

Folsom Lake Symphony
PETER JAFFE, MUSIC DIRECTOR AND CONDUCTOR

ROMANTIC TALES

February 9, 2019 7:30 pm
Tien Hsieh, piano



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Folsom Lake Symphony

PETER JAFFE, MUSIC DIRECTOR AND CONDUCTOR

Tien Hsieh, *piano*

ROMANTIC TALES

Saturday, February 9, 2019 • 7:30 pm

Harris Center for the Arts, Three Stages at Folsom Lake College

George Gershwin
(1898–1937)
arr. Robert Russell Bennett
(1894–1981)

Porgy and Bess, Selection for Orchestra

Camille Saint-Saëns
(1835–1921)

Piano Concerto No. 2 in G minor, op. 22
Andante sostenuto
Allegro scherzando
Presto
Tien Hsieh, *piano*

Intermission

Nicolay Rimsky-Korsakov
(1844–1908)

Scheherazade, op. 35
Largo e maestoso
Lento
Andantino quasi allegretto
Allegro molto

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PETER JAFFE

MUSIC DIRECTOR AND CONDUCTOR



PETER JAFFE is in his fifth season as the dynamic music director and conductor of the Folsom Lake Symphony. Also serving as the music director for the Stockton Symphony since 1995 and for the Auburn Symphony since 2012, Mr. Jaffe is known for combining a passion for outreach and education with top-notch musicianship, and for fostering sustained artistic growth. Organizations ranging from the Association of California Symphony Orchestras to the Brubeck Institute and Goodwill Industries have honored Mr. Jaffe with prestigious awards for his innovations in educational programming and for his distinguished cultural contributions. Mr. Jaffe has spearheaded the commissions of several world premieres—Avner

Dorman's *Uzu and Muzu* from *Kakaruzu* earned the Stockton Symphony national recognition for community engagement activities dealing with crucial social issues, and a portion of the Stockton Symphony CD of Chris Brubeck's *Mark Twain's World* was broadcast nationally on NPR's *Performance Today*.

Mr. Jaffe has appeared as guest conductor with the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra, New Mexico Symphony Orchestra, Flagstaff Symphony Orchestra, Long Beach Symphony Orchestra, Symphony Silicon Valley, the Sacramento and Virginia Symphonies, and many other orchestras and music festivals across the country. He teaches every summer at the Conductor's Institute of South Carolina, and he conducted and taught at the Aspen Music Festival for fourteen years—many of his Aspen performances have been broadcast nationally. He spent three seasons conducting at the Oberlin Conservatory and two as a visiting professor at Stanford University, highlighted by an Eastern European tour with the Stanford Symphony. He has served as music director for the Stockton Opera since 2001, most recently conducting Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel* in January.

Many of Mr. Jaffe's own arrangements have been commissioned by and performed with orchestras in Aspen, Chicago, Long Beach, and Stockton, including his *Symphonic Birthday* and his transcription of Haydn's *Arianna* a Naxos for Jan DeGaetani, which was also performed by the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. A CD of his lullaby arrangements was released on the Chandos label, featuring mezzo-soprano Nadia Pelle with Yuli Turovsky directing *I Musici de Montréal*.

Mr. Jaffe appeared on NBC's *First Camera* in a show devoted to *Tanglewood*, where he was coached by Leonard Bernstein, Seiji Ozawa, Gunther Schuller, and Gustav Meier. He also studied conducting with Andor Toth, Paul Vermel, Charles Bruck, and Herbert Blomstedt. Peter Jaffe's instrumental background includes extensive performing on the violin, viola, and keyboard. He served for a season as acting concertmaster of the Atlantic Symphony Orchestra in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and for several years as staff pianist and vocal accompanist at the Aspen Music Festival. He often conducts from the harpsichord when performing Baroque or early Classic repertoire.



