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Concert Program

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NEC Philharmonia

Hugh Wolff

Stanford and Norma Jean Calderwood Director of Orchestras

with

Changyong Shin '24 AD, piano

Wednesday, April 3, 2024

7:30 p.m.

NEC's Jordan Hall

PROGRAM

Qigang Chen
(b. 1951)

Wu Xing (The Five Elements) (1999)
Shui (Water)
Mu (Wood)
Huo (Fire)
Tu (Earth)
Jin (Metal)

Richard Strauss
(1864–1949)

Death and Transfiguration, op. 24

Intermission

Sergei Prokofiev
(1891–1953)

Piano Concerto No. 2 in G Minor, op. 16
Andante – Allegretto
Scherzo: Vivace
Intermezzo: Allegro
Finale: Allegro tempestuoso

Changyong Shin '24 AD, piano

Chen *Wu Xing (Five Elements)*

“This commission [by Radio France] immediately raised all my interest, for the proposition coincided with a period of personal quest,” Chen wrote. “The challenge pleased me and I took it up as a style exercise, supported by the pressure of the duration [limitation]...”

“Before going further in my process, I undertook to characterize each piece by a different symbol. From there was born the idea of representing the five elements (Wu Xing). Because according to the *Yi King*, five elements constitute the universe: metal, wood, water, fire, and earth....

“To characterize musically a symbol in an extremely short time and to present a tangible material in an abstract language were my lines of strength. But even more, to establish relationships between the materials, so that each element generated the next one, as if the last was the consequence of the first.”

The result was a small suite of five two-minute movements, with the five Chinese elements in an order based on generation (other orders traditionally suggest other themes, such as production or overcoming). According to the foreword in the printed score, water is the strongest element for Chen, but characterized by calmness. Wood is the richest element, with a lot of variations; fire represents life (warm, but not aggressive); earth, a generative principle, is the matrix; and metal refers to strength and light.

The Five Elements was a finalist in the 2001 Masterprize competition in the UK, and it has been recorded by Didier Benetti and the National Orchestra of France.

Strauss *Death and Transfiguration*

Richard Strauss was just twenty-five when he wrote *Death and Transfiguration*.

Together with his tone poem *Don Juan*, written a year earlier, the work established Strauss as a prodigy composer with a brilliant future. *Death and Transfiguration* has a hidden story that provides the scaffolding for the musical structure. For the premiere, and at the composer’s request, his friend Alexander von Ritter wrote the following scenario.

- I. (Largo) In a dark, shabby room, a man lies dying. The silence is disturbed only by the ticking of a clock - or is it the beating of the man’s heart? A melancholy smile appears on the invalid’s face. Is he dreaming of his happy childhood?
- II. (Allegro molto agitato) A furious struggle between life and death, at whose climax we hear, briefly, the theme of Transfiguration that will dominate the final portion of the work. The struggle is unresolved, and silence returns.
- III. (Meno mosso ma sempre alla breve) He sees his life again, the happy times, the ideals striven for as a young man. But the hammer-blow of death rings out. His eyes are covered with eternal night.
- IV. (Moderato) The heavens open to show him what the world denied him:

Redemption, Transfiguration - the Transfiguration theme first played *pianissimo* by the full orchestra, its flowering enriched by the celestial arpeggios of two harps. The theme climbs ever higher, dazzlingly, into the empyrean.

(translation courtesy of Herbert Glass)

Prokofiev Second Piano Concerto

Sergei Prokofiev's Second Piano Concerto has an unusual history. Written in the waning years of Tsarist Russia, it was premiered in 1913 with the composer as soloist. In the chaos following the Russian Revolution the manuscript was lost in a fire. Ten years later, after finishing his Third Piano Concerto, Prokofiev reconstructed the lost concerto from memory. Needless to say, that process involved as much re-composition as reconstruction, and Prokofiev pronounced the finished product "so completely rewritten that it might almost be considered Concerto No. 4." Despite that, it remains his Second Piano Concerto. Again, the composer played the premiere – almost exactly a century ago – in May 1924.

