

Minnesota Orchestra

David Afkham, conductor | Emanuel Ax, piano

Friday, October 29, 2021, 8 pm | Orchestra Hall
 Saturday, October 30, 2021, 8 pm | Orchestra Hall

Unsus Chin	<i>subito con forza</i>	ca. 6'
Ludwig van Beethoven	Concerto No. 4 in G major for Piano and Orchestra, Opus 58 Allegro moderato Andante con moto Rondo: Vivace <i>Emanuel Ax, piano</i>	ca. 34'
I N T E R M I S S I O N		ca. 20'
Dmitri Shostakovich	Symphony No. 10 in E minor, Opus 93 Moderato Allegro Allegretto Andante - Allegro	ca. 55'

pre-concert

Concert Preview with Patricia Ryan
 Friday, October 29, 7 pm, Target Atrium
 Saturday, October 30, 7 pm, Target Atrium

Minnesota Orchestra concerts are broadcast live on Friday evenings on stations of [YourClassical Minnesota Public Radio](#), including KSJN 99.5 FM in the Twin Cities.





David Afkham, conductor

David Afkham was announced as chief conductor and artistic director of the Orquesta y Coro Nacional de España beginning in September 2019. This position builds on the success of his tenure as the orchestra's principal conductor since 2014. Afkham is in high demand as a guest conductor with some of the world's finest orchestras and opera houses and has established a reputation as one of the most sought-after conductors to emerge from Germany in recent years. His upcoming highlights as guest conductor include returns with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Philadelphia Orchestra, Münchner Philharmoniker, HR Sinfonieorchester Frankfurt, Swedish Radio Symphony,

Orchestra of Accademia Santa Cecilia and NHK Symphony Orchestra, as well as debuts with the Pittsburgh Symphony and Dresden Philharmonic. He was the winner of the 2008 Donatella Flick Conducting Competition in London and was the inaugural recipient of the Nestlé and Salzburg Festival Young Conductors Award in 2010. From 2009 to 2012 he was assistant conductor of the Gustav Mahler Jugendorchester. More: davidafkham.com.



Emanuel Ax, piano

Emanuel Ax made his New York debut in the Young Concert Artists Series, and in 1974 won the first Arthur Rubinstein International Piano Competition in Tel Aviv. In 1975 he won the Michaels

Award of Young Concert Artists, followed four years later by the Avery Fisher Prize. Last spring, his recitals and orchestral appearances were postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and like many artists around the world, he responded to these unprecedented circumstances creatively. He hosted "The Legacy of Great Pianists," part of the online production Live with Carnegie Hall, highlighting legendary pianists who have performed at Carnegie Hall. Ax has been a Sony Classical exclusive recording artist since 1987, his most recent release being Brahms Trios with cellist Yo-Yo Ma and pianist Leonidas Kavakos. He received GRAMMY® Awards for the second and third volumes of his cycle of Haydn's piano sonatas. He has also made a series of Grammy-winning recordings with Yo-Yo Ma of the Beethoven and Brahms sonatas for cello and piano. More: opus3artists.com, emanuelax.com.

one-minute notes

Chin: *subito con forza*

To mark last year's occasion of Ludwig van Beethoven's 250th birthday, Unsuk Chin composed *subito con forza* (Italian for "Suddenly, with force"), inspired by the conversation books that helped Beethoven communicate in person as his hearing diminished. Brief, visceral and powerful, it includes many references to Beethoven's music—hidden and overt.

Beethoven: Piano Concerto No. 4

Ludwig van Beethoven's lyrical Fourth Piano Concerto begins with soloist rather than orchestra, foreshadowing the work's soft-spoken mood. Most striking is the second movement, in which harsh strings are calmed by the gentle piano.

Shostakovich: Symphony No. 10

Dmitri Shostakovich's Tenth is a work of great extremes, requiring delicate strands of sound from a massive ensemble, framing tiny movements with huge ones, communicating darkly but rising to a high-spirited conclusion. Many assumed this enigmatic symphony was a protest against Stalin and his oppression, but the composer would acknowledge only that his wish was "to portray human emotions and passions."



