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SERIES I

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ALAYNA McNEIL, VIOLIN (2022 YAC WINNER)
& THE LETHBRIDGE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

OCTOBER 16, 2023 – 7:30 PM

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Programme Order

Procession of the Nobles from Mlada

*Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov
(1844-1908)*

Violin Concerto No. 2 in G Minor, Op. 63

*Sergei Prokofiev
(1891-1953)*

I. Allegro moderato

II. Andante assai

III. Allegro, ben marcato

Alayna McNeil, violin

Winner of the LSO's 2022 Young Artist Competition

Intermission

Symphony No. 5 in E Minor, Op. 64

*Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky
(1840-1893)*

I. Andante. Allegro con anima

II. Andante cantabile, con alcuna licenza

III. Valse: Allegro moderato

IV. Finale: Andante maestoso. Allegro vivace

For Everyone's Enjoyment

Please remove all hats to preserve sightlines.

Please set all electronics to silent and lower the screen brightness.

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Latecomers are seated at a suitable break.

No outside food or drinks - Water is available in the lobby.

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2023/24

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SING FOR JOY (AGES 40+)	THURSDAYS	7:00 - 8:30PM
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ADULT GROUP UKULELE	MONDAYS	5:30 - 6:20PM

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About the Special Guest

Alayna McNeil, violin

Alayna McNeil is currently in her fourth year of a Bachelor of Music in violin performance at the University of Lethbridge. Alayna has been fortunate to study with Peter Visentin throughout university, with John Lowry for the Spring 2023 semester, and with Lise Boutin previously. Alayna is a three-time recipient of the Abbondanza Fine Arts Undergraduate Award, a two-time recipient of the Lethbridge Symphony Orchestra Strings Award, and she received the Fine Arts Award for Excellence in 2023. As the inaugural winner of the 2022 Centric MusicFest/Primo Music Association scholarship, Alayna was featured as a performer in the 2022 Centric Music Fest in Lethbridge. Alayna was the 2019 winner of the Rose Bowl award for the Most Artistic and Outstanding Performer in the Lethbridge Music Festival, and she received first place in her class at the 2021 Alberta Provincial Music Festival. Alayna has loved playing violin with the Lethbridge Symphony Orchestra for seven years, and she is honoured to be performing with the LSO as a soloist.





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Programme Notes

Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov (1844-1908): “Procession of the Nobles” from *Mlada*

Although Rimsky-Korsakov is known today primarily for his orchestral masterpieces such as *Sheherazade* and the *Capriccio espagnol*, he was also a very prolific composer of operas. In fact, his most famous piece—“The Flight of the Bumblebee”—is an extract from one of these operas, *The Tale of Tzar Sultan*. Tonight’s program begins with another operatic excerpt, “The Procession of the Nobles” from the opera ballet *Mlada*.

Mlada began in 1872 as a collaborative effort between Rimsky-Korsakov and two other famous members of the Russian nationalist school, Alexander Borodin and Modest Mussorgsky. Although some of the music was written, the project never really got off the ground and was abandoned. In 1889, some time after the deaths of both Borodin and Mussorgsky, Rimsky-Korsakov returned to the libretto and set it entirely himself. Unfortunately, the work was not a success, due in part to the difficulties inherent in the combined demands of both an opera and a ballet.

The story of the opera ballet is a mixture of Russian legend and fairytale. *Mlada* herself is a dancing, rather than a singing, role. She has already been killed by her rival to the hand of Prince Yaromir, the evil princess Voyslava, and appears throughout the opera as a mute spectre who thwarts the plans of Voyslava and Voyslava’s ally, Morena, the goddess of the underworld. The plot culminates in Morena’s destruction of Yaromir and his village following his killing of Voyslava, and the ascent of the souls of Yaromir and *Mlada* to heaven.

“The Procession of the Nobles” occurs towards the beginning of Act II during a midsummer festival at the village. It marks the arrival of the princes of the land who are hailed in choral acclamations accompanying the orchestral march. Later in the Act, *Mlada* mysteriously appears as a warning to Yaromir as he dances with Voyslava.

Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953): Violin Concerto No. 2 in G Minor, Op. 63

Prokofiev’s Second Violin Concerto was written in 1935 at an important juncture in the composer’s life. In 1918 he had fled the turmoil of the Russian Revolution and its aftermath of the Civil War settling first in the United States, then in France, where his career came to centre on Paris. In the late 1920s, though, he increasingly gravitated back towards the now Soviet Union, first with concert tours and then finally with a permanent move to Moscow in the spring of 1936, only months before the Soviet Union was gripped with the first of the bloody Stalinist purges. The Concerto was thus one of the last works written before this fateful move.

Concerning its character, Prokofiev expressed a desire to write something more intimate than his first Violin Concerto and designed it as a “concert sonata for violin and orchestra” with a strongly lyrical bent, which the noted Prokofiev scholar Rita McAllister has compared to the melodic richness of Prokofiev’s ballet *Romeo and Juliet* from the same period. The violin part, though, is still very virtuosic and technically demanding.

The Concerto is cast in three movements. The opening movement features two prominent themes. The first, intoned by the violin at the very beginning, is dark and brooding, the second noble, yet intense. In its course, the music goes through a kaleidoscope of emotions ending in passionate outburst in powerful quadruple stops for the solo violin. The second movement begins with an extremely beautiful, elegiac melody, accompanied by pizzicato strings and staccato winds. Each time it returns it features this light staccato accompaniment so typical of the serenade tradition. In between these appearances, the music traverses a wide range of emotions from the mysterious to the playful, ending with a final dark statement of the theme for horn, cello and low clarinet against the pizzicato accompaniment of the solo violin. The third movement then brings the work to an exciting conclusion with an aggressive, athletic finale.

Programme Notes

Peter Ilyitch Tchaikovsky (1840-1893): Symphony No. 5 in E minor, Op. 64

The imaginative orchestration and powerful expressive force of Tchaikovsky's orchestral music make him one of the greatest symphonic composers of the nineteenth century, as seen especially in his last three symphonies—the Fourth, Fifth and Sixth “Pathétique.”—some of the most popular works on the modern concert stage. This is particularly true of the Fifth Symphony, which we will be hearing tonight. It was composed from May to August of 1888 when Tchaikovsky had entered a new and very creative stage in his career and was recognized internationally as one of Europe's leading composers. Only a few months previously, in December of 1887, he had set out on the first of his successful European tours conducting his own music in Leipzig, Berlin, Prague, Paris and London before enthusiastic audiences. Yet ironically the period of the composition of the Fifth Symphony was also one of self doubt and darker thoughts.

Since his teenage years Tchaikovsky had suffered from a morbid sensitivity. During the spring and summer months that he worked on the Symphony, he was plagued with worries about a decline in his powers as a composer and thoughts about his own mortality, exacerbated by the slow and painful death from tuberculosis of his friend Nikolay Kondrat'yev. His preoccupations can be seen in a diary entry from this period: “How short life is. How much one wants to do, to think about, to say. One puts things off, imagining there is still so much time ahead yet there around the corner death is already lying in wait...” Tchaikovsky's struggles with these thoughts are vividly reflected in the Fifth Symphony and its programmatic overtones.

The Symphony consists of four movements, each of which is overshadowed by a recurring motto theme, marked in one of Tchaikovsky's notebooks as representing “complete resignation before fate.” The motto theme first appears at the very beginning of the Symphony, in the dark lower register of the clarinets in A. Here it has a foreboding, funereal character to it that colours the whole symphony. It is answered by the main theme of the first movement—a grim, march-like theme that is eventually superseded by an unusual subordinate theme, beginning in an uneasy, striving B minor only to explode in joy in D major. These emotions dominate the first movement and come to a powerful climax in the central development section. The second movement features one of Tchaikovsky's greatest and most beautiful melodies. Following a somber introduction by the strings, the melody enters in the French Horn. Its warm and tender opening, suggesting a distant memory of happiness, moves to an increasingly yearning continuation that is brutally cut off by a glaring intrusion of the motto theme. A second statement of the melody is once more cut off by the terrifying motto theme before the movement is brought to a gentle conclusion. The third movement is a lilting waltz with a mercurial, impish trio. Together they seem to summon up the joys of life. But even here the motto theme steals in to colour the end of the movement with its dire sense of unease, now cynically taking on the characteristics of the preceding waltz.

