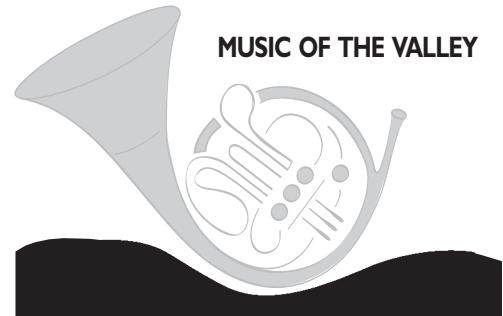


# Livermore-Amador Symphony

Arthur P. Barnes, Music Director & Conductor

February 11, 2012, 8 p.m.

Bankhead Theater, Livermore



## Something for Everyone

Prelude Talk at 7 p.m. by Arthur P. Barnes, LAS conductor and music director,  
and Peter Curzon, LAS percussionist and music committee member

**The Moldau (Vltava)—from *Má Vlast***

**Bedřich Smetana**  
(1824–1884)

**Serenade for Winds in D Minor, Opus 44, B. 77**

1. Moderato quasi Marcia
2. Menuetto
3. Andante con moto
4. Finale—allegro molto

**Antonín Dvořák**  
(1841–1904)

**Concerto No. 2 in C Minor, Opus 18, Movement 1**

**Sergei Rachmaninoff**  
(1873–1943)

Christine Xu, piano

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### INTERMISSION

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**Première Rhapsodie**

**Claude Debussy**  
(1862–1918)

Clifford Tam, clarinet

**Danse Macabre, Opus 40**

**Camille Saint-Saëns**  
(1835–1921)

**An Orkney Wedding, with Sunrise (1985)**

**Peter Maxwell Davies**  
(b. 1934)

Nicholas Theriault, bagpipe

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\* High-school  
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## The Moldau (Vltava)—from *Má Vlast*

**Bedřich Smetana  
(1824–1884)**

Bedřich Smetana was the first major composer from Bohemia (now the Czech Republic) to view himself as a Czech, rather than as a citizen of the Austrian Empire, which controlled the region in the 19th century. His music was so distinctively different from that of composers from either Vienna (the Hapsburg capital) or the German regions that he essentially defined the Czech nationalistic school of composition and is still one of its two shining lights (the other being his contemporary Antonín Dvořák). Smetana's earliest successes were his operas, not symphonic compositions, although only one opera (*The Bartered Bride*) is frequently performed.

In 1874 Smetana faced the problem of growing deafness and resigned his position as music director of the Prague Opera. He immediately resurrected a project he had begun two years earlier—the composition of a series of symphonic poems (in the manner of Franz Liszt) that was to establish his place in musical history: the cycle entitled *Má Vlast* (*My Fatherland*). Some of its works were to be based on Bohemian legend and history, others on the natural beauty of the land itself. Before he completed the first of the set, however, he had gone completely deaf. Like Beethoven with his Ninth Symphony, he never heard his masterwork cycle performed.

An intricate opening passage passed back and forth between the two flutes at the beginning of the work represents the rippling of two brooks that rise in the Bohemian highlands and soon flow together to become the Moldau (also known by its Czech name, Vltava). The river becomes majestic, the continuous rise and fall of its waves reflected in the swell and ebb of the accompaniment to the work's most famous melody. The river passes next through the Bohemian forest. We hear the sounds of a royal hunt and then a peasant wedding. Leaving the forest, we hear a moment of placid serenity highlighting the gleaming rays of the moon falling on the *rusalki*, legendary river nymphs.

The river once again resumes its flow, until it encounters the St. John's rapids. After a white-water passage, the river flows in its fullest glory into Prague. As it enters the city, it passes the castle rock of Vyšehrad, seat of the ancient Bohemian kings. Vyšehrad was, for Smetana, the symbol of Czech sovereignty—and the subject of the first poem in the cycle. Its thematic motive (taken from the first tone poem) is poured forth by all the brass in their fullest glory, to match the river. Finally, the Moldau passes through Prague to merge with the Elbe, and the final sounds heard are the rise and fall of the waves of the Moldau, gradually dying out as it loses its identity in the placid, slow-flowing Elbe.

