

2026 Festival Orchestra Concert Notes

RACHMANINOFF AND BRAHMS
Tuesday, February 24, 2026



PHOENIX for orchestra
Dan Locklair
Born: August 7, 1949
Composed: 2007

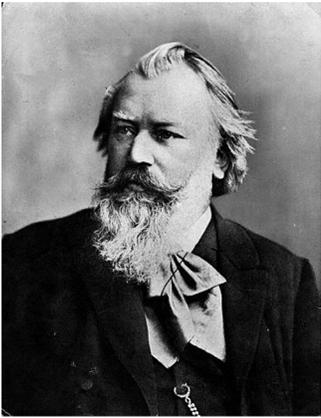
From composer Dan Locklair:

PHOENIX for orchestra began its life as a three-minute fanfare entitled, *PHOENIX Fanfare*. It was commissioned in 1979 by Union Theological Seminary in New York City for the 3 February 1980 reopening and dedication of Union's renovated James Memorial Chapel. Since the Chapel had been virtually gutted and rebuilt, a title evoking the mythological bird that rose from the ashes seemed most appropriate. From the beginning, the piece was conceived as an antiphonal composition, with the original brass sextet placed in a rear balcony, while the organ and percussion were located in the front of James Chapel. For practical reasons, in August of 1985 the brass scoring of *PHOENIX Fanfare* was reduced to brass quartet and was also joined with a newly composed processional and was given the title, *PHOENIX Fanfare and Processional*. It was first performed at the September 1985 Opening Convocation of Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, where I serve as Composer-in-Residence and Professor of Music. Though the composition has had many performances in its "full" brass/organ/percussion version (including use for many years at graduation exercises of The Juilliard School in New York City and, in Winston-Salem, at the 2005 Inauguration of Nathan Hatch as Wake Forest University's thirteenth President), many organists from around the country wrote to me to ask if I might consider creating a solo organ version of the processional part of the piece. In 1996 I did. It, like the "full" organ/brass/percussion version of the piece, has now become quite popular throughout America and abroad.

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In the autumn of 2006, Winston-Salem Symphony Music Director, Robert Moody, heard a concert performance of the original version of *PHOENIX Fanfare and Processional* and, soon afterwards, phoned to ask if I would consider creating a version of it for orchestra. He went on to explain that he would like to begin his 2007 – 2008 Winston-Salem Symphony season with the World Premiere of the piece (16 and 18 September 2007) and repeat it at the Arizona MusicFest (19 February 2008). Since one of the halls had a pipe organ and the other did not, Robert Moody and I both agreed that the presence of an organ part would best be reduced to an optional one and, even at that, for its role to no longer be a soloistic one. I then agreed to transcribe the work for orchestra, with work on the piece spanning December 2006 to early March 2007. I wish to extend my appreciation to Maestro Moody for giving impetus to this composition and to the Winston-Salem Symphony and Arizona MusicFest for their commission that has allowed this new version of the piece to come about. *PHOENIX for orchestra* is warmly dedicated to the Winston-Salem Symphony and its conductor, Robert Moody.

PHOENIX for orchestra is approximately ten minutes in length. As in the original *PHOENIX Fanfare*, an antiphonal brass ensemble (here two trumpets and two trombones) is a vital part of the composition, with this ensemble being placed either in the rear or to both sides of the performance space. Whereas the original *PHOENIX Fanfare* had extensive antiphonal writing between the brass ensemble in the rear and the organ and percussion in the front, in the new *PHOENIX for orchestra* the dialoguing is now between the off-stage brass ensemble and an identical one contained within the on-stage orchestra. As the opening bars progress, the activity of this dialoguing quickly grows to include the entire orchestra, which eventually leads to the composition's processional-like main section. The primary, stately melodic material is first presented by the strings alone, then handed over to the antiphonal brass quartet just before all forces join together as the section regally builds. After a large climax is reached, a contrasting and delicately colored middle section for the orchestra alone emerges. After this section reaches its zenith, a variant of the opening fanfare section between the antiphonal brass and orchestral brass emerges. This section leads to a return of the primary processional-like section of the piece and, ultimately, to the piece's majestic conclusion.



Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 77

Johannes Brahms

Born: May 7, 1833

Died: April 3, 1897

Composed: 1878

Johannes Brahms was a German composer, virtuoso pianist and conductor whose music was known for its rhythmic interest, innovative use of dissonance and texture. His musical contributions were admired by his contemporaries, including Antonin Dvorak.

Joseph Joachim, violinist and friend of Brahms, first premiered the composer's only violin concerto in 1879. Joachim believed the piece to be one of the four great German concertos, in the company of the masterworks by Beethoven, Bruch and Mendelssohn. Originally planned in four movements, Brahms intended it to be a symphonic concerto rather than a virtuoso showpiece. However, he chose to discard the two middle movements - and later re-worked them into his second piano concerto - and replace them with the Adagio movement. This second movement contains prominent solos for the violin and cello, making this part of the work in effect a concerto for piano trio.

The critical reaction to the concerto was not all favorable. Some violinists considered this now staple of the violin literature unplayable, one saying it was not so much for the violin as "against the violin" but in Vienna the public adored the piece. Joachim himself did not promote the concerto after a personal falling out with Brahms, but Joachim's students Marie Soldat, Gabriele Wietrowetz and Leonora Jackson contributed to the piece gaining a foothold in the repertoire.

Program Notes by Naomi G. Martinez-Goldstick



Symphony No. 2 in E minor, Op. 27

Sergei Rachmaninoff

Born: April 1, 1873

Died: March 28, 1943

Composed: 1907

Sergei Rachmaninoff conducted the premiere of his 2nd Symphony in 1908 to great applause. However, Rachmaninoff was not convinced of his symphonic composition skills. His first symphony was not at all well received and it caused him to struggle with confidence and battle a bout of depression. However, ten months later his Symphony No. 2 would go on to win the Glinka Award (his second such award - the first given for his Piano Concerto No. 2).

Rachmaninoff is well known for his song-like melodies, expressiveness and rich colors and his second symphony is no exception. Parts of it have been used many times in various ways - as part of a film score, as popular songs by Eric Carmen and Barry Manilow as well as inspiration for other compositions, including jazz themes and a piano concerto by Alexander Warenberg.

Program Notes by Naomi G. Martinez-Goldstick