

# Year of the Dragon: A Lunar New Year Celebration

## 迎龙新春音乐会



**CONCERT PROGRAM**

Toronto Symphony Orchestra  
Gustavo Gimeno, Music Director

# Sewatokwa'tshera't

## (The Dish With One Spoon)

The land we gather on is the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit River, the Anishinaabe, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee, and the Wendat peoples, and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples.

We recognize that Toronto is within the territory governed by the Dish With One Spoon treaty between the Anishinaabe, Mississaugas, and Haudenosaunee, which bound them to share the territory and protect the land, and that subsequent Indigenous Nations and Peoples, and all newcomers, are invited into this treaty in the spirit of peace, friendship, and respect.

As we continue our second century of sharing the healing power of art, we are grateful to live and make music on this land.

## Happy New Year! 新年快乐!



**ONE OF THE MANY JOYS** we relish in presenting music to a city as diverse as ours is the opportunity to showcase our relationship with individual communities

within Toronto's dynamic tapestry. Our celebration of this Lunar New Year with you is a testament to our appreciation for Toronto's Chinese diaspora, and its broader East Asian communities. Our mission to be Toronto's Symphony Orchestra includes finding opportunities to host moments of cultural celebration and our shared love for music.

Here at the TSO, we fervently believe that our strength lies in our differences, and this belief is reflected across all aspects of our organisation—from our musicians, to our staff, and programming. Tonight's program reflects both the diversity that we celebrate in every concert, and the plurality of Chinese arts and culture. The works in this concert range from traditional melodies and dancers, to new pieces by contemporary Chinese composers, to an excerpt from Chopin's Piano Concerto No.1—under the baton of a rising Canadian

conductor, Naomi Woo. I hope you'll enjoy the full range of this experience, and we look forward to welcoming you again for more moments of musical celebration.

在向多伦多这座人口多元化的城市呈现音乐时,我们所体验到的许多乐趣之一,就是有机会展示我们与这个充满活力大家庭中各个社区的密切关系。我们与您共庆农历新年,表达了我们对于多伦多华裔社区及更广泛的东亚社区的感激之情。我们的家就是您的家,多伦多交响乐团的使命包括寻找各种机会举办文化庆祝活动,并分享我们对音乐的共同热爱。对于那些重返多伦多交响乐团的人,我们由衷地感谢您对我们所创作音乐的持续支持。对于那些首次加入我们的人:热烈欢迎!我们很高兴与您一起迎接龙年,开启您音乐之旅的新篇章。

在 TSO,我们坚信我们的优势在于我们的差异,这一信念体现在我们组织的各个方面——从我们的音乐家、到我们的员工和节目编排。今晚的节目体现了我们在每场音乐会中庆祝的多样性,以及中国艺术和文化的多元性。这场音乐会的作品涵盖范围广泛,从传统的旋律和舞蹈,到当代中国作曲家的新作品,再到由加拿大新晋指挥家胡嘉玲(Naomi Woo)指挥的肖邦第一钢琴协奏曲选段。希望您能尽情享受这种全方位的体验,我们期待着在更多的音乐庆典中再次欢迎您。

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Williams".

**Mark Williams**  
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TORONTO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA  
Gustavo Gimeno, Music Director

## Year of the Dragon: A Lunar New Year Celebration

**Dashan**, host and narrator  
**Naomi Woo**, conductor  
**Timothy Chooi**, violin  
**Eric Guo**, piano  
**The Soaring Eagles**, dance company  
**Chinese Collective Arts Association**,  
dance company

**Chan Ka Nin 陈嘉年**  
*Welcoming Spring 迎春曲*

**Frédéric Chopin 弗雷德里克·肖邦**  
Piano Concerto No. 1 in E Minor, Op. 11  
III. Rondo: Vivace  
第一钢琴协奏曲, 作品11、第三乐章 回旋曲-活泼的

**Huang Ruo 黄若**  
"Flower Drum Song from Feng Yang"  
from *Folk Songs for Orchestra*  
管弦乐民谣:《花鼓曲》

**Igor Stravinsky 伊戈尔·斯特拉文斯基**  
"Danse infernale du roi Kastchei"  
the Suite from *The Firebird* (1919 revision)  
《火鸟》组曲, "魔王卡什伊的地狱之舞"

