

SHOWCASE | APRIL 2022



April 2022

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from the editor

In early March 2020, four days before COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic, the Minnesota Orchestra's last concert for an in-person audience was "The Russian Century," as violist Sam Bergman and conductor Sarah Hicks led a musical exploration of Russia's tumultuous history from the 1900s to present. Those in Orchestra Hall that night couldn't have imagined how the world would be reshaped in the next two years by a deadly and still-mutating virus—and that Russia would become a pariah state after waging war on its neighbor Ukraine.

Although many things have changed since that concert, there is still much to be gleaned from its subject matter of repressive governments, censorship, conformity, and the survival of artistic expression across times of war and peace. This month some of those issues come to the fore, as when the Orchestra and soloist Ning Feng play Dmitri Shostakovich's First Violin Concerto, a work Shostakovich was writing in 1948 when he and other Soviet composers were denounced by Stalin's regime for dwelling on "dark and fearful aspects of reality." Shostakovich shelved his concerto until after Stalin died. and his music continues to resound decades after the attempt to snuff his career.

History doesn't repeat, but it often rhymes—according to an aphorism sometimes attributed to Mark Twain—and in the years to come, we will surely hear stories that rhyme with past instances of art and humanity triumphing over oppression and destruction, and will be an important part of the story of our century.

Carl Schrader

Carl Schroeder, Editor editor@mnorch.org

about the cover

R. Douglas Wright, the Minnesota Orchestra's principal trombone since 1995—the year in which Osmo Vänskä's predecessor Eiji Oue took the reins as the Orchestra's music director. While with the Orchestra, Wright has premiered concertos by Kurt Schwertsik and James M. Stephenson. Photo: Courtney Perry.

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Sarah Hicks, page 30 Photo: Josh Kohanek

Shostakovich, Moussa and Ravel

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Minnesota Orchestra Kevin John Edusei, conductor

Ning Feng, violin

Thursday, April 7, 2022, 11 amOrchestra HallFriday, April 8, 2022, 8 pmOrchestra Hall

Dmitri Shostakovich	Concerto No. 1 in A minor for Violin and Orchestra, Opus 77 Nocturne Scherzo Passacaglia Burlesca <i>Ning Feng, violin</i>	ca. 36'
	INTERMISSION	ca. 20'
Samy Moussa	Nocturne	ca. 14'
Maurice Ravel	Suite No. 2 from <i>Daphnis and Chloe</i> Lever du jour Pantomime Danse générale	ca. 16'
Maurice Ravel	Boléro	ca. 14′

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.

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Kevin John Edusei, conductor

German conductor Kevin John Edusei, now debuting with Minnesota Orchestra, conducts widely across Europe and North America, dividing his time between the concert hall and opera house. His 2021-22 season features many debuts, including with the Dallas, Baltimore and Indianapolis symphony orchestras and at Alice Tully Hall (New York City) with the Juilliard Orchestra, and in Europe with the Royal Philharmonic, City of Birmingham Symphony, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic orchestras, Essen Philharmonic and Radio Symphony Orchestra Berlin. He also returns to Scotland to conduct a joint concert with the BBC Scottish and Royal Scottish

National symphony orchestras in Glasgow. The 2021-22 season marks Edusei's eighth and final season as chief conductor of the Munich Symphony Orchestra. He takes up the position of principal guest conductor with the Fort Worth Symphony in the 2022-23 season. More: <u>intermusica.co.uk</u>, <u>kevinjohnedusei.com</u>.



Ning Feng, violin

Violinist Ning Feng performs around the globe with major orchestras and conductors, and in recital and chamber concerts in some of the most important international series and festivals. He has toured Europe, Asia and Australia with the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra; and China with many orchestras including the Budapest Festival Orchestra, Berlin Konzerthaus Orchester and Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra. Other career highlights to date include performances with the Royal Philharmonic, City of Birmingham Symphony, BBC Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, National Symphony of Washington, D.C., Helsinki Philharmonic, Bavarian Radio Symphony, Frankfurt Radio Symphony and Russian National Symphony orchestras. In the 2020-21 season, he was artist in residence with the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra. He records for Channel Classics, and his most recent disc features concertos of Paganini and Vieuxtemps. More: intermusica.co.uk, ningfengviolin.com.

one-minute notes

Shostakovich: Violin Concerto No. 1

Once hidden within the repressive climate of Stalin's regime, Shostakovich's concerto alternates somber movements with brighter, virtuosic passages. A spectacular cadenza links the ominous third movement with the work's striking, fast-paced finale.

Moussa: Nocturne

In Moussa's Nocturne, the center of gravity is pitched in the lower registers, with a few moments of brightness. The final minutes create a ghostly atmosphere through unusual modern techniques.

Ravel: Suite No. 2 from Daphnis and Chloe; Boléro

The ancient lovers in Ravel's *Daphnis and Chloe* Suite are shown in happy moments. Rippling woodwinds announce sunrise; solo flute represents Daphnis telling the tale of Pan and Syrinx; and the couple celebrates with a joyous dance. Then, over a beguiling and insistent rhythm, *Boléro* repeats a single hypnotic melody on an ever-shifting combination of instruments. With each change in orchestral color, the tension builds—to a climax of shattering intensity.



Dmitri Shostakovich

Born: September 25, 1906, St. Petersburg, Russia Died: August 9, 1975, Moscow, Russia

Concerto No. 1 in A minor for Violin and Orchestra, Opus 77

Premiered: October 29, 1955

uring the summer of 1947, in the icy political atmosphere that followed military victory in World War II, Dmitri Shostakovich began what seemed an entirely "safe" composition. For years he had been an admirer of violinist David Oistrakh, and that summer—in the village of Kellomäki on the Gulf of Finland he began a violin concerto for his friend. He sketched the first movement that July and completed it in November after returning to his teaching position in Moscow. The second movement, a scherzo, came quickly and was done by the first week in December, while the third, a passacaglia, was completed in January 1948.

a demand for conformity

But as Shostakovich continued to work on the concerto, the political and artistic climate around him turned deadly. This was the period of the crackdown on Soviet artists led by Stalin's ideological pointman, Andrei Zhdanov. At the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Composers in February 1948, Shostakovich along with Prokofiev, Khachaturian, Miaskovsky and others was attacked for his "formalistic distortions and antidemocratic tendencies" and for writing "confused, neuropathological combinations which transform music into cacophony," music that "dwells too much on the dark and fearful aspects of reality."

