GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY®

DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC, THEATRE, AND DANCE

Symphony Orchestra

Joel Schut, conductor

7:30 P.M.
Tuesday, April 11, 2023
Louis Armstrong Theatre
Haas Center for Performing Arts
GVSU Allendale Campus

Program

Finlandia (1899) — Jean Sibelius (1865-1957)

Piano Concerto No. 1 in F-sharp minor, Op. 1 (1891) — Sergei Rachmaninov (1873-1943)

I. Vivace-Moderato

Lydia Seaver, piano
Concerto Competition Winner

~Intermission~

Symphony No. 104 in D Major (1795) — Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

I. Adagio – Allegro
II. Andante
III. Menuetto and Trio
IV. Finale: Spiritoso

Danzón No. 2 (1992) — Arturo Márquez (b. 1950)

Featured Soloist Bio

Lydia Seaver, from Montague, Michigan, is a junior in the Bachelor of Music program studying piano performance, under the direction of Dr. Sookkyung Cho. She loves playing collaboratively with all instruments, and also enjoys playing for many different churches. She is very passionate about teaching and has a growing piano studio of her own. Aside from music, Lydia also enjoys being a teacher at Studio France School of Dance, where she teaches both the first steps and little movers classes. Most important to Lydia is her faith in God and her family. She loves spending time with her parents, her seven older siblings, and her twenty little nieces and nephews.

Symphony Orchestra Personnel

Names are listed in alphabetical order to emphasize the contribution of each player

Violin I
Genevieve Balivet
Ian Curtis
Rebekah Doody
Erin Gibbons
William Haynes
Jeffrey Mom
Liesl Mom**
Aveline Schienke
Avery Trimble

Violin II
Esther Bard
Taylor Grifhorst
Andrew Kales*
Daniel Lesinski
Priscilla Martin
Danielle Meyers
Jocelynn Pierce
Emma Scott

Viola
Matt DuRose*
Morgan Hare
Cruz Peña*

Cello
Ethan Akers*
Jake Doctor
Sam Nicely
Emily Ryan

Double Bass
Cullen DeCou*
Eleanor Hopper*
Jeremiah Jackson

Flute
Grace Morrison*
Abigail Walsh*+

Oboe
Joy Anderson
Lea Carter*

Clarinet
Gracie Barrett*
Stephanie Bueche*

Bassoon
Dylan Barrick*
Ruth Wilson*+

Horn
Richard Barney+
Joseph Bowman
Delaney Nation
Michael Scobey*
Evan Supplee

Trumpet
Morgan Hare*
Lewis Kailing
Tate Szilagyi

Trombone
Clair Jansma
Jada Rivon
Taylor Ward*

Tuba
Michael Ring

Timpani
Sam Wolcott

Percussion
Jaden McCallum

Piano
Mei Lin Wooden

*Section Principal or Co-Principal
**Concertmaster
+Guest Artist

Program Notes

Finlandia

During the 1890s Sibelius took on the challenge of writing music that stirred Finnish patriotism in the face of Czar Nicholas II's Russification policies. The composer wanted to create something recognizably Finnish, but without resorting to direct imitation of folk music. As he wrote to his wife Aino, "I would not wish to tell a lie in art ... But I think I am now on the right path. I now grasp those Finnish, purely Finnish tendencies in music less realistically but more truthfully than before." Many of his early efforts in this direction were ephemeral – a composer in search of his voice – but the 1899 Finlandia has transcended both its local association and its political objective. Originally the finale of a suite of incidental music to accompany a historical tableaux, it was performed first at an event whose announced purpose was support of a journalists' pension fund but whose organizers sought to promote a spirit of national unity. The title Finland Awakens attracted negative attention from the czarist régime, so for a while the piece was known as Impromptu – surely one of the great misnomers in music history!

Like all successful symphonic poems, Finlandia's extra-musical meaning generates the music's formal shape. The composer described this meaning in stirring words: "We fought 600 years for our freedom and I am part of the generation which achieved it. Freedom! My Finlandia is the story of this fight. It is the song of our battle, our hymn of victory." His genius is that this story functions simultaneously on both exterior and interior levels – capturing just that intersection where patriotism feeds personal identity and vice versa. Massive chords establish the music's parameters of great depth and seriousness. Very slowly they yield to a woodwind choir, then to the strings; the judiciously restrained orchestration suggests that there is power held in check. The accumulated tension yields to more defiant strains, then to a resolute, even jaunty section before settling into the strains of the last reverent theme (later used for the hymn "Be still, my soul," whose text emphasizes patience in the face of suffering), which Sibelius gradually builds into triumph.

