

## Toronto Symphony Orchestra

Sir Andrew Davis, Interim Artistic Director

**Wednesday, October 9, 2019 at 8:00pm**

**Thursday, October 10, 2019 at 8:00pm**

**Saturday, October 12, 2019 at 8:00pm**

### **Gimeno Conducts *Daphnis et Chloé***

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**Gustavo Gimeno**, conductor

**Beatrice Rana**, piano

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**Guillaume Connesson**

***Aleph: Danse symphonique*** (TSO Co-commission)

**Sergei Prokofiev**

**Piano Concerto No. 3 in C Major, Op. 26**

I. Andante – Allegro

II. Andantino

III. Allegro ma non troppo

Intermission

**Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky**

***The Tempest Fantasy-Overture, Op. 18***

**Maurice Ravel**

**Suite No. 2 from *Daphnis et Chloé***

I. Lever du jour

II. Pantomime

III. Danse générale

Please stay in your seats after the concert for a chat with incoming Music Director Gustavo Gimeno and TSO Chief Executive Officer Matthew Loden.

*The appearance of Gustavo Gimeno is generously supported by Philip & Eli Taylor and Invesco Ltd.*

*The post-performance conversations with Gustavo Gimeno are generously supported by Peter & Margie Kelk.*

*The October 9 performance is generously supported by Marianne Oundjian to welcome Gustavo Gimeno.*

*As a courtesy to musicians, guest artists, and fellow concertgoers, please put your phone away and on silent during the performance.*

## ABOUT THE WORKS

Guillaume Connesson

### ***Aleph: Danse symphonique***

(TSO Co-commission)

**Born:** Boulogne-Billancourt, France,  
May 5, 1970

**Composed:** 2007

15  
min

Guillaume Connesson's *Aleph* is the first part of the composer's *Cosmic Trilogy*, a triptych of works for orchestra, which also includes *Une lueur dans l'âge sombre (A Glimmer in the Age of Darkness)* (2005) and *Supernova* (1997). According to the composer, the works evoke, respectively, three moments in the history of the universe: the Big Bang; the appearance of light and the stars; and, finally, the explosion and death of a star. *Aleph* is the first of these. The title, Connesson says, refers to "the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet; in mathematics, it represents the cardinality of an infinite set; and in the hermetic tradition, a sphere that is purported to contain the whole world.... [It is] a huge dance of life and energy on the beginning of the universe."

It is also a highly engaging example of Connesson's mature compositional style, fusing the expanded tonality and brilliant orchestral sonorities of Ravel, Debussy, Arthur Honegger, and Henri Dutilleux (all French composers Connesson claims as his lineage) with elements of film music (à la John Williams), the spiky modernism of Shostakovich, the music of Leonard Bernstein, John Adams's American minimalism, and club dance music. The propulsive drive of this score owes much to the latter three.

In the composer's words: "*Aleph* is constructed entirely around the figure seven: seven sections are linked together; the main theme has seven beats in the bar and is made up

of seven notes. The work begins with a huge *fortissimo* chord, which releases waves of energy. A pulse establishes itself and the main theme gradually takes shape. Particles of matter assemble themselves together, until a new chord releases a tumultuous energy. After this introduction, the dance proper begins: the main theme passes from one desk of instruments to another, initially light and rhythmic in character, then becoming increasingly turbulent. This culminates in the first refrain, which sets out the second theme, played by the trumpets in chords.

"After a climax of energy, the matter suddenly dissolves during the central section in which a lyrical theme on the violas and cellos seeks to open out, interrupted twice in a row by the first theme. On the third attempt, the lyrical melody finally unravels in the violins, accompanied by that initial cell. A harmonic bridge built in swirling canons upon this initial cell leads to the second refrain of the second theme. The dance is suddenly interrupted by a long, crescendo coda: an ostinato builds up progressively in the strings to which the first theme is added in the woodwinds; and finally, at the climax, the second 'refrain' theme is superimposed in the brass in a frenetic dance with which my score concludes."

*Aleph: Danse symphonique* was a Co-commission between the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, New World Symphony, and Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Connesson dedicated the work to Åsa and Stéphane Denève as a marriage gift; its Canadian Première took place on October 24, 2007, performed by the TSO under Denève's baton.

