



MINNESOTA
ORCHESTRA

Osmo Vänskä // MUSIC DIRECTOR

TCHAIKOVSKY SYMPHONY NO. 4

FRI AUG 27, 2021 8PM
SAT AUG 28, 2021 8PM

Minnesota Orchestra
Karina Canellakis, conductor
Jon Kimura Parker, piano

Sponsored by TCF Bank (now part of Huntington Bank).

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| William Grant Still | Symphony No. 1, <i>Afro-American</i> IV. Lento, con risoluzione - Più mosso | ca. 8' |
| Wolfgang Amadè Mozart | Concerto No. 21 in C major for Piano and Orchestra, K. 467 II. Andante III. Allegro vivace assai <i>Jon Kimura Parker, piano</i> | ca. 16' |
| Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky | Symphony No. 4 in F minor, Opus 36 I. Andante sostenuto - Moderato con anima II. Andantino in modo di canzona III. Scherzo: Pizzicato ostinato IV. Finale: Allegro con fuoco | ca. 44' |



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the Orchestra Hall auditorium.**

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The concert on Friday, August 27, is broadcast live on stations of **YourClassical Minnesota Public Radio**, including KSJN 99.5FM in the Twin Cities.

PROFILES



Karina Canellakis, conductor

Internationally acclaimed for her emotionally charged performances, technical command and interpretive depth, Karina Canellakis regularly appears with the top orchestras of North America, Europe and Australia. She

is the chief conductor of the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra and concurrently holds the title of principal guest conductor with both the London Philharmonic Orchestra and Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin. Her 2021-22 season includes significant debuts with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra and San Francisco Symphony, as well as return engagements with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra. She is also active on the operatic stage and is known to many in the classical music world for her virtuoso violin playing. More: opus3artists.com.



Jon Kimura Parker, piano

Pianist Jon Kimura Parker, the Minnesota Orchestra's creative partner for summer programming, is known for his passionate artistry and engaging stage presence, with multiple solo appearances at the Berlin Philharmonic,

London's South Bank, the Sydney Opera House and the Beijing Concert Hall. He is an Officer of The Order of Canada, his country's highest civilian honor. Parker, who is artistic advisor of the Orcas Island Chamber Music Festival, performs regularly with the Miró Quartet and is a founding member of the Montrose Trio and co-founder of Off The Score. He is professor of piano at the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University and artistic director of the Honens International Piano Competition. A more complete profile of Parker appears in the summer program and at minnesotaorchestra.org or jonkimuraparker.com.

ONE-MINUTE NOTES

Still: Symphony No. 1, *Afro-American*, mvt IV

Still's *Afro-American* Symphony blends two musical cultures into one, combining elements of jazz and African American spirituals with European classical forms. The fourth movement of his symphony—which opens tonight's program—originally carried the title *Aspiration*, and the music is appropriately filled with hope and optimism.

Mozart: Piano Concerto No. 21, mvts II and III

Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 21 captivates audiences with an unlikely balance of constant momentum and entrancing beauty. An inventive piano solo, colored by brass fanfares and woodwind melodies, makes this a star among Mozart's many concertos.

Tchaikovsky: Symphony No. 4

Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony, like Beethoven's Fifth, presents a Fate motif at the outset. This is an adventurous work carrying us through lyrical episodes as well as high drama on the way to an exuberant conclusion.



The Minnesota Orchestra has been nominated for the Orchestra of the Year award in the 2021 Gramophone Classical Music Awards. We need your vote in order to win! Vote now at gramophone.co.uk/awards.

PROGRAM NOTES

William Grant Still

Born: May 11, 1895, Woodville, Mississippi

Died: December 3, 1978, Los Angeles, California

Lento, con risoluzione – Piu mosso*, from Symphony No. 1, *Afro-American

Premiered: October 29, 1931

William Grant Still's achievements in classical music were impressive and groundbreaking: he was the first African American to have a symphony performed by

the New York Philharmonic, the first to conduct the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and the first to have an opera staged by a major opera company, the New York City Opera, to name just a few landmarks. The son of a bandmaster and a high school English teacher, he began his musical career working as an arranger for W.C. Handy and Artie Shaw. Following his naval service during World War I, he made his home in Harlem, where he took part in the Harlem Renaissance artistic and cultural movement. By the time of his death in 1978, he had composed nearly 200 works, including five symphonies.

Many of Still's works, particularly those composed in the 1920s and '30s, expressly explore African American history, identity and musical traditions, including the orchestral works *African Suite*, Symphony No. 1—known as the *Afro-American Symphony*—and *In Memoriam: The Colored Soldiers Who Died for Democracy*.

The *Afro-American Symphony*, which remains Still's best-known and most frequently-heard work, was premiered in October 1931 by the Rochester Philharmonic, marking the first time a major orchestra performed a symphony by an African American composer. (Two years later, Florence Price followed suit as the first African American woman to achieve the feat.)

a blues-infused symphony

In the *Afro-American Symphony*, Still follows the basic four-movement form of a traditional classical symphony, but gives it a uniquely American sound through the use of musical styles, rhythms and harmonies pioneered by African Americans—chief among them the blues. Still wrote that the music “offers the sorrows and the joys, the struggles and achievements of an individual Afro-American....Each movement has a suggestive title: the first is Longing, the second Sorrow, the third...Humor, and the fourth Sincerity. In it, I have stressed an original motif in the blues idiom, employed as a principal theme of the first movement, and appearing in various forms in the succeeding movements, where I have tried to present it in a characteristic manner.”

Today's performance features the symphony's final movement, titled *Lento, con risoluzione – Piu mosso*. In it, a slow and noble 12-bar blues theme, initially marked “organ-like,” is freely developed through assorted tempos. Still employs surprising key changes, sonic effects such as muted trumpets, and—just as we think the symphony may be set for a slow and soft close—a sudden leap to a rapid *Vivace* in 6/8 time, followed by a triumphant *Maestoso* finale.

