



# University of North Texas Symphony Orchestra

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David Itkin, Conductor

with

Bob Hess, Narrator  
Dance and Theatre Department, UNT

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Wednesday, September 13, 2023

7:30 pm

Winspear Hall

Murchison Performing Arts Center

# PROGRAM

Don Juan, Opus 20 (1888)..... Richard Strauss (1864–1949)

Bob Hess, narrator  
assistant professor of voice and acting,  
Dance and Theatre Department, UNT

--Intermission--

Symphony No. 4 in E minor,  
Opus 98 (1884).....Johannes Brahms (1833–1897)

- I. Allegro non troppo
- II. Andante moderato
- III. Allegro giocoso
- IV. Allegro energico e passionato

*Twenty-sixth program of the 2023–2024 season  
Photography and videography are prohibited*

# PROGRAM NOTES

Richard Strauss's symphonic poem *Don Juan* and Johannes Brahms's *Symphony No. 4* premiered only four years apart, yet the two orchestral works embody two vastly different approaches to expression in music. This distinction is one of programmatic music versus absolute music—music that represents a story or program versus music that does not. Both approaches value structure, but whereas the form of an absolute work often unfolds according to traditional classical forms (such as sonata form), the structure of a programmatic work unfolds according to the logic of the material upon which its program is based. Perhaps this distinction is no more evident than in the mid-nineteenth-century “War of the Romantics,” an ideological disagreement between proponents of absolute music and advocates of programmatic music. In some ways, this fight was waged over the legacy of Beethoven, with each camp seeking to inherit and build upon his legacy in different ways.

By the 1880s, new composers looked back on the ideological carnage of the previous decades to create their own space. Strauss initially held Brahms, a proponent of absolute music, in high regard, referring to the early 1880s as a time of personal *Brahmsschwärmerei*: Brahms infatuation. Brahms offered feedback on Strauss's *Symphony No. 2*, and Strauss helped prepare the Meiningen Court Orchestra for the premiere of Brahms's *Symphony No. 4* in 1885. Looking back though, Strauss regretted his Brahmsian dedication to strict sonata form in his early works. One can see Strauss grappling with the relationship between form and plot in *Don Juan* while Brahms similarly wrestled with the abstract nature of expression in his *Symphony No. 4*. Seeing himself as working within the shadow of Beethoven, Brahms's oeuvre is characterized by works that are not about anything per se. Rather than having descriptive titles, his works are numbered or are described according to key: *Symphony No. 4*; *Horn Trio in E-flat Major*. And unlike Strauss's *Don Juan*, which clearly seeks its inspiration from a literary program, Brahms was adamant that his symphonic endeavors contained no such story; he expressed anxieties about the abstract nature of his *Symphony No. 4*, “for which no word-text is appropriate.” Such anxieties extended to his attitude toward the symphony as a genre. His *Symphony No. 1* famously took decades to complete owing to his fears about writing within the shadow of Beethoven. In their two works on this program, Strauss and Brahms each emphasize the drama of the orchestral form despite seeking musical expression in different ways.

## **Richard Strauss (1864–1949)** ***Don Juan*, Opus 20 (1888)**

By the time Richard Strauss composed his second symphonic poem, *Don Juan*, in 1888 at age twenty-four, his career was already off to a promising start. With several performances and published compositions under his belt, including the *Violin Concerto in D minor*, Strauss shifted his compositional focus away from absolute music and towards programmatic music, focusing his greatest efforts on symphonic poems and operas.

# PROGRAM NOTES

Strauss wasted little time between the composition of *Don Juan* and its premiere near the end of 1889. It was not his first symphonic poem, an orchestral genre characterized by its reliance on a program or poem. However, it catapulted the young musician's career in ways that no prior composition had. Enthusiasts of classical music may be familiar with the Spanish story of Don Juan through Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's famous opera *Don Giovanni*, a version in which the predatory libertine Don Giovanni is ultimately condemned to hell by the statue of a man he killed. Strauss's take on the classic tale may be less familiar because he based his symphonic work on an unfinished interpretation of the story by the restless nineteenth-century Austro-Hungarian poet Nikolaus Lenau (1802–1850). Having abandoned the practice of medicine, Lenau took up writing poetry, moving across the Atlantic from Stuttgart to rural Indiana to live in utopic communion with the Harmony Society. Even this experience left him disillusioned, and he soon moved back to Stuttgart and Vienna. It was in Vienna that he began writing his poem "Don Juan"; that same year, however, his mental health deteriorated. After jumping from a window and running through the streets, Lenau was institutionalized, the poem never completed. Lenau's retelling of the Don Juan tale embodies the same themes of disillusionment and discontent that haunted Lenau throughout his life. In Lenau's version, the young Spanish libertine Don Juan flees boredom, restlessly seeking magic fulfillment through beauty and love. Unable to do so, he grows disillusioned and weary, resigning himself to death.

