FEBRUARY 2024

SHOWCASE

MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA
Now playing and coming soon

DIAL M for Murder
adapted by JEFFREY HATCHER
from the original by FREDERICK KNOTT
directed by TRACY BRIGDEN
Now – February 25

The Guthrie Theater presents
an Irish Repertory Theatre production
produced by Octopus Theatricals

On BECKETT
conceived and performed by BILL IRWIN
February 17 – March 24

RICHARD II
HENRY IV
HENRY V
by WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
directed by JOSEPH HAJ
March 23 – May 25
When we look back in time, a common refrain is that the past several years have blended together, and pre-pandemic memories can seem like forever ago. Hyperbole aside, it’s instructive to peer four years in the rear-view mirror of Minnesota Orchestra history and think of all that’s changed—or stayed constant.

In late winter 2020, the Orchestra was preparing to welcome the Sphinx Virtuosi string chamber orchestra for its Orchestra Hall debut, in concerts that were among the first removed from the calendar due to COVID-19. This month the Virtuosi makes its second appearance with the Orchestra in a program that includes a work by Angélica Negrón composed in 2020 for musicians to perform together in isolation via Zoom, but can thankfully now be played in person. A week later we hear the Orchestra Hall premiere of Diaspora, a saxophone concerto by Billy Childs that highlights an instrument last featured at Orchestra Hall in a solo capacity on New Year’s Day of 2020. Mid-February brings the Orchestra’s third annual program honoring one of the world’s oldest holidays, Lunar New Year, and the month is rounded out by a highly varied chamber music concert as well as the return of Osmo Vänskä, whose music director tenure from 2003 to 2022 spanned a critical time in the Orchestra’s history, and who will remain a fixture for many years to come as our conductor laureate.

Although things are unknowable as we look ahead, both musically and in the world at large, Christopher Lloyd’s character Dr. Emmett Brown from the Back to the Future films offers good advice: “Your future is whatever you make it. So make it a good one!”

Carl Schroeder, Editor
editor@mnoorch.org

ABOUT THE COVER
A close-up look at the Orchestra’s basses—an instrument highlighted with late-February performances of two bass concertos in the hands of guest soloist Nina Bernat. Photo: Caroline Yang

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Carl Schroeder, Editor
editor@mnoorch.org

SHOWCASE FEBRUARY 2024 — MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA
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<th>First Name</th>
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<td>Pops Conductor Laureate</td>
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<td>J. Christopher Marshall</td>
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### SHOWCASE FEBRUARY 2024

- **CONTRABASSOON**
  - Open

- **Horns**
  - Michael Gast
    - Principal
  - John Sargent
    - Principal
  - Jocelyn Rainey
    - Acting Principal

- **Trombones**
  - R. Douglas Wright
    - Principal
  - Star Tribune Chair
  - Kari Sundstrom
    - Principal
  - William C. and Corinne J.
    - Dietrich Chair
  - Felix Regalado
    - Minnesota Orchestra Fellow

- **Tuba**
  - Andrew Chappell
  - Robert Machray
    - Ward Chair

- **Timpani**
  - Erich Reippe
    - Principal
  - Dimitri Mitropoulos
    - Chair
  - Jason Arks
    - Chair

- **Librarians**
  - Maureen Conroy
    - Principal
  - Eric Sjostrom
    - Associate Principal

- **Personnel Manager**
  - Kris Arks

- **Technical Director**
  - Joel Mooney

- **Stage Managers**
  - Don Hughes
  - Matthew Winiecki

- **Head Audio Engineer**
  - Jay Perlman

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- Carcassi violin donated by Kirk Walker
- Steinway grand piano donated by Dr. F. Bruce Lewis
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Official Release

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Located on the Main Floor Lobby next to the Marquette Ave. entrance.

ATM
Lost and Found
Located on the Main Floor Lobby near the north elevator.

Coat check
Available in the south lobby.

Family/gender neutral bathroom is available; ask an usher if accompanied by an adult. Family friendly behavior is expected in family seating areas (including balcony seating) and over for TV broadcast concerts)

Beverages upon arrival and receive special discounts.

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Cameras and Recordings
Please silence all electronic devices. Prohibited during the concert.

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Ticket Sales
minnesotaorchestra.org | 612-371-5656
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Orchestra Hall
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Minneapolis, MN 55403

General Information
612-371-5600 | info@mnorch.org
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Visit Guest Services near the Marquette Ave. entrance for hearing enhancement, large print programs and accessible seating options, including a bariatric chair. Talk with us about special requests, and we’ll be happy to accommodate.

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Emergency medical technicians and security personnel are present at every Orchestra Hall event. Please ask any usher for assistance. Our trained staff have procedures in place for emergency situations. A safe and secure venue is our top priority at Orchestra Hall.

MNOrch App
Download our free app from the App Store or Google Play. Access your tickets, pre-order beverages upon arrival and receive special discounts.
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. Last month he led 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 Ruder’s 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 Lutoslawski 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 Marie Carl-Nielsen Foundation in Denmark. For more information, visit minnesotaorchestra.org.
SPECIAL FUNDS

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
for Education and Outreach

Kenneth and Betty Jayne Dahlberg Fund
for Minnesota Orchestra Musicians

Roberta Mann Foundation Fund
for Guest Artists and Conductors

Sit Investment Associates
Chair for Education
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!
There are a few features that just about every concert at Orchestra Hall shares: pre-performance chatter in the lobby, the dings of ticket scanners as you enter the auditorium and the sound of instruments tuning onstage. But first you must enter the building. And for that there is Roger Bergman, the first doorman of Orchestra Hall. In a long coat or Bermuda shorts, Roger has been warmly welcoming concertgoers, musicians and music directors alike for more than 32 years. Roger recently shared thoughts on his work, outlook and strategy for remembering names.

Could you tell us how you first became involved with the Orchestra?

I’ve always been a classical music fan, so I went to lots of Minnesota Orchestra concerts at Northrop Auditorium, when the ensemble was known as the Minneapolis Symphony. I started working here in 1991 after getting laid off from the electronics corporation Sperry UNIVAC when it was bought up by Burroughs. I wanted to find another job, but I couldn’t. So while I was looking, I heard about working here and I thought, “Well, I could work here until something else comes up.” I did eventually find another full-time job and it was very stressful—I’d get to my office in the morning and my message light would be flashing on my phone, and it was panic all day long. So this was my stress reliever. And then I realized, “Well, this would be a perfect retirement job”—and I’m still here!

As a fan of classical music, do you have any favorite composers?

I really like Philip Glass! But a lot of people do not like Philip Glass and I don’t recall that the Orchestra has played his music recently. I’d love it if we could get his music on a program soon! My favorite symphony is Sibelius’ Second—I think it’s [Conductor Laureate] Osmo Vänskä’s favorite symphony also. And I like the Romantic symphonies. I really like new age music, too.

You’re also a trumpeter—what kind of music do you play?

I’m in the Robbinsdale City Concert Band, and we play lots of marches and show tunes. I’m also in the Synod Senior Band, where a bunch of old people got together and formed a band that consists largely of retired band directors and retired musicians. One of the trumpet players for the Orchestra was in the band for a while. It started off with 19 people and now it’s over 100.

Have you been a doorman the entire time since you started here?

No, I’ve been an usher and then I was an usher trainer for a while. I was a production assistant for a while, too. But I was the first doorman.

And what do you enjoy about being one of the official doormen of the Minnesota Orchestra?

Well, over time when people come in, they get used to seeing me apparently. And if I’m not here they’ll say, “Where were you? Didn’t see you last week—are you OK?” I try to remember everyone’s names—sometimes I cannot, but I take a stab at it anyways and sometimes I’m wrong.

You’re often the first person people see when they arrive at Orchestra Hall. What do you want people to feel when they walk through those doors?

Welcomed, and that it’s going to be a fun, worthwhile experience.

Do you have a favorite time of year to be outside working the door?

Well, the summertime I can be in Bermuda shorts sometimes, and that’s my favorite—I don’t like long pants. When I get home—even in the wintertime—the long pants come off and the shorts go on. When I lived in my house, my neighbors had pictures of me shoveling my driveway in Bermuda shorts and a T-shirt. I’d much rather wear just a regular shirt than a jacket.

Is there a message you’d like to send to people reading this?

Well, this is the best orchestra in the world. And the musicians are the best in the world. And it’s just fun! The only reason that I’m here is because I’m having fun.

Visit minnesotaorchestra.org/stories for an extended version of this interview.
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.

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In recent years, an increasing number of Minnesota Orchestra concerts and initiatives have been about much more than music. Such is the case with the Orchestra’s newest digital production, a multi-film collection called “Music and Healing” that’s unlike anything the organization has ever before produced and presented. Hosted by Principal Conductor of Live at Orchestra Hall Sarah Hicks, the series comprises a full concert performed in July 2023 by the Orchestra as well as an online collection of conversations with musicians, special guest artists and experts who share ways in which music can help us understand, process, express and accept anxiety.

“Anxiety has been with me for most of my life,” says Hicks. “Making music with others has been foundational in helping me feel grounded and whole.” Over the course of seven short films, Hicks converses with Orchestra musicians Sonia Mantell and Greg Milliren, composer Molly Joyce, singer-songwriter Chastity Brown, music producer and composer Lazerbeak, mindfulness instructor Mariann Johnson and University of Minnesota experts Dr. Hubert Lim and Dr. Kelvin Lim. The conversations—which range from highly informative to deeply vulnerable—explore the roots of anxiety, how it presents itself in our minds, bodies and lives, and how music can play a unique and productive role in taming it.

A centerpiece of the project is a 90-minute concert, conceived and conducted by Sarah Hicks, that explored the same themes in front of a live audience at Orchestra Hall as part of the 2023 Summer at Orchestra Hall festival. Featuring the music of Dmitri Shostakovich, Arvo Pärt and Takashi Yoshimatsu, the concert also showcased world premiere performances of works by Molly Joyce and Chastity Brown.

“The beauty of music is that it is so abstract sometimes, especially a lot of orchestral music, so it can be one of the most human ways to talk about difficult subjects,” says Joyce, whose composition Serenity included the voices of online audiences who responded to questions about anxiety.

Produced in partnership with the University of Minnesota’s Earl E. Bakken Center for Spirituality and Healing, the complete series of conversations and performances is available at minnesotaorchestra.org/healing.
MAHLER 8: THE REVIEWS ARE IN

One of the largest-scale recording projects in the Minnesota Orchestra’s history—a 10-disc cycle of Gustav Mahler’s symphonies recorded for BIS Records under the direction of Conductor Laureate Osmo Vänskä as a capstone of his 19 seasons as music director—reached its penultimate chapter this past December with the release of Mahler’s Eighth Symphony, known as the Symphony of a Thousand.

