



Western Music

Don Wright Faculty of Music

WESTERN UNIVERSITY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

7:30 p.m., December 9, 2025

Paul Davenport Theatre

Simone Luti, *conductor*

William Tell Overture

Gioachino Rossini
(1792–1868)

Symphony No. 8 in B minor, "Unfinished," D. 759

Allegro moderato

Andante con moto

Franz Schubert
(1797–1828)

-Intermission-

Die Moldau (The Moldau)
from *Má vlast* ("My Fatherland")

Bedřich Smetana
(1824–1884)

Slavonic Dances, Op. 46

Presto

Allegro assai

Antonín Dvořák
(1841–1904)

Slavonic Dances, Op. 72

Allegretto grazioso

Hungarian Dance No. 5

Johannes Brahms
(1833–1897)

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PROGRAM NOTES

Rossini's *William Tell Overture*, the dazzling introduction to his final opera, is a four-part musical narrative that has become far more famous than the opera itself. It begins with a serene depiction of dawn in the Swiss Alps, featuring a lyrical cello choir. A sudden, dramatic storm follows, with driving winds and thunderous orchestral effects. The calm after the storm arrives in the gentle *Ranz des vaches*, a pastoral call evoking Swiss shepherds.

The overture culminates in its electrifying finale—an exhilarating gallop led by blazing brass and racing strings. Long associated with heroic adventure, this music captures the opera's themes of freedom and uprising with irresistible energy and precision.

Schubert's "**Unfinished**" **Symphony** stands as one of the great enigmas of the orchestral repertoire. Composed in 1822, it consists of only two completed movements—yet these movements are so emotionally complete that the work feels whole despite its fragmentary form. The opening Allegro moderato begins with a dark, hushed tremolo that unfolds into one of Schubert's most haunting melodies, a blend of lyrical warmth and profound unease. The second movement, Andante con moto, offers radiant contrast: its serene, songlike themes ripple with Schubert's unmistakable gift for melody, even as shadows occasionally pass through.

Why Schubert left the symphony unfinished remains a mystery, but the music's emotional depth and structural innovation influenced generations of composers. Today, the "Unfinished" remains a testament not to incompleteness but to Schubert's extraordinary ability to express the intimate and the infinite within the orchestral sound.

Smetana's *The Moldau* is a vivid musical portrait of the great Czech river as it flows through the countryside toward Prague. Two shimmering flute lines evoke the river's twin spring sources, which soon swell into a sweeping, noble theme. Along the journey, the music paints scenes of rural life: a forest hunt, a rustic wedding dance, and the moonlit stillness of the river gliding past water nymphs. As the Moldau approaches the capital, the music grows majestic before finally disappearing into the distance. A masterpiece of tone painting, *The Moldau* captures not only the landscape itself but the national spirit Smetana sought to celebrate in *Má vlast*.

Dvořák's *Slavonic Dances* are among his most joyful and widely beloved works, celebrating the rhythms and spirit of Central and Eastern European folk music. Originally composed for piano four-hands and later orchestrated, these dances were not based on specific folk melodies but rather on Dvořák's own themes crafted in authentic folk style.

The first set, **Op. 46**, bursts with youthful energy and warm lyricism, drawing inspiration from Czech forms such as the lively furiant and the graceful sousedská. Its newfound popularity helped propel Dvořák to international acclaim. The later set, **Op. 72**, written eight years afterward, is more varied in color and character, reflecting a more mature composer who explored a broader Slavic palette—from fiery exuberance to introspective melancholy.

Among Brahms's most instantly recognizable pieces, *Hungarian Dance No. 5* crackles with the fiery spirit of Hungarian folk style. Originally written for piano four-hands and later orchestrated (most famously by Martin Schmelting), the dance is based on a lively *csárdás*, full of sharp contrasts between smoldering slow sections and sudden bursts of brilliant, quick-tempered energy.

In its orchestral form, the piece gains vivid color—swaggering strings, crisp rhythms, and flashes of brass and winds that heighten its theatrical flair. Short, dramatic, and irresistibly catchy, *Hungarian Dance No. 5* remains a perennial crowd favorite and a showcase of Brahms's love for folk-inspired melody and rhythmic verve.

Program notes by Tasman Tantasawat

WESTERN UNIVERSITY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Flutes

Grace Zhu*
Yiping Zhang (*also as Piccolo*)*
Jenny Zhang
Darren Wo

Oboes

Mateo Zapata*
Ashlyn Black*
Leona Wen (*as English Horn*)

Clarinets

Finn Inglis*
Kaitlyn Chambers

Bassoons

Yaron Felter-Gonen*
Siodhachan Morehead

Horns

Chrysa Balaka
Kai Church
Lela Burt

Trumpets

Matthew Usher*
Rex Mulder*
Toshi Kawabe

Trombones

John Lau*
Max Zhang
Amy Jordaen

Tuba

Daniel Montaseri

Percussions

Anang Binesi
Cora Robison
Owen Bastarache
Liam Fischer
Chi-Miigwech

Violins

Yanet Campbell**
Helen Faucher*
Julian Trippel*
Alex Matwijiw*
Erin Van Dyke
Yuyin Chen
Jerry Ma
Frank Su
Cordelia Poon
Brett Trampleasure
Clara Martin
Ashley Lo
Charlotte Usprich
Yongxuan Wu
Haiyue Yang
Kate Roberge
Khloe Wang
Cyr Cyr
Eileen Lee
Lerissa Mowatt
Jayden So
Deion Liu
Theodore Chow

Violas

Ludmilla Kraneck*
Tasman Tantasawat*
Cian Diamond*
Lincoln St John*
Yifan Liu
Yining Yang
Maria Camila Lopez
Lexi White
Olivia Cardillo
Stella Shin
Grace Wright
Adora Yao

Celli

Abigail Greenland*
Isaac Lee
Felicity Ngo
Nicholas Lago
Kara Lim
Jason Too
Thomas Gadd
Charlotte Montgomery-Seto

Double basses

Adela Montgomery*
Joshua Guttormson
Thomas Locke

** Concert Master

* Principal