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FROM THE EDITOR

Many trends can be traced throughout the history of classical music—for example, across the centuries we can hear changes in the musical toolbox available to composers through the evolution of harmonies, forms and instruments. A deeper philosophical change in instrumental music, however, is that more composers have become storytellers rather than simply crafters of sound. This can be evident in musical titles; though it’s not new for music to have a compelling personal inspiration, it would be rare to find a modern piece titled Symphony No. 3 in F major, and unheard of for a centuries-old work to be named 4 Bassoons Talking, as is the case this month in a recent piece by Wynton Marsalis.

The expanded storyteller role means that a composer may hit on an intriguing idea that breathes new life into an older form. One such case is in Enigma Variations, Edward Elgar’s 1899 spin on the “theme and variations” structure in which each variation depicts either a friend of Elgar, his wife Caroline or the composer himself. And one of this month’s newest works, Jessie Montgomery’s Starburst, comes from the cutting edge of astronomy, showing through music “the rapid formation of large numbers of new stars in a galaxy at a rate high enough to alter the structure of the galaxy significantly”—a concept Elgar couldn’t have imagined. Wrapping up the month is music enmeshed in one of the most beloved stories of our time—the Harry Potter series—bookending Elgar’s music, in a way, by celebrating another British friendship: that of Harry, Ron and Hermione.

We thank you for making Orchestra Hall a stop in your personal story of a new year’s beginning, and hope to welcome you soon for another chapter!

Carl Schroeder, Editor
editor@mnorch.org

ABOUT THE COVER

Principal Flute Adam Kuenzel, the longest-serving principal player in the Minnesota Orchestra’s woodwind section, standing for recognition at last year’s Juneteenth program. Photo: Courtney Perry

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Sarah Hicks, page 37
Photo: Josh Kohanek

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PROFILE

THOMAS SØNDERGÅRD

Danish conductor Thomas Søndergård, who this past 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*. This month he leads concerts with violinist Augustin Hadelich as well as his first Relaxed Family Concert program.

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 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 orchestras is complemented by guest engagements with major ensembles 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 Marie Carl-Nielsen Foundation in Denmark. For more information, visit minnesotaorchestra.org.

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When you think of Orchestra Hall, does an extraordinarily special memory come to mind?

The fall of 2024 marks a half-century 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, we invite you to share your special memories of Orchestra Hall by emailing them to 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 past 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.
How did you find your way into being a music librarian?
In a medium-typical way. Most librarians at major orchestras have at least a master’s degree as a performer. I started working in the Minnesota Orchestra library part-time during my doctorate studies in viola at the U of M, and in 2015 Osmo Vänskä granted me tenure as assistant principal librarian after several years working on one-year contracts. I’ve also performed with the Orchestra many times as a substitute violist. That background is key for me as a librarian, so I can approach things from a performer’s perspective—asking what I would need if I were the person playing—and I get to apply the huge amount of random music knowledge I’ve picked up over the years.

In addition to your librarian work, you’ve taken on a visible role for our early-arriving audiences.
Yes, I love being an occasional host of pre-concert talks! It’s a fun challenge to go in directions which aren’t explored in program notes, and when I interview guest artists, I have to adapt quickly when conversations go somewhere unexpected. My favorite guest so far was violinist Elina Vähälä, who came in 2022 to play the two versions of Sibelius’ Violin Concerto. She’s an extremely genuine person who was so excited to play both versions and share a granular look at the differences.

What are some of the more typical things a music librarian does?
Most importantly, preparing music and scores in a timely manner, so the performers can access six to eight programs in advance. Preparing music means getting the conductor’s direction on which edition to use, working with publishers and rental companies to get any music that’s new to us, and looking into markings in the music that need to be copied or changed. A big part is bowings—the symbols that show when the string players’ bows should go up and down—and we work with the principal players on their preferences, then copy them into all the parts. The librarians are always double-checking since things can change during rehearsals.

You’re one of three full-time librarians at the Orchestra.
Yes, our trio has a diverse skill set that complements one another—I’m the resident string musician, Maureen [Conroy] has a background as a horn player and Eric [Sjostrom] was a bassoonist. We have the advantage of pooling our strengths, whereas a librarian at a smaller orchestra might have to do everything on their own.

How has technology changed a music librarian’s job?
Things are easier when so much can be sent by email, and we can do things like work with our string principals through cloud storage to make the bowing process faster, even if [Concertmaster] Erin Keefe is out on the road. Of course, our new Music Director Thomas Søndergård travels often, so we’re getting used to new ways of working. The convenience of technology comes with responsibility, too—librarians need to know and follow all the rules of copyright and music ownership.

Which upcoming concerts are you most excited about?
Definitely David Robertson’s program with John Adams’ Doctor Atomic Symphony, Tony Ross playing Dvořák’s Cello Concerto and Christian Tetzlaff playing Brahms’ Violin Concerto. The concerts in April with Nur-D will be easy from a librarian’s perspective, since the arranger Andy Thompson is amazing to work with. He’s always on time and makes sure the music is how we want it.

Tell us a bit about your work away from Orchestra Hall as a writer and performer.
When I was at Penn State, I earned undergraduate degrees in both English and viola performance, and I’ve continued to do a lot of writing. My debut chapbook, Little Blue Primer—a hybrid nonfiction poetry book structured around the format of a syllabus—was published in 2021, and I’m in the process of getting a graduate certificate in creative writing from UPenn. I play viola as an active freelancer, too. I performed in a string quartet for many years, and I recently started a string trio called Ninebark Ensemble with Elizabeth York and Ruth Marshall. In summers I play in the Apollo Music Festival in southeastern Minnesota.

Finish this sentence: Every day I have to...
...complete Wordle, The Mini, Spelling Bee and Worldle. Must complete!

Visit minnesotaorchestra.org/stories for an extended version of this interview.
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directed by KIMBERLY SENIOR
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directed by TRACY BRIGDEN
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conceived and performed by BILL IRWIN
February 17 – March 24

PHOTO: CAROL ROSEGG
NOW PLAYING: “SECRETS FROM A FOREST”

In recent years, the sounds of Minnesota Orchestra musicians have resonated in some unexpected places—from local breweries to midfield at U.S. Bank Stadium—and now, at the Bell Museum’s planetarium. The museum, located on the University of Minnesota’s St. Paul campus, is currently screening an original film, Secrets from a Forest, that tells an intriguing story of the relationship between nature and art, and features an all-star cast of Orchestra musicians.

Created by the award-winning team of nature photographer Jim Brandenburg and director Neil Lucas, Secrets from a Forest details the journey of a Stradivarius violin from Italy’s Dolomite Mountains to a violinmaker’s shop and, finally, to the concert stage. Brandenburg describes the compelling vision of the project: “Wouldn’t it be wonderful if we could transport the musicians’ performance from the Minnesota Orchestra back to the incredible forest where the wood came from—the Paneveggio Forest in northern Italy?”

Through breathtaking cinematography, the film brings audiences to the Italian forest that is home to the “singing” spruce that served as the wood source for Stradivarius violins, and then into a violinmaker’s studio for a first-hand look at the painstaking craftsmanship involved in building one. The film concludes with a thrilling musical sequence in which the sound of the Stradivarius comes to life—as a result of this delicate dance between human beings and nature.

The story is also one of partnership between two longtime Minnesota institutions—the Orchestra and the natural history museum founded in 1872. Twelve Orchestra musicians provide the soundtrack for the film and appear onscreen alongside soloist Thomas Gould, performing the Winter concerto from Vivaldi’s Four Seasons. Many of the music sequences were recorded and filmed in Minnesota, but through the magic of technology, musicians in the film are transported back to the forest in Italy where the story begins.