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GUEST ARTIST



Born in Taiwan, **Tien Hsieh** began early musical training with her mother, Sylvia Hsieh, who maintains an active piano studio in Sacramento. Currently residing in Folsom, California Tien has enjoyed a far-ranging career as recitalist, concerto soloist and chamber musician, with recital appearances in Hungary, Germany, Italy, France, Canada, China and throughout the U.S.

Her various accolades include the Los Angeles International Liszt Competition, Li-Ching Cultural & Educational Foundation Grant, Distinguished Artist Award from Artists International Presentations, cover feature on the Sacramento Talent Magazine and recital selected by The San Francisco Examiner's Memorable Concerts of 2013. She has been heard on radio stations across the U.S. and Canada, and

her television appearances include PBS for the International Piano Festival in Houston, Texas, and a nationwide TV commercial for Van de Kamp fish sticks!

Tien's 2014 Liszt recital tour included a return to both the Liszt Museum in Budapest and Lane Series at University of Vermont, Boston University (presented by ALS - New England Chapter), recital debut in Pécs, Hungary (presented by Hungarian Liszt Society) and the opening concert at Albano Liszt Festival in Italy. Recent performance highlights include solo recitals in California, Washington, Wyoming, Montana, Oregon and Utah. As soloist, she has performed with Roswell Symphony in New Mexico, Spokane Symphony at The Festival at Sandpoint in Idaho, Redlands Symphony at Redlands Bowl, Oregon Mozart Players, Manhattan Philharmonia and Houston Civic Orchestra.

Tien received her Bachelor of Music degree as a full scholarship student at University of Houston, studying with Abbey Simon and Ruth Tomfohrde. As a scholarship student at Manhattan School of Music, she received her Master of Music and Professional Studies under the tutelage of Marc Silverman, and was the recipient of the Roy M. Rubinstein Award and Bettingen Corporation Grant. As a dedicated proponent of music education, Tien works with ten aspiring students at her private studio in California. Her students have appeared on various performance platforms including NPR's From the Top and Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall. Her active involvement in the field of performing arts includes current vice-president of Arts Northwest.

Tien's recent recording of Bach & Beethoven: Mostly Transcriptions 2 on the MSR label received high praise from the press, reaching #1 twice on Amazon's Best Sellers list and remained a best seller for two consecutive months in 2015.

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PROGRAM NOTES

Porgy and Bess, Selection for Orchestra

George Gershwin/Robert Russell Bennett

Born in Brooklyn, New York, September 26, 1898;

died in Hollywood, California, July 11, 1937/

Born in Kansas City, Missouri, June 15, 1894; died in New York, August 18, 1981

Immediately upon reading DuBose Heyward's novel *Porgy* in 1926, George Gershwin wanted to transform it into an opera. It took seven years, however, for Gershwin and Heyward to begin work on it—they were joined by George's brother Ira as co-lyricist—and two more before it reached the stage. George spent several weeks with Heyward on Folly Island, near Charleston, to absorb the rhythmic language and singing of South Carolina black culture. *Porgy and Bess*, billed as an "American folk opera," deals with the harsh realities of life in the "Catfish Row" tenement—crap games, murder, drugs—and the love that grows between Porgy, a disabled beggar, and Bess, abused by her man Crown.

The premiere took place in Boston on September 30, 1935, and, after revisions, opened with the same company in New York on October 10. Despite the audience's enthusiasm, several critics judged it harshly for its "halfway" stance between opera and musical. *Porgy and Bess* later achieved international success, but unfortunately Gershwin did not live to witness it.

Suites from the opera for various ensemble combinations have proliferated, among them two by Robert Russell Bennett, who is best known as the orchestrator for some of the repertoire's most famous musicals by such illustrious composers as Irving Berlin, Jerome Kern, Cole Porter, Richard Rodgers—and George Gershwin. In 1942 Fritz Reiner heard a revival of Gershwin's opera *Porgy and Bess*, and, unaware that Gershwin himself had made an orchestral suite, asked Bennett, who had been a good friend of Gershwin, to make such an arrangement. When Gershwin's own suite surfaced many years later, his brother Ira titled it *Catfish Row* to distinguish it from Bennett's by-then-famous suite.

