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ABOUT THE COVER: Principal Viola Rebecca Albers caps the Minnesota Orchestra’s January schedule with the U.S. premiere of Donghoon Shin’s viola concerto *Threadsuns*. Photo: Travis Anderson Photo

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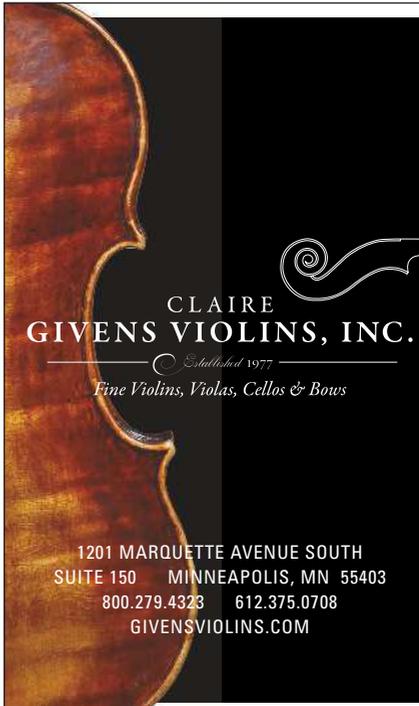
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PROFILE

THOMAS SØNDERGÅRD

Danish conductor Thomas Søndergård, now in 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*, this month’s festival of music from Nordic countries and his first Listening Project concert. In November 2025 the Pentatone label released 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.

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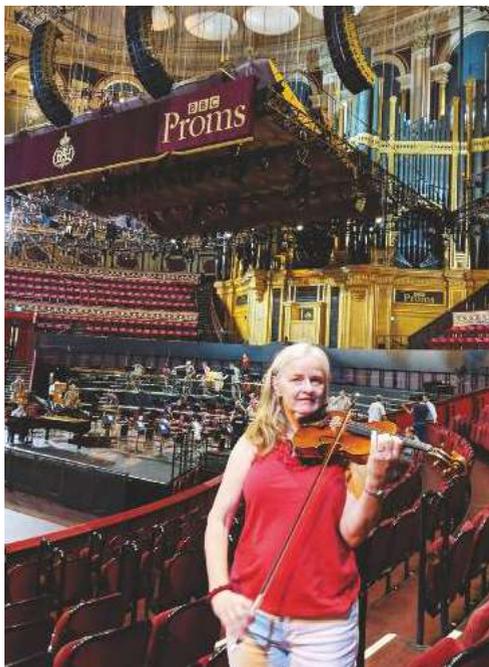
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RETIRING MUSICIAN SPOTLIGHT: JEAN MARKER DE VERE

The Minnesota Orchestra bids a fond farewell this month to its current longest-tenured violinist as Jean Marker De Vere retires after almost 48 years in the second violin section. Raised in a Detroit suburb, Jean joined the Orchestra in 1978, fresh from earning a bachelor of music degree and performer's certificate at Indiana University studying with Josef Gingold, and has played under six of the Orchestra's 11 music directors—from Skrowaczewski to Søndergård. She has chosen to cap her career with the January 8 and 9 concerts featuring, appropriately, a violin soloist: James Ehnes in Sibelius' Violin Concerto—music Jean has “always found beautiful.”

Jean's most treasured concert memories run the gamut from playing Beethoven's Fifth Symphony in 2018 for a “packed and inspired crowd” in Cape Town, South Africa, to a singular concert on March 13, 2020, performed to an empty Orchestra Hall auditorium right before the pandemic shutdown. “That concert, which included Shostakovich's Symphony No. 7, was one of the most moving and emotional performances of my career,” she recalls. Other memorable performances include Mahler symphonies with Klaus Tennstedt, Sibelius symphonies with Osmo Vänskä, Shostakovich's Violin Concerto with the “fiery and energetic” Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg at Carnegie Hall, chamber music



Second violinist Jean Marker De Vere at London's Royal Albert Hall during the Minnesota Orchestra's August 2018 visit to the BBC Proms.

with violinist Pekka Kuusisto and busy Sommerfest seasons under Leonard Slatkin's baton. She has also enjoyed Christmas shows with Pops Conductor Laureate Doc Severinsen—citing his “earnest flair on the podium”—and the Orchestra's ongoing partnership with singer-rapper-writer Dessa. “Dessa has been a favorite pop artist of mine for many years,” Jean notes. “She is exceptionally talented and draws the audience in like few others.”

Alongside the work of rehearsing and performing, Jean recalls many light-hearted anecdotes, including

[Continued on page 16](#)



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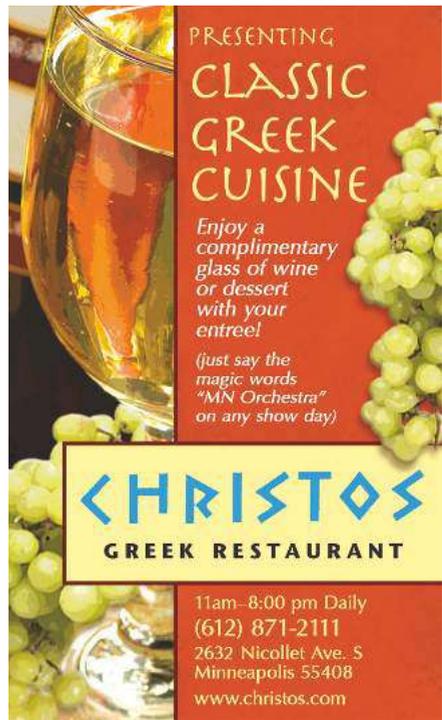
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Pops Conductor Laureate Doc Severinsen with Jean backstage in 2014.

one from the 1998 Japan tour. “During the tour we were all required to pack our bags and leave them outside our hotel room the night before departing, reserving a small bag of overnight items to carry with us the next day,” she remembers. “One night I accidentally packed my shoes in my luggage. Fortunately the Japanese hotels always provided slippers, so I wore slippers the whole next day, including on and off the bullet trains!” A more recent meeting of cultures took place in the first week of the Orchestra’s current season, when Jean shared a stand with the Orchestra’s newest second violinist, Iceland native Herdís Guðmundsdóttir, for whom at least one piece of repertoire was brand-new—Herdís’ first time playing *The Star-Spangled Banner*.

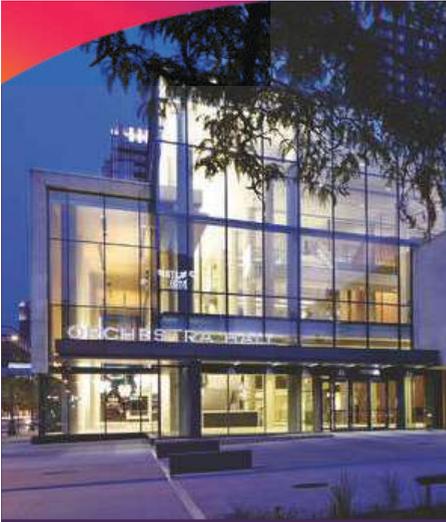


Jean at the Cape Town City Hall during the 2018 South Africa tour.

Looking ahead, Jean’s retirement calendar is starting to fill up. “My husband and I plan to take a Mediterranean cruise next summer,” she says. “I’m also considering taking classes on Suzuki teaching to improve my skills in teaching young violinists, and I want to study viola more diligently and learn to play the exquisite Bach solo suites.” She also plans to continue her four-mile walks and weather-permitting biking, explore aerobic classes, learn pickleball and travel in her 25-year-old motorhome—“in between repairs!”

In closing, Jean offers praise for both the Orchestra’s audiences and her violin colleagues. “Our audiences are consistently engaged with what we do, whether it be pops or classical,” she says. “I have been really fortunate through my years in Minnesota to work with violinists who show respect for one another and strive to collaborate as a group.”

Read an extended Q&A with Jean at minnesotaorchestra.org/stories.



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NORDIC SOUNDSCAPES RETURNS WITH MUSIC AND MORE!

Earlier this season the Minnesota Orchestra presented the rare film sequel that many say tops the original—*Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back*—and this month we'll aim to outdo the smash success of yet another popular original: the Nordic Soundscapes Festival, which was introduced at Orchestra Hall in January 2025 to the delight of audiences, local critics and national media outlets from *The Wall Street Journal* to *The New York Times*.

