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From the Board President

Dear Friends of The Symphonia,

On behalf of the entire Board of Directors, it is my great pleasure to welcome you to The Symphonia's 20th Anniversary Season. This milestone is a testament to the unwavering support of our audiences, the exceptional talents of our musicians, and the dedication of our artistic leadership. We are incredibly proud to celebrate two decades of bringing outstanding musical performances to this vibrant community.

This 20th season is truly special, as we reflect on our past and look forward to an exciting future. Our programming showcases a rich blend of classical masterpieces and contemporary works, and we are honored to collaborate with some of today's most distinguished conductors and soloists. From the soaring melodies of Vieuxtemps' Violin Concerto No. 5 to Beethoven's exhilarating Symphony No. 7, and the timeless beauty of Tchaikovsky's Serenade for Strings, there is something for everyone to enjoy.



In addition to our concert series, The Symphonia is proud to have been selected by the City of Boca Raton to perform twice in 2024. This past July, we partnered with Crazy Fingers for Symphonia JAMS, a unique collaboration that brought classical and jam band fans together at Mizner Amphitheater. We look forward to returning to the Amphitheater on December 7th for our much-anticipated Holiday Pops concert, a festive celebration to kick off the holiday season.

We are also excited to introduce Harmony & Vines, a delightful series of curated evenings of music, wine, and food. Held at Sixty Vines, and sponsored by Drowos Private Wealth, these dinners provide a unique opportunity to enjoy the symphony experience in a more intimate and relaxed setting.

Finally, our educational initiatives continue to grow. Through Strings & Self-Esteem, we are reaching underserved students, ages 5 to 18, at Paul's Place and the Fuller Center, fostering a love for music while building confidence and self-expression.

As we embark on this landmark season, we invite you to join us in celebrating the power of music to inspire, uplift, and unite. Thank you for being a part of The Symphonia family. Your continued support ensures that we can share the beauty and joy of music with future generations. Here's to an unforgettable 20th Anniversary Season!

With warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sheldon Kwiat".

Sheldon Kwiat
President, Board of Directors
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PROGRAM

Sunday, November 17, 2024 – 3 pm

Roberts Theater at Saint Andrew's School

Alastair Willis, Conductor
Andrés Cárdenes, Violin Soloist

Principal Conductor's Chair sponsored by The Kimmel Family

Celebration Overture James Stephenson

Violin Concerto No. 5 Henri Vieuxtemps

I. Allegro non troppo

II. Adagio

III. Allegro con fuoco

Andrés Cárdenes, Violin Soloist

INTERMISSION

Pulcinella Suite Igor Stravinsky

I. Sinfonia

II. Serenata

III. Scherzino – Allegretto – Andantino

IV. Tarantella

V. Toccata

VI. Gavotta (con due variazioni)

VII. Vivo

VIII. Minuetto – Finale

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THE SEAGATE



PROGRAM NOTES

Celebration Overture by James Stephenson **Born 1969 in Illinois**

This work was premiered by the Chicago Chamber Orchestra in September of 1999. It is scored for piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, one trombone, timpani, piano, harp (optional), and strings.

Since becoming a full-time composer in 2007, I have been fortunate to have had a steady stream of commissions and projects, keeping me always on task and, luckily, in demand. Stemming from my days as a professional trumpeter in the Naples (FL) Philharmonic, I have endeavored to be a "performer's composer" – always remaining sensitive to the needs of those who are on stage making the music happen. Chicago Symphony clarinetist John Yeh has playfully called me "The Concerto King", and I am happy to admit that my catalog does include a concerto, and sonata, for nearly every symphonic instrument, with more being added every year.

A notable characteristic I try to infuse in my music is rhythmic momentum, as well as colorful scoring and orchestration, whether for instruments of the same timbre, or in mixed chamber settings. For me, this is the playground, and I absolutely love this part of the process.

I will always cherish and hold in high esteem the musical giants of the past, in addition to adding my own modern sensitivities, so as to try to give my music a blend of familiarity and new discovery all at once. With this, I hope to lead audiences and performers on a journey of both anticipation and reward.

In the fall of 1999, I was contacted by my good friend Edward Benyas, with a request to compose a new work to celebrate the 48th anniversary of the Chicago Chamber Orchestra, for a concert he would be conducting.

There are three things that pop up in my head when I think back to his requests during our phone conversation.

- 1) The piece needed to be completed in roughly 2 weeks,
- 2) please feature the timpanist, and
- 3) really? a piece to celebrate the 48th anniversary?

The first request needs very little explanation - it was hard and furious work, but was completed on time. I have very fond memories of sitting on the porch of a cabin in Northern Michigan, overlooking a lake, while writing this work.

The second request was amusing to me. The timpanist for the concert was also a mutual friend, and it was already known that in order to play the concert, he would be driving hours from one gig, unloading timpani, then driving elsewhere, playing another job, then driving back to the first, playing, reloading timpani, etc... In other words, could I please reward him with a good part for all of the extra hassles he'd be going through just to play the concert.