## Serenade for Winds in D Minor

**Opus 44, B. 77**

**Antonín Dvořák  
(1841–1904)**

At heart Antonín Dvořák was a country boy, one of seven children of a butcher/innkeeper in a small village in Bohemia. Bohemia was full of music, and young Antonín took violin lessons and, like his father, became a fiddler in the village band. But there was no question about his father's plan for young Antonín's future: He was to go into the innkeeping business. Since many German travelers came to Bohemia, his father sent him to live with an uncle in a nearby town and learn German to help him speak with foreign guests at the family inn.

There Dvořák met a musician friend of his uncle's who taught him viola, piano, and organ, and when he was 16, Dvořák went to study music in Prague. He played violin and viola in Prague's National Opera Orchestra until, at age 31, he won a prize for composition. He soon became famous as a composer and was able to make a living composing and teaching composition at the Prague Conservatory.

In 1874 Dvořák applied for and won the Austrian state stipend for young composers, which brought his work to the attention of influential critic Eduard Hanslick. Dvořák applied again—and won again—in each of the next four years, earning the respect and aid of Johannes Brahms in getting his works published along the way. The stipends enabled Dvořák to concentrate on composition and performing his works, which suddenly increased in number as his popularity

among the general public in his homeland and throughout Austria rapidly grew. In this period, Dvořák wrote two serenades, one for strings (B. 52) and one for winds (B. 77), hearkening back to the entertaining and charming music of Mozart and the Classical era.

The four-movement Serenade for Winds in D Minor was written in just two weeks in January 1878. Dvořák scored it for two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, three horns, cello, and double bass, with an ad lib contrabassoon part as well. Despite the lack of the higher register that would have come from the inclusion of flutes in the mix, the work as a whole has a lightness that stems from Dvořák's graceful melodic lines and ensemble writing, fitting for a piece recalling the refinement of the Classical era. Its form may be descended from Classical ones, but the music is entirely filled with Slavonic folk music rhythms and harmonies. It opens with a *Moderato quasi Marcia* that can be oh-so-serious or mocking if its humor isn't balanced just so. It's the only movement in a minor key; all of the remaining movements are in major keys, adding to the good-natured qualities of the serenade overall. The second movement, entitled *Menuetto*, feels something like a Classical minuet. The third movement, *Andante con moto*, sets a mostly pastoral scene, but with moments of passion created in arcing lines for the oboe and clarinet. The finale is something of a rondo, as playfully structured as it is teasing in rhythm and textures. It recalls the theme from the first movement in one of its episodes, set against the more dancelike main theme of the movement.

Dvořák conducted the premiere of the work in Prague on November 15, 1878, in a program devoted to his own compositions, something that was just starting to happen for the composer. The serenade was immediately well received and was published the following April. Brahms praised it, writing to the violinist Joseph Joachim, "A more lovely, refreshing impression of real, rich, and charming creative talent you can't easily have. ... I think it must be a pleasure for the wind players." And it remains a well-loved favorite of wind players and enthusiasts alike.

## Piano Concerto No. 2 in C Minor

**Sergei Rachmaninoff  
(1873–1943)**

Ever since the success of the 1996 Academy Award-winning movie *Shine*, the so-called Rach 3 has been indelibly engraved in the public mind as the Rachmaninoff piano concerto. Yet for nearly a century, it was an earlier work, the second concerto, whose first movement we hear tonight, that consistently won accolades and enthralled audiences. Rachmaninoff's struggle to complete Concerto No. 2 is surely as fascinating as that of David Helfgott, the pianist at the center of *Shine*, to master the Rach 3.

