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THE DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC PRESENTS

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# VALPARAISO UNIVERSITY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Diego Piedra, conductor

Featuring

Nicole Lee, *piano*

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Saturday, April 23, 2022, 5:00 p.m.  
Valparaiso University  
Chapel of the Resurrection

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## PROGRAM

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Piano Concerto No. 2, op.18

Sergei Rachmaninoff

I. Moderato

1843-1943

II. Adagio Sostenuto

III. Allegro Scherzando

Nicole Lee, *piano*

Brief Pause

Symphony No. 5 in E minor, op. 64

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

I. Andante

1840-1893

II. Andante cantabile, con alcuna licenza

III. Valse

IV. Finale

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## PROGRAM NOTES

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### **Piano Concerto No. 2, op. 18**

Sergei Rachmaninoff was a Russian pianist, composer and conductor. He was a composition student of Sergey Taneyev, who was a pupil of Tchaikovsky at the Moscow Conservatory. He is regarded as one of the greatest pianists of his day as well as a very gifted composer, one who was surrounded by the likes of Tchaikovsky and Rimsky-Korsakov, who were and still are amongst the most important and popular composers to live.

Before completing his second piano concerto, Rachmaninov fell into depression. His first symphony's premiere had been catastrophic, the conductor (Alexander Glazunov - another great composer) had probably been drunk, and the critics didn't miss the opportunity to trash his work. César Cui, another member of the Mighty Five (a group of Russian composers which include Rimsky-Korsakov and Glazunov among others) wrote the following about the performance of the first symphony: "If there were a conservatoire in Hell, if one of its talented students were instructed to write a programme symphony on "The Seven Plagues of Egypt", and if he were to compose a symphony like Mr Rachmaninoff's, then he would have fulfilled his task brilliantly and delighted the inmates of Hell."

Understandably so, Rachmaninov started doubting himself to the point that he was unable to compose at all. He began composing the concerto in June, 1900 and finished it in April, 1901. He declined several invitations to perform as a virtuoso pianist in Europe due to his sickness, and was taken to see the author Leo Tolstoy in the hopes that he would somehow help him unlock his mind and compose again, but this meeting only worsened his mental state. It was then when relatives took Rachmaninov to visit a neurologist by the name of Nikolai Dahl, who was well known for his successful hypnosis treatments. As Dr. Dahl was a music amateur himself, he was able to talk to Rachmaninov about music and under hypnosis, he told Rachmaninov "You will begin to write your concerto ... You will work with great facility ... The concerto will be of an excellent quality." After visiting Dr. Dahl daily from January until April, Rachmaninov's health was restored as well as his composition confidence. The result is the jewel that we have today which became an instant classic that established him as one of the greatest composer-performers to live.

The concerto is composed in three movements, each one filled with virtuosity and great beauty from the beginning to the end, and is dedicated to Dr. Nikolai Dahl.

The Valparaiso Symphony Orchestra has the immense pleasure to be accompanying Prof. Nicole Lee as soloist.

## Symphony No. 5 in E minor, op. 64

Russian culture and education demanded that art music had to be of the highest caliber, and fundamentally different from western music in terms of content and form. It needed to reflect the strength of Russia, its intellect, philosophy, politics, heritage and beauty.

When Tchaikovsky started to work on his fifth symphony, he was struggling to find inspiration to compose. Moreover, he was very challenged with formal composition techniques. He wanted to be as expressive as he could while utilizing structures such as the sonata form (a western-music structural form that dominated music since the classical era and one that Tchaikovsky confessed he was unable to master). Notwithstanding, Tchaikovsky possessed a remarkable ability for composing unforgettable melodies of great beauty and charm.

Tchaikovsky was not known for writing “Russian” melodies, but their repetitive structure in terms of harmony and rhythm is something that got naturally transferred into his own music. A decade passed between the composition of the fourth and fifth symphonies. Music was not flowing through Tchaikovsky with the usual ease; he complained that the beginning was hard and that he had to “squeeze it from his dull brain.” He was determined to prove to himself and to the world that he was not worn out as a composer. After four months of intense work, the result was a fantastic symphony that encompasses great beauty, melodies, drama, and intense personal feelings. It is very possible that he thought that a given structure like sonata form was not the best vehicle for him to use and express the full lushness of his emotions, or that he tried to use it but could not make it work, and as a result either diverted from it or resorted to other means of composing his music. Perhaps, the single most defining aspect of Tchaikovsky’s music -other than his melodies- is the use of phrase repetition.

