

MOZART'S TRIPLE: LING, TAO AND CHANG

SATURDAY January 30, 2016

8:00pm

Jahja Ling, **conductor and piano** (See page 4 for bio)

Jessie Chang, **piano** (See page 32 for bio)

Conrad Tao, **piano**

Performance at the Jacobs Music Center's Copley Symphony Hall

Program

CLAUDE DEBUSSY /
Orch. by Henri Büsser

Petite suite
En bateau (In the Boat)
Cortège
Menuet
Ballet

**WOLFGANG AMADEUS
MOZART**

Concerto No. 7 in F Major for 3 Pianos, K. 242: *Lodron*
Allegro
Adagio
Rondo: Tempo di menuetto

Jahja Ling, piano
Jessie Chang, piano
Conrad Tao, piano

INTERMISSION

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK

Slavonic Dance in G minor, Op. 46, No. 8*

Jahja Ling, piano
Jessie Chang, piano

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK

Slavonic Dance in E minor, Op. 72, No. 2*

Jahja Ling, piano
Jessie Chang, piano

JOHANNES BRAHMS

*Hungarian Dances**
No. 5 in G minor
No. 6 in D Major

Jahja Ling, piano
Conrad Tao, piano

(program continued)

GEORGE GERSHWIN Three Preludes*
Allegro ben ritmato e deciso
Andante con moto e poco rubato
Allegro ben ritmato e deciso
Jahja Ling, piano
Jessie Chang, piano

MAURICE RAVEL *Suite (5 pièces enfantines) from Ma Mère l'Oye (Mother Goose)*
Pavane of the Sleeping Beauty
Tom Thumb
L'air des Petites Pantouffles, Empress of the Pagodas
Conversations of Beauty and the Beast
The Enchanted Garden

*Piano 4-hands, no orchestra

The approximate running time for this program, including intermission, is one hour and fifty minutes.

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

(Continued from page 34)

Slavonic Dances

in G minor, Op. 46, No. 8: Presto

in E minor, Op. 72, No. 2: Allegretto grazioso

ANTONIN DVOŘÁK

Born September 8, 1841,

Mühlhausen, Bohemia

Died May 1, 1904, Prague

Success came late to Dvořák. For years he labored in obscurity, supporting himself and his family as an orchestral violist and teacher, and then came the break: his music attracted the attention (and admiration) of Brahms, who alerted his own publisher, Simrock, to the talents of this unknown Bohemian composer. Simrock commissioned a set of *Slavonic Dances* from Dvořák, suggesting that he model them on Brahms' own vastly popular *Hungarian Dances*. Dvořák composed a set of eight dances – originally for piano four-hands – between April and August 1878 and then orchestrated them. They were an instant success and quickly traveled around the world; performances followed in Germany, France, Italy, England and even distant America. Simrock paid Dvořák only a modest fee for this music, and the publisher did quite well financially on its tremendous success. For his part, Dvořák got something much better than money: he achieved worldwide fame, and the *Slavonic Dances* were

really the music that launched his career. Simrock of course wanted another set of dances, and eight years later Dvořák wrote a further set of eight, which were published as his Opus 72. (Those eight years made a tremendous difference in Dvořák's career: he asked – and got! – ten times as much for this set as he was paid for the first.)

This concert offers one dance from each of the two sets, heard in its original version for piano four-hands. It has been noted that Dvořák – unlike Brahms – did not quote actual folk melodies in his dances; instead, he used native dance forms to write his own music. This set opens with one of the most famous dances from Opus 46. No. 8 in G minor is a *furiant*, an old Czech dance in which the meter changes constantly. Marked *Presto*, it bursts to life with a powerful, decisive beginning that quickly leaps between major and minor modes. The brief central episode moves to G Major and flows serenely before the return of the opening material and a very abrupt – and exciting – close. No. 2 in E minor from the later set is a *starodávný*, a three-beat dance also used by Dvořák's friend Leoš Janáček, who referred to it as “an old-time dance.” Its opening sounds like mournful gypsy fiddling; Dvořák stresses that the playing should be *molto espressivo*. The central episode is poised, and after all this energy the dance comes to a very effective *pianissimo* close. ■

