

**TORONTO SYMPHONY YOUTH ORCHESTRA**

Nicholas Sharma, RBC Resident Conductor &  
TSYO Conductor

*Program 4*

Saturday,  
April 25, 2026  
3:00pm

# Rachmaninoff Symphony No. 2

**Nicholas Sharma**, conductor  
**Harrison Yang Meng**, viola  
(2024/25 TSYO Concerto Competition Winner)

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**Erich Wolfgang Korngold**  
Overture to *Captain Blood*

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**William Walton**  
Violin Concerto  
I. Andante comodo  
II. Vivo, con molto preciso

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**Samuel Coleridge-Taylor**  
"Valse bohémienne" from *Four  
Characteristic Waltzes*, Op. 22

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## Intermission

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**Sergei Rachmaninoff**  
Symphony No. 2 in E Minor, Op. 27  
I. Largo – Allegro moderato  
II. Allegro molto  
III. Adagio  
IV. Allegro vivace

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Erich Wolfgang Korngold (1897–1957)

## Overture to *Captain Blood*

Composed 1935

4 min

**ERICH WOLFGANG KORNGOLD** was among more than two dozen notable European composers in the 1930s or '40s whose lives were upended by the Nazi regime, tragically altering the course of modern music history. Some of these mostly Jewish creators lost their lives, and others were unfairly forgotten, but Korngold managed to find work and refuge in Hollywood, where he first came in 1934 and remained after Hitler annexed his native Austria in 1938.

Although Korngold was never able to reclaim the standing he enjoyed in the classical music field prior to World War II, he gained considerable fame as a film composer, writing the scores for 16 films. He won Academy Awards for *Anthony Adverse* (1936) and *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938), but he is arguably best remembered for his music for the pirate swashbuckler *Captain Blood* (1935). It established Errol Flynn as a Hollywood star and earned an Academy Award nomination for best picture.

Korngold essentially defined what symphonic movie music could or should be, influencing dozens of film composers who came after him, including John Williams, who has towered over the field for the past 50 years. Indeed, when people describe a musical work as “cinematic,” they are referring at least indirectly to Korngold’s plush, late-Romantic style whether they know it or not. That distinctive sound can be heard to advantage in the soaring, exuberant, and propulsive music of *Captain Blood* with its rich, unabashed tonality and fanfare-like brass flourishes. The score was written in just three weeks in collaboration with orchestrator Hugo Friedhofer, and it incorporates bits of two tone poems by Franz Liszt.

Korngold’s Violin Concerto (1945) is part of the standard classical repertoire, and efforts have been under way in recent decades to raise the prominence of his other worthy non-cinematic works. But as much as some of those compositions deserve to be performed, there is little doubt that it is the composer’s movie scores that will continue to be his most lasting legacy, especially his unforgettable music for *Captain Blood*.

—Program note by Kyle MacMillan

William Walton (1902–1983)

## Viola Concerto – Mvts. I & II

Composed 1928–1929; revised 1961

11 min

**THIS PIECE USHERED IN** a more mature phase in William Walton’s career, one where lyricism and melancholy played greatly increased roles. Perfectly attuned to the reserved yet deeply expressive personality of the featured

instrument, and astutely scored so that the soloist is never obscured, it also contains Walton’s firmest commitment to date to traditional musical forms. It is a remarkably assured work for a composer in his late 20s.

The two most highly esteemed viola soloists of the day were the Englishman Lionel Tertis and the German Paul Hindemith, the latter even more renowned as a

composer. It was celebrated conductor Sir Thomas Beecham who suggested to Walton that he compose a concerto for Tertis. Walton did most of the work on it in Amalfi, Italy, beginning in November 1928.

When it was completed, he sent it to Tertis, who “turned it down sharply by return of post, which depressed me a good deal as virtuoso violists are scarce,” Walton recalled. Edward Clark of the BBC suggested that Walton turn to Hindemith. Hindemith agreed to première the concerto at a promenade concert in London, with the composer conducting.

