Hopkins Center for the Arts
at Dartmouth

presents

Dartmouth Symphony Orchestra Student Showcase

Filippo Ciabatti, conductor

Alyssa Gao, violin
Betty Kim, violin
Richard Lu, cello

Funded in part by the Roesch Family Fund in support of Instrumental Ensembles and gifts from Friends of the Dartmouth Symphony Orchestra.

Spaulding Auditorium's Hamburg Steinway concert grand piano was purchased with generous gifts from Members of the Hopkins Center and Members of the Hood Museum of Art; the class of 1942, in memory of Allan Dingwall '42; and anonymous donors.

Sat, Oct 5, 7:30 pm

2019 • Spaulding Auditorium • Dartmouth College

Program

Violin Concerto in D Major, Op. 35 — Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893)

Alyssa Gao, violin

I. Allegro moderato
II. Canzonetta: Andante
III. Finale: Allegro vivacissimo

Intermission

Tzigane — Maurice Ravel (1875–1937)

Betty Kim, violin

Variations on a Rococo Theme, Op. 33 — Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893)

Richard Lu, cello

I. Moderato assai quasi Andante—Thema: Moderato semplice
II. Var. I: Tempo della Thema
III. Var. II: Tempo della Thema
IV. Var. III: Andante
V. Var. IV: Allegro vivo
VI. Var. V: Andante grazioso
VII. Var. VI: Andante
VIII. Var. VII: Andante sostenuto
IX. Var. VIII e Coda: Allegro moderato con anima

Program Notes

Violin Concerto in D Major, Op. 35
Pyotr Illyich Tchaikovsky

In early 1878, Tchaikovsky's patron Nadezhda von Meck gave the composer money to use for an extended holiday. She felt that his failed marriage in 1877 and suicide attempt by drowning in the Moscow River warranted a trip outside of Russia to recover his spirits. Taking violinist Joseph Kotek as a companion, Tchaikovsky set off for Clarens, Switzerland. The two read through reams of violin music, including Edouard Lalo's *Symphonie espagnole*. Lalo's symphony was a seminal force in Tchaikovsky's decision to write his own violin concerto, which he began on March 17 and completed in only two weeks. Little did he realize he had created a lightning rod for criticism. To start it off, Mme. von Meck wrote of her personal displeasure with the concerto. "I shall not give up the hope that in time the piece will give you greater pleasure," Tchaikovsky responded.

Its first dedicatee, Leopold Auer, head of the violin department of the St. Petersburg Conservatory and concertmaster of the Imperial Orchestra, refused to play the concerto, deeming it "unsuitable to the character of the instrument." Critic Edouard Hanslick wrote that it was "a rare mixture of originality, crudity, of inspiration and wretched refinement, with an audible, odorously Russian stench." Continuing on in the *Neue freie Presse*, Hanslick's disgust gained momentum: "(In the first movement) vulgarity gains the upper hand. The Adagio is well on the way to reconciling us and winning us over when, all too soon, it breaks off to make way for a finale that transports us to the brutal and wretched jollity of a Russian church festival. We see a host of gross and savage faces, hear crude curses and smell the booze." Hanslick lobbed grenades at Tchaikovsky as well. "The Russian composer is surely no ordinary talent, but rather an inflated one, obsessed with posturing as a man of genius and lacking of all discrimination and taste." Tchaikovsky cut out the review and literally carried the critic's words in his pocket for several months, becoming very depressed. The concerto's future seemed catastrophic. Things began to look up when, on December 4, 1881, Adolf Brodsky, the second dedicatee, premiered the work in Vienna and wrote, "One can play the concerto again and again and never be bored. And, this (repetition) is a most important circumstance for conquering its difficulties." The concerto was revived.

