

Anchorage Symphony Orchestra

NEWS RELEASE

CONTACT: Jennifer Cargile, 907-274-8668



Anchorage Symphony Orchestra

Made in America

Featuring Daniel Hsu, piano

Saturday, March 2, 2019 – 8:00pm

Atwood Concert Hall, ACPA

Anchorage, Alaska – February 25, 2019 – There is a notion about classical music - that it was written by European men - centuries ago. The Anchorage Symphony proves this myth wrong on March 2nd with a concert of great music written in and inspired by America.

The Grammy award winning piece, *Made in America*, by Joan Tower opens this extraordinary evening. With a career spanning over fifty years, Tower is widely regarded as one of the most important American composers living today. She has been commissioned to write works for major soloists, ensembles, and orchestras around the world, including Carol Wincenc, Emerson Quartet, and Chicago Symphony, among others.

In 2004, Tower was the first composer chosen for the Ford Made in America consortium commission. This consortium was made of 65 smaller orchestras around the country, joined by the League of American Orchestras and Meet the Composer. "When they asked me to do this," Tower said, "they called the project Made in America, and the fact that it was going across the U.S., this word 'America' kept popping up in my brain." Tower noted that she was further inspired by her return to the US after spending her childhood in Bolivia (ages 9-18). "When I returned to the United States, I was proud to have free choices, upward mobility, and the chance to try to become who I wanted to be. I also enjoyed the basic luxuries of an American citizen that we so often take for granted: hot running water, blankets for the cold winters, floors that are not made of dirt, and easy modes of transportation, among many other things. So when I started composing this piece, the song *America the Beautiful* kept coming into my consciousness and eventually became the main theme for the work."

As part of this commission, once Tower's commission was completed, it began a cross country tour of all 50 states over an 18 month period, finishing in Juneau, Alaska. A recording of *Made in America*, performed by Leonard Slatkin and the Nashville Symphony, won the 2008 Grammy Award for Best Classical Contemporary Composition, in addition to the Grammy Awards for Best Classical Album and Best Orchestral Performance.

While not about America, Rachmaninoff's *Piano Concerto No. 3* was written for his first tour of the US. Premiered by the composer himself in New York City, this concerto is respected, even feared, by many pianists. Rachmaninoff called it his favorite of his own piano concertos, writing "I much prefer the Third because my Second is so uncomfortable to play." Josef Hofmann, the pianist to whom the work is dedicated, never publicly performed it, saying that it "wasn't for"

him. Audience members may recognize this challenging concerto from the 1996 film *Shine*, based on the life of Australian pianist David Helfgott.

American pianist and Van Cliburn bronze medalist, Daniel Hsu is ready for Rachminoff's challenge. Described by the Philadelphia Inquirer as a "poet with an expressive edge to his playing that charms, questions, and coaxes," Hsu is increasingly recognized for his easy virtuosity and bold musicianship. Growing up in San Francisco, Hsu began piano lessons at the age of 6, making his concerto debut with the Fremont Symphony Orchestra just two years later, and his recital debut with the Steinway Society of the Bay Area at 9 years old. He was accepted into the Curtis Institute of Music at 10, along with two of his siblings. Since then he has gone on to perform with large orchestras around the world, including the Philadelphia and Tokyo Orchestras. Now at the old age of 21, Hsu is currently the Richard A. Doran Fellow at the Curtis Institute of Music. When not sitting at his piano, he also enjoys Marvel films and computer programming. He contributed to the creation of Workflow, a popular productivity app that allows users to automate tasks on iPhone, iPad, and Apple Watch, which won the coveted 2015 Apple Design Award and was acquired by Apple in March 2017.

Closing this concert is Howard Hanson's romantic second symphony, commissioned to celebrate the 50th anniversary of an American treasure - the Boston Symphony Orchestra (1930). Upon its premiere, Hanson wrote that his goal with this symphony was "to create a work young in spirit, Romantic in temperament, and simple and direct in expression." To guide him in this goal, he listed his greatest influence was Jean Sibelius.

In a daring move, Hanson structured his second symphony in just three movements (not the normal four). A theme from the first movement has become known as the "Interlochen theme" and is performed at the conclusion of all concerts at the Interlochen Center for the Performing Arts. Audience members are sure to feel the boldness, energy, and of course, romance, of this great American symphony.

Anchorage Symphony's Made in America - Saturday, March 2, (8pm) in the Atwood Concert Hall, Alaska Center for the Performing Arts. Infrared headphones for the hearing impaired are available concert night from the House Manager on the Orchestra Level. Tickets: Adult, \$52-\$27; Youth, \$24.75-\$12.50; Senior, \$46.50-\$24.50. Military, student and group discounts available. To purchase tickets, visit the CenterTix Box Office at the Alaska Center for the Performing Arts or www.centertix.net or call 263-ARTS (2787), toll free at 1-877-ARTS- TIX.

Program

JOAN TOWER Made in America

RACHMANINOFF Piano Concerto No. 3

HANSON Symphony No. 2

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