

GENEVA CONCERTS



presents

Symphor!a

THE ORCHESTRA OF CENTRAL NEW YORK

Lawrence Loh, conductor

Jon Nakamatsu, piano

Sunday 20 February 2022 • 3:00 p.m.
Smith Opera House

COMING NEXT

Friday, March 4, 2022
7:30 PM



Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra

François López-Ferrer, conductor
Olga Kern, piano

George GERSHWIN: *Cuban Overture*

George GERSHWIN: *Piano Concerto in F Major*

Gabriela Lena FRANK: *Leyendas: An Andean Walkabout*

Alberto GINASTERA: *Estancia: Four Dances*

Symphor!a

THE ORCHESTRA OF CENTRAL NEW YORK

Lawrence Loh, conductor
Jon Nakamatsu, piano

Samuel **COLERIDGE-TAYLOR**

Ballade in A minor, Op.64

Maurice **RAVEL**

Concerto in G Major for Piano and Orchestra

- I. Allegramente
- II. Adagio assai
- III. Presto

Jon Nakamatsu, piano

INTERMISSION

Sergei **RACHMANINOFF**

Symphony No. 3 in A minor, Op.44

- I. Lento - Allegro moderato
- II. Adagio ma non troppo
- III. Allegro

**This concert is made possible with generous financial
support from the Williams Family Foundation**

Lawrence Loh

Lawrence Loh, Music Director of Symphoria, was named Music Director of the West Virginia Symphony commencing in the 2017-18 season. Mr. Loh concluded his 12-year tenure as Music Director of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Philharmonic in 2017. Mr. Loh has had a decade-plus association with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra where he currently leads annual pops and other select programs.



Having a particular affinity for pops programming, Mr. Loh has been engaged for repeat performances with Chris Botti, Idina Menzel, Ann Hampton Callaway, the Texas Tenors and more. He has assisted John Williams on multiple occasions and conducted numerous sold-out John Williams tribute concerts. He is particularly adept at conducting concerts synchronizing live orchestral music with film, and he has led *Star Wars*, *Jaws*, *Jurassic Park*, *Pixar in Concert*, *Disney in Concert*, *The Wizard of Oz* and *Singin' in the Rain*, among other concert productions.

Mr. Loh is active as a guest conductor, both in the U.S. and abroad. In addition to annual concerts in Pittsburgh and Dallas, his recent engagements include the Boston Pops (Tanglewood); Detroit Symphony; San Diego Symphony; Seattle Symphony; Buffalo Philharmonic; and the Cathedral Choral Society at the Washington National Cathedral. In the summer of 2016, he made his debut at Tanglewood, conducting Shostakovich's 5th Symphony with the Boston University Tanglewood Institute Young Artists Orchestra, and returned in 2017 to conduct the Boston Pops.

Mr. Loh received his Artist Diploma in Orchestral Conducting from Yale, his Masters in Choral Conducting from Indiana University, and his BA and Certificate of Management Studies from the University of Rochester. Lawrence Loh was born in southern California of Korean parentage and raised in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. He and his wife Jennifer have a son, Charlie, and a daughter, Hilary.

Jon Nakamatsu

The distinguished American pianist Jon Nakamatsu, known internationally for the panache and elegance of his solo, concerto, and chamber performances, will be performing Ravel's Piano Concerto in G major.

Mr. Nakamatsu has become a favorite with audiences throughout the world. As a prolific recording artist, he has set to disc numerous seminal performances on the harmonia mundi label. In his review of Mr. Nakamatsu's recent performance of Saint-Saëns' Piano Concerto No. 2, Daniel J. Kushner writes in the Rochester *Democrat and Chronicle*: "Nakamatsu evinced brilliant musicianship. His tone and articulation sparkled and shimmered, while his use of dynamics and energy brought out the lifeblood of each and every phrase."

Mr. Nakamatsu has been an active guest soloist with leading orchestras throughout his career. He has collaborated with such esteemed conductors as Philippe Entremont, Raymond Leppard, Michael Tilson Thomas and Osmo Vänskä. His numerous summer engagements have included appearances at the Aspen, Tanglewood, Ravinia, Caramoor, Vail, Wolf Trap, and Britt festivals. In 1999, Mr. Nakamatsu performed at the White House at the special invitation of President and Mrs. Clinton.



