



Semyon BYCHKOV & CHO Seong-jin & Czech Philharmonic

2025.10.16 Thu. 19:30

Weiwuying Concert Hall

Duration is 95 minutes with a 20-minute intermission.



National Kaohsiung
CENTER FOR THE ARTS

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Program

M. RAVEL: Piano Concerto in G Major

Piano | CHO Seong-jin

- I. Allegramente
- II. Adagio assai
- III. Presto

----- Intermission -----

P. I. TCHAIKOVSKY: Symphony No. 5 in e minor, Op. 64

- I. Andante—Allegro con anima
- II. Andante cantabile con alcuna licenza
- III. Valse. Allegro moderato
- IV. Finale. Andante maestoso—Allegro vivace

Program notes

M. RAVEL: Piano Concerto in G Major

Written by TSAI Yung-Kai (Associate Professor, Department of Music, Tunghai University)

Translated by HSIEH Lin

Piano Concerto in G Major, one of RAVEL's late works, was composed between 1929 and 1931. Although he had already conceived the idea of writing a piano concerto as early as 1906 and again around 1913, it was not fully realized until 1929. During this same period, he also received a commission to compose the Piano Concerto for the Left Hand in D Major.

RAVEL, known for his clockwork rhythmic precision and Spanish Basque influences, found further inspiration in jazz after visiting the United States in 1928. Beyond these elements, this concerto also reflects his neoclassical aesthetic. In a 1931 interview, he stated:

"My only wish ... was to write a genuine concerto, that is, a brilliant work, clearly highlighting the soloist's virtuosity, without seeking to show profundity. As a model, I took two musicians who, in my opinion, best illustrated this type of composition: MOZART and SAINT-SAËNS. This is why the concerto, which I originally thought of entitling Divertissement, contains the three customary parts: the initial Allegro, a compact classical structure, is followed by an Adagio, in which I wanted to render particular homage to "scholasticism," and in which I attempted to write as well as I could; to conclude, a lively movement in Rondo form, likewise conceived in accordance with the most immutable traditions."

Piano Concerto in G Major inherits MOZART's style by presenting varied themes and skillfully weaving them together. On this classical foundation, RAVEL integrates his wide musical language, especially in the first movement, **Allegrement**. The movement follows sonata form. Its short development section brings it closer to early Classical style. RAVEL introduces five main themes and varies them through different orchestration between the exposition and recapitulation. The piccolo opens the pentatonic A theme with Basque dance rhythms; in the recapitulation, the theme returns as complex piano chords.

The piano presents the B theme in both exposition and recapitulation, with left-hand broken chords providing a stable foundation while right-hand triplets infuse blues nuances. The clarinet introduces the C theme—derived from the B theme's conclusion—later taken up by trumpet, though in the recapitulation the piano claims it first before winds reinforce it with flutter-tonguing. The more introspective D theme features sparse left-hand punctuations

in the exposition that resemble whispered confidences, then returns transformed in the recapitulation through the soft voice of the harp. Meanwhile, the jazzy E theme ascends stepwise before blossoming in upper registers, ultimately making its recapitulation appearance unexpectedly within the cadenza. RAVEL's orchestral wizardry, already acclaimed in his own time, ensures the movement remains endlessly surprising.

The second movement, **Adagio assai**, follows an ABA' structure. Though written in 3/4, it blends both duple and triple pulses. The A section presents a 35-bar right-hand piano melody with no repeating rhythmic patterns. After a more agitated middle section, the A' section returns with the English horn playing a shortened version of the main theme, while the piano adds ornate filigree. The third movement, **Presto**, combines sonata and rondo forms. Its four-chord opening theme provides the framework for the movement. In each variation, RAVEL explores the piano's percussive possibilities with rapid moto perpetuo clusters. The pairing with brass fanfares and the woodwinds' jazz-inspired bursts is especially striking.

The concerto premiered in Paris in 1932, with Marguerite LONG as soloist and the composer himself conducting.

