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Matthew Bassett
Conductor

Music for Lovers

Shieh-Jian Tsai,
Guest Violinist



Works By:

G. Chen & Z. He • Khachaturian
Tchaikovsky • Mozart

APRIL 14, 2024 | 7:00 PM

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Conductor's Corner:

Welcome to the April concert of the Amherst Symphony Orchestra. The program this evening features four pieces that relate to our theme: ***Music for Lovers***. There is, perhaps, no more universal human emotional experience than amorous love and attraction. These masterworks come from different time periods & cultures and express the complexity of romantic love in all its beauty, messiness, and magic. Indeed, music's capacity to convey the indescribable makes it the perfect medium to explore and attempt to understand this universal, yet mysterious topic.

Interestingly, music itself can evoke strong feelings similar to falling in love. Whether it be excitement & joy or sadness & longing, everyone has been moved by a particular song or piece of music. This fact, like romantic love, is among the shared experiences that bind us as humans.

This program offers all of us a chance to reflect on our relationships, ourselves, and our bond with music. The members of the orchestra and I hope that you have a meaningful experience this evening as we share our love for this magnificent music. Thank you very much for coming.

Matthew Bassett



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Principal
Gabrielle Catalano
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Alicia DiVita
Aubrey Garas
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Adam Peterson,
Principal
Isabel Anadon
Hersh Blaggan
Christina DiVita
Martin Ederer
Maddie Mooney
Joy Perry
Nicole Pierino
Mary Pouli-Sosnowski

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Allison Collins,
Principals
Peg Beyer
Erin Eno
Samantha Godus
Reggie Guo
John Martell
Jennifer Sandner
Joseph Tronolone
Anne Marie Will

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Gil Pease, Principal
Jamie Baumgardt
Bob Groves
Brian DeJesus
Mary DiCioccio
Vincent Tutino

Flutes:

August Grillo, Principal
Michelle Russ

Piccolo:

Eileen Brusino

Oboes:

Sheryl Rohr, Principal
Erin Rush

English Horn:

Laura Buechi

Clarinets:

Lynn Price, Principal
Rachel Birkman

Bassoons:

Susan Tichy, Principal
Becca Schroeder

French Horns:

Megan Marranca - Velez,
Principal
Lee Brusino
Dave Macaluso
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Isaac Newman

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G. Nathan Barnes, Principal
Don Montalto

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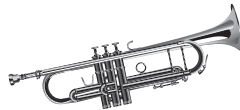
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*Khachaturian/Tchaikovsky

**Mozart/Chen & He

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Amherst Symphony Orchestra

Music for Lovers

Sunday, April 14, 2024 • 7:00 pm

Matthew Bassett, Conductor

Shieh-Jian Tsai, Guest Violinist

Overture to The Marriage
of Figaro, K. 492

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

The Butterfly Lovers
Violin Concerto

Gang Chen and Zhanhao He

Shieh-Jian Tsai, violin

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Adagio Phrygia and Spartacus
from Spartacus

Aram Khachaturian

Romeo and Juliet Overture
Fantasy, TH 42, ĆW 39

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

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MATTHEW BASSETT, Conductor

Matthew Bassett became Principal Timpanist of the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra in 2009. In addition to his duties with the BPO, he maintains a busy schedule as a conductor, performer, and educator in western New York and beyond.



As a conductor, Mr. Bassett has prepared and directed many premiere performances, including works by Greg D'Alessio, Carl Schimmel, and Monica Houghton. In 2013, Matt conducted the Buffalo Chamber Players in a presentation of two operas based on the writings of W.B. Yeats; The following year, he conducted many of his BPO colleagues in an orchestra performance to benefit the First Presbyterian Church of Buffalo.

Highlights of Matt's performance career have included serving as principal timpanist for the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra in Wellington, New Zealand; performing as percussion soloist with the Cleveland Orchestra, Buffalo Philharmonic, National Repertory Orchestra, and the Canton Symphony; and participating in the U.S. premiere performance of *Four4* by John Cage at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City with the composer in attendance. Since 1993, he has been principal timpanist & percussionist with Apollo's Fire (The Cleveland Baroque Orchestra). Matt can be heard on numerous commercial recordings with the Buffalo Philharmonic, Cleveland Pops Orchestra, Apollo's Fire, and the Cleveland Orchestra.