Sergei Rachmaninoff's difficulties as the composer-to-be of Concerto No. 2 began in 1897, when his newly completed First Symphony was viciously denounced by critics—one even suggested that the work might have been produced by "a conservatory in hell." The young man was devastated and, for several years, had great difficulty applying himself to his work. At the same time, he was struggling financially, a situation not helped by the fact that his publisher had neglected to obtain an international copyright on the very popular Prelude in C-sharp Minor, which was being reproduced indiscriminately in Britain and the U.S. without proper payment.

Things finally came to a head in January 1900, when the composer visited Leo Tolstoy. Rachmaninoff played the piano for the legendary writer, who complained, "Tell me, is such music needed by anybody? ... I must tell you how I dislike it all! ... Beethoven is nonsense, Pushkin and Lermontov also."

"It was awful," recalled Rachmaninoff. Later in the evening, Tolstoy apologized. Nevertheless, Rachmaninoff went into a deep depression and stopped composing altogether.

His cousins, with whom he had a close relationship, talked him into seeing an acquaintance of theirs, Dr. Nikolai Dahl. Dahl, himself an amateur musician, had become interested in hypnosis and had devoted his practice to it. He combined that technique with pleasant and intelligent conversations about music, and Rachmaninoff began to improve rapidly. By summer he had started on a new concerto (No. 2

in C Minor). Work now progressed rapidly, and by the end of the year, he played the last two movements in a December concert in Moscow. He then turned to the first movement, with its dramatic and moody opening chords, and completed it very quickly.

### Première Rhapsodie

Claude Debussy  
(1862–1918)

Debussy composed his Première Rhapsody just at the moment when he was embarking upon his first book of preludes for the piano. The rhapsody was designed for a competition at a music conservatory, so naturally Debussy provides a fair number of challenges for the soloist, but never at the expense of musical interest. The remarkable feature of this short piece is the manner in which the music fluctuates quite abruptly between scherzo-like quirkiness (even flippancy) and poetic reverie. At one moment, the music is full of rhythmic energy, and at the next, it is gently fluent and serene. These quieter passages present a challenge, however, calling for delicate phrasing and beautiful tone. Even on a smaller scale, Debussy can still charm us, as he does here with his willowy motives and shadowy textures.

In July 1909, Debussy had sat on the jury for the Paris Conservatory's annual woodwind *concours* (exit examinations), and that fall he was asked to compose the clarinet test piece for the following year; he obliged with the Première Rhapsodie, which he wrote in December 1909 and January 1910. On July 14, 1910, he duly listened as 11 students—all but one of whom he dismissed as “nondescript”—worked their way through the piece; “to judge by the expressions on the faces of my colleagues,” he said, “the Rhapsodie was a success!” He considered the piece “one of the most charming I have ever written” and liked it enough to arrange the piano part for orchestra, producing one of his very few concerto-type compositions.

The lesser works of a major composer can be easily overlooked, and such is the case with this rhapsody. But as French conductor and composer Pierre Boulez writes, “Often the secondary or minor works [of a major composer] … interest me more than the major works of a minor composer. … I cannot help thinking that a great composer also reveals himself—and often most engagingly—in the works that seem like snapshots of the family rather than in the formal portraits done for posterity. This is how I like to think of the *Rhapsodie pour clarinette*.”

### Danse Macabre Opus 40

Camille Saint-Saëns  
(1835–1921)

Camille Saint-Saëns, often called the “French Mendelssohn,” was a precocious and prolific composer, prodigious in every genre. Born on October 9, 1835, in Paris and raised by his mother, Saint-Saëns began his studies on piano, proving his precocity by accompanying a Beethoven violin sonata at the age of 5. He went on to study composition at the Paris Conservatory under Fromental Halévy. However, it was his close friendship with Hector Berlioz and, more importantly, with Franz Liszt that most influenced his music.

Liszt's creation of the symphonic poem as a musical genre revolutionized classical music. Saint-Saëns even financed and conducted a series of concerts featuring the Liszt symphonic poems. It was inevitable that he would then turn to this genre as a source of inspiration. Like Liszt, Saint-Saëns began his group of symphonic poems in his middle 30s, produced all four of them within less than a decade, and drew some of his material from his own earlier works in other forms.

