



2024-25 Hal & Jeanette Segerstrom
Family Foundation Classical Series

SHELLEY CONDUCTS BEETHOVEN'S FIFTH & THE EMPEROR CONCERTO

Preview Talk at 7 p.m.
KUSC midday host Alan Chapman

Thursday, May 1, 2025 @ 8 p.m.
Friday, May 2, 2025 @ 8 p.m.
Saturday, May 3, 2025 @ 8 p.m.

Alexander Shelley, conductor
George Li, piano
Pacific Symphony
Warren Hagerty, cello
Southern California Children's Chorus—
Lori Loftus, founding director

TAN DUN "Jubilation" from *Heaven Earth Mankind*
(*Symphony 1997*)
Warren Hagerty, cello
Southern California Children's
Chorus—Lori Loftus, director

BEETHOVEN Piano Concerto No. 5 in E-flat Major, Op. 73
("Emperor")
I. Allegro
II. Adagio un poco mosso
III. Rondo: Allegro
George Li, piano

—INTERMISSION—

IMAN HABIBI *Jeder Baum spricht*
("Every Tree Speaks")

BEETHOVEN Symphony No. 5 in C minor, Op. 67
I. Allegro con brio
II. Andante con moto
III. Scherzo. Allegro
IV. Finale. Allegro

The 2024-25 season piano soloists are generously
sponsored by The Michelle F. Rohé Fund

CONCERT SPONSOR



This concert is being recorded for broadcast
on Aug. 3, 2025 on Classical California KUSC.

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

PROGRAM NOTES

Tan Dun

Born: 1957 in Changsha, China

“Jubilation” from *Heaven Earth Mankind*

Composed: 1997

Premiered: July 1, 1997, by the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra with the composer conducting.

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

Instrumentation: Two flutes including piccolo, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, one tuba, timpani, percussion, harp, piano, strings, solo cello, and chorus.

Approximate duration: 3 minutes.



Many of us became aware of Tan Dun's standing as a major composer in 2000, with the release of Ang Lee's landmark film *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon*. Dun was only in his early 40s when he created the score, which paired stunningly with the film's poetic

lushness and mythic story. But he was already a major presence in world music and had been commissioned four years earlier by America's largest opera company, New York's Metropolitan Opera, to compose *The First Emperor*, which premiered in 2006. It was one of the biggest productions in Met history.

Born in the Hunan province of China, Dun gained his first musical experiences in rituals with local shamans. Beginning in 1966, the Cultural Revolution temporarily detoured him from music, but when several members of a Peking opera troupe were killed in a ferry accident, Dun was called in as a replacement violist and arranger. In 1977, after passing a highly competitive entrance exam, he entered the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing. His early influences included Toru Takemitsu, George Crumb, Alexander Goehr, and Hans Werner Henze.

Heaven Earth Mankind is a symphony composed to celebrate the return of Hong Kong to Mainland China. Commissioned by the People's Republic of China, it premiered at the stroke of midnight on July 1, 1997—the moment of transition for the former crown colony. Though the work marked a time of conflicting emotions and political uncertainty, Dun insisted that the aim of the symphony is to unite people regardless of politics; that art should be universal, and that traditional Chinese culture should be celebrated.

Ludwig Van Beethoven

Born: Dec. 17, 1770 in Bonn, Germany

Died: Mar. 26, 1827 in Vienna, Austria

Concerto No. 5 in E-flat Major for Piano and Orchestra, Op. 73, "Emperor"

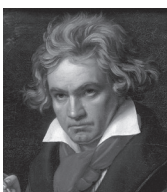
Composed: 1809

Premiered: Nov. 28, 1811 in Leipzig with Friedrich Schneider as soloist and Johann Philipp Christian Schulz conducting the Gewandhaus Orchestra.

Most recent Pacific Symphony performance: Jun. 12, 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: 38 minutes.



