

Minnesota Orchestra

Dima Slobodeniouk, conductor

Baiba Skride, violin

Friday, February 11, 2022, 8 pm | Orchestra Hall
 Saturday, February 12, 2022, 8 pm | Orchestra Hall

Unsuk Chin	<i>Frontispiece for Orchestra</i>	ca. 8'
Wolfgang Amadè Mozart	Concerto No. 4 in D major for Violin and Orchestra, K. 218 Allegro Andante cantabile Rondeau: Andante grazioso - Allegro ma non troppo <i>Baibe Skride, violin</i>	ca. 24'
	I N T E R M I S S I O N	ca. 20'
Igor Stravinsky	<i>The Firebird</i> , complete ballet (original 1910 version)	ca. 44'

pre-concert

Concert Preview

Friday, February 11, 7 pm, Auditorium

Saturday, February 12, 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.





Dima Slobodeniouk, conductor

Dima Slobodeniouk has held the position of music director of the Orquesta Sinfónica de Galicia since 2013, in addition to his positions as principal conductor of the Lahti Symphony Orchestra and artistic director of the Sibelius Festival. He works with orchestras such as the Berlin Philharmonic, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Chicago, Baltimore, Sydney and NHK symphony orchestras. His discography

was recently extended with recordings of Prokofiev suites with the Lahti Symphony Orchestra. He previously recorded works by Kalevi Aho, also with the Lahti Symphony Orchestra, which received the *BBC Music Magazine* award in 2018. He has begun a conducting initiative with the Orquesta Sinfónica de Galicia, providing an opportunity for students to work on the podium with a professional orchestra. More: kdschmid.co.uk, dima-slobodeniouk.com.



Baiba Skride, violin

Violinist Baiba Skride first performed with the Minnesota Orchestra under the direction of Osmo Vänskä in April 2008, performing Mendelssohn's

Violin Concerto. She has also worked with orchestras such as the Berlin Philharmonic, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Orchestras New York Philharmonic, Concertgebouworkest, Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, Orchestre de Paris, London Symphony Orchestra, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra, Oslo Philharmonic, Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Shanghai Symphony Orchestra and NHK Symphony Orchestra. A highlight of Skride's 2021-22 season included the season opening of the Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, with which she performed Sofia Gubaidulina's Triple Concerto with Harriet Krijgh (cello) and Martynas Levickis (bajan) under the baton of Andris Nelsons. She is anticipating the release of her latest solo recording, adding to her prolific discography including a recently released Mozart recording with the Swedish Chamber Orchestra and a Bartók recording with the WDR Sinfonieorchester. More: kdschmid.co.uk, baiba-skride.com.

one-minute notes

Chin: *Frontispiece*

Contemporary composer Unsuk Chin describes *Frontispiece* as “a time lapse...of the history of music” comprising countless tiny musical fragments and gestures that are sometimes jarring, sometimes calm and never predictable. Among the composers alluded to—but not quoted—are Bruckner, Ives, Webern and Boulez.

Mozart: *Violin Concerto No. 4*

Mozart's penultimate violin concerto is virtuosic music packed with surprises. In the opening movement, the orchestra recedes and the soloist takes command, gracefully elaborating on the themes; the *Andante cantabile* is pure song with the second of the work's two cadenzas; and the *Rondeau* finale is music fit for a French court, incorporating a tune Mozart encountered in Strasbourg.

Stravinsky: *The Firebird*

The heroic Prince Ivan and a magical Firebird are revealed with brilliant orchestral colors. The gentle dance of captive princesses, the prince's effort to free them, and the evil sorcerer's defeat by the Firebird—all is painted in the most vivid musical imagery.



Unsuk Chin

Born: July 14, 1961,
Seoul, South Korea

Frontispiece for Orchestra

Premiered: September 6, 2019

Artistic meditations on the music of past generations can take all shapes and sizes. Late last year, for instance, fans of the Beatles partook in a new eight-hour-long documentary on the recording of just a single album, *Let It Be*. Unsuk Chin's 2019 orchestral work *Frontispiece* swings in the other direction, combining a sweeping scale of ambition with a brevity of expression, presenting a time lapse of symphonic music history across a mere eight minutes.

looking to the past

Frontispiece is the second work by the South Korean-born composer to receive its American premiere by the Minnesota Orchestra this season; Chin's *subito con forza* was featured at a pair of concerts in late October. These two pieces share some conceptual DNA in that both look to great composers of the past. In the case of *subito con forza*, the scope is limited to just one composer, Ludwig van Beethoven, whereas *Frontispiece* references classical composers as disparate as Anton Bruckner, Charles Ives, Pierre Boulez and Anton von Webern, among others.

