



# Symphony Parnassus

STEPHEN PAULSON, MUSIC DIRECTOR

## MUSSORGSKY

Prelude to "Khovanshchina"

## TCHAIKOVSKY

Violin Concerto in D Major

Sean Mori, soloist

## RACHMANINOFF

Symphonic Dances

**3 P.M. SUNDAY  
JANUARY 27, 2019**

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**2018-19 SEASON  
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Dear Friends,

Good afternoon and welcome to our Symphony Parnassus winter concert. We devote our entire program to three Russian romantic works from a period of almost seventy years: Mussorgsky's *Khovanshchina* was written in 1874; Tchaikovsky's violin concerto in 1878; and Rachmaninoff's *Symphonic Dances* in 1940.

Rachmaninoff retained the romantic spirit well into the twentieth century, as other composers were experimenting with modernism. His writing does, however, show signs of advanced harmonic thinking and off-beat rhythms.

Mussorgsky, on the other hand, dared to break with tradition early in the romantic period. His harmonies in *Khovanshchina* foreshadow modernism. Just listen for the horn section depicting gigantic Russian church bells using seventh chords that don't resolve. I find moments like this utterly exciting and fascinating!

We are thrilled to present our guest soloist, Sean Mori, in Tchaikovsky's beloved Violin Concerto. Sean is a winner of the Conservatory/Parnassus Competition, our annual collaboration with the San Francisco Conservatory Pre-College Division.

Thank you for supporting Symphony Parnassus. We hope you enjoy our performance of romantic Russian musical treasures.

**Stephen Paulson**  
Music Director

## PROGRAM

3 p.m. Sunday, January 27, 2019  
Taube Atrium Theater  
401 Van Ness Ave., San Francisco, CA 94102  
*Stephen Paulson, conductor*

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### MODEST MUSSORGSKY (1839–1881)

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#### Prelude to *Khovanschina* (1874)

6 minutes

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### PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY (1840–1893)

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#### Violin Concerto in D Major, Op. 35 (1878)

Allegro moderato  
Canzonetta: Andante  
Finale: Allegro vivacissimo

**Sean Mori, soloist**

35 minutes

— *Intermission* —

20 minutes

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### SERGEI RACHMANINOFF (1873–1943)

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#### *Symphonic Dances*, Op. 45 (1940)

Non allegro  
Andante con moto (Tempo di valse)  
Lento assai – Allegro vivace – Lento assai. Come prima – Allegro vivace

36 minutes

*Please silence all cell phones and electronic devices prior to the performance.*

## MUSICIANS

### Violin I

Vivian Ling,  
*Concertmaster*  
Annie Li,  
*Associate Concertmaster*  
Katie Belleville  
Jessica Greer  
Helene Grotans  
Christopher Liao  
Courtney Onodera  
Gianluca Pane  
Mitchell Perilla

### Violin II

Julia Lurie,  
*Principal*  
Jonathan Eldridge,  
*Associate Principal*  
Dan Ahn  
Nina Bai  
Rachel Cloues  
Nadia Herrera  
Karin Katzeff  
Harmony TomSun  
Julia Ye  
Claire Yin

### Viola

Hélène Wickett,  
*Principal*  
Tom Bodenheimer,  
*Associate Principal*  
Nick Blanchard  
Julia Kelson  
Donna Lim  
Claire Morrow  
Joan Murray  
Merle Rabine

### Cello

Jennifer Mathers,  
*Principal*  
Leo Baluk,  
*Associate Principal*  
Margaret Moores  
Chris Brann  
Brian Colfer  
Jozo Dujmovic  
Nathan Leber  
Maggie Nelson  
Katherine Robertson

### Bass

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Joseph Taylor,  
*Associate Principal*  
Paul Breslin  
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### Flute

Darcy Mironov,  
*Principal*  
Jenna Mauro

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Winslow Taub

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*Principal*  
Steve Kim

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Robyn Smith

### Clarinet

Kyle Beard,  
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Bert Baylin

### Bass Clarinet

Michael Beale

### Bassoon

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*Principal*  
Sarah Smith

### Contrabassoon

Oleksandr Kashlyuk

### Alto Saxophone

Michael Beale

### Horn

Dan Meier,  
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Robin Varga  
Peter Jilka  
John DeGiglio

