

LIVERMORE AMADOR SYMPHONY

Lara Webber
Music Director & Conductor
Arthur P. Barnes
Music Director Emeritus
Saturday, June 4, 2022, 8 p.m.
Bankhead Theater, Livermore

Building a New World



Prelude Talk at 7 p.m. by Lara Webber

Listening to the Land (2013)
from *Broken Ink*

Zhou Tian
(b. 1981)

Piano Concerto No. 3 (1921)
in C Major, Opus 26
I. Andante – Allegro
II. Tema con variazioni
III. Allegro, ma non troppo

Sergei Prokofiev
(1891–1953)

Frederic Chiu, soloist

INTERMISSION

Symphony No. 9 “From the New World” (1893)
in E Minor, Opus 95, B. 178
I. Adagio – Allegro molto
II. Largo
III. Molto vivace
IV. Allegro con fuoco

Antonín Dvořák
(1841–1904)

Season Tickets for 2022–2023 are on sale in the lobby.

*The audience and performers are invited to enjoy cider and sparkling wine
in the lobby and outdoor courtyard after the concert
at a reception hosted by the Livermore-Amador Symphony Guild.*

Music Director position underwritten by the Chet and Henrietta Fankhauser Trust;
Frederic Chiu’s appearance sponsored by Linda Tinney.

Orchestra

Conductor

Lara Webber

First Violin

Elizabeth Rivard
Concertmaster

Juliana Zolynas
*Assistant
Concertmaster*

Norman Back

Feliza Bourguet

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English Horn

Jeanne Brown

Clarinet

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Bass Trombone

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Celesta

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* High school student

**The Livermore-Amador Symphony
requires all musicians and guest artists to be fully vaccinated.**

**LAS is in full compliance with all current Alameda County health mandates
plus rehearsal and performance-venue health policies.**

Program Notes

Listening to the Land (2013) from *Broken Ink*

Zhou Tian
(b. 1981)

Born into a musical family in 1981 in Hangzhou, Zhou Tian came of age in a globalized China and was in the United States by his 19th birthday. Trained at the Curtis Institute of Music (B.M.), the Juilliard School (M.M.), and the University of Southern California (D.M.A.), he studied with some of America's finest composers, such as Jennifer Higdon, Christopher Rouse, and Stephen Hartke. He is currently an associate professor of composition at the Michigan State University College of Music.

In the words of the composer:

“The poetry and calligraphy of the Song Dynasty (960–1279) have long been a staple in the Chinese culture. And so when Hangzhou, once the capital of Southern Song—and my hometown—asked for a new piece celebrating the city's magnificent cultural heritage, I was beyond excited. It was like a musical homecoming.

“In *Broken Ink*, a symphonic suite inspired by the poetry of the Song dynasty, I sought to capture the poetic flavor that was lost in translation. The work was built as a mosaic of Chinese musical traditions and my approaches to writing for the symphony orchestra. In addition to the standard orchestral palette, the instrumentation includes nonclassical instruments such as Tibetan singing bowls, tuned gongs, and a large Chinese bass drum.”

“Listening to the Land,” the fifth movement of the *Broken Ink* suite, is an elegy inspired by “Forever in Happiness (Reminiscing the Bygone Days),” a Song Dynasty poem by Xin Qiji (1140–1207) about lost love.

Piano Concerto No. 3 (1921) in C Major, Opus 26

Sergei Prokofiev
(1891–1953)

Of the five piano concerti written by Sergei Prokofiev, the third piano concerto has garnered the greatest popularity and critical acclaim. The concerto radiates a crisp vitality that testifies to Prokofiev's inventive prowess in punctuating lyrical passages with witty dissonances while maintaining a balanced partnership between the soloist and the orchestra. Unlike in the examples of piano concerti set by many of Prokofiev's Romantic forebears, the orchestra rises above subsidiary accompaniment to play a very active part in this work.

