



USC Thornton Symphony

Friday, Feb. 25, 2022

7:30 p.m.

Bovard Auditorium

University of Southern California

Maestro Carl St.Clair, *conductor*

Stella Cho, *soloist*

USC Thornton
School of Music

Program

Witold Lutoslawski
(1914-1994)

Concerto for Cello
Stella Cho, *soloist*

Intermission

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky
(1840-1893)

Symphony No.6, Op. 74
TH 30, B minor; "Pathétique"

Program Notes

Witold Lutoslawski

Cello Concerto

Following many trials early in life due to the political climate of Europe, Polish composer Witold Lutoslawski lived to see himself become one of the most important composers of the 20th century. He was born in Warsaw in 1913, which, at the time, was a province of Imperial Russia. Lutoslawski's family fled to Moscow when Germany invaded Russia in 1914. In 1918, following his father's passing, his family returned to Warsaw.

In 1924, at the age of eleven, Lutoslawski saw a performance of Karol Szymanowski's Symphony No. 3, which he later would remark was "an occasion of real revelation for me." In the months that followed, he would start studying the violin. By 1927, he would begin study at the Warsaw Conservatory under the tutelage of Witold Malizewski, a student of Nikolai Rimski-Korsakov.

The start of Lutoslawski's career was delayed due to the outbreak of World War II. He was involved in the military and was even imprisoned by the Germans. He was able to escape death, however, and returned to Warsaw following the war. Due in part to this unfortunate time away from music, his compositional career would take some time to take off. *Musique Funébre* (1958), written in memoriam of Béla Bartók, would launch him to international acclaim.

The Cello Concerto is among his most important works. It is dedicated to the great cellist Msitslav Rostropovich, who asked Lutoslawski to write a cello concerto for him, saying, "I can't guarantee I will play it well, but I will certainly play it very often." The piece was commissioned by the Royal

(cont.) Philharmonic Society, and its premiere was given by Rostropovich in October 1970 with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Edward Downes. This cello concerto is presented as a single connected movement with four distinct sections. A solo cello introduction opens the piece as a searching cadenza before blaring trumpets interrupt the search for melody. Lutoslawski describes the concerto as a work in which the cello and orchestra are in constant battle -- a rather natural role for its dedicatee, Rostropovich. Following the opening cadenza section, the piece follows a familiar, fast, slow, fast structure. Near the end, eight orchestral blows seem to mark the demise of the hero, but the resurgent cello returns in the coda signifying its ultimate triumph.

Andrew Grishaw
DMA Spring 2022

Pyotr Ilych Tchaikovsky

Symphony No. 6, "Pathetique"

The sixth symphony of the great Russian composer Pyotr Ilych Tchaikovsky was premiered on October 28, 1893 in Saint Petersburg with the composer himself conducting. Just nine days later, he would take his last breath. The piece received its second performance 20 days later, under the direction of Eduard Nápravník, as part of a memorial concert. The piece is shrouded in darkness and despair despite its overwhelming romantic passion.

The symphony comprises four movements. The enthralling first movement was composed in just five days in an outburst of creative inspiration. It features a melodic "sigh" presented in the opening moments, a premonition of

(cont.) the density that will inculcate the rest of the movements. The second movement is a gorgeous waltz typical of Tchaikovsky. This waltz is not as graceful as others heard in *Swan Lake* or *The Nutcracker* ballets due to its 5/4 meter and the ever-present textual reminder of darkness.

The third movement is emblematic of Tchaikovsky's finale movements. The music has relentless energy that culminates in overpowering final chords that inspire audiences to often stand and cheer at its close. There is, however, the foreboding fourth movement to follow that reveals the true emotions of Tchaikovsky in 1893.

The final movement of the sixth symphony is perhaps best described as an "apotheosis where Tchaikovsky at once finds the authentic voice that had eluded him his entire life, and is made painfully aware of the missed opportunities to use it over the years, driving an unbearable clash of emotional extremes" (David Bernard). The final notes Tchaikovsky ever wrote are in the cellos and basses alone, marked "pppp", meaning to be played as softly as possible.

