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CONCERT SEASON

# RUSSIAN SILVER

James Villani Music Director

Agnes Wan Piano

May 12, 2018  
7:30 PM

Hylton Performing  
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## Manassas Symphony Orchestra Presents

# RUSSIAN SILVER

## A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

**Bob Marsh**

Welcome to the final concert of our Silver Anniversary Season, *Russian Silver*. Tonight's event is an extravaganza at every turn. We are delighted to host a fantastic pre-concert performance by our friends at the famed Washington Balalaika Society. What a treat to have them join us!

We are especially excited to be joined by over two dozen high school musicians from around the region for this concert. These student string players have worked hard and prepared diligently to play with the MSO in the season finale, Rimsky-Korsakov's magical *Scheherazade*. Their brass-playing counterparts are joining us for Shostakovich's brilliant opener, *Festive Overture*.

In the middle of the concert we are very proud to present acclaimed Steinway Artist Agnes Wan performing Rachmaninoff's showpiece *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*. Dr. Wan has performed all over the world and we are lucky to have her perform with us tonight. We also want to offer special thanks to Emil Chudnovsky - our amazing soloist from October 2016 - for warming us up for the Rachmaninoff by playing the Paganini *Caprice* upon which the *Rhapsody* is based.

All the musicians that you see in front of you volunteer their time and musical talent to make the MSO a success. Travelling from all around the region, the mission and music of the MSO is a labor of love for all of them. We hope, as you pass through the beautiful Hylton Center Didlake Grand Foyer, that you will have an opportunity to greet our talented MSO musicians and guest artist and thank them for their dedication in bringing you this wonderful concert.

Please consider becoming one of our most valued patrons by supporting the MSO with a monetary donation. Your donations have helped us grow and develop into the inspirational community orchestra that we are today - recognized locally and nationally for excellence. You will find a donation form in this program to facilitate your contribution. Thank you for your generosity and support for the MSO. For more information regarding the symphony, membership, donations, and tickets, please visit [ManassasSymphony.org](http://ManassasSymphony.org). You may also reach us at 703-853-0749 or by email at [info@manassassymphony.org](mailto:info@manassassymphony.org).

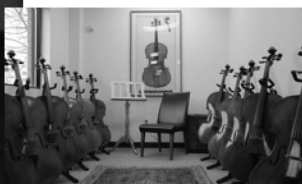
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# ABOUT THE CONDUCTOR

**James Villani, Music Director**



James Villani has been the conductor and music director of the Symphony since 2004. As a long-time strong advocate for continuing adult music education and volunteerism in the arts, Mr. Villani has been involved in community musical organizations since coming to Northern Virginia in 1986. He was associate conductor and clarinetist for the Reston Chamber Orchestra for 10 years, and has been involved with countless other area performances. He is an active judge and clinician for local music festivals and competitions. He is a member of the League of American Orchestras and the Conductors Guild. Mr. Villani was a semi-finalist for The American Prize for Community Orchestra Conductors in 2010.

A native of New Castle, Pennsylvania, Mr. Villani began playing clarinet in school at the age of 8. He honed his skills, as many in town did, in the back room of Al Colella's Shoe Store, where Mr. Colella taught a steady stream of clarinetists for decades while servicing the occasional shoe customer. Later, while in high school, Mr. Villani studied with Carl Marks, a noted faculty member at Duquesne University and Youngstown State University's Dana School of Music. Mr. Marks was himself a student of the legendary Daniel Bonade.

Mr. Villani received Bachelor's Degrees in Clarinet Performance and Music Education from Penn State University, where he studied with Smith Toulson and was a member of every major ensemble, from the marching Blue Band to the Symphony Orchestra. Among his PSU highlights were four major bowl games, playing tenor saxophone in Disney's All-American College Marching Band at the grand opening of the EPCOT theme park, and performing with the Pittsburgh Symphony under the baton of Michael Tilson Thomas.

