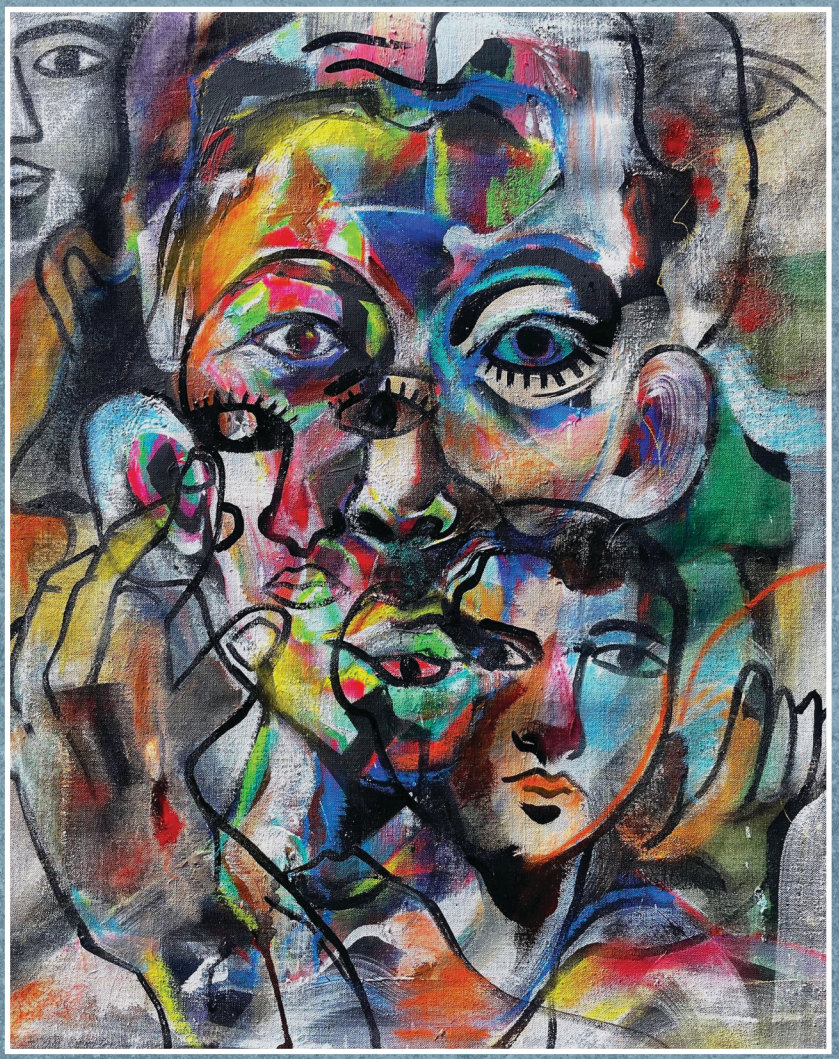
Symphony Parnassus

STEPHEN PAULSON, MUSIC DIRECTOR



3 P.M. SUNDAY, NOV. 19, 2023

SAN FRANCISCO CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC

2023-24 SEASON – PROGRAM 1

About Symphony Parnassus

"The best of the Bay Area's community musicians" —Michael Tilson Thomas

Longtime San Francisco residents may remember Symphony Parnassus's ancestor, the Doctors' Symphony, which began in 1965 when a few doctors' chamber groups coalesced for the first time into an orchestra. Lyn Giovanniello, a recent member of our string bass section, was drafted by the Doctors' Symphony to be their first conductor. The group met regularly and presented concerts at what was then UC Hospital through the 1970s. Almost a decade after that organization folded, biophysics graduate student and amateur cellist Jonathan Davis re-established it as the more community-oriented UCSF Orchestra. He obtained funding from UCSF and started giving concerts in the UCSF Gym in 1989. Davis was able to tap an enthusiastic, supportive pool of both amateur and professional musicians from the faculty, staff and student body of UCSF as well as the local community. The UCSF Orchestra quickly grew, attracted large audiences, and earned a reputation for outstanding performances.

