

Minnesota Orchestra

Nathalie Stutzmann, conductor
Tobias Feldmann, violin

Thursday, March 3, 2022, 11 am | Orchestra Hall
Friday, March 4, 2022, 8 pm | Orchestra Hall
Saturday, March 5, 2022, 8 pm | Orchestra Hall

George Walker	Lyric for Strings	ca. 7'
Sergei Prokofiev	Concerto No. 2 in G minor for Violin and Orchestra, Opus 63 Allegro moderato Andante assai Allegro, ben marcato <i>Tobias Feldmann, violin</i>	ca. 26'
	I N T E R M I S S I O N	ca. 20'
Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky	Symphony No. 6 in B minor, Opus 75, <i>Pathétique</i> Adagio - Allegro non troppo Allegro con grazia Allegro molto vivace Finale: Adagio lamentoso	ca. 45'

pre-concert

Concert Preview with Phillip Gainsley
Thursday, March 3, 10:15 am, Auditorium
Friday, March 4, 7 pm, Auditorium
Saturday, March 5, 7:15 pm, N. Bud Grossman Mezzanine

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.





Nathalie Stutzmann, conductor

Nathalie Stutzmann has been announced as the Atlanta Symphony's fifth music director beginning in the 2022-23 season, becoming only the second woman to lead a major American orchestra. In addition, this season she becomes the Philadelphia Orchestra's new principal guest conductor, which will involve a regular presence in the orchestra's subscription series, recordings, tours and summer festivals. She is also entering the fourth season as chief conductor of the Kristiansand Symphony Orchestra in Norway. This season and the next, she will conduct the Orchestre de Paris, London Symphony Orchestra, Royal

Stockholm Philharmonic, Hamburg NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra, Helsinki Radio Symphony, and the Seattle, Pittsburgh, and San Francisco symphony orchestras. Having established a strong reputation as an opera conductor in large repertoire such as Wagner's *Tannhäuser* and Boito's *Mefistofele*, in 2022 she will conduct a new production of Tchaikovsky's *Queen of Spades* in Brussels' La Monnaie. She will make her Metropolitan Opera debut in 2023. More: nathaliestutzmann.com, askonasholt.com.



Tobias Feldmann, violin

German violinist Tobias Feldmann is a laureate of the Queen Elisabeth

and Joseph Joachim competitions. He has recently performed with the Konzerthausorchester Berlin, Bournemouth Symphony, Tonkünstler-Orchester, Concertgebouw Chamber Orchestra and Moscow State Symphony, collaborating with conductors John Storgårds, Nicholas Collon, David Afkham, Reinhard Goebel, Fabien Gabel and Marin Alsop. Highlights of his current season include performances with the BBC Philharmonic, Staatsorchester Hannover, WDR Sinfonieorchester, Tiroler Symphonieorchester Innsbruck, BBC Scottish Symphony, Uppsala Chamber Orchestra and Ensemble Resonanz. Further ahead, he will return to the Residentie Orkest and will debut with Helsinki Philharmonic and Berner Symphonieorchester. An avid chamber musician, he has performed at the Wiener Konzerthaus, Schubertiade Schwarzenberg, Vinterfest, Rheingau and Lockenhaus festivals, partnering with Kian Soltani, Denis Kozhukhin and Tabea Zimmermann. Other future engagements include his Wigmore Hall debut and a return to the Amsterdam Concertgebouw. He records for Alpha Classics. More: tobiasfeldmann.com, askonasholt.com.

one-minute notes

Walker: Lyric for Strings

Written in memory of the composer's grandmother, Walker's Lyric for Strings is music of great emotion, with melodies proceeding in mostly stepwise manner, harmonies jumping from major to modal, and sparing use of plucked strings.

Prokofiev: Violin Concerto No. 2

This lyrical concerto veers between extremes, now gentle, now full of energy. The composer's imagination—and his penchant for saucy touches—are often evident, as in his use of castanets near the work's exciting close.

Tchaikovsky: Symphony No. 6, *Pathétique*

Darkly, tenderly, beautifully, Tchaikovsky's Sixth and final symphony communicates a mood of deep suffering. Brilliant touches include a waltz in 5/4 time, a dramatic scherzo and a lamenting melody that sinks away to silence.



George Walker

Born: June 27, 1922,
Washington, D.C.

Died: August 23, 2018,
Montclair, New Jersey

Lyric for Strings

Premiered: 1946

In addition to being one of the most prestigious awards for composers in the U.S., the Pulitzer Prize for Music may be a ticket to good health: of its 38 recipients who are no longer living, 16 survived past the age of 90, and two-time winner Elliott Carter reached age 103. George Walker, winner of the 1996 Pulitzer, would have become a centenarian this coming June, but passed away in 2018 at age 96, leaving a catalog of more than 90 works in a variety of genres. The most famous of these is *Lyric for Strings*, which originated as the second movement of Walker's String Quartet No. 1, written in 1946 and dedicated to the memory of the composer's recently deceased grandmother.

