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Pasadena Symphony Association

Pasadena Symphony & POPS

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Nicholas McGegan Returns to Pasadena Symphony with Brahms Symphony No. 2 & Poulenc's Double Piano Concerto

Pasadena, CA – Ring in the New Year with Principal Guest Conductor **Nicholas McGegan** as he masterfully explores the musical genius of **Brahms Symphony No. 2** and enjoy mother-daughter pianists' **Mihyang and Esther Keel** as they perform **Poulenc's** jazzy and exotic **Concerto for Two Pianos** on Saturday, January 17, 2014 at 2:00 p.m. & 8:00 p.m. at Ambassador Auditorium.

The Los Angeles Times celebrated McGegan to be "in fact the sunniest conductor in classical music!" and the *Crescenta Valley Weekly* said "if performances under McGegan are any indication, the Pasadena Symphony seems to be on the cusp of a golden age." The return of the jovial McGegan spotlights the unique partnership with the expert master of Baroque and Classical interpretations as he applies his historical performance practice and deeply personal interpretation of Brahms' *Symphony No. 2* - a first for this two-time Grammy nominee. The cheery and almost pastoral mood of the symphony often invites comparisons with Beethoven's *Symphony No. 6* (which McGegan will lead in his March 2015 performances). Having the burden of writing his first symphony lifted, Brahms playfully wrote to his publisher that his 2nd "is so melancholy that you will not be able to bear it. I have never written anything so sad, and the score must come out in mourning." Also on the program is Peter Maxwell Davie's *An Orkney Wedding with Sunrise*, an enduringly popular work depicting a riotous celebration featuring a bagpipe soloist dressed in traditional Scottish regalia. The piece was commissioned by the Boston Symphony Orchestra and was premiered in 1985 under the baton of John Williams.

Mother and daughter team, Esther and Mihyang Keel delve into the drama and flair of Poulenc's *Concerto for Two Pianos*. Inspired by Mozart, Liszt and Ravel, the work marked the beginning of a "great period" of early 20th century classical music. Pianist Esther Keel has been praised as "an artist of utmost taste, proportion and charm" and has captivated audiences around the world since making her debut with Esa-Pekka Salonen and the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the age of thirteen. Her mother, Mihyang Keel has delighted audiences for over 30 years with performances with Korea Chamber Symphony, the La Mirada Symphony Orchestra and has made various television appearances on both MBC TV and KBS TV.

Nicholas McGegan is a pioneer in exporting historical period practices to conventional symphonic forces. His discography includes more than 100 recordings, including the

Gramophone-winning, GRAMMY® nominated world premiere of Handel's *Susanna*. He is also credited with the first performance in modern times of Handel's *Gloria*. As long-standing music director of the Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra and Philharmonia Chorale, McGegan established the leading period performance ensemble in the United States.

Performances are accompanied by a popular pre-concert discussion that gives the audience insights into the music and musicians one-hour before curtain. Audiences are invited to luxuriate in the lively **Sierra Auto Symphony Lounge**, yet another addition to the delightful and elegant concert experience the Pasadena Symphony offers. Located in the beautiful outdoor plaza at the Ambassador Auditorium, audiences can enjoy a deliciously prepared menu specially created for the evening by Claud and Co, fine wines, and sparkling conversation before the concert and during intermission.

The Ambassador Auditorium is located at 131 South St. John Avenue, Pasadena, CA. Ticket prices start at \$35 and may be purchased online at www.pasadenasympphony-pops.org or by calling (626) 793-7172.

IF YOU GO:

- **What:** The Pasadena Symphony presents McGegan's Dvorak
- **Special Guests:** Nicholas McGegan (principal guest conductor), Mihyang and Esther Keels (pianos)
- **When:** Saturday, January 17 at 2:00 p.m. & 8:00 p.m.
- **Where:** Ambassador Auditorium | 131 South St. John Avenue, Pasadena, CA 91105
- **Cost:** Tickets start at \$35.00
- **Parking:** Valet parking with wheelchair access is available on Green Street for \$15. Handicap and general parking is available next to the Auditorium at the covered parking structure for \$10. Additional handicap parking is also located at the above-ground parking lot adjacent to the Auditorium (entrance on St. John Ave.) for \$10. Parking purchased onsite is cash only.
- **Symphony Lounge:** Located on the plaza at Ambassador Auditorium. Open before the concert and during intermission.
- **Pre-Concert Discussion:** Pre-concert discussion with Nicholas McGegan begins one hour before curtain and is available to all ticket holders.

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ABOUT THE ARTISTS

About Nicholas McGegan

“If the performances under Nic McGegan are any indication, the Pasadena Symphony seems to be on the cusp of a golden age. Long may it last.” praised Ted Ayala of the Crescenta Valley Weekly of Principal Guest Conductor of the Pasadena Symphony. As he embarks on his fourth decade on the podium, Nicholas McGegan — long hailed as “one of the finest baroque conductors of his generation” (London Independent) and “an expert in 18th-century style” (The

New Yorker) — is increasingly recognized for his probing and revelatory explorations of music of all periods.

