

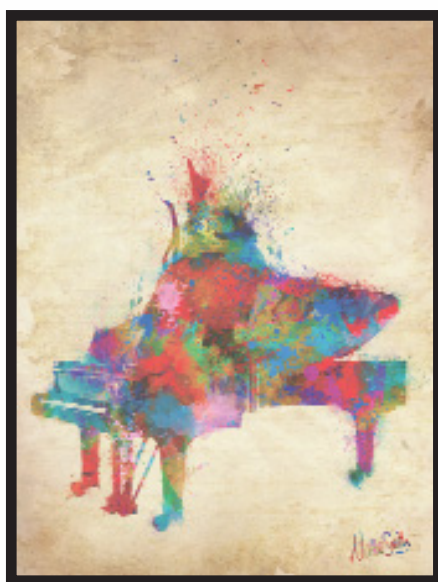


Midland-Odessa Symphony & Chorale

Gary Lewis, Music Director & Conductor

Presents

Opening Night: Orchestral Blockbusters



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KO-EUN YI, PIANO

WINNER OF THE CONCERT ARTISTS GUILD INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2016

7:30 P.M.

WAGNER NOËL PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

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OPENING NIGHT: ORCHESTRAL BLOCKBUSTERS

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Orchestral Blockbusters
7:30 p.m.
Saturday, September 10, 2016
Wagner Noël Performing Arts Center**

Gary Lewis, conductor

KO-EUN YI, PIANO

WINNER OF THE CONCERT ARTISTS GUILD INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION

Overture to Ruslan and Lyudmila, op. 5

Mikhail Glinka (1804 – 1857)

Piano Concerto No. 3, op. 26

Sergei Prokofiev (1891 – 1953)

Ko-Eun Yi, piano

- Andante – Allegro
- Tema con variazioni
- Allegro ma non troppo – Meno mosso – Allegro

~ I N T E R M I S S I O N ~

Variations on an Original Theme, "Enigma," op. 36

Sir Edward Elgar (1857 – 1934)

Theme: Andante

Variation I: "C.A.E."

(L'istesso tempo)

Variation II: "H.D.S-P."

(Allegro)

Variation III: "R.B.T."

(Allegretto)

Variation IV: "W.M.B."

(Allegro di molto)

Variation V: "R.P.A."

(Moderato)

Variation VI: "Ysobel"

(Andantino)

Variation VII: "Troyte"

(Presto)

Variation VIII: "W.N."

(Allegretto)

Variation IX: "Nimrod"

(Adagio)

Variation X: "Dorabella" (Intermezzo: Allegretto)

Variation XI: "G.R.S."

(Allegro di molto)

Variation XII: "B.G.N."

(Andante)

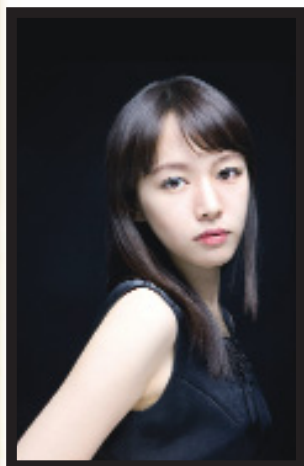
Variation XIII: "****"

(Romanza: Moderato)

Variation XIV: "E.D.U."

(Finale: Allegro presto)

ABOUT THE ARTIST



Ko-Eun Yi, piano

Winner, 2013 Concert Artists Guild Victor Elmaleh Competition
Korean pianist Ko-Eun Yi, a winner of the 2013 CAG Victor Elmaleh Competition, has earned praise for playing with “**élan and fire and a surplus of bravura technique**” (*Cincinnati Enquirer*). She has garnered numerous top prizes in her young career, with recent successes at the 2010 World Piano Competition in Cincinnati and the 2011 Wideman International Piano Competition in Jackson, Mississippi. *The Washington Post* applauded her recent debut recital in DC: “**a masterful technician ... Her finger-work was immaculate, inner voices were keenly drawn out, and there was no lack of power when needed.**”

At the October 2013 CAG competition, Ko-Eun was also awarded the Victor & Sono Elmaleh Piano Prize, and her 2014-15 itinerary includes her February 2015 New York recital debut at Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall on the CAG New York Series. Other upcoming engagements resulting from her CAG victory include concerto engagements with the Dupage

Symphony Orchestra near Chicago and the Roswell Symphony in New Mexico, as well as recitals for the Trust Performing Arts Center in Harrisburg, PA and the Art Trail Gallery in South Carolina.

