

**TORONTO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**

Gustavo Gimeno, Music Director

# Tchaikovsky's Swan Lake

**Gustavo Gimeno**, conductor  
**Denis Kozhukhin**, piano

.....  
**Sophie Dupuis**

*Les aventures de Sarah* (Nov 27 & 30)  
(World Première/TSO NextGen Commission)

.....  
**Darren Xu**

*Because I Sing* (Nov 29 & 30)  
(World Première/TSO NextGen Commission)

.....  
**Edvard Grieg**

**Piano Concerto in A Minor, Op. 16**

I. Allegro molto moderato

II. Adagio

III. Allegro moderato molto e marcato

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## Intermission

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**Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky/  
compiled by Gustavo Gimeno**  
**Suite from *Swan Lake*, Op. 20a**

I. Scene [Act II, No. 10]

II. Waltz [Act I, No. 2]

III. Dance of the Swans [Act II, No. 13, Var. 4]

IV. Pas d'action [Act II, No. 13, Var. 5]

V. Hungarian Dance: Czardas [Act III, No. 20]

VI. Spanish Dance [Act III, No. 21]

VII. Neapolitan Dance [Act III, No. 22]

VIII. Mazurka [Act III, No. 23]

IX. Scene [Act IV, No. 28]

X. Final Scene [Act IV, No. 29]

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Thursday,  
November 27, 2025  
7:30pm

Saturday,  
November 29, 2025  
7:30pm

Sunday,  
November 30, 2025  
3:00pm

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**The TSO Chamber Soloists**

Thursday, November 27, 2025  
6:15pm

Amanda Goodburn, violin  
Rémi Pelletier, viola  
Song Hee Lee, cello  
Jesse Dale, double bass  
Samuel Banks, bassoon  
Camille Watts, flute & tin whistle  
Nicholas Hartman, horn  
Joseph Kelly, drum kit

Sofia Gubaidulina  
String Trio

Cris Derksen  
*Still Here\** (World Première)

\*Created for the Art of Healing program  
in collaboration with Shkaabe Makwa  
at the Centre for Addiction and  
Mental Health (CAMH).



*The NextGen Composer  
program is generously  
supported by RBC Foundation.*

*The November 27  
performance is generously  
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*The November 29  
performance is generously  
supported by the Estate of  
Hans Henrik Georg Nielsen.*

*The November 30 performance  
is generously supported by  
the Estate of Peggy Sisley.*

Sophie Dupuis (b. 1988)

## **Les aventures de Sarah**

World Première/TSO NextGen Commission  
Nov 27 & 30

Composed 2025

5 min

**FROM THE COMPOSER:** *Les aventures de Sarah* was written during my child's first year. Needless to say, its creation took place bit by bit between sleepless nights, diaper changes, and bouts of anxiety brought on by the many challenges of caring for a baby. It was inevitable that all aspects of my life, including my work, would become influenced by this new reality of parenthood.

As first-time parents, my partner and I are overly concerned with doing everything "just right" to optimize our child's development. "Talk to your baby often," they say, "to promote language acquisition." And so, we do. But to help us come up with conversation material, since it tends to be rather one-sided, we have been resorting to books and nursery rhymes. As we discovered, some of them are delightfully imaginative! Amid the exciting breakthroughs, the challenges, and the intense love that comes with raising a little human, it is rediscovering the world through her eyes—marvelling at little things, pacing through sweet moments, and embarking on mighty imaginary adventures of pirates, talking animals, and flights to the moon—that has been particularly exhilarating. It nudged us to reconnect with our inner child and share this magical sense of wonder with her.

*Les aventures de Sarah* is a glimpse into this enchanted world, with delicate, shimmering textures, uneasy dissonances—because no great adventure is without a little fright—and bold passages of courage. Come along on these explorations of mysterious caverns, travels over the mighty sea, and stargazing atop giant flowers.

**COMPOSER BIO:** From and based in New Brunswick, Sophie Dupuis is a francophone composer interested in music for solo instruments and ensembles, electroacoustics, and multidisciplinary art. Her work is characterized by rich textures, emotive melodies, and immersive soundscapes.

Dupuis has been commissioned and performed by soloists and groups including Ballet-Opéra-Pantomime, Duo Holz, Ventus Machina, Made in Trio, Din of Shadows, Thin Edge New Music Collective, ECM+, Quasar, and Esprit Orchestra. Her first album, *Comme bon lui semble*, featuring a collection of visual-art-inspired works, was released by Navona Records in October 2023.

Dupuis has regularly received generous funding from the Canada Council for the Arts, the Ontario Arts Council, ArtsNB, FACTOR, and the SOCAN Foundation for her projects. She was chosen by composer James Rolfe to receive the Johanna Metcalf Performing Arts Prize Protégée Award, and by contemporary voice specialist Janice Jackson to share the Friends of Canadian Music Award. Her album received a 2024 Music/Musique NB Award nomination for Recording of the Year.

Aside from her activities as a composer, she works as a freelance violinist, arranger, and music educator. Dupuis holds a Bachelor of Music degree in composition from Dalhousie University, and Master of Music and Doctor of Musical Arts degrees from the University of Toronto.



