

TORONTO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Gustavo Gimeno, Music Director

Tchaikovsky's Fifth

Hannu Lintu, conductor

Elina Vähälä, violin

Liam Ritz, RBC Affiliate Composer

Echo Chamber

(World Première/TSO Commission)

Dmitri Shostakovich

Violin Concerto No. 2 in C-sharp Minor, Op. 129

I. Moderato

II. Adagio

III. Adagio – Allegro

Intermission

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Symphony No. 5 in E Minor, Op. 64

I. Andante – Allegro con anima

II. Andante cantabile con alcuna licenza

III. Valse: Allegro moderato

IV. Finale: Andante maestoso – Allegro vivace

Violin Concerto No. 2 by Dmitri Shostakovich
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APRIL 23, 25 & 26, 2026

Program 3

**Thursday,
April 23, 2026**

7:30pm

**Saturday,
April 25, 2026**

7:30pm

**Sunday,
April 26, 2026**

3:00pm

The TSO Chamber Soloists

Sunday, April 26, 2026

1:45pm

Miles Haskins, clarinet

Nicolas Richard, bassoon

Nicholas Hartman, horn

Eri Kosaka, violin

Theresa Rudolph, viola

Song Hee Lee, cello

Michael Chiarello, double bass

Liam Ritz, RBC Affiliate Composer

Façade (World Première)*

Kelly-Marie Murphy

Artifacts from the Auditory World

*Commissioned by Joseph
Johnson, with funding support from
the Ontario Arts Council, an agency
of the Government of Ontario



Foundation

*RBC Affiliate Composer is
generously supported by
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*The April 25 performance is
generously supported by the
Estate of Douglas Hodgson.*

*The April 26 performance is
generously supported by the
Estate of Erika Maria Urbonas.*

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Liam Ritz, RBC Affiliate Composer
(b. 1996)

Echo Chamber

World Première/TSO Commission
Composed 2025

10 min

FROM THE COMPOSER: With the growing prevalence of AI-generated content, sensationalized media, and algorithmic amplification, our sources for reliable information have eroded alongside our collective ability to critically discern where the truth lies. We are reaching a tipping point where we can no longer trust what we see or hear in our digital landscape. Drawing on the dual meaning as both an acoustic and socio-political phenomenon, *Echo Chamber* explores reverberation and repetition as an allegory for our engagement with contemporary media and the circulation of (mis)information.

The piece begins with the introduction of a slow, lyrical melody in the bass clarinet. As the work unfolds, this germ of an idea spreads throughout the orchestra with its initial meaning fading as it is refracted and reinterpreted by different voices. Unlike an acoustic echo—where sounds gradually decay—ideas within this piece selectively gain momentum and gravity, allowing certain aspects to accumulate false significance through their repetition. By the end, only fragments of the original melody remain, distorted and recontextualized by their continuous transformation. The piece concludes not with resolution, but with collapse, as the amplification of the repeated ideas reaches its breaking point.

COMPOSER BIO: Liam Ritz is a Canadian composer based in Toronto. His music is characterized by its eclectic and diverse influences, drawing from popular music, jazz, visual arts, literature, dance, and theatre. In recent years, Ritz's compositions have delved into themes of memory and place, integrating references and quotations from various artistic forms to create multi-layered contextual meanings.

Ritz has collaborated with prominent ensembles, including the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra, Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, Talea Ensemble, and National Youth Orchestra of Canada. With performances across Canada, the US, Italy, Finland, Argentina, and Japan, Ritz's work has allowed him to collaborate with acclaimed performers such as Gustavo Gimeno, Gemma New, Cameron Crozman, Etsuko Kimura, León Bernsdorf, and more.

Named one of CBC's "30 hot Canadian classical musicians under 30", Ritz has received multiple SOCAN Foundation Young Composers Awards and a City of Hamilton Arts Award, and has been selected for many prestigious composer programs. He was appointed RBC Affiliate Composer of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra in the 2024/25 season.

