

# HART HOUSE ORCHESTRA

HENRY JANZEN, PRINCIPAL CONDUCTOR &  
MUSIC DIRECTOR

# SUMMER CONCERT

8:00 PM THURSDAY, MAY 30<sup>TH</sup>, 2024  
GREAT HALL, HART HOUSE  
TORONTO

# PROGRAMME

## **Divertimento for String Orchestra Sz.113 BB. 118**

Béla Bartók

## **The Threepenny Opera Suite (arr. Rozemond)**

Kurt Weill

— *INTERMISSION* —

## **Piano Concerto No.4 in G major, op. 58**

Ludwig van Beethoven

with Piano soloist Sumi Kim

1. Allegro moderato
2. Andante con moto
3. Rondo (Vivace)

## Béla Bartók: Divertimento for String Orchestra Sz.113 BB. 118



*Orchestration: String orchestra (subdivided into soloists for each string instrument) requiring at least 6 first violins, 6 second violins, 4 violas, 4 cellos, and 2 double basses. Approximate duration: 27 minutes*

Bartók composed the *Divertimento for String Orchestra* in 1939 at the behest of his friend Paul Sacher, a Swiss conductor, composer, impresario and

art patron.

Paul Sacher, who studied with the conductor Felix Weingartner, married the heiress of the pharmaceutical firm Hoffmann-LaRoche and led the company until his death in 1999. His resulting wealth (in the 1990s he was considered the third richest person in world) allowed he and his wife to patronize art on a truly princely scale. Sacher founded the Basel Chamber Orchestra in 1926, and the Basel Schola Cantorum in 1933, the later a leading music academy and research institute focusing on early music. Most impressive, however, was his patronage of 20<sup>th</sup> Century music: he commissioned works from virtually every prominent composer from Richard Strauss to Harrison Birtwistle, including Stravinsky, Hindemith, Lutoslawski, to name but a few.

The *Divertimento for String Orchestra* was the second and last work Bartók wrote for Sacher's Basel Chamber Orchestra. The first collaboration resulted in *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta*, the commission marking the orchestra's tenth anniversary. In 1936 Sacher requested a composition less challenging than the previous one. Bartók obliged with the light-spirited *Divertimento*.

The composition of the *Divertimento for String Orchestra* took a mere 15 days between August 2-17, 1939 – less than a month before the outbreak of World War II. To help Bartók with his work, Paul Sacher put him up in a luxurious mountain chalet in the Alps with all possible comforts including a chef, on hand. He even had a piano brought to the chalet from Berne. Bartók wrote to his son that he felt “like a musician of the olden time; the invited guest of a patron of the arts”. It was to be the last happy period in Bartók's life: as a declared anti-Nazi, and unhappy about his country's alliance with Hitler, he and his wife had to flee Hungary in 1940. Bartók died in unhappy exile just five years later in New York City. His output in those intervening years, included the *Concerto for Orchestra*, the *Third Piano Concerto*, the *Sonata for Solo Violin* (written for Yehudi Menuhin) and his *Viola Concerto* (written for William Primrose) posthumously finished by his student Tibor Serly.

The *Divertimento for String Orchestra* can best be described as “Baroque meets folk music”. The title *Divertimento* alludes to the genre of light, entertaining party music written by countless eighteenth century composers, including Mozart and Haydn, which is precisely what Paul Sacher wanted. The composition follows the Baroque template for the *concerto grosso*, with the full ensemble alternating with small groups of solo voices. As a further nod to the Baroque period, the *Divertimento* also contains many *fugato* passages. It is, therefore, a neo-Baroque work, but only up to a point. The form may be Baroque, but the musical language pays homage to the music of Bartók’s native Hungary. Bartók was thoroughly familiar with the Hungarian folk music upon which this work is based, through his interest in and research into musical ethnography.

The first movement feels like an eccentric waltz with gypsy influences, such as the use of various modes and non-traditional scales, irregularly placed accents and extended syncopated rhythms. In keeping with the Baroque *concerto grosso* model, the orchestral texture is marked by a clear contrast between the group of solo instruments and the full orchestra. Most of the melodic material presented by the group of soloists is in the form of a fugue.

The second movement presents a haunting, nocturnal landscape. The hushed, snaking chromatic lines of the opening bars bring a sense of terror. After a sudden terrifying outburst, the music fades into a dark, ritualistic procession.

The final movement, a rondo, pulls us into an exuberant, wild Hungarian dance. An exhilarating three-voice fugue in the middle section leads to a cadenza, begun by the cello and morphing into the solo violin playing the role of a gypsy fiddle. At the end, the work winds up to a frenzied tempo for a dramatic close.

## **Kurt Weill – The Threepenny Opera Suite (arr. Rozemond)**



*Orchestration: 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, trombone, tuba, timpani/percussion, strings. Approximate duration: 22 minutes*

*The Threepenny Opera* is the first and most popular collaboration between playwright Bertolt Brecht and composer Kurt Weill. It is an adaptation of *The Beggar’s Opera*, the 1728 ballad opera by John Gay and John Christopher Pepusch.

