



Andrew Litton

2023-24 Hal & Jeanette Segerstrom  
Family Foundation Classical Series

## BEETHOVEN & SHOSTAKOVICH

Thursday, Feb. 22, 2024 @ 8 p.m.

Friday, Feb. 23, 2024 @ 8 p.m.

Saturday, Feb 24, 2024 @ 8 p.m.

Andrew Litton, conductor  
Alessio Bax, piano  
Pacific Symphony

The 2023-24 season piano soloists are generously  
sponsored by **The Michelle F. Rohé Fund**



**This concert is being recorded for broadcast on  
July 14, 2024 on Classical California KUSC.**

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

## PROGRAM

- GRIFFES *The White Peacock*
- BEETHOVEN **Piano Concerto No. 3 in C minor,  
Op. 37**  
*Allegro con brio*  
*Largo*  
*Rondo: Allegro*  
Alessio Bax
- INTERMISSION-
- SHOSTAKOVICH **Symphony No. 5 in D minor, Op. 47**  
*Moderato*  
*Allegretto*  
*Largo*  
*Allegro non troppo*



# PROGRAM NOTES

## Charles Tomlinson Griffes *The White Peacock*

**Born:** Sept. 17, 1884 in Elmira, NY

**Died:** Apr. 8, 1920 in NYC

**Composed:** 1915 (piano version),  
orchestrated in 1919

**Premiered:** June 22, 1919 in NYC

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

**Instrumentation:** two flutes  
including piccolo, two oboes,  
two clarinets, two bassoons,  
two horns, three trumpets, two trombones, timpani,  
percussion, two harps, celesta, and strings

**Approximate duration:** 6 minutes



The Great Influenza pandemic of 1918 came in three waves, adding perhaps as many as 50 million deaths to the horrors of World War I. The American composer Charles Tomlinson Griffes was among their number, a victim of empyema resulting from the flu. What might he have accomplished if he had not died in 1920 at age 35? Born in Elmira, New York, he received his first piano lessons from his oldest sister, Katharine, who studied with Mary Selena Broughton, a noted piano pedagogue at Elmira College. At age 15, Griffes began formal musical training with Miss Broughton, who financed his further studies at the Stern Conservatory in Berlin in 1903. After two years there, Griffes studied briefly with the composer Engelbert Humperdinck, whose influence—along with that of Wagner and Liszt—is evident in his early works.

Considered an exemplar of American Impressionism, Griffes played an important role in U.S. classical music, particularly in the development of the American art song. His music combines sensitivity and sensuality, and his song catalog, while moderate in size, demonstrates a remarkable fusion of music and text. We also hear this knack in *The White Peacock*, which—though wordless—is a musical setting of a poem that is almost hallucinatory in its lush, vivid sensuality.

Griffes had already begun a musical rendering of Coleridge's drug-induced vision of Kublai Khan's Xanadu when he turned to another poem of equally fevered intensity: *The White Peacock*, which the Scottish poet William Sharp had published under his occasional pseudonym Fiona Macleod.

As with his *Pleasure Dome of Kublai Khan*, Griffes composed *The White Peacock* for solo piano and orchestrated it later. In a letter, he notes that it was prompted by a visit to the Berlin zoo: "Among the peacocks, was a pure white one—very curious. [The piece] pictures a wonderful garden filled with

gorgeous color, where a white peacock moves about slowly, as the soul, as the breath of all this beauty." This casual description can't prepare us for the light, color, and almost palpable humidity of both the poem and the music, which casts a spell with its intense, meandering chromaticism.

Though Sharp's poem is too long to append here, it helps to know that it is a single sentence, 56 lines long, in which the word 'peacock' occurs only once—the last word of the poem. Here are the beginning and end:

Here where the sunlight  
Floodeth the garden,  
Where the pomegranate  
Reareth its glory  
Of gorgeous blossom;  
Where the oleanders  
Dream through the noontides...  
... White as a cloud through the heats of the  
noontide  
Moves the White Peacock.

