

**M** Manhattan  
School of Music

**MSM  
PHILHARMONIA  
ORCHESTRA**

**Perry So**, Conductor

**Alexandra Lee** (MM '19), violin

*Winner of the 2018–19 Eisenberg-Fried Competition,  
Strings Division*

Thursday, September 19, 2019 | 7:30 PM  
Neidorff-Karpati Hall

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# MSM PHILHARMONIA ORCHESTRA

**Perry So**, Conductor

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Strings Division*

## **PROGRAM**

W. A. MOZART  
(1756–1791)

Symphony No. 25 in G Minor, K. 173*dB* (K. 183)

*Allegro con brio*

*Andante*

*Menuetto*

*Allegro*

JEAN SIBELIUS  
(1865–1957)

Violin Concerto in D Minor, Op. 47

*Allegro moderato*

*Adagio di molto*

*Allegro; ma non tanto*

**Ms. Lee**, violin

## *Intermission*

JOHANNES BRAHMS  
(1833–1897)

Symphony No. 2 in D Major, Op. 73

*Allegro non troppo*

*Adagio non troppo*

*Allegretto grazioso (Quasi andantino)*

*Allegro con spirito*

# MSM PHILHARMONIA ORCHESTRA

**Perry So**, Conductor

**Alexandra Lee** (MM '19), violin

## **VIOLIN 1**

**Amos Lee**,  
Concertmaster  
*Astoria, New York*

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*Gwangju, South Korea*

**Da Huang**  
*Beijing, China*

**Jinyu Xiong**  
*Shanghai, China*

**Jinwoo Jung**  
*Seoul, South Korea*

**Sonya Shin**  
*Alberta, Canada*

**Luxi Wang**  
*Guangyuan, Sichuan, China*

**Jaycee Cardoso**  
*Huntington Station, New York*

**Corinne Au**  
*Short Hills, New Jersey*

**Charles Lee**  
*Seoul, South Korea*

**Minseon Kim**  
*Daegu, South Korea*

**Chris Lee**  
*Seongnam, South Korea*

**Yixiang Wang**  
*Shanghai, China*

**Adryan Rojas**  
*New York, New York*

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**Maïthéna Girault**,  
principal  
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**Carlos Martinez  
Arroyo**  
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Haettenschwiller**<sup>^</sup>  
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*Brooklyn, New York*

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*Dallas, Texas*

**Brass & Wind Principals**

\* MOZART Symphony  
No. 25 in G Minor

^ SIBELIUS Violin  
Concerto in D Minor

+ BRAHMS Symphony  
No. 2 in D Major



# PROGRAM NOTES

## Symphony No. 25 in G Minor, K. 173dB (K. 183)

W. A. Mozart

Mozart's Symphony No. 25 in G Minor is dated October 5, 1773, just two days after he completed his Symphony No. 24 in B-flat Major and only seven days after his return to Salzburg from a stay in Vienna. His ability to compose a plethora of music so quickly suggests that the work took shape in his mind earlier than it was actually set to paper. That two such different works were penned only two days apart attests to his ability to think in distinct styles simultaneously. Whereas the B-flat Symphony shows the influence of the Italian three-part overture or *sinfonia*—three movements without a minuet—the G Minor is a full four-movement work of the *Sturm und Drang* (storm and stress) style that was prevalent in Germany around this time.

It is entirely likely that the 17-year-old Mozart had been influenced in this Symphony by Haydn's tempestuous Symphony No. 39 of 1767 or 1768, as Haydn scholar H. C. Robbins Landon suggests. Both works are in G minor and both use four horns, which provide an unusual fullness in the days when two horns were the norm. For Mozart the key of G minor expressed tragedy: he used it for Constanze's aria "Traurigkeit" in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* and Pamina's aria "Ah, ich fühl's" in *Die Zauberflöte*, works in which the text confirms the notions of sorrow and despair. Similar emotional qualities appear in his Piano Quartet, K. 478, the String Quintet, K. 516, and his next-to-last Symphony, K. 550. (The present work is often called the "Little" G Minor to distinguish it from the famous later symphony.)

A certain youthful untamed fury seems present in the opening movement, which, though compact, exhibits a full sonata form with both the exposition and the development-recapitulation sections repeated, plus a coda. Agitated syncopation initiates a rocketing main theme, whose force is dramatically matched after a gentle winding down when the next energetic theme bursts on the scene, now in the major mode.

The veiled quality of the lovely slow movement owes to its muted strings, which, coupled with the constant surrounding sighing figures, project a sense of longing. This brief movement, too, exhibits a sonata form with both halves repeated, but ends in simplicity, without coda.