P. I. TCHAIKOVSKY: Symphony No. 5 in e minor, Op. 64

Written by TSAI Yung-Kai (Associate Professor, Department of Music, Tunghai University)

Translated by HSIEH Lin

After completing his Symphony No. 4, infused with personal meaning, between 1877 and 1878, TCHAIKOVSKY did not return to the symphonic genre until 1888, despite composing the *Manfred* Symphony, which leans more toward symphonic poem and suite. Between March and April 1888, he mentioned to his brother Modest that he wished to compose a new symphony over the summer, also expressing similar intentions to his patroness Nadezhda von MECK and several friends. Progress, however, appeared slow. In May, he wrote, "It is very difficult. I am squeezing out of my dull brain a symphony." Throughout the process, he remained doubtful: "I am working very hard on a symphony which I think is not inferior to my previous works—at least, I hope so. But perhaps I am mistaken, and perhaps later on I shall think that I have exhausted my creative powers, that my head is empty, that time has passed me by." This anxiety likely stemmed from his increasingly strong desire for artistic self-surpassing, as he confessed to von MECK: "In the future I must work even harder. I want to show not only others, but also myself, that my time has not yet passed."

TCHAIKOVSKY completed the draft around late June, and sent the full score in September. Comparing the surviving sketches shows significant changes along the way, including his original ideas for a programmatic content. He once jotted the following for the first movement:

Introduction: Complete submission before fate, or, in other words, the inscrutable designs of Providence.

Allegro: (1) Murmurs, doubts, laments, reproaches to XXX

(2) Should I throw myself into faith???

In drafts for the second movement, he wrote phrases like "a ray of light," "consolation," and "the following reply: 'No, there is no hope.'" Yet neither these programmatic ideas nor their related musical materials made it into the final work. He ultimately chose to leave the symphony without an explicit program. In June, he wrote to Grand Duke Konstantin Konstantinovich: "At the present time I am very busy and am working with great concentration on a symphony without any program."

Even so, many features of the work still retain aspects of program symphony or symphonic poem: all four movements feature the same "motto" theme, a cyclic technique. Moreover,

the tonal journey from E minor to E major suggests a struggle “Per aspera ad astra” (through hardships to the stars). The first movement opens with an **Andante** introduction, where the clarinet intones a somber, funerary theme in its lower register, often called the “Fate” theme. The main body in **Allegro con anima** follows sonata form. The clarinet and bassoon present the first theme, still somber but infused with dotted rhythms in 6/8 that build latent energy. The second theme has a questioning quality, more transitional in nature. A third theme emerges as a long-short-long-short rhythmic figure introduced by woodwinds, sounding like a firm rejection. The development primarily explores the first and third themes. The recapitulation closely follows the exposition, differing mainly in orchestration. The coda, led by the first theme, begins majestically with fortississimo, but dissipates, ending quietly with clarinet, bassoon, and cellos.

The second movement, **Andante cantabile, con alcuna licenza** (singing and somewhat freely), begins by continuing the previous movement’s gloom, gradually hinting at brightness through a shift to the major key. The main body follows an ABA’ form. The A section features a sweet horn melody in D major, the A1 theme, followed by a noble A2 theme played by the strings. The B section introduces sighing woodwind phrases with trembling effects. Suddenly, the orchestra bursts forth with the “Fate” theme, like an awakening from a dream. In the A’ section, TCHAIKOVSKY varies the instrumentation of the two main themes and adds contrapuntal voicing, giving the movement a sense of progression from solitude to harmony.

The third movement, “Valse” (Waltz), marked **Allegro moderato**, also follows ABA’ form. The waltz theme consists of three main melodies. The middle section features the first violins playing a lightly staccato theme tinged with sadness, which spreads to other string and orchestral sections. Toward the end, as the strings alternate between pizzicato and arco, the oboe unobtrusively leads the waltz theme back to the A’ section. Yet as the movement nears its close, the clarinet and bassoon once again sound the low-register “Fate” theme, interrupting the waltz with a deathly silence before concluding explosively.

The fourth movement, Finale, opens in E major with an Andante maestoso introduction. The strings restate the “Fate” theme in the low register before the brass takes over and the music slips back into minor. The main body, marked **Allegro vivace**, has a brisk, dance first theme and a bright, linear second theme. The “Fate” theme reappears frequently, effectively functioning as another main theme. The coda briefly revisits E major and the “Fate” theme before recalling the first movement’s first theme, bringing the symphony from gloom to triumph—perhaps mirroring TCHAIKOVSKY’s own creative journey.

