

ORANGE COUNTY PERFORMING ARTS CENTER
RENÉE AND HENRY SEGERSTROM CONCERT HALL
Thursday–Saturday, May 13–15, 2010, at 8:00 p.m.



PRESENTS

**2009–2010 HAL AND JEANETTE SEGERSTROM
FAMILY FOUNDATION CLASSICAL SERIES**

BEETHOVEN & RACHMANINOFF

MICHAEL STERN, CONDUCTOR
DEJAN LAZIĆ, PIANO

BARBER Medea's Meditation and Dance of Vengeance, Op. 23a
(1910–1981)

BEETHOVEN Concerto No. 4 in G Major for Piano and Orchestra, Op. 58
(1770–1827)
Allegro moderato
Andante con moto
Rondo: Vivace
DEJAN LAZIĆ

— I N T E R M I S S I O N —

RACHMANINOFF Symphonic Dances, Op. 45
(1873–1943)
Non allegro - Lento - Tempo I
Andante con moto (Tempo di valse)
Lento assai - Allegro vivace

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SEGERSTROM CENTER FOR THE ARTS

PROGRAM NOTES

BY PETER LAKI, Program annotator for the Cleveland Orchestra and Pacific Symphony



Medea's Meditation and Dance of Vengeance, Op. 23a (1946-55)

BY SAMUEL BARBER
(WEST CHESTER, PA, 1910 – NEW YORK, 1981)

Instrumentation: 3 flutes (third doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, English horn, small clarinet in E-flat, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, harp, piano, and strings.
Performance time: 14 minutes.

The collaboration with Martha Graham's dance company revealed an aspect of Barber's personality that he didn't often show the world. Widely known as the Romantic lyricist of the Violin Concerto and the Adagio for Strings, Barber accepted an invitation to work on a dark and violent subject and produced a strong and hard-edged score whose dissonant harmonic language was harsh enough to cause some people to leave the hall during some of the early performances.

From the complex mythological story told by Euripides in his great tragedy, Graham had extracted a symbolic plot focusing on the jealousy drama when Jason leaves Medea for a young princess. In her fury, Medea murders not only her

rival but also her own (Medea's) children. Graham and Barber wanted to present this horrible family drama in all its gruesomeness; as a result, he was, as critic and fellow composer Virgil Thomson put it in his inimitable style, "freed at last from the well-bred attitudinizing and mincing respectabilities of his concert manner." And Thomson was happy to note that "Once more the theater has made a man out of an American composer who had passed his early years as a genteel musical essayist."

Barber's *Medea* music went through several fundamental transformations over a ten-year period. The first performance, presented at Columbia University under the title *Serpent Heart* (May 10, 1946), had a score consisting of nine movements and utilizing a small ensemble of 13 instruments. The following year, Graham revised the ballet as *Cave of the Heart*. For his part, Barber re-orchestrated the music as a concert suite for large orchestra, rearranging the material of the original nine movements into seven. Finally, in 1955, Barber made yet another version, in a single continuous movement, retaining only music that related to the protagonist. This work was titled *Medea's Meditation and Dance of Vengeance* and premiered by Dimitri Mitropoulos and the New York Philharmonic on February 2, 1956.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Barber placed the following lines from Euripides as an epigraph in his score:

Look, my soft eyes have suddenly filled with tears:

O children, how ready to cry I am, how full of foreboding!

Jason wrongs me, though I have never injured him.

He has taken a wife to his house, supplanting me...

Now I am in the full force of the storm of hate,

I will make dead bodies of three of my enemies—father, the girl and my husband! Come, Medea, whose father was noble, Whose grandfather God of the sun, Go forward to the dreadful act.

Cast in the traditional slow-fast form used in dances and rhapsodies, Barber's music captures the austere mood with massive blocks of sound and strident orchestral colors. The intense ostinatos (obsessively repeated rhythms) and heavily accented chords have reminded more than one commentator of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*. As Barbara B. Heyman remarks in her masterful book on Barber, the composer had made, with this work, "a major stylistic leap."

Piano Concerto No. 4 in G Major, Op. 58 (1806)

BY LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN
(BONN, 1770 - VIENNA, 1827)

Instrumentation: piano solo, plus flute, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, strings (first movement); strings alone (second movement); the ensemble of the first movements, plus 2 trumpets and timpani (third movement).
Performance time: 35 minutes.

