

GENEVA CONCERTS

presents



**Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra**

**Michael Francis, conductor**

**Yekwon Sunwoo, piano**

Friday 12 April 2019 • 7:30 p.m.  
Smith Opera House

# GENEVA CONCERTS, INC.

## 2018–2019 SEASON

Thursday 27 September 2018 at 7:30 p.m.

### **Chanticleer**

*Then and There, Here and Now—celebrating Chanticleer’s 40th year*

Called “the world’s reigning male chorus” by *The New Yorker*, the San Francisco-based Grammy Award-winning ensemble is known around the world as “an orchestra of voices” for its seamless blend of twelve male voices.

Friday 9 November 2018 at 7:30 p.m.

### **Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra**

Carlos Kalmar, conductor; Ahrim Kim, cello

KODÁLY *Dances of Galánta*

SCHUMANN Concerto in A Minor for Cello, Op. 129

HAYDN Symphony No. 98 in B-flat Major

LISZT Hungarian Rhapsody No. 1 in F Minor

Friday 1 February 2019 at 7:30 p.m.

### **Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra**

Ward Stare, Music Director; Jon Nakamatsu, piano

RACHMANINOFF *The Isle of the Dead*

BEETHOVEN Piano Concerto No. 2 in B-flat Major, Op. 19

STRAVINSKY *The Rite of Spring*

Saturday 2 March 2019 at 7:30 p.m.

### **Darrah Carr Dance**

*Ceilidh: An Evening of Irish Music and Dance*

The champion Irish step dancers are acclaimed for their lightning-fast renditions of both hard shoe and soft shoe styles set to live music on fiddle, accordion, spoons, and guitar.

Friday 12 April 2019 at 7:30 p.m.

### **Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra**

Michael Francis, conductor

Yekwon Sunwoo, piano (2017 Van Cliburn Gold Medalist)

WALTON Symphony No. 1 in B-flat Minor

RACHMANINOFF Piano Concerto No. 3 in D Minor, Op. 30

*Programs subject to change.*

Performed at the Smith Opera House, 82 Seneca Street, Geneva



These concerts are made possible by generous underwriting from the Williams Family Foundation, by a continuing subscription from Hobart and William Smith Colleges, and, in part, with public funds from NYSCA’s Decentralization Program, administered locally by Finger Lakes Community Arts Grants (FLCAG).

# GENEVA CONCERTS, INC.

Friday 12 April 2019 • 7:30 p.m.

## Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra

Ward Stare, Music Director

**Michael Francis, conductor**

**Yekwon Sunwoo, piano**

**Symphony No. 1 in B-flat Minor**

**Walton**

Allegro assai

Presto, con malizia

Andante con malinconia

Maestoso—Allegro, brioso ed ardentemente

**Intermission**

**Piano Concerto No. 3 in D Minor, Op. 30**

**Rachmaninoff**

Allegro ma non tanto

Intermezzo: Adagio

Finale: Alla breve

**Yekwon Sunwoo, piano**

# Michael Francis

Michael Francis has quickly established himself internationally. Known for maintaining a diverse repertoire while paying particular homage to the composers of his native Britain, Francis enjoys great reception throughout North America, Europe, and Far East Asia.



This season, Francis has been appointed the new Chief Conductor of Deutsche Staatsphilharmonie Rheinland-Pfalz. He returns with MDR Leipzig Radio Symphony Orchestra, Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, and Tampere Philharmonic Orchestra, and debuts with St. Louis Symphony Orchestra as well as Phoenix and San Diego symphonies.

Working with young musicians has always been a priority for Maestro Francis. He will return to the National Youth Orchestra of Canada during summer 2019. Francis has made frequent visits to Miami's New World Symphony and recently returned to the National Youth Orchestra of Scotland. He also works regularly with young musicians in Florida as part of the orchestra's community engagement initiative.

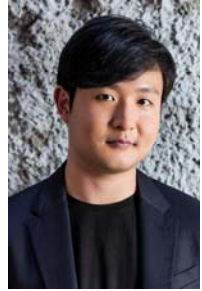
After several years as a tenured double-bass player in the London Symphony Orchestra (LSO), he came to prominence as a conductor in January 2007, replacing an indisposed Valery Gergiev for concerts with the LSO during the BBC's Gubaidulina Festival at the Barbican Centre. Just one month later, Francis was asked, this time with only two hours' notice, to replace the composer/conductor John Adams in a performance of his own works with the LSO at the Philharmonie Luxembourg. Soon after in January 2009, he replaced André Previn leading a German tour of the Stuttgart Radio Symphony with Anne-Sophie Mutter.

