



Clara Schumann & Brahms

March 27–28, 2026 | 7:30 p.m.

Holland Performing Arts Center

François López-Ferrer, conductor | Zee Zee, piano

UNSUUK CHIN

subito con forza

CLARA SCHUMANN

Piano Concerto in A Minor, Op. 7

I. Allegro maestoso

II. Romanze: Andante non troppo, con grazia

III. Finale: Allegro non troppo

Zee Zee, piano

INTERMISSION

JOHANNES BRAHMS

Symphony No. 4 in E Minor, Op. 98

I. Allegro non troppo

II. Andante moderato

III. Allegro giocoso

IV. Allegro energico e passionato

This printed program is a condensed version.

For more info about the orchestra, guest artists, and the full program notes, download the Omaha Symphony app or scan this QR code with your mobile device. *Para leer la información en español, utilice nuestro programa digital.*

*program subject to change



Featured Artists



Spanish-American conductor **François López-Ferrer** has carved an impressive path in the world of classical music, distinguished by his dynamic artistry and compelling performances. Recipient of the prestigious 2024 Sir Georg Solti Conducting Award, his international career has been marked by recent debuts with esteemed orchestras worldwide, including the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic (LA Phil) at the Hollywood Bowl, Hong Kong Philharmonic, Orquesta Nacional de España, Orquesta Sinfónica de Galicia, Orquesta Sinfónica Radio Televisión Española, Verbier Festival Orchestra, Ensemble intercontemporain, Opéra de Lausanne, and George Enescu Philharmonic.

Upcoming engagements include debuts with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Opéra de Paris conducting a new production of Haydn's 'L'isola disabitata', Orquesta de la Comunidad de Madrid, Orquesta Sinfónica de Puerto Rico, and The Orchestra San Antonio, as well as returns to the Orquesta Sinfónica de Navarra, Orquesta Sinfónica de Castilla y León, and the Philharmonisches Orchester Hagen.

His journey began as Associate Conductor of the Cincinnati Symphony (CSO) and May Festival, where he made a significant impact on audiences and critics alike. In January 2022 he seamlessly stepped in for Louis Langrée with the CSO for the US premiere of Mark Simpson's Violin Concerto, featuring Nicola Benedetti. López Ferrer's artistry was further refined during his tenure as a 2021-22 Dudamel Fellow with the LA Phil, as well as Resident Conductor of the Opéra de Paris's Académie. He was a featured conductor in the 2022 Bruno Walter National Conductor Preview alongside the Louisiana Philharmonic.

Early career achievements include serving as Associate Conductor of the Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional de Chile and Principal Conductor of the Ballet Nacional Chileno. As a 2018 Verbier Festival Conducting Fellow, he made a memorable debut stepping in for Iván Fischer in a shared program alongside Sir Simon Rattle and Gábor Takács Nagy. Furthermore, he is a two-time recipient of the Solti Foundation U.S.'s Career Assistance Award, winner of the inaugural 2015 Neeme Järvi Prize at the Menuhin Gstaad Festival, and former member of the Deutsche Dirigentenforum.

López-Ferrer holds a master's degree in Orchestral Conducting from the Haute École de Musique de Lausanne and a bachelor's in Composition from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. Born in Switzerland and raised in the United States, he embodies a rich multicultural lineage, with a Cuban mother and Spanish father, and speaks six languages fluently.



An imaginative and electrifying performer, **Zee Zee** has been praised as "full of enthusiasm and glamour, radiating the vigor of youth," (*Chinese Gramophone*), while also commending her interpretations and communicative abilities as "taking us to another reality... bright, expressive and moving to the extreme," (*Belgischer Rundfunk*). Her creative maturity has been hailed as "a powerful, passionate and compelling representation of pure artistry," (*Los Angeles Times*).

In addition to her work as a soloist, Zee Zee is a founding member of the Z.E.N. Trio, alongside violinist Esther Yoo and cellist Narek Hakhnazaryan. The trio released their first and second albums in 2019, both under Deutsche Gramophone. Zee Zee is also the founder and artistic director of the Z+ international music festival in Shanghai.

Zee Zee began her musical training at age five in Berlin, Germany, and continued her studies at the Shenzen Arts School, Eastman and Julliard Schools, and Peabody Institute, studying under Leon Fleisher and Alfred Brendel. She has won the Petschek Piano Award, first prize at China's 1st International Piano Concerto Competition, the Gina Bachauer International Artists Piano Competition, and the Krainev International Piano Competition. She was also a prize winner at the 2013 Queen Elizabeth Competition. Zee Zee was a BBC New Generation Artist from 2013-2015 and performed at the Royal Albert Hall as a part of the BBC Proms. She is currently based in Berlin and New York.

subito con forza

Unsusuk Chin

Born: July 14, 1961 – Seoul, South Korea

Piece Length: Approximately 5 minutes.

