



COLLEGE OF MUSIC

University of North Texas
College of Music

Ensemble Concert | Wednesday, February 11, 2026 | 7:30 p.m.
Margot and Bill Winspear Hall - Murchison Performing Arts Center

Symphony Orchestra
Clay Couturiaux, conductor
Adam Wodnicki, piano

Piano Concerto No. 3 in C minor, Op. 37 (1800).....Ludwig van Beethoven
I. Allegro con brio (1770–1827)
II. Largo
III. Rondo: Allegro – Presto
Adam Wodnicki, piano

-INTERMISSION-

Symphonic Dances, Op. 45 (1940)..... Sergei Rachmaninoff
I. Non Allegro (1873–1943)
II. Andante con moto. Tempo di Valse
III. Lento assai—Allegro vivace

Program two hundred fifty-four of the 2025–2026 season
Photography and videography are prohibited

Program Notes

Piano Concerto No. 3 in C minor, Op. 37 (1800) | Ludwig van Beethoven

Program note by Sarah Addison, doctoral teaching assistant in music history,
supervised by Brian Anderson, Senior Lecturer of Music History Pedagogy

Between 1795 and 1800, Beethoven's reputation was rapidly growing in Vienna. He dazzled as a piano virtuoso, published to wide acclaim, and cultivated a growing circle of aristocratic patrons. Beethoven completed his Piano Concerto No. 3 in C minor in 1800, the same year he gave his first concert completely devoted to his own music. The key of C minor would later define some of his most dramatic music, from the *Pathétique* Sonata to the Fifth Symphony. Although the Third Concerto stands at the end of Beethoven's early period, it already points toward the heroic expansion of form and expression that would soon define his middle years.

Sketches for the Piano Concerto date as early as 1796, but Beethoven revised it repeatedly before its premiere on April 5, 1803, at the Theater an der Wien. It was a typically ambitious all-Beethoven event that evening; in addition to the Piano Concerto, he also unveiled his Second Symphony and the oratorio *Christ on the Mount of Olives*. Beethoven himself was the soloist, though the score was not fully written out. Ignaz von Seyfried, who turned pages for the composer, later recalled seeing "almost nothing but empty pages; at most, here and there, a few Egyptian hieroglyphs" to remind Beethoven of what to play. The composer performed largely from memory, nodding discreetly to signal when Seyfried should turn the blank sheets, a story that became one of the most famous anecdotes of Beethoven's performing life.

Despite this chaotic debut, the Third Concerto stands as a landmark in Beethoven's development. It bridges the Classical clarity of Mozart's concertos and the more symphonic conception that would define Beethoven's middle style. The orchestra now acts not merely as accompaniment but as a full-voiced partner, trading arguments and ideas with the soloist rather than merely framing displays of virtuosity. The work also pays subtle homage to Mozart's own Piano Concerto in C minor, K. 491—a piece Beethoven deeply admired. Both share the same key, the same somber opening gesture in the strings, and a similar sense of tension between drama and lyricism. Yet where Mozart's shadows are elegant, Beethoven's are muscular and volatile.

The Concerto opens with the orchestra alone in the first exposition, introducing three compact ideas that generate nearly all of the movement's material: a rising motive, a downward scale, and a terse rhythmic figure like a martial drumbeat. The music moves with stern purpose through the first exposition, its minor-key urgency immediately distinctive among Beethoven's concertos. When the piano enters, marking the second exposition, it bursts onto the scene with a storming ascent, three surging C-minor scales that sound like a defiant declaration. The soloist then takes command during the second exposition, restating and transforming the orchestral ideas through rapid figuration and harmonic exploration throughout the remainder of the exposition. In the development, Beethoven narrows his focus to rhythmic energy and harmonic surprise. He builds largely from that terse "drumbeat" figure, which only appears again after the recapitulation in the form of literal drumbeats in the timpani during the cadenza. The single cadenza Beethoven wrote is expansive and dramatic, alternating turbulence with introspection before subsiding into quiet trills that dissolve into the coda. There, the piano and orchestra trade cascading arpeggios and a final triumphant surge back into C minor.

