PIANO
CLEVELAND

PRESENTS



FINAL CONCERTO ROUND

Presented by the Walter and Jean Kalberer Foundation

Friday, July 31 | 7:30 PM

Kulas Hall
Cleveland Institute of Music

Program

FINALISTS | **JUNIOR DIVISION**



Ryan Huang | 15
Canada / United States

Concerto in A Minor, Op. 16
I. Allegro molto moderato

Edvard Grieg
(1843–1907)



Jueon Lee | 14
South Korea

Concerto No. 1 in E Minor, Op. 11
I. Allegro maestoso

Frédéric Chopin
(1810–1849)



Yixin Shen | 15
China

Concerto in A Minor, Op. 16
I. Allegro molto moderato

E. Grieg
(1843–1907)

Intermission

FINALISTS | **SENIOR DIVISION**



Chenxu Han | 17
China

Concerto No. 1 in C Major, Op. 15
I. Allegro con brio

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770–1827)

Program

FINALISTS | **SENIOR DIVISION**



Guillermo Hernández Barrocal | 18
Spain

Concerto in A Minor, Op. 54
I. Allegro affettuoso

Robert Schumann
(1810–1856)



Yurim Kim | 17
South Korea

Concerto No. 1 in E Minor, Op. 11
I. Allegro maestoso

F. Chopin
(1810–1849)

Brief Pause

FIRST PRIZE WINNER | **RISING STAR DIVISION**



Wilson Liu | 12
United States

Capriccio in B Minor, Op. 76, No. 2

Johannes Brahms
(1833–1897)

Nocturne in D-flat Major, Op. 27, No. 2

Frédéric Chopin
(1810–1849)

Awards Ceremony

GUEST ARTISTS

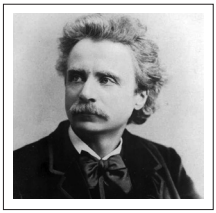
CANTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Canton Symphony Orchestra



Steven Byess | Conductor

Program Notes | By Marco Ladd, Ph.D.



Edvard Grieg

(1843–1907)

Piano Concerto in A Minor, Op. 16

One of the chief exponents of Norwegian romantic nationalism, **Edvard Grieg** was born in Bergen to a prosperous middle-class family. His parents were amateur musicians, keen to foster young Edvard's growing talent: with the encouragement of the eminent violinist Ole Bull, this entailed leaving Norwegian institutions behind and, aged fifteen, enrolling at the Leipzig Conservatory. Though being in one of the powerhouses of German musical culture undoubtedly benefitted his musical development, a distinctive compositional voice eluded him. The turning point came a few years after leaving Leipzig, when, under the influence of Bull and Norwegian nationalist circles, he was exposed to his country's traditional music and culture. From this point onwards, even as he contributed amply to the cosmopolitan demand for expressive, evocative pieces aimed at amateurs—his beloved *Lyric Pieces* for piano—and toured the musical capitals of Europe extensively as a performer, he also cultivated a unique personal style that borrowed and transformed musical materials from Norwegian folk culture. These nationalist leanings famously informed his incidental music for *Peer Gynt,* by the famed Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen, but also surfaced in the songs and piano miniatures that were his specialty. Thanks to his predilection for small canvases, his willingness to cater to amateur music-making, and the delicate lyricism of his music, Grieg has always been popular with audiences; yet he also had notable admirers among later composers, from Frederick Delius to Maurice Ravel.

The Piano Concerto in A minor was composed in the summer of 1868, a year after Grieg's marriage to the singer Nina Hagerup and shortly after the birth of their daughter: it is the work of a young man keen to make his mark. The concerto was premiered in April 1869 in Copenhagen; later that same year, however, Grieg visited the eminent composer and pianist Franz Liszt, who read through the Concerto at sight and suggested some revisions to the orchestration that were incorporated into the first published score in 1872. Yet though he appeared often as the soloist in performances of the work, Grieg was never fully satisfied with it: he continued to revise the Concerto intermittently, with the latest version dating to shortly before his death.