The “Danse Macabre” is the third of these symphonic poems. Many attempts to translate its title fall short—“Dance of Death” and “Ghosts’ Dance” just don’t work—so it is best left untranslated. The work must have had a very special appeal for Liszt, since he wrote several pieces in the same vein—and one with a similar title based on the same theme. The broad waltz theme in the “Danse Macabre” may be recognized as a variation on the “Dies Irae,” the ancient liturgical chant for the dead, on which Liszt based his “Totentanz” for piano and orchestra.

“Danse Macabre,” Saint-Saëns’ most frequently performed orchestral work, was not originally conceived as an orchestral score. Saint-Saëns, again in true Lisztian fashion, adapted it from one of

his songs for voice and piano, a setting of a verse by Henri Cazalis, rendered in English as follows:

Zig, zig, zig, Death in a cadence,  
Striking with his heel a tomb,  
Death at midnight plays a dance tune,  
Zig, zig, zig, on his violin.  
The winter wind blows, and the night is dark;  
Moans are heard in the linden trees.  
Through the gloom, white skeletons pass,  
Running and leaping in their shrouds.  
Zig, zig, zig, each one is frisking,  
The bones of the dancers are heard to crack—  
But hist! of a sudden they quit the round,  
They push forward, they fly; the cock has crowed.

The image of Death as a fiddler appears in the works of several composers, but each of the other treatments fails in comparisons to Saint-Saëns’. The orchestra strikes midnight; Death tunes up and then begins his waltz; and a second theme on the xylophone evokes the skeletal celebrants, who become more and more energetic until, with the cock’s crow, they disperse and vanish.

### An Orkney Wedding, with Sunrise Peter Maxwell Davies (b. 1934)

Although he was born and reared, and received his musical training, in the large English industrial city of Manchester, composer Sir Peter Maxwell Davies has pursued most of his creative career on rural Hoy, one of the remote Orkney Islands off the northern coast of Scotland. There he founded the St. Magnus Festival of the Northern Arts, and there he has composed quantities of music in all genres in an eclectic style that fuses modernism with his deep interest in early music of both the medieval and Renaissance periods. Like the Scottish composer James MacMillan, Maxwell Davies is also a social activist, working, in his case, on behalf of the antinuclear movement and environmental protection.

Maxwell Davies’ music can be quite challenging to listen to, but the piece we hear on this concert, “An Orkney Wedding with Sunrise,” is pure entertainment. Written in 1985 to fulfill a commission from conductor and famed film composer John Williams for the Boston Pops Orchestra, it scored a rousing success at its premiere, in May 1985 in Boston, where it was later captured on a PBS telecast along with a film of an actual Orkney wedding celebration.

In a letter to Williams, Maxwell Davies vividly described his piece, which depicts a wedding he attended on Hoy in 1978:

It starts with the arrival at the community hall of the guests in rainy, stormy weather—the slapstick at [measure 8] is, quite literally, the slamming of the door against the elements. It’s tradition, then, to line up around the sides of the hall and be presented very ceremoniously to the bridal couple; you discreetly kiss her cheek, and he shakes your hand and gives you a welcoming glass of whiskey, while the band plays tunes suitable for the “procession.” … The dancing, and the serious consumption of whiskey, starts after the band has retuned—and before each dance, the first-fiddle (solo) leader shouts out the key and the name of the tune, and the band plays the tonic chord, before plumping into the dance number itself. (I’ve left out the shouting bit!)

You’ll notice that the band also consumes a fair amount of whiskey—it shows up very badly around page 23—I remember the island doctor was so fed up with the band’s guitarist getting chords and rhythms wrong, he seized the guitar and tried to play it himself, with even worse results. At page 25, the first-fiddle leader tries to rally his troops to play a reel, but it’s beyond recall—the horn whoops are the whoops of the dancers. … (On this occasion on Hoy, one venerable 84-year-old widow was seen leaping six feet in the air and emitting whoops even your horns could hardly do justice to—she wasn’t seen for a week after the wedding.) On page 29, the assembly is left behind and heard from the clear, cool night outside the hall—the dance music fades (as I started then the long walk home across the island). The sunrise follows—although the bagpipe is not strictly an Orkney instrument, I rationalized this by thinking that the sun rises across the water over Caithness in mainland Scotland … and here the piper, in all his traditional finery pacing up and down, represents the sun.

