

Romance & Revolution

May 1, 2027

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Yaniv Dinur, *Conductor*
Joyce Yang, *Piano*

Pyotr Ilyich TCHAIKOVSKY
(1840–1893)

Piano Concerto No. 1 in Bb minor, Op. 23
Allegro non troppo e molto maestoso
Andantino semplice
Allegro con fuoco

INTERMISSION

Igor STRAVINSKY
(1882–1971)

Le Sacre du Printemps
Part I: L'Adoration de la Terre
Part II: Le Sacrifice

Ms. Yang is represented by Arts Management Group.

Stage flowers provided by Hilly Fields Florist



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At age twenty-one, **Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–93)** quit law school to study composition and orchestration at St. Petersburg Conservatory. After graduating in 1865, he was hired to teach harmony at the Moscow Conservatory, where he remained until 1875, when severe depression led him to resign from teaching. The composer was often depressed and pessimistic, and much has been written about his homosexual angst. Nevertheless, Tchaikovsky, whose music was greatly influenced by the West, was quite prolific between 1869 and 1874, composing his first three string quartets, the perennially popular first piano concerto, the third symphony, the ballet *Swan Lake*, and two symphonic fantasies, *The Tempest* and *Romeo and Juliet*. **Piano Concerto No. 1** was written in 1874. A repeated four-note descending pattern intoned by the four French horns introduces the well-known lyrical string melody that begins the **Allegro non troppo**, accompanied by fortissimo chords on the piano. Following the introduction, the movement proper begins with the pianist playing a rhythmic tune that Tchaikovsky borrowed from Ukrainian folksong tradition. A lyrical second theme provides contrast. The themes are developed in the composer's inimitable dramatic style amidst showy arpeggios and impassioned outbursts from orchestra and soloist alike. In the recapitulation, the oboe presents the secondary theme that was first heard in the clarinet. Muted, plucked strings provide an ostinato backdrop for the flutes' sweetly impassioned melody at the beginning of the **Andantino semplice**. The piano imitates the flutes and a pastoral scene unfolds. When a solo cello sings the theme, the piano provides gentle staccato accompaniment. After a prestissimo middle section, cascading arpeggios on the piano lead to the return of the original theme, played by the so-

loist with extended trills. The **Allegro** begins **con fuoco** (with fire) as the pianist plays a tricky passage of ornamented parallel thirds. The theme demonstrates again the influence of Ukrainian folk music on Tchaikovsky's compositional style. Another lyrical secondary theme appears and alternates with the folk tune, which becomes quite insistent. The soloist has ample opportunity to dazzle before the concerto comes to a rousing finish.

DID YOU KNOW?

In 1958 at the height of the Cold War, American pianist Van Cliburn became a household name overnight after winning top prize at the first Tchaikovsky International Piano Competition in Moscow.

The competition had been implemented to demonstrate Soviet artistry, but the standing ovation for Cliburn's rendition of Piano Concerto No. 1 tipped the balance in the American's favor.

The twenty-three-year-old appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine with the caption "The Texan who Conquered Russia."

Born near St. Petersburg, **Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971)** had the good fortune to study with Rimsky-Korsakov, a master orchestrator. Between 1910 and 1939, he lived in Paris and Switzerland and became a naturalized French citizen. Ballet was an important genre during the 1900s when rhythm often replaced melody as the primary focus in "classical" compositions. In 1910 Sergei Diaghilev, the founder/director of the Ballets Russes, commissioned Stravinsky to write a ballet. *The Firebird* premiered that year and was such a success that Diaghilev immediately commissioned another ballet. Rimsky-Korsakov's influence is evident in the lush orchestration of *Firebird*, but Stravinsky began to demonstrate

