



**GRAND VALLEY
STATE UNIVERSITY**[®]

**DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC,
THEATRE, AND DANCE**

Symphony Orchestra

Dr. Joel Schut, director

7:30 P.M.

Wednesday, April 9, 2025

Louis Armstrong Theatre

Haas Center for Performing Arts

GVSU Allendale Campus

Program

In the Steppes of Central Asia (1880)

Borodin
(1833-1887)

Talking Beasts (2025)

Olivia Kieffer
(b. 1980)

Jeremy Cleary, soprano saxophone

Seth Kane, alto saxophone

Graham Koppi, tenor saxophone

Ben Barker, baritone saxophone

Tema con Variazioni (1974)

Jean Françaix
(1912-1997)

Mia Palma, clarinet

Concerto Competition Winner

Symphony No. 5 in D Minor, Op. 47 (1937)

Dmitri Shostakovich
(1906-1975)

II. Largo

IV. Finale: Allegro

Personnel Roster

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

Violin 1

Noah Abdelkader
Genevieve Balivet ø
Rebekah Doody
Erin Gibbons ø
Rachel Glanton
Danielle Meyers
Gabrielle Phelps
Jocelynn Pierce
Andrew Kales*
Aveline Schienke
Hailey Smith
Madelyn Stembol ø
Avery Trimble

Violin 2

Esther Bard
Vera Bresser
Maggie Fisher
Elaina Frollo
Taylor Grifhorst
Breanna Lane
Daniel Lesinski
Priscilla Martin
Jaden Moser
Natalie Palbicke
Danny Parker
Claire Pohl
Kayla Shook
Kenneth Walker*
Aiden Zemaitis

Viola

Sam Bryant
Matt Durose ø
Symone Forrest
Cruz Peña* ø
Braedyn MacKeller
Xavaier Williams

Cello

Seamus Adams
Giselle Balivet
Ava Chupack
Jake Doctor*
Megan Ferenczhalmy
Grace Jenkins
Madigan Lautzenheiser
Aiden Mack
Sam Nicely
Bridget Parlmer
Kaden Pokora
Maria Rocha
Tyleur Wright

Double Bass

Cullen DeCou*
Iris Eppinga
Jae Gauthier
Andrew Lunn
Adam Zdarsky

Flute

Julia Meyer
Grace Morrison*

Oboe

Joy Anderson* ø
Lea Carter* ø
James Hollister*

English Horn

Joy Anderson

Clarinet

Sophia Janiga
Julia Smolinski* ø

Bassoon

Simon Furton
Daken VanDusen*

Horn:

Richard Britsch+
Andrew Hardy
Tim Lester* ø
Logan Nommensen ø
Julia Schnike

Trumpet

Alec Bossa* ø
Donovan Ford
Mia Kolhoff
Taylor Seelye

Trombone

Micah Babinski
Matt Keith
Dylan Schoolcraft* ø

Tuba

Jorge Gonzalez

Timpani

Zachary Haverkamp

Percussion

Ramses Arispe
Thomas Cordes
Brayden VanderWall

Piano:

Mijeong Lee

*Section Principal

+Guest Artist

ø Graduating or Student Teaching

Soloist Bio

Mia Palma, clarinet

Mia Palma is a sophomore pursuing her bachelor's in Music Performance. She is a student of Dr. Arthur Campbell and Dr. Gary June, and has been a member of the Grand Valley Wind Symphony for the past two years. In the fall of 2024, Mia performed in a master class at GVSU for world renowned clarinetist, Julian Bliss. Outside of Grand Valley State University, Mia has been an active soloist and performer in various settings and ensembles. She has been a member of the Grand Rapids Youth Symphony for the last three seasons, where she has served as principal clarinetist for multiple performances. Through the Grand Rapids Youth Symphony, Mia has been awarded the second place prize for the 2025 Skips Gates Concerto Competition. In her free time, she enjoys composition, as well as film media and art. Mia is an active member of her home church where she serves as sound technician for the worship team. She endeavors to glorify God in every aspect of her life, using her musical talents to honor Him.

