

2025-26 Hal & Jeanette Segerstrom
Family Foundation Classical Series

TCHAIKOVSKY'S SWAN LAKE

Preview Talk at 7 p.m.
KUSC midday host Alan Chapman
Thursday, December 4, 2025 @ 8 p.m.
Friday, December 5, 2025 @ 8 p.m.
Saturday, December 6, 2025 @ 8 p.m.

Tianyi Lu, conductor
Alexandra Dariescu, piano
Pacific Symphony

CASSANDRA MILLER *Swim—U.S. Premiere*

RAVEL Piano Concerto in G Major
Allegramente
Adagio assai
Presto
Alexandra Dariescu, piano

—INTERMISSION—

TCHAIKOVSKY Suite from *Swan Lake*
Scène
Valse
Danse des Cygnes
Scène
Czardas - Danse Hongroise
Danse Russe
Danse Espagnol
Danse Napolitaine
Scène
Finale

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

The 2025-26 season piano soloists are generously
sponsored by The Michelle F. Rohé Fund



ABOUT THE CONDUCTOR

Tianyi Lu, conductor



Internationally recognized for her thrilling energy on the podium, deeply creative interpretation, and open-hearted leadership, Chinese-born New Zealander Tianyi Lu collaborates with leading orchestras and opera houses around the world. Her work is driven by an ethos of empowerment, connection,

and compassion through music. After winning first prize in 2020 at both the Sir Georg Solti International Conductors' Competition and the International Conducting Competition "Guido Cantelli" in Italy, Lu was appointed conductor-in-residence with the Stavanger Symphony Orchestra in Norway, a position she held until the end of the 2023–24 season.

Highlights include Lu's BBC Proms debut with the BBC Symphony Orchestra and Sol Gabetta, and performances with the New York Philharmonic, Montreal Symphony, London Philharmonic, Philharmonia Orchestra, The Hallé Manchester, MDR-Sinfonieorchester, Orchestre National de Lyon, Helsinki Philharmonic, San Diego Symphony, Orquesta Sinfónica de Madrid, Orchestre de Chambre de Lausanne, and Sydney Symphony. A former Dudamel Fellow, she made her Hollywood Bowl debut with the Los Angeles Philharmonic in 2021 and returned for her Walt Disney Concert Hall debut in 2023. Operatic engagements include *Rigoletto* at Aalto-Musiktheater Essen and the 2023 world premiere of *Marie & Pierre* at Theater Basel.

In the 2025–26 season, Lu makes debuts with the San Francisco Symphony, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, National Symphony Orchestra Washington, New World Symphony, Orchestre Philharmonique de Monte-Carlo, Norwegian Radio Orchestra, Utah Symphony, Tiroler Symphonieorchester Innsbruck, Athens State Orchestra, and Bochumer Symphoniker. She also embarks on a touring debut in Belgium with the Orchestre National de Belgique and returns to the Residentie Orkest Den Haag, City of Birmingham Symphony, Lahti Symphony, and Pacific Symphony.

Lu is deeply committed to fostering diversity, equity, inclusion, and empathy through the arts. She serves on the board of directors of the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama and as an artist ambassador for Opera for Peace. Her outreach work includes guest speaking for London Marathon Events and the "Do More Good" podcast, conducting "Ears Wide Open" concerts with the Melbourne Symphony, and appearing on Welsh National Opera's podcast *The O Word*. Lu completed her Master of Music in orchestral conducting with distinction at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama in 2015, studying under David Jones. She has assisted or participated in master classes with Sir Andrew Davis and Xian Zhang (Melbourne Symphony Orchestra), Daniele Gatti (Concertgebouworkest), and Bernard Haitink (Lucerne Festival Orchestra). An alumna of the Hart Institute for Women Conductors at The Dallas Opera, Lu's mentors include Sian Edwards, Carlo Rizzi, Neeme Järvi, Alexander Polianichko, Kenneth Kiesler, Carlo Montanaro, and Alice Farnham.