Performed and recorded in June 2022, the epic Eighth Symphony 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 and in the Orchestra Hall lobby. In addition, following the Orchestra’s performances on Thursday, February 22, and Saturday, February 24, audiences will have the opportunity to take home a piece of Orchestra history as Vänskä signs CDs in the lobby.

Critics have offered high praise for the new album such as these comments from Geoff Brown of Britain’s The Times: “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.” Visit minnesotarchestra.org/shop to add this and other Orchestra recordings to your collection.
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, FRIENDS 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, the organization’s president.

Visit 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 bass concertos by Eduard Tubin and Giovanni Bottesini with the Minnesota Orchestra from February 22–24, 2024.
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 or scan the QR code below for a continually updating list of events—including the following performances:

On Sunday, February 25, at 3 p.m. at Gideon Ives Auditorium at the Minnesota Masonic Heritage Center in Bloomington, Principal Trumpet Manny Laureano will lead the Bloomington Symphony Orchestra in “Celebrating the Americas,” a program of music by Arturo Márquez, George Gershwin and Howard Hanson, with pianist Clare Longendyke as soloist in Gershwin’s Rhapsody in Blue.

On Sunday, February 25, at 4 p.m. at MacPhail Center for Music’s Antonello Hall in Minneapolis, violinist Natsuki Kumagai, Associate Principal Viola Marlea Simpson and cellist Pitnarry Shin, alongside two former Orchestra musicians, violinist Stephanie Arado and violist Sabina Thatcher, will perform a concert of music by Ludwig van Beethoven, Billy Childs and Johannes Brahms with the Bakken Ensemble.

Join us this spring in Westminster Hall for...

Lunar New Year with Gao Hong & Friends
Friday, February 9 | 7pm

Ein deutches Requiem
by Johannes Brahms
Friday, March 22 | 7pm
Saturday, March 23 | 2pm

Ten Thousand Things Theatre
The Spitfire Grill
Friday, May 17 | 7pm

Learn more about pricing and ‘pay-what-you-can’ at westministermpls.org/wpas

Westminster Presbyterian Church
12th Ave S & Nicollet Mall
PASSING THE BATON TO THE NEXT GENERATION

Have you ever wondered how conductors get their start? Look no further than Orchestra Hall last month, when two groups of young people tried their hands—and batons—at a pair of inspirational “Meet a Conductor” sessions at which Music Director Thomas Søndergård and Kellen Gray, a frequent collaborator with Søndergård and associate artist with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, met more than 40 children for a memorable conducting lesson. At the sessions, children used batons created earlier in the day with help from occupational students at St. Catherine’s University and staff from Toneworks Music Therapy Services, LLC. The young aspiring ensemble leaders learned some basics of conducting and led Orchestra trombonist R. Douglas Wright and a chorus of adults and peers in rousing renditions of *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star* and *Happy Birthday*.

Gray, who is planning future projects with the Orchestra’s education and community engagement department, remarked that “It was such a refreshing delight to see the joy on young children’s faces during the ‘Meet a Conductor’ session. In being a professional musician, it’s easy to take for granted that what we do every day can be such a new adventure for people. The entire day and all the events around the program were spectacular, but the highlight for me was seeing the excitement on a few shy children’s faces when they got to conduct a group of their peers and parents!”
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River Rhapsody
SYMPHONY BALL
Saturday, May 4, 2024

Celebrating Thomas Søndergård’s inaugural season with the Minnesota Orchestra.

TICKETS ON SALE NOW STARTING AT $99

Join us on May 4, 2024 to support the Orchestra’s artistic and educational missions as we revel in the traditions—from music to food—that the River inspires. Then, experience an exquisite river-themed concert of glorious orchestral music performed by the Minnesota Orchestra, conducted by new Music Director Thomas Søndergård. Cap off the night at our festive after-party at Orchestra Hall.

EVENT CHAIRS
Diane and Tony Hofstede

MINNESOTAORCHESTRA.ORG/SYMPHONYBALL

MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA
As we enter the year of the dragon this month, I’m reminded of a tale from another year of the dragon: 1964.

A young boy played beside a tumbling stream in the high mountains of Laos. Among the speckled river rocks, he saw something jagged and white, a giant tooth big as his torso. The boy lifted it with shaking hands, felt its weight, touched its smooth texture and looked into its glimmering depth. For a moment, he thought he saw an image from deep within coming through to the light. Half-afraid and half-excited, the boy slammed it hard against a heavy boulder. It shattered into pieces, white as clouds.

Over half a century later and far across the ocean, that boy, an old man now, sits near me at a long table. He reflects wistfully, “It could have been a dinosaur tooth. It could have been a dragon tooth. There’s no knowing now. All I knew then was that I was holding something old and sacred, something whose history I could not begin to fathom, and so I cracked it hoping that it would spill its secrets, but all I managed was to destroy it.”

Two young boys sit at the same table, mouths open in amazement, round eyes trained on the white-haired man and ears cocked in my direction, waiting for me to translate the Hmong words into English.

“Wow! Why did you do that?” they ask.

The man shrugs his shoulders, and tells the boys, “I was young. I did not know better.”

One responds, “You could have been a paleontologist, Yawm Txiv.” The other shakes his head vigorously, unbelievingly, “Man, it could have been a pov haum.”

I’m surprised that they know what a pov haum is: a powerful token, often found in the natural world, a little object embedded with magical powers.

The wrinkles deepen around the old man’s eyes and he shares another story. Once, his own grandfather had found a pov haum in the belly of a wild boar. It was a small, shiny rock, no bigger than the tip of a thumb. He’d brought it home. One daughter couldn’t quite see the shine by the family’s firelight, so she threw it high to see how it might reflect the flames. With her mouth wide open, the pov haum slipped down her throat. Many years later, that daughter chanced upon a beautiful white rooster. The rooster led her to a cave. Inside its depths, she found coffers of precious gold bars, necklaces made of precious metals and gems and other artifacts of wealth. She became rich. Her discovery was attributed to the pov haum that she carried deep within her being.

The kids and I are mystified. What a reality to inhabit. I ask, “What if it had been a dragon’s tooth?”

The man looks at me across the length of the table. When he speaks again, his voice enters the room like wind through a window.

“We lived a world where the dragons dwelled in the stillest, deepest ponds, where the rivers were their highways. If it had indeed been a dragon’s tooth that I had found, it would not have been an accident. If I had kept it, no doubt the dragon would have come for it sooner or later, and whatever the outcome of that encounter, my life would not have been lived as it has been. Because I did not keep the tooth, because I had broken it into pieces, whatever grand plan there had been shattered. Instead, I was left to devise a life on my own, one that would see my world fall on me, that would have me flee, via the waterways of the world, for a life on distant shores.”

The young boy at the river in Laos grew up and became my father and the boys’ grandfather. Now, at our table in Minnesota, he sits sharing the stories of his past, instilling the magic and mystery of our ancestors, and planting seeds of wisdom for the shatterings, the discoveries and the possibilities of what is and can never be known as we greet once again the year of the dragon.

Kao Kalia Yang is an award-winning Hmong American author for children and adults, a sought-after national public speaker and an educator. Yang is a Soros, McKnight and Guggenheim fellow. Her new memoir Where Rivers Part will be released next month. Learn more at kaokaliayang.com.
Angel Bat Dawid and Sojourner Zenobia, Zankel Hall at Carnegie Hall. Photo by Jennifer Taylor.
TITO MUÑOZ
WITH THE MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA

THE SPHINX VIRTUOSI

Tito Muñoz, conductor
Njioma Chinyere Grevious, violin

Thursday, February 1, 2024, 11AM
Friday, February 2, 2024, 8PM
Saturday, February 3, 2024, 7PM

Michael Abels
Global Warming
CA. 8'

Angélica Negrón
Marejada
CA. 8'

Astor Piazzolla/
arr. Leonid Desyatnikov
Winter and Summer, from The Four Seasons in Buenos Aires
for Violin and Orchestra
Njioma Chinyere Grevious, violin
CA. 14'

Carlos Simon
Breathe
CA. 10'

INTERMISSION
CA. 20'

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor
Symphonic Variations on an African Air, Opus 63
CA. 20'

Silvestre Revueltas
Sensemayá
CA. 7'

PRE-CONCERT
Concert Preview with Michael Abels and Loki Karuna
Thursday, February 1, 10:15am, Target Atrium | Friday, February 2, 7:15pm, Target Atrium
Saturday, February 3, 6:15pm, Target Atrium

THANK YOU
This program is presented as part of The Great Northern.
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.
ARTISTS

NJIOMA CHINYERE GREVIOUS, VIOLIN

Njioma Chinyere Grevious is an emerging, passionate and versatile solo, chamber and orchestral musician. She is a graduate of the Juilliard School and a winner of its John Erskine Prize for scholastic and artistic achievement. In 2023 she won both the Robert F. Smith first prize and audience choice awards in the Senior Division of the Sphinx Competition as well as joint prizes in the Concert Artists Guild/Young Classical Artists Trust auditions. She has appeared as a soloist with the Chicago Philharmonic, Western Michigan Symphony and Newark Symphony Orchestra. In November 2022, she performed in the London Symphony Orchestra as a winner of the Music Academy of the West Keston Max orchestral fellowship. A frequent chamber performer, she is a founding member of the award-winning Abeo Quartet, which has performed in the Schneider Concert Series, Alice Tully Hall, the Kennedy Center, Montreal and Oslo. She recently completed studies with Ryan Meehan and the Calidore String Quartet at the University of Delaware. Originally from Boston, she was a scholarship recipient for many years through Project STEP, a string training program for Black and Latin youth. More: njiomagrevious.com.

TITO MUÑOZ, CONDUCTOR

Tito Muñoz, now in his tenth season as music director of the Phoenix Symphony, previously served as music director of the Opéra National de Lorraine and the Orchestre symphonique et lyrique de Nancy in France. Other prior appointments include assistant conductor positions with the Cleveland Orchestra, Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra and Aspen Music Festival. Muñoz has appeared with many of North America’s most prominent orchestras, including those of Atlanta, Baltimore, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Dallas, Detroit, Houston, Indianapolis, Milwaukee, New York and Utah. He maintains a strong international conducting presence, including engagements with the Royal Philharmonic (London), Ulster Orchestra, BBC Symphony Orchestra, BBC Scottish Symphony, Lucerne Festival Contemporary Orchestra, Opéra Orchestre National Montpellier, Opéra de Rennes, Auckland Philharmonia, Sydney Symphony and São Paolo State Symphony. Born in Queens, New York, Muñoz began his musical training as a violinist in New York City public schools. He made his professional conducting debut in 2006 with the National Symphony Orchestra at the Kennedy Center and made his Cleveland Orchestra debut at the Blossom Music Festival that same year. More: jamesbrownmanagement.com, titomunoz.com.

