

## **The San Diego Union-Tribune**

Following intermission, the symphony presented the world premiere of Vladimir Tarnopolski's "**Danse Macabre**," which the composer himself introduced in a pre-recorded video. As its title suggests, "Danse Macabre" was a grim and often sardonic work, a contemporary dance of death...

It juxtaposes a dissonant re-harmonization of the 8-note passacaglia from Brahms' Symphony no. 4 with the Dies Irae plainchant melody from the Mass for the Dead. In addition to acerbic new harmonies for these melodies, Tarnopolski's score is laden with grotesque, at times hilarious, orchestral effects: scraping piano and harp strings; blowing air through wind and brass instruments; wood blocks clacking away; eerie woodwind flourishes; and thwacking, rattling percussion effects.

The piece climaxed with the entire horn section whooping up to the top of their range in a desperate trill, after which a long denouement featured principal horn Benjamin Jaber trading elaborate runs with trumpeter Christopher Smith. This alternated with a jangly violin solo strummed like a balalaika by concertmaster Jeff Thayer, interjected with woodwind and trombone laughing music.

It was simultaneously somber and funny, given an understanding performance by Payare and the Symphony. It deserves to be widely played, and hopefully we can hear more Tarnopolski works in future Symphony concerts.

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