Through 27 years as its music director, McGegan has established the San Francisco-based Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra and Philharmonia Chorale as one of the world's leading period-performance ensembles, with notable appearances at Carnegie Hall, the London Proms, the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, and the International Handel Festival, Göttingen where he was artistic director from 1991 to 2011. Throughout his career, McGegan has defined an approach to period style that sets the current standard: serious and intelligent, but never dogmatic. More recently, Philharmonia Baroque is branching out under his leadership. Calling the group's recent recording of the Brahms Serenades "a truly treasurable disc," James R. Oestreich in *The New York Times* made special note of the performance's "energy and spirit."

McGegan's ability to engage players and audiences alike has made him a pioneer in broadening the reach of historically informed practice beyond the world of period ensembles to conventional symphonic forces. His guest-conducting appearances with major orchestras — including the New York, Los Angeles, and Hong Kong Philharmonics; the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Louis, Toronto and Sydney Symphonies; the Cleveland and the Philadelphia Orchestras; and the Northern Sinfonia and Scottish Chamber Orchestra — often feature Baroque repertoire alongside Classical, Romantic, 20th-century and even brand-new works: Mendelssohn, Sibelius, Britten, Bach and Handel with the Utah Symphony; Poulenc and Mozart with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra; Mahler and Mozart with the Pasadena Symphony Orchestra; and the premiere, in 2012, of Stephen Hough's *Missa Mirabilis* with the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, paired with Haydn, Brahms and Mendelssohn.

Active in opera as well as the concert hall, McGegan was principal conductor of Sweden's perfectly preserved 18th-century theater Drottningholm from 1993 to 1996. He has also been a frequent guest conductor with opera companies including Covent Garden, San Francisco, Santa Fe and Washington.

His discography of more than 100 releases includes the world premiere recording of Handel's *Susanna*, which garnered both a Gramophone Award and a GRAMMY® nomination, and recent issues of that composer's *Solomon*, *Samson* and *Acis and Galatea* (the little-known version adapted by Felix Mendelssohn). He is also credited with the first performance in modern times of Handel's masterly but mislaid *Gloria*. Under its own label, Philharmonia Baroque Productions (PBP), in addition to the Brahms recording Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra has recently released five acclaimed archival recordings: Berlioz's *Les Nuits d'été* and selected Handel arias with the late Lorraine Hunt Lieberson; Haydn Symphonies No. 88, 101 and 104, nominated for a GRAMMY® Award; Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* and other concerti with Elizabeth Blumenstock as violin soloist; Handel's *Atalanta* with soprano Dominique Labelle in the title role; and Brahms' beloved Serenades.

Mr. McGegan is committed to the next generation of musicians, frequently conducting and coaching students in residencies and engagements at Yale University, the Juilliard School, Harvard University, the Colburn School, Aspen Music Festival and School, and the Music Academy of the West.

Born in England, Nicholas McGegan was educated at Cambridge and Oxford and taught at the Royal College of Music, London. He was made an Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (OBE) in the Queen's Birthday Honours for 2010 "for services to music overseas." His awards also include the Halle Handel Prize; an honorary professorship at Georg-August University, Göttingen; the Order of Merit of the State of Lower Saxony (Germany); the Medal of Honour of the City of Göttingen, and an official Nicholas McGegan Day, declared by the Mayor of San Francisco in recognition of two decades of distinguished work with Philharmonia Baroque.

About Mihyang Keel

Mihyang Keel, born in Seoul Korea, earned her bachelor degree from Seoul National University where she received "The University President Award", which led to an invitation among all the graduates of 1977 to perform at the Blue House for the President of South Korea. Upon graduation, Mrs. Keel moved to the United States and earned her master of music degree from the University of Southern California. She received the "Pi Kappa Lambda Award" from USC. Throughout her career, she has studied with Professor Nakho Paik, Daniel Pollack and Kisun Yun. She was a winner of the National Young Artists Competition, which led to numerous solo recitals in both Korea and the United States. She has appeared as soloist performing concertos by Mozart, Beethoven, Rachmaninoff, Saint-Saens, Prokofiev, and Tchaikovsky with various orchestras such as the Korea Chamber Symphony, Nasung Symphony Orchestra, La Mirada Symphony Orchestra, Chapman Symphony Orchestra, and the Peninsula Symphony, among others. She has made various television appearances on both MBC TV and KBS TV.

Presently, Mrs. Keel is a member of the National Music Honor Society, Music Teacher's Association of California, and the Music Teacher's National Association. For the past thirty-five years, she has been the pianist and organist for the Galilee Choir of Young Nak Presbyterian Church of Los Angeles. She has also enjoyed her career as a teacher and has been teaching in her Torrance studio for the past thirty-seven years. Her students have been prize winners in numerous competitions such as the Edith Knox Concerto Competition, Marina Del Rey-Westchester Symphony Young Artist Competition, Torrance Symphony Concerto Competition, Bronislaw Kaper Award Competition, Young Musicians Foundation Concerto Competition, and the Glendale Piano Competition, among others. Her students have also been admitted to prestigious colleges such as Juilliard, Eastman, Manhattan School of Music, Eastman School of Music, Peabody, USC, UCLA, and the San Francisco Conservatory.

