



Netherlands Reflections

Lahav SHANI & Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra

2026.6.13 Sat. 19:30

Weiwuying Concert Hall

Duration is 110 minutes with a 20-minute intermission.



National Kaohsiung
CENTER FOR THE ARTS

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Program

J. WAGENAAR: Overture to *Cyrano de Bergerac*

D. SHOSTAKOVICH: Piano Concerto No. 2 in F Major, Op. 102

- I. Allegro
- II. Andante
- III. Allegro

----- Intermission -----

J. BRAHMS: Symphony No. 2 in D Major, Op. 73

- I. Allegro non troppo
- II. Adagio non troppo
- III. Allegretto grazioso (Quasi andantino)
- IV. Allegro con spirito

Program Notes

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Translated by Lin HSIEH

J. WAGENAAR: Overture to *Cyrano de Bergerac*

Long Ago...

In a bustling Parisian theater, Cyrano, a fearless swordsman, defeats a noble opponent in a duel while simultaneously improvising elegant verses. Yet before his cousin Roxane, he is silenced by deep insecurity over his grotesquely large nose.

When Roxane falls in love with the handsome but reticent Christian, Cyrano chooses to support them. On the battlefield Cyrano protects Christian, while secretly writing love letters in Christian's name, and risking his life to deliver them. Moved by the words, Roxane braves the front lines to declare her love for Christian.

Cyrano remains silent after Christian's death, allowing Roxane to grieve and keep her husband's memory alive. 15 years pass before she finally realizes the words she loved were Cyrano's. Only then does the mortally wounded Cyrano die, brandishing an invisible sword, proclaiming he will always defend his panache.

Tangling Humanity

Premiered in 1897, E. ROSTAND'S *Cyrano de Bergerac* draws inspiration from the real 17th-century French swordsman and poet. The play blends thrilling duels with depth of lyricism. Cyrano's "strong yet vulnerable" nature makes him more resonant than a flawless hero. This classic paradox of power and insecurity has inspired countless adaptations, including tonight's overture.

Literature vs. Music

Dutch composer Johan WAGENAAR was deeply influenced by R. STRAUSS's symphonic poems, mastering rich orchestration and motifs to depict character, creating contrasting styles between sections to heighten tension—perfect for the depiction of Cyrano's stark conflicts.

Cyrano is a tragic character who must hide behind another's name to express his love, only to die just as the truth is revealed. Paradoxically, WAGENAAR's overture seems to downplay the tragedy. Led by horns and trumpets, the section marked "heroic spirit" surges upward with energy, celebrating Cyrano's bravery and pride as a swordsman. This gives way to passages labeled "Love, Poetry" where violins and woodwinds convey the deep yearning within Cyrano's eloquence. These two themes form the structural core of the overture and portray the protagonist's dual nature. Other sections marked "Cheerfulness," "Humor," and

"Satire" highlight Cyrano's resilient optimism with light woodwinds and quick, leaping figures that evoke his quick wit. Passages labeled "Chivalry" and "Strength of Character" reflect his moral nobility: his willingness to sacrifice personal love and face destiny with unwavering dignity.

Soul and Panache

Though Cyrano dies in sorrow, his spirit resonates in the overture's triumphant conclusion. WAGENAAR merges the "heroic" and "love, poetry" themes. When the latter appears for the last time, its once-delicate melody is transformed: the brass that previously carried the heroic theme now proclaim it with grandeur. The love letters are elevated majestically. Cyrano finally overcomes insecurity and even death itself to find redemption. What kind of soul and panache makes such complete devotion and sacrifice? The tragic plot is merely the surface that reveals this deeper exploration.

D. SHOSTAKOVICH: Piano Concerto No. 2 in F Major, Op. 102

May 10, 1957 — Moscow Conservatory

19-year-old Maxim stepped onto the stage for his graduation concert, performing a three-movement piano concerto—a 19th-birthday gift from his father, Dmitri SHOSTAKOVICH. As Maxim embarked on his career, his father's affection resonated through the score's youthful outer movements and intimate center.

While audiences hear a lyrical concerto, for father and son it was a private language. Amidst a career shadowed by political fear, this work offered a rare, warm retreat into family.

Love of Father and Son

Led by the bassoon, the woodwinds open with a playful, elastic march like a toy soldier's steady stride. *Disney's Fantasia 2000* aptly paired this melody with *The Steadfast Tin Soldier*, a perfect tale for the score. After the bright and lyrical two themes, the energy explodes. With the orchestra, the piano enters a whirlwind acceleration, unleashing thundering octaves and chords to assert its virtuosic command against the full ensemble. Following a brilliant cadenza, the orchestra reprises the main themes, driving toward a jubilant finale.

The second movement's sublime beauty and melancholic melody feel closer to RACHMANINOFF or TCHAIKOVSKY; it is hard to believe it's from SHOSTAKOVICH, who typically infuses his music with sharp social critiques. Here, we see the composer as a father, setting aside external anxiety to offer his child a moment of tender care.