Mozart's *Menuetto* seems especially indebted to the minuet of Haydn's Symphony No. 39 in its stern outer sections. Mozart uses the full orchestra in unison, which he contrasts with his sweet G major trio, which only the winds play in the manner of Austrian *Harmoniemusik* (wind band music).

The syncopations and unisons of the finale bring a sense of unity with the first movement, as does Mozart's reliance again on the full-but-brief sonata form with coda. The turbulence and little-relieved minor-mode of this movement and of the work in general show a remarkable intensity that makes this Symphony seem anything but "Little."

## **Violin Concerto in D Minor, Op. 47**

### **Jean Sibelius**

Sibelius, himself a violinist, had dreams as a youth of being a virtuoso, but the idea of writing a violin concerto may have been planted in his mind by violinist Willy Burmester in the spring of 1902. He wrote Sibelius the following year to inquire whether the concerto was finished and offered himself as soloist. Burmester was to have received the dedication and first performance, but Sibelius behaved badly by approaching Viktor Nováček, a mediocre violinist, to play a premiere at a time before Burmester was available. Burmester was naturally upset, but Sibelius was determined to go forward, despite the fact that he hadn't yet completed the Concerto.

The "Euterpists," the new circle of artists with whom Sibelius began socializing in 1902, assumed he composed speedily and miraculously. However, his wife and intimate friends knew how difficult it could be for him to complete anything on time owing to his moods and his Bacchic revels. Sibelius's own delays and the inability of Nováček to master the solo part in time resulted in several postponements of the Concerto's premiere. When the performance finally took place on February 8, 1904, with Sibelius conducting, the critics were divided about the merits of the piece itself but united in the opinion that Nováček was ill equipped to handle its difficulties.

Sibelius found much that he wanted to revise. Despite Burmester's offer to "launch" the Concerto with several performances in Helsinki in October 1904, Sibelius was unwilling to take on such a deadline. He completed his revision by the end of June 1905, but arrangements were made for another violinist—Karl Halir, also not up to Burmester's caliber—to premiere the revised version in Berlin with no less than Richard Strauss conducting. Again reviews were mixed—Joseph Joachim, who had been Brahms's advisor on violin matters, not surprisingly weighed in with the detractors. Wounded at being passed over again, Burmester kept to his threat never to play the Concerto, though Sibelius did send him a score when it finally appeared

in print. It was not until the 1930s that it caught on with the public. The dedication, incidentally, went to a 17-year-old violinist, Ferenc von Vecsey, who played the work in Berlin and Vienna in 1910.

Sibelius scholar Erik Tawaststjerna suggests that much of the Romantic nostalgia in the Concerto reflects the composer's unfulfilled dreams of being a violin virtuoso. The poetic opening unfolds slowly in the dark-hued colors that people have come to equate with Finland even without any quotations or programmatic legends. The looseness of the sonata form reflects the concerto types of Mendelssohn, Schumann, and Bruch rather than the forms of Mozart, Beethoven, and Brahms. A cadenza for the soloist, for example, serves as the development section. The ascendancy of the soloist throughout the work reflects Sibelius's idea of what a concerto should be, a view he kept to the end of his life.

The slow movement is a kind of *romanza* (in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries a slow lyrical instrumental piece) in B-flat major; the long violin cantilena (singing melody) begins in that key after a series of wind passages in thirds has made some tonal excursions. The contrasting middle section or secondary theme, depending on one's structural perspective, is based on the woodwind opening, now in the violins. When the orchestra returns to the "cantilena" theme, the solo violin provides interesting counterpoint with jagged leaps and acrobatic broken octaves.

The finale presents the rhythm of a polonaise (festive dance of Polish origins), with the solo violin in its hefty lower register, possibly prompting the witty remark of scholar and composer Donald Francis Tovey about "a polonaise for polar bears." The remark might also pertain to the second theme, notable for its playful cross accents. The movement is replete with violin pyrotechnics, which explode soon after the first theme's presentation. Approaching a kind of rondo form (in which a refrain alternates with contrasting episodes), the finale was characterized by Sibelius as a "*danse macabre*," which includes lighter moments alongside the dark as a proper "dance of death" should.

## **Symphony No. 2 in D Major, Op. 73**

### **Johannes Brahms**

Brahms had taken some twenty years to complete his First symphony, but his Second followed with seeming ease only one year later. Given his habit of working in pairs, however, the ideas for it surely came to him before the First was finished. Brahms spent the summer of 1877 at the charming village of Pörtschach on Lake Wörth in the Austrian Alps. In September Clara



Schumann wrote from Baden-Baden to a mutual friend, “Brahms is in a happy mood, very delighted with his summer resort, and he has finished—at all events in his head—a new symphony in D major. . . . he has written out the first movement.” The remainder followed relatively quickly for it was ready for performance in December of that year.

