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## from the editor

Jean Sibelius is by no means a modern composer—he was born in 1865, the year the American Civil War ended, and he published no major works after 1926—but nor is he a figure of the distant past, as his lifespan crossed for a short stretch with that of Minnesota Orchestra Music Director Osmo Vänskä, who was four years old when Sibelius died in 1957.

Sibelius' music is so ingrained in the national identity of Finland that he is considered “almost a founding father” there, notes *The New Yorker* music critic Alex Ross. So it was inevitable that Vänskä would bring that founding father to the Minnesota Orchestra, and over the past 19 years, audiences have come to know and love both Finns. Fittingly, a three-week celebration of Sibelius' music is at the center of Vänskä's farewell season in Minnesota, and in the span of this issue we hear all seven symphonies and the Violin Concerto in both its standard form and the rarely-heard original version, among other works.

When the history of Vänskä's tenure with the Minnesota Orchestra is written, Sibelius will surely figure prominently—thanks to triumphs like a 2014 Grammy Award for a Sibelius symphonies album, and a 2010 *Kullervo* performance at Carnegie Hall that prompted a rapturous Alex Ross review stating that on that night, the Minnesota Orchestra sounded to him like “the greatest orchestra in the world.” If the Orchestra's next music director champions a single composer as spectacularly as Vänskä has Sibelius, Orchestra Hall audiences will be richly rewarded in the years to come.



Carl Schroeder, Editor  
editor@mnorch.org

## about the cover

Osmo Vänskä, who this month leads his final scheduled performances of Jean Sibelius' music during his tenure as Minnesota Orchestra music director, posing outside of his Minneapolis condo. Photo: Zoe Prinds-Flash.

## concerts

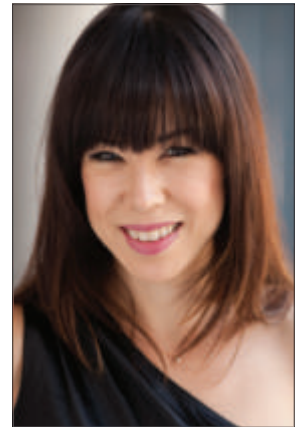
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## Minnesota Orchestra SHOWCASE

January 2022

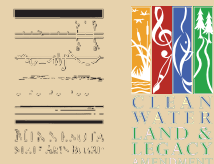
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## profile Osmo Vänskä, music director

**f**innish conductor Osmo Vänskä, the Minnesota Orchestra's tenth music director, is renowned internationally for his compelling interpretations of the standard, contemporary and Nordic repertoires. Throughout the 2021–22 season, as Vänskä's 19-year leadership tenure comes to a close, the Orchestra will celebrate his lasting impact through performances of Sibelius symphonies and other signature repertoire, reconnections with favorite guest soloists and the continuation of a project to perform and record all ten Mahler symphonies.

Vänskä has led the Orchestra on five major European tours, as well as a 2018 visit to London's BBC Proms, and on historic tours to Cuba in 2015 and South Africa in 2018. He has also led the Orchestra in appearances at New York's Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center, Chicago's Symphony Center and community venues across Minnesota.

Vänskä's recording projects with the Orchestra have met with great success, including a Sibelius symphonies cycle, one album of which won the 2014 Grammy Award for Best Orchestral Performance. In February 2021 BIS released the Orchestra's newest album, featuring Mahler's Tenth Symphony—part of a Mahler series that includes a Grammy-nominated Fifth Symphony recording. Other recent releases include an album of in-concert recordings of Sibelius' *Kullervo* and *Finlandia* and Kortekangas' *Migrations*; albums of Beethoven and Tchaikovsky piano concertos with Yevgeny Sudbin and Stephen Hough, respectively; *To Be Certain of the Dawn*, composed by Stephen Paulus with libretto by Michael Dennis Browne; and a particularly widely-praised Beethoven symphonies cycle.

As a guest conductor, Vänskä has received extraordinary praise for his work with many of the world's leading orchestras, including the Boston and Chicago symphony orchestras, Philadelphia Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, London Philharmonic, Berlin Philharmonic, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Vienna Symphony, Hong Kong Philharmonic and Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Orchestra. In January 2020 he became music director of



Travis Anderson

the Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra. In 2014 he became the Iceland Symphony Orchestra's principal guest conductor; since then he has been named the ensemble's honorary conductor. He is also conductor laureate of the Lahti Symphony Orchestra, which, during two decades as music director, he transformed into one of Finland's flagship orchestras.

Vänskä began his music career as a clarinetist, holding major posts with the Helsinki Philharmonic and the Turku Philharmonic. Since taking up the instrument again for Sommerfest 2005 he has performed as clarinetist at Orchestra Hall, other Twin Cities venues, the Grand Teton Festival, the Mostly Mozart Festival, La Jolla Summerfest, the Seattle Chamber Music Festival, and several festivals in Finland. He has recorded Bernhard Henrik Crusell's three Clarinet Quartets and Kalevi Aho's Clarinet Quintet for the BIS label and is in the process of recording several duos for clarinet and violin which he has commissioned with his wife, violinist Erin Keefe.

During the 2021–22 season he is scheduled to conduct ensembles including the Antwerp Symphony Orchestra, Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra, Netherlands Radio Philharmonic, Pittsburgh Symphony, Orchestra Orchestre National de Lyon, Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra and Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra. In addition, he will be in residence at the Curtis Institute, where he will work with conducting fellows across a four-month span. For more information, visit [minnesotaorchestra.org](http://minnesotaorchestra.org).

**t**he Minnesota Orchestra, led by Music Director Osmo Vänskä, ranks among America's top symphonic ensembles, with a distinguished history of acclaimed performances in its home state and around the world. Founded in 1903, it is known for award-winning recordings as well as for notable radio broadcasts and educational engagement programs, and a commitment to new orchestral repertoire.

### music director spotlight: Dimitri Mitropoulos

■ After the Minnesota Orchestra's third music director, Eugene Ormandy, departed in 1936 to join the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Orchestra—then known as the Minneapolis Symphony—didn't settle on an immediate replacement, instead trying out a series of guest conductors. On January 29, 1937, 39-year-old Greek conductor Dimitri Mitropoulos made an ecstatically-received debut in Minneapolis; within two weeks he was signed as the next music director.

■ A native of Athens, Mitropoulos studied music at his home city's conservatory, where he specialized in piano and composition. In the 1920s his focus turned to conducting, and by the early 1930s he was conducting throughout Europe. In 1936 he made his U.S. debut with the Boston Symphony.

■ Mitropoulos' 12-year tenure with the Orchestra is widely regarded as a golden period. His intensity and unique methods—most often conducting from memory, with no score or baton—brought about thrilling musical interpretations. During his tenure, the Orchestra recorded extensively on the Columbia label.

■ In 1949 Mitropoulos left Minnesota to become the New York Philharmonic's music director, a post he held until 1958 when he was succeeded by his protégé Leonard Bernstein. He died in Italy in 1960 while rehearsing Mahler's Third Symphony.

■ Mitropoulos is the Minnesota Orchestra's only music director memorialized in currency: in 2016 a two-Euro coin featuring his profile was released in his home country.



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## newly added: Chamber Music, Sensory-Friendly Concerts and Wellness events

At Orchestra Hall, the fall of 2021 marked the return of a number of “big” things—such as a stage filled with the entire Minnesota Orchestra, an auditorium of full-capacity audiences, and epic works ranging from Ludwig van Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony to Richard Strauss’ *Ein Heldenleben* to Ludwig Göransson’s score from *Black Panther*. Several popular series of more modest scale are also returning to Orchestra Hall as the calendar turns to 2022, with new additions to the schedule including Chamber Music, Sensory-Friendly Concerts, Yoga Classes and Music & Mindfulness sessions.



The 2022 Chamber Music series will include two Sunday afternoon concerts designed by the Orchestra’s musicians and showcasing small ensembles of Orchestra musicians, with each concert taking place in the intimate setting of Orchestra Hall’s Target Atrium. The first program takes place on February 13, and features Franz Schubert’s Octet, Steve Reich’s Music for Pieces of Wood, and Heitor Villa-Lobos’ *Jet Whistle* for flute and cello. The second, slated for May 1, will highlight music by Russell Steinberg, Johannes Brahms, Shelley Washington and Louise Farrenc.

Also returning in 2022 are Sensory-Friendly Concerts designed for audiences of all ages and abilities, including individuals on the autism spectrum and those with sensory sensitivities. Presented in the Target Atrium, the concerts feature small ensembles from the Orchestra, guest musicians from the community, and Board-Certified Music Therapist Lyndie Walker from Toneworks Music Therapy Services as host. This season’s Sensory-Friendly Concerts, which are sponsored by PNC Bank, take place at 11 a.m. on Saturday, February 26, and Tuesday, April 19.

The Orchestra is also spotlighting wellness with the return of Yoga Class at Orchestra Hall as well as Music & Mindfulness sessions. Yoga Classes are held in the Hall’s lobby and are led by a certified yoga instructor, featuring live music performed by an Orchestra musician or duo. These Sunday morning classes are held on January 9 and March 6, beginning at 9 a.m. Music & Mindfulness sessions are presented in

collaboration with the University of Minnesota’s Earl E. Bakken Center for Spirituality and Healing, and take place on Thursday, April 7, and Thursday, May 19, at 7 p.m. Each one-hour session takes place onstage at Orchestra Hall and features music performed by an Orchestra musician or small ensemble, with Mariann Johnson from the University of Minnesota guiding attendees to take a mindful approach to listening. Visit [minnesotaorchestra.org](https://minnesotaorchestra.org) for more details on these newly added events and to purchase tickets. We hope to see you back at Orchestra Hall soon!

## introducing Elixir Haus

For Minnesota Orchestra concertgoers who have yet to discover the (chilly) joys of the Elixir Haus, consider bundling up and heading outside at intermission to experience our new outdoor hub for refreshments. Located on the Peavey Plaza side of Orchestra Hall, Elixir Haus is open through February before each concert and during intermission, serving spirits, wine, signature “snaps,” hot coffee and homemade hot chocolate. Drinks can be pre-ordered and waiting for you at intermission by ordering on the new MNOrch app, downloadable from the Apple App Store or Google Play. If you are feeling adventurous (or thirsty), check out this unique concert experience for the bold!



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## announcing livestream and broadcast concerts for 2022

When you can't make it to Orchestra Hall in person, the next-best thing is *This Is Minnesota Orchestra*, the Emmy-nominated livestream and TV/radio broadcast series that launched in fall 2020 as a way to continue live Minnesota Orchestra concerts when audiences couldn't safely gather at Orchestra Hall. The series has continued for select concerts in the 2021–22 season, including the New Year's Eve performance that launches a three-week Sibelius Festival—and exciting news has just arrived that six more concerts have just been designated for livestreaming and TV broadcast in the first seven months of 2022.



Pianist Ingrid Fliter performing Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 23 with the Minnesota Orchestra under conductor Thomas Søndergård in the December 3 *This Is Minnesota Orchestra* concert broadcast.

