

PENINSULA *symphony*

Symphony Sounds

February, 2016

49th Season, Number 2

Editor: Terri Zinkiewicz

Peninsula Symphony Concert

Sunday, February 14, 2016, at 7:00 PM

Redondo Union High School Auditorium
222 North Pacific Coast Highway
Redondo Beach, CA 90277

BRAHMS CYCLE II

Scott Tennant, guitar

Akutagawa *Music for Symphony Orchestra*
Rodrigo *Concierto de Aranjuez* for Guitar
and Orchestra
Brahms *Symphony No. 2 in D major,*
Opus 73

Concert Details

Doors open at 6:00 PM. Center-section seating is reserved for members at the Patron level and above.

Pre-concert lecture by **Maestro Berkson** at 6:15 PM for Symphony Association members and first-time attendees.

General public admitted at approximately 6:50 PM.

POST-CONCERT MEET THE PERFORMERS

After the concert, the audience is invited to remain in the auditorium and meet informally with our conductor, Gary Berkson, and with our soloist. The artists may make a few remarks about the performance, and then the audience will have an opportunity to ask questions. Please call our office at 544-0320 if you have any questions about this event.

Spend Your Valentine's Day Evening at the Peninsula Symphony's Concert

We have turned our calendars to 2016, and that means the Peninsula Symphony's concert season will be resuming. On Sunday, February 14 we will continue our year-long examination of the four symphonies of Johannes Brahms. This time it will be the Brahms Symphony No. 2 in D major that will be presented after intermission. We will begin the concert by introducing our audience to the Japanese composer Yasushi Akutagawa. In addition, we are pleased to present our soloist, Scott Tennant, who is one of the world's great classical guitar virtuosos.

This edition of **Symphony Sounds** includes short previews of the pieces and composers that will be performed at the February 14 concert, a profile of our soloist, photos from our October 25 concert and the post-concert reception and other articles. Maestro Berkson is personally donating funds to the Peninsula Symphony for all first-time audience members on February 14. Read about it in this newsletter and make plans to take your friends as well as your valentine with you to the concert on February 14.



Maestro Gary Berkson presents a pre-concert lecture before every concert to introduce the music and composers. He illustrates with keyboard examples and interesting stories. Take advantage of this membership perk!

Music Preview (Please see the 2015-2016 Program Book that is distributed at all concerts for more detailed program notes.)

Music for Symphony Orchestra Yasushi Akutagawa (1925-1989)

Music for Symphony Orchestra is considered composer Yasushi Akutagawa's breakthrough musical composition. It was successful in Japan after its Tokyo premiere in 1950 and was also widely played in the United States and the Soviet Union. Scored for full orchestra, it is written in two parts that are each just under five minutes in length, and it shows the influence of Dmitri Shostakovich.

Yasushi Akutagawa was a twentieth century Japanese composer, conductor, educator and television host. The son of a famous author, he graduated from the Tokyo Conservatory of Music in 1949, the year before the *Music for Symphony Orchestra* was premiered.

Akutagawa wrote both programmatic music, such as operas and film scores and also absolute music, such as symphonies and a cello concerto. He played an important role in reestablishing cultural relations between Japan and the rest of the world following World War II. He was particularly drawn to composers in the Soviet Union, including Shostakovich and Prokofiev, and he introduced their music to Japanese audiences.

Concierto de Aranjuez for Guitar and Orchestra Joaquín Rodrigo (1901-1999)

Like most of Joaquín Rodrigo's music, the *Concierto de Aranjuez* uses singable melodies and traditional orchestra sounds. It was composed in Paris in 1939 immediately prior to World War II, and it remains Rodrigo's most popular work. The premiere performance was in Madrid in 1940, and its United States premiere was in 1959. Rodrigo transcribed the piece for harp and orchestra in 1974.

The *Concierto de Aranjuez* may be best known for its slow, middle movement in which the guitar begins with a few chords and the English horn introduces the main melody. The final

movement is a courtly dance that combines duple (2/4 time) and triple (3/4 time) meters.

Born in Spain, Joaquín Rodrigo was almost totally blind by the age of three, and this factored into his devotion to music. He studied piano and violin (but not guitar) as a child and started composing in 1923 by initially working in Braille and later dictating to his companion who made copies of the works. Rodrigo went to study in Paris in 1927, three years after the Valencia Symphony performed one of his orchestral works.

