



PACIFIC SYMPHONY'S
45th
ANNIVERSARY
— A SEASON OF DISCOVERY —
CARL ST. CLAIR MUSIC DIRECTOR

SEPTEMBER
2023-24 SEASON



**Hal and Jeanette Segerstrom
Family Foundation Classical Series**

OPENING WEEKEND
A Hero's Life
September 21 - 23 2023

Welcome to Pacific Symphony's 45th Anniversary Season

We're opening Pacific Symphony's 45th anniversary season with one of the greatest tone poems of all times: Richard Strauss's *Ein Heldenleben*, "A Hero's Life." When I think about it, the life of Pacific Symphony is truly heroic. The Symphony's meteoric rise in just 45 short years is really unprecedented in the pantheon of American orchestras, and we can all be very proud of it. Most of the credit is not only due to the orchestra's great musicians but also to *your* continued support.

To some, a 45th anniversary might sound old, but in the life of symphony orchestras, we're still like adolescents. In the short life of Pacific Symphony, we have grown to become the largest orchestra formed in America in the last half century! It's due to a consistency of philosophy: We've had only two music directors and two executive directors, and that's kept us on an important mission of becoming your orchestra. Music enhances the beautiful life we live in Orange County. Great music contributes to our existence, to the beauty and meaning of that life. And that's been an important part of our mission.

We've never taken our eyes off the prize of where Pacific Symphony fits in the world of music. We commissioned works. We performed in Europe in 2006, we opened a new hall at Segerstrom Center for the Arts that same year. We had a PBS special, performed in Carnegie Hall, and toured China. We've recorded CDs and created music that is truly ours. At each turn, those endeavors have been lauded and applauded by the musical world at large and also by you. We always strive to be the beacon of artistic achievement of Orange County.

As we embark on our 45th season, brimming with the exhilarating promise of Strauss's *Ein Heldenleben* and so much more, let us not forget the incredible journey that's brought us here. Our story is a tapestry woven from the unyielding commitment of our musicians, the steady vision of our leadership, and the invaluable support from you, our audience. Whether you've been with us since our first downbeat or are joining us for the first time, you are an essential part of our symphonic narrative—a narrative that speaks to the power of music to unite, inspire, and elevate the human spirit. With deep gratitude and an eagerness for the musical adventures that await, I invite you to partake in this celebratory season. Together, let us write the next chapter in Pacific Symphony's truly heroic journey. Thank you for making us your orchestra. Here's to making more beautiful music together.



Carl St.Clair
Music Director

2023-24

A Season of Discovery

It is with tremendous excitement and anticipation that we welcome you to Pacific Symphony's 45th anniversary and the opening night of the Hal and Jeanette Segerstrom Family Foundation Classical Series. As we look back on our rewarding journey with you, our beloved audience, it is equally important that we continue to move forward, exploring new horizons. In light of this spirit of adventure, our theme for the 2023-24 season is aptly named, "A Season of Discovery."

The world of classical music is vast and diverse, brimming with undiscovered masterworks and moments of serendipity. This season promises to offer precisely those moments. We invite you to discover new talents as we introduce eight dynamic conductors from around the world, each offering a captivating approach to collaborative and interpretive music-making. From the grandeur of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony to the passion of Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto, from the soul-stirring melodies of Dvorák's Symphony No. 9 to a fresh staging of Puccini's timeless *La Bohème*, every performance promises a refreshing escape from the ordinary.

For our opening weekend concerts, Carl St.Clair conducts an inspiring program titled "A Hero's Life," featuring a work of the same name by Richard Strauss. This is a work that was heroically performed on a memorable and critically acclaimed tour of Austria, Germany, and Switzerland by Pacific Symphony and Carl in 2006.

Throughout history, music has celebrated the hero's journey—its trials, tribulations, and triumphs. This program delves deep into the essence of what it means to be heroic, both in the grandeur of symphonic sound and the intricacies of individual narratives. It serves as a testament to the power of music to uplift, inspire, and heal.

In keeping with our theme, we'd urge you to pause and watch the captivating lobby video featuring our own musicians. Listen as they passionately discuss their musical heroes—those figures who've left an indelible mark on their lives, and by extension, on ours as well. These narratives draw a touching parallel to the heroism in music that we're exploring this season.



Before concluding, we wish to acknowledge the real-life heroes of Pacific Symphony—You! You are our dedicated audiences, donors, and volunteers. Your unwavering commitment to our mission, investment in music education, community programming, and artistic achievement makes you an indispensable part of our legacy. We owe our existence, growth, and every standing ovation to you. Thank you!

Tonight, as we launch a historic season, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Hal and Jeanette Segerstrom Family for their leadership support and dedication to Pacific Symphony. They have recently renewed their support for this series for seven years through the end of the decade! Their generosity has enabled us to create a platform for extraordinary musical experiences, and their legacy continues to inspire us as we embark on this exciting journey.

Here's to a season of fresh experiences, timeless music, and shared stories. Together, let's embark on a journey of discovery, and celebrate the hero in all of us!