He received a Master of Music in Conducting from Northwestern University, where he studied conducting with John P. Paynter and was a graduate assistant for the university wind ensembles. He had a rather unique opportunity for a conducting major -- playing bass clarinet in the top wind ensemble alongside classmates who are now members of top symphony orchestras, including the principal clarinetist of the Houston Symphony. Mr. Villani was also a student of Clark Brody, principal clarinetist of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra under Fritz Reiner, and Alan Stout, a renowned contemporary composer.

Mr. Villani taught in the public schools of Chalfont, PA; East Palestine, Ohio; and at Stonewall Jackson High School in Manassas. Mr. Villani is an Adjunct Assistant Professor at Northern Virginia Community College.



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TONIGHT'S PROGRAM

RUSSIAN SILVER

MANASSAS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Saturday, May 12, 2018 · 7:30 p.m.

Merchant Hall of the Hylton Performing Arts Center

James Villani · Music Director

Agnes Wan · Piano Soloist      Emil Chudnovsky · Violin

**Festive Overture in A major, Op. 96** .....Dmitri Dmitriyevich  
Shostakovich (1906-75)

**Caprice No. 24 in A minor (for violin solo)**..... Niccolò Paganini  
(1782-1840)

Mr. Chudnovsky, violin

**Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, Op. 43**.....Sergei Vasilievich  
Rachmaninoff (1873-1943)

Ms. Wan, piano

**INTERMISSION**

**Scheherazade, Op. 35**..... Nikolai Andreyevich  
Rimsky-Korsakov (1844-1908)

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- II. The Kalandar Prince
- III. The Young Prince and The Young Princess
- IV. Festival at Baghdad – The Sea – The Ship Breaks against a Cliff  
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drink or gum is allowed in Merchant Hall. Patrons will be seated during appropriate pauses in the music.*



# GUEST ARTIST

**Agnes Wan**



Praised as a “big pianist, big musician, big potential” with “compelling artistry that draws the listeners in and envelops them with musical joy,” pianist Ho Yan Agnes Wan most recently completed a six-city, eight-recital performance tour in Texas. Other notable past engagements included a recital on the “Pianists of the World” series at the prestigious St. Martin-in-the-Fields in London, United Kingdom and the season kick-off on the SPG Live! Concert Series at the Steinway Piano Gallery of Charlotte, where she performed on the legendary Horowitz piano (CD 503) as part of the piano’s Piedmont Region Tour. Upcoming engagements will include a tour to Europe and another to Canada.

An active piano recitalist, her performance is known for its expressive quality. In a recent recital review published by the Classical Voice of North Carolina, critic Chelsea Huber wrote, “perhaps the best thing about watching her perform is the joy she exudes while playing. Wan has a sort of quiet intensity that manifests itself regardless of the mood set by the music ... Wan performed the music with feeling that involved every fiber of her being,” and highlighted her “intricate interpretation ... precise articulations ... independent phrasing of each melodic line ... exuberant performance ... carefully phrased, lyrical melody ... [and] sense of humor.” Her debut compact disc recording, “Robert Schumann: Romance at the Piano,” released on Soundset Recordings label in late 2012, received critical acclaim from music critic Jerry Dubins (with the Fanfare Magazine): “... Wan plays these Schumann pieces as expressively and poetically as anyone I’ve heard, always placing her technical mastery at the service of Schumann’s ever-inventive musical imagination.”

As a clinician, Agnes Wan has been an active adjudicator at many youth piano competitions, and frequently gives masterclasses to talented young students at various Steinway facilities and a number of fine arts high schools. She has also given masterclasses at the Community College of Baltimore County, McNeese State University, Tennessee Technological University, and the University of Montevallo, among others. As a presenter, she has appeared at the state-level Music Teachers Association conferences in Alabama, Indiana, Texas, and North Carolina. Her Book, “Physical and Mental Issues in Piano Performance: The Interrelationships between Physical Tension, Performance Anxiety, and Memorization Strategies,” released by VDM-Verlag in 2008, has reportedly been recommended as a reference book for piano pedagogy courses at a few universities. Her scholarly articles have been published by the peer-reviewed journal, *American Music Teacher*.