-Note by Susan Key

Piano Concerto No. 1 in F-sharp minor, Op. 1

"I have rewritten my First Concerto," Rachmaninoff communicated to a friend. "It is really good now. All the youthful freshness is there, and yet it plays itself so much more easily. And nobody pays any attention. When I tell them in America that I will play the First Concerto, they do not protest, but I can see by their faces that they would prefer the Second or Third."

Youthful freshness is not an unexpected quality considering that the first movement of the Concerto was written by a student musician of 17, and the second and third movements when he was all of 18. What is remarkable is that Rachmaninoff maintained the freshness when he revised the work in 1917, some 26 years later. By that time, he had many major works to his credit – in addition to the Second and Third Piano Concertos, there were two symphonies, for the second of which he had won the prestigious Glinka Prize. And he had become celebrated not only as a composer but also as a pianist and conductor. The First Concerto, then, reflects both a teenaged Rachmaninoff who was already in possession of a strongly defined compositional style, and a mature, worldly, and experienced creative artist.

The 26-year delay between the completion of the Concerto and its final revision is typical of Rachmaninoff's somewhat haphazard approach to composing. The fact is, in his youth he was known as a somewhat lethargic student. Yet, in spite of his efforts to avoid hard work, he turned out some impressive scores even before graduating from the Moscow Conservatory: In addition to the First Concerto, there was the one-act opera Aleko, which won the admiration of Tchaikovsky, and several piano pieces, including the C-sharp-minor Prelude, whose immense success hounded the composer throughout his life. And of course, the emotional abyss into which he fell following the failure of his First Symphony in 1897 halted his productivity until a kind of hypnosis treatment brought him out of the depression and into the glories of the Second Piano Concerto.

In the matter of compositional style, the First Concerto is thoroughly characteristic of Rachmaninoff's once and always manner, which is both Russian and Romantic. In regard to the former, the composer said, "I am a Russian composer, and the land of my birth has inevitably influenced my temperamental outlook." Continuing this statement, Rachmaninoff in effect explained the Romanticism of his music: "My music is a product of my temperament and so it is Russian music. I never consciously attempted

to write Russian music, or any other kindof music." Neither did he attempt to explore any of the contemporary stylistic trends that were appearing on the horizon. Rachmaninoff might have entered the new century making bold new sounds – after all, he was only 27 in 1900. But his musical mentality was of a different order than that of, say, his countryman Stravinsky, and he remained virtually impervious to the shock waves of the revolutionary salvos being released in the Europe of his time. Rachmaninoff the incorrigible Romantic continued throughout his career to operate in his own distinctive creative orbit, an orbit defined by plush lyricism that rides the waves of luxurious, enriched harmonies, and, in the piano works, expansive, richly detailed virtuosity in the grand 19th-century bravura tradition.

The mark of youthful impetuosity is particularly apparent at the opening of the First Concerto, where an urgent two-measure fanfare in horns, clarinets, and bassoons sparks a fiery entrance from the piano, which, erupting high in the treble, lunges down the keyboard in blazing double octaves and chords. In his subsequent three piano concertos, the first-movement scene is set with far more reserve and seriousness: at age 17, temperamental abandon came naturally. Following this introductory boldness, which climaxes in a cadenza-like flourish, the strings sing the lyric main theme, after which the piano takes the melody, adorning it with inimitable Rachmaninoffian decoration. Later, a stunning cadenza that follows an expanded return of the fanfare opening treats the main materials in a fantastic, brilliant fashion.

The middle movement's nocturnal atmosphere, initiated by a horn solo, may echo the mood of the slow movement of Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony, but the melting, extended piano solo that follows resonates with the pure Romanticism of Rachmaninoff. In this movement as in the vital finale, the pianism is absolutely ravishing and quite able to compensate for the somewhat wobbly structural stability, and, in the last movement, for the theme in a slow middle section that exceeds the acceptable level of sugar content. What matter: "It is really good now... it plays itself so much more easily." (if one has the fingers and the soul of Rachmaninoff).

-Note by Orrin Howard

Symphony No. 104 in D Major

By 1790, Haydn was no longer in service to the Esterházy family. His longtime patron, Prince Nicolaus, had died, leaving Haydn a handsome pension while he maintained some connection with the court. However, the new Prince, Anton, although he increased Haydn's pension, dismissed the entire musical establishment, leaving Haydn with little to do. So, the composer moved to Vienna.

Abundant job offers came his way, but nearing 60, famous and secure financially, the composer decided that he had no need to seek another permanent appointment. Thus, he accepted the most beguiling of the many commissions he was offered: for a half dozen symphonies, ordered by Johann Peter Salomon of London, impresario, violinist, and conductor of his own orchestra, reportedly England's finest.

