

Minnesota Orchestra

Dima Slobodeniouk, conductor | Sasha Cooke, mezzo

Friday, November 12, 2021, 8 am | Orchestra Hall
 Saturday, November 13, 2021, 8 pm | Orchestra Hall

Ulysses Kay	Suite from <i>The Quiet One</i> Joy and Fears Street Wanderings Interlude Crisis	ca. 16'
Gustav Mahler	<i>Songs of a Wayfarer</i> Wenn mein Schatz Hochzeit macht (When my sweetheart is married) Ging heut' Morgen übers Feld (I went this morning over the field) Ich hab' ein glühend Messer (I have a gleaming knife) Die zwei blauen Augen von meinem Schatz (The two blue eyes of my sweetheart) Sasha Cooke, mezzo	ca. 18'
	I N T E R M I S S I O N	ca. 20'
Johannes Brahms	Symphony No. 4 in E minor, Opus 98 Allegro non troppo Andante moderato Allegro giocoso Allegro energico e passionato	ca. 40'

The German text and English translation of Mahler's *Songs of a Wayfarer* are provided in an insert, and the translation will be projected as surtitles.

pre-concert

Concert Preview with Patricia Ryan
 Friday, November 12, 7 pm, Target Atrium
 Saturday, November 13, 7 pm, Target Atrium

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





Dima Slobodeniouk, conductor

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

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



Sasha Cooke, mezzo

Two-time Grammy Award-winning mezzo Sasha Cooke has sung at the Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera, English National Opera, Seattle Opera, Opéra National de Bordeaux,

and Gran Teatre del Liceu, among other institutions, and with over 70 symphony orchestras worldwide, frequently in the works of Mahler. In the 2021-22 season, she returns to the Metropolitan Opera for her role debut as Cherubino in Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*. On the concert stage, she joins the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Houston Symphony, Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Oregon Symphony, St. Louis Symphony Orchestra and Wheeling Symphony Orchestra. This season also includes the release of Cooke's new CD, *How Do I Find You*, on the Pentatone label. The recording, which features songs by Caroline Shaw, Nico Muhly, Missy Mazzoli and Jimmy Lopez, among others, is intended as a tribute to both the struggles and hopes of artists that have been wrought by the pandemic. More: sashacooke.com, imgartists.com.

one-minute notes

Kay: Suite from *The Quiet One*

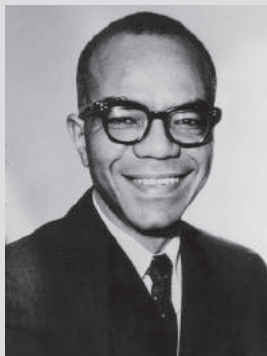
This suite of Ulysses Kay's music from the 1948 documentary *The Quiet One*, which follows a troubled young boy and his experience at a New York reform school, distills the film's themes of joy, fear, crisis and hope with inward-looking, gently melodic music that is inherently soloistic, using only one of each wind and brass instrument except tuba.

Mahler: *Songs of a Wayfarer*

Gustav Mahler's *Songs of a Wayfarer* evoke the deep despair and emotional journey of the composer's own experience with unrequited love, traveling through the highs of happiness and the lows of intense, unimaginable pain.

Brahms: *Symphony No. 4*

Johannes Brahms' Fourth is a passionate work filled with high drama. From a first movement both warm and tragic, the symphony proceeds through a moody intermezzo and a rambunctious scherzo to a most unusual conclusion: a beautifully abstract set of variations on a Bach cantata.



