

MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA

Thomas Wilkins, conductor

Valeriy Sokolov, violin

Friday, October 20, 2023, 8PM

Saturday, October 21, 2023, 7PM

Orchestra Hall

Roy Harris

Symphony No. 3
[In one movement]

CA. 17'

Samuel Barber

Concerto for Violin and Orchestra, Opus 14
Allegro
Andante
Presto in moto perpetuo
Valeriy Sokolov, violin

CA. 25'

I N T E R M I S S I O N

CA. 20'

Gabriela Ortiz

Kauyumari

CA. 7'

Howard Hanson

Symphony No. 2, Opus 30, *Romantic*
Adagio – Allegro moderato
Andante con tenerezza
Allegro con brio

CA. 28'

THANK YOU

The 2023–24 Classical Season is presented by Ameriprise Financial.

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.



THOMAS WILKINS,
CONDUCTOR

Thomas Wilkins is principal conductor of the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra, the Boston Symphony's artistic advisor for education and community engagement, and principal guest conductor of the Virginia Symphony. In addition, he holds Indiana University's Henry A. Upper Chair of Orchestral Conducting. In 2021 he completed a long and successful tenure as music director of the Omaha Symphony Orchestra. Devoted to promoting a lifelong enthusiasm for music, he brings energy and commitment to audiences of all ages, and he is hailed as a master at communicating and connecting with audiences. He has guest conducted orchestras throughout the U.S. and debuted with the Minnesota Orchestra in May 2022, leading a program that included Joel Thompson's *Seven Last Words of the Unarmed*. His many awards include the League of American Orchestras' Gold Baton Award and the Lifetime Achievement Award for Music from the Omaha Entertainment and Arts Awards. Boston's Longy School of Music awarded him the Leonard Bernstein Lifetime Achievement Award for the Elevation of Music in Society, and Boston Conservatory conferred on him an honorary Doctorate of the Arts. More: kaylormanagement.com.



VALERIY SOKOLOV, VIOLIN

Ukrainian violinist Valeriy Sokolov, one of the most outstanding artists of his generation, works regularly with the world's leading orchestras, from the Philharmonia Orchestra and Cleveland Orchestra to the Tokyo Symphony, Seoul Philharmonic and Shanghai Symphony. He has appeared in many major European festivals including the Verbier, Lockenhaus and Lucerne festivals, and regularly performs in major concert halls around the world. As a chamber musician he has collaborated regularly with Gary Hoffman, Gerard Causse, Lisa Batiashvili, Francois Leleux, Nelson Goerner and others. This month Sokolov is making his U.S. debut performing Barber's Violin Concerto with both the Houston Symphony and the Minnesota Orchestra. In Europe this season he performs with the Orchestre National des Pays de la Loire, Orchestre Philharmonique de Monte-Carlo, NDR Radiophilharmonie Hannover, Borusan Istanbul Philharmonic Orchestra and Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, among other ensembles. He has developed a varied catalog of recordings with Erato Records, including violin concertos of Bartók and Tchaikovsky. He is also featured on a DVD of the Sibelius Violin Concerto and in Bruno Monsiegeon's film *Natural Born Fiddler*. He is a 2005 winner of the George Enescu International Violin Competition in Bucharest. More: askonasholt.com.

ONE-MINUTE NOTES

Harris: Symphony No. 3

Roy Harris' Third Symphony embodies the composer's aims to capture the American spirit. Cast in one movement that opens and closes with a tragic mood, the symphony mixes traditional classical elements such as a fugue with forays into a more modern harmonic language.

Barber: Violin Concerto

In Samuel Barber's concerto, the solo violin sings passionate, lyrical lines in the opening pair of movements, then delivers a whirlwind of triplet rhythms in the fast-paced finale.

Ortiz: *Kauyumari*

Gabriela Ortiz's *Kauyumari*, named for a mystical animal guide in the Huichol culture indigenous to Mexico, celebrates the Huichol people's sacred traditions, evoking spiritual growth and earth stewardship through vibrant, rhythmic music.

