

SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER 2025

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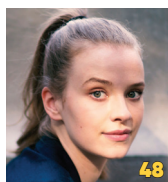
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**ABOUT THE COVER:** Anthony Ross, the Minnesota Orchestra's principal cello since 1991, is featured as soloist in works by Leonard Bernstein and Steve Heitzeg on September 26–27. Photo: Travis Anderson.

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## PROFILE

# THOMAS SØNDERGÅRD

Danish conductor Thomas Søndergård, who this fall begins his third season as 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 repertoire, and a collaborative approach with the musicians he leads.

Søndergård first conducted the Minnesota Orchestra in December 2021, establishing an immediate rapport with musicians and audiences. Highlights of his 2025–26 season in Minnesota include opera-in-concert performances of Bartók's *Bluebeard's Castle*, a festival of music from Nordic countries and his first Listening Project concert. In November the Pentatone label will release the Orchestra's first album under his direction, featuring works of Thomas Adès including the Violin Concerto with soloist Leila Josefowicz.

Since 2018 Søndergård has been music director of the Royal Scottish National Orchestra (RSNO). He previously 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,



London Symphony and New York Philharmonic. This season, in addition to a full slate of RSNO concerts at home and on tour in both Europe and China, he appears as guest conductor with the Konzerthausorchester Berlin, Danish National Symphony, Finnish Radio Symphony, Oslo Philharmonic and Barcelona Symphony.

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 Trial* to wide acclaim; he has returned subsequently many times to the Royal Danish Opera. His discography 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 works with BBC NOW; and works by Prokofiev and Strauss with the RSNO.

For more information, visit [minnesotaorchestra.org](https://minnesotaorchestra.org).

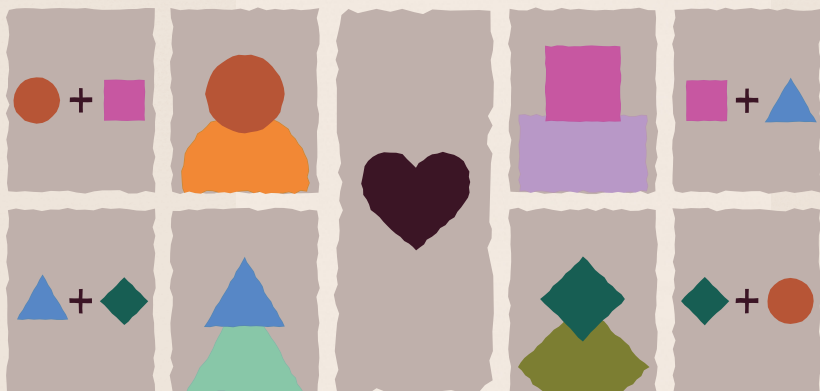


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WELCOMING OUR NEW PRESIDENT AND MUSICIANS

As the Minnesota Orchestra launches its 2025-26 season, it welcomes a new administrative leader and a trio of new full-time musicians. Joining as president and CEO is Twin Cities native Isaac Thompson, who returns to his home state after most recently holding the same position with the Oregon Symphony; new onstage are Principal Trumpet James Vaughen, first violinist Angela Ryu and second violinist Herdís M. Guðmundsdóttir.

Thompson grew up playing violin, including at Orchestra Hall as a member of Minnesota Youth Symphonies, then shifted to a behind-the-scenes administrative career initially with the Cincinnati Symphony, then the New York Philharmonic. “The opportunity to return to Minnesota to lead my hometown orchestra at this moment is deeply meaningful,” he says, adding in a *MinnPost* interview that

“[m]aintaining the qualities that have made the Orchestra great over decades, and then envisioning an innovative future, is what I’m excited to dive into.” He succeeds Interim President and CEO Brent Assink, who filled the post during the 2024–25 season.

Vaughen, a native of Illinois, arrives at the Orchestra via the Detroit Symphony’s assistant principal trumpet post, while Canadian-born Ryu has won several competitions in her home country and served as concertmaster of the Shepherd School Symphony, and Guðmundsdóttir, originally from Iceland, has been a member of several ensembles including the Civic Orchestra of Chicago and the Aspen Contemporary Ensemble. Learn more at [minnesotaorchestra.org/musicians](https://minnesotaorchestra.org/musicians) and in future *Showcase* issues—and join us in welcoming them to the stage!



Isaac Thompson



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## INTRODUCING THE LINDAHL AUDITORIUM

— This summer the Minnesota Orchestra celebrated the extraordinary generosity of steadfast supporters Nancy and John Lindahl by unveiling a new name for Orchestra Hall's performance auditorium—now known as the Lindahl Auditorium. The announcement of the Lindahls' landmark \$15 million commitment—one of the largest gifts in the Orchestra's history—coincided with the conclusion of Nancy Lindahl's nearly three-year term as Board chair, during which the Orchestra welcomed a new music director as well as interim and permanent administrative leaders. She also spearheaded private fundraising for the newly approved Upper Harbor Terminal Amphitheater project.

"The Minnesota Orchestra has meant the world to me since I was a child attending Orchestra concerts at Northrop Auditorium with my parents," said Nancy Lindahl. "The Orchestra contributes immensely to our state through high-caliber musicianship, music education and community partnerships, and we want to keep this cultural touchstone strong and vital."

William P. Miller, who succeeds Lindahl as Board chair, stated that "Nancy and John truly define what it means to lead by example," while Music Director Thomas Søndergård praised "the obvious care that the community shows toward the Orchestra—and the Lindahls beautifully demonstrate what that means." Principal Bass Kristen Bruya added: "The musicians are deeply grateful for the value Nancy and John place on art and music."



John and Nancy Lindahl

Greg Helgeson

## A KINDER KONZERT PREMIERE

— FRIENDS of the Minnesota Orchestra invites you and your family to a special event at Orchestra Hall on Sunday, October 26: a Kinder Konzert featuring the premiere of *Caps for Sale*, with music by Abbie Betinis—played by an ensemble of Minnesota Orchestra musicians—paired with the text of Esphyr Slobodkina's classic children's book narrated by Katie Condon. The family-friendly performance is complemented by a variety of lobby activities; tickets are available at [minnesotaorchestra.org](https://minnesotaorchestra.org).



Composer Abbie Betinis



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## IN MEMORY: VIOLIST KENNETH FREED

In June the Minnesota Orchestra unexpectedly lost a beloved colleague when violist Kenneth Freed, 64, passed away of natural causes. Freed joined the Orchestra in 1998 after performing in the Manhattan String Quartet for five years. Once in Minnesota, he wholeheartedly threw himself into many roles, including serving for 12 seasons as music director of the Mankato Symphony and for one season as a Minnesota Orchestra assistant conductor. He championed underrepresented composers, volunteered for committees and played chamber music at every opportunity.

Musical literacy was a driving passion across Freed's career, leading him to found Learning Through Music, an education nonprofit that harnessed music to improve learning outcomes. He served as a mentor to students at Greenwood Music Camp, in school settings and through a partnership with Walker West Music Academy. A native New Yorker, he began lessons as a child at the Henry Street Settlement School and went on to study English literature and music at Yale, where he earned undergraduate and advanced degrees.

"Ken believed deeply that music, both learning to read it and appreciating it, changes lives," said Concertmaster Erin Keefe. "Funny, talented and deeply beloved, he was the heart and soul of the orchestra."



Travis Anderson Photo

Outgoing and big-hearted, Freed was known by colleagues and fans of the Orchestra's social media as a champion jokester—someone who took music, but not himself, seriously. "Violists inhabit sort of a parallel universe from the rest of the Orchestra," he said in a 2024 interview. "Philosophically, we develop a sense of humor almost as a necessity. Personally, I just find it a lot of fun to make people laugh."