**Program note by Hannah Chan-Hartley**

Sergei Prokofiev  
**Piano Concerto No. 3 in  
C Major, Op. 26**

**Born:** Sontzovka, Russia, Apr 23, 1891

**Died:** Moscow, Russia, Mar 5, 1953

**Composed:** 1921

**28  
min**

For most of the spring and summer of 1921, energized by recent success overseas, Prokofiev's big project was the Third Piano Concerto. On December 16, he performed the concerto for the first time, with the Chicago Symphony. It was decently received there, but later met with outright hostility in New York. Prokofiev was resentful—he compared the New York critics to “a pack of dogs let out from behind the gate to bite my trousers to shreds”—and finally gave up on America. By March 1922, he was back in Europe—at first in the remote village of Ettal, in Bavaria. The concerto had better success in Europe and Russia—indeed, it was, for a time, Prokofiev's “meal ticket.” He made a scintillating, unsurpassed recording of it in 1932.

In this brilliant and thrillingly virtuosic concerto, Prokofiev neatly balances and integrates the piano and orchestra parts. The musical idiom is unapologetically modern, yet presents no insurmountable challenges to lay listeners (not for nothing is this Prokofiev's most popular concerto). It is not a “neurotic” piece either, Prokofiev insisted. As he told the conductor Serge Koussevitzky, “This is

not a Stravinsky symphony—there are no complicated meters, no dirty tricks.”

Unneurotic, maybe, but it certainly displays various sides of his musical persona, perhaps in part because of the wide range of previously composed materials that come together here. One theme near the end of the first movement dated from 1911, and the variation theme of the second from 1913. Two more themes in the first movement, and two variations in the second, dated from 1916–17, by which point he had tried several times to complete the concerto. And two themes in the finale were taken from a string quartet he had recently abandoned. Here they all come together, in music that can be unabashedly Romantic, sarcastic, soaring and lush, bustling and angular, and playful as well as violent.

The first movement—notwithstanding the poignant melody with which it opens—is propulsive and passionate, sometimes ironic (note the castanets!), and has a busy, toccata-like piano part. The theme of the second movement is a lovely, courtly, tongue-in-cheek march recalling the faux-18th-century confections of the “Classical” Symphony; five variations follow, all highly individual and extravagantly imaginative, and at the height of it all, the theme returns in its original form. The opening theme of the finale, played by two bassoons in unison, is a sort of grotesque tiptoeing, evidently humorous—at first, anyway. The movement turns out to be substantial, with a fiery piano part. Prokofiev apes the rondo form of many Classical concerto finales, and in so doing,

## GIMENO, YUJA WANG & BRAHMS

**APR 8, 9 & 11, 2020**

Incoming Music Director Gustavo Gimeno makes his second and final appearance of the season in these all-Brahms concerts, featuring the always-dazzling Yuja Wang performing both of the composer's piano concertos.

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## ABOUT THE WORKS

forges a balance of moods that recalls the first movement. At the heart of the finale is a beautiful slow waltz, though the movement ultimately drives to a rousing close.

**Program note by Kevin Bazzana**

### Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky *The Tempest Fantasy-Overture*, Op. 18

**Born:** Kamsko-Votkinsk, Russia, May 7, 1840

**Died:** St. Petersburg, Russia, Nov 6, 1893

**Composed:** 1873

22  
min

*The Tempest* is one of Tchaikovsky's three symphonic poems based on Shakespeare's plays (the others were *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet*). He was urged to write it by Russian art historian and critic Vladimir Stasov, who, as a member of the Imperial Academy of the Arts, was a mentor to a group of nationalistic Russian composers known as "The Five." Stasov considered Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 2, composed in 1872, to be "one of the most important creations of the entire Russian school," and, in December of that year, wrote to Tchaikovsky, proposing three sources for tone-poem treatment: Gogol's novel, *Taras Bulba*; Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*; and *The Tempest*. For each, Stasov outlined in florid detail the program that the work might follow. For *The Tempest* it read, in part, as follows:

"Starting with the sea, the uninhabited island, the mighty and forbidding figure of the magician Prospero, then switching to the graceful and womanly Miranda, rather like the primordial Eve...struck by the tempest she is flung ashore with the handsome youth Ferdinand; they fall in love [and] at this point in

the first half of the overture there should be a wonderful and poetic motif, as Miranda...leaves behind her childhood innocence to become a young woman in love. In the second half of the overture [their] passion should already be in full sail, as they embrace the fires of love... the intervening middle section would be...the half-beast Caliban, the enchanted spirit Ariel, and his chorus of elves. The end ought to depict Prospero's renunciation of his magic powers, the blessing of the young couple's union, and the return to the mainland."

