

Pasadena Community Orchestra

Bethany Pflueger, Conductor



Friday, May 9, 2025, 8:00 pm
Pre-Concert Discussion at 7:15 pm

First Church of the Nazarene of Pasadena

Program

- Overture to *Candide* Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990)
- Variations on a Shaker Melody Aaron Copland (1900-1990)
- March from "1941"..... John Williams (b. 1932)

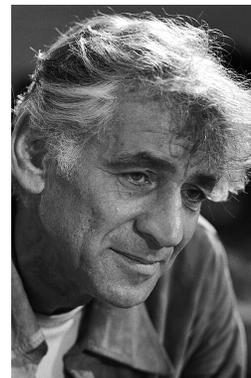
Intermission

- Piano Concerto No. 3 in D minor, Op. 30 Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943)
- Allegro ma non tanto
- Adagio
- Alla Breve

Romain Jansen, piano soloist
2025 Winner, Young Artist Competition, Open Division

PROGRAM NOTES – PCO CONCERT, MAY 9, 2025

Leonard Bernstein was one of the most important and influential musicians of the twentieth century. He was a pianist, composer, lecturer, music educator, humanitarian, and was the first American conductor to achieve international acclaim. His prodigious talent won him numerous awards, including seven Emmys, two Tonys, sixteen Grammys, and an Academy Award nomination. As a composer, Bernstein wrote in many styles, including symphonic and orchestral music, ballet, film and theatre music, choral works, opera, piano, and chamber music. Probably his most famous work is the musical *West Side Story*, Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet transported to New York's Upper West Side. He shared his passion for classical music by using his teaching talents in the now-legendary lecture-concert *Young People's Concerts* with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra from 1958-1972, and broadcast live by CBS.



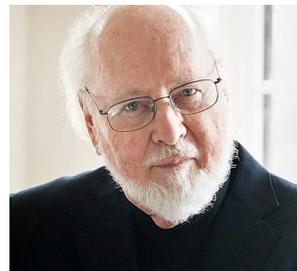
Candide is an operetta composed by Bernstein, based on a novella by the French writer and philosopher Voltaire. First performed in 1956, it was coldly received by audiences and critics, but the *Overture* has since become a staple of the repertoire. Bernstein conceived of the work as a comic operetta, and the overture reflects this with a score that mixes multiple styles and forms that is light and humorous, while maintaining a flavor of the original 18th century story.



Aaron Copland was an American composer, teacher, and conductor, and along with Leonard Bernstein, widely regarded as one of the most important figures in 20th-century American music. (The photo is of Copland with Bernstein, ca. 1940). Born in Brooklyn in 1900, Copland studied in Paris with the famed teacher Nadia Boulanger before returning to the United States, where he began developing a unique musical voice. He became known for his ability to blend classical techniques with American folk styles, jazz influences, and open harmonies that evoked the vastness of the American landscape. Works like *Appalachian Spring*, *Billy the Kid*, *Rodeo*, and *Fanfare for the Common Man* brought classical music to a wider public and helped establish a distinctly American sound.

Variations on a Shaker Melody is derived from Copland's ballet *Appalachian Spring*, basing it on the Shaker tune "Simple Gifts." In this arrangement, Copland explores the melody through a series of imaginative variations, highlighting different instrumental colors and moods while maintaining the simple, spiritual quality of the original tune. The piece reflects his skill at transforming folk material into sophisticated orchestral music.

John Williams is a renowned American composer and conductor, best known for his iconic film scores that have become an integral part of cinematic history. With a career spanning over six decades, he has composed music for blockbuster films such as *Star Wars*, *Indiana Jones*, *Jaws*, *Jurassic Park*, and the *Harry Potter* series. Williams' music has earned him numerous awards, including multiple Academy Awards and Grammys.



March from "1941" is a bold, energetic piece composed for Steven Spielberg's 1979 satirical war-comedy film *1941*. The march captures the film's over-the-top, satirical tone with driving rhythms,

playful brass fanfares, and dramatic flair. Though the movie received mixed reviews, the March shines with Williams' talent for blending humor, excitement, and orchestral brilliance.



Sergei Rachmaninoff was a Russian composer, pianist, and conductor known for his deeply expressive music and virtuosic piano writing. Born in 1873, he fled Russia with his family in the turmoil of 1917, eventually settling in the US. He was one of the last great ‘romantic’ composers, with works that combined beautiful harmonies, sweeping melodies, and emotional intensity. He is best known for his large orchestral works like the *Piano Concertos No. 2 and 3*, *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*, and *Symphonic Dances*. His music remains a favorite among performers and audiences for its passionate depth and technical brilliance.

The *Piano Concerto No. 3 in D minor, Op. 30*, composed in 1909, is one of the most technically demanding and emotionally powerful works in the piano repertoire, written for his first tour of the United States. With Rachmaninoff’s sweeping Romantic melodies, intricate textures, and immense expressive range, the concerto features a rich interplay between piano and orchestra, between delicate lyricism and thunderous intensity. It is a favorite among virtuoso pianists and audiences, admired for both its lush romanticism and its technical challenges.

About tonight’s soloist. Performing the Rachmaninoff Third Piano Concerto is the Orchestra’s 2025 winner in the Open Division of the Young Artist Competition, Pianist **Romain Jansen**. Romain is a soloist and a chamber musician. He enjoys discovering all kinds of repertoire, with an affinity for Russian romantic music. Romain is currently studying at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique et Danse de Lyon, the Royal College of Music of London and the USC Thornton School. He has studied in masterclasses with renowned pianists and professors including Philippe Cassard, Anne Queffelec, Denis Pascal, Emmanuel Strosser, Claire Désert and Vittorio Forte. You can read more details about our soloist on our website.



Program notes by Stephen Unwin, PCO Board member

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We thank our many donors who have generously given to the Pasadena Community Orchestra since April 29, 2024. At our January concert, we announced to our audience that all donations made at the event would support Orchestra members who lost their homes in the Eaton Fire. Your generous donations raised over \$8,000 for our colleagues. We are deeply moved by your outpouring of support. We also thank the many volunteers who work behind the scenes to make our concert season possible.

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