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ORCHESTRAL PERFORMANCE PROGRAM

**OPUS 130**

David Chan, Conductor

Daria Podorozhnova (BM '27), piano

Winner of the 2024-2025 Eisenberg-Fried Concerto Competition

JT Kane, Dean of Instrumental Studies and Orchestral Performance

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 21, 2026 | 7:30 PM  
NEIDORFF-KARPATI HALL

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## PROGRAM

JOHANNES BRAHMS  
(1833–1897)

Piano Concert No. 2 in B-flat Major, Op. 83

- I. *Allegro non troppo*
- II. *Allegro appassionato*
- III. *Andante*
- IV. *Allegretto grazioso*

## *Intermission*

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF  
(1873–1943)

*Symphonic Dances*, Op. 45

- I. *Non Allegro*
- II. *Andante con moto. Tempo di Valse*
- III. *Lento assai—Allegro vivace*

# MSM SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

David Chan, Conductor

Daria Podorozhnova (BM '27), piano

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(Guest Concertmaster)

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1 BRAHMS – PIANO CONCERTO NO. 2 IN B-FLAT MAJOR

2 RACHMANINOFF – SYMPHONIC DANCES

# PROGRAM NOTES

## Piano Concerto No. 2 in B-flat Major, Op. 83

### Johannes Brahms

Born in Hamburg, May 7, 1833; died in Vienna, April 3, 1897

“I have written a tiny little piano concerto with a tiny little wisp of a *scherzo*,” wrote Brahms to Elisabet von Herzogenberg, playfully describing what is one of the most towering concertos in the repertoire. Four days later he sent the completed score to Theodor Billroth, surgeon and amateur violinist, saying teasingly: “I am sending you some little piano pieces.” It had been over two decades since Brahms had written a piano concerto, so this was thrilling news. Clara Schumann, one of the century’s greatest pianists, was equally pleased, quipping that if it really were little “I might even be able to play it myself.”

Brahms had made initial sketches in 1878 after his first Italian journey with Dr. Billroth, but other works, among them his Violin Concerto, and another Italian tour intervened before he completed the Second Piano Concerto in 1881. He dedicated the work to his former piano and composition teacher Eduard Marxsen, finally feeling he had produced an appropriate honor. After a number of private trial performances—in his own two-piano arrangement and with the Meiningen court orchestra conducted by Hans von Bülow—Brahms gave the public premiere on November 9, 1881, in Budapest on a Philharmonic subscription concert conducted by Alexander Erkel. Greeted by a standing ovation, Brahms launched a tour of the work with the Meiningen orchestra through Germany, Switzerland, Austria, and the Netherlands.

Brahms’s First Piano Concerto had begun in the Classic manner with the soloist entering after an orchestral exposition, but his Second begins with solo horn and the piano introducing the main theme—a celebrated duet. (This order of events had become more typical in the Romantic era in the wake of Beethoven’s Fourth and Fifth Piano Concertos.) The movement contains no cadenza in the traditional sense, though Brahms does include several unaccompanied passages for the soloist.

Brahms confided to Dr. Billroth that he had included the second movement, a *scherzo*, as “something strong and passionate” to offset the *andante* character of the two surrounding movements. This “added” movement raises the number of movements to four—more in keeping with a symphony than a concerto. Brahms may have originally invented this material for his Violin

Concerto, but even though the *scherzo* was the last to be completed, in no way does it sound like an afterthought—one could hardly imagine the work without this spirited movement. Brahms integrates the *scherzo-trio-scherzo* form with sonata form; in the midst of the development he introduces a ringing, contrasting D major theme as a kind of “*trio*” section.

The third movement opens with a gorgeous solo cello melody, which creates poignant hemiolas (contrasting rhythmic groups of two and three). The expansive three-part structure becomes developmental and impassioned in its central portion. With harmonic ingenuity Brahms has the opening cello solo return in the remote key of a lovely piano episode, before slipping back to the home key for the reprise.

The last movement—a rollicking rondo with elements of sonata form—features several episodes of Hungarian character, a reminder that Brahms had just written his Violin Concerto for his Hungarian friend, virtuoso violinist Joseph Joachim. The final return of the rondo refrain speeds up into a version in 6/8 meter, mirroring a similar effect in his Violin Concerto. The finale leaves a wonderful sense of grandeur and playfulness ingeniously combined.

The *scherzo* and the four-movement scheme of the Second Piano Concerto have led some to dub the work a “piano-symphony.” The soloist’s part, however, cannot be considered obligato (accompanying) in nature—its complex rhythms, massive chords, and passages in thirds, sixths, and octaves make it one of the most challenging in the repertoire.

—©Jane Vial Jaffe

## ***Symphonic Dances*, Op. 45**

### **Sergei Rachmaninoff**

Born in Semyonovo, April 1, 1873; died in Beverly Hills, March 28, 1943

While recovering from an operation on Long Island in May 1940, Rachmaninoff somehow found the energy to compose what turned out to be his last work. In August he wrote to Eugene Ormandy—conductor of the Philadelphia Orchestra, with whom he had had a long and rewarding association—that he had completed a new orchestral piece, “which I naturally want to give first to you and your orchestra. It is called *Fantastic Dances*.” Ormandy replied immediately that he would be delighted to perform the work that season. A week later Rachmaninoff was calling the piece *Symphonic Dances*, though he later said he would have called

it simply “Dances” had he not been worried that people would associate it with jazz orchestras. Working with extraordinary determination on the orchestration amid practicing the piano for the upcoming concert season, he prepared proofs before and after concerts once the season had begun and had the piece ready for the January 3, 1941, premiere.

