

vcuarts | music

THE VCU SYMPHONY PRESENTS

EYES ON THE SKY

Conducted by
Daniel Myssyk

Monday, October 10th, 2022 at 8 PM
Sonia Vlahcevic Concert Hall
W.E. Singleton Center for the Performing Arts
922 Park Avenue, Richmond, VA 23220

VCU Symphony
Daniel Myssyk, conductor

Flute

Nathaniel Scida
Erin Clarke
Kayla Hanvey*

Oboe

Lauren Williams*
David James*

Clarinet

Sine Anderson
Yuxiao Zhang

Bassoon

Amelia Rose Sheppard
Dr. Bruce Hammel*

Horn

Philip Boulanger
Luke Sardinia
Alyssa Honaker
Dr. Patrick Smith*

Trumpet

Michael Nguyen
John Rose
Alexander Wilkerson

Trombone

Grant Cunningham
Patrick Gadams
Isaac Murrell

Tuba

Isaac Patton

Percussion

Axel Gray, principal
Gavin Shaw
Erik Lund
Carolyn Shortess
John McCormick

Piano

Sasha Wang

Violin 1

Arianna Greggs, concertmaster
Luz Recinos
Rachel Dale
Spencer Conroy
Maia Timm
Heidi Marle
Aiyana Pringle
Caleb Stanger

Violin 2

Tyler Miranda, principal
Naim Gmati
Sabrina Almond
Amya Ester
Jeremy John
Ileana Mattison
Grace Fisherpoff
Sydney Bales
Sara Jade Kelly

Viola

Erick Dearhart, principal
Faith Utz
Anna Mitchell
Ethan Crane

Cello

Zach Williams, principal
Kevin Nguyen
Arowyn Almeida
Adam Jones
Kofi Mframa
Daniel Rivera
Nathaniel Wood
Tobias Washington
Chris Kim
Cameron Toler

Bass

Kairu Mitchell, principal

*guest

VCU Brass Ensemble
Alexander Wilkerson, conductor

Trumpets

Daniel Ramirez, concertmaster
John Rose
Clayton Parker
Michael Nguyen

Horns

Joseph Rutherford
Luke Sardinia

Trombones

Grant Cunningham
Kayla Hawkins
Layne Hopkins
Carson Longacre
Isaac Murrell

Euphonium

Owen Goddu

Tuba

Isaac Patton

Program

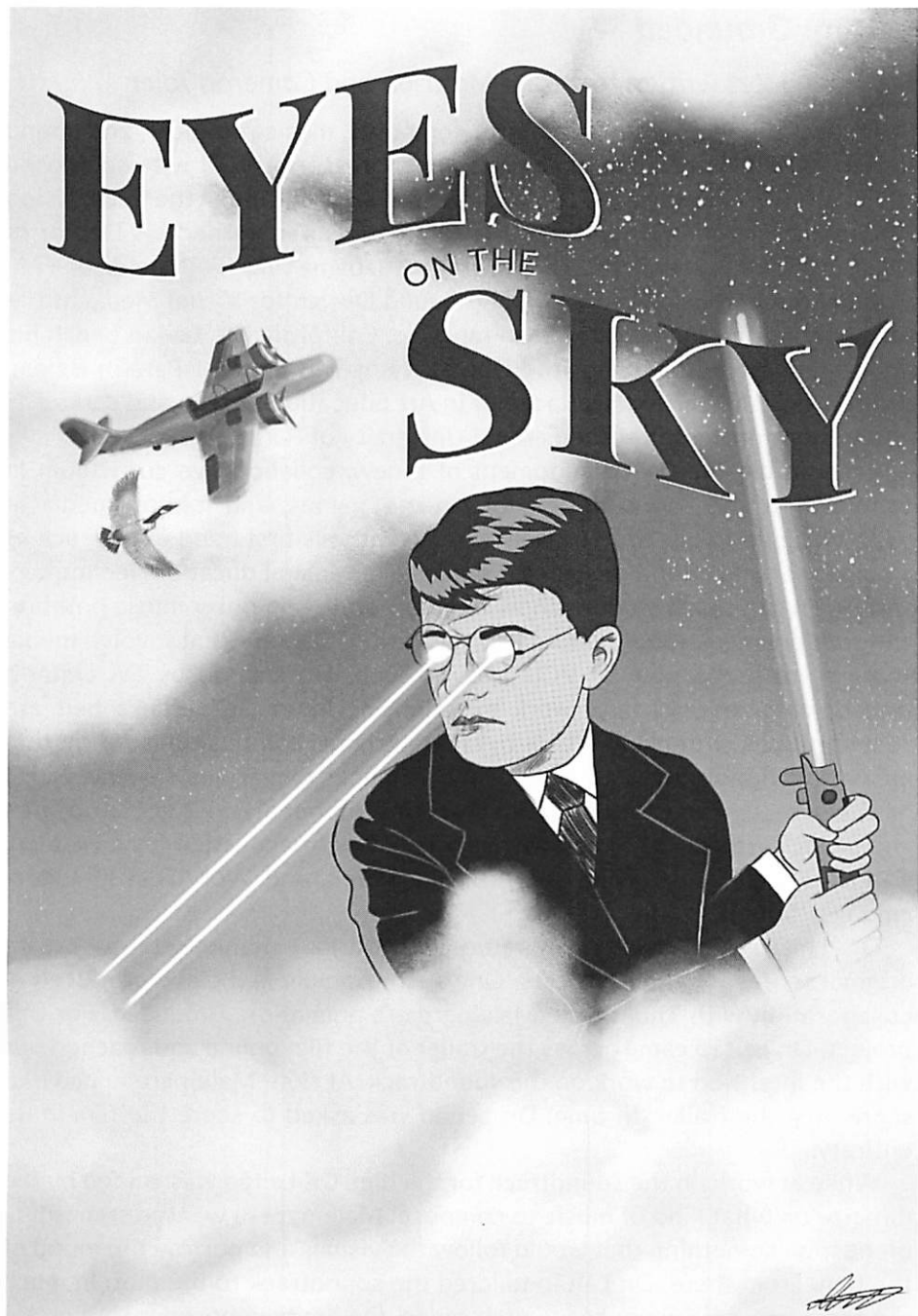
Selections from *Star Wars* John Williams, arr. Wilkerson
Throne Room and End Title