“Secrets from a Forest has broken new ground for live action film in the full-dome environment, transforming what’s possible for immersive storytelling,” said Bell Museum Executive Director Holly Menninger. The film runs with daily shows at the Bell Museum through February 16. Learn more at bellmuseum.umn.edu.
NEWS
MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA

GET YOUR SYMPHONY BALL TICKETS

Starting on January 25, you can be among the first to get your tickets for the Minnesota Orchestra’s 2024 Symphony Ball gala fundraiser, River Rhapsody—a Mississippi River-inspired evening of music, dancing, dining, drinks, auctions and good company, all supporting your Minnesota Orchestra and our artistic and educational missions. Held on May 4 at Orchestra Hall and the Minneapolis Hilton, River Rhapsody is a celebration of the soul-nourishing, life-giving currents of music and water that flow through all of us—from the Northwoods to Louisiana’s bayou country.

You’re invited to join us and celebrate the Orchestra as we revel in the traditions—from music to food—that the river inspires. Then, experience an exquisite river-themed concert of glorious orchestral classics performed by the Minnesota Orchestra, conducted by Music Director Thomas Søndergård, before capping off the night at our festive after-party at Orchestra Hall.

Learn more about what’s in store in next month’s Showcase, featuring an interview with Ball Chairs Diane and Tony Hofstede—and visit minnesotaorchestra.org/symphonyball to purchase tickets beginning January 25.

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 for a continually updating list of events—including “All in Good Fun,” a program of lighthearted musical surprises by the Isles Ensemble, which includes Orchestra violist Kenneth Freed, on Sunday, January 21, at Lake of the Isles Lutheran Church in Minneapolis.

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PLAYBILL
This month, the Minnesota Orchestra’s Young People’s Concerts bring an exciting dimension to the series, as students don’t just make up the audience—several are the stars of the show onstage. The Students Center Stage concerts on January 23 and 24, conducted by Tong Chen, feature two young soloists who won the YPSCA Young People’s Concerto Competition—violinist Esme Arias-Kim and oboist Izaiah Cheeran, a Minnesota native—each performing a concerto movement. In addition, Anoka High School junior Luca La Hoz Calassara will host the program, and 15-year-old Minnetonka High School freshman Luke Soneral’s Muggle’s March will be performed. Another special concert comes earlier in the month, as Music Director Thomas Søndergård leads his first Relaxed Family Concert on January 7, featuring musical selections that were formative to the Orchestra’s musicians while they were children.

“Our educational and family concerts in January are extraordinary,” says Mitra Sadeghpour, the Orchestra’s director of education and community engagement. “Having our music director on the podium for a Family Concert shows his exceptional commitment to young people, and our Students Center Stage program honors music educators by featuring their students onstage with the Minnesota Orchestra. We look forward to seeing the future of music on the stage at Orchestra Hall!” Søndergård adds: “When kids are in the Hall and they can see someone their own age onstage, they’ll listen and experience in a different way.”

Other recent Young People’s Concerts have also made major impacts on students, including a late November program conducted by Kalena Bovell spotlighting vibrant harvest season traditions and festivals from around the world. In one highlight, concert host Shekela Wanyama served as narrator for Jerod Impichchaachaaha’ Tate’s Spirit Chief Names the Animal People; in another, dancers Cheng Xiong and Pasha Yang performed original choreography set to Jocelyn Hagen’s woodwind quintet Shoua and the Northern Lights Dragon. Although Young People’s Concerts are exclusively for school and homeschool groups, admission to the January 7 Family Concert is open to the public—get your tickets at minnesotaorchestra.org.
MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA

CRITICS’ COLUMN: RECENT REVIEWS

“To mark his official departure [as Minnesota Orchestra music director, Osmo] Vänskä chose one of the most colossal of the repertoire’s monster items: Mahler’s Symphony No. 8, the Symphony of a Thousand....Recording the Eighth has always been a difficult assignment. So has conducting it. For particular proof of Vänskä’s victory, look to the tenderness of Part Two’s orchestral adagio and the finale’s mounting uplift, destined to leave the listener in some kind of heaven, even if not the exact one that Goethe’s text describes.”

—Geoff Brown, The Times [U.K.], November 29, 2023

“[Pianist Bertrand] Chamayou proved a fluid and graceful interpreter during [the] most heart-filling moments [of Camille Saint-Saëns’ Fifth Piano Concerto] and the bringer of storms on passages both thunderous and lightning-quick....[In Korngold’s] music for the swashbuckler The Sea Hawk...[the Minnesota Orchestra’s] brass section sent plenty of royal fanfares pealing from the stage, and the French horns and strings collaborated on some sections ideal for misty love scenes.”

—Rob Hubbard, Star Tribune, November 16, 2023

“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
In 2012, when cellist Mina Fisher retired from the Minnesota Orchestra after a 33-year tenure, she began pouring her time into three varied outlets—private teaching, managing the Bakken Trio chamber music ensemble and starting a boutique truffle business called Tour de Chocolat. As the decade progressed, an unexpected fourth outlet emerged: the creation of the musical play Nadia, which Fisher calls a “theatrical marriage of chamber music and storytelling” illuminating the life, career and inner thoughts of Nadia Boulanger, a giant of 20th-century music education who taught hundreds of classical composers—many of whom traveled to France to study under her guidance. Now, seven years after Nadia’s first performances in Minneapolis, the production is itself traveling to France for a special performance in Paris on March 10.

The process that led to Nadia’s creation began in 2015 when Fisher was researching Boulanger to find didactic methods for use in her own teaching—bolstering her knowledge beyond just the lists of Boulanger’s well-known students including Aaron Copland, Astor Piazzolla and the late former Minnesota Orchestra Music Director Stanislaw Skrowaczewski. “My affection [at first] was all towards Nadia’s teaching and to the fact that she resembled my grandmother,” Fisher recalls. After six months of learning more and brainstorming possible projects, Fisher approached singer-actress Christina Baldwin to ask if she would collaborate on writing a play about Boulanger. “I was utterly flabbergasted when she immediately said ‘yes,'” Fisher says. “But then she got a lot of roles in succession, and it rained the whole month of May when I usually garden and bike a lot, so I just started writing. And Christina, bless her, encouraged me to keep on.”

After Nadia’s 2017 debut in a series of sold-out, critically acclaimed performances at MacPhail Center for Music in downtown Minneapolis—with Baldwin as Boulanger—St. Olaf College voice professor Tammy Hensrud took center stage in 2018 for additional performances at St. Olaf and Luther College. Nadia then toured to northern Minnesota in early 2020 thanks to a Minnesota State Arts Board grant, and mezzo Adriana Zabala took on the lead part for performances in Minnesota, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. Maria Jette has also stepped into the role of Boulanger. “So many Nadias—I’m in awe of them all!” Fisher remarks.

The March performance in Paris is owed in part to a suggestion from Mariellen Jacobson, a longtime Minnesota Orchestra supporter and former president of the Young People’s Symphony Concert Association (YPSCA). “Mariellen is a great Francophone, and she once encouraged me to take Nadia to a theater at the American Church in Paris, a huge Gothic cathedral on the Seine,” Fisher explains. “Adriana Zabala’s French sister-in-law is a violin professor at the Paris Conservatoire, and she enthusiastically endorsed the proposal and volunteered to play [the secondary role of] the Violinist, so I approached the director of the Atelier Chamber Music Series there in 2019. But then came the long period of COVID—until the series restarted this past fall.”

Although Fisher comments that she misses the excitement of playing in the Minnesota Orchestra—especially “the adrenaline kick from all those personalities and being cradled in that vat of sumptuous sound”—she finds herself at Orchestra Hall often, but now in the audience, specifically box A of the third balcony, alongside another dedicated fan of the ensemble. “My husband Fritz is a longtime full-season subscriber to the Orchestra—38 years faithful!” she says. In addition to the years-long journey of Nadia, Fisher has found her private teaching especially rewarding. “My students have won lots of competitions, but I care more that they become passionate about music and love to play and work hard,” she notes. It may be no coincidence that this outlook echoes the legacy of Boulanger—whose story comes vividly to life with every performance of Nadia, from the City of Lakes to the City of Light.
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.