Forced to read a humiliating apology and to promise to mend his ways, Shostakovich quickly learned that the government's demand for conformity took more menacing forms. He was dismissed from his teaching positions, his music was effectively banned, and there is evidence that the Shostakovich family subsisted during this period on the savings of their housekeeper. The death of Stalin in 1953 seemed to promise a more liberal artistic atmosphere in Russia, but Shostakovich held the concerto back for two more years. It was finally premiered, by Oistrakh and the Leningrad Philharmonic under Yevgeni Mravinsky, on October 29, 1955, eight years after its composition.

spectacular and virtuosic

From the perspective of a half-century later, it seems extraordinary that this music could have been considered dangerous, either to its

audience or its composer. In many respects, the most remarkable feature of this concerto is how old-fashioned it is. It is a big virtuoso piece, conceived with the talents of a specific performer in mind and offering that soloist a cadenza so spectacular that it almost becomes a separate movement in itself. The Concerto in A minor has become so frequently performed and recorded that the fact that Shostakovich had to keep it hidden for so many years speaks volumes about the political and artistic climate in Russia during Stalin's paranoid final decline.

We need not know any of its history, however, to feel the greatness of this music. The concerto has some unusual features. It has two dark slow movements, both of them almost nightmusic movements (one of them in fact is called *Nocturne*), and these alternate with two bright fast movements, both of which have titles that imply a degree of play: *Scherzo* and *Burlesca*. For the scoring, Shostakovich does without trumpets and trombones, but his use of xylophone, harp and celesta gives this concerto a distinct, sometimes eerie, sound.

the concerto: slow movements that haunt

nocturne. The opening movement truly is night-music. The lower strings' rocking opening supplies the shape of the movement's main theme, and the solo violin ruminates on this shape as it rises above their somber sound. The music builds to a climax marked appassionato. Then Shostakovich mutes the violin, and the music turns subdued and dark. Much of the writing for the solo violin is very high here, and eventually the violin comes swirling down out of the dark moonlight. Some aggressive double stopping leads to the wonderful close, where the muted violin climbs to the top of its range, its high E shimmering above the icy suspension of the orchestra's final chord.

scherzo. By contrast, the *Scherzo* is all hard edges, dancing and skittering along its 3/8 meter. While there are episodes on other themes, it is the strident energy of the opening that drives this movement to its unrelenting close.

passacaglia. With horn fanfares ringing above them, lower strings stamp out the ground bass of the *Passacaglia* theme, which stretches out over 17 measures, then begins to repeat quietly. A woodwind choir sings a somber variation before the solo violin enters, soaring above the ominous tread of the passacaglia subject far below. Its plaintive opening melody gives way to more impassioned material, and at the climax the violin stamps out the passacaglia ground in fortissimo double stops.

Gradually this falls away, the orchestra drops out, and—as a bridge between the third and fourth movements—Shostakovich offers his soloist a tremendous cadenza. This begins simply (marked "quiet but majestic") as the violin explores bits of the

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passacaglia ground, but gradually it gathers speed and accelerates straight into the concluding *Burlesca*.

burlesca. "Burlesque" implies a mocking or joking character, and this movement is at times almost sneering. The stinging sound of the xylophone colors its jaunty main idea, and this finale, in the general shape of a rondo, does not relax its pace for an instant. At the close, the violin rushes from the bottom of its range to the very top as the music hurtles to its brusque final chords.

It is no surprise that Shostakovich kept this music hidden during Stalin's repressive final years. There is nothing tragic about this work, nor is there anything ideologically dangerous about it beyond the fact that it is simply a very serious piece of music. In those uncertain years, that may have been enough to make it dangerous.

Beautifully written for one of the great violinists, the concerto makes a brilliant impact in live performance, especially in its glittering final movement. But long after the brilliance of the finale has ended, it is the haunting power of the slow movements—the somber *Nocturne* and the heartfelt *Passacaglia*—that stays to haunt the memory.

Instrumentation: solo violin with orchestra comprising 3 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 3 oboes (1 doubling English horn), 3 clarinets (1 doubling bass clarinet), 3 bassoons (1 doubling contrabassoon), 4 horns, tuba, timpani, tam-tam, tambourine, xylophone, 2 harps, celesta and strings

Program note by Eric Bromberger.



Samy Moussa

Born: June 1, 1984, Montreal, Canada

Nocturne Premiered: February 17, 2015

orn in Montreal and based in Berlin for the past decade, conductor and composer Samy Moussa is enjoying great success in North America and Europe, recently highlighted by the Vienna Philharmonic's premiere of his *Elysium* last September and his appointment as the Toronto Symphony Orchestra's artist in residence for the 2021-22 season. His impressive catalog of compositions includes two operas, an oratorio, 17 pieces for orchestra including two symphonies and two concertos, and numerous choral, chamber, solo and multimedia works.

Moussa's Nocturne was completed in 2014 and premiered by the Montreal Symphony under conductor Kent Nagano on February 17, 2015. In 2016, Moussa finished his Symphony No. 1, titled *Concordia*, and included the Nocturne as the third of four movements. The Montreal Symphony and Nagano premiered the symphony in its full form in June 2017; Nocturne is now performed by orchestras both as a standalone piece and as part of the larger symphony.

night

Moussa's captivating portrait of the night is moonlit and deeply atmospheric from start to finish. Even at its brightest moments, there is an intriguing darkness, an otherworldliness, present. The work opens with a mysterious horn call; it is slow-paced, intentional and beautiful, supported by low strings, bassoons and clarinet, each layering in cautiously and increasing the intensity of the horn's original theme.

It soon becomes clear that this Nocturne will be different from a traditional Romantic-era nocturne, especially in the way it utilizes the lowest instruments in the orchestra as Moussa leans into the ominous, rich tones of the bass clarinet, contrabassoon, tuba and basses.

In an interview with the Houston Symphony about Nocturne, Moussa explained: "I was interested in creating a piece where the center of gravity would be pitched in the lower registers. It allowed the few moments of brightness to be—hopefully—more extraordinary."