Audiences are invited to come early before Nordic Soundscapes concerts January 3 to 17 for performances and activities in the Roberta Mann Grand Foyer and N. Bud Grossman Mezzanine, in partnership with local and regional Nordic organizations.

The Bartók X Björk concert that kicked off the festival on **January 3** was preceded by Danish folk music performed by Niels Billund and Rolf Krogstad and a demonstration of Nordic paper cutting by Sonja Peterson, in partnership with the Danish American Center in Minneapolis.

Pre-concert activities continue on **January 8**, as Sarah Pradt performs traditional Norwegian music on Hardanger fiddle, while Becky Utecht and Sue Flanders demonstrate the Norwegian craft of Skinnfell. LEGO building and Danish Kringle from O&H Danish Bakery in Racine, Wisconsin, are presented in partnership with the

Museum of Danish America in Elk Horn, Iowa. On **January 9**, the Suomi Finland 100 women's choir performs Finnish music, while Finnish craft and culture is presented by the Finlandia Foundation and FinnFest. **January 10** brings Nordic music with the Blake Chamber Orchestra and Nordic woodworking with Jeanette Torkelson and Mia Ingram, in partnership with Norway House in Minneapolis.

The **January 16** concert is preceded by music from the MacPhail Northside Youth Orchestra and Icelandic textiles presented by the Icelandic Hekla Club of Minneapolis, while **January 17** brings the Swedish folk music of Renee Vaughan and Paul Sauey, Swedish folk woodwork from Maeve Gathje, and Liz Bucheit's demonstration of Viking posament knotting and Norwegian filigree jewelry, in partnership with the American Swedish Institute.

At all concerts during the Nordic Soundscapes Festival, visit our Nordic Soundscapes Marketplace in the Target Atrium where you'll enjoy food, beverages, wares and a festive lounge space from Crown Bakery & Eatery, Ingebretsen's, Vikre Distillery, Danish Teak Classics, Event Lab and more.

Visit minnesotaorchestra.org/nordic for full details!

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A FANTASTIQUE VISIT TO IOWA



Jeremy Mims

The Minnesota Orchestra, Music Director Thomas Søndergård and violin soloist Benjamin Beilman performing at the University of Iowa's Hancher Auditorium.

———— The Minnesota Orchestra has kept its live performances primarily to the home base of Orchestra Hall during the post-pandemic era—aside from a spring 2023 Common Chords residency week in Austin, Minnesota—making it all the more reason to celebrate a brief trek down to Iowa City in mid-November. Led by Music Director

Thomas Søndergård, a Saturday evening concert at the University of Iowa's Hancher Auditorium featured Hector Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique* (our two custom-cast Royal Eijsbouts church bells made the trip!) and Benjamin Beilman in Karol Szymanowski's First Violin Concerto. The next day, 12 Orchestra musicians, Søndergård and Leni and David Moore Vice President of Artistic Planning Erik Finley participated in Q&A sessions and masterclasses through the School of Music that deepened connections.

The residency revived a relationship with the University of Iowa that began in 1909 and ran continuously until the early 1980s. Dr. Tammie Walker, director of the university's School of Music, shared: "One of the most common reflections I've heard is just how extraordinary the concert was—and how remarkably generous, warm and genuine the entire Minnesota Orchestra team proved to be."



Jeremy Mims

Principal Oboe Nathan Hughes, left, working with a University of Iowa student during a masterclass.

2026

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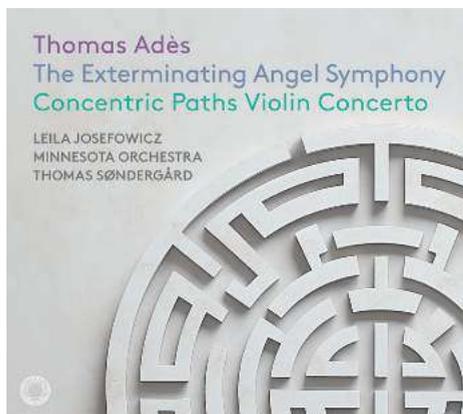


NEW THOMAS ADÈS ALBUM EARNING RAVES

— Critical praise is continuing to roll in for the Minnesota Orchestra’s first album with Music Director Thomas Søndergård, featuring two works by British composer Thomas Adès recorded live in concert in September 2024. Released in November 2025 on the PENTATONE label, the album includes the premiere recording of Adès’ *The Exterminating Angel* Symphony and, with soloist Leila Josefowicz, his Violin Concerto.

Adès is among the most successful composers of our time, having written three operas that have been staged across the globe. He won a Grammy for a recording of *The Tempest* and was the youngest recipient of the Grawemeyer Award. In 1997, the Minnesota Orchestra became the first professional American orchestra to perform his music.

The new album earned a coveted five-star rating from *The Times* (London), which stated that “The orchestral playing and the recorded sound are magnificent.... Søndergård and his Minnesotans revel in its textural niceties but the soloist Leila Josefowicz, supremely eloquent, reigns supreme, burning a bright path through the circling, descending and ascending patterns that dominate the score. File this release under ‘sonic spectaculars.’” Meanwhile *Opus Klassiek* praised the Orchestra’s “certainly impressive



The Orchestra’s new Thomas Adès CD.

[contribution]...Søndergård possesses a keen ear for balance and detail. The interplay with Josefowicz is exemplary: clear, dynamic, and well-balanced.”



Physical CDs are available for purchase at the Orchestra Hall merchandise cart during the Nordic Soundscapes Festival from January 3–17. Many listeners may also prefer to stream the album online through all major services including Apple Music, Amazon Music, iTunes, Spotify and YouTube. Scan the QR code with your mobile device or visit minnesotaorchestra.org/ades-album for a selection of links to stream or buy the music—and hear what the critics are raving about!

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NORDIC SOUNDSCAPES SØNDERGÅRD AND EHNES

Thomas Søndergård, conductor
James Ehnes, violin

THU JAN 8 11AM | FRI JAN 9 8PM

Esa-Pekka Salonen *Nyx* CA. 17'

Jean Sibelius Concerto in D minor for Violin and Orchestra,
Opus 47 (1905 revision) CA. 31'
Allegro moderato
Adagio di molto
Allegro, ma non tanto
James Ehnes, violin

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

Carl Nielsen Symphony No. 1 in G minor, Opus 7 CA. 27'
Allegro orgoglioso
Andante
Allegro comodo
Finale: Allegro con fuoco

Profiles of the conductor and soloist appear on pages 12 and 51.
Visit minnesotaorchestra.org/pre for details about pre-concert activities.

THANK YOU

The 2025-26 Classical season is presented by Ameriprise Financial.
Additional support for the Nordic Soundscapes Festival is provided by the
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Friday night Classical concerts air live on [YourClassical Minnesota Public Radio](#).

**ESA-PEKKA SALONEN****B:** June 30, 1958
Helsinki, Finland***Nyx*****PREMIERED:**
February 19, 2011

— One of the myriad joys of the Minnesota Orchestra’s Nordic Soundscape Festival—now in its sophomore year—is the opportunity to hear intriguing works by past and present Nordic composers whose music is seldom played at Orchestra Hall. This month’s such offerings include music by Esa-Pekka Salonen, Wilhelm Stenhammar and Hans Abrahamsen, played alongside stalwarts like Sibelius and Nielsen. To be sure, Salonen is hardly an unfamiliar name in the classical music world, as both a prominent composer and conductor, but his past affiliation with the Minnesota Orchestra includes only a set of concerts as guest conductor in 1985 and two performances of his *Helix* in July 2018.

PRESTIGE IN TWO FIELDS

In the realm of conducting, Salonen is perhaps most noted for his tenure as music director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic from 1992 to 2009, though he has also held leadership positions with the Philharmonia Orchestra, Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra and San Francisco Symphony. In September 2025 the Orchestre de Paris announced his appointment as principal conductor, effective fall 2027. He is still affiliated with the Los Angeles Philharmonic as conductor laureate and creative director designate.

