



# Advance Program Notes

National Symphony Orchestra of Cuba

Enrique Pérez Mesa, conductor

Featuring Yekwon Sunwoo, 2017 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition gold medalist, piano

Wednesday, March 21, 2018, 7:30 PM

These Advance Program Notes are provided online for our patrons who like to read about performances ahead of time. Printed programs will be provided to patrons at the performances. Programs are subject to change.

## National Symphony Orchestra of Cuba

Enrique Pérez Mesa, conductor

Yekwon Sunwoo, 2017 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition gold medalist, piano

*1812 Overture*

Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)

*Three Poems*

Amadeo Roldán (1900-1939)

Piano Concerto in A-minor, op. 16

Edvard Grieg (1843-1907)

Yekwon Sunwoo, piano

### INTERMISSION

*The Three-Cornered Hat*

Manuel de Falla (1876-1946)

Symphony no. 7 in A Major, op. 92

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

*Poco Sostenuto—Vivace*

*Allegretto*

*Presto—Assai meno presto*

*Allegro con brio*

YEKWON SUNWOO APPEARS BY ARRANGEMENT WITH THE CLIBURN

# Program Notes

## 1812 OVERTURE

PIOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY (1840-1893)

The breakup of Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's marriage in the late 1870s was cause for much gossip in Moscow. The focus of the chatter centered on his sexuality, of course, and it confirmed for him the need to escape the rigidity of his life at the conservatory. Tchaikovsky believed a "breakup" with the Russian capital city was also necessary if he was to recapture the compositional confidence of his younger days. There are few works in the historical catalogue of symphonic music that can genuinely rival the current popularity of Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture*. Even so, given its legacy of populist immediacy over philosophical depth, it is hard to believe that he would have composed such a work during his self-imposed exile/renaissance. Commissions have a certain power to persuade, however, and the piece was premiered in 1882 at a dedication of the new Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow, itself commissioned by Tsar Alexander I to commemorate the Russian victory over Napoleon. The occasion demanded a rousing, celebratory anthem to Russian might and an unabashed musical retelling of the old battles. Tchaikovsky created an excellent study in slowly built musical tension, and the patience with which audiences must wait for the culminating fireworks is both exquisite and excruciating in a well-paced performance, making the thunderous cannon shots and the pealing of the victory bells even more rewarding when released at last. It is a testament to the always-masterful craft of Tchaikovsky, even in such "light" fare. It serves us to remember that no artistic crime was committed here. The *1812 Overture* was and is a purely celebratory work, and in that vein, he could have not have succeeded more enviably.

## THREE POEMS

AMADEO ROLDÁN (1900-1939)

Amadeo Roldán was a Cuban composer and violinist born in Paris to a Cuban mother and a Spanish father. It was Roldán's mother, the pianist Albertina Gardes, who initiated her children to music. Roldán came to Cuba in 1919 after studying music theory and violin at the Madrid Conservatory, graduating in 1916. He became the concertmaster of the new Orquesta Sinfónica de la Habana in 1922. In the mid-1920, he was appointed concertmaster of the Orquesta Filarmónica of Havana (he would assume the position of conductor in 1932) and founded the Havana String Quartet. During this period, Roldán, one of the leaders of the Afro-Cubanismo movement, wrote the first symphonic pieces to incorporate Afro-Cuban percussion instruments. Roldán's best-known composition is the 1928 ballet *La Rebambaramba*, described by a critic of the era as "a multicolored musicorama ... depicting an Afro-Cuban fiesta in a gorgeous display of Caribbean melorhythms, with the participation of a multifarious fauna of native percussion effects, including a polydental glissando on the jawbone of an ass." Roldán died at the peak of his creative powers at 38 of a disfiguring facial cancer (he had been an inveterate smoker). His career followed a similar path to Alejandro García Caturla, and the two men are considered to be pioneers of modern Cuban symphonic art.