Throughout 12 extraordinary minutes, the swells and diminuendos move like a chest rising through deep breaths and long exhales. The pace quickens and energizes with staccato notes in the bassoons and bass clarinets, as glittering high woodwinds and trumpets add spectacular flashes of light. Grumbling, agitated low brass and timpani interjections punctuate long, ominous chords, but the music repeatedly returns to the haunting opening theme. After a journey through extremes of dark and light, the stillness of night settles in. Slowly and methodically, the orchestra fades away until only the deepest tones of the ensemble remain.

a deeper meaning

Following the premiere of Nocturne in Montreal, a review in *Musical Toronto* remarked that Moussa's orchestration seems to be "harnessed to a deeper meaning."

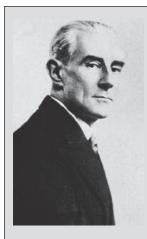
Nocturnes are meant to tell stories of the energy, the mystery and the beauty of the night. With this piece, however, Moussa

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takes that a step beyond. "I build sounds and invent music with my own fantasy," he also said in the interview with the Houston Symphony. In this composition, he transports us to fantastical place, into the unexplored depths of our dreams, guided only by the light of the moon.

Instrumentation: 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets (1 doubling piccolo trumpet), 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, Chinese cymbals, large and small suspended cymbals, tambourine, 3 triangles, glockenspiel, harp, piano (doubling celesta) and strings

Program note by Emma Plehal.



Maurice Ravel

Born: March 7, 1875, Ciboure, Pyrénées-Atlantiques, France Died: December 28, 1937, Paris, France

Suite No. 2 from Daphnis and Chloe Premiered: June 8, 1912 (complete ballet)

n 1909 the impresario Serge Diaghilev brought the Ballets Russes to Paris as part of his ongoing presentation of things Russian (art, sculpture, icons, opera and ballet) in the City of Lights, and that summer Diaghilev approached Maurice Ravel and asked him for a score. The French composer, then 34, could not have had more distinguished collaborators: Diaghilev oversaw the project, Mikhail Fokine was choreographer, Leon Bakst designed the sets, and Vaslav Nijinsky and Tamara Karsavina would dance the lead roles.

gentle story, stormy collaboration

But it proved a stormy collaboration. For the subject, Diaghilev proposed the gentle love story of Daphnis and Chloe, a pastoral by the Greek Longus (fourth or fifth century B.C.). A young man and woman, abandoned as infants by their respective parents and raised by a shepherd and a goatherd, meet and fall in love. She is kidnapped by pirates but rescued by the intercession of the god Pan, and the ballet concludes with general rejoicing.

The story seems simple enough, but quickly the collaborators were at odds. Part of the problem was that while Bakst had conceived

an opulent Eastern setting for the ballet, Ravel imagined "a vast musical fresco, less thoughtful of archaism than of fidelity to the Greece of my dreams, which identifies quite willingly with that imagined and depicted by late 18th-century French artists." Paintings of the verdant sets suggest that Ravel's conception described by Madeline Goss as "a typically 18th-century atmosphere of Watteau shepherdesses"—finally prevailed.

"into our hearts like a comet"

The *Daphnis* premiere was conducted by Pierre Monteux at the Châtelet Théâtre on June 8, 1912. The ballet had an overwhelming impact. Poet and dramatist Jean Cocteau, then only 23, asserted: "*Daphnis and Chloe* is one of the creations which fell into our hearts like a comet coming from a planet, the laws of which will remain to us forever mysterious and forbidden."

Ravel drew two suites from the ballet for concert performance. The familiar Suite No. 2 constitutes the closing celebration of the ballet. Rippling flutes and clarinets echo the sound of rivulets as Daphnis awakes and the sun comes up. This glorious music is derived from the soaring horn melody heard at the very beginning of the ballet. Chloe appears, and the joyful lovers are united. Told that Pan had saved her in memory of the nymph Syrinx, Daphnis and Chloe now act out that tale in pantomime, and Daphnis mimes playing on reeds, a part taken in the orchestra by an opulent flute solo. The two collapse into each other's arms and pledge their love. The stage is filled with happy youths, whose Danse générale brings the ballet to a thrilling conclusion.

Instrumentation: 3 flutes (2 doubling piccolo), alto flute, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, E-flat clarinet, bass clarinet, 3 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 4 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, castanets, tambourine, triangle, glockenspiel, 2 harps, celesta and strings

Program note by Eric Bromberger.

Maurice Ravel

Boléro

Premiered: November 22, 1928

hough it is most often heard today in the concert hall, Ravel's *Boléro* began life as a ballet—the dancer Ida Rubinstein asked the composer for a ballet with a Spanish atmosphere, and he wrote this score for her in 1928. In Rubinstein's choreography, a young woman in gypsy dress mounts a table in a smoky tavern and begins to dance. Men surround the table and begin to pound out the bolero rhythm as her dance grows in excitement. The

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climax brings an explosion—knives are drawn—but trouble is avoided and everyone vanishes with the last chord. So exciting was the premiere in Paris on November 22, 1928, that the audience rushed the stage and Rubinstein herself barely escaped injury in the resulting tumult.

Originally, a bolero was a moderately-paced Spanish dance in triple-time in which the dancers sang and accompanied themselves with castanets. Ravel excludes the sound of voices and begins with the simplest of openings: a snare drum lays out the two-measure rhythmic pattern that will repeat throughout *Boléro*.

Solo flute plays the languorous main idea, a lilting, winding melody that is repeated and extended by other wind instruments. And then Ravel simply repeats this material, subtly varying its orchestration as it gradually grows louder. The music is full of striking effects that make use of uncommon instruments (two kinds of saxophone, E-flat clarinet and oboe d'amore) or set instruments in unusual registers. At the close, he makes one harmonic adjustment, shifting from C major to E-flat major, and in this context even so simple a modulation seems a cataclysmic event. Grinding dissonances drive *Boléro* to a thunderous close on a great rush of sound.

Even before its use in the movie 10, Ravel's *Boléro* was one of the most famous works ever written for orchestra, familiar to millions around the world and a favorite even with those who claim to dislike classical music. Yet this dazzling piece is remarkable for the utter simplicity of its material. Ravel himself described it as "17 minutes of orchestra without any music" and said that it was "one very long, gradual crescendo." But it is the "non-musical" materials—the hypnotic rhythms, subtle shifts of instrumental color, avoidance of any kind of development, cumulative expressive power—that make *Boléro* such an exciting experience.