Darren Xu (b. 1996)

## Because I Sing

World Première/TSO NextGen Commission  
Nov 29 & 30

Composed 2025

5 min

**FROM THE COMPOSER:** For as long as I can remember, I have loved melody, and I find myself singing and humming in reaction to different experiences. It could be an emotionally lyrical tune that gives me the courage to brace for challenges, a soft but powerful melody with ebbs and flows that accompanies sadness and grief, a laid-back track that is easy, or simply a song that radiates joy. *Because I Sing* is just that. I partially attribute this human experience to my father, who, ever since I was a child, has shared with me the songs that have accompanied him through the many challenges and sorrows of his life—whether it was facing fear as a sailor months away from home, cycling past graveyards on his way to graveyard shifts (because yes, even a grown man is “allowed” to freak out about spirits), or unknowingly shedding tears while singing a Buddhist chant, only to realize he was missing his late mother. *Because I Sing* explores this fundamental human experience with potent melodies that arise when faced with sadness, fear, melancholy, and the unknown.



Read more about the TSO's NextGen Composers— and our *Tchaikovsky's Swan Lake* program—on *Noteworthy*.

**COMPOSER BIO:** Darren Xu is a Chinese Canadian composer who is currently a PhD student at London's Royal College of Music, where he recently obtained his Artist Diploma in Composition. He enjoys writing music for acoustic instruments, films, and cross-disciplinary collaborations.

He has had the opportunity to work with various groups, including Standing Wave, the Vancouver Inter-Cultural Orchestra, the Wallace Collection, English National Ballet School, PEP (Piano and Erhu Project), TorQ Percussion Quartet, and Trio Immersio. His first orchestral composition, *To Liberate*, was premiered by the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra at the Winnipeg New Music Festival, and was subsequently read by the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra.

Xu's collaborations with the Musqueam artist Debra Sparrow culminated in performances of his music as part of installations and showcases of Sparrow's Salish weavings, which took place at venues across Vancouver. His score to the film *Stargazer* was awarded Best Score at the New York Film Awards in November 2018.

He received his Bachelor of Music, Bachelor of Commerce, and Master of Music degrees at the University of British Columbia.



Edvard Grieg (1843–1907)

## Piano Concerto in A Minor, Op. 16

Composed 1868

30 min

**IN 1864, EDVARD GRIEG BEFRIENDED** another young Norwegian composer, Rikard Nordraak. Nordraak believed that the future of their country's art music lay not in a continued reliance on Germanic models, but in tapping into the rich heritage of folk song. Grieg quickly came to share this view. Nordraak died of consumption in March 1866, at 23. For a time, Grieg's grief led him to consider abandoning the nationalist path he and his friend had agreed upon, but a visit to Nordraak's grave convinced him to stay the course.

Grieg expressed himself most successfully in miniature forms. The songs and brief piano works, such as the many books of *Lyric Pieces*, stand among his finest achievements. His only significant large-scale composition is this piano concerto.

The newly married, 25-year-old composer spent the summer of 1868 in Denmark, living and working in the village of Søllerød. He shared a house with pianist

Edmund Neupert, who gave him regular advice on the concerto's solo part, and to whom, in gratitude, he dedicated the piece. The première proved hugely successful. This led to numerous further performances, and the foundation of Grieg's international fame.

The first movement boasts one of the most familiar openings in the entire concerto repertoire. Much of its memorability springs from its very simplicity. The movement proper wears a rather melancholy expression, although warmth is amply present as well. A long, taxing solo cadenza near the end says about all there is to say, so Grieg follows it with only the briefest of summings-up.

The second movement, ushered in by muted strings, is a tender song without words. The finale follows on directly, led off by an insistent, almost march-like theme. It is modelled on the springdans (leaping dance), a Norwegian folk step. The second theme offers strong contrast. At first it has the character of as wistful and poetic a melody as Grieg ever penned. In the concluding pages he demonstrates that it also has the capacity to become a grand, triumphant hymn.

—Program note by Don Anderson

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893)/  
comp. Gustavo Gimeno (b. 1976)

## Suite from *Swan Lake*, Op. 20a

Composed 1875–1876

38 min

**NO WORK EMBODIES CLASSICAL BALLET** more than *Swan Lake*, the dramatic, sometimes dark, and ultimately redemptive love story of Prince Siegfried and Odette, a woman

condemned to be the Swan Queen from dawn to dusk by an evil sorcerer. Moscow's Bolshoi Theatre premièred the original version in 1877, but it was not until the great choreographers Marius Petipa and Lev Ivanov created a second version in 1895, for the Imperial Ballet at the Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg, that this work became a

*Program 2—About the Music*

world-renowned classic that continues to be restaged and reimagined today. Memorable choreographic moments from this ballet include the fluttering, bird-like movements of the Swan Queen and the beautiful, criss-crossing shifts of the corps de ballet in Act III with the dancers' celebrated one-legged stutter slides.

