

TCHAIKOVSKY & MOZART

November 2* & 4, 2023 • 7:30 PM

***Thursday Classics presented by Quikcard**

Featuring:

Michael Stern, conductor – see *bio on page 4*.

Tony Siqi Yun, piano (ESO Debut) – see *bio on page 5*.

To read the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra roster, see page 6.

KODÁLY

Dances of Galánta

(16')*

I - Lento

II - Allegretto moderato

III - Allegro con moto, grazioso

IV - Allegro

V - Allegro vivace

MOZART

Symphony No. 41 in C major, K551 "Jupiter"

(31')*

I - Allegro vivace

II - Andante cantabile

III - Allegretto

IV - Molto allegro

INTERMISSION (20 minutes)

TCHAIKOVSKY

Piano Concerto No. 2 in G major, Op. 44

(43')*

I - Allegro brillante e molto vivace

II - Andante non troppo

III - Allegro con fuoco

Program subject to change.

*indicates approximate performance duration

Dances of Galánta

Zoltan Kodály

(b. Kecskemét, 1882 / d. Budapest, 1967)

First performed: October 23, 1933, in Budapest

Last ESO performance: Symphony Under the Sky 2002

The small town of Galánta was part of the empire of Austria-Hungary prior to the First World War, and it was there that Zoltan Kodály spent his childhood (the town is now part of Slovakia), and it was there that his interest in documenting and preserving the folk traditions of his native land began. He went on from there to Budapest for much of his formal musical training, which led him into the countryside, recording as much of the traditional music as he could on wax cylinders. In 1927, he published a piano score of dances from the Marosszék region, which he orchestrated a couple of years later. Soon after that came a follow-up – a set of dances from his home region of Galánta.

Written for the 80th anniversary of the Budapest Philharmonic Society, the *Dances of Galánta* is not composed as a multi-movement suite of separate dances, but as a constantly shifting, single-movement piece – more of a tone poem, actually. Those familiar with the folk-influenced works of Kodály's famous countryman Béla Bartók may recognize the *verbunkos* style of the music – a template in which a slow section (the *lassú*) is followed by a more energetic dance (the *friss*). In this extended series of dances, the first part of the work contains several of the more deliberate dances – though the colours used cover a broad palette, before the work is taken over by the more rousing, similarly varied ones.

Symphony No. 41 in C Major, K.551 “Jupiter”

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

(b. Salzburg, 1756 / d. Vienna 1791)

Composition completed August 10, 1788. It is not known if the work was ever performed during Mozart's lifetime.

Last ESO performance: January 2020

Mozart wrote his last symphony more than three years before he died, and it is highly likely he felt that he would write more. But the fact remains that other projects occupied him until his death seven weeks shy of his 36th birthday, and while it was not Mozart who chose the epithet “Jupiter” for his last symphony, this Olympian work is a worthy final effort.

Mozart both looks back to the past and anticipates the future in his *41st Symphony*. His use of counterpoint in the opening and final movements is certainly a tribute to composers such as Bach, while his ability to create towering musical structures from minimal musical building blocks is something Beethoven and others picked up on years later.

There are no less than three separate musical ideas in the very opening of the work – quite uncharacteristic of “proper” sonata-allegro form. Similarly, there are three thematic ideas in the Andante cantabile second movement – two serene ones separated by a tense, dramatic emotional one.

A slightly more conventional third movement balances a lyrical Minuet with two starkly contrasting trio subjects. The final movement, rather than a jovial trot to the finish line, is instead a towering musical structure, "... where contrasting themes are lined up, harnessed, and sent galloping down the final stretch in one of the most glorious, tingling, and overwhelming passages in music," wrote longtime *New York Times* critic Harold C. Schoenberg.

Piano Concerto No. 2 in G Major, Op.44

Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

(b. Kamsko-Votkinsk, 1840 / d. St. Petersburg, 1893)

First performed: November 12, 1881, in New York

Last ESO performance: January 1987. The third movement of the work was performed in March 2015.

Tchaikovsky's output for piano and orchestra is small, and most of it lives in the shadow of his *First Piano Concerto*. Ever one for self-doubt, Tchaikovsky constantly solicited the opinions of others about his works, and whenever those opinions were critical, his doubts magnified. The scathing opinion his friend and pianist Nikolai Rubinstein initially had about the first concerto, for example, plunged Tchaikovsky into despair. Yet, the concerto was a huge success with the public, and even Rubinstein came around, championing the work later on. So, in the summer of 1879 at his sister's home in Ukraine, Tchaikovsky staved off boredom by idly working out a new concerto, one for which he once again intended Rubinstein to be the dedicatee.

