



College of Music
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

MSU Symphony Orchestra

“Pines of Rome” and Honors Concert

Octavio Más-Arocas, conductor

Winners of the Honors Competition and
the Jere Hutchison Composition Competition

Ruoxi Bian, mezzo-soprano

Diya Dong, violin

Ethan Smith, composer

Friday, March 21, 2025

Cobb Great Hall, Wharton Center, 8:00 p.m.

PROGRAM

Fanfare for Symphony Orchestra Claire Oselador
The Sam and Mary Austin New Fanfares Project

Violin Concerto No. 1 in D Major, Op. 19 Sergei Prokofiev
Andantino (1891-1953)
Scherzo. Vivacissimo
Moderato. Allegro moderato
Diya Dong, violin

from *Les Huguenots* Giacomo Meyerbeer
Non, non, non... vous n'avez jamais (1791-1864)
Ruoxi Bian, mezzo-soprano

Intermission

Vintage Fantasy Ethan Smith

Pines of Rome, P 141 Ottorino Respighi
The Pines of the Villa Borghese (1879-1936)
Pines Near a Catacomb
The Pines of the Janiculum
The Pines of the Appian Way
Octavio Más-Arocas, conductor

PROGRAM NOTES

The Sam and Mary Austin New Fanfares Project

MSU Symphony Orchestra concerts will open with a newly written fanfare composed by a current composition student. The selected students are assigned to write short works for a diverse group of players giving them the opportunity to present their work with the Symphony Orchestra audience. For their continuing support of new music at MSU, we are honored to name the fanfare project after Sam and Mary Austin.

Fanfare for Symphony Orchestra

This fanfare came at quite a time in my artistic development. Between being incredibly burnt-out and feeling like I had been doing too much of the same things I always do, I felt stuck for quite some time after being asked to write for the wonderful MSU Symphony Orchestra. Not wanting to pass up such an opportunity, what resulted was a large amount of stylistic experimentation, improvisation, and self-rediscovery which, while fruitful, made it quite hard to actually start writing the piece. Once I actually got started though, I was swarmed with a sea of almost too many ideas! Ironically, this is the first large ensemble work of mine where I felt it was almost too easy to hit the three-minute mark, which was coincidentally my length goal. Usually, I find myself wanting to wrap things up not too far beyond that point, but here I found myself wanting to take my time a bit more. It made me think a lot about the nature of time: specifically, the audience's time, and how we as composers write in sound, but across time. I came to the conclusion that music forms to almost synchronize our lived experiences, but for a moment. My task was simple: to compose moments in time that, while brief in duration, are deep in experience. I hope that I have managed to live up to that task.

This short-but-sweet piece takes you on a journey through several different tonal areas and styles that I personally love. There is material inspired from film scores, a quasi-Afro-Cuban jazz moment, and blurred lines between quartal and tertian harmony. I do not want to spoil too much of what is to come, but I deeply hope you enjoy "Fanfare".

- Claire Oselador

PROGRAM NOTES (cont.)

Violin Concerto No. 1 in D Major, Op. 19

Sergei Prokofiev's early career as a composer and pianist was marked by defiance, evident in his abrasive early works like the first two Piano Concertos and *Seven, They Are Seven*, an attempt to outdo Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* in primitivistic energy. However, his lyrical side emerged in his *Violin Concerto No. 1*, composed in 1917.

That year was one of immense upheaval in Russia, with the February and October Revolutions reshaping the nation. Politically, Prokofiev likely sympathized with the ousted czarists. He avoided the turmoil of Petrograd, retreating to the Caucasus, where he composed prolifically. His 1917 output included the *Classical Symphony*, *Visions Fugitives*, and this concerto.

Originally set to premiere in November 1917 with violinist Paul Kochanski, the performance was postponed due to the political chaos. The concerto finally debuted in Paris in 1923, played by Marcel Darrieux with Serge Koussevitzky conducting. By then, Prokofiev had left Russia for what he called a "brief concert tour" of the West—one that lasted 15 years. The audience included figures like Pablo Picasso, Arthur Rubinstein, and Nadia Boulanger.

Initial reactions were mixed: progressives found the concerto too traditional, while conservatives deemed it too modern. However, it soon gained popularity, helped by a Russian performance with Nathan Milstein and Vladimir Horowitz, followed by a full orchestral rendition by Joseph Szigeti and Fritz Reiner in Prague (1924). The work straddles two musical worlds: Romantic lyricism in its first and third movements, and the modern, rhythmic drive of the second, showcasing Prokofiev's unique synthesis of old and new.

