

# Minnesota Orchestra

Fabien Gabel, conductor

Augustin Hadelich, violin

Thursday, March 10, 2022, 11 am | Orchestra Hall

Friday, March 11, 2022, 8 pm | Orchestra Hall

*With these concerts we honor the memory of **Bob Boldt**  
in appreciation of his generous estate gift to the Minnesota Orchestra.*

Samy Moussa	<i>Crimson</i>	ca. 11'
Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky	Concerto in D major for Violin and Orchestra, Opus 35 Allegro moderato Canzonetta: Andante Finale: Allegro vivacissimo [There is no pause before the final movement] <i>Augustin Hadelich, violin</i>	ca. 34'
I N T E R M I S S I O N		ca. 20'
Richard Strauss	Suite from <i>Der Rosenkavalier</i> , Opus 59	ca. 21'
Maurice Ravel	<i>La Valse</i>	ca. 13'

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.



**Fabien Gabel**, conductor

Fabien Gabel has established an international career of the highest caliber, appearing with orchestras such as the London Philharmonic Orchestra, Orchestre de Paris, NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchester, Gürzenich-Orchester Köln Cologne, Tonkünstler-Orchester, Oslo Philharmonic, Helsinki Philharmonic, Cleveland Orchestra, Seoul Philharmonic and Melbourne Symphony. He began the 2021-22 season leading the season opening concerts of the Tonkünstler-Orchester in Vienna. Other highlights of his current season include his debuts with NDR Radiophilharmonie, Stavanger Symphony, Luzerner Sinfonieorchester,

Malmö Symphony and Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxembourg, and his return to the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, where he appears regularly. Having attracted international attention in 2004 as the winner of the Donatella Flick conducting competition, Gabel has served as the assistant conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra, music director of Orchestre Symphonique de Québec and, most recently, music director of the Orchestre Francais de Jeunes. More:

[fabiengabel.com](http://fabiengabel.com), [opus3artists.com](http://opus3artists.com).



**Augustin Hadelich**, violin

Augustin Hadelich's 2021-22 season began an acclaimed three-concert debut with the Berlin Philharmonic. Shortly

after came the European premiere of a new violin concerto written for him by Irish composer Donnacha Dennehy. Hadelich has appeared with every major orchestra in North and South America, including the Boston Symphony, Chicago Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, L'Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal and the Symphony Orchestra of São Paulo (OESP) in Brazil. This season he returns to Carnegie Hall with the Orchestra of St. Luke's. He is the winner of a 2016 Grammy Award for Best Classical Instrumental Solo for his recording with the Seattle Symphony of Dutilleux's Violin Concerto, *L'Arbre des songes*. A Warner Classics Artist, Hadelich is featured most recently on a Grammy-nominated double CD of Bach sonatas and partitas. More: [augustinhadelich.com](http://augustinhadelich.com), [schmidtart.com](http://schmidtart.com).

### one-minute notes

#### Moussa: *Crimson*

Contemporary composer Samy Moussa's *Crimson* begins and ends in very different places—opening with a crashing cymbal and bright, high chords without strings, and closing with low rumblings and strings playing at the bottom of their ranges. In between are a calm passage starring celesta and a faster section with exciting rhythms.

#### Tchaikovsky: Violin Concerto

Tchaikovsky's dazzling Violin Concerto, once called "unplayable," is now the vehicle of great virtuosos. It is noted equally for bravura passagework and the pure romantic realism for which the composer is known, with soulful melodies yielding to folk-like dance tunes and rhythms in the exhilarating *Finale*.

#### Strauss: Suite from *Der Rosenkavalier*

This popular suite from Richard Strauss' opera abounds with exquisite textures, beautifully balancing the story's romance, rowdy farce and sentimentality. Highlights include a youthful lovers' song and a courtly Viennese waltz.

#### Ravel: *La Valse*

Ravel's homage to the Viennese waltz depicts both intimacy and opulence, twirling toward a frenzied conclusion.