According to his sister-in-law, Sofiya Satina, Rachmaninoff had once given the three movements programmatic titles, “Noon,” “Twilight,” and “Midnight,” which he later replaced with noncommittal Italian tempo designations. Whether or not he intended a connection between the different phases in a man’s lifetime as he had in *The Bells*, the *Symphonic Dances* sound programmatic. Rachmaninoff, in fact, hoped they would serve as the basis for a ballet and played through the score for choreographer Mikhail Fokine, who had earlier produced a successful ballet to his *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*. Fokine’s death in 1942 ended those hopes.

The three dances are each constructed in a basic A-B-A form in which the final “A” section is wonderfully varied and extended. Rachmaninoff’s harmonic language is firmly rooted in the nineteenth century, ignoring the avant-garde developments of the early twentieth century. His own late style is evident, nevertheless, in the shifting harmonies of the second movement and the energetic rhythmic patterns and “grotesqueries” à la Prokofiev of the outer movements.

The *Symphonic Dances* show Rachmaninoff’s interest in varied instrumental tone qualities. In the first movement he makes special use of the timbral qualities of the alto saxophone in combination with other winds and uses the piano in effective combinations with the strings and harp. (It should be noted in connection with the first movement that the tempo marking “*Non allegro*,” which the composer seldom used, was somehow attached in error. In 1942 he told conductor Dimitri Mitropoulos, who was taking the movement too slowly, that it should have been marked simply “*Allegro*.”)

The opening of the second dance, a mournful waltz, is notable for the tone quality of the stopped horns and muted trumpets. In the finale the chimes and xylophone are employed for coloristic purposes, the former sometimes reminiscent of Berlioz’s bells in the “Witches’ Sabbath” from *Symphonie fantastique*, which also incorporates the *Dies irae* chant from the Requiem Mass.

Rachmaninoff was fascinated all his life by ecclesiastical chants, an interest that he summarizes in the *Symphonic Dances*. At the end of the first movement he refers—according to some commentators—to the main theme of

the opening movement of his First Symphony (still unpublished at the time), which itself had been based on Russian church music. Others hear this as another form of the *Dies irae*, which had figured in so many of his compositions, particularly in the *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*. The *Dies irae* becomes particularly pronounced in the finale, which also makes use of the chant *Blagosloven esi, Gospodi* (“Blessed be the Lord”) from his 1915 choral work *All Night Vigil*. Rachmaninoff wrote the word “Alliluya” in the orchestral score at the corresponding point where in the choral work the “alleluias” praise God following the resurrection of Christ.

At the end of the score he wrote, “I thank thee, Lord,” which here may have signified more than a composer’s traditional end-of-work utterance. Having become more pious toward the end of his life, Rachmaninoff might also have been referring to God’s victory over death, represented musically by the Russian chant’s banishing of the *Dies irae*. It seems entirely likely that Rachmaninoff contemplated his own death as he composed the *Symphonic Dances*, perhaps aware that it would be his last work. Though he revised the Fourth Piano Concerto in 1941, he wrote no more new works. He had decided that the 1942–43 season would be his last as a performing pianist and he bought and furnished a house in Beverly Hills for his retirement. He died there on March 28, 1943, having played what would be his last concert six weeks before in Tennessee. Lest the reader expect a dark work, it should be said that the *Symphonic Dances*, which Rachmaninoff considered his best work, express an exuberant approach to life, particularly in the outer movements.

—©Jane Vial Jaffe

# ABOUT THE ARTISTS

## David Chan, Conductor

Head of Manhattan School of Music's prestigious Orchestral Performance program, David Chan is known as one of the most accomplished violinists of his generation, and is quickly making a name for himself as an elegant conductor of unusual interpretive depth. After 25 seasons as concertmaster of New York's legendary Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, he now serves as Artistic Director of the Taipei Music Academy and Festival, one of the world's preeminent educational festivals; as Principal Conductor of the Apollo Orchestra in the Washington, D.C. area; and as Director of the Credo Festival, an orchestral training institute held annually in Chicago's Symphony Center. He was previously Music Director of the APEX Ensemble, with which he earned high praise for innovative and adventurous programming, and Music Director of Camerata Notturna.

