

BlueWater: violinist Jinjoo Cho to play the Tchaikovsky Concerto

by Jarrett Hoffman



Violinist Jinjoo Cho was born in Seoul and lives in Montreal, but you could easily say she's from Northeast Ohio. She moved here as a teenager and enrolled in the Cleveland Institute of Music's young artist program, and she didn't leave the area until last year, when she joined the faculty of the Schulich School of Music at McGill University.

Her time living in Cleveland saw her career take off. Cho won a major competition (International Violin Competition of Indianapolis), made an important solo debut (Carnegie Hall), took on teaching positions (CIM and Oberlin Conservatory), and founded and continues to run a summer festival (ENCORE Chamber Music in Gates Mills).

Cho has been featured by many of the area's prominent ensembles and presenting organizations — and she's still adding to that list. She will play Tchaikovsky's *Violin Concerto* this weekend in her first appearances with BlueWater Chamber Orchestra, led by Daniel Meyer.

Performances take place on Saturday, November 23 at 7:30 pm at Plymouth Church in Shaker Heights (tickets available [online](#)) and on Sunday, November 24 at 3:00 pm at Pilgrim Congregational Church (admission by freewill offering), the latter as part of the Arts Renaissance Tremont series.

The program, titled “Deceptive Cadences” — after that beautifully not-quite-resolved harmonic progression — also includes Schumann’s *Overture, Scherzo and Finale*, Op. 52, and Thomas Adès’ *Three Studies from Couperin*.

I reached Cho by telephone in Montreal, and she said she’s coming to Cleveland a bit early this trip for some ENCORE work and to catch up with friends. We began by talking about her new home up north.

Jinjo Cho: It’s amazing — it’s an artistically charged city, so it’s fun to live here. There’s tons of cultural things happening. Everyone keeps talking about how cold it is, but I’m from Cleveland, so it’s really no problem.

Jarrett Hoffman: Adding up all the years you studied and taught in Cleveland, it’s a good while.

JC: I really grew up there.

JH: We had an interesting [conversation](#) last time we talked in March, when you were playing the Korngold with the Akron Symphony. You said that one of the nice things about that concerto is that there isn’t a thick layer of tradition for playing it. With Tchaikovsky it’s the opposite.

JC: Yes, of course it’s such standard repertoire, and pretty much everybody has probably heard it at some point in their lives. But the beautiful thing about our field is that you get to reinvent it, and you get to reimagine what Tchaikovsky would have wanted. And when the music is as great as the Tchaikovsky Concerto, I don’t think you ever get tired of it. So the process is a little bit different in this case, but there is also that aspect of refreshing what you’ve learned and what you’ve heard from all facets of your life.

JH: When did you first play it?

JC: Actually it was in Cleveland, I believe with the Cleveland Orchestra Youth Orchestra. I won the concerto competition and then played the piece with Steven Smith, which was his last year [as Music Director], so that was really awesome.

JH: I found a video [online](#) of you playing the first movement with the Seoul Philharmonic — it was at an outdoor concert for the Korean Independence Day in 2018. How did that come about?

JC: Well, the city government always does an Independence Day concert at the big square that we have in Seoul. The Seoul Phil, of course being the city's orchestra, always features one conductor and one soloist for the general-public classical music concert, which is really cool. It was a huge honor to play there.

JH: You grew up in Korea. How long did you live there?

JC: Thirteen years. And you know, I still have most of my family there, so it's really my home country, and I go to perform quite a bit.

JH: Back in March, we talked about some of your funny interests, like collecting kitchen magnets and stationery. This time I thought I'd ask about your toy poodle Miso, who I'm guessing is with you in Montreal.

JC: Yeah, and she travels with me when I come to Cleveland. I think she likes Cleveland better — I feel like it's more of a dog-friendly city. But yes, she lives where I live.

JH: Thanks so much for your time, and we're excited to have you back in Cleveland.

JC: Me too! I'm really looking forward to it.

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