## PIANO CONCERTO IN A-MINOR, OP. 16

EDVARD GRIEG (1843-1907)

A generation prior to Sibelius, Edvard Grieg tackled the problem of creating a style that united personal and communal identity. He was motivated first by his associations with violinist Ole Bull and composer Rikard Nordraak. "It was as if the scales fell from my eyes," recalled Grieg. In most of his music, however, he avoided direct quotation from folk sources, as in the Piano Concerto. The concerto was composed during a summer sojourn to Italy shortly after the birth of Grieg's daughter. While there, he met with Franz Liszt, Europe's reigning piano virtuoso, who had already expressed interest in his work. Liszt's encouragement emboldened Grieg to show him the score of the concerto he was working on; the story goes that Liszt gave a flawless reading of the piece at sight; his enthusiasm has been shared by countless pianists (and audiences) since. Grieg was only 25 at the work's 1869 premiere, which might lead you to think that the piece would be superficial—and there is no dearth of surface here: catchy tunes, brilliant timbres, flashy virtuoso exhibitions. Yet the young composer had a feel for the way this surface could serve those elements of music that emerge in longer terms:

# *Program Notes, continued*

long-range formal structures, subtle relationships between parts, and the like. The arresting gesture that opens the concerto—a downward cascade that outlines an A-minor chord—demonstrates the play between surface brilliance and deeper significance. By firmly establishing the harmony of A-minor, it allows for exploration of further harmonic regions without disrupting the stability of the movement. It also allows the listener to follow a plethora of thematic material without losing a basic point of reference. The second movement reminds us that Grieg was more at home in the smaller lyric genres; here we are drawn into an intimate scene using the colors of muted strings and woodwind solos. The soloist does not enter until well into the movement, first as a decorative touch, then gradually integrated into the principal thematic material. The last movement is dominated by the soloist's robust foot-stomping theme, which steps back briefly for a serene interlude introduced by a flute solo and featuring lyrical, improvisatory passages from the piano. Soon the dance takes over again, pushing the piece to its dramatic conclusion.

## **THE THREE-CORNERED HAT MANUEL DE FALLA (1876-1946)**

During World War I, Manuel de Falla wrote a pantomime ballet in two scenes, *El Corregidor y la Molinera* (*The Magistrate and the Miller's Wife*). The work was scored for a small chamber orchestra and was performed in 1917. Sergei Diaghilev of the Ballets Russes saw the premiere of *El Corregidor y la Molinera* and commissioned de Falla to rewrite it. The outcome was a two-act ballet scored for large orchestra called *El Sombrero de Tres Picos*. This was first performed in London at the Alhambra Theatre on July 22, 1919, with sets and costumes created by Pablo Picasso and choreography by Léonide Massine. Diaghilev asked de Falla to conduct the premiere, but the composer felt he was not experienced enough to conduct a work so complex, and he handed the baton to Ernest Ansermet after one rehearsal.

## **SYMPHONY NO. 7 IN A MAJOR, OP. 92 LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)**

Beethoven's impressive output is often divided by scholars into distinct periods—the Bonn years, the early years in Vienna, the "heroic" middle period, and of course the late period. It is no surprise that these categorizations correspond with big changes in the composer's personal story, and though he certainly never separated his work into such academic groupings, his stormy life made it possible for history to do so. If the *Eroica* Symphony is the true centerpiece of the middle period of Beethoven, then the equally potent 7th Symphony must be remembered as its noble valediction. The premiere occurred in December 1813, and the benefit concert for wounded soldiers was the most successful (and possibly oddest) of the composer's life. The symphony was well-received but a bit lost among the technological gadgetry, the pre-existing enthusiasm for *Wellington's Victory*, and the general anti-Napoleon fervor of the occasion. It is interesting to consider how the seventh symphony would be partly guilty of the same "shadowing" effect over the more slender eighth the following year, a clear indication that the seventh was much more than a "companion piece" to the *Victory* work and quickly destined for its own greatness. Another opportunity provided by history is the linking of Symphony no. 7 to the famous "Immortal Beloved" letters of 1812. The letters and symphony were written at the same time and it seems likely that the same depth of positive emotion informed them. For a man who already knew loss in a measure beyond what he deserved, it is thrilling to view Beethoven's exuberant, celebratory A Major Symphony as the musical translation of a very real, if fleeting, happiness.