Hanson: Symphony No. 2, *Romantic*

Horns are the central force in Howard Hanson's Second, which the composer called "young in spirit" and "warm-blooded." A slow, haunting opening leads to an *Allegro moderato* full of urgent, lyric melodies. The gorgeous slow movement evokes church music, while the finale builds to a blaze of jubilant fanfares.



ROY HARRIS

B: February 12, 1898
Lincoln County, Oklahoma
D: October 1, 1979
Santa Monica, California

Symphony No. 3

PREMIERED: February 24, 1939

The late Roy Harris, born 125 years ago, felt a strong obligation to articulate and convey in his music the “American spirit.” This aim was shared by several other composers of his generation such as Aaron Copland, two years his junior, and it continues to drive many musical creators of our own day. The American qualities Harris perceived—energy, strength and heroic determination—are reflected in his music, and his works have an authentic, unselfconscious ring, with a dignity and independence of idiom. Unfortunately, although Harris enjoyed stunning success early in his career, his scores have not had staying power. Nearly all but the Symphony No. 3 have gone into eclipse.

A COMPOSER ON THE MOVE

The Oklahoma native’s prolific output as a symphonist was sparked when conductor Serge Koussevitzky called for a “great American symphony from the American West.” Harris responded with his Symphony No. 1 (1933), the first of 15 symphonies in all. His Third and Fifth Symphonies (1935 and 1942) were also written for Koussevitzky, the eminent leader of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. In a local twist, Harris’ overture *Johnny Comes Marching Home* was premiered in 1935 by the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra, three decades before the ensemble was renamed the Minnesota Orchestra.

The Depression years may have been lean, but Harris thrived on an abundance of commissions, performances and awards. He was determined to prove that a serious classical composer could earn a living through his work. To that end, he broke ground for the composer-in-residency concept, spending time at educational institutions from Juilliard and the Westminster Choir School at Princeton in the mid-’30s to California colleges in the ’70s. He would often stay at each for only a year or two as a means of preserving independence.

THE AMERICAN QUALITY

The hallmarks of Harris’ American style are demonstrated by the Third Symphony, whose power, sweep and vitality bring to mind the buoyant poetry of Walt Whitman and

Carl Sandburg. Aaron Copland once remarked of Harris’ music, “I feel its American quality quite strongly, quite aside from any pioneer trappings.” The designs have classical antecedents, and to be sure, the composer once defined himself as “a modern classicist.”

The theme that opens the Third Symphony, marked *Con moto*, unfolds with a fluid grace that by its very nature is conducive to counterpoint. Typical of Harris, the evolving strain seems to have a destination. His idiom is instrumental, but Harris was known to sing the tunes he wrote. The framework is broadly diatonic—the harmonic system of nearly all classical music written before the 20th century—which the composer regarded as indispensable to the architecture of sound; but he also created polytonal textures, somewhat in the manner of Milhaud and Stravinsky. His impulsive rhythms, he explained, “come to us first as musical phraseology; then we struggle to define them on paper.” Even at their most complex, they have the authentic grit of American soil. The orchestration is bright and sturdy, and the tone heroic, as the music gathers momentum and intensity.

When the Symphony No. 3 was first performed by the Boston Symphony Orchestra on February 24, 1939, the reviewer from the Harvard *Crimson* was none less than the 20-year-old Leonard Bernstein, who hailed it as “mature in every sense, beautifully proportioned, eloquent, restrained and affecting.” For the premiere, Harris himself reduced the compelling contents of the interlocked sections to an outlined, thus providing a kind of roadmap.

Section I. Tragic—low string sonorities.

Section II. Lyric—Strings, horn, woodwinds.

Section III. Pastoral—emphasizing woodwind color.

Section IV. Fugue—dramatic.

A) Brass-percussion predominating.

B) Canonic development of Section II material constituting background for further development of Fugue.