Haydn was treated like royalty – or at least like Europe's greatest composer – upon his arrival in England at the beginning of 1791 for a residency during which the first set of Salomon's symphonies, Nos. 93-98, would be presented. Later, another series of six – the rest of the 12 so-called "London Symphonies" – was composed in Vienna. Haydn returned to a breathlessly expectant London in February of 1794. The English were not disappointed.

The last symphony, the present work, to which alone among the 12 the name "London" has become particularly attached, was first heard on April 13, 1795, and was also the main event of Haydn's London farewell concert, for his own benefit, three weeks later. Of the latter, Haydn recorded in his diary: "The hall was filled with a picked audience. The whole company was delighted and so was I. I took in this evening 4000 gulden. One can make as much as this only in England." It should be noted that by this time Salomon was no longer able to afford his own series and Haydn had become associated with another presenter.

Whether or not Haydn had decided that this would be his last symphony – which it is – everything about it projects the feeling of a "statement," including the boldly decisive, symmetrical introduction, as distinct from the improvisatory feeling Haydn conveys in similar circumstances elsewhere: two portentous D-minor episodes framing a smaller one in the key of F major. The dark drama nonetheless gives way to something quite different (otherwise it wouldn't be Haydn, master of the unexpected), a charging, joyous Allegro.

Reversing the procedure, the Adagio begins with an innocent, lilting G-major melody in the first violins, which darkens almost imperceptibly as the other strings enter, then changes its personality as the winds play a little lament, whereupon the whole orchestra bursts out in (minor-key) fury.

The burly minuet has a particularly jaunty trio, dominated by solo oboe and bassoon, while the grand finale – to London and to Haydn, the symphonist – is a potpourri of Slavonic folk tunes which Haydn heard during his years on the Esterházy estates. The opening theme had long been thought of as a London tribute, quoting from the street-song "Hot Cross Buns," but in recent years has been identified as "Oj Jelena," a ballad sung by the Croatians living in Eisenstadt when Haydn made his home there.

-Note by Herbert Glass

Arturo Marquez – Danzon No. 2

The music of Mexican composer Arturo Márquez has been gaining currency with orchestras and audiences throughout his homeland and around the world. He is best known for his series of danzóns, works based on a Cuban dance that migrated to Veracruz, Mexico. Márquez' Danzón No. 2, in particular, is one of the most popular and frequently performed works written after 1950 from Latin America.

In February 2006, Arturo Márquez received the Medalla de Oro al Mérito de Bellas Artes (Gold Medal of Merit in the Fine Arts), the highest honor given to artists by Mexico's Bellas Artes.
Marquez wrote the following notes for the premiere of Danzón No. 2:

"The idea of writing the Danzón 2 originated in 1993 during a trip to Malinalco with the painter Andrés Fonseca and the dancer Irene Martínez, both of whom [have] a special passion for the danzón, which they were able to transmit to me from the beginning, and also during later trips to Veracruz and visits to the Colonia Salon in Mexico City. From these experiences onward, I started to learn the danzón's rhythms, its form, its melodic outline, and to listen to the old recordings by Acerina Mariano Merceron and his Danzonera Orchestra. I was fascinated and I started to understand that the apparent lightness of the danzón is only like a visiting card for a type of music full of sensuality and qualitative seriousness,

a genre which old Mexican people continue to dance with a touch of nostalgia and a jubilant escape towards their own emotional world; we can fortunately still see this in the embrace between music and dance that occurs in the State of Veracruz and in the dance parlors of Mexico City.

"Danzón 2 ... endeavors to get as close as possible to the dance, to its nostalgic melodies, to its wild rhythms, and although it violates its intimacy, its form and its harmonic language, it is a very personal way of paying my respects and expressing my emotions towards truly popular music."

-Note by Elizabeth Schwartz

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Paul Swantek
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Marlen Vavrikova
Kody Wallace
Abigail Walsh
Mark Williams
Alex Wilson

Upcoming MTD Events

April 13 at 7:30 PM - Jazz Night II. LAT, PAC
April 14 at 7:30 PM - Wind Symphony and Concert Band. LAT, PAC
April 16 at 3:00 PM - FrenchFest #5. The Block, Muskegon
April 17 at 7:00 PM - FrenchFesr #5. Park Church, Grand Rapids
April 18 at 7:30 PM - Varsity Glee Club. CDC, GVSU
April 22 at 7:00 PM - Spring Dance Concert. LAT, PAC
April 23 at 2:00 PM - Spring Dance Concert. LAT, PAC
April 23 at 3:00 PM - FrenchFest #5. First Reformed Church, Holland