

LONDON SYMPHONIA **2024-25** SEASON



# BEETHOVEN AND SIBELIUS WITH KERSON LEONG

APRIL 5, 2025 | 7:30 pm | Metropolitan United

Presenting Partner: *Serenata Music*

## Guest Artists

- Tania Miller, *conductor*
- Kerson Leong, *violin*

London  
**Symphonia**



**JOSH MORGAN  
MAYOR**

October 5, 2024

Dear Friends,

On behalf of London City Council, let me welcome you to London Symphonia's 2024-25 Season. We are honored to have such a distinguished ensemble in our community, and we eagerly anticipate the musical experiences you will bring to our residents.

London Symphonia has long been a shining star in our artistic constellation, and their dedication to excellence in music enriches the lives of residents across all ages. Each performance you deliver resonates deeply, creating cherished memories and fostering a love for the arts.

This season, London Symphonia is excited to present a diverse array of performances that will captivate your senses and enrich your spirit. From timeless classics to contemporary works, there is something for everyone to enjoy. I encourage you to explore the full program and immerse yourself in the magic that only live orchestral music can bring.

As we gather to appreciate the extraordinary talent of our musicians and guest artists, let us also celebrate the power of music to inspire, heal, and unite. I invite you to share in this season's festivities, whether you are a lifelong supporter or a newcomer to the concert hall.

Thank you for your dedication to enriching our lives through the power of music. Here's to a wonderful season ahead!

Kind regards,

Josh Morgan  
Mayor, City of London

City of London  
Office of Mayor Josh Morgan  
300 Dufferin Avenue  
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**WELCOME to BEETHOVEN AND SIBELIUS WITH KERSON LEONG**

Thank you for joining us for tonight's concert which we believe will be a highlight of the 2024-25 Season.

When Kerson Leong made his London Symphonia debut in 2018, we knew right away that he was a meteoric talent unlike any other in Canada. Today he is recognized as one of the brightest classical stars who continually delivers thrilling performances and daring interpretations. We are proud and thrilled to welcome him back, along with Tania Miller, one of our favourite conductors, who will lead this performance of soul-stirring music.

We hope you will return for our Season Finale on May 3 when London-born and raised singer/songwriter Genevieve Fisher will perform with London Symphonia in this ultimate country music concert. You'll hear the premiere of her new single and songs that have shaped her career – those she has written, her personal favourites and songs best loved by her fans. Exciting new orchestral arrangements by our own Scott Good along with special guest St. Mary Choir will make this a truly enjoyable evening.

To all our donors thank you for your continuing belief in our creativity and commitment to bringing the joy and transformative power of music to people of all ages across the community. Your support is vital to London Symphonia's success, not just in bringing performances like the one tonight to life but through our comprehensive education and outreach programs. On behalf of the musicians, staff, and Board of Directors, our heartfelt thanks.

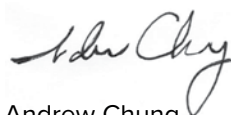
Glorious music and great artistry await you throughout the season. We hope you will enjoy tonight's concert and spread the word to family and friends.

We look forward to seeing you often.

Sincerely,



April Voth  
*Executive Director*



Andrew Chung  
*Artistic Producer*

# BEETHOVEN AND SIBELIUS WITH KERSON LEONG

**APRIL 5, 2025** at 7:30 pm  
Metropolitan United

## Guest Artists

- Tania Miller, *conductor*
- Kerson Leong, *violin*

## Ludwig van Beethoven

Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in D Major, Op. 61

- I. Allegro ma non troppo
- II. Larghetto
- III. Rondo. Allegro

*INTERMISSION*

## Jean Sibelius

Symphony No. 2 in D Major, Op. 43

- I. Allegretto
- II. Tempo andante, ma rubato
- III. Vivacissimo
- IV. Finale: Allegro moderato

The program runs approximately 2 hours and 10 minutes  
will be performed with a 20-minute intermission.

Presenting Partner: *Serenata Music*

Supported by: Rhys and Mary Lou Dixon Fund



## MEET KERSON LEONG AND THE LONDON SYMPHONIA MUSICIANS AFTER THE CONCERT

Join us in the Great  
Room behind the stage  
and speak with the  
musicians.

