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# A DAY IN THE ALPS

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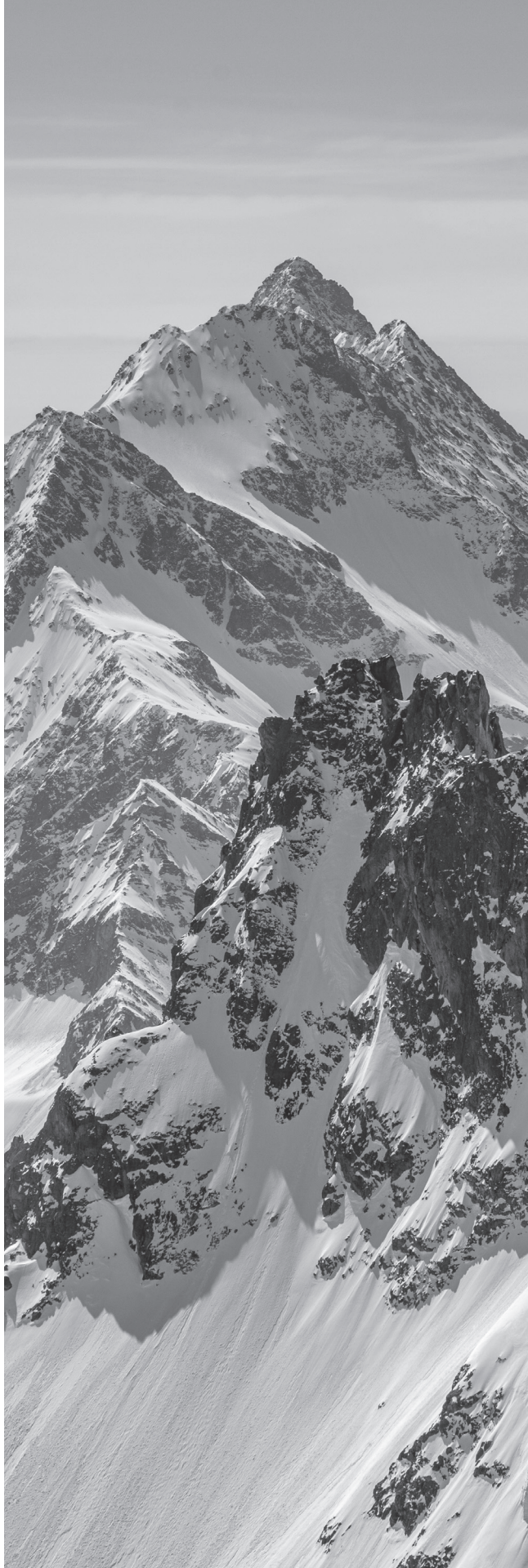
Sunday, Jan. 12, 2025 @ 3 p.m.

Carl St.Clair, conductor  
Tobias Melle, graphic artist  
Pacific Symphony

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**STRAUSS** *Alpine Symphony, Op. 64*  
*Nacht (Night)*  
*Sonnenaufgang (Sunrise)*  
*Der Anstieg (The Ascent)*  
*Eintritt in den Wald (Entering the Forest)*  
*Wanderung neben dem Bache*  
*(Wandering near the Stream)*  
*Am Wasserfall (At the Waterfall)*  
*Erscheinung (Apparition)*  
*Auf blumige Wiesen (On Blooming Meadows)*  
*Auf der Alm (On the Alpine Pasture)*  
*Durch Dickicht und Gestrüpp auf Irrwegen*  
*(Going Astray in Thicket and Underbrush)*  
*Auf dem Gletscher (On the Glacier)*  
*Gefahrvolle Augenblicke*  
*(Dangerous Moments)*  
*Auf dem Gipfel (At the Summit)*  
*Vision (View)*  
*Nebel steigen auf (Fog Arises)*  
*Die Sonne verdüstert sich allmählich*  
*(The Sun Gradually Darkens)*  
*Elegie (Elegy)*  
*Stille vor dem Sturm (Calm Before the Storm)*  
*Gewitter und Sturm (Thunder and Storm)*  
*Sonnenuntergang (Sunset)*  
*Ausklang (Vanishing Sound)*  
*Nacht (Night)*