Salonen, however, initially considered himself more a composer than a conductor. The Helsinki native’s creations span the genres of orchestral, chamber and choral music, including concertos for saxophone, piano, violin and cello. His recent compositions include *Gemini*, premiered in 2019 by the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and the Sinfonia concertante for Organ and Orchestra, first played by the Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra and soloist Iveta Apkalna in January 2023. Major recognition conferred on Salonen—as both conductor and composer—includes the 2012 Grawemeyer Award for his Violin Concerto, 18 Grammy nominations and two Grammy wins. He is up for the 2026 Grammy for Best Orchestral Performance for a recording of Stravinsky’s *Symphony in Three Movements* with the San Francisco Symphony; winners will be announced February 1.

MUSIC FROM MYTHOLOGY

Salonen's work heard this week is *Nyx*, a 17-minute symphonic poem named for the goddess from Greek mythology. It was commissioned jointly by an international coalition including the Atlanta Symphony, Barbican Centre, Carnegie Hall, Finnish Broadcasting Company and Radio France, and premiered on February 19, 2011, with the composer conducting the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France. The composer has provided the following comments on *Nyx*:

"*Nyx* is my return to the genre of pure orchestral music since *Helix* (2005). It employs a large orchestra, and has exposed concertante parts for solo clarinet and the horn section. Rather than utilizing the principle of continuous variation of material, as is the case mostly in my recent music, *Nyx* behaves rather differently. Its themes and ideas essentially keep their properties throughout the piece while the environment surrounding them keeps changing constantly. Mere whispers grow into a roar; an intimate line of the solo clarinet becomes a slowly breathing broad melody of tutti strings at the end of the 18-minute arch of *Nyx*.

"I set myself a particular challenge when starting the composition process, something I hadn't done earlier: to write complex counterpoint for almost one hundred musicians playing tutti at full throttle without losing clarity of the different layers and lines; something that Strauss and Mahler so perfectly mastered. Not an easy task, but a fascinating one. I leave it to the listener to judge how well I succeeded.

"*Nyx* is a shadowy figure in Greek mythology. At the very beginning of everything there's a big mass of dark stuff called Chaos, out of which comes Gaia or Ge, the Earth, who gives birth (spontaneously!) to Uranus, the starry heaven, and Pontus, the sea. *Nyx* (also sometimes known as *Nox*) is supposed to have been another child of Gaia, along with *Erebus*. The union of *Nyx* and *Erebus* produces Day. Another version says that *Cronos* (as Time) was there from the beginning. Chaos came from Time. *Nyx* was present as a sort of membrane surrounding Chaos, which had *Phanes* (Light) at its center. The union of *Nyx* with *Phanes* produced heaven and earth. She is an extremely nebulous figure altogether; we have no sense of her character or personality. It is this very quality that has long fascinated me and made me decide to name my new orchestral piece after her.

"I'm not trying to describe this mythical goddess in any precise way musically. However, the almost constant flickering and rapid changing of textures and moods as well as a certain elusive character of many musical gestures may well be related to the subject. I have always enjoyed the

unrivalled dynamic range of a large symphony orchestra, but *Nyx* seems to take a somewhat new direction from my earlier orchestral music: there are many very delicate and light textures, chiaroscuro instead of details bathing in clear direct sunlight. I guess this is symptomatic of growing older as we realize there are no simple truths, no pure blacks and whites but an endless variety of half shades.”

Instrumentation: 3 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), piccolo, 3 oboes, English horn, 3 clarinets (1 doubling E-flat clarinet), bass clarinet, 3 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, 2 high bongos, sizzle cymbal, low tuned gongs, tam-tam, tom-toms, wood block, glockenspiel, vibraphone, chimes, piano (doubling celesta), harp and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY CARL SCHROEDER, WITH MUSICAL DESCRIPTION BY ESA-PEKKA SALONEN.



JEAN SIBELIUS

B: December 8, 1865
Hämeenlinna, Finland

D: September 20, 1957
Järvenpää, Finland

Concerto in D minor for Violin and Orchestra, Opus 47 (1905 revision)

PREMIERED: February 8, 1904
(original version); October
19, 1905 (revised version)

— In 1902, the German violinist Willy Burmester asked Jean Sibelius to write him a concerto. When Sibelius sent him the piano reduction of the first two movements in September 1903, Burmester was enthusiastic and suggested the premiere be given in Berlin in March 1904. But Sibelius had other ideas. Due to strained financial circumstances, he wanted the concerto performed as soon as possible and secretly asked another violinist to give the premiere in Helsinki at an earlier date. What Sibelius got in the end was a far inferior soloist (a local teacher named Victor Nováček, who never did learn the concerto properly), a cool reception at the premiere, mostly negative reviews in the press and the justifiable resentment of Burmester.

Following the premiere, the concerto was put aside for over a year until Sibelius got around to revising it. He toned down some of the overtly virtuosic episodes, tightened the structure of the outer movements and altered the orchestration of numerous passages. The revisions amount to far more than mere window dressing, and the results are fascinating to compare with the original. Performances of the concerto’s original version

are rare due to stipulations from the Sibelius estate, but the Minnesota Orchestra and its tenth music director, Osmo Vänskä, have had a hand in its limited revival, with Vänskä conducting a performance in 1990 with the Lahti Symphony and the first-ever commercial recording with that same orchestra in 1991, as well as the U.S. premiere with the Minnesota Orchestra in January 2022.

On October 19, 1905, the concerto received its premiere in its final form in Berlin, with Karl Halir as soloist and none other than Richard Strauss on the podium. Shortly afterwards, Sibelius' friend Rosa Newmarch told him that "in fifty years' time, your concerto will be as much a classic as those of Beethoven, Brahms and Tchaikovsky." How right she was!

A PREFERENCE FOR VIOLIN

Sibelius' affinity for the violin stemmed from his youth, when he aspired to become a great violinist. "My tragedy," he wrote, "was that I wanted to be a celebrated violinist at any price. From the age of fifteen, I played my violin for ten years, practicing from morning to night. I hated pen and ink....My preference for the violin lasted quite long, and it was a very painful awakening when I had to admit that I had begun my training for the exacting career of an eminent performer too late." His very first composition (*Vattendroppar*), written at the age of 8 or 9, was a piece for violin and cello. Although he left just one violin concerto, he also composed numerous short pieces for the instrument, mostly with piano.

The solo violin part is one of the most difficult in the entire repertory. Virtuoso passages abound, but they are welded to disciplined musical thought; there is no empty display material here. The orchestral writing bears much evidence of Sibelius' deep interest in this medium, and serves a far greater purpose than a mere backdrop for the soloist. Dark, somber colors predominate, as is this composer's tendency, lending an air of passionate urgency to the music. Note particularly the third theme in B-flat minor in the first movement, played by the unison violins, or the second theme of the finale, again played by the violins, with its interplay of 6/8 and 3/4 meters.

THE CONCERTO IN BRIEF

ALLEGRO MODERATO. In the first movement, attention to the formalities of sonata form is largely avoided in favor of originality of thought. There is no development section as such; instead, each of the three main themes is fully elaborated and developed upon initial presentation. A cadenza occurs at the point where a full development would normally stand, followed by

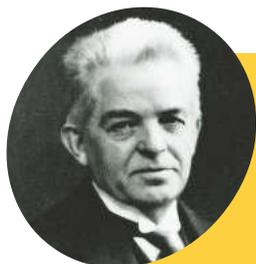
a recapitulation of the three themes, each of which is subjected to further expansion.

ADAGIO DI MOLTO. In the *Adagio* movement, Sibelius contrasts the long, dreamy and reflective opening theme with a turbulent and darkly passionate section in the minor mode.

ALLEGRO, MA NON TANTO. The finale, in rondo form, calls to the fore the full technical prowess of the soloist. Energetic rhythms suggestive of the polonaise and Romani dances offer further elements of excitement to this exuberant movement.

Instrumentation: solo violin with orchestra comprising 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY ROBERT MARKOW.