The first performance took place on October 3, 1929. It appears to have been less than ideal. Nevertheless, it won a warm reception. Tertis quickly realized the error of his snap judgement and became one of its most eloquent advocates. Decades later, when Walton revised the concerto,

he reduced the orchestration and added a significant role for harp. It is the first two movements of this version that you will hear this afternoon.

Placed first, the slow movement immediately establishes the concerto’s bittersweet personality. Although it contains passages of drama and animation, it is basically calm and thoughtful. A compact rondo with the bustling, witty character of a scherzo follows. The energy never flags for a second as the viola gets a rare opportunity to let its hair down. The finale is the longest and most elaborate movement. Walton combined new material with themes from the first movement. The music progresses from a jovial opening, through a monumental orchestral tutti in fugal style, to a quiet, poignant conclusion.

—Program note by Don Anderson

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## Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (1875–1912)

# “Valse bohémienne” from *Four Characteristic Waltzes, Op. 22*

Composed 1899

3 min

**SAMUEL COLERIDGE-TAYLOR** was largely forgotten as recently as ten years ago, but he has come roaring back into view with the rise of Black Lives Matter and the classical music world’s overdue attention on unfairly overlooked composers of colour. The Black British composer was particularly in the spotlight last year as artists and ensembles on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean marked the 150th anniversary of his birth to an English mother and a father from Sierra Leone.

Born in the Holborn section of London, Coleridge-Taylor was named after the celebrated English poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge. With encouragement from his mother, he first learned the violin and went on to study under Anglo-Irish composer

Charles Villiers Stanford at the Royal College of Music. Although he only lived to be 37, Coleridge-Taylor achieved considerable acclaim in England during his short life. In part because of the huge success of *The Song of Hiawatha*, a trilogy of cantatas, he made three tours to the United States and was received in 1904 at the White House by President Teddy Roosevelt. Coleridge-Taylor was best known for his vocal and choral works like *Hiawatha*, but he also wrote in an array of the forms including chamber and incidental music as well as orchestral compositions like his *Petite Suite de Concert* (1910), one of his most frequently played works today.

The “Valse bohémienne”—the first of four short works collected in a set titled *Four Characteristic Waltzes, Op. 22*—was written in 1898 when the composer was

courting his wife. The pieces were not meant to be danced but were designed to capture in concert form the 3/4 metrical time and undulating sweep of the popular social dance. Coleridge-Taylor was a big admirer of Antonín Dvořák, so it is probably not surprising that the title of this waltz alludes to the Bohemian region of the celebrated

Czech composer's homeland, or that it is composed in a Dvořák-like, Romantic style with unhurried, flowing lines and a rich, uncomplicated orchestration. The result is music that sounds fresh and instantly intoxicating.

—Program note by Kyle MacMillan

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Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873–1943)

## Symphony No. 2 in E Minor, Op. 27

Composed 1906–1907

62 min

**IN 1897**, the première of Rachmaninoff's ambitious and intensely dramatic First Symphony proved such an unmitigated disaster that it plunged the 24-year-old composer into a depression so profound that he was virtually unable to compose. He needed three years and the help of a psychiatrist to revitalize his creative muse.

By the autumn of 1906, he came to feel that his activities as a pianist and a conductor were leaving too little time for his first love—composition. Seeking a retreat, he chose Dresden, Germany. He leased a villa, where he would spend several months during each of the next two and a half years. In that idyllic setting, he was free to relax, to ponder, and to allow his inherently expansive creative impulses to define their limits.

During this period, he composed several important scores, including his Piano Sonata No. 1 and the symphonic poem *Isle of the Dead*. Having finally exorcised the demon of his First Symphony's failure, he was able to consider the creation of a successor. He took great care with it, sincerely wishing it to

succeed. His efforts won total vindication when the first performance, which he conducted himself in St. Petersburg on February 8, 1908, scored a resounding triumph.

