

Cleveland Women's Orchestra to feature pianist Angelin Chang

by Daniel Hathaway



In 2011, pianist Angelin Chang was featured in Mozart's D-minor Piano Concerto with the Cleveland Women's Orchestra at Severance Hall. This Sunday, April 22 at 3:30 pm, the Cleveland State University professor will return to solo with that ensemble in a very different work, Sergei Rachmaninoff's Second Concerto.

"It's one of the most popular concertos of all time," the pianist said in a telephone conversation, "but sometimes after hearing those beautiful, lush, transporting themes we forget that the piece came from a grim place in his life. Rachmaninoff had deep depression and writer's block until his hypnotist got him out of it. It's important to know so that the beauty and passion can come through in this technically difficult piece."

(Speaking of going from one mood to the other, Chang told me about her niece who wanted to visit Cleveland in February to get away from the sun and heat of California. "Though the weather didn't cooperate and they didn't get to experience ice and snow, they were so excited to have gloomy weather so they could appreciate the other kind later.")

Although Chang began learning the concerto at a young age, she said that every time she comes back to it, it's like starting out on a new piece. "Maybe it's a gift to be able to start fresh, but it's a concerto that doesn't stay in the fingers, and each time you play it with a new ensemble, it's different."

One thing Chang tries to instill in her students is healthy practice habits — an important issue in the concerto. "The technical passages in Rachmaninoff 2 have tricky configurations. I don't have large hands, and there's a tendency to want to

stretch yourself beyond the normal. If this leads to ‘ouch’ rather than elasticity, it’s not good, and you shouldn’t try to play through the pain,” she said. “With the pressure of having to play all those notes, it’s easy to want to push yourself, but I try to take a step back and build in plenty of breaks to re-evaluate what I’m doing. Developing awareness of what’s happening in your body is the key.”

A woman of many talents and interests, Angelin Chang is Professor of Law at Cleveland Marshall Law School as well as Professor of Music at Cleveland State University. She manages to combine the two through her work in entertainment law, the subject of a symposium she participated in last week. In this digital age, with rapid changes in the music industry, Chang said there are a lot of interesting legal issues to be worked out.

Most of her performing these days is done within the University, where she recently played a concert with members of The Cleveland Orchestra, and celebrated Debussy’s centennial and Bach’s 333rd Birthday. A concert of music by John Cage is in the works. “One of my students who is passionate about Cage’s music is producing it and I’m very proud of her for that.”

Chang is looking forward to her appearance with the Cleveland Women’s Orchestra both as a musical and a community event. “It’s really very special to me. I hope a lot of families come to Severance Hall on Sunday. Sometimes people think, ‘Oh, I have kids and I don’t want them to disturb the music — but I think this is the perfect event for families. I hope to see a lot of kids there.’”

Sunday’s program, led by music director Robert Cronquist, also includes Berlioz’ Overture to *Benvenuto Cellini* and Haydn’s *Symphony No. 104* (“London”). Tickets for the concert, which marks the ensemble’s 83rd annual visit to Severance Hall, can be reserved [online](#) or by calling 216.231.1111.

Published on ClevelandClassical.com April 17, 2018.

Click here for a printable copy of this article

[Return to the Front Page.](#)