

APRIL 2024

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## FROM THE EDITOR

In his speech accepting the 2024 Academy Award for Best Director last month, *Oppenheimer* director Christopher Nolan noted that motion pictures are just a little over 100 years old—still a young art form compared with painting and theater—and that the future of the form is unknowable and full of possibilities.

Orchestral music predates movies by several centuries, but its path continues to develop and surprise today. The means of enjoying it have changed greatly over times as well. At first limited to the wealthy and royalty, symphonic music became available for increasingly wider audiences who might nevertheless have a chance to hear a particular work only once in their lives—and over the past century, further democratized through radio, recordings and the internet. Now the touch of a button can replicate sounds once heard only in the richest of European courts.

Recordings of old and new orchestral works have never been easier to access, but the experience of hearing the music live in person can't be duplicated exactly. We thank you for sharing it today at Orchestra Hall, whether you're here to hear a Beethoven symphony or the freewheeling singer-rapper Nur-D's orchestral debut—in a show full of closely-kept surprises that opens possibilities for the future of the form.

*Carl Schroeder*

Carl Schroeder, Editor  
editor@mnorch.org

## ABOUT THE COVER

Hanna Landrum—a member of the Minnesota Orchestra's second violin section since 2019—at a concert in November 2023. She will host next month's Symphony Ball concert. Photo: Courtney Perry.

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Nur-D, page 20



Thomas Søndergård,  
page 24



Sterling Elliott, pages 33, 38

FROM LEFT: Marrie Weigel; Zoe Prinds-Flash; Will Hopkins

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Erin Keefe, page 24  
Photo: Nate Ryan

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**Writer** Michael Divino

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in a voluntary system of revolving  
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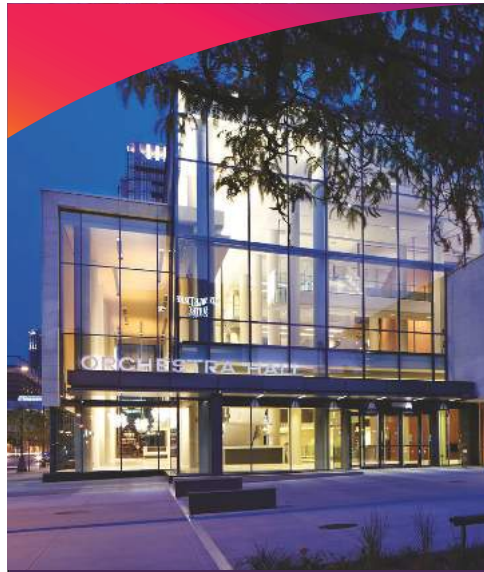


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### Orchestra Hall

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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 past fall with two weeks of historic concerts highlighted by Richard Strauss' *Alpine Symphony* and, with the Minnesota Chorale, Ravel's complete ballet score *Daphnis and Chloe*. This month he leads concerts featuring Concertmaster Erin Keefe and the Minnesota Chorale as well as several initiatives spotlighting students and music educators.

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

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



Zoe Prinds-Flash

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

After launching the Minnesota Orchestra's 2023–24 season in September, Søndergård opened the RSNO's season the following month with piano soloist Lise da la Salle performing concertos by Grieg and Beethoven. His busy slate with both 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](http://minnesotaorchestra.org).



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## The Michael Steinberg & Jorja Fleezanis Fund

**Stone Pond**  
World Premiere Performance  
Sunday, May 5, 2024, 3 pm

Celebrate the premiere of this dramatic new chamber work by the multi-award-winning composer Roydon Tse, inspired by a poem by MacArthur Fellow Ellen Bryant Voigt, with both composer and poet present for this special occasion.

Presenting the premiere: Alan Snow, violin; Tony Ross and Beth Rapier, cellos; Tim Zavadil, saxophone; Stephen Yoakam, narrator; Karl Paulnack, moderator.

Also featured: Schubert's magnificent String Quintet in C major, with violinist Erin Keefe and violist Sabina Thatcher joining Snow, Ross and Rapier.

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Sharon and Paul



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**Tickets and more information: [SteinbergFleezanisFund.org](http://SteinbergFleezanisFund.org)**

The Michael Steinberg & Jorja Fleezanis Fund was established by the late violinist Jorja Fleezanis to commission new works incorporating literary texts and music by emerging composers.

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## AUDIENCE SPOTLIGHT ORCHESTRA HALL AT 50

This coming fall marks a half-century since the Minnesota Orchestra's home in downtown Minneapolis opened in October 1974. In honor of the 50th anniversary, we invite you to share your special memories of Orchestra Hall by emailing them to [OrchHall50@mnorch.org](mailto:OrchHall50@mnorch.org). This month's memory comes from audience member Carolyn Brunelle.

"My first memory of Orchestra Hall was being there on Opening Night in October 1974. My husband Philip was a member of the Minnesota Orchestra from 1964 to 1969 but was out of town conducting an opera on the Opening Night. I was invited by Kathy Cunningham to join her and her husband as their guests—this was not only exciting for me, but it meant an evening out, leaving three small children with a sitter! The concert opened with Stanislaw Skrowaczewski's arrangement of Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D minor—a piece I knew well as Philip plays it on the organ every September for Rally Sunday at Plymouth Congregational Church. Every time I am in Orchestra Hall I fondly recall that first time and the generous invitation from Kathy Cunningham."



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



*dugo*

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## MEET A MUSICIAN: JUDE PARK

Zoe Prinds-Flash



Minnesota Orchestra musician since: **2022**

Section: **Viola**

Hometown: **Tampa, Florida**

Education: **Rice University, Oberlin Conservatory**

### How did you find your way to the viola, and what made you stick with it?

My journey to viola was a relatively recent one. Since my mom is a pianist, my first instrument was actually piano. However, she quickly realized that it didn't come naturally for me. So at the age of 4, I started playing the violin, and it became my main instrument until my junior year of undergraduate studies at Oberlin Conservatory. That year, a friend—who is now a violist with the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra—gave me my very first viola lesson, and I was instantly hooked.

### How do you describe the viola's role in an orchestra?

Compared to its string siblings' proportions, the viola is an imperfect instrument, which I believe creates its unique timbre. I love its pathos quality and ability to weave in and out of different roles. The viola can be a soloistic voice, the glue that connects the upper and lower string instruments, or it can accompany other instruments.

### Although you only joined the Minnesota Orchestra in 2022, it was a big part of your musical upbringing—which included early encounters with Principal Cello Anthony Ross and the late former Concertmaster Jorja Fleezanis.

Yes, in 2012 I attended one of my first summer music camps, Interlochen Arts Academy, and Tony Ross and Jorja Fleezanis happened to be there. Tony, the soloist that week, performed Elgar's Cello Concerto while Jorja coached the strings, taught lessons and gave a lecture on how to be an orchestral musician. While it wasn't required of her, Jorja also performed with us in the rehearsals and concert. Her fiery passion for orchestral playing left a significant impact on me, and she opened my eyes to a new career path. Looking back, it's clear that Jorja and Tony were a natural team of musicians and educators. That week of camp was simply different—they inspired and united all of us.

### Do you have a favorite concert experience from the past two seasons?

Most recently, I enjoyed concerts with Thomas Søndergård which included Walton's *Scapino* Overture, Britten's Violin Concerto and *Enigma* Variations by Elgar. Another favorite with him was our opening week of Richard Strauss' *Alpine Symphony*. Søndergård always brings out a sense of freedom

within the Orchestra, and the music-making is a joy to be a part of. On a different note, I've enjoyed our Lunar Year Concerts. I love the community it brings together, and I wish I had access to concerts like this as a kid. I'm also grateful that [Principal Bassoon] Fei Xie is the artistic consultant for this concert. From the programming to the artists involved, it all feels genuine and authentic.

### An unusually large number of violists joined the Minnesota Orchestra all at once in 2022—you, Lydia Grimes, Marlea Simpson and Sarah Switzer. Did the four of you form a special bond?

While the classical music world is small, the viola world is even smaller. Marlea and I were studiomates at Oberlin Conservatory, so we were already friends prior to joining the Orchestra. I remember thinking at the audition that it'd be a dream if we could become colleagues since she's an absolute hoot to be around. Now that it's a reality, I could not be more happy to have her as a friend and colleague. Sarah and I were also studiomates while I was in Houston pursuing my master's degree at Rice University. And while I didn't know Lydia beforehand, coming in together has definitely brought us closer. There's a lot of camaraderie and support, and I'm grateful we could all join this orchestra together.

### What do you enjoy doing in your spare time away from Orchestra Hall?

I'm the type that can easily preoccupy myself with current hobbies while also dreaming of a million other hobbies. I enjoy reading, gaming, playing guitar and collecting watches. As of late, I started taking piano lessons, and it has been a rewarding journey so far thanks to my incredible teacher, Claudia Chen. She challenges different parts of my brain and body compared to the viola, and it's always refreshing to gain new perspectives as a musician. I've also been maintaining an aquarium that currently contains fish (specifically minnows and loaches), a snail, shrimp and a variety of aquatic plants. The goal is to eventually create multiple balanced, self-sustaining ecosystems. In the future, I hope to also pick up watchmaking, pottery and woodworking. Clearly I'm a bit of a dreamer and I like to stay curious—it keeps things exciting for me!