Francis' discography includes the Rachmaninov piano concertos with Valentina Lisitsa and the London Symphony Orchestra, Wolfgang Rihm's "Lichtes Spiel" with Anne-Sophie Mutter and the New York Philharmonic, and the Ravel and Gershwin piano concertos with Ian Parker.

Now entering his fourth season as Music Director of The Florida Orchestra, he has led a transformative community engagement initiative, which has included statewide residencies, programmatic collaborations with local museums, and a hugely expanded lecture series. He is also Music Director of the Mainly Mozart Festival in San Diego, where he has launched an ambitious multi-year exploration of Mozart's life. He was previously Chief Conductor and Artistic Advisor of the Norrköping Symphony Orchestra from 2012 to 2016.

Francis makes his home in Tampa, Florida with his wife Cindy and 4-year-old daughter Annabella.

# Yekwon Sunwoo



Gold medalist of the Fifteenth Van Cliburn International Piano Competition, Yekwon Sunwoo has been hailed for “his total command over the instrument and its expressiveness” (*San Francisco Examiner*). A powerful and virtuosic performer, he also, in his own words, “strives to reach for the truth and pure beauty in music,” and hopes to convey those fundamental emotions to audiences.

Born in Anyang, South Korea, Sunwoo began learning piano at age 8. He gave both his recital and orchestra debuts in 2004 in Seoul before moving to the United States in 2005 to study with Seymour Lipkin at the Curtis Institute of Music. He earned his bachelor’s degree there, his master’s at The Juilliard School with Robert McDonald, his artist diploma at the Mannes School of Music with Richard Goode, and additional studies under Bernd Goetzke in Hannover. Sunwoo credits each for their guidance in his artistic development and approach.

Two weeks after his Cliburn win, record label Decca Gold released *Cliburn Gold 2017*, which includes his award-winning performances of Ravel’s *La valse* and Rachmaninoff’s Second Piano Sonata.

In previous seasons, Sunwoo has performed as soloist with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra under Marin Alsop, The Juilliard Orchestra with Itzhak Perlman at Avery Fisher Hall, Houston Symphony Orchestra with James Feddeck, Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra with Leonard Slatkin and Nicholas McGegan, National Orchestra of Belgium, Sendai Philharmonic Orchestra, and others. He has appeared in recital in Hamarikyu Asahi Hall in Tokyo, Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, Wigmore Hall in London, Radio France and Salle Cortot in Paris, Kumho Art Hall in Seoul, and throughout South Korea, Germany, Switzerland, Prague, and Morocco.

An avid chamber musician, his partners have included the Jerusalem and Brentano String Quartets, violinists Benjamin Beilman and Ida Kafavian, cellists Edgar Moreau, Gary Hoffman, and Peter Wiley, and pianist Anne-Marie McDermott. He has toured Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Panama with the Kumho Asiana Cultural Foundation, performed for the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center’s *Inside Chamber Music* Lectures, and been invited to the Summit Music, Bowdoin International, and Toronto Summer Music Festivals.

In addition to the Cliburn gold medal, Sunwoo has won first prizes at the 2015 International German Piano Award in Frankfurt, the 2014 Vendome Prize held at the Verbier Festival, the 2013 Sendai International Music Competition, and the 2012 William Kapell International Piano Competition.

A self-proclaimed foodie, Sunwoo enjoys finding pho in each city he visits and takes pride in his own homemade Korean soups.

# PROGRAM NOTES

## *Symphony No. 1 in B-flat Minor*

**SIR WILLIAM WALTON**

b. Oldham, England / March 29, 1902

d. Ischia, Italy / March 8, 1983

First performed by the RPO: Feb 13, 1936; Sir Hamilton Harty, conductor  
Last performed by the RPO: Mar 19, 2005; Christopher Seaman, conductor

In 1931, Walton's dynamic Biblical oratorio *Belshazzar's Feast* established him as the brightest young star of British music. His publisher, Hubert Foss, suggested that he solidify his reputation still further by composing a fully abstract, large-scale work for orchestra alone. Walton decided upon a symphony, and set to work in the summer of 1932.

His personal life played a significant role, not only in the symphony's character but in the lengthiness of its evolution. Around 1930, he fell quickly and deeply in love with Baroness Imma Doernberg, a young, beautiful widow. By the time she left him, with much bitterness, during the summer of 1933, he had completed the first three movements of the symphony. Another distraction came through a commission to compose his first film score, for the romantic drama *Escape Me Never*. These outside pressures resulted in a fragile emotional condition and a simultaneous physical illness. They left him unable to put the substantial sketches for the symphony's finale into satisfactory shape.

