



2023-24 Hal & Jeanette Segerstrom  
Family Foundation Classical Series

## TCHAIKOVSKY'S SIXTH

Thursday, Apr. 25, 2024 @ 8 p.m.

Friday, Apr. 26, 2024 @ 8 p.m.

Saturday, Apr. 27, 2024 @ 8 p.m.

Shiyeon Sung, conductor

Yeol Eum Son, piano

Pacific Symphony

## PROGRAM

DONGHOON SHIN *The Hunter's Funeral*

MOZART Piano Concerto No. 21 in C Major,  
K. 467

*Allegro maestoso*

*Andante*

*Allegro vivace assai*

Yeol Eum Son

-INTERMISSION-

TCHAIKOVSKY Symphony No. 6 in B minor, Op. 74  
("Pathétique")

*Adagio - Allegro non troppo*

*Allegro con grazia*

*Allegro molto vivace*

*Finale: Adagio lamentoso*

The 2023-24 season piano soloists are generously  
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**This concert is being recorded for broadcast on  
Aug. 4, 2024 on Classical California KUSC.**

*Performance at the Segerstrom Center for the Arts  
Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall & Lobby*



# ABOUT THE CONDUCTOR

**South Korean conductor Shiyeon Sung is the first female conductor out of that country to make the leap to the podium of internationally renowned orchestras, including the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Konzerthaus Orchestra Berlin, and the Bamberg Symphony.**



When she was appointed assistant conductor at the Boston Symphony Orchestra in 2007, her reputation as one of the most exciting emerging talents on the international music circuit was already secure: shortly before, Sung had won the International Conductors' Competition Sir Georg Solti and the Gustav Mahler Conductors' Competition in Bamberg. During her three-year tenure in Boston, she began a close collaboration with the Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra and conducted their season-opening concert in 2007. In 2009, the orchestra established an associate conductor's position especially for her, which she held until 2013.

Sung was chief conductor of the Gyeonggi Philharmonic Orchestra from 2014 until the end of 2017, during which time she led the orchestra to international success. Following a performance in 2015 at the Philharmonie Berlin, in 2017 Sung and her orchestra were the first Asian orchestra to be invited for a guest appearance at the Musikfest Berlin, the renowned international orchestra festival. Their recording of Mahler's Symphony No. 5 for Decca documents Sung's outstanding work with the group of predominantly young orchestral musicians, for which she was awarded the Musical Performance Prize 2017 from the Daewon Cultural Foundation. After her departure from Gyeonggi, Sung relocated to Berlin where she now resides, but remains a popular guest in her home country and regularly returns to the Korea National Opera and the Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra.

Sung's 2023-24 season kicked off at the Hollywood Bowl in a concert with the Los Angeles Philharmonic. Following her successful debut with the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra in their Musica Viva series in July 2022 season, she was immediately re-invited for subscription concerts in November 2023. She returned to the Royal Philharmonic for five concerts in February 2024 following her successful debut in December 2022. In Asia, she will appear with the Hankyung and the Daejeon Philharmonic, the KBS Symphony Orchestra and the Kanagawa Philharmonic.

Born in Pusan, South Korea, Sung won various prizes as a pianist in youth competitions. From 2001 to 2006, she studied orchestral conducting with Rolf Reuter at the Hanns Eisler School of Music in Berlin and continued her education with advanced conducting studies with Jorma Panula at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm.

# ABOUT THE ARTIST

**In high demand as recitalist, concerto soloist, and chamber musician, Yeol Eum Son has won critical plaudits for the profound insights and intelligence of her interpretations.**



Her development as an all-round artist has gained from collaborations with conductors as diverse as Lorin Maazel, Dmitri Kitajenko, Valery Gergiev, Andrew Manze, Jaime Martin, Jun Märkl, Roberto González-Monjas, Jonathon Heyward, Ryan Bancroft, Pablo Gonzalez, Pietari Inkinen, Joana Carneiro, Gergely Madaras, and Omer Meir Welber.