## Samy Moussa

**Born:** June 1, 1984,  
Montreal, Canada

### *Crimson*

**Premiered:** August 23, 2015

Samy Moussa, whose music is heard at Orchestra Hall this week for the first time, straddles two sides of the musical profession—as a composer and conductor—and his career spans both sides of the Atlantic. Born in Montreal and based in Berlin for the past decade, he is enjoying great success in North America and Europe, recently highlighted by the Vienna Philharmonic's world premiere of his *Elysium* last September and his appointment as the Toronto Symphony Orchestra's artist in residence for the 2021-22 season; the latter ensemble will premiere his Symphony No. 2 in May. Minnesota Orchestra audiences won't have to wait long to hear more of his music: his Nocturne will be featured at concerts on April 7 and 8.

Although Moussa sometimes leads his own compositions, as with the Toronto Symphony's performances of his Violin Concerto *Adrano* in January, he is often content to hand his music to other conductors for their interpretations. Among those who have championed his works is this week's conductor Fabien Gabel, who has led Moussa's music in recent seasons with the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, Houston Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre Français des Jeunes and Orchestre symphonique de Québec. Gabel was entrusted with both the French and North American premieres of *Crimson*; this week he leads its first performances at the hands of a professional U.S. orchestra, one month after the premiere in our country by the Juilliard Orchestra under Kevin John Edusei's direction.

### a premiere on "Boulez day"

At age 37, Moussa has already built an impressive catalog of compositions, including two operas, an oratorio, 17 pieces for orchestra including two symphonies and two concertos, and numerous choral, chamber, solo and multimedia works. *Crimson* dates from 2015, when Moussa was selected for the Roche Young Commissions program to write a work for premiere at the "Day for Pierre Boulez" presented by the Lucerne Festival in Switzerland on August 23, 2015, when Julien Leroy conducted the Lucerne Festival Academy Orchestra.

The Lucerne Festival pulled out all the stops on that summer Sunday, presenting eight concerts to honor the pioneering French composer-conductor who was the founder and artistic director of the Lucerne Festival Academy. The occasion and the commission had special meaning for Moussa, who had studied with Boulez—but the honoree himself was sadly not present due to health concerns, and passed away early the following year.

### 62 different openings

*Crimson* is scored for an expansive orchestra, comprising a larger-than-normal wind section; a more standard brass section brightened by a piccolo trumpet; a timpani-and-percussion complement calling for six players; and harp, piano, celesta and strings. Moussa's remarks on the piece offer a fascinating glimpse into his compositional process and an outline of what to listen for:

"I always start a composition from the beginning. This is essential, otherwise invention is impossible. *Crimson* was no exception: it took 62 different overtures before finally obtaining something that I considered satisfactory. Each of these openings was a plausible option, but I was looking for something else. One might think that I have absolute control over the music that I write, but that's not true. Music is a living matter and very often has its own will. I only knew that it had to be resolute, loud, metallic, homophonic and equivocal.

"The final version of the opening contains elements of a conclusive gesture; the most striking being the cymbal crash at the very beginning and the harmonic clarity of the first chords. However, I created a wide space within these bars: the large string ensemble does not play and the lower notes are still relatively high.

"These two elements explain the ending, which is in a way the opposite. This offers a resolution to the initial imbalance: the music consists mainly of the strings and then only extremely low notes. What happens in the middle is the presentation of two new ideas: The first, briefly introduced, is a calm passage in which the celesta dominates a dispersed orchestra; the second is fast and rhythmic music that eventually merges with the opening bars and returns to the original idea in order to develop it further."

**Instrumentation:** 3 flutes (all doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, English horn, 3 clarinets (1 doubling E-flat clarinet and 1 doubling bass clarinet), 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets (1 doubling piccolo trumpet), 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, crotales, Chinese cymbal, crash cymbals, 6 gongs, 4 metal blocks, large tamtam, 6 tom-toms, 3 triangles, glockenspiel, vibraphone, chimes, harp, piano (doubling celesta) and strings

Program note by *Carl Schroeder*.



## Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky

**Born:** May 7, 1840,  
Votkinsk, Russia

**Died:** November 7, 1893,  
St. Petersburg, Russia

### Concerto in D major for Violin and Orchestra, Opus 35

**Premiered:** December 4, 1881

"The Russian composer Tchaikovsky is surely not an ordinary talent, but rather an inflated one, with a genius-obsession without discrimination or taste. Such is also his latest, long and pretentious Violin Concerto....Friedrich Vischer once observed, speaking of obscene pictures, that they stink to the eye. Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto gives us for the first time the hideous notion that there can be music that stinks to the ear."

Incredible as it may seem today, this was the response to the world premiere of Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto in Vienna in December 1881. The words quoted are by the notorious critic Eduard Hanslick—and eight of the 10 reviews that appeared in Vienna voiced much the same sentiment.

The circumstances leading to the concerto's first performance were hardly auspicious. Tchaikovsky composed the work during March and April of 1878 while staying at Clarens on Lake Geneva, Switzerland. There he was visiting his composition student, Yosif Yosifovich Kotek, who was the one responsible for introducing Tchaikovsky to the wealthy patroness Nadejda von Meck. The composer wrote to Madame von Meck that he was inspired by the "freshness, piquant rhythms, beautifully harmonized melodies of Lalo's *Symphonie espagnole*," and shortly afterwards that his own concerto "is hurrying towards its end...I started the work, was seduced by it and now the sketches are almost completed." Kotek expressed dissatisfaction with the second movement, and Tchaikovsky replaced it with entirely different music.

### the "unplayable" work

Mme. von Meck was not completely pleased by the concerto either. But the biggest blow was probably the rejection from the celebrated virtuoso and teacher Leopold Auer, to whom the work was originally dedicated—and who pronounced it unplayable. Not until nearly four years after its completion did Adolf Brodsky take up its cause, giving the first performance not in Russia but in

Vienna. He was daunted neither by its technical difficulties nor by the dismal critical reception.

Tchaikovsky rewrote the dedication to Brodsky, who went on to perform the concerto in London, and then in Moscow, eventually winning public support for it. Even Auer, in his old age, finally saw its merits, and the work became a mainstay in the repertoires of his protégés, including Mischa Elman, Jascha Heifetz and Efrem Zimbalist. Today's students readily master yesterday's most fiendish difficulties, and Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto is now one of the two or three most popular works in the genre.

### the concerto in brief

Although the concerto is full of bravura passage work, it also contains a wealth of the pure romantic lyricism for which Tchaikovsky is so noted. The first movement, *Allegro moderato*, boasts both a lyrical first and second theme, and even the cadenza emphasizes the expressive over the virtuosic. The second movement, *Canzonetta: Andante*, has a certain melancholic wistfulness to it—soulful, though not mournful. The muted solo violin presents the first folk-like theme. This brief movement is followed without pause by the exhilarating *Finale*, whose themes suggest Russian dance tunes and rhythms, especially the *trepak*.

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

Program note by **Robert Markow**.



## Richard Strauss

**Born:** June 11, 1864,  
Munich, Germany

**Died:** September 8, 1949,  
Leipzig, Germany

### Suite from *Der Rosenkavalier*, Opus 59

**Premiered:** January 26, 1911  
(full opera)

*Der Rosenkavalier*, Richard Strauss' "comedy for music" on a libretto by Hugo von Hofmannsthal, was completed on September 26, 1910. The premiere, under the direction of Ernst von Schuch, took place at the Dresden Court Opera on January 26, 1911. The score of the suite played at these concerts, which bears the copyright date of 1945, credits no arranger. Artur Rodziński probably had a hand in the arrangement, and possibly



Leonard Bernstein. It was published with the blessing of the composer, then desperately in need of income.