The first three Beethoven concertos represent a gradual line of evolution, gradually moving away from the Mozartian models and culminating in No. 5, the magnificent "Emperor" Concerto in E-flat Major. No. 4 seems to fall outside that line. It is every bit as revolutionary as the "Emperor," which it preceded by three years; yet its tone is characterized by a unique mixture of cheerfulness and lyricism with occasional touches of mystery. The first movement is gentle yet extremely powerful. The finale is playful and witty yet has its dream-like moments. And in between, there is an "Andante con moto" that doesn't resemble anything Beethoven ever wrote before or after the Fourth Concerto.



WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The first surprise occurs in the very first measure of the concerto. The usual orchestral introduction is preceded by a piano solo consisting of a few simple chords played almost as if in a dream. The orchestra enters in a different key, eventually finding its way back to G major. From here on, the succession of themes follows the established conventions, but there are many irregularities in the tonal plan and its harmonic elaboration. One of the many unexpected modulations in the movement leads to an expressive melody played pianissimo in the highest register of the instrument. It makes use of notes that had only recently been added to the keyboard; it is interesting to observe that Beethoven contrasted the extremely high range of the melody with a left-hand accompaniment that is extremely low. The effect is magical.

The second-movement “Andante con moto” is an impassioned dialog between the piano and the strings that seems to cry out for a programmatic explanation. In 1985, musicologist Owen Jander interpreted the movement as “Orpheus in Hades,” with Orpheus pleading with the Furies of the Underworld for the life of his wife, Eurydice. Having won Eurydice back, Orpheus broke his vow not to look at her during their way home and lost her forever.

Jander supported his claims by some biographical evidence. An acquaintance of Beethoven’s, composer Friedrich August Kanne, was working on an opera based on the Orpheus myth around the time Beethoven composed his concerto. Kanne, who wrote both the libretto and the score of his opera, included a passage where Orpheus and the chorus of the Furies alternate in one-line speeches very much in the manner of Beethoven’s piano-string dialog.

In a gesture Beethoven was particularly fond of, the third-movement Rondo

starts in the “wrong” key: for several measures, C major is suggested before the “correct” G major is established in a clearly audible tonal “switch.” The cheerful mood of the movement is occasionally tempered by more serious moments, but the ending, culminating in a vigorous Presto, is one of the happiest Beethoven ever wrote.

Like the first movement, the third makes room for a cadenza. Beethoven noted in the score: “The cadenza should be short.” In 1809, he wrote down an example of what he had in mind, perhaps at the request of his pupil, Archduke Rudolph, to whom the concerto was dedicated.

Symphonic Dances, Op. 45 (1941)

BY SERGEI RACHMANINOFF
(ONEG, NR. NOVGOROD, RUSSIA, 1873 – BEVERLY HILLS, CALIFORNIA, 1943)

2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, harp, piano, strings.

Performance time: 33 minutes.

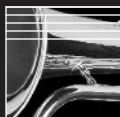
During the quarter-century between his emigration from Russia and his death, Sergei Rachmaninoff completed



only six new works — and this despite his insistence that “composing is as essential a part of my being as breathing or eating; it is one of the necessary functions of living.” But it seems that the exhausting schedule of a concert pianist took too great a toll on his creative energies. Even more importantly, Rachmaninoff was too deeply attached to his native land to ever overcome the emotional trauma of emigration and homesickness. He continued to live in a Russian world, surrounded by Russian friends, eating Russian food, speaking, thinking, dreaming in Russian. Musically, too, he remained steeped in the milieu in which he had grown up: the tradition he had absorbed at the Moscow Conservatory in the 1890s, when Tchaikovsky (his early mentor) was still alive. That milieu seemed infinitely remote in time and space in the America of the 1940s, and Rachmaninoff, as he himself put it in 1939, felt “like a ghost wandering in a world grown alien. I cannot cast out the old way of writing, and I cannot acquire the new.”

In 1940, the 67-year-old Rachmaninoff gathered up his strength to write what would remain his swan song. Originally, he planned to give the three movements the titles “Noon,” “Evening,” and “Midnight,” probably thinking of reflecting different phases of life rather than simply times of day. He also wanted to call the work *Fantastic Dances*, before settling for the definitive title. In a newspaper interview, he said: “It should have been called just ‘Dances,’ but I was afraid people would think I had written dance music for jazz orchestras.”