After much amiable bickering between composer and mentor (over such things as whether there actually needed to be a tempest in *The Tempest*, and if so, where it should occur in the work), Tchaikovsky set to work with a will. The completed score was prefaced by a short program, which, compared to Stasov's increasingly effusive exhortations, was a masterpiece of economy:

*The Sea. The magician Prospero commands his spirit Ariel to create a storm, of which a victim is the fortunate Ferdinand. The enchanted island. The first timid stirrings of love between Ferdinand and Miranda. Ariel. Caliban. The lovers are overwhelmed by their passion. Prospero renounces his magical powers and leaves the island. The Sea.*

As is customary for the symphonic poem, it consists of an uninterrupted single movement, with a hugely satisfying range of moods and orchestral colour. It also has a pleasing symmetry, easily discernible from the short program note: the actual storm of the first half is balanced by "the lovers...overwhelmed by their passion" in the second; Prospero's summoning of the storm stands opposite his renunciation of his powers; and before and after all else is "The Sea", in all its lonely beauty.

**Program note by David Perlman**

Maurice Ravel

## Suite No. 2 from *Daphnis et Chloé*

Born: Ciboure, France, Mar 7, 1875

Died: Paris, France, Dec 28, 1937

Composed: 1913

16  
min

The ballet *Daphnis et Chloé* was Ravel's most ambitious work for the stage. The composer himself considered it (along with the ballet *Ma mère l'Oye*) his most important work, and certainly it is a *locus classicus* of the Ravel style; Stravinsky called it "one of the most beautiful products in all of French music." It was commissioned in 1909 by the great Russian impresario Sergei Diaghilev, who was in Paris for the début season of his Ballets Russes, a potent force in early 20th-century music.

Ravel laboured hard for three years before completing *Daphnis et Chloé*; it "left me in pitiful condition," he said in a letter. After many delays, the première was given in Paris, by Diaghilev's company, on June 8, 1912, with the legendary Vaslav Nijinsky dancing the role of Daphnis. Ravel extracted two suites from the score: the first in 1911, before the ballet was even complete; and the second, which we will hear tonight, in 1913.

The scenario of *Daphnis et Chloé*, in three tableaux, was inspired by a famous pastoral romance by the Greek writer Longus (Ravel had always been drawn to ancient and exotic subjects). The first two tableaux constitute Suite No. 1: the hero and heroine find their love threatened, first by rival suitors and then by pirates, who abduct Chloé. Suite No. 2, played without a break, consists of three selections that give us the highlights of the ballet's third and final tableau.

The first selection ("Lever du jour") picks up after shepherds, with the help of the god Pan, have rescued Chloé. Daphnis is awakened at dawn, and the lovers are reunited, with

Ravel's shimmering music unforgettably depicting a sunrise accompanied by birdsong and the murmur of springs; a great melody wells up from the bottom of the orchestra as the lovers fall into each other's arms. In the second selection ("Pantomime"), the lovers dance a mime in honour of the love of Pan and Syrinx (tender, sensuous string chords forming a backdrop to piquant and flashy solos in the woodwinds). The final selection ("Danse générale") depicts the joyous tumult with which the drama ends. A lot of the work that left Ravel in the "pitiful condition" he described, likely went into revising and expanding this dance. The result is one of his most brilliant and virtuosic orchestral pieces—rousing, rhythmically furious, and audaciously orchestrated.

Ravel said of *Daphnis et Chloé* that it was "constructed symphonically according to a very strict tonal scheme by means of a few motifs; their development assures the work's symphonic homogeneity." True enough, but most listeners, it is safe to say, admire other elements of the music: beautiful melodies, lush harmonies, rhythmic momentum, a Straussian gift for tone-painting, and, above all, the orchestration. Ravel's handling of a huge orchestra augmented by more than a dozen percussion instruments marks him as one of music's most ingenious and innovative orchestrators.

**Program note by Kevin Bazzana**

## THE ARTISTS



### **Gustavo Gimeno** **conductor**

*Gustavo Gimeno made his TSO début in February 2018.*

Gustavo Gimeno is Music Director of the Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxembourg (OPL) and incoming Music Director of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra.

