



New England  
Conservatory

# Concert Program

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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, appearing to read "Andrea Kalyn".

Andrea Kalyn  
President

# NEC Philharmonia

Hugh Wolff, conductor

*Stanford and Norma Jean Calderwood Director of Orchestras*

with

Leland Ko '24 AD, cello

Wednesday, December 13, 2023

7:30 p.m.

NEC's Jordan Hall

## PROGRAM

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**Gabriela Lena**  
Frank (b. 1972)

*Escaramuza* (2010)

**Witold Lutosławski**  
(1913–1994)

**Concerto for Cello and Orchestra**  
(1970) *played without pause*

Introduction  
Four Episodes  
Cantilena  
Finale

Leland Ko '24 AD, cello

*Intermission*

**Sergei Rachmaninoff**  
(1873–1943)

***Symphonic Dances, op. 45***  
Non allegro – Lento – Tempo  
I Andante con moto  
Lento assai – Allegro vivace

Millennia ago, before the invention of music or the written word, a prehistoric human likely picked up a stick and banged on a hollow log for the sheer joy of it. If rhythm is the first step toward music, then repeated notes are the first step toward melody. This concert features three works that start with these fundamentals and build into structures of imagination, complexity, and richness. Gabriela Lena Frank gets us in the mood with a furious bass drum solo, Witold Lutosławski builds an entire concerto from slowly repeated D's, and Sergei Rachmaninoff starts with a simple repeated-note figure that morphs into a menacing ostinato.

*Escaramuza* by **Gabriela Lena Frank** is scored for strings, harp, piano, and percussion. She writes:

*Escaramuza*, which signifies “skirmish” in the Spanish language, is inspired by the *kachampa* music of Andean Perú. Celebrating the pre-Hispanic Inca warrior, the *kachampa* dance is executed by athletic men who convey a triumphant, even joyful spirit. Inspired by the *kachampa* dances done with fast-snapping ropes that I’ve witnessed in Perú, especially in Paucartambo during the Virgen de la Carmen festival, I’ve created a brightly chiseled romp in an asymmetrical 7/8 rhythm that is launched after an extended bass drum solo. Through most of *Escaramuza*, no section of the ensemble is allowed to rest for long, maintaining the high energy typical of *kachampas*.

Witold **Lutosławski** wrote his Cello Concerto for Mstislav Rostropovich, who premiered it in London with the Bournemouth Symphony. Leland Ko, this evening’s soloist, has written this personal note about the music:

I’ve had a hard time containing my excitement about this piece. When Hugh Wolff reached out to me at the end of last year to decide on a concerto, Lutosławski’s was a logical conclusion—we both had interest in it, its popularity has been growing recently, and, at least in my thinking, for various reasons there is no piano reduction for this concerto, so the chance to learn the piece with orchestra was an opportunity I felt I had to take.

What I did not expect was just how obsessed I would become with this concerto. I vaguely understood that it was a unique piece, but what I soon found out was that it was like learning a new language which was able to communicate something extremely potent with me even as I was still trying to hash out its vocabulary, grammar, and at times even just its alphabet. This concerto is devoid of bar lines, and is instead full of obsessive repeated units, frequently in odd numbers, grotesque glissandi and quarter tones, and bursts of energy interspersed with silence. But perhaps the most notable feature is Lutosławski’s frequent use of the aleatoric method (structured randomness... or perhaps controlled chaos?), in which the orchestra is given various units to play, but the “when” and “how often” are left up to the conductor and each player.

What results from this is a story that follows a very clear emotional arc from intense stillness and uneasiness, to several episodes of increasing anxiety, to unhinged suffering and terror, and ultimately to intense determination and resilience. Lutosławski said that personal and political events did not directly influence his music, but also acknowledged that they did invade his creative process. Though there is no explicit narrative or political event to which it relates, it may be worth noting that this concerto was written in 1970 following several years of Polish troops and the Soviet regime suppressing liberal reforms and protests, and also the death of his mother — not to mention that Lutosławski himself was born to a democratic and politically active family just before the Russian Revolution, had lived through both World Wars, had enlisted in the army as a radio operator and escaped capture by German soldiers, and had lost his father and both his brothers to war or regime. Perhaps this helps explain the feeling that this concerto is about one against many, about the individual against society: every idea, every voice, every bit of resilience that the solo cello has is met by the orchestra rudely interrupting it, harassing it, creating fear, and even drowning it out.

I have always seen this concerto listed in concert programs as having four continuous movements — Introduction (Cadenza), Four Episodes, Cantilena, and Finale — and while no such explicit delineations nor their movement titles exist in the score, they've helped me organize the piece in my own head. The concerto opens with the cello alone: a five-minute cadenza book-ended and interspersed with repeated open Ds, filled in with rustlings and bursts of energy that have various markings from the composer — *indifferente* (indifferent), *grazioso* (graceful), *un poco buffo ma con eleganza* (a little funny but with elegance), *marziale* (march-like) — but that are perhaps shaded more than anything by the intensity and insanity of being alone. Towards the end of the cadenza, the spell is broken by three trumpets, and the cello consequently enters into the world.

