

Strauss' Alpine Symphony, with Chopin

MATTHIAS PINTSCHER, MUSIC DIRECTOR AND CONDUCTOR
YUNCHAN LIM, PIANO



KANSAS CITY
SYMPHONY

November 22-24, 2024

Helzberg Hall,
Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts

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Strauss' Alpine Symphony, with Chopin

Friday, November 22, 2024 at 8 p.m. (Symphonic Piazza)

Note: The works by Chopin and Strauss will be performed for the Symphonic Piazza concert.

Saturday, November 23, 2024 at 8 p.m.

Sunday, November 24, 2024 at 2 p.m.

Helzberg Hall, Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts

MATTHIAS PINTSCHER, MUSIC DIRECTOR AND CONDUCTOR
YUNCHAN LIM, PIANO

CARLOS SIMON

Warmth from Other Suns for String Orchestra

I. Rays of Light

II. Flight

III. Settle

FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN

Concerto No. 2 in F Minor for Piano and Orchestra, op. 21

I. Maestoso

I. Larghetto

III. Allegro vivace

Yunchan Lim, piano

Intermission

RICHARD STRAUSS

Eine Alpensinfonie, op. 64



Matthias Pintscher

MUSIC DIRECTOR
AND CONDUCTOR

Matthias Pintscher is the newly appointed music director of the Kansas City Symphony, beginning with the 2024/25 season. He has just concluded a successful decade-long tenure as the music director of the Ensemble Intercontemporain, the iconic Parisian contemporary ensemble founded by Pierre Boulez and winner of the 2022 Polar Prize. During his stewardship, Pintscher led this most adventurous institution in the creation of dozens of world premieres by cutting-edge composers from all over the world and took the ensemble on tours around the globe — to Asia and North America and throughout Europe to all the major festivals and concert halls.

The 2023/24 season was Pintscher's fourth year as Creative Partner at the Cincinnati Symphony, where he conducted a new work by intí figgis-vizueta, as well as an immersive video concert of Olivier Messiaen's *Des Canyons aux étoiles*. He also toured with the Junge Deutsche Philharmonie where he is artist-in-residence. As guest conductor, he returned to the RAI

Milano Musica, Orchestre de Chambre de Paris, NDR Hamburg, Indianapolis Symphony, Milwaukee Symphony, Barcelona Symphony, Lahti Symphony, Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen, La Scala and Berlin's Boulez Ensemble. Pintscher has conducted several opera productions for the Berliner Staatsoper, Wiener Staatsoper and Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris. He returned to the Berliner Staatsoper in 2024 for Beat Furrer's *Violetter Schnee*.

Pintscher is also well-known as a composer, and his works appear frequently on the programs of major symphony orchestras throughout the world. In August 2021, he was the focus of the Suntory Hall Summer Festival — a weeklong celebration of his works with the Tokyo Symphony Orchestra as well as a residency by the Ensemble Intercontemporain with symphonic and chamber music performances. His third violin concerto, *Assonanza*, written for Leila Josefowicz, premiered in January 2022 with the Cincinnati Symphony.

Yunchan Lim

PIANO

Since becoming the youngest person ever to win gold at the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition at 18 in 2022, Yunchan Lim's ascent to international stardom has been meteoric. Conductor Marin Alsop said, "Yunchan is that rare artist who brings profound musicality and prodigious technique organically together."

In the years following his Cliburn win, Lim made successful orchestral debuts with the New York, Los Angeles, Munich and Seoul philharmonic orchestras, as well as the Chicago, Lucerne, BBC, Boston and Tokyo symphony orchestras, among others. Recital appearances include performances at Carnegie Hall, the Verbier Festival, Wigmore Hall, Het Concertgebouw and Suntory Hall, among other major stages.