ONE-MINUTE NOTES

Abels: Global Warming
Composed in 1990 and inspired by the post-Cold War thaw in international relations, Global Warming blends elements of folk music from divergent cultures, with solo strings employing sliding pitches in ethereal opening and closing sections.

Negrón: Marejada
This piece from the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic, originally intended for performance by a string quartet over Zoom, embraced the limitations of the medium by working around synchronization issues to create intriguing sounds that have taken on new life through in-person performances.

Piazzolla: Winter and Summer, from The Four Seasons in Buenos Aires
The seasonal extremes of Buenos Aires are brought to life in two selections from Astor Piazzolla’s tango-flavored take on Antonio Vivaldi’s classic—by turns seductive, powerful and haunting.

Simon: Breathe
Inspired by a quote from Howard Thurman, a spiritual adviser to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Breathe paints a meditative soundscape that begs us all to “stay put for a spell.”

Coleridge-Taylor: Symphonic Variations on an African Air
In his Symphonic Variations, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor takes the tune of the Spiritual “I’m troubled in mind” and cleverly hides it in an expansive and innovative theme and variations.

Revueltas: Sensemayá
Sensemayá, based on the Nicolás Guillén’s poem of the same name, builds from solisitic passages to a riotous climax for the full orchestra before ending ominously.
ARTISTS  FEB 1–3

THE SPHINX VIRTUOSI

The Sphinx Virtuosi is a dynamic and inspiring professional self-conducted chamber orchestra that serves as the flagship performing entity of the Sphinx Organization—the leading social justice non-profit dedicated to transforming lives through the power of diversity in the arts. Comprising 18 accomplished Black and Latinx artists, the Sphinx Virtuosi evolves and transforms the face of classical music through artistic excellence, pioneering programming and impassioned community engagement. Its members serve as cultural and diversity ambassadors for audiences and communities around the U.S. and abroad. Since 2004, the Sphinx Virtuosi’s concerts have been presented by leading arts organizations, including annual visits to Carnegie Hall. The ensemble’s debut album, Songs for Our Times, was released on Deutsche Grammophon in July 2023 and represents the rich history of the Sphinx Organization and the vibrant future of classical music by centering the artistry of extraordinary composers and artistic visionaries of color.

Heralded for their kaleidoscopically varied repertoire and bold thematic programming, Sphinx Virtuosi concerts give prominence to historically excluded Black and Latinx composers. In an effort to expand its repertoire and engage new audiences, the ensemble commissions new works annually from composers such as Michael Abels, Terence Blanchard, Valerie Coleman, Xavier Foley, Ricardo Herz, Jimmy Lopez, Jessie Montgomery, Daniel Bernard Roumain and Carlos Simon. Members of the Sphinx Virtuosi have performed as soloists with major American orchestras including the New York Philharmonic and the Cleveland, Detroit, Atlanta, Philadelphia, Seattle, and Pittsburgh symphony orchestras. Members also hold professional orchestral and academic positions.

The Sphinx Virtuosi’s community engagement initiatives regularly extend beyond masterclasses and workshops to members leading diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives within arts organizations and connecting with other Sphinx programming to further the mission of achieving excellence through diversity. As a bilingual ensemble, these artist-citizens frequently break down existing barriers empowering the art form to connect with the broader community. The Sphinx Virtuosi has collaborated with major artists such as Terence Blanchard, Denyce Graves, Sweet Honey in the Rock, Damien Sneed, Will Liverman, J’Nai Bridges and Davóne Tines. Outside of the classical realm, the ensemble’s musicians have also worked with leading international artists such as Beyoncé and Jay-Z, and made high-profile appearances including on The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon and the broadcast of the 2022 Grammy Awards. Their 2023-24 season includes performances for Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, Denver Friends of Chamber Music, Stanford Live, and a return performance at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum. More: sphinxmusic.org, mkiartists.com.

FIRST VIOLIN
Meredith Riley Concertmaster
Sandro Leal-Santiesteban
Maïthéna Girault
Adé Williams

SECOND VIOLIN
Clayton D Penrose-Whitmore Principal
Caitlin Edwards
Robyn Quinnett
Scott Jackson

VIOLA
Robert Alvarado Switala Principal
Harper Randolph
Camila Berg
Mario Rivera

CELLO
Eri Snowden-Rodriguez Principal
Diana Flores
Lindsey Sharpe
Titilayo Ayangade

BASS
Jonathan Colbert Principal
Christopher Johnson
Michael Abels is one of the most successful and acclaimed classical composers working today—with the 2023 Pulitzer Prize for Music, won jointly with Rhiannon Giddens for their opera Omar, among many triumphs in a career that has also included his award-winning scores for Jordan Peele’s films Get Out, Us and Nope. One might expect a work from his pen titled Global Warming to be newly composed and addressing today’s climate headlines. Surprisingly, though, it was written in 1990, and the title has two meanings, one of them quite positive—the “warming” of international relations at the end of the Cold War. Also playing into the title were the heated confines of the work’s premiere—Abels’ hometown of Phoenix, Arizona, where his friend and advocate Mark Russell Smith led the premiere with the Phoenix Youth Symphony on May 15, 1991. Decades later, the music—especially the ethereal opening and close in which sliding pitches of solo violin, viola and cellos come to the fore—may call to mind alarming images of a heating world, even though the music wasn’t composed with a political message in mind.

“In 1990, global warming was something that climate scientists were talking about, but it wasn’t in the public eye nearly as much as it is today,” Abels noted in 2016. “But around that time, the Cold War had ended, the Berlin Wall had just come down, and it felt to me like there was greater cooperation between nations of the world than there had been before in my lifetime. In my musical life, I had been listening to a lot of world music, and I was struck by some of the similarities I heard between music of cultures from different corners of the world, so I wanted to write some music where I could explore some of those similarities... So I took the phrase ‘global warming’ to mean not only the temperature rising, but also a feeling of warming between nations and cultures.”

SUCCESS IN TWO WORLDS
The multiple meanings of Global Warming are a small duality in a career built on a larger one—highly regarded music for the concert hall and original scores for massively popular films. In addition to being the go-to composer for director Jordan Peele, Abels has written music for the movies Bad Education, Nightbooks, Fake Famous, Beauty and Breaking, and the documentary series Allen v. Farrow. His works for the concert hall include the choral song cycle At War with Ourselves for the Kronos Quartet, the Grammy-nominated Isolation Variation for violinist Hilary Hahn, Emerge for the National Symphony and Detroit Symphony, and the guitar concerto Borders for soloist Mak Grgic. Abels and Rhiannon Giddens’ Pulitzer Prize-winning 2022 opera Omar is based on the autobiography of Omar ibn Said, a Fula Muslim scholar born in what is now Senegal, and enslaved in the U.S. from 1807 until his death in 1864.

THE COMPOSER’S NOTE
Abels has provided these comments on Global Warming:

“Living in Los Angeles, I’ve been able to learn about music from around the world simply by opening the window; among my neighbors are immigrants from every corner of the world. I was intrigued by the similarities between folk music of divergent cultures, and decided to write a piece that celebrates these common threads as well as the sudden improvement in international relations that was occurring.

“The opening section of the piece is a vision of the traditional idea of global warming—a vast desert, the relentless heat punctuated by the buzzing of cicadas, and an anguished, frenetic solo violin (with help from a solo cello). This scene gives way to several episodes reminiscent of folk music of various cultures, most noticeably Irish and Middle Eastern. At the climax of the piece, a Middle Eastern melody is transformed, through gradual changes in rhythm and ornamentation, back into the Irish refrain, and many counter-melodies join in to present a noisy—yet harmonious—world village. This joyous moment is broken by a sudden return to the stark vision of the opening, leaving the listener to decide which image may more accurately reflect our future.”

Instrumentation: 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes (1 doubling English horn), 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bodhran, congas, guiro, tabla, tamtam, triangle, xylophone, marimba and strings

In March 2020, Puerto Rican-born composer Angélica Negrón was given a task that would’ve been inconceivable a month earlier: composing a piece for the Kronos Quartet...
to play not in person—but in isolation, with the string quartet’s members connected via Zoom at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

INA N B E Y O N D T H E C O N C E R T H A L L
Based in New York, Negrón is no stranger to composing music beyond a typical concert hall setting. Her hourlong 2019 work *Chorus of the Forest* is a prime example; composed for use by the New York Botanical Garden, it employs chorus, percussion and electronics for visitors to experience as they walked through a forest. She is also a founding member of the tropical electronic band Balún. Her music has also been presented in prestigious concert halls, including performances by the Seattle Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Louisville Orchestra and New York Philharmonic.

“When Kronos approached me...to write a piece for them to rehearse and perform together during this difficult moment of social isolation, I wanted to create something playful and rhythmic yet flexible and malleable that would be fun to put together,” Negrón recalls. “Something that responded directly to the challenges during this time of performing music together while not being able to be together in the same room. But also something that took into consideration the limitations of the video communications platforms and use those challenges as compositional material and creative impulse. The natural delay, the canceling of sound frequencies and the inability for everyone to fully play together at the same time and in perfect synchronization, are all challenges that I decided to embrace as unique elements that make this piece thrive even within the limitations of the medium.”

FROM THE KRONOS QUARTET
The Kronos Quartet, which released the online premiere of *Marejada* on August 30, 2020, offers this description of the music and its initial performance practices:

“*Marejada* is meant to be played along with a background ambient soundscape, which serves as the environment this piece lives in. Audiences are encouraged to play this ambient soundscape either in their homes (through their phone, computer or speakers) or at the performance site for the duration of the piece to immerse themselves in the environment of the piece and be together in the same space with the performers.

“Additionally, the string quartet members can each play this track on their headphones while they’re rehearsing and performing via Zoom or any video conference platform. For live performances the track can be played through the speakers in the space along with the audience. The field recordings from Puerto Rico used in this soundscape come from Audiopuerto, a sound library of sounds from Puerto Rico created by Ariel Alvarado & Manuel Vázquez. This track lasts 10 min. so that performers and audiences can fade it out when they wish.”

Instrumentation: string orchestra

PROGRAM NOTE BY CARL SCHROEDER.