Services for Freed were held in July and featured performances by many of his colleagues, including his beloved viola section playing an arrangement of *Nimrod* from Elgar's *Enigma* Variations. The Orchestra shares deep condolences with his wife Gwen and their children, Zachary, Eleanor and Jonah, and extended families.

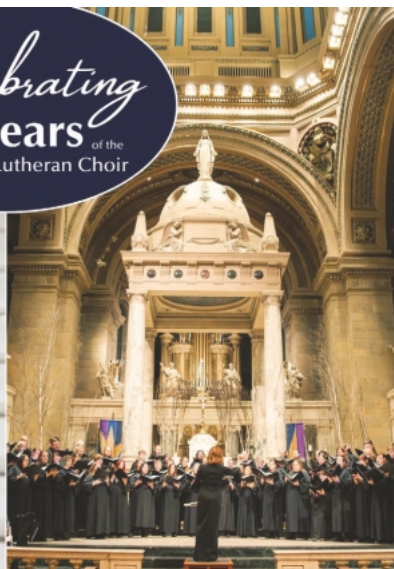




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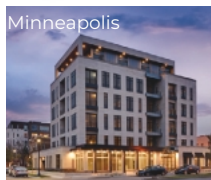
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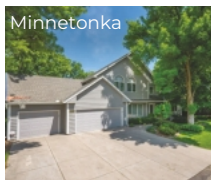
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John Stafford Smith/ *The Star-Spangled Banner* CA. 2'  
orch. Stanislaw Skrowaczewski

Leonard Bernstein *Overture to Candide* CA. 5'

Hector Berlioz *Les Nuits d'été* (Summer Nights), Opus 7 CA. 32'  
Villanelle  
Le Spectre de la Rose  
Sur les Lagunes  
Absence  
Au Cimetière; Clair de Lune  
L'île Inconnue  
*Joyce DiDonato, mezzo*

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

Guillaume Connesson *Céléphaïs*, from *Les cités de Lovecraft* CA. 9'

Richard Strauss *Suite from Der Rosenkavalier*, Opus 59 CA. 23'



View the French text and English translation for *Les Nuits d'été* by scanning the QR code or visiting [minnesotaorchestra.org/berlioztext](https://minnesotaorchestra.org/berlioztext).  
An English translation will also be projected as surtitles.

Conductor and soloist profiles appear on pages 10 and 55.  
Visit [minnesotaorchestra.org/pre](https://minnesotaorchestra.org/pre) for details about pre-concert activities.

### THANK YOU

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**LEONARD BERNSTEIN**

**B:** August 25, 1918  
Lawrence, Massachusetts  
**D:** October 14, 1990  
New York City

**Overture to *Candide***

**PREMIERED:**  
December 1, 1956 (Broadway);  
January 26, 1957 (concert)

One of several throughlines in the Minnesota Orchestra's 2025-26 season is a celebration of music composed in or otherwise linked with the United States, in conjunction with the nation's upcoming 250th birthday on July 4, 2026. Appropriately launching the season's American journey is one of our country's most recognizable classical concert works, Leonard Bernstein's Overture to *Candide*—which has its own roots extending back slightly more than 250 years.

When thousands perished in the Lisbon, Portugal, earthquake of 1752, the French writer and philosopher Voltaire responded with the diverting story of *Candide*, a guileless innocent who through every trial and tribulation clings to the notion that this is indeed the best of all possible worlds. Published in 1759, Voltaire's stinging satire attacked the bedrock premise of the philosophical optimists who provided a rationalization for any apparent evil.

Nearly 200 years after *Candide* appeared in print, Bernstein and playwright Lillian Hellman collaborated to produce a musical version. After tryouts in Boston and New Haven, *Candide* opened at the Martin Beck Theater in New York on December 1, 1956. For all its vigor, tunefulness and immense theatricality, the show was not an immediate success, earning mixed reviews and surviving just 73 performances in its initial run.

**"GONE" AND BACK AGAIN**

"*Candide* is on and gone," Bernstein wrote in his diary in February 1957, penning a highly premature obituary. Already on January 26, 1957, Bernstein had led the New York Philharmonic in the first concert performance of the *Candide* Overture, which started its swift ascent into the orchestral repertory where it remains beloved for its embodiment of the high-energy American spirit.

Despite its initial stage failure, *Candide* has gone on to a successful life. The first of several key modifications to the production came in 1958, when Bernstein pulled in playwright Hugh Wheeler to take up where Hellman



left off, helping Bernstein trim the two acts to one, restoring Voltaire's biting wit and creating a narrator's role for Voltaire. Still, much credit for *Candide's* longevity and ultimate success must go to Bernstein's music, the best-known portion of which remains the vigorous and lyrical overture. It begins with a dramatic fanfare, then offers a quick tour of "Oh, Happy We," "Glitter and Be Gay" and other memorable themes from the operetta.

**Instrumentation:** 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, E-flat clarinet, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, snare drum, tenor drum, bass drum, cymbals, triangle, glockenspiel, xylophone, harp and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY MARY ANN FELDMAN.



### HECTOR BERLIOZ

**B:** December 1, 1803  
Côte-Saint-André, France

**D:** March 8, 1869  
Paris, France

### *Les nuits d'été* (Summer Nights), Opus 7

**COMPOSED:** 1840-41 (for voice and piano); 1843 and 1856 (for voice and orchestra)

Hector Berlioz, like Robert Schumann, Hugo Wolf and Claude Debussy, was an astute music critic. This was by necessity: French indifference towards his innovative music had forced Berlioz to the task in order to support a trio of dependents—wife, son and mistress. But he despised the profession, and a deadline was like a pistol aimed at his brow, its threat providing the only incentive to put pen to paper. "To write nothings about nothings!" he lamented. "To bestow lukewarm praises on insupportable insipidities" was a loathsome task.

Various other artists and writers of the Romantic age were doubly endowed as creators and critics; prominent on the list are William Blake, Victor Hugo and Eugène Delacroix. Théophile Gautier (1811-1872), author of the poems that inspired the loosely connected *Les nuits d'été* (Summer Nights) by Berlioz, was a poet, painter and balletomane. In addition to producing more than 300 volumes of collected essays, poetry and fiction, Gautier created the scenarios of two enduring ballets, *Giselle* and *La Peri*.

## A NEW MUSICAL PATH

Breaking new ground, Berlioz abandoned conventional classical genres to develop new hybrids, especially for voice and orchestra. Opera and

symphony merged in such works as *Romeo and Juliet*, and in 1840–41 he composed a set of six Gautier song settings, originally for voice and piano. In 1843 he orchestrated one movement, *Absence*, and 13 years later he recast the other five as well, creating the song cycle *Les nuits d'été* as we know it today, and foreshadowing the orchestral song cycles that would loom so importantly in composers yet to come. The result was strikingly prophetic of the impressionist destiny of French music.

Never intending these casually produced works as a set for a single singer, Berlioz conceived them for different voices: mezzo, contralto, tenor, baritone. Each is dedicated to a singer he encountered during an encouraging sojourn at Weimar—and the full set was apparently never performed on one program during the composer's lifetime.

### THE MUSIC: DELICATE, POIGNANT, RADIANT

A country song of folklike simplicity, set to a steady pulse, the delicately scored *Villanelle* is tinted with bright strokes of orchestral color, the bassoon prominent toward the close. Garlands of 16th-notes unfolding in the strings entwine the haunting declamation of *Le Spectre de la rose*, the phantom souvenir of a ball; here the wide vocal line veers towards a descending chromatic path.