The 3rd request, once I got over the initial whys and reallys, presented a rather fun challenge and inspiration. Puns and symbolism have always been a part of my "game" when writing music, and so I took advantage of whatever I could with the number 48 (or 48th) when composing this piece. For example, the piece opens with a flurry of 40 eighth-notes in the strings (I was going to go for 48 notes, but it didn't work, so I settled for forty 8th notes instead). Additionally, the harmonic structure of the piece is almost entirely built upon a minor 7th chord; this is because when one counts up 4 semi-tones from the root of the chord, and then another 8, the resulting notes spell out most of a minor 7th chord.

[Example: C up to E-flat, and then again up to B-flat]. Lastly, the one of the main themes is a very catchy tune written to the time signature of 4/8. Of course, all of the games and symbolism are fruitless unless the piece stands on its own musically.

This is first and foremost with every piece I write, and I am pleased to say that this piece was a joy and honor to compose, and to present to the Chicago Chamber Orchestra for its premiere that September of 1999. I was unable to make the premiere concert, but I am told that the timpanist was in rare form when performing the piece!

On March 4-5, 2011, the piece was performed by the Lake Forest Symphony, under the direction of Alan Heatherington, as an "honorary re-dedication" to the city of Lake Forest, IL, in recognition of the 150th anniversary of the city.

Violin Concerto No. 5, by Henri Vieuxtemps
Born February 17, 1820, in Verviers, Belgium
Died June 6, 1881, in Mustapha Supérieur, Algeria

This work was premiered in 1861 as a contest piece at the Brussels Conservatory. It is scored for solo violin, flute, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, timpani, and strings.

The method of the Russian School of violin playing is well represented in the teaching of Leopold Auer and his students, including Jascha Heifetz, Nathan Milstein, Mischa Elman, David Oistrakh and Leonid Kogan, but the origin of that school goes back to a prolific Belgian composer who is believed to have started that method in St. Petersburg. Henri Vieuxtemps was a violin prodigy as a child and made his Paris debut at age nine. His teacher, Charles Auguste de Bériot, intended for him to stay in the French capital, but the 1830 Revolution made it difficult. A further complication was his teacher's marriage to the eminent soprano Maria Malibran and their impending concert tour. He moved back to Brussels before traveling to Germany, where he met Robert Schumann.

Vieuxtemps made his London concert debut in 1834 and returned to Paris the following year, where he studied with Anton Reicha at the Conservatoire. Berlioz and Paganini heard him there and praised his abilities. After trips to Leeds and the United States, he moved to St. Petersburg, where he stayed from 1846 to 1851. His legacy was cemented by founding the violin studio of the St. Petersburg Conservatory, thus founding the Russian School of violin playing. In 1851 Vieuxtemps returned to Brussels and joined the faculty of the Brussels Conservatory. He suffered strokes in 1873 and 1879, but was able to move to Algeria, where he lived in a sanatorium close to his daughter's house. His death, according to period sources, was brought on by head injuries from a rock thrown at him near the sanatorium.

Early in Vieuxtemps' life, his music was almost exclusively for the violin, most notable his seven violin concertos composed between 1840 and 1870. However, he was unable to play the violin after his first stroke, so he wrote other music for strings, including a violin sonata, three string quartets, and two concertos for cello.

Vieuxtemps' Violin Concerto No. 5 is unique in structure. Cast in three movements, the concerto flows without pause and gives the impression of long movement. The introduction to the Allegro non troppo first movement is dramatic and uses three powerful themes to set the scene. When the soloist enters with a series of arpeggios, the mood changes, but the passionate first theme returns in a virtuosic twist. The soloist soon states the lyrical

major-key second theme before the intricate development section. After a dazzling display of virtuosity, the recapitulation brings back the main themes in a rather creative manner.

A brilliant cadenza follows and ushers in the *Adagio* second movement. Vieuxtemps based the solo line on an aria from Gretry's opera *Lucille*. A pizzicato accompaniment provides a delicate underpinning over which the lyrical singing qualities of the solo violin shines. Soon the theme modulates and the *Allegro con fuoco* finale begins with the most bravura writing of the entire work, serves as a brief coda to the concerto, and gives the listener a thrilling conclusion.

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Suite from *Pulcinella*, by Igor Stravinsky

Born June 17, 1882, in Oranienbaum, Russia

Died April 6, 1971, in New York, New York

The complete work was first performed on May 15, 1920, by Diaghilev's Ballets Russes at the Paris Opera House. The Suite dates from 1922. It is scored for two flutes, two oboes, two bassoons, two horns, trumpet, trombone, and strings.

Stranded in Switzerland and Paris during World War I, Igor Stravinsky often was forced to compose for the players at hand. Many musicians were serving in the military, where many died, leaving a dire shortage of players. It was against this backdrop in 1918 and 1919 that he composed *A Soldier's Tale* for a mere handful of instruments. A year later, although the situation had eased slightly, he found himself working again with Sergei Diaghilev, the impresario of the Ballets Russes, who had championed his three most successful ballets, *The Firebird*, *Petrushka*, and *The Rite of Spring*. Diaghilev was also unable to return to Russia, making another collaboration between the two expatriates seem logical. The project was *Pulcinella*.

