



# RACHMANINOFF & TCHAIKOVSKY

*Featuring Joyce Yang*



CLASSICAL SERIES

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 1, AT 7 PM | FRIDAY & SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 2 & 3, AT 8 PM

## NASHVILLE SYMPHONY

LAWRENCE FOSTER, *conductor*  
JOYCE YANG, *piano*

### BRUNO MANTOVANI

*Finale*

*United States Premiere*

### SERGEI RACHMANINOFF

**Concerto No. 2 in C minor for Piano and Orchestra, Op. 18**

Moderato

Adagio sostenuto

Allegro scherzando

*Joyce Yang, piano*

– INTERMISSION –

### PIOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY

**Symphony No. 1 in G minor, Op. 13 “Winter Dreams”**

Allegro tranquillo

Adagio cantabile ma non tanto

Scherzo: Allegro scherzando giocoso

Finale: Andante lugubre – Allegro moderato – Allegro maresoso

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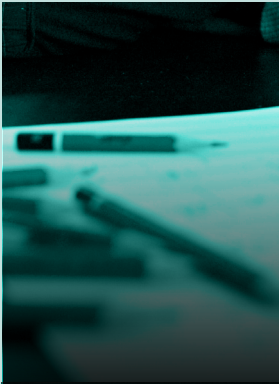


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# TONIGHT'S CONCERT

## AT A GLANCE



### BRUNO MANTOVANI

#### *Finale*

- French composer Mantovani is also a conductor and the director of the Paris Conservatoire, where he studied with great distinction before serving as an administrator. His work explores the ties between music and other artistic disciplines, while also engaging with the Western classical music tradition.
- Mantovani wrote this dramatic piece for the 50th Besançon International Competition. He had no particular inspiration in mind, other than a piece in the style of a finale. “This is exactly what I attempted to create,” he explains, “a jubilatory feeling that marks a point of no return, and above all, an impression of an achievement, of resolution.”



### SERGEI RACHMANINOFF

#### Concerto No. 2 in C minor for Piano and Orchestra, Op. 18

- Rachmaninoff composed this piece after a long period of depression set off by the strongly negative reaction to his First Symphony. He regained his confidence after undertaking treatment with hypnotherapist Nikolai Dahl, to whom the concerto is dedicated.
- The composer's grandson has suggested that Rachmaninoff may have been in love with Dahl's daughter, and that he channeled these feelings into the Concerto.
- Rachmaninoff performed the solo part at the 1901 premiere in Moscow, where it was a resounding success. While written at the dawn of the 20th century, at a time when composers like Debussy and Schoenberg were enacting a major transformation in music, this piece remains fundamentally Romantic.
- In the transition from the first movement to the second movement, the music moves from the key of C minor to the vastly different key of E major. This is the same shift that takes place between the first and second movements of Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 3.
- Where you've heard this music: Eric Carmen borrowed one of the melodies from the second movement for his '70s mega-hit “All By Myself.” Upon learning that the work was not in the public domain outside the U.S., Carmen agreed to pay a percentage of the royalties to the Rachmaninoff estate.
- The tune from the finale is used in the song “Full Moon and Empty Arms,” made famous by Frank Sinatra in 1945, and the Concerto is featured in the classic comedy *The Seven Year Itch* (1955), starring Marilyn Monroe.



### PIOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY

#### Symphony No. 1 in G minor, Op. 13 “Winter Dreams”

- Tchaikovsky composed his First Symphony in 1866, not long after he had started teaching at the Conservatory of Music in Moscow at the invitation of founder Nikolai Rubinstein. The creative process was taxing, and the piece was conceived during many sleepless nights as he wrestled with anxiety over the task.
- Although it is performed less frequently than his later works, Tchaikovsky looked back fondly on his First Symphony. In a letter to Nadezhda von Meck, his patroness, he said, “In many respects it is very immature, although fundamentally it is still richer in content than many of my other, more mature works.”
- Tchaikovsky himself designated the title “Winter Dreams,” and he gave subtitles to the first two movements that also evoke a feeling of wintery chill and reverie. The music blends the influence of Russian folksongs with Western classical tradition.