Beethoven was deeply concerned with the philosophical ideas of the Enlightenment, and most particularly with the dilemma of the individual's right to be free versus society's need to be governed. There are good reasons why the concerto form is especially well

suited to these concerns. Its most basic formal constraint—the one (soloist) versus the many (orchestra)—provides an ideal framework for exploring the individual's relationship with society. But for all the philosophical meanings we hear in Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 5, its appeal is mainly a matter of sheer, abstract beauty, expressed through melodies that combine simplicity and grandeur.

The "Emperor Concerto" bears the hallmarks that have grown familiar through the canon of Beethoven piano concertos: the fast-slow-fast arrangement of movements, the adherence to sonata form, the final rondo with its repeated melodic statements by the soloist. But its consistently noble character is unique. Beethoven's rededication of the *Eroica* symphony (he ripped Napoleon's name out of the autograph score) shows what he thought of emperors, but the "Emperor Concerto" seems aptly named for its elevated expression, which never flags.

Rather than climbing to altitude, the concerto's opening seems already to have arrived at a great height, announcing itself through repeated, solemn chords with the gilded quality of a royal fanfare. After an introduction, the splendid opening theme has a sense of firmness, strongly rooted in the concerto's tonic key of E-flat. It is balanced by a second theme that is no less noble but far softer, almost whispering its presence until the two themes reconcile. After this high-flying but worldly opening, the second-movement adagio seems to ascend still further, perhaps heavenward, stopping time with a sweet but melancholy meditation.

In the final movement, the main theme is really just an arpeggio reassembled. But with each dazzling iteration, Beethoven disassembles it still further, requiring the listener to take part in the performance through active listening — just as variations on a theme may require listeners to bushwhack

their way back to the original theme. As in the concerto's opening, the main theme of the final movement has the structure and imposing character of a fanfare.

Beethoven performed his other concertos publicly, but by 1811 his increasing deafness prevented him from doing so. In listening, we can hear why: this concerto requires extreme virtuosity from the soloist. Entrances are precise and unforgiving, and some passages that have a free, cadenza-like quality are actually prescribed in detail. The premiere of the "Emperor Concerto" was played by pianist Friedrich Schneider in Leipzig.

Iman Habibi

Born: 1985 in Tehran, Iran

Jeder Baum spricht **("Every Tree Speaks")**

Composed: 2020

Premiered: Mar. 12, 2020 by The Philadelphia Orchestra with Yannick Nézet-Séguin conducting.

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

Instrumentation: Three flutes including piccolo, two oboes, two clarinets, three bassoons including contrabassoon, two horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, and strings.

Approximate duration: 6 minutes.



Iman Habibi, the distinguished Iranian-Canadian composer and pianist, received his doctorate in music at the University of Michigan. He is a founding member of the piano duo ensemble Piano Pinnacle. Habibi's music and performances have been programmed

by The Carnegie Hall and The Marilyn Horne Foundation (New York), Tanglewood Music Festival (Massachusetts), The Canadian Opera Company and Tapestry Opera (Toronto), New York Festival of Song, Saratoga Springs Performing Arts Center, Vox Novus (New York), Atlantic Music Festival (Maine), the BCScene Festival (Ottawa), and the Powell Street Festival (Vancouver), among many others.

Commissioned in celebration of the 250th anniversary of Beethoven's birth, *Jeder Baum spricht* was premiered by the Philadelphia Orchestra in 2020—technically, the composer's *semiquincentennial*—conducted by Yannick Nézet-Séguin. In scoring the symphony, Habibi adhered to the exact instrumentation of Beethoven's Fifth. On his website, Habibi describes the work as "an unsettling rhapsodic reflection on the climate catastrophe, and is written in dialogue with Beethoven's 5th and 6th symphonies. The piece shifts focus rapidly, and attempts to achieve its goal time and time again through different means, only to be faced with similar obstacles. Like much of Beethoven's music, this piece accompanies an unspecific narrative and imagery, and ends with a sense of resolve, one that I hope can drive our collective will towards immediate impactful change."

Ludwig Van Beethoven

Born: Dec. 17, 1770 in Bonn, Germany

Died: Mar. 26, 1827 in Vienna, Austria

Symphony No. 5 in C minor, Op. 67

Composed: 1808

Premiered: Dec. 22, 1808, at the Theater an der Wien in Vienna with the composer conducting.

