

DECEMBER 2023

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FROM THE EDITOR

The memorable tagline of YourClassical Minnesota Public Radio’s *Composers Datebook* is “All music was once new,” and the same idea applies to even the most ingrained of holiday traditions; all of them started at some specific point in time. The holiday season—however you define or celebrate it—is always evolving in numerous ways, including through the arrival of new works of art associated with winter months. Hardly a year goes by without a song, movie or piece of writing arriving on the pop culture scene and being dubbed an “instant holiday classic” that will continue to warm hearts for years to come.

This holiday season the Minnesota Orchestra brings to life a sampling of classics old and new, for ages young and old—ranging from Handel’s *Messiah*, premiered in 1742, to Disney’s *Frozen*, which hit movie theaters a decade ago. Music Director Thomas Søndergård leads his first holiday concerts here—a New Year’s program featuring selections from Tchaikovsky’s *Nutcracker*—while Orchestra trumpeter Charles Lazarus is the star of *Merry & Bright*, which has become a fixture of our December concert lineup. And Orchestra Hall is sure to be filled with Kristin Chenoweth fans for a one-night-only concert of Broadway hits and seasonal tunes.

Whichever concert you’re attending, and however you celebrate the rest of the season, we thank you for spending a bit of your busy holidays with us and wish you a happy start to 2024!

*Carl Schroeder*

Carl Schroeder, Editor  
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ABOUT THE COVER

Music Director Thomas Søndergård conducting the Minnesota Orchestra and Minnesota Chorale—which this month marks the 50th anniversary of its first performance with the Orchestra—in a September 2023 performance of Ravel’s *Daphnis et Chloé*. Photo: Emma Redinger.

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FROM LEFT: Jeff Cravotta; John Russo; Chris McDuffie

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—Kirkus Reviews



Despite Covid cautions—N95s, solitude, vaccinations—the author's renal rebound lands him in the ER. Hospital week unveils a quirky cast—specialists, caring nurses, concerned kids. Time bends with tales of plane capers, orangutans, spectral kin. Echoing Wodehouse and Sedaris, this memoir novella humorously captures American healthcare's enigma and the need to embrace change, and adopt compassion on the road.



[www.ProfAkshayRao.com](http://www.ProfAkshayRao.com)

————— Danish conductor Thomas Søndergård, who this fall began his tenure as the 11th music director of the Minnesota Orchestra, is a highly regarded conductor in both the orchestral and opera spheres. He has earned a reputation for incisive interpretations of works by composers from his native Denmark, a great versatility in a broad range of standard and modern repertoire, and a collaborative approach with the musicians he leads.

Søndergård first conducted the Minnesota Orchestra in December 2021 performances, establishing an immediate rapport with musicians and audiences; he was quickly reengaged for an April 2022 concert and then announced as the next music director in July 2022. His inaugural season began this fall with two weeks of historic concerts highlighted by Richard Strauss' *Alpine Symphony* and, with the Minnesota Chorale, Ravel's complete ballet score *Daphnis and Chloe*. He will next appear with the Orchestra leading a pair of New Year's concerts featuring pianist Sir Stephen Hough.

Since 2018 Søndergård has been music director of the Royal Scottish National Orchestra (RSNO), a role he will continue alongside his Minnesota appointment. Prior to joining the RSNO, he served as principal conductor and musical advisor to the Norwegian Radio Orchestra and then as principal conductor of the BBC National Orchestra of Wales (BBC NOW). As a guest conductor he has led major European and North American orchestras including the Berlin Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony, Gewandhaus Orchestra, Houston Symphony, London Philharmonic, and the symphonies of London, Montreal and Toronto.

Søndergård began his music career as a timpanist, joining the Royal Danish Orchestra after graduating from the Royal Danish Academy of Music. He made his conducting debut in 2005, leading the Royal Danish Opera in the premiere of Poul Ruders' *Kafka's Trial* to wide acclaim; he has returned



Chris McDuffie

subsequently many times to the Royal Danish Opera. His discography on the EMI, Dacapo, Bridge Records, Pentatone and Linn Records labels includes Vilde Frang's debut recording of violin concertos by Sibelius and Prokofiev with the WDR Symphony Orchestra Cologne; numerous works by Poul Ruders; the Lutosławski and Dutilleux concertos with cellist Johannes Moser and the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra; Sibelius symphonies and tone poems with BBC NOW; and works by Prokofiev and Strauss with RSNO.

After launching the Minnesota Orchestra's 2023–24 season in September, Søndergård opened the RSNO's season the following month with piano soloist Lise da la Salle performing concertos by Grieg and Beethoven. His busy slate with both ensembles is complemented by guest engagements with major orchestras including the New York Philharmonic, London Symphony Orchestra, Aalborg Symfoniorkester, Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra, Danish National Symphony Orchestra and Iceland Symphony Orchestra.

Søndergård is the 2023 recipient of the prestigious honorary award from the Carl Nielsen and Anne Mary Carl-Nielsen Foundation in Denmark. For more information, visit [minnesotaorchestra.org](https://minnesotaorchestra.org).

**Accelerator Funds**

The funds below support the research, development and implementation of new projects and initiatives at the Minnesota Orchestra and allow the Orchestra to seize on opportunities that will greatly benefit our audiences and community.

**Artistic Excellence Accelerator Fund**  
Bob and Carolyn Nelson

**Digital Enhancement Fund**  
Catherine R. and Steven Webster

**Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Accelerator Fund**  
Laurie and Ed Greeno, Laysha Ward and Bill Kiffmeyer, Yvonne Cheek and Mike Kirkwood, Denise and Maurice Holloman

**Artistic Funds**

Funds support the Minnesota Orchestra's ability to attract and program phenomenal guest artists as part of its classical concert series, ensuring outstanding musical experiences for our audiences each season.

**Major Restricted Funds**

The major restricted funds below are dedicated to supporting an array of initiatives, artistic collaborations, education and outreach programs, Orchestra musicians, and guest artists and conductors.

**The Bellwether Fund**  
for Musician Designated Initiatives

**Nicky Carpenter Fund**  
for Artistic Collaborations

**Charles and Kathy Cunningham Fund**  
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**Kenneth and Betty Jayne Dahlberg Fund**  
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## AUDIENCE SPOTLIGHT — SHARE YOUR ORCHESTRA HALL MEMORIES

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In the 49 years since the Minnesota Orchestra's home in downtown Minneapolis opened in October 1974, generations of audiences, performers and visitors have experienced unforgettable concerts, shared special traditions with families and friends, forged a lifelong passion for music, set in motion a personal dream—and enjoyed the many other ways a trip to the Hall can leave a small or large imprint on a life.

As we prepare to celebrate the venue's 50th anniversary in 2024, we invite you to share your special memories of Orchestra Hall by emailing them to [OrchHall50@mnorch.org](mailto:OrchHall50@mnorch.org). Selected stories will be shared in future issues of *Showcase* magazine and on the Orchestra's website.

When Thomas Søndergård picked up the baton this fall as the Orchestra's 11th music director, he ushered in an era of new musical memories—ones we hope will stick with you long after the last sounds of today's concert have faded from the Hall. We look forward to hearing and sharing your memories as the half-century milestone approaches!



The inaugural concert at Orchestra Hall—a performance on October 21, 1974, led by the Orchestra's sixth music director, Stanislaw Skrowaczewski.



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## MEET A MUSICIAN: TIMOTHY ZAVADIL

Zoe Prinds-Flash



Minnesota Orchestra musician since: **2007**

Position: **Clarinet and Bass Clarinet**

Hometown: **St. Louis, Missouri**

Education: **Northwestern University and DePaul University**

**How did you get your start in music, and then find your way into the bass clarinet world?**

My first instrument was guitar, and when I was 6 or 7, I was sure I'd end up joining the band Kiss—although time has run out on that dream, since their final tour is ending this month. By fourth grade I wanted to play saxophone, but my uncle, a professional trumpet player, advised my parents to start me on clarinet. That turned out to be prophetic, since clarinet is the best “root” instrument for branching out to other woodwinds. A few years later I was looking through stacks of clarinets in the band room—alto, bass, E-flat—and I wanted to bring them all home. That whet my appetite for exploring different kinds of clarinet, although I didn't really start bass clarinet until college. I also love playing basset horn, and saxophone is my stress-relief instrument.

**Can you tell us about your involvement with the Cuban American Youth Orchestra?**

The Cuban American Youth Orchestra, or CAYO, is a Minneapolis-based non-profit focused on youth cultural diplomacy through music, founded by Rena Kraut—a regular substitute clarinetist with the Minnesota Orchestra—after our 2015 Cuba tour. About 10 Orchestra musicians are involved with CAYO, and as director of operations, I do anything from planning tours to making copies when someone forgets their music. Last summer we put together a 20-piece orchestra of Cuban and American students for the International Day of Music at Orchestra Hall, and they performed a piece by a young Cuban composer, Jorge Amado. In 2019 we organized a 75-piece orchestra of American and Cuban students in Havana, and brought 10 musicians from the Orchestra as faculty. Next May we'll be back in Havana with another large orchestra of Cuban and American high school students. The point is not only to make good music, but to make connections with people from a culture that's just 90 miles off the coast, but in a different world in terms of infrastructure and resources.

**Talk us through the experience of performing Geoffrey Gordon's bass clarinet concerto *Prometheus*.**

Playing a bass clarinet concerto with a major orchestra is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity! The Minnesota Orchestra

was one of three orchestras to commission it, and we performed the U.S. premiere in April 2019. I did lots of mental preparation in studying the score and getting ready to perform in front of my colleagues, plus logistical things like getting a sculptor friend to make me a bass clarinet peg that was long enough so I could stand while playing. Geoffrey's music is about telling stories, and this concerto was based on Kafka's version of the Prometheus story. You can hear all sorts of details, like trumpets depicting an eagle pecking at Prometheus' liver. Things got nerve-wracking for me during the preparation, since I was recovering from a rib injury that winter—fortunately I didn't have things as rough as Prometheus! I'm very grateful to Geoffrey, to Osmo Vänskä for conducting, and to the Orchestra's administration for jumping into the project wholeheartedly.