- Herbert Glass, LA Phil

***Non, non, non... vous n'avez jamais* from *Les Huguenots* - Act II**

One of the most delightful moments in *Les Huguenots*, Meyerbeer's grand opera of religious conflict and romance, is Urbain's aria "Non, non, non... vous n'avez jamais" in Act II. Urbain, a lively and mischievous page to Queen Marguerite de Valois, delivers this buoyant piece with charm and excitement. As the scene unfolds, Urbain announces the arrival of the noble Protestant Raoul de Nangis, who has been summoned to meet an unknown lady. With playful enthusiasm, Urbain describes the spectacle of Raoul approaching the castle blindfolded, stirring great curiosity and

PROGRAM NOTES (cont.)

amusement among the villagers. The aria is filled with sparkling vocal runs and rhythmic energy, perfectly capturing the youthful exuberance of the character. Meyerbeer, a master of French Grand Opera, infuses this piece with elegance and brilliance, allowing the singer to showcase agility, warmth, and a sense of theatrical flair. The aria is a true gem of the opera, offering a lighthearted contrast before the drama intensifies.

- Daniel Jaggars

Vintage Fantasy

I was inspired to write this piece by an electronic music class I took, of all things. The different timbral possibilities of working with electronic music led to me thinking about how to work with timbre in an orchestral context, and I decided to write an orchestra piece to explore my ideas. I took a lot of inspiration from the orchestra works of Phillip Glass, Paul Hindemith, and Claude Debussy. I was also inspired by the video games I played as a kid such as Final Fantasy.

- Ethan Smith

Pines of Rome

Respighi managed to get a couple of operas staged in his native Bologna by the time he was 31 years old, but work as an orchestral musician (violin and viola), teacher, piano accompanist, and arranger of Baroque music sustained his peripatetic career in its early years. A move to Rome in 1913 as professor of composition at the Liceo Musicale of Santa Cecilia proved decisive, since Rome was then the center of orchestral life in Italy. In 1916, he completed *Fountains of Rome*, a four-part symphonic tone poem that gradually became a huge success, making Respighi famous and wealthy.

In 1919, the Liceo Musicale became the Conservatory of Santa Cecilia, and in 1923, Respighi was appointed its director. He held that administrative post only three years, during which he composed *Pines of Rome*, a sequel to *Fountains*, and even more lucrative for Respighi. Its success, following its premiere in December 1924, enabled Respighi to quit as director of the Conservatory in 1926, although he continued the teaching he loved there, as an advanced composition professor, until 1935.

PROGRAM NOTES (cont.)

The great popularity of this music is not hard to understand. It is brilliantly evocative, well-crafted, and emotionally sincere musical pageantry. The first section of *Pines* – all four are played without a break – is a short prelude depicting children at play in the pine grove of the Villa Borghese, their dances and games raucously projected through quick brass and woodwind exchanges.

“Pines Near a Catacomb” presents a serene, even somber scene, with muted strings supporting an orchestral chant which “re-echoes solemnly, sonorously, like a hymn” rising from the catacomb, in the composer’s words.

“The Pines of the Janiculum” is night music in which a solo clarinet sings plaintively, introducing the actual song of a nightingale (Respighi even specified the recording to be used) over tremolo strings. “The Pines of the Appian Way” suggests morning dawning over the march of imperial Roman glory in trumpet-driven triumph. Mussolini adored Respighi’s orchestral music, but the sound of a fascist parade here is probably the result of purely musical muscle flexing rather than any consciously propagandistic intentions on the part of the rather non-political composer.

- John Henken, LA Phil

ARTIST-FACULTY BIOS

Octavio Más-Arocas is Director of Orchestras at MSU. He is the Music Director and Conductor of the Mansfield Symphony in Ohio, the Marquette Symphony in Michigan, the Clinton Symphony in New York, and Conductor-in-Residence at the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music, California. Previous positions include Principal Conductor of the Green Bay Symphony Orchestra, Resident Conductor of the Unicamp Symphony Orchestra in Brazil, Director of Orchestras at Ithaca College, Lawrence University, Baldwin Wallace University, and at Interlochen Arts Academy. He has also been Resident-Conductor of the Sewanee Summer Music Festival and Assistant Conductor of the National Repertory Orchestra. An award-winning conductor, Más-Arocas was chosen by Kurt Masur for the Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy Award working as Maestro Masur's assistant with the Leipzig Gewandhaus and Helsinki Radio orchestras. Más-Arocas is the winner of the Robert J. Harth Conducting Prize at the American Academy of Conducting at Aspen, Thelma A. Robinson Award from the Conductors Guild, Prize Winner of the Third European Conductors Competition, and winner of the National Youth Orchestra of Spain Conductors Competition. He has appeared with orchestras across North and South America and Europe, and has taught workshops and masterclasses in the USA, Spain, Portugal, and Brazil.

STUDENT BIOS

Mezzo-soprano **Ruoxi Bian** is completing her DMA degree at Michigan State University under Professor Jane Bunnell. She holds a Master degree from Manhattan School of Music and a Bachelor degree from Minzu University of China. Ruoxi was the winner of the Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition Idaho-Montana district. She also won First Prize at the Singapore Zhongsin International Music Competition and the San Jose International music competition. Her operatic roles include Minskwoman (*Flight*), Zerlina (*Don Giovanni*), Ramiro (*La Finta Giardiniera*), and Amastre (*Serse*). She has performed scenes as Rosina (*Il Barbiere di Siviglia*), Carmen, and Nicklausse (*Les Contes d'Hoffmann*), among others.

