

CONCERTO PRIZEWINNER SHOWCASE SERIES

PROKOFIEV AND TCHAIKOVSKY
PYOTR AND THE WOLVES

9 MARCH 2022, 8 PM
ESPLANADE CONCERT HALL

PROGRAMME

YST Orchestral Institute
with
JASON LAI, *principal conductor*
KUO LYU-YAN, *piano*

SERGEI PROKOFIEV

Piano Concerto No. 3 in C major, Op. 26

- I. Andante – Allegro
- II. Tema con variazioni
- III. Allegro, ma non troppo

PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY

Symphony No. 6 in B minor, Op. 74

- I. Adagio – Allegro non troppo
- II. Allegro con grazia
- III. Allegro molto vivace
- IV. Finale: Adagio lamentoso

ABOUT YST

Inspirational life-affirming music-making is at the heart of the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music at the National University of Singapore. Centred in one of the world's most dynamic countries, the Conservatory is uniquely placed to offer a distinct and powerful contemporary Asian voice.

Founded in 2003, YST quickly established a reputation as Asia's most exciting international conservatory by bringing together a world-class faculty and facility to develop excellence in instrumental performance and composition. Building on this strong foundation, the Conservatory has evolved over the past decade to become one of the world's most distinctive music schools, diversifying its offerings and continually seeking to connect authentically with its surrounding community. Specialisations added subsequently include Voice, Audio Arts & Sciences, Conducting, Music & Society and Music, Collaboration & Production. Alongside students from Singapore, the Conservatory community is internationally diverse, with representation from over 20 countries and five continents.

Keenly focused on nurturing identity as a driver for excellence, YST's Bachelor of Music programme offers full financial support for all its undergraduate students, enabled by major gifts from the Yong Loo Lin Trust. The Conservatory's continuum of offerings further includes a Master of Music degree, NUS-facing Second Majors, Minor and modules, Continuing Education & Training courses for adult learners, and a Young Artist programme. We host a vibrant performance calendar with around 200 concerts annually, featuring students and faculty alongside international artists and ensembles. Our community engagement and professional integration programme has extensive local, regional and global reach. Students are supported to find their own artistic pathways through exchanges, festivals, competitions and projects. More broadly, our international networks and partnerships further enhance the educational experience and ensure our continued evolution.

VICE DEAN'S MESSAGE

Welcome and thank you for joining us in this third concert of YST's **Concerto Prizewinner Showcase Series: Prokofiev and Tchaikovsky, *Pyotr and the Wolves***!

Tonight's concert is a very special occasion for the YST community in that it marks a return – after a nearly three-year absence – to what had been (pre-pandemic) an annual springtime tradition of the Conservatory: presenting large-scale orchestral programs at the Esplanade Concert Hall.

YST's 2021-22 Concert Season, themed **Gravity & Light** aptly captures the gravitas in which we currently find ourselves: the ongoing global pandemic, the international conflict sparked by the invasion of Ukraine; but there is also light: the world uniting around ideas of sovereignty over tyranny, the power of expression over silence, and the power of healing through art and science. One of the light-affirming pleasures of being a part of the Conservatory is celebrating the unbridled musical artistry and talents of young performers such as **BMus3 pianist, Kuo Lyu-Yan**, and the musicians of the **YST Orchestral Institute**.

The Conservatory also celebrates reflections, refractions, and evolutions in warmly welcoming Professor Peter Tornquist to Singapore, to NUS, and to the YST Conservatory community as our new Dean, while recognizing Professor Bernard Lanskey's legacy, who in his fourteen years as Conservatory Dean, significantly and dynamically advanced the YST project, including inaugurating the YST Orchestral Institute early in 2019.

The subtitle ***Pyotr and the Wolves***, recognizes the complex interplay between musical art, composers' creative and personal lives that give rise to the creative impulse, the power of national and global identity, and the heroes and villains as old as the human story itself. As internationally focused composers, both Prokofiev and Tchaikovsky wrote music for **all of humanity** and sought to engage our musical imaginations with profound aural soundscapes, be it young Sergei's precocious vitality in the prime of his youth, or Pyotr Ilyich's hero's journey that we all embody – life's passions, loves, challenges, and ultimately the universality of mortality itself.

Light and gravity, indeed.

Associate Professor Brett Stemple
Vice Dean (Ensembles, Research & Professional Awareness)





ABOUT THE YST ORCHESTRAL INSTITUTE

The YST Orchestral Institute is a creative musicians' laboratory, designed as an innovative forum for conservatory-level orchestral training. First conceptualized in 2018 by former YST Dean, Prof. Bernard Lanskey, as a way of revitalizing learning and teaching systems within a large ensemble context, the Orchestral Institute has emerged as a dynamic platform in which aspirational orchestral musicians work collaboratively alongside professionals drawn from Conservatory faculty, staff, and alumni, as well as YST partner institutions, from Southeast Asia and beyond. Pioneering interdisciplinary programming, a unique production style, collaborative-composition creation, musician health & well-being, and an open-dialogue approach to rehearsing are all hallmarks of the Orchestral Institute approach – a phil-harmonie philosophy which seeks to create a safe 'play-space' emphasizing creativity, mutual learning, and skills development appropriate for large ensemble music-making, with the ambition of enabling musicians to be even more open, daring, questioning, collaborative and passionate about the music they make together.