Chin is quick to emphasize that *Frontispiece* is built not on direct musical quotations, but rather on allusions, subtle references and unexpected interactions as various composers and styles cross paths and mingle. Like many of her works, it is music of high difficulty—fitting her stated belief that when she is composing for high-caliber ensembles, she wants “to drive these good musicians to their limits.” It is scored for a large orchestra, most notably including a super-sized brass section that includes six horn players, four trumpets and four trombones. Also featured are a wide array of percussion instruments and piano, the instrument Chin played in her youth before turning to composition.

the music: “poured into new moulds”

Frontispiece was commissioned by Germany's NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchester and premiered by that ensemble on September 6, 2019, with the work's dedicatee Alan Gilbert conducting. The word referenced in the title is both an architectural term as well as the name of an illustration facing

a book's title page. The composer has provided the following comments:

“*Frontispiece* for Orchestra was commissioned by the NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra to open Alan Gilbert's inaugural season as their Chief Conductor. This occasion prompted me to write a short piece which presents a time lapse of a kind of the history of music: certain aspects of a number of key symphonic works of different epochs are being evoked and poured into new moulds by letting them interact and comment upon each other. These are never actual style quotations—mere allusions, and faint references.

“On the level of details, the work consists of many tiny fragments which all refer to gestures typical to certain works and composers, and these are being ‘translated’ to each other in numerous different and occasionally unexpected ways. As to give but a few examples: certain chord sequences by Anton Bruckner are interpreted in a manner akin to Anton von Webern, splinters of Strauss, Scriabin and Stravinsky collide, Brahmsian harmony passes through the prisms of, say, Charles Ives, and certain material from Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony—Heaven forbid—is being presented a la manière de Pierre Boulez.

“This process of ‘translating’ happens on several levels: diverse materials and gestures, ranging from Baroque music all the way to the avant-garde, are being transcribed and transformed in an alienating manner so that something very different arises as a sum of their interactions. All of this happens at a rather microscopic level: all aforementioned allusions, as well as other ones, are not immediately perceivable, and it is most certainly not necessary to trace them in order to be able to ‘understand’ the piece. On the level of the macrostructure, the work's form is being held together by a certain chord, which could be called its supporting pillar—a chord which, by way of exception, is completely autarchic.

“*Frontispiece* reflects on my decades-long experiences with landmark works of the symphonic literature as composer and recipient. In extracting distinct aspects of works of certain composers, Anton von Webern's art of revealing a ‘universe in a nutshell’ by means of extreme compression served as a particular inspiration.”

about the composer

Born in Seoul in 1961, Chin has lived in Berlin since 1988, and her music is described by her publisher Boosey & Hawkes as “modern in language, but lyrical and non-doctrinaire in communicative power.” She is routinely commissioned by leading musical organizations, and her works have been showcased at major festivals and concert series in Asia, Europe and North America by ensembles such as the Berlin Philharmonic, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, BBC Symphony Orchestra, New York



Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic and Tokyo Symphony. She has also composed an opera, *Alice in Wonderland*, along with works for chamber ensembles, solo piano, voices and electronics. Initially self-taught in music, she studied composition at Seoul National University as well as with György Ligeti at the Hochschule für Musik and Theater Hamburg.

Chin has been a composer in residence for numerous ensembles, most notably serving an 11-year tenure with the Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra, where she founded and oversaw its contemporary music series. From 2011 to 2020 she served as artistic director of the “Music of Today” series of the Philharmonia Orchestra in London, and in 2022 she is beginning a five-year appointment as artistic director of the Tongyeong International Festival in South Korea. She recently earned the 2021 Leonie Sonning Music Prize, adding to her long list of honors that includes one of the most prestigious and lucrative prizes in classical composition, the Grawemeyer Award, conferred in 2004 for her Violin Concerto.

In addition to *Frontispiece* and *subito con forza*, Chin’s recent large-scale works include *Chant des Enfants des Étoiles* for choirs and orchestra, premiered within the inaugural events at the Lotte Concert Hall in Seoul in 2016; *Chorós Chordón*, which the Berlin Philharmonic took to Asia in 2017; and *SPIRA*, a concerto for orchestra premiered in 2019 by the Los Angeles Philharmonic. Her newest work, Violin Concerto No. 2, *Scherben der Stille*, was scheduled to receive its world premiere last month by the London Symphony Orchestra and soloist Leonidas Kavakos under the direction of Sir Simon Rattle.

Instrumentation: 3 flutes (1 doubling alto flute and 1 doubling piccolo), 3 oboes (1 doubling English horn), 3 clarinets (1 doubling E-flat clarinet), 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 6 horns, 4 trumpets, 4 trombones, tuba, timpani, 2 snare drums, bass drum, cymbals, 3 suspended cymbals, cencerros, crotales, pitched gong, guiro, metal blocks, 2 tambourines, tamtam, temple blocks, triangle, glockenspiel, vibraphone, chimes, marimba, harp, piano (doubling celeste) and strings

Program note by Carl Schroeder.