TCHAIKOVSKY dedicated this symphony to Theodor AVÉ-LALLEMANT, director of the Hamburg Philharmonic Society. The second and third movements were first heard in November 1888 in a two-piano version arranged by Sergey TANEYEV, performed with Aleksandr ZILOTI. The full orchestral premiere took place later that month in St. Petersburg, conducted by TCHAIKOVSKY himself. Though he remained critical of the finale and even the entire work, worrying it was "exaggeratedly pompous," "insincere," or "pretentious," the symphony was well-received in his time. By World War II, its "victory" associations brought frequent performances, and to this day it remains one of his most representative works.

About the Artists



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Conductor

Semyon BYCHKOV

Semyon BYCHKOV became Chief Conductor and Music Director of the Czech Philharmonic in 2018, and his inaugural season was celebrated with an international tour that took the orchestra from performances at home in Prague to concerts in London, New York, and Washington. The following year saw the completion of The TCHAIKOVSKY Project—involving the release of a seven-CD box set devoted to the composer's symphonic repertoire and a series of international residencies. In his first season with the Czech Philharmonic, he also instigated the commissioning of 14 new works which have subsequently been premiered by the orchestra and performed by other ensembles across Europe and in the United States.

Semyon BYCHKOV's repertoire spans four centuries to which he brings a combination of innate musicality and rigorous Russian pedagogy. In addition to guest engagements with the world's major orchestras and opera houses, he holds honorary titles with the BBC Symphony Orchestra and the Royal Academy of Music, holding an honorary doctorate with the latter. He was named Conductor of the Year at the 2015 International Opera Awards and, in 2022, by Musical America.



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Piano

CHO Seong-jin

CHO Seong-jin has established himself worldwide as one of the leading pianists of his generation and most distinctive artists on the current music scene. With an innate musicality and consummate artistry, his thoughtful and poetic, virtuosic, and colorful playing can combine panache with purity and is driven by an impressive natural sense of balance. He is celebrated unanimously across the globe for his expressive magic and illuminative insights.

CHO Seong-jin was brought to the world's attention in 2015 when he won First Prize at the CHOPIN International Competition in Warsaw, and his career has rapidly ascended since. In early 2016, he signed an exclusive contract with Deutsche Grammophon and, in 2023, CHO was awarded the prestigious Samsung Ho-Am Prize in the Arts in recognition of his exceptional contributions to the world of classical music. An artist in high demand, CHO works with the world's most prestigious orchestras including Berliner Philharmoniker, Wiener Philharmoniker, London Symphony Orchestra, Concertgebouworkest, and Boston Symphony Orchestra. Conductors he regularly collaborates with include CHUNG Myung-whun, Gustavo DUDAMEL, Andris NELSONS, Yannick NÉZET-SÉGUIN, Gianandrea NOSEDA, Antonio PAPPANO, Simon RATTLE, Santtu-Matias ROUVALI, Esa-Pekka SALONEN, and Lahav SHANI. In the 2024/25 season, CHO held the position of Artist in Residence with the Berliner Philharmoniker.



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Czech Philharmonic

Chosen as Gramophone's 2024 'Orchestra of the Year', this season the Czech Philharmonic will be a guest in the most prestigious halls across East Asia–Taiwan, Japan and South Korea–as well as major cities in Germany, Italy, Austria, Luxembourg and Belgium. In the Czech Republic, the orchestra appears at its home, the Rudolfinum in Prague, at festivals including Prague Spring, DVOŘÁK Prague and SMETANA Litomyšl, as well as at international festivals such as Grafenegg, George Enescu and Bad Kissingen. Following in the footsteps of Yuja WANG, Magdalena KOŽENÁ, Sir András SCHIFF and Daniil TRIFONOV, Evgeny KISSIN will be the Czech Philharmonic's 130th season Artist-in-Residence.