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.

Westminster Performing Arts Series
Winter 2024

By celebrating artists and connecting them more closely with the community, the Performing Arts Series extends Westminster’s telling presence in the city and invites people to experience the beauty of the arts.

Gao Hong
Friday, February 9 | 7pm
Westminster Hall

On the eve of the Lunar New Year, Chinese pipa player Gao Hong will perform in collaboration with the Carleton College Chinese Music Ensemble. Ticket prices include the performance, parking, and reception. Learn more about pricing and ‘pay-what-you-can’ at westministermpls.org/wpas
February may be the shortest month of the year—although it is extended by an extra day in 2024—but next month at Orchestra Hall is packed to the brim with thrilling repertoire, a varied slate of returning and debuting guest artists, and our third annual Lunar New Year celebration.

To kick off the month, the Sphinx Virtuosi—the flagship ensemble of the Sphinx Organization, dedicated to transforming lives through the power of diversity in the arts—will again share the stage with the Minnesota Orchestra in a program conducted by Tito Muñoz that includes works by several Black and Latin composers. Violinist Njioma Chinyere Grevious, senior division first place and audience prize winner of the 2023 Sphinx Competition, will bring the sounds of Argentinian summer and winter in two of Astor Piazzolla’s Four Seasons of Buenos Aires. The concert also features the Orchestra’s first performance of Carlos Simon’s Breathe, which is based on a quote by theologian Howard Thurman, who was a spiritual advisor to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

The following week, conductor Ruth Reinhardt and saxophonist Steven Banks will each make their Minnesota Orchestra debut. Banks will solo in Billy Childs’ recent work Diaspora, a concerto for saxophone and orchestra highlighting Black experiences in America and inspired by poets such as Langston Hughes and Maya Angelou. Near the month’s end, Conductor Laureate Osmo Vänskä makes an eagerly anticipated return to his beloved Orchestra near the end of the month, conducting a unique program featuring two Orchestra-commissioned works by Anders Hillborg and Kevin Puts, as well as two bass concertos starring soloist Nina Bernat, the 2022 winner of the FRIENDS of the Minnesota Orchestra Young Artist Competition.

The week before Vänskä’s return will see Orchestra Hall transformed into a festive space for our third annual Lunar New Year program. The ensemble will welcome the Year of the Dragon in a concert curated by artistic advisor Fei Xie which also features Xie’s parents, famous Peking Opera musicians Zhengang Xie and Mei Hu, masters of the Chinese instruments jing hu and yue qin, respectively. Many musical memories are waiting to be made here at Orchestra Hall in February and beyond—visit minnesotaorchestra.org for your tickets!
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Nina Bernat will be performing with the Minnesota Orchestra February 22–24, 2024.

Meet a Musician
ACCENT

Nina Bernat, bass
Grand prize winner of the Young Artist Competition
In performance and in conversation with Melissa Ousley, host
Tuesday, February 20
Target Atrium, Orchestra Hall

Nina Bernat will be performing with the Minnesota Orchestra February 22–24, 2024.

Join us for a special evening: Young Artist Competition Celebration, Special Guests, and more. For details and to purchase tickets please see our website.
MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA

Thomas Søndergård, conductor
Augustin Hadelich, violin

Friday, January 5, 2024, 8PM | Saturday, January 6, 2024, 2PM | Orchestra Hall

William Walton
Scapino, A Comedy Overture
CA. 8’

Benjamin Britten
Concerto for Violin and Orchestra, Opus 15
Moderato con moto
Vivace
Passacaglia: Andante lento (un poco meno mosso)
Augustin Hadelich, violin

INTERMISSION
CA. 20’

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor
Idyll, Opus 44
CA. 8’

Edward Elgar
Variations on an Original Theme, Opus 36, Enigma
Enigma: Andante
Variations
I. (C.A.E.): L’istesso tempo
II. (H.D.S.- P.): Allegro
III. (R.B.T.): Allegretto
IV. (W.M.B.): Allegro di molto
V. (R.P.A.): Moderato
VI. (Ysobel): Andantino
VII. (Troyte): Presto
VIII. (W.N.): Allegretto
IX. (Nimrod): Moderato
X. (Dorabella): Intermezzo (Allegretto)
XI. (G.R.S.): Allegro di molto
XII. (B.G.N.): Andante
XIII. (**): Romanza (Moderato)
XIV. (E.D.U.): Finale (Allegro)

PRE- AND POST-CONCERT

Concert Preview with Nicholas Landrum
Friday, January 5, 7:15pm, Target Atrium | Saturday, January 6, 1:15pm, Target Atrium

Conversation with Thomas Søndergård and Melissa Ousley
Saturday, January 6, post-concert, Auditorium

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

Minnesota Orchestra concerts are broadcast live on Friday evenings on stations of YourClassical Minnesota Public Radio, including KSJN 99.5 FM in the Twin Cities.
Augustin Hadelich is widely considered as one of the greatest violinists of our time. Known for his phenomenal technique and insightful interpretations, he has performed with all the major American orchestras as well as the Berlin Philharmonic, Vienna Philharmonic, Concertgebouw Orchestra, Bavarian Radio Symphony and London Philharmonic, among many other eminent ensembles. He debuted with the Minnesota Orchestra in 2015 and appeared here most recently in March 2022, performing Beethoven's Violin Concerto. In the 2023-24 season, he is the artist in residence at the Konzerthaus Berlin and performs with more than two dozen major orchestras in North America, Europe and Asia, including the Cleveland Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, Orchestre National de France, NHK Symphony Orchestra, Taiwan Philharmonic and Seoul Philharmonic. He also performs recitals in the U.S., Canada, Germany, Italy and Japan. Hadelich received a 2016 Grammy Award for Best Classical Instrumental Solo in 2016 for his recording of Dutilleux’s Violin Concerto with the Seattle Symphony, and he is featured on three additional Grammy-nominated albums. A Warner Classics Artist, he most recently released a Spain-themed album titled Recuerdos. Hadelich rose to fame when he won the Gold Medal at the 2006 International Violin Competition of Indianapolis. More: kdschmid.de, augustinhadelich.com.

Walton: Scapino
William Walton’s Scapino evokes the spirit of a roguish commedia dell’arte character. Contributing to an atmosphere of comedy are long melodic lines juxtaposed with short interjections.

Britten: Violin Concerto
In Benjamin Britten’s musical statement of anguish over the Spanish Civil War, Spanish rhythms and dance figures interweave with a long lyrical melody for solo violin, leading to a cadenza and a set of passionate variations on a Spanish theme.

Coleridge-Taylor: Idyll
Samuel Coleridge-Taylor’s Idyll is an airy and dreamlike musical landscape, highlighting the sweet-singing capabilities of the woodwinds and horns and the lyrical beauty of the string section.

Elgar: Enigma Variations
Thirteen of Edward Elgar’s closest friends, as well as the composer himself, are depicted in this musical portrait gallery. A highlight is the poignant Nimrod, which starts quietly and builds to a sonorous emotional climax.
This week’s program of works by British-born composers begins with a work rooted not in the U.K., but in a different country’s tradition—the commedia dell’arte, a theatrical form that flourished in Italy in the 17th and 18th centuries. This form was the origin of characters such as Harlequin and Colombine, among many others. Although the form declined, many of its stock figures live on in music, where they have inspired such classical works as Schumann’s *Carnaval*, Stravinsky’s *Petrushka* and *Pulcinella*, Schoenberg’s *Pierrot Lunaire*, Rachmaninoff’s *Polichinelle* and Milhaud’s *Scaramouche*, to name just a few.

**A WILY CHARACTER**

In Walton’s *Scapino* work we meet the titular character, a crafty servant always alert to cutting a good deal, whether for himself or for his master. The young Englishman William Walton chose Scapino as a subject when, to celebrate its 50th anniversary in 1941, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra extended commissions to a number of composers, including Walton.