It is true that the concerto demanded new violin techniques, but not impossible ones. In this regard, the concerto was forward-looking, ranking among those musical works whose demands initiated new technical abilities and expertise from the performer. Ultimately, as violinists improved, Tchaikovsky's work has become one of the great showpieces in violin repertoire. Its fanciful gypsy-like tunes, colorful Russian orchestration and pyrotechnics make it a timeless thriller. "I never compose in the abstract," Tchaikovsky explained. "I invent the musical idea and its instrumentation simultaneously." Concept and instrumentation were one.

Years later, Auer regretted his early refusal to play the concerto. In the *Musical Courier*, January 1912, he stated, "I have often deeply regretted (my refusal) and before Tchaikovsky's death received absolution from him."

A brief introduction from the first violins opens the concerto. After a small crescendo, the soloist is launched unobtrusively with a tiny solo and presentation of the main theme, sung above minimal string accompaniment. The subject becomes increasingly elaborate, gains strength, and the orchestra adds weight and coloration. A second theme, marked con molto *espressione*, is similar and equally beguiling. Such lack of contrast between the two main themes is unusual, but the composer's intent was to write idiomatically for the violin, not to genuflect to traditional formal controls. The development section savors the main theme before growing into a fiery

Program Notes *continued*

cadenza. A recapitulation follows the soloist's high-wire performance, but then the orchestra takes a bow with its own extravaganza in a coda, which asks for no less than four accelerations of tempi.

The second movement (*canzonetta*) is exactly that: a small, quiet, song. Both its structure (ABA) and texture are simple. Woodwind chords prepare the soloist's setting. Two elegant themes are quietly presented with accompaniment from violins, violas and French horns. In the third section, the woodwinds return with a recall of the opening, and lead directly into the finale.

In contrast, the third movement immediately ignites renewed vigor and acrobatics. The soloist whips out a dance-like tune, which is capsulated in rondo format (alternating theme and episodes). Tchaikovsky releases all orchestral stops and the soloist, now launched on a frenetic ride, is front and center. Keeping up, he must navigate perilous scales, double stops, dangerous leaps with blazing speed and accuracy. Herein lie many of the technical difficulties alluded to earlier. The effect is undeniably stunning. Michael Steinberg concluded that "Although Tchaikovsky could not please Dr. Hanslick, he has no trouble at all winning us over!"

Courtesy of violin.org

Tzigane
Maurice Ravel

Primarily engrossed in the opera *L'Enfant et les sortilèges* during the first half of the 1920s, Maurice Ravel nonetheless managed to produce a small number of chamber works—notably, the *Sonata for violin and cello* and *Tzigane*—in which the former served in part as the progenitor of the latter. The immensely talented Hungarian violin virtuoso Jelly d'Arányi, great-niece of the Romantic violinist and Brahms associate Joseph Joachim, had given a private performance of the *Sonata for violin and cello*. Ravel was greatly impressed with her playing, and is said to have kept d'Arányi up until sunrise playing gypsy tunes of her native Hungary. In return, Ravel composed *Tzigane* for violin and piano, dedicating the work to d'Arányi, who premiered the work in London on April 22, 1924.

The work's title came from the French word for gypsy. Like many other gypsy- and Hungarian-inspired pieces, the "gypsy" quality of the work is but a stylization of something that at one time was authentic, like the Spanish-influenced music of Chabrier or Lalo, or the "janissary" music of Mozart and Beethoven. Far more interesting than the work's title, however, is Ravel's use of the luthéal, a novelty of Ravel's day permitting the piano to produce different timbres in a manner akin to organ stops. One of these registrations was evocative of the cimbalom, an instrument commonly found in Eastern Europe and in gypsy music. The luthéal, however, suffered the same fate as the arpeggione, and *Tzigane* as Schubert's sonata. Today, the work is heard either with its piano accompaniment or in the orchestral version that Ravel produced during the summer after its premiere.

Tzigane opens with a lengthy and fiery cadenza for the soloist, immediately evoking the lush and florid violin writing of the late Romantic period in addition to being vaguely reminiscent of the style of Paganini. Following the violin's cadenza, the piano enters with its own, though far briefer and leading into the first thematic section. From thence on, a myriad of melodies, all with the fiery quality at once summoned in the cadenza, proceed in segmented fashion, pulling the tempo to and fro. A particularly striking grandioso section marks the ensuing frantic-paced *accelerando* that leads to the work's exuberant conclusion.

