



Pacific Symphony Santiago Strings | Recomposed, May 17 @ 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

I WELCOME TO OUR 2025-26 SEASON FINALE!

It is an immense pleasure to welcome you to our 2025-26 Pacific Symphony Youth Ensembles season finale performances!

This has been a wonderfully successful season, marking many accomplishments and creative collaborations by all four of our youth ensembles, as they presented thrilling concert performances in the fall and spring. Additionally, our PSYE string and wind chamber ensembles have appeared to excellent effect at several special events this season, including the Symphony's 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, we are planning some **unique and exciting programming for our 2026-27 season, including the celebration of Youth Wind Ensemble's 20th anniversary**, and we warmly invite you to join us for more new and enriching musical adventures.

Grounded in the creative leadership of Music Director Designate 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 the 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

Jerry Huang* *Board Chair*

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

Directors

James Carter	Hans Imhof †	Linda Owen
Kristy Cha	Sheng Jiang	Herb Roth
David Dunford	Emma Lee	Elaine Sarkaria
Melanie Graham	Eric Lee	Walter Stahr*
Paul Hahm	Hedy Lee	Peter Tan
Joyce Hanson	László Mező	Larry Woody
Jerry Huang	Dot Nelson	David Yeung

I PSYE EX-OFFICIO BOARD MEMBERS & STAFF

Alexander Shelley* <i>Artistic & Music Director Designate, Pacific Symphony</i>	Jackson Nguyen <i>Youth Wind Ensemble & Concert Band Manager, Pacific Symphony</i>
Carl St.Clair* <i>Music Director Laureate, Pacific Symphony</i>	Vivian Sanyuan Wu <i>Youth Orchestra & Santiago Strings Manager, Pacific Symphony</i>
John Forsyte* <i>President, Pacific Symphony</i>	Danielle Liu <i>Youth Quartet & Octet Coordinator, Pacific Symphony</i>
Eileen Jeanette <i>Senior Vice President of Artistic Planning & Production, Pacific Symphony</i>	Frances Cisneros <i>Youth Concert Band Saxophone Coach, Pacific Symphony</i>
Shawne Natalia Zarubica <i>Managing Director, Pacific Symphony Youth Ensembles, Pacific Symphony</i>	Baxter Fee <i>Youth Concert Band Percussion Coach, Pacific Symphony</i>
Daniel Escobar <i>Director of Individual Giving & Governing Members, Pacific Symphony</i>	Michael Hammerton <i>Youth Concert Band Brass Coach, Pacific Symphony</i>
Pola Benke <i>Music Director, Pacific Symphony Youth Orchestra & Pacific Symphony Assistant Conductor</i>	Meri Sheegog <i>Santiago Strings String Coach, Pacific Symphony</i>
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



RECOMPOSED

Sunday, May 17, 2026 @ 1 p.m.

Dr. Johanna Gamboa-Kroesen, conductor
Pacific Symphony Santiago Strings

Scan the code below for full concert
information and program notes



This afternoon's performance is generously
sponsored by **Elaine Sarkaria.**

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

CARLOS GARDEL
(Arr. J. Barralet)

"Por una cabeza"
PSSS Cellos

JOSHUA REZNICOW *American Sketches*

MARTIN ELLERBY *Bridgewater Serenade*
I. Caprice (Edward Elgar)
II. Barcarolle (Frederick Delius)
III. Fughette (Gustav Holst)
VI. Vignette (William Walton)
VII. Caravelle (Eric Coates)

MAX RICHTER

The New Four Seasons
Vivaldi Recomposed
(selected movements)
Spring I
Harmonie Fu, violin
Spring III
Alicia Huang, violin
Summer I
Anna Shung, violin
Summer III
Ryan Noda, violin

STEPHAN KONCZ

A New Satiesfaction
(*Gymnopédie No. 1*)

(No Intermission)

MEET PSSS

Dr. Johanna Gamboa-Kroesen / Music Director

Vivian Junyuan Wu / PSSS Manager

Meri Sheegog / PSSS Coach

VIOLIN I

Harmonie Fu
Alicia Huang
Annessa Hui
Madeleine Joo
Jimin Kang
Joanna Kang
Emmalyn Kim
Junseo Lee
Eunice Lee
Kevin Liu
Owen Lo
Ryan Noda
Anna Shung
Victoria Shung
Lana Sirkin
Xindi Wang

VIOLIN II

Annie Chih
Hudson Fu
Derek Guan
Henry Jang
Caylin Jeon
Jennifer Kim
Ellen Kim
Fiona Kim
Emily Lee
Jane Lee
Zack Lee
Jarden Pan
Lucas Poon
Mason Przytulski
Winston Ryee
Melody Ye

VIOLA

Vincent Cho
Danielle Hahn
Jesse Huang
Jerry Huang
Uthara Iyer
Olivia Kim
Luke Lee
Ariane Liang
Emily Pan
Jamie Reyes
Grace Wang
Emily Xiao
Amber Yun
Tim Zhang
Chelsey Yu

CELLO

Annabelle Chantana
Audrey Chen
Zach Gerhart
Lucas Kim
Ryan Kim
Theodore Kim
Kaitlyn Lee
Duhan Li
Audrey Ma
Jeremiah Ming
Jeeho Park
Lioma Quoit Minematsu
Louis Shen
Abby Yoo
Ereny Yosef
Xien Zheng

DOUBLE BASS

Derek Cha
Chris Ding
Yehia Mansour
Dean Saunders
Keegan Seigel

SCHOOLS REPRESENTED

Arnold O. Beckman High School
Beacon Park School
Beechwood School
Bernardo Yorba Middle School
Calvary Christian School
Charles Evans Hughes Junior High School
Corona Del Mar Middle School
Crean Lutheran High School
Deerfield Elementary School
El Rancho Charter School
Heritage Oak Private Education
Irvine High School
Jeffrey Trail Middle School
Lakeside Middle School
Las Flores Middle School
McPherson Magnet School
Northwood High School
Orange County School of the Arts
Orchard Hills School
Oxford Academy
Portola High School
Portola Springs Elementary School
Rancho San Joaquin Middle School
Red Hill Lutheran School
Sage Hill School
Sierra Vista Middle School
Solis Park School
St. Margaret's Episcopal School
Westpark Elementary School
Woodbridge High School

Sections listed alphabetically.

ABOUT THE MUSIC DIRECTOR



Dr. Johanna Gamboa-Kroesen is a GRAMMY®-nominated music educator, conductor, and Assistant Professor of Music Education at the UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music, where

she teaches courses in music education, string pedagogy, and conducting, and supervises student teaching. She is a Fulbright Scholar, having completed work in the Philippines examining music, culture, and education. She holds a Doctorate in Education from the University of California, Los Angeles, a Master of Music Education from The Hartt School of Music, and dual Bachelor of Music degrees in Music Education and Violin Performance from Chapman University.

As Music Director of Pacific Symphony Santiago Strings, one of Southern California's premier youth orchestras, Dr. Gamboa-Kroesen is recognized for her artistry, inclusivity, and commitment to educational excellence. Under her leadership, the ensemble was named Grand Champion at the 2026 National Orchestra Festival and has been hailed for performing "with a maturity and intentionality well beyond their years... making music with a sense of freedom." Her work as a conductor and educator reflects a deep belief in the power of ensemble learning to cultivate connection, belonging, and musical growth. She frequently conducts school, youth, and regional honor orchestras and is sought after for workshops and clinics by community music organizations and school districts across the country.

Dr. Gamboa-Kroesen's research and publications, featured in *Research Studies in Music Education and Teaching Music*, explore inclusive teaching practices, string pedagogy, school belonging, and culturally responsive music education. She regularly presents at national and international conferences, including the International Society for Music Education (ISME), Society for Music Teacher Education (SMTE), College Music Society (CMS), National Association for Music Education (NAfME), American String Teachers Association

(ASTA), California All-State Music Education Conference (CASMEC), and the Suncoast Music Education Research Symposium. Within ASTA, she serves as Chair of the College Committee, where she champions initiatives that strengthen collegiate engagement, professional sustainability, and inclusive access across the string teaching community.

Dr. Gamboa-Kroesen has received multiple research, service, and teaching awards and collaborates extensively with school districts as a curriculum and instructional consultant. Prior to her appointment at UCLA, she taught orchestra in public schools for sixteen years, where her innovative and student-centered approaches to teaching continue to influence her university and community work today.