ABOUT THE ARTIST

Alexandra Dariescu, piano



Alexandra Dariescu, creator of *The Nutcracker and I*, is a trailblazing pianist whose fearless curiosity and innovative spirit have earned her international acclaim. Continuing her exceptional journey, Dariescu achieves gender equality in her concerto programming for the third

consecutive season, championing inclusion and diversity. In demand worldwide, she has performed with eminent orchestras such as the London Philharmonic, Orchestre National de France, Oslo Philharmonic, and Sydney Symphony, under conductors including Adam Fischer, Cristian Măcelaru, Alain Altinoglu, Fabien Gabel, Jun Märkl, Vasily Petrenko, Ryan Bancroft, James Gaffigan, and JoAnn Falletta.

In the 2023–24 season, Dariescu opened the BBC Symphony Orchestra's season with Sakari Oramo at the Barbican Centre, giving the U.K. premiere of Dora Pejačević's *Phantasie* concertante. In North America, she made debuts with the Indianapolis Symphony (Nadia Boulanger) and Vancouver Symphony (Ravel G major), and returned to the Detroit Symphony for the world premiere of James Lee III's *Shades of Unbroken Dreams*, written for her and co-commissioned by the BBC Philharmonic and Orlando Philharmonic. Additional highlights include performances with the Houston, Copenhagen, Mainz, Trondheim, and Wuppertal symphonies, and her continued appearances at the George Enescu Festival. This season marks the seventh year of her acclaimed production *The Nutcracker and I*, touring the U.K., Germany, Belgium, and China.

In 2022, Dariescu made the world premiere recording of Leokadiya Kashperova's Piano Concerto (1900) with the BBC Symphony Orchestra for BBC Radio 3's *Composer of the Week*. Her advocacy for overlooked composers has led to important revivals, including works by Nadia Boulanger, George Enescu, Alberto Ginastera, and Dora Pejačević.

Since premiering *The Nutcracker and I* in 2017—an original multimedia production combining piano, dance, and animation—Dariescu has brought her vision of accessibility in classical music to audiences across Europe, Australia, China, the Emirates, and the U.S.

She has released eight albums to critical acclaim, including her recent Decca recording with Angela Gheorghiu, the *Trilogy of Complete Preludes* (Champs Hill Records), Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1 with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (Signum Records), and *The Nutcracker and I* audiobook.

Mentored by Sir Andrés Schiff and Dame Imogen Cooper, Dariescu studied with Nelson Goerner, Alexander Melnikov, Dina Parakhina, and others, and was a laureate of the Verbier Festival Academy. She received the U.K.'s Women of the Future Award in Arts and Culture, the Order "Cultural Merit" (Knight) from the Romanian President, and honors including Cultural Ambassador of Romania, Officer of the Romanian Crown, and Young European Leader by Friends of Europe.

Dariescu is an associate member and professor of piano at the Royal Northern College of Music.



PROGRAM NOTES

Cassandra Miller

Born: 1976, Metchosin, BC, Canada

Swim



Composed: 2023

Premiered: Sep. 16, 2023, at Sage Gateshead in Gateshead, UK, with Dinis Sousa conducting the Royal Northern Sinfonia.

Most recent Pacific Symphony performance: This is a U.S. premiere by Pacific Symphony.

Instrumentation: Two flutes, two

oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, and strings.

Approximate duration: 17 minutes.

Based in London, Cassandra Miller is a Canadian-British composer whose composition methods incorporate a unique practice of meditation-based uncontrolled, spontaneous singing. She uses these vocal techniques together with creative transcription processes to transform pre-existing musical sources (from both within and outside the classical tradition), to magnify their expressive, personal, or fragile qualities.

"Music this uncalculatedly beautiful leaves you almost desperate with gratitude", wrote Alex Ross of her work in *The New Yorker*. Miller's *Duet for Cello and Orchestra* was hailed as one of the 'best classical music works of the 21st-century' by *The Guardian*. *Round*, composed for the Toronto Symphony Orchestra and André de Ridder, was premiered in 2016. Other large-scale pieces include *A Large House* for string orchestra and percussion, which was premiered at Ostrava Days in 2009 by the Janáček Philharmonic and Peter Rundel, and which has since enjoyed performances by the Oslo Philharmonic as part of Only Connect Festival, and the Zipangu Ensemble at Angelica Festival (Bologna), a performance that was later released on disc.