As with all three of his symphonies, the Second Symphony is bound together by a brief, simple recurring theme or "motto." This one is played by the double basses at the beginning of the first movement's slow, brooding introduction. The main "Allegro" presents a balance of restless, dramatic, and yearning elements. In its urgency and rhythmic drive, the following scherzo leans toward the tart style of Prokofiev, but only Rachmaninoff (or perhaps his idol, Tchaikovsky) could have written the soaring second theme.

The third movement "Adagio" is the symphony's beating heart, an outpouring of passionate lyricism virtually unsurpassed in all music. The principal theme is a long, glowing melody introduced by solo clarinet. As the movement develops, it touches repeated heights of rapture, before dying away into contented stillness. The symphony concludes with a surging, joyful rondo. Fleeting reminiscences of previous movements crop up, en route to the exhilarating conclusion.

—Program note by Don Anderson



**Nicholas Sharma**, RBC Resident Conductor & TSYO Conductor

In the 2025/26 season, Nicholas Sharma joins the Toronto Symphony Orchestra as RBC Resident Conductor and Toronto Symphony Youth Orchestra Conductor. He has led performances with orchestras across North America, earning recognition for his versatility and musical artistry.

Recent conducting highlights include début performances with the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra and the Eugene Symphony, as well as serving as Assistant Conductor of the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra and Music Director of the South Dakota Symphony Youth Orchestra.

He has participated in master classes and summer festivals with the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, the New World Symphony, the National Academy Orchestra of Canada, the Aspen Music Festival, and the Colorado College Summer Music Festival, working with such distinguished conductors as Michael Tilson Thomas, Stéphane Denève, Neeme Järvi, Robert Spano, Nicholas McGegan, Mark Stringer, and Boris Brott.

A native of the Toronto area, Sharma began his musical studies as a violinist. He holds a degree in violin performance from the Eastman School of Music, where he studied with Oleh Krysa, and a master's degree in orchestral conducting from the University of Oregon under David Jacobs. In 2024, he completed a Doctor of Musical Arts (DMA) degree in orchestral conducting at Eastman, studying with Neil Varon. His return to Toronto marks both a personal and professional homecoming as he takes on these new artistic leadership roles.



**Harrison Yang Meng**, viola  
(2024/25 TSYO Concerto Competition Winner)

Violist Harrison Yang Meng is a passionate, full-scholarship student at The Royal Conservatory of Music's Taylor Academy. He began the violin at age 7, taught by his mother, Linda Yang, and studied with Atis Bankas when he joined the academy at 13. He started the viola at age 14 and is currently studying with Theresa Rudolph at the same institution.

Meng is a winner of the 2024/25 TSYO Concerto Competition and the 2025 North York Concert Orchestra (NYCO) Concerto Competition, and the Grand Prize Winner of the 2024 International Music Festival and Competition. He is also a prizewinner of the Canadian Music Competition and the Ontario Music Festivals Association competitions.

Meng has performed as a soloist with several orchestras, including the NYCO, the Kindred Spirits Orchestra, and the Canada Youth Chamber Orchestra, among others. He attended the Heifetz International Music Institute in 2024 and was a young artist at the 2025 Caledon Music Festival. In the same year, Meng and his string quartet were invited to participate in the Banff International String Quartet Competition (BISQC) Youth Chamber Music Program. He has collaborated with renowned musicians such as David Ying, Barry Shiffman, Nicholas Kitchen, Joel Quarrington, the Isidore String Quartet, and Min-Jeong Koh. He has also taken part in master classes with many distinguished artists.

As a dedicated chamber and orchestral musician, Meng was Principal Viola of the TSYO from 2023 to 2025. He is also the Principal Viola of the Taylor Academy Chamber Orchestra.

## Toronto Symphony Youth Orchestra

Nicholas Sharma, conductor

**FOR 52 SEASONS**, since its founding under the direction of Victor Feldbrill in 1974, the Toronto Symphony Youth Orchestra (TSYO) has been dedicated to providing a high-level orchestral experience for talented young musicians aged 22 and under. The tuition-free TSYO program delivers a unique, powerful, and life-enriching opportunity that encourages significant achievement, regardless of participants' chosen career paths. The TSYO is closely affiliated with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra: TSO musicians serve as coaches through the season, TSO guest artists lead TSYO master classes, and the TSYO performs annually with the TSO in a side-by-side concert.

