



The Columbian

Symphony features Spanish pianist

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BY JAMES BASH for The Columbian

There's always a new wrinkle when you take on the task of managing an orchestra. That's what Celia Gesting, president of the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, learned when she sought an artist's visa for pianist Carmen Yepes.

Yepes is the 28-year-old Spanish sensation who will be playing a rarely performed piano concerto by Alexander Scriabin with the orchestra this weekend.

"It's difficult for an orchestra of our size to bring to the U.S. someone who has never worked here before," Gesting said.

Professional artists from other countries must have an artist visa to perform here.

"You have to prove artistic merit to the officials," Gesting said. "In this case, the Scriabin piece is seldom heard and Carmen Yepes will bring her own interpretation. That was a strong enough argument for the visa to be approved."

To make matters more complicated, the attorneys who have done pro bono work for the orchestra moved on to indigent immigration. So the orchestra has had to hire attorneys to secure the artist visa.

"Getting that visa is going to cost us about \$6,000, which is a heavy hit on our budget," says Gesting.

Yepes is performing a concerto that some critics think should be a staple of most orchestras' repertoires.

There are some moments when this music is reminiscent of Rachmaninoff's work, but Scriabin moves the piano and orchestra into sonorities that are uniquely his own. The work is classified as a late Romantic piece.

"In the Steppes of Central Asia" is tone poem by Alexander Borodin, who wrote this short, idyllic piece in 1880 to celebrate the silver anniversary of the reign of Alexander II of Russia. This work has been popular since its premiere in St. Petersburg by the orchestra of the Russian Opera under the direction of Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov.

This orchestral piece depicts an interaction of Russians and Easterners in the steppe lands of the Caucasus. As a caravan of Central Asians crosses the desert under the protection of Russian troops, you can hear an oriental melody, a Russian melody and a traveling theme that

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Celia Gesting. President of the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra.

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represents the plodding hoofs of the horses and camels.

The concert concludes with Rimsky-Korsakov's "Scheherazade," a symphonic retelling of the exotic adventures of Sinbad the sailor from "The Thousand and One Nights." The music is famous for its sensual melodies, the evocative colors, the moods and fairy-tale-like atmosphere it creates.

In fact, parts of "Scheherazade" have been used in such movies as "You Can't Take It With You," "A Clockwork Orange," "The Man with One Red Shoe," and incorporated as background music in the video game "Civilization IV."

The beguiling, sinuous violin solo in the first and third movements of "Scheherazade" will be played by assistant concertmaster Tatiana Kolchanova-Parente. She is replacing Vancouver Symphony Orchestra concertmaster Eva Rosenburg, who is recovering from an injury to her arm.

If you go

- What: Spanish pianist Carmen Yepes performing with the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra.
- When: 3 p.m. Saturday and 7 p.m. Sunday.
- Where: 1300 N.W. 139th St., Vancouver.
- Cost: Tickets are \$27, \$22 for seniors and \$7 for students.
- Information: Call 360-735-7278 or visit vancouversymphony.org .

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