

SUBSCRIPTION CONCERT ONE  
2023-2024 SEASON

# RUSH

VALDOSTA  
SYMPHONY  
ORCHESTRA



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, reading "Richard A. Carvajal".

**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**  
Interim Dean, College of the Arts

## Concert Sponsor



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 34th 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 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

## Melissa White, violin

American violinist Melissa White has enchanted audiences and critics around the world as both a soloist and a chamber musician. Her February 2020 performance with the National Philharmonic was deemed “absolutely breathtaking” by Maryland Theatre Guide critic Katie Gaab, who cited the “grace, precision, and warmth” of her playing in Florence Price’s Violin



Concerto No. 1. Reviewing the same concert for The Washington Post, Matthew Guerrieri called her “an excellent advocate, prioritizing ease and fluency over intensity, suiting the music’s lyric and episodic nature.”

The 2022-2023 concert season abounded with achievement for Ms. White, whose rapid rise as a soloist captured the attention of orchestras

and audiences worldwide. Recent orchestral performances include return engagements with the National Philharmonic and the Chicago Sinfonietta, a debut performance with The Philadelphia Orchestra (with Yannick Nézet-Séguin conducting), and appearances with the Richmond, Cincinnati, and Midland Symphony Orchestras, the Northwest Sinfonietta, and the Aspen Music, Brevard Music Center, and Heartland Festival Orchestras.

Ms. White will make her recital debut at Carnegie Hall in June 2023, kicking off what is sure to be a milestone season of performances. Recently named 2023-2024 Joyce C. Willis Artist in Residence with the Hartford Symphony Orchestra, Ms. White will perform next season both alongside the orchestra and in solo recital, will host panel discussions on pertinent topics in the arts, and will work closely with string students from underserved communities in the region. Ms. White will debut as soloist with the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra and Buffalo Philharmonic in the 2023-2024 season, in addition to appearances with the Charlotte Symphony, Valdosta Symphony Orchestra, and West Virginia Symphony Orchestra.

A first-prize laureate in the Sphinx Competition, she has performed with such leading U.S. ensembles as the Cleveland Orchestra, the Boston Pops, the Louisville Orchestra, and the Atlanta, Baltimore, Colorado, Detroit, and Pittsburgh symphony orchestras. Internationally, she has appeared as soloist with Poland’s Filharmonia Dolnoslaska; with the Colombian Youth Orchestra in a tour of that country; with the Czech National Philharmonic; and as a recitalist in Baku, Azerbaijan, and Jelenia Gora, Poland. Her film credits include a violin solo in the soundtrack to Jordan Peele’s 2019 psychological thriller *Us*; and in addition to her numerous classical performances she has also performed alongside several pop artists including Pharrell, Bruno Mars, Alicia Keys, and Lauryn Hill.

Outside of orchestra and recital appearances, Ms. White relishes the opportunity to perform in chamber music settings alongside close friends and colleagues. She looks forward to engagements with Kaleidoscope Chamber Collective, who will appear in June 2023 at Wigmore Hall with star violinist Hilary Hahn, as well as upcoming collaborations with Orpheus Chamber Orchestra and the DUBHE Ensemble, with whom she will appear at the National Orchestral Institute + Festival in the summer of 2023 and the Harris Theater in the 2023-24 season.

Ms. White is a founding member of New York-based Harlem Quartet, where since 2006 her passion and artistry have contributed to performances hailed for “bringing a new attitude to classical music, one that is fresh, bracing and intelligent” (Cincinnati Enquirer). Together with Harlem Quartet, she has appeared in many of the country’s most prestigious venues, including Carnegie Hall, the White House, and the Kennedy Center; and toured throughout the U.S., as well as in Europe, Africa, Japan, and the United Kingdom. Harlem Quartet has collaborated closely with leading jazz musicians including Chick Corea and Gary Burton with whom their recording, “Mozart Goes Dancing” won three Grammy Awards, including the Grammy for Best Instrumental Composition in 2013. Harlem Quartet was named quartet-in-residence at Montclair State University in the fall of 2021, and has served as the visiting quartet-in-residence at the Royal College of Music in London since 2016.

A passionate educator, Ms. White currently serves as Music Artist Faculty at New York University’s Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development and, as of fall of 2022, she is also Professor of Music at the University at Buffalo. She looks forward to her Sarasota Music Festival debut as a faculty member in June of 2023.

