

Hartford Symphony Orchestra

TCHAIKOVSKY & GRIEG

December 3-5, 2021

HARTFORD SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Carolyn Kuan, music director

TCHAIKOVSKY & GRIEG

Friday, December 3, 2021 / 8:00 p.m.

Saturday, December 4, 2021 / 8:00 p.m.

Sunday, December 5, 2021 / 3:00 p.m.

Belding Theater, The Bushnell Center
for the Performing Arts

CAROLYN KUAN, conductor

GABRIELA MARTINEZ, piano



**EDVARD GRIEG
(1843-1907)**

Music from *Peer Gynt*:

Abduction of the Bride & Ingrid's Lament
Peer Gynt's Homeward Journey
Morning
Ase's Death
Anitra's Dance
In the Hall of the Mountain King

**PIOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY
(1840-1893)**

The Nutcracker, Op. 71
Act I Finale

VI. Clara and the Nutcracker
VII. The Battle
VIII. Journey through the Snow
IX. Waltz of the Snowflakes

~ INTERMISSION ~

**EDVARD GRIEG
(1843-1907)**

Piano Concerto, Op. 16

I. Allegro molto moderato
II. Adagio
III. Allegro moderato molto e marcato
Gabriela Martinez, piano

The post of Music Director is endowed by The Beatrice Fox Auerbach Foundation.

Cameras and recording equipment are not permitted during the performance.

As a courtesy to the performers and other audience members, please turn off watch alarms and cell phones.

The Hartford Symphony Orchestra receives major support from the Greater Hartford Arts Council, the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, and with support from the Department of Economic and Community Development, Connecticut Office of the Arts which also receives support from the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency.

The 2021-22 Masterworks Series is presented by

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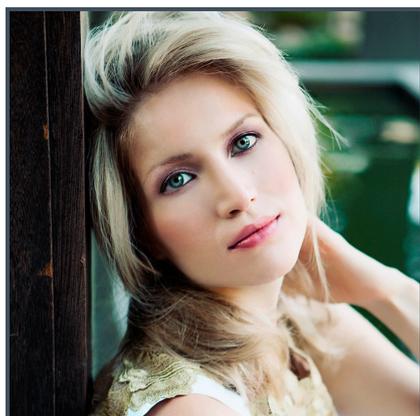
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Artist Biography



GABRIELA MARTINEZ

Piano

Photo Credit: Lisa-Marie Mazzucco

Gabriela Martinez is represented worldwide by Sciolino Artist Management

Versatile, daring, and insightful, Venezuelan-born pianist Gabriela Martinez is establishing a reputation both nationally and internationally for the lyricism of her playing, her compelling interpretations, and her elegant stage presence.

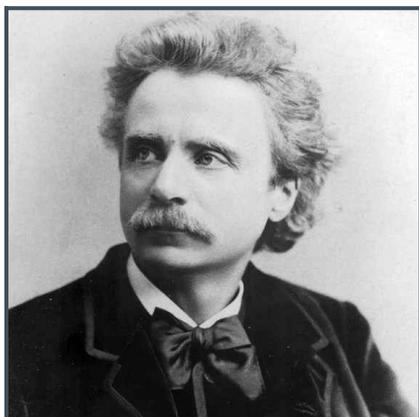
Since making her orchestral debut at age 7, Ms. Martinez has played with such distinguished orchestras as the San Francisco, Chicago, Houston, New Jersey, Tucson, Pacific, and Fort Worth symphonies; the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra; Germany's Stuttgarter Philharmoniker, MDR Rundfunkorchester, Nürnberger Philharmoniker, and MDR Leipzig Radio Philharmonic Orchestra; Canada's Victoria Symphony Orchestra; the Costa Rica National Symphony; and the Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra in Venezuela. In the past four seasons she has appeared with the Knoxville, Richmond, Charlotte, Grand Rapids, Pasadena, Springfield and Wichita symphonies, the Orlando, Boise and Dayton philharmonics, the Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia, and the Atlantic Classical Orchestra. Orchestral engagements in the 2021-22 season include the Omaha, Hartford, and San Antonio symphonies.

