

GENEVA CONCERTS



PRESENTS



THE SYRACUSE ORCHESTRA

JULIAN PLAYS TCHAIKOVSKY

Lawrence Loh, conductor
Julian Schwarz, cello

Sunday, March 10, 2024 • 3:00 p.m.
Smith Opera House

GENEVA CONCERTS

2023-2024 SEASON

Saturday, September 23, 2023 at 7:30 pm
DARRAH CARR DANCE

Saturday, November 4, 2023 at 7:30 pm
THE FISK JUBILEE SINGERS

Sunday, January 28, 2024 at 3:00 pm
SYMPHORIA!
Lawrence Loh, conductor; Rachel Barton Pine, violin

MAZZOLI *Sinfonia (for Orbiting Spheres)*
BRAHMS *Symphony No. 3 in F major, Op. 90*
VIVALDI *The Four Seasons*

Sunday, March 10, 2024 at 3:00 pm
SYMPHORIA!
Lawrence Loh, conductor; Julian Schwarz, cello

TCHAIKOVSKY *Variations on a Rococo Theme for Cello
and Orchestra, Op. 33*
MAHLER *Symphony No. 5 in C-sharp minor*

Performed at the Smith Opera House, 82 Seneca Street, Geneva, NY

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THE SYRACUSE ORCHESTRA

Lawrence Loh, Music Director

Julian Plays Tchaikovsky

PIOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY
Variations on a Rococo Theme, op.33, TH 57

PIOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY
Pezzo Capriccioso, op.62, TH 62
Julian Schwarz, cello

INTERMISSION

GUSTAV MAHLER
Symphony No.5 in C-sharp minor

PART I

1. Trauermarsch
2. Stürmisch bewegt

PART II

3. Scherzo: Kräftig, nicht zu schnell

PART III

4. Adagietto
5. Rondo-Finale

SYMPHORIA HAS A NEW NAME

MEET THE SYRACUSE ORCHESTRA!

The Syracuse Orchestra (previously known as Symphoria) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit formed in late 2012 as a musician-led cooperative orchestra, one of only two in the United States. This business model is designed to be artistically excellent, administratively lean, and financially resilient. The orchestra presents more than 50 concerts and reaches 100,000 people annually in venues ranging from libraries and health care facilities to public parks, churches, museums, and our home venue, the Crouse-Hinds Theater at the Civic Center.

The Syracuse Orchestra is composed of a diverse group of talented musicians hailing from all across the globe, bringing with them a breadth of musical talent that extends far beyond the Syracuse community.

JULIAN SCHWARZ, cello



PHOTO: MATT DINE

Julian Schwarz was born to a multigenerational musical family in 1991. Heralded from a young age as a cellist destined to rank among the greatest of the 21st century, Julian's powerful tone, effortless virtuosity, and extraordinarily large color palate are hallmarks of his style.

After making his concerto debut at the age of 11 with the Seattle Symphony and his father Gerard Schwarz on the podium, he made his US touring debut with the Moscow Radio Symphony Orchestra in 2010. Since being awarded first prize at the inaugural Schoenfeld International String Competition in 2013, he has led an active career as soloist, performing with the symphony orchestras of Annapolis, Boise, Buffalo, Charlotte, Columbus, Delaware, Des Moines, Hartford, Jacksonville, Louisville, Memphis, Modesto, Omaha, Puerto Rico, Richmond, Rochester, San Antonio, San Jose, Sarasota, Syracuse, Toledo, Tucson, Virginia, West Virginia, Wichita, and Winston-Salem, among others.