Upcoming performances featured on *This Is Minnesota Orchestra*, a co-production with TPT, will feature Junping Qian leading a Lunar New Year celebration (Saturday, February 5); Karina Canellakis conducting Rachmaninoff's *Symphonic Dances* (Friday, February 25); Sarah Hicks on the podium for a collaboration with Cloud Cult (Friday, April 1); Music Director Osmo Vänskä in a MusicMakers concert of music by emerging composers (Friday, May 6); Concertmaster Erin Keefe and pianist Juho Pohjonen performing Mendelssohn's *Double Concerto*, conducted by Vänskä (Friday, June 3); and pianist Jon Kimura Parker performing Beethoven's *Third Piano Concerto*, led by conductor Nicholas Collon (Friday, July 15). Sarah Hicks, the Orchestra's principal conductor for Live at Orchestra Hall concerts, will share hosting duties for the 2022 *This Is Minnesota Orchestra* broadcasts with conductor William Eddins and with Brian Newhouse, formerly of YourClassical MPR and now a member of the Orchestra's Development team.

The six concerts will be televised live on TPT-2 or TPT-MN Channel and streamed live for free on the Orchestra's website and social

media channels. In addition, all Friday night classical concerts will continue to be broadcast on YourClassical Minnesota Public Radio. Most *This Is Minnesota Orchestra* performances will be available online to audiences at no cost as they debut live and for up to a week afterward on the Orchestra's website; subsequent on-demand access will be available for purchase, and select subscribers and donors will receive a free Digital Concert Hall membership as a benefit. The Digital Concert Hall will offer easy on-demand access to *This Is Minnesota Orchestra* performances from the current season, as well as additional premium content including interviews with guest artist.

Visit [minnesotaorchestra.org/digital-concerts](https://minnesotaorchestra.org/digital-concerts) for more information.

Cloud Cult fans, take note: the April 1 broadcast and livestream will be structured slightly differently. It will be available to audiences at no cost as it premieres live on TPT-2 and via online streaming. After April 1, the concert will be available for on-demand viewing through a purchase on the Orchestra's website, and will also be available to TPT Passport members on the TPT website after the initial broadcast.

In conjunction with the unveiling of the 2022 *This Is Minnesota Orchestra* slate, the Orchestra announced a new addition to the staff, Ashleigh Rowe, who will join the organization this month as its director of broadcasts and digital initiatives. Working for TPT since 2009, Rowe has managed a diverse portfolio of projects at the public broadcasting station, including serving as managing director of arts and culture; executive producer of the arts program *Minnesota Original*; and director of impact for national productions. Over the last 16 months, she has been instrumental in creating and developing *This Is Minnesota Orchestra*.

"It is outstanding to have a professional of Ashleigh Rowe's experience and caliber to join our team to lead the build-out of our digital capabilities," said Minnesota Orchestra President and CEO Michelle Miller Burns. "Live broadcasts, concert streams and made-for-digital programming are all initiatives that are growing in importance to the Orchestra as we identify ways to augment and amplify the live concert experience and to connect with new audiences."





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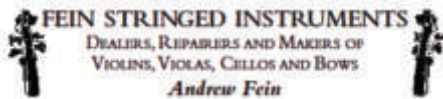


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## coming up at Orchestra Hall: Lunar New Year and more

This year the Minnesota Orchestra's holiday offerings continue into February with the ensemble's first-ever Lunar New Year concerts celebrating the two-week-long holiday centered around new beginnings, good health, fortune and unity that is celebrated around the world. Two Lunar New Year concerts—one on the evening of Saturday, February 6, and another the following afternoon in a slightly shorter version geared toward families—will be conducted by Junping Qian, and will feature music by composers born in China, Singapore and Vietnam.

The program, which was constructed with artistic guidance from the Orchestra's Principal Bassoon Fei Xie, features several soloists: Assistant Concertmaster Rui Du, Gao Hong on pipa (for February 6 only), and two performers with a very special connection to the Orchestra: jing hu master Zhengang Xie and yue qin master Mei Hu, Peking Opera musicians who are Fei Xie's parents. Highlights include the world premiere of the orchestral version of *Circle of Unity*, originally written as a song by the late composer Trinh Cong Son and recently arranged by Jaakko Kuusisto, as well as Tan Dun's *Internet Symphony Eroica*; the *Butterfly Lovers* Violin Concerto by He Zhanhao and Chen Gang; Hua Wu's *In the Dark Night* for Jinghu and Orchestra; and Gao Hong's *Guangxi Impression* Concerto for Pipa and Orchestra, featuring the composer herself as soloist. The Lunar New Year performances

are presented as part of The Great Northern, a ten-day festival throughout the Twin Cities that celebrates our cold, creative winters through diverse programming that invigorate mind and body.



Neda Navvaei

Conductor Junping Qian

Later in February at Orchestra Hall, conductor Dima Slobodeniouk and violinist Baiba Skride return for performances of Mozart's Fourth Violin Concerto (February 11–12); the Orchestra launches its 2022 Chamber Music series with music for small ensembles by Heitor Villa-Lobos, Steve Reich and Franz Schubert (February 13); travel writer and television host Rick Steves takes the stage to host a musical and personal exploration of Europe through music by its beloved classical composers, led by Sarah Hicks (February 18 and 20); and conductor Karina Canellakis conducts Richard Strauss' *Don Quixote* with cellist Jean-Guihen Queyras as soloist (February 25–26). Visit [minnesotaorchestra.org](http://minnesotaorchestra.org) for more information and tickets.

## Symphony Ball: Brilliance

Next May, for the first time since June 2019, the Minnesota Orchestra's annual Symphony Ball gala fundraiser is returning as a live, in-person event at Orchestra Hall. Chaired by Lisa and Bruce Paradis, the 2022 Ball is titled "Brilliance: Relive the Remarkable," and looks back at the Orchestra's remarkable string of accomplishments during Osmo Vänskä's 19-year tenure as music director—from major tours to award-winning recordings to, above all, powerful musical memories made in Minneapolis—and looks ahead to the ensemble's bright future. Vänskä and the Orchestra's Concertmaster Erin Keefe serve as the Ball's honorary chairs. Circle May 7, 2022, on your calendar, and turn to page 48 for more details!

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## Finlandia Foundation National

Finlandia Foundation National congratulates Osmo Vänskä on his many honors, recognitions, awards and accomplishments, including the Minnesota Orchestra's current Sibelius Festival.

Jean Sibelius was the first Patron of Finlandia Foundation National, the premier network of Finnish-American groups in the United States.

Since its founding in Pasadena, California, in 1953, music has been an important part of Finlandia Foundation's mission to support and encourage an awareness of Finnish culture and heritage in the United States, and a connection to contemporary Finland.

We appreciate Maestro Vänskä's commitment to presenting Finnish music and artists to audiences in the U.S. and around the world.

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To help make your entrance into Orchestra Hall faster and more convenient, the Orchestra has partnered with a separate health status app, Bindle, to help you feel safe going into shared spaces again. Individuals can safely store COVID-19 vaccine records and test results in their Bindle wallet, which transforms them into anonymous entry passes that can be used to access events and locations. Bindle technology is designed in such a way that your personal health data is kept strictly private. You have complete control of your health data—Bindle and the Minnesota Orchestra don't see it or store it. The best-part: Bindle users have a dedicated fast-track line into Orchestra Hall to speed your entry. Visit [minnesotaorchestra.org/safety](https://minnesotaorchestra.org/safety) for all of our current safety protocols and more information about the Bindle app.

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## critics' column: recent concert reviews

“Although masked, the Minnesota Chorale was magnificent [in Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony], and the four vocal soloists—soprano Melody Moore, mezzo Kelley O’Connor, tenor Sean Panikkar and bass Mark S. Doss—intertwined their voices beautifully, especially on their transporting final slow section....[The] performance [featured] a precise and propulsive take on the concert-opening Sinfonietta No. 1 by 20th-century American composer Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson. It’s a work for which [guest conductor Juraj] Valčuha clearly has a passion, as he’s requested it on programs he’s conducted elsewhere. He was flamboyant and demonstrative in leading the orchestra’s strings, which responded with a thrilling performance that was sad and lovely in its central slow movement.”

—Rob Hubbard, *Star Tribune*,  
November 17, 2021

“While Beethoven symphonies have become a specialty of the Minnesota Orchestra during the Osmo Vänskä era, the ensemble is also quite expert at those of Shostakovich. His 10th can be pretty relentless in its darkness, particularly in a first-movement struggle between hopelessness and a survivor’s sense of well-tempered triumph. The composer’s individuality was asserted in the melancholy clarinet of Gabriel Campos Zamora and the sad but resonant French horn calls of Michael Gast.”

—Rob Hubbard, *Star Tribune*,  
October 30, 2021

“[Jessie Montgomery’s *Banner*] threads elements of [*The Star-Spangled Banner*] melody with other anthems from around the world, as well as...‘Lift Every Voice and Sing,’ otherwise known as the Black National Anthem. Montgomery’s 2014 piece isn’t a rebuttal of *The Star-Spangled Banner*, nor is it a riff. Rather she is investigating a richer, more multifaceted notion of what a song for America could sound like. What she has come up with is messy at times, innovative, full of points of tension and also joy.”

—Sheila Regan, *Pioneer Press*,  
September 24, 2021



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## FinnFest events extend Sibelius Festival experience

Throughout his tenure as the Minnesota Orchestra's music director, Osmo Vänskä has been a good friend of FinnFest USA, bringing the Orchestra to the cultural festival when it was held in Duluth in 2008, commissioning a work of music by Olli Kortekangas in 2016 in conjunction with that year's event, and co-hosting FinnFest in 2017 with a very special guest: Finland's President, Sauli Niinistö.

This month, as the Orchestra performs a festival of music by Finland's most famous classical composer, Jean Sibelius, FinnFest's affiliated events include two online webinar lectures exploring Sibelius' music: one on January 22nd and the other on January 29th. On January 22, Daniel Grimley—University of Oxford Professor of Music and Douglas Algar Tutorial Fellow at Merton College—will speak on the topic of "Sibelius from Firebrand to Monument." Grimley is the author of *Sibelius: Life, Music, Silence*. His research interests include music, landscape, cultural geography, ecocriticism and the environmental humanities, Scandinavian music and English music.

On January 29, the featured speaker will be Professor Timo Virtanen, senior research at the National Library of Finland, and editor-in-chief of the Sibelius Academy Sibelius Publication Project. Virtanen's lecture will explore the genesis and the two versions of Sibelius' Violin Concerto—both of which are heard at Orchestra Hall this month. In 1997, 15 years after the estate of Sibelius gifted the composer's personal archival collection to the National Library of Finland, Virtanen began the massive editing work of Sibelius' music that continues to this day. Visit [finnfest.us](http://finnfest.us) to learn more about these webinar lectures and FinnFest's wide array of other events.



Finland's President Sauli Niinistö, center, onstage at Orchestra Hall in September 2017 with Music Director Osmo Vänskä and then-Board Chair Marilyn Carlson Nelson.

## a call for your questions



How does the Minnesota Orchestra choose which music to play each season? What are the musicians' top downtown dining recommendations? How did conductors keep their skills sharp when the COVID-19 pandemic arrived? What's life like for a left-handed musician?