Guided by a vision of inclusive excellence, Dr. Gamboa-Kroesen continues to lead initiatives that reimagine how music education can connect people, cultures, and communities through shared creative practice.

I ABOUT PSSS

Now in its 35th season, Pacific Symphony Santiago Strings (PSSS) has become a nationally celebrated youth string orchestra. As the 2026 Grand Champion of the National Orchestra Festival in the Middle School Division, PSSS reflects the highest standards of musical excellence and ensemble performance. Sponsored by the Orange County Chapter of the Suzuki Music Association of California, PSSS was founded in 1991 by Lonie Bosserman and Margie Chan, coming under the wing of Pacific Symphony in 2007.

Led from its inception through the 2021-22 season by renowned music educator Irene Kroesen, PSSS welcomed its new music director, Dr. Johanna Gamboa-Kroesen in the fall of 2022. Dr. Kroesen is a member of the music faculty at UCLA, and her tenure represents an exciting new chapter for the ensemble.

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 30 schools in the Southern California region, PSSS provides an experience that nurtures the confidence, poise, and musical sensitivity of young musicians through the

study and performance of outstanding string orchestra literature. PSSS serves gifted young instrumentalists in grades 6 through 9 and is one of four youth ensembles offered by Pacific Symphony's Youth Ensembles program.

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

I PROGRAM NOTES

Although one of Argentina's most famous composers, **Carlos Gardel** (1890-1935) was actually born in Toulouse, France as Charles Romauld Gardes. He moved to Buenos Aires as a child in 1893. As a young man, Gardel became involved in the popular music scene in belle epoque Argentina, helping to popularize the tango as a vocal, rather than strictly instrumental, genre. A prolific musician, Gardel recorded almost 900 songs, becoming the most popular tango singer in Argentina by the early 1920s. His musical compositions are often used as a symbol of the city of Buenos Aires, much like Ravel's for Paris or Gershwin's for New York.



Later in his career, Gardel became involved in the film industry, which brought him to international acclaim as an actor and singer in the early 1930s. He began visiting the United States in 1933 to work with Paramount Pictures. A rising international sensation, Gardel was tragically killed in a plane crash in Medellín, Colombia in 1935 while on tour through Latin America.

"**Por una cabeza**" was composed for the 1935 film *Tango Bar*, directed by John Reinhardt. The film was produced by Paramount—in fact, it was

produced in Astoria, Queens, and was the last movie the studio ever produced in New York City. The movie's protagonist Ricardo Fuentes (played by Gardel), down on his luck in Buenos Aires, decides to leave the city and move to Barcelona, Spain. A former horse gambler, Ricardo has ambitious plans to open a tango bar, where he seeks to entertain guests with live tangos.

On his way to Europe, he encounters two thieves, one of whom is a beautiful woman. When Ricardo sees them steal a bracelet, he decides not to report them because he has fallen in love with the female thief, Laura. After arriving in Barcelona and opening his tango bar, he ultimately saves Laura from the gang of criminals who had ensnared her.

The song "Por una cabeza" ("by a head") refers to horse racing. During the song, Ricardo sings of the excitement and disappointment of horse gambling, in which winning or losing can come down to the tiniest of margins and can be decided in a split second. He compares his addiction to gambling to the love of a beautiful woman. In the movie, the song is sung while Ricardo is preparing to board the ship, reminiscing back on the past life he is leaving behind while looking towards his future in Europe.

Text and translation

Por una cabeza de un noble potrillo
Que justo en la raya, afloja al llegar
Y que al regresar, parece decir:
"No olvides, hermano, vos sabés, no hay que jugar"
Por una cabeza, metejón de un día
De aquella coqueta y risueña mujer
Que al jurar sonriendo, el amor que está mintiendo
Quema en una hoguera todo mi querer

By a head of a noble foal
Exactly on the line, quick to arrive,
And which when returning, seems to say:
"Don't forget, brother, you know you shouldn't gamble."
By a head, a day's infatuation
With that flirtatious, smiling girl
Who with smiling promise, burns all my desire
Of love, which is a lie, in a bonfire.

Por una cabeza
 Todas las locuras
 Su boca que besa, borra la tristeza
 Calma la amargura
 Por una cabeza
 Si ella me olvida
 ¿Qué importa perderme mil veces la vida?
 ¿Para qué vivir?

¿Cuántos engaños por una cabeza?
 Yo juré mil veces, no vuelvo a insistir
 Pero si un mirar me hiere al pasar
 Su boca de fuego, otra vez, quiero besar
 Basta de carreras, se acabó la timba
 Un final reñido yo no vuelvo a ver
 Pero si algún pingo llega a ser fija el domingo
 Yo me juego entero, ¿qué le voy a hacer?

Born in Minneapolis, **Joshua Reznicow** (b. 1975) received

his bachelor's degree in string education, composition, and theory from the University of Northern Iowa. He earned his master's degree in arts and teaching from Coe College in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

A composer, director, and string teacher, he is the director of orchestral activities in Linn-Marr High School, in Marion, Iowa. He also teaches composition and strings at Coe College.

Composed in 2009, **American Sketches** was commissioned by Sandy Tatge and the Roosevelt High School Orchestra in Des Moines.



British composer **Martin Ellerby** (b. 1957) studied composition and counterpoint at London College and at the Royal College of Music. He earned his DMA from the University of Salford, just outside

Manchester. Ellerby has written in a wide variety of classical genres and for numerous music education forums.

His music has been performed and recorded worldwide by prestigious ensembles and in renowned venues. Ellerby has served in many British national and royal musical positions, including as composer in residence to the



By a head
 All the madness
 Her mouth which kisses, erases the sadness,
 Calms the bitterness.
 By a head
 If she forgets me
 So what if I lose my life a thousand times?
 Why live?

How many disappointments over a head?
 I'll swear a thousand times, I won't insist again.
 But if a glance wounds me again as I pass by,
 With her fiery mouth, I will want to kiss her.
 No more running until the game is finished.
 I won't see another close finish like that.
 But if a horse turns out to be a sure bet on Sunday,
 I'm going all in. What can I do?

Regimental Band of Her Majesty's Coldstream Guards.

Bridgewater Serenade (2015) is a seven-movement suite. Each movement in the work alludes to the musical style of a different British composer. The work's title refers both to Bridgewater Canal (one of the most famous sites in Manchester) and to Ben Bridgewater, the composer's heart surgeon, to whom the work is dedicated.

Born in Hamelin, Germany, pianist and composer **Max Richter** (b.

1966) moved to Britain as a young child. He grew up in Bedford, a mid-sized English town about halfway between London and Birmingham. Richter studied composition and piano at the University of Edinburgh and at the Royal Academy of Music. He also studied privately with renowned modernist composer Luciano Berio in Florence.



As a composer, Richter has a particular interest in sonic space as an integral component of music. Beyond its technical qualities, his music engages with the contemporary social problems of our time, including environmental degradation, refugee crises, and human rights around the world.

He is particularly known for having composed the soundtrack of *Hamnet*, a 2025 historical drama detailing the personal life of William Shakespeare. An active performer, Richter founded the contemporary classical music group Piano Circus, which has performed works by preeminent living composers including Arvo Pärt, Steve Reich, Philip Glass, and many others.

Richter composed ***The New Four Seasons*** in 2012. The work is a recomposition and reinterpretation of Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons* violin concerti (composed in 1718-1723, published in 1725). In his recomposition, Richter discarded about 75 percent of the original music in Vivaldi's concerti.

The piece combines, phases, and reinterprets the remaining music. Unlike composers from the eighteenth through mid-twentieth centuries who strove to create new musical styles, Richter's reworking of Vivaldi reflects the postmodernist attitude that the past is not something to be overcome but rather is all around us yet is in need of rediscovery and recreation.

Born in Vienna, **Stephan Koncz** (b. 1984) studied music at the Vienna Musikhochschule, the Vienna Conservatory, and the University of Vienna. His teachers and mentors have included Daniel Barenboim, Steven Isserlis, and other renowned musicians. Koncz has been a cellist with the Berliner Philharmoniker since 2010 and is an active performer in chamber groups in addition to his orchestral career.



Koncz's ***A New Satiesfaction*** (2018) was inspired by *Gymnopédie #1* (1888) by Erik Satie. Although it is often considered an arrangement of Satie's work, it goes far beyond that; in fact, it is more a recomposition than an arrangement. Originally written for string quartet, the piece also includes musical references to Rossini's *William Tell Overture*. It incorporates influences of French impressionism, minimalism, and modern dance music.