Reiner specifically wanted a piece that would fit on three 78 rpm records (six sides at four minutes per side), which dictated the twenty-four minute length. That arrangement, entitled *Porgy and Bess: A Symphonic Picture*, premiered on February 5, 1943, with Reiner conducting the Pittsburgh Symphony. Many orchestras, though, wanted a shorter version, so Bennett obliged in 1961 with the present *Porgy and Bess, Selection for Orchestra*, which accomplishes the amazing feat of presenting ten of the opera's famous vocal numbers—fied together with various motives from elsewhere in the score—all in the space of approximately twelve minutes!

Bennett's great skills as an orchestrator and his affection for Gershwin and his music show to great advantage in this work. The four chords that "herald the day" at the opening of Act II, Scene 3, set the mood for the collage of excerpts, which appear in a different order from the opera though basically close to the 1942 arrangement. Bennett's first substantial selection, "Clara, Clara, Don't You Be Downhearted," originated in Act III's chorus of women mourning those who died in the previous night's storm. It leads directly into "A Woman Is a Sometime Thing," which Clara's husband Jake sings in Act I as he volunteers to put their baby to sleep but which turns out to be more his musings on romance rather than a real lullaby.

Next comes Clara's lullaby, "Summertime," which actually precedes Jake's in the opening scene. Its sultry lyricism has made it the opera's most famous number. Bennett juxtaposes this with Porgy's jaunty "I Got Plenty o' Nuttin'," which he sings in Act II, happy that Bess now lives with him and in direct contrast with Jake's more serious attitude about making ends meet. A melancholy cello solo brings on Porgy

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and Bess's heartfelt love duet "Bess, You Is My Woman Now," sung just before the church picnic on Kittiwah Island, which Bess attends only reluctantly since the disabled Porgy can't go. The ensuing chorus "Oh, I Can't Sit Down" reflects the high spirits of the picknickers about to board the boat.

The bluesy, syncopated "There's a Boat Dat's Leavin' Soon for New York" follows, sung in Act III by drug dealer Sportin' Life to entice Bess to New York after she's been tricked into thinking Porgy will be jailed for a long time for the murder of Crown. Backing up to the church picnic scene, we next hear Sportin' Life's witty "sermon" on skepticism, the popular "It Ain't Necessarily So." Bennett's last substantial selection, the exuberant "Oh Lawd, I'm on My Way," comes from the end of the opera, when, only a week after Bess has left for New York, Porgy gets out of jail and sets out to follow her. Bennett cleverly superimposes fragments of other songs and fittingly concludes with a grandiose return to their love theme, "Bess You Is My Woman Now."

Piano Concerto No. 2 in G minor, op. 22

Camille Saint-Saëns

Born in Paris, October 9, 1835; died in Algiers, December 16, 1921

A child prodigy whose natural musical abilities rivaled Mozart's, Saint-Saëns possessed a score-reading facility and digital dexterity at the keyboard that dazzled those who came into contact with him throughout his life. Nevertheless he opted for the life of a composer rather than that of a concert pianist, limiting his public performances almost exclusively to his own works. He premiered all five of his piano concertos at the keyboard.

Saint-Saëns composed his Second Piano Concerto in only seventeen days in 1868 as part of a program to display Anton Rubinstein as a conductor to the Parisian public, who knew him as a virtuoso pianist of Liszt's stature. Saint-Saëns, who played the piano part, wrote of the May 13 premiere in the Salle Pleyel, "Not having had the time to practice it sufficiently for performance I played very badly, and, except for the scherzo, which was an immediate success, it did not go well. The general opinion was that the first part lacked coherence and the finale was a complete failure."

