

# ALBANY SYMPHONY

## BRUCKNER & CUONG

**SATURDAY | MARCH 11, 2023 | 7:30 PM**

**SUNDAY | MARCH 12, 2023 | 3:00 PM**

TROY SAVINGS BANK MUSIC HALL

DAVID ALAN MILLER, CONDUCTOR

Viet Cuong  
(1990-)

**Submarine, Concerto for Orchestra** (world premiere)

INTERMISSION

Anton Bruckner  
(1824-1896)

**Symphony No. 5**

- I. Adagio
- II. Sehr langsam
- III. Molto vivace
- IV. Allegro moderato

CONCERT SPONSOR



*This concert is in honor of Athena Lord and in remembrance of loved ones we lost during the pandemic. The Albany Symphony commission of Submarine is supported by a gift from Robert Storch and Sara Lord.*

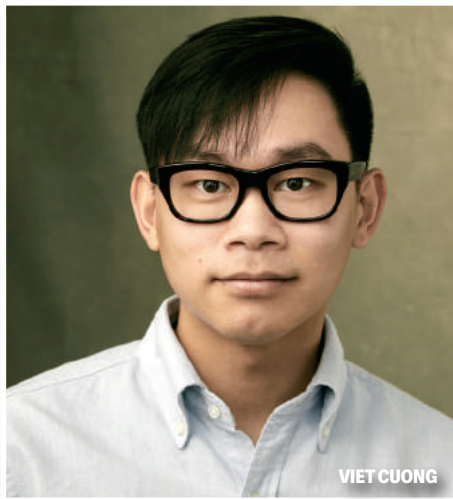
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## VIET CUONG

Called “alluring” and “wildly inventive” by *The New York Times*, the “irresistible” (*San Francisco Chronicle*) music of American composer Viet Cuong (b. 1990) has been commissioned and performed on six continents by musicians and ensembles such as the New York Philharmonic, Eighth Blackbird, Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, Sō Percussion, Alarm Will Sound, Atlanta Symphony, Sandbox Percussion, Albany Symphony, PRISM Quartet, Orchestra of St. Luke’s, and Dallas Winds, among many others. Cuong’s music has been featured in venues such as Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, the Kennedy Center, National Gallery of Art, and Library of Congress, and his works for wind ensemble have amassed hundreds of performances worldwide, including at Midwest, WASBE, and CBDNA conferences. He was recently featured in *The Washington Post*’s “21 for ’21: Composers and performers who sound like tomorrow.”

In his music Cuong enjoys exploring the unexpected and whimsical, and he is often drawn to projects where he can make peculiar combinations and sounds feel enchanting or oddly satisfying. His recent works thus include a percussion quartet concerto, tuba concerto, snare drum solo, and, most recently, a concerto for two oboes. This eclecticism extends to the range of musical groups he writes for, and he has worked with ensembles ranging from middle school bands to GRAMMY-winning orchestras and chamber groups. Cuong is also passionate about bringing different facets of the contemporary music community together, and he will have opportunities to do so with an upcoming concerto for Eighth Blackbird with the United States Navy Band. He is the California Symphony’s 2020-2023 Young American Composer-in-Residence.

Cuong is an Assistant Professor of Music Composition and Theory at the University



of Nevada, Las Vegas. He holds degrees in music composition from Princeton University (MFA/PhD), the Curtis Institute of Music (Artist Diploma), and the Peabody Conservatory (BM/MM). His mentors include Jennifer Higdon, David Serkin Ludwig, Donnacha Dennehy, Steve Mackey, Dan Trueman, Dmitri Tymoczko, Kevin Puts, and Oscar Bettison. During his studies, he held the Daniel W. Dietrich II Composition Fellowship at Curtis, Naumburg and Roger Sessions Fellowships at Princeton, and Evergreen House Foundation scholarship at Peabody, where he was also awarded the Peabody Alumni Award (the Valedictorian honor) and Gustav Klemm Award.

