



CELEBRATING
THE LIFE &
LEGACY OF



JORJA FLEEZANIS

March 19, 1952 – September 9, 2022



with Edo de Waart



with John Adams



with Osmo Vänskä



with Sir John Tavener



with Andrew Litton



with Eiji Oue



with Garrick Ohlsson



with Michael Tilson Thomas

IN TRIBUTE TO JORJA FLEEZANIS

*Today's program offerings, performers and speakers
were selected for their special connection to Jorja.*

Johannes Brahms

Andante, from Quartet in C minor for Piano and Strings, Opus 60

Erin Keefe, violin
Sam Bergman, viola
Anthony Ross, cello
Lydia Artymiw, piano

Welcome

On behalf of the Minnesota Orchestra
Michelle Miller Burns, President and CEO

Welcome, via Video

On behalf of the Minnesota Orchestra Board of Directors
Nancy Lindahl, Chair-Elect of the Board, Life Director

Johann Sebastian Bach

Adagio, from Concerto for Oboe and Violin in C minor, BWV 1060R

Alan Snow, violin
Basil Reeve, oboe
Mary Jo Gothmann, piano

Welcome

On behalf of the Michael Steinberg and Jorja Fleezanis Fund
Mari Carlson, Fund President
Director Emerita, Minnesota Orchestra Board

Remembering Jorja

Jonathan Fleezanis, Jorja's nephew

Jules Massenet

Meditation from Thaïs

Erin Keefe, violin

Mary Jo Gothmann, piano

Ithaka, by C. P. Cavafy

A favorite poem of Jorja and Michael,

Focus of the first commission by Steinberg Fleezanis Fund

Stephen Yoakam, actor and narrator

Frédéric Chopin

Nocturne in C minor, Opus 48, No. 1

Garrick Ohlsson, piano,

dear friend and collaborator of Jorja's for 40 years

A Tribute Video: Jorja Fleezanis – Musician, Educator, Lover of Life

Michael Daugherty

Big Two-Hearted River, from *Tales of Hemingway*

Anthony Ross, cello

Mary Jo Gothmann, piano

Following the Tribute Program, you are invited to gather in the Orchestra Hall lobby to enjoy a casual reception with Jorja's favorite chocolate chip cookies from Cookie Cart, a North Minneapolis non-profit serving youth.

If you wish, you may direct memorials in Jorja's honor to the Michael Steinberg and Jorja Fleezanis Fund, which is described on pages 10 and 11 of this booklet; or to an organization of your choice.

Ithaka

by C.P. Cavafy

As you set out for Ithaka
hope your road is a long one,
full of adventure, full of discovery.
Laistrygonians, Cyclops,
angry Poseidon – don't be afraid of them:
you'll never find things like that one on your way
as long as you keep your thoughts raised high,
as long as a rare excitement
stirs your spirit and your body.
Laistrygonians, Cyclops,
wild Poseidon – you won't encounter them
unless you bring them along inside your soul,
unless your soul sets them up in front of you.

Hope your road is a long one.
May there be many summer mornings when,
with what pleasure, what joy,
you enter harbours you're seeing for the first time;
may you stop at Phoenician trading stations
to buy fine things,
mother of pearl and coral, amber and ebony,
sensual perfumes of every kind –
as many sensual perfumes as you can;
and may you visit many Egyptian cities
to learn and go on learning from their scholars.

Keep Ithaka always in your mind.
Arriving there is what you're destined for.
But don't hurry the journey at all.
Better if it lasts for years,
so you're old by the time you reach the island,
wealthy with all you've gained on the way,
not expecting Ithaka to make you rich.

Ithaka gave you the marvellous journey.
Without her you wouldn't have set out.
She has nothing left to give you now.

And if you find her poor, Ithaka won't have fooled you.
Wise as you will have become, so full of experience,
you'll have understood by then what these Ithakas mean.

PROGRAM NOTES

Johannes Brahms

Andante, from Quartet in C minor for Piano and Strings, Opus 60

Completed in 1875, this last of three piano quartets by Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) has an overall brooding character that the composer associated with unrequited love. It contains themes and references that are connected to Clara Schumann, the composer and pianist who had a long and complex friendship with Brahms. The third movement, *Andante*, is the only one of the four centered in a major key. “Long-spun themes are necessary to the growth of a slow movement,” commented the late musicologist Arthur Cohn. “In this one, Brahms outdoes himself, and many others, forming a 16-measure theme that has breadth from beginning to end; it is poured-out, magnificent song, dimmed with tears.”

The entire C-minor quartet received a powerful performance by Jorja, Anthony Ross, Lydia Artymiw and the composer-violist Jessica Meyer just this past May 14, on an occasion that was especially important to Jorja. The program’s centerpiece that day was Jessica Meyer’s *Where You Love From*, an enthralling new chamber work with narrator, the most recent commission of the Steinberg Fleezanis Fund.

