

2025-26 Hal & Jeanette Segerstrom
Family Foundation Classical Series

SHELLEY CONDUCTS STRAVINSKY'S FIREBIRD

Preview Talk at 7 p.m.
KUSC midday host Alan Chapman
Thursday, January 15, 2026 @ 8 p.m.
Friday, January 16, 2026 @ 8 p.m.
Saturday, January 17, 2026 @ 8 p.m.

Alexander Shelley, conductor
Aubree Oliverson, violin
Fowler Amusement, visuals
Pacific Symphony

ADAMS *Short Ride in a Fast Machine*

KORNGOLD Violin Concerto in D Major, Op. 35
Moderato nobile
Romance: Andante
Finale: Allegro assai vivace
Aubree Oliverson, violin

—INTERMISSION—

STRAVINSKY *The Firebird*
Introduction
Kastchei's Enchanted Garden
The Firebird Enters, Pursued by Ivan Tsarevich
The Firebird's Dance
Ivan Tsarevich Captures the Firebird
The Firebird Begs to be Released
Entrance of the Thirteen Enchanted
Princesses
The Princesses Play with the Golden Apples
(Scherzo)
Ivan Tsarevich Appears
The Princesses' Khorovod (Round Dance)
Daybreak
Ivan Tsarevich Enters Kastchei's Palace
Entrance of Kastchei the Immortal
Dialogue between Kastchei and Ivan Tsarevich
The Princesses Plead for Mercy
The Firebird Enters
Dance of Kastchei's Retinue under the
Firebird's Magic Spell
Infernal Dance of Kastchei and His Subjects
The Firebird's Lullaby
Kastchei Awakens
Kastchei's Death
Kastchei's Spell Is Broken



This concert is being recorded for broadcast
on July 19, 2026 on Classical California KUSC.

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

ARTISTIC AND MUSIC DIRECTOR DESIGNATE



One of the foremost conductors of his generation, Alexander Shelley is “a natural communicator, both on and off the podium” (*The Daily Telegraph*). A passionate and articulate advocate for the role of music in society, Shelley has spearheaded multiple award-winning and ground-breaking projects,

unlocking creativity in the next generation and bringing symphonic music to new audiences.

With a conducting technique described as “immaculate, everything crystal clear” (*Yorkshire Post*), and with a “precision, distinction and beauty of gesture not seen since Lorin Maazel” (*Le Devoir*), Shelley is known for the integrity of his interpretations and for his creative programming, having led over 50 major world premieres, highly praised cycles of Beethoven, Schumann, and Brahms symphonies, and operas, ballets, and multimedia productions.

Shelley appears regularly across six continents with the world’s finest soloists, including Emanuel Ax, Joshua Bell, Renée Fleming, Hilary Hahn, Thomas Hampson, Daniel Hope, Lang Lang, and Itzhak Perlman. He is a regular guest with renowned orchestras of Europe, the Americas, Asia, and Australasia, including Leipzig’s Gewandhaus Orchestra, the Konzerthausorchester Berlin, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande; the Helsinki, Hong Kong, Luxembourg, Malaysian, Oslo, Rotterdam, and Stockholm philharmonic orchestras; and the São Paulo, Houston, Seattle, Baltimore, Indianapolis, Montreal, Toronto, Munich, Singapore, Melbourne, Sydney, and New Zealand symphony orchestras.

In 2024, Shelley was appointed to become Pacific Symphony’s third artistic leader, taking the title of Artistic and Music Director, beginning in the 2026–27 season. He is serving as Artistic and Music Director Designate during 2025–26. The 2025–26 season marks Shelley’s 11th and final as Music Director of Canada’s National Arts Centre Orchestra (NACO). He has recently been appointed Principal Conductor of the National Symphony Orchestra Ireland, beginning in 2026–27; this season, he assumes the position of Principal Conductor Designate, leading the orchestra at the National Concert Hall, Dublin. Since the 2024–25 season, Shelley has been the Artistic and Music Director of Artis–Naples, in Florida, where he provides artistic leadership for the Naples Philharmonic and oversees the entire multidisciplinary arts organization. He has also served as Principal Associate Conductor of London’s Royal Philharmonic Orchestra since 2015.

