



University of North Texas
College of Music

Ensemble Recital | Wednesday, September 18, 2024 | 7:30 p.m.
Margot and Bill Winspear Performance Hall - Murchison Performing Arts Center

UNT Concert Orchestra
Clay Couturiaux, conductor
Jung Choi, oboe

Prelude to Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg Richard Wagner
(1862) (1813-1883)

SILENCE Concerto for Oboe and Orchestra..... Sungji Hong
(2024) (b. 1973)

I. Kumari
II. Tawaif

Jung Choi, oboe

-INTERMISSION-

Symphony No. 7 in A Major, Op. 92Ludwig van Beethoven
(1812) (1770-1827)

I. Poco sostenuto – Vivace
II. Allegretto
III. Presto – Assai meno presto
IV. Allegro con brio

Program nine of the 2024–2025 season
Photography and videography are prohibited

UNT Concert Orchestra

Violin 1

Polly Klein †
Jiwon Lee
Ethan Dunn
Phoebe (Pei-Hsuan)
Tang
Sophie Thiessen
Rowan Ingraham
Jingwei Zhang
Monica Limberg
Mitchelle Cabrera
Braeden Boyles
Travis Pota-Birkhoff
Oscar Mata
Isaiah Vargas
Yuma Okada

Violin 2

Pablo Cerdas †
Marlon Barrios
Emma Swank
Juliana Jones
Charlotte Reid
Julia Oh
Seth Castellano
Janicesta Browne
Dylan Garcia
Valeria Tuesta

Viola

John Sharp †
Samuel Yi
Audrey Lewis
Kseniya Klyukina
Anthony Brooks
Camryn Bourne
Aidan Shannon
Breanna Norton

Cello

Emilio Lara †
Claire Cabral
Noah Sendir
Elise Abbott
Maya Huber
Griffin Jones

RJ Lux
Dawn Mansfield
Jonathan Scoggins
Dylan Branam
Aminah (Zhimai) Ma
Mateo Jones
Gilbert DeWitte
Olivia Graber
Olivia Jenkins
Sarah Hart

Bass

Emma Willis †
Zoe Harris
Zachary Seymour
Andrew Lakly
Aiyana Armstrong
Lilian Holder
Camryn Lafargue
Sara Nell Chase
Alain Mpinda

Flute

Josh Diaz
Eden Ligon
Hui Lam Mak *#
Shane Salinas +
Michael Salm

Oboe

Madeline Lee
Daniel Moreira
Benjamin Yoder †

Clarinet

Riley Mazziotta *
Meaghan O'Connor
Anthony Piñeiro
Stoney Shelton +
Allyson Verret #

Bassoon

Anthony Coito +
Landon Murr *#
Fiona Theriault

French Horn

Andrew Bennett #+
Caleb Harold
Eva Gomez *
Trampus Marek
Samantha Sheats

Trumpet

Zach Dyess
Elaina Garza
Ryn Jenkins *+
Michael McWhorter
#

Trombone

Charles Brantley
Britton Fugazzi *#

Bass Trombone

Jackson Roth

Tuba

Wesley Arnold

Timpani

Jack Spelman

Percussion

Caleb Brown
Desmond Bigler
Brayden Haslam
Hannah McDowall
Paul Martini

Harp

Zoë Winn

‡ Concertmaster

† Principal

* Principal on

Wagner

Principal on Hong

+ Principal on

Beethoven

Program Notes

Richard Wagner (1813–1883)

Prelude from *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (1862)

The lighthearted nature of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* finds no parallel in Wagner's later works, as a comedy set in a specific historical backdrop rather than a mythological or supernatural setting. Young singer Walther von Stolzing aspires to join the mastersingers' guild and win his love's hand in marriage. At first, the guild, suspicious of his seriousness and creativity, rejected him. Yet the drama ends on a high note when Walther's work with his mentor, Hans Sachs, pays off; Walther is accepted as member of the guild and earns a happily ever after. *Die Meistersinger* constitutes a statement for artistic integrity and innovation, and against sloppiness and conventionalism, issued from a peculiar pro-German perspective which nowadays we find difficult to endorse.

The straightforward and assertive Prelude, completed six years before the drama, introduces some of its central topics. The composition opens with a grand theme that represents the mastersingers in Nuremberg, followed with a brass march later used in act 3 for the arrival of the guild, mirroring the opening in pomp and grandeur. As a nod to the music of the past, a third theme takes up a lively contrapuntal texture that rises to the first great climax of the piece.

