

# DARING VIRTUOSITY

Saturday | September 17, 2011 | 8 pm | Symphony Hall at the DECC  
Duluth Superior Symphony Orchestra | Rei Hotoda, conductor

**Katherine Chi, piano**

SEPT  
17  
2011

## Higdon

blue cathedral

ca. 11'

## Tchaikovsky

Piano Concerto No. 1, op. 23 in B-flat minor

ca. 32'

Allegro non troppo e maestoso-Allegro con spirito

Andantino semplice-Prestissimo

Allegro con fuoco

**Katherine Chi, Piano**

I N T E R M I S S I O N

ca. 20'

## Mussorgsky/Ravel

Pictures at an Exhibition

ca. 35'

Promenade

I. Gnomus

Promenade

II. The Old Castle

Promenade

III. The Tuileries Gardens

IV. Bydlo

Promenade

V. Ballet of the Chickens in their Shells

VI. Samuel Goldenberg and Schmuyle

VII. The Market Place at Limoges

VIII. Catacombs

Cum mortuis in lingua mortua

IX. The Hut on Fowl's Legs, "Baba-Yaga"

X. The Great Gate of Kiev

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**7pm Behind the Music** is hosted by William Bastian.  
His profile appears on page 57.

Rei Hotoda's profile appears on page 24.  
Katherine Chi's profile appears on page 24.

Program subject to change



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We are pleased to continue our support of the Duluth Superior Symphony Orchestra. The arts are an important part of our community and it is our pleasure to contribute to the DSSO. We applaud everyone who makes this happen and we look forward to another memorable season.

## DARING VIRTUOSITY

A soaring expression of the soul by a dazzling contemporary composer...a “difficult, strange, wild, ultra-modern” piano concerto that has astonished audiences since its premiere in 1874...and a gorgeous musical invitation to step inside the paintings at an art exhibition.

**Jennifer Higdon** (b. 1962) has been called “a hot commodity” in today’s classical music scene. Among her many awards are the 2010 Pulitzer Prize in Music and the 2009 Grammy Award for Best Contemporary Classical Composition. Her works are performed frequently, with “blue cathedral” sometimes receiving more performances in a given year than any other work by a living American composer.

To symbolize “the journey of life...and what happens after life as well,” [Higdon] envisions taking the listener on a journey upward through a crystal cathedral in the air, passing crystal columns and stained glass window while flying ever upwards towards the stars and out into space.

Born in Brooklyn, Higdon was raised in a small town in the Smoky Mountains of Tennessee by parents self-described as “two crazy hippies.” She played flute in high school marching band and listened to a variety of musical styles, but knew little about classical music. When she decided to major in music in college, her limited background presented challenges: “I had to take theory for dummies and learn what an interval is.”

Today Higdon teaches composition at the prestigious Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. A few years after joining the faculty, she was asked to compose a piece celebrating Curtis’ 75th anniversary. The result was “blue cathedral,” composed in 1999. Higdon sees similarities between Curtis, which she describes as “a place to reach towards that beautiful expression of the soul which comes through music,” and a cathedral, “where all possibilities soar...a place of thought, growth, spiritual expression.”

A profound personal experience also inspired “blue cathedral.” Higdon’s younger brother had died in 1998 from melanoma. She says, “The recent loss of my younger brother, Andrew Blue, made me reflect on the amazing journeys that we all make.” To symbolize “the journey of life...and what happens after life as well,” she envisions taking the listener on a journey upward through a crystal cathedral in the air, passing crystal columns and stained

glass window while flying ever upwards towards the stars and out into space.

Higdon’s virtuosic skills as an orchestrator are evident in the transparent and luminous tone colors of “blue cathedral.” Unusual instruments include crystal glasses, prepared piano, and Chinese reflex balls. Certain musical details symbolize the two siblings. Flute and clarinet solos represent Higdon and her brother (he played clarinet). Toward the end of the piece, the flute drops out, leaving the clarinet alone: “Kind of representative,” she says, “of my brother going on without me.” Thirty-three strikes of the piano represent her brother’s age at the time of his death.



**INSTRUMENTATION:** Two flutes (second doubling piccolo), one oboe, English horn, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (crotales, marimba,

tam tam, vibraphone, glockenspiel, belltree, sizzle cymbal, suspended cymbal, chimes, bass drum, tom tom, two triangles), harp, prepared piano/celesta, eight crystal glasses, sixty Chinese bells and strings.

