

**TORONTO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**

Gustavo Gimeno, Music Director

## Beethoven's Seventh

**Gustavo Gimeno**, conductor  
**Jonathan Crow**, violin

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**Olga Neuwirth**  
*Dreydl*

Canadian Première  
October 25 & 28 only

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**György Ligeti**  
Violin Concerto

I. Præludium: Vivacissimo luminoso  
II. Aria, Hoquetus, Choral: Andante con moto  
III. Intermezzo: Presto fluido  
IV. Passacaglia: Lento intenso  
V. Appassionato: Agitato molto

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### Intermission

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**Tansy Davies**  
*Plumes*

North American Première  
On October 29, *Plumes* will open the concert instead of being performed after the intermission.

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**Ludwig van Beethoven**  
Symphony No. 7 in A Major, Op. 92

I. Poco sostenuto — Vivace  
II. Allegretto  
III. Presto  
IV. Allegro con brio

*Program 3*

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Wednesday,  
October 25, 2023

8:00pm

Saturday,  
October 28, 2023

8:00pm

Sunday,  
October 29, 2023\*

3:00pm

\*George Weston Recital Hall

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*Gustavo Gimeno's appearances  
are generously supported by  
Susan Brenninkmeyer in memory  
of Hans Brenninkmeyer.*

Olga Neuwirth (b. 1968)

## Dreydl

Canadian Première

Composed 2021

11 min

### THE COMPOSER DESCRIBES HER PIECE AS

**FOLLOWS:** *Dreydl*, composed in 2021, is a one-movement orchestral piece. It emerged out of my preoccupation with memory and the passing of time, which was also why I used a small fragment of Mordechaj Gebirtig's "Hulyet hulyet kinderlach" ("Play kids, play") with the line "Wayl fun friling bis tsum / Winter is a katzensprung" ("Your spring is here, [but] winter is a cat's leap away") in my first opera, *Baalamb's Feast*, in 1994. *Dreydl* also stems from my more recent interest in restyling and reinventing dance-like rhythms or patterns that have nearly no development.

The title was inspired by the first line of the Yiddish children's song "Ikh bin a kleyner dreydl". A dreydl is a spinning top that children still play with today during the Festival of Lights, Chanukah. As with dice, the dreydl is a game of chance. Incessantly it spins and spins and is therefore for me a symbol of life: "The wheels are turning, the years are passing / Alas without end and without goal / Bereft of luck, so I stayed..." says a passage in the song "Dem Milners Trern" ("The Miller's Tears") by Mark Markowytsh Warschawskij. The continuous rhythmic patterns in *Dreydl* are used to underline the fatal circularity of destiny such as we have experienced during the two years of the pandemic—where time has been suspended and nobody knows what the future will bring.

**COMPOSER BIO:** Born in Graz, Austria, Olga Neuwirth studied composition at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and the Vienna Hochschule für Musik und darstellende Kunst (College of Music and Interpretive Arts) as well as painting and film at San Francisco Art College. Major influences on her own music include Adriana Hölszky, Tristan Murail, and Luigi Nono. From early on, she fused live musicians, electronics, and videos into distinctive audiovisual experiences, which exemplify her interdisciplinary approach of an "art-in-between" that speaks to all the senses. With an artistic outlook that has always involved multiple aesthetics drawn from film, literature, visual art, natural science, and popular culture, her extensive oeuvre comprises performances, installations, texts, speeches, photo series, radio and screenplays, short films, orchestra scores, ensemble pieces, film music, and music-theatre works.

Recent highlights among Olga's numerous international commissions include her percussion concerto *Trurljade - Zone Zero* for the Lucerne Festival in 2016 when she served as the festival's composer-in-residence for the second time; the inauguration of her 3-D sound installation in collaboration with IRCAM at Paris's Centre Pompidou for its 40th anniversary in 2017; and the world première in 2019 of her opera *Orlando* at the Vienna Staatsoper. She's the recipient of many prestigious prizes, including the Wolf Prize for Music in 2021, and the Grawemeyer Award for Music Composition and Ernst von Siemens Music Prize in 2022.



—Compiled and written by Hannah Chan-Hartley, PhD

György Ligeti (1923–2006)

## Violin Concerto

Composed 1990 & 1993

29 min

**GYÖRGY LIGETI WAS BORN IN 1923** in Transylvania, Romania, to Hungarian-Jewish parents, and all of his immediate family except his mother tragically died in the Holocaust. After World War II, he continued his musical studies at the Franz Liszt Academy in communist-controlled Hungary, studying under Ferenc Farkas and Zoltán Kodály among others. He went on to teach at the school from 1950 through 1956, when he fled to Austria after a Hungarian uprising was violently suppressed by the Soviet army. Once he was on the other side of the Iron Curtain, he finally found the freedom to give full voice to his groundbreaking, intensely individualist compositional voice.