Courtesy of Joseph DuBose, classicalconnect.com

Program Notes *continued*

Variations on a Rococo Theme, Op. 33
Pyotr Illyich Tchaikovsky

The Variations on a Rococo Theme, Op. 33, were written in Moscow in December 1876, while the composer's tenure at the Conservatoire was slowly dragging to a close, and his lucrative, epistolary relationship with his patron Nadezhda von Meck beginning to flower. Although he resented the hours teaching that prevented him from composing, Tchaikovsky had nevertheless made some enduring friendships at the Conservatoire, among them the cello professor Wilhelm Fitzenhagen, who had taken positions in Moscow after refusing an offer from the great Franz Liszt to remain with his orchestra in Weimar. No cellist and famously riddled with self-doubt, Tchaikovsky had agreed to a number of alterations suggested by Fitzenhagen, for whom the work was composed, and it seems to have been this "original" version which was premiered in November 1877, in Moscow, under Nicolai Rubinstein, with Fitzenhagen as soloist. So far so good. However, Fitzenhagen had further ideas of his own for the piece and set about "improving" the work, substantially altering the solo part, tagging endings on here and there, shuffling the movements and even omitting the final variation altogether. "Horrible Fitzenhagen insists on changing your cello piece…and he claims you gave him permission. Good God!" wrote the unconvinced publisher Pyotr Jurgenson to the composer. Nevertheless, the piano score was published in 1878, presumably without the composer's approval, and the orchestral score appeared some years later, in 1889, both "revised and corrected" by Fitzenhagen. In the case of the piano score, Tchaikovsky's seeming reluctance to get involved may have been in part due to the extensive travels undertaken to shake off the horror of his badly judged and swiftly aborted marriage in 1877. And in the case of the publication of the orchestral score, a furious, and either accepting or resigned Tchaikovsky famously declared, "The devil take it. Let it stand!". And so the Fitzenhagen version of the Rococo Variations remains the standard version of the piece—even to this day.

Not until 50 years after Tchaikovsky's death did the composer's "original" version come to be heard in the concert hall, its first modern performance documented as being by Daniil Shafran in 1941. The Soviet-published edition of 1956, the composer's "original" score, obviously still retains much of Fitzenhagen's initial and, indeed, subsequent revisions to the cello part, but the variations are restored to Tchaikovsky's original plan.

The Variations reflects Tchaikovsky's adoration of the music of Mozart, a composer he revered above all and referred to as the "Christ of music." The poise and order of the music of Mozart and his time appealed greatly to a composer we regard as representing of the heights of the so-called Romantic period. The work has a brief, almost subdued, orchestral introduction leading into the refined charm of the cello theme—not an 18th-century original, but rather Tchaikovsky's idealized view of such a theme. Thereafter the cellist barely draws breath, the melody expanding into ever more expansive declarations, duets with the flute and the clarinet, cadenzas and a virtuoso package of classic cello cantabile, pizzicato, double-stopping, nostalgic waltzes, runs and trills until the coda brings us to an invigorating conclusion.

Courtesy of M. Ross, hyperion-records.co.uk

About the Artists

Filippo Ciabatti, conductor, a native of Florence, Italy, is the Music Director of the Dartmouth Symphony Orchestra and the Interim Music Director of the Dartmouth Glee Club and the Handel Society of Dartmouth College. With opera director Peter Webster, Ciabatti has created the Dartmouth Opera Lab. In October 2018, the first production featured Grammy Award-winning baritone Daniel Belcher, and soprano Amy Owens.

During the summer of 2018, Ciabatti was invited to be a Conducting Fellow at the Aurora Music Festival in Stockholm, under the direction of Jukka-Pekka Saraste. During the festival, he conducted Hannah Kendall's 2017 composition *The Spark Catchers* in a concert that also featured legendary cellist Mischa Maisky in the Konserthuset Stockholm.

