

MASTERWORKS II

Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto with Lun Li

Lucas Richman, Conductor
Lun Li, Violin

Hector Berlioz
(1803–1869)

Béatrice et Bénédict: Overture

Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky
(1840–1893)

Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 35

I. Allegro moderato
II. Canzonetta: Andante
III. Finale: Allegro vivacissimo

Lun Li, Violin

INTERMISSION

César Franck
(1822–1890)

Symphony in D minor

I. Lento - Allegro non troppo
II. Allegretto
III. Allegro non troppo

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Lucas Richman

Music Director & Conductor

GRAMMY award-winning conductor **Lucas Richman** has served as Music Director for the Bangor Symphony Orchestra since 2010 and held the position as Music Director for the Knoxville Symphony Orchestra from 2003–2015. Over the course of nearly four decades on the podium, he has garnered an international reputation for his graceful musical leadership in a diverse field of media. In concert halls, orchestral pits and recording studios around the world, Richman earns rave reviews for his artful collaborations with artists in both the classical and commercial music arenas.

He has appeared as guest conductor with numerous orchestras including the New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, Boston Pops, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Baltimore Symphony, Indianapolis Symphony, New Jersey Symphony, Canada's National Arts Centre Orchestra and Toronto Symphony Orchestra, the Russian National

Orchestra, the Oslo Philharmonic, the SWR Radio Orchestra of Kaiserslautern, the Iceland Symphony Orchestra, the Zhejiang Symphony Orchestra, the Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional and the Zagreb Philharmonic. Recent guest conducting highlights include programs with the Cleveland Orchestra, the Orlando Philharmonic and the Israel Camerata Orchestra Jerusalem.

In recent years, Mr. Richman has led performances with notable soloists in both the classical and pop worlds, ranging from Mstislav Rostropovich, Garrick Ohlsson, Lang Lang, Midori, Gil Shaham, Emanuel Ax, Yefim Bronfman, Michelle DeYoung and Frederica von Stade to James Taylor, Michael Jackson, Pat Boone, Michael Feinstein, Gloria Estefan, Matthew Morrison, Martin Short, Tony Randall, Victor Borge and Brian Wilson. His numerous collaborations with film composers as their conductor has yielded recorded scores for such films as the Academy Award-nominated *The Village* (with violinist Hilary Hahn), *As Good As It Gets*, *Face/Off*, *Se7en*, *Breakdown*, *The Manchurian Candidate*, *White Noise* and the recent Marvel Universe release, *Madame Web*; in 2010, John Williams invited him to lead the three-month national summer tour of *Star Wars in Concert*. Mr. Richman received a GRAMMY Award (2011) in the category of Best Classical Crossover Album for having conducted the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra on Christopher Tin's classical/world fusion album, *Calling All Dawns*.

Also an accomplished composer, Mr. Richman has had his music performed by over two hundred orchestras and ensembles across the United States, with the Bangor Symphony having premiered eleven of those works during his tenure. His recent CD release of solo piano works, *Lucas Richman: Variations*, is available for sale in the lobby and online. For more information, visit www.lucasrichman.com.

Meet the Guest Artist

Lun Li is a violinist committed to creating thought-provoking, boundary-pushing concert experiences for contemporary audiences around the world. A native of Shanghai, China, violinist Lun Li won First Prize in the 2021 YCA Susan Wadsworth International Auditions, The Paul A. Fish Memorial Prize, the Buffalo Chamber Music Society Prize, and was named John French Violin Chair at YCA. Lun has had the honor and privilege of traveling between Shanghai and New York bringing him a plethora of experiences.

An avid chamber musician, Lun has participated in the Marlboro Music Festival, the Verbier Music Festival Academy, Music@Menlo's international program, and Music from Angelfire. He's had the pleasure to work alongside prestigious musicians such as Kim Kashkashian, Ani Kavafian, Ida Kavafian, Marcy Rosen, Steven Tenenbom, Peter Wiley, and with members of the Calidore, Doric, and Miro Quartets. Further accolades include winning second prize in Shanghai's Haydn Chamber Competition, resulting in an invitation to perform at the Helsinki Music Centre Festival. Lun is a member of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center's prestigious Bowers Program.

