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James Ross, music director
Mayron Tsong, piano

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UMD SYMPOSY ORCHESTRA

CLAUDE DEBUSSY (1862-1918)
Nocturnes
Fêtes
Nuages

DMITRY SHOSTAKOVICH (1906-1975)
Symphony No. 1 in F Minor, Op. 10
Allegretto – Allegro non troppo
Allegro
Lento – Largo
Allegro molto – Adagio

INTERMISSION

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)
Piano Concerto No. 1 in D Minor, Op. 15
Maestoso
Adagio
Rondo: Allegro non troppo

Mayron Tsang, piano

In consideration of all patrons, please ensure all cell phones remain off.
We appreciate your cooperation and understanding.

James Ross is a musician of international repute. His musical activities cover three fields: conducting, horn playing and teaching. Born in Boston, he grew up studying the horn and earned his bachelor's degree from Harvard University in 1981. His first conducting experience came as an undergraduate when he was chosen by his peers to lead the Bach Society Orchestra. Upon graduation, he began his conducting studies in earnest with Kurt Masur in Leipzig while simultaneously serving as Solo-Horn of the prestigious Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, becoming the first American member in the orchestra's 250-year history. Presently, he is the Director of Orchestral Activities at the University of Maryland, Associate Director of the Conducting Program at The Juilliard School and Orchestra Director of the National Youth Orchestra at Carnegie Hall.

After two summers of study at the Tanglewood Music Center (1984-85) Ross was offered the position of interim Assistant Conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. In June 1994 he completed a four-year tenure as Music Director of the Yale Symphony Orchestra. He has also served a three-year term collaborating with William Christie as the Assistant Conductor of the Paris-based period instrument ensemble Les Arts Florissants. He has guest conducted such diverse orchestras as the Leipzig Gewandhaus, the Utah Symphony, the Orquesta Ciudad Granada, the Harrisburg Symphony Orchestra, the Orquesta Sinfonica of Galicia, the Neubrandenburger Philharmonie, the Binghamton Philharmonic, and the National Symphony Orchestra in side-by-side concerts with UMSO.

He has worked both joyously and often with youth orchestras, among which are the Mendelssohn Conservatory Orchestra of Leipzig, the Curtis Institute Orchestra of Philadelphia, the Orchestra of the Conservatorio Superior of Salamanca, the McGill Symphony Orchestra, the National Youth Orchestra of Spain, the Kansas All-State Orchestra and the Youth Orchestra of Acarigua-Araure in Venezuela, part of the famed “El Sistema.” His principal conducting teachers are Kurt Masur, Otto-Werner Mueller, Seiji Ozawa and Leonard Bernstein.

As a horn soloist, he has performed with such orchestras as the Boston Symphony, the Boston Pops, the Bayerische Radio Orchester, the Leipzig Radio Orchestra and the Leipzig Gewandhaus. When he was awarded Third Prize in the Munich International Horn Competition in 1978, he became the first American and one of the youngest competitors ever to do so. His performances and recordings as principal horn of the Gewandhaus, including the Strauss Four Last Songs with Jessye Norman, helped him gain international recognition as an artist.

In the field of opera, he has conducted productions of Mozart’s Abduction from the Seraglio at the Théâtre du Rhin in Strasbourg, Le Nozze di Figaro in the Théâtre Champs-Elysées in Paris and Handel’s Rodelinda at the Glyndebourne Festival. He has prepared concert presentations of Törstensson’s The Expedition and Stravinsky’s Oedipus Rex with the Stockholm Philharmonic.

As a teacher, prior to his appointment at the University of Maryland, Ross served on the faculties of Yale University, the Curtis Institute of Music, Haverford and Bryn Mawr colleges, and as a guest artist at the Toho School of Music in Tokyo, Japan. He was a founding director of the Music Masters Course in Kazusa, an international chamber music festival dedicated to the concept of artistic cross-cultural exchange that takes place yearly in Chiba, Japan. In his work as Artistic Advisor to the Escuela de Practica Orquestal of the Orquesta Sinfonica of Galicia and conductor at the International Festival of Lucena, he played a vital role in the education of the present generation of active Spanish musicians and has recently

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ABOUT THE ARTISTS
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retired from his position as Artistic Director of the National Orchestral Institute where his leadership since 2001 has helped to foment change in the orchestral landscape of the United States.