Amplified Soul, Ms. Martinez's debut solo album, was released by Delos Records in 2016. It features works by Beethoven, Rachmaninoff, Szymanowski, and two living composers: Dan Visconti—whose title selection *Amplified Soul* (world premiere recording), was written for Ms. Martinez—and Mason Bates.

Her wide-ranging career includes world premieres of new music, live performance broadcasts, and interviews on TV and radio. Ms. Martinez's performances have been featured on National Public Radio, CNN, PBS, *60 Minutes*, ABC, *From the Top*, Radio France, WQXR and WNYC (New York), MDR Kultur and Deutsche Welle (Germany), NHK (Japan), RAI (Italy), and on numerous television and radio stations in Venezuela.

Ms. Martinez was the First Prize winner of the Anton G. Rubinstein International Piano Competition in Dresden, and a semifinalist at the 12th Van Cliburn International Piano Competition. She began her piano studies in Caracas with her mother, Alicia Gaggioni, and attended The Juilliard School, where she earned her Bachelor of Music and Master of Music degrees.

Program Notes



EDVARD GRIEG

Music from Peer Gynt

Edvard Grieg photo by Elliot and Fry

World Premiere: *February 24, 1876 (as part of the full opera)*

Most Recent HSO Performance: *May 1993*

Instrumentation: 2 flutes with first flute doubling on piccolo, piccolo, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, triangle, cymbals, bass drum, snare drum, tambourine, and strings: violin I, violin II, viola, cello, and bass

Duration: 25'

Suite from the Incidental Music to Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*, Opp. 46 and 55 (1874-1875)

Edvard Grieg

(Born June 15, 1843 in Bergen, Norway Died there on September 4, 1907)

The premiere of the revival of the fantastical allegory *Peer Gynt* by Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906) in February 1876 for which Grieg provided a raft of incidental music was one of the greatest successes of the composer's life. The event marked the beginning of his international renown and his financial security. Grieg outlined the plot of the play, though it needs to be pointed out that the episodes and characters he mentions have a deeper, symbolic significance than is apparent from this brief précis:

"Peer Gynt, the only son of poor peasants, is drawn by the poet as a character of morbidly developed fancy and a prey to megalomania. In his youth, he has many wild adventures — comes, for instance, to a peasants' wedding where he carries the bride up to the mountain peaks. There he leaves her so that he may roam about with wild cowherd girls. He then enters the land of the Mountain King, whose daughter falls in love with him and dances for him. But he laughs at the dance and its droll music, whereupon the enraged mountain folk wish to kill him. But he succeeds in escaping and wanders to foreign countries, among others to Morocco, where he appears as a prophet and is greeted by Arab girls. After many wonderful guidings of Fate, he at last returns as an old man, after suffering shipwreck on his way to his home, which is as poor as he left it. There the sweetheart of his youth, Solvejg, who has stayed true to him for all these years, meets him, and his weary head at last finds rest in her lap."

The selections on this concert are drawn from the two concert suites Grieg extracted from the complete score in 1888 and 1891. *The Abduction of the Bride and Ingrid's Lament* portrays Peer's kidnapping of the bride at a village wedding and her grief at later being discarded by him. *Peer Gynt's Homeward Journey* is a stormy seascape. *Morning* is one of the most famous evocations of dawn in the entire musical repertory. The music occurs not at the beginning of the play, however, but in Act IV, when Peer is in Africa. *Åse's Death* serves as the poignant background for the passing of Peer's mother. *Anitra's Dance* is a lithe number of exotic character performed for Peer during his adventures in Morocco by the daughter of a Bedouin chief. *In the Hall of the Mountain King* accompanies Peer's terrified escape from the abode of the most fearsome of Norway's trolls.

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PIOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY

The Nutcracker, Op. 71

World Premiere: December 18, 1892

Most Recent HSO Performance: May 13, 2012

Instrumentation: 3 flutes with second and third flute doubling on piccolo, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, glockenspiel, tambourine, tamtam, ratchet, castanets, cymbals, triangle, bass drum, snare drum, chimes, whipcrack, suspended cymbal, toydrums, gunshot, harp, celeste, and strings: violin I, violin II, viola, cello, and bass

Duration: 20'

Act I Finale from *The Nutcracker*, Op. 71 (1891-1892)

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky

(Born May 7, 1840 in Votkinsk Died November 6, 1893 in St. Petersburg)

