

VALDOSTA
SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA



CHANGE

35TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON
2024-2025

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the 2024-2025 Valdosta Symphony Orchestra season at Valdosta State University. We are celebrating 35 years of the transformative power of music, and it is my pleasure to welcome you to Whitehead Auditorium for today's performance.



Part of our mission at VSU is to provide our region with the resources and support necessary to develop and sustain a higher quality of living, greater economic and community development, and inspired innovation that nurtures and respects our diverse populations. Music helps us do that by generating pride in our hometown, adding vibrancy to our community, promoting more creative thinking, strengthening our connection with others, and inspiring us to become more active and engaged.

When the VSO performed its first concert in November 1990, VSU was the only institution of higher education in Georgia to have its own university-affiliated symphony orchestra. As South Georgia's flagship institution of higher education, having a professional orchestra playing live classical music in our backyard is just one example of how VSU is working to enhance communities through life-changing experiences.

The VSO contributes to the cultural life of the entire region. In addition to its concert performances, it offers musical enrichment grants to support VSU students pursuing creative endeavors. It provides exploratory string classes for children and adults through the South Georgia String Project, presents a special Youth Concert Series for school children and their teachers, and introduces the instruments of the orchestra to young children during the annual Tunes for Tots.

We are deeply grateful for every member of the VSO for their tireless dedication to the musical arts and their willingness to share their talents with others. We are also grateful for you — the many individuals, families, and corporations who attend our events and generously support, protect, and nurture our university community's tradition of musical excellence. Your continued support will make it possible for the VSO to continue making music for many years to come.

Thank you for being a part of our audience.

Enjoy the performance!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard A. Carvajal".

Richard A. Carvajal, Ph.D.
President of Valdosta State University

Good evening,

As our Valdosta Symphony Orchestra steps into its 35th season, I invite you to reflect on the uniqueness that is the VSO. More than just an award-winning symphony, the VSO represents the special relationship that has been forged over decades between the university and community; between students and professionals; between artists and audiences. It is the perfect embodiment of why we do what we do at Valdosta State University. As artists, educators, and performers, we are driven by the goal to help support and grow our students. The VSO provides us with a rare opportunity to do exactly that. It is a testament to the collaborative spirit of the Arts, and the role that the Arts play in a thriving community.



I would like to express my gratitude to our attendees, season ticket holders, generous donors, and sponsors. Your investment in the College of the Arts and the Valdosta Symphony Orchestra reflects your belief in the transformative power of music. It also reflects your commitment to our students, our institution, and Arts education. It is because of you and your generosity that the VSO can continue.

I would also like to thank our outstanding faculty and student performers, the Executive Director, and the Director/Conductor of the VSO. Their passion for music and dedication to the Arts is what drives the success of this enterprise. They are truly the unsung heroes of each performance. My thanks to each of you for championing and supporting us tonight. We appreciate your attendance and your unwavering dedication to the College of the Arts, the Music Department, and to the Valdosta Symphony Orchestra. We are delighted that you have chosen to spend your evening with us.

Enjoy!

Nicole B. Cox

Nicole B. Cox, Ph. D.
Dean, College of the Arts

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First Federal was founded in 1934 by a group of businessmen who had a vision for thrift and home ownership in Valdosta/Lowndes County. Since that time, First Federal has grown and flourished along with this area. It is our goal to keep the original vision as our theme and mission for the future. You, as our valued customer, are an integral part of the success of the Association. We realize this and again, value your relationship with us. We remain focused on placing the customer first and are constantly seeking ways to improve our products and services to match the ever changing banking environment. If you are an existing customer, we appreciate your continued loyalty and support and look forward to serving you for many years to come. If you are seeking a bank, I hope you'll give us an opportunity to meet your financial needs.

First Federal is especially proud to be the corporate sponsor for the opening concert for this 35th season of the Valdosta Symphony Orchestra. The VSO is a valuable cultural resource for our local surrounding communities with the subscription series, youth concerts and the South Georgia String Project.

