

ALSO SPRACH ZARATHUSTRA

Friday and Saturday, November 22-23, 2019 at 8 p.m.
Sunday, November 24, 2019 at 2 p.m.


HELZBERG HALL, KAUFFMAN CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

MICHAEL STERN, *conductor*
JOYCE YANG, *piano*

MAHLER

“Adagio” from Symphony No. 10 (ed. Ratz)

JONATHAN LESHNOFF

Piano Concerto
I. Fast
II. : “Neshama,” Slow
III. Scherzo
IV. Finale: Fast
JOYCE YANG, *piano*

INTERMISSION

R. STRAUSS

Also sprach Zarathustra, op. 30

The 2019/20 season is generously sponsored by
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GUSTAV MAHLER (1860–1911)

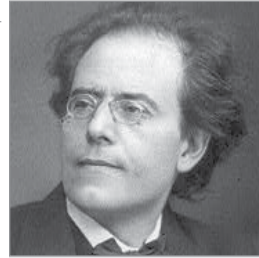
“Adagio” from Symphony No. 10 (1910)

(ed. Ratz) 22 minutes

Piccolo, 3 flutes, 3 oboes, 3 clarinets, 3 bassoons, 4 horns, 4 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, harp and strings.

By 1906, Gustav Mahler had composed eight symphonies. Mahler was acutely aware that several composers, including Beethoven, Schubert and Bruckner, were never able to advance beyond their ninth symphonies. Therefore, when Mahler composed a work for two soloists and orchestra, he decided on the title *Das Lied von der Erde* (The Song of the Earth), rather than “Symphony No. 9.” While composing his next Symphony, which he did call the Ninth, Mahler informed his wife Alma, “Actually, of course, it’s the Tenth, because *Das Lied von der Erde* was really the Ninth.” In the summer of 1910, when Mahler began work on his Tenth Symphony, he announced to Alma, “Now the danger is past.” But Mahler, who suffered from a heart condition, died on May 18, 1911. He was 50 years old.

At the time of Mahler’s death, his Tenth Symphony remained incomplete. Mahler had essentially finished the opening movement and prepared sketches (in various stages of completion) of the remaining four. There have been several attempts to fashion a complete score of the Mahler Tenth for performance — the most famous by Deryck Cooke, which premiered in London, on August 13, 1964. But the Tenth’s opening “Adagio” stands on its own as a masterpiece by a unique symphonic genius. The extended slow-tempo movement inexorably builds to a shattering climax, finally resolving to closing measures of unearthly peace and beauty.



At the time of Mahler’s death, he had completed only one movement of what he planned to be a five-movement symphony.



American
composer
Jonathan Leshnoff
wrote his Piano
Concerto for
Joyce Yang. The
two collaborated
on the final draft
of the score.

JONATHAN LESHNOFF (b. 1973)

Piano Concerto (2019) 23 minutes

Solo piano, piccolo, 3 flutes, 3 oboes, English horn, 3 clarinets, bass clarinet, 3 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, piccolo trumpet, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, marimba, snare drum, harp and strings.

A mutual friend introduced Jonathan Leshnoff and Joyce Yang in 2017. When Joyce appeared with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra in February 2018, Leshnoff remarked he was “blown away by her sublime phrasing and virtuosity.” After that performance, they immediately discussed a new piano concerto. Leshnoff began work shortly thereafter and by March 2019, Leshnoff was ready to present Yang a full draft. They met in Baltimore for two days and discussed the entire piece. Leshnoff incorporated Yang’s suggestions and revised the concerto, which was finished soon after.

The concerto is in four movements. The prominent, stately principal theme appears shortly after the opening of the concerto; rapid and energetic conversations between the piano and orchestra develop this theme. The second movement is slow and contemplative, bringing out the soft nuances of the piano. Climaxing with an iteration of the principal theme, the movement then sinks back to its meditative stance before ending mysteriously. A brief humorous scherzo precedes the final movement, which is kinetic and propulsive. The concerto ends with a triumphant restatement of the main theme, this time in full confidence and grandeur.

Leshnoff finds Jewish mysticism and spirituality to be an inexhaustible inspiration for his music. This piano concerto is inspired by the ancient Jewish mystical tradition that everything in the universe has a soul, from humans, animals and plants to

inanimate objects. This tradition teaches that the soul has five parts. The second movement of this concerto is the composer's impression of the third level of the soul, "Neshama," Hebrew for "breathing soul" and associated with the Hebrew letter "he" ה.