He has appeared on major musical stages in venues including Konzerthaus Berlin, Kulturpalast Dresden, Wiener Konzerthaus, and Verizon Hall at the Kimmel Center. He has toured with Curtis Institute of Music and Musicians from Marlboro, bringing him to Carnegie Hall, Merkin Hall, 92Y, and the Kimmel Center in Philadelphia.

In 24-25 Lun will appear as concerto soloist with the Bangor Symphony, Kennett Square Symphony, Colgate University Orchestra, Chamber Orchestra of the Spring (CO), Meridian Symphony, and the Salina Symphony. In recital he will be presented by the Main Line Committee for the Philadelphia Orchestra, Bedford Chamber Concerts, and the Arts Council of Moore County. He will make multiple appearances with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center at The Society of the Four Arts in Palm Beach, Alice Tully Hall in New York City, and on tour throughout Asia. Additionally Lun will appear on tour with YCA on Tour in March 2025.

Lun holds degrees from Curtis Institute of Music (BM'20) and The Juilliard School (MM'22). His mentors include Ida Kavafian, Catherine Cho, and Joseph Lin. He is currently pursuing an Artistic Diploma at The Juilliard School where he serves as teaching assistant to Catherine Cho.

Lun plays on the Stradivarius "Samazeuilh" 1735 violin, on generous loan from the Nippon Music Foundation.



Lun Li

Violin

Béatrice and Bénédict Overture

by Hector Berlioz | 8 minutes

When Hector Berlioz saw a production of *Hamlet* in Paris in 1827, it ignited an obsession with Shakespeare that lasted for the rest of his life. In his autobiography, he wrote, “Shakespeare, falling thus unexpectedly upon me, dismayed and astounded me. His lightning, in opening to me the firmament of art with a sublime thunderclap, illuminated the most distant depths. I recognized true grandeur, true beauty, dramatic truth...My heart and whole being were possessed by a fierce, desperate passion in which love of the artist and the art were interfused, each intensifying the other.” Berlioz composed several works that were based on Shakespeare’s plays, including *Le Roi Lear*, a concert overture based on *King Lear*, the second and third works in his series titled *Tristia*, which are based on scenes from *Hamlet*, his *Marche funèbre pour la dernière scène d’Hamlet* (Funeral March for the final scene of *Hamlet*) for wordless chorus and orchestra, a symphony in seven movements based on *Romeo and Juliet*, and his opera *Béatrice et Bénédict*, based on Shakespeare’s *Much Ado About Nothing*.

Berlioz composed *Béatrice et Bénédict* from 1860–1862, following a period of many personal challenges. His marriage to Harriet Smithson (with whom he became infatuated after seeing her play *Juliet* on the stage) had ended in divorce, and he encountered many problems with the production of his grand opera, *Les Troyens*. In addition, he was beginning to experience the symptoms of intestinal neuralgia that ultimately caused his death in 1869. Despite these difficulties, *Béatrice et Bénédict* is brimming with lighthearted fun and frivolity. Berlioz composed this opera for the impresario Edouard Benazet, who wanted something special for the grand opening of a theatre in Baden-Baden, Germany. Berlioz wrote the libretto as well as the music and conducted the well-received premiere on August 9, 1862. The spirited overture featured in today’s concert begins with music from the conclusion of the opera, when Beatrice and Benedict marry and sing, “Love is a torch...Love is a flame...today the truce is signed; we will become enemies again tomorrow!” Five additional excerpts from the opera are creatively woven together in this overture, and the orchestra sparkles brilliantly, with Berlioz’s renowned skill as an orchestrator on full display.

Violin Concerto in D major

by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky | 33 minutes

Although Tchaikovsky’s *Violin Concerto* is now considered a masterpiece, its success was hard won. Tchaikovsky began work on this concerto in Clarens,

