Minnesota Orchestra

Leonidas Kavakos, conductor and violin

Thursday, May 11, 2023, 11 am | Orchestra Hall
Friday, May 12, 2023, 8 pm | Orchestra Hall

Johann Sebastian Bach — Concerto in D minor for Violin and Strings, BWV 1052R — ca. 24′

Allegro
Adagio
Allegro

Leonidas Kavakos, violin

I N T E R M I S S I O N — ca. 20′

Johannes Brahms — Symphony No. 1 in C minor, Opus 68 — ca. 45′

Un poco sostenuto – Allegro
Andante sostenuto
Un poco allegretto e grazioso
Adagio – Più andante – Allegro non troppo, ma con brio

pre-concert	**Concert Preview** with Phillip Gainsley and guests Thursday, May 11, 10:15 am, Auditorium Friday, May 12, 7:15 pm, Target Atrium
multi-media installation	**Juxtaposition Arts Exhibit** From May 11 to 20, the Orchestra Hall lobby will be home to a multi-media installation created by teaching artists and youth apprentices from Juxtaposition Arts, inspired by Carlos Simon and Marc Bamuthi Joseph's *brea(d)th.*

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.

Leonidas Kavakos, conductor and violin

Leonidas Kavakos is recognized across the world as a violinist and artist of rare quality, acclaimed for his outstanding technique, captivating artistry, superb musicianship and the integrity of his playing. He works regularly with the world's most prestigious orchestras and conductors and plays as recitalist in the world's premier recital halls and festivals. He has developed close relationships with major orchestras such as the Vienna Philharmonic, Berlin Philharmonic, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra and Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra. He also works closely with the Dresden Staatskapelle, Bayerischer Rundfunk, Munich Philharmonic and Budapest Festival orchestras, Orchestre de Paris, Academia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia and Orchestra Filarmonica della Scala. In recent years, he has succeeded in building a strong profile as a conductor and has conducted numerous major orchestras including the New York Philharmonic, Houston Symphony, Dallas Symphony, Gürzenich Orchester, Vienna Symphony, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Chamber Orchestra of Europe, Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, Filarmonica Teatro La Fenice, Danish National Symphony Orchestra and, most recently, the Israel Philharmonic. Although this week's concerts mark his Minnesota Orchestra conducting debut, he has appeared with the ensemble many times as a violin soloist since his debut in 1995, including at a Carnegie Hall performance in 2009, and was artist in residence of the Orchestra's 1997 Sommerfest. In the 2022-23 season, he is artist in residence at Orquesta y Coro Nacionales de España, where he appears as both violinist and conductor. He tours Europe with Yuja Wang and returns to the U.S. with regular recital partners pianist Emanuel Ax and cellist Yo-Yo Ma. He performs throughout Europe and the Middle East with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra and returns to the Vienna Philharmonic, Bayerischen Rundfunks Symphony Orchestra, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, NDR Hamburg, New York Philharmonic and Czech Philharmonic. He also conducts the Danish National Symphony Orchestra and RAI Torino and has a residency at Tongyeong International Music Festival, in addition to a series of recitals in Japan and South Korea. Kavakos is an exclusive recording artist with Sony Classics. His recent releases include *Bach: Sei Solo* and two albums of Beethoven's Symphonies No. 2 and 5 arranged for chamber trio, performed with Emanuel Ax and Yo-Yo Ma. Born and brought up in a musical family in Athens, Kavakos now curates an annual violin and chamber music master class in his home city. He plays the "Willemotte" Stradivarius violin made in 1734. More: opus3artists.com, leonidaskavakos.com.

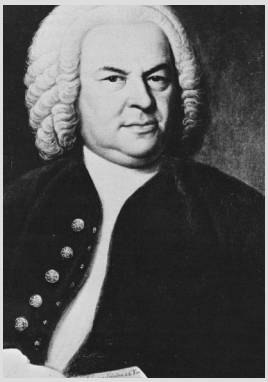
one-minute notes

Bach: Violin Concerto in D minor

The perpetually busy Bach often repurposed his music for various uses, and the D-minor Violin Concerto is among his works that exists in multiple forms; its score survived only a keyboard concerto, and musicologists have reconstructed a violin version believed to be the root work. It contains three movements, ordered in the traditional fast-slow-fast form; the outer movements showcase Baroque dynamism, framing an eloquent, pain-infused *Adagio*.