In 2018–2019, he led the Dartmouth Symphony Orchestra in an Italian tour in collaboration with the Orchestra Toscana dei Conservatori in prominent venues and festivals, including the Puccini Days in Lucca. Other highlights of the season include an all-Beethoven concert with Israeli pianist Sally Pinkas, and a collaboration with the NPR show *From The Top*, hosted by the famous American pianist Jeremy Denk. In 2020, Ciabatti will conduct the world premiere of a new secular oratorio composed by the renowned jazz composer Taylor Ho Bynum, and will collaborate at a project with the Martha Graham Dance Company.

In 2018, he made his debut with the Vermont Symphony Orchestra at the Vermont State House in Montpelier. He will conduct the Vermont Symphony Orchestra again in October 2019, in an event created in collaboration with the Creative Projects Chair of the VSO, Matt LaRocca.

In 2017–2018, Ciabatti conducted *Madama Butterfly* at Opera North (NH), and Hansel and Gretel and Don Giovanni (directed and featuring Nathan Gunn) at the Lyric Theatre at Illinois.

In 2016, Ciabatti conducted Tosca at Opera North (NH), directed by Russell Treyz, and Britten's Midsummer Night's Dream at the Lyric Theatre at Illinois, directed by Christopher Gillett. In 2015, he made his South American debut conducting the Universidad Central Symphony Orchestra in Bogota, Colombia, where he also taught master classes in orchestra and Italian opera. With La Nuova Aurora Opera, he conducted full productions of Handel's *Rodrigo* (2015) and Purcell's *King Arthur* (2016).

As a pianist and vocal coach in Italy, Ciabatti worked for the Cherubini Conservatory, Maggio Musicale Fiorentino and Florence Opera Academy. He has played for masterclasses of Renée Fleming, Nathan Gunn, William Matteuzzi, Donald George and Isabel Leonard. Since 2016, he has been music director and vocal coach of "Scuola Italia per Giovani Cantanti Lirici" in Sant'Angelo in Vado (Italy), and this summer will join the faculty of "Opera Viva!" in Verona as vocal coach.

Ciabatti holds degrees in piano, choral conducting and orchestral conducting from Italy and the United States.

Alyssa Gao '20 is from Batavia, Illinois. At Dartmouth, she is an environmental studies major with minors in public policy and gender studies. In addition to spearheading the development of the Intercollegiate Sustainability Summit, Gao is also a War and Peace Fellow, a senior editor for the Dartmouth Law Journal, and a member of the Student Advisory Board for the Sexual Violence Prevention Project. She intend to pursue a law degree after graduation.

Gao writes: "I have wanted to play the Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto since I started the violin at age 6, and it is one of the pieces that I have continued to love throughout my entire musical career. This concerto is one of my favorite pieces because it has such incredible artistic beauty: Tchaikovsky employs a

About the Artists *continued*

wide and diverse range of colors and emotions, and there is so much lyricism in every passage of the piece. I am excited to perform the full concerto with the Dartmouth Symphony Orchestra!"

Betty Kim '20, from Diamond Bar, California, is pursuing a major in English with a concentration in creative writing and a minor in music. She was the Best Overall winner of the Culley Concerto Competition in 2019 and has served on-and-off as the DSO's concertmaster since her sophomore year. She also plays violin and viola in various classical chamber groups, is a fiddler in the Dartmouth Klezmer Band, and works as a teaching assistant in the Department of Music, a student manager at Paddock Music Library and an assistant at the Ceramics Studio. A writer and editor, she was recently awarded the Erskine Caldwell Award in Fiction for her short story "Motherland." Her honors thesis within the creative writing department is a graphic novel about the experiences of Asian and Asian-American communities. After Dartmouth, she hopes to attend graduate school and eventually pursue a career in creative writing, sequential art, and teaching.

