



2021-22 Hal & Jeanette Segerstrom Family Foundation Classical Series

YANG PLAYS RACHMANINOFF

Preview talk with Dr. Jacob Sustaita @ 7 p.m.

Thursday, April 28 @ 8 p.m.

Friday, April 29 @ 8 p.m.

Saturday, April 30 @ 8 p.m.

José Luis Gomez, conductor

Joyce Yang, piano

The 2021-22 season piano soloists are generously sponsored by:

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

PROGRAM

Carreño **Margariteña**
Pacific Symphony Premiere

Rachmaninoff **Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, Op. 43**
Joyce Yang, piano

-Intermission-

Schumann **Symphony No. 4 in D Minor, Op. 120**
Ziemlich langsam – Lebhaft
Romanze: Ziemlich langsam
Scherzo: Lebhaft
Langsam – Lebhaft

MEET THE ARTIST




Joyce Yang first came to international attention in 2005 when she won the silver medal at the 12th Van Cliburn International Piano Competition.

The youngest contestant at 19 years old, she took home two additional awards: Best Performance of Chamber Music (with the

Takács Quartet) and Best Performance of a New Work. In 2006, Yang made her celebrated New York Philharmonic debut alongside Lorin Maazel at Avery Fisher Hall along with the orchestra's tour of Asia, making a triumphant return to her hometown of Seoul, South Korea. Yang's subsequent appearances with the New York Philharmonic have included opening night of the 2008 Leonard Bernstein Festival—an appearance made at the request of Maazel in his final season as music director.

In the last decade, Yang has blossomed into an "astonishing artist" (*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*), showcasing her colorful musical personality in solo recitals and collaborations with the world's top orchestras and chamber musicians through more than 1,000 debuts and re-engagements. She received the 2010 Avery Fisher Career Grant and earned her first Grammy nomination (Best Chamber Music/Small Ensemble Performance) for her recording of Franck, Kurtág, Previn & Schumann with violinist Augustin Hadelich.

Yang's wide-ranging discography includes the world premiere recording of Michael Torke's Piano Concerto, created expressly for Yang and commissioned by the Albany Symphony. She recorded Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1 with Denmark's Odense Symphony Orchestra that *International Record Review* called "hugely enjoyable, beautifully shaped...a performance that marks her out as an enormous talent. Yang appears in the film *In the Heart of Music*, a documentary about the 2005 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition. She is a Steinway artist. 

MEET THE CONDUCTOR



The Venezuelan-born Spanish conductor José Luis Gómez was catapulted to international attention when he won First Prize at the International Sir Georg Solti Conductor's Competition in Frankfurt in September 2010, securing a sensational and rare unanimous

decision from the jury. Gómez's electrifying energy, talent and creativity earned him immediate acclaim from the Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra, where he was appointed to the position of assistant conductor, a post created especially for him by Paavo Järvi and the orchestra directly upon the conclusion of the competition. Since then he has worked with the RTVE National Symphony Orchestra of Madrid, Orquesta Filarmónica de Gran Canaria, Houston Symphony Orchestra, National Arts Centre Orchestra of Ottawa, Hamburg Symphony, Weimar Staatskapelle Orchestra, Karlsruhe Staatstheater Orchestra, Basel Sinfonietta, Orquesta Sinfónica do Porto, Castilla y León Symphony Orchestra, Grand Rapids Symphony, Alabama Symphony, the Chamber Orchestra of San Antonio, Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, the Macau Orchestra and Pomeriggi Musicali di Milano Orchestra. Maestro Gómez was the principal conductor of the Orchestra 1813 Teatro Sociale di Como between 2012-15 and is music director of the Tucson Symphony Orchestra.

PROGRAM NOTES

Inocente Carreño:
Margariteña



The spacious, sunlit sound of Inocente Carreño's composition *Margariteña* has been gaining favor among American concertgoers recently, and it is easy to hear why: the sound is exhilarating and fresh. Carreño, who died in 2016 at age 96, was a dominant figure in Venezuelan music for most of his long

life. Born in 1919 on the Venezuelan island of Porlamar, he gained prominence as an orchestral player, conductor, composer and music educator. Carreño was professor of theory and solmization at the José Angel Lamas Superior Music School for 30 years, and for 25 years was a horn player in the Symphonic Orchestra of Venezuela. He was the director of the Prudencio Essá School of Music that he founded with Antonio J. Ochoa in 1970 and was counselor minister of the permanent delegation of Venezuela to UNESCO in Paris from 1984-88. As a conductor, he led most of the symphonic orchestras in Venezuela. As a musician and composer, he received the most important distinctions granted in Venezuela, including the Venezuelan National Prize for Music in 1989.