The serene second movement flows directly into a rapid, dancey finale. SHOSTAKOVICH employs a mix of 7/8 rhythms rooted in Russian folk music and 2/4 meter to create a dizzying momentum. He humorously incorporates technical finger exercises familiar to every piano student, sending the hands darting across the keys before ending in a radiant celebration.

Of No Artistic Value?

Despite SHOSTAKOVICH dismissing this work as having 'no artistic value,' Classic FM ranked it ninth in their 2024 Hall of Fame. The composer's self-deprecation may have been a jab at the hackneyed platitudes of Soviet officials, or perhaps the composer simply viewed the concerto as a modest piece designed for young performers. While its straightforward scales, the octaves, and sonata form might seem 'simple' to a virtuoso, they serve as a narrative of fatherhood: the toy soldiers of childhood, the tenderness of accompaniment, and the daily discipline of practice. These exercises become a nostalgic reflection as a son graduates into his own musical career.

Mastering Weight with Lightness

SHOSTAKOVICH's life was a tug-of-war between state honors and terrifying denunciations. Branded as a "formalist" and "anti-people," he was forced to struggle between ideological demands and creative freedom, survival and dignity. This "worthless" concerto emerged during a rare window of calm between STALIN's death in 1953 and the composer's forced Party membership in 1961. Unlike his usual brooding style, this work is a luminous pearl, glowing with paternal love. Through its pure "lightness," it momentarily lifts the immense political "weight" SHOSTAKOVICH carried for decades.

J. BRAHMS: Symphony No. 2 in D Major, Op. 73

At the southern foothills of the Austrian Alps lies a narrow valley lake whose waters shimmer with a translucent hue between emerald and cobalt. The slender lake is encircled by dark fir forests; hills rise along the north, while the southern bank remains quiet and deep. This poetic landscape is the famous Lake Wörthersee.

In Romanticism, nature was regarded as a living, sacred organism—a mirror of human emotion where the spirit could regain strength and rediscover the authentic self estranged by industrial civilization. Since the 19th century, Wörthersee has served not only as a summer retreat for Europe's artistic elite; its "transparent stillness" allowed artists to withdraw from the world and work with relaxed concentration. Here, inspiration found late-Romantic symphonist Gustav MAHLER, Second Viennese School composers Anton WEBERN and Alban BERG, novelist Robert MUSIL, and the postwar poet Ingeborg BACHMANN.

The "Melody Catcher" by the Lake

BRAHMS also found the area deeply inspirational, jokingly telling his publisher that "melodies here are so abundant, one must be careful not to trample them." That summer, he "captured" the material for his Second Symphony; while his First took over 20 years to escape BEETHOVEN's shadow, the Second was completed in a single summer. For a composer so meticulous, this lightning-fast creation speaks to the lake's magic. Movements marked "not too much," "graceful," and "spirited" capture the comfort and vitality of nature. Utilizing instrumental timbres like a plein air painting, the work opens with woodwinds, horns and strings evoking a mountain valley filled with horn calls and birdsong. The third movement features a rustic, folk-like oboe melody over plucked cellos, while the uncommon addition of a tuba lends a majestic depth to the natural landscape.

Flapping Black Wings

Despite its radiant surface, BRAHMS described the work as "melancholy," jokingly suggesting the score be "rimmed in black" to signify mourning. While he often teased friends with such irony, the "necessary shadows" are audible. When asked why he introduced somber trombones and rumbling timpani into the serene first movement, he replied: "I am a deeply melancholic person... black wings are constantly flapping above me." He saw a direct link between this symphony and his concurrent motet, *Why is light given to the weary?* While the symphony represents shadows within the sunlight, the motet, drawing on biblical texts about suffering and humble resignation, confronts the darkness in life head-on.

A Dialectic by the Lake

The motet serves as an interpretive footnote to the symphony. The "necessary shadows" of the first movement suggest that even in life's most idyllic moments, fate remains an inescapable presence. The second movement's struggle teaches us to face destiny with endurance, leading to the third movement's spiritual healing through the rustic conversation with nature. Finally, the exuberant finale captures a sincere, inner melody, allowing the self to emerge from the shadows into a state of radiant joy.

About the Artists



**Conductor and Piano |
Lahav SHANI**

Lahav SHANI is the Chief Conductor of the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra. He assumed his position in September 2018, becoming the youngest Chief Conductor in the orchestra's history. In the 2020/21 season, SHANI succeeded Zubin MEHTA as Music Director of the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra; the Münchner Philharmoniker appointed Lahav SHANI as their new Chief Conductor, starting from September 2026.

Recent and upcoming guest conductor highlights include engagements with Wiener Philharmoniker, Berliner Philharmoniker, Gewandhaus Orchester, Münchner Philharmoniker, Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, London Symphony Orchestra, Filarmonica della Scala, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Philadelphia Orchestra, Budapest Festival Orchestra, Orchestre de Paris and Philharmonia Orchestra.