**What do you enjoy doing when you're not making music?**

Lots of family time—I have three kids who are 16, 22 and 24, and my partner has two kids as well. In summertime I like biking and walking to the Mississippi River, and in winter I do some cross-country skiing and trips to the North Shore. And I'm always reading a book. Some recent favorites are *You're Not Listening* by Kate Murphy, *Strike Me Down* by Mindy Mejia—a fun read set in Minneapolis—Barbara Kingsolver's *The Poisonwood Bible* and *Stolen Focus* by Johann Hari.

**What interesting experiences come from having a last name that starts with “Z”?**

In college, I played saxophone in the horn section of a rock band, and we all had last names that started with Z (Zavadil, Zemataitis, and Zych)—we were, of course, known as “Z Horns.” And in one of my last grad school classes, everyone had to give a final presentation, and my topic was the relationship between the musicians union and symphony orchestras. Because it was my final semester, and I was pretty much ready to be done with school, I wasn't as prepared for the presentation as I could have been. However, because the professor chose to go in alphabetical order, he never got to me, and I merely had to hand in my sloppily handwritten notecards. I ended up getting an A in the class!



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## NEWS — MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA

### TWO NEW RECORDINGS RELEASED

The Minnesota Orchestra’s discography has grown this fall with the release of two new recordings, both involving large forces of singers alongside the Orchestra: Gustav Mahler’s Symphony No. 8, known as the *Symphony of a Thousand*, and Carlos Simon and Marc Bamuthi Joseph’s *brea(d)th*, a landmark new work recorded at its world premiere last May.

Released on December 1 by BIS Records, the Mahler album is the ninth release in the Orchestra’s critically acclaimed initiative to record all ten Mahler symphonies. Performed and recorded in June 2022 as part of Osmo Vänskä’s last performances as music director, the epic Eighth Symphony is one of the largest-scale symphonies in the classical music repertoire. The Orchestra’s recording amasses the forces of the Minnesota Chorale, National Lutheran Choir, Angelica Cantanti Youth Choirs, Minnesota Boychoir and seven vocal soloists. It is available now on streaming platforms and for purchase through the Orchestra’s website, in the Orchestra Hall lobby and from other retailers.

Decca Classics released *brea(d)th* on September 1. Commissioned by the Orchestra in the wake of George Floyd’s murder, *brea(d)th* situates Floyd’s story in the context of America’s centuries-long history of systemic racism and oppression and asks listeners to consider, “How

do we move forward? What is the breadth of the task at hand?” The 35-minute work features music by Grammy-nominated composer Carlos Simon and a libretto by Marc Bamuthi Joseph, who is featured as a spoken word artist performing his original text. Recorded over three live performances in May 2023 at Orchestra Hall, the pioneering work was conducted by Jonathan Taylor Rush and includes singers from the Minnesota Chorale, Twin Cities Choral Partners and 29:11 International Exchange. The recording is available now on all major streaming platforms.

At turns solemn, bluesy, heart-rending and dissonant, *brea(d)th* includes an instrumental elegy movement for strings placed at the center. Joseph’s libretto—which in his own words “considers bread, as in value; breath, as in life force; and breadth, as in the radius of American promise”—is tightly woven with Simon’s music of great emotional range. The creation of *brea(d)th* was collaborative, with Simon and Joseph working closely with the Orchestra to connect with local artists, activists and community members, and taking a pilgrimage to George Floyd Square. In their artist statement, the co-creators describe *brea(d)th* as “a classical work, inspired by the enduring presence of George Floyd to consider an equitable future... *brea(d)th* is a moving, yearning, admonition for repair.”





## NEWS

### MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA

## MUSIC EDUCATORS: JOIN US ONSTAGE!

If you're a music educator in Minnesota teaching grades K through 12, we're putting out a special call to you: you're invited to join Minnesota Orchestra musicians side-by-side onstage in April to rehearse and perform the *Jupiter* movement from Gustav Holst's *Planets*—a one-of-a-kind musical collaboration full of camaraderie with Orchestra musicians and fellow educators.

Music educators who apply will work with Music Director Thomas Søndergård in two rehearsals at Orchestra Hall on April 25 and 27, playing alongside their Minnesota Orchestra musician counterparts. The experience will culminate in performances on April 27 and 28 in which educators will perform in concert with Søndergård and the Orchestra for an audience that will include family, friends and school administrators, among others. It's one of several initiatives during Søndergård's first season designed to underscore the importance of music educators throughout our state and to celebrate their contributions.

"It's really important for me from the start of my tenure to say a big thank you to all the music educators, the teachers, the people who influence kids at a very early age to bring music into their lives...and to welcome different emotions into their lives," says Søndergård. "I believe that really changes us within."

Although the Orchestra has offered Side-by-Side rehearsals and performances with both students and adults in the past, the April experience is the first Side-by-Side specifically geared toward teachers. The opportunity is open to K-12 music educators who play string, woodwind, brass or percussion instruments, with participants being selected for the experience based on instrumentation needs.

Application details and deadlines are available at [minnesotaorchestra.org/sidebyside](https://minnesotaorchestra.org/sidebyside). We'll see you onstage!

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## NEWS

### FRIENDS OF THE MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA

## CELEBRATING 75 YEARS OF FRIENDS

FRIENDS of the Minnesota Orchestra has a very special cause for celebration coming up: 2024 marks the organization's 75th anniversary. FRIENDS' luncheon, held on May 22, 2024, at Lafayette Club on the Lake, will be one of many highlights celebrating the jubilee anniversary.

Originally known as WAMSO—the Women's Association of the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra—FRIENDS was founded in 1949 by Rosalynd Pflaum and other Twin Cities women with an appreciation for music, community engagement and the Minnesota Orchestra, which was then called the Minneapolis Symphony. Since then, this organization has become an independent non-profit organization with an enduring presence in our community.

The success of FRIENDS has been due primarily to its award-winning programs, including Kinder Konzerts, Meet a Musician/ACCENT and the Young Artist Competition. Closest to many hearts are Kinder Konzerts, which are held at both Orchestra Hall and on the road, and offer many young children their first encounter with live classical music. Through Kinder Konzerts in the Hall, FRIENDS has brought musical storytelling to life in a unique way—by pairing children's books, a narrator and classical music.

Over the years, FRIENDS has commissioned 18 musical works for Kinder Konzerts, with each story performed by a chamber ensemble of Minnesota Orchestra musicians. The compositions each feature the four instrument families in an orchestra: strings, woodwinds, brass and percussion. The book featured at this season's Kinder Konzerts, *Max Found Two Sticks* by Brian Pinkney, is paired with music by Janika Vandervelde and tells the story of a boy who creates music, to the delight of his

family and friends, by thumping two twigs that fell from a tree onto ordinary objects. The music brings the story vividly to life, including the chiming of church bells and rhythms imitating the sounds of pigeons.

FRIENDS' continued partnership with the Minnesota Orchestra helps further FRIENDS' mission "to serve as a community partner to create and bring music learning opportunities to children and families." The programs also succeed thanks to the contributions of Minnesota Orchestra musicians and staff, as well as FRIENDS volunteers. "FRIENDS extends our appreciation to everyone who has been part of this inspiring collaboration for many decades," says Roma Calatayud-Stocks, president of FRIENDS.

Visit [friendsofminnesotaorchestra.org](http://friendsofminnesotaorchestra.org) for more information on FRIENDS and its upcoming events, which include Meet a Musician/ACCENT events with retired Minnesota Orchestra Associate Principal Cello Janet Horvath and bass player Nina Bernat, winner of the 2022 Young Artist Competition—the latter of whom will perform a bass concerto by Giovanni Bottesini with the Minnesota Orchestra from February 22-24, 2024.



Bass player Nina Bernat



## NEWS

### MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA

## JUST ADDED: INDIGO GIRLS IN CONCERT

Already looking forward to spring? Mark your calendar for March 26, when the Minnesota Orchestra will perform a just-announced concert with the Grammy Award-winning folk pop duo Indigo Girls. Under the direction of Principal Conductor of Live at Orchestra Hall Sarah Hicks, the duo of Amy Ray and Emily Saliers will perform a selection of their signature songs arranged for orchestra.



Founded in the suburbs of Atlanta in 1985, Indigo Girls earned a Grammy Award in 1990 for Best Contemporary Folk Album for their self-titled breakout studio album. Since then, the duo has been nominated for six additional Grammys, released numerous Gold and Platinum records and collaborated with artists ranging from Michael Stipe to Joan Baez. They are the only duo with top 40 titles on the Billboard 200 in the '80s, '90s, '00s and '10s. In 2012, Indigo Girls embarked on a bold new chapter, collaborating with a pair of orchestrators to prepare large-scale arrangements of their songs to perform with symphony orchestras around the country. With this successful project, the duo has created a seamless blend of folk, rock, pop and classical that elevated their songs to new heights without sacrificing the emotional intimacy and honesty that have defined their music for decades.

Indigo Girls first appeared alongside the Minnesota Orchestra in a sold-out performance in February 2019, then returned for two concerts in June 2022. Their forthcoming appearance with the Orchestra will take place during the nationwide tour for their 16th studio album *Look Long*, which was released in 2020. Tickets are available now at [minnesotaorchestra.org](http://minnesotaorchestra.org).

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NEWS

YPSCA

## APPLY FOR THE YPSCA COMPETITION

The Minnesota Orchestra Young People's Symphony Concert Association (YPSCA) is pleased to announce a fantastic opportunity for talented young musicians: the 67th Annual Concerto Competition, which will be held in February 2024, with applications due by January 19, 2024.

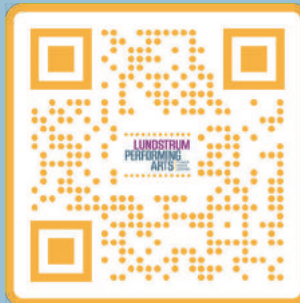
Students in grades 7 through 12 who are residents of Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa or Wisconsin, and are skilled players of orchestral instruments or piano, will compete for the opportunity to perform as soloist with the Minnesota Orchestra in a set of future Young People's Concerts. Cash prizes for the finalists total more than \$10,000. The competition's preliminary round will be virtual, with performance video submissions due February 9, 2024. The final round will be held at Orchestra Hall on Sunday, February 25, 2024. More information and links to the competition guidelines can be found at [minnesotaorchestra.org/ypcc](https://minnesotaorchestra.org/ypcc).

