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# MSM SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

**George Manahan** (BM '73, MM '76), Conductor

**Po-Wei Ger** (BM '18), piano

*Winner of the 2024 Eisenberg-Fried Concerto Competition*

**JT Kane**, Dean of Instrumental Studies and Orchestral Performance

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2024 | 7:30 PM  
NEIDORFF-KARPATI HALL

This year's performance season has been inspired by a unifying theme: ***Humanity in Harmony: Rituals, Resistance, and Resilience***. We hope during this election year, the biggest in human history with over half the world's population having the opportunity to vote in 72 countries, that this theme reflects the power of the arts to unite us even in moments of discord and differences. The collective experience of collaboration – creating together – reminds us that even in our differences we can find common ground, stand up to tyranny and oppression, and elevate our work as artists to fulfill the hope and promise of a better tomorrow.

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**Joyce Griggs**, Executive Vice President and Provost

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*Manhattan School of Music's public programs are made possible in part by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature.*



*Funded in part by a grant from the New York City Tourism Foundation.*

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## PROGRAM

CARLOS CHÁVEZ  
(1899–1978)

*Sinfonía india* (Symphony No. 2)

MAURICE RAVEL  
(1875–1937)

Piano Concerto for the Left Hand in D Major

## *Intermission*

ROBERT SIROTA  
(b. 1949)

212: *Symphony No. 1*

Approaches

Do Not Hold Doors

Lamentation

O Manhattan

# MSM SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

George Manahan (BM '73, MM '76), Conductor

Po-Wei Ger (BM '18), piano

## VIOLIN 1

**Hajung Cho**,  
concertmaster  
*Seoul, South Korea*

**Eunhye Chun**  
*Cheonan, South Korea*

**Muriel Oberhofer**  
*Schaffhausen, Switzerland*

**Seoyoung Jang**  
*Jeju City, South Korea*

**Selin Algoz**  
*New York, New York*

**Haegge Chung**  
*New York, New York*

**Junlong Qu**  
*Qingdao, China*

**Jackson Chang**  
*Taipei, Taiwan*

**Vivian Kao**  
*Hong Kong, Hong Kong*

**Alix Auclair**  
*Paris, France*

**Maja Uzarska**  
*Warsaw, Poland*

**Siyi Li**  
*Beijing, China*

**Zixiang Lin**  
*Shanghai, China*

**Shih Chen Ting**  
*Taipei, Taiwan*

## VIOLIN 2

**Thierry Neves**,  
principal  
*Goiania, Brazil*

**Shang-ting Chang**  
*Taoyuan, Taiwan*

**Natsuko Kojima**  
*Tokyo, Japan*

**Dayeon Jang**  
*Jeonju, South Korea*

**Adryan Rojas**  
*Delaware, Ohio*

**Faith Borkowski**  
*Niskayuna, New York*

**Hao Yuan**  
*Kaifeng, China*

**Erin Han**  
*Irvine, California*

**Yoon Ha Kim**  
*Manhasset, New York*

**Seoyeon Lee**  
*Seoul, South Korea*

**Shan-ling Liu**  
*Hsinchu, Taiwan*

**Huiyang Xie**  
*Yinchuan, China*

## VIOLA

**Melis Turker**, principal  
*Istanbul, Turkey*

**Anna Huang**  
*Zhubei City, Taiwan*

**Jack Rittendale**  
*St. Louis, Missouri*

**Bi-Wen Chou**  
*Taipei, Taiwan*

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*Sydney, Australia*

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**Yu-sheng Tu**  
*Kaohsiung City, Taiwan*

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\* CHÁVEZ

# RAVEL

† SIROTA

*Sinfonía india* (Symphony No. 2)

Piano Concerto for the Left Hand in D Major

212: *Symphony No. 1*

# PROGRAM NOTES

## *Sinfonía india* (Symphony No. 2)

### Carlos Chávez

Carlos Chávez displayed his passion for music as a composer, conductor, educator, writer, and government official. Trained primarily on the piano, he studied first with his brother Manuel, then with Asunción Parra, Manuel Ponce, and Pedro Luis Ogazón. Though he had little formal education in composition he avidly absorbed the works of the great masters—his scores of Beethoven and Brahms are covered with his notes concerning motivic development. He also benefitted from Juan B. Fuentes's instruction in harmony and, of great significance, from constant exposure to the indigenous music of Mexican Indians.

