

ANGELA CHENG PLAYS CLARA SCHUMANN

April 20 & 21,* 2024 • 7:30 PM / 2:00 PM

***Robbins Sunday Classics**

Featuring:

Fawzi Haimor, conductor – *see bio on page 5.*

Angela Cheng, piano – *see bio on page 6.*

To read the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra roster, see page 7.

BATES

Mothership

(10')*

C. SCHUMANN

Piano Concerto in A minor, Op.7

(21')*

I - Allegro maestoso

II - Romanze: Andante non troppo, con grazia

III - Finale : Allegro non troppo

INTERMISSION (20 minutes)

TCHAIKOVSKY

Symphony No.2 in C minor, Op.17

(32')*

I - Andante sostenuto – Allegro vivo

II - Andantino marziale, quasi moderato

III - Scherzo: Allegro molto vivace

IV - Finale: Moderato assai – Allegro vivo

Program subject to change.

*indicates approximate performance duration

Mothership **Mason Bates**

(b. Richmond, Virginia, 1977)

First performed: March 21, 2011, in Sydney, Australia

The ESO had programmed this work for a performance in 2020, but it was cancelled due to the pandemic. It is receiving its ESO premiere at this performance, and is the first work by Mason Bates played by the ESO.

Composer of the Grammy-winning opera *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs*, Mason Bates is imaginatively transforming the way classical music is created and experienced as a composer, DJ, and curator. As the first composer-in-residence appointed by the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, he presented a diverse array of artists on his series KC Jukebox, using immersive production and stagecraft. Championed by legendary conductors including Riccardo Muti, Michael Tilson Thomas, and Marin Alsop, his symphonic music is the first to receive widespread acceptance for its unique integration of electronic sounds. Named as the most-performed composer of his generation in a recent survey of American music, Bates has also composed for feature film.

Highly informed by his work as a DJ, his curatorial approach integrates adventurous music, ambient information, and social platforms in a fluid and immersive way. Working in clubs under the name DJ Masonic, Bates has developed *Mercury Soul*, a show combining DJing and classical music, to packed crowds with clubs and orchestras around the country. A diverse artist exploring the ways classical music integrates into contemporary cultures, he serves on the faculty of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music.

Of his work *Mothership*, Mason Bates writes:

The mothership floats high above, an orchestra pulsing rapidly with a heart of techno. At several moments in the piece, various soloists dock with the mothership, dropping in with solos both virtuosic and lyrical. The work was commissioned by Michael Tilson Thomas and the YouTube Symphony, which premiered the work in March 2011 at the Sydney Opera House in Australia.

The piece follows the form of a scherzo with double trio. But while symphonic scherzos historically play with dance rhythms such as the waltz, *Mothership* looks to 21st Century dance music (such as techno) to enliven its journey. The brief solos can be played as written or improvised.

Many thanks to Michael, whose mentoring greatly helped the work on many levels, and to the musicians from around the world who came together in Sydney and helped *Mothership* lift off.

Piano Concerto in A minor, Op.7

Clara Schumann

(b. Leipzig, 1819 / d. Frankfurt, 1896)

First performed: 1835 in Leipzig

Like Mason Bates' work above, Clara Schumann's concerto was originally programmed by the ESO for a spring 2020 performance (with Angela Cheng as soloist), cancelled by the pandemic. As a result, this is the first time the ESO has played any work by Clara Schumann

The piano concerto composed by Clara Schumann as a precocious teenager was no mere isolated exception to the rule of the 19th century. Rather, it was the natural product of one of the most prodigious and exceptional talents of the Romantic era. Born Clara Wieck, the daughter of one of Leipzig's most noted piano pedagogues, Clara demonstrated amazing talent from a very early age, guided carefully and expertly by her father. When she was twelve, her father accepted into his home another emerging piano talent, Robert Schumann. Nine years older than Clara, Robert befriended the talented youngster – a friendship that would eventually evolve into love and marriage – very much over her father's objections.