**DSSO HISTORY:** Tonight marks the Orchestra’s first performance of music by Jennifer Higdon.

**P**yotr Il’yich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893) was not a concert pianist, so he often sought expert advice when writing for that instrument. For suggestions on his Piano Concerto No. 1 in B-flat minor, Op. 23, he turned to his mentor, Nikolay Rubinstein, who was a piano virtuoso. This was more than casual advice-seeking: Tchaikovsky intended to honor Rubinstein by dedicating the concerto to him. He also hoped Rubinstein would perform it.

With all but the orchestration completed, he played the concerto for Rubinstein on Christmas Eve, 1874. Tchaikovsky later described the devastating evening: “My need was for remarks about the virtuoso piano technique. R’s eloquent silence was of greatest significance. He seemed to be saying, ‘My friend, how can I speak of detail when the whole thing is repellent?’...Then a torrent poured from Nicolay Grigoryevich’s mouth...my concerto was worthless and unplayable...” To Rubinstein’s suggestions for large-scale revisions, Tchaikovsky responded, “I shall not alter a single note. I shall publish the work exactly as it stands!” (In fact he would revise the concerto twice; most performances today use the revisions published in 1889.)

Tchaikovsky completed the concerto in February 1875. He scratched out Rubinstein’s name on the score and dedicated it instead to Hans von Bülow, a pianist whose combination of intellect and passion he greatly admired. Von Bülow accepted the dedication and premiered the concerto in Boston in October

1875. As happens with many new works, response to the concerto was mixed. The audience was pleased enough to call for an encore of the final movement, but the critic for *Dwight's Journal of Music* was not sure what to think: "This extremely difficult, strange, wild, ultra-modern Russian Concerto...We had the wild Cossack fire and impetus without stint, extremely brilliant and exciting, but could we ever learn to love such music?"

Time has given us the answer to that question—Tchaikovsky's is one of the most beloved concertos in the repertoire. Even novice concert-goers will probably recognize the magnificent opening: a grand summons from the unison horns, thundering chords sweeping from low to high on the piano (an idea that was new to the 1889 edition), and a passionate melody surging from the orchestra. With this work, Tchaikovsky brings a new level of symphonic grandeur and pianistic virtuosity to the solo concerto. Even Nikolay Rubinstein admitted he had been mistaken and became one of its most famous interpreters.



**INSTRUMENTATION:** Two flutes, two clarinets, two oboes, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani and strings.

**DSSO HISTORY:** This evening's concert is the eleventh featuring this Concerto on the DSSO's Classical Series. The previous performances featured Miriam Blair (1934 and 1944), Jesús María Sanromá (1949), Byron Janis (1963), Van Cliburn (1970), Andre-Michel Schub (1977, with guest conductor Andrew Schenck), Natalia Trull (1990), Horacio Gutiérrez (1992), John Browning (on a 1998 Tchaikovsky Gala concert), and Antonio Pompa-Baldi (on September 24, 2005). At the New Year's Eve concert in 1988, the first movement of this concerto was performed by Beth Gilbert (the Orchestra's Principal Keyboardist). The three most recent performances of this work have all been on the opening concert of the season.

**I**n the same year that Tchaikovsky was composing his piano concerto, **Modest Mussorgsky** (1839-1881) composed "Pictures at an Exhibition." Although the two men were fellow Russians of almost the same age, their styles and aesthetic ideals were quite different. Tchaikovsky, a graduate of the first Russian music conservatory, valued the musical traditions of the European mainstream. But Mussorgsky, largely self-taught, sought to create a more distinctly nationalist style shaped by Russian language and folksong. And, while Tchaikovsky valued beauty most highly, Mussorgsky wanted to portray reality, warts and all.

Mussorgsky wrote "Pictures at an Exhibition" in 1874 after viewing a memorial exhibition of paintings by his friend, artist Victor Hartmann. Ten movements illustrate Hartmann's pictures:

- A nutcracker in the shape of an evil gnome.
- A troubadour singing in front of a medieval castle.
- Children and their nurse playing in the gardens of the Tuileries.
- Oxen pulling a heavy peasant cart.
- A costume design—canary chicks enclosed in eggs—for a ballet.
- Two Polish Jews, one rich, the other poor.
- Women quarreling in a market in Limoges, France.
- Hartmann and two other men exploring the catacombs of Paris by lamplight.
- A clock designed as the hut of the broom-riding, child-eating witch Baba Yaga.
- Hartmann's plan for a great monument with stone city-gates and a small church.

A recurring "Promenade" theme represents the strolling spectator (Mussorgsky) and the effects the paintings

have on him. By the end, the viewer is drawn completely inside the pictures. Only three of these pictures actually appeared at Hartmann's memorial exhibition. Others Mussorgsky owned himself or saw at the homes of friends. (About half of these paintings and drawings still exist.)