After five unfruitful months in 1922 trying to make connections in Europe, Chávez experienced much more successful sojourns in the United States, forming friendships with composers such as Copland, Varèse, and Cowell, and associations with professional organizations that would endure all his life. As a journalist for *El universal* in Mexico City he wrote more than 200 articles on music from 1924 to 1955. He organized concerts of new music in Mexico and in the United States and in 1928 helped found the Orquesta Sinfónica México (OSM), which he conducted for twenty-one years. He simultaneously served as director of the Conservatorio Nacional de Música until 1933. Asked by President Aléman in 1947 to establish the Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Chávez served as director until 1952 and, under its auspices, formed the Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional, which eventually superceded the OSM.

In 1949 Chávez gave up his institute post to devote more time to composition, but continued to conduct, write, and lecture internationally. In 1958–59 he served as Charles Elliot Norton Chair of Poetics at Harvard University. He later taught composition at the Conservatorio Nacional, directed the Cabrillo Music Festival, and lectured in the United States and England.

Chávez composed over 200 works in a variety of genres, including eight symphonies (one categorized as juvenilia and the Seventh unfinished). He wrote “nationalist” music, exhibiting both primitive and modern characteristics, alongside works of more abstract design and inspiration. At times he employed a high level of dissonance and at others tended toward more traditional tonality and Classic forms.



Second of his symphonies and perhaps his most popular work, the *Sinfonía india* dates from 1935–36. The composer conducted the first performance on a radio broadcast with the Columbia Broadcasting Company Orchestra on January 23, 1936. He based the work on the rhythms and melodies of Mexican Indian music, and employed a whole battery of indigenous percussion instruments. In order that the work could be played by orchestras that did not have these instruments available, the composer worked out equivalents in common use. The list of the original Indian instruments, however, is quite impressive: Yaqui drum, clay rattle, Yaqui metal rattle, water gourd, tenaburi (string of butterfly cocoons), two teponaxtles (two-tongued wooden slit drums), grijutian (string of deer hooves), tlapanhuehuatl (bass drum), and raspador Yaqui. The percussion section also includes suspended cymbal, claves, snare drum, guiro (notched gourd scraper), which are common enough to appear even in the “equivalent” version..

The work unfolds in one movement, in which the introduction, first and second themes, and recapitulation follow Classic form. Instead of a development section, however, Chávez introduces a third theme that serves as a “slow movement” between the exposition and recapitulation. A catchy sequence of mixed meters opens the lively introduction, which sets up the motoric propulsion of the outer sections of the piece. The percussion instruments make their first appearance to usher in the exposition, where Chávez introduces the first of his indigenous themes. Heard in the oboe and first violins, this Huichol Indian melody from the state of Nayarit sounds like a natural outgrowth of the introduction. The singing second theme (only clarinets and drum) stems from the Yaqui Indians of Sonora, as does the slow, serious third theme (horn and flute). Gradual acceleration brings on the return of all the themes from the exposition. A Seri melody forms the basis of the thrilling build to the finish.

## **Piano Concerto for the Left Hand in D Major** **Maurice Ravel**

Basking in the success of his 1928 United States tour and the runaway popularity of *Bolero*, Ravel contemplated writing an opera about Jeanne d’Arc (never completed) and a piano concerto, which he himself would play all over the world. While working on the concerto he received an unusual commission for another piano concert—for the left hand alone—from Paul Wittgenstein, brother of Ludwig, the famous philosopher. The Austrian pianist had lost his right arm in World War I while on the Russian front and, after spending time as a prisoner of war in Siberia, had returned to Vienna bent on rebuilding his musical life. His determination—and financial well-being—led him to commission left-hand piano

works of various genres from Ravel, Prokofiev, Strauss, Hindemith, Britten, and Korngold, in addition to lesser-known composers—Franz Schmidt (his favorite), Sergei Bortkiewicz, Rudolf Braun, Josef Labor, Ernest Walker, and Hans Gál.