In a crowded field, Op. 16 opens with one of the most memorable opening gestures of all nineteenth-century concertos. A sequence of granitic block chords tumbles from the top to the bottom of the keyboard, outlining a characteristic interval pattern—a descending second followed by a descending third (i.e. a step followed by a leap downwards). Though this interval pattern appears often in Grieg's works and is characteristic of Norwegian fiddle music, the opening as a whole is highly reminiscent of the Piano Concerto by Robert Schumann, also in A minor. This is no coincidence, for Grieg had an abiding love of Schumann's music, and had in fact heard Robert's widow—the virtuoso pianist Clara Schumann—perform the Piano Concerto during his time in Leipzig. In other ways, however, the music seems to look forward, its rich textures and spontaneous lyricism anticipating the concertos of Rachmaninov.

Following the dramatic opening, the concerto proper begins with a cluster of themes, a brittle fanfare and then a sweeping rising figure—a step, followed by a leap upwards—that is in fact the opening gesture flipped on its head. Played first by the orchestra, then by the soloist, together these themes define the first subject of the exposition, the first section of the **sonata form** structure underpinning the movement. A bustling transitional passage gets underway, leading to a massed buildup on a single chord: this heralds the entry of a contrasting second subject in C major, which, in its melting lyricism, is the polar opposite of the opening. With mounting enthusiasm, the soloist builds towards a powerful cadence to affirm the new key, signaled by a glittering chordal trill (or shake) that unleashes a triumphant passage for the orchestra alone. In the middle section of the movement, the **development,** the soloist weaves delicate arpeggios around an orchestral duet, flutes and horns taking turns to softly intone the fanfare theme. The soloist then takes up the sweeping rising theme, whose increasing agitation precipitates a crisis: recollections of the opening signal the onset of the **recapitulation.** This is a mostly faithful reprise of material heard in the exposition, with one key difference: the lyrical second theme is now in A major (the major **mode** of the home key). As before, it ends with a climactic trill that, this time, leads briskly towards a **cadenza:** a virtuosic unaccompanied passage for the soloist typically found at the end of concerto movements. Grieg's cadenza elaborates on the fanfare theme, which is eventually rendered at maximum intensity in thunderous block chords, wreathed in arpeggios. The end of the movement recalls its opening, now repurposed as a gesture of emphatic finality.

Program Notes



Frédéric Chopin

(1810–1849)

Piano Concerto No. 1 in E minor, Op. 11

Allegro maestoso

The two virtuosos who defined the sound of Romantic pianism in the first half of the nineteenth century—**Frédéric Chopin** and Franz Liszt—were born within two years of one another, in 1810 and 1811 respectively. Yet in their music and in their character, the two men defined opposite poles of musical experience. Liszt's extravagant showmanship was well suited to public display, and to the growing demand for public concert-going across Europe. Chopin, by contrast, looked inwards: though no less prodigiously gifted than his Hungarian contemporary, his music and playing blossomed in the intimate space of the drawing room, whether in private concerts or in private lessons.

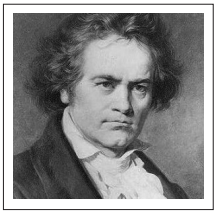
Yet Chopin, too, started out a showman. Born Fryderyk Franciszek Chopin in a small town near Warsaw, Poland, the composer was a child prodigy who was giving his first public concerts already by the age of seven. By his late teens, trained in a range of musical disciplines and with several youthful works under his belt, the young virtuoso had become the toast of Warsaw's high society. Such great talent, however, demanded exposure on a bigger stage. The logical next step was to tour Europe's great cities as a virtuoso composer-pianist, and Chopin duly departed Warsaw for Vienna in early November 1830. Just weeks later, Polish nationalists instigated a revolt against Russian rule subsequently known as the November Uprising. Many of Chopin's friends returned to Poland to take part in this (ultimately failed) revolution, and the composer himself was torn between the call of his homeland and the call of his talent. In the end, however, he followed the latter to Paris, where he found himself among a rich community of Poles in exile. Paris would be his home for most of the rest of his life; he never returned to Poland.