Warm regards,

Arthur Ong, Chairman
Board of Directors

John Forsyte
President & CEO

Conducting Through Time: From Beethoven to Bernstein

During the 2023-24 season I'm conducting four subscription concerts: opening weekend's "A Hero's Life" by Richard Strauss and closing weekend's Beethoven's Ninth; Brahms Symphony No. 1 in February, as well as our opera of the year, Puccini's *La Bohème* in April. I want to talk a little bit about why I put those on my 34th season and the orchestra's 45th.

When I was a student at the University of Texas at Austin, I was under the tutelage and mentorship of Dr. Walter Ducloux. I commented to him that one day I hoped to claim my rightful lineage from him going back to the great Arturo Toscanini, who Ducloux had worked closely with. He took me by the shoulders and pulled me very close, saying "My dear young man, I think I forgot to tell you that my closest friend in Vienna when I was a student there, played in the cello section for Johannes Brahms."

So what does that actually mean? That means when I shook hands with Dr. Ducloux—who shook hands with his friend in Vienna, who then shook hands with Johannes Brahms after a rehearsal and says, "Maestro Brahms, thank you for a great rehearsal"—I was only three handshakes away from a great master of the German Romantic tradition!

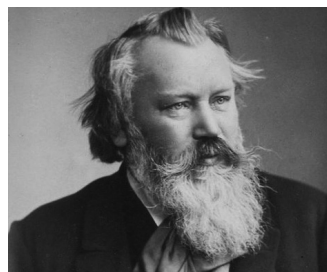
I realized at the very beginning of my career that I needed to discover, cherish, and really bring to the forefront this musical heritage. Shortly after finishing my training with Dr. Ducloux, I worked closely with Leonard Bernstein. On Aug. 19, 1990, I conducted the last concert of Bernstein's life as a conductor. I remember that Bernstein had filled in for Bruno Walter, who was a close friend of Gustav Mahler. When I conduct Mahler, I'm literally only two handshakes away from that composer.

I'm conducting Puccini's *La Bohème* and Arturo Toscanini premiered that work. I am so close to all this music, even though I'm eons away in time. All of these great mentors that I've had—all important heroes for me—have really contributed to who I am as an artist. When I conduct the music of Richard Strauss, I have to remember Dr. Ducloux heard Richard Strauss conduct his own works in Munich.

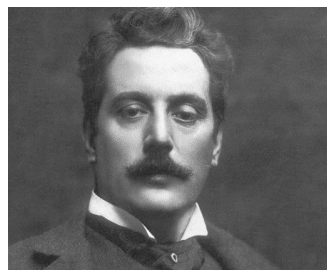
As we delve into the richness of this season, it's worth reflecting on the extraordinary tapestry of connections that tie us to the very origins of the music we love. My journey through the world of conducting has afforded me the incredible privilege of being only a few handshakes away from the titans of the 19th-century Romantic era. Through mentors like Dr. Walter Ducloux and Leonard Bernstein, I've inherited a lineage that connects me to the very souls who breathed life into these masterpieces. When I take to the podium to lead Pacific Symphony through the works of Strauss, Beethoven, Brahms, or Puccini, know that you're not just hearing notes—you're experiencing a living tradition, a reverberating echo from the past, rendered vivid and immediate through our collective musicianship.

In each performance, my hope is that we bridge time and space, connecting you not just to the music but also to the very essence of its creators. Thank you for being an essential part of this ongoing musical conversation.

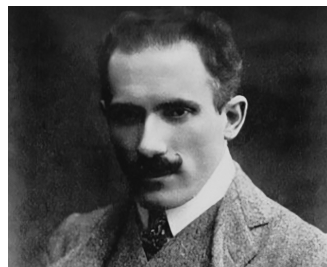
Carl St. Clair
Music Director



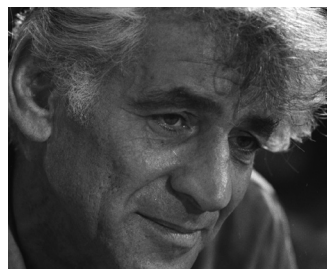
JOHANNES BRAHMS



GIACOMO PUCCINI



ARTURO TOSCANINI



LEONARD BERNSTEIN



WALTER DUCLOUX

Music Director Carl St.Clair

The 2023-24 season marks Music Director Carl St.Clair's 34th year leading Pacific Symphony. St.Clair is one of the longest-tenured conductors of the major American orchestras. St.Clair's lengthy history solidifies the strong relationship he has forged with the musicians and community. His continuing role also lends stability to the organization and continuity to his vision for the Symphony's future. Few orchestras can claim such rapid artistic development as Pacific Symphony—the largest-budgeted orchestra formed in the United States in the last 50 years, due in large part to St.Clair's leadership.