The veritable heart of the composition, a core of sincere love and honest creativity, is appropriately placed in the middle and embodied in Walther's prize song. After some elaboration of the contrapuntal theme, the music of the song is first announced in the strings, warmly cast in Wagner's characteristic musical voice, with chromatic notes, florid rhythms, and more frequent modulations. All of a sudden, a jaunty woodwind transformation of the march interrupts this impassioned melody—out of vapid conformism, the guild has rejected Walther's high art but has nothing solid to offer in exchange. The guild theme is even used to build a fugato, an academic form that rarely reached beyond a display of empty technique. However, Wagner evaded any possible negative effects by using the fugue to build up toward the splendid ending section; there, all three of the opening motives are worked out together in an earth-shattering culmination. Finally, the march theme returns in its original shape to take us to the set of majestic "amen" cadences that closes the prelude with solemnity.

Sungji Hong (b. 1973)

***Silence* (2024)**

Sungji Hong, assistant professor of composition at the University of North Texas, draws inspiration from the rich symbolic traditions of Nepal and India in *Silence*, her new concerto for oboe and orchestra. Hong was born and studied in Seoul, South Korea prior to her graduate studies in England; she earned her PhD in composition with Thomas Simaku, John Stringer, and Nicola LeFanu at the University of York. Her creative output has already garnered important commissions and several awards in various national and international competitions. *Silence* was commissioned by UNT assistant professor of oboe Jung Choi through a generous university grant, and it premiered in Rochester, NY this past May. Tonight, Dr. Choi reprises her role as *Silence*'s soloist.

Silence proposes a fresh take on the genre of the concerto specifically oriented toward the promotion of Asian women. At first sight, concertos and silence do not appear to mix; the genre typically highlights the soloist's bravery and talent, sometimes in outspoken, heroic tones that require much music. Here, instead, silence is made musical. *Silence* is the backdrop for many subtle gradations of sound—delicate chamber gestures are interspersed with just a few moments of orchestral power, with the soloist cast as an extremely resourceful poet that remains in control of the music throughout. In lieu of traditional themes, accompaniments, chords, and developments, Dr. Hong resorts to modal writing inspired on different Nepalese and Indian traditions, exotic yet kind to the ear and capable of infinite variety. Long-held notes serve as melodic poles to ground the listener, in lieu of traditional ideas of tonality present Wagner's and Beethoven's works, and multiple waves of sound that grow and fade substitute for the climax-oriented drive of traditional music.

"Kumari," the first movement, takes its name from the Nepali pre-pubescent girls chosen and celebrated as temporary living vessels to the goddess Taleju. Kumaris are elected on the basis of poetic attributes, which inspired this movement in an idealized and artistic way—and Kumaris also spend most of their terms in silence, considered as a positive response to their believers' petitions. A striking chord begins the piece, followed by softer music from the oboe. Rather than specific melodies, sound masses and colorful harmonies create the atmosphere for this work. The oboe's long-held notes, including microtones, eventually give way to a flicker of a melody, which the orchestra picks up in fragments. Dr. Hong sees this intensification as a reflection of the Kumari's divine power and a subsequent exploration of her "poignant transition from divinity to humanity." More whimsical music builds as the movement reaches its ending; the Kumari's conversion turns into "a

powerful confrontation marked by septuplets and thunderous double trills," where the oboist comes in and out of agreement with the orchestra to produce a culmination that convincingly closes the piece.

The second movement is a dance that incorporates Hindustani classical music to honor the legacy of tawaifs, female courtesans and artists who served the Indian nobility of the Mughal period (1526–1858). The present-day Bollywood legacy of their dancing is also referenced through hints of the song "Nigahein Milane Ko Jee Chahata Hain" ("I Yearn to Meet My Lover's Eyes"), from the classic film *Dil Hi To Hai* ("It's the Heart, After All," 1963). Yaman, one of the most fundamental ragas in the Hindustani tradition and one that tawaifs would have commonly practiced, is identified as the inspiration for Dr. Hong's modal writing. A Western passacaglia layout structures the movement through four-measure repeated modules. A haunting oboe cadenza that explores the whole range of the instrument emerges from silence and serves as introduction, plunging into quick, agile gestures as the orchestra joins. The orchestra directly echoes bits of the oboe's melodies, creating exhilarating and iridescent textures. As the dance pushes forward, the texture becomes fuller and more active; finally, the orchestra falls into a pulsing harmony underneath the soloist. A last, quieter nod at silence precedes the final flourish of sound. (We thank Dr. Vivek Virani for his help with Indian musical concepts and Bollywood title translations.)