Steinway Artist, Mayron Tsong, has been taken by her performances around the globe to almost every state in the continental United States, as well as Canada, Russia, Sweden, Italy, Taiwan, Hong Kong and China. After her solo recital debut at Carnegie Hall’s Weill Recital Hall, Harris Goldsmith of The New York Concert Review praised it as “an enlivening, truly outstanding recital.” Fanfare magazine called her “a genius, pure and simple … perhaps, a wizard.”

After the release of her first CD by Centaur Records, rave reviews in American Record Guide and Fanfare magazine compared her playing to Horowitz, Pollini, Andsnes and Laredo, stating “her technique is dazzling, yet subjugated to a controlling intellect and deeply felt sensitivity that removes her from the category ‘virtuoso’ by nature of her long-range artistic vision.” The recording, featuring works of Rachmaninoff, Scriabin and Prokofiev, recently won a Global Music Award.

Winner of numerous competitions and prizes, Tsong has performed and interviewed for many radio broadcasts, including CBC Radio in Canada, WDAV in North Carolina, WFMT Radio in Chicago, Radio 4 in Hong Kong and NPR’s The State of Things. She has appeared as soloist with orchestras around the world, including the St. Petersburg Chamber Philharmonic (Russia), Symphony North (Houston), Longview Symphony Orchestra (Texas), North Carolina Symphony, Red Deeer Symphony Orchestra (Canada) and Lethbridge Symphony Orchestra (Canada). Equally active in chamber music collaborations, her summers have taken her to festivals across the United States, Prague, Germany and Italy, including Eastern Music Festival, Prague International Piano Masterclasses and Schlern International Music Festival and Orfeo Chamber Music Festival in Italy. Her collaborations with some of the finest chamber groups and musicians in North America include Jeffrey Zeigler (of the Kronos Quartet), Brentano String Quartet, Philharmonic Quintet of New York, Miró String Quartet, Vega String Quartet, James Campbell, George Taylor and Antonio Lysy.

A native of Canada, Dr. Tsong is one of the youngest musicians to complete a Performer’s Diploma in Piano from the Royal Conservatory of Toronto at age 16. While still a student, she was awarded the Millennium Prize for Russian Performing Arts, and she is a three-time recipient of The Female Doctoral Students Grant, a competition that encompasses all disciplines nationwide, awarded by the government of Canada. Holding graduate degrees in both piano performance and music theory from Rice University, her impressive pedigree boasts distinguished teachers like John Perry, György Sebők, Robert Levin, Anton Kuerti and Marilyn Engle. Gaining recognition as a pedagogue herself, she has appeared around the world as a masterclass clinician, lecturer, judge and Visiting Professor.

She was recently added to Who’s Who Among Professional Artists as well as Who’s Who Among American Teachers & Educators, and she is an Honorary Member of the Tingshuset Music Society in Sweden along with prominent Swedish artists like Martin Feist and Christian Lindberg.

Tsong is currently Associate Professor and Artist Teacher of Piano at the School of Music at the University of Maryland. She previously served as Head of Keyboard Studies at the University of Lethbridge and at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
d’un faune, an aural representation of the imagery suggested by Stéphane Mallarmé’s symbolist poem. The Nocturnes we are hearing this afternoon, however, were inspired by painting rather than poetry, and capture the fleeting play of light and shadow so integral to the Impressionist aesthetic. An undulating ostinato, or repeated motivic pattern, paired with an alien-sounding English horn solo paints a picture of a mysterious night sky in Nuages, and the incessant triplet figures of Fêtes seem to embody the driving energy of a brass band and a crowded park on a summer day. Much like his contemporaries the Impressionist painters, Debussy tricks his listeners into seeing what he wants them to see through creative use of tone color and orchestration.

A vibrant synthesis of the arts exists in the pairing of Debussy’s Nocturnes with the Impressionist paintings of James Whistler. Whistler regarded music to be “the poetry of sound, as painting is the poetry of sight,” and he appropriated musical designations, including Harmonies, Symphonies and Nocturnes, for use as titles for many of his paintings.

At the time that Debussy chose it for the title of this piece, the original musical meaning of the designation ‘nocturne’ (‘nightpiece’) had faded; like Whistler, Debussy felt that the nocturne was rather “everything that the word conveyed in impressions and special effects of light.” Debussy disliked providing explanations of his music, but in the case of his Nocturnes, he wrote

Nuages ['Clouds'] renders the immutable aspects of the sky and the slow, solemn motion of the clouds, fading away in grey tones lightly tinted with white. Fêtes ['Holidays'] gives us the vibrating atmosphere with sudden flashes of light. There is also the episode of the procession (a dazzling fantastic vision) which passes through the festival scene and becomes merged in it. But the background remains persistently the same: the festival, with its blending of music and luminous dust, participating in the cosmic rhythm.