South Korean composer Unsusuk Chin is among the most sought-after composers living and working today. Chin began her composition studies at Seoul National University, under the tutelage of Sukhi Kang. After graduating, she received a grant to study in Germany with the iconoclastic Hungarian composer György Ligeti, whose music is perhaps best known through its use in the films of Stanley Kubrick, most famously *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Chin's music is full of eclectic influences, ranging from contemporary to Medieval composition techniques, Balinese Gamelan, and electronic music, the latter most evident in her work while in Berlin during the late 1980s.

In 2020, Chin received a commission from BBC Radio 3, the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, and the Kölner Philharmonie to compose a short work in celebration of the 250th anniversary of Beethoven's birth. The world premiere performance, given by the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra conducted by Klaus Mäkelä on September 24, 2020, was a rousing success from critics and audiences alike. Starting with the opening of Beethoven's "Coriolan" Overture, Chin quickly blends her own exciting musical vocabulary— innovative orchestral colors, energetic and virtuosic passages, and inventive harmonies— with quotations from quotes from Beethoven's catalog. These weave in and out of Chin's orchestral textures, resulting in a breathtaking concert opener that has become a deserved favorite of orchestras around the world.

Piano Concerto in A Minor, Op. 7

Clara Schumann

Born: September 13, 1819 – Leipzig, Germany

Died: May 20, 1896 – Frankfurt, Germany

Piece Length: Approximately 20 minutes.

Among the great figures that helped shape the musical world during the Romantic era, Clara Schumann (née Wieck) proudly stands tall. Regarded as one of the greatest pianists of her time, she helped transform the format of the piano recital into what we expect today: a commanding performance, completely from memory. Her choices of repertoire were inspired, felt fresh, and often incorporated improvisation or brand-new compositions. Her career lasted over 60 years, during which she would frequently tour Europe, championing the work of Robert Schumann (her husband), Johannes Brahms (with whom she maintained a close friendship for most of her life), Frédéric Chopin, and Felix Mendelssohn.

Clara Schumann was taught by her father, Friedrich Wieck, a renowned pianist and pedagogue. His approach to pianism had greater emphasis on tone and expressiveness over sheer finger dexterity. Her career began as a child prodigy, debuting in 1828 Leipzig at the age of nine. Within three years, she would begin touring Europe. On one of her first tours, she impressed the great violinist Niccolò Paganini as well as the writer Johann Goethe. During her youth, she also composed, producing a number of excellent works, including the piano concerto on tonight's concert. Composing was a part of her life that, as she wrote, "gives me great pleasure...there is nothing that surpasses the joy of creation."

Program Notes

While she would later devote her creative life to piano transcriptions of works by her husband Robert Schumann and Brahms, and editing the former's published works, the brilliance of Clara Schumann as a creative genius and an incredible pianist are combined in her only completed piano concerto. She would complete the work in 1835 at just sixteen years old, and premiere it that year with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, conducted by Felix Mendelssohn. While the concerto does feature the standard three movement structure one expects from works of the era, the compositional also features formal and orchestration innovations that reveal a composer clearly moving away from the traditions of the Classical period. For years, her compositions were forgotten and rarely performed, but a resurgence of interest began in the 1980s. Today, her complete works have been recorded by multiple artists, and rightfully appear on concert programs every year.

Symphony No. 4 in E Minor, Op. 98

Johannes Brahms

Born: May 7, 1833 – Hamburg, Germany

Died: April 3, 1897 – Vienna, Austria

Piece Length: Approximately 45 minutes.

A year after the successful premiere of his Symphony No. 3 in F Major in 1883, Brahms began work on a fourth symphony. In September 1885, one month before the world premiere of this new symphony, Brahms invited a number of close friends to hear him and Ignaz Brüll perform the work on piano. After playing through the first movement, there was silence among the normally supportive friends. Among those present, the critic Eduard Hanslick apparently broke the silence by stating “I feel like I’ve just been beaten up by two terribly intelligent people.” It briefly lightened the mood in the room. Brahms and Brüll proceeded to complete the performance of the symphony, but again the reception was rather cold. Brahms, understandably anxious about this, gruffly argued that it would make a better impression when one could hear his orchestral colors versus the piano’s tones alone.

The premiere on October 25, 1885 with the Meiningen Court Orchestra conducted by the composer was met with a similar lukewarm reception. However, some of those present at the private performance in September had a better response to the music upon a second hearing. In fact, Hanslick would describe the work as a “dark well”, adding “the longer we look into it, the more brightly the stars shine bright.”

Indeed, the craftsmanship found in the Fourth symphony reveals Brahms at the heights of his creative powers. Not only is the mastery of the development of musical ideas rarely surpassed in the symphonic literature, but the invention of formal structure is a marvel. While the premiere was met with a tepid response, the symphony has since become a staple of the orchestra literature, with the musicologist Donald Tovey going as far as to call it “one of the greatest orchestral works since Beethoven.”

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