his own voice in *Petrushka*, with more modernistic tendencies such as frequently changing meters, multiple ostinatos, and even bi-tonality (two tonal centers at the same time). Of course, the choreographer and dancers found it difficult to deal with the complicated rhythms and inconsistent meters, but Stravinsky was just getting started; his next collaboration with Diaghilev, **Le sacre du printemps** (*The Rite of Spring*, 1913), almost caused a riot with its pounding, primitivistic rhythms and story line of the pagan sacrifice of a virgin. It became one of the most influential works of the century and is still frequently performed today. Tonight's concert version is also a regular item in orchestral programming, scored for a huge orchestra: piccolo, three flutes, alto flute, four oboes, English horn, three clarinets, bass clarinet, four bassoons, contrabassoon, eight horns (!), piccolo trumpet, four trumpets, bass trumpet, three trombones, two tubas, two timpanists, percussion (two antique cymbals, bass drum, cymbals, güiro, tam-tam, tambourine), and strings. After the mystical bassoon solo in its upper range introduces "The Fertility of the Earth," violently hammered chords occur in seemingly random rhythmic patterns. At times Stravinsky changes the meter in every measure. Many rehearsals were required, individually for the orchestra and for the dancers, and then joint rehearsals; still, choreographer Nijinsky supposedly yelled numbers from the stage wings to help the dancers count during the premiere. The complex meters, syncopation, and the raw primitivism achieved by the extremely large orchestra served to intensify the already difficult subject matter of a young woman dancing herself to death to appease the gods of spring. Try to picture yourself as part of the Parisian audience one hundred years ago. Imagine the innocence of the young woman

in long braids whirling on stage in her embroidered native attire. As she is penned in the middle of a circle of tribal elders wearing bear headdresses, her panic is palpable in her awkward, knock-kneed quaking that is interrupted by irregular leaps in the air, timed to the offbeat accents in the music. Stravinsky's driving repetitions of short melodic motifs (ostinatos) and the dissonance caused by polytonality reinforce the savagery of the plot and the choreography. Whether or not the riot at the premiere was simply good public relations on the part of impresario Diaghilev (as some believe) or the initial audience's genuine horror at the raw nature of the ballet's story and music, one can certainly understand the groundbreaking nature of this event. Like many of his musical colleagues, Stravinsky left Europe during World War II. After living in the New England area and participating in the Harvard lecture series in 1939-40, he settled in Los Angeles and became a US citizen in 1945. Stravinsky has a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame and a posthumously-awarded 1987 Grammy for Lifetime Achievement.

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Dr. Akers has a Master of Music degree in Piano Performance from Indiana University and a Ph.D. in Historical Musicology from Florida State University

Blessed with "poetic and sensitive pianism" (Washington Post) and a "wondrous sense of color" (San Francisco Classical Voice), Grammy-nominated pianist **Joyce Yang** captivates audiences with her virtuosity, lyricism, and interpretive sensitivity. She first came to international attention in 2005 when she won the silver medal at the 12th Van Cliburn International Piano Competition. The youngest contestant at 19 years old, she took home two additional awards: Best Performance of Chamber Music (with the Takács Quartet), and Best Performance of a New Work. In 2006 Yang made her celebrat-



ed New York Philharmonic debut alongside Lorin Maazel at Avery Fisher Hall along with the orchestra's tour of Asia, making a triumphant return to her hometown of Seoul, South Korea. Yang's subsequent appearances with the New York Philharmonic have included opening night of the 2008 Leonard Bernstein Festival – an appearance made at the request of Maazel in his final season as music director. The New York Times pronounced her performance in Bernstein's *The Age of Anxiety* a "knockout."

Over the last two decades, Yang has blossomed into an "astounding artist" (Neue Zürcher Zeitung), showcasing her colorful musical personality in solo recitals and collaborations with the world's top orchestras and chamber musicians through more than 1,000 debuts and re-engagements. She received the 2010 Avery Fisher Career Grant and earned her first Grammy nomination (Best Chamber Music/Small Ensemble Performance) for her recording of Franck, Kurtág, Previn & Schumann with violinist Augustin Hadelich ("One can only sit in misty-eyed amazement at their insightful flair and spontaneity." – *The Strad*).