After six years at the orchestra's helm, Jonathan Davis moved to Boston to pursue his career, and Jeremy Swerling was named music director. Two years later, the orchestra elected Stephen Paulson as its third music director. After being cut from UCSF's budget in 1999, the orchestra was reorganized as a nonprofit entity with the name Symphony Parnassus, to honor its roots in San Francisco's Parnassus Heights neighborhood. Symphony Parnassus continues to attract top musical talent from the local community. In addition to members of the UCSF community, the orchestra now includes corporate executives, IT specialists, engineers, scientists and educators, as well as music students and professionals.

Over the years, Symphony Parnassus has collaborated with world-class musicians such as pianist Robin Sutherland, violist Geraldine Walther, oboist William Bennett and sopranos Lisa Vroman and Hope Briggs. Ballet legend Rudolph Nureyev made his West Coast conducting debut with our orchestra. Famed jazz saxophonist and composer John Handy premiered his *Concerto for Jazz Soloist and Orchestra* with us. With its focus on local soloists, composers and visual artists, Symphony Parnassus continues to play a unique and vital role in the Bay Area's arts community.

For further information, please contact us at:

Symphony Parnassus
PO Box 225297
San Francisco, CA 94122-5297
(415) 409-6411

Website: www.symphonyparnassus.org
Email: info@symphonyparnassus.org
Facebook: www.facebook.com/symphonyparnassus
Twitter: @symparnassus
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Music Director's Welcome

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the premiere of our 33rd concert season! Symphony Parnassus has a proud history of showcasing the talents of local composers and soloists alongside beloved classics. We are thrilled to welcome back the immensely talented pianist Parker Van Ostrand to perform the enchanting melodies of Tchaikovsky's timeless Piano Concerto No. 1.

After intermission, we will perform Shostakovich's Symphony No. 5 in D minor. Soviet composer Dmitri Shostakovich lived under Joseph Stalin's reckless and terrifying dictatorship, and to many listeners, his music expresses dissent against a dangerous ruler. Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony is loved by many for its dramatic twists and turns, and its triumphant finale.

We wish you a happy, healthy holiday season. We truly appreciate your support of live orchestral music and hope to see you again in January for the world premiere of jazz bassoonist Paul Hanson's *Transitions* Concerto for Electric Bassoon and Orchestra.

Stephen Paulson
Music Director

UPCOMING CONCERTS

3 P.M. SUNDAY, JANUARY 28, 2024
Taube Atrium Theater, San Francisco

3 P.M. SUNDAY, APRIL 14, 2024
Taube Atrium Theater, San Francisco

www.SymphonyParnassus.org

Program

3 p.m. Sunday, November 19, 2023

Caroline H. Hume Concert Hall
San Francisco Conservatory of Music
50 Oak Street, San Francisco, CA 94102

Stephen Paulson, conductor

PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY (1840–1893)

Piano Concerto No. 1 in B-flat Minor, Op. 23 (1874)

I. Allegro non troppo e molto maestoso – Allegro con spirito
II. Andantino semplice – Prestissimo – Tempo I
III. Allegro con fuoco – Molto meno mosso – Allegro vivo

Parker Van Ostrand, soloist

32 minutes

— Intermission — 15 minutes

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH (1906–1975)

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

I. Moderato
II. Allegretto
III. Largo
IV. Allegro non troppo

50 minutes

Please silence all cell phones and electronic devices prior to the performance.

