

EVOCATIVE

VALDOSTA
SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA



2023-2024 Season

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the 2023-2024 Valdosta Symphony Orchestra season at Valdosta State University. We are celebrating 34 years of the transformative power of music, and we are delighted to have you join us from your favorite seat in Whitehead Auditorium for what promises to be five inspiring live performances.

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 — because we understand the undeniable role the arts play in bringing people together, fostering creativity, and driving innovation. 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 American Prize-winning VSO serves both the cultural life of Valdosta and the regional academic mission of VSU. Its membership is a unique blend of resident artist-faculty, students studying professional music disciplines, talented community performers, and carefully selected professionals from a five-state region. It attracts guest soloists of national and international renown.

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 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 the many individuals, families, and corporations who generously support, protect, and nurture our university community’s tradition of musical excellence.

Thank you for being a part of our audience.

Enjoy the performance!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard A. Carvajal". The signature is fluid and cursive.

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

Good evening,

Our Valdosta Symphony Orchestra is truly a unique enterprise, one of a select few in the entire country that operates collaboratively and benefits both the university and community. The VSO is a premier example of our campus and community's commitment to Arts and culture, fostering tourism, economic growth, and civic pride. As such, we have a responsibility to nurture a thriving arts community, to educate, mentor, and support our students, and enhance the cultural landscape of our region. Together, we embark on a musical journey that captivates and uplifts our community, leaving an indelible mark for generations to come.



I want to take a moment to express my deep gratitude to all our attendees, steadfast season ticket holders, generous donors, and visionary sponsors. Your investment in the performing arts and specifically the Valdosta Symphony Orchestra, is a testament to your belief in the power of music -- to educate, inspire, and entertain, and we are grateful for your continued support.

Year after year, the VSO assembles unique performances that feature talented guest performers and showcases the outstanding artistry of our faculty through solo performances and collaborative leadership to create music recognized across national and international stages, right here in our own community.

Regarding our outstanding faculty and student performers, the Executive Director, and Director/Conductor of the VSO -- their hard work, grit, and dedication to their craft brings the orchestra to life. We are truly fortunate to have such a passionate group of students, faculty, guest artists, professionals, and loyal supporters -- we couldn't do it without you.

My sincere thanks to each one of you for championing our Valdosta Symphony Orchestra. We appreciate your attendance and your unwavering dedication to the College of the Arts, the Department of Music, and to the Valdosta Symphony Orchestra. We are delighted that you have chosen to be part of this effort.

Enjoy the evening and the performance, we are in for a real treat.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael T. Schmidt".

Michael T. Schmidt
Dean, College of the Arts

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About the Music Director



Howard Hsu

Howard Hsu is the Music Director of the Valdosta (GA) Symphony Orchestra and serves as Associate 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" and "Orchestras of 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, 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 has given the Georgia premieres of Fernande Decruck's Sonata for Saxophone and Orchestra, several of the Debussy/Matthews Preludes, and Jonathan Bailey Holland's *Motor City Dance Mix*.

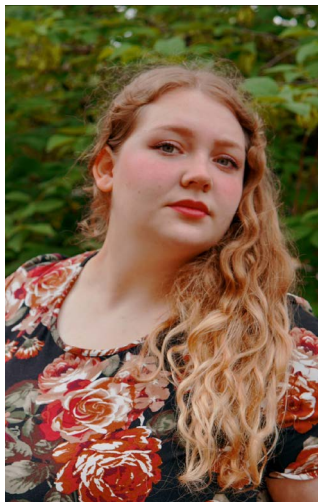
Howard Hsu has appeared as guest conductor with the Hartford (CT), Fox Valley (WI), Wyoming, Mankato (MN), Macon (GA), and New Britain (CT) Symphonies, as well as the Bronx (NY) Arts Ensemble, with whom he conducted the world premiere of Eleanor Cory's *O'Keefe's Flora*. He was a Visiting Assistant Professor 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

Aspen Sloan, Soprano

Aspen, hailing from Thomasville, Georgia, is a senior studying vocal performance under the guidance of Dr. Tamara Hardesty. She specializes in classical roles and has garnered recognition for her talent, including winning accolades in competitions such as SERNATS.



Aspen has also delivered standout performances as Angelica in *Suor Angelica* and Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte*, featured in recent VSU opera productions. She plans on graduating with her vocal performance degree and will be pursuing her master's degree at another institution. In the future, Aspen hopes to perform on stages worldwide and share her deep love for music and the arts.



The Valdosta Symphony Orchestra

34th Season

Howard Hsu, Music Director

“Evocative”

April 27, 2024

This concert is sponsored by Valdosta Family Medicine.