As a chamber musician, Mr. Schwarz performs extensively in recital with Marika Bournaki. In 2016 Schwarz & Bournaki were awarded first prize at the inaugural Boulder International Chamber Music Competition's "The Art of Duo", and subsequently embarked on an extensive 10-recital tour of China in March 2017. In fall 2023, the duo will give the World Premiere of a Double Concerto by Marcus Norris. Mr. Schwarz is a founding member of the New York based Frisson Ensemble (a mixed nonet of winds and strings), and the Mile-End Trio with violinist Jeff Multer and Ms. Bournaki. He performs frequently at Bargemusic in Brooklyn with violinist Mark Peskanov, on the Frankly Music Series in Milwaukee with violinist Frank Almond, as a member of the Palladium Chamber Players in St Petersburg FL, and has appeared at the Cape Cod Chamber Music Festival, Orcas Island Chamber Music Festival, and the Seattle Chamber Music Festival. In addition, he runs programming for the Tuesday evening chamber music series at the Eastern Music Festival in Greensboro, NC.

Julian Schwarz is an ardent supporter of new music, and has premiered concertos by Richard Danielpour and Samuel Jones. In the '17-'18 season, he gave the world premiere of Lowell Liebermann's first Cello Concerto with a consortium of six orchestras. Other premieres include recital works by Paul Frucht, Scott Ordway, Jonathan Cziner, Gavin Fraser, Alex Weiser, Ofer Ben-Amots, chamber music by Adolphus Hailstork, Henri Lazarof, Bright Sheng, and the US Premiere of Dobrinka Tabakova's Cello Concerto.

A devoted teacher, Mr. Schwarz serves as Associate Professor of Cello at Shenandoah Conservatory of Shenandoah University (Winchester, VA), and on the artist faculty of NYU's Steinhardt School of Music and the Eastern Music Festival.

Born in Seattle, WA, Mr. Schwarz studied at the Academy of Music Northwest and the Lakeside School. He continued to the Colburn School in Los Angeles under Ronald Leonard, and then moved to New York City to study with mentor Joel Krosnick at The Juilliard School (BM '14, MM '16). Other influential teachers include the late David Tonkonogui, the late Toby Saks, the late Lynn Harrell, Neal Cary, and chamber music mentors Andre Roy, Arnold Steinhardt, Jonathan Feldman, Toby Appel and Paul Coletti. Julian plays a Neapolitan cello made by Gennaro Gagliano in 1743 and American bows by Paul Martin Siefried.

LAWRENCE LOH, conductor



Described as bringing an *“artisan storyteller’s sensitivity... shaping passages with clarity and power via beautifully sculpted dynamics... revealing orchestral character not seen or heard before”* (Arts Knoxville) Lawrence Loh enjoys a dynamic career as a conductor of orchestras all over the world.

As Music Director of The Syracuse Orchestra, Lawrence Loh has helped to build a 21st century model of a modern symphony orchestra. *“The connection between the organization and its audience is one of the qualities that’s come to define Syracuse’s symphony as it wraps up its 10th season, a milestone that might have seemed impossible at the beginning.”* The Syracuse Orchestra and Lawrence Loh show that it is possible to create a *“new, more sustainable artistic institution from the ground up.”* (Syracuse.com).

From 2005-2015, he served as Assistant, Associate and Resident Conductor of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, and he returns annually to lead a wide variety of programs. Mr. Loh's previous positions include Music Director of the West Virginia Symphony Orchestra; Music Director of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Philharmonic; Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of the Syracuse Opera; Music Director of the Pittsburgh Youth Symphony Orchestra; Associate Conductor of the Dallas Symphony Orchestra; Associate Conductor of the Colorado Symphony Orchestra; and Music Director of the Denver Young Artists Orchestra.

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); Baltimore, Atlanta, National, Detroit, and Seattle Symphonies; Buffalo and Rochester Philharmonics, 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 he returned to Tanglewood in 2017 to conduct the Boston Pops.

As a self-described "Star Wars geek" and film music enthusiast, Loh has conducted numerous sold-out John Williams and film music tribute concerts. He has assisted John Williams on multiple occasions and has worked with a wide range of pops artists from Chris Botti and Ann Hampton Callaway to Jason Alexander and Idina Menzel. As one of the most requested conductors for conducting Films in Concert, Loh has led *Black Panther*, *Star Wars* (Episodes 4-6), *Jaws*, *Nightmare Before Christmas*, *Jurassic Park*, *Casablanca*, *The Wizard of Oz* and *Singin' in the Rain*, among others.