Visit [minnesotaorchestra.org/stories](https://minnesotaorchestra.org/stories) for an extended version of this interview.

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## NEWS

### MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA

## LAST CALL FOR SYMPHONY BALL

It's not too late to get your tickets for the party of the year: "River Rhapsody," the Minnesota Orchestra's 2024 Symphony Ball gala on Saturday, May 4, at Orchestra Hall and the Minneapolis Hilton. This year's Ball is a celebration of the soul-nourishing, life-giving currents of music and water that flow through all of us. You're invited to join the evening of music, dancing, dining, drinks, auctions and good company—all celebrating the Orchestra, the Mississippi River and Music Director Thomas Søndergård, and raising funds for the Orchestra's artistic and educational missions.



Jack Brass Band

There are two fabulous ways to experience Symphony Ball: by joining the entire evening—dinner, auctions, a concert by the Minnesota Orchestra conducted by Thomas Søndergård and an after-party featuring music by Jack Brass Band—or by enjoying the concert and after-party only. Helping guide the events are two hosts: singer-rapper-writer Dessa for the dinner portion, and Orchestra violinist Hanna Landrum for the concert. The Orchestra thanks presenting sponsor Huntington Bank. Whether it's your first Symphony Ball or a long-running tradition, you're invited to the party: purchase tickets by scanning the QR code or visiting [minnesotaorchestra.org/symphonyball](https://minnesotaorchestra.org/symphonyball).



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## A ROARING SUMMER CELEBRATES THE 1920s

Josh Kohanek



Jon Kimura Parker, creative partner for Summer at Orchestra Hall

Temperature-wise, it seems like winter never came to Minnesota this year. One thing you *can* count on, though, is a roaring summer at Orchestra Hall as we pay tribute to the 1920s and celebrate the Hall’s 50th birthday. For the third straight year, pianist Jon Kimura Parker serves as creative partner for Summer at Orchestra Hall—a position supported by Marilyn and Glen Nelson—guiding programming for the festival and serving as piano soloist at several concerts.

As a prelude to the festival, the Orchestra performs four free outdoor concerts from July 8 to 13 at the Lake Harriet Bandshell in Minneapolis and additional venues in Plymouth, Hudson and Winona. Returning home to Orchestra Hall, the ensemble plays concerts on July 20 and 21 featuring Orchestra violinist Natsuki Kumagai as soloist in a violin concerto

by Chevalier de Saint-Georges, then hits the road again to reprise the program in Winona. The festival’s Roaring Twenties theme—celebrating the decade’s artistic innovations and fervor for jazz—begins in earnest on July 26 with a program that includes Parker as soloist in Maurice Ravel’s Piano Concerto in G. In the two weeks that follow, other festival highlights include a Grand Piano Spectacular featuring Parker and three other piano stars; a program spotlighting the music of George Gershwin; an Uptown Nights concert inspired by the historic musical hot spots of Harlem; and two concerts featuring the entire Oscar-winning 1951 film *An American in Paris* with the Orchestra performing the score live.

Fans of the annual Day of Music needn’t worry—the summer staple returns to Orchestra Hall on Saturday, July 27. This year’s edition kicks off a celebration that will extend into the Orchestra’s upcoming 2024-25 season: the 50th anniversary of the Hall’s opening in October 1974. The 12-hour Day of Music features appearances by Twin Cities-based musicians, dancers and visual artists, plus two performances by the full Minnesota Orchestra.

A stellar lineup of conductors appears throughout the summer, including Norman Huynh, Delyana Lazarova, Stephanie Childress, Lina González-Granados, Byron Stripling and Principal Conductor of Live at Orchestra Hall Sarah Hicks. Visit [minnesotaorchestra.org](http://minnesotaorchestra.org) for full details on all summer performances. Tickets go on sale for subscribers on April 9 and are available to the general public beginning April 22.



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## NEWS — MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA

### MUSICIANS AROUND TOWN



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

On Sunday, April 7, at 4 p.m. at MacPhail Center for Music's Antonello Hall in Minneapolis, Minnesota Orchestra cellist **Pitnarry Shin**, joined by two former Orchestra musicians, violinist Stephanie Arado and violist Sabina Thatcher, along with pianist Tim Lovelace and violist Daniel Orsen, will perform a concert of music by Kaija Saariaho, Tōru Takemitsu, Stephen Hartke and Camille Saint-Saëns with the **Bakken Ensemble**.

On Sunday, April 21, at 3 p.m. at Gideon Ives Auditorium at the Minnesota Masonic Heritage Center in Bloomington, Minnesota Orchestra Principal Trumpet **Manny Laureano** will lead the **Bloomington Symphony Orchestra** in "Out of this World," a program of music by Leonard Bernstein and Gustav Holst. The orchestra will be joined by the Normandale College Concert Choir, Angelica Encore Choral Ensemble and the winner of the MNSOTA Mary West Solo Competition.

On Sunday, May 5, at 3 p.m. at Westminster Church in Minneapolis, a special concert continues the legacy of two late members of the Minnesota Orchestra family: former Concertmaster Jorja Fleezanis and her husband, musicologist Michael Steinberg. The fund created in their name has commissioned Roydon Tse to create a work called *Stone Pond* setting text by Ellen Bryant Voigt. It will be performed by four Minnesota Orchestra musicians—violinist **Alan Snow**, cellists **Anthony Ross** and **Beth Rapier** and **Timothy Zavadil** on saxophone rather than his usual instrument, bass clarinet—along with narrator Stephen Yoakam. Also on the program is Franz Schubert's String Quintet in C major, with Concertmaster **Erin Keefe** and former Minnesota Orchestra violist Sabina Thatcher joining Snow, Ross and Rapier. For more information and to order tickets, visit [steinbergfleezanisfund.org](https://steinbergfleezanisfund.org).

### THOMAS IN THE BIG APPLE



Thomas Søndergård

Thomas Søndergård has a busy schedule throughout the 2023-24 season, hopping between North America and Europe to conduct the two ensembles he serves as music director—the Minnesota Orchestra and Royal Scottish National Orchestra—along with numerous orchestras as a guest conductor. This month he is racking up frequent flier miles by visiting Minnesota twice, in mid-April and later in the month—with a high-profile debut appearance with the New York Philharmonic sandwiched in between. He will lead that orchestra in works by Lili Boulanger, Olga Neuwirth and Sergei Prokofiev.



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Photo: Ken Howard/Met Opera

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## JANE STORY TAKES TOP HONORS AT YPSCA CONCERTO COMPETITION

Each year at Orchestra Hall, the next generation of orchestral musicians from Minnesota and surrounding states shows off their talents in the Young People’s Concerto Competition presented by YPSCA—the Young People’s Symphony Concert Association. The top prizewinner is given the opportunity to perform as soloist with the Minnesota Orchestra at a set of Young People’s Concerts.

For this year’s Competition, 41 students competed in the preliminary round by submitting performance videos which were adjudicated remotely by a panel of ten judges. Fourteen of those students advanced to the final round on Sunday, February 25, 2024, at Orchestra Hall.

Seventeen-year-old violinist Jane Story won the Competition with a beautiful performance of the first movement, *Allegro molto appassionato*, from Mendelssohn’s Violin Concerto. In addition to the opportunity to perform with the Minnesota Orchestra at a future season’s Young People’s Concert program, she received a cash prize of \$2,000 from the Edwin and Edith Norberg Fund, and also won the Claire Givens Violins Award. Story, who is from Stevens Point, Wisconsin, studies violin with Anna Cromwell while studying academics through the Academy of Excellence Online School based in Milwaukee.

Each of the 14 finalists received a cash award, which collectively totaled \$12,000. In addition to Story, the finalists included violinists Lorelei Schoenhard and Vladimir Tsiper; cellists Sophia Alexander and Joshua Moon; trumpet player Christian Garner; and pianists Kevin Chen, Gaia Daniel, William Feng, Orion Kim, André Peck, Alex Rodriguez, Thomas Stang and Jacob Taggart.

Judges for the Final Round were Minnesota Orchestra violinists Céline Leathead and Milana Elise Reiche as well as Paul Shaw and Rebecca Shockley. Judges for the preliminary round were Orchestra violinist Hanna Landrum, Orchestra percussionist Kevin Watkins, and former Minnesota Orchestra Fellow and bassoonist Kai Rocke, as well as Jim Bartsch, Kari Docter, Noel Engebretson, Michele Frisch, Ivan Konev, Ho-Yin Kwok and Paul Winberg.



Matthew Brenengen

Violinist Jane Story

### FINALISTS PERFORMING AT PRE-CONCERT SHOWCASES

As part of YPSCA’s Student Ambassadors initiative, four Competition finalists will perform prior to Minnesota Orchestra concerts this month. They will appear in the Target Atrium at 7:15 p.m. on Friday, April 12, and at 1:15 p.m. on Saturday, April 13. Additional finalists will perform at public and private events in the Twin Cities area over the next few months. For more information, visit [minnesotaorchestra.org/ypcc](https://minnesotaorchestra.org/ypcc).