**Chen Gang and He Zhanhao 陈刚, 何占豪**  
*The Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto*  
梁山伯与祝英台小提琴协奏曲

**Sun Chang 孙畅**  
*Ballad of the Pipa 配乐朗诵《琵琶行》*

**Li Huanzhi 李焕之**  
*Spring Festival Overture 春节序曲*

Program

Tuesday,  
February 13, 2024  
8:00pm

 中國銀行 (加拿大)  
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Chan Ka Nin (1949)

## **Welcoming Spring** 迎春曲

*Composed 2022*

**WELCOMING SPRING** is an orchestral overture to the arrival of spring, which is the most auspicious time of the year according to *I Ching (Book of Changes)*, an ancient Chinese manual of divination. Terminology such as “Swallows Arrive”, “Thunder Starts Resounding”, and “Beginning of Lightning” are used to depict the vitality in the air. As snow begins to melt, flowers start to bloom, and birds are returning; these are the first signs of spring, which bring a sense of hope, rejuvenation, and fresh feelings.

—Harriet Ann Jacobs (Canadian Music Centre)

Frédéric Chopin (1810–49)

## **Piano Concerto No.1, Op. 11, III. Rondo – Vivace**

第一钢琴协奏曲, 作品11、  
第三乐章 回旋曲-活泼的

*Composed 1830*

**THE THIRD MOVEMENT** of Chopin’s Piano Concerto No.1 opens with a short call and response—of the movement’s first theme—between strings high and low, and throughout the woodwinds. The rondo pace provides a refreshing jolt out of the lethargy of the preceding *larghetto*, evoking the spirit of Chopin’s *Rondo à la Krakowiak* from 1828. A vigorous dialogue between orchestra and piano leads the soloist into the second theme in A Major. After a brief development section, the activity returns to the opening *krakowiak* dance, which is overtaken by another prolonged virtuoso passage that inclines into the repetition of the second theme and culminates in the delirious sprint to the finish line of the closing virtuoso passage.

—Michael Zarathus-Cook

Huang Ruo (1976)

## **“Flower Drum Song from Feng Yang” from Folk Songs for Orchestra**

管弦乐民谣:《花鼓舞》

*Composed 2012*

**I GREW UP IN CHINA** and have always had a fondness for Chinese folk songs. China has more than 50 ethnic groups, each with its own culture, traditions, and folk songs. Starting with this commission from the San Francisco Symphony, *Folk Songs for Orchestra* is an ongoing project that I plan to compile over the years, setting folk tunes from various parts of China into Western orchestral form. I have chosen four of the most well-known Chinese folk songs. The first one is the “Flower Drum Song from Feng Yang” (凤阳花鼓). Known for its flower-drum performances, Fengyang is the birthplace of Zhu Yuanzhang, the first emperor of the Ming Dynasty.

—Huang Ruo

Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971)

## **“Danse infernale du roi Kastcheï” (“King Kastcheï’s Infernal Dance”) the suite from *The Firebird***

《火鸟》组曲, “魔王卡什伊的地狱之舞”

*Composed 1919*

**THE BASIC PREMISE** of *The Firebird*—knitted from various Russian tales—entails a brazen young prince and his daring rescue of the captives of Kastcheï sorcerer king with the help of a magic (and fiery) bird by his side. Stravinsky originally composed the ballet score in 1910 and went on to publish various suites, the 1919 version being the most lucrative. This revision removed two movements from an earlier five-movement suite, and replaced them with “Berceuse” and a concluding “Finale”. The whirling,

nightmarish “Infernal Dance” performed by Kastchei and his monstrous subjects is a tour de force of orchestral brilliance.

