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NEC Symphony

Hugh Wolff, conductor
*Stanford and Norma Jean Calderwood Director of Orchestras*

with

So Jeong Kim ’23 MM, oboe
*Winner, NEC Concerto Competition*

Wednesday, March 1, 2023
7:30 p.m.
NEC’s Jordan Hall
PROGRAM

Unsuk Chin
(b. 1961)

subito con forza (2020)

Antonino Pasculli
(1882–1971)

Oboe Concerto on Themes from Donizetti’s
‘La Favorita’
Andante – Adagio
Allegretto
Molto largo
Allegro velocissimo

So Jeong Kim ’23 MM, oboe
Winner, NEC Concerto Competition

Intermission

Johannes Brahms
(1833–1897)

Symphony No. 1 in C Minor, op. 68
Un poco sostenuo – Allegro
Andante sostenuto
Un poco allegretto e grazioso
Adagio – Più andante –
Allegro non troppo, ma con brio
Unsuk Chin was born in Seoul, studied with György Ligeti in Hamburg, and now lives in Berlin. Winner of the 2004 Grawemeyer Award, she has a keen ear for strikingly original sounds and a wide-ranging emotional palette.

Composed for the celebrations of Beethoven’s 250th birthday in 2020, Unsuk Chin’s compact orchestral work *subito con forza* draws inspiration directly from the composer. She writes, “What particularly appeals to me [about Beethoven] are the enormous contrasts: from volcanic eruptions to extreme serenity.” Chin embedded references to Beethoven: the Coriolan Overture, Emperor Concerto, and Fifth Symphony all make fleeting appearances. As its title implies, the short work moves abruptly from one mood or style to another, much like jump cuts in a fast-paced film.

Antonio Pasculli was an Italian oboe virtuoso, composer, arranger and conductor. Born in Sicily, he traveled extensively throughout Europe mainly to perform his own virtuoso showpieces. His favored compositional form was a set of variations on a popular operatic work. This tried-and-true technique allows the soloist to show off formidable technique with tunes well known to the public. Many nineteenth century virtuosos did this, notably Liszt with his paraphrases of operas from Mozart to Verdi. Pasculli favored the *bel canto* opera of Donizetti. Their expressive and coloratura vocal lines were ideal for the *cantabile* capabilities of the oboe and its flexibility with fast scales, arpeggios, and roulades. The *Oboe Concerto on Themes from Donizetti’s La Favorita* alternates slow and fast variations, including one in minor key, just before the *Allegro velocissimo* coda. A brilliant showcase for any oboist brave enough to take it on, in part due to its difficulty, it is rarely performed.

In a 1933 essay, Arnold Schoenberg wrote, "Form in music serves to bring about comprehensibility through memorability. Evenness, regularity, symmetry, subdivision, repetition, unity, relationship in rhythm and harmony and even logic -- none of these elements produces or even contributes to beauty. But all of them contribute to an organization which makes the presentation of the musical idea intelligible. The language in which musical ideas are expressed in tones parallels the language which expresses feelings or thoughts in words... The aforementioned elements of [music’s] organization function like the rhyme, the rhythm, the meter, and the subdivision into strophes, sentences, paragraphs, and chapters in poetry or prose... Progress in music consists in the development of method. Brahms, the classicist, the academician, was a great innovator in the realm of musical language -- in fact, he was a great progressive."

We hardly think of Johannes Brahms as a revolutionary. He was the 19th century’s throwback – a brilliant composer more interested in extending and perfecting the methods and structures of the classical era than in the innovations of composers such as Berlioz, Liszt and Wagner (all of whom were at least twenty years older than Brahms). But Schoenberg appreciated Brahms as a composer who created
complex structures built from rigorously organized musical materials, not one seduced by atmosphere, color, or flights of imagination. In this way, Brahms reflects Schoenberg’s own rigor in inventing and organizing 12-tone music.

The **First Symphony** is an extraordinary example of Brahms’ rigor. He labored long over it – the first sketches dates from 1862; he was forty-three when he finished it in 1876. Contemporary music had already moved far away from Brahms’ style: Wagner’s complete *Ring* cycle was first performed three months before Brahms’ symphony. But today Brahms’ First Symphony seems more than worth the wait. It begins with one of most intense and anguished utterances in all symphonic music. A powerful chromatic line rises above a throbbing C pedal, followed by quiet falling sixths in the woodwinds. Virtually everything in the movement is derived from these ideas: chromatic lines, the melodic use of the sixth and its inversion, the third (Schoenberg surely approved), and the stubborn persistence of pedal tones denying music that yearns to break free. The serene slow movement opens with a gentle two-bar phrase. Moments later, in another invention Schoenberg admired, it becomes the bass line for a new melody in the oboe. In this movement, the rising chromatic gestures of the first movement take on a more resigned quality. The *scherzo* movement (an invention of Beethoven) is replaced by a gentle dance in two-four time, more in line with the *Rhenish* symphony of Brahms’ mentor, Robert Schumann. The *Finale* begins in darkness and gradually makes its way to light, reflecting the direction of the entire symphony. That light first appears a few minutes into the brooding introduction when the air clears and the horn sounds one of the most famous calls ever written. In 1868, Brahms sent Clara Schumann a birthday postcard with this melody given the following words: “Hoch auf’m Berg, tief im Tal, grüß’ ich Dich, viel tausendmal!” (High in the mountains, deep in the valley, I greet you thousands of times!) Brahms uses the melody to punctuate the structure of the *Allegro non troppo, ma con brio* that follows – a movement of fervor and passion that carries us breathless to its whirlwind coda.

