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Classical Music

Concert programme

**Chamber Orchestra of
Europe/Sunwook Kim**

Sat 12 Apr 7.30pm

Hall

Important information



When does the concert start and finish?

The concert begins at 7.30pm and finishes at about 9.30pm, with a 20-minute interval.



I'm running late!

Latecomers will be admitted if there is a suitable break in the performance.



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Sunwook Kim plays Beethoven Chamber Orchestra of Europe

Sat 12 Apr 7.30pm, Hall

Chamber Orchestra of Europe Sunwook Kim piano/director

Anna Clyne *Stride*

Ludwig van Beethoven Piano Concerto No 3

- 1 Allegro con brio
- 2 Largo
- 3 Rondo: Allegro

Interval 20 minutes

Ludwig van Beethoven Rondino in E flat
major for wind octet

Ludwig van Beethoven Piano Concerto No 4

- 1 Allegro moderato
- 2 Andante con moto
- 3 Rondo: Vivace

The Chamber Orchestra of Europe's tour has been made possible by the generous support of Hyundai Motor

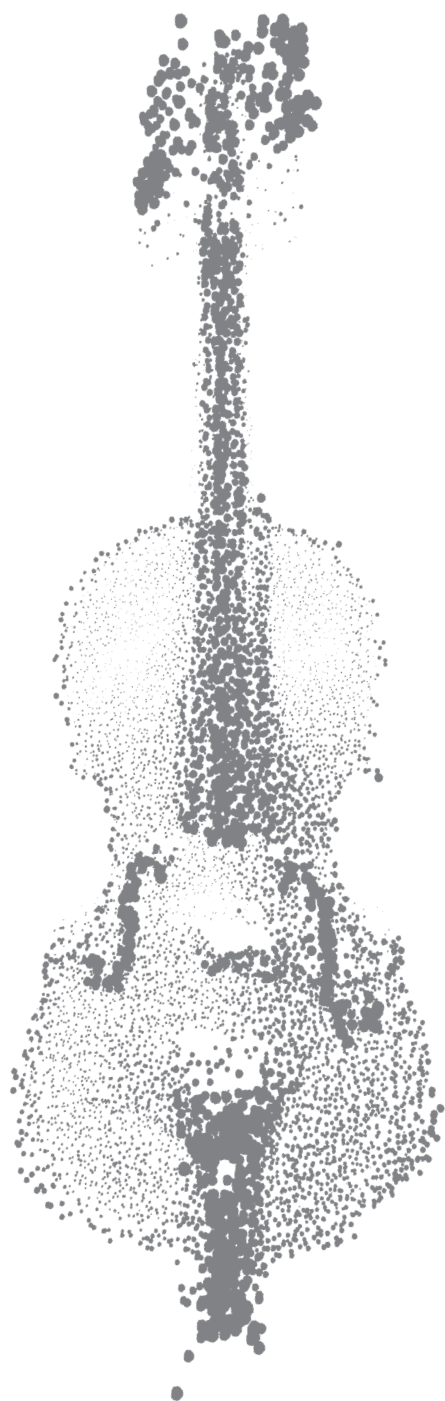


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The Chamber Orchestra of Europe is tonight play-directed by charismatic pianist Sunwook Kim in a programme with Beethoven at its heart: the highly contrasting Third and Fourth concertos, alongside the characterful Rondino for wind octet. To start, Anna Clyne's *Stride*, inspired by Beethoven's much-loved *Pathétique* Sonata.

