

## Minnesota Orchestra

Lee Mills, conductor  
Jon Kimura Parker, piano

Friday, July 14, 2023, 8 pm | Orchestra Hall

Clarice Assad	<i>Brazilian Fanfare</i>	ca. 8'
Felix Mendelssohn	Concerto No. 1 in G minor for Piano and Orchestra, Opus 25 Molto allegro con fuoco Andante Presto – Molto allegro e vivace <i>Jon Kimura Parker, piano</i>	ca. 20'
	I N T E R M I S S I O N	ca. 20'
Rodrigo Cicchelli	<i>Esboço de Psyché</i> (Sketch of a Butterfly)	ca. 12'
Ludwig van Beethoven	Symphony No. 8 in F major, Opus 93 Allegro vivace e con brio Allegretto scherzando Tempo di menuetto Allegro vivace	ca. 26'

Lee Mills' profile appears on page 46; Jon Kimura Parker's on page 10.

pre- and  
post-concert

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### Clarice Assad

**Born:** February 9, 1978,  
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

### *Brazilian Fanfare*

**Premiered:** March 26, 2006

A good fanfare is designed to snap the listener to attention, conveying a sense of joy, excitement and festivity. Brazilian-American composer Clarice Assad's *Brazilian Fanfare* certainly does that and more, delivering a brass-forward, high-octane wash of sound that is certain to electrify the listener.

Born in Rio de Janeiro in 1978 and now based in Chicago, Assad is one of the most widely performed Brazilian-born concert music composers of her generation. She holds a bachelor of music degree from Chicago's Roosevelt University and a master of music degree from the University of Michigan School of Music, where she studied with Michael Daugherty, Susan Botti and Evan Chambers. She has more than 70 works to her credit, and institutions that have commissioned her include Carnegie Hall, the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Orquestra Sinfônica de São Paulo and the Chicago Sinfonietta. Her work *Danças Nativas*, commissioned by Aquarelle Guitar Quartet, was nominated for a Latin Grammy for Best Contemporary Composition in 2009.

Assad's recent and upcoming projects have involved some of America's most prominent orchestras, including the Los Angeles Philharmonic, which commissioned her overture *Boitatá* and premiered it this past April. She is currently at work on a bassoon concerto commissioned by the Philadelphia Orchestra for Daniel Matsukawa, among other projects. Minnesota audiences are also becoming familiar with her works via her residency with the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra through which she is exploring a timely topic—advances in artificial intelligence—and writing a work titled *AI*, scored for electronics and chamber orchestra.

### a musical celebration of heritage

Composed in 2005, *Brazilian Fanfare* is a natural outgrowth of Assad's upbringing and heritage. In describing the work, she explained that she set out to write a piece that would celebrate the rich musical history of her home country by introducing the listener to many different styles and genres of Brazilian music.

"Composing a Brazilian orchestral work has been a very exciting experience for me," Assad commented. "I was thrilled with the immense arsenal of possibilities. Still, I was also a bit skeptical because I knew that it would be virtually impossible to incorporate all aspects of Brazilian music into one single piece. Brazil is a very young country with a very young history, but it is also the largest country in South America. Consequently, each little region has a great variety of cultures and sub-cultures. It would be challenging to describe the many different styles and genres that make up the music of Brazil."

Assad tackled the challenge head-on, crafting a work that emphasizes the country's breadth of musical styles rather than the most familiar ones. "I wanted *Brazilian Fanfare* to comprise as many of these [Brazilian] elements as possible, portraying a portion of every region as a caricature, while focusing on the joyful, light, humorous and warm aspects of this country, because this is how most people relate to Brazil," she noted. "I also wanted this work to be easily recognizable as 'Brazilian' without having to write a 'bossa nova' section in the middle!"

To that end, she drew heavily on five familiar Brazilian rhythms in their rawest form, which come from different origins within Brazil. Among them are the African-influenced *Olodum* from Bahia, the *Samba* from Rio de Janeiro, the rapid-fire *Chorinho* from São Paulo, and the syncopated, duple-meter *Baião* from Pernambuco in the northeast. She notes, however, that the work is not based solely on Brazil's rhythms and regions of today. It also engages in what the composer calls "time travel," referencing a cornucopia of Brazilian musical styles from the 17th century to more recent developments. The result is a boisterous, exuberant work roaring with life.