Johann Sebastian Bach

Adagio, from Concerto for Oboe and Violin in C minor, BWV 1060R

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) is believed to have based his C-minor concerto for two keyboard soloists on an earlier concerto for violin, oboe and strings that is lost to history. Annotator David Evan Thomas notes that its central *Adagio* “lopes lyrically along in 12/8 meter, and the texture is unique, with the two solo voices contrasting in timbre and strings accompanying in pizzicato”—an effect imitated here by piano. When Jorja Fleezanis and her dear friend and colleague oboist Basil Reeve performed the concerto with the Minnesota Orchestra in 1999, critic Michael Anthony observed that they “played elegantly and with skill, capturing just the right plaintive tone in the slow movement.” This performance also features Jorja’s former student Alan Snow, among the Minnesota Orchestra’s newest violinists.

Jules Massenet

Meditation from *Thaïs*

The operas of French composer Jules Massenet (1842-1912) that are still staged regularly today have powerfully emotional melodies. That quality is evident in this lyric, intimate and fragrant intermezzo from the 1894 opera *Thaïs*. Although it is often performed as a separate concert or recital piece, in its

original context the *Meditation* follows a lover's farewell in which he declares to the priestess Thaïs that "Your memory will perfume my soul."

Jorja loved this work deeply and chose it to present on many special occasions in her life.

Frédéric Chopin

Nocturne in C minor, Opus 48, No. 1

The 21 piano nocturnes of Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849) are among the finest short-form solo pieces for the instrument, and their free-flowing rhythms and songlike melodies influenced many composers who followed. Among the better-known nocturnes is this one cast in C minor; the first of a pair written in 1841, it is dedicated to Laure Duperré, a favorite pupil of the Polish composer. It conveys a sense of noble and powerful grief—although its middle section shifts to C major—beginning and ending in slow softness, its contrasting core erupting for a spell in imposing fortissimo octaves.

Garrick Ohlsson, who performs this nocturne today, was among Jorja's earliest, dearest and closest musical collaborators and friends. Together they established the FOG Trio, titled according to the last-name initials of the players: Fleezanis, Ohlsson and cellist Michael Grebanier. Garrick Ohlsson is also a preeminent Chopin interpreter, having recorded the composer's entire musical output.

Michael Daugherty

Big Two-Hearted River, from *Tales of Hemingway*

Tales of Hemingway, a cello concerto by Iowa native Michael Daugherty (b. 1954) that premiered in 2015 and was played just a few weeks ago by the Minnesota Orchestra and soloist Anthony Ross, springs from the life and writings of the great 20th-century literary figure Ernest Hemingway. The composer offers this description of the work's opening movement, named after an early Hemingway story, *Big Two-Hearted River*: "I have composed serene and passionate music that evokes a leitmotif in Hemingway's writing: his belief that one can be healed by the power of nature through exploring isolated outdoor terrains."

This story is set on the beautiful Northern Michigan peninsula where Jorja chose to build her retirement home, and where she was eager to return after each absence. The nature images in today's tribute video show views of Lake Michigan from her home in Lake Leelanau.

Soloist Anthony Ross and his wife, cellist Beth Rapiere, were among the Minnesota Orchestra musicians who were particularly close to Jorja, and their deep friendship, along with this music's serenity, led to its choice as the final work on today's program.

THE ARTISTS

Lydia Artymiow, piano, is known for her compelling performances as a chamber musician, recitalist and soloist with renowned symphonic and chamber ensembles across the U.S., Canada, Europe and Asia. She is also an award-winning recording artist and guest at major festivals, and she has earned rave reviews for her artistry, poetic gifts, communicative intelligence, warmth and distinctive and beautiful sound. Born in Philadelphia to Ukrainian parents, she graduated summa cum laude from that city's University of Arts and studied further with principal teachers including Freda Pastor Berkowitz and Gary Graffman, her mentor. Now a Professor Emerita of the University of Minnesota, she serves as a guest teacher at Juilliard.

Sam Bergman, viola, joined the Minnesota Orchestra in 2000 and now is Acting Assistant Principal Viola. Since 2005 he has produced, written and hosted more than 40 narrated shows for the Orchestra, many with conductor Sarah Hicks for the Inside the Classics series. He studied at Oberlin Conservatory and was a member of the Alabama Symphony before coming here. Away from Minnesota, he is principal viola of the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music in California and has brought several works featured there to program here. An audio interview he did with Jorja in 2009 is available at minnesotaorchestra.org/remembering-jorja.