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

Symphony No. 7, Op. 92 (1812)

An abundance of memorable rhythms and colorful melodies distinguish Beethoven's Seventh Symphony as one of the most "romantic" of his oeuvre. Coming at the end of his "heroic" compositional period, the Seventh Symphony is a seemingly effortless demonstration of Beethoven's creative prowess. Unexpected harmonies sound over pulsating rhythms as Beethoven simultaneously expands and subverts the generic conventions of the symphony, bringing in a breath of fresh air to his work. After more than half an hour of elaboration, Beethoven's Seventh Symphony reaches a conclusion both positive and convincing. Yet to do so, the piece has to confront its own furious outbursts and put them under control.

An extended introduction frames the first movement. Grand chords give way, first to one theme (by the woodwinds, then by everyone) and then to another, delicate one (in the oboes), through some of Beethoven's most mysterious tonal magic. Broad chord and ascending scales lead to quieter moments and a repeated note, which then spills into the sprightly *Vivace*, cast as a tight sonata form. Hector Berlioz once remarked on the popular quality of this movement's themes; indeed, the jaunty dotted figure presented at the outset bleeds through the whole ten minutes of the movement in a powerful apotheosis of the dance. However, some *pianissimo* harmonic mystery derived from the introduction returns throughout the movement, in places such as the expansion of the secondary theme and the beginning of the development. The mysterious music reappears one last time in the coda, where it launches an impressive build up towards the frenzied culmination that closes the movement with a triumphant echo of the main theme.

In a very un-Beethovenian way, the famed second movement pushed Romantic emotional coloring to the forefront. A set of pensive ostinato variations in the minor mode, something of a dirge, alternates with a luminous theme in major, drawing more on sound contrast than on thematic elaboration. The movement starts with the recognizable ostinato on the lower strings, and gradually layers in the violins and the wind instruments to reach the first climax of the piece; then it is time for major-mode music, with the woodwinds taking the melody. More minor variations and a fugal section produce a second climax, again followed by the peaceful woodwind melody. The ending comes much as the beginning of the movement did—in quiet strings and one louder, final chord from the woodwinds and brass. Aside from the fugal interlude, expression and orchestral color amply predominate to produce one of Beethoven's most original—and beloved—symphonic movements.

The F-major scherzo, marked *Presto*, rushes in with a flourish and cascades of light, descending notes cast in the square, dance-inspired phrases characteristic of the genre. A lengthy, striking *fortissimo* unison introduces the more temperate Trio (middle section). Structural contrast is again a matter of color, which this movement handles in a memorable manner: the tonality switches to the bright and remote D major, the woodwinds are foregrounded, and the violins are relegated to playing a sustained note that provides resonance. The flurry of the opening scherzo returns but does not signify the end—Beethoven expands the typical tripartite structure of this movement (in ABA form) by adding more iterations of the two main sections of music (drawing an ABABA outline). In keeping with the playful character of a scherzo, though, the movement ends rather unexpectedly, as swift chords cut off a third iteration of the second section.

The finale, in sonata form, restores the rhythmic intensity of the first movement, now presented with a whirlwind of energy, racing along with unbounded enthusiasm. The themes allude to comic opera, in keeping with the tradition of the lighthearted symphonic finale; but the orchestral forces that Beethoven unleashes are unlike any preexisting music. His technique is effective yet simple, even primitive, as it consists of loud, accentuated chords, assertive rhythms, and much reiteration, with one striking climax per theme—once again, musical color takes over the composition. The development recalls the mysterious tonal magic from the first movement in its most forceful version yet, leading into a “false recapitulation” —the presentation of the opening theme in an unexpected, “wrong” key. Next, the real recapitulation unfolds as expected, and the coda focuses on the main motive, reiterating it once and again to produce the last impressive climax of the composition.

—Cecilia Presa (supervised by Dr. Bernardo Illari, with additional help from Dr. Brian Anderson)

Biographies

Clay Couturiaux

Clay Couturiaux is the assistant director of Orchestral Studies at the University of North Texas where he currently teaches orchestral conducting and is conductor of the UNT Concert Orchestra. The 2024–25 season marks Couturiaux's thirteenth season as music director and conductor of the Richardson Symphony Orchestra. Following a distinguished 16-year tenure, he was named conductor laureate of the Monroe Symphony Orchestra in May 2020. He has also served on the faculty of the UNT Summer Strings Institute since 2015.