Mr. Bassett operates a home business repairing and refurbishing percussion instruments and equipment. He also re-wraps timpani mallets for professional and amateur performers, and prepares calfskin timpani heads for professional performers and orchestras. Matt resides in Buffalo with his daughter and his partner Kathleen Bassett, a music educator, choral conductor, and vocal soloist.

Shieh-Jian Tsai, Guest Violinist

Mr. Shieh-Jian Tsai has been a member of the 2nd violin section with the *Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra* since 2004, and serves as concertmaster of the Amherst Symphony Orchestra. He had participated in festivals where he performed under renowned Maestros, with colleagues from around the world. In Fall of 2007, Mr. Tsai was invited on tour with the *Verbier Festival Orchestra* under direction of Maestro Jiri Belohlavek, piano soloists Yundi Lee and Lang Lang, performing in major concert halls in Europe and South America.



A native of Taipei, Taiwan, Mr. Tsai began playing the violin at age 6. He received his Bachelor of Music in Violin Performance from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, and Master of Music in Violin Performance from New England Conservatory in Boston, MA. His principle teachers include Mr. Gerardo Ribeiro, Mr. Sherban Lupu, and Ms. Masuko Ushioda.

After winning their 5th violin concerto competition, Mr. Tsai was a featured soloist with the *Taiwan Strings Orchestra* performing Mendelssohn Violin Concerto in D minor, and made his debut at the National Concert Hall in Taipei, Taiwan. As an active soloist, Mr. Tsai performs regularly with the *Camerata di San't Antonio* and *Ars Nova Chamber Orchestra*. He made WNY premiere of Jean Sibelius' Suite for Violin and String Orchestra, and the Violin Concerto by Alexander Arutiunian.

A devoted chamber musician, Mr. Tsai has been invited to Musicorda, Sarasota, and *Tanglewood Music Festivals*. He is a member of the Buffalo Chamber Players, ensemble in-residence at AKG, and has been a guest artist at *A Musical Feast* at the Burchfield Penny Art Center, *Chamber Music on Elmwood*, *Chamber Music Society of Olean*, *Akron Summer Music Festival* and the Northwestern Oklahoma State University.

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Arts & culture is an industry with notable economic and social impact. It employs people locally, purchases supplies and services from local businesses, and helps build a healthy, vibrant, and more livable community.

In Western New York, arts & culture organizations provided some 8,220 jobs, with a \$381,400,000 financial impact. In Amherst, for every person who attends any arts venue, performance, or production, there is a \$45 expenditure in other businesses.

90.5% of respondents to a recent survey about arts & culture reported their belief that the activity they were attending was a source of pride for the community. And as noted above, also a source of income for a lot of businesses.

We have much more information available to business owners and managers, as well as professional service providers, to explain why your support of ASO — as a sponsor or as an advertiser — really could make a difference for your business.

***For more information, please email our General Manager
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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

My Dear Fellow ASO Fans,

Even if I am wearing two sweaters and desperately seeking out the gloves I put away just a couple of weeks ago, my winter-weary bones are telling me spring's on the horizon. This is a time for robins and budding trees, for painting window boxes and washing down the porch furniture, for lazy daydreaming into increasingly long evenings.



Gustav Mahler once wrote "Spring won't let me stay in this house any longer! I must get out and breathe the air deeply again." Apparently Mr Mahler did not suffer from spring allergies; nevertheless, I feel his enthusiasm for breathing deeply of the air of spring.

And while this is a season for new beginnings for much of the world, for ASO it is a time to draw things to a close for another wonderful season of music and community. It's been a good year in many respects, challenging in others, with some sadness touching our lives as well. The thing that keeps so many of us going, of course, is the music. The gift of rejuvenation and joy that comes from music well played and shared with love can change minds and hearts in a heartbeat.

The other thing that keeps us going is you. Our audience. You people who come out in sunshine and darkness, in shirt sleeves and winter boots, because you know wonderful music will come after long hours at practice, more hours at rehearsals, and now a few hours on a Sunday evening. And that's just the musicians!