Ritz is a graduate of the University of Toronto and his compositions have been supported by organizations such as the Toronto Arts Council, Ontario Arts Council, Canada Council for the Arts, RBC Emerging Artists Project, and SOCAN Foundation.



Dmitri Shostakovich (1906–1975)

Violin Concerto No. 2 in C-sharp Minor, Op. 129

Composed 1967

30 min

SHOSTAKOVICH COMPLETED his Violin Concerto No. 2 on May 18, 1967. At this time, though he was living under the reactionary, oppressive regime of Leonid Brezhnev, his art was influenced more by personal than political factors. He had suffered a heart attack a year earlier, and would be plagued by declining health for the rest of his life; the darkness and introspection of his late music certainly speak to the state of the aging composer's body and mind. (He remained prolific, however, though he admitted to composing his new concerto very slowly.) The concerto was dedicated to David Oistrakh, who studied it with Shostakovich and gave the first performance, in a Moscow suburb, on September 13, with Kirill Kondrashin conducting the Moscow Philharmonic. The same forces gave the official première on September 26, at the Moscow Conservatory, to a warm though hardly rapturous reception, and recorded the piece in November.

The Violin Concerto No. 2 is more Classical in form and dimensions, more refined and transparent than the more popular No. 1 of 1948, and, though tonal, it is one of a handful of late works in which 12-tone rows occasionally appear. Shostakovich noted that No. 2 was less “symphonic” in conception, too: “In the new concerto, virtually everything is set out by the solo violin, everything is concentrated in its part and the orchestra accompanies, as it were.” This is already obvious in the expansive, mournful cantilena with which the concerto opens. Basically sombre, the sonata-like first movement has episodes of caustic irony and brutality, too, and Shostakovich set it in

C-sharp minor, an unusual and awkward key for the violin, to underscore the prevailing mood. The haunting slow movement is a study in brooding lyricism, and, its harmonic acerbity and ambiguity notwithstanding, it ends in purest D-flat major (also C-sharp major). D-flat becomes the key of the finale, which follows without a break—a rondo that is variously playful, melancholy, sarcastic, and raucous. There is a cadenza for the soloist in every movement; the impassioned one in the middle of the finale, at 150 bars, amounts almost to a separate movement.

—Program note by Kevin Bazzana



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Dmitri Shostakovich appears on a 2000 Russian postage stamp. Violinist David Oistrakh, for whom the composer wrote both of his Violin Concertos and his Violin Sonata, is also depicted on the far right.

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893)

Symphony No. 5 in E Minor, Op. 64

Composed 1888

47 min

DESPITE THE INTERNATIONAL FAME that Tchaikovsky's music won during his lifetime, he remained an emotionally fragile, intensely self-doubting artist, with much of his inner life, positive and negative aspects alike, played out in his music.

In his Symphony No. 4 (1878), his sense of himself as the victim of a cold, heartless fate manifests itself in a recurring theme—a harsh brass fanfare. Ten years passed before he composed his next symphony, by which time the international successes that his music had won in the interim had placed him in a more positive frame of mind: the idea of fate still dogged him, but according to a programmatic sketch of the Fifth Symphony, fate had evolved into providence, a somewhat less hostile governor of life.

He conducted the Fifth Symphony's first two performances himself, then another in Prague shortly thereafter. Audiences loved it, but the press reacted with hostility. The critical barbs initially devastated him, but a further performance in Hamburg firmly erased his pessimistic feelings.

Like its predecessor, the Fifth Symphony is founded upon a recurring melody representative of the composer's current philosophical outlook. Reflecting his overall lightening in attitude, the new providence theme is less intimidating than its fatalistic counterpart in Symphony No. 4. Introduced quietly in the clarinets, it undergoes a gradual, increasingly positive transformation in an opening movement that contrasts restlessness with yearning.

