USC Thornton Chamber Orchestra

Friday, Nov. 12, 2021
7:30 p.m.
Bovard Auditorium
University of Southern California

Jeffrey Kahane, conductor, piano
Program

**Maurice Ravel**  
(1875-1937)  
Piano Concerto in G Major  
*Allegramente*  
*Adagio Assai*  
*Presto*

Jeffrey Kahane, piano

**Intermission**

**Jesse Montgomery**  
(1981–)  
*Strum*

**Franz Joseph Haydn**  
(1732–1809)  
Symphony No. 103 in E flat major  
*Adagio - Allegro con spirito*  
*Andante più tosto allegretto*  
*Menuet*  
*Allegro con spirito*
Jeffrey Kahane joined the USC Thornton School of Music as a part-time faculty member in keyboard studies in 2015 and became a full-time professor in 2016 following a 20-year run as music director of the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra (LACO), the longest tenure of any music director in the ensemble's history.

Equally at home at the keyboard or on the podium, Kahane has established an international reputation as a truly versatile artist, recognized by audiences around the world for his mastery of a diverse repertoire ranging from Bach, Mozart and Beethoven to Gershwin, Golijov and John Adams.
Program Notes

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)
Piano Concerto in G Major (1931)

In 1906, Ravel began writing a Piano Concerto in G based on Basque themes but set it aside to complete his left hand piano concerto. He came back to the G Major concerto in 1913 but abandoned the piece not long after. Finally in 1929 Ravel returned to the concerto and spent three years sketching the piece before it’s completion. Originally, he had intended to be the soloist for the first public performance but fatigue, poor health, and pressure had Ravel pass off this performance opportunity to Marguerite Long.

Rather than embrace the emotionally intense Sturm and Drang of the 19th century, Ravel wrote a musical portrait with the intent to entertain. Influences included Basque themes and jazz, which had been popular in Paris since the start of the decade.

Ravel said this about his work:

"[...] a concerto in the truest sense of the word: I mean that it is written very much in the same spirit as those of Mozart and Saint-Saëns. The music of a concerto should, in my opinion, be lighthearted and brilliant, and not aim at profundity or at dramatic effects. It has been said of certain great classics [specifically Brahms] that their concertos were written not ‘for,’ but ‘against’ the piano. I heartily agree. I had intended to entitle this concerto ‘Divertissement.’ Then it occurred to me that there was no need to do so, because the very title ‘Concerto’ should be sufficiently clear."

The piece starts with a sharp crack from the slapstick before a dazzling melody played by the piccolo, clarinet, and trumpet with accompaniment from the soloist. While the piano plays an almost meditative melody, the jazz influences emerge with outbursts of muted trumpet and clarinet which later get interrupted with crisp repeated notes. The second movement starts slowly with a piano alone before the woodwinds enter with the second theme to converse with the piano. The final movement returns to the high energy displayed in the first movement. This movement highlights a march-like melody based on a descending three-note motive as well as brassy fanfares. These ideas race to the end, and Ravel cleverly ends the movement exactly as it began.

Alex Liang (BM 2021)
After his fame in the Esterházy establishment and the death of his patron Prince Nikolaus, Haydn’s services were no longer needed, allowing him to travel. Johann Peter Salomon, a German violinist, invited Haydn to London to conduct and commission new symphonies with a large orchestra. London welcomed Haydn graciously as his music had already permeated the city. During his second journey to London in 1794, he composed his Symphony No. 103, the eleventh of his twelve London Symphonies.

Upon listening, Symphony No. 103 was nicknamed “The Drumroll” after the long timpani solo that begins the work. The basses and bassoons start with a somber melody before it is passed to the violins. The harmonically ambiguous introduction paves the way for the brighter Allegro con spirito section that firmly establishes a tonic and flows its way to the end of the movement. The Andante movement has two themes and two keys alternating between C minor and C major. A gentle violin solo in C-major is interrupted by a furious C-minor outcry from the orchestra.