Following the success of the *Concierto de Aranjuez*, Rodrigo received commissions from various instrumental soloists for other concertos, although none received the lasting fame of the guitar work.

Rodrigo was made Marquis of the Gardens of Aranjuez, part of the Spanish nobility, by King Juan Carlos I in 1991. Rodrigo's daughter currently holds this title. Aranjuez, with its beautiful summer gardens, is located approximately twenty-six miles south of Madrid.

Symphony No. 2 in D major, Opus 73 Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Brahms' Second Symphony was composed in 1877 in a much shorter time period than his first symphony. The Vienna Philharmonic premiered the symphony the same year, and the fourth movement was performed a second time as an encore. The New York Philharmonic performed the symphony the following year.

The symphony is structured like many classical symphonies. The first and last movements are lively, and a slow second movement is followed by a third-movement scherzo. Although many cite the pastoral mood of the symphony, Brahms indicated he had never written anything so sad.

The first movement is based somewhat on *Brahms' Lullaby*, initially introduced by the cellos. See if you can hear variants of this well-known tune. The first movement's approximately fifteen-minute duration is the longest movement in the four Brahms symphonies. The second movement is more serious and could be a reason Brahms

considered the symphony to be sad. The third movement is dance-like, lighter than the others, and may reflect the influence of Mozart or Schubert. The final movement begins as quietly and smoothly as the full string section can manage, followed by a loud section by the full orchestra less than a half-minute later. There is no subtlety in the concluding coda, as the full orchestra telegraphs the triumphant ending with several punctuated chords.

Johannes Brahms was a German virtuoso pianist and composer. His compositions were widely recognized during a concert tour at the age of twenty. He was the piano soloist in 1859 when his Piano Concerto No. 1 was his first orchestral composition to be performed in public. Brahms' reputation was assured after *A German Requiem*, his major choral work, premiered in 1868, and he became quite wealthy. He wrote over 200 songs. Other well-known, smaller works include the *Hungarian Dances* and the *Liebeslieder Waltzes*.

Brahms favored absolute music rather than tone poems, program music, or opera. He studied Baroque and Classical composers and was strongly influenced by the Romantic composer Robert Schumann.

Soloist – Scott Tennant, Guitar



Scott Tennant, classical guitar virtuoso and Grammy-award-winning recording artist.

Scott Tennant is a world-renowned classical guitar virtuoso, Grammy-award-winning recording artist, writer and educator. He currently resides in the Los Angeles area and is a member of the faculty at USC's Thornton School of Music and the Pasadena Conservatory of Music. He previously taught at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music.

A Detroit native, Tennant began studying guitar in 1968 when he was just six years old, and his public debut was four years later. He attended USC as a student in the 1980s.

Tennant is a founding member of the L.A. Guitar Quartet (LAGQ). Established in 1980, this organization consists solely of USC alumni. Tennant's Grammy came when LAGQ's *Guitar Heroes* CD won the 2005 award for best classical crossover recording. LAGQ previously had another Grammy nomination.

Tennant has written eight books, including *Pumping Nylon* which is widely considered the authority on classical guitar technique. He also writes articles for various guitar magazines. Tennant performs and participates in festivals world-wide. He is best known for his performances of Spanish music and his recordings of Joaquín Rodrigo, so we are in for a real treat at the February 14th concert.

Past Events

October 25th Peninsula Symphony Concert

The October 25, 2015, Peninsula Symphony concert, titled "*BRAHMS CYCLE I*," began with Maestro Berkson's pre-concert lecture. He indicated that his objectives for this season's programming are to explore different types of music written by composers who reflect some of the ethnic diversity of the South Bay, and to explore the symphonies of Johannes Brahms. This concert addressed both objectives.

The first selection, *Serenade in E-flat major*, was written by a teenaged Richard Strauss. It is the first time that the Peninsula Symphony programmed a selection for only wind instruments. Berkson highlighted its "simple, beautiful melody" and indicated he personally likes the depth of the sound of the contrabassoon. The contrabassoon is larger than the bassoon and sounds one octave lower, but it is rarely scored in the standard concert literature.