Carreño's sound combines brilliant, sunlit textures with complex, layered rhythms and lustrous harmonies that often force close neighbors in the scale to "play together," as the brasses do in *Margariteña*. In listening to Carreño's distinctively Venezuelan music, it is interesting to compare him to the American composer John Williams; they are near-contemporaries (Williams was born thirteen years later) who won acclaim both conducting and composing for orchestras, but more importantly, their music shares irrepressible energy and a sense of optimism that seems to express a national spirit. In fact, *Margariteña* is the word for a woman from the Venezuelan island of Margarita. You can hear the sun, sea and love of country in every bar.

Sergei Rachmaninoff:

Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, Op. 43



In recent years, more than one commentator has likened Rachmaninoff's *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* to our composer's "sampling" of another's work, like a rap artist. But as listeners, we do better to remember the traditional appeal of the theme-and-variation idea, which shows what both

the composer and the performer can do across a wide range of technical challenges. Paganini had already done this with his original composition. In Rachmaninoff's dazzling treatment of this material, we have a perfect convergence of all the elements of instrumental virtuosity: a melodic subject drawn from a flashy instrumental caprice by a superstar soloist; an extraordinary set of 24 variations designed to showcase both compositional and performance skills; a heroic expansion of the original melody's scale and dynamic range; and special attention to Rachmaninoff's particular gifts as a pianist—the blazing speed and thundering power that thrilled his audiences.

Rachmaninoff was essentially a figure of the 20th century, the last of the Russian Romantics. But his sound was rooted in the 1800s and in the Russian nationalist tradition dating back to Glinka and Tchaikovsky. He trained as a performer and composer in Moscow and St. Petersburg, focusing on the piano in both disciplines. But all expectations for his future life, including his life in music, were shattered by the Russian revolution of 1917 when Rachmaninoff's aristocratic family lost their long-held estate with its traditional way of life. He became a citizen of the United States and died here while touring as a concert pianist, just three days before his 70th birthday.

Rachmaninoff composed the *Rhapsody* in 1934 when he had already written four full-length concertos. By that time, his unabashedly Romantic style was very nearly a thing of the past. But its lushness and melodic appeal were irresistible, and despite his frequent bouts of self-doubt, he had every reason to be confident of the *Rhapsody*'s success and formal excellence. Not just a collection of variations on a theme, it 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 the key of A minor. The result closely resembles a concerto: It has traditional fast, slow and faster movements, and it incorporates additional thematic materials to develop musical ideas in a formal way.

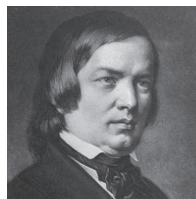
Listeners who cannot quite place the formal title of the *Rhapsody* will immediately recognize Paganini's familiar main subject, which is the best-known and -loved of his set of 24 violin caprices. It's built upon a pair of peppery A-minor phrases that sound vaguely demonic, especially on the violin. The melody starts with an emphatic A, and then, after a quick four-note figure, jumps up to E—then drops an octave to a lower E, repeats the four-note figure starting on E rather than A to arrive back where it began. This basic progression—start on the tonic, jump up a fifth, drop an octave and jump up a fourth to the tonic again—is often called "circular," and it could be repeated in an endless loop if a counterbalancing phrase didn't intervene... eventually resolving it on the same tonic note.

In Rachmaninoff's treatment of this theme, the first 10 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.” It is often played as a stand-alone work. But the entire composition, as well, has been popular since its premiere in Baltimore in 1934. At that historic performance, Leopold Stokowski was on the conductor’s podium, and Rachmaninoff was at the keyboard. When Bruno Walter led the New York Philharmonic in the Rhapsody’s first New York performance, Rachmaninoff was again the soloist. Writer Robert A. Simon commented in *The New Yorker* that “The Rachmaninoff variations, written with all the composer’s skill, turned out to be the most successful novelty that the Philharmonic Symphony has had since Mr. Toscanini overwhelmed the subscribers with Ravel’s *Boléro*.” 🌙

Robert Schumann:

Symphony No. 4 in D Minor (1851 version)



Born in the Saxon town of Zwickau (now Germany), Schumann began his musical studies at age six. After customary studies at the Zwickau Gymnasium and facing intense family pressure, he matriculated at the University of Leipzig to study law. But music continued to preoccupy him; the year before his enrollment at Leipzig,

he encountered another fantastically gifted young composer named Franz Schubert, who was nine years his senior. Inspired by Schubert’s example as well as the poems of Jean Paul Richter, Schumann began exploring song composition—to the detriment of his law studies. He turned to one of the most celebrated German piano teachers of the day, Friedrich Wieck, for intensive piano studies.

