

The 2025-26 season of the Pacific Symphony Youth Ensembles is made possible thanks to the generous contributions from our gracious supporters.



Pacific Symphony Youth Wind Ensemble | Stories on Page & Screen, March 15 @ 7:00 PM



Pacific Symphony Youth Orchestra | Slavic Inspirations, March 16 @ 7:00 PM

Pacific Symphony is a proud
Resident Company of

WELCOME TO OUR 2025-26 PSYE MID-SEASON CONCERTS!

It is a pleasure to welcome you to our 2025-26 Pacific Symphony Youth Ensembles mid-season concerts!

It has been a wonderfully successful season so far, with **all four of our youth ensembles presenting thrilling concert performances this past fall**. Additionally, our PSYE chamber ensembles have appeared to excellent effect at several special events this season, including the **Lunar New Year and Lantern Festival celebrations**.

In addition, we are proud to announce the **landmark win by Pacific Symphony Santiago Strings, our middle school string orchestra led by Dr. Johanna Gamboa-Kroesen, who were named Grand Champions at the 2026 National Orchestra Festival in San Francisco!**

Looking ahead, our youth ensembles are busy preparing for our **May concerts, and we invite you to join us for these exciting musical adventures!**

Grounded in the creative leadership of **Alexander Shelley**, PSYE continues to build upon the rich legacy established by **Music Director Laureate Carl St.Clair**. It is with this guidance and the support of **Pacific Symphony & PSYE Boards of Directors**, plus the **extraordinary support of our many generous donors, families and volunteers that this program is made possible.**

Thank you so much, and please enjoy the music!



Shawne Natalia Zarubica

Managing Director, Pacific Symphony Youth Ensembles, Pacific Symphony

I PACIFIC SYMPHONY YOUTH ENSEMBLES (PSYE)

Pacific Symphony Youth Ensembles (PSYE) is one of the largest and most prestigious pre-professional music training programs in the nation, nurturing and inspiring exceptional young musicians in grades 6 through 12. PSYE provides its members with advanced, innovative artistic experiences that cultivate musical excellence, personal growth, and lifelong engagement with the art of symphonic performance.

Now under the creative leadership of Alexander Shelley, Pacific Symphony's Artistic and Music Director Designate, PSYE continues to build upon the rich legacy established by Music Director Laureate Carl St.Clair, who originally envisioned the program as an integral part of Pacific Symphony's educational mission. Together, their vision reflects a shared commitment to inspiring the next generation of artists and audiences.

Comprising four performing ensembles—Pacific Symphony Youth Orchestra, Pacific Symphony Youth Wind Ensemble, Pacific Symphony Santiago Strings, and Pacific Symphony Youth Concert Band—PSYE offers students the opportunity to develop their artistry through professional repertoire, world-class coaching, and unique performance experiences.

Members benefit from engaging conversations and mentorship with Maestros Shelley and St.Clair, receive regular coaching from Pacific Symphony musicians, and collaborate with renowned guest artists such as Yo-Yo Ma, Cho-Liang Lin, Narong Prangcharoen, Derrick Skye, and Glenn Dicterow, among many others.

The Youth Ensembles perform regularly at the acclaimed Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall in Costa Mesa, CA, as well as at venues throughout the region. These free, community-focused performances are warmly received each season, touching the lives of thousands of Southern California residents.

Membership in PSYE is determined through annual auditions held each spring, drawing more than 700 applicants each year. The 335 students currently participating represent over 75 schools across Orange County and beyond. Graduates of the program go on to study at leading institutions including Juilliard, Johns Hopkins University/Peabody Institute, UCLA, University of Michigan, Stanford, USC, Brown, Vanderbilt, Yale, and many more.