Musicians

Violin I
Daniel Tan,
Concertmaster
Annie Li,
Assoc. Concertmaster
Cesar Mendez Lizarraga
Helene Grotans
Renee Zhang
Brian Rash
Eric Ward
Allie Mangel
Michelle Lee

Violin II
Elana Estrin,
Acting Principal
Lucy Atkinson
Jakob Zwiener
Janet Li
Dan Ahn
Jonathan Eldridge
Bailey McEachen
Isabelle Ghofrani
Andre Turati
Melissa Normoyle

Viola
Hélène Wickett,
Principal
Nick Blanchard
Tom Bodenheimer
Frances Gregor
Grace Hala'ufia
Allison Li
Alex Long
Claire Morrow
Merle Rabine
Maia Scarpetta
Shawn Tahata
Andrew Zhang
Zhimin Zhao

Cello
Jen Mathers,
Principal
Leo Baluk
Margaret Moores
Jonathan Atkins
Brian Colfer
Jozo Dujmovic
Zhenya Farrington
Nathan Leber
Katherine Robertson

Bass
Joseph Taylor,
Principal
Jim McManus

Flute
Darcy Mironov,
Principal
Jenna Mauro

Piccolo
Winslow Taub

Oboe
Jenna Simon,
Co-Principal
John Quinlan,
Co-Principal

Clarinet
Kyle Beard,
Principal
Joe Romano

E-flat Clarinet
Silas Patlove

Bassoon
Noah Cort,
Principal
Sarah Smith

Horn
Eric Anderson,
Co-Principal
John DeGiglio,
Co-Principal
Robin Varga
Ruth Wilson

Trumpet
Chris Wilhite,
Principal
Jay Shuler
Justin Smith

Trombone
Katie Lambert,
Principal
Ravi Sahae
Jason Hebert

Tuba
Bin Love

Timpani
Christian F. Howes

Percussion
Cassandra Firmin

Harp
Molly Langr

Piano / Celesta
Peter Hwang

Music Director

Stephen Paulson has been the music director of Symphony Parnassus since 1998. Devoted to creating the best possible experience for both players and audience, he has led the ensemble through a wide variety of repertoire, drawing on the classical canon as well as new compositions. A student of George Cleve, Paulson has appeared as a guest conductor with members of the San Francisco Symphony, the Phoenix Symphony and the New World Symphony.

Paulson joined the San Francisco Symphony as principal bassoonist in 1977. Since his 1978 solo debut, he has been a frequent soloist with the symphony, performing with conductors such as Kurt Masur, Wolfgang Sawallisch, Christopher Hogwood and Helmuth Rilling. In 1995, he was one of four SFS musicians invited by Sir Georg Solti to perform with the World Orchestra for Peace, celebrating the 50th anniversary of the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland. In 2009, he was invited to be a mentor and participant in the world's first YouTube Symphony Orchestra Summit at Carnegie Hall in New York. He is also featured in the documentary series *Keeping Score,* created by Michael Tilson Thomas with the San Francisco Symphony.

In 2011, Symphony Parnassus performed Paulson's own *Bassoon Concerto* with soloist Steven Dibner, SFS associate principal bassoonist.

Paulson has been a faculty member of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music since 1978 and has given master classes at schools around the world, including the Manhattan School of Music, the New England Conservatory, the Eastman School of Music, the Shanghai Conservatory, and the Juilliard School. He has taught and performed at many summer festivals, including Aspen, the Symphony Orchestra Academy of the Pacific, the Grand Teton Music Festival, Music at Kirkwood and Music in the Vineyards.

A graduate of the Eastman School of Music, Paulson studied bassoon with K. David Van Hoesen and Mordechai Rechtman and composition with Samuel Adler. From 1970 to 1977, he served as co-principal bassoonist of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. Prior to that, he was principal bassoonist with the Rochester Philharmonic from 1968 to 1970.

Guest Artist

Parker Van Ostrand currently studies at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music with Garrick Ohlsson and Yoshikazu Nagai.