Increasingly in demand on the podium, Chan's conducting engagements in recent seasons have included Belgium's l'Orchestre Philharmonique Royal de Liège, the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra, and l'Orchestre Dijon Bourgogne in France; the Las Vegas Philharmonic; the Grant Park and Classical Tahoe summer festivals; the Juilliard Orchestra and Manhattan School of Music in New York City; and at *Musique et Vin au Clos Vougeot*, where the festival orchestra comprises musicians from the Metropolitan Opera, the Berlin Philharmonic, the Vienna Philharmonic, and all of the top orchestras in Paris. As Artistic Partner of Mainly Mozart's Festival of Orchestras, he has conducted the organization's famed All-Star Orchestra, as well as an entire festival combining musicians of the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the San Francisco Symphony, and another series bringing together members of the MET Orchestra and the National Symphony Orchestra. As a soloist, he has appeared under the baton of such conductors as James Levine and Fabio Luisi, with orchestras including the MET Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, San Diego Symphony, Indianapolis Symphony, National Symphony Orchestra of Taiwan, and Moscow State Symphony. He is also a dedicated chamber musician who performs regularly at all the leading summer festivals.

In addition to his concert appearances, Chan is active as an entrepreneur and creative director. In 2008, combining his interest in wine with his passion for music, he co-founded the *Musique et Vin au Clos Vougeot* festival in the Burgundy region of France. During his 13 seasons as artistic director of the festival, which pairs wine tastings with music, he oversaw its growth from a small, intimate gathering to a destination event attracting many of the biggest names in classical music, such as Yo-Yo Ma, Joyce DiDonato, Jean-Yves Thibaudet, Matthew Polenzani, Emmanuel

Pahud, Menahem Pressler, Cho-Liang Lin, Gary Hoffman, Marlis Petersen, and Ildar Abdrazakov.

A native of San Diego, Chan began his musical education at the age of four. After winning prizes at the Tchaikovsky and Indianapolis international violin competitions, he made his New York debut in 1995 at Avery Fisher Hall, and his Carnegie Hall debut in 2003, performing the Brahms Double Concerto with the MET Orchestra. A student of Dorothy DeLay, Hyo Kang, and Michael Tseitlin, he received his bachelor's degree from Harvard University and his master's from the Juilliard School. Chan became Professor of Violin at Rice University's Shepherd School of Music starting from the fall of 2025, while continuing his roles at Juilliard and Manhattan School of Music through the 2026-27 school year.

## **Daria Podorozhnova (BM '27), piano**

Daria Podorozhnova is a Russian pianist based in New York. In 2025, she was awarded Second Prize at the Olga Kern International Piano Competition in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Her recent successes include First Prize at the Ann & Charles Eisemann Young Artist Competition in Dallas, which led to a solo appearance with the Richardson Symphony Orchestra, and First Prize at the Chopin International Piano Competition in Hartford, Connecticut. She has also received Sixth Prize at the 69th Maria Canals International Piano Competition in Barcelona, as well as top prizes at international competitions in Russia and Kazakhstan.

In February 2025, Podorozhnova was named a winner of the Eisenberg–Fried Concerto Competition at Manhattan School of Music, earning a performance of Brahms's Piano Concerto No. 2 with the OPUS130 orchestra. Daria has appeared extensively as a recitalist and concerto soloist in Russia and internationally, and has performed at major festivals including Stars of the Baikal, the XVII International Piano Festival “Mariinsky”, and the International Music Festival “Vivace.”

Born in Rostov-on-Don, Russia, Daria began her piano studies at the age of six at the Special Music School affiliated with the Rostov State Conservatory. She studied with Inna Serebryanskaya and later with renowned professor Sergei Osipenko.

Daria Podorozhnova is currently pursuing her Bachelor of Music degree at Manhattan School of Music in New York, where she studies with Alexandre Moutouzkine. She is a recipient of the Harold and Helene Schoenberg Pianist Scholarship.

# **ABOUT THE ORCHESTRAL STUDIES PROGRAM**

In the tradition of the classical music conservatory, the orchestral studies program at MSM forms the heart of the performing experience for classical instrumentalists. All students, placed by competitive audition, participate in a variety of orchestral projects under the guidance of George Manahan, Director of Orchestral Activities, and JT Kane, Dean of Instrumental Studies and Orchestral Performance.

Students play in a variety of orchestral formats, giving them ample opportunity to develop their audition and ensemble technique, broaden their knowledge of orchestral repertoire, and perform at New York City venues such as Carnegie Hall, the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, St. Patrick's Cathedral, and Merkin Concert Hall. Winners of the School's annual Eisenberg–Fried Concerto Competition perform with the orchestras as soloists.

In addition to Maestro Manahan, the orchestras work regularly with Leonard Slatkin, Distinguished Visiting Artist in Conducting and Orchestral Studies, and guest conductors such as Joshua Gersen, Mei-Ann Chen, and JoAnn Falletta.

**George Manahan**, Director of Orchestral Activities

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# ABOUT MANHATTAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Founded as a community music school by Janet Daniels Schenck in 1918, today MSM is recognized for its more than 1,000 superbly talented undergraduate and graduate students who come from more than 50 countries and nearly all 50 states; its innovative curricula and world-renowned artist-teacher faculty that includes musicians from the New York Philharmonic, the Met Orchestra, and the top ranks of the jazz and Broadway communities; and a distinguished community of accomplished, award-winning alumni working at the highest levels of the musical, educational, cultural, and professional worlds.

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 Division is a professionally oriented Saturday music program dedicated to the musical and personal growth of talented young musicians ages 8 to 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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