Don Juan, Tone Poem after Lenau, Op. 20 | 19 mins

Richard Strauss (1864-1949)

“Porgi amor” from *The Marriage of Figaro* | 4 mins

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

“Quando m’en vo” from *La bohème* | 3 mins

Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924)

Apsen Sloan, soprano

Winner of the 2024 VSO Concerto Competition

~ INTERMISSION ~

“Prelude and Liebestod” from *Tristan and Isolde* | 17 mins

Richard Wagner (1813-1883)

Courtesy of Gloria Boyette Corker, winner of the “Choose Your Favorite Musical Work” Symphony Ball auction item

Pines of Rome | 23 mins

Ottorino Respighi (1879-1936)

I. “I pini di Villa Borghese” (“The Pines of the Villa Borghese”)

II. “Pini presso una catacomba” (“Pines Near a Catacomb”)

III. “I pini del Gianicolo” (“The Pines of the Janiculum”)

IV. “I pini della via Appia” (“The Pines of the Appian Way”)

Howard Hsu, conductor

Offstage brass:

Trumpet: Johnny Dixon, Dustin Kirby, Braeden Floyd, Dr. Lee Smith, Brody Johnson

Horn: Theo Horton

Trombone: Natalie Savoie, Riley Carr

Tuba: William Griffin, Charles Williams

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Xin Yu Chang
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Sergio Sabillon
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Acting Principal
Megumi Terry
Michael Sparks
Alysia Johnson
Erika Sciascia
Amelia Pharis
Lambert Hsieh
Elma Sanabria
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Dale Fedele
Dennis Savoie

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Catie Canale

Keyboard

Valerie Holton Smith, *Principal*
Beibe Lin

Valdosta Symphony Orchestra

ABOUT THE MUSIC

by Alan M. Rothenberg

Don Juan, Tone Poem after Lenau, Op. 20

Richard Strauss (1864-1949)

Completed in 1888. About the same time: 1887: Arthur Conan Doyle publishes the first Sherlock Holmes story, Verdi completes "Otello." 1888: Mahler becomes director of the Budapest opera, Gilbert & Sullivan's "The Yeoman of the Guard" premieres. 1889: Herman Hollerith invents the punch card system.

The legend of a man whom women find irresistible has been a favorite theme of poets and artists for some time, Mozart's *Don Giovanni* being the most notable musical example. Late-romantic composer Richard Strauss based his musical depiction on an unfinished poem by the Hungarian Nicholas Lenau. In Lenau's version, Don Juan is not so much a lothario as a tormented man, in a futile search for the ideal woman: "to enjoy in one woman all women, since he cannot possess them as individuals." Numerous sexual conquests leave the Don unfulfilled, and eventually he realizes the futility of his search. Finally, during a duel with the brother of one of the women, he lets himself be killed, since he has found victory "as boring as the whole of life."

Richard Strauss' initial musical training encouraged respect for the elegance and directness found in the music of Haydn and Mozart, while also cautioning him about "modernist" composers, particularly Richard Wagner. But Strauss quickly became enamored of Wagner's music, and in 1888 Strauss began working as a *repetiteur* (rehearsal supervisor) at Bayreuth, the summer festival Wagner created to showcase his own works. Under Wagner's direct influence, Strauss found his own compositional voice, combining Viennese clarity and Wagner's theatricality. *Don Juan* is the first piece in Strauss' distinctive style of musical storytelling, with exuberant orchestration and expressive depictions of people and events.

Don Juan is set in sonata-allegro form. The first theme, heard after an introductory flourish, represents Don Juan on his way to romantic adventure. This theme recurs frequently, usually after lyrical "love music" that highlights solo instruments, particularly violin and oboe. Near the end, the horns introduce a theme depicting the nobility of the Don. Suddenly the music becomes quiet—he has realized the emptiness of his life, and he allows himself to succumb to the sword.

"Porgi amor" from *The Marriage of Figaro*

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

Pierre Beaumarchais' 1778 play *La folle journée, ou le Mariage de Figaro* (*The Day of Folly, or The Marriage of Figaro*) is the second of three plays about the exploits of Figaro, servant to Count Almaviva. Written just before the French Revolution, the play is a sharp and witty criticism of the aristocracy. The librettist, Lorenzo Da Ponte removed most of the original play's social commentary to get past the censors, and Mozart wrote some of

his greatest music, resulting in a domestic comedy that has not left the standard operatic repertoire since its premiere in 1786. In the opera, philandering Count Almaviva has set his eyes on Susanna, the Countess' maid, who is preparing to marry Figaro, the Count's head servant. In her aria "Porgi amor" ("Grant, love, some comfort"), the Countess laments her husband's infidelities. She then conspires with Figaro and Susanna to teach the count a lesson.

"Quando m'en vo" from *La bohème*

Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924)

Reaction to the February 1896 first performance of Puccini's *La bohème*, conducted by Arturo Toscanini, was lukewarm at best, possibly because the well-heeled Turin audience disliked this story about lower-class, free-spirited bohemians in Paris. Two months later, at a performance in Palermo, the audience loved it so much they demanded the repetition of the last act. The opera has since become a fixture of the mainstream repertoire. Based on a collection of short stories by Henri Murger, Puccini's opera focuses on two couples and their on-again/off-again relationships. The second act takes place on Christmas Eve, and the painter Marcello is celebrating with his friends at a Paris bistro. His former lover, Musetta, arrives with her current companion. Seeing Marcello there, Musetta sings "Quando m'en vo" ("When I go along"), an aria describing how everyone desires her, and by the end of the act Marcello and Musetta are back together.