Ravel decided to work on both Concertos simultaneously, completing the Left-Hand Concerto in 1930, slightly before “his” Concerto in 1931. In contrast to the buoyant, carefree demeanor of the G major Concerto, the Left-Hand Concerto projects a dark atmosphere. Ravel described the works to his friend M. D. Calvocoressi:

Planning the two piano concertos simultaneously was an interesting experience. The one in which I shall appear as the interpreter is a concerto in the truest sense of the word: I mean that it is written very much in the same spirit as those of Mozart and Saint-Saëns. The music of a concerto should, in my opinion, be lighthearted and brilliant, and not aim at profundity or dramatic effects. . . . In some ways my Concerto is not unlike my Violin Sonata; it uses certain effects borrowed from jazz, but only in moderation.

The Concerto for the left hand alone is very different. It contains many jazz effects, and the writing is not so light. In a work of this kind, it is essential to give the impression of a texture no thinner than that of a part written for both hands. For the same reason, I resorted to a style that is much nearer to that of the more solemn kind of traditional concerto. A special feature is that after a first section in this traditional style, a sudden change occurs and the jazz music begins. Only later does it become manifest that the jazz music is built on the same theme as the opening part.

Ravel may have featured jazz’s lighter side in the jaunty second section of the Left-Hand Concerto, but elsewhere he dramatically drew on some of the more soulful qualities of jazz. From a mysterious “out-of-the-depths” beginning, the orchestra’s low instruments establish the solemn mood—the contrabassoon in a marching theme and the low horns introducing “blue” notes and jazz rhythms. Once the orchestra has explored these ideas, the piano enters in a massive cadenza that immediately quells any doubt about the sufficiency of one hand.

With this extended passage and an equally epic cadenza near the end of the one-movement work, Ravel brought out his client’s cantankerous nature. Demanding that Ravel rewrite the piece, Wittgenstein reportedly complained, “If I wanted to play without the orchestra I would not have ordered a concerto!” Expressing dissatisfaction was apparently his *modus operandi*—“How can I with my one hand hope to compete with a quadruple orchestra?” was his reaction to Strauss’s *Parergon zur “Symphonia domestica”* and, though he promptly paid for Prokofiev’s Left-Hand Concerto, he returned it saying, “I do not understand a single note in it and will not play it.”

Wittgenstein did present Ravel’s Concerto on November 27, 1931, but the falling out with Ravel had caused the premiere to be moved from Paris to Vienna.

Fences were sufficiently mended for a successful premiere in Paris in 1933 with Ravel conducting. Wittgenstein later admitted that it took him months of study to realize what a great work it was.

Ravel's achievement in creating a texture for one hand that sounds as full as if it were played by two is universally admired; no other left-hand composition has come close to the Concerto's success. As for Wittgenstein, his personal tragedy ultimately assured him a place of importance in the annals of history.

—Program notes ©Jane Vial Jaffe

## **212: *Symphony No. 1***

### **Robert Sirota**

Over five decades, composer Robert Sirota has developed a distinctive voice, clearly discernible in all of his work, whether symphonic, choral, stage, or chamber music. Writing in the *Portland Press Herald*, Allan Kozinn asserts: "Sirota's musical language is personal and undogmatic, in the sense that instead of aligning himself with any of the competing contemporary styles, he follows his own internal musical compass."