Instrumentation: 2 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), piccolo, 2 oboes (1 doubling oboe d'amore), English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, E-flat clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, soprano saxophone, tenor saxophone, 4 horns, 4 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, cymbals, 2 snare drums, tam-tam, bass drum, harp, celesta and strings

Program note by Eric Bromberger.

c⊕da

The Minnesota Orchestra, then known as the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra, gave its initial performance of **Dmitri Shostakovich's First Violin Concerto** on November 6, 1964, at Northrop Memorial Auditorium, with Stanislaw Skrowaczewski conducting and Leonid Kogan as soloist. Three days earlier, incumbent President Lyndon B. Johnson defeated Barry Goldwater in a landslide election, winning his first and only full four-year term after assuming the office following the assassination of John F. Kennedy a year earlier. Four of the last five soloists who have performed the work with the Minnesota Orchestra are women: Hilary Hahn in 1998, Viktoria Mullova in 2001, Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg in 2004 and Lisa Batiashvili in 2007.

This week's performances of **Samy Moussa's Nocturne** are the Minnesota Orchestra's first performance of the work, but the second time the ensemble has played his music in less than a month; his *Crimson* was heard on March 10 and 11 under the baton of Fabien Gabel.

The Orchestra first performed **Maurice Ravel's Suite No. 2 from Daphnis and Chloe**—and gave its initial rendition of the Suite No. 1 as well—on December 4, 1924, at the St. Paul Auditorium Theater, with Henri Verbrugghen on the conductor's podium. At that concert, the featured pianist soloist was renowned composer Percy Grainger, who later toured with the Orchestra in 1928 and 1948.

The Orchestra introduced **Ravel's** *Boléro* to its repertoire on March 6, 1930, also at the St. Paul Auditorium Theater with Verbrugghen conducting. It was one of the first pieces ever recorded at Orchestra Hall, at sessions in October 1974.

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Minnesota Orchestra

Chia-Hsuan Lin, conductor

G. Phillip Shoultz, III, host

Maria Dively, American Sign Language interpreter

Saturday, April 9, 2022, 2 pm | Orchestra Hall

Huang Ruo	Girl from Da Ban City, from Folk Songs for Orchestra	ca. 4'
Edvard Grieg	Morning Mood, from Peer Gynt, Suite I, Opus 46	ca. 4'
Kareem Roustom	How Beautiful the Light of the Rising Sun, from Aleppo Songs for Orchestra	ca. 3'
Roy Harris	Interlude, from A Folk Song Symphony	ca. 3'
Béla Bartók	Romanian Folk Dances Joc cu bâta Brâul Pe loc Buciumeana Poarga româneasca Maruntel Maruntel	ca. 7'
Modest Mussorgsky	Gopak, from The Fair at Sorochinski	ca. 3'
Florence Price	Juba, from Symphony No. 3 in C minor	ca. 5'
José Pablo Moncayo	Huapango	ca. 8'

thank you

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Artists



Chia-Hsuan Lin, conductor

Chia-Hsuan Lin, who was appointed associate conductor of the Richmond Symphony Orchestra in 2016, began her sixth season with the Richmond Symphony in 2021 and was recently named the interim music director of the Contemporary Youth Orchestra of Cleveland. She enjoys frequent guest appearances around the world and made her Minnesota Orchestra debut in February 2020, conducting a week of student and family concerts centered on Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*. She has also led the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, Virginia Symphony, Fort Wayne Philharmonic, Williamsburg Symphony, Richmond Ballet, Peninsula Music Festival Orchestra, Virginia Commonwealth University Symphony Orchestra, Academy of Taiwan Strings and Taipei Philharmonic Chorus. A champion of the next generation of musicians and composers, she has led a growing list of premieres including new works by Chris Thile, Stephen Prutsman, Laura Schwendinger and Jennifer Jolley. Lin previously served as music director of the Richmond Symphony Orchestra of Chicago, and she was assistant conductor of opera at the CCM Spoleto Music Festival in Italy. More: <u>chiahsuanlin.com</u>.



G. Phillip Shoultz, III, host

G. Phillip Shoultz, III, who is known for fostering community and inspiring action among people of all ages and abilities, enjoys a multifaceted career as artist, educator, consultant, speaker and pastoral musician. He is the associate artistic director of VocalEssence, where his most visible impact is seen through his visionary leadership as founding conductor of the VocalEssence Singers Of This Age and through his engaging *Take 5 with GPS* daily livestream and series of instructional videos. He also serves Westwood Lutheran Church as Cantor for Music, Worship and the Arts, and he frequently appears throughout the U.S. as a guest clinician, adjudicator and consultant. Each year, he serves as mentor to educators through classroom visits and as an adjunct faculty member in the Graduate Music Education program at the University of St. Thomas. He is the winner of the 2015 American Choral Directors Association Graduate Student Conducting Competition, and he has appeared as a conducting fellow with the Oregon Bach Festival, Chorus America, Choral Music Experience Institute and several other summer programs. More: vocalessence.org.



Maria Dively, American Sign Language interpreter

Maria Dively has been an American Sign Language interpreter for eight years in Minnesota and California. A NIC/Trilingual Interpreter, she is a graduate of North Central University in Minneapolis. She was born and raised in Puerto Rico and has been involved personally and professionally in the Deaf community since college. From a young age, she has been involved with music as a woodwind player, percussionist and steel drums player, among other roles.

Minnesota Orchestra

Thomas Søndergård, conductor

Wednesday, April 13, 2022, 7 pm Orchestra Hall

Benjamin Britten	Four Sea Interludes, from Peter Grimes, Opus 33a Dawn: Lento e tranquillo Sunday morning: Allegro spiritoso Moonlight: Andante comodo e rubato Storm: Presto con fuoco	ca. 16'
lgor Stravinsky	Symphony in Three Movements Allegro Andante – Interlude Con moto	ca. 21'
Claude Debussy	La Mer From Dawn to Noon on the Sea Play of the Waves Dialogue of Wind and Sea	ca. 23'



Thomas Søndergård, conductor

Danish conductor Thomas Søndergård is the current music director of the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, an appointment that followed six seasons in which he served as principal guest conductor. Previously, he served as principal conductor of the BBC National Orchestra of Wales and as principal conductor and musical advisor of the Norwegian Radio Orchestra. Recent highlights of his tenure with the RSNO have included tours to China and the U.S., premieres of new commissions and conducting Wynton Marsalis' Violin Concerto with Nicola Benedetti. This season, he conducts the Montreal Symphony, Bergen Philharmonic, Malmö Symphony, NDR Radiophilharmonie Hannover, Royal Danish Academy of Music, Royal Danish Opera (*Die Walküre* and New Year concerts), London Philharmonic Orchestra and Danish National Symphony Orchestra, among other ensembles. He has been invited to perform with many of the world's finest orchestras including the Berlin Philharmonic, Leipzig Gewandhausorchester, Royal Concertgebouw, Chicago Symphony and London Symphony. More: <u>askonasholt.com</u>.