Highlights of Shelley’s 2025–26 season with Pacific Symphony include concerts with Pablo Sainz-Villegas, performing Arturo Márquez’s guitar concerto *Mystical and Profane*; pianist Gabriela Montero, performing her “Latin Concerto”; violinist

Aubree Oliverson, performing Korngold’s Violin Concerto; and a special program for the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence of the U.S., with Conrad Tao performing Gershwin’s Piano Concerto.

To celebrate his 11-year tenure at NACO, Shelley leads the orchestra in a semi-staged production of *Tosca*, featuring soprano Ailyn Pérez; Beethoven’s Piano Concerto No. 5, “Emperor,” with Lang Lang; Joshua Bell’s *The Elements*, commissioned from five of today’s leading American composers; Gershwin’s Piano Concerto, with Hélène Grimaud; a Brahms and Schumann program featuring violinist James Ehnes; and the orchestra’s first-ever performances of Mahler’s Symphony No. 2, “Resurrection.”

With the Naples Philharmonic, season highlights include *African Queens*, a powerful work for soprano and orchestra by seven American composers, sung by soprano Karen Slack; *Perú Negro*, by Jimmy López, the composer’s homage to his Afro-Peruvian heritage; the world premiere of a newly commissioned work by Raven Chacon, the first Native American to win a Pulitzer Prize for Music (2022); and Strauss’ *Also sprach Zarathustra*.

Additional highlights this season include Shelley’s debut with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, with James Ehnes giving the U.K. premiere of James Newton Howard’s Violin Concerto No. 2. He also debuts with the Dortmunder Philharmoniker, with David Fray performing Schumann’s Piano Concerto in A Minor.

During his tenure at NACO, Shelley’s programming has been credited for turning the orchestra “almost overnight... into one of the more audacious orchestras in North America” (*Macleans*). Together they have undertaken major tours of Canada, Europe, and to Carnegie Hall. In 2025, they embarked on a monumental tour, returning to Japan for the first time in 40 years and making their Republic of Korea debut. *Poema: Ad Astra*, the first volume of a NACO recording project pairing Strauss tone poems with contemporary works, was released in January 2025; the second volume is scheduled for release in fall 2025.

Shelley’s operatic engagements have included productions with the Royal Danish Opera, Canadian Opera Company, Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen, and Opéra National de Montpellier. His eight-year tenure as Chief Conductor of the Nürnberger Symphoniker, which concluded in 2017, was hailed as a golden era for the orchestra.

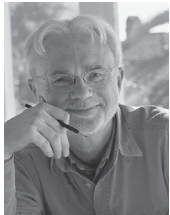
Born in London to concert pianists, Shelley studied cello and conducting in Germany and gained widespread attention when he was unanimously awarded first prize at the 2005 Leeds Conductors Competition, with the press describing him as “the most exciting and gifted young conductor to have taken this highly prestigious award.”

PROGRAM NOTES

John Adams

Born: 1947 in Worcester, MA

Short Ride in a Fast Machine



Composed: 1986

Premiered: Jun. 13, 1986, by the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra conducted by Michael Tilson Thomas

Most recent Pacific Symphony performance: Oct. 5, 2000, in Segerstrom Hall, with Carl St.Clair conducting

Instrumentation: Four flutes including piccolo, three oboes including English horn, four clarinets, four bassoons including contrabassoon, four horns, four trumpets, three trombones, one tuba, timpani, percussion, two synthesizers, and strings.

Approximate duration: 4 minutes.

Considered by many to be the dean of American composers, John Adams was born in Worcester, Massachusetts and attended Harvard University, where his composition instructors included some of the most influential musical thinkers of the day—Leon Kirchner, Roger Sessions, and David Del Tredici among them.

No living composer has been more influential in serious music than John Adams. His probing, thematically modern operas such as *Nixon in China*, *Dr. Atomic* and *The Death of Klinghoffer*—which once seemed like impossibly long shots—now grip and fascinate audiences around the world. His remarkable orchestral-electronic elegy *On the Transmigration of Souls* is acknowledged as the go-to musical remembrance for 9/11. His compositions are distinguished by their intellectual depth but can also be wittily amusing, as in the case of *Short Ride in a Fast Machine*.