— Corinne Fombelle & Thomas May



## BRUNO MANTOVANI

Born on October 8, 1974, in Châtillon, a suburb of Paris; currently resides in Paris

### Finale

**Composed:** 2007

**First performance:** June 15, 2007, in Besançon, France, at the International Competition for Young Conductors, with the Orchestre National d'Ile de France

These are the first performances by the Nashville Symphony and the U.S. premiere.

**Estimated length:** 14 minutes

**K**nown primarily as a composer, Bruno Mantovani is also a conductor and heads one of the most storied and influential musical institutions in Europe, the Paris Conservatory. After studying there with great distinction (including five first prizes), he went on to become its director in 2010. Mantovani has achieved renown especially for his works for orchestra and for the stage. His collaborations with the Paris Opera include the ballet *Siddharta* and the opera *Akhmatova*, inspired by the story of the great Russian poet Anna Akhmatova

Mantovani's aesthetic explores the ties between music and other artistic disciplines, as well as a critical engagement with the music of the Western tradition. Some of his works combine both approaches, such as the symphonic poem *Schlemihl*, which reflects on Richard Strauss (*Ein Heldenleben*) and the 19th-century novel *Peter Schlemihl* by Adelbert von Chamisso. Last December saw the world premiere of his latest work, *Danse libre*, a harp concerto that responds to Debussy's *Danses sacrées et profanes*.

*Finale* is one of a pair of compositions Mantovani was asked to write in 2007 for Europe's two major competitions for orchestral conductors: the Bamberg Symphony Orchestra's so-called Mahler Competition and the Besançon

International Competition. This was a coincidence the composer says he found "particularly amusing," since the essential requirement was the same for both — to showcase the talents of aspiring conductors. At the same time, he realized that the pieces had to be "very different (the similarity of the projects prompting me to renew myself from one piece to the next)." It occurred to him as well that *Finale* and its companion, *Time Stretch (on Gesualdo)*, might form "the first two pillars of a future cycle" — though he has not since added to it.

Mantovani has spoken of his obsession with the "orchestral hedonism" of Strauss and with the "sonic opulence" of Edgar Varèse — a characteristic which is discernible here. Another notable feature of *Finale* is the interplay it presents between virtuosic handling of the orchestra — requiring corresponding virtuosity from the players and their conductor — and the emergence of solo passages, with a particular focus on the flute.

## WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

**M**antovani supplies the following commentary on *Finale*:

"The piece [involves] writing not from any given reference but instead creating my own original references. The recurrence of certain motifs in the solo flute part therefore structures a very free and very rhapsodic form based on the contrast between stationary moments (slow loops, ostinati, statically held notes) and other highly energetic, elusive or highly developed moments.

"Beyond the fact that it refers to the final round of the 50th Besançon International Competition that commissioned the work, the title of this eventful quarter-hour of music tends to give a conclusive character to the cycle (currently containing only two sections [*Time Stretch and Finale*]). This is indeed what I attempted to create: a jubilant feeling that marks a point of no return and, above all, an impression of an achievement, of resolution."

*Finale* is scored for 3 flutes (3rd doubling piccolo), 3 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 3 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, 3 percussionists, harp and strings.



# SERGEI RACHMANINOFF

Born on April 1, 1873, in Semyonovo, Russia; died on March 28, 1943, in Beverly Hills, California

**Composed:** 1900-01

**First performance:** November 9, 1901, in Moscow, with Rachmaninoff as the soloist and Alexander Siloti conducting the Moscow Philharmonic.

**First Nashville Symphony performance:**

November 25, 1947, at War Memorial Auditorium with Music Director William Strickland and soloist Eugene List.

