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O'AHU

# FRINGE

FESTIVAL

*"Houseless in Paradise,"  
dance, puppetry, improv  
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# DIGGING DEEP

*Cecile Licad explores "Rach 2" with the Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra*

## HAWAII SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

*Cecile Licad guest soloist,  
Tito Munoz guest conductor*

**Where:** Blaisdell Concert Hall

**When:** 4 p.m. Sunday

**Cost:** \$32-\$90

**Info:** ticketmaster.com or 800-745-3000

**By Steven Mark**

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Rachmaninoff's moody, melancholy "Piano Concerto No. 2 in C Minor" is one of those iconic works so popular it has its own catchy nickname: "Rach 2."

It's a hip enough phrase to conjure pop tunes the work has inspired, like Eric Carmen's "All by Myself" and "Full Moon and Empty Arms," a Sinatra signature.

But it's not just out of popularity that top concert pianists like Cecile Licad come back to it. She asked to play it with the Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra as part of that never-ending search for artist.

"Whenever I have to perform something like this, I always have to relearn and reinvent what I think about this music," she said in a rare phone interview.

"You can show off your technique, but I feel like you have to be above this techni-



**Cecile Licad:**

*The pianist received the Leventritt prize at age 20 — the first winner in 11 years*



**Tito Munoz:**

*He switched from the violin to conducting after embracing his "type A" personality*

cal thing and discover the undertone of the work," she said, adding that she's been focusing on finding "hues and colors" in the work.

The concerto is also famous for being the work that Rachmaninoff composed after pulling out of a deep depression.

"It's his life," Licad said. "You have to tell his whole story in 30 minutes. ... It's sadness, it's happiness, it's victory, whatever kind of emotion you can think of."

Licad was born and raised in the Philippines and came to international renown when she won the prestigious Leventritt prize at age 20 in 1981. Itzhak Perlman and Pinchas Zukerman received the prize early in their careers, but it hadn't been granted in 11 years.

Licad's emotional, passionate presence proved a winner then and in concert ever since.

MENDELSSOHN'S "The Hebrides, Op. 26 (Fingal's Cave)" and Brahms' "Symphony No. 2 in D Major, Op. 7," which has been called his "Pastoral Symphony," fill out the program. It will be a concert with, in the words of guest conductor Tito Munoz, a lot of "warmth."

"They're pieces that really get to you, that get inside of

you," he said.

The Mendelssohn work was inspired by a visit the composer made to the coast off Scotland.

"He had to go ashore and find a pub, because he heard the music in his head and wanted to get to a piano and figure it out," Munoz said. "He had to convince the owner to let him in, because it was a Sunday and they didn't play on Sundays."

Munoz, a native New Yorker, started his music career as a violinist but was drawn to conducting. "My 'type A' personality came through, not only to be a conductor but the leader of the section as the concertmaster, taking responsibility for the whole," he said.

He's eager to come to Hawaii for the first time. As a young, freelance conductor who's apprenticed with the Cleveland Orchestra and other fine groups, there's both nerves and excitement at coming to a new place.

"At the first rehearsal, we'll just play through the main piece," he said. "A lot will be said by the visuals, by the eyes, by the interaction while we're making music. And that will be 'the moment' — the time when the orchestra decides whether the conductor knows what he's doing."