During his tenure, St.Clair has become widely recognized for his musically distinguished performances, his commitment to building outstanding educational programs, and his innovative approaches to programming. In April 2018, St.Clair led Pacific Symphony in its sold-out Carnegie Hall debut, as the finale to the Carnegie's yearlong celebration of preeminent composer Philip Glass' 80th birthday, ending in a standing ovation with *The New York Times* calling the Symphony "a major ensemble!" He led Pacific Symphony on its first tour to China in May 2018, the orchestra's first international tour since touring Europe in 2006. The orchestra made its national PBS debut in June 2018 on *Great Performances* with Peter Boyer's *Ellis Island: The Dream of America*, conducted by St.Clair. Among St.Clair's many creative endeavors are the highly acclaimed American Composers Festival, which began in 2000, and the opera initiative, "Symphonic Voices," which has included concert-opera productions of *Madama Butterfly*, *The Magic Flute*, *Aida*, *Turandot*, *Carmen*, *La Traviata*, *Tosca*, and *La Bohème* in previous seasons.

St.Clair's commitment to the development and performance of new works by composers is evident in the wealth of commissions and recordings by the Symphony. The 2016-17 season featured commissions by pianist/ composer Conrad Tao and composer-in-residence Narong Prangcharoen, a follow-up to the slate of recordings of works commissioned and performed by the Symphony in recent years. Other commissions include John Wineglass' *Alone Together* (2021), William Bolcom's *Songs of Lorca and Prometheus* (2015-16), Elliot Goldenthal's *Symphony in G-sharp Minor* (2014-15), Richard Danielpour's *Toward a Season of Peace* (2013-14), Philip Glass' *The Passion of Ramakrishna* (2012-13), and Michael Daugherty's *Mount Rushmore*, and *The Gospel According to Sister Aimee* (2012-13). St.Clair has led the orchestra in other critically acclaimed albums including two piano concertos of Lukas Foss, Danielpour's *An American Requiem*, and Goldenthal's *Fire Water Paper: A Vietnam Oratorio* with cellist Yo-Yo Ma. Other commissioned composers include James Newton Howard, Zhou Long, Tobias Picker, Frank Ticheli, Sir James MacMillan, Chen Yi, Curt Cacioppo, Stephen

Scott, Jim Self (Pacific Symphony's Principal Tubist), and Christopher Theofanidis.

In 2006-07, St.Clair led the orchestra's historic move into its home at the Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall at Segerstrom Center for the Arts. The move came on the heels of the landmark 2005-06 season that included St.Clair leading the Symphony on its first European tour—nine cities in three countries playing before capacity houses and receiving extraordinary responses and reviews. From 2008-10, St.Clair was general music director for the Komische Oper in Berlin. He also served as general music director and chief conductor of the German National Theater and Staatskapelle (GNST) in Weimar, Germany, where he led Wagner's *Ring Cycle* to critical acclaim. He was the first non-European to hold his position at the GNST; the role also gave him the distinction of simultaneously leading one of the newest orchestras in America and one of the oldest in Europe.

In 2014, St.Clair became the music director of the National Symphony Orchestra in Costa Rica. His international career also has him conducting abroad several months a year, and he has appeared with orchestras throughout the world. St.Clair has led the Boston Symphony Orchestra (where he served as assistant conductor for several years), New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, and the San Francisco, Seattle, Detroit, Atlanta, Houston, Indianapolis, Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver symphonies, among many.

Carl St.Clair is a strong advocate of music education for all ages and is internationally recognized for his distinguished career as a master teacher. He has been essential to the creation and implementation of the Symphony's education and community engagement programs including Pacific Symphony Youth Ensembles, Heartstrings, Sunday Matinees, OC Can You Play With Us?, *arts-X-press*, and *Class Act*. In addition to his professional conducting career, St.Clair has worked with most major music schools across the country. In 2018, Chapman University President Danielle Struppa appointed St.Clair as a Presidential Fellow, working closely with the students of the College of the Performing Arts at Chapman University. St.Clair has been named "Distinguished Alumni in Residence" at the University of Texas Butler School of Music beginning 2019. And, for over 25 years, he has had a continuing relationship with the USC Thornton School of Music where he is artistic leader and principal conductor of the orchestral program.





Pacific Symphony, led by Music Director Carl St.Clair for the last 34 years, has been the resident orchestra of the Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall since 2006.

Currently in its 45th season, the Symphony is the largest orchestra formed in the U.S. in the last 50 years and is recognized as an outstanding ensemble making strides on both the national and international scene, as well as in its own community of Orange County. In April 2018, Pacific Symphony made its debut at Carnegie Hall as one of two orchestras invited to perform during a yearlong celebration of composer Philip Glass' 80th birthday, and the following month the orchestra toured China. The orchestra made its national PBS debut in June 2018 on *Great Performances* with Peter Boyer's *Ellis Island: The Dream of America*, conducted by St.Clair. Presenting more than 100 concerts and events each year and a rich array of education and community engagement programs, the Symphony reaches more than 300,000 residents—from school children to senior citizens.

The Symphony offers repertoire ranging from the great orchestral masterworks to music from today's most prominent composers. Just over a decade ago, the Symphony launched the highly successful opera initiative, "Symphonic Voices," which continues in April 2024 with Puccini's *La Bohème*. It also offers an in-demand Pops season, enhanced by state-of-the-art video and sound, led by celebrated pops conductors. Each season also includes Café Ludwig, a chamber music series; an educational Family Musical Mornings series; and Sunday Matinees, an orchestral matinee series offering rich explorations of selected works led by St.Clair.

