



Hartford Symphony Orchestra

FIREBIRD

February 11 - 13, 2022

HARTFORD SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
[Carolyn Kuan, music director](#)

FIREBIRD

Friday, February 11, 2022 / 8:00 p.m.
 Saturday, February 12, 2022 / 8:00 p.m.
 Sunday, February 13, 2022 / 3:00 p.m.

Belding Theater, The Bushnell Center
 for the Performing Arts

CAROLYN KUAN, conductor
SIRENA HUANG, violin

GEORGES BIZET **(1838-1875)**

Selections from *Carmen*
 Prelude to Act I
 Aragonaise (Prelude to Act IV)
 Intermezzo (Prelude to Act III)
 Seguidilla (Act I)
 The Dragoons of Alcala (Prelude to Act II)
 Habanera (Act I)
 Nocturne (Micaëla's Aria from Act III)
 Song of the Toreador (Act II)
 Danse Bohème (Act II)

HE ZHANHAO / CHEN GANG **(b. 1933 / b. 1935)**

The Butterfly Lovers
 Concerto for Violin and Orchestra
 Sirena Huang, violin

~ INTERMISSION ~

IGOR STRAVINSKY **(1882-1971)**

Suite from *The Firebird* (1919 Version)
 Introduction — The Dance of the Firebird
 Round Dance of the Princesses
 Infernal Dance of the King Kashchei
 Berceuse — Final

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.

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ROBERTS
F O U N D A T I O N

The Elizabeth M. and
Harriette M. Landon Foundation

This concert is sponsored by
The Alexander Campbell McNally and Tina Mahar McNally Memorial Concert



SIRENA HUANG

Violin

Praised by The Baltimore Sun for her "impeccable technique...deeply expressive phrasing...and poetic weight," Sirena Huang is one of her generation's most celebrated violinists. She brings not only technical brilliance and powerful artistry to the stage, but also a profound sense of connection to her audience.

Sirena has been the recipient of numerous accolades and awards. In 2017, she was awarded First Prize at the Elmar Oliveira International Violin Competition and later that year, she was the winner of the New York Concert Artist Worldwide Debut Audition. In 2009, she won First Prize Gold Medalist of the 6th International Tchaikovsky Competition for Young Musicians. She won First Prize and the Audience Award at the Cooper International Competition in 2011. That same year, she was also named the first Artist-in-Residence of Hartford Symphony

Orchestra. In 2013, she was awarded the Hannloser Prize for Violin at the Verbier Music Festival in Switzerland. She is also a top prize winner at Singapore International Violin Competition as well as the Shanghai Isaac Stern International Violin Competition.

Sirena made her solo debut with the National Taiwan Symphony Orchestra in 2004 at the age of nine and has performed in twenty countries across three continents. She has been featured as a soloist with more than fifty prestigious ensembles, including the New York Philharmonic, Cleveland Symphony Orchestra, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, Shanghai Symphony Orchestra, Russian Symphony Orchestra, Singapore Symphony Orchestra, and the Staatskapelle Weimar in Germany. She has performed in leading venues, including Berliner Philharmonie, Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, the Kennedy Center, the Kravis Center, Esplanade -Theaters on the Bay, Shanghai Concert Hall, and the Taiwan National Concert Hall, among many others. She has appeared as a guest artist at the Verbier Music Festival, Marlboro Music Festival, Ravinia Music Festival, Aspen Music Festival, Newport Music Festival, Music in the Mountains Festival, Eastern Music Festival, Sarasota Arts Series, "The Great Music for a Great City" series in New York City, and many others.

Motivated by a deep wish to inspire peace and harmony with her music, Sirena has performed before world leaders, thinkers and humanitarians. She has appeared at the World Peace Conference held in Petra and at the Opening Ceremony of the "Forum 2000 World Conference" in Prague, among others.

In addition to her TED Talk in 2006, Sirena has been featured on numerous radio and television broadcasts, including WQXR's McGraw-Hill Young Artists Showcase, and NPR's "From the Top" as well as several interviews with WNPR, CNBC, WTNH, WTIC, WB20 and Beethoven Radio.