Alongside its celebrations of SHOSTAKOVICH's 50th anniversary, RAVEL's 150th anniversary and the 150th anniversary of "Vltava"– the iconic second poem of *Má vlast*– the Czech Philharmonic will shine a spotlight on contemporary music this season with the appointment of its first ever Composer-in-Residence, Bryce DESSNER. The European and Czech premieres of two new works by DESSNER will be led by Chief Conductor and Music Director Semyon BYCHKOV and Principal Guest Conductor Jakub HRŮŠA. Further national premieres by John ADAMS, Luigi DALLAPICCOLA, György KURTÁG, Witold LUTOSŁAWSKI, Guillaume CONNESSON and Wynton MARSALIS will be conducted by Principal Guest Conductor Sir Simon RATTLE, Sir Anthony PAPPANO, Thomas ADÈS, Stéphane DENÈVE and Cristian MĂCELARU. PAPPANO will return in summer 2026 with the London Symphony Orchestra to perform in Prague as part of a new Czech Philharmonic initiative.

Members of Czech Philharmonic

Chief Conductor & Music Director

Semyon BYCHKOV

Concertmaster

Jan MRÁČEK

Jiří VODIČKA

Jan FIŠER

First Violin

Magdaléna MAŠLAŇOVÁ

Otakar BARTOŠ

Luboš DUDEK

Marie DVORSKÁ

Bohumil KOTMEL

Jiří KUBITA

Lenka MACHOVÁ

Viktor MAZÁČEK

Pavel NECHVÍLE

Zdeněk STARÝ

Milan VAVŘÍNEK

Zdeněk ZELBA

Marko ČAŇO

Second Violin

Petra BRABCOVÁ

Ondřej SKOPOVÝ

Markéta VOKÁČOVÁ

Milena KOLÁŘOVÁ

Petr HAVLÍN

Pavel HERAJN

Jitka KOKŠOVÁ

Veronika KOZLOVSKÁ

Vítězslav OCHMAN

Václav PRUDIL

Jiří ŠEVČÍK

Helena ŠULCOVÁ

Tereza PETROVÁ

Antonín KRATOCHVÍL

Viola

Eva KRESTOVÁ

Pavel CIPRYS

Dominik TRÁVNÍČEK

Jaroslav PONDĚLÍČEK

Jiří POSLEDNÍ

Jiří ŘEHÁK

Jan ŠIMON

Lukáš VALÁŠEK

Silvestr PAVLÍČEK

Elnara TAGHIZADE

Adam PECHOČIAK

Pavel KIRS

Cello

Václav PETR

Adam KLÁNSKÝ

František HOST

Josef ŠPAČEK

Jakub DVOŘÁK

Tomáš HOSTIČKA

Jan HOLEŇA

Marek NOVÁK

Jan KELLER

Eduard ŠÍSTEK

Double Bass

Adam HONZÍREK

Petr RIES

Lukáš HOLUBÍK

Gonzalo JIMÉNEZ BARRANCO

Ondřej BALCAR

Martin HILSKÝ

Tomáš KARPÍŠEK

Julius FEČO

Flute

● Andrea RYSOVÁ

● Naoki SATO

Jan MACHAT

Petr VEVERKA

Lucija HORVAT

Oboe

● Jana BROŽKOVÁ

● Barbora TRNČÍKOVÁ

Vladislav BORO VKA

Jiří ZELBA

Clarinet

● Jan MACH

● Lukáš DITTRICH

Kateřina ŠKARDOVÁ

Jana KREJČÍ

Bassoon

● Ondřej ROSKOVEC

● Jaroslav KUBITA

Martin PETRÁK

Ondřej ŠINDELÁŘ

Horn

● Ondřej VRABEC

Kateřina JAVŮRKOVÁ

Jan VOBOŘIL ml.

Jindřich KOLÁŘ

Zdeněk VAŠINA

Trumpet

● Walter HOFBAUER

Martin CHODL

Jaroslav HALÍŘ

Trombone

● Jan PERNÝ

Lukáš MOŤKA

Bohumil TŮMA

Tuba

Jakub CHMELÁŘ

Timpani

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Percussion

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Nana FUKUZATO

Harp

Jana BOUŠKOVÁ

Barbara PAZOUROVÁ

● First Principal

Sponsor

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Weiwuying Online Questionnaire