Matthew Brenengen

Finalists of the 2024 YPSCA Young People’s Concerto Competition at Orchestra Hall, February 2024.



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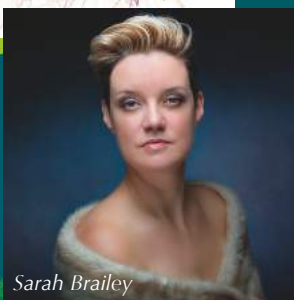
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## MUSIC EDUCATORS SHARE THE STAGE

From April 25 to 28, Orchestra Hall will be the site of a one-of-a-kind musical collaboration between musicians of the Minnesota Orchestra and music educators. Teachers from throughout Minnesota will travel to Minneapolis to work with Music Director Thomas Søndergård in two rehearsals, playing alongside their Minnesota Orchestra counterparts. The experience culminates in two Season Sampler performances at Orchestra Hall on April 27 and 28 before an invited audience that will include family, friends and school administrators. The program's overall intention is to advocate for music programs in schools, uplift Minnesota music educators, and increase connection between Orchestra musicians, music educators, and their students and families. Watch for a recap of the experience in the June issue of *Showcase*.

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

Although the Orchestra has offered Side-by-Side rehearsals and performances with both students and adults in the past, the April event marks the organization's first Side-by-Side that is specifically geared toward teachers. A total of 55 music educators from an applicant pool of more than 100 were selected for the program. To apply, educators wrote short essays about the value of music education and how the experience with the Orchestra would benefit their practices in the classroom. The participants represent elementary, middle and high schools in all parts of the state, from the Twin Cities metro to Greater Minnesota. Following is a list of music educators participating in the experience.

Samantha Amys	Stacy Griffin	Olivia Moraczewski
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Rosa Glade Arnold	Erika Hammerschmidt	Aimee Paar-Olson
Edward Barlow	Callie Hensler	Jack Reynertson
Kevin Berdine	Allysa Hurley	Michelle Schettler-Stein
Colleen Bertsch	Nahal Javan	Melani Schwartz
Beatrice Blanc	Nyssa Jimenez	Gene Schott
Micah Boudinot	Nicholas Kees	Michael Scott
Casey Clementson	Patricia Kelly	Holly St. Germain
Max Clifford	Kate Kowalkoski	Julie Takkunen
Aimon Dwan	Becky Lake	David Thompson
Abigail Eck	Johnna Lawrence	Kathryn Thompson
Madeline Eicher	Willy Leafblad	Nora Tycast
Daniel Ericksen	Michael Legvold	Andrew Tralle
Kimberly Fahy	Katie Manley	Maxwell Voda
Mary Gagnon	Rachel Masters	Sheila Wilcox
Nicholas Gaudette	Katie Miller	Olive Winter
Mark Gitch	Kristen Moon	Reid Wixson



# MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA

## MAY HIGHLIGHTS

SØNDERGÅRD, GERSTEIN  
AND RACHMANINOFF

THU MAY 2 11AM  
FRI MAY 3 8PM

TCHAIKOVSKY,  
KORNGOLD AND CHIN

THU MAY 9 11AM  
FRI MAY 10 8PM

SYMPHONY IN 60:  
TCHAIKOVSKY SYMPHONY NO. 2  
SAT MAY 11  
4:30PM HAPPY HOUR / 6PM CONCERT /  
7PM ONSTAGE RECEPTION WITH MUSICIANS

STAR WARS: THE LAST JEDI  
WITH THE MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA

THU MAY 16 7PM  
FRI MAY 17 7PM  
SAT MAY 18 7PM

TETZLAFF PLAYS BRAHMS  
VIOLIN CONCERTO

THU MAY 30 11AM  
FRI MAY 31 8PM  
SAT JUN 1 7PM



KIRILL GERSTEIN






ELIM CHAN



CHRISTIAN TETZLAFF

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# NUR-D

## WITH THE MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA

Sarah Hicks, conductor | Nur-D, singer, rapper and writer  
DJ Hayes, producer | Amy Bauzenberger, business manager  
Isaac Jordan, vocals | Shanice Mason, vocals  
Kyle Bochert, horn | Cody LeDuc, trombone | Skylar Pratt, saxophone  
Dave Stangel, saxophone | Christian Rasmussen, bass | Erik Sundman, piano  
Josh Pratt, production manager | Andy Thompson, arranger

Friday, April 5, 2024, 8PM

Saturday, April 6, 2024, 8PM

Orchestra Hall



### NUR-D, SINGER, RAPPER AND WRITER

One of the fastest rising stars in Minnesota’s music scene, Nur-D burst onto the stage in 2018 and hasn’t looked back since. Self-described as “Your 7th-Favorite Hip Hop Person,” Nur-D has dedicated himself to making music for anyone who has ever felt a little bit different. With over nine full-length projects and a bevy of singles, he has a song to fit any vibe and every occasion. Nur-D has shared billing with acts such as Earth, Wind & Fire, Ludacris, MisterWives, Tyler the Creator and the Wu-Tang Clan, just to name a few. Each time he has shown audiences why he is a name to watch in this growing music scene. The leader of the “Nur-D Club” is a breath of fresh air in the hip hop world, and fans are feeling the same. Nur-D boasts a fervent fan base across the U.S. and around the globe—not too shabby for a class clown from the small town of Rosemount, Minnesota. More: [nurdrocks.com](http://nurdrocks.com).



### SARAH HICKS, CONDUCTOR

Sarah Hicks, the Minnesota Orchestra’s principal conductor of Live at Orchestra Hall, has led a broad range of programs since joining the Orchestra as assistant conductor in 2006, and has earned wide acclaim as a guest conductor in the U.S. and abroad. Her notable projects here have included co-creating the Inside the Classics series and Sam & Sarah series with Orchestra violist Sam Bergman and leading new productions with collaborators such as Dessa, Cloud Cult, The New Standards, PaviElle French, Kevin Kling, Peter Rothstein, Robert Elhai and The Moving Company. Hicks premiered Pixar in Concert and Disney and Pixar’s *Coco* in Concert; her live concert recording of *A Celebration of the Music from Coco* at the Hollywood Bowl can be seen on Disney+ and her work on *The Little Mermaid Live!* was broadcast on ABC. Next month she will lead U.S. Bank Movies & Music performances of *Star Wars: The Last Jedi*. More: [minnesotaorchestra.org](http://minnesotaorchestra.org).

#### PRE- AND POST-CONCERT

Activities, vendors and artists curated by Nur-D, including Banana Leaf Collective, The Legacy Building, Pimento Jamaican Kitchen and Modist Brewing

Friday, April 6, Roberta Mann Grand Foyer | Saturday, April 7, Roberta Mann Grand Foyer

**Please note:** Tonight’s concert will be totally amazing and super dope. As of the time this issue went to print, all preparations were 100% done and completely finished. We definitely know what we’re doing.

Also, there will be one intermission.



# MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA

Anna Handler, conductor  
Natalia Romero Arbeláez, host  
Maria Dively, American Sign Language interpreter

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

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

Dmitri Shostakovich	Festive Overture, Opus 96	CA. 6'
Ralph Vaughan Williams	Selection from <i>Prelude: Andante maestoso</i> , from Symphony No. 7, <i>Sinfonia antartica</i>	CA. 3'
Iman Habibi	<i>Jeder Baum spricht</i> (Every Tree Speaks)	CA. 6'
Gabriela Lena Frank	<i>Coqueteos</i> , from <i>Leyendas: An Andean Walkabout</i>	CA. 3'
James Price Johnson	<i>Subway Journey</i> , from <i>Harlem Symphony</i>	CA. 4'
Johannes Brahms	<i>Allegro non troppo, ma con brio</i> , from Symphony No. 1 in C minor	CA. 9'

## PRE- AND POST-CONCERT

Arrive early and stay after the concert to try instruments, make art, dance and meet Minnesota Orchestra musicians.

## THANK YOU

The Relaxed Family Concert series is made possible by PNC.

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



**ANNA HANDLER,**  
CONDUCTOR

Anna Handler, the newly named assistant conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, is a German-Colombian conductor and pianist who grew up in Munich. This season she is a Dudamel Fellow with the Los Angeles Philharmonic. Following her debut at the Salzburg Festival in 2022 as director of the Kát'a Kabanová opera camp, Handler was immediately re-engaged to conduct new productions of *L'enfant et les sortilèges* and *Die Kluge*. Further 2023-24 season highlights include debuts with the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, Grazer Philharmoniker, Münchner Rundfunkorchester, Los Angeles Philharmonic and North Carolina Symphony, in addition to the Minnesota Orchestra with this program. In August 2022, together with her team at Enigma Classica, she presented an interdisciplinary project on music education using real-time generative video animation at the Young Artist Festival Bayreuth. Handler graduated from the Juilliard School in May 2023, where she received mentorship from David Robertson and was the first conductor ever to receive the Juilliard Kovner Fellowship for outstanding students of classical music. She also studied at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater München, the Accademia Pianistica di Imola, the Folkwang University of the Arts and the Hochschule für Musik Weimar. More: [annahandler.com](http://annahandler.com).