Ulysses Kay

Born: January 7, 1917,
Tucson, Arizona

Died: May 20, 1995,
Englewood, New Jersey

Suite from *The Quiet One*

Premiered: November 19, 1948

For one reason or another, the popular genre of orchestral music composed for films has not frequently found its way into the core of so-called “serious” classical music repertoire, and is instead often confined to pops concerts, festivals of film music, and the recent trend of complete movie screenings synchronized with the scores played live. Happily, this week’s concerts bring the Minnesota Orchestra’s first playing of a suite of American composer Ulysses Kay’s music from the 1948 documentary drama *The Quiet One*. (Not, of course, to be confused with Aaron Copland’s *Quiet City* or the current horror/science-fiction franchise *A Quiet Place*.)

joy, fear, crises and hope

The Quiet One’s focus is a troubled 10-year-old, Donald Thompson, who is sent to New York’s Wiltwyck School for Boys, which was founded in 1938 as a center for the treatment of male juvenile delinquency. Wiltwyck, which operated until 1981, was financially supported by famous names as disparate as Eleanor Roosevelt, Johnny Carson and Harry Belafonte. The school boasted successes despite the fiscal issues that eventually led to its closure; eight years after *The Quiet One*’s release, the school’s most famous alumnus, Floyd Patterson, was crowned the world heavyweight champion of boxing for the first of two times.

The Quiet One was directed by Sidney Meyers and earned high acclaim, including Academy Award nominations in the categories of Best Documentary Feature and Best Original Screenplay. Kay’s score, here represented by a four-movement, 16-minute concert suite extracted from the hour-long documentary, captures the film’s themes of joy, fear, crises and hope in music that is inward-looking, gently melodic and rooted in the Romantic-era harmonic language typical of many American orchestral film scores. The instrumentation is relatively small, with just one of each standard wind and brass instrument (except tuba)—fittingly for a score with “one” in the title, thereby giving a soloistic quality to much of the writing—along with strings, piano, celesta and a complement of standard percussion instruments.

The suite, which was premiered at a concert in November 1948 by the New York Little Symphony with the composer conducting, distills Kay’s first film score—written in an age when a sizeable number of classical composers of music for the concert hall also had a foot in the world of cinema. Of its four movements, the opening *Joys and Fears* is the most expansive, comprising more than half of the suite’s duration; it is followed by *Street Wanderings*, *Interlude* and *Crisis*. Critic Noel Strauss of *The New York Times* declared that it was music of “...marked significance and worth...[with] vividness and subtlety in conveying varied emotions and also...deftly orchestrated.”

a prolific Neoclassical composer

Kay, whose centennial passed four years ago, was the nephew of influential jazz bandleader and cornet and trumpet player King Oliver, and was prodded by composer William Grant Still in the mid-1930s to redirect his academic efforts from liberal arts to music. He studied at the University of Arizona, Eastman School of Music, Yale University and Columbia University, and like many classical composers who came of age in the 20th century, he had available to him a dizzying array of traditional and modern compositional styles and techniques. While studying with Paul Hindemith in the early 1940s, he found his primary voice in the Neoclassical style—the revival of 18th-century European practices such as light textures, simplicity of style, harmonies rooted in traditional Western tonality (though with expanded use of dissonance), and the favoring of traditional non-programmatic forms such as dance suites and sonatas.

By the time of Kay’s passing in 1995, his output of nearly 140 works included five operas, the last of which was about Frederick Douglass, as well as nearly four dozen orchestral works and numerous choral, chamber and film compositions. Also vital to his life’s story were service in the U.S. Navy as a musician during World War II; a Fulbright fellowship that enabled an extended postwar period of study in Italy; 15 years as an advisor and consultant for the performing rights organization Broadcast Media, Inc.; and two decades as a distinguished music professor at the City University of New York (CUNY). One of his students at CUNY’s Lehman College was the American composer-conductor Kevin Scott, whose later advocacy of Kay’s music included conducting the Metropolitan Philharmonic Orchestra in a 2003 album dedicated to Kay’s works that included a recording of the Suite from *The Quiet One*.

Instrumentation: flute (doubling piccolo), oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn, trumpet, trombone, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, suspended cymbal, triangle, wood block, xylophone, glockenspiel, vibraphone, piano (doubling celesta) and strings

Program note by **Carl Schroeder**.





