

Minnesota Orchestra

Miguel Harth-Bedoya, conductor
Grace Roepke, harp

Thursday, June 8, 2023, 11 am | Orchestra Hall
Friday, June 9, 2023, 8 pm | Orchestra Hall

Zoltán Kodály	Concerto for Orchestra	ca. 18'
Alberto Ginastera	Concerto for Harp and Orchestra Allegro giusto Molto moderato Cadenza: Liberamente capriccioso – Vivace <i>Grace Roepke, harp</i>	ca. 21'
I N T E R M I S S I O N		ca. 20'
Zoltán Kodály	<i>Dances of Galánta</i>	ca. 16'
Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky	<i>Capriccio italien</i> , Opus 45	ca. 16'

pre-concert

Pre-concert Presentation with Janet Horvath
Thursday, June 8, 10:15 am, Target Atrium
Friday, June 9, 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.



Miguel Harth-Bedoya, conductor

Peruvian-born conductor Miguel Harth-Bedoya has earned acclaim for his idiomatic interpretations from a diverse and wide range of repertoire in concerts across the globe. His 30-year career as a professional conductor—including 20 seasons at the helm of the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra—is complemented by his deep commitment to passing his experience to the next generation of musicians, and he is director of orchestral studies at Baylor University and music director of the Baylor Symphony Orchestra, as well as founder of The Conducting Institute. This week marks his long-awaited return to the Minnesota Orchestra after a debut at the 2004 Sommerfest. His recent guest conducting

engagements have included concerts with the New Zealand Symphony, Charleston Symphony and Curtis Symphony, as well as appearances at the Aspen Music Festival, Grant Park Music Festival and Oregon Bach Festival. As an opera conductor, he conducted the premiere of Jennifer Higdon's *Cold Mountain*, the recording of which received a Grammy nomination. He is the founder and artistic director of Caminos del Inka, a non-profit organization dedicated to researching, performing and preserving the rich musical legacy of South America. More: miguelharth-bedoya.com.



Grace Roepke, harp

Grace Roepke is an international award-winning soloist and the newly

appointed principal harp of the Louisville Orchestra. The first harpist to be awarded the Grand and First Prize at the FRIENDS of the Minnesota Orchestra Young Artist Competition, she has also received top prizes in the Dutch World Harp Competition, the Lyon & Healy Awards and the American Harp Society National Competition. Roepke is also the first harpist to win a fellowship in Orchestral Studies at the Cleveland Institute of Music, and has performed with the Cleveland Orchestra, Grant Park Music Festival, Akron Symphony Orchestra and Erie Philharmonic, among other ensembles. She has been a fellowship recipient at the Lucerne Festival Academy, Round Top Festival Institute and Texas Music Festival. She has presented numerous world premieres including *Mammoth* by Teddy Abrams with cellist Yo-Yo Ma, *Air* by Thomas Adès with violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter, and *Time Lapse* by Patrick Harlin as a part of Yolanda Kondonassis' FIVE MINUTES for Earth Project. Roepke is a proud third-generation harpist, following in the footsteps of her mother and grandmother. She received her bachelor's and master's degrees from the Cleveland Institute of Music, where she studied with Kondonassis. More: graceroepeke.com.

one-minute notes

Kodály: *Concerto for Orchestra*; *Dances of Galánta*

Kodály's *Concerto for Orchestra* is infused with Hungarian folk melodies and built on Baroque-era structures, namely the concerto grosso form of small groups in interplay with the full ensemble and, in the middle movement, passacaglia—continual variations over a repeating bass line. In *Dances of Galánta*, he memorializes his boyhood home, imposing his own structure on five dances the local Romani band had played—haunting, majestic, stomping and whirling—producing a vivid image of yesteryear.

Ginastera: *Harp Concerto*

Ginastera's *Harp Concerto* explores the folk rhythms of Argentina and the many capabilities of the harp, including its fiery energy, mysterious colors and dreamlike special effects.

Tchaikovsky: *Capriccio italien*

Tchaikovsky's delightful ode to Rome opens with a striking military bugle call and continues with episodes based on Italian songs, both lyrical and lively, before the work closes with a sizzling tarantella dance.



Zoltán Kodály

Born: December 16, 1882,
Kecskemét, Hungary

Died: March 6, 1967,
Budapest, Hungary

Concerto for Orchestra

Premiered: February 6, 1941

Although Zoltán Kodály wrote a number of thrilling and colorful works for orchestra, the stage and other settings, he is perhaps best known today not for his compositions—but rather for a framework of early youth music education known as the Kodály Method. The method was created based on principles that Kodály advanced in numerous books he wrote concerning childhood and music study, and while he did not create the method, his research and theories significantly influenced the Hungarian music education system that developed in the 1940s. The ensuing Kodály Method was built using this education system as a foundation and is now used the world over.

a varied career

While education was of utmost significance to Kodály, his non-didactic composition catalogue is varied and impressive. After studying with Charles Widor in France, Kodály wrote numerous works for organ. His output also included choral and chamber works, orchestral pieces, incidental stage music and a Hungarian folk opera. Of particular note is his solo Cello Sonata from 1915—an early work written when Kodály was 28 years old—that is much-loved by cellists and brings to the fore some of Kodály's signature musical traits: imagination, creativity, sensitivity to idiomatic writing for instruments, and a fondness for incorporating Hungarian folk music sound worlds into the contemporary composition practice of his time.