**Estimated length:** 35 minutes

## Concerto No. 2 in C minor for Piano and Orchestra, Op. 18

It was through the medium of the piano concerto — specifically, the second of his four numbered concertos for the instrument — that Sergei Rachmaninoff worked his way out of a long episode of debilitating depression. The depression had been touched off by the disastrous premiere of the young composer’s First Symphony in 1897. Rachmaninoff’s attempts to regain his confidence only backfired when he subsequently paid a couple of visits to the elderly Leo Tolstoy, seeking advice from the sage. Then in full ascetic mode, Tolstoy made clear his disdain for the young Russian’s music.

These setbacks had a traumatic effect on Rachmaninoff’s ability to continue composing. He suffered from a lingering dry spell for the next several years, although he was able to remain musically active with conducting engagements, as well as by continuing his career as a concert pianist. In 1900, Rachmaninoff was advised to seek out treatment from the pioneering hypnotherapist Nikolai Dahl, who also happened to be an accomplished musician and was particularly sympathetic to his patient’s plight.

After several months of daily visits, Rachmaninoff experienced a breakthrough. A spring trip to the resort area of Yalta in Crimea, a popular getaway for artists, also proved to be restorative. While there, Rachmaninoff received

an inspiring compliment about his music from the playwright Anton Chekhov — a kind of antidote to his toxic encounter with Tolstoy. By the summer, he was composing again, and the next year he completed his Piano Concerto No. 2. Dedicated to Dahl, it marked the cure for Rachmaninoff’s creative block during this phase of his career.

Another (unverified) theory about Rachmaninoff’s cure — which the composer’s grandson suggested to the pianist Stephen Hough — is that his frequent visits to Dahl were actually prompted by his love for the therapist’s daughter, and that he channeled these feelings into the Second Concerto. (He would marry his first cousin, Natalia Alexandrovna Satina, in the year following the work’s premiere.)

Whatever the case, “new musical ideas began to stir within me,” Rachmaninoff later recalled, “far more than I needed for my concerto.” He suffered one more crisis of confidence shortly before the premiere of the completed work, when a friend complained that the material of the first movement was inadequately designed. But the work scored a huge success from the start, saving the composer from a relapse into paralyzing self-doubt. A fertile period of new pieces followed, and the Second Concerto quickly established itself in the repertory.

## WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The first movement introduces some patterns that recur later in the other two movements, including a brief prelude gesture in the form of a solo for the piano. Eight chords of shifting harmonies work toward the home key of C minor, evoking the sound of tolling bells that is one signature of Rachmaninoff’s music. A four-note tag at the end serves as a unifying motif,

followed by the orchestra’s entry with the first of the opening movement’s two main themes. Even when the soloist is not at the center of attention, Rachmaninoff’s writing requires virtuosic verve.

Curiously, the piano never plays the complete first theme by itself, but it does introduce the lyrically effusive second theme after an agitated transition passage. Rachmaninoff made his name



as one of the superstars of the golden age of pianism in the late-19th to early-20th century period, but he combines virtuosity with his remarkable ear for effective orchestral textures as well.

During the climactic reprise of the first theme by the orchestra, the soloist bursts into a rhythmically brittle sequence based on the four-note motif from the opening, now almost martial in its bravado. A solo horn takes up the second theme this time, magically decelerated, against string tremolos and clarinet harmonies.

The orchestra effects a harmonic shift to E major at the opening of the *Adagio sostenuto*. Rachmaninoff then presents one of his most indelible melodies, intertwining the piano's figurations with contributions from the woodwinds. Eric Carmen helped himself to this tune for his 1975 pop hit "All By Myself," just as he would lift another Rachmaninoff *Adagio* tune for "Never Gonna Fall in Love Again" in 1976. (Carmen later discovered that these works were not in the public domain outside the United States and came to an agreement with the composer's estate.)