Maestro Couturiaux has accumulated over two decades of experience conducting professional symphony orchestras and teaching at the university level. His career has taken him across the United States, Europe, and Asia including concerts with the Vietnam National Symphony Orchestra, Ho Chi Minh City Symphony Orchestra, Milano Classica Orchestra da Camera, and National Taiwan Normal University Symphony Orchestra. Other professional conducting engagements include performances with the Abilene Philharmonic, Arkansas Symphony, Austin Symphony, Metropolitan Classical Ballet, East Texas Symphony Orchestra, Texas Chamber Orchestra, and Wichita Falls Symphony Orchestra.

Further highlights include conducting the University of North Texas Symphony Orchestra in concert for an audience of 37,000 at Cowboys Stadium in a major collaboration with the North Texas XLV Super Bowl Host Committee, NFL Films, and Tim McGraw. He has also recorded with the UNT Chamber Orchestra on the Crystal Records label. In addition to his professional schedule, Maestro Couturiaux regularly serves as a guest conductor/clinician, including concerts with several Texas All-Region Honors Orchestras.

In March 2013 the Northeast Louisiana Arts Council named Maestro Couturiaux the recipient of the Edmund Williamson Artist of the Year Award. The award is presented to an artist who the selection committee feels has made the most significant contribution to the improvement of the quality of life for Northeast Louisiana.

Dr. Couturiaux began his musical studies at the age of eight in violoncello and piano. He holds degrees in both conducting and violoncello performance from the University of North Texas. In addition, he developed his conducting skills at the world-renowned Pierre Monteux School for Conductors and Orchestra Musicians in Maine and at the National Arts Centre Conductors Programme in Ottawa, Canada. The long list of distinguished conductors with whom Couturiaux studied includes Anshel Brusilow, Jorma Panula, Michael Jinbo, Hugh Wolff, Neal Gittleman, Carl Topilow, and Harold Farberman.

Sungji Hong

Sungji Hong's compositions include works for solo instruments, orchestra, chorus, ballet and electroacoustic media with special interest on timbre and pre-determined pitch structures. In a Citation awarded by the American Academy of Arts and Letters, "At times complex and at times straightforward, her passionate music uses precise timbres to unfold dramatic, virtuoso gestures, iridescent colors, and vivid, atmospheric auras."

Her honors include fellowships from the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation, Civitella Ranieri Foundation, the American Academy of Arts and Letters, commissions from the The Chicago Center for Contemporary Composition at the University of Chicago, the Fromm Music Foundation at Harvard University, the National Flute Association, Texas Flute Society, Furman University Clarinet Ensemble, the MATA Festival, Lorelei Ensemble, the Tongyeong International Music Festival, Kumho Asiana Cultural Foundation, the Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra and Ensemble TIMF. Her Missa Lumen de Lumine on the ECM New Series (ECM 1929), performed by the vocal ensemble Trio Mediaeval, received critical acclaim and reached the top ten on the Billboard Classical Chart and iTunes classics.

Her music has been performed by leading players and ensembles in over 47 countries and 236 cities. Her music has been widely broadcast in more than 17 countries (55 channels) and has been recorded and released on the Soundbrush, Elektramusic, Atoll, Dutton label and by ECM Records. Her music is published by [Tetractys Publishing](#).

She has won the Kazimierz Serocki (1st Prize), Franz Josef Reini-Stiftung (1st Prize), Magistralia (1st Prize), Ilshin Composition Prize (1st Prize), In Nova Musica Competition (1st Prize), the Jesus Villa Rojo (1st Prize), the European Competition of the State Conservatory of Thessaloniki (1st Prize), the Temple Music Composition Prize (1st Prize), the Crwth Competition (1st Prize), the international competition for original ballet music at the ISCM World Music Days – Slovenia (1st Prize), the Montserrat International Camera Music Composition Competition (1st Prize), the Salvatore Martirano Composition Competition (2nd Prize), the Dimitris Mitropoulos International Competition (2nd Prize), the Theodore Front Prize (IAWM), the Yoshiro Irino Memorial Prize (ACL), the Christian Fellowship of Art Music Composers Scholarship, and the British Chevening Scholarship.

