

MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA

Elim Chan, conductor
Benjamin Beilman, violin

Thursday, May 9, 2024, 11AM
Friday, May 10, 2024, 8PM

Orchestra Hall

Unsuik Chin	<i>subito con forza</i>	CA. 6'
Erich Wolfgang Korngold	Concerto in D major for Violin and Orchestra, Opus 35 Moderato nobile Romance: Andante Finale: Allegro assai vivace <i>Benjamin Beilman, violin</i>	CA. 23'
	I N T E R M I S S I O N	CA. 20'
Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky	Symphony No. 2 in C minor, Opus 17, <i>Little Russian</i> Andante sostenuto – Allegro vivo Andantino marziale, quasi moderato Scherzo Finale: Moderato assai	CA. 33'

PRE-CONCERT

Concert Preview with Loki Karuna

Thursday, May 9, 10:15am, Target Atrium | Friday, May 10, 7:15pm, Target Atrium

THANK YOU

The 2023–24 Classical Season is presented by Ameriprise Financial.

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.



ELIM CHAN,
CONDUCTOR

One of the most sought-after artists of her generation, Elim Chan conducts a repertoire ranging from Classical to contemporary symphonic works. She was guest conductor of the Royal Scottish National Orchestra from 2018 to 2023 and has been chief conductor of the Antwerp Symphony Orchestra since 2019. This season—her final as chief conductor—she will present that orchestra in the Benelux with soloists including Sol Gabetta and Midori. Other highlights of her 2023-24 season include debuts with the Salzburg Festival, Orchestre de Paris, Staatskapelle Berlin, Staatskapelle Dresden, New York Philharmonic, Orchestre Métropolitain in Montreal, Seattle Symphony and Minnesota Orchestra. She also returns to the Los Angeles Philharmonic, St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, Oslo Philharmonic, Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra and Philharmonia Orchestra. In spring 2023, the Orquesta Sinfónica de Castilla y León announced a three-year collaboration with Chan as associate conductor, focusing on Stravinsky’s ballets. A native of Hong Kong, in 2014 she was the first female winner of the Donatella Flick Conducting Competition, enabling her to spend the 2015-16 season as assistant conductor at the London Symphony Orchestra, working closely with Valery Gergiev. The following season she joined the Dudamel Fellowship program of the Los Angeles Philharmonic. More: ccm-international.de, elimchan.nl.



BENJAMIN BEILMAN,
VIOLIN

Benjamin Beilman, one of the leading violinists of his generation, has won international praise for his passionate performances and deep rich tone. His 2023-24 season includes his debut with the St. Louis Symphony and returns to the Minnesota Orchestra, Oregon Symphony and Pacific Symphony, with which he will perform and conduct a program of Vivaldi. In Europe, he performs with the SWR Symphonieorchester Stuttgart, Kölner Philharmonie, Deutsche Radio Philharmonie Saarbrücken, Tonkünstler Orchestra and BBC National Orchestra of Wales, among other ensembles. In 2022 he became one of the youngest artists to be appointed to the faculty of the Curtis Institute of Music, and this season he leads a Curtis string ensemble in a national tour. In recent seasons his passion for contemporary music has led to new works written for him by Frederic Rzewski and Gabriella Smith, the latter co-commissioned by the Schubert Club in St. Paul. He has given multiple performances of Jennifer Higdon’s Violin Concerto and recorded Thomas Larcher’s concerto with the Tonkünstler Orchester; he also premiered Chris Rogerson’s Violin Concerto, *The Little Prince*, with the Kansas City Symphony. He also performs in recital and chamber music settings at major halls across the world. More: opus3artists.com, benjaminbeilman.com.

ONE-MINUTE NOTES

Chin: *subito con forza*

To mark Beethoven’s 250th birthday in 2020, Unsuk Chin composed *subito con forza* (“Suddenly, with force”), inspired by the conversation books that helped Beethoven communicate in person as his hearing diminished. Brief, visceral and powerful, it includes hidden and overt references to Beethoven’s music.

Korngold: Violin Concerto

Erich Wolfgang Korngold, one of great film composers early in the history of cinema, also created rich drama in the concert hall—and one shining example is this glorious, eloquent violin concerto, written for virtuoso Jascha Heifetz.

Tchaikovsky: Symphony No. 2, *Little Russian*

A solo horn sings the opening melody of Tchaikovsky’s Second Symphony, which—in typical Tchaikovsky fashion—quotes a variety of Eastern European folk tunes. Traditional melodies from Ukraine, or “Little Russia,” as it was then called, inspired both the musical ideas and the nickname for this work. Sadly, the music and title take on a new context due to the present Russia-Ukraine war.