Most recent Pacific Symphony performance: Sep. 9, 2023, at the FivePoint Amphitheatre with Carl St.Clair conducting.

Instrumentation: Three flutes including piccolo, two oboes, two clarinets, three bassoons including contrabassoon, two horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, and strings.

Approximate duration: 31 minutes.



The thundering opening bars of Beethoven's fifth symphony are iconic. And, conveniently enough, they conform to the rhythm of the phrase "Beethoven's Fifth." According to musicologist Richard E. Rodda, this is "the most famous beginning in all of classical music." Pounded out once and then repeated a whole step down, this motif really does sound like "fate knocking at the door," a phrase that has stuck to it ever since Beethoven's students Anton Schindler and Ferdinand Ries circulated the story.

Beethoven composed this symphony between 1804 and 1808, a period that also gave us the Fourth and Sixth symphonies, his Piano Concerto No. 4, the Violin Concerto in D, and three major piano sonatas. But not many of his comments regarding the Fifth Symphony survive from these productive years; in one note, he says there "begins in my head the working-out in breadth, height and depth. Since I am aware of what I want, the fundamental idea never leaves me. It mounts, it grows. I see before my mind the picture in its whole extent, as if in a single grasp." To some listeners, this supports the idea that Beethoven built his magnificent four-movement work on four fateful notes.

From the first movement, with its remarkable alternation between exclamation and contemplation, we move to a movement marked *andante con moto*, built on two themes that Beethoven develops separately. Then, in the second movement, the tension relaxes with a series of lyrical variations on a theme we first hear in the violas and cellos, underlined by the double-basses. A second theme brings other orchestral voices into play, clarinets and bassoons, along with the ever-present violin choir. After a variation on the initial theme is introduced, a third theme offers an unexpectedly dynamic interplay between orchestral forces, leading to a resolution that is somehow louder and more emphatic than we might have expected from such a gentle opening. The stakes have been raised, reminding us of the symphony's portentous opening.

In the third movement, built on a scherzo and a trio, we return to the symphony's opening key of C minor. This movement leads without interruption to the fourth movement,

which unites the elements that followed the first movement with the themes of the movements that came later. Having transitioned to C Major, the symphony closes with an unusually long sequence of C major chords—40 by some counts. (It depends upon where you start counting, which is a matter of some controversy among musicologists...as is everything else about this symphony). But there is no dispute that to Beethoven and his predecessors, the key of C Major represented light and order. As he does so often, Beethoven has taken us from darkness to light.

Michael Clive is a cultural reporter living in the Litchfield Hills of Connecticut. He is program annotator for Pacific Symphony and has written numerous articles for magazines and newspapers in the U.S. and U.K. and hundreds of program notes for orchestras and opera companies. **Operahound.com**

ABOUT THE CONDUCTOR

Alexander Shelley, conductor
Artistic and Music Director Designate
Phillip N. and Mary A. Lyons Artistic and
Music Director Designate Chair



"A natural communicator, both on and off the podium" (*The Daily Telegraph*), Alexander Shelley performs across six continents with the world's finest orchestras and soloists. With a conducting technique described as "immaculate" (*Yorkshire Post*) and with a "precision, distinction and beauty

of gesture" (*Le Devoir*), Shelley is known for the clarity and integrity of his interpretations and for the creativity and vision of his programming. To date he has spearheaded over 40 major world premieres, highly praised cycles of Beethoven, Schumann, and Brahms symphonies, operas, ballets, and innovative multi-media productions.

Since 2015, he has served as both Music Director of Canada's National Arts Centre Orchestra and as Principal Associate Conductor of London's Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. In 2024-25, he also began his tenure as Artistic and Music Director of Artis-Naples in Florida, providing artistic leadership for Naples Philharmonic, as well as for the entire multidisciplinary arts organization.

Additional highlights of the 2024-25 season include performances with the Seattle Symphony, Chicago Civic Orchestra, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Colorado Symphony, Warsaw Philharmonic, and the National Symphony of Ireland. Shelley is a regular guest with some of the finest 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 Sao Paulo, Houston, Seattle, Baltimore, Indianapolis, Montreal, Toronto, Munich, Singapore, Melbourne, Sydney, and New Zealand symphony orchestras.