### Trumpet

Chris Wilhite  
Franklin Davis  
G. Mancho Gonzalez

### Trombone

Ravi Sahae  
Ray Horton

### Bass Trombone

Forrest Jones

### Tuba

Carolyn Tillstrom

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Jonathan Goldstein

### Piano

Peter Hwang

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Michael Steadman

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Longtime San Francisco residents may remember Symphony Parnassus's ancestor, the Doctors' Symphony, which began in 1965 when a few doctors' chamber groups coalesced for the first time into an orchestra. Lyn Giovanniello, a recent member of our string bass section, was drafted by the Doctors' Symphony to be their first conductor. The group met regularly and presented concerts at what was then UC Hospital through the 1970s. Almost a decade after that organization folded, biophysics graduate student and amateur cellist Jonathan Davis re-established it as the more community-oriented UCSF Orchestra. He obtained funding from UCSF and started giving concerts in the UCSF Gym in 1989. Davis was able to tap an enthusiastic, supportive pool of both amateur and professional musicians from the faculty, staff and student body of UCSF as well as the local community. The UCSF Orchestra quickly grew, attracted large audiences, and earned a reputation for outstanding performances.

After six years at the orchestra's helm, Jonathan Davis moved to Boston to pursue his career, and Jeremy Swerling was named music director. Two years later, the orchestra elected Stephen Paulson as its third music director. After being cut from UCSF's budget in 1999, the orchestra was reorganized as a nonprofit entity with the name Symphony Parnassus, to honor its roots in San Francisco's Parnassus Heights neighborhood. Symphony Parnassus continues to attract top musical talent from the local community. In addition to members of the UCSF community, the orchestra now includes corporate executives, IT specialists, engineers, scientists and educators, as well as music students and professionals.

Over the years, Symphony Parnassus has collaborated with world-class musicians such as pianist Robin Sutherland, violist Geraldine Walther, oboist William Bennett and sopranos Lisa Vroman and Hope Briggs. Ballet legend Rudolph Nureyev made his West Coast conducting debut with our orchestra. Famed jazz saxophonist and composer John Handy premiered his *Concerto for Jazz Soloist and Orchestra* with us. With its focus on local soloists, composers and visual artists, Symphony Parnassus continues to play a unique and vital role in the Bay Area's arts community.

For further information or questions, please contact us at:

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**Stephen Paulson** has been the music director of Symphony Parnassus since 1998. Devoted to creating the best possible experience for both players and audience, he has led the ensemble through a wide variety of repertoire, drawing on the classical canon as well as new compositions. A student of George Cleve, Paulson has appeared as a guest conductor with members of the San Francisco Symphony, the Phoenix Symphony and the New World Symphony.

Paulson joined the San Francisco Symphony as principal bassoonist in 1977. Since his 1978 solo debut, he has been a frequent soloist with the symphony, performing with conductors such as Kurt Masur, Wolfgang Sawallisch, Christopher Hogwood and Helmuth Rilling. In 1995, he was one of four SFS musicians invited by Sir Georg Solti to perform with the World Orchestra for Peace, celebrating the 50th anniversary of the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland. In 2009, he was invited to be a mentor and participant in the world's first YouTube Symphony Orchestra Summit at Carnegie Hall in New York. He is also featured in the documentary series *Keeping Score*, created by Michael Tilson Thomas with the San Francisco Symphony.

In 2011, Symphony Parnassus performed Paulson's own *Bassoon Concerto* with soloist Steven Dibner, SFS associate principal bassoonist.

Paulson has been a faculty member of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music since 1978 and has given master classes at schools around the world, including the Manhattan School of Music, the New England Conservatory, the Eastman School of Music, the Shanghai Conservatory, and the Juilliard School. He has taught and performed at many summer festivals, including Aspen, the Symphony Orchestra Academy of the Pacific, the Grand Teton Music Festival, Music at Kirkwood and Music in the Vineyards.

A graduate of the Eastman School of Music, Paulson studied bassoon with K. David Van Hoesen and Mordechai Rechtman and composition with Samuel Adler. From 1970 to 1977, he served as co-principal bassoonist of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. Prior to that, he was principal bassoonist with the Rochester Philharmonic from 1968 to 1970.

Violinist **Sean Mori**, 16, has been playing violin since age 3 and gave his first solo performance at age 5.

Sean says he says he is drawn to the way music, and especially the violin, can express emotion and stories, particularly in the towering Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto. "Tchaikovsky had the ability to put in all these different colors and conflicts, and it has so many difficult emotions intertwined," he said.

His appearance with Symphony Parnassus marks the first time Sean has performed with an orchestra. He is a 2018 winner of the Symphony Parnassus / San Francisco Conservatory of Music Concerto Competition.

Though it's his first time performing as soloist with an orchestra, he's no stranger to the concert stage, having played throughout the world, from Prague to New York to Japan, and is a scholarship student of Ian Swensen and Elbert Tsai at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music.