Strauss saw a staged adaptation of Lenau's text and later took it as inspiration for his symphonic poem, allowing the musical logic of the work to unfold according to the story. Despite the clarity of the story to Strauss, its precise programmatic character remains elusive to the listener; when preparing the premiere, Strauss provided the orchestra with programmatic instructions but did not offer them to the audience. Instead, the audience received only three brief excerpts from Lenau's poem:

That magic circle, immeasurably wide, of beautiful femininity with their multiple attractions, I want to traverse in a storm of pleasure, and die of a kiss upon the lips of the last woman. My friend, I want to fly through all places where a beautiful woman blooms, kneel before each one of them and conquer, if only for a few moments...

I shun satiety and the weariness of pleasure, and keep myself fresh in the service of the beautiful; hurting the individual women, I adore the whole species. The breath of a woman, which is the fragrance of spring to me today, tomorrow may oppress me like the air of a dungeon. When I wander with my changing affections in the broad circle of beautiful women, my love for each one is different; I do not wish to build temples out of ruins. Yes! Passion must be new each time; it cannot be transferred from one woman to the next, it can only die in one place and arise once more in another; and if it recognizes itself for what it is, it knows nothing of repentance. Just as every beauty is unique in the world, so also is the love to which it gives pleasure. Out, then, and away after the ever-new victories as long as the fiery ardors of youth still soar!...

# PROGRAM NOTES

It was a beautiful storm that drove me on; it has subsided and a calm has remained behind. All my desires and hopes are in suspended animation; perhaps a lightning bolt, from heights that I contemned, mortally struck my amorous powers, and suddenly my world became deserted and benighted. And yet, perhaps not—the fuel is consumed and the hearth has become cold and dark (Excerpts from "Don Juan" by Nikolaus Lenau, translated by Stanley Appelbaum for Dover Pub., 2001).

While it may be possible to imagine the story unfolding as a series of literal events, such as a sequence of romantic encounters, the poetic excerpts instead encourage hearing the piece as a reflection of Don Juan's own mind as he reflects on his aspirations. The first part of the poetic excerpt contains fantastic and striking language—a storm of pleasure, immeasurable magic, conquest. Indeed, the first section of music also evokes vastness, triumph, and a larger-than-life theatricality. In Lenau's second excerpt, Don Juan offers musings on his desires. In beauty, he privileges newness and change; what is at once pleasurable is soon oppressive. The music is similarly unstable, comingling lyrical themes with extended stormy passages. The stark shift between this section and the third is striking—Don Juan's death is not a fierce fight; it is a resignation, and the music is cold and gloomy. It is also possible to hear the piece according to its musical structure. The work operates as a combination of sonata and rondo form, opening with so-called "masculine" and "feminine" themes that return near the end and sandwich a series of internal episodes. Such a reading also privileges the view that the work represents a series of romantic encounters. Ultimately, Strauss's decision to withhold a clear program affords the listener a level of subjectivity and creativity when interpreting the piece.

## **Johannes Brahms (1833–1897)** ***Symphony No. 4 in E minor, Opus 20 (1888)***

Johannes Brahms's fourth and final symphony premiered in 1885, just nine years after that of his first. In contrast with the relatively green Strauss, Brahms was an experienced composer in his early fifties and had spent the last decade touring as a concert pianist and guest conductor. As in many of his other compositions, Brahms sought inspiration in the past, drawing on older scales, thematic material by Johann Sebastian Bach, time-honored structural forms, and homages to Beethoven. The symphony is divided into four movements culminating in a set of variations derived from Bach's church cantata *Nach dir, Herr, verlangte mich*, BWV 150. Such retrospection is emblematic of Brahms's compositions and outlook. His choral works, such as the *Adoramus te* from 1859, often seek inspiration in Renaissance and Baroque polyphony. Moreover, his music collection and concert programs similarly indicate an interest in music of the past—a tradition to which he saw himself as an inheritor. Brahms's backward gaze was not always so distant, however. As in the case of Brahms's First Symphony, the shadow of Beethoven looms large in this work, especially in its reliance on classical form and use of a variation finale.