## Ludwig van Beethoven *Concerto No. 3 in C minor for Piano and Orchestra, Op. 37*

**Born:** Dec. 17, 1770 in Bonn,  
Germany

**Died:** Mar. 26, 1827 in Vienna

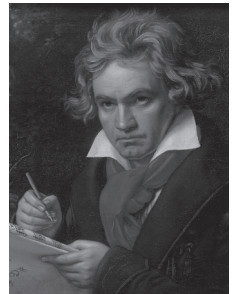
**Composed:** 1800

**Premiered:** Apr. 6, 1803 in  
Vienna, with the composer as  
soloist

**Most recent Pacific Symphony  
performance:** Jun. 10, 2022, with  
Carl St. Clair conducting, and  
Alexander Romanovsky as soloist

**Instrumentation:** two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets,  
two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, timpani, and  
strings and solo piano

**Approximate duration:** 34 minutes



Critics generally divide Beethoven's stylistic periods into early, middle, and late; they identify his Piano Concerto No. 2 as the earliest of the early concertos, most clearly showing the influence of Mozart and Haydn. (It actually predates the one we now know as No. 1; though published later, it was composed earlier.) To many listeners, including the musicologist and Beethoven specialist Hans-Werner Küthen, No. 3 is Beethoven's "breakout" concerto. Küthen has described this concerto as a gateway between the Classical concerto tradition and the revolution that began with Beethoven's fourth and fifth concertos, and that continued in the Romantic era.

# PROGRAM NOTES

Beethoven completed most of his work on the Piano Concerto No. 3 in 1799 and 1800, just two years after finishing his [current] Concerto No. 1, though he continued refining No. 3 until performing the premiere in April 1803. Still, it represents a cautious departure from his earlier concertos. Küthen observes that “The four versions of the B-flat concerto [No. 2], the three of the C major [No. 1], and a single one of the C minor concerto show that the time span between draft and final form becomes increasingly short, that the composer wins the upper hand over the virtuoso, and in [the Third Concerto] Op. 37 a first perfection of the genre is reached, which was the object of the greatest emulation in the 19th century.”

There was only one orchestral rehearsal, and it was a messy affair, which did not bode well for the premiere. But if the composer was worried, he needn't have been. His reputation was growing, as was public acceptance of his highly individualistic style, and this concerto was understood to be a more personal statement than Nos. 1 and 2. The opening movement, marked *allegro con brio*, exposes a powerful, solemn theme in the orchestra, allowing it to modulate from minor to major and then introducing a second, more lyrical theme before settling back into minor. Thus the stakes are high before the piano even makes its entrance; and throughout the movement, it is left to the piano soloist to reconcile the emotions contested in the development of these two themes.

The second movement, a meditative *largo*, is poetic and contemplative, with the piano at times so deeply embedded in the ensemble that the orchestra takes the melodic line for extended periods. The gorgeous, zesty closing rondo is often described as joyful or jubilant despite its minor key—despite modulations into major, it remains at home in the key of C minor. The movement's energy and exuberance come not only from the beauty of melody, but also from the sense of the concerto's successful reconciliation of contending melodic forces. The movement's conclusion brings a sense of drama and completion that is almost operatic.

## Dmitri Shostakovich

### Symphony No. 5 in D minor, Op. 47

**Born:** Sept. 25, 1906 in St. Petersburg, Russian Empire

**Died:** Aug. 9, 1975 in Moscow, USSR

**Composed:** Apr. – July 1937

**Premiered:** Nov. 21, 1937 with Yevgeny Mravinsky conducting the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra

**Most recent Pacific Symphony**



**performance:** Feb. 1, 2014, with Carl St.Clair conducting

**Instrumentation:** three flutes including piccolo, two oboes, three clarinets including bass clarinet and e-flat clarinet, three bassoons including contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, one tuba, timpani, percussion, two harps, piano, celesta, and strings

**Approximate duration:** 44 minutes

In January 1936, when Joseph Stalin's scathing condemnation of Shostakovich's musical style appeared in *Pravda*, the larger message was clear: In Stalin's Soviet Union, where every public expression of art was deemed an instrumentality of the state, Shostakovich had gone from celebrity to pariah. *Pravda's* devastating pronouncement could mean the end not only of his career, but of his life. It put his family and his friends at risk of exile. Yet as those closest to him knew—including friends who sought his secret support for artists similarly endangered—Shostakovich subordinated everything, including politics, to his music. He just wanted to compose.

If Shostakovich, his art, and his family were to survive, there was only one option: "rehabilitation." But would that mean compromising his aesthetic principles? Tabling his powerful Fourth symphony, he wrote his Symphony No. 5 with the express intention of pleasing his proctors in the Politburo. It is a passionate, stentorian work whose program is ostensibly the heroism of the Soviet citizenry. (Today, this symphony is often misinterpreted as an account of the Nazis' brutal Siege of Leningrad, which was still four years in the offing when Shostakovich composed it.) Bureaucrats interpreted the symphony as an apology and heard the "constructive" music they wanted to hear, and Shostakovich was reprieved—at least for a while.