Artistic collaborators for *Fanfares and Blooms in Light*
Bohyun Yoon, Associate Professor of Craft Material Studies
Ross Walter, Associate Professor of Music
VCU Brass Ensemble, dir. Alexander Wilkerson

Soundtrack to *Grounded* Filipe Leitão

Suite for Variety Orchestra Dmitri Shostakovich
VII. Waltz 2

Symphony No. 1 in F minor, Op. 10 Dmitri Shostakovich
I. Allegretto – Allegro non troppo
II. Allegro – Meno mosso – Allegro – Meno mosso
III. Lento – Largo – Lento
IV. Allegro molto – Lento – Allegro molto – Meno mosso – Allegro
molto – Molto meno mosso – Adagio



Artwork by Ileana Mattison. Typesetting by Anna Mitchell.

Leitão: *Grounded*

Program notes written by Ileana Mattison and Cameron Toler

An award-winning, Brazilian-born composer, music producer, and sound designer, Dr. Filipe Leitão is an assistant professor at VCU who composed the score for *Grounded* (2016), a short film created under the supervision of Canadian director Thomas de Maleingreau. Leitão earned his Doctor of Musical Arts degree at the University of Alabama and his Master of Fine Arts degree in Music Production and Sound Design for Visual Media at the Academy of Art University in San Francisco, California. Dr. Leitão began his undergraduate education at the University of The State of Pará in Belém, Brazil, where he earned his Bachelor in Art Education degree and served as an assistant professor at the Federal University of Pará.

Responsible for the development of a new, collaborative curriculum in composition and sound design for cinema, games, and motion media at VCU, Dr. Leitão built courses from scratch with his first hand experience as a composer and sound designer. Courses like Music Education Technology and Arranging teach students how to incorporate computer music notation and sequencing software into music education. Courses that involve media scoring are brand new to VCU and, as such, are shaped by Dr. Leitão's translational research and work experience. Under Dr. Leitão's belt are collaborations with many artists to create original compositions for motion media and video games, as well as concert pieces for various ensembles. He has been recognized at both national and international levels at various film and music festivals, including the New York Electroacoustic Music Festival, Cannes Short Film Corner, Toronto Film Week, and WorldFest Houston, among others.

Dr. Leitão has also collaborated with various filmmakers to create original scores for their projects. One such example is a piece produced in collaboration with Thomas de Maleingreau's animation, *Grounded*. For this project, Dr. Leitão came across the trailer of the film online and reached out with the intention to work on the soundtrack. At first, Maleingreau had him score only the trailer. In time, Dr. Leitão was asked to score the film in its entirety.

