

Peter Oundjian conducts the Royal Conservatory Orchestra

Friday, May 3, 2024 at 8pm

This is the 1,297th concert in Koerner Hall

Peter Oundjian, conductor

Stewart Goodyear, piano

Royal Conservatory Orchestra

PROGRAM

Kelly-Marie Murphy: *Curiosity, Genius, and the Search for Petula Clark*

Ludwig van Beethoven: Piano Concerto No. 5 in E flat Major, op. 73 ("Emperor")

I. Allegro

II. Adagio un poco mosso

III. Rondo: Allegro

INTERMISSION

Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky: Symphony No. 5 in E Minor, op. 64

I. Andante – Allegro con anima

II. Andante cantabile, con alcuna licenza

III. Valse – Allegro moderato

IV. Finale: Andante maestoso – Allegro vivace – Moderato assai e molto maestoso

Kelly-Marie Murphy

Born in Sardegna, Italy, September 4, 1964

Curiosity, Genius, and the Search for Petula Clark (2017)

Ottawa-based composer Kelly-Marie Murphy's *Curiosity, Genius, and the Search for Petula Clark* was premiered September 22, 2017 to mark Glenn Gould's 85th birthday and the 70th anniversary of his debut with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. "For this piece," Murphy writes, "I wanted to explore the difference between the public perception of Glenn Gould (quirky, odd, ingenious, obsessive), and how Glenn perceived himself (a regular guy with many interests; possibly wearing a cheap suit). He did a fascinating series of radio documentaries, the first of which was called *The Search for Petula Clark*. Essentially, Glenn was intrigued by chasing radio relay stations on a drive up to northern Ontario. At certain intervals, he could hear Petula Clark's current hit, "Who Am I?" By the end of the drive, Glenn was quite an expert on the piece, and the distance between relay stations ... He speaks about this pop song with the same focus, attention, and intellect as he would use on Bach. It is both funny and charming. I tried to weave these elements through the piece – energy, curiosity, reflection, and satisfaction."

All four elements can be heard in Murphy's rhythmically driven score, which builds through a series of climaxes, with brilliant orchestral writing, virtuoso percussion, sonorous brass sequences, and intricate woodwind colour. There is humour in the music, too, and whimsy – not surprising in this portrayal of a musician whose legendary sardonic way with words and deadpan delivery could describe Petula Clark's voice as "fiercely loyal to its one great octave" and the message of many of her songs as a "proud, secure Methodist tract." The exception was her 1966 single "Who Am I?" where the vulnerability, insecurity, and uncertainty of the lyrics shine through in 'Pet's' singing and, unless I am fancifully mistaken, are similarly echoed in the rising scales and melodic fragments of the slower, quieter, later section of Murphy's attractive score.

This piece was originally commissioned by the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Peter Oundjian, Music Director, with financial support from the Government of Canada for performance during the 150th Anniversary of the Confederation of Canada [September 2017]. The new arrangement being performed tonight was supported by commissioning funds from The Royal Conservatory.

Ludwig van Beethoven

Born in Bonn, Germany, baptised December 17, 1770; died in Vienna, Austria, March 26, 1827

Piano Concerto No. 5 in E flat Major, op. 73 ("Emperor") (1809)

Known in the English-speaking world as the "Emperor," Beethoven's Fifth Piano Concerto is heroic in mood and scale. It is the prototype of the romantic piano concerto. The military element in the martial rhythm and scoring of the opening movement echoes the fact that Beethoven wrote the music while Napoleon's troops were bombarding his city of Vienna. Five years earlier, he had angrily scratched out Napoleon's name on the title page of the "Eroica." Three rock solid chords from the orchestra are followed immediately by assertive, cadenza-like flourishes from the piano before the two main themes are introduced in a more traditional manner by the orchestra. By placing the cadenza at the opening, rather than in its customary place towards the end of the movement, Beethoven defines the role of the soloist in a new and striking way and leaves no doubt as to where authority lies. Concerto and symphony combine, as the piano and orchestral writing is full of symphonic detail integral to the progression of the music.

The serene and idyllic slow movement, with its simple hymn-like theme, interweaves one statement of the theme with the next, and never really ends. It is in the remote key of B major, yet the tonality does not jar. Neither does the deceptively simple key shift on a single bassoon note at the conclusion of the movement. This brings us back to the home key of E flat and, in a magical moment (recalling the eerie transition from the third movement to the finale in the Fifth Symphony), back to the soloist's dream-like musing on the theme to come. The orchestra catches on to the theme that the piano softly hints at and together they leap into an exuberant finale. This is a grand sonata-rondo structure, invigorating in mood, with the piano asserting its leonine power in music of real majesty – an Emperor among concertos, indeed.

Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky

Born in Kamsko-Votkinsk, Russia, April 25/May 7, 1840; died in St. Petersburg, Russia, October 25/November 6, 1893

Symphony No. 5 in E Minor, op. 64 (1888)

"I am exceedingly anxious to prove to myself, as to others, that I am not played out as a composer," Tchaikovsky wrote to his long-time patron Nadezhda von Meck, acknowledging fear of failure as one of the strongest of all motivators for a creative artist. "Have I told you that I intend to write a symphony?" Tchaikovsky had expressed a similar fear to his brother Modest a month

earlier, but work was progressing well in the pleasant surroundings of a new dacha he had built in the woods at Frolovskoe, just outside Moscow. His outline for the first movement was to cryptically suggest an underlying program for the Fifth: "Introduction. Complete resignation to Fate – or (what is the same thing) the inscrutable design of Providence. Allegro: I. Murmurs, doubts, reproaches against XXX ... (II) Shall I throw myself in the embraces of faith???? A wonderful program, if only it can be carried out."

This program sketch, found in one of Tchaikovsky's notebooks, certainly promises *something*. But read what you will into 'XXX.' A gambling addiction? His homosexuality? Like the Fourth and the Sixth symphonies, Tchaikovsky's Fifth is concerned in some way with fate, but not the struggle. Tchaikovsky now appears resigned to his lot in life and willing to trust in providence and faith. He said little about the piece, though he did once write to his patron about adopting faith: "The intelligent man who believes in God has armour, against which the blows of fate are absolutely in vain." Fate makes a low-key entrance at the very beginning in a darkly coloured, two-bar clarinet theme that is melancholy and muted. Its rhythm, however, is distinctive and forms a motto theme that will reappear throughout the symphony – initially as a subdued march-like main theme, soon to be whipped into a state of great agitation.

The slow movement introduces one of the most celebrated of Tchaikovsky's romantic tunes, an expansive, supplicatory melody given to the horn. This and two additional themes add a humane, compassionate dimension into the symphonic argument. But comfort gives way to conflict with two brusque and quite unexpected intrusions of the Fate motif. By the end of a movement of great drama, resolution remains a distant objective. The appearance of the motto theme punctuates the smooth contours of the third-movement waltz, which, otherwise, suspends the emotional trajectory of the symphony. In the finale, however, it is transformed into a triumphant march of victory as a grand military procession brings out the heavy guns and Tchaikovsky completely resigns himself to Fate. "If Beethoven's Fifth is Fate knocking at the door," wrote a critic not long after the premiere, "Tchaikovsky's Fifth is Fate trying to get out."

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Peter Oundjian **Conductor**

A dynamic presence in the conducting world, Peter Oundjian is renowned for his vibrant collaborative spirit and engaging musicality. His musical career spans five decades, beginning as a solo violinist and first violinist of the Tokyo String Quartet, followed by an international conducting career leading preeminent orchestras in many of the world's major musical centers.

He is currently Principal Conductor of the Colorado Symphony and Music Director of the Colorado Music Festival. Over the course of his 14-year tenure as music director of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, which concluded in 2018, he reinvigorated the orchestra with acclaimed innovative programming, artistic collaborations, extensive audience growth, national and international tours, and several outstanding recordings, including *Vaughan Williams: Orchestral Works*, which garnered a Grammy nomination and a Juno Award.

From 2012-18, Oundjian served as music director of the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, where he led the RSO on several international tours, including North America, China, and a European festival tour with performances at the Bregenz Festival, the Dresden Festival, as well as in Innsbruck, Bergamo, Ljubljana, and others. His final appearance with the orchestra as their music director was at the 2018 BBC Proms where he conducted Britten's epic *War Requiem*.

Oundjian was principal guest conductor and artistic advisor of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra from 2006 to 2010 and artistic director of the Caramoor International Music Festival from 1997 to 2007. He was also the music director of the Amsterdam Sinfonietta from 1998-2002. Throughout his conducting career, Oundjian has appeared as guest conductor with many leading orchestras, including Philadelphia, Boston, Chicago, Pittsburgh, Atlanta, and San Francisco Symphonies.

