

Guest pianist to perform with AU orchestra

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Guest artist David Peter Coppen will perform the Piano Concerto in C minor by Rachmaninoff with the Alfred University Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Dr. Lisa Lantz at 8 p.m. Saturday, May 3, in Holmes Auditorium, Harder Hall, on the AU campus. When Coppen agreed to play Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto in C minor, he agreed to change his life, said Lantz, assistant professor of strings and director of the AU orchestra. From last September until now, he has spent virtually every night working in a practice room, studying thousands of notes on the pages of his music and bringing Rachmaninoff's voice to his piano, she explained. Coppen's experience with music goes back to his childhood when he, reaching up to hold a parent's hand, would go to a concert hall to sit, rapt in concentration. The first time he heard this Concerto, it was played by Cuban-born Jorge Bolet, one of the greatest romantic pianists of all times, a man whose life overlapped that of Rachmaninoff. A life-long memory of the performance inspired Coppen. As a piano student, Coppen never expected to have the opportunity to play the Concerto with an orchestra but he listened to it often. Last September, Lantz invited Coppen to appear as a soloist with the Alfred University Orchestra for a second time. She gave him two options: Mozart's A Major or Rachmaninoff's C Minor. The Mozart Concerto was familiar to Coppen but he chose the more difficult, the Rachmaninoff, and began his work. Since then he has maintained a schedule with a morning gym session, a full work day and then evening piano practice, said Lantz. His weekends included tutelage from Professor Douglas Humpherys of the Eastman School of Music, where Coppen is the Special Collections Librarian of the Sibley Music Library. Originally from California, Mr. Coppen earned a Bachelor of Music in Piano Performance from the University of Michigan. He later earned a master's degree in library science. The Concerto in C minor was first presented in 1901 in Moscow when Rachmaninoff played the second and third movements in a December concert. After the performance, he turned to the piece again as a composer and quickly created the first movement with its dramatic opening chords. Throughout the piece, the orchestra and piano amuse each other, passing musical questions and answers. The Concerto, Rossini's Overture from *The Barber of Seville*, and *From the Steps of Central Asia* by Borodin will also be presented by the Alfred University orchestra at its spring concert.