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.



Pacific Symphony

OF MYTHS & LEGENDS

Sunday, May 17, 2026 @ 7 p.m.

Angela Woo, conductor

Frances Cisneros, guest conductor &

PSYCB saxophone coach

Pacific Symphony Youth

Saxophone Ensemble

Pacific Symphony Youth Concert Band

Scan the code below for full concert
information and program notes



This evening's performance is generously
sponsored by **Hans and Valerie Imhof.**

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

RALPH FORD

Dillon's Flight

JOHN MACKEY

Teeth of the Mechanism

EDVARD GRIEG
(Arr. Cisneros)

Peer Gynt Suite No. 1, Op. 46
(selections)

Morning Mood

In the Hall of the Mountain King

Pacific Symphony
Youth Saxophone Ensemble

Frances Cisneros,
guest conductor

BRIAN BECK

La Madre de los Gatos

FRANK TICHELI

Loch Lomond

LUIS ALARCÓN

Res Levissima

BRIAN BALMAGES

Arabian Dances

(No Intermission)

MEET PSYCB

Angela Woo / Music Director
Jackson Nguyen / PSYCB Manager
Frances Cisneros / Saxophone Coach
Baxter Fee / Percussion Coach

Michael Hammerton / Brass Coach
Haiyang Wang / Woodwinds Coach

FLUTE

Kate Jung, *principal*
Ziling Cheng, *PSYWE Mentor*
Jacob Han
Claire Kim
Ellie Kim
Katie Kim
Annabel Lin
Chloe Park
Shruti Pradhan

OBOE

Seoah Shin, *principal*
Gia Kwak
Olivia Park

CLARINET

Kara Chan, *principal*
Daniel Ahn
Annabelle Baek
Daniel Cui
Adrian Kang
Leia Kim
Stella Kim
Jihu Lee
Sihu Lee
Jayden Lim
Aaron Lin
Jeyi Park
Julian Park
Ethan Wang
Christine Yang
Kevin Zhang

BASS CLARINET

Gavin Wolfe, *principal*
George Chuan, *PSYWE Mentor*
Jon Lee, *PSYWE Mentor*

BASSOON

Chaaya Springer, *principal*
Hannah Pearce

ALTO SAXOPHONE

Justin Chuang, *principal*
Timothy Hsu
Jude Lee
Max Mar
Max Wang
Eric Yang

TENOR SAXOPHONE

Jay Homma, *principal*
Sonam Raj, *PSYWE Mentor*
Tristan Shaw

BARITONE SAXOPHONE

Adrian Dee, *principal*
Neil Dedhia, *PSYWE Mentor*
Jacob Herrera Monteon, *PSYWE Mentor*

FRENCH HORN

Chloe Shin, *principal*
Aaron Chung
Aurora Li, *PSYWE Mentor*
Abigail Julian
Vivian Murray

TRUMPET

Tony Lee, *principal*
Joshua Cho
Ryan Choi, *PSYWE Mentor*
Roy Han
Brent Kim
Jayden Lee
Luke Yang
Brandon Yoon

TROMBONE

Elias Yun, *principal*
Joshua Choi
Enzo Nohai
Jayden Park
Dylan Tang
Vinh Tran
Daniel Yoo

EUPHONIUM

Annie Kwak, *principal*
William Guo

TUBA

Joel Anne, *principal*
Eli Magdaleno, *PSYWE Mentor*

PERCUSSION

Megan Chan
Ian Park
Kylee Tang
Johnny Xia
Colton Yu

SCHOOLS REPRESENTED

Arnold O. Beckman High School
Beechwood School
Brea Olinda High School
Cadence Park School
Carl Hankey Middle School
Cerritos High School
Chaparral Middle School
Crean Lutheran High School
D. Russell Parks Junior High School
Heritage Oak Private Education
Jeffrey Trail Middle School
Lakeside Middle School
Newcomb Academy
Northwood High School
Orange County School of the Arts
Orchard Hills Middle School
Oxford Academy
Pioneer Middle School
Portola High School
Rancho San Joaquin Middle School
Sage Hill School
Serrano Intermediate School
Sierra Vista Middle School
Solis Park School
South Pointe Middle School
Sunny Hills High School
Tesoro High School
Tetzlaff Middle School
University High School
Valley Christian High School
Vista Verde School
Woodcrest Christian High School

Sections listed alphabetically
under principal.

ABOUT THE MUSIC DIRECTOR



Angela Woo is Director of Instrumental Music at John Adams Middle School (Santa Monica, CA) where nearly 300 students comprise three concert bands and three string orchestras. The

John Adams ensembles have consistently earned the highest possible ratings at performance festivals. In 2011, the John Adams Middle School Wind Ensemble was selected to perform at the inaugural California All-State Music Education Conference as the only middle school concert band in the state to be so honored.

Woo is also Music Director of Pacific Symphony Youth Concert Band (Orange County, CA), which is part of Pacific Symphony Youth Ensembles, one of the largest pre-professional music training programs in the nation for young musicians in grades 6 through 12.

For over 25 years, Woo has enjoyed an active schedule as a guest conductor, clinician, and adjudicator with numerous honor groups, conducting symposia, and music festivals throughout the United States. Woo has been invited by several universities to lead professional development workshops for music educators at the elementary and secondary levels. Her guest conducting invitations have included All-State honor bands and orchestras at the middle school and high school levels in Kentucky, Oregon, Michigan, Colorado, California, Georgia, and Louisiana. Woo has been invited by the WorldStrides Honors Performance Series to conduct in Carnegie Hall (New York) with the 2019 and 2022 Middle School Honors Orchestra, and the 2020 High School Symphony Orchestra.

On the international level, Woo was the first woman to conduct at the 1992 XIV New Music Forum in Mexico City, premiering wind music of Karel Husa, Vincent Persichetti, George Crumb, and William Schuman. In 2019, Woo was the first international guest conductor for the middle school State Honours Ensemble Program at the Queensland Conservatorium at Griffith University (Brisbane, Australia), and returned to guest conduct the national high school Wind Orchestra with the 2023 Australian Honours Ensemble Program.

An alumna of the University of California, Los Angeles, Woo holds the degrees Bachelor of Arts in Music Education and Piano Performance, Master of Education, and Master of Fine Arts in Conducting.

She also holds the Master of Arts in Educational Administration from California State University, Northridge. Prior to her appointment to John Adams Middle School in 1995, Woo was Director of Music at Corona del Mar High School in Orange County, California where she led the band, orchestra, choral, and jazz ensembles. She also served as conductor of the Santa Monica College Wind Ensemble during the 1995-96 season.

Woo is a staunch advocate for music education at all levels. She has been recognized and honored for her advocacy and service to music education by local, regional, and national organizations, including the Santa Monica Rotary Club (2005 Santa Monica-Malibu District Teacher of the Year), the John Philip Sousa National Foundation (2012 Legion of Honor Laureate), the Education Through Music - Los Angeles Foundation (2019 Shining Star Award), and the Southern California School Band and Orchestra Association (2020 Gold Award and 2025 Outstanding Middle School Educator Award). Woo was named the recipient of the 2024 California Music Educators Association Middle School Music Educator Award.

ABOUT THE GUEST CONDUCTOR



Frances Cisneros is an accomplished saxophone soloist, ensemble player, and educator, having received her Master of Music degree in Saxophone Performance at University of Southern

California in 2022. She made her solo debut with Riverside Philharmonic in 2018, is currently Tenor Saxophonist with TC4 Quartet, and has served as Pacific Symphony Youth Concert Band saxophone coach and Pacific Symphony Youth Saxophone Ensemble conductor since 2024.

I ABOUT PSYCB

Now in their 4th season, Pacific Symphony Youth Concert Band (PSYCB) is the newest addition to the PSYE family of ensembles. Founded in 2022 through the generous sponsorship and advocacy of Hans and Valerie Imhof, PSYCB is led by renowned music educator Angela Woo.

Under the creative leadership of Alexander Shelley, Pacific Symphony's Artistic and Music Director Designate, PSYCB 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 32 schools throughout the Southern California region, PSYCB provides an experience that nurtures the confidence, poise, and musical sensitivity of young musicians through the study and performance of outstanding concert band literature. PSYCB serves gifted instrumentalists in grades 6 through 9 and is one of four youth ensembles offered by Pacific Symphony's Youth Ensembles program.

