

Cleveland Women's Orchestra: catching up with Jinjoo Cho

by Daniel Hathaway



On Sunday, May 1 at 3:30 pm, Robert Cronquist will lead the Cleveland Women's Orchestra in its 81st anniversary concert at Severance Hall. The program will include Modest Mussorgsky's *Night on Bald Mountain*, Zoltán Kodály's "Intermezzo" from *Háry Janós*, Antonín Dvořák's *Symphony No. 8 in G*, and Henri Wieniawski's *Violin Concerto No. 2 in d*.

Not for the first time, the concert will feature violinist Jinjoo Cho, who first performed with CWO when she was in her teens. We caught up with the busy violinist on her cell phone while she was enjoying "a wonderful and rare morning off" walking her dog. We began by asking her how many times she's appeared with

the Women's Orchestra.

"We've played Mendelssohn, Beethoven, the Waxman *Carmen Fantasy* — so this must be the fifth time at least," Cho said. "Since we've already covered most of the concertos that are up our alley, Bob Cronquist wanted to do either Vieuxtemps or Wieniawski. I said, 'I'm not doing Vieuxtemps,' so there it is!"

Having thus jokingly put her foot down, Jinjoo noted that the Wieniawski has a special appeal. "It's very sentimental. Wieniawski is the Chopin of the violin world, and it's a short, virtuoso concerto of the kind that used to be considered a bit more like high school pieces. But those are making a comeback. The Wieniawski doesn't require 200 people onstage. It highlights the beauty of the instrument and shows what it can do. It's emotional. It's just beautiful."

Jinjoo Cho has nailed gold medals in several important international competitions, including Montréal (2006), Buenos Aires (2010), and Indianapolis (2014), but she's now turning to other endeavors. "My competition days are definitely over, and by the time I get my courage up again, I'll be too old!" she said.

Those new activities include teaching at the Oberlin Conservatory and, next season, at the Cleveland Institute of Music, where she entered the young artist program at the age of 14. "I teach six hours a week at Oberlin, divided between three violin students and chamber groups. I love it there — it's midway between academia and conservatory, a perfect combination. And teaching at CIM is going to be very exciting."

Describing her biggest passion as arts education and audience engagement, Cho is also busy putting the finishing touches on a new summer program, the Encore Chamber Music Institute, to debut this summer at Gilmour Academy in Gates Mills. "It's a very different format from the old Encore School for Strings, but we wanted to associate our name with the legacy that it left," she said. "We've accepted all the students, and the program is full. There are 32 students in the Quartet Seminar, 24 coming for Violin Week, and 23 for the Sonata Duo program. We'll have the Miró Quartet with the fabulous Brazilian pianist Arnaldo Cohen for opening night, and faculty concerts by musicians from all over the country, including Dan McDonough from the Jupiter Quartet, Amit Even-Tov from the Ariel, and Mari Sato and Annie Fullard from the Cavani — amazing musicians who will be teaching and performing."

Jinjoo Cho also keeps in touch with her native country through Classical Revolution Korea, a program where musicians travel all across Korea to give free concerts and meet audiences in cafés. The concerts have included recent performances in Seoul and Jeju Island.

Watch *ClevelandClassical.com* for a forthcoming feature story about the Encore Institute.

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