

# PASADENA COMMUNITY ORCHESTRA

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Bethany Pflueger, Conductor



**Friday, November 9, 2018, 8:00 p.m.**

## PROGRAM

Academic Festival Overture..... Johannes Brahms (1833 – 1897)

Harp Concerto..... Alberto Ginastera (1916 – 1983)

Allegro giusto

Molto moderato

Liberamente capriccioso - Vivace

Alyssa Katahara, harp soloist

## INTERMISSION

Symphony No. 9..... Antonín Leopold Dvořák (1841 – 1904)

Adagio-Allegro molto

Largo

Scherzo

Allegro con fuoco

## CONCERT NOTES

### Symphony No. 9, “New World Symphony”



In 1891, American philanthropist Jeanette Thurber invited **Antonín Dvořák** to direct the National Conservatory of Music of America, a school she had founded in 1885 that would allow students to study music at a high level without having to travel to Europe. The school also would allow students of all backgrounds – women, African Americans, other minorities as well as the disabled. Dvořák became the school’s director from 1892 – 1895, spending the summer of 1893 in the Czech community of Spillville, Iowa. As one of the most prominent directors in the school’s history, he developed the school’s curriculum and expanded its faculty; he also appeared as guest conductor. It was probably his versatility and nationalist sensibilities that earned him the position. He was very much interested in, and consequently fascinated by, the musical cultures of the American indigenous and the African American, traditions that he believed should be embraced more. ‘I am convinced that the future music of this country must be founded on what are called Negro melodies. These can be the foundation of a serious and original school of composition,’ Dvořák stated after having encountered Harry T. Burleigh, an African American student at the Conservatory, who sang traditional spirituals to him and later said that Dvořák absorbed their spirit before writing his own melodies.

During his tenure, he wrote the String Quartet in F major (op. 96, *American*), String Quintet in E-flat major (op. 97) and the famous **Symphony No. 9** (*From the New World*). Popularly known as the *New World Symphony*, the 9<sup>th</sup> Symphony was commissioned by the New York Philharmonic and premiered at Carnegie Hall in December 1893, with Anton Seidl as conductor. It was a huge success, and it brought Dvořák’s career to a pinnacle. The title came as an afterthought, which he added just before delivering the score to the New York Philharmonic, explaining that it was nothing more than ‘impressions and greetings from the ‘New World’. Despite its subtitle, the piece seems to retain a certain Czech flavor in its syncopated rhythms and modal melodies, which are characteristic of many folk and popular musical traditions, whether in Bohemia or North America. He made a very significant impact on music and cultural life in the United States, perhaps influencing and inspiring many American composers, including, even, Aaron Copland. Musicologists have found in its melodies echoes of such tunes as ‘Swing Low, Sweet Chariot’ and ‘Massa Dear’. Although there are no Native American melodies in the piece, Dvořák makes a parallel between the third movement (Scherzo) and the section of Longfellow’s poem ‘The Song of Hiawatha’ describing the Pau-Puk Keewis dance.

### Academic Festival Overture



By the late 1870s, **Johannes Brahms** had become a major figure in the music world, after having premiered a succession of well received works – the First and Second Symphonies and the Violin Concerto. In 1879, his old friend, conductor and composer, Bernhard Scholz, arranged for the University of Breslau to bestow an honorary doctorate on the composer. Brahms, who loathed public attention, would have been content by responding with a simple letter of acknowledgment, but the University expected nothing less than a newly composed work in exchange for the honorary degree. ‘Compose a fine symphony for us!’ wrote

Scholz. ‘But well orchestrated, old boy, not too uniformly thick!’ Brahms was certainly not going to write a full symphony, but he was happy to write something that would be far from thick in orchestration, or excessively intellectual. He never attended university himself, but some 20 years prior, he had spent some time hanging around the University of Göttingen with his friend violinist Joseph Joachim, so he had a good idea of what might appeal to the young scholars. The *Academic Festival Overture* was created as a *medley of student drinking songs à la Suppé*, as Brahms described it, which included the following: *Fuchslied* (Fox Song), *Wir hatten gebauet ein stattliches Haus* (We Have Built a Stately Home), *Hör, ich sing das Lied der Lieder* (Listen, I Sing the Song of Songs) and *Gaudeamus igitur* (So Let Us Rejoice). Brahms himself conducted the premier, and received his honorary degree, at a special convocation in January 1881. The work is one of a pair of contrasting overtures, the other being the Tragic, also written in the summer of 1880 and premiered in December.

## Harp Concerto Op. 2



Throughout the 20th century, efforts had been made to keep the lovely and angelic harp relevant in the world of new music, expand its capabilities, and intrigue composers, either through commissions or original works by harpists, and through the efforts of other collaborating artists. Argentinean composer **Alberto Ginastera**, considered one of the most important 20th century musical figures of the Americas, studied at the Williams Conservatory, in his native Buenos Aires, where he graduated in 1938, and later studied with Aaron Copland at Tanglewood, while on a visit to the United States in 1945 – 1947.

Upon his return to Buenos Aires, he founded the League of Composers, and held a number of teaching posts. Among his most notable students was Astor Piazzolla, who studied with him in 1941. Because Ginastera was fascinated with Argentinean folk music, of which the guitar was an essential part, the closely related harp provided similar characteristics that allowed him to continue expanding his contemporary sound. Inspired by the Argentinean ‘malambo’, a dance contest among gauchos that involves stomping of the heels, he incorporates the alternating time signatures of 6/8 and 3/4 and effectual techniques, such as knocking on the sound board and nail glissandos, with dance-like rhythms and percussive intensity – qualities which make it stand apart from other harp concertos.