GEORGES BIZET (1838-1875)

Selections from *Carmen*

World Premiere: March 3, 1875 (as part of the full opera)

Most Recent HSO Performance: February 9, 2013

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

Duration: 25'

Selections from *Carmen* (1872-1875)

Georges Bizet

(Born October 25, 1838 in Paris Died June 3, 1875 in Bougival, near Paris)

Carmen, Prosper Mérimée's earthy novella of 1845, was an unlikely subject for Georges Bizet to have chosen for representation at the Opéra-Comique, whose bourgeois works had accustomed the theater's audiences to lighthearted, happy-ending stories disposed in breezy musical numbers separated by spoken dialogue. Heroism, tragedy and recitative were reserved for the hallowed environs of the Paris Opéra. Even though Bizet and his librettists, Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy, smoothed the edges of the story and the characters (Carmen was little more than a raw prostitute in Mérimée's novella), critics and audience were bemused by the tragic progression of its plot, the depth of its characterization, the lubriciousness of its emotions, and the cumulative power of its impact at the opera's premiere on March 3, 1875. Though *Carmen* did not initially achieve the success Bizet had hoped, neither was it the fiasco that some legends later made of it. It was retained in the Opéra-Comique repertory and given 35 times before the end of the 1875 season and thirteen the next, though Bizet died in Paris exactly three months after the premiere, knowing little of the opera's success. *Carmen* then was produced to much acclaim across Europe and in America (first at New York's Academy of Music on October 23, 1878), and by the time it was revived at the Opéra-Comique, in 1883, the original spoken dialogue had been replaced with composed recitatives by the New Orleans-born composer Ernest Guiraud. *Carmen* was invariably performed in that through-composed version until Bizet's original score again came to light in the 1960s.

The selections on this concert begin with the ominous Prelude to Act I, which serves as the gateway to the fiery and tragic tale that follows. The *Aragonaise* (Entr'acte to Act IV), brilliant and languorous by turns, sets the scene for the opera's searing conclusion. The *Intermezzo* (Entr'acte to Act III) provides a quiet, lyrical foil to the surrounding events. In the seductive *Seguidilla* (Act I), Carmen lures Don José to a local tavern. *The Dragoons of Alcala* (Entr'acte to Act II) is the marching music that precedes Don José's arrival among the Gypsies. In the *Habanera* (Act I), which Bizet based on a popular song by the Spanish composer Sebastián de Yradier, Carmen sings of the fickleness of her love. The *Nocturne* is Micaëla's aria in Act III in which she implores Don José to return home to his dying mother. The *Song of the Toreador* (Act II) is the swaggering melody of the haughty bullfighter Escamillo. The *Danse Bohême* (Act II) is the fiery music marking Carmen's return to her Gypsy band after fleeing from Seville.

HE ZHANHAO / CHEN GANG (b. 1933 / b. 1935)

The Butterfly Lovers

World Premiere: May 1959

Most Recent HSO Performance: *This is the HSO's first performance of this work*

Instrumentation: 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani, cymbals, tamtam, clappers, and strings: violin I, violin II, viola, cello, and bass

Duration: 27'

The Butterfly Lovers, Concerto for Violin and Orchestra (1959)

Chen Gang

(Born March 10, 1935 in Shanghai)

He Zhanhao

(Born August 29, 1933 in Hejiashan village, Zhuji, Zhejiang Province)

The Butterfly Lovers is the collaborative work of Chen Gang and He Zhanhao, two of China's leading composers, who met when they were students at the Shanghai Conservatory in the 1950s. Chen, born in Shanghai in 1935, was introduced to music by his father, Chen Gexin, a prolific composer of popular songs. He entered the Shanghai Conservatory in 1955 to study composition and music theory under Ding Shande, the school's director, and the visiting Russian composer Valery Arzamanov. After graduating in 1960, Chen joined the Conservatory faculty; he has also served as director of the Guangxi Institute of the Arts. His compositions, which draw on both Chinese and Western influences, include orchestral, vocal and chamber works whose performances he has overseen in China, the United States, Canada, France, Singapore, Taiwan and Hong Kong.

