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## SEONG-JIN CHO | Piano

Monday, October 22, 2018 | 7:30pm

Herbst Theatre

**BACH** Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue  
in D minor, BWV 903

**SCHUBERT** Fantasy in C Major, D.760  
"Wanderer Fantasy"

**CHOPIN** Polonaise-fantaisie in A-flat Major,  
Opus 61

### INTERMISSION

**MUSSORGSKY** Pictures at an Exhibition

*Promenade*

*Gnomus*

*Promenade*

*Il Vecchio Castello*

*Promenade*

*Tuileries*

*Bydlo*

*Promenade*

*Ballet of the Chicks in Their Shells*

*Two Polish Jews, One Rich,*

*the Other Poor*

*Promenade*

*Limoges, The Market Place*  
*Catacombae, Sepulcrum Romanum*  
*Cum Mortuis in Lingua Mortua*  
*The Hut on Fowl's Legs (Baba-Yaga)*  
*The Great Gate of Kiev*

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**Seong-Jin Cho** records exclusively for Deutsche Grammophon

**Seong-Jin Cho** is represented by Primo Artists  
244 Fifth Avenue, Suite B222, New York, NY 10001 | [primoartists.com](http://primoartists.com)

Hamburg Steinway Model D, Pro Piano, San Francisco

## ARTIST PROFILE

*Tonight is the San Francisco Performances debut of Seong-Jin Cho.*



With an overwhelming talent and innate musicality, **Seong-Jin Cho** is rapidly embarking on a world-class career and considered one of the most distinctive artists of his generation.

Cho was brought to the world's attention in Fall 2015 when he won the coveted Gold Medal at the Chopin International Competition in Warsaw. This same competition launched the careers of world-class artists such as Martha Argerich, Maurizio Pollini, Garrick Ohlsson and Krystian Zimerman.

In January 2016, Cho signed an exclusive contract with Deutsche Grammophon. The first recording was released in November 2016 featuring Chopin's *Piano Concerto No. 1* and the four *Ballades* with the London Symphony Orchestra and Gianandrea Noseda. A solo Debussy recording was then released in November

2017. In November 2018, he releases a Mozart album featuring sonatas and the D minor concerto with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe and Yannick Nézet-Séguin.

An active recitalist, he performs in many of the world's most prestigious concert halls. In the 2018–19 season, he will play the main stages of Carnegie Hall, Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, Berlin Philharmonie Kammermusiksaal, Frankfurt's Alte Oper, Los Angeles' Disney Concert Hall, Zurich's Tonhalle-Maag and Munich's Prinzregententheater plus at the Verbier Festival, Gstaad Menuhin Festival and Rheingau Festival among several other venues.

Cho collaborates with conductors at the highest level such as Sir Simon Rattle, Valery Gergiev, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Gianandrea Noseda, Antonio Pappano, Myung-Whun Chung, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Yuri Temirkanov, Kzysztof Urbanski, Marek Janowski, Vasily Petrenko, Jakub Hrusa, Leonard Slatkin and Mikhail Pletnev.

Born in 1994 in Seoul, Seong-Jin Cho started learning the piano at 6 and gave his first public recital at age 11. In 2009, he became the youngest-ever winner of Japan's Hamamatsu International Piano Competition. In 2011, he won Third prize at the Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow at the age of 17. In 2012, he moved to Paris to study with Michel Béroff at the Paris Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique where he graduated in 2015. He is now based in Berlin.

More information on Seong-Jin Cho can be found at [seongjin-cho.com](http://seongjin-cho.com).

## PROGRAM NOTES

### Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue in D minor, BWV 903

**JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH**  
(1685–1750)

In December 1717 Bach became Kapellmeister in Cöthen to Prince Leopold, a music-lover who encouraged him to write instrumental music. During his Cöthen years (1717–1723), Bach wrote a number of works for the keyboard, including Book I of *The Well-Tempered Clavier*. During these same years Bach composed his *Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue in D minor*. Those who think of Bach as the “safe” composer of church music and preludes and fugues will have that conception mauled by the *Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue*. This is wild music—daring, powerful, expressive, brilliant. Bach may initially set this music in D minor, but the chromatic freedom of his writing often dissolves any sense of a home key, and there are moments of dissonance in this music that can still surprise the ear centuries after it was written.

The opening section of the *Chromatic Fantasy* suggests the effect of improvisation, with its great swirls and free flights. After this opening flourish, Bach proceeds to a section he marks *Recitative*: here the pulse feels slower, and the free flights of the opening give way to chords, trills, and complex rhythms that can suddenly erupt into the free manner of the opening. The ending of this section is extraordinary: over a series of twelve descend-

ing—and quite dissonant—chords in the left hand, the right offers a fragmentary final statement before the section resolves firmly on a D-Major chord. The *Fugue* returns to D minor, and Bach builds it on a long subject that rises sinuously and chromatically in its original statement. The fugue is in three voices, and textures remain quite clear—this fugue shows Bach the contrapuntalist at the height of his powers.

