



2022-23 Hal & Jeanette Segerstrom  
Family Foundation Classical Series

## GRIEG PIANO CONCERTO

Thursday, June 1 @ 8 p.m.

Friday, June 2 @ 8 p.m.

Saturday, June 3 @ 8 p.m

Teddy Abrams, conductor  
Louis Lortie, piano  
Pacific Symphony

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 on  
August 6, 2023 on Classical California KUSC.**

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

## PROGRAM

**TEDDY ABRAMS** *Overture in Sonata Form*  
*Pacific Symphony Premiere*

**GRIEG** **Piano Concerto in  
A minor, Op. 16**  
Allegro molto moderato  
Adagio  
Allegro moderato molto e marcato  
*Louis Lortie, piano*

-INTERMISSION-

**STRAVINSKY** *Petrushka (1947 version)*  
The Shrove-Tide Fair  
Petrushka's Cell  
The Moor's Cell  
The Shrove-Tide Fair  
(Towards Evening)

## ABOUT THE CONDUCTOR



**An unusually versatile musician, Teddy Abrams is the widely-acclaimed Music Director of the Louisville Orchestra and Music Director and Conductor of the Britt Festival Orchestra.**

A tireless advocate for the power of music, Abrams has fostered interdisciplinary collaborations with organizations including the Louisville Ballet, Center for Interfaith Relations, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Speed Art Museum, and Folger Shakespeare Library. His rap-opera, *The Greatest: Muhammad Ali*, premiered in 2017, celebrating Louisville's hometown hero with an all-star cast that included Rhiannon Giddens and Jubilant Sykes. Abrams' work with the Louisville Orchestra has been profiled on *CBS News Sunday Morning*, *NPR*, and in *The Wall Street Journal*.

Abrams recently collaborated with Jim James, vocalist and guitarist for My Morning Jacket, on the song cycle *The Order of Nature*, which they premiered with the Louisville Orchestra in 2018 and recorded on Decca Gold. Additional highlights of the 2019-20 season included his debut as guest conductor with Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxembourg, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, and the Celtic Connections Festival in Glasgow, and the lead role in the Kennedy Center Honors celebration of his mentor Michael Tilson Thomas.

Recent guest conducting highlights include engagements with the Los Angeles Philharmonic; the San Francisco, National, Houston, Indianapolis, Milwaukee, Vancouver, Colorado, Utah, and Phoenix Symphonies; Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra; and

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the Florida Orchestra. He served as Assistant Conductor of the Detroit Symphony from 2012-14.

From 2008 to 2011, Abrams was the Conducting Fellow and Assistant Conductor of the New World Symphony (NWS). He has conducted the New World Symphony (NWS) in Miami Beach, Washington D.C., and at Carnegie Hall, and recently returned to conduct the NWS on subscription with Joshua Bell as soloist.

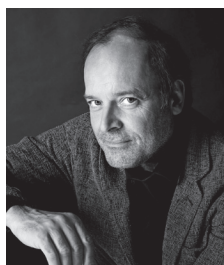
An accomplished pianist and clarinetist, Abrams has appeared as a soloist with a number of orchestras—including play-conducting the Ravel Piano Concerto with the Fort Worth Symphony in 2017 and Jacksonville Symphony in 2013—and has performed chamber music with the St. Petersburg String Quartet, Menahem Pressler, Gilbert Kalish, Time for Three, and John Adams, in addition to annual appearances at the Olympic Music Festival. Dedicated to exploring new and engaging ways to communicate with a diverse range of audiences, Abrams co-founded the Sixth Floor Trio in 2008. Together, they founded and direct GardenMusic, the music festival of the world-renowned Fairchild Tropical Garden in Miami; they continue to tour regularly throughout the U.S.

Abrams was a protégé of Michael Tilson Thomas from the age of eleven, and studied conducting with Otto-Werner Mueller and Ford Lallerstedt at the Curtis Institute of Music, and with David Zinman at the Aspen Music Festival; he was the youngest conducting student ever accepted at both institutions. Abrams is also an award-winning composer and a passionate educator. His 2009 Education Concerts with the New World Symphony (featuring the world premiere of one of Abrams' own orchestral works) were webcast to hundreds of schools throughout South Florida.