Starting in the gloomy mists of G minor, *Sur les lagunes* (In the Lagoons) is intensified by a striking motif of the minor second, which echoes even in the last fragment of the vocal line. At its midpoint, Berlioz accentuates the emotional curve of the poetry in the reiterated outbursts of *Ah! sans amour* (Oh! without love), each outcry spread across the gradual descent of an octave and a half, and the last shred of grief culminating in a short pause.

Now in E-flat major, *Absence* begins to unfold its lament for the lost lover; a solo clarinet is entwined with the voice. The poignancy of *Au cimetière* (In the Graveyard) depends partly upon its dynamic nuances: a range of soft tones, dwindling to quadruple *pianissimo*. The most radiant song is left for the closing *L'île inconnue* (The Unknown Island), whose high spirits are affirmed by rhythmic momentum and fresh woodwind scoring.

View the text and translation for *Les nuits d'été* by scanning the QR code on page 19 or visiting [minnesotaorchestra.org/berlioztext](https://minnesotaorchestra.org/berlioztext).

**Instrumentation:** mezzo solo with orchestra comprising 2 flutes, oboe, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 3 horns, harp and strings

EXCERPTED FROM A PROGRAM NOTE BY MARY ANN FELDMAN.



**GUILLAUME  
CONNESSON****B:** May 5, 1970  
Boulogne-Billancourt,  
France*Céléphaïs*, from  
*Les cités de Lovecraft***PREMIERED:**  
October 13, 2017

— Our concert's second half begins as the first portion ended: with music from a Frenchman's pen—but from a composer born a century and a year after Berlioz died. Guillaume Connesson is a distinctive voice in today's world of classical concert music, fusing late Romantic-style melodies with aspects of American minimalism and film scoring aesthetics. His musical language reaches back, yet also exists in our time—a true fusion of old and new, like a Monet painting of the International Space Station. Its colors radiate warmth, though the subject matter is wholly modern.

**MUSIC THAT “COULDN'T HAVE BEEN IMAGINED”**

While Connesson's work is steeped in cinematic textures and a unique sense of drama, his music retains the unmistakable mark of orchestral craftsmanship. The film-score atmosphere is undeniable, but he is wholly a product of his generation. “This music,” he has said, “couldn't have been imagined a hundred years ago.” His signature ethos and dramatic flair often begin with a literary source or visual inspiration. Connesson shapes harmony and color as though assembling a puzzle. Describing his process, he explains: “It's like having an architecture, a building in the mist,” gradually revealed piece by piece through the fog.

In his three-movement 2017 work *Les cités de Lovecraft*, Connesson draws from the strange and highly imaginative world of H. P. Lovecraft, who is most famous for his Cthulhu Mythos shared fictional universe. The source in particular is Lovecraft's *Dream Cycle*, a series of short stories written from 1918 to 1932 and set in the “Dreamlands”—an alternate dimension accessible only through dreams. Co-commissioned by the Orchestre National de Lyon and the Netherlands Philharmonic, Connesson's work has been performed internationally, solidifying the composer's place in the contemporary orchestral canon.

**THE MUSIC: A DREAMLAND IN FIVE PARTS**

In this week's performances we hear the opening movement, *Céléphaïs*. *Céléphaïs* is described by both Connesson and Lovecraft as a glittering

port city with marble walls and bronze gates. Each of the five continuous sections in this movement depicts a particular aspect of the dream city.

**THE BRONZE GATES.** The opening section begins with a punctuated arrival at the city, marked by whirling strings and woodwinds, complete with interjections of percussion and pizzicato strings knocking at the gates. The grandeur of the structure is represented by fanfares of brass, pushed along by a martial snare drum.

**ENTRANCE TO THE CITY OF ONYX STREETS.** After the gates open, the first theme is unfurled—a ravishing melody somewhere between Ravel’s *Daphnis et Chloé* and a John Williams film score, a signature of Connesson’s aesthetic purview.

**THE TURQUOISE TEMPLE.** The third section opens with another theme in the first trumpet, which, in Connesson’s interpretation, gives “life to a colorful pagan celebration.”

**THE ROSE-CRYSTAL PALACE OF THE SEVENTY DELIGHTS.** This music of the palace is seductive, with heavily stylized oboe passages over a rustling texture of strings and harp. The melody is passed through the winds until a glimmering chorale of violins and violas breaks passionately through, ultimately dissolving into a duet between solo violin and viola.

**THE SEVEN PROCESSIONS OF PRIESTS CROWNED WITH ORCHIDS.** The final section of the work begins in an aptly utilized 7/4 meter with an off-kilter march. The texture is subdued at first, but proceeds with interjections from the full ensemble as the procession moves toward a triumphant ending.

**Instrumentation:** 3 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, English horn, 3 clarinets, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, snare drum, military drum, medium and high suspended cymbal, medium sizzle cymbal, claves, mark tree, petite shaker, tambourine, temple blocks, triangle, whip, xylophone, glockenspiel, vibraphone, harp, piano (doubling celesta) and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY NICHOLAS LANDRUM.

**RICHARD STRAUSS**

**B:** June 11, 1864  
Munich, Germany

**D:** September 8, 1949  
Leipzig, Germany

**Suite from *Der Rosenkavalier*, Opus 59**

**PREMIERED:**  
January 26, 1911  
(full opera)

— *Der Rosenkavalier*, Richard Strauss’ “comedy for music” on a libretto by Hugo von Hofmannsthal, was completed on September 26, 1910. The premiere, under the direction of Ernst von Schuch, took place at the Dresden Court Opera on January 26, 1911. The score of the suite played at these concerts, which bears the copyright date of 1945, credits no arranger. Polish conductor Artur Rodziński probably had a hand in the arrangement, and possibly Leonard Bernstein—the composer of the *Candide* Overture that opens this week’s program. It was published with the blessing of the composer, then desperately in need of income.

**A LIBRETTO THAT SET ITSELF**

In 1909, Strauss was, with Puccini, the most famous and the richest European classical composer alive. He had written a string of orchestral works, many of which had become indispensable repertoire items; he had emerged as an important song composer; and latterly, with *Salome* and *Elektra*, he had made his mark in the opera world, and in a big way.

For *Elektra* Strauss set an adaptation of Sophocles’ play by the Viennese poet Hugo von Hofmannsthal. But it was *Der Rosenkavalier* (The Knight of the Rose) that launched the two artists’ extraordinary working friendship that lasted through a further half dozen projects until the poet’s death in 1929. Drawing on a broad range of sources, Hofmannsthal provided a libretto that, Strauss said, virtually set itself to music.

To summarize baldly: *Der Rosenkavalier* is about an aristocratic married lady in her early 30s, wife of Field Marshal von Werdenberg, who loses her 17-year-old lover (who is also her cousin) when he falls in love with a bourgeois girl his own age. But of course there is more to it than that—it is about what French novelist Gustave Flaubert called “sentimental education,” the incalculable powers of eros, social climbing, the subtle messages of language, the mysterious passage of time, grace under fire. Not least, it is about gorgeous singing and fragrant orchestral textures.

An impoverished and chawbacon country cousin, Baron Ochs, comes to the Marshal’s wife, the Marschallin, for advice. He has arranged to

become engaged to Sophie von Faninal, the sweet young daughter of a nouveau riche army contractor who is as eager to benefit from Ochs' title as Ochs is to get hold of some of the Faninal money. Custom—and this is entirely an invention of Hofmannsthal's—demands that the formal proposal of marriage be preceded by the presentation to the prospective bride of a silver rose: can the Marschallin suggest a young man of suitable background and bearing to take on the role of the rose-bearing knight, the “Rosenkavalier”? She suggests Octavian, her cousin-lover.