Although meant to be allusive rather than denotative, Debussy’s titular designations, combined with the composer’s own descriptions of Nuages and Fêtes, paint a picture of his sources of inspiration: the vague and hazy shapes of moonlit clouds flitting silently across a night sky, the vibrant energy of a jubilant crowd as it converges on a Parisian park to enjoy the boisterous sounds of a brass band. Debussy’s musical representations of luminous, blurred shapes, flashes of light and color, and the play of shadows find ample parallels in the works of Whistler and his Impressionist contemporaries.

In 1925, the 19-year-old Dmitry Shostakovich was preparing to graduate from the Leningrad Conservatory. After several years spent supporting his family by playing piano in silent-film cinemas, the talented youth excelled in courses of piano performance and composition at the Soviet Union’s preeminent academy of music. To meet the graduation requirements of his course of study, Shostakovich submitted his first large-scale orchestral work; quite possibly the most astonishing final project in the history of music conservatories, this First Symphony launched the young and hitherto unknown prodigy to international stardom. Less than two years after its 1926 premiere by the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra under the direction of Nikolai Malko, Shostakovich’s Symphony No. 1 would delight audiences across Europe and the United States, presented by such eminent conductors as Arturo Toscanini, Leopold Stokowski, Otto Klemperer and Bruno Walter.

Shostakovich composed his First Symphony during the politically and musically tumultuous 1920s. From predecessors such as Igor Stravinsky, Sergei Prokofiev, Béla Bartók and Darius Milhaud, Shostakovich inherited a compositional tradition that was influenced by the sounds of jazz and popular music, a tradition in which tonality was no longer a universally accepted paradigm. Although the Soviet authorities would one day abuse, deceive and manipulate Shostakovich in an attempt to bend his creative spirit to the will of the State, the composer’s voice in his First Symphony was truly his own. While respecting many 19th-century symphonic conventions, the compositional language of this work was entirely new and personal. Marked by a dark witticism, traditional formal structures are treated with a sense of irony; contrasts between individual sections, while expected, are made grotesque by their extremes, and sudden and violent outbursts are balanced with passages of passionate expressivity. Although this work dates from early in his oeuvre, its blend of traditional craftsmanship and precocious originality was a trait typical of Shostakovich’s style well into his compositional maturity.

The symphony begins with a march-like theme, whimsical despite its minor mode and descending melodic contour, stated by the solo clarinet and then taken up by a series of orchestral choirs. Rarely does the entire orchestra sound together in this first movement, splintered instead into solo or small group timbres. The second theme, a lilting melody introduced by the solo flute, is characterized by its major mode, rhythmic regularity and conventional points of harmonic repose. The grotesque march and lyrical waltz dominate the first movement, dichotomous in their extreme contrast with one another. The march affects an air of jaunty vitality, but many interruptions and unexpected transitions create a nervous tension that remains unresolved due to the lack of a major climax at the close of the movement. The grotesque continues into the second movement with the introduction of its first theme in A minor. Severe in contour but buoyant and rhythmically playful, this
theme seems to have the character of a run-away train as it barrels through the orchestral texture. Starting in the low strings, it passes through the solo clarinet, to the horns, then the violins, and finally to a hocket-skeletal piano solo. In stark contrast, the chromatic second theme slinks and slithers through a choir of woodwinds and double reeds like a snake through tall grass. The driving quality of the opening figures returns in a vigorous orchestral tutti as the combination of both thematic ideas hurtles toward the movement’s unusual climax. A series of fortissimo chords in the solo piano are echoed by muted brass and the answering string harmonies leave the listener unsure if the movement has really come to a close.

The plaintive oboe solo that opens the third movement wanders unpredictably from key to key, but is full of an expressive depth that is reminiscent of the late-Romantic sensibilities of Gustav Mahler. The funeral second theme, introduced by the solo oboe, is punctuated by a rhythmic fanfare that persists until the close of the movement. Linked to the preceding movement by a drumroll, the finale opens with a brooding meditation. Like the symphony’s opening movement, the finale is characterized by the extreme contrast between its two main themes. The explosive first theme and the wistfully lyrical second theme struggle for dominance until a powerful climax, a gesture that seems to indicate that the work has come to a close. This false ending, a clever joke by a precocious young talent, may have been one of the attributes of this astounding work that inspired conductor Nikolai Malko on the eve of its 1926 premiere to write, “I have the feeling that I have turned over a new page in the history of symphonic music and of a new and great composer.”