This past year, he was a quarter-finalist in the under-15 division of the 2018 International Menuhin Competition in Geneva, Switzerland. He has won many first-place prizes as well: the United States International Music Competition, DVC/HNU Young Artist String Competition, Pacific Musical Society competition, Galante Music Festival, Nova Vista Concerto Competition, and was invited to perform at Steinway Society of the Bay Area's Young Artists Concert.

Sean lives in Palo Alto, Calif., with his parents Takeshi and Sachiko, and younger sister Jennifer, 13, who studies the cello; neither of their parents are musicians. Sean does high-school coursework through the School of Independent Learners in Los Altos, and attends the Pre-College Program at the SF Conservatory.



## MODEST MUSSORGSKY

### Prelude to *Khovanshchina* (1874)



Modest Mussorgsky (1839-1881) was a Russian pianist and composer whose works celebrated Russian art and history. To that end, between 1856 and 1870, he collaborated with fellow composers Mily Balakirev, César Cui, Alexander Borodin and Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov in Saint Petersburg. Their group was dubbed The Mighty Handful (*Moguchaya kuchka*) by their influential friend and music critic Vladimir Stasov; they became known outside Russia as The Five. Mussorgsky's

orchestral tone poem *Night on Bald Mountain*, his opera *Boris Godunov*, his *Songs and Dances of Death*, and his solo piano suite *Pictures at an Exhibition* stand among the great Russian musical works of the mid-19th century.

In September 1874, Mussorgsky completed his piano score for *Dawn On the Moskva River*. He intended the piece to be the prelude for his new opera, *Khovanshchina* (The Kovansky Affair), which lay incomplete upon his death in March 1881. Between 1872 and 1880, Mussorgsky worked hard on his four-act, five-hour-long opera, which tells of Prince Ivan Kovansky's rebellion against his young regent, Sofia Alekseyevna (1657-1704) and the two young Tsars Peter the Great and Ivan V, who were trying to bring Western reforms to Russia. The first woman regent in Russian history, Sofia reigned but seven years, from 1682 until 1689, but she accomplished much, including bringing industrialization to her country, and making Russia the first western country to sign a trade agreement with Imperial China. Prince Kovansky had helped foment the Moscow Uprising of 1682, which resulted in Sofia becoming regent on behalf of her little brother Ivan and half-brother Peter, who were crowned joint Tsars. But that fall, Kovansky turned against Sofia, intending to install himself as the new regent, and when he'd lined up his forces, Sofia was forced to flee Moscow. Later, she managed to suppress the so-called Kovanshchina (Kovansky Affair) with the help of diplomat Fyodor Shaklovity.

This episode of Russian history was suggested to Mussorgsky by his friend Stasov as a suitable topic for an opera. As Stasov noted, "It seemed to me that the struggle between the old and new Russia, the passing of the former from the stage, and the birth of the latter, was rich soil for drama." The composer enthusiastically agreed, dedicating the new work to his friend, and subtitling it "National Music Drama." Though Mussorgsky wrote the libretto for *Kovanshchina*, the music was incomplete, and very little of it was orchestrated. After Mussorgsky's death, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov revised, scored and finished the opera to his liking, and premiered it in 1886. The Prelude was first heard in St. Petersburg in February of 1886.

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*Continued on page 8*

## PROGRAM NOTES

Though *Khovanshchina* was arranged and orchestrated by the team of Igor Stravinsky and Maurice Ravel for Serge Diaghilev in 1913, and a more complete edition of the opera was made by Dmitri Shostakovich in 1959, it is Rimsky-Korsakov's orchestration that we will hear at today's concert.

Mussorgsky described his Prelude to Act I as "depicting dawn over the Moscow River, matins at cock crow, the patrol, and the taking down of the chains [on the city gates]." The atmospheric beauty and gentleness of this Prelude stand in sharp contrast to the vicious political strife of the rest of the opera. The piece begins quietly and delicately; a singular, folk-like melody emerges and is treated to slight variations, evoking the way Russian folksongs were traditionally sung, the melody being subtly modified from one verse to the next. When it is sounded by the oboe against rising strings, the curtain rises, and we see not the Moscow River, but Red Square. The music grows more animated as church domes are lit by the rising sun, and bells sound for early mass. After the bells die away, the music, like the mist from the river, gradually dissolves as well.

The work is scored for pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets and bassoons, 4 horns, timpani, tam-tam, harp and strings. A performance typically lasts between five and six minutes.

