Creative Dialogue
A CONVERSATION ABOUT WOMEN AND RESISTANCE
Nora Chipaumire, choreographer and dancer
Kojo Nnamdi, moderator
Monday, April 1, 2013 . 7:30PM . FREE
Join Chipaumire along with Sheri Parks, UMD American Studies professor; Sherma Kadlou, an Iranian writer who has lived most of her life in exile from her home country; and Sarah Browning, director of DC Poets Against the War and Split This Rock. They will discuss the complexities experienced by women who choose and/or are destined to lead a life of protest and resistance.

NORA CHIPAUMIRE
Miriam
Eric Ting, director
Omar Sosa, composer
Olivier Clausse, lighting design
Okwui Okpokwasili, performer
April 4 – 6, 8PM . $35

With Miriam, the renowned choreographer and dancer Nora Chipaumire creates her first character-driven work — a deeply personal dance-theatre performance that looks closely at the tensions women face between public expectations and private desires; between selflessness and ambition; and between the perfection and sacrifice of the feminine ideal.
Join the artists for a Talk Back following the April 5 performance.

The Three E’s: Egmont, Engelbert and (the Brahms) E-Minor
UMD Repertoire Orchestra
John Devlin, conductor
Michael Votta Jr., guest conductor
Tuesday, February 26, 2013 . 8PM
Elsie & Marvin Dekelboum Concert Hall

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LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)  
Overture to Goethe’s Egmont (1810)

ENGELBERT HUMPERDINCK (1854-1921)  
Evening Prayer and Dream Pantomime from Hänsel und Gretel (1892)  
Michael Votta Jr., conductor

INTERMISSION

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)  
Fourth Symphony in E Minor, op. 98 (1885)  
I. Allegro Non Troppo  
II. Andante Moderato  
III. Allegro Giocoso  
IV. Allegro Energico e Passionato

John Devlin holds many positions as an artist in the Washington DC area. He is the Music Director of the Youth Orchestras of Prince William (VA), the Associate Conductor of the Capital City Symphony, the Assistant Conductor of the Apollo Symphony Orchestra and a Technical Director for IMAG at the National Symphony Orchestra. Devlin is a member of the graduate program in orchestral conducting at the University of Maryland School of Music, where he received his master of music degree and is currently enrolled in the Doctor of Musical Arts program. A student of James Ross, Devlin has also studied wind conducting with Michael Votta and choral conducting with Ed Macary. Devlin graduated summa cum laude from Emory University with a double major in music and Latin.

Devlin has studied conducting at Tanglewood, the Pierre Monteux School and the Cabrillo Music Festival. At these and other programs he has studied with Marin Alsop, Michael Jinbo, Leon Botstein, Harold Farberman and Scott Stewart.

Much in demand as a guest conductor and clinician, Devlin has conducted the North Dakota All-State Orchestra and the Harford (MD) All-County Orchestra. He has also served as a clinician for a variety of competitions and festivals. His professional affiliations include The Conductors Guild, the League of American Orchestras and Mu Phi Epsilon. For more information, please visit www.JohnDevlinMusic.com and follow him on Twitter (@JohnDevlinMusic).

This evening’s program will last approximately 1 hour and 40 minutes with a 15-minute intermission.
ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Michael Votta Jr. was Music Director of the North Carolina Wind Orchestra prior to joining the faculty of the University of Maryland in the fall of 2008. Critics have praised him as “a conductor with the drive and ability to fully relay artistic thoughts” and for his “interpretations of definition, precision and most importantly, unmitigated joy.” Ensembles under his direction have received critical acclaim in the United States and Europe for their “exceptional spirit, verve and precision,” their “sterling examples of innovative programming” and “the kind of artistry that is often thought to be the exclusive purview of top symphonic ensembles.” Before his appointment at Maryland, Votta held conducting positions at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, Duke University, Ithaca College, the University of South Florida, Miami University (Ohio) and Hope College.

His performances have been heard in broadcasts throughout the U.S., on Austrian National Radio (ÖRF) and Southwest German Television and have been released internationally on the Primavera label. In addition, his ensembles have been invited to perform at conferences of the Conductors Guild, the College Band Directors National Association and the North Carolina Music Educators Association. Numerous major composers including George Crumb, Christopher Rouse, Karel Husa, Olly Wilson, Barbara Kolb, Warren Benson and Louis Andriessen have praised his performances of their works.

Votta maintains an active schedule as guest conductor and clinician in the U.S. and has appeared in Europe and Israel. He has taught conducting seminars in the U.S. and Israel and has guest conducted and lectured at institutions such as the Eastman School of Music, the Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, the Prague Conservatory and the National Arts Camp at Interlochen. He has also appeared at conferences of numerous organizations including the College Band Directors National Association, the Midwest Band and Orchestra Conference, the Conductors Guild and state music educators’ conventions in New York, North Carolina and Ohio.

Votta holds a Doctor of Musical Arts in conducting degree from the Eastman School of Music where he served as Assistant Conductor of the Eastman Wind Ensemble and studied with Donald Hunsberger. A native of Michigan, Votta received his undergraduate training and master of music degrees from the University of Michigan, where he studied with H. Robert Reynolds.