While at work on the soundtrack for the film, Dr. Leitão was guided by the director on what kind of music to compose; Maleingreau wanted something orchestral, something that would follow the visuals and portray the mood of the film. From there, Dr. Leitão tailored the soundtrack to the plot. In much the same way as a violin has a pitch range, the limits imposed by a director allow a sound designer to focus on the most important aspects of the plot

when interacting with the film. The entirety of the soundtrack was arranged digitally with the use of a sound library.

For a piece without dialogue, Dr. Leitão explained in an interview with VCU Symphony musicians that characters are given themes to communicate emotion and intention. These themes interact musically when characters interact on screen. The score to *Grounded* consists of two main melodies that represent its main characters: a slow, simple piano melody to represent the old pilot and a playful, quirky marimba melody to represent the goose. These two melodies combine to form a new theme at a pivotal moment of the film. The rest of the score is used to build background, ambience, and environment to give the main characters depth and context. The VCU Symphony is proud to present the first ever live, acoustic performance of Dr. Filipe Leitão's *Grounded* and honor the work of one of the department's beloved professors.

Dmitri Shostakovich: *Suite for Variety Orchestra*:

VII. Waltz No. 2

Program notes written by Ileana Mattison and Cameron Toler

Dmitri Shostakovich was born in Saint Petersburg on September 25th, 1906. Even as a child, his talent as a musician and composer was recognized by the head of the Petrograd Conservatory, Alexander Glazunov. At only 13 years old, Shostakovich began his studies at the Conservatory and upon graduation published his Symphony No. 1 in F minor to international acclaim. As such, Shostakovich gained the favor of Russia's new Leninist government, which saw him as a political tool to shape the revolution.

With orders from Leninist officials to glorify values of the revolution vied against personal intellectual ideas, Shostakovich was in an uncomfortable position as the forefront of Soviet composers. This conflict came to a head in 1936 when Stalin stormed out of an opera house after viewing the first act of Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*. Stalin thought the work contradicted traditional Soviet values and instructed the central Soviet newspaper, *Pravda*, to denounce Shostakovich through several articles. Even with the general public's favor, opera houses in the Soviet Union canceled performances of Shostakovich's work for fear of oppressive repercussions.

His income severely limited and his work ostracized, Shostakovich turned to film music, a genre favored by Stalin for its lack of personal expression. Eventually, authorities again hailed Shostakovich for his efforts as a true Soviet artist. Meanwhile, censorship of the arts continued to worsen in the Soviet Union. Many of Shostakovich's friends and colleagues were either killed or imprisoned in the Great Purge, a move by Stalin to consolidate power through the elimination of political opposition, ethnic minorities, and citizens vocal against communism.

It was in this time that Shostakovich wrote many of his most iconic compositions, such as his *Suite for Variety Orchestra*, from which his Waltz 2 was pulled. This easily recognizable melody endures today as a favorite of many film and television scores, namely the scores to Stanley Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut*, Netflix's *Altered Carbon*, and Zach Snyder's *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice*. The instrumentation for Waltz 2 includes a variety orchestra, an instrumentation which most notably includes saxophone, an instrument not traditionally featured in orchestra repertoire. Written in ternary form, Waltz 2 features a soaring, C-minor melody passed around the players contrasted by a humorous toy soldier march. Shostakovich's

Waltz 2 would soon become one of his most successful short compositions. While he tried to conceal his own ideologies within his work, Shostakovich was denounced a second time in 1948 and was officially blacklisted by the Soviet Regime.

Health issues plagued Shostakovich's later years. Even after a polio diagnosis, multiple heart attacks, and debilitating falls, Shostakovich still managed to finish his 14th and 15th symphonies. Against adversity, Shostakovich composed a total of 15 string quartets, 15 symphonies, six concerti, and numerous other works for piano, opera, and film, becoming recognized as one of the most celebrated composers of the 20th century. Shostakovich died of lung cancer on August 9th, 1975.

Shostakovich: Symphony No. 1 in F minor, Op. 10

Program notes written by Ileana Mattison and Cameron Toler

Dmitri Shostakovich's Symphony No. 1 in F minor, Op. 10 had humble beginnings as a school project during his final year at the Petrograd Conservatory. With only a handful of published works under his belt, Shostakovich was initially skeptical of his ability to compose a symphonic work but became more invested as the piece progressed. So, while attending classes and working as an accompanist for silent movies, Shostakovich composed his First Symphony while still in his late teens. The first two movements are marked by a distinct irony as they seem to poke fun at the musical constraints they were written under. However, after writing the first half of the symphony, Shostakovich had a change of heart and decided to bring a dark and intense atmosphere to the third and fourth movements. Upon its premiere, Shostakovich's first symphony was a huge success and gained the young composer international fame with the symphony being performed by the Berlin Philharmonic the following year. To this day, Shostakovich's Symphony No. 1 remains one of his most renowned works.

