

# Minnesota Orchestra

Osmo Vänskä, conductor | Joshua Bell, violin

Thursday, September 23, 2021, 7:30 pm | Orchestra Hall  
 Friday, September 24, 2021, 8 pm | Orchestra Hall

**John Stafford Smith/arr. Stanislaw Skrowaczewski**  
*The Star-Spangled Banner*

ca. 2'

**Kalevi Aho**

*Minea: Concertante Music for Orchestra*

ca. 18'

**Max Bruch**

*Scottish Fantasy for Violin and Orchestra, Opus 46*

ca. 28'

Prelude: Grave

Adagio cantabile

Allegro

Andante sostenuto

Finale: Allegro guerriero

*Joshua Bell, violin*

I N T E R M I S S I O N

ca. 20'

**Jessie Montgomery**

*Banner*

ca. 8'

**Ludwig van Beethoven**

Symphony No. 5 in C minor, Opus 67

ca. 36'

Allegro con brio

Andante con moto

Allegro

Allegro

[There is no pause before the last movement.]

**pre-concert**

**Concert Preview** with Phillip Gainsley, Sam Bergman, Natsuki Kumagai and Sophia Mockler

Thursday, September 23, 6:45 pm, Target Atrium

Friday, September 24, 7:15 pm, N. Bud Grossman Mezzanine

Minnesota Orchestra concerts are broadcast live on Friday evenings on stations of [YourClassical Minnesota Public Radio](#), including KSJN 99.5 FM in the Twin Cities.





**Osmo Vänskä**, conductor

Profile appears on page 8.



**Joshua Bell**, violin

With a career spanning almost four decades, Grammy Award-winning violinist Joshua Bell is one of the most celebrated classical artists of his era. Having performed with virtually every major orchestra in the world, Bell continues to maintain engagements as a soloist, recitalist, chamber musician, conductor and music director of the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields. Highlights of his 2021-22 season include leading the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields at the 2021 BBC Proms,

throughout Europe, and in the U.S. on tour; returning to the Philadelphia Orchestra for a play/conduct program, and to the Verbier Festival and the New York Philharmonic; and tours with the Israel Philharmonic and NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra as soloist. Bell was named 2010 “Instrumentalist of the Year” by Musical America and a 2007 “Young Global Leader” by the World Economic Forum, has been nominated for six Grammy Awards, and received the 2007 Avery Fisher Prize. He has also received the 2003 Indiana Governor’s Arts Award and a 1991 Distinguished Alumni Service Award from the Jacobs School of Music. In 2000, he was named an “Indiana Living Legend.”

Joshua Bell appears by arrangement with Park Avenue Artists and Primo Artists. He records exclusively for Sony Classical—a MASTERWORKS label. More: [parkavenueartists.com](http://parkavenueartists.com), [primoartists.com](http://primoartists.com), [joshuabell.com](http://joshuabell.com).

### one-minute notes

#### **Aho: *Minea***

In this concert opener premiered by the Minnesota Orchestra in 2009, scored for large orchestra with an expanded percussion section, each instrument is given a chance to shine as volume and tempo increase throughout.

#### **Bruch: *Scottish Fantasy***

Although he was German, Max Bruch was attracted to the folksongs of Scotland and Wales. His *Scottish Fantasy*, while not technically a violin concerto, spotlights the solo violin in a prelude and four movements—played without pause—ranging from a solemn prelude to a heroic, virtuoso close, and incorporating a variety of folk tunes.

#### **Montgomery: *Banner***

In *Banner*, Jessie Montgomery asks us: “What does an anthem for the 21st century sound like in today’s multi-cultural environment?” Her answer includes individual voices interacting with a unified ensemble through fragments of music from *The Star-Spangled Banner*, the Mexican national anthem, protest songs, Puerto Rican melodies, folk songs and more, blending together the musical icons of a diversified world.

#### **Beethoven: *Symphony No. 5***

The narrative of the Fifth Symphony is a classic example of progress from turbulence to victory. The four notes of the familiar opening are heard throughout the first movement. The *Andante* brings variations on a lovely, arching melody; the third movement seems ghostly and threatening. Beethoven then tunnels through the darkness, drums thudding, into bright C-major light.



