

## Minnesota Orchestra

Ryan Bancroft, conductor

Kirill Gerstein, piano

Thursday, January 5, 2023, 11 am | Orchestra Hall

Friday, January 6, 2023, 8 pm | Orchestra Hall

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor     *Solemn Prelude, Opus 40*     ca. 10'

Sergei Rachmaninoff     Concerto No. 3 in D minor for Piano and Orchestra, Opus 30     ca. 44'

Allegro ma non tanto  
Intermezzo: Adagio  
Finale: Alla breve  
*Kirill Gerstein, piano*

I N T E R M I S S I O N     ca. 20'

Modest Mussorgsky/  
orch. Maurice Ravel     *Pictures at an Exhibition*     ca. 30'

Introduction: Promenade  
Gnomus  
Il vecchio castello  
Tuileries  
Bydlo  
Ballet of Chicks in their Shells  
Samuel Goldenberg and Schmuyle  
Limoges (The Marketplace)  
Catacombae - Con mrtuis in lingua mortua  
Baba-Yaga - The Hut on Fowl's Legs  
The Great Gate of Kiev

## pre-concert

Concert Preview with Valerie Little, Ryan Bancroft and other guests

Thursday, January 5, 10:15 am, Auditorium

Friday, January 6, 7:15 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. The January 6 concert will also be broadcast live on [Twin Cities PBS \(TPT-2\)](#) and available for streaming at [minnesotaorchestra.org](http://minnesotaorchestra.org) and on the Orchestra's social media channels.





**Ryan Bancroft**, conductor

Los Angeles native Ryan Bancroft gained international recognition as a conductor in 2018, winning both the first prize and audience prize at the prestigious Malko Competition for Young Conductors held in Copenhagen. In September 2021, he began his tenure as principal conductor of the BBC National Orchestra of Wales. He is artist in association of the Tapiola Sinfonietta and in 2021 was named chief conductor designate of the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic, with his tenure as chief conductor set to begin next September. He has conducted numerous orchestras throughout Europe and North America, including the London Philharmonic, BBC Symphony, Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Danish National Symphony, Toronto Symphony, Baltimore Symphony and Houston Symphony. This week's performances mark his debut with the Minnesota Orchestra. Passionate about new music, Bancroft has performed with Amsterdam's acclaimed Nieuw Ensembles, assisted Pierre Boulez in a performance of his *Sur Incises* in Los Angeles, and premiered works by Sofia Gubaidulina, John Cage, James Tenney and Anne LeBaron in addition to working closely with improvisers Wadada Leo Smith and Charlie Haden. He returns to work with the Ensemble intercontemporain in Paris in March 2023. More: [intermusica.co.uk](http://intermusica.co.uk).



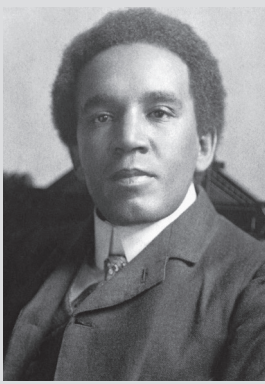
**Kirill Gerstein**, piano

Kirill Gerstein's intense piano technique and imaginative musical presence have brought him a career that spans concert halls around the globe. His most recent performance with the Minnesota Orchestra came at a unique moment in the ensemble's history: a performance of Rachmaninoff's Second Piano Concert exclusively for radio audiences shortly after COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic in March 2020. He has appeared with the Chicago Symphony, Boston Symphony, Leipzig Gewandhaus, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Vienna Philharmonic, Berlin Philharmonic, London Symphony and Bavarian Radio Symphony, in addition to giving recitals in many major cities. In the current season, Gerstein is artist in residence with the Bavarian Radio Symphony and will present a three-part concert series at Wigmore Hall in London. He has recorded several albums on the myrios label since 2010, and his 2020 premiere recording with the Boston Symphony Orchestra of Thomas Adès' Piano Concerto, which was written for Gerstein, won a 2020 Gramophone Award and was nominated for three Grammys. He is a professor of piano at Berlin's Hanns Eisler Hochschule and a faculty member at the Kronberg Academy. More: [imgartists.com](http://imgartists.com), [kirillgerstein.com](http://kirillgerstein.com).



