

Sunday Matinee

SHELLEY CONDUCTS DUKAS AND STRAUSS

Sunday, Oct. 25, 2026 @ 3 p.m.

Alexander Shelley, conductor
Pacific Symphony

DUKAS

The Sorcerer's Apprentice

STRAUSS

Also sprach Zarathustra, Op. 30

Einleitung, oder Sonnenaufgang

(Introduction, or Sunrise)

Von den Hinterweltlern

(Of the Backworldsmen)

Von der großen Sehnsucht

(Of the Great Longing)

Von den Freuden und Leidenschaften

(Of Joys and Passions)

Das Grablied (The Song of the Grave)

Von der Wissenschaft

(Of Science and Learning)

Der Genesende (The Convalescent)

Das Tanzlied (The Dance-Song)

Nachtwandlerlied

(Song of the Night Wanderer)

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Program Book



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



PROGRAM NOTES

Paul Dukas

Born: Oct. 1, 1865 in Paris, France

Died: May 17, 1935 in Paris, France

The Sorcerer's Apprentice



Composed: 1897

Premiered: May 18, 1897 in Paris, with the composer conducting the Société Nationale de Musique.

Most recent Pacific Symphony performance: Aug. 9, 2014, at the Verizon Wireless Amphitheatre with Richard Kaufman conducting.

Instrumentation: Three flutes

including piccolo, two oboes, three clarinets including bass clarinet, four bassoons including contrabassoon, four horns, four trumpets, three trombones, timpani, percussion, harp, and strings.

Approximate duration: 12 minutes.

Paul Dukas figures prominently in the cultural history of his native France. The extensive scholarship on his life and achievements reveals him to be an astute critic and music editor as well as an important composer who was a contemporary of Maurice Ravel and Claude Debussy, both of whom were his friends and colleagues. Dukas was influential and had a major impact on the French music scene. But in the United States, his longer, more major works—such as his fascinating opera *La peri*—are not well-known. His reputation rests on a smaller, superbly crafted work that lasts scarcely a quarter of an hour: his beguilingly spooky tone poem *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* (*L'apprenti sorcier*). Walt Disney's brilliant animation of *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* inspired an improbable alliance with Disney, superstar conductor Leopold Stokowski, and Mickey Mouse in the 1940 film classic *Fantasia*. Mickey's memorable star turn as the apprentice earned him a congratulatory handshake with the live-action Maestro Stokowski in an early bit of movie magic. The rest is Hollywood history.

Despite its brevity, *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* fully demonstrates Dukas' skillful craftsmanship—particularly in his evocative use of orchestral color and texture, and in its harmonies, which were at the forefront of French innovation. The rhythm is unstoppably bouncy as the magic gets out of hand, but those chords! Are they major or minor? Dissonant or assonant? None of those, really, but symmetrical, constructed in uniform intervals. The result is a kind of controlled ambiguity that defines the mystery of the apprentice's predicament: in an attempt to escape his chores, he unleashes magical forces that could flood his village. How will he stop them?

Even if you haven't seen *Fantasia*, the music alone perfectly describes the arcing story line of this programmatic work, which starts serenely and ends where it started—but only after a hair-raising climax. The story is an international classic: In the Italian folk tale, the assistant to the wise old witch Strega Nona unleashes a flood of pasta! Wolfgang von Goethe's literary German version is *Der Zauberlehrling*.

Richard Strauss

Born: Jun. 11, 1864 in Munich, Germany

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

Also Sprach Zarathustra



Composed: 1896

Premiered: Nov. 27, 1896 in Frankfurt, with Strauss conducting.

Most recent Pacific Symphony performance: Apr. 13, 2019, with Jean-Marie Zeitouni conducting.

Instrumentation: Four flutes including piccolo, four oboes including English horn, four clarinets

including bass clarinet and e-flat clarinet, four bassoons including contrabassoon, six horns, four trumpets, three trombones, two tubas, timpani, percussion, two harps, organ, and strings.

Approximate duration: 33 minutes.

Strauss' tone poem *Also sprach Zarathustra* is inspired by the enigmatic philosophical work of the same title by German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche.

The work's central character, Zarathustra, serves as the voice of a series of philosophical reflections on humanity, nature, knowledge, and existence. Strauss translates these ideas into a richly expressive orchestral work, using vivid instrumental colors and dramatic contrasts to evoke a sense of cosmic scale, natural phenomena such as sunrise, and a range of human emotions, including yearning and joy.

The nine sections of Strauss' setting, played with only three major pauses, correspond to sections of Nietzsche's text. But Strauss' gift for the specifics of musical narrative are less relevant here than in a tone poem such as *Till Eulenspiegel*, with

its story-driven episodes. Zarathustra's furious orations are of limited interest today, but the mood-paintings Strauss drew from them are ravishing.

Strauss composed *Zarathustra* in 1896, when he was 31. But in 1968, two decades after his death, its place in the orchestral canon changed dramatically. That's when Stanley Kubrick included its introduction, an intensely dramatic rendering of a sunrise, in his film *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Suddenly, *Zarathustra* was everywhere, and still is.

The hyperdramatic opening of *Zarathustra* strikes many listeners as a finale, but it is actually a depiction of a beginning—and, in Kubrick's vision, appropriately profound to signal the dawn of homo sapiens' development as a questing, intelligent being. Strauss labeled the composition's nine sections as follows:

1. "Einleitung, oder Sonnenaufgang" (Introduction, or Sunrise)
2. "Von den Hinterweltlern" (Of the Backworldsmen)
3. "Von der großen Sehnsucht" (Of the Great Longing)
4. "Von den Freuden und Leidenschaften" (Of Joys and Passions)
5. "Das Grablied" (The Song of the Grave)
6. "Von der Wissenschaft" (Of Science and Learning)
7. "Der Genesende" (The Convalescent)
8. "Das Tanzlied" (The Dance Song)
9. "Nachtwandlerlied" (Song of the Night Wanderer)

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](#)



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