

# Grieg's Piano Concerto

FRIDAY, MAY 8  
SATURDAY, MAY 9  
SUNDAY, MAY 10

ANU TALI, GUEST CONDUCTOR  
CHAEYOUNG PARK, PIANO

Helzberg Hall, Kauffman Center for the  
Performing Arts



KANSAS CITY  
SYMPHONY

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# Grieg's Piano Concerto

Friday, May 8, 2026 at 8 p.m.  
Saturday, May 9, 2026 at 8 p.m.  
Sunday, May 10, 2026 at 2 p.m.

**ANU TALI**, GUEST CONDUCTOR  
**CHAEYOUNG PARK**, PIANO

Helzberg Hall, Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts



**EDUARD TUBIN** *Estonian Dance Suite*, ETW 15  
I. Crossed Sticks Dance  
II. A Long Anglaise  
III. Setu Dance

**EDVARD GRIEG** Concerto in A Minor for Piano and Orchestra, op. 16  
I. Allegro molto moderato  
II. Adagio  
III. Allegro moderato molto e marcato  
Chaeyoung Park, piano

Intermission

**JEAN SIBELIUS** Symphony No. 1 in E Minor, op. 39  
I. Andante, ma non troppo — Allegro energico  
II. Andante, ma non troppo lento  
III. Scherzo: Allegro  
IV. Finale (quasi una fantasia)

# Anu Tali

GUEST CONDUCTOR

**D**escribed by the Herald Tribune as “charismatic, brilliant, energetic,” Anu Tali is one of the most captivating and versatile conductors on the international scene today, an artist whose pursuit of fresh and ingenious artistic creativity is acclaimed worldwide by critics and public alike.



Highlights of the 2025/26 season include concerts with Konzerthausorchester Berlin, Munich Radio Orchestra, Kansas City Symphony, Orchestra Sinfonica Nazionale della RAI, Cologne Chamber Orchestra, Staatsorchester Rheinische Philharmonie and Nordic Symphony Orchestra in Tallinn.

Former music director of the Sarasota Orchestra in Florida, Anu Tali appears with orchestras worldwide including the New Japan and Tokyo Philharmonic orchestras, Orchestre National de France, Houston Symphony Orchestra, Mozarteumorchester Salzburg, Orquesta Sinfónica de RTVE and Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra. In Germany she has worked with the Deutsches Symphonieorchester Berlin, Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, Konzerthausorchester Berlin, Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen and Ensemble Modern.

Together with her twin sister Kadri, Anu Tali founded the Nordic Symphony Orchestra in 1997, with the aims of utilizing music as a tool to develop cultural contacts between Estonia and Finland and uniting musicians from around the world. Today the Nordic Symphony Orchestra brings together musicians from the world’s leading orchestras, with members from 15 countries.

Her debut recording, “Swan Flight” (Finlandia/Warner Classics), earned Tali the 2003 ECHO Klassik Young Artist of the Year award. Other recordings include “Action Passion Illusion” for Warner Classics, featuring works by Rachmaninoff, Sibelius and Erkki-Sven Tüür.

Anu Tali began her musical career as a pianist, graduating from the Tallinn Conservatory before training as a conductor at the Estonian Academy of Music with Kuno Areng, Toomas Kapten and Roman Matsow. From 1998 to 2000 she studied at the St. Petersburg State Conservatory with Ilya Musin and later with Leonid Kortchmar and Jorma Panula.

# Chaeyoung Park

PIANO

Chaeyoung Park has been praised as a passionate pianist who “does not play a single note without thought or feeling” (New York Concert Review). As a recital soloist, Park has performed at major venues including Carnegie Hall’s Weill Recital Hall, Bravo! Vail Music Festival, Gilmore Rising Stars and Tongyeong International Music Festival. Her recent concerto engagements include performances with the Charlotte Symphony, Israel Philharmonic, Redlands Symphony and Israel Camerata Jerusalem.



In 2019, Park made history as the first female Korean pianist to win the Hilton Head International Piano Competition, leading to her Carnegie Hall solo debut and a performance of Beethoven’s Piano Concerto No. 4 with the Hilton Head Symphony Orchestra. In 2022, she was the first prize winner of the Young Concert Artists Susan Wadsworth International Auditions. She was also a finalist in the 2023 Arthur Rubinstein International

Master Piano Competition and the 2021 Concours Musical International de Montréal.

Park regularly performs with orchestras around the U.S., including the Maryland Symphony, Eugene Symphony, Mobile Symphony, Topeka Symphony and others. Recent recital highlights include debuts at Merkin Hall and the Kennedy Center’s Terrace Theater.

Introduced to the piano in her kindergarten music class, Park immediately showed a love for music, which was deepened by her grandmother’s timely gift of a Yamaha upright piano. After winning her first local competition at age 8, Park’s musical studies became serious. She immigrated to the U.S. at age 10 to study with Jack Winerock, to whom she credits much of her musical upbringing, having studied with him for eight years.

