



OMAHA
SYMPHONY

Ankush Kumar Bahl, Music Director

program notes

2022/23 SEASON

Bernstein, Ravel & Tchaikovsky

Friday, April 28, 2023 | 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, April 29, 2023 | 7:30 p.m.

Holland Performing Arts Center

Eric Jacobsen, conductor | Wei Luo, piano

LEONARD BERNSTEIN

Overture to *Candide*

MAURICE RAVEL

Concerto in G Major for Piano & Orchestra

I. Allegramente

II. Adagio assai

III. Presto

Wei Luo, piano

INTERMISSION

PIOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY

Symphony No. 1 in G minor, Op. 13, TH 24
(*Winter Daydreams*)

I. Daydreams on a Winter Journey: Allegro
tranquillo

II. Land of Gloom, Land of Mist: Adagio cantabile
ma non tanto

III. Scherzo: Allegro scherzando giocoso

IV. Finale: Andante lugubre; Allegro moderato;
Allegro maestoso

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Featured Artists



Eric Jacobsen, conductor

Just 40 years old and already well-established as one of classical music's most exciting and innovative young conductors, Eric Jacobsen combines fresh interpretations of the traditional canon with cutting-edge collaborations across musical genres. Hailed by the *New York Times* as "an interpretive dynamo," Eric, as both a conductor and a cellist, has built a reputation for engaging audiences with innovative and collaborative programming.

Eric joined the Virginia Symphony Orchestra as Music Director in 2021, being named the twelfth music director in the orchestra's 100+ year history. Recent and upcoming projects include a recording project of Dvořák and Coleridge-Taylor with Gil Shaham, and a world premiere of a new mandolin concerto by Chris Thile.

Eric is in his eighth season as Music Director of the Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra, as he continues to pioneer the orchestra's programming and community engagement in new and exciting directions. The 2022-23 season looks forward to the return of the second year of the Resonate Festival, a unique blend of old and new orchestral and chamber works, performed in standard and more intimate concert formats, featuring Artist-in-Residence Anthony McGill, one of the most poetic clarinetists ever, in what will be a truly remarkable and inspiring set of concerts.

Eric is also artistic director and co-founder of The Knights, the uniquely adventurous NYC-based chamber orchestra. The ensemble, founded with his brother, violinist Colin Jacobsen, grew out of late-night music-reading parties with friends, good food and drink, and conversation. As conductor, Jacobsen has led the "consistently inventive, infectiously engaged indie ensemble" (*New York Times*) at venues throughout New York City and surrounding areas, at major summer festivals, and on tour nationally and internationally. Under Jacobsen's baton, The Knights have developed an extensive recording collection, which includes the critically acclaimed albums *Azul*, with longtime collaborator Yo-Yo Ma, as well as a recent album featuring Gil Shaham in performances of the Beethoven and Brahms Violin Concertos.

A frequent guest conductor, Eric has established continuing relationships with the Colorado Symphony, the Detroit Symphony, the Oregon Bach Festival, and the Dresden Musikfestspiele. This season's engagements also include concerts with the Omaha Symphony, New Jersey Symphony, and Grant Park Festival.

Eric brings joy, storytelling, and a touch of humor to what he describes as "musical conversations" that delight audiences around the world, including those who do not traditionally attend classical music concerts. Jacobsen is married to Grammy-winning singer-songwriter Aoife O'Donovan, and they have a five-year-old daughter, Ivy Jo.



Wei Luo, piano

Wei Luo is recognized as one of the most significant pianists of her generation. Already in her young career she has performed on many of the world's leading stages. In 2019 her self-titled debut album was released on Universal Music Group's Decca Gold label. The album was featured by *Gramophone Magazine* as one of the most exciting new releases. *San Diego Union Tribune* said: "This recording reveals a dazzling artist with an astonishing range of colors at her disposal, put to the service of a confident young soul whose musicality suggests the experience of someone two decades older."

This past year Wei gave a 13-concert recital tour throughout China's major cities and venues including Shanghai Concert Hall, Beijing National Center of Performing Art, Guangzhou Opera House, Harbin, Chongqing and Guiyang, among others. She also performed with leading orchestras including Shanghai Symphony Orchestra (Beethoven Concerto No. 4), Guangzhou Symphony Orchestra (Rachmaninoff Concerto No. 2) and the National Center of Performing Arts Orchestra (Prokofiev Concerto No. 3). For World Sleep Day 2021, Wei participated in a campaign by Universal Music Group, along with 18 other UMG musicians worldwide, in which she recorded *Nocturne* by Grammy award winning composer Christopher Tin.