Mussorgsky's composition, originally a suite for solo piano, has inspired orchestral arrangements by other composers. The first known public performance of "Pictures" took place ten years after Mussorgsky's death in a partially orchestrated arrangement by Tauschmaloff. Of the dozen or so subsequent orchestrations, the best known is the 1922 arrangement by Maurice Ravel (1875-1937). Ravel's version has far surpassed Mussorgsky's own in terms of familiarity and popularity. His virtuosic treatment of the orchestral palette brings Mussorgsky's pictures to life in dazzling color. Among many effective examples are the noble saxophone serenade of the troubadour, the anxious pleading of the poor Jew in the muted trumpet (in a difficult passage of triple tonguing), and the ponderous laboring of the tuba-as-oxen.

**INSTRUMENTATION:** Three flutes, (two doubling piccolo), three oboes, (one doubling English horn), two clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons, contra bassoon, alto saxophone, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (bass drum, xylophone, snare drum, tam tam, triangle, whip, ratchet, cymbals, bass drum, glockenspiel, suspended cymbal, chimes), two harps, celesta, and strings.

**DSSO HISTORY:** The DSSO's eight prior performances of this work were in 1948, 1955, 1960, 1969, 1974, 1991, 1999, and on October 25, 2008. In addition to the Classical Series concert in 1974, three movements of this piece were performed the same year as part of a special December concert with the Duluth Ballet Company.

## KATHERINE CHI, PIANO



Sought after as a concerto soloist of musical and technical distinction, Katherine Chi is noted for the breadth of her repertoire. While hailed for her interpretations of Mozart, she is also acclaimed for performances of major romantic and twentieth century

concertos. "...the most sensational but, better, the most unflinchingly cogent and compelling Prokofiev's Third I have heard in years," wrote a reviewer in *The Globe and Mail*.

Ms. Chi has also given memorable recitals in Hamburg, Hanover, Milan, Rome and Salzburg. She has appeared with the CBC Radio Orchestra in Vancouver, Canada's National Arts Centre Orchestra, Manitoba Chamber Orchestra, the Neue Philharmonie Westfalen, Toronto Sinfonia, and the Alabama, Calgary, Colorado, Edmonton, Kitchener-Waterloo, Montreal, Ottawa, Philadelphia, Quebec, Thunder Bay, Toronto, Vancouver and Victoria Symphony Orchestras and at a variety of festivals.

Katherine Chi gave her debut recital at the age of nine. A year later she was accepted to the prestigious Curtis Institute of Music. She continued studies with Russell Sherman and Wha Kyung Byun at the New England Conservatory in Boston, where she received her master's degree and graduate and artist diplomas. She later studied for two years at the International Piano Foundation in Como, Italy, and at the Hochschule für Musik in Cologne. Ms. Chi also studied with Seymour Lipkin, Galina Eguizarova, and Wassily Lobanov. She was a prizewinner at the 1998 Busoni International Piano Competition and was the first Canadian and the first woman to win Canada's Honens International Piano Competition.

## REI HOTODA, CONDUCTOR



Applauded by the *Washington Post* as "talented and poised with strong potential," conductor Rei Hotoda is rapidly becoming one of America's dynamic conductors. She has guest conducted orchestras throughout North America and Europe including the

Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, Colorado Symphony Orchestra, Edmonton Symphony Orchestra, Syracuse Symphony Orchestra, the Staatskapelle Weimar Orchestra and the International Contemporary Ensemble. As a protégé of Marin Alsop, Ms. Hotoda was winner of the 2006 Taki Concordia Conducting Fellowship, a fellowship created by Marin Alsop to mentor women conductors.

Ms. Hotoda is in her second season as the Assistant Conductor of the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, working very closely with her current mentor, Music Director Jaap van Zweden. She has conducted many DSO series, including DSO Classic Concerts in Greenville, Casual Classics, Youth Concerts, Family Series, Pops Concerts, and the Outdoor Parks Concerts.

Ms. Hotoda studied conducting with Gustav Meier at the Peabody Institute in Baltimore, Maryland. She holds a doctorate in piano performance from the University of Southern California and a bachelor of music in piano performance from the Eastman School of Music.

From 2006-2009 Ms. Hotoda was the Assistant Conductor of the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra. She has also held positions as the Assistant Conductor for the 2005 Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music in California and the 2005 Hot Springs Music Festival. She has conducted and collaborated with many famous soloists and touring groups including Van Cliburn silver medalist Joyce Yang, Pink Martini, Isabella Rossellini, and Ben Folds.

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