Miller enjoys a particularly close relationship with Quatuor Bozzini, for whom she wrote several pieces including *Warblework* and *About Bach*. The latter was awarded the 2016 Jules-Léger Prize for New Chamber Music. Other prizes include one of the Paul Hamlyn Foundation's 2021 Awards for Artists and a second Jules-Léger Prize for Bel Canto in 2011.

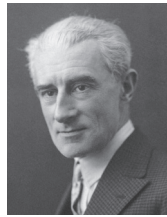


Maurice Ravel

Born: Mar. 7, 1875, in Ciboure, France

Died: Dec. 28, 1937, in Paris

Piano Concerto in G Major



Composed: 1929-32

Premiered: Jan. 14, 1932, at the Salle Pleyel in Paris with soloist Marguerite Long and the composer conducting the Orchestre Lamoureux.

Most recent Pacific Symphony performance: Feb. 9, 2020, in the Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert

Hall with Carl St. Clair conducting and Alain Lefèvre as soloist.

Instrumentation: Two flutes including piccolo, two oboes including English horn, two clarinets including bass clarinet and e-flat clarinet, two bassoons, two horns, one trumpet, one trombone, timpani, percussion, harp, and strings, and solo piano.

Approximate duration: 23 minutes.

Despite his status as a conscientious objector, Maurice Ravel's service as an ambulance driver during World War I exposed him to some of the war's worst horrors. The impact of these traumatic experiences stayed with him for the rest of his life, and though he never spoke of them, three of his musical masterworks did: his two piano concertos, and his opera *L'enfant et les sortilèges*, in which a child's desperate cry for his mother reflects the collective cry of Europe engulfed by terror.

Ravel's admirers had long been waiting for him to compose a piano concerto. When he finally took up the form he was in his mid-50s (the year was 1929), and he worked on two at once: the G-Major, and one in D-Major for the left hand alone, composed for his friend Paul Wittgenstein, a pianist who had lost his right arm in battle during World War I. (The embittered Wittgenstein rejected the work.) Though Ravel began the G-Major first, it took longer to complete, and we can hear it as a reaffirmation of the joy and light that music brings to the darkest times. These concertos were among the last compositions Ravel ever completed.

Had things gone as planned, Ravel himself would have played the premiere of the G Major concerto; he intended it to serve as the showpiece of an international tour that could have secured his retirement. An extensive itinerary was mapped out for destinations as distant as Japan, but his failing health forced its cancellation. Instead, Ravel conducted the orchestra and chose Mme. Marguerite Long as soloist.

The concerto sparkles with joyous energy and a sense of spontaneity, but it is far from casual in its sourcing and craftsmanship. Ravel scholars hear an olio of dazzling diversity in it: Basque and Spanish melodies, jazz riffs, the influences of Mozart and Saint-Saëns, and even his childhood fascination with mechanical toys. Ravel himself claimed that a major inspiration for the work came to him aboard English trains as he traveled to Oxford University in 1928 to receive an honorary doctorate. Is that the rhythmic impetus we hear in the final

movement, with its moto perpetuo pushing forward like a locomotive? Here is what he told a reporter for the *London Daily Telegraph* after both piano concertos were completed:

It was an interesting experience to conceive and realize the two concertos at the same time. The [G-Major]...is a concerto in the strict sense, written in the spirit of Mozart and Saint-Saëns. I believe that a concerto can be both gay and brilliant without necessarily being profound or aiming at dramatic effects. It has been said that the concertos of some great classical composers, far from being written for the piano, have been written against it...