### a libretto that set itself

In 1909, Strauss was, with Puccini, the most famous and the richest composer alive. He had written a string of orchestral works, many of which had become indispensable repertoire items; he had emerged as an important song composer; and latterly, with *Salome* and *Elektra*, he had made his mark in the opera world, and in a big way.

For *Elektra* Strauss set an adaptation of Sophocles' play by the Viennese poet Hugo von Hofmannsthal. But it was *Der Rosenkavalier* (The Knight of the Rose) that launched the two artists' extraordinary working friendship that lasted through a further half dozen projects until the poet's death in 1929. Drawing on a broad range of sources, Hofmannsthal provided a libretto that, Strauss said, virtually set itself to music.

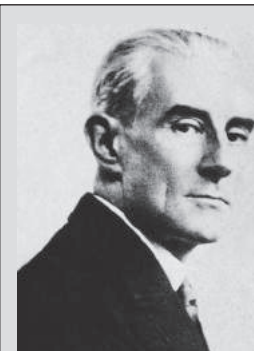
To summarize baldly: *Der Rosenkavalier* is about an aristocratic married lady in her early 30s, wife of Field Marshal von Werdenberg, who loses her 17-year-old lover (who is also her cousin) when he falls in love with a bourgeois girl his own age. But of course there is more to it than that—it is about what Flaubert called “sentimental education,” the incalculable powers of eros, social climbing, the subtle messages of language, the mysterious passage of time, grace under fire. Not least, it is about gorgeous singing and fragrant orchestral textures.

An impoverished and chawbacon country cousin, Baron Ochs, comes to the Marshal's wife, the Marschallin, for advice. He has arranged to become engaged to Sophie von Faninal, the sweet young daughter of a nouveau riche army contractor who is as eager to benefit from Ochs' title as Ochs is to get hold of some of the Faninal money. Custom—and this is entirely an invention of Hofmannsthal's—demands that the formal proposal of marriage be preceded by the presentation to the prospective bride of a silver rose: can the Marschallin suggest a young man of suitable background and bearing to take on the role of the rose-bearing knight, the “Rosenkavalier”? She suggests Octavian, her cousin-lover. He and Sophie fall in love at first sight. By means of a series of degrading tricks the projected Ochs-Faninal alliance is undermined, and the Marschallin and Ochs renounce Octavian and Sophie respectively, the former with sentimental dignity, the latter in an atmosphere of rowdy farce.

The first *Rosenkavalier* Suite came out as early as 1911. In addition to the (presumably) Rodziński Suite of 1945, there are excellent and interesting concert sequences by three eminent Strauss conductors, Antal Dorati, Erich Leinsdorf and William Steinberg.

**Instrumentation:** 3 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 3 oboes (1 doubling English horn), 3 clarinets (1 doubling E-flat clarinet), bass clarinet, 3 bassoons (1 doubling contrabassoon), 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, ratchet, tambourine, triangle, glockenspiel, 2 harps, celesta and strings

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



### Maurice Ravel

**Born:** March 7, 1875,  
Basses-Pyrénées, France  
**Died:** December 28, 1937,  
Paris, France

### La Valse

**Premiered:** December 12, 1920

**m**aurice Ravel, like many French composers, was profoundly wary of German music. Yet there was one German form for which he felt undiluted affection: the waltz. As a young piano student in Paris, Ravel fell under the spell of Schubert's waltzes for piano, and in 1911 he composed his own *Noble and Sentimental Waltzes*, a set of charming waltzes modeled on the Schubert dances he loved so much. Earlier, in 1906, he had planned a great orchestral waltz with the working title *Wien* (Vienna), but the piece was delayed and Ravel did not return to it until the fall of 1919. This was the year after the conclusion of World War I, and the French vision of the Germanic world was now quite different than it had been when he originally conceived the piece.