None of this could have been on Chopin's mind during his final year in Warsaw (1829–30), however, when he was writing his Piano Concerto No. 1 in E minor, Op. 11. A concerto of one's own was essential for any touring virtuoso pianist, which at that point Chopin still aspired to be—and in reality, Op. 11 was already his second effort in the genre, composed after the Piano Concerto No. 2 in F minor that was later issued as Opus 21. Both concertos are the work of a young man looking forward to a career that was still in the process of blossoming, and for this very reason it is worth placing them in the context for which they were composed: the concert halls and aristocratic salons of Warsaw, where Chopin first plied his trade and where he absorbed the sounds and mannerisms of the so-called "brilliant style."

The brilliant style was one of many evolutions of the mature Classical style represented by composers such as Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Nowadays we are familiar with the strand of musical influence that led from Mozart to the late Classicism of Beethoven and Schubert, and from there to the early Romanticism of Schumann and Mendelssohn. But there was another strand of influence departing from Mozart the performer, embodied by a cohort of border-hopping composer-pianists such as Jan Ladislav Dussek, Johann Nepomuk Hummel (a former student of Mozart's), Ignaz Moscheles and many others besides. The "post-classical" music of these pianist-composers, according to musicologist Jim Samson, was characterized by an expansion and exaggeration of two characteristics of Mozart's piano concertos: graceful lyricism on the one hand, and brilliant virtuosity on the other, described at the time with the Italian word bravura. Music mainly combining these two qualities was cosmopolitan, international, widely popular; the brilliant style thus loomed large in the musical culture of Europe in the early 1800s, even if most of its exponents are relatively unfamiliar to listeners today. It was profoundly formative for Chopin, leaving its mark on all his early works—not least his piano concertos, in which rhapsodic lyricism is juxtaposed with passagework of fearsome difficulty.

Piano Concerto No. 1 opens with a prolonged orchestral introduction typical for concertos of the time, though its grandeur is a marker of the young composer's ambition. All the main themes in the movement are first presented here. First comes a wide-ranging opening theme, serious in tone, paired immediately with a subsidiary lyrical theme, unfolding mournfully over a pulsing accompaniment; then, after a transition, a radiant singing melody in the major mode, shy at first but gaining in confidence as it repeated. To an extent the simple scoring of the orchestral part betrays Chopin's inexperience (he wrote very little for instruments throughout his career), though we must remember that touring virtuosi often performed their concertos in private homes to the backing of a string quartet, making relatively plain accompaniment a pragmatic choice. Regardless, like all concerto first movements this one is in dialogue with the most important formal pattern employed in instrumental music of the period, sonata form. Movements in **sonata form** typically foreground contrast in their opening portion, known as the **exposition,** by opposing musical themes played in different keys; this creates tension that has to be resolved in a subsequent portion called the **recapitulation,** where the musical themes from the exposition are reprised, generally in the same order, all in the home key. But in the first movement of Op. 11 Chopin inverts the pattern: the dramatic change of key is placed in the recapitulation, late in the work, while the entire orchestral introduction and exposition, shifts between minor and major aside, stay in the home key. Chopin would leave this unusual formal choice behind in his mature music, but the general effect of increasingly frustrated stasis followed by crisis—privileging apotheosis over resolution—can be clearly identified in many subsequent works, such as the solo Ballades.

Program Notes



Ludwig van Beethoven

(1770–1827)

Piano Concerto No. 1 in C major, Op. 15

Allegro con brio

It is difficult to overstate the influence that **Ludwig van Beethoven**—the man, his music, and his myth—has had on the history of Western classical music. Composers of the later nineteenth century invariably wrestled with their illustrious forebear, while musical society at large placed Beethoven on a pedestal as the archetypal Great Composer, a key reference point in Western music theory, aesthetics and philosophy. Beethoven's biography, too, and in particular his irreversible hearing loss, was influential in generating the myth of the Suffering Artist who must triumph over adversity—an image that continues to shape the way we think about talent and artistry today, for good or for ill. It can be difficult, therefore, to put ourselves in the shoes of Vienna's aristocracy and bourgeoisie c. 1800, when the Beethoven myth was not yet established: when Beethoven was still the young man from Bonn who had studied with Haydn; the tremendously exciting pianist whose improvisational gifts enchanted Viennese salon-goers; the composer of symphonies and sonatas that crackled with energy and rhythmic verve, quite unlike the artless grace of Mozart.