Because of World War I and other social factors, Kodály, who was born in 1882, did not gain major public success until after his 40th birthday, a phase later in life than most major composers made their names known. In 1923 his *Psalmus Hungaricus* for solo tenor, chorus and orchestra was premiered under the baton of fellow Hungarian composer-conductor Ernst von Dohnányi in celebration of the 50th anniversary of the union of Buda, Pest, and Óbuda. After that triumph, Kodály's research, composition practice and theories of early music education coalesced into a fruitful career.

Sixteen years after that major premiere, Kodály received one of his most significant commissions, from the Chicago Symphony

Orchestra, in honor of its 50th anniversary. To properly display the talents of the orchestra while composing a work that is celebratory in nature, Kodály chose to use the medium of a concerto for orchestra and composed the work in 1939 and 1940. The first performance was given by its commissioning ensemble under Frederick Stock on February 6, 1941. Although the work was celebrated at its premiere, it is not widely performed, and this week's concerts mark its first performance by the Minnesota Orchestra—and the second time this season the ensemble has performed a work titled *Concerto for Orchestra*, following Ulysses Kay's last November.

an exciting contradiction

Typically a concerto features one soloist—though sometimes two or more—accompanied by an orchestra or other large ensemble. The soloist or soloists are highlighted through a mixture of virtuosic and lyrical passages that not only show off their ability but also the range of sounds and colors of their instrument. The dialogue between soloist and ensemble can be quite dense (as in Adolphus Hailstork's *Piano Concerto* or Anis Fuleihan's *Concerto for Theremin*), or it can also be rather individualistic (as in Francis Poulenc's *Concerto for Organ, Timpani and Strings* or my own *Piano Concerto: Solution* for piano and percussion quintet). However, in a concerto for orchestra, there are many moments for soloists within the orchestral context to shine and be in dialogue with other soloists or the orchestra on the whole. The orchestral writing also contains virtuosity, showing off what a virtuosic orchestral sound can be in the same vain as a traditional concerto for a soloist or a small chamber ensemble.

Kodály's exciting work does exactly this. The piece opens with a high-energy, vertical theme that is punctuated with percussive instrumental hits. *Moto perpetuo* (continuous motion) 16th-notes in the winds, brass and strings work in tandem with the stomping eighth-note gestures to create a sense of constant forward movement. Additionally, Kodály employs a significant amount of meter changes, which can shift the rhythmic groupings from 3 beats to 4 beats, and vice versa. The high-energy music sets up a lyrical lullaby that opens with a solo cello melody supported by a solo bass pedal tone. Throughout this gorgeous display of lyricism, many solo instruments are featured, some alone, some in counterpoint with other solo instruments. The energy ebbs and flows until the initial high energy music returns, followed by another moment of lyricism. The conclusion is energetic and celebratory, a perfect ending for a piece that was composed in celebration of an important milestone.

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

Program note by **Anthony R. Green**.



Alberto Ginastera

Born: April 11, 1916,
Buenos Aires, Argentina

Died: June 25, 1983,
Geneva, Switzerland

Concerto for Harp and Orchestra, Opus 25

Premiered: February 18, 1965

Argentina's best-known composer, who passed away 40 years ago this month, was born of an Italian mother and a father of Catalan descent. The latter accounted for Alberto Ginastera's preference for pronouncing his name with a soft "G," as in the Catalan language ("Jean-astera"), rather than with the standard hard "G."

Ginastera was heavily involved with promoting Argentine music and in developing the musical life of his country. His contributions in this area include setting up a league of composers that became the Argentine section of the International Society for Contemporary Music, participation in numerous international festivals of new music, and teaching at several prestigious schools in Buenos Aires, including his own alma mater, the National Conservatory. Ginastera's ballet scores *Panambí* (1937) and *Estancia* (1941) were early successes that remain among his most popular works.

A Guggenheim Fellowship to live and work in the U.S. during 1946-47 solidified Ginastera's close association with this country; henceforth, many of his major works received their premieres here, including two concertos for piano and one each for violin, harp and cello; the operas *Bomarzo* and *Beatriz Cenci*; and the orchestral score *Glosses sobre temas de Pau Casals*.