I PSYE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Elizabeth Stahr* *Lifetime Director & Distinguished Counselor Emeritus to the Board ~ In Loving Memory*

Directors

James Carter	Hans Imhof †	Herb Roth
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Paul Hahm	Laszlo Mezo	Larry Woody
Joyce Hanson	Dot Nelson	David Yeung
Jerry Huang	Linda Owen	

I PSYE EX-OFFICIO BOARD MEMBERS & STAFF

Alexander Shelley* <i>Artistic & Music Director Designate, Pacific Symphony</i>	Jackson Nguyen <i>Youth Wind Ensemble & Youth Concert Band Manager, Pacific Symphony</i>
Carl St.Clair* <i>Music Director Laureate, Pacific Symphony</i>	Vivian Sunyuan Wu <i>Youth Orchestra Manager & Santiago Strings Manager, Pacific Symphony</i>
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Eileen Jeanette <i>Senior Vice President of Artistic Planning & Production, Pacific Symphony</i>	Frances Cisneros <i>Youth Concert Band Saxophone Coach, Pacific Symphony</i>
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Johanna Gamboa-Kroesen <i>Music Director, Pacific Symphony Santiago Strings</i>	Haiyang Wang <i>Youth Concert Band Wind Coach, Pacific Symphony</i>
Gregory X. Whitmore <i>Music Director, Pacific Symphony Youth Wind Ensemble</i>	Alan Lu <i>Youth Ensembles Intern, Pacific Symphony</i>
Angela Woo <i>Music Director, Pacific Symphony Youth Concert Band</i>	
Bethany Goldberg <i>Youth Ensembles Coordinator, Pacific Symphony</i>	

* Also member of Board of Directors
for Pacific Symphony
† Pacific Symphony Life Director



Pacific Symphony

STORIES ON PAGE & SCREEN

Sunday, Mar. 15, 2026 @ 7 p.m.

Dr. Gregory X. Whitmore, conductor
Rich Capparella, narrator
Pacific Symphony Youth Concert Band
(PSYCB), guest ensemble
Pacific Symphony Youth Wind Ensemble

Scan the code below for full concert
information and program notes.



Special thanks to illustrator John Howe for the use of
his Lord of the Rings artwork. For more information
please visit his website at www.john-howe.com.

This evening's performance is generously
sponsored by **Pacific Life Foundation**.

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

JOHN WILLIAMS *March of the Resistance*
Arr. Lavender (from *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*)

JOHN WILLIAMS *Rey's Theme*
Arr. Lavender (from *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*)

JULIE GIROUX *Riften Wed*

—INTERMISSION—

JOHAN DE MEIJ *Symphony No. 1:*
The Lord of the Rings
I. Gandalf (The Wizard)
II. Lothlórien (The Elvenwood)
III. Gollum (Sméagol)
IV. Journey in the Dark
V. Hobbits
Rich Capparella, narrator
PSYCB, guest ensemble
Angela Woo, music director

MEET THE PSYWE

Dr. Gregory X. Whitmore / Pacific Symphony Youth Wind Ensemble Music Director
Jackson Nguyen / Pacific Symphony Youth Wind Ensemble Manager

FLUTE

Kaya Baird
Principal
Ziling Cheng
Aimee Fan
Sarah Feigenbaum
Grady Gillen
Euna Kim
Jacob Li
Angela Wang
Hunsika Yerratha
Lucia Yu
Emily Zhao

OBOE

Sydney Kramer
Principal
Fenton Benne

CLARINET

Wonny Jang
Principal
Chloe Baek
Alex Butterly
Eric Choi
Ethan Choo
Ben Chow
Daniel Chung
Kai Doushgounian
Jenna Hong
Benjamin Lee
Kaden Lee
Tyler Salamanca
Ashley Shibuya
Gabi White

BASS CLARINET

Dylan Rosen
Principal
George Chuan
Jon Lee

BASSOON

Normandie Olsen
Principal

ALTO SAXOPHONE

Jayden Lee
Principal
Megan Chou
Cameron Davenport
Shido Kamai
Jai Lue
Nolan Nelson
Jason Ngo
Vincent Nguyen
James Park
Abel Yu

TENOR SAXOPHONE

Armaan Diwan
Principal
Sonam Raj
Justin Vo

BARITONE SAXOPHONE

Jacob Herrera-Monteon
Principal
Samyam Bhandari
Neil Dedhia

HORN

Aurora Li
Principal
Brandon Dee
Noah Kim
Joshua Liu
Sylas Wei
Rico Xu

TRUMPET

George Ty
Principal
Austin Ahn
Bomi Bishop
Ian Cho
Soocho Cho
Ryan Choi
Alvin Chung
Alex Lee
Zachary Lovell
Tomo Nagasaki
Eddie Valdemar