When the 22-year-old Beethoven came to Vienna in late 1792, he had been straining at the limits of the musical horizons in his hometown of Bonn for some years. A brief, earlier trip to the Habsburg capital in 1787 (during which he probably took a few lessons with Mozart, and heard him perform) had given him a taste of its rich musical and social opportunities; he hungered for more. Having arranged to study with the great Joseph Haydn, he did not arrive in Vienna as an unknown, and a thick network of acquaintances and professional contacts was eager to help him make his way. In the event, Beethoven and Haydn's relationship was somewhat fraught and the period of formal instruction lasted less than a year. But the city that had recently mourned the death of Mozart welcomed the talented young pianist who seemed in every way to be the elder composer's successor. His reputation as a composer took longer to build, but this was partly by design: Beethoven deliberately refrained from publishing any of his compositions until 1795, when his fame as a performer was already well established in Viennese noble circles, thus maximizing the impact of his Op. 1 (a collection of piano trios).

The First Piano Concerto, Op. 15, was likewise written in 1795, and must therefore be understood as part of this initial charm offensive, when Beethoven was actively building his career. Though it was the first concerto he published, it was not the first one he wrote. The Concerto in B-flat major, now known as the Second Concerto, Op. 19, was written before Op. 15 and was a revision of a work Beethoven composed while still in Bonn (another piece of juvenilia, a Concerto in E-flat major from 1784, was never published at all). This cluster of early concertos should come as no surprise. Performing as a soloist in a concerto was a standard way for budding virtuoso pianists to exhibit their skills, even in the largely private recitals Beethoven gave during his first years in Vienna (when performed in aristocratic parlors the "orchestra" would typically be played by a string quartet). Notably, when the First Concerto was premiered on December 18th, 1795—at a concert organized by his former teacher Haydn—it was only Beethoven's second *public* concert appearance since his arrival in Vienna three years prior. As the first piano concerto composed expressly for Viennese audiences, Op. 15 therefore represents a milestone in his development as a public figure.

The First Concerto is often described as being influenced by Mozart, and indeed there is a grand concerto by Mozart in the same key of C major (No. 25, K503) that Beethoven is known to have admired. Certainly in Op. 15 he deploys faultlessly the formal model for concerto-writing Mozart had perfected during the peak of his fame in the mid 1780s. The first movement is the longest, employing a concerto-specific hybrid of the **ritornello form** typical of Baroque concertos—where solos and orchestral passages alternate systematically—and the **sonata form** characteristic of the Classical symphony—which relies on creating tension between contrasting musical materials and resolving it via repetition. In the stately orchestral introduction, the opening bars establish a principal theme whose insistent rhythm (**one**, one-two, **one**) recurs again and again throughout the movement as a kind of motto. Though the soloist first begins with a new theme, poised and urbane, the motto soon reappears in the transition to the secondary theme in a new key; and again in the central **development** section that elaborates on the preceding musical materials; and again in the quiet, hushed passage that immediately precedes the reprise of the main theme and the beginning of the **recapitulation.** The end of the movement leaves a dramatic pause for a final unaccompanied solo for the pianist—a **cadenza**—that in Beethoven's early professional career would have been improvised by the performer. Over the course of his career, however, Beethoven would be instrumental in the gradual move towards soloists playing non-improvised, written-out cadenzas. Reflecting this transformation is the fact that in 1809 he wrote out no fewer than three cadenzas for use in the opening movement of Op. 15. The third of these—the longest and most complex, adding nearly five minutes to the movement overall—is the one most often performed today.