“Fate” is the central theme in Tchaikovsky’s fifth symphony as it is for Beethoven’s fifth, with the well known “fate knocking at the door” motif. It is no accident that Tchaikovsky chose “fate” as a suitable idea for his symphony, since he too felt its weight on top of him. Interestingly, Tchaikovsky’s original intention with his fourth symphony was to show his answer to Beethoven’s fifth, as that symphony also is based upon another “fate” theme, one that perhaps is darker than that of the fifth symphony.

Tchaikovsky wrote in his notes what appears to be a program for the first movement of the fifth symphony. His thoughts are private, not to be made public or shown in order to help understand the narrative of the symphony. His wishes were for the public to find meaning through the music alone. Tchaikovsky writes:

*“Complete resignation before Fate, or, which is the same, before the inscrutable predestination of Providence. Murmurs, doubts, complaints, reproaches against XXX. Shall I throw myself in the embraces of faith?”*

Similarly to his Overture *Romeo and Juliet*, Tchaikovsky loathed this symphony. He wrote about his symphony:

*“There is something repellent in it, some over exaggerated color, some insincerity of fabrication which the public instinctively recognizes. It was clear to me that the applause and ovations referred not to this but other works of mine, and that the symphony itself would never please the public. All this causes a deep dissatisfaction with myself.”*

The symphony is written in four movements.

-Diego Piedra

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## ABOUT THE ORCHESTRA

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The Valparaiso University Symphony Orchestra is a select ensemble dedicated to professional performance standards of works from both the standard and contemporary repertoires. Students of all areas of study are welcome to participate. Recent performances have included music by Beethoven (Symphonies 5, 8, 9), Brahms (Symphonies 1, 2, 4), Mendelssohn (Symphonies 4, 5), Shostakovich (Symphony 5, Piano Concerto 2), Sibelius (Symphonies 1, 2), Tchaikovsky (Symphonies 4, 5), Mahler (Symphony 2), Britten (Sea Interludes), Elgar (Enigma Variations), Holst (The Planets), Respighi (Pines of Rome), Strauss (Death and Transfiguration), and Stravinsky (Firebird Suite). In 2018, the VUSO served as the anchor ensemble for the second annual Friendship Lasts Forever gala concert, which was held at Pritzker Pavilion in Millennium Park, the premier outdoor performance venue in Chicago. In the spring of 2018, they toured China for the second time. For many years, the VUSO has hosted the Great Lakes Music Festival, welcoming traditional musicians from China, as well as high school students from Indiana, Illinois, and Michigan.

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## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

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**Nicole Lee**, a native of Vancouver, Canada, is a pianist acclaimed as both a soloist and a collaborative artist. As an active chamber musician, Lee continues to perform collaborative recitals with instrumentalists and especially enjoys presenting 4-hand piano repertoire with colleague Joseph Bognar. Lee holds B.M. and M.M. degrees in piano performance from the University of Southern California. She was selected as the outstanding graduate of the Keyboard Studies Department in both her graduate and undergraduate programs. She also holds performance and teacher's diplomas from the Royal Conservatory of Music of Toronto and Licentiate and Fellowship diplomas from the Trinity College of London.

**Diego Piedra** is the Director of Orchestras at Valparaiso University. A strongly driven performer and educator, Dr. Piedra feels at home working on the podium with student and professional orchestras. Recent professional conducting engagements have included the Music Directorship and Conducting of Spectrum Orchestra, visiting orchestral positions at Luther College and the University of Toledo, and guest conducting appearances with the Oakland Symphony Orchestra in Michigan, the National Symphony Orchestra of Costa Rica, and the Municipal Orchestra of Cartago. In Costa Rica Dr. Piedra was in high demand as the orchestral conducting professor at the University of Costa Rica as well as a guest violin teacher and performer in Venezuela, Honduras and Guatemala. He founded the national youth orchestra called Manuel María Gutiérrez at SINEM (the Costa Rican version of Venezuela's El Sistema), and was its Music Director and Conductor from 2009-2011. Since 2014, Dr. Piedra has been Music Director at the Dubuque Symphony Orchestra's Summer String Camp, working as a conductor, violinist and composer. As a professional violinist he has been a member of the prestigious New World Symphony in Miami, South Bend Symphony Orchestra, Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra, Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra, Oakland Symphony Orchestra, the National Symphony Orchestra of Costa Rica and Concertmaster of the Orquesta de Cámara de Costa Rica. Dr. Piedra participated as violinist and assistant conductor in the tour and recording of the University Symphony Orchestra of the University of Michigan (winner of four Grammy awards in 2006), which culminated at Carnegie Hall, New York.