Abrams performed as a keyboardist with the Philadelphia Orchestra, won the 2007 Aspen Composition Contest, and was the Assistant Conductor of the YouTube Symphony at Carnegie Hall in 2009. He has held residencies at the La Mortella music festival in Ischia, Italy and at the American Academy in Berlin. Teddy was a proud member of the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra for seven seasons and graduated from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music with a Bachelor of Music, having studied piano with Paul Hersh.

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

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**For over three decades, French-Canadian pianist Louis Lortie has performed world-wide, building a reputation as one of the world's most versatile pianists.** He extends his interpretative voice across a broad spectrum of repertoire, and his performances and award-winning recordings attest to his remarkable musical range.

In demand on five continents, Lortie has established long-term partnerships with orchestras such as the BBC Symphony

Orchestra, BBC Philharmonic, Orchestre National de France and Dresden Philharmonic in Europe and the Philadelphia Orchestra, Dallas Symphony, San Diego Symphony, St Louis Symphony, and New Jersey Symphony in the U.S. In his native Canada, he regularly performs with the major orchestras in Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal, Ottawa, and Calgary. Further afield, collaborations include the Shanghai Symphony, Hong Kong Philharmonic, National Symphony Orchestra of Taiwan, Adelaide and Sydney Symphony Orchestras, and the Orquestra Sinfônica do Estado de São Paulo in Brazil. Regular partnerships with conductors include Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Edward Gardner, Sir Andrew Davis, Jaap Van Zweden, Simone Young, Antoni Wit, and Thierry Fischer.

In recital and chamber music, Lortie appears in the world's most prestigious concert halls and festivals, including London's Wigmore Hall, the Philharmonie de Paris, Carnegie Hall, Chicago Symphony Hall, the Beethovenfest Bonn, and Liszt Festival Raiding. Recent special projects have included performances of Liszt's complete *Années de Pèlerinage* in one evening and a complete Beethoven sonata cycle filmed at Salle Bourgie in Montreal, and broadcast on Medici TV in 2021.

Together with fellow pianist Hélène Mercier, as the Lortie-Mercier duo, he has also shed new light on the repertoire for four hands and two pianos both in the concert hall and on several best-selling recordings.

A prolific recording artist, Lortie's 30-year relationship with Chandos Records has produced a catalogue of over 45 recordings on the label, covering repertoire from Mozart to Stravinsky, including a complete Beethoven sonata cycle and the complete Liszt *Années de Pèlerinage*, which was named as one of the top ten recordings of 2012 by the *New Yorker*. His recording of the Lutoslawski Piano Concerto with Edward Gardner and the BBC Symphony Orchestra received high praise, as have his Chopin recordings. In duet with Hélène Mercier, he recorded *Carnival of the Animals* with Neeme Järvi and the Bergen Philharmonic and Vaughan-Williams' Concerto for Two Pianos as well as Rachmaninoff's complete works for two pianos. Recent recording projects include the five Saint-Saëns piano concertos with Edward Gardner and BBC Philharmonic, solo piano works by Fauré, and the complete works of Chopin. He has also recorded two acclaimed CDs with violinist Augustin Dumay for Onyx Classics.

Lortie is co-founder and Artistic Director of the LacMus International Festival on Lake Como and a Master-in-Residence at The Queen Elisabeth Music Chapel of Brussels. During his formative years in Montreal, Lortie studied with Yvonne Hubert (a pupil of the legendary Alfred Cortot), later in Vienna with Beethoven specialist Dieter Weber, and subsequently with Schnabel disciple Leon Fleisher. In 1984, Lortie won First Prize in the Busoni Competition and the same year he was a prize-winner at the Leeds Competition.