"a harder task"

The Harp Concerto was commissioned in 1956 by Edna Phillips—who had been principal harpist in the Philadelphia Orchestra from 1930 to 1946, and the first female member of that orchestra—and her husband Samuel R. Rosenbaum. They expected that the concerto would be ready for performance at the 1958 Inter-American Music Festival in Washington, D.C. Political events and other projects intervened: Ginastera was among those demanding civil liberties from an oppressive Argentine government that responded by withdrawing all his academic positions, and he was preoccupied with *Bomarzo*, an opera he was working on at the time.

Ginastera didn't finish the concerto until late 1964, by which time Phillips was no longer performing. The composer has written that "writing for the harp [is] a harder task than writing for piano, violin or clarinet. My creative work was therefore slow and painful, since I wished to produce, as I did with my Piano and Violin Concertos, a virtuoso concerto with all the virtuoso display, for the soloist and for the orchestra, that real concertos must have." Ginastera called it "the most difficult work I have ever written." The honor of the premiere went to a colleague of Phillips, Nicanor Zabaleta. Eugene Ormandy—the Minnesota Orchestra's music director from 1931 to 1936, when the ensemble was known as the Minneapolis Symphony—conducted the Philadelphia Orchestra on February 18, 1965.

Listeners familiar with Ginastera's concertos for piano and violin will find once again the composer's delight in use of imaginative orchestral colors, his fondness for sharp-edged dissonances and predilection for virtuosic writing. The orchestral resources are modest except in the percussion department, which requires nearly 30 different instruments handled by four players, all in addition to timpani. The multifarious ways in which Ginastera uses this assemblage contribute significantly to the fascination of the score and to its highly rhythmic nature. "When it came to sheer technique and resource, to sonorous imagination, to brilliant and irresistible effect, he had few peers," wrote the late distinguished musicologist and author Michael Steinberg for a performance of this concerto by the San Francisco Symphony.

the music: rhythmic and exhilarating

allegro giusto. The first movement is in sonata form, with two well-defined and contrasting subjects, the first presented by the soloist against a busy and highly rhythmic orchestral background in the opening bars, the second a more relaxed affair for the harp alone.

molto moderato. The slow movement opens and closes with a quiet fugato for the strings. In between are two contrasting episodes. In the first, the harp writing is primarily chordal and clearly defined; in the second, the harp indulges in a misty dialogue with celesta and glockenspiel.

cadenza: liberamente capriccioso-vivace. A long cadenza exploits idiomatic harp writing—sweeping glissandos, arpeggios, powerful block chords, whistling effects (*sons sifflés*), scale figurations and pearly bell-tones. This leads directly into the finale, an exhilarating movement in simple rondo form (ABACA, in which A is the returning theme, and B and C are contrasting sections) and infused with energetic dance impulses of Argentine origin. The highly rhythmic nature of this movement is underscored by the percussion section, which at times nearly competes with the harp as a collective soloist and greatly helps carry the concerto to an exhilarating conclusion.



Instrumentation: solo harp with orchestra comprising 2 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani, field drum, tenor drum, bass drum, antique cymbals, suspended cymbal, bongos, claves, high and low cowbells, guiro, maracas, slapstick, tambourine, tamtam, tom-toms, small triangle, wood block, xylophone, glockenspiel, celesta and strings

Program note by **Robert Markow**.

Zoltán Kodály *Dances of Galánta*

Premiered: October 23, 1933

The two composers and ethnomusicologists who brought to the classical concert hall a striking Hungarian national music—Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály—were born just a year apart, in 1881 and 1882. Both were determined to be true to their Magyar origins, creating music whose foundation was folksong, with entirely original melodies that imitate those folk songs' style. They started from the then-uncatalogued songs and dances of the peasants, which they tracked down by wandering from village to village, equipped with primitive recording equipment as well as a good ear for notating what they heard.

At times Kodály's research was frustrated because the peasants, too often tricked, had grown suspicious of city slickers. Recalling his journeys with Bartók across Transylvania, where they divided certain districts between them, he wrote: "It wasn't so bad as long as we went on foot, but when we needed a carriage to take all our equipment—the paraphernalia, including wax cylinders, finally provided by the government—they smelled a rat, suspecting some kind of 'business.'"

Getting the women to sing was not always easy, for in those days it was generally thought that women only sang in public if they'd had too much to drink. "The men, however, were ready enough to cooperate, once they had had a glass or two," Kodály reported.

richly ornamented tunes, remembered from boyhood

Kodály's first research took him back to the village of his boyhood, Galánta, on the main train line from Budapest to Vienna and Prague, where his father had been appointed stationmaster in 1885. He started by looking up his old schoolmates and persuading them to sing; he subsequently elicited songs from the family's former servants, notating what they performed. This is the town, with its joyous memories of a rustic boyhood, that he memorializes in his *Dances of Galánta*.