He and Sophie fall in love at first sight. By means of a series of degrading tricks the projected Ochs-Faninal alliance is undermined, and the Marschallin and Ochs renounce Octavian and Sophie respectively, the former with sentimental dignity, the latter in an atmosphere of rowdy farce.

The first *Rosenkavalier* Suite came out as early as 1911. In addition to the (presumably) Rodziński Suite of 1945, there are excellent and interesting concert sequences by three eminent Strauss conductors, Antal Dorati, Erich Leinsdorf and William Steinberg.

**Instrumentation:** 3 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 3 oboes (1 doubling English horn), 3 clarinets (1 doubling E-flat clarinet), bass clarinet, 3 bassoons (1 doubling contrabassoon), 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, ratchet, tambourine, triangle, glockenspiel, 2 harps, celesta and strings

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Joan Tower	<i>Made in America</i>	CA. 14'
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Leonard Bernstein	Three Meditations from <i>Mass</i> for Cello and Orchestra [in three movements] <i>Anthony Ross, cello</i>	CA. 19'
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Steve Heitzeg	<i>EcoSaga</i> (Concerto in Three Landscapes)* water and stone forest and fells wild life <i>Anthony Ross, cello</i>	CA. 12'
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I N T E R M I S S I O N	CA. 20'
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Béla Bartók	Concerto for Orchestra Introduzione Gioco delle coppie Elegia Intermezzo interrotto Finale	CA. 38'
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\* World premiere; co-commissioned by the Minnesota Orchestra and Linda Lovas Hoeschler and Peter Blyberg, in honor of their families who are challenged, vitalized and healed by music.

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Conductor and soloist profiles appear on pages 10 and 57.

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**JOAN TOWER**

**B:** September 6, 1938  
New Rochelle, New York

***Made in America***

**PREMIERED:**  
October 2, 2005

Grammy-winning composer Joan Tower is widely regarded as one of America's most important living classical composers. During her 60-plus year career, she has combined her compositional work with an active career as a performer, conductor and music educator, and her works have been commissioned by numerous major ensembles, soloists and orchestras. The League of American Orchestras gave Tower its highest honor, the Gold Baton, in 2019. The following year, *Musical America* named Tower its Composer of the Year.

**REFLECTIONS ON AMERICA'S BEAUTY**

One of Tower's most successful works of this century is 2005's *Made in America*. Co-commissioned by the League of American Orchestras and Meet the Composer, it was performed in all 50 states by some 65 different orchestras in the 15 months after its premiere by New York's Glens Falls Symphony Orchestra on October 2, 2005. In 2008 it won the Grammy for Best Classical Contemporary Composition.

In the score for *Made in America*, Tower writes: "I crossed a fairly big bridge at the age of 9 when my family moved to South America (La Paz, Bolivia), where we stayed for nine years. I had to learn a new language, a new culture, and how to live at 13,000 feet! It was a lively culture with many saints' days celebrated through music and dance, but the large Inca population in Bolivia was generally poor and there was little chance of moving up in class or work position. When I returned to the United States, I was proud to have free choices, upward mobility, and the chance to try to become who I wanted to be. I also enjoyed the basic luxuries of an American citizen that we so often take for granted: hot running water, blankets for the cold winters, floors that are not made of dirt, and easy modes of transportation, among many other things.

"So when I started composing this piece, the song *America the Beautiful* kept coming into my consciousness and eventually became the main theme for the work. The beauty of the song is undeniable and I loved working

with it as a musical idea. One can never take for granted, however, the strength of a musical idea—as Beethoven (one of my strongest influences) knew so well. This theme is challenged by other more aggressive and dissonant ideas that keep interrupting, unsettling it, but *America the Beautiful* keeps resurfacing in different guises (some small and tender, others big and magnanimous), as if to say, ‘I’m still here, ever changing, but holding my own.’ A musical struggle is heard throughout the work. Perhaps it was my unconscious reacting to the challenge of how do we keep America beautiful.”

**Instrumentation:** 2 flutes (both doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, trombone, timpani, bass drum, 3 suspended cymbals (large, medium and low), egg maraca, medium maraca, sleigh bells, tambourine, wood block, xylophone, glockenspiel, vibraphone and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY ELIZABETH SCHWARTZ.



### LEONARD BERNSTEIN

**B:** August 25, 1918  
Lawrence,  
Massachusetts

**D:** October 14, 1990  
New York City

### Three Meditations from *Mass for Cello and Orchestra*

**PREMIERED:**  
October 11, 1977

— The 1970s was a decade of great growth for many major American arts institutions. The Minnesota Orchestra, for instance, opened Orchestra Hall in 1974 and expanded its season to year-round, while the Detroit Symphony renovated its own Orchestra Hall early in the decade, and the San Francisco Symphony capped the '70s by beginning work on its current home venue. Perhaps most notably, the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts opened in 1971 in Washington, D.C., as a living memorial to the late President John F. Kennedy.

Jacqueline Kennedy, widow of the slain President, asked Leonard Bernstein to compose a large-scale piece for the inauguration of the Kennedy Center on September 8, 1971. He responded with his *Mass*, subtitled *A Theater Piece for Singers, Players and Dancers*, and taking the form of a dramatic stage production. Incorporating a full orchestra augmented by rock instruments and quadraphonic tape, the commission was an ambitious undertaking—

an inspired, in some ways preposterous work, whose impact remains controversial. Based on the traditional Catholic liturgy, to which Bernstein added his own words and texts by Stephen Schwartz, *Mass* blended diverse musical styles, expressing the composer's belief in the power of music to transcend all barriers, and to heal and unite.

The epic scope and performing forces required for *Mass* have made it less often-heard than Bernstein's most famous creations—although the Minnesota Orchestra presented it as part of a Bernstein festival in 2009. A smaller-scale—though still substantial—musical sibling of *Mass* is the *Three Meditations from Mass* for Cello and Orchestra. It was premiered by the great Russian-born cellist and conductor Mstislav Rostropovich at the Kennedy Center on October 11, 1977, with Bernstein conducting the National Symphony Orchestra. It is scored for cello soloist without winds or brass—but with a large percussion complement, timpani, harp, piano, organ and strings.

## THE MUSIC: THREE MEDITATIONS

The first two Meditations, which occur as instrumental interludes in the complete *Mass*, were initially arranged by the composer for cello and piano. The first (rather slow, very sustained) occurs between the *Confession* and the *Gloria*, and the second (slow, sustained) between the *Gloria* and the *Epistle*. The latter is a set of four variations with a coda, based on an 11-note sequence which Bernstein borrowed from the finale of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. The choral cry for common humanity echoes in the cello's rich double stops.

A third Meditation, very fast, stems from various parts of *Mass*, as a note in the score explains: "The *Epiphany*, a kind of solo fantasia; *In Nomine Patris*, a trance-like dance; and the chorale *Almighty Father*." Although some of these sections are widely separated in the complete work, they share an underlying thematic unity. Bernstein inscribed the piece to Rostropovich, who declared in an interview, "I would be happy to play this work all my life."

**Instrumentation:** solo cello with orchestra comprising timpani, 2 snare drums, bass drum, cymbals, suspended cymbal, 3 hand drums, gourds, tambourine, tom-toms, triangle, xylophone, marimba, glockenspiel, vibraphone, harp, piano, organ and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY MARY ANN FELDMAN.