—Michael Zarathus-Cook & Don Anderson

Chen Gang (1935) and He Zhanhao (1933)

## ***The Butterfly Lovers*** **Violin Concerto**

梁山伯与祝英台小提琴协奏曲

Composed 1959

**THE BUTTERFLY LOVERS** premiered at Shanghai’s Lyceum Theatre, with the Shanghai Conservatory Symphony Orchestra, the same year it was composed. The concerto borrows its subject matter from a folktale, dating as far back as the 9th-century Tang Dynasty, concerning the tragic but romantic tale of two young lovers, Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yintai.

—Michael Zarathus-Cook

Sun Chang

## ***Ballad of the Pipa*** 配乐朗诵《琵琶行》

**BALLAD OF THE PIPA** is based on a poem of the same name, composed by the Tang Dynasty poet Bai Juyi. The poem describes the poet’s idyllic encounter with a pipa (Chinese lute) player performing by the Yangtze River:

大弦嘈嘈如急雨

Thick strings clatter like splattering rain,

小弦切切如私语

Fine strings murmur like whispered words,

嘈嘈切切错杂弹

Clattering and murmuring, meshing  
interweaving sounds,

大珠小珠落玉盘

Like pearls, big and small, falling on a platter  
of jade.

—Michael Zarathus-Cook

Li Huanzhi (1919–2000)

## ***Spring Festival Overture*** 春节序曲

Composed 1955–56

**THE SPRING FESTIVAL OVERTURE** is a work strongly influenced by the efforts of Xian Xinghai—composer of the *Yellow River Cantata* on which the famous *Yellow River Concerto* is based—to interpret Chinese folk music in Western musical styles. The Spring Festival of the title is the Chinese New Year, and the themes of this overture come from folk music from the Shanbei region.

—John Henken (LA Philharmonic)



Bank of China (Canada) is proud to  
support the TSO's *Year of the Dragon:*  
*A Lunar New Year Celebration Concert.*

 中國銀行 (加拿大)  
BANK OF CHINA (CANADA)



## About the Conductor



### Naomi Woo, conductor 胡嘉玲, 指挥

These performances mark Naomi Woo's TSO début.

Canadian conductor and pianist Naomi Woo is a widely sought-after symphonic and operatic conductor, educator, and the 2022 winner of the Canada Council's prestigious Virginia Parker Prize. After a successful tenure as Assistant Conductor of the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, she joined the Orchestre Métropolitain de Montréal as Artistic Partner from the 2023/24 season and the Philadelphia Orchestra as Assistant Conductor from the 2024/25 season.

Highlights of her auspicious 2023/24 season include conducting engagements with the Orchestre Métropolitain, Orchestre symphonique de Montréal, Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, and the National Arts Centre Orchestra; two appearances with the Illinois Symphony Orchestra, where she is a music director finalist; and a tour of England leading English Touring Opera's *Cinderella*. As an assistant and cover conductor, Naomi works with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, Toronto Symphony Orchestra, and Orchestre Métropolitain. She conducts classical subscription concerts with the Orchestre symphonique de Laval, Orchestre symphonique de Trois-Rivières, Orchestre symphonique de la Côte-Nord, Symphony Nova Scotia, and the Thunder Bay Symphony.

Naomi is a member of Tapestry Opera's Women in Musical Leadership program and was chosen by her mentor Yannick Nézet-Séguin as a member of the Orchestre Métropolitain's inaugural Orchestral Conducting Academy. She was a resident of the 2022 Women Opera Makers Workshop at the Festival d'Aix-en-Provence, and, in 2018, was accepted into the first training course for women conductors at the National Opera Studio, hosted by the Royal Philharmonic Society and the Royal Opera House.

As a pianist, she has been a prize winner at the Eckhardt-Gramatté National Music Competition and a winner of the Hélène Roberge Prize for Canadian Music. She is an artist with Tangram, an ensemble devoted to celebrating the vitality of Chinese cultures and creating new music by transnational Chinese creators.

Also passionate about education, Naomi was Music Director of the University of Manitoba Symphony Orchestra until 2023 and has made guest conducting and lecturing appearances at the Oberlin Conservatory and the Royal Academy of Music. As the first-ever Music Director of Sistema Winnipeg, a program that uses music as a tool for social change, a commitment to using music to imaginatively transform the world runs through all of her work, including her PhD thesis from the University of Cambridge titled "The Practicality of the Impossible."