# PROGRAM NOTES

Despite the symphony's status as a piece of absolute music, it is not devoid of meaning; the monumental work can be read as a fierce drama of tonality, one beginning and ending in E minor. Such treatment deviates from typical tender treatments of E minor; Brahms instead opts for intensity marked by exchange and contrast. Such atypicality is reflected in Brahms's own attitudes and concerns about the piece. After all, his friends dismissed the work after hearing a reduction on two pianos, and Brahms feared that the work would never ripen or mature: "I don't know whether a wider public will get to hear it. I fear it has the taste of the climate here—where the cherries never become sweet enough to eat!" Another marker of the symphony's dramatic arc is its thematic unity, which characterizes the symphony as a whole and represents a distinctly nineteenth-century approach to composition. Aspects of the opening theme return in all three remaining movements. Brahms, typically cast as a musical conservative, was actually *au courant* in this privileging of unity. The twentieth-century avant-garde composer Arnold Schoenberg even sought inspiration in Brahms's approach to thematic development.

The first movement of four, marked *Allegro*, begins with a memorable theme in E minor characterized by its contrast of initial angularity and subsequent smoothness. Marked by gestures of sighing and grasping that evoke pleading anguish, the opening melody later gives way to various other themes, culminating in a triumphant Major-mode theme punctuated by energizing horns and trumpets. The exuberant mood is not permanent. Because the movement is in sonata form, the opening suffering eventually returns, this time more fervent and urgent. The climax is one of tragedy, not victory.

The start of the second movement offers a respite from the intensity of the first; it opens with a plaintive and lilting horn call, evoking an idyllic and rose-colored pastoral scene. The opening theme is in the Phrygian mode—a scale that predates the more familiar Major and minor scales. The use of a Phrygian theme, a decision also found in the second movement of his *Piano Quintet in F minor*, is representative of Brahms's penchant for the past. This antiquarian outlook functions as a gesture toward a simpler time.

The vigorous third movement suggests youthful, unbridled energy, almost frantic in character. It is a modified scherzo, a quick dance-inspired form typically in triple meter. Brahms puts his own spin on the form, opting for a sprightly theme in duple meter and eschewing the typical melodic middle section, called a trio, for that of sonata form. The scherzo also offers a rare moment of levity in a work otherwise marked by weight and tragedy. Its sheer energy and buoyance suggest a typical classical *lieto fine* (happy ending), yet this is not how the symphony ends.

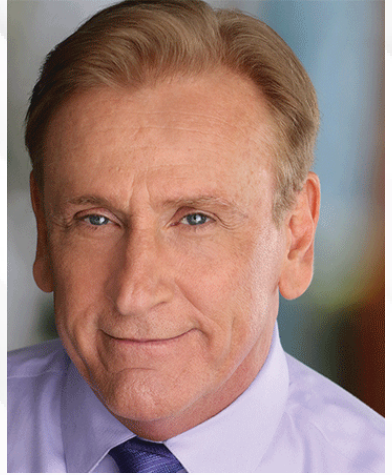


# PROGRAM NOTES

Beginning after the work could have ended, the centerpiece of the symphony is its true finale, the passacaglia. Opposite in character to the ebullient scherzo, the final movement begins with stately simplicity, gradually unfurling to reveal its gnarly tragedy over a set of variations. Like the Don Juan legend, the passacaglia is Spanish in origin. The passacaglia is a seventeenth-century musical form characterized by the repetition of a triple-meter ostinato, typically in the bass. This movement embodies a fascination with structure. Listen for the ways that Brahms varies the ostinato through transposition, rhythm, chordal structure, instrumentation, and the incorporation of earlier thematic material—especially the chain of thirds from the opening theme of the first movement, which returns near the end. The structure of the movement can even be interpreted through the lens of sonata form, in which the lyrical variations of the flute, clarinet, and trombone act as a secondary theme group, the central modulatory variations act as a development, and the later variations act as a recapitulation by mirroring the structure of the opening variations. However, like the opening movement, Brahms utilizes the structure to dramatic ends. The movement, like the symphony as a whole, begins and ends in E minor, the only of Brahms's symphonies to close in a minor key. In contrast with Strauss's quiet conclusion, Brahms's tragedy in symphonic form is extroverted, a loud and desperate plea in the face of a still audience.—*Chandler Hall under the direction of Bernardo Illari*