Gustav Mahler

Born: July 7, 1860,
Kalischt, Bohemia
(now Czech Republic)
Died: May 18, 1911,
Vienna, Austria

Songs of a Wayfarer

Premiered: March 16, 1896

Gustav Mahler had a lifelong fascination with the collection of Germanic poetry *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (The Boy’s Magic Horn). Collected by Ludwig Achim von Arnim and Clemens Brentano, and published at the beginning of the 19th century, the *Wunderhorn* includes ballads, folk songs and poems dating back to the 16th century. Mahler discovered the collection in his early twenties, and he returned to the texts repeatedly, not only to set them as songs, but also for use in larger forms, such as symphonic movements.

Although the texts themselves are evocative of the folk themes and character of the previous three centuries, Mahler did not limit his musical language when he set the poetry. The aged stories of love and life, sorrow and death provoked his own musical images, fresh and redolent of the maturing composer’s 20th-century musical sensibility.

Mahler’s biographer Henry-Louis de la Grange has written that Mahler “felt at home in the colorful anthology. In it he found striking glimpses of man and his earthly destiny, both humorous and tragic, and reflections on the human condition.”

love, loss and nature

In his *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* (Songs of a Wayfarer), Mahler used the *Wunderhorn* as an inspiration to compose not only music but his also his own poetry. Two of the anthology’s folk poems turned up as elements of the first *Wayfarer* song, “Wenn mein Schatz Hochzeit macht” (“On the day my sweetheart happily marries”), and Mahler himself wrote the rest of the poems, originally intended as a gift to one of his early love interests.

Ultimately, Mahler created in the *Wayfarer Songs* the first major song cycle composed originally for the combination of voice and orchestra (rather than orchestrating songs that were originally accompanied by the piano), and it was also Mahler’s first major orchestral work. (He subsequently used musical materials from the second and fourth songs in the first and third movements of

his First Symphony, which came later, so listeners familiar with that work will instantly recognize the music.)

Like Franz Schubert’s *Winterreise* (Winter Journey), the *Songs of a Wayfarer* cycle traces the journey of a disappointed suitor whose sweetheart has found happiness with another man. The steady progression toward peace that death brings is accompanied by a profound connection to the delights and consolation of nature. Mahler’s colorful orchestration and imaginative instrumentation support the vocal line and complete the composer’s literary thoughts with music that paints explicit and immediate images in sound.

Instrumentation: solo mezzo with orchestra comprising 3 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 2 oboes (1 doubling English horn), 3 clarinets (1 doubling bass clarinet), 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, suspended cymbal, tamtam, triangle, bells, harp and strings

Program note by **Sandra Hyslop**.



Johannes Brahms

Born: May 7, 1833,
Hamburg, Germany
Died: April 3, 1897,
Vienna, Austria

Symphony No. 4 in E minor, Opus 98

Premiered: October 25, 1885

Johannes Brahms knew from the outset that his Fourth Symphony was different from the other three, and he apparently entertained fears that it might not be received as warmly. Composed in 1884 and 1885, on the heels of the extroverted Third Symphony of 1883, the Fourth was at once the composer’s most passionate and his most abstract symphonic outpouring. As with the Second Symphony, he joked self-consciously about its unique quality, stating in a letter that it consisted of “a few entr’actes and polkas that I happened to have lying around.”

Like the first two symphonies, the Third and Fourth also form a pair, one clear-eyed and direct, the other gray and troubled. The English critic Donald Francis Tovey called the Fourth “one of the rarest things in classical music, a symphony which ends tragically.” (The torrid First had broken into triumphant C-major at the end.)