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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

Composer, arranger, conductor, and music educator **Ralph Ford** (b. 1963) earned his bachelor's and master's degrees from Troy State University in southern Alabama. He began his musical career while still a student. In fact, Ford began professionally arranging music as a high school student in Panama City, Florida. He was appointed director of jazz ensemble during his sophomore year in college and became staff arranger for the university band as a college senior. Ford continued both positions after graduating, serving as assistant director of bands at Troy University for many years. In addition, he taught courses in brass, jazz, orchestration, arranging, music technology, and music theory.



Ford has enjoyed an extremely wide-ranging musical career. In addition to having taught in universities for 29 years, he serves as the exclusive composer and arranger for Alfred Music, a publishing company in Los Angeles. He has written advertising jingles, participated in live radio broadcasts, worked on television voice-overs, and produced television, radio, and Internet programs.

A prolific composer, Ford has composed more than 250 works. His music has been performed by school, community, university, military, and professional ensembles worldwide. Although he has retired from university teaching, he still lives in Troy, Alabama.

Dillon's Flight (2007) is a musical depiction of the phoenix, a magical bird that features heavily in ancient Greek mythology. In the earliest written

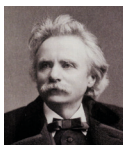
description, the phoenix was said to have a lifespan 972 times that of a human one, or around 40,000-50,000 years (people generally had short lifespans in the ancient world). In later versions, the phoenix was considered immortal. It was often depicted visually with a halo and was identified with Helios, the ancient Greek personification of the sun. In most mythologies, once every few hundred years (the exact interval differs by source), the bird dies by fire, and its ashes come back to life in a never-ending cycle. Ford's musical depiction of piece is dedicated to Dillon Middle School in Phoenix, New York (just north of Syracuse).

An Ohio native, **John Mackey** (b. 1973) has written a great deal of music for large ensemble. After earning a bachelor's degree in music from the Cleveland Institute of Music, he received his master's degree in composition at the Juilliard School of Music, where he studied with John Corigliano. Mackey is currently a resident of Cambridge, Massachusetts. He has written much orchestra music but has focused particularly on music for wind band.



Teeth of the Mechanism (2005) was commissioned and premiered by Cooper Middle School in McLean, Virginia. It was first recorded by the Hikarigaoka Girls' High School Wind Orchestra in Japan.

Born into a middle-class family in the port city of Bergen, **Edvard Grieg** (1843-1907) quickly rose to become the preeminent composer of Norway. He began the study of music at an early age and was quickly drawn to the works of Robert Schumann, among others. After living in Denmark and Sweden, he became associated with a newly emergent Norwegian school of art. During the 1860s, he met with Norwegian violinist Ole Bull (1810-1880) composer Rikard Nordraak (1842-1866, composer of the Norwegian national anthem), and famed Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906). Grieg was heavily influenced by them and embarked on a quest to use music in order to promote a sense of Norwegian identity, as distinct from that of its Scandinavian neighbors. By 1874, the year that Grieg first began composing **Peer Gynt**, he had already established himself as a composer, gained a comfortable livelihood in Denmark, and had returned home to Norway several years before.



It is hardly surprising that Norwegian artists and intellectuals felt the stirrings of a budding national identity around this time. Political developments throughout the 19th century affected the history of the country, radically transforming the national landscape. Beginning in the year 1378, Norway had been a province of Denmark for a period of 436 years. However, during the early 19th century it found itself allied with Napoleon in opposition to Denmark. As a result of Napoleon's defeat, Norway was absorbed into Sweden, its neighbor to the east. Not desiring this union, Norwegians waged war against Sweden, but neither side was able to win, and a compromise was reached: Norway was made an autonomous province of Sweden, sharing the Swedish monarch and foreign policy but being allowed its own local government. As a result of these developments, Norway experienced cultural autonomy during the 19th century, with prominent intellectuals and artists struggling to define a sense of just what it meant to be Norwegian (in close parallel to similar developments in Eastern Europe.) Full Norwegian independence would finally be reached in 1905.

Grieg's work *Peer Gynt* was composed as music to accompany the play *Peer Gynt* by Henrik Ibsen. Grieg worked closely with Ibsen; it was Ibsen who asked Grieg to set his play to music. Grieg composed the music in 1874 and 1875, and it was first performed and published in 1876. Based on an old Norwegian fairy tale, the play follows the life of Peer Gynt, the

son of a merchant who had squandered his family's fortune. Left destitute, Peer's mother hoped he would restore this fortune, but he is revealed to be lazy and foolish. During the course of the play, Peer kidnaps Ingrid, a beautiful bride. Fleeing with her, he hits his head on a rock in his haste and dreams intoxicated dreams of mountain trolls. Later in life, he leaves home in search of his fortune, ultimately ending up as a wandering businessman in Morocco. Trekking across the Sahara, he meets Anitra, the daughter of a local Bedouin chief. After many other adventures, the elderly Peer returns to Norway at the end of the play and recounts his life—both the good deeds and the sinful ones.

With the success of the play and its music, Grieg decided to set several movements of the music as symphonic works. Revised in 1885 and 1888, he published these in 1888 as *Peer Gynt Suite 1* and *Peer Gynt Suite 2*. Each of these suites features four movements from the play, presented out of order. In Suite 1, the first movement, "**Morning Moods**," is taken from Act IV, Scene 1. At this point in the play, a wandering Peer first sets eyes on Morocco, watching the desert sun rise over the mysterious land. Though it is often used to depict Norway, the movement was actually intended as a musical representation of the Sahara desert. Pale colors and thin textures depict the shifting colors of sunrise, beginning with the flutes and upper woodwinds and continuing with the bright warmth of sun—depicted in blazing brass. Exotic harmonic effects depict the faraway African location. The second movement, "**Åse's Death**," taken from the prelude to Act III, hauntingly depicts the death of Peer's mother and his mourning for her. The simple chorale texture and hauntingly lyrical melody suggest profound sadness, shock, and loss. As the movement progresses, it undergoes a gradual intensification of texture, harmony, and dynamics, suggesting Peer becoming more and more upset as the true magnitude of his loss sinks in. The third movement, "**Anitra's Dance**" (Act IV, Scene 4), depicts Peer's encounter in Africa with Anitra, daughter of the Bedouin chief. Its twisting, contorted melody, rhythmic activity, and detached articulations suggest Anitra's exotic, seductive charms. Towards the end of the movement, the cellos imitate the melody in the violin, suggesting Peer becoming enthralled and captivated by her allure. The final movement, "**In the Hall of the Mountain King**" (Act II Scene 8), depicts Peer's feverish dreams of mountain trolls. In Peer's

dream, the troll king offers to make him a troll if he agrees to marry the king's daughter and to certain other conditions. "What is the difference between troll and man?" the troll king asks, then answers himself: "Out there, where sky shines, humans say: 'To thyself be true.' In here, trolls say: 'Be true to yourself and to hell with the world.'" Peer initially agrees to become a troll but ultimately reconsiders and decides to remain human. The chromatic harmonies and dark orchestration suggest the dark, cavernous space and its mysterious inhabitants. The movement builds to a climax before Peer ultimately rejects the king's offer.

Brian Beck (b. 1976) earned a bachelor's degree in music education from Texas A&M and a master's in music education from the University of Houston. He composes and arranges music for both instrumental and vocal ensembles. He has served for many years as band director at both Byrd Middle School and Brandenburg Intermediate School in Duncanville, Texas (a suburb of Dallas); the music ensembles at both schools received notable recognition during his tenure. Concurrently to his teaching, Beck also serves as chairman of the Region 20 middle school band division at the Texas Music Educators Association.



The title of *La Madre de los Gatos* (The Mother of the Cats) refers to the unofficial nickname of Verda Shine, who served as band director in Duncanville middle schools for many years. Ms. Shine's love of cats was well known by students, who cherished her warmth and nurturing personality. The work was first performed in 2009, in Duncanville, and was published in 2011. Ms. Shine, to whom the work is dedicated, passed away in 2025 at the age of 74.

A professor of composition at the USC Thornton School of Music since 1991, **Frank Ticheli** (b.1958) has composed music in a wide variety of forms and genres. Having spent the earliest part of his childhood in Louisiana, Ticheli now lists Cajun, Creole, New Orleans jazz, and Southern Folk music as some of his most important influences. A native of Monroe, Louisiana, his initial exposure to music was New Orleans jazz. After relocating to suburban Dallas at the age of thirteen, he became exposed



to band music at his high school's award-winning music program. These two early influences can be heard in many of his award-winning compositions.