**NATALIA ROMERO  
ARBELÁEZ,**  
HOST

Originally from Colombia, Natalia Romero Arbeláez is an experienced performer, educator and musician. As an educator, she thrives in the intersection of academic and applied music making. She is passionate about access and student voice and ownership in her classroom and performing practices. She works as the Upper School choir director at the Blake School in Minneapolis, where she directs three curricular ensembles and two extra-curricular groups, in addition to music directing the spring musical. Besides teaching, she is an active performer and vocal coach. She has been seen as the host of *STAGE* on TPT, for which she received a Regional Emmy Nomination for her role as host, and onstage at Orchestra Hall hosting Minnesota Orchestra Young People's Concerts. As a vocal coach, she has worked with the Guthrie Theater, Teatro del Pueblo and the Ordway, where she is part of the founding faculty for the GreenRoom fellowship. She can be found singing with the VocalEssence Ensemble Singers and Border CrosSing, where she also directs Heritage Choir, a bilingual community choir. She holds a bachelor of music from St. Olaf College and a master of music Education from the University of St. Thomas. More: [naromero.com](http://naromero.com).



**MARIA DIVELY,**  
AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE  
INTERPRETER

Maria Dively has been an American Sign Language interpreter for nine years in Minnesota and California. A NIC/Trilingual Interpreter, she is a graduate of North Central University in Minneapolis. She was born and raised in Puerto Rico and has been involved personally and professionally in the Deaf community since college. From a young age, she has been involved with music as a woodwind player, percussionist and steel drums player, among other roles.



# MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA

Thomas Søndergård, conductor

Erin Keefe, violin

Minnesota Chorale, Kathy Saltzman Romey, artistic director

Thursday, April 11, 2024, 11AM

Friday, April 12, 2024, 8PM

Saturday, April 13, 2024, 2PM

Orchestra Hall

**Eleanor Alberga** *Rise Up, O Sun!\** CA. 10'  
*Minnesota Chorale*

**Max Bruch** Concerto No. 1 in G minor for Violin and Orchestra, Opus 26 CA. 25'  
Prelude: Allegro moderato  
Adagio  
Finale: Allegro energico  
*Erin Keefe, violin*

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

**Johannes Brahms** *Schicksalslied* for Chorus and Orchestra, Opus 54 CA. 15'  
*Minnesota Chorale*

**Robert Schumann** Symphony No. 1 in B-flat major, Opus 38, *Spring* CA. 30'  
Andante un poco maestoso – Allegro molto vivace  
Larghetto  
Scherzo: Molto vivace  
Allegro animato e grazioso

The text of Eleanor Alberga's *Rise Up, O Sun!* and an English translation of the original German text of Johannes Brahms' *Schicksalslied* will be projected as surtitles.

\* United States premiere; co-commissioned by Minnesota Orchestra.

## PRE-CONCERT

Concert Preview with Phillip Gainsley

Thursday, April 11, 10:15am, Target Atrium

Performance by Finalists of the YPSCA Young People's Concerto Competition

Friday, April 12, 7:15pm, Target Atrium | Saturday, April 13, 1:15pm, Target Atrium

## THANK YOU

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

Minnesota Orchestra concerts are broadcast live on Friday evenings on stations of [YourClassical Minnesota Public Radio](#), including KSJN 99.5 FM in the Twin Cities.



**THOMAS SØNDERGÅRD,**  
CONDUCTOR

Profile appears on page 8.



**ERIN KEEFE, VIOLIN**

Erin Keefe, the Minnesota Orchestra's concertmaster since 2011, has established a reputation as a violinist who combines exhilarating temperament and fierce integrity. As a soloist with the Orchestra, she has played Bernstein's *Serenade after Plato's "Symposium,"* Beethoven's Violin Concerto, two concertos by Mendelssohn—the Violin Concerto and the Double Concerto for Violin, Piano and Orchestra—as well as the violin concertos of Brahms and Kurt Weill and Dvořák's *Romance* for Violin and Orchestra. A dedicated educator, she joined the violin faculty at the Curtis Institute of Music in fall 2022. Winner of an Avery Fisher Career Grant and the Pro Musicis International Award, Keefe has appeared as soloist with orchestras throughout the world.

She is also a highly sought-after chamber musician who has been an Artist of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center and plays locally with the Accordo chamber ensemble. As a guest concertmaster, she has appeared with the New York Philharmonic, Pittsburgh Symphony, Seoul Philharmonic and São Paulo Symphony Orchestra. Her recording projects include a number of violin-and-clarinet works recorded with Minnesota Orchestra Conductor Laureate Osmo Vänskä. More: [minnesotaorchestra.org](http://minnesotaorchestra.org).

**MINNESOTA CHORALE**  
**KATHY SALTZMAN ROMNEY,**  
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR  
**BARBARA BROOKS,**  
ACCOMPANIST AND  
ARTISTIC ADVISOR

The Minnesota Chorale, principal chorus of the Minnesota Orchestra since 2004, marked the 50th anniversary of its first appearance with the Orchestra this past December in performances of Handel's *Messiah*. Its other recent collaborations with the Orchestra include performances of Ravel's *Daphnis and Chloé* and the world premiere of *brea(d)th* by Carlos Simon and Marc Bamuthi Joseph. Founded in 1972 and led since 1995 by artistic director Kathy Saltzman Romey, the Chorale is Minnesota's preeminent symphonic chorus and ranks among the foremost professional choruses in the U.S. This season's projects away from Orchestra Hall include two editions of its acclaimed *Bridges* program, one featuring a new work by Alberto Grau and the other collaborating with the Border CrosSing ensemble, as well as choreographed performances of Orff's *Carmina burana* with Minnesota Dance Theatre. More: [mnchorale.org](http://mnchorale.org).

**SOPRANO**

Kate Biederwolf  
Penny Bonsell  
Deborah Carbaugh\*  
Catherine Crosby-Schmidt\*  
Gina K. Cruciani  
Heather Ford  
Cheryl Friedrichs  
Michelle Hayes\*  
Molly Hayes  
Elizabeth Longhurst\*  
Wendy Lukaszewski  
Shana Marchand  
Meghan McCabe  
Shannon McGuire\*  
Sommer McInerney  
Elizabeth Pauly\*  
Sara Payne\*  
Elizabeth Pemberton\*  
Delilah Jane Schuster  
Shari M. Speer\*  
Jennifer Sylvester\*  
Shekela Wanyama\*

**TENOR**

Drew Brooks  
Patrick L. Coleman  
Benjamin Cooper  
Chris Crosby-Schmidt  
Mark Ertl  
Thomas Jermann  
Andrew Kreye\*  
Andy McCullough\*  
Scott D. McKenzie  
Kevin Navis  
Jeffrey Nielsen  
Mark Pladson  
Elias Pohren-Everett  
Benjamin Polach\*  
Jonathan Ponce  
Anthony T. Rohr\*  
Patrick Romey\*  
Luke Slivinski  
Erick Sood  
Walter Tambor  
Mark Trease  
Ty Wottrich

**BASS**

**ALTO**

Rachel Buchberger  
Nancy Buller  
Cherelle-Renee Childs\*  
Susan Druck\*  
Traci Elder  
Gloria Fredkove  
Mallory Harrington  
Heather A. Hood\*  
Lauren G. Johnson  
Suzanne Kennedy\*  
Patricia Kent\*  
Linnea Lee  
Celia McCoy  
Damara O'Malley\*  
Krista J. Palmquist\*  
Erica Perl\*  
Sydney Rabata  
Elsie Raymer  
Joy E. Roellinger  
Jen Santoro Rotty  
Elizabeth Sullivan\*  
Natalie Wishcop  
Sarah Zach

Connor Buechler  
Scott Chamberlain  
Steve Dahlberg\*  
Mark Garner\*  
Stefan Gingerich  
David Goudzwaard-Vaught\*  
John R. Henrich  
Thomas Hollenhorst  
Steve Hughes  
Joe Kastner\*  
Steven W. Landby\*  
Adam Ley  
Bob Magil  
Eric Carlisle Nelson  
Paul Nevin  
Robert Oganovic  
Nathan Oppedahl  
Bob Peskin\*  
Jerry Rubino\*  
Bob Simon  
William B. Smale  
Russ Vander Wiel  
Rick Wagner\*  
Trevor Woggon

\* section leader



**ELEANOR ALBERGA**

**B:** September 30, 1949,  
Kingston, Jamaica

***Rise Up, O Sun!***

**PREMIERED:** July 22, 2023

In Eleanor Alberga’s home city of Kingston, Jamaica, the 1950s was a decade of cultural transition. Radio stations began broadcasting popular music from the United States, including jazz and rhythm and blues. Jamaican musicians emulated these imported styles, then put their own spin on them. At the same time, a move toward cultural nationalism led to the study and promotion of Indigenous Jamaican music. Alberga was immersed in all these sounds as a young musician and felt a “compulsion” toward composition at an early age. When she was 8, she wrote her first piece—a short work for piano inspired by her family’s dog, a golden retriever named Andy. “I loved my dogs,” Alberga recalled in a 2019 interview, “and it made me want to express something about this particular dog.” She studied voice and piano and, as a teenager, played guitar with the legendary Jamaican Folk Singers.

**A CONFLUENCE OF STYLES**

Alberga moved to London at the age of 21 to study voice and piano at the Royal Academy of Music. In the following years, she danced and played music with the African dance company Fontomfrom and worked as a concert pianist. Alberga’s fluency in styles ranging from Jamaican folk,

Western European classical and American pop music emerged in her playing and writing. Her tenure as music director and composer with the London Contemporary Dance Theatre officially launched her composition career. Alberga’s deep knowledge of modern dance, impressive improvisational skills and compelling works for the Dance Theatre brought acclaim and led to commissions from across the United Kingdom and the United States. Since then, Alberga has written operas; works for chamber ensembles, orchestra and vocal ensembles; and music for stage, TV and film. Her 2015 work, *Arise, Athena!* was premiered on the prestigious Last Night of the BBC Proms. In 2020, she was elected a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Music, and in 2021 she was awarded an OBE (Order of the British Empire award) in the Queen’s Birthday Honors for her service to British music.

Rhythmic drive is central to Alberga’s music, reflecting her experience with various African and Jamaican dance genres. Early works, such as *Hill and Gully Rider* and *Sun Warrior* (both from 1990) are largely tonal—using the traditional harmonic structures of Western music—and infused with ostinatos (repeated rhythmic patterns). Alberga’s mid-career music took on more adventurous harmonic motion. Later works combine these tendencies, often with programmatic themes. Although her writing is rhythmic, inventive and demonstrates a comfortable relationship with dissonance, Alberga’s work is also recognized for its structural clarity—a less-prominent feature in much of today’s classical music.

**INSPIRATION FROM POETRY**

The text of Alberga’s 2023 choral-orchestral work *Rise Up, O Sun!* comes from William Blake’s *Vala, or The Four Zoas*.

**ONE-MINUTE NOTES****Alberga: *Rise Up, O Sun!***

Eleanor Alberga’s recent choral-orchestral work sets text by William Blake, musically painting images of clear waters, tender grass and the sun at dawn, with piano coming to the fore in key moments.

**Bruch: Violin Concerto No. 1**

Dark, throaty sounds open this concerto and color the remainder of the work. The virtuosic *Prelude* leads to a lyrical

*Adagio* based on three great melodies, and the energetic *Finale* is full of suspense and musical pyrotechnics.

**Brahms: *Schicksalslied***

*Schicksalslied* (Song of Destiny) presents a powerful contrast between the bliss of the gods and the bleak conditions of humanity. A turbulent *Allegro* follows the luminous opening, and serenity returns at the close.

**Schumann: Symphony No. 1, *Spring***

Robert Schumann’s *Spring* Symphony reflects the composer’s contentment—a happy period early in his marriage to Clara—and his love of nature, with programmatic elements inspired by poetry. The music embodies spring’s awakening, lyricism and youthful exuberance.

This multi-volume poem was to be a compendium of Blake's mythical world. Each volume is referred to as a "Night," and the text of *Rise Up, O Sun!* appears in Night the Ninth—the last installment of the epic. The exuberant text invites the listener into a world alive with symbols of rebirth: clear waters, tender grass and delicious grapes beckon as the rising sun dawns on a new world. Much like Johannes Brahms' setting of *Schicksalslied*—which opens the second half of today's program—Alberga's *Rise Up, O Sun!* is a study in text-painting. The words "Hear me sing" are sung by the choir and set in a declamatory manner, with longer note values distinguishing the text from the rapid flurry of activity in the orchestra that began the piece. The chorus continues in homophony, or unified rhythm, as if they are speaking the words "for in my bosom, a new song arises" together.

The words "flow on, ye gentle airs" are depicted by softer dynamics, smooth legato articulation and gentle triplet motion that results in a sense of ebbing and flowing. At "I will cause my voice to be heard," the orchestra drops out almost entirely, highlighting the words as they are sung by the chorus. Running notes in the piano depict, at times, flowing waters and glittering clouds.

*Rise Up, O Sun!* received its premiere performance on July 22, 2023, as part of the Three Choirs Festival in Gloucester, England, with Adrian Partington conducting the Philharmonia Orchestra and Festival Chorus.

## INTRIGUING PARALLELS

Although Alberga's *Rise Up, O Sun!* and Brahms' *Schicksalslied* are very different pieces, thoughtful listeners may discern interesting parallels, as if we are hearing a conversation about text-setting, instrumental colors and metric play between two composers from different backgrounds and separated by more than a century. Brahms and Alberga each derived the structure of their piece from that of the text, and used compositional techniques to convey directly what the text is saying. Both evoke the mood of the text through varied instrumental combinations that result in distinct sonic impact. Both use rhythm in compelling ways, although here the influence of time and culture is most apparent: Brahms' metric shifts can feel disruptive or destabilizing while Alberga's, written over a century later by a composer steeped in African diasporic polyrhythms, seamlessly compel the music forward. Nevertheless, the combination of technique, craft and imagination creates aural illustrations of these two epic poems in the hands of two remarkable composers.

**Instrumentation:** mixed chorus with orchestra comprising 3 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba,

timpani, snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, suspended cymbal, crotales, sleigh bells, tambourine, tamtam, triangle, metal wind chimes, vibraphone, harp, piano and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY SHEKELA WANYAMA.



## MAX BRUCH

**B:** January 6, 1838  
Cologne, Germany

**D:** October 2, 1920  
Friedenau, Germany

## Concerto No. 1 in G minor for Violin and Orchestra, Opus 26

**PREMIERED:** April 24, 1866

Max Bruch comes perilously close to being a one-work composer, his First Violin Concerto being the one work. In his day, however, he was a most substantial figure on the Western classical music landscape, an artist who consistently won respect for his command of craft and affection for his devotion to beautiful sounds.

## THE PATH TO SUCCESS

Bruch's early musical training outside the home amounted to indoctrination in the conservative Mendelssohn-Schumann-Brahms faction and against the progressive Liszt-Wagner wing. He composed prodigiously during boyhood, and at 20, he settled down to teach in Cologne, where his first opera was staged the same year.

Bruch completed his Violin Concerto No. 1 in 1866 and conducted the first performance on April 24 that year with Otto von Königslow as soloist. Bruch substantially revised the concerto with the help of Joseph Joachim, who reintroduced it in its present form in 1868.

In the 1870s, in part because of the phenomenal success of the G-minor Violin Concerto, Bruch enjoyed some patches of prosperity and independence that allowed him to devote himself entirely to composition. In the early 1890s he was granted two coveted titles: a professorship (at the Berlin Academy of Fine Arts) and a doctorate (from Cambridge).

As Bruch lived in comfortable retirement in his Berlin villa, the world around him changed nearly beyond recognition. Although the popularity of his Violin Concerto No. 1 remained a reassuring constant, when he died at 82 many who read the respectful obituaries must have been astonished to learn that he had been alive until the day before.



## A RICH AND SEDUCTIVE CONCERTO

Assessing the four most famous German violin concertos—the Beethoven, the Mendelssohn, the Bruch G-minor and the Brahms—Joseph Joachim, who was intimately connected with all four, called Bruch’s “the richest, the most seductive.” If you take “richest” to refer to immediate sensuous impressions, Joachim is exactly on target, and it takes less than a minute to find that out.

In the first movement, *Prelude*, orchestral flourishes alternate with solo flourishes. Bruch introduces two expansive and memorable melodies. Just when a development seems due, he brings back his opening chords and flourishes, using them this time to prepare the soft sinking into the *Adagio*. It is in this second movement that the soul of this perennially fresh and touching concerto resides, lyric rapture being heightened by Bruch’s artfully cultivated way with form, proportion and sequence.

As for the crackling, Romani-tinged *Finale*, having paid no attention to the date of composition, I had always assumed that Bruch had borrowed a notion or two from his slightly older colleague Johannes Brahms. It turns out that Bruch got there first and, always inclined to be jealous of Brahms, he would have found my mistake very annoying.

**Instrumentation:** solo violin with orchestra comprising 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani and strings

PROGRAM NOTE FROM THE LATE MICHAEL STEINBERG’S *THE CONCERTO: A LISTENER’S GUIDE* (OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1998), USED WITH PERMISSION.



### JOHANNES BRAHMS

**B:** May 7, 1833  
Hamburg, Germany  
**D:** April 3, 1897  
Vienna, Austria

*Schicksalslied for Chorus and Orchestra, Opus 54*  
**PREMIERED:** October 18, 1871

As music historians tell it, Johannes Brahms came across the text of his *Schicksalslied* (Song of Destiny) during a vacation trip to the North Sea in the summer of 1868. Alfred Dietrich, his host, recalled that “Brahms, usually so lively, was quiet and grave. Earlier that morning (he was always an early riser), he had found [Friedrich] Hölderlin’s poems in my bookcase and was deeply impressed. Later on, some of us were lounging by the sea, when we saw Brahms a long way off sitting by himself on the shore, writing.”

Brahms would ultimately cut his vacation short so he could return home to Hamburg and complete *Schicksalslied*.

