

Palm Springs Friends of Philharmonic Presents

PACIFIC SYMPHONY

CARL ST. CLAIR, MUSIC DIRECTOR

JEAN-YVES THIBAUDET, PIANO

Sponsored by Norman Forrester & William Griffin

TUESDAY, MARCH 11, 2025, AT 7:30 PM
MCCALLUM THEATRE, PALM DESERT, CA

PROGRAM:

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN	<i>Egmont</i> , op. 84: Overture	17'
CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS	Piano Concerto no. 5 in F major, op. 103, "Egyptian" <i>I. Allegro animato</i> <i>II. Andante</i> <i>III. Molto allegro</i>	29'

-INTERMISSION-

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN	Symphony No. 7 in A major, op. 92 <i>I. Poco sostenuto - Vivace</i> <i>II. Allegretto</i> <i>III. Presto</i> <i>IV. Allegro con brio</i>	36'
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Entry to the hall will not be permitted while music is playing. Ushers will seat late arrivals at an appropriate time. Please remain seated until the performers leave the stage at intermission and at the end of the program. PS Phil audiences are known for the warm and courteous welcome extended to visiting performers - *thank you!*

Photography and recording of any kind are strictly prohibited. Please remember to silence your phone and other devices. Programming and artists subject to change without notice.

PROGRAM NOTES

EGMONT OVERTURE, OP. 84

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Born December 16, 1770, Bonn

Died March 26, 1827, Vienna

In 1809, Beethoven was invited to contribute incidental music to a revival of Goethe's tragedy *Egmont* at the Vienna Burgtheater. The motives of the theater's managers were clear: the French occupation of Vienna had just ended, and they wanted to celebrate their own freedom with a production of a play that told of resistance to political oppression. Beethoven had found the French occupation very difficult (he had hid in the basement of his brother's house with a pillow wrapped around his head during the French bombardment), and he was delighted to write the incidental music, which consists of an overture and nine other movements, including songs, entr'actes, a melodrama, and a concluding victory symphony.

But *Egmont* appealed to Beethoven for reasons deeper than its relevance to the French occupation of his adopted city. Goethe's tragedy tells of the heroic resistance to the Spanish occupation of the Netherlands by Count Egmont, who is imprisoned by the evil Duke Alva. When a rescue attempt by Egmont's lover Clärchen fails, she poisons herself, but Egmont goes to the gallows confident of the ultimate triumph of his cause. The themes of an imprisoned hero, a faithful woman willing to make sacrifices for love and political ideals, and the resistance to tyranny are of course those of Beethoven's opera *Fidelio*, and while the endings of *Egmont* and *Fidelio* are quite different, Beethoven must have found Goethe's play close to his own heart.



Portrait of Lamoral, Count of Egmont, Prince of Gavere
By Frans Pourbus the Elder, 1579

The complete incidental music is seldom heard today, but the overture has become one of Beethoven's most famous. It does not, however, attempt to tell the story of the play, and listeners should not search for a musical depiction of events. A powerful slow introduction gives way to a tentative, falling string figure—gradually the strength coiled up in this simple theme-shape is unleashed, and the dramatic overture rushes ahead at the *Allegro*. This music is full of energy, and at moments Beethoven subtly shifts the pulse of his 3/4 meter to make it feel like 6/8. The ominous chords of the opening return to usher in the brilliant close, where music that will reappear in the *Symphony of Victory* (the tenth and final movement of the incidental music) symbolizes the ultimate victory of Egmont's cause.

PIANO CONCERTO NO. 5 IN F MAJOR, OP. 103, "EGYPTIAN"