When Oxford University Press published *Scapino*, Walton requested that the score’s cover be adorned with a 1622 etching of Scapino by Jacques Callot, showing a figure with flowing clothing, sword worn at a jaunty angle, a feathered hat and a van Dyke beard beneath his piercing eyes. In the score Walton noted that “Scapino is one of the less familiar characters of the commedia dell’arte, the hero of Molière’s *Les Fourberies de Scapin*, who may figure in the complicated ancestry of Figaro. We owe him the word ‘escapade,’ which is descriptive of the character’s stock-in-trade.”

By the time Walton began work on the score in 1940, he was already in the British army, and he worked on the piece as his military duties allowed. *Scapino* was, in fact, one of Walton’s few concert works composed during the war; most of his time went to film scores, such as Laurence Olivier’s *Henry V*. His description of *Scapino* as “A Comedy Overture” is exactly right: this is not a musical portrait of that wily figure, but an evocation of his spirit. Tempos tend to be very fast, and the sonority is high, bright and glittering, often full of the sound of brass and xylophone.

**Scapino, A Comedy Overture**

PREMIERED: April 3, 1941

The overture is in a straightforward three-part structure. It gets off to a sizzling start (Walton’s marking is *Molto vivace*), and violas quickly introduce a gliding, sinuous tune that is soon picked up by the violins and other instruments—this will be the musical backbone of *Scapino*. The more lyric central episode, introduced by solo cello (on a variant of the overture’s main theme), offers a moment of relative repose before the opening tempo returns and *Scapino* races to its high-energy conclusion.

Frederick Stock and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra gave the first performance of *Scapino* on April 3, 1941. Because of the war and his military duties Walton could not attend, and he did not hear the piece until some time later. He revised the score in 1950, and it is the revised version that is always heard today.

**Instrumentation:** 3 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, English horn, 3 clarinets (1 doubling bass clarinet), 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, castanets, Chinese temple blocks, tambourine, triangle, xylophone, glockenspiel, harp and strings

**Program Note by Eric Bromberger.**

**Benjamin Britten**

B: November 22, 1913
Lowestoft, England

D: December 4, 1976
Aldeburgh, England

**Concerto for Violin and Orchestra, Opus 15**

PREMIERED: March 28, 1940

Benjamin Britten came to the United States in 1939, when all was not well in the world, nor in Britten’s nascent career. “A discouraged young composer—muddled, fed-up, and looking for work, longing to be used”—that is how he described himself later. It was in St. Jovite, Quebec, that he finished his Violin Concerto in the summer of 1939, just before war engulfed Europe.

**MUSICAL AND POLITICAL EVOLUTION**

In his 20s, Britten began to attract attention with works such as the Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge, written in 1937 for the Boyd Neel Orchestra to take to the last Salzburg Festival before Germany’s annexation of Austria, and the Piano Concerto, in which he was soloist at the 1938 BBC Proms festival in London. Critics at home, however, were generally hostile to anyone outside the English
pastoral tradition. The foreign influences on Britten’s music—notably Mahler and Shostakovich—did not help his position. Neither did his brilliance: “Too clever by half,” was the consensus. His loyalty to left-wing causes and his ties to such writers as W.H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood also made him a suspect figure.

Britten’s discouragement was political as well as musical. The appeasement policies vis-à-vis Hitler and Mussolini of successive Tory governments enraged and depressed him. When Auden and Isherwood moved to the United States in January 1939, Britten made arrangements to follow. He took two unfinished scores, the song cycle Les Illuminations (with text by Arthur Rimbaud) and the Violin Concerto. His companion on the journey—and for life, as it turned out—was the tenor Peter Pears, whom he had met three years before when they had given a benefit recital for the Republican side in the Spanish Civil War.

That tragic conflict has a bearing on the Violin Concerto. Britten’s sympathies were with Spain’s Republicans, who were defeated with Fascist aid in March 1939. He had friends among the British volunteers who went to Spain to fight on the Republican side, and on a tour with the Spanish violinist Antonio Brosa, he himself witnessed some of the slaughter. It was to Brosa that Britten entrusted the editing and the first performance of the Violin Concerto, which was given with the New York Philharmonic under John Barbirolli on March 28, 1940 (we hear it today in Britten’s revisions of 1950 and 1958). Brosa attested that the first music in the concerto—a quiet five-note timpani figure with cymbal punctuation—is in a specifically Spanish rhythm. Alban Berg’s great Violin Concerto, broadcast by the BBC in 1936, had provided a model for violin-concerto-as-requiem, and so Britten’s grippingly eloquent work also became a concerto funebre, a “war requiem” closely related to his Sinfonia da Requiem that followed it in 1940.

THE MUSIC: DRAMA SURROUNDING A SCHERZO MODERATO CON MOTO. Britten begins with his Spanish figure for drums and cymbal. Its third statement releases into a march which you had best enjoy now, for it will not return. After a brief and agitated development, the violin plays rhapsodic figurations against a background of slow chords for just a few strings, with woodwinds recalling fragments of the march and muffled drums dropping in a reminder of the Spanish dance rhythms.

Britten has saved the harp for this moment of homecoming, and for some time the mysterious blur of its low glissandos marks the beginning of each of its measures. The recapitulation also marks the arrival of the concerto’s true harmonic home, D, which at this moment is a luminous D major. The melody, espressivo but pianissimo, is sung by the orchestral violins and violas, while the solo violin, basses, bass drum and harp fiercely add the Spanish figure that began the movement. Continuing the reversal of roles, the solo violin extends the melody. Slowly, with one or the other Spanish rhythms inescapably present, this impassioned elegy sinks into silence.

VIVACE. Out of this silence the sardonic scherzo springs into life. Slashing percussive chords con tutta forza against swirling figures and trills in the orchestra, the soloist at first turns accompanist. But all this is preparation and upbeat, and the theme proper, a melody that describes a large curve up and down across two octaves, is finally introduced by the soloist. Contrast arrives in the form of a violin tune, and then comes what in the matter of sheer color is the most amazing music in the concerto: while muted strings play tremolando, the scherzo theme is transformed into a solo for the tuba with two piccolos dancing a giddy round in the stratosphere. Eventually the orchestra proposes a return to the violin tune. But the wheels spin frantically in place, and when the orchestra stops, the soloist continues its crazed whirling. This the beginning of a coda, which is also the bridge to the finale.

PASSACAGLIA: ANDANTE LENTO (UN POCO MENO MOSSO). We now arrive at the passacaglia theme of the finale. This is the first of Britten’s many passacaglias—a set of variations over a reiterated bass—a form he would use tellingly throughout his life. Its use calls to mind another of Britten’s passionate and formative musical loves, the great 17th-century predecessor, Henry Purcell.

It is for this moment that Britten has saved the trombones, who quietly cut across the end of the coda with the passacaglia theme. This is a scale ascending and descending in alternating whole- and half-steps, that pattern symbolizing another aspect of the major-minor ambivalence. Britten begins with a series of overlapped statements of this scale. Then come nine variations, several of which also encompass more than one statement of the theme: (1) “speaking” violin figurations over tremolando strings; (2) the theme in the winds with more elaborate violin commentary; (3) orchestra alone with oboe solo; (4) a rhythmically free violin melody over a clear 3/4 accompaniment; (5) the violin inverts the theme, then picks up the decorative scales begun by the woodwinds; (6) a march; (7) a pedal E, the theme in the bassoon, with swift, featherweight violin figurations; and (8) grand, for orchestra alone.
The final variation is the keening lament toward which the whole concerto has tended. Over solemn orchestral chords the violin sings out its anguish. At the close, Britten achieves extraordinary intensity by having the violin climb to great altitudes, but on the lowest string. The orchestra, very softly, comes to rest on an empty D chord, one without either the F-sharp or the F-natural that would fit either major or minor. It is on just those two notes that the violin sobs its final trill.

