

A misty landscape at sunrise or sunset. The sky is a gradient of warm colors from light blue to bright yellow. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a strong glow. In the foreground, there is a body of water reflecting the light. In the middle ground, there are silhouettes of trees and a power line tower. The overall atmosphere is serene and atmospheric.

penn
SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Saturday, December 10, 2022

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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

With thanks to the University of Pennsylvania Music Department

Dr. Michael Ketner, Director of Performance
Sophie Shalit, Performance Operations Coordinator
Matthew Hewitt, Communications Coordinator
Eugene Lew, Director of Sound and Music Technology
Dr. Timothy Rommen, Department Chair



PROGRAM

Finlandia

Jean Sibelius

Variations on a Rococo Theme

for cello solo and orchestra

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

INTERMISSION

Symphony No. 2

Jean Sibelius

- I. Allegretto – Poco allegro – Tranquillo, ma poco a poco ravvivando il tempo all'allegro – Poco largamente – Tempo I – Poco allegro
- II. Tempo andante, ma rubato – Poco allegro – Molto largamente – Andante sostenuto – Andante con moto ed energico – Allegro – Poco largamente – Molto largamente – Andante sostenuto – Andante con moto ed energico – Andante – Pesante
- III. Vivacissimo – Lento e soave – Tempo primo – Lento e soave – (attacca)
- IV. Finale: Allegro moderato – Moderato assai – Meno moderato e poco a poco ravvivando il tempo – Tempo I – Largamente e pesante – Poco largamente – Molto largamente

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.

FINLANDIA & TCHAIKOVSKY**1st Violin**

Elliot Kim, Concertmaster / Bonnie Li
Andrew Wang / Hannah Tsai
Isaac Yan / Daniel Da
Roberto Ligeralde / Daniel Kwon
April Zhang / Jessica Liang
Alan Hong / Amy Hong

2nd Violin

Jason Ren, Co-principal / Victor Tsao
Eric Liu / Danny Sanchez
Ian Lee / Anjana Begur
Anthony Lee / Susan Zhang
Luis O. Tierradentro / Sheridan Marsh
Brinson Moore / Benjamin Amidon

Viola

Ella Cho, Principal / Gavin Lee
Lucas Chang / Savannah Mueller
Henry Sywulak-Herr / Sahana Sundar
Cynthia Dong / Isaac King

Cello

Michael Tu, Co-principal / Sophie Sax
Colby Snyder / Gabrielle Ryu
Christine Kong / Alex Ge
Patrick Wu / Evan Jiang
Deborah Zhang / Melanie Hilman

Bass

Berk Soykan, Principal / Sarah Ramadan
Olivia Steinmetz* / Sophia Kelsall*

SYMPHONY NO. 2**1st Violin**

Hannah Lee, Co-concertmaster / Joey Wu
Ben She / Zoe Patterson
Bryan Kim / Daphnie Nie
Ethan Yu / Annie Cheng
William Qi / Gracie Zhang
Louis Dong / Jonah Baer
Maggie Yuan / Angela Ye
Richard Xiong / Kevin Zhou

2nd Violin

Talia Coopersmith, Principal / Michael Huang
Jason Lee / Julianna Cimillo
Joy Onawola / Alison Royce
Annie Wu / Adah Kaplan
Eva Gonzalez-Whitehouse / Elliot Kim
Emily Monfont / Leslie Kinnas Capalbo
Brinson Moore / Benjamin Amidon
Bo Sun

Viola

Autumn Cortright, Co-principal / Greg Kraynak
Phoebe Vallapureddy
Cecilia Wright / April Park
Anna Chung / Aaron Tsui
Tara Pilato / Enne Kim
Nancy Drye / Isaac King

Cello

Marcela Reina, Co-principal / Melanie Hilman
Deborah Zhang, Principal
Samantha Martinez / Andy Liu
Sophia Liu / Melissa Liu
Thomas Sharrock / Avani Asokkumar
Evan Jiang / Maxfield Brody

