

# PENN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA CONCERT

featuring **Rachel Ku** of the **Philadelphia Orchestra**





Friday, February 18, 2022

IRVINE AUDITORIUM  
3401 SPRUCE STREET  
University of Pennsylvania

The Department of Music and the Student Activities Council present

# **PENN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**

**Thomas Hong, conductor & director**  
**Rachel Ku, viola**

With thanks to the University of Pennsylvania Music Department

Dr. Timothy Rommen, Department Chair

Dr. Michael Ketner, Director of Performance

Maddie Hewitt, Performance and Communications Coordinator

Eugene Lew, Director of Sound and Music Technology



## PROGRAM

Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun..... Claude Debussy

Symphony No. 5..... Franz Schubert

- I. Allegro
- II. Andante con moto
- III. Menuetto. Allegro molto
- IV. Allegro vivace

## INTERMISSION

Harold in Italy ..... Hector Berlioz

- I. Harold aux montagnes
- II. Marche des pèlerins
- III. Sérénade
- IV. Orgie de brigands

Founded in 1878, the **Penn Symphony Orchestra** exists to provide the Penn community with orchestra concerts. Consisting of primarily undergraduate student members, the ensemble performs music ranging from the early Baroque styles to modern living composers. The Penn Symphony Orchestra rehearses and performs in historic Irvine Auditorium on the University of Pennsylvania campus.

Hailed by Kurt Masur as “one of the most talented young conductors of his generation,” **Thomas Hong** enjoys the distinction of being one of many successful protégés of the great Maestro. Having won titled positions with the Dallas, Pittsburgh, and Seattle Symphony Orchestras as well as Orchestre National de France, Hong has conducted countless concerts with those orchestras, ranging from classical, community, education and pops concerts. Presently, he is the artistic director and conductor of the University of Pennsylvania Orchestras. Recent activities include being principal conductor for the inaugural season of the DSO on the “GO” series with the Dallas Symphony, performing in neighboring venues of the North Texas area, and a re-engagement with the Utah Symphony, where he was the conductor for the Gina Bachauer International Piano Competition in Salt Lake City.

Hong was born in Incheon, Korea and immigrated to the United States with his family. He began his musical training as a pianist with Dr. Samuel Hsu at Cairn University. Later, he went on to earn a Master’s degree in choral conducting at Temple University and an artist diploma in orchestral conducting from The Curtis Institute of Music, studying with Maestros Alan Harler and Otto Werner Meuller, respectively. He concluded his artistic training with Larry Rachleff at Rice University’s Shepherd School of Music. Currently, Hong lives in Philadelphia with his wife Rachel Ku and their daughter Esther.





## **VIOLIN 1**

Stand 1 – Daniel Hwang / Hannah Tsai  
Stand 1.5 – Joey Wu / Linlin Yang  
Stand 2 – William Qi / Jonah Baer  
Stand 3 – Daniel Da / Daphne Nie  
Stand 4 – Yuxuan Liu / Bonnie Li  
Stand 5 – Ben She / Maggie Yuan  
Stand 6 – Elliot Kim, Concertmaster / Joy Gong  
Stand 7 – Nora Youn / Heewon Kim  
Stand 8 – Alea Zone

## **VIOLIN 2**

Stand 1 – Hannah Goldberg, Principal / Lucas Schrier  
Stand 1.5 – Alison Royce / Talia Coopersmith  
Stand 2 – Jason Ren, Co-principal / Mallory Peters  
Stand 3 – Victor Tsao / Hyejin Lee  
Stand 4 – Anthony Lee / Joy Onawola  
Stand 5 – Annie Wu / Anna Nguyen  
Stand 6 – Jason (Jaemyoung) Lee / Susan Zhang  
Stand 7 – Eric Liu / Kingsley Song  
Stand 8 – Kevin Xu

## **VIOLA**

Stand 1 – Ella Cho, Principal / Gavin Lee  
Stand 1.5 – Cecilia Wright / Autumn Cortright  
Stand 2 – Jacob Sheldon / Savannah Mueller  
Stand 3 – William Krasnow / Sahana Sundar  
Stand 4 – Henry Sywulak-Herr / Anna Chung  
Stand 5 – Greg Kraynak / Peter Proenca  
Stand 6 – Kevin Chen

