

**TORONTO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**

Gustavo Gimeno, Music Director

# Dvořák Symphony No. 7

**Nicholas Sharma**, conductor

**Kevin Chen**, piano

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**Vivian Fung**

*Parade*

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**Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart**

Piano Concerto No. 17 in G Major, K. 453

I. Allegro

II. Andante

III. Allegretto

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## Intermission

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**Antonín Dvořák**

Symphony No. 7 in D Minor, Op. 70

I. Allegro maestoso

II. Poco adagio

III. Scherzo: Vivace

IV. Finale: Allegro

*Program 2*

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**Saturday,  
March 7, 2026**

7:30pm

**Sunday,  
March 8, 2026**

3:00pm

Performances at  
George Weston Recital Hall

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*RBC Resident Conductor  
is generously supported by  
RBC Foundation.*

*The TSO's George Weston  
Recital Hall Series is  
generously supported by  
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Steinsky.*

Vivian Fung (b. 1975)

## **Parade**

Composed 2022

11 min

**FROM THE COMPOSER:** *Parade* is a celebration of community, but also explores the journey from solitude to togetherness. Like so many others, I was feeling quite isolated from human contact during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, I had the opportunity in 2022 to attend the San Francisco Lunar New Year parade as my then 6-year-old son was marching as part of a group of students representing his school in the parade. I was deeply moved by the festivities as masses of people came together to celebrate the occasion, and I wanted to express conflicting feelings of chaos and melancholy, at the same time as empathy and gratitude, in this new orchestral work.

The work starts softly in a dream-like state and slowly quotes the first line from a Hildegard von Bingen chant, “O ignee Spiritus” (“O fiery Spirit, praise to you”). Just as the dream-like state reaches a climax, the parade begins and has an Ives-ian chaos to it, as different groups enter, playing the same music but out of time with one another (the tune alludes to a Chinese military song). The scene transitions to a more raucous, dance-inspired affair. As the dance disappears, the dream-like state returns, interspersed with fragments of previous melodies, and then builds to a triumphant climax, bringing the work to a roaring and euphoric close.

**COMPOSER BIO:** JUNO Award-winning composer Vivian Fung has a unique talent for combining idiosyncratic textures and styles into large-scale works, reflecting her multicultural background. NPR calls her “one of today’s most eclectic composers,” and *The Philadelphia Inquirer* praises her “stunningly original compositional voice.”

Fung’s 2025/26 premières began in October 2025 with a new work for string quartet and poet, as part of Del Sol Quartet’s project *Facing the Moon: Songs of Diaspora*, featuring the poetry of San Francisco-based Genny Lim. In collaboration with Sandbox Percussion and Kristin Lee, Fung is writing a new *Concerto for Violin and Four Percussionists* for Sandbox and Lee’s US tour this spring. Fung will write a new work for Ensemble for These Times that will include homemade percussion for Haruka Fujii. Continued partnerships include Fung’s first opera, *My Family // Cambodia, 1975*, with librettist Royce Vavrek; *Girl from the 905*, a new song cycle with Vavrek and soprano Andrea Núñez; and a new work for violin and electronics to be premiered in early 2027, based on a recent fieldwork trip to Guizhou, China, with violinist Nancy Zhou.

Born in Edmonton, Alberta, Fung began her composition studies with composer Violet Archer and received her doctorate from The Juilliard School in New York. She currently lives in California with her husband, Charles Boudreau, their son, Julian, and their dog, Coco.



Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791)

## Piano Concerto No. 17 in G Major, K. 453

Composed 1784

32 min

**MOZART'S VIENNESE PIANO CONCERTOS** represent one of the richest legacies in a single genre by any artist, and overshadow, in their importance and quantity, the contributions of subsequent composers to this form. The concerto was one of Mozart's most progressive genres, in which the soloist is pitted dramatically against the orchestra, while innovations in form, orchestration, and texture make a decisive appearance.