Unsuk Chin

Born: July 14, 1961,
Seoul, South Korea

subito con forza

Premiered: September 24, 2020

In the classical music world, one ripple effect of the COVID-19 pandemic has been the curtailing or reimagining of many initiatives to celebrate Ludwig van Beethoven's 250th birthday year of 2020. (The Minnesota Orchestra, for instance, postponed its Summer at Orchestra Hall series titled "The Beethoven Influence" from 2020 to July 2022.)

In some areas of the world, though, the Beethoven show went on—enough so to allow for the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra's September 2020 world premiere of *subito con forza*, a brief Beethoven-inspired concert opener composed by South Korean-born Unsuk Chin for the 250th anniversary occasion. Although 2020 is now in the rear-view mirror, the work's rollout is continuing at a rapid pace. The Hallé Orchestra's U.K. premiere took place at the BBC Proms in early September 2021, and this week the Minnesota Orchestra is giving the first U.S. performances (outpacing the San Francisco Symphony by only a few days). In coming months, performances are scheduled by the Oslo Philharmonic, Luxembourg Philharmonic, Vienna Radio Symphony, Magdeburgische Philharmonie and Santa Cruz Symphony.

suddenly, with force

In many scores of Western classical music, the Italian language is used for tempo markings and other performance indications. One such direction is *subito con forza*, or "suddenly, with force." It has appeared in the scores of various composers, but Chin seems to be the first to take the term, typically seen in small type and visible only to the performers, and turn it into a composition's title.

Chin's *subito con forza* takes an unexpected approach to honoring Beethoven's 250th birthday: it is inspired not solely by his music, but rather by the written "conversation books" Beethoven began to accumulate as his deteriorating hearing impacted his life and work. He carried these blank booklets with him for his acquaintances to write their sides of conversations, while he answered aloud; he also jotted his own thoughts and reminders along with occasional musical sketches. The concept of using these books as a basis for a composition came from the "non

bthvn projekt" of the Kolner Philharmonie's KölnMusik, which co-commissioned *subito con forza* along with BBC Radio 3 and the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra.

"breaking through forms"

In 2020, Chin related to musicologist and writer Thea Derks that she was particularly drawn to Beethoven's remark "Dur und Moll. Ich bin ein Gewinner," which translates as "Major and minor. I'm a winner." Beethoven, Chin says, is one of her favorite composers because "he was constantly looking for new directions. He was the first consciously modern composer, in the sense that every piece asked for original solutions, even if this meant breaking through existing forms....What particularly appeals to me are the enormous contrasts: from volcanic eruptions to extreme serenity."

Subito con forza is scored for an orchestra that is in part typical of Beethoven's early symphonies and several of his concertos—winds and brass in pairs (with no trombones or tuba), timpani and strings—but augmented by piano and a large percussion array. It begins—as advertised—suddenly, with force, and the composer reports that it "contains some hidden references to Beethoven's music." Some of those references are more overt, such as a brass aside on the Fifth Symphony's famous opening rhythm, and the harmonic language is distinctly modern. At this week's concerts, this visceral and unpredictable music serves as a prelude to one of Beethoven's most poetic works, the Fourth Piano Concerto.

about the composer

Born in Seoul in 1961, Chin has lived in Berlin since 1988, and her music is described by her publisher Boosey & Hawkes as "modern in language, but lyrical and non-doctrinaire in communicative power." She is routinely commissioned by leading musical organizations, and her works have been showcased at major festivals and concert series in Asia, Europe and North America by ensembles such as the Berlin Philharmonic, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, BBC Symphony Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic and Tokyo Symphony. She has also composed an opera, *Alice in Wonderland*, along with works for chamber ensembles, solo piano, voices and electronics. Initially self-taught in music, she studied composition at Seoul National University as well as with György Ligeti at the Hochschule für Musik and Theater Hamburg.

