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ABOUT THE COVER: Assistant Concertmaster Rui Du is a featured soloist in the February 26 Lunar New Year celebration. Photo: Zoe Prinds-Flash

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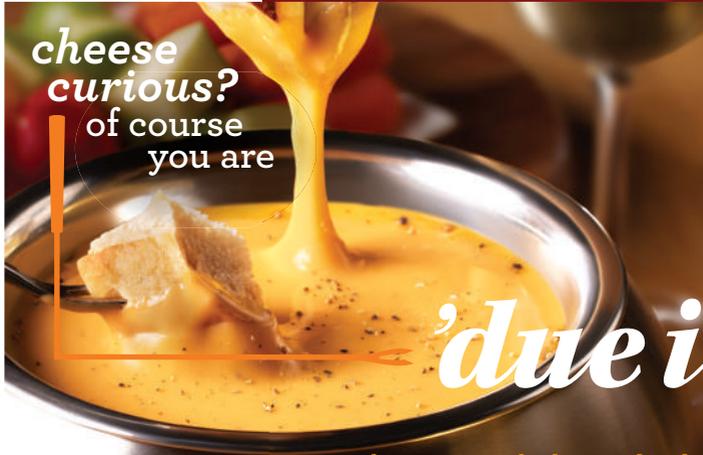
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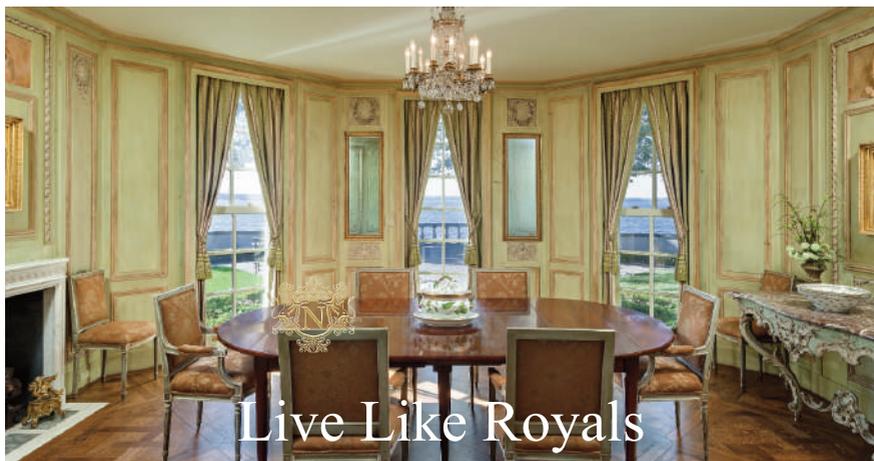
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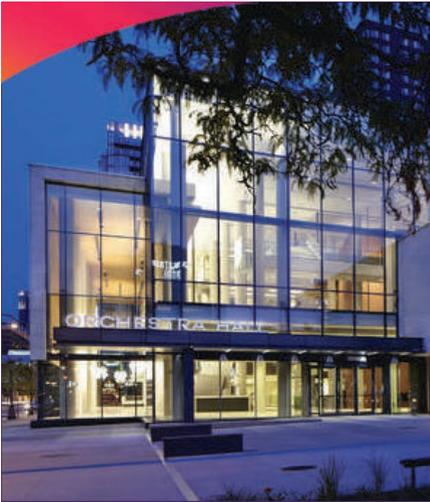
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PROFILE

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*, January'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.

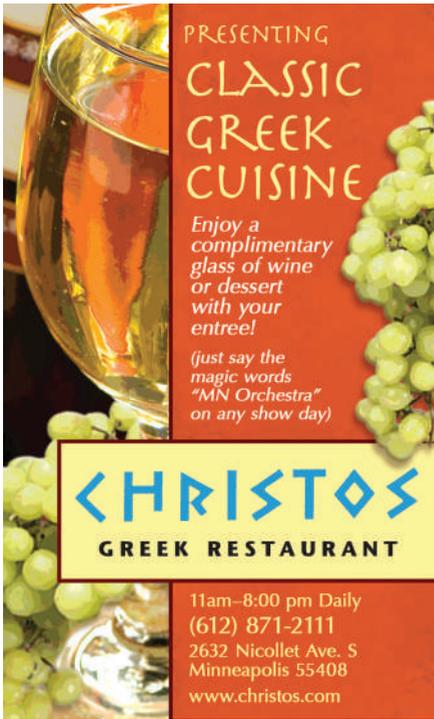
Since 2018 Søndergård has been music director of the Royal Scottish National Orchestra (RSNO). He previously served as principal conductor and musical advisor to the Norwegian Radio Orchestra and then as principal conductor of the BBC National Orchestra of Wales (BBC NOW). As a guest conductor he has 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.



