

Tania Miller conducts the Royal Conservatory Orchestra

Friday, November 24, 2017 at 8:00pm

Prelude Recital at 6:45pm

Pre-concert Talk at 7:15pm

This is the 778th concert in Koerner Hall

Tania Miller, conductor

Sae Yoon Chon, piano

Royal Conservatory Orchestra

PROGRAM

Michael Oesterle: *Home* (world premiere)

Sergei Prokofiev: Piano Concerto No. 2 in G Minor, op. 16

- I. Andantino
- II. Scherzo: Vivace
- III. Intermezzo: Allegro moderato
- IV. Allegro tempestoso

INTERMISSION

Igor Stravinsky: *Petrushka*

Tableau 1: *The Shrovetide Fair*

1. *The Shrovetide Fair*
2. *The Crowds*
3. *The Charlatan's Booth*
4. *Russian Dance*

Tableau 2: *Petrushka's Room*

Tableau 3: *The Moor's Room*

1. *In the Moor's Room*
2. *Dance of the Ballerina*
3. *Waltz of the Ballerina and the Moor*

Tableau 4: *The Shrovetide Fair (Evening)*

1. *The Shrovetide Fair (Evening)*
2. *Dance of the Wet Nurses*
3. *Dance of the Bear and Peasant*
4. *Dance of the Jovial Merchant with Two Gypsy Girls*
5. *Dance of the Coachmen and Grooms*
6. *Dance of the Masqueraders*
7. *The Death of Petrushka*

Michael Oesterle

born in Ulm, Germany, June 29, 1968

Home, from the symphony New World (2014)

Montreal composer Michael Oesterle immigrated to Canada in 1982 and has lived in Montreal since 1996. He has been composer-in-residence with l'Orchestre Metropolitain and has won Holland's Gaudeamus Prize, the Grand Prize at the CBC Radio Young Composers' Competition, and the Canada Council Jules Léger Prize.

Michael Oesterle writes: "During a three-year residency with the Victoria Symphony, I composed a symphony in four chapters with the title *New World*. The piece is an homage to the great geographical ebb and flow of humanity we know as the immigrant experience. I wrote it through the filter of my personal impressions as an immigrant, and with the realization of a subject that is humbling in its breadth. The Victoria Symphony premiered the first chapter, *Crossings*, in September 2012; chapter two, *Of Hope and Refuge*, in May 2013; chapter three, *The Golden Door*, in January, 2014. The final chapter, *Home*, was premiered in May 2014.

Home begins with an almost mechanical atmosphere, an atmosphere of potential, of work, like a methodical search through an attic or basement: the kind of assembly and sorting that comes with a major shift in life, a reconsideration of personal space and time. The music overflows into a series of moods, like someone reflecting on a box of memorabilia, postcards, photos, old maps. The moods shift rapidly from sentimental to sombre, even angry at times, but always return to the search that might answer the question of home, of identity. Finally, there is a humorous resignation, a happy dance to an old record, leading to a grand sense of being overwhelmed by the inevitability of time and the realization that there is no answer to the question of home, no return: but that the beauty of the question is, in itself, transcendent."

The version heard today will be a world premiere of a shortened version of *Home*, arranged especially for The Royal Conservatory.

Sergei Prokofiev

Born in Sontzovka, Russia, April 11/23, 1891; died in Moscow, Russia, March 5, 1953

Piano Concerto No. 2 in G Minor, op. 16 (1912–13, rev.1924)

When the brothers Rubinstein founded music conservatories in Moscow and St. Petersburg during the 1860s, they kick-started a tradition of virtuosity in piano performance and composition that endures to this day. Prokofiev was trained in this tradition but quickly gained a reputation as the 'bad boy' of the St. Petersburg Conservatory, notably with his First Piano Concerto, which seemingly does its best to subvert the very tradition from which he emerged. But it was this training that allowed him to develop one of the most wide-ranging keyboard and composing techniques of any musician in the first half of the 20th century. Prokofiev, wisely perhaps, held off giving a performance of his Second Piano Concerto at the Conservatory. He composed it two years after the First, again while still a student. It fared no better when the 22-year-old composer gave the premiere in Pavlovsk, just outside St. Petersburg, in the well-groomed grounds of the Imperial Palace in front of a well-groomed audience. The historian and critic Vyacheslav Karatygin reported that the audience was "frozen with fright, hair standing on end." A performance in Rome followed. But the parts and full score were then lost when Prokofiev left behind the uncertainties of the Russian Revolution and set sail for the United States. In 1924 he reconstructed the version we know today from a piano reduction, now with more than a decade of experience under his belt since his student days. He joked that the score was so completely rewritten that it might be considered a new concerto. After a slow start, critical reception to the concerto has warmed to a point where, in recent years, several have argued that the Second is Prokofiev's masterwork among concertos.