The next piece was *African Suite*, written by the 20th-century Nigerian composer Fela Sowande. Berkson said that he heard this suite for the first time on *The Music Channel*. The music sounds

like British string music, but with West African melodies. It was the first performance of this work for virtually all of the symphony musicians as well as the audience.

The second half of the concert was Symphony No. 1 in C minor, Opus 68, by Johannes Brahms. This majestic, approximately forty-five-minute symphony is a favorite of many, and the orchestra earned a sustained standing ovation at its conclusion. The next concert will feature Brahms' second symphony, and by the end of the season we will have presented all four of the beautiful Brahms symphonies.



Maestro Berkson played excerpts of the concert music to illustrate his points during the pre-concert lecture.



Symphony Association President John Williams welcomed the audience members to the season's opening concert.

Post-Concert Reception

Symphony Association members at the Sponsor level and above joined Maestro Berkson and the Board of Directors at Ws China Bistro for a reception immediately following the October 25th concert. We were treated to some delicious

finger foods and lovely desserts while we chatted and discussed the concert with our fellow classical music lovers. Per our custom, the Peninsula Association Board members wore formal black tie apparel, and that added to the special atmosphere after a very successful opening concert.



Above and below - Peninsula Symphony Association donors enjoy the post-concert reception at Ws China Bistro.





Above and below – additional photos from the post-concert reception.



Fundraiser Trip Suggestions

The Peninsula Symphony Association typically plans a day-trip fundraiser via motor coach each season. In recent years we have gone to the Old Town Music Hall in El Segundo and to the art deco Saban Theater in Beverly Hills for a special screening of *Casablanca*. We are seeking input on other locations that could be popular with our members. Sites need to be reachable for round-trips in a day, and entrance fees should be nominal so we can price the trip reasonably while still raising funds for the Symphony Association. Please send ideas to the Peninsula Symphony office, to the attention of special-events coordinator Mona Gifford.

Meet a Community Player

Symphony Sounds continues its “Meet a Community Player” column. Many of the

Symphony musicians are community players who attend weekly rehearsals for the joy of making music with their colleagues. Some were music majors who moved to careers in other fields. All have interesting stories to tell. This issue features oboist Don Clary.

Don Clary, a Rancho Palos Verdes resident, has played oboe in the Peninsula Symphony for over 35 years. He has degrees in physics, math and gemology and retired from DuPont where he generated four US patents in electro-optics.

Don’s position in the woodwind section is near the center of the orchestra, and he loves hearing the symphony sounds surrounding him, experiencing the skill and musicality of musicians around him and contributing to that experience for the audience.

Clary taught himself to read music and ultimately selected the oboe for formal instruction after he had his college physics degree, unlike most symphony musicians who began studying music as children,

Clary also taught himself to cut gemstones and went on to win eight International American Gem Trade Association Cutting Edge awards in gem cutting. He also won Lapidary Journal’s Gemmy Award.

Don combines interests in wildlife photography with international travel. Like working with gemstones, photography is about physics (optics, color, lenses and light). His work was printed on the front cover of *Wildbird Magazine*.



Peninsula
Symphony oboist
Don Clary in
Antarctica.

Future Events

2016 Edith Knox Performance Competition

The January 31 application deadline has just passed for the 2016 Edith Knox Performance Competition. The next step for the competitors is the preliminary competition round on Saturday, February 20 at Harbor College. Each contestant will perform, from memory, a work for solo instrument and orchestra in its entirety from the standard repertoire.

Symphony Association members at the level of Benefactor and above are invited to attend the preliminary competition. Parents and teachers are allowed to hear their children and students, but not the other competitors. A panel of three judges will select five individuals to perform in the competition finals in Redondo Beach on Sunday, April 3. All finalists will receive cash prizes following their Redondo Beach performances.

Symphony Association members and the general public are invited to the April 3 Young Artists' Showcase. Admission is free. The names of the finalists and more information on the competition and prior winners can be found on our website at www.pensym.org and in an upcoming edition of **Symphony Sounds**.

Young Artists' Showcase Sunday, April 3, 2016 at 2:00 PM

The five finalists in the 2016 Edith Knox Performance Competition will perform in full concert dress with piano accompaniment for professional judging. The first-prize winner will be announced at the end of the program and will solo with the Peninsula Symphony at its June 19, 2016, Norris Foundation concert. These events are free and open to the public.

