

# MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA

David Robertson, conductor

Yefim Bronfman, piano

Friday, June 7, 2024, 8PM

Saturday, June 8, 2024, 7PM

Orchestra Hall

*With these concerts we honor the memory of James P. Callahan.*

**Adolphus Hailstork**      Symphony No. 1      CA. 21'

Allegro  
Lento ma non troppo  
Allegretto  
Vivace

**Ludwig van Beethoven**      Concerto No. 4 in G major for Piano and Orchestra, Opus 58      CA. 34'

Allegro moderato  
Andante con moto  
Rondo: Vivace  
[There is no pause before the final movement.]  
*Yefim Bronfman, piano*

I N T E R M I S S I O N      CA. 20'

**John Adams**      *Doctor Atomic* Symphony      CA. 25'

The Laboratory  
Panic  
Trinity  
[The three movements are played without pause.]

## PRE-CONCERT

Concert Preview with Nicholas Landrum

Friday, June 7, 7:15pm, Target Atrium | Saturday, June 8, 6:15pm, 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.



**DAVID ROBERTSON,**  
CONDUCTOR

David Robertson—conductor, artist, composer, thinker and American musical visionary—occupies the most prominent podiums in opera, orchestral and new music. He is a champion of contemporary composers and an ingenious programmer who has served in leadership positions with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre National de Lyon, BBC Symphony Orchestra and, as protégé of Pierre Boulez, the Ensemble intercontemporain. He appears with the world’s great orchestras, including the New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Vienna Philharmonic, Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunk and Czech Philharmonic, and at festivals on five continents. Since his 1996 Metropolitan Opera debut, he has conducted a breathtaking range of Met projects, including premiere productions of works by John Adams and Nico Muhly, and the 2019 production of *Porgy and Bess*, for which he shared a Grammy for Best Opera Recording. In 2022, he made his Rome Opera debut conducting Janáček’s *Kát’a Kabanová*. Robertson is a Chevalier de l’Ordre des Arts et des Lettres of France. He serves on the Tianjin Juilliard Advisory Council, complementing his role as director of conducting studies, distinguished visiting faculty of the Juilliard School. More: [opus3artists.com](https://opus3artists.com), [conductordavidrobertson.com](https://conductordavidrobertson.com).



**YEFIM BRONFMAN,**  
PIANO

Yefim Bronfman, one of today’s most acclaimed and admired pianists, stands among a handful of artists regularly sought by festivals, orchestras, conductors and recital series. His commanding technique, power and exceptional lyrical gifts are consistently acknowledged by the press and audiences alike. Recent performance highlights include summer festival appearances, a European tour celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Munich Opera and Orchestra, return engagements with New York Philharmonic and the Boston, Kansas City, National, Milwaukee, Pittsburgh and San Francisco symphonies, and a recital tour culminating at Carnegie Hall. This year marks the 45th anniversary of his debut with the Minnesota Orchestra when, in 1979, he performed Beethoven’s Third Piano Concerto. Born in Tashkent in the Soviet Union, Bronfman immigrated to Israel with his family in 1973, where he studied with pianist Arie Vardi, head of the Rubin Academy of Music at Tel Aviv University. In the U.S., he studied at the Juilliard School, Marlboro School of Music and the Curtis Institute of Music. A recipient of the prestigious Avery Fisher Prize, he has been honored in recent years with the Jean Gimbel Lane prize in piano performance from Northwestern University and an honorary doctorate from the Manhattan School of Music. More: [opus3artists.com](https://opus3artists.com), [yefimbronfman.com](https://yefimbronfman.com).

**ONE-MINUTE NOTES**

**Hailstork: Symphony No. 1**

Adolphus Hailstork’s First Symphony brings an array of influences from diverse cultural backgrounds—including subtle incorporations of music from Guyana, where he had recently studied—to the traditional four-movement format of classical symphonies. Hailstork himself conducted the premiere in New Jersey in 1988.

**Beethoven: Piano Concerto No. 4**

Ludwig van Beethoven’s lyrical Fourth Piano Concerto begins with the soloist rather than the orchestra, foreshadowing the work’s soft-spoken mood. Most striking is the second movement, in which harsh strings are calmed by the gentle piano.

**Adams: Doctor Atomic Symphony**

John Adams’ *Doctor Atomic* Symphony comprises music drawn from the composer’s 2005 opera exploring the weeks leading up to the first atomic bomb test in 1945—a narrative that overlaps at times with last year’s hit film *Oppenheimer*. We hear a laboratory’s tension, wartime panic and a countdown to the test, as well as a poetic aria in which *Oppenheimer*’s vocal line is reassigned to solo trumpet.



## ADOLPHUS HAILSTORK

**B:** April 17, 1941  
Rochester, New York

### Symphony No. 1

**PREMIERED:** August 1, 1988

American composer Adolphus Hailstork's musical background includes studying violin, piano, organ and voice. During his childhood and youth, he was part of the Cathedral Choir of Men and Boys at the Cathedral of All Saints, an Episcopal cathedral in Albany, New York. Here he developed an organic relationship with melody, which shows itself proudly in his compositions for voice as well as those for instruments. Hailstork's development as a composer directly relates to his connection to the Minnesota Orchestra. In 1975, he attended a Black Music Symposium at Orchestra Hall, where the late Paul Freeman held a reading of new works. One of those pieces was Hailstork's *Celebration!*, which was commissioned by the JC Penney Foundation. Because of its exceptional nature, Freeman programmed it on the Minnesota Orchestra's final symposium concert, and it has been widely performed since.

### FOLLOWING FOOTSTEPS

Hailstork's First Symphony shares some similarities with Sergei Prokofiev's. Both are the composers' first numbered symphonies, yet both composers had earlier composed successful orchestral works (Hailstork's included *An American Port of Call* and *Epitaph for a Man Who Dreamed*). Both men composed their symphonies in the spirit of Joseph Haydn and other Classical-era composers, with Prokofiev assigning the *Classical Symphony* nickname to his first. Lastly, they both employ a four-movement, fast-slow-fast-fast structure, typical of traditional classical symphonic structure. Both symphonies are light in nature, partly due to their instrumentations, which are identical. Yet, while Prokofiev's Classical-era musical inspiration is quite clear, Hailstork's inspiration seemingly comes from more contemporary sources of diverse cultural backgrounds.

Much of Hailstork's music references genres and practices of traditional and popular Black music from the United States. This is evident in his orchestral works as well as in his works for smaller forces, such as *Three Smiles for Tracey* for solo clarinet or *Songs of Love and Justice* for voice and piano. His approach to referencing Black music, however, is quite subtle and organic, rooted in his Episcopal

chorister experience coupled with intense composition study with luminaries such as Mark Fax, David Diamond and Nadia Boulanger, among others.

For his First Symphony, the Black music references, on the surface, may seem quite subtle or even non-existent, which is to be expected for a composition that is turning to Haydn as an inspirational foundation. Yet one structural reference is quite clear for those with extensive experience amongst Black church musicians interpreting hymnody. In this tradition, hymns in a 3/4 or 6/8 time signature (a strong beat followed by two weaker pulses to form a triplet rhythm) quite often get reimagined into a quick 4/4 time signature (for example, *Revive Us Again*), and the reverse is also true (as in *Holy, Holy, Holy*). In his first symphony, Hailstork's first movement is solidly in 4/4. He uses the exact same material to open the finale, which sounds immediately like a reprise; however, this movement is cleverly in 6/8.

Hailstork's probable inspiration for the actual music—the melodies and harmonies themselves—came from further away: perhaps Guyana. In 1987, when the commission for this symphony was extended, Hailstork was studying in Guyana on a Fulbright scholarship. Traditional Guyanese music, according to various sources, has influences from the music of India, Europe, Africa, Central America, China and Amerindian musical practices. Hailstork must have been actively exposed to such music while abroad, particularly to traditional Guyanese shanto music that is highly reminiscent of calypso, but with a unique parlance. The inspiration can be heard in his 1987 piece *Variations on a Guyanese Folksong*, which has versions for violin and viola with piano accompaniment. In his first symphony, the international influence is quite strong.

### THE MUSIC: A RANGE OF INFLUENCES

**ALLEGRO.** The first movement begins with strong chords, pulsing on every beat, in a rather ritualistic, celebratory manner, similar to some Amerindian and European traditional secular music. As the music develops and the themes unfold, a highly syncopated rhythm becomes a musical dance floor for beautiful, swirling melodies. The rhythm definitely has a Guyanese shanto flare, yet also is evocative of some simple African rhythms or simpler tabla rhythms from traditional music of India.

**LENTO MA NON TROPPO.** The second movement, marked *Lento ma non troppo* (Slow, but not too much) is heavily focused on melody, with strings featured in a lush setting. Much of the melodic string writing has a cinematic quality, at times evoking a Bollywood soundtrack as well as Harlem-era slow jazz harmonies.