Tchaikovsky, one of Rachmaninoff's idols, provided the model in his own First Piano Concerto for the introduction of a scherzo-like

central section that contrasts with the lyrical framework surrounding it. A brief solo for the piano serves as transition back to the nostalgic principal melody.

A short prelude launching the finale gives way to a splashy mini-cadenza before the main theme is announced. Unlike the first movement, Rachmaninoff establishes a striking contrast between this theme — tightly confined, yet volatile — and the well-known second one, which initially emerges from the violas. The latter melody encapsulates the Concerto's moody, elegiac lyricism, as if Rachmaninoff is smuggling the emotional directness of his beloved Tchaikovsky into a new century.

The ensuing episodes include a brief, fugue-like passage and a transformation of the moody second theme into a grand version for the entire ensemble, mixed with assertive piano chords. The spell quickly dissolves, yielding to a fleet-fingered coda in the major and punctuated by the composer's rhythmic signature (long-short-short-long).

*In addition to solo piano, the score calls for 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, cymbals and strings.*



## PIOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY

Born on May 7, 1840, in Votkinsk, Russia; died on November 6, 1893, in Saint Petersburg, Russia

**Composed:** 1866–68; revised 1874

**First performance:** February 15, 1868, in Moscow, with Nikolai Rubinstein conducting

**First Nashville Symphony performance:**

February 6, 1998, with Music Director Kenneth Schermerhorn

**Estimated length:** 45 minutes

### Symphony No. 1 in G minor, Op. 13 "Winter Dreams"

In 1888, when Rachmaninoff was a student at the Conservatory of Music in Moscow, Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky served on the board for a crucial examination in which the younger Russian was selected for an elite group to be trained as potential composers. Tchaikovsky was so impressed that he was later reported to have said: "For him, I predict a great future."

Two decades earlier, Tchaikovsky's own future as a composer was still very much unsettled when he moved to Moscow in 1866 and began teaching

at the very same Conservatory, known today as the Moscow State Tchaikovsky Conservatory. It had just been founded by Nikolai Rubinstein, who invited Tchaikovsky to join the new faculty. Fresh out of the Saint Petersburg Conservatory, which had been established only four years earlier by Rubinstein's brother Anton, Tchaikovsky made his debut as a professional composer that year with a beefed-up version of a student piece he had written, an Overture in F.

Nikolai Rubinstein conducted the Overture

in March 1866, the same month in which Tchaikovsky embarked on his First Symphony, which he dedicated to Nikolai. The composer reported to one of his younger brothers: “At 11 o’clock, I either give a lesson until 1, or tackle the symphony (which, by the way, is going sluggishly) ... My nerves are extremely fraught again, for the following reasons: 1) my lack of success in composing the symphony; 2) Rubinstein and [writer Konstantin] Tarnovsky spend all day trying to torment me... 3) being unable to shake off the thought that I might soon die without even managing to complete the symphony.”

Tchaikovsky continued work during that summer, trying to focus on the symphony while on retreat at a dacha, chain-smoking deep into the night. Another of the composer’s brothers, Modest, later recalled that “no other work cost him such effort and suffering,” remarking that Pyotr Ilyich that summer suffered from insomnia, culminating in hallucinations and

“a terrible nervous attack, the like of which he never experienced again during his lifetime.” As a result, he added, Tchaikovsky never again allowed himself to compose at night.

Otherwise, there is little documentation about the genesis of this first of Tchaikovsky’s six numbered symphonies. He showed the work-in-progress to his mentors but was advised to make revisions. Anton Rubinstein then found only the middle movements acceptable. Nikolai conducted the scherzo alone in December 1866, but it wasn’t until February 1868 that he premiered the entire First Symphony. Tchaikovsky fundamentally revised the score into its final version in 1874, later referring to the First fondly as “a sin of my sweet youth.” To his patroness Madame von Meck, he also observed: “In many respects it is very immature, although fundamentally it is still richer in content than many of my other, more mature works.”

## WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

One of the main challenges Tchaikovsky was facing with his Symphony No. 1 was the mere act of being a Russian composer writing a symphony — not unlike the problem facing American composers attempting to forge a style of their own. As he was coming of age, a fierce debate was raging among Russian composers about how to create an “authentic” Russian style that did not merely imitate the models from the West — the models on which the new conservatories were built.

In his First Symphony, Tchaikovsky finds something of a middle ground between the different camps by combining Western models and ideas of orchestration with Russian folk materials. One angle the Russian nationalists particularly preferred (even though it was also quite popular in the West) was that of program music: compositions anchored to some outside narrative. Tchaikovsky gave the work the overall subtitle *Zimniye gryozy* — “Winter Dreams” (sometimes translated “Winter Daydreams” or “Winter Reveries”) — and also subtitled the first two movements: “Daydreams of a Winter Journey” and “Land of Gloom, Land of Mists,” respectively. This suggests that he may have had a specific program in mind. The atmospheric opening, along with the folksong dimension of some of the material, can be heard to evoke the Russian landscape in a more general sense. Yet

as with the work’s genesis, there is no concrete evidence to spell out any detailed program. Also of note in the First’s gentle opening is the sheer length of the thematic material, stated by the flutes and bassoons when first presented. Already, Tchaikovsky’s distinctive gift for melody is apparent. Two main thematic ideas are explored in this first movement, and Tchaikovsky aficionados will doubtless hear foreshadowings of the later, much better-known symphonies (particularly the Fourth).

For all his misgivings during the writing of his First Symphony, Tchaikovsky enjoyed immediate approval from his audience for the Adagio at the 1868 premiere. Here, the composer continues to draw on his haunting melodic gift, gracing the oboe with a melody that sounds like genuine Russian folksong. For this Adagio, Tchaikovsky recycled a theme he had associated with nature in an unperformed overture he had based on a play called *The Storm*. The Scherzo similarly contains a reworking of music from a piano work, while the trio “is Tchaikovsky’s first orchestral waltz,” according to biographer Roland John Wiley.

Wiley also notes the inspiration that Tchaikovsky drew from Robert Schumann when conceiving the First Symphony — particularly in stretching the conventions of sonata form in the outer movements. Schumann’s unusually structured Fourth Symphony was the apparent

model, while “folkish references find their apotheosis here: the introduction is a folk theme treated in changing background.” This folk theme later returns as the second theme and, finally, “in a triumphant variant.” At the same time, Tchaikovsky’s conservatory studies in counterpoint are also in evidence in one of the finale’s most energetic episodes, anticipating the thrilling clash music of the *Romeo and Juliet Overture-Fantasy* of 1869.

Overall, concludes Wiley, the First “illustrates Tchaikovsky’s characteristic interplay of

conformity and independence, making his music at once original and responsive to tradition.”

*The Symphony No. 1 is score for 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, cymbals, bass drum and strings.*

— Thomas May, the Nashville Symphony’s program annotator, is a writer and translator who covers classical and contemporary music. He blogs at [memeteria.com](http://memeteria.com).

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS



### LAWRENCE FOSTER CONDUCTOR

American conductor Lawrence Foster is the music director of Opéra de Marseille, a position he has held since 2013. Previously, he was music director of Orquestra Simfònica de

Barcelona, Orchestre Philharmonique de Monte-Carlo, Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra, Houston Symphony and the Orchestre de Chambre de Lausanne, among others. He is currently conductor laureate of the Gulbenkian Orchestra, for whom he served as music director for 10 years; he has toured this orchestra across the world, partnering with leading soloists such as Lang Lang in Germany, Spain, Brazil and major festival destinations.