Despite the initial reaction, the Concerto has become Saint-Saëns's most popular and widely acclaimed work in this genre. Liszt wrote a detailed critique to Saint-Saëns saying that the work as a whole "pleases me singularly," and regretted that as "an old disabled pianist" he could not appear himself in Paris.

Saint-Saëns's deviation from the conventional fast-slow-fast sequence of movements is one of the work's most striking features. The first movement, much admired by Liszt, opens with a piano cadenza—Bach-like at first—that initiates a fantasia-like movement rather than a traditional sonata-form movement. The tranquil theme that follows the long introduction was derived from Gabriel Fauré's *Tantum ergo* for voice and organ, which Fauré had shown to his teacher Saint-Saëns in the midst of working on the Concerto. Of course the movement does not "lack coherence," as is evident by tracing various thematic transformations, but the first audience's reaction may have reflected the composer's non-Classical manipulation of these themes. The return of certain material, for example, appears only in the closing cadenza.

Instead of a slow movement, Saint-Saëns placed a "scherzo" second, the rhythm of which Liszt found "piquant" and which owes much of its fairyland quality and form to Mendelssohn. Several prominent timpani passages offer a glimpse of Saint-Saëns's orchestrational prowess.

The closing movement is an irresistible tarantella, more Classical in form than the preceding movements. Bravura and technical skill are combined with inspiration.

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Scheherazade, op. 35

Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov

Born in Tikhvin, Novgorod govt., March 18, 1844; died in Lyubensk, St. Petersburg govt., June 21, 1908

The collection of ancient Persian-Indian-Arabian tales called *The Arabian Nights' Entertainments* or *A Thousand and One Nights* has fascinated children and adults for centuries. Arranged in its present format as early as 1450, probably in Cairo, the collection was first introduced to the European world in 1704 by the Frenchman Antoine Galland, whose free rendering of the oldest known manuscript of 1548 came out in twelve volumes spanning fourteen years. Many translations later appeared and the immense popularity of the work continued into the nineteenth century, when Rimsky-Korsakov was inspired to compose his symphonic suite *Scheherazade*. Written in the summer of 1888 at Nyezgovity, Rimsky-Korsakov's summer place on the shore of Lake Cheryemenyetskoye, the musical work has become almost as well known as its literary inspiration.

Before following the career of a composer, Rimsky-Korsakov first took a position in the Russian Navy, following in the footsteps of his brother, twenty-two years his senior. He sailed aboard the clipper *Almaz* as a midshipman for two-and-a-half years, a tour that took him to England, the Baltic, the Eastern United States, Brazil, and the Mediterranean. His autobiography contains a wonderful travelogue of his sailing adventure: awe at the magnificence of Niagara Falls, notes on the American Civil War, tropical nights on the ocean, exotic places in and around Rio de Janeiro, and the unforgettable luminosity of the Sargasso Sea. This trip fostered the composer's lifelong interest in foreign and exotic places. The rich panorama of orchestral colors and the "sea pictures" in *Scheherazade* owe almost as much to Rimsky-Korsakov's sailing adventure as to *The Arabian Nights*.

Rimsky-Korsakov prefaced the score of *Scheherazade* with the following telescoped version of the story that frames the great collection:

The Sultan Schahriar, convinced of the perfidy and faithlessness of women, vowed to execute each of his wives after the first night. But the Sultana Scheherazade saved her own life by interesting him in the tales she told him through 1001 nights. Impelled by curiosity, the Sultan continually put off her execution, and at last abandoned his sanguinary resolve. Many marvels did Scheherazade relate to him, citing the verses of poets and the words of songs, weaving tale into tale and story into story.