# TONIGHT'S MUSICIANS

## Violin 1

Joe Lanza  
Andrew Chung  
Mikela Witjes (mentor)  
Chia-Hsuan Chen\*  
Mel Martin  
Peter Carter  
Calvin Tsang  
Sheilanne Lindsay

## Violin 2

Émilie Paré  
Michele Dumoulin  
Sarah Wiebe (mentor)  
Yanet Campbell-  
Secades\*  
Andrew Bensler  
Alyssa Stevenson  
Min Xie

## Viola

Marie-Eve Lessard  
John Wiebe  
Jacqueline Milne (mentor)  
Tasman Tantasawat\*  
Roman Kosarev

## Cello

Ben Bolt-Martin  
Sonya Nanos Hodgson  
Patrick Theriault (mentor)  
Sarah Cupit\*  
Joel Tangjerd

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\*London Symphonia Fellows from Western University

**Photography and video/audio recording of any kind is not permitted during the performance.**

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London Symphonia wishes to acknowledge and honour the land on which we are meeting as the traditional territory of the First Nations peoples: the Chippewa of the Thames First Nation (part of the Anishinaabe), the Oneida Nation of the Thames (part of the Haudenosaunee) and the Munsee-Delaware Nation (part of the Leni-Lunaape). Let us reflect on how we as individuals and as a community can carry this spirit of gratitude into everything we do to honour the work that all the First Nations peoples of the Turtle Island have done, and continue to do, for the land that supports us all.

## Tania Miller



Canadian Conductor **Tania Miller** has distinguished herself as a dynamic interpreter, musician and innovator. On the podium, Maestra Miller projects authority, dynamism and sheer love of the experience of making music. As one critic put it, she delivers calm intensity... expressive, colourful and full of life... her experience and charisma are audible.” Others call her performances “technically immaculate, vivid and stirring”.

Tania Miller is Artistic Director of the Brott Music Festival in Canada and the Artistic Director and Conductor of the National Academy Orchestra of Canada and of Brott Opera. Maestra Miller has upcoming concerts with the National Symphony of Mexico, the Janacek Philharmonic in Ostrava, Czech Republic, and Madison Symphony with recent concerts with the Eugene Symphony, Winnipeg Symphony and South Bend Symphony. Maestra Miller conducted Vancouver Opera’s production of Mozart’s *Die Zauberflöte*, and a 2024 concert with highly acclaimed soprano, Sondra Radvanovsky with Vancouver’s Opera West. Other recent debuts include the Warsaw Philharmonic, I Musici de Montreal, Baton Rouge Symphony and the New Haven Symphony.

Miller has conducted the KBS Symphony in Seoul, and the Virtuoso Chamber Orchestra at the World Orchestra Festival in Daegu, South Korea with concerts in Daegu, Hwaseong, and Seoul. She has appeared as a guest conductor in Canada, the United States and Europe with such orchestras as the Bern Symphony Orchestra, NFM Wrocław Philharmonic, Toronto Symphony, Seattle Symphony, Chicago Symphony, Oregon Symphony, Chautauqua Symphony Orchestra, Ottawa’s National Arts Centre Orchestra, Orchestre Métropolitain de Montreal, Vancouver Symphony, Orchestre Symphonique de Quebec, Naples Philharmonic, Hartford Symphony, Madison Symphony, Calgary Philharmonic, Rhode Island Philharmonic, Louisiana Philharmonic and numerous others. Maestro Miller was Music Director of Canada’s Victoria Symphony for 14 years, and was named Music Director Emerita for her commitment to the orchestra and community. She has distinguished herself as a visionary leader and innovator with a deep commitment to contemporary repertoire and composers and has gained a national reputation as a highly effective advocate and communicator for the arts.

## Kerson Leong



Miller conducted Calgary Opera's production of Lehar's *Merry Widow* and numerous opera productions as Artistic Director of Michigan Opera Works and guest conductor of Opera McGill in Montreal. She was Assistant Conductor of the Carmel Bach Festival for four seasons, and Assistant and Associate Conductor of the Vancouver Symphony from 2000-2004. She was Assistant Conductor of the Banff Summer Festival of the Arts opera production of Michael Daugherty's Jackie O.

Ms. Miller has a Doctorate and Masters degree in Conducting from the University of Michigan. Maestro Miller received an Honorary Doctor of Laws degree from Royal Roads University, and an Honorary Fellowship Diploma from Canada's Royal Conservatory of Music for her commitment to leadership in community and music education. She was recipient of the 2017 Friends of Canadian Music award from the Canadian League of Composers for her dedication to the performance of contemporary music.

**Kerson Leong** has been described as “not just one of Canada’s greatest violinists but one of the greatest violinists, period” (*Toronto Star*). Forging a unique path since his First Prize win at the International Yehudi Menuhin Violin Competition in 2010, he continues to win over colleagues and audiences alike with “a mixture of spontaneity and mastery, elegance, fantasy, intensity that makes his sound recognizable from the first notes” (*Le Monde*).

