



University of North Texas  
College of Music

Ensemble Concert | Wednesday, March 4, 2026 | 7:30 p.m.  
Margot and Bill Winspear Hall - Murchison Performing Arts Center

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**UNT Symphony Orchestra**  
**featuring student conductors**

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Overture to *Der Freischütz*, Op. 77 J.277 (1820) ..... Carl Maria von Weber  
(1786–1826)  
Jiwoo Seo, conductor

Danzas fantásticas, Op. 22 (1919) ..... Joaquín Turina  
I. Exaltación (1882–1949)  
II. Ensueño  
III. Orgía  
Patricio Gutiérrez, conductor

-INTERMISSION-

Symphony No. 2 in D Major, Op. 73 (1877) ..... Johannes Brahms  
I. Allegro non troppo (1833–1897)  
Nathan Howard, conductor  
II. Adagio non troppo  
Mingtong Xie, conductor  
III. Allegretto grazioso (quasi andantino) — Presto ma non assai  
Ella Castro, conductor  
IV. Allegro con spirito  
Alexandra Kovatch, conductor

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**Program three hundred twenty-two of the 2025–2026 season**  
**Photography and videography are prohibited**

## Program Notes

### **Overture to *Der Freischütz* (The Marksman), Op. 77 J. 277 | Carl Maria von Weber (1786–1826)**

Carl Maria von Weber's *Der Freischütz*, premiered in Berlin in 1821, marked a decisive turning point in German opera. For the first time, a work combined folk legend, supernatural forces, and the sounds of everyday life into a cohesive Romantic vision. Drawing on the singspiel tradition—operas with spoken dialogue rather than recitative—Weber created something entirely new: music that embodied both the rustic and the uncanny. *Der Freischütz* became an instant success and set the stage for the later works of Richard Wagner, who called it “the foundation stone of the German opera.”

The story, based on an old German folktale, centers on Max, a young marksman who loses confidence before a shooting contest that will determine his marriage to Agathe, daughter of the forester Cuno. Desperate to prove himself, Max accepts help from Caspar, a fellow hunter who has sold his soul to the demonic black huntsman, Samiel. Caspar persuades Max to forge seven magic bullets, six which are under their control and one under Samiel's. Throughout the opera, the presence of a wise hermit, who represents divine mercy and moral order, frames the struggle between temptation and faith. In the end when that last bullet goes astray, nearly striking Agathe, the hermit intervenes to restore justice and saves both lovers reaffirming the triumph of good over evil.

The Overture encapsulates the opera's drama in miniature. Its slow introduction opens with dark, mysterious low string tremolos and unsettled harmonies that evoke the shadowed forest and Samiel's lurking power. Against this backdrop, the horns introduce a noble chorale drawn taken from the Act I chorus of huntsmen, symbolizing the purity and fellowship of the human world. This tension between light and darkness, between the diabolical and the divine, is woven into the music itself: the contrast of minor and major modes, the interplay of eerie tremolos and radiant brass, and the sudden silences that feel like the forest holding its breath.

When the *Allegro* begins, Weber draws directly on the opera's arias. The first theme, from Max's Act I soliloquy, conveys his fear and inner conflict through urgent rhythms and minor-key turbulence. A contrasting, radiant second theme, borrowed from Agathe's Act II aria, embodies faith and love. Throughout, Weber's orchestration vividly contrasts shadow and light with the menacing mutter of low strings and trombones against the glowing color of the winds and horns.

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The overture ends in triumph as C major overcomes C minor, echoing the opera's moral resolution. In about ten minutes, Weber fuses symphonic sonata form with vivid theatrical storytelling, establishing the tone and spirit of German Romanticism.

### ***Danzas fantásticas*, Op. 22 | Joaquín Turina (1882–1949)**

Joaquín Turina's *Danzas fantásticas* is among the brightest gems of early twentieth-century Spanish music. Written in 1919, first for piano and then orchestrated that same year, the three-movement suite was inspired by José Más's novel *La orgía* as well as the sounds and rhythms of Spain itself. Although Turina is often associated with his native Seville, the suite draws on dances from across Spain, from the Aragonese jota to the Basque zortziko and the Andalusian farruca, blending local color with Parisian refinement. Each movement opens with an epigraph taken from *La orgía*, which Turina included in his score to capture the atmosphere behind the music.

Turina, like his contemporary Manuel de Falla, studied in Paris before returning to Spain at the outbreak of World War I. He absorbed the harmonic richness of Debussy and Ravel while in France but, following the advice of Isaac Albéniz, turned to Andalusian song and dance for his deepest inspiration. *Danzas fantásticas* distills that mixture of elegance and earthiness. It is a work of vivid atmosphere, sensuous orchestration, and unmistakably Spanish rhythm.