## **CELLO**

Stand 1 – Deborah Zhang, Principal / Jason Shu  
Stand 1.5 – Angela Youn, Co-principal / Andy Liu  
Stand 2 – Michael Tu / Sophie Sax  
Stand 3 – Christine Kong / Samantha Martinez  
Stand 4 – Sierra Wei / Emily Hilman  
Stand 5 – Edward Kim / Alex Ge  
Stand 6 – Evan Jiang / Avery Bloomberg

## **BASS**

Stand 1 – Berk Soykan, Principal / Alex Kalbach  
Stand 2 – John Wallison / William Stewart

**FLUTE / PICCOLO**

Sherry Shi  
Elle Kirsch  
Michael Han  
Alyssia Liu  
Nadia Awad

**OBOE**

Daniel Koropecjy-Cox

**CLARINET**

Will Wang  
Greg Ferrey  
Brett Bernstein  
Xandro Xu

**BASSOON**

Davey Heister  
Mikaeel Habib  
Kaitin Blam

**HORN**

Jeremy Middleman  
Anagha Gouri  
Aidan Lewis  
Evan Bretz

**TRUMPET**

Adrian Wang  
Seamus Wang  
Eli Harrison  
Celeste Adler  
Ryan Dahn

**TROMBONE**

Lance Lunceford  
Justin Amgott  
Tyler Jenkins-Wong  
Rishi Patel  
Hunter Stufflebeam, Bass

**HARP**

Elizabeth Vo-Phamhi

**PERCUSSION**

Karen Xu

**GUEST MUSICIANS**

Vincent Luciano, bass  
Olivia Steinmetz, bass  
Bill Priebe, percussion  
Randy Rudolf, percussion  
Dana Newcomb, oboe  
Erin Lensing, oboe  
Hanul Park, bassoon  
Rick Barrantes, bassoon

Please note, some members of the Penn Symphony Orchestra have met the University's requirements to perform on this evening's concert without masks. Masks are still required for all audience members throughout the evening.



*The following notes are written by William E. Runyan and abbreviated by Thomas Hong.*

## **NOTES ON DEBUSSY**

### **Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune**

While others, notably Franz Liszt, were on the forefront of stylistic change during the nineteenth century, it is surely Claude Debussy who forever established entirely new ways of thinking about the fundamental ways of defining and composing music in Western culture. More than anyone, he truly was the father of much of the philosophical basis for the complete turnover in musical art that defined the twentieth century. And, along the way, he composed some of the most original, creative, and dare we say, beautiful music in the repertoire. His name, of course, is indelibly linked with what is popularly called “musical impressionism,”—a term he deplored—but that doesn’t really specifically tell you much. What you may say is that he largely worked within a musical style that made little use of so many of the characteristics of a musical tradition that really dominated the concert halls of the 18th and 19th centuries.

In a nutshell, Debussy was not much interested in systems of musical composition, wherein each part—large or small—had a rational, expected, and traditional relationship to every other part. Rather, he focused upon listening to musical sounds in new ways—considering them just for their intrinsic sound, and not how they might fit into a hierarchy as a mere building block. He opened up new ways of composing and listening, and the musical world was changed forever. He adored painting and poetry, and his deep immersion in those arts is fundamental

in searching for meaning in his personal musical style. His aesthetic was rooted in the French nineteenth-century literary movement known as “symbolism.” While most educated Americans today know and speak glibly of “impressionism,” and associate our composer with that style in painting, it is with the much less familiar concept of “symbolism,” specifically that in French literature, that informed almost all of Debussy’s music. Symbolism is traced by most to the poet, Charles Baudelaire, as well as to the imagery and themes of Edgar Allan Poe, whose works in French translation were of great popularity and influence in France. Later, Stéphane Mallarmé and Paul Verlaine were the central figures of the movement, and whose influence on Debussy it would be difficult to overestimate.

Mallarmé poem, *L'après-midi d'un faune* (1876), is the subject of Debussy’s one-movement “tone poem,” and is his most recognized work. While the text concerns the awakening of a faun from a drowsy mid-afternoon nap, and his reflections on his memories of his adventures with nymphs that morning, the narrative is not straightforward and linear—and neither is Debussy’s score. A faun, of course, is a creature that is half goat and half man, symbolic in literature of untrammelled natural spirits, and nymphs are young, nubile free spirits who sing and dance their way to amorous freedom. The tone poem in the hands of masters such as Liszt, Smetana, and Strauss generally has focused on very specific images and the stories behind them. But, the genre in the hands of Debussy (under the influence of the symbolists) approached the text in a much different way. His *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun* (1894), from the immortal opening languid, sensuous flute solo, creates an episodic series of feelings, atmospheres, and reflections rather than a story. The faun, half-dulled by the afternoon heat thinks



random thoughts of “. . . enervating swoon of heat, which stifles all fresh dawn’s resistance”; “. . . girls sleeping, with their reckless arms around each other”; and “. . . my speechless soul and heavy-laden body succumb at last to noontime’s ceremonial pause.”