Hungarian Dances

No. 5 in G minor

No. 6 in D-flat Major

JOHANNES BRAHMS

Born May 7, 1833, Hamburg

Died April 3, 1897, Vienna

Brahms had a life-long fascination with Hungarian music, which for him meant gypsy music. As a boy in Hamburg, he first encountered it from the refugees fleeing revolutions in Hungary for a new life in America, and he was introduced to gypsy fiddle tunes at the age of 20 while on tour with the Hungarian violinist Eduard Reményi. (It was on that tour that Brahms began his lifelong collection of Hungarian folk-tunes.) Over a period of years, he wrote a number of what he called *Hungarian Dances* for piano four-hands and played them for (and with) his friends. He published ten of these in 1869 and another 11 in 1880, and they proved a huge success. There was a ready market for this sort of music that could be played at home by talented amateurs, and these fiery, fun pieces carried Brahms' name around the world. (They also inspired the *Slavonic Dances* of his friend Antonin Dvořák.)

In the *Hungarian Dances*, Brahms took *csardas* tunes and – preserving their themes and characteristic freedom – wrote his own music

based on them. To his publisher, Brahms described these dances as “genuine gypsy children, which I did not beget, but merely brought up with bread and milk.” It has been pointed out, however, that Brahms did not begin with authentic peasant tunes (which Bartók and Kodály would track down in the twentieth century), but with those tunes as they had been spiffed-up for popular consumption by the “gypsy” bands that played in the cafés and on the street corners of Vienna. Brahms would not have cared about authenticity. He loved these tunes – with their fiery melodies, quick shifts of mood and rhythmic freedom – and he successfully assimilated that style, particularly its atmosphere of wild gypsy fiddling. (In fact, he assimilated it so successfully that several of the *Hungarian Dances* are based on “gypsy” tunes that he composed himself!)

If this music was an instant success with audiences, it also proved popular with performers, and the *Hungarian Dances* soon appeared in many arrangements. (All 21 have been orchestrated: Brahms himself prepared three of these, Dvořák orchestrated the final five, and various others arranged the remaining 13.) The present program offers two-handed piano versions of two of the most famous dances. The most famous of them all, No. 5 in G minor, seems to bear the imprint of wild gypsy fiddling in every measure. The concluding No. 6 in D-flat Major may seem to open in a sort of smouldering, languorous passion, but – in those tempo shifts so characteristic of these dances – it will suddenly dart ahead, as it does in the fiery rush to its conclusion. ■

Three Preludes

GEORGE GERSHWIN

Born September 26, 1898, Brooklyn
Died July 11, 1937, Hollywood

While still a very young man, Gershwin made a fortune as a composer of songs and Broadway shows, but he longed to be regarded as a “serious” composer. To this end, he studied with such teachers as Rubin Goldmark (who was also teaching Aaron Copland in these years), Wallingford Riegger and Henry Cowell, and burst to worldwide fame with two works that fused classical music and jazz: *Rhapsody in Blue* (1924) and the Piano Concerto in F (1925). During these same years Gershwin was also working on a series of short pieces for solo piano, and he completed six of them, which he intended to call *Novelettes*. When it came time to publish them, however, Gershwin selected only three and called them Piano Preludes. Gershwin himself gave the first performance on December 4, 1926, at the Hotel Roosevelt in New York on a duo-recital with Peruvian contralto Marguerite d'Alvarez.

The three preludes are in a fast-slow-fast sequence, and both fast movements have the same marking: *Allegro ben ritmato e deciso*. Gershwin is reported to have written the first movement (which he referred to as “the Spanish prelude”) in one sitting. The most famous of the preludes is probably the second, marked *Andante con moto e poco rubato*, in which a bluesy little tune sings languorously over an ostinato bass line.