Born and raised in Lansing, Michigan, she received her BMus from The Curtis Institute of Music and MMus from New England Conservatory, where her teachers included Jaime Laredo, Ida Kavafian, Donald Weilerstein, and Miriam Fried.

In addition to her musical career, Ms. White has enjoyed practicing various styles of yoga for more than a decade, and completed training in both Vinyasa and Ashtanga at Sampoorna Yoga School in Goa, India. She is the co-founder of Intermission, a groundbreaking program that unites body, mind, breath, and music-making through yoga and meditation; the program comprises sessions for students and retreats for professionals.

Melissa is represented worldwide by Dinin Arts Management & Consulting. She is incredibly grateful to be playing a c1780 Ferdinando Gagliano violin, currently on loan from Strumenti. Patron-investors can help keep this violin in Melissa’s hands by investing in it online at [strumenti.com](http://strumenti.com).

**The Valdosta Symphony Orchestra**  
**34th Season**

**Howard Hsu**, Music Director

**“Rush”**

April 30, 2023

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

**Polonaise from *Eugene Onegin*, Op. 24 | 5 mins**

Pyotr Illyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893)

**Violin Concerto No. 1 in D Major | 34 mins**

Florence Price (1887–1953)

I. Tempo moderato

II. Andante

III. Allegro

Melissa White, violin

~ INTERMISSION ~

**Symphony No. 5 in E Minor, Op. 64 | 44 mins**

Pyotr Illyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893)

I. Andante — Allegro con anima

II. Andante cantabile, con alcuna licenza

III. Valse: Allegro moderato

IV. Finale: Andante maestoso — Allegro vivace

Howard Hsu, conductor



# THE VALDOSTA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Howard Hsu, *Music Director* • **Lougenia and William Gabard Chair**

Clell Wright, *Chorus Master*

## Violin I

Kristin Pfeifer Yu,  
*Concertmaster*

**Leona Strickland**  
**Hudson Chair**

Alexander Reshetnichenko,  
*Assistant Principal*

Hannah MacLean

Felipe Romagnoli

Kevin Chaney

Sergio Sabillon

Elma Sanabria

Alysia Johnson

Michael Sparks

Marina Volynets

## Violin II

Kenneth Davis,  
*Acting Principal*

Thomas Roggio

Catherine Yara-Aponte

Xin Yu Chang

Annalisa Chang

Amelia Pharis

Erika Sciascia

Rachel Grubb Friedman

Jennifer Clyde

Madison Brown

## Viola

Laurel Yu, *Principal*

**Brantley and Barbara**  
**Jenkins Chair**

Miriam Tellechea

Luiz Barrionuevo

Molly Turner

Allyson Royale

Benjamin Suarez

Hunter Sanchez

Dylan Heib-Schatzberg

Ronald Lopez

Jonathan Drawdy

## Violoncello

Steven Taylor, *Principal*

**Daniel and Carolyn**  
**Coleman Chair**

Micah Taylor

Michael Knowles

Kyna Elliott

David Lescalleet

Lidia Sanchez

Christina Wong

Anthony Shands

Devon Anderson

## Contrabass

Tod Leavitt, *Principal*

Gabriel Monticello,  
*Assistant Principal*

Vadim Volynets

Trent Harper

## Flute

Lindsay Sparks, *Principal*

Elizabeth Goode

## Oboe

Susan Eischeid, *Principal*

**Allan and Joan**  
**Dear Chair**

Lindsay Miller

## Clarinet

Peter Geldrich, *Principal*

**Kay Jennett Chair**

Christian Windish

Manuel Barreto

## Bassoon

Shannon Lowe,

*Acting Principal*

Sherwood Wise, *Interim*

*Bassoon*

## Horn

Kelly Langenberg, *Principal*

William Schaffer

Paul Basler

Elizabeth Deitemyer

Riley Prichard

## Trumpet

Javian Brabham, *Principal*

Jacob Bady

Richard Wiemer

Brandon Allen

## Trombone

Douglas Farwell, *Principal*

**Jerry Jennett Chair**

Franklin Carmona

Riley Carr

## Bass Trombone

Evan Hurst

## Tuba

Ryan Sorenson, *Principal*

Charles Williams

## Timpani

Ryan Smith, *Principal*

## Percussion

Milik Green

## Keyboard

Valerie Holton Smith, *Principal*

# Valdosta Symphony Orchestra

## ABOUT THE MUSIC

by Alan M. Rothenberg

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### Polonaise from *Eugene Onegin*, Op. 24