Visuals by Tobias Melle



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

# PROGRAM NOTES

Richard Strauss

## ***Alpine Symphony*, Trv 233, Op.64**

**Born:** Jun. 11, 1864 in Munich, Kingdom of Bavaria

**Died:** Sep. 8, 1949 in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Bavaria, West Germany

**Composed:** Nov. 1, 1914 – Feb. 8, 1915

**Premiered:** Oct. 28, 1915 with the composer conducting the Dresden Hofkapelle in Berlin

**Most recent Pacific Symphony performance:** May 21, 2016, in the Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall with Carl St.Clair conducting

**Instrumentation:** four flutes including piccolo, four oboes including English horn, four clarinets including bass clarinet and e-flat clarinet, four bassoons including contrabassoon, twelve horns, four trumpets, six trombones, two tubas, two timpani, percussion, two harps, celesta, organ, and strings

**Approximate duration:** 47 minutes



Born in 1864, at the end of Western classical music's Romantic era, Strauss had a long, productive life that began during America's Civil War and ended after World War II. Though he lived more than 50 years after Wagner and was at first prevented by his musician-father from hearing Wagner's music, he

later became obsessed by it. Many Strauss contemporaries thought Wagner's revolutionary ideas had been exhausted before Strauss came on the music scene, but Strauss found new life in them: By adding iridescent layers and unexpected modulations, he expanded old chords to make them do things no one thought they could do. His glittering compositions matched the emotional immediacy of Expressionist painters, but not their abstraction; that was the realm of atonal composers such as Schoenberg and Berg.

In his 20s, Strauss established himself as a dazzling musical technician with superb keyboard technique. His mastery of complex, inventive harmonies gave hope to listeners in the post-Brahmsian, post-Wagnerian world that there were still musical frontiers to explore without abandoning tonality altogether, as the Second Viennese School was doing under the leadership of Arnold Schoenberg and Alban Berg. Though *An Alpine Symphony* is not one of his earlier works, it has much in common with those he wrote when first making his reputation as a composer with lushly entertaining, highly programmatic tone poems. To many music historians and critics, *An Alpine Symphony* belongs in this category, rather than with other symphonies of its time, such as those of Strauss' friend Mahler.

Meditative ideas are given voice and mountain scenery comes to life as we listen to this "symphony"; in it we can sense memories of human experience and hear Strauss' innate theatricality. Strauss' best-known tone poems are indispensable concert staples today—*Don Quixote*, *Til Eulenspiegel*, *Don Juan*, and *Ein Heldenleben*, to name the most familiar. Strauss began *An Alpine Symphony* during this period, in 1899, but abandoned it for a while, though other equally ambitious tone poems were begun and finished. Also *sprach Zarathustra*, for example, is everywhere now, thanks to the movie *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Strauss was in his 30s and still pigeonholed as a "promising young composer" when he wrote these works, and was recognized as a pianist, conductor, and technical wizard of harmony. By the time he completed *An Alpine Symphony*, in 1915, he was an international celebrity and an acclaimed opera composer. *An Alpine Symphony* would prove to be the largest-scale non-vocal composition Strauss would create before his death.

A lifelong nature enthusiast who especially loved mountain climbing, Strauss was inspired to write *An Alpine Symphony* by a boyhood experience during which he and a group of friends became lost and got caught in a storm when returning from a mountain hike. He had originally envisioned an even larger-scale work that would eulogize Mahler as well as memorialize his childhood mountain adventure, but in the end created the single-movement *Alpine Symphony*. "Cinematic" is a word often used to describe it; the richness of Strauss' sonic tapestry suggests both the intensity of his boyhood experience and the monumentality of Alpine grandeur.

Though the *Alpine Symphony* is not written in true symphonic form, Strauss' skill with narrative was such that the music forms a perfect arc, starting and ending with night on the mountain. In between, Strauss gives us 20 additional melodic sections—he named them but did not number them—that make us feel we are right there on the mountain (the Heimgarten in southern Bavaria) with him. They range from sunrise, ascent, entry into the forest, wandering by the brook, at the waterfall, apparition, in flowering meadows, in a pasture, lost among thickets, on a glacier, a dangerous moment, at the summit, a vision, rising mists, the sun clouds over, elegy, calm before storm, a tempest, sunset, and evening calm.