# *National Symphony Orchestra of Cuba*

Enrique José Pérez Mesa, artistic director and chief conductor

Antonio Dorta Lazo, clarinet soloist

Augusto Florencio Diago Carreras, violin soloist and concertmaster

## **FIRST VIOLIN**

Desiree Justo Castilla Ayudante  
Leonardo Pérez Baster  
Silvio Miguel Duquesne  
Cabarroca  
Yanet Vega Zaldívar  
Malin Hau Abon  
Alejandro Menéndez-Cuesta  
Suarez  
Alejandro Vazquez Zaldívar  
Verónica Reyes Toscaeva

## **SECOND VIOLIN**

Iresi García Chao, principal  
Liliana Gloria Serrano Fernández,  
assistant principal  
Rogelio Martínez Muguercia  
Jessie de Armas Amador  
Mayla Belkis Carminate Reyes  
Dania Gutiérrez Flores  
Irasema Jiménez Jiménez  
Justo Elpidio Flores Hernández  
Victoria Milagros Lo Tamayo  
Gerardo Rafael García Huerta

## **VIOLA**

Roberto Herrera Díaz, principal  
Raíza Valdés Ortega, assistant  
principal  
Yaser Abdel Cruzata Revé  
Miriam Erasma Baró Jiménez  
Juan Gabriel Hechevarría Sánchez  
Danny Santos Pérez  
José Carlos Fuentes Iribarnegaray

## **CELLO**

Alejandro Rodríguez Tirado,  
principal  
Arelis Zaldívar Copello, assistant  
principal  
Gladys Lo Tamayo  
Diana Rosa Alonso Pons  
María Victoria Boada Cuellar  
Mayrelys Danay Smith Rojas

## **DOUBLE BASS**

Andrés Hirán Escalona Graña,  
principal  
Francisco Antonio Valdés Torres,  
assistant principal  
Alfredo Alejandro Averhoff  
Morales  
Michel Toll Calviño

## **FLUTE**

Zorime Mercedes Vega García,  
principal  
Karla López Mena, assistant  
principal  
Sulany López Lago

## **OBOE**

Frank Ernesto Fernández Neira,  
principal  
Marlene Neyra García, assistant  
principal  
Lauren Ríos Hernández

## **CLARINET**

Maray Viyella Clausell, principal  
Flavia Medez Pérez

## **BASSOON**

Francisco Guillermo Sánchez  
Mejías, principal  
Abrahan Castillo Moreno  
Dasni Martínez Marín

## **FRENCH HORN**

Pedro Luis González García,  
principal  
Moisés Hernandez Doménigo,  
assistant principal  
Dania Pérez Fonseca  
Carlos David Guerra Serrano

## **TRUMPET**

Jorge Alberto Rubio Pérez,  
principal  
Damian Miguel Salvent Vargas,  
assistant principal  
Enrique Mario Rodríguez Toledo

## **TROMBONE**

Alberto Batista Meneses,  
principal  
Marisel González Valdes, assistant  
principal  
Ivanovi Garzón Tabares

## **TUBA**

Manuel Antonio Milán Medel

## **PERCUSSION**

Luis Antonio Barrera Perea,  
principal  
Abiel Chea Guerra, assistant  
principal  
Jesús Federico Chea Gort  
Yaneisy Ríos Linares  
Alejandro Banegas Marichal