ASTOR PIAZZOLLA

B: March 11, 1921
Mar del Plata, Argentina

D: July 4, 1992
Buenos Aires, Argentina

Winter and Summer, from *The Four Seasons in Buenos Aires* for Violin and Orchestra, arranged by Leonid Desyatnikov

COMPOSED: 1964, 1970

Astor Piazzolla was a fabulously talented young man whose wealth of talent caused him some confusion as he tried to decide on a career path. Very early he learned to play the bandoneon, the Argentinian accordion-like instrument that uses buttons rather than a keyboard, and he became a virtuoso on it. He gave concerts, made a film soundtrack and created his own bands before a desire for wider expression drove him to the study of classical music. In 1954 he received a grant to study with Nadia Boulanger in Paris, and it was that great teacher who advised him to follow his passion for the Argentinian tango as the source for his own music.

REVITALIZING THE TANGO

Piazzolla returned to Argentina and gradually evolved his own style, one that combines the tango, jazz and classical music. The tango, an old Argentinian dance that had become a popular form was revitalized in his hands as he transformed it into music capable of varied expression and sharply contrasted moods.

*The Four Seasons in Buenos Aires,* or *Las cuatro estaciones porteñas* in the original Spanish, is an unusual collection of individual tangos that, taken together, form a remarkable whole. In the title, *cuatro estaciones* evokes *The Four Seasons* of Vivaldi, while *porteña* (or *porteño*), which translates as “port” area, has come to refer to the port area of Buenos Aires, birthplace of the tango, or by extension anyone or anything native to Buenos Aires. Working over several years, Piazzolla originally wrote the four tangos in his *Four Seasons* for the small ensemble he led in Buenos Aires: violin, piano, electric guitar, bass and bandoneon. Each tango depicts a different season in the city. *Summer* (Verano porteño) dates from 1964, *Autumn* (Otoño porteño) from 1969, and *Spring* (Primavera porteña) and *Winter* (Invierno porteño) from 1970. Piazzolla sometimes performed them as
Contemporary American composer Carlos Simon has established himself as a pioneering voice in modern classical music. Simon—whose numerous credits include a Grammy Award and a professorship at Georgetown University—has had works commissioned and premiered the world over. He is most familiar to Minnesota Orchestra audiences as one half of the creative team behind the choral-orchestral work Breathe, which the Orchestra commissioned from Simon and librettist Marc Bamuthi Joseph in response to the murder of George Floyd. The work was premiered in May 2023 under the baton of Jonathan Taylor Rush; Decca Classics released the world premiere recording this past September.

An Atlanta native born into a lineage of preachers, Simon grew up with the sound of gospel in his ear. “Music is my pulpit,” he says. “That’s where I preach.” His music draws on the sounds of his youth including gospel, jazz and the blues combined with a captivating neo-romantic aesthetic. He is currently composer in residence at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., and is a recipient of the Sphinx Medal of Excellence.

Simon is a member of a collective of young Black composers self-named the “Blacknificent 7,” which also includes Jessie Montgomery, Jasmine Barnes, Damien Geter, Joel Thompson, Dave Ragland and Shawn Okpebholo. The seven members created the group as a collective safe space to share the challenges and rewards of working as Black artists in the modern classical music industry. The group was recently featured on a Chicago Symphony Orchestra MusicNOW concert curated by Montgomery, who serves as that orchestra’s Mead composer in residence.

Breathe was commissioned by the Gabriela Lena Frank Creative Academy of Music for the San Francisco Chamber Orchestra. It is a quiet, peaceful meditation featuring gently moving lines and broad melodies with a serene, atmospheric background. The composer’s program note begins with a quote from the American Quaker poet John Greenleaf Whittier—“Drop Thy still dews of quietness / Till all our striving cease”—then continues with Simon’s own words:

“One of my favorite books to read and re-read has been Meditations of the Heart, written by renowned theologian Howard Thurman. A spiritual advisor to many, including Martin Luther King, Jr., Thurman was a prolific writer and preacher who lived in San Francisco for a large part of his life. Meditations of the Heart is a collection of meditations and prayers on the beauty of humanity. I was deeply inspired by one section entitled ‘Still Dews of Quietness,’ which urges one to ‘stay put for a spell.’ Through his words, I wanted to take the gesture further by writing a piece that encourages others to simply reflect and breathe.”

**Instrumentation:** 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, suspended cymbal, mark tree, wood blocks, vibraphone and strings

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The music of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor has recently become something of a fixture in Minnesota Orchestra programming. Since the 2019-20 season, 13 different works (out of the nearly 90 he wrote) from the British composer’s pen have been featured on 16 separate Minnesota Orchestra concert programs—including chamber music and Young People’s Concerts—with that figure due to rise to 18 by the end of this season. This is an encouraging sign, given that Coleridge-Taylor’s music was a staple in the Orchestra’s repertoire from 1905 to 1930 but was then neglected for...
well over six decades, a fate all too common throughout Western music history for composers who were not white. Throughout his life, Coleridge-Taylor was an advocate for the unity and uplift of Africans and members of the African diaspora, and many of his works seek to incorporate African melodies into Western classical music.

EXPANDING A FOLK MELODY
Symphonic Variations on an African Air was written in 1906. In 1904, Coleridge-Taylor wrote 24 Negro Folk Melodies, a set of 24 themes and variations for solo piano with each variation based on a traditional melody; in each, Coleridge-Taylor presents the original theme as a “motto” and builds variations on it as each miniature unfolds. In this program’s work, Coleridge-Taylor takes one of those songs, called “I’m troubled in mind,” and expands it into a full 20-minute orchestral work, packed with all the grandiosity and tenderness of early 20th-century British music.

Coleridge-Taylor took some inspiration from friend and mentor Edward Elgar and his Enigma Variations for his own work, but innovates the structure beyond the genre to create something wholly unique. In Elgar’s composition from 1899, variations are mostly separate from one another and easily discernible by ear. This is not the case with Coleridge-Taylor. Here, the “motto” is not always easily recognized—save for the very beginning and end—and variations flow directly from one to the next with no indication given in the score when one ends and another begins, leading to disagreements among scholars and musicians on how many variations the work contains. Despite this confusion, it’s clear that Coleridge-Taylor’s mastery of his craft in this work and others proved just how talented he was. Audiences of today are privileged to hear it live once again after all these years.

Instrumentation: 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes (1 doubling English horn), 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 5 trombones, tuba, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, triangle, harp and strings

SHOWCASE FEBRUARY 2024

SILVESTRE REVUELTA

B: December 31, 1899
Santiago Papasquiaro, Mexico

D: October 5, 1940
Mexico City

Sensemayá

Premiered: December 15, 1938
(full orchestra version)

PROGRAM NOTE BY MICHAEL DIVINO.

Silvestre Revueltas was a pivotal figure in Mexican classical music during his lifetime, which was tragically cut short when he was only 40. Born into an artistic family—his siblings had varied careers in painting, acting, writing and dancing—he studied violin and composition at the National Conservatory in Mexico City. He then continued his education in the U.S., first at St. Edward College in Texas and then at the Chicago Musical College. His friend and fellow composer Carlos Chávez extended an invitation for him to serve as assistant conductor of the National Symphony Orchestra of Mexico, a post he held from 1929 to 1935.

Revueltas wrote more than 50 pieces across a variety of musical styles, including music for films, chamber music, ballets, songs, works for orchestra and pieces for solo piano. Sensemayá is perhaps his most famous work and has often drawn comparisons to another pivotal composition written over two decades earlier: Igor Stravinsky’s Rite of Spring. From subject matter to the music itself, the comparison seems apt. Like Stravinsky, Revueltas found inspiration from folkloric spiritual practices and translated that inspiration into a work that explores the violence, terror and unique beauty of a ritual sacrifice to please the gods.

A STRUGGLE OF LIFE AND DEATH
Written in 1937 in a version for chamber orchestra (and expanded the following year in the full-orchestra version performed on this program), Sensemayá is based on Cuban poet Nicolás Guillén’s poem of the same name. Bearing a title that translates roughly as “Chant for Killing a Snake,” the poem is based on Afro-Cuban spiritual practices. The obsessive, repetitive nature of Guillén’s poem is brought to bear through colorful orchestration, alternating compound time signatures and the use of expertly layered ostinato motives. The work opens with a low trill from bass clarinet representing the winding snake; distinct rhythmic motifs from the percussion and bassoon then bring to life the obsessive chanting of those gathered for the ritual. As the chant progresses, we hear distinct melodic figures from the brass and violent slashes from the winds and strings. By the end of this ritual, the neatly layered motifs fight against one another in a chaotic swirl of life and death. Despite its struggle, the snake is killed in a final, violent blow.

Instrumentation: 2 flutes, 2 piccolos, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, E-flat clarinet, bass clarinet, 3 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 4 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, suspended cymbal, bombo, claves, guiro, small Indian drum, large tamtam, tom-toms, xylophone, glockenspiel, piano, celesta and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY MICHAEL DIVINO.
MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA

MARCH HIGHLIGHTS

TROUPE VERTIGO:
CIRQUE FAIRYTALES
WITH THE MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA
SAT MAR 2  7PM
SUN MAR 3  2PM*

TCHAIKOVSKY SYMPHONY NO. 5
FRI MAR 8  8PM
SAT MAR 9  7PM

DVOŘÁK SYMPHONY NO. 8
THU MAR 21  11AM
FRI MAR 22  8PM

YUJA WANG PLAYS BARTÓK
FRI MAR 29  8PM
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MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA

Ruth Reinhardt, conductor
Steven Banks, alto and soprano saxophones

Friday, February 9, 2024, 8PM
Saturday, February 10, 2024, 7PM | Orchestra Hall

Bedřich Smetana
Šárka, No. 3 from Má vlast (My Homeland)  
CA. 11'

Billy Childs
Diaspora (Concerto for Saxophone and Orchestra)  
Motherland  
If We Must Die  
And Still I Rise  
Steven Banks, alto and soprano saxophones
CA. 22'

INTERMISSION  
CA. 20'

Sergei Prokofiev
Selections from Romeo and Juliet, Ballet Music, Opus 64  
The Montagues and the Capulets  
Juliet—The Young Girl  
Masks  
Dance  
The Death of Tybalt  
Romeo and Juliet Before Parting  
Morning Serenade (Aubade)  
Romeo at Juliet’s Grave  
CA. 33'

PRE-CONCERT
Performance by Ballet Co.Laboratory  
Friday, February 9, 7:15pm, Target Atrium | Saturday, February 10, 6:15pm, Target Atrium

THANK YOU
The 2023–24 Classical Season is presented by Ameriprise Financial.  
These concerts are generously sponsored by Huntington Bank.  
The Minnesota Orchestra is grateful to Al and Kathy Lenzmeier for supporting Billy Childs’ Diaspora in this program.