Agnes Wan holds the Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Piano Performance and Pedagogy from the University of Iowa and an Artist Diploma from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. She also obtained her Bachelor of Music and double master's degrees in music therapy and piano performance at the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts and Loyola University New Orleans respectively. Her teachers have included Gabriel Kwok, Nancy Loo, Jac McCracken, Uriel Tsachor, James Tocco, and Michael Chertock. Having previously taught at Vanderbilt University and Chowan University, Wan is currently an Assistant Professor of Piano at Virginia State University. She also serves as an Adjunct Lecturer of Applied Music (Piano) at the College of William and Mary. In September 2013, she was invited to join the roster of Steinway Artist, an honorable designation she has held since then.

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# PROGRAM NOTES

By Dr. Stephen Fisher

If the history of Russia has been a succession of oppressive regimes interspersed with brief thaws and intervals of unrest, the history of art music in the Western European mold in Russia has been one of composers doing their best to create within the restrictions imposed by the situation. All three composers on this program had their difficulties with the politics of their homeland. In the Tsarist police state Western-style music was generally regarded as an indication of Russia's modernization and was approved so long as composers and their works stayed away from certain sensitive areas. In the Soviet police state that developed after 1917, artists and the arts were expected to serve the ideology and purposes of the Communist regime, and those who failed to follow the official line could expect career- and possibly life-threatening consequences.

As Dmitri Shostakovich was eleven years old in 1917, he spent his adult life in the Soviet era. He narrowly escaped being a victim in Stalin's purges of the late 1930s and, after becoming a national hero in World War II, suffered another period of persecution in the postwar years. The Festive Overture dates from 1954, the year after Stalin's death, when the situation was starting to improve once more. Shostakovich reportedly dashed it off in three days for a concert to commemorate the 37th anniversary of the Revolution. He had a great facility for producing light music (in his teens he had been pianist in a silent movie house) and of the many pieces he composed for official occasions, this must have been one of the more enjoyable to write.

The overture begins with a trumpet call that leads into a huge fanfare for the orchestra, with the brass section of course being prominent. The clarinets and flutes begin the quick part of the overture with a busy theme. Another energetic idea appears in the full orchestra, and then a more lyrical one in the strings. The three themes chase each other around a bit, and then the fanfare returns in a big coda to wrap things up. The piece has been a popular concert opener ever since it was written.

Before World War I Sergei Rachmaninoff pursued a triple career as pianist, conductor, and composer, proving equally gifted in all three capacities. He had written the bulk of his music before war began in 1914. The war years were not conducive to creative work, and the upheavals of 1917 convinced him to leave Russia. An engagement in Stockholm late in that year gave him the opportunity to depart his homeland, never to return. With his family properties in Russia lost, he undertook a heavy touring schedule as a pianist to support himself and his family. After trying Scandinavia and New York, he eventually acquired a villa in Switzerland that became his principal home in the 1930s, and there he composed most of his later works. The Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini was written there in the summer of 1934. That November Rachmaninoff played the first performance in Baltimore with the Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Leopold Stokowski, with whom he had developed an important artistic partnership. The same artists recorded the work the following month, and it became the best-known of Rachmaninoff's postwar compositions.



The Rhapsody is based on the last of Paganini's 24 Caprices for violin, probably the best-known melody in the entire solo literature for the instrument. It has been used or quoted in works by a wide variety of composers, including Brahms, who wrote two books of variations on it for piano. Beyond the choice of the theme, Rachmaninoff's work looks back in other ways to nineteenth-century Romanticism. Despite the title "Rhapsody," it is really a set of free variations on the caprice—undoubtedly, he wrote 24 variations because it is the 24th of them. The variations are played without a break, but the piece is structured so that everything through Variation 10 corresponds to a first movement, Variations 11–18 serve as the scherzo and slow movement, and Variations 19–24 constitute the finale of a multi-movement work.

The Rhapsody begins with a tribute to Beethoven, specifically to the final movement of Beethoven's Symphony No. 3: after an initial flourish, just as in that work, the first variation reduces the theme to a skeleton, and only then does the actual theme appear—appropriately enough, in the violins. Several variations unfold in rapid succession and the piano writing becomes more and more spectacular. The tempo slows only at Variation 7, in which the piano introduces a new melody, the *Dies irae* from the Latin Mass for the Dead. This melody has a similar contour to Paganini's theme and may have been its inspiration; since the early nineteenth century it has been quoted by many composers, including Liszt, who based on it a work for piano and orchestra entitled *Totentanz* (Dance of Death). The pace picks up in Variations 8–10, with the *Dies irae* returning for a moment in the piano in Variation 10, which brings the first section of the Rhapsody to a close.