## Kalevi Aho

**Born:** March 9, 1949,  
Forssa, Finland

### ***Minea*: Concertante Music for Orchestra**

**Premiered:** November 5, 2009

Kalevi Aho and Osmo Vänskä first met in 1989, when Vänskä conducted two of Aho's works in a recording with the Lahti Symphony Orchestra in their native Finland. Since then, Vänskä has led premieres of some two dozen compositions by Aho, and has played an active role in commissioning many of them. He has earned a reputation as an authoritative interpreter of Aho's music, and has conducted six of Aho's works at Orchestra Hall since becoming the Minnesota Orchestra's music director in 2003. In April 2020 Vänskä was scheduled to lead the Orchestra in a seventh Aho work, the percussion concerto *Sieidi*, in a program that was canceled early in the pandemic.

Widely regarded as Finland's most distinguished symphonist since Sibelius, Aho studied with Einojuhani Rautavaara at the Sibelius Academy. He has become a major figure in European musical circles and has worked as a freelance composer since 1994.

### made for Minnesota

*Minea* marked a bit of a departure for Aho, who is best known for multi-movement, large-scale works. "It was Osmo's idea that I compose a shorter piece for the Minnesota Orchestra," Aho recalled at the time of the premiere here in 2009. "We discussed the prospect in 2005 when the Orchestra played my Seventh Symphony. Osmo's proposal was a piece about 16 to 20 minutes, for a large orchestra, about 100 musicians. He wanted every musician of the Minnesota Orchestra to have an opportunity to shine."

That last specification yielded the subtitle, Concertante Music. "This piece really highlights the virtuosity of the Minnesota Orchestra," says Aho. "It also has some major solos for individual players, for example a very demanding contrabassoon solo toward the middle of the piece." As for the title: *Minea* is a play on Minneapolis. "When I finished composing, the work had no name. I began to twist the city name to find a title. I wondered about *Minnea*, then took away one 'n' and got *Minea*."

The form was left to Aho's discretion. He chose a free structure in several sections with a forward trajectory of tempi and volume.

*Minea* opens *Tranquillo*, then steadily accelerates to *Allegro*, *Furioso*, and finally *Presto*. "The idea is simply that the music becomes faster and faster toward the end," he explains. "It is like a single huge accelerando and crescendo."

### music of many cultures

Aho has long had an interest in non-Western music. *Minea* is one of several works in which he has expanded his musical vocabulary. "I have sought a new, fresh relation to tonality by using scales from other musical cultures," he explains. "I find rhythm in Western music less interesting than in African, Arabian or Indian music. In *Minea*, I have tried to enrich the rhythmic element by using percussion, metric influences and patterns from musical cultures" beyond the traditional classical style.

*Minea*'s score specifies a large percussion battery that requires four players. One instrument Aho includes is *darabukka*, a goblet-shaped drum prominent in North African and Middle Eastern music. "I really like the sound of a good *darabukka*," declares Aho. A typical phenomenon in Arabian music is rhythmical patterns that repeat through the whole piece. Those patterns can be long and complicated. "*Minea* also has complex rhythmic patterns, which are repeated dozens of times before they change," he continues.

"*Minea*'s form is also connected to classical Northern Indian music, which generally begins with a slow section lacking a clear pulse. Eventually a pulse is established, normally with a *tabla* player drumming. The tempo becomes faster and faster. At the end, the virtuosity and speed of the music increase to a maximum."

Aho compares the *Tranquillo* section that opens *Minea* to the opening of an Indian *raga*, which designates a particular scale pattern, patterns of rising and falling pitches, and mood. The ensuing *Allegro*, *Furioso* and *Presto* sections correspond to the more rhythmic sections of an Indian composition; however, he has added inflections from Arabian music. "And at the beginning," he notes, "you might also hear a little Japanese flavor."

**Instrumentation:** 3 flutes, piccolo, 3 oboes, English horn, 3 clarinets, bass clarinet, 3 bassoons, contrabassoon, 6 horns, 4 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, tenor drum, bass drum, large suspended cymbal, 2 small suspended cymbals, 2 bongos, chains, 2 congas, *darabukka*, *tamtam*, 4 tom-toms, *glockenspiel*, *vibraphone*, chimes, harp, piano and strings

Program notes by Laurie Shulman ©2017.

First North American serial rights only.





## Max Bruch

**Born:** January 6, 1838,  
Cologne, Germany

**Died:** October 2, 1920,  
Friedenau, Germany

### **Scottish Fantasy for Violin and Orchestra, Opus 46**

**Premiered:** September 1880

It may seem strange that so thoroughly German a composer as Max Bruch should have written a *Scottish Fantasy*, but in fact Bruch was quite familiar with the British Isles and their folk music. He served for two years as director of the Liverpool Philharmonic Society, traveled widely through England and Scotland, and loved the novels of Sir Walter Scott. All of these interests made themselves felt in Bruch's music: he composed *Twelve Scottish Folk Songs* in 1863 and an *Adagio on Celtic Melodies* for cello and piano in 1891. He was proud that he had found those themes on his travels, rather than taking them from books.