18th century ballad operas were satirical musical plays that used some opera

conventions, but with spoken dialogue replacing the recitatives. The lyrics of the arias in the *Beggar's Opera* were set to various musical works of the time including folk tunes, popular broadsheet ballads, church hymns and in the case of the *Beggar's Opera*, two Handel arias. The *Beggar's Opera* was a double satire: on one hand, it took aim at government corruption specifically that of Prime Minister Robert Walpole, and on the other, the aristocracy's enthusiasm for Italian opera.

Bertold Brecht's first contact with *The Beggar's Opera* was through the German translation made by his then-lover, Elisabeth Hauptmann. Indifferent at first, Brecht became interested when solicited by the impresario Ernst Aufricht to write a play to launch his new theatre company at the *Theater am Schiffbauerdamm*. In Brecht's hands the opera became a socialist critique of the capitalist world. Brecht adapted Hauptmann's translation, added four ballads by the French 14th century poet François Villon, and asked Kurt Weill to write the music. For Weill, who thought romantic opera was elitist just as Gay and Pepusch in their day viewed Italian opera as elitist, this was a first attempt to create a new type of opera that would appeal to the masses.

The *Threepenny Opera* was first performed in the *Theater am Schiffbauerdamm* in 1928, coincidentally occurring with the rise of Hitler and Naziism. This made the opera part of the political turmoil and public extremism of the day, the consequence of which led in a few short years to the end of the Weimar republic. The opera opened to a rather poor reception; however, it soon became a roaring success with a run of over 400 performances in the following years. Ironically, the opera that was intended for the masses became a "must see" for the Berlin social and financial elite that it criticized. Brecht intended to keep the English title of the play for his work, "*The Beggar's Opera*", but just a week before the opening he changed his mind and renamed it *Die Dreigroschenoper (The Threepenny Opera)*.

The *Threepenny Opera* is set in Victorian London's underworld of beggars, thieves, whores and pimps. Macheath (a.k.a Mackie the Knife), a play on Shakespeare's character Macbeth, is London's most notorious criminal, who elopes with Polly Peachum. Polly's last name refers to the use of *peach* in English slang of the time meaning "to squeal". In this instance it can be extended to have several meanings. She is the daughter of Jeremiah Peachum, the boss of London's beggars. Peachum trains and "organizes" the beggars in exchange for a hefty percentage of their earnings. He is furious over the elopement of his daughter and he wants to have Macheath arrested and hanged. Macheath, forewarned by Brown, who is the chief of police and also an old army buddy, goes into hiding in... a whorehouse. One of the in-house "entertainers", a former lover of Macheath, betrays his hiding place to

Peachum. Peachum then threatens to ruin Brown's career by having his beggars disrupt the coronation procession of the Queen. Brown therefore reluctantly arrests Macheath. As Macheath is about to be marched to the gallows, there is a sudden comical reversal: Peachum announces that in this opera mercy will prevail over punishment. The arrival of a messenger announcing that the Queen has pardoned Macheath, granting him a title and a castle, completes the farce.

The *Threepenny Opera Suite* is an orchestral arrangement of the most popular musical numbers of the opera, among them one finds *The Ballad of Mack the Knife*, *Polly's Song*, and the *Cannon Song*, a duet between Macheath and Brown.

### **Ludwig van Beethoven: Piano Concerto No.4 in G major, op. 58**



*Orchestration: solo piano, 1 flute, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani and strings. Approximate duration: 34 minutes*

Beethoven's Fourth Piano Concerto is a seminal work, marking a radical departure from his first three concertos for this instrument. In it he takes the first steps to redefine the genre. It is also arguably the most innovative among his five piano concerti.

Nowhere is this more obvious than in the opening of the first movement. Whereas almost every classical era concerto before this begins with a substantial orchestral introduction, Beethoven begins his Fourth Piano Concerto with the soloist alone, quietly and 'gently' (*dolce*), delivering the main theme, almost as if he were improvising. By doing so, he infers the primacy of the soloist on stage, while setting out the main idea. Beethoven then breaks off, as though in mid-thought, with the strings replying in hushed tones, before he launches into the exposition proper. The movement grows from this opening to its heights of grandeur and brilliance. However, it is the opening that sets the emotional scene: tender lyricism, delicacy, and moments of intimate chamber music-like exchange between piano and orchestra.

The entry of the solo piano after the orchestral introduction is also unusual. Rather than waiting for a clear end to the exposition, the soloist enters while the orchestra is still playing the concluding phrase. The solo part, again in an

improvisational mood recalls the opening theme while launching into a short cadenza-like passage. This piano entry splits the octave into two successive equal intervals. On their own, they would be considered quite dissonant.

The second, slow movement, is a moving dialogue between strings and piano. The strings are initially loud and menacing, with the piano soothing and placatory. As the movement progresses, the piano grows more and more impassioned, the string writing becoming more mellow, losing its edge, until at the end – after a short, dramatic piano cadenza – only a shadow of the opening motif can be heard. It is no wonder that one of Beethoven's 19<sup>th</sup> century biographers compared it to Orpheus taming the Furies in Hades.