**STEVE HEITZEG**

**B:** October 15, 1959  
Albert Lea, Minnesota

***EcoSaga* (Concerto in Three Landscapes)**

**PREMIERING:**  
September 26, 2025

— Among living Minnesota-born composers, there may be no closer friend of the Minnesota Orchestra than St. Paul-based Steve Heitzeg, whose ties to the ensemble and Orchestra Hall extend back to the 1990s, when he began writing works for Kinder Konzerts and Young People's Concerts. The longstanding relationship has resulted in a steady progression of commissions, premieres and performances on many of the Orchestra's concert series—often capturing in music Heitzeg's passion for the environment, social issues, human rights and "the peaceful coexistence of all species through music," as the composer distills his philosophy. Another of his signatures is the frequent inclusion of naturally found percussion instruments such as stones, shells and driftwood.

Heitzeg's output, which has been commissioned by the Philadelphia Orchestra, VocalEssence and many other institutions and individuals across the country, also extends to the genres of choral and chamber music, ballet and documentary films. Among his recent works are *Our House is on Fire* (Song for Climate Justice) for mixed chorus and piano—setting text by climate activist Greta Thunberg—and *Death Suite for Jackie O*, premiered by mezzo Clara Osowski and pianist Casey Rafn at the Schubert Club this past January.

**SPOTLIGHTING THE ORCHESTRA'S MUSICIANS**

Several of Heitzeg's works have been composed with specific Minnesota Orchestra soloists in mind. These include the 2006 violin trio *Peace Cranes*—written for then-Orchestra violinists Pamela Arnstein, Angela Fuller and Sarah Kwak—and the trumpet concerto *American Nomad*, premiered in 2015 by Charles Lazarus and the Orchestra, who reprised it in 2019.

This week's concerts bring the world premiere of a concerto dedicated to the Orchestra's Principal Cello Anthony Ross, bearing the intriguing title *EcoSaga* (Concerto in Three Landscapes). It was co-commissioned by the Orchestra and longtime supporters Linda Lovas Hoeschler and Peter Blyberg "in honor of their families who are challenged, vitalized and healed by music," according to the score's dedication.

“Working on *EcoSaga* with Steve has been a real delight,” says Ross. “The depth and scope of his music is truly enthralling. The awesomeness of nature and humanity really comes through. He also has a gift for melody and wonderful harmonies.”

## IN THE COMPOSER’S WORDS

Heitzeg offers these comments on the music and its dedicatee:

“It was an honor to be asked by Tony Ross—a great champion of living composers—to write this piece. The concerto evokes diverse moods of wild landscapes with the soloist acting as heroic witness, sometimes paying tribute to the beauty of wild spaces, sometimes protesting their destruction.

**WATER AND STONE.** “Oceanic and ancient sounds from low strings, ocean drum, stones and waterphone open the concerto with the cellist playing a haunting theme—evoking whale songs with bends and glissandi. The movement closes with the section ‘*and the birds sing for peace (in memory of Pablo Casals)*.’ Here percussionists play a Starling bird call and birdy box while woodwinds flutter and the cello soloist closes this movement in the stratosphere on a diaphanous high A.

**FORESTS AND FELS.** “Part elegy/part pastorella for strings; it is a graceful paean to bucolic and distant horizons.

**WILD LIFE.** “Marked *With Abandon*, the cello soloist rips into an angular, mixed-meter theme that is taken up by the orchestra. A brief *Sanctuary* follows. Then the opening theme is restated in a lyrical *Lento maestoso*. A *Protest Against Ecocide* erupts with dramatic gestures by both soloist and orchestra. The concerto closes with an *Ascendant* section with the soloist, strings, timpani and chimes in a processional leading to the final chord of deep strings, while the soloist holds a high F that fades into infinity.”

**Instrumentation:** solo cello with orchestra comprising 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, trombone, tuba, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, suspended cymbal, birdy box, 2 pieces of driftwood, ocean drum, Starling bird call, 2 stones, tambourine, tam-tam, temple blocks, Tibetan tingsha bells, waterphone, wood block, xylophone, glockenspiel, chimes and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY CARL SCHROEDER, WITH MUSICAL DESCRIPTION BY STEVE HEITZEG.



**BÉLA BARTÓK**

**B:** March 25, 1881  
Sânnicolau Mare,  
Romania

**D:** September 26, 1945  
New York City

**Concerto for Orchestra**

**PREMIERED:**  
December 1, 1944

— Béla Bartók and his wife Ditta fled to the United States in October 1940 to escape World War II and the Nazi domination of Hungary, but their hopes for a new life in America were quickly shattered. Wartime America had little interest in Bartók or his music, and the couple soon found themselves living in near poverty. Then came catastrophe: in the spring of 1942 Bartók's health failed. By the following spring his weight had dropped to 87 pounds, and he had to be hospitalized. Bartók fell into a depression, convinced that he would neither recover nor compose again.

**TRANSFORMED BY A COMMISSION**

At this point, Bartók's friends rallied around him—and very discreetly too, since the fiercely proud composer would never accept anything that savored of charity. Fritz Reiner and Joseph Szigeti convinced Serge Koussevitzky to ask for a new work from the ailing composer, and the conductor visited Bartók's hospital room in New York City to tell him that the Koussevitzky Foundation had commissioned an orchestral work for which it would pay \$1,000. Bartók refused. He believed that he could never complete such a work, but Koussevitzky gave Bartók a check for \$500 and insisted that the money was his whether he finished it or not. The visit had a transforming effect: soon Bartók was well enough to travel to Saranac Lake in upstate New York, where he spent the summer.

Once he started on his new commission, Bartók worked fast—beginning on August 15, 1943, and completing the score eight weeks later. Koussevitzky conducted the *Concerto for Orchestra* in its first performance, by the Boston Symphony Orchestra, on December 1, 1944. It was an instant success, and Bartók reported that Koussevitzky called it “the best orchestra piece of the last 25 years.”

**MUSIC OF STRENGTH AND BEAUTY**

Bartók provided his own program note for the work's premiere, stating in part: “The title of this symphony-like orchestral work is explained by its tendency to treat the single orchestral instruments in a *concertante*

or soloistic manner. The ‘virtuoso’ treatment appears, for instance, in the fugato section of the development of the first movement (brass instruments), or in the perpetuum-mobile-like passage of the principal theme of the last movement (strings), and especially in the second movement, in which pairs of instruments consecutively appear with brilliant passages.”

This is music of strength, humanity, beauty and, not least, humor. Bartók’s own description may touch the secret of its emotional appeal: “The general mood of the work represents, apart from the jesting second movement, a gradual transition from the sternness of the first movement and the lugubrious death-song of the third, to the life-assertion of the last one.”

The five movements of the Concerto for Orchestra are in the beautifully symmetric arch form that Bartók sometimes employed. The outer movements, both in modified sonata form, anchor this arch, framing the two even-numbered movements, both of which have the character of scherzos (each is marked *Allegretto*). The central slow movement, which itself is in a symmetric ternary form, becomes the capstone to the arch.

Visit [minnesotaorchestra.org/bartokconcerto](https://minnesotaorchestra.org/bartokconcerto) for an extended description of the music.

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

**PROGRAM NOTE BY ERIC BROMBERGER.**



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A profile of conductor Sarah Hicks appears on page 56.

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Leonidas Kavakos, conductor and violin

FRI OCT 10 8PM | SAT OCT 11 7PM

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart	Concerto No. 3 in G major for Violin and Orchestra, K. 216 Allegro Adagio Rondo: Allegro  <i>Leonidas Kavakos, violin</i>	CA. 24'
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I N T E R M I S S I O N

CA. 20'

Dmitri Shostakovich	Symphony No. 15 in A major, Opus 141 Allegretto Adagio Allegretto Adagio – Allegretto	CA. 42'
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A profile of conductor and soloist Leonidas Kavakos appears on page 56.  
Visit [minnesotaorchestra.org/pre](https://minnesotaorchestra.org/pre) for details about pre-concert activities.