### Piano Concerto No. 1 in D Minor, Op. 15

**JOHANNES BRAHMS**

**BORN:** May 7, 1833, Hamburg

**DIED:** April 3, 1897, Vienna

Brahms composed his First Piano Concerto between 1854 and 1859. This work was premiered by the Hanover Court Orchestra on January 22, 1859 under the baton of violinist-conductor Joseph Joachim and with Brahms at the piano. The score calls for solo piano, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani and strings. Duration: 48 minutes.

Notoriously cautious and often circumspect with regard to his compositions, Johannes Brahms was always hesitant to pronounce a work complete to his satisfaction. Composition of his First Symphony, Op. 68, began in 1862, but the piece was not completed until 14 years later. Work on his Piano Quartet No. 3 commenced in 1855 and continued for the next 20 years until it was published in 1875 as Op. 60. Many of Brahms’s works were subjected to complex modifications and multiple revisions, but few more so than his Piano Concerto No. 1, Op. 15.

Upon his arrival in Vienna as a budding composer, Brahms was praised in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* by the music critic and composer Robert Schumann as being one who “sprung like Athena, fully armed, from the head of Zeus.” Shortly after this celebratory essay was published, Brahms began work on the composition that would eventually become his First Piano Concerto. An initial version of the piece, a sonata for two pianos, was drafted in 1854 and immediately its composer felt a sense of dissatisfaction. On June 19 of that year, Brahms wrote to his friend, the violinist and conductor Joseph Joachim, “I wish I could leave my D Minor Sonata alone for a long time. I have often played the first three movements over with Frau [Clara] Schumann, but I find that I require even more than two pianos. I am in such a confused and indecisive frame of mind that I cannot beg you enough for a good, firm response.” Over the next several years, this uncertainty persisted; in a note accompanying a draft of his new finale, Brahms wrote to Joachim in December 1857, “I have no judgment about this piece anymore, nor any control over it.” Brahms’s feeling of conflict about his Piano Concerto may have been augmented by the confusion and anxiety caused by the tragedy that struck his lifelong friend the Schumann family in the mid-1850s. Brahms’s teacher and mentor Robert Schumann suffered a mental breakdown in February 1854 that led to a failed suicide attempt and subsequent confinement to an asylum where he died on July 29, 1856. These catastrophic events brought Brahms and Schumann’s wife Clara closer together, and his love for her would be a defining characteristic of the rest of both their lives. During this tumultuous time, the young Brahms was composing the Piano Concerto No. 1, and Clara’s support and advice were indispensable to him as he found his creative voice.

The early version of Op. 15 consisted of three movements, one of which Brahms later transformed into a funeral march for his *Ein deutsches Requiem* for chorus and orchestra, Op. 45. Later that same year, Brahms set the first movement of the sonata in the symphonic medium but that plan was also abandoned. It was not until 1855 that the work evolved into a piano concerto, orchestrated with the help of his friend Joachim. Only in his mid-20s, Brahms had never before tackled a large-scale work for orchestra, and Joachim was instrumental in the process of orchestrating the Concerto. Amidst giving advice on cuts and alterations, among many other things, Joachim provided the skeptical Brahms with encouragement. In response to the new finale, Joachim wrote, “All in all I find it really significant: the pithy, bold spirit of the first theme, the intimate and soft B-flat major passage, and particularly the solemn reawakening toward a majestic close after the cadenza — all that is rich enough to leave an uplifting impression.” The two men tinkered meticulously with the orchestration until early the next year, and on March 30, 1858, Brahms played a reading rehearsal of the piece with the Hanover court orchestra, under the direction of Joachim. The first public performance of the work was given by the same orchestra and conductor on January 22, 1859 and was critically acclaimed. This performance was repeated five days later at the Leipzig Gewandhaus with Brahms at the piano and Julius Rietz conducting, but the reaction to it could not have been more different. In a letter to Joachim, Brahms wrote, “No reaction at all to the first and second movements. At the end three pairs of hands tried slowly to clap, whereupon a clear hissing from all sides quickly put an end to any such demonstration.” A performance in his home city of Hamburg on March 24 once again evoked a positive response, but Brahms continued to make alterations to the work until its publication as his Op. 15 in 1861.