The opening dance, built on the Aragonese *jota*, begins with a shimmering introduction that evokes the approach of a festival, as if the listener were hearing distant celebrations through the evening air. Soon the rhythms of the *jota* emerge, a buoyant triple meter, bright brass fanfares, and energetic percussion, all of which are tempered by languid melodic phrases that recall Turina's French training. This interplay between rhythmic vitality and lyrical warmth continues throughout, as the music rises to jubilant climaxes before fading into a reflective close, "as though the figures in that incomparable picture were moving inside the calyx of a flower."

A wistful contrast follows in the second dance, a *zortziko* from the Basque country set in 5/8 time. Turina alternates the sinuous dance rhythm with slower, dreamlike passages in 6/8, creating a delicate ebb and flow. The strings and winds sing gently intertwining lines, as if echoing the movement's epigraph: "The guitar's strings sounded the lament of a soul helpless under the weight of bitterness." This movement's quiet grace and subtle rhythmic shifts form the emotional heart of the suite.

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The final dance returns to Andalusia for a lively *farruca*, a style of flamenco known for its bold drive and swagger. Here Turina's orchestra glows with color; tambourine, castanets, and vibrant brass shape a scene of exuberant celebration. As the music builds, its rhythmic pulse becomes irresistible, rising in waves of brilliance until it bursts into a radiant conclusion, "as from the bottom of raised glasses, full of incomparable wine, rose joy."

### **Symphony No. 2 in D Major, Op. 73 | Johannes Brahms (1833–1897)**

When Brahms finished his First Symphony in 1876, the critics quickly dubbed it Beethoven's Tenth. The comparison both flattered and irritated him. He famously snapped, "Any ass can see that." But after the long, tortured labor of writing his first symphony, the Second came swiftly. Composed during the summer of 1877 in the idyllic lakeside town of Pörtschach, it emerged in only a few months and surprised everyone with its apparent ease and warmth. Brahms himself, with characteristic sarcasm, warned his publisher that the piece was so melancholy it "must appear with a black border." In reality, the D-major Symphony seems suffused with sunlight, but as in all Brahms, its brightness is never uncomplicated.

The symphony begins almost imperceptibly, a horn call built from a three-note motive, a rising half-step followed by a third. That simple shape becomes the seed of the entire symphony, threading through every movement in countless guises. In the first 40 measures, Brahms unfolds a series of musical events: the horn call in major and then in minor, a calming response in the strings, and a dark echo from the trombones. These quick shifts between light and shadow establish the work's character, which is pastoral on the surface yet clouded by fleeting unease.

Out of this mosaic grows the main theme, a broad, lyrical line for violins that still bears the imprint of the three-note idea. Brahms's technique of continuous development keeps the music in motion; every phrase seems to grow from the last. The contrasts between major and minor come so quickly that the listener is always slightly off balance. The expected second theme, which should appear in A major, instead slips into F-sharp minor, a quietly subversive move that deepens the movement's emotional ambiguity.

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When the development begins, the earlier flickers of tension turn into full storms. The cellos seize the three-note figure and drive it upward, answered by urgent entries from the other strings until the orchestra breaks into a brief fugue. Trombones, rarely heard in Brahms, enter with overlapping phrases that recall the horn call in ominous tones. As the storm ebbs, the opening theme reemerges in the recapitulation, but now it is more reflective, tinged with longing rather than radiance. The coda circles back to the horn motive once more, closing the movement in D major but with its serenity unsettled.

The slow movement begins with another transformation of the motive: a descending cello line answered by bassoons climbing upward. These two ideas seem to search for each other. Brahms writes the music as a single, unbroken span rather than a set of discrete themes. Its phrases overlap and stretch forward, creating ambiguous harmonies that drift between keys without arriving at a firm resolution. The movement never feels still even in its calmer moments; beneath the long singing lines lies a quiet intensity, an undercurrent that pushes the music toward a searing central climax. Trombones return here too, casting their familiar shadow across the texture before the theme tries, three times, to regain its footing. Each attempt falters until, finally, a fragile calm settles over the closing bars with the muted strings and trembling timpani creating a sense of uneasy rest.

After the darkness of the *Adagio*, the third movement feels like sunlight filtering through leaves. An oboe sings a gentle tune whose first three notes again trace the symphony's unifying motive. Brahms plays rhythmic games here, accenting the "wrong" beats to create a graceful lilt. Twice, the tempo suddenly quickens into a *Presto*, the same melody now scampering with playful energy before easing back to its leisurely pace. The result is both witty and seamless. It is a brief moment of genuine lightness framed by tenderness.

