

Symphony Orchestra's "Spring Destiny" Concert

On Saturday, March 9, at 8 p.m.

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(Photo by Alistair Clarke)

By: Chris Wild, Symphony Orchestra conductor, Andrews University Department of Music

On Saturday, March 9, at 8 p.m., the Andrews University Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Chris Wild, will present their concert titled “Spring Destiny” in the Howard Performing Arts Center on the campus of Andrews University.

“Spring Destiny” invites listeners to thaw from the cold winter, joining the orchestra on a tour that will move south from Austria toward the festive sounds of Italy, France and Spain.

To begin the concert, the Symphony Orchestra will welcome Claudio Gonzalez, professor of music, back to the familiar confines of the Howard stage. He will join Carla Trynchuk, professor of music, as soloists for Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s majestic duo concerto, “Sinfonia Concertante.” For this performance, Gonzalez will debut a new viola that he recently commissioned to be built by an American luthier. Largely hopeful in character, “Sinfonia Concertante” features the violin and viola as solo instruments and was completed by Mozart in 1779 at the age of 23. Andrews University’s orchestra members look forward to hearing and accompanying two faculty members with whom many have studied for years.

Having performed a handful of pieces by composers based in northern Europe during this academic year, it is fitting that the orchestra will now head for warmer borders with the compositions following intermission. The music of Giuseppe Verdi (1813–1901) is often considered an appropriate representation of the sentiments of Italian people, especially since the composer played a stirring role in the Risorgimento unification of Italy in the late 19th Century—a patriotic movement then also recognized by the acronym V.E.R.D.I. For this occasion, the orchestra will perform the “Overture” to his opera “La Forza del Destino,” which translates to “The Force of Destiny.” This operatic prelude is full of contrasting colors and moods, forecasting the dramatic emotions of the opera.

A handful of French composers who were working at the turn of the last century (a period known as “la fin de siècle”) have often been grouped together with their painter colleagues, termed Impressionists. Whereas Claude Monet’s paintings seem to blur edges, the compositions of Claude Debussy (1862–1918) and Maurice Ravel (1875–1937) are almost scientific in their approach to detail, and both are credited with great innovations in the use of orchestral instruments. In this vein, Ravel is widely considered to be a master orchestrator, and so it is his orchestral setting of Modest Mussorgsky’s “Pictures at an Exhibition” that has become the favored adaptation of Mussorgsky’s music. Nonetheless, one may imagine Impressionist paintings when hearing the music of Debussy and Ravel because they shared a fondness for depicting the sublime beauty of their French surroundings. In this evening’s piece by Ravel, his “Rapsodie espagnole,” the piece begins with a mysterious prelude evoking an evening in Paris, in which a four note descending motif is heard throughout, moving from one instrument to another. Following this initial descent, the remainder of the piece offers a festive collection of sounds inspired by Spain: a “Malagueña” (representing the flamenco of southern Spain), a “Habanera,” and a “Feria (Festival).” In total, this concert of music promises to warm the soul.

Tickets can be purchased at howard.andrews.edu. Prices are \$6 for general admission and \$4 for students and seniors (limit two student tickets per student ID). For more information, call the Howard Box Office at 269-471-3560.