As good as they are, they could not do their best without sterling conductors, so we are grateful to Bryan Eckenrode and Armenio Suzano for their commitment to bringing the best out in the orchestra. We are also grateful to Orchestra Personnel Manager Lee Brusino; Music Acquisition Librarian Jeff Mols, ably assisted by Michael Klucznik; and General Manager Phyllis Piazza who all provide oil to keep this machine going.

The good members of FASO (Friends of the Amherst Symphony Orchestra) also spend hours of their time each year on the social side, planning and executing the Preview Luncheons hosted a week or so before every concert. FASO members also bake a lot of cookies, for the Winter Concert in December, and for the orchestra for a couple of rehearsals every season. And of course, there is the important fundraising plant sale (going on now in the lobby!), funds for which support the annual scholarship FASO and the Williamsville Rotary Club jointly sponsor for a student going on to study, or minor, in music at college.

What has helped make this season so successful for me has been fellow members of the Board of Directors. I took on the role of President of the Board rather unexpectedly back in early September, and these hard-working people have kept me on the path all year. Actually, their commitment to ASO has allowed me to wander off the path occasionally, so that we can devise and carry out programs that will help the orchestra grow and develop over the next several years.

In a recently released survey on the impact the arts have in Western New York, 88.5% of respondents said they believe future generations need to have the same kinds of cultural experiences available to them as are available now. And that's our goal: to make sure you, your children, your grandchildren, and **their** children will happily come out to enjoy this excellent community orchestra on Sundays for years to come.

Thank you for joining us this Sunday. See you at Island Park August 6th!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Claudia".

Claudia Staines, President, ASOA

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PROGRAM NOTES

by Matthew Bassett

**Overture to The Marriage of Figaro,
K. 492**

**Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
(1756-1791)**

Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* is among the most beloved comic operas of all time. It tells the story of an engaged servant couple who conspire with the mistress of the house to confront her husband's bullying and philandering. The non-stop action of the opera takes place in one madcap day that includes plenty of eavesdropping, mistaken-identity, and the sparking love of the young couple. This frenetic pace is foreshadowed in the overture—also one of Mozart's most cherished works. The music vibrates with restless energy and brilliant bursts of joy, conveyed in Mozart's perfectly balanced and clear musical language. Upon attending one of the first performances of the opera in 1786, the Hungarian poet Ferenc Kazinczy summarized the work's genius: "Where could words be found that are worthy to describe such joy?"

**The Butterfly Lovers
Violin Concerto**

Gang Chen (b. 1933) & Zhanhao He (b. 1935)

The Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto was co-written by composers Gang Chen and Zhanhao He when they were students at the Shanghai Conservatory. It is a fascinating blend of western orchestral instruments with traditional Chinese melodies and performance techniques. The music tells the story of *The Butterfly Lovers*, a popular Chinese folktale set during the Jin Dynasty (266-420 CE): Zhu is a young woman who must disguise herself as a man to get an advanced education. At school she meets Liang, a young man. They immediately become close friends and their time together. When school comes to an end, Liang still is not aware that Zhu is a woman. Zhu invites him to visit her and court her "sister".

cont.



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When he visits and discovers the truth, they fall in love. However, Zhu has been betrothed to another. Liang rages, then dies of a broken heart. Zhu, rather than live without Liang kills herself and jumps into Liang's grave. Reunited in death, they emerge as two butterflies and remain together forever.

The music is performed in one continuous movement, but contains seven sections depicting the story: 1) Introduction/first meeting, 2) Busy school years, 3) School ends/sadness, 4) Zhu rages about betrothal, 5) Falling in love, 6) Liang becomes sick & dies/Zhu kills herself in despair, 7) Reunited in death/transformation into butterflies. Throughout the work, the solo violin depicts Zhu. It is a showcase for the soloist, requiring both technical virtuosity and extreme tenderness. It is stunning work that overflows with beauty, tragedy, hope, and grandeur.

**Adagio of Phrygia and Spartacus
from Spartacus**

**Aram Khachaturian
(1903-1978)**

Aram Khachaturian was a Soviet composer of Armenian descent. His most famous work—particularly here in Buffalo—is the *Sabre Dance* from his ballet, *Gayane*. Khachaturian's musical style combines Russian musical traditions with the folk music of Armenia and the Middle East to create a unique sound that is earthy, lush, and sensual.