At 13, Clara noted in her diary that she had begun to compose a piano concerto. "Schumann will orchestrate it now so that I can play it at my concert," she added. The one-movement *Concerto-Rondo*, as she called it, would eventually become the third movement of the concerto we will hear at this concert. The complete three-movement work opens sternly at first in the orchestra, and the piano's entrance is equally dramatic. Orchestra and piano share in presenting the main theme, but soon enough, the solo instrument dominates in a dreamy rhapsody of that theme. Energy and momentum build throughout the movement, with gentle nudges from the orchestra urging the piano on, until a change in pace ushers in the second movement without a pause. Unusually, the piano is the only instrument used in the "Romance" middle movement, until it is eventually joined by a lone cello. The tender dialog is ended by the timpani, which ushers in the final movement – a triple metre dance full of that same A minor earnestness of the opening movement. The piano part is brilliantly written – and it should be noted that tonight's soloist, Angela Cheng, made a recording of the concerto for Koch International.

Symphony No.2 in C minor, Op.17

Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

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

First performed: February 7, 1873, in Moscow

Last ESO performance: Symphony Under the Sky 2006

The summer of 1872 was one of those all too rare times in the life of Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky – a time of calm, serenity, and true happiness. He spent that time with family at his sister's home in the Ukrainian village of Kamenka, and from this oasis of leisure and love comes his *Second Symphony*, surely one of the most contented and beguiling of any of his works. It is worth noting, however, that in 1880, influenced by music he had come to know (notably D elibes' *Sylvia* and Bizet's *Carmen*), he made substantial revisions to the first movement, and altered the finale as well.

His father and brother spent time with the rest of the family over the summer, and in only a few weeks (quite quickly for Tchaikovsky), he had sketched out all four movements of the symphony. As was not unusual for Tchaikovsky, many of the themes in the work were based on the Ukrainian folk songs that Tchaikovsky heard or was reminded of during his frequent visits. The particular region of Ukraine in which his sister lived was known in Russia, derogatively, as "Little Russia," and it was critic Nikolai Kashkin who gave the work the nickname "Little Russian" symphony, by which it was long known. It has also been more correctly identified as the "Ukrainian" symphony, although it is worth stressing that Tchaikovsky used neither.

The first movement begins with a slow introduction, based on a variation of the song “Down By Mother Volga.” The Allegro vivo section of the movement is more dramatic and theatrical, strongly contrasted by a quiet secondary theme introduced by solo clarinet.

The second movement is a fine example of making lemonade from lemons. Three years before writing this symphony, Tchaikovsky had experienced utter failure with an opera based on the Undine legend (the same legend Dvořák used for his opera Rusalka). But rather than scrap what he had already written, Tchaikovsky took music intended for a wedding scene from the opera, and that forms the basis for the main theme of the second movement of the symphony. Another Ukrainian folk song, “Spin, My Spinner” – also introduced first in the clarinet – is a contrasting melody.

The Scherzo is all original music of Tchaikovsky, which bristles with energy that seems determined to break loose – darting among the woodwinds and strings. Halfway through, a trio subject of a deliberate and much more restrained manner takes the field briefly, but seems impatient to move on, back to the high energy Scherzo theme to finish out this five-minute movement.

The final movement is a full-fledged set of variations on yet another Ukrainian folk song, “The Crane.” Tchaikovsky reveals a too-seldom sense of humour throughout this movement, while also demonstrating his gift for orchestration. There is an almost self-deprecating seriousness to the way the movement begins, but once the Presto portion starts, the theme is treated to a wide variety of dashing orchestral colours. There are two moments where it seems like the élan of the music will come crashing down, but it is only temporary, and Tchaikovsky’s fondness for Ukraine and its folk traditions is never more vividly expressed than here.

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Biographies

Fawzi Haimor

Conductor

Fawzi Haimor has been General Music Director of the Württembergische Philharmonie Reutlingen from September 2017 until the end of 2020. The Orchestra celebrated its 75th anniversary in 2020, opening this special year with Beethoven's 9th Symphony and a world premiere by Kareem Roustom before the other celebration programmes fell victim to pandemic restrictions. Fawzi Haimor's official farewell to the orchestra takes place in summer 2022 with Mahler's 3rd Symphony and record a CD with works by Reza Vali.

Highlights of the 2022/23 season include concerts with The Florida Orchestra with works by Cerdania, Marsalis, Ellington und Gershwin and his debut with Utah Symphony Orchestra with Strawinsky's "Feuervogel" (1919) and Orff's "Carmina Burana."