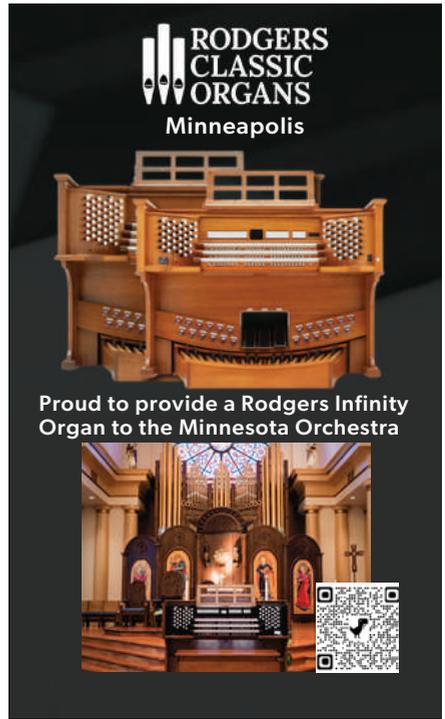
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MEET OUR 2026 SYMPHONY BALL CHAIRS: WALTER TAMBOR AND BARRY BERG

— Symphony Ball 2026— “And All That Jazz”—will evoke the beating emotion and vibrant electricity of the Jazz Age when Orchestra friends and fans come together on Saturday, May 2, at Orchestra Hall and the Minneapolis Hilton. The gala event, which this year celebrates 70 years of the Ball, is the Orchestra’s largest annual fundraiser, raising critical funds for the organization’s artistic and education programs. We sat down with Symphony Ball Chairs **Walter Tambor** and **Barry Berg** to learn more about their path to the Orchestra and what you can expect from a Jazz-era Symphony Ball.

How did you come up with this year’s Symphony Ball theme “And All That Jazz,” and do you have a particular connection to jazz music?

We’re both strong jazz enthusiasts and consider jazz America’s singularly distinctive contribution to the world of music. Discovering that Music Director Thomas Søndergård was exploring a concert focused on American music the weekend of the Ball and had secured soprano Janai Brugger as a guest artist, we concluded celebrating the Jazz Age would be an exciting theme. 2026 is the nation’s 250th anniversary, an added reason to choose a theme highlighting America’s contribution to music. Walter has been interested in jazz since taking a college course on the history of jazz, while Barry studied classical piano and violin,



2026 Symphony Ball Chairs Barry Berg and Walter Tambor

but has found pleasure in the soul of jazz and improvisation. We’ve greatly enjoyed jazz clubs not only in Minneapolis, but also in New York and London.

How will the jazz theme be incorporated in Symphony Ball’s activities, music, auctions, décor and any other elements that we can reveal so far?

Our colors are vibrant blue and orange, which will be reflected in the décor, conveying the energy and mood of jazz during the Golden Age of Jazz, which ran from 1920 to 1945. We are working on a variety of jazz and improv auction items (silent and live) that capture the spirit of the theme. The Orchestra’s concert will feature the music of this era, and we’ve retained jazz artists to add to the energy and excitement of the entire evening.

[Continued on page 14](#)

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One key element of jazz is improvisation. Are there ways in which the spirit of improv and playing off other people's ideas have been part of chairing and preparing for the Ball?

We're having a great time working with an engaged and committed Symphony Ball Committee and Orchestra staff and musicians on all aspects of the Ball. Brainstorming, improvisation and evolution of ideas is an inherent part of the process when you work with numerous players. Everyone brings special strengths!

How did you first get involved with the Minnesota Orchestra, and what have been some of your favorite concerts over the years?

Barry grew up in western Minnesota and considers the Orchestra part of the critical DNA of this community. Walter is a professional musician who moved to the Twin Cities in 2004, initially taking advantage of rush tickets and discounts for attendees under 40 before becoming a committed patron. He joined the Minnesota Chorale in 2018, participating in the Orchestra's concerts in South Africa, where performing Beethoven's Ninth Symphony was an extraordinary life experience. We're both fans of piano soloists (André Watts and Garrick Ohlsson count as favorites) and violinists (especially Joshua Bell and James Ehnes); other Minnesota Orchestra highlight moments for us have included Stephen Paulus' oratorio *To Be Certain of the Dawn* and, more recently, Puccini's opera *Turandot*. As long-time members of

FRIENDS of the Minnesota Orchestra, we've also hosted piano competitors for the Orchestra's former Young Artist competition.