A passionate love-idyll follows in the second movement, which commences with a ravishing theme introduced by solo horn

and a more wistful idea first played by solo oboe. Both melodies grow in fervour as this expansive movement unfolds, with its raptures twice interrupted by the providence theme, the second time with particularly devastating impact. The movement that follows is a typically elegant Tchaikovsky waltz, based on a popular song he heard being sung by a boy in the street during a visit to Florence, Italy. The sole blemish on its courtly surface comes in a brief, almost casual appearance of the providence theme—a cloud across the sun—just before the end of the movement.

Providence reappears, transformed and almost benign, in the slow introduction to the "Finale", where it is heard in a major key for the first time. The movement is one of Tchaikovsky's most joyous and energetic, strongly coloured with the hearty flavours and dancing rhythms of Russian folk music. Brass fanfares and a thunderous timpani roll herald a pause for breath, after which the symphony's overarching theme stands radiantly transfigured in a sturdy processional, before a whirlwind coda brings the symphony home.

—Program note by Don Anderson



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The title page of the first edition (1888) of Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 5.



Hannu Lintu, conductor

Hannu Lintu made his TSO début in May 2011.

“Dynamic and sharp on the podium” (Bachtrack) and with an “extreme clarity of purpose, every detail worth noting” (*Los Angeles Times*), Hannu Lintu maintains his reputation as one of the world’s finest conductors. This season, Lintu continues his tenures as Music Director of Orquestra Gulbenkian and Chief Conductor of Finnish National Opera and Ballet, proving himself a master of both symphonic and operatic repertoire, and begins his tenures as Artistic Partner of the Lahti Symphony Orchestra and Artistic Director of the

International Sibelius Festival.

Last season also saw Lintu’s appointment, beginning in 2026/27, as Music Director of Singapore Symphony Orchestra, where he will appear this season for several performances, including Haydn’s *Nelson Mass* and Shostakovich’s *Symphony No. 7 “Leningrad”*. Other highlights include returns to the BBC, St. Louis, Toronto, Baltimore, and Detroit Symphonies, as well as a production of Richard Strauss’s *Elektra* and the world première of Sebastian Fagerlund’s *The Morning Star* at Finnish National Opera.

Symphonic highlights of recent years have seen Lintu conduct the Chicago Symphony, New York Philharmonic (including an immediate reinvitation from the orchestra to perform at the Bravo! Vail festival), Berliner Philharmoniker, Cleveland Orchestra, Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, BBC Symphony, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Radio Filharmonisch Orkest, London Philharmonic, Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, Konzerthausorchester Berlin, St. Louis Symphony, and Orchestre symphonique de Montréal.

Lintu’s recent opera highlights have included Enescu’s *Œdipe* with the Vienna Symphony at Bregenz Festspiele, Wagner’s *Der fliegende Holländer* at Opéra national de Paris and Debussy’s *Pelléas et Mélisande* at Bayerische Staatsoper as a guest conductor, and multiple productions at Finnish National Opera and Ballet, including a recent multi-season *Ring* cycle, Poulenc’s *Dialogues des Carmélites*, Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*, a choreographed reimaging of Verdi’s *Messa da Requiem*, Puccini’s *Turandot*, Richard Strauss’s *Salome*, and Britten’s *Billy Budd*.

Lintu has made several recordings for Ondine, BIS Records, Naxos, AVIE Records, and Hyperion Records. His diverse discography comprises recordings of Magnus Lindberg’s orchestral works, the complete Beethoven piano concertos with Stephen Hough, and Lutostawski’s *Symphonies Nos. 1–4*, all with Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra. He has received two International Classical Music Awards and several nominations for Gramophone and GRAMMY® Awards in recognition of recording projects such as Bartók’s violin concertos with Christian Tetzlaff, works by Sibelius featuring Anne Sofie von Otter, Rautavaara’s *Kaivos*, and the violin concertos of Sibelius and Thomas Adès with Augustin Hadelich and Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra.