This slow, heartfelt music traveled a path parallel to that of the second movement from fellow American composer Samuel Barber's String Quartet of 1936. Walker and Barber each extracted the *Molto adagio* middle movement from their respective quartets and recast them as string orchestra works. Barber's took the name *Adagio for Strings*, while Walker's became known as the *Lyric for Strings* (though Walker initially used the title *Lament for Strings*) and received its premiere in a 1946 radio broadcast; each piece became its composer's most frequently performed music.

a lengthy and decorated career

Although George Walker's parents were not professional musicians, they gave him a name with musical lineage: his middle name, Theophilus, was one of three middle names given to Mozart at birth. Walker started piano lessons at age five and enrolled at Oberlin College when he was only 14, then graduated four years later. He subsequently earned artist's diplomas in both piano and composition at the Curtis Institute and a doctorate at the Eastman School of Music, and also spent time in Europe under the tutelage of Nadia Boulanger, who taught many well-known 20th-century classical composers.

Although he is best known as a composer in genres ranging from piano sonatas to concertos to sinfonias, Walker began his musical career as a pianist, soloing with the Philadelphia Orchestra in 1945. He also spent decades teaching in academia, including

a professorship at Rutgers University from 1969 to 1992. His lengthy composing career reached a pinnacle of recognition in 1996 when he won the Pulitzer Prize for Music for his soprano-and-orchestra work *Lilacs*—becoming the first Black composer to earn the honor.

Walker continued crafting new compositions well into his 90s, with one of his final completed works, the *Sinfonia No. 5*, written in response to the 2015 massacre at a church in Charleston, South Carolina. He was in the process of composing a new work for the Los Angeles Philharmonic when he died in 2018.

words from the composer

Walker offered this concise summary of the *Lyric for Strings*:

“After a brief introduction, the principal theme that permeates the entire work is introduced by the first violins. A static interlude is followed by successive imitations of the theme that lead to an intense climax. The final section of the work presents a somewhat more animated statement of the same thematic material. The coda recalls the quiet interlude that appeared earlier.”

Spanning six minutes, with melodies that proceed primarily stepwise, a few judiciously chosen pizzicato notes and a steady 3/4 time signature nearly throughout, it is “not necessarily a simple piece,” Walker noted in a 2017 interview with Frank J. Oteri of *NewMusicBox*. “It alternates between major and modal [scales and harmonies]. In touching upon modes, it became chromatic. But the chromaticism comes about from my interest in expanding the harmonic vocabulary to include dissonance as a part of the harmonic palette, not in dissonance that is totally disconnected from something.”

Tonight's performance marks the second time in a year that some form of this music has been heard at Orchestra Hall: in March 2021 four Minnesota Orchestra musicians played the string quartet version of the *Molto adagio* movement, with no in-person audience due to pandemic restrictions; the music now resounds in the same space with more musicians onstage and listeners filling the seats.

Instrumentation: string orchestra

Program note by Carl Schroeder.



Sergei Prokofiev

Born: April 23, 1891,
Sontsovka, Ukraine

Died: March 5, 1953,
Moscow, Russia

Concerto No. 2 in G minor for Violin and Orchestra, Opus 63

Premiered: December 1, 1935

Like many other Russian musicians, Prokofiev fled to the West in the aftermath of the Communist Revolution of 1917, eventually making his home in Paris, where he wrote music that was brilliant—and often abrasive. The young composer appeared to take delight in assaulting audiences: when one of his early premieres was roundly booed, he walked onstage, bowed deeply to the jeering audience, sat down and played an equally harrowing encore.

Gradually, though, Prokofiev began to feel homesick for Russia. He made the first of many return visits in 1927, began keeping a Moscow apartment in 1933 and moved back completely in 1936. He knew that if he returned to Russia, he would have to relax his style: Socialist Realism demanded music that was lyric and attractive to a mass audience. Whether for this or other reasons, his music grew more lyric and accessible as he made the decision to move to Russia, and once there, *Peter and the Wolf* and the ballet *Romeo and Juliet* were among the first things he wrote.

an evolving style

The Second Violin Concerto also dates from the years when his style was evolving. In 1935 Prokofiev was asked by friends of the French violinist Robert Soëmens to write a violin concerto for him. The composer noted that the unsettled circumstances of his life caused this music to be written in many different places: “the principal theme of the first movement was written in Paris, the first theme of the second movement in Voronezh, the orchestration I completed in Baku, while the first performance was given in Madrid, in December 1935.” Prokofiev and Soëmens then took the concerto on an wide-ranging tour, performing it in Portugal, Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia.