The *Cincinnati Enquirer* praised her Gold medal-winning concerto performance at the World Piano Competition: “...**a fantasy world of shimmering sounds and colors. Her playing was at once flawless and dazzling.**...” Additional recent concerto highlights for Ko-Eun include performances with the Barcelona, Jerusalem, and Boston Symphony Orchestras, the Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Aspen Concert Orchestra, working with such conductors as Lawrence Foster, Leon Fleisher, and Christopher Wilkins. She toured South America playing Saint-Saëns concerto No. 2 with the New England Youth Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Benjamin Zander.

A compelling recitalist, Ko-Eun has given solo concerts around the US at Alice Tully Hall in NYC, the Phillips Collection in Washington, DC, the Dame Myra Hess Series in Chicago, the Bossier ‘Jam’n Bread’ Chamber Series in Shreveport, LA, and at Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts, as well as internationally in Spain and Korea.

Born in Seoul, Korea, Ko-Eun Yi began her piano studies at the age of three. She earned her Bachelor and Master of Music degrees at The Juilliard School studying with Jerome Lowenthal and completed her Professional Studies degree with André-Michel Schub at Manhattan School of Music. She is now pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts degree at Stony Brook University with Christina Dahl.



OPENING NIGHT: ORCHESTRAL BLOCKBUSTERS

Overture to *Ruslan and Lyudmila*, op. 5



Mikhail Ivanovich Glinka

b. June 1, 1804 Novospasskoye, Russian Empire

d. February 15, 1857 Berlin, Germany

Premiered: December 9, 1842 at the Bol'shoy
Theatre in St. Petersburg

Approximate duration: 5 minutes

Timeline Connections

- 1835: Siege of B  sar (Texan Army captured San Antonio)
- 1836: The Alamo
- 1837: Queen Victoria ascended to British throne
- 1842: Glinka premiered his *Ruslan and Lyudmila*
- 1844: First electronic telegram (Samuel Morse)
- 1845: Invention of the Rubber Band (Stephen Perry)
- 1845: Texas became the 28th state of the USA

Hailed as the preeminent icon of Russian Romanticism, **Glinka** contributed a unique voice that would influence generations to come. Glinka's work affected notable composers such as Rimsky-Korsakov and others of *The Mighty Handful* (also known as *The Five*, counting Borodin and Mussorgsky amongst their group). It could also be claimed that Tchaikovsky (of the famous *Swan Lake* and *The Nutcracker*) as well

as Stravinsky were influenced by the groundwork laid by Glinka's bricks as well. A fundamental ingredient in marking Glinka's influence is the quintessential Russian voice – an aspect that, in the late 19th century, was particularly attractive in the face of widespread nationalistic trends throughout the Western world.

Ironically, however, Glinka's "Russianness" was more a byproduct than an impetus for his artistic process. The bricks of his own foundation were heavily mixed with European stones, sparkling with possibility. His Russian roots undeniably served as the clay and mortar, but the genius in his artistry lies in the synthesis of European compositional techniques. In fact, musicologists claim that Glinka is the founding father of this new ideology: a clearly Russian voice merged with the Western classical model. Unlike many who came before, Glinka embraced the sparkling European stones and mixed them in with his Russian clay. The resulting bricks were spectacular, and for the first time, a Russian composer gained a European reputation within the Western art music world – laying the foundation for many more to come.

As an active participant in Western tradition, Glinka was cited as clearly influenced by Italian, French, and German composers, and *Ruslan and Lyudmila* was certainly no exception. Many list Beethoven and Mozart amongst his general influences, and one would be hard pressed to deny the connection between *Ruslan* and Rossini's Italian operatic style, particularly *The Barber of Seville* (one of Glinka's favorite works). Hector Berlioz once wrote of the obvious German tinge in *Ruslan*, namely in the sheer prominence of the orchestra, the remarkable instrumentation, and the "beauty of the harmonic fabric."

The various influences have even led musicologists to describe this work as (at least) trilingual; Glinka used a Russian idiom as his clay, Italian sparkling stones, and even threw in a few precocious gems of whole-tone scales and other bits of exoticism.