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Helena Juntunen, soprano

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Saturday, January 1, 2022, 2 pm | Orchestra Hall

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Symphony No. 7 in C major, Opus 105  
[in one movement] ca. 22'

*Herzog Magnus* (Duke Magnus), for Voice and Orchestra, Opus 57, No. 6  
*Helena Juntunen, soprano* ca. 4'

*Luonnotar* (Spirit of Nature), for Soprano and Orchestra, Opus 70  
*Helena Juntunen, soprano* ca. 8'

I N T E R M I S S I O N ca. 20'

*Höstkväll* (Autumn Evening), from Five Songs, Opus 38, No. 1  
*Helena Juntunen, soprano* ca. 5'

Symphony No. 2 in D major, Opus 43 ca. 44'  
Allegretto  
Andante, ma rubato  
Vivacissimo  
Finale: Allegro moderato

The Finnish texts and English translations of Sibelius' *Herzog Magnus* (Duke Magnus), *Luonnotar* (Spirit of Nature) and *Höstkväll* (Autumn Evening) appear in an insert, and the translations will be projected as surtitles. Translations by BIS (*Herzog Magnus*), W.F. Kirby (*Luonnotar*) and John Skinner (*Höstkväll*).

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. The December 31 concert will also be broadcast live on [Twin Cities PBS \(TPT MN Channel\)](#) and available for streaming at [minnesotaorchestra.org](http://minnesotaorchestra.org) and on the Orchestra's social media channels.







**Osmo Vänskä**, conductor

Profile appears on page 8.



**Helena Juntunen**, soprano

Helena Juntunen has been a regular performer at the Finnish National Opera since 1999, and her role of Marguerite in Gounod's *Faust* at the Savonlinna Opera Festival in 2002 can be considered as her professional breakthrough. In recent seasons, she performed as Madama Butterfly and Donna Elvira at the Savonlinna Opera Festival and as Marie/Marietta in *Die Tote Stadt* in Simon Stone's critically acclaimed production in Basel. Her recent concert highlights include Sibelius' *Luonnotar* in Sydney, London, Amsterdam and Ottawa; Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer*

*Night's Dream* at the Lucerne Festival under Vladimir Jurowski; Unsuk Chin's *Snags & Snarls* in Stavanger, Helsinki and London; and the creation of Hafliði Hallgrímsson's new song cycle in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Reykjavik, among many other performances. Among her many recordings, she is featured with the Lahti Symphony on the BIS label's *Spirit of Nature* album that includes three of the works on this program: Sibelius' *Luonnotar* as well as the world premiere recordings of the orchestral versions of the *Höstkväll* (Autumn Evening) and *Herzog Magnus* (Duke Magnus), conducted by Osmo Vänskä. More: [helenajuntunen.com](http://helenajuntunen.com).

### **Sarah Hicks**, host and writer

For the concert on Friday, December 31, Sarah Hicks, the Minnesota Orchestra's principal conductor of Live at Orchestra Hall, serves as host of the Twin Cities PBS broadcast and online livestream, *This Is Minnesota Orchestra*, a role she has played over the last 16 months. A full profile appears on page 45.

### one-minute notes

## **Sibelius: Symphony No. 7; Herzog Magnus; Luonnotar; Autumn Evening; Symphony No. 2**

Jean Sibelius' final symphony, the Seventh, consists of a single movement—not as if several movements were stitched together, but as if movements unfold in alternation, or even simultaneously, with themes and motifs mingling together seamlessly. Also notable: a solo trombone delivers three noble incantations, building toward a sumptuously scored final chord.

At the core of this program are three works by Sibelius for soprano soloist and orchestra. *Herzog Magnus* tells a medieval tale of a Swedish Duke and his supposed encounter with a mermaid, with music that evokes the feel of a Nordic ballad, creating a sense of antiquity and courtly elegance. *Luonnotar* (Spirit of Nature) retells the ancient Finnish myth of the origin of the cosmos, with music that creates a mood of mystery, excitement and awe, culminating with the soloist's voice soaring upward and fading to nothing. *Höstkväll* (Autumn Evening) depicts a majestic scene of shadows falling at a sunset in autumn. Dark, sustained chords and pedal points give the impression of ancient timelessness, and the soprano sings at times unaccompanied.

From an assortment of seemingly disjointed elements, Sibelius creates an imposing mosaic in his Second Symphony. One fascinating feature of the *Finale* is a wistful melody played over running eighth-notes, written in memory of the composer's sister-in-law.



## Jean Sibelius

**Born:** December 8, 1865,  
Tavastehus, Finland

**Died:** September 20, 1957,  
Järvenpää, Finland

### Symphony No. 7 in C major, Opus 105

**Premiered:** April 3, 1911

The Seventh is Jean Sibelius' final symphony, the culmination of a lifetime of work in the direction of concision, compression and organic unity within symphonic form. In this 20-minute work, the composer presents a seamless tapestry of motifs, all interrelated, all rigorously and logically controlled so as to create, as he expressed it, "an inner connection between all the motifs." Sibelius' Seventh is the *ne plus ultra* of the single-movement symphony. The composer himself was at first unsure what to call this work. At its premiere, which he conducted in Stockholm on March 24, 1924, it appeared on the program as *Fantasia sinfonica*. Afterwards he decided that it did indeed fulfill the requirements of symphonic design—not of symphony in the classical *form* of the model established by Haydn and Mozart, or even of the later works by Brahms and Tchaikovsky, but in the genre: a large-scale work striving for organic unity among its constituent parts.

#### motifs seamlessly intertwined

As far back as Schubert in his *Wanderer* Fantasy for piano (1822), or Liszt in his Piano Sonata and Second Piano Concerto, or even as recently as Schoenberg in his First Chamber Symphony (1906), composers had been seeking ways of eliminating the formal subdivisions between movements, of telescoping several movements into one. In his Seventh Symphony, Sibelius fused the constituent parts into a fabric totally devoid of seams, borders or divisions of any kind. It is not so much a matter of several movements stitched closely together as of several movements unfolding in alternation or at times even simultaneously.

The process is diametrically opposed to that of Gustav Mahler, whose monumental symphonies stretch out to 80, 90, even 100 minutes. Yet, interestingly enough, these two composers had great respect for each other. There is scarcely a moment of silence in the entire symphony; ideas and motifs follow one another without pause, at times overlapping, dovetailing and intertwining as well. There are really no themes one can leave the concert hall humming, yet the symphony abounds in memorable ideas and events.

The opening rap on the timpani is often regarded as a kind of "call to attention." The ensuing scale-like passage in the strings constitutes one of the "seeds" or "germs" that will engender many of the symphony's subsequent motivic elements. Three times throughout the symphony the solo trombone delivers a noble incantation that cuts effortlessly through the dense polyphony around it; each of these incantations is a kind of landmark on the symphony's journey toward its final cadence in C major. The *Vivacissimo* is another of the memorable moments, as strings and woodwinds in turn race skittishly in every direction.

As this symphony fits no traditional mold, yet is obviously continuously active in the unfolding of musical events, the Cleveland Orchestra's former annotator Klaus Roy suggests that the listener experience it as a "tone poem without a story or picture." Hence, each listener must create his or her own program. Another annotator, Timothy Day, finds in its conclusion "a resolution...the dignified calm of a human spirit which has struggled and won through in a hostile environment."

#### brief, yet epic

Despite its relative brevity and the concentrated attention it demands, the Seventh Symphony exudes an epic character. Robert Simpson grandly regards it "like a great planet in orbit, its movement vast, inexorable, seemingly imperceptible to its inhabitants. [It] has both the cosmic motion of the earth and the teeming activity that is upon it; we are made to observe one or the other at the composer's will." For its New Year's Eve review of 1933, the BBC played a recording of parts of this symphony while a speaker recited the experience of flying over Mount Everest. Wind, air, movement and mountain landscapes are also evoked by Sir Donald Francis Tovey in his assessment of the symphony: "If the listener feels that unformed fragments of melody loom out of a severely discordant fog of sound, that is what he is meant to feel. If he cannot tell when or where the tempo changes, that is because Sibelius has achieved the power of moving like aircraft, with the wind or against it. An aeronaut carried with the wind has no sense of movement at all; but Sibelius' airships are roomy enough for the passengers to dance if they like....He moves in the air and can change his pace without breaking his movement."

The late Michael Steinberg concluded his long and eloquent essay on Sibelius' Seventh Symphony with a few words about the non-existent Eighth, which had been the subject of so much anticipation during Sibelius' lifetime (he composed virtually nothing during the last 31 years of his long life) and which engendered so much speculation after his death. Steinberg fittingly puts the seal on Sibelius' symphonic output by calling him "almost incomparably a master of final cadences." Such will surely



be most listeners' thoughts upon hearing that sumptuously scored, final C-major chord of the Seventh.

**Instrumentation:** 2 flutes (both doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani and strings

Program note by **Robert Markow**.

## **Herzog Magnus (Duke Magnus), for Voice and Orchestra, Opus 57, No. 6**

**Premiered:** September 8, 1910 (voice and piano version); orchestrated in 1912

While the other two vocal works on this program highlight Sibelius' nature-loving mysticism, the song *Herzog Magnus* (Duke Magnus) shows a very different side of the composer—that of a musical nationalist. It tells an ancient tale of a Swedish duke's encounter with a mermaid. Through it, we can see Sibelius' deep, continuing connection with his Swedish heritage, and his interest in creating a pan-Scandinavian culture drawn from Swedish and Finnish sources.

### updating a medieval legend

*Herzog Magnus* is based on a dimly-recalled episode from Sweden's medieval past. Magnus, Duke of Östergötland, was a younger son of the great King Gustav Vasa. As a teenager, Magnus started to display signs of mental illness, and his family quietly sent him to live in Vadstena Castle near Lake Vättern. At some point, he was involved in a clumsy accident that pitched him into his castle's moat. Gossips soon seized upon the story as proof of his mental incompetence, enlarging it with each retelling. Within a few years, a legend took shape in which the so-called "Mad Duke" thought he saw a mermaid in the castle's moat and threw himself from his tower window into the water below. The tale sparked several popular ballads, usually focusing on the Duke's foolishness.

In 1909 Sibelius created a new version of this well-known tale, but he made the story his own. For one, as a text he chose not a traditional ballad, but a contemporary Swedish poem by Ernst Josephson. In this retelling, Duke Magnus is sensitive rather than insane, weary from his family's endless political infighting. Unexpectedly, the Duke steps into a dream-like encounter with the supernatural when a mermaid calls out to him. Seeking escape from his tedious existence, Magnus leaps from his window to find rapture in her arms. The next morning the Duke's attendants find him asleep in a bed of violets. Overall, Josephson treats the entire adventure with a sense of envy.

### the music: a sense of antiquity

The musical language recalls Sibelius' early days as a nationalist composer, bringing to mind the famous *Karelia* Suite. The overall feel evokes a Nordic ballad, with Sibelius modulating the sound world to create a sense of antiquity. Over a rippling accompaniment that suggests the mermaid's watery realm, the soprano tells the story in repeated verses, in imitation of medieval troubadours. The vocal line is dusted with light ornamentation, which provides a sense of courtly elegance. For all its connection to the past, however, Sibelius adds a sense of melancholy that gives the work a vaguely *fin-de-siècle* sensibility.