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893)

Tchaikovsky's only work to gain a foothold in the standard operatic repertoire, *Eugene Onegin* is based on Alexander Pushkin's 1833 novel of the same name. The idea of writing an opera based on Pushkin's novel was suggested to Tchaikovsky in 1877 by an opera singer. The composer at first thought the idea ridiculous, but within the next few days had written a draft of the plot and began composing shortly thereafter, completing the opera in 1879.

The plot of *Eugene Onegin* is a straightforward story of love offered and unrequited. Tatyana, the daughter of a wealthy landowner, is in love with the self-centered Onegin, who rejects her affections. But by the time Onegin is ready to return her love, Tatyana has married a prince to whom she intends to be faithful, despite her renewed ardor for Onegin. The Polonaise heard this afternoon occurs at the beginning of the final act, where a grand ball is being held at which Onegin confronts the now-married Tatyana with his feelings.

### Violin Concerto No. 1 in D Major

Florence Price (1887–1953)

Florence Price—or more precisely, her music—is benefiting from our increased attention to composers who were not, in the words of New Yorker music critic Alex Ross, “white, male, and dead.” Born in 1887 in Little Rock, Arkansas, she was an enthusiastic and precocious music student, publishing her first piano piece at age eleven, and graduating high school as the class valedictorian at age fourteen. Finding no music school in the south would accept her, she enrolled at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston, where she studied organ and composition. She graduated with honors in 1906.

After moving to Atlanta, she became head of the music department at the historically Black institution Atlanta College, now known as Clark Atlanta University. In 1912, she married and moved back to Little Rock. She gave birth to two children, then in 1927 escaped an abusive marriage and Little Rock's racial oppression by moving to Chicago. There she became part of the Chicago Black Renaissance, continuing her musical studies privately and at local universities. Price achieved some success in Chicago—in 1933 her First Symphony was performed by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Other, smaller orchestras also began presenting her music. However, as more modern musical styles rose in popularity, Price's music faded into the background, except for her settings of Negro Spirituals.

While much of her music has been lost, the last twenty years have seen a revival of interest in Florence Price, partly caused by the discovery of a large collection of her manuscripts in a dilapidated house in St. Anne, Illinois, a small town near the Illinois/Indiana border—the house had once been Price's summer home. Alex Ross wrote, “not only did Price fail to enter the [musical] canon; a large quantity of her music came perilously close to obliteration. That run-down house in St. Anne is a potent symbol of how a country can forget its cultural history.”

The manuscript of Price's First Violin Concerto was among those found in the St. Anne home. Composed in 1939, there is no record of any performances before the first modern performance in 2018. John Michael Cooper, a musicologist who specializes in under-recognized composers of color, notes that the first concerto “is in some ways a microcosm of the issues

that she faced throughout her creative career... On the one hand, it demonstrates both her fluency in the idioms of Euro-American classical repertoire... On the other hand, those idioms are counterbalanced by elements from Black vernacular ones such as spirituals and jazz.”

The concerto is cast in the typical three movement fast-slow-fast format, and the careful listener will note occasional references to concertos that form the core of the solo violinist’s repertoire, including those by Mendelssohn, Brahms, and Tchaikovsky. But these are balanced with extensive chromatic passages, “blue” notes, and moments of “call and response” between the soloist and the orchestra.

## Symphony No. 5 in E Minor, Op. 64

Pyotr Ilych Tchaikovsky

*Completed in 1888. About the same time: 1887: Death of Alexandr Borodin, Verdi’s “Otello” premieres. 1888: George Eastman perfects the first Kodak camera, Rimsky-Korsakov’s “Scheherazade” premieres. 1889: Alexander Gustave Eiffel designs a tower for the Paris World Exhibition, Herman Hollerith invents the punch card system.*

The winter of 1887–1888 found Tchaikovsky on a tour of Europe and England, conducting his own works and those of other Russian composers. The concerts were greeted unevenly—Tchaikovsky’s pieces that were welcomed enthusiastically by the public were dismissed by the critics. It didn’t help that he was, by his own admission, not a particularly good conductor, and that much of his orchestral music was unknown outside Russia. He returned home in May 1888, moving to a rural area close to Moscow. He spent the first few weeks recovering from the hectic pace of the tour. Eventually his mind turned back to composing and he began working on his Fifth Symphony. By the end of June, he had sketched the entire work, completing the orchestration in August. At the first performance, in St. Petersburg on November 17, 1888, Tchaikovsky once again received mixed reactions. Both the audience and the orchestra presented the composer with bouquets and many ovations, but the critics called the symphony routine and full of cheap effects.