In 2020, Anna Clyne (born 1980) was invited to write a piece inspired by Beethoven as part of his 250th-anniversary celebrations. *Stride* draws on the Piano Sonata in C minor, Op 13, (the *Pathétique*). In a piece to camera for her publisher's social media feed, she explains the title, finding kinship between Beethoven's driving left-hand octaves at the outset with the 'stride' style of jazz piano playing (a leaping left-hand style that grew out of ragtime, with Fats Waller as its most high-profile exponent). Clyne takes fragments of the Beethoven – rhythmic, melodic and harmonic – and develops them through her own lens, flinging them round the ensemble, keeping them spinning, all the while transforming them. Techniques from Clyne's electroacoustic music background influence the score; there is abrupt cross-cutting, layering, stretching, and even a written-out reverberation chamber, where pitches from a viola melody are sustained by other instruments, giving it a hazy shadow. There are certainly episodes that sound fleetingly like pure Beethoven, but this is neither laboured pastiche nor earnestly deconstructed artifice but an energetic, high-spirited and wholly original work.

© Dan Whitfield

Pity the poor page turner. The conductor Ignaz Seyfried found himself in that role for the premiere of Beethoven's Third Piano Concerto in Vienna in 1803: 'In the playing of the concerto movements

he asked me to turn the pages for him, but – heaven help me! – that was easier said than done. I saw almost nothing but empty leaves; at the most on one page or the other a few Egyptian hieroglyphs wholly unintelligible to me scribbled down to serve as clues for him: for he played nearly all the solo part from memory, since, as was so often the case, he had not had time to put it all down on paper.'

Beethoven had conceived the idea of a C minor concerto as early as 1796, which, so he wrote in a sketchbook, was to have a kettledrum in the cadenza. It was an idea brought to brilliant fruition in his Third Piano Concerto. Radical though this idea may be, it sounds completely inevitable in the context of an opening movement that is full of military swagger, with its dotted rhythms underpinning the first idea and wind-band sonorities. The second theme – lyrical and in the major – offers typically Beethovenian contrast. And when the pianist does finally enter, the opening theme is pugnaciously prefaced with a flurry of upward minor-key scales. Scales and trills – such basic musical building blocks – are used heavily throughout the movement, never more hauntingly than in the closing moments of the cadenza where, against hushed piano writing, the timpani enters, veiled and etching out that familiar dotted rhythm of the opening theme. It offers a moment of contemplation before the music is swept up to a terse, brilliant conclusion.

There's a shock in store as we reach the Largo, which moves from C minor to the warmth of E major and from frenetic energy to a chordal theme introduced by the soloist. Stillness and a reminder of the composer's fabled skills as an improvisator are uppermost here. And the piano becomes part of a chamber ensemble, with some beautifully considered accompanying passages (something that works particularly well when the pianist has colleagues of the calibre of the COE as we hear this evening).

A sense of unease returns in the agitated C minor rondo, its main idea introduced by the pianist. As in the first movement, we're reminded of the military, with colourful wind-band textures, but there's variety,

courtesy of an episode casting the clarinet in a starring role, before Beethoven winds up the tension with a passage of fugal writing. The concerto culminates in a headlong Presto dash to the end, the piano leading his orchestral colleagues on a merry dance, now in an affirmative C major.

An octet of wind players from the COE now get a chance to take centre-stage with Beethoven's E flat Rondino. The title was not Beethoven's own, but that of Diabelli – of variation fame – when he published it posthumously in 1830. It may be compact and early, dating from 1793, but it's a real gem of a piece. It's scored for pairs of oboes, clarinets, bassoons and horns set in motion by a theme on the horns who also get the final say with writing that is by turns muted and unmuted. In between this earworm of a theme, all eight players get to shine, and move us too, with a couple of minor-key interludes. It was at one time intended as the finale to Beethoven's Wind Octet, Op 103, but the composer thought better of it, instead ending that piece with a headlong presto movement.

