

Chapel Hill  

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*Philharmonia*

Sunday, 3 May 2026 - 3:00 pm

Moeser Auditorium  
University of North Carolina  
at Chapel Hill

Donald L. Oehler, Music Director

***A Classical Revival***

**Overture to Donna Diana** Emil von Reznicek (1860-1945)

**Variations on a Rococo Theme** Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)  
Alex Forman – cello

***Intermission***

**Symphony No. 5 in B-flat Major, Op.100** Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953)

- I. Andante
- II. Allegro marcato
- III. Adagio
- IV. Allegro giocoso

## A Classical Revival

The thematic thread running through all three works on this afternoon's concert is the idea of the mid-18th century as an emotional and aesthetic refuge – a place of order, grace and wit that composers invoke either playfully (as with Reznicek), nostalgically (in the case of Tchaikovsky), or with Prokofiev's Fifth Symphony, as a structural counterweight to the horrors of the Second World War.



*Emil von Reznicek*

*The Overture to Donna Diana* is a typical example of Sonata-Allegro form featuring melodies used in the opera. The plot of the opera is quite similar to William Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew*, though it is set in the royal courts of Barcelona in the mid 18th century. This energetic overture is written in the unusual time signature of 3/16, emphasizing the fast pace and comedic lightness of this opera, completed in 1894.

Tchaikovsky's *Variations on a Rococo Theme* is a concert work for cello and orchestra. The piece was written between December 1876 and March 1877. It is the closest Tchaikovsky ever came to writing a full concerto for cello and orchestra. The style was inspired by Mozart and makes it clear that Tchaikovsky admired the Classical style very much. The Theme is not Rococo in origin but actually an original theme by Tchaikovsky in the Rococo style.



*Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky*



*Wilhelm Fitzenhagen*

Tchaikovsky wrote this piece for and with the help of Wilhelm Fitzenhagen, a German cellist and fellow professor at the Moscow Conservatory. Fitzenhagen gave the premiere in Moscow on November 30, 1877. While one can find Tchaikovsky's original composition of eight variations in his collected works, study scores, piano reductions, and orchestral parts are only published using Fitzenhagen's amended and reordered version of the variations. The Fitzenhagen version contains just seven of the eight original variations by Tchaikovsky and is the version performed by the orchestra and soloist today.

**Alex Forman**, our soloist, is currently a Junior at Enloe Magnet High School in Raleigh, North Carolina. Alex began piano at four years old and would later pick up the cello at age nine. He currently studies with Caroline Stinson at Duke University, and his former teachers and mentors include Rosalind Leavell, Erica Leavell, Bonnie Thron, Tomoko Fujita, and John Popham. He has spent his summers at both the Kinhaven Music School and the Interlochen Arts Academy, and will be attending the Bowdoin International Music Festival this summer to study with Daniel McDonough.



As a chamber musician, Alex is currently a member of the Tempus Piano Quartet. Based at UNC-Chapel Hill through the Mallarme Youth Chamber Orchestra Program, the Tempus Quartet won first prize at the USC Chamber Day Competition in 2025. Earlier this winter, they were semi-finalists in the Coltman Chamber Competition and will be competing in the quarterfinals of the Fischhoff International Chamber Competition later this spring. Alex has participated in masterclasses with numerous groups such as the Verona Quartet, the Jupiter Quartet, the Parker Quartet, the Ciompi Quartet, members of A Far Cry, and the Balourdet Quartet.

As a soloist, Alex received the Honorable Mention prize in the Duke String School Concerto Competition in 2024. He has also had the opportunity to sit principal cello of numerous local, regional, and state level orchestra events. Alex plans to attend music

school after graduating from high school next year. In addition to playing cello, he also enjoys reading, napping, good food, and rock climbing.



Sergei Prokofiev wrote his *Symphony No. 5 in B<sup>b</sup> major, Op. 100*, in the Soviet Union in a little less than one month in the summer of 1944. A Russian-born pianist and composer, he is best known for his ballets, including *Romeo and Juliet* (1935), seven symphonies, five piano concertos, ten piano sonatas, the orchestral suite, *Lieutenant Kije* (1934) and the beloved children’s piece *Peter and the Wolf* (1936).

The creation of the Fifth Symphony can be traced to musical ideas of Prokofiev’s earlier works, particularly the Symphony No. 4 in C major composed fourteen years earlier.

In a statement at the time of the work’s premiere Prokofiev said that he intended it as “a hymn to free and happy Man, to his mighty powers, his pure and noble spirit.” He added, “I cannot say that I deliberately chose this theme. It was born in me and clamored for expression. The music matured within me. It filled my soul.”

The work is in direct contrast to the horrors of the Second World War against Nazi Germany, a war that would continue for almost another year, ending in early May of 1945. Prokofiev’s use of classical forms for the movements of this Symphony hearken back to the elegance and grace of the 18th century.

## I. Andante

The first movement is crafted in a sonata-allegro form: its exposition presents three themes, one calm and sustained,







devolves into a cacophonous frenzy, which is then stripped down to solo strings playing machine-like staccato repeated notes with rude interjections from low trumpets, making the ultimate orchestral unison B $\flat$ , sound all the more ironic.

*Program Notes by Garth E. Molyneux*