Soprano Aino Ackté premiered the song in Viipuri on September 8, 1910, with Ernst Linko at the piano. In 1912, Sibelius orchestrated the work especially for Ackté to use on concert tours. The only copy of the orchestral score disappeared during World War II, but fortunately was rediscovered in 1994. Like *Höstkväll*, it is receiving its first-ever performance by the Minnesota Orchestra at this week's concerts.

**Instrumentation:** solo soprano with orchestra comprising 2 flutes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, timpani, triangle, harp and strings

Program note by **Scott Chamberlain**.

## **Luonnotar (Spirit of Nature), for Soprano and Orchestra, Opus 70**

**Premiered:** September 10, 1913

It is a shame Sibelius' *Luonnotar* is not better known outside of Finland. Powerful, mysterious and wholly original, this tone poem for soprano and orchestra is one of the most remarkable classical works to have been written during one of the most remarkably creative periods in the composer's career. *Luonnotar* (Spirit of Nature) retells the ancient Finnish myth of the origin of the cosmos—and has quite the origin story of its own.

### a turbulent genesis

In 1910, a promising opportunity arose for Sibelius when the legendary soprano Aino Ackté, who had earlier premiered his *Höstkväll*, approached him and proposed he write her a new work based on Edgar Allen Poe's *The Raven* for her Central European tour. Sibelius was thrilled at the prospect of such a well-known luminary touring with his music and eagerly agreed.

Alas, the project never quite took flight, so to speak. Sibelius was already swamped with his Fourth Symphony, and he found Poe's dream-haunted text challenging to set to music. A few months before the tour started, Sibelius abruptly pulled out of the project.

Ackté was livid, and Sibelius spent the next three years trying to work back into her favor.

In 1913 Sibelius found himself in hot water again. He had agreed to debut a new choral work for Britain's Three Choirs Festival in Gloucester, but again had trouble coming up with a suitable composition. Surprisingly, Ackté came to his rescue. She explained she was also to perform at the Festival; could he finally make good on his previous agreement and write a new work for her to perform?

Sibelius threw himself into the new project, determined to solve two problems at once. He turned to Finland's epic poem, the *Kalevala*, for inspiration, setting a passage that describes the creation of the world. Ackté loved it, writing "Luonnotar is ingenious and magnificent. I am enthusiastic about it—but to the same degree, so afraid of not being able to sing it worthily, because it is madly difficult." She premiered the work at the Festival on September 10, 1913, conducted by Herbert Brewer. The critics did not quite know what to make of its Finnish-language text, but immediately hailed its power and originality.

### the music: excitement and awe

In setting this creation myth, Sibelius took an unconventional approach. Unlike other popular tone poems of the day, such as Paul Dukas' *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, in this music Sibelius chose not to depict the events in the poem literally. Instead, he has the soprano essentially tell the age-old myth—and tell it dramatically!—as if she were an ancient shaman. The orchestra supports her and provides atmosphere.

In terms of musical structure, the work consists of a single movement made up of two contrasting sections that repeat themselves, A-B-A-B. The first section bustles with movement, as if bursting at the seams with generative power. Here, Sibelius uses "cross hatched" strings—tight, rapid ostinatos—and chattering woodwinds that convey energy and excitement. The contrasting section is slow and mysterious, suggesting cosmic forces at work. It favors icy strings and eerie pedal points; these are played at the outer extremes of the orchestra's range, creating a vast sense of empty space. In many ways, the music here foreshadows the final movement of Gustav Holst's *The Planets* and the "outer space" music of the later 20th century. The soprano links the two sections together, creating a shifting sense of excitement and otherworldly awe as she spins forth her tale.

As the work opens, the soprano recounts that before time began, there was a nature spirit, a Daughter of the Air, who tired of her existence in the sky and came down to the great primordial sea. She swam endlessly across the expanse until a great storm arose.

Alone and terrified, she called out to the great god Ukko to send her aid.

At once, a great sea-bird appeared, flying toward her and crying out for a safe place to rest. Filled with compassion, the maiden lifted her knee from the water. The bird alighted, nested, and lay its egg. In time, the egg quickened with life, and as it did so, it began burning with fearsome heat. The maiden cried out and kicked the egg away, breaking it.

And then, a miracle occurred. As the soprano explains in hushed tones of awe, Beauty came forth from the shattered egg. The broken, mottled shell transformed into the starry dome of heaven. The yolk became the sun, and the egg whites became the moon. In the work's final moments, the soprano describes the lighting of the stars. In doing so, her voice soars upwards and fades away to nothing, becoming one with the newly-created cosmos.

**Instrumentation:** solo soprano with orchestra comprising 2 flutes (both doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, 2 timpani, 2 harps and strings

Program note by *Scott Chamberlain*.

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## Höstkväll (Autumn Evening), from Five Songs, Opus 38, No. 1

Premiered: September 12, 1903

Sibelius was fascinated by nature, which he turned to again and again as a source of inspiration. While many of his contemporaries treated nature as a bit of light-hearted escapism, Sibelius probed far deeper in his music. He depicted natural forces at their rawest and most primal—as sources of high drama. All these elements are found in the orchestral song *Höstkväll* (Autumn Night), a miniature marvel depicting a world of untamed forces completely unconcerned with human existence.

### Sibelius the songwriter

Some of Sibelius' most evocative nature-themed works, of which *Höstkväll* is a prime example, are the songs he wrote for solo voice. It may be surprising to think of Sibelius as a songwriter, as he is primarily remembered today for his large-scale works. But he was equally adept at writing in smaller forms. The intimacy of songwriting seemed to bring him special joy, as he produced more than 100 songs in all. Most of these miniatures were written for piano accompaniment, but he later orchestrated several key works. For the most part, the language of his songs was Swedish—the language Sibelius spoke at home as a child (to the end of his days, when Sibelius counted aloud, he did so in Swedish).



While his songs are of course on a different scale than his larger works, the elements that make him such a fascinating symphonist are equally on display in these miniature forms. His songs display extraordinary powers of compression, making powerful statements through the smallest of gestures. Plus, he had an uncanny ability to establish a mood.

### music inspired by nature

These elements are certainly clear in *Höstkväll*, one of his greatest, most atmospheric songs. The text is a Swedish poem by Viktor Ryberg, which powerfully sets the scene: the sun is setting, and the clouds are etched in light, hanging low in the sky as a storm approaches. Shadows fall on everything, creating sharp contrasts. Finally, a lone traveler appears to take in the majesty of the scene with its dying light. The poet closes the text by asking, does the traveler feel his soul at one with the song of the wind in the starless twilight? Will his sorrow die like a cry lost amidst autumn's mighty lament?

The starkness of the scene is emphasized by the extreme economy of the music. The accompaniment tends toward dark, sustained chords and pedal points that give the impression of ancient timelessness. For extended sections the soprano sings unaccompanied. The soprano describes the scene in dramatic, visionary detail, her voice a force of nature unto itself. Despite her powerful delivery, the overall sense of the work is one of understatement...of things hidden and inscrutable, much like nature itself.

The famous Finnish soprano Aino Ackté sang the premiere on September 12, 1903, at a concert in Helsinki with Oskar Merikanto on piano. Later, Sibelius decided that the work's power and grandeur cried out for orchestration, which he completed in 1904. In its full orchestral form, *Höstkväll* has been championed by several legendary singers, including Kirsten Flagstad and Birgit Nilsson. This week's performances of *Höstkväll* are the Minnesota Orchestra's first.

**Instrumentation:** solo soprano with orchestra comprising 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trombones, snare drum, harp and strings

Program note by *Scott Chamberlain*.

## Symphony No. 2 in D major, Opus 43

Premiered: March 8, 1902

Sibelius' Second Symphony is one of several of the composer's works linked to the man to whom it is dedicated, Baron Axel Carpelan. As Erik Tawaststjerna tells us in his masterly Sibelius

biography, Carpelan was considered "a hypochondriac who had done little with his life, had precious little money, and eked out a lonely bachelor existence..." When his parents opposed his plans to become a violinist, he did "the next best thing. He did all in his power to bolster the illusion of being in the midst of musical activity....In his dealings with Sibelius he showed real flair...and at his best, was a source of inspiration...."

Carpelan first introduced himself to Sibelius in October 1900, but he had already been writing letters to the composer, full of advice, suggestions, interference, trivia, insight, gossip, hypochondriac laments and unsolicited opinions. Even before their meeting, Carpelan had commanded Sibelius to go to Italy, and his intuition was absolutely on target. In February 1901 Sibelius arrived in Rapallo, just below Genoa. Still depressed by the death from typhus of his youngest daughter, Kirsti, the year before, worried about the tough line recently taken toward Finland by Russia, inclined as always to drink and smoke too much, his marriage uneasy, the 35-year-old composer was in poor shape. But the tonic effect of Italy was extraordinary.

### "fatally in love" with his symphony

By May, home again, he had accomplished much, particularly by way of sketching what he thought of as a four-movement orchestral fantasy: "I've now fallen fatally in love with [it]. I can't tear myself away from it." It became clear to Sibelius that he was writing neither a set of four tone poems nor an orchestral fantasy, but a real symphony. When the first performances took place—four concerts in March 1902, with Sibelius conducting the Helsinki Philharmonic—the composer's triumph was complete.

Almost at once there appeared an article by Sibelius' friend the conductor Robert Kajanus, who offered a political interpretation of the work that called the *Andante* a "broken-hearted protest against all the injustice that threatens at the present time to deprive the sun of its light and our flowers of their scent."

Sibelius was distinctly annoyed. Nonetheless, such readings would surface again. Philip Hale's Boston Symphony program note from 1924, for example, is full of terms like "oppression," "patriotic feeling," "brutal rule" and "the awakening of national feeling." This sort of thing had a comic pendant 16 years later when Virgil Thomson wrote that the only reason American orchestras played so much Sibelius was that Finland alone had paid her war debts.

Yet at that same time, Sibeliana was at its zenith in America. It was soon to be intensified even more by Finland's heroic resistance to invasion by the Soviet Union. By the time of his death in 1957, Sibelius had, most astonishingly, sunk into oblivion, to become the object of excited rediscovery toward the end of the 1970s.

### coherence and fragmentation

The Sibelius Second is now a very familiar piece, but its first audiences had never experienced music that begins and builds like this.

**allegretto.** At an easygoing pace, strings fairly quietly play a series of chords, 11 of them, that might be the beginning of a theme or an accompaniment in search of a theme. The 11 chords are repeated, then just the first five, twice. Now, in darker colors, the process begins again. Only this time, woodwinds and clarinets add a prettily chirping melody. Before the oboes and clarinets have gotten very far with their tune, the horns tell them they have the character all wrong, it should be soulful and slower. The woodwinds resume their version. The strings, having first experimented to see what the woodwind tune sounds like when you play it pizzicato, upside down and very slowly, return to a basic-Finnish version of their chords; that is, only the gesture remains, the tune is gone. The horns carry on with their ruminations. And they all seem pretty much to ignore one another. Gradually we come to feel the coherence of this music. What Sibelius wants us to perceive as most important, he positions accordingly, playing it more often or more emphatically. It is as though he had set himself the task of discovering the coherence and hierarchical placement of all these fragments. He himself put it more picturesquely when he once wrote, “It is as though the Almighty had thrown the pieces of a mosaic down from the floor of heaven and told me to put them together.” So, stones into mosaic, that is the scenario of this movement.