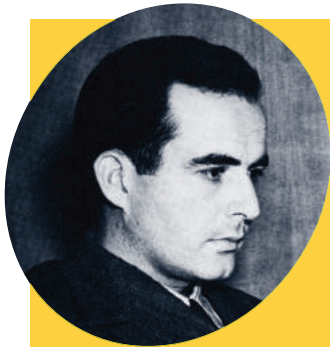
Section V. Dramatic—tragic.

A) Restatement of violin theme of Section I: tutti strings in canon with tutti woodwinds against brass and percussion developing rhythmic motif from climax of Section IV.

B) Coda—development of materials from Sections I and II over pedal timpani.

Instrumentation: 3 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, 2 tubas, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, xylophone, vibraphone and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY MARY ANN FELDMAN.



SAMUEL BARBER

B: March 9, 1910
West Chester, Pennsylvania

D: January 23, 1981
New York City

Concerto for Violin and Orchestra, Opus 20

PREMIERED: February 7, 1941

In the golden days of the Renaissance and early Baroque age, most male composers began their musical lives as boy sopranos trained in church choirs. Ultimately, instrumental virtuosity superseded the human voice. By contrast, the 20th century's Samuel Barber, a supreme American lyricist, was among the few composers of his time who studied singing. Gifted with a mellow baritone voice, he pursued a triple major in composition, piano and voice as a member of the charter class of Philadelphia's Curtis Institute of Music.

Barber's lyrical style also characterizes his instrumental concertos: the Violin Concerto premiered under Eugene Ormandy in Philadelphia in 1941, the Cello Concerto introduced by Raya Garbousova under Serge Koussevitzky in Boston in 1946, and the Piano Concerto which John Browning premiered at Lincoln Center in 1962 and repeated here at Orchestra Hall in the 1980s.

LIKE A HUMAN VOICE

Of all orchestral instruments, the violin may be the closet analogue to a human voice in its capacity for both warmth and intimacy—and this is how Barber employs it, maximizing those qualities. However, the patron who commissioned the Violin Concerto had initially sought a different effect.

Samuel Fels, a wealthy businessman in Barber's hometown of Philadelphia, proposed a vehicle for his adopted son, Iso Briselli, a violin prodigy. The young composer developed the first two movements of this Opus 14 while residing in the idyllic Swiss village of Sils Maria, but like other expatriate Americans, fled Europe after the Nazis invaded Poland. Back in Philadelphia, Barber presented the opening movements to Fels—but they did not please.

Fels had anticipated flashy music of the kind that triggers cheering, and this thoughtful discourse between soloist and orchestra was too lyrical for him. Barber responded by dashing off a showpiece finale demanding consummate skills—but this was judged too difficult! Soon, however, a promising Curtis student named Herman Baumel delivered a polished reading of the finale. Baumel also gave a private performance of the concerto with the Curtis Orchestra

under Fritz Reiner and played it with the Philadelphia Orchestra in rehearsal before the official premiere.

Fels was unable to reclaim money already dispensed to Barber, who had spent it in Europe. So the businessman compromised by paying half the fee and surrendering the rights of first performance to the composer. The esteemed American violinist Albert Spaulding delivered the concerto's premiere on February 7, 1941.

THE CONCERTO IN BRIEF

The traditionalist side of Barber as well as his progressive impulses—irregular rhythms and sometimes edgy dissonances—are shown to advantage in this moving work, which has commanded a solid niche in the repertory for more than three quarters of a century.

ALLEGRO. The music is not hard to follow. There are no contests here, only a harmony of dialogue between partners, the big orchestra and the little violin, cast as a wordless troubadour of intense personal emotion. The opening movement includes moments of dark agitation and high intensity, not unlike profound conversation. The passion is shared in the development and a full reprise incorporating a brief cadenza.

ANDANTE. Initially, the solo violin is silent, as an oboe delivers the slow movement's introductory song. Cellos take up the singing, which spreads across the orchestra before—heralded by a horn solo—the soloist speaks out with a fresh idea, initially tranquil, but soon growing passionate.

PRESTO IN MOTO PERPETUO. In abrupt contrast, drumming launches the spiky finale, a swift perpetual motion conclusion which sustains triplet rhythms almost throughout, especially in the rapid, virtuosic bowing of the soloist, driving headlong to the close. Energy is the essence of this bracing movement.