During the 2023-24 season, Yeol Eum Son collaborates once again with the Deutsche Radio Philharmonie Saarbrücken Kaiserslautern at home in Germany and on tour in South Korea (Rachmaninoff Piano Concerto No.3), Tasmanian Symphony (Rachmaninoff Piano Concerto No.3), and Auckland Philharmonia (Mozart Piano Concerto No.24). She makes debuts with the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra (Chopin Piano Concerto No.2), Atlanta Symphony Orchestra (Britten Piano Concerto), Vancouver Symphony Orchestra (Mozart Piano Concerto No.20), NAC Orchestra (Prokofiev Piano Concerto No.2), West Australian Symphony Orchestra (Rachmaninov Piano Concerto No.3), and Tenerife Symphony (Rachmaninoff Piano Concerto No.3). She also returns to the Melbourne Recital Centre and Adelaide International Piano Series, and makes recital debuts at the Singapore International Piano Festival, Risør Chamber Music Festival, International Piano Festival of Oeiras, and Mänttä Music Festival.

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

Son, born in Wonju, South Korea in 1986, received her first piano lessons at the age of three-and-a-half. She was among the prize winners at the International Tchaikovsky Competition for Young Musicians in 1997 and won the Oberlin International Piano Competition two years later. Son studied at Korea National University of Arts and continued her training with Professor Arie Vardi at the Hochschule für Musik, Theater und Medien Hannover.

Son attracted international attention when she secured second prize and the Best Chamber Music Performance at the 2009 Van Cliburn Competition. She underlined her position among the most gifted artists of her generation at the 2011 International Tchaikovsky Competition, where she won the Silver Medal and received the coveted competition's prizes for Best Chamber Concerto Performance and Best Performance of the Commissioned Work.

Over the past decade, Son has achieved global acclaim not least for her interpretations of Mozart's piano concertos. In 2016, she joined the Academy of St Martin in the Fields and Sir Neville Marriner in what proved to be the conductor's final recording, setting down a radiant interpretation of Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 21 in C Major K. 467 for Onyx Classics. She made her London debut at Cadogan Hall with the same work and orchestra in 2018 and enchanted the audience at the Royal Albert Hall the following year with Mozart's Piano Concerto in B-flat Major K. 450 for her debut at the BBC Proms. The YouTube video of her performance of K. 467 at the International Tchaikovsky Competition has been viewed almost 23 million times, thought to be a record figure for any live Mozart work on the platform.

## PROGRAM NOTES

**Donghoon Shin**

### *The Hunter's Funeral*

**Born:** 1983 in South Korea

**Composed:** 2017

**Premiered:** June 21, 2017 at the Royal Festival Hall in London, with Patrik Bailey conducting the Philharmonia Orchestra

**Most recent Pacific Symphony performance:** This is a Pacific Symphony premiere

**Instrumentation:** one flute including piccolo, one clarinet, one horn, one trumpet, percussion, harp, piano, and select strings

**Approximate duration:** 12 minutes



Born in South Korea in 1983, Donghoon Shin studied composition at Seoul National University with Sukhi Kang and Uzong Choe. He moved to London in 2014, studying with Julian Anderson at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and with Sir George Benjamin at King's College London.

In 2010, Donghoon Shin won the Gran Prix of the ANM-BBVA International Composition Concours, followed by the Goethe Award in 2013 from the Goethe Institut and Tongyeong International Music Festival. Major awards over the past decade include the Royal Philharmonic Society Composition Prize in 2016, a UK Critics' Circle Music Award for Young Talent in 2019, and the Claudio Abbado Prize in 2022. His music has been performed and commissioned by prominent orchestras, ensembles and festivals such as the London Symphony Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, Helsinki Philharmonic, Karajan Academy of the Berlin Philharmonic, Dresden Philharmonic, Spanish National Orchestra, Minnesota Orchestra, Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra, Ensemble Intercontemporain, Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, Ensemble Recherche, Riot Ensemble, EXAUDI ensemble, Festival d'Automne à Paris, and Tongyeong International Music Festival.

A visit to Shin's website is of interest, but avoids detailed explanations of musical style or intent. But with its provocative title and sound, *The Hunter's Funeral* seizes our imagination with questions that only we, as listeners, can answer. In this piece, commissioned by the Philharmonia Orchestra and premiered at London's Royal Festival Hall in 2017, we can hear both pursuit and call-and-response.

# PROGRAM NOTES

Longtime classical fans will recognize musical antecedents here, including Weber's opera *Der Freischütz*, in which a hunter becomes the prey, hunted by the devil; and the Renaissance madrigal "Blow Thy Horn, Hunter," in which the hunter's horn—sounded when the quarry is captured—is called a "morte." As we listen to these works, we must ask ourselves: Who is the hunter, and who is hunted?

## Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart *Piano Concerto No. 21 in C Major, K. 467*

**Born:** Jan. 27, 1756 in Salzburg, Austria

**Died:** Dec. 5, 1791 in Vienna, Austria

**Composed:** 1785

**Premiered:** Mar. 10, 1785 at Vienna's

National Court Theater with the composer as soloist

**Most recent Pacific Symphony performance:** Oct. 22, 2011, with Giancarlo Guerrero conducting, and Jeremy Denk as soloist

**Instrumentation:** one flute, two oboes, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, timpani, strings, and solo piano

**Approximate duration:** 29 minutes



It seems Mozart was writing beautiful music almost from the cradle. He never reached the age when we expect great composers to produce their most profound pieces—artworks that seem to illuminate what it means to be human or to challenge the way we listen rather than just delight us with melodic and harmonic invention. His Piano Concerto No. 21 was composed in a matter of weeks in 1785, when he was 29 and living in Vienna. It was a period of almost unbelievable productivity for the composer, crowded with masterpieces.

Scholarship sometimes treats these great works as mysteries, searching for a "key" to all of the late symphonies, operas, and piano concertos in one genre or another. Indeed, more than one author has suggested that the opening movement of this concerto points toward the opening of Mozart's great Symphony No. 40. But more than anything else, the Piano Concerto No. 21 is known for the sublime beauty of its central *andante* movement, which seems to suspend time as we listen.

Though the concerto conforms to the fast-slow-fast arrangement of movements typical of the era, it opens with a quiet melody in the strings that takes shape gradually, seeming to belie the movement's *allegro* marking. Woodwinds, brass, and percussion answer the strings, opening the movement to inspired wandering from one theme and instrumental family to another.

When the slower second movement begins in F Major (the concerto's outer movements are in C Major), hushed strings initiate a long-lined, flowing melody underscored by murmuring triplets passed from one instrumental family to another—the inner strings, the woodwinds, the piano's bass line. In its initial, major statement, the melody has a beauty that seems subdued yet ecstatic, as if it has surpassed the temporal realms of the everyday and could purl on forever. But as it roams and modulates, its restatement in F minor strikes a note of earthly reality, like the shadow of a cloud on a sunny landscape. For all its hushed, lyric intensity, this is a melody that argues against those who say the operas are the key to Mozart's late masterpieces: this theme cannot be sung like the tune of an aria, only played by a pianist with a very good *legato*.

A melody to die for? Perhaps. The Swedish film director Bo Widerberg may have thought so when he chose this movement to provide the leitmotif for the fatal romantic passion between Elvira Madigan, a tightrope walker in the circus, and Bengt Edvard Sparre, a respectably married count and lieutenant in the Swedish cavalry. But unlike Sparre and Madigan, listeners to the Concerto No. 21 re-enter the world joyfully in its third movement, a zesty finale with a primary theme suggesting a *gavotte*, but rendered in a speedy *allegro vivace* tempo that's more like a gallop. As in many other Mozart concertos, this final movement takes the form of a *sonata-rondo*, with new melodic subjects introduced between restatements of the primary theme. In addition to providing the pianist with an opportunity to display brilliantly contrasting musical ideas and colors, the *rondo* gives Mozart a showcase for his endless inventiveness. By the time the concerto ends, we have been launched into heavenly orbit and brought happily back to earth.

# PROGRAM NOTES

## Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky *Symphony No. 6 in B minor, Op. 74, "Pathétique"*



**Born:** May 7, 1840 in Votkinsk, Russian Empire

**Died:** Nov. 6, 1893 in St. Petersburg, Russian Empire

**Composed:** 1893

**Premiered:** Oct. 28, 1893 in St. Petersburg, with the composer conducting

**Most recent Pacific Symphony performance:** Oct. 19, 2019, with Carl St. Clair conducting

**Instrumentation:** three flutes including piccolo, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, one tuba, timpani, percussion, and strings

**Approximate duration:** 46 minutes

Was it just an unfortunate twist of fate that Tchaikovsky drank a glass of cholera-contaminated water five days after conducting the premiere of his Symphony No. 6? Was he unconsciously punishing himself for the sexual impulses that tormented him, perhaps even succumbing to an urge to die? Or did he, in fact, commit suicide to conceal his alleged affair with the nephew of Duke Stenbock Thurmor? We'll never know the answer, but our awareness of his inner conflicts can add depth to our experience in listening to his impassioned "Pathétique."