South Korean-born and raised in Lawrence, Kansas, since age 10, Park returns to Kansas frequently to visit her two cats and share music with her community during visits home from New York City, where she is currently based. She was the 2014 winner of the Kansas City Symphony Woman’s City Club Charitable Foundation Young Artist Competition. She holds a bachelor’s degree, a master’s degree and an artist diploma from the Juilliard School. She is managed worldwide by Young Concert Artists.

# *Estonian Dance Suite,* **ETW 15 (1938)**

**EDUARD TUBIN (1905–1982)**

13 MINUTES

*Piccolo, flute, oboe, English horn, 2 clarinets, bassoon, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, trombone, timpani, harp and strings.*

## **THE STORY**

Eduard Tubin is a composer unfairly neglected by two nations. He was born in Estonia in 1905, but fled the USSR's second occupation of Estonia with his wife and children in 1944. They settled in Stockholm, Sweden (and became citizens in 1961). As a result, half of his compositions were written outside his native country, and performances of his music were banned in Estonia under two different Soviet regimes. But at the same time Sweden could not claim him as one of their own.



Like many of his contemporaries (his fellow Eastern Europeans Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály among them) Tubin was inspired by the folk music of his country, collecting songs as a musicologist and writing much of his music on Estonian folk themes. He wrote many songs for choir or voice and piano on texts by Estonian poets, and multiple pieces for orchestra based on folk melodies — *Estonian Folk Dances* (1929), *Suite on Estonian Motifs* (1931) and the piece we're performing today, *Estonian Dance Suite* (1938).

Near the end of Tubin's life he slowly started to gain greater recognition, partly through the advocacy of the Estonian conductor Neeme Järvi. On Tubin's deathbed he received a phone call from Järvi; the conductor promised that he would make recordings of all of Tubin's ten symphonies, which had never been recorded in Estonia or Sweden. Tubin died shortly thereafter. Järvi was true to his word, recording all of his symphonies over the next ten years in a set that remains the best recording of these works.

## The Suite is written for very modest orchestral forces, but Tubin's skill as an orchestrator makes colorful use of every instrument.

### THE MUSIC

The Suite is written for very modest orchestral forces, but Tubin's skill as an orchestrator makes colorful use of every instrument. The "Crossed Sticks Dance" is cheery, with its main melody introduced by a solo violin and easily recognizable as folklike in nature. It grows to an insistent climax with a sudden but upbeat ending. "A Long Anglaise," the longest of the three movements, begins slowly with a horn, then an oboe, then a flute playing the pastoral theme. Even this slower movement never lacks for energy, though, and various accompaniment patterns keep the momentum moving forward as the melody is traded around the full orchestra. The harp and low strings fade out at the end. The final movement, "Setu Dance," starts energetically, with the melody in the violins and a rising chromatic accompaniment figure shifting between four and five notes. These two ideas, along with another melody in the central section, undergo variations and transformations throughout the movement. It's easy to visualize dancers whirling, spinning and then striking their final pose (or collapsing!) as the delirious ending spurs the music on faster and faster to the final notes.

— *AJ Harbison*

# Concerto in A Minor for Piano and Orchestra, op. 16 (1868)

**EDVARD GRIEG**  
**(1843–1907)**

30 MINUTES

*Solo piano, piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani and strings.*

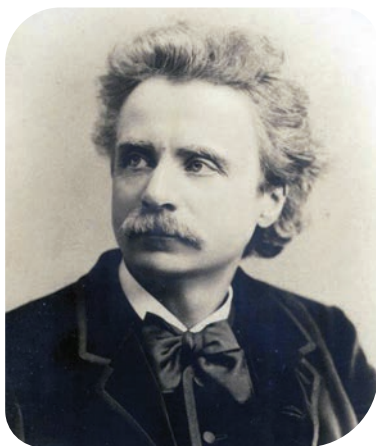
## THE STORY

All three of the composers on today's program were deeply interested in the music of their homelands and how it should inform their own personal compositional styles. Tübingen drew heavily from Estonian folk music as source material. Sibelius looked to Finnish literature and mythology for inspiration. Grieg did both: He frequently used Norwegian folk tunes in his music, wrote incidental music for plays written by Norwegian authors and set many Norwegian poems to music. But often he preferred to write his own melodies that were flavored by folk music rather than drawn directly from it; he once said, "I am sure my music has a taste of codfish."

The Piano Concerto, written when he was only 24 years old, is one such example. While it is evocative of Norwegian folk music in some of its gestures and melodies, it is all original. There are subtle influences, though: The opening piano line of a falling minor second followed by a falling major third is a common motif in the folk music of Norway, and there are hints of a Norwegian folk dance and the Norwegian Hardanger fiddle in the last movement.

The concerto had its premiere in 1869 in Copenhagen, and was a hit from the start, quickly receiving performances in Christiania (now Oslo), Germany and England.