Chin has been a composer in residence for numerous ensembles, most notably serving an 11-year tenure with the Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra, where she founded and oversaw its contemporary music series. From 2011 to 2020 she served as artistic director of the "Music of Today" series of the Philharmonia Orchestra in London, and in 2022 she will begin a five-year appointment as artistic director of the Tongyeong International



Festival in South Korea. She recently earned the 2021 Leonie Sonning Music Prize, adding to her long list of honors that includes one of the most prestigious and lucrative prizes in classical composition, the Grawemeyer Award, conferred in 2004 for her Violin Concerto.

In addition to *subito con forza*, Chin's most recent large-scale works include *Chant des Enfants des Étoiles* for choirs and orchestra, premiered within the inaugural events at the Lotte Concert Hall in Seoul in 2016; *Chorós Chordón*, which the Berlin Philharmonic took to Asia in 2017; and *SPIRA*, a concerto for orchestra premiered in 2019 by the Los Angeles Philharmonic. Minnesota Orchestra audiences will hear more of her music at Orchestra Hall next February, when guest conductor Dima Slobodeniouk will lead her *Frontispiece*.

Instrumentation: 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani, 3 snare drums, 2 cymbals, crotales, 2 pitched gongs, guiro, tambourine, large tamtam, triangle, whip, xylophone, marimba, vibraphone, chimes, piano and strings

Program note by **Carl Schroeder**.



Ludwig van Beethoven

Born: December 16, 1770,
Bonn, Germany

Died: March 25, 1827,
Vienna, Austria

Concerto No. 4 in G major for Piano and Orchestra, Opus 58

Public premiere: December 22, 1808

When Ludwig van Beethoven departed for Vienna in November 1792, encouraged by the prospect of becoming a Haydn pupil, Mozart had been dead for only a year. In hindsight, it is hard not to imagine that destiny was compensating for the cruel loss of Mozart by sending this young lion of a pianist to Vienna, which was then Europe's crossroad for classical music.

fragile pianos, stolen cadenzas

Though he had strong roots in 18th-century Classicism, Beethoven's alliance with Haydn did not last long, and he soon went his own way. He emerged as Romanticism's pre-eminent composer for the piano, which was steadily improving but was not yet strong enough to support all that Beethoven demanded. Plumbing the poetry as well as the power of the tantalizing new pianoforte, Beethoven wrote five piano concertos, along with 32 sonatas and diverse chamber works with piano, and he changed keyboard style forever.

No piano was safe in his hands, as the late Harold C. Schonberg emphasized in "String Snapper, Hands on High," the Beethoven chapter in *The Great Pianists*. Still a fragile instrument in those days, with a resonance too small for what the composer heard in his mind's ear, the lightweight pianoforte proved no match for his power as a performer, or for his conceptions as a composer who thought orchestrally for the instrument. Nobody ever claimed that Beethoven's playing was perfect, but all agreed that its impact was overwhelming, and that he strove for the big sound.

As a piano improviser Beethoven was without peer, at least until Liszt came along. He also tended to be pugnacious, and when he realized that would-be rivals were stealing whatever they could recall of his extemporizations, claiming it as their own, he determined to terminate the cadenza thievery by writing the notes down. A few years after completing this concerto, he produced a number of cadenzas for this work. He also began to regulate the performer, cautioning in the finale, "Let the cadenza be short." No doubt Beethoven would have agreed with Sir Donald Tovey, who said, "A bad cadenza is the very appendicitis of music."

premiere at a legendary concert

The Concerto in G major was composed in 1805-06, near the end of Beethoven's career as Vienna's reigning pianist, when deafness was curtailing his appearances. In 1807 he unveiled it at a private subscription concert, but its public premiere was deferred until December 22, 1808, at the legendary Beethoven *Akademie* (a term for concerts and recitals) that also included the premieres of the Fifth and Sixth Symphonies and the Choral Fantasy, along with other works.

