



Esther Yoo

2023-24 Hal & Jeanette Segerstrom
Family Foundation Classical Series

SIBELIUS' VIOLIN CONCERTO

Thursday, Oct. 19, 2023 @ 8 p.m.

Friday, Oct. 20, 2023 @ 8 p.m.

Saturday, Oct. 21, 2023 @ 8 p.m.

Christian Kluxen, conductor

Esther Yoo, violin

Pacific Symphony

PROGRAM

BOULANGER *D'un soir triste*
("Of a Sad Evening")

SIBELIUS *Violin Concerto in D minor, Op. 47*
Allegro moderato
Adagio di molto
Allegro; ma non tanto
Esther Yoo, violin

-INTERMISSION-

PROKOFIEV *Symphony No. 5 in B-flat Major,*
Op. 100
Andante
Allegro moderato
Adagio
Allegro giocoso

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**This concert is being recorded for broadcast on
Feb 11, 2024 on Classical California KUSC.**

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

ABOUT THE CONDUCTOR



Now in his seventh season as Music Director of the Victoria Symphony in Canada, Christian Kluxen is also in his first season as Principal Guest Conductor of the Turku Philharmonic Orchestra in Finland, following a five-year tenure as Chief Conductor of the Arctic Philharmonic in Norway.

Kluxen has been described in the press as “a dynamic, charismatic figure” who “forms the music with an impressive vertical power of emotion and a focus on the grand form,” conducting “with exemplary clarity and a heavenly warmth.” He is recognized for his sincere and transparent leadership, innovative programming, and his bold, imaginative and energetic interpretations.

Alongside his many and varied commitments with the Victoria Symphony and Turku Philharmonic Orchestra, recent and forthcoming guest engagements include Orchestre de Chambre de Lausanne, Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra, Copenhagen Philharmonic, Odense Symphony, and Norrköping Symphony. A fruitful and inspiring relationship with the Arctic Philharmonic, resulted in numerous exhilarating performances of a wide variety of repertoire, as well as several acclaimed recordings.

Born in Copenhagen in 1981, Kluxen feels a natural affinity towards the Germanic and Scandinavian repertoire, particularly the works of Beethoven, Brahms, Richard Strauss, Nielsen, and Sibelius. In 2020, he released a recording of Beethoven’s Violin Concerto on the Simax label, featuring violinist Henning Kraggerud and the Arctic Philharmonic. The disc was praised for its “surprisingly beautiful orchestra sound,” and labeled as “almost too perfect” by the biggest Danish newspaper *Politiken*.

During the 2014-15 season, Kluxen held the Dudamel Fellowship with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, acting as assistant conductor to Gustavo Dudamel and Esa-Pekka Salonen.

In his home country, Kluxen enjoys close relationships with several orchestras, including the Copenhagen Philharmonic and Odense Symphony, and in May 2019, he stepped in at short notice for concerts with the Danish National Symphony Orchestra, replacing Yuri Temirkanov in concerts broadcast live on Danish National Radio.

Kluxen’s concerts have been broadcast live in Denmark, the UK, Sweden, Norway, and Canada. His most recent albums with the Arctic Philharmonic are Lasse Thoresen’s *The Sound of the Arctic*, which has garnered outstanding praise, including five stars from *Politiken*, and Eldbjørg Hemsing’s concept album *Arctic*, recipient of Germany’s Opus Klassik. He has received several prestigious awards and prizes, and in 2016, he was nominated by the International Opera Awards as “Young Conductor of the Year.”

ABOUT THE ARTIST



Esther Yoo has been described as “the model of a violin soloist in the modern age.” (*The Strad*). In 2010, she became the youngest prizewinner of the International Jean Sibelius Violin Competition and of the Queen Elisabeth Competition two years later. In 2014, she became a *BBC Radio 3* New Generation Artist

and in 2018 was selected as one of *Classic FM*’s “Top 30 Artists under 30.” In 2020, she was named one of *WQXR*’s “20 For 20” artists to watch.

In the 2023-24 season, Yoo debuts with Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, Turku Philharmonic Orchestra, Orquestra Sinfônica do Estado de São Paulo, Orquestra Sinfónica RTVE, as well as joining BBC Symphony Orchestra and Andrew Davis for the world premiere of Raymond Yiu’s Violin Concerto, touring with Philharmonia Orchestra, and returning to iconic venues such as Wigmore Hall and Concertgebouw Amsterdam.