For these thoughts and moods Debussy crafted perfect orchestral colors, melodies, and harmonies. While not a follower of Brahms—nor, on the other hand, of Liszt, Wagner, and Strauss, either—Debussy, with this first great success, opened the door to the twentieth century in music, and it was never the same thereafter. ☉

## **NOTES ON SCHUBERT**

### **Symphony no. 5**

The epitaph on Schubert’s tombstone reads: “The art of music has entombed here a rich treasure but even fairer hopes.” We all lament the “loss” of treasure that we never possessed, none perhaps more than great art that we presume may have come to pass but not for lives cut short in youth. But not all composers can live long productive lives like those enjoyed by Verdi and Strauss, for example. Often those who die young are nevertheless privileged to accomplish much, and Schubert, like Mozart, is exemplary. He left behind him a legacy of over six hundred art songs; no other composer’s contribution to the genre is as significant in scope and number. And, of course, while he did compose marvelous chamber works, symphonies, and music for piano, it is his inimitable gift for melody—the essence of his Lieder—theat equally informs and carries his instrumental works. Schubert’s fifth symphony is almost as well known

as the two late, mature ones, so popular with today’s audiences, the so-called “Unfinished” and the “Great” C Major. But this early work is a different take on the genre. It certainly calls to mind the early symphonies of Mozart—and even alludes to portions of that composer’s early G minor symphony. It is modest in length, light in orchestration (no clarinets, trumpets, or drums), and terse in development. What is noteworthy are its melodious themes and interesting harmonies—all lifelong characteristics of Schubert’s works. The first movement gets right to the point with two attractive melodies heard almost immediately, but what is of equal interest are the arresting and unusual key areas heard later: D-flat major and E-flat minor. While the typical concertgoer may not recognize these keys by name, he will sense the richness of harmony, just as almost anyone can hear the same in a Gershwin song. So listen for it! The slow, second movement exhibits the same melodic inventiveness and harmonic adventures—even modulating to the rare key of C-flat major. The third movement really does sound like a rough, vigorous minuet by Haydn (rather old fashioned by then), but Schubert’s elegant melodic gift surfaces in the contrasting middle section. The last movement is a cheerful romp that sounds like it could have been composed some forty years earlier. So, we have a youthful work here, one that takes Haydn and Mozart as points of departure, and blends in delightful touches of Romantic melody and harmony, all so different from that of Schubert’s stormy contemporary, Beethoven. ☉

**(10-MINUTE INTERMISSION)**

# NOTES ON BERLIOZ

## Harold in Italy

Of all of the major composers of the nineteenth century, Hector Berlioz is perhaps the most personally interesting. What a vivacious, unique individual he was, both in his life and in his music. And, perhaps most refreshing--for one who lived such an intense and varied existence--on the whole he suffered from few pathologies in his behavior and personality. He was intense and impassioned in his pursuit of the composition of music that reflected his literary interests, his interaction with his physical surroundings, and his deeply-felt emotions. He was not a virtuoso performer (playing the flute and the guitar only passably), his early musical training having been derived largely from the study of harmony books. However—and it is a major informing aspect of his intellect—he was a man of literature. He read widely and with sophistication from an early age, and later become one of the most important music critics and general authors in music of all time. Over a half dozen or more of his major works derive from some important connection with Shakespeare; he married the most important Shakespearian actress of the time, and composed his *Symphonie fantastique* as a response to his hopeless infatuation with her (the marriage didn't last). Characteristically, he never actually set any of Shakespeare's words to music — they were an inspiration, only. And the same should be said of his music, which is filled with local color and the expertly-crafted atmospherics that were inspired by nature and culture.