Prior to the pandemic, Wei made her debut with the San Diego Symphony, Jahja Ling conducting. In recent seasons, she performed Rachmaninoff Piano Concerto No. 3 with the Quad City Symphony, Prokofiev Piano Concerto No. 3 with the Kansas City Symphony and Michael Stern, and Mendelssohn's Piano Concerto in G minor with the Denver Philharmonic.

In 2018 Wei received the Gilmore Young Artist Award. She is also a recipient of the "Salon de Virtuosi" Career Grant in New York. *The Philadelphia Inquirer* described her performance, saying: "Equally intriguing were those odd moments when she took you so far inside the music that your ears left behind previous points of reference, partly because she immerses herself in the music with an intensity that borders on madness." She made her orchestra debut at age 11 with the Shanghai Philharmonic where, along with artistic director Muhai Tang, they opened the 2011 season performing Prokofiev Concerto No. 3 at the Shanghai Oriental Art Center.

Wei has performed solo recitals in major cities and music festivals, including Lucerne Switzerland, New York City (Mostly Mozart Festival and the NY International Keyboard Festival), San Francisco Herbst Theater, Napa Valley Music Festival, Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival and Gilmore Keyboard Festival.

Wei is an avid performer of contemporary music. *The Poems*, a set of short pieces written by Marc Neikrug that Wei commissioned, was premiered in summer 2019. Wei has always enjoyed performing in unconventional venues and doing both outreach and charity concerts.

Born in Shenzhen, China, Wei showed great interest in music and began piano lessons at age five. She gave her debut recital in Hong Kong at age six. Winner of numerous competitions in China, Wei also claimed first prize in the 11th Chopin International Competition for Young Pianists in Poland and the 2nd Rachmaninov International Piano Competition for Young Pianists in Frankfurt, both in 2010. In 2012, at age thirteen, Wei was accepted to the prestigious Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia where she studies with Gary Graffman and Robert McDonald. Wei is pursuing her bachelor's degree at Curtis.

Program Notes

Overture to *Candide*

Leonard Bernstein

Born: Lawrence, Massachusetts, August 25, 1918

Died: New York, New York, October 14, 1990

Voltaire's famous 1759 "philosophical novel," *Candide* served as an important corrective to the unvarnished optimism of the 18th century and its self-titled "Age of Enlightenment." The book's satirical tone ("this is the best of all possible worlds") found a sympathetic voice two centuries later when Lillian Hellman penned an updated version, which in turn inspired Bernstein to adapt it for a "comic operetta." A critical success – though initially a box office failure – Bernstein's *Candide* has enjoyed continued, growing popularity from its early status as a cult following, now steeped in increasingly mainstream adoration. Its sparkling overture—effervescent, by turns sardonic and sentimental and capped by a tongue-in-cheek Rossinian *crescendo*—has been a deservedly popular curtain raiser for nearly half a century.

Piano Concerto in G Major

Maurice Ravel

Born: Ciboure, France, March 7, 1875

Died: Paris, France, December 18, 1937

Ravel capped off an extraordinary run of success in the early 20th century with a tour of the United States in 1928 and his Mozart-meets-the-Blues Piano Concerto in G Major, completed in 1931. While standard in structure, this deft, brilliant work manages to simultaneously exist as an affectionate ode to the 18th century, while honoring the jazz influences Ravel – and France – had come to embrace. And because this is Ravel, the work runs the gamut from exquisite, unfolding beauty to high-energy, intricate orchestration, highlighting both our fantastic soloist, Wei Luo, and members of the brass and woodwind sections throughout.

Symphony No. 1 in G Minor, Op. 13, TH 24 *Winter Daydreams*

Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Born: Votkinsk, district of Viatka, Russia, May 7, 1840

Died: St. Petersburg, Russia, November 6, 1893

Russia's most famous composer was stymied by the symphony. This wasn't entirely his fault; he was systematically thwarted by inner and outer forces at every turn during his first foray into this grandest of orchestral genres. Mentors insisted that Tchaikovsky needed to compose within the framework established by the great masters of the 18th and early 19th centuries, but these rules destroyed Tchaikovsky's confidence and creativity, making it nearly impossible for him to put pen to paper. His desire to make his own way, vying with his omnipresent need to please his teachers, drove him from frustration and anxiety into depression and insomnia. At one point during the compositional process of *Winter Daydreams*, his doctor required Tchaikovsky to take a complete mental rest from writing. As his brother Modest wrote, "No other work cost him such effort and suffering... Despite painstaking and arduous work, its composition was fraught with difficulty." Yet, Tchaikovsky would prevail, his Symphony No. 1 a testament to his gift as a tunesmith and orchestrator, and the conviction that the only symphonic rules Tchaikovsky truly needed, were the ones he himself put into place.