**Sarah Hicks**, broadcast host

For the concert on January 6, Sarah Hicks serves as host and writer of the Twin Cities PBS broadcast and online livestream *This Is Minnesota Orchestra*. 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 series and Sam & Sarah series with Orchestra violist Sam Bergman and leading original productions with collaborators such as PaviElle French, Kevin Kling, Peter Rothstein, Robert Elhai and The Moving Company. She has been an artistic leader in concerts featuring artists from Minnesota's popular music scene including Dessa—with whom she and the Orchestra also made a live-in-concert recording on Doomtree Records—and The New Standards. In addition, she led a concert broadcast and livestream with Cloud Cult and the Orchestra that won a 2022 Upper Midwest Emmy Award. Later this season she conducts movie concerts of *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* and *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*, among other performances. More: [minnesotaorchestra.org](http://minnesotaorchestra.org).



### Samuel Coleridge-Taylor

**Born:** August 15, 1875,  
London, England

**Died:** September 1, 1912,  
London, United Kingdom

### **Solemn Prelude, Opus 40**

**Premiered:** September 13, 1899

Viewed through one lens, the life of London-born composer Samuel Coleridge-Taylor was one of towering triumphs. At age 22 he authored what became, by some accounts, the most successful cantata of his era, *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast*. His music and reputation spread quickly across the Atlantic, boosted by three U.S. tours. He was invited to the White House by Theodore Roosevelt in 1904 and earned such a devoted following in America that multiple choruses and public schools were named in his honor. The great achievements of Coleridge-Taylor, whose father was from Sierra Leone, brought special pride to many in the African American population at a time when the Reconstruction era's steps toward racial equality were being reversed.

#### a less fortunate account

A change in one's metaphorical eyewear brings a much less fortunate story into focus. Coleridge-Taylor's wide renown did not bring him great wealth, as his publisher reaped the financial benefits of *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast* when, prior to the oratorio's premiere in 1898, the composer sold the work's full rights for 15 shillings. As the oratorio skyrocketed in popularity, Coleridge-Taylor capitalized quickly with two sequels, *The Death*

of *Minnehaha* and *Hiawatha's Departure*, which like *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast* were based on Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's epic poem *The Song of Hiawatha*. These two cantatas enjoyed moderate success, but not on the level of the first in the series. Coleridge-Taylor spent the rest of his life generating compositions at a rapid pace and only scraping by financially. His life was cut short by pneumonia at age 37.

The young Minnesota Orchestra, known then as Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra, was among many ensembles to champion his music—at first. From 1905 to 1930 the ensemble's first two music directors, Emil Oberhoffer and Henri Verbrugghen, brought his works to life 25 times on subscription programs, pops concerts and tours. His musical cause in our state was surely not hurt by the contents of his most popular work, a setting of the Longfellow tale of Hiawatha and Minnehaha—three names prevalent on Minnesota's maps and affixed to several natural landmarks. Why, then, did this popular composer's music vanish from the Orchestra's programs until 1998, with none of the ensemble's music directors leading his works from 1931 to October 2019?

John K. Sherman's *Music and Maestros*, a history of the Orchestra's first half-century, posits one explanation: that World War I and the Great Depression brought about the demise of many civic singing organizations on which the Orchestra relied in performing newer choral-orchestral works such as *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast*. Most of Coleridge-Taylor's other 81 opuses were obscure in comparison and therefore less likely to make their way to the Orchestra's music stands. Sherman's 357-page tome makes no mention, however, of the word "racism"—the dominant factor in the sparse programming of music by Black composers for much of the history of major American orchestras, including Minnesota's. A major course correction has happened in recent years: since December 2016, when Roderick Cox conducted Coleridge-Taylor's *Danse Nègre* from the *African Suite*,

#### one-minute note

#### Coleridge-Taylor: *Solemn Prelude*

This music by a young Samuel Coleridge-Taylor premiered at Britain's Three Choirs Festival in 1899, then was not performed again until its revival at the same still-active festival in 2021. It made its way to the U.S. for the first time just this past September. Slow and anthem-like, the overture journeys from minor to major across a 10-minute span.

#### Rachmaninoff: *Piano Concerto No. 3*

The third of Sergei Rachmaninoff's four virtuosic piano concertos balances moments of song-like simplicity and thunderous virtuosity. The opening *Allegro* is subtle and soulful, while the latter movements offer catchy themes, ingenious variations and a feather-light waltz.