Britten: Four Sea Interludes, from Peter Grimes

Britten's suite offers glimpses of his masterful opera set in a fishing village on the Suffolk coast, complete with sounds of sea birds, the surf—and church bells, reflecting a deadly conflict between villagers and an outcast.

Stravinsky: Symphony in Three Movements

Stravinsky's World War II-era symphony bears the mark of its age—at turns violent, somber, militant and triumphant, with emphasis on solo piano and harp. In the finale, a powerful fugue heralds the fall of the Nazis.

Debussy: La Mer

Debussy's classic oceanic portrait recreates the feeling of a visit to the sea. Two slower movements surround a scherzo as a kaleidoscopic stream of musical fragments eventually builds to a stormy, dissonant close.



Osmo Vänskä // MUSIC DIRECTOR

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STAR WARS: RETURN OF THE JEDI Feature Film with the Minnesota Orchestra

Sarah Hicks, conductor

Thursday, April 21, 2022, 7:30 pmOrchestra HallFriday, April 22, 2022, 7:30 pmOrchestra HallSaturday, April 23, 2022, 7:30 pmOrchestra HallSunday, April 24, 2022, 2 pmOrchestra Hall

John Williams

Star Wars Film Concert Series Star Wars: Return of the Jedi

> Starring Mark Hamill Harrison Ford Carrie Fisher Billy Dee Williams Anthony Daniels as C-3PO

Co-Starring David Prowse as Darth Vader Kenny Baker as R2-D2 Peter Mayhew as Chewbacca Frank Oz as Yoda

Directed by Richard Marquand Produced by Howard Kazanjian Story by George Lucas Screenplay by Lawrence Kasdan and George Lucas Executive Producer George Lucas Music by John Williams



Original Motion Picture soundtrack available at Disneymusicemporium.com

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Today's performance lasts approximately 2 hours and 35 minutes, including one 20-minute intermission. Please remain seated until the conclusion of the end credits.

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Artists

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Star Wars Film Concert Series Production Credits

President, Disney Music Group Ken Blunt

SVP/GM, Disney Concerts Chip McLean

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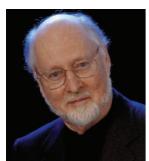
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Sarah Hicks, conductor



John Williams, composer

Sarah Hicks, the Minnesota Orchestra's principal conductor of Live at Orchestra Hall, has led a broad range of programs since joining the Orchestra as assistant conductor in 2006. Her notable projects here have included co-creating the Inside the Classics and Sam & Sarah series with Orchestra violist Sam Bergman; conducting a live-in-concert recording with singer-rapper Dessa; and leading original Orchestra programs and Movies & Music concerts. Since fall 2020 she has been the on-camera host and writer of the Twin Cities PBS broadcast and online livestream series *This Is Minnesota Orchestra*. A specialist in film music and the film in concert genre, she premiered Pixar in Concert and Disney-Pixar's Coco in Concert. Her live concert recording of *A Celebration of the Music of Coco* at the Hollywood Bowl can be seen on Disney+ and her work on *The Little Mermaid Live* was broadcast on ABC. More: minnesotaorchestra.org.

In a career spanning more than five decades, John Williams has become one of America's most accomplished and successful composers for film and for the concert stage, and he remains one of our nation's most distinguished and contributive musical voices. He has composed the music for more than 100 films, including all nine Star Wars saga films, as well as the first three Harry Potter films, Superman, Memoirs of a Geisha, Home Alone and The Book Thief. His 48-year artistic partnership with director Steven Spielberg has resulted in many of Hollywood's most acclaimed and successful films, including Schindler's List, E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial, Jaws, Jurassic Park, Close Encounters of the Third Kind, the Indiana Jones films, Saving Private Ryan, Lincoln, The BFG and The Post. Williams has composed themes for four Olympic Games. He served as music director of the Boston Pops Orchestra for 14 seasons and remains its laureate conductor. He has composed numerous works for the concert stage including two symphonies as well as concertos commissioned by many of America's most prominent orchestras. Williams has received five Academy Awards and 52 Oscar nominations (making him the second-most nominated person in the history of the Oscars), seven British Academy Awards, 24 Grammys, four Golden Globes and five Emmys. In 2003, he received the Olympic Order (the International Olympic Committee's highest honor) for his contributions to the Olympic movement. In 2004, he received the Kennedy Center Honors, and in 2009 he received the National Medal of Arts, the highest award given to artists by the U.S. government. In 2016 he received the 44th Life Achievement Award from the American Film Institute-the first time a composer was honored with this award.

Upcoming Concerts

SPRING CHAMBER MUSIC CONCERT

SUN MAY 1 4PM

MUSICMAKERS

FRI MAY 6 8PM Osmo Vänskä, conductor Kevin Puts, Composer Institute director

SYMPHONY BALL 2022: BRILLIANCE

A gala benefiting the Minnesota Orchestra SAT MAY 7 8:30PM

Osmo Vänskä, conductor Cory Wong, guitar

TCHAIKOVSKY, CHEN AND NIELSEN

FRI MAY 13 8PM SAT MAY 14 8PM Xian Zhang, conductor Adam Kuenzel, flute

MUSIC & MINDFULNESS

THU MAY 19 7PM Mariann Johnson, instructor

HOPE AND HUMANITY

THU MAY 19 11AM FRI MAY 20 8PM SAT MAY 21 8PM Thomas Wilkins, conductor Minnesota Chorale Twin Cities Choral Partners

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Anyone, including children, entering Orchestra Hall will be required to show proof upon arrival of full COVID-19 vaccination or a negative COVID-19 PCR test. More information at minnesotaorchestra.org/safety. All artists, programs, dates and prices subject to change. PHOTOS Zhang: Benjamin Ealovega; Wilkins: Courtesy of the Omaha Symphony; Wong: Galen Higgens; Vänskä: Zoe Prinds-Flash.

apr 28, 29, 30

Minnesota Orchestra Gemma New, conductor

Sunwook Kim, piano

Thursday, April 28, 2022, 11 am	Orchestra Hall
Friday, April 29, 2022, 8 pm	Orchestra Hall
Saturday, April 30, 2022, 8 pm	Orchestra Hall

With this concert we gratefully recognize *C. Curtis Dunnavan* for his generous contribution to the Minnesota Orchestra.