# PROGRAM NOTES

**Teddy Abrams**

## *Overture in Sonata Form*

**Born:** 1987 in Berkeley, CA

**Composed:** 2014

**Most recent Pacific Symphony performance:** This is a Pacific Symphony premiere

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

**Estimated duration:** Approximately 11 minutes

An unusually versatile musician, Teddy Abrams is the widely-acclaimed Music Director of the Louisville Orchestra and Music Director and Conductor of the Britt Festival Orchestra. A tireless advocate for the power of music, Abrams has fostered interdisciplinary collaborations with organizations including the Louisville Ballet, the Center for Interfaith Relations, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, the Speed Art Museum, and the Folger Shakespeare Library. His rap-opera, *The Greatest: Muhammad Ali*, premiered in 2017, celebrating Louisville's hometown hero with an all-star cast that included Rhiannon Giddens and Jubilant Sykes. Abrams' work with the Louisville Orchestra has been profiled on *CBS News Sunday Morning*, *NPR*, and in *The Wall Street Journal*.

Abrams' *Overture in Sonata Form* is a winning combination of boisterous energy, glistening textures heavy on brass and winds, dynamic contrasts, and spacious, wide-open melodies that sound quintessentially American, with driving, jazz-inspired rhythms that have their tap shoes on. Drawing lessons from Gershwin, Copland, Bernstein, and Thomson, Abrams thrills the ear with a sound all his own.



**Edvard Grieg**

## *Piano Concerto in A Minor, Op.16*

**Born:** June 15, 1843 in Bergen, Norway

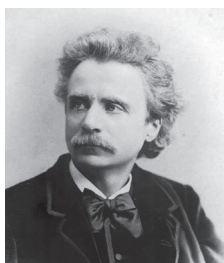
**Died:** September 4, 1907 in Bergen, Norway

**Composed:** 1868

**Premiered:** April 3, 1869 in Copenhagen, with Edmund Neupert on piano and Holger Simon Paulli conducting

**Most recent Pacific Symphony performance:** November 19, 2016 with Rune Bergmann conducting

**Instrumentation:** two flutes including piccolo, two oboes,



two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, strings, and solo piano

**Estimated duration:** Approximately 31 minutes

Edvard Grieg's sole piano concerto begins with one of the most dramatic opening statements in classical music. Even if you think you don't know this work, you will probably recognize it after just a few seconds. And if you have never heard it before, you will never forget its famous opening bars.

Given the iconic status of this concerto and Grieg's accomplishment as a pianist, it is surprising that he never finished another piano concerto. Though he was a virtuoso pianist who originally expected to make his career as a soloist, his popular Concerto in A minor is the only concerto he ever wrote. He composed it during the summer of 1868, while on holiday in the Danish town of Søllerød. And though he never finished another (he started a B-minor concerto 14 years later, but never completed it), the singularity of this concerto does not reflect a lack of commitment to the form. It is a passionate work that, together with its counterparts by Tchaikovsky, Liszt, and Schumann, has formed the cinematic ideal of the piano concerto—fiery fortissimos, thundering chords, and swirling arpeggios followed by portentous silences as the soloist's hands hang dramatically in the air.

Despite his youth, Grieg gave his concerto a grandness that made it the biggest project he ever undertook. Success attended it from the time of its premiere in Copenhagen in April of 1869. The soloist's boundless enthusiasm for the work and the fervent public reaction surely encouraged Grieg to call on the most celebrated pianist of the day, Franz Liszt. He had already contacted Grieg after hearing an early violin sonata, and conferred upon him his highest accolades for a rising composer, praising not only his creativity but also his discipline. When they were together, Liszt honored Grieg by playing a two-piano version of the sonata with him; then Liszt astonished the younger composer by improvising his own version incorporating both parts for solo piano. Grieg had brought the score of his concerto with him, but when Liszt proved eager to play through it with Grieg (two-piano arrangements were standard reductions for full-scale concertos), Grieg had to demur—he had not practiced the work enough to play it confidently.

This tantalizing predicament led to what is surely one of the most impressive and fateful incidents in the annals of musical sightreading: Liszt took the full score and played through it without advance preparation, improvising his own solo piano reduction as he went. Grieg, not a man given to exaggeration, wrote a letter describing Liszt's increasing excitement. "At the end," wrote Grieg, "he said to me... 'You carry on, my friend; you have the real stuff in you. And don't ever let them scare you!'"

This is a concerto that begins by seeming to announce its bold ambitions. The opening bars could hardly be more dramatic: a portentous drumroll in the timpani is followed

# PROGRAM NOTES

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by the furious pounding of chords that introduce the piano—after which a surprisingly calm and simple theme emerges in the orchestra, ornamented by the soloist. A second theme arises in the cellos (favored by Grieg throughout his career), with trumpets spearheading a development section. Despite the serenity of its surface, this music is deep and brooding.