Bass

Joonyoung Lee, Co-principal / Berk Soykan
John Wallison / William Stewart

* Guest Musician

FINLANDIA & TCHAIKOVSKY & SYMPHONY NO. 2

Flute

(Finlandia) Elle Kirsch / Katherine Li
(Tchaikovsky) Alyssia Liu / Katherine Li
(Symphony No. 2) Michael Han / Kimberly Liang

Oboe

(Finlandia) Jonathan Hong / Daniel Koropecj-Cox
(Tchaikovsky) Daniel Koropecj-Cox / Jonathan Hong
(Symphony No. 2) Luna Sato

Clarinet

(Finlandia) Greg Ferrey / Will Wang
(Tchaikovsky) Will Wang / Greg Ferrey
(Symphony No. 2) Xandro Xu

Bassoon

(Finlandia) Mikael Habib / Kaitlin Blam

Horn

(Finlandia & Tchaikovsky) Anagha Gouru / Evan Bretz
(Finlandia & Tchaikovsky) Aidan Lewis / Harold Litt
(Symphony No. 2) Brian Herman / Harry Li / Ryan Yang / Harold Litt

Trumpet

(Finlandia) Seamus Wang (Matthew Bloomfield, assist.) / Eli Harrison / Graciela Torres (Kent Bergin, assist.)
(Symphony No. 2) Matthew Bloomfield / Seamus Wang (Celeste Adler, assist.) / Eli Harrison (Kent Bergin, assist.)

Trombone

(Finlandia) Tyler Jenkins-Wong (Mark Li, assist.)
(Finlandia) Rishi Patel / Hunter Stufflebeam
(Symphony No. 2) Tyler Jenkins-Wong (Mark Li, assist.)
(Symphony No. 2) Rishi Patel / Hunter Stufflebeam

Tuba

(Finlandia & Symphony No. 2) Dan Ju

Timpani / Percussion

(Finlandia & Tchaikovsky) Kayden Maiorine / Akash George
(Symphony No. 2) Tammy Yang

Guest Musicians

Oboe, Dana Newcomb
Clarinet, Amy Christmas
Bassoon, Kahlan Yenney
Bassoon, Asha Kline
Horn, Martina Adams
Trumpet, Kent Bergin
Percussion, Bill Priebe

Winds / Brass / Percussion

NOTES ON SIBELIUS

Finlandia, op. 26

The compositions of Jean Sibelius constitute a case study in the capriciousness of musical taste and the power of the artistic *avant-garde*. Pigeonholed by many as primarily a Finnish nationalist, whose dark, remote music was a shallow representative of Romanticism's last gasp, Sibelius was nevertheless deemed the champion of American and British conservative musical tastes between the world wars. Typical was Olin Downes, music critic of the *Times*, whose relentless public support of Sibelius bordered on sycophancy. Likewise, Koussevitsky, conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, programmed a cycle of Sibelius's symphonies, and dogged the composer to finish the eighth—which he never did. But, those who favored the *avant-garde* of Stravinsky, Schoenberg, and company—and that included most of continental Europe and American intellectuals—were scathing in their contempt. One respected and well-known critic entitled an essay about Sibelius, “The Worst Composer in the World.” These controversies, and Sibelius's life-long struggle with alcoholism and depression no doubt played a signal part in his composing nothing of significance from the nineteen thirties until his death in 1957 at the age of 91.

But today Sibelius enjoys a respect, while not approaching the heights of pre-World War II times, that seems to secure his reputation. While he was a prolific composer, and his symphonies enjoy frequent performance, none of his works

achieved the popularity of *Finlandia*. Finland had for centuries languished under the rule of Sweden, and then in the early nineteenth century fell under the control of Russia, becoming by the end of the century a grand duchy of the Russian Empire. After tightening control of Finland by Russia in 1898, the Finns were distinctly unhappy. Surging nationalism manifested itself in variety of ways, including a patriotic melodrama given in 1899 in Helsinki, ostensibly to raise money for a newspaper pension fund. Sibelius contributed incidental music to this enterprise, the last tableau of which was entitled *Suomi Herää* (Finland Awakens). He reworked the piece into a symphonic tone poem the next year, and renamed it *Finlandia*. It opens with ominous brass chords, moves on into a tumultuous faster section that seems to parallel a growing national sense of strength, and ends triumphantly with a powerful chorale (heard earlier, in a soft aura of confidence). The chorale has entered the realm of popular church music under the title, “Be Still My Soul,” but it stands alone as the most affirmative statement of the confidence and independence of the Finnish people. ☺