Evidence suggests that the source of the Fourth's high drama was not personal crisis but Brahms' interest during the 1880s in the Greek tragedies of Sophocles and others. Brahms' friendship with conductor Hans von Bülow beginning in 1881 was also a factor. Bülow, who had just been named director of the Meiningen Court Orchestra, offered Brahms a first-class ensemble with which the composer could "try out" the Fourth and other works.

Bülow prepared the Meiningen Orchestra's first performance of the Fourth Symphony, which Brahms conducted on October 25, 1885. The composer then took the piece on tour with the Orchestra, performing it throughout northern Germany and the Netherlands, before allowing Hans Richter to present it to the Viennese public in January 1886.

The initial response was surprisingly cool, considering the extent to which the city had lionized Brahms throughout the 1870s and early 1880s. The Fourth was declared "un-Brahmsian." (At an earlier private performance of a four-hand piano version, the biographer Max Kalbeck reportedly suggested that the fourth movement be omitted altogether.)

Brahms did not lay a finger on the work. And sure enough, by the end of the composer's life the Viennese public had gained a deeper appreciation not only for the Fourth, but for a whole career of symphonic music that it seemed to sum up. A performance of the Fourth in 1897, a month before the composer's death, indicated the depth of the shift of opinion.

Here is Florence May's description of the emotional evening: "A storm of applause broke out at the end of the first movement, not to be quieted until the composer, coming to the front of the artists' box in which he was seated, showed himself to the audience. An extraordinary scene followed the conclusion of the work. The applauding, shouting audience, its gaze riveted on the figure standing in the balcony, so familiar and yet in present aspect so strange, seemed unable to let him go.

"Tears ran down his cheeks as he stood there shrunken in form, with lined countenance, a strained expression, white hair hanging lank; and through the audience there was a feeling as of a stifled sob, for they knew that they were saying farewell."

Four weeks later, hordes of admirers turned out for the composer's funeral.

tragedy of the classical kind

allegro non troppo. The first movement is uniquely tragic in tone, yet glowing with an inner warmth that is unprecedented in Brahms' orchestral output. "It acts its tragedy with unsurpassable variety of expression and power of climax," Tovey writes. One is

tempted to wonder why tragedy should sound so beautiful. Some have also found echoes of Beethoven's *Hammerklavier* Sonata in the obsessive descending thirds. (Brahms' appreciation of late Beethoven had deepened recently as a result of hearing his works played by Bülow, who was also one of the great pianists of his day.)

andante moderato. The slow movement is a moody intermezzo, lightening the tone to take some of the first movement's weight from the listener's chest.

allegro giocoso. The third movement is one of the composer's splashiest and most "bacchanalian" scherzos. Its finale-like fervor caused Tovey to ask, "After three movements so full of dramatic incident, what finale is possible?"

allegro energico e passionato. The finale Brahms devised for the Fourth Symphony was indeed singular, and was the chief point of controversy when the symphony was introduced. It was perhaps also the work's chief point of contact with the last Beethoven piano sonatas, and with the Renaissance and Baroque music that had recently occupied Brahms the scholar. It is a set of variations on the bass from Bach's Cantata No. 150, *Nach Dir, Herr, verlangst mich* (For Thee, Lord, Do I Long).

Brahms inflects the bassline with a tiny, "Romanticizing" chromatic alteration before submitting it to a set of variations that gradually reduces the "theme" to a vague, schematized scaffolding. Such a procedure calls to mind not only Baroque works such as Bach's Chaconne for solo violin but also the variation movements of late Beethoven. The Opus 111 Sonata, Beethoven's last, also ends with an ethereal set of variations whose theme is slowly reduced, bit by bit, to little more than an abstract harmonic skeleton.

In retrospect, the orchestral variations were perhaps the only way Brahms could have ended the Fourth Symphony—with a conservative twist that set musical limits by evoking Baroque harmonic ideals, yet creating closure through subtle thematic reminiscences and a reduction to harmonic essentials.

Instrumentation: 2 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani, triangle and strings

Program note by **Paul Horsley**.