Program Notes

Borodin – In the Steppes of Central Asia

This following note, written in Russian, German, and French, appears in the score: “Out of the silence of Central Asia come the sounds of a peaceful Russian song. There are heard, too, the melancholy strains of Eastern melodies and the stamping of approaching horses and camels. A caravan, escorted by Russian soldiers, crosses the measureless desert, pursuing its way, free from care, under the protection of Russian arms. The caravan moves ever forward. The songs of the Russians and those of the Asia locals mingle in common harmony, their refrain gradually dying away in the distance.”

Composed in 1880 and originally intended as a background for a series of tableaux vivants to take place in celebration of the 25th anniversary of the reign of Alexander III, this work gave Borodin much of his fame as a composer. In 1881, during a journey to Weimar, Borodin visited Liszt and in a letter informed his wife that “Liszt had been so pleased with ‘The Steppes’ that he urged the making of a four-hand piano arrangement at once.” Incidentally, on this occasion, Borodin dedicated the work to the Hungarian artist.

-Note by Mary Mayer

Kieffer – Talking Beasts

Talking Beasts refers to a scene in my favorite C.S. Lewis book from *Chronicles of Narnia: The Magician's Nephew*. It's a beautiful long scene where Aslan the lion creates Narnia, by walking about and breathing on the earth, and plants burst forth, and the animals emerge from the ground. Eventually he gathers together the beasts and gives them instructions for living. This composition is a take on a concerto grosso, which is a baroque form of music where musical material is passed between the soloists and the ensemble. The music is meant to evoke the atmosphere and conversation between Aslan and the Talking Beasts.

Françaix – Tema con Variazioni

Sixty-five years after Debussy composed his *Première Rhapsodie*, Jean Françaix was approached with a similar commission from the Paris Conservatoire—to compose a work as a test piece for the clarinet department's *Pièce de Concours*. Composed in 1974 for that year's trials, Françaix dedicated *Tema con variazioni* to his grandson Olivier. In all his music, Françaix was unashamedly in the business of charming his listeners, though, unlike his friend Poulenc—with whom he is sometimes compared for the cheeky insouciance of much of his music—Françaix rarely expressed any deep emotion or sensibility. *Tema con variazioni* is no exception, presenting a perky theme followed by six variations which in their various ways recall the studiously carefree and irreverent spirit of the 1920s, yet fulfil the requirement—in the composer's own words—of being “perilous to perform”. “Fortunately,” he added, “clarinet players have masochistic tendencies... We are far from the time when Jerome K. Jerome, listening to a clarinet, wrote that it reminded him of this mother-in-law swallowed by a shark. Nowadays clarinet players have turned into mermaids; and Odysseus's bonds should be of steel.”

-Note by Daniel Jaffe

Shostakovich – Symphony No. 5

“COMPOSER REGAINS HIS PLACE IN SOVIET,” read a headline of *The New York Times* on November 22, 1937. “Dmitri Shostakovich, who fell from grace two years ago, on the way to rehabilitation. His new symphony hailed. Audience cheers as Leningrad Philharmonic presents work.”

The background of Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony was well known. His career began before he was twenty with the cheeky First Symphony; he was immediately acclaimed the brightest star in the Soviet musical firmament. In the years that followed, he produced music with amazing celerity, and even managed to catch Stalin's attention, especially with his film scores. (Stalin was convinced that film was one of the most powerful weapons in his propaganda arsenal.) The mid-1930s, however, the years during which Stalin tightened his iron grasp on Russia, saw a repression of the artistic freedom of Shostakovich's early years, and some of his newer works were assailed with the damning criticism of "formalism." The storm broke in an article in Pravda on January 28, 1936 entitled "Muddle Instead of Music." The "muddle" was the opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mzensk District*, a lurid tale of adultery and murder in the provinces that is one of Shostakovich's most powerful creations. The denunciation, though it urged Shostakovich to reform his compositional ways, also encouraged him to continue his work, but in a manner consistent with Soviet goals. As "A Soviet composer's reply to just criticism" — a phrase attributed to Shostakovich by the press, though it does not appear in the score — the Fifth Symphony was created, and presented to an enthusiastic public. Shostakovich had apparently returned to the Soviet fold, and in such manner that in 1940 he was awarded the Stalin Prize, the highest achievement then possible for a Russian composer.