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Izaiah Cheeran



Esme Arias-Kim

Past YPSCA Concerto Competition winners Izaiah Cheeran—an oboist and Minnesota native—and violinist Esme Arias-Kim will both appear as soloists at Young People's Concerts on January 23 and 24, 2024. YPSCA will invite members and donors to attend the January 23 Young People's concert, with a reception to follow honoring the soloists.



**NEWS**  
**MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA**

**CRITICS' COLUMN:  
 RECENT CONCERT  
 REVIEWS**

“Under the direction of a wise veteran conductor, Thomas Wilkins, the orchestra performed three works written by American composers from 1930 to 1941 and tossed in some distinctly Mexican sounds from the pen of 21st-century composer Gabriela Ortiz...[The] interpretation of [Hanson’s] Second (‘Romantic’) Symphony was an unqualified triumph....[Violinist Valeriy Sokolov] displayed impressive enough skills to be judged a very promising talent, and his encore of Fritz Kreisler’s Recitativo and Scherzo showed that Sokolov can deliver an adrenaline rush as capably as anyone.”

—Rob Hubbard, *Star Tribune*,  
 October 21, 2023

“[Audra McDonald’s] performance was a mesmerizing journey through the American Musical Theater songbook... [including] timeless classics from the likes of Stephen Sondheim and Rodgers and Hammerstein...[and] productions such as *Light in the Piazza*, *My Fair Lady*, *The Wiz*, and many more, creating an unforgettable evening of music. [McDonald’s] concert was a beacon of hope and joy, especially in these challenging times. She created a safe and inviting space for all audience members to revel in the magic of her music.”

—Jared Fessler, *Broadway World*,  
 November 3, 2023

“Being present at...Orchestra Hall to witness Ben Folds live was an absolute delight....[Folds] mesmerized the audience with two enthralling sets....[and he] also emphasized the significance of music therapy and education....The concert left the audience yearning for more, a testament to the brilliance and artistry of these musical maestros.”

—Jared Fessler, *Broadway World*,  
 October 9, 2023



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## NEWS

### MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA

## SYMPHONY BALL: RIVER RHAPSODY

Mark your calendar now: the Minnesota Orchestra's Symphony Ball gala fundraiser will be held on Saturday, May 4, 2024, at Orchestra Hall and the Minneapolis Hilton. Featuring the theme River Rhapsody, the event will celebrate the Orchestra, the state of Minnesota and the Mississippi River. The gala will spotlight musical styles popular in cities along the river's route and will feature a performance by the Minnesota Orchestra, dancing, dining, drinks, auctions and good company. Watch future issues of *Showcase* for more details about the Ball, an interview with the Ball Chairs Diane and Tony Hofstede and an announcement when tickets are available.

## MUSICIANS AROUND TOWN



When Minnesota Orchestra musicians aren't at Orchestra Hall, you can find many of them around the Twin Cities and beyond in other types of musical performances such as solo recitals and concerts with chamber music groups, concerto appearances with other orchestras, forays into rock music, stage productions and more. Visit [minnesotaorchestra.org/aroundtown](https://minnesotaorchestra.org/aroundtown) or scan the QR code for a continually updating list of events.



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## THOMAS SØNDERGÅRD: A TIME SIGNATURE OF LOVE

For Minnesota Orchestra Music Director Thomas Søndergård—who makes his next appearance on the Orchestra Hall conductor’s podium for two New Year’s concerts—music has been an ongoing fascination since in his childhood in the arts-friendly Danish town of Holstebro. “I remember walking in the shopping area in that little city and hearing a marching band around the corner,” he says, “and I just took off from my parents.” Standing beside the band, mesmerized, he recalled wanting to be part of it.

His parents dutifully enrolled him in percussion lessons at the local music school, and by the time he was a teenager he was dreaming about a life in music. After studies at the Royal Danish Academy of Music and playing in the European Union Youth Orchestra, Søndergård eventually joined the Royal Danish Orchestra in 1992. When playing in that ensemble, he paid careful attention to the conductors on the podium, feeling he may one day want to join their ranks.

### CONNECTION AND COLLABORATION

Over time, Søndergård began to pick up scores for study as a way to dig deeper into the music. “Little by little people asked me to guide them through the music,” he recalls. “In the beginning it was friends and colleagues, and then it took off and I started conducting symphony orchestras and operas.” For a decade, he kept a foot planted in each of the two worlds, working as a member of the Royal Danish Orchestra and as a conductor. But a turning point came in 2005 when he was invited to prepare his orchestral colleagues in rehearsals leading up to the debut of a new opera called *Kafka’s Trial* by Danish composer Poul Ruders, and then ended up leading the entire world premiere production with the Royal Danish Opera. Soon after, Søndergård made the leap to pursue a full-time conducting career.

By 2009, Søndergård had been appointed the principal conductor and musical adviser of the Norwegian Radio Orchestra, and then followed leadership positions with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, where he still serves as music director. Those early years as an orchestral player inform his leadership style to this day. “What I discovered when I was playing in an orchestra,” he reflects, “is that when things really click between a conductor and an orchestra, it is because the conductor has a healthy way of thinking about his or her role that is focused on making music cooperatively.”

This collaborative ethos made him a natural fit for the Minnesota Orchestra. He recalls feeling a powerful connection with Minnesota musicians in his first rehearsal. “There was so much energy and focus from the Orchestra, and it was just there from the beginning,” he says. “I immediately felt a connection. It was a moment I’ll never forget.”



Zoe Prinds-Flash

Music Director Thomas Søndergård

### THE FOUNDATION IS SET

Listening is a skill this modest maestro has honed over a lifetime in music, and when it comes to communicating those needs with his players, his approach is grounded in a very personal style. “I don’t think I can get to a good result with anyone in front of me if I don’t start with love and respect,” he muses. “I know that I am the one in control [of the rehearsal] and musicians want someone to guide them. That I have no problem with, but it is always with the time signature that is called love.”

And so the foundation is set for a new partnership between a conductor and Orchestra who are finding affinity in a shared philosophy of cooperative music-making. Not surprisingly, Søndergård is optimistic about what lies ahead: “It is an enormous luxury for me to take over an ensemble that is in such great shape and in such great spirit. It actually feels to me as if it is just about finding the right way to place my arm around the shoulders of this Orchestra, and we will continue the journey that is already so well on its way.”



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## AN AULD LANG SYNE by DAN CHOUINARD

Showing up to play piano at someone else’s holiday party, you can’t really know what sort of night you’re in for. For starters, it’s good to show up in the proper attire.

Saturday, December 13, 1997, I’d written “black jacket” in my calendar, but stepping through the polished doors and into the Presidential Suite at the top of the Minneapolis Hilton Hotel, I got the sinking feeling the voice on the phone had probably said “black tie.”

“They’d like you for 90 minutes after dinner, but come an hour early and be prepared to stay late if they want you to.” At least I’d shown up on time, if underdressed: the grand piano required some fussing over with a stack of wadded bar napkins before it sounded good enough for the Pillsbury Board of Directors and Spouses, who were now drifting through the presidential doors. Regal in holiday finery, they glided past the doughboy ice sculpture, past the piano (vague nods in my direction), past the glittering skyline view, toward the bar and the culmination of the evening’s festivities: cordials, flambé desserts, fine cigars, tasteful live piano music.

“Be ready for anything,” I’d been told. Right. Another night of wallpaper piano. I sighed and settled in with autopilot renditions of holiday favorites, a no-man’s land of leather furniture between me and the shimmering mirage at the bar. My mind wandered down to my rusting subcompact car parked at an expired meter, the festive red and white envelope surely flapping on the windshield by now.

Not my favorite, these wallpaper gigs, squandered sing-along opportunities, I felt. Every so often I lobbed mild musical provocations in the direction of the bar and waited for a response. *Jingle Bell Rock*. Nothing. *Merry Christmas (War Is Over)*. Probably too serious. *Blue Christmas*. *Mele Kalikimaka*...

Eventually a plaid cummerbund and bow tie crossed over to the piano. “Paul over there’s wondering if you do any Buddy Holly.” Paul sauntered over and we got through *Peggy Sue* and

*Every Day* with help from another tux or two. Then on to Wilson Pickett. And the Beatles. By the time we got to the *Big Chill* soundtrack, the entire shimmering mirage had coalesced around the piano, drinks in hand.

The next couple hours are a blur. I remember someone asked my name. I remember someone swapped my club soda for something much smoother with a long, buttery finish. I remember we kept singing till nearly midnight, mostly pop tunes from the ’60s and ’70s, plus the occasional holiday song at someone’s insistence, all with the same full-throated gusto.

I remember how tuxes and gowns gradually took on faces, faces acquired voices and names and stories. I remember a deep solidarity like we’d all been friends a long, long time.

Not much earlier I’d thought them such a remote bunch. But one by one they’d crossed over to the piano and proved me wrong. For two brief shining hours we were a single noisy clan, the Wailing Doughboys. Walking out to my car, smiling and looking up past the 25th floor and into the winter sky, I mused about our shared lot on this earth and about our craving for certain universal, utterly ordinary comforts. The company of loved ones at the end of the day. The songs you know by heart and aren’t afraid to sing in front of your friends. The old familiar stories with the old ridiculous embellishments.

Simple, timeless comforts. May we practice them often. And may they be as familiar as winter’s snow to our children’s children.