About Esther Keel

Praised as "an artist of utmost taste, proportion and charm" (The Cleveland Plain Dealer), American pianist Esther Keel has captivated audiences around the world since making her debut with Esa-Pekka Salonen and the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the age of thirteen. Since then, she has concertized throughout the United States and Canada, as well as in Germany, Italy, Austria, Switzerland, Ireland, Korea, and Russia.

Ms. Keel has performed with over twenty orchestras across the United States including the Jacksonville Symphony, Pasadena Symphony, Korean American Symphony, The Juilliard Orchestra, Merrick Symphony, Mozart Festival Orchestra, Peninsula Symphony, Colburn Orchestra, and the San Francisco State Symphony, among others. In addition to Esa-Pekka Salonen, she has worked with notable conductors such as Otto-Werner Mueller, Rossen Milanov, Fabio Mechetti, and Bundit Ungrangsee.

As a soloist, Ms. Keel has appeared in prestigious concert halls including Kennedy Center in Washington D.C, Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall in New York, Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles, and abroad at the Kurhaus Bad Aussee in Austria, Teatro Guglielmi in Italy, and the Poland Embassy in Moscow. She has been featured in the Southampton Rising Stars Concert Series, the Los Angeles Da Camera Society at the historic Doheny Mansion, San Francisco's Annual Chopin Concert Series, and the Los Angeles Philharmonic Rising Stars Recital Series. Ms. Keel's numerous competition honors include top prizes in the Moscow International Chopin Competition, Washington International Piano Competition, National Federation of Music Clubs Competition, Ostra International Piano Competition in Italy, Juilliard Concerto Competition, and the American Prize at the Cleveland International Piano Competition.

As an avid chamber musician, Ms. Keel has performed in venues such as Alice Tully Hall, Peter Jay Sharp Theatre, Wilshire Ebell Theatre, LACMA, and the California Club. She has worked with musicians including Fred Sherry, Jonathan Feldman, Joseph Kalichstein, Seymour Lipkin, and Vivian Weilerstein. She has performed in the Musica L'Amore Chamber Music Series, Alice Tully's Wednesdays at One Series, and the Young Musicians Foundation Chamber Music Series, which was broadcast live on the classical music station KUSC 91.5.

Born and raised in Los Angeles, California, Ms. Keel began playing the piano at the age of three with her concert pianist mother, Mihyang Keel. She received her Bachelor and Master of Music degrees from the Juilliard School. In May of 2011, Ms. Keel graduated with an Artist Diploma from the Colburn Conservatory in Los Angeles. In addition to her studies, she has served as an instructor in the college division of the Juilliard School, as well as at the Colburn School of Performing Arts. She currently maintains a small private studio in both Los Angeles and the South Bay. Her former teachers have included John Perry, Yoheved Kaplinsky, Yong Hi Moon, and Robert McDonald.

About the Pasadena Symphony and POPS

Recent Acclaim for the Pasadena Symphony and POPS

"...the new era at the Pasadena Symphony Orchestra has begun..." Los Angeles Times.

“The Pasadena Symphony signals a new direction...teeming with vitality...dripping with opulent, sexy emotion.” Los Angeles Times.

“...full of pulsating energy from first note to last... the strings were lushly resonant, the wind principals were at the top of their games, and the brass rang out with gleaming vigor.” – Pasadena Star News.

Formed in 1928, the Pasadena Symphony and POPS is an ensemble of Hollywood’s most talented, sought after musicians. With extensive credits in the film, television, recording and orchestral industry, the artists of Pasadena Symphony and POPS are the most heard in the world.

The Pasadena Symphony and POPS performs in two of the most extraordinary venues in the United States: Ambassador Auditorium, known as the *Carnegie Hall of the West*, and the luxuriant Los Angeles Arboretum & Botanic Garden. Internationally recognized, Grammy-nominated conductor, David Lockington, serves as the Pasadena Symphony Association’s Music Director, with performance-practice specialist Nicholas McGegan serving as Principal Guest Conductor. The multi-platinum-selling, two-time Emmy and five-time Grammy Award-nominated entertainer dubbed “The Ambassador of the Great American Songbook,” Michael Feinstein, is the Principal Pops Conductor, who succeeded Marvin Hamlisch in the newly created *Marvin Hamlisch Chair*.

A hallmark of its robust education programs, the Pasadena Symphony Association has served the youth of the region for over five decades through the Pasadena Youth Symphony Orchestras (PYSO) comprised of five performing ensembles, with over 250 gifted 4th-12th grade students from more than 50 schools all over the Southern California region. The PYSO Symphony often performs on the popular television show *GLEE*.

The PSA provides people from all walks of life with powerful access points to the world of symphonic music.