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Saturday, March 8, 2025 | 7:30PM

Terrace Theater

Classical series



Musical Fusion with Arturo Sandoval

Eckart Preu, conductor | Arturo Sandoval, trumpet

Adam Schoenberg *Cool Cat*

Gershwin *Cuban Overture*

Arturo Sandoval *Concerto for Trumpet No. 2*

***** 20 min. Intermission *****

Hindemith *Symphonic Metamorphosis*

Rachmaninoff (arr. Bob Barrett) *SERGE* (themes from Piano Concerto No. 2).
World Premiere.

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*Program and artists are
subject to change.*

Adam Schoenberg – *Cool Cat*

Question: *How does one pay appropriate homage to a beloved and iconic community symbol of independence, daring, and heart?* This was the challenge faced by Los Angeles-based composer Adam Schoenberg (no relation to Arnold, btw) when the Los Angeles Philharmonic asked him to compose a fanfare in tribute to P-22, the intrepid mountain lion who miraculously survived in Griffith Park for 10 years until his death in December, 2022. During P-22's decade of tenaciously resourceful residency in the unlikely urban L.A. wilderness, with regular forays into the streets and backyards of neighborhoods abutting the park in the Hollywood Hills and nearby Silverlake, the "Hollywood Cat" acquired a huge fan club and became the poster cat for a highly popular campaign to preserve the endangered California mountain lions. When he died in 2022, the city mourned.

Of his energetic and joyous work, composer Schoenberg – who teaches music at Occidental College and lives just over the hill from P-22's Griffith Park stomping grounds – shared that "*Cool Cat* is a celebration more than anything else, as I was specifically asked to not write an elegy."

Fun fact: *Cool Cat* received its premiere performance at the Hollywood Bowl on September 12, 2023, exactly ten years to the day from the premiere in 2013 of Schoenberg's first Los Angeles Philharmonic commission, *Bounce*.

George Gershwin – *Cuban Overture*

In 1932, George Gershwin enjoyed a whirlwind vacation to Havana with a group of bachelor friends. This first exposure to the sultry, steamy island nation and its storied nightlife, percussive rhythms, and characteristic Latin popular music took him by storm – he was mesmerized by the totally exotic flavor of his vacation, which he remembered later as "two hysterical weeks... where no sleep was had." Upon his return to New York, inspired by the indelible experience and wanting to share the excitement of it with Americans who had not visited Cuba, he wrote his *Cuban Overture* (originally entitled *Rumba*, but later renamed so as to be more "dignified").

By then, Gershwin was a mature and wildly successful composer with a 20-year track record of Broadway shows, popular songs, and "serious" music; *Rhapsody in Blue* and *An American in Paris* were already phenomenal blockbusters. However, success was not enough for Gershwin. With a laser-focus on continuously improving his compositional technique, he was at that time studying to hone his orchestration skills with an eminent Russian emigré named Joseph Schillinger. Schillinger's student roster also included other contemporary luminaries such as Tommy Dorsey, Benny Goodman, and Oscar Levant. Gershwin's studies imparted a new sophistication to his later works, but never quashed his genius for innovation. *Cuban Overture* prominently features four Cuban instruments that he brought home from Havana, and he specified that they be prominently positioned in front of the conductor's podium.

Cuban Overture received its premiere at the New York Philharmonic's first ever all-Gershwin concert, a gargantuan sold-out event performed at Lewisohn Stadium to an audience of more than 17,000. Said the composer, "It was the most exciting night I have ever had."

Arturo Sandoval – Concerto for Trumpet No. 2

Virtuoso trumpeter Arturo Sandoval defies categorization. He roared into the American musical consciousness at the 1978 Newport Jazz Festival where with his Cuban jazz ensemble *Irakere* (also including the likes of Paquito D’Rivera and Chucho Valdés), he took the proverbial roof off. In the five decades since that historic entré, his meteoric career has continued and his musical interests have ranged panoramically. He is a soloist, a recording artist, a film soundtrack musician, a band leader, a classical music star, a composer and improviser, and a proud acolyte of his mentor and idol, Dizzy Gillespie. He defies categorization, except to the extent that everything he has undertaken in the seven-and-counting decades he has been performing music qualifies as groundbreaking.