Naomi holds a PhD from the University of Cambridge, where she was a Gates Cambridge Scholar. She has also studied mathematics, philosophy, and music at Yale College, the Yale School of Music, and Université de Montréal. Her formative training before university took place at the Vancouver Academy of Music. She acknowledges generous support over the years from the Manitoba Arts Council, Canada Council for the Arts, Help Musicians UK, and the BC Arts Council.

## About the Host & Narrator



### **Dashan**, host and narrator 大山, 主持/朗诵

Dashan made his TSO début in February 2015.

Dashan (aka Mark Rowswell) has been called “the most famous foreigner in China,” where he has worked as a media personality and cultural ambassador for over 30 years. Born and raised in Canada, Rowswell began studying Chinese in the mid-1980s, first at the University of Toronto and later at Peking University. While in Beijing, he became interested in *xiangsheng*, a revered form of traditional comedic dialogue in China, and was soon appearing on national television under the stage name “Dashan”.

Repeated performances to hundreds of millions of television viewers turned Dashan into a household name across China, and his media career expanded from comedy to dramatic acting to hosting cultural, diplomatic, educational, and commercial programs, as well as live events. Over time, Dashan came to be seen as an all-round cultural ambassador between China and the West and as a symbol of finding common ground between cultures, “a foreigner but not an outsider,” according to the *People’s Daily*.

Dashan is the only non-Chinese performer to have appeared four times on the CCTV Spring Festival Gala, the largest annual television extravaganza in China, with an estimated audience of over a billion viewers. Dashan also served as Canada’s Team Attaché during the 2008 Olympics in Beijing and as Canada’s Commissioner General for Expo 2010 in Shanghai. In 2006, he was inducted into the Order of Canada, the country’s highest civilian honour. In 2012, Dashan was named Goodwill Ambassador to China by Canada’s Prime Minister.

In 2018, the University of Alberta conferred an honorary Doctor of Letters on Mark Rowswell in recognition of his contribution to cross-cultural communication. In recent years, Dashan has returned to his comedic roots, combining traditional Chinese comedy with Western stand-up in his ground-breaking solo show, *Dashan Live*. Chinese audiences know the character Dashan from TV; and over this 60-minute performance, Dashan shares hilarious behind-the-scenes stories of his 30 years between the East and West.

## About the Artists



### **Timothy Chooi, violin 徐任良, 小提琴**

Timothy Chooi made his TSO début in May 2018.

Internationally acclaimed violinist Timothy Chooi (pronounced as “Chewy”) has captivated audiences worldwide with his virtuosic and finely nuanced performances. He is highly sought after for his passionate renditions and extensive repertoire, as well as his exceptional ability to connect with a global audience, amassing a media following of millions of viewers who have tuned in to his music.

Chooi gained international recognition by winning First Prize at the Joseph Joachim International Violin Competition in Hannover, Germany, and Second Prize at the Queen Elisabeth Competition. He also received the prestigious classical music award, the Yves Paternot Prize, at the Verbier Festival in Switzerland.

He has performed with renowned orchestras such as the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Belgian National Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, and Wiener Concert-Verein, among others. His performances have garnered glowing reviews from venues such as Carnegie Hall, Musikverein Wien, Berliner Philharmonie, Amsterdam’s Concertgebouw, and the Royal Albert Hall in London. Additionally, he has collaborated with several esteemed artists, including Anne-Sophie Mutter, Pinchas Zukerman, Jukka-Pekka Saraste, Lang Lang, and James Ehnes.

This upcoming year marks an exciting touring year from Chooi, which includes collaborations with London’s Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, featuring Emmy Award nominee composer Brian Tyler, a return to the Toronto Symphony, and débuts with the European Union Youth Orchestra, Brucknerhaus Orchester, and at the Wimbledon Music Festival.

Chooi’s music has been broadcasted on several prestigious stations worldwide. In 2023, he recorded with Anne-Sophie Mutter and Mutter’s Virtuosi on Deutsche Grammophon, and his performance with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra was featured on Medici TV. His music has also aired on NPO Radio Klassiek Amsterdam, WQXR New York, RTBF Belgium, Swiss Public Radio, CBC/Radio-Canada, Deutschlandfunk Kultur, and Danish Public Radio.