Lim's 2024/25 season highlights include orchestral debuts with the Washington National Symphony, Kansas City Symphony, London Symphony, Royal Philharmonic, Vienna Radio Symphony, Berlin Radio Symphony and WDR Symphony as well as returning to the New York Philharmonic, Lucerne Symphony Orchestra and Orchestra de Paris. This season will also see his recital debut at the Kennedy Center and a return to Carnegie Hall.

As an exclusive Decca Classics recording artist, Lim's acclaimed



debut studio album, "Chopin Études op. 10 and op. 25" has gone double platinum in South Korea and topped classical charts around the world. His previous releases include "Liszt: Transcendental Études," "Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 5 'Emperor'" and his appearance on the "2020 Young Musicians of Korea" album.

Born in Siheung, South Korea, Lim began piano lessons at age 7. He was accepted into the Korea National Institute for the Gifted in Arts at 13, where he met his teacher and mentor, Minsoo Sohn. In 2019, at age 15, he became the youngest person to win South Korea's IsangYun International Competition. Lim is currently studying at the New England Conservatory of Music with Minsoo Sohn.



Carlos Simon (b. 1986)

***Warmth from Other Suns* for String Orchestra (2021)**

String orchestra version commissioned by the Kansas City Symphony
18 minutes

Warmth from Other Suns is a terrifying expression of the duality of wanting to find rest, yet never being able to call a place home. This musical journey is based off of the thrilling book, “The Warmth of Other Suns” by Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist, Isabel Wilkerson. Wilkerson’s book describes the Great Migration where many African-Americans fled from southern states which were filled with the hot stench of Jim Crow. The Great Migration would take them to a new part of America where the promise of more economic opportunity hung before them with wavering uncertainty. The author centers the story around three main characters. My aim was to embody the feelings of the main characters and express their spirit musically.

“Rays of Light”

The piece opens with high-pitched violins using harmonics seemingly breaking through clouds and refracting in the most unusual yet beautiful way. A symbol of hope, promise, and a future. This promise is quickly interrupted by the fear of never feeling safe, which many African-Americans must have felt during this time in history. This agitation and fear theme can be felt in the cello. The three main characters all come to a point where they must question whether or not they will decide to leave their “home” which is a place of unrest in the hopes of a better life which may or may not fulfill its promise. African-Americans are a people who have believed in the promise of a better future despite the oppression they have constantly faced.

“Flight”

Though “Rays of Light” represents hope, questions/answers, and uncertain promises, “Flight” represents the unrest that is brought forth when the decision is made to act on the pursuit of the uncertain promise of a better life. The decision of the great departure evokes fear on both sides of society. African-Americans took a risk to journey through a racist country to find another home while many white Southerners feared an economical crash if African-Americans fled the South. These feelings of unrest and fear can be felt throughout the second movement through jolting

rhythms, syncopated melodic lines, call and response, and rapid perpetual movement.

“Settle”

The third movement, “Settle” echoes the material of the first movement that brought great hope and promise, but now, the movement is more grounded with rich harmonic support. The arrival of a new place where the sun gives warmth, comfort, and rest. Perhaps a place to finally call home.

— *Carlos Simon and Leah Claiborne*

2025 UPCOMING CLASSICAL CONCERTS**Saint-Saëns’ Organ Symphony,
Pahud Plays Ibert**

Friday, January 17, 2025 at 8 p.m.

Saturday, January 18, 2025 at 8 p.m.

Sunday, January 19, 2025 at 2 p.m.

Matthias Pintscher, music director and conductor

Emmanuel Pahud, flute

Jan Kraybill, organ



CLAUDE DEBUSSY *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun*

JACQUES IBERT Concerto for Flute and Orchestra

MICHAEL TILSON THOMAS *Notturmo* for Flute, Harp and Strings

CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS Symphony No. 3 in C Minor, “Organ Symphony”

Conrad Tao Plays Beethoven

Friday, January 24, 2025 at 8 p.m. (Symphonic Piazza)

Note: Both Beethoven pieces will be performed for the Symphonic Piazza concert.