Mary Jo Gothmann, piano, enjoys a varied career as a chamber musician, soloist, opera coach and organist. She has recently appeared with the Chamber Music Society of Minnesota, Bakken Trio, Hill House Chamber Players and other ensembles, and she regularly assists the Minnesota Orchestra and Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra. She works with prestigious opera companies from Santa Fe to New York City and has presented recitals with singers from the Metropolitan Opera, as well as with instrumentalists from orchestras across the U.S. She is a graduate of the Met's Young Artist program, the University of Minnesota, New England Conservatory and Saint Olaf College.

Erin Keefe, violin, concertmaster of the Minnesota Orchestra since 2009, has established a reputation as an artist who combines exhilarating temperament and fierce integrity. She is a past winner of an Avery Fisher Career Grant, the Pro Musicis Award and multiple international competitions, and appears as a guest concertmaster and concert soloist with major orchestras in the Americas, Europe and Asia, performing repertoire varying from Beethoven, Mendelssohn and Brahms to Kurt Weill. An Artist of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center since 2010 and regular collaborator with major artists and chamber ensembles, she is among the leading chamber musicians of her generation. She recently also joined the violin faculty at the Curtis Institute.

Garrick Ohlsson, piano, the only American to win first prize in the International Chopin Piano Competition, is recognized worldwide for his masterful Chopin interpretations, although he is also noted for superb performances of Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert and the Romantics. His enormous repertoire ranges over the entire piano literature, and he is esteemed for his symphonic, chamber and recital appearances and his many recordings—which include the complete works of Chopin and all 32 Beethoven piano sonatas. Garrick Ohlsson met Jorja in San Francisco in the early '80s, when, with cellist Michael Grebanier, they formed the FOG Trio, and from that time they remained close friends. We are grateful that he traveled from San Francisco to honor her in this special tribute program.

Basil Reeve, oboe, retired principal oboe of the Minnesota Orchestra, began his 41-year tenure here after serving as lead oboist with the Rotterdam Philharmonic and New York City Opera. His concerto repertoire ranges across four centuries, from Telemann and Bach to Christopher Rouse, whose Oboe Concerto he premiered with the Orchestra in 2009. A sought-after teacher, he has performed and taught at festivals including Spoleto and Round Top, and for 37 years he served as co-artistic director of the Musical Offering chamber ensemble. He was a close friend of Jorja Fleezanis and her late husband Michael Steinberg.

Anthony Ross, cello, joined the Minnesota Orchestra in 1988 and was appointed principal cello in 1991. He has performed virtually all the major cello concertos under the Orchestra's music directors and esteemed guest conductors and has won acclaim across the U.S. and abroad. He is a member of Accordo and the Chamber Music Society of Minnesota and is well known as an educator, having taught at Eastman and at major festivals. Michigan was his home as well as Jorja's, and they, along with his wife cellist Beth Rapier, enjoyed many dinners together in recent years. He has also performed in each of the Steinberg Fleezanis Fund's new works.

Alan Snow, violin, joined the Minnesota Orchestra this past September, which Jorja cheered—she had been his teacher and collaborator at Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music. He previously served as second associate concertmaster with the Omaha Symphony and concertmaster with symphonies in Indiana, at Music Academy of the West and Festival Napa Valley Academy, among others. He has given solo and chamber music performances with major ensembles internationally, has won numerous awards and has recorded chamber music albums exploring Mexico's rich classical music landscape.

Stephen Yoakam, actor/narrator, is known throughout the Twin Cities theater community for his 80-plus roles at the Guthrie Theater, including most recently in *The Tempest*, as well as *King Lear*, *Othello*, *The Crucible*, *An Iliad* and others; and as a founding member of Mixed Blood Theatre. He has received a McKnight Theater Artist award through the Playwrights' Center and has been featured as a narrator in performances with the Minnesota Orchestra and other ensembles. For each of the new works the Steinberg Fleezanis Fund has commissioned and premiered, he has been Jorja's choice as narrator.



Michael Steinberg & Jorja Fleezanis Fund

In Jorja's own words:

I established the Michael Steinberg and Jorja Fleezanis Fund as a memorial to my husband Michael, who believed deeply in those creative voices throughout history who were bold groundbreakers. He spent his life writing and talking about them, endlessly advocating that we have the curiosity to be open, and listen. The most significant gesture of gratitude I could give him was to establish a fund that would create a body of new works to celebrate his lifelong defense of composers, the pioneers, the ones pushing the boundaries of music ever outward. The Fund's goal is to award an annual commission to a young emerging composer who will bring together music and the written word. Through the Fund I also plan to publish a book containing a significant collection of Michael's *Boston Globe* reviews in the near future.



Jorja Fleezanis with Michael Steinberg at the 2009 Symphony Ball, for which Ball Chair Susan Campbell chose Jorja as Honorary Chair.

