



2022-23 Hal & Jeanette Segerstrom Family Foundation Classical Series

BRONFMAN PLAYS SCHUMANN

Preview Talk with Alan Chapman @ 7 p.m.

Thursday, Feb. 2 @ 8 p.m.

Friday, Feb. 3 @ 8 p.m.

Saturday, Feb. 4 @ 8 p.m.

Carl St. Clair, conductor
Yefim Bronfman, piano
Pacific Symphony

This concert is generously sponsored by **E. Nakamichi Foundation**

The 2022-23 season piano soloists are generously sponsored by **The Michelle F. Rohé Fund**

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This concert is being recorded for broadcast in Summer 2023 on Classical KUSC.

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

PROGRAM

PROKOFIEV **Selections from Romeo and Juliet, Op. 64**

Montagues and Capulets

Juliet the Young Girl

Minuet

Masks

Balcony Scene

Tybalt's Death

Romeo and Juliet Before Parting

Romeo at Juliet's Tomb

-INTERMISSION-

SCHUMANN **Piano Concerto in A Minor, Op. 54**

I. Allegro affettuoso

II. Intermezzo: Andantino grazioso

III. Allegro vivace

Yefim Bronfman, piano

J. STRAUS, JR. **On the Beautiful Blue Danube, Op. 314**

ABOUT THE ARTIST



Internationally recognized as one of today's most acclaimed and admired pianists, Yefim Bronfman stands among a handful of artists regularly sought by festivals, orchestras, conductors, and recital series. His commanding technique, power, and

exceptional lyrical gifts are consistently acknowledged by the press and audiences alike.

Following summer festival appearances in Verbier and Salzburg and on tour with mezzo-soprano Magdalena Kozena, the 2022-23 season begins with the opening week of the Chicago Symphony followed by return visits to New York Philharmonic, Pittsburgh, Houston, Philadelphia, New World, Pacific, Madison, New Jersey, Toronto, and Montreal symphonies. In Europe, he will tour with Rotterdam Philharmonic and can also be heard with Berlin Philharmonic, Bayerischer Rundfunk (Munich), Bamberg, Dresden Staatskapelle, Maggio Fiorentino, and Zurich Opera orchestras.

Bronfman works regularly with an illustrious group of conductors, including Daniel Barenboim, Herbert Blomstedt, Semyon Bychkov, Riccardo Chailly, Christoph von Dohnányi, Gustavo Dudamel, Charles Dutoit, Daniele Gatti, Valery Gergiev, Alan Gilbert, Vladimir Jurowski, Zubin Mehta, Riccardo Muti, Andris Nelsons, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Sir Simon Rattle, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Jaap Van Zweden, Franz Welser-Möst, and David Zinman. Summer engagements have regularly taken him to the major festivals of Europe and the U.S. Always keen to explore chamber music repertoire, his partners have included Pinchas Zukerman, Martha Argerich, Magdalena Kožená, Anne-Sophie Mutter, Emmanuel Pahud, and many others. In 1991, he gave a series of joint recitals with Isaac Stern in Russia, marking Bronfman's first public performances there since his emigration to Israel at age 15.

Widely praised for his solo, chamber, and orchestral recordings, Bronfman has been nominated for six GRAMMY® Awards, winning in 1997 with Esa-Pekka Salonen and the Los Angeles Philharmonic for their recording of the three Bartok Piano Concerti. His prolific catalog of recordings includes works for two pianos by Rachmaninoff and Brahms with Emanuel Ax, the complete Prokofiev concerti with the Israel Philharmonic and Zubin Mehta, a Schubert/Mozart disc with the Zukerman Chamber Players, and the soundtrack to Disney's *Fantasia 2000*. His most recent CD releases are

the 2014 GRAMMY® nominated Magnus Lindberg's Piano Concerto No. 2 commissioned for him and performed by the New York Philharmonic conducted by Alan Gilbert on the Da Capo label; Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1 with Mariss Jansons and the Bayerischer Rundfunk; a recital disc, *Perspectives*, complementing Bronfman's designation as a Carnegie Hall 'Perspectives' artist for the 2007-08 season; and recordings of all the Beethoven piano concerti as well as the Triple Concerto together with violinist Gil Shaham, cellist Truls Mørk, and the Tönhalle Orchestra Zürich under David Zinman for the Arte Nova/BMG label.

Now available on DVD are his performances of Liszt's second piano concerto with Franz Welser-Möst and the Vienna Philharmonic from Schoenbrunn, 2010 on Deutsche Grammophon; Beethoven's fifth piano concerto with Andris Nelsons and the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra from the 2011 Lucerne Festival; Rachmaninoff's third concerto with the Berlin Philharmonic and Sir Simon Rattle on the EuroArts label; and both Brahms Concerti with Franz Welser-Möst and The Cleveland Orchestra (2015).