**Instrumentation:** solo violin with orchestra comprising 3 flutes (2 doubling piccolo), 2 oboes (1 doubling English horn), 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, snare drum, tenor drum, bass drum, cymbals, suspended cymbals, triangle, glockenspiel, harp and strings

**Program Note by the Late Michael Steinberg, Used with Permission.**

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**Samuel Coleridge-Taylor**

**B:** August 15, 1875
London, England

**D:** September 1, 1912
London, England

**Idyll, Opus 44**

**Premiered:** 1901

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**A Beautiful Picture**

*Idyll* is airy and picturesque, highlighting the sweet-singing capabilities of the woodwinds and horns and the lyrical beauty of the string section. The word *idyll* comes from the Greek *eidyllion*, which means “little picture,” and it most commonly refers to a poem or story of a simple, beautiful or peaceful place, often in a rural setting. From start to finish, this piece is exactly that: a blissful little escape into a dreamlike musical landscape.

**Instrumentation:** 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, harp and strings

**Program Note by Emma Plehal**

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**Coleridge-Taylor’s Music in Minnesota**

In April 1905, Emil Oberhoffer, the first music director of what was then known as the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra, introduced Coleridge-Taylor’s music to Minnesota, programming an excerpt from *Hiawatha’s Wedding Feast*. Following his lead, Henri Verbrugghen, the ensemble’s second music director, continued to program Coleridge-Taylor’s music on a variety of programs through 1930. Then, unfortunately, more than six decades passed without another performance of his music by the Minnesota Orchestra. Since 1992, the Orchestra has added 13 additional compositions by Coleridge-Taylor to its repertoire.

*Idyll* was first performed by the Minnesota Orchestra on October 7, 2022, in a public concert that was born out of the Orchestra’s Listening Project. One year prior to the performance, the Orchestra’s musicians and staff began a new initiative with the goal of deepening their own knowledge of great orchestral works by historically underrepresented composers whose music is less likely to have been recorded professionally. Through careful research, they selected works to be performed and recorded, making the recordings available free of charge for listeners and orchestras around the world. Through the ongoing Listening Project, the Orchestra strives to encourage future performances of this music by ensembles worldwide.

**A Complicated Beginning**

Coleridge-Taylor’s *Idyll* began its life as the second movement of his First Symphony, which he composed while still a student at Stanford University. He originally titled the movement *Lament*, but after many revisions spanning several years, it reappeared as *Idyll* and received its first performance at the 1901 Three Rivers Choir Festival in Gloucester. At that time, the piece received wildly mixed reviews; some critics praised Coleridge-Taylor for *Idyll’s* beauty, while other critics pined for a more complex work. It was because of this lukewarm reception that the work was not fully published at the time. To keep expenses low, it was not unusual for new compositions to reach the engravers and printers and only see a full score or select parts made available. This process made Coleridge-Taylor’s music almost inaccessible for any orchestra seeking to perform it unless they rented the parts in manuscript form. A fully engraved set of score and parts for *Idyll* only became available widely in 2021.
One evening in 1898, Edward Elgar was improvising for his wife at the piano and just for fun tried varying a theme to suggest the personalities of different friends. Suddenly a musical project occurred to him, and what had begun “in a spirit of humor...continued in deep seriousness.” The result was an orchestral theme and 14 variations, each a portrait of a friend or family member.

The subjects were soon identified, but mystery surrounded the theme itself, a six-bar melody full of rises and falls that make it an ideal candidate for variation. Elgar himself fed that mystery, naming the theme “Enigma” and stating that “its ‘dark saying’ must be left unguessed.” Hans Richter conducted the first performance in London on June 19, 1899, and the Enigma Variations quickly established Elgar’s reputation.

**PORTRAITS OF FRIENDS—PLUS A SELF-PORTRAIT**

Elgar’s music is a charming depiction of his social circle in late-Victorian England, which had affinities for garden parties, bicycle visits and long steamer trips abroad.

**THEME: ENIGMA.** Strings alone announce the noble, wistful theme, which Elgar marks molto espressivo. The music leads directly into the first variation.

I. C.A.E. This is a gentle portrait of the composer’s wife, Caroline Alice Elgar, musically similar to the first statement of the theme.

II. H.D.S.-P. Hew David Steuart-Powell was a piano teacher; this variation, marked Allegro, echoes his practicing staccato runs.

III. R.B.T. Elgar described Richard Baxter Townshend as “an amiable eccentric.”

IV. W.M.B. The variation for William Meath Baker, a bluff and peremptory country squire, thunders past in barely 30 seconds.

V. R.P.A. Elgar described Richard Penrose Arnold, as a “gentleman of the old school” and represents him with a noble violin line and flights of fancy from the woodwinds.

VI. YSOBEL. Isabel Fitton, a viola player, is gently depicted via an exercise in string-crossing for violists—showcasing the basic and essential technique of moving the bow from one string to another.

VII. TROYTE. Arthur Troyte Griffith was an argumentative architect. His Presto variation features brillante runs from the violins and ends with the sound of a slamming door.

VIII. W.N. Winnifred Norbury, a dignified older acquaintance of the Elgars, is heard in a “trilly laugh,” but some believe the music actually depicts her family home.

IX. NIMROD. August Jaeger was one of Elgar’s closest friends and supporters; “Jaeger” (Jäger) is German for hunter, and Nimrod was the mighty hunter in the Biblical book of Genesis. This noble slow movement is sometimes performed separately as a memorial. Strings alone announce the theme, which grows to a triumphant climax and subsides to end quietly.

X. DORABELLA. Dora Penny was a friend whose slight stammer is represented in the music as a brief hesitation at the start of each woodwind phrase. Elgar renamed her Dorabella for this variation, after the character in Mozart’s Così fan tutte.

XI. G.R.S. The variation for George Robertson Sinclair, the organist at the Hereford Cathedral, features the sound of his bulldog Dan in the growling lower instruments, and the tinkling sound of his bicycle bell in the triangle.

XII. B.G.N. Basil Nevinson was a cellist, and noble solos for that instrument open and close this cantabile variation.

XIII. (***) ROMANZA. Lady Mary Lygon was on a steamship to Australia when Elgar wrote this music, and he remembered her with a variation that suggests the sound of the ship’s vibrating engines as side drum sticks roll softly on the timpani. Over this low rumble, Elgar quotes Mendelssohn’s Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage Overture, putting quotation marks around the excerpt in his score.

XIV. E.D.U. “Edu” was his wife’s nickname for the composer, and this musical self-portrait, by turns powerful, striving and gentle, was “written at a time when friends were dubious and generally discouraged as to the composer’s musical future.” Along the way we hear the whistle Elgar used to announce his arrival at home; he also weaves in a reminiscence of his wife’s variations before the music drives to a triumphant close.

**Instrumentation:** 2 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, organ, bass drum, cymbals, snare drum, triangle and strings

**PROGRAM NOTE BY ERIC BROMBERGER.**
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.

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MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA

Thomas Søndergård, conductor
Maria Dively, American Sign Language interpreter

Sunday, January 7, 2024, 2PM  |  Orchestra Hall

This afternoon’s concert lasts approximately one hour and is performed without an intermission.

Gabriela Ortiz  
*Kauyumari*  
CA. 7'

Benjamin Britten  
*Storm, from Four Sea Interludes from Peter Grimes*  
CA. 5'

Lili Boulanger  
*D’un matin de printemps (Of a Spring Morning)*  
CA. 5'

Jessie Montgomery  
*Starburst*  
CA. 4'

Edward Elgar  
*Nimrod, from Enigma Variations*  
CA. 4'

Florence Price  
*Juba, from Symphony No. 3 in C minor*  
CA. 5'

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky  
Selections from *The Nutcracker*  
Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy  
Dance of the Mirlitons  
Trepak  
CA. 5'

Modest Mussorgsky/  
orch. Maurice Ravel  
*The Great Gate of Kiev, from Pictures at an Exhibition*  
CA. 5'

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**PRE- AND POST-CONCERT**
Arrive early and stay after the concert to try instruments, make art, dance and meet Minnesota Orchestra musicians.