The first movement opens with a clarinet solo, a long, lyrical melody that the whole orchestra eventually picks up and expands. The strings begin the allegro section with a passage that seems to accelerate toward a climax, at which point the entry of the solo piano unexpectedly breaks the lyrical mood in an exuberant burst of brilliance and rhythm. The soloist and orchestra continue until the piano introduces the second theme with a loud, unexpected marchlike climax. The second theme, considerably more dissonant, is first taken by the orchestra and then expanded upon by the soloist. This leads into what is perhaps the most recognizable section of the first movement: several lines of octaves interspersed with close tones either above or below, moving up and down the keyboard with the hands usually on top of one another. This is followed by a restatement of the opening clarinet theme, played loudly in the full orchestra, which transitions to a haunting variation of the theme by the solo piano. A quick passage from the movement's beginning is now taken up by the piano, in what is arguably the most difficult passage in the first movement for its challenges of fingering and phrasing. This leads into a recapitulation of the piano's entrance, which leads into a brilliant coda as well as runs on the piano consisting entirely of ascending parallel triads and glissandi. The second theme is restated in the high register of the piano, first as block chords and then as frenetic sixteenth-note arpeggios. Several nonmelodic scales wind the music down to a quiet throb in the orchestra on a dissonant chord. The orchestra then resumes the pulsating low Cs, and the piano makes a shortened restatement of the scalar passage, which is now used to end the movement, with a dissonant harmony followed sarcastically by barely tonal open C octaves.

The middle movement, a theme and five variations, is a dazzling example of Prokofiev's expressing his slightly sarcastic wit in musical terms. The central idea is stated by the orchestra in a hesitant, piquant gavotte, and the first variation is a broad, slow restatement by the piano, beginning with a long trill followed by a glissando-like run up the keyboard. The second variation is presented by the orchestra at a galloping pace, with the piano providing excitement with long runs up and down the keyboard. The third variation is a heavily syncopated deconstruction of the main theme with a lumbering jazzy backbeat. The fourth variation, possibly the most famous, is a haunting, wandering meditation on the main theme, with free dialogue between the piano and the orchestra—a recurring motive of cold, ethereal falling thirds from the piano adds to the faintly otherworldly mood set by this section. The fifth variation is another allegro romp for soloist and orchestra, starting in a sunny major key but modulating into transitional waters as the main theme is fragmented and thrown into double-time pieces and then building and subsiding into the coda. The orchestra plays the main theme in its original form at original speed (half that of the preceding variation), with the piano providing double-time obbligato accompaniment. A short *andante* ending hinting at E major gives the piano the last word with a low-octave E-G chord.

The third movement, which Prokofiev himself called an argument between soloist and orchestra, begins with a statement of the main theme in the bassoons and pizzicato strings, interrupted by the piano's assertive entrance with a conflicting theme. Interplay between the piano and orchestra builds up steam, with a brief quickening of tempo, before arriving at a slow, lyrical secondary theme in the woodwinds. The piano offers a rather sarcastic reply, and the slow theme develops, through another Rachmaninoff-esque restatement and another ethereal exploration in contrast to the woodwinds. Then comes a united climax with piano and strings in unison, fading into the coda, which is the most virtuosic section of the concerto, with an allegro restatement of the main theme. The piano reframes it initially in one key but then seems to be at odds with the strings, which are in a different key. The coda then explodes into a musical battle between soloist and orchestra, with prominent piano ornamentation over the orchestra, eventually establishing the ending key of C major and finishing in a flourish with a fortissimo C tonic ninth chord.

Symphony No. 9 “From the New World” (1893)

Antonín Dvořák

in E Minor, Opus 95, B. 178

(1841–1904)

By the time he was 50 years old, Antonín Dvořák was already a famous composer. With the help of his mentor, Johannes Brahms, his works had been published and widely performed. And his own mastery of composition had evolved to a point where, with the exception of Brahms himself, Dvořák was widely considered the greatest symphonic composer alive. Beyond writing music, Dvořák also had an active career as a teacher and was making a comfortable living as a professor at the music conservatory in Prague.

Fame has its price, however, and for Dvořák this came in the form of an irresistible offer from an American woman, Jeanette M. Thurber, who wanted him to leave his home and come to New York City. The National Conservatory of Music, which she had founded in 1885, needed a new director, and Thurber hoped that Dvořák's worldwide reputation would help increase the school's struggling enrollment (and budget).