Nevertheless, Ravel still felt the appeal of the project, and by December he was madly at work. The orchestration was completed the following March, and the first performance took place in Paris on December 12, 1920. By this time, perhaps wary of wartime associations, Ravel had renamed the piece *La Valse*.

### an opulent—and troubling—score

Ravel described exactly his original conception for the work: “Whirling clouds give glimpses, through rifts, of couples waltzing. The clouds scatter little by little. One sees an immense hall peopled with a twirling crowd. The scene is gradually illuminated. The light of chandeliers bursts forth fortissimo. An Imperial Court, about 1855.”

The music also gives us this scene. Out of the murky, misty beginning come bits of waltz rhythms; gradually these join

together and plunge into an animated dance. This is dazzling writing for orchestra, some of which results from the music's rhythmic energy, some from Ravel's keen ear for instrumental color.

If *La Valse* concluded with all this elegant vitality, our sense of the music might be clear, but instead it drives to an ending full of frenzied violence. We come away not so much exhilarated as shaken. Ravel made a telling comment about this conclusion: "I had intended this work to be a kind of apotheosis of the Viennese waltz, with which was associated in my imagination an impression of a fantastic and fatal sort of dervish's dance."

Is this music a celebration of the waltz—or an exploration of the darker spirit behind the culture that created it? Many have opted for the latter explanation, hearing in *La Valse* not a *Rosenkavalier*-like evocation of a more graceful era, but the snarling menace behind that elegance.

Ravel himself was evasive about the ending. Aware of its implications, he explained in a letter to a friend: "Some people have seen in this piece the expression of a tragic affair; some have said that it represented the end of the Second Empire, others that it was postwar Vienna. They are wrong. Certainly, *La Valse* is tragic, but in the Greek sense: it is a fatal spinning around, the expression of vertigo and the voluptuousness of the dance to the point of paroxysm."

**Instrumentation:** 3 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 3 oboes (1 doubling English horn), 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, antique cymbals, castanets, tambourine, tamtam, triangle, bells, 2 harps and strings

Program note by **Eric Bromberger**.

This week's performances of **Samy Moussa's *Crimson*** are the Minnesota Orchestra's first-ever performances of his music, and the first time in two years that a work by a Canadian composer has appeared on the Orchestra's classical subscription series—following Zosha di Castri's *Lineage* in February 2020. The Orchestra has several additional ties to Canada: flute and piccolo player Roma Duncan is from Nova Scotia, while violinist Joanne Oppenorth is a native of Edmonton, and the Orchestra's creative partner for Summer at Orchestra Hall, Jon Kimura Parker, hails from Vancouver. In addition, cellist Arek Tesarczyk was principal cello of the Winnipeg Symphony for 11 years.

The Minnesota Orchestra, then known as the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra, gave its initial performance of **Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky's *Violin Concerto*** on February 22, 1907, in the Minneapolis Auditorium, with the Orchestra's founding Music Director Emil Oberhoffer conducting and Arthur Hartmann as soloist. During the tenure of the Orchestra's current Music Director Osmo Vänskä, the concerto has received several notable performances, including renditions by Joshua Bell in February 2004 at Orchestra Hall and on a three-week-long European Tour, and again by Bell in September 2016 to launch the 2016-17 concert season. Most recently, James Ehnes was the soloist as part of the January 2018 Tchaikovsky Marathon.

The Orchestra first performed music from **Richard Strauss' *Der Rosenkavalier*** on October 22, 1911, at the Minneapolis Auditorium, with Oberhoffer conducting; that occasion featured a selection of waltzes from the opera. The ensemble has presented the full opera on several occasions, most recently with Andrew Litton leading a production in July 2011 to conclude that year's Sommerfest.

The Orchestra introduced **Ravel's *La Valse*** to its repertoire on February 24, 1927, at the St. Paul Auditorium Theater, with Henri Verbrugghen conducting. It was one of the first pieces ever recorded at Orchestra Hall, at sessions in October 1974.