Through the public school system, Ticheli gained an appreciation for the inherent potentials of this ensemble. Ever since then, he has been fascinated by instrumental colors. He often utilizes transparent, pure colors, carefully avoiding the overuse of *tutti*. In nearly all of his music, Ticheli aims for transparency of texture and pureness of tone color, saving full *tutti* for rare occasions. Explaining his philosophy of orchestration, he has remarked:

To be certain, carefully written color combinations can produce unique and beautiful results, and well-mixed colors are usually a necessity during a strong climax. But constant doubling weighs down a piece and reduces its expressive potential. Unfortunately, this sound is so prevalent in band music that many listeners accept it as "the band sound." I certainly understand one reason for the practice. Music educators, seeking ways to encourage greater confidence in their students, have been drawn to thick doublings as a kind of musical insurance policy. But ironically, this leads to a dependency-based relationship that ultimately keeps students down. I try to provide an alternative for young musicians by writing somewhat leaner, more transparent textures. When students are expected to carry the ball from time to time, they ultimately become more confident, more self-aware, and more sensitive.

Loch Lomond (2002) is Ticheli's setting of a traditional Scottish folk song. Like the vast majority of folk music, the melody is of unknown origin; it shares common features with many other folk songs. Its famous text dates to 1746, although multiple versions exist and the melody has also been sung to others.

Although England and Scotland were formally united in 1707, Scottish nationalism long remained an important force shaping society in the formerly independent nation located in the northern half of the island of Great Britain. In 1745, descendants of Scottish kings attempted to regain the British throne in 1745 while the British army was involved in a war in continental Europe. The rebellion, termed the Jacobite Rebellion, ultimately failed, and Scotland remained part of the United Kingdom. In the aftermath, 3500 of the rebellion's participants were tried for treason. Over a hundred were executed, and many died while awaiting trial. Hundreds were pardoned, and nearly 2000 were

exiled to British colonies. Due to public outcry, a general pardon was issued by Parliament in 1746.

The lyrics of “Loch Lomond” refer to two captured Scottish soldiers who had participated in the Jacobite Rebellion. One of them was set to be executed, while the other was to be set free. The song is sung by the soldier to be put to death. As he awaits his fate, he sings of the better days of his youth and of his spirit returning to his beloved Scotland. In Celtic mythology, when a person dies in another land, his or her spirit will travel home after death via a path referred to as “the low road.”

In his arrangement of the song, Ticheli combines “Loch Lomond” with “Danny Boy,” a traditional Irish folk song. By including it, Ticheli highlights the musical similarities between the two melodies as well as the deep historical and cultural ties linking Scotland and Ireland.

Text (traditional version): LOCH LOMOND

*By yon bonnie banks,
And by yon bonnie braes,
Where the sun shines bright, on Loch Lomond
Where me and my true love
Were ever wont to gae
On the bonnie, bonnie banks of Loch Lomond.*

*Chorus: Oh! ye'll tak' the high road and
I'll tak' the low road,
An' I'll be in Scotland afore ye,
But me and my true love will never meet again
On the bonnie, bonnie banks of Loch Lomond.*

*'Twas then that we parted,
In yon shady glen,
On the steep, steep side of Ben Lomond
Where in purple hue
The Highland hills we view,
And the moon coming out in the gloaming.*

*(Chorus)
The wee birdies sing
And the wild flowers spring,
And in sunshine the waters are sleeping.
But the broken heart it kens
Nae second Spring again,
Tho' the wae'ful may cease frae their greeting.*

Originally from Valencia, Spain, **Luis Alarcón** (b. 1972) has won many prestigious international awards and prizes. His music has been performed in more than 30 countries in Europe, the Americas,



and Asia. He is currently serving as professor at the Valencia Conservatory and as principal conductor of Unión Musical Santa Cecilia Symphonic Band.

Res Levissima (2025), whose title means “very light” or “the lightest thing,” was commissioned by the Cleveland Youth Wind Symphony Group 1. The work was premiered by the ensemble on March 2, 2025, with the composer conducting.

Brian Balmages (b. 1975) has enjoyed a prolific career. In addition to composing, he is also a conductor, performer, and producer. He received his bachelor's degree from James Madison University and a master's degree from the University of Miami. He is currently serving as professor of instrumental conducting and as band director at Towson University, near Baltimore. In 2013, Balmages had the high honor of composing music for the prayer service at the inauguration of President Barack Obama's second term. **Arabian Dances** (2009) combines music composed by Balmages with traditional Arabic folk music. It incorporates “Ala Dal'ona” and “Tafta Hindi,” two Lebanese folk songs.



Lyrics (translation, courtesy Libana):

*Ala Dal'ona:
A gentle breeze is blowing from the West
It is soothing because it comes from my love.*

*The playful breeze enhances my feelings; bring good
health and strength!
Give my heart lightness and beauty,
so that my friends will love me.*

*Breeze, come from near my garden,
Bring the fragrance of the flowers
From the rose and the pomegranate.
Then will our flesh touch.*

*Cool breeze, come from the mountain,
From all directions.
How lovely it is to sit under the grapevine, how lovely
is the eating of bread and olives.*

*Tafta Hindi:
Indian taffeta, Indian taffeta,
Silk and linen I sell here.
Open (the door) for me, pretty girls,
I have goods to sell you.*



Pacific Symphony

PEOPLE, PLACES & THINGS!

Monday, May 18, 2026 @ 7 p.m.

Dr. Gregory X. Whitmore, conductor
Peter Bement, guest conductor
Caelum Quartet, PSYWE members
Pacific Symphony Youth Wind Ensemble

Scan the code below for full concert
information and program notes



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.

NICOLE PIUNNO

Bright Shadow Fanfare

JAKE RUNESTAD

Let My Love Be Heard

Peter Bement,
guest conductor

ED WINDELS

Firefall

World Premiere

—INTERMISSION—

DAVID MASLANKA

Songs for the Coming Day

VIII. The Soul is Here

for its Own Joy

Caelum Quartet

Jayden Lee

Shido Kamai

Armaan Diwan

Jacob Herrera-Monteon

MORTEN LAURIDSEN *O Magnum Mysterium*

Transcribed by H. Robert Reynolds

OMAR THOMAS

Come Sunday

MEET PSYWE

Dr. Gregory X. Whitmore / Music Director
Jackson Nguyen / PSYWE 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

Sohrab Zarin, *principal*
Normandie Olsen

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

FRENCH HORN

Aurora Li, *principal*
Brandon Dee
Noah Kim
Joshua Liu
Sylas Wei
Rico Xu

TRUMPET

George Ty, *principal*
Austin Ahn
Bomi Bishop
Ian Cho
Sooho 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
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*

SCHOOLS REPRESENTED

Arnold O. Beckman High School
California High School
Canyon High School
Crean Lutheran High School
Diamond Bar 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

Sections listed alphabetically
under principal.

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), Renée 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

ABOUT THE GUEST CONDUCTOR



Peter Bement currently serves as the Associate Director of Bands at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona and a Lecturer of

Music at California State University, Fullerton. Originally hailing from Rancho Cucamonga, California, he completed his Bachelor's and Master's in Music at CSU Fullerton, and has studied under mentors Dustin Barr, Gregory Whitmore, and Kevin Mayse. Previously, he served as the Interim Director of Bands and Orchestra at CSU Los Angeles and the Director of Orchestra Programs at Huntington Beach High School. Beginning in Fall 2026, he will depart his position at Cal Poly Pomona to join the graduate doctoral conducting program at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities.

In addition to his ensemble duties at Cal Poly Pomona, Bement instructs undergraduate students in conducting coursework and French Horn. He regularly serves as an adjudicator for the California State Band Championships and across Southern California at various band and orchestra festivals and is a Performing Arts clinician for the Disneyland Resort. He has

appeared as a guest conductor in rehearsal and performances across the United States and internationally, including appearances with the Pacific Symphony Youth Wind Ensemble, the Japanese Ground Self-Defense Force Northern Band, and the United States Army Band "Pershing's Own."

Beyond the podium, Bement continues actively teaching and performing in and around the greater Los Angeles area. A strong supporter of the multifaceted elements of K-12 music education, he frequently has collaborated with high school music programs in both the concert band and marching scene, working most recently with Rancho Cucamonga High School, Garden Grove High School, and the Pacific Crest Drum and Bugle Corps. His advocacy for new music has led to commissions and premieres of works by composers such as Kristian de Leon, Jack Bertrand, Kevin Charoensri, Mat Campbell, Thomas Hiel, and others.