The four episodes that follow are each established with a set of pizzicati from the solo cello, and all devolve into frantic repetition before being interrupted by the brass. The first episode begins with a certain degree of wonder, and the cello takes its time tentatively inspecting the new world around it. In the second episode, duplets turn into triplets as the cello becomes more anxious, as if skirting around or trying to avoid something. By the third episode, the triplets become quadruplets and the cello reaches full running speed and full fear. The fourth episode turns in a more rhythmic and determined direction, as if the cello has found some kind of resolve, but this fire, too, is put out by the brass.

The cello gets its first chance to interrupt the orchestra before the Cantilena, still with pizzicato, but this time forcefully and repetitively on low Es. The cello then begins a visceral lament and chant, amidst an unhinged murmuring from the strings in the orchestra, until rising to a climax in which the orchestra converges on a single G# and drowns out the solo cello.



I can only describe what happens next in the Finale as a total outcry. It begins with the only major orchestral tutti in the concerto, which includes some of the most terrifying sounds I've ever heard an orchestra make. Several lengthy attempts to fight back from the solo cello are interrupted by orchestral "schmears," until finally ten repeated chords from the orchestra mark its final blows, reducing the cello to pure wailing and whimpering. However, in a final burst of inspiration, the cello climbs all the way up to its highest registers and repeats an A until it is the only voice left — echoing the beginning of the concerto, somehow — as if the idea of freedom must continue.

My deepest thanks to Hugh Wolff and to all the musicians on stage for taking on this concerto with me. I can tell how much they believe in the power of this piece, and I could not be more excited to bring it to life with them tonight.

The wild success of the Ballets Russes in Paris in the early 1910s and the burgeoning international career of his younger compatriot, Igor Stravinsky, did not escape the notice of **Sergei Rachmaninoff**. He approached Michel Fokine, choreographer of Stravinsky's *The Firebird* and *Petrushka*, with the hope of collaborating on a ballet. Though nothing came of it at the time, the two did work together in London in 1934 on the ballet *Paganini*, based on the composer's *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*. Then, in the summer of 1940 as war engulfed Europe, Rachmaninoff found himself a refugee, living on Long Island. Nearby, were the Fokines (as well as Vladimir Horowitz and other artists fleeing Europe). Rachmaninoff spent his days practicing piano for an upcoming tour of the United States and composing a work he called *Fantastic Dances*. While he had in mind the Philadelphia Orchestra and Eugene Ormandy for the music's premiere, he wanted Fokine to choreograph it. Rachmaninoff played his new composition on the piano for both Fokine and Ormandy, but sadly the former died before a ballet could be created. Ormandy and the Philadelphians premiered the music, now titled *Symphonic Dances*, in January of 1941. It was to be Rachmaninoff's last major work; he died just two years later.

The music has all the hallmarks of mature Rachmaninoff: deeply felt melodies, brilliantly colorful orchestration (note the alto saxophone's prominent role in the first movement's slow central episode), propulsive rhythm, and pervasive melancholy. The last is perhaps no surprise, given the composer's fragile health and the catastrophe of Nazism and the Second World War. The first movement, originally titled Noon and given the highly unusual tempo Non Allegro, conjures goose-stepping soldiers and the relentless march to totalitarianism of 1940. The middle section's aching melody has a Russian folk-song quality — the juxtaposition of the two a clear message. Toward the end of the movement, the pessimism lightens for a moment of quiet serenity before the music fades away. The middle movement (originally Twilight) opens with eerie dissonant brass chords, and a danse macabre style violin solo, before settling into a melancholy waltz with rapidly shifting moods. The third (Midnight) completes the journey from day into night. Very much in the spirit of a witches' dance, the music has an orgiastic quality. As in the other

movements, the energy subsides for a tranquil middle section, but the dance returns and builds to a frenzied apotheosis. Here Rachmaninoff quotes the Gregorian mass *Dies irae* chant, a life-long obsessive musical totem for him and perhaps a premonition of his own death. While *Symphonic Dances* received mixed reviews at its premiere, it has gradually caught on. Many now regard it as Rachmaninoff's masterpiece: brilliant, concise, and deeply personal. —Hugh Wolff

**Leland Philip Ko** (b. 1998), a cellist of Chinese-Canadian descent, is the kind of person who's always had an overflow of energy. His restlessness has led him to various callings, from competitive tennis and distance running to calligraphy and origami, but so far he's found that making music with and for others – and the process that goes into that – are the things that best focus his mind, and that this restlessness is what gives him an almost stubborn desire to experience something with his audiences and colleagues every time he walks out on stage. Though he has chosen to dedicate himself to classical music, he does his best to remember and live by a former mentor's advice that music is *about* life, not the other way around.

