



Cellists Amiliya Smith, Michael Dzwonczyk, and Nicolas Kristensen of the Langley Philharmonic Orchestra perform Tchaikovsky's Serenade for Strings.



The Langley Concert Orchestra performs *Once Upon a December*, from *Anastasia*, with clips of the animated film projected in the background.

An Evening in Moscow

Langley High School Orchestra presents *Russian Winter Dreams*

By ERIKA LI
SENIOR, LANGLEY HS

On Tuesday, Dec. 7, the Langley High School Orchestra took the stage for an evening of Russian Winter Dreams, showcasing the vibrant music of Russia. Audience members were transported to places in Russia far and wide, from the idyllic countryside to the ballrooms of the historic Winter Palace. The Symphonic Orchestra, comprised of junior and senior musicians, opened the night with *March Slav* by Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky, a nationalistic and poetic piece written about the Serbian-Ottoman War. Next came *Waltz No. 2*, written by Dmitri Shostakovich, a Soviet-era piece with a haunting main melody, and the *Dance of the Tumblers*, an excerpt from Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's opera, *The Snow Maiden*.

The freshman and sophomore players of the Concert Orchestra continued the lively tunes with *Postcards from Russia*, a compilation of Russian folk songs, arranged by Carrie Lane Gruselle. The next piece was Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet*, an overture based on Shakespeare's iconic play, rich in storytelling and imagery.

A standout from the night was the rendition of *Once Upon a December*, arranged by Bob Cerulli, the well-loved main theme of the Disney film *Anastasia*. During the piece, clips of the animation were projected on the stage, creating an immersive experience for audience members. Michael Dzwonczyk, a junior cellist in the Philharmonic Orchestra commented, "It was interesting to see the



The Langley Philharmonic Orchestra plays *A Mad Russian Christmas*, in a festive and energetic end to the concert.

wide variety of Russian music played by the different groups."

Finally, the Philharmonic Orchestra began their performance, starting with the *Waltz and Tema Russo* movements of Tchaikovsky's *Serenade for Strings*. They then closed off the night on a high note, performing *Mad Russian's Christmas*, an arrangement of melodies by the Trans-Siberian Orchestra of Tchaikovsky's classic ballet, the *Nutcracker*. The piece had an added bit of modern flair, with electric bass, guitar, and drums all accompanying the orchestra.

The Langley Orchestra showcased many facets of the lively music of Russia, from nationalistic marches to dances to well-known melodies with a modern twist. Yet it wasn't just music that infused Russian culture into the evening. Orchestra members ate Russian piroshkis during the pre-concert banquet

and student pianists performed pieces by the likes of Prokofiev and Rachmaninoff at the reception. Student speakers seamlessly wove between performances, providing background and commentary on each piece. Many orchestra members and students in Langley's flagship Russian language program introduced themselves and recited poetry in Russian, some even dressed in traditional attire.

"I think it was really cool that Russian culture was incorporated into our concert," said Megan Faust, a senior violinist in the Symphonic Orchestra. "I learned about the music and also their language and history."

The sense of warmth and community was strong at the concert, especially with a tribute to former Spring Hill Elementary School orchestra teacher Ruth Donahue. Donahue taught at the Langley feeder school for over



Senior violinist Daewa Zaheer of the Langley Symphonic Orchestra wears traditional Russian clothing as she provides historical background on Russian composers and their music.

three decades, inspiring thousands of students to continue in the strings program, before recently retiring. Spring Hill graduates in Langley's orchestra performed under Donahue's conducting one last time with *Irish Washerwoman*, one of Donahue's orchestra traditions, where students warm up with a catchy tune at progressively faster speeds.

Langley Orchestra's concerts aim to inspire, entertain, and unite. Students and audience members alike were whisked away into the magical world of *Russian Winter Dreams*, making for both a festive and captivating evening of music