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. The February 9 concert will also be broadcast live on Twin Cities PBS (TPT-2) and available for streaming at minnesotaorchestra.org and on the Orchestra’s social media channels.
RUTH REINHARDT, CONDUCTOR

German conductor Ruth Reinhardt is building a reputation for a keen musical intelligence, programmatic imagination and elegant performances. In the 2023-24 season, she leads a production of La Traviata for the Royal Swedish Opera and makes debuts in Europe with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, Helsinki Philharmonic and WDR Symphony Orchestra Cologne. In North America, she begins the season with the Nashville Symphony and makes debuts with the New Jersey Symphony and Grand Rapids Symphony, in addition to her first appearance with the Minnesota Orchestra. Placing significant emphasis on women composers of the late 20th century and early 21st century, Reinhardt brings new names and fresh faces to many orchestras for the first time. Among those whose works appear often in her programs are Grażyna Bacewicz, Kaija Saariaho, Lotta Wennäkoski, Daniel Bjarnason, Dai Fujikura and Thomas Adès. Reinhardt attended the Juilliard School, where she received her master’s degree. She was a Dudamel Fellow of the Los Angeles Philharmonic in the 2017-18 season, conducting fellow at both the Seattle Symphony in 2015-16 and the Tanglewood Music Center in 2015, and Taki Concordia associate conducting fellow from 2015 to 2017. More: opusArtists.com, ruth-reinhardt.com.

STEVEN BANKS, ALTO AND SOPRANO SAXOPHONES

Saxophonist and composer Steven Banks is striving to bring his instrument to the heart of the classical music world. He is driven to program and write music that directly addresses aspects of the human experience and is an active and intentional supporter of diverse voices in the future of concert music. In 2022 he was awarded the prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant and was a chosen artist for WQXR’s Artist Propulsion Lab. Ensembles he has appeared with include the Cleveland Orchestra, Montreal Symphony, Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra and Aspen Festival Orchestra. He has also appeared across the U.S. in recital and as a chamber musician, and he is a founding member of the all-saxophone Kenari Quartet. This season he is premiering and touring Billy Childs’ concerto Diaspora, which was co-commissioned by nine orchestras along with Young Concert Artists. As a composer, Banks has been commissioned by numerous organizations. His work for alto saxophone and string quartet, Cries, Signs and Dreams, was premiered in 2022 at Carnegie Hall with the Borromeo Quartet, and his solo piano work Fantasy on Recurring Daydreams was premiered last year by Zhu Wang. More: imartists.com, steven-banks.com.

WILLIAM EDDINS, BROADCAST HOST

For the concert on February 9, William Eddins serves as host and writer of the Twin Cities PBS broadcast and online livestream This Is Minnesota Orchestra. Eddins has a multifaceted musical career as a conductor and pianist. He is the music director emeritus of the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra, a former associate conductor of the Minnesota Orchestra and a frequent guest conductor of major orchestras throughout the world. In September 2022 he conducted the Orchestra's season opening concerts for the first time in a program that included the Minnesota premiere of Wynton Marsalis’ Swing Symphony, performed with the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra. More: williameddins.com.
Bedřich Smetana was born in a picturesque town in Bohemia when the land was subjected to the ironclad rule of the Austrian monarchy, and its administration was unconditionally German. Educated from his earliest days in the German language, the composer—who was to be recognized as the founder of Czech national music—struggled to express himself in the Czech tongue. He did, however, declare in words as well as his music, “My homeland means more to me than anything else.” And in the cycle of a half-dozen symphonic poems collectively known as Má vlast (My Homeland), he left an orchestral legacy inspired by his country’s landscape, legends and history.

Of this remarkable set of descriptive pieces, only The Moldau, which traces the course of the river Vltava as it flows northward through the Bohemian forest to the Elbe, is a staple of the repertory. The lesser-known Šárka is the third of the initial trilogy composed in rapid succession in 1874-75. Ironically, this was a difficult, even sorrowful period in Smetana’s life, for he had totally lost his hearing and had to resign his conductorship at the National Opera. But no traces of his suffering will be found in the brilliant music, so optimistic and affirmative of the Czech spirit.
During a December 2020 online masterclass sponsored by the jazz education platform Open Studio Jazz, American composer Billy Childs explained the driving force behind his musical creations: “I approach [my] compositions melodically. That’s my way in. I feel that the melody communicates to the listener, just like a beautifully constructed sentence in a speech. If music is a language, then melody is like a sentence in that language.”

This approach to melody is evident in his recently premiered saxophone concerto Diaspora. Featuring an instrument not typically heard in a symphony orchestra—and even more rarely placed at center stage—Childs has created a beautiful musical speech in three movements, constructed from melodic sentences birthed from a people that have borne and continue to bear and survive myriad injustices. Where legends such as Sojourner Truth, Harriet Jacobs, Bayard Rustin and Frances Ellen Watkins Harper have employed the written and spoken word, Childs joins a legacy of composers such as William Grant Still, Undine Jacobs, and Childs selected poems by Nayyirah Waheed, Claude McKay and Maya Angelou to form the journey that the concerto represents. Diaspora begins in a natural and “pure” African setting, then progresses to the period of African capture and the forced journey into American enslavement, and concludes with music representing survival and a hopeful future. The bookends of positivity within this narrative are treated with familiar and comforting musical construction, contrasting with the raw, brash and visceral crying that powers to the fore when the music tells of the enraged and pained psychological state of the enslaved. Thusly, the “wide musical scope” is apropos: a story so powerful and diverse requires music that matches this dynamic.

Diaspora was composed in 2022 on a commission from a consortium of nine orchestras including the Minnesota Orchestra, along with a tenth partner, Young Concert Artists, for Banks, who is in the midst of touring with the concerto. The world premiere was given by the Kansas City Symphony in February 2023, with Banks as soloist, under the baton of this week’s conductor Ruth Reinhardt.

From Prodigious Beginnings
William “Billy” Edward Childs was born and raised in Los Angeles, where popular music, jazz and classical music constantly surrounded him. A piano prodigy, he gave his earliest performance at 6 years old. Beginning at age 16, he attended the Community School of the Performing Arts at the University of Southern California (USC), and eventually continued on to receive a bachelor of music degree from USC. He toured Japan with the J. J. Johnson Quintet at just 20 years old and made his debut recording with that ensemble. From 1977 to 1984 he gained notoriety playing with Freddie Hubbard’s ensemble. Four years later he began his solo jazz recording career, and he has since amassed 13 Grammy nominations and five Grammy Awards.

Alongside his success in the jazz field, classical music has always been a strong presence in the life of Childs. He has received commissions from the Ying Quartet, Kronos Quartet, Dorian Wind Quintet, American Brass Quintet, Los Angeles Master Chorale, Detroit Symphony Orchestra and Los Angeles Philharmonic, among other ensembles. He has also performed with famous classical stars such as Yo-Yo Ma and Renée Fleming.

Showcasing Musical Diversity
Diaspora showcases the comfort that Childs has cultivated within diverse genres. Steven Banks, the saxophonist who helped to commission this concerto and was the soloist for its premiere as well as this week’s performances, emphatically reflects: “I’ve certainly never played a concerto that had this wide of a musical scope. The first movement is very diatonic, almost sing-songy, and the second movement gets all the way up to a screaming multiphonic (a technique where the saxophone plays multiple pitches at the same time).”

Childs refers to this new saxophone concerto as a symphonic poem. Its three movements are each based on poetry. Both Childs and Banks were drawn to Ravel’s Gaspard de la Nuit (a three-movement piano suite based on poems by Aloysius Bertrand) as a structural model, but where Ravel’s masterpiece uses poems by one author, Banks and Childs selected poems by Nayyirah Waheed, Claude McKay and Maya Angelou to form the journey that the concerto represents.

The Concerto: Building to Empowerment
The first movement, Motherland, begins in a manner atypical of a concerto. The soloist plays a folk-like melody unaccompanied for quite a significant amount of time. It is, however, not a cadenza where a soloist must display their virtuoso technique; rather, it is a melody that must be sung with utmost care. This singing melody firmly establishes an African setting—balanced and purposeful, containing wisdom and secrets to be revealed. By the end of this
movement, the melody takes on an array of changes, which eventually culminate in the moment where Europeans fight with Africans, and the movement ends with the first cadenza—a reflective moment of confusion, moments of hope, yet a foreshadowing of a dismal future.

The second movement, *If We Must Die*, takes one of the most powerful sonnets ever written in history and uses it as a foundation. Claude McKay’s most famous work ends with a couplet that perhaps sums up the entirety of this concerto: “Like men, we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack / Pressed to the wall dying but fighting back.” Expectedly, this movement contains brash utterances, wailing gestures, tense undulations, and other compositional approaches that evoke this “fighting” and “dying.” This movement concludes with a short cadenza that transitions the mood from pain to resilience, self-love, self-worth and self-determination.

The third and final movement, *And Still I Rise*, is hope musically embodied. “Black empowerment,” according to Childs, is what defines this finale. He opens this movement with a variation of the melody that begins the entire piece. Yet in this setting for saxophone and piano, Childs draws upon his experiences playing gospel in church, and creates an intimate sound that is heard in the context of Black American worship. With its rousing conclusion, the music reflects one of Maya Angelou’s most powerful literary statements—a message of survival, encouragement and hope.

**THE COMPOSER’S NOTE**

Billy Childs has provided a detailed program note on *Diaspora*. To read it in full, visit minnesotalyris.org/diasporanote or scan the QR code.

**Instrumentation:** solo saxophone with orchestra comprising 2 flutes (1 doubling piccolo and alto flute), oboe, English horn, 2 clarinets, bassoon, contrabassoon, 3 horns, 2 trumpets, trombone, bass trombone, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, suspended cymbal, brake drum, cowbell, tambourine, tam-tam, triangle, wood blocks, xylophone, marimba, vibraphone, chimes, harp, piano (doubling celesta) and strings

**PROGRAM NOTE BY ANTHONY R. GREEN.**
performances. The eight movements she has chosen comprise two movements from Prokofiev’s Suite No. 1, five from the Second Suite and a lone movement from the Suite No. 3—conjuring in sound the characters, actions and moods of the drama.

MUSIC TENDER AND DRAMATIC

The Montagues and the Capulets is one of the most famous excerpts from the ballet, forging ahead powerfully as it depicts the swagger of the rival families; its quiet central episode features several striking sounds, including a tenor saxophone solo and wispy glissandos for muted violas. Juliet—The Young Girl captures the heroine’s sprightly energy with racing violins and teasing motifs, though wistful interludes also suggest a depth to her character. In the witty Masks, Mercutio and Benvolio have talked Romeo, a fellow Montague, into crashing the ball at the Capulets, and this music accompanies their stealthy entrance. Dance continues these events, accompanying a scene from the ball.