A bombastic and grandiose *Maestoso* (an Italian expression meaning ‘with dignity’ or ‘nobly’) opens the Concerto. The first movement alone lasts for approximately 20 minutes, longer than some Mozart concerti in their entirety, and its emotional force and sheer breadth eclipse that which is to be found in any Classical era work of this genre. The opening orchestral exposition clearly establishes the passion, tension and drama of the *Maestoso* in a tumultuous blaze of timpani, fierce strings and jabbing brass. This is not simply an introduction; it is an orchestral exposition full of essential thematic material that sets the tone for the remainder of the movement. Thunderous octaves in the piano herald the opening of a development section marked by a canonic interplay between the soloist...
and orchestra, one that cements their roles as equal partners. Despite the designation of the piano as the solo voice, Brahms weaves it into a delicate and detailed orchestral tapestry. Possibly because of the work's inception as a sonata for two pianos, it is this interplay, rather than the contrast, of soloist and accompaniment that is the driving force behind melodic and harmonic development. Brahms provides ample opportunity for displays of arresting bravura that allow the soloist to shine, and the movement comes to a close with a powerful coda featuring sparkling scalar passages, almost frenzy-like in their intensity.

Robert Schumann’s illness and death had a profound effect on his young protégé, in reference to both Brahms’s personal life and his compositional activities. Many have equated the Adagio movement of the First Piano Concerto with this tragedy, interpreting it as an expression of the young man’s grief. In 1856, Brahms wrote to Clara, “I am making a gentle portrait of you in the form of an Adagio,” but it is clear that this lyrical prayer was for both Clara and Robert. Brahms inscribed the score with words from the Sanctus of the Latin Mass, “Benedictus quivenit innomine Domini” (“Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord”), and the movement embodies at once both a certain sweetness and a thoughtful melancholy. Set in a ternary scheme (ABA) with a coda, the gradual transitions between sections render the symmetrical regularity of the simple formal structure almost indiscernible. As always, no gesture by Brahms is unconsidered: when the piano first enters with the theme of the movement, it is marked with the words molto dolce espressivo (‘with very expressive sweetness’), but when the theme returns in the recapitulation, Brahms indicates that it should be interpreted as molto espressivo dolce (‘very expressive and sweet’). This afternoon’s soloist, Mayron Tsong, notes that she “envisions the return of the theme differently, as most performers undoubtedly do. I imagine a slower tempo, a more intimate expression is appropriate, although Brahms did not precisely write this instruction.” These nuances of expression are indicative of the depth of feeling with which Brahms imbued his Adagio.

The concluding Rondo possesses a rhythmic energy full of life and vigor, providing a fitting end to the Concerto. Although markedly less dramatic than the opening Maestoso, the finale possesses a dance-like quality and clarity of form that balances the forcefulness and power of the first two movements. The structural scheme (ABACABA) consists of a series of episodic statements punctuated by a return of the opening thematic material. A cadenza-like passage allows the piano to indulge in a few moments alone, but the rhythmic vitality of the Rondo is restored in the coda and the movement is brought to a close in a series of sparkling and virtuosic gestures in the piano and triumphant flourishes by the brass and strings. As in the previous two movements, the delicate balance between adherence to formal structure and depth of emotional expression makes the finale of the young Brahms’s First Piano Concerto unceasingly compelling.

—Jessica M. Abbazio © 2012
Musicology Program, University of Maryland
Nora Chipaumire will present her new work Miriam and will engage in a year-long residency involving the Prince George’s African American Museum & Cultural Center, the Maryland Women’s Heritage Center and the new National Museum of Women’s History.

SFJAZZ COLLECTIVE

SFJAZZ Collective will be in residency for a week before their October 12 performance here, rehearsing and preparing for the world-premiere presentation of The Music of Chick Corea and New Compositions.

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These boundary-breaking artists will return in the 2012-2013 season to collaborate on the world-premiere performance of an original piece by Anderson, commissioned by the Center.

In the last ten years, the Center has commissioned more than 40 new works and debuted many of them with the creative input of both students and faculty.

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Piccolo
Christi Rajnes

Oboe
David Dickey
Sarah Minneman
Emily Tsai

English Horn
David Dickey

Clarinet
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Alaina Pritz

Bassoon
Tilden Marbit
Erica Yeager

Contrabassoon
Jacquelyn Symon

Horn
J.P. Bailey
Matthew Gray
Gabrielle Lambiase
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Neil Brown
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Patrick Durbin
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Trombone
Casey Jones
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Tuba
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Timpani
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Miriam

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