TROMBONE

Parker Wilson-Medvitz
Principal
Natalie Dechary
Luca Dustin
Cruz Magaña
Ada Mjolsness
Adrian Perez
Gwyn Renger
Nathan Sung
Taylor Wong
Sophie Yu

BASS TROMBONE

Ryland Del Mundo
Principal
Brandon Coluna

EUPHONIUM

Diego Tarry
Principal
Alan Co
Violet Dif
Tehmina Zarin

TUBA

Ferrel Widjaya
Principal
Max Ledezma
Eli Magdaleno
Matthew Tucker

PERCUSSION

Listed Alphabetically
Addie Case
Alex Chen
Ella Choi
Momoka Hayashibe
Alex Lu

PIANO

Angela Luo
Principal

HARP

Amber Chui
Principal

PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

Arnold O. Beckman High School
California High School
Canyon High School
Crean Lutheran High School
Diamond Bar High School
El Dorado High School
El Toro High School
Eleanor Roosevelt High School
Glen A. Wilson High School
Gretchen Whitney High School
Irvine High School
Laguna Hills High School
Los Altos High School
Marina High School
Northwood High School
Orange County School of the Arts
Oxford Academy
Portola High School
Sage Hill School
San Marcos High School
Santa Monica High School
Troy High School
University High School
Vista Murrieta High School
Woodbridge High School

ABOUT THE MUSIC DIRECTOR



Gregory Xavier Whitmore is Conductor of the University Symphonic Winds at California State University Fullerton (CSUF). In addition to this artistic responsibility, Dr. Whitmore is an Associate

Professor of Instrumental Music Education and serves as Area Coordinator of the CSUF Music Education Department. Dr. Whitmore is also in his 12th season as Music Director of the Pacific Symphony Youth Wind Ensemble, one of only a handful of youth wind ensembles connected to a group one professional symphony orchestra (Pacific Symphony) in the United States.

Dr. Whitmore's previous appointments in higher education include tenure as Director of Bands at Irvine Valley College (Irvine, CA), Mt. San Antonio College (Walnut, CA), and College of the Desert (Palm Desert, CA). Prior to his work in higher education, Dr. Whitmore spent 13 years as Director of Bands at Cathedral City High School (Cathedral City, CA).

A proud Midwesterner and native of Ann Arbor, Michigan; Dr. Whitmore earned his bachelor's degree in instrumental music education from The University of Michigan School of Music, Theater and Dance. While a student at Michigan, Dr. Whitmore performed in the University of Michigan Symphony and Concert Bands; and led the University of Michigan Marching Band as "Michigan's Man Up Front" - Drum Major - from 1999 to 2001 - becoming the second Black Drum Major in the history of the University of Michigan. Dr. Whitmore received his master's degree in music with an emphasis in wind conducting from California State University Fullerton. Dr. Whitmore holds a master's degree, and a doctorate in music and music education from Columbia University (Teachers College) in the city of New York.

A Second Place Winner of the 2017 American Prize in Conducting, Dr. Whitmore has conducted ensembles around the world in such notable concert venues as the Teatro Nacional de Costa Rica, The Sydney Opera House (Sydney, Australia), The Golden Hall of The Musikverein (Vienna), The Wiener Konzerthaus (Vienna), The MuTh (Vienna), Renee and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall (Costa

Mesa, CA), Symphony Hall (Chicago), The Kennedy Center (Washington, D.C.), Carnegie Hall (New York City), Walt Disney Concert Hall (Los Angeles), Meng Concert Hall (Fullerton, CA), Weill Hall (Sonoma, CA), The Ambassador Auditorium (Pasadena, CA), Holy Trinity Church (Stratford, England), St. John's Smith Square (London), Chateau Vaux le Vicomte (Paris), and Heidelberg Castle (Germany). Under Dr. Whitmore's direction, the Cathedral City High School Symphony Band was selected to perform as the showcase ensemble during the 2008 California Band Directors Association Annual Convention. Dr. Whitmore is a conductor for the World Strides Honors Performance Series.