Founded in 1978 as a collaboration between California State University, Fullerton (CSUF) and North Orange County community leaders led by Marcy Mulville, the Symphony performed its first concerts at Fullerton's Plummer Auditorium as the Pacific Chamber Orchestra, under the baton of then-CSUF orchestra conductor Keith Clark. Two seasons later, the Symphony expanded its size and changed its name to Pacific Symphony Orchestra. Then, in 1981-82, the orchestra moved to Knott's Berry Farm for one year. The subsequent four seasons, led by Clark, took place at Santa Ana High School auditorium where the Symphony also made its first six acclaimed recordings. In September 1986, the Symphony moved to the new Orange County Performing Arts Center, and from 1987-2016, the orchestra additionally presented a Summer Festival at Irvine Meadows Amphitheatre. In 2006, the

Symphony moved into the Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall, with striking architecture by Cesar Pelli and acoustics by Russell Johnson. In 2008, the Symphony inaugurated the hall's critically acclaimed 4,322-pipe William J. Gillespie Concert Organ. The orchestra embarked on its first European tour in 2006, performing in nine cities in three countries.

Recordings commissioned and performed by the Symphony include the release of William Bolcom's *Songs of Lorca* and *Prometheus* (2015-16), Richard Danielpour's *Toward a Season of Peace*, Philip Glass' *The Passion of Ramakrishna* (2013-14), as well as Michael Daugherty's *Mount Rushmore* and *The Gospel According to Sister Aimee* (2012-13). In 2014-15, Elliot Goldenthal released a recording of his Symphony in G-sharp Minor, written for and performed by the Symphony. The Symphony has also commissioned and recorded *An American Requiem* by Danielpour and *Fire Water Paper: A Vietnam Oratorio* by Goldenthal featuring Yo-Yo Ma. Other recordings have included collaborations with such composers as Lukas Foss and Toru Takemitsu. Other leading composers commissioned by the Symphony include Paul Chihara, Daniel Catán, James Newton Howard, William Kraft, Ana Lara, Tobias Picker, Christopher Theofanidis, Frank Ticheli, John Wineglass, Sir James Macmillan, and Chen Yi.

In both 2005 and 2010, the Symphony received the prestigious ASCAP Award for Adventurous Programming. Also in 2010, a study by the League of American Orchestras, *Fearless Journeys*, included the Symphony as one of the country's five most innovative orchestras. The Symphony's award-winning education and community engagement programs benefit from the vision of St.Clair and are designed to integrate the orchestra and its music into the community in ways that stimulate all ages. The Symphony's Class Act program has been honored as one of nine exemplary orchestra education programs by the National Endowment for the Arts and the League of American Orchestras. The list of instrumental training initiatives includes Pacific Symphony Youth Orchestra, Pacific Symphony Youth Wind Ensemble, Pacific Symphony Santiago Strings, and new this season, Pacific Symphony Youth Concert Band. The Symphony also spreads the joy of music through *arts-X-press*, Class Act, Heartstrings, OC Can You Play With Us?, Santa Ana Strings, Strings for Generations, *Symphony on the Go!*, and Symphony in the Cities.

Pacific Symphony

Carl St.Clair • Music Director

William J. Gillespie Music Director Chair

Enrico Lopez-Yañez • Principal Pops Conductor

Hal and Jeanette Segerstrom Family Foundation Principal Pops Conductor Chair

Richard Kaufman • Principal Pops Conductor Laureate

Jacob Sustaita • Assistant Conductor

Mary E. Moore Family Assistant Conductor Chair

FIRST VIOLIN

Dennis Kim

*Concertmaster;
Eleanor and Michael Gordon
Chair*

Yoomin Seo

Associate Concertmaster

Jeanne Skrocki

*Assistant Concertmaster
Arlene and Seymour Grubman
Chair*

Michael Siess

Christine Frank

Kimiyo Takeya

Ayako Sugaya

Ann Shiau Tenney

Joanna Lee+

Robert Schumitzky

Agnes Gottschewski

Dana Freeman

Julie Ahn

Paul Manaster

SECOND VIOLIN

Vacant*

*Elizabeth and John Stahr
Chair*

Jennise Hwang**

Yen Ping Lai

Yu-Tong Sharp

Ako Kojian

Linda Owen

Sooah Kim

MarlaJoy Weisshaar

Alice Miller-Wrate

Shelly Shi

Hanbyul Jang+

VIOLA

Meredith Crawford*

*Catherine and James Emmi
Chair*

Victor de Almeida**

Carolyn Riley

John Acevedo

Adam Neeley+

Hanbyul Jang

Julia Staudhammer

Joseph Wen-Xiang Zhang

Cheryl Gates

Phillip Triggs

CELLO

Warren Hagerty*

*Catherine and James Emmi
Chair*

Benjamin Lash**

Tianlu Xu

Robert Vos

László Mező

Ian McKinnell

M. Andrew Honea

Jennifer Goss

Rudolph Stein

Emma Lee

BASS

Vacant*

Douglas Basye**

Christian Kollgaard

David Parmeter

Andrew Chilcote

David Black

Andrew Bumatay

Constance Deeter

FLUTE

Benjamin Smolen*

Valerie and Hans Imhof Chair

Sharon O'Connor

Cynthia Ellis

PICCOLO

Cynthia Ellis

OBOE

Jessica Pearlman

Suzanne R. Chonette Chair

Ted Sugata

ENGLISH HORN

Lelie Resnick

CLARINET

Robert Walker*

*The Hanson Family Founda-
tion Chair*

David Chang

Charlie and Ling Zhang Chair

BASS CLARINET

Joshua Ranz

BASSOON

Rose Corrigan*

Ruth Ann and John Evans Chair

Elliott Moreau

Andrew Klein

Allen Savedoff

CONTRABASSOON

Allen Savedoff

FRENCH HORN

Keith Popejoy*

Adedeji Ogunfolu

Kaylet Torrez**

TRUMPET

Barry Perkins*

Susie and Steve Perry Chair

Tony Ellis

David Wailes

TROMBONE

Michael Hoffman*

David Stetson

BASS TROMBONE

Vacant

TUBA

James Self*

TIMPANI

Todd Miller*

PERCUSSION

Robert A. Slack*

HARP

Michelle Temple

The Sungaila Family Chair

PIANO/CELESTE

Vacant

DIRECTOR OF ORCHESTRA PERSONNEL

Craig Hahn

LIBRARIAN

Alison Spaeth

* Principal
** Assistant Principal
+ On Leave

The musicians of Pacific
Symphony are members of
the American Federation of
Musicians, Local 7.



EIGHTH BLACKBIRD

2022-23 Hal & Jeanette Segerstrom
Family Foundation Classical Series

A HERO'S LIFE

Thursday, Sept. 21, 2023 @ 8 p.m.

Friday, Sept. 22, 2023 @ 8 p.m.

Saturday, Sept. 23, 2023 @ 8 p.m.

Carl St. Clair, conductor

Eighth Blackbird

Pacific Symphony

SUNDAY MATINEE

Sunday, Sept. 24, 2023 @ 3:00 p.m.

This performance is *Ein Heldenleben* only.

Carl St. Clair, host/conductor

Pacific Symphony

PROGRAM

- MOZART *Symphony No. 32 in G Major, K. 318*
Allegro spiritoso
Andante
Tempo primo
- VIET CUONG *Vital Sines*
Eighth Blackbird
- INTERMISSION-
- STRAUSS *Ein Heldenleben, TrV 190, Op. 40*

OFFICIAL
TV STATION



OFFICIAL
HOTEL

AVENUE OF THE ARTS
COSTA MESA
—
TRIBUTE PORTFOLIO

OFFICIAL
RADIO STATION



**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 & Lobby*

ABOUT THE ARTISTS



Eighth Blackbird, hailed as “one of the smartest, most dynamic ensembles on the planet” (*Chicago Tribune*), began in 1996 as a group of six entrepreneurial Oberlin Conservatory students and continues today under the leadership of founding members Lisa Kaplan (executive director) and Matthew Duvall (artistic director).

Eighth Blackbird has won four GRAMMY® Awards for “Best Small Ensemble/Chamber Music Performance” over its 25-year history and has become “a brand-name defined by adventure, vibrancy, and quality” (*Detroit Free Press*). It has commissioned and premiered hundreds of works by established and emerging composers, including Steve Reich’s Pulitzer Prize-winning Double Sextet and works by Andy Akiho, Viet Cuong, Bryce Dessner, Jennifer Higdon, Amy Beth Kirsten, David Lang, Nico Muhly, Carlos Sanchez-Guittierez, Julia Wolfe, Xuan, and Pamela Z. Through performances in its Chicago home base and at venues across the U.S. and around the world, Eighth Blackbird has brought innovative presentations of works by living composers to tens of thousands of music lovers.

The ensemble’s extensive recording history, primarily with Chicago’s Cedille Records, encompasses more than a dozen acclaimed albums. Its most recent release, *Singing in the Dead of Night*, written for Eighth Blackbird by Michael Gordon and Pulitzer Prize winners David Lang and Julia Wolfe, was released on Cedille Records in 2020 and was

described by *Cleveland Classical* as “propulsive, chaotic, and remarkably poignant.” 2019’s *When We Are Inhuman* (7d03d/Secretly Canadian), was a collaboration with The National’s Bryce Dessner and Will Oldham (aka Bonnie ‘Prince’ Billy) that features new arrangements by Lisa Kaplan, who also co-produced the album with Dessner. Other collaborations with some of today’s most well-regarded artists include heralded performers such as Dawn Upshaw and Jeremy Denk, seminal composers such as Philip Glass and Nico Muhly, and genre-fluid composers and performers Dessner, Oldham, Gustavo Santaolalla, Pamela Z, Arcade Fire’s Richard Reed Parry, Justin Vernon of Bon Iver, My Brightest Diamond frontwoman Shara Nova, and Iarla Ó Lionáird of The Gloaming.