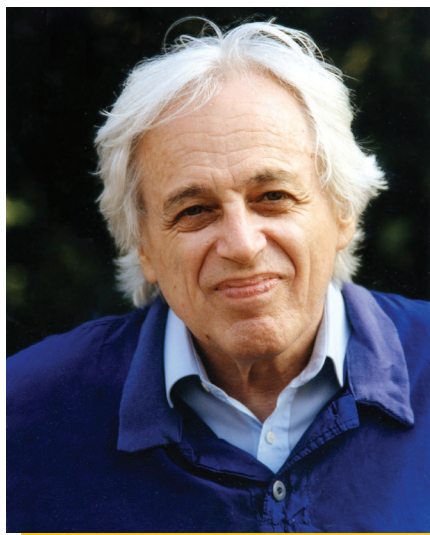
Although influenced by serialism and other aspects of classical modernism, Ligeti also realized their limitations. “We must find a way of neither going back nor continuing the avant-garde,” he said in 1993. “I am in a prison: one wall is the avant-garde, the other wall is the past, and I want to escape.” His response was to take in music of all kinds and create what music critic Alex Ross described as a “crazy-quilt tonality.” It’s an approach that can be heard to advantage in his career-summarizing Violin Concerto, which incorporates a range of effects and influences, including microtonality, Hungarian folk melodies, and medieval and Renaissance music.

First completed in 1990, Ligeti revised the concerto twice, adding two movements to the original three and finally reorchestrating the third and fourth movements in 1993. This highly original work is a workout for the soloist and the orchestra with sometimes strange, unexpected sounds; dense, thorny passagework; and shrill, bizarre

chords. It requires several orchestral players to tune their instruments to unconventional or “scordatura” pitches while the soloist tunes to clashing standard pitches.

The concerto also calls for four wind players to play ocarinas—ancient clay flutes with startling, opaque, whistle-like sound. Contradictions and extremes abound. The piece begins with the solo violin alternating rapidly between A and D, and then other instruments join in what quickly becomes a cacophonous thicket of overlapping and colliding passages. Offering striking contrasts to these intense, propulsive moments are the slow solo-violin opening of the second movement, a surprising kind of moving lamentation, and the *Passacaglia* fourth movement, which sounds like some lonely, long-ago air. It all adds up to a tough, chaotic yet timelessly compelling piece.

—Program note by Kyle MacMillan



↑ György Ligeti c. 2004. Photo by Peter Andersen.

Tansy Davies (b. 1973)

## Plumes

North American Première

Composed 2019

5 min

**IN RECENT YEARS**, nature has been a dominant theme in Davies's compositions, which explore, evoke, and embody the fluidity of natural processes—their cyclic aspects, as well as their unpredictable shifts. *Plumes*, commissioned by the Royal Northern Sinfonia to mark the 60th anniversary of the orchestra in 2019, was, according to Davies, "inspired by the view from the Sage Gateshead and the complex flows of the mighty river Tyne."

"A dance of two elements; a duet between air and water," the piece unfolds organically, cycling through the evolution of several key motifs. As Davies describes it: "Murky undercurrents provide momentum, while aerial interjections rise up like plumes," which, from the start of the piece, are evoked by various slow-moving lines in the low register of the orchestra's bass instruments (bass clarinet, bassoon, contrabassoon, cellos, and double basses), set against piercing wind flourishes with the upper strings providing a haze of rapid chromatic figures.

Following this "Liquid. A river..." part (as it is described in the score), the music progresses "Into sky," in which the wave-like lines shift to the upper registers of the woodwinds and second violins. The music soon returns to "liquid" but with some of the materials redistributed across the orchestra's instruments. The piece continues through a second and into a third cycle of "Cloud-like material." This, Davies notes, "is formed as the two elements become one, gliding and spinning high above, before condensing and reforming as deep river currents, and before rising up again."



↑  
Gateshead skyline, Newcastle upon Tyne

**COMPOSER BIO:** Born out of a fascination with nature and shamanism, as well as a grinding rhythmic energy, the music of Tansy Davies has been described as both "sleek, hot, earthy" and "transparent, brazenly beautiful." It is championed by ensembles including the New York Philharmonic, Ensemble intercontemporain, and Tokyo Symphony Orchestra, and at festivals including Ultima, Présences, Donaueschinger Musiktage, and Warsaw Autumn. *Between Worlds*, an operatic response to 9/11, was premièred by English National Opera in 2015, and, in 2018, her chamber opera *Cave* was premièred with Mark Padmore, Elaine Mitchener, and the London Sinfonietta. She has taught composition at both the Royal Academy of Music in London and the Jacobs School of Music in Bloomington, Indiana. Recent projects include *Nightingales: Ultra-Deep Field* for Arditti Quartet, *Monolith: I Extend My Arms* for the strings of Britten Sinfonia, and a residency at the Amsterdam Concertgebouw culminating in the ensemble piece *Soul Canoe*.



