Symphony Orchestra Concert

Dr. Joel Schut, conductor

7:30 P.M.
Wednesday, April 15, 2026
Louis Armstrong Theatre
Haas Center for Performing Arts

Program:

Poet and Peasant Overture (1846) — Franz Von Suppé (1819-1895)

String Quartet Op. 59, No. 1 (1808) — Ludwig Van Beethoven (1770-1827)

I. Allegro

GVSU Chamber Orchestra

Trumpet Concerto in E-flat Major, Hob. VIIe:1 (1796) — Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

I. Allegro
II. Andante
III. Allegro

Dr. Alex Wilson, trumpet

Passacaglia and Fugue in C minor, BWV 582 (1716/1922) — J.S. Bach (1865-1750)
Arr. Leopold Stokowski (1882-1977)

Polovtsian Dances from Prince Igor (1890) — Alexander Borodin (1833-1887)

Dr. Alex Wilson, trumpet

Dr. Alex Wilson has been the trumpet professor at Grand Valley State University since 2015. He holds a Bachelor's degree from GVSU, where he studied with Richard Stoelzel, and a Master's and Doctorate of Musical Arts from Arizona State University, where he studied with David Hickman. Alex performs often with the Grand Rapids Symphony, West Michigan Symphony, and other nearby orchestras. While in Arizona, he performed with the Phoenix Symphony and the Arizona Opera.

A versatile soloist, Alex published solo CDs in 2016 ("Volti Subito") and 2022 ("Volante"), performed at the 2013 International Trumpet Guild conference in Grand Rapids, and toured as a soloist for the Shen Yun Symphony Orchestra during two national tours, at venues including Carnegie Hall and the Kennedy Center. He often appears as a guest soloist or clinician at local schools, and has also given performances and masterclasses internationally at venues such as the Tainan University of Technology in Taiwan and the I Alcalá Trumpetfest in Spain.

Program Notes:

Suppé – Poet and Peasant Overture

"Where have I heard that before?" you might ask yourself when encounting music of one of the "lesser-knowns" of orchestral music. With the music of Franz von Suppé, the answer would be: In those television cartoons you watched as a child. Maestro Bugs Bunny conducted Suppé's Morning Noon and Night in Vienna in the classic Baton Bunny. Mickey Mouse conducted his Light Cavalry Overture in Walt Disney's Symphony Hour; and Popeye needs a can of spinach to help him get through the Poet and Peasant Overture in Spinach Overture.

Franz von Suppé—his parents named him Francesco Ezechiele Ermengildo Cavalieredi Suppé Demelli—was born in what is now Croatia. His Belgian father was a civil servant for the Austrian Empire and his mother came from Vienna. His father discouraged Franz's early musical talent and sent him to Padua to study law. There he saw the operas of and met Rossini, Verdi and Donizetti. When his father died, he went with his mother to her native Vienna and started studying music in earnest. He got an unpaid internship at one of the theaters in Vienna. Most of what he wrote early on couldn't be called "opera" (or even "operetta"). Instead, it was instrumental overtures, incidental music, and the occasional song to accompany some sort of theatrical comedy. He wrote his first real "operetta" (The Boarding School) in 1860 and had his first international hit several years later with The Beautiful Galatea. He wrote nearly fifty operettas in all and is credited with establishing the genre of Viennese operetta, placing him on par with what Jacques Offenbach did for French and Gilbert and Sullivan did for English operettas. He died a very rich man.

Suppé wrote Poet and Peasant to accompany a production that he called a "comedy with songs." It tells of the escapades of a broken-hearted poet as he vacations amongst the "country-folk" in the mountains. The brass play a solemn chorale to begin the overture. A solo cello gets an extended melody accompanied by the harp. The orchestra intrudes with a fiery section that dissolves into a waltz and then revs up for the required "flash-and-dash" ending.
-Note by John P. Varineau

Beethoven - String Quartet Op. 59, No. 1

The debut of Beethoven's new Op.59 No.1 quartet elicited reactions of disbelief and incredulity from musicians and public alike. The quartet's size alone, easily twice as long as any of Beethoven's earlier quartets and longer than five of his nine symphonies, caused musicians to react very negatively. Some of Beethoven's most trusted friends believed he might even be playing a joke on them, as the technical and expressive demands put to the players had never been seen in a chamber work before. One violinist, whose advice Beethoven had sought for fingering suggestions for the violin parts, challenged Beethoven as to the artistic validity of the Op.59 No.1 quartet. Beethoven's response to him was firm: "Oh, it is not for you, but for a later age."