He recently won the 2023 PianoTexas Academy Concerto Competition and performed with the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra this past June. In 2022, he won the Gold Medal in the 71st Wideman International Piano Competition and in November, collaborated with Yuja Wang for a two-piano performance at the SFCM Gala. Last summer, he was selected to play in the inaugural G. Henle Verlag Murray Perahia Masterclass in Munich. He also toured with the California Youth Symphony to Eastern Europe last summer with Bernstein's Symphony No. 2, "The Age of Anxiety." In 2020, Parker won Third Prize and the Best Sonata Award in the 10th National Chopin Piano Competition, and was one of 20 high school students nationwide named a 2021 U.S. Presidential Scholar in the Arts.

This season, Parker will be performing with the Camellia Symphony, Symphony Parnassus, the South Arkansas Symphony, the Shreveport Symphony, and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music Orchestra as winner of their 2023 Concerto Competition. He will also give recitals at the Dame Myra Hess Memorial Concert Series in Chicago, the Tutunov Series in Ashland, the Cape Cod Chamber Music Festival, the Washington International Piano Festival, and Gretna Music with violinist Amaryn Olmeda.

Parker is from Sacramento, CA, and previously studied with Linda Nakagawa, Natsuki Fukasawa, Sarah Chan, and Jon Nakamatsu.

Board of Directors

PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY

Piano Concerto No. 1, Op. 23 (1874)

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893) began piano lessons at the age of five. Within three years he could read music as well as his teacher. But a career as a musical child prodigy was not to be, as Pyotyr's ever-practical parents sent him away at age 10 into nine years of schooling to prepare him for the Russian civil service, during which time he could only take occasional piano lessons. After working for four years at the Ministry of Justice, the 23-year-old Tchaikovsky abandoned his budding law career and started pursuing music study full-time at the new Saint Petersburg Conservatory. He graduated in just two years, and was soon in the employ of his alma mater as a music theory professor.

Endowed with a sensibility at once poetic and conservative—his favorite composer was Mozart—Tchaikovsky sought what he called "the higher artistic truth which springs from the mysterious depths of man's creative power and pours out into clear, intelligible, conventional forms." Displaying a bold, original gift for beautiful melody and drama, Tchaikovsky's songs, symphonies, concertos, chamber music, ballets and operas gave him well-deserved fame.

Tchaikovsky composed his first Piano Concerto during November and December of 1874. In November he wrote to his brother Anatoly, "I am now immersed in the composition of a piano concerto. I definitely want Rubinstein to play it at his concert." He was referring to the famous pianist Nikolay Rubinstein, who, as head of the new Moscow Conservatory of Music at which the 34-year-old Tchaikovsky worked as a professor, was also his boss. Tchaikovsky played through the concerto for Rubinstein and friends on Christmas Eve, but it got a frosty reception. "I played the first movement," Tchaikovsky recalled. "Not a word, not an observation! Rubinstein was preparing his thunder." When Tchaikovsky had finished, Rubinstein declared that the concerto "was worthless, that it was impossible to play, that its passages were clumsy, awkward, so awkward that they could not be corrected, that as a composition it was bad, that I stole from here and there, that there are only two or three pages worth preserving." Undaunted, Tchaikovsky refused to change "a single note."

Tchaikovsky then sent his concerto to the eminent pianist and conductor Hans von Bülow. Bülow loved the piece, declaring that it "displays such brilliance, and is such a remarkable achievement among your musical works, that you have without doubt enriched the world of music as never before. There is such unsurpassed originality, such nobility, such strength, and there are so many arresting moments throughout this unique conception. There is such a maturity of form, such style—its design and execution, with such consonant harmonies, that I could weary you by listing all the memorable moments which caused me to thank the author—not to mention the pleasure from performing it all. In a word, this true gem shall earn you the gratitude of all pianists." Bülow as piano soloist gave the world premiere in Boston the following October, to the American audience's wild applause; he proceeded to program the concerto over one hundred times during his United States tour. A few years later, Rubinstein changed his mind about the concerto and performed it himself. Tchaikovsky was "very, very pleased" by his change of heart, and the two remained friends until Rubinstein's untimely passing at the age of 45.