From the beginning, Prokofiev turned from the single-movement design of the First Concerto to four independent movements in his Second – there is a now romantic, now stormy opening movement, giving way to a brief, furiously brilliant scherzo, a grotesque Intermezzo, and fleet-fingered finale. The piano's deeply reflective

opening theme is marked *narrante* ('in narrative style') and this could well describe the first movement itself. As the movement progresses, it becomes clear that there is a strong emotional underpinning waiting to be uncovered behind the masque of Prokofiev's bravura piano writing – perhaps reflecting the work's dedication to a fellow student at the Conservatory who had committed suicide. As in Rachmaninov's Third Piano Concerto, the movement is dominated by a monumental cadenza, which takes the place of the customary development and much of the recapitulation too. At its peak, Prokofiev marks his score *colossale*, only to follow it with *tumultuoso* and *con tutta forza*. The orchestra continues the magnificent momentum and drama, soon bringing the movement to a reflective close with a hushed restatement of the opening theme.

For the pianist there is no respite. What follows is a whirlwind *moto perpetuo* – 187 measures in which the piano plays a non-stop stream of octave 16ths. The movement is again driven by the piano, with the orchestra pitching melodic fragments into the mix, but mostly ducking out of the pianist's way. The third movement is disarmingly titled *Intermezzo* but soon reveals itself as an ominous, often sardonic march with a heavy tread. Pianist Sviatoslav Richter imagined it as the image of Goya's Saturn devouring his son. The finale returns to the scale and momentum of the opening movement, its tempestuous main theme leaping across the keyboard to complement a calmer, folk-like second melody. Both are developed and culminate in another lengthy piano cadenza, only to be brusquely curtailed by the orchestra instigating a savage parting shot at the opening theme.

Igor Stravinsky

Born in Oranienbaum (now Lomonosov), nr. St. Petersburg, Russia, June 5/17, 1882; died in New York, New York, April 6, 1971

***Petrushka* (1910-11, revised 1947 version)**

Petrushka is to the Russians what the puppet Punch is to the English, Pierrot to the French, Pinocchio to the Italians, and Hanswurst to the Germans. He is a reflection of ourselves. His character is one step removed from reality, but his very real, all-too-human emotions are his tragedy and, by reflection, our own uncertainty. *Petrushka*'s longing for the unattainable – for human life – makes his death all the more human and his resurrection, at the end, all the more disturbing.

Stravinsky arrived at the image of *Petrushka* while composing a short *Konzertstück* for piano and orchestra in 1910. As he was writing what he called this 'bizarre piece,' he said that he had a recurring image of a puppet, suddenly endowed with life, exasperating the patience of the orchestra with diabolical cascades of arpeggios. He crystallised his thoughts into the character of *Petrushka*, "the immortal and unhappy hero of every fair in all countries." He told the impresario Serge Diaghilev about the new piece and right away Diaghilev suggested working it into a ballet. The two had recently won great success with the ballet *The Firebird*, their first collaboration. Now, although the music for another ground-breaking ballet, *The Rite of Spring*, was already germinating, Stravinsky set to work on a third ballet score. The music for the *Konzertstück* formed the second scene, with the piano retaining its role as the musical embodiment of *Petrushka*.

Diaghilev brought in the best talent of the day to develop and produce the ballet. Mikhail Fokine was the choreographer and the scenario and decor were by Alexandre Benois. In their respective biographies, each of the four major players in the creation of the ballet (Stravinsky, Diaghilev, Fokine, and Benois) claimed the major role in the ballet's development. The truth, doubtless, lies somewhere between. Pierre Monteux conducted. The four principal roles were taken by Nijinsky, Karsavina, Orlov, and Cecchetti. The performances at the Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris were a triumph. *Petrushka* was generally acclaimed as the greatest achievement of the Ballets Russes under Diaghilev. When the company toured Europe and the States with the new production, they needed 12 rail cars to transport the elaborate sets. To this day, *Petrushka* remains one of the most played and most staged of Stravinsky's

ballets. Stravinsky constantly revised the orchestration of the ballet, arriving at a score, which is more of a concert version, for smaller orchestra, in 1947.