UNSUK CHIN

B: July 14, 1961
Seoul, South Korea

subito con forza

PREMIERED: September 24,
2020

In the classical music world, some popular pieces from the so-called “standard repertoire” are in steady rotation, with the same work appearing on a program every few seasons. Newer compositions are rarely given repeat hearings so quickly, but this week’s concerts bring a welcome exception: the second set of concerts at Orchestra Hall to feature Unsuk Chin’s *subito con forza*, of which the Minnesota Orchestra gave the U.S. premiere in October 2021.

Chin’s *subito con forza* is a concert opener composed to mark the 250th anniversary of Ludwig van Beethoven’s birth in 2020. The composition’s title means “suddenly, with force”—given in Italian, the language used for tempo markings and other performance indications in many scores of Western classical music. The piece takes an unexpected approach to honoring Beethoven: it is inspired not solely by his music, but rather by the written “conversation books” he began to accumulate as his deteriorating hearing impacted his life and work. Beethoven 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 Beethoven’s conversation books as a basis for a composition came from the “non bthvn projekt” of the Kölner Philharmonie’s KölnMusik. It co-commissioned *subito con forza* along with BBC Radio 3 and the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra—which premiered the piece in September 2020.

“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.”

Chin’s composition 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.

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 began a five-year appointment as artistic director of the Tongyeong International Festival in South Korea. Later this month she will accept the Ernst von Siemens Music Prize in a Munich ceremony, adding to her long list of honors that includes the prestigious Grawemeyer Award, conferred in 2004 for her Violin Concerto.

In addition to *subito con forza*, Chin’s recent large-scale works include the Violin Concerto No. 2—subtitled *Shards of Silence*—which was premiered by Leonidas Kavakos in 2021, as well as two orchestral scores given their first performances in 2023: *Alaraph* and *Operascope*. Last year the Berlin Philharmonic released an album of her music titled *The Unsuk Chin Edition*. Her second opera, *Die dunkle Seite des Mondes* (Dark Side of the Moon) is slated for a world premiere in May 2025 at the Staatsoper in Hamburg, Germany.

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.



ERICH WOLFGANG KORNGOLD

B: May 29, 1897
Brünn, Moravia
(now Brno, Czech Republic)
D: November 29, 1957
Los Angeles, California

Concerto in D major for Violin and Orchestra, Opus 35

PREMIERED: February 15, 1947

Erich Wolfgang Korngold was making formidable waves as he entered his teens. Gustav Mahler, Richard Strauss, Giacomo Puccini and Bruno Walter were among those ready to salute him as a talent on the level of a young Mozart. The son of Julius Korngold, Vienna’s most influential music critic after the death of Eduard Hanslick, the boy played the piano well by the time he was 5 and was composing large-scale works at 10, performed by such greats as Artur Schnabel and the Austrian Imperial Ballet. These early opuses are imposing accomplishments, serious pieces still worth hearing and, some of them, more impressive than what Mozart, Schubert, Mendelssohn and Meyerbeer had to offer at that age.

THE LURE OF HOLLYWOOD

Korngold’s success continued into his 20s, and a 1932 poll by a Vienna newspaper determined that he was one of the two greatest living composers—but he did not turn out to be a second Mozart. Yet his music came to be heard by uncounted millions. In 1934 the producer and director Max Reinhardt invited him to Hollywood to score his film version of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. He was immediately asked to stay on and write the music for *Captain Blood*, the film that made Erroll Flynn a star. In 1938, when Austria was annexed by the Nazi regime, he moved his family, including his parents and brother, to Hollywood.

Korngold’s film scores won him two Oscars—for *Anthony Adverse* and *The Adventures of Robin Hood*—and earned additional Academy Award nominations for *The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex* and *The Sea Hawk*. His last movie, from 1946, was that still-stirring drama *Deception*,

and the Cello Concerto that Paul Henreid plays in the film became a concert piece in its own right.

MUSIC FOR THE CONCERT HALL

After World War II, Korngold came back to composing for the concert hall—and the Violin Concerto marked his return. At the urging of the great Polish violinist Bronisław Huberman, Korngold composed the concerto in the summer of 1945, drawing on material from his film scores for *Anthony Adverse* and *Another Dawn* (both 1936), *The Prince and the Pauper* (1937) and *Juarez* (1939). The work, dedicated to Alma Mahler-Werfel, was first performed on February 15, 1947, by Jascha Heifetz with Vladimir Golschmann and the St. Louis Symphony.

MODERATO NOBILE. The solo violin is immediately present, and with a glorious, eloquent theme that rises through almost two octaves in just five notes, a melody Korngold rescued from his score for *Another Dawn*. After a transition of quicker music, a new theme arrives, no less lyric than the first, and beautifully supported in the orchestra. This one is taken from *Juarez*, one in the long series of Warner biopics starring Paul Muni.