Thomas D. Newbern

President, First Federal Savings of Valdosta

About the Music Director



Howard Hsu

Howard Hsu is the Music Director of the Valdosta (GA) Symphony Orchestra, which performs a vital cultural role in the South Georgia region, and he also serves as Professor of Music and Director of Orchestra Studies at Valdosta State University. Under his leadership, the Valdosta Symphony was selected as the 2014 winner of the American

Prize in Orchestral Performance (community division), and has had performances aired statewide on Georgia Public Broadcasting Radio's "Midday Music," "Orchestras of Georgia," and "Front Row Georgia" programs. Hsu has performed with the Canadian Brass, Robert McDuffie, Simone Dinnerstein, Jennifer Frautschi, Wendy Warner, Christine Brewer, Rachel Barton Pine, Orion Weiss, Stanford Olsen, Alexander Ghindin, Alexander Schimpf, Katia Skanavi, Awadagin Pratt, Elena Urioste, Amy Schwartz Moretti, the Empire Brass, Chris Brubeck, Geneva Lewis, Maria Ioudenitch, Melissa White, Natasha Paremski, and the Melodica Men. He conducted the world premiere of James Oliverio's Trumpet Concerto No. 1: World House; the U.S. premiere of Ned McGowan's Concerto for iPad and Orchestra (Rotterdam Concerto 2); and the Georgia premieres of Jessie Montgomery's Rounds, James MacMillan's Larghetto for Orchestra, Fernande Decruck's Sonata for Saxophone and Orchestra, several Debussy/Matthews Preludes, and Jonathan Bailey Holland's Motor City Dance Mix.

Howard Hsu has appeared as guest conductor with the Hartford (CT), Fox Valley (WI), Wyoming, Mankato (MN), Macon (GA), and New Britain (CT) Symphonies, as well as the Bronx (NY) Arts Ensemble, with whom he conducted the world premiere of Eleanor Cory's O'Keeffe's Flora. He was a Visiting Assistant Professor of Music at the University of Connecticut and Associate Conductor of the University of Connecticut Symphony Orchestra, and was Visiting Instructor of Music and Director of the Orchestra at Connecticut College.

Howard Hsu received his D.M.A. from the University of Connecticut, his M.M. from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, and his B.S. from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Kelly Hall-Tompkins, Violin

Winner of a Naumburg International Violin Competition Honorarium Prize and featured in the Smithsonian Museum for African-American History, Ms. Hall-Tompkins is a violin soloist entrepreneur who has been acclaimed by the *New York Times* as “the versatile violinist who



makes the music come alive,” for her “tonal mastery” (*BBC Music Magazine*) and as *New York Times* “New Yorker of the Year.” She has appeared as co-soloist in Carnegie Hall with Glenn Dicterow and conductor Leonard Slatkin, in London at Queen Elizabeth Hall, at Lincoln Center and with the Symphonies of Baltimore, Dallas, Jacksonville, Oakland, recitals in Paris, New York, Toronto, Washington, Chicago, and festivals of Tanglewood, Ravinia, Santa Fe, France, Germany and Italy.

She was “Fiddler”/Violin Soloist of the Grammy/Tony-nominated Broadway production of *Fiddler on the Roof*. Inspired by her experience, she commissioned and developed the first ever Fiddler solo disc of all new arrangements, “The Fiddler Expanding Tradition,” which is featured in the upcoming new documentary “Fiddler: A Miracle of Miracles” on the 55-year history of the musical. Actively performing virtually throughout the pandemic, numerous projects include premiering 4 pieces written for her, creating and/or been invited to participate in unique collaborations including with Tony-nominated actor Daniel Watts, aerial dancer Alexandra Peter, Frisson Films, Gil Shaham’s *Gilharmonic*, Routledge press as contributing author for a new book on Music and Human Rights and with WQXR as part of the inaugural Artist Propulsion Lab.

As founder of Music Kitchen-Food for the Soul, Kelly Hall-Tompkins is a pioneer of social justice in classical music, bringing top artists in over 100 concerts in homeless shelters coast to coast from New York to Los Angeles, and in internationally in Paris, France. Music Kitchen commissioned and will present the World Premiere of the *Forgotten Voices Song Cycle* in Association with Carnegie Hall.

About the Assistant Conductor



Daniel Marcos Rodriguez

Daniel Marcos Rodriguez is an orchestral and opera conductor. He began conducting in high school at sixteen years old under the tutelage of Dr. Adalberto Yanes in Miami, FL. He embarked to further sharpen his skills at Miguel Harth-Bedoya's Conducting Institute for three consecutive years. Consequently, Daniel has been accepted as a conducting fellow in numerous international workshops and received an Honorable Mention for the Respighi Prize in Conducting.