Later, in his post-Stalin memoir *Testimony*, Shostakovich asserts that audiences heard something far different: an account of the devastation that Leningrad's population endured under 11 years of Stalinist rule. Reports of the symphony's premiere depict the audience weeping en masse, overcome by emotion. According to Shostakovich, they understood the musical subtext that eluded the politicians—not only deep understanding of their suffering, but also the hope of endurance and eventual triumph.

Can we believe Shostakovich's after-the-fact program for this symphony? Does it matter? In *Testimony*, Shostakovich depicts his life and art after 1936 as devoted to covert resistance and subversion of Soviet repression. Whether his recollections were accurate or idealized is the subject of a fascinating debate that can probably never be resolved. But their existence demonstrates that memories of his life as an artist were of paramount importance

to Shostakovich. These memories would form a bulwark for composing his later symphonies. But for Shostakovich and his contemporaries, his Symphony No. 5 was rooted in the horrific now. The sense of anguish and the hope of redemption are real.

Aesthetically, Shostakovich's manipulation of his music is thrillingly right. It is also extremely graphic in its rendering of Russian stoicism in the face of suffering. This is the symphony that confirmed sonic effects that we now hear as Shostakovich trademarks: snarling brassy and a sense of acid-tinged irony in the notes. But if there are double-meanings to decode here, it is up to us listeners—not the critics or the musicologists—to decode them. Shostakovich composed for the people, not the Politburo. Was his subject the horrors of World War II, or the siege of Soviet communism, or both?

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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)*

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

**Combining exceptional lyricism and insight with consummate technique, Alessio Bax is without a doubt “among the most remarkable young pianists now before the public” (Gramophone).** He

catapulted to prominence with First Prize wins at both the 2000 Leeds

International Piano Competition and the 1997 Hamamatsu International Piano Competition and is now a familiar face on five continents as a recitalist, chamber musician, and concerto soloist. He has appeared with over 150 orchestras, including the New York, London, Royal, and St. Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestras, the Boston, Dallas, Cincinnati, Seattle, Sydney, and City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestras, and the Tokyo and NHK Symphony in Japan, collaborating with such eminent conductors as Marin Alsop, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Sir Andrew Davis, Fabio Luisi, Sir Simon Rattle, Yuri Temirkanov, and Jaap van Zweden.

Highlights of the 2023-24 season include his debut with Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Sir Andrew Davis, return performances with Dallas Symphony, Helsinki



Philharmonic, and Buenos Aires Philharmonic, his fifth performance at the famed Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires, a tour of Asia with violinist Daishin Kashimoto, and of Japan with flutist Emmanuel Pahud, numerous New York appearances with Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, and a wide range of high-profile chamber music projects, recitals, and concerto performances in Europe, Asia, and across the United States.

As a renowned chamber musician, he recently collaborated with Joshua Bell, Ian Bostridge, Lucille Chung, Vilde Frang, Steven Isserlis, Daishin Kashimoto, François Leleux, Sergei Nakariakov, Emmanuel Pahud, Lawrence Power, Jean-Guihen Queyras, Paul Watkins, and Tabea Zimmermann, among many others.

Since 2017, he has been the Artistic Director of the Incontri in Terra di Siena Festival, a Summer Music Festival in the Val d'Orcia region of Tuscany. He appears regularly in festivals such as Seattle, Bravo Vail, Salon-de-Provence, Le Pont in Japan, Great Lakes, Verbier, Ravinia, and Music@Menlo. In 2009, he was awarded an Avery Fisher Career Grant, and four years later, he received both the Andrew Wolf Chamber Music Award and the Lincoln Center Award for Emerging Artists. Bax's celebrated Signum Classics discography includes *Italian Inspirations*, *Beethoven's Hammerklavier and Moonlight Sonatas* (a Gramophone "Editor's Choice"); *Beethoven's Emperor Concerto*; *Bax & Chung*, a duo disc with Lucille Chung; *Alessio Bax plays Mozart*, recorded with London's Southbank Sinfonia; *Alessio Bax: Scriabin & Mussorgsky* (named "Recording of the Month ... and quite possibly ... of the year" by *MusicWeb International*); *Alessio Bax plays Brahms* (a Gramophone "Critics' Choice"); *Bach Transcribed*; and *Rachmaninov: Preludes & Melodies* (an *American Record Guide* "Critics' Choice"). Recorded for Warner Classics, his *Baroque Reflections* album was also a Gramophone "Editor's Choice."