## **STAFF**

Alejandro Guma Ruiz

# *Biographies*

## **NATIONAL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA OF CUBA**

**Enrique Pérez Mesa, artistic director and chief conductor**

The National Symphony Orchestra of Cuba (NSOC) has its antecedents in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when the Cuban cathedrals of Havana and Santiago de Cuba had a musical chapel made up of a small number of singers and instrumentalists. At the end of that century the Cuban priest composer Esteban Salas expanded the chapel of the Cathedral of Santiago de Cuba until building a small orchestra. But it is not until the third decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that the first full-format symphonic orchestras were created in Cuba, a permanent institutional life and continuous programming. These orchestras were the Symphony Orchestra of Havana, founded in 1922 by Gonzalo Roig, and the Philharmonic Orchestra of Havana, founded in 1924 and whose direction was initially entrusted to the Spanish musician Pedro Sanjuán. The existence of both orchestras generated by the emulation established between the two groups undeniable benefits for the musical culture at the time. The Symphony Orchestra of Havana maintained regular presentations in the first years of its life, but later its concerts became more spaced until disappearing in the late '40s. On the other hand, the Philharmonic Orchestra of Havana maintained a stable program of concerts until 1958. The titular direction was assumed successively by Alberto Bolet, Juan Jose Castro, Massimo Freccia, Erich Kleiber, Igor Markevich, Arthur Rodzinski, Amadeo Roldán, and Frieder Weissmann.

In 1959 the National Symphony Orchestra of Cuba was founded, belonging to the National Philharmonic of Cuba. On November 11, 1960, the NSOC debuted at the Teatro Auditorium Amadeo Roldán under the direction of Enrique González Mántici.

Since its creation, the NSOC has developed a very important work of disseminating Cuban and Latin American music, as well as covering a vast symphonic and chamber repertoire that ranges from the baroque to modern music. More than 3,000 concerts have been held between national and international performances, including performances in Russia, Poland, Yugoslavia, Mexico, Nicaragua, Spain, Peru, Argentina, Martinique, and Guadeloupe, consolidating basic lines of work such as seasonal regular concerts, symphonic programs and chorals, cycles of didactic concerts, national periodical tours, lyrical and ballet shows, extraordinary gala concerts, and more.

In all these years, the National Symphony Orchestra of Cuba has been directed by more than 100 national and foreign conductors, among them Claudio Abbado, Manuel Duchesne Cuzán, Elena Herrera, Guido López-Gavilán, Jorge López Marín, Iván del Prado, Francesco Belli, Carmine Coppola, Herrera de la Fuente, Luis de Pablo, Bernardo Adam Ferrero, Tomás Fortín, Yoshikazu Fukumura, Alexander Gauk, Medardo Caisabanda, Enrique Gonzalez Mántici, Camargo Guarnieri, Felix Guerrero, Emil Jachaturian, Siegfried Kurz, Michel Legrand, Georges Martin, Joel Mathias Jenny, Eduardo Moubarak, Jean-Paul Pénin, Carlos Piantini, Redentor Romero, Gonzalo Romeu, Roberto Sánchez Ferrer, Vasil Stefanov, Hans Werner Henze, Tek Yin, and Enrique Pérez Mesa, who holds the position of the principal conductor of the orchestra. The NSOC has counted on the presence of national and international soloists of great international prestige, including Frank Fernández, Jorge Luis Prats, Francesco Manara, Georgi Badev, Zuill Bailey, Rita Boubolidi, Yuri Boukoff, José Carreras, Joaquín Clerch, Costas Cotsiolis, Anton Dikov, Niurka Gonzalez, Eric Grossman, Victoria de los Angeles, Victor Pellegrini, Ivan Petruzzello, Mstislav Rostropovich, David Oistrakh, and many others.



# Biographies, continued



## ENRIQUE PÉREZ MESA

**National Symphony Orchestra of Cuba, music director**

Internationally renowned maestro Enrique Pérez Mesa is currently an artistic director of the National Symphony Orchestra of Cuba, as well as the Chamber Orchestra of Our Time. He has led performances in prestigious concert halls throughout Austria, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Spain, France, Italy, Mexico, Venezuela, Russia, South Korea, and the United States, among others.