Daniel made his operatic debut with Opera Orlando as their Associate Conductor in 2022 and returned for the 2023 - 2024 season where he contributed to numerous productions including *Tosca*, *Frida*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, and was part of the fourth ever production of Philip Glass's and Robert Moran's *The Juniper Tree*. Daniel's musical quest remains to be an effective conductor who truthfully communicates the genius of the composers to inspire empathy within himself and the musicians he leads, while creating more access for all audiences to be impacted by the power of classical music.



The Valdosta Symphony Orchestra

35th Season

Howard Hsu, Music Director

“Change”

September 21, 2024

*This concert is sponsored by
First Federal Savings of Valdosta.*

Overture to *The Barber of Seville* | 8 mins

Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868)

Daniel Marcos Rodriguez, conductor

***Body in Motion*, for violin and orchestra (Georgia premiere) | 20 mins**

Jeff Beal (b. 1963)

- I. head above water
- II. breathing
- III. running

Kelly Hall-Tompkins, violin

~ **INTERMISSION** ~

Symphony No. 6 in B minor, Op. 74 “Pathétique” | 44 mins

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893)

- I. Adagio – Allegro non troppo
- II. Allegro con grazia
- III. Allegro molto vivace
- IV. Adagio lamentoso

Howard Hsu, conductor

THE VALDOSTA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

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Clell Wright, *Chorus Master* • **Daniel Marcos Rodriguez, Assistant Conductor**

Violin I

Kristin Pfeifer Yu,
Concertmaster
Leona Strickland
Hudson Chair

Megumi Terry
Stacey Sharpe
Felipe Romagnoli
Thomas Roggio
Sergio Sabillon
Alexander Reshetnichenko
Elma Groetsch
Chuck Gunsaulus
XinYu Chang

Violin II

Erika Sciascia, *Principal*
Catherine Yara,
Acting Principal
Nicole Vega
Kaitlin Smedley
Alysia Johnson
Juliana Saxton
Amelia Pharis
Marina Volynets
Jennifer Clyde
Rachel Friedman

Viola

Laurel Yu, *Principal*
Brantley and Barbara
Jenkins Chair
Molly Turner
Benjamin Suarez
Luiz Barrionuevo
Miriam Tellechea
Jonathan Drawdy
Dylan Heib-Schatzberg
Joshua Singletary

Violoncello

Kathryn Troy, *Principal*
Daniel and Carolyn
Coleman Chair
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Steven Taylor
Alexis Barnett
Kyna Elliott
Lidia Sanchez

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Tod Leavitt, *Principal*
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Assistant Principal
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Vadim Volynets
Trent Harper

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Adrienne Read
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Oboe

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Dear Chair
Jillian Camwell
Jessica Holcomb

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Dennis Savoie

Bassoon

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Acting Principal
Reed Hanna

Horn

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Tuba

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Christopher Singleton

Keyboard

Valerie Holton Smith, *Principal*

Valdosta Symphony Orchestra

ABOUT THE MUSIC

by Alan M. Rothenberg

Overture to *The Barber of Seville*

Gioachino Rossini (1792–1868)

Gioachino Rossini spent most of his childhood in Bologna. He studied music at the conservatory there, yet maintained that most of his knowledge of composition came from studying and arranging the music of Haydn and Mozart. He began writing operas in 1810, at the age of eighteen, but his first real success came with the drama *Tancredi*, premiered in Venice in 1813. Rossini's reputation as an operatic composer grew throughout Europe, and was sealed three years and six operas later, with *Almaviva, or The Useless Precaution*. Later renamed *The Barber of Seville*, it has become Rossini's most beloved opera. The vivacious overture seems perfectly suited to the sparkling wit of the libretto, although it was actually used for two previous operas.

Body in Motion

Jeff Beal (Born 1963)

Initially a jazz trumpeter, Jeff Beal studied composition at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, NY. As a jazz trumpet player and band leader, he recorded several albums for Island Records. As a composer he is equally at home in jazz, concert, movie, and television music. His score for the 2000 film "Pollock" brought him notice as a composer to noted film and television directors Oliver Stone, Ed Harris, and others.