He performed Beethoven's *Hammerklavier* Sonata for Daniel Barenboim in the PBS-TV documentary *Barenboim on Beethoven: Masterclass*, available on DVD from EMI. The next season will see the release of two additional discs for Signum Classics: a new solo recital album and a four hands/two pianos disc of French music with Lucille Chung. At the age of 14, Bax graduated with top honors from the conservatory of Bari, his hometown in Italy, and after further studies in Europe, he moved to the United States in 1994. He has been on the piano faculty of Boston's New England Conservatory since the fall of 2019 and serves as co-artistic director of the Joaquín Achúcarro Foundation for emerging pianists. Bax lives in New York City with pianist Lucille Chung and their daughter, Mila.



# ABOUT THE CONDUCTOR

## **Andrew Litton is Music Director of the New York City Ballet.**

He is also Conductor Laureate of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and was previously Music Director Laureate of Norway's Bergen Philharmonic. Under his leadership the Bergen Philharmonic gained international recognition through extensive recording and touring, making debuts at the BBC Proms, at Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, and appearances at Vienna's Musikverein, Berlin's Philharmonie, and New York's Carnegie Hall. For his work with the Bergen Philharmonic, Norway's King Harald V knighted him with the Norwegian Royal Order of Merit.

Litton was Principal Conductor of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra from 1988-94. During this time, he led the orchestra on their first American tour and produced 14 recordings, including the GRAMMY® winning *Belshazzar's Feast*. As Music Director of the Dallas Symphony Orchestra from 1994-2006, he hired over one third of the players, led the orchestra on three major European tours, appeared four times at Carnegie Hall, created a children's television series broadcast nationally and in widespread use in school curricula, produced 28 recordings, and helped raise the orchestra's endowment from \$19 million to \$100 million. He regularly guest conducts leading orchestras and opera companies around the globe and adds to his discography of over 140 recordings, which have garnered America's GRAMMY® Award, France's Diapason d'Or, and other honors.

In addition to conducting over 50 performances at the New York City Ballet, Litton returns regularly to the Singapore Symphony Orchestra (where he is a former Principal Guest Conductor), Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, and Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra, and guest conducts with a wide range of international orchestras: recent and forthcoming highlights including the BBC Symphony Orchestra, English Chamber Orchestra, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Dallas Symphony, Colorado Symphony, Seattle Symphony, Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, Orquesta Sinfónica de Galicia, and the Royal Swedish Orchestra.

An avid opera conductor with a keen theatrical sense, Litton has led major opera companies throughout the world, including the Metropolitan Opera, Royal Opera Covent Garden, Australian



Opera, and Deutsche Oper Berlin. In Norway, he was key to founding the Bergen National Opera, where he led numerous critically acclaimed performances. He often conducts semi-staged opera programs with symphony orchestras. During his 14-year tenure as Artistic Director of the Minnesota Orchestra Sommerfest, he concluded the festival with sold-out performances of *Salomé*, *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Madama Butterfly*, *La Bohème*, *Tosca*, *Rigoletto*, *La Traviata*, and others. He conducted the BBC National Orchestra of Wales at the 2021 BBC Cardiff Singer of the World competition.

Litton's work with New York City Ballet has earned praise from critics, dancers, and audiences, bringing new prominence to the Ballet's orchestra. He began his ballet work while still a Juilliard student, performing as on-stage pianist for Rudolf Nureyev, Natalia Makarova, and Cynthia Gregory. In 2023-24, Litton will make his debut with the Royal Ballet at Covent Garden.

An accomplished pianist, Litton often performs as piano soloist, conducting from the keyboard, most recently Beethoven's Triple Concerto in Singapore. An acknowledged expert on George Gershwin, he has performed and recorded Gershwin widely as both pianist and conductor and serves as Advisor to the University of Michigan Gershwin Archives. After leading the Covent Garden debut of *Porgy and Bess*, Litton arranged his own concert suite of the work, which is now performed around the world. In 2014, he released his first solo piano album, *A Tribute to Oscar Peterson*, a testimony to his passion for jazz, particularly the music of that great pianist.