Born in Tashkent in the Soviet Union, Yefim Bronfman immigrated to Israel with his family in 1973, where he studied with pianist Arie Vardi, head of the Rubin Academy of Music at Tel Aviv University. In the United States, he studied at The Juilliard School, Marlboro School of Music, and the Curtis Institute of Music, under Rudolf Firkusny, Leon Fleisher, and Rudolf Serkin. A recipient of the prestigious Avery Fisher Prize, one of the highest honors given to American instrumentalists, in 2010 he was further honored as the recipient of the Jean Gimbel Lane prize in piano performance from Northwestern University and in 2015 with an honorary doctorate from the Manhattan School of Music.

PROGRAM NOTES

Sergei Prokofiev

Selections from *Romeo and Juliet*

Born: April 23, 1891, in Sontsivka, Ukraine

Died: March 5, 1953, Moscow, Russia

Composed: 1935

Premiered: December 30, 1938 in Brno, Czechoslovakia

Most recent Pacific Symphony performance: April 18, 2015 in the Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall with Carl St.Clair conducting

Instrumentation: three flutes including piccolo, three oboes including English horn, three clarinets including bass clarinet, three bassoons including contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, one tuba, timpani, percussion, harp, piano, celesta, tenor sax, and strings

Estimated duration: Approximately 48 minutes

Like his compatriots Tchaikovsky and Stravinsky, Sergei Prokofiev composed compelling musical narratives that work as abstract music in the concert hall without the benefit of dance or text. Just a glance at the best-known of these—*Romeo and Juliet*, *Cinderella*, and *Peter and the Wolf*—is enough to remind us of his greatness as a storyteller; the music compels us with the ebbs and flows of the unseen story as well as its sheer beauty.

The prodigiously gifted Prokofiev earned a reputation as something of a musical firebrand early in life. Just a year after beginning his formal music training at age 11 with the eminent Ukrainian-born composer Reinhold Glière, he entered the Moscow Conservatory; his written recollections of this period, as well as his early compositions, suggest that Prokofiev was not a troublemaker, but possessed a musical mind that was questing and eager to experiment with new trends in tonality, harmony, and rhythm. He signed a contract with the music publisher Boris P. Jurgenson at age 20 and at 22, met Stravinsky's patron Diaghilev in London and composed several short ballet scores for him.

Musicologists discern many possible reasons why the Soviet government allowed the young Prokofiev to travel so freely, and why he chose to return. While there is plenty of background commentary to analyze, most of it fails to consider the depth of the attachment that Russian artists seem to feel for their homeland; all too often, if they cannot be happy there, neither can they be happy anywhere else. For us, in listening to *Romeo and Juliet*, Prokofiev's travels in the early 1920s crucially gave him experience to draw upon in composing this ballet score more than a decade later. He completed most of it in 1935. The ballet was composed based on a synopsis by Adrian Piotrovsky and Sergey Radlov.

One reason for the stunning effectiveness of the



Romeo and Juliet score is Prokofiev's superb mastery in balancing lyricism and tension. The melodic appeal, the romanticism, and the sensuality of young love never flag throughout the ballet. Yet there is a sense of foreboding and darkness, too. It might have wound up a bit less dark, but things did not go exactly as planned for the composer. The ballet's original scenario included a happy ending, an invention suggested by the tenuous assumption that love's triumph would be deemed more beneficial to the Soviet people than tragedy and death—though Prokofiev offers another reason in his autobiography:

...the reasons for this bit of barbarism were purely choreographic: living people can dance, the dying cannot... After several conferences with the choreographers, it was found that the tragic ending could be expressed in the dance and in due time the music for that ending was written.

Not until 1938 was the ballet finally premiered in Brno, Czechoslovakia—without fanfare, but recomposed with a tragic ending that conforms more closely to Shakespeare's. The Russian premiere was held at the Kirov Theater in 1940.

Robert Schumann

Concerto in A Minor for Piano and Orchestra

Born: June 8, 1810, Zwickau, Germany

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

Composed: 1841 to 1845

Premiered: December 4, 1845 in Dresden, with Clara Wieck Schumann as soloist

Most recent Pacific Symphony performance: October 24, 2015 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, strings, and solo piano

Estimated duration: Approximately 31 minutes

The chronology of Schumann's Piano Concerto is straightforward enough, but the story behind it is not so simple: Schumann's only piano concerto began as a single-movement work, his *Fantasie*, composed in 1841. Then, in the spring and summer of 1845, he added two movements to create a complete concerto. His wife, the great pianist Clara Wieck, introduced the concerto at a New Year's Day concert in Leipzig in 1846.

