



DEPAUL UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF MUSIC

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Saturday, February 1, 2025 • 8:00 PM

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DEPAUL  
SYMPHONY  
ORCHESTRA

*Francesco Milioto, conductor*

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Mary Patricia Gannon Concert Hall  
2330 North Halsted Street • Chicago

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Saturday, February 1, 2025 • 8:00 PM  
Gannon Concert Hall

# DEPAUL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

*Francesco Milioto, conductor*

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## PROGRAM

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Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975)

Symphony No. 9 in E-flat Major, Op. 70 (1945)

- I. Allegro
- II. Moderato
- III. Presto
- IV. Largo
- V. Allegretto

- Intermission -

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Symphony No. 1 In C Minor, Op. 68 (1855-1876)

- I. Un poco sostenuto--Allegro--Meno allegro
- II. Andante sostenuto
- III. Un poco allegretto e grazioso
- IV. Adagio--Più andante--Allegro non troppo, ma con brio--Più allegro

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*As a courtesy to those around you, please silence all cell phones and other electronic devices. Flash photography is not permitted.*

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## BIOGRAPHIES

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**Francesco Milioto** is a distinguished opera conductor known for his exceptional ability to work closely with singers. His interpretations are marked by a deep curiosity and a commitment to collaboration, earning him a reputation as a gifted “singer’s conductor.” Currently, he serves as the Music Director of OPERA San Antonio, The Florentine Opera, and Holy City Arts and Lyric Opera in Charleston, SC. Maestro Milioto’s recent work includes acclaimed performances at Lyric Opera of Chicago, The Atlanta Opera, Arizona Opera, and Tulsa Opera, and he is a current member of the music staff at Lyric Opera of Chicago.

For the 2024-25 season, Mr. Milioto will continue his work at Lyric Opera of Chicago as cover conductor for *Rigoletto*. He also enters his third season as Music Director at The Florentine Opera, where he will lead productions of *Madama Butterfly*, *Carmen*, and Handel’s *Acis and Galatea*, the latter from the harpsichord. In San Antonio, he will conduct *The Nutcracker* with Ballet San Antonio and *Madama Butterfly* with OPERA San Antonio, both in collaboration with Classical Music Institute. Additionally, he will debut at Kentucky Opera conducting *Madama Butterfly* and lead the DePaul Symphony Orchestra for the first time.

A passionate educator, Maestro Milioto is sought after for his coaching and masterclasses. He regularly works with young artists at OPERA San Antonio and The Florentine Opera and will return to Detroit Opera Studio for additional masterclasses.

Milioto’s career spans numerous esteemed positions. He has served as Music Director of the New Millennium Orchestra, Skokie Valley Symphony Orchestra, Highland Park Strings, and Access Contemporary Music, and has guest conducted for Chicago Opera Theater. His work with the New Millennium Orchestra, which he co-founded, was highly praised for its wide-ranging repertoire, blending classical music, opera, and collaborations with jazz and hip-hop artists. His tenure with Highland Park Strings and Skokie Valley Symphony Orchestra also earned critical acclaim, featuring both world-renowned soloists and a diverse array of repertoire from early music to contemporary works. As Artistic Director of Access Contemporary Music, Milioto led the Palomar ensemble, known for its vibrant performances, which were featured on radio and in international venues.

Born in Toronto to Italian parents, Milioto began piano studies at age seven and later earned degrees in Piano Performance from the University of Western Ontario and in Orchestral Conducting and Opera Repetition from McGill University.