continued on following page

The second movement provides complete contrast. It is a serene, contemplative *Largo* in E major, a key harmonically remote from the concerto's home key and strikingly unconventional for its time. Beethoven begins with the piano alone, spinning a long, song-like melody marked by detailed pedaling and subtle dynamic shading. The orchestra enters with muted strings and hushed winds, creating a still, almost spiritual atmosphere. Even within this calm, the music never feels motionless. Beethoven builds a quiet intensity beneath the still surface that eventually breaks through in a more radiant orchestral sound. The piano and orchestra weave around one another in gentle dialogue, the melody unfolding in long arcs that suggest improvisation (and could have been improvisation on the first night). A radiant orchestral tutti and a tender reprise bring the movement to a close, the piano ending on a whispering upward gesture that seems to vanish into air.

Without pause, the finale bursts in with an edgy, syncopated theme in C minor with a witty, rhythmic idea that anchors the movement's lively rondo form. The piano introduces the refrain almost playfully before the orchestra seizes it with full vigor. Each return of the theme is interrupted by contrasting episodes: a buoyant detour into C major, and a warm dialogue between clarinet and piano in A-flat major. The finale sparkles with virtuosic passagework, quick runs, arpeggios and quick exchanges with the orchestra. The movement also contains one of Beethoven's sly harmonic jokes: he briefly pivots to the remote key of E major, recalling the slow movement, before accelerating into a sparkling *Presto* coda. Beethoven resolves the concerto's tension between darkness and light. The C minor that once sounded defiant and tragic is transformed into radiant C major, the music racing forward with almost symphonic exuberance.

Symphonic Dances, Op. 45 (1940) | Sergei Rachmaninoff

Program note by Dax Anthony Stokes, doctoral candidate in orchestral conducting, in partial fulfillment of MUGC 6954, supervised by Brian Anderson, Senior Lecturer of Music History Pedagogy

In December 1917, Rachmaninoff left Russia for a Scandinavian tour, never to return. The Bolshevik Revolution has already claimed his home estate, and would soon claim the country he held so dear. He would tour Europe for the next year before finally deciding, reluctantly, that the best place to support his family would be in the United States. He made the journey by boat in 1919 to New York, where he began his new life as a touring concert pianist and largely set aside composition.

Rachmaninoff only composed six new pieces during his time in America, the last of which is his *Symphonic Dances*, Op. 45, completed in 1940. Rachmaninoff dedicated the *Symphonic Dances* to Eugene Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra, who premiered the piece in early 1941. This was his last composition before his death in March 1943, just one month after achieving American citizenship.

Symphonic Dances first came to exist as a work for two pianos, but Rachmaninoff immediately created a version of the work for the orchestra. Before its publication, Rachmaninoff considered titling the work just "Dances," or even "Fantastic Dances," with the three movements having the titles of "Noon," "Twilight," and "Midnight," yet the published score has no movement titles. The movements get darker as the piece moves on, and its first review even compared the work to Saint-Saëns' symphonic poem *Danse Macabre*.

continued on following page

The first movement opens with a short rhythmic figure in the violins, which soon takes over and becomes an overarching theme of the movement. The middle section of the movement is both innovative yet purely Rachmaninoff. The alto saxophone solo, reminiscent of Rimsky-Korsakov's distinctive folk melodies, is an example of the long, legato melody that one would expect in a symphonic work by Rachmaninoff. True to form, this melody is soon taken over by the strings. As this is Rachmaninoff's first and only composition incorporating the alto saxophone, Rachmaninoff consulted American composer Robert Russell Bennett to make sure the part was playable on the instrument. Rachmaninoff quotes his first symphony at the end of the first dance, though it would not have been recognized by audiences at the time. The symphony had failed due to a poorly performed premiere led by a drunk conductor, and the piece was not rediscovered until after his death.