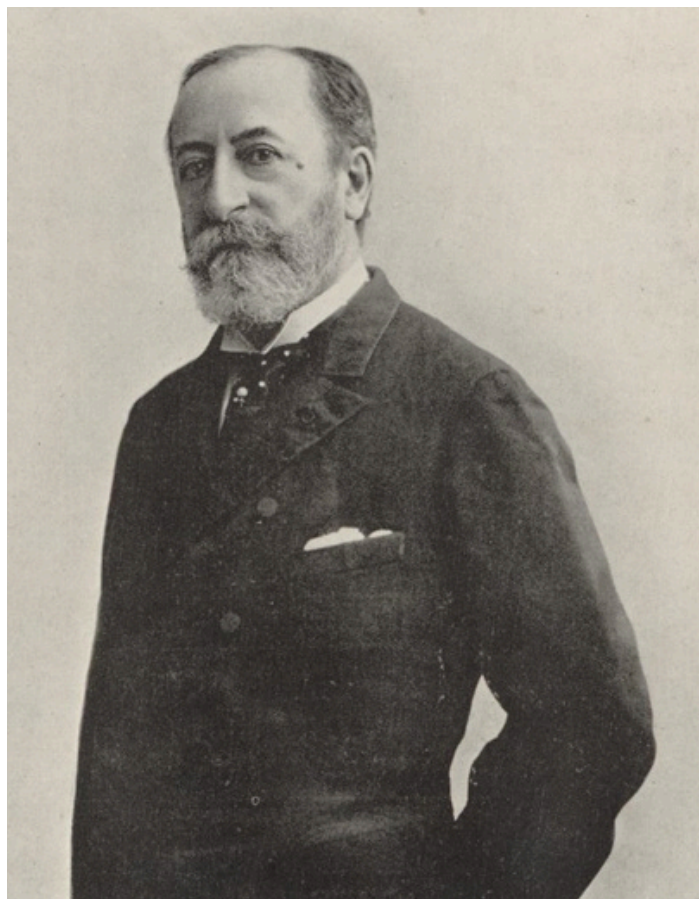
CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS

Born October 9, 1835, Paris

Died December 16, 1921, Algiers

Saint-Saëns loved to travel, and his many trips took him throughout Europe—from Portugal to Russia, from Scandinavia to the Mediterranean—and he also crossed the Atlantic to visit both North and South America (in fact, Saint-Saëns made it all the way to California in 1915 to help celebrate the Panama-Pacific Exposition). But there was one locale that he loved above all others: North Africa. Saint-Saëns made repeated trips to this region, drawn in particular to the exotic qualities of the African nations that bordered the Mediterranean (it was on one of these trips that he died at the age of 86). His many North African journeys influenced his music: Saint-Saëns composed a *Suite Algérienne*, a work for piano and orchestra that he titled *Africa*, and the present piano concerto, which was inspired by a trip to the Nile and which bears the nickname "Egyptian."

Early in 1896, Saint-Saëns made an extended visit to Egypt, and as part of that trip he took a boat ride up the Nile. It was while he was staying in Luxor, site of the ancient city of Thebes, that he composed his Piano Concerto No. 5, and Saint-Saëns himself was aware that the region had helped shape this concerto. He later wrote: "The second part, in effect, takes us on a journey to the East and even, in the F sharp passage to the Far East. The G major passage is a Nubian love song which I heard sung by the boatmen on the Nile as I went down the river in a dahabieh." Saint-Saëns was soloist at the premiere of the Piano Concerto No. 5, which took place in the Salle Pleyel in Paris on June 2, 1896. That concert was part of the celebration marking the fiftieth anniversary of his first public performance, which had taken place in the same



Camille Saint-Saëns circa 1880, photo by Charles Reutlinger
Bibliothèque nationale de France, département Musique

hall in May 1846. The concerto is in the expected three movements, all of them full of the polish, graceful spirits, and idiomatic writing that mark Saint-Saëns' music. The *Allegro animato* contrasts two quite different themes, both introduced by the piano: a flowing chordal melody and a somewhat more expressive second subject, marked *Un poco rubato* and set in D minor. The movement develops in sonata form, builds to a climax, and falls away to a quiet close on the second theme.

The central *Andante* is the movement that earned this concerto the nickname "Egyptian." An attack for full orchestra gets the movement off to a

surprisingly fierce start, and this is followed by pulsing rhythms in the strings. The episode in G major is the love-song Saint-Saëns heard sung by the Nile boatmen, and he said that the chirping grace-notes in the violins were the sound of crickets and frogs he heard along the banks of the Nile.

The finale, marked *Molto allegro*, gets off to a propulsive, driving start. Saint-Saëns said that

SYMPHONY NO. 7 IN A MAJOR, OP. 92

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Born December 16, 1770, Bonn

Died March 26, 1827, Vienna

Beethoven turned 40 in December 1810. Forty can be a difficult age for anyone, but for Beethoven things were going very well. True, his hearing had deteriorated to the point where he was virtually deaf, but he was still riding that white-hot explosion of creativity that has become known, for better or worse, as his “Heroic Style.” Over the decade-long span of that style (1803-1813), Beethoven essentially re-imagined music and its possibilities. The works that crystalized the Heroic Style—the *Eroica* and the Fifth Symphony—unleashed a level of violence and darkness previously unknown in music, forces that Beethoven’s biographer Maynard Solomon has described as “hostile energy,” and then triumphed over them. In these violent symphonies, music became not a matter of polite discourse, but of conflict, struggle, and resolution.