Late in 1890, Tchaikovsky was approached by Prince Ivan Vselvolozhsky, director of the Imperial Theater in St. Petersburg, and Marius Petipa, the French dancer and choreographer who created an unprecedented standard of ballet production and execution after settling in Russia in 1847, to compose a full evening's entertainment — a one-act opera and a ballet. The subject for the opera was to be of Tchaikovsky's choice (he picked *King René's Daughter* by the Danish dramatist Hendrik Herz, which the composer's brother Modest turned into a libretto titled *Iolanthe*), but that for the ballet was specified as E.T.A. Hoffmann's story of *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King*, one of the most popular tales in Russia at the time. Tchaikovsky had read Hoffmann's *Nutcracker* in 1882 "with great pleasure," and he accepted the commission.

Ernst Theodor Amadeus Hoffmann (he changed his third named from Wilhelm for love of Mozart), born in 1776, was a German writer, painter and musician whose life and works were inflamed by the ardent spirit of Romanticism. As a young man, he studied law, and held positions in the Prussian bureaucracy until Napoleon overthrew the government in 1806. Thereafter he served as an opera conductor in Bamberg, Dresden and Leipzig, and took up musical composition, producing a symphony, a ballet, some sacred works, a few chamber pieces and twelve operas. He returned to government service in 1816, as a justice of the supreme court in Berlin, a post he retained until his death in 1822. Hoffmann turned to writing late in his career, after he had moved to Berlin. He produced two novels and a treatise on the problems of theater direction, but he is best known for his collections of short stories that explore the fantastic, grotesque and even sinister aspects of the imagination, often with sharp wit and deep psychological insight. (A talented artist, he also illustrated several of his own books.) Hoffmann was a strong influence on Edgar Allan Poe and other 19th-century writers of fantasy, and his tales served as inspiration for compositions by Wagner (*Die Meistersinger*), Offenbach (*The Tales of Hoffmann*) and Delibes (*Coppélia*), as well as Tchaikovsky.

The scenario devised for the new ballet by Petipa, who had also choreographed the premiere of *The Sleeping Beauty*, was not based directly on Hoffmann's original story, however, but rather on a French adaptation by Alexandre Dumas père that considerably softened the grotesque elements and erotic undertones of the German Romanticist's narrative. Tchaikovsky objected to the lack of faithfulness to Hoffmann's original, much of whose interest for him lay precisely in its juxtaposition of the naïve, idyllic images of youth with moments of *grotesquerie*, but resigned himself to his contractual agreement, and told Modest shortly after starting composition in February 1891 that "I am beginning to be reconciled to the subject."

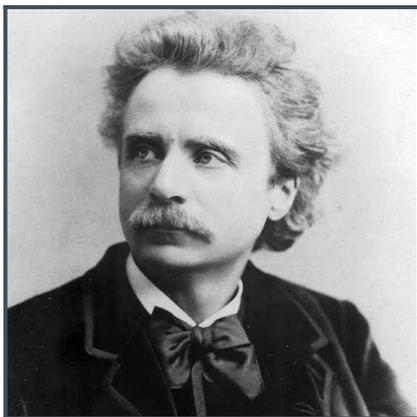
Just as he was undertaking *Nutcracker*, Tchaikovsky was invited to the United States to conduct his music at the inaugural festivities celebrating the opening of Carnegie Hall in New York City. He agreed to go, and in March set out on a concert tour that took him en route across Germany and to Paris. Always interested in novel sounds, Tchaikovsky heard in Paris the celesta, a recent invention of the celebrated harmonium builder, Victor Mustel, and realized that its ethereal tone would be perfect for his new ballet. He urged his publisher, Jurgenson, to obtain one immediately: "Have it sent directly to St. Petersburg, but no one there must know about it. I am afraid Rimsky-Korsakov and Glazunov might hear of it and make use of it before I do. I expect it to make a tremendous impression." (Tchaikovsky first used the instrument in his symphonic poem *The Voyevoda* in 1891. The French composer Ernest Chausson may have been the first to include it in an orchestral score, in his incidental music to Shakespeare's *The Tempest* in Paris in 1888.)

