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Pasadena Symphony & POPS
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For images visit: <http://www.pasadenasympphony-pops.org/press-release-beethoven-emperor-piano-concerto/>

December 15, 2015

**PASADENA SYMPHONY PRESENTS BEETHOVEN “EMPEROR” PIANO CONCERTO
WITH NICHOLAS MCGEGAN AND VAN CLIBURN MEDALIST SEAN CHEN**

Pasadena, CA – Start your New Year off right with the Pasadena Symphony and Principal Guest Conductor **Nicholas McGegan** as he delivers **Beethoven’s Piano Concerto No. 5, the “Emperor**, on **January 9th** at **Ambassador Auditorium**. “One of the finest baroque conductors of his generation” (*London Independent*), two-time Grammy nominee McGegan is increasingly recognized for his probing and revelatory explorations of music of all periods. McGegan is sure to infuse the program with his jovial spirit, having been celebrated as “in fact the sunniest conductor in classical music!” by the *Los Angeles Times*. Don’t miss the expert master of Classical interpretations as he applies his historical performance practice and deeply personal interpretation to Beethoven’s beloved fifth and final piano concerto.

For McGegan’s highly anticipated return, pianist Sean Chen will bring to life Beethoven’s sublime, beautiful, and exuberant piano concerto. Hailed as a charismatic rising star with “an exceptional ability to connect with an audience combined with an easy virtuosity” (*Huffington Post*), 27-year-old Chen earned third prize in the 2013 Van Cliburn competition winner, and was recently named a 2015 fellow by the prestigious Leonore Annenberg Fellowship Fund for the Performing Arts. A prodigious talent, he regularly appears with orchestras in the US and around the world and has earned accolades for his “alluring, colorfully shaded renditions” (*New York Times*). A native of Oak Park, CA, Chen returns to his Southern California roots for this exclusive engagement.

The concert’s program is purely classical with Sergei Prokofiev’s *Classical Symphony* and Schubert’s *Unfinished Symphony* accompanying Beethoven’s “Emperor”. Prokofiev’s only Classical symphony is the Modern Russian composers throw back to the Classical masters. The overall Classical style of the Symphony makes it easy to forget it is a twentieth-century creation. Schubert wrote his *Unfinished Symphony* at a time when the young composer was in awe of Beethoven and harbored an almost naïve desire to emulate him. Scholars suggest that one possible reason for Schubert’s inability to complete the piece was his realization that he was unable to live up to such lofty standards.

And lofty standards they were. Beethoven composed his fifth and final piano concerto in 1809 during Napoleon’s invasion of Austria, when his hearing had deteriorated too far for him to perform it himself. The pinnacle of his piano concertos, the piece was coined the “Emperor” by Beethoven’s contemporaries for its powerful themes, bold melodies and overall grandeur. The jubilant mood of its finale will finish this definitive performance with a bang under the baton of the masterly McGegan.

The Pasadena Symphony provides a socially vibrant experience specially designed for the music lover, the social butterfly or a date night out, and the inner epicurean in us all. Enjoy a drink or a bite in the luxurious Sierra Auto Symphony Lounge, yet another addition to the delightful and elegant concert experience the Pasadena Symphony offers. A posh setting at Ambassador Auditorium's beautiful outdoor plaza, the lounge offers specialized menus for each concert by Claud & Co for both lunch and dinner, a full bar and fine wines by Michero Family Wines, plus music before the concert and during intermission.

Performances on January 9, 2016 take place at both 2:00pm and 8:00pm and are accompanied by pre-concert discussions with Nicholas McGegan one hour before curtain. 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](tel:6267937172).

IF YOU GO:

- **What:** The Pasadena Symphony presents Beethoven “Emperor” Piano Concerto.
- **When:** Saturday, January 9 at 2:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m.
- **Where:** Ambassador Auditorium | 131 South St. John Avenue, Pasadena, CA 91105
- **Cost:** Tickets start at \$35.00
- **Parking:** Valet parking is available on Green Street for \$15. General parking is available in two locations: next to the Auditorium (entrance on St. John Ave) at the covered parking structure for \$10 and directly across the street at the Wells Fargo parking structure (entrance on Terrace at Green St). ADA parking is located at the above-ground parking lot adjacent to the Auditorium (entrance on St. John Ave.) for \$10. Parking purchased onsite is cash only.
- **Sierra Auto Symphony Lounge:** Located on the plaza at Ambassador Auditorium. Opens at 12:30 pm before the matinee and 6 pm before the evening performance.
- **Pre-Concert Discussion:** Pre-concert discussions with Conductor Nicholas McGegan begins one hour before curtain and is available to all ticket holders at no cost.

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ABOUT THE ARTISTS

NICHOLAS MCGEGAN

Principal Guest Conductor

As he embarks on his fourth decade on the podium, Nicholas McGegan, hailed as “one of the finest baroque conductors of his generation” (London *Independent*), is increasingly recognized for his probing and revelatory explorations of music of all periods. He has been Music Director of Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra for 28 years, and was Artistic Director of the International Handel Festival Göttingen for 20 years (1991–2011). Beginning in the 2013-14 season he took on the title of Principal Guest Conductor of the Pasadena Symphony, and in 2014 becomes Artist in Association with Australia’s Adelaide Symphony.