At first Dvořák was reluctant to go. He was comfortable in his native land, among friends and many professional acquaintances, and had little interest in undertaking a long ocean voyage for an uncertain future in a strange new country. Thurber's money, however, eventually won him over, and in the fall of 1892, Dvořák set sail for New York, accompanied by his wife, two of their six children, and a musician friend. His new salary would be more than 25 times what he had been making in Prague—and he wouldn't have to teach in the summer, giving him even more time to write music.

Dvořák took his new teaching responsibilities very seriously. Among other things, he was soon advocating Thurber's dream of creating a “new American music,” which would somehow be distinguished from Dvořák's own European tradition, with its unmistakable traces back to Beethoven and Mozart. He studied Native American music (transcribed secondhand into European musical notation) and listened to African American spirituals.

All of these factors—new surroundings, new acquaintances and colleagues, learning new musical idioms—stimulated Dvořák’s own creativity, and he began sketching in his notebook. At first he thought he might write an opera about an American subject. Soon enough, however, he found himself writing a new symphony instead.

Completed within eight months of his arrival in New York, the Ninth Symphony reflects Dvořák’s early impressions of America, as evidenced by the subtitle “From the New World,” which he added to the score. Dvořák hoped that this nickname would help listeners understand that his new work was something like a postcard—written largely in his own musical language and style but conveying to the European musical establishment some of the newness (and bigness) that America had to offer.

Dvořák succeeded so well in capturing the spirit of the New World that many people mistakenly assumed that his “New World” Symphony actually quotes—rather than merely suggests—American melodies. (One of his tunes has, in fact, become an “American” song; see below.) The Ninth Symphony was a popular hit at its first performance, in 1893 at Carnegie Hall in New York, and remains one of Dvořák’s most often played works.

The first movement begins with a slow introduction hinting at the main theme, with the melody itself soon appearing softly in two horns. This syncopated fanfare will recur throughout the remainder of the symphony, bringing a sense of unity and grandeur to the work. Later in the movement, another melody is introduced by a solo flute.

The famous second movement includes the melody that many of us recognize as the spiritual “Goin’ Home.” The song, however, came after the symphony—one of Dvořák’s students set words to the tune several years after the symphony was written.

Dvořák’s image for the third movement was the Native American dance scene in Longfellow’s “The Song of Hiawatha.” The rhythm of the whirling opening section, however, feels clearly Czech in origin. The remaining melodic ideas are waltzes, alternatingly graceful and energetic.

The fourth and final movement is set in motion almost as if it were a car engine, catching slowly and then whirring to life. Melodies from the first three movements reappear, along with new material, including a tune reminiscent of “Three Blind Mice” (or, more likely, the Czech folk song whose title is often translated as “Weeding Flaxfield Blue”). After all that, the symphony comes to a fitting and stirring conclusion.

*Program notes compiled or written by Kathy Boster from Internet sources
Edited by Eva Langfeldt*

Piano Soloist Frederic Chiu

Frederic Chiu performs at major venues such as Lincoln Center in New York, Le Châtelet in Paris, and the Mozarteum in Buenos Aires, plus smaller and unusual venues. He collaborates with classical music friends Joshua Bell, Pierre Amoyal, and the St. Lawrence String Quartet, as well as non-classical friends such as jazz pianist Bob James and storyteller David Gonzalez to bring vivid live piano experiences to all audiences.

Chiu has recorded the many piano works of Prokofiev, and his personal relationship with the Prokofiev family makes him a world-recognized advocate of the composer. Across more than thirty albums, he also has recorded works of Chopin, Liszt, Ravel, Mendelssohn, Brahms, Rossini, and Grieg. His wide legacy is seen in his latest recordings: Beethoven/Liszt Symphonies V and VII, “Hymns and Dervishes,” music of Gurdjieff/de Hartmann, “Distant Voices: Music of Claude Debussy & Gao Ping,” and Schubert’s Fantasy for Violin and Piano.



photo: Chris Craymer

His innovative programming includes “Classical Smackdown,” where composers face off in head-to-head comparisons, with listeners voting for their favorite composer: Debussy vs.

Prokofiev, Bach vs. Glass, Mendelssohn vs. Chopin before age 20. Results are tracked at Chiu's ClassicalSmackdown.com website. With his wife, Jeanine Esposito, he co-created the arts nonprofit Beechwood Arts & Innovation to explore collaboration across art genres and the integration of arts and technology to foster community. His innovative vision of *Romeo & Juliet – The Choice*, an interactive production of the popular Prokofiev ballet, debuted in 2018. Chiu teaches at both Carnegie Mellon University and The Hartt School.