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**THANK YOU**
The Relaxed Family Concert series is made possible by PNC.

This activity is made possible by the voters of Minnesota through a grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board, thanks to a legislative appropriation from the arts and cultural heritage fund.
Danish conductor Thomas Sondergard, who this past 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. Sondergard 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*. In recent weeks he has led the Orchestra’s New Year’s concerts as well as a program with violinist Augustin Hadelich.

Since 2018 Sondergard 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. Sondergard 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 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, Sondergard 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. He is the 2023 recipient of the prestigious honorary award from the Carl Nielsen and Anne Marie Carl-Nielsen Foundation in Denmark. For more information, visit minnesotaorchestra.org.

Maria Dively has been an American Sign Language interpreter for nine years in Minnesota and California. A NIC/Trilingual Interpreter, she is a graduate of North Central University in Minneapolis. She was born and raised in Puerto Rico and has been involved personally and professionally in the Deaf community since college. From a young age, she has been involved with music as a woodwind player, percussionist and steel drums player, among other roles.
THE SPHINX VIRTUOSI  
WITH CONDUCTOR TITO MUÑOZ  
AND THE MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA  
THU FEB 1 11AM  
FRI FEB 2 8PM  
SAT FEB 3 7PM  
The Sphinx Virtuosi shares the stage with the Minnesota Orchestra in a program featuring Carlos Simon’s meditative Breathe and Angélica Negrón’s immersive Marjada.

PROKOFIEV’S ROMEO AND JULIET  
FRI FEB 9 8PM  
SAT FEB 10 7PM  
Conductor Ruth Reinhardt and saxophonist Steven Banks, a 2022 Avery Fisher Career Grant recipient, make their debuts with the Minnesota Orchestra to showcase Billy Childs’ recent work Diaspora, a concerto for saxophone and orchestra.

OSMO VÄNSKÄ RETURNS  
THU FEB 22 11AM  
FRI FEB 23 8PM  
SAT FEB 24 7PM  
Conductor Laureate Osmo Vänskä leads a compelling program celebrating the future of orchestral music. Hear new commissioned works by Anders Hillborg and Kevin Puts. Plus, 2022 FRIENDS Young Artist Competition winner Nina Bernat performs two bass concertos.

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WITH THE MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA  
SAT FEB 17 7PM  
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ANTHONY ROSS PLAYS DVOŘÁK’S CELLO CONCERTO

MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA

Jun Märkl, conductor
Anthony Ross, cello

Friday, January 12, 2024, 8PM
Saturday, January 13, 2024, 7PM
Orchestra Hall

Antonín Dvořák
Concerto in B minor for Cello and Orchestra, Opus 104
Allegro
Adagio ma non troppo
Finale: Allegro moderato
Anthony Ross, cello

INTERMISSION
CA. 20’

Johannes Brahms
Symphony No. 3 in F major, Opus 90
Allegro con brio
Andante
Poco allegretto
Allegro

CA. 33’

PRE-CONCERT
Performance by YPSCA Concerto Competition Finalists
Friday, January 12, 7:15pm, Target Atrium | Saturday, January 13, 6:15pm, Target Atrium
Book signing by retired Minnesota Orchestra cellist Marcia Peck
January 12 and 13, Roberta Mann Grand Foyer

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

Minnesota Orchestra concerts are broadcast live on Friday evenings on stations of YourClassical Minnesota Public Radio, including KSJN 99.5 FM in the Twin Cities.
ANTHONY ROSS, CELLO

Anthony Ross, the leader of the Minnesota Orchestra’s cello section since 1991, has been a soloist many times with the Orchestra, performing all the standard cello concertos as well as modern works such as Michael Daugherty’s *Tales of Hemingway*, James MacMillan’s Cello Concerto, Paul Moravec’s *Montserrat* and David Ott’s *Concerto for Two Cellos*, which he and his wife, Minnesota Orchestra cellist Beth Rapier, have long championed. In April 2024 Ross and Rapier will be featured with cello section colleagues in Moses Hogan’s *Spirituals for Five Cellos* at an Orchestra chamber music concert. Ross has also played as a concerto soloist with the Moscow State Orchestra, Louisville Orchestra, Dallas Symphony, Rochester Philharmonic, South Dakota Symphony and many other Midwest regional orchestras. An avid chamber musician, he is a member of Accordo and the Chamber Music Society of Minnesota and has appeared on many festival stages. Winner of the prestigious bronze medal at the 1982 Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow, Ross went on to gain the Stulberg Award, the G.B. Dealy Award and a prize in the Parisot International Cello Competition. He has twice been awarded a McKnight Artist Fellowship, first as a soloist and then as part of the Ross Rapier Cello Duo. More: minnesotaorchestra.org.

JUN MÄRKL, CONDUCTOR

Jun Märkl is a highly respected interpreter of core Germanic repertoire and has become known for his explorations of French Impressionists. He serves as music director of the Taiwan National Symphony Orchestra, artistic advisor of the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, and principal guest conductor of the Residentie Orkest The Hague and the Oregon Symphony Orchestra. His longstanding relationships with the state operas of Vienna, Berlin, Munich, Semperoper Dresden and the Metropolitan Opera have been complemented by his music directorships of the Orchestre National de Lyon, MDR Leipzig Radio Symphony Orchestra and Basque National Orchestra. Märkl has an extensive discography of more than 50 albums including the complete Robert Schumann symphonies with the NHK Symphony Orchestra. He is currently in the midst of a cycle of works by Camille Saint-Saëns, Richard Strauss and Toshio Hosokawa. Born in Munich, Märkl won the conducting competition of the Deutscher Musikrat in 1986 and studied at Tanglewood with Leonard Bernstein and Seiji Ozawa. Soon after he appeared in opera houses throughout Europe, and subsequently held his first music directorships at the Staatstheater Saarbrücken and the Nationaltheater Mannheim. More: musicvinearts.com, junmarkl.com.

Dvořák: Cello Concerto

The Dvořák Cello Concerto, achingly romantic, is often considered the greatest Western classical concerto ever written for the instrument. A quiet section near the close recalls the composer’s lost love, who died as the work was composed.

Brahms: Symphony No. 3

A powerful brass motto opens this symphony; hymn-like, passionate, pastoral and bittersweet melodies follow. Resolving tension, the final Allegro treats us to a serene, sunny flow—the mood so often associated with Brahms.
Antonín Dvořák’s Cello Concerto is considered by many to be the greatest ever written for that instrument, and so it comes as a surprise to learn that the composer had been reluctant to write a concerto for this instrument. He had reservations about what he considered the cello’s “limitations”: a somewhat indistinct sound in its lowest register and a thin sound in its highest, as well as the problem of making a low-pitched instrument cut through the weight of a full orchestra. But—encouraged by hearing Victor Herbert play his own Second Cello Concerto in New York in 1894—Dvořák wrote this masterpiece very quickly between November 8, 1894, and February 9, 1895.

BOTH GRAND AND LEAN

Dvořák’s solutions to the problems posed by a cello concerto are ingenious. Rather than scaling back the orchestra to balance it more equitably with the soloist, he instead writes for a huge orchestra, adding three trombones and tuba to the texture, as well as instruments less common for the period: piccolo and triangle. He then scores the concerto with great imagination, alternating grand gestures that use all his forces with leanly-scored passages in which only a handful of instruments accompany the soloist. When Brahms examined the score to Dvořák’s Cello Concerto, he exclaimed: “Why on earth didn’t I know one could write a cello concerto like this? If I had only known I would have written one long ago!”