Lawrence Loh received his Artist Diploma in Orchestral Conducting from Yale, his Masters in Choral Conducting from Indiana University and his Bachelor of Arts 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. Follow him on Instagram @conductorlarryloh or visit his website, www.lawrenceloh.com

Program Notes

Symphony No. 5 of **Gustav Mahler** (1860–1911), is an homage to Bach, with its heavy reliance on counterpoint. Written in 1901-1902, the Fifth—even though its Bach inspiration looks further back, to the Baroque—launches the new century. Not that it's forbidding—it is an easily accessible piece. But it's surely wild: with its off-kilter phrasing, unexpected dissolves, odd changes in sonority, and swerves in direction, the Fifth promotes formal disruption to a central position in the music's aesthetic. In a letter to his wife Alma after the first rehearsal, Mahler described it as a "foaming, roaring, raging sea of sound" in which "new worlds are forever being engendered, only to crumble to ruins the moment after." The work's five movements are organized into three parts. Part One consists of a pair of hyper-intense movements. The first, introduced by a stark trumpet solo, is what conductor Larry Loh calls a "stately" funeral march. It's followed by a movement which might seem to be a tumultuous response. The opening is marked *Stürmisch bewegt. Mit grösster Vehemenz* (*Turbulently emotional. With the greatest vehemence*)—and it's a whirlwind of emotions, bursts of fury frequently interrupted by moments of sublime tenderness. The movement seems ready to conclude majestically as it builds to an affirmative chorale—but it suddenly collapses, and the movement lurches to its end, where, all energy spent, it expires with a single *pianissimo* tap on the timpani.

Part Two begins after a long pause. It is a single movement, but it's the symphony's longest, a *Scherzo*, with major obligato (solo) passages for the first-

desk horn. It brings a substantial shift in mood, as we move from minor to major. In fact, it brings multiple shifts in mood. As our principal horn Jon Garland says, “One of the most challenging things about the obligato part is the wide variety of expression that is required. The opening passages are quite strong, and then the music transitions to these extended lyrical passages. But not for long, because it then transitions back to those opening passages, but this time with a somewhat more athletic take.” The careening movement is brimming with waltzes and *ländler* (the waltz’s rural predecessor)—and since these dances often sound inebriated, the music stumbles in a way that throws you off balance. As Mahler put it, it’s “the very devil of a movement.”

Part Three of the symphony returns to the two-movement structure, although the relation between the two is different this time. First we get an *Adagietto*—Mahler’s most famous single movement, often played alone. In contrast to the other four movements, this one—which cuts the orchestra down to strings and harp—is patient and luminous. Yet despite its relative straightforwardness, it has, over the years, generated the most varied interpretive responses. Conductors have chosen dramatically divergent tempos: a normal performance lasts anywhere from seven to twelve minutes (an unusually wide range), and there are outliers that stretch out to a quarter of an hour. There are radical differences in affect, as well. On the one hand, it’s had an honored role at ceremonies of mourning, especially since Leonard Bernstein played it at Robert Kennedy’s funeral—after which Jacqueline Kennedy, in a letter to the conductor, described it as “this strange music of all the gods who were crying,” adding “[it] was everything in my heart, ... peace and pain and such drowning beauty.” Yet the work had a fundamentally different origin: it did not emerge from grief but was rather written, according to Mahler’s good friend Willem Mengelberg, as a love letter to Alma. Viewed from this perspective, it reflects not only Mahler’s longing, but also premonitions of the anguish that came to characterize their difficult marriage. For Larry, it’s definitely a love letter, but “it is a beautiful and contemplative work that could be taken in many different ways other than what was intended.” As for tempo, says Larry, “finding the right tempo is difficult. You have to find that balance of stillness, but also enough direction, so that you can take in the phrases.”