Brahms: Symphony No. 1

Brahms' First Symphony—sometimes called "Beethoven's Tenth" for its kinship with that composer's nine symphonies—has an anguished opening. But at its buoyant close, a brilliant horn call clears the way for a melody in which we recognize the influence of the "Ode to Joy."



Johann Sebastian Bach

Born: March 21, 1685, Eisenach, Germany
Died: July 28, 1759, Leipzig, Germany

Concerto in D minor for Violin and Strings, BWV 1052R

Composed: ca. 1729

Johann Sebastian Bach was a great recycler—of his own music as well as that of others. A busy, practical musician, he had plenty of motivation to recast good ideas in new forms. In 1723, when he became cantor of the Thomasschule in Leipzig, his work overload multiplied. Moreover, other tempting new possibilities opened up to him in that bustling commercial metropolis through his leadership of the Collegium Musicum that had been thriving since its founding by Georg Philipp Telemann nearly 20 years earlier.

many opportunities to create

The Collegium was a voluntary association of professional musicians and university students who gathered weekly at a Leipzig coffee house—more often in the summertime, when outdoor settings provided attractive venues—to give public concerts. In those days the fare was contemporary; everyone looked forward to new music. For Bach, immersed in producing sacred music, there was renewed opportunity to create secular works for an enthusiastic ensemble of instrumentalists.

Pressured by time, Bach often resorted to redressing works he had written during his six idyllic years at Cöthen, whose psalm-singing Calvinist court had little use for his sacred inspirations and thus had spurred a glorious outpouring of concertos, sonatas and the like. Add to this the needs of his own household, burgeoning with gifted offspring eager to play, and Bach's incentives to produce instrumental music alongside his churchly obligations are eminently clear.

lost and rebuilt

The once-lost Violin Concerto in D minor, which now bears the Bach works catalog number BWV 1052R (R for "reconstruction") is a splendid case in point—not a recycled product, but presumably the original thing as rebuilt from surviving sources. Despite its great suitability for the violin, the D-minor Concerto is more often experienced as a keyboard concerto designated by the same number, BWV 1052. In that form it was last presented at Orchestra Hall by Simone Dinnerstein in 2010.

Many of Bach's keyboard concertos are believed to be transcriptions of earlier concertos for other instruments, for which the original scores often didn't survive. The consensus of the last century is that Bach first wrote the D-minor Concerto for violin, although some 21st-century scholarship has suggested that a version for organ came first, and the chicken-and-egg discussion is continuing amongst musicologists. What is certain is that over the past 150 years, several reconstructions of the missing violin concerto have been created using the keyboard version and other Bach materials as sources; among them are composer-violinist Ferdinand David's version of 1873, violinist Robert Reitz's of 1917 and the one used in this week's concerts, conductor-musicologist Wilfried Fischer's edition published in 1970. In some performances of the D-minor Violin Concerto, the orchestra will perform their parts exactly as written in the keyboard version, with the only change being the violin soloist's reconstructed material.

The late Jorja Fleezanis, the Minnesota Orchestra's concertmaster from 1989 to 2009, performed the concerto at Orchestra Hall in 1995, noting at that time that although it can be confusing which music came first, there is no reason to be hesitant about enjoying the music in any of its forms. "We still have a strange aversion to transcription," she commented. "It remains something pejorative in our minds, though Bach, above everybody, showed us how music can be reused."

the music: confident and eloquent

allegro. The work's opening *Allegro* is pegged to its invigorating theme—a prime example of Baroque dynamism. Though divided into four main sections, the expansive movement (the longest of the three, but by less than a minute) never loses sight of its governing premise.

adagio. Bach's centerpiece is a pure instrumental aria, retaining the minor mode but now anchored in G. Fleezanis commented on this movement in 1995: "The *Adagio* is almost like a four-part chorale. Simple melodic lines become eloquent, and are suffused with pain."

allegro. Ignited by a swift scale—toppling an octave, as if to mirror the first movement's rapid octave ascent—the finale reinstates the brisk and fiery tempo of its stern predecessor. All that Bach delivers from a tiny, slurred three-note figure is a wonder to behold—a lashing out against adversity that continues the confidence exuded by the first movement. And like the opening, it delivers the full barrage of Baroque virtuosity, resonating with double stops and sizzling with the crossing of strings.