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**WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART** Concerto No. 3 in G major for Violin and Orchestra, K. 216

**B:** January 27, 1756  
Salzburg, Austria

**D:** December 5, 1791  
Vienna, Austria

**COMPOSED:**  
1775

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart the performer means most of all Mozart the pianist, and he was probably the greatest of his time. But he was also no average violinist. On October 4, 1777, for example, he took part in a private concert in Munich, playing a couple of piano concertos and a demanding violin solo part, and performing, as he wrote to his father, “as though I were the greatest violinist in all of Europe. They all opened their eyes.”

### A FATHER'S KNOWING PRAISE

Bragging? Yes, of course. Exaggerating? Almost surely not. Mozart had a sober sense of his gifts and accomplishments. He was, moreover, writing to the most knowledgeable and exigent connoisseur of string-playing alive: Leopold Mozart, himself a first-rate violinist and pedagogue, a prolific and able composer, and an outstanding musician all around.

Leopold was also not extravagant when it came to praising his son. When, therefore, he writes, “You yourself do not know how well you play the violin...when you play with energy and with your whole heart and soul, yes indeed, just as though you were the first violinist in all of Europe,” these are not just the words of a proud, let alone indulgent, papa.

### DEBATING THE ORIGINS

Wolfgang began to play the violin right at the beginning of his career, when he was 6, and he was just 7 when he made his public debut playing a concerto—we do not know whose—at a birthday celebration for Archbishop Sigismund von Schrattenbach of Salzburg.

We cannot be absolutely sure that Mozart wrote any or all of his five concertos for himself, but it is probable. The G-major Violin Concerto is dated September 12, 1775. Nothing is known about its first performance, though it is safe to assume that it took place soon after the work was completed and probably with Mozart as soloist. Mozart left no cadenzas.



## THE MUSIC: DELIGHTFUL, MIRACULOUS AND QUIRKY

**ALLEGRO.** In this concerto, Mozart gives us a first movement of a delightfully buoyant energy. At the beginning, he is recycling music he had written a few months before: an aria from *Il re pastore*, a serenata that was performed at Salzburg on April 23, 1775.

**ADAGIO.** The miraculous second movement is a real *Adagio*, something relatively rare in Mozart, and this is one of those touching pages to which British musicologist Cuthbert Girdlestone has given the designation “dream andantes.” The sound of muted strings, the slightly troubled triplets in the inner voices, the plucked basses, the delicate comments and punctuations of the wind instruments instantly cast a poetic spell.

**RONDO: ALLEGRO.** Mozart gets quirky in the finale. What starts out here as a simple and rustic rondo is interrupted by a double episode in contrasting duple meter, the first part a grave gavotte in G minor, the second a jolly country dance whose tune has been identified as a folk melody known as “The Strassburger.” After this double episode, the original material returns, but whimsy and surprise reign to the very last gesture.

**Instrumentation:** solo violin with orchestra comprising 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 horns and strings

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



### DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH *Symphony No. 15 in*

**B:** September 25, 1906  
St. Petersburg, Russia

*A major, Opus 141*

**D:** August 9, 1975  
Moscow, Russia

**PREMIERED:**  
January 8, 1972

— Dmitri Shostakovich's 15th and final symphony has been enveloped in mystery and curiosity since its premiere in January 1972, which was conducted by Shostakovich's son Maxim. Even the composer himself was unsure what the symphony meant or what messages it would send to the world.

What had begun as an optimistic gift to himself for his 60th birthday turned upside down when Shostakovich found himself in a hospital bed,

struggling with mental and physical ailments toward the end of his life. The music that poured out of him now seems to be a menagerie of musical quotations and warped memories, perhaps a final showcase of Shostakovich's favorite musical moments, or maybe a series of twisted dreams put to music. After living through Stalin's oppressive regime, Shostakovich's career had been sustained in part by his ability to keep his political and personal ideas to himself, or to mask them expertly within his compositions. It is for this reason that we can only imagine what his intentions were.

## THE MUSIC: FILLED WITH QUOTATIONS

This first movement sets forth a sort of musical circus, which Shostakovich described as “a toy-shop with a cloudless sky above.” The symphony opens with a lone glockenspiel followed by a cheerful flute solo. Then, a quirky bassoon melody emerges from the back of the orchestra and things start to get bizarre. A simple rhythm makes its way throughout the ensemble until it lands in the trumpets, where we hear a bold quotation from Rossini's *William Tell* Overture.

Shostakovich uses this quote as an interjection several times throughout the first movement, setting the stage for a grab bag of quotations throughout the symphony's four movements. We hear fragments of Wagner's *Ring Cycle*, Beethoven's *Egmont* Overture, Strauss' *Ein Heldenleben*, multiple Mahler symphonies, countless other Shostakovich compositions and many others. As the symphony nears its end, another familiar chord, this time from Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*, changes the mood. The ending is possibly the most curious part. Shimmering yet eerie chords in the strings paired with unusual, relentless clicking sounds in the percussion have led many listeners to believe that Shostakovich had written down all of the music in his head, then turned to the whirrs and ticking sounds of the machines surrounding him in his hospital room.

**Instrumentation:** 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, castanets, slapstick, tam-tam, tom-toms, triangle, wood block, xylophone, glockenspiel, vibraphone, celesta and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY EMMA PLEHAL.

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Benjamin Britten

Sinfonia da Requiem  
Lacrymosa  
Dies irae  
Requiem aeternam

CA. 20'

Anna Clyne

ATLAS  
Volume I  
Volume II  
Volume III  
Volume IV

CA. 28'

Elisabeth Brauß, piano

I N T E R M I S S I O N

CA. 20'

Ludwig van Beethoven

Symphony No. 5 in C minor, Opus 67  
Allegro con brio  
Andante con moto  
Allegro  
Allegro  
[No pause before the last movement.]

CA. 36'

Conductor and soloist profiles appear on pages 55 and 57.  
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**BENJAMIN BRITTEN**

**B:** November 22, 1913  
Lowestoft, England

**D:** December 4, 1976  
Aldeburgh, England

*Sinfonia da Requiem*,  
**Opus 20**

**PREMIERED:**  
March 29, 1941

Benjamin Britten's *Sinfonia da Requiem* had a genesis as strange as anything in the history of Western classical music. An avowed pacifist, Britten left his native England as war clouds gathered in 1939, hoping to make his life and career in the United States, which was, for the moment, staying out of the European war.

While living on Long Island, Britten was contacted by the British Council with a remarkable proposal. The Japanese government, which was also staying out of the war for the moment, planned to celebrate the 2,600th anniversary of its ruling dynasty, and for that occasion, set for September 1940, it was commissioning works by a number of composers, Richard Strauss and Jacques Ibert among them.

Now the Japanese government invited Britten to write a work for the occasion, and he accepted, stipulating only that “no form of musical jingoism” be required. Britten hurried to complete the music, which he titled *Sinfonia da Requiem*, early in June 1940, and the Japanese government promptly paid him. (The composer used the money to buy an aging Model T.)

Then came a sour surprise. The Japanese authorities rejected the piece, claiming that its “melancholy” tone was inappropriate for their festive occasion. More specifically, they objected to the titles Britten gave the three movements—*Lacrymosa*, *Dies irae* and *Requiem aeternum*—claiming that these made the *Sinfonia* “purely a religious music of Christian nature” and thus insulting to the Emperor. Though they allowed Britten to keep the commission fee, they refused to perform the music, and the premiere was given by John Barbiroli and the New York Philharmonic on March 29, 1941.