In September 2015, Shelley succeeded Pinchas Zukerman as Music Director of Canada's National Arts Centre Orchestra, the youngest in its history. The ensemble has since been praised as "an orchestra transformed ... hungry, bold, and unleashed" (*Ottawa Citizen*) and his programming credited for turning the orchestra "almost overnight ... into one of the more audacious orchestras in North America." (*Maclean's Magazine*). Together they have undertaken major tours of Canada, Europe, and to Carnegie Hall, where they premiered Philip Glass's 13th symphony.

They have commissioned ground-breaking projects such as *Life Reflected* and *Encount3rs*, released multiple JUNO award-nominated albums and, most recently, responded to the pandemic and social justice issues of the era with the NACOLive and UnDisrupted series. This season they complete a major Schumann - Brahms - Schumann recording cycle and perform multiple world premieres.

In August 2017, Shelley concluded his eight-year tenure as Chief Conductor of the Nürnberger Symphoniker, a period that was hailed by press and audience alike as a golden era for the orchestra. His operatic engagements have included *The Merry Widow* and Gounod's *Romeo and Juliet* (Royal Danish Opera); *La Bohème* (Opera Lyra/National Arts Centre), *Louis Riel* (Canadian Opera Company/ National Arts Centre), *Iolanta* (Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen), *Così fan tutte* (Opéra National de Montpellier), *The Marriage of Figaro* (Opera North), *Tosca* (Innsbruck), and both *Le nozze di Figaro* and *Don Giovanni* in semi-staged productions at the NAC.

Winner of the ECHO prize and the Deutsche Grunderpreis, Shelley was conferred with the Cross of the Federal Order of Merit by German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier in recognition of his services to music and culture in April 2023. Through his work as Founder and Artistic Director of the Schumann Camerata and their pioneering "440Hz" series in Dusseldorf, as founding Artistic Director of the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen's *Zukunftslabor* and through his regular tours leading Germany's National Youth Orchestra, inspiring future generations of classical musicians and listeners has always been central to Shelley's work. He regularly gives informed and passionate pre- and post-concert talks on his programs, as well as numerous interviews and podcasts on the role of classical music in society. During his time in Nuremberg, he hosted more than half a million people at the annual Klassik Open Air concerts—Europe's largest classical music event.

Born in London in October 1979 to celebrated concert pianists, Alexander studied cello and conducting in Germany and first 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."

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

George Li, piano



Praised by *The Washington Post* for combining “staggering technical prowess, a sense of command and depth of expression,” pianist George Li possesses an effortless grace, poised authority, and brilliant virtuosity far beyond his years. Since winning the Silver Medal at the 2015 International

Tchaikovsky Competition, Li has rapidly established a major international reputation and performs regularly with some of the world’s leading orchestras and conductors, such as Dudamel, Gaffigan, Gergiev, Gimeno, Honeck, Orozco-Estrada, Petrenko, Robertson, Slatkin, Temirkanov, Tilson Thomas, Long Yu, and Xian Zhang.

Li’s 2023-24 season begins with a recital at the Grand Teton Music Festival followed by his debut with the Aula Simfonia in Jakarta, Indonesia and conductor Jahja Ling. He embarks on an extensive tour in China including recital and concerto performances in Kunming, Beijing, and Shanghai. In Europe, Li presents recital programs in Viersen, Baden, Elmau, and Stuttgart, and he debuts with the Prague Philharmonia in Prague and Ljubljana. U.S. performances include engagements with the Cincinnati and Milwaukee Symphonies, Florida Orchestra, Oklahoma City Philharmonic, and Chicago Sinfonietta; and recitals across the country from California to Florida. A committed collaborator, George returns to the ECHO series in El Cajon, CA with the Dover Quartet and San Francisco’s Davies Symphony Hall with violinist Stella Chen.