In the spring of 1917, Diaghilev wrote to Stravinsky proposing a new ballet based on the music of the eighteenth century, but arranged by several contemporary composers and including sets by Pablo Picasso. Due to his dislike of music of the Baroque period and, presumably, a desire to be the only composer involved, Stravinsky refused. Finally, after several correspondences, the composer agreed to the project after seeing several manuscripts from the British Museum attributed to Giovanni Battista di Pergolesi (1710-1736). Later research has shown that few of the pieces were actually by Pergolesi, but most were instead by his Venetian contemporary Domenico Gallo.

Retaining the melodies of the originals, Stravinsky freely adapted the harmonies, rhythms, and other musical elements. Unlike his massive earlier ballets, *Pulcinella* is for an abbreviated orchestra of some thirty players, due largely to the lack of players in 1920. From the twenty Baroque works Stravinsky selected for inclusion in *Pulcinella*, he crafted eighteen movements for the complete ballet. The score relies heavily on solo instruments, including an enchanting oboe solo in the second movement. Three singers are used in the ballet, but Stravinsky excluded them from the Suite.

A listener unfamiliar with Stravinsky's neoclassical works might hear this work as being composed in the eighteenth century. However, a closer examination reveals details that are exceedingly anachronistic, but they provide motion and energy to the melodies of long ago, giving us a striking, if somewhat fractured view, of both worlds.

Stravinsky's story borrows heavily from the traditional Neapolitan *commedia dell'arte* in its use of characters familiar to audiences of the time. They are Pulcinella (a clown-like character similar to the British Punch), Pimpinella (his girlfriend), Furbo (Pulcinella's friend), the young ladies Prudenza and Rosetta, and the young men Florinda and Cloviello. In a short version of the story, the two young men serenade the ladies, but their song does not impress the women, who pour water on them. Prudenza's father chases the men away. Pimpinella, in the next scene, catches Pulcinella kissing Rosetta. The young men, apparently still angry from their earlier failure, come in dressed like Pulcinella and beat him up. Pulcinella is stabbed, but is resurrected by Furbo posing as a magician. Luckily this has all been a plan to regain Pimpinella's favor. The plan works, Florindo and Cloviello gain the favor of Prudenza and Rosetta, and the ballet concludes with a triple marriage. Although the plot is far from profound, it provides an adequate vehicle to showcase Stravinsky's adaptation of Baroque music without detracting from it.

Stravinsky's Suite is in eight parts. The opening *Sinfonia* is majestic with its full string textures. A simpering oboe solo dominates the lovely "Serenata" with its repeated limping Lombardic rhythm (long-short-long).

The third movement is in three parts. Quick and fleeting, the "Scherzino" begins with sprightly woodwind solos that give way to prominent passages for strings and horns. The "Allegretto" is filled with running scales and textures that are undeniably by Stravinsky. His *Andantino* relies heavily on shimmering harmonic sequences.

The fourth-movement *tarantella* is a rapid 6/8-meter dance traditionally used to ward off ill effects from the bite of the tarantula. Brassy and majestic, the *Toccata* features solos for oboe and violin. Perhaps the most memorable melody in the entire work is the demure *Gavotta* that is treated to several luminous variations written for winds alone. The next section, marked simply *Vivo*, features the low brass and basses in a weighty melody that has a rustic charm.

Stravinsky's two-part final movement begins with a graceful *Minuetto* that strays from the opening string texture to include solos for the trombone and trumpet. As the tension builds in the final measure of this section, Stravinsky begins the second part of the movement, simply entitled *finale*. Packed with trumpet fanfares and syncopation, this movement also includes flashbacks to music from other movements, most notably the harmonic sequences from the *Andantino*. The final measures sparkle with trumpet fanfares and some of Stravinsky's most optimistic music.

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Grammy-nominated conductor **Alastair Willis** is currently the Music Director of the South Bend Symphony Orchestra and Principal Conductor and Music Advisor to The Symphonia. In past seasons, Willis has guest conducted orchestras around the world including the Chicago Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, Mexico City Philharmonic, and many others. This season, he returns to the Chicago Symphony, Qatar Philharmonic, River Oaks Chamber Orchestra, Pacific Northwest Ballet, and Salute to Vienna.



Alastair Willis

Violin Soloist



Andrés Cárdenes

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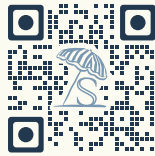
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The SYMPHONIA Legacy Society

The SYMPHONIA acknowledges with gratitude and "forever" recognition:

**The JAM CHARITABLE TRUST
LEE ZEIDMAN**

Consider a charitable bequest and become a charter member of the **LEGACY SOCIETY.** Your planned gift will make a significant impact in the sustainability of The SYMPHONIA'S mission and will allow you to support the orchestra without giving up current assets. Your gift can take many forms:

A bequest of cash or securities

A specified percentage of your net estate
Life insurance, with the orchestra as beneficiary

Other material assets

LEGACY SOCIETY members will receive "forever" recognition and other specially-designated benefits.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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