Short Ride is a lighter Adams composition that has found huge popularity in the concert hall. (Another, *The Chairman Dances*, ideates Mao Tse-Tung stepping out of a painting and dancing a fox-trot!) Of *Short Ride*, Adams notes: "You know how it is when someone asks you to ride in a terrific sports car, and then you wish you hadn't?" Listening to Adams' musical rendering, it is impossible *not* to know. Though it is classified as a fanfare, this is the kind of musical bonbon that might once have been called a *divertissement*. It is also an extended metaphor in music. Poetry fans should rush to their anthologies and compare it to "She being Brand" by E. E. Cummings. Though Cummings' work is different—dating to 1925 and comparing an awkward erotic encounter to a ride in a jalopy—the links between the two works illuminate both. They bounce!

Erich Wolfgang Korngold

Born: May 29, 1897 in Brünn, Austria-Hungary (now Brno, Czech Republic)

Died: Nov. 29, 1957 in Los Angeles, CA

Violin Concerto in D Major, Op. 35



Composed: 1945

Premiered: Feb. 15, 1947 in St. Louis, MO by the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Vladimir Golschmann with Jascha Heifetz as violin soloist

Most recent Pacific Symphony performance: Apr. 30, 2016 in the

Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall with Bramwell Tovey conducting and Midori as soloist.

Instrumentation: Two flutes including piccolo, two oboes including English horn, three clarinets including bass clarinet, two bassoons including contrabassoon, four horns, two trumpets, one trombone, timpani, percussion, harp, celesta, strings, and solo violin.

Approximate duration: 24 minutes.

Erich Korngold was born in Brünn, Austria-Hungary, now Brno, Czech Republic, just a stone's throw from Vienna, the city that had been the capital of the European classical music tradition for two centuries. Jewish musicians were a particular target of the Third Reich, and Korngold was in the vanguard of Jewish-Viennese composers who fled before the onset of World War II to settle in Hollywood, helping to create a musical golden age to match the golden age of American Cinema.

Earlier, growing up in Brno, Korngold was already well known in Austrian and German musical circles. His mentor Gustav Mahler called him a genius, and at age 13 his first opera, *Der Schneemann*, confirmed his status as one of the most remarkable prodigies in music history. After his work with the director Max Reinhardt, who brought him to Hollywood to score the film *Robin Hood*, cineastes joked that he "invented" the career of Errol Flynn, magically capturing and magnifying the star's swashbuckling virility and roguish charm in music.

Korngold arrived in the U.S. believing he was on a temporary assignment. But he had no illusions about conditions in Europe, and stayed in California at the urging of colleagues and friends. Grateful for the security he found here for his family, he resolved to compose only film music until Hitler's final defeat. But his success in the film industry resulted in an oddly bifurcated career: In Europe he is known to this day as a classical composer; in America his name is inseparable from popular movies. When he rededicated himself to composing for the concert hall and the opera house, few of his works found their places here.

Today, film buffs recognize his many film scores as masterpieces of the genre, and operaphiles point to his opera *Die Tote Stadt* as a hauntingly beautiful and gripping tale of memory and obsessive love. But it is the violin concerto, composed in his characteristically lush, melodic style, that is most often cited as the cornerstone of his reputation. Here Korngold bridges the concert hall and Hollywood: its opening *Moderato nobile* movement is built around themes from his

scores for *Another Dawn* and *Juarez*; in the central *Romanze* movement, the main theme is a quotation from his *Anthony Adverse*; and in the final *Allegro assai vivace*, an energetic movement with plenty of virtuoso licks, the proceedings build to a rollicking climax based on a melody from *The Prince and the Pauper*. Championed by Jascha Heifetz, the concerto soon entered the standard repertory. It is dedicated to Alma Mahler, Gustav's widow. Considering all the European culturati who nursed bad crushes on this charismatic woman, it's quite possible that Korngold did, too.

Inevitably, long after the fall of the Third Reich, its horrors cast a shadow over Korngold's success. As he told his friends here, "We thought we were Viennese. Hitler taught us we were Jewish."

Igor Stravinsky

Born: Jun. 16, 1882 in St. Petersburg, Russia

Died: April 6, 1971 in New York, NY

Suite from *The Firebird*



Composed: 1910

Premiered: Jun. 25, 1910 at the Opéra de Paris, conducted by Gabriel Pierné.

Most recent Pacific Symphony performance: (1945 Version) Dec. 4, 2021, in the Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall with Markus Stenz conducting.

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

Approximate duration: 57 minutes.

