

MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA

Thursday, November 9, 2023, 11AM | Orchestra Hall
Friday, November 10, 2023, 8PM

Today's program is performed without a conductor.

Richard Strauss/
arr. Karl Kramer *Feierlicher Einzug* (Solemn Entrance) CA. 7'

Anthony Barfield *Invictus* CA. 6'

Béla Bartók Divertimento for String Orchestra CA. 27'
Allegro non troppo
Molto adagio
Allegro assai

I N T E R M I S S I O N CA. 20'

Maurice Ravel *Pavane for a Dead Princess* CA. 6'

Gabriel-Urbain Fauré *Sicilienne*, from *Pelléas and Mélisande*, Opus 80 CA. 4'

Gabriel-Urbain Fauré *Pavane*, Opus 50 CA. 6'

Georges Bizet/
arr. Rodion Shchedrin Selections from *Carmen* Suite for Percussion and Strings CA. 21'
Introduction | Dance | First Intermezzo
Carmen's Entrance and Habanera
Second Intermezzo | Bolero | Torero | Finale

PRE-CONCERT

Panel Discussion with Minnesota Orchestra Musicians
Thursday, November 9, 10:15am, Target Atrium | Friday, November 10, 7:15pm, Target Atrium

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.

“Conductors are essential to large-scale orchestral works, but there is plenty of repertoire we’re capable of playing without direction from the podium. Our wonderful new Music Director Thomas Søndergård suggested that the Orchestra’s musicians put together an uncondacted program because he wants to encourage us to listen and react more to one another, without a central figure dictating each beat and phrase. This further hones our ears and ensemble skills, demanding that we rely even more on one another for musical and physical cues to communicate phrasing, tempos and articulation. While I’ll be leading several pieces from my concertmaster chair, all the musicians have had the opportunity to be more active participants in the rehearsal process and to join in crafting our collective interpretation of these pieces. We hope you enjoy this unique concert!”

– Erin Keefe, concertmaster

RICHARD STRAUSS

Feierlicher Einzug (Solemn Entrance),

arr. Karl Kramer

The German composer Richard Strauss (1864-1949) was 45 years old with decades of monumental musical works already behind him when he composed *Feierlicher Einzug*—but it is likely that some inspiration for this work reached back to his very first days, when he heard his father practice for his job as principal horn in the court orchestra of Munich. The young Strauss’ aptitude for extraordinary brass writing had been showcased in his horn concertos, tone poems and opera scores, but in 1909, when he produced this work for brass and timpani, it quickly secured a permanent place in the brass ensemble catalog.

At this time, Strauss was the principal conductor of the Staatskapelle Berlin, the resident orchestra of the Berlin State Opera. He frequently made public service appearances in this role and was asked to compose music for significant civic events. *Feierlicher Einzug* was one such composition, written at the request of the Order of Saint John, a fraternal Christian organization that has provided charitable services for ill and impoverished people worldwide since the early 11th century. Strauss’ composition was featured whenever the Order held an investiture ceremony, welcoming in new members. The original version called for 15 trumpets, three of them soloists, alongside four horns, four trombones and two tubas. Since then, it has since seen countless arrangements, some created by Strauss himself—utilizing chamber ensembles of all sizes and expanding up to a full symphony orchestra with pipe organ. The version performed at today’s concert was arranged by Karl Kramer.

The full title of this work is *Feierlicher Einzug der Ritter des Johanniter-Ordens*, which translates to *The Solemn Entrance of the Knights of the Order of Saint John*. While it is often translated in this setting to the word “solemn,” the German term “Feierlicher” also describes something that is ceremonious, festive and honorable, and each of these descriptions can be applied to Strauss’ work as well.

An opening fanfare emerges from chords that begin in the lowest voices of the ensemble and build upwards into the higher, brighter tones of the trumpets. The chorale section, which makes up the majority of the work, is richly scored, yet simple in harmonic structure. It grows in both intensity and dynamic, steadily rising from pianissimo to fortissimo over the course of the piece.

Instrumentation: horn, 4 trumpets, 4 trombones, tuba and timpani

ANTHONY BARFIELD

Invictus

The premiere of contemporary New York-based composer Anthony Barfield’s *Invictus* was an unusual one—performed by musicians from six musical ensembles, standing 12 feet apart from one another in a large arc in front of the iconic buildings of New York’s Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. There was no in-person audience present—only a dozen brass players, a few camera operators and the composer, who conducted the ensemble. *Invictus* premiered on Facebook and Lincoln Center’s website on September 1, 2020. Through it, Barfield (b. 1983) set out to communicate the resilience of a city facing uncertainty through the coexisting events of the COVID-19 pandemic and Black Lives Matter movement. The premiere performance served not just as a reflection of history but as a statement of current circumstances, shining a light on the city’s enduring hope and relentless courage.