The one-movement piece brings to mind a kaleidoscope: it is predominantly built around short, constantly shifting motifs rather than extended melodies. After a sparkling introduction, the brass and percussion come bounding in, as befits a traditional fanfare. The woodwinds dance their way in, too, chattering away with pure delight. Assad balances these extroverted sections with sweeping interludes for the strings and sets up a pattern where highly rhythmic sections trade places with more lyrical ones. Overall, the orchestration is joyful, light and humorous. The work builds in intensity as it reaches its conclusion, ending in a burst of sound.

The world premiere of *Brazilian Fanfare* took place on March 26, 2006, in Chattanooga, Tennessee, performed by the work's commissioning ensemble, the Chattanooga Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of Robert Bernhardt.

**Instrumentation:** flute, piccolo, 2 oboes, clarinet, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani,



snare drum, bass drum, sizzle cymbal, suspended cymbal, cabasa, congas, guiro, maracas, samba whistle, tambourine, timbales, tom-toms, triangle, wood blocks, chimes and strings

Program note by *Scott Chamberlain*.



**Felix Mendelssohn**  
**Born:** February 3, 1809,  
 Hamburg, Germany  
**Died:** November 4, 1847,  
 Leipzig, Germany

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**Concerto No. 1 in G minor  
 for Piano and Orchestra,  
 Opus 25**  
**Premiered:** October 17, 1831

**f**elix Mendelssohn was the cherished crown prince in his prosperous and seemingly happy family. It was the blessed lot of such well-to-do young men to be sent on an educational grand tour. Mendelssohn's lasted a year and took him via Munich and Vienna to Italy, Switzerland, Munich for a second time, Paris, London and home to Berlin.

### attending to the ladies—and the concerto

Munich in October 1831 brought a round of parties for the young Mendelssohn, but he also found time to play chamber music, give a daily lesson in double counterpoint to a woman he referred to in letters as “little Mademoiselle L.,” and complete the piano concerto he had sketched earlier on his journey, in Rome. Competing with Mlle. L. for Mendelssohn's attentions was a talented 17-year-old pianist by the name of Delphine von Schauroth. She was well-connected: King Ludwig I himself spoke to Mendelssohn on her behalf, rather to the composer's annoyance. But Mendelssohn liked Delphine, and she received the dedication of the concerto, which became one of her party pieces in her later career.

Mendelssohn, however, played the premiere himself on October 17, at a concert devoted entirely to his own music. Also included were his Symphony No. 1, the astounding Overture he had written at 17 for Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and some keyboard improvisations.

### the music: a tempestuous beginning

The audience at the Munich Odeon, which included the King, must have been astonished by the way the concerto begins—not just by the tempestuous orchestral crescendo but even more by the

entrance of the piano after only seven preparatory bars. In five concertos he had written in his teens, Mendelssohn had provided the full orchestral exposition listeners expected. In the Piano Concerto No. 1, the drastic short-circuiting of formal conventions consorts well with the urgent gestures of this music—*Sturm und Drang* (the heightened “storm and stress” emotions explored in some pre-Romantic German art) revisited.

**molto allegro con fuoco.** The piano enters not just soon and impetuously, but with an imposing display of brawn. Alone, it also begins a lyric second theme, to which the violins add just a touch of delicate commentary. This episode, a brief moment of relaxation, begins in B-flat major, which, as the relative major of the home key, G minor, is normal—although at the same time, Mendelssohn is careful not to stabilize B-flat too much, keeping his melody poised over a dominant pedal. Moreover, he almost immediately repeats its opening phrase in B-flat *minor*, then uses that change as a hinge to go into D-flat major, and by now he has moved very far away from home. Thunderous octave scales begin the development, which is full of pianistic and harmonic adventure.

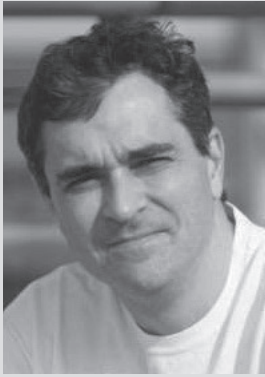
**andante.** After an elegantly tactful introduction by the piano, cellos and violas sing the touching, lightly sentimental song-without-words of the *Andante*. In the middle comes a lovely opportunity for the pianist to show off their skill in filigree, while violas and cellos—each section divided in two to make a gloriously rich crème caramel of a sound—continue the melodic flow. Finally, with violins adding their shimmer to the orchestral palette, the piano reclaims the melody.