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# VALPARAISO UNIVERSITY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

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## **Violin 1**

+Morgen Heissenbuettel, Ypsilanti, MI  
(music performance, psychology)

Savannah Jackson, Rockford, IL  
(mechanical engineering)

Elizabeth Deml, Bedford, NH (mechanical engineering)

Simeon Klepac, Wilmore, KY (music education)

Dr. Katharina Uhde\*\*

## **Violin 2**

^Jeremy Freed, Three Rivers, MI (meteorology)

Olivia Maass, Fishers, IN (exploratory)

Emily Nelson, Chicago, IL (physics)

Dr. Sangeeta Swamy\*\*

## **Viola**

^Anton Pham, Goshen, IN (meteorology)

Lucia Otten, Valparaiso, IN (exploratory)

Reiana Thomas, Portage, IN (music)

Carolina Bowen, Salem, VA (music education)

## **Cello**

^Hallie Wolf, Kenosha, WI (chemistry)

~Evee Curtis, Mishawaka, Ind. (music education)

Micah D'Arcangelo, Statesboro, GA (mechanical  
engineering)

## **Bass**

^~Jakob Wiegand, Saratoga Springs, NY  
(civil engineering)

Kyle Morrison, Lake Zurich, IL (mechanical engineering)

## **Flute**

^Genevieve Brown, Williamston, MI (music performance)

Julia Pastore, Munster, IN (music therapy)

Sammy Knapp, Georgetown, KY (engineering)

## **Oboe**

Adelyn Carney, Appleton, WI (biology/chemistry)

## **Clarinet**

^Max Ehlers, Milwaukee, WI (biology/chemistry)

Camille Ancevicus, Homer Glen, IL (nursing)

## **Bassoon**

^Nicholas Sanchez, Hobart, IN (music education)

Joel Stoppenhagen, Ossian, IN (music education)

## **Horn**

^Maiah Deogracias, Fort Wayne, IN  
(art/communications)

Savannah Becka, Crown Point, IN (environmental  
science)

~Ryan Gee, Princeton, IL (music)

Hannah Nelson, Rolling Prairie, IN (environmental  
engineering)

## **Trumpet**

^Jacob Keen, Knox, IN (music education)

Kurt Mertzger, Vicenza, Italy (music education)

## **Trombone**

^Matthew Yee, Auburn, CA (civil engineering, music)

Adam Lindemer, Crown Point, IN (music education)

~David Lee, Schererville, IN (music education)

## **Tuba**

~Payton Wills, Valparaiso, IN (biology/chemistry)

## **Timpani**

Ricky Paz, Schererville, IN (music education)

## **Percussion**

Ben Gorseki, Valparaiso High School

Joel Reuning-Scherer, West Hartford, CT (computer  
engineering)

## **Orchestra Manager**

Ricky Paz, Schererville, IN (music education)

+ Denotes concertmaster

^ Denotes principal

\*\* Denotes Faculty

~ Denotes Graduating Senior

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## UPCOMING PERFORMANCES

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### **Student Recitals**

Duesenberg Recital Hall

Marcus Engstrom, saxophone  
Sunday, April 24, 2022, 5:00 p.m.

Ryan Gee, trumpet and David Lee, tuba  
Sunday, April 24, 2022, 7:30 p.m.

Morgen Heissenbuettel, violin  
Saturday, April 30, 2022, 7:30 p.m.

Shantée Lewis, soprano and  
John Claudy, tenor  
Sunday, May 1, 2022, 5:00 p.m.

Kate Eisenhutt, composition  
Sunday, May 1, 2022, 7:30 p.m.

Dante Canchola, composition  
Friday, May 6, 2022, 7:30 p.m.

### **Ensemble Concerts**

Sousa Tribute Concert  
Chamber Concert Band, Luce Concert  
Band, Comm/University Concert Band  
Saturday, April 30, 2022, 4:00 p.m.  
Chapel of the Resurrection

New Music Ensemble  
Monday, May 2, 2022, 7:30 p.m.  
Duesenberg Recital Hall

Percussion Ensemble  
Thursday, May 5, 2022, 4:00 p.m.  
Duesenberg Recital Hall

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