The sonata form first movement opens with one of Beethoven's most noble themes, and sets the stage for the genial mood to follow. It's difficult for us to imagine today, but Beethoven's decision to set the initial presentation of the first theme in the cello part so challenged the conventions of the time that his friends would tease Beethoven mercilessly, with rehearsal sessions frequently ending in raucous laughter. Beethoven cleverly adorns the first theme with triplets and buoyant eighth notes that help keep the music aloft. Moments of trepidation and darkness in the exposition are quickly supplanted by bright optimism. The centerpiece of the first movement is a marvelous fugue that begins with the

second violin, moves to the viola and first violin, and which culminates in the cello before splintering apart for the reemergence of the music from the opening of the movement.
-Note by Kurt Baldwin

Haydn – Trumpet Concerto
Haydn's Trumpet Concerto of 1796 is not just his finest concerto; 200 years after its composition, it remains the greatest trumpet concerto ever composed. Trumpets before this time had been extremely limited instruments, able to produce only a few notes in a scale and depending even for this on players' ability to change pitch by adjusting their lips. In the 1790s, however, the Viennese trumpeter Anton Weidinger invented a keyed trumpet that made the instrument much more flexible. Its four keys (like the keys on woodwind instruments) gave his trumpet a much greater range and made possible a number of chromatic tones previously impossible. The keyed trumpet represented a great leap forward for the trumpet, though this instrument itself would be superseded by the invention of the modern valved trumpet in 1813.

Haydn immediately saw the possibilities of Weidinger's new instrument and wrote a concerto designed to show off the new instrument. It employs a full range of notes, requires rapid leaps and includes many chromatic passages that no previous trumpet could have played. Throughout, Haydn's Trumpet Concerto combines nobility, strength, and a relaxed and gracious manner. The opening Allegro is in sonata form; Haydn varies classical concerto formula by having the trumpet join the orchestra before the opening exposition is complete, and he asks the soloist to make difficult leaps and to play long chromatic lines.

The second movement, significantly marked Andante cantabile, shows that the new instrument can sing too. It is in ABA form: The gorgeous opening melody is in A-flat major, but in the middle section Haydn modulates—as a demonstration of the trumpet's new flexibility—into the extremely unusual key of C-flat major. The famous last movement is a combination of sonata and rondo. Its main theme, heard quietly at first, will later ring out with strength as it leads to the conclusion on a series of blazing trumpet calls.
-Program Note by Eric Bromberger

Bach/Stokowski – Passacaglia and Fugue in C minor
The term "transcription" can mean several things in music. Writing down a live or recorded performance or transferring a piece from one notation system to another are forms of transcription, but transcription also includes shifting music from its original performing medium to another, such as playing a choral piece on the piano or adapting a keyboard work for orchestra.

In Western music, transcription in this third sense began as early as the 14th century. By the Baroque era it was a common practice, for teaching and performing. Johann Sebastian Bach transcribed his own music from one medium to another, as well as works by other composers, such as Antonio Vivaldi.

So it is not at all beyond tradition that Bach's own music has been transcribed for every possible performing medium, from computers to (very) full orchestras. As interest in Baroque music boomed in the 20th century, many composers and conductors transcribed works by Bach for the symphony orchestra, a medium that did not exist in Bach's own time.

Leopold Stokowski (1882-1977) was justly admired for his flair with Bach transcriptions, best known in the mighty Toccata and Fugue in D minor, BWV 565, as used in Walt Disney's Fantasia(1940). His first

recording of that transcription, however, was made in 1927. Two years later he orchestrated the equally imposing Passacaglia and Fugue in C minor, BWV 582 - continuous variations of astonishing variety over a repeating bass line, with the main theme of the ensuing fugue based on the first half of that bass line -Note by John Henkin

Borodin – Polovtsian Dances
Alexander Borodin was a self-described "Sunday composer": a scientist by day, he wrote music in his free time but nonetheless won enough acclaim as a composer of Russian art music to gain a position among the country's "Mighty Handful." He began writing music as a devotee of Mendelssohn, but quickly changed his language to something of a more nationalistic bent. Still, echoes of Mendelssohn's style, particularly his talents for lyrical, melodic writing, remain an underlying theme in Borodin's later, folk-influenced works.