Indeed, that was probably the last thing Rachmaninoff ever wanted to do. To write ballet music for the great Mikhail Fokine to choreograph was a completely different matter. In 1939, Fokine had produced a ballet about Paganini using the score of Rachmaninoff’s *Paganini Rhapsody*. After this successful collabora-



PROGRAM NOTES *(continued)*

tion, Rachmaninoff was hoping that *Symphonic Dances* could be turned into another Fokine ballet, but these plans came to nothing, due to the choreographer's death in 1942.

It is impossible to know whether Rachmaninoff knew he was writing his last work. Yet the suspicion that this might have been the case is not so easily dismissed. The numerous references to Rachmaninoff's earlier works suggest that the composer was looking back on his life. In the coda of the first movement, he quoted the main theme from his ill-fated First Symphony of 1897. At its premiere, conducted by an apparently intoxicated Alexander Glazunov, the symphony failed badly, thrusting the young composer into such a state of depression that for three entire years, he was unable to write any music whatsoever. He only recovered his ability to work through the intervention of a psychiatrist who used hypnosis to restore his self-confidence. Rachmaninoff could be certain that no one would recognize this reference to a symphony not performed in 43 years; yet to him the quote must have had a secret symbolic meaning — a nostalgic recollection of the ambitions and adversities of his youth. A little earlier in the piece, scholars have detected an echo of one of Rachmaninoff's solo piano works (*Etude-Tableau*, Op. 33, No. 7 [1911]). Even more intriguingly, Kasyan Goleyzovsky, a choreographer from the Bolshoi Theater in Moscow, has claimed that “a significant part” of *Symphonic Dances* originated in an aborted ballet project *The Scythians*, on which Rachmaninoff appears to have worked around 1915. No music for this project survives, but a handwritten note from Goleyzovsky from the time mentions “sketches . . . for the final symphonic dance” — an interesting coincidence if nothing else, given the title of the 1940 composition.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

It was to be expected that the “Dies irae” melody, which had been haunting Rachmaninoff since the fateful First Symphony, would not be left out this time. It wasn't; yet the composer placed it in a new context by juxtaposing it with another quote, the “Alleluia” from the *All-Night Vigil* (1915). The evocation of the Last Judgement was thus complemented by a reference to Resurrection, apparently symbolizing a defeat of Death by the power of Redemption. It would indeed make sense to imagine Rachmaninoff consciously bidding farewell to his composing days with this gesture.

Yet in spite of all this serious symbolism, *Symphonic Dances* is anything but a heavy dramatic composition. True, the emphasis seems to be more on the “symphonic” than on the “dances”— the piece is a three-movement symphony in all but name. Still, the dance character is always present in *Symphonic Dances*; the work would make a good ballet after all.

The first movement bears the unusual tempo marking “Non allegro,” which Rachmaninoff occasionally used to avoid overly fast tempos (although there is a story that at one rehearsal with Dimitri Mitropoulos and the Minneapolis Symphony, Rachmaninoff started snapping his fingers to accelerate the tempo). The main part of the movement obviously cannot be too slow or the contrasting middle section, marked “Lento,” with its expressive saxophone solo, will become definitely snail-paced. For this saxophone solo, incidentally, Rachmaninoff sought out Broadway composer Robert Russell Bennett, who gave him some technical advice on how to handle this (for him) unusual instrument. It wasn't the only time Rachmaninoff turned to a specialist. Before the premiere, Eugene Ormandy noted that some of the violin bowings were extremely difficult to exe-

cute. Rachmaninoff replied: “Ah yes, Fritz did those for me” (Fritz being none other than Fritz Kreisler).

Beginning with an ominous motto with stopped horns and muted trumpets, the second movement is a valse triste with a melancholy string theme wandering from key to key, accompanied by impressionistic woodwind figurations. At the end, the tempo and the rhythm become more animated and the movement, surprisingly, ends like a Mendelssohn scherzo.