The finale is dominated by successive transformations of the motto theme, which launches the movement's introduction as a march, now in a bright and noble E major. This is all swept away by the explosive beginning of the main movement, which is tossed back and forth between despair and elation including further brilliant, fanfare transformations of the motto theme. This struggle eventually leads to the motto theme's final apotheosis as a broad uplifting march, which brings with it at its end another transformation—that of the grim main theme of the first movement in a life-affirming explosion of light.

Program notes courtesy of Dr. Brian Black



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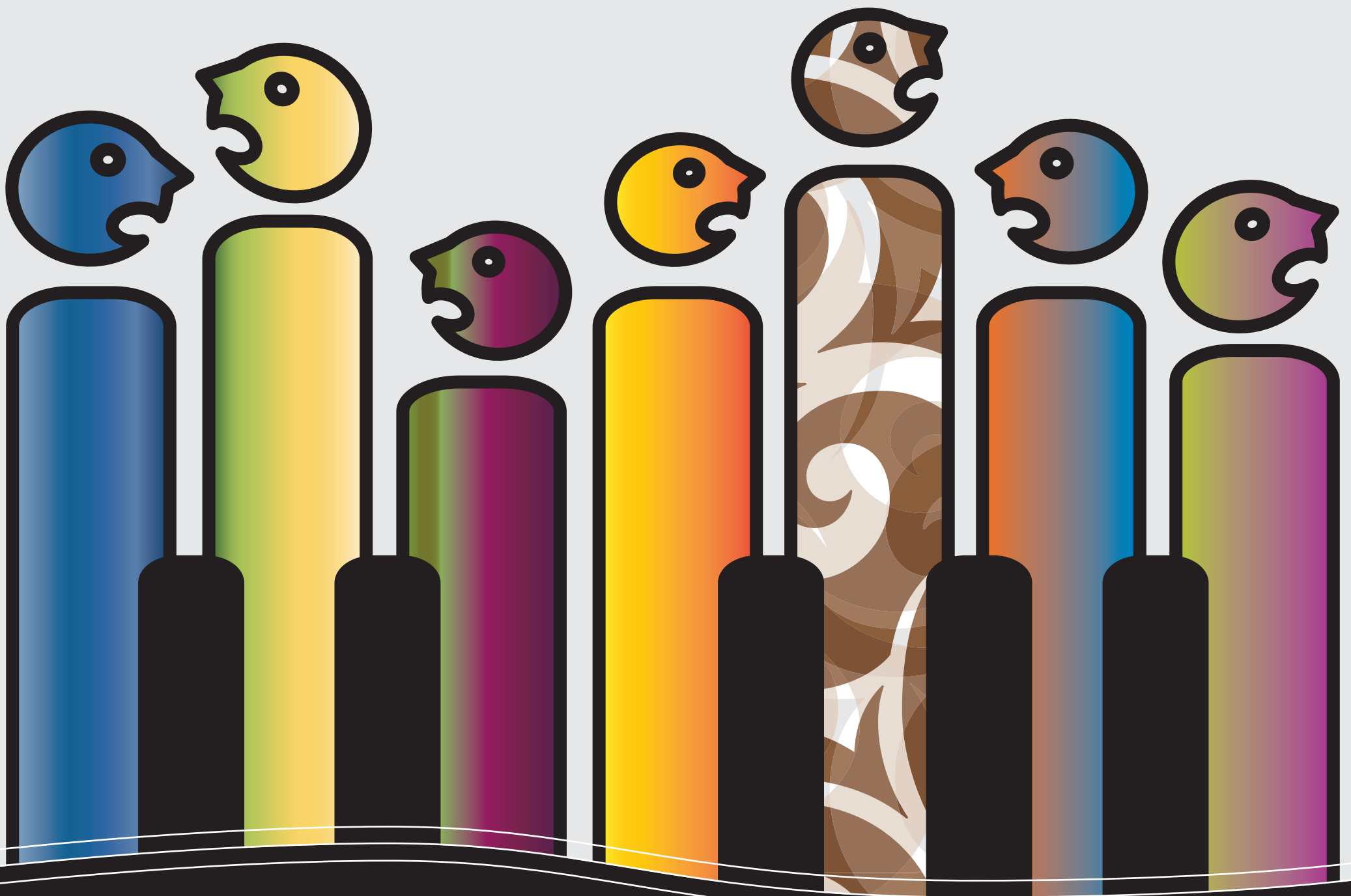
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