At this concert the *Preludes* are heard in an arrangement for two pianists. ■

Suite (5 pièces enfantines) from *Ma Mère L'Oye* (Mother Goose)

MAURICE RAVEL

Born March 7, 1875, Ciboure, Basses-Pyrennes
Died December 28, 1937, Paris

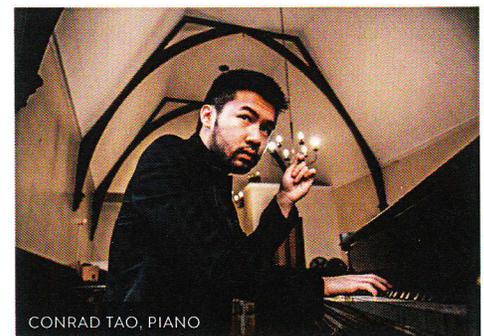
Ravel was a very strange mixture as a person. A man of enormous sophistication and intelligence, he nevertheless felt throughout his life a stinging longing for the world of the child: he collected toys and was fascinated by the illustrations in children's books. Not surprisingly, he made friends easily with children and sometimes abandoned the adults at parties to go off and play games with their children.

Ravel's fascination with the world of the child found expression in his art: he wrote music for children to hear (such as his opera *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges*) and music for them to play. His *Ma Mère l'Oye* (“Mother Goose Suite”) for piano-four hands dates from 1908. Ravel wrote it for Jean and Mimi Godebski, aged 8 and 10, the son and daughter of some of his friends, though it was two other children – aged 7 and 10 – who played the premiere in Paris in 1910. Each of the five movements was inspired by a scene from an old French fairy tale; the suite, however, should be understood as a collection of five separate scenes rather than as a connected whole. In an oft-quoted remark, Ravel described his aim and his technique in this music: “My intention of awakening the poetry of childhood in these pieces naturally led me to simplify my style and thin out my writing.” This may be music intended for children, but it is also music for adults: it evokes the freshness and magic of something long in the past. In 1911, Ravel orchestrated *Ma Mère l'Oye*, slightly expanding the music in the process.

The very gentle *Pavane of the Sleeping Beauty* depicts the graceful dance of the attendants around the sleeping Princess Florine. *Tom Thumb* tells of one of the most famous figures in children's tales – the little boy who leaves a trail of breadcrumbs behind in the woods, only to become lost when birds eat the crumbs. The music itself seems to wander forlornly as the lost boy searches

for the path; high above him, the birds who ate his crumbs cry out tauntingly. *Laideronnette, Empress of the Pagodas* tells the story of the empress who is made ugly by a spell, only to be transformed to beauty at the end. When she steps into her bath in the garden, bells burst out in happy peals. Ravel's use of the pentatonic scale – the music is played mostly on black notes – evokes an oriental atmosphere. *Conversations of Beauty and the Beast* brings another classic tale. Ravel depicts Beauty with a gentle waltz, Beast with a lumpish, growling theme in the contrabassoon's low register. A delicate glissando depicts his transformation, and Ravel skillfully combines the music of both characters. *The Enchanted Garden* brings the suite to a happily-ever-after ending. The opening – for strings alone – is simple, almost chaste, but gradually the music assumes a broad, heroic character and – decorated with brilliant runs – drives to a noble close in shining C Major. ■

ABOUT THE ARTIST



CONRAD TAO, PIANO

Horacio Gutiérrez, previously scheduled for these concerts, is unable to perform. In his place we are pleased to present Avery Fisher career grant winner **CONRAD TAO**. Appearances by Conrad Tao, Jahja Ling and Jessie Chang on this concert are generously underwritten by Guest Artist Sponsor The Vail Memorial Fund.

Conrad Tao has appeared worldwide as a pianist and composer, and he has been dubbed a musician of “probing intellect and open-hearted vision” by *The New York Times*, a “thoughtful and mature composer” by NPR and “ferociously talented” by *TimeOut New York*. In June of 2011 the White House Commission on Presidential Scholars and the Department of Education named Mr. Tao a Presidential Scholar in the Arts, and the National Foundation

for Advancement in the Arts awarded him a YoungArts gold medal in music. Later that year, Mr. Tao was named a Gilmore Young Artist, an honor awarded every two years highlighting the most promising American pianists of the new generation. In May of 2012 he was awarded the prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant.