He has collaborated with well-known soloists, including Alexandra Ferri, Francesco Manara, José Manuel Carreño, Frank Fernández, Roger Woodward, Konstantin Cherbakov, Alexander Braginski, Joaquín Clerch, the Romeros Quartet, Jorge Luis Prats, and Víctor Rodríguez.

His recordings include a Grammy Award nomination for *Salmo de Las Americas* (Classical Music); *Concertos for Piano by Spanish Composers*; and *Five Concertos for Piano and Orchestra* by Heitor Villa-Lobos, which was acknowledged with a Cubadisco Award in 2007. His DVD recording with Cuban pianist Frank Fernández was nominated for the Cubadisco in 2008. Mesa has also recorded music for Cuban and Spanish films.

Mesa's conducting master classes have included trips to Colombia, Mexico, Ecuador, and Spain. He has received the Pilgrim of the Millennium, granted by the mayor of Jerusalem, as well as the Shield of the City of Sabaudia, Italy, and a Seal of Laureate of Distinction from the National Culture of Cuba.

A native of Matanzas, Cuba, Mesa majored in violin at the National School of Arts, where his teachers were Inna Kuznezova and Billy Mokatzian. Later he studied conducting with Guido López-Gavilán at the Instituto Superior de Arte.



## YEKWON SUNWOO

**2017 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition gold medalist, piano**

Gold medalist of the 15<sup>th</sup> Van Cliburn International Piano Competition, 28-year-old pianist Yekwon Sunwoo has been hailed for "his total command over the instrument and its expressiveness" (*San Francisco Examiner*). A powerful and virtuosic performer, he also, in his own words, "strives to reach for the truth and pure beauty in music," and hopes to convey those fundamental emotions to audiences.

Born in Anyang, South Korea, Sunwoo began learning piano at age eight. He gave both his recital and orchestra debuts in 2004 in Seoul before moving to the United States in 2005 to study with Seymour Lipkin at the Curtis Institute of Music. He earned a bachelor's degree there, a master's degree at the Juilliard School with Robert McDonald, and an artist diploma at the Mannes School of Music with Richard Goode. He currently studies under Bernd Goetzke in Hannover, Germany. Sunwoo credits each for their

guidance in his artistic development and approach, and honored the late Lipkin by performing his cadenza during his semifinal round performance of the Mozart Piano Concerto in C Major, K. 467.

The first Korean to win Cliburn gold, Sunwoo launched his debut season in 2017–2018 with invitations to the Aspen, Grand Teton, and Duszni International Music Festivals. Recitals will take him to Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, and Vancouver, and he undertakes a nine-city tour of the United States with the National Orchestra of Cuba in the spring. In Europe Sunwoo makes his United Kingdom concerto debut with the Royal Scottish

# *Biographies, continued*

National Orchestra under Cristian Macelaru, appears in the first full season at the Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg, and performs in Brussels, Copenhagen, Istanbul, Madrid, Helsingborg, and across Germany. His appearances in Asia include those in Beirut, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and across South Korea.

Record label Decca Gold released *Cliburn Gold 2017* two weeks after his Cliburn win, which includes his award-winning performances of Ravel's *La Valse* and Rachmaninoff's Second Piano Sonata.

In previous seasons, Sunwoo has performed as soloist with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra under Marin Alsop, the Juilliard Orchestra with Itzhak Perlman at Avery Fisher Hall, Houston Symphony Orchestra with James Feddeck, Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra with Leonard Slatkin and Nicholas McGegan, National Orchestra of Belgium, Sendai Philharmonic Orchestra, and others. He has appeared in recital in Hamarikyu Asahi Hall in Tokyo, Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, Wigmore Hall in London, Radio France and Salle Cortot in Paris, Kumho Art Hall in Seoul, and throughout South Korea, Germany, Switzerland, Prague, and Morocco.