Since the appearance in 1979 of the purported memoirs of Shostakovich (*Testimony*), however, the above tale needs some reconsideration. The prevailing interpretation of the Fifth Symphony had been that generally it represented triumph through struggle, à la Beethoven's Fifth and Ninth Symphonies, and specifically the composer's renunciation of his backslidden ideological ways. But in *Testimony*, Shostakovich, bitter, ill, disillusioned, said, "I think it is clear to everyone what happens in the [finale of the] Fifth Symphony. The rejoicing is forced, created under threat, as in *Boris Godunov*. It's as if someone were beating you with a stick and saying, 'Your business is rejoicing, your business is rejoicing,' and you rise, shaky, and go marching off muttering, 'Our business is rejoicing, our business is rejoicing.' What kind of apotheosis is that? You have to be a complete oaf not to hear that. People who came to the premiere in the best of moods wept."

Shostakovich's thoughts about the Fifth Symphony bear directly on the listener's perception of the work. The key to the work's meaning, its finale, can no longer be seen as a transcendence or negation of the tragic forces invoked in the earlier movements, especially the third, but rather as an

affirmation of them. The boisterous trumpets and drums are not those of a festival or a peasant dance, but of a forced death march — Stalin's "exterminations" outnumbered those of Hitler. The Fifth Symphony arose not from Shostakovich's glorification of his nation. It arose from his pity.

The sonata form of the Symphony's first movement begins with a stabbing theme in close imitation. A group of complementary ideas is presented before the tempo freshens for the second theme, an expansive melody of large intervals. The sinister sound of unison horns in their lowest register marks the start of the development. The intensity of this section builds quickly to a powerful, almost demonic march. The recapitulation rockets forth from a series of fierce brass chords leading to a huge, sustained climax after which the music's energy subsides to allow the second theme to be heard in a gentle setting for flute and horn. Quiet intensity pervades until the movement ends with ethereal scales in the celesta. The scherzo has much of the sardonic humor that Shostakovich displayed in such movements throughout his life. The Symphony's greatest pathos is reserved for the Largo. This movement is best heard not in a specific formal context but as an extended soliloquy embracing the most deeply felt emotions. For much of its length, the expression is subdued, but twice the music gathers enough strength to hurl forth a mighty, despairing cry. The finale is in three large sections, determined as much by moods as by themes. The outer sections are boisterous and extroverted, the central one, dark-hued and premonitory. Whether the mood of rough vigor of this framing music or the tragedy of the central section stays longer in the mind is a matter listeners must determine for themselves. The delicate formal balance that Shostakovich achieved here could be tipped in either direction depending on the experience the individual brings to it. Only great masterworks can simultaneously be both so personal and so universal.

-Note by Richard Rodda

GVSU Music Faculty

Corie Auger	Samuel Gould	Danny Phipps
Christopher Belland	Dan Graser	Bill Ryan
Rachael Bergan	Letitia Jap	Justin Sarns
Richard Britsch	Gary June	Joel Schut
Mark Buchner	Olivia Kieffer	Greg Secor
Arthur Campbell	Andrew Lenhart	Kathryn Stieler
Paul Carlson	Pablo Mahave-Veglia	Paul Swantek
Sookkyung Cho	Helen Marlais	James Thompson
Greg Crowell	Barry Martin	Kevin Tutt
Michael Drost	John Martin	Marlen Vavříková
Lisa Feurzeig	Chuck Norris	Mark Williams
Beth Gibbs	Victoria Olsen	Alex Wilson
Patricia Gordon	Christopher Petersmark	Molly York

Upcoming MTD Events

April 10 at 7:30PM – Saxophone Studio Recital. SVS

April 11 at 7:00PM – Senior Dance Concert. 1600

April 11 at 7:30PM – Wind Symphony. LAT

April 12 at 2:00PM – Senior Dance Concert. 1600

April 13 at 5:00PM – Early Music Ensemble. SVS

April 14 at 7:30PM – University Arts Chorale. Cook-DeWitt Center

April 15 at 7:30PM – Anima and Varsity Glee Club. Cook-DeWitt Center

April 16 at 3:00PM – Guest Artist Masterclass: Thomas Hubel, trumpet.

April 16 at 7:30PM – Cello Studio Recital. SVS

April 18 at 7:00PM – Spring Dance Concert. LAT

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