During the 2015-16 season Mr. Tao performs with the Philadelphia Chamber Orchestra, Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, Cincinnati Symphony, Dallas Symphony Orchestra, Buffalo Philharmonic, Pacific Symphony, Brazilian Symphony and Calgary Philharmonic, among others; he also performs recitals in Europe and throughout the United States with repertoire ranging from Bach to Frederic Rzewski to Rachmaninoff to Julia Wolfe. Past notable symphonic engagements have included the San Francisco Symphony, Baltimore Symphony, Toronto Symphony, St. Louis Symphony, Detroit Symphony, National Arts Centre Orchestra, Indianapolis Symphony and Nashville Symphony. Mr. Tao maintains a close relationship with the Aspen Music Festival, and he has appeared at the Sun Valley Summer Symphony, Brevard Music Center, Ravinia Festival and Mostly Mozart Festival.

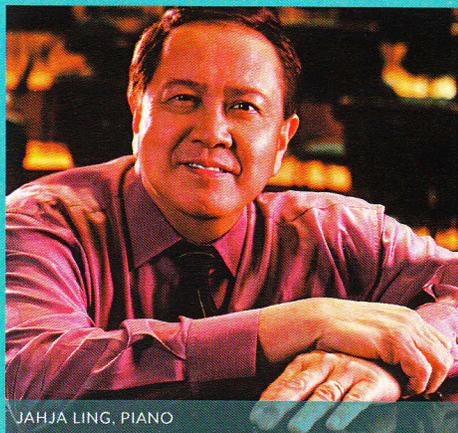
In June of 2013, Mr. Tao kicked off the inaugural UNPLAY Festival at the powerHouse Arena in Brooklyn, which he curated and produced. The festival, designated a “critics’ pick” by *TimeOut New York* and hailed by the *The New York Times* for its “clever organization” and “endlessly engaging” performances, featured Mr. Tao with guest artists performing a wide variety of new works. Across three nights encompassing electroacoustic music, performance art, youth ensembles and much more, UNPLAY explored the fleeting ephemera of the Internet, the possibility of a twenty-first century canon and music’s role in social activism and critique. That month, Mr. Tao, a Warner Classics recording artist, also released *Voyages*, his first full-length recording for the label, declared a “spiky debut” by *The New Yorker’s* Alex Ross. Of the album, NPR wrote: “Tao proves himself to be a musician of deep intellectual and emotional means – as the thoughtful programming on this album...proclaims.” His next album, *Pictures*, which slots works by David Lang, Toru Takemitsu, Elliot Carter and Mr. Tao himself alongside Mussorgsky’s familiar and beloved *Pictures at an Exhibition*, was released in October 2015.

Mr. Tao’s career as a composer has garnered eight consecutive ASCAP Morton Gould Young Composer Awards as well as the Carlos Surinach Prize from BMI. In the 2013-14 season, while serving as the Dallas Symphony Orchestra’s artist-in-residence, Mr. Tao premiered his orchestral composition, *The World Is Very Different Now*. Commissioned in observance of the fiftieth anniversary of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, the work was described by *The New York Times* as “shapely and powerful.” Most recently, the Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia commissioned a new work for piano, orchestra and electronics, *An Adjustment*, which received its premiere in September 2015 with Mr. Tao at the piano. The Philadelphia Inquirer declared the piece abundant in “compositional magic,” a “most imaginative [integration of] spiritual post-Romanticism and ‘90s club music.”

Conrad Tao was born in Urbana, Illinois, in 1994. He has studied piano with Emilio del Rosario in Chicago and Yoheved Kaplinsky in New York, as well as composition with Christopher Theofanidis. ■

GUEST ARTISTS FOR THIS EVENING’S PROGRAM
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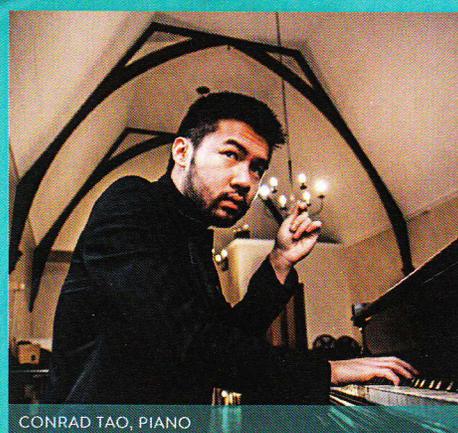
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JAHJA LING, PIANO



JESSIE CHANG, PIANO



CONRAD TAO, PIANO