Yoo has worked with a wide range of leading conductors, including Gustavo Dudamel, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Vasily Petrenko, Santtu-Matias Rouvali, Dalia Stasevska, Myung-Whun Chung, Thierry Fischer, and Karina Canellakis. Previous seasons have seen her perform across the world. In 2018, Yoo was appointed as Royal Philharmonic Orchestra’s inaugural Artist-in-Residence.

A prolific recording artist, Yoo has released several albums on Deutsche Grammophon, most recently releasing *Barber, Bruch*, to critical acclaim and previously having recorded the violin concertos of Sibelius, Glazunov, and Tchaikovsky. She also features prominently on the soundtrack of the feature film *On Chesil Beach*, as well as a guest artist on pianist Chad Lawson’s album *breathe*, both released on Decca Records.

Yoo is unique among classical soloists in being fully tricultural. She was born and spent her earliest years in the U.S. before receiving her education in Belgium, Germany, and the U.K., but she proudly retains her family’s Korean heritage. Having roots in three continents contributes to her versatility and exceptionally broad range of expression, and is unquestionably a factor in making her one of the most articulate and gifted communicators in the field of classical music.

PROGRAM NOTES

Lili Boulanger

D'un soir triste

Born: August 21, 1893 in Paris, France

Died: March 15, 1918 in Mézy-sur-Seine, France

Composed: 1918

Premiered: Indeterminate, but possibly 1986, by the Women's Philharmonic

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

Instrumentation: Two flutes, three oboes including English horn, three clarinets including bass clarinet, three bassoons including contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, one tuba, timpani, percussion, harp, celesta, and strings

Words like “improbable” and “dramatic” don't quite meet the measure of the lives led by Lili Boulanger and her sister Nadia; their story reads like the invention of a Hollywood scriptwriter on drugs. Born in Paris, they were both musical prodigies. Their mother was a Russian princess; their father, the French composer and music teacher Ernest Boulanger, had won the coveted Prix de Rome for composition in 1835. He was his wife's senior by more than forty years and was 77 when his adored younger daughter, Marie-Juliette Olga, who became known as Lili, was born. She was perhaps the most promising young composer in France when she died at age 24 in 1918.

Because Lili died so young, it is her older sister whose name is more familiar to us now. Nadia Boulanger taught privately from the time of her graduation with honors from the Conservatoire de Paris until her death in 1979 at age 92. The Boulanger salon in Paris became a kind of musical shrine where some of the most accomplished composers in the world—Gershwin, Copland, Phillip Glass, and Quincy Jones among them—sought to find their own unique compositional voice.

Both sisters composed, but Nadia always acknowledged that it was Lili who had the greater talent as a composer. Six years older than her sister, Nadia competed for the Prix de Rome four times without success, but Lili won it on her first try for her cantata *Faust et Hélène* when she was 19. After Lili's death, Nadia achieved fame as a pedagogue of unrivalled independence and authority as well as a conductor and—to a limited extent—a composer. Her success became a fulfillment of Lili's creative potential as well as her own.



Lili's compositional style is often described as post-Romantic and likened to Debussy's, whose taste for the mystical fairy tales of Maeterlinck she shared. We can hear both the beauty and the sadness of a brilliant talent shadowed by health problems in her symphonic poem *D'un soir triste*. There is vigor here, but it is eclipsed by the melancholia of melodic lines that meander downward. Her bold voicing of the cello is remarkable in exploring the instrument's expressive lower reaches.

Jean Sibelius

Violin Concerto in D minor, Op. 47

Born: December 8, 1865 in Hämeenlinna, Finland

Died: September 20, 1957 in Järvenpää, Finland

Composed: 1904–1905

Premiered: February 1904 (original) in Helsinki, with Sibelius conducting and Victor Nováček as soloist. October 1905 (revised version) with Richard Strauss conducting and Karel Halíř as soloist

Most recent Pacific Symphony performance: September 23, 2017, with Carl St.Clair conducting and Joshua Bell as soloist

Instrumentation: Two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, strings, and solo violin

Sibelius began his musical life determined to achieve greatness as a violinist. “[I]t was a very painful awakening when I had to admit that I had begun my training for the exacting career of an eminent [soloist] too late,” he wrote. He composed his violin concerto in 1903, when he was 38 and his ambitions for a career as a virtuoso were in the past, but his love for the instrument is on every page of the score. By this time Sibelius had published some of his most popular works, and his stature was international. But despite his increasing success and productivity, he had trouble paying his bills, and his income could not support the lifestyle he wanted for his family. Health worries, too, nagged at him. He was well aware that concertos could prove lucrative for their composers. And though he was only 40 at its completion, his violin concerto proved to be the only one he ever wrote.