Born in Canada to Indonesian parents and raised in the United States, Chooi embarked on his violin journey having been inspired by his older brother, Nikki Chooi. At the age of 16, his début performance with the Montreal Symphony Orchestra (Orchestre symphonique de Montréal) catapulted his career onto the global stage. Currently, Chooi serves as the Professor of Violin at the University of Ottawa in Canada. He performs on two exceptionally rare violins: the Titan Guarneri del Gesù violin from 1741, on loan from CANIMEX INC. in Drummondville, Quebec, Canada, and the Engleman Stradivarius violin from 1709, on loan from the Nippon Music Foundation in Japan.



**Eric Guo, piano 郭嘉骏, 钢琴**

These performances mark Eric Guo's TSO début.

A Toronto native, Eric Guo started his piano journey at the age of 4. Presently, he is pursuing a Bachelor of Music in Piano Performance (Honours) at The Glenn Gould School of The Royal Conservatory in Toronto, under the mentorship of John Perry and David Louie, supported by a full scholarship. Additionally, he is an alumnus of The Royal Conservatory's Taylor Academy, where he received instruction from Li Wang and John O'Connor. Top prize-winner of international competitions: Chopin Competition on period instruments in Warsaw (with Mazurkas Prize), PianoTexas Concerto Competition, Minnesota e-Piano, Hastings International Piano Concerto Competition, Moscow Chopin Competition in Foshan, China, and Canadian Chopin Competition (with Best Mazurkas and Concerto Prize), etc. Also, CMC 1st Prize and Grand Prize. Named CBC 30 Hot Canadian Classical Musicians Under 30 and recipient of the 2023 Hnatyshyn Foundation Developing Arts Grant in Piano.

Performed at prestigious venues in Europe: Rudolfinum in Prague, Vzlet in Prague, Lukaskirche in Dresden, Salle Cortot and Bibliothèque Polonaise in Paris, Warsaw National Philharmonic Hall, Chopin's birthplace in Żelazowa Wola, Chopin Museum in Warsaw, Krzysztofory Palace Museum in Krakow, Pszczyna Castle in Poland, Ateneo de Madrid, BOZAR in Brussels, and more. In Canada: Koerner Hall, George Weston, Four Seasons Centre, Harbourfront Centre Theatre, McMaster University LIVElab, Burlington Performing Arts Centre, Salle Gilles-Lefebvre, Maison des arts Desjardins Drummondville, and more.



### **The Soaring Eagles 光辉龙狮体育会**

These performances mark The Soaring Eagles's TSO début.

Soaring Eagles Lion Dance is a performance and competition team passionate about preserving lion dance culture through teaching and performance. Serving as the Canadian branch of the Kong Fai Lion Dance Association, Soaring Eagles has partnerships with lion dance teams across the world, including Macau, China, Malaysia, Spain, and the United States.

Rooted in tradition, lion dance is a production typically performed wherever luck is needed and evil needs to be warded away. While most commonly associated with Chinese New Year, lion dances are also performed at grand openings, weddings, birthdays, and other celebratory events. There are several different styles of lion dance; the Soaring Eagles specialize in traditional and acrobatic Southern-style lion dance, including bench and high pole performances.



### **Chinese Collective Arts Association 菁华艺术协进会**

These performances mark the Chinese Collective Arts Association's TSO début.

The Chinese Collective Arts Association (CCAA) is a non-profit organisation that promotes and educates the community about Chinese cultural arts through engagements and events. After years of being trained in Chinese dance together, a group of dancers from Chi-Ping Dance Group gathered to share their enthusiasm for dance, music, and theatre. The CCAA plays a prominent role in providing the public with a taste of China in their own unique and modern way.

The CCAA's goal is to serve the community through organising and participating in charitable events, to work in conjunction with other organisations, groups, and individuals to promote Chinese culture, and to act as a forum for Chinese cultural education.

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**新年快乐**



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