Her works have been performed by the Radio and Television Symphony Orchestra of Belgrade, the Orchestra of Slovenian National Theatre Opera and Ballet, the Jenaer Philharmonie, Oviedo Filharmonia, the Orchestra of Opera North, the Orchestra of Colours, the Thessaloniki State Symphony Orchestra, the Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra, the Suwon Philharmonic Orchestra, the Masan Philharmonic Orchestra, the Seinäjoki City Chamber

Orchestra, the City of London Sinfonia, the Soloists of the Royal Opera House Covent Garden, Yeongnam Philharmonic Soloists, the Soloists of the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Volti Chamber Choir, Seattle Pro Musica, Renaissance Voices, Con Spirito, the New York Virtuoso Singers, Lorelei Ensemble, Aella Choir, iSing Silicon Valley, In Mulieribus, Seraphour, Trio Artemisia, Dulciana Vocal Ensemble, the BBC Singers, the Choir of the Temple Church in London, Trio Mediaeval, Ensemble Creations, Harry Sparnaay, Sarah Watts, Jason Noble, Carla Rees, Jiyoung Lee, Eun Hae Oh, Jennie Oh Brown, Elizabeth McNutt, Kelley Barnett, Laura Faoro, Jung Choi, Aleksandra Panasiak, Sooyeon Lim, Jihye Chang, Maiko Matsuoka, Wendy Case, Hae-Sun Kang, Arditti String Quartet, Ensemble Concorde, Nieuw Ensemble of Amsterdam, Kammerensemble Neue Musik Berlin, Ensemble Linea, Ensemble Accroche Note, Moscow Contemporary Music Ensemble, Caput Ensemble, Next Mushroom Promotion, Ensemble cross.art, Ensemble Mosaik, UMS 'n JIP, dissonArt ensemble, Ensemble Avantgarde, Eutopia Ensemble, Hard Rain Soloist Ensemble, Phidias Trio Tokyo, QUARTZ ensemble, Onix Ensemble, Ensemble Offspring, Ensemble Sonomania, Traiect Ensemble, Extraordinary Stroma, Trio Sirènes, TrioPolis, Texas New Music Ensemble, ensemble NOISE, Juventas New Music Ensemble, Kassia Ensemble, Ensemble Mise-en, Ensemble Intercontemporain, and Ensemble TIMF.

Sungji Hong, born in Seoul in 1973, studied composition with Kyungsun Suh at the Hanyang University in Seoul. Subsequently completed her MMus with Robert Saxton and Paul Patterson at the Royal Academy of Music in London, respectively, and also with Michael Finnissy, and her Ph.D. in composition with Thomas Simaku, John Stringer, and Nicola LeFanu at the University of York in the UK. She has participated in various workshops and masterclasses such as Voix Nouvelles (Royaumont) and in Darmstadt where she studied with Brian Ferneyhough, Jonathan Harvey, Theo Loevendie, Tristan Murail and Toshio Hosokawa, as well as the International mastercourse and workshop for conductors and composers with Péter Eötvös and Zolt Nagy in Herrenhaus Edenkoben.

Hong is an Assistant Professor of Music Composition at the University of North Texas.

Jung Choi

Oboist Jung Choi, a native of South Korea, has quickly established a career of both performing and teaching. She was honorably mentioned twice as the finalist for the Gillet-Fox International Oboe Competition and started teaching and giving master classes at a collegiate level.

Having made her concerto debut at the age of 16, Choi has since appeared as soloist with the Seoul Yego Orchestra, SNU Wind Ensemble, Bucheon Youth Philharmonic, Seoul Youth Philharmonic, Seoul Chamber Orchestra and Eastman Philharmonia. She also has appeared internationally as a chamber and orchestral musician in Germany, France, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and Japan.

While she was working on her master's degree at the Eastman School of Music, Choi was appointed as oboe/English horn player at the Binghamton Philharmonic. She taught at Nazareth College and Roberts Wesleyan College in Rochester, NY as well. Upon graduation from Eastman where she was appointed assistant principal for the Korean Symphony Orchestra and gave up to 90 concerts annually. Choi also taught oboe at Seoul National University, her alma mater. As a devoted teacher her students won major music competitions in Korea, were invited to compete in oboe competitions such as the Muri Competition and Prague Spring Competition, and were invited to Pacific Music Festival, American Institute of Musical Studies, Norfolk Chamber Music Festival and Interlochen Summer Arts Camp.

Choi is an avid chamber musician and a member of wind ensemble Winds, the Piri oboe ensemble and a woodwind quintet, Sunyul. She was invited as principal oboist of Daegwanryoung Music Festival, Incheon and Arts Festival and Malaysia Festival Orchestra. Apart from classical music, Choi's interest lies in other genres of music as well. She has recorded music for movies, musicals, and K-pop songs. She also performed the oboe on a Korean national television show collaborating with a poet.

Choi's principal teachers include Richard Killmer, Yun Jung Lee, Myung Jin Lee, Soo Keum Kim and Jong Duk Kim. She comes to UNT from Missouri State University.