A high school teacher of German with no formal conservatory training, Jon Nakamatsu's electrifying performance of Rachmaninoff's Third Piano Concerto won him the Gold Medal at the 1997 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition amidst a field of experienced competition warriors. Mr. Nakamatsu had studied privately with the late Marina Derryberry from the age of six. Mr. Nakamatsu is a graduate of Stanford University with a bachelor's degree in German Studies and a master's degree in Education.

Program Notes

Tonight's three composers—**Samuel Coleridge-Taylor** (1875–1912), **Maurice Ravel** (1875–1937), and **Sergei Rachmaninoff** (1873–1943)—were born less than three years apart. Today, of course, Ravel and Rachmaninoff are better known; but back in 1898, things were different. Rachmaninoff was reeling from the failure of his First Symphony, a failure so complete that he abandoned composing for years. Ravel was about to be kicked out of his composition class at the Conservatoire for failing fugue exams twice. Coleridge-Taylor, in contrast, was on an upward trajectory.

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor was born in 1875 in London to Alice Martin, an English woman, and Daniel Taylor, a Krio man from Sierra Leone who had studied medicine in the capital. Daniel Taylor returned to Africa without learning that Alice was pregnant. Alice Martin named her son Samuel Coleridge Taylor after the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

Taylor was brought up in Croydon, suburb of London. There were numerous musicians on his mother's side, and his grandfather played the violin. He started teaching it to Samuel when he was young. The boy's ability was obvious, and his grandfather paid for him to have violin lessons.

The extended family arranged for Taylor to study at the Royal College of Music, beginning at the age of 15. He changed from violin to composition, working under professor Charles Villiers Stanford.



After completing his degree, Taylor became a professional musician, soon being appointed a professor at the Crystal Palace School of Music; and conducting the orchestra at the Croydon Conservatoire. The young man later used the name "Samuel Coleridge-Taylor", with a

hyphen, said to be following a printer's typographical error.

By 1896, Coleridge-Taylor was already earning a reputation as a composer. He was helped by Edward Elgar, who had been asked to write a piece for the prestigious Three Choirs Festival. Since Elgar was over-committed, he recommended that the commission be directed to Coleridge-Taylor instead—a man he deemed the “cleverest” of the young British composers of the time. The resulting work, the **Ballade**, Op. 33, was a tremendous success, and the composer had reason to be confident of his future. And any confidence would have been justified: his choral work *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast*, unveiled just a few months later, was such a world-wide hit that, until the Second World War, it stood up to Handel's *Messiah* in terms of popularity.

The Ballade is not quite typical of Coleridge-Taylor. Many of his later works incorporated his Black heritage, as well as Native American elements. The Ballade, not surprisingly given its origins, is more solidly European in spirit. It's a touch sentimental in spots, but it's sentimentality with total conviction.

We don't know what trajectory Coleridge-Taylor would have followed if he had not died of pneumonia brought on by overwork. But we do know the artistic trajectories of Ravel and Rachmaninoff; and although the composers are in many ways polar opposites, their careers followed a similar route. As they grew older, both produced less; for many listeners, however, their work got better and better.

Ravel's 1930–31 **Concerto in G** is the next-to-last work he composed, and there's good reason for calling it a distillation of his art. Ravel is known as a cool, ironic, anti-romantic. Stravinsky dubbed him the “Swiss watchmaker.” As today's soloist Jon Nakamatsu puts it, “Every note in the Concerto is perfect.” Explicitly modeled on the classicism of Mozart and Saint-Saëns, it is, for the most part, both light and light-hearted. It begins with what sounds like a ringmaster's whip, ushering in a first movement of riotous circus activity—and the finale has a similar carnivalesque quality.

Both movements show the influence of jazz—but they're not *really* jazz. As Jon points out, “The material has roots in that genre,” but the

execution is another matter. He clarifies by comparing Ravel and Gershwin. Yes, the Ravel has a lot of Gershwin hallmarks (not surprising, since the two composers greatly admired each other). There are, for instance, the “incredible melodies and lazy harmonies that relax you.” Still, the differences between Gershwin and Ravel are significant, too. “In Gershwin, you have that possibility of moving things around, swinging things a bit.” Ravel has a more “disciplined element of structure and order,” and the intricacies of the connections between the piano and orchestra prevent you from taking the same “personal liberties.”