In the fall of 1811, Beethoven began a new symphony—it would be his Seventh—and it would differ sharply from those two famous predecessors. Gone is the sense of cataclysmic struggle and hard-won victory that had driven those earlier symphonies. There are no battles fought and won in the Seventh Symphony—instead, this music is infused from its first instant

this concerto depicted a “sea-voyage,” and many have heard the rumble of a ship’s propellers at the beginning of this movement (three years later, in his *Enigma Variations*, Elgar too would depict the rumble of a ship’s engines on a long voyage). This finale is deft and light-hearted music (though it requires some very brilliant piano-playing to bring it off), and the music dances gracefully right up to its vigorous concluding chords.

with a mood of pure celebration. Such a spirit has inevitably produced a number of interpretations as to what this symphony is “about”: Berlioz heard a peasants’ dance in it, Wagner called it “the apotheosis of the dance,” and more recently Maynard Solomon has suggested that the Seventh is the musical representation of a festival, a brief moment of pure spiritual liberation. But it may be safest to leave the issue of “meaning” aside and instead listen to the Seventh simply as music. There had never been music like this before, nor has there been since—Beethoven’s Seventh Symphony contains more energy than any other piece of music ever written. Much has been made (correctly) of Beethoven’s ability to transform small bits of theme into massive symphonic structures, but in the Seventh he begins not so much with theme as with rhythm: he builds the entire symphony from what are almost scraps of rhythm, tiny figures that seem unpromising, even uninteresting, in themselves. Gradually, he unleashes the energy locked up in these small figures and from them builds one of the mightiest symphonies ever written.

The first movement opens with a slow introduction so long that it almost becomes a

separate movement of its own. Tremendous chords punctuate the slow beginning, which gives way to a poised duet for oboes. The real effect of this long *Poco sostenuto*, however, is to coil the energy that will be unleashed in the true first movement, and Beethoven conveys this rhythmically: the meter of the introduction is a rock-solid (even square) 4/4, but the main body of the movement, marked *Vivace*, transforms this into a light-footed 6/8. This *Vivace* begins in what seems a most unpromising manner, however, as woodwinds toot out a simple dotted 6/8 rhythm and the solo flute announces the first theme, a graceful melody on this same rhythm. Beethoven builds the entire first movement from this simple dotted rhythm, which saturates virtually every measure. As theme, as accompaniment, as motor rhythm, it is always present, hammering into our consciousness. At the climax, horns sail majestically to the close as the orchestra thunders out that rhythm one final time.

The second movement, in A minor, is one of Beethoven's most famous slow movements, but the debate continues as to whether it really is a slow movement. Beethoven could not decide whether to mark it *Andante* (a walking tempo) or *Allegretto* (a moderately fast pace). He finally decided on *Allegretto*, though the actual pulse is somewhere between those two. This movement, too, is built on a short rhythmic pattern, in this case the first five notes: long-short-short-long-long—and this pattern repeats here almost as obsessively as the pattern of the first movement. The opening sounds like a series of static chords—the theme itself occurs quietly inside those chords—and Beethoven simply repeats this theme, varying it as it proceeds. The central episode in A major moves gracefully along smoothly-flowing triplets before a little fugato on the opening rhythms builds to a great climax. Beethoven winds the movement down on the

woodwinds' almost skeletal reprise of the fundamental rhythm.

The *Scherzo* explodes to life on a theme full of grace notes, powerful accents, flying staccatos, and timpani explosions. This alternates with a trio section for winds reportedly based on an old pilgrims' hymn, though no one, it seems, has been able to identify that exact hymn. Beethoven offers a second repeat of the trio, then seems about to offer a third before five powerful chords cut the movement off abruptly.

These chords set the stage for the *Allegro con brio*, again built on the near-obsessive treatment of a short rhythmic pattern, in this case the movement's opening four-note fanfare. This four-note pattern punctuates the entire movement: it shapes the beginning of the main theme, and its stinging accents thrust the music forward continuously as this movement almost boils over with energy. The ending is remarkable: above growling cellos and basses (which rock along on a two-note ostinato for 28 measures), the opening theme drives to a climax that Beethoven marks *fff*, a dynamic marking he almost never used. This conclusion is virtually Bacchanalian in its wild power—no matter how many times one has heard it, the ending of the Seventh Symphony remains one of the most exciting moments in all of music.