Recent concerto highlights include performances with the Los Angeles, New York, London, Rotterdam, Oslo, St. Petersburg, Buffalo Philharmonics; the San Francisco, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Dallas, Tokyo, Frankfurt Radio, Sydney, Nashville, New Jersey, New World, North Carolina, Pacific, Valencia, Montreal, and Baltimore Symphonies; as well as the Philharmonia, DSO Berlin, Orchestra National de Lyon and Orchestre Philharmonique Royal de Liège in Belgium. His eight-concert tour of Germany with the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra included performances at the Berlin Philharmonie, Philharmonie am Gasteig Munich, and the Stuttgart Liederhalle. Collaboration with the Mariinsky Orchestra included performances at the Paris Philharmonie, Luxembourg Philharmonie, New York’s Brooklyn Academy of Music, Graffenegg Festival, and in various venues throughout Russia.

In recital, Li has previously performed at venues including Carnegie Hall, Davies Hall in San Francisco, Symphony Center in Chicago, the Mariinsky Theatre, Elbphilharmonie, Munich’s Gasteig, the Louvre, Seoul Arts Center, Tokyo’s Asahi Hall and Musashino Hall, NCPA Beijing, Shanghai Poly Theater, and Amici della Musica Firenze, as well as appearances at major festivals including the Edinburgh International Festival, Verbier Festival, Ravinia Festival, Festival de Pâques in Aix-en-Provence Festival, and Montreux Festival. An active chamber musician, Li has performed alongside Benjamin Beilman, Noah Bendix-Balgley, James Ehnes, Daniel Hope, Sheku Kanneh-Mason, and Kian Soltani.

Li is an exclusive Warner Classics recording artist, with his debut recital album released in October 2017 which was

recorded live from the Mariinsky. His second recording for the label features Liszt solo works and Tchaikovsky Piano Concerto No.1, which was recorded live with Vasily Petrenko and the London Philharmonic and was released in October 2019. His third album with the label, which includes solo pieces by Schumann, Ravel and Stravinsky, was released in the spring of 2024.

Li gave his first public performance at Boston’s Steinway Hall at the age of ten, and in 2011, performed for President Obama at the White House in an evening honoring Chancellor Angela Merkel. Among Li’s many prizes, he was the recipient of the 2016 Avery Fisher Career Grant, a recipient of the 2012 Gilmore Young Artist Award, and the First Prize winner of the 2010 Young Concert Artists International Auditions. He is currently pursuing an Artist Diploma at the New England Conservatory, continuing to work with Wha Kyung Byun. When not playing piano, George is an avid reader and photographer, as well as a sports fanatic.

Southern California Children’s Chorus Lori Loftus, founding director



The Southern California Children’s Chorus (SCCC) was founded in 1996 as a 501c3 nonprofit organization whose mission is “enhancing children’s lives through

distinguished choral music education and world-class performance.” SCCC currently serves nearly 300 children, ages 5 through 20. Through a program stressing musical aptitude, teamwork, discipline, self-confidence and personal growth, SCCC strives to develop the entire character of its young singers.

A recipient of three EMMY® awards, SCCC has gained international acclaim for the quality of its music education program. Their choruses are featured frequently at Orange County’s Segerstrom Hall and have thrilled audiences at Carnegie Hall, the Sydney Opera House, Westminster Abbey, and the White House. In addition, SCCC has contributed singers for Touchstone and MGM films, television productions and commercials, orchestral, adult choral, and opera productions, rock music recordings, and many Disney events, both televised and live. Its EMMY®-winning performances include a collaboration with Steven Tyler and Joe Perry of Aerosmith in a stirring rendition of “Dream On” for ESPN’s E:60 special, “Boston Strong,” as well as a live performance of “What a Wonderful World” with Esperanza Spalding at the 84th annual Academy Awards.

Their sequential choral program consists of six choirs guided by a highly skilled and experienced faculty. SCCC is tuition-based and is dedicated to making its programs available to children from all economic backgrounds, providing scholarships and other forms of assistance to families in need. Striving to make membership as affordable as possible, the SCCC engages in an array of fundraising activities, deriving the significant portion of its budget not covered by tuition from tax-deductible contributions from the community as well as support from grant-making organizations.