Robert Sirota's works have been performed by orchestras across the United States and Europe and ensembles such as the Chiara, American, Ethel, Elmyr, Blair, and Telegraph String Quartets; the Peabody, Concord, and Webster Trios; and Alarm Will Sound, Sequitur, yMusic, Chameleon Arts, Dinosaur Annex, and Concerts on the Slope. His music has also been performed at the Bowdoin Gamper and Bowdoin International Music Festival, the Mizzou International Composers Festival, and the festivals at Tanglewood, Aspen, Yellow Barn, and Cooperstown.

Sirota's recent commissions include those from Jeffrey Kahane and the Sarasota Music Festival, Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine, Palladium Musicum, American Guild of Organists, the American String Quartet, Alarm Will Sound, the Naumburg Foundation, yMusic, Thomas Pellaton, Carol Wincenc, Linda Chesis, Trinity Episcopal Church (Indianapolis), and Sierra Chamber Society, as well as arrangements for Paul Simon.

In 2021 Sirota launched the Muzzy Ridge Concerts series at his studio in Searsmont, Maine. Held in August each year, the concerts are committed to presenting intimate performances by world-class musicians.

Sirota has received grants from the Guggenheim and Watson Foundations, NEA, Meet the Composer, and the American Music Center. His music is recorded on

Legacy Recordings, National Sawdust Tracks, and the Capstone, Albany, New Voice, Gasparo, and Crystal labels, and is published by Muzzy Ridge Music, Schott, Music Associates of New York, MorningStar, Theodore Presser, and To the Fore.

A passionate educator, Sirota gives seminars and holds residencies at major institutions worldwide, most recently in Singapore. He previously taught at Boston University, Tanglewood, MIT, and New York University, where he chaired the Department of Music and Performing Arts Professions. He then served as director of the Peabody Institute of Music, overseeing a major facilities renovation, and subsequently as president of the Manhattan School of Music (2005–12) where he also taught composition.

Sirota divides his time between New York and Searsport, Maine, with his wife, Episcopal priest and organist Victoria Sirota. They frequently collaborate on new works, with Victoria as librettist and performer, at times also working with their children, Jonah and Nadia, both world-class violists.

Composed in 2007, Sirota's 212: *Symphony No. 1* received its premiere by the Manhattan School of Music Symphony, conducted by Kenneth Kiesler, in January 2008. (As the city's most famous area code, the number 212 serves as a calling card for New Yorkers.) The composer writes:

Although I have written a number of concertos and several other fairly substantial orchestral works, I will confess that I found the prospect of composing a full-length symphony to be somewhat daunting. But as I began to sketch ideas for 212, I realized that the scope and breadth of the subject—Manhattan—demanded nothing less than an extended, multi-movement form. In framing the four movements of this 25-minute work, I have tried to portray Manhattan as I have experienced it: a place of incomparable majesty, vitality, tragedy, and hope.

The first movement, Approaches, is the most visual of the four movements. It conjures up views of the city, some iconic, some obscure, that we experience upon approaching Manhattan from various directions.

The end of the first movement is interrupted by a subway train (specifically, the number 2 express rumbling through the 59th Street station) which dissolves, without pause, into the second movement, Do Not Hold Doors. I have appropriated this ubiquitous subway instruction because I liked the fact that its four words contain, consecutively, two, three, four, and five letters. The primary theme of this jazzy movement,

introduced by a quartet of saxophones, is a syncopated four-chord tune in which the chords consist, respectively, of two, three, four, and five notes. At the beginning of the movement, you might also notice, after the contrabassoon solo, a distinctive three-note whine that the 2-train makes when it releases its brakes just prior to moving (it's g-f-e, octave-displaced into a rising figure.)

The second movement emerges from underground to Ground Zero, to a panicked chorus of sirens and car alarms leading to the third movement, Lamentation. This meditation on the victims of 9/11 is a transcription for string orchestra of the middle movement of my string quartet, *Triptych*, which was composed in 2002.

The final very quiet and agonized tones of the third movement evaporate, and the fourth movement, *O Manhattan*, is introduced by offstage horns. This finale is a hymn to our Manhattan, more precious and hopeful than ever.