Music Director Lara Webber



Lara Webber is dedicated to inspiring audiences and community engagement through the power of symphonic music. She has been praised by fellow musicians for her musical depth, genuine expression, strong personal vision, and collaborative spirit. Now in her eighth season as music director and conductor of LAS, she has brought music to Tri-Valley elementary schools, coached chamber musicians, and advocated for the arts.

Webber holds degrees in music from Oberlin and USC and has held the positions of both assistant and associate conductor of the symphony orchestras of Baltimore and Charleston and music director of the Charleston Symphony Orchestra Chorus. She is music director of the Palo Alto Philharmonic. Her guest-conducting activities have included multiple performances with the symphonies of Houston, Pittsburgh, Santa Barbara, and Modesto, among others. She has served as cover conductor for the San Francisco Symphony and the National Symphony Orchestra and was a conductor of the Emmy-nominated Disney's Young Musicians Symphony Orchestra. Her operatic associations include posts as assistant conductor at Glimmerglass Opera and conductor of the Baltimore Opera Studio.

Our 2022–2023 Season

In addition to our regular four-concert series, during our next season, LAS will perform at the Livermore Valley Performing Arts Center (LVPAC) gala on September 10; at Pops on the Green on October 15; and at the LVPAC family concert on the afternoon of December 3, partnering with Valley Dance Theatre.

Season tickets are on sale for our 2022–2023 concert series: *Holiday Joy* on December 3; *Violins of Hope* on February 5, 6, and 7, presented with the East Bay Holocaust Education Center; *Kaleidoscopic Color and Spiritual Sound* on April 1; and *Drama and Fantasy, O'Conor Plays Beethoven* on May 20. Have a look at our new season brochure, available in the lobby, and buy season tickets tonight at the Symphony Guild table if you wish!

Student Awards and Competition

The Symphony Association annually presents several awards to local graduating high school seniors who have made significant contributions to school and community musical activities. Applications will be available in late August and are due in October 2022.

The Symphony Association's **50th annual** Competition for Young Musicians is open to instrumentalists and vocalists who reside in Alameda County, Contra Costa County, the City of Tracy, or the community of Mountain House. The maximum age is 19 at the time of the winners' performance. The 2022–2023 winners will perform as soloists with the Symphony at its concert on April 1, 2023. The competition will be held in October 2022 for those students who apply by the September deadline and pass a preliminary screening.

For additional information, see livermoreamadorsymphony.org.

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The Livermore-Amador Symphony Association gratefully acknowledges donations received since February 2020 from the following.

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livermoreamadorsymphony.org/donations

Corrections or questions?

Please contact Judy Eckart: judy@justjudy.com

LASYO Concert on July 23

The Livermore-Amador Symphony Youth Orchestra, LASYO, is a summer orchestra established by the Symphony Association and open to musicians ages 11 (or in 6th grade) through 21 who play violin, viola, cello, string bass, flute, piccolo, oboe, English horn, clarinet, bassoon, horn, trumpet, trombone, tuba, harp, timpani, or percussion.

For 2022, Don Adkins returns as music director and Sammie Flanzbaum returns as winds and percussion director. (Longtime conductor Göran Berg is on hiatus this year but hopes to return for the 2023 season.) Following auditions in May, rehearsals are on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 7 to 9:30 pm. This year rehearsals will run from June 14 through July 19, with a dress rehearsal on July 22 and a public concert on the evening of Saturday July 23 at the First Presbyterian Church, 4th and L Streets in Livermore.

A.P. Barnes Society

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Members of the A.P. Barnes Society bequeathed donations to the symphony or have included the symphony in their estate plans. For information, please contact

APBarnesSociety@livermoreamadorsymphony.org.

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The Livermore-Amador Symphony Association and Livermore-Amador Symphony Guild gratefully acknowledge funding support from:

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For more information or to arrange an appraisal, contact Nancy McKenzie at **nancymac360@gmail.com** or **925.294.8657**

Livermore-Amador Symphony is a member of the Livermore Cultural Arts Council and a resident company of the Bankhead Theater.



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