Because of his lifelong work in chemistry and medicine, Borodin's output is, relative to other composers, exceedingly small. His primary works include his Second Symphony, a handful of songs, a particularly notable String Quartet (the Second) and his opera Prince Igor, for which he wrote both the music and the libretto. Borodin worked on the opera for some two decades, but left it unfinished at his death in 1887. His colleagues Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov and Alexander Glazunov finished the work (including recreating the overture from sketches that Borodin had sung to his colleagues, a feat that Glazunov is said to have done from memory) in time for an 1890 premiere. The opera, though posthumous and largely filled in by others, took a respected position as an emblem of Russian nationalist music, and although the opera's plot may more accurately be called a series of sketches, the total effect is still vibrant and unified.

By the end of the second act of Prince Igor, the title character has been taken prisoner by the Polovtsian Khan Konchak. The Khan, intrigued by his depressed captive, calls in a group of slaves to liven Prince Igor's spirits. The servants' songs begin as sentimental recollections of their homeland, but gradually gain vigor and become shouts in praise of the slaves' royal master. The process takes roughly 11 minutes, during which a flurry of energetic winds and percussion join in a sparkling, rhythm-driven dance. The instrumentation is brilliant and crystalline, reliant upon powerful brass and soloistic woodwinds to brighten the already exotic, lithe melodies.

Borodin was not an ethnomusicologist; his sketches contain a handful of melodies that he apparently considered to be equally appropriate for both the main body of the opera and those parts which concern the nomadic Polovtsians. But in spite of a general disdain among the Mighty Handful for incorporating explicitly "ethnic" signatures (César Cui, a close friend of Borodin's, was particularly emphatic about this), the Polovtsian scenes in Prince Igor do contain a smattering of appropriate rhythmic and melodic influences. In addition, Borodin's bright tone colors, graceful melodic lines, and energetic rhythms create a general feeling of celebration and enthusiasm that make the work appropriate as a piece for both the operatic stage and the concert hall.
–Note by Jessica Schilling

Alpha Personnel Roster:

Violin 1
Noah Abdelkader
Rebekah Doody ø
Maggie Fisher
Andrew Kales* ø
Jocelynn Pierce ø
Aveline Schienke* ø
Avery Trimble* ø
Kenneth Walker

Violin 2
Esther Bard ø
Vera Bresser
Willow Davidson
Daniel Lesinski
Priscilla Martin
Danielle Meyers *ø
Danny Parker
Kayla Shook
Aiden Zemaitis

Viola
Emma Cornish
Sarah Johncox
Braedyn MacKeller
Cruz Peña* ø
Xavaier Williams

Cello
Seamus Adams
Giselle Balivet ø
Maria Benítez-Sabino ø
Jake Doctor*
Megan Ferenczhalmy
Grace Jenkins
Nyx Johnson
Aiden Mack
Gabrielle Peck
Tyleur Wright

Double Bass
Alex Barrett
Cullen DeCou* ø
Iris Eppinga
Jovany Hernandez
Andrew Lunn
Samantha Rometty

Piccolo
Jillaena Weesies

Flute
Julia Meyer
Grace Morrison* ø

Oboe
Lea Carter
Kayla Hieb
Elisa Skinner*

English Horn
Kayla Hieb

Clarinet
Lilly Childers
Maddox Lewis*
Elyse Ritter

Bass Clarinet
Maddie Sanborn

Bassoon
Simon Furton*
Tanner Reynolds*

Horn
Eli Gibson
John Johnson+
Brendan Reed*
Elizabeth Slabaugh*

Trumpet
Donovan Ford ø
Andrews Lasceski ø
Mia Kolhoff* ø
Alejandro Zorrilla

Trombone
Micah Babinski
Matt Keith*
Elizabeth Phillips

Tuba
Jorge Gonzalez

Timpani
Zachary Haverkamp* ø

Percussion
Thomas Cordes
Ash Martinez-Lopez
Dyami Campos
Brayden VanderWall
Ramses Arispe

Harp
Alison Reese +

Section Principal
+Guest Artist
ø Graduating or
pre-service teaching
next semester
Names are listed in alphabetical order to emphasize the contribution of each player

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