Brahms’s delight with his summer resort is evident in the work, which has often been described as his most cheerful symphony. He acknowledged it himself, writing in his typical joking manner to his publisher Simrock, “It is so melancholy that you will not be able to bear it. . . . The score will need a black edging.” And on November 22 he further teased in a letter to his friend Elisabeth von Herzogenberg: “I do not need to play it to you beforehand. You only have to sit down at the piano, put your small feet on the two pedals in turn, and strike the chord of F minor several times in succession, first in the treble, then in the bass (*ff* and *pp*) and you will gradually gain a vivid impression of my ‘latest.’” His description was about as far from the work’s actual sunny demeanor as he could concoct.

The Symphony met with instant success at its premiere on December 30, 1877, conducted by Hans Richter in Vienna. On the following January 10, Brahms himself conducted it at the Leipzig Gewandhaus, and again the audience responded with eager enthusiasm.

The sunlit Symphony, however, would not be Brahms without a certain brooding side. He in fact told Clara that not only the second movement, but the first was “quite elegiac in character.” Biographer Malcolm MacDonald mentions an unpublished letter that the composer wrote in response to a friend’s objection to the gloom and harsh dissonance of the trombone canon in the first movement’s development—Brahms excuses himself on the grounds of his “habitual melancholy.” Moreover, in the coda he quotes his own song “Es liebt sich so lieblich im Lenze,” written in early 1877, which reflects the change of mood in Heinrich Heine’s poem from lighthearted love in spring, to desire, to missed opportunity, and to resignation.

The unassuming nature of the lyrical main theme of the movement belies its germinal significance; its first three notes—a half-step “dip” played by the cellos in the first bar—provide material not only for the first movement, but also for the remainder of the Symphony. A wonderful, soaring variant of the theme, also in the home key, occurs shortly into the movement. The second subject is notable for its similarity in contour to Brahms’s famous “Cradle Song,” Op. 49, no. 4, but also for its tinge of melancholy: where one

might expect the dominant or another major key as befits an almost pastoral symphony, Brahms employs F-sharp minor. Toward the end of the movement he treats us to one of his longest and most expressive horn solos.

Though all the movements are set in major keys, the B major of the *Adagio* presents a dark hue, apparent at the outset in the impassioned cello theme with its bassoon counterpoint. In the contrasting section in 12/8 meter, the composer offers some of his beloved rhythmic play—tied chords anticipating the beat. Near the end of this section the three-note motive from the first movement returns in alternation among the lowest voices (bassoon, trombone, tuba, and basses).

In place of the traditional fast scherzo, Brahms often favored a movement in a more relaxed tempo, as in the present third movement. Nevertheless, he worked in lively sections where a scherzo's trios would traditionally appear. Thus the movement consists of three graceful refrains with two high-spirited episodes. The first episode reveals itself to be an ingenious variation on the main theme, and the second a kind of inverted variation of the first. Brahms's penchant for variation also propelled him to alter the refrain with each return; the last comes back in an unexpected key before returning home.

The main theme of the finale takes the "motto" of the first movement as its point of departure. This motive appears in many guises throughout the movement, serving, for example, as the accompaniment to the broad second theme, which itself is related to the main theme, and to the theme of the "scherzo." From the movement's hushed opening statement arises perhaps the most ebullient celebration Brahms ever composed. It would have gone against his nature, however, to have composed a lightweight frolic for a finale; his sonata-form celebration instead carries an air of victory.

—Program notes ©Jane Vial Jaffe

# ABOUT THE ARTISTS

## Perry So, Conductor

A regular presence in concert halls on five continents, conductor Perry So recently made his European operatic debut at the Royal Danish Opera in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, his North American operatic debut at Yale Opera with Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*, and returned to the Orquesta Sinfónica del Principado de Asturias as the orchestra's Artistic Collaborator. Other debuts have been with the Szezecin Philharmonic in Poland, the Nürnberger Symphoniker both in Bavaria and on tour to Milan, and the Orquesta Sinfónica de Navarra in Pamplona, Spain. Recent highlights include return visits to the Sinfónica de Tenerife and a seven-week tour of South Africa with three orchestras, including a Verdi Requiem in Cape Town. In the coming season he will make debuts with the San Francisco Symphony, the Tucson Symphony Orchestra, and the Orquesta Filarmónica de Málaga.

