

Min Kwon ('90)

Pianist; Piano professor, Mason Gross School of the Arts, Rutgers University

→ For Min Kwon, encores are about providing contrast or contemplation. Sometimes, she will encore lighter excerpts from her commissioning project, *America/Beautiful*, in which she asked over 70 composers to each compose a variation on the patriotic song "America the Beautiful." In concerto appearances, she may build on the theme of a given program.

"I recently played Rachmaninoff's Second Piano Concerto, and I would have loved to have done Variation No. 18 from his *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*. That's something everyone knows, and if I play a program of all Beethoven or all Rachmaninoff, I think about extending that arc. So, in this case, I wanted to play the 18th Variation, but with [overtime] rules and whatnot, the orchestra didn't necessarily want to do it. So, I came up with a solo arrangement of this variation, and over the years that worked well.

"When performing in Europe, I find that people are curious about what is going on in America. And strangely enough, they want to hear American pieces, and I don't mean Gershwin and Barber. People are increasingly curious and even hungry for pieces of our current time, because that speaks to our feelings and reactions to things happening in real time. I used to play something beautiful, like a Chopin nocturne that people could go home and hum. But we now live in a time where the encore is a great [opportunity] to give them something that's very *now*."