



The Vancouver  
**CHOPIN**  
SOCIETY

2025-2026 **SEASON**

Music is the divine way to tell  
beautiful, poetic things to the

**HEART.**

~ Pablo Casals ~

**SOFYA GULYAK**

Sunday, April 26, 2026

3:00 PM Vancouver Playhouse

## MESSAGE FROM ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

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We end our season with a performance by Sofya Gulyak, the first woman to win the Leeds International Piano Competition, and the Vancouver and Canadian debut of Vincent Ong, a laureate of the 19<sup>th</sup> International Chopin Competition who won the hearts of many music lovers with his performance at the competition.

We will also be announcing the incredible lineup of artists in our 2026-2027 season. In the theatre lobby, you will find rack cards detailing all the wonderful concerts we have arranged for you in the coming season.

Our society is a member of the International Federation of Chopin Societies, based in Vienna. This connection puts us in touch with some fifty other Chopin Societies worldwide, creating exciting possibilities for inviting international musicians to Vancouver.

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## SOFYA GULYAK

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**Chaconne in D minor**  
**Prelude, Fugue and Variation , Op. 18**  
**Choral Prelude “ Nun komm,**  
**der Heiden Heiland”, BWV 659**  
**Tocatta and Fugue in D minor BWV 565**

**BACH-BUSONI**  
**FRANCK**  
**BACH-BUSONI**

**BACH-BUSONI**

*Intermission*

**Prelude in C-sharp minor, Op.45**  
**Rondo à la Mazur Op.5**  
**From 6 Polish songs:**

**CHOPIN**  
**CHOPIN**  
**CHOPIN -LISZT**

Meine Freuden

Mädchens Wunsch

**Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2 in C-sharp minor**  
(cadenza by Sofya Gulyak)

**LISZT**

*We acknowledge the financial support of*  
*The Province of British Columbia*  
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# NOTES

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## **Bach-Busoni, Chaconne in D minor**

The first half of today's concert presents romantic interpretations of baroque genres. Italian pianist and composer Ferruccio Busoni (1866-1924) wrote this virtuosic revision of the monumental Chaconne from Bach's D minor Partita for solo violin while on a tour of the U.S. in 1892. The music of J.S. Bach was a life-long interest for Busoni, starting with his father's encouragement when he was a boy. He went on to publish eight volumes of material inspired by the music of Bach, including editions, transcriptions and new compositions. A chaconne is a piece based on the continuous variation of a short theme, in this case four measures long. Busoni's arrangement rewrites Bach's music to suit the modern grand piano, while retaining the violin version's sense of proportion and grandeur.

## **Franck, Prelude, Fugue and Variation, Op. 18**

The musical career of Cesar Franck built slowly from the time of his early studies as a pianist. He eventually found a home as a church organist in Paris, becoming well-known as a representative of the high-quality instruments built by Cavallé-Coll. Not until 1872, at the age of fifty, did he become a professor at the Conservatory. This piece is from 1862, written under the inspiration of the beautiful new organ recently installed at his church. It opens lyrically with a singing melody in 9/8 time, Andantino cantabile. A short transitional passage leads into the fugue in four voices, sustained and legato in tempo Allegretto. The Variation brings back the haunting melody of the Prelude, now enhanced by murmuring sixteenth notes; the ending gently fades away.

## **Bach-Busoni, Chorale Prelude "Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland," BWV659**

This tune "Now comes the Saviour" must have been a favourite of J.S. Bach, because he composed four organ chorale preludes and two cantatas which are based on it. The original chorale was written in 1524 by Luther who was referencing a medieval chant for the first Sunday of Advent, the time when the church awaits the birth of Christ. This is Busoni's arrangement of the most elaborate of Bach's organ settings, featuring a highly decorated version of the tune in the soprano. The

two middle voices are in canon at the fifth while the bass walks along in dignified octaves.

## **Bach-Busoni, Toccata and Fugue in D minor, BWV 565**

Capturing the majesty of this toccata for large baroque organ on the piano was a challenge for Busoni, who relished in the epic appeal of Bach's great organ works. The transcription doubles lines, enriches harmonies and adds romantic expression marks. This was among the last of Busoni's transcriptions of the baroque master's organ pieces, published in 1900. The rhapsodic opening section is followed by a four-voice fugue which concludes with an elaborate, recitative-inspired cadenza.

## **Chopin, Prelude in C sharp minor, Op. 45**

This wonderful Prelude comes from the summer of 1841; Chopin published it that fall as a stand-alone piece. It has the character of an improvisation, beginning with simple parallel chords introducing a sustained, expressive melody. There is no contrasting middle section, but rather it modulates continuously from one key to another, moving toward an ecstatic cadenza with lush chromatic harmonies and then dying away.

## **Chopin, Rondo à la Mazur, Op. 5**

Chopin was just 16 years old when he wrote this Rondo in 1826, the year he entered the High School for Music in Warsaw. Probably written as an assignment for composition class, it shows he was already a master of the brilliant style popular in Europe at the time. The melodies and rhythms are based on the Polish mazurka, while its melodic fioriture and figurations already sound like mature Chopin.