**ALLEGRETTO.** The quick, light third movement breaks from the otherwise rhythmically constant opening movements, taking the audience to a complex, chromatic environment. The opening melodic gesture floats high, with twists and turns that nod to East Asia—China, or India perhaps? Yet the rhythmic complexity seems to come from West African or Amerindian practices. The introduction of a triple meter feel in this movement makes the transition into the pulse of the last movement quite smooth and natural.

**VIVACE.** The finale makes use of the mathematical phenomenon that allows for 6/8 and 3/4 time signatures and rhythmic pulses to exist almost simultaneously, which is characteristic of some Central American music. A great example of this is Leonard Bernstein’s *America* from *West Side Story*, where “*I like to be in A...*” is in 6/8 and “*...Me-Ri-Ca*” is in 3/4. Both Bernstein and Hailstork incorporate this Central American rhythmic device, yet place it within their own compositional voices. Hailstork summarizes the main musical themes in the finale, ending with a bold, rousing gesture. Even though it is a light symphony, it contains a quiet power, especially in its myriad cultural quotations and its harmonic and melodic clarity.

Hailstork composed his First Symphony on a commission from the Shore Festival of Classics in Ocean Grove, New Jersey, with the intent to celebrate Ocean Grove’s founding. The symphony received its premiere on August 1, 1988, with the Shore Festival Orchestra performing under the direction of the composer himself.

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

PROGRAM NOTE BY ANTHONY R. GREEN.



**LUDWIG  
VAN BEETHOVEN**

**B:** December 16, 1770  
Bonn, Germany

**D:** March 25, 1827  
Vienna, Austria

**Concerto No. 4 in  
G major for Piano and  
Orchestra, Opus 58**

**PUBLIC PREMIERE:**  
December 22, 1808

— When Ludwig van Beethoven departed his hometown of Bonn for Vienna in November 1792, encouraged by the prospect of becoming a Haydn pupil, Mozart had been dead for only a year. In hindsight, it is hard not to imagine that

destiny was compensating for the cruel loss of Mozart by sending this young lion of a pianist to Vienna, which was then Europe’s crossroad for classical music.

**FRAGILE PIANOS, STOLEN CADENZAS**

Though he had strong roots in 18th-century Classicism, Beethoven’s alliance with Haydn did not last long, and he soon went his own way. He emerged as Romanticism’s pre-eminent composer for the piano, which was steadily improving but was not yet strong enough to support all that Beethoven demanded. Plumbing the poetry as well as the power of the tantalizing new pianoforte, Beethoven wrote five piano concertos, along with 32 sonatas and diverse chamber works with piano, and he changed keyboard style forever.

No piano was safe in his hands, as the late Harold C. Schonberg emphasized in “String Snapper, Hands on High,” the Beethoven chapter in *The Great Pianists*. Still a fragile instrument in those days, with a resonance too small for what the composer heard in his mind’s ear, the lightweight pianoforte proved no match for his power as a performer, or for his conceptions as a composer who thought orchestrally for the instrument. Nobody ever claimed that Beethoven’s playing was perfect, but all agreed that its impact was overwhelming, and that he strove for the big sound.

As a piano improviser Beethoven was without peer, at least until Franz Liszt came along. He also tended to be pugnacious, and when he realized that would-be rivals were stealing whatever they could recall of his extemporizations, claiming it as their own, he determined to terminate the cadenza thievery by writing the notes down. A few years after completing this concerto, he produced a number of cadenzas for this work. He also began to regulate the performer, cautioning in the finale, “Let the cadenza be short.” No doubt Beethoven would have agreed with the British musicologist Sir Donald Tovey, who said, “A bad cadenza is the very appendicitis of music.”

**PREMIERE AT A LEGENDARY CONCERT**

The Concerto in G major was composed in 1805-06, near the end of Beethoven’s career as Vienna’s reigning pianist, when deafness was curtailing his appearances. In 1807 he unveiled it at a private subscription concert, but its public premiere was deferred until December 22, 1808, at the legendary Beethoven *Akademie* (a term for concerts and recitals) that also included the premieres of the Fifth and Sixth Symphonies and the Choral Fantasy, along with other works.

**ALLEGRO MODERATO.** This most poetic of Beethoven concertos, the fourth work on that marathon program, must have come as a surprise to the listeners. Its start was astonishing: the piano alone presents a sweetly harmonized

theme, almost as if in a reverie of improvisation; the first two bars, in fact, consist mostly of repeated notes cast in a rhythmic motif that will pervade the entire movement. All is quiet, introspective. Repeating the thought from a distant key, the orchestral strings hardly dare raise their sound, except for a single emphatic note, one of those *sforzandos* (sudden loud notes) that intensify expression. This was Romanticism, and it was new, especially in the way it focused on the inner self—restraining the impulse to show off virtuosity in favor of substance, intimate and serene.

Once the piano has spoken the subdued main thought, affirmed by the orchestra in a brighter key, it drops out for nearly 70 bars before returning to the scene. In the meantime, thanks to the orchestral exposition, the subjects have become very familiar. Returning quietly, the piano soon sweeps into brilliant scales that make way for the principal theme, which now engages orchestra and soloist as equal partners. When the lilting second subject reappears in clear violin and wind tones, the piano supplies a backdrop of rippling figurations—quite virtuosic in fact, without losing sight of the fundamental lyricism. The development culminates in a resounding chordal pronouncement of the principal idea that demonstrates how much power Beethoven demanded from the instrument.

**ANDANTE CON MOTO.** Now follows one of the most striking movements in concerto literature: Franz Liszt compared its dialogue to that of Orpheus taming the wild beasts with his music. The stubborn resistance of the bestial voice, low and rough in the strings, is gradually eroded by the plaintive tones of the piano, which will not give up. Its pleas are rendered in as *cantabile* (singing) a style as possible. Beethoven’s dramatic scene for keyboard and strings has not one excessive note. The music is lean, and the logic persuasive, as the keyboard’s alluring rhetoric conquers all.

**RONDO: VIVACE.** Once the luminous E-minor harmonies of the slow movement have dissolved, the concerto forges ahead without a break. Strings whisper the vivacious tune that sets the *Rondo* finale in gear, whereupon the piano reappears, adding a syncopated jolt to make the refrain even more pungent. In contrast, the responding strain is songful, without sacrificing speed or playfulness. Nowhere will this finale be shy or subdued. Its abundant ideas propel a development that crackles with wit and imagination. After the cadenza Beethoven insists be short, a gigantic coda continues the boisterous antics, quickened to *presto* and more irrepressible than ever.

**Instrumentation:** solo piano with orchestra comprising flute, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY MARY ANN FELDMAN.



## JOHN ADAMS

**B:** February 15, 1947  
Worcester, Massachusetts

### *Doctor Atomic* Symphony

**PREMIERED:** August 21, 2007

John Adams is hardly the only modern opera composer who has mined the recent past for subject matter, but his track record for being ahead of the times is unparalleled. Relations between the U.S. and China, which may be the defining story of 21st-century geopolitics, were covered in his 1987 opera *Nixon in China*. *The Death of Klinghoffer*, which premiered in 1991, addresses the Israel-Palestine conflict that erupted into a horrific war last October. And 2005’s *Doctor Atomic* explored a key period in the life of atomic weapons pioneer J. Robert Oppenheimer 18 years before movie audiences flocked to Christopher Nolan’s Oscar-winning biopic bearing the physicist’s last name. In the wake of *Oppenheimer*’s success, Adams’ opera, as well as the symphony the composer culled from it in 2007, have received renewed interest and performances.

### “EVENT OF THE YEAR”

In its original operatic form, *Doctor Atomic* was composed for the San Francisco Opera, which premiered it on October 1, 2005—an occasion hailed by *New York Times* critic Anthony Tommasini as “the musical event of the year in America.” With a libretto by Peter Sellers—who has been central to the creation of five of Adams’ six operas—it focuses on a narrow slice of time: the weeks leading to the first test of an atomic bomb in a New Mexico desert on July 16, 1945. That event demonstrated the achievement of the years-long Manhattan Project mere weeks before atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan. The opera ends with a prolonged countdown as assembled scientists observe the test blast from a distance, followed by a woman’s voice pleading for aid in Japanese.

Sellers’ libretto is based on a wide range of source material including Manhattan Project participant memoirs and interviews, nuclear physics manuals, government documents and poetry—a real-life interest of Oppenheimer. The cast of characters includes some names familiar to viewers of last year’s film—Robert Oppenheimer and his wife Kitty Oppenheimer, General Leslie Groves and Edward Teller—but as the action is confined to New Mexico in summer 1945, the broader elements of Oppenheimer’s academic rise, arms control advocacy and political downfall are not addressed in the opera.