**andante, ma rubato.** A timpani roll sets the scene for the second movement. Basses alternating with cellos, both pizzicato, spell out a long line. Horns and timpani add punctuation to the bassoon melody, and quickly the heat is turned up, everything becoming louder, faster and more agitated. Antiphonal cries flung back and forth between winds and strings push the music to an almost strident climax; from there, it falls back in exhaustion from *fff* to *ppp*. When the music resumes after a long silence, the world has changed. Peace, however, is shortlived. Fragmentation overpowers coherence, and the music ends with a troubling abruptness.

**vivacissimo.** A version of Sibelius’ buzzing-string music sets the very quick scherzo in motion. A long silence, broken only by five drumbeats that descend from *p* to *pppp*, clears the air for the trio, an oboe melody, distinctly *triste*, that begins with nine repetitions of its initial note. The scherzo begins again, the trio returns; but before long a new idea—three ascending notes—insists on making itself heard, and this soon bursts forth as the principal theme of the finale.

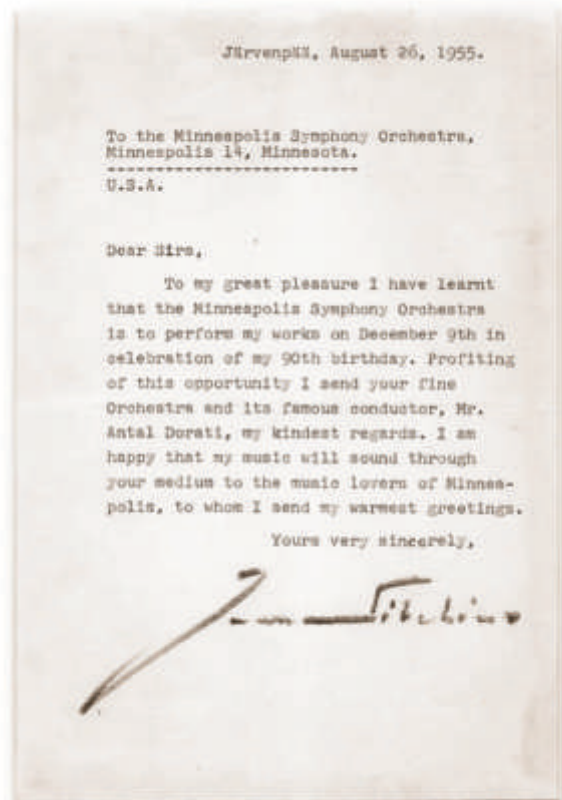
**finale: allegro moderato.** This theme, simple as it is, generates powerfully thrusting forward motion. The most fascinating feature of this *Finale*, however, is a wistful melody played obsessively over running eighth-notes in the lower strings. This passage, Tawaststjerna learned from the composer’s widow, was written in memory of his sister-in-law, who had recently taken her own life. The issue of this obsession when it seizes the music for the second time is the renewed blaze of D major in which the symphony so triumphantly ends.

**Instrumentation:** 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani and strings

Program note excerpted from the late **Michael Steinberg’s** *The Symphony: A Listener’s Guide* (Oxford, 1995), used with permission.

coda

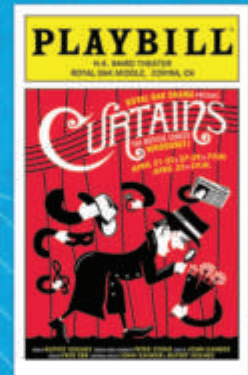
The Minnesota Orchestra’s relationship with Jean Sibelius’ music goes way back—in fact, the composer himself wrote to the then-Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra in 1955 upon learning of the ensemble’s plans to celebrate his 90th birthday with a program of his music conducted by Music Director Antal Dorati.





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# Minnesota Orchestra

Osmo Vänskä, conductor

Elina Vähälä, violin

Friday, January 7, 2022, 8 pm | Orchestra Hall

Saturday, January 8, 2022, 8 pm | Orchestra Hall

## All works composed by Jean Sibelius

Symphony No. 6 in D minor, Opus 104	ca. 27'
Allegro molto moderato	
Allegretto moderato	
Poco vivace	
Allegro molto	
Concerto in D minor for Violin and Orchestra, Opus 47 (1903-04 early version)	ca. 38'
Allegro moderato	
Adagio di molto	
Allegro, ma non tanto	
<i>Elina Vähälä, violin</i>	
I N T E R M I S S I O N	ca. 20'
Symphony No. 1 in E minor, Opus 39	ca. 36'
Andante, ma non troppo - Allegro energico	
Andante, ma non troppo lento	
Scherzo: Allegro	
Finale (quasi una fantasia): Andante - Allegro molto	

### pre-concert

Solo piano performance and remarks by Ruusamari Teppo, a direct descendent of Jean Sibelius

Friday, January 7, 7 pm, Auditorium

Saturday, January 8, 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.







**Osmo Vänskä**, conductor

Profile appears on page 8.



**Elina Vähälä**, violin

Born in the U.S. and raised in Finland, Elina Vähälä made her orchestral debut with the Lahti Symphony Orchestra at the age of 12 and was later chosen by Osmo Vänskä as the orchestra's Young Master Soloist. Since then, her career has continued to develop on the international stage, winning praise from audiences and musicians alike. She appears regularly with all of the key Finnish orchestras as well as being a guest of countless high-profile orchestras around the globe such as the Houston Symphony, Vancouver Symphony, Yomiuri Nippon Symphony

Orchestra, Beethoven Orchester Bonn, Dortmund Philharmoniker, Istanbul State Symphony, Malmo Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre Philharmonique de Strasbourg and RTVE Spanish Radio Orchestra. She has toured throughout the U.K., Finland, Germany, China, Korea and South America. The 2021-22 season sees her return to the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra and Seoul International Music Festival as well as her debuts with the Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra and Pannon Philharmonic. She also appears at the festivals in Tampere, Clandeboye and Oulu, where she has recently been appointed artistic director. More: [dispeker.com](http://dispeker.com), [elinavahala.com](http://elinavahala.com).

### one-minute notes

## Sibelius: Symphony No. 6; Violin Concerto (original version); Symphony No. 1

Jean Sibelius' Sixth Symphony is unusual in several ways: it contains no slow movement, and in it, instruments are scored primarily in their upper ranges, contributing to a sense of weightlessness. The third movement stands out as a particularly virtuosic tour de force.

The rarely-performed original version of Sibelius' Violin Concerto is significantly different from the familiar, finished version: most notably it is longer, and the soloist's part is more overtly virtuosic. Minnesota Orchestra Music Director Osmo Vänskä played a central role in the rediscovery of this work, when in 1991 Sibelius' heirs permitted Vänskä and Finland's Lahti Symphony to give one live performance and make a recording.

Sibelius' First Symphony balances Classical economy with Romantic gestures. The symphony opens with a long, dark clarinet melody. After a second movement rich in Romantic sonorities, the *Scherzo* brings dramatic accents and vast dynamic contrasts. Lush and impassioned themes rule in the *Finale* before the music, now seeming disjunct, closes on a haunting note.



## Jean Sibelius

**Born:** December 8, 1865,  
Tavastehus, Finland

**Died:** September 20, 1957,  
Järvenpää, Finland

### Symphony No. 6 in D minor, Opus 104

**Premiered:** February 19, 1923

Sibelius' Sixth Symphony, like his Third, is performed less often than the others. Concertgoers expecting to encounter the epic majesty of Symphony No. 1, the grand heroism of Nos. 2 and 5 or the gaunt austerity of No. 4—all far better known than the Sixth—are in for a surprise.

#### a symphony of paradoxes

Instead, a cool, rarefied air seems to surround the Sixth in music of purity and luminescence. Textures are transparent, colors are muted, orchestral forces are modest, and instrumental ranges are often directed toward the upper end of the spectrum rather than the lower.

It is also a symphony of paradoxes. Despite a predilection for the upper range, this is Sibelius' only symphony to incorporate a bass clarinet, which is used frequently as part of the woodwind choir. Despite the transparent textures, it is a work richly imbued with polyphony inspired by 16th-century masters like Orlando de Lassus and Palestrina. Despite the composer's original intention to make the Sixth "wild and impassioned in character," it displays these qualities only rarely, even though there is no "slow" movement and very little slow music in the whole symphony.

The symphony was completed in February of 1923 and received its first performance on February 19 in Helsinki, with the composer conducting. The score is dedicated to the great Swedish composer Wilhelm Stenhammar (1871-1927).

#### the music: harmonic tension and pervasive scales

**allegro molto moderato.** The opening bars display several of the qualities described above, including polyphony (in five parts), the concentration on the upper range (violins divided into four parts plus violas as the "bass" voice) and the prominence of the Dorian mode, a mode of the medieval church. Two additional features of this opening material must be noted, features that will continue through the entire symphony: the pervasive use of scales, and a "germ motif," which is found in so many of Sibelius' works. In this case, it is the first four notes played by the upper half of the

second violin section; this four-note sequence will play a more significant role than that of any of the principal themes, and will in fact be absorbed into most of them.

Although lyrical in character, this opening material is not thematic. The first true theme arrives only somewhat later: a scurrying figure heard initially in the flutes and immediately imitated a notch lower by the oboes, all to the notable accompaniment of the harp, which Sibelius had used only once before in a symphony (the First). Here we encounter still another of the Sixth Symphony's paradoxes, for this theme is in neither D Dorian nor D minor, but C major! The harmonic antithesis between the Dorian mode and C major will constitute one of the principal sources of tension in the movement. There is a further theme in B minor (a lyrically rising and falling line for the cellos), but it is now obviously going to be useless to attempt to force this movement into the Procrustean bed of a textbook sonata form.

**allegretto moderato.** The second movement abounds in the veiled, remote, "cool" sounds so beloved by Stravinsky in many of his neoclassic works. There is much use of the harp, scales and scalelike fragments are omnipresent, and a gentle melancholy seems to hover over the music.

**poco vivace.** In contrast to the nearly indefinable meters of the second movement, the third is rhythmically alive and invites body movement. It is also a tour de force of orchestral virtuosity, requiring a Mendelssohnian lightness of touch and almost airborne fleetness.

**allegro molto.** The finale opens with a quasi-heroic statement. In the course of this free-form movement we encounter the symphony's most passionate and exuberant passages (the only moment marked *fff* is found here), but the final moments are given to quiet reflection of earlier material as the textures become ever sparer, dissipating into the serene silence of infinity.

**Instrumentation:** 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets,  
bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones,  
timpani, harp and strings

Program note by **Robert Markow**.



## Concerto in D minor for Violin and Orchestra, Opus 47 (1903-04 early version)

Premiered: February 8, 1904

This week's concerts offer a rare chance—the first ever at Orchestra Hall—to hear Sibelius' Violin Concerto as it was originally composed and premiered in 1904, while next week's performances feature the concerto's substantially rewritten final form of 1905 in which it is almost always played.