Tchaikovsky was home from his American tour by May, and resumed work immediately on *Nutcracker*. He finished sketching the score by the end of the following month, though not without the misgivings he usually expressed over his new works. "The ballet is infinitely worse than *The Sleeping Beauty*, that much is certain," he lamented to his brother Modest. "Let's see how the opera will turn out." Like the true professional composer he had become, however, he labored on despite his doubts, working on *Iolanthe* during the fall, and completing the orchestration of *Nutcracker* by the following February. With the premiere of the new ballet and opera delayed until December 1892, he conducted some of his new music at a concert in St. Petersburg on March 19th. The suite of eight numbers he extracted from the complete score of the ballet was so successful that five of the movements were immediately encored. The premiere of the full ballet on December 18th, though lavishly mounted, fared less well. Casting changes and the public's increasing familiarity with subject and score soon led to *Nutcracker's* wide acceptance, however, and it has remained one of the most popular of all ballets.

The ballet opens with a Christmas party at the home of the President of the Town Council and his wife. The door bursts open, and Clara and Fritz, the President's children, run in, accompanied by some of their playmates. The President suggests that the children don paper hats and parade about the room (*March*). Among the adults who subsequently arrive is the mysterious Councilor Drosselmeyer, who gives Clara a large nutcracker with a grotesque head. Fritz takes it from her, and breaks the Nutcracker in trying to crack open an overly large nut. Clara carefully gathers up the pieces. The party ends. The guests leave, the children are sent to bed; the President turns out the lights and retires. Clara steals back into the living room, lit only by the candles on the tree, to look again at her broken Nutcracker.

Midnight strikes, the clock's face having taken on the features of Drosselmeyer. Mice scurry out from the corners of the room. Clara, terrified, climbs into a chair, only to see the Christmas tree grow magically to an enormous size. The gingerbread men left over from tea suddenly spring to life as soldiers to battle the mice. They are being beaten (and eaten) by the mice, when the Nutcracker jumps up to become their leader. He is confronted by the Mouse King himself, and appears about to meet his fate when Clara hurls her slipper at the rodent-monster and kills him. The mice, leaderless, flee, and the Nutcracker is transformed into a gallant Prince. As reward for saving his life, he invites Clara to visit his kingdom. She accepts. In the finale of Act I, titled *Scene in the Pine Forest (Journey Through the Snow)*, Clara and the Prince travel through a dense, snow-covered forest, guided by gnomes bearing torches. The travelers are met on their arrival by the King and Queen of the Snowflakes, who dance with their subjects (*Waltz of the Snowflakes*).

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EDVARD GRIEG

Piano Concerto, Op. 16

Edvard Grieg photo by Elliot and Fry

World Premiere: *April 3, 1869*

Most Recent HSO Performance: *December 1, 2004*

Instrumentation: 2 flutes with second flute doubling on piccolo, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani, and strings: violin I, violin II, viola, cello, and bass

Duration: 30'

Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 16 (1868)

Edvard Grieg

(Born June 15, 1843 in Bergen, Norway Died there on September 4, 1907)

Grieg completed his studies at the Leipzig Conservatory in 1863. Rather than heading directly home to Norway, however, he settled in Copenhagen to study privately with Niels Gade, at that time Denmark's most prominent musician and generally regarded as the founder of the modern Scandinavian school of composition. During his three years in that lovely city, Grieg met Rikard Nordraak, another young composer from Norway who was filled with the glowing ambition of establishing a distinctive musical identity for his homeland. His enthusiasm kindled Grieg's nationalistic interests, and together they established the Euterpe Society to help promote Scandinavian music. Grieg's concern with folk music grew stronger during the following years, especially when he was left to carry on the Euterpe project alone after Nordraak's premature death in 1866 at the age of 23. Also during this Danish sojourn, Grieg met Nina Hagerup, a fine singer and his cousin. More than familial affection passed between the two, however, and they soon found themselves in love. Nina's mother disapproved of the match ("He is nothing. He has nothing. And he makes music no one wants to hear," was the maternal judgment), and plans for a wedding were postponed.