© Harriet Smith

The circumstances of the premiere of Beethoven's Fourth Piano Concerto in 1808 may have contributed to its initial neglect. Crammed into a four-hour epic concert in an unheated theatre in a freezing Viennese December, it had to fight for attention among – almost unbelievably – the premieres of both the Fifth and Sixth Symphonies and the Choral Fantasy, along with excerpts of the Mass in C major. In the family of five concertos, it is also an outlier, an introvert sandwiched between the fiery Third and the majestic Fifth. However, since its inauspicious start, buried at the foot of a Beethoven premiere mountain, pianists and listeners have taken the quiet radicalism and gentle beauty of this work to their hearts. Lyricism and innovation are in evidence from the off. Rather than an expected orchestral exposition, the soloist enters completely alone, with a single G major chord followed by a gently pulsing, caressing questioning phrase. The orchestra answers in a far away B major, a harmonic swerve that seems like they're answering a question with a question of their own. Thereafter orchestra and soloist

are intertwined, a coalition rather than opposing factions, exploring the musical territory outlined in the opening bars.

The austere second movement takes us into a new, bleaker landscape. Stern, jagged neo-Baroque unison statements from the orchestra are responded to by softly placatory phrases and quivering trills from the piano, attempting to assuage the orchestral fury and find a way forward. Though unfolding at a slow tempo (not too slow; the tempo marking of *Andante con moto* implies a brisk walking pace), there is an edge-of-seat tension to this brief movement, punctuated by silences. The great German pianist Wilhem Kempff memorably described it thus: 'there are few notes. Instead there are many rests, which sit like black, sinister birds on the lines of the music, signs signifying a silence which takes the breath away.'

The rondo finale is a jubilant affair, the orchestra banishing the darkness with martial trumpets and drums and engaging in jocular interplay with the piano. In a more reflective episode, there is a melody that shares a close resemblance to a theme from the Choral Fantasy with which the concerto shared a billing at its premiere, (itself a precursor to the famous Ode to Joy theme from the Ninth Symphony, as yet some 16 years away).

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Sunwook Kim

Sunwook Kim came to international recognition when he won the Leeds International Piano Competition in 2006, aged just 18, the competition's youngest winner for 40 years, as well as its first Asian winner. Since then, he has established a reputation as one of the finest pianists of his generation, appearing with leading orchestras, including the Berlin, London and Los Angeles Philharmonic orchestras, Berlin Radio, Bournemouth, Chicago, City of Birmingham, Finnish Radio, London and NHK Symphony orchestras, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Staatskapelle Dresden, Minnesota Orchestra, NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchester, Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen, Philharmonia Orchestra, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, BBC Orchestra of Wales, Radio-France Philharmonic and the Hallé. He has collaborated with leading conductors, including Jakub Hrůša, Karina Canellakis, Nathalie Stutzmann, Thomas Sondergård, Tugan Sokhiev, Daniel Harding, Paavo Järvi, David Afkham, Edward Gardner, Sir John Eliot Gardiner, Myung-Whun Chung, Osmo Vänskä, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Kirill Karabits, Marek Janowski, Sakari

Oramo, Andrew Manze, Vassily Sinaisky, Michael Sanderling and Sir Mark Elder.

This season he continues his term as Music Director of the Gyeonggi Philharmonic Orchestra, conducting works from Mozart and Beethoven to Richard Strauss, Bartók and Unsuk Chin. He also makes conducting debuts with the Iceland Symphony Orchestra and Armenian National and Israel Philharmonic orchestras.

Play-directing from the piano, current highlights include the current tour of Europe and Korea with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe. As a concerto soloist, he returns to the Los Angeles Philharmonic and as part of the Seoul Festival curated by Unsuk Chin.

In recital Sunwook Kim collaborates with Janine Jansen in a tour of Italy, including performances in Venice, Milan, Cremona and Turin, as well as to Düsseldorf and Lugano. Further highlights to date include regular appearances at Wigmore Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, in the 'Piano 4 Etoiles' series at the Paris Philharmonie and Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Teatro Colon in Buenos Aires, Kioi Hall in Tokyo, Symphony Hall Osaka and Seoul Arts Centre, as well as at leading festivals, including Aix-en Provence, Piano aux Jacobin, La Roque d'Anthéron and Klavier-Festival Ruhr, among others.