Prokofiev had at first planned to write a “concert sonata for violin and orchestra,” something smaller-scaled than a concerto; what he produced was a violin concerto conceived on a somewhat intimate scale. It is scored for what is essentially Mozart’s orchestra (pairs of woodwinds, horns and trumpets, plus strings), but that classical

sound is enlivened by some unusual percussion instruments, including castanets and a variety of drums.

the music: intimate and lyrical

allegro moderato. The intimate, lyric nature of this concerto is evident from the first instant of the *Allegro moderato*, where the solo violin, all alone, lays out the opening theme. This concerto veers between extremes—murmuring and muted one instant, full of steely energy the next—and this contrast is reflected in the bittersweet second subject, also announced by solo violin. The development of this sonata-form movement is extremely energetic, and the movement finally snaps into silence on abrupt pizzicatos.

andante assai. Pizzicato strings also open the second movement, where they provide a pointillistic accompaniment to the violin’s long cantilena. This melody, which changes meters smoothly between 12/8 and 4/4, evolves through a series of variations until a pair of clarinets introduces the singing central episode. The opening material returns, and Prokofiev closes with an imaginative touch: he has the solo violin take over the pizzicato figure from the opening and “accompany” the orchestra to the quiet close.

allegro, ben marcato. Briefest and most exotic of the movements, the finale demands virtuoso playing from both soloist and orchestra to solve complex problems of coordination and balance. Here Prokofiev makes distinctive use of his percussion instruments, particularly the castanets. The closing pages are particularly exciting, alternating measures of 7/4, 5/4, 2/2 and 3/2 with the basic pulse of 3/4, and Prokofiev drives the concerto to a saucy close.

Instrumentation: solo violin with orchestra comprising
2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns,
2 trumpets, snare drum, bass drum, cymbals,
castanets, triangle and strings

Program note by **Eric Bromberger.**



Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Born: May 7, 1840,
Votkinsk, Russia
Died: November 7, 1893,
St. Petersburg, Russia

Symphony No. 6 in B minor, Opus 74, *Pathétique*

Premiered: October 28, 1893

Much conjecture has surrounded the “program” of Tchaikovsky’s Sixth Symphony. During its composition he wrote to his nephew Vladimir Davidov that “the program will be of a kind that will remain an enigma to all—let them guess... This program is saturated with subjective feeling...while composing it in my mind I shed many tears.”

passionate, not pathetic

Tchaikovsky considered calling it the “Tragic,” but when his brother Modeste suggested *pateticheskyy*, the composer exclaimed, “Excellent, Modya, bravo, pateticheskyy!” The word was inscribed immediately on the score’s title page and taken to the publisher Jurgenson. Within a day Tchaikovsky changed his mind. But Jurgenson, no doubt with an eye towards the sales potential of such a catchy title, let the work go out as *Symphonie pathétique*, and the name stuck. It is worth noting that the word *pathétique* derives from the Greek *patheticos*, which has a different flavor than in most modern English contexts, where it usually implies inadequacy and pity, as in “a pathetic attempt.” The Russian *pateticheskyy* refers to something passionate, emotional and, as in the original Greek, having overtones of suffering.

Death seems to lurk in much of the work. The words “death” and “dying” occur in a letter Tchaikovsky wrote explaining the plan of the symphony. Some listeners hear an expression of a hypersensitive artist given to alternating moods of exaltation and dejection, and try to follow each emotional state in the music as a mirror of the composer’s soul. Others take their cue from critic Philip Hale, who wrote: “Here is a work that, without a hint or a suggestion of a program, sums up in the most imaginative language the life of man, with his illusions, desires, loves, struggles, victories, unavoidable end.”

Tchaikovsky began working on his last symphony in February 1893 and conducted the first performance on October 28 in St. Petersburg. It was only mildly successful, yet he felt that it was “the best and especially the most sincere of my works. I love it

as I have never loved any of my other musical creations.” At the second performance, three weeks later, conducted by Eduard Nápravník, the symphony left a powerful impression. But the composer was dead: his *Symphonie pathétique* had become his swan song.

the symphony: poignant and trailing to silence

adagio – allegro non troppo. The introductory bassoon solo, which crawls slowly through the murkiest colors of the orchestra, becomes the melodic material for the *Allegro* section’s principal theme. The second theme, presented by the violins, is probably the most memorable of the entire work, haunting in its beauty, poignancy and sad lyricism. The clarinet brings this theme down to the limits of audibility. A crash shatters the mood abruptly, and the development section ensues, one of the most violent and ferocious passages Tchaikovsky ever wrote. A brief recapitulation is followed by a consoling coda.

allegro con grazia. The second movement, in 5/4 meter, has famously been called a “broken-backed waltz, limping yet graceful.” A *Trio* section in the middle, also in 5/4, is noteworthy for the steady, pulsing notes in the bassoons, double basses and timpani.

allegro molto vivace; finale: adagio lamentoso. The *Pathétique*’s third movement combines elements of a light scherzo with a heavy march. So festive and exuberant does the march become that one is tempted to stand and cheer at the end, making all the more effective the anguished cry that opens the finale. The finale’s infinitely warm and tender second theme in D major works itself into a brilliant climax and crashes in a tumultuous descent of scales in the strings. The first theme returns in continuously rising peaks of intensity, agitation and dramatic conflict. Finally the energy is spent, the sense of struggle subsides, and a solemn trombone chorale leads into the return of the movement’s second theme, no longer in D major but in B minor—dark, dolorous, weighted down in inexpressible grief and resignation. The underlying heart throb of double basses eventually ceases and the symphony dies away into blackness... nothingness.

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

Program note by **Robert Markow**.