Saturday, January 25, 2025 at 8 p.m.

Sunday, January 26, 2025 at 2 p.m.

Matthias Pintscher, music director and conductor

Conrad Tao, piano

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN Concerto No. 1 in C Major for Piano and Orchestra

CONRAD TAO (Kansas City Symphony commission and World Premiere)

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN Symphony No. 7 in A Major

Frédéric Chopin (1810–1849)

Concerto No. 2 in F Minor for Piano and Orchestra, op. 21

(1829)

30 minutes

Solo piano, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, trombone, timpani and strings.



THE STORY

As far as we know, the Polish/French composer Frédéric François Chopin never composed a single work that did not include the piano. And he only composed six pieces for piano and orchestra.

The piece we know as his Piano Concerto No. 2 was actually the first to be written but second in order of publication. Chopin composed it in the fall of 1829, when he was 19 years old and still a student at the Warsaw Conservatory. In fact, his inexperience with writing for orchestra led him to ask two older students to help.

The beautiful, slow second movement was inspired by the composer's infatuation with Konstancja Gładkowska, a soprano and fellow student at the Conservatory. He wrote to a friend, "Perhaps to my misfortune, I have met my ideal and have served her faithfully for six months, without speaking to her about my feelings. I dream about it: under her inspiration, the adagio of my Concerto in F minor and, this morning, the little waltz that I'm sending you, have been born ... I tell to the piano what I confide to you."

The concerto had its premiere in Warsaw in March 1830 with the composer at the piano, and was enthusiastically received — so much so that a repeat performance five days later was hastily arranged. When he left for Western Europe later that year, he exchanged gifts with Gładkowska, and she wrote him a friendly farewell note. But there is no evidence that he ever shared his feelings with her; we have only the second movement of this concerto as an expression of his affection.

THE MUSIC

In the first movement, marked "Maestoso" (majestically), the orchestra provides a lengthy introduction, stating both the bold

first theme and the lyrical second theme before the piano enters. The orchestra never becomes an equal partner with the piano, but mostly just provides the background to let the soloist shine.

The “Larghetto” second movement has drawn comparisons with the nocturnes, or night pieces, that Chopin was to compose beginning that following year and throughout his life. The singing theme perhaps represents the soprano’s voice, the middle section in minor possibly Chopin’s unrequited longing. The final movement is in the style of a mazurka, a Polish dance; the piano introduces the main theme,

which returns several times. Watch for the middle section, where the violins play “col legno,” with the wood of the bow rather than the hair, in an early example of this technique. After a final restatement of the melody in the piano, the piece almost seems to come to an end — but the orchestra finishes on an F major chord, surprisingly, instead of F minor. A solo horn confirms the new key, and what follows is a charming coda that also happens to rank among the most difficult passages in the piano concerto literature.

— *AJ Harbison*

2025 UPCOMING POPS CONCERTS

Disney™ in Concert: The Sound of Magic

Friday and Saturday, January 10-11, 2025 at 8 p.m.
Sunday, January 12, 2025 at 2 p.m.

Stuart Chafetz, guest conductor



Celebrating 100 years of Disney, this concert features hit songs from “Aladdin,” “Cinderella,” “Beauty and the Beast,” “The Lion King,” “The Little Mermaid” and many more — join us as original Disney film footage is projected live on the big screen in Helzberg Hall. Presentation licensed by Disney Concerts.® All rights reserved.

Kings of Soul

Friday and Saturday, February 14-15, 2025 at 8 p.m.
Sunday, February 16, 2025 at 2 p.m.

Scott Terrell, guest conductor



A dazzling Valentine’s Weekend performance honoring the legendary artists of classic soul, including tributes to Marvin Gaye, The Temptations, James Brown, Al Green and Otis Redding. American Idol contestant Michael Lynche and Broadway performers Chester Gregory and Darren Lorenzo join your Kansas City Symphony in this showcase of soulful rhythms and melodies.