The finale begins quietly, the three-note figure whispered in the strings as if gathering strength. Then, with a burst of bright D major, the full orchestra launches into one of Brahms's most exuberant movements. The main theme, derived once more from that same motive, unfolds in jubilant arcs while the second theme offers a warm, expansive contrast. Rhythmic displacements and quick exchanges between winds and strings keep the momentum buoyant. In the development, the pace briefly relaxes as Brahms stretches the three-note motive into long, arching phrases that pass between winds and strings. But soon the energy returns, sweeping the music toward a triumphant recapitulation. Brahms marks the reprise *poco forte*, a characteristic paradox suggesting emotional intensity expressed with restraint. Only in the closing pages of the coda does the orchestra finally release that tension, as the horns and trumpets blaze the three-note call in its brightest form, answered by trombones in glowing D major.

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In Brahms's Second Symphony, what began as a quiet pastoral gesture ends in full-throated celebration. Yet even here, the joy feels hard-won, touched by the shadows that linger beneath Brahms's serenity. The Second Symphony leaves its listeners somewhere between peace and wistfulness, its light never entirely free of cloud.

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## Biographies

**Ella Castro** is a Filipino soprano, conductor, and composer. A jack of many trades, Ella has a stellar career in singing and teaching, leading choirs and orchestras, and composing and arranging musicals and choral works. Under the guidance of her voice professor Dr. Terrie Sanders, she won numerous accolades in her singing career. She also taught her own voice studio in Northwestern State University (NSU) School of Creative and Performing Arts. She was also the interim director of NSU Men's Chorus for almost two years. As a chorister, Ella had traveled to different parts of the world (Asia, Europe, and USA) joining local and international choral competitions and concert tours, including being a member of the World Youth Choir in 2025, touring Catalunya and France. She made her orchestral debut conducting the Natchitoches Northwestern Symphony Orchestra in 2022. She was the chorumaster and assistant conductor of Spotlight on Opera 2023's productions of Puccini's "Suor Angelica", and "Madama Butterfly" held in Shreveport, Louisiana under the guidance of Dr. William Reber and Ms. Kristin Roach. Back in the Philippines, she was the resident musical director and composer of Teatro Kalsayeño, Caloocan City Science High School's theatre group from 2014 to 2020, composing various musicals for and with them. Currently, she is the personnel manager of University of North Texas - Orchestral Studies where she is working on her doctorate degree in orchestral conducting under Maestro David Itkin. As a graduate student conductor, she conducts and assists the UNT Symphony Orchestra and Concert Orchestra. She was also appointed as the assistant conductor of Lewisville Lake Symphony for the 2025-2026 season.

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Described by the Chilean Newspaper, El Centro, as “a bright young talent,” Chilean cellist and conductor **Patricio Gutiérrez** has performed in Canada, United States, Peru, Argentina, and Chile. A dedicated cello instructor, Gutiérrez has taught in several youth orchestras in Maule and Bio-bio regions in Chile between 2009-15, as well as in the DFW area from 2018. Patricio is also an active arranger, organizing pieces for cello duets, trios, quartets, and string ensembles. Born into a non-musical family in Santiago, Chile, Gutiérrez began studying classical guitar at the age of eight and switched to cello at the age of ten. Patricio graduated from Universidad de Talca in 2012 under the guidance of Alejandro Tagle. In 2013 Patricio was the recipient of the Univerisia Scholarship of Santander Bank in Chile, which allowed him to spend one semester as an exchange student at University of Connecticut, taking cello lessons with the cellist of the Penderecki Quartet, Katie Schlaikjer. In 2018, Patricio graduated from The Glenn Gould School of the Royal Conservatory in Toronto where he finished his Artist Diploma, working with both cello teachers Desmond Hoebig and Andrés Díaz. In 2020, Patricio graduated from his MM in cello performance under the guidance of Andrés Díaz at SMU. In 2022, Patricio graduated from his MM in orchestral conducting under the guidance of Dr. Paul Phillips at SMU. In 2024, Patricio was appointed assistant conductor of Lewisville Lake Symphony. Currently, Patricio is pursuing his Doctoral studies at the University of North Texas under David Itkin.

**Nathan Howard** is a multi-instrumentalist and conductor pursuing a Doctorate at the University of North Texas under Maestro David Itkin. Following graduate studies at Southern Methodist University, he served as resident conductor of the Meadows Symphony Orchestra. Nathan also studied at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, where he recorded with the New Music Ensemble. As an ensemble leader, he was Music Director for The Camp-of-the-Woods jazz band and conducted the Lviv National Philharmonic, Meadows Symphony Orchestra and Samford University Orchestra. His previous conducting teachers include Paul C. Phillips, Jack Delaney, and Michelle Merrill.