Looking deeper, we find that the concerto is a touchstone for Schumann's creative turmoil and eventful marriage, one of the great love stories in music history. Schumann felt drawn to music but was pushed by his



family toward a legal career. He was studying at the University of Leipzig when he was drawn into the Wieck family—first as a student of Clara’s father, the revered piano pedagogue Friedrich Wieck.

When he began his lessons in 1828, Schumann was 18 and Clara, who was only 9, was a piano prodigy who had already performed publicly. Two years later, Schumann finally won his own family’s approval to prepare for a career in music, and he moved into the Wieck household. Abandoning his law studies hardly ended Schumann’s troubles. His friendship with young Clara seems to have been one of the few bright spots in a life marked by dark moods made worse by deaths in his family and by injuries to his right hand that hindered his playing. He drank heavily. Yet he somehow managed to compose prolifically, especially for the piano. And he wrote incisive, statesmanlike criticism, founding a music magazine that became known as the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*.

Clara and Robert’s friendship turned to love, but not before he became romantically involved with another of Friedrich Wieck’s pupils, one Ernestine von Fricken. Even when that entanglement ended, Friedrich Wieck objected strenuously to their engagement and blocked it with every means at his disposal. Clara and Robert finally married in 1840, and Clara, by then a renowned soloist, wanted to play a concerto by her husband—for his sake as well as her own. When his initial attempts at a concerto failed, she recognized that the *Fantasia* could be part of something larger, and it was at her urging that it became the basis of Schumann’s beautiful Concerto in A Minor.

Schumann’s style of piano composition is often described as mercurial. It seems certain that Clara Wieck, noted for the poetic subtleties of her interpretations, was the perfect pianist for his music. But concertos call for drama as well as poetry, and this one opens with a gesture that has been described as ripping away a curtain: a fusillade of chords from the piano. The boldness of this introduction clearly influenced the young Edvard Grieg in composing his own Piano Concerto in A Minor.

In transitioning from the first movement to the second, we can hear Schumann’s moodiness, which is apparent in the concerto’s extremes of color. In the second movement, an intermezzo, a melody of great delicacy takes shape, with the piano relegated mainly to accompaniment. But in the more energetic third movement, marked *allegro vivace*, the piano part shows majesty, energy, and variety. The concerto concludes by drawing together the thematic materials we have heard into a cohesive finale, climaxed by a dramatic sounding of timpani and a dramatic chord that echoes through the orchestra.

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.

Johann Strauss II

On the Beautiful Blue Danube

Born: October 25, 1825, Neubau, Vienna, Austria

Died: June 3, 1899, Vienna, Austria

Composed: 1866

Premiered: July 1, 1867 in New York

Most recent Pacific Symphony performance: April 13, 2019

in the Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall with Jean-Marie Zeitouni conducting

Instrumentation: two flutes including piccolo, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four French horns, two trumpets, one trombone, one tuba, timpani, percussion, harp, strings, and male chorus

Estimated duration: Approximately 9 minutes

Two famous composers bore the name Johann Strauss. Father and son, they vied for and traded the title of “waltz king” during their lifetimes—and, along with Johann Jr.’s brother Josef, comprised one of music history’s most successful musical dynasties. With the benefit of history, a clear consensus of listeners awards the title of waltz king to Johann Jr., even though his brother and father also wrote plenty of those lilting, quintessentially Viennese confections. Despite their rivalries, or perhaps because of them, the Strauss dynasty elevated a beloved tradition of social dancing to a way of life in Vienna that virtually defined Viennese culture during the 19th century (Johann Sr. was born in 1804, and Johann Jr. died in 1899).

Probably the best-known of all Strauss waltzes, *On the Beautiful Blue Danube* was already a familiar tune in American households before Stanley Kubrick chose it for a featured role in *2001: A Space Odyssey*. The way he used it was revelatory and indelibly memorable—both hilarious and seriously provocative. As the movie’s Pan American space-plane is shown docking with a space station, the gargantuan stateliness of these two huge mechanisms waltzing with each other transformed our view of space technology.

Americans who have not seen *2001*, if there are any, have only to visit Austria to understand the very high regard in which this glorious waltz is held. It was first performed in choral form at a concert by the Vienna Men’s Choral Association in 1867, and has been popular ever since, with the instrumental version having eclipsed several others with words. In Vienna, *An der schönen blauen Donau* is an unofficial Austrian national anthem. Despite its stateliness, Johann Jr. found a way to bring it to a rousing finish: with emphatic tonic chords emphasized by a snappy drum roll in the snares.