His latest album release of *Britten & Bruch: Violin Concertos*, recorded with the Philharmonia Orchestra and Patrick Hahn for Alpha Classics, was awarded Gramophone Editor’s Choice, Choc de Classica, and ‘The Strad Recommends’ by *The Strad*, as well as five-star recommendations from *The Sunday Times* and *The Diapason* among others. As a sought-after soloist, he was hand-picked by Yannick Nézet-Séguin to be artist-in-residence with the Orchestre Métropolitain during the 2018-19 season and has recently performed as soloist with such ensembles as the Royal, Oslo, Brussels, Kansai, and Liège Royal Philharmonic Orchestras, and the Seattle, Singapore, Toronto, Istanbul, Toledo, Montreal, Stavanger, and Wuppertal Symphony Orchestras.

Kerson performs on the ‘ex Bohrer, Baumgartner’ Guarneri del Gesu violin courtesy of Canimex Inc, Drummondville (Quebec), Canada.

## PROGRAM NOTES

### Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

#### Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in D Major, Op.61

History does not record whether Beethoven was present at the first performance of this concerto in December 1806, though it seems likely.

The violinist was the virtuoso Franz Clement, and the concert was for his benefit; but one wonders what might have passed through the great composer's mind as, between the first and second movements, Clement performed his own sonata on one string, *with the violin held upside down*. The audience ate it up, though – this was probably what most had actually come for. They even extended their lukewarm approval to what is arguably the greatest violin concerto ever written. Whatever he thought, Beethoven, a longtime admirer of Clement, remained on good terms with him for the rest of his life.

Beethoven's sketchbooks reveal he interrupted work on the Fifth Symphony, then well under way, to write a concerto "out of clemency for Clement." (This pun, written in the manuscript, implies that the violinist was pressed to find a suitable new piece for his concert. Certainly Beethoven was pressed: apparently Clement had virtually to sight-read the barely completed finale). In its **first movement** the concerto, like the symphony, is preoccupied with a single rhythmic figure, in this case the five notes stated at the outset, unconventionally by the timpani. The movement's dimensions are

unprecedented – by itself it is nearly the length of a Mozart concerto – and the violin's highest tessitura is exploited to an unusual degree outside of virtuoso display pieces, perhaps reflecting Clement's particular abilities. As in all Beethoven's mature concertos, the soloist continues after the cadenza (tonight by Fritz Kreisler); part of the magic of this coda lies in its being the violinist's only complete presentation of any of the main themes, the rest of his part being essentially elaboration of the orchestral line. The **slow movement**, a timeless set of variations, passes without pause into the rondo, a feature typical of many of Beethoven's compositions at this time. The **finale's** coda is notable for using the cadenza-closing trill to move to A flat major, the remotest key possible from D; this excursion gives the eventual return of the home tonality (main theme in the oboe!) an added satisfaction.

Although it was published in 1808 in both its original format and in a transcription for piano and orchestra (Op.61a, commissioned in 1807 by the pianist and publisher Muzio Clementi, who had pronounced the violin version 'beautiful'), the Beethoven Concerto was neglected after its premiere. It seems to have been considered old-fashioned: not only were the latest pyrotechnics missing but Beethoven's early biographer Anton Schindler refers to "its artistic peculiarities (use of short bow strokes following the old Italian school of Nardini and Tartini...)." There were performances by the French master Pierre Baillot



in Paris in 1828 and the 14-year-old Belgian virtuoso Henri Vieuxtemps in Vienna in 1834, but its official entry into the repertory is usually dated from 1844 when the 12-year-old Hungarian prodigy Joseph Joachim performed it in London under Felix Mendelssohn. Joachim made the Beethoven concerto his signature piece over his 65-year career, composing two sets of cadenzas for it; in turn, his identification with it influenced the concertos that composers wrote for him, including Brahms, Schumann and, to a lesser extent, Dvořák.

The Viennese-American violinist Fritz Kreisler (1875-1962) was beloved not only for his playing but also for the many charming compositions he left for his instrument. Kreisler's cadenzas for the Beethoven Concerto were written at the age of 21, before he had publicly performed the piece. They are frequently played because – and here we apologize to the ghost of Franz Clement – of the musical depth they bring to what can be an empty display of technique. When in the first movement cadenza Kreisler sets the end of the orchestral introduction against the beginning of the second theme – without, as the Russian virtuoso Nathan Milstein observed, killing either melody – one can imagine Beethoven himself muttering, “*Zum Donnerwetter!* Why didn't I think of that?” Incidentally, Beethoven hated bad cadenzas enough that in his later Piano Concerto No.5, he wrote his own right into the score.