But as important as Petipa and Ivanov were, *Swan Lake* would never have achieved its enduring success without Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's extraordinary score, which is drenched in late 19th-century Romanticism with its unforgettable melodies, entrancing moods, and rich harmonies. Much like his scores for *The Nutcracker* and *The Sleeping Beauty*, this rich, evocative music powerfully sets each scene, conjures the movement, and reveals the inner emotions and moral states of these timeless fairy-tale characters.

In November 1900, seven years after Tchaikovsky's death, a suite of six excerpts from the ballet was published as Op. 20a. Although the composer had written to his publisher in 1882 saying he wanted to assemble a suite from *Swan Lake*, it is not clear whether he or someone else chose the excerpts for this grouping. In 1994, the Vienna Philharmonic recorded this version for the Deutsche Grammophon label, an album that Music Director Gustavo Gimeno

discovered in his young adulthood and has returned to often. Gimeno is also a fan of a 2010 recording by conductor Yuri Temirkanov and the St. Petersburg Philharmonic that runs about 40 minutes and includes ten excerpts, including several that are not in Op. 20a.

For this concert, Gimeno has put together his own set of excerpts from *Swan Lake*, adopting an approach similar to Temirkanov's, that likewise runs about 40 minutes. It includes the seven sections from Op. 20a as well as the Spanish Dance, Neapolitan Dance, and Mazurka from Act III—lively culturally inspired divertissements that are all part of a grand party to celebrate Siegfried's 21st birthday. Other highlights include the opening excerpt, "Scene" (from Act II, No. 10), the poignant, vulnerable, oboe-driven theme that introduces the Swan Queen and then swells in intensity as she encounters the prince, and two selections from the Act II "Dances of the Swans", including No. 13, Var. 4, a driving, metrical section that accompanies an intricate pas de quatre in the ballet. The suite ends with the propulsive "Final Scene" (Act IV, No. 29), with its soaring lines and emphatic brass, which reprises some of the ballet's main themes and leads to the work's shocking final act of love.

—Program note by Kyle MacMillan



↑  
A 2008 production of Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* by the Royal Swedish Opera in Stockholm.

For a biography of *Gustavo Gimeno*, please turn to page 8.



## **Denis Kozhukhin, piano**

Denis Kozhukhin made his TSO début in October 2016.

A pianist of exceptional technique, emotional depth, and sophistication, Denis Kozhukhin has gained significant recognition through his powerful performances, establishing himself as one of the most accomplished musicians of his generation.

In the 2025/26 season, Kozhukhin will return to the Royal Festival Hall with the Philharmonia Orchestra; to The Concertgebouw with the Netherlands Philharmonic, on a nationwide tour led by their Chief Conductor, Lorenzo Viotti; and to the Megaron in Athens to perform all of Rachmaninoff's piano concerti on consecutive nights. Other highlights of the season include an appearance with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra under Music Director Gustavo Gimeno; débuts with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra under Music Director Jonathan Heyward, The Hallé, SWR Symphony Orchestra Stuttgart, Barcelona Symphony, Orchestre National de Lille, and Iceland Symphony; and an Asian tour that includes performances with the National Symphony Orchestra of Taiwan and Hong Kong Sinfonietta, and recitals in Pohang, Daegu, and Tokyo.

Other recent highlights include performances with the Oslo Philharmonic, the NHK Symphony, Washington's National Symphony, the Danish National Symphony, Camerata Salzburg, the Royal Philharmonic, the BBC Scottish Symphony, the Dallas, Melbourne, and San Francisco Symphonies, the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic, and the WDR Sinfonieorchester, working with Rafael Payare, Ryan Bancroft, Alain Altinoglu, Jakub Hruša, Paavo Järvi, Cristian Măcelaru, Daniel Barenboim, Hannu Lintu, Sir Simon Rattle, Dalia Stasevska, and Santtu-Matias Rouvali, among others. He has also performed recitals at Carnegie Hall, Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, Brussels's Bozar, Vienna's Musikverein, Philharmonie de Paris, Cologne Philharmonie, Stockholm's Konserthus, Berlin's Pierre Boulez Saal, and London's Wigmore Hall. Away from the piano, Kozhukhin has also begun to appear as a conductor, a growing area of his musicianship.

Since winning the Queen Elisabeth Competition in 2010, Kozhukhin has performed with the London Symphony, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Rotterdam Philharmonic, and Staatskapelle Berlin. A sought-after recitalist and chamber musician, he regularly appears at a number of prominent music festivals including the Verbier, Gstaad, Grafenegg, Dresden, Intonations, Tsinandali, Lanaudière, and Jerusalem Music Festivals, the Klavier-Festival Ruhr, and the BBC Proms.

As a Pentatone recording artist, Kozhukhin has established a discography that spans works by Haydn, Mendelssohn, Tchaikovsky, Grieg, Ravel, and Gershwin.

A graduate of the Reina Sofía School of Music in Madrid where he studied under Dmitri Bashkirov and Claudio Martínez Mehner, Kozhukhin further honed his skills at the International Piano Academy Lake Como—where he received advice from notable pianists such as Fou Ts'ong, Stanislav Ioudenitch, Peter Frankl, Boris Berman, Charles Rosen, and Andreas Staier—and with Kirill Gerstein in Stuttgart.