Four years before *The Rite of Spring* made Stravinsky an international celebrity, the success of his ballet score for *The Firebird* secured his future as a composer. Though the commission came from Serge Diaghilev and the Ballets Russe in 1908, it could not have happened without Stravinsky's teacher, mentor and friend, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov. Stravinsky stayed with Rimsky-Korsakov and his family in Heidelberg in the summer of 1902, and it was the eminent composer's suggestion that Stravinsky not enter the conservatory in Saint Petersburg, but rather take private lessons in composition. With the death of Stravinsky's father that year, the relationship with Rimsky-Korsakov grew closer, and in 1905 he began taking lessons with the master twice each week, continuing until Rimsky-Korsakov's death in 1908.

Stravinsky made every musical influence his own, but in early compositions such as the *Scherzo fantastique* and *Feu d'artifice* his debt to his mentor is especially evident. At first these early works were hardly performed, but by chance, the sparkling, elegant *Feu d'artifice* ("Fireworks") came to the attention of the producer-choreographer Sergei Diaghilev, director of the prestigious Ballets Russe. Diaghilev wanted a modern, distinctively Russian voice for a new ballet,

The Firebird, and he thrived on risk. He commissioned the unknown Stravinsky, and the result was a hit for both artists.

In 1908, before he began work on *The Firebird*, there was little external evidence of Stravinsky's potential to become one of the giants of Western music. He was 26 and was still greatly influenced by Rimsky-Korsakov's iridescent harmonies and traditional virtuosity. Earlier, without a major commission, Stravinsky had accepted a suggestion from Rimsky for an opera based on an enchanting tale from Hans Christian Andersen, *Le Rossignol*. But after a year's work, the serendipitous commission for *The Firebird* prompted him to set *Le Rossignol* aside.

Suddenly, Stravinsky was in a hothouse of international talent. The Ballets Russe's dancers included Vaslav Nijinsky and Bronislava Nijinska, its settings and costumes were designed by such artists as Pablo Picasso and Leon Bakst, and its productions embodied all the artistic richness and ferment of Paris in the Art Deco era preceding World War I. With characteristic boldness, Diaghilev had given Stravinsky this assignment based on a single hearing of a rather slender score; its success made the composer's reputation overnight. It was the beginning of a transformative musical journey that continued with *Petrushka* and the epoch-making *The Rite of Spring*. In less than five years, this astounding collaboration caused sophisticated Parisians to riot at the sound of a new and revolutionary kind of music far beyond anything Rimsky-Korsakov imagined.

"Shimmering" is a word often used to describe the ethereal beauty of Stravinsky's score for *The Firebird*. But when balletomanes first encountered it in 1909, both the look and the sound of this work had the power to shock. Where 19th-century ballets were dominated by elegance and picturesque delicacy on stage and in the pit, *The Firebird* substituted a story rooted in folk traditions that seemed primitive by comparison, even including human sacrifice. The music booms with emphatic percussion and is not afraid of dissonance. Yet it also shines with melodies that are almost magical, capturing the sense of human awe in the midst of nature's eternal vastness. In his next two ballets, Stravinsky would go even further in combining sophisticated musical craft with folk elements that seemed shockingly primitive to his contemporary listeners.

"For me, the most striking effect in *The Firebird* was the natural-harmonic string glissando near the beginning, which the bass chord touches off like a Catherine wheel," Stravinsky wrote. "I was delighted to have discovered this, and I remember my excitement in demonstrating it to Rimsky's violinist and cellist sons." The equally innovative *Petrushka* and *The Rite of Spring* were soon to follow.

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 ARTISTS

Aubree Oliverson, violin



Praised for her evocative lyricism and joyful, genuine approach, young American violinist Aubree Oliverson is proving to be one of the most compelling artists of her generation, distinguishing herself with clear, honest, and colorful performances, which have been described as “powerful... brimming with confidence

and joy” by the (*Miami New Times*).

