

CHEERS FOR TCHAIKOVSKY

SEPTEMBER 21 , 2024, 7:00PM

SIMON CONCERT HALL | OMAHA CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC

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PROGRAM

Symphony No.2, Op.17 “Little Russian”

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Violin Concerto, Op.35

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Featuring Soloist
Jennifer Ahn, Violin



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meet our ORCHESTRA PERSONNEL

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Ruth Meints*
Concertmaster
Seha Ok
Leslie Steele
Taryn Geiger
Linda Autenrieth
Wendy Petty

Violin II

Kumiko Tubrick*
Abigail Layne
Bonnie Hartley
Jenny Reid
Claudia Rowen
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Annabelle Abisset

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Darbi Hight*
Sofia Starcic
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Shari Lyles
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Bassoon

Chuck Serfass
Kate Ziegerer

Horn

Keith Davis
Doug Divis
Don Love
Christi Bierman

Trumpet

James Lund
Ryan Anderson

Trombone

Robert Serfass
Hanna Ingraham de Hernandez
Jeff Ingraham

Tuba

Nate Griffith

Timpani

Nick Lacroix

Percussion

Steve Jordon
Matthew Morse

Music Director

Dr. Kenneth Meints

*section Principal

Meet Our Featured Artist Jennifer Ahn!



A passionate performer and educator, violinist Jennifer Ahn made her solo debut with the Omaha Symphony at the age of 11. Currently based in NYC, her extensive credits include a solo performance at Carnegie Hall, as well as appearances at Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, the Heifetz International Institute, and the National Arts Centre in Canada.

A frequent guest presenter at universities, Jennifer frequently travels to Omaha Conservatory of Music to give workshops, chamber coachings, and masterclasses. She recently served on the Faculty for Soundwaves, OCM's summer institute.

An avid collaborator, Jennifer has worked with such artists as Nicholas Mann, David Geber, Julia Lichten, Anton Nel, Shai Wosner, Leonid Gorokhov, and members of the American, Borromeo, Brentano, Chiara, Emerson, and Orion String Quartets.

She was featured on the Heifetz International Institute's YouTube channel as a member of the Aria String Quartet as well as on the National Arts Centre of Canada's channel as a participant in the Young Artist Program. She has also worked with prominent conductors including Daniel Harding, Marin Alsop, Leonard Slatkin, and Larry Rachleff, as well as current and former orchestral musicians such as Glenn Dicterow, Jorja Fleezanis, David Kim, Arnold Steinhardt, and Giovanni Guzzo.

Jennifer received her Bachelors and Masters from the Manhattan School of Music, where she studied with Pinchas Zukerman and Patinka Kopec and worked as the studio assistant. She currently serves as the Orchestra Manager for New York Youth Symphony and holds several teaching positions in NYC.

Additional Program Notes Online!
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Symphony No.2, Op.17 “Little Russian”

The second symphony may be the shortest of Tchaikovsky's symphonies, but it is by no means “little”. The nickname was bestowed by Nikolai Kashkin, a Moscow music critic and friend of Tchaikovsky's. It refers to “Little Russia”, the affectionate name for the Ukraine. Kashkin believed “Little Russian” was an apt nickname due to the fact that the piece includes several Ukrainian folk tunes. Tchaikovsky's younger sister, Sasha Davidov, owned an estate in Kamenka, near the Ukrainian capital of Kiev. This location became a second home for the composer - a nurturing place where he could experience the family life he desired but did not have for himself. It was here that he first heard the folk tunes being sung by the family's servants. Tchaikovsky completed the score in Moscow, after resuming his teaching duties at the Conservatory. The symphony's Moscow premiere in February 1873 went extremely well, with Tchaikovsky later telling his father, “I am delighted with all the success and the material profit that has accrued from it.” Despite the positive reception, Tchaikovsky made a few changes in orchestration immediately after the premiere, followed by a substantial revision in December 1879. This revised version, most commonly performed today, received its American premiere on December 7, 1883, by the New York Symphony Society at Steinway Hall, New York.