In addition to its GRAMMY® Awards, Eighth Blackbird’s many honors include winning the 1998 Concert Artists Guild Competition; pioneering a year-long residency at the Museum of Contemporary Art—Chicago in 2016, during which the ensemble served as a living installation with open rehearsals, performances, guest artists, and public talks; receiving the prestigious MacArthur Award for Creative and Effective Institutions and Chamber Music America’s inaugural Visionary Award; and being named Musical America’s 2017 Ensemble of the Year.

The name “Eighth Blackbird” derives from the eighth stanza of Wallace Stevens’s evocative, imagistic poem, *Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird*: “I know noble accents / And lucid, inescapable rhythms; / But I know, too, / That the blackbird is involved / In what I know.”

ABOUT THE COMPOSER



Called “alluring” and “wildly inventive” by *The New York Times*, the “irresistible” (*San Francisco Chronicle*) music of Vietnamese-American composer Viet Cuong (b. 1990) has been commissioned and performed on six continents by musicians

and ensembles such as the New York Philharmonic, Eighth Blackbird, Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, Sō Percussion, Alarm Will Sound, Atlanta Symphony, Sandbox Percussion, Albany Symphony, PRISM Quartet, Orchestra of St. Luke’s, and Dallas Winds, among many others. Cuong’s music has been featured in venues such as Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, the Kennedy Center, National Gallery of Art, and Library of Congress, and his works for wind ensemble have amassed several hundreds of performances worldwide, including at Midwest, WASBE, and CBDNA conferences. He was recently featured in *The Washington Post*’s “21 for ‘21: Composers and performers who sound like tomorrow.”

In his music, Cuong enjoys exploring the unexpected and whimsical, and he is often drawn to projects where he can make peculiar combinations and sounds feel enchanting or oddly satisfying. His notable works thus include concerti for tuba and dueling oboes, percussion quartets utilizing wine glasses and sandpaper, and pieces for double reed sextet, cello octet, and solo snare drum. This eclecticism extends to the range of musical groups he writes for, and he has worked closely with ensembles ranging from middle school bands to GRAMMY®-winning orchestras and chamber groups. Passionate about bringing these different facets of the contemporary music community together, his recent works include *Vital Sines*, a concerto for Eighth Blackbird and the U.S. Navy Band, and *Re(new)al*, a concerto for percussion quartet with a variety of ensemble accompaniments. He is the California Symphony’s 2020–23 Young American

Composer-in-Residence, as well as Pacific Symphony’s current Composer-in-Residence.

Cuong is an Assistant Professor of Music Composition and Theory the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. He holds degrees in music composition from Princeton University (MFA/PhD), the Curtis Institute of Music (Artist Diploma), and the Peabody Conservatory (BM/MM). His mentors include Jennifer Higdon, David Serkin Ludwig, Donnacha Dennehy, Steve Mackey, Dan Trueman, Dmitri Tymoczko, Kevin Puts, and Oscar Bettison. During his studies, he held the Daniel W. Dietrich II Composition Fellowship at Curtis, Naumburg and Roger Sessions Fellowships at Princeton, and Evergreen House Foundation scholarship at Peabody, where he was also awarded the Peabody Alumni Award (the Valedictorian honor) and Gustav Klemm Award.

A scholarship student at the Aspen, Bowdoin, and Lake Champlain music festivals, Cuong has been a fellow at the Orchestra of St. Luke’s DeGaetano Institute, Minnesota Orchestra Composers Institute, Mizzou International Composers Festival, Eighth Blackbird Creative Lab, Cabrillo Festival’s Young Composer Workshop, Cortona Sessions, and Copland House’s CULTIVATE workshop. Cuong has held artist residencies at Copland House, Yaddo, Ucross, the Atlantic Center for the Arts, and at Dumbarton Oaks, where he served as the 2020 Early-Career Musician-in-Residence. His music has been awarded the Barlow Prize, Frederick Fennell Prize, Walter Beeler Memorial Prize, Barlow Endowment Commission, ASCAP Morton Gould Composers Award, Theodore Presser Foundation Award, Suzanne and Lee Ettelson Composers Award, Cortona Prize, New York Youth Symphony First Music Commission, and Boston GuitarFest Composition Prize.

COMPOSER'S NOTE: VIET CUONG ON VITAL SINES

It would be difficult to overstate just how important the wind ensemble has been in my life.

Band was where I found community and identity during a time in my youth when I feared that there was nothing out there for me. In fact, it was one of the only places during those teenage years where I felt confident in who I was. And it was ultimately this confidence that gave me the nerve to believe that I could one day make it as a composer. But my life in the wind ensemble world almost never was. I very nearly gave up my musical pursuits in a fit of childhood frustration at the age of 11. My father, though he had no musical ability himself, saw in it something important. Always one to look after my creativity, he steadied me and encouraged me to give it more time. It was not long before he was proven right, and music had become something vital to me.

I find myself thinking of that crucial moment more and more since my father's passing last year, and how music was and remains my vital connection to him. In the last weeks of his life—spent in the disorienting whirl of the ICU—I often struggled to speak. But when I could not, I would play him the pieces of mine that I knew were his favorites, hoping that the sounds, the sine waves, could find their way to his consciousness. Since his death, I have come to understand that my love for music is inseparable from the love I have for him. I still catch myself wanting to call him and play him my latest efforts.