**presto-molto allegro e vivace.** Another fanfare rouses us from these dreams, and, with a more expansive imitation of the concerto's opening—a suspenseful crescendo in the orchestra and a bravura entrance for the soloist—Mendelssohn launches his headlong and glittering finale with its sparkling and dancing themes and decorative counter-themes. For a moment, he relaxes tempo and mood to bring the briefest of recollections of the first movement's lyric theme; then, the pianist having been given this chance to catch his or her breath, he launches his sure-to-bring-the-house-down coda.

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

Excerpted from *Michael Steinberg's* *The Concerto: A Listener's Guide* (Oxford University Press, 1998), used with permission.

*The Creative Partner for Summer at Orchestra Hall position is supported by Marilyn and Glen Nelson.*



### Rodrigo Cicchelli

**Born:** July 9, 1966,  
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

### *Esboço de Psyché* (Sketch of a Butterfly)

**Premiered:** August 21, 2015

Brazilian composer Rodrigo Cicchelli Velloso's *Esboço de Psyché* (Sketch of a Butterfly) is a fascinating fusion of past and present—the rethinking of a Classical myth, told with a distinctly modern sensibility.

Cicchelli was born in Rio de Janeiro in 1966. After first studying music composition at the Villa-Lobos Institute of Unirio, he earned a doctorate in music composition from the University of East Anglia in England. He subsequently completed degrees in flute performance and earned a postdoctoral fellowship in 2015, researching Brazilian repertoire for flute and electroacoustic resources. He has composed a variety of symphonic, choral and chamber works, which have been performed by ensembles including Orquestra Sinfônica Brasileira, Orquestra Sinfônica da UFRJ, Sinfonietta Carioca, Coral Brasil Ensemble and Quarteto Françaix. Active as a researcher as well as a composer, Cicchelli has presented at several conferences and is published in a variety of sources. He is currently on the composition faculty of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro.

#### an ancient tale for a modern world

*Esboço de Psyché* takes its inspiration from the ancient love story of Cupid and the princess Psyche, which was made famous by the Roman author Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*. It is richly allegorical, with Cupid as the personification of Love, while Psyche (whose name means "Divine Breath") is the personification of the Soul. Only through a series of tests and trials are the two able to come together and find happiness. The myth touches on themes of forbidden knowledge, self-discovery and the enduring power of love, and has been a favorite of poets, mystics and psychologists for millennia. Among the composers who have set the story to music are Jean-Baptiste Lully, César Franck and Claude Debussy.

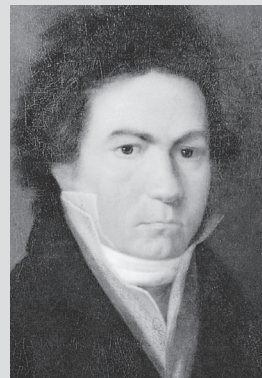
For *Esboço de Psyché*, Cicchelli takes a different approach. Rather than retelling the story through music, he uses the myth as a starting point, creating an atmospheric tone poem depicting Psyche as the "breath of the soul" reaching for love. He notes that

ancient Greek artists emphasized Psyche's connection to the soul by depicting her with butterfly wings, as if she were a butterfly goddess. Cicchelli incorporates this idea in his work, ensuring that the music has a butterfly-like delicacy. The work is centered around the sounds of the flute, partnered with piccolo and alto flute, which suggest the gentle flight of a butterfly as it unfurls its wings and rapturously dances above the rest of the ensemble. Against this, the orchestra plays delicate brushes of sound, creating an otherworldly soundscape that supports the gossamer flights of the flutes above. Toward the end, a more lyrical section emerges in the strings, which becomes ominous with a swell of percussion. But the turbulence subsides, and the work closes with one last flutter of the flute's butterfly wings.

The work premiered on August 21, 2015 with the conductor of tonight's concert, Lee Mills, leading the Brazilian Symphony Orchestra at the Sala Cecília Meireles theater in Rio de Janeiro.

**Instrumentation:** flute, piccolo, alto flute, oboe, English horn, bassoon, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, trombone, bass trombone, tuba, timpani, 3 suspended cymbals, tamtam, triangle, glockenspiel, vibraphone, chimes, harp, celesta and strings

Program note by **Scott Chamberlain**.



### Ludwig van Beethoven

**Born:** December 15, 1770,  
Bonn, Germany

**Died:** March 26, 1827,  
Vienna, Austria

### Symphony No. 8 in F major, Opus 93

**Premiered:** February 27, 1814

The Eighth Symphony has always seemed out of place in the progression of Ludwig van Beethoven's symphonies. It comes after the dramatic Fifth, expansive Sixth and powerful Seventh, and it precedes the grand Ninth. Within this sequence, the Eighth seems all wrong: it is brief, relaxed, and—in form and its use of a small orchestra—apparently a conscious throwback to the manner of Haydn and Mozart.