Fawzi Haimor has conducted many orchestras including the Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxembourg, BBC Philharmonic, Orchestre de chambre de Paris, NDR Radiophilharmonie Hannover, WDR Funkhausorchester in Cologne, Deutsche Radiophilharmonie Saarbrücken Kaiserslautern, Orquesta Sinfónica do Porto Casa da Música, the Oulu Sinfonia and Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano Giuseppe Verdi. In the US, he has worked with The Florida Orchestra, Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, New West Symphony and the New Mexico Philharmonic, among others. In July 2017, he made his acclaimed debut at the Grant Park Music Festival in Chicago. He has also conducted the Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra, Kyoto Symphony Orchestra and the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra. In May 2018, he made his debut at London's Barbican Centre conducting the Chineke! Orchestra as part of the Max Richter Weekend.

Highlights of recent years have included his debut at the Musikverein Vienna with the Württembergische Philharmonie Reutlingen, as well as his debut with the BBC Symphony Orchestra (including Prokofiev's 7th Symphony), a tour with the NDR Radiophilharmonie Hannover and The King's Singers, a re-invitation to the Chineke! Orchestra (including a concert at the Southbank Centre London) and concerts with the Virginia Symphony Orchestra. Important upcoming projects are his debut with Utah Symphony conducting Orff's "Carmina burana" as well as returning to The Florida Orchestra.

Fawzi Haimor has a wide-ranging repertoire with a focus on late German Romanticism and 19th and 20th century Russian and American composers. He is also a dedicated interpreter of contemporary music and has premiered works by Mason Bates, Kareem Roustom and other composers.

Fawzi Haimor was born in Chicago and grew up in the Middle East and San Francisco. Until 2015, he was Assistant Conductor and Resident Conductor at the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, where he worked with conductors such as Manfred Honeck, Leonard Slatkin, Gianandrea Noseda, Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos and Yan Pascal Tortelier. Previously, he was Assistant Conductor of the Alabama Symphony Orchestra. During this time, he founded the Alabama Symphony Youth Orchestra and served as its first music director. Together with his wife and four children he lives in the San Francisco Bay area.

Angela Cheng

Piano

Consistently praised for her brilliant technique, tonal beauty, and superb musicianship, Canadian pianist Angela Cheng is one of her country's national treasures. In addition to regular guest appearances with virtually every orchestra in Canada, she has performed with the symphonies of Saint Louis, Houston, Indianapolis, Colorado, Utah, San Diego and Jacksonville, as well as the philharmonic orchestras of Buffalo, Louisiana, Rhode Island, London, Israel and Minas Gerais in Brazil.

Recent performances include a debut with the Fort Worth Symphony, performing Rachmaninoff's "Variations on a Theme of Paganini," under the baton of Robert Spano, and a return to the Vancouver Symphony, performing Ravel's Concerto in G with Otto Tausk. Next season will include the Boulder Philharmonic, Newfoundland Symphony, Okanagan Symphony, Saskatoon Symphony, Saguenay Symphony and the Symphony of Northwest Arkansas.

Angela Cheng has performed recitals and concertos at Carnegie Hall, Kennedy Center/Washington, D.C., the 92nd Street Y/New York and Wigmore Hall in London. She appears regularly on recital series throughout the United States and Canada and has collaborated with numerous chamber ensembles including the Takács, Colorado, and Vogler quartets. North American festival performances include Banff, Chautauqua, Colorado, Great Lakes Chamber Music, Vancouver, Toronto and the Festival International de Lanaudière in Quebec.

Ms. Cheng has made several recordings for CBC, including discs of Mozart and Shostakovich concerti and a CD of four Spanish concerti with Hans Graf and the Calgary Philharmonic. In addition, an all-Chopin recital CD has been released by Universal Music Canada.

Angela Cheng has been Gold Medalist of the Arthur Rubinstein International Piano Masters Competition, as well as the first Canadian to win the prestigious Montreal International Piano Competition. Other awards include the Canada Council's coveted Career Development Grant and the Medal of Excellence for outstanding interpretations of Mozart from the Mozarteum in Salzburg, Austria.

A native of Hong Kong, Ms. Cheng studied extensively with Menahem Pressler at Indiana University and with Sascha Gorodnitzki at The Juilliard School. She is currently on the artist faculty of the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, where she was honored with the 2011-12 Excellence in Teaching Award.

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)

*The ESO works in proud partnership with the AF of M
(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