In addition to its unusual star-crossed history, it has an unusual form. Cast in four movements, it eschews the traditional fast-slow-fast shape. The first movement is slow and melancholy, then doubles the tempo and lightens its mood. An enormous cadenza follows, filling almost half the movement's length. The second movement is a short, virtuoso Scherzo – the pianist plays unrelenting sixteenth notes with both hands, an octave apart. This *perpetuum mobile*, reminiscent of the finale of Chopin's B-flat minor Piano Sonata, is a technical tour-de-force. What follows under the sly title of *Intermezzo*, is a grim march – all sarcasm and sharp edges. The *Finale* hews more closely to the traditional model, a fast movement with lyrical episodes, a second, much shorter cadenza, and a brilliant run to the finish line.

Known to be one of the most technically challenging piano concertos in the repertoire, it has only recently entered the mainstream, as a younger more fearless generation of pianists has embraced it.

– Hugh Wolff

Pianist **Changyong Shin** has garnered international attention, with first-prize wins at the Gina Bachauer, Seoul, and Hilton Head International Piano Competitions. In 2022, he won the Raymond E. Buck Jury Discretionary Award at the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition.

In 2021, Changyong captivated audiences with a sold-out recital at Lotte Concert Hall, followed by a sold-out recital tour as well and multiple performances as part of Lotte Concert Hall's highly selective "In-House Artist Series." He also completed a recital at Seoul Arts Center in 2023. He has performed throughout Asia, North America, and Europe, including recitals at Carnegie Hall's Zankel and Weill Recital Halls, WQXR's The Greene Space, and Salle Cortot and the Louvre in Paris. He has also been featured at prominent festivals including the Barletta Piano Festival (Italy), Klavier-Festival Ruhr (Germany), Newport and Green Lake Festivals (United States) and Music in PyeongChang in Korea. Concerto appearances include those with the Utah Symphony, Oakland Symphony, Sendai Philharmonic, Hilton Head

Symphony Orchestra, Seoul Philharmonic, KBS Symphony and among others.

Changyong has released three professional recordings; his debut album on the Steinway label was named one of the “Best New Recordings of 2018” by WQXR, and subsequent albums received rave reviews from *ClassicsToday* and *Pizzicato*. Throughout this year, he has dedicated himself as the host of 2024 Matinee Concert Series at Arts Center Incheon, curating a dynamic lineup of performances that include both solo showcases and chamber music collaborations with fellow musicians, culminating in four memorable concerts.

A native of South Korea, Changyong was selected as the first prize winner of the Young Artist Award of The National Academy of Arts, Republic of Korea Academy in 2022. He has pursued his musical education in the United States since 2011, earning a bachelor’s degree from the Curtis Institute of Music and master’s degree and artist diploma from The Juilliard School under the tutelage of Robert McDonald. Currently, he is studying as an Artist Diploma student under the guidance of Wha Kyung Byun at New England Conservatory.

NEC Philharmonia

Hugh Wolff, conductor

First Violin

SooBeen Lee
Hannah Kim
Hannah Goldstick
Hila Dahari
Olga Kaminsky
Sydney Scarlett
Felicitas Schiffner
Peixuan Wu
Passacaglia Mason
Chloe Hong
Emma Boyd
Joshua Brown
Ching Shan Helen Yu
Nathan do Amaral Oliveira

Second Violin

Julian Rhee
K. J. McDonald
Yixiang Wang
Eunha Kim
Gabriella Foster
Caroline Smoak
Joy Wei
Jordan Hadrill
Angela Sin Ying Chan
Claire Thaler
Harin Kang
Yebin Yoo
Céline Bethoux

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Zac Fung
Lily Stern
Shijie Ma
Jihyeuk Choi
Jung ah Lee
Thomas Hung
Soyeon Koo
Lillian Yim
Sophia Knappe
Michelle Jung
Miruna Eynon

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Cailin Singleton
Gregory Padilla
Yihan Wu
Shion Kim
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Misha Bjerken

Viola

Yi-Chia Chen
Peter Jablokow
Chengrong Li
Hyelim Kong
Man To Kwong
RuYao Van der Ploeg
Xinlin Wang
Joy Hsieh
Eunha Kwon
Anna Mann
Adam Newman