But the actual tunes in the work, familiar from that vague wash of childhood recollection, did not derive from his own collecting

but rather from some almost forgotten volumes compiled around 1800. Published in Vienna, this collection had preserved the old *verbunkos* tradition (from the German *Werbung*, "recruiting"). The *verbunkos* was a Hungarian dance associated with a ritual method of enlisting soldiers during the imperial wars of Haydn's time. Performed by a dozen or so hussars, led by their sergeant, the essence of the dance was the alternation of slow figures with quick ones; the tunes, mostly simple folksongs, were extravagantly elaborated by the accompanying Romani musicians. Thus a striking feature of the *verbunkos* to be heard in the *Dances of Galánta* is its rich ornamentation, coupled with crisply syncopated rhythms and wide leaps.

The *Dances of Galánta* date from Kodály's middle years, the most rewarding period for him as a composer. Recognizing Kodály's musical individuality, Toscanini conducted many of his works, including, in 1930, the *Dances of Marosszék*. Three years later, upon a commission for the 80th anniversary of the Budapest Philharmonic, Kodály composed the complementary *Dances of Galánta*, first performed on October 23, 1933. The work includes a chain of five connected dances, gradually accelerating in tempo, upon which Kodály imposed an original structure.

First there is a slow introduction, with a haunting Romani motive to set the mood. The various solo statements of this idea (cello, horn, flute/oboe and so forth) are separated by whirling figures out of which the clarinet comes to the fore; after a showy cadenza, it delivers the majestic strain of the first dance. This theme functions as the refrain for roughly the first half of the work—a rondo whose episodes generate new dances. The fourth dance, with its own subsection (a little march, somewhat slower), launches the second half, which culminates in a fiery, lavishly ornamented dance that Kodály paints in the most brilliant orchestral colors (*Allegro vivace*). Suddenly the motion is arrested, and a short coda recalls the stately rondo, but only momentarily, for the whirling, stomping dancing soon resumes to leave the listener with an unforgettable image of Eastern Europe as it was nearly a century ago.

Instrumentation: 2 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani, bells, snare drum, triangle and strings

Program note by **Mary Ann Feldman**.



Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Born: May 7, 1840,
Votkinsk, Russia

Died: November 6, 1893,
St. Petersburg, Russia

***Capriccio italien*, Opus 45**

Premiered: December 18, 1880

It's hard to believe that this blazing, colorful music could have been written when its creator was locked in the throes of a long and disabling depression.

Tchaikovsky had made an ill-advised marriage in 1877 that lasted three weeks. In the shattered aftermath he withdrew not only from society but from his professional commitments. He resigned from the Moscow Conservatory and lived for extended periods in Switzerland, France and Italy, returning occasionally to Russia but then staying at summer estates, far from his old circle of friends and colleagues. It is not surprising that his creativity should suffer under these conditions: the quality of his work fell off, he had to force himself to write music, and true inspiration came only intermittently during these difficult years.

Rome's sights, smells and folk songs

Tchaikovsky spent the winter of 1880 in Rome, and like millions of other visitors over the last several thousand years, he fell in love with the city. It was carnival season, and life blazed around him in the streets. Crowds, dancers, fireworks, music, the smell of food: all these were part of his impressions of the Eternal City—and suddenly Tchaikovsky felt like writing music.

He turned the tunes he heard around him to good use musically, and on January 16, soon after his arrival, he began writing *Capriccio italien*. To his patroness Nadezhda von Meck back in Russia, he explained his method: "I am working on a sketch of an 'Italian Fantasia' based on folk songs. Thanks to the charming themes, some of which I have heard in the streets, the work will be effective." The actual composition took some time, and Tchaikovsky did not complete *Capriccio italien* until May, after he had returned to Russia.

The title "capriccio" has no formal musical meaning. It is more a suggestion of atmosphere, indicating something unexpected (the "caprice") or, more often, something spicy and animated. It is in the latter sense that Tchaikovsky intends the title. Formal

structures were never his strong point as a composer, and he makes his "Italian Caprice" out of a series of sections in different meters and keys. The resulting structure is episodic, but few have complained—the music is too much fun.

Capriccio italien opens with a striking military bugle call. Tchaikovsky's lodgings in Rome were at the Hotel Constanzi, next to the barracks of the Royal Italian Cuirassiers, and he woke to this summons every morning. A series of episodes based on Italian tunes follows. These are sharply varied—some are lyric and melodic, while others are more animated. Throughout, the composer's keen orchestral sense is always in evidence: this music is brilliantly orchestrated, and *Capriccio italien* is a delight for listeners and performers alike. Tchaikovsky rounds matters off with a tarantella, a blazing Italian dance in 6/8, and the *Capriccio italien* drives to a sizzling close.

Instrumentation: 3 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 cornets, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, tambourine, glockenspiel, harp and strings

Program note by **Eric Bromberger**.