#### Mussorgsky/Ravel: *Pictures at an Exhibition*

Modest Mussorgsky took as inspiration for this brilliant work—a memorial to his friend, the Russian painter Viktor Hartmann—ten colorful images in a posthumous exhibition of Hartmann's work. *Pictures* was originally a virtuosos showpiece for solo piano, but now it is most widely known in this lush, magical orchestration by Maurice Ravel.

the Orchestra has delved into his compositional catalog with regularity, programming nine of his works at 23 concerts. This week, a tenth joins them—*Solemn Prelude*—and even more of the composer’s music is on its way to Orchestra Hall this spring, when *Petite Suite de Concert* opens concerts from May 18 to 20.

**a belated but welcome rebirth**

The ten-minute *Solemn Prelude* premiered in 1899 at the Three Choirs Festival in Worcester, England, and was well-received at that occasion but not picked up for publication. Although Coleridge-Taylor was commissioned by the festival two other times—with the A-minor Ballade of 1898 finding some subsequent success—*Solemn Prelude* faded from view after its initial performance, its orchestral parts were lost and the only known surviving conductor’s score was shelved at London’s British Library. A reduced piano-only score did remain in the festival’s files, but *Solemn Prelude* went unheard during all of the 20th century plus a bit over two decades.

The Three Choirs Festival, now an incredible 308 years old with some 550 commissions under its belt, revived the work for its second-ever performance—the Philharmonia Orchestra doing the honors—during the festival’s 2021 edition after its chief executive, music scholar Alexis Paterson, followed an educated hunch and tracked down the original score amid a collection of Coleridge-Taylor’s manuscripts at the British Library. Now published by Faber Music, *Solemn Prelude* was given its U.S. premiere by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra this past September, making the current week’s audiences in Minneapolis among the few who have heard the 124-year-old work in America during its belated but welcome rebirth.

**minor to major, in no hurry**

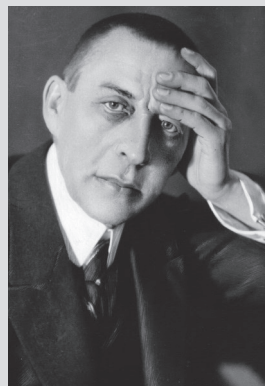
*Solemn Prelude* is an anthem-like composition that journeys in no rush from B minor to B major, with detours into a number of other keys along the way. The tempo is *lento* throughout, though occasional accelerations and slow-downs of just a few measures add variety to the pacing. More rapid figurations come to the fore as the piece progresses before matters conclude slow and soft. The orchestra is of the slimmed-down size of a late Classical period ensemble, and the scoring tends to highlight most or all of the ensemble playing together at once, rather than spotlighting individual instruments; in fact, no single player receives an extended solo line. Just one percussion instrument—cymbals—is employed, judiciously.

An assessment of *Solemn Prelude* in the *Chicago Tribune* last September was measured in tone but ultimately positive, with Hannah Edgar writing that “one wonder[s] if the 24-year-old Coleridge-Taylor—in the middle of a hugely productive period when he wrote the work for Britain’s Three Choirs Festival in

1899—was sweating under a deadline...[but it is] still a worthy addition to any orchestra’s tool kit.”

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

*Program note by Carl Schroeder.*



**Sergei Rachmaninoff**

**Born:** April 1, 1873,  
Semyonovo, district of  
Starorussky, Russia

**Died:** March 28, 1943,  
Beverly Hills, California

**Concerto No. 3 in D minor  
for Piano and Orchestra,  
Opus 30**

**Premiered:** November 28, 1909

In October 1906 Sergei Rachmaninoff moved from Moscow to Dresden with his wife and their daughter, Irina, aiming to take himself out of circulation. He was a busy pianist and conductor—he had just concluded two years as principal conductor at the Bolshoi Opera—and he longed for time just to write. But as offers to play and conduct kept coming in, he decided to accept an invitation to visit the United States. It was for this tour that he wrote his Third Piano Concerto, and on November 28, 1909, he introduced it with Walter Damrosch and the New York Symphony. Soon after he played it again, and to his much greater satisfaction, with the New York Philharmonic under Gustav Mahler, another conductor struggling to find time to compose.

**the music: from simplicity to virtuosity**

**allegro ma non tanto.** Rachmaninoff invented arresting beginnings for all his works for piano and orchestra. In the first measure of the Third Concerto we find a quality we do not usually associate with Rachmaninoff: simplicity. For two measures, clarinet, bassoon, horn, timpani and muted strings set up a pulse against which the piano sings—or is it speaks?—a long and quiet melody, the two hands in octaves as in a Schubert piano duet. It is a lovely inspiration, that melody unfolding in subtle variation, just a few notes being continually redisposed rhythmically. Once only, to the extent of a single eighth note, does melody exceed the range of an octave; most of it stays within a fifth.