### nearly lost to history

The original version of Sibelius' Violin Concerto might have been lost to history—the composer forbade further performances in a 1904 edict—were it not for the diligent efforts of Swedish-based BIS Records and conductor Osmo Vänskä. BIS' landmark Sibelius Edition, a multi-decade project overseen by founder Robert von Bahr, is among the most ambitious recording initiatives focused on a single major classical composer: a comprehensive effort to record every piece Sibelius wrote, including numerous works that had never previously been recorded.

Sibelius' heirs were supportive of the project, and in 1991 they permitted Vänskä, Finland's Lahti Symphony and soloist Leonidas Kavakos to record the original version of the Violin Concerto and give one live performance. That recording on the BIS label—which paired the concerto's original and final versions—earned high acclaim including a 1991 Gramophone Award. The Sibelius estate's restrictions have since loosened, although performances still remain rare: a 2015 rendition by Australia's Queensland Symphony Orchestra was billed as only the third public performance.

### stung by criticism

It's no coincidence that Sibelius' only concerto is for violin: as a young man he had aspired to be a celebrated violinist, but a failed audition for the Vienna Philharmonic in 1891 put an end to his original dream. Little more than a decade later, Sibelius had become a cultural hero in Finland after the successful premieres of works such as his *Kullervo*, *Finlandia* and the first two symphonies—and it was then that he set on writing a concerto that would showcase the instrument of his youth in its full virtuosic glory.

Sibelius conducted the Violin Concerto's premiere in Helsinki on February 8, 1904, and it did not go as he had hoped. The music proved too challenging for the soloist, Victor Nováček, and an attending critic whose opinion Sibelius highly valued, Karl Flodin, declared the concerto “a mistake,” criticized in particular its difficult virtuoso components, and offered the final judgment that “the concerto is, to be honest, boring, something which could not hitherto be said of a composition by Jean Sibelius.” Stung by

the critique, Sibelius withdrew the concerto and set to work on revisions. The final version was introduced on October 19, 1905, with Richard Strauss conducting the Berlin Court Orchestra and soloist Karel Halíř, and this version of the concerto has become a cornerstone of the 20th-century violin repertoire.

### the key differences

Following is a condensed version of the late Finnish musicologist Erkki Salemenhaara's description of the key differences between the original version of the Violin Concerto and its successor, from the 1991 BIS album of both works:

“In his work of revision [Sibelius] acted precisely according to the guidelines suggested by [Karl] Flodin. The greatest difference between the first and the second versions is that in the second Sibelius dispensed with a striking amount of the virtuoso element in the solo part. More concretely, he discarded the first movement's second, Bach-like solo cadenza entirely. In the finale, too, he made significant cuts.

**allegro moderato.** “In his revision of the first movement the composer took away not only virtuoso but also musical elements. A short, sweetly Mendelssohnian interlude was cut out entirely. The final motif of the exposition underwent a genuine transformation; it was intended as a codetta or as the final theme's third motif. In the original version it has a higher rhythmic profile with an incisive Beethovenian sonority and sharply dotted rhythms. In the recapitulation of the first version a muscular Beethovenian passage is constructed out of this same motif which recurs right at the end of the movement. In the final version all that remains of the motif in its sharply rhythmic form is a brief reminder of the final bars of the first movement, where it appears as if by surprise.

“In the first version, in the transition to the cadenza which takes the place of the development, there remains a ‘gap’ which the composer did not completely succeed in filling, even in the second version with its rhythmically smoother motif. Another striking alteration is that in the original version the short ‘cadenza’ which follow the main theme is accompanied all the time by a rhythmic figure from the orchestra, prefiguring the main theme of the finale.

**adagio di moto.** “The least changes were made to the slow [middle] movement, the beauty of which had been especially praised by reviewers of the first performance. The length of the movement is the same in both versions, and the differences appear mostly in the reduction of the solo part's ornamental aspects and the omission of a short final cadenza in the final version.

**allegro ma non tanto.** “In the finale, the present-day listener will be surprised by the omission of a fresh Beethovenian idea which is



situated after the main theme. It leads to a short recapitulation of the main theme, which is not present in the final version, and after which we progress to the subsidiary theme. A few virtuoso touches have also been removed from the finale. Changes have been made to the orchestration in all three movements: generally speaking, the first version has a darker, more massive sound.”

### in summary

Salmenhaara concluded with a general assessment: “The first version of Sibelius’ Violin Concerto is more dramatic, more virtuosic and more Beethovenian than the established version. It may also be rougher, more rugged and not as symphonically integrated as the second version. Without a doubt, however, it possesses its own fascination....it shows in a definite form the furnace in which [the concerto] was forged, where a genius worked.”

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

Program note by *Carl Schroeder*.

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## Symphony No. 1 in E minor, Opus 39

Premiered: April 26, 1899

Few first symphonies can claim the boldness, masterly symphonic thought and originality as that of Jean Sibelius. Only Brahms, Mahler and perhaps Schumann can stand next to him in this regard. Sibelius’ first essay in the genre was also his first major abstract composition, begun in April 1898 and completed early in 1899. The composer himself conducted the successful premiere in Helsinki on April 26, 1899. The symphony, the famous *Finlandia*, and two of the *Legends* met with such enthusiastic receptions that the Finnish government granted the composer a lifetime pension so that he could devote himself entirely to composition. Sibelius was not yet 36 years old.

The dark, craggy power of this work, its evocation of the magic spell of the North, the romantic melodies and its spirit of bardic sagas have stirred many writers to poetic commentary. Here is Robert Bager’s description: “The work abounds in contrasts. Herein is represented the unfettered, mercurial thinking of a young symphonist....The young composer pours great melodies into his work, melodies that sing with an exultant joy, melodies that rise and fall with tremendous intensity, and also melodies that are nostalgic and mellow and suffused with a tender pathos. There are grace and lightness in the music as it comes rushing to the creator’s pen. There are also wild, barbaric shouts, outbursts of tremendous passion, raging unbridled utterances that hurl themselves forward like the roar of giant winds.”

### the music: beginning with clarinet

**andante, ma non troppo – allegro energico.** The symphony opens with a long, haunting melody for the solo clarinet, accompanied only by the distant rumble of timpani as a pedal point (a device Sibelius uses often). To the leading Sibelius scholar, Erik Tawaststjerna, this melody “rises in a broad arch and dips like a wounded bird in flight, before fading and disappearing in a primeval mist.” The sense of aching loneliness and bleakness imparted by this introduction is characteristically Sibelian, and is found frequently in his music. Also characteristic is the length of this theme, which seems almost to grow organically out of itself.

When the *Allegro* main section begins, we find still another Sibelian touch—a theme beginning in the violins with a long, sustained note, and gathering momentum toward the end in quicker notes. The theme is of ambiguous tonality, sharing qualities of E minor and its relative major, G. The theme’s coiled tension is fully released when the entire orchestra presents this idea in splendid glory. Three more themes appear in this richly melodic exposition.

**andante, ma non troppo lento.** The slow movement is built largely from the initial theme—a slowly rocking, melancholic line played first by violins and cellos with mutes, which give an added tinge of greyness.

**scherzo: allegro – lento, ma non troppo.** The *Scherzo* looks back to Bruckner in its insistent pounding character, and even further back to Beethoven’s Ninth in the use of frequent melodic outbursts from the timpani. The central trio section stands in marked contrast in its idyllic mood, tonality (E major as opposed to the C-minor *Scherzo*), tempo (*lento*) and thinned-out texture.

**finale (quasi una fantasia): andante – allegro molto.** For the *Finale*, we return to the symphony’s opening gesture: that long, solo clarinet line—but played now by the entire string section (minus the basses) in a grand, heroic manner punctuated by solemn brass chords. Two strongly contrasted ideas are presented and developed: a springy, dancelike motif with syncopated rhythms, and a deeply expressive, soulful theme played first by the combined violin sections on the G string for extra warmth and sonority. The symphony builds to a monumental climax, but ends abruptly—with a strange, sudden tapering off and two pizzicato chords in the strings, just as did the first movement.

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

Program notes by *Robert Markow*.



# February Concerts

## LUNAR NEW YEAR WITH THE MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA

SAT FEB 5 8PM

## LUNAR NEW YEAR FOR FAMILIES (A RELAXED FAMILY CONCERT)

SUN FEB 6 2PM

Junping Qian, conductor

Roz Tsai, host

Rui Du, violin

Gao Hong, pipa (Feb 5 only)

Zhengang Xie, jing hu master

Mei Hu, yue qin master

Fei Xie, artistic consultant

Asian Media Access, artistic partner

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## MOZART, CHIN AND STRAVINSKY'S FIREBIRD

FRI FEB 11 8PM

SAT FEB 12 8PM

Dima Slobodeniouk, conductor

Baiba Skride, violin

## RICK STEVES' EUROPE: A SYMPHONIC JOURNEY WITH THE MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA

FRI FEB 18 8PM

SUN FEB 20 2PM

Sarah Hicks, conductor

Rick Steves, host

## CANELLAKIS CONDUCTS DON QUIXOTE

FRI FEB 25 8PM

SAT FEB 26 8PM

Karina Canellakis, conductor

Jean-Guihen Queyras, cello

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# Minnesota Orchestra

Osmo Vänskä, conductor

Elina Vähälä, violin

Thursday, January 13, 2022, 11 am | Orchestra Hall

Friday, January 14, 2022, 8 pm | Orchestra Hall

Symphony No. 4 in A minor, Opus 63	ca. 32'
Tempo molto moderato, quasi adagio	
Allegro molto vivace	
Il tempo largo	
Allegro	
I N T E R M I S S I O N	
Symphony No. 3 in C major, Opus 52	ca. 30'
Allegro moderato	
Andantino con moto, quasi allegretto	
Moderato - Allegro, ma non tanto	
Concerto in D minor for Violin and Orchestra, Opus 47 (1905 revision)	ca. 31'
Allegro moderato	
Adagio di molto	
Allegro, ma non tanto	
<i>Elina Vähälä, violin</i>	

## pre-concert

**Concert Preview** with Phillip Gainsley  
 Thursday, January 13, 10:15 am, Auditorium  
 Friday, January 14, 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.







**Osmo Vänskä**, conductor

Profile appears on page 8.



**Elina Vähälä**, violin

Born in the U.S. and raised in Finland, Elina Vähälä made her orchestral debut with the Lahti Symphony Orchestra at the age of 12 and was later chosen by Osmo Vänskä as the orchestra's Young Master Soloist. Since then, her career has continued to develop on the international stage, winning praise from audiences and musicians alike. She appears regularly with all of the key Finnish orchestras as well as being a guest of countless high-profile orchestras around the globe such as Houston Symphony, Vancouver Symphony, Yomiuri Nippon Symphony

Orchestra, Beethoven Orchester Bonn, Dortmund Philharmoniker, Istanbul State Symphony, Malmo Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre Philharmonique de Strasbourg and RTVE Spanish Radio Orchestra. She has toured throughout the U.K., Finland, Germany, China, Korea and South America. The 2021-22 season sees her return to Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra and Seoul International Music Festival as well as her debuts with Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra and Pannon Philharmonic. She also appears at the festivals in Tampere, Clandeboye and Oulu, where she has recently been appointed artistic director. More: [dispeker.com](http://dispeker.com), [elinavahala.com](http://elinavahala.com).

one-minute notes

**Sibelius: Symphony No. 3; Symphony No. 4; Violin Concerto (final version)**

Sibelius' Third Symphony has many subtle beauties, strength of purpose and ideas that are developed in imaginative ways. Notable for its lean orchestral textures, it culminates in a broad, majestic theme with a distinctive rhythmic pattern, riding to a grand conclusion.