Vivian Fung	Aqua	ca. 5'
Samuel Barber	Symphony No. 1, Opus 9	ca. 20'
	INTERMISSION	ca. 20'
Johannes Brahms	Concerto No. 1 in D minor for Piano and Orchestra, Opus 15 Maestoso Adagio Rondo: Allegro non troppo	ca. 44'

pre-concert Thu

Concert Preview with Phillip Gainsley Thursday, April 28, 10:15 am, Auditorium Friday, April 29, 7 pm, Auditorium Saturday, April 30, 7 pm, Auditorium

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.

apr 28, 29, 30

Artists



Gemma New, conductor

New Zealand-born conductor Gemma New, who makes her Minnesota Orchestra debut this week, is music director of the Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra, principal guest conductor of the Dallas Symphony Orchestra and the recipient of the prestigious 2021 Sir George Solti Conducting Award. The 2020-21 season saw her make notable debuts with the Seattle Symphony, Atlanta Symphony and Basque National Orchestra of Spain. Her 2021-22 season includes subscription appearances with National Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal, Baltimore Symphony, St. Louis Symphony, Atlanta Symphony and Kansas City Symphony. She will also make debuts with the WDR Sinfonieorchester, BBC Philharmonic,

Hallé Orchestra, Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra and Orchestre National d'Ile de France. In June 2022, New will make her debut with the Los Angeles Opera for the West Coast Premiere of Kevin Puts' *The Brightness of Light* with soprano Renée Fleming and baritone Rod Gilfry.

More information on Gemma New can be found at <u>gemmanew.com</u>. Management for Gemma New: Primo Artists, New York, NY <u>www.primoartists.com</u>.



Sunwook Kim, piano

South Korean pianist Sunwook Kim performs his Minnesota Orchestra debut in these performances. He came to international recognition when he won the prestigious Leeds International

one-minute notes

Piano Competition in 2006, aged just 18, becoming the competition's youngest winner for 40 years, as well as its first Asian winner. Since then, he has established a reputation as one of the finest pianists of his generation, appearing as a concerto soloist in the subscription series of some of the world's leading orchestras, including the London Symphony Orchestra, Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Staatskapelle Dresden (Asia Tour conducted by Myung-Whun Chung), NDR Sinfonieorchester Hamburg, Finnish Radio Symphony, Philharmonia Orchestra, London Philharmonic, Radio-France Philharmonic, NHK Symphony, Hallé Orchestra, and the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra for his BBC Proms debut in summer 2014. Kim's debut recital recordings on the Accentus label include three discs of Beethoven sonatas, Franck's Prélude, Choral et Fugue and Brahms's Sonata No. 3. More: askonasholt.com, sunwookkim.com.

Fung: Aqua

Inspired by and emulating Chicago's Aqua Tower, *Aqua* is divided in two parts, the first representing the building's ebbing and flowing balconies—with music first gentle and then violent—and the second depicting its dipping and swelling vertical pools, spotlighting solo harp and a climactic pandemonium of sound that dissipates into the ether.

Barber: Symphony No. 1

Long, singing lines and memorable themes show Barber's considerable melodic gift in this early work, written when the composer was just shy of 26. Rich orchestral color is provided by every instrument family as tunes change from soaring to jagged, from quiet to intensely powerful.

Brahms: Piano Concerto No. 1

Many see in this work the young composer's reaction to Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and to the turmoil that followed the attempted suicide of Brahms' dear friend, Robert Schumann. The concerto, dramatic and emotional, gives the orchestra an aggressive role, assigning more lyrical music to the piano. Of note: the second movement's "lovely portrait" of Clara Schumann and, in the bold finale, cadenzas leading to a majestic conclusion.

Program Notes

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Vivian Fung

Born: 1975, Edmonton, Canada

Aqua Premiered: June 8, 2013

he debatable quip "Writing about music is like dancing about architecture" has been attributed to Elvis Costello, Thelonious Monk, Martin Mull, Frank Zappa and others, but none of them are on the record regarding the topic of writing music about architecture—the intriguing assignment given to Vivian Fung in 2012, when she was one of four composers commissioned by the Chicago Sinfonietta to write music inspired by iconic Chicago buildings for the ensemble's ChiScape project.

a sculptural skyscraper

A native of Edmonton, Canada, Fung selected as her subject Aqua Tower, which at the time was one of Chicago's newest skyscrapers, completed in 2010. The mixed-use, primarily residential building has several unique features, most notably the irregular curved balcony slabs that give the façade an undulating sculptural quality. The building also stands out on the conceptual side: at the time of its opening, it was the world's tallest building designed by a female-led firm—Studio Gang Architects, headed by Jeanne Gang. Although it is eye-catching, Aqua Tower doesn't



dominate the Windy City's skyline—at 876 feet tall, it is only three-fifths the size of the Willis Tower—but it would loom over all of Minnesota's skyscrapers, including the 792-foot-high IDS Center in downtown Minneapolis.

Drawing inspiration from the building, Fung composed the evocative fiveminute score Aqua, which received its premiere on June 8, 2013, with Mei-Ann Chen conducting the Chicago Sinfonietta in a performance that also introduced the other three ChiScape commissions by Armando Bayolo, Jonathan Bailey Holland and Chris Rogerson—who like Fung were handpicked for the project by Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Jennifer Higdon.