It is this part of the soul that expresses itself in thoughts and ideas and is housed in the brain. The second movement of the concerto is Leshnoff's musical painting of the Neshama. He explains, "On paper, this movement is written with very simple rhythms and melodies. It is up to the artist to connect her mind and essence with the music that will bring these simple structures to full, breathing life. The movement is purposefully slow and meditative, which bring the soloist and audience to internal contemplation without the 'distraction' of virtuosity. It is this internal contemplation that is the essence of the Neshama."

WORLD PREMIERE

Commissioned by the Kansas City Symphony (Music Director Michael Stern), underwritten by the generous support of the Miller Nichols Charitable Foundation.

Co-commissioned by the Tucson Symphony (Music Director José Luis Gomez), Harrisburg Symphony (Music Director Stuart Malina), and Knoxville Symphony Orchestra (Music Director *Aram Demirjian*), with the support of F. Lawrence Clare in memory of his brother Dennis A. Clare.



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RICHARD STRAUSS (1864-1949)

Also sprach Zarathustra (Thus Spake Zarathustra), op. 30 (1896) 32 minutes

2 piccolos, 3 flutes, 3 oboes, English horn, E-flat clarinet, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 3 bassoons, contrabassoon, 6 horns, 4 trumpets, 3 trombones, 2 tubas, timpani, bass drum, chime, cymbals, glockenspiel, suspended cymbals, triangle, two harps, organ and strings.

During the years 1895 to 1897, Richard Strauss composed three orchestral tone poems based on famous literary characters. The first, *Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks*

(1895), is a rollicking tour-de-force depicting the exploits of the medieval jokester. The last, *Don Quixote* (1897), is a witty and often affecting musical portrayal of the misadventures of Cervantes' beloved "Knight of the Sorrowful Countenance." Strauss' inspiration for the middle work in this trilogy was of a far different nature — Friedrich Nietzsche's epic philosophic poem "Also sprach Zarathustra" (Thus Spake Zarathustra)

Nietzsche based the protagonist in "Thus Spake Zarathustra" on the ancient Persian prophet also known as Zoroaster, who leaves the solitude of his mountain refuge to share his wisdom with mankind. During the course of the poem, Nietzsche, in the person of Zarathustra, denounces the very foundations of society — organized religion, democracy and civilization — that he believes inhibit man's ability to reach his greatest potential.

Strauss began composition of the score on February 4, 1896, and completed the work on August 24 of that year. The composer led the Museums-Orchester of Frankfurt-am-Main in the November 27, 1896 premiere. Prior to the first performance, Strauss provided these notes:



Strauss based his tone poem on Nietzsche's philosophic work of the same name.

First movement: Sunrise, Man feels the power of God. *Andante religioso*. But man still longs. He plunges into passion (second movement) and finds no peace. He turns toward science, and tries in vain to solve life's problem in a fugue (third movement). Then agreeable dance tunes sound and he becomes an individual, and his soul soars upward while the world sinks far below him.

Strauss' *Also sprach Zarathustra* opens with the famous "Sunrise," followed by eight sections, performed without pause. Each has a title taken from a chapter in Nietzsche's book.

- I. Sunrise (Sonnenaufgang)
- II. Of the Backworldsman (Von den Hinterweltlern)
- III. Of the Great Longing (Von der grossen Sehnsucht)
- IV. Of Joys and Passions (Von den Freuden und Leidenschaften)
- V. Song of the Grave (Das Grablied)
- VI. Of Science (Von der Wissenschaft)
- VII. The Convalescent (Der Genesende)
- VIII. The Dance Song (Das Tanzlied)
- IX. Night Wanderer's Song (Das Nachwandlerlied)

Kansas City Symphony **fun fact**

number of **people who attend symphony**
concerts in Helzberg Hall at Kauffman Center
for the Performing Arts annually

180,000

VIOLINIST WYATT UNDERHILL IS A NATIVE OF MILWAUKEE,

Wisconsin, where he began playing the violin at age 6. Currently assistant concertmaster of the San Francisco Symphony, Underhill previously served

as assistant concertmaster and acting associate concertmaster of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra.

He also has performed as concertmaster of the Mid-Atlantic and New Haven symphonies as well as the Lakes Area Music Festival Orchestra in Minnesota. He has appeared as soloist with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, Concord Chamber Orchestra, and Oberlin Orchestra, as well as in recital at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., the Fine Arts Camp in Sitka, Alaska, and the Gualala

Arts Center in California. He is a graduate of the Oberlin Conservatory and the Juilliard School, where upon graduation he was awarded the William Schuman Prize and the Benzaquen Career Advancement Grant. ■



BLESSED WITH “POETIC AND SENSITIVE PIANISM”

(Washington Post) and a “wondrous sense of color” (San Francisco Classical Voice), Grammy® Award-nominated pianist Joyce Yang captivates audiences with her virtuosity, lyricism and interpretive sensitivity.