The overture to *Ruslan and Lyudmila* was written last, reportedly in between rehearsals for the premiere. (Another connection to Mozart may come to mind; he completed the overture to his

OPENING NIGHT: ORCHESTRAL BLOCKBUSTERS (continued)

Don Giovanni less than 24 hours before the premiere.) Glinka's *Ruslan* overture particularly foreshadows the music of the final number of the final act, providing a framework for the cyclic effect utilized throughout the entire opera. In each of the five acts, Glinka foreshadows the finale for the respective act. Musicologist Richard Taruskin describes the result as a "spacious, enclosed, quasi-palindromic structure [that] became a hallmark of Russian opera." A later example of this structure is Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov*.

Once more, the firmness of Glinka's bricks is clear despite the irony; Mussorgsky and other members of The Mighty Handful sought to establish a uniquely Russian school, influenced by Russian composers who came before them, vehemently and distinctly without general European trends. Regardless, Glinka's sparkling European stones remain in his Russian clay, and the effect in *Ruslan and Lyudmila* is remarkably exciting.

Piano Concerto No. 3, op. 26



Sergei Prokofiev

b. April 23, 1891 Sontsovka, Russian Empire

d. March 5, 1953 Moscow, USSR

Premiered: December 16, 1921 in Chicago with

Prokofiev at the piano

Approximate duration: 28 minutes

Timeline Connections

- 1888: Tchaikovsky premiered his *Symphony No. 5*
- 1889: *Starry Night* (Vincent van Gogh)
- 1899: Premiere of Elgar's **Enigma Variations**
- 1917: Russian Revolution
- 1921: Prokofiev premiered his **Piano Concerto No. 3**
- 1922: USSR established
- 1947: Cold War began
- 1953: Deaths of both Stalin and Prokofiev -- on the same day in Moscow

Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No. 3 is a difficult work to categorize in any concrete way. It features dripping stacks of dissonance but is still accessible, still palatable. The melodies flirt with various extremes – some are lushly lyrical and often evoke Russian folksong, serving as clear echoes of Prokofiev's roots in late Russian Romanticism. Other melodies feature stark registral contrasts or grinding tension more akin to modernist movements such as expressionism. The dissonance alone may tempt a listener to simply label this work as modernism, and yet, with virtuosic twists and turns, it also features traditional techniques (clear, regular meters, for example). Prokofiev's fierce adherence to traditionalism is, in fact, a common thread through virtually all of his oeuvre. He is even accredited as a leading force in the creation and solidification of neoclassicism – his essentially concurrent *Classical Symphony* (op. 25, composed 1915-17) is exemplary to this end.

However, within his palate of accessible traditionalism, there is a unique and heavily permeating spice: using traditionalism to the point of exaggerated caricature. His *Classical Symphony* is not exempt from this flavor; many contemporary avant-garde musicians perceived it as little more than an esoteric joke. In this work, however, the flavor is more pungent: Prokofiev described the spice as **caustic humor**.

Perhaps it is within this caustic humor that we understand Prokofiev. His vehemence is filled with a ferocity that viscerally exudes an element of the human condition: grinding conflict. Who cannot relate to conflict? Prokofiev himself certainly had

OPENING NIGHT: ORCHESTRAL BLOCKBUSTERS (continued)

his fair share of conflict, particularly after settling back into his native land not long after Stalin officially came to power.

Prokofiev's early years were spent in the relative luxury of privilege, however. His father managed an estate, and his mother was a patron for the arts (she began piano lessons with Prokofiev at the age of four). Prokofiev was the last of three children, but his two elder sisters died in infancy. As their precious only child, Prokofiev's parents endeavored to provide as much as possible, employing various governesses to supplement an education for their young son. His playmates in these early years were the children of the employees – whom he addressed with the informal “you” while they addressed him with the formal form. Musicologist Dorothea Redepenning claims that this “contributed to giving him a sense, from an early age, of being privileged, indeed invulnerable and immune to criticism.” His years at university did little to manipulate his confidence, but the October Revolution of 1917 forced a change that would forever shift his perspective.

Like so many artists, Prokofiev fled the country just after the October Revolution. He traveled east for several months, ultimately landing in the United States in the early 1920s with the hopes of concertizing in a manner akin to his countryman Rachmaninoff. However, after only one full season of numerous disappointments and accompanying financial hardships, Prokofiev relocated to Europe. His *Piano Concerto No. 3* was a product of this time, finished on a holiday in Brittany during the summer of 1921 (though sketches date back to at least 1917). One could claim that the virtuosic showmanship of this piece was intentionally designed with American audiences in mind.