“Of course, it’s always special to listen to the very beautiful *Adagietto* movement,” adds Jon, “but for the first horn, it’s particularly special because you are also simultaneously thinking quite a bit about playing the first note of the fifth movement.” That upbeat movement, which comes without a break, begins transparently, first with a horn call, then with a conversation among solo winds. But despite the easy-going opening, we soon find ourselves in a vigorous fugue for full orchestra, and the music hurtles ahead—characteristically, with a lot of sharp turns (and reminiscences from earlier movements)—until we realize that we are heading toward a reprise of the failed chorale from the second movement. Will it succeed this time? Yes—but in a uniquely Mahlerian way. I won’t spoil the effect by telling you precisely what happens; rest assured that it is both surprising and fulfilling, and that it leads to the most rambunctiously joyful ending in the entire Mahler canon.

This is the first time Larry has conducted the entire work (he’s conducted the *Adagietto* often), but it’s hardly new to him. In fact, it has “obsessed” him since

his student days. “To me it has incredible depth and emotion. I would listen to it in the dark, thinking it was the pinnacle of what you can do with an orchestra emotionally. And I would study it and dream about the day that I would get to do it.” Listening tonight, you’ll understand that dream.

What can you program before the Mahler Fifth? On our one previous performance of the work, it was coupled with Saint-Saëns’s delightfully light-weight Second Piano Concerto. At the time, soloist Jon Nakamatsu quipped that it would be “overkill” to pair it with something that put equal demands on the listener: “You’re going to get a huge steak and potatoes, you don’t want ham right before. You want something that will prepare you, like salad.” Tonight we’ve chosen another deft work, the 1877 **Variations on a Rococo Theme** by **Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky** (1840–1893)—and coincidentally, tonight’s soloist Julian Schwarz offers a similar metaphor, suggesting it was an “apéritif” that avoided the problem of “two main courses.”

The work was written for the virtuoso cellist Wilhelm Fitzenhagen—who not only inspired it, but also gave Tchaikovsky advice and introduced some alterations (including removing one of the variations and reordering others) that made their way into the first edition and became standard for decades. Usually, in a case like this—say, Bruckner’s Ninth Symphony, which was “improved” by his friend, conductor Ferdinand Löwe—the composer’s original score eventually takes over. Not so here. The Fitzenhagen version is still widely performed—and, in fact, that’s the version that Julian will offer tonight. Why? Perhaps some of it is nostalgia—it’s the version he first learned, and he still has a certain “bias” toward it. More important, he says, he has “a tremendous respect for Fitzenhagen as a cellist. There are obviously no recordings of him; but we know from his editorial markings and his own compositions the kind of techniques that he was good at, the kind of approach he had to playing. Tchaikovsky wasn’t a cellist; and as is the case with Joseph Joachim and the Brahms Violin Concerto, the piece is inseparable from the advocacy of the player.”

Most important, though, he believes that Fitzenhagen’s changes improve the work. Julian is “not a great fan” of the original Eighth Variation which Fitzenhagen—who was clearly not a great fan, either—removed; and Julian believes that the exciting variation that was originally in fourth place works much better at the end (where Fitzenhagen moved it) than buried in the middle.

As for the spirit of the piece: although it is based on a pseudo-rococo theme of Tchaikovsky’s own invention (there’s a similar pastiche of 18th-century music in his late opera *Queen of Spades*), and although it contains a certain amount of “prim and proper” music that evokes “people in white wigs,” Tchaikovsky’s “lush, heart-on-the-sleeve” romanticism still comes through. In fact, Julian sees it as closely related to Tchaikovsky’s ballet music. Yes, Tchaikovsky’s work is made up of true variations—that is, manipulations of an initial theme. But the term “variation” also refers to a solo number in a ballet—and Julian takes that as encouragement to “represent different characters in the piece.” For those who miss hearing *The Nutcracker* during the off-season, this may be the next-best thing.

Peter J. Rabinowitz

The Syracuse Orchestra

Lawrence Loh, music director, Sean O'Loughlin principal pops conductor

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