With a research interest in music educator values as operationalized into pedagogy, in addition to investigating the concert band as an artistic medium; Dr. Whitmore has presented research at music education symposia throughout the United States and abroad, including The Midwest Clinic, and the International Society of Music Education World Congress. Dr. Whitmore's research has been published in *Visions of Research in Music Education*. Dr. Whitmore has been recognized in four editions of *Who's Who Among America's Teachers* and he has been included in the 2005/2006 Edition of the National Honor Roll's *Outstanding American Teachers*. Dr. Whitmore was selected to represent the State of California by *School Band and Orchestra Magazine* in the 2008 edition of "50 Band Directors Who Make a Difference."

Dr. Whitmore belongs to professional organizations that include College Band Directors National Association, Kappa Psi Honorary Band Fraternity, Alpha Delta Phi Fraternity, Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia Fraternity, Pi Kappa Lambda Honor Society, The National Association for Music Education, Southern California School Band and Orchestra Association, and the California Music Educators Association, College Band Directors National Association, and The National Band Association.

Learn more about Dr. Whitmore at gwhitmore.com

I ABOUT PSYWE

Established in 2007, Pacific Symphony Youth Wind Ensemble (PSYWE) made its debut under the baton of award winning music educator Dr. Michael J. Corrigan, later succeeded by Dr. Joshua Roach of the USC Thornton School of Music. In 2014, PSYWE welcomed its current music director Dr. Gregory Xavier Whitmore. Under Dr. Whitmore's visionary leadership, PSYWE has continued to develop into a nationally celebrated youth wind ensemble and has undertaken numerous commissions, world premieres, and the continued exploration of new music initiatives.

Under the creative leadership of Alexander Shelley, Pacific Symphony's Artistic and Music Director Designate, PSYWE continues to build upon the rich legacy established by Music Director Laureate Carl St.Clair. Together, their vision reflects a shared commitment to inspiring the next generation of artists and audiences.

Representing over 25 schools in the Southern California region, PSYWE provides members with an advanced and innovative artistic environment and encourages musical and personal growth through the study and performance of outstanding symphonic wind band literature. PSYWE serves exceptional young instrumentalists in grades 9-12 and is one of four youth ensembles offered by Pacific Symphony's Youth Ensembles program.

PSYWE members benefit from the mentorship of Maestros Shelley and St.Clair, receive regular coaching from Pacific Symphony musicians and guest artists, perform at the magnificent Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall in Costa Mesa, CA, and enjoy periodic touring opportunities,

In 2016-17, PSYWE celebrated its 10th anniversary with a tour to Austria's Summa Cum Laude International Youth Music Festival in Vienna, where PSYWE took first prize in its category, performing in the Golden Hall of the Musikverein, the MuTh Concert Hall, and Vienna's legendary Konzerthaus. In 2025, PSYWE toured Costa Rica, collaborating with the National Institute of Music, working and performing with regional professional bands, and culminating in an enthusiastically received sold-out concert at the historic Teatro Nacional in the capital city of San José.

Membership in the Pacific Symphony Youth Ensembles program is determined through annual auditions held each spring, drawing more than 700 applicants each year. Graduates of the program go on to study at leading institutions including Juilliard, Johns Hopkins University/Peabody Institute, UCLA, University of Michigan, Stanford, USC, Brown, Vanderbilt, Yale, and many more.

I PROGRAM NOTES



Legendary film composer **John Williams** (b. 1932) has a name largely synonymous with a major shift in Hollywood that took place since the 1970s.

Williams's own personal musical style is unmistakable but takes its inspiration from many traditional sources. It is rife with advanced harmonies, skilled counterpoint, and masterful orchestration. Set in the distant past in another galaxy, *Star Wars* is an epic science fiction film series created by George Lucas (b. 1944). ***Star Wars: The Force Awakens*** (2015) is the first movie of this sequel trilogy.



