



University of North Texas
College of Music

Ensemble Recital | Wednesday, September 11, 2024 | 7:30 p.m.
Margot and Bill Winspear Performance Hall - Murchison Performing Arts Center

UNT Symphony Orchestra

David Itkin, conductor

Prelude und Liebestod from Tristan and Isolde Richard Wagner
(1859) (1813-1883)

L'apprenti sorcier (The Sorcerer's Apprentice) Paul Dukas
(1897) (1865-1935)

-INTERMISSION-

Symphony No. 5 in E-flat major, Op. 82 Jean Sibelius
(1915) (1865-1935)

- I. Tempo molto moderato – Allegro moderato
- II. Andante mosso, quasi allegretto
- III. Allegro molto – Largamente assai

Program six of the 2024–2025 season
Photography and videography are prohibited

UNT Symphony Orchestra

Personnel

Violin 1

Kevork Esmeryan ‡
Kejin Chen
Olivia Corporon
Ella Curb
Kevin (Qiang) Fu
Ming-Wei Hsieh
Ray (Jui-Chen) Hsu
Alfiia Mansurova
Emma Millian
Oscar Morales
Anna Seo
Eleanor (Szu Yun)
Wang
Hongrui Wang
Peng Yi

Violin 2

Gabriel Parker †
Mia Caliri
Olivia Dinardis
Lucas Furtado
Miguel Guillén
Hyun Jung Kim
Delane Marsh
Michelle Martey
Arsenio Peña
Xiachu Song
Chloe Svadlenka
Thi Tang
Emilia Yoon

Viola

Leonardo Sobral †
Shanya Chynwat
Anthony Couvillion
Margot Elder
Kelsey Felton
Qianqian Fu
Cameron Halsell

Cello

Eric Rau †
Tyler Aguiard
Julia Jiho Choi
Iris (Chao) Fang
Maddy Dykhouse
Minching Lin
Jiapeng Liu
Xiyan Liu
Ethan Nelsen
Camilo Vasquez

Bass

Xuan Xu †
Ruben Borges
Zoe Czarnecki
Joe Ferris
Wyatt Gaugler
Joseph La Marca
Jason (Kuan-Chieh) Lo
Ricardo Puche

Flute

Mary Chamoun
Allyson Kreider +
James (Chen-Yu) Lee
*
Alison Parker #
Carter Reynolds

Oboe

Alexander Kang +
Hayley Monk *
Hyungju Oh #

Clarinet

Erick Morales +
Andrew Rutten
Lucas Shroyer
Ayuna Sumi *
Brandon Von #

Bassoon

Keliang Li +
Emily O'Donnell #
James Smelley
Sam Viebrock *

French Horn

Justin Beyer **
Daniel Castillon
Isaac Fowler
Becca Geitzenauer +
Patrick Ring

Trumpet

Georgia Hageman #
David Hall *
Lexy Kilgore +
Joseph Williams

Trombone

Benjamin Hahn †
Thomas Spencer

Bass Trombone

Aaron Anderton-Coss

Tuba

Parker Burkey

Timpani

Raina Liao

Percussion

Ryan Blankenship
Aidan Henderson
Ryan Hurford
Caleb Yurasek

Harp

Victoria Gonzalez

‡ Concertmaster

† Principal

* Principal on Wagner

Principal on Dukas

+ Principal on Sibelius

Program Notes

Richard Wagner (1813–1883)

Prelude and Liebestod from *Tristan und Isolde* (1865)

Intense desire and deep philosophical ideas combine in the music from *Tristan und Isolde*. Richard Wagner (1813–1883) penned this innovative musical drama between 1856 and 1859, during a break from writing his masterwork, *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. In the 1850s, Wagner studied the philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860), whose concepts of life, love, and death emerge in *Tristan*. Wagner's novel uses of dissonance and constantly delayed harmonic resolution by means of endless, unsettling chromatic writing influenced generations of composers after *Tristan*'s premiere. César Franck, Max Reger, Claude Debussy, Paul Dukas (whose music also appears on this program), and many others felt prey to the intense allure of *Tristan*'s magic.

In *Tristan und Isolde*, Wagner retells the Celtic story of Tristan's quest to bring Isolde from Ireland back to Cornwall as King Marke's bride. Isolde's despair during their return journey prompts her to trick Tristan into drinking a death potion, but her servant brings up a love potion instead, causing the couple to fall madly in love with each other. Their love becomes a source of great pain as their feelings upend their lives, eventually leading to their mutual demise. At the finale of the music drama, Isolde travels to Tristan, who was wounded and fled when King Marke discovered the lovers in a tryst. Tristan, however, had already perished just prior to Isolde's arrival. She sings the Liebestod—here taken over by the orchestra—as she dies by his side.