Peninsula Symphony Concert Sunday, April 17, 2016, at 7:00 PM

BRAHMS CYCLE III

Beth Pflueger, flute

Suzanna Guzmán, mezzo-soprano

Canzona Women's Ensemble

Members of the LAHC/PSA Youth Orchestra

Ives	<i>The Unanswered Question</i>
Vaughan	Magnificat
Williams	
Fernström	<i>Concertino for Flute with Small Orchestra and Women's Chorus, Opus 52</i>
Brahms	<i>Symphony No. 3 in F major, Opus 90</i>

Let's Meet Maestro Berkson's Special Audience Challenge

Take a first-time, new audience member to the February 14th pre-concert lecture and concert, and their attendance will pay dividends to the Peninsula Symphony. Maestro Berkson and his wife Annika have made a generous offer to donate \$10 to the symphony for each new, first-time attendee, and the amount is doubled to \$20 for anyone under the age of sixteen. There is no limit to the number of people eligible for this donation, so let's help fill our beautiful concert auditorium on February 14th, beginning at 6:15 PM.

The Peninsula Symphony makes a valuable contribution to the South Bay community arts scene, and we are continuing to strive to make ourselves more visible to the public, both young and old. One of the best ways is to request that our current audience help spread the word with their friends and neighbors. Now is the time to invite that new person to accompany you and meet Maestro Berkson's special audience challenge.

General Meeting of the Peninsula Symphony Association

The Symphony Association's annual meeting is scheduled for **Monday, March 28, 2016**. The Board meeting begins at 7:30 PM and the annual membership meeting will follow, at approximately **9:00 PM**. All Symphony Association members are eligible to attend either or both meetings.

The primary item of business at the annual meeting is the election of new Board members for the 2016-2017 fiscal year. The Nominating Committee will present a list of candidates. Association members attending this meeting may nominate additional candidates and may also vote. Please call the Symphony Association office (310-544-0320) if you plan to attend, so that we have sufficient capacity for all attendees. You will receive additional details about the meeting location when you call.

Thank you to our Sponsors

City of Rolling Hills

Kenneth T. & Eileen Norris Foundation

Los Angeles County Supervisor Don Knabe

Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors/County Arts Commission

The Morgan Stanley Foundation

Palos Verdes Woman's Club

Southern California Edison Foundation

The Peninsula Symphony's concerts are also generously supported by the Recording Industry's Music Performance Trust Fund.

Save The Date

Next season is the Peninsula Symphony's 50th anniversary and we have several events planned to recognize this milestone including a GALA evening celebration on

Saturday, September 24

Please save this date. More details will be available as we get closer to the date, but put it on your new 2016 calendars now so you don't miss it.

Thank you to our Virtuoso Level Members

Last season, we introduced our highest membership level, Virtuoso, for individuals or couples who contribute at least \$5000 to the Peninsula Symphony Association in a single season. The 2014-2015 members were Dorothy and Allen Lay. As of the end of December, we are proud to announce the Virtuoso contributors for the 2015-2016 season

Ken and Anita Gash

Allen and Dorothy Lay

The Shlens Family

John and Sue Williams

Enjoy the Second Concert!

BRAHMS CYCLE II

**Sunday, February 14, 2016, at 7:00 PM
Redondo Union High School Auditorium**



Post Office Box 2602
Palos Verdes Peninsula, CA 90274

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Contact Information

Any questions or requests about the Peninsula Symphony, the Peninsula Symphony Association or **Symphony Sounds** should be sent to the Peninsula Symphony Association office. We will route your message to the appropriate person.

The Peninsula Symphony Association
Post Office Box 2602
Palos Verdes Peninsula, CA 90274

The office is normally staffed from 9:00 AM to noon on Monday and Friday. You may call at any time (310-544-0320) and leave a message on our answering machine, but phone replies will usually be made only during normal staffing hours. You can also e-mail us at music.pensym@verizon.net. General information about the Symphony (current season schedule, maps and directions, etc.) can be found on our website (www.pensym.org).

Other contacts are:

Peninsula Symphony Association President, John Williams wskrs@verizon.com

Music Director/Conductor, Gary Berkson conductor.pensym@verizon.net