Yet there’s another dimension to the Ravel. Between these two jazz-infused outbursts of *joie-de-vivre* is a slow movement, written under the spell of the Mozart Clarinet Quintet, where Ravel is at his most romantically profound. Jon fell in love with the Ravel when a teenager—and it was this movement that did it, “one of the deepest and most soul-searching, haunting pieces in the repertoire.” Its high point is the ending, with an “incredible English horn solo,” which Ravel has scored in “a perfect way.” It’s also hard, even “scary,” to perform. “Sometimes, I think I’d rather hear it than do it; but when it works, it is really one of the best feelings, the most chamber-like moments, in all concertos. And how often do I get to play with an English horn?”



Rachmaninoff’s **Symphony No. 3**, written in 1935–36, thirty years after his popular Second, is also the composer’s next-to-last piece—and also a distillation of his art. Or, at least, a distillation of his late art. Rachmaninoff composed little after he left Russia in 1917, and what he did produce was increasingly lean and concentrated. This symphony is bound together by a dark, fatalistic motto theme, but it has the strong melodic pull that has made his earlier works so popular. The second theme of the first movement is especially luscious.

Yet if the Second is a vast canvas in oils, the Third has more of a mosaic quality. The basic units are smaller, the surface more often disrupted. Conductor Larry Loh points, for instance, to the complexity of the rhythms: “The first rhythmic section in the first movement is completely off kilter, so off-balance and unexpected.” The structure—three movements rather than the traditional four—runs against expectations, too. Rachmaninoff gets down to three movements by mashing two movements together: the second movement begins as a typical Rachmaninoff slow movement, but it turns into a slashing, sharp-edged Scherzo before it returns to its original mood. There’s something unusual in the nature of the melodies, too. The score is full of melodies with a flavor of Russian Orthodox chant. “That sets the tone for the mysterious nature of his melodies,” says Larry. “A lot of them expand outward from an economy of notes.” You’ll hear this technique toward the beginning of the piece. After the brief introduction, with the motto, we get the first theme, played on bassoons and oboes — “a compressed theme that expands outward, becoming so ravishing when the full strings come in.” Finally, the orchestration has a new level of imagination; Larry points to the unusual texture of the opening of the second movement, with its horn solo and harp. “It’s completely inventive.”



The result is the kind of piece Larry likes best: a work with a deeper meaning, rather than one that’s “superficial or written to be enjoyed in a very generic way.” The Rachmaninoff Third, like the central movement of the Ravel, is particularly impressive for what Larry calls its “later-in-life-perspective.” We’ve come a long way from the youthful confidence of the Coleridge-Taylor.

Peter J. Rabinowitz
with editing by Scott McKinney, Ford Weiskittel

Symphonia Musicians

VIOLIN I

Peter Rovit*
Concertmaster
Sonya Stith-Williams
Acting Concertmaster
Edgar Tumajyan
Noemi Miloradovic
Jeeyoung Park
Liviu Dobrota
Jonthan Hwang
Laura Smith
Joseph Morag

VIOLIN II

Amy Christian, Principal
Anita Gustafson,
Assistant Principal
Linda Carmona
Noah Fields
Sara Silva
Yurie Mitsuhashi
Stephanie Bonk

VIOLA

Arvilla Wendland
Acting Principal
Carol Sasson,
Acting Asst Principal
William Ford-Smith
Szu Hua (Mia) Chen
Victoria Miskolczy
Sean Flynn

CELLO

Heidi Hoffman,
Principal
Lindsay Groves,
Assistant Principal
Gregory Wood,
Assistant Principal

Walden Bass
George Macero
Lydia Parkington

BASS

Spencer Phillips,
Principal
Darryl Pugh*
Joshua Kerr
Marshall Henry

FLUTE

Xue Su, Principal
Kelly Covert

PICCOLO

Kelly Covert

OBOE

Eduardo Sepúlveda
Principal
Patricia Sharpe
Lilian Copeland

CLARINET

Allan Kolsky, Principal
John Friedrichs,
Assistant Principal
Jackie Gillette

BASS CLARINET

John Friedrichs

BASSOON

Rachel Koeth, Principal
Jessica Wooldridge King
Carl Gardner

CONTRABASSOON

Jessica Wooldridge King

HORN

Julie Bridge, Principal
Jon Garland,
Assistant Principal
Jonathan Dozois
Tyler Oglvie
Joel Ockerman

TRUMPET

John Raschella, Principal
Roy Smith
Kyle Jones

TROMBONE

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