He released his debut recital disc (of Beethoven's *Waldstein* and *Hammerklavier* sonatas) on Accentus in 2015; this was followed by music by Franck and Brahms, as well as more Beethoven. His most recent chamber music release is of Beethoven's violin sonatas with Clara-Jumi Kang. His discography also includes concertos by Brahms, Unsuk Chin and Beethoven.

Sunwook Kim was born in Seoul in 1988 and completed an MA in conducting at the Royal Academy of Music, where he was subsequently made a fellow in 2019. Besides his Leeds win, his international awards include the first prize at the 2004 Ettlingen Competition and the 2005 Clara Haskil Competition. In 2013 he was selected by the Beethoven-Haus Bonn to become the first beneficiary of its new mentoring scheme.



© Julia Wesely

Chamber Orchestra of Europe

The Chamber Orchestra of Europe (COE) was founded in 1981 by a group of young musicians who became acquainted as part of the European Community Youth Orchestra (now EUYO). There are now about 60 members of the COE, who pursue parallel careers as principals or section leaders of nationally based orchestras, as eminent chamber musicians, and as tutors of music.

From the start, the COE's identity was shaped by its partnerships with leading conductors and soloists. It was Claudio Abbado above all who served as an important mentor in the early years. He led the COE in staged works such as Rossini's *Il viaggio a Reims* and *The Barber of Seville* and Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* and *Don Giovanni* and conducted numerous concerts featuring works by Schubert and Brahms in particular. Nikolaus Harnoncourt also had a major influence on the development of the COE through his performances and recordings of all of the Beethoven symphonies, as well as through opera productions at the Salzburg, Vienna and Styriarte festivals.

Currently the orchestra works closely with Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Sir Simon Rattle, Sir Andrés Schiff and Robin Ticciati, who are Honorary Members (following in the footsteps of the late Bernard Haitink and Nikolaus Harnoncourt), and also Sir Antonio Pappano.

The COE has strong links with many of the major festivals and concert halls in Europe. It has been 'Residenzorchester Schloss Esterházy' in Eisenstadt since 2022. In partnership with the Kronberg Academy, the COE also became the first-ever orchestra-in-residence at the Casals Forum in Kronberg in 2022.

With more than 250 works in its discography, the COE's recordings have won numerous international prizes, including two Grammys and three *Gramophone Record of the Year Awards*. Its recent releases include a pairing of piano concertos by Clara Wieck-Schumann and Robert Schumann with Beatrice Rana and Yannick Nézet-Séguin, which met with widespread acclaim; and a cycle of Brahms symphonies with Nézet-Séguin, recorded in 2022 and 2023 at the Baden-Baden Festspielhaus.

In 2009 the COE Academy was created in order to give a select group of exceptional students the chance to study with principal players of COE and, importantly, to tour with the orchestra.

The COE is a private orchestra which receives financial support from, in particular, the Gatsby Charitable Foundation and a further number of Friends, including Dasha Shenkman, Sir Siegmund Warburg's Voluntary Settlement, the Rupert Hughes Will Trust, the Underwood Trust, the 35th Anniversary Friends and American Friends.

Chamber Orchestra of Europe

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viola

Eivind Ringstadt
Firmian Lerner
Claudia Hofert
Riikka Repo
Dorle Sommer
Giulia Wechsler

cello

Richard Lester
Principal Cello Chair
supported by an
anonymous donor
Kate Gould
Luise Buchberger
Laura Moinian
Sally Pendlebury

double bass

Enno Senft
Principal Bass Chair
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Simo Väisänen

flute

Clara Andrada
Principal Flute
Chair supported
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Josine Buter
(& piccolo)

oboe

Juan Pechuan
Ramirez
Principal Oboe
Chair supported
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Canosa

clarinet

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Marie Lloyd

bassoon

Matthew Wilkie
Principal Bassoon
Chair supported
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horn

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trumpet

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Shostakovich**
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