

PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
16 March 2018

Two Russian Composers' Responses to Extreme Personal Crisis (13 & 14 April)

[16 March 2018, Hong Kong] On 13 & 14 April in the **Hong Kong Cultural Centre Concert Hall**, the **Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra (HK Phil)**, conductor [Zhang Guoyong](#) and violinist [Baiba Skride](#) will perform a programme of music composed at critical times in the lives of two Russian composers.

The concert opens with the famous Polonaise from Tchaikovsky's opera *Eugene Onegin*. This was written around the time of Tchaikovsky's disastrous marriage – which lasted three months and ended with suicidal intentions. Pushkin's original story of *Eugene Onegin* struck Tchaikovsky as being so much like his own personal life that he decided to set it as an opera as a means of surviving his marriage and its aftermath. Its first performance was given in 1879 by a group of Tchaikovsky's own students at the Moscow Conservatory, but despite such inauspicious beginnings, *Eugene Onegin* became the most successful of Tchaikovsky's 10 operas, its celebrated Polonaise one of its most spectacular and glittering moments.

Latvian violinist Baiba Skride, who has been compared with the legendary violinists of the past, will perform another famous work by Tchaikovsky dating from the same turbulent and emotionally-charged period of his life: the Violin Concerto. Originally written for one of the witnesses at the composer's ill-fated wedding, the Violin Concerto is full of passion and dazzling virtuoso display.

Over half a century later, Tchaikovsky's compatriot, Shostakovich, was going through his own personal crisis. Stalin had stormed out of a performance of his opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* which had then been officially condemned as "muddle instead of music". Shostakovich was under threat of banishment, possibly even death, if his next work did not satisfy the Soviet authorities. That work was his Fifth Symphony and, luckily for the composer, was so well received at its premiere in 1937 that he was fully rehabilitated as an approved Soviet composer.

Recognised as an expert interpreter of Russian works, especially the music of Shostakovich, Chinese conductor Zhang Guoyong will be on the podium to bring us the excitement and heady optimism of Shostakovich's most popular symphony.

Tickets priced: HK\$480, \$380, \$280, \$180 are now available at [URBTIX](#). For enquiries, please call +852 2721 2332 or visit www.hkphil.org.

Artists

Zhang Guoyong, conductor [\[full biography\]](#)

Zhang Guoyong studied conducting at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music under the direction of Prof Huang Xiaotong. He is now the Professor and Dean of the conducting department of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, Principal Conductor of the Shanghai Opera House, and Music Director of the Qingdao Symphony Orchestra. Zhang is expert in Russian works, especially Shostakovich's symphonies. Wherever he has performed, he has always impressed the audience and musicians with his sharp hearing, strong basic skills, efficient rehearsal method and appropriate handling of the music's structure.

Baiba Skride, violin [\[full biography\]](#)

Baiba Skride's natural approach to music-making has endeared her to some of today's most important orchestras and conductors. Prestigious orchestras with whom she has worked include the Berlin Philharmonic, Boston Symphony, Royal Concertgebouw, Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre de Paris, London Philharmonic and NHK Symphony. Contemporary music is central to Baiba Skride's music making. She is also a sought-after chamber musician.

CLASSICS SERIES: TCHAIKOVSKY & SHOSTAKOVICH

13 & 14 | 4 | 2018

FRI & SAT 8PM

Hong Kong Cultural Centre Concert Hall

HK\$480 \$380 \$280 \$180

Tickets are now available at URBTIX

For ages 6 or above

Artists

[Zhang Guoyong](#)

conductor

[Baiba Skride](#)

violin

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Zhang Guoyong



Baiba Skride

Photo Credit: Marco Borggreve



The Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra

Photo Credit: Cheung Chi Wai/HK Phil

Programme

TCHAIKOVSKY
TCHAIKOVSKY
SHOSTAKOVICH

Eugene Onegin: Polonaise

Violin Concerto

Symphony no. 5

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Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra

Music Director: Jaap van Zweden

Principal Guest Conductor: Yu Long

The Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra (HK Phil) is recognised as Asia's foremost classical orchestra. Presenting more than 150 concerts over a 44-week season, the HK Phil attracts more than 200,000 music lovers annually.

Jaap van Zweden, one of today's most sought-after conductors, has been the orchestra's Music Director since the 2012/13 concert season, a position he will continue to hold until 2022. Maestro van Zweden will be the next Music Director of the New York Philharmonic from the 2018/19 season.

Yu Long was appointed Principal Guest Conductor with the HK Phil for a three-year period commencing with the 2015/16 season.

Under the dynamic leadership of Music Director Jaap van Zweden, the HK Phil has attained new heights of artistic excellence, garnering international critical acclaim.

Following on from the success of the European tour which included a filmed concert from Vienna's Musikverein, the HK Phil has toured extensively within the mainland China. In celebration of the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the HKSAR, and with support of the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices, the orchestra recently performed in Seoul, Osaka, Singapore, Melbourne and at the Sydney Opera House.

Jaap, the HK Phil, and a superb casts of soloists, have presented concert performances and recordings of the four operas from Richard Wagner's epic *Ring* cycle. These have been enthusiastically endorsed by both audiences and critics at home and abroad, and in recognition of their quality, the orchestra and Jaap have been invited to perform Wagner's *Die Walküre* in staged performances at the Beijing Music Festival last October in a co-production with the Salzburg Easter Festival.

Conductors and soloists who have recently performed with the orchestra include Vladimir Ashkenazy, Charles Dutoit, Christoph Eschenbach, Matthias Goerne, Stephen Hough, Lang Lang, Yo-Yo Ma, Ning Feng and Yuja Wang.

The HK Phil promotes the work of Hong Kong and Chinese composers through an active commissioning programme, and has released recordings on the Naxos label featuring Tan Dun and Bright Sheng, each conducting their own compositions. Its acclaimed education and community engagement programmes in schools, hospitals and outdoor space, bring music into the hearts of tens of thousands of children and families every year.

The Swire Group has been the Principal Patron of the HK Phil since 2006. Through this sponsorship, which is the largest in the orchestra's history, Swire endeavours to promote artistic excellence, foster access to classical music and stimulate cultural participation in Hong Kong, and to enhance Hong Kong's reputation as one of the great cities of the world.

Thanks to a significant subsidy from the Hong Kong Government and long-term funding from Principal Patron Swire, the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust and other supporters, the HK Phil now boasts a full-time annual schedule of core classical repertoire and innovative popular programming, extensive education and community programmes, and collaborations with, among others, Opera Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Arts Festival.

Originally called the Sino-British Orchestra, it was renamed the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra in 1957 and became fully professional in 1974. The HK Phil is a charitable organisation.

The Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra is financially supported by the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and is Venue Partner of the Hong Kong Cultural Centre. SWIRE is the Principal Patron of the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra.