

MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA

Hannu Lintu, conductor
Yuja Wang, piano

Friday, March 29, 2024, 8PM
Saturday, March 30, 2024, 7PM

Orchestra Hall

Kaija Saariaho	<i>Ciel d’hiver</i>	CA. 10’
Sergei Prokofiev	Concerto No. 1 in D-flat major for Piano and Orchestra, Opus 10 Allegro brioso Andante assai Allegro scherzando [The movements are played without pause.] <i>Yuja Wang, piano</i>	CA. 16’
I N T E R M I S S I O N		CA. 20’
Sergei Rachmaninoff	Symphony No. 2 in E minor, Opus 27 Largo – Allegro moderato Allegro molto Adagio Allegro vivace	CA. 60’

PRE-CONCERT

Concert Preview with Valerie Little
Friday, March 29, 7:15pm, Target Atrium | Saturday, March 30, 6:15pm, Target Atrium

THANK YOU

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



HANNU LINTU,
CONDUCTOR

Acclaimed for his dynamic podium presence and attention to instrumental color, Hannu Lintu maintains his reputation as one of the world's finest conductors. This season he becomes music director of Orquestra Gulbenkian while continuing his tenure as chief conductor of Finnish National Opera and Ballet, demonstrating his mastery of both symphonic and operatic repertoire. The appointments follow successful concerts with Orquestra Gulbenkian and productions with Finnish National Opera and Ballet including Strauss' *Salome*, Puccini's *Turandot* and Britten's *Billy Budd*. Highlights of his 2023–24 season include completing that opera house's *Ring Cycle* with Wagner's *Götterdämmerung* and leading productions of Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmelites* and Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, as well as debuts with Berlin Philharmonic, NHK Symphony Orchestra and SWR Symphonieorchester and returns to the Boston Symphony, Chicago Symphony, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, Orchestra Sinfonica Nazionale della RAI and George Enescu International Festival. Lintu studied cello and piano at the Sibelius Academy, where he also later studied conducting with Jorma Panula. He took first prize at the Nordic Conducting Competition in Bergen in 1994. More: harrisonparrott.com, hannulintu.fi.



YUJA WANG, PIANO

Yuja Wang is celebrated for her charismatic artistry, emotional honesty and captivating stage presence. She has performed with venerated conductors, musicians and ensembles, and is renowned for her virtuosity and lively performances. Her skill and charisma were recently demonstrated in a marathon performance of Rachmaninoff's four piano concertos plus the Paganini Rhapsody, all in one afternoon at Carnegie Hall with the Philadelphia Orchestra led by Yannick Nézet-Séguin. Last season she performed the world premiere of Magnus Lindberg's Piano Concerto No. 3 with the San Francisco Symphony and gave further performances across North America and Europe. This season she performs a recital tour to world-class venues across North America, Europe and Asia. Born into a musical family in Beijing, she trained in Canada and at the Curtis Institute of Music under Gary Graffman. Her international breakthrough came in 2007 when she performed as soloist with the Boston Symphony. Two years later she signed an exclusive contract with Deutsche Grammophon, and she has since established her place among the world's leading classical artists. In 2017 she was named Musical America's Artist of the Year, and in 2021 she received an Opus Klassik Award. She won her first Grammy Award at last month's ceremony. More: intermusica.com, yujawang.com.

ONE-MINUTE NOTES

Saariaho: *Ciel d'hiver*

Kaija Saariaho, who passed away less than a year ago, adapted *Ciel d'hiver* (Winter Sky) from her earlier work *Orion*, drawing inspiration from the mythological huntsman who is immortalized as a constellation. Its complex, layered textures evoke the sensational view of a starry night.

Prokofiev: Piano Concerto No. 1

Notable features of this concerto include a grandly soaring theme for piano and orchestra in unison and, in the final movement, a thrilling display of energy and wit as piano and orchestra seem pitted against each other. Prokofiev, himself a sensational pianist, performed this exhilarating work as his final exam at the Moscow Conservatory.

Rachmaninoff: Symphony No. 2

Rachmaninoff's longest, grandest and most expansive symphony is built on the opening motif, a somber figure for low strings. The lyrical third movement is a standout, containing several gorgeous melodies and an extended clarinet solo of ardent longing. The finale is soaring and magnificent, culminating in a blaze of orchestral sound.

**KAIJA SAARIAHO****B:** October 14, 1952
Helsinki, Finland**D:** June 2, 2023
Paris, France*Ciel d'hiver***PREMIERED:** April 7, 2014

In March 2023, when the Minnesota Orchestra last played the music of Kaija Saariaho—her clarinet concerto *D'OM LE VRAI SENS*, featuring Kari Kriikku—the Finnish composer's music was at a high point of recognition, particularly in her home country, where the classical music community had recently come together to celebrate her 70th birthday. Soloists, ensembles, educational institutions and the Finnish National Opera offered more than two dozen concerts in the latter months of 2022 featuring music from throughout her career. Sadly, that professional pinnacle was counterbalanced by personal tragedy, as Saariaho had been diagnosed with glioblastoma in February 2021. After her passing early in June 2023, tributes poured in from around the world, with performers, listeners and fellow composers praising her music, humanity and commitment to supporting future generations of musicians.