He Zhanhao was born in 1933 in Zhejiang Province, on China's southeast coast, south of the Yangtze River Delta. His early musical experience was as a member of an ensemble accompanying traditional Zhejiang *yueju* opera, during which he learned to imitate on the violin the technique of the *erhu* (a spike fiddle with two silk strings, a hexagonal body covered with snakeskin, and no fingerboard). He went to the Shanghai Conservatory in 1957 to study violin and composition; the following year he began researching the use of folk instrument techniques on the violin, a project whose best-known result is *The Butterfly Lovers*. He joined the Conservatory faculty upon his graduation in 1964. His compositions, written for Western and Chinese instruments separately and in inventive combinations, are characterized by lyricism and expressive appeal.

Chen and He have provided the following information: "*The Butterfly Lovers Concerto* was written in 1959 when we were students at the Shanghai Conservatory. Musically the Concerto is a synthesis of Eastern and Western traditions, although the melodies and overall style are adapted from traditional Chinese opera. The solo violin is used with a technique that recalls the playing technique of the Chinese two-string fiddle. It is a one-movement programmatic concerto, with three sections that correspond to the three phases of the story — *Falling in Love*, *Refusing to Marry* and *Metamorphosing into Butterflies*.

"The narrative, derived from Chinese folklore, tells the story of the lovers — Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai. In order to pursue her studies, Zhu Yingtai has disguised herself as a boy. She has been studying together with Liang Shanbo, but her identity is unknown to her friend. This happy period of study and friendship comes to an end when Zhu Yingtai is compelled to return home. The couple part at a pavilion, eighteen miles from the city. This forms the exposition of a tripartite sonata-form movement.

"In the central section, the formal development, Zhu Yingtai defies her father, who has arranged a marriage for her. Liang Shanbo decides to visit Zhu Yingtai and only now finds out that she is a girl and about to be married. There is a tender duet between violin and cello as Liang Shanbo realizes the nature of his affection for his former companion. He dies, the victim of despair, and Zhu Yingtai, on the way to her wedding, stops at her lover's tomb and leaps into it. The tomb bursts open and at the sound of the gong the music reaches the climax.

"In the final section, the recapitulation, the love theme reappears and Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai emerge from the tomb as a pair of butterflies, flying together, never more to be parted. Their true love was perpetuated in a verse:

A rainbow shines and flowers flourish.

Amid the flowers butterflies flutter

In pairs that never sever.

The spirits of Liang and Zhu never perish.

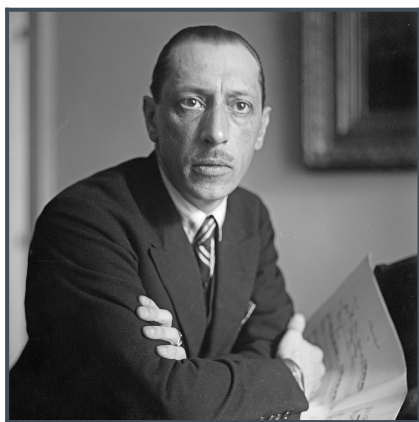
"The exposition begins with a flute solo against a background of soft tremolo on the strings, followed by a beautiful oboe melody that represents a peaceful, sunny spring day. The solo violin, accompanied by the harp, sings a simple, graceful love theme and enters into a dialogue with the cello, which renders into music the first encounter of Liang Shanbo with the girl Zhu Yingtai at a wayside arbor. A free cadenza leads to a lively rondo, in which the solo violin alternates with the orchestra. Three happy years of close affinity pass quickly before Zhu Yingtai is called home. An *Adagio* utters their reluctance to part.

"The development section opens with ominous foreshadows on the gong, cellos and bassoons. Brasses break in with a fierce and malicious theme, the theme of feudal forces. The violin pours out first the anxieties of Zhu Yingtai in free rhythm and then her protest in powerful syncopated chords. The two themes — the protest theme and the feudal forces theme — are woven into a climax of conflict as Yingtai protests against her undesired marriage. In the *Adagio* that follows, a duet for violin and cello evokes the longing of Shanbo and Yingtai for each other when they visit in the girl's parlor. The music shifts abruptly into *san-ban* (free rhythm) and *kuai-ban* (fast tempo). Yingtai pours out her grief to the heavens at Shanbo's tomb after his forlorn death. The device of *jin-la-man-chang* (singing freely upon a rushing accompaniment), borrowed from Shaoxing and Beijing operas, ushers in another climax. After the violin finishes its last plaintive phrase, the whole orchestra bursts into a powerful *tutti*. The tomb opens, and Yingtai plunges in. The music swells to the largest climax of the Concerto.