Julie Giroux (b. 1961) has become an important composer in both the popular and concert music realms. Her ***Riften Wed*** (2024) is based on the video game series

Elder Scrolls, set in an immersive world which players explore. The main action takes place in city of Riften, "a seedy, crime-filled and nearly lawless city." Within Riften is the Temple of Mara, where the city's denizens get married. In her composition *Riften Wed*, Giroux aspired to create "the music for loves and unions, past and present such as this.... where love is a gift worthy of all the joy and pain it demands."



Johan de Meij (b. 1953) is one of the most renowned composers for wind orchestra. His ***Symphony No. 1, The Lord of the Rings***, was inspired by *The Lord of the Rings*, a novel series

by J.R.R. Tolkien (1892-1973). Written between 1937 and 1949 and published in 1955, the epic fantasy work is set in a fictional world called Middle-earth.

Joshua Grayson, Ph.D., is an historical musicologist and graduate of the USC Thornton School of Music, and the program note annotator for Pacific Symphony Youth Ensembles.



SLAVIC INSPIRATIONS

Monday, Mar. 16, 2026 @ 7 p.m.

Pola Benke, conductor
Jonathan Doh, piano
Pacific Symphony Youth Orchestra

Scan the code below for full concert
information and program notes.



EDWARD ELGAR *Polonia, Op. 76*

**SERGEI
RACHMANINOFF** *Piano Concerto No. 3 in D minor,
Op. 30
1st Movement
Allegro ma non tanto
Jonathan Doh, piano*

—INTERMISSION—

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK *The Golden Spinning Wheel,
Op. 109*

This evening's performance is generously
sponsored by **Pacific Life Foundation.**

