



University of North Texas Concert Orchestra

Clay Couturiaux, conductor

with

Molly Fillmore, soprano

Vladimir Viardo, piano

Wednesday, September 20, 2023

7:30 pm

Winspear Hall

Murchison Performing Arts Center

PROGRAM

Vocalise, Opus 34, No. 14 (1915) Serge Rachmaninoff (1873–1943)

Molly Fillmore, soprano

Romeo and Juliet

Overture-Fantasy (1880) Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893)

--Intermission--

Concerto No. 2 in C minor, Opus 18 (1901) Serge Rachmaninoff

I. Moderato

II. Adagio sostenuto - Più animato - Tempo I

III. Allegro scherzando

Vladimir Viardo, piano

***Forty-fourth program of the 2023–2024 season
Photography and videography are prohibited***

PROGRAM NOTES

Revered Tchaikovsky, beloved Rachmaninoff: this concert is a true treat of well-known music. Each piece, a cornerstone of the concert repertoire, celebrates beauty, often through lush lyricism and fervent love and in stark contrast with angst and strife. The resplendence of these songful pieces is matched only by their memorability.

Serge Rachmaninoff (1873–1943) **Vocalise, Opus 34, No. 14 (1915)**

For the listener, Rachmaninoff's Vocalise is a wash of resplendent sound, a testament to the voice's ability to express even without a text. The smooth, legato, and melodious character of the vocal line belies the song's difficulty. Indeed, the singer's melody is virtually unbroken for the duration of the six-minute work, requiring tremendous stamina and offering the singer no time to rest.

Known primarily for his virtuosic piano compositions and ability, Russian composer Serge Rachmaninoff also wrote over six dozen songs, the most famous of which is his Vocalise, a textless song composed in 1912 and revised in 1915. The song was published as the last piece of his *Fourteen Romances*, and each was composed with a specific performer in mind. Rachmaninoff dedicated Vocalise to the Russian opera singer Antonina Nezhdanova, who premiered the song in 1916 with Rachmaninoff at the piano. The song exists in a variety of instrumentations—high voice and piano; cello and piano; voice and orchestra; orchestra. It is most often performed without voice, so hearing the sung version is a rare treat.

Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893) **Romeo and Juliet Overture-Fantasy (1880)**

Four hundred years after the death of William Shakespeare, we continue to be fascinated with his works. Whether by reading *Hamlet* in English class or enjoying a loose adaptation like Disney's *The Lion King*, nearly all of us have been drawn to the stories of Shakespeare. Composers from Beethoven to Berlioz and Mendelssohn to Verdi resonated with the same themes that continue to draw us to Shakespeare today—the allure of legend, magic, love, and intrigue.

PROGRAM NOTES

Similarly, Russian composers were not immune to this fascination with Shakespeare. The scholar Philip Ross Bullock even described the time as one of “Shekspirshchina,” the “Rule of Shakespeare.” Mily Balakirev (1836–1910), the leader of the group of nationalist composers known as the “Mighty Five,” threw his hat into the ring with an overture and incidental music for *King Lear*, a positively received composition interpreted as an expression of Russian nationalism. In 1869, Balakirev suggested to Tchaikovsky, then aged 29, that the latter should compose a symphonic poem inspired by *Romeo and Juliet*. Balakirev offered the younger composer suggestions for the program of the work, and Tchaikovsky took these ideas to heart. In October of 1869, Tchaikovsky reported back to Balakirev, writing:

My overture is coming along rather quickly; the greater part is already completed in outline, and if nothing gets in my way, I hope that within around a month and a half it will be ready. When it crawls out of my womb, you will see that whatever else it is, a large number of your suggestions have been carried out according to your instructions. (Translated by David Brown in *Tchaikovsky: A Biographical and Critical Study*, 1978).

Upon the work's completion, Tchaikovsky dedicated it to Balakirev. It premiered in 1870, but Tchaikovsky continued to tinker with the work, revising the overture first in 1870 and again in 1880. Over the course of these revisions, Tchaikovsky lessened Balakirev's influence on the work by overhauling the introduction, some of the reprises, and the conclusion.