## MORTAL AND IMMORTAL LESSONS

Friedrich Hölderlin’s novel *Hyperion, or The Hermit in Greece* was published in 1799. Its structure is epistolary: a series of letters written by Hyperion to a friend as he recalls adventures and lessons learned over the course of his life. The poem *Schicksalslied* appears toward the end of the book. It contrasts the pleasant, light-filled world inhabited by immortal beings with the harshness of mortals’ daily reality. The first two stanzas describe the divine breezes, soft ground and “eternal clarity” of the afterlife. In stark contrast, the third and final stanza describes the world inhabited by mortals: a relentless and suffering-filled struggle from hour to hour in which they are tossed like waves from cliff to cliff into Uncertainty.

Brahms was not religious in the conventional sense, but his work around this time explores the inner life and the solace one can find in music. His *Alto Rhapsody* (with text by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, completed 1869) explores the tribulations of love and despair, ending with an affirmation of faith and music. The cantata *Rinaldo* (also with text by Goethe and completed in 1868) likewise churns with the protagonist’s inner turmoil but ends with a rosy, optimistic expression of faith. Most notably, Brahms’ *Ein deutsches Requiem* (A German Requiem, completed in 1868) was unusual among Requiem settings in that, rather than memorializing the dead, it uses music to offer the living reassurance and comfort after the loss of a loved one.

## WRESTLING WITH THE TEXT

Given his tendency toward happier endings, Brahms wrestled with the final stanza of Hölderlin’s text. The piece opens with passionate music in E-flat major and is marked “slow and filled with longing.” Shimmering motives in the woodwinds and strings accompany the chorus as they sing of beings that “wander above, in light” in the first stanza. The second stanza remains in the world of the afterlife, describing the ever-blooming and innocent nature of immortal beings.

The third stanza, however, darkens the mood dramatically as it describes the world of mortals. Brahms shifts the key to C minor, the strings play turbulent arpeggios, and the violent bashing of waves against cliffs can be heard in marcato (strong, sharp and short) rhythms in the chorus and orchestra. This stanza, which includes the words “But we are charged never to rest anywhere,” presented Brahms with a challenge: should we—his listeners—be left in such a dark place? He initially set text for this final section, but wasn’t satisfied with it.

In the end, Brahms chose to use the radiant music from the beginning of the piece. It was customary at the time for composers to end pieces in the same keys they began in, but Brahms chose to transpose the opening material into the lower key of C major for this final section. Rather than wallowing in the suffering of the third stanza, or the “longing” character indicated in the introduction, Brahms re-uses the opening music but marks it “adagio,” demonstrating perhaps a less troubled spirit than the beginning. The absence of the chorus and text here is surprising, but nevertheless powerful, as once again, Brahms’ music expresses a faith that goes beyond words.

*Schicksalslied* premiered in Karlsruhe, Germany, on October 18, 1871, under the direction of Hermann Levi. Listeners across more than a century and a half can all be thankful that Brahms curtailed his vacation to deliver the compelling and expressive “Song of Destiny”—music that he was perhaps destined to write.

### HALLMARKS OF BRAHMS

Audiences familiar with Brahms’ *Ein deutsches Requiem* will recognize musical tendencies between the two pieces. As with the *Requiem*, the opening section of *Schicksalslied* features a repetitive rhythm—called an ostinato—on the tonic pitch. The choral writing is often homorhythmic, meaning all voice parts sing the same rhythms at the same time. Singers appreciate Brahms’ expansive but not taxing vocal ranges and text-setting that preserves the natural prosody of the German language. Sweeping string melodies and rich wind and brass colors create a Romantic-period sound throughout much of Brahms’ orchestral output, while imitative motives and balanced phrases remind listeners of his extensive training in Baroque-era conventions.

**Instrumentation:** mixed chorus and orchestra comprising 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY SHEKELA WANYAMA.



### ROBERT SCHUMANN

**B:** June 8, 1810  
Zwickau, Germany

**D:** July 29, 1856  
Bonn, Germany

**Symphony No. 1 in B-flat major, Opus 38, *Spring***

**PREMIERED:** March 31, 1841

The marriage between Robert and Clara Schumann—a union of artists—was one of great passion but considerable stress. They endured “the misery of thin walls,” in Clara’s own words, when she hoped to practice at the piano while he was absorbed in composing. In fact, as a new bride, she was alarmed by his “incessant composing,” which eroded the amount of time she hoped he would spend with her. Still, there was much happiness early in 1841 when, only months after their wedding, she rhapsodized: “We enjoy such happiness as I have never before known. My father always made fun of so-called *domestic bliss*. How I pity those who do not know it! They are only half alive.”

Clara’s journal recorded her husband’s progress on the B-flat-major Symphony, which he began in December of their wedding year. Within weeks, Robert produced the sketches for what proved to be his first completed symphony. By February 20, he had orchestrated the entire score, describing the ordeal in his diary: “After many sleepless nights comes prostration. I feel like a young woman who has just given birth—so relieved and happy, but also sick and sore.” He continued: “My Clara knows that too and cuddles up to me with double tenderness which, some day, I will make up to her. After all, if I should undertake to tell of all the love which Clara showed me during this time, and was such a willing heart, I should never get through. I would not find one in a million who would give me so much attention, and so much indulgence.” Subsequent years would bring much turbulence to Robert’s life—culminating in a suicide attempt and institutionalization—but happy feelings prevailed at this moment.

### INSPIRATION FROM POETRY

On March 31, 1841, just five weeks after it was finished, Schumann’s Symphony No. 1 premiered at a pension fund concert for members of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra. Felix Mendelssohn conducted, and Clara also performed on the program while Robert, at age 30, enjoyed one of the instant successes of his life. The title affixed to the symphony, *Spring*, is the composer’s own. Like many of

his Romantic-era peers, he was immersed in literature. His inspiration for the symphony stemmed from a poem by his friend Adolph Böttger. Its concluding lines suggest the rhythm of the first movement theme: “*O wende, wende, deinen Lauf / Im Tale blüht der frühling auf!*” (Oh, turn, turn aside thy course / For the valley blooms with spring!). The exhilaration of the music matches the joyfulness of the words, uttered upon the first breath of the new season.

A year later Schumann sent a portrait of himself to Böttger, along with the opening notes of the symphony. In those days he also spoke of the work to the composer Ludwig Spohr, citing “the flush of spring which carries a man away, even in his old age, and surprises him again every year.” Schumann continued: “I did not intend to describe or paint, but I firmly believe that the time when it came into being influenced its character and form, and made it what it is.” Springtime, his love for Clara, the serenity their marriage brought after the long struggle with her father, who was determined to prevent it—all these generated the subjective emotionalism invested in the Romantic symphonist’s work.

## THE MUSIC: IMAGES OF SPRING

### ANDANTE UN POCO MAESTOSO–ALLEGRO MOLTO VIVACE

Although Schumann emphasized that his purpose “was not to describe or paint,” he nevertheless spoke of the introduction in programmatic terms: the fanfare and trumpets and horns was to sound “as if from on high, like a call to awaken,” and in the subsequent material, he said, “there might be a suggestion of the growing green of everything, of a butterfly taking wing, and in the *Allegro* of the gradual assembly of all that belongs to spring. But these are fantastic thoughts that came to me *after* I had finished the work,” he asserted, echoing the protest of many composers of program music. Seeds of the exultant main theme are to be found in the opening trumpet call, but its jaunty rhythm now spurs the music to its full impetus. Rhythm is a driving force in Schumann, as in Beethoven, but it is his lyricism that reigns supreme, here unveiled in a peaceful contrasting theme. The rising scale figures of the codetta motive affirm the hopefulness that is the essence of spring. The development explores these ideas, but before long the entire orchestra revives the jubilant call of the opening, and a free reprise gets underway, venting out a new strain in the coda.

**LARGHETTO.** The year prior to the symphony was a time of song for Schumann—a great outpouring of lyricism in vocal works, carrying on what he had already accomplished with miniatures for the piano. The slow movement of the symphony is a continuation of this lyricism, beginning with a flowing, arch-like melody that might have born the words of a love poem. The theme recurs three times, always

in different scoring, and functioning as a refrain between episodes. The first interlude is quite impassioned, while the second intensifies the mood of ardent love and yearning at the heart of the movement. So far trombones have been silent, but just before they close they solemnly anticipate the main theme of the *Scherzo* thereby linking the inner movements of the work.

**SCHERZO: MOLTO VIVACE.** The *Scherzo* theme is a vigorous transformation of the beguiling melody that dominated the prior movement; soon it gives way to the motion of a waltz, led off by clarinet. There are two trios: the first a dance that has the winds responding to the strings, and the second of frolic upon a scale figure. After a reprise of the muscular D-minor subject, Schumann invents a fresh tune for the coda, rich in the nostalgia one feels for the games of childhood.

**ALLEGRO ANIMATO E GRAZIOSO.** A glistening flourish and ascending motto make way for the spirited finale. Its buoyant main theme trades lately but not frivolously. Schumann warned a conductor of its delicacy, noting, “I like to think of it as the farewell of spring...” In the transition to a new and glowing theme, Schumann slyly quotes a crisp tune from one of his favorite solo piano works, *Kreisleriana*, altering its rhythm as if to pose a riddle. The accelerating coda is as beautiful as it is swift.

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

PROGRAM NOTE BY MARY ANN FELDMAN.



# CHAMBER MUSIC

## WITH MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA MUSICIANS

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

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

Giacchino Rossini	Duo for Cello and Double Bass Allegro Andante Tempo di pollacca <i>Erik Wheeler, cello   Kyle Sanborn, bass</i>	CA. 14'
Kevin Puts	<i>Credo</i> The Violin Guru of Katonah Infrastructure Learning to Dance Credo <i>Emily Switzer, violin   Joanne Opgenorth, violin            Sarah Switzer, viola   Sonia Mantell, cello</i>	CA. 19'
I N T E R M I S S I O N		CA. 15'
Johannes Brahms	Serenade No. 1 in D major, Opus 11 Allegro molto Scherzo Adagio non troppo Menuetto I – Menuetto II <i>Natsuki Kumagai, violin   Jenni Seo, viola            Erik Wheeler, cello   David Williamson, bass            Adam Kuenzel, flute   Gabriel Campos Zamora, clarinet            David Pharris, clarinet   Julianne Mulvey, bassoon            Michael Gast, horn</i>	CA. 40'

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# MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA

Kristiina Poska, conductor  
Sterling Elliott, cello

Thursday, April 18, 2024, 11AM  
Friday, April 19, 2024, 8PM

Orchestra Hall

Aaron Copland	<i>Appalachian Spring</i> (1945 orchestration)	CA. 24'
Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky	Variations on a Rococo Theme for Cello and Orchestra, Opus 33 <i>Sterling Elliott, cello</i>	CA. 18'
	I N T E R M I S S I O N	CA. 20'
Ludwig van Beethoven	Symphony No. 8 in F major, Opus 93 Allegro vivace e con brio Allegretto scherzando Tempo di menuetto Allegro vivace	CA. 26'

## PRE-CONCERT

2024-25 Season Preview with Kari Marshall (April 18) and Grant Meachum (April 19)  
Thursday, April 18, 10:15am, Target Atrium | Friday, April 19, 7:15pm, N. Bud Grossman Mezzanine

## THANK YOU

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**KRISTIINA POSKA,**  
CONDUCTOR

Award-winning conductor Kristiina Poska is in high demand on the international music scene. She has held the post of chief conductor of Flanders Symphony Orchestra since the 2019-20 season and principal guest conductor of the Latvian National Symphony Orchestra since 2021-22. This season, in addition to her debut with the Minnesota Orchestra this week, she makes her first appearance with the Frankfurt Museumsorchester, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Oregon Symphony, Orquesta Nacionales de España, NHK Symphony Orchestra, Royal Scottish National Orchestra and Rotterdam Philharmonic. She also returns to the WDR Sinfonieorchester Köln, Orchestre National de France, Hallé Orchestra and Stavanger Symphony Orchestra and tours across Europe with the Flanders Symphony Orchestra. Equally prolific in the operatic repertoire, this season she returns to Staatsoper Berlin to conduct a production of Mozart's *The Magic Flute*. Poska's previous roles have included principal conductor of Cappella Academica from 2006 to 2011, Kapellmeister at Komische Oper Berlin from 2012 to 2016 and music director for Theater Basel for the 2019-20 season. Her latest recording with the Flanders Symphony Orchestra features Beethoven's Symphonies No. 1 and 7. More: [harrisonparrott.com](http://harrisonparrott.com), [kristiinaposka.com](http://kristiinaposka.com).



**STERLING ELLIOTT,**  
CELLO

Cellist Sterling Elliott is a 2021 Avery Fisher Career Grant recipient and the winner of the Senior Division of the 2019 National Sphinx Competition. This season he debuts with the Minnesota Orchestra and the New Jersey Symphony, among other ensembles, and performs the world premiere of John Corigliano's *Phantasmagoria* with the Orlando Philharmonic. He debuted at London's Wigmore Hall in February. Last summer he made his orchestral debut with the San Francisco Symphony, performed at the Edinburgh Festival and returned to the Hollywood Bowl with the Los Angeles Philharmonic. He has a long history with the Sphinx Organization, from which he receives a Medal of Excellence this season. He also participates in the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center's Bowers Program and was recently named the YCAT–Music Masters Robey Artist by the London-based Young Classical Artists Trust. He is pursuing an Artist Diploma at the Juilliard School under the tutelage of Joel Krosnick and Clara Kim. He is an ambassador of the Young Strings of America, a string sponsorship operated by Shar Music. He performs on a 1741 Gennaro Gagliano cello on loan through the Robert F. Smith Fine String Patron Program, in partnership with the Sphinx Organization. More: [colbertartists.com](http://colbertartists.com), [sterlingelliott.com](http://sterlingelliott.com).

## ONE-MINUTE NOTES

### Copland: *Appalachian Spring*

Aaron Copland's ballet suite tells the tale of a young pioneer couple in rural Pennsylvania through square dances, country fiddling and a famous finale built on the Shaker song *Simple Gifts*.

### Tchaikovsky: *Variations on a Rococo Theme*

Traveling from an original theme in the cello through seven variations and a lively coda, *Variations on a Rococo Theme* is light, elegant and full of charm.

### Beethoven: *Symphony No. 8*

With its cheerful disposition and quick pace, this complex yet eminently listenable symphony was one of Beethoven's own favorites. He wrote it while he was losing the last of his hearing and coping with a family feud, making its bright spirit all the more remarkable.

**AARON COPLAND**

**B:** November 14, 1900  
Brooklyn, New York

**D:** December 2, 1990  
North Tarrytown, New York

***Appalachian Spring***  
 (1945 orchestration)

**PREMIERED:** October 30, 1944  
(original ballet for chamber  
ensemble); October 4, 1945  
(suite for full orchestra)

— Tonicity in Western classical music seems to come in waves. In the 1980s it became “permissible” among academic composers to write accessible music again, in a sea-change that some called “the new Romanticism.” But such shifts in fashion and dogma are seen through the centuries.

When Aaron Copland returned to the United States from Paris in 1924, he entered what he called a “period of austerity,” during which he explored 12-tone composition and other modern techniques. Then, toward the end of the 1930s, he found himself dissatisfied with the state of American music, and with the relationship of composers to their audiences.

“The conventional concert public continued [to be] apathetic or indifferent to anything but the established classics,” he wrote in 1941. “It seemed to me that we composers were in danger of working in a vacuum. I felt it was worth the effort to see if I couldn’t say what I had to say in the simplest possible terms.” It was in this spirit that Copland embarked upon a series of enduring works that assured his position as a quintessential American classical composer: *Fanfare for the Common Man*, the ballet *Rodeo*, *A Lincoln Portrait* and *Appalachian Spring*.

**THE MARTHA GRAHAM FACTOR**

The spark for *Appalachian Spring* was Martha Graham, who had helped reshape American ballet with her innovative modern style. (Copland’s original working title for the ballet was “Ballet for Martha.”)

“When I wrote *Appalachian Spring*, I was thinking primarily about Martha and her unique choreographic style, which I knew well,” the composer wrote. “Nobody else seems quite like Martha: she’s so proud, so very much herself. And she’s unquestionably very American: there’s something prim and restrained, simple yet strong, about her which one tends to think of as American.”

Graham and Copland had often planned to collaborate, but it was not until Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge attended a Graham performance in early 1942 that funding became available. The fabulously generous benefactress

commissioned Graham to create three new ballets for the 1943 Fall Festival of the Coolidge Foundation in Washington, D.C.

*Appalachian Spring* was one of those three, but it didn’t get to the stage that year. Graham’s script was delayed, so Copland didn’t finish the score until June 1944. The premiere that October in Washington—with Graham, Merce Cunningham and May O’Donnell in the company—was a full year later than originally planned. Louis Horst conducted the 13-member chamber ensemble for which the piece was originally composed.

**“A PIONEER CELEBRATION”**

The ballet depicts, in Copland’s words, “a pioneer celebration in spring around a newly built farmhouse in the Pennsylvania hills in the early part of the last century.” The composer’s description continues: “The bride-to-be and the young farmer-husband enact the emotions, joyful and apprehensive, that their new partnership invites. An older neighbor suggests now and then the rocky confidence of experience. A revivalist and his followers remind the new householders of the strange and terrible aspects of human fate. At the end the couple are left quiet and strong in their new house.”

The suite from the ballet created for full orchestra in 1945, and given its premiere that year by Artur Rodziński and the New York Philharmonic, is the form in which it is best known today. The suite is in eight sections played without pause. Copland himself summarized it:

**VERY SLOWLY.** Introduction of the characters, one by one.

**FAST.** Sudden burst of unison strings in A-major arpeggios starts the action.

**MODERATE.** Duo for the bride and her intended; scene of tenderness and passion.

**QUITE FAST.** The revivalist and his flock.

**STILL FASTER.** Solo dance of the bride; presentiment of motherhood. Very slowly.

**TRANSITION SCENE.** Calm and flowing. Scenes of daily activity for the bride and her farmer husband. There are five variations on a Shaker theme...published under the title “The Gift to be Simple.”