Tchaikovsky did make a few revisions to the concerto during the winter of 1888–89 in collaboration with pianist Alexander Siloti (who was, incidentally, Rachmaninoff's cousin). Tchaikovsky wrote to Siloti that he left the concerto's "fate to your discretion regarding everything except form. [in other words, no cuts and no reordering sections of the piece] You can edit the piano part as you like, change the markings (but leave my new markings, please), and I will be incredibly grateful to you for proofreading." It is thus difficult to ascertain which of the changes to this edition are Tchaikovsky's and which are Siloti's. In any case, Tchaikovsky seems to have trusted Siloti's judgment, and this is the version of the concerto that is nearly always performed today.

The First Piano Concerto is scored for solo piano, pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets and bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani and strings. It lasts about 32 minutes.

First Movement: *Allegro moderato*. The famous triple-horn-call opening instantly identifies this as Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto, emphatically declaring B-flat minor with a descending 4-note motif that outlines 5-3-2-1 of the B-flat minor scale. But the orchestra has other ideas, and refuses to confirm the key of the piece as announced by the horns! A series of strong orchestral chords that answers the three horn calls throws the tonality of the music off-balance, wrenching the key of the piece away from B-flat minor, and finally landing it in B-flat major! Solo piano steps in with booming B-flat major chords, confirming the orchestra's "new key." Over these, strings in octaves begin with the same 4-note motif tranformed to major, unfurling itself into a powerfully romantic melody (Theme 1) spanning a remarkable seventeen measures. The piano takes the melody next, with melodic and rhythmic variations, and sends it via a powerful cadenza into dark, uncertain diminished-chord territory. Orchestral strings come to the rescue, restating the Big Tune in major (and this, strangely enough, is the very last time we shall hear Theme 1); the piano plays along, then returns to diminished-chord figures that hint at a transition. With quiet trumpet calls, the entire brass section puts an "Amen" to this first part of the movement.

What follows is a mercurial, scherzo-like episode introducing the second main theme of the movement, this time in B-flat minor, featuring a long train of quick eighth notes broken into pairs. (Tchaikovsky famously recounted that he had heard a blind beggar sing this Ukrainian folksong at a fair.) Woodwinds finally succeed

Continued on page 8

in smoothing out the spiky texture by interjecting little 3-note legato phrases that blossom into a longer, more melodic phrase upon which the piano muses for a moment (Theme 3). At the piano's last note, violins quietly spin forth a new, sweeter melody (Theme 4), but the piano interrupts it with the 3-note motif of Theme 3. These themes combine and foment into an explosive orchestral climax before finally resolving into a beautiful episode featuring Theme 4's sweet, long-legged melody in the strings with woodwinds answering and piano embellishing with arpeggios. A new episode combining Theme 4 with the mercurial Theme 2, wherein Theme 4 is changed from major to minor, grows to a loud climax that is cooled down by solo piano into a softly brooding cadenza, only to heat up again with a varied Theme 3 motif and new thematic material in the strings (Theme 5) on its way to a sudden proclamation of Theme 4 by the trombones. Theme 4 again mixes it up with Theme 2, which eventually predominates, and then runs out of steam. Out of the ashes arises a veritable renaissance of Theme 3, and a powerful climax. The main piano cadenza of the movement follows, passionate and dramatic in its reworking of the first movement's main themes. The orchestra then picks up on Theme 4 and leads straightaway to the closing chords of the movement in a blazing B-flat major.

The innovative form of this huge first movement allows Tchaikovsky to introduce and juxtapose his themes in unique and effective ways, heightening both the beauty and the drama of the music.

Second Movement: *Andantino semplice*. The music begins with quiet string *pizzicatos* and a plaintive flute melody echoed by the piano. Variations of orchestral color, in particular the use of an open-fifth drone in the low strings, create a decidedly pleasant, rustic atmosphere. Two cellos restate the flute melody over active sixteenth-note piano figures. Then, another mercurial, scherzo-like section featuring quick 2-note figures (see Movement 1, Theme 2) begins, leading to a quick-waltz episode, more mercurial piano figures, and a quiet transition into the plaintive main theme capped by an endearing coda. The quick-waltz melody comes from a popular French song, *Il faut s'amuser, danser et rire (One must have fun, dance and laugh)*. Tchaikovsky's brother Modest wrote of this tune: "Together with brother Anatoly, we sang it constantly during the early seventies."