Instrumentation: 3 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, English horn, 3 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, suspended cymbal, small cymbal, tamtam, wood block, glockenspiel, vibraphone and strings

Program note by Carl Schroeder.

Wolfgang Amadè Mozart

Born: January 27, 1756, Salzburg, Austria

Died: December 5, 1791, Vienna, Austria

Andante and Allegro vivace assai, from Concerto No. 21 in C major for Piano and Orchestra

Premiered: March 10, 1785

The year of this piano concerto, 1785, saw Wolfgang Amadè Mozart at the pinnacle of his professional fame and popularity in Vienna. Having moved there in 1781 to escape the oppressive measures and indignities he suffered at the Court of Salzburg, Mozart charted a course as musical freelancer in his newly-adopted city, and for a time was grandly successful: he became the darling of Vienna. It was in this happy environment of sweet success, exhilaration and financial security that Mozart wrote the majority of his piano concertos. No fewer than a dozen works poured forth (in addition to much other music, of course) during the brief period from 1784 to 1786.

Not only was Mozart the first great composer of piano concertos, but the sheer prodigality invites disbelief. Quantity is no guarantee of quality, but here we are looking at an unprecedented and unsurpassed body of masterpieces among the piano concerto genre.

another enormous success

In this field crowded with masterpieces, the Concerto No. 21 is widely regarded as one of the crowning achievements. It was completed on March 9, 1785, and received its first performance the following day at a benefit concert. As was the case with his other Viennese concertos, Mozart was the soloist, and he realized another enormous success.

andante. In the concerto's second movement, trumpets and timpani are silent. Muted strings, a divided viola section and pervasive *pizzicati* in the low strings give the movement its own special sound quality. The soloist's entry is again long delayed; once the piano begins, though, it plays nearly continuously for the

remainder of the movement. The orchestra henceforth maintains a mostly accompanimental role as the soloist spins out its long-breathed *cantabile* in lines of ravishing beauty. The mood of blissful repose is nevertheless dotted with poignant dissonances, which caused Mozart's father incorrectly to suspect copyist's errors.

allegro vivace assai. The finale is a high-spirited rondo. The opening theme goes—unusually in this case—first to the orchestra, not the soloist. The subtle interplay of soloist and orchestra that pervaded the first movement returns, as does the brilliant sound of trumpets and drums.

Instrumentation: solo piano with orchestra comprising flute, 2 oboes, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani and strings

Program note by Robert Markow.

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Born: May 7, 1840, Votkinsk, Russia

Died: November 6, 1893, St. Petersburg, Russia

Symphony No. 4 in F minor, Opus 36

Premiered: February 22, 1878

The Fourth Symphony dates from the most tumultuous period in Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky's difficult life. In July 1877, Tchaikovsky married one of his students at the Moscow Conservatory, Antonina Ivanovna Milyukova. The marriage was an instant disaster. Tchaikovsky abandoned his bride, tried to return, but retreated again. He fled to Western Europe, finding relief in the quiet of Clarens in Switzerland and San Remo in Italy. It was in San Remo—on the sunny shores of the Mediterranean and far from the chaos of his life in Moscow—that he completed the Fourth Symphony in January 1878.

The Fourth Symphony has all of Tchaikovsky's considerable virtues—great melodies, primary colors, and soaring climaxes—in this case fused with a superheated emotional content. Tchaikovsky said that the model for his Fourth Symphony had been Beethoven's Fifth, specifically in the way both symphonies are structured around a recurring motif, though perhaps also in the sense that the two symphonies begin in emotional turmoil and eventually win their way to release and triumph in the finale.

the music: a duel with fate

andante sostenuto–moderato con anima. The symphony opens with a powerful brass fanfare, which

Tchaikovsky described as “Fate, the inexorable power that hampers our search for happiness. This power hangs over our heads like the sword of Damocles, leaving us no option but to submit.” The principal subject of this movement, however, is a dark, stumbling waltz in 9/8 introduced by the violins. Like inescapable fate, the opening motto-theme returns at key points in this dramatic music, and it finally drives the movement to a furious close.

andantino in modo canzona. The two middle movements bring much-needed relief. *The Andantino*, in ternary-form, opens with a plaintive oboe solo and features a more animated middle section. Tchaikovsky described it: “Here is the melancholy feeling that overcomes us when we sit weary and alone at the end of the day. The book we pick up slips from our fingers, and a procession of memories passes in review...”

scherzo: pizzicato ostinato. The scherzo has deservedly become one of Tchaikovsky's most popular movements. It is a tour de force for strings, which play pizzicato throughout, with crisp interjections first from the woodwinds and then from brass. The composer noted: “Here are only the capricious arabesques and indeterminate shapes that come into one's mind with a little wine...”

finale: allegro con fuoco. Out of the quiet close of the third movement, the finale explodes to life. The composer described this movement as “the picture of a folk holiday” and said, “If you find no pleasure in yourself, look about you. Go to the people. See how they can enjoy life and give themselves up entirely to festivity.” Marked *Allegro con fuoco*, this movement simply alternates its volcanic opening sequence with a gentle tune that is actually the Russian folk tune “In the field there stood a birch tree.”

Given the catastrophic events of his life during this music's composition, Tchaikovsky may well have come to feel that Fate was inescapable, and the reappearance of the opening motto amid the high spirits of the finale represents the climax—musically and emotionally—of the entire symphony. This spectre duly acknowledged, Tchaikovsky rips the symphony to a close guaranteed to set every heart in the hall racing at the same incandescent pace as his music.

Instrumentation: 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, triangle and strings

Program note by Eric Bromberger.