The first performance of the Seventh Symphony took place in the Great Hall of the University in Vienna on December 8, 1813. Though nearly deaf at this point, Beethoven led the performance, and the orchestra was able to compensate for his failings, so that the premiere was a huge success. On that occasion—and at three subsequent performances over the next few months—the audience demanded that the second movement be repeated.

Program notes by Eric Bromberger

ARTIST BIOS

CARL ST.CLAIR, CONDUCTOR

The 2024-25 season marks Music Director Carl St.Clair's 35th year leading Pacific Symphony. He is the longest-tenured American-born conductor of a major American orchestra. During St.Clair's lengthy history, Pacific Symphony has become the largest budgeted orchestra formed in the last 50 years. Pacific Symphony was invited by the League of American Orchestras to become the newest and youngest orchestra among America's Tier 1 Orchestras. Few orchestras can claim such rapid artistic development.

During his tenure, St.Clair has become widely recognized for his musically distinguished performances and his innovative approaches to programming. In April 2018, St.Clair led Pacific Symphony in its sold-out Carnegie Hall debut, celebrating Philip Glass's 80th birthday at the final concert of Carnegie's yearlong celebration of the preeminent composer. The concert ended with a standing ovation and with The New York

Times calling the Symphony "a major ensemble!" St.Clair led Pacific Symphony on its first tour to China in May 2018, the orchestra's first international tour since touring Europe in 2006. The orchestra's European tour included playing concerts in nine cities (including Munich, Frankfurt, Cologne, Lucerne, and Vienna) in three countries appearing before capacity houses and receiving standing ovations and critical acclaim. The Hannoversche Allgemeine raved, "St.Clair and his fabulous orchestra completely won over Hanover...with spirit, a sense of sound, and utterly breathtaking precision" and Cologne's General Anzeiger exclaimed, "Electrifying... captivating!"

The orchestra made its national PBS debut in June 2018 on *Great Performances* with Peter Boyer's *Ellis Island: The Dream of America*, conducted by St.Clair. Among St.Clair's many creative endeavors are the highly acclaimed

Photo by Doug Gifford



American Composers Festival, which began in 2000, and the opera initiative, “Symphonic Voices,” which has included concert-opera productions of *Madama Butterfly*, *The Magic Flute*, *Aida*, *Turandot*, *Carmen*, *La Traviata*, *Tosca*, *Rigoletto*, and *La Bohème* in previous seasons.

St.Clair’s commitment to the development and performance of new works by composers is evident in the wealth of commissions and recordings by the Symphony. Beginning in the 2023-24 season, Viet Cuong was named the Symphony’s Composer-in-Residence. The 2016-17 season featured commissions from pianist/composer Conrad Tao and Composer-in-Residence Narong Prancharoen, a follow-up to the slate of recordings of works commissioned and performed by the Symphony in recent years. Other commissions include John Wineglass’ *Alone Together*, William Bolcom’s *Songs of Lorca* and *Prometheus*, Elliot Goldenthal’s *Symphony in G-sharp Minor*, Richard Danielpour’s *Toward a Season of Peace*, Philip Glass’ *The Passion of Ramakrishna*, and Michael Daugherty’s *Mount Rushmore* and *The Gospel According to Sister Aimee*. St.Clair has led the orchestra in other critically acclaimed recordings including two piano concertos of Lukas Foss, Danielpour’s *An American Requiem*, and Goldenthal’s *Fire Water Paper: A Vietnam Oratorio* with cellist Yo-Yo Ma. Other commissioned composers include James Newton Howard, Zhou Long, Tobias Picker, Frank Ticheli, Sir James MacMillan, Chen Yi, Curt Cacioppo, Stephen Scott, Jim Self (Pacific Symphony’s Principal Tubist), and Christopher Theofanidis.

Internationally, St.Clair has appeared with orchestras throughout the world. He has led orchestras in Asia, Central and South America, and Europe. In January 2024, following a 27-year relationship with Sinfonieorchester Wuppertal (Germany), St.Clair was named Honorary Guest Conductor for Life. In 2023, he concluded a

successful 10-year tenure as Music Director with the National Symphony of Costa Rica. From 2008-10, St.Clair was General Music Director for the Komische Oper in Berlin. He also served as General Music Director and Chief Conductor of the German National Theater and Staatskapelle (GNTS) in Weimar, Germany, where he led Wagner’s Ring Cycle to critical acclaim. He was the first non-European to hold this position at the GNTS; the role also gave him the distinction of simultaneously leading one of the newest orchestras in America and one of the oldest in Europe.

