



Paul Huang

2023-24 Hal & Jeanette Segerstrom
Family Foundation Classical Series

TCHAIKOVSKY'S VIOLIN CONCERTO

Thursday, Jan. 11, 2024 @ 8 p.m.

Friday, Jan. 12, 2024 @ 8 p.m.

Saturday, Jan 13, 2024 @ 8 p.m.

Matthew Halls, guest conductor
Paul Huang, violin
Pacific Symphony

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**This concert is being recorded for broadcast on
Mar. 3, 2024 on Classical California KUSC.**

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

PROGRAM

- SIBELIUS *A Saga (En saga), Op. 9*
- TCHAIKOVSKY *Violin Concerto in D Major, Op. 35*
Allegro moderato
Canzonetta: Andante
Finale: Allegro vivacissimo
Paul Huang
- INTERMISSION-
- VAUGHAN
WILLIAMS *Symphony No. 6 in E Minor*
Allegro
Moderato
Scherzo: Allegro vivace
Epilogue: Moderato



PROGRAM NOTES

Jean Sibelius

En Saga, Op. 9

Born: Dec. 8, 1865 in Hämeenlinna, Finland

Died: Sept. 20, 1957 in Järvenpää, Finland

Composed: 1891-92, revised in 1902

Premiered: Feb. 16, 1893, in Helsinki, with the composer conducting the Helsinki Orchestral Association

Most recent Pacific Symphony

performance: This is a Pacific Symphony premiere

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



Jean Sibelius, whose long life spanned a period of astounding change in history and compositional style, was the very soul of Finnish classical music. Born in 1865, the last year of the Civil War and Lincoln's presidency, he survived until 1957—the year that the Soviet Union launched Sputnik and Van Cliburn launched his career. When Sibelius began composing, Romanticism strongly prevailed in European music. But its esthetic boundaries were expanding quickly, and the challenge of Richard Wagner was forcing composers to re-think everything. Surrounded by change, Sibelius never stopped exploring ways to advance his musical style, never compromised his expressiveness, and never sounded like anybody else.

Perhaps surprisingly, he began his musical life determined to achieve greatness as a violinist. "It was a very painful awakening when I had to admit that I had begun my training for the exacting career of an eminent soloist too late," he wrote. Though he achieved success as a major symphonist and the creator of the beloved *Finlandia* as well as one of the most successful violin concertos in the repertory, many musicologists express a nagging sense that this great composer has never quite achieved the place in the musical pantheon that his greatness would justify. The reason may be one of the very qualities that his admirers value most: his originality.

A strong, distinctive sense of expressiveness, deep and dark-hued, seems to be what musicologists are getting at when they struggle with Sibelius's uniqueness. His work is unmistakably Nordic, but also highly personal. Hearing it is like a journey northward. We note this in his early work *En Saga*, a moody tone poem that conveys a story that remains untold yet reveals an intense drama. In fact, moodiness is the point: As a form, the tone poem invites us as listeners to imagine the drama behind the music, and while the tone poems of a composer such as Richard Strauss create a specific and highly detailed narrative, Sibelius does the opposite—insisting that we ideate our own scenario

as we listen. Texture, tone, and mood are all there, and they are conveyed with an intensity that is utterly, compellingly beautiful.

While many of his contemporary listeners wondered what *En Saga* was all about, Sibelius's comments about its meaning only tantalized. "*En Saga* is psychologically one of my most profound works," he wrote. "I could almost say that the whole of my youth is contained within it. It is an expression of a state of mind. When I was writing *En Saga*, I went through many things that were upsetting to me. In no other work have I revealed myself as completely as in *En Saga*. For this reason alone, all interpretations of *En Saga* are, of course, completely foreign to my way of thinking."

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Violin Concerto in D Major, Op. 35

Born: May 7, 1840, in Votkinsk, Russian Empire

Died: Nov. 6, 1893, St. Petersburg, Russian Empire

Composed: 1876

Premiered: Dec. 4, 1881, in Vienna, conducted by Hans Richter with Adolph Brodsky as soloist

Most recent Pacific Symphony

performance: Jan. 29, 2022, with

Anja Bihlmaier conducting and Bomsori Kim as soloist
Instrumentation: two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, timpani, and strings and solo violin



Tchaikovsky had seized upon the idea of composing a concerto for violin after hearing others he liked, particularly the energetic, five-movement *Symphonie espagnole* (a violin concerto in all but name) by the French composer Edouard Lalo. He worked intensively on the project, and at first, its progress seemed smooth. He chose the great violinist Leopold Auer as the concerto's dedicatee and to play the premiere. He planned to convey the completed manuscript to the virtuoso via their mutual student, Josif Kotek. "How lovingly Kotek busies himself with my concerto," Tchaikovsky told his brother Anatoly while composing it. "...He plays it marvelously."