Instrumentation: solo violin with orchestra comprising harpsichord and strings

Johannes Brahms

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

Symphony No. 1 in C minor, Opus 68

Premiered: November 4, 1876

a momentous encounter took place on September 30, 1853, the day on which Robert Schumann noted in his diary, "Brahms to see me (a genius)." Touring Germany as pianist for the Hungarian violinist Eduard Reményi, the 20-year-old Brahms had detoured through Düsseldorf in order to pay a call on Schumann, his artistic ideal. For his part, Schumann was so impressed with both the compositions and the keyboard skills of his visitor that he hailed the "young eagle" in a prophetic article published in *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*. When success and fame came quickly to Brahms, everyone took for granted that he would soon produce a symphony in the Beethoven mold.

They waited a long time. "To write a symphony is no joke," Brahms explained, ultimately postponing his debut as a symphonist until the age of 40. Few challenges have occupied a composer over so long a time. Finally, more than two decades after he had first contemplated such a project, Brahms' Symphony No. 1 resonated in the hall at Karlsruhe on November 4, 1876. After its triumphant debut, the symphony caught on fast, and with the rapid proliferation of orchestras across the United States it became a staple of the repertory on two continents.

a kinship with Beethoven

Just three months before the C-minor Symphony debuted, Richard Wagner also realized an ambitious pursuit: three complete performances of his gigantic *Ring* cycle at the festival theater built expressly for it at Bayreuth. To the conservative faction that was opposed to the extravagant wiles of Wagnerism, Brahms' persuasive symphony had not appeared a moment too soon.

The symphony was swiftly—and favorably—compared with Beethoven's. The conductor Hans von Bülow referred to Brahms' First as "the Tenth." The epithet flattered as well as provoked the composer, but Bülow only meant that Brahms was carrying on where Beethoven had left off. Not superficial resemblances, but a kinship of creative spirit and architectural mastery linked the two great symphonists.

the music: Brahms' symphonic breakthrough

un poco sostenuto–allegro. There is no mistaking the characteristic Brahms tone in the powerful introduction, where a ponderous throbbing in the bass underlies the anguished double theme upon which the symphony embarks. As a chromatic motif struggles upward in the violins, a companionate thought descends in the winds, these conjunctive strands forming a motto that unifies the movement and is prophetic of the *Allegro* about to erupt. Winds drive it to a piercing start, and what before was melancholy now emerges fierce and ready for combat.

andante sostenuto. Whereas the dramatic opening movement was drawn from a dark palette, the slow interlude is sketched in pastel tones suited to its chamber-like intimacy. Strings, with a lone bassoon, give out the instrumental song, which is soon upstaged by a lyric oboe theme that becomes the heart of a trio in which solo horn and violin join.

un poco allegretto e grazioso. Since a quicksilver scherzo would have been incompatible with the basic temperament of this granitic work, Brahms offers a thoughtful rather than impetuous intermezzo, unfolding upon a brace of themes.

adagio–più andante–allegro non troppo, ma con brio. The mighty portal to the finale—austere, even hinting at tragedy—makes way for a statement of great purpose. When this strain's resemblance to Beethoven's *Ode to Joy* theme was pointed out to Brahms, he curtly rejoined: "Any jackass can see that." Analysis, however, dilutes the resemblance.

The late Minnesota Orchestra program annotator Donald N. Ferguson has left a succinct commentary on the rest of the movement: "In the course of the development a horn-call from the introduction (Brahms heard it in the Alps, and it seems to have become for him a symbol of spiritual freedom) is made to achieve great vividness. After this, a recapitulation, which however lacks the principal subject, leads to the coda. Here the joyous energy that was born of the introduction reaches incredible vigor and becomes almost hoarse with triumph. Significant in this great outburst is a religious-sounding phrase in the brass which serves, as did the chorale theme in the first movement, to suggest that the energies displayed are directed towards a purpose not discoverable on the plane of the earth."

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

Program notes by ***Mary Ann Feldman****.*