The third movement, like the first, is in A-B-A form, with a central slow section flanked by faster music. But the contrasts are much sharper: the “Non allegro” (“not fast”) is replaced by “Allegro vivace” (“fast and lively”) and the “Lento” (“slow”) by “Lento assai” (“very slow”). The fast section — in fact preceded by a gloomy slow introduction — has its share of lively rhythms, syncopations, but is overcast with an air of seriousness announced early in the movement by the solemn bells. The mournful middle section adds to the gravity of the atmosphere, preparing the entrance of the “Dies irae” theme, played by the brass after the return of the fast tempo. Only gradually (and within certain limits) does the music lighten up for the final “Alliluya” (to use Rachmaninoff's transliterated Russian spelling from the score). But it does happen in the end, and although the “sad” minor tonality doesn't go away, the rhythmic momentum and dazzling orchestral colors of the conclusion project faith, strength, and reassurance.



ABOUT THE MUSIC DIRECTOR

CARL ST.CLAIR



In 2009-10, Pacific Symphony's Music Director Carl St. Clair marks the start of his 20th anniversary with the orchestra. 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. St. Clair's lengthy history with the Symphony solidifies the strong relationship he has forged with the musicians and the 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 orchestra formed in the United States in the last 40 years—due in large part to St. Clair's leadership.

St. Clair and the Symphony launch the 2009-10 season surrounded by internationally celebrated artists with whom he has developed close relationships. The season includes inventive, forward-thinking programming, including a new series of concerts, "Music Unwound," featuring multimedia, varied formats and ancillary events. Other highlights include four world premieres and the critically acclaimed American Composers Festival, in its 10th year under St. Clair, entitled "The Greatest Generation."

This past season, St. Clair celebrated another milestone—the 30th anniversary of Pacific Symphony. In 2006-07, St. Clair led the orchestra's historic move into its home in the Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall at the Orange County Performing Arts Center. 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. The Symphony received rave reviews

from Europe's classical music critics—22 reviews in total.

At the start of 2008-09, St. Clair added to his portfolio the role of general music director of the Komische Oper Berlin, a prestigious opera company located in Berlin, Germany, with a history that dates back to 1892. He recently concluded his tenure as general music director and chief conductor of the German National Theater and Staatskapelle (GNTS) in Weimar, Germany, where he recently led Wagner's "Ring Cycle" to great critical acclaim. St. Clair was the first non-European to hold his position at the GNTS; the role also gave him the distinction of simultaneously leading one of the newest orchestras in America and one of the oldest orchestras in Europe.

St. Clair's international career has him conducting abroad numerous months a year, and he has appeared with orchestras throughout the world. He was the principal guest conductor of the Radio-Sinfonieorchester Stuttgart from 1998-2004, where he successfully completed a three-year recording project of

the Villa-Lobos symphonies. He has also appeared with orchestras in Israel, Hong Kong, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and South America, and summer festivals worldwide.

St. Clair's commitment to the development and performance of new works by American composers is evident in the wealth of commissions and recordings by Pacific Symphony. St. Clair has led the orchestra in numerous critically acclaimed albums including two piano concertos of Lukas Foss on the harmonia mundi label. Under his guidance, the orchestra has commissioned works which later became recordings, including Richard Danielpour's *An American Requiem* on Reference Recordings and Elliot Goldenthal's *Fire Water Paper: A Vietnam Oratorio* on Sony Classical with cellist Yo-Yo Ma. Other composers commissioned by St. Clair and Pacific Symphony include William Bolcom, Philip Glass, Zhou Long, Tobias Picker, Frank Ticheli and Chen Yi, Curt Cacioppo, Stephen Scott, Jim Self (the Symphony's principal tubist), Christopher Theofanis and James Newton Howard.

In North America, 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.

Under St. Clair's dynamic leadership, the Symphony has built a relationship with the Southern California community by understanding and responding to its cultural needs. A strong advocate of music education for all ages, St. Clair has been essential to the creation and implementation of the symphony education programs including Classical Connections, *arts-X-press* and Class Act.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

MICHAEL STERN CONDUCTOR



Conductor Michael Stern is in his fifth season as music director of the Kansas City Symphony, hailed for its remarkable artistic growth and development since his tenure began.

The Symphony and Stern concluded their first year together by making a recording for the Naxos label which was released in 2007. Their latest CD, *The Tempest*, with music by Sullivan and Sibelius inspired by Shakespeare's play, was released to critical acclaim in July 2008 on the Grammy Award®-winning Reference Recordings label.