A proud alumnus of Riverside City College and Alta Loma High School alongside CSU Fullerton, Bement enjoys spending his free time with his wife exploring the outdoors, brewing specialty coffee, playing disc golf, and relaxing with their very fluffy cats.

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.

PROGRAM NOTES

Nicole Piuanno (b. 1985)

earned a bachelor’s degree in music education in 2007. She subsequently received a master’s degree in theory pedagogy and a DMA in composition from Michigan State University. Her compositions have been performed by many prestigious ensembles including the United States Marine Band, Coast Guard Band, and Air Force Band, as well as in international music conferences.



Piuanno aims to infuse her music with an innately spiritual quality. In her own words, she views it as “a vehicle for seeing and experiencing the realities of life” that “reflects the paradoxes in life and how these seemingly opposites are connected as they often weave together.” In particular, Piuanno aims to use music to depict “the light and dark, past and present, beauty and brokenness, confinement and freedom, chaos and order, spiritual and physical, life and death.” (For more details, the composer’s artist statement may be found at <https://www.nicolepiuanno.com/bio>).

In **Bright Shadow Fanfare**, Piuanno aimed to express her philosophical and spiritual ideas. First, the piece represents her conception of “bringing our darkness into the light in order to integrate it with our true self.” Simultaneously, it also depicts the notion of sharing our gifts with others, even if we might not ordinarily be inclined to do so. The work was composed in 2021.

A native of Rockford, Illinois, **Jake Runestad** (b. 1986) is quickly making a name for himself in the contemporary music scene. He earned his master’s degree in composition from Peabody



Conservatory and has since won numerous prestigious awards for his compositions. He has worked with many leading ensembles in the US, Europe, the Far East, and around the world. Among his many compositional achievements, the young composer has already written three operas. Currently residing in Minneapolis, Runestad also frequently appears as a conductor.

Runestad is passionate about the power of music to express social themes. Many of his works explore contemporary social and political issues, including immigration, gender equality, disability, climate change, and more. According to his official biography, Runestad has consciously used his career and output to promote “the power of music for positive change,” and to foster “authentic human emotions and experiences.”

Originally written for chorus, **Let My Love Be Heard** was composed in 2014. The work was written for the Seattle vocal ensemble Choral Arts Northwest. Since then, it was rededicated to the memory of the victims of terrorist attacks in Paris and Beirut in 2015. The piece was performed by the choir at Cal State Long Beach in memory of Nohemi Gonzalez, a student at the university who was killed in the Paris attack. Runestad adapted the piece for wind ensemble in 2015.

Text: A Prayer
by Alfred Noyes

*Angels, where you soar
Up to God’s own light,
Take my own lost bird
On your hearts tonight;
And as grief once more
Mounts to heaven and sings,
Let my love be heard
Whispering in your wings.*

Celebrated contemporary composer **Ed Windels** developed an interest in a wide variety of performing arts from early childhood. He began composing as a teenager. He earned a master's degree in composition and theory from Mannes School of Music in 1990 and was subsequently awarded a fellowship at the Aspen Summer Music Festival. Windels is co-founder of the New York chapter of the American Society of Musicians, Composers and Arrangers. In his compositions, Windels combines an interest in nineteenth-century musical form, twentieth-century modernist techniques, and musical theatre's broad accessibility.



Firefall (2022) was inspired by the celebrated "firefall" phenomenon in Yosemite National Park. Every year in February, red sun rays hit Horsetail Falls at just the right angle at just the right time of day. The resulting natural lighting causes the waterfall to appear as though it were transformed into fire. The seemingly magical phenomenon is known far and wide and attracts tourists from all over the world. The musical idea for the work dates back to a concert in 2019 at the Midwest Clinic in Chicago, in which Windels heard a musical figure of descending thirds. The musical pattern intrigued him enough that he decided to write a complete piece based on it.



Firefall (World Premiere)

American composer **David Maslanka** (b. 1943) has become especially well known for his music for winds. Among his more than 150 works are over 50 pieces for wind ensemble, including eight symphonies, seventeen concertos, a Mass, and many concert pieces. His ***Songs for the Coming Day*** is in nine movements and was commissioned by the Masato Kumoi Sax Quartet and consortium. The movements are relatively brief "songs without words" with titles such as Breathing, Awakening, Letting Go of the Past, and The Soul is Here for its Own Joy.



Born in a small town in southeastern Washington State, **Morten Lauridsen** (b. 1943) has become one of America's most celebrated composers. Lauridsen began his music studies at Whitman College in Walla Walla, Washington before transferring to the University of Southern California. Since earning his PhD in music from USC, he served on the faculty there for many years. From 1990 until 2002 he was the chair of the composition department; in addition to other accomplishments, he founded the Advanced Studies Program in Film Scoring.



Highly acclaimed, Lauridsen's music has earned many distinguished prizes and awards. Largely neotonal, it uses triadic harmonies frequently enriched with added tones and displays the influence of medieval chant and Renaissance polyphonic music. Many of Lauridsen's works are infused with a sense of mystical spirituality.

Commissioned by the Los Angeles Master Chorale, ***O Magnum Mysterium*** was composed in 1994; Lauridsen spent six months working on the five-minute piece. According to the composer, the work was based on the 1633 painting *Still Life with Lemons, Oranges and a Rose* by Spanish artist Francisco de Zurbarán (1598-1664). The painting symbolically represents the Virgin Mary using water, citrus fruits, and flowers as traditional symbols of fertility. In composing the work, Lauridsen sought to create the same effect in sound that the painting had on him.

The traditional chant on which it is based, *O Magnum Mysterium*, dates back to the Middle

Ages and was traditionally used for Christmas. Inspired by medieval and Renaissance composers, Lauridsen's composition uses simple, direct musical materials—smooth, flowing lines and primary chords enriched with gently shimmering added tones. At the climax, Lauridsen sought to represent Mary's "profound sorrow of seeing her son murdered." He accomplishes this with a single

Text and translation

O magnum mysterium,
et admirabile sacramentum,
ut animalia viderent Dominum natum,
iacentem in praesepio!
Beata Virgo, cujus viscera
meruerunt portare
Dominum Iesum Christum.
Alleluia!

Born in New York and of Guyanese descent, ambitious composer **Omar Thomas** (b. 1984) received his bachelor's in music education at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia. He went on to earn a master's degree in jazz composition from New England Conservatory. A precocious student, he served as assistant professor of harmony at Berklee College of Music while still a graduate student. Since graduating, Thomas taught theory at Peabody and is currently an associate professor of composition and jazz studies at the University of Texas at Austin.

Thomas composes both jazz and classical music and has written extensively for contemporary jazz ensemble. He has earned many prestigious awards and prizes for his music. Thomas recently became the first Black composer awarded the National Bandmasters Association's Revelli Award. His music has been widely performed and



note on the word "Virgo"—a G-sharp, the only non-harmonic tone in the entire work that is out of the key. An accented dissonance, it immediately stands out of the rest of the piece. Lauridsen's musical depiction reflects both spirituality and the shared human experiences of sorrow and transcendence.

O great mystery,
and wonderful sacrament,
that animals should see the newly born God,
lying in an enclosure!
Blessed is the Virgin whose womb
was worthy of bearing
our God Jesus Christ.
Halleluia!

recorded. Outside of his musical career, Thomas is a noted activist in Boston's LGBTQ community.

Come Sunday (2018) is a two-movement work inspired by African-American worship services, and particularly by the overriding importance of the Hammond organ in Gospel music. In the first movement, "Testimony," the organ serves as spiritual preparation for the congregation as they are about to begin worship. The prayer service itself is highly eclectic, incorporating what the composer calls "a magical union of Bach, blues, jazz, and R&B." The second movement, "Shout!," reflects "the frenzied and joyous climactic moments when The Spirit has taken over the service." The piece's title is an explicit reference to a 1943 work by Duke Ellington, whose music also combines jazz and classical elements.

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.



Pacific Symphony

AMERICAN DANCES/ MOVEMENT

Tuesday, May 19, 2026 @ 7 p.m.

Pola Benke, conductor

Erin Liao, flute

Ho Sen Ken Xiao, guest composer &
PSYE Young Composer Project Alumnus
Pacific Symphony Youth Orchestra

ALISTAIR COLEMAN

Opalescent

GEORGES HÜE

Fantasie for Flute & Orchestra
Erin Liao, flute

HO SEN KEN XIAO

driftwoods

ARTURO MÁRQUEZ

Danzón No. 2

—INTERMISSION—

AARON COPLAND

Appalachian Spring

Scan the code below for full concert
information and program notes



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

Special thanks to **Stanley Behrens** for his generous
support of PSYE's **Young Composer Project**.