While the charge of writing "against the instrument" has been aimed at a number of great composers (notably Beethoven), Ravel seems to have been targeting Brahms, whose piano concertos struck him as self-consciously profound utterances that were arduous both to play and to hear. The G-Major concerto offers the opposite kind of enjoyment: no less sophisticated or intricate in its craft, no less rewarding to the listener, but far lighter in weight.

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Born: May 7, 1840, in Votkinsk, Russia

Died: Oct. 16, 1893, in St. Petersburg, Russia

Suite from *Swan Lake*



Composed: 1875-76

Premiered: Mar. 4, 1877, at the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow, with its orchestra conducted by Julius Reisinger.

Most recent Pacific Symphony

performance: July 12, 2025, at the Charles Krug Winery in Napa, CA, with

Gavriel Heine conducting.

Instrumentation: Three flutes including piccolo, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, four trumpets, three trombones, one tuba, timpani, percussion, harp, and strings.

Approximate duration: 39 minutes.

Some things seem never to change. Take, for example, the challenge of building a career as a composer. In Tchaikovsky's day, as now, receiving a commission could be the best news that a composer could possibly receive, but executing it could be the worst possible headache. Today, it might be fulfilling a high-profile commission; in 19th-century Russia, it was writing for the ballet.

In receiving the commission for *Swan Lake* in 1875, Tchaikovsky was hemmed in by numbers. He was expected to cue a dramatic leap or precisely time a mimed sequence to fit the dancers' needs and limits. His rhythms and tempos had to conform to the demands of choreographic convention, and his seemingly inexhaustible gift for melodic invention was tailored to fit dance steps. But in listening to the movements of the Suite from *Swan Lake*, you won't detect any of these constraints. It is all pure music and pure Tchaikovsky, endlessly

tuneful and thrillingly danceable. It took him about a year and a half to complete the score, and dance rehearsals—which began before he was finished—took eleven months.

Like many 19th-century story ballets, *Swan Lake* takes place in a world of enchanted forests and palaces; it is populated by nobly born humans, half-human spirits, and villains with magical powers, all caught between two worlds that are far removed from everyday reality. For Tchaikovsky, the challenge was to create music that combines with the actions of wordless dancer-actors and stage designers to transform this realm of airy fantasy into a theatrical experience of authentic human emotion and conflict. Most of all, he had to frame these actions with music that would be dramatically compelling as stage accompaniment, yet worthy of performance on its own.

Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* foregrounds the poetic enchantment of classical dance against a background of mysterious, dark magic at play—forces in constant tension with romantic yearning. His three great ballet scores embody these layered emotions as none had before them, deepening the possibilities of dance as theater and achieving a popularity that endures to this day. Without dancers and sets, the Suite from *Swan Lake* suggests not a suite of dance movements, but a deeply atmospheric musical narrative depicting magic, menace, sacrifice, and transfiguration.

As staged drama, *Swan Lake* cloaks a complex and deeply human tale of ill-fated romance in a scenario of enchantment and magic. At its core is the double-role of Odette, a princess who has been transformed into a white swan, and Odile, the black swan who is her alter ego. Of course, there is a prince, Siegfried, whose fate is sealed when he mistakes Odile for Odette. Such worldly goings-on provide an ideal scenario for the otherworldly beauty of ballet, but in *Swan Lake* they also offer a serious exploration of timeless ideas: the duality of human nature, the lure of what's dark and unknown, the conflict between civic duty and romantic obsession. Ultimately, though love and duty both have staked claims on the hapless Prince Siegfried, love prevails. And the evil enchanter Baron von Rothbart, whose magic makes it all happen? He wins the battles, but not the war.

More so than the symphonies, concertos, or tone poems, the ballets are a spectacular showcase for Tchaikovsky the melodist. In them we hear a succession of contrasting melodies, each one a self-contained solo dance, or "variation"—in this case, a reference to the showy choreography rather than the music. In love stories such as *The Sleeping Beauty* and *Swan Lake*, most variations are performed by suitors; in *The Nutcracker*, they are performed by a succession of fabulous, imported toys brought to enchanted life by Clara's mysterious uncle Drosselmeyer.

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