In the video of the work’s premiere, Barfield speaks about New York City in 2020 and the “uncertainty of it all.” However, the music is uplifting, optimistic and reassuring. The term “Invictus” has Latin roots, meaning unconquerable or invincible. It is often used to describe the power of an individual or group to prevail over a seemingly impossible battle.

A Mississippi native and graduate of the Juilliard School, Barfield has built an incredible career as an Emmy-nominated music producer, composer and trombone player, collaborating with ensembles around the world including the United States Army Band “Pershing’s Own” and the New York Philharmonic. His production company, Velocity

Music Inc., has worked with artists such as Lil Wayne and has produced multiple independent film soundtracks.

Instrumentation: 4 horns, 4 trumpets, 3 trombones and tuba

BÉLA BARTÓK

Divertimento for Strings

— The Divertimento for Strings by Béla Bartók (1881-1945) represents a 20th-century approach to the concerto grosso—a compositional form that was very popular during the 17th and early 18th centuries, in which a small group of soloists share the primary melodic material while a smaller orchestra accompanies and interacts with them. Though loosely built upon the same basic structure, this Divertimento is a uniquely Bartók blend of Eastern European folk music and visionary musical techniques that pushed the genre in an entirely new direction.

Set in three movements—*Allegro non troppo*, *Molto adagio* and *Allegro assai*—the Divertimento begins with a powerful driving motion crafted from accented, repetitive chords across the ensemble, while the first violins sing a main theme. The second movement is dark and disturbing, similar to the mood of Bartók’s Sixth String Quartet, which was composed in the same year (1939). This eerie, haunting feeling is often attributed to Bartók’s deep sense of loss during World War II and an impending emigration from his homeland of Hungary to the United States. Spirits are lifted again, though, in a final movement that celebrates dance music and buzzes with newfound energy. The rondo finale also features a folk-inspired violin cadenza, counterpoint inspired by Bartók’s Baroque-era predecessors, and a brilliant, *vivacissimo* conclusion.

Valerie Little, the Minnesota Orchestra’s assistant principal librarian, was part of the collaborative team that determined today’s concert selections. “The Artistic Advisory Committee was interested in programming the Bartók Divertimento for Strings due to its intimate and light nature,” she explains, “which we hear through the interplay between soloists and the full sections, and also because the smaller string sections will give the audience a different aural experience than they hear with the full orchestra. Also, we haven’t featured it since 1996, so it is definitely time to revisit Bartók’s singular take on the concerto grosso!”

Instrumentation: string orchestra

[PROGRAM NOTES ON STRAUSS, BARFIELD AND BARTÓK WORKS BY EMMA PLEHAL.](#)

MAURICE RAVEL

Pavane for a Dead Princess

— Throughout his compositional career, the Frenchman Maurice Ravel (1875-1937) turned often to dance as inspiration. The waltz, minuet, bolero, habanera and pavane he all set twice or more; also given due attention were the malagueña, rigaudon and forlane. One of his first successful works was the exquisite piano miniature *Pavane pour une infante défunte* (Pavane for a Dead Princess), written in 1899 while the composer was still a student, and dedicated to the Princess of Polignac, a noted patron of the arts. In the composer’s words: “It is not a lament for a dead child, but an evocation of the pavane which might have been danced by a tiny princess such as was painted by Velasquez at the Spanish Court.” The first performance of the solo piano version was given by Ricardo Viñes in Paris on April 5, 1902.

The *Pavane*’s popularity grew even more when the composer orchestrated it in 1910. In Ravel’s treatment of the pavane (a stately 16th-century Spanish court dance), we find a haunting, graceful melody set against a gently undulating rhythmic accompaniment. Strings are muted throughout, adding a touch of veiled mystery to the subtly archaic character. The small orchestra also includes a harp, an oboe, and pairs of flutes, clarinets, bassoons and horns.