St.Clair has led the Boston Symphony Orchestra (where he served as Assistant Conductor for several years 1985-90), New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, and the San Francisco, Seattle, Detroit, Atlanta, Houston, Indianapolis, Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver symphonies, among many.

Carl St.Clair is a strong advocate of music education for all ages and is internationally recognized for his distinguished career as a master teacher. He has been essential to the creation and implementation of the Symphony’s extensive education and community engagement programs. In addition to his professional conducting career, St.Clair has worked with most major music schools across the country. He received an Honorary Doctorate from Chapman University and has served as a Presidential Fellow, working closely with the students of the College of the Performing Arts (2018-2022). St.Clair has been named “Distinguished Alumni” at the University of Texas Butler School of Music beginning 2019. And, for over 30 years, he has had a continuing relationship with the USC Thornton School of Music where he is Artistic Leader and Principal Conductor of the orchestral and large ensemble program.

JEAN-YVES THIBAUDET, PIANO

Through elegant musicality and an insightful approach to both contemporary and established repertoire, Jean-Yves Thibaudet has earned a reputation as one of the world's finest pianists. He is especially known for his diverse interests beyond the classical world; in addition to his many forays into jazz and opera—including works which he transcribed himself for the piano—Thibaudet has forged profound friendships around the globe, leading to fruitful collaborations in film, fashion, and visual art. He is a devoted educator and the first-ever Artist-in-Residence at the Colburn School, which awards several scholarships in his name.

Thibaudet opens the 2024/25 season with Gershwin's Piano Concerto in F at the Colorado Symphony; he later brings the piece to the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre national du Capitole de Toulouse, and Los Angeles Philharmonic. He performs another signature piece, Saint-Saëns's Piano Concerto No.5, with the National Symphony Orchestra of Taiwan, NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra, Pacific, Kansas City, and San Diego Symphonies, Macao Orchestra, and Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France. A major contemporary exponent of Khachaturian's Piano Concerto, Thibaudet performs the piece with the National Symphony Orchestra, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic, and Tonhalle orchestras.

In Seoul, with the KBS Symphony Orchestra, he returns to Scriabin's *Prometheus: The Poem of Fire*, which he performed last season in a synesthetic presentation with olfactory cues created by Mathilde Laurent of Cartier. He also appears as soloist on Liszt's Piano Concerto No.2, with the Boston Symphony Orchestra and Münchner Philharmoniker; Leonard Bernstein's Symphony No.2, *Age of Anxiety*, with Shanghai Symphony

Orchestra; and Ravel's Piano Concerto in G with the New Jersey Symphony and Palm Beach Symphony orchestras. Other season highlights include world premiere performances of two new works: Benjamin Attahir's double-concerto *Hanoi Songs*, with the Seattle Symphony, and Manu Martin's *Cosmic Rhapsody*, with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra; and the return of his program with Michael Feinstein, *Two Pianos: Who Could Ask for Anything More?* in Rome and San Francisco.

In addition to his orchestral dates, Thibaudet takes part in the Itzhak Perlman and Friends tour across California and a tour of Asia with longtime collaborator Gautier Capuçon. While visiting the Boston Symphony Orchestra, he will play chamber music with members of the orchestra. He also continues his multi-season focus on Debussy's *Préludes*, performing both books in their entirety at recitals across the United States; last season saw a reissue of his seminal 1996 recording of the *Préludes* on limited-edition vinyl with design by Vivienne Westwood.

A prolific recording artist, Thibaudet has appeared on more than 70 albums and six film scores; his extensive catalogue has received two GRAMMY® nominations, two ECHO Awards, the Preis der deutschen Schallplattenkritik, the Diapason d'Or, the CHOC du Monde de la Musique, the Edison Prize, and Gramophone awards. Recent recordings include *Gershwin Rhapsody*, a collection of Gershwin pieces recorded with Michael Feinstein, including four newly-discovered ones; *Night After Night*, a celebration of James Newton Howard's scores for the films of M. Night Shyamalan; and *Carte Blanche*, a collection of deeply personal solo piano pieces never before recorded by the pianist. Other highlights include a 2017 recording of Bernstein's *Age of Anxiety* with the Baltimore



Photo by Andrew Eccles

Symphony Orchestra and Marin Alsop; recordings of the complete solo piano music of Debussy and Satie; Grammy-nominated recordings of Ravel's complete solo piano works and Saint-Saëns's Piano Concerti Nos. 2 & 5; the jazz albums *Reflections on Duke* and *Conversations With Bill Evans*; and *Aria—Opera Without Words*, which features arias transcribed for solo piano by Thibaudet himself.