With this thought at hand, his self-proclaimed label of “caustic humor” may take on a new shape, but one cannot deny that this spice is present before and after this difficult time. It became even more pronounced under the iron fist of Stalin after Prokofiev returned home in 1936. Regardless, Prokofiev's voice carries vehemence born of the level of intimacy he had with his craft – music was a vehicle for his own visceral voice,

and an integral part of his identity. Indeed, Prokofiev's music is heartbreakingly passionate, anguished and fervent to the last caustically humorous breath.

Variations on an Original Theme, “Enigma,” op. 36



Sir Edward Elgar

b. June 2, 1857 Broadheath, England

d. February 23, 1934 Worcester, England

Premiered: June 19, 1899 at the St. James's Hall in London

Approximate duration: 35 minutes

Timeline Connections

- 1853: Steinway & Sons (of Steinway Pianos) founded in New York
- 1861–1865: American Civil War
- 1865: *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (Lewis Carroll)
- 1867: Alaska is purchased from Russia for \$7.2 million
- 1876: Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone
- 1889: World Fair in Paris (world music such as Javanese Gamelan influenced Parisian composers - notably Debussy)
- 1899: Premiere of Elgar's *Enigma Variations*
- By the end of the century, the Britain Empire would extend to over a fifth of the earth's total land area, controlling nearly a quarter of the world's population.

OPENING NIGHT: ORCHESTRAL BLOCKBUSTERS (*continued*)

The work of Edward Elgar heralded a significant chapter in English music history; his oeuvre is easily amongst the most valued since that of Henry Purcell in the Baroque era. His milieu had humble beginnings, however, and his fame was hard won. The piece that is most often cited as his claim to fame is his *Variations on an Original Theme*, known now as the ***Enigma Variations***. Interestingly, the subtitle “enigma” refers only to the theme itself, and was added in pencil by Elgar’s friend and publisher, August Jaeger.

As a whole, Elgar’s voice is uniquely individual. Richard Strauss once spoke of him as the “first English progressive,” and indeed, there is a tumultuously revolutionary tinge to his work. The turmoil was personal rather than political, however, as British imperialism was at its zenith. Elgar struggled personally, like so many other artists; he battled with balancing external confidence and internal despondence. Perhaps this balancing act is in some ways responsible for the visceral opulence in his music.

The *Variations* display this richness with fervor. In 1911, Elgar recalled the compositional process as one that “commenced in a spirit of humour and continued in deep seriousness.” Elgar further explained that within the variations, he had “sketched portraits of my friends—a new idea, I think— that is, in each Variation I have looked at

the theme through the personality (as it were) of another Johnny,” and dedicated the work to his “friends pictured within.” Although he was initially reluctant to reveal the identities of each friend, he eventually published descriptive notes.

Theme: Andante “Enigma”

Since the theme is an “enigma,” Elgar not only refused to offer an explanation, but tempted future musicians with a riddle: “The enigma I will not explain – its ‘dark saying’ must be left unguessed.”

Elgar later privately admitted that the “enigma” – with its “dark saying” – could be considered a reference to his own character. Many musicians cite the main motive as the melodic representation of his name: Ed-ward El-gar.

Variation I: “C.A.E.” (Listesso tempo): Elgar’s wife, C. Alice Elgar

“The variation is really a prolongation of the theme with what I wished to be romantic and delicate additions; those who knew C.A.E. will understand this reference to one whose life was a romantic and delicate inspiration.”

Variation II: “H.D.S-P” (Allegro): chamber music partner, pianist Hew David Steuart-Powell

“His characteristic diatonic run over the keys before beginning to play is here humorously travestied in the semiquaver passages; these



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OPENING NIGHT: ORCHESTRAL BLOCKBUSTERS *(continued)*

should suggest a Toccata, but chromatic beyond H.D.S.-P.'s liking."

Variation III: "R.B.T." (Allegretto): vocalist Richard Baxter Townshend

"R.B.T.'s presentation of an old man in some amateur theatricals—the low voice flying off occasionally into 'soprano' timbre." While Townshend was at Oxford, he rode his bicycle around town frequently, the bell ringing constantly. The pizzicato in the strings and the woodwind counterparts represent the bicycle bell.

Variation IV: "W.M.B." (Allegro di molto): William Neath Baker

Baker was "a country squire, gentleman, and scholar. In the days of horses and carriages, it was more difficult than in these days of petrol to arrange the carriages for the day to suit a large number of guests. The Variation was written after the host had, with a slip of paper in his hand, forcibly read out the arrangements for the day and hurriedly left the music-room with an inadvertent bang of the door. . . . [There] are some suggestions of the teasing attitude of the guests."