Currently under the leadership of YST Conservatory Principal Conductor, Jason Lai; Vice Dean of Ensembles, Brett Stemple; OpusNovus Conductor (and YST Artist Fellow), Dr Lien Boon Hua, and Orchestral Manager, Yap Zi Qi; and working alongside Conservatory students, faculty, staff, and YST Artist Fellows – the Orchestral Institute has created and curated a number of groundbreaking orchestral productions including *Telling Beyond Words* (2019), and – despite the global pandemic – *Springs of Uncertainty* (2020), *Lichtbogen* (2020), *Landscapes of Souls* (2021), *Transfigurations* (2021), *Dream for Future* (as part of SoundBridge Music Festival 2021) and a special collaborative family concert with the Kids' Philharmonic, *Symphonies Simple and Philharmonic Friends* (2021), among others, many of which are available for viewing at the YST Conservatory's YouTube channel.

PROGRAMME NOTES

SERGEI PROKOFIEV

Piano Concerto No. 3 in C major, Op. 26

I. Andante – Allegro

II. Tema con variazioni

III. Allegro, ma non troppo



It was 1921, just a few years after the end of World War I, and three years since the outbreak of the 1918 Flu Pandemic, when the thirty year-old Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953), then living on the coast of Brittany, France, found himself surrounded by a community and opportunities that would shape his artistic future. While socialising with fellow Russians in exile and enjoying a budding romance with Spanish-American soprano Lina Codina – who in 1923 would become his wife – the composer had much in life to look forward.

It was during this vibrantly fruitful period of his life that Prokofiev drew seeds of inspiration – in no small part from his social circle – for a new piano concerto. After playing some sketches of this new composition to the poet, Konstantin Balmont – Sergei's neighbour in Brittany – Prokofiev was met with such strong words of encouragement, affirming the abundant potential for a new piano-orchestral showcase:

***Prokofiev! Music and youth in bloom,
In you, the orchestra yearns for forgotten summer sounds...***

With Balmont's words as a creative spark, Prokofiev dedicated himself to completing one of the most acclaimed piano concertos of the twentieth-century, and one of the cornerstones of the composer's entire oeuvre. Using a patchwork of compositional sketches dating as far back as his student days in 1911, Prokofiev synergised his sprightly piano style with his compositional prowess to complete his masterpiece.

The first movement opens with a lyrical solo clarinet, only to soon break into a lively Allegro – introduced by a flurry of scalar flourishes by the strings – readily paving the way for the grand entrance of the solo piano. The youthful energy of the opening bars is then transferred to the solo piano with its powerful melodies and rhythmic flourishes – eventually including some Lina-inspired Spanish tinges – establishing with panache the vibrant multi-faceted character of the opening movement.

The theme & variations of the second movement showcases Prokofiev's programmatic versatility as a composer, a trait which becomes fully apparent in his later ballet and film scores. The sinuously delicate reservedness of the theme by the orchestra alone, hauntingly introduces the piano's first of several dramatic variations of theme – including another trumpet-led Spanish nod – only to end with a more affirmative restatement of the theme, encouraged this time by reflective pianistic interjections.

The animated finale is distinguished by its abundance of rapid, melodic runs, rhythmic punctuations, sprightly passages by the piano, and a blazing C-major ending by the tutti ensemble, a powerful conclusion to a masterful concerto by a composer that had still had much in life awaiting him in 1921, Pyotr, wolves and all!

PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY

Symphony No. 6 in B minor, Op. 74

I. Adagio – Allegro non troppo

II. Allegro con grazia

III. Allegro molto vivace

IV. Finale: Adagio lamentoso



“Without exaggeration, I have put my whole soul into this work.” Pyotr Ilyich quipped when asked about his final work. In February of 1893 the composer began working on his Symphony No. 6, conducting its premiere on October 28 in St. Petersburg – passing away, tragically, only nine days after its premiere.

Tchaikovsky initially titled it the Programme Symphony but, nearing its premiere chose to have the programme of the symphony remain somewhat a mystery, eventually bowing to Patetichesky, a title suggested by his younger brother, Modest. Pyotr immediately wrote this title down on the score. A day after sending it off to the publisher, Tchaikovsky changed his mind once again, requesting “patetichesky” be removed, which the publisher initially did. However, the publisher – wanting a catchy title to boost sales, and after Tchaikovsky’s death – distributed it as *Symphonie pathétique*, which it has been forever known.