Wolfgang Amadè Mozart

Born: January 17, 1756, Salzburg, Austria
Died: December 5, 1791, Vienna, Austria

Concerto No. 4 in D major for Violin and Orchestra, K. 21

Composed: ca. October 1775

Wolfgang Amadè Mozart’s father Leopold—an eminent violinist and pedagogue—believed that his prodigiously talented son could be “the greatest violinist in Europe,” and things got off to a promising start. By the age of seven, young Mozart was playing the violin in family trios, though he later expressed a preference for the viola, so that he could get into the center of the harmonies. Before long, however, he gravitated to the great new invention of the day, the piano, and his preference for the keyboard led him to compose a cache of piano concertos of a quantity—23 mature works—equaled by none other.

Although the majority of Mozart’s concertos are for piano, violin soloists were not left empty-handed. There are five violin concertos, plus a couple of miscellaneous movements, the Concertone for Two Violins, and the Sinfonia concertante for violin and viola. Mozart was just 19 when he produced his five violin concertos, all dating from 1775. The first two, now seldom displayed, tend to be conventional in nature, reflecting the works he grew up with in his father’s household. But No. 3, finished in September of that year, shows a spurt in Mozart’s musical growth, which he continued to exhibit in the Nos. 4 and 5, finished in October and December respectively. The D-major Concerto No. 4 is crammed with surprises, the first of which is that it is more virtuosic than its predecessors.

the music: surprises, song and dance

allegro. Already the opening *Allegro* abounds with opportunities for display, affording us some idea of the composer’s prowess, for these works were written for his own use. Once the orchestra has introduced the principal ideas, it takes a definite backstep to the soloist, accompanying and doubling rather than asserting itself in genuine dialogue fashion. When the themes return with the soloist, for whom they were designed all along, the lines wear their new adornments quite naturally, as if the laces of violin arpeggios and figurations should have been there in the first place.

andante cantabile. The *Andante cantabile* is pure song from beginning to end, and once the violin joins the singing, it will not be stopped. Like the first movement, this one offers a place for a cadenza. Alas, Mozart's own cadenzas are lost; those of Joseph Joachim (for whom Brahms wrote his only violin concerto) are a frequent choice.

rondeau: andante grazioso-allegro ma non troppo. The finale is a true *Rondeau*—that is, in the French manner, relaxed and full of caprice and wit. It steps forward from a genuine gavotte tune, such as might have been danced to at a French court. The theme promptly gives way to a caper that is nothing more than a variant of itself. A second episode introduces a typically French bagpipe ditty known as the musette; you will hear the drone on the low G string of the violin as it pipes a tune that had tantalized Mozart on a visit to Strasbourg.

Instrumentation: solo violin with orchestra comprising 2 oboes, 2 horns and strings

Program note by *Mary Ann Feldman*.



Igor Stravinsky

Born: June 17, 1882,
St. Petersburg, Russia
Died: April 6, 1971,
New York City

***The Firebird*, complete ballet (original 1910 version)**

Premiered: June 25, 1910

In 1909, following a successful visit of the Ballets Russes to Paris, the Russian impresario Serge Diaghilev and his choreographer Mikhail Fokine made plans for a new ballet to be presented in Paris the following season, based on the old Russian legend of the Firebird. They at first asked Anatoly Lyadov to compose the music, but when it became clear that the notoriously lazy Lyadov would never get around to it, they decided to take a chance on a young composer who had orchestrated some pieces for the Ballets Russes the year before. His name was Igor Stravinsky, and he was virtually unknown.

Recognizing that this was his big chance (and terrified that he would not be up to the challenge), Stravinsky set to work in November 1909 at a dacha owned by the Rimsky-Korsakov family (to which he had gone, as he said, “for a vacation in birch forests and snow-fresh air”). He finished the piano score in St. Petersburg

in March, and the orchestration was complete a month later. The first performance took place in Paris on June 25, 1910, eight days after the composer's 28th birthday, and it was a huge success. Stravinsky would go on to write quite different music over the course of his long career, but the music from *The Firebird*—now a century old—remains his most popular creation.

a magical tale

The Firebird tells of a young prince, Ivan Tsarevich, who unknowingly pursues the magic Firebird—part woman, part bird—into the garden of the green-taloned Kastchei, most horrible of all ogres: Kastchei captures and imprisons maidens within the castle and turns all knights who come to rescue them to stone. Ivan captures the Firebird, but she begs to be released, and when he agrees she gives him a magic feather and vanishes. The prince sees a group of 13 princesses playing with golden apples, and when dawn breaks and they have to return to Kastchei's castle, he follows them. Instantly he is confronted by the hideous fiends who inhabit the castle and is about to be turned to stone himself when he remembers the feather. He waves it, and the Firebird returns, putting Kastchei and all the other ogres to sleep, and showing him where a magic egg is hidden in a casket. When Ivan smashes the egg, Kastchei and his fiends disappear, the petrified knights return to life, the maidens are freed, Kastchei's castle is transformed into a cathedral, and Ivan marries the most beautiful of the princesses.

the complete ballet music

These concerts present the score of *The Firebird* as it was performed at the premiere of the ballet in Paris in June 1910—about 45 minutes of music—rather than the more frequently performed 1919 suite in which the duration is more than halved.