## **Jean Sibelius (1865-1957)**

### **Symphony No.2 in D Major, Op.43**

Sibelius' biographer Karl Ekman preserves a revealing discussion between the Finnish composer and the Austrian symphonist Gustav Mahler. “...On the essence of the symphony, I said that I admired its severity and style and the profound logic that created an inner connection between all the motives,” remembered Sibelius. “Mahler's opinion was just the reverse: ‘No, the symphony must be like the world. It must embrace everything.’” This dates from 1907, while Sibelius was working on his most classical symphony, the Third, and Mahler on his most colossal, the *Symphony of a Thousand*.

The Second Symphony occupies a pivotal position in Sibelius' output. Composed in 1901, it stands at the beginning of a new century, one that would find the aphoristic style foreshadowed here more to its taste than the Mahlerian epic. Like Tchaikovsky, and unlike most European contemporaries, Sibelius saw no philosophical contradiction in composing both symphonic poems in the Liszt tradition, and symphonies in the Beethoven/Brahms tradition. Fired by Finnish nationalism, he began with the more subjective symphonic poem: in *En saga*, *Finlandia* et al, he developed the compositional technique to create objective works with ‘an inner connection between all the motives’. While the First Symphony of 1897 retains the outlines of the Tchaikovsky model,

the Second begins a transformation completed in the Seventh Symphony in which rhetoric, emotionalism, traditional form, even breaks between movements, would be stripped away, leaving a cool and compact 20-minute essay.

The Second is far from that yet, but the beginning of the process is seen in the bridge joining the scherzo to the finale (in which the finale theme is evolved) and in the tightly organized first movement. Here, not for the last time, Sibelius put a pigeon among the critical cats: it still resists analysis. Several themes are set forth – a dance-like woodwind figure, followed by a gentle horn rumination; a bassoon fanfare leading to an unaccompanied recitative in the violins; a bucolic oboe melody accompanied by flute trills and sighing strings; and after some lively pizzicato, a high woodwind call consisting of a long-held note and a flourish. Given extensive development, they are restated in a different order: first the brass take up the fanfare and harmonize the violin recitative, and the dance theme is then combined with the bucolic melody. What is unusual is that the return to the home key of D major (after the development) is unprepared; then the repetition of the beginning is condensed. This disguised recapitulation blurs the form, distressing analysts if not the average listener.

The symphony retains, thanks to tireless scholarship of which Sibelius would not have approved, some programmatic baggage. The second movement originated in sketches for two unfinished tone poems, one in which Don Juan meets Death (hence the gloomy bassoon melody), and the other based on Dante's *Divine Comedy* (ditto the pianissimo string chorale, originally designated "Christus"). Also, the finale's turbulent and obsessive third theme, with its accompanying scales, was conceived as a memorial to the composer's sister-in-law, who had committed suicide. In this context, the life-affirming climax has even greater significance.

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In honour of Ron Wexler's birthday

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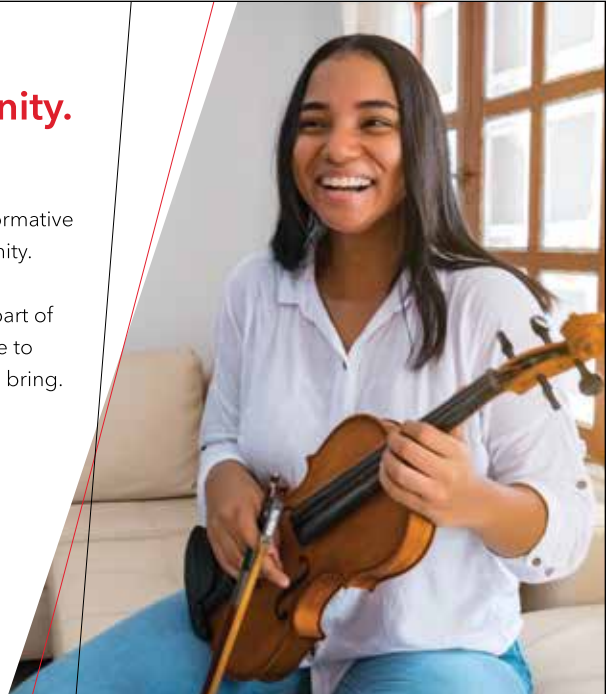
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## PRODUCTION TEAM

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Earl McCluskie, *Audio Supervision and Mixing Engineer*

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Rob Cairns, *Lighting*

Rachel Chen, *Video On Demand Titles - Volunteer*

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## CONCERT POLICIES

- **Photography and video/audio recording of any kind is not permitted during the performance.**
- Photos are permitted before and after the performance and during Intermission.
- Mask wearing is not currently required. Not everyone may have the same degree of comfort with the lifting of restrictions, and we ask that you please respect the personal space and comfort level of those around you.
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