## AN ANTI-WAR STATEMENT

Despite the titles of the movements, Britten did not regard the *Sinfonia da Requiem* as religious music. In fact, he intended it specifically as an anti-war statement. In an interview with a New York newspaper at the time of



the premiere, Britten said: “I’m making it as anti-war as possible....I don’t believe you can express social or political or economic theories in music, but by coupling new music with well-known musical phrases, I think it’s possible to get over certain ideas. I’m dedicating the symphony to the memory of my parents, and, since it is a kind of requiem, I’m quoting from the *Dies irae* of the Requiem Mass. One’s apt to get muddled discussing such things—all I’m sure of is my own anti-war conviction as I wrote it.”

The question remains whether music—abstract sound—can express anti-war (or any other) sentiments. It is worth noting, however, that Britten would incorporate the titles of the three movements of the *Sinfonia* in his *War Requiem* of 1961, where he combines the Requiem text with Wilfred Owen’s poetry to create a clear anti-war statement. The *Sinfonia da Requiem* makes that same statement, but at an abstract, purely instrumental level.

The *Sinfonia* is concentrated music. Its three movements, in a slow-fast-slow sequence that is performed without pause, span barely 20 minutes, and Britten surprisingly anchors all three movements around the tonality of D: D minor in the stern initial movements, D major in the consoling finale. Further, Britten is not so interested in the classical symphony’s opposition of different themes and keys as he is in a sort of organic growth of seminal material. The work’s opening theme will return in modified form in all three movements.

## THE MUSIC IN BRIEF

**LACRYMOSA.** The *Lacrymosa*, which traditionally announces the day when mankind faces judgment, bursts to life with great explosions of sound that resolve into a numbed, steady tread. Against this dark pulse, cellos announce the movement’s swaying, rising main theme. Secondary material is based on the leap of a seventh, but the swaying motion of the opening is never far away, and after a thunderous climax, that rhythm leads the movement to its subdued close.

**DIES IRAE.** The *Dies irae*, which Britten himself called a “formal Dance of Death,” is a tour de force for orchestra, with tremolo flutes, brilliant brass writing and great full-orchestra swoops and shrieks. In its central episode, the eerie sound of alto saxophone briefly recalls the symphony’s undulating opening theme before the violence returns. The movement rises to another climax, then shatters into fragments.

**REQUIEM AETERNUM.** From those fragments the harp assembles a quiet ostinato pulse, and the *Requiem aeternum* opens with three flutes singing

the movement's consoling main melody. Britten's friend W.H. Auden described the finale as "a movement of peace and quiet rejoicing," and Britten asks for a tempo of *Andante molto tranquillo*. But this peace is not long-lived. Gradually the swaying melody of the beginning insinuates itself, and Britten plays this up to a tremendous climax before the furies subside and the *Sinfonia* closes with a prayer for peace in which D major is affirmed quietly but clearly.

**Instrumentation:** 3 flutes (1 doubling alto flute and piccolo), 2 oboes, English horn, 3 clarinets (1 doubling E-flat clarinet and 1 doubling bass clarinet), alto saxophone, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 6 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, suspended cymbal, tambourine, whip, xylophone, 2 harps, piano and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY ERIC BROMBERGER.



#### ANNA CLYNE

**B:** March 9, 1980  
London, England

#### ATLAS

**PREMIERED:**  
March 28, 2024

Described as a "composer of uncommon gifts and unusual methods" in a *New York Times* profile and as "a radical melodist with a painter's eye" by National Public Radio, Grammy-nominated composer Anna Clyne is one of the most acclaimed and in-demand composers of her generation. She often collaborates with innovative choreographers, visual artists, filmmakers and other musicians. Her versatile style focuses on acoustic and electro-acoustic music, combining resonant soundscapes with propelling textures that weave, morph and collide in dramatic explosions. Clyne's ties to the Minnesota Orchestra extend nearly to the beginning of her professional career: in November 2006 her work <<rewind>> was featured at the Orchestra's first-ever Future Classics concert.

#### FROM ONE ARTIST TO ANOTHER

In some of her works, particularly those connected to visual art, Clyne will sometimes make paintings of her own as she composes, creating visual and aural ideas in a symbiotic manner. *ATLAS*, as Clyne explains in the

following comments included in the score, “is inspired by (and titled after) the monumental, four-volume publication *ATLAS*, which maps the ideas, processes and inspirations of the German artist Gerhard Richter.”

Clyne continues: “Conceived and closely edited by Richter himself, this comprehensive compendium cuts straight to the heart of the artist’s thinking, collecting more than 5,000 photographs, drawings and sketches that he has compiled or created since the moment of his creative breakthrough in 1962. My music responds to the imagery contained in these four volumes to create a musical montage and a lucid narrative.” Like Mussorgsky’s *Pictures at an Exhibition*, Clyne’s musical interpretations convey aspects of the actual images and the emotional textures of Richter’s art.

## COVERING VAST TERRITORY

Clyne’s creativity was further sparked by a contemporary musical source: the pianist who premiered *ATLAS* with the Dallas Symphony Orchestra on March 28, 2024. “I also found inspiration in Jeremy Denk’s playing and repertoire, which ranges from very early music to very contemporary music,” Clyne remarks. “The four movements cover a lot of technical, emotional and musical territory. The first movement, for example, is very angular, very thorny; in contrast, the second movement has a lot more lush and rich textures. We hear a very simple melody in the piano that is then amplified, almost creating a natural reverberation in the orchestra to this childlike music in the solo piano.”

The swaggering athleticism of the first movement, featuring massive tone clusters, lightning-fast runs and eye-popping virtuosity, returns in the third movement with propulsive rhythms and recurring fragments of an off-kilter waltz. Clyne also pays homage to Denk’s passion for Bach with a chorale and quotes from *The Well-Tempered Clavier*. In the final movement, Clyne layers references to the expressive melody from the second movement with the chorale, and ends with a final cheeky nod to *The Well-Tempered Clavier*.

**Instrumentation:** solo piano with orchestra comprising 2 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets (1 doubling bass clarinet), 2 bassoons (1 doubling contrabassoon), 2 horns, 2 trumpets, trombone, tuba, timpani, 2 snare drums, bass drum, cymbals, hi-hat cymbal, ride cymbal, crotales, tam-tam, triangle, wood block, vibraphone, chimes and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY ELIZABETH SCHWARTZ.

**LUDWIG  
VAN BEETHOVEN****B:** December 16, 1770  
Bonn, Germany**D:** March 26, 1827  
Vienna, Austria**Symphony No. 5 in  
C minor, Opus 67****PREMIERED:**  
December 22, 1808

— Beethoven's Fifth Symphony takes listeners on one of the most satisfying emotional journeys in all of Western classical music. Music so white-hot in intensity, so broad in appeal, cries out for interpretation. To some, it is Fate knocking at the door. Others see it as the triumph of reason over chaos and evil. Sadly, though, to some this music is so over-familiar that we may have lost the capacity to listen to it purely as music, to comprehend it as the astonishing and original musical achievement that it is.

**THE SYMPHONY IN BRIEF**

**ALLEGRO CON BRIO.** The stark opening of the *Allegro con brio*, both very simple and charged with volcanic fury, provides the musical content for the entire movement. Those four notes shape the main theme, generate the rhythms, and pulse insistently in the background—they even become the horn fanfare that announces the second theme. The power unleashed at the beginning is unrelenting, and this movement hammers to a close with the issues it raises still unresolved.

**ANDANTE CON MOTO; ALLEGRO.** The *Andante con moto* contrasts two themes. Violas and cellos sing the broad opening melody in A-flat major, while the second subject, in heroic C major, blazes out in the brass, and Beethoven alternates these two themes, varying each as the movement proceeds. The third movement returns to the C-minor urgency of the beginning. It seems at first to be in scherzo-and-trio form, with lower strings introducing the sinuous opening idea. At just the point one anticipates a return to the scherzo comes one of the most original moments in music.