If you wish, you may direct memorials in Jorja's honor to the Michael Steinberg and Jorja Fleezanis Fund. Visit steinbergfleezanisfund.org to make an online gift, or mail a check to John Nuechterlein, Treasurer, 7607 West 14th Street, St. Louis Park, Minnesota 55426. (Donations to the Fund are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law.)

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

John Adams
Mari Carlson
Shelli Chase
Lydia Miller Choorapuzha

Adele Evidon
Susan Feder
Robert Guter
Warren Mack
John Nuechterlein

Deborah O'Grady
Garrick Ohlsson
Karl Paulnack
Edo deWaart

PREMIERE OF THE FUND'S FOURTH COMMISSIONED WORK

Mark your calendar for May 13, 2023, for the premiere of the Steinberg Fleezanis Fund's fourth commissioned work, *For the Sleepwalkers*, by composer Jungyoon Wie—who has just been announced as the 2022 winner of the G. Schirmer Prize for the Gabriela Lena Frank Creative Academy of Music. The performance will take place at Westminster Presbyterian Church in downtown Minneapolis.



For more information about the Fund and the premiere, visit steinbergfleezanisfund.org. Also there is a detailed biography of Jorja by Patricia Lewy, her friend of 60 years; in the future the Fund anticipates posting writings by others on both Jorja and Michael.

WE THANK YOU!

Many who cared deeply for Jorja Fleezanis worked hard to make today's tribute program possible.

We offer special thanks first of all to the Minnesota Orchestra family and to the Michael Steinberg and Jorja Fleezanis Fund—and also to these individuals:

Lydia Artymiw

Sam Bergman

Peter Borne

Michelle Miller Burns

Mari Carlson

Adele Evidon

Jonathan Fleezanis

Paris Fleezanis

Mary Jo Gothmann

Erin Keefe

Karen Koepp

Patricia Lewy

Nancy Lindahl

Warren Mack

John Nuechterlein

Garrick Ohlsson

Gwen Pappas

Karl Paulnack

Nick Peter

Basil Reeve

Anthony Ross

Carl Schroeder

Alan Snow

Karen Walhof

Stephen Yoakam





JORJA FLEEZANIS

Jorja Fleezanis, the extraordinary concertmaster of the Minnesota Orchestra from 1989 to 2009, died on September 9 at the age of 70 in her home on the Lake Leelanau Peninsula in Michigan, where she had recently retired. She was a barrier-breaking artist, chamber musician and pre-eminent teacher of orchestral technique. She was generous, warm-hearted, exuberant, intellectually curious and wholly committed to music, her colleagues and her students.

Jorja's magnificent presence made an indelible mark on the sound and spirit of the Minnesota Orchestra—as it did on virtually everyone in her orbit. Her dear friend, pianist Garrick Ohlsson, spoke of “the sunshine of her presence” and said: “Jorja was not only a transcendent musician but a collaborator of the most profound depth and humanity.” Edo de Waart, who recruited her to become the Minnesota Orchestra's first female concertmaster in 1989, called her “a force of nature” who “put more into her music than anyone I ever worked with.” Michael Tilson Thomas called her “one of the most sophisticated, devoted and omnivorously curious musicians” he ever knew. For Osmo Vänskä she was “a cornerstone player,” for the *New York Times* “a trailblazer,” for the *Pioneer Press* “a rebel with a violin.”

As concertmaster—only the second woman in that role in any major U.S. orchestra—Jorja was the public face and inspiring champion of the Minnesota Orchestra. She served many educational organizations, from the University of Minnesota to Interlochen to the Jacobs School at Indiana University, where she prepared the next generation of musicians to carry on the tradition of symphonic excellence and, as she put it, to “become a bridge between the public and the music.”

Being that bridge mattered greatly to her and to her eminent husband, musicologist Michael Steinberg, her partner through 26 years of marriage until his death in 2009. They cared passionately about new music, and in the solos she offered at Orchestra Hall, she was a powerful advocate for the new works audiences were not likely to hear from guest artists. Premiering works commissioned for her by the Minnesota Orchestra, John Adams' Violin Concerto and Sir John Tavener's *Ikon of Eros*, or commissions of the Schubert Club or Minnesota Public Radio, were to her “high-water marks” that “gave our community invaluable exposure to the creative voices of our time.” The Michael Steinberg and Jorja Fleezanis Fund she established after Michael's death is her effort to continue sharing their commitment to creating new works.

When she left the Minnesota Orchestra in 2009, she said: “For me, high praise would be: ‘Jorja, you never coasted.’ Early in my career I was told: ‘If you play like that in every concert, you'll burn out’ but I knew that wasn't right. Playing with full commitment gives back: it revitalizes me.”

That was how Jorja Fleezanis played music and lived life. We will forever thank her for her gifts.