*For nearly four decades Dan Chouinard has been pianist and accordionist for a who’s who of Twin Cities performers, an enabler of community sing-alongs and a writer of hit shows for Minnesota Public Radio, TPT and others. In the coming weeks his collaborators include Kevin Kling, Prudence Johnson, Bradley Greenwald, Maria Jette, Jennifer Grimm, Dane Stauffer, T. Mychael Rambo, Thomasina Petrus and the members of his classic country band Lush Country. For more information, visit [danchouinard.com](http://danchouinard.com).*





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 Georgia Jarman, soprano  
 Reginald Mobley, countertenor  
 Toby Spence, tenor  
 Jordan Bisch, bass  
 Minnesota Chorale, Kathy Saltzman Romey, artistic director

Friday, December 8, 2023, 8PM  
 Saturday, December 9, 2023, 7PM | Orchestra Hall

George Frideric Handel      *Messiah*      CA. 60'  
    Sinfonia  
    Part I

I N T E R M I S S I O N      CA. 20'

George Frideric Handel      *Messiah*      CA. 60'  
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**CHRISTOPHER WARREN-GREEN,**  
CONDUCTOR

British conductor Christopher Warren-Green is music director of the London Chamber Orchestra as well as conductor laureate and artistic adviser to the Charlotte Symphony, following 12 years as its music director. He is also chair of the Foundation for Young Musicians, and in 2022 he celebrated a professional career spanning 50 years. Warren-Green has conducted eminent orchestras around the world, including the London Philharmonic Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, Philadelphia Orchestra, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Orchestre National de Belgique, Beethoven Orchestra Bonn, Orchestre national de Montpellier and Hong Kong Philharmonic, as well as the Iceland, Detroit, Houston, St. Louis, Milwaukee, Toronto, Seattle, Vancouver and Singapore symphony orchestras. He has led the Minnesota Orchestra’s performances of Handel’s *Messiah* four times before: in 2002, 2006, 2008 and 2014. Highlights of his 2023-24 season include returns to the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and Macau Orchestra, as well three visits with Romanian Radio Chamber Orchestra and performances with the Charlotte Symphony and London Chamber Orchestra. Warren-Green has recorded extensively for Sony, Philips, Virgin, EMI, Chandos, Decca and Deutsche Gramophone, and records with London Chamber Orchestra for Signum Classics. More: [harrisonparrott.com](http://harrisonparrott.com).



**GEORGIA JARMAN,**  
SOPRANO

American soprano Georgia Jarman’s numerous successes span lyric and bel canto repertoire alongside a growing reputation in 20th-century works and new commissions. Of those which hold special significance are the landmark operas of Sir George Benjamin—*Written on Skin* and *Lessons in Love and Violence*—which Jarman debuted at Venice Biennale Musica under the composer’s baton. She recently returned to the role of Isabel in *Lessons in Love and Violence*, joining the Mahler Chamber Orchestra on a European tour. During the 2023-24 season she joins the Orchestre de Paris in the same work under the baton of Benjamin, and sings Agnes in *Written on Skin*, making her debut at Deutsche Oper Berlin under Marc Albrecht. Jarman’s breakthrough performance and debut at the Royal Opera House at Covent Garden came as Roxana in Kasper Holten’s spectacular production of Szymanowski’s *Król Roger*. She made her BBC Proms debut in 2019 singing the same composer’s *Love Songs of Hafiz* alongside BBC Scottish Orchestra. This season she debuts with the Boston Symphony as Solveig in Grieg’s *Peer Gynt*, joins the Charlotte Symphony in Vaughan William’s *A Sea Symphony* and performs Dvořák’s *Te Deum* with the Naples Philharmonic. More: [harrisonparrott.com](http://harrisonparrott.com), [georgiajarman.com](http://georgiajarman.com).



**REGINALD MOBLEY,**  
COUNTERTENOR

Grammy-nominated American countertenor Reginald Mobley is renowned for his interpretation of Baroque, Classical and modern repertoire, and leads a prolific career on both sides of the Atlantic. An advocate for diversity in music and its programming, he became the first ever programming consultant for the Handel & Haydn Society following several years of leading its community engaging Every Voice concerts. He holds the position of visiting artist for diversity outreach with the Baroque ensemble Apollo’s Fire, and is leading a research project in the U.K. to uncover music by composers from diverse backgrounds. This season he also performs Handel’s *Messiah* with the Pittsburgh Symphony and Philadelphia Orchestra. Recent and future highlights include performing Orff’s *Carmina burana* with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and debuts with the Boston Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra and Orchestre Métropolitain de Montreal, as well as a tour of his new program *Sons of England* and a solo recital as part of the Bayreuth baroque opera festival. His first solo album with ALPHA Classics was released to great acclaim last June to coincide with a major series of concerts with pianist Baptiste Trotignon. In addition, he is featured on albums with the Monteverdi Choir, Agave Baroque and Stuttgart Bach Society. More: [clbmanagement.co.uk](http://clbmanagement.co.uk), [reginaldmobley.com](http://reginaldmobley.com).





## TOBY SPENCE, TENOR

British tenor Toby Spence has sung with renowned orchestras such as the Berlin Philharmonic, Vienna Philharmonic, Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, London Symphony, London Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Cleveland Orchestra, Rotterdam Philharmonic and Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia. He has appeared as a guest soloist at the Easter Festival in Salzburg and the Edinburgh International Festival. On the opera stage he has appeared at such venues as Teatro alla Scala, Teatro Real and the Royal Opera House at Covent Garden, and with companies such as the Frankfurt Opera, Metropolitan Opera and English National Opera. His 2023-24 season includes a return to the Royal Opera House for Erik in *Der Fliegende Holländer*, as well as house debuts as Alonso in *The Tempest* for the Wiener Staatsoper and as the title role in *Idomeneo* for Opéra National de Lorraine. On the concert stage this season he sings Mortimer in *Lessons in Love and Violence* with Orchestre de Paris, *The Bells* with the Bergen Philharmonic and the Mozart Requiem with the Tampere Philharmonic. He also returns in recital to the Oxford Lieder Festival. He was the winner of the Royal Philharmonic Society 2011 Singer of the Year award. More: [askonasholt.com](http://askonasholt.com).



## JORDAN BISCH, BASS

American bass Jordan Bisch, a graduate of the Metropolitan Opera's Lindemann Young Artist Development Program, made his Metropolitan Opera debut as the Second Knight in *Parsifal*. His career includes notable roles in productions such as *The Barber of Seville*, *La Sonnambula*, *Aida*, *Idomeneo* and *Romeo and Juliet*. Bisch has also graced stages in Japan with Don Carlos and has performed with renowned opera companies including the San Francisco Opera, Opera Philadelphia, Washington National Opera, Los Angeles Opera, Seattle Opera, Dallas Opera and Florida Grand Opera. In the realm of concert performances, he has performed at prestigious venues including the Hollywood Bowl with Gustavo Dudamel and the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Tanglewood Festival with Michael Tilson Thomas, and the Charlotte Symphony with Christopher Warren-Green. He is featured on the Los Angeles Philharmonic's recording of Shostakovich's *Orango* on the Deutsche Grammophon label, conducted by Esa-Pekka Salonen. A native of Vancouver, Washington, Bisch has earned accolades including a second-place win in the 2009 Operalia competition, a triumph in the 2005 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions Grand Final, a 2005 Sara Tucker Study Grant, and Richard Tucker Career Grants in both 2006 and 2009. More: [jordanbisch.com](http://jordanbisch.com).

## MINNESOTA CHORALE

KATHY SALTZMAN ROMEY,  
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

BARBARA BROOKS,  
ACCOMPANIST AND  
ARTISTIC ADVISOR

The Minnesota Chorale, principal chorus of the Minnesota Orchestra since 2004, this month marks the 50th anniversary of its first appearance with the Orchestra. The Chorale performed Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloé* with the Orchestra this past September and will collaborate again in two works next April: Eleanor Alberga's *Rise Up, O Sun!* and Johannes Brahms' *Schicksalslied*. Founded in 1972 and led since 1995 by artistic director Kathy Saltzman Romey, the Chorale is Minnesota's preeminent symphonic chorus and ranks among the foremost professional choruses in the U.S. More: [mnchorale.org](http://mnchorale.org).

### SOPRANO

Alyssa Breece\*  
Cathy Crosby-Schmidt\*  
Monica deCausmeaker\*  
Deyhdra Dennis-Weiss \*  
Laurel E. Drevlow\*  
Elizabeth Longhurst\*  
Amy Madson  
Pamela Marentette\*  
Sara Payne\*  
Elizabeth Pemberton\*  
Adriana Pohl  
Kristin Schmitz\*  
Jennifer Sylvester\*  
Maya A. Tester

### ALTO

Susan Druck\*  
Debra Gilroy\*  
Heather A. Hood\*  
Laura Horner\*  
Patricia Kent\*  
Claire M. Klein  
Celia McCoy  
Barbara Prince\*  
Deborah E. Richman  
Joy E. Roellinger  
Mitra Sadeghpour\*  
Elizabeth Sullivan\*

### TENOR

Sam Baker\*  
Daniel Borup\*  
Jared Campbell\*  
Ryan Cogswell\*  
Chris Crosby-Schmidt  
Thomas Jermann  
Tom Knabel  
Jeffrey Nielsen  
Bill Pederson\*  
Josh R. Pritchett\*  
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Patrick Romey\*  
Luke Slivinski

### BASS

Matthew Abbas  
Peder Bolstad  
Mark Garner\*  
David Goudzwaard-Vaught\*  
Jim Hild  
Jon Nordstrom\*  
Nathan Oppedahl  
Bob Peskin\*  
Nathan Petersen-Kindem\*  
Benjamin Shermock\*  
Russ Vander Wiel  
Rick Wagner\*

\* section leader



## GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL

**B:** February 23, 1685  
Halle, Germany

**D:** April 14, 1759  
London, England

### *Messiah*

**PREMIERED:** April 13, 1742

George Frideric Handel was perhaps the first classical musician to find stardom in numerous European countries. Born in Germany, he studied music in Italy before moving to England, where he remained for the rest of his life. Handel's mature music, particularly his choral works, reflects a skillful blend of these three countries' styles of classical music.

For over 260 years, *Messiah* has been Handel's most popular and beloved oratorio, and it continues to give pleasure to audiences around the world, whether in mammoth extravaganzas with 3,000-plus singers; ever-popular *Messiah* "sing-alongs"; gospel and country versions; or performances in Baroque style with small choruses and chamber orchestras playing instruments of Handel's time period. While *Messiah* concerts have become a Christmas tradition in North America, the oratorio was originally written for performance during Passion Week, the holiest week of the Christian year leading up to Easter Sunday.

### A MUSICAL TRIUMPH, WITH A COMPLEX LEGACY

Today *Messiah* is considered Handel's greatest musical achievement, but its popularity was not immediate. Written during a three-week span in the summer of 1741 and premiered in Dublin the following spring, *Messiah* was

composed for a charity benefit advertised "For the relief of the Prisoners in the several Gaols" and several other worthy causes. *Messiah* received warm reviews at its premiere, but its enduring popularity did not begin until after Handel's death. During his lifetime it was regarded as simply one of his many successful oratorios.