The last movement is a traditional Rondo, characterized by a rhythmic theme, alternating with a dance-like passage. In this movement piano virtuosity is finally given free rein with Beethoven presenting a remarkable variety of moods and instrumental colors. After a cadenza and a series of trills, there is a moment of repose before the soloist and orchestra dash headlong into an up-tempo finish.

The concerto was written in 1805-1806 when Beethoven was in his mid 30's and deafness was beginning to severely impinge on his activities as a performing musician. The concerto was first performed privately at the palace of his friend and patron Prince Franz-Joseph von Lobkowitz. The first public performance took place on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of December 1808 at the *Theater an der Wien* as part of a marathon concert. On the occasion, Beethoven played the solo part in what was to be Beethoven's last appearance as a soloist with orchestra. While he would live for two more decades, his deafness would become complete by 1814, claiming his public life with it.

The first public appearance of this concerto in concert included Beethoven's *Choral Fantasy*, and the premieres of his Fifth and Sixth symphonies. Unfortunately, the orchestra was woefully under-rehearsed, it was bitter cold, and the theatre was not heated. In spite of these inauspicious conditions, the Fourth piano concerto was favourably received. However, after the first performance it fell into oblivion for 30 years until it was revived and vigorously championed by Felix Mendelssohn.

Even though Beethoven was well known as a piano virtuoso, he disliked virtuosity for its own sake. In a letter to his friend Ferdinand Ries, Beethoven explained, "Candidly I am not a friend of *allegri di bravura* since they do nothing but promote mechanism." This viewpoint is borne out in the Fourth Piano Concerto where he omits bravura keyboard display in favour of intimacy and serenity.

## **Henry Janzen, Music Director and Principal Conductor**



Henry Janzen's formative influences include Masterclasses with Menahem Pressler and William Primrose at the Banff School of Fine Art coupled with advanced studies in New York City with renowned pedagogues Lillian Fuchs, Arianna Bronne, Raphael Bronstein and Nathan Gordon.

Subsequent teaching positions include the University of Western Michigan, Wayne State University and University of Western Ontario. For the past 20 years Mr. Janzen has taught in the Orchestral, Applied and Chamber Music areas at the University of Guelph. In addition to regular orchestral and opera performances he has been heard in performances across North America and Europe including Prague, Salzburg and Vienna. Mr. Janzen has appeared with such diverse groups as the New York String Ensemble, Greenwich (Connecticut) Choral Society and Rackham Symphony Choir.

As conductor he has served with distinction the Michigan Youth Symphony, the Clarion Choir and Orchestra; the Dearborn Symphony and the University of Guelph Orchestra. Some of his memorable performance opportunities were the private funeral ceremony for Henry Ford II; with Lloyd Bridges in the TV movie "In the Nick of Time"; performances at the Premier Centre in Detroit with Gladys Knight and the Pips; the installations of firstly Archbishop and then Edmund Cardinal Szoka and a mass for 100,000 people with Pope John Paul II.

## **Sumi Kim, Piano soloist**



Pianist Sumi Kim began playing the piano at the age of five in Seoul, South Korea. She continued working intensively even while completing a degree in Food Science. During this time she won the Grand Prize in the at the Virtuoso International Competition held in Seoul. This led to a recommendation from the selection committee that she pursue further studies abroad.

Relocating to the Yukon, Canada, Sumi Kim became an active as a recitalist and collaborative pianist in the Whitehorse music scene. She appeared regularly at the Gallery Recital Series at the Yukon Arts Centre, and the Rotary Music Festival. She also collaborated with the Whitehorse Community Choir.



Her passion for music and desire to deepen her knowledge propelled her to seek further instruction. She is presently completing her Bachelor of Music in Piano Performance at the University of Toronto studying with Dr. Younggun Kim.

As a recipient of various awards, she acknowledges and values the Richard Iorweth Thorman Jazz Scholarship, the Mary-Margaret Webb Piano Performance Award, and the Greta Kraus Scholarship. An avid chamber musician, her Trio recently won the Felix Galimir Award at the Faculty of Music, University of Toronto.

Ms. Kim has been featured at various venues and with orchestras in the Greater Toronto area as well as further afield in other provinces within Canada. She finds that maintaining an active performance schedule is a great means of exploring the deeper meanings of the musical languages found in the piano repertoire.

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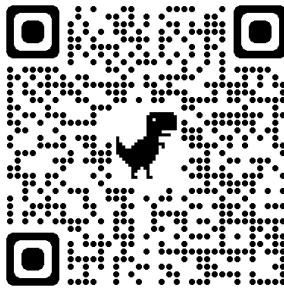
Phoenix Wong

### PERCUSSION

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Julia Kitaygorodsky

CM – Concert Master  
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Master  
P – Principal  
AP – Assistant Principal  
CP – Co-principal  
\* Guest musician

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