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NOTES ON TCHAIKOVSKY

Variations on a Rococo Theme, Op.33

Tchaikovsky's music is beloved by audiences for its rich Romantic character and the emotional depth in its melodies. Yet despite his proclivity for composing Romantic music, Tchaikovsky himself idolized Mozart, a composer whose music is deeply rooted in the Classical tradition, a musical style that was already antiquated by Tchaikovsky's time. Thus, in contrast to many of his other compositions, Tchaikovsky's Variations on a Rococo Theme for Cello and Orchestra was conceived as an homage to the Classical style and his idol Mozart. The term "Rococo" typically refers to the ornate and decorated art style from the 18th century but in this case, Tchaikovsky uses it as a descriptor for an original theme that evokes the musical style from that era. Although not a concerto in name or form, the Rococo Variations is the closest cellists will come to a concerto from Tchaikovsky. Unlike the violin or piano repertoire which contains so many concertos by so many composers, the cello concerto repertoire is considerably smaller and contains many works that come with an asterisk attached to them. Tchaikovsky's Rococo Variations, despite being a staple in the cello repertory, is one of those pieces that requires some explanation. Tchaikovsky began composing the piece in 1876 for Wilhelm Fitzhagen, a German cellist and colleague of Tchaikovsky's at the Moscow Conservatory. The piece received its premiere the following year in 1877 to much success, but prior to its publication, Fitzhagen made considerable alterations to the piece,

going so far as rearranging the order of the variations and cutting the final variation altogether. Tchaikovsky, who was abroad at the time of the premiere and thus never even heard a performance of the piece as he originally composed it, seemingly acquiesced to the revisions despite complaints from his publisher. Even though Tchaikovsky's original version has since been published, Fitzhagen's reconstructed version is the one cellists continue to perform to this day.

The piece begins with a short orchestral introduction that is followed by the solo cello stating the principal theme that has the character of a charming gavotte dance. Tchaikovsky emulation of the simple elegance of the Classical style is clear in the principal theme; however, the codetta which bridges the theme and the first variation is where Tchaikovsky's own musical personality emerges. A series of seven variations follows the theme, displaying a wide variety of emotional characters and requiring great amounts of technical skill from the soloist. The final variation and coda culminate in a very Tchaikovsky-esque sprint to the finish that brings Tchaikovsky's heartfelt tribute to Mozart and the Classical tradition to a rousing conclusion. ☉

2022 Evan Jiang

NOTES ON SIBELIUS

Symphony No. 2 in D Major, op. 43

The compositions of Jean Sibelius constitute a case study in the capriciousness of musical taste and the power of the artistic avant-garde. Pigeonholed by many as primarily a Finnish nationalist, whose dark, remote music was a shallow representative of Romanticism's last gasps, Sibelius was nevertheless deemed the champion of American and British conservative musical tastes between the world wars. Typical was Olin Downes, music critic of the Times, whose relentless public support of Sibelius bordered on sycophancy. Likewise, Koussevitsky, conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, programmed a cycle of Sibelius's symphonies, and dogged the composer to finish the eighth—which he never did. But, those who favored the avant-garde of Stravinsky, Schönberg, and company – and that included most of continental Europe, and American intellectuals—were scathing in their contempt. One respected and well-known critic entitled an essay about Sibelius, “The Worst Composer in the World.” These controversies, and Sibelius's life-long struggle with alcoholism and depression no doubt played a signal part in his composing nothing of significance from the nineteen thirties until his death in 1957 at the age of 91.