Although Handel was associated with charitable causes in Europe, the legacy of his music is complicated by what we know today—that some of Handel's patrons were closely linked to the trading and transportation of enslaved Africans, either as slave owners or major investors. Recent research has revealed that Handel himself was sometimes paid through the sale or ownership of shares in the Royal African Company, an English trading institution that is believed to have shipped more enslaved Africans to the Americas than any other company.

The years immediately preceding the composition and premiere of *Messiah* were artistically and financially disastrous for Handel. In 1737, he suffered a debilitating stroke, although he eventually recovered enough to resume work. The grandiose style of Italian *opera seria*—noble or "serious" opera—for which Handel was best known was dwindling in popularity, so much so that after 1741 he stopped composing operas altogether. In the 1730s, Handel himself had experienced the bankruptcy and failure of two of his own opera companies, and by 1740, the city of London could not support its remaining two opera companies vying for an ever-shrinking audience accepting of non-English languages in its entertainments. Both shrewd and practical, Handel accepted the public's waning interest in *opera seria*, and started composing something new—oratorios in English—that he hoped audiences would prefer.

### ESTABLISHING AN ENDURING FORMAT

Handel's oratorios are cornerstones of the genre, and several took hold quickly in the European classical canon.

## ONE-MINUTE NOTE

### Handel: *Messiah*

In the month of December, we often associate gracious acts of charity with the joyful holiday season. Thus it seems appropriate that Handel's great oratorio, *Messiah*, has become an integral part of Christmas celebrations, because it was written for inclusion in a series of Dublin concerts benefiting public causes; the first performance of *Messiah* in 1742 raised an impressive £400 for charity. Beginning in 1750, he

led popular annual performances of the work for the benefit of London's Foundling Hospital Chapel, to which he donated a pipe organ in addition to bequeathing a copy of the score and parts to *Messiah*.

The German composer had spent most of his later years in London and was well known for his operatic and courtly compositions. Handel may not have considered himself a composer of sacred music, but it is

reported that *Messiah* so moved him that after completing the "Hallelujah Chorus"—with tears streaming down his face—he declared: "I did think I did see all Heaven before me and the great God himself." Over the next 250 years *Messiah* secured a place as one of the most beloved compositions in the entire orchestral and choral repertoire, and as one of Handel's most enduring and endearing works.



He wrote many of them; *Messiah* was his ninth. Although other composers had written oratorios, and the genre dates back to the early 1600s, Handel's innovations established the oratorio format that classical music listeners know best today.

The oratorio is best understood as an unstaged opera with a sacred plot, typically from the Christian Bible, juxtaposing the drama of opera with the profundity of religious themes—thereby appealing to both theater lovers and followers of that faith tradition. Like operas, oratorios were written in several parts that focused on the dramatic elements of the libretto. Handel's oratorios satisfied his intended audience's desire for dramatic musical works in cities where opera was banned and during the Lenten season that precedes Easter, when opera houses were closed.

### A COLLABORATION FOR THE AGES

An oratorio's text, particularly a sacred oratorio, was of equal importance to the music. For *Messiah*, Handel partnered with Charles Jennens, a collaborator as gifted with words as Handel was with music. One does not need to be either a musical or Biblical expert to appreciate the care with which Jennens chose and arranged the texts of *Messiah*'s libretto. Jennens' selection of texts is masterful, drawing on both well-known and obscure passages from the Bible.

Jennens' libretto contains almost no direct narrative; it is a contemplative rather than dramatic portrayal of the life, Passion and resurrection of Christ. Jennens outlined the three parts of *Messiah* accordingly: Part I presents the biblical prophecies of the Messiah, who would offer salvation; this section also presents prophecies of the Virgin birth and Christ's many miraculous and benevolent acts. Part II recounts Jesus' suffering and the rejection of his teachings by the people, his agony on the cross and subsequent resurrection, the knowledge spread among the Christian populace of his identity as the Son of God and the spreading of the Gospel. In Part III, the texts deal with the promise of bodily resurrection after the Day of Judgment, Jesus' victory over death and his ultimate deification.

*Messiah*'s lasting reputation is also due to Handel's skillful rendering of Biblical texts, which would have been as familiar to the Christian audiences of his day as commercial jingles and pop song lyrics are to today's listeners. Handel was a master of *Affektenlehre*, the Baroque aesthetic also known as text painting, which, as it suggests, audibly portrays words using musical devices. A few examples: the chorus, "All we like sheep," features an ending with a melisma—one syllable stretched across many pitches—on the word "astray," concluding in the line "All we like sheep have gone astray," with the word itself going astray from the phrase. In the opening tenor aria "Ev'ry valley," Handel sets the word "crooked" with a variety of bouncy dotted

rhythmic figures, and the word "straight" with strong single beats. In the bass aria "The people that walked in darkness," the opening phrase meanders as if lost through the darkness of a minor key, which abruptly changes into a triumphant major with the words "have seen a great light." This same technique of juxtaposing minor with major can be heard in the chorus "Since by man came death." The opening lines begin in a somber minor key, which then bursts into the joyous relative major on the words "By man came also the resurrection of the dead."

### DISPELLING THE MYTHS

A number of myths regarding *Messiah* have persisted over the years. Some accounts describe Handel refusing food and drink as he wrote *Messiah* in a white-hot religious fever. Others describe the composer's emotional state, weeping or gazing raptly into the distance, lost in an ecstasy of pious thought. The fact that Handel wrote *Messiah* in just 24 days has been taken as proof of his religious inspiration, but in fact Handel often composed quickly, especially during the summer months when he was readying operas for the upcoming theatrical season. Handel completed Part I in six days, Part II in nine, and Part III in another six, with three more days for fleshing out the orchestration. Although Handel was a sincere Christian, the speed at which he produced such transcendent and enduring music owes more to his gifts as a composer rather than to the passion of his religious beliefs.

*Messiah* received warm reviews in the Dublin newspapers even before its premiere. One reviewer, after attending a rehearsal, wrote that "Handel's new sacred Oratorio... far surpasses anything of that Nature, which has been performed in this or any other Kingdom." Another review said of the actual performance, "Words are wanting to express the exquisite Delight it afforded to the admiring crouded Audience. The Sublime, the Grand, and the Tender, adapted to the most elevated, majestick and moving Words, conspired to transport and charm the ravished Heart and Ear."

**Instrumentation:** soprano, countertenor, tenor and bass soloists, mixed chorus and orchestra comprising 2 oboes, bassoon, 2 trumpets, timpani, harpsichord (doubling organ), theorbo and strings

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*The program for today's concert will be announced from the stage. There will be one 20-minute intermission.*



### CHARLES LAZARUS, TRUMPET

Trumpeter Charles Lazarus, a Minnesota Orchestra member since 2000, is a multi-faceted performer, composer, producer and bandleader whose career has included tenures in Dallas Brass, Meridian Arts Ensemble and Canadian Brass. He has created and produced several crossover orchestral shows featuring his various ensembles, with which he has released five recordings. His live recording of Steve Heitzeg's *American Nomad* concerto and a children's animated short film collaboration with author Michael Hall are available online. His most recent recording collaboration with Tommy Barbarella, *The Modern Hymn Project*, is a collection of modern jazz takes on traditional hymns and spiritual music. He has appeared as a soloist with numerous orchestras around the U.S. and Canada and has performed with the Empire Brass, New York Philharmonic Principal Brass, London Brass and Barry White. In demand as a clinician and teacher, he has performed and taught master classes in every U.S. state, Canada, and throughout Asia and Europe. More: [minnesotaorchestra.org](http://minnesotaorchestra.org), [charleslazarus.com](http://charleslazarus.com).

### ANGELICA CANTANTI YOUTH CHOIRS

MICHELLE GEHRZ, DIRECTOR

AUDREY RIDDLE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

ANDREA DITTMER, CHOIR MANAGER

Profile appears on page 40.

Chloe Barim

Evelyn Blessing

Maya Bradley

Nico Caffari

Emma Carpenter

William Catalano

Lydia Duphorn

Mariella Elm

Mia Gile

Elliott Hazzard

Madeline Jensen

Evelyn Jurrens

Talia Cordova

Kramer

Kainalu Lazarus

Liam McNally

Madeleine Schroeder

Stella Siler

Naia Spoonheim

Josephine Spott

Ryan Warmka

Ingrid Wills

### LAZARUS BRASS

#### TRUMPET

Brad Shermock

Douglas C. Carlsen

Martin Hodel

#### HORN

Michael Gast

Michael Petruconis

#### TROMBONE

Dean Sorenson

R. Douglas Wright

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Steven Campbell

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# "FROZEN" IN CONCERT

## FEATURE FILM WITH THE MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA

Sarah Hicks, conductor

Friday, December 15, 2023, 7PM

Saturday, December 16, 2023, 2PM & 7PM

Sunday, December 17, 2023, 2PM

Orchestra Hall

DISNEY Presents

## "FROZEN" in Concert

Songs by Kristen Anderson-Lopez and Robert Lopez

Original Score by Christophe Beck

Story by Chris Buck, Jennifer Lee, Shane Morris

Screenplay by Jennifer Lee

Executive Producer John Lasseter

Produced by Peter Del Vecho, p.g.a.

Directed by Chris Buck Jennifer Lee

Voice Cast

Kristen Bell "Anna"

Idina Menzel "Elsa"

Jonathan Groff "Kristoff"

Josh Gad "Olaf"

Santino Fontana "Hans"

Alan Tudyk "Duke"

Ciaran Hinds "Pappie"/"Grandpa"

This film is rated PG.

Original Soundtrack available from WALT DISNEY RECORDS at [Disneymusicemporium.com](http://Disneymusicemporium.com)

Distributed by WALT DISNEY STUDIOS MOTION PICTURES

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Tonight's program, which runs approximately two hours, including one 20-minute intermission, is a presentation of the complete film *Frozen* with a live performance of the movie's entire score, including music played by the Orchestra during the end credits. Please remain seated until the end of the performance.

### THANK YOU

The Movies & Music series is presented by U.S. Bank.