Third Movement: *Allegro con fuoco (fast, with fire)*. A short, explosive, rhythmic introduction yields to the piano's statement of the main theme, again based on a Ukrainian folksong: a series of quick, syncopated 4-note motifs in B-flat minor. Full-orchestra climaxes bring in a companion theme for a galloping Cossack *Trepak* in G-flat major, but these don't last long, as they usher in episodes where strings and piano introduce a more extended, romantic second theme. This second theme finally gets the full-orchestra treatment, becoming the Big Tune of the Finale. And on its heels, a fiery *prestissimo* coda races to the concerto's breathless finish.

Program notes by Franklin Davis

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH

Symphony No. 5, Op. 47 (1937)

Premiered November 21, 1937 in Leningrad. Scored for two flutes, piccolo, two oboes, two clarinets, E-flat clarinet, two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, harp, piano, celesta, timpani, snare and bass drums, cymbals, xylophone, glockenspiel, triangle, and strings.

"Music has a great advantage: without mentioning anything, it can say everything."

—Ilya Ehrenberg,
from *Testimony* by Solomon Volkov

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975) was born in St. Petersburg (renamed Leningrad during the Soviet era). He received his first piano lessons from his mother at age nine, demonstrating perfect pitch and a quick aptitude for music. As a teenager he supported himself and his mother by playing the piano for silent films. At 19 he graduated from the St. Petersburg Conservatory and premiered his first symphony, which gave him international notoriety as an up-and-coming composer.

The 1930s, however, proved to be a difficult and dangerous time for Dmitri Shostakovich. His wildly successful opera, *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk,* had its run suddenly cut short after Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin attended a performance. In January of 1936, the infamous unsigned article "Muddle Instead of Music" (written under Stalin's direction) appeared in the Soviet newspaper *Pravda,* and Shostakovich was instantly branded an "enemy of the people." Those who drew the dictator's wrath—including many of the composer's artist colleagues—were usually taken away during the night and sent to their deaths in Siberian labor camps. Due to his international stature, Shostakovich was luckier than most. But after the attacks in the press, most of his friends feared associating with him, and he henceforth kept a packed suitcase beside his bed in case he was arrested in the night.

Shostakovich's next close call came with his Fourth Symphony, which he had been composing for some time. Despite the risk of associating with an "enemy of the people," the Leningrad Philharmonic agreed to premiere it. But rehearsals went badly, and it became clear to Shostakovich that performing such an *avant garde* work would put his life in jeopardy. In December of 1936, he announced that it was a failure and withdrew it. The Fourth was lost during World War II, and it wasn't until 1961 that it was reconstructed and given its premiere.

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At this time Russia was undergoing what was later called "The Great Terror." After a failed assassination attempt, Stalin responded with a level of repression rarely seen in human history. He declared that five percent of the population was "unreliable," and gave orders that the number of arrests must match this figure. Guilt was irrelevant; it was sufficient to round up several thousand people from a given town and march them off to the Gulags. Millions thereby perished—in fact, Stalin's genocide machine claimed many more times the number of lives in peacetime than Hitler's did during the war.

> *"The majority of my symphonies are tombstones. Too many of our people died and were buried in places unknown... that's why I dedicate my music to them all."*
>
> —Shostakovich, in *Testimony*

In this dangerous climate, with a wife and two young children to worry about, it was a matter of survival that Shostakovich try to appease the authorities. He succeeded, in fact he redeemed himself, with what became his most admired work. The Fifth Symphony was composed and premiered in 1937, at the height of mass terror. The premiere, at which many in the audience wept, took place in Leningrad, a city that had suffered particularly harsh repressions. The ovation afterwards was said to last over half an hour. A journalist provided it with the subtitle, "A Soviet artist's reply to just criticism." The composer's official synopsis read, "The idea behind my symphony is the making of a man. I saw him, with all his experience, at the center of the work, which is lyrical from beginning to end. The finale brings an optimistic solution to the tragic tone of the first movement."