This matters, because the essence of the French word “*pathétique*” and the Russian “*patetichesky*” differ in the thrust of their respective meanings. “*Pathétique*” implies inadequacy and pity, whereas, in Russian, “*patetichesky*” carries more feeling of passionate and emotional, with overtones of suffering. The latter better captures the essence of this symphony.

The first movement, *Allegro ma non troppo* – representing a passionate thirst for life in the initial sketch – begins with a dark and murky bassoon solo based on a harmonic suspension which evolves into the primary theme of the first movement. The second theme played by the strings is filled with melancholy, beautifully haunting, and as memorable as numerous famous themes from Tchaikovsky's ballet scores.

The second movement, *Allegro con grazia* – representing love – features a stumbling waltz in 5/4, giving its dance-like charm subtle displacement. The central trio section, still in 5/4, features a sighing melody in the violins and cellos above the quiet but ominous pulsing of the timpani, bassoons and double basses.

Offsetting the melancholy of the first two movements, the third movement, *Allegro molto vivace* – the rush of life and its inherent challenges and disappointments – combines elements of an insistent scherzo with heavy brass & percussion reinforcements painting an ever more frantically-chaotic march. As the music gains momentum, it spurs the audience along, enhancing the emotionally stirring strings passage that opens the finale.

The *Adagio Lamentoso* – indeed a funereal lament – includes a tenderly warm second theme in D-major that works itself into a brilliant climax followed by peaking intensity and agitation of the first theme – again, as in the first movement, based on a harmonic suspension – the valedictory plunge into silence from a sustained B-minor chord deep in the strings weighed down in inexpressible grief and resignation. With a quiet stroke on the orchestral gong introducing a sacred chorale from the low brass, the strings eventually cease with a fading heartbeat from the double-basses, and the symphony sinks into darkness.

Tchaikovsky was obsessed with concepts of fate in his final three Symphonies, Nos. 4, 5 & 6. Famously, Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 – which the YSTOI will be performing on its season finale on April 16 – also explored this theme with its life-affirming culmination in C-major (not unlike the Prokofiev!). Not accidentally, Tchaikovsky's B-minor framing of fate offers solace and consolation as we, the every-Pyotrs of the world, must encounter in living and in dying, wolves within and without.

JASON LAI

PRINCIPAL CONDUCTOR OF THE YST ORCHESTRAL INSTITUTE

Jason Lai is the Principal Conductor of the **Yong Siew Toh Conservatory Orchestral Institute**, the Principal Guest Conductor at the Orchestra of the Swan, and former Associate Conductor of the Singapore Symphony Orchestra, and Hong Kong Sinfonietta. He has been a prominent figure in Singapore's musical life since his arrival in 2010, and also active internationally giving masterclasses in Europe and China. He has also guest conducted the New Japan Philharmonic, Orchestra of the Swan, and the Podlasie Opera & Philharmonic in Poland. Recent appearances include the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, the Hong Kong Sinfonietta, and the Macao Orchestra.



Education and mentorship is central to Jason's work in Singapore. At YST he fosters a collaborative, holistic approach to orchestral training, whilst teaching the next generation of conductors – many of who have had successes both at home and abroad. With the SSO he spearheaded education and outreach programming, helping the orchestra reach new audiences, notably through his Discovering Music and children's concerts.

Jason is also building a unique reputation as a communicator with mass appeal through his television appearances in both the UK and Asia. Jason has frequently appeared on BBC television as a judge on BBC's Young Musician of the Year competition, the classical talent show, Classical Star, and as a conducting mentor in the series Maestro, with his celebrity student comedienne Sue Perkins. He was also presenter and conductor for Project Symphony, an eight-part series for Okto, where he was filmed setting up a community orchestra.

Jason's roots lie in Hong Kong, but he was born in the UK and was a pupil at Chetham's School of Music in Manchester, where he studied cello. He studied both cello and composition at Oxford University, and went on to the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London, where he was awarded a Fellowship in Conducting. His conducting career was launched after he won the BBC Young Conductors Workshop in 2001.

KUO LYU-YAN

CONCERTO PRIZE WINNER SOLOIST

Taiwanese Pianist Kuo Lyu-Yan (Juliette) began piano lessons at the age of five. A third-year YST student in the Bachelor's Degree in Piano Performance, she is currently studying with Professor Albert Tiu. Lyu-Yan's past instructors include renowned Taiwanese pianist Grace Chung, and she also had masterclasses with Boris Berman, Nikolai Lugansky, and Paul Lewis. Recently, she was one of the prizewinners of the YST Concerto Competition in 2021 and was also tied for first prize in the 2021 Singapore National Piano and Violin Competition. Lyu-Yan also won second prize at the 10th International Piano Competition at Shanghai Conservatory of Music in 2013, second prize at the Osaka International Music Competition (Category Piano J) in 2014, and third prize at the Taiwan First Prize Music Competition in 2014.