An enigma from the pre-World War I years, Sibelius' Fourth Symphony is dark music from a dark moment in the composer's life. The beginning question, elaborated by solo cello, is pondered throughout the work. The scherzo emerges as if from nowhere, and the Largo rises slowly, singing, to a Brucknerian climax. Before the finale's brusque ending, it brims with ideas and the bright sonority of bells.

Sibelius' "dearest wish" had been to become a virtuoso violinist, and his love for the instrument is evident in his Violin Concerto. The solo violin speaks dreamily, then with bravura. The Adagio, with a melody of vast breadth, leads to a finale noted for its inventive rhythms and brilliant close.



## Jean Sibelius

**Born:** December 8, 1865,  
Tavastehus, Finland

**Died:** September 20, 1957,  
Järvenpää, Finland

### Symphony No. 4 in A minor, Opus 63

**Premiered:** April 3, 1911

In 1910 and 1911, Jean Sibelius had a rich fund of human and musical experience to draw on. New people he had met (Gustav Mahler was one), an illness he had survived—the removal of a tumor from his throat in 1909—new landscapes he had experienced, his country’s political situation: all these went to feed his artistic fantasy. The Fourth Symphony is a monument to a richly lived, deeply considered and by no means easy life. He began work on the work in the spring of 1910 and completed the score early in 1911. He led the premiere in Helsinki on April 3, 1911.

Those things ghosting about the background of this symphony all tend to make one feel small, and so should the Fourth as a whole. Aloneness, a sense of the contrast between human and superhuman, the impact of concentrated experience—these are perhaps the images that, unbidden, lodged in Sibelius’ mind as he conceived and began to fix the musical gestures of this unsettling masterwork.

#### the music: answering a question

**tempo molto moderato, quasi adagio.** The symphony begins with a question. Basses and cellos, *fortissimo* but muted, together with bassoons sound a huge C, from which two other notes, D and F-sharp, detach themselves. The F-sharp falls back to E, and for a long time we hear only a rocking, back and forth, between these two pitches. It is the kraken’s roar.

These four notes—C/D/E/F-sharp—are part of a whole-tone scale, an elusive, ambiguous creation all of whose intervals are alike, which therefore presents no articulation and has neither beginning nor end. This so-called tritone interval between the outer notes, C and F-sharp, is pungent, and medieval theorists called it *diabolus in musica*. It is an uncomfortable dissonance that demands resolution.

The most natural resolution is outward, to a perfect fifth, and that is eventually accomplished in this symphony—in the finale! For the time being, though, we must be satisfied with gnomic adumbrations of this possibility. We will also gradually discover

that the music heard in the first few minutes, including the solo cello melody, provides the stuff from which all the rest of the symphony will be drawn.

**allegro molto vivace.** When this questioning, almost slow movement finds its end, the scherzo emerges from it at once. The tritone disturbs the calm, the dactyls in duple meter disturb the lilt of the opening tune, and the somber second half of the movement disturbs the architectural and expressive set of the piece as a whole.

**il tempo largo.** The third movement—and this is truly slow music—is the symphony’s center, and here, tentatively at first, then more openly, Sibelius sings. He allows himself one climax, lacerating and laconic at the same time. We might remember that when Sibelius heard the Bruckner Fifth it had moved him to tears. Sibelius’ *Largo* ends, like his first movement, in repetitions and a question mark.

**allegro.** The finale emerges immediately, as the scherzo did from the first movement. The *allegro* quality—in its literal sense of “cheerful” as well as its musical one, indicating a quick tempo—is instantly compromised by the grinding dissonance that occurs when the second violins join the firsts. The issue of the tritone is still very much alive. In this finale, in striking contrast to the economy of the first three movements, Sibelius almost overwhelms us with a profusion of ideas. That richness sets off the coda, in which all this music is brought down to the irreducible. It falls back from bright major to dark minor, then disintegrates into scarcely audible tremolandi. A flute voices an appeal, to which the oboe makes crowing, heartless response.

Neither affirmative nor pathetic, the end, *mezzo-forte* and rigorously in tempo, is shattering in its matter-of-factness. Sir Colin Davis, a deeply penetrating Sibelius conductor, described this moment as “a brusque hand that smoothes the earth over the grave.”

**Instrumentation:** 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani, bells and strings

*Excerpted from a program note by the late Michael Steinberg, used with permission.*

## Symphony No. 3 in C major, Opus 52

**Premiered:** September 26, 1907

Of Sibelius’ seven symphonies, the Third may be the least played and least known—the composer himself referred to it as his beloved and least fortunate child. It has many subtle beauties,



an indisputable strength of purpose and ideas that are developed in imaginative ways. But these are rendered less than obvious by Sibelius' use of lean orchestral textures, air of classical restraint (in contrast to the heroic mold of the First and Second Symphonies) and economy rather than expansiveness in overall layout, as well as the absence of memorable, expansive themes.

#### "where words leave off"

Sibelius' Third must have seemed quaintly anachronistic when it came out—around the same time as works like Mahler's Sixth Symphony, Glière's Third, Strauss' *Salome* and Scriabin's *Divine Poem*, all conceived on a grand scale for oversized orchestra and filled with hyperemotional trauma.

But to Sibelius, there was something almost sacred about writing a symphony. He believed in the purity of the genre, and he believed that all symphonies since Beethoven, with the exception of those of Brahms, had been perverted into symphonic poems. "Music begins where words leave off," he wrote. "A symphony should be music first and last...the essence of a symphony [lies in] severity of style and the profound logic that creates an inner connection among all the motifs." As the late musicologist Michael Steinberg so deliciously said of this work, "there is no imagery and no drama for you to lose yourself in except that of the musical events themselves. This is like Haydn: you can't do anything with it except listen to it, and it is meant for people who really listen."

The composer conducted the premiere of his Third Symphony with the Helsinki Philharmonic on September 26, 1907.

**the music: tradition, wistfulness and a "phantasmagoria"**  
**allegro moderato.** The first movement is in traditional sonata form, with two contrasting themes in the exposition, a development section and recapitulation. The opening measures bring us the first of those themes, a quiet processional in the lower strings followed a few moments later by a jaunty whistle in the woodwinds. The second theme arrives in the cellos in the key of B minor—a long, forlorn subject marked by syncopations and restless energy. The development section concerns itself almost exclusively with a rhythmic figure that formed a prominent component of the first theme—a grouping of four even 16th-notes, which Sibelius now turns into a continuous flow. The development grows inexorably in strength until it reaches a grand climax where the opening processional theme returns gloriously, now once again in the home key of C major.

**andantino con moto, quasi allegretto.** The rarely used key of G-sharp minor was Sibelius' choice for the second movement, which consists of a single wistful theme of pastoral character heard in successive entries by pairs of woodwinds (flutes, clarinets) or in the violins. Two episodes interrupt the proceedings, the first a brief

woodwind chorale, the second somewhat fitful in its stop-and-go movement and frequent changes of timbres. When the principal theme returns, it is now more richly and subtly colored.

**moderato – allegro, ma non tanto.** The "finale" is peculiar in that it is actually two movements in one—not two separate movements connected by a bridge passage, but a single movement whose second half grows organically out of the first. The first half contains wisps and tendrils of motifs ("a flickering phantasmagoria of elusive scraps," in the words of Jack Diether) thrown out in seemingly fragmentary form. These eventually coalesce into a broad, majestic theme with a distinctive rhythmic pattern of long-long-short-short-long, on which the symphony rides boldly to its grand, C-major conclusion.

**Instrumentation:** 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani and strings

*Program note by Robert Markow.*

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## Concerto in D minor for Violin and Orchestra, Opus 47 (1905 revision)

Premiered: September 26, 1907

In 1902, the German violinist Willy Burmester asked Sibelius to write him a concerto. When Sibelius sent him the piano reduction of the first two movements in September 1903, Burmester was enthusiastic and suggested the premiere be given in Berlin in March 1904. But Sibelius had other ideas. Due to strained financial circumstances, he wanted the concerto performed as soon as possible, and secretly asked another violinist to give the premiere in Helsinki at an earlier date. What Sibelius got in the end was a far inferior soloist (a local teacher named Victor Nováček, who never did learn the concerto properly), a cool reception at the premiere, mostly negative reviews in the press, and the justifiable resentment of Burmester.

Following the premiere, the concerto was put aside for over a year until Sibelius got around to revising it. He toned down some of the overtly virtuosic episodes, tightened the structure of the outer movements and altered the orchestration of numerous passages. The revisions amount to far more than mere window dressing, and the results are fascinating to compare with the original.

On October 19, 1905, the concerto received its premiere in the final form in Berlin, with Karl Halir as soloist and none other than Richard Strauss on the podium. Shortly afterwards, Sibelius' friend Rosa Newmarch told him that "in fifty years' time, your concerto will be as much a classic as those of Beethoven, Brahms and Tchaikovsky." How right she was!

### a “preference for the violin”

Sibelius’ affinity for the violin stemmed from his youth, when he aspired to become a great violinist. “My tragedy,” he wrote, “was that I wanted to be a celebrated violinist at any price. From the age of fifteen, I played my violin for ten years, practicing from morning to night. I hated pen and ink....My preference for the violin lasted quite long, and it was a very painful awakening when I had to admit that I had begun my training for the exacting career of an eminent performer too late.” His very first composition (*Vattendroppar*), written at the age of 8 or 9, was a piece for violin and cello. Although he left just one violin concerto, he also composed numerous short pieces for the instrument, mostly with piano.

The solo part is one of the most difficult in the entire repertory. Virtuoso passages abound, but they are welded to disciplined musical thought; there is no empty display material here. The orchestral writing bears much evidence of Sibelius’ deep interest in this medium, and serves a far greater purpose than a mere backdrop for the soloist. Dark, somber colors predominate, as is this composer’s tendency, lending an air of passionate urgency to the music. Note particularly the third theme in B-flat minor in the first movement, played by the unison violins, or the second theme of the finale, again played by the violins, with its interplay of 6/8 and 3/4 meters.

### the concerto in brief

**allegro moderato.** Attention to the formalities of sonata form is largely avoided in favor of originality of thought. In the first movement, there is no development section as such; instead, each of the three main themes is fully elaborated and developed upon initial presentation. A cadenza occurs at the point where a full development would normally stand, followed by a recapitulation of the three themes, each of which is subjected to further expansion.

**adagio di molto.** In the *Adagio* movement, Sibelius contrasts the long, dreamy and reflective opening theme with a turbulent and darkly passionate section in the minor mode.