But tastes change, and the current crop of composers and scholars now take a more balanced view of Sibelius's compositions. His seven symphonies enjoy renewed respect, although the ever-popular second symphony

has long been a repertory standard, and—other than the evergreen Finlandia—is his most popular work. It is not incorrect, of course, to recognize the deeply informing rôle of nationalist Finnish elements in his music style. He consciously and assiduously studied and absorbed the musical and literary heritage of the Finnish culture and adroitly folded them into a unique personal style. He was completely taken by the Finnish national epic, the Kalevala, and early on his musical style reflected these cultural elements, from his melodic choices to the stories behind his tone poems. His symphonies are large soundscapes that surge and ebb, whose melodies often appear first as small kernels of a few notes whose significance is easily overlooked. But, as the music unfolds and these bits of melody appear in a kaleidoscope of identities, they meld together into great torrents of themes. Sibelius was a master of orchestration, and most listeners easily accept the inevitable comparisons to the bleak, cold, primæval landscapes of Finland.

Finland for centuries had been under Swedish hegemony, and then in the nineteenth century under Russian control. Many still remember Finland's heroic stand against the Soviets early in WWII (although their later coöperation with the Nazis troubled some). Sibelius's second symphony depicts, indeed, a defiant and bold stand for Finnish independence during its struggles with Russia around the turn of the twentieth century. Composed in 1902, the symphony is usually understood as a gesture of defiance in the face of the Tsar, although the composer never suggested this view. The first

movement opens quietly in a fashion typical of the composer's style—no big tunes to hear and remember, but, as alluded above, just some little fragments that gradually assemble themselves. Then the process reverses itself, and the bits close the movement peacefully. The second movement is a slow sonata form that begins with a remarkable pizzicato section in the cellos and double basses, followed by a somewhat sinister theme in the bassoons. In a fashion traditional from Mozart on we next hear a lyrical contrasting theme in the strings. Most symphonies use a brisk dance form for third movements. Here Sibelius begins with energetic string figurations that soon are followed in the middle sections by a pastoral oboe solo. Then, as usual in these matters, the string section returns. This movement is blended right into the beginning of the famous last movement, one almost universally loved—well, at least known—by music lovers everywhere. Clear themes prevail, the most familiar one being the ascending three note stepwise motif. The movement closes heroically with a huge statement of this melody, with the complete brass section taking the lead. The careful listener will note that this little theme has appeared in many guises throughout the whole work. This is typical of Sibelius's craftsmanship and integrated approach to composition. In many ways this glorious finale affords the composer the last laugh over his "sophisticated" detractors. ☉

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SOLOIST BIO

Hun Choi

Hun Choi, from Seoul, entered the Curtis Institute of Music in 2017 and studies with Peter Wiley, former cellist of the Guarneri Quartet, and Gary Hoffman. All students at Curtis receive merit-based, full-tuition scholarships, and Mr. Choi is the Jacqueline du Pré Memorial Fellow.

Mr. Choi has performed as a soloist with the PyeongChang Music Festival's orchestra as a winner of their concerto competition, the Yewon Orchestra, and the Namyangju Symphony Orchestra. He received first prize at the 2016 Ewha Kyunghyang Competition, the 2015 Seoul Youth Chamber Music Competition, and the 2014 Buwon Competition; and third prize at the 2019 Morningside Music Bridge Concerto Competition. He has also performed at the Artsylvia and Yewon chamber music festivals, and in the orchestras of the Korea National University of Arts, the Korea National Institute for the Gifted in Arts, and the Yewon School.

Mr. Choi has performed solo recitals at Kukje Art Center and the Kumho Prodigy Concert Series; and has attended the PyeongChang Music Festival and School, Morningside Music Bridge, the Great Mountains Music Festival, and the Seoul Art Center Music Academy. He holds a Bachelor of Music degree from Korea National University of Arts, where he studied with Myung-Wha Chung.



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