## **Chopin-Liszt, from Six Polish Songs, S. 480**

*Meine Freuden (Moja pieśń / My Joys)*  
*Mädchens Wunsch (Życzenie / The Maiden's Wish)*

Throughout his career, Chopin wrote Polish songs based on poems written by people he knew, although none of these were published in his lifetime. Of the nineteen that went to print after he died, six were transcribed as piano solos by Liszt around 1860. These two are happy

love songs using the rhythms of the mazurka, folk-like in their original versions. "My Joys" describes the pleasures of listening to your sweetheart's talking and then gets quite passionate about kissing in the second verse. In "The Maiden's Wish," a girl imagines being the sun so she could always shine on her beloved and then thinks perhaps being a bird would be good, so she could always be near him. Liszt gave his arrangements German titles, along with new ornamentations, accompaniments and cadenzas, while retaining their charm.

**Liszt, Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2 (with Sofya Gulyak's original cadenza)**

In 1839-40 at the height of his career as a touring virtuoso, Liszt returned to Hungary, the land he had left as a child, and was received as a national hero. This visit renewed his interest in the music he heard the gypsies play and led to his composition of nineteen Hungarian Rhapsodies for piano, of which this is the most popular. First there is a slow section (the *lassan*), darkly minor but sparked with rhythmic freedom and capricious commentary. The ensuing *friskan* or fast section is a playful flight of fancy based on a folksy dance tune. The incredible display of virtuosity is designed to astound and delight the listener. Liszt himself wrote several cadenzas for the ending, but in the score, he invites performers to invent their own; today we are privileged to hear Ms. Gulyak's response to his challenge.

**Ruth Enns,**  
*Vancouver Academy of Music*  
April 2026

**SOFYA GULYAK**  
*Piano*



THE VANCOUVER CHOPIN SOCIETY # 400 - 601 WEST BROADWAY AVENUE VANCOUVER, B.C. V5Z 4C2, CANADA

[info@chopinsociety.org](mailto:info@chopinsociety.org) | [www.chopinsociety.org](http://www.chopinsociety.org) | 604.871.4450

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## BIOGRAPHY

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In September 2009 Sofya Gulyak was awarded the 1<sup>st</sup> prize and the Princess Mary Gold Medal at the Sixteenth Leeds International Piano Competition – the first woman in the history of the competition to achieve this distinction. Since then she has appeared all over the world to great acclaim. Her recital programs are frequently reviewed in superlatives, and her concerto appearances with major orchestras are noted in glowing terms by the world's music press. Sofya has been praised for her "tremendous precision and coloration...exquisite soft playing ...with delicacy" and described as a "Rach star"(Washington Post). Sofya Gulyak's resume includes prizes from many prestigious piano competitions: she is a 1st prize winner of William Kapell International Piano Competition in the USA, Maj Lind Helsinki International Piano Competition, Tivoli Piano Competition in Copenhagen, Isang Yun International Piano Competition in South Korea, San Marino Piano Competition, winner of Busoni Competition in Italy and prize winner of Marguerite Long Piano Competition in Paris.

Over decade she has been a professor of piano at the Royal College of Music in London. In 2023 she was appointed as an associate professor at Jacobs school of Music at Indiana University.

Her playing has been broadcast on radio and TV in Russia, Poland, France, Italy, Germany, United States, Finland, Denmark, Serbia, New Zealand, Brazil, Mexico, United Kingdom (BBC3 and BBC4) and other countries.



## MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

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Welcome to The Vancouver Chopin Society's exciting 2026-2027 season. We have curated a series that includes names familiar to you, as well as artists playing in Vancouver for the very first time.

As we are still basking in the pride we felt when, for the third time in a row, a Canadian artist came home with a major prize at the International Chopin Competition in Warsaw. Pianist Kevin Chen, silver medalist from the 19<sup>th</sup> edition of the competition, will make a welcome return to the Playhouse. We have also invited David Khrikuli, a finalist at the competition who won countless fans with his stunning playing, as well as 4<sup>th</sup> prize winner, the 17-year-old Tianyao Lyu, who wowed the Varsovian audience with her stunning talent. Also making their Vancouver debut will be pianists Saskia Giorgini and Aimi Kobayashi.

Last season, Daniil Trifonov had to cancel his appearance because of illness. We are happy that we managed to successfully secure a new date for his Vancouver recital, which will be held at the beautiful and acoustically resplendent Chan Centre for the Performing Arts.

Returning to Vancouver will be fan favourites Zlata Chochieva, Federico Colli and Alexander Gavrylyuk – musicians who have new ideas and interpretation to offer with every concert they give.

We hope you are as excited – and proud - as we are about our upcoming season. We are mindful that Vancouver has many wonderful cultural events to offer, and we do appreciate your support by attending our concerts. We look forward to seeing all of you at our concerts this coming season.

# 2026-2027 SEASON

## KEVIN CHEN

Sunday, September 20, 2026, 3 pm

*Vancouver Playhouse*

## DAVID KHRIKULI

Monday (Thanksgiving day), October 12, 2026, 3 pm

*Vancouver Playhouse*

## SASKIA GIORGINI

Sunday, November 17, 2026, 3 pm

*Vancouver Playhouse*

## AIMI KOBAYASHI

Sunday, January 17, 2027, 3 pm

*Vancouver Playhouse*

## ZLATA CHOCHIEVA

Sunday, February 14, 2027, 3 pm

*Vancouver Playhouse*

## DANIIL TRIFONOV

Friday, March 12, 2027, 3 pm

*Chan Centre*

## TIANYAO LIU

Wednesday, April 7 2027, 7:30 pm

*Vancouver Playhouse*

## FEDERICO COLLI

Sunday, May 2, 2027, 3 pm

*Vancouver Playhouse*

## ALEXANDER GAVRYLYUK

Sunday, May 16, 2027, 3 pm

*Vancouver Playhouse*

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