Sandoval grew up immersed in music, playing multiple instruments before settling on the trumpet. He began performing on stage in his native Cuba at the age of thirteen, studied for three years in his teens at La Escuela Nacional de Arte in Havana, and became a member of both the All-Star National Band of Cuba and the Orquesta Cubana de Música Moderna. He also continued to perform the Afro-Cuban jazz upon which he was raised, and in secret he was studying and listening to contraband recordings of American jazz, which was forbidden under the regime of Fidel Castro. Eventually, when the nation’s isolation relaxed enough to allow a return of the cruise industry, Sandoval was able to meet his idol, Dizzy Gillespie, who came to perform in Cuba in 1977 on the very first ship to arrive. Sandoval volunteered to be Gillespie’s driver and spent the day escorting him to destinations all around Havana. Imagine Gillespie’s surprise when, later in the evening, he arrived at a club jam session and discovered the trumpeter wailing onstage was none other than his driver. Sandoval and Gillespie were fast friends until the latter’s passing in 1992, and it was with help from Gillespie in 1990, while Sandoval was touring with his United Nations Orchestra, that Sandoval and his family were able to seek political asylum through the American Embassy in Athens.

The Concerto for Trumpet No. 2 is both an evolution of Sandoval’s musical oeuvre and a personal contribution to the trumpet repertoire by the prodigious multi-hyphenate musician. “The thing is,” he says, “I’ve been playing these concertos that everyone plays all the time... We just don’t have enough new material.” Both this work and his 1st trumpet concerto demonstrate Sandoval’s deep love and appreciation for classical music, reflecting the foundational music education he received during his time at the Escuela Nacional.

“For ... the jazz musician, the melody is just an excuse to improvise; but in classical music, it’s the other way around. It’s two different states of mind. With classical you have to be extremely well prepared, you have to know the music very well, and you have to play as neat and clean, as perfect as possible.”

Hear Arturo Valdes and his Irakere colleagues in 1977 here:

<https://havanamusicsschool.com/irakere-a-name-that-makes-history/>

Paul Hindemith – *Symphonic Metamorphosis*

Arguably Paul Hindemith’s most enduringly popular orchestral composition, the *Symphonic Metamorphosis After Themes by Carl Maria von Weber* has quite a complex mouthful of a title, which is why it is so routinely truncated to *Symphonic Metamorphosis* (although the composer disliked the shorthand). The work’s origin story is equally complex. By the 1930s, Hindemith had built a very successful career as a performer and composer in his native Germany and around Europe. He also held a respected academic position at the Berlin Academy of Music when Adolf Hitler’s influence on German culture

began to take hold. After enduring several years of increasing trouble from the rising Nazis, he and his Jewish wife Gertrud left Germany for Switzerland in 1936. During their stay in Switzerland he accepted an invitation from dancer and choreographer Léonide Massine to collaborate on developing a ballet, *Nobilissima Visione*, which was well-received. Therefore, in 1940, after he and Gertrud had departed Europe for New York, it was a welcome opportunity when Massine again invited Hindemith to join him in a new project to compose a ballet around motifs from the musical works of Carl Maria von Weber. Hindemith accepted, swiftly composed two pieces to set the tone, and shared them with his colleague. Unfortunately, Massine detested the music. The straitlaced Hindemith, in turn, loathed the revelation that Salvador Dalí had been enlisted to design surrealistic backdrops and costumes. These and other personal differences irrevocably soured the friendship. The partnership ended, the ballet was cancelled, and the compositions were temporarily shelved.

However, Hindemith was happy with the music and after a lengthy cooling off period he took it up again, transforming and developing Weber's themes into the orchestral suite on the program tonight. *Symphonic Metamorphosis* was an immediate hit when it premiered with the New York Philharmonic in 1944. Hindemith remained in the U.S., composing and teaching at Yale, until 1953 when he returned to Zurich and eventually to Frankfurt and his homeland.

Rachmaninoff (arr. Bob Barrett) - SERGE (themes from Piano Concerto No. 2). World Premiere.

"I'm a huge fan of Ravel, Debussy, Satie," says Arturo Sandoval, "and I am also a huge fan of Sergei Rachmaninoff. I love those piano concertos; that's my favorite music. Romantic music. And why? Because the melodies are so beautiful!"

This passion for Rachmaninoff was the inspiration for composer Bob Barrett's *SERGE: Themes from Piano Concerto No. 2*, a collaboration between the two musicians which receives its concert debut performance tonight. "In 2020, during the pandemic, Arturo and I began getting together in his studio... with no intent in mind other than maintaining some sense of sanity during a time when concerts and all other work had come to a halt," says Barrett. With Sandoval on record that he especially loves the 2nd piano concerto, "we wanted to create an all-new standalone piece designed specifically as a feature for Arturo..... So I guess you could say something good (and musical) came out of the pandemic!"

Susan Swinburne has been a lover and student of music since demanding piano lessons at age six. Her work in orchestra management has enriched her life personally and professionally for the past three decades. A habitué of concert halls throughout southern California, she lives, listens, writes, and researches in the South Bay.

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