The Prelude and Liebestod together, taken from the drama's beginning and ending, capture both the anticipation and yearning present in outset, and the turmoil in its resolution. The intense longing explored in the plot starts immediately in the music—the first harmony is the famed Tristan chord, so named for its presence in the work. Through this ambiguous and unstable chord, the Prelude's opening invokes a question that never quite finds a place to rest, as one of the many *leitmotiven* that reference emotions, people, or places in the work. Like much of the rest of the opera, the Prelude persistently builds tension until the orchestration seems to collapse in on itself, returning to the same questioning motive as the beginning of the piece. The unfulfilled yearning represented in the music reflects Wagner's preoccupation with Schopenhauer's philosophy of the Will, understood as the main force behind human urges. In his view, desire is never satisfied, and only brings suffering in life; self-denial and death are the only means to mitigate it.

The Liebestod—which literally translates as love-death—realizes this destructive outcome. Portions of the turbulent, unsettled musical motives from the Prelude make their way into this section. This time, though, they finally reach a conclusion. Consistent, rising melodies symbolizes Tristan and

Isolde's transcendence as they leave their suffering behind through death. Tristan's transfigured form, described by Isolde in her last song, exemplifies Schopenhauer's idea of death as a means of escaping worldly pains. As Isolde perishes alongside Tristan, the longing, dissonant harmonies reach their height before dispelling, and the music finally reaches a peaceful-sounding resolution as Isolde, through death, reunites with her love.

Paul Dukas (1865–1935)

***L'apprenti sorcier* (1897)**

Even without the visual aid of Mickey Mouse's shenanigans in Disney's film *Fantasia* (1940), Dukas's whimsical music remains a clever depiction of a literary story. Dukas composed *L'apprenti sorcier* shortly after the premier of his only symphony in 1896. The piece's source of inspiration is a poem by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832) in which a sorcerer's apprentice uses magic to outsource his water carrying chores to a broom when his master steps out of the workshop. Inexperienced in magic, the apprentice soon loses control of the enchantment. He takes an axe to the unmanageable broom only to find it regenerates into many baby brooms that work even faster than before. The brooms fill the workshop with water until, in the nick of time, the sorcerer returns and fixes his apprentice's magical folly.

The music follows a rather tight sonata form, with a regular exposition with two themes, a development and a recapitulation, all of which is framed by an introduction and a coda. *L'apprenti sorcier* was originally labeled as a scherzo based on Goethe's poem. A scherzo typically includes more lighthearted, even humorous music, which discloses Dukas's reading of the poem. The opening section begins with a dissonant mixture of long, held notes and quick flourishes of woodwind instruments above that represents the enchantment. These flutters, which become more dramatic as the music continues, evoke the awakening the broom. Ideas of animation—and later, of the duplication of the broom—present themselves in the music through the main melodic theme, first introduced by the bassoon and imitated next by the strings, brass, and winds.

A steady, plodding accompaniment joins in, which reinforces the idea of the broom's repetitive work commanded by the apprentice. By the development, the main theme transforms into a whole-tone scale, keeping the same contour of melody while achieving a more fantastical, directionless sound. Dukas expertly depicts the ensuing chaos through sudden tempo changes and thick instrumental textures. When the music reaches a climactic point at the end of the middle section, one can imagine the apprentice's exasperation as he chops away at the broom, and perhaps even see the broomstick pieces reanimate as the main theme returns with fervor. Dukas's extraordinary ear for choosing the right instruments for any and all musical

gestures is one of the main reasons for this work's resounding success, down to a rare solo of contrabassoon, groaning from the abysses of the orchestra right before the recapitulation. *L'apprenti sorcier* has remained one of Dukas's most popular works for its brilliant depiction of Goethe's poem through the most convincing orchestral music.

Jean Sibelius (1865–1957)

Symphony No. 5 (1919)

By the time of this symphony's composition, Finland already regarded Sibelius as a central figure in the development of its national identity. Along with contemporaries such as Heino Kaski and Erkki Melartin, Sibelius's music became a hallmark of Finnish art and is still often performed both inside and outside the country. His Fifth Symphony balances the contemplative spirit of his later works with a more familiar nineteenth-century musical landscape; during a time of radical artistic change and modernist experimentation, Sibelius stayed close to the late Romantic era in his choices of harmony and melody. His Fifth Symphony also draws on the composer's personal philosophy of the connection of music and nature. Sibelius enjoyed living in the countryside for most of his life, and frequently sought inspiration from the surrounding landscapes. One of the 5th Symphony's most notable themes draws on the grandeur and beauty of sixteen flying swans, an encounter he considered one of the peak experiences of his life.