He did not rush the piece, working on it during visits to Rome and Paris, putting the finishing touches on it in May of 1880. Once again, he sent it off to Rubinstein, as well as to Sergei Taneyev, another pianist friend. Taneyev assured Tchaikovsky not a note needed changing, and Rubinstein's lack of response led the composer to feel confident enough to prepare the work for performance. It was only then that both Rubinstein and Taneyev expressed doubts – and once again, Tchaikovsky felt unsure about the work's worthiness. But the meddling did not stop there.

After concerns were raised that the first two movements were too long, Tchaikovsky made a few cuts. Then Alexander Siloti, another pianist and composer, took it upon himself to make drastic revisions, including the removal of some wonderful concertante work for cello and piano in the second movement, publishing this heavily excised score after Tchaikovsky's death. That version, unfortunately, continued to be a standard one until the middle of the 20th century. In 1949, a complete, unrevised version (without even the cuts Tchaikovsky had made) was published by the Bruckner-Verlag, edited by Fritz Oeser, and it is this version which we will hear at these concerts.

As with the first concerto, Tchaikovsky originally intended Rubinstein to give the work's premiere. But Rubinstein died, at only 45 years old, eight months before its first performance – which was not even given in Russia. Never quite convinced that the piano and orchestra playing together was an ideal pairing, Tchaikovsky employs more of a dialog format throughout the concerto – Rubinstein, somewhat derogatively, described it as "episodic."

A brief, fanfare-like opening is answered almost immediately by the piano. The melodic material is presented in several guises by both orchestra and soloist, leading to one of several mini-cadenzas for the piano. The orchestra changes the mood with the second main theme right

after, again answered in piano. It is here that piano and orchestra truly unite for an extended passage developing this new melodic idea. Perhaps the concerto's most unusual touch is that, shortly after the Development section has begun to provide new ideas to the previous material, the piano's long, ornate cadenza takes over, in the middle of the movement rather than nearer the end. It spans a major part of the movement, truncating the Development and having the orchestra bring in the celebratory feel of the movement's opening when it rejoins the goings-on. The piano has yet more fire and flash as the Recapitulation parses out the melodic material to first the orchestra, then piano, before allowing both to conclude this 20-plus minute movement together.

The second movement is also long, an Andante in the dominant major, D. From the outset, the soloistic work for violin, then cello, is made apparent in what becomes almost a chamber-music set of variations on yet another example of Tchaikovsky's inexhaustible gift for melody. The orchestra gets a chance to bring the passion to a high point, exquisitely then stepping away to allow the piano, violin, and cello to take over. The piano gets another cadenza, this time in a more standard place near the end of the movement. The final movement is a sprightly, comparatively brief affair – a merry romp in 2/4 time with a driving energy to it, and much more concerted playing of piano with orchestra than anywhere else in the concerto. The pace rarely flags, and the piano passages are brilliant – certainly one of the most contented and joyous concerto movements Tchaikovsky ever wrote.

Program notes © 2023 by D.T. Baker

Biographies

Michael Stern

Conductor

Conductor Michael Stern is Music Director of the Kansas City Symphony and the Stamford Symphony, Founding Artistic Director, and Principal Conductor of the IRIS Orchestra, and recently named Music Director of the National Repertory Orchestra where he begins his tenure in the summer of 2021.

Michael Stern and Kansas City have been hailed for their remarkable artistic ascent, original programming, organizational development and stability, and the extraordinary growth of its varied audiences since his tenure began. Stern and the orchestra have partnered with Grammy® Award-winning Reference Recordings for a series of very well-received CDs, including a new recording of works by American composer Adam Schoenberg, Gustav Holst's "The Planets," and albums of Elgar, Sibelius, and Saint-Saens.

IRIS Orchestra in Germantown, Tennessee is known for the virtuosity of its playing, and the depth and variety of its programming, with special emphasis on American contemporary music. Under Stern's direction, IRIS has commissioned and premiered works by William Bolcom, Chris Brubeck, Richard Danielpour, Stephen Hartke, Edgar Meyer, Jonathan Leshnoff, Ned Rorem, Huang Ruo, amongst others, and has released recordings on the Naxos and Arabesque labels.