Grieg visited Franz Liszt in Rome in 1870, and Liszt famously sight-read the concerto — both the solo part and the orchestral reduction together. He was very complimentary, saying "Keep on, I tell you; you



# The opening of the concerto is one of the most dramatic in the repertoire: a timpani roll and then a piano flourish covering the full range of the keyboard.

have what is needed, and don't let them frighten you." He also gave Grieg some advice on revising the orchestration. Grieg revised the concerto multiple times over the course of his life — sometimes taking Liszt's advice, sometimes not, and sometimes reversing whatever his prior decision was — finishing the last version just a few weeks before his death. It is this final version that is popular today, though at least one recording of the original 1868 version exists.

Another great composer shared Liszt's enthusiasm for Grieg's concerto: Sergei Rachmaninoff (no slouch at piano concertos himself) considered it the greatest piano concerto ever written.

## THE MUSIC

The opening of the concerto is one of the most dramatic in the repertoire: a timpani roll and then a piano flourish covering the full range of the keyboard. The first theme, played piano (softly) and dolce (sweetly) by the woodwinds, is tame by comparison but very hummable and memorable, as are most of the concerto's melodies. A contrasting lyrical melody in major is introduced by the cellos, followed soon after by the piano. There are virtuosic passages for the soloist throughout as well as a cadenza for the piano alone near the end of the movement. The second-movement Adagio is in three parts; muted strings and woodwinds take the lead in the first and the piano doesn't enter until the second. The impassioned music of this movement is almost more reminiscent of chamber music (which Grieg wrote much more of) than music for orchestra. Two high trills and a languorous slow arpeggio in the piano usher in the third movement without a pause. The piano starts with virtuosic bravado and then introduces the brisk, dancelike theme. Again a contrasting lyrical theme appears, played first by a solo flute. The piano takes up the theme and the music eventually fades out. The first theme returns, and after two dramatic full-orchestra pauses, it is transfigured into a major key in 3/4 time (when its original version was in a minor key in 2/4 time), with a completely different character. This leads to a triumphant, majestic version of the second theme and the ending — four loud A major chords over a timpani roll, recalling the concerto's opening.

— *AJ Harbison*

# Symphony No. 1 in E Minor, op. 39 (1899)



## JEAN SIBELIUS (1865–1957)

38 MINUTES

*2 piccolos, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, triangle, harp and strings.*

### THE STORY

By the time Finnish composer Jean Sibelius began composing his first symphony in 1898, he already had a good deal of experience writing orchestral music — he had composed an overture, a ballet scene, three tone poems, *Karelia Music* and his massive choral symphony *Kullervo*, as well as the tone poem *Finlandia*. Almost all of these were based on Finnish themes or mythology, and he was quickly gaining recognition as Finland’s foremost composer, especially given his nationalism at a time when Russia was seeking to restrict Finland’s autonomy. At the First Symphony’s premiere in April 1899, many of the audience members were expecting another strong nationalist statement. They were disappointed, as Sibelius had no text or program for the symphony. But their disappointment was quickly reversed with another Sibelius work on the same concert, *Song of the Athenians*, which was clearly (even blatantly) patriotic. It instantly became a symbol of Finnish patriotism and Sibelius instantly became a national hero. For his part, he was rather annoyed that the piece overshadowed the premiere of the symphony.

It was standard practice at the time for a composer’s first symphony to be modeled after a symphony written by a master. Sibelius, notwithstanding his Finnish patriotism, chose the Russian composer Tchaikovsky’s Sixth Symphony, the “Pathétique,” as his model. Sibelius’ harmonies, long-breathed melodies and dark orchestration in this piece owe much to Tchaikovsky’s influence. On the other hand, there is much in the symphony that is strongly original; much of what was to make Sibelius one of the most important symphonists of the early 20th century is already present.

# The opening clarinet line introduces all the main motifs and ideas for the whole symphony.

## THE MUSIC

The symphony opens in a striking way (the first of many displays of originality): a quiet timpani roll underneath a long-breathed clarinet line that soliloquizes for more than a minute and a half. Pay attention — this line introduces all the main motifs and ideas for the whole symphony. The rest of the movement is dramatic, with heroic outbursts, ominous murmurings and mysterious chromatic passages, along with some lighter moments of respite, including one theme that could be an elegant waltz. The slow second movement begins with a melody played by violins and cellos, strongly reminiscent of themes from the first movement but with a very different character. There are more mood shifts here, from sweet to intense to lighthearted to stormy. The sweet melody from the beginning wins out in the end and the movement ends quietly. The scherzo that follows sounds like a mashup of several different types of dances, some energetic and some less so. Many scholars see the influence of the Austrian composer Anton Bruckner and his symphonic scherzos in this movement, though again Sibelius takes inspiration from another composer and makes something quite original from it. The last movement is titled “Finale (quasi una fantasia),” hinting at the free-range form to follow. It begins with yet another melody derived from the clarinet’s opening line and again progresses through a variety of moods, dominated by two extended passages of sweeping passion interrupted by a stormy episode. The last moments of the symphony feature three hammerblows in the winds and brass, but a quiet and perhaps enigmatic ending with two plucked chords in the strings.

— *AJ Harbison*



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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 Kansas City Symphony every season, including brilliant classical musicians, popular singer/songwriters, rock bands and other creative 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.

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