Litton's Dallas Symphony Rachmaninoff Piano Concerto recordings with Stephen Hough, widely hailed as the best since the composer's own, won the Classical Brits/BBC Critics Award. He also received a Grammy nomination for his recording of Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd* with the New York Philharmonic and Patti Lupone.

Born in New York City, Litton graduated from the Fieldston School and earned both Bachelor's and Master's degrees from The Juilliard School in Piano and Conducting. He served as assistant conductor at La Scala and at the National Symphony under Rostropovich. His many honors in addition to Norway's Order of Merit include Yale's Sanford Medal, the Elgar Society Medal, and an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Bournemouth.

# UPCOMING CONCERTS



## O.C. LANTERN FESTIVAL 2024

Mar. 2 @ 11:00 A.M. - 4:00 P.M.

Free Family event! Bring the entire family and join us for Pacific Symphony's annual Lantern Festival, celebrating the Year of the Dragon! The act of lighting and appreciating lanterns is a way for people to let go of the burdens of their old selves and express their best wishes.

Co-presented with the South Coast Chinese Cultural Center.

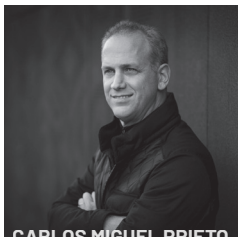


POPS: Underwritten by Sharon and Tom Malloy Family

## LYLE LOVETT AND HIS ACOUSTIC GROUP

Mar. 8-9 @ 8:00 P.M.

Be mesmerized by the soulful voice and impeccable guitar skills of Austin City Limits Hall of Famer Lyle Lovett, as he performs his greatest hits backed by a full symphony orchestra. Bonnie Raitt says that Lovett "writes songs that sound like no one else's and then he sings them in an even more unique way."



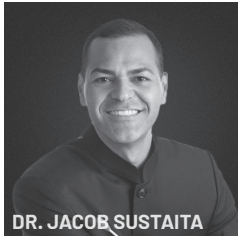
CLASSICAL: Hal and Jeanette Segerstrom Family Foundation

## MAHLER'S FIFTH

Mar. 14-16 @ 8:00 P.M.

Carlos Miguel Prieto, conductor  
Sterling Elliott, cello

Mahler's Symphony No. 5 offers a powerful journey from mourning to triumph, with its emotional range and triumphant finale. In contrast, Haydn's upbeat Cello Concerto No. 1 is a joyful cornerstone of the classical repertoire.



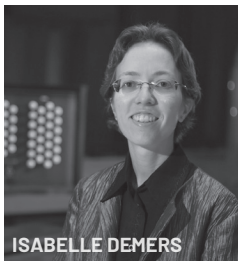
FAMILY MUSICAL MORNINGS: Presenting Sponsor Famers & Merchants Bank

## CARNIVAL OF THE ANIMALS

Mar. 16 @ 10:00 A.M. & 11:30 A.M.

Jacob Sustaita, conductor  
Robin Walsh, puppet artist

Experience composer Camille Saint-Saëns' beloved children's classic with colorful and engaging puppets, captivating music, and playful storytelling.



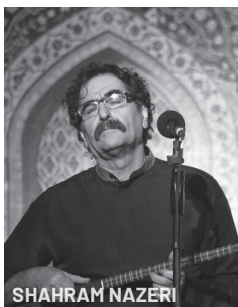
PEDALS & PIPES: Sponsored by Valerie & Barry Hon

## SUPERSTAR ORGANIST ISABELLE DEMERS

Mar. 17 @ 3:00 P.M.

Isabelle Demers, organ

Isabelle Demers captivates audiences globally with her virtuosity, earning ongoing acclaim for her "expressive, profound" performances (RSCM's *Church Music Quarterly*). She will be performing Stravinsky's *Firebird Suite*, continuing the legacy of her acclaimed 2010 recital.



## NOWRUZ: IRANIAN NEW YEAR WITH SHAHRAM NAZERI

Mar. 23 @ 8:00 P.M.

Carl St.Clair, conductor  
Shardad Rohani, guest conductor  
Shahram Nazeri, vocalist  
Mahsa Vahdat, vocalist  
Pejman Hadadi, percussion

A traditional festival that marks the beginning of spring, Nowruz is a time to celebrate the "rebirth of nature" and wash away the past. Featured guest this year is Shahram Nazeri, the undisputed icon of Classical Persian and Sufi music. **Concert sponsored by the Farhang Foundation, Anoosheh & Alan Oskouian, and generous members of the Cyrus Society.**