



MUSIC WESTERN
The University of Western Ontario

Faculty of Music

Information

"RUSSIAN MASTERS" OPENS UWO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA SEASON

The musicians of the UWO Symphony Orchestra assemble for their first performance of the 2002-03 season on Sunday, October 20. James McKay, music director of the UWOSO, is on the podium for this concert featuring two beloved works from the body of Russian symphonic literature: Rachmaninoff's *Symphony No. 2* and Shostakovich's *Piano Concerto No. 2* (with UWOSO Concerto Competition winner Christopher Morano).

Considered one of the last great Romantic symphonies, Sergei Rachmaninoff's (1873-1943) *Symphony No. 2* was born out of the composer's depression and paranoia that followed the utter derision with which his first symphony was greeted, in 1897. So severely was his confidence shaken by the first symphony's reception that he seriously contemplated giving up composing entirely, and even consulted with psychiatrists and hypnotists in his effort to regain his emotional stability and confidence. Premiered in 1908, the second symphony was as great a success as the first had been a failure, and it has taken its place in the repertoire along side the big late-Romantic works of Bruckner and Mahler, easily being their equal in length and breadth, and boasting rich, melodic themes and Rachmaninoff's distinctive Russian voice throughout.

Dmitry Shostakovich (1906-1975) was a pioneer among those Russian composers who emerged because of, rather than despite, the cultural demands of the Soviet regime. His entire career was realized under the communist government, and his constant struggle, and his genuine desire, was to create music that would satisfy both his artistic independence and a political regime's inability to accept art it did not understand.

His second piano concerto, composed in 1957, was a gift for his son Maxim's 19th birthday. Written for soloist and small orchestra, and utilizing more of a chamber music approach between the two, it is a light-hearted and lyrical work that is

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particularly well suited for a young performer. In this case, Christopher Morano, a fourth year student in the Bachelor of Music Performance program, has already distinguished himself as an exceptional young performer. As well as this accomplishment in the UWOSO Concerto Competition, Chris was one of three scholarship winners in the 2002 London Music Scholarship Foundation competition, last February. He is a student of John-Paul Bracey.

The UWO Symphony Orchestra concert is at 3:00 p.m. on Sunday, October 20, 2002, in Alumni Hall on the UWO campus. Admission is \$10 for adults and \$5 for students and seniors, and tickets are available at the door. For more information on this or any Music Western event, call (519) 661-3767.

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