In the second movement, an introspective adagio, the piano plays rhapsodically over muted strings. A sequence of trills signals the entrance of the piano, which plays until the reintroduction of a stark, jagged reintroduction of the concerto's main theme. The calmness of the adagio's opening eventually returns to the movement, leads directly into a third movement that is livelier—even rambunctious, with adventurous rhythmic groupings of 13, 22, and 27 notes. This rousing finale has a characteristically Norwegian sound, thanks to the inclusion of a Norwegian folk-dance—the 'hurling,' or 'halling'—that develops into a brisk waltz as the movement progresses. The folkly textures in the strings emulate the sound of the Hardanger fiddle, an indigenous Norwegian instrument resembling a violin. A brilliant, virtuosic cadenza brings the concerto to a close.

## Igor Stravinsky

### *Petrushka* (1947 version)

**Born:** June 17, 1882 in Saint Petersburg, Russia

**Died:** April 6, 1971 in New York, NY

**Composed:** 1911 (original version), 1947 (revised version)

**Premiered:** June 13, 1911

**Most recent Pacific Symphony performance:** June 2, 2018 with Ben Gernon 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, celesta, piano, and strings

**Estimated duration:** Approximately 40 minutes

Since late in the last millennium, your intrepid annotator has been insisting that Igor Stravinsky's place in music history has been due for re-evaluation. If we hold out for another millennium, this contention might be proven correct. Not that anyone has ever doubted Stravinsky's greatness, least of all the composer himself. For most of his life, Igor Stravinsky was the most famous composer in the world, a musical supernova whose dominance was comparable to that of Picasso in art. His great early ballet scores, including the original *Petrushka* ballet, played a key role in establishing his reputation.

Having received much of his musical education through private instruction, Stravinsky began composing ballet

scores when he was 24. At that age most ambitious young composers were years beyond conservatory, hoping to attract favorable attention from the music world. That was just what he wanted as well, and though he had published almost nothing of consequence, he was the private pupil and esteemed protégé of Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, who recognized his promise.

Stravinsky's association with Rimsky-Korsakov was a credential by itself, but the young composer had no major commissions on his docket. An improbable series of coincidences brought Stravinsky the commission for *The Firebird*, his breakthrough ballet for Serge Diaghilev's prestigious *Ballets Russes*. Suddenly, Stravinsky was in a Parisian hothouse of international talent. Diaghilev's gamble on Stravinsky paid off handsomely for both men, and its success made the composer's reputation overnight, launching a transformative musical journey that continued with *Petrushka* and the epoch-making *Sacre du printemps*.

Composed in 1910 and 1911, *Petrushka* was one of a number of scores that Stravinsky revised in 1947, by which time critics considered it a "youthful" work. As for the story of the ballet, it bears some resemblance to the familiar tale of Pinocchio, the fibbing toy that longed to be a real boy. But the music of *Petrushka* tells us a different, far more serious tale that is definitely not kids' stuff. The title character is a puppet who recurs across Europe: Punch in England, Pulcinella in Italy, Polchinelle in France, Kasperle in Germany. He's a combination of bully and victim who often resorts to trickery and violence to get his way, but comes to a pathetic end. In this case, his story is told in four dramatic scenes, starting when he is brought to life by the puppetmaster Charlatan at the Shrovetide fair. *Petrushka* falls in love with the ballerina puppet; she rejects him in favor of another animated puppet, the dashing Moor, who slays him. When his spirit rises after his death, he sees his rival's triumph and endures a kind of second death. Where was the line between life and death? Was the petty *Petrushka* somehow ennobled by love and pursuit? Was it worth it?

What we hear is a swirling mixture of giddiness and melancholy that captures the forced gaiety of the amusement park, with its somber, melancholy undertones. The music and the story put us in mind not of *Petrushka*'s fate, but of our own, and of every instance when we've felt the pangs of envy or jealousy, or the desire for revenge. Who but Stravinsky could make tawdriness sound so elegant?

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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)*