He is the author of numerous articles on wind literature and conducting. His arrangements and editions for winds have been performed and recorded by university and professional wind ensembles in the U.S., Europe and Japan. He has served as Editor of the College Band Directors National Association Journal, as a member of the Executive Board of the International Society for the Investigation of Wind Music (IGEB) and on the board of the Conductors Guild.

As a clarinetist, Votta has performed as a soloist throughout the U.S. and Europe. His solo and chamber music recordings are available on the Partridge and Albany labels.

PROGRAM NOTES

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

Overture to Goethe’s Egmont (1818)

From the opening, the unison outburst of the orchestra, the rich string harmonies and the elegiac singing woodwinds clarify that Egmont is anything but a happy tale.

Beethoven’s initial inspiration for the composition came from two sources: the Napoleonic Wars and the dramatic play Egmont composed by perhaps the most influential German author of all times, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Goethe’s verse and philosophies have inspired musicians for generations and Beethoven was no exception.

The dramatic narrative is that of 16th-century Dutch nobleman the Count of Egmont. After a gut-wrenchingly emotional introduction, the constantly driving pulse and sudden explosions of the full orchestra vividly depict the triumphant battle scenes of Count Egmont. Eventually the bombast leads to horn calls depicting the arrest of Egmont by his enemy, the Duke of Alba. Egmont is condemned to death, and Beethoven depicts his beheading with a chopping execution in the full violin section.

After a brief lament, Beethoven dramatically alters the course of the music. Out of a churning energy in the strings emerges a victorious fanfare and unexpected response to the tragic slaying of our hero. The response tells us not only the end of the story, but gives us vital insight into Beethoven’s own political leanings. Although Egmont was killed, his execution led to protests against Spanish rule in the Netherlands eventually leading to liberation for the Danish people. The triumphant music of the ending of the overture seems to suggest not only the liberation of the Danish people through the spirit of Egmont’s heroism, but also indicates Beethoven’s hope that Europe would eventually succeed in overcoming the tyranny of Napoleon.

— Jason William Ethridge

ENGELBERT HUMPERDINCK (1854-1921)

Evening Prayer and Dream Pantomime from Hänsel und Gretel (1892)

Like many traditional Germanic fairy tales, the story of Hansel and Gretel in Humperdinck’s opera reaches the message through grotesque imagery. At this point in the opera (the end of Act 2), the children are lost in the woods, hungry and scared. To make matters worse, the Sandman appears and throws sand into the children’s eyes. Blinded and frightened, the music of this scene begins with the children praying for protection through the night. The prayer music begins softly in the strings and eventually grows to a luscious full orchestral texture.

As the children lie down to sleep, the strings begin downward skipping gestures, which depict new characters emerging on the scene. Fourteen angels glorious emerge from heaven to protect the children while sleeping. Through a series of grand climaxes the angels move about encircling the children and blessing their respite.

The music is some of the richest in the literature with warm harmonies that encircle the listener in a blanket of sound. The musical style relies heavily on folk-melody and Wagnerian harmony. The simplicity of the prayer melodies and tuneful accompaniments are wed beautifully to the harmonic language of late German romanticism.

The opera granted its composer incredible immediate success. Humperdinck had not been a full-time musician, but the success of Hänsel und Gretel allowed the composer to quit his day job and pursue composition solely. It remains his most popular and frequently performed composition to this day.

— Jason William Ethridge
JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)

Fourth Symphony in E Minor, op. 98 (1885)

When Brahms completed the Fourth Symphony, in the Styrian resort town of Mürzzuschlag in the summer of 1885, he referred to it humorously as “a few entr’actes and polkas I happened to have lying about,” but he was quite aware of what he had achieved in this work and he was not prepared for the cool reception he received when he returned to Vienna and played a two-piano reduction of the score (with Ignaz Brüll as his keyboard partner) for a group of his closest friends. The assembled company—the conductor Hans Richter (Brahms’s enthusiastic champion, who had given the premiere of the Third Symphony), the surgeon Theodor Billroth, the music critics Eduard Hanslick and Max Kalbeck—greeted the work with little more than polite silence. The next day, Kalbeck (Brahms’s first biographer) went so far as to tell the composer that the final movement, in variation form, was unsuitable for a symphony and ought to be replaced. Brahms simply pointed out that Beethoven had composed a variation finale for the *Eroica* and stuck to his guns; the finale came to be the most admired part of the work.

It is hard to imagine now that a work that speaks to us with such engaging directness might ever have faced such resistance. The opening movement has a noble, reserved dignity, bordering on austerity but flowing with the natural momentum and appealing blend of the lyric and heroic elements that Brahms balanced so effectively in so much of his music. These qualities are evident in the undemonstratively self-confident theme stated at the outset and are intertwined in the two others on which the movement is built.