Always sensitive to how his music was received, the reactions of the critics led Tchaikovsky to reconsider the merits of his Fifth Symphony. He wrote to his patron Nadezhda von Meck, “I have become convinced that this symphony is unsuccessful... It was clear to me that the ovations I received [at the first performance] were directed at my previous work, but the symphony itself was incapable of attracting them or at least pleasing them. The realization of all this causes me an acute and agonizing sense of dissatisfaction with myself.” But in January 1889, on a second tour of Europe, he conducted it in Hamburg, in the presence of Johannes Brahms, to great acclaim. He wrote to his brother Modeste that “the symphony ceased to strike me as bad and I have fallen in love with it again.”

Publicly, Tchaikovsky said that the symphony had no program, however the sketches show some extra-musical ideas that were in his mind while composing the work. A note seems to indicate a general plan for the first movement: “Introduction: complete resignation before Fate, or what is the same thing, the inscrutable design of Providence. Allegro: Murmurs, doubts, laments, reproaches against XXX. Shall I cast myself into the embrace of faith?” XXX was usually how Tchaikovsky referred to his homosexuality in his diaries, something he considered shameful and caused him endless anxiety. The symphony begins with a “fate motive” that is heard throughout the piece. The atmosphere of the first movement is somewhat brooding and introspective. The second movement, with three distinct lyrical melodies, is clearly a love song. In one of the sketches for this movement there is written in French, above the opening horn melody, “O, how I love you! O my love!” Twice the fate motive interrupts.

The third movement is a graceful waltz that could easily have come from one of Tchaikovsky’s ballet scores, but, just before the end, the fate motive reappears. In the finale, the fate motive is no longer an interruption; it is incorporated into other themes or is set in contrast to them. At the end the motive reappears, but now in a major key. Perhaps the composer intended to tell us that faith had triumphed over fate.

Program Notes © 2023 Alan M. Rothenberg [www.noteperfectnotes.com](http://www.noteperfectnotes.com)

# Valdosta Symphony Orchestra

## Upcoming Events

**October 12, 2023**

### **POPS IN THE PARK**

VSU Fine Arts Building Amphitheater • 6:00 p.m.

- Performances by Faculty and Student Jazz Ensembles, Spotlighters, and the Steel Drum Band
- Guest Artist: Sage Kahn, trumpet
- Call (229) 333-2150 to reserve tickets
- Call (229) 333-5804 for more information

**November 4, 2023**

### **Beethoven and Blue Jeans**

Mozart Allegro from Serenade No. 13 in G Major,

K. 525 "Eine kleine Nachtmusik" | 4 mins

Mozart *Don Giovanni* Overture, K. 527 | 7 mins

Neruda Concerto for Trumpet in E-flat

Major | 16 mins

Javian Brabham, trumpet



Beethoven Symphony No. 8 in F Major, Op. 93 | 27 mins

- The Neruda is one of the most popular trumpet concertos, but was originally composed for French horn
- Beethoven's student asked why the Seventh Symphony was more popular than the Eighth, and Beethoven replied, "...because the Eighth is so much better."

Break out your blue jeans, have some BBQ (courtesy of Stifel and the VSO) on the Fine Arts lawn before the show, and then sit back and enjoy your Valdosta Symphony Orchestra!

**November 11, 2023**

### **VSO SYMPHONY BALL**



# THE VALDOSTA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

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# 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).



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*HOTEL PATRONS*



The background is an abstract composition of blue and white splatters and textures, resembling watercolor or ink on a light surface. On the right side, there is a blurred, vertical image of an orchestra, showing the silhouettes of musicians and their instruments, which is partially obscured by the abstract splatters.

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