# BIOGRAPHIES

**Bob Hess** has appeared on nearly every stage in the DFW Metroplex over the last 45 years and is a member of the Brierley Resident Acting Company at the Tony Award-winning Dallas Theater Center and recent recipient of the prestigious Lunt Fontanne Fellowship awarded annually to ten regional theatre actors of note across America. Most recently, he has appeared in Theater Center's *Trouble in Mind*, *Native Gardens*, and *Into the Woods*, WaterTower Theatre's *I Am My Own Wife* (in collaboration with the play's Pulitzer Prize-winning author Doug Wright), and Stage West's regional premiere of *The Children*. Other performances have included *La Cage aux Folles*, *The Nance*, and *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike* (Uptown Players), *Artist Descending a Staircase* and *King Liz* (Amphibian Productions), *Hir* (Stage West), *Rock of Ages* and *Million Dollar Quartet* (Casa Manana), and *Driving Miss Daisy* (with Sandy Duncan; (North Carolina Theatre). The recipient of numerous awards from DFW Critics' Forum and Broadway World, Bob is represented by The Mary Collins Agency and is proud to serve as an assistant professor of theatre at University of North Texas.





# BIOGRAPHIES

The 2023–2024 season marks **David Itkin's** 19th season as music director and conductor of the Abilene Philharmonic, and his 16th year serving as professor of music and director of orchestral studies at the University of North Texas College of Music.

During past seasons Maestro Itkin's career has taken him to 45 U.S. states and 15 countries in Europe, the Middle East, and Asia, including concerts and recordings with the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, Slovenska Filharmonija, San Diego Symphony, and Seoul Philharmonic. Other guest conducting appearances include concerts with the Colorado Philharmonic, Annapolis Symphony, National Repertory Orchestra, Fort Worth Symphony, Illinois Symphony, Delaware Symphony, New Hampshire Symphony, Cheyenne Symphony, and the Indianapolis, Baltimore, and Reno chamber orchestras. During the Summer of 2006 Maestro Itkin appeared once again with the Slovenska Filharmonija in Ljubljana, Slovenia, conducting the opening concert of the 14th World Saxophone Congress.



Following a distinguished 17-year tenure, Maestro Itkin was named conductor laureate of the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra in July 2010. Previously Mr. Itkin served as music director and conductor of the Las Vegas Philharmonic, artistic director and conductor of the McCall Summerfest in McCall, Idaho, and as music director and conductor of the Lake Forest Symphony (Chicago), Kingsport Symphony, Birmingham Opera Theatre, and Lucius Woods Music Festival (Wisconsin).

His second book, *The Conductor's Craft*, was published in 2021 by GIA Publications, whereupon notable conductors and pedagogues wrote, "a real breakthrough for anyone studying or teaching conducting," "I love this book and will be using it in my studio," and "Bravo to Maestro Itkin." His first book, *Conducting Concerti*, was released in August 2014 to considerable critical acclaim. Leonard Slatkin called *Conducting Concerti* "a valuable textbook for the aspiring Maestro...highly recommended," and Samuel Adler called it "an invaluable addition to the world of conducting textbooks."

Mr. Itkin's first film score (*Sugar Creek*) was recorded in 2006 by the Arkansas Symphony for the film's 2007 release. His most recent major work, *Exodus*, an oratorio, was premiered in April 2005 in Little Rock, with William Shatner narrating. *Exodus* was released worldwide on CD in 2007. In May 2009 Maestro Itkin was awarded both an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters by Lyon College and the Above the Barre award by Ballet Arkansas. In addition to his professional schedule, Maestro Itkin regularly serves as a guest conductor/clinician, including concerts with the Arkansas All-State Orchestra, Southern California High School Honors Orchestra, Maine All-State Orchestra, Las Vegas Senior Honors Orchestra, and any number of Texas all-region Honors Orchestras.

# SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

## Violin I

Ming-Wei Hsieh †  
André Daniel  
Olivia Dinardis  
Sardor Djumaev  
Keyu Fan  
Qiang (Kevin) Fu  
Jui-Chen (Ray) Hsu  
Hyun Jung Kim  
Emma Millian  
Gabriel Parker  
Yelim Seo  
Xiachu Song  
Peng Yi  
Emilia Yoon

## Violin II

Hoigum Park †  
Mia Caliri  
Camryn Cox  
Kevork Esmeryan  
Miguel Guillen  
Michael Holtzapple  
Helen Lundy  
DeLane Marsh  
Michelle Martey  
Oscar Morales  
Arsenio Peña  
Thi Tang