The Ginastera **Harp Concerto** was commissioned by Edna Phillips and her husband Samuel Rosenbaum for the 1958 Inter-American Festival, but was not premiered until the 1963 festival. Why it took him a long time to complete the work is unclear, perhaps due in part to political unrest in Argentina or other pending works at the time, including an opera and a piano concerto. Phillips was the Philadelphia Orchestra’s harpist from 1930 – 1946, taught at the Philadelphia Conservatory for forty years, and was interested in expanding the repertoire for the instrument. When the 1958 festival had passed with no concerto, Phillips was performing less frequently, so she recommended to Ginastera, her good friend and colleague, Sylvia Meyer, of the Washington National Symphony, to premier the concerto at the 1961 festival – and still, no concerto. He finally completed the work in time for the 1963 festival, by which time Phillips had already retired and he had requested Spanish harpist Nicanor Zabaleta – who had somehow heard about the pending piece and paid a visit to the composer in Argentina – to play the premier..

## **Alyssa Katahara, harp soloist**



Harp soloist Alyssa Katahara joins PCO in opening the 2018 – 2019 concert season with Ginastera's Harp Concerto Op. 25. Alyssa Katahara began her musical studies as a violinist at two and harp at age six. She has appeared as a concerto competition winner and featured soloist with the National Repertory Orchestra, National Philharmonic, Interlochen Arts Camp Philharmonic, and Peabody Preparatory String Ensemble. In the 2018-19 season, Ms. Katahara will solo with the Colburn School and Burbank Philharmonic as the grand-prize winner of the 2018 Hennings-Fischer Young Artists Competition. In addition, Ms. Katahara has been awarded top prizes in the American Harp Society National Competition advanced division, US Army Orchestra Concerto Competition, Interlochen Arts Academy Concerto Competition, and Mid-Atlantic Harp Festival Competition.

Ms. Katahara has participated in summer festivals across the United States. In the summer of 2018, she served as principal harpist at the Aspen Music Festival and School. She spent previous summers as a fellow at the Music Academy of the West and the National Repertory Orchestra, as an Emerson Scholar at Interlochen Arts Camp, and at the Boston University Tanglewood Institute.

Ms. Katahara began her orchestral studies in 2009 where she served as principal harpist in the Jacksonville Symphony Youth Philharmonic and has since performed with the American Youth Philharmonic and United States Army Orchestra. From 2010-2013, she participated in the Peabody Preparatory program where she studied with Michaela Trnkova. She later attended Interlochen Arts Academy where she graduated with honors and studied with Joan Holland. She is currently a Bachelor of Music degree candidate at the Colburn School where she studies with JoAnn Turovsky.

### **2018 – 2019 Concert Season**

Friday, January 25, 2019, 8:00 p.m., Mozart + Bach + Walton + Liszt

Sunday, March 3, 2019, 2:30 p.m., 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Chamber Music Gala + Fundraiser, featuring violin soloist, Aubree Oliverson

Friday, March 15, 2019, 8:00 p.m., Boulanger + Neruda + Beethoven, featuring trumpet soloist Cameron Ghahremani

Friday, May 10, 2019, 8:00 p.m., Adams + Tchaikovsky + Young Artist Competition Winner

Saturday, June 8, 201, 6:30 p.m., Annual Concert in the Park, Sierra Madre Memorial Park

## TIMPANI FUNDRAISER DONORS

Over the summer, Pasadena Community Orchestra held its first-ever online fundraising campaign in order to raise the resources to purchase a set of timpani. Through donations from PCO musicians, friends, and family, the GoFundMe campaign raised over \$4,000 in 17 days! As a result, PCO was able to purchase a set of timpani to be used at rehearsals throughout the year. PCO acquired its new timpani through percussionist **Mark Zimoski**, and PCO's Board of Directors and all of the musicians would like to thank Mark for his warmth and generosity. Also, PCO would like to thank the dedicated individuals who spearheaded the GoFundMe campaign and made it all possible:

Alex Birkhold  
Hong-Yi Hon  
Adrienne Lee  
Beth Pflueger  
Noah Pflueger-Peters

Our heartfelt thanks to the following donors who contributed to the timpani fundraiser:

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NIK KEELAGHAN TRYING OUT NEW TIMPANI



PCO IN NEW REHEARSAL SPACE WITH TIMPANI

## PERSONNEL

### CONDUCTOR

Bethany Pflueger

### VIOLIN I

Hong-Yi Hon\*  
Ilana Amos  
Alex Birkhold  
Sam Chillingarian  
Curtis Horton  
Deanna Kitamura  
Frank Mori  
Nancy Smith  
Oliver Truong

### VIOLIN II

Adrienne Lee\*  
Carol Bruegge  
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### VIOLAS

Miriam Hartman\*  
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\*Principal

### CELLOS

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## IN-KIND

PCO thanks Graziela Camacho, Graphic Design/Webmaster; Candace Dougherty, Videography; Marina Chen, Photography; and the many volunteers whose behind-the-scenes help makes these concerts possible. We could not do it without them. PCO also thanks Alverno High School for their rehearsal space.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF PASADENA COMMUNITY ORCHESTRA

Bette Solomon, President, Lawrence Covellone, Donald Fisher, Thom Fountain, Joseph Kertes, Susie Kyropoulos, Stephen Unwin, Gary Urwin

## FOUNDATION SUPPORT

PCO is partially funded by the Pasadena Arts & Culture Commission, Los Angeles County Arts Commission and Pasadena Showcase House for the Arts.

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Pasadena Community Orchestra Foundation  
P.O. Box 92917  
Pasadena, CA 91109-2917  
(626) 445-6708  
[www.pcomusic.org](http://www.pcomusic.org)