An avid chamber musician, his partners have included the Jerusalem and Brentano String Quartets; violinists Benjamin Beilman and Ida Kafavian; cellists Edgar Moreau, Gary Hoffman, and Peter Wiley; and pianist Anne-Marie McDermott. He has toured Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Panama with the Kumho Asiana Cultural Foundation, performed for the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center's Inside Chamber Music Lectures, and been invited to the Summit Music, Bowdoin International, and Toronto Summer Music Festivals.

In addition to the Cliburn gold medal, Sunwoo has won first prizes at the 2015 International German Piano Award in Frankfurt, the 2014 Vendome Prize held at the Verbier Festival, the 2013 Sendai International Music Competition, and the 2012 William Kapell International Piano Competition.

A self-proclaimed foodie, Sunwoo enjoys finding pho in each city he visits and takes pride in his own homemade Korean soups.

# *Engagement Events*

Wednesday, March 21, 2018

## **TALK: CUBAN MUSICAL CULTURE**

Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortíz, the so-called “third” discoverer of Cuba (after Columbus and von Humbolt), called his homeland a cultural stew, or *ajiaco*, because of strong African and European influences. Musically, these expressions emerge in the Cuban musical genres of areito, zapateo, zampado, the theatrical music of zarzuela, son montuno, guaguanco, rumba, and more. This presentation summarized and sampled these styles of Cuban music as well as the island’s historical and contemporary vanguard who have shaped the National Symphony Orchestra of Cuba.

Joseph L. Scarpaci, Ph.D., Latin American Studies scholar and executive director of the Center for the Study of Cuban Culture + Economy

*Special thanks to Joseph L. Scarpaci*

## **LEARNING GUIDE QUESTIONS**

The Moss Arts Center Learning Guide is a resource for educators, students, and anyone who enjoys digging deeper into our programming. To engage even more fully with our season performances, view the full Learning Guide at [bit.ly/LearningGuideMAC](http://bit.ly/LearningGuideMAC). Please use the following questions to spark your own contemplation about today’s performance:

- In addition to the pieces by de Falla and Roldán, where did you hear Spanish or Latin influences in the orchestra’s performance? What forms did they take?
- A 2008 story on National Public Radio described a successful effort by the National Symphony Orchestra of Cuba—an historically white, male institution—to diversify its membership. The result was a symphony orchestra composed of 40 percent black or mixed-race musicians and 45 percent women. What positive impacts do you imagine this had in Cuba and the broader classical music world?
- Which piece in the program had the strongest impact on you? Why?



# *In the Galleries*

## **RAY KASS**

January 18-March 31, 2018

All galleries

Ray Kass, a prominent Virginia artist with a long record of national and international exhibitions, is well known not only for the quality and breadth of his art but as a pivotal, even catalytic figure in this region. Over the years Kass stood out as an exemplary artist, here and in the art world beyond, as well as a distinguished art professor at Virginia Tech. Among his many accomplishments was establishing and directing the Mountain Lake Symposium and Workshop programs, through which he brought art-world luminaries to this region—Clement Greenberg, Donald B. Kuspit, and John Cage, among others—and subsequently influenced generations of artists in Virginia and the southeast.

This exhibition highlights exemplary work from Kass' prolific career, ranging from his large scale, multi-panel *Polyptych* (1961-2003) paintings to his most recent *Still Lives* (2015-2018), created with stencils in an inventive layering of water media, oil emulsion, and dry pigment on rag paper. Among the key works in the exhibition is the monumental painting *Broad Channel: Vorticella Polyptych*, 1991, from the permanent collection of the Nevada Museum of Art, which will be seen in Virginia for the first time in 20 years.

## **GALLERY HOURS**

Monday-Friday, 10 AM-5:30 PM

Saturday, 10 AM-4 PM

To arrange a group tour or class visit, please contact Meggin Hicklin, exhibitions program manager, at [megh79@vt.edu](mailto:megh79@vt.edu) or 540-231-0840.