Other debuts in recent years include the Cleveland and Minnesota Orchestras; Houston, Detroit, New Jersey, Israel, and Shanghai Symphony Orchestras; the China Philharmonic; and the Residentie Orkest in the Hague. He has been a frequent guest both at Walt Disney Hall and the Hollywood Bowl following his stint as an inaugural Dudamel Conducting Fellow of the Los Angeles Philharmonic. He led the Hong Kong Philharmonic with Lang Lang in an internationally televised celebration of the 15th anniversary of Hong Kong's return to China at the close of his four years as Assistant, then Associate Conductor. He toured the Balkan Peninsula with the Zagreb Philharmonic in the first series of cultural exchanges established after the breakup of Yugoslavia.

So received both first prize and the Special prize at the Fifth International Prokofiev Conducting Competition in St. Petersburg. His recording of Barber and Korngold's Violin Concertos with violinist Alexander Gilman and the Cape Town Philharmonic Orchestra was awarded the Diapason d'Or in January 2012. He has recorded extensively with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales and the BBC Concert Orchestra.

He is known for his wide-ranging programming, including numerous world premieres on four continents and works from the Renaissance and the Baroque. He has conducted productions of *Così fan tutte*, *Turn of the Screw*, *Giulio Cesare*, *Gianni Schicchi*, and *Die Fledermaus*. His commitment to working with young musicians has taken him to the Australian Youth Orchestra, the Round Top Festival, Manhattan School of Music, the Hong Kong Academy for the Performing Arts, and the Yale School of Music. He has assisted

Edo de Waart, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Gustavo Dudamel, Lorin Maazel, and John Adams. Born in Hong Kong, Perry So holds a degree in Comparative Literature from Yale University.

## **Alexandra Lee (MM '19), violin**

Russian born violinist Alexandra Lee, winner of Manhattan School of Music's 2018–19 Eisenberg–Fried Competition, won her first music competition at the age of 5 and appeared as a soloist with the Far Eastern Symphony Orchestra. In 2005 she was invited to study at the Central Music School of the Moscow State Tchaikovsky Conservatory. Alexandra received a Bachelor of Music degree from the Royal College of Music in 2017 and a Master of Music degree from Manhattan School of Music in 2019, supported by full scholarship in both institutions.

Alexandra is the winner of 15 international music competitions, including the 13th LISMA International Music Competition in New York in 2017, the 3rd Gershwin International Music Competition in 2017, the 2018 Waldo Mayo International Violin Competition, and the 2008–09 Yampolsky International Violin Competition and Moscow International David Oistrakh Violin Competition. She made her solo debut in Carnegie Hall's Stern Auditorium in October 2018 accompanied by the Senior Concert Orchestra of New York.

In 2012 Alexandra performed for President Vladimir Putin of Russia and was awarded the Russian Presidential Scholarship. In 2016 she won the Yamaha Music Foundation of Europe Award and made her solo debut in Suntory Hall in Tokyo with the Gwangju Women's Philharmonic Orchestra.

Alexandra has participated in master classes with Zakhar Bron, Boris Kuschmir, Maxim Vengerov, Alexander Markov, and Lambert Orkis. She has worked with leading conductors such as Mikhail Pletnev, Leonard Slatkin, George Manahan, Yuri Bashmet, and Vladimir Fedoseyev and performed with internationally renowned orchestras such as the Seoul Symphony Orchestra, Russian State National Orchestra, and Russian State Symphony Orchestra. Alexandra regularly performs in the United States, Russia, Great Britain, Germany, Austria, France, Italy, Poland, South Korea, and Japan. She plays an 1865 Honore Derazey violin.



# The Centennial Project

Manhattan School of Music's Centennial Project was an ambitious program of improvements to the School's architecturally distinguished campus coinciding with MSM's 100th anniversary. The centerpiece of the Project was the renovation of Neidorff-Karpati Hall, MSM's principal performance space, which has been transformed into a state-of-the-art venue to showcase our talented students. Built in 1931 and designed by Shreve, Lamb & Harmon, the architects of the Empire State Building, the hall has been called "one of the Art Deco treats in the city" by the *New York Times*. The Project also included a dramatic and welcoming new campus entrance on Claremont Avenue, new practice rooms, and an expansion of the main entryway and lobby.

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The School is dedicated to the personal, artistic, and intellectual development of aspiring musicians, from its Precollege students through those pursuing doctoral studies. Offering classical, jazz, and musical theatre training, MSM grants a range of undergraduate and graduate degrees. True to MSM's origins as a music school for children, the Precollege program continues to offer superior music instruction to 475 young musicians between the ages of 5 and 18. The School also serves some 2,000 New York City schoolchildren through its Arts-in-Education Program, and another 2,000 students through its critically acclaimed Distance Learning Program.

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