ROMANCE. The second movement’s principal theme comes from *Anthony Adverse*, a movie with Frederic March and Olivia de Havilland. Korngold, along with Gale Sondergaard (best supporting actress) and Tony Gaudio (photographer) won Oscars for this one. In its demand for an elegantly poised cantabile and with its pages of suave noodling, this *Romance* gives a perfect picture of what Heifetz was all about.

FINALE: ALLEGRO ASSAI VIVACE. The finale is a playful rondo, whose second theme—the first one we hear when the music emerges from its gigue-like beginning—is the title music for *The Prince and the Pauper*. And no question about it, Korngold knows how to write a bring-the-house-down ending.

Instrumentation: solo violin with orchestra comprising 2 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 2 oboes (1 doubling English horn), 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons (1 doubling contrabassoon), 4 horns, 2 trumpets, trombone, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, deep bell in F, gong, xylophone, glockenspiel, vibraphone, celesta, harp and strings

PROGRAM NOTE EXCERPTED FROM THE LATE MICHAEL STEINBERG’S *THE CONCERTO: A LISTENER’S GUIDE* (OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1998), USED WITH PERMISSION.



**PETER ILYICH
TCHAIKOVSKY**

B: May 7, 1840
Votkinsk, Russia
D: November 6, 1893
St. Petersburg, Russia

**Symphony No. 2 in
C minor, Opus 17,
*Little Russian***

PREMIERED: February 7, 1873

Relations between Tchaikovsky and “The Five,” that influential band of Russian nationalist composers, were always a little tender. Those five—Mussorgsky, Borodin, Cui, Balakirev and Rimsky-Korsakov—admired Tchaikovsky’s talents but were suspicious of his conservatory training and his use of Western forms. Tchaikovsky’s Second Symphony, in fact, occasioned one of their few moments of cordial contact.

Tchaikovsky composed this symphony between June and November 1872, and it was first performed in Moscow on February 7, 1873. The symphony seemed to have a popular success, but César Cui, a member of The Five, savaged it in a review. Always vulnerable to criticism, Tchaikovsky was stung by this review, and seven years later he came back to the symphony and revised it. He was now a better composer, and he knew it. To his patron Madame von Meck he wrote: “Today I set out to remodel my Second Symphony. It went so well that before lunch I had made a rough draft of nearly half of the first movement...How much seven years can mean when a man is striving for progress in his work!”

A SYMPHONY INFUSED WITH FOLKSONGS

The Second is Tchaikovsky’s shortest symphony, but what makes this music distinctive is his use of folk tunes for some of its themes. This was a technique favored by The Five, and Rimsky-Korsakov in particular was impressed when Tchaikovsky played this music for him on the piano. The authentic folk tunes that Tchaikovsky employed here come from Ukraine, which was known at the time as “Little Russia,” subsequently a state in the former Soviet Union and, ever since the USSR’s dissolution in 1991, an independent country. The nickname *Little Russian*, however, did not originate with the composer. It was coined by the music critic Nikolay Kashkin, and in Russia at the time that nickname would have been understood to mean simply “Ukrainian.” Sadly, we must view the music and the title in the context of Russia’s 2022 invasion of Ukraine and horrific war that has followed.

ANDANTE SOSTENUTO–ALLEGRO VIVACE. The first movement opens with a long solo for horn based on the Ukrainian

folksong “Down by Mother Volga.” The music leaps ahead at the *Allegro vivo*, which itself sounds folksong-derived. Tchaikovsky may have had difficulty with the symphonic form, but this movement is beautifully-made: the development treats both the main theme of the exposition and the horn theme from the introduction.

ANDANTINO MARZIALE, QUASI MODERATO. The second movement was originally the wedding march from Tchaikovsky’s ill-fated opera *Undine*. Over the timpani’s steady tread, woodwinds sing the little march tune; a more lyric second idea follows.

SCHERZO: ALLEGRO MOLTO VIVACE. The third movement is a propulsive scherzo in ABA form. Metric units are quite short here: the outer sections are in 3/8, the trio in 2/8.

FINALE: MODERATO ASSAI. Tchaikovsky’s brassy opening theme of the finale bears a striking resemblance to the “Promenade” theme of Mussorgsky’s *Pictures at an Exhibition*, though the Tchaikovsky was written first—but it is in fact a derivation of the Ukrainian folk tune “The Crane.” This theme accelerates until it suddenly is transformed into the athletic main idea, and Tchaikovsky offers a lilting second idea in the violins. It is no surprise that this finale—with its imaginative ideas about structure, unusual harmonic progressions and use of folk tunes—should have delighted Rimsky-Korsakov. This movement was, in fact, Tchaikovsky’s own favorite.

Instrumentation: 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, tamtam and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY ERIC BROMBERGER.