Leland was born and raised in the Boston area, where he studied with Kirstin Peltz, Ronald Lowry, and Paul Katz. He earned a B.A. from Princeton University in German literature, before attending The Juilliard School for his M.M., studying with Minhye Clara Kim, Timothy Eddy, and Natasha Brofsky. He has returned to Boston to pursue an A.D. at the New England Conservatory with Yeesun Kim and Donald Weilerstein, and resides in the city with his 11-year-old cat, Ham.



**NEC Philharmonia**  
Hugh Wolff, conductor

*First Violin*

Angela Sin Ying Chan  
Joy Wei  
Byeol Claire Kim  
Michael Fisher  
Céline Bethoux  
Hila Dahari  
Sarah Campbell  
Peixuan Wu  
Joshua Brown  
Gabriella Foster  
Caroline Smoak  
Cameron Alan-Lee  
Jiaxin Lin  
Rachel Wang

*Second Violin*

Clayton Hancock  
Nathan do Amaral  
Oliveira Tsubasa  
Muramatsu Julian Rhee  
Felicitas Schiffner Wangrui  
Ray Xu  
Darwin Chang  
Yilei Yin  
Ching Shan Helen Yu  
Arun Asthagiri  
K. J. McDonald  
Tessie Katz  
Emily Lin

*Viola*

Corley Friesen-Johnson  
Chengrong Li  
Nathan Emans  
Peter Jablokow  
Sofia Beiran  
Hyelim Kong  
Aidan Garrison  
Philip Rawlinson  
Cara Pogossian  
Yi-Chia Chen  
Elton Tai

*Cello*

Bennet Huang Annie  
SeEun Hyung  
Hechen Sun Michelle  
Jung  
Pi-Wei Lin  
Joanne Hwang Asher  
Kalfus Thomas Hung  
Lily Stern  
Andres Sanchez  
Seoyeon Koo  
Sophia Knappe

*Bass*

Misha Bjerken  
Yu-Cih Chang  
Beth Ann Jones Yihan  
Wu  
Cailin Singleton  
Alyssa Peterson

*Flute*

Isabel Evernham §  
Honor Hickman ‡ Jay  
Kim  
Jungyoon Kim  
Elizabeth McCormack

*Piccolo*

Anne Chao §  
Honor Hickman ‡ Jay  
Kim  
Elizabeth McCormack

*Oboe*

Dane Bennett  
Donovan Bown  
Abigail Hope-Hull §  
Christian Paniagua‡

*English horn*

Gwendolyn Goble

*Clarinet*

Sarah Cho  
Xianyi Ji  
Phoebe Kuan §  
Hugo Hyeekwoo Kweon  
‡ Chasity Thompson

*Bass Clarinet*

Xianyi Ji ‡  
Cole Turkel §

*Bassoon*

Matthew Heldt  
Carson Meritt  
Julien Rollins §  
Andrew Sala‡

*Contrabassoon*

Garrett Comrie §  
Carson Meritt ‡

*Saxophone*

Zeyi Tian

*French horn*

Grace Clarke  
Jihao Li §  
Graham Lovely  
Willow Otten ‡  
Noah Silverman Qianbin  
Zhu

*Trumpet*

Eddy Lanois  
Reynolds Martin §  
Nelson Martinez ‡  
Matthew Milhalko  
Alex Prokop  
Cody York

*Principal players*

\* Frank  
‡ Lutoslawski  
§ Rachmaninoff

*Trombone*  
Eli Canales  
Jaehan Kim ‡  
Noah Korenfeld §

*Bass Trombone*  
Roger Dahlin ‡  
Scott Odou §

*Tuba*  
Masaru Lin §  
Hayden Silvester ‡

*Timpani*  
Michael Rogers ‡  
Lucas Vogelmann §  
Zesen Wei \*

*Percussion*  
Gustavo Barreda  
Jordan Fajardo-Bird  
Eli Geruschat  
Felix Ko \*  
Danial Kukuk §  
Ngaieng Lai  
Liam McManus  
Eli Reisz  
Michael Rogers ‡  
Jeff Sagurton  
Halle Hayoung  
Song Connor Willits

*Harp*  
Yoonsu Cha \*‡  
Shaylen Joos §  
  
*Keyboard*  
Kai-Min Chang, piano  
\*‡ Yujin Han, piano §  
Hyunjin Roh, celeste ‡

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Hugh Wolff

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Special thanks to Jason Horowitz, Daniel Getz, Mickey Katz,  
and Anthony D'Amico for their work in preparing the  
orchestra for this evening's concert.

## 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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*all programs subject to change*

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Student of Jane Eaglen

*Friday, December 15, 2023 at 8:30 p.m., Williams Hall*

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 June 30, 2023.

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