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

MEET THE PSYO

Pola Benke / Pacific Symphony Youth Orchestra Music Director

Vivian Junyuan Wu / Pacific Symphony Youth Orchestra Manager

FLUTE

Erin Liao

Principal

Yige (Gloria) Zhou

Co-principal

Jia Kim

Connor Gong

OBOE

Ahri Shin

Principal

Connor Shim

Co-principal

Michelle Hsu

ENGLISH HORN

Aidan Lee

Principal

CLARINET

Kenny Song

Principal

Sean Yu

Co-principal

Ken Liu

Mason Ahn

Ian Suh

BASSOON

Tyler Phan

Principal

Lyn Molinari

HORN

Alexandre Hartling

Principal

Koen Wang

Co-principal

Jude Vijay

Rory Tran

Anna Wilsen

TRUMPET

Daniel Lee

Principal

Wade Hardy

Co-principal

Kaitlyn Chung

Minseo (Leon) Chung

TENOR TROMBONE

Jerry Xu

Principal

Kenneth Gong

Co-principal

Jaden Jung

BASS TROMBONE

Zuriel Martinez

Principal

TUBA

Ace Tecson

Principal

PERCUSSION

Talon Lu

Principal

Vivienne Hsi

Co-principal

Daniel Kim

David Wong

HARP

Sydney Lee

Principal

Noella Lee

Co-principal

PIANO

Jonathan Doh

Principal

Richard Feng

Co-principal

VIOLIN 1

Seaena Kim

Concertmaster

Natalie Xu

Assistant concertmaster

Chloe Woo

Jimin Ha

Claire Yuan

Dylan Nguyen

KariAnne Chien

Victoria Park

Jon Suh

Jaynie Lee

Nick Nguyen

Haoqi Wang

Anika Chen

Ethan Wang

Kyle Yeung

Grace Chun

VIOLIN 2

Sylvie Kim

Concertmaster

Danny Yoo

Assistant concertmaster

Andrew Kao

Brendan Chang

Abigail Chung

Maxwell Lee

Adam Liu

Caleb Schweiger

Daniel Park

Noel Jung

Ken Xiao

Eric Shin

Ben Li

Evan Kim

Esther Ahn

VIOLA

Lyla Han

Principal

Miono Quoit-Minematsu

Principal

Ethan Bei

Brian Kim

Nicholas To

Peter Lee

Olivia Guo

Annabelle Jin

Johan Sears

Peyton Tan

Joanne Chen

Madelyn Fu

Pyron Tan

Ken Chung

CELLO

Jeremy Lee

Principal

Kathryn Loutzenheiser

Co-principal

Alex Hwang

Cristian Santa Ana

Anastasia Catanus

Seojun Baek

Jaxon Yoon

Erin Suh

Nash Wu

Verena Lo

Aiden Kim

Zachary Kim

Charlotte Yoh

Aiden Chew

DOUBLE BASS

Claire Holben

Principal

Noa Stewart

Co-principal

Jacelle Penano

Parker Brueggeman

Jacelle Penano

Sartaj Benipal

Sydnee Yeh

SCHOOLS REPRESENTED

Aliso Niguel High School

Arnold O. Beckman High School

Canyon High School

Crean Lutheran High School

Diamond Bar High School

Eleanor Roosevelt High School

Etiwanda School District

ASC Program

Fountain Valley High School

Huntington Beach High School

Kraemer Middle School

Legacy Magnet Academy

Long Beach Polytechnic

High School

Mira Costa High School

Northwood High School

Orange County School of the Arts

Oxford Academy

Pacific Academy

Pacific Christian High School

Portola High School

Sage Hill School

San Joaquin High School

St. Margaret's Episcopal School

Sunny Hills High School

Tesoro High School

University High School

Valencia High School

Woodbridge High School

ABOUT THE MUSIC DIRECTOR



Pola Benke is a distinguished conductor and cellist, celebrated for her innovative approach to orchestral leadership and her commitment to standardizing diverse programming

in the modern symphonic repertoire. Beginning in the 2025–26 season, she will serve as Assistant Conductor of Pacific Symphony and Music Director of the Santa Monica Symphony. She currently holds the position of Assistant Conductor with the Long Beach Symphony and the Riverside Philharmonic, demonstrating her growing influence across Southern California's musical landscape.

Born in Poland, Benke began her musical journey as a cellist and holds Master's degrees in both cello performance and orchestral conducting. Her dual expertise gives her a rare perspective—combining the analytical insight of a conductor with the empathy of a performer. Whether leading a full symphony or an intimate ensemble, she brings warmth, clarity, and a deep sense of purpose to every rehearsal and performance. At the core of Benke's artistry is her dedication to diverse

programming that reflects the world's rich cultural tapestry. She believes that music has the power to unite and inspire, and she is committed to curating concerts that showcase voices from underrepresented communities while reimagining the classics through fresh interpretations. Her leadership style is marked by kindness, collaboration, and the ability to inspire musicians of all generations to perform at their best. Whether leading a large-scale symphonic work or rehearsing an intimate chamber ensemble, she brings energy and precision that elevates every performance.

Benke's professional path has been shaped by collaborations with leading conductors and ensembles, including Maestro Neeme Järvi, Sian Edwards, and Paavo Järvi. Her participation in prestigious programs like the Järvi Academy in Estonia, the Dartington Music Festival in England, and the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music has further refined her craft, earning her recognition as a forward-thinking and impactful conductor.

Influenced by composers like Krzysztof Penderecki, Igor Stravinsky, and Jennifer Higdon, Pola embodies a modern approach to conducting—honoring the past while boldly shaping the future of orchestral music.

ABOUT THE ARTIST



16-year-old pianist, Jonathan Jihan Doh is in 11th grade, currently attending Pacific Academy in Irvine. He began his music journey in piano with his mother at the age of six and

currently studies under the instruction of Mr. Rufus Choi. Doh has won various international and national competitions which includes being selected as the youngest finalists in the 2020 Ettlingen International Piano Competition in Germany, 1st prize at the MTAC State Solo Competition, 2nd prize at the Los Angeles International Liszt Competition, 2nd prize at the Arizona Piano Institution Solo Competition, 1st prize of CAPMT OC & JCM Young Musicians Concerto Competition performing with the Orchestra Collective of OC in 2022, 1st prize at the 2022 & 2024 MTAC State Concerto Competition. He was a finalist in the 2023 Redlands Bowl Young Artists