For Brahms, neurotic about writing a symphony after Beethoven’s nine, the gradual public appreciation of this work was gratifying. His close friend Joseph Joachim, writing from England in 1877 after premiering the work there, said the symphony “really gets to people.” Surely that is what writing music is all about.

**So Jeong Kim** is an oboist from South Korea, born in 1995. She commenced her musical journey at Sunhwa Arts School in Seoul, South Korea, where she won the Outstanding Performance Award for achieving the highest score on the performance test among more than 300 students. Her exceptional skills and hard work led her to be awarded various prestigious music competitions, including the Music Association of Korea Competition, the Seoul Music Competition, KUMF (Korea-U.S.A. Music Foundation for Gifted) Music Competition, Nanpa Concours, and Korea Herald Music Competition.

So Jeong Kim continued her education at Yonsei University in Seoul, South Korea, where she earned a Bachelor of Music degree in Oboe Performance and
received several recognitions, including an excellent performance scholarship for five semesters and the most outstanding freshman award. In South Korea, she received instruction from renowned musicians, including Hyung Sub Kim, Eun Hee Im, Hyung Geun Lee, and Mi Sung Lee.

Currently, So Jeong Kim is pursuing her graduate studies at the New England Conservatory of Music (NEC), under the guidance of John Ferrillo, Principal Oboe of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and Anne Gabriele, Second Oboe of the Los Angeles Philharmonic. She has won several distinguished competitions at NEC, including the Concerto Competition (Woodwind, Brass, Percussion, and Harp) and the Honors Ensemble Competition, both in 2022. Her passion for music has also taken her to international events, such as the International Double Reed Society (IDRS) in Granada, Spain, and the Jeju International Wind Ensemble Festival (JIWEF) in Jeju, South Korea. In 2022, she also performed a concerto with Maestro Shin-ik Hahm and his orchestra. Additionally, she was chosen as one of the winners of the American Protégé International Music Talent Competition, which has granted her the opportunity to perform at Carnegie Hall in late May 2023.

NEC Symphony
Hugh Wolff, conductor

**First Violin**
- Michael Fisher
- Yirou Zhang
- Emma Servadio
- Sofia Skoldberg
- Darwin Chang
- Tzu-Ya Huang
- Ryan Tully
- Gabriella Foster
- ChiungHan Tsai
- Aidan Daniels
- Jeremiah Jung
- Tara Hagle

**Second Violin**
- Olga Kaminsky
- William Kinney
- Kearston Gonzales
- Abby Reed
- Sarah Campbell
- Maxwell Fairman
- Shiyu Wang
- Emma Boyd
- Caroline Smoak

**Viola**
- Nicolette Sullivan-Cozza
- Nathan Emans
- Harry Graham
- Peter Jablokow
- Ru-Yao Van der Ploeg
- Eunha Kwon
- Philip Rawlinson
- Jowen Hsu
- Bram Fisher
- Njord Fossnes

**Cello**
- Austin Topper
- Max Zhenren Zhao
- Asher Kalfus
- Angela Sun
- Sophia Knappe
- Mina Kim
- Phoebe Chen
- Miruna Eyron
- Tianao Pan
- Zanipolo Lewis

**Bass**
- Brian Choy
- Colby Heimburger
- Luke Tsuchiya
- Isabel Atkinson

**Flute**
- Isabel Evernham *
- Honor Hickman ‡
- Subee Kim
- Anna Ridenour
- Jou Ying Ting
- Nina Tsai §

**Oboe**
- Yuhsi Chang §
- Robert Diaz ‡
- Corinne Foley *

**Clarinet**
- Sarah Cho *
- Xianyi Ji §
- Cole Turkel ‡
Bassoon
Seth Goldman *
Kangwei Lu
Carson Meritt §
Andrew Salaru ‡
Jialu Wang

Contrabassoon
Seth Goldman

French horn
Mattias Bengtsson *
Huimin Mandy Liu ‡
Graham Lovely
Tess Reagan
Xiaoran Xu §

Trumpet
Justin Park §
Allie Richmond ‡
Cody York *

Trombone
Jaehan Kim
Noah Nichilo

Bass Trombone
Jason Sato

Timpani
Isabella Butler ‡
Mark Larrivee *
Rohan Zakharia §

Percussion
Doyeon Kim
Nga ieng Sabrina Lai §
Eli Reisz *

Principal players
*Chin
‡Pasculli
†Brahms

Special thanks to Jason Horowitz, Noriko Futagami, Mickey Katz, Anthony D’Amico and Eli Epstein 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 Conductor 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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Food and drink are not allowed in the concert hall, and photography and audio or video recording are prohibited. Assistive listening devices are available for all Jordan Hall concerts; contact the head usher or house manager on duty or inquire at the Coat Room. Latecomers will be seated at the discretion of management.

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