**allegro, ma non tanto.** The finale, in rondo form, calls to the fore the full technical prowess of the soloist. Energetic rhythms suggestive of the polonaise and gypsy dances offer further elements of excitement to this exuberant movement.

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

Program note by *Robert Markow*.

## fun facts

### Jean Sibelius, the Minnesota Orchestra and Osmo Vänskä

- The Minnesota Orchestra, founded as the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra, first performed Sibelius’ music on November 21, 1909, when founding music director Emil Oberhoffer conducted *Valse Triste*. Its first performance of a Sibelius symphony, the First, came in December of 1910.
- The Minnesota Orchestra’s first Sibelius recording was made in 1935: the First Symphony, conducted by Eugene Ormandy, who later said it was “perhaps... the first Sibelius symphony to be recorded outside of Scandinavia.”
- On the day Sibelius died, September 20, 1957, the Minnesota Orchestra was performing a concert in Karachi, Pakistan, as part of a Middle Eastern tour.
- Sibelius’ birthplace of Hämeenlinna, Finland, is just 40 miles from Lahti, Finland, where Osmo Vänskä was music director of the Lahti Symphony from 1988 to 2008.
- In his first-ever guest appearance with the Minnesota Orchestra in October 2000, Osmo Vänskä conducted Sibelius’ Violin Concerto, with Joshua Bell as soloist.
- Osmo Vänskä has conducted more than 300 performances of Sibelius’ music with the Minnesota Orchestra—more than any previous music director. In all, the Orchestra has given more than 1,100 performances of Sibelius’ music.
- After the Minnesota Orchestra performed Sibelius’ *Kullervo* at Carnegie Hall in March 2010, *The New Yorker’s* Alex Ross wrote that on that evening, “the Minnesota Orchestra sounded, to my ears, like the greatest orchestra in the world.”
- The Minnesota Orchestra and Osmo Vänskä received their first-ever Grammy Award for Best Orchestral Performance in January 2014 for the second disc in their Sibelius symphonies cycle. A year earlier, their first Sibelius album was nominated in the same category.





# Minnesota Orchestra

Osmo Vänskä, conductor

Sam Bergman, host

Saturday, January 15, 2022, 8 pm | Orchestra Hall

Sunday, January 16, 2022, 2 pm | Orchestra Hall

These performances explore Jean Sibelius' Fifth Symphony and the story behind its significantly different original and final versions. In the concert's first half, spanning slightly less than an hour, host Sam Bergman will detail the work's unusual history and share what makes it such a remarkable composition, and the Orchestra will perform portions of each version.

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

ca. 20'

### Jean Sibelius

Symphony No. 5 in E-flat major, Opus 82 (final version)

Tempo molto moderato - Allegro moderato - Presto

Andante mosso, quasi allegretto

Allegro molto - Misterioso

ca. 31'





**Osmo Vänskä**, conductor

Profile appears on page 8.



**Sam Bergman**, host

Violist Sam Bergman joined the Minnesota Orchestra in 2000. Born in Boston, he grew up primarily in small-town Pennsylvania, studying violin and viola with members of the Boston Symphony Orchestra and Philadelphia Orchestra. Since 2005, he has produced, written and hosted more than 40 original narrated shows for the Minnesota Orchestra, many of those with conductor Sarah Hicks for the orchestra's Inside the Classics series. Recent programs have included a celebration of LGBTQ composers; a deep dive into the way the human brain interacts with music; and *The Prodigious Life of Clara S*, a two-act play created in collaboration with The Moving Company, tracing the life and career of pianist and composer Clara Schumann. In July 2022 The Moving Company, Bergman and the Orchestra will again collaborate with a new musical play, *Beethoven: The Artist's Influence*. In 2018, Bergman teamed with soprano Carrie Henneman Shaw to create a new performance series called Outpost, which blends chamber music by living composers with spoken word performances by Minnesota actors, poets, comics, journalists and storytellers. More: [minnesotaorchestra.org](http://minnesotaorchestra.org).



## Jean Sibelius

**Born:** December 8, 1865,  
Tavastehus, Finland

**Died:** September 20, 1957,  
Järvenpää, Finland

### Symphony No. 5 in E-flat major

**Premiered:** December 8, 1915  
(original version); November 24,  
1919 (final version)

World War I threatened the global consciousness in a way that it had never been assaulted before; for the first time it dawned on the human imagination that it might be possible to destroy civilization. That war, however, left Scandinavia untouched, and the residents of those countries watched warily as the horror unfolded to the south. In 1915, the first full year of the war, Jean Sibelius drafted his Fifth Symphony. He did not connect it directly to the war, but it is hard not to feel that it registers some response to that traumatic time. Sibelius wanted his symphony understood only as music: for the London premiere in 1921, he specified that “The composer desires the work to be regarded as absolute music, having no direct poetic basis.” But while the symphony may not consciously be about the war, it makes statements of strength and hope from out of that turbulent time.

Sibelius' Fifth Symphony went through three different versions spread out over five years. The composer had made a successful tour of America in 1914, and he returned home to find Europe at war. A notebook entry from September 1914 brings his first mention of the new symphony, as well as an indication of how depressed he was: “In a deep valley again. But I already begin to see dimly the mountain that I shall certainly ascend...God opens his door for a moment and His orchestra plays the Fifth Symphony.” He drafted the symphony in 1915 and led the premiere on December 8 of that year. But Sibelius was dissatisfied, and across 1916 he revised the symphony, combining its first two movements and so reducing the number of movements from four to three. But when this version was performed in December 1916, he was still unhappy, and he came back to the symphony three years later and revised it a third time. This final version premiered in Helsinki on November 24, 1919, a year after the war's end.

**Instrumentation (final version):** 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani and strings

Program note by *Eric Bromberger*.





## with the Minnesota Orchestra

Sarah Hicks, conductor

Thursday, January 27, 2022, 7 pm | Orchestra Hall

Friday, January 28, 2022, 7 pm | Orchestra Hall

Saturday, January 29, 2022, 7 pm | Orchestra Hall

Directed by **David Yates**

Produced by **David Heyman and David Barron**

Written by **Michael Goldenberg**

Based on "Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix" by **J.K. Rowling**

### starring

**Daniel Radcliffe** as Harry Potter

**Rupert Grint** as Ron Weasley

**Emma Watson** as Hermione Granger

**Helena Bonham Carter** as Bellatrix Lestrange

**Robbie Coltrane** as Rubeus Hagrid

**Warwick Davis** as Filius Flitwick

**Ralph Fiennes** as Lord Voldemort

**Michael Gambon** as Albus Dumbledore

**Brendan Gleeson** as Alastor "Mad-Eye" Moody

**Richard Griffiths** as Vernon Dursley

**Jason Isaacs** as Lucius Malfoy

**Gary Oldman** as Sirius Black

**Alan Rickman** as Severus Snape

**Fiona Shaw** as Petunia Dursley

**Maggie Smith** as Minerva McGonagall

**Imelda Staunton** as Dolores Umbridge

**Timothy Spall** as Peter Pettigrew

**Emma Thompson** as Sybill Trelawney

**Julie Walters** as Molly Weasley

Music by **Nicholas Hooper**

Cinematography by **Slawomir Idziak**

Edited by **Mark Day**

Produced by **Heyday Films**

Distributed by **Warner Bros. Pictures**

Today's performance lasts approximately 2 hours and 55 minutes, including one 20-minute intermission.  
Please remain seated until the conclusion of the end credits.

Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix™ In Concert is produced by CineConcerts

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**Sarah Hicks**, conductor

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*. Last month she worked with director Peter Rothstein, writer Kevin Kling, writer-composer Pavielle French and composer Robert Elhai on creating the Orchestra's Joyful Echoes theatrical holiday concert.

A specialist in film music and the film in concert genre, Hicks 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. With the Danish National Symphony Orchestra, she recorded film music for an album titled *The Morricone Duel*, which was released in 2018, has been broadcast around the world and has garnered over 150 million views on YouTube. Away from Orchestra Hall, the 2021-22 season sees her returning to the San Francisco Symphony, Dallas Symphony and Hawaii Symphony, and marks her debuts with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, WDR Köln and the Grant Park Music Festival. Her opera appearances include the East Slovak State Opera Theater and the Curtis Opera Theater, as well as operas in concert with the RTÉ Orchestra. More: [minnesotaorchestra.org](http://minnesotaorchestra.org).



### Nicholas Hooper, composer

Nicholas Hooper is one of Europe's leading composers, having written and produced music for over 250 films, dramas and documentaries since 1990. He has developed a reputation for producing music that is original, inspiring and always colorful.

Hooper's scores have received several major accolades. In 2004 he won the BAFTA for Best Original Score for *The Young Visitors* as well as being nominated for *State of Play* in the same year. He was nominated for a 2006 BAFTA for his score to *The Girl In The Café*, and prior to this was BAFTA nominated for *The Way We Live Now*. In 1998 he won the coveted Golden Panda Award for *Land of the Tiger*, a major BBC documentary series on India. The following year he won again—having been nominated for three separate scores—making him the first composer to win the award consecutively. He has received many other accolades for his feature films including the period feature *The Heart Of Me*, starring Helena Bonham Carter and Olivia Williams, and *The Tichbourne Claimant*, which prompted *Variety* to state: “Nicholas Hooper's alert symphonic score rates a major bow, adding shape and atmosphere to the labyrinthine tale.”

Hooper scored Philip Martin's feature *Einstein and Eddington*, starring David Tennant as Sir Arthur Eddington and Andy Serkis as Albert Einstein for Company Pictures/HBO, and *Belonging* for BBC Wales Drama. He also scored *Enid Blyton* for Carnival/BBC, *Mo Mowlam* for C4, and *Yes Virginia*, a CBS animated film for Christmas 2009.

Hooper has received great critical acclaim for his stunning scores to both *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* for Warner Bros. (“Let there be no doubt – Hooper's reputation is cemented with this work, and his career just shifted gears,” wrote Daniel Champion, *Music from the Movies*, July 2007), and *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, nominated for a 2010 Grammy for Best Film Score. He most recently completed recording two wonderful scores to the Walt Disney Pictures feature releases, *African Cats* and *Chimpanzee*.



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MAY 7, 2022

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When you include the Minnesota Orchestra in your estate plans, you become a member of the Laureate Society—and our Laureate family. Regular benefits include:

- Invitation to the annual Laureate Society Luncheon with Minnesota Orchestra musicians
- Backstage tour of Orchestra Hall
- Complimentary refreshments at intermission during classical subscription season concerts
- Recognition as Laureate Society members in publications such as *Showcase*
- Communications about Minnesota Orchestra news and special updates
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If you would like more information about planned giving, please contact Emily Boigenzahn at 612-371-7138 or [eboigenzahn@mnorch.org](mailto:eboigenzahn@mnorch.org).



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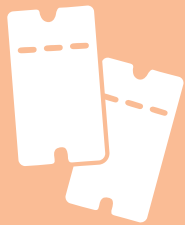
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If you would like information about planned giving, please contact Emily Boigenzahn at 612-371-7138 or [eboigenzahn@mnorch.org](mailto:eboigenzahn@mnorch.org).





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