The composer at one time gave programmatic titles for the four movements of his symphonic suite, which are still frequently used in concert programs despite the fact that he later withdrew them. He thought titles were too definite in associating various themes with specific characters and incidents. The same motives often have different literary connotations, which, as Rimsky-Korsakov realized, wreaks havoc on attempts to tie the music to a specific program. The Scheherazade motive, introduced by the solo violin, is the only one that holds up with regard to a program. Even the commanding opening motive that possibly represents the sultan returns later in places unlikely to relate to him.

Referring to the discarded headings—the sea and Sinbad's ship, the fantastic narrative of the Prince Kalender, the Prince and the Princess, the Baghdad festival and the ship dashing against the rock with the bronze rider upon it—Rimsky wrote in his autobiography:

In composing *Scheherazade* I meant these hints to direct but slightly the hearer's fancy on the path which my own fancy had traveled. . . . All I had desired was

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that the hearer . . . should carry away the impression that it is beyond doubt an Oriental narrative of some numerous and varied fairy-tale wonders and not merely four pieces played one after the other and composed on the basis of themes common to all the four movements.

This suite, in which almost every instrument of the orchestra is featured, exemplifies Rimsky's virtuosity in orchestration, which at this point, he was proud to say, had not been influenced by Wagner. *Scheherazade*, and the just as brilliantly orchestrated *Capriccio espagnol* and *Russian Easter Overture* were in fact his last important purely orchestral works, after which he became almost exclusively an opera composer.

Rimsky-Korsakov begins this piece with the powerful music we associate at first with the Sultan Schahriar and the seductive, graceful violin solo representing Scheherazade. We sense the roll of Sinbad's ship in the composer's rocking, wave-like theme and a series of adventures as he develops all three ideas.

The original title of the second movement refers to an unspecified Kalender prince in the *Arabian Nights*. Rimsky seems to represent the Kalenders—a wandering tribe of beggars and dervishes—with his "Eastern" melodies and colorful solos for bassoon, oboe, flute, and horn.

The lyrical outpouring of the third movement is easily imaginable as love music. Rimsky-Korakov entwines two main themes, one sensuous and the other more playful. Scheherazade's gentle voice appears toward the end.

The composer originally described his Finale as "the Baghdad festival and the ship dashing against the rock with the bronze horseman on it." The ship is Sinbad's and the "bronze horseman" refers to St. Petersburg's famous statue of Peter the Great and to a famous poem by Aleksandr Pushkin that involves the statue and the 1824 flood of the Neva River. Rimsky-Korsakov must have liked the time warp, imagining Sinbad's ancient ship crashing against the statue of his own city in a storm. Following Scheherazade's introduction, we seem to hear first dancing at the festival and then waves at sea becoming more stormy. Rocking motion and cymbal crashes represent the waves, and the striking of the tam-tam (gong) surely marks the climactic moment when the ship hits the rock.