It is the version of *Romeo and Juliet* from 1880 that is performed most frequently today. Like most concert overtures of the nineteenth century, *Romeo and Juliet* is structured according to modified sonata form. Reflecting on Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Nicholas Temperley notes that “the result is a mood piece, not a musical narrative.” In *Romeo and Juliet*, Tchaikovsky evokes the themes of the play—love, piety, bitter hatred—through the musical themes of sonata form. The most memorable and anticipated of these is the love theme.

The introduction depicts the solemnity and devout faith of Friar Laurence, the cleric who weds the two young lovers. This opening section is slow, introspective, and chorale-like, a subtle harbinger of Romeo and Juliet's tragic fate. Darkness and peace alternate in the strings and winds before harp arpeggios evoke the sounds of a legendary past, transporting the listener to a new time and place. The second section, in B minor, begins with the principal theme of the work, an angry and energetic syncopated melody depicting the fiery hatred between the Montague and Capulet families. Strings and winds then exchange ideas before violins swirl in intrigue, propelling the listener forward as the lower strings and winds fight in a canon.

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Romeo and Juliet find love despite their families' hatred. Their infatuation is first expressed through a gentle and romantic secondary theme on the English horn and viola. This legendary love theme is the centerpiece of the work, yet it is withheld from the listener, who first endures the bitter sparring of the two families. Its emergence alone is noteworthy, as it organically grows from the wreckage of familial malice. It is stated three times, at first anxious but later peaceful. In the development, the angry theme from earlier returns, reminding the lovers of the precariousness of their relationship. The recapitulation finally offers the love theme in exultant D Major, but the work soon collapses into a second development. Sections of intense familial hatred fight with passages of passionate forbidden love, represented by the two main themes of the work. Eventually the lovers perish; fragments of the love theme play over quiet, low strings. The work ends in B Major, suggesting heavenly peace and the indelibility of their love even over death.

Serge Rachmaninoff (1873–1943) ***Concerto No. 2 in C minor, Opus 18 (1901)***

Rachmaninoff's *Piano Concerto No. 2* represented a rejuvenating return to composition after a confidence-shattering event three years before. In 1897, his *Symphony No. 1* was panned by the audience, causing him to retreat inward and virtually cease composing. Rachmaninoff partially blamed the conductor, Alexander Glazunov, for this failure. In a letter, Rachmaninoff remarked that "I am amazed how such a highly talented man as Glazunov can conduct so badly. I am not speaking now of his conducting technique (one can't ask that of him) but about his musicianship. He feels nothing when he conducts. It's as if he understands nothing." César Cui, Russian composer and member of the "Mighty Five," focused his criticism on the music itself, likening it to the seven plagues of Egypt as described in Exodus. It was Rachmaninoff's meetings with the physician, amateur musician, and hypnotist Nikolai Dahl in the spring of 1900 that helped the despondent musician regain the confidence and motivation to compose. Rejuvenated, Rachmaninoff set off to work, promptly completing his *Piano Concerto No. 2* and dedicating the three-movement work to Dahl.

Taken as a whole, the concerto resembles a lengthy lyrical aria in multiple phases. With virtuosic displays limited to the three cadenzas of the piece, the pianist most often engages in arpeggios in sections of melody, octaves or thick chords for climaxes, and brief flourishes for tension. Because much of the work is built upon sweeping lyrical themes, Rachmaninoff adds interest through orchestral color. Melodies return in new guises, played over different figurations or in different instrumentation. Reliance on song form facilitates a certain kind of tension and release, one in which all the edges are smoothed and the strongest climaxes occur in the middle of the movements. The exception here is the third movement, the only fast movement in the concerto. Even then, however, the tempo does not inhibit lyricism.