## SARAH HICKS, CONDUCTOR

Sarah Hicks, the Minnesota Orchestra’s principal conductor of Live at Orchestra Hall, has led a broad range of programs since joining the Orchestra as assistant conductor in 2006, and has earned wide acclaim as a guest conductor in the U.S. and abroad. Her notable projects here have included co-creating the Inside the Classics series and Sam & Sarah series with Orchestra violist Sam Bergman and leading original productions with collaborators such as PaviElle French, Kevin Kling, Peter Rothstein, Robert Elhai and The Moving Company. She has been an artistic leader in concerts featuring artists from Minnesota’s popular music scene—including shows with The New Standards, singer-writer-rapper Dessa—with whom Hicks and the Orchestra made a live-in-concert recording on Doontree Records—and Cloud Cult. Next March she will conduct the Orchestra in a concert with the Indigo Girls, and in April she will lead the Orchestra’s first concerts with Minnesota-based hip-hop artist Nur-D. A specialist in film music and the film-in-concert genre, Hicks premiered Pixar in Concert and Disney and Pixar’s *Coco* in Concert; her live concert recording of *A Celebration of the Music from Coco* at the Hollywood Bowl can be seen on Disney+ and her work on *The Little Mermaid Live!* was broadcast on ABC. She will lead nearly all concerts on the Minnesota Orchestra’s 2023-24 U.S. Bank Movies & Music slate, including *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 1* and *Star Wars: The Last Jedi*. More: [minnesotaorchestra.org](http://minnesotaorchestra.org).

## CHRISTOPHE BECK, COMPOSER

Canadian composer Christophe Beck started piano lessons at age 5, and by 11 he was learning Bee Gees songs by ear and performing with his first-ever band, Chris and The Cupcakes. During high school he studied piano, saxophone and drums, and wrote many tender ’80s love ballads. While studying music at Yale, Beck wrote two musicals with his brother Jason, as well as an opera based on *The Tell-Tale Heart* by Edgar Allen Poe. Upon graduation, Beck moved to Los Angeles to attend USC’s prestigious film scoring program, where he studied with Jerry Goldsmith. A personal recommendation from the legendary Buddy Baker, then head of the USC Music Department, led to his first assignment for the Canadian TV series *White Fang*. Several TV series later, he was asked to score the second season of WB Network’s *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Beck received the Emmy Award for Outstanding Music Composition for his score to the *Buffy* episode “Becoming, Part 1.” In 2000, the cheerleading comedy *Bring It On* launched Beck’s film career, which includes such diverse credits as *Under the Tuscan Sun*, *Edge of Tomorrow*, *Crazy Stupid Love*, *Pitch Perfect* and the *Hangover* trilogy. More recently, Beck scored the Oscar- and Grammy-winning animated films *Frozen* and its sequel *Frozen II*, as well as all three of Marvel’s *Ant-Man* films. More: [christophebeck.com](http://christophebeck.com).

## KRISTEN ANDERSON-LOPEZ and ROBERT LOPEZ, SONGWRITERS

Kristen Anderson-Lopez and Robert Lopez are the Oscar-, Grammy- and Emmy-winning, married songwriting team behind the Disney animated films *Frozen* and *Frozen II*. Together they also wrote the Oscar-winning song “Remember Me” from Pixar’s *Coco* and songs for Marvel’s *WandaVision* (winning an Emmy Award for “Agatha All Along”). They wrote songs for Barack and Michelle Obama’s series *We the People* and adapted *Frozen* for the Broadway stage. Lopez co-conceived and co-wrote the hit musicals *Avenue Q* and *The Book of Mormon*, both earning him Tony Awards. Anderson-Lopez’s show *In Transit* made history as the first all a cappella musical to run on Broadway, after an award-winning Off-Broadway run. Anderson-Lopez and Lopez have written for television, film and stage, including *Finding Nemo: The Musical*, songs for *Wonder Pets!* (two Emmy Award wins) and the *Winnie the Pooh* animated film. Anderson-Lopez and Lopez both serve on the Dramatist Guild Council. Graduates of Yale University and Williams College, respectively, they now reside in Brooklyn with their two daughters.



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# A HOLIDAY EVENING WITH KRISTIN CHENOWETH AND THE MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA

Kristin Chenoweth, vocalist  
Mary-Mitchell Campbell, conductor  
Maria Dively and Erin Gardner, American Sign Language interpreters

Monday, December 18, 2023, 7:30PM | Orchestra Hall

*The program for tonight's concert will be announced from the stage. There will be one 20-minute intermission.*



## KRISTIN CHENOWETH, VOCALIST

Emmy and Tony Award-winning actress and singer Kristin Chenoweth's career spans film, television, voiceover and stage. In 2015 she received a coveted star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. In 2009 she received an Emmy Award for Best Supporting Actress in a Comedy Series for her role in *Pushing Daisies*. In 1999 she won a Tony Award for *You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown*, and in 2004 she was nominated for a Tony for her original role of Glinda the Good Witch in *Wicked*. She has been nominated for two Emmy Awards and a People's Choice Award for her role on *Glee*. In 2009 she wrote an upliftingly candid, comedic chronicle of her life so far, *A Little Bit Wicked*, which debuted on *The New York Times* hardcover non-fiction best seller list. Her hilarious and insightful gift book, *I'm No Philosopher, But I Have Thoughts: Mini-Meditations for Saints, Sinners, and the Rest of Us*, was released last winter by Harper Celebrate.

Chenoweth recently teamed up with Kenny Ortega and Monarch Media Team to produce the docuseries *1300 Miles to Broadway*, inspired by her theatre program Broadway Bootcamp. She recently co-starred in Apple TV+'s acclaimed musical-comedy series *Schmigadoon!* alongside Cecily Strong, Keegan-Michael Key and Ariana DeBose. She has performed to sold-out audiences across the world, including performances at Carnegie Hall and Royal Albert Hall. Her album of American Songbook classics on Concord Records, *The Art of Elegance*, debuted at #1 on *Billboard's* Current Jazz and Traditional Jazz charts, and #1 on Amazon's Vocal Pop chart. More: [officialkristinchenoweth.com](http://officialkristinchenoweth.com).



## MARY-MITCHELL CAMPBELL, CONDUCTOR

Mary-Mitchell Campbell is active as a conductor, music director, orchestrator, composer and arranger. Her Broadway credits include productions of *Some Like It Hot*, *The Prom*, *Mean Girls*, *My Love Letter to Broadway with Kristin Chenoweth*, *For The Girls*, *Tuck Everlasting*, *Finding Neverland*, *Big Fish*, *The Addams Family*, *Company* and *Sweeney Todd*. In addition, she serves as music director for New York City Center's Encores! series. She is deeply passionate about arts education and is the founder and president of ArtsIgnite, which uses the arts to work with children in under-resourced communities. A native of North Carolina, she resides in Bear Mountain with her beloved dogs, Maya and Steve. More: [artsignite.org](http://artsignite.org).



Angel Bat Dawid and Sojourner Zenobia, Zankel Hall at Carnegie Hall. Photo by Jennifer Taylor.

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# MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA

Thomas Søndergård, conductor

Sir Stephen Hough, piano

Angelica Cantanti Youth Choirs, Elizabeth Egger, director

Sunday, December 31, 2023, 7:30PM

Monday, January 1, 2024, 2PM

Orchestra Hall

## Sergei Prokofiev

### *Winter Bonfire Suite, Opus 122*

Departure  
Snow Outside the Window  
Waltz on the Ice  
The Bonfire  
Chorus of the Pioneers  
Winter Evening  
March  
The Return

CA. 20'

*Angelica Cantanti Youth Choirs*

## Sergei Rachmaninoff

### Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, Opus 43

*Sir Stephen Hough, piano*

CA. 23'

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

CA. 20'

## Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky

### Selections from *Nutcracker, Opus 71*

Miniature Overture  
March of the Toy Soldiers  
Waltz of the Snowflakes  
Kingdom of the Sweets  
Dance of the Reed-Flutes (Mirlitons)  
Waltz of the Flowers  
Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy  
Coda  
Final Waltz and Apotheosis

CA. 35'

*Angelica Cantanti Youth Choirs*

## POST-CONCERT

After the New Year's Eve concert, join us in the Roberta Mann Grand Foyer for a countdown to midnight, vintage jazz from Belle Amour and a complimentary Champagne toast.

## THANK YOU

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

The January 1 concert will be broadcast live on stations of [YourClassical Minnesota Public Radio](#).



**THOMAS SØNDERGÅRD,**  
CONDUCTOR

Profile appears on page 8.

Thomas Søndergård shared these comments on the music selected for today’s concert: “The season of winter, Christmas and New Year’s has always been a magical time of year for my family, and I want the audience to celebrate in that same way with this program. Earlier this year I met kids attending a concert at Orchestra Hall, and I told them that I remember when I was that age, I felt all the things that music could do with emotions, inspiration and fantasy. This program really offers that. Prokofiev’s *Winter Bonfire* begins with a train that takes off into the winter landscape, and there is a children’s choir singing in one movement. When kids are in the Hall with their families, and they can see someone their own age on stage, they’ll listen and experience in a different way. The Rachmaninoff Rhapsody played by Stephen Hough is famous for its beautiful tune, and then we head to a world of secrets and fantasy in *Nutcracker*. To round things off, we may be in for a little New Year’s surprise!”



**SIR STEPHEN HOUGH,**  
PIANO

One of the most distinctive artists of his generation, Sir Stephen Hough combines a distinguished career as a pianist, composer and writer. Named by *The Economist* as one of “Twenty Living Polymaths,” he holds the distinction of being the first classical performer to receive a MacArthur Fellowship in 2001. In 2014 he was made a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE), and in 2022 he was knighted in the Queen’s Birthday Honors. Since winning the 1983 Naumburg Competition in New York, Hough has performed with major orchestras and has given recitals in prestigious venues, from London’s Royal Festival Hall to New York’s Carnegie Hall. His discography of over 60 albums has earned international recognition, including a collaboration with the Minnesota Orchestra featuring Tchaikovsky’s three piano concertos and Concert Fantasia, released in 2010. His compositions are published by Josef Weinberger, including music for orchestra, choir, chamber ensemble, organ and solo piano. He premieres his first piano concerto this season with the Utah Symphony. A noted writer, he has contributed articles for *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Times* (U.K.) and other publications. He has authored four books, most recently a memoir, *Enough: Scenes from Childhood*. More: [harrisonparrott.com](http://harrisonparrott.com), [stephenhough.com](http://stephenhough.com).