The violence that triggers the concluding tragedy explodes in The Death of Tybalt. Tybalt, a Capulet, has killed the Montague Mercutio, and Romeo, once the voice of calm, becomes furious and kills Tybalt. The music illustrates the swordfight, the fatal thrust, and a clod-hopping funeral march in which cellos and horns sing the funeral song above rolling drums. Romeo and Juliet Before Parting brings some of the finest music in the ballet. The tender flute solo at the beginning sets the mood of love, which Prokofiev underlines with a solo for viola d’amore (a part usually undertaken by the modern viola). Following the emotional Morning Serenade, a love song also known as Aubade, today’s suite concludes with Romeo at Juliet’s Grave, as grieving violins drive the music to a painful climax, and it falls away into numbed silence.

Instrumentation: 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, tenor saxophone, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, cornet, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, tambourine, triangle, xylophone, chimes, harp, piano, celesta and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY ERIC BROMBERGER.
LUNAR NEW YEAR
WITH THE MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA

Junping Qian, conductor
Vân-Ánh Vanessa Võ, vocals, đàn bầu and đàn tranh
Zhengang Xie, jing hu | Mei Hu, yue qin
Roz Tsai, host | Fei Xie, artistic advisor

Saturday, February 17, 2024, 7PM | Orchestra Hall

Li Huanzhi
Spring Festival Overture
CA. 5'

Texu Kim
Dub-Sanjo
CA. 8'

Tyzen Hsiao
The Angel from Formosa
CA. 5'

Vân-Ánh Vanessa Võ
Lullaby for a Country for Soprano and Orchestra
Love
Yearning
Sorrow
Fire
CA. 16'

Vân-Ánh Vanessa Võ, vocals, đàn bầu and đàn tranh

INTERMISSION
CA. 20'

Johann Strauss, Jr.
Voices of Spring (Frühlingsstimmen) Waltz, Opus 410
CA. 6'

ZhenQiang Xie/
Guang Han
Flying Dragon and Dancing Phoenix *
for Jing Hu, Yue Qin and Orchestra
Zhengang Xie, jing hu | Mei Hu, yue qin
CA. 15'

Hua Wu
Welcome Spring for Jing Hu and Orchestra
Zhengang Xie, jing hu
CA. 3'

Traditional/
arr. Yukikazu Suzuki
Colorful Clouds Chasing the Moon
CA. 5'

Jianping Tang
Dance of the Golden Snake
CA. 4'

* World premiere; commissioned by the Minnesota Orchestra

PRE-CONCERT AND INTERMISSION
Music and dance presented in partnership with the Alliance of Chinese Culture & Arts and Carleton College’s Department of Music.
Saturday, February 17, Roberta Mann Grand Foyer, Target Atrium and N. Bud Grossman Mezzanine

This concert will be broadcast live on stations of YourClassical Minnesota Public Radio.
VÂN-ÁNH VANESSA VÕ, VOCALS, ĐÀN BÂU AND ĐÀN TRANH
Vân-Ánh Vanessa Võ is an award-winning performer of the 16-string đàn tranh (zither) and an Emmy Award-winning composer who has collaborated with Kronos Quartet, Alonzo King LINES Ballet and Yo-Yo Ma. She also uses the monochord (đàn bầu), bamboo xylophone (đàn trống), traditional drums (trống) and other instruments to create music that blends Vietnamese instruments and traditions with other genres and structures. Võ co-composed and arranged music for the Oscar-nominated documentary Daughter from Danang as well as the Emmy-winning soundtrack for Bolinao S2, among other film projects. She graduated with distinction from the Vietnamese Academy of Music, where she later taught, and has since performed in more than 14 countries, including appearances at venues such as Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center and Lincoln Center as well as the 2012 London Olympic Games Music Festival. Her recent projects include premiering the first part of the Mekong trilogy production, Mekong: SOUL, commissioned by the Kennedy Center, and co-composing an original soundtrack for the PBS documentary The People vs. Agent Orange with Blake Leyh. During President Barack Obama’s administration, Võ became the first Vietnamese artist to perform at the White House and received the Artist Laureate Award for her community contributions through the arts. More: vananhvo.com.

JUNPING QIAN, CONDUCTOR
Junping Qian, who is now in his third year of leading the Minnesota Orchestra’s Lunar New Year celebration, served as assistant conductor of the Royal Scottish National Orchestra from 2018 to 2020 and was a visiting faculty member at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. He won first prize at the 2017 Bucharest International Conducting Competition and was also a prize-winner in the 2019 International Competition of Young Conductors Lovro von Matačić in Zagreb, the 2021 Hans von Bülow International Conducting Competition and the 2022 Princess Astrid Competition in Trondheim. Since making his European debut at the Verbier Festival in 2012, Qian has conducted on four continents with orchestras such as the Konzerthausorchester Berlin, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Orchestre de Paris, Danish National Symphony Orchestra, Hungarian State Opera, Roma Sinfonietta, Minnesota Orchestra, Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra and Kammerorchester Basel. Qian graduated from the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia and the Hochschule für Musik Hanns Eisler in Berlin. His teachers and mentors include Daniel Harding, Sir Roger Norrington, Thomas Søndergård, Christoph Eschenbach, Christian Ehwald, Mark Gibson and Otto Werner Mueller. More: junpingqian.com.

ZHENGANG XIE, JING HU
Jing hu master Mr. Zhengang Xie and yue qin master Ms. Mei Hu, a husband-and-wife team, are listed as members of the elite group among the musicians in the Directory of Current Chinese Artists of 1998, which Hu participated in editing. While in China, as the top “Cheng” style Peking Opera fiddlers, Xie and Hu performed and recorded as solo jing hu and yue qin players with many top Beijing Opera houses, including the Beijing Opera House and National Opera House. In addition to performing traditional Peking Opera repertoire, Xie has participated in many new opera productions, such as the Peking Opera TV show Cao Xueqin and the new opera The Legend of The White Snake. Xie has also performed in the Great Hall of People in Beijing during a Lunar New Year celebration, and was greeted by the Chairman Jiang Zemin, among other top Chinese government officials. Since moving to the U.S. in 1999, the couple has brought Chinese music, particularly Peking Opera, to their community. While living in Cincinnati from 2000 to 2020, Xie and Hu performed in concert halls, schools and universities around the region. In collaborations with the University of Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, they performed concertos such as In the Dark Night, The Qiao Family Compound and The God of Mountain. Xie and Hu are active in creating performance videos online, as well as performing around the region. More: zhengangxie.com.

(continued on next page)
the Twin Cities area. They were featured soloists with the Minnesota Orchestra at the inaugural Lunar New Year concert in 2022, and this past summer they toured Spain with Carleton College Chinese ensemble on an invitation from pipa master Gao Hong. Xie and Hu currently reside in Plymouth, Minnesota, near their son, Minnesota Orchestra Principal Bassoon Fei Xie, and his family.

**ZHENQIANG XIE, COMPOSER**
ZhenQiang Xie, president of the Chinese Opera Music Society, national first-class composer and expert of the Ministry of Culture, is currently a professor and director of the music department of the National Academy of Chinese Opera. He has composed more than 50 large-scale plays for the National Peking Opera Theater of China, Beijing Peking Opera Theater and other provincial theaters, and has composed more than 60 music works for national important evening party CCTV and the Spring Festival gala of various provincial TV stations. His Radiant Snow and Ice won the award for outstanding works for the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics. In 1999 he was compiled into Biography of Contemporary Dramatists, published by China Drama Press.

**FEI XIE, ARTISTIC ADVISOR**
Fei Xie joined the Minnesota Orchestra as principal bassoon in 2017 after serving as principal bassoon of the Baltimore Symphony, an ensemble he first joined as second bassoonist in 2008. When he won the principal role in 2012, Xie became the first Chinese-born bassoonist to hold such a position in a major American symphony orchestra. Xie has appeared as soloist with the Minnesota Orchestra—performing Mozart’s Bassoon Concerto in January 2021—Baltimore Symphony, Festival Mozaic Orchestra and the Sichuan Conservatory Symphony Orchestra in China, and he has taught masterclasses and coached orchestral bassoonists throughout the U.S., China and Brazil. He has also appeared in numerous chamber music concerts at Orchestra Hall, most recently in last month’s performance of Samuel Barber’s Summer Music and Wynton Marsalis’ 4 Bassoons Talking. He took on the role of artistic consultant for the Orchestra’s first two Lunar New Year celebrations in February 2022 and January 2023 and continues in that capacity this year. The 2022 concerts also saw Xie joined onstage by his mother and father—the professional Peking Opera musicians Mei Hu and Zhengang Xie, who are yue qin and jing hu masters, respectively—and they reunite for this year’s program as well. More: minnesotaorchestra.org.

**ROZ TSAI, HOST**
Dr. Benhong Rosaline Tsai, who also hosted the Minnesota Orchestra’s Lunar New Year concerts in 2022 and 2023, is a global talent management executive who has held transformative leadership roles in multiple Fortune 500 organizations such as Ecolab, Honeywell and Xcel Energy. She currently serves as Vice President of Talent, Learning, and Org Effectiveness at Thrivent, a Fortune 500 financial services firm based in Minneapolis. She is a long-time community volunteer for youth development, arts and culture organizations, most recently completing her term as board chair for Minnesota non-profit BestPrep. A native of Tianjin, China, Tsai completed her undergraduate studies at Nankai University and obtained her master of science degree at St. Cloud State University. She holds a doctorate degree from University of Minnesota, where she currently serves as adjunct faculty for the Carlson School of Management. More: carlsonschool.umn.edu.