**ALLEGRO.** Instead of going back, Beethoven pushes ahead. Bits of the scherzo flit past quietly, and suddenly the finale, a triumphant march in C major, bursts to life: this dramatic moment has invariably been compared to sunlight breaking through dark clouds. The coda itself is extremely long, and the final cadence—extended almost beyond reason—is overpowering.

No matter how familiar this symphony is, the music remains extraordinary. Heard for itself, Beethoven's Fifth Symphony is as original and powerful and furious today as it was when it burst upon an unsuspecting audience in Vienna 217 years ago.

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

PROGRAM NOTE BY ERIC BROMBERGER.

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**ELISABETH BRAUß,**  
PIANO

German pianist Elisabeth Brauß, who has been praised for the maturity of her interpretations, makes several debuts during the 2025-26 season, including her North American concerto debut with the Minnesota Orchestra and first appearances with the Orchestre Philharmonique de Luxembourg, Oulu Symphony and Lahti Symphony. In addition, she returns to the Bournemouth Symphony, BBC Philharmonic and Göttinger Symphonieorchester. In recital she debuts at the Piano aux Jacobins festival and returns to the Konzerthaus Berlin and Muziekcentrum De Bijloke, as well as Wigmore Hall for a solo recital and several chamber projects. Brauß is a former BBC New Generation Artist, and in 2021 she made her debut at the BBC Proms with the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra. She studied at the Hochschule für Musik, Theater und Medien Hannover, at the Institut zur Früh-Förderung musikalisch Hochbegabter, and with Jelena Levit, Matti Raekallio, Bernd Goetzke and Igor Levit. More: [askonasholt.com](https://askonasholt.com), [elizabethbrauss.com](https://elizabethbrauss.com).



**JOYCE DIDONATO,**  
MEZZO

Winner of multiple Grammy Awards and an Olivier Award, Joyce DiDonato entrances audiences across the globe in recitals, appearances with major orchestras and on the operatic stage. Her 2025-26 season includes concerts with the Minnesota Orchestra, Montreal's Orchestre Métropolitain and St. Louis Symphony, as well as her Lincoln Center stage debut as Mother in *Amahl and the Night Visitors* and a role debut at the Metropolitan Opera in Saariaho's *Innocence*. Recent engagements include a return to Teatro Real Madrid for Handel's *Theodora* and a European recital tour with performances at Teatro alla Scala and Deutsche Staatsoper Berlin, among other venues; concerts with the Philadelphia Orchestra, Norwegian National Opera Orchestra and London Philharmonic; and operatic appearances on the stages of the Royal Opera House, Wiener Staatsoper, Teatro Real Madrid, Barbican Centre and Bavarian State Opera. Her discography includes Gramophone Award-winning recordings of Berlioz's *Les Troyens* and Handel's *Agrippina*. More: [askonasholt.com](https://askonasholt.com), [joycedidonato.com](https://joycedidonato.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 former Orchestra violist Sam Bergman and leading original productions with collaborators such as PaviElle French, Kevin Kling, Peter Rothstein, Robert Elhai, The Moving Company, Nur-D, The New Standards, Cloud Cult and Dessa—with whom Hicks and the Orchestra made a live-in-concert recording on Doomtree Records and will collaborate again in November 2025. Later this season she will lead film music concerts featuring *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, as well as a performance with singer Ben Rector, among other concerts. More: [minnesotaorchestra.org](https://minnesotaorchestra.org).



**LEONIDAS KAVAKOS,**  
CONDUCTOR AND VIOLIN

Leonidas Kavakos is recognized as a violinist and artist of rare quality, drawing acclaim for his captivating artistry, musicianship, technique and integrity of his playing. He performs with leading orchestras as both soloist and conductor, and in recital at the world's premier venues. In 2022, he founded the Greek chamber group Apollōn Ensemble, and in 2025 he becomes artistic director of the Classic Revolution Festival at Lotte Concert Hall in Seoul. Highlights of his 2025–26 season include performances with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra and NHK Symphony, among other ensembles, as well as conducting engagements with the Czech Philharmonic, Philharmonia and Barcelona Symphony; he is also the Dallas Symphony's artist in residence. He curates an annual violin and chamber music masterclass in Athens, and is professor of violin at the Basel Academy of Music. He plays the 'Willemotte' Stradivarius violin of 1734. More: [intermusica.com](https://intermusica.com), [leonidaskavakos.com](https://leonidaskavakos.com).



**ANDREW MANZE,**  
CONDUCTOR

Andrew Manze is celebrated as one of the most inspirational conductors of his generation. He was chief conductor of the NDR Radiophilharmonie in Hannover from 2014 to 2023, drawing special notice for tours to China and Japan, as well as award-winning Mendelssohn and Mozart recordings for Pentatone. Since 2018, he has been principal guest conductor of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, and since 2024 he has been principal guest conductor of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, which he led last season on tour. As a guest conductor, he has longstanding relationships with many leading orchestras, including the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Munich Philharmonic and Rotterdam Philharmonic, among others. In recent seasons he has also led the Boston Symphony and the New York and Los Angeles philharmonics, and has appeared often at the Mostly Mozart Festival. Last season's highlights included concerts with violinist James Ehnes and the Danish National Symphony. More: [intermusica.com](https://www.intermusica.com), [andrewmanze.com](https://www.andrewmanze.com).



**ANTHONY ROSS,**  
CELLO

Anthony Ross, leader of the Minnesota Orchestra's cello section since 1991, has been a soloist many times with the Orchestra, performing all the standard cello concertos—most recently Walton's in fall 2024—as well as modern works such as Michael Daugherty's *Tales of Hemingway*, James MacMillan's Cello Concerto, Paul Moravec's *Montserrat* and David Ott's Concerto for Two Cellos, which he and his wife, Minnesota Orchestra cellist Beth Rapier, have long championed. He has appeared many times on the Orchestra's chamber music series and has been a concerto soloist with the Moscow State Orchestra, Louisville Orchestra, Dallas Symphony, Rochester Philharmonic, South Dakota Symphony and many other Midwest regional orchestras. An avid chamber musician, he is a member of Accordo and the Chamber Music Society of Minnesota and has appeared on many festival stages. In 1982 he won the bronze medal at the prestigious Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow. More: [minnesotaorchestra.org](https://www.minnesotaorchestra.org).

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## Laureate Spotlight: Bruce Taylor and Dennis Carey



Bruce Taylor and Dennis Carey were longtime supporters and fans of the Minnesota Orchestra. We lost Dennis on February 2, 2021, and Bruce on August 31, 2024, and we miss them dearly. Dennis was a beloved teacher and librarian in the Minneapolis public schools, and Bruce provided disease prevention and control services for the Minneapolis Health Department for 30 years. Bruce's enduring love of music and theater began when he served in the Coast Guard in New York, while Dennis had a love of music early on, as an amateur pianist. They were tireless advocates for many cultural institutions in the Twin Cities, as well as the Animal Humane Society and the Human Rights Campaign. The Minnesota Orchestra is very grateful to be a beneficiary of their generous commitment to make a difference and keep doing good, even after their lifetimes. As they were big fans of Principal Cello Anthony Ross, we are pleased to dedicate the Orchestra's September 26 and 27 concerts to their memory.

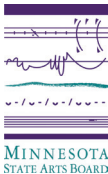
For more information about planned giving and the difference you can make for the Orchestra, please contact Emily Boigenzahn at [eboigenzahn@mnorch.org](mailto:eboigenzahn@mnorch.org) or 612-371-7138.



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