Cholera was rife in Saint Petersburg in 1893, and citizens throughout the city were boiling their drinking water. It's hard to imagine Tchaikovsky, who always fretted and feared the worst, letting his guard down offhandedly. He worried about his image both as a composer whose reputation would survive him and as a public figure in Russian society. And he knew that since Beethoven, the symphony was a form that serious composers reserved for big ideas and programmatic music that might have a narrative line or an intellectual agenda connected with the philosophical ideas of greatest concern to them. For Tchaikovsky, his repressed homosexuality and the possibility of marriage were among these ideas. Dangerous as homosexuality was in that time and place—punishable by exile to Siberia—it seems likely that he was more concerned with appearances, and saw marriage as his chance for an outwardly normal life. Fifteen years earlier, in 1877, he had married a 16-year-old student, Antonina Miliukhova, who was infatuated with him. The marriage was an unmitigated disaster, plunging Tchaikovsky into such unbearable tension that he could not bear to be near her. In one close encounter when they found themselves in the same room, they passed without exchanging a word.

By 1892, when he was working on early sections of a sixth symphony in E-flat Major, Tchaikovsky was one of the most famous composers in the world—a man whose fame redounded to the glory of his homeland, as he had hoped it would. But at age 53, his struggles with self-image and sexual identity were no closer to resolution. Musicologists' analyses of his agonized homosexual relationships are speculative,

but it's difficult to escape some obvious conclusions about his conflicted relationship with his nephew Bob Davydov, with whom he was in love: Davydov's encouragement and understanding were indispensable to the self-doubting Tchaikovsky, but the younger man's very presence in the composer's life was a temptation and a reminder of feelings he was trying to suppress. How could he continue to craft a symphony that was planned to be highly programmatic, and thus self-revealing? At an impasse and feeling that his creative resources were spent, Tchaikovsky halted work on the E-flat Major draft in December 1892—a decision that felt not like surrender, but liberation. Within two months he began an entirely new approach to his Sixth symphony, and the ideas came pouring forth. He drafted its first section in only four days and could clearly imagine the rest. Six months later, his work on the symphony was complete.

Tchaikovsky intended his Symphony No. 6 as a programmatic work, and listening to it convinces us that the program is specific and detailed, yet the details remain unknown. He wrote to his nephew that it would "remain a mystery—let them guess." Today, we are still guessing. The sound of this symphony gives us a sense of inchoate longing: somber, melancholy, and yearning by turns. The ovation that greeted Tchaikovsky when he took the podium in October 1893 to lead the premiere performance was not matched once the symphony ended, when the audience was left to reflect on the secrets of this moody masterpiece. Today, it is esteemed as one of Tchaikovsky's most eloquent expressions of disappointed hopes and the ache for personal fulfillment—recurrent themes in earlier works such as his opera *Eugene Onegin*.

The symphony's forte passages suggest the gravity of judgment rather than triumph, while the softer passages—which dwindle down to a Guinness-record-worthy marking of "pppppp"—communicate agonized introspection. These dynamics left Tchaikovsky's audience with a very different listening experience than they expected, and prompted the composer's brother Modest to propose "Pathétique" as a name for the symphony.

If the symphony offers respite, it is in its interior movements: the lilt of the second movement, labeled a waltz, but actually rendered in a tricky 5/4 rhythm; and the third movement, which includes a blaring march that gleams with brass. This movement has all the ingredients for a sense of triumph except triumph itself. It leaves an impression of ironic disappointment, as if it were a critique of the triumphant finale that resolves Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony stated from a vantage point of greater experience.

Tchaikovsky famously said that he had put his "whole soul" into the "Pathétique." We may never know the demons that inhabited that soul, but we can hear the tortured sincerity of his feelings. For better or worse, those feelings ended in death nine days after he conducted the symphony's premiere.

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*Michael Clive is a cultural reporter living in the Litchfield Hills of Connecticut. He is program annotator for Pacific Symphony and has written numerous articles for magazines and newspapers in the U.S. and U.K. and hundreds of program notes for orchestras and opera companies. [Operahound.com](http://Operahound.com)*