Variation V: "R.P.A." (Moderato): son of a poet Mathew Arnold, Richard Penrose Arnold Richard Arnold "was a great lover of music, which he played (on the pianoforte) in a self-taught manner, evading difficulties but suggesting in a mysterious way the real feeling. His serious conversation was continually broken up by whimsical and witty remarks." The expansive melody in the strings represents Arnold's nobility of mind and his deeply truthful way of playing music.

Variation VI: "Ysobel" (Andantino): Elgar's violin student, Isabel Fitton

Due to a shortage of violists in the neighborhood, "Ysobel" (as Elgar called her) eventually switched to viola, hence the prominent feature of that instrument here. Forever her teacher, the opening "is an 'exercise' for crossing the strings—a difficulty for beginners." Elgar was also aware of Isabel's charm and beauty; this variation is "pensive and, for a moment, romantic."

Variation VII: "Troyte" (Presto): architect and close friend, Arthur Troyte Griffith

"The uncouth rhythm of the drums and lower strings was really suggested by some maladroit essays to play the pianoforte; later the strong rhythm suggests the attempts of the instructor (E.E.) to make something like order out of chaos, and the final despairing 'slam' records that the effort proved to be in vain."

Variation VIII: "W.N." (Allegretto): Worcester Philharmonic Society, Winifred Norbury

"The gracious personalities of the ladies are sedately shown. W.N. was more connected with music than others of the family, and her initials head the movement; to justify this position a little suggestion of a characteristic laugh is given."

Variation IX: "Nimrod" (Adagio): dearest friend, critic, and publisher August J. Jaeger "Jaeger" is German for "hunter;" and the biblical *Nimrod* was the mighty hunter. "Something ardent and mercurial, in addition to the slow movement, would have been needed to portray the character and temperament of A.J. Jaeger. The Variation . . . is the record of a long summer evening talk, when

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OPENING NIGHT: ORCHESTRAL BLOCKBUSTERS (continued)

my friend discoursed eloquently on the slow movements of Beethoven and said that no one could approach Beethoven at his best in this field, a view with which I cordially concurred. It will be noticed that the opening bars are made to suggest the slow movement of the Eighth Sonata (*Patbétique*)."

Variation X: "Dorabella" (Intermezzo: Allegretto): friend, Dora Penny
Dora was the step-niece of Billy Baker (Variation IV), and a cheerful music lover. Elgar nicknamed Dora "Dorabella" in reference to Mozart's *Così fan tutte*. "The movement suggests a dance-like lightness." In addition, there is a suggestion of a stammer, representing a younger Dora.

Variation XI: "G.R.S." (Allegro di molto): cathedral organist, George Robert Sinclair
Elgar admits to a bit of injustice here, as this variation has "nothing to do with organs or cathedrals or, except remotely, with G.R.S. The first few bars were suggested by his great bulldog Dan (a well-known character) falling down the steep bank into the River Wye... his paddling up stream to find a landing place... and his rejoicing bark on landing.... G.R.S. said, 'Set that to music.' I did; here it is."

Variation XII: "B.G.N." (Andante): chamber music partner and cellist, Basil G. Nevinson
"The Variation is a tribute to a very dear friend whose scientific and artistic attainments, and the wholehearted way they were put at the disposal of

his friends, particularly endeared him to the writer." The variation features a cello solo, calling to mind the chamber music collaborations of Nevinson and Elgar, alongside H.D.S-P. (Variation II).

Variation XIII: "****" (Romanza: Moderato)
"The asterisks take the place of the name of a lady who was, at the time of composition, on a sea voyage. The drums suggest the distant throb of the engines of a liner over which the clarinet quotes a phrase from Mendelssohn's *Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage*." Although the asterisks (particularly coupled with Romanza) conjure up quite the mystery, this was a simple matter of not being able to ask permission at the time of publication. Nonetheless, the affect speaks to a poignant longing for one who is far away.

Variation XIV: "E.D.U." (Finale: Allegro presto)
If pronounced as one word ("Edoo"), these initials sound like Alice Elgar's nickname for her husband Edward Elgar. He paints himself as "bold and vigorous in general style." As discussed above, this was only part (perhaps even less than half) of him. Near the end, Elgar brings back his Alice and Nimrod once more.

At the end of the score, Elgar also set words adapted from Tasso, a 16th century Italian poet:
*Bramo assi, poco spero, nulla chieggio.
I long for much, I hope for little, I ask
for nothing.*



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