### not quite a concerto

By far the most famous of Bruch's uses of folk music is his *Scottish Fantasy*, composed in Cologne in 1879-80. Though Bruch consulted with the great German violinist Joseph Joachim about the violin part, he dedicated the piece to the Spanish virtuoso Pablo de Sarasate, who gave the first performance at the Bach Festival in Hamburg in September 1880. Bruch remained uncertain about the form of his piece, and in a letter to his publisher shortly after premiere he said: "Fantasy is too general and usually leads one to expect a shorter piece rather than a work with several movements. On the other hand, it cannot be called a concerto (which is also Joachim's opinion) since the form of the entire work is very free, and also because folk melodies are used."

Though Bruch sometimes referred to this piece as a "concerto," perhaps his subtitle is most accurate: "Fantasy for violin with orchestra and harp, freely treating Scottish folk melodies." It was important to him to note the central role played by the harp in this music: Bruch identified the violin and the harp as the principal instruments of Scottish folk music.

### "the glorious times of old"

The *Scottish Fantasy* falls into a prelude and four movements, played without break.

It is in the prelude, marked *Grave*, that one senses most clearly the influence of Sir Walter Scott's novels; many years after

composing this music, Bruch told a friend that the opening depicts "an old bard, who contemplates a ruined castle, and laments the glorious times of old." Solemn brass chords establish this atmosphere, and Bruch marks the violin's soaring entrance *Quasi recitativo*.

This leads on a trill into the main section of the opening movement, marked *Adagio cantabile*. The harp takes a central role, preparing the way for the entrance of the violin on the folk-tune "Auld Rob Morris."

The following *Allegro* is based on the tune "The Dusty Miller," which the violin sings over a bagpipe-like drone.

A slow transition that recalls "Auld Rob Morris" then leads into the *Andante sostenuto*, based on the love song "I'm Down for a Lack of Johnnie." The phrases of this touching song conclude with the "Scotch snap": each phrase ricochets off its last note to land on another note.

The movement draws to a quiet close, and the *Allegro guerriero* finale bursts to life. Here the violin's chords sound the principal melody, "Scots wha hae," believed to have been sung by the troops of Robert the Bruce as they routed the English cavalry at the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314. That war-cry becomes the basis for some virtuoso fiddling, and the *Scottish Fantasy* powers its way to a heroic close on "Scots wha hae."

**Instrumentation:** solo violin with orchestra comprising 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, harp and strings

*Program note by Eric Bromberger.*



## Jessie Montgomery

**Born:** 1981,  
New York City

### ***Banner***

**Premiered:** September 2014

debates over *The Star-Spangled Banner's* suitability as a national anthem have been going on nearly since the ink dried on Francis Scott Key's lyrics, penned after a battle in the War of 1812. (The melody originated decades earlier across the Atlantic, beginning its life in London as a gentlemen's club song.) Key, a power player from a wealthy slave-owning family in Maryland, was a slave owner himself, a fact which led Abolitionists to mock Key for the hypocrisy of his line "the land of the free." For these and other reasons, complex feelings about *The Star-Spangled Banner* have existed for generations, and it only became our national anthem in 1931.

### addressing the paradoxes

Necessarily, anyone who engages with the national anthem is engaging with more than just a piece of music: we're also engaging with what it means to be an American, and what it means to be free. This is especially true in our time and place, 16 months after George Floyd was murdered by police on a street corner ten minutes away from Orchestra Hall.

The Sphinx Organization commissioned *Banner* from American composer Jessie Montgomery upon the 2014 bicentennial of Key's poem. In *Banner*, Montgomery addresses the paradoxes raised by the anthem in a direct and powerful way. As she writes in her composer's notes, "For most Americans, the song represents a paradigm of liberty and solidarity against fierce odds, and for others it implies a contradiction between the ideals of freedom and the realities of injustice and oppression....I've made an attempt to answer the question: 'What does an anthem for the 21st century sound like in today's multi-cultural environment?'"

That answer employs symbolic instrumentation: a string quartet set against an orchestra, representing individuals interacting with a larger whole. Throughout the piece these two ensembles play off each other constantly. Sometimes they support each other; sometimes they drown each other out; sometimes they come into outright, cacophonous conflict.

### meaningful melodies and ideals

*Banner* opens with a burst of trills. The string quartet enters with a seemingly battered (albeit resolute) version of *The Star-Spangled Banner*. Then the first violin steps forward to offer a clear-eyed rendition of the Mexican national anthem. This new music energizes the orchestra and sets off a cascade of fleet-fingered notes in the violins and flutes.