Apart from being a solo pianist, Lyu-Yan also enjoys working with other musicians in chamber music, especially in a piano duo and duet settings.

Lyu-Yan's interests also encompass sports. Being a keen spectator of NBA basketball, she greatly admires Stephen Curry of the Golden State Warriors!

MUSICIANS *PROKOFIEV*

FIRST VIOLIN

GEORGII MOROZ
LIN JIAXIN
YAO LIANG-YU
FENG JIALE
CHANG CHANG-YEN
KOMILA IZATULLOYEVA
LEONID DATSIUK
SHIM FINE
HOI KHAI-WEING
BAKHODIR RAKHIMOV

SECOND VIOLIN

MA MINGYUAN
THANATAT SRIARANYAKUL
FOO YUE NING
ZOU MENG
CHANG QIAN
TEO WEI EN REINA
ZHONG YIFAN
CHAN WAI MUN JOANNE

VIOLA

CAO LAN
LIU CHI-YUN
HUANG WANXINYI
LEE WEI-FAN
CHIU YI-RU
CHAN SHEE ANN SHANNON
ZHANG MANQIN[^]

CELLO

LIU JIAQI
OH HYERIN
ZHAO LEYAN
BEKHZOD OBLAYOROV
JOO HWAYOUNG
HAN HUIJAE
NG PEI-SIAN[^]

DOUBLE BASS

SHOHEI YOSHIHARA
FANG PO-YU
KHEE YU HANG
NG LAI TING
GUENNADI MOUZYKA[^]

FLUTE

ALEKSANDR TIAN

FLUTE/PICCOLO

LEE MINJIN

CLARINET

LEE PIN YI

BASSOON

STEPHEN MAK WAI SOON
MUHAMMAD AFIQ BIN HUSSAINI

FRENCH HORN

LUKE CHONG KHI SIAN
LEE YAN LIANG
LINNET SIM YUN JUAN
CHIU HSUAN

TRUMPET

ZHOU BINGHAN
AMIR HASIF BIN ROSLI

TROMBONE

SAMUEL TAYLOR ARMSTRONG[^]
YEE CHOON YONG WILLIAM

BASS TROMBONE

JENNIFER STEPHANIE SILVA CORESMA

TIMPANI

THANAPHAT PRATJAROENWANIT

PERCUSSION

ORATHAI SINGHAART

[^] Orchestral Institute Faculty

MUSICIANS TCHAIKOVSKY

FIRST VIOLIN

GEORGII MOROZ
LIN JIAXIN
YAO LIANG-YU
FENG JIALE
CHANG CHANG-YEN
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HOI KHAI-WEING
BAKHODIR RAKHIMOV
ZOU ZHANG
TAN XIN JIE

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FOO YUE NING
ZOU MENG
CHANG QIAN
TEO WEI EN REINA
ZHONG YIFAN
CHAN WAI MUN JOANNE
EDGAR JAVIER LUCENA RODRIGUEZ

VIOLA

CAO LAN
LIU CHI-YUN
HUANG WANXINYI
LEE WEI-FAN
CHIU YI-RU
CHAN SHEE ANN SHANNON
ZENG ZIYAN
ZHENG JINGJING

CELLO

LIU JIAQI
OH HYERIN
ZHAO LEYAN
BEKHZOD OBLAYOROV
JOO HWAYOUNG
HAN HUIJAE
HO CHIEN-YU
SARAN CHAROENNIT

DOUBLE BASS

FANG PO-YU
SHOHEI YOSHIHARA
KHEE YU HANG
NG LAI TING
WANG LUYAO *

FLUTE

VIKTORIYA KLYUKINA
LEE MINJIN

FLUTE/PICCOLO

LI JIA-EN

CLARINET

CHEN I-CHING

BASSOON

JAVLON KHAYITOV
SHI JIAAO

FRENCH HORN

HSIEH YUNG-SHAN
LUKE CHONG KHI SIAN
GAO YU FEI JOEY
LEE YAN LIANG

TRUMPET

NUTTAKAMON SUPATTRANONT
ZHOU BINGHAN

TROMBONE

STEFAN BENCIC
SAMUEL TAYLOR ARMSTRONG[^]

BASS TROMBONE

SHIN TANAKA

TUBA

TAN SHUN ZHONG

TIMPANI

ORATHAI SINGHAART

PERCUSSION

K. GUN MONGKOLPRAPA
JEREMY NG CHUAN KAI

[^] Orchestral Institute Faculty

* Alumnus

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This evening's master of ceremonies is

ZACHARY DOMINGUEZ