His approach to period style — intelligent, infused with joy and never dogmatic — has led to 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, where his programs often mingle Baroque with later works. The coming months will feature collaborations with the New Zealand and Tasmania Symphonies, as well as Washington, D.C.'s National Symphony Orchestra, Italy's Orchestra of Padova Veneto, Sweden's Svenska Kammarorkestern, the Bournemouth Sinfonietta, the Orchestra of St. Luke's, and Caramoor International Music Festival.

He is also at home in opera houses; in addition to shining new light on close to twenty Handel operas as the Artistic Director and conductor at the Gottingen Festival, he has led productions for leading companies including Covent Garden, San Francisco, Santa Fe and Washington. He was Principal Conductor at Sweden's famed Drottningholm Theatre from 1993-1996.

English-born Nicholas McGegan was educated at Cambridge and Oxford. He was made an Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (OBE) "for services to music overseas." Other awards include the Halle Handel Prize; the Order of Merit of the State of Lower Saxony (Germany); the Medal of Honour of the City of Göttingen, and a declaration of Nicholas McGegan Day, by the Mayor of San Francisco in recognition of his work with Philharmonia Baroque. In 2013, the San Francisco Conservatory of Music awarded him an honorary degree of Doctor of Music.

His extensive discography includes seven recent releases on Philharmonia Baroque's label, Philharmonia Baroque Productions (PBP), including Brahms Serenades; Beethoven Symphonies nos. 4 and 7; Berlioz *Les Nuits d'été* and Handel arias with Lorraine Hunt Lieberson; Haydn Symphonies nos. 88, 101 and 104 (nominated for a GRAMMY® Award); Vivaldi *The Four Seasons* and other concerti with violinist Elizabeth Blumenstock, and Handel's *Atalanta* and Handel's Teseo, both featuring soprano Dominique Labelle.

SEAN CHEN

Piano

Hailed as a charismatic rising star with "an exceptional ability to connect with an audience combined with an easy virtuosity" (*Huffington Post*), 27-year-old American pianist Sean Chen is the 2013 DeHaan Classical Fellow of the American Pianists Association. He also earned third prize in the 2013 Cliburn International Piano Competition. Since then, he has continued to earn accolades for "alluring, colorfully shaded renditions" (*New York Times*), and was recently named a 2015 fellow by the prestigious Leonore Annenberg Fellowship Fund for the Performing Arts.

In the coming season, Mr. Chen will make return appearances with the San Diego Symphony, Carmel Symphony, and Sunriver Festival Orchestras, as well as perform with the National Symphony of the Dominican Republic, North Carolina, Hudson Valley, Pasadena, Bakersfield, Knoxville, Fairfax, and San Angelo Symphony Orchestras. He will also be traveling across the United States for solo and chamber recitals, including concerts in Chicago, Denver, Louisville, and Los Angeles. Lauded for his natural charisma and approachable personality, Mr. Chen is particularly in demand for residencies that combine performances with master classes, school concerts, and artist conversations.

He has previously worked with many prominent orchestras, including the Fort Worth, Hartford, Indianapolis, Milwaukee, Phoenix, San Diego, Santa Fe, Tucson, and New West Symphonies, as well as the Philadelphia, Indianapolis, and South Bay Chamber Orchestras, collaborating with such esteemed conductors as Leonard Slatkin, Gerard Schwarz, Miguel Harth-Bedoya, Marcelo Lehninger,

Nir Kabaretti, James Judd, George Hanson, and Boris Brodt. Solo recitals have brought him to major venues worldwide, including Jordan Hall in Boston, Subculture in New York City, the American Art Museum at the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C., the National Concert Hall in Taipei, Het Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, and the Salle Cortot in Paris.

His recent CD releases include *La Valse*, a solo recording on the Steinway label, hailed for “penetrating artistic intellect” (*Audiophile Audition*); a live recording from the Cliburn Competition released by Harmonia Mundi, praised for “ravishing tone and cogently contoured lines” (Gramophone); and an album of Michael Williams' solo piano works on the Parma label.

A multifaceted musician, Mr. Chen also transcribes, composes, and improvises. His transcription of Ravel's *La Valse* has been received with glowing acclaim, and his encore improvisations are lauded as “genuinely brilliant” (*Dallas Morning News*). An advocate of new music, he has also collaborated with several composers and performed their works, including Lisa Bielawa, Michael Williams, Nicco Athens, Michael Gilbertson, and Reinaldo Moya.

Born in Florida, Mr. Chen grew up in the Los Angeles area of Oak Park, California. Mr. Chen earned his Bachelor and Master of Music from Juilliard, meanwhile garnering several awards, most notably the Paul and Daisy Soros Fellowship for New Americans. He received his Artist Diploma in 2014 at the Yale School of Music as a George W. Miles Fellow. His teachers include Hung-Kuan Chen, Tema Blackstone, Edward Francis, Jerome Lowenthal, and Matti Raekallio.

When not at the piano, Mr. Chen enjoys experimenting with computers.

ABOUT THE PASADENA SYMPHONY ASSOCIATION

Recent Acclaim for the Pasadena Symphony and POPS

“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.

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