The score is dedicated to Sibelius' last-minute choice for the premiere performance, Victor Nováček, a Czech violinist who was on the faculty of the Helsinki Institute of Music. (Sibelius' original



PROGRAM NOTES

choice, Willy Burmeister, was unavailable to perform in Helsinki.) As the concerto opens, a lovely, melancholy theme takes its place over pulsing strings. The movement blooms in the richness of its accompaniment and in the vigor of the violin's solo utterance, building to an energized statement in march rhythm. A fiery coda brings it to a close.

The second movement, an *Andante*, brings us the extended, singing lines that have long been traditional in the central movement of violin concertos—perhaps the most romantic pages Sibelius ever wrote. But it is the final movement, marked *Allegro ma non tanto* (fast, but not too fast), that has captured most attention among players and critics. Its supreme difficulty belies the “not too fast” marking as its emphatic, swirling dance rhythm builds in energy and technical demands, combining Sibelius's Nordic aesthetic with the zest of a Gypsy-inspired finale. It is considered one of the two or three greatest movements in the violin concerto repertory.

This may not sound like the work of a composer who lived past the midpoint of the 20th century, but it has an authentically original sound that is ineffable and timeless... a sound that has been described as smoky or northern. Its strong, distinctive sense of expressiveness, deep and dark-hued, seems to be what musicologists are getting at when they struggle with Sibelius' uniqueness. His work is unmistakably Nordic, but also highly personal.

Thanks in large measure to the success of this concerto, The Helsinki Institute of Music was later renamed in Sibelius' honor.

Sergei Prokofiev

Symphony No. 5 in B-flat Major, Op. 100

Born: April 23, 1891, Sontsvika, Ukraine

Died: March 5, 1953, Moscow, Russia

Composed: 1944

Premiered: January 13, 1945 by the USSR State Symphony Orchestra conducted by Prokofiev

Most recent Pacific Symphony

performance: January 15, 2017 with Carl St.Clair conducting

Instrumentation: Three flutes including piccolo, three oboes including English horn, four clarinets including bass clarinet and e-flat clarinet, three bassoons



including contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, one tuba, timpani, percussion, harp, piano, and strings

Prokofiev composed his fifth symphony in 1944, 14 years after the completion of his fourth. World War II was still raging, and he was beset by health problems including a series of heart attacks that began in 1941. He countered these setbacks with a disciplined composing regimen (Prokofiev was always a highly skilled composer, able to work from memory or at the keyboard.) As the 1940s went on, musicologists tell us his life as a composer almost became a race against time as he focused his energies and his life choices for the sake of his musical productivity.

Like Shostakovich, Prokofiev often commented publicly on his symphonies—always with a wary eye on the Soviet cultural bureaucracy, but also with a sincere sense of mission. Both men wanted to bring music to the Russian people that would inspire them in difficult times; we can compare Prokofiev's sense of urgency regarding his fifth symphony to Shostakovich's regarding his seventh, a tribute to the people of Leningrad and their suffering during the siege. Both personally and politically, Prokofiev felt that an emphatic, affirmative musical statement—an expression of optimism, a sense that life is worth living—was what he and his compatriots needed in 1944. And though his ideas for this symphony had been germinating gradually throughout the war years, the music poured out of him in a torrent as he composed it in the summer of 1944. He described the symphony as “a hymn to free and happy Man, to his mighty powers, his pure and noble spirit,” and wrote that “I cannot say that I deliberately chose this theme. It was born in me and clamored for expression. The music matured within me. It filled my soul.”

In the symphony's first movement, we hear a serenely developed opening theme balanced by tremolo strings that seem to reach for a noble destiny. The second movement scherzo is infused with manic energy, while the third movement is slow and contemplative. After this period of deliberation, the symphony returns in its fourth movement to the sense of affirmation and confidence that we hear as it opens.

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