The middle variations are highly distinctive. Variation 11 is a tribute to the elaborate style of Romantic piano writing. Variation 12, a minuet, resembles the sort of piece a late nineteenth-century composer might have written looking back into the past. Variations 13 and 14 increase the tempo, leading into Variation 15, a scherzo for piano solo in which the orchestra only reappears for the ending. Then come three slow variations. Variation 16 combines the piano with a solo violin and lush, divided strings, while Variation 17 is largely for piano and winds. In the most famous section of the Rhapsody, Variation 18, the piano flips Paganini's tune upside down and turns it into a beautiful, yearning melody.

After a moment of silence, the pace picks up. Variations 19–22 dance wildly. Variation 23 begins with a recollection of Paganini's tune and in Variation 24, as we race to the end, the brass plays the opening of the *Dies irae*. This results in a grand climax, but then the music quietly resumes for a few concluding measures as if the composer/pianist is winking at us.

**N**ikolai Rimsky-Korsakov was not an especially political individual, but even he was unable to stay out of difficulties with the authorities in the last years of his life. After the failed Revolution of 1905 the government took oppressive measures against the students in the St. Petersburg Conservatory, where Rimsky-Korsakov had taught since 1871. When he signed a letter opposing these steps, even though he was the most famous living Russian composer, the government retaliated by firing him and dismissing a hundred of the students. Unwillingly Rimsky-Korsakov became a symbol of resistance; the government responded by banning performances of his music. Several hundred students and faculty left the Conservatory in protest. The crisis blew over: Rimsky-Korsakov was reinstated as professor and the ban was lifted, though the



## PROGRAM NOTES *CONTINUED*

episode worsened his heart problems and he retired the following year. Production of his last work, the satirical opera *Le coq d'or*, was held up by the censors until after Rimsky-Korsakov's death in 1908.

While in Russia itself he is regarded as a great operatic composer, in the rest of the world Rimsky-Korsakov is probably best known for three orchestral works from 1887-88: *Capriccio espagnol*, *Scheherazade*, and the Russian Easter overture, opp. 34-36. These show his style at full maturity and his legendary command of orchestral color at its most brilliant.

Though *Scheherazade* is not overtly political, in the Russia of 1888 its subject matter would have had political resonance: the Russian Empire and the British Empire were fiercely contending for influence in the Middle East, and the region was very much on people's minds. *Scheherazade* was not Rimsky-Korsakov's first use of Middle Eastern material; perhaps the best of his earlier orchestral works, *Antar*, also treats a Middle Eastern subject. For *Scheherazade*, Rimsky-Korsakov found inspiration in the *Arabian Nights*. He summarized the framing-tale: "The Sultan Shahriar, convinced of the faithlessness of women, had sworn to put to death each of his wives after a single night. But the Sultana *Scheherazade* saved her life by diverting him with stories...." The composer was reluctant to say much about the individual stories, preferring to let the listener imagine them.

*Scheherazade* opens with two themes that will recur frequently in the piece: a commanding one featuring the brass, representing the Sultan, and then a lyrical one in the solo violin, representing *Scheherazade* herself. She calms her husband's wrath and we find ourselves voyaging along with *Sinbad* (here Rimsky-Korsakov was able to draw upon his experience as a naval officer). The second tale relates the adventures of a prince in disguise; the protagonist is played by the bassoon. The third tale is a lyrical interlude. Excitement builds in the final tale, as we move (somehow) from the festival at Baghdad back to the ship at sea (with themes from earlier in the work returning), into a storm and a shipwreck, followed by calm: the storm is over, the Sultan has given up his bloodthirsty plans, and *Scheherazade's* melody has the final word.