*212* is lovingly dedicated to the memory of my father, Harry Sirota, a truly great New Yorker.

*—Compiled by Jane Vial Jaffe*

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

### **George Manahan** (BM '73, MM '76), Conductor

George Manahan is in his 14th season as Director of Orchestral Activities at Manhattan School of Music, as well as Music Director Emeritus of the American Composers Orchestra. He served as Music Director of the New York City Opera for 14 seasons and was hailed for his leadership of the orchestra. He was also Music Director of the Richmond Symphony (VA) for 12 seasons. Recipient of Columbia University's Ditson Conductor's Award, Mr. Manahan was also honored by the American Society of Composers and Publishers (ASCAP) for his "career-long advocacy for American composers and the music of our time." His Carnegie Hall performance of Samuel Barber's *Antony and Cleopatra* was hailed by audiences and critics alike. "The fervent and sensitive performance that Mr. Manahan presided over made the best case for this opera that I have ever encountered," said the *New York Times*.

Mr. Manahan's guest appearances include the Orchestra of St. Luke's as well as the symphonies of Atlanta, San Francisco, Hollywood Bowl, and New Jersey, where he served as acting Music Director for four seasons. He has been a regular guest with the Curtis Institute and the Aspen Music Festival and has appeared with the opera companies of Seattle, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Chicago, Santa Fe, Paris, Sydney, Bologna, St. Louis, the Bergen Festival (Norway), and the Casals Festival (Puerto Rico). His many appearances on television include productions of *La bohème*, *Lizzie Borden*, and *Tosca* on PBS. The *Live from Lincoln Center* telecast of New York City Opera's production of *Madama Butterfly*, under his direction, won a 2007 Emmy Award.

George Manahan's wide-ranging recording activities include the premiere recording of Steve Reich's *Tebillim* for ECM; recordings of Edward Thomas's *Desire Under the Elms*, which was nominated for a Grammy; Joe Jackson's *Will Power*; and Tobias Picker's *Emmeline*. He has conducted numerous world premieres, including Charles Wuorinen's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, David Lang's *Modern Painters*, Hans Werner Henze's *The English Cat*, Tobias Picker's *Dolores Claiborne*, and Terence Blanchard's *Champion*.

He received his formal musical training at Manhattan School of Music, studying conducting with Anton Coppola and George Schick, and was appointed to the faculty of the school upon his graduation, at which time the Juilliard School

awarded him a fellowship as Assistant Conductor with the American Opera Center. Mr. Manahan was chosen as the Exxon Arts Endowment Conductor of the New Jersey Symphony the same year he made his opera debut with the Santa Fe Opera, conducting the American premiere of Arnold Schoenberg's *Von Heute auf Morgen*.

## **Po-Wei Ger** (BM '18), piano

Pianist Po-Wei Ger received his Master's degree from the Yale School of Music under the guidance of Dr. Melvin Chen in 2021. He began his doctoral studies at Manhattan School of Music in 2022, studying initially with Solomon Mikowsky and now with Jiayin Li.

At the age of seven, Po-Wei began studying piano with Jia-li Shu, and later with Ming-Hui Lin at the National Taiwan Normal University. As an undergraduate at MSM working with Dr. Mikowsky, Po-Wei collaborated with the Cuban National Symphony Orchestra in 2015 and 2016. He was also a prizewinner in the Panama International Piano Competition in 2016 and 2018. In April 2021, Po-Wei won the 2nd Prize, the Chamber Music Prize, and the Audience Prize at the Premio Jaén competition in Spain.

An avid chamber musician, Po-Wei has participated in a master class with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, guided by Gilbert Kalish. He and his chamber partners won the Lillian Fuchs Chamber Music Competition at MSM and have performed in the Vista Chamber Music Series at the Yale School of Music. Po-Wei, along with Chao-Chih Chen and Tzu-Wei Huang, formed the clarinet trio Trio Astralis, and won the Youth Chamber Music Program at Eslite Bookstore, the leading bookstore chain in Taiwan. He performed at the Norfolk Chamber Music Festival in 2019 and 2022, as well as at the Taos School of Music in New Mexico in 2021. He also performed at the Yellow Barn Music Festival in Putney, Vermont in 2023 and 2024. He currently teaches at the JCC Thurnauer School of Music.