Friedrich Wieck’s daughter Clara was a nine-year-old piano prodigy when Schumann first met her; by the time he prevailed over her father’s personal and legal objections to marry her, she was 21. In the intervening years, Schumann had begun to lay the foundation for his career as a virtuoso pianist. When a hand injury foreclosed that option, he turned to piano composition: more songs and jewel-like piano pieces. It was Clara who persuaded him to look beyond the keyboard to full orchestra and to the symphony as a form.

With Clara’s encouragement and sound musical judgment, Schumann published his first symphony in 1841, the year after they married. He completed another that same year but withheld it from publication, making his Symphony No. 2 his third complete work in symphonic form. He eventually completed a fourth symphony, No. 3 in the catalogue; that second effort, published posthumously, became what we now know as his Symphony No. 4. Flush with inspiration and optimism, he had begun work on it just months after his marriage, in 1840, and completed it early in 1841. “Robert’s mind is very creative now,” Clara wrote in her diary, “and he began a symphony yesterday which is to consist of one movement, but with an Adagio and finale. I have heard nothing of it as yet, but from seeing Robert’s doings, and from hearing a D minor echoing wildly in the distance, I know in advance that this will be another work that is emerging from the depths of his soul.” Schumann revised it a decade later, adding depth to the orchestration and to the development of some of its themes. The 1851 version, which superseded the original for publication, proved one of the few points of artistic disagreement between Brahms and Clara Wieck; while Brahms greatly preferred the austere purity and lightness of the original (which had earned critical praise at its premiere with the Leipzig Gewandhaus), Clara characterized the earlier edition as inferior and unfinished. She was adamant that only the later performing edition should see print.

Schumann is sometimes called “the spirit of the Romantic era,” and in this symphony we can hear why. Many of the ideas that preoccupied Romantic poets, artists and musicians are here—among them a deep attraction to the rawness of nature, a feverish intensity, and a spirit of rebellion that questions familiar,

conventional ideas. This is most apparent in the symphony’s form, which defies the conventional grouping of four distinct movements with silence in between. Far from an arbitrary matter of musical architecture, the elimination of movement breaks reflects a unity of expression that flows through the symphony from beginning to end. Despite variations of light and dark, fast and slow, the symphony’s materials form a sort of continuous weave, and there is a fevered restlessness even in quiet moments. In this way, Schumann dared his contemporaries to think beyond their musical expectations—to listen to the fundamentals of orchestral expression harking back to earlier eras, to Bach and others who predated the symphonic “advances” of the Classical era and the monumentality of Beethoven.

Schumann’s composing career was tragically short. His bouts of clinical depression and dementia, which would be far more treatable today, drove him to attempt suicide in 1854, and he spent the remaining two years of his life in an asylum. Music history is full of what-if questions. One of the most tantalizing is suggested by Schumann’s illness, which afflicted him in both body and mind. What if it had been treatable during his lifetime? 🌙

Inocente José Carreño

Born: December 28, 1919, in Porlamar, Venezuela

Died: June 29, 2016, in Porlamar, Venezuela

Margariteña: Pacific Symphony Premiere

Composed: 1954

World Premiere: December 1954 in Caracas at the Latin American Music Festival with the composer on the podium.

Instrumentation: two flutes including piccolo, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four French horns, two trumpets, three trombones, one tuba, timpani, percussion, harp, piano and strings.

Estimated duration: 14 minutes

Sergei Rachmaninoff

Born: April 1, 1873, in Oneg, near Semyonovo, Russia

Died: March 28, 1943, in Beverly Hills, Calif.

Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, Op. 43

Composed: According to the score, the work was composed from July 3 to August 18, 1934, at the composer’s summer home, the Villa Senar in Switzerland.

World Premiere: November 7, 1934, at the Lyric Opera House in Baltimore, Md., with the composer at the piano and Leopold Stokowski conducting the Philadelphia Orchestra.

Most recent Pacific Symphony performance: September 11, 2021.

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

Estimated duration: 22 minutes

Robert Schumann

Born: June 8, 1810, in Zwickau, Saxony, Germany

Died: July 29, 1856, in Endenich, near Bonn, Germany

Symphony No. 4 in D Minor, Op. 120

Composed: Sketched in 1841 but was only fully orchestrated in 1851

World Premiere: This work received its first performance on December 6, 1841, in Leipzig, under the baton of conductor Ferdinand David. Schumann abandoned the piece, only to resurrect and revise it, eventually conducting a new premiere on March 1, 1852, in Düsseldorf.

Most recent Pacific Symphony performance: March 12, 1993.

Instrumentation: two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four French horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani and strings.

Estimated duration: 28 minutes