**MODERATO.** The bride takes her place among her neighbors. At the end the couple are left in their new house.

**Instrumentation:** 2 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, 2 trombones, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, suspended cymbal, claves, tabor, triangle, wood block, xylophone, glockenspiel, harp, piano and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY PAUL HORSLEY.



**PETER ILYICH  
TCHAIKOVSKY**

**B:** May 7, 1840  
Votkinsk, Russia  
**D:** November 6, 1893  
St. Petersburg, Russia

**Variations on a Rococo  
Theme for Cello and  
Orchestra, Opus 33**

**PREMIERED:** November 30, 1877

It's hard to believe that Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky wrote this lovely, elegant, chaste music immediately after completing his overwrought symphonic poem *Francesca da Rimini* and immediately before his white-hot Fourth Symphony. That sequence alone should alert us to the fact that there were many sides to this often-tormented composer.

If we automatically identify Tchaikovsky with colorful and emotional music, we need to remember that he was also drawn to the formal clarity of 18th-century classical music and loved Mozart above all other composers. One of the finest examples of this attraction is his *Variations on a Rococo Theme*, composed in December 1876, shortly after he returned to Moscow after attending the first performance of Wagner's *Ring* at Bayreuth.

This was a very difficult time for Tchaikovsky. He was on the verge of entering into a disastrous marriage with one of his students, Antonina Miliukova. He hoped that such a union would “cure” him of his homosexuality, but secretly he must have known that that was impossible. Writing this music may have offered him an escape from that personal turmoil into the clarity and order of another era.

### A SOLOIST TAKES CONTROL

The immediate impulse to write it came in a commission from the cellist Wilhelm Fitzenhagen. Trained in Germany, Fitzenhagen had in 1870 become professor at the Imperial Conservatory in Moscow, where Tchaikovsky also taught, and the two men had become good friends. When Fitzenhagen asked Tchaikovsky to write a piece for cello and orchestra for him, the composer responded with a set of variations based on what he called a “rococo” theme and scored for what was essentially Mozart's orchestra (pairs of woodwinds and horns, plus strings).

Tchaikovsky worked closely with Fitzenhagen while composing the *Rococo Variations*, and the writing for cello is graceful and idiomatic. But Fitzenhagen, a composer himself, apparently regarded Tchaikovsky's manuscript as

only a starting point, and he drastically revised the score. He reduced Tchaikovsky's original eight variations to seven, altered their order and re-wrote some of the cello part. By the time of the premiere, which took place in Moscow on November 30, 1877, Tchaikovsky had made the fateful marriage, abandoned his wife and fled to Switzerland to restore his mental balance. When he returned to Moscow in 1879, the music had already been published in Fitzenhagen's revision. At this point it was virtually impossible for him to reverse these changes. The result is that the *Rococo Variations* are invariably performed today in Fitzenhagen's revised version rather than in the version Tchaikovsky actually wrote.

### THE MUSIC: GRACEFUL RESTRAINT

A brief orchestral introduction (how light and clear this music sounds!) gives way to the entrance of the solo cello, which sings the “rococo” theme. That theme, Tchaikovsky's own, is marked *espressivo* on its first appearance, and it falls into two eight-bar phrases. Seven variations follow. These are nicely contrasted: some are lyrical, some athletic; some emphasize the cello, while others vigorously toss the theme between soloist and orchestra. Tchaikovsky varies key and meter throughout the set, and he ingeniously turns the final variation into an exciting coda. Yet the key word throughout is “restraint,” and this gentle score seems to come from a different planet altogether from the Fourth Symphony, which would shortly follow.

**Instrumentation:** solo cello with orchestra comprising 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY ERIC BROMBERGER.



**LUDWIG  
VAN BEETHOVEN**

**B:** December 15, 1770  
Bonn, Germany  
**D:** March 26, 1827  
Vienna, Austria

**Symphony No. 8 in  
F major, Opus 93**

**PREMIERED:** February 27, 1814

The Eighth Symphony has always seemed out of place in the progression of Ludwig van Beethoven's symphonies. It comes after the dramatic Fifth, expansive Sixth and powerful Seventh, and it precedes the grand Ninth. Within this sequence, the Eighth seems all wrong: it is brief, relaxed, and—in form and its use of a small



orchestra—apparently a conscious throwback to the manner of Haydn and Mozart.

### MORE THAN AN HOMAGE

Beethoven had in mind more than an homage to his forebears, though, as the late musicologist Michael Steinberg notes: “If we think of the Eighth as a nostalgic return to the good old days, we misunderstand it. What interests Beethoven is not so much brevity for its own sake as concentration. It is as though he were picking up where he had left off in the densely saturated first movement of the Fifth Symphony to produce another tour de force of tight packing.”

And perhaps the symphony fits a pattern after all, in approach if not content. Beethoven composed his Fifth and Sixth Symphonies together between 1807 and 1808, intentionally crafting two very different types of symphonies, and he took a similar path with his contrasting Seventh and Eighth, writing them essentially side-by-side in 1811 and 1812. In any case, the Eighth is one of those rare things: a genuinely funny piece of music, full of high spirits, what (at first) seem wrong notes, unusual instrumental sounds and sly jokes.

### THE MUSIC: ENERGETIC AND CLEVER

**ALLEGRO VIVACE.** The symphony explodes to life with a six-note figure stamped out by the whole orchestra; this figure will give rhythmic impulse to the opening movement and function as its central melodic idea. This music seems always to be pressing forward, sometimes spilling over itself with scarcely restrained power, sometimes erupting violently.

**ALLEGRO SCHERZANDO.** The second movement brings some of the symphony’s most clever moments. Beethoven’s friend Johann Nepomuk Maelzel had invented a metronome, and the woodwinds’ steady tick-tick-tick at the beginning is Beethoven’s rendering of the metronome’s sound. Over this mechanical ticking, the violins dance happily until the music suddenly explodes in short bursts of rapidly played notes.

**TEMPO DI MENUETTO.** In the third movement Beethoven delights in unexpected twists. The trio section of this movement brings a moment of unexpected beauty as a mysterious, romantic horn solo takes the lead in the middle of the standard, stately form.

**ALLEGRO VIVACE.** The blistering finale is full of humor. Racing violins present the main idea, and this opening section zips to what should be a moment of repose on the strings’ unison C, but Beethoven slams that C aside with a crashing C-sharp, and the symphony heads off in the “wrong” key. The jokes come so quickly in this movement that many of them pass unnoticed: the “wrong” notes,

the “oom-pah” transitions scored for just timpani and bassoon, and so forth. The ending brings the best joke of all, for the coda refuses to quit. Finally—finally!—Beethoven wrenches this most good-natured and energetic music to a resounding close.

**Instrumentation:** 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY ERIC BROMBERGER.

# MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA

Kristiina Poska, conductor  
Sterling Elliott, cello

Saturday, April 20, 2024, 6PM | Orchestra Hall

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky	Variations on a Rococo Theme for Cello and Orchestra, Opus 33 <i>Sterling Elliott, cello</i>	CA. 18'
Ludwig van Beethoven	Symphony No. 8 in F major, Opus 93 Allegro vivace e con brio Allegretto scherzando Tempo di menuetto Allegro vivace	CA. 26'

Profiles of Kristiina Poska and Sterling Elliott appear on page 34.  
Program notes on the Tchaikovsky and Beethoven works begin on page 36.

## PRE-CONCERT

Performance by Breck High School String Orchestra, 5:15pm, Target Atrium

## POST-CONCERT

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Violinist Njioma Chinyere Grevious performing a movement from Astor Piazzolla's *The Four Seasons in Buenos Aires* with members of the Minnesota Orchestra and Sphinx Virtuosi, February 2024.

A TRANSFORMATIVE WEEK  
WITH THE SPHINX VIRTUOSI

At the start of February, Minnesota Orchestra audiences experienced one of the season's most thrilling programs: three powerful concerts in which the Orchestra shared the stage with the Sphinx Virtuosi. The 18-member string orchestra is the flagship ensemble of the Sphinx Organization, which is dedicated to transforming lives through the power of diversity in the arts. Led by Tito Muñoz, the program included works by six Black and Latin composers and featured violin soloist Njioma Chinyere Grevious in two movements of Astor Piazzolla's *The Four Seasons in Buenos Aires*. Critical acclaim was just as enthusiastic as the audience response, as the *Star Tribune* called the concert "hypnotic and exhilarating."

During the week, several members of each ensemble met at MetroNOME Brewery in Lowertown St. Paul for a chamber-music jam session. William Eddins, who hosts the *This Is Minnesota Orchestra* TV and livestream series and is a former associate conductor of the Orchestra, owns the thriving brewery, which offered a casual setting for Minnesota Orchestra and Sphinx musicians to enjoy a fun evening of music, food, beverages and conversation. The Jonathan & Jill Eisenberg Family Fund of The Minneapolis Foundation was the lead sponsor of the Sphinx Partnership Week, including the three concerts at which the Sphinx Virtuosi performed.

The Orchestra is deeply grateful to the Eisenbergs for their major gift and their commitment to the Orchestra's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion initiatives.



Members of the Minnesota Orchestra and Sphinx Virtuosi at MetroNOME Brewery. Photo: Sonia Mantell



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