Beal's concert music output includes ballets, orchestral pieces, chamber works, and choral music. He developed a special relationship with conductor Leonard Slatkin, former director of the Detroit, Saint Louis, and Washington, DC orchestras. Slatkin has been instrumental in commissioning Beal for multiple works, including the new violin concerto *Body in Motion*, written for violinist Kelly Hall-Tompkins and dedicated to both her and Slatkin. Beal described the genesis and structure of the concerto (edited for clarity):

I had the pleasure of attending Kelly Hall-Tompkins's concert at Carnegie Hall in the spring of 2022. Of course, I was impressed by her wonderful playing... A few months later we finally met in person. We hit it off personally and mentioned in passing I had been thinking about a violin concerto. Kelly knew of my work, and we mutually decided to explore the idea of a collaboration.

When I compose a new concerto, I often think of the soloists' plating and spirit... I loved the fact that [Kelly] brings a wonderful emotional intensity to everything she plays. My feelings about Kelly's artistry were no doubt part of this inspiration. She is an intense, passionate performer who seems to never wish to sit still artistically.

I began thinking about water as a metaphor—both visually and musically. I love the way water presents to us a visual tension between the hypnotic, peaceful, and (in the case of a windy lake or sea) a sense of constant, fluid motion. I began to think of both the orchestra and soloist as active natural forces. [For the first movement, "head above water,"] I pictured a swimmer constantly bobbing in a turbulent sea, trying to catch breaths and survive, and this swimmer became a metaphor for the soloist.

The second movement, “breathing,” has a plaintive quality, and an ache I feel relates to blues music. I often use the term “beautiful sadness” as a way of verbalizing what I feel the blues has given me musically. “Breathing” feels like the earth; a plant breaking through the soil to find sun, or a baby’s first precious breaths...Life moving slowly but deliberately with the absolute need of breath for substance.

As I began my musical life as a jazz trumpet player, a sense of improvisation and dance is a part of the music I compose. The third movement, “running,” is one-part joyful romp, and another part a more desperate act—perhaps pursuit of prey or escape from a predator. Here the violin is a jazz soloist, soaring in the sky and skating across a bed of syncopations and groove music for both the orchestra and soloist.

The title, *Body in Motion*, came to me as I was connecting all of the ideas the music represents. Life is a constant struggle against entropy, aging, fatigue, and even despair. The idea of forward motion is perhaps one answer to these challenges.

Symphony No. 6 in B Minor, Op 74 “Pathétique”

Piotr Ilych Tchaikovsky (1840–1893)

Composed in 1893. About the same time: 1891: Arthur Conan Doyle begins publishing Sherlock Holmes stories. 1893: World’s Columbian Exhibition in Chicago. 1894: Emile Berliner develops sound recording disks.

For many, the music of Piotr Ilych Tchaikovsky epitomizes the Romantic era. His boundless gift for melody, brilliant orchestrations, and accomplished compositions in most musical forms show his skill and versatility. So many of his works are considered part of the standard repertoire—all of the symphonies, the concertos for violin and for piano, numerous ballets and operas—that his popularity is undeniable. Yet when looking deeper at Tchaikovsky’s life one is presented with a complex, conflicted man who lived for his art, and quite possibly died for it.

Tchaikovsky began work on his sixth and last symphony in February 1893, commenting, “the ultimate essence of the [symphony’s] plan is LIFE. First movement—all impulsive passion, confidence, thirst for activity. Must be short. (Finale DEATH—result of collapse.) Second movement—love; third, disappointments; fourth ends dying away (also short).” By the time the symphony was completed, some six months later, the composer acknowledged the presence of a storyline (somewhat modified from his original conception) to Rimsky-Korsakov, but did not care to divulge it. And by the time of the premiere in October 1893, he renounced any kind of narrative to the piece. It was his brother Modeste’s statement that the symphony was *pateticheskyy*, a Russian word commonly translated as “emotional,” but also with connotations of extreme passion, which led Tchaikovsky to initially subtitle the symphony *Pathétique*, although he tried, unsuccessfully, to remove it after sending the score to the publisher.