Because of his agonized confusion over his own sexual identity, Tchaikovsky's ardent admiration of Kotek has been the subject of scholarly speculation, and we can only imagine the composer's distress when the young Kotek refused the manuscript outright. The fault was probably Leopold Auer's: Having seen the work in progress, Auer had expressed his misgivings with harshness, pronouncing the concerto "unplayable," a judgment that Kotek would have been unwise to ignore.

Finding an alternate soloist for the concerto hardly lifted the cloud hanging over it. Reviewing the premiere

PROGRAM NOTES

performance in Vienna on Dec. 4, 1881, Eduard Hanslick—the dean of the Viennese music critics and one of the era’s most influential tastemakers—lambasted it as “music that stinks to the ear,” one of the most infamous phrases in the annals of music history. With hindsight, it’s easy to dismiss such invective, but it tormented Tchaikovsky, who reportedly re-read Hanslick’s review until he had committed it to memory.

Hanslick’s outburst is all the more shocking in light of the characteristically singing melodies in which this concerto abounds. Its first movement, an allegro moderato in D Major, is all graceful lyricism—seemingly an affectionate description of the scenic charms of Clarens, the Swiss resort town where it was composed. But its virtuosity and vigor seem to delineate the existential questions that are always present and passionately articulated in Tchaikovsky’s major works, especially in the symphonies. This emotional intensity reaches a climax in the buildup to the first cadenza.

The second movement, a serenely mournful andante cantabile, contrasts markedly with the first; the violin’s entry is melancholy, and it voices a singing lament that eventually gives way to a happier pastoral melody, like a song of spring. Both moods shadow each other for the duration of the movement as we alternate between brighter and darker soundscapes.

The concerto’s final movement follows the second without pause. It is extravagantly marked allegro vivacissimo and returns to the opening movement’s D major key, recapturing its exuberant energy. This movement also incorporates an energetic Russian dance (Hanslick’s “whiff of vodka?”) that leaps off the page as the violinist’s bow dances along with it. A nostalgic second theme provides an emotional counterpoint to the movement’s higher-energy passages, but it is finally eclipsed by a passionate, exuberant finale.

Ralph Vaughan Williams Symphony No. 6 in E minor

Born: Oct. 12, 1872, in Down Ampney, Gloucestershire, England

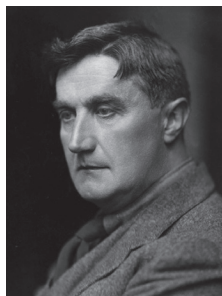
Died: Aug. 26, 1958, in Westminster, England

Composed: 1944–47, revised in 1950

Premiered: Apr. 21, 1948, with Sir Adrian Boult conducting the BBC Symphony Orchestra

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

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, two harps, tenor sax, and strings
Did you know that Ralph Vaughan Williams composed



nine symphonies and five operas, all highly respected? Even his admirers often don’t. We know Ralph Vaughan Williams as a towering figure in English music, interred in Westminster Abbey next to Henry Purcell; yet his longer works are usually eclipsed by the better-known shorter ones, which are rooted in England’s centuries-old song traditions and in the verdure of the English countryside—most especially *The Lark Ascending*, *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis*, *Five Variants of Dives and Lazarus*, *The Wasps Overture*, and the *English Folk Song Suite*.

The Cambridge-educated Vaughan Williams studied English folk songs throughout his long career and read English lyric poetry with an expert eye. If a Hollywood scriptwriter had to invent a musician for his chosen task of elevating English song, the result would surely have been the resolute Ralph. His terribly English family had scores of eminent jurists on one side and the Wedgwood pottery dynasty on the other.

Though the artistic Wedgwoods encouraged young Ralph’s interest in music with early instruction in theory, violin, and piano, he was far from a prodigy; he struggled with his musical development, and, in his Cambridge years, described his own technical abilities as mediocre. But musicologist Hugh Ottaway ascribes Vaughan Williams’ difficulties mainly to his struggle to find a distinctive voice for himself and for British music. Ottaway dates the turning point to 1910, when Vaughan Williams stunned his colleagues with the *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis*.

