

Anchorage Symphony Orchestra

NEWS RELEASE

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Anchorage Symphony Orchestra Tradition and Innovation featuring Mary Elizabeth Bowden, trumpet Saturday, March 2nd – 7:30pm Atwood Concert Hall, ACPA

Anchorage, Alaska – February 16, 2024 – Symphony orchestras worldwide stand as timeless bastions of musical tradition, and also work to remain dynamic and relevant by continuing to explore new avenues of expression while honoring the classic masterpieces. Commissions of contemporary works by groups like the Anchorage Symphony's Musica Nova Commissioning Club are essential to bringing new works to life by collaborating with living composers across genres, and in doing so, creating a bridge between past and present. In this delicate dance between tradition and innovation, symphony orchestras preserve classical music's cultural heritage and serve as crucibles of artistic evolution, ensuring that the symphonic tradition remains a living, breathing art form that resonates with audiences across generations.

On Saturday, March 2nd, the Anchorage Symphony deftly walks this delicate line of *Tradition and Innovation*, performing a range of music from Beethoven's masterwork *Symphony No. 5* to the 2020 Musica Nova commission *Trumpet Concerto* by Canadian composer Vivian Fung, featuring the enigmatic Mary Elizabeth Bowden on trumpet. Bowden will also perform Jean-Baptiste Arban's *Variations on a Theme from Bellini's "Norma."* This epic evening also includes Bohuslav Martinu's *Thunderbolt P-47*, a thrilling piece capturing WWII fighter pilots' spirit, courage, and heroism.

It is hard to think of another piece that embodies symphonic traditions more than Beethoven's *Symphony No. 5*. This iconic and universally recognized masterpiece was composed during a period of personal turmoil for Beethoven and stands as a tribute to his resilience and creative genius. Opening with perhaps the most famous four-note motif in the history of Western classical music, often referred to as "short-short-short-long" or "fate knocking at the door," this motif serves as the driving force throughout the symphony. Beethoven's Fifth (as it is colloquially known) is evidence of the composer's innovative spirit, pushing the boundaries of classical form and expression. Its enduring popularity is a testament to its universal appeal and its profound impact on the evolution of classical music.

Originally scheduled for the Anchorage Symphony's 2020 Season Finale, accomplished trumpet player Mary Elizabeth Bowden now joins the ASO to perform Vivian Fung's *Trumpet Concerto*, co-commissioned by the ASO commissioning club, Musica Nova. Premiered by the Erie Philharmonic, Fung's concerto is a virtuosic tour de force, displaying the capabilities of the flugelhorn, E-flat, and piccolo trumpets, and stretches the imagination to what is possible for these instruments. Written for award-winning trumpeter Mary Elizabeth Bowden, who inspired Fung after a conversation about her solo career in general and as a woman in a male-dominated field, Fung describes her concerto, "Ideas of striving, overcoming challenges, frustration, passion, and ultimately joy and celebration are all explored in this piece. Rather than composing the work in movements, I have chosen to organize the piece as a continuous work with various episodes, including a toe-tapping march, a stormy chant, and a more contemplative section for flugelhorn leading to a hip-hop-inspired dance." Fung's *Trumpet Concerto* is the first concerto written by a North American female composer for a female trumpet soloist, and it was awarded a New Music USA grant.

JUNO Award winner Vivian Fung has a unique talent for combining idiosyncratic textures and styles into large-scale works, reflecting her multicultural background. NPR calls her "one of today's most eclectic composers." Born in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, Fung received her doctorate from The Juilliard School and now lives in California with her family and teaches at Santa Clara University.

The muse for Fung's new piece, classical trumpeter and Gold Medal Global Music Award Winner Mary Elizabeth Bowden, has been described by *Gramophone Magazine* as "brilliant" and "radiant in new repertoire for trumpet." A Yamaha Performing Artist, Bowden is highly regarded for her artistry and virtuosity as a soloist and praised for the clarity, purity, and power of her sound. Bowden recently released her second solo album, *Rêverie* (with the Kassia Ensemble, an all-female ensemble), and her debut album, *Radiance* (featuring new American works), on Summit Records. She has been featured on NPR's *New Classical Tracks* with Julie Amacher.

Bowden, who frequently performs in solo recitals and concerts, is in demand as a guest artist with chamber and symphonic orchestras and makes up one-half of the Dash Duo with her husband, trumpeter David Dash. She is a Resident Artist at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts and the Assistant Professor of Trumpet at Shenandoah Conservatory. Bowden will stay on the Atwood stage after the ASO premiere of Fung's concerto for Jean-Baptiste Arban's *Variations on a Theme from Bellini's Norma*, demonstrating Arban's technical brilliance, melodic inventiveness, and ability to blend classical and brass band traditions.

Rounding out this evening of *Tradition and Innovation* is Bohuslav Martinu's tribute to WWII fighter planes, *Thunderbolt P-47*. This thrilling piece captures the pilots' spirit, courage, and heroism, leading the audience to picture propellers spinning as a fleet of planes fly through the clouds.

In early 1945, Martinu was commissioned to write a piece for the National Symphony Orchestra. Deciding to write a short piece to match the modest fee the NSO paid him, Martinu

was inspired by the P-47, a bomber plane with machine guns used in the last three years of WWII by the British, French, and Americans, and their brave pilots who flew several covert and dangerous missions. By the time *Thunderbolt P-47* premiered, the war was over, the Allies declared victory, and Martinu was catapulted into the ranks of renowned contemporary composers.

Tickets to Anchorage Symphony's *Tradition and Innovation* are now available at CenterTix.com or by calling 907-263-ARTS (2787). Over the next few weeks, ASO social media channels will have guest artist interviews, pre-concert chats, and more.

Anchorage Symphony's Tradition and Innovation, Saturday, March 2, 2024, (7:30pm) in the Atwood Concert Hall, Alaska Center for the Performing Arts. Infrared headphones for the hearing impaired are available concert night from the House Manager on the Orchestra Level. Tickets: Adult, \$52-\$27; Youth, \$24.75-\$12.50; Senior, \$46.50-\$24.50 (prices include all surcharges and fees). Military, student and group discounts available. To purchase tickets, go to www.centertix.com or call 263-ARTS (2787), toll free at 1-877-ARTS-TIX.

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Program

BOHUSLAV MARTINU | Thunderbolt P-47

VIVIAN FUNG | Trumpet Concerto

JEAN-BAPTISTE ARBAN arr DEJONG | Variations on a Theme from Bellini's "Norma"

LUDWIG van BEETHOVEN | Symphony No. 5

- Interviews with ASO Music Director, Elizabeth Schulze and attendance at a rehearsal are available upon request.
- Contact ASO Marketing Director, Jennifer Cargile at ASO@YourASO.org, or 907-227-1401 to make arrangements.