Instrumentation: solo violin with orchestra comprising 2 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani, snare drum, piano and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY MARY ANN FELDMAN.



GABRIELA ORTIZ

B: December 20, 1964
Mexico City, Mexico

Kauyumari

PREMIERED: October 9, 2021

In 2021 Mexican composer Gabriela Ortiz was commissioned by Gustavo Dudamel and the Los Angeles Philharmonic to compose a work commemorating the ensemble's return to live performances after the most severe waves of the COVID-19 pandemic, during which stages around the world fell silent for many months. It was through this request that Ortiz's *Kauyumari*, the title of which means "blue deer" in the language of Mexico's indigenous Wixárika people, came to life in the form of an effusive and invigorating brief orchestral work. "Although life is filled with interruptions," noted Ortiz, "*Kauyumari* is a comprehension and celebration of the fact that each of these rifts is also a new beginning."

THE SYMBOL

The Wixárika people, more commonly known as Huichol, are an indigenous Mexican group that today inhabits several western states of both Mexico and the United States. Deeply rooted in their time-honored religious practices, the Huichol are recognized around the world for their elaborate artwork which reveres spiritual icons and features brightly colored patterns and symbols to honor the group's ancient history. Huichol culture is also centered around a powerful connection to nature and the sun. Through these ideals, the legend of *Kauyumari* has long served as one of the most significant parts of Huichol culture, featuring a creature guiding its followers to be lifelong protectors of the earth.

THE MUSIC

In the opening pages of her score for *Kauyumari*, Ortiz shares her own description of this sacred tradition:

"Among the Huichol people of Mexico, *Kauyumari* means 'blue deer.' The blue deer represents a spiritual guide, one that is transformed through an extended pilgrimage into a hallucinogenic cactus called peyote. It allows the Huichol to communicate with their ancestors, do their bidding, and take on their role as guardians of the planet. Each year, these Native Mexicans embark on a symbolic journey to 'hunt' the blue deer, making offerings in gratitude for having been granted access to the invisible world, through which they also are able to heal the wounds of the soul."

Bass drum and double bass set the tone as *Kauyumari* begins, a solo maraca providing the first, and critically important, indication of a rhythmic underpinning. Two offstage trumpets converse with one another and are soon joined by their onstage peers. Woodwind whispers add shimmer to the steadily developing texture as additional instruments from the lowest registers also layer in, enriching the music's foundation and groundedness. The colors continue to brighten as woodwinds chirp a lighthearted, syncopated melody. This is celebratory music at its finest, perpetually moving, growing and spreading contagious positive energy to anyone within its auditory reach. It is as though what began as just a small gathering gradually drew in others one by one, until an entire community could revel in a unified, vibrant, high-energy fiesta.

ABOUT THE COMPOSER

This week's concerts mark the first-ever Minnesota Orchestra performances of Gabriela Ortiz's music. One of the leading composers in Mexico, Ortiz's extensive catalog of works includes operas, chamber music, film scores, and collaborations with artists and educators of all kinds, with many of her projects closely connected to issues such as gender equality, social and racial justice, and global environmentalism. Born into a musical family—her parents were members of the folk music ensemble Los Folkloristas—Ortiz is the recipient of the National Prize for Arts and Literature in Mexico, among many other recognitions worldwide. She is also a faculty member at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México in Mexico City and Indiana University in the United States.

Instrumentation: 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 4 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, suspended cymbal, bongos, claves, metal guiro, jawbone, log drum, seed pod rattle, shaker, sistrum, tambourine, tamtam, xylophone, glockenspiel, harp and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY EMMA PLEHAL.



HOWARD HANSON

B: October 28, 1896
Wahoo, Nebraska

D: February 26, 1981
Rochester, New York

Symphony No. 2, Opus 30, *Romantic*

PREMIERED: November 28, 1930

Wahoo, Nebraska, may seem to be an unlikely birthplace for a composer, conductor, teacher and champion of American music. But Howard Hanson recalled that there was more good music in one square foot of his hometown of Wahoo than in many a big Eastern city.

