

Program

Sixty-Second Season
Third Subscription Concert

Violin Superstar Ray Chen

Tuesday, January 21, 2025
Waco Hall, 7:30 p.m.

LAWRENCE LOH, MUSIC DIRECTOR

Sinfonia (for Orbiting Spheres) Missy Mazzoli
(b. 1980)

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

Ray Chen, violin

INTERMISSION

Symphony No. 5, Op. 100 in B-flat major Sergei Prokofiev
(1891–1953)

- I. Andante
- II. Allegro marcato
- III. Adagio
- IV. Allegro giocoso

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The Waco Symphony Orchestra is a member of the League of American Orchestras.

Sinfonia (for Orbiting Spheres)

Missy Mazzoli (b. 1980)

Recently deemed “one of the more consistently inventive, surprising composers now working in New York” (*The New York Times*) and “Brooklyn’s post-millennial Mozart” (*Time Out New York*), Missy Mazzoli has had her music performed by the Kronos Quartet, LA Opera, eighth blackbird, the BBC Symphony, Scottish Opera and many others. In 2018 she became one of the first two women, along with Jeanine Tesori, to receive a main stage commission from the Metropolitan Opera and was nominated for a Grammy award. She is Composer-in-Residence at the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and from 2012-2015 was Composer-in-Residence with Opera Philadelphia. Upcoming commissions include works for Opera Philadelphia, the National Ballet of Canada, Chicago Lyric Opera and Norwegian National Opera. Her works are published by G. Schirmer. (Source: missymazzoli.com)

Following is the composer’s note on the work we will hear tonight:

Sinfonia (for Orbiting Spheres) is music in the shape of a solar system, a collection of rococo loops that twist around each other within a larger orbit. The word “sinfonia” refers to baroque works for chamber orchestra but also to the old Italian term for a hurdy-gurdy, a medieval stringed instrument with constant, wheezing drones that are cranked out under melodies played on an attached keyboard. It’s a piece that churns and roils, that inches close to the listener only to leap away at breakneck speed, in the process transforming the ensemble turns into a makeshift hurdy-gurdy, flung recklessly into space. *Sinfonia (for Orbiting Spheres)* was commissioned by the Los Angeles Philharmonic and later expanded for a concert with the Boulder Philharmonic.

Concerto in D Major for Violin and Orchestra, Op. 35

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893)

Tchaikovsky grew up in a moderately musical home in a remote area west of the Ural mountains. His parents provided for piano instruction, but there was no talk of Tchaikovsky pursuing music as a career. With their sights set on the civil service, the parents sent ten-year-old Tchaikovsky to a boarding school in St. Petersburg. Two years later he entered the School of Jurisprudence, graduating at age nineteen and spending the next three years as an assistant in the Ministry of Justice.

While Tchaikovsky appears to have taken seriously his general education and his work in the civil service, his musical urges were stirring. In 1861 he enrolled in the music theory class of the newly founded Russian Music Society (RMS). The following year, the RMS became the St. Petersburg Conservatory, under the directorship of Russian composer and pianist Anton Rubenstein. Tchaikovsky (at age 22) enrolled full-time in courses in harmony, instrumentation, and composition. When he graduated in 1865, he was invited to serve as professor of music theory at the forthcoming Moscow Conservatory (founded 1866). During his years at the Conservatory, Tchaikovsky composed operas, orchestral works, music for piano, songs, and chamber music.

A turning point came in 1877, the year that Tchaikovsky’s relationship with two women would spell disaster for his life. The first, Antonina Miliukova, was a former conservatory student who professed love and said she was desperate to meet him and would kill herself if he refused. Tchaikovsky yielded to her persistence, and on July 18 they were married. His decision was a desperate attempt to dispel rumors of his homosexuality; the marriage was a nightmare for Tchaikovsky and drove him to attempt suicide.

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At the same time his marriage was disintegrating, Tchaikovsky's long correspondence with Nadezhda von Meck was flourishing. A wealthy widow, von Meck had first written to him in December of 1876 concerning various commissions, but the correspondence quickly became personal. The relationship had a bizarre side—Tchaikovsky and von Meck agreed never to meet in person—but it sustained the composer, both emotionally and financially, and left posterity an invaluable window into his inner world.