# ABOUT THE ORCHESTRAL STUDIES PROGRAM

In the tradition of the classical music conservatory, the orchestral studies program at MSM forms the heart of the performing experience for classical instrumentalists. All students, placed by competitive audition, participate in a variety of orchestral projects under the guidance of George Manahan, Director of Orchestral Activities, and JT Kane, Dean of Instrumental Studies and Orchestral Performance.

Students play in a variety of orchestral formats, giving them ample opportunity to develop their audition and ensemble technique, broaden their knowledge of orchestral repertoire, and perform at New York City venues such as Carnegie Hall, the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, St. Patrick's Cathedral, and Merkin Concert Hall. Winners of the School's annual Eisenberg–Fried Concerto Competition perform with the orchestras as soloists.

In addition to Maestro Manahan, the orchestras work regularly with Leonard Slatkin, Distinguished Visiting Artist in Conducting and Orchestral Studies, and guest conductors such as Joshua Gersen, Mei-Ann Chen, and JoAnn Falletta.

**George Manahan**, Director of Orchestral Activities

**JT Kane**, Dean of Instrumental Studies and Orchestral Performance



# ABOUT MANHATTAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Founded as a community music school by Janet Daniels Schenck in 1918, today MSM is recognized for its 1,025 superbly talented undergraduate and graduate students who come from 54 countries and nearly all 50 states; its innovative curricula and world-renowned artist-teacher faculty that includes musicians from the New York Philharmonic, the Met Orchestra, and the top ranks of the jazz and Broadway communities; and a distinguished community of accomplished, award-winning alumni working at the highest levels of the musical, educational, cultural, and professional worlds.

The School is dedicated to the personal, artistic, and intellectual development of aspiring musicians, from its Precollege students through those pursuing doctoral studies. Offering classical, jazz, and musical theatre training, MSM grants a range of undergraduate and graduate degrees. True to MSM's origins as a music school for children, the Precollege Division is a professionally oriented Saturday music program dedicated to the musical and personal growth of talented young musicians ages 5 to 18. The School also serves some 2,000 New York City schoolchildren through its Arts-in-Education Program, and another 2,000 students through its critically acclaimed Distance Learning Program.

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We want to acknowledge that we gather as Manhattan School of Music on the traditional land of the Lenape and Wappinger past and present, and honor with gratitude the land itself and the people who have stewarded it throughout the generations. This calls us to commit to continuing to learn how to be better stewards of the land we inhabit as well.



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*The Galaxy Society*

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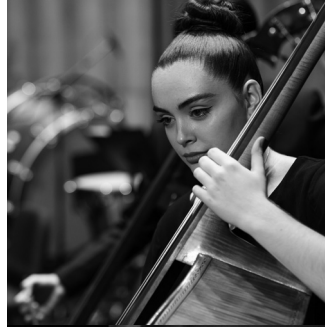
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For further information and to join our Galaxy Society, which honors those who have committed to making a planned gift to the School, **please contact Susan Madden, Vice President for Philanthropy**, at 917-493-4115, or visit: [msmnyc.edu/galaxy-society](http://msmnyc.edu/galaxy-society).

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Laura Hamilton (BM '81, MM '82)  
Phillip N. Kawin (BM '82, MM '85)\*  
Diane Kettering (BM '78)  
Alan M. and Karen Schiebler Knieri  
Doris Konig ('66)  
Warren Laffredo ('59)\*  
Gail Levine, PhD  
Robert I. Lewy\*  
Carol Lieberman  
Frank Lotrario (BM '63, MM '65)  
Susan Madden†  
Alta (BM '69) and Marc I. Malberg  
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Allen Lee Smith (BM '77)  
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