CARL NIELSEN

B: June 9, 1865
Sortelung, Denmark

D: October 3, 1931
Copenhagen, Denmark

Symphony No. 1 in
G minor, Opus 7

PREMIERED:
March 14, 1894

Throughout the 20th century, Carl Nielsen's music appeared relatively infrequently on the Minnesota Orchestra's concert programs, with the first hearing coming not until 1965, more than three decades after the composer's passing and a century since his birth. Thanks to the advocacy of the Minnesota Orchestra's two most recent music directors, Osmo Vänskä and Thomas Søndergård, the Orchestra has rectified this imbalance. Søndergård in particular is regarded as a passionate supporter of the music of his countryman Nielsen's; in 2019 he participated in a special concert to celebrate Nielsen's work with the Royal Danish Academy of Music Copenhagen, and in 2023 he received a prestigious honorary award from the Carl Nielsen and Anne Marie Carl-Nielsen Foundation.

HUMBLE BEGINNINGS AND A ROYAL PREMIERE

Nielsen came from a humble household in the countryside near Odense, Denmark (the home, too, of Hans Christian Andersen). After his 1886 graduation from the conservatory in Copenhagen, where he engaged in

violin and other instrumental studies, Nielsen concentrated his composing urges on small—but demanding—chamber music forms, increasingly looking toward writing a symphony. A study trip in 1890 and 1891 provided him with opportunities to hear concerts and to meet artists throughout Europe, and he returned home to Copenhagen not only with new ideas for his compositions, but also with a new bride—Anne Marie Brodersen, a talented Danish sculptor who he met, wooed and married in the first months of 1891.

By 1892 Nielsen had completed his Symphony No. 1, and two years later the score was published, bearing a dedication to his wife. The symphony received its premiere on March 14, 1894, conducted by Johan Svendsen at Copenhagen’s Theatre Royal. Nielsen himself performed in the orchestra, from his chair among the second violins. The audience received the symphony with excited applause, calling Nielsen for several bows.

THE SYMPHONY: BOLD, MOVING AND ADVENTUROUS

In diaries that Nielsen kept during the composition of his First Symphony, he revealed his admiration for Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony—admiration that drove him to begin copying out Beethoven’s full orchestra score from memory. He never did complete his self-appointed task, but he no doubt learned much from the undertaking.

ALLEGRO ORGOGLIOSO. The rhythmic insistence and drama of the opening bars of Nielsen’s First recall his admiration of Beethoven’s Fifth, and his pacing throughout the first movement is bold and spare. The heading of that first movement, *Allegro orgoglioso*—Italian for “a spirited tempo, played proudly”—describes Nielsen’s intentions with the music.

ANDANTE. The urgent tempos continue in the *Andante* movement, which unfolds as a profoundly moving sonic portrait.

ALLEGRO COMODO. This movement, not a standard scherzo, reveals its adventurous nature in the unusual (for a third movement), complex time signature of 6/4.

FINALE: ALLEGRO CON FUOCO. The final movement, although bearing a G-minor key signature, harks back to the first movement by beginning and ending in a bold C major.

Instrumentation: 3 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones and strings

EXCERPTED FROM A PROGRAM NOTE BY SANDRA HYSLOP.



Angel Bat Dawid and Sojourner Zenobia, Zankel Hall at Carnegie Hall. Photo by Jennifer Taylor.

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

Laura Valborg Aulin String Quartet in F major, Opus 17 CA. 25'
 Allegro con grazia
 Intermezzo: Allegro con spirito e capriccioso
 Andante espressivo
 Finale: Allegro vivace
*Sarah Grimes and Ben Odhner, violin
 Sifei Cheng, viola | Pitnarry Shin, cello*

Otto Mortensen Quintette for Winds CA. 20'
 Allegro ma non troppo
 Allegretto grazioso
 Lento - Allegro vivace
*Greg Milliren, flute
 Julie Gramolini Williams, oboe and English horn
 Gregory T. Williams, clarinet
 J. Christopher Marshall, bassoon
 Bruce Hudson, horn*

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

Jean Sibelius String Quartet in D minor, *Voces intimae* CA. 31'
 Andante – Allegro molto moderato
 Vivace
 Adagio di molto
 Allegretto (ma pesante)
 Allegro
*James Ehnes and Susie Park, violin
 Rebecca Albers, viola | Silver Ainomäe, cello*

A profile of James Ehnes appears on page 51.

Visit minnesotaorchestra.org/musicians for profiles of Minnesota Orchestra musicians performing in this evening's concert.

* In remembrance

THANK YOU

Additional support for the Nordic Soundscapes Festival is provided by the Barbro Osher Pro Suecia Foundation.

NORDIC SOUNDSCAPES SØNDERGÅRD CONDUCTS SIBELIUS

Thomas Søndergård, conductor

Lauren Snouffer, soprano

FRI JAN 16 8PM | SAT JAN 17 7PM *

Wilhelm Stenhammar *Excelsior!*, Opus 13 CA. 14'

Hans Abrahamsen *let me tell you* (text by Paul Griffiths) CA. 30'

Part I

Let me tell you how it was

O but memory is not one but many

There was a time, I remember

Part II

Let me tell you how it is

Now I do not mind

Part III

I know you are there

I will go out now

Lauren Snouffer, soprano

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

Jean Sibelius *Symphony No. 1 in E minor*, Opus 39 CA. 36'

Andante, ma non troppo - Allegro energico

Andante, ma non troppo lento

Scherzo: Allegro - Lento, ma non troppo

Finale (quasi una fantasia): Andante -

Allegro molto

The English text of *let me tell you* will be projected as surtitles.

Profiles of the conductor and soloist appear on pages 12 and 53.

Visit minnesotaorchestra.org/pre for details about pre-concert activities.

* Mingle with musicians onstage following the January 17 concert.

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**WILHELM STENHAMMAR** *Excelsior!*, Opus 13**B:** February 7, 1871
Stockholm, Sweden**PREMIERED:**
December 28, 1896**D:** November 20, 1927
Jonsered, Sweden

— Wilhelm Stenhammar, a leading figure in Swedish classical musical life during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, left a rich legacy of innovative and expressive compositions, coupled with a 15-year tenure as conductor of the Gothenburg Symphony and a busy life as a touring pianist and mentor. Born into a religiously strict but musical household, he began piano studies as a young boy and by his teens was composing short piano sonatas and songs. In 1888 he quit his formal school training and dedicated himself to intensive study of piano, composition and organ, and in 1892 he graduated with a degree in organ from the Royal Conservatory in Stockholm. That same year he made a trio of important debuts in Stockholm: as piano soloist, chamber musician and composer.

From 1892 to 1893, Stenhammar relocated to Berlin to study piano, where his boyhood fascination with Richard Wagner was magnified thanks to multiple weekly trips to the opera house. By 1894, he returned to Stockholm and that same year premiered his Piano Concerto No. 1 to great acclaim. By the end of the 1890s, he began conducting operas at the Stockholm Opera, and in 1906 was named conductor of the Gothenburg Symphony, which he transformed into one of Scandinavia's best orchestras. After his time in Gothenburg, he returned to recital tours and briefly held a conducting post at a theater in Stockholm before dying from a stroke in 1927.

POETRY IN MOTION

Excelsior! is a concert overture written for, dedicated to and premiered by the Berlin Philharmonic in 1896. While the work is not inherently programmatic, its title and inclusion of a brief quote from Goethe's *Faust* in the score hint at a general extra-musical idea: reaching higher, perhaps even for something unattainable. In Latin, "excelsior" means "higher," and the excerpted Goethe mentions a feeling of upward striving brought upon by visions of eagles and cranes soaring in the blue sky.

So, too, does the musical material in *Excelsior!* seem to take flight, containing a wealth of themes passed around the orchestra that all continually reach upward and fall back down. From the explosive opening

to the work's calmer middle section, followed by a dramatic restatement and expansion of the first theme, Stenhammar uses these ascending ideas to unite *Excelsior!* thematically throughout various shifts in mood and color—all while using performance markings like “with passionate motion” and “violently urging upwards” at various moments in the score.

Instrumentation: 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 3 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY MICHAEL DIVINO.