HIGH HONORS AND DIVERSE INSPIRATIONS

Born in 1952 in Helsinki, Saariaho studied composition there and in Freiburg and Paris, where she lived from 1982 until her death. Although many of her works are for chamber ensembles, in the final three decades of her life she produced several works for larger forces, including the operas *L'Amour de loin*, *Adriana Mater*, *Emilie* and *Only The Sound Remains*, as well as the oratorio *La Passion de Simone*. In 2003 she was awarded one of the highest honors for classical composers, the Grawemeyer Award. She was a committed educator and oversaw opportunities for composers such as the International Kaija Saariaho Organ Composition Competition. Her final work, the trumpet concerto *HUSH*, received a posthumous premiere in August 2023 by the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra under Susanna Mälkki's direction.

Saariaho's inspirations and subject matter varied greatly from work to work. Her 2018 opera *Innocence*, for instance, is of the here-and-now, addressing the aftermath of a school shooting, but her 2013 work *Ciel d'hiver* ("Winter Sky" in French) looks back to ancient times—as well as a work from earlier in her catalog. It is an arrangement of the second movement of her orchestral piece *Orion*, which was premiered by the Cleveland Orchestra in 2003. *Ciel d'hiver*

was commissioned by Musique Nouvelle en Liberté and was first heard in its standalone form on April 7, 2014, with the Orchestre Lamoureux performing under the baton of Fayçal Karoui. The Minnesota Orchestra was slated to perform *Ciel d'hiver* in May 2020 before the COVID-19 pandemic scrambled the schedules of orchestras worldwide.

MUSIC FROM MYTHOLOGY

In an excerpt from musicologist Laurie Shulman's program note on *Ciel d'hiver* written for the Minnesota Orchestra for the cancelled 2020 performance, Shulman summarizes the music's content and its context in the story of Orion that inspired the larger work from which *Ciel d'hiver* is drawn:

"In ancient Greek and Roman mythology, Orion was a handsome giant and hunter. The tales of his birth vary, but he is alleged to have come from the region of Boeotia. On the island of Chios, according to the myth, he drove out all the wild beasts. He fell in love with King Oenopion's daughter Merope, but then offended the king with his cavalier treatment of the princess. Oenopion enlisted the assistance of Dionysus to blind Orion. An oracle informed him that he could only regain his sight by directly viewing the rays of the rising sun. Hephaestus provided him with a guide to the east. After his vision was restored, he lived with the goddess Artemis as a hunter. Several tales of his death exist: at Artemis' hand, at the hands of the jealous Apollo or as the victim of a scorpion sting. Following his death, Orion was placed among the stars as a constellation.

"Saariaho is known for manipulating dense blocks of sound in shifting patterns, with an emphasis on orchestral color. Each of the three movements of her work *Orion* addresses an aspect of Orion's life and legend. *Ciel d'hiver* presents a sequence of individual soloists in vivid relief above a quiet, sustained pedal point from strings, harps, piano and organ. The spotlight passes from piccolo to concertmaster, then to clarinet, oboe, trumpet and the violin section. As the texture becomes more dense, various instruments echo repeated motives. We view the firmament on a crystal clear night, far from civilization: the heavens sparkling with infinite variety against the midnight darkness. From complex textures emerge recurrent motives: the more we listen, the more layers we hear, coalescing in nature's universal order."

Instrumentation: 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons (1 doubling contrabassoon), 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 2 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, small bell, crotales, glass chimes, shell chimes, 3 suspended cymbals, tamtam, vibraphone, triangle, harp, piano, celesta and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY CARL SCHROEDER, WITH MUSICAL DESCRIPTION BY LAURIE SHULMAN.

**SERGEI PROKOFIEV**

B: April 23, 1891
Sontzovka, Ukraine
D: March 5, 1953
Moscow, Russia

Concerto No. 1 in D-flat major for Piano and Orchestra, Opus 10
PREMIERED: July 25, 1912

— Sergei Prokofiev showed his musical talents early. He was composing before he was 6 and produced an opera by 12, and for his application to the St. Petersburg Conservatory at 13, he submitted four operas, two sonatas, a symphony and several piano works. During his teens he studied with such luminaries as Reinhold Glière, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, Anatol Lyadov and Alexander Tcherepnin. As a pianist he was no less sensational. He appeared as soloist in the premiere of his own First Piano Concerto when he was 21 (July 25, 1912, in Moscow) and less than two years later played the same work, in place of the traditional classical concerto, for his final examination at the St. Petersburg Conservatory before a panel of 20 judges, each of whom had the published score in his hands. Prokofiev considered it his first “more-or-less mature composition,” and it became his first published work.

THE CONCERTO: MUSIC WITHOUT PAUSE

The concerto is a cross between a single-movement work in several sections and a compressed concerto, its three movements played without pause. A grandly soaring theme for piano and orchestra in unison opens the work, returns at the concerto’s midpoint and again at the very end, providing a set of structural pillars. The tremendously exuberant opening material is followed by a hell-for-leather passage for the soloist before the music finally settles down to a more temperate and lighthearted theme, also initiated by the soloist, in the concerto’s home key of D-flat major. A contrasting idea, somewhat introspective and dour, is presented by the darker-colored instruments of the orchestra. The *Andante assai* passage maintains the position of the traditional slow movement, but is rather too short to fulfill this role. It is more of an episode, consisting of a single, long-breathed lyrical idea shared by orchestra and soloist in turn. The exhilarating *Allegro scherzando* pits piano against orchestra in a thrilling display of athletic prowess, motoric energy and witty interplay of ideas. For the cadenza, the piano re-engages the principal theme of the opening movement, and the concerto comes to a resplendent close with the grandly soaring subject in D-flat major with which it opened.

Instrumentation: solo piano with orchestra comprising 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, glockenspiel and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY MARY ANN FELDMAN.

**SERGEI RACHMANINOFF**

B: April 1, 1873
Semyonovo, district of Starorussky, Russia
D: March 28, 1943
Beverly Hills, California

Symphony No. 2 in E minor, Opus 27

PREMIERED: February 8, 1908

— One of the most surprising things about Rachmaninoff’s Second Symphony is that it was written at all. The premiere of his First Symphony in 1897 was a debacle, plunging the composer into a depression so profound that he wrote nothing for several years thereafter. It wasn’t just that the public didn’t like it, or the critics, or his friends, or his colleagues. No one liked it, including its own author. A long series of treatments involving hypnosis by a Dr. Dahl brought him to the point where he could write his Second Piano Concerto, completed in 1900. But it was ten years before Rachmaninoff could face the prospect of writing another symphony. And at first, he told no one about his endeavor.

A SUCCESS FROM THE START

Rachmaninoff had moved to Dresden at the time, in the fall of 1906, to escape the demands of public life in Moscow, where he was in constant demand as a pianist, conductor, committeeman, guest and collaborator on all things musical. The stately old city, where Rachmaninoff and his wife had spent their honeymoon several years earlier, appealed strongly to the composer. Also, the peace and anonymity he found in Dresden were conducive to artistic creativity. His Second Symphony was fully sketched by New Year’s Day of 1907. Revisions and orchestration took place over a longer period, both back home in Russia and during a return visit to Dresden. Rachmaninoff conducted the first performance, which took place on January 26, 1908, in St. Petersburg. He also led the Moscow premiere a week later, as well as an early American performance with the Philadelphia Orchestra in November 1909.

In each case the audience responded enthusiastically, and the symphony has enjoyed an unbroken run of popularity

to this day. The score was published in 1908, but then the manuscript went missing for nearly a century. Musical sleuths rejoiced when, in September of 2004, it turned up in a cellar in Switzerland. Until then, it was the only Rachmaninoff manuscript not accounted for, making it all the more tantalizing as a prize find. Rachmaninoff specialist Geoffrey Norris notes that “quite apart from the score’s potential monetary value, its significance for musicians and scholars is priceless, because, with the hundreds of emendations, crossings-out and annotations that Rachmaninoff made on the manuscript, it gives clues to his earlier thoughts on the symphony.”

THE MUSIC: HAUNTED BY A MOTTO

LARGO–ALLEGRO MODERATO. Most of the symphony’s melodic material derives from a single motif, heard in the opening bars in the somber colors of low cellos and basses. In a multifarious variety of guises and transformations, this “motto” haunts the entire symphony in both obvious and subtle ways, infusing it with coherence and compelling impetus. After its initial statement, the motto passes to other instruments, eventually giving birth to a sinuous violin phrase, which grows to an impressive climax as it weaves its way through lushly orchestrated textures and luxuriant counterpoint. Following the slow introduction, the main *Allegro moderato* section of the movement is ushered in with a shivering, rising figure in the strings. Violins then spin out a long, winding, aspiring theme based on the motto. The delicate, gentle second theme, divided between woodwinds and responding strings, also derives from the motto.

ALLEGRO MOLTO. The second movement, a scherzo, is built on the motif of the *Dies Irae*, the medieval Gregorian chant for the dead. Four horns in unison proclaim a boldly exuberant version of the *Dies Irae*, which itself has its seeds in the symphony’s motto. (This motif was used in the composer’s *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*.) Two contrasting ideas of note are the warmly flowing lyrical theme for the violins and a brilliant fugato section that demands the utmost in virtuosity from the strings.

ADAGIO. The third movement is one of the lyric highlights of all Rachmaninoff’s works. No fewer than three gorgeous melodies are heard, beginning with one of the most popular ever written. Following immediately on this theme of great repose and tranquility comes one of the glories of the solo clarinet repertory—an extended theme full of ardent longing.

ALLEGRO VIVACE. The enormously energetic finale too is a broadly expansive movement, beginning with a boisterously robust idea that might easily conjure up the spirit of a carnival. This is followed by a dark, grim, march-like episode, then by another of Rachmaninoff’s most famous themes—a magnificent, soaring affair that sweeps onward

over an expanse of more than one hundred measures. Rachmaninoff’s longest, grandest, most expansive symphonic work ends in a veritable blaze of sound.

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

PROGRAM NOTE BY ROBERT MARKOW.