#### more than an homage

Beethoven had in mind more than an homage to his forebears, though, as the late musicologist Michael Steinberg notes: "If we think of the Eighth as a nostalgic return to the good old days, we misunderstand it. What interests Beethoven is not so much



brevity for its own sake as concentration. It is as though he were picking up where he had left off in the densely saturated first movement of the Fifth Symphony to produce another tour de force of tight packing.”

And perhaps the symphony fits a pattern after all, in approach if not content. Beethoven composed his Fifth and Sixth Symphonies together between 1807 and 1808, intentionally crafting two very different types of symphonies, and he took a similar path with his contrasting Seventh and Eighth, writing them essentially side-by-side in 1811 and 1812. In any case, the Eighth is one of those rare things: a genuinely funny piece of music, full of high spirits, what (at first) seem wrong notes, unusual instrumental sounds and sly jokes.

### the music: energetic and clever

**allegro vivace.** The symphony explodes to life with a six-note figure stamped out by the whole orchestra; this figure will give rhythmic impulse to the opening movement and function as its central melodic idea. This music seems always to be pressing forward, sometimes spilling over itself with scarcely restrained power, sometimes erupting violently.

**allegretto scherzando.** The second movement brings some of the symphony’s most clever moments. Beethoven’s friend Johann Nepomuk Maelzel had invented a metronome, and the woodwinds’ steady *tick-tick-tick* at the beginning is Beethoven’s rendering of the metronome’s sound. Over this mechanical ticking, the violins dance happily until the music suddenly explodes in short bursts of rapidly played notes.

**tempo di menuetto.** In the third movement Beethoven delights in unexpected twists. The trio section of this movement brings a moment of unexpected beauty as a mysterious, romantic horn solo takes the lead in the middle of the standard, stately form.

**allegro vivace.** The blistering finale is full of humor. Racing violins present the main idea, and this opening section zips to what should be a moment of repose on the strings’ unison C, but Beethoven slams that C aside with a crashing C-sharp, and the symphony heads off in the “wrong” key. The jokes come so quickly in this movement that many of them pass unnoticed: the “wrong” notes, the “oom-pah” transitions scored for just timpani and bassoon, and so forth. The ending brings the best joke of all, for the coda refuses to quit. Finally—finally!—Beethoven wrenches this most good-natured and energetic music to a resounding close.

Instrumentation: 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons,  
2 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani and strings

Program note by **Eric Bromberger**.

coda

Tonight’s performance of **Clarice Assad’s *Brazilian Fanfare*** marks the first time the Minnesota Orchestra has performed any of Assad’s compositions. She has, however, developed musical ties on the other side of the Twin Cities. The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra has named her as one of its initial composers to participate in its new Sandbox Composer Residency program, has previously performed several of her compositions, and in January 2024 will give the premiere of a new commissioned orchestral work by Assad.

The Minnesota Orchestra, then known as the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra, first performed **Felix Mendelssohn’s *Piano Concerto No. 1*** on January 18, 1935, at Northrop Memorial Auditorium, with Ruth Slenczynska as soloist and Eugene Ormandy conducting. Slenczynska, a piano prodigy who was only 10 years old at the time of that performance, is still living and last year, at age 97, released a new album revisiting pieces she has been playing for more than nine decades. She gave additional performances with the Orchestra in 1934, 1939 and 1960.

This performance of **Rodrigo Cicchelli’s *Esboço de Psyché (Sketch of a Butterfly)*** is also the Minnesota Orchestra’s first rendition of Cicchelli’s music. Tonight’s conductor, Lee Mills, led the world premiere of the work on August 21, 2015, with the Brazilian Symphony Orchestra. Mills has had one prior engagement with the Minnesota Orchestra: in February 2022 he stepped in for Sarah Hicks on short notice to lead the Orchestra in two performances of “Rick Steves’ Europe” hosted by Steves, a travel writer and television personality.

The Orchestra introduced **Ludwig van Beethoven’s *Eighth Symphony*** to its repertoire on February 19, 1911, at the Minneapolis Auditorium, under the baton of founding Music Director Emil Oberhoffer. That performance came three weeks before the Orchestra performed its first-ever concert in Chicago—the largest city where the eight-year-old Orchestra had yet performed.