*Program notes by Franklin Davis*



### PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY

#### **Violin Concerto in D Major, Op. 35 (1878)**

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893) began piano lessons at the age of five. Within three years he could read music as well as his teacher. But a career as a musical child prodigy was not to be, as Pyotr's ever-practical parents sent him away at age 10 into nine years of schooling to prepare him for the Russian civil service, during which time he could only take occasional piano lessons. After working for four years at the Ministry of Justice, the

23-year-old Tchaikovsky abandoned his budding law career and started pursuing music study full-time at the new Saint Petersburg Conservatory. He graduated in just two years, and was soon in the employ of his alma mater as a music theory professor.

Endowed with a sensibility at once poetic and conservative—Mozart was his favorite composer—Tchaikovsky sought what he called "the higher artistic truth which springs from the mysterious depths of man's creative power and pours out into clear, intelligible, conventional forms." With his bold, original gift for beautiful melody and drama, Tchaikovsky's songs, symphonies, concertos, chamber music, ballets and operas gave him well-deserved fame.

Tchaikovsky dashed off the first version of his Violin Concerto in less than a month in the spring of 1878 while vacationing in Clarens, a Swiss resort on the shores of Lake Geneva. He had gone there to recover from the depression brought on by his disastrous marriage to Antonina Miliukova, and he was joined there by violinist Yosif Kotek, his composition pupil (and probable love interest), whose presence inspired Tchaikovsky. He sought Kotek's advice on the solo violin part, writing to his brother Anatoly, "How lovingly he's busying himself with my concerto! It goes without saying that I would have been able to do nothing without him. He plays it marvelously." To avoid any appearance of impropriety, he dedicated the work to the virtuoso Leopold Auer, who promptly pronounced its fiendishly difficult solo part "unviolinistic" and refused to perform it. To his credit, Auer did offer to help revise it, but he procrastinated so long that Tchaikovsky, in a huff, awarded both the dedication and the honor of the first performance to Adolph Brodsky. The long-delayed premiere took place in Vienna on December 4, 1881. Years later, Auer made amends: He not only championed the concerto tirelessly in the concert hall (in the revised version that he had first promised to make), but ensured that it would become a mainstay of the violin repertoire by teaching it to Nathan Milstein, Jascha Heifetz, and other up-and-coming virtuosos. It is that revised version which we will hear at today's concert.

The Violin Concerto is scored for pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets & bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, timpani and strings. The gently lilting tune that the first violins play at the outset of the *Allegro moderato* is a red herring: almost immediately a drum roll dials up the tension, as the first theme, in D major, emerges in a series of short phrases. The solo violin enters in its lowest register, stretches its wings in a graceful arpeggio, then settles down to develop this theme in a warmly lyrical fashion, adding another, dotted-rhythm theme as its counterpart. After the introduction of a beautifully romantic second theme, the concerto grows steadily more virtuosic. The first theme reappears in various guises, now accompanied by majestic brass fanfares, now embedded in delicate violinistic filigree. Coming on the heels of a blazing orchestral climax, the brilliant solo cadenza leads to an extended synopsis of the *Allegro*, finally rushing headlong into a rousing finish.

The relaxed *Canzonetta*, with its sultry, Slavic-sounding theme in G minor, provides a welcome respite from the intensity of the concerto's outer movements. Low woodwinds intone a plaintive melody in G minor that frames the the movement at its beginning and end. Between statements of the G minor theme, a lovely, yearning, more European-sounding melody in E-flat major makes but one appearance. After a woodwind intonation at the movement's end, a series of quiet chord changes effects a seamless transition to the spitfire Finale. The orchestra pounces suddenly, with a fiery first statement of the movement's main theme. Solo violin interrupts with a warm-up cadenza, then presents the main theme with orchestra in a double-time sprint in the key of D major. The movement's Rondo form allows for contrasting passages in A major where the music slows to a languid andante, then winds itself back up and continues on its quicksilver way. Coming out of the final slow section, Tchaikovsky has his fiddler slowly dial up the orchestra into a frenzied, headlong climax, with violin and orchestra throwing ever-shortening phrases back and forth at each other, and then makes both of them stop on a dime.

*Program notes by Franklin Davis*



## **SERGEI RACHMANINOFF** ***Symphonic Dances, Op. 45 (1940)***

Russian composer, virtuoso pianist and conductor Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943) was born into a musical family, and started playing piano at the age of four. In 1892 he graduated from the Moscow Conservatory, already with several orchestral and piano pieces to his credit. A sensitive soul who often went into fits of despondency when his music failed to make a favorable impression, Rachmaninoff fell into a four-year-long

depression in 1897, after his First Symphony received negative reviews. It was only through a process of successful therapy that he embarked upon and completed his Second Piano Concerto, which was enthusiastically received. Rachmaninoff conducted at the Bolshoi Theatre for the next 16 years.