Other notable orchestral engagements have included the Chicago Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Hong Kong Philharmonic, the BBC Philharmonic, as well as the Toronto, Vancouver, Sydney, Melbourne,

and New Zealand symphony orchestras. She was also featured in a five-year Rachmaninoff concerto cycle with Edo de Waart and the Milwaukee Symphony, to which she brought "an enormous palette of colors, and tremendous emotional depth" (Milwaukee Sentinel Journal).

In solo recitals, Yang's innovative program has been praised as "extraordinary" and "kaleidoscopic" (Los Angeles Times). She has performed at New York City's Lincoln Center and Metropolitan Museum, the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., Chicago's Symphony Hall, Zurich's Tonhalle, and all throughout Australia on a recital tour presented by Musica Viva.

As an avid chamber musician, Yang has collaborated with the Takács Quartet for Dvořák – part of Lincoln Center's Great Performers series – and Schubert's "Trout" Quintet with members of the Emerson String Quartet at the Mostly Mozart Festival at Lincoln Center. Yang has fostered an enduring partnership with the Alexander String Quartet and together released three celebrated recordings under Foghorn Classics.

As a champion of new music, Yang has premiered three piano concerti by Michael Torke, Jonathan Leshnoff, and Reinaldo Moya. In the fall of 2025, she will perform a new work by Jonathan Leshnoff: *Rhapsody on America*, a piece written expressly for her.

Yang has released 10 recordings, including celebrated solo discs (*Collage* and *Wild Dreams*, Avie Records), where she "demonstrated impressive gifts" (New York Times). Yang also released a live-performance recording of Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1 with Denmark's Odense Symphony Orchestra (Bridge Records), which International Record Review called "hugely enjoyable, beautifully shaped ... a performance that marks her out as an enormous talent."

In recent years, Yang has focused

Guest Artist, *cont'd.*

on promoting creative ways to introduce classical music to new audiences. She served as the Guest Artistic Director for the Laguna Beach Music Festival in California, curating concerts that explore the “art-inspires-art” concept – highlighting the relationship between music and dance while simultaneously curating outreach activities to young students. Yang’s collaboration with the Aspen Santa Fe Ballet of *Half/Cut/Split* – a “witty, brilliant exploration of Robert Schumann’s *Carnaval*” (The Santa Fe New Mexican) choreographed by Jorma Elo – was a marriage between music and dance to illuminate the ingenuity of Schumann’s musical language. The group toured nationwide, including five performances at the Joyce Theater in New York.

In the summer of 2025, Yang made a celebrated return to the Aspen Music Festival performing Brahms Piano Concerto No. 1, and made her debut at San Diego’s Mainly Mozart Festival. In the 2025/2026 as one of the most in-demand soloists and recitalists today, Yang will continue to present her wide range of repertoire in over 30 cities around the world playing piano concertos with New Jersey Symphony, St. Louis Symphony, Vancouver Symphony, Oregon Symphony, Milwaukee Symphony, and Belgian National Orchestra among many others, and give solo recitals at Celebrity Series of Boston, Meany Center for the Performing Arts in Seattle, and ECHO Chamber Music Series in San Diego. As a chamber musician, Yang will reunite with the Takács Quartet performing Schumann’s Piano Quintet.

Born in Seoul, South Korea, Yang received her first piano lesson from her aunt at the age of four. She quickly took to the instrument, which she received as a birthday present. Over the next few years won several national piano competitions in her native country. By the age of ten, she had entered the School of Music at the Korea National University of Arts, and went on to make a number of concerto and recital appearances in Seoul and Daejeon. In 1997, Yang moved to the United States to begin studies at the pre-college division of the Juilliard School with Dr. Yoheved Kaplinsky. During her first year at Juilliard, Yang won the pre-college division Concerto Competition, resulting in a performance of Haydn’s Keyboard Concerto in D with the Juilliard Pre-College Chamber Orchestra. After winning the Philadelphia Orchestra’s Greenfield Student Competition, she performed Prokofiev’s Third Piano Concerto with that orchestra at just twelve years old. She graduated from Juilliard with special honor as the recipient of the school’s 2010 Arthur Rubinstein Prize, and in 2011 she won its 30th Annual William A. Petschek Piano Recital Award. She is a Steinway artist.

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