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## PROGRAM NOTES

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Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975)

**Symphony No. 9 in E-flat Major, Op. 70 (1945)**

*Duration: 27 minutes.*

Will the real Dmitri Shostakovich please hold up his hand—or at least the composer of Symphony No. 9? On no other major recent composer has more ink been spilt attempting to understand what thought processes and motivations reveal the true self than that on Shostakovich. The evidence is fought over, sifted, and re-sifted to build the case that he was a musically-gifted, but incredibly naïve, tool of the worst instincts of Stalinism. Or, on the other hand, a musically-gifted, but wondrously deceptive, resident critic of the terrors of Soviet Communism. Even, something of both. The jury of experts is still out, and will more than likely remain so, for Shostakovich left a maddeningly ambiguous record of his inner thoughts. He was capable of writing the most satirical compositions that scathingly excoriated the excesses and flaws of Western Democracies—it is informing to remember that as a young man he spent much time playing the piano in silent movie houses. And, of course, he is admired for music of dark and profound passion that laments the fundamental tragedies of universal human experience. It is always tempting for those who enjoy easy freedoms of artistic expression to hold others from other times to a high moral standard and to adjure them to not “sell out” their integrity. But few major composers have endured such political and artistic oppression as that of Shostakovich.

He was a student during the early years of the Soviet regime, and like all artists in that country, enjoyed the relative indifference towards the arts of early communism. Stylistic prescriptions and proscriptions lay in the future, and he studied the music of an array of traditional and modern composers. His musical education was broad and firm, and he was free to pursue his artistic interests. He was generally supportive of the communist regime, and saw no reason to think otherwise. But, as the world knows, during the late twenties and early thirties, life in the Soviet Union evolved into something much more sinister and challenging. As Stalin gradually clamped down on every aspect of everyday life, the arts became progressively a tool for social and political indoctrination. Art was impressed into the service of the state as propaganda, taking in this case the form of what is known as “Socialist Realism.” Simply put, artists were to glorify the reality of the revolution and its benefit to Soviet citizens. Cantatas about the arrival of new tractors to the village, or about “Stalin, the great gardener and re-forester,” were to become the norm.

What is clear, however, is that many of Shostakovich's works admirably reflect his times and milieu—the most familiar one, of course, to American audiences is his Symphony No. 7, that is widely interpreted as an indelible portrait of the deep suffering—but ultimate Soviet triumph--of the siege of Leningrad. Symphony No. 8, following in 1943 was even darker and full of despair (but without the triumph), which fact was unfortunately out of sync with the Red Army's increasing success on the battlefield. That certainly didn't go over well with his critics, which probably accounts for his documented intention of that year to write a big celebratory symphony for the triumph of communism over fascism, replete with vocal soloists and a chorus. Well, it didn't happen, and Shostakovich's Symphony No. 9, which was intended to pull out all the stops to celebrate victory, ended up being one of his shortest and lightest—almost Mozartian. Well, again, Shostakovich miscalculated the tone of his work with the spirit of the times and official expectations of public art.

The work was given its première in fall 1945. Although initially praised by the critics, it soon was condemned in both the East and the West for its failure to properly reflect the profound victory of the times. It is cast in five relatively short movements—the last three of which are played without pause. The whole symphony doesn't last long, at all—shorter than some single movements of his previous symphonies.

Obviously a parody of Haydn and Mozart, the first movement is a playful scamper that is interrupted by an awkward, rude interjection from the trombone (it's Shostakovich, after all--the master of rough humor and sarcasm). Apparently, the foolish trombonist believes that it is his duty to announce the second theme (played by the chirping piccolo), which he does in the most exaggerated and redundant way. You'll hear it again, for in the best classical fashion, the short exposition is repeated. The development then begins with a dense, somewhat darker passage in the strings, and takes on a rather sinister Cossack gallop. But the recap comes quickly, and we again hear the happy beginning. Naturally, the second theme is high, but not nearly as soon as our presumptuous trombonist thinks, for he keeps jumping in to announce it, but way too early—and in the wrong key, for goodness' sake. After six false starts from the trombonist, on the seventh time he gets it right and the second theme enters (this time in the solo violin). And this little neo-classic jaunt is over very quickly.

The second movement opens with a meditative—almost plaintive--solo clarinet, accompanied only by pizzicato bass line. The soloist is soon joined by a second clarinet, and then by the rest of the woodwinds. The

mood is distinctively in contrast with the “whistling in the dark” optimism of the first movement, and much more aptly reflective of dark times—even in victory. This whole passage ultimately dissolves into an even more sinister waltz, begun by the strings. The waltz plods wearily along until it just fizzles out, the piccolo having the last say.