STUDENT BIOS (cont.)

Diya Dong is a first-year doctoral student in Violin Performance at Michigan State University, studying under Professor Berlinsky. She serves as concertmaster of the MSU Symphony Orchestra. Diya began her studies at the Music Middle School Affiliated to Shanghai Conservatory of Music and completed both her undergraduate and master degrees at Shanghai Conservatory. She has won several prestigious awards, including the Gold Medal at the 2nd National Violin Competition and 2nd place at the 9th Hong Kong International Violin Competition in 2019.

Claire Oselador (they/them) is a New Jersey-born composer of concert music living in East Lansing, Michigan. With a jazz and theater background, they weave together a wide range of musical influences with the goal of creating tapestries of sound to foster empathy between people with different experiences. Mx. Oselador holds a B.M. in Composition from The Crane School of Music at SUNY Potsdam, where they studied under Tim Sullivan, Ivette Herryman, Jerod Sommerfeldt, and Phil Salathé. They are currently finishing a M.M. in Composition, from Michigan State University, where they have studied with Zhou Tian and David Biedenbender.

Ethan Smith is a composer from Michigan who is inspired by video game music, blending jazz, funk, and classical genres. Ethan has studied with composition professors at Michigan State University such as Mark Sullivan, Ricardo Lorenz, and Zhou Tian. During his time at MSU, he has also studied oboe performance with Nermis Mieses. Ethan is currently pursuing double majors in Music Composition and Games and Interactive Media, combining his musical skills with game development. Outside of school, Ethan enjoys running, anime, and spending time with his cat.

TRANSLATIONS

Non, non, non...vous n'avez jamais" from *Les Huguenots* - Act II

No, no, no, you have never,
I take it, no, never heard anything like it from the voice of a young page!
Ah! Non, non, non, and the girls of the village will never forget the sight!

Surrounded by a throng of people, over his eyes a blindfold, a handsome gentleman appears; gliding like a shadow he passes, and treading lightly he crosses the space; and young and old, follow him with their eyes and say: "Who is he?" and then, "Where is he going?" and "What is he looking for?" It's a big hubbub!

The gentleman can't see a thing. He feels his way along, his neck stretched out. The children naughty... tease him with their hands; their laughing sisters... throw flowers at him! It is a laughing and beautiful procession! Ah, what a laughing and beautiful procession!

The gentleman beneath his blindfold follows, pressed by the young girls of the village, advances, approaches the castle.

What a festival for the castle, what a festival. It is him, he comes, he comes here!

Ah!

PERSONNEL

Violin I

**Farangiz Takhirova
Thomas Shahbaghyan
Sage Rosales
Amy Chang
Wang Liang
Zenai Li
Lyudmilla Gofurova
Xiaoding Shen
Xinying Hu
Xiang Lei

Violin II

*Chonghua Zuo
Maria Skidmore
Tadan Baartz-Bowman
Hengping Lin
You Jung Hsu
Min-Han Tsai
Dana Hardy
Alison Birmingham
Ashwin Innuganti
Fanhong Jiang

Viola

*Jian Xiong
Madison Hilborn
Kunjie Chai
Yu-Chieh Lin
Tirian Cooper
Jamie Kasper
Aidan Chapman-Anderson
Eleanor Limbaugh
Qiongwen Zhang

Cello

*Po-Chen Chang
Cheng Lin
Yu-Hsin Wu
Weian Gu
Cheng-Hung Chung
Weigen Jiang
Shaniah Cooper
Yue Kang
Avigail Arad

Bass

*Cole Sheffer
Manyi Zhang
Alex Zajdel
Grace Kovacs
Parker Duncan

Flute

Josean Delgado
Page Morgan
Ivana Chacón

Oboe

Emily Quintana
Brett Boyer
Caitlyn Falbe

Clarinet

Frankie Mu
John Khaydorov
Ricky Latham

Bassoon

Erica Haas
Gabby Richmond
Dylan Myers

Horn

Alexander Delperdang
Keith Pepper
Alden Leonard
Caden Dinnie

Trumpet

Austin Cruz
Natalia Vela
Mark Davis

Trombone

Jordan Dove
Alex Ortiz Sanchez

Bass Trombone

Nicholas Cicero

Tuba

AJ Johnson

Percussion

Isaac Hinshaw
Cadence Miller
Margaret Parker
Taryn Parry
Klaire Thomas

Piano

Xiaoxiao Ouyang

Celeste

Matthew Grossi

Organ

Kelly Bohan

Harp

Claire Learned
Iris Ho Lin

Librarians

Aaron Longuski
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**Denotes Concert
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* Denotes Principal

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