**PROGRAM NOTES**
Program notes for tonight’s concert are provided in an insert and are accessible at minnesotaorchestra.org/lunarnewyearnotes or via the QR code below.
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MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA

Osmo Vänskä, conductor
Nina Bernat, bass

Thursday, February 22, 2024, 11AM
Friday, February 23, 2024, 8PM
Saturday, February 24, 2024, 7PM

Orchestra Hall

Gioachino Rossini  Overture to The Barber of Seville  CA. 7'
Giovanni Bottesini  Concerto No. 2 in B minor for Bass and String Orchestra
  Allegro moderato
  Andante
  Finale: Allegro
  Nina Bernat, bass

Anders Hillborg  Through Lost Landscapes  CA. 13'

INTERMISSION  CA. 20'

Eduard Tubin  Concerto for Bass and Orchestra
  Allegro con moto
  Allegro non troppo
  Allegro non troppo, poco marciale
  [The three movements are played without pause]
  Nina Bernat, bass

Kevin Puts  Concerto for Orchestra  CA. 24'
  Hymn for the Hurting
  Caccia no. 1
  Music Box with Arietta
  Toccata
  Siciliana
  Ecco la Marcia? (Caccia No. 2)

PRE-CONCERT
Performance by Le Quatuor International de Saxophones
Thursday, February 22, 10:15am, Target Atrium | Friday, February 23, 7:15pm, Target Atrium
Saturday, February 24, 6:15pm, Target Atrium

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ARTISTS

OSMO VÄNSKÄ, CONDUCTOR

Minnesota Orchestra Conductor Laureate Osmo Vänskä, whose 19-year tenure as the Orchestra’s music director concluded in summer 2022, is renowned internationally for his compelling interpretations of the standard, contemporary and Nordic repertoires. His multi-year recording project with the ensemble to record all ten of Gustav Mahler’s symphonies concluded in November 2022 with sessions of the Third Symphony. Vänskä’s previous recordings with the Orchestra include all of the Sibelius and Beethoven symphonies, which included discs that earned a Grammy Award for Best Orchestral Performances and two additional Grammy nominations. Vänskä also led the ensemble on major tours to Cuba, Europe and South Africa. As a guest conductor, he has received extraordinary praise for his work with many of the world’s leading orchestras. He previously served as music director of the Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra and Finland’s Lahti Symphony. He began his music career as a clarinetist and continues to perform on that instrument. This season he conducts the orchestras of Atlanta, Bergen, Detroit, Netherlands Radio, Antwerp, Pittsburgh, Seattle, Tokyo Metropolitan, Sydney, Adelaide and Toronto, among other ensembles. More: minnesotaorchestra.org, harrisonparrott.com.

NINA BERNAT, BASS

Double bassist Nina Bernat, acclaimed for her interpretive maturity, expressive depth and technical clarity, has emerged onto the world stage with many awards and accolades to her credit. In 2023 she was honored as a recipient of the Avery Fisher Career Grant and winner of the Concert Artists Guild Elmaleh Competition. Recent awards include first prizes in the Barbash J.S. Bach String Competition, the FRIENDS of the Minnesota Orchestra Young Artist Competition, the Juilliard Double Bass Competition and the 2019 International Society of Bassists Solo Competition. She has been invited to perform as guest principal bass with the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra and Oslo Philharmonic, serving under the batons of conductors such as András Schiff and Osmo Vänskä. Bernat is in demand as a passionate chamber musician. She begins her involvement with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center as a member of the Bowers Program in 2024. Among her notable chamber performances are appearances with the Jupiter Symphony Chamber Players, Bridgehampton Chamber Music Series and Mostly Music. She performs on an instrument passed down from her father, Mark Bernat, attributed to Guadagnini. More: ninabernat.com.

ONE-MINUTE NOTES

Rossini: Overture to The Barber of Seville

Rossini’s overture sets the stage for an opera full of wit and comic intrigue. A slow introduction builds to an exciting Allegro con brio, with a well-known “laughing” main theme, and the music crescendos to a sparkling close.

Bottesini: Bass Concerto No. 2

Bottesini did for the bass what Niccolò Paganini did for the violin, and his Bass Concerto No. 2 is a hallmark in the bass repertory. Rich with lyrical melodies and plenty of virtuosic writing, the work allows the soloist to put their full mastery of the instrument on display.

Hillborg: Through Lost Landscapes

Hillborg’s Through Lost Landscapes alludes to the disaster-struck state of the planet today. Its greatly varied scoring includes dense tone clusters, jazz-style piano, solo passages for soprano saxophone and haunting imitations of bird calls.

Tubin: Bass Concerto

Estonian composer Eduard Tubin wrote his Concerto for Bass and Orchestra for fellow countryman Ludvig Juth, who was a bass player in the Boston Symphony. The work is suffused with expansive melodic ideas and contains a unique cadenza which Juth called “unprecedented for the bass.”

Puts: Concerto for Orchestra

In composing his recent Concerto for Orchestra, Kevin Puts found a “creative entry point” in Amanda Gorman’s poem Hymn for the Hurting about the 2022 school shooting in Uvalde, Texas. Other varied inspirations include a Mozart opera and a 14th-century musical form, the caccia.
From the moment of its premiere in Rome on February 20, 1816, Rossini’s The Barber of Seville has been an audience favorite. The opera is one of the finest examples of opera buffa, full of witty music and comic intrigue in the battle of the sexes. One of the most popular parts of The Barber has always been its overture, which sets exactly the right mood for all the fun to follow.

CHARMING AND VERSATILE
Yet this overture had originally been composed three years earlier as the introduction to a tragic opera, Aureliano in Palmira. And two years later, Rossini used it again as the overture to his historical opera about Queen Elizabeth I, Elisabetta, Regina d’Inghilterra. Finally, in 1816, it became the overture to The Barber of Seville. It seems hard to believe that an overture composed for a tragic opera could function so perfectly as the introduction to a comic tale, yet it does, and, whether on the opera stage or in the concert hall, this music continues to work its charm.

In modified sonata form, the overture is scored for Mozart’s orchestra (pairs of winds, plus timpani and strings) with the addition of one very non-Classical instrument, a bass drum. The overture begins with a slow introduction marked Andante maestoso, which features crashing chords, gathering energy and a beautifully poised melody for violins. The music rushes ahead at the Allegro con brio, with its famous “laughing” main theme, full of point and expectancy. Solo oboe introduces the second theme group, marked dolce, which alternates with the main violin theme. Along the way are several of the lengthy crescendos that were a virtual Rossini trademark—his nickname was “Monsieur Crescendo”—and one of these drives this sparkling music home in a great blast of energy.

Instrumentation: flute, piccolo, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani, bass drum, cymbals and strings

In the string family, works for soloist and orchestra are distributed quite unevenly. Whereas the violin and the cello enjoy a wealth of concerto repertoire, the viola is relegated to a few pre-1900 works and a thriving contemporary canon, and the bass is given even less attention. Yet the history of solo music for the lowest string instrument begins much earlier than one might expect. As early as the 1700s, composers such as Haydn and Mozart composed virtuoso works for their talented bassist contemporaries. Over the next three centuries, composer-performers such as Giovanni Bottesini, Serge Koussevitzky, Edgar Meyer and François Rabbath expanded the possibilities of this powerful, versatile and colorful instrument, especially taking advantage of its physical changes over time. In today’s concert we shall hear bass concerto performances by two composers: Giovanni Bottesini and Eduard Tubin.

THE ACCIDENTAL BASSIST
Despite Bottesini’s major contribution to the bass world as both a composer and a virtuosic soloist, he almost didn’t become a bassist. Born in 1821 in Lombardy, Italy, he studied violin from a young age and proved to be an incredible talent. When he was 14, his music-teacher father sought to enroll him in the Milan Conservatory, but there were too many violin students for the institution to distribute a scholarship to young Bottesini. As the family lacked the funds to pay full tuition, Bottesini knew he must enroll with one of the only two scholarships that the conservatory had available: one for bassoon and one for double bass. In a matter of weeks, he prepared a bass audition—and successfully won the scholarship.

Subsequently, Bottesini worked at extrapolating the many possibilities of the bass, and became a leading soloist, so much so that he became known as the “Paganini of the Double Bass” (double bass being one common name for the instrument, which in orchestral settings was often used to “double” the same notes as the cello, sounding one octave lower). Bottesini toured the world, holding a position as far away as Havana, Cuba. A talented conductor, Bottesini often premiered his own operas, as well as the world premiere of Verdi’s Aida held in Cairo. Verdi himself
appointed Bottesini director of the Parma Conservatory. Sadly, only one year into this position, Bottesini passed away, leaving behind a great legacy.

THE CONCERTO: A BELOVED STAPLE
Contributing mightily to the instrument’s repertoire, Bottesini’s Bass Concerto No. 2 is a beloved staple for the instrument, especially notable for the fascinating cadenza in the introduction. Composed in 1845 and cast in three movements, this Romantic-era concerto is dominated by clear, lyrical melodies, an exploration of the full virtuosic capability of the soloist and the bass itself, and a clarity of harmony and structure. Where the first two movements are quite reminiscent of opera arias, the last movement is more of a rousing dance. One can almost hear tambourines and stomp ing feet as the music unfolds.

Instrumentation: solo bass and string orchestra

PROGRAM NOTE BY ANTHONY R. GREEN.

ANDERS HILLBORG
B: May 31, 1954
Sollentuna, Sweden

Through Lost Landscapes
PREMIERED: February 7, 2020

The music of Anders Hillborg, one of the leading Swedish classical composers working today, first arrived at Orchestra Hall in 2014, when Minnesota Orchestra audiences heard soprano Renée Fleming perform Hillborg’s The Strand Settings. In September 2017 the Orchestra and soloist James Ehnes performed the American premiere of Hillborg’s Second Violin Concerto, which was commissioned by a consortium that includes the Minnesota Orchestra. This week brings the Orchestra’s first performance of another Hillborg work co-commissioned by the ensemble: Through Lost Landscapes.

A LEADING CREATIVE VOICE
Born in 1954 in Sollentuna, Sweden, and educated at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm, Hillborg has produced a large and varied compositional catalog across four decades that includes works for orchestra, choir and chamber combinations, as well as film scores and pop music. His music is regularly commissioned and performed by major orchestras around the world. Among the conductors he has been closely associated with is Esa-Pekka Salonen, who has conducted and commissioned a number of his works, including Sirens, which was jointly commissioned by the Los Angeles Philharmonic and Chicago Symphony Orchestra. In recent years Hillborg has twice been honored with the Swedish Gramophone Award for Best Classical CD of the Year for albums featuring his music.

Many of Hillborg’s works bear intriguing and sometimes enigmatic titles; among his most recent works are Sound Atlas (2018) for orchestra, The Breathing of the World (2019) for choir, soprano saxophone and cello, and Through Lost Landscapes (2019) for orchestra. In addition, recent years have brought concertos for cello and viola. Virtuosic writing is a calling card of his music, and some of his earlier works were at first deemed unplayable before musicians rose to the challenge.

SPEAKING TO THE MOMENT
The title Through Lost Landscapes has, sadly, become increasingly apt since Hillborg composed the 13-minute work four years ago. Each day seems to bring new images of desolation around the world brought by fires, floods and other natural and man-made disasters. Although this music does not follow a specific extramusical program, it alludes to the state of the planet today both through its title and its recurring haunting bird calls, among other special effects.

Through Lost Landscapes was commissioned jointly by the Minnesota Orchestra, Orquesta Sinfónica de Castilla y León, BBC Radio 3, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic and Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra. The work received its world premiere in Spain in February 7, 2020, with the Orquesta Sinfónica de Castilla y León, led by conductor Andrew Gourley, performing mere weeks before COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic. It is scored for a fairly large orchestra, with the standard layout augmented by larger-than-usual wind complements, soprano saxophone and percussion instruments such as congas, guiro and two large vibraslaps.