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

MEET PSYO

Pola Benke / Music Director

Vivian Junyuan Wu / PSYO Manager

FLUTE

Erin Liao, *principal*

Yige (Gloria) Zhou, *co-principal*

Jia Kim

Connor Gong

OBOE

Ahri Shin, *co-principal*

Connor Shim, *co-principal*

Michelle Hsu

ENGLISH HORN

Adrian Lee, *principal*

CLARINET

Kenny Song, *principal*

Sean Yu, *principal*

Ken Liu

Mason Ahn

Ian Suh

BASSOON

Tyler Phan, *principal*

Madilyn Molinari

FRENCH HORN

Alexandre Hartling, *principal*

Jude Vijay, *co-principal*

Koen Wang

Rory Tran

Anna Wilsen

TRUMPET

Daniel Lee, *principal*

Wade Hardy

Kaitlyn Chung

Minseo (Leon) Chung

TENOR TROMBONE

Jaden Jung, *principal*

BASS TROMBONE

Zuriel Martinez, *principal*

PERCUSSION

Daniel Kim, *principal*

Vivienne Hsi, *co-principal*

Talon Lu

David Wong

HARP

Sydney Lee, *principal*

Noella Lee, *co-principal*

PIANO

Jonathan Doh, *principal*

Richard Feng, *co-principal*

VIOLIN I

Hannah Schweiger, *concertmaster*

KariAnne Chien, *assistant concertmaster*

Noel Jung

Brendan Chang

Eric Shin

Haoqi Wang

Abigail Chung

Evan Kim

Esther Ahn

Adam Liu

Danny Yoo

Caleb Schweiger

Sylvie Kim

Nick Nguyen

Daniel Park

Ben Li

Andrew Kao

VIOLIN II

Jon Suh, *principal*

Kyle Yeung, *co-principal*

Maxwell Lee

Chloe Woo

Jaynie Lee

Ken Xiao

Jimin Ha

Ethan Wang

Grace Chun

Claire Yuan

Anika Chen

Dylan Nguyen

Amelia Kang

Victoria Park

Seaena Kim

Natalie Xu

VIOLA

Lyla Han, *principal*

Miono Quoit-Minematsu, *co-principal*

Brian Kim

Nicholas To

Peter Lee

Ethan Bei

Madelyn Fu

Annabelle Jin

Joanne Chen

Olivia Guo

Peyton Tan

Pyron Tan

Johan Sears

Ken Chung

CELLO

Verena Lo, *principal*

Anastasia Catanus, *co-principal*

Jaxon Yoon

Aiden Chew

Seojun Baek

Nash Wu

Erin Suh

Aiden Kim

Zachary Kim

Charlotte Yoh

Jeremy Lee

Kathryn Loutzenheiser

Alex Hwang

Cristian Santa Ana

DOUBLE BASS

Noa Stewart, *principal*

Claire Holben, *co-principal*

Parker Brueggeman

Jacelle Penano

Sartaj Benipal

Sydney 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

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

Pacifica 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. 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



Erin Liao, 18, is a senior at Eleanor Roosevelt High School. She began her journey with the flute at age 10 and currently studies with Professor Catherine Ransom Karoly. Liao has

won several national and international honors and awards including the 2026 National Youth Orchestra Award (NYO-USA), the 2026 National YoungArts Competition Award as one of five flutists, Grand Prize Finalist in the 2026 Music Center Spotlight Program, and was a finalist in the 2025 NFA High School Soloist Competition. Additionally, she was accepted into the 2024 MusicForAll Honor Band of America and won 1st prize in the 2022 American Protégé International

Woodwinds and Brass Competition. Liao was named a Fellow of the From the Top Learning and Media Lab in 2025, through which she had the opportunity to speak about music and neuroscience on National Public Radio. In 2024, Erin has performed as a soloist with the Los Angeles Youth Philharmonic, playing the Double Flute Concerto by Franz Doppler at Walt Disney Concert Hall. Over the past seven years, Erin has consistently earned principal positions in the All-State California and All-Southern California Honor Ensembles. Outside of her orchestral activities, Erin serves as the principal flute of the ERHS Wind Ensemble and regularly performs chamber music for annual festivals.

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

Alistair Coleman (b. 1998) studied at the Curtis Institute of Music and Juilliard. He is currently in the first year of his PhD program at Princeton University, where he is a recipient of the Roger Sessions Fellowship. Concurrently, Coleman is serving on the faculty at Curtis and also teaches at Hidden Valley's Emerging Composers Intensive in Northern California.



Coleman's music has earned both critical and popular acclaim. He is currently serving as composer in residence of Young Concert Artists, and has seen his music performed in Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, and internationally. In frequent demand, Coleman has been commissioned to write for Opera Philadelphia, the Kansas City Symphony, and many other ensembles. His music has won many prestigious awards, including from Juilliard, Curtis, the American Composers Forum, and the National Young Arts Foundation. Coleman founded the composition mentorship program at Opportunity Music Project, a tuition-free music education program in New York City which seeks to promote diversity.

Written for the Curtis Symphony Orchestra, **Opalescent** (2021) was originally coupled with choreography. In the original staged version, dancers reacted to the musical colors of the work which were inspired by opal, a beautiful, iridescent gemstone. In

the composer's own words, the piece "channel surfs between the three different types of opals: common, precious, and fire; and their individual reactions to light." The piece premiered in spring 2021 and was published in 2022.

The music of French composer **Georges Hüe** (1858-1948) is today unjustly neglected. As a youth, Hüe had a positive relationship with the famed opera composer Charles Gounod, who encouraged him to continue his musical pursuits. Hüe went on to study composition, counterpoint, and organ in Paris. In 1879 he won the Prix de Rome, a prestigious annual award established by the French government which sponsored the nation's most talented art and composition students to study in Rome for three years. The award often launched its recipients' artistic careers; it appears in the biographies of many French composers of note, including Berlioz, Gounod, Bizet, and Debussy.



Hüe composed predominantly vocal music, including at least ten operas and dozens of songs. His music often takes inspiration from fairy tales. Hüe wrote in a largely traditional musical language, although beginning in the 1910s he became influenced by

some of the more modern musical techniques being developed by Debussy and Ravel. Later in his career, Hûe embarked on extensive travels to the Far East, composing several works based on Chinese and Japanese music he encountered.

Fantasy for Flute and Orchestra was originally written in 1913 for flute and piano; Hûe orchestrated the work in 1923. The piece features the mysterious, fairy tale-like qualities in keeping with much of the composer's vocal and operatic music. Expertly crafted, the piece captures the full range of the flute's expressive capabilities.

Ho Sen Ken Xiao (b. 2010) is a violinist and composer currently studying at the Orange County School of the Arts (OCSA). As a composer, he is a fellow of the LA Philharmonic Composer Fellowship and a private student of Yiming Wu. He has also received instruction from other composers including Andrew Norman, Thomas Kotcheff, and Derrick Skye. Ho Sen Ken is the alternate apprentice composer for NYO-USA 2026 and won third place in the International Eduards Balsys Composer Competition, which included the premiere of "In Pieces" for flute, marimba, and piano. He also received 1st prize at MusicTeacherGifts.com's 13th Annual Youth Music Composition Competition.



driftwoods is the skeletal, weathered remains of a tree. It is stripped of bark and softened by time, water, and motion. From once being rigid and rooted, it becomes lighter and quieter, marked by cracks, hollows, and scars that record its passage through time. Although this piece represents driftwood as an object, it is more a parallel to what can be people.

Like driftwood, the orchestra is shaped into smoother contours, its material reduced to a single sound world and three central intervals: the perfect fourth, tritone, and perfect fifth, which form the spine of the work. The intervals are used in a purist context, perfect intervals creating a flat and consonant stillness, while the tritone adds colors of tension. These intervals continually reappear in different melodies, instrumentations, and time.

The work begins with a white backdrop, gradually colored by murmurs suggestive of the sea and the lifelessness of the wood. As the music unfolds, additional shades emerge, revealing the imperfect and fractured character of the driftwood. The piece then builds toward a brief climax that gestures

toward what once was, before subsiding back into the same hollow stillness from which it began. (*Notes courtesy of the composer.*)

A native of Alamos, Sonora, in the northwestern part of Mexico, **Arturo Márquez** (b. 1950) studied piano, violin, trombone, and theory at the Mexican national conservatory. He led a municipal band in Mexico, studied in Paris (1980-1982), and received a Fulbright fellowship to attend CalArts where he received a master's degree in composition (1990).