In 1784, Mozart wrote his Concerto in G Major, K. 453, for Babette Ployer, a favourite pupil. Its opening "Allegro" movement employs a march rhythm, yet the character of the work displays a delicate transparency and intimacy. Great energy lurks just beneath its surface, however, as is revealed by the deceptive cadences in the opening orchestral ritornello, which take the music momentarily to E-flat major, reinforced by sudden forte interjections with wind support. Not merely an isolated effect, this energetic gesture returns to introduce the fantasy-like development and also marks the tutti preceding the solo cadenza.

The ensuing slow movement in C major explores a surprising disjunction between the opening thematic statement for strings in the ritornello, and the contrasting continuation featuring the oboes and other winds. In the solo exposition, the piano fills in this structural gap, bringing a passionate chromatic continuation, whose pathos is heightened by leaps in register. As the movement unfolds, Mozart reveals unsuspected possibilities hidden within this contrast-laden music. Only at the conclusion does the pianist supply a firm resolving

phrase, as the sonorities of the piano, winds, and strings are integrated at last.

Mozart indulged in co-operative dialogue of another kind after he purchased a pet starling in May 1784. He felt inspired to teach his bird the theme of the variation finale of K. 453, and he even wrote out the starling's version of the first measures, labelling it "The Starling's Tune". Mozart's playful interaction with his starling is fascinating in light of the affinity of this delightful movement to the music for the bird-catcher Papageno in his opera *The Magic Flute*. The notes attempted by the bird outline rising fourths, a configuration that Mozart decorates with grace notes and wind interjections on the closing turn figure. According to Mozart's entry in his notebook, this turn figure also derives from his feathered friend. The heart of this final movement is a mysterious minor variation heard pianissimo, characterized by syncopations and strange leaps in register. Thereafter, the unbridled high spirits of the reprise carry the day, and a "Presto" finale in *opera buffa* style caps the concerto. Yet even here, soft dark shadows reminiscent of the minor variation reappear before the triumphant close.

—Program note by William Kinderman

Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904)

## Symphony No. 7 in D Minor, Op. 70

*Composed 1884–1885*

38 min

**DVOŘÁK'S SEVENTH IS A MASTERPIECE** of Romantic symphonic form, and though not as popular as the “New World” it is widely regarded as his greatest symphony. It is teeming with ideas, developed with great imagination and sophistication, and organized as a coherent musical drama. It is also epic in scale, wide-ranging, and profound in expression. There is emotional torment and tragic power in the Seventh that may reflect Dvořák’s personal troubles—around this time he was struggling to have his Czech operas accepted in Vienna, feeling pressure to write operas in German, and arguing with his publisher. His sketches show that the Seventh cost him much hard work and soul-searching. He was aiming quite consciously to write a masterpiece—a work that was, he hoped, “capable of stirring the world.”

A mood of tragedy is established in the very first bars. The symphony opens with a low D and a quiet, foreboding drumroll, followed by a brooding first theme, hushed and fragmented at first, but coalescing into an extended outburst that is almost operatic in its anguish. The turbulence dissolves into a lyrical second theme, first played softly in the woodwinds in a gentle waltz-like rhythm, and then extended at length, growing more ardent until it bursts forth, fortissimo, in the full orchestra. The development section is unusually short but highly dramatic. It swells into a brassy, portentous recapitulation of the first theme, which immediately subsides into a full reprise of the second theme. The coda is long and impressive—the music reaches a furious climax but then dies away and the final pages of the movement are as gloomy and mysterious as the opening bars.

The second movement is an almost unbroken flow of melody, structured as a

great arch—opening with a gentle chorale-like theme, gathering intensity, recalling the tragedy of the first movement in a stormy middle section, then closing peacefully.

One memorable theme follows another, all of them distinct in profile and character—tender, passionate, wistful, hesitant, and melancholy. Dvořák gives each theme its own special instrumental setting, often making striking use of solo wind instruments. And just when the sequence of new melodies seems poised to go on forever, several themes from the first part of the movement return, dramatically, to effect a resolution.

