





**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 ROMEY,**  
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.

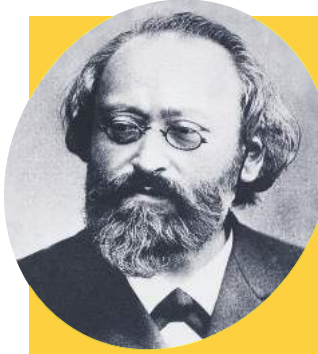
## INTRIGUING PARALLELS

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.