SHANI was born in Tel Aviv in 1989 and started his piano studies aged six with Hannah SHALGI, continuing with Prof. Arie VARDI at the Buchmann-Mehta School of Music in Tel Aviv. He went on to complete his studies in conducting with Prof. Christian EHWALD and piano with Prof. Fabio BIDINI, both at the School of Music Hanns Eisler Berlin. Whilst a student he was mentored by Daniel BARENBOIM. In 2013, he won First Prize in the Gustav Mahler International Conducting Competition in Bamberg. June 2016 saw Lahav SHANI's debut with the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra as a conductor and as a piano soloist; his appointment as Chief Conductor from 2018 was announced two months later.

As a pianist, SHANI has performed as a soloist with Daniel BARENBOIM, Zubin MEHTA and Gianandrea NOSEDA. He has play-directed piano concerti with many orchestras including the Vienna Philharmonic, Philharmonia Orchestra, Filarmonica della Scala, Staatskapelle Berlin and Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra. SHANI also has considerable experience performing chamber music and in recital and is a regular performer at the Verbier Festival, and has also appeared at the Aix-en-Provence Easter and Jerusalem Chamber Music Festivals, and in duo recitals with Martha ARGERICH.



Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra

The Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra, founded in 1918, is distinguished by its intensely energetic performances, acclaimed recordings, and innovative audience engagement. Over the decades, it has established a firm position among Europe's leading orchestras.

After its pioneering early years, the orchestra developed into one of the foremost ensembles in the Netherlands under Eduard FLIPSE, principal conductor from 1930. In the 1970s and 1980s, under Jean FOURNET, Edo de WAART, and James CONLON, the orchestra gained growing international recognition. The appointment of Valery GERGIEV marked the beginning of a new and flourishing era, later continued by Yannick NÉZET-SÉGUIN and, from 2018, Lahav SHANI.

The orchestra's home is De Doelen Concert Hall, yet it performs frequently in other venues—from local stages to major international concert halls in Europe and beyond. Since 2010, the Rotterdam Philharmonic has been a resident orchestra of the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris. With its regular concerts, educational performances, and community projects, the orchestra reaches an annual audience of 150,000 to 200,000, including a significant number of young listeners.

Since the pioneering MAHLER recordings with Eduard FLIPSE in the 1950s, the Rotterdam Philharmonic has released numerous critically acclaimed recordings with labels such as Warner Classics, Deutsche Grammophon, Decca, Philips and BIS Records. Its performances are available online through concert streams on medici.tv, as well as video projects such as *From us, for you: Beethoven Symphony No. 9* (2020), which became international news after reaching millions of viewers worldwide within just a few weeks of its release.

Members of ROTTERDAM PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

Chief Conductor

Lahav SHANI

Honorary Conductor

Yannick NÉZET-SÉGUIN

Regular Guest Conductor

Tarmo PELTOKOSKI

First Violin

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Quirine SCHEFFERS

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Alexandra VAN BEVEREN

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Second Violin

Charlotte POTGIETER

Frank DE GROOT

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Elina HIRVILAMMI-STAPHORSIUS

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Bob BRUYN

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Maija REINIKAINEN

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Viola

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Jutta DEMUYNCK

Cello

Emanuele SILVESTRI

Gustaw BAFELTOWSKI

Joanna PACHUCKA

Daniel PETROVITSCH

Mario RIO

Eelco BEINEMA

Carla SCHRIJNER

Pepijn MEEUWS

FANG Yi-ting

Killian WHITE

Paul STAVRIDIS

Double Bass

Matthew MIDGLEY

Ying Lai GREEN

Jonathan FOCQUAERT

Arjen LEENDERTZ

Ricardo NETO

Javier CLEMÉN MARTÍNEZ

Marta FOSSAS MALLORQUÍ

Mario FERNÁNDEZ

Flute

Juliette HUREL

Joséphine OLECH

Manon GAYET

Flute / Piccolo

Beatriz DA SILVA BAIÃO

Oboe

Karel SCHOOF

Jesús PINILLOS RIVERA

Anja VAN DER MATEN

Oboe / Cor Anglais

Ron TIJHUIS

Clarinet

Julien HERVÉ

Bruno BONANSEA

Alberto SÁNCHEZ GARCIA

Clarinet / Bass Clarinet

Romke-Jan WIJMENGA

Bassoon

Pieter NUYTTEN

Lola DESCOURS

Marianne PROMMEL

Bassoon / Contra-bassoon

Eliás AGSTERIBBE

Horn

David FERNÁNDEZ ALONSO

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Pierre BUIZER

Trumpet

Alex ELIA

Adrián MARTÍNEZ MARTÍNEZ

Simon WIERENGA

Giovanni GIARDINELLA

Trombone

Pierre VOLDERS

Alexander VERBEEK

Remko DE JAGER

Bass Trombone / Contra-Bass Trombone

Rommert GROENHOF

Tuba

Martijn VAN RIJSWIJK

Timpani / Percussion

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