His ballet *Spartacus* is loosely based on the events of the Third Servile War. Spartacus and his wife Phrygia are held captive by the Roman consul. Spartacus leads a rebellion of the male prisoners who escape and free the female slaves—including Phrygia. The *Adagio* depicts Phrygia's sadness in captivity, escape, and blissful reunion with Spartacus. It begins quietly, introducing a love theme of incredible tenderness and sadness. Eventually the pace quickens as the lovers escape. They fight their way to freedom where they are reunited in a rapturous musical climax. The piece ends in quiet joy and contentment.

Romeo and Juliet: Overture
-Fantasy, TH 42, ĆW 39

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky
(1840-1893)

There is, perhaps, no love story in western literature as well-known and well-loved as Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Its themes of family rivalry, young love, and tragic fate have inspired composers from Gounod to Berlioz to Bernstein. Tchaikovsky's symphonic poem based on *Romeo and Juliet* is one of the most cherished pieces in the orchestral repertoire.

The piece portrays major elements of the plot through a sophisticated musical language that expresses the emotional themes of the story. It begins with a woodwind chorale that is both reverent and ominous—foreshadowing the ill-fated action to come. Soon the music becomes fast and unsettled, illustrating the feud between the Montagues and Capulets. This section uses sharp, short cymbal crashes to depict sword fighting. The action dissipates and gives way to the famous balcony scene. Here, Tchaikovsky brilliantly illustrates the slow development of love: quiet, careful, and shy at first, followed by the exhilaration of reciprocated feelings and mutual attraction—perfectly conveyed by one of Tchaikovsky's most famous melodies. This beauty gives way, once again, to the strife engulfing the two families: This time it is more hectic and terrifying and includes the trumpets dominating the orchestra with the fate theme from the beginning. Next, the love theme is proclaimed by the full orchestra as the lovers have their final—and most passionate—encounter. Their joy is interrupted multiple times by the anger of the quarreling families and eventually results in their deaths, represented by a long timpani roll. The epilogue begins with the lament of the families as they finally understand the consequences of their hate. Lastly, we hear the fate theme again in an expanded wind chorale, now transformed into a prayer of forgiveness and hope before the young lovers' spirits ascend together. The full orchestra celebrates the triumph of their love with a tremendous major chord and the story comes to an end.



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Message from the FASO President

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Coupons make a thoughtful gift for birthdays, or any special occasion and are available tonight at the Plant Sale Table in the lobby or from any FASO member or by calling 716-839-0673.

Thanks to everyone who attended last month's FASO pre-concert performance luncheon. **A very special FASO luncheon will be held on Tuesday, May 14, 2024, at 11:00 AM at the Country Club of Buffalo, when this year's scholarship winner will perform and be honored by FASO and the Williamsville Rotary Club. The community is invited to participate in this event and reservation forms are available this evening on the table in the hallway.**

Again, I ask you to please consider membership in FASO (Friends of the Amherst Symphony). Applications are available in the lobby.

"Friendship is like a violin; the music may stop now and then, but the strings will last forever."

Grateful that we have music in our community,

Mitzie Serafin

FASO President



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MARCH 20, 2023 - MARCH 14, 2024



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Friday, April 19, 2024 at 7:30 PM

"A Festive Finale"

Orchard Park High School

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Sunday, April 28, 2024 at 3:00 pm • Depew High School

Sunday June 9, 2024 • Cheektowaga Town Park

2:15 Pre-Concert, 3 PM Orchestra

ACE CHAMBER MUSIC CONCERT

Sunday, May 19, 2024 at 3:00 pm

Trinity United Methodist Church

AMHERST CHAMBER ENSEMBLES ORCHESTRA

Sunday, June 2, 2024 at 3:00 pm

Trinity Methodist Church



**The ASO concerts are funded in part
by the Erie County budget and the
Town of Amherst.**

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SUMMER CONCERT

Tuesday, August 6, 2024 • 7:00 pm
Island Park in the Village of Williamsville
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