HANS ABRAHAMSEN

B: December 23, 1952
Kongens Lyngby,
Denmark

let me tell you

PREMIERED:
December 20, 2013

Artistic spinoffs of Shakespeare's plays seem to come in waves, and one currently cresting in pop culture is *Hamlet*. Chloé Zhao's acclaimed new film *Hamnet* explores the play's origin and initial premiere, while the playlists of Taylor Swift fans likely include *The Fate of Ophelia*, last year's chart-topping riff on the tragic *Hamlet* character who drowns after succumbing to madness and grief when Prince Hamlet kills her father and rejects her romantically.

Ophelia is also the focus of Danish composer Hans Abrahamsen's 2013 orchestral song cycle *let me tell you*, which flips *Hamlet's* script to Ophelia's vantage point—using a vocabulary limited to only the different words (between 480 and 483, depending on the counting method) that she speaks in Shakespeare's play. The three-part, seven-movement libretto is adapted from the 2008 novel of the same title by British writer Paul Griffiths that shares identical text constraints. Soprano Barbara Hannigan and the Berlin Philharmonic, led by Andris Nelsons, delivered the premiere on December 20, 2013. In 2016 *let me tell you* won Abrahamsen the coveted Grawemeyer Award, while a 2019 poll of critics by the U.K.'s *The Guardian* listed it as the 21st century's greatest classical composition.

Through the course of 30 captivating minutes, we hear Ophelia's musings on music, memory, time, light and nature, as the text's focus progresses from past to present to future. In the third and final part, snow imagery

is abundant while the close suggests, but doesn't outright state, Ophelia's death.

A NOTE FROM THE LIBRETTIST

A program note by Griffiths—also a noted music critic and librettist for operas by Tan Dun and Elliott Carter—is included with a 2016 recording of *let me tell you* by Barbara Hannigan and the Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks; following are excerpts.

“The music...is at once familiar and strange, for the language of traditional tonality is present but fractured into new configurations. Any sense of a recognizable key comes only fleetingly, and melody casts back to an ancient time of folk song....Generally the pulse is clear—it is picked out at the start in oscillating octaves from the celesta—but the position of the strong beat is ambiguous. Time here simultaneously ticks and floats. Such music, beginning right away, not only presents the protagonist's world but also foreshadows the crucial melodic element associated with her first words [‘Let me tell you how it was’].

“The protagonist is not quite the Ophelia of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. She has the same words...but she uses these words to express herself differently. Her utterance is at once constrained and resolute, fragile and decisive...she can be at once hesitant and assertive. She tells us of things to which there is little or no reference in the play, such as the nature of memory, or ‘a time... when we had no music.’ The opening of the second part replays and alters the opening of the first; the last part has an even shorter introduction, again going back to the beginning and taking it further, before arriving at the slow finale. Now microtonal tunings fold into the texture and, being derived from natural harmonics, begin to reroot the music in a glistening new world of resonance. We are in the snow, in a white landscape where the erasure of detail and contour is the renewal of possibility.”



To view an extended version of this program note as well as the text sung by the soprano, scan the QR code or visit minnesotaorchestra.org/letmetellyou.

Instrumentation: solo soprano with orchestra comprising 3 flutes (all doubling piccolo, with 1 also doubling alto flute), 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet (doubling E-flat clarinet), 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani, bass drum, Japanese wood blocks, paper, 2 Reibestöcke, tam-tam, whip, xylophone, marimba, glockenspiel, vibraphone, chimes, harp, celesta and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY CARL SCHROEDER, WITH MUSICAL DESCRIPTION BY PAUL GRIFFITHS.



JEAN SIBELIUS

B: December 8, 1865
Hämeenlinna, Finland

D: September 20, 1957
Järvenpää, Finland

Symphony No. 1 in E minor, Opus 39

PREMIERED:
April 26, 1899

Few first symphonies can claim the boldness, masterly symphonic thought and originality as that of Jean Sibelius. Only Brahms, Mahler and perhaps Schumann can stand next to him in this regard. Sibelius' first essay in the genre was also his first major abstract composition, begun in April 1898 and completed early in 1899. The composer himself conducted the successful premiere in Helsinki on April 26, 1899. The symphony, the famous *Finlandia*, and two of the *Legends* met with such enthusiastic receptions that the Finnish government granted the composer a lifetime pension so that he could devote himself entirely to composition. Sibelius was not yet 36 years old.

The dark, craggy power of this work, its evocation of the magic spell of the North, the romantic melodies and its spirit of bardic sagas have stirred many writers to poetic commentary. Here is musicologist Robert Bagar's description: "The work abounds in contrasts. Herein is represented the unfettered, mercurial thinking of a young symphonist...The young composer pours great melodies into his work, melodies that sing with an exultant joy, melodies that rise and fall with tremendous intensity, and also melodies that are nostalgic and mellow and suffused with a tender pathos. There are grace and lightness in the music as it comes rushing to the creator's pen. There are also wild, barbaric shouts, outbursts of tremendous passion, raging unbridled utterances that hurl themselves forward like the roar of giant winds."

THE MUSIC: BEGINNING WITH CLARINET

ANDANTE, MA NON TROPPO–ALLEGRO ENERGICO. The symphony opens with a long, haunting melody for the solo clarinet, accompanied only by the distant rumble of timpani as a pedal point (a device Sibelius uses often). To the leading Sibelius scholar, Erik Tawaststjerna, this melody "rises in a broad arch and dips like a wounded bird in flight, before fading and disappearing in a primeval mist." The sense of aching loneliness and bleakness imparted by this introduction is characteristically Sibelian, and

is found frequently in his music. Also characteristic is the length of this theme, which seems almost to grow organically out of itself.

When the *Allegro* main section begins, we find still another Sibelian touch—a theme beginning in the violins with a long, sustained note, and gathering momentum toward the end in quicker notes. The theme is of ambiguous tonality, sharing qualities of E minor and its relative major, G. The theme's coiled tension is fully released when the entire orchestra presents this idea in splendid glory. Three more themes appear in this richly melodic exposition.

ANDANTE, MA NON TROPPO LENTO. The slow movement is built largely from the initial theme—a slowly rocking, melancholic line played first by violins and cellos with mutes, which give an added tinge of greyness.

SCHERZO: ALLEGRO–LENTO, MA NON TROPPO. The *Scherzo* looks back to Bruckner in its insistent pounding character, and even further back to Beethoven's Ninth in the use of frequent melodic outbursts from the timpani. The central trio section stands in marked contrast in its idyllic mood, tonality (E major as opposed to the C-minor *Scherzo*), tempo (*lento*) and thinned-out texture.

FINALE (QUASI UNA FANTASIA): ANDANTE–ALLEGRO MOLTO. For the *Finale*, we return to the symphony's opening gesture: that long, solo clarinet line—but played now by the entire string section (minus the basses) in a grand, heroic manner punctuated by solemn brass chords. Two strongly contrasted ideas are presented and developed: a springy, dancelike motif with syncopated rhythms, and a deeply expressive, soulful theme played first by the combined violin sections on the G string (the lowest string) for extra warmth and sonority. The symphony builds to a monumental climax, but ends abruptly—with a strange, sudden tapering off and two pizzicato chords in the strings, just as did the first movement.

Instrumentation: 2 flutes (both doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, triangle, harp and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY ROBERT MARKOW.