Marquez has maintained an interest in interdisciplinary works combining theatre, photography, and music, and his works frequently use new sonic possibilities for the orchestra. While he wrote avant-garde music earlier in his career, his later music has displayed a predilection for accessibility and incorporates popular music styles. In addition to concert music, Marquez has also composed the music for numerous films. He composed **Danzon 2** in 1994.

The son of Jewish immigrants from Lithuania, **Aaron Copland** (1900-1990) was one of America's most iconic composers. Born in Brooklyn, Copland grew up in New York City and lived above his family's department store. As a child he helped his parents run it; he studied the basics of piano from his older sister. He began improvising at age seven, started composing at age 12, and took formal piano lessons from age 13 to 17. Unlike most twentieth-century composers, Copland never went to university or conservatory; instead, he continued studying piano and composition privately and supplemented his musical education by attending as many concerts as possible.



Copland continued his musical education in Paris during the 1920s, where he studied with Nadia Boulanger, teacher of many of the great American composers of the twentieth century. From an early age, he had been fascinated by jazz and popular music; his studies in France introduced him to the latest in European modernism. Boulanger's concept of "la grande ligne"—the idea that every musical composition must follow an indisputable line of logical development from the first measure to the very end—proved highly influential to the young

composer.

By the time he returned home in 1924, Copland was composing highly experimental music that combined urban jazz influences with neoclassical elements of his hero Stravinsky. Critics described his music of this period as “edgy” and “nervous.” In contrast to the career trajectories of most twentieth-century composers, particularly in America, Copland never held a full-time university position, although he taught some classes at the New School of Social Research and at Harvard. Preferring to maintain his artistic independence at all costs, he was nearing destitution and survived on the generosity of friends and through several modest grants.

Having long maintained an interest in Socialist ideas, Copland decided to use his musical talents to help raise the national spirits after seeing the economic suffering around him during the 1930s. Enthralled by Latin American socialism, Copland visited Mexico and expressed a sincere desire to visit the Soviet Union. His musical style changed decisively at this time, abandoning the jazzy modernisms he had cultivated in the 1920s and turning toward a simplified style accessible to the common people. One of the most important aspects of this change was an embrace of American folk music elements.

Although the postwar period saw a period of prolonged hostility between the United States and the Soviet Union, during the 1930s Copland did not see any tension between Communism and American society. Quite the contrary, he, like many in American Socialist circles, emphasized the compatibility between the two. In fact, this idea was highlighted by the American Communist Party, which instructed its artists and composers to incorporate specifically American themes in their works in order to emphasize this compatibility. Composers like Copland, Marc Blitzstein, and others wrote thoroughly American works designed to lift people's mood, raise attention to important social issues, and publicly proclaim their allegiance as Socialists to American culture and values.

Yet the turn to Americana during the 1930s and 1940s was not solely a matter of Socialist party politics; rather, it was an important aspect of the general mood of the country at the time. Spurred on by the WPA and other New Deal programs, many artists who received government assistance felt a renewed sense of social consciousness. Because they were supported by society, many felt a desire to reach wider audiences. Like Copland, many artists wished to use their prodigious talents to help improve the

national morale at a time of profound national crisis brought on by the Great Depression and the Second World War.

Abandoning his musical style from the 1920s, Copland settled on a new one that could better achieve the social aims he had for his music. Copland's music from this time is simplistic, but not simple. It uses very sophisticated harmonies and counterpoint, but does so using light, transparent textures in a way that is easy to understand rather than off-putting. Facing a time of national tragedy and suffering, Copland, like many other American artists, reached into American history and legends to comfort and heal an ailing nation.

Not to be understated is the fact that like many other American Jews and second-generation immigrants, Copland felt great patriotic pride in his country. Thus, the American themes and folk elements in his music simultaneously represent a commitment to his social ideals, a deep-seated impulse to help his nation and compatriots, and the profound desire to assimilate into mainstream American culture common to immigrant communities. His music is a deep personal statement of identity, detailing his thoughts on what it meant to be American, a Jew, and a member of the international community.

By the late 1940s Copland had gained a reputation as the greatest living composer in America. He continued writing music well into the postwar era, turning away from folk music and returning to a more modernist orientation in the 1960s. He withdrew from composing in the early 1970s but remained an important force in American musical life until shortly before his death in 1990.

Throughout his career, Copland held a fascination with large public venues, which modeled the themes of community so frequently present in his music. Many of his most significant works were for the stage, and he wrote significant amounts of music for the silver screen, radio, and television. Some of Copland's most famous compositions are ballets; he used two famous ballet scores *Billy the Kid* (1938) and *Rodeo* (1942) as the primary vehicle for his forays into folk Americana.

Copland wrote the ballet *Appalachian Spring* for choreographer and modern dancer Martha Graham (1894–1991). A figure of renown in American dance circles, Graham was fascinated with the project of creating a ballet with “an American theme.” Her work was commissioned by the Coolidge Foundation, which was devoted to fostering an American voice in music, culture, and the arts. Graham approached

Copland with her idea in 1942; he composed the score in the following two years. The piece premiered at the Coolidge Auditorium of the Library of Congress in Washington, DC in 1944.

In total, four authorized versions of work exist. The ballet was originally written for a thirteen-instrument chamber orchestra, in large part due to logistical considerations of a space that was unable to accommodate a full orchestra. In 1945, a year after the piece's premiere, Copland was commissioned to write an orchestral suite from the ballet by Artur Rodzinski, music director of the New York Philharmonic. This orchestral suite version preserves most of the ballet's music, with the exception of a few sections where the primary interest had been the action on stage. In 1954, Copland reorchestrated the complete ballet for full orchestra; in 1972 he reworked the 1945 orchestral suite version into the original chamber ensemble.

The story of the ballet follows a young farm couple about to marry and establish a pioneer home in early nineteenth-century Pennsylvania. The ballet follows the course of a single day in the community. After dawn breaks, the preacher delivers a sermon, witnessed by an older pioneer woman (portrayed by Martha Graham herself in the original version). The young couple is introduced, and their wedding is depicted. The work is a psychological narrative of the four main characters as their lives are interwoven together with the community of followers. It represents the individual and communal response to the challenges of forging a home in a new land, responding to the trials of life, and coming out spiritually revitalized.

The finale of Copland's score quotes the song "Simple Gifts," a "dancing song" composed in 1848 by Joseph Brackett (1797-1882) for use in the Shaker community of Alfred, Maine. Founded in eighteenth-century England by Ann Lee (1736-1784), the Shakers emigrated to the American colonies on the eve of the Revolution in 1774. A religious order formally named "Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing," the Shakers were devoted to simple living and worship of God through vigorous dancing in order to achieving "Christian perfection" in this world. At their height in the 1840s, there were approximately twenty Shaker communities in the United States, from

Maine to Indiana. Although their numbers declined significantly after the Civil War, in fact the group still exists—a single Shaker community survives to the present day in Maine, with a population of 2.

The Shakers produced approximately 10,000 melodies for their worship and community devotions. "Simple Gifts," by far the most famous of these, was published in the book *The Gift to be Simple: Songs, Dances and Rituals of the American Shakers* by Edward Deming Andrews, where Copland first encountered it. The song's original text reads:

*'Tis the gift to be simple, 'tis the gift to be free
'Tis the gift to come down where we ought to be,
And when we find ourselves in the place just right,
'Twill be in the valley of love and delight.
When true simplicity is gained,
To bow and to bend we shan't be ashamed,
To turn, turn will be our delight,
Till by turning, turning we come 'round right.*

Although many critics, listeners, and even Copland himself have noted how well his music portrays the Appalachian Mountains, Copland had no way of knowing that the ballet he was writing would specifically be about this area. As he himself put it, "I gave voice to that region without knowing I was giving voice to it." The work's title was suggested by Martha Graham after Copland finished composing the music. Her title was inspired by a passage from the poem "The Dance," a section of the epic poem *The Bridge* (1930) by esteemed modernist American poet Hart Crane (1899-1932); the word "spring" refers to water, not the season.

In any of its versions, the work is an optimistic, idyllic vision of the American heartland. Conceived during a time of national emergency, it points the way to a communal future of peace and spiritual rejuvenation.

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.