orchestra, featuring the Harlem Quartet. This past November, Innova Records released River Oaks Chamber Orchestra's debut album "ROCO: Visions Take Flight," praised by ArtsFuse.org as "one of those rarest of accomplishments: a contemporary music album that's a sheer joy to listen to, from start to finish." Chen, a frequent guest conductor with the orchestra, conducts the CD which features the world premiere recordings of five of the orchestra's commissioned works.

Recognized as someone who has redefined the orchestra experience, amongst Chen's honors and awards are being named one of the 2015 Top 30 Influencers by *Musical America*, (the bible of the performing arts industry); the 2012 Helen M. Thompson Award from the League of American Orchestras; Winner, the 2007 Taki Concordia Fellowship; and 2005 First Prize Winner of the prestigious Malko Competition. Chen is the recipient of several ASCAP awards for innovative programming during her tenure as the music director of Chicago Sinfonietta & Portland Youth Philharmonic in Oregon (2002-07). Chen is also conductor laureate of the Memphis Symphony Orchestra, having served as music director from 2010-16.

Born in Taiwan, Chen came to the United States to study violin in 1989 and became the first student in New England Conservatory's history to receive Master's Degrees simultaneously in both violin and conducting. She later studied with Kenneth Kiesler at the University of Michigan, where she earned a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in conducting. Chen participated in the National Conductor Preview, National Conducting Institute, Aspen American Academy of Conducting and Pierre Monteux School.



AARON DIEHL

A 34-year-old classically trained pianist and composer, Aaron Diehl has made an indelible mark on the jazz world over the last 15 years. Showing an affinity for early jazz and mid-20th century “third-stream” music, his latest evolution comes as he begins to tackle modern classical works, performing works by George Gershwin with the New York Philharmonic, Cleveland Orchestra and LA Philharmonic in the last year alone.

Diehl has collaborated with living masters ranging from NEA Jazz Master Benny Golson to 20th century classical titan Philip Glass, while establishing himself as one of the preeminent interpreters of the Great American Songbook in his own trio and with the vocalist Cécile McLorin Salvant.

Jazz critics from *The New York Times* have extolled Diehl’s “melodic precision, harmonic erudition and elegant restraint,” while the same paper’s classical critics have noted, “Mr. Diehl plays magnificently.” His meticulously conceived performances, collaborations and compositions are refreshing as his highly personal aesthetic spearheads a union of tradition and original artistry, while bounding ahead on an uncharted course.

Born in 1985 in Columbus, Ohio to a funeral director and a former Olympian turned education administrator, Diehl grew up in a nurturing musical environment. His grandfather, Arthur Baskerville, a pianist and trombonist was an early influence. He began studying classical piano at age 7, while his passion for jazz was further fueled while attending the Interlochen Arts Camp as a pre-teen, where he met the pianist Eldar Djangirov,

who exposed him to Oscar Peterson and Art Tatum recordings.

At age 17, Diehl was a finalist in Jazz at Lincoln Center’s Essentially Ellington competition, where he was noticed by Wynton Marsalis. Soon after, Diehl was invited to tour Europe with the Wynton Marsalis Septet (Marsalis has famously referred to him as “The Real Diehl.”) That Fall he would matriculate to the Juilliard School, studying with jazz pianists Kenny Barron and Eric Reed and classical pianist Oxana Yablonskaya. Diehl came to wider recognition in 2011 as winner of the American Pianists Association’s Cole Porter Fellowship, which included \$50,000 in career development and a recording contract with the esteemed Mack Avenue Records.

Diehl has been a staple of the New York jazz scene since 2007. His role as pianist and musical director for vocalist Cécile McLorin Salvant, the most arresting and authentic jazz vocalist to emerge in three decades, has enhanced his profile well beyond the jazz world.

Shortly before Salvant released her highly acclaimed “WomanChild,” which featured Diehl and his trio, the pianist released his Mack Avenue debut, “The Bespoke Man’s Narrative,” a tribute of to the sophisticated classicism of the Modern Jazz Quartet; particularly the pianist John Lewis. At the time, the New York Daily News wrote, “Diehl, a rising star of jazz piano, has an individual talent so huge that one day he may extend the jazz tradition.” The Financial Times commented, “as sharp, opulent and stylish as the title might suggest. Diehl’s fluency is remarkable and his light-but-sensuous

touch oozes class without breaking boundaries.”

Upon the release of his 2015 Mack Avenue album, “Space, Time, Continuum”—featuring special guests Golson and Joe Temperley—in some ways a reaction to the classicism of “Bespoke,” the New York Times reframed its prior appraisal. “Mr. Diehl, who once might have suggested an emissary from another time himself, has brilliantly advanced his art under current conditions.” The Irish Times noted, “his second studio album...hints at new horizons.” Golson told the Wall Street Journal, “He’s going to go the distance. He’s going to be one of the important ones.”

Diehl’s first solo album, “Live at Caramoor” (2008), was a concert recorded at the Caramoor Festival. “Live at the Players” (2010) featured two of his trios: Quincy Davis and David Wong, and Paul Sikivie and Lawrence Leathers. He won the 2012 Prix du Jazz Classique from the Académie du Jazz for “Live at the Players”; the 2013 Jazz Journalists Award for Up-And-Coming Artist, and in 2014 was the Monterey Jazz Festival Commission Artist, becoming one of the youngest artists to receive that honor. For Monterey, he composed “Three Streams of Expression,” dedicated to Lewis.

Diehl served in 2014–15 as music director for Jazz at Lincoln Center’s New Orleans Songbook series, performed in the 2014 New York premiere of Philip Glass’ complete Etudes at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, collaborated with the flamenco guitarist Dani De Morón in *Flamenco Meets Jazz* (produced by Savannah Music Festival and Flamenco Festival). He served as the inaugural artistic director of the Catskill Jazz Factory in Tannersville, N.Y.

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS:

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We are most grateful to The Nicholas Endowment for their underwriting of Garrick Ohlsson, our piano soloist for this weekend’s concerts. Through generous gifts to the Symphony’s endowment fund, the Nicholas family has established a fund that will sponsor an outstanding guest pianist in each Pacific Symphony season. In addition, the Nicholas Endowment provides an annual gift to support the Symphony’s HEARTSTRINGS program, purchasing tickets and providing transportation for underserved populations to attend Pacific Symphony Family Concerts on Saturday mornings throughout the year. For their continuing support, we are truly grateful to the Nicholas Endowment.