Gustavo Gimeno made his Canadian début with the TSO—to public and critical acclaim—in February 2018. Gimeno has signed a five-year contract with the TSO to begin in the 2020/21 season. He will be the TSO’s 11th Music Director, starting in the Orchestra’s 99th season.

Since he became Music Director of the OPL in 2015, he has conducted that orchestra in a wide variety of concert formats, appearing with the orchestra in many of the most prestigious concert halls throughout Europe. In the current season, he builds on the successful tours of previous years with guest performances in Germany, Spain, France, Sweden, and, for the first time, South America. During past seasons, Gustavo Gimeno has shared the stage of the Philharmonie Luxembourg with soloists such as Daniel Barenboim, Krystian Zimerman, Yuja Wang, Anja Harteros, Bryn Terfel, and Frank Peter Zimmermann. Highlights of the current season include the world première of Francisco Coll’s Violin Concerto with Patricia Kopatchinskaja, as well as guest concerts in Buenos Aires and São Paulo with Janine Jansen as soloist.

Gustavo Gimeno is also a much sought-after guest conductor worldwide. In 2019/20, he will make his début with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, and will return to the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra Washington, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra, Orchestra Sinfonica Nazionale della Rai, Münchner Philharmoniker, and the Orchestra of the Eighteenth Century, which specializes in historically informed performance practice.

He will appear at the Liceu Opera Barcelona for the first time in January 2020 with Giuseppe Verdi’s *Aida*. In 2019, he gave his début at Zurich Opera with Verdi’s *Rigoletto*, in a production directed by Tatjana Gürbaca. Gustavo Gimeno made his opera début in 2015 with Bellini’s *Norma* at the Valencia Opera House. In 2017, he conducted Verdi’s *Simon Boccanegra* and Mozart’s *Don Giovanni* with the OPL at the Grand Théâtre in Luxembourg, where he will also appear in the current season, conducting Verdi’s *Macbeth*.

Born in Valencia, Gustavo Gimeno began his international conducting career in 2012 as assistant to Mariss Jansons, while he was a member of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra in Amsterdam. He also gained invaluable experience as assistant to Bernard Haitink and Claudio Abbado, who strongly supported and influenced him in many respects as a mentor.



## Beatrice Rana

### piano

*These performances mark Beatrice Rana's TSO début.*

Beatrice Rana has shaken the international classical music world, arousing admiration and interest from concert presenters, conductors, critics, and audiences in many countries.

Ms. Rana performs at the world's most esteemed concert halls and festivals, and collaborates with conductors such as Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Antonio Pappano, Fabio Luisi, Riccardo Chailly, Yuri Temirkanov, Gianandrea Noseda, Jun Märkl, Trevor Pinnock, James Gaffigan, Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla, Lahav Shani, Andrés Orozco-Estrada, Susanna Mälkki, Leonard Slatkin, Kent Nagano, and Zubin Mehta.

During the upcoming seasons, she will début with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre de Paris, Bayerische Rundfunk Sinfonieorchester, New York Philharmonic, Deutsches Sinfonie Orchester, Orquesta Nacional de España, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra, Toronto Symphony Orchestra, and Orchestre National de Lyon, and will return to the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, Danish National Symphony Orchestra, Dallas Symphony Orchestra, and Antwerp Symphony Orchestra. She will also tour with the London Philharmonic Orchestra and Vladimir Jurowski, the Wiener Symphoniker and Andrés Orozco-Estrada, and the Philharmonia Zurich and Fabio Luisi.

Ms. Rana will play recitals at the Berlin Philharmonie, Carnegie Hall, Lisbon's Gulbenkian Foundation, Barcelona's Palau de la Musica, Lugano's LAC, Paris's Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Madrid's Scherzo Great Performers series, Gilmore Keyboard Festival, Tokyo's Kioi Hall, and London's Wigmore Hall, among other venues.

An exclusive Warner Classics recording artist, Rana received international acclaim for her recordings of Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, and Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No. 2 and Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1 with Antonio Pappano and Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia. Her next solo album will be released in October 2019 and will feature works by Stravinsky and Ravel.

Beatrice Rana came to public attention in 2011 after winning First Prize at the Montreal International Competition, and in 2013, when she won the Silver Medal and the Audience Award at the 14th Van Cliburn International Piano Competition.

Born in Italy into a family of musicians, Rana currently lives in Rome where she continues her studies with her lifetime mentor, Benedetto Lupo. She studied previously with Arie Vardi at the Hochschule für Musik in Hanover.