His early career was driven to some degree by his frustrating quest to win the prestigious Prix de Rome, which he finally won in 1830. Characteristically, having won, he dallied and resisted actually moving to Rome for the required residency there—he loathed Rome and Italian art and music. He did love the Italian countryside, the sunshine, and the evocative legends and char-

acters. Hence, some of his most inspired music stemmed from his time there—including *Harold in Italy*. Paganini in the early 1830s had acquired a fine Stradivarius viola, and commissioned Berlioz to write a concerto for him that would serve as a springboard for his prodigious talents. Their respective values in musical composition were obviously so mutually exclusive that Paganini rejected the piece (it wasn't showy enough). Berlioz, never to waste ideas, recast the work to suit himself, and something quite different emerged. It is a musical depiction of selected events from Lord Byron's *Childe Harold*, an evocation of Berlioz's sojourn in Italy, and a display piece for viola solo —all in one! It is not a concerto, nor is it a symphony or a tone poem—the three most important genres for symphony orchestra. Rather, it is a perfect example of Berlioz's individualistic approach to all of his compositions—it's a bit of all three: he simply created his own unique vessel for his musical thoughts. Thus, *Harold in Italy* is “sui generis” or unique, and typical Berlioz.

Cast in four movements, it is a musical depiction of Byron's poem (itself autobiographical) about a disillusioned and melancholy young man who wanders about Italy in search of the meaning of life—in other words, a Byronic hero. The first movement alludes to tramping around in the Abruzzi mountains that Berlioz, himself, loved, and in the second, Harold joins a procession of holy pilgrims. The third movement is simply a serenade to a beloved, and in the last the hero Harold—represented, as in all the movements, by the solo viola—joins in the riotous revelry of the local brigands. The opening notes of the solo viola are a major theme (it almost amusingly stutters into full form) and the attentive listener will hear it in all the movements as Harold's theme. Paganini did not hear the piece that his abortive composition morphed into until a few years later. He was so impressed with it that he sent Berlioz 20,000 francs and a note: “Beethoven being dead only a Berlioz could reincarnate him.” That seems ample crow to eat. ☺

# RACHEL KU

## Featured Soloist

Violist Rachel Ku joined the viola section of the Philadelphia Orchestra as the youngest member of the Orchestra in September, 2004 at the age of 19. She has been studying viola since age eight and piano since age five, and made her solo debut in Taipei in 1995. She has since made solo appearances with the Mansfield Symphony Orchestra in Ohio, Rice University Chamber Orchestra, and the Curtis Chamber Ensemble. In January, 2005 Ms. Ku performed Hindemith's "Der Schwanendreher" as soloist with the Delaware Symphony Orchestra as part of the orchestra's subscription concert series.

Ms. Ku has received several awards and honors, including first prize in the 2004 Delaware Symphony Orchestra Young Soloist Competition and second prize in the 2002 Riverside Symphonia Caprio Young Artists Competition. She was rewarded first prize at the 1997 Taiwan National Viola Competition, as well as second prize and fifth prize in the 1996 Taiwan National Viola and Piano competitions, respectively. During the summers she has participated in numerous music festivals such as Marlboro, Sarasota, Kneisel Hall, Taos, Angel Fire, International Music Festival in Saluzzo, Italy, and Encore School for Strings. She has collaborated as chamber musician with such artists as Kim Kashkashian, Steven Isserlis, Julian Rachlin, Chantal Juillet, David Kim, Arnold Steinhardt, and Marcy Rosen.

Ms. Ku graduated with a Master of Music degree from the New England Conservatory studying with Kim Kashkashian and a Bachelor of Music degree from the Curtis Institute of Music as a student of Joseph dePasquale. She served as principal viola of the Curtis Symphony Orchestra. In addition to teaching private lessons, she is also an adjunct faculty member at Cairn University and Temple University.

# Upcoming Concerts

**February 25 | 7:00 PM**

Penn Chamber

**February 27 | 7:00 PM**

Celebration and Remembrance  
The Music of James Primosch

**April 1 | 6:00 PM & 7:30 PM**

Penn Jazz Ensembles

**April 2 | 3:00 PM**

Speak to us of Joy and Sorrow  
Music for These Unprecedented Times  
Featuring Penn Chorale

**April 3 | 3:00 PM**

Penn Wind Ensemble

**April 10 | 4:00 PM**

Penn Flutes: Museum Crawl

**April 11 | 7:30 PM**

Music for Spirit and Soul  
Featuring Penn Collegium Musicum

For more information visit  
[music.sas.upenn.edu/events](https://music.sas.upenn.edu/events)