Tchaikovsky composed his *Violin Concerto*, Op. 35, in the spring of 1878 in Clarens, a Swiss village on the shores of Lake Geneva. After a private hearing, he replaced the original middle movement with the now-familiar Canzonetta, composed in a single day. Tchaikovsky dedicated the concerto to Leopold Auer, who initially rejected it as unplayable. The premiere took place in Vienna on 4 December 1881, with the Russian-born virtuoso Adolph Brodsky as soloist. Critical reception was at first hostile, but Russian audiences embraced the work. Auer eventually changed his view and went on to teach it to some of the finest violinists of the next generation. Today it is considered one of the great violin concertos of the nineteenth century.

Symphony No. 5 in B-flat Major, Op. 100 *Sergei Prokofiev* (1891–1953)

Russian composer Sergei Prokofiev was the brilliant, pampered son of an agronomist on a large estate in Sontsovka in eastern Ukraine. He composed from the age of four and was an accomplished pianist by ten. When he entered the St. Petersburg Conservatory at age thirteen, his catalog of compositions included a symphony, four operas, two piano sonatas, and several other piano pieces. As a conservatory student he was considered odd and blunt. He went his own way, irrespective of whatever teaching he received, producing a considerable body of impressive, though not particularly well-liked, compositions. During his conservatory years, he acquired a reputation as an innovator and iconoclast.

Prokofiev lived during a time of political upheaval. Like many of his contemporaries, he at first welcomed the February Revolution of 1917 because it portended a liberation of the arts. In the ensuing turmoil, however, he fled Russia for the United States by way of Japan, arriving in New York in September 1918. In the States, he found himself competing with Rachmaninoff, whose music was more accessible to conservative American audiences and who was more willing to showcase the music of other composers. After two seasons, Prokofiev went to Europe for three years, where

Opening Notes Pre-Concert Talks

6:40 p.m.–7:10 p.m.

Before each classical Season Concert

6:10 p.m.–6:40 p.m.

Before *Jurassic Park* in Concert

Learn interesting insights about the music you'll hear at Opening Notes, a **free pre-concert talk led by Maestro Lawrence Loh**. Featured soloists and special guests may make an appearance.

Location is in Recital Hall II within Waco Hall.

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the Parisian premieres of his *Scythian Suite* (under Koussevitzky) and a ballet titled *The Tale of the Buffoon* made him famous overnight.

Prokofiev returned to the Soviet Union for concert tours in 1927, 1929, and 1932, resettling there permanently in 1936. This was the time of Stalin's horrific purges, so Prokofiev's decision to return to his homeland remains a puzzle, as are his true sentiments about the events that swirled about him. Several of his works from this period are propagandistic. Did those works reflect his personal convictions, or was he just trying to stay alive? No one can say. It was only a matter of time before Prokofiev was reprimanded for "aloofness from Soviet reality." An official denunciation in 1948 dealt a blow from which the composer never recovered. His death on 5 March 1953, the same day Stalin died, was barely noticed.

Prokofiev's monumental *Symphony No. 5 in B-flat major, Op. 100*, is one of the composer's

most celebrated achievements. Composed in the summer of 1944, during the chaos of World War II, the work is a testament to the resilience of the human spirit. Prokofiev described it as "a hymn to free and happy Man, to his mighty powers, his pure and noble spirit."

The Symphony's richly orchestrated four movements form a mesmerizing succession of moods and colors. The first movement is triumphant, the second playful, sometimes sarcastic. The third begins with a haunting melody that builds to an emotional climax before returning to the quiet of the opening. The exuberant fourth movement brings the work to a satisfying conclusion with a rousing coda.

First performed on 13 January 1945 in Moscow, conducted by the composer, Prokofiev's *Symphony No. 5* was quickly recognized as a masterpiece.

Seeking Support of Baylor-WSO Student Interns

You can join forces with us to keep the WSO strong by sponsoring a student intern playing in the orchestra. Sponsorship opportunities start at \$300.

Recognizing that the Waco Symphony Orchestra benefits from Baylor University services including rehearsal/concert venues and a shared music library, the Baylor-WSO Intern Scholarship Program was established in 1999 as a joint effort of the Waco Symphony and the Dallas Fort Worth Professional Musicians Association, AFM Local 72-147. Student interns audition for a position in the symphony, where they are mentored by seasoned musicians as they gain valuable professional orchestral experience. This program provides experiential learning, mentorship opportunities, and prepares students for professional music careers. To the best of our knowledge, this program is the only one of its kind.

Underwriting helps fund up to 20 Baylor-WSO Student Interns each year. The WSO is seeking to increase support for its interns. If you are interested in becoming a sponsor, scan the QR code below or contact WSA Executive Director Carolyn Bess at 254-754-1035.

See page 27 for a list of WSO Musicians and Baylor-WSO Student Interns.