This year also marks Stern's second season as principal guest conductor of Orchestre National de Lille, France. As well, Stern is founding artistic director and principal conductor of the IRIS Orchestra in Germantown, Tennessee. Other positions include a tenure as the chief conductor of Germany's Saarbrücken Radio Symphony Orchestra (the first American chief conductor in the orchestra's history) and as permanent guest conductor of the Orchestre National de Lyon in France, a position which he held for five years.

Stern has led orchestras throughout Europe and Asia, including the London Symphony, London Philharmonic, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic, Beethovenhalle Orchestra in Bonn, Budapest Radio Symphony Orchestra, Israel Philharmonic, Moscow Philharmonic, National Symphony of Taiwan, Tokyo's NHK Symphony and the Vienna Radio Symphony's tour of China.

In North America, Stern has conducted the New York Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra, Pittsburgh Symphony, St. Louis Symphony, Atlanta Symphony, Houston Symphony, Baltimore Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra, Toronto Symphony, Cincinnati Symphony, Seattle Symphony, Montreal Symphony, Indianapolis Symphony, and the National

Symphony in Washington, D.C. He also appears regularly at the Aspen Music Festival and has served on the faculty of the American Academy of Conducting at Aspen.

Stern received his music degree from The Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, where his major teacher was the noted conductor and scholar Max Rudolf. Stern coedited the third edition of Rudolf's famous textbook, *The Grammar of Conducting*, and also edited a new volume of Rudolf's collected writings and correspondence. Stern is a 1981 graduate of Harvard University, where he earned a degree in American history.

DEJAN LAZIĆ PIANO



Pianist Dejan Lazić was born in Zagreb, Croatia, and grew up in Salzburg where he studied at the Mozarteum. He is quickly establishing a reputation worldwide as "a brilliant

pianist and a gifted musician full of ideas and able to project them persuasively" (*Gramophone*). *The New York Times* hailed his performance as "full of poetic, shapely phrasing and vivid dynamic effects that made this music sound fresh, spontaneous and impassioned." After a highly successful Edinburgh Festival recital, *The Scotsman* wrote recently: "Dejan Lazić shines like a new star."

As recitalist and soloist with orchestra, Lazić has appeared at major venues in Europe, North and South America, Asia, and Australia and has been invited to numerous international festivals.

In spring 2008, he gave his orchestral debuts at New York's Lincoln Center with the Budapest Festival Orchestra and Iván Fischer and at London's Royal Festival Hall with the London Philharmonic Orchestra under the direction of Kirill Petrenko. During the 2007-08 season, he also performed very successfully with the Philharmonia Orchestra under Vladimir Ashkenazy and with the Bamberger

Symphoniker under Jonathan Nott. He also appeared with the Atlanta, Seattle and Indianapolis and Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestras, Het Residentie, the Seoul and Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestras and the Rotterdams Philharmonisch Orkest. He was "artist in residence" with the Netherlands Chamber Orchestra in 2008-09, and equally enjoys a growing following in the Far East.

Highlights of the 2009-10 season include a tour with the Australian Chamber Orchestra, engagements with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, MDR Leipzig, Danish National Symphony Orchestra, Orquestra Sinfônica do Estado de São Paulo, Pacific Symphony and his debut with NHK Symphony Orchestra.

Alongside his solo career, Lazić is also a passionate chamber musician. He works regularly with artists such as Benjamin Schmid, Gordan Nikolić and Richard Tognetti and is a regular guest at the Menuhin Festival Gstaad and many others. Recitals in 2009-10 lead him to Istanbul, Munich and the Heidelberg Spring, to mention just a few.

Lazić records exclusively for Channel Classics. The first volume of his "liaisons" series with works by Scarlatti and Bartók was released in 2007; the second with a Schumann/Brahms program followed in early 2009. In 2008, he released a recording of Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto No. 2 with the London Philharmonic Orchestra and Kirill Petrenko.

Lazić is also a composer. His works include various piano compositions, chamber music and orchestral works (including String Quartet Op. 9, written for Mstislav Rostropovich's 70th birthday gala). In the 2007-08 season, he premiered his piano cycle *Kinderszenen – Hommage à Schumann* Op. 15 at the Amsterdam Concertgebouw. His arrangement of Brahms' Violin Concerto for piano and orchestra saw its world premiere with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and Robert Spano in October 2009.