The accompaniment cost Rachmaninoff considerable trouble. He was thinking, he said, of the piano singing the melody “as a singer would sing it, and [finding] a suitable orchestral accompaniment, or rather, one that would not muffle this

singing.” What he found invites, for precision and delicacy, comparison with the workmanship in Mozart’s concertos. The accompaniment does indeed let the singing through, but even while exquisitely tactful in its recessiveness, it is absolutely specific—a real and characterful invention, the fragmentary utterances of the violins now anticipating, now echoing the pianist’s song, the woodwinds sometimes and with utmost gentleness reinforcing the bass or joining the piano in a few notes of its melody. The further progress of the movement abounds in felicities and ingenuities, sharply imagined and elegantly executed.

**intermezzo: adagio.** “Intermezzo” is a curiously shy designation for a movement as expansive as this, though we shall discover that it is in fact all upbeat to a still more expansive *Finale*. It is a series of variations, broken up by a feather-light waltz. The clarinet-and-bassoon melody of the waltz is close cousin to the concerto’s principal theme, and the piano’s dizzying figuration, too, is made of diminutions of the same material.

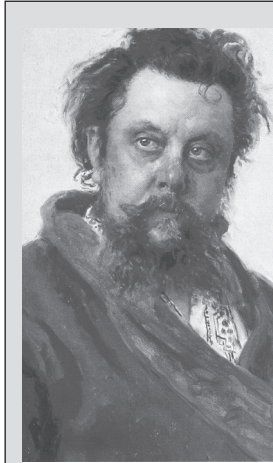
**finale: alla breve.** When the *Intermezzo* yields to the explosive start of the *Finale*, we again find ourselves caught up in a torrent of virtuosity and invention. Rachmaninoff gives us the surprise of a series of variations on what pretends to be a new idea but is in fact an amalgam of the first movement’s second theme and the beginning of the finale. His evocations of earlier material are imaginative and structural achievements on a level far above the naive quotation-mongering of, say, César Franck or even Dvořák.

Rachmaninoff was anxious to put his best foot forward in America. His Second Concerto had already been played in New York, and Rachmaninoff wanted his new work to convey a clear sense of his growing powers as composer and pianist. It does have features in common with the Second: the sparkling, dense, yet always lucid piano style, a certain melancholy to the song, an extroverted rhetorical stance, the apotheosized ending, even the final YUM-pa-ta-TUM cadential formula that is as good as a signature. But the differences are even more important, and they are essentially matters of ambition and scope. The procedures that hold this work together are far beyond the capabilities of the composer of the Second Concerto eight years earlier.

Also, much more is asked of the pianist. The Third Concerto makes immense demands on stamina, the orchestral passages that frame the *Intermezzo* being the soloist’s only moments of respite. Rachmaninoff sees the soloist not merely as someone who can sing soulfully and thunder imposingly, but as an alert, flexible, responsive musician who knows how to listen, blend and accompany. And even in this non-prima-donna role the challenge is greater here than in the Second Concerto.

**Instrumentation:** solo piano with orchestra comprising 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, suspended cymbal and strings

*Program note excerpted from the late Michael Steinberg’s The Concerto: A Listener’s Guide (Oxford University Press, 1998), used with permission.*



### Modest Mussorgsky

**Born:** March 21, 1839,

Karevo, Pskov District, Russia

**Died:** March 28, 1881,

St. Petersburg, Russia

### *Pictures at an Exhibition*, orchestrated by Maurice Ravel

**Premiered:** May 3, 1923

One of the most popular and frequently recorded pieces of classical music did not exist in its composer’s own lifetime—at least not in the form most audiences know it today. Modest Mussorgsky completed *Pictures at an Exhibition* in 1874 for solo piano and died seven years later, after which a veritable industry sprung up of orchestrators reimagining the piece in larger instrumentations. Many concertgoers know only Ravel’s 1923 orchestration of the original piano score. But Maurice Ravel’s was neither the first nor the last. At least 30 others exist for full orchestra, beginning as early as 1891 with one by Mikhail Tushmalov. Among the many who have put their stamp on Mussorgsky’s score are Walter Goehr, Sir Henry Wood, Lucien Cailliet, Leopold Stokowski, Paul Kletzki, Vladimir Ashkenazy and Sergei Gorchakov. But there’s more—much more.