Upcoming Concerts

M N
— O

Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninoff

FEB 13–14

Juraj Valčuha, conductor

HERRMANN *Prelude, Nightmare
and Love Scene from Vertigo*

TCHAIKOVSKY *Romeo and Juliet,
Fantasy-Overture*

RACHMANINOFF *Symphony No. 3*

Vänskä, Keefe and Stravinsky

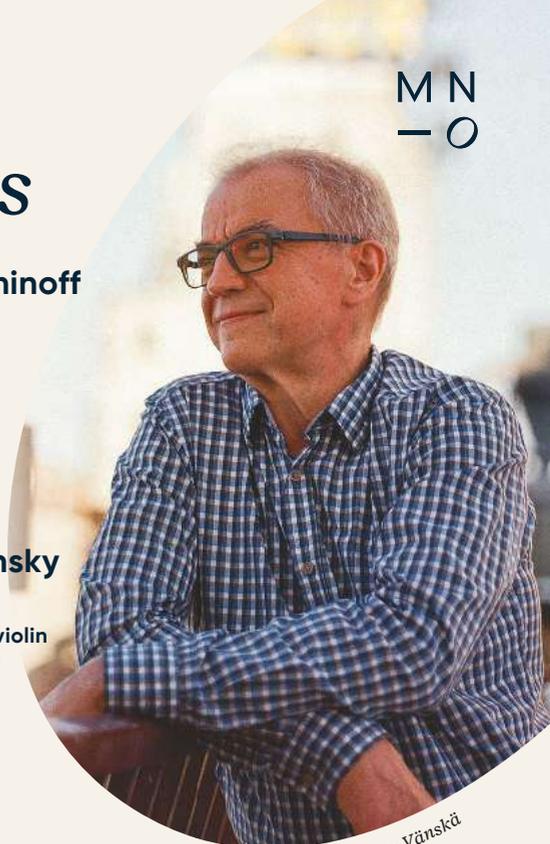
FEB 19–20

Osmo Vänskä, conductor | Erin Keefe, violin

MAZZOLI *Sinfonia (for Orbiting Spheres)*

PROKOFIEV *Violin Concerto No. 2*

STRAVINSKY *Petrushka*



Osmo Vänskä

Lunar New Year with the Minnesota Orchestra

THU FEB 26 7PM

Chia-Hsuan Lin, conductor

Yazhi Guo, suona | Rui Du, violin

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the beginning of the Year of the Horse.



Lunar New Year

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Fabien Gabel, conductor
Rebecca Albers, viola
Brian Newhouse, broadcast host

FRI JAN 30 8PM | SAT JAN 31 7PM

Paul Dukas	<i>The Sorcerer's Apprentice</i>	CA. 10'
Donghoon Shin	<i>Threadsuns</i> , Concerto for Viola and Orchestra * [in two untitled movements] <i>Rebecca Albers, viola</i>	CA. 23'
I N T E R M I S S I O N		
Claude Debussy	<i>Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun</i>	CA. 10'
Paul Dukas	Prelude to Act III from <i>Ariadne and Bluebeard</i>	CA. 8'
Albert Roussel	Suite No. 2 from <i>Bacchus and Ariadne</i> , Opus 43 Ariadne's Awakening Ariadne and Bacchus Bacchus' Dance The Kiss Bacchus' Cortege Ariadne's Dance Ariadne and Bacchus Bacchanale and the Coronation of Ariadne	CA. 18'

* U.S. premiere; co-commissioned by the Minnesota Orchestra.
 Profiles of the conductor, soloist and broadcast host appear on pages 51 and 52.
 Visit minnesotaorchestra.org/pre for details about pre-concert activities.

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 and streaming live on the Orchestra's YouTube channel and Facebook page.

**PAUL DUKAS**

B: October 1, 1865
Paris, France

D: May 17, 1935
Paris, France

*The Sorcerer's
Apprentice*

PREMIERED:
May 18, 1897

Paul Dukas composed *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* in 1897, precisely 100 years after Johann Wolfgang von Goethe wrote the ballad on which it was based. The work was premiered on May 18, 1897, at a Société Nationale concert in Paris, with the composer conducting.

The story—inscribed in popular culture, of course, by Disney's *Fantasia*—is that of a sorcerer-in-training who, in his master's absence, thinks to save himself trouble by commanding a broom to assume something like human form. The enchanted broom sprouts two legs and a head, and begins fetching the bathwater from the river, but the apprentice has forgotten the command to stop, and no amount of verbal abuse does the trick. Meanwhile the house is flooded. He thinks of a solution—to take a cleaver and destroy the relentlessly industrious broom. This gives him two water-carrying brooms instead of one. Panicked, he calls the sorcerer: “Master, the peril is great/I cannot be rid/Of the spirits I called.” The sorcerer restores order and lays down the law: only he, and for his purposes alone, will summon these spirits.

“THE CALM BEFORE THE BRAINSTORM”

The brilliant music of *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* begins with a slow introduction that provides a frame for the story and depicts the calm before the brainstorm. Debussy remembered this beautiful page when he came to write his ballet *Jeux*, and it is also part of the storehouse on which Stravinsky drew for *The Firebird*. But even in this calm, something is germinating. For the moment it is a quiet phrase, first played by the clarinet, its outline reinforced by bright harmonics on the harp. Then the music bursts into crazily energized life, and after a thud on the timpani and a long silence the story begins. The broom gets to its newly found feet and begins its work to the clarinet tune, now given to the bassoon and, by being made staccato, quite transformed in character. It is one of those themes that are so simple one can hardly conceive of their needing to be invented.

In an ingenious, brilliantly scored series of continuing variations, the piece builds to its first crisis, the hacking to bits of the broom. What follows—the

coming to life of the fragments, the flood, the panicked call to the sorcerer, the sorcerer's command—is all vividly set before us. The quiet opening music returns to complete the frame. This time Dukas adds a regretful phrase for a single viola, alone unmuted among all the strings. And the last two bars remind us that this is, after all, a scherzo.

Instrumentation: 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 3 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 2 cornets, 3 trombones, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, suspended cymbal, triangle, glockenspiel, harp and strings

EXCERPTED FROM A PROGRAM NOTE BY MICHAEL STEINBERG.



DONGHOON SHIN

B: November 3, 1983
Seoul, South Korea

Threadsuns, Concerto
for Viola and Orchestra

PREMIERED: January 9, 2025

— Within orchestral repertoire, the viola concerto is a genre cloaked in mystery. Though many exist, they don't share the same spotlight as concertos for violin, piano and cello. While the violin demands attention, the viola historically has been used in a more supportive role, given its lower-middle register and warm tone. The first known viola concerto is said to be that of Georg Philipp Telemann, composed between 1716 and 1721. As time progressed and violists gained more virtuosity, a growing number of soloistic works entered the repertoire, with 20th-century concertos by Béla Bartók, William Walton and Paul Hindemith being amongst the most treasured. Contemporary composers (myself included) are creating more concertos for this wonderful instrument, more often than not through close collaboration with performers.

South Korean composer Donghoon Shin's new concerto for viola and orchestra, *Threadsuns*, is receiving its U.S. premiere with this week's performances. Composed in 2024, it was commissioned by a consortium of four orchestras: the Berlin Philharmonic, Gyeonggi Philharmonic Orchestra, Tonkünstler-Orchester Niederösterreich and Minnesota Orchestra. The world premiere was given by the Berlin Philharmonic, with Amihai Grosz as the viola soloist, performing under the baton of Tugan Sokhiev on January 9, 2025.

INSPIRATION FROM POETRY

“Suns – thin as thread – around the greyish-black wasteland. A thought – as high as a tree – picks up tones of the light: on the other side of human existence remain songs to be sung.” In this short, complex poem by the celebrated Ukrainian Jewish poet Paul Antschel (1920-1970)—better known as Paul Celan—multiple meanings are implied. One interpretation likens a metaphorical idea to a metaphorical voice. In the same way an idea can be as fluid and all-encompassing as light, a voice can be as omnipresent and as timeless as song. Referencing music, nature, hope and death, Celan’s *Fadensonnen* (Threadsunns) is the inspiration for Donghoon Shin’s atmospheric *Threadsunns*, which was also composed in memory of the late Hungarian composer and conductor Peter Eötvös (1944-2024).

Born in South Korea in 1983, Shin grew up listening to jazz and Led Zeppelin and singing music he composed for a band he formed with friends. In a 2021 interview for the City of London Sinfonia podcast, Shin confessed that György Ligeti’s Piano Concerto inspired him to compose music in Ligeti’s distinct style, and it was at that point he surrendered his ambitions of becoming a novelist to a calling to become a composer. Yet his love for literature remains strong. His cello concerto *Nachtergebung* (Surrendering to the Night) is inspired by a poem by Georg Trakl, and his orchestral opus *Kafka’s Dream* is inspired by Jorge Luis Borges’ essay about Kafka. Shin continues to turn to literature as a foundation for composing. Musically, his colorful sound-world has hints of Ligeti, Unsuk Chin (one of his beloved teachers), Gustav Mahler and Alban Berg. Contemporary romanticism and expressionism dominate Shin’s musical machinations, combined with a craft that gives a new timeless and omnipresent voice to the orchestral repertoire.