The overall mood of the Sixth belies the fact that while composing it Tchaikovsky was in good spirits. He wrote to his nephew Vladimir Davidow, “you cannot believe what bliss it is to be convinced that my time is not yet over and I am still able to work. I certainly regard it as the best—and especially the most sincere—of all my works. I love it as I have never before loved one my musical children.” He was at the top of his compositional form, he was in great demand as a conductor, and his fame spread worldwide.

The symphony initially received a lukewarm reception. The St. Petersburg orchestra had expressed its lack of enthusiasm for the work during rehearsals, and after the first performance, the composer wrote to his publisher “something odd happened with this symphony! It’s not that it displeased, but it produced some bewilderment. As far as I myself

am concerned—I am prouder of it than any of my other works.” The second performance, twenty days later, was an absolute triumph. But between those two performances, the composer died, either accidentally or by his own hand—leading us into one of the most intense controversies in contemporary musicology.

For many years, the accepted story was the composer inadvertently drank unboiled water, based on an account by his brother Modeste. In the past thirty years another theory has been advanced—that the composer’s homosexuality was about to be exposed, which would have led to the composer being jailed or put to death. Instead, he was encouraged by a group of his fellow law school alumni to commit suicide, rather than cause dishonor to their school. As a result, Tchaikovsky, a man who greatly valued honor, poisoned himself, or perhaps drank the cholera-laden water on purpose.

Musicologists continue to disagree—often vehemently—on this issue, but whichever story is true, the Sixth Symphony is very much one of extremes of emotion. The halting, brooding opening motive is developed into the first theme, accelerating to the second theme, one of Tchaikovsky’s most lyrical yet with an element of sadness. The second movement is a marvel of craftsmanship—it sounds like a graceful waltz, except it is in 5/4, rather than 3/4 time. The third movement march is a joyous affair that ends optimistically, only to be immediately crushed by the grieving, sobbing opening of the final movement. The music repeatedly attempts to pull itself out of the depths of despair, only to eventually sink back down, slowly dying away.

The final oration from a doomed man, or is it only by coincidence that a work so filled with pathos happens to be the last utterance by someone caught in circumstances beyond his control? Most likely, we will never know.

Program Notes © 2024 Alan M. Rothenberg www.noteperfectnotes.com

CONCERT ETIQUETTE

PLEASE DO

- Turn off your pager and watch alarms.
- Consult the program for the number of movements in a piece to know when to clap at the end.
- Unwrap your cough drop before the music starts so it’s ready if you need it.
- Cover your mouth to cough/ sneeze to muffle the sound.
- Put your cell phone on silent.

PLEASE DON'T

- Talk or whisper during the performance.
- Sing, or tap your fingers/feet to the music.
- Bring young children to the concert – our Youth concerts are specially geared towards developing attention spans.
- Leave or take your seat during the music (unless you did not follow the previous rule - in that case, please escort your disruptive child out as quickly as possible). Please wait until you hear applause.
- Clap between movements thinking it’s the end of the piece. When in doubt, wait for others to clap first.
- Use flash photography or recording devices during the concert (these actions are illegal in this hall).

Valdosta Symphony Orchestra

Upcoming Events

October 10, 2024 - POPS IN THE PARK

VSU Fine Arts Building Amphitheater • 6:00 pm

- Come dine al fresco and enjoy live music!
- For reservations/information, contact Amber Porter at 229-333-2150 or email saporter@valdosta.edu
- Outside food & beverages are welcome!
- People are welcome to bring blankets, chairs, etc.
- Limited additional seating & tables will be available at a first come, first-served basis.
- Proceeds support the Music Scholarship Alliance, which awards scholarships to talented music students

October 26, 2024

Whitehead Auditorium • 7:30 pm

VSO: CASUAL CLASSICS: FRIGHTFUL FAVORITES

Join us for an eerie evening of your frightful favorites! Whether it's music from *Jaws*, *Psycho*, *Night on Bald Mountain*, or *Sorcerer's Apprentice*, this concert will thrill and enchant!

After a rousing success last season, the VSO Cosplay Competition returns in time for Halloween. Whether or not you compete for prizes in the competition, we invite everyone attend in costume. At this family-friendly concert there will also be trick-or-treating for concertgoers of all ages!

November 9, 2024

VSO SYMPHONY BALL

Save the date – Support the VSO at the social event of the year!



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