The ominous *Introduction*, in the unusual key of A-flat minor, hints at the music that will be associated with the monsters; near the end of this section comes one of Stravinsky's most striking orchestral effects, a series of rippling string glissandos played entirely in harmonics. *The Enchanted Garden of Kastchei* leads to music that Stravinsky omitted from the suites, the *Appearance of the Firebird, Pursued by Prince Ivan*, full of trills and tremolos from the strings. The music proceeds without pause into the shimmering, whirling *Dance of the Firebird* and *The Firebird's Variation*, which contained Stravinsky's own favorite music from this score. But between these comes the unfamiliar *Capture of the Firebird by Prince Ivan*, full of quick-paced staccato writing that concludes with ringing horn attacks.

Appearance of the Thirteen Enchanted Princesses is marked by shimmering string chords, followed by a series of woodwind and violin solos and culminating in a flute cadenza. As Prince Ivan watches, the princesses engage in their *Game with the Golden Apples*, which bustles along energetically on its steady rhythmic pulse. Stravinsky was later critical of this movement, calling it too

“Mendelssohnian-Tchaikovskyan,” but it is brilliant music, and it makes an effective scene in the ballet. The *Sudden Appearance of Prince Ivan*, with its striking horn solos, accompanies Ivan Tsarevich’s entry into the garden. The music now proceeds into the familiar *Khorovod*, or *Round Dance*. One of the intentions of Diaghilev and Fokine had been to make *The Firebird* as “Russian” as possible, and in *The Princesses’ Khorovod* Stravinsky uses the old Russian folk-tune “In the Garden.” Announced by solo oboe as the 13 captive princesses dance in the castle garden, the melody is taken over by the violins and extended in the ballet’s most lyric section.

The *Khorovod* comes to a peaceful close, and it is here that listeners will find a long sequence of unfamiliar music. In the familiar suites, the *Khorovod* gives way to the *Infernal Dance of All Kastchei’s Subjects*, but in the complete ballet a number of scenes separate these two movements. *Daybreak*, with its fierce trumpet calls, leads to the *Magic Carillon*: bells ring wildly as Kastchei’s monsters appear—to violent music—and take Prince Ivan captive. Kastchei the Immortal then enters on a series of brass fanfares and threatens Ivan. The princesses intercede to little avail before the Firebird herself enters and gradually puts Kastchei’s minions to sleep. Only now does the great *Infernal Dance of All Kastchei’s Subjects* explode to life in one of the most violent orchestral attacks ever written. Sharply syncopated rhythms and barbaric snorts from the low brass depict the fiends’ efforts to resist the Firebird’s spell; without the slightest relaxation or slowing of tempo this dance powers its way to a dazzling (and ear-splitting) close on a great rip of sound. In its aftermath, solo bassoon sings the gentle, almost lugubrious *Berceuse*, the music with which the Firebird lulls Kastchei and his followers to sleep.

In the familiar suites, the *Berceuse* leads without pause into the *Finale*. In the ballet, however, Kastchei does not remain conveniently asleep but comes back to life to the sound of contrabassoons, then bassoons, then the entire wind and brass sections. The Firebird lulls him not to sleep but to death (deep string chords), and this leads through a magical passage for tremolo strings into the *Finale*. Here solo French horn sings the main theme, based on another Russian folksong, “By the Gate.” Beginning quietly, this noble tune simply repeats, growing in strength as it recurs, and the ballet drives to its magnificent conclusion.

Instrumentation: 3 flutes, piccolo (1 flute also doubling piccolo), 3 oboes, English horn, 3 clarinets (1 doubling E-flat clarinet), bass clarinet, 3 bassoons, contrabassoon (1 bassoon also doubling contrabassoon), 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, tambourine, tam-tam, triangle, glockenspiel, xylophone, 3 harps, piano, celesta and strings; offstage: 3 trumpets, 2 tenor Wagner tuben, 2 bass Wagner tuben, bells

Program note by **Eric Bromberger**.



In 1940 and 1966 Igor Stravinsky conducted the Minnesota Orchestra, then known as the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra, in performances at the ensemble’s home of Northrop Auditorium. Pictured here is Stravinsky at the 1966 performance, at which he led his *Fireworks* and *The Fairy’s Kiss*.