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The first movement, in sonata form, begins with the solo piano. The opening passage emerges from the distance. Enshrouded in mystery, it does not reveal the tonic of the movement: C minor. As the sound comes into focus, the upper strings enter with the principal theme, a lengthy lyrical melody supported by rapid arpeggios in the piano. After some playful flourishes by the soloist, the piano begins its own lyrical theme, soon joined by a sentimental figure in the strings. The unstable development builds to a climax marked by ascending strings, piercing brass, and thick, portentous chords in the piano. When the opening theme returns in the recapitulation, it is nearly unrecognizable. The piano now has a brash, march-like figure that pierces the lyricism of the strings. The tension, enhanced by punctuating brass, remains unmatched for the remainder of the movement. The pressure soon dissolves back into legato lyricism, marking the transition into the secondary theme. Now stated by winds and a solo horn, the secondary theme gives way to a coda in C minor as the winding figures of the piano accelerate and crescendo into a quick climax.

The second movement, marked *Adagio sostenuto*, is a slow ternary (ABA form) aria in the distant key of E Major. Simple arpeggios in the piano serve as the foundation for a clarinet solo. The repeating arpeggios create a sense of calm stillness with the clarinet floating on top, moving ever-forward but without any sense of urgency or desperation. The piano then takes the lead, subverting the sense of calm and building to a climax two-thirds of the way through the movement. After an extended virtuosic cadenza, the strings enter with a restatement of the earlier clarinet melody in one of the most sumptuous and heartfelt sections of the work.

The final movement offers a stark contrast with the others. Marked *Allegro scherzando*, this is the only fast movement of the concerto. Composed in sonata form, it begins with a playful and orchestral introduction that explains the transition from E Major back to C minor. The piano enters with a virtuosic cadenza, the second of the concerto, ratcheting up the tension before stating an anxious theme—almost dance-like but too jittery. The oboes and strings have the secondary theme, and like so many others in this concerto, it is sweeping and lyrical. Bittersweet in character, the mood of this theme characterizes the remainder of the work. The development, on the other hand, mimics the restlessness of the start of the movement with frequent syncopation and off-beat accents dominated by the percussive effects of the piano. Rachmaninoff subverts the recapitulation itself—the end of the development and the beginning of the recapitulation are blended, obscuring the listener's sense of place. Moreover, the second theme unconvincingly returns in D-flat Major instead of C Major, necessitating a second development. Following the second development, the secondary theme returns, this time resolutely in C Major. Cellos take center-stage as the piano flitters above. Unison strings punctuated by thick chords in the piano raise the tension in an overwhelming display of late Romantic indulgence, a lyrical climax to a concerto marked by its lyricism. The piece concludes with an electric and energizing coda in C Major.—*Chandler Hall under the direction of Bernardo Illari*

BIOGRAPHIES

Described by *Gramophone* as “a compelling interpreter,” **Molly Fillmore** made her Metropolitan Opera debut as Helmwig in their production of *Der Ring der Nibelungen*. She returned to the Met to sing a principal role in *Satyagraha* by Philip Glass. Both of these productions were shown live in movie theaters around the world as part of the Met's Live in HD series as well as on PBS stations nationwide as part of their Great Performances series. She can be heard and seen on the Grammy-winning Deutsche Grammophon CD and DVD/Blu-Ray of *Die Walküre* from The Metropolitan Opera under the musical direction of James Levine and Fabio Luisi, as well as on the recently released (2021) DVD and CD of the Metropolitan Opera's production of *Satyagraha*.



Her newly released album, *Bold Beauty – Songs of Juliana Hall*, with faculty colleague Elvia Puccinelli, features a song cycle (Cameos) for which Ms. Fillmore wrote the poems, called “vivid glances” by *Gramophone*.

She made her soprano debut in the title role of *Salome* at San Francisco Opera, a role which she also sang for Arizona Opera, and covered at The Metropolitan Opera. She sang the role of Ortlinde in Francesca Zambello's San Francisco Opera production of *Die Walküre*, conducted by Donald Runnicles. Other American opera appearances as a soloist include Seattle Opera, Spoleto Festival, and Washington National Opera. She made her role debut as Marietta/Marie in *Die tote Stadt* with Theater St. Gallen, Switzerland and sang the title role of *Turandot* with the University of North Texas Symphony.