**Alexandra Kovatch** is a dedicated teacher, harpist, and orchestral conductor. She began her musical journey as a harpist, earning a Bachelor of Music degree in harp performance from Washburn University (2017). Alexandra has performed with orchestras across Kansas, Missouri, and Colorado. Notably, she participated in a performance at the American Harp Society National Conference in Atlanta (2016) and is a faculty member at the Elyrica Summer Harp Program in Connecticut (2021, 2023, and 2024). Alexandra began conducting during her undergraduate studies and continued to pursue this passion at Missouri State University under the guidance of Dr. Christopher Kelts. She earned her Master of Music degree in Orchestral Conducting from Missouri State University in 2020. During the pandemic, she began teaching at Drury University (Springfield, Missouri), where she taught from 2020 to 2023, directing the orchestra and teaching various music courses. She also served as the Orchestra Director for the Ozark Festival Orchestra (Monett, Missouri). As a guest conductor, Alexandra has conducted the Kansas City Civic Orchestra (2023) and the Allen Philharmonic Orchestra (2024) in two performances of The Nutcracker alongside the Allen Civic Ballet. Currently, Alexandra is pursuing a Doctorate of Musical Arts in Orchestral Conducting at the University of North Texas. She is studying with Professor David Itkin in the graduate orchestral conducting studio, studying harp with Dr. Jaymee Haefner, and serving as the Assistant Conductor to the Opera Program while studying under Dr. Stephanie Rhodes Russell.

**Jiwoo Seo** is currently pursuing a master's degree in Orchestral Conducting at the University of North Texas under Professor David Itkin, where she also studies harpsichord with Professor Malcolm Matthews and performs with the Baroque Orchestra. She earned her bachelor's degree in Choral Conducting from the Korea National University of Arts. During her undergraduate years, she conducted premieres of new works by students at several universities. She also founded Reason Choir bringing together young musicians. She previously studied violin and composition during her secondary education.

**Mingtong Xie** is a conductor. He enrolled in the conducting program at the Xinghai Conservatory of Music and held the position of Assistant Conductor for the Xinghai Symphony Orchestra in 2015. In 2019, he conducted the premiere of *The Years of Splendor*, a large-scale musical theatre production, at the Xinghai Conservatory of Music's Lang Lang Concert Hall. Later that year, he was admitted to the Master of Conducting program at the Central Conservatory of Music, studying under Professor Sha Liu, Principal Conductor of the China National Traditional Orchestra, and Professor Lin Chen, Director of the Conducting Department at the Central Conservatory of Music and Music Director of the Chengdu Symphony Orchestra. From 2021 to 2023, he was the Assistant Conductor of the Central Conservatory of Music Chamber Orchestra. Additionally, he fulfilled Assistant Conductor responsibilities at significant events such as the Music and Dance Collection Project and the "Harmony of East and West, Creating the Future" concert. In the same period, he took on the role of Teaching Assistant for conducting courses at the Central Conservatory of Music Middle School. He was awarded the National Scholarship for Graduate Students and received the title of "Excellent Student" from the Central Conservatory of Music in December 2021. He was also distinguished as an Outstanding Graduate of the Central Conservatory of Music. From June 2022 to 2025, he was the resident conductor of the Symphony Orchestra at the Music School attached to the Xinghai Conservatory of Music. In November 2023, he served as Assistant Conductor for the Chou Wen-chung Centennial Concert at the Xinghai Conservatory of Music, conducting works such as *Twilight Colors*, *In the Mode of Shang* (premiere), and *YU KO*. He has been a guest conductor with numerous symphony orchestras, chamber orchestras, and the National Traditional Orchestra of China, including the Central Conservatory of Music Symphony Orchestra, Central Conservatory of Music Chamber Orchestra, Xiamen Theater Symphony Orchestra, Beijing National Orchestra, Henan Symphony Orchestra, Xinghai Conservatory of Music Symphony Orchestra, Xinghai Conservatory of Music Chamber Music Ensemble, and the Symphony Orchestra of the Music School attached to the Xinghai Conservatory of Music. He is currently working on his doctoral degree in orchestral conducting under Maestro David Itkin as a graduate student conductor.

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## Symphony Orchestra Personnel

### Violin 1

Marlon Barrios  
Pablo Cerdas  
Ethan Dunn  
Ella Curb  
Hyunjung Kim  
Arsenio Peña  
Travis Pota-Birkhoff  
Chloe Svadlenka  
Phoebe Tang  
Eleanor (Szu Yun) Wang  
Yu Xie ‡  
Peng Yi

### Violin 2

Mitchelle Cabrera  
Seokhwan Choi  
Lucas Furtado  
Ming-Wei Hsieh  
Patis Intaramaha  
Monica Limberg  
Ziyang Lyu †  
Michelle Martey  
Oscar Morales  
Hongrui Wang

### 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  
Minching Lin  
Xiyan 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 +

### 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

### Harp

Maria de Jesus  
Contreras

‡ Concertmaster

† Principal

\* Principal on Weber

# Principal on Turina

+ Principal on Brahms