allegro moderato. This most poetic of Beethoven concertos, the fourth work on that marathon program, must have come as a surprise to the listeners. Its start was astonishing: the piano alone presents a sweetly harmonized theme, almost as if in a reverie of improvisation; the first two bars, in fact, consist mostly of repeated notes cast in a rhythmic motif that will pervade the entire movement. All is quiet, introspective. Repeating the thought from a distant key, the orchestral strings hardly dare raise their sound, except for a single emphatic note, one of those *sforzandos* (sudden loud notes) that intensify expression. This was Romanticism, and it was new, especially in the way it focused on the inner self—restraining the impulse to virtuosity in favor of substance, intimate and serene.

Once the piano has spoken the subdued main thought, affirmed by the orchestra in a brighter key, it drops out for nearly 70 bars before returning to the scene. In the meantime, thanks to the orchestral exposition, the subjects have become very familiar. Returning quietly, the piano soon sweeps into brilliant scales that make way for the principal theme, which now engages orchestra



and soloist as equal partners. When the lilting second subject reappears in clear violin and wind tones, the piano supplies a backdrop of rippling figurations—quite virtuosic in fact, without losing sight of the fundamental lyricism. The development culminates in a resounding chordal pronouncement of the principal idea that demonstrates how much power Beethoven demanded from the instrument.

andante con moto. Now follows one of the most striking movements in concerto literature: Franz Liszt compared its dialogue to that of Orpheus taming the wild beasts with his music. The stubborn resistance of the bestial voice, low and rough in the strings, is gradually eroded by the plaintive tones of the piano, which will not give up. Its pleas are rendered in as *cantabile* (singing) a style as possible. Beethoven's dramatic scene for keyboard and strings has not one excessive note. The music is lean, and the logic persuasive, as the keyboard's alluring rhetoric conquers all.

rondo: vivace. Once the luminous E-minor harmonies of the slow movement have dissolved, the concerto forges ahead without a break. Strings whisper the vivacious tune that sets the *Rondo* finale in gear, whereupon the piano reappears, adding a syncopated jolt to make the refrain even more pungent. In contrast, the responding strain is songful, without sacrificing speed or playfulness. Nowhere will this finale be shy or subdued. Its abundant ideas propel a development that crackles with wit and imagination. After the cadenza Beethoven insists be short, a gigantic coda continues the boisterous antics, quickened to *presto* and more irrepressible than ever.

Instrumentation: solo piano with orchestra comprising flute, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani and strings

Program note by *Mary Ann Feldman*.



Dmitri Shostakovich

Born: September 25, 1906,
St. Petersburg, Russia

Dies: August 9, 1975,
Moscow, Russia

Symphony No. 10 in E minor, Opus 93

Premiered: December 17, 1953

dmitri Shostakovich and other Russian composers were pilloried at the infamous 1948 Congress of the Union of Soviet Composers, a showcase inquisition put on by a government intent on keeping its artists on a short leash. Shostakovich was dismissed from his teaching positions and forced to read a humiliating confession. Then, as he supported his family by writing film scores and patriotic music, he privately composed the music *he* wanted to write and kept it back, waiting for a more liberal atmosphere. Soon after Stalin's death on March 5, 1953, he set to work on his Tenth Symphony, which was completed that October and premiered by Yevgeny Mravinsky and the Leningrad Philharmonic that December 17.

a matter of debate

This imposing work, dark and somber, touched off a firestorm in Russia, where it was regarded as a challenge to Soviet control of Russian artists. A conference was called in Moscow in the spring of 1954 to try to come to terms with music that was so politically incorrect. After three days of debate, the conference came to a compromise approval of this music, declaring—with considerable mental gymnastics—that the Shostakovich Tenth represented “an optimistic tragedy.”

the music: struggles, signatures and shifts

moderato. The music begins quietly and ominously, with rising and falling patterns of three notes. More animated material follows: a wistful tune for solo clarinet and a dark waltz for solo flute. Simple figures explode violently across the span of this movement, which rises to a series of craggy climaxes. After so much mighty struggle, the movement vanishes on the most delicate strands of sound: solo piccolo, barely audible timpani rolls and widely spaced pizzicato strokes.