Before her switch to dramatic soprano repertoire, Molly Fillmore had an international career as a mezzo-soprano, including five seasons as a principal soloist in the ensemble of Oper der Stadt Köln (Cologne Opera), where she appeared in over twenty roles, including Cherubino in *Le nozze di Figaro*, Romeo in *I Capuleti e I Montecchi*, Don Ramiro in *La finta giardiniera*, Mercédès in *Carmen*, Wellgunde in *Das Rheingold*, and Waltraute in *Die Walküre*. Other mezzo-soprano appearances included the roles of Orfeo in *Orfeo ed Euridice* and Margret in *Wozzeck*.

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On the concert stage, Molly Fillmore has appeared as a soloist in an operatic concert with the Boston Symphony Orchestra at Tanglewood, Mozart's *Requiem* and Handel's *Messiah* with the Detroit Symphony, *La damnation de Faust* with Utah Symphony, Vaughan Williams' *Magnificat* and an opera gala with the Choral Arts Society of Washington, the Mozart *Requiem* at Carnegie Hall, a Gershwin celebration and Mozart *Requiem* at Lincoln Center, Isolde's "Liebestod" at the Interlochen Arts Festival, Stravinsky's *Les Noces* at the Great Lakes Chamber Festival, and in the Saint-Saëns *Oratorio de Noël*, broadcast on Deutschlandfunk Radio. She appeared opposite baritone Mark Delavan in Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, which she also sang with the UNT Symphony Orchestra. Molly Fillmore recently debuted Samuel Barber's *Knoxville: Summer of 1915* and the *Bachianas Brasileiras* of Villa-Lobos for the Sherman Symphony, and she has sung both the soprano and mezzo-soprano parts of a favorite work, the Verdi *Requiem*, multiple times on professional stages.

An active recitalist, she studied German art song at the Franz-Schubert-Institut in Baden-bei-Wien. She gave a joint recital with tenor Ernst Haefliger at the International Beethoven Festival in Bonn and has been heard in recital in Switzerland, Germany, Austria, China and various cities in the United States.

Molly Fillmore made her solo operatic debut with the Washington National Opera at the Kennedy Center Opera House while a sophomore at American University. By the time she had completed her master of music degree, she had appeared in seven solo roles (including a leading role in the zarzuela *El Gato Montes*) with the Washington National Opera and as a soloist in numerous concerts at the Kennedy Center Concert Hall.

A native of northeast Ohio, she graduated *magna cum laude* with a B.A. in music from American University in Washington, D.C., and is the recipient of the university's Evelyn Swarthout Hayes Award, given to the student who has contributed most to the Washington, D.C. performing arts scene while maintaining a high grade point average. She holds a master of music degree from The University of Maryland. She taught voice at Michigan State University for ten years and, in 2014, joined the faculty at the University of North Texas, where she holds the position of professor of voice and chair of the Division of Vocal Studies. She has given numerous masterclasses both in the United States and in China, and she has former students who now serve on the faculty of secondary music institutions. She regularly produces abridged summer opera productions for her studio members and others in the Division of Vocal Studies in order to provide role performance opportunities.

BIOGRAPHIES

Since claiming victory and a Gold Medal at the Fourth Van Cliburn International Piano Competition in 1973, **Vladimir Viardo** has earned the esteem of the public and his colleagues alike. Having risen to international prominence, he has distinguished himself with some of the most critically acclaimed performances and recordings of his generation, inspiring many, including Sviatoslav Richter and Alicia de Larrocha, to praise him for his extraordinary musicianship. In the years that followed, Viardo collaborated with the world's leading orchestras, including the Royal Philharmonic, Moscow Philharmonic, Leningrad Philharmonic, Warsaw Philharmonic, Israel Philharmonic, Atlanta Symphony, Prague Philharmonic, and many others.



Like a handful of other celebrated Soviet artists, from dancer Nureyev to mathematician Egorov, Viardo's journey to the West began under an ominous political cloud. No matter that, by the time he was 23, his future was already assured with impeccable credentials, several additional competition wins—including a top prize at the Concours Marguerite Long-Jacques Thibaud in Paris—and a command of more than 37 concertos, Viardo fell victim to demands of the Soviet authorities. Detained behind the Iron Curtain, Viardo threw himself into his work, only to emerge with even greater determination, now buttressed by exemplary artistic refinement, to bring his art to music lovers everywhere. With the onset of Perestroika, the Soviets at last allowed Viardo to accept engagements in Germany and the United States.