After opening the 2023-24 season in Denver, Oundjian returns to Seattle, Dallas, Toronto, and Sarasota. His season culminates with a Carnegie Hall concert on May 7, where he leads the Royal Conservatory Orchestra and Stewart Goodyear in the same program as tonight.

Oundjian has been a visiting professor at Yale University's School of Music since 1981.

Stewart Goodyear

Piano

Proclaimed “a phenomenon” by the *Los Angeles Times* and “one of the best pianists of his generation” by the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Stewart Goodyear is an accomplished concert pianist, improviser, and composer.

Mr. Goodyear has performed with, and has been commissioned by, many of the major orchestras and chamber music organizations around the world. Last year, Orchid Classics released Mr. Goodyear’s recording of his suite for piano and orchestra, *Callaloo*, and his piano sonata. His recent commissions include a Piano Quintet for the Penderecki String Quartet and a piano work for the Honens Piano Competition.

Mr. Goodyear’s discography includes the complete sonatas and piano concertos of Beethoven, as well as concertos by Tchaikovsky, Grieg, and Rachmaninov, an album of Ravel piano works, and an album entitled *For Glenn Gould*, which combines repertoire from Gould’s US and Montreal debuts. His Rachmaninov recording received a Juno nomination for Best Classical Album for Soloist and Large Ensemble Accompaniment. Mr. Goodyear’s recording of his own transcription of Tchaikovsky’s *The Nutcracker (Complete Ballet)*, was chosen by *The New York Times* as one of the best classical music recordings of 2015. His discography is released on the Marquis Classics, Orchid Classics, Bright Shiny Things and Steinway, and Sony labels. His newest recording, Adolphus Hailstork’s Piano Concerto with the Buffalo Philharmonic under JoAnn Falletta, was released in March 2023 on the Naxos label. His composition for solo cello and piano, *The Kapok*, was recorded by Inbal Negev and Mr. Goodyear on Avie Records, and his suite for solo violin, *Solo*, was commissioned and recorded by Miranda Cuskson for the Urlicht Audiovisual label.

Highlights for the 2023-24 season are his performance at the Southbank Centre (UK), Schleswig-Holstein Festival, his recital debut at Wigmore Hall, his debut with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, and his return with the Milwaukee Symphony, Buffalo Philharmonic, the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, and the Rheingau Musik Festival in Germany.

First ever Artist in Residence at The Royal Conservatory of Music, Stewart Goodyear studied at the Conservatory under James Anagnoson and Leon Fleisher. He made his Koerner Hall debut on November 28, 2010 and, later, gave the first performance of his Beethoven Marathon, during which he performed all of Beethoven’s piano concertos in one day. Tonight marks his 15th appearance in the Hall.

Royal Conservatory Orchestra

Joaquin Valdepeñas, Resident Conductor

The Royal Conservatory Orchestra (RCO), part of the Temerty Orchestral Program, is widely regarded as an outstanding ensemble and one of the best training orchestras in North America. Through the RBC Guest Conductor Program, four renowned conductors work with the RCO each season, allowing Glenn Gould School students to gain experience through professional rehearsal and performance conditions. A full week of rehearsals culminates in a Koerner Hall performance under the batons of such distinguished guest conductors as Sir Roger Norrington, former Ichnatowycz Chair in Piano Leon Fleisher, Bramwell Tovey, Johannes Debus, Peter Oundjian, Gábor Takács-Nagy, Ivars Taurins, Tania Miller, Andrei Feher, Mario Bernardi, Richard Bradshaw, Nathan Brock, Julian Kuerti, Uri Mayer, Tito Muñoz, Andrés Keller, and Lior Shambadal. With four annual performances, participation in the RCO ensures that instrumental students in the Bachelor of Music and the Artist Diploma Program of The Glenn Gould School graduate with extensive orchestral performance experience. Additionally, winners of The Robert W. and G. Ann Corcoran Concerto Competition have the opportunity to appear each year as soloists with the RCO. Graduates of the RCO have joined the ranks of the greatest orchestras in the world, including the Cleveland Orchestra, the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, the BBC Orchestra, the Montreal Symphony Orchestra, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Tafelmusik, the Canadian Opera Company Orchestra, the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, the Calgary Philharmonic, the Quebec Symphony Orchestra, the Hallé Orchestra of Manchester, the Hong Kong Philharmonic, the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, and Leipzig Gewandhaus. On May 7, 2024, the RCO will make its Carnegie Hall debut under the baton of Maestro Oundjian with RCM alumnus Stewart Goodyear as piano soloist, with tonight’s program.