Yang first came to international attention in 2005 when she won the silver medal at the 12th Van Cliburn International Piano Competition. The youngest contestant at 19 years old, she also took home awards for Best Performance of Chamber Music and Best Performance of a New Work. In 2006, she made her New York Philharmonic debut and toured Asia with the orchestra, making a triumphant return to her hometown of Seoul, South Korea. Her subsequent appearances with the New York Philharmonic included opening night of the 2008 Leonard Bernstein Festival, where the New York Times pronounced her performance in Bernstein’s *The Age of Anxiety* a “knockout.”

Over the last decade, Yang has blossomed into an “astonishing artist” (Neue Zürcher Zeitung), performing solo recitals and more than 1,000 debuts and re-engagements with the world’s top orchestras and chamber musicians. Yang received the 2010 Avery Fisher Career Grant and earned her first Grammy nomination for her recording with violinist Augustin Hadelich.

Other notable orchestral engagements have included the Chicago Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin and BBC Philharmonic, as well as the orchestras of Toronto, Vancouver, Sydney, Melbourne and New Zealand. She also was featured in a five-year Rachmaninoff concerto cycle with Edo de Waart and the Milwaukee Symphony.

She has appeared in recital at New York City’s Lincoln Center and Metropolitan Museum, Washington’s Kennedy Center, Chicago’s Symphony Hall and Zurich’s Tonhalle. In 2018, Musica Viva presented Yang in an extensive recital tour throughout Australia.

Born in Seoul, South Korea, Yang received her first piano lesson from her aunt at age 4. In 1997, she moved to the United States to study at the pre-college division of Juilliard. After winning the Greenfield Student Competition, she performed Prokofiev’s Third Piano Concerto with the Philadelphia Orchestra at just 12 years old. Yang appears in the film “In the Heart of Music,” a documentary about the 2005 Cliburn Competition. She is a Steinway artist. ■



About JONATHAN LESHNOFF, composer

Hailed as “a leader of contemporary American lyricism” (New York Times), composer Jonathan Leshnoff is renowned for his music’s striking harmonies, structural complexity and powerful themes. More than 65 orchestras worldwide



in hundreds of orchestral concerts have performed works by the Baltimore-based composer. He has received commissions from Carnegie Hall and the orchestras of Atlanta, Baltimore, Dallas, Kansas City, Nashville, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. Some of classical music’s most celebrated artists have premiered Leshnoff’s compositions, including Gil Shaham, Roberto Díaz, Johannes Moser, Manuel Barrueco, Ricardo Morales and Joyce Yang.

American orchestras have ranked Leshnoff among the most-performed living composers in recent seasons, and upcoming seasons are no exception. The 2019/20 season highlights include the world premiere of a new piano concerto with Joyce Yang and the Kansas City Symphony, the premiere of a new chamber orchestra overture written for IRIS Orchestra, and the premiere of a new symphonic work commissioned by the Oklahoma City Philharmonic to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Oklahoma City bombing. Other notable performances include the premiere of a new chamber orchestra transcription of Leshnoff’s Guitar Concerto by Jason Vieaux and the New Mexico Philharmonic, the West Coast premiere of Leshnoff’s music by Orli Shaham with the Pacific Symphony’s Café Ludwig Chamber Series, and performances by the Duluth Superior Symphony Orchestra, Greenville Symphony, Greenwich Village Orchestra, Northern Tier Symphony Orchestra and Susquehanna Symphony Orchestra. Following acclaim for his recent Naxos album release, the New West Symphony performs Leshnoff’s Fourth Symphony featuring the Violins of Hope in Los Angeles in April. Leshnoff also continues this season as composer-in-residence with the Fairfax and Harrisburg symphony orchestras.

Leshnoff has released four albums to date on the Naxos American Classics label. Most recently in May, an album entirely of his works was released with the Nashville Symphony performing *Starburst*, his Guitar Concerto with Jason Vieaux, and his Symphony No. 4, “Heichalos,” featuring the Violins of Hope.

Celebrated by Fanfare magazine as “the real thing,” Leshnoff’s music has been lauded by Strings Magazine as “distinct from anything else that’s out there” and by the Baltimore Sun as “remarkably assured, cohesively constructed and radiantly lyrical.” Leshnoff’s catalog is vast, including symphonies and oratorios in addition to numerous concerti, solo and chamber works. Leshnoff is a professor of music at Towson University. ■