Foster has been invited as guest conductor by many of the world’s leading orchestras, including the Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, NDR Radiophilharmonie Hannover, Konzerthausorchester Berlin, Filarmonica Arturo Toscanini of Parma, Hungarian National Philharmonic, Copenhagen Philharmonic Orchestra, Montreal Symphony Orchestra and Hong Kong Philharmonic. He has frequently appeared at major festivals, including the Lucerne and Grafenegg festivals. Foster holds dear his deep and longstanding musical friendships with outstanding artists such as Evgeny Kissin, Arcadi Volodos and Arabella Steinbacher.

In addition to his concert engagements, Foster is an accomplished opera conductor and has appeared with major opera companies throughout the world. His opera productions at Opéra de Marseille have received wide critical acclaim,

and his regular guest-conducting engagements include Frankfurt Opera, Hamburg State Opera, San Francisco Opera and Opéra de Monte-Carlo, among others. He recently conducted a concert version of Hindemith’s *Mathis der Maler* at the Enescu Festival in Bucharest and led *Traviata* at the Savonlinna Opera Festival.

Foster’s discography includes a number of highly acclaimed recordings for Pentatone, notably of violin works with Arabella Steinbacher, as well as Bartók’s *Two Portraits*, Ligeti’s *Romanian Concerto*, Kodály’s *Dances of Galanta* and *Háry Janos Suite*, Robert Schumann’s four symphonies with the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, and Strauss’ *Zigeunerbaron* with NDR Radiophilharmonie Hannover. A critically acclaimed recording of Verdi’s *Otello* with the Gulbenkian Orchestra was released in 2017.

Born in 1941 in Los Angeles to Romanian parents, Foster has been a major champion of the music of Georg Enescu, serving as artistic director of the Georg Enescu Festival from 1998 to 2001. In January 2003 he was decorated by the Romanian president for his services to Romanian music.



### JOYCE YANG PIANO

Blessed with “poetic and sensitive pianism” (*Washington Post*) and a “wondrous sense of color” (*San Francisco Classical Voice*), pianist Joyce Yang came to international

attention in 2005, when she won the silver medal at the 12th Van Cliburn International Piano Competition. The youngest contestant at 19 years

old, she took home two additional awards: the Steven De Groote Memorial Award for Best Performance of Chamber Music (with the Takács Quartet) and the Beverley Taylor Smith Award for Best Performance of a New Work.

Since her spectacular debut, Yang has performed as soloist with New York Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, Royal Flemish Philharmonic, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, BBC Philharmonic and the orchestras of Baltimore, Detroit, Houston, Milwaukee, Pittsburgh, San Francisco, Sydney, New Jersey and Toronto, among many others.

In the 2017/18 season, Yang embarks on a series of debuts, collaborations and premieres. Highlights include her debut with New Zealand Symphony Orchestra under Edo de Waart, a performance with Albany Symphony at the Kennedy Center featuring works by Michael Torke (including *Three Manhattan Bridges*, written expressly for her) and Joan Tower, and her first collaboration with Aspen Santa Fe Ballet on a new work for dancers and solo piano choreographed by Jorma Elo. She continues her enduring partnership with Alexander String Quartet with

performances of works by Schumann and Brahms in California and New York.

Born in 1986 in Seoul, South Korea, Yang received her first piano lesson from her aunt at age 4. Over the next few years, she won several national piano competitions in her native country. By age 10, she had entered the School of Music at the Korea National University of Arts and went on to make a number of concerto and recital appearances in Seoul and Daejeon. In 1997, she moved to the United States to begin studies at the pre-college division of The Juilliard School with Dr. Yoheved Kaplinsky. During her first year there, she won the pre-college division Concerto Competition. After winning the Philadelphia Orchestra’s Greenfield Student Competition, she performed Prokofiev’s Third Piano Concerto with that orchestra at just 12 years old. She graduated from Juilliard as the recipient of the school’s 2010 Arthur Rubinstein Prize, and in 2011 she won its 30th Annual William A. Petschek Piano Recital Award.

Yang appears in the film *In the Heart of Music*, a documentary about the 2005 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition. She is a Steinway artist.