THE MUSIC: VIRTUOSIC, SHIMMERING AND ORGANIC

Threadsunns is in two movements, both of which operate in tandem to build a classical sonata form; the first movement serves as an exposition (where the main themes and the harmonic world are introduced), while the second movement serves as a development and recapitulation (where the themes are manipulated and evolve, and where the piece restates the opening material, but diverges at some point to conclude the entire work). Virtuoso solo viola passages are in dialogue with contrapuntal statements by the piccolo, contrabassoon, celesta, flutes and more. The entire work is fragrant with shimmering tremolo gestures, quickly ascending and descending statements, and a rhythmic ebb and flow as organic as light and the unfolding of life. While the poem takes less than 20 seconds to recite in

both its original German as well as any of its translations, this 23-minute fantasy can be explored and treasured forever.

Instrumentation: solo viola with orchestra comprising 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes (1 doubling English horn), 2 clarinets (1 doubling E-flat clarinet), bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, 3 suspended cymbals, crotales, large gong, tam-tam, triangle, xylophone, glockenspiel, vibraphone, chimes, piano (doubling celesta) and strings

PROGRAM NOTE AND POEM TRANSLATION BY ANTHONY R. GREEN.



CLAUDE DEBUSSY

B: August 22, 1862
Saint-Germain-en-Laye,
France

D: March 25, 1918
Paris, France

Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun

PREMIERED:
December 22, 1894

— This shimmering, endlessly beautiful music is so familiar to many of us—particularly the famous opening flute solo played in its lowest register—that it is difficult to comprehend how problematic it was for audiences in the years after its premiere in December 1894. Camille Saint-Saëns was outraged: “[It] is pretty sound, but it contains not the slightest musical idea in the real sense of the word. It’s as much a piece of music as the palette a painter has worked from is a painting.”

QUIETLY REVOLUTIONARY MUSIC

We may smile today, but Saint-Saëns had a point. Though it lacks the aggression of Stravinsky’s *Rite of Spring*, the *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun* may be an even more revolutionary piece of music, for it does away with musical form altogether. This is not music to be grasped intellectually, but simply to be heard and felt.

Debussy based this work on the poem “L’après-midi d’un faune” by his close friend, the Symbolist poet Stéphane Mallarmé. The poem itself is dreamlike, a series of impressions and sensations rather than a narrative. It tells of the languorous memories of a faun on a sleepy afternoon as he recalls an amorous encounter the previous day with two passing forest nymphs. This encounter may or may not have taken place, and the faun’s

memories—subject to drowsiness, warm sunlight, forgetfulness and drink—grow vague and finally blur into sleep.

A SOFT AND SENSUAL WORLD

Like the faun's dream, Debussy's music lacks specific direction. The famous opening flute solo (the faun's pipe?) draws us into this soft, sensual world. The middle section, introduced by woodwinds, may be a subtle variation of the opening flute melody—it is a measure of this dreamy music that we cannot be sure. The opening theme returns to lead the music to its glowing close.

Audiences have come to love this music precisely for its sunlit mists and glowing sound, but it is easy to understand why it troubled early listeners. Beneath its shimmering and gentle beauties lies an entirely new conception of what Western classical music might be.

Instrumentation: 3 flutes, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, antique cymbals, 2 harps and strings

EXCERPTED FROM A PROGRAM NOTE BY ERIC BROMBERGER.

PAUL DUKAS

Prelude to Act III from *Ariadne and Bluebeard*

PREMIERED: May 10, 1907

— Paul Dukas is most famous as the composer of *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*—the tuneful symphonic poem cemented in both pop culture and the classical repertoire for its use in the signature segment of Disney's animated *Fantasia*—but he was also a noted music critic. Sadly for posterity, he may have been his own harshest critic, withdrawing or destroying many of his compositions before his death in 1935, a half-decade prior to *Fantasia*'s release. Dukas' other surviving works are heard much less frequently—for instance, only about 20 percent of the Minnesota Orchestra's 300-some documented performances of his music have been of works besides *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*—and this week's concerts bring the Orchestra's first rendition of music from Dukas' 1907 opera *Ariadne and Bluebeard* (*Ariane et Barbe-bleue* in the original French).

UNTANGLING THE REFERENCES

Despite the title's similarity to another Frenchman's work on this week's Orchestra program—a suite from Albert Roussel's ballet *Bacchus*

and *Ariadne*—the works do not tell the same story, and they reference different characters named Ariadne. The Ariadne of Roussel’s work is from Greek mythology, while Dukas’ Ariadne—although named after the mythological character—is an otherwise unrelated protagonist from the 1899 symbolist play *Ariane et Barbe-bleue* by Maurice Maeterlinck. The predatory Bluebeard, however, is one and the same as the male lead from Béla Bartók’s opera *Bluebeard’s Castle*, which the Minnesota Orchestra will perform this May.

To summarize, the opera’s plot tells the tale of Ariadne—newly the sixth wife of the nobleman Bluebeard, who is believed to have murdered his first five wives. Ariadne defies Bluebeard’s command not to open a forbidden door and discovers his previous wives alive underground. (Here the plot diverges from some tellings of the Bluebeard tale, in which the wives have indeed been murdered.) Ariadne frees them and confronts Bluebeard, who survives a peasant revolt. After the wives tend to a wounded Bluebeard, Ariadne chooses freedom, but the other wives remain behind and Ariadne departs alone.

FROM SHADOWS TO LIBERATION

The music heard in this week’s concerts is the prelude to the third and final act of the opera, which opens with Bluebeard’s prior wives emerging with Ariadne from the underground cellar into the hall of Bluebeard’s castle. The music paints this transition with remarkable orchestral imagination and chromaticism—moving from shadows and confinement to radiance and dawning liberation. Beginning with a loud jolt from the full orchestra and ending *pianissimo*, the music journeys in tempo from slow to moderate and back. Short, wistful solo passages are given most notably to flute, clarinet and English horn, while strings have a recurring motif of leaping and falling fifths upon fifths. Listeners may not come away humming tunes as they might after *The Sorcerer’s Apprentice*, but the opera’s intriguing music bears listening after the Minnesota Orchestra’s 118-year wait to bring it to life.

Instrumentation: 3 flutes, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 3 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, triangle, harp and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY CARL SCHROEDER.

**ALBERT ROUSSEL**

B: April 5, 1869
Tourcoing, France

D: August 23, 1937
Royan, France

**Suite No. 2 from
Bacchus and Ariadne,
Opus 43**

PREMIERED: May 22, 1931
(complete ballet); February
2, 1934 (Suite No. 2)

Born into a family of wealthy industrialists, Albert Roussel lost his parents in early childhood and, until the age of 11, was raised by his grandfather, the mayor of Tourcoing, France. As the heir to a fortune, he could have done anything he chose, but, despite signs of musical promise, he joined the French Navy and saw service in faraway places, going out to sea on the *Iphigénie*, one of the last of the sailing frigates. Roussel's adventures in distant harbors were later reflected in the subject matter, harmonies and instrumental palette of the music he began to write around the turn of the century. By 1894, at age 25, Roussel had resigned his commission to pursue the serious study of music at the Schola Cantorum in Paris, where he subsequently became a professor of counterpoint. During World War I he set aside music to serve as an ambulance driver; after the Armistice he settled in Normandy and devoted the rest of his life to composition.

EXPANDED HORIZONS AT A CAREER TWILIGHT

By Roussel's own testimony, the works of his middle period—after 1918—were on the one hand adventurous, especially harmonically, but on the other showed “a return to clearer lines”—evidence of his Neoclassical leanings. In his final decade, which delivered the ballets *Bacchus et Ariane*, rendered in English as *Bacchus and Ariadne* (1930), and *Aénéas* (1935), he found his “definitive mode of expression,” he said, and applied his craft to descriptive ends. Emanating from his linear thinking, the *Bacchus* music is richly polyphonic, and the resultant harmonies change swiftly, at times bordering on the abrasive. The mature Roussel was very much a part of a musical world whose horizons had been broadened by Bartók and Stravinsky.