Suddenly the piece enters an otherworldly interlude. The flutists bend pitches downward and the string players make clacking sounds using the wood of their bows. The low tom and kick drum start quietly pounding. Soon the string players are actually stomping their feet and drumming on their instruments. The orchestra has been transformed into a quintessentially American ensemble, the marching band.

The finale begins with four snappy chords from the string quartet. Here Montgomery layers scraps of meaningful melodies on top of each other: excerpts from protest songs, folk songs, Puerto Rican melodies and, yes, even *The Star-Spangled Banner* itself. At one point, a full seven of these pieces sound simultaneously. Heard together, they paint a dazzling portrait of what might happen when Americans' identities collide with, complement, and shape who we are and who we ought to be. In Montgomery's words, a modern tribute to the national anthem requires no less than "acknowledging the contradictions, leaps and bounds, and milestones that allow us to celebrate and maintain the tradition of our ideals."

**Instrumentation:** 2 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn, trumpet, timpani, snare drum, kick drum, low tom-tom and strings

*Program note by Emily Hogstad.*







## Ludwig van Beethoven

**Born:** December 16, 1770,  
Bonn, Germany

**Died:** March 26, 1827,  
Vienna, Austria

### Symphony No. 5 in C minor, Opus 67

**Premiered:** December 22, 1808

The opening measures of Ludwig van Beethoven's Fifth Symphony feature the most well-known notes in classical music, and Beethoven's Fifth is certainly the most famous symphony ever written. Music so white-hot in intensity, so universal in appeal, cries out for interpretation. To some, it is Fate knocking at the door. Others see it as the triumph of reason over chaos and evil. But engaging as such interpretations are, they tell us more about the people who make them than about the music itself. The sad truth is that this music is so over-familiar that we have lost the capacity to listen to it purely as music, to comprehend it as the astonishing and original musical achievement that it is.

#### the music

**allegro con brio.** The opening of the first movement is both very simple and charged with volcanic fury: it is an assaultive beginning, as Goethe instinctively recognized. The seemingly simple four-note figure that saturates this movement will reappear in many forms throughout the symphony, shaping the main theme, generating the rhythms and pulsing insistently in the background. It even becomes the horn fanfare that announces the second theme. The torrent unleashed at the beginning is unrelenting, and this brief movement hammers to a close with the issues it has raised still unresolved.

**andante con moto.** Next comes a variation-form movement based on two separate themes. Violas and cellos sing the broad opening melody in A-flat major; Beethoven reportedly made eleven different versions of this theme before achieving what he wanted. The second subject, in heroic C major, blazes out in the brass, and Beethoven then alternates these two themes, varying each as the movement proceeds.

**allegro.** The third movement returns to the C-minor urgency of the beginning. Lower strings introduce the sinuous opening idea that curls up out of the depths, and we are back in the darkness of the first movement. But horns quickly ring out the symphony's opening motto, and this scherzo, pitched between darkness

and light, never fully recovers its equilibrium. The trio, with its blistering fugal entries in the strings, subtly incorporates the symphony's opening rhythm as it proceeds. At just the point where one anticipates a return to the opening of the scherzo comes one of the most famous—and most original—moments in music.

**allegro.** Instead of going back, Beethoven pushes ahead. Bits of the scherzo flit quietly over an ominous pedal, and we seem to be gliding over a dark landscape as muted sunlight flickers around us through the clouds. Suddenly the final movement, a triumphant march in C major, bursts across that darkness like a shaft of golden light. At this same instant Beethoven widens his tonal palette, introducing three trombones (their first appearance ever in a symphony), contrabassoon and piccolo. The lower instruments add impressive heft to the orchestral sound, while the piccolo's slashing, silvery runs enliven much of this finale.

Near the middle of this movement Beethoven brings back some of the scherzo. It reminds us of the darkness surrounding this journey and briefly slows progress before the triumphant march bursts out again to drive the symphony to its close. The coda itself is extremely long, and the final cadence—extended almost beyond reason—is overpowering. No matter how familiar this music is, no matter how overlain it has become with extra-musical associations, the Fifth Symphony remains extraordinary music. Heard for itself, free of cultural baggage, it is as original and exciting and furious today as when it burst upon an unsuspecting audience on that cold winter night in Vienna two centuries ago.

**Instrumentation:** 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets,  
2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 2 horns, 2 trumpets,  
3 trombones, timpani and strings

Program note by **Eric Bromberger.**