—Compiled and written by Hannah Chan-Hartley, PhD

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

## Symphony No. 7 in A Major, Op. 92

Composed 1811–1812

36 min

### BEETHOVEN BEGAN HIS SEVENTH SYMPHONY

around the summer of 1811, and completed it the following spring; it had its première in December 1813. One of the last specimens of his “heroic” style, it proved to be one of his most popular works, though it was also widely considered difficult and eccentric. A reviewer in 1827 wrote, “The whole thing lasts at least three-quarters of an hour, and is a true mixture of tragic, comic, serious, and trivial ideas, which spring from one level to another without any connection, repeat themselves to excess, and are almost wrecked by the immoderate noise of the timpani.”

By one account, composer Carl Maria von Weber, on the basis of this work, pronounced Beethoven “ripe for the madhouse.” There are dark, strange, disturbing passages in this symphony, but ultimately it is a celebration—joyous, liberated, festive. Wagner famously dubbed it “the apotheosis of the dance,” and a powerful rhythmic momentum does drive every movement—even the *Allegretto*, which unfolds like a procession.

A long, weighty, and slow introduction to the first movement establishes the high rhetorical tone of the symphony; a striking transition prods the music by degrees toward the boisterous jig-like rhythm of the main part of the first movement. The main theme, when we first hear it (solo flute), is quiet and light-hearted, but by the time the music has driven to its raucous coda, the accumulated rhythmic energy is thrilling.

The *Allegretto* second movement introduces a note of tragedy: The sober main theme, set out in the lower strings, is subjected to variations—now brooding, now terrifying,

now delicate. Twice there is relief—brief, tender idylls—but the movement finally peters out as though in despair, and ends as it began, with mournful horn-and-woodwind chords.

The propulsive *Presto* is unusually long; twice the scherzo is interrupted by a slower, more majestic trio. (According to an acquaintance, Beethoven borrowed the theme of the trio from an Austrian pilgrimage hymn, and the solemn scoring of it lends credence to the story.)

The galloping *Allegro* finale is even more rhythmically furious than the first movement, and its main theme is developed almost obsessively. Near the end, at a busy, explosive climax, Beethoven wrote one of his very rare triple-*forte* dynamic markings. It was warranted: its listeners had never known music with such Dionysian drive and power before.

—Program note by Kevin Bazzana

### THE WAR OF 1812 FROM A CANADIAN POINT OF VIEW

The War of 1812 (which lasted from 1812 to 1814) was a military conflict between the United States and Great Britain. As a colony of Great Britain, Canada was swept up in [a] war fought in Upper Canada, Lower Canada, on the Great Lakes and the Atlantic, and in the United States. The peace treaty of Ghent (1814), which ended the war, largely returned the status quo. However, in Canada, the war contributed to a growing sense of national identity, including the idea that civilian soldiers were largely responsible for repelling the American invaders. In contrast, the First Nations allies of the British and Canadian cause suffered much because of the war; not only had they lost many warriors (including the great Tecumseh), they also lost any hope of halting American expansion in the west, and their contributions were quickly forgotten by their British and Canadian allies. —The Canadian Encyclopedia

For a biography of Gustavo Gimeno, please turn to page 10.



### Jonathan Crow, violin

Jonathan Crow made his TSO solo début in September 2011.

One of Canada's brightest talents, violinist Jonathan Crow exudes "masterful coolness" (*Montreal Gazette*) as Concertmaster of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. A native of Prince George, British Columbia, Crow earned his Bachelor of Music degree in Honours Performance from McGill University in 1998, at which time he joined the Montreal Symphony Orchestra as Associate Principal Second Violin. Between 2002 and 2006, Crow was the Concertmaster of the Montreal Symphony Orchestra, becoming the youngest concertmaster of a major North American orchestra. Crow continues to perform as guest concertmaster with orchestras around the world, including the National Arts Centre Orchestra, Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, Mahler Chamber Orchestra, Sinfonia de Lanaudière, and Pernambuco Festival Orchestra (Brazil).

Crow has performed as a soloist with most major Canadian orchestras including the Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver Symphony Orchestras, the National Arts Centre and Calgary Philharmonic Orchestras, the Victoria and Kingston Symphonies, and Orchestra London, under the baton of such conductors as Charles Dutoit, Sir Yehudi Menuhin, Sir Andrew Davis, Peter Oundjian, Gustavo Gimeno, Kent Nagano, Mario Bernardi, and João Carlos Martins.

An avid chamber musician, Crow has performed at many chamber music festivals in Europe and North America and is the Artistic Director of Toronto Summer Music. He is a founding member of the JUNO Award-winning New Orford String Quartet, a new project-based ensemble dedicated to the promotion of standard and Canadian string quartet repertoire.

Crow is currently Associate Professor of Violin at the University of Toronto.



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Standing as one to the applause. Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* gets Year 101 underway, September 20 2023. Photo: Gerard Richardson.