### Fantasy in C Major, D.760 “Wanderer Fantasy”

**FRANZ SCHUBERT**  
(1797–1828)

Completed in November 1822, this music has taken the name *Wanderer Fantasy*, for it is based in part on Schubert’s song *Der Wanderer*. The *Wanderer Fantasy* is in one single movement—about 20 minutes in length—that falls into four sections. While the title “fantasy” may imply a lack of attention to form, exactly the reverse is true here—there are unusual thematic and rhythmic connections between the four sections, so that this music is tightly disciplined throughout. It is also extremely difficult to perform. In fact, it was too difficult even for its creator. Schubert is reported to have given up during a performance of this music and stormed away from the piano, exclaiming: “The devil may play this stuff! I can’t!” The brilliance of this music has made it a great favorite of virtuoso pianists. Franz Liszt frequently performed the *Wanderer Fantasy*, and its cyclic structure of interconnected movements had a strong influence on his own music.

The opening provides the basic dactylic pulse that will recur throughout the Fantasy. The second section (there are no pauses between the sections) quotes a fragment of Schubert's song *Der Wanderer* and then offers a series of variations on it. Again, these variations grow increasingly brilliant before this section subsides to end quietly. The third section is built upon a dotted rhythm that begins to dominate the music—this dancing rhythm will recur throughout this carefree interlude. The final section recalls the theme that opened the Fantasy, but now that rhythmic figure is treated fugally.

## Polonaise-fantaisie in A-flat Major, Opus 61

**FREDERIC CHOPIN**  
(1810–1849)

Written in 1845–46, the *Polonaise-fantaisie* is one of Chopin's final works—and one of his most brilliant. A polonaise is usually in three parts: a first subject, a contrasting middle section, and a return of the opening material. Chopin's *Polonaise-fantaisie* keeps this general pattern but with some differences: Chopin writes with unusual harmonic freedom and incorporates both themes into the brilliant conclusion—doubtless he felt that he had reshaped the basic form so far that it was necessary to append the “fantaisie” to the title.

The *Allegro maestoso* introduction is long and free, while the first theme group is remarkable for the drama and virtuosity of the writing. This makes the quiet middle section all the more effective: this chordal melody of disarming simplicity is developed at length before the return of the open-

ing material. The final pages are dazzling—Chopin combines both themes as the *Polonaise-fantaisie* winds down to its powerful final chord.

## Pictures at an Exhibition

**MODEST MUSSORGSKY**  
(1839–1881)

In the summer of 1873 Modest Mussorgsky was stunned by the sudden death of his friend, the artist Victor Hartmann. The following year, their mutual friend Vladimir Stassov arranged a showing of over 400 of Hartmann's watercolors, sketches, drawings, and designs. Inspired by the exhibition and the memory of his friend, Mussorgsky set to work on a suite of piano pieces based on the pictures and wrote enthusiastically to Stassov: “Hartmann is bubbling over, just as Boris did. Ideas, melodies, come to me of their own accord, like the roast pigeons in the story—I gorge and gorge and overeat myself. I can hardly manage to put it all down on paper fast enough.”

*Pictures at an Exhibition* consists of ten musical portraits bound together by a promenade theme that recurs periodically—Mussorgsky said that this theme, meant to depict the gallery-goer strolling between paintings, was a portrait of himself. Even early listeners were struck by the “orchestral” sonorities of this music, and in 1922 Serge Koussevitzky asked Maurice Ravel to orchestrate it. This quickly became one of the most popular works in the orchestral repertory, and this recital offers the opportunity to hear this music performed in its original version.

The opening *Promenade* alternates 5/4 and 6/4 meters; Mussorgsky marks

it “in the Russian manner.” The *Gnome* is a portrait of a gnome staggering on twisted legs; the following *Promenade* is marked “with delicacy.” In Hartmann’s watercolor *The Old Castle*, a minstrel sings before a ruined castle. *Tuileries* is a watercolor of children playing and quarreling in the Paris park, while *Bydlo* returns to Eastern Europe, where a heavy ox-cart grinds through the mud. Mussorgsky wanted the following *Promenade* to sound *tranquillo*, but gradually this *Promenade* takes on unexpected power. *The Ballet of the Unhatched Chicks* depicts Hartmann’s costume design for the ballet *Trilby*, in which these characters wore egg-shaped armor.

“I meant to get Hartmann’s Jews,” said Mussorgsky of *Two Polish Jews, One Rich, One Poor*, often called by Mussorgsky’s later title *Samuel Goldenberg and Schmuyle*. This portrait of two Polish Jews in animated conversation has the rich voice of Goldenberg alternating with Schmuyle’s rapid, high speech.

Listeners who know *Pictures* only in the Ravel orchestration will be surprised to find this movement followed by another *Promenade*; Ravel cut this from his orchestral version. The *Marketplace at Limoges* shows Frenchwomen quarreling furiously in a market, while *Catacombs* is Hartmann’s portrait of himself surveying the Roman catacombs by lantern light. This section leads into *Cum mortuis in lingua mortua*: “With the dead in a dead language.” Mussorgsky noted: “The spirit of the departed Hartmann leads me to the skulls and invokes them: the skulls begin to glow faintly.” *The Hut on Fowl’s Legs* shows the hut of the witch Baba Yaga, who would fly through the skies in a red-hot mortar—Mussorgsky has her fly straight into the final movement, *The Great Gate of Kiev*. Mussorgsky’s brilliant finale transforms the genial *Promenade* theme into a heaven-storming conclusion.

—Program notes by Eric Bromberger