The *Andante moderato* that follows, possibly the finest of all of Brahms’s marvelous slow movements, is distinguished for its straightforwardness and all-round warmth of heart. The initial horn theme and the succeeding cantilena for the cellos evoke a mood of gentle melancholy and nostalgia. The young Richard Strauss told Brahms this music suggested “a funeral procession moving in silence across moonlit heights.” Brahms’s friend Elisabeth von Herzogenberg wrote to him: “It is like a stroll through an ideal landscape at sunset, as its tones become warmer and diffused with a crimson glow . . . .”

In the third movement (*Allegro giocoso*), as Olin Downes wrote some 80 years ago, “we have Brahms as Old Bear’s Paws.” This is an out-and-out scherzo in everything but name, the most exuberant such piece in any of Brahms’s symphonies, with an unabashedly prominent theme and some imaginative rhythmic by-play driving home its festive character.

The remarkable finale, at once majestic and decidedly dramatic, is what eventually became of Brahms’s fascination with the concluding chorus of Bach’s Cantata No. 150, *Nach Dir, Herr, verlanget mich*. That piece is in the form of a brief chaconne; Brahms had played a piano reduction of it for Bülow and some other friends as early as 1880 and advised that he was contemplating a symphonic movement based on it. Such a movement did not turn up in his Third Symphony, composed in 1883, but was reserved to provide the climax of this quite different work. This finale is itself sometimes described as a chaconne, but is more widely regarded as a passacaglia. Actually, these two terms have become more or less interchangeable in our time, indicating a certain modification of theme-and-variation form—and both titles have taken on connotations of profundity and even spirituality, quite unrelated to the light-hearted pieces known at the end of the 16th century, when the Spaniards brought the chaconne to Europe from Peru.

No matter how Max Kalbeck may have felt about a variation-finale for a symphony, it was hardly a new or radical idea when Brahms composed his Fourth. Such symphonies are in sufficient number for us to observe that in more than a few of them the earlier movements might be regarded, to a greater or lesser degree, as further variations—in this sense proleptic ones—on the theme we do not meet in its original form until the finale. Dvořák’s Eighth Symphony, in G major, comes to mind as an illustrative example; and a similar case might be made for the *Eroica* itself, but the impression is especially strong in the present work. In light of the probability that the finale was the first part of this symphony that Brahms composed, it is not much of a stretch to regard the three other movements as constituting additional (and more expansive) variations on the same theme—whether by design or simply as inevitable consequence of the powerful stimulus this lifelong “variation composer” found in the chaconne-finale of the Bach cantata.

While the background given here is by no means essential to the listener’s appreciation and enjoyment of this symphony, its towering finale exudes a generative power that ranks high among its numerous distinctions. In more than 30 concise but exceptionally characterful variations, Brahms here explores a range of emotion as well as sheer orchestral color beyond anything he had attempted in his earlier symphonies and it is significant that he did not attempt to extend his symphonic canon further in the dozen years left to him after completing this work. In any event, it was at his final appearance in public, less than four weeks before his death, that the Viennese at last acknowledged the Fourth Symphony’s stature and took it to their hearts, in an outpouring of admiration and affection such as few composers can have experienced. Richter was again the conductor, on March 7, 1897. The scene was captured touchingly by Florence May, an English pianist who studied briefly with the composer and became his biographer, in this frequently quoted passage in her *Life of Brahms*:

A storm of applause broke out at the end of the first movement, not to be quieted until the composer, coming to the front of the artists’ box in which he was seated, showed himself to the audience. The demonstration was renewed after the second and third movements and an extraordinary scene followed the conclusion of the work. The applauding, shouting house, its gaze riveted on the figure standing in the balcony, so familiar and yet in present aspect so strange, seemed unable to let him go. Tears ran down his cheeks as he stood there in shrunken form, with lined countenance, strained expression, white hair hanging lank; and through the audience there was a feeling as of a stifled sob, for each knew that they were saying farewell.
UMD REPETOIRE ORCHESTRA
John Devlin and Jason William Ethridge, music directors

Violin
Frances Takemoto,
Concertmaster
Claire Cannon
Samuel Creighton
Darren D’Souza
Kristin Kerns
Angela Maki
Abby Malkin
Indigo McGarr
Mary Natoli
Keith Paarporn
Nick Pozoulakis
Chelsea Robinson
Alina Rosenthal
Ethan Salem
Rena Shi
Abby Stauffer
Ruth Wang
Sze Wing Yu
George Zhang
Tingrui Zhao
Daniel Zou

Double Bass
Sahil Kulgod, principal
William Scally
Kathryn Juliano

Flute
Chanmi Kim
Jenny Lehtonen
David Pratico
Avery Sandborn
Dominique Thoemmes
Vanessa Varela
Vivien Xie

Oboe
Elizabeth Eber
Kelly Klomparens

Clarinet
Michael Casto
Phyllicia Cotton
Laura Guenzel
Sarah Hunt

Bassoon
Yuchi Ma
James Chen
Jacqui Symon

Horn
Laura Bent
Gabby Lambiase
Alex Rogers
JP Bailey

Trumpet
Avery Boddie
Michael Damiani
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Tuesday, February 26, 2013 . 8PM
Joseph & Alma Gildenhorn Recital Hall