The minuet is firmly in the key of Eb major but slowly explores denser harmonic regions. Haydn refers back to a Classical-era minuet with very strong downbeats in each measure rather than the flowing rhythms in a Baroque minuet. The Finale starts with a rather ominous horn call that is repeated throughout the movement. Haydn introduces his main theme with four notes and uses this motive to paint a contrapuntal conversation among the orchestra. The conclusion combines the horn call and the four-note motive, tumultuously racing to the end.

Alex Liang (BM 2021)
Program Notes

Jessie Montgomery (1981-

Strum (2006/2012)

Strum is the culminating result of several versions of a string quintet I wrote in 2006. It was originally written for the Providence String Quartet and guests of Community MusicWorks Players, then arranged for string quartet in 2008 with several small revisions. In 2012 the piece underwent its final revisions with a rewrite of both the introduction and the ending for the Catalyst Quartet in a performance celebrating the 15th annual Sphinx Competition.

Originally conceived for the formation of a cello quintet, the voicing is often spread wide over the ensemble, giving the music an expansive quality of sound. Within Strum I utilized texture motives, layers of rhythmic or harmonic ostinati that string together to form a bed of sound for melodies to weave in and out. The strumming pizzicato serves as a texture motive and the primary driving rhythmic underpinning of the piece. Drawing on American folk idioms and the spirit of dance and movement, the piece has a kind of narrative that begins with fleeting nostalgia and transforms into ecstatic celebration.

— Jessie Montgomery
USC Thornton Chamber Orchestra

Violin I
Yu-Chen Lin, concertmaster
Agatha Blevin
Arianna O’Connell
Artem Kolesov
Emily Hsu
Nayoung Yoo
Vikram Iyer
Yue Qian

Violin II
Billie Smith, principal
Bradley Adam Bascon
Floriane Naboulet
Kendra Sobania
Olena Kaspersky
Peiwen Su
Taiga Murooka
Veronika Manchur

Viola
Jenny Sung, principal
Andrew Grishaw
Daniel Miles
Ellie Welker
Emma Antonides
Wilfred Farquharson

Cello
Ji Sun Jung, principal
Madeline Sheard
Myles Yeazell
Peter Choi
Sarah Kim
Taeguk Mun

Bass
Dan Carson, principal
Alan Wang
Avery Weeks
Ethan Moffitt

Harp
Mana Azimi

Flute
Chloe Descher
Emily Harrington
Hyojin Park*

Oboe
Cameron Roberts*
Sara Petty

English Horn
Sara Petty

Clarinet
Abraham Schenk
Alex Chang
Espen Aas*
Ray Wyant+

Eb Clarinet
Alex Chang

Bassoon
Anne Ranzani
Samantha Epp

Horn
Eun Jin Koh
Katherine Yang+
Rachel Lauson
Susannah Greenslit*

Trumpet
Kobe Sampson-Davis
Richard Torneros Francisco*
Svend Lykkegaard+

Trombone
Stephen Hannan

Timpani
Austin Cernosek*+

Percussion
Dominic Grande
Michael Dehan
Paul Matthews*
Soojin Kang

* Principal on Ravel
+ Principal on Haydn
Acknowledgements

ORCHESTRA DEPARTMENT

Carl St.Clair  
   Artistic Leader and Principal Conductor
Sharon Lavery  
   Resident Conductor, Chair of Winds & Percussion
Mike Basak  
   Orchestra Manager
Brent Anderson  
   Orchestra Librarian

ORCHESTRA STAFF

Alex Liang  
Andrew Grishaw  
Derek Zimmerman  
Emmanuel Louis Jesus Rojas  
Lindsay Bryden  
Samantha Kwan  
Sara Petty  
Sarah Wager  
Susannah Leigh Greenslit
Upcoming Signature Series Events

Nov. 19-20 at 8 p.m.
USC Thornton Opera presents Britten’s *Curlew River* and Gluck’s *Orfeo ed Euridice*

Nov. 29 at 4:30 p.m.
Chamber Music Festival: Winds & Percussion

Dec. 3 at 8 p.m.
Baroque Sinfonia

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