**ANGELICA CANTANTI**  
YOUTH CHOIRS

**ELIZABETH EGGER,**  
DIRECTOR

**AUDREY RIDDLE,**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**ANDREA DITTMER,**  
CHOIR MANAGER

The Angelica Cantanti Youth Choirs is one of the oldest children’s choir programs in the Twin Cities. Founded in 1980, Angelica Cantanti is dedicated to providing consistent, high-quality choral music education with excellence in performance. Members include singers in kindergarten through grade 12, representing communities and schools across the Twin Cities metro area. Rehearsals are held weekly in Bloomington. Singers in ACYC performed at the 2018 Super Bowl at U.S. Bank Stadium and recorded Gustav Mahler’s *Symphony of a Thousand* with the Minnesota Orchestra in June 2022. The organization was recently voted “Best Community Choir in Minnesota” by WCCO-TV. More: [angelicacantanti.org](http://angelicacantanti.org).

- |                   |                  |
|-------------------|------------------|
| Sophia Bazakos    | Susannah Houston |
| Evelyn Blessing   | Kainalu Lazarus  |
| William Catalano  | Gabrielle Mackey |
| Merryn Cosgwell   | Preston Rose     |
| Sarah Conner      | Berit Schulz     |
| Elizabeth Couling | Naia Spoonheim   |
| Julia Farah       | Ella Spott       |
| Jordin Floyd      | Elodie Ursu      |
| Elizabeth Hersey  | Adalyn Western   |
| Mamie Holm        | Ingrid Wills     |





## SERGEI PROKOFIEV

**B:** April 23, 1891  
Sontsivka, Ukraine

**D:** March 5, 1953  
Moscow, Russia

### *Winter Bonfire Suite,* Opus 122

COMPOSED: 1949

*Winter Bonfire* was written during a uniquely challenging period for Sergei Prokofiev. Firstly, he was nearing the end of his life—there were only four years in between the composing of *Winter Bonfire* in 1949 and his death due to cerebral hemorrhage—and he had been chronically sick for eight years before his death. (In a historical irony, Prokofiev died on the same day as Joseph Stalin, whose regime tormented many Soviet composers.) In addition to those challenges, and in defiance of his doctor's orders as he recovered from a stroke that left him disabled for many months, Prokofiev continued to write a considerable amount of music during this time—almost as if his life depended on it. And as a composer living in Stalin's USSR, it very well might have.

In 1936, Prokofiev and his family moved back to Moscow for good. Since 1918, he had undertaken a cosmopolitan career mainly based in Paris—after a brief stint in San Francisco that nearly left him penniless—performing as a pianist and composing in both the U.S. and in his home country. He had left the USSR to escape the malaise in a post-Revolution and post-World War I society, and in a mirror image of the reason for his departure, the economic slump caused by the Great Depression in the U.S. (plus a healthy amount of homesickness) spurred him to return to his homeland.

But composing under Stalin's strict regime proved trying. In 1948, Prokofiev and other Soviet composers including Dmitri Shostakovich were officially denounced for adopting an aesthetic deemed too “modern.” To protect the safety of both himself and his wife, Prokofiev wrote to the General Assembly of Soviet Composers, admitting to “formalism” and spoke firmly in support of “a return to memorable melodies—turning away from atonality toward a simple harmonic language—and reinstatement of polyphony capable of incorporating Russian folk melodies.” Essentially, the regime mandated that art must be created in a style that praised Stalin and the so-called “oasis” he had created. Prokofiev knew that in order to spare him and his family from any retaliation for failure to comply, he had to bend—publicly, at least—to the will of the government.

### A COMMISSION FROM THE REGIME

*Winter Bonfire* was written in strict adherence to this style, known as socialist realism, on a commission from the All-Union Radio, which was the official radio broadcasting organization of the USSR. It is a symphonic suite for children that tells the story of a group of Young Pioneers (a Soviet youth program) enjoying an exciting winter's outing in the Russian countryside just outside Moscow. Like his famous *Peter and the Wolf*, *Winter Bonfire* features text narration and depicts colorful scenarios meant to delight young listeners. The well-known Soviet children's writer Samuil Marshak wrote the narration for *Winter Bonfire* (which is not heard on today's program).

Despite its dubious origins, *Winter Bonfire* demonstrates Prokofiev's unique skill of writing memorably melodic children's music that has a way of entertaining listeners of every age and follows firmly in the legacy of *Peter and the Wolf*. The suite is cast in eight movements, with a youth

## ONE-MINUTE NOTES

### Prokofiev: *Winter Bonfire*

Sergei Prokofiev's *Winter Bonfire* is a charming symphonic suite for children in the vein of the composer's famous *Peter and the Wolf*. It depicts vivid scenarios such as a train ride, falling snow, skating and the bonfire promised in the title, with a youth choir joining the fifth of eight movements.

### Rachmaninoff: Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini

A twisting melody by Niccolò Paganini is the basis for Sergei Rachmaninoff's ingenious set of 24 variations for piano and orchestra. The famous 18th variation turns Paganini's theme upside down, transforming it into a gorgeous, moonlit lovesong.

### Tchaikovsky: Selections from *Nutcracker*

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky's holiday classic *Nutcracker*, rich with colorful scoring and famous melodies, is condensed into a collection of nine movements selected by Thomas Søndergård. Among them are some of the ballet's signature moments, including *Waltz of the Flowers* and *Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy*.

choir used only in the fifth. Following is a brief description of the eight movements.

**DEPARTURE.** Unison horns open this movement with a declarative six-bar theme that sets us on our snowy musical journey. We hear the train tracks through repeated figures in the strings while winds and brass trade melodic material back and forth, loosely based on the opening theme. Fast, scalar passages in the strings provide some contrast in the middle, never losing sight of the movement’s driving energy.

**SNOW OUTSIDE THE WINDOW.** A graceful and homely melody is first presented by the oboe and supported by sustained notes in the strings. Prokofiev paints a sonic landscape of sparkly, snowy vistas through notable use of the strings and percussion throughout.

**WALTZ ON THE ICE.** A playful waltz features primary melodic material in the strings. The reprise of the theme after a slightly mysterious middle section is colored with low brass accompaniment.

**THE BONFIRE.** Trembling, shimmering strings provide the backdrop for this movement, capturing the beauty of a winter sunset and the flames of the bonfire. Horns open with a melody that invokes the grandeur of the vista, eventually joined by various woodwinds and the strings.

**CHORUS OF THE PIONEERS.** The fifth movement is the only one in the suite to use the choir, which sings two brief episodes; the orchestra then closes the movement.

Several versions of the choral text exist in Russian and English; the English version sung at these concerts follows.

Now the towering flames delight us  
While the freezing earth grows warm,  
And the country folks invite us  
Proudly to inspect their farm.

Gather wood from more than one tree,  
Throw on twigs and pile them high,  
While the folks from town and country  
Sit together warm and dry.

Bright and high the sparks are springing,  
Fast the hours speed along,  
Merrily we keep on singing  
And the bonfire leaps with song.  
Merrily we keep on singing  
And the bonfire leaps with song.

Now the towering flames delight us  
While the freezing earth grows warm,  
And the country folks invite us  
Proudly to inspect their farm.

We have hours and hours before us,  
So before the morning light,  
Let us sing a rousing chorus

Ringingly gaily through the night.  
Let us sing a rousing chorus  
Ringingly gaily through the night.

**WINTER EVENING.** A graceful, dreamlike song is passed between the violins and many solo woodwind instruments.

**MARCH.** A cheerful march prominently features the snare drum and trumpet, accompanied by playful figures in the strings and woodwinds.

**THE RETURN.** The adventure has ended, as the train music from the opening movement returns to guide listeners back home.

**Instrumentation:** children’s chorus with orchestra comprising 2 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), oboe, 2 clarinets, bassoon, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, trombone, tuba, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, tambourine, triangle, xylophone, glockenspiel, harp, piano, celesta and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY MICHAEL DIVINO.



**SERGEI RACHMANINOFF**

**B:** April 1, 1873  
Oneg, Novgorod, Russia  
**D:** March 28, 1943,  
Beverly Hills, California

**Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, Opus 43**

**PREMIERED:** November 7, 1934

In the spring of 1934, Sergei Rachmaninoff, then 61, and his wife Natalia moved into a villa they had just built on Lake Lucerne in Switzerland. They were delighted by the house, its opulent size and its view across the beautiful lake. Rachmaninoff was especially touched to find a surprise waiting for him there: the Steinway Company of New York had delivered a brand-new piano to the villa.

**A TUNE THAT BECKONS COMPOSERS**

Rachmaninoff spent the summer gardening and landscaping, and he also composed. Between July 3 and August 24 he wrote a set of variations for piano and orchestra on what is one of the most varied themes in the history of Western classical music, the last of Niccolò Paganini’s Twenty-Four Caprices for Solo Violin. Paganini had written that devilish tune, full of rhythmic spring, chromatic tension and virtuoso writing, in 1820, and he himself had followed it with 12 variations. That same theme has haunted composers through each century since—resulting in variations on it by Liszt (*Transcendental Etudes*), Schumann (12 Concert Etudes) and Brahms (the



two sets of Paganini Variations) in the 19th century, followed in the 20th century by Witold Lutosławski, Boris Blacher and George Rochberg. And there may be more to come.

After considering several titles for his new work, the composer settled on Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, a title that places the focus on melody and somewhat disguises the ingenious variation-technique at the center of this music. The first performance, with the composer as soloist, took place in Baltimore on November 7, 1934, with Leopold Stokowski conducting the Philadelphia Orchestra. Pleased and somewhat surprised by the work's reception, Rachmaninoff observed dryly: "It somehow looks suspicious that the Rhapsody has had such an immediate success with everybody."

### BRAVURA SOLOS, BRILLIANT CONTRASTS

The Rhapsody has a surprising beginning: a brief orchestral flourish containing hints of the theme leads to the first variation, which is presented *before* the theme itself is heard. This gruff and hard-edged variation, which Rachmaninoff marks *Precedente*, is in fact the bass line for Paganini's theme, which is then presented in its original form by both violin sections in unison. Some of the variations last a matter of minutes, while others whip past almost before we know it (several are as short as 19 seconds). The 24 variations contrast sharply in both character and tempo, and the fun of this music lies not just in the bravura writing for piano but in hearing Paganini's theme sound so different in each variation.