The orchestration’s premiere was conducted by Sir Henry Wood in Manchester, England, on February 27, 1911. Although Ravel did not leave a recording of himself conducting the work, he did critique the orchestral version’s premiere. He lamented the *Pavane*’s “excessively flagrant influence” of French Romantic composer Emmanuel Chabrier, and also claimed that the original piano version’s popularity was due to what he considered its conservative, unimaginative character. Regardless of Ravel’s assessment, the *Pavane*’s quaint charm, evocative mood and idyllic tranquility have endeared it to millions, and no critic, not even the composer, can undo the touching effect this exquisite musical gem has on us.

Instrumentation: 2 flutes, oboe, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, harp and strings

[PROGRAM NOTE BY ROBERT MARKOW.](#)

GABRIEL FAURÉ

Sicilienne from *Pelléas and Mélisande*, Opus 80

— The French organist and composer Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924) was a man of a most reserved nature, lacking all flamboyance, and he felt most at home in the intimacy of chamber music and art songs. His incidental music for Maurice Maeterlinck's play *Pelléas and Mélisande* was music of a larger scale—and after composing it in condensed scoring, Fauré entrusted the process of orchestration to his gifted pupil Charles Koechlin. The great symbolist drama by the Belgian-born Maeterlinck spurred the imagination of many composers, among them Debussy, Sibelius and Schoenberg. But Fauré's score for the 1898 London production of the play predated all those composers. The tale of the ill-fated lovers—Melisande, married to Prince Golaud, is attracted to the prince's younger half-brother Pelléas—is traced to the Middle Ages. Fauré's music captures the atmosphere of the realm of the King of Allemonde, where the lovers fulfill their tragic destiny. The *Sicilienne* is an entr'acte—music between acts—borrowed from music Fauré had originally created for the cello, pulsating in the undulating rhythm of the ancient Italian dance.

Pavane, Opus 50

— Fauré's standalone composition *Pavane*, composed a decade before *Pelléas and Mélisande*, showcases Fauré's restraint and looks back in time—here to the elegance and artifice of the rococo, the early-18th century artistic movement that reacted against the strict restrictions of the Baroque, instead emphasizing a more graceful approach. Fauré's *Pavane* dates from 1887, when he was called upon to contribute music for an entertainment at the Opéra-Comique that was conceived in the pastoral spirit of a painting by the rococo artist Jean-Antoine Watteau. Graceful in melody and airy of texture, this work is also distinguished by the restraint of its emotional display. Fauré's use of solo woodwind is as gentle and refined as the pastel colorations of rococo art. Fauré's title suggests a nostalgia for the 16th-century Pavane dance—a model Ravel would follow in titling his *Pavane for a Dead Princess*.

Instrumentation (*Sicilienne*): 2 flutes, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, 2 horns, timpani, harp and strings; (*Pavane*): 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY MARY ANN FELDMAN.

GEORGES BIZET

Carmen Suite for Percussion and Strings, arr. Rodion Shchedrin

— The *Carmen* Suite for Percussion and Strings shows the musical fireworks that can erupt when one composer takes the baton from the other—and runs in quite a different direction. In 1967 the Russian composer Rodion Shchedrin (b. 1932) was tasked with arranging music for a ballet version of one of the world's most popular operas, George Bizet's *Carmen*—and in a family twist, the premiere was to be given by the Bolshoi Ballet, featuring Shchedrin's wife, the famous ballerina Maya Plisetskaya.

The idea for Shchedrin's *Carmen* ballet came from Plisetskaya, who had read Prosper Mérimée's novel *Carmen* when she was very young; "I longed to create *Carmen* for half my life as a dancer," she reported. Plisetskaya arranged for Alberto Alonso to design the choreography for her. Shchedrin reworked Bizet's score into 13 numbers, some of which flow into each other without pause. His titles have little to do with Bizet's original. One of the most striking features of Shchedrin's transcription is the instrumentation, which omits all wind instruments but requires, in addition to the standard string section, nearly 50 percussion instruments. Today's performance features eight of the 13 movements: the *Introduction*, *Dance*, *First Intermezzo*, *Carmen's Entrance and Habanera*, *Second Intermezzo*, *Bolero*, *Torero* and *Finale*.

Instrumentation: timpani, 4 bongos, castanets, claves, cockolo, 3 cowbells, crotales, Charleston (lo-hat) cymbals, cymbals, alto drum, bass drum, field drum, soprano drum, guiro, maracas, tambourine, tamtam, 3 temple blocks, 5 tom-toms, triangle, whip, 2 wood blocks, marimba, glockenspiel, vibraphone, chimes and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY ROBERT MARKOW.