First presented at the Paris Opéra on May 22, 1931, *Bacchus and Ariadne*, in its poetry, pictorialism and final bacchanale, bears superficial resemblances to Maurice Ravel's *Daphnis and Chloe*. Both works trace their subject matter and atmosphere to the world of ancient Greece. Roussel's ballet relates the happier version of the Ariadne legend: instead of expiring on the shores

where she was abandoned by her love, Theseus, she finds erotic consolation in the arms of Bacchus. The music ignites the imagination: Roussel's score demonstrates his belief that music can project every aspect of the dance without necessarily diminishing its own stature. His large orchestra masterfully evokes every phase of the story. After its successful premiere, Roussel lost little time in preparing two orchestral suites from the ballet, each covering the events of one of its two acts.

A PAIR OF MYTHICAL SUITES

In the first suite from *Bacchus and Ariadne*—not heard at this week's concerts, but summarized as background—Theseus, having rescued the Athenian youths and maidens from the Minotaur, lands on the island of Naxos. There Bacchus, the god of wine, takes command, lulling the beautiful Ariadne into a deep sleep. He orders Theseus and his crew to set sail without her—a convenient liberty taken with the myth that has the benefit of making the lover appear less callous.

The Suite No. 2 opens with Ariadne asleep on the island shore, her slumber suggested by a gentle melody assigned to solo viola. When she awakens, only to realize that she has been abandoned, the music grows agitated, hinged upon a jagged, leaping motif and strident harmonies. She hurls herself from a cliff (you will hear the glissando of her fall), only to land in the arms of Bacchus (represented by the clarinet), who dances with her as if to continue her dreaming. Then, to a mischievous tune, Bacchus dances an athletic solo that shows off every ripple of muscular *premier danseur* legs.

At last he kisses Ariadne, and the music is calmed by a long-breathed phrase in the horns. She is enchanted by this wily seducer—gossamer violin arpeggios and delicate wind figurations suggest the vulnerable state. Before long, fauns and bacchantes march in, bearing a golden goblet. After sipping the wine, Ariadne begins her own dance, set initially to a sensuously curving strain first awarded to the solo violin. The Dionysiac scene builds to a jubilant bacchanale that sweeps the ballet to its delirious peak. Ultimately, Bacchus leads Ariadne to the summit of Naxos where she is crowned with a tiara of stars plucked from the heavens. Roussel's music culminates in brilliance and virtuosity fit for the triumphant conclusion.

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

PROGRAM NOTE BY MARY ANN FELDMAN.

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REBECCA ALBERS,
VIOLA

Originally from Longmont, Colorado, Rebecca Albers joined the Minnesota Orchestra as assistant principal viola in 2010 and won the position of principal viola in 2017. She has performed throughout the U.S., Asia and Europe, making her New York debut at Lincoln Center, performing the New York premiere of Samuel Adler's Viola Concerto with the Juilliard Orchestra. An avid chamber musician, she performs often at such festivals as the Marlboro Music Festival, Seattle Chamber Music Society Summer and Winter Festivals, and Rome Chamber Music Festival. Albers is a member of Accordo, a Twin Cities-based chamber ensemble whose members are present and former principal players from the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra and the Minnesota Orchestra. She has toured extensively with Musicians from Marlboro and with the Albers Trio, an ensemble formed with her sisters Laura and Julie Albers, and has been featured on many of the Orchestra's chamber concerts. More: minnesotaorchestra.org.



JAMES EHNES,
VIOLIN

James Ehnes has established himself as one of the most sought-after musicians on the international stage. Gifted with a rare combination of stunning virtuosity, serene lyricism and unflinching musicality, he is a favorite guest at the world's most celebrated concert halls. During the 2025-26 season, he embarks on his 50th birthday recital tour in his native Canada, with performances in every province and territory. A devoted chamber musician, he is the artistic director of the Seattle Chamber Music Society and the leader of the Ehnes Quartet, while as a recitalist he performs regularly at prestigious venues in the U.S. and abroad. Ehnes has won many awards for his recordings, including two Grammys, three Gramophone Awards and 12 Juno Awards. In 2021 he was announced as the recipient of the coveted Artist of the Year award at the Gramophone Awards. He plays the "Marsick" Stradivarius of 1715. More: intermusica.com, jamesehnes.com.



FABIEN GABEL,
CONDUCTOR

Fabien Gabel is music director of the Tonkünstler-Orchester Niederösterreich, which he conducts at Vienna's Musikverein, St. Pölten and Grafenegg. He has established an international career of the highest caliber, appearing with orchestras such as the Orchestre de Paris, Chicago Symphony, London Philharmonic, Cleveland Orchestra, NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchester, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic, Orchestre symphonique de Montréal and Seoul Philharmonic. The 2025-26 season includes his debut at the Metropolitan Opera with *Carmen*; a five-city tour of Spain with Yuja Wang and the Mahler Chamber Orchestra; and premiere performances of Samy Moussa's Flute Concerto with the Orchestre National de France and Detroit Symphony, as well as Donghoon Shin's Viola Concerto *Threadsuns* with the Minnesota Orchestra and Tonkünstler-Orchester. He makes his South American debut with the São Paulo Symphony and debuts with the Sydney Symphony. More: opus3artists.com, fabiengabel.com.



BRIAN NEWHOUSE,
BROADCAST HOST

For the performance on Friday, January 30, Brian Newhouse serves as host and writer of the Twin Cities PBS and online livestream *This Is Minnesota Orchestra*. Newhouse hosted his first live Minnesota Orchestra radio broadcast in 1983, and for much of the next four decades welcomed Minnesota Public Radio listeners to the Orchestra's concerts. Off air, he became managing director of MPR's classical programming, which reaches nearly five million listeners each week. With degrees in voice and English from Luther College, he had an active professional singing career alongside his work in radio and earned an MFA in creative writing from Hamline University, winning a Peabody Award for writing the radio documentary *The Mississippi: River of Song*. In 2020 he joined the Orchestra's staff as associate vice president of individual giving, retiring last year. Next month, E.C. Schirmer will publish *Choral Conducting: A Life of Building* by Dale Warland, edited by Newhouse.



LAUREN SNOUFFER,
SOPRANO

Recognized for her unique artistic curiosity in world-class performances spanning the music of Monteverdi and Handel through to Hans Abrahamsen and Sir George Benjamin, Lauren Snouffer is celebrated as one of the most versatile and respected sopranos on today's international stages. Her concert profile has yielded marvelous results with the Cleveland Orchestra, Handel & Haydn Society, San Francisco Symphony, Music of the Baroque, Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Pittsburgh Symphony, New York Philharmonic, NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchester and Orquestra Sinfônica do Estado de São Paulo. Highlights of the recent past include a Metropolitan Opera debut in *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay*; *The Magic Flute* at Glyndebourne, Opernhaus Zürich and Seattle Opera; Monteverdi's *Orfeo* with a world premiere orchestration by Nico Muhly at Santa Fe Opera, and many successes at Houston Grand Opera in productions led by Patrick Summers and Harry Bicket, among others. More: etudearts.com.

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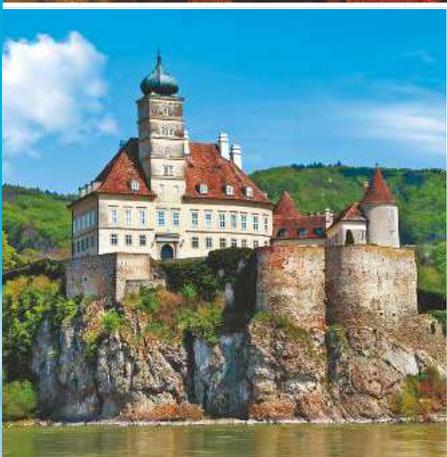
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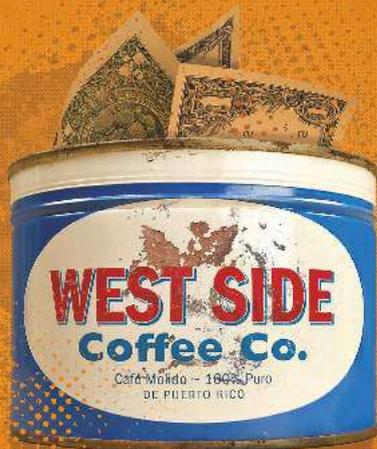
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