In three of them, Rachmaninoff incorporates the old plainsong tune *Dies Irae* (Day of Wrath) used by Berlioz, Saint-Saëns and many others, including Rachmaninoff, for whom this grim theme was a virtual obsession. Here it appears in the piano part in the seventh and tenth variations, and eventually it drives the work to its climax.

Perhaps the most famous of Rachmaninoff's variations, though, is the 18th, in which Paganini's theme is inverted and transformed into a moonlit lovesong. The piano states this variation in its simplest form, and then strings take it up and turn it into a soaring nocturne. The 18th variation has haunted many Hollywood composers, and Rachmaninoff himself noted wryly that he had written it specifically as a gift "for my agent." From here on, the tempo picks up, and the final six variations accelerate to a monumental climax. The excitement builds, the *Dies Irae* is stamped out by the full orchestra, and suddenly, like a puff of smoke, the Rhapsody vanishes before us on two quick strokes of sound.

**Instrumentation:** solo piano with orchestra comprising 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, suspended cymbal, triangle, glockenspiel, harp and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY ERIC BROMBERGER.



### PETER ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY

**B:** May 7, 1840  
Votkinsk, Russia

**D:** November 6, 1893  
St. Petersburg, Russia

### Selections from *Nutcracker*, Opus 71

**ORIGINAL BALLET PREMIERED:**  
December 18, 1892

Early in 1891, the Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg approached Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky with a commission for a new ballet. They caught him at a bad moment. At age 50, Tchaikovsky was assailed by worries that he had written himself out as a composer. To make matters worse, the Theatre proposed a story line the composer found unappealing: they wanted to create a ballet on the old E.T.A. Hoffmann tale *Nussknacker und Mausekönig* (known in English as *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King*), but in a version that had been retold by Alexandre Dumas as *Histoire d'un casse-noisette* and then further modified by the choreographer Marius Petipa. This sort of fairy tale full of imaginary creatures set in a confectionary dreamworld of childhood fantasies left Tchaikovsky cold, but he accepted the commission and grudgingly began work.

### AN UNEXPECTED SUCCESS

Things got still worse. Tchaikovsky had to interrupt work on the score to go on tour in America, where he was to conduct at the festivities marking the opening of Carnegie Hall in May 1891; just as he was leaving, his sister Alexandra died. The agonized composer considered abandoning the tour but went ahead (it was a huge success), and then returned to Russia in May to resume work on the ballet. He hated it and, probably more to the point, he hated the feeling that he had written himself out. To his brother, he wrote grimly: "This ballet is infinitely worse than *The Sleeping Beauty*—so much is certain."

The score was complete in the spring of 1892, and *Nutcracker* was produced at the Imperial Theatre in St. Petersburg that December, only 11 months before the composer's death at 53. At first, it had only a modest success, but then a strange thing happened. That success grew so steadily that Tchaikovsky had to reassess what he had created: "It is curious that all the time I was writing the ballet I thought it was rather poor, and then when I began my opera [*Iolanthe*] I would really do my best. But now it seems to me that the ballet is good, and the opera is mediocre."

Tchaikovsky’s premonition was quite correct: hardly anyone is interested in *Iolanthe* today, but the score for *Nutcracker* contains some of the best-loved classical orchestral music ever written. Why? What is the secret of this music’s perennial appeal—and how could the composer initially have so misjudged one of his creations?

To begin to answer these questions, we need to remember that Tchaikovsky was essentially a dramatic composer, and however much he may have claimed to dislike this tale—of magic mice, a nutcracker that turns into a prince, and vistas made up of jam and candy—he could still respond to the situations and actions of the ballet. Further, Tchaikovsky had a real melodic gift: he could create attractive and instantly recognizable tunes for characters or scenes. One need only think of how familiar the *Waltz of the Flowers* or *Trépak* have become—and they were famous long before Walt Disney’s 1940 animated film *Fantasia* cemented them into the public consciousness. Finally, Tchaikovsky had become by this point in his career a superb craftsman with the orchestra, and he uses his resources with great skill.

## A MAGICAL LANDSCAPE

*Nutcracker* is in two acts, and today’s performance features three movements from the first act and six from the second, presented in the order they are heard in the ballet.

Act I introduces members of the Stahlbaum (in some productions, Silberhaus) family, particularly the young Clara and her godfather, Herr Drosselmeyer, who produces the wooden nutcracker in the shape of a soldier. At midnight, Clara comes down to look at the Christmas tree and encounters a band of mice. Helped by the Nutcracker, who is transformed into a prince, she drives off the mice and goes on a sleigh-ride with the Prince to the land of the Sugar Plum Fairy. In today’s performance, we hear three selections from the first act—the *Miniature Overture* that opens the ballet, the *March* (also known as *March of the Toy Soldiers*) and the *Waltz of the Snowflakes* that draws the act to a close.

Act II takes place in the Land of Sweets. The opening scenes show us this magical landscape and Clara’s wonder, and in this concert we hear the music that introduces this wondrous land. The prince recounts Clara’s heroism and the battle with the mice, and in the couple’s honor, the Sugar Plum Fairy offers a series of dances—which include some of the most famous classical orchestral music ever written, although some selections have been criticized as reducing diverse traditions to clichés and reinforcing cultural biases, while many stagings of the ballet historically have perpetuated racism through choices in casting, costuming and makeup elements. Some of the dances are associated with specific beverages and nationalities; today we hear

one of those dances, the *Dance of the Reed-Flutes (Mirlitons)*, which is enlivened by the bright sound of three flutes.

The justly famous *Waltz of the Flowers* is next in today’s performance, followed by the *Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy*, which deserves special note for its innovative instrumentation. In Paris while on his way to America, Tchaikovsky heard the recently invented celesta and fell in love with its delicate ringing sound. He had one shipped to St. Petersburg and was desperate that he be the first to use it, warning his publishers that “no one there must know about it. I am afraid that Rimsky-Korsakov and Glazunov might hear of it and use it before I do. I expect it will make a tremendous impression.” And it *does* make that “tremendous impression” in the *Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy*. The *Nutcracker* ballet—and today’s condensed version of it—then concludes with a *Coda* and *Final Waltz* and *Apotheosis*, as all in the Land of the Sweets pay homage to Clara, who has rescued their prince.

**Instrumentation:** children’s chorus with orchestra comprising 3 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, English horn, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, castanet, nipple gong, ratchet, tambourine, triangle, glockenspiel, 2 harps, celesta and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY ERIC BROMBERGER.



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Minnesota Orchestra Music Director Thomas Søndergård acknowledging Kathy Saltzman Romey, artistic director of the Minnesota Chorale, following a joint performance of Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloé*, September 2023. Photo: Emma Redinger

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Audience members applauding at the conclusion of the Minnesota Orchestra's season opening concert in September 2023—Thomas Søndergård's inaugural program as the ensemble's 11th music director. Photo: Greg Helgeson

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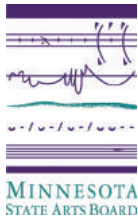
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William H. Phipps Foundation  
Xcel Energy Foundation

\$5,000-\$9,999

Anna M. Heilmaier Charitable Foundation  
Art and Martha Kaemmer Fund of HRK Foundation  
Boss Foundation  
Charlson Foundation  
Clinton Morrison Fund  
of The Minneapolis Foundation

Fox Rothschild LLP  
Harry L. and Janet M. Kitselman Foundation  
M.A. Mortenson Company  
Margaret Rivers Fund  
Mayo Clinic  
The Midwest Radiology Foundation

Mortenson Family Foundation  
SandCastle Foundation  
Sir Speedy  
Tennant Foundation

\$1,000-\$4,999

The Amphion Foundation  
Archie D. and Bertha H. Walker Foundation  
Bailey Nurseries, Inc.  
Dellwood Foundation  
Federated Insurance

Felice E. Kronfeld Fund  
of The Minneapolis Foundation  
John W. and Marcia T. Turcotte Fund  
of the Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation  
Margaret H. & James E. Kelley Foundation, Inc.  
Mill City Capital

Minnesota Vikings Football  
Onan Family Foundation  
The Pentair Foundation  
RBC Foundation - USA  
Robinson Rubber Products Co., Inc.  
The Sieff Family Foundation



**PLAYBILL**

# fringeSHIP

**AUGUST 8-15  
EDINBURGH, SCOTLAND**

**2024**

Playbill proudly presents the opportunity to experience the internationally acclaimed Edinburgh Festival Fringe in a first of its kind adventure on board the Playbill FringeShip. We are thrilled to bring you the Ambassador Cruise Line's *Ambition*—a sustainable and modern cruise ship—as the inaugural Playbill FringeShip for the 2024 Edinburgh Festival Fringe.

The beautiful and recently renovated ship will be the official 'Floatel' by the Fringe, docked in the buzzing port district of Leith. Playbill FringeShip will have direct transportation to and from the festival, as well as bringing the life and vibrancy of Edinburgh Festival Fringe on board.

Along with ultra-comfortable lodging in an array of accommodations on board, all guests of the Playbill FringeShip will enjoy a number of amenities on and off the ship, including:

- Breakfast, lunch, and dinner every day in our many restaurants and lounges, paired with a drink package of your choice
- Exciting Fringe entertainment within the FringeShip's state-of-the-art theatre and cabaret lounge, for onboard guests only
- Access to roundtrip coach service from Leith to the center of Edinburgh
- Wellness center, gym, two swimming pools, and a top deck open-air lounge with a pizza parlor

Make your stay at Fringe Festival easy and comfortable. Join us on the Playbill FringeShip!

*Prices starting at \$225 per day, per person!*

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Clockwise from top left: Musician from The Ambling Band; *Kathy and Stella Solve a Murder Mystery*; Photo: Mihaela Bodlovic; Traditional Dancer, Royal Mile; Fringe Festival Crowd, Royal Mile; *Feeling Afraid As If Something Terrible is Going to Happen*; Photo: Mihaela Bodlovic; *Mass Effect*, HIMHERANDIT Productions.



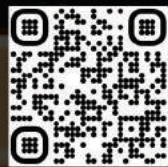
# Wells Pianos

Rebuilding & Selling Classic Steinways



“unparalleled sheer perfection”

- Pianist, Vijay Venkatesh’s  
reaction to playing our  
restored Steinway Model B  
on *Performance Today*



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