In 1989 the North Texas College of Music appointed Viardo to its distinguished faculty, where he soon established a reputation as an extraordinary coach and teacher. His roster of students includes young artists from Europe, the Americas, South Africa, and Asia, many of them competition winners themselves. Viardo's masterclasses are much in demand throughout the world, and his philosophy of teaching is detailed in Benjamin Saver's *The Most Wanted Piano Teachers in the USA*.

After returning to the West, Viardo's international career resumed with several concerts at Carnegie Hall, the Lincoln and Kennedy centers, Salle Pleyel, and the Concertgebouw. His concert tours have taken him to leading American, Canadian, and European cities, to Asia and South Africa, as well as to Israel and Central and South America, where he has appeared as a soloist with most of the important conductors in the world, not the least of whom are Mehta, Maazel, Davies, Susskind, Shippers, Kondrashin, Spivakov, Giordano, and M. Shostakovich. His numerous recordings for Melodia, Pro Arte and Nonesuch have been greeted with unanimous critical acclaim.

BIOGRAPHIES

Clay Couturiaux is the assistant director of Orchestral Studies at the University of North Texas where he currently teaches orchestral conducting and is conductor of the UNT Concert Orchestra. The 2023–24 season marks Couturiaux's twelfth season as music director and conductor of the Richardson Symphony Orchestra. Following a distinguished 16-year tenure, he was named conductor laureate of the Monroe Symphony Orchestra in May 2020. He has also served on the faculty of the UNT Summer Strings Institute since 2015.



Maestro Couturiaux has accumulated over two decades of experience conducting professional symphony orchestras and teaching at the university level. His career has taken him across the United States, Europe, and Asia including concerts with the Vietnam National Symphony Orchestra, Ho Chi Minh City Symphony Orchestra, Milano Classica Orchestra da Camera, and National Taiwan Normal University Symphony Orchestra. Other professional conducting engagements include performances with the Abilene Philharmonic, Arkansas Symphony, Austin Symphony, Metropolitan Classical Ballet, East Texas Symphony Orchestra, Texas Chamber Orchestra, and Wichita Falls Symphony Orchestra.

Further highlights include conducting the University of North Texas Symphony Orchestra in concert for an audience of 37,000 at Cowboys Stadium in a major collaboration with the North Texas XLV Super Bowl Host Committee, NFL Films, and Tim McGraw. He has also recorded with the UNT Chamber Orchestra on the Crystal Records label. In addition to his professional schedule, Maestro Couturiaux regularly serves as a guest conductor/clinician, including concerts with several Texas All-Region Honors Orchestras.

In March 2013 the Northeast Louisiana Arts Council named Maestro Couturiaux the recipient of the Edmund Williamson Artist of the Year Award. The award is presented to an artist who the selection committee feels has made the most significant contribution to the improvement of the quality of life for Northeast Louisiana.

Dr. Couturiaux began his musical studies at the age of eight in violoncello and piano. He holds degrees in both conducting and violoncello performance from the University of North Texas. In addition, he developed his conducting skills at the world-renowned Pierre Monteux School for Conductors and Orchestra Musicians in Maine and at the National Arts Centre Conductors Programme in Ottawa, Canada. The long list of distinguished conductors with whom Couturiaux studied includes Anshel Brusilow, Jorma Panula, Michael Jinbo, Hugh Wolff, Neal Gittleman, Carl Topilow, and Harold Farberman.