Since operas are among the costliest endeavors in classical music, it is common for composers to extract or reimagine operatic elements in order to widen the music’s reach. Adams’ *Doctor Atomic* Symphony was initially 45 minutes in duration, and has since been reduced in scope to a 25-minute symphony of three movements played without pause. Performed by a large orchestra with no voices, the symphony mixes some content taken directly from the opera, such as the overture and interludes, along with rewritten material in which instruments take on melodies that were sung in the original. An example of the latter is a transformed version of one of the opera’s best-known passages: an aria of poetic verse from John Donne’s *Holy Sonnet XIV* sung by Robert Oppenheimer as, alone onstage, he observes the prototype bomb hours before its test. (In the symphony, a trumpet takes on the singer’s role.)

The *Doctor Atomic* Symphony was premiered by the BBC Symphony Orchestra, with Adams conducting, at a BBC Proms concert on August 21, 2007. This week’s renditions are conducted by David Robertson, a longtime collaborator of Adams who led the symphony’s first recording with the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra in 2009.

## THE COMPOSER’S OUTLINE

In the score for the *Doctor Atomic* Symphony, Adams provided the following outline of the work:

**THE LABORATORY.** “The symphony begins with [the] opera’s Overture with its Varèsian blocks of clashing dissonances in the brass, winds and tuned percussion. This gives way to [a] *Laboratory* scene in which the assembled Los Alamos scientists and assistants declaim in oracular mode what Einstein’s laws have revealed to them: ‘*We believe that matter can be neither created nor destroyed but only altered in form....But now we know that energy may become matter, and matter may become energy and thus be altered in form.*’

**PANIC.** “The following *Panic* scene begins with a passage of frantic string music that evokes a city under nighttime attack from the skies. A solo trombone takes the part of Army General Leslie Groves, angrily barking out orders to the assembled multitude. The music’s highly stressed energy eventually cools, but only slightly, leading into the *Corn Dance* scene, ritual music for a Tewa Indian ceremony. The rest of the movement is a symphonic compression of the tense, often chaotic activity leading up to the countdown to the bomb’s detonation. It includes lines for Kitty, Oppenheimer’s wife, for her Indian maid, Pasqualita, and for a Medical Corps captain, who warns of the toxic properties of the deadly plutonium that fuels the bomb.

**TRINITY.** “The final movement, *Trinity*, bears the name Oppenheimer chose for the test site. It is a setting (here intoned by the solo trumpet) of the famous John Donne sonnet, ‘Batter my heart, three-person’d God.’ Oppenheimer’s deep ambivalence about the weapon he has

brought into the world finds voice in the poet’s anguished cry of remorse over the loss of his soul.”

## ABOUT THE COMPOSER

Born in 1947 in Worcester, Massachusetts, John Adams is by many accounts the most frequently performed living American composer of orchestral music for the concert hall. He is known for mixing elements of minimalism—such as the repeated wood block pulse in the background of his well-known overture *Short Ride in a Fast Machine*—with the harmonic language and lush orchestration of the late Romantic period.

Recurring extramusical themes in Adams’ music include nods to his native Northeastern U.S. and empathetic responses to recent and current events, both through his operas as well as concert works such as *On the Transmigration of Souls*—an orchestral reply to the September 11 attacks that earned Adams the 2003 Pulitzer Prize in Music. Other awards conferred on him include the 1995 Grawemeyer Award for his Violin Concerto—a work co-commissioned by the Minnesota Orchestra and premiered by the Orchestra in 1994 with the late former Concertmaster Jorja Fleezanis as soloist—as well as five Grammy Awards.

Among Adams’ recent projects are the opera *Antony and Cleopatra*—an adaptation of the Shakespeare play premiered at the San Francisco Opera in September 2022—and the orchestral work *Frenzy*, premiered by the London Symphony Orchestra this past March. A new piano concerto composed for soloist Vikingur Ólafsson is scheduled for a premiere by the Vienna Symphony Orchestra in May 2025.

**Instrumentation:** 2 flutes, piccolo, 3 oboes (1 doubling English horn), 3 clarinets (1 doubling E-flat clarinet and 1 doubling bass clarinet), 3 bassoons (1 doubling contrabassoon), 4 horns, 4 trumpets (1 doubling piccolo trumpet), 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, 2 suspended cymbals, crotales, tuned gongs, 2 tamtams, thunder sheet, glockenspiel, chimes, harp, celesta and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY CARL SCHROEDER.