The “Vivace”, though marked “Scherzo” and set in 6/4 time, has the character of a furiant—the boisterous Bohemian folk dance upon which Dvořák drew in many fast movements. But this furiant is not exuberant; the music is dark and grim, propulsive, and harshly accented, with only fleeting wisps of expressive melody to smooth its jagged textures. The trio section is more ingratiating and pastoral, but the relief is short-lived. The “Vivace” returns, now shortened to make room for a substantial coda, which broods briefly before driving to a powerful, frenzied conclusion.

The “Finale” taps back into the tragic vein of the first movement, and its overall form is similar. It comprises a first theme that grows from melancholy to an outburst of fearsome power; a leisurely, lyrical second theme, which is quiet at first but builds to a triumphant full-orchestra setting; a concise but eventful development; a truncated recapitulation of the first theme and a full reprise of the second; and a turbulent coda. Now, however, there is no despairing conclusion. In ten solemn bars, Dvořák finally grants this stormy work—at the very last minute—its long-deferred, hard-won resolution in D major.

—Program note by Kevin Bazzana



## **Nicholas Sharma, RBC Resident Conductor & TSYO Conductor**

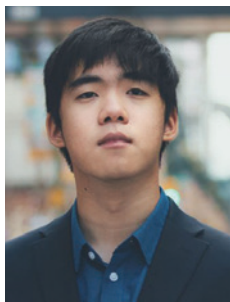
Nicholas Sharma made his TSO début in November 2025.

In the 2025/26 season, Nicholas Sharma joins the Toronto Symphony Orchestra as RBC Resident Conductor and Toronto Symphony Youth Orchestra Conductor. He has led performances with orchestras across North America, earning recognition for his versatility and musical artistry.

Recent conducting highlights include début performances with the Rochester Philharmonic and Eugene Symphony, as well as serving as Assistant Conductor of the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra and Music Director of the South Dakota Symphony Youth Orchestra for the 2024/25 season.

He has participated in master classes and summer festivals with the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, the New World Symphony, the National Academy Orchestra of Canada, the Aspen Music Festival, and the Colorado College Summer Music Festival, working with distinguished conductors such as Michael Tilson Thomas, Stéphane Denève, Neeme Järvi, Robert Spano, Nicholas McGegan, Mark Stringer, and Boris Brott.

A native of the Toronto area, Sharma began his musical studies as a violinist. He holds a degree in violin performance from the Eastman School of Music, where he studied with Oleh Krysa, and a master's degree in orchestral conducting from the University of Oregon under David Jacobs. In 2024, he completed a Doctor of Musical Arts (DMA) degree in orchestral conducting at Eastman, studying with Neil Varon. His return to Toronto marks both a personal and professional homecoming as he takes on these new artistic leadership roles.



## **Kevin Chen, piano**

These performances mark Kevin Chen's TSO début.

Canadian pianist Kevin Chen has quickly established himself as one of the most distinctive voices of his generation, praised for his poetic sensitivity, natural eloquence, and remarkable technical command.

In October 2025, Chen won Second Prize at the XIX International Chopin Piano Competition in Warsaw. He is also the First Prize winner of the Arthur Rubinstein International Piano Master Competition (2023), Concours de Genève (2022), International Franz Liszt Piano Competition (2021), Hilton Head International Piano Competition (2020), and International Piano-e-Competition (2019).

Chen has appeared with major orchestras including the Warsaw Philharmonic, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, Taipei Symphony, Hungarian National Philharmonic, Edmonton Symphony, and Calgary Philharmonic. He has been featured at international festivals such as La Roque d'Anthéron, Chopin and His Europe, and Duszynki-Zdrój, and has performed in leading venues including Carnegie Hall and the Berlin Philharmonie, among others.

Born in Edmonton, Chen began piano studies at the age of 5 and soon attracted national attention, winning first place at the Canadian Music Competition at 8. He was later named one of the CBC's "30 hot Canadian classical musicians under 30" and one of *Maclean's* magazine's "100 Remarkable Canadians". He currently studies at the Hochschule für Musik, Theater und Medien Hannover with Professor Arie Vardi.