Back in Norway, Grieg's creative work was concentrated on the large forms advocated by his Leipzig teachers and by Gade. By 1867, he had produced the Piano Sonata, Op. 7, the first two violin and piano sonatas, a symphony (long unpublished and made available only as recently as 1981), and the concert overture *In Autumn*. He also carried on his work to promote native music, and he gave an unprecedented concert exclusively of Norwegian compositions in 1866. Its excellent success brought him a notoriety that lifted him to the front rank of Scandinavian musicians: he was appointed conductor of the Philharmonic Society in Christiania (Oslo), had a full schedule of pupils, and was popular as a piano recital artist. As a result of his success, he was able to retrieve his fiancée, Nina, from Copenhagen, and the couple were married in June 1867. The daughter born the following spring was yet another mark of Grieg's increasingly happy life.

Grieg arranged to have the summer of 1868 free of duties, and he and Nina returned to Denmark for an extended vacation. They deposited the baby with grandparents in Copenhagen, and then went off to a secluded retreat at Sölleröd. It was there that Grieg wrote his Piano Concerto. He thoroughly enjoyed that summer. He slept late, took long walks, ate well, and tipped a glass in the evenings with friends at the local inn. The sylvan setting also spurred

his creative energies, and he composed freely for several hours each afternoon. When the couple returned to Norway in the fall, the Concerto was largely completed. He tinkered with the work throughout the winter, and had it ready for its premiere the following April. The piece was well received, but his joy over this success was tempered by the death of his thirteen-month-old daughter only a few weeks later.

One thing that helped Grieg through those dark times was an encouraging letter he received from Franz Liszt. Writing of the Violin Sonata, Op. 8, Liszt praised Grieg as a "strong, creative, inventive, and well-disciplined talent which has only to follow its natural bent to reach even higher levels." Liszt proffered an invitation for the young Norwegian to visit him. Grieg, with the help of a government grant that had been facilitated by Liszt's praise, left with Nina to meet Liszt in Rome in the fall of 1869. He wrote long, vivid letters to his parents describing the journey, the Eternal City, and especially the great Liszt, who amazed Grieg by sight-reading the difficult new Concerto. "Not content with just playing," Grieg reported, "he, at the same time, converses and makes comments, addressing a bright comment now to one, now to another of the assembled guests, nodding significantly to the right or left, particularly when something pleases him. In the Adagio, and still more in the Finale, he reached a climax, both as to his playing and the praise he had to bestow.... In conclusion, he handed me the manuscript, and

said in a particularly cordial tone: 'Keep steadily on; I tell you, you have the capability, and — do not let them intimidate you.' " A proud moment, indeed, for the 26-year-old composer. Liszt had some words of technical advice about the Concerto that Grieg acted upon, but it was this closing admonition that stayed with him throughout his life.

Grieg's Piano Concerto closed the youthful period of his life that was devoted to large-scale compositions. In 1869, a year after the Concerto was written, he discovered *Aeldre og nyere fjeldmelodier*, Lindemann's collection of Norwegian folk tunes. Grieg turned his attention thereafter to the idealization of the folk song in miniature musical works, producing only three compositions of sonata length during his remaining forty years. The Concerto exhibits some of the folk-influenced characteristics that mark Grieg's later works, but it is also firmly entrenched in the German Romantic tradition of Schumann's Piano Concerto.

The first movement opens with a bold summons by the soloist. The main theme is given by the woodwinds and taken over almost immediately by the piano. A flashing transition, filled with skipping rhythms, leads to the second theme, a tender cello melody wrapped in the warm harmonies of the trombones. An episodic development section, launched by the full orchestra playing the movement's opening motive, is largely based on the main theme in dialogue. The recapitulation returns the earlier themes, after which the piano displays a tightly woven cadenza. The stern introductory measures are recalled to close the movement.

Hans von Bülow called Grieg "the Chopin of the North," and that appellation is nowhere more justified than in the nocturnal second movement. A song filled with sentiment and nostalgia is played by the strings and rounded off by touching phrases in the solo horn. The soloist weaves elaborate musical filigree above the simple accompaniment before the lovely song returns in an enriched setting. The finale follows almost without pause. Themes constructed in the rhythms of a popular Norwegian dance, the *halling*, dominate the outer sections of the movement. The movement's central portion presents a wonderful melodic inspiration, introduced by the solo flute, that derives from the dreamy atmosphere of the preceding movement. The dance rhythms return and gather increasing momentum. A grandiloquent restatement by the full orchestra of the theme of the movement's central section brings this evergreen work to a stirring close.

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