More than two dozen arrangements exist for band, and there are also versions for string orchestra, Russian folk instrument orchestra, Chinese orchestra, koto ensemble, woodwind quintet, brass quintet (at least 20 versions), guitar trio and piano duo—not to mention for a quintet of four tubas plus euphonium; a bassoon quintet; two oboes, English horn, heckelphone and bassoon; and 44 pianos. There are jazz and big band versions, a rock version, and electronic and disco versions. If you include arrangements of partial versions and single movements in addition to the complete versions above, the grand total comes to more than 550 arrangements.

Perhaps most astonishing is that for all the popularity *Pictures* enjoys today, no public performance of the original score is known to have been given in the composer's lifetime. Mussorgsky was a fine pianist, but if he played *Pictures* at all, it was in private. The first documented public performance took place only in 1914, in England. Four years earlier the first known recording had been made, a piano roll made by one Gavriil Romanovsky. *Pictures* did not begin to acquire popularity until Serge Koussevitzky commissioned Ravel to orchestrate the score. Koussevitzky conducted the first performance in Paris on May 3, 1923, and the following year introduced *Pictures* to North America with the Boston Symphony.

### a musical tribute

The circumstances leading to the creation of *Pictures* are well documented: When Viktor Hartmann, an artist, designer and sculptor, died of a heart attack in 1873, his close friend Mussorgsky was devastated. Mussorgsky was further plagued with guilty feelings, recalling an incident a few months earlier that clearly showed Hartmann had a serious health issue, about which Mussorgsky did nothing. Following Hartmann's death Mussorgsky slipped into depression, which was further aggravated by his alcoholism. Some months later Vladimir Stassov, a music critic and friend of both Mussorgsky and Hartmann, arranged an exhibit of about 400 of the late artist's works, hoping that this tribute might in some way relieve Mussorgsky's depression. The exhibition opened in January 1874 at the St. Petersburg Society of Architects, and it inspired Mussorgsky to create a suite of musical portraits for piano, his only significant work for this instrument.

**Introduction: Promenade.** A "Promenade" theme opens an imaginary stroll through the picture gallery, a theme that returns several times throughout the work as the viewer moves on to another painting or group of paintings, of which ten are depicted:

**Gnomus.** A wooden child's toy styled after a small, grotesque gnome with gnarled legs and erratic hopping movements.

**Il vecchio castello.** A watercolor of a troubadour singing in front of a medieval castle, his melancholic song carried by the alto saxophone.

**Tuileries.** A lively picture of children scampering about, engaged in horseplay while their nannies chatter.

**Bydlo.** An oxcart on giant, lumbering wheels, its driver singing a folk song in the Aeolian mode.

**Ballet of Chicks in their Shells.** Cheeping baby canaries dancing about, still enclosed in their shells, with their wings and legs protruding.

**Samual Goldenberg and Schmuyle.** A pair of vividly drawn personalities: a rich man who is pompous, self-important and arrogant; and a poor man, sniveling, beseeching, nervous, pitiable.

**Limoges (The Marketplace).** Another lively, bustling French scene where we find the rapid chatter, babble and arguments of housewives, with a particularly noisy fracas during which the music plunges into...

**Catacombae - Con mortuis in lingua mortua.** Hartmann himself, lantern in hand, exploring the subterranean passages of Paris, accompanied by eerie, ominous sounds. To a distorted version of the *Promenade* theme, the music depicts a grisly sight: "Hartmann's creative spirit leads me," wrote Mussorgsky, "to the place of skulls and calls to them—the skulls begin to glow faintly from within."

**Baba-Yaga - The Hut on Fowl's Legs.** The Russian witch Baba Yaga, portrayed not as Hartmann did, as a fantastic bronze clock-face mounted on chicken legs—but in a dizzying ride through the air in her mortar, steering with a pestle, sailing right into...

**The Great Gate of Kiev.** Hartmann's architectural design for a gate (never built) to commemorate Alexander II's narrow escape from an assassination attempt in Kiev.

**Instrumentation:** 3 flutes (2 doubling piccolo), 3 oboes (1 doubling English horn), 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, alto saxophone, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, tenor tuba, timpani, bass drum, chimes, cymbals, tam-tam, bells, ratchet, snare drum, slapstick, triangle, xylophone, 2 harps, celesta and strings

Program notes by **Robert Markow**.