The second movement, which most closely resembles a dance, can be best described as a *valse triste*, or "sad waltz." This movement is a waltz in name, and often in practice, yet the waltz is frequently interrupted, slowed down, or sped up in frantic ways. The movement begins with muted trumpets and stopped horns, which both play the waltz rhythm. A solo violin finally takes over, leading to a full dance with solos in the English horn and oboe. The changes in texture and tempo continue throughout the movement until the waltz eventually dies out, followed by a short scherzo-type ending.

The third and longest movement is a tale of two chants. Rachmaninoff incorporated Russian Orthodox chant in many of his works, as did many Russian composers. In his *Symphonic Dances*, Rachmaninoff's use of Znamenny chant is removed one degree; instead of quoting the chant itself, he quotes the ninth movement of his own choral masterwork, the *All-Night Vigil*, Op. 36, of 1915. This musical reference to the Resurrection in *All-Night Vigil* drives the beginning section of the final movement. The other chant melody is the *Dies irae*, a Gregorian chant melody associated with requiem masses (masses for the deceased) that Rachmaninoff uses in at least fourteen of his works, including all three symphonies. The *Dies irae* permeates the finale, until the Russian chant finally comes back in with an almost direct quote from Rachmaninoff's *Vigil* movement. The final return of the Resurrection moment is clearly a turning point in the work, as Rachmaninoff marked this moment in the score with the word "Alleluia." The "Alleluia" section pushes out the *Dies irae*, the Resurrection triumphing over death. The piece ends with a massive full-orchestra rhythmic figure driving toward the conclusion, although the last sound to be heard is that of the tam-tam, or gong, with the instruction from the composer to "let it vibrate."

Biographies

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 Symphony and Concert Orchestra. The 2025–26 season marks Couturiaux's fourteenth 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 International Summer Music 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 Popilow, and Harold Farberman.

Internationally renowned pianist, recording artist and pedagogue, Polish-born artist **Adam Wodnicki** has received acclaim on five continents for his dramatic interpretations, poetic sensitivity and brilliant technique. He can be heard on Muza, Folkways, Centaur, Wergo, Altarus, Klavier, and Dux labels. Recordings of cello and piano sonatas by Dzubay, Muczynski and Shostakovich with cellist Carter Eneyart (Centaur) and solo discs with piano works by Ignacy Jan Paderewski (Altarus) received rave notices: 'one of the year's best contemporary chamber music albums' (Chicago Tribune), 'incontestable brilliance' (H.C. Schonberg in American Record Guide), and 'a recording by a master pianist' (Journal of the American Liszt Society). Wodnicki's recording of the three Piano Trios by Robert Muczynski (Centaur) was chosen by a Fanfare critic as one of the top five albums on the 'Best of 2004' list; and the 2008 release on the Dux label of the Piano Concertos by Serocki, Baird and Krenz received a Polish Phonographic Academy nomination for the 2009 Fryderyk Award. Adam Wodnicki has also made numerous radio and TV recordings, including recordings of piano concertos by Serocki, Baird, Krenz and complete works for piano and orchestra by Sigismond Stojowski.

He has concertized and taught in North and South America, Europe, Africa and the Far East. He has appeared in such musical centers as Kraków, Warsaw, Helsinki, Chicago, Los Angeles, Boston, New York, Tokyo, Seoul, Singapore, Taipei, Tel Aviv, Pretoria and Prague. In recent seasons he has appeared at prestigious international music festivals such as Arundel Festival in England, Les Rencontres Internationales Frédéric Chopin in Nohant and Nancyphonies in Nancy (France) and the Chopin Festival in Mariánské Lázně (Marienbad), Czech Republic; he has also performed and taught in Japan, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Ukraine, China, Hong Kong, Korea, Israel, South Africa, Colombia, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Argentina, and Austria. Since 1991 he has returned yearly to his native Poland for highly successful tours; his appearance at the Paderewski Festival in Kraków was described by the press as a 'pianistic sensation' (Czas Krakowski).