Vaughan Williams composed his Symphony No. 6 in the years from 1944–47, during and after World War II—a time of deprivation in England. There, as in Russia, listeners found programmatic themes in new symphonies, drawing solace and spiritual meaning in the music they heard. In this symphony, which received approximately one hundred performances within a year of its 1948 premiere, concertgoers heard echoes of war in strident passages that seemed far removed from Vaughan Williams’ more familiar pastoral voice. More than one contemporary critic felt the work expressed the horror of the atomic bombs exploded in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Vaughan Williams’ widely reported response was, “It never seems to occur to people that a man might just want to write a piece of music.” But he was more frank regarding the poetic, hopeful strains of the symphony’s final movement, suggesting a beloved quotation from Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*: “We are such stuff / As dreams are made on; and our little life / Is rounded with a sleep.”

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

ABOUT THE CONDUCTOR

Matthew Halls began his tenure as Chief Conductor of Finland's Tampere Philharmonic this season, with programs ranging from Bach's *St. John Passion* through to Mahler's *Symphony No. 2*.



He also returns to the Finnish Radio Symphony, Gulbenkian Orchestra, Stavanger Symphony, Warsaw Philharmonic, and Wiener Symphoniker, and debuts with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic and Tapiola Sinfonietta.

Halls regularly guest conducts the Cleveland Orchestra, Seattle Symphony, Iceland Symphony, Wiener Symphoniker, Finnish Radio Symphony, Dallas Symphony, and Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra among others. Recent highlights include Mahler's "Resurrection" Symphony with the Toronto Symphony, the U.S. premiere of James MacMillan's Fourth Symphony with Pittsburgh Symphony (Halls previously conducted the world premiere of MacMillan's *European Requiem*) and his Chicago Symphony debut.

With a background in period-performance, Halls was one of the first to guest conduct Nikolaus Harnoncourt's *Concentus Musicus Wien*. His discography includes Bach's Harpsichord Concertos directed from the keyboard, the premiere recording of Handel's *Parnasso in Festa* (which won the Stanley Sadie Handel prize) and Bach's Easter and Ascension Oratorios. In the theatre, his operatic credits range from Handel's *Ariodante* to Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Violinist Paul Huang, considered to be one of the most distinctive artists of his generation, is the recipient of the prestigious 2015 Avery Fisher Career Grant and the 2017 Lincoln Center Award for Emerging Artists.



Recent career highlights have included an acclaimed debut at Bravo! Vail Music Festival stepping in for violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter in Mozart's Violin Concerto No. 4 with Chamber Orchestra Vienna-Berlin, Rotterdam Philharmonic with Lahav Shani, Detroit Symphony with Leonard Slatkin, Houston Symphony with Andres Orozco-Estrada, Baltimore Symphony, and Seoul Philharmonic with Markus Stenz, and recital debuts at the Lucerne Festival in Switzerland and Aspen Music Festival.

In Fall 2021, Huang also became the first classical violinist to perform his own arrangement of the National Anthem for the opening game of the NFL at the Bank of America Stadium in Charlotte, North Carolina to an audience of 75,000. An exclusive recording artist with France's Naïve Records, his debut album *Kaleidoscope* was released worldwide in Oct. 2023. His recording of Toshio Hosokawa's Violin Concerto *Genesis* with Residentie Orkest Den Haag will be released on NAXOS in June 2024.

During the 2023-24 season, Huang appears with the National Symphony Orchestra of Taiwan with Jun Markl, and makes debuts with Dallas Symphony Orchestra and NHK Symphony with Fabio Luisi, Vancouver Symphony with Otto Tausk, and San Francisco Symphony with Mei-Ann Chen, in addition to his appearance with Pacific Symphony and Matthew Halls.

Born in Taiwan, Huang began violin lessons at the age of seven. He is a recipient of the inaugural Kovner Fellowship at The Juilliard School, where he earned his Bachelor's and Master's degrees under Hyo Kang and I-Hao Lee. He plays on the legendary 1742 "ex-Wieniawski" Guarneri del Gesù on extended loan through the Stradivari Society of Chicago and is on the faculty of Taipei National University of the Arts. He resides in New York.