Acclaimed as a “masterful” soloist (*San Diego Story*), Oliverson’s most recent solo appearances in 2023 include season openings of the Chamber Orchestra of New York at Carnegie Hall (di Vittorio), Utah Symphony at Abravanel Hall (Morlot), Peace Orchestra Project (Mengoli), and Ridgefield Symphony with a pairing of the Barber and Esmail violin concertos. Other season highlights include performances with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic (Teychenné), Columbus Symphony (Miller), Orquesta Sinfónica de Navarra (Hoving), North Carolina Symphony (Prieto), Pacific Symphony (St.Clair), Des Moines Symphony (St.Clair), Amarillo Symphony (Jackson), Moldavian Philharmonic (Macek), Excelentia Madrid (Braunstein), Slovak Sinfonietta (Foron), Rouse Philharmonic Orchestra (Sachedina), New Haven Symphony (So), Puerto Rico Symphony (Valdés), and the Kontrapunktus Baroque Ensemble; in works by Brahms, Dvorak, Barber, Bruch, Korngold, Mendelssohn, Tchaikovsky, Weinberg, Haydn, Saint-Saens, Esmail, and Bach.

Passionate about and at ease with all periods of classical repertoire, Oliverson is committed both to performing the beloved standard to a range of audiences, as well as bringing lesser-known pieces into their rightful spotlight: “I play music that speaks to me regardless of how often it’s already being played, rediscovering lost masterpieces and composers who deserve more attention, paired with my own fresh take on the classics. It’s my hope that if I love a piece, someone in the audience will too.” Among the works she has championed over the years are the Pergolesi Bb Major concerto, Julius Conus concerto (1896), Weinberg concertino (1948), Reena Esmail “The Blue Room” concerto (2007), Salvatore di Vittorio “Voyages of Aeneas” concerto (2022), and more, alongside her favorite standard repertoire.

A dynamic recitalist and sensitive chamber musician, Oliverson recently toured Europe with Jean-Yves Thibaudet, Clive Greensmith, and Tatjana Masurenko and collaborates this season with Anne Akiko Meyers and the Philharmonic Society of Orange County in duo works of Bach, Philip Glass, and Handel-Halvorsen. Other engagements include festivals such as the Aix-en-Provence Easter Festival with Gil Shaham, the Rome Chamber Music Festival, Oropa Music Festival, Moab Music Festival, ChamberFest West, and recitals at the Grand Teton Music Festival and SOKA Performing Arts Center, among many others. Oliverson has collaborated with world-renowned artists such as Robert McDuffie in Harris Hall at the Aspen Music Festival, Gil Shaham on tour in Mexico, Renaud Capuçon in France, Joseph Silverstein in Salt Lake City, and Lynn Harrell, Orli Shaham, Robert Chen, and Andrew Marriner in Los Angeles.

Dedicated to reaching a broader audience and the importance of music education from a young age, Oliverson has travelled to over 100 schools throughout the Western United States and spoken at national education conventions, encouraging thousands of children to work hard and participate in music. Recently, Oliverson presented digital master classes for organizations including the Orchestra of the Americas, Music to Save Humanity, and Kontrapunktus Baroque, and she participated in a masterclass and side-by-side performance with the Esperanza Azteca Youth Orchestra in Mexico.

Oliverson won the ‘Special Prize of Merit’ for violin at the prestigious Verbier Festival Academy, the Aspen Music Festival Dorothy Delay competition, a National YoungArts Foundation award, was honored as a United States Presidential Scholar in the Arts, and most recently named the 2023 Francis Rosen Prize recipient at the Colburn Conservatory, where she also obtained her Bachelor’s Degree and Artist Diploma. A former student of Debbie Moench, Eugene Watanabe, Danielle Belen, and Boris Kuschnir at the Musik und Kunst Privatuniversität der Stadt Wien, Aubree graduated from the Colburn Music Academy in 2016 and from the Colburn Conservatory in 2023, studying with the Jascha Heifetz Distinguished Violin Chair, Mr. Robert Lipsett, for nine years.

Aubree plays a very fine Giovanni Battista Guadagnini violin, kindly loaned to her by Irene R. Miller through the Beare’s International Violin Society, and a Jean “Grand” Adam bow on loan from the Metzler Violin Shop.

Fowler Amusement, visuals



The Firebird project’s visual media was produced by Fowler Amusement, a boutique production company based in Southern California and led by Disney animation veteran Andrew Austin.

A wide range of talented artists with backgrounds in media and the arts contributed, including Audri Phillips, a visual poet who crafted intriguing abstract imagery and animator Olga Sobolevska whose knowledge of classical dance and the traditions of Eastern European folk tales helped enrich the project.

Numerous other creative talents provided inspiring content such as David Simmon’s character animation; and film editor Andy Tauke brought the work to completion with director/producer Andrew Austin.