Program Notes



Robert Schumann

(1810–1856)

Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 54

Allegro affettuoso

A poet of the piano and a significant musical aesthete of his time, **Robert Schumann** was a key member of a generation of composers including Chopin and Mendelssohn, whose works defined the sound of early Romanticism. Born in Saxony in what is now Germany, Schumann studied music from an early age, but like many musicians before him he was strongly encouraged by family to go into law. When the lure of music proved stronger than his legal studies, he took lessons with Friedrich Weick; Weick's daughter Clara—herself a child prodigy who would become one of the most influential concert pianists of the entire century—would later become Robert's wife. Schumann's aspirations to become a concert pianist were thwarted when he permanently injured his hands, possibly through harmful practice techniques; from then on, he focused his energies on composition. Over the course of his career he made significant contributions to the symphonic literature and chamber music repertoire, as well as to the genres for which he is most famous—the accompanied song or Lied, and a range of unique and highly original works for solo piano. Schumann was also a significant early music critic, founding one of the nineteenth century's key music journals, the Neue Zeitschrift für Musik; towards the end of his life he befriended and mentored the young pianist and composer Johannes Brahms.

During his years as an aspiring pianist Schumann had embarked upon (and abandoned) various attempts at writing a piano concerto; ironically, the only concerto he ever did complete was first conceived as something else entirely. This concerto-to-be emerged in the enormous burst of creativity Schumann experienced immediately after his marriage to Clara Wieck, which had finally taken place in September 1840 after a drawn-out legal battle with her father. Songs, symphonies, and chamber music poured easily out of Robert's pen for the next several years, and among them was a *Phantasie* in A minor for piano and orchestra. Written in just ten days in 1841, this *Phantasie* was roughly equivalent to the first movement of what would become the Piano Concerto. Clara was full of admiration for the new work, and even played through it during a rehearsal for Schumann's "Spring" Symphony later that same year. But despite Schumann's best efforts, he was unable to persuade a publisher to print a one-movement work, and he put it aside. Only in 1845 did he return to the *Phantasie*,

and with Clara's encouragement expand it into a fully-fledged Concerto, adding a slow movement and a finale. The new work received its first performance in Dresden in December 1845, with Clara as the soloist. Well received from the very first, the Concerto in A minor has remained one of the most popular nineteenth-century piano concertos ever since, and is one of the most recorded works in the Western art music tradition.

Perhaps because of its origins in the standalone *Phantasie,* the opening movement of the Piano Concerto is a very finely woven piece, the soloist's part tightly integrated with the orchestra. Nevertheless, the pianist is in the spotlight from the very start, even if Schumann generally avoids virtuosic showmanship in the manner of (say) Liszt. Triggered by an explosive orchestral strike, the opening bars of the concerto feature a dramatic sequence of falling piano chords. A tender theme is then presented by the woodwind section, and immediately reprised by the pianist: this theme, initiated by a descending motive that Schumann used often in his works to stand for "Clara," is the source of almost all the melodic material in the movement. Busy transitional material gets underway, leading us from the home key of A minor to a new key, C major (typical procedure for a **sonata form** movement). Ordinarily the new key would be marked by a new theme; here, after a full-orchestra flurry and a sequence of interlocking descending scales in the solo part, Schumann presents a variation on the "Clara" theme. Soloist and orchestra play with this new variation with mounting excitement until the orchestra can contain itself no longer, bursting out into a joyous fanfare. And then, one of the most magical moments in the whole concerto: over rippling, nocturne-like arpeggios (broken chords), a touching third variation on "Clara" unfolds as a duet between the pianist and a solo clarinet. Resuming the original mood, a challenging passage based on a range of ideas from the movement thus far leads back to the "Clara" theme in its original garb. The opening section of the movement is then reprised in the **recapitulation,** but modified so that the music remains in the home key. But the joyous fanfare, this time, leads to a **cadenza**—a passage in a concerto where the soloist shows off their virtuosity. It is followed by a fast, exciting coda that brings the movement to an emphatic close.

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