The score's non-traditional notation at times indicates that notes may be played in an order of the performers' choosing, with the work's first half making extensive use of "feather-beamed" rhythms that grow progressively faster but not at a precise rate, as instruments enter and exit in overlapping layers. The emphasis is on instrumental timbres, brief rising and falling gestures, and imaginative special effects—such as in the closing measures, when the pianist is instructed to sweep their fingers across the strings inside the piano, and a percussionist plays a bowed waterphone.

the composer's note

Fung has provided the following comments on Aqua:

"[Aqua Tower's] design juxtaposes horizontal waves, created by a rippling array of balcony slabs, with a vertical landscape of pools, hills, and valleys. Based on those conceptual elements, my work is structured in two parts: 'Grand Wave No. 1 – Liquid Balconies' represents the horizontal ebb and flow with divisi string parts that weave in and out of a colorful texture of undulating harmonies, starting gently and quickly becoming increasingly urgent and violent. Following a powerful climax, 'Grand Wave No. 2 – Vertical Pools' ensues with a solo harp line interjected with musical gestures depicting the dips and swells on the façade of the building. The musical work culminates in a complex chord that begins with a hum from nothingness and swells into a pandemonium of sound before disappearing into the ether of the stratosphere."

about the composer

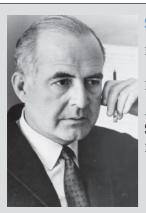
Described by National Public Radio as "one of today's most eclectic composers," Vivian Fung has a unique talent for combining idiosyncratic textures and styles into large-scale works, reflecting her multicultural background. Among her notable works are the clarinet quintet *Frenetic Memories*, a reflection on her travels to visit minority groups in China's Yunnan province; *Earworms*, commissioned by Canada's National Arts Centre Orchestra, which musically depicts today's diverted attention spans and multi-tasking lives; and *The Ice Is Talking* for solo percussion and electronics, commissioned by the Banff Centre, using three ice blocks to illustrate the beauty and fragility of our environment.

Winner of the 2013 JUNO Award for Classical Composition of the Year for her Violin Concerto, Fung has a varied catalog that includes 18 orchestral works, among them seven concertos, as well as a wide array of works for chamber groups, vocalists, soloists, wind ensembles and gamelan, along with two operas. Highlights of her upcoming performance calendar include the digital world premiere of two operatic scenes based on her oral family history in Cambodia with librettist Royce Vavrek, part of Edmonton Opera's The Wild Rose Opera Project; a U.K. tour of a new work with the Tangram Collective; the premiere of her fifth String Quartet by Canada's Lafayette String Quartet; the French premiere of Earworms by the Orchestre de Paris; and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic's U.K. premiere of String Sinfonietta. In addition, Mary Elizabeth Bowden tours her Trumpet Concerto and records it with the Chicago Youth Symphony Orchestras for future release on Çedille Records. She is currently at work on a new project about identity with soprano Andrea Nunez and librettist Royce Vavrek, an expanded version of her Flute Concerto, and upcoming percussion works for Katie Rife and for Ensemble for These Times.

Fung began her composition studies with composer Violet Archer and received her doctorate from the Juilliard School in New York, where her mentors included David Diamond and Robert Beaser. She is now based in California, where she serves on the composition faculty of Santa Clara University.

Instrumentation: 2 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets (1 doubling bass clarinet), 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, suspended cymbal, finger cymbals, ratchet, tamtam, waterphone, glockenspiel, chimes, marimba, harp, piano and strings

Program note by Carl Schroeder.



Samuel Barber

Born: March 9, 1910, West Chester, Pennsylvania Died: January 21, 1981, New York City

Symphony No. 1, Opus 9 Premiered: December 13, 1936

an this wonderful symphony—still so fresh and youthful really be 86 years old? Barber completed it in February 1936, a few days before his 26th birthday, while spending a year in Europe on a Pulitzer Traveling Scholarship and as a Prix de Rome winner. The symphony was premiered in December of that year in Rome by the Augusteo Orchestra and quickly repeated by the Cleveland and Philadelphia orchestras, New York Philharmonic and other orchestras in this country. When Artur Rodziński conducted this music with the Vienna Philharmonic at the Salzburg Festival in July 1937, it was the first work by an American ever performed at that festival. Bruno Walter recorded it in 1945, and it remains one of the best-known symphonies ever composed by an American. Its numerous recordings include several by European orchestras.

This popularity is easy to understand. Throughout, the symphony's long, singing lines and memorable themes show Barber's considerable melodic gift. This is also one of those pieces that just sound good. Barber had a terrific ear for instrumental color, and this music rings through a concert hall, its sonority dominated by the sound of soaring violins, piercing trumpets and thunderous timpani. And finally, the symphony is effective formally. Only 20 minutes long, it is in one movement made up of four sections that conform to the movements of the traditional symphony. As many have noted, Barber's model for such a form was Sibelius' Seventh Symphony (and some may hear a touch of Sibelius in his orchestral sound), but the youthful energy and imaginative evolution of themes are entirely Barber's own.

melodies, soaring and spiky

The symphony gets off to a terrific *Allegro ma non troppo* start on a series of terraced brass attacks—a rippling wash of bright sound—and immediately Barber introduces his first subject in the strings. This jagged shape will reappear in a variety of forms. Other themes follow quickly—a long-lined melody for English horn and violas and a soaring, intense closing subject—and these three ideas contain all the material Barber will use across the span of his symphony. Now he plays them up to a tremendous climax, but does not recapitulate them, and this opening section collapses on fragments of its first theme.

Out of the silence, the Allegro molto leaps to life on the strings' dancing 6/8 meter, a pulse felt in virtually every measure of this energetic section. Based on a variation of the symphony's opening string theme, this section conforms to the scherzo of the traditional symphony. It too rises to a spiky, sonorous climax, then falls away on the sound of muttering bassoons and clarinets and—over quiet timpani strokes—flows directly into the Andante tranquillo. This section is derived primarily from the long melody originally introduced by English horn and violas. Over murmuring strings, solo oboe transforms that melody into an expressive cantilena, and this too builds up to a climax of considerable power. The concluding section, marked Con moto, begins very quietly in the cellos and basses. Their simple tune is yet a further derivation of the symphony's opening theme, and now Barber employs it as the ground bass for a passacaglia. As it repeats, he weaves variants of the symphony's themes above its

Program Notes

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quiet progression, slowly at first, then gathering intensity as the symphony drives to its powerful close.

Instrumentation: 3 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, harp and strings

Program note by Eric Bromberger.



Johannes Brahms

Born: May 7, 1833, Hamburg, Germany Dies: April 3, 1897,

Vienna, Austria

Concerto No. 1 in D minor for Piano and Orchestra, Opus 15

Premiered: January 22, 1859

J ohannes Brahms was still just a rosy-cheeked boy of 20 when Robert Schumann met him, immediately recognized his talent and became his enthusiastic champion. He proclaimed Brahms "a young eagle" and said: "When he holds his magic wand over the massed resources of chorus and orchestra, we shall be granted marvelous insights into spiritual secrets." But Schumann went into steep mental decline, attempted suicide by throwing himself into the Rhine and died two years later in a mental asylum.