VISIT [KCSYMPHONY.ORG](https://www.kcsymphony.org) FOR TICKETS.

Richard Strauss (1864-1949)

Eine Alpensinfonie (An Alpine Symphony), op. 64

(1911-1915)

51 minutes

2 piccolos, 4 flutes, 3 oboes, English horn, heckelphone, 3 clarinets, E-flat clarinet, bass clarinet, 4 bassoons, contrabassoon, 12 horns, 4 Wagner tubas, 4 trumpets, 6 trombones, 2 tubas, 2 sets of timpani, bass drum, cowbell, cymbals, glockenspiel, snare drum, tam-tam, thunder machine, triangle, wind machine, 2 harps, celeste, organ and strings.



THE STORY

An Alpine Symphony, despite the symphonic title, is the last of Richard Strauss' tone poems. Grand on every scale — length, number of performers, programmatic design, and time from conception to completion — the work is a summation of his purely orchestral endeavors. Some musicologists have sought to connect *An Alpine Symphony* with a particularly memorable ascent of Heimgarten mountain in Upper Bavaria made when Strauss was 15 years old. Embarking during the pre-dawn hours, he and his fellow adventurers marveled at the view from the summit but got lost on the descent and were caught in violent weather, eventually reaching shelter the next day. Strauss recounted the exploit in a letter to a friend and noted, "The next day I described the whole hike on the piano. Naturally huge tone paintings and smarminess

à la Wagner." While the passage of time between this experience and the beginning of any formal symphonic sketches may have attenuated overt connection, there is more than passing reference to the adventure in the finished work.

Two decades after the Alpine adventure, Strauss wrote to his parents that he was considering a composition "that would begin with a sunrise in Switzerland; otherwise so far only the idea (love tragedy of an artist) and a few themes exist." Over the next couple of years, he worked on sketches based on the concept of a complete symphony with the Alpine climb detailed in the first movement — hence, the symphonic designation in the title. During the same timeframe, he also considered writing a two-movement symphonic work

called *Künstlertragödie* (An Artist's Tragedy) based on the life of Swiss artist Karl Stauffer who lived in the Alps. Neither plan came to fruition and the project didn't progress until 1911 when he returned to the notion during a break while working on his opera *Die Frau ohne Schatten* (The Woman without a Shadow). His surroundings probably contributed a degree of inspiration as he was enjoying his new villa in Garmisch in the Bavarian Alps, not far from the Zugspitze, the highest mountain in Germany.

Like so many German artists and intellectuals of the era, Strauss came under the sway of philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, perhaps most famously composing his tone poem *Also sprach Zarathustra*, inspired by Nietzsche's novel of the same title. Nietzsche's rejection of moral duality and its Christian underpinnings appealed to Strauss, who had tired of the metaphysical trappings associated with Richard Wagner's music. Nietzsche's 1895 book, "Der Antichrist," excoriated Christianity and exalted his concept of the will to power. It was in this frame of reference that Strauss heard the news of Gustav Mahler's death in 1911. He had greatly admired Mahler's conducting and compositions but was distraught at Mahler's metaphysical preoccupation, writing in his diary:

The death of this aspiring, idealistic, energetic artist [is] a grave loss ... Mahler, the Jew, could gain acceptance in Christianity. As an old man the hero Wagner returned to it under the influence of Schopenhauer. It is clear to me that the German nation will achieve new creative energy only by liberating itself from Christianity ... I shall call my alpine symphony: Der Antichrist, since it represents: moral purification through one's own strength, liberation through work, worship of eternal, magnificent nature.

Eventually, Strauss discarded the title of *Der Antichrist* as too philosophical. Work on *An Alpine Symphony* proceeded apace with composition finished in 1913 and orchestration completed in February 1915. He was pleased with the outcome and after a rehearsal of the work with its massive forces and meticulously indicated textures, he reportedly quipped, "Now at last I have learned to orchestrate." Strauss conducted the premiere in Berlin with the Dresden Hofkapelle on October 28, 1915.