"The flute and harp imbue the recapitulation with a celestial bliss. The love theme reappears on the violin *con sordino* [muted]. Out of the tomb fly a pair of butterflies, which are believed to be the transfigurations of the deceased lovers."

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IGOR STRAVINSKY (1882-1971)



Suite from The Firebird (1919 Version)

World Premiere: June 6, 1910 (as part of the original ballet)

Most Recent HSO Performance: February 15, 2015

Instrumentation: 2 flutes with second flute doubling on piccolo, 2 oboes with second oboe doubling on English horn, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, xylophone, tambourine, triangle, cymbals, bass drum, harp, piano, and strings: violin I, violin II, viola, cello, and bass

Duration: 23'

Suite from *The Firebird* (1911)

Igor Stravinsky

(Born June 17, 1882 in Oranienbaum, near St. Petersburg Died April 6, 1971 in New York City)

Fireworks. There could not have been a more appropriate title for the work that launched the meteoric career of Igor Stravinsky. He wrote that glittering orchestral miniature in 1908, while still under the tutelage of Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, and it shows all the dazzling instrumental technique that the student had acquired from his teacher. Though the reception of *Fireworks* was cool when it was first performed at the Siloti Concerts in St. Petersburg on February 6, 1909, there was one member of the audience who listened with heightened interest. Serge Diaghilev was forming his Ballet Russe company at just that time, and he recognized in Stravinsky a talent to be watched. He approached the 27-year-old composer and requested orchestral transcriptions of short pieces by Chopin and Grieg that would be used in the first Parisian season of the Ballet Russe. Stravinsky did his work well and on time.

During that same winter, plans were beginning to stir in the creative wing of the Ballet Russe for a Russian folk ballet — something filled with legend and magic and fantasy. The composer Nikolai Tcherepnin was associated with the Ballet Russe at that time, and it was assumed that he would compose the music for a plot derived from several traditional Russian sources. However, Tcherepnin was given to inexplicable changes of mood and he was losing interest in ballet at the time, so he withdrew from the project. Diaghilev inquired whether Stravinsky had any interest in taking it over, and he agreed. The triumphant premiere of *The Firebird in Paris* on June 25, 1910 rocketed Stravinsky to international fame.

The story deals with the glittering Firebird and the evil ogre Kashchei, who captures maidens and turns men to stone if they enter his domain. Kashchei is immortal as long as his soul, which is preserved in the form of an egg in a casket, remains intact. The plot shows how Prince Ivan wanders into Kashchei's garden in pursuit of the Firebird; he captures it and exacts a feather before letting it go. Ivan meets a group of Kashchei's captive maidens and falls in love with one of them. The princesses return to Kashchei's palace. Ivan breaks open the gates to follow them, but he is captured by the ogre's guardian monsters. He waves the magic feather and the Firebird reappears to smash Kashchei's vital egg; the ogre expires. All the captives are freed and Ivan and his Tsarevna are wed.

Stravinsky drew three concert suites from *The Firebird*. The 1919 suite includes six scenes from the complete score. The first two, *Introduction* and *The Dance of the Firebird*, accompany the appearance of the magical creature. The *Round Dance of the Princesses* uses the rhythm and style of an ancient Russian dance called the *Khorovod*. The *Infernal Dance of King Kashchei*, the most modern portion of the score, depicts the madness engendered by the appearance of the Firebird at Kashchei's court after the revelation to Ivan of the evil ogre's vulnerability. The haunting *Berceuse* is heard when the thirteenth princess, the one of whom Ivan is enamored, succumbs to a sleep-charm that saves her from the terrible King while Ivan destroys Kashchei's malevolent power. The *Finale*, initiated by the solo horn, confirms the life-force that had been threatened by Kashchei.