CONCERT ORCHESTRA

Violin I

Karim Ayala Pool ‡
Polly Klein
Lucas Furtado
Jingwei Zhang
Marlon Barrios
Pablo Cerdas
Alyssa Hall
Ethan Dunn
Luca Nardelli
Oscar Mata
Chloe Svadlenka
Isaiah Vargus

Violin II

Kelly Huang ‡
Ella Curb
Mitchelle Cabrera
Julia Oh
Evan Collazos
Juliana Jones
Emil De Veyra
Sofia Vega
Seth Castellano
Emma Swank
Braeden Boyles
Zakkary Diserens
Dylan Garcia
Josue Tachiquin

Viola

Shanya Chynwat ‡
John Sharp
Ke'Juan Thompson
Rachel Liu
Isaac Seybold
Samuel Yi
Elizabeth Olson
Caroline Skeels
Kate Durham
Angel De Hoyos
Anthony Brooks
Johnathan Ramos
Camryn Bourne

Cello

Jacob Reed ‡
Louis Staton
Deohanz Buenafe
Ethan Nelsen
Noah Sendir
Jaya Waugh
Jin Wang
Zhimai Ma
Ashton Gonzalez
Claire Cabral
Maya Huber
Ethen Lim

Double Bass

Savannah Hilterbrandt ‡
Joe Ferris
Catherine Willis
Josue Reyes
Garrett Hicks
Aiyana Armstrong
Riley Hale
Wyatt Gaugler
Zach Seymour

Flute

Di Cao * +
Seungbeom Oh ^
Carter Reynolds
Michael Salm

Oboe

Madeline Lee ^
Daniel Moreira
Ava Raymond * +

Clarinet

Riley Mazziotta
Kyle Norberg
Wesley Wynn ^
Allyson Verret * +

Bassoon

Megan Gober ^
Donovan Neal * +
Artur Kuchurivskiy

Horn

Andrew Bennett
Isaac Fowler
Haley Ginn ^
Brandon Kofahl
Sebastian Ruiz * +

Trumpet

Robert Jones
Henry Lesser
Jacaleb Shepard +
Joseph Williams ^

Trombone

Timothy Wight + ^
Thomas Spencer
Aaron Anderton-Coss

Tuba

Loghan Runnakko

Timpani

Raina Liao

Percussion

Caleb Brown
Brayden Haslam
Jack Spelman
Zeke Strawn
Adam Surak

Harp

Gabi Logan

‡ Concertmaster
‡ Principal
* Principal on
Rachmaninoff Vocalise
+ Principal on Tchaikovsky
^ Principal on
Rachmaninoff Piano
Concerto

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David Itkin, Anshel Brusilow Professor of Orchestral Studies

Clay Couturiaux, Assistant Director of Orchestral Studies

Charles Baldwin, Doctoral Conducting Associate/Librarian/Conducting Class

Patricio Gutierrez, Doctoral Conducting Associate/Operations Manager

Qiuxian Lu, Doctoral Conducting Associate/Personnel Manager

Instrumental Studies & Keyboard Studies (*Adjunct)

Julia Bushkova, violin

Chloé Kiffer, violin

Philip Lewis, violin

*Dina Nesterenko, violin

Susan Dubois, viola

Daphne Gerling, viola

Horacio Contreras, cello

Nikola Ružević, cello

Jeffrey Bradetich, double bass

Gudrun Raschen, double bass

Jaymee Haefner, harp

Mary Karen Clardy, flute

Elizabeth McNutt, flute

Terri Sundberg, flute

*Amy Taylor, piccolo

Jung Choi, oboe

Daryl Coad, clarinet

Deb Fabian, clarinet

Kimberly Cole Luevano, clarinet

Phillip Paglialonga, clarinet

*Gregory Raden, clarinet

Darrel Hale, bassoon

Eric Nestler, saxophone

John Holt, trumpet

Raquel Samayoa, trumpet

*Kyle Sherman, trumpet

Katherine McBain, horn

Stacie Mickens, horn

Tony Baker, trombone

Natalie Mannix, trombone

Steven Menard, trombone

David Childs, euphonium

*Matthew Good, tuba

Don Little, tuba

Quincy Davis, drumset

*Stockton Helbing, drumset

*Steven Pruitt, drumset

Mark Ford, percussion

David Hall, percussion

Paul Rennick, percussion

*Sandi Rennick, percussion

*Liudmila Georgievskaya, piano

Steven Harlos, piano

Pamela Mia Paul, piano

Elvia Puccinelli, collaborative piano

Gustavo Romero, piano

Vladimir Viardo, piano

Adam Wodnicki, piano

Jesse Eschbach, organ

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