One of the world's great pianists, Rachmaninoff concertized for most of his life, but his busy performing schedule severely curtailed his composing time. Rachmaninoff completed only six compositions after 1918, when he escaped his native Russia after the October Revolution to live in the United States and tour internationally. His *Symphonic Dances* of 1940 was his last composition. It was originally written for two pianos, with the title *Fantastic Dances*, which the composer often played privately with his neighbor and friend Vladimir Horowitz. Rachmaninoff orchestrated the *Dances* in the fall of 1940 and it was premiered on January 3rd, 1941, by the Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Eugene Ormandy, to whom the work is dedicated.

Its title suggests the music can be danced to, and that was apparently Rachmaninoff's intent. His 1934 work, *Rhapsody on the Theme of Paganini*, was made by choreographer Michel Fokine into a ballet that enjoyed great success upon its 1939 premiere by the Royal Ballet in London. So, Rachmaninoff was again inspired to collaborate with Fokine on a ballet. He played the *Dances* on the piano for Fokine, who was enthusiastic. But fate intervened, and Fokine's death in 1942 put an end to their plans. It wasn't until the 1980s that the *Dances* were first choreographed for a ballet. Its three movements are filled with rhythmic vivacity, as well as the lush orchestration for which Rachmaninoff was famous.

The first movement, marked *Non Allegro*, features driving rhythms and a quickly descending 3-note motif which is extensively developed. A contrastingly languid, dreamy middle section begins with a plaintive oboe solo, echoed by clarinet and bassoon, which creates the texture for an alto saxophone to play a long-phrased minor-key melody that's later taken up by the violins. Staccato murmurs from low clarinets gradually re-ignite the quick, driving pulse of the initial *allegro* with its 3-note motif. But this reprise is rather understated, and the movement ends softly.

The second movement, marked *Andante con moto (Tempo di valse)*, is indeed a symphonic waltz. It begins with a series of fanfares played by muted trumpets and horns; later on, these fanfares will both quietly underscore and boldly interrupt the proceedings. The body of the movement is a slithery *Valse Diabolique* full of hesitations and shifting tempos, at times recalling Ravel's *La Valse*. This virtuosic music becomes, in turns, more mercurial and languid as it reaches its quiet end.

The finale begins with a slow introduction (*Lento assai*), then proceeds quickly (*Allegro vivace*) in syncopated triplet rhythms with a decidedly Spanish flair, reminiscent of Debussy's *Iberia*. Later on, there's an extended slow section which develops the introduction's seed motif into beautiful, heartfelt melodies, then an extended quick section and coda. Listen for quotations of the Gregorian death chant *Dies Irae*, first played by the trumpet. It is a defining motif in Rachmaninoff's final compositions, alluding to the composer's own mortality. But near the end of the movement, he counterbalances it with a quotation of the Alleluia from his own 1915 choral work, the *All-Night Vigil*, as if to affirm final victory over death.

The *Symphonic Dances* is scored for 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, alto saxophone, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, harp, piano, timpani, side drum, bass drum, triangle, tambourine, tam-tam, cymbals, chimes, glockenspiel, xylophone, and strings. A performance typically lasts about 36 minutes.

*Program notes by Franklin Davis*

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Thank you in advance for your generosity and commitment to bringing musical excellence to the San Francisco Bay Area for another 29 years.

## Robert "Kyle" Beard

**Instrument:** Clarinet

**Hometown:** Keene, New Hampshire

**Joined Symphony Parnassus:** 2017

**Day job:** Woodwind Teacher &  
 Repair Technician

**When and why did you select your instrument?**

I selected the clarinet at the age of 12, when I asked my school band teacher which instrument was most like the recorder; her reply was the clarinet, and I have been playing ever since!

**What do you like best about playing clarinet?**

My favorite thing about the clarinet is its versatility in character and depth of expression. It is capable of demonstrating a wide range of emotion, from joyful to mournful, and it is exciting to explore the instrument's expressive capacity.

**What book have you read recently?**

I recently read, *The F Word*, a book about the psychology and linguistic implications of profanity across the world's languages and cultures.

**Hobbies and Interests:**

My other activities include studying Mandarin Chinese, linguistics, hiking, and playing video games.



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# **Symphony Parnassus** STEPHEN PAULSON, MUSIC DIRECTOR



*Our 29th season continues!*

**SUNDAY, APRIL 7, 2019 AT 3 P.M.**

**TAUBE ATRIUM THEATER, SAN FRANCISCO**

CHABRIER: "Joyeuse Marche"

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*Alex Zhou, soloist*

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