But his audience, who lived through the terror, knew what his symphony was really about. Throughout history, artists have thumbed their noses at authorities who were too dense to see through their parody and satire, and Shostakovich was no different. One doesn't have to delve deeply to discern what this powerful music expresses. The first movement begins and ends in a tragic lament, interrupted in the middle by a goose-stepping march with a diabolical tune that musicologist Ian MacDonald calls the "Stalin Theme." The Scherzo is a heavy-handed dance in waltz time, with a club foot that requires a fourth beat here and there. It manages to parody as well as pay tribute to the *Weltschmerz* of Mahler's Second Symphony.

The third movement is one of the most despairing pieces of music ever written, a memorial to Mother Russia and her murdered millions. And of the exultant finale, Shostakovich wrote in his memoirs (smuggled out of Russia after the composer's death): "What exultation could there be? I think it is clear to everyone what happens in the Fifth. The rejoicing is forced, created under threat... It's as if someone were beating you with a stick, 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 it."

The Fifth was hugely successful. The Soviet regime was pleased that the rebel had knuckled under, while most Russians saw the truth behind the façade. Western audiences, generally unaware of what was going on in Stalin's USSR, were awestruck by the symphony's grandeur and power. The relatively recent revelation of its true meaning only enhances our appreciation of this testament to one man's struggle in expressing his and his people's anguish under a brutal tyrant.

Program notes by Franklin Davis

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Please consider making a tax-deductible donation to Symphony Parnassus.

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- Mail a check payable to "Symphony Parnassus"
  Symphony Parnassus,
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To schedule an audition, fill out the contact form on our website:
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Or email our Director, Stephen Paulson:
auditions@symphonyparnassus.org

Symphony Parnassus

thanks the following individuals and organizations for their support:

Parker Van Ostrand *Soloist*
Michael Beale *Program Designer*
Franklin Davis *Program Annotator*
Jun Yang *Artist*
Jennifer Mathers *Facebook Volunteer*
Andrew Cortwright *Twitter Volunteer*
Alice Smith *Usher Coordinator*
Betsy Braunstein, Leslie Rabine *Ushers*
S.F. Conservatory of Music *Performance Venue*
San Francisco State University *Rehearsal Venue*

COVER ARTIST

Jun Yang is a self taught, multifaceted and resourceful artist who uses a broad range of techniques and materials creating art pieces in a variety of sizes and locations, from intimate canvases to full scale murals. Born and raised in Seoul, South Korea, Yang has made San Francisco his home for the past 12 years. The city inspires Yang with celebrated urban landscape, natural beauty as well as the socially inclusive culture which provides support and protection. His introspective and celebratory works aim to create a space for identities to exist against the normative, a space for marginalized communities to be seen and heard. Yang recognizes anomalies, pain and trauma in his figures, and these unresolved struggles transform into vibrant colors, empowering the search for understanding, love and support. Yang's art speaks to viewers across cultures and continents in a unique way, transcending the need for common language. Yang has shown his work in numerous national and international exhibitions in San Francisco, as well as Kunsthaus Graz, Graz Austria, MOCA Taipei, Taiwan and Seoul, Korea.

www.junyangart.com

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Symphony Parnassus

WINTER CONCERT

3 p.m. Sunday, January 28th, 2024

Taube Atrium Theater

401 Van Ness Avenue, 4th Floor

PAUL HANSON
Transitions—Electric Bassoon Concerto (World Premiere)
Paul Hanson, soloist

DARIUS MILHAUD
La Création du monde

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