Several of the wind parts have very prolonged notes, beyond normal lung capacity. Strauss suggested that these musicians use the Samuels Aerophor, a device invented by Dutch flutist

Richard Strauss

(continued)

Bernard Samuels in 1911. The contraption included a mouthpiece connected to a foot-operated bellows. Unsurprisingly, it never caught on and musicians today use a circular breathing method to contend with the challenge.

THE MUSIC

Performed as one continuous movement, Strauss charts his metaphorical Alpine journey chronologically:

1. Nacht (Night)
2. Sonnenaufgang (Sunrise)
3. Der Anstieg (The Ascent)
4. Eintritt in den Wald (Entry into the Forest)
5. Wanderung neben dem Bache (Wandering by the Brook)
6. Am Wasserfall (At the Waterfall)
7. Erscheinung (Apparition)
8. Auf blumigen Wiesen (On Flowering Meadows)
9. Auf der Alm (On the Alpine Pasture)
10. Durch Dickicht und Gestrüpp auf Irrwegen (Through Thickets and Undergrowth on the Wrong Path)
11. Auf dem Gletscher (On the Glacier)
12. Gefährliche Augenblicke (Dangerous Moments)
13. Auf dem Gipfel (On the Summit)
14. Vision (Vision)
15. Nebel steigen auf (Mists Rise)
16. Die Sonne verdüstert sich allmählich (The Sun Gradually Becomes Obscured)
17. Elegie (Elegy)
18. Stille vor dem Sturm (Calm Before the Storm)
19. Gewitter und Sturm, Abstieg (Thunderstorm and Tempest, Descent)
20. Sonnenuntergang (Sunset)
21. Ausklang (Quiet Settles / Epilogue)
22. Nacht (Night)

Strauss packs great detail into each scene, some quite brief while others are several minutes long. His expertise at orchestration is especially conspicuous in the many transitions because they are handled so deftly. Whether portraying serene nighttime, bucolic meadows, magnificent vistas or raging tempest (complete with thunder and wind machines!), the musical depiction is filled with sonic splendor. One can readily appreciate the music without figurative context; the symbolic journey is up to each listener.

— *Eric T. Williams*



KANSAS CITY SYMPHONY

In only its 42nd season, the Kansas City Symphony has already become one of America's most vibrant major orchestras and has gained national and international recognition. With the 2024/25 season, the Symphony welcomes conductor and composer Matthias Pintscher as its new music director. Pintscher regularly conducts many of the world's best orchestras and opera companies and ranks as one of the world's foremost composers of orchestral music.

Continually creating live music experiences in Helzberg Hall, located in the prestigious Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts, the Symphony serves Kansas City's metro population of more than 2.2 million people as well as welcoming visitors from around the globe. The Symphony's 80 full-time musicians from around the world bring a diverse and dynamic range of musical experiences to our audiences in both orchestral and chamber music formats each season. In addition to concerts in Helzberg Hall, Symphony musicians perform throughout the region on our portable stage, the Mobile Music Box. The Symphony also serves as the

orchestra for the Kansas City Ballet and the Lyric Opera of Kansas City, adding to the rich cultural experiences that these organizations offer to the community.

Top international soloists perform with the Symphony every season, including brilliant classical musicians, popular singer/songwriters, rock bands and other performers. The Symphony also performs live soundtracks for a variety of fan-favorite films, with the movie projected on a giant screen above the stage.

Music connects us; it has the unique ability to draw us closer to our inner selves and also closer to one another, transcending our differences. Every Kansas City Symphony concert will take you on an emotional journey — a journey that's deeply personal but also a journey that we all experience together as one.

We're happy you are here. We are *your* Kansas City Symphony.

Visit kcsymphony.org for more information.

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