Thibaudet has also had an impact on the worlds of fashion, film, and philanthropy. He was soloist on Aaron Zigman's score for *Wakefield*; this was the first time the composer had allowed a pianist other than himself to perform his film work. He was also soloist in Dario Marianelli's award-winning scores for the films *Atonement* (which won an Oscar for Best Original Score) and *Pride and Prejudice*, as well as Alexandre Desplat's soundtracks for *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* and Wes Anderson's *The French Dispatch*. He had a cameo in Bruce Beresford's film on Alma Mahler, *Bride of the Wind*, and his playing is showcased throughout. In 2004 he served as president of the prestigious charity auction at the Hospices de Beaune. His concert wardrobe is

designed by Dame Vivienne Westwood.

Jean-Yves Thibaudet was born in Lyon, France, where he began his piano studies at age five and made his first public appearance at age seven. At twelve, he entered the Paris Conservatory to study with Aldo Ciccolini and Lucette Descaves, a friend and collaborator of Ravel. At age fifteen, he won the Premier Prix du Conservatoire and, three years later, the Young Concert Artists Auditions in New York City. Among his numerous commendations is the Victoire d'Honneur, a lifetime career achievement award and the highest honour given by France's Victoires de la Musique. In 2010 the Hollywood Bowl honored Thibaudet for his musical achievements by inducting him into its Hall of Fame. Previously a Chevalier of the Ordre des Arts et des Lettres, Thibaudet was awarded the title Officier by the French Ministry of Culture in 2012. In 2020, he was named Special Representative for the promotion of French Creative and Cultural Industries in Romania. He is a co-artistic advisor with Gautier Capuçon of the Festival Musique & Vin au Clos Vougeot in Burgundy.

PACIFIC SYMPHONY

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The Sungaila Family Chair

* *Principal*

** *Assistant Principal*

+ *On Leave*

The musicians of Pacific Symphony are members of the American Federation of Musicians, Local 7.

PACIFIC SYMPHONY, LED BY MUSIC DIRECTOR CARL ST. CLAIR FOR THE LAST 35 YEARS, HAS BEEN THE RESIDENT ORCHESTRA OF THE RENÉE AND HENRY SEGERSTROM CONCERT HALL SINCE 2006.

Currently celebrating its 46th anniversary season, the Pacific Symphony is the largest orchestra formed in the U.S. in the last 50 years and is recognized as an outstanding ensemble making strides on both the national and international scene, as well as in its own community of Orange County.

In April 2018, Pacific Symphony made its debut at Carnegie Hall as one of two orchestras invited to perform during a yearlong celebration of composer Philip Glass' 80th birthday, and the following month the orchestra toured China. The orchestra made its national PBS debut in June 2018 on *Great Performances* with Peter Boyer's *Ellis Island: The Dream of America*, conducted by St. Clair. Presenting more than 100 concerts and events a year and a rich array of education and community engagement programs, the Symphony reaches more than 300,000 residents—from school children to senior citizens.

In both 2005 and 2010, the Symphony received the prestigious ASCAP Award for Adventurous Programming. Also in 2010, a study by the League of American Orchestras, *Fearless Journeys*, included the Symphony as one of the country's five most innovative orchestras. The Symphony's award-winning education and community engagement programs benefit from the vision of St. Clair and are designed to integrate the orchestra and its music into the community in ways that stimulate all ages.

The Symphony's Class Act program has been honored as one of nine exemplary orchestra education programs by the National Endowment for the Arts and the League of American Orchestras. The list of instrumental training initiatives includes Pacific Symphony Youth Orchestra, Pacific Symphony Youth Wind Ensemble, Pacific Symphony Santiago Strings, and Pacific Symphony Youth Concert Band.

The Symphony also spreads the joy of music through arts-X-press, Class Act, Heartstrings, Lantern Festival Orchestra, Symphony on the Go!, and Symphony in the Cities.