A MAN OF DEEP CONVICTIONS

Hanson was the son of Swedish immigrants, fervent Lutherans (the chorale tunes would influence his music), and he grew up to be a hard-working, straight-talking man of deep convictions. He was known for his fairness and unflinching generosity to students during his 40-year tenure as director of the Eastman School of Music.

Hanson was always a teacher. Joining the faculty of the College of the Pacific in California at 20, he was promoted to dean of its Conservatory just three years later. Next he won the Prix de Rome and became the first American prizewinner to study in that city, where Ottorino Respighi, his teacher at the Academy of Santa Cecilia, wielded considerable impact on his developing skills of orchestration. He later said that the greatest influence of all was Sibelius—yet his music was typically American in spirit. And he was determined that American composers would have their due. Even if a work did not appeal to him personally, he would guarantee its performance if he thought it had merit.

Hanson won many honors, including the 1943 Pulitzer Prize for his Symphony No. 4. An enthusiastic yet practical visionary, he managed to be a productive composer as well as a teacher and organizer of festivals of American composers' works. His Symphony No. 2 was spurred by another crusader for new music, Serge Koussevitzky, who commissioned it for his Boston Symphony Orchestra, which introduced the work in Boston on November 28, 1930. Known as the *Romantic*, the new symphony was a bold gesture for its times—the heyday of neo-classical Stravinsky and atonal Schoenberg—and prophetic of the so-called “new neo-Romanticism” that blossomed in the mid-'70s.

“A MANIFESTATION OF THE EMOTIONS”

At the time of the premiere, Hanson offered this much-quoted remark on his new symphony: “The symphony

represents for me my escape from the rather bitter type of modern musical realism which occupies so large a place in contemporary musical thought. Much contemporary music seems to me to be showing a tendency to become entirely too cerebral. I do not believe that music is primarily a matter of the intellect, but rather a manifestation of the emotions. I have, therefore, aimed in this symphony to create a work that was young in spirit, lyrical and Romantic in temperament, and simple and direct in expression.”

ADAGIO–ALLEGRO MODERATO. A haunting three-note motif, dark and heavy in atmosphere, rises out of the opening bars, scored for woodwinds. But it is left to the quartet of horns to announce the principal theme. It emerges as the chief theme of the work, recurring at salient points in the design, at last to cap the climax of the celebratory finale.

Hanson's music abounds with melody: urgent, lyric and captivating. An episodic strain unfolds in the oboe and continues with a solo horn—the instrument that signals the Romantic sensibility, from Brahms and Dvořák to Mahler, Sibelius and Hanson. When the legitimate second subject comes on the scene in the strings, it is entwined with a countersubject in the horn. The vivid color of the English horn announces the development, whose climax triggers the return of the main theme, now in the trumpets. All the familiar ideas return in proper order, and the movement closes quietly in muted strings, punctuated by horns.

ANDANTE CON TENERAZZA. From beginning to end, the slow movement is gorgeously scored. The woodwind choir gives out a simple chorale statement, and a brass interlude, related to the opening of the symphony, develops into a subordinate theme derived from the horn solo of the previous movement. Horns enrich the texture nearly everywhere, coloring the passionate discourse and ushering the movement to its placid end.

ALLEGRO CON BRIO. A crisp figure, bright in high winds and strings, propels the folk-like start of the vigorous finale, whereupon the four horns declaim the main theme. A long lyric line spun by the English horn provides an alternate and deeply expressive idea. The center of the movement is announced by a steady pizzicato figure in the low strings, set to the drumming of timpani; a horn call, taken up by trombone, builds to a fanfare unleashed brilliantly from the trumpets. At the climax, the trusty motto theme rings out in the trumpets as the *Romantic* Symphony heads for the grand close—rhythmic, jubilant and, for all its Sibelian ancestry, conveying that amorphous quality identified as American.

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

PROGRAM NOTE BY MARY ANN FELDMAN.