## Viola

Leonardo Sobral †  
Jianhe Chen  
Anthony Couvillion  
Kelsey Felton  
Brittney Geurink  
Cameron Halsell  
Amanda Hamilton  
Jocelyn Kasperek  
RJ McDowell  
Jeremy Mends

## Cello

Julia Jiho Choi †  
Eric Rau †  
Tyler Aguiard  
Madeline Dykhousé  
Ethan Gaskin  
Jiapeng Liu  
Xiyun Liu  
Qiaojiannan (Gamma) Ma  
Emily Maher  
Camilo Vasquez  
Hyelin Yoo

## Bass

Jacob Hoch †  
Zoe Czarnecki  
Bryan Dawn  
Kuan-Chieh (Jason) Lo  
Matt Luse  
Han Meng  
Roberto Ramón  
Xuan Xu

## Flute

Taylor Francis +  
Kiana Kawahara  
Hyeyeon Kim  
Alison Parker  
Lucy Song \*

## Oboe

Kit Hawkins \* +  
Hayley Monk  
Hyungju Oh

## Clarinet

Anna Ferrari  
David Molina +  
Erick Morales \*  
Mitchel Sidden

## Bassoon

Keliang Li \* +  
Aaron Lukenbill  
Samuel Viebrock

## Horn

Justin Beyer  
Daniel Castillon +  
Zachary McKinn  
Patrick Ring \*  
Benjamin Ruiz

## Trumpet

David Hall \*  
McKenna Hill +  
Bradley Swanson  
Abby Ward

## Trombone

Robert Caney +  
Benjamin Hahn \*  
Patrick Perry

## Tuba

Parker Burkey

## Harp

Zoe O'Shaughnessy

## Timpani

Jacob Fullinwider

## Percussion

Ryan Blankenship  
Luke Gibson  
Aidan Henderson

‡ Concertmaster  
† Principal  
‡ Assistant Principal  
\* Principal on Strauss  
+ Principal on Brahms

# FACULTY AND STAFF

## Orchestral Studies

David Itkin, Anshel Brusilow Professor of Orchestral Studies  
Clay Couturiaux, Assistant Director of Orchestral Studies  
Charles Baldwin, Doctoral Conducting Associate/Librarian/Conducting Class  
Patricio Gutierrez, Doctoral Conducting Associate/Operations Manager  
Qiuxian Lu, Doctoral Conducting Associate/Personnel Manager

## Instrumental Studies & Keyboard Studies (\*Adjunct)

Julia Bushkova, violin	*Kyle Sherman, trumpet
Chloé Kiffer, violin	Katherine McBain, horn
Philip Lewis, violin	Stacie Mickens, horn
*Dina Nesterenko, violin	Tony Baker, trombone
Susan Dubois, viola	Natalie Mannix, trombone
Daphne Gerling, viola	Steven Menard, trombone
Horacio Contreras, cello	David Childs, euphonium
Nikola Ružević, cello	*Matthew Good, tuba
Jeffrey Bradetich, double bass	Don Little, tuba
Gudrun Raschen, double bass	Quincy Davis, drumset
Jaymee Haefner, harp	*Stockton Helbing, drumset
Mary Karen Clardy, flute	*Steven Pruitt, drumset
Elizabeth McNutt, flute	Mark Ford, percussion
Terri Sundberg, flute	David Hall, percussion
*Amy Taylor, piccolo	Paul Rennick, percussion
Jung Choi, oboe	*Sandi Rennick, percussion
Daryl Coad, clarinet	*Liudmila Georgievskaya, piano
Deb Fabian, clarinet	Steven Harlos, piano
Kimberly Cole Luevano, clarinet	Pamela Mia Paul, piano
Phillip Paglialonga, clarinet	Elvia Puccinelli, collaborative piano
*Gregory Raden, clarinet	Gustavo Romero, piano
Darrel Hale, bassoon	Vladimir Viardo, piano
Eric Nestler, saxophone	Adam Wodnicki, piano
John Holt, trumpet	Jesse Eschbach, organ
Raquel Samayoa, trumpet	

## College of Music Administration

John W. Richmond - Dean  
Warren H. Henry - Senior Associate Dean, Academic Affairs  
Kirsten Soriano - Associate Dean, Operations  
Emilita Marin - Assistant Dean, Business and Finance  
Raymond Rowell - Assistant Dean, Scholarships and External Affairs  
Jaymee Haefner - Director, Graduate Studies  
Mark Montemayor - Director, Undergraduate Studies  
Joel D. Wiley - Director, Admissions  
Matt Hardman - Director, Communications, Marketing and Public Relations