The symphony opens with a slow introduction, marked *Andante sostenuto*. The main theme of this passage, the folk song “Down by the Mother Volga”, clearly establishes the character of this work. It is first played by solo horn, then passed among the various sections of the orchestra. Suddenly, the tempo becomes more lively (*Allegro vivo*), and the strings play an incisive theme that begins the exposition. The body of the first movement is set in an orderly sonata form, reflecting the “correctness” which Tchaikovsky boasted about to his brother. After the stormy main theme, the character brightens as the oboe plays a lovely second melody. After resuming the agitated first theme, Tchaikovsky has a lengthy development section that focuses upon this melody and the “Volga” theme from the introduction. The closing section of the movement is conventional, except for a long coda that closes with a return to the opening tempo and horn solo.

Tchaikovsky was a marvelous composer, but not always successful when it came to opera. One disappointment was *Undina*, which wreaked havoc on the composer's morale. He destroyed all but a few snippets of the score, one of which was recycled as the second movement (*Andantino marziale, quasi moderato*). This unhurried march theme is the basis for a rondo, which alternates with two other melodies. The first of these is a lyrical theme played by the violins. The second is a distinctly Ukrainian melody played by the oboe and flute that recalls the tone of the first movement's Volga theme.

Tchaikovsky once again uses a traditional form in his third movement. His scherzo (*Allegro molto vivace*) has the traditional three-part form standard in symphonic third movements since the time of Haydn and Mozart. The opening section is blazingly

fast, with violins weaving a furiously fast melody above forceful accents. The central trio changes both key (from minor to major) and character (to a less ferocious duple meter) into a pastoral dance music from the woodwind section. There is an abbreviated return of the opening material, with Tchaikovsky hinting briefly to the trio in the coda.

The main theme of the finale (another Ukrainian folk song, The Crane) emerges in a slow, plodding introduction (*Moderato assai*). When the body of the movement begins, this same theme is presented in its original form, a quick duple meter dance tune (*Allegro vivo*), played by the strings. Tchaikovsky works intensively with this theme before introducing the second theme, a syncopated and whimsical melody played by the violins. In the development section, Tchaikovsky works with both themes, often pitting one section of the orchestra (brasses, woodwinds, or strings) against the others. In the recapitulation, Tchaikovsky brings back the second theme first, followed by the “Crane” melody and leads (after a dramatic crash from the tamtam) into a brilliant coda that closes the symphony on a festive note.

Violin Concerto, Op.35

Tchaikovsky composed his Violin Concerto in 1878, in Clarens, Switzerland, during a recovery period following his disastrous marriage. Once completed, he sent the work to Leopold Auer, the distinguished Hungarian violin soloist and pedagogue. To his horror, Auer declined to perform it, citing both technical and artistic shortcomings. German soloist Adolf Brodsky eventually expressed an interest premiering the work, but spent the better part of two years preparing for the concert. When the work was finally performed in December 1888, the notorious critic Hanslick, in a moment of bitter hostility, gave the concerto a scathing review. Auer, however, later changed his opinion and went to great effort to restore the work to its rightful place in the repertoire by introducing it to many of his eminent pupils, including Jascha Heifetz and Nathan Milstein.

Within moments after the first movement (*Allegro moderato*) opens with a lyrical theme, the rising phrases anticipate the entrance of the violin. In classic sonata form, the composer transports us from the exposition through an extended development section, to a recapitulation and finally, a virtuosic coda. The second movement (*Andante*) shifts the mood, creating contrast in the key of G minor. Listen in particular for the wistful duet between the violin and clarinet in the second half. The finale (*Allegro vivacissimo*) is a rondo chock-full of dance rhythms. The main theme has a vigorous folk element, which leads in turn to a second theme over droning bagpipe fifths and a bassoon counterpoint. The violin plays a melody based on Tchaikovsky’s characteristically folkish falling fourths. This tune works itself up into a wild dance, delicately answered by the woodwind before the return of the original theme. Finally, the solo violin leads off an exhilarating chase that brings the concerto to a dashing close.