Principal players

* Chen
† Strauss
§ Prokofiev

Flute
Isabel Evernham
Honor Hickman
Jay Kim
Jungyoon Kim *
Elizabeth McCormack
Yechan Min †
Subin Oh §

Piccolo
Jay Kim

Oboe
Robert Diaz
Corinne Foley
Gwendolyn Goble *
Kian Hirayama †
Abigail Hope-Hull §
Christian Paniagua

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Clarinet
Xianyi Ji §
Phoebe Kuan
Yi-Ting Ma †
Chasity Thompson *

E-Flat Clarinet
Phoebe Kuan

Bass Clarinet
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Yi-Ting Ma *

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Wilson Lu
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Carson Merrit *
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Feiyang Xu

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Hugh Wolff

*Stanford and Norma Jean Calderwood Director of Orchestras;
Chair, Orchestral Conducting*

Hugh Wolff joined the New England Conservatory faculty in 2008 and has conducted a large share of NEC's orchestral concerts every year since then. He has taught graduate students in an elite training program for orchestral conductors since 2009.

Wolff has appeared with all the major American orchestras, including those of Boston, Chicago, New York, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Cleveland. He is much in demand in Europe, where he has conducted the London Symphony, the Philharmonia, the City of Birmingham Symphony, the Orchestre National de France, Czech Philharmonic, Leipzig Gewandhaus, Munich Philharmonic, and the Bavarian and Berlin Radio Orchestras. A regular guest conductor with orchestras in Japan, Korea, Scandinavia, Canada and Australia, he is also a frequent conductor at summer festivals.

Currently Laureate Conductor of the Belgian National Orchestra, Wolff was principal conductor of the Frankfurt Radio Orchestra from 1997 to 2006 and maintains a close relationship with that ensemble. He led it on tours of Europe, Japan, and China, and at the Salzburg Festival. Wolff was principal conductor and then music director of the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra (1988-2000), with which he recorded twenty discs and toured the United States, Europe, and Japan. Performances with the Boston Symphony have included the world premiere of Ned Rorem's *Swords and Ploughshares* in Symphony Hall. Wolff was music director of the New Jersey Symphony (1986-1993) and principal conductor of Chicago's Grant Park Music Festival (1994-1997). He began his professional career in 1979 as associate conductor of the National Symphony Orchestra under Mstislav Rostropovich.

Wolff's extensive discography includes the complete Beethoven symphonies with the Frankfurt Radio Orchestra and music from the baroque to the present. He has recorded or premiered works by John Adams, Stephen Albert, John Corigliano, Brett Dean, Lukas Foss, John Harbison, Aaron Jay Kernis, Edgar Meyer, Rodion Shchedrin, Bright Sheng, Michael Torke, Mark-Anthony Turnage, and Joan Tower and has collaborated on CD with Mstislav Rostropovich, Yo-Yo Ma, Steven Isserlis, Joshua Bell, Hilary Hahn, Dawn Upshaw, Jennifer Larmore, Jean-Yves Thibaudet, and jazz guitarist John Scofield. Three times nominated for a Grammy Award, Wolff won the 2001 Cannes Classical Award.

A graduate of Harvard College, Wolff studied piano with George Crumb, Leon Fleisher and Leonard Shure, composition with Leon Kirchner and Olivier Messiaen, and conducting with Charles Bruck. In 1985, Wolff was awarded one of the first Seaver/ National Endowment for the Arts Conducting Prizes.

A gift from the Calderwood Charitable Foundation endowed the Stanford and Norma Jean Calderwood Director of Orchestras chair now occupied by Hugh Wolff. He and his wife, harpist and radio journalist Judith Kogan, have three sons.

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Welcome to NEC!

I am thrilled to share New England Conservatory's 2023-24 concert season—a celebration of the power of music to connect and inspire one another.

Whether you are seated in one of our concert halls or watching online, we hope you are uplifted by the performances of our students, faculty, and guest artists.

Above all, we thank you for your support of our students as they cultivate their artistry and contribute to the world through music.

A handwritten signature in black ink.

Andrea Kalyn
President

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