Adam Wodnicki studied with Jan Hoffman, Guido Agosti and György Sebök, and his artistic roots can be traced to the traditions of Fryderyk Chopin, Franz Liszt and Ferruccio Busoni. Three-time prizewinner of the annual Chopin Society National Piano Competition in Warsaw and the recipient of three prizes at the 8th Festival of Polish Pianists, Wodnicki is Regents Professor of Piano at the University of North Texas in Denton. He has served on juries of international competitions and is a performance editor for the Musica Iagellonica's first ever edition of The Complete Works by Paderewski. In 2010 he began a collaboration with the Eufonium Publishing of Gdynia, Poland, and has since edited over 30 volumes of piano music of 19th and 20th century Polish composers, such as Piotr Perkowski, Stanisław Niewiadomski, Tadeusz Jofeyko, Antoine de Kontski, Juliusz Zarębski and Édouard Wolff. Wodnicki's article on Chopin appeared in The European Journal for Pianists and Teachers. In 2014, he was awarded a medal Gloria Artis by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage of the Republic of Poland; in 2015, he was honored with the statuette Golden Owl by the Editorial Board of periodical Jupiter (Vienna, Austria) for his achievements in the field of music. Adam Wodnicki is a Steinway Artist.

Symphony Orchestra Personnel

Violin 1

Mitchelle Cabrera
Pablo Cerdas
Seokhwan Choi ‡
Ella Curb
Lucas Furtado
Ming-Wei Hsieh
Patis Intaramaha
Ziyang Lyu
Michelle Martey
Arsenio Peña
Travis Pota-Birkhoff
Hongrui Wang

Violin 2

Marlon Barrios
Olivia Corporon
Ethan Dunn
Hyunjung Kim †
Monica Limberg
Alfiia Mansurova
Oscar Morales
Chloe Svadlenka
Phoebe Tang
Eleanor (Szu Yun) Wang
Yu Xie
Peng Yi

Viola

Yupeng Cai
Shanya Chynwat
Margot Elder
Jose Fiorentino
Qianqian Fu
Brittney Geurink
Cameron Halsell
Madi Price
John Sharp
Kelsey Shippee †
Leonardo Sobral
Samuel Yi
Ziyan Zeng

Cello

Claire Cabral
Julia (Jiho) Choi
Maddy Dykhouse
Maya Huber
Mansur Kadirov
Xiyang Liu †
Ethan Nelsen
Chase Teague
Paul Trainor

Bass

Ruben Borges †
Wyatt Gaugler
Zoe Harris
Savannah Hilterbrandt
Jason (Kuan-Chieh) Lo
Catherine Willis
Xuan Xu

Flute

Kaitlyn Maresca
Alison Parker #
Shane Salinas
Michael Salm *
Natalie Zeles

Oboe

Alexander Kang
Madeline Lee Aranki *
Taylor Darnell #

Clarinet

Megan Dewalt
Amber Lo #
Andrew Rutten *
Ayuna Sumi

Bassoon

Landon Murr
Donovan Neal *
James Smelley #

Alto Saxophone

Ziliang Zhang

Horn

Andrew Bennett
Justin Beyer
Eva Gomez*
Jasmine Perry-Grice
Sebastian Ruiz #

Trumpet

Georgia Hageman #
Joseph Runkle
Jacaleb Shepard
Joseph Williams *

Trombone

Noah Davies #
Nick Cavallo
Dillon Smith

Tuba

Jiwoong Hyun

Timpani

Jack Spelman

Percussion

Rune Hale
Brayden Haslam
Qaimdad Hunzai
Caleb Yurasek

Piano

Tao Jiang

Harp

María de Jesus
Contreras

‡ Concertmaster

† Principal

* Principal on Beethoven

Principal on Rachmaninoff