### VIOLINS

Aida Chegini  
Anamaria Khingava  
Annika Kho  
Ariel Loboda  
Chelsea Gu  
Chelsea Wan  
Chloe Ng  
Edward Wu  
Emily Wang  
Hannah Kwan  
Joy Cha-Kang  
Lucas Ju  
Marion Cha-Kang  
Oliver (Zihuan) Xu  
Richard Xiong  
Roland Ding  
Salma Khakimov  
Sophie Cheung  
Tina Sievers  
Victoria Gilerovitch  
Xinru Lai  
Yusuf Tajbakhsh  
Zhuoyi Yang  
Zoe Lai-Yi Clarke

### VIOLAS

Celine Aricibasi  
Emily Liao  
Gabiella Liu  
Isla Ertl  
Larry Zheng  
Lauren Liang  
Nathan Wu  
Noah Haro Jang  
Peggy Zhu  
Sam Talebi  
Solomon Cheung

### CELLOS

Austin Dong  
Claire Wang

Unice Choe  
George Gernega  
Maggie Marshman  
Matthew Ng  
Rebecca Lima  
Ruichen Wang  
Ryan Yin  
Stella Chang  
Yuheng (Hassel) Chen

### DOUBLE BASSES

Alice Quach  
Danylo Tkaczyk  
Emma Chen  
Jikai (Nick) Zhang  
Julia Li  
Richard Nemeth  
Wang Hin (Marcus) Chan  
Xiaoyi (Ashley) Ruan

### FLUTES

Eleanor Song  
Karri Li  
Rowan Froh

### OBOES

Clara Aristanto  
Hingyi Cui  
Jason Fan

### CLARINETS

Farimah Khorrami  
Marco Ding  
Michelle Jin

### BASSOONS

Kendal Morrison  
Spencer Mendez  
Taran Massey-Singh

### HORNS

Avery Hubert  
Ethan Chialtas  
Jingyao (Victor) Hu

Sophia Choi  
Qiwei Liu

### TRUMPETS

Kevin Zhao  
Naomi Hunter  
Tamsin Spiller  
Teresa Osko

### TROMBONES

Abellia Chan  
Alina Dai  
Amy Jordaán  
Yan Lam John Lau

### TUBA

Jack Shiels

### PERCUSSION

Bowen Wang  
Elyssa Arde  
Jon Bilek

### HARPS

Luc Hung  
Weiqi (Vicky) Chen

### STAFF

**Matthew Robertson+**  
TSYO Manager &  
Community Assistant

**Jennifer Mak**  
Interim TSYO Manager

**Nicole Balm**  
Senior Director of  
Education & Community  
Engagement

**Pierre Rivard**  
Family & School  
Programs Manager

**Angela Maria Sanchez**  
Education & Community  
Engagement Coordinator

### FACULTY

**Nicholas Sharma**  
RBC Resident Conductor  
& TSYO Conductor  
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Volunteer Committee*

**Ilan Mendel**  
TSYO Assistant Conductor

**Shane Kim**  
Violin Coach  
TSO Violin

**Peter Semionovs**  
Violin Coach  
TSO Violin

**Ivan Ivanovich**  
Viola Coach  
TSO Viola

**Emmanuelle Beaulieu  
Bergeron**  
Cello Coach  
TSO Associate Principal  
Cello

**Christopher Laven**  
Double Bass Coach  
TSO Double Bass

**Miles Haskins**  
Woodwind Coach  
TSO Clarinet & Bass  
Clarinet

**Renata Cardoso**  
Brass Coach  
TSO Trumpet

**Joseph Kelly**  
Percussion Coach  
TSO Percussion/Assistant  
Principal Timpani

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+On leave