The opening movement bears marks of Sibelius's ongoing struggle with perfectionism, as the common version known today was originally two separate movements. Combining them into a single entity produces a one-of-a-kind form that gradually shifts from slow-moving masses of sound to a lively, agile scherzo. A horn call begins the movement, followed with woodwind echoes that slowly unfold into the melody as if they were a living organism. An image of mist soon emerges from string tremolos, underscoring additional thematic developments in the horns and woodwinds that seamlessly grow into a first climax of the piece. As the music wanes, the original horn call sounds once again, this time in the trumpets, and a variation of the whole opening follows before the piece veers in another direction. A chromatic bassoon solo, freely floating above the string mist, leads towards a third iteration of the horn call. Scherzo motives now follow; the subsequent music adopts a dance-like quality, bridging the gap with the once-separated second movement. Melodies again grow organically out of each other, with a gradual increase in excitement that build up to a truly triumphant ending.

Andante mosso, quasi allegretto, the second movement of the work, is cast as a series of variations on the plucked rhythmic pattern first audible in the plucked melody of the strings. Woodwinds reply with shortened notes in a kind of call-and-response with the plucked strings. The element of repetition so central to this movement (and to the end of the final movement as well)

reflects folk influence, as if the music were reciting an epic or a myth. What begins as an almost idyllic, pastoral sound takes some darker musical turns as it progresses towards the third movement, but not without a return to the opening motive of plucking strings.

Following tradition, tonight's performance will not separate the last two movements; the somewhat sudden ending of the second movement plunges into the rush of activity that launches the finale. The initial flurry of music, a full theme of its own, gives way to the first appearance of the swan theme: a solemn, leaping, impressive melody in the horns. In this theme, Sibelius managed to write into the piece the awe he experienced when he spotted the flying swans, and created one of the most memorable moments of his whole output. Above the swan theme, the strings play a smoother, soaring melody. The music expands on both themes, first the swan theme and then its countermelody, before settling on the image of the birds. Again, the folk-inspired repetition presents itself, here paired with an imitation of nature. The swan motif is traded and fragmented among the instruments and gives way to the most rousing climax so far, as the symphony draws to a close with grand chords interspersed with unexpected silence.

—Cecilia Presa (supervised by Dr. Bernardo Illari, with additional help from Dr. Brian Anderson)

Biography

The 2024–2025 season marks David Itkin's 20th season as music director and conductor of the Abilene Philharmonic, and his 17th year serving as professor of music and director of orchestral studies at the University of North Texas College of Music.

During past seasons Maestro Itkin's career has taken him to 45 U.S. states and 15 countries in Europe, the Middle East, and Asia, including concerts and recordings with the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, Slovenska Filharmonija, San Diego Symphony, and Seoul Philharmonic. Other guest conducting appearances include concerts with the Colorado Philharmonic, Annapolis Symphony, National Repertory Orchestra, Fort Worth Symphony, Illinois Symphony, Delaware Symphony, New Hampshire Symphony, Cheyenne Symphony, and the Indianapolis, Baltimore, and Reno chamber orchestras. During the Summer of 2006 Maestro Itkin appeared once again with the Slovenska Filharmonija in Ljubljana, Slovenia, conducting the opening concert of the 14th World Saxophone Congress.

Following a distinguished 17-year tenure, Maestro Itkin was named conductor laureate of the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra in July 2010. Previously Mr. Itkin served as music director and conductor of the Las Vegas Philharmonic, artistic director and conductor of the McCall Summerfest in McCall, Idaho, and as music director and conductor of the Lake Forest Symphony (Chicago), Kingsport Symphony, Birmingham Opera Theatre, and Lucius Woods Music Festival (Wisconsin).

His second book, *The Conductor's Craft*, was published in 2021 by GIA Publications, whereupon notable conductors and pedagogues wrote, "a real breakthrough for anyone studying or teaching conducting," "I love this book and will be using it in my studio," and "Bravo to Maestro Itkin." His first book, *Conducting Concerti*, was released in August 2014 to considerable critical acclaim. Leonard Slatkin called *Conducting Concerti* "a valuable textbook for the aspiring Maestro...highly recommended," and Samuel Adler called it "an invaluable addition to the world of conducting textbooks."

Mr. Itkin's first film score (*Sugar Creek*) was recorded in 2006 by the Arkansas Symphony for the film's 2007 release. His most recent major work, *Exodus*, an oratorio, was premiered in April 2005 in Little Rock, with William Shatner narrating. *Exodus* was released worldwide on CD in 2007. In May 2009 Maestro Itkin was awarded both an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters by Lyon College and the Above the Barre award by Ballet Arkansas. In addition to his professional schedule, Maestro Itkin regularly serves as a guest conductor/clinician, including concerts with the Arkansas All-State Orchestra, Southern California High School Honors Orchestra, Maine All-State Orchestra, Las Vegas Senior Honors Orchestra, and any number of Texas all-region Honors Orchestras.