Switzerland in March of 1878, and completed it just a few weeks later, on April 11th. His original plan was to dedicate the concerto to the Hungarian violinist Leopold Auer, who was a professor at St. Petersburg Conservatory and first violinist with the St. Petersburg Imperial Theaters (including the Imperial Ballet). Tchaikovsky was an admirer of Auer and defended him when Auer succeeded Henryk Wieniawski at the conservatory and was subjected to critical remarks in some musical circles. Unfortunately, Auer refused to play the concerto, stating that “Warmly as I had championed the symphonic works of the young composer (who was not at that time universally recognized), I could not feel the same enthusiasm for the *Violin Concerto*...still less could I place it on the same level as his strictly orchestral compositions.” Tchaikovsky later said that Auer’s rejection “...had the effect of casting this unfortunate child of my imagination into the limbo of the hopelessly forgotten.” At this point, Tchaikovsky re-dedicated the concerto to the Russian violinist Adolf Brodsky, who was the concertmaster of the New York Symphony and the Hallé orchestra in Manchester, England at the time. Brodsky attempted to convince the Pasdeloup and the Cologne orchestras in Paris to perform the concerto, but both orchestras refused. Finally, Hans Richter and the Vienna Philharmonic agreed to add the concerto to their concert series. The premiere took place on December 4, 1881. Apparently, Tchaikovsky was not aware of this event, and therefore was not present, which may have been a blessing in disguise. The short amount of time that Richter allowed for rehearsal was mainly spent correcting mistakes in the orchestral parts. Although Brodsky was applauded, the concerto itself was hissed by the hostile audience. Music critic Eduard Hanslick wrote in his review, “The Russian composer Tchaikovsky is surely no ordinary talent; but rather an inflated one, obsessed with posturing as a man of genius, and lacking all discrimination and taste.” Eventually, the opinion regarding this concerto changed, and it is now considered one of the treasures of the repertoire for violin. Leopold Auer later performed the concerto and taught it to his students as well.

The concerto opens with a gracious melody for woodwinds and strings, which, unusually, is never heard again. In the ninth measure, the mood changes, and the stage is set for the entrance of the solo violinist, who enters with a dramatic, cadenza-like passage. The first and second themes follow, but instead of the usual development of these themes, there is a virtuosic cadenza for the soloist. The first movement concludes with a lengthy and brilliant coda. The lovely and delicate second movement, a Canzonetta, was written at the end of April 1878, after Tchaikovsky decided to drop the original second movement. A cadenza at the end of the Canzonetta provides the transition to the finale, which is Russian in flavor and character. Based on two folklike melodies, the music builds in excitement throughout the movement, leading to the thrilling conclusion.

Symphony in D minor

by César Franck | 37 minutes

Born in Belgium, César Franck was a musical child prodigy and completed several successful tours as a concert pianist at a young age. He then studied at the Paris Conservatoire and became a professor of organ there in 1871. In this role, he espoused his philosophy that French music should be more substantial and serious, and less frivolous. He was attracted to the Germanic ideas of symphonic form and was inspired by Liszt's transformation of themes in his symphonic poems. Through his compositions, most of which were written in the last decade of his life, he paved the way for French composers such as Claude Debussy and Léo Delibes.

A pious and humble man, Franck nevertheless revolutionized the musical world with his mastery of cyclic form. This mastery is clearly evident in his *Symphony in D minor*, which he completed in 1888. Author and music critic Louis Biancolli writes, "...he was launching an epochal device of composition, one never fully exploited before, the cyclical form. He organized his material with superb singleness of aim. The plan of his symphony, fully expounded, was a marvel of logic and evolution." In this symphony, musical ideas from the first and second movements reappear in the third movement, which creates a sense of coherence and unity. The second movement includes a famous solo for English horn, which was also revolutionary at the time.

The Paris Conservatory orchestra played the premiere of this symphony in 1889, a year before Franck's death at age 68. Biancolli describes the premiere of the symphony in this way: "Never doubting that he had left an enduring hymn of faith for posterity, he turned a deaf ear to the raw contention set off by his Symphony. At the premiere everything went against it. The musicians were apathetic. The audience was puzzled. The enemy cabals were bitterly decisive. The professors raised their hands in horror over the use of the English horn in a symphony. Charles Gounod, the darling of the opera, flailed the work with a ready dictum: "The affirmation of incompetence pushed to dogmatic lengths." Franck said of the premiere, "Oh, it sounded well, just as I thought it would." Biancolli also aptly writes that this symphony is "the work of a supreme artist intent on absolute truth in revealing himself and his faith through an expressive medium. Few musical works come as close to saintliness."

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