- Program notes © 2017 Keith Horner

Tania Miller

Conductor

In 2017-18, Tania Miller celebrates her 15th season as Music Director of the Victoria Symphony. As the first Canadian woman ever to be Music Director of a major Canadian symphony orchestra, she and the Victoria Symphony marked the orchestra's 75th anniversary in 2015-16 by touring Canada with performances in Vancouver, Ottawa, Quebec City, and Toronto.

Tania Miller also pursues an active guest conducting schedule. She has appeared in Canada with (among others) the National Arts Centre Orchestra in Ottawa, Orchestre Métropolitain du Grand Montréal, Orchestra London, the CBC Radio Orchestra, the Calgary Philharmonic, the Manitoba Chamber Orchestra; and the symphony orchestras of Toronto, Vancouver, Kitchener-Waterloo, Thunder Bay, Winnipeg, Regina, Saskatoon, and Edmonton. In the United States she has conducted the Seattle, Tucson, New West, and Elgin symphony orchestras and the Naples (FL) Philharmonic, while in Europe she has conducted the Berne Symphoniker in Switzerland and Poland's Wroclow Philharmonic.

Sae Yoon Chon

Piano

Sae Yoon made his debut with the Cleveland Orchestra under the baton of Maestro Jahja Ling at the age of 18. Since then, he has performed with the Bucheon Philharmonic Orchestra, Astana Symphony Orchestra, the Hilton Head Symphony Orchestra, and the Hanoi Philharmonic. He has collaborated with conductors Young Min Park, John Morris Russell, Jahja Ling, Erzhan Dautov, and Jakyung Year.

He has been awarded numerous prizes at international piano competitions, including 5th Prize at the 2017 Seoul International Piano Competition, 3rd Prize at the 2016 Hilton Head International Piano Competition, 3rd Prize at the 2014 Cooper International Piano Competition in Oberlin, 4th Prize at the 2013 Hilton Head International Piano Competition for Young Artists, 3rd Prize in the 2013 International Festival and Competition for Young Pianists, 1st Prize and the Best Classical Work Player award in the 2012 Hanoi International Piano Competition, and 2nd Prize in the 2012 Isidor Bajic Memorial Piano Competition in Novi Sad, Serbia.

Sae Yoon started playing the piano at age of six, and continued his studies at the Yewon Art School and the Seoul Arts High School where his teachers included Professor Hyoung-Joon Chang and Ms. Sae-Kyung Park. He is currently studying with John O'Connor and James Anagnoson at The Glenn Gould School, where he is also the recipient of the full-tuition Liliane Szenteleky - de Kresz Scholarship.

Royal Conservatory Orchestra

Joaquin Valdepeñas, Resident Conductor

The Royal Conservatory Orchestra (RCO), part of the Temerty Orchestral Program, is widely regarded as an outstanding ensemble and one of the best training orchestras in North America. The Conservatory's orchestral students gain critical performance experience in the acoustically renowned Koerner Hall, as well as invaluable musical insights by being led by such distinguished conductors as Gábor Takács-Nagy, Tania Miller, Ihnatowycz Chair in Piano Leon Fleisher, and Johannes Debus this season; past guest conductors have included Sir Roger Norrington, Peter Oundjian, Mario Bernardi, Richard Bradshaw, Ivars Taurins, Julian Kuerti, Nathan Brock, Uri Mayer, Lior Shambadal, Bramwell Tovey, and Tito Muñoz. The RCO ensures that instrumental students in the

Performance Diploma Program and the Artist Diploma Program of The Glenn Gould School graduate with extensive orchestral performance experience. Additionally, at least two winners of The Glenn Gould School Concerto Competition have the opportunity to appear each year as soloists with the RCO. Graduates of the RCO have joined the ranks of the greatest orchestras in the world, including the Montreal Symphony Orchestra, the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, the BBC Orchestra, the Quebec Symphony Orchestra, the Canadian Opera Company Orchestra, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, the Calgary Philharmonic, Tafelmusik, the Hallé Orchestra of Manchester, the Hong Kong Philharmonic, the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, and Leipzig Gewandhaus. The RCO has been invited to perform at the Isabel Bader Performing Arts Centre in Kingston this season, has been heard on *CBC Radio*, and has toured China during the 2004-05 season.