This one, *Vital Sines*, is dedicated to my father's memory as the guardian of my musical life, as well as the many moments during my life when I found sanctuary in music. The creation of this particular piece, though challenging, was a way of finding solace when I needed it most. Throughout the piece, I employ several musical sequences and chaconne forms, all of which use repetition as a means of development. The overarching structure of the piece thus bears a resemblance to the visual depiction of the sine wave, rising and falling like the tracing of breaths and heartbeats. There is of course comfort in the familiarity of continued repetition. But I also followed memories back to my teenage years in Band, when that community had the extraordinary ability to not just bring me comfort but heal my heart. What I then realized was that all the other musical communities I have become a part of since then, Band or not, hold this same healing power.

With this concerto for Eighth Blackbird and the US Navy Band, I am tremendously honored to bring together the Wind Band and New Music communities, both vital to me and so many others. Thank you to Eighth Blackbird and the U.S. Navy Band for giving me an opportunity that I dreamed of for many years, as well as for your patience as I navigated this time in my life. Finally, thank you to my father for helping me find my way all those years ago. This one's for you.



VIET CUONG, RIGHT, WITH MUSIC DIRECTOR CART ST. CLAIR, AT THE "RE(NEW)AL" PREMIERE LAST SEASON.

PHOTO COURTESY OF PACIFIC SYMPHONY/DOUG GIFFORD

PROGRAM NOTES

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart Symphony No. 32 in G Major, K. 318

Born: January 27, 1756 in Salzburg, Austria

Died: December 5, 1791 in Vienna, Austria

Composed: 1779

Most recent Pacific Symphony performance: June 5, 2010

Instrumentation: Two flutes, two oboes, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, timpani, and strings



Mozart composed his Symphony No. 32 when he was 22 years old, a mature artist composing masterpieces at an astonishing rate. The year was 1779, and he had returned from the extended trip to Paris that he and his father had planned to further his career; the results were not as they'd hoped, though the tour did produce his "Paris" Symphony, No. 31. His relocation from Salzburg to Vienna, similarly motivated, was still two years away.

If we look for possible influences on the development of No. 32, they can be summed up in two words: "opera" and "daddy." Opera was a lifelong preoccupation for Mozart, and the chief obstacle between him and opera was his father, who opposed the idea of young Wolfgang writing for the stage too soon. When his son was only eight years old, Leopold wrote that Mozart "constantly has an opera running in his head, which he wants to perform in Salzburg with all sorts of young people." At age 21 he was still telling his father "I have only to hear people discuss an opera, I have only to be in a theater, to hear tuning-up—Oh! I am quite beside myself right away!" The following year, when they left for Paris, his feelings had hardly subsided. "Don't forget my wish to write operas," he wrote to Leopold. By the time he composed this symphony, his obsession with opera was finally bearing fruit: His first major operatic commission, a chaotic rom-com called *La finta giardiniera* ("The Phony Gardener") finally came in 1774; after that, *le déluge*. Many musicologists believe that the Symphony No. 32 began life as an overture for an opera. Alfred Einstein, an eminent 20th-century Mozart scholar, believed that it was certainly intended for Mozart's unfinished opera *Zaide*, which he was also working on around that time.

But Alfred Einstein died in 1952, before the era of digital archiving and online research, and today the evidence is still not conclusive. Some critics

cite the fast-slow-fast pattern of the symphony's uninterrupted movements, which fit the pattern of a Classical Italian overture. But that pattern is also customary for Classical symphonies. To your intrepid annotator, the most compelling arguments are the symphony's irrepressible buoyancy and brevity, which would serve well in a curtain-raiser. It's non-stop entertainment, and at a typical playing time of eight to ten minutes, it's short for a Mozart symphony but long for an overture—suggesting that it may have been repurposed from one form to the other. It could certainly fit George Bernard Shaw's description of Mozart's overture for *Le nozze di Figaro*: music that makes us eager to hear more. After the symphony's formal opening chords, which function like a theatrical call to order, the mood is playful and the orchestration abundant for its era.

Viet Cuong Vital Sines for Wind Ensemble and Orchestra World Premiere Scoring

Born: 1990

Premiered: April 9, 2022 with the U.S. Navy Band and Eighth Blackbird

Most recent Pacific Symphony performance: This is an orchestral version premiere by Pacific Symphony

Instrumentation: Two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, one tuba, timpani, percussion, and strings



Originally conceived as a concerto for the progressive ensemble Eighth Blackbird and the U.S. Navy Band, *Vital Sines* now receives its world premiere as scored for full orchestra. Composed by Pacific Symphony's Composer-in-Residence Viet Cuong, the work is dedicated to his father. This is a richly emotional work that expresses homage with forceful energy and beauty.