The last three movements are played without a break, but are nevertheless each distinctive. The first of them is a brilliant scherzo, begun with a scintillating passage in the woodwinds, quickly joined by all. The movement’s second idea features the brass, led by a trumpet solo. But, unlike most symphonic scherzi, this whole movement, rather like the previous one, quickly just fades away to an ominous ambiguity. The penultimate movement ensues immediately with an unexpected stentorian blast in the tuba and trombones, seeming to invoke the doom laden low brass of Wagner’s *Götterdämmerung*. A solo bassoon has the temerity to answer with a kind of recitative that some opine is a sly reference to Beethoven’s 9th. The brass persists, and then so does the quiet, modest bassoon. After an extended solo, the bassoon segues right into the last movement. It all starts innocuously as a jaunty little walk, but gradually grows into a tripping jog, quickly picking up steam. It grows in intensity, volume, and tempo, and we’re soon in the midst of a grotesque, hobnail-booted march (is this, too, a thinly-veiled comment?). A manic galop drives mercilessly to a quick, smashing end.

So what does it all mean? A cheerful salute to Haydn; a gloomy little interlude; an ambiguous contest between heavyweight brass and a thoughtful bassoonist; an ominous waltz; and finally, a dance hall *galop*—all a most curious celebration of the end of the cataclysmic world war. It’s a fool’s errand to decipher the thoughts of this brilliant, complex composer, caught in lifelong existential struggle with the worst of totalitarianism. Better to simply listen and appreciate his art.

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

**Symphony No. 1 In C Minor, Op. 68 (1855-1876)**

*Duration: 45 minutes*

“This is a chosen one.” Robert Schumann so characterized Johannes Brahms in his famous article that introduced the young Brahms to the public. Little did he know! Brahms went on to become the last great successor of the artistic mantle of musical Classicism that led from Joseph Haydn, through Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert. That’s taking the rather narrow view, of course, for there were others who followed who revered the classical attributes of restraint, balance, clarity of form, elegance, and general equipoise that came to characterize the collective features that

came to be known as classical style. And they stand in clear contrast to the sweeping trends and excesses of music Romanticism that came to dominate European music until the cataclysm of World War I.

Simply put, the composers of the nineteenth century after Beethoven tended to divide themselves into two groups. The progressives were true “Romantics,” and were greatly influenced by the extra-musical ideas that were the subjects of contemporary literature, poetry, and painting, among others. They devised new genres, such as the tone poems of Smetana and Liszt, the music dramas of Wagner, and the characteristic piano pieces of Chopin. Much of this music, to use a phrase still common among seekers of meaning in music, was about “something”—meaning something familiar to human experience. Liszt and Wagner, *et al*, while respecting the music of the past, saw no future in continuing that tradition.

Others, Brahms most significantly, still adhered strongly to the musical philosophically oriented musical style of Beethoven. He and other conservatively minded musicians held that the traditional forms of sonata, concerto, and symphony had not nearly exhausted their viability, and that music should continue to speak in an integrated language that referred to itself, alone, and certainly not to extra-musical ideas. So, he and his ilk continued to write “pure,” or “abstract” music, like sonatas and symphonies (a so-called symphony is just a sonata for orchestra). Today, most of those who compose, perform, and listen to art music see no contradiction at all in valuing both broad aesthetic viewpoints—so we enjoy the best of both worlds.

The example of Beethoven’s music loomed overwhelming for Brahms, and he waited for decades to essay his first symphony, completing it in 1876, when he was forty-three years old. Brahms was probably the most conscientious and self-critical of all the great composers, and worked on this symphony for about two decades. It garnered sufficient early success to be deemed the “Tenth,” referencing Beethoven’s nine in that genre, although it really bears more comparison with Beethoven’s fifth symphony. It has stood the test of time sufficiently to no longer bear comparisons to any of Beethoven’s works, and is now one of the monuments of the greatest musical compositions of Western Civilization.