ALLEGRO. The lengthy opening Allegro is in sonata form, and Dvořák follows custom by introducing both main themes before the soloist enters. The quiet opening tune, a dark, march-like figure for clarinets, soon builds up to a Grandioso restatement, preparing the way for the glorious second subject, a soaring melody perfectly suited to the solo horn that announces it. The solo cello makes an impressive entrance on the opening march theme, and Dvořák exploits fully the lyric and dramatic possibilities of the instrument in this movement.

ADAGIO MA NON TROPPO. The second movement is in ABA form, with woodwinds introducing the gentle opening section before the soloist takes it up. The central episode quotes from Dvořák’s own song “Leave me alone with my dreams.” It had been a favorite of one of Dvořák’s pupils, Josefína Čermáková Kaunitzova, with whom he had fallen in love while he was a young man. She had not responded to that love, and Dvořák later married her sister. Now, as he was writing this concerto in New York City, he learned that Josefína was seriously ill in Prague, and remembering her fondness for this song, he included its wistful melody in this movement.

FINALE: ALLEGRO MODERATO. Over a steady pulse from lower strings, horns announce the main subject of the rondo-finale, which the soloist quickly picks up. This rondo is both lively and lyrical, and its episodes are varied. Near the close comes a remarkable passage. Shortly after Dvořák returned to Prague in 1895, Josefína died. Stunned, the composer returned from her funeral and rewrote the ending of the concerto, adding a quiet 60-measure section that recalls the main theme of the first movement and the song-theme from the second movement that Josefína had loved so much.

It is a moving ending. Dvořák recalls his sister-in-law one final time as the cello sings this sad melody, its final measures trailing off over quiet timpani accompaniment, and then—with this behind him—he rushes the work toward its smashing close.

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

PROGRAM NOTE BY ERIC BROMBERGER.

JOHANNES BRAHMS

The shortest of Brahms’ symphonies may also be his most complex. The dense interweaving of major and minor tonalities and its florid and jarring themes broke new ground in Western classical music. The context of the music’s creation was unique as well. The year was 1883, and Brahms had just turned 50. He was enamored of a younger singer, the contralto Hermine Spies, and suddenly he’d begun writing lieder for the alto range.

The bachelor composer was beginning to grow melancholy about his prospects for finding love, and the texts of the
songs, as Jan Swafford points out in his fine 1997 biography, dwell on being “over the hill.” Thus, instead of his usual posh vacation-spas like that at Bad Ischl, he spent the summer in a country house overlooking the Rhine in Wiesbaden, where Hermine lived. It’s not clear what, if anything, went on between them, but it’s reasonable to presume that he poured much of his emotion into his main project for the summer, the Third Symphony.

The First Symphony, 15 years in the works, had taught Brahms much about forging an individual style, and about weaning himself from Beethoven. The Second came out in a flow that at least one writer has suggested was a little too fast.

The Third, written after a six-year hiatus and composed and scored in a few weeks, was intriguing to its first listeners partly because of the way it seemed to meld the First’s struggle with the mellifluous melodic style of the Second. (Granted, the hiatus had seen the completion of the Violin Concerto, the Second Piano Concerto and the Academic Festival and Tragic overtures.)

Already at its premiere in Vienna in 1883, with Hans Richter on the podium, the Third was proclaimed by many to be the composer’s greatest work up to that time. Ironically, this was just the sort of mutual acclaim by press and public that seemed to make Brahms uneasy. For how does one top one’s “greatest work so far”?

FAUST AND BEYOND

There is some evidence, too, that Brahms did not start from scratch when working on the Third. For the middle two movements of the Symphony, he might have drawn upon music he had sketched in 1881 as incidental music for Goethe’s Faust. In any case, the composer integrated these movements into a symphonic conception of almost unprecedented unity. Some have gone so far as to characterize the Third in terms of a cyclic plan like that of Franz Liszt’s piano concertos, in which an entire multi-movement work is conceived as a single continuous structure.

Indeed, the tonal plan of the Third Symphony is unusual in many respects—such as the use of C major and C minor, respectively, for the two inner movements; and the return of early thematic material at the end of the work is only one of many means by which the four movements are unified. “What a harmonious mood pervades the whole!” said Clara Schumann of the Third, immediately perceiving this sense of wholeness. “All the movements seem to be of one piece, one beat of the heart, each one a jewel.”

MAJOR AND MINOR, LOCKED IN COMBAT

ALLEGRO CON Brio. Much has been written of the stupendous rising motto in the brass that opens the symphony’s first movement, which forms an essential building-block for the entire piece. The signature of F—A-flat—F is heard not only in the massive wind chords that begin the piece, but also in the bass line that accompanies the subsequent string theme.

The A-natural of the main theme’s outline of F—A—F casts itself in immediate relief with the A-flat of the bass, creating a major-minor tension whose spring-like coil unwinds itself throughout the symphony. Several writers have pointed out the resemblance of the first descending string theme to a subject in Schumann’s Rhenish Symphony, a connection that makes sense in light of Brahms’ summer home on the Rhine. If the development section seems too concise for the material presented in the exposition, Brahms makes up for this by extending the movement through a substantial coda that elaborates the essential descending motif.

ANDANTE. The second movement is uncomplicated but darkly shaded, encompassing a hymn-like first theme and a pointedly contrasted second subject, heard in the clarinets and bassoons, that—in a bit of structural slight-of-hand—is skipped in the recapitulation but instead becomes part of the final movement’s resolution.

POCO ALLEGRETTO. The third movement, neither scherzo nor minuet, reminds us somewhat of the composer’s intermezzos for piano, and features one of his most passionate melodies.

ALLEGRO. The finale, beginning squarely in F minor, serves as a genuine culmination, and its tranquil coda in F major heightens the sense of relief, indeed of the “triumph” of major over minor, and of resolution over tension.

Instrumentation:

- 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon
- 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani
- and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY PAUL HORSLEY.
CHAMBER MUSIC
WITH MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA MUSICIANS

Sunday, January 14, 2024, 4PM | Target Atrium, Orchestra Hall

The Minnesota Orchestra’s Chamber Music series is generously sponsored by Dr. Jennine and John Speier.

Zoltán Kodály
Serenade for Two Violins and Viola, Opus 12
Allegramente – Sostenuto, ma non troppo
Lento, ma non troppo
Vivo
Sophia Mockler, violin | Emily Switzer, violin
Sarah Switzer, viola

CA. 20’

Paul Wiancko
LIFT for String Quartet
[In three movements]
Sarah Grimes, violin | Ben Odhner, violin
Lydia Grimes, viola | Erik Wheeler, cello

CA. 25’

Samuel Barber
Summer Music, Opus 31
Adam Kuenzel, flute | Nathan Hughes, oboe
Gabriel Campos Zamora, clarinet
Fei Xie, bassoon | Michael Gast, horn

CA. 12’

Osvaldo Golijov
Last Round for Double String Quartet and Double Bass
Movido, urgente – Subito meno mosso
Lentissimo
Alan Snow, violin | Hanna Landrum, violin
Céline Leathead, violin | Yi Zhao, violin
Marlea Simpson, viola | Jude Park, viola
Sonia Mantell, cello | Katja Linfield, cello
David Williamson, bass

CA. 15’

Wynton Marsalis
4 Bassoons Talking
C and C
(Hanging with) Beni & Maria
Slow Train South
International Waltz
Soul Sacrifice
Preach it, Teach it
Four Talkin’ ‘bout Four
Fei Xie, bassoon | J. Christopher Marshall, bassoon
Norbert Nielubowski, bassoon | Julianne Mulvey, bassoon

CA. 15’

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HARRY POTTER AND THE DEATHLY HALLOWS™ PART 1 IN CONCERT
WITH THE MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA

Sarah Hicks, conductor
Thursday, January 25, 2024, 7PM
Friday, January 26, 2024, 7PM
Saturday, January 27, 2024, 7PM
Orchestra Hall

Directed by David Yates
Produced by David Heyman, David Barron and J.K. Rowling
Written by Steve Kloves
Based on “Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows” by J.K. Rowling