A scholarship student at the Aspen, Bowdoin, and Lake Champlain music festivals, Cuong has been a fellow at the Orchestra of St. Luke’s DeGaetano Institute, Minnesota Orchestra Composers Institute, Mizzou International Composers Festival, Eighth Blackbird Creative Lab, Cabrillo Festival’s Young Composer Workshop, Cortona Sessions, and Copland House’s CULTIVATE workshop. Cuong has held artist residencies at Copland House, Yaddo, Ucross, the Atlantic Center for the Arts, and at Dumbarton Oaks, where he served as the 2020 Early-Career Musician-in-Residence. His music has been awarded the Barlow

Endowment Commission, ASCAP Morton Gould Composers Award, Theodore Presser Foundation Award, Suzanne and Lee Ettelson Composers Award, Cortona Prize, New York Youth Symphony First Music Commission, Boston GuitarFest Composition Prize, and Walter Beeler Memorial Prize.

## ANTON BRUCKNER

In the summer of 1872, Anton Bruckner (1824–1896), a native of provincial Upper Austria, already having established himself in Vienna as the official successor of his teacher Simon Sechter at the Conservatory, produced a new symphony in C minor. At the time, and after some thought, he established its number as the Second even though he had already written three symphonies. The Second was the first symphony written by anybody to take up major structural and stylistic innovations made by Beethoven in his Ninth. Over the next four years Bruckner produced three more symphonies in similar mold culminating in the Fifth, which reached a very high level of technical expertise in the most demanding idioms. It is as if, despite his accustomed humility, he were saying, “I am the son of a village schoolmaster, and this is what I can do.”

The special effects begin in the first measures of a slow introduction. In it the basses are heard pizzicato, outlining step by step a descent and return through a fifth. The descending fifth is also heard in the other movements and is one component of a number of devices which unify the symphony. Soon there is an imposing dialogue between a rhythmic idea for the full orchestra and a series of chords for the full brass section, with the descending and returning fifth being the melody, played by the bass trombone and tuba. Then the main sonata movement begins, with a vigorous first theme which incorporates the descending fifth in a new way. The second theme begins with quiet pizzicato chords, in the style of a hymn or chorale, eventually moving into an active third theme.



The development brings treatment of the first and third themes with dazzling complexity, suddenly interrupted by the hushed second theme and then a recall of the great brass chords and low-brass melody of the introduction. The movement, already showing the most determined ambition, concludes with a madly accelerated coda.

The adagio that follows is in the five-part ABABA form developed by Beethoven in his Ninth Symphony. Here the first (A) theme seems lonely and alienated, the second (B) theme is warm and consoling. The emotional contrast is so strong that it inspired the conductor Robert Heger to write in his personal score of the Fifth, at the appearance of the consoling theme, “Die schöne Stelle” (the beautiful place) and later, “Die göttliche Stelle” (the divine place). Nonetheless, the movement ends rather suddenly without a triumphant climax like the ones he had included in his earlier symphonies. Then, uniquely for Bruckner, the scherzo begins with a greatly accelerated version of the second-movement theme, only to be interrupted again and again with an explicit strain of the country music he was used to in his homeland. This alternation seems to have been a portrayal of the composer in his public life, as the second one showed his private life. His real inner feelings could perhaps be found

in the cheerful and whimsical trio, where the protagonist walks quickly and eagerly along a sunny country road.

The finale begins with the same descending and returning fifth, but suddenly the solemnity is interrupted by the solo clarinet, which gives a new and irreverent theme that is soon made the subject of a sturdy, striding, fugal exposition. The cheerful second theme belies its extreme contrapuntal virtuosity, and the stern third theme is a version of the first theme in half tempo. But before this section of the movement closes, there is a majestic and bold chorale of four phrases, put forward by the brasses and winds. It is the melody of the first phrase that becomes in the development the subject of a complex and forward-moving orchestral fugue. Soon the clarinet theme joins in the fugal excitement, but the ensuing climax is cut short and the second theme returns according to Bruckner's usual scheme. Then when the third theme appears, the stern quality

is in less than four seconds overridden by the fast theme of the first movement, and considerable more fugal material is the result. The final measures of the symphony are devoted to ordered recalls of the themes of the symphony: first the clarinet theme in great majesty, then the mighty chorale in its full four phrases, then the theme from the first movement with a scale theme common to both the second and third groups of the finale. All is done with great magnificence and festival grandeur.

Bruckner was happy with the hard-won result, even though he told his friends that he would never do anything like that again for any amount of money. Since Bruckner's lifetime, the symphony has always won appreciation for its impressive beauty and for the substantial work and dedication required to put it on. This evening we are very glad to hear it in the Capital District.

*Bruckner note by William Carragan,  
Vice-President, Bruckner Society of America*



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