It was natural for the young composer to try to register his feelings in music, and in March 1854, only weeks after his friend's suicide attempt, he set out to create that most dramatic and challenging of forms, a symphony. He had never written anything for orchestra, so he sketched this work first as a sonata for two pianos—and soon realized that he was not ready to compose a symphony. He decided to transform the first movement into the opening movement of a piano concerto. Then he composed a new slow movement and a new rondo-finale. Still desperately uncertain of his abilities, Brahms worked on the piano concerto for four years before, in March 1858, he was willing to try it out in a private performance. The public premiere came the following January.

the music: catastrophe, relief and heroism

maestoso. Despite the marking *Maestoso*, the first movement feels less majestic than catastrophic. This violent opening, Brahms told Joseph Joachim, was a depiction of his feelings when he learned of Schumann's suicide attempt. After the initial sound and fury, the piano makes a deceptively understated entrance, which points to a remarkable feature of this movement: in general, the orchestra has the more aggressive material, the piano the friendlier music. To call this a "symphony-concerto," as some have done, goes too far, but such a description does indicate the unusually dramatic character of this music. The huge exposition leads to a relatively brief development that includes a shimmering, dancing episode in D major. The recapitulation offers no emotional release, no modulation into a major key, and the movement drives unrelentingly to its close.

adagio. Relief arrives with the second movement. In a letter from December 1856 Brahms wrote to Schumann's widow Clara, a superb pianist who was to be Brahms' lifelong friend: "I am also painting a lovely portrait of you; it is to be the *Adagio*." In D major, it has a quiet expressiveness, an almost consoling quality after the furies of the first movement. It rises to a gentle climax before a brief cadenza leads to a quiet close.

rondo: allegro non troppo. The finale returns to the mood and D-minor tonality of the opening. The piano's initial theme makes few literal returns but is skillfully transformed on each reappearance, including one used as the subject for a brief but lithe fugue. Brahms offers two cadenzas in this movement, the first almost Bachian in its keyboard writing, and at the very end the rising shape of the rondo theme helps propel the movement finally in D major—to a heroic conclusion.

Early reaction to this concerto was harsh. After a performance in Leipzig, Brahms wrote to Clara Schumann: "You have probably already heard that it was a complete fiasco; at the rehearsal it met with total silence, and at the performance (where hardly three people raised their hands to clap) it was actually hissed." It must have given Brahms particular pleasure when, 35 years later, in 1894, he conducted a program in Leipzig that included both his piano concertos—and heard this product of his youth cheered in the same hall where it had been reviled so many years before.

Instrumentation: solo piano with orchestra comprising 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani and strings

Program note by Eric Bromberger.

may 1

Chamber Music with Musicians of the Minnesota Orchestra

Sunday, May 1, 2022, 4 pm | Orchestra Hall, Target Atrium

With this concert we gratefully recognize **Dr**. **Jennine and John Speier** for their generous contribution to the Minnesota Orchestra's **Investing in Inspiration** campaign.

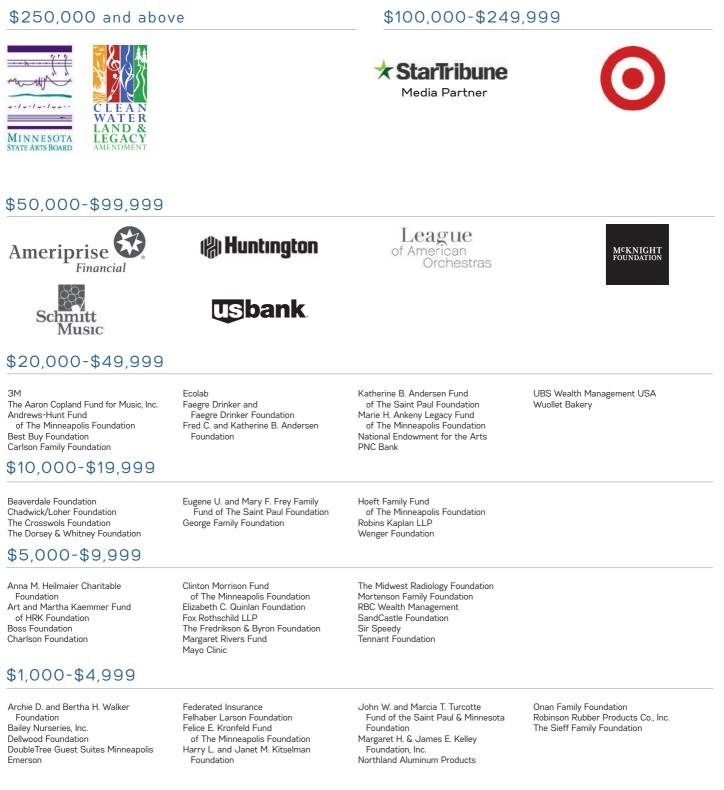
Russell Steinberg	Subterranean Dance Natsuki Kumagai, violin Erik Wheeler, cello Adam Kuenzel, flute Gabriel Campos Zamora, clarinet Kevin Watkins, percussion Mary Jo Gothmann, piano	ca. 8'
Johannes Brahms	String Quartet No. 2 in A minor, Opus 51 Allegro non troppo Andante moderato Quasi Minuetto, moderato Finale: Allegro non assai Sarah Grimes, violin Ben Odhner, violin Kenneth Freed, viola Anthony Ross, cello	ca. 30'
	INTERMISSION	ca. 20'
Shelley Washington	Middleground for String Quartet Allison Lovera, violin Sabrina Bradford, violin Sam Bergman, violin Esther Seitz, cello	ca. 10'
Louise Farrenc	Nonet in E-flat major, Opus 38 Adagio - Allegro Andante con moto Scherzo: Vivace Adagio - Allegro <i>Rui Du, violin Kenneth Freed, viola</i> <i>Erik Wheeler, cello Kathryn Nettleman, bass</i> <i>Greg Milliren, flute Julie Gramolini Williams, oboe</i> <i>David Pharris, clarinet J. Christopher Marshall, bassoon</i> <i>Bruce Hudson, horn</i>	ca. 30'

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