The first movement starts with a playful exchange between trumpet and bassoon interrupted by the entrance of the first theme on solo clarinet. Throughout this movement, the tone feels somewhat tongue-in-cheek with the momentum stopping and starting constantly and "wrong-note" melodies scattered throughout before moving into a lively Allegro march. Eventually, the music gives way to the second subject, a graceful waltzing theme on solo flute with string accompaniment. Following this, solo violin signals the oncoming return of the lively march and development as it builds into a fanfare, which is followed by a false return of the main theme cut short. Next, we hear the previous themes but in reverse order, starting with the waltzing second theme, followed by the return of the main theme's boisterous march, and finally a return of the introductory motif.

The second movement maintains the comedic nature of the first but adds a touch more darkness. The movement opens with an intro from cello and bass that gives way to a mad scherzo with melodies charging past at breakneck speeds. It is in this section that the piano is featured for the first time as it receives the solo melody before settling into the slower *Meno mosso* section. Here Shostakovich creates an ominous, foreboding tone as the melodies are passed around the orchestra. Next, the scherzo returns, slowly at first but quickly builds speed reaching the original tempo as the piano returns with its scalic solo melody. However, the foreboding theme of the *Meno mosso* returns triple forte in the brass over top of the melody

as the piano frantically tries to maintain its place in the movement. Finally, the movement ends as the few last gasping breaths from the piano signal something much darker yet to come.

The third movement begins with a dark and tragic oboe solo that eventually trades off with solo cello before subsiding as the rest of the orchestra joins in. Militaristic motifs from both the snare drum and trumpets can be heard dotted throughout this section, creating a foreboding atmosphere. This eventually fades into the Largo section which features a return of the melody in a violin solo. This melody is answered with a reply on solo trumpet before moving into the end of the movement with a small cello solo before leading immediately into the fourth movement with a snare drum roll that builds in intensity.

The fourth movement begins with the woodwinds singing sorrowful melodic lines contrasted with the strings' tense tremolo accompaniment. This is followed by a motif reminiscent of the previous movement from the cellos. From here, the movement builds into an Allegro molto with a frantic clarinet solo, following which, all hell breaks loose. However, this intensity slows enough for a haunting violin solo before building back up into an intense climax that's cut off suddenly. A terrifying timpani solo heralds the return of the previous violin melody on solo cello. Finally, the music builds in intensity before being interrupted at its climax by a rowdy fanfare from the brass that brings the symphony to a close.

About the Conductor

Assistant Conductor of the Richmond Symphony, Canadian-American conductor Daniel Myssyk was Music Director of the Montreal based Orchestre de chambre Appassionata from 2000 to 2016. In recent years, he has made critically acclaimed appearances with Les Grands Ballets Canadiens, and the Lubbock Symphony Orchestra, among others. In 2015, Myssyk made his debut in Guanajuato (Mexico) where he has been returning almost every season since. In 2019, return engagements have brought him back to Canada to conduct the Orchestre symphonique de Trois-Rivières and the Orchestre de la Francophonie.

Myssyk's recordings have received widespread critical acclaim. *Czech Serenades* with works by Suk and Dvořák, was nominated for best recording of the year at the ADISQ awards, Quebec's equivalent of the Grammys and at the Prix Opus from the Conseil québécois de la musique.

Professor Myssyk has been Virginia Commonwealth University's Director of Orchestral Activities since 2007. Under his leadership, three VCU Opera productions of *The Gondoliers* (2015), *The Old Maid and the Thief* (2012), and *Hansel and Gretel* (2011) won top prizes at the National Opera Association competition. His involvement toward the youth reflects a well-honed passion for music education. In addition to his work at VCU, he is a regular collaborator with Senior Regional Orchestras throughout Virginia, among others. He was appointed conductor of the Richmond Symphony Youth Orchestra in 2018.

In the early 2000s, Myssyk was a conducting fellow at the Aspen Music Festival and School where he spent two summers under the tutelage of David Zinman. A student of Larry Rachleff, he received his Master's Degree in Conducting from the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University in 2006.

Friends of Music

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