Starring
Daniel Radcliffe as Harry Potter
Rupert Grint as Ron Weasley
Emma Watson as Hermoine Granger
Helena Bonham Carter as Bellatrix Lestrange
Robbie Coltrane as Rubeus Hagrid
Warwick Davis as Filius Flitwick
Ralph Fiennes as Lord Voldemort
Helena Bonham Carter as Bellatrix Lestrange
Michael Gambon as Albus Dumbledore
Brendan Gleeson as Alastor “Mad Eye” Moody
Richard Griffiths as Vernon Dursley
John Hurt as Mr. Ollivander
Jason Isaacs as Lucius Malfoy
Alan Rickman as Severus Snape
Fiona Shaw as Petunia Dursley
Timothy Spall as Peter Pettigrew
Imelda Staunton as Dolores Umbridge
David Thewlis as Remus Lupin
Julie Walters as Molly Weasley

Music by Alexandre Desplat
Cinematography by Eduardo Serra
Edited by Mark Day
Produced by Heyday Films
Distributed by Warner Bros. Pictures

Today’s performance lasts approximately 2 hours and 50 minutes, including one 20-minute intermission. Please remain seated until the conclusion of the end credits.

THANK YOU
The Movies & Music series is presented by U.S. Bank.
JAN 25–27  ARTISTS

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ABOUT CINECONCERTS

CineConcerts is one of the leading producers of live and digital music experiences performed with visual media, and continues to redefine entertainment. Founded by producer/conductor Justin Freer and producer/writer Brady Beaubien, CineConcerts will engage over 4.8 million people worldwide in concert presentations in over 3,000 scheduled performances in 48 countries through 2025, and recently launched CineConcerts +PLUS—a global digital network and app suite with hundreds of exclusive podcast episodes and produced content. Recent and current live and digital concert experiences include Elf in Concert, The Pinball Concert (Digital), The Polar Express in Concert, Rudy in Concert, The Passion of the Christ in Concert, The Da Vinci Code in Concert, The Harry Potter Film Concert Series, Gladiator Live, The Godfather Live, It’s a Wonderful Life in Concert, DreamWorks Animation In Concert, Star Trek: The Ultimate Voyage 50th Anniversary Concert Tour, Breakfast at Tiffany’s in Concert and A Christmas Dream Live. More: cineconcerts.com.

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—whom Hicks and the Orchestra made a live-in-concert recording on Doomtree Records—and Cloud Cult. 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. In the spring she will lead the Orchestra’s first concerts with Minnesota-based hip-hop artist Nur-D and the return of the folk-pop duo Indigo Girls, as well as a U.S. Bank Movies & Music performance of Star Wars: The Last Jedi. More: minnesotaorchestra.org.
ALEXANDRE DESPLAT, COMPOSER

Alexandre Michel Gérard Desplat, born on August 23, 1961, in Paris, France, is a prolific composer known for his orchestral film scores that draw from a wide range of influences including Claude Debussy, Maurice Ravel, Bernard Herrmann, and jazz and world music.

His musical journey began at a young age. He started playing the piano at age 5, picked up the trumpet later on, and then switched to the flute at 9. His parents, both students at the University of California, Berkeley, introduced him to a wide variety of music. He developed an early appreciation for film music, collecting Bernard Herrmann’s Hitchcock soundtracks as a teen. This love for film music was further ignited when he heard John Williams’ Star Wars score in 1977. Other early sources of Desplat’s inspiration include the music of Maurice Jarre, Nino Rota and Georges Delerue.

Desplat studied at the Conservatoire de Paris under Claude Ballif and also took a summer course under Iannis Xenakis. He furthered his studies under Jack Hayes in Los Angeles. At the age of 20, after leaving the Conservatoire, he joined a theatrical troupe where he wrote and played music. His journey into film scoring began in the 1990s, and his big break in Hollywood came in 2003 with the soundtrack for the film Girl with a Pearl Earring.

His career has spanned over four decades, during which he has received numerous accolades including two Academy Awards, three British Academy Film Awards, three César Awards, two Golden Globe Awards and two Grammy Awards. In 2016 he was made an Officer of the Ordre national du Mérite and a Commander of the Ordre des Arts et des Lettres. Some of his notable works include the scores for The Grand Budapest Hotel (2014), The Shape of Water (2017), The Queen (2006), The King’s Speech (2010), Argo (2012), The Imitation Game (2014) and the final two films in the Harry Potter series.

Desplat’s sophisticated orchestrations and his ability to seamlessly blend different musical styles have made him a sought-after composer in the film industry, contributing to both low-budget independent productions and large-scale blockbusters. More: alexandredesplat.net.
We are grateful to the following individuals, and to the more than 14,000 donors whose Guaranty Fund gifts help sustain the Minnesota Orchestra each year.

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There are so many ways you make a difference in the Minnesota Orchestra’s ability to fulfill its mission of service and inspiration to our community. When you attend a concert at Orchestra Hall and share your experience with friends and family, you help spread the word about the thrill of live orchestral music in our community and beyond. Thank you! And if you have made a contribution—large or small—to the Orchestra, thank you! You are joining more than 13,000 donors who believe this music belongs to everyone, and that it takes everyone to ensure that the soul-lifting thrill of music thrives today and tomorrow for our community.

This is the power we all have when we realize our individual role in fostering and sustaining what we love. In doing so, we will help nearly 30,000 elementary school students come to Orchestra Hall this season for a Young People’s Concert, many of them hearing an orchestra for the first time and feeling just like the boy who exclaimed on his way out of Orchestra Hall last year, “This is the best day of my life!”

You can make “best days” happen for children and adults alike with a gift of any size. If you are new to giving at the Orchestra, all of the details and ways to give are available on our website: minnesotaorchestra.org/support. You will find how to make a gift from a Donor Advised Fund, an Individual Retirement Account, estate plan or via stock. Regardless of the size of your gift, like a hundred musicians onstage making music together, generosity takes on a whole new power with the collective participation of us all.
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LAUREATE SOCIETY
SPOTLIGHT: LINDSAY KRUH

Lindsay Kruh is passionate about supporting arts experiences for young people. When he was a child himself, his exposure to live symphonic music and theater opened the door to a world of wonder that has since enriched his entire life.

He credits his parents with helping shape this love of the arts. His father was a professor at the University of Arkansas, so he was immersed in a university setting and made regular visits to museums and concerts. He also recalls loving the music of his dad’s classical recordings as well as his parents at the family piano, but the electricity and shared experience of live performances stuck with him the most.

Lindsay discovered the Minnesota Orchestra when he was a student at St. Olaf College in the 1970s. Later, while working for Dayton Hudson Department Stores, he eagerly absorbed the Twin Cities’ cultural amenities. “We are so lucky to have this great arts community,” he says. Lindsay has been an Orchestra subscriber for many years and is a regular supporter of Young People’s Concerts and education programs. He also supports youth access to arts at many other local organizations. He has decided to extend his support for the Orchestra’s education programs beyond his lifetime by including a gift in his will. His hope is to perpetuate his annual giving and ensure that generations of young people will have access to the incredible power of live symphonic music—and that they, too, will carry this magic throughout their lifetimes.

The arts have brought much joy to Lindsay’s life. He is giving back with his annual donation to our education programs as well as a legacy gift. If you are interested in learning about how you can support the Minnesota Orchestra in a meaningful way that fits your vision, please contact Emily Boigenzahn at eboigenzahn@mnorch.org or 612-371-7138.
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The Minnesota Orchestra is grateful to the forward-thinking businesses and foundations that value the role of the arts in making our community strong and vibrant. Their generous support fuels dazzling musical experiences that enrich, inspire and serve people throughout Minnesota, across the country and around the world. To find out more about how your organization can play a part, contact John Dunkel at 612-371-5659 or jdunkel@mnorch.org.

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

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