While this symphony has often been described as a work in which the composer is knowingly writing about his own death, it is impossible to confirm this exact storyline. Tchaikovsky did publicly proclaim that he had a program for this work, but as Rimski-Korsakov described, "I (Rimsky-Korsakov) asked if he (Tchaikovsky) had any program for this composition. He said that of course he had, but that he did not wish to reveal it."

This symphony inspired many of the great composers of the day, including Gustav Mahler, who modeled his ninth Symphony after "Pathetique". The piece lives on as one of the most important and most effective works of the 19th century.

About the Artists

Stella Cho, *cello*



Originally from South Korea and raised in Great Britain, Stella Cho made her London solo debut at the Royal Albert Hall at the age of 15. She has also given recital programs in South Korea, Spain, the Netherlands, Poland, Germany, Croatia and the U.S., and she has played on numerous occasions on national television and radio. Cho was selected as one of the Holland Music Sessions' New Masters on Tour and gave solo recitals across Europe, including the Royal Concertgebouw. Cho has performed in numerous renowned music festivals around the

world including Yellow Barn Chamber Music Festival, Ravinia Festival, La Jolla SummerFest, Banff Chamber Music Festival, Casals Festival, the Perlman Music Program and Aspen Music Festival. She has also collaborated with eminent musicians such as Ralph Kirshbaum, Jaime Laredo, Sharon Robinson, Joseph Kalichstein, Joseph Silverstein and the Borromeo String Quartet.

Cho earned her bachelor of music and master of music degrees with honors at the USC Thornton School of Music's prestigious Gregor Piatigorsky Studio, studying with Ralph Kirshbaum, and she completed further graduate studies at the New England Conservatory with Laurence Lesser. She recently completed her doctorate of musical arts degree at USC Thornton and was selected as the 2021 Outstanding DMA Graduate.

She is currently teaching and performing in the Los Angeles area, as cello faculty at Loyola Marymount University and as a cellist of the SAKURA Cello Quintet and Delirium Musicum.

USC Thornton Symphony

Violin I

Belle Wang,
Concertmaster
Bradley Adam Bascon
Elise Haukenes
Emily Hsu
Charlie Lin
Veronika Manchur
Peiwen Su
Shelby Wong
Micah Yoo
Weilu Zhang

Violin II

Anna Renton,
Principal
Agatha Blevin
Olena Kaspersky
Sofia Llacer Chamberlain
Maya Masaoka
Floriane Naboulet
Asher Wulfman
Nayoung Yoo

Viola

Andrew Towsey-Grishaw,
Principal
Emma Antonides
Gloria Choi
Wilfred Farquharson
Connie Song
Yu Ting Hsu
Sophia Valenti
Sarah Wilkinson

Cello

Ismael Guerrero Bombut,
Principal
Quenton Blache
Mairead Flory

Cello (cont.)

Ariel Hung
Ji Sun Jung
Madeline Sheard
Myles Yeazell

Bass

Aaron Blick,
Principal
Andrew Hungness
Ethan Moffitt
Ella Sharpe
Alan Wang
Avery Weeks

Harp

Sarah Hsiao

*=Principal on Lutoslawski
+=Principal on Tchaikovsky

Flute

Chloe Descher*
Jamie Kim+
Gaby Beltran
Sylvia Ettinger

Oboe

Sonia Matheus +
Sara Petty*
Alex Changus
Liz Plescia

Clarinet

Besnik Abrashi +
Chanul Kim*
Alex Tu
Bram Schenk
Byungho Park

Bassoon

Daniel St. John*+
Ingrid Hernandez
John Gonzales

Horn

Kathy Yang*
Susannah Greenslit +
Rachel Kim
Sophia Barnard

Trumpet

Kobina Sambson-Davis +
Svend Lykkegaard*
Emily Nastelin
Jorge Araujo Felix
Lucca Cidale
Remy Gilboe
Tali Duckworth

Trombone

Stephen Hannan*+
Alex Melzer
Kevin Truong

Tuba

Neha Kudva
Derek Zimmerman

Timpani

Paul Matthews*+

Percussion

Dominic Grande*+
Sean Yan*+
Zoe Beyle*+

Upcoming Events

Feb. 28 at 7:30 p.m.

Thornton Edge

Mar. 4 at 8 p.m.

Baroque Sinfonia

Mar. 11 at 7:30 p.m.

USC Thornton Symphony

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