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## **VIOLIN II**

Jeff Ohmart\*  
Dylan Abrokwa (SJHS)  
Ashley Agre (SJHS)  
Susan Bardenhagen  
Dale Baseri  
Nicole Caputo  
Richard Hong  
Betsy Hooper  
Jessica Joyner  
Alexandra Long  
Gail Sander  
Paige Sharkey (WHS)  
Alyson Wyckoff  
John Ventura (OHS)  
Emily Woods (CVHS)  
Elijah Yim (BMS)

## **VIOLA**

Asli Gültekin Özek\*  
Matt Bess  
Helena Boyd (PTHS)  
Erika Cho (CCHS)  
Erin Hilton  
Katara Hofmann  
Kana March (CCHS)  
Ryan Mraz (SJHS)  
Robert Salzberg  
Katie St. Pierre  
Mia Villani (PTHS)

## **CELLO**

Anna Henke\*  
*The Leslie A. Lydick Chair*  
Michael Agre  
David Boyer  
Nyree Brown (BFHS)  
Alexandra Geers  
Mary Jo Grote  
Katie Huszcza (CCHS)  
Rochelle Kidd  
Leslie Lydick  
Emily Mason  
Ann Pucci  
Angelina Seamster (BMS)  
Jay Villani (PTHS)

## **BASS**

Stephen Kelsey\*  
Raegan Fisher (SHS)  
Yannira Lopez (OHS)  
Eric Renne

## **PICCOLO**

Sue Kim

## **FLUTE**

Claire Loerch\*  
Heidi Schuller



**OBOE**

Mary Padilla\*  
Connie Tyler

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Laurel Siberts

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Anna Kwartin†  
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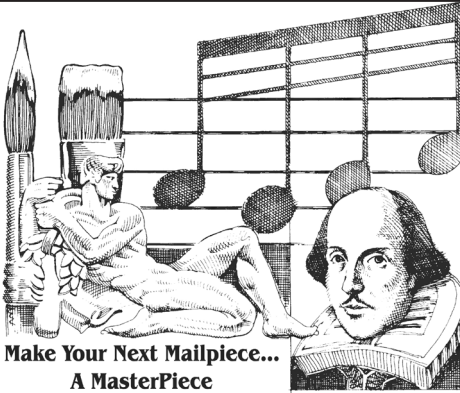
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# Music

[myoo-zik]

noun

An art of sound in time that expresses ideas and emotions in significant forms through the elements of rhythm, melody, harmony, and color

# Art

[ahrt]

noun

The quality, production, expression, or realm, according to aesthetic principles, of what is beautiful, appealing or of more than ordinary significance



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### The Wiz

**Nov. 4 at 2pm & 7pm & Nov. 5 at 3pm**

Location: Metz Middle School, Manassas, VA

**Directed by: Jann Crawford**

**Book by William F. Brown**

Music & Lyrics by Charlie Smalls, from the story "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz" by L. Frank Baum

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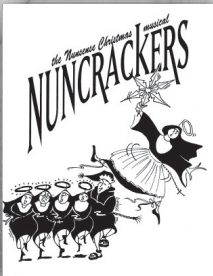
A musical based on the play by Sir J.M. Barrie  
Lyrics by Carolyn Leigh, Music by Morris Charlap



**April 28 & 29, 2018**

Music by Alan Menken, Lyrics by Howard Ashman & Glenn Slater, Book by Doug Wright

## Rooftop Productions Presents



### Nuncrackers

**Nov. 25 at 7pm & Nov. 26 at 2pm**

**Weekend Shows Dec. 1-10 at 2pm & 7pm**

Location: Kellar Theater at the Center for the Arts

**Directed by: Ted Ballard**

Book, Music, & Lyrics by Dan Goggin

*Nuncrackers is produced by arrangement with TAMS-WHITMARK MUSIC LIBRARY, INC. 560 Lexington Ave. New York, NY 10022.*

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**Mystery Dinner Theater**

**Feb. 23 & 24, 2018**

Written by Kate & JJ Musgrove  
Ticket price includes a catered dinner



**May 4-19, 2018**

Book by Marshall Brickman & Rick Elice, Music & Lyrics by Andrew Lippa, Based on characters created by Charles Addams



# NOTES

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