Lintu studied cello and piano at the Sibelius Academy, where he also later studied conducting with Jorma Panula. He participated in master classes with Myung-Whun Chung at the Accademia Musicale Chigiana in Siena, Italy, and took first prize at the Nordic Conducting Competition in Bergen in 1994.



Elina Vähälä, violin

These performances mark Elina Vähälä's TSO début.

Born in the US and raised in Finland, Elina Vähälä, "a fluent, stylish and gifted musician whose brilliant technique is matched by an abundant spirit, sensitivity and imagination" (*Chicago Tribune*), made her orchestral début with the Lahti Symphony Orchestra at the age of 12 and was later chosen by Osmo Vänskä as the orchestra's Young Master Soloist. Since then, her versatility and charismatic performances have won praise from audiences and musicians alike.

Vähälä began her 2025/26 season with the Tapiola Sinfonietta performing Bruch's Violin Concerto No. 1 under Andrew Manze. She went on to début with the MÁV Symphony Orchestra in Budapest to commemorate Finland's Independence Day with Kuusisto's Violin Concerto, which was written for her, followed by a concert with the Vaasa City Orchestra. January 2026 included both a concert with the Turku Philharmonic Orchestra and the first of this season's two concerts with the Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra. The second, in March, was the gala concert of the Beethoven Festival in Warsaw and featured the composer's Triple Concerto with Nicolas Altstaedt and Alexander Lonquich.

She also appears this season with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra alongside Hannu Lintu to perform Shostakovich's Violin Concerto No. 2. Returning to the Lahti Symphony Orchestra, she performs Bruch's Violin Concerto No. 1, and with Jyväskylän Sinfonia, she performs Schumann's Violin Concerto. A highlight of the season is a performance of Sibelius's Violin Concerto at the Concertgebouw with the Radio Filharmonisch Orkest. In the same concert, conducted by Oscar Jockel, she performs a new piece by Jockel for violin, electronics, choir, and orchestra.

Last season, Vähälä gave world premières of Cecilia Damström's *Earth Songs* with the chamber ensemble Tampere Raw, and of Olli Mustonen's Violin Concerto No. 2 "Larin Paraske" with the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra under Nicholas Collon. She also gave the Finnish première of Samy Moussa's Violin Concerto "Adrano" with the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra under Dalia Stasevska. Further highlights included a reinvitation to NFM Wroctaw Philharmonic to perform Szymanowski's Violin Concerto No. 1, and a performance of Britten's Violin Concerto with the Symphoniker Hamburg under Sylvain Cambreling.

Highlights of previous seasons include performances with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, Beethoven Orchester Bonn, Dortmunder Philharmoniker, Orchestre Philharmonique de Strasbourg, Norrköping Symphony, Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra, Seoul Philharmonic, Adelaide Festival, Princeton Symphony, Houston Symphony, Vancouver Symphony, Yomiuri Nippon Symphony, and others. Vähälä is a regular guest of all major Finnish orchestras.

An advocate for new music, Vähälä has given world premières of Aulis Sallinen's Chamber Concerto, Curtis Curtis-Smith's Double Concerto, and Kalevi Aho's Violin Concerto No. 2, all of which were written for her, as well as Jan Sandström's Violin Concerto. Befitting her Finnish roots, she has premièred many chamber works and violin concertos by Finnish composers and is one of very few to perform the Sibelius Violin Concerto in its early version.

Vähälä is committed to the development of skills and opportunities for young musicians. In 2009 she launched the Violin Academy, a master-class-based educational project for highly talented young Finnish violinists funded by the Finnish Cultural Foundation. Previously a professor at the Hochschule für Musik in Karlsruhe, Germany, she has been a professor at the Universität für Musik und darstellende Kunst in Vienna since September 2019.

Vähälä plays a Giovanni Battista Guadagnini violin made in 1780.