As was the case with Wolfgang and Leopold Mozart, Viet Cuong matured as a musician whose chief influence was his father. But their respective relationships were mirror opposites of each other: where Leopold Mozart was himself an accomplished composer who sought to manipulate and exploit his son's development, Viet Cuong's father was interested

PROGRAM NOTES

not so much in music as in supporting his son's independent creative spirit and his autonomy in life. On his website, Viet Cuong comments movingly on his father's nurturing influence:

Always one to look after my creativity, [my father] steadied me and encouraged me to give it more time...I find myself thinking of that crucial moment more and more since my father's passing...and how music was and remains my vital connection to him. In the last weeks of his life—spent in the disorienting whirl of the ICU—I often struggled to speak. But when I could not, I would play him the pieces of mine that I knew were his favorites, hoping that the sounds, the sine waves, could find their way to his consciousness. Since his death, I have come to understand that my love for music is inseparable from the love I have for him. I still catch myself wanting to call him and play him my latest efforts.

Praised as “alluring” and “wildly inventive” by *The New York Times* and “irresistible” by the *San Francisco Chronicle*, Cuong's music has been commissioned and performed on six continents by musicians and ensembles such as the New York Philharmonic, the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, and many others. It has been featured in venues such as Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, the Kennedy Center, National Gallery of Art, and Library of Congress, and his works for wind ensemble have amassed hundreds of performances worldwide, including at Midwest, WASBE, and CBDNA conferences. He was featured in *The Washington Post*'s “21 for '21: Composers and performers who sound like tomorrow.”

Richard Strauss

Ein Heldenleben

Born: June 11, 1964 in Munich, Germany

Died: September 8, 1949 in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, West Germany

Composed: 1898

Premiered: March 3, 1899 in Frankfurt, with Strauss conducting

Most recent Pacific Symphony performance: June 16, 2018

Instrumentation: Four flutes including piccolo, four oboes including English horn, four clarinets including bass clarinet and e-flat clarinet, four bassoons including contrabassoon, eight horns, five trumpets, three trombones, one tuba, timpani, percussion, two harps, tenor tuba, and strings



Richard Strauss ended his illustrious career as a composer of operas and art songs, but began it as a pianist, conductor, and composer of orchestral music that demonstrated his supreme mastery of orchestral color and post-Wagnerian harmonics. He composed *Ein Heldenleben*—“A Hero's Life”—when he was 34. He had already proven that he was not exactly shy when it came to revealing his own life through his music; the hero of this tone poem is Strauss himself. He composed *Also Sprach Zarathustra* in the same year (1898), making them these two the last in the series of tone poems and programmatic symphonies he had begun a decade earlier.

Ein Heldenleben proceeds in six sections, the first of which reveals a portrait of the young composer and the challenges that lie ahead of him; in the second section, “The Hero's Adversaries” are depicted in musical caricatures. Critics, of course, get the worst of it, in sketches reminiscent of Wagner's musical lambasting of his critics. In the third section, “The Hero's Helpmate,” we hear a sympathetic, layered portrait of Strauss' wife, Pauline, a distinguished soprano whom he had directed as *Isolde*, and who receives rather harsher treatment in his operatic comedy of marital discord, *Intermezzo*. The frankly romantic depiction of their relationship provides an apt transition from the comedy of the hero's conniving adversaries to the nobler challenges facing him as his life takes shape—“The Hero's Battlefield” (depicting literal combat in graphic musical terms) and the retrospective section on “Works of Peace” (in which Strauss quotes from earlier tone poems); and finally his “Withdrawal from the World,” elegiac and serene, in which the hero looks back on a life well-lived. From a musical and a narrative standpoint, *Ein Heldenleben* is a work of stunning confidence (and ego strength) for a 34-year-old composer—and as always, with Strauss, an occasion for stunningly virtuosic orchestral playing.

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

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Masami and Walter Stahr
Mr. and Mrs. William S. Thompson
Judy and Wes Whitmore
Charles and Ling Zhang

In Honor of Aiden Chandra

Anish Chandra

In Honor of Gregory Cox and Team

Ildiko Good

In Honor of Michelle Horowitz

Lucy Sun

In honor of Jaynie Lee

Keun mi Kim

In Honor of Robert Lee Sanders

Angela Sanders

In Honor of Shirley Li

Anonymous

In Honor of Arthur Ong

Amy Chen

In Honor of Annosheh Oskouian and Nowruz Concert

Judy and Wes Whitmore

In Honor of Jack and Mary Jane Schrader

William Mitchell

In Honor of Carl St.Clair

Sally Bender
CarolAnn Tassios
Jeremy Weiner

In honor of Roberta Swain

Ms. Katherine Swain

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**MUSIC DIRECTOR'S CIRCLE
(\$100,000+)**

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Bank of America
City of Hope Orange County
Farmers & Merchants Bank
Fieldstead & Company
Kingston Technology
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Regency Air
Zion Enterprises, LLC

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The Westin South Coast Plaza
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California Southern University
Chapman University
JETCC International, Inc.
LAist
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Seegerstrom Center for the Arts
The UCI Foundation

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Tahiti.com
Tsar Nicoulai Caviar
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Orange County's United Way
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Patiné Cellars
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The Ahmanson Charitable Community Trust
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The Joe MacPherson Foundation
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**FOUNDER'S CIRCLE
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The Colburn Foundation
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