Program notes compiled by Jeff Pelletier

Program booklet edited by Eva Langfeldt



## WINNERS OF THE 2011–2012 COMPETITION FOR YOUNG MUSICIANS

### Christine Xu

Piano

Christine Xu began her study of the piano at age 4. Just five years later, her musical career began when, after a rigorous audition process, she was selected to play in the Junior Bach Festival. Since that time, she has performed at the festival

for five consecutive years. In 2010 she played the Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue in D minor as a finale, and in 2011 she performed the Aria and Variations 1–16 of the Goldberg Variations. She has participated in the U.S. Open Music Competition since the age of 10, winning eight first prizes in various categories. Last year, she was chosen as first alternate in the statewide MTAC (Music Teachers' Association of California) piano competition.

Christine has been invited to perform throughout the Bay Area, from the Youth Music Festival in Pleasanton to the Berkeley Hillside Club. At school she is the accompanist of the choir and also volunteers to accompany other soloists and ensembles for their competitions and recitals. Christine's experience at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, where she studies with Dr. Sharon Mann, has led her to a genuine interest in and love for music. She especially enjoys playing Bach, as well as great nineteenth-century works; she loves the humor and character of contemporary music; and she continues to develop a fascination for music and its many shades.

In addition to the piano, Christine enjoys a variety of activities at Amador Valley High School. A sophomore, and the daughter of Qian Huang and Jack Xu, she excels in her studies and serves as an officer for the Amador Valley math and science teams and the French honor society. Her awards include qualifying for the AIME (American Invitational Mathematics Examination) competition, placing in the Bay Area Regional Science Olympiad, and earning third place in the national French Grand Concours. Christine enjoys volunteering, tutoring, and sharing her hobbies with friends and team members. During her free time, she likes to read novels, write poetry, and sleep.



### Clifford Tam

Clarinet

Clifford Tam began playing the clarinet at the age of 8, under the instruction of Bernie Berke. He currently studies with Joe Bonfiglio, and he has studied with Andrew Simon, the principal clarinet of the Hong Kong Philharmonic. As a soloist, Clifford's first experience was in the 6th grade, when he performed in the Livermore Solo and Ensemble Festival. In addition to being chosen several times for that event's Command Performance, he has been selected to sit in and play with the Oakland East Bay Symphony. He has been chosen as the principal clarinet for the Northern California honor band and, for two years in a row, the regional honor band.

The son of Leland and Esther Tam, Clifford is a senior at Livermore High School and is the principal clarinet in the school's symphonic band. He also has performed in the pit orchestras for a variety of musicals, including *West Side Story*, *Les Misérables*, *The Sound of Music*, and *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dream Coat*. Clifford's abilities in music are not limited to the clarinet. He plays piano, guitar, and percussion instruments and performs on drum-line. Composing electronic music is an activity that he enjoys, and he often attempts to incorporate classical elements into his compositions.

Outside of school, Clifford is involved in a variety of community outreach programs, including the Young Adult Volunteers (Y.A.V.) summer reading program at Livermore Library, and he is a server and general helper at Open Heart Kitchen. He also is very involved at his church, where he helps with the sound system, teaches clarinet, and performs on the clarinet and in the percussion section for various musical presentations. In his free time, Clifford enjoys eating, hanging out with friends, "getting distracted," and tinkering with new musical projects, such as his electric clarinet. Upon graduating from high school, he hopes to attend college and study clarinet performance, but he has not yet decided on which college.

## 2012–2013 COMPETITION FOR YOUNG MUSICIANS

Recordings due October 7    Competition October 28, 2012

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