"Prelude and Liebestod" from *Tristan and Isolde*

Richard Wagner (1813-1883)

In 1854, while living in Zurich and working on his plan to create four operas based on Nordic mythology, Richard Wagner found himself falling in love with Mathilde Wesendonk, wife of wealthy merchant Otto Wesendonk. Immersed in love, Wagner set the *Ring* cycle aside to compose *Tristan and Isolde*, based on Celtic and French medieval legends. The opera was completed in 1859 and was first performed in 1865.

The opera is at once simple and extraordinarily complex. The simplicity is found in the story. While bringing Isolde to King Marke so she may become Queen, the King's loyal servant Tristan hides his love for her. Tristan and Isolde drink the love potion intended for the King, and their true love for each other is revealed. Realizing the only way they can be together is in death, Tristan allows himself to be fatally wounded in a sword fight, and Isolde dies immersed in her love for Tristan. The complexity is found in Wagner's music—there are no less than 40 *leitmotifs*. Throughout the opera, the music describes the inner thoughts and feelings of the title characters, with many moments of emotional conflict and longing.

The opera's prelude begins with what is now known as "The Tristan Chord," probably the most analyzed moment in music. The chord is left unresolved until the end of the opera, in the *Liebestod* ("love-death").

Pines of Rome

Ottorino Respighi (1879-1936)

Ottorino Respighi, the most famous Italian orchestral composer of the twentieth century, was born into a family of amateur musicians. He pursued musical studies diligently in his native Bologna, and secured positions as a violinist first in a local opera house, and then at the Imperial Theater in St. Petersburg. While in Russia, he studied composition with Rimsky-Korsakov, at the time considered one of the masters of orchestration. Upon his return to Bologna, Respighi was hailed as a great composer, and subsequently traveled throughout Europe, giving classes. In 1913, he was appointed composition professor at Rome's St. Cecilia Conservatory.

Respighi was eager to build on the success of his 1917 tone poem *Fountains of Rome*. But it was not until 1924 that *Pines of Rome* was completed, and it quickly became his most popular work. The first performance, in Rome on December 14, 1924, was an absolute triumph. When Respighi toured the U.S. in 1926, he attended performances of *Pines* by Arturo Toscanini and the New York Philharmonic, Leopold Stokowski and the Philadelphia Orchestra, and virtually every other major American orchestra.

Throughout the piece, one can hear how much Respighi learned about orchestration during his studies with Rimsky-Korsakov. Also clearly evident is the influence of Debussy and impressionism, particularly in the two central slow movements. In her memoir, Respighi's wife, constant companion, and musical assistant Elsa observes that the first movement includes songs she sang when playing in the Villa Borghese as a child. Also notable is the then-unprecedented use of recorded nightingale songs in the third section, the first instance of recorded sound integrated with live performance. Respighi even specified which record—a Victor 78 rpm disk—to be used.

The composer prefaced the score with the following program:

I. Pine-Trees of the Villa Borghese

Children are at play in the pine groves of Villa Borghese. They dance round in circles, they play at soldiers, marching and fighting. They are wrought up by their own cries like swallows at evening; they come and go in swarms. Suddenly the scene changes.

II. Pine-Trees Near a Catacomb

We see the shades of the pine-trees fringing the entrance to a catacomb. From the depth rises the sound of mournful psalm singing, floating through the air like a solemn hymn, and gradually, mysteriously dispersing.

III. Pine-Trees of the Janiculum

A quiver runs through the air: the pine trees of the Janiculum stand distinctly outlined in the clear light of a full moon. A nightingale is singing.

IV. Pine-Trees of the Appian Way

Misty dawn on the Appian Way: solitary pine-trees guarding the magic landscape. The muffled, ceaseless rhythm of unending footsteps. The poet has a fantastic vision of bygone glories. Trumpets sound and, in the brilliance of the newly risen sun, a consular army bursts forth towards the sacred way, mounting in triumph to the Capitol.

Valdosta Symphony Orchestra

2024-25 Sneak Peak



September 21, 2024

Jeff Beal
Body in Motion,
for violin and orchestra
(Georgia premiere)
Kelly Hall-Tompkins, violin

Tchaikovsky Symphony
No. 6
in B minor, OP. 74
“Pathétique”

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
2024-25 Sneak Peak
(continued)



October 26, 2024 - Halloween concert

February 15, 2025

Beethoven
Piano Concerto No. 5
E-flat Major, Op. 73
"Emperor"

Jon Nakamatsu, piano



March 29, 2025 - Stravinsky *Rite of Spring*



May 3, 2025

Byron Stripling,
trumpet

Carmen Bradford,
vocalist



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* designates former presidents of the Valdosta Symphony Guild

HOTEL PATRONS



The background is a vertical, arched stained glass window. The window is divided into several panes by dark leaded glass lines. The colors are primarily deep blue, purple, and teal, with large, expressive white brushstrokes overlaid across the panes. The overall effect is abstract and artistic.

League
of American
Orchestras

Cover Design by
Damien van Veen