Concerto Competition, performing Chopin's First Piano Concerto with the Festival Orchestra. He was also accepted into the Morningside Music Bridge (MMB) international scholarship program at the New England Conservatory in the summer of 2024, where he performed in the highlight concert at Jordan Hall. He has had the opportunity to participate in masterclasses and lessons with distinguished artists including Piotr Paleczny, Arie Vardi, Dang Thai Son, Szymon Nehring, Haesun Paik, and Xiaohan Wang. Jonathan was featured on the cover of the Fall 2024 *MTAC Magazine* and is a recipient of the 2024 and 2025 Chopin Foundation of the United States Scholarship. He was named a 2025 National YoungArts Award Winner and is a semifinalist in The Music Center's Spotlight program. In addition to his solo work, he enjoys chamber music and regularly performs for his local senior center.

I ABOUT PSYO

Founded in 1993, Pacific Symphony Youth Orchestra (PSYO) has emerged as one of the leading pre-professional training orchestras in the nation. Led by Pola Benke, Pacific Symphony Assistant Conductor and PSYO Music Director, the ensemble provides its members with advanced artistic and technical training that cultivates musical excellence, personal growth, and lifelong engagement with the art of orchestral performance.

Under the creative leadership of Alexander Shelley, Pacific Symphony's Artistic and Music Director Designate, PSSS continues to build upon the rich legacy established by Music Director Laureate Carl St.Clair. Together, their vision reflects a shared commitment to inspiring the next generation of artists and audiences.

Representing over 26 schools in the Southern California region, PSYO provides members with in-depth exposure to the traditional orchestral canon, as well as engagement with exciting new works and

living composers. PSYO serves exceptional young instrumentalists in grades 9-12 and is one of four youth ensembles offered by Pacific Symphony's Youth Ensembles program.

PSYO members benefit from the mentorship of Maestros Shelley and St.Clair, receive regular coaching from Pacific Symphony musicians, perform at the magnificent Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall in Costa Mesa, CA, and enjoy periodic touring opportunities, including tours to Bulgaria in 2011, to China in 2016, and to the Czech Republic and Austria in 2023.

Membership in the Pacific Symphony Youth Ensembles program is determined through annual auditions held each spring, drawing more than 700 applicants each year. Graduates of the program go on to study at leading institutions including Juilliard, Johns Hopkins University/Peabody Institute, UCLA, University of Michigan, Stanford, USC, Brown, Vanderbilt, Yale, and many more.

I PROGRAM NOTES

The most esteemed British composer of the Victorian and Edwardian

eras, **Edward Elgar** (1857-1934) composed his symphonic prelude **Polonia** in 1915. Polish conductor Emil Mlynarski requested that Elgar write a wartime work based on Polish musical sources. Since Poland was then a part of the Russian Empire and was allied with the United Kingdom and France, Elgar readily agreed. Much of *Polonia's* music is original, but the piece also includes quotations of the Polish national anthem, other patriotic songs, and allusions to concert music by Paderewski and Chopin.



Well known for its lush sense of nostalgia, the music of **Sergei Rachmaninoff**

(1873-1943) stands as the last representative of Russian late Romanticism. Rachmaninoff composed his **Third Piano Concerto** in 1909. Like much of Rachmaninoff's music, it is tinged with nostalgia for the "lost Russia" that would never return. Although the piece initially received a lukewarm reception, it was popularized by Vladimir Horowitz and has been a staple of the piano repertoire ever since.



Born in a small village in Bohemia, **Antonín Dvořák** (1841-1904)

remains one of the giants of nineteenth-century Czech music. His **Golden Spinning Wheel** (1896) captures the dark characters and eerie, macabre mood of Erben's poetic text through musical motifs.



UPCOMING CONCERTS



Pacific Symphony Santiago Strings | Recomposed, May 17, 2026 @ 1:00 PM



Pacific Symphony Youth Concert Band | Of Myths & Legends, May 17 @ 7:00 PM



Pacific Symphony Youth Wind Ensemble | People, Places & Things, May 18 @ 7:00 PM



Pacific Symphony Youth Orchestra | American Dances/Movement, May 19 @ 7:00 PM