allegro. The second movement, brief and brutal, rips to life with frenzied energy and does not stop until it vanishes on a whirlwind. Listeners will detect the rising pattern of three notes that opened the first movement, but here they are spit out like

bursts of machine-gun fire. Some view this movement as a musical portrait of Stalin, but the composer's son Maxim has specifically denied this.

allegretto. After the fury of the second movement, the third begins almost whimsically. The violins' opening gesture repeats the three-note phrase that underpins so much of this symphony, and we move to what is distinctive about this movement: one of the earliest appearances of Shostakovich's musical signature in his works. High woodwinds sing out the four-note motto D/E-flat/C/B. In German notation, E-flat is S and B is H, and the resulting motto spells DSCH, the composer's initials in their German spelling: Dmitri SHostakovich.

This musical calling card would appear in many subsequent Shostakovich works, at times seeming to be an assertion of Shostakovich's existence and his independence. Also notable is this movement's horn call, ringing out 12 times across its span. In this enigmatic movement, one senses a private drama being played out. The music slides into silence with woodwinds chirping out the DSCH motto one final time.

andante - allegro. The finale opening returns to the mood of the very beginning, with somber low strings beneath lonely woodwind cries. When our sensibilities are thoroughly darkened, Shostakovich suddenly shifts gears. Solo clarinet offers a taut call to order, and the violins launch into an *Allegro* that pushes the symphony to an almost too conventional happy ending.

What are we to make of this conclusion, apparently shaped by the requisite high spirits of Socialist Realism? It has unsettled many listeners, who feel it a violation of the powerful music that preceded it. The source of the power of this work continues to elude our understanding, even as we are swept up in its somber strength.

Instrumentation: 2 flutes, piccolo (1 flute also doubling piccolo), 3 oboes (1 doubling English horn), 3 clarinets (1 doubling E-flat clarinet), 3 bassoons (1 doubling contrabassoon), 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, tambourine, tamtam, triangle, xylophone and strings

Program note by **Eric Bromberger.**

This week's performances of **Unsuik Chin's *subito con forza*** are the work's first-ever performances in the United States. The Minnesota Orchestra has performed her music on one previous program: a selection from her opera *Alice in Wonderland* appeared on a series of Young People's Concerts in January 2018. Next February the Orchestra will perform another of her works, *Frontispiece*, which she says is a "time lapse of a kind of the history of music: certain aspects of a number of key symphonic works of different epochs are being evoked and poured into new moulds." Chin is also a mentor of Donghoon Shin, another composer whose music the Orchestra played earlier this month—the work *The Hunter's Funeral*.

The Minnesota Orchestra, then known as the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra, first performed **Ludwig van Beethoven's Fourth Piano Concerto** on January 5, 1915, at the Minneapolis Auditorium, with founding Music Director Emil Oberhoffer conducting an all-Beethoven program and Leonard Borwick as the piano soloist. During the Orchestra's 118-year history it has played the work more than 100 times with esteemed soloists such as Glenn Gould, Hélène Grimaud, Dame Myra Hess, Garrick Ohlsson, Arthur Rubinstein, Rudolf Serkin and André Watts. In 2009 the Orchestra, under Osmo Vänskä's direction, recorded the work with Yevgeny Sudbin for an album on the BIS Records label.

The Orchestra's initial performance of **Dmitri Shostakovich's Symphony No. 10** came on February 3, 1967, at Northrop Memorial Auditorium, under the baton of Stanislaw Skrowaczewski. That performance came a week to the day after NASA's Apollo program was suspended due to a fire that killed three astronauts during a launch pad test of the Apollo 1 spacecraft. Skrowaczewski later led the Shostakovich work in one of the final concerts of his 19-year tenure as the Orchestra's music director in April 1979.