Meanwhile, conductor Sir Hamilton Harty had scheduled the première for March 19, 1934. After the date came and went, he and Hubert Foss persuaded Walton to allow the first three movements to be performed on their own. They were heard in London on December 3, 1934. They made a strong impression, but the lack of the emotional resolution that the finale would hopefully provide left many listeners frustrated and unsatisfied.

Two further incomplete performances followed before Walton managed to unlock the problem of how to conclude the symphony. Two things proved crucial in the breakthrough. One was the incorporation of fugal passages in the middle section of the finale. It was suggested by a friend, composer Constant Lambert. The other was the arrival of a new love interest, Alice Wimborne. This wife of a wealthy steel tycoon was a more mature and stable lover than Imma Doernberg. She and Walton would remain close until her death in 1948. The symphony was heard complete for the first time on November 6, 1935, with Harty conducting the BBC Symphony Orchestra. It won a triumphant reception.

Seething with rage and tension, the opening movement regularly borders on brutality. It is driven by a strong rhythmic pulse and sports much prominent and spectacular brass writing. A darting danse macabre of a scherzo follows. Walton summed up its acid-etched nature with the unusual tempo marking *Presto, con malizia* (very fast, with malice). Perhaps he intended it as a jibe against his former lover.

After two such blistering assaults on the senses, he finally offered an oasis of repose with the cool lyricism of the third movement. Yet even here, disturbing undercurrents and an anguished climax deny the music the tranquility it seeks (echoes of recent heartache?).

Resolution of the symphony's traumas comes with the heartening opening bars of the finale. They raise the curtain on an invigorating, busily textured movement. It is far less tense than the three that precede it, but bears sufficient weight to avoid proving anti-climactic. In the thrilling, majestic concluding section, Walton bolstered the orchestra with additional percussion to lend the celebrations extra punch.

## ***Piano Concerto No. 3 in D Minor, Op. 30***

**SERGEI RACHMANINOFF**

b. Oneg, Russia / March 20, 1873

d. Beverly Hills, California, USA / March 28, 1943

First performed by the RPO: Nov 16, 1933; Guy Fraser Harrison, conductor

Last performed by the RPO: Jun 1, 2013; Tito Muñoz, conductor

In anticipation of his first visit to America, Rachmaninoff decided to compose a new piano concerto, with which he hoped to conquer the New World. He created it during the summer and autumn of 1909. With Walter Damrosch conducting the Orchestra of the New York Symphony Society, Rachmaninoff gave the première of Concerto No. 3 on November 28. It impressed neither the public nor the critics. They considered it too long, too complex, and less immediately attractive than the already beloved Concerto No. 2.

That second-class status remained in effect for many years, and not just because of the initial reaction. Rachmaninoff was not only one of the greatest pianists of the day, he was also one of the strongest. Bearing his own, almost superhuman physical gifts in mind, he had written a solo part so exhausting that few, if any others were equal to its demands. Even Josef Hofmann, the eminent virtuoso to whom Rachmaninoff dedicated it, declined to perform it.

This unfortunate situation remained in effect until the arrival of a new lion of the keyboard, Rachmaninoff's fellow Russian, Vladimir Horowitz. For many years, few save Rachmaninoff and Horowitz played the Third Concerto. But times have changed. With increasing numbers of new, ever more virtuosic pianists coming on the scene, it has come to rival Concerto No. 2 in numbers of performances. The prominent part it played in the Oscar-winning movie *Shine* (1996) has given it an even greater lease on life.



So deep did Rachmaninoff's roots lie in his country's native music that the haunting first theme of the concerto's opening movement could easily be mistaken for a Russian folk song or church chant. As this spacious movement unfolds, Rachmaninoff demonstrated that the melody harbors within its elegant simplicity many possibilities for elaboration. So too does the other material, which is equally eloquent in character. A solo cadenza of awe-inspiring power and difficulty crowns the movement.

The slow movement opens with a wistful orchestral introduction. The piano enters with material that forms the starting point for a set of variations. The majority of these remain in a reflective mode, but first passion, then whimsy, play significant roles in the proceedings, as well. Without a pause, a brilliant outburst by the soloist ushers in the finale, a canvas virtually as broad as the opening movement and even more dynamic in character. Themes from earlier in the concerto intermingle with new material. A torrent of virtuosity on both the creative and performing fronts sweeps the concerto forward to its resounding conclusion.

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