Kim writes: "*Tzigane* is special to me because it's one of the rare pieces that highlights the wonders of both the solo violin and the orchestra. Originally written for violin and piano, the piece begins with a five-minute cadenza (unaccompanied solo), a nerve-wracking and exhilarating opening. The main theme is introduced soon after the orchestra enters, and subsequently flows into variations that are playful, then serious, then playful again. This piece gives me a voice as a soloist; to croon and cry as I please during the cadenza. When the accompaniment is introduced, the soloist has to interact carefully, but spontaneously, with the orchestra. It's an interesting archive of the 'non-Western' influences that composers like Ravel were so obsessed with around the turn of the century. It's also special as a technically demanding piece that highlights the beginnings of 'extended technique': harmonics, left-hand pizzicato and extended passages of right-hand pizzicato that is likely to blister the soloist's fingers. It is an exciting piece that almost sounds like improvised material; the ending sounds as if it is spiraling out of control, frenzied and joyous."

Richard Lu '20, from Camas, Washington, is double-majoring in economics and mathematics. He started playing the cello when he was eight years old. Aside from the cello, he enjoys playing soccer, hiking, photography and watching the NBA. On campus, he is involved with the Dartmouth Symphony Orchestra, the Dartmouth Emerging Markets Group, his fraternity, Zeta Psi, and as a Research Assistant at the Tuck School of Business After graduation, he plans to work in the finance industry and attend business school.

Lu writes: "Tchaikovsky's Rococo Variations is one of my favorite pieces for the cello because it packs so many different characters into a single piece with no pauses in between. The most challenging part is capturing each emotion while simultaneously navigating its technical difficulties. My favorite variation is the sixth one (second-to-last) because it is the only variation in a minor key, and its melancholy restatement of the melody is the perfect set-up for the piece's virtuosic final variation and coda. I first started learning the *Rococo Variations* in high school but had to stop playing it after developing tendonitis in both wrists. After taking several breaks from the cello over the past years to recover, I eventually picked the piece back up last year and has been working on it wholeheartedly since."

Dartmouth Symphony Orchestra

Filippo Ciabatti, conductor

Violin I
Hanlin Wang ’21
Bryan Shin ’20
Joy Miao ’23
David Horak
Ida Claude ’22
John Cho ’22
Celine Boulben
Betty Kim ’20

Violin II
Sophia Chang Stauffer ’22
Grace Lu ’23
Jackson Spurling ’23
Jonathan Chiou ’22
Alyssa Gao ’20
Marcia Cassidy F
Greg Diehl
Brian Clague

Viola
Anaïse Boucher-Browning ’22
Raymond Hsu ’21
Leslie Sonder F
Katie Hoover ’22
Ana Ruesink
Jehan Diaz ’22

Cello
Owen Eskandari ’22
Woojin Chung ’23
Elaine Young ’22
Dilshod Narzillaev
Jack Ryan ’23
Hanna Splinder ’23

Bass
Eliot Porter
David Vargas ’23
Paul Horak TH’94

Flute
Sophie Huang ’21
Laura Jeliazkov ’18 (+piccolo)

Oboe
Michelle Farah
Andrea Heyboer

Clarinet
Ryan Ding ’20
Elias Rosenberg ’22

Bassoon
Maureen Strenge
Rae Docherty ’23

Horn
Michael Lombardi
Patrick Kennelly F
Michael Huang ’20
Adam Schommer

Trumpet
Carl Albach
Adam Shohet

Timpani
Andre Sonner

Percussion
Brandon Chen ’23

Piano
Miles Fellenberg

Celesta
Wending Wu ’23

* = Concertmaster
F = Dartmouth faculty
TH = Thayer School of Engineering
Italics = Guest musician

Please turn off your cell phone inside the theater.

Assistive Listening Devices available in the lobby.

DARTMOUTH RECYCLES

If you do not wish to keep your playbill, please discard it in the recycling bin provided in the lobby. Thank you.