Recent guest engagements have included the Boston Symphony at Tanglewood, the Chicago Symphony at Ravinia, the Atlanta Symphony, the Minnesota Orchestra, the New York Philharmonic in the film score to *The Red Violin* with Joshua Bell as soloist; also, with the Philadelphia Orchestra at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center, the National Arts Centre in Ottawa, Ravinia, and the Napa Valley Festival del Sole, as well as concerts at the Stern Violin Competition in Shanghai.

Annually he conducts the Guangzhou Symphony Orchestra as part of the Youth Music Culture Guangdong with Yo-Yo Ma and regularly appears at the Aspen Music Festival and School. He has led the major orchestras in London, Stockholm, Paris, Helsinki, Budapest, Israel, and Moscow, Taiwan, and Tokyo, et al. Stern has been Chief Conductor of Germany's Saarbrücken Radio Symphony Orchestra (the first American chief conductor in the orchestra's history), Permanent Guest Conductor of the Orchestre National de Lyon in France, and Principal Guest Conductor of the Orchestre National de Lille, France.

Tony Siqi Yun

Piano

The Canadian born pianist Tony Siqi Yun will this season make his subscription debut with the Philadelphia Orchestra performing Robert Schumann's Piano Concerto under the baton of Yannick Nézet-Séguin. He first met Maestro Nézet-Séguin in the final round of the inaugural China International Music Competition in 2019, where he went on to win First Prize and a Gold Medal performing Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No 1. Other recent concerto performances have included the Cleveland Orchestra (Tchaikovsky), Toronto Symphony and Orchestre Métropolitain in Montreal, (Clara Schumann), Buffalo Philharmonic (Tchaikovsky) and the Orchestre de Chambre de Paris (Beethoven).

Tony regularly performs solo recitals in both Europe and North America. Recent and future highlights include his debuts at the Hamburg Elbphilharmonie, Gewandhaus in Leipzig, Düsseldorf, Luxembourg and in North America the Vancouver Recital Society, Stanford Live, and Gilmore Rising Stars Series. At the Kissinger KlavierOlymp in 2022 he was awarded two prizes.

Tony has a long-standing relationship with the China Philharmonic Orchestra with whom he has toured and also appeared as soloist in the 2019 CCT New Year's Concert. He has also performed with the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra.

He is a recipient of the Jerome L. Greene Fellowship at the Juilliard School where he studies with Professors Yoheved Kaplinsky and Matti Raekallio.

Meet the Musicians

Michael Stern, Artistic Advisor

Cosette Justo Valdés, Resident Conductor and Community Ambassador

William Eddins, Music Director Emeritus, Conductor

Violin I

Robert Uchida, Concertmaster

The John & Barbara Poole Family Concertmaster Chair

Eric Buchmann, Associate Concertmaster

Broderick Olson

Ewald Cheung

Joanna Ciapka-Sangster

Laura Veeze

Anna Kozak

Aiyana Anderson-Howatt

Anita Walsh

Violin II

Dianne New – Principal

Susan Flook – Assistant Principal

Heather Bergen

Yue Deng

Danielle Greene

Buon Park

Yeeun Ha

Zoë Sellers (on leave)

Viola

Keith Hamm – Principal

Ethan Filner – Assistant Principal

Clayton Leung

Rhonda Henshaw

Stefan Jungkind

Cello

Rafael Hoekman – Principal

The Stuart & Winona Davis Principal Cello Chair

Julie Hereish – Assistant Principal

Ronda Metzies

Meran Currie-Roberts

Victor Pipkin

Bass

Hilda Cowie – Principal

Chris Jones – Acting Assistant Principal

Janice Quinn

Rob Aldridge

Chantel Leung

Douglas Ohashi (on leave)

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(American Federation of Musicians of the United States
and Canada) Local 390.*

Flute

Elizabeth Koch – Principal

Sarah Pollard – Assistant Principal

Oboe

June Kim – Principal

Paul Schieman – Assistant Principal

The Steven & Day LePoole Assistant Principal Oboe Chair

Clarinet

Julianne Scott – Principal

David Quinn – Assistant Principal

Bassoon

Bianca Chambul – Principal

Edith Stacey – Assistant Principal

Horn

Allene Hackleman – Principal

Megan Evans – Assistant Principal

Ryan Garbett – Assistant Principal

Donald Plumb – Assistant Principal

Trumpet

Robin Doyon – Principal

Frédéric Payant – Assistant Principal

Trombone

John McPherson – Principal

Kathryn Macintosh – Assistant Principal

Bass Trombone

Tyler Cairns – Principal

Tuba

Scott Whetham – Principal

Timpani

Barry Nemish – Principal

Percussion

Martin Bui – Principal

Harp

Nora Bumanis – Principal