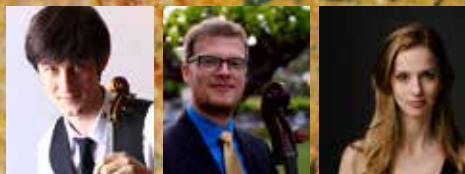
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Nigel Armstrong, violin, James Jaffe, cello
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Falla: Spanish Dances from
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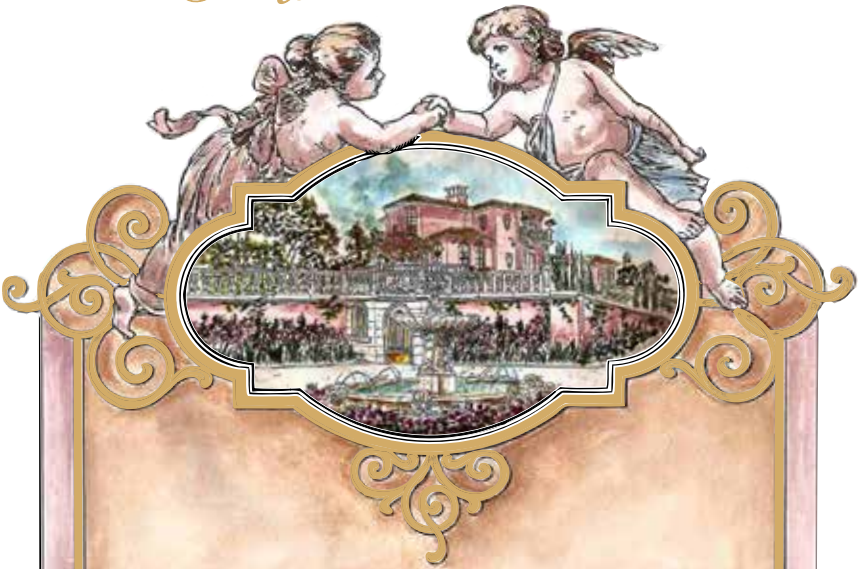
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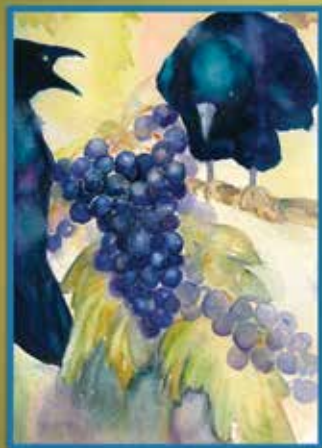
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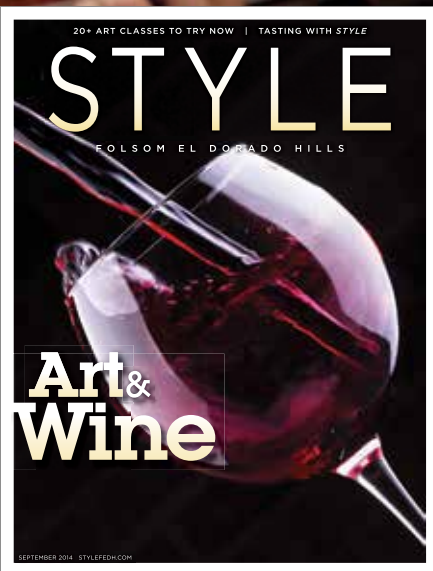
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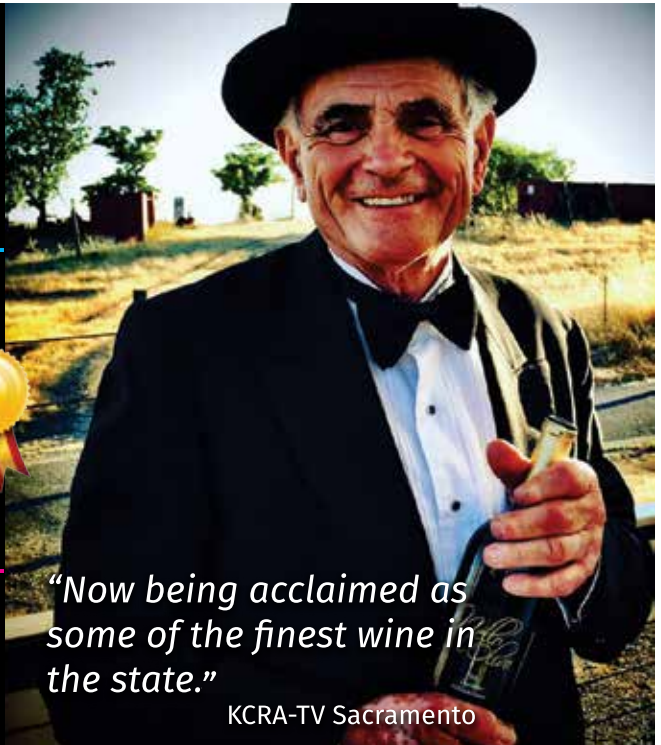
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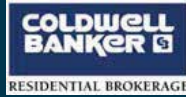
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