It begins austerely and rather abstractly—timpani pounding away—with simple musical elements that come to permeate the entire first movement. This slow introduction is soon followed by the faster movement proper, which weaves a tapestry of motivic manipulation, thorough integration of ideas, and masterful polyphonic textures. You’re not likely to walk



away whistling the tunes, but rather with the feeling that you have heard music that offers more details to enjoy than one listening can absorb. The second movement opens with an incredibly rich, warm statement by the string section. A subsequent theme is intoned by the solo oboe and then the solo clarinet. Brahms works through these ideas in the same contemplative, pastoral mood and before long, the solo horn announces the coda. But, we're glad that the composer takes his time in gently bringing this meditation to a profound and tranquil end. The third movement is a happy jaunt through nature, opening with the solo clarinet. Other ideas are heard, but the initial tune returns from time to time to keep us on track. A skipping middle section in six-eight time provides some diverting, yet optimistic activity, but soon our familiar first section returns—suitably varied, of course. And then this sunny diversion is over before you know it.

Notwithstanding all of the treasures of the first three movements, the last movement is the star of this symphony. It begins ominously, and with a bit of uncertainty as to where it will take us, but that is soon cleared up by the glorious solos in the horn (inspired by the Swiss alphorn—think of Ricola commercials on TV) and flute. The famous trombone chorale is heard, letting us know that this is serious stuff, and then we're ready for the main event. A rich, hymn-like theme is heard in the low register of the strings (you'll be able to sing this one), and we're off. What follows is a treasure trove of distinct and ingratiating themes, all of which are worked through such as to engender an almost overwhelming anticipation of the spacious and grand ending. The chorale, first heard softly at the beginning in the trombones, is reserved for a monumental rendition at the end—an almost overwhelming statement of joy, power, and triumph of the good.

From ominous beginning to exultant end, this glorious work is ample evidence of Brahms' almost unique combination of profound, emotional feeling combined in eloquent restraint with highest intellectual techniques. It illustrates perfectly why so many orchestral musicians unhesitatingly cite this composer as their deep, personal favorite of them all.

*Notes by Wm. E. Runyan*

**PERSONNEL**

FLUTE	TUBA	Madeline Guyer
Xander Day	Castin York	Sophia Schölch
Chaosupeí Gao		David Phetmanysay
Elena Rubin	PERCUSSION	Elena Galentas
Amanda Welch	Adrianna Harrison	Facundo Ortega
	Tomas Leivestad	Julia Seabron
OBOE	Kevin Tan	
Jackson Brummett		CELLO
Emily Mendez	VIOLIN	Francisco Garay, <i>principal</i>
	Alyssa Orantes, <i>concertmaster</i>	Sydney Andersen
CLARINET	Justine Teo	McKayla Fetters
Rachel Beil	Sean Hsi	Aurian Kutner
Yuqing Huang	Joshua Sukhdeo	Brendan Stock
	Ben Koenig	Clara Dodge
Bassoon	Jenna Krause	Julianna Bray
Angela Hernandez	Carlysta Tran	Gita Srinivasan
Jason Huang	Olha Tytarenko	Rachel Volk
Xavier Woodley	Alec Tonno	Ryan Han
	Jason Hurlbut	
HORN	Joanne Lin, <i>principal</i>	BASS
Eli Hoffmann	Henry Hsueh	Sebastian Sanchez, <i>principal</i>
Trevor Huffman	Mia Smith	Adam Wang
Katy Meffert	Joey Lau	Yuyan Wang
Tarre Nelson	Nicole Kwasny	Lily Enderle
John Perez	Elise Maas	Stephen Kilpatrick
	Angela Rojas	Mateo Estanislao
TRUMPET	Benjamin Mora Neira	Anthony D'Agostino
Kai-Chun Chang	Naomi Southard	Walker Dean
Jhoan Garcia		
Abner Wong	VIOLA	
	Lucie Boyd, <i>principal</i>	
TROMBONE	Alejandra Contreras	
Erich Corfman	Casey Lebkicker	
Amanda Pinos	Darren Carter	
Tim Warner	Phoebe Hu	

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