THE MUSIC IN BRIEF
The composer has endorsed program annotator Martin Anderson’s summary of Through Lost Landscapes:

“The piece opens with what must be the grandest yet of Hillborg’s clusters, supported with three huge chords, the third marked Ecstatic. That unleashes a hectic chase, a jazzy piano prominent in the texture. The texture begins to shimmer, with waves of color from piano and celesta in particular. Another series of massive chords, linked by rolling melodic lines, suggests the image of the forest, with tree trunks of cathedral grandeur holding up a vast carpet
of vegetation; a solo soprano saxophone emerges in a rare island of calm.

“Another chase (an echo of the monkeys in Köchlin’s symphonic poem Les bandar-log?) initiates a never-ending downwards glissando, initiating the idea that will underlie most of the rest of the piece. A series of woodwind patterns suggests some treetop activity, an idea that becomes hard to resist when, two pages later in the score, Hillborg marks them as ‘imitating bird calls.’ (Whether by accident or design, these calls sound very like those of the Greater Bird-of-Paradise, Paradisaea apoda.) Under the cover of another glissando, the bird calls are transformed into a swift pulse, but it soon falls silent, leaving room for another passage of noisy bird calls. The shimmering waves of piano and celesta return, slowing down to allow another grandiose chord to envelope the orchestra. The Birds-of-Paradise are heard again, twice, and the music sinks gently to rest.”

Instrumentation: 3 flutes (all doubling piccolo), 3 oboes, 3 clarinets, soprano saxophone, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, 3 congas, large guiro, 4 tom-toms, triangle, 2 vibraslap, glockenspiel, crotales, chimes, piano, celesta and strings

Instrumentation: solo bass with orchestra comprising 2 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 2 oboes (1 doubling English horn), 2 clarinets (1 doubling bass clarinet), 2 bassoons (1 doubling contrabassoon), 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, tamburo, harp and strings

Eduard Tubin was born, educated and developed a successful career in his native Estonia. Between 1940 and 1944, Soviet and German warring over this country resulted in citizens forced into labor camps, imprisonment, tens of thousands of Estonian deaths and over 250,000 people being displaced. Tubin was amongst those who fled to Sweden in 1944 after a brutal Soviet attack, and he remained there until his death. Three years after Tubin’s political flight, he met Ludvig Juth, an Estonian bass player in the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

“BETTER” THAN A BASSIST’S CONCERTO
The meeting of the two Estonians resulted in Juth commissioning a concerto from Tubin. This request began a fruitful exchange in which Tubin was taught about the techniques of bass performance and the instrument’s timbre, wide pitch range and virtuosic possibilities. Even though Juth composed his own concerto in 1932, he said of Tubin’s concerto “…the piece is very good and very suitable for the double bass, even a double bass player would not have written it better.” Juth premiered this piece in a version for bass and piano in 1948, but never played the concerto with an orchestra before his passing in 1957. In March of that same year soloist Manuel Verdeguer delivered the concerto’s orchestral premiere with the Colombia Symphony.

Characteristic features of Tubin’s musical language include his talent for expanding simple melodies into large forms and his love for the Estonian sound. The Bass Concerto is no exception; its first 3-note statement defines the primary emotion of the entire piece, and as it unfolds, one can clearly hear how the additional melodies, harmonies and counterpoint are related. Of special note is the concerto’s cadenza, praised by Juth as something “unprecedented for the bass.” While the normal tuning of the bass, from lowest pitch to highest, is E-A-D-G, a common “solo tuning” for bass concerto repertoire is a whole-step higher: F#-B-E-A, resulting in a brighter sound. In addition to adopting this practice, Tubin remains primarily in the middle and high registers of the instrument in his concerto, making the lower pitches supportive and bold.

Instrumentation: 3 flutes (all doubling piccolo), 3 oboes, 3 clarinets, soprano saxophone, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, tamburo, harp and strings

Although Kevin Puts hails from St. Louis, Missouri, the Twin Cities have loomed large in his award-winning career. Puts won the 2012 Pulitzer Prize for Music for his opera Silent Night, which was commissioned and premiered by Minnesota Opera, and in 2014 he was named director of the Minnesota Orchestra Composer Institute.
The Orchestra commissioned his 2006 work Sinfonia concertante and has played six of his pieces to date. This week brings a seventh—his Concerto for Orchestra, which was commissioned by the Minnesota Orchestra, St. Louis Symphony and Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music. Its premiere was given on January 21 of last year by the St. Louis Symphony under the baton of Stéphane Denève, and the piece is dedicated to that ensemble and conductor.

THE COMPOSER’S RESPONSE
The composer has supplied the following comments about the work:

“The [concerto’s] creative entry point for me was the discovery of young Amanda Gorman’s beautiful poem ‘Hymn for the Hurting’ written in response to the horrific school shooting—an occurrence now routine in our country—in Uvalde, Texas, in May 2022. The music at the concerto’s opening—recalled briefly at various places throughout the piece—is my immediate musical reaction to it. The title of the second movement, *Caccia*, is a reference to the 14th-century musical form depicting the hunt or the chase and flows directly from this opening hymn. It continues the opening movement’s focus on the various groups of instruments in the orchestra beginning with the oboes and punctuated at all times by the orchestra’s three percussionists who play identical collections of six drums. *Music Box with Arietta*, by contrast, explores the gentler side of the percussion section, led here by cascading gestures played by the harp and celesta, giving way to a lyrical counterpoint of woodwinds. *Toccata* is a quick exchange between the strings, the winds and the percussion. Eventually the brass section asserts itself, cutting across these exchanges with brash, angular lines. A brief refrain of the opening movement leads to a gentle *Siciliana* featuring nearly all instruments in the orchestra in lyrical ways, perhaps most prominently the piano. Another refrain introduces the final movement, another *Caccia*, this one containing a brief quotation from the Mozart opera which inspired it.”

ABOUT THE COMPOSER
Kevin Puts’ music has been commissioned and performed by leading ensembles and opera companies from around the globe; among them are the Metropolitan Opera, Philadelphia Orchestra, Carnegie Hall, Opera Philadelphia and Minnesota Opera. In 2006, early in Puts’ career, the Minnesota Orchestra premiered his Sinfonia concertante as part of the ensemble’s series of commissions celebrating its centennial. He has also worked with prominent soloists and conductors such as Renée Fleming, Yo-Yo Ma, Yannick Nezet-Seguin, Marin Alsop and Joshua Bell—for whom he composed his most recent orchestral work, *Earth*, which Bell premiered in August 2023 with the NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra. He is also committed to fostering the next generation of composers. In addition to his leadership role of the Minnesota Orchestra Composer Institute, he teaches composition at the Peabody Institute of Johns Hopkins University.

Puts’ most recent opera, *The Hours*, received two premieres in 2022—first in concert by the Philadelphia Orchestra, then fully staged at the Metropolitan Opera. Among other recent highlights are the West Coast premiere of *The Brightness of Light*, featuring Renée Fleming and Rod Gilfry with the Los Angeles Opera Orchestra, and the world premiere of his triple concerto *Contact*, composed for the trio Time for Three. At the 2023 Grammy Awards, a recording of *Contact* with the Philadelphia Orchestra and conductor Xian Zhang was awarded Best Contemporary Classical Composition.

Instrumentation: 3 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, English horn, 3 bassoons (1 doubling contrabassoon), 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, suspended cymbal, 2 bongos, 2 timbales, 2 tom-toms, triangle, xylophone, marimba, glockenspiel, vibraphone, chimes, harp, piano (doubling celesta) and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY CARL SCHROEDER

Kevin Puts, in his role as director of the Minnesota Orchestra Composer Institute, listening alongside composer Texu Kim at a rehearsal for the Composer Institute concert in May 2015. Kim’s work *Dub-Sanjo* is heard at Orchestra Hall earlier this month at the Lunar New Year concert. Photo: Greg Helgeson
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- *Greg Milliren, flute*  
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Suite from *Much Ado About Nothing* for Violin and Piano
- The Maiden in the Bridal Chamber
- Dogberry and Verges (March of the Watch)
- Scene in the Garden
- Masquerade (Hornpipe)
  - *Ben Odhner, violin*  
  *Susan Billmeyer, piano*

Kevin Puts  
*Credo*
- The Violin Guru of Katonah
- Infrastructure
- Learning to Dance
- Credo
  - *Alan Snow, violin*  
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*Trio Pathétique* in D minor
- Allegro moderato
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- Allegro con spirito
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  *Gabriel Campos Zamora, clarinet*
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Leoš Janáček  
*String Quartet No. 2, Intimate Letters*
- Andante – Con moto – Allegro
- Adagio – Vivace
- Moderato – Andante – Adagio
- Allegro – Andante – Adagio
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*In Remembrance

These listings are current as of
December 14, 2023. Every effort has
been made to ensure their accuracy.
If your name has been inadvertently
omitted or incorrectly listed, please
accept our apology and contact the
Development department at 612-371-
5600 or at support@mnorch.org.

For information on giving at these or
other levels, please call Bonnie Marshall
at 612-371-7122 or visit our website at
minnesotaorchestra.org/support.

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.

SHOWCASE FEBRUARY 2024 —— MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA

2023–24 GUARANTY FUND

YOUR GIFT MAKES THE “BEST DAYS” HAPPEN AT ORCHESTRA HALL!

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
students applauding a Minnesota Orchestra “Sounds of the
Harvest” Young People’s Concert, November 2023. Photo: Courtney Perry

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When you include the Minnesota Orchestra in your estate plans, you become a member of the Laureate Society—and our Laureate family. Regular benefits include:

- Invitation to the Ken and Judy Dayton Annual Laureate Society Luncheon with Minnesota Orchestra musicians
- Backstage tour of Orchestra Hall
- Complimentary refreshments at intermission during classical subscription season concerts
- Recognition as Laureate Society members in publications such as Showcase
- Communications about Minnesota Orchestra news and special updates
- VIP ticket services for Laureate members who also donate to the Guaranty Fund at the Maestro’s Circle level

If you have included the Minnesota Orchestra in your estate plans, please let us know so we can thank you and recognize you personally for your generosity. We will respect your wishes to remain anonymous if you so choose.

If you would like more information about planned giving, please contact Emily Boigenzahn at 612-371-7138 or eboigenzahn@mnorch.org.
CORPORATIONS, FOUNDATIONS AND PUBLIC SUPPORT

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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$100,000–$249,999

$50,000 – $99,999

$20,000–$49,999

$10,000–$19,999

$5,000–$9,999

$1,000–$4,999

This activity is made possible by the voters of Minnesota through a Minnesota State Arts Board Operating Support grant, thanks to a legislative appropriation from the arts and cultural heritage fund.

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