Can you say a bit about your background in general—some other things you've done professionally or enjoy personally, aside from the Minnesota Orchestra?

We're both avid live theatergoers, contemporary art enthusiasts, and frequent international travelers. We consider ourselves fortunate to live in a rich artistic community, are passionate about music education and have served on a variety of arts boards.

What would you say to someone who has never attended Symphony Ball before but is considering coming this year?

The Minnesota Orchestra is one of the finest professional orchestras in the U.S. The Symphony Ball will be an exciting, fun, energetic evening and is a terrific opportunity to connect with other music lovers, build a sense of community and support for the tremendous artists of the Orchestra—and to bid on some amazing experiences.

Anything else you'd like to add about yourselves or Symphony Ball?

It's really a joy and honor to work on the Ball, creating an event that not only supports this amazing Orchestra but recognizes its importance within the civic and cultural landscape of Minnesota.

Tickets for the Symphony Ball are now available at minnesotaorchestra.org.

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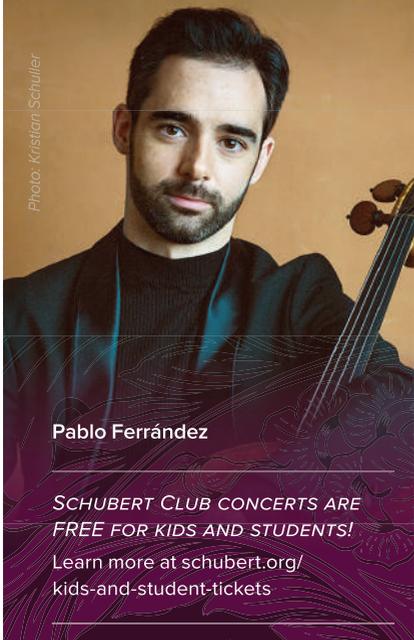
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Pablo Ferrández, cello

Wed, Mar 18 • 7:30 PM
Thu, Mar 19 • 10:30 AM
Ordway Concert Hall

Miró Quartet with

Steven Banks, saxophone

Sun, Apr 12 • 4:00 PM
Saint Anthony Park UCC

schubert.org • 651.292.3268

NEW LEADER, NEW ERA

— When Isaac Thompson was named the Orchestra's new President and CEO last summer, it marked a homecoming. Born in the North Star State and growing up in Shoreview, Thompson's formative music experiences occurred in Minnesota, but college and career led him away. Now he is back in Minneapolis to lead his hometown orchestra. We took a stroll back to understand his roots—and gain insights on where the Orchestra is heading.

How did you choose to play the violin?

My parents started me on piano when I was 5 years old, and I loved it. The music, the lessons—maybe not so much the practicing—but the overall experience was positive. At around age six, my parents brought me to the Minnesota Orchestra, and I was totally blown away by the violin section and told them that I wanted to study violin, so they signed me up for a Suzuki violin program shortly thereafter!

The late Minnesota Orchestra Concertmaster Jorja Fleezanis was one of your instructors. What were some of your takeaways from time with her?

The biggest takeaway I learned from Jorja, which was not limited to violin playing, is to be curious in all facets of life. Never just settle for the quick and easy answer, but really dive in and go deeper into whatever you are engaged in. I so admired Jorja for her insatiable curiosity and how she brought that to everything she did.

You worked with former Minnesota Orchestra Music Director Edo de Waart at the Milwaukee Symphony. What did you learn from him?

Edo hired me when I was 25 with not a lot of experience, but we really hit it off from the get-go. I learned that planning a season is not just slotting in puzzle pieces but is best accomplished through robust artistic dialogue and being able to construct, and then deconstruct over and over, until you come to a compelling and meaningful season.

You've worked at a lot of different orchestras. What kind of mindset did you need to have to adapt to different environments?

Orchestras are in many ways reflections of the communities in which they exist—and every community is different. It has been fascinating working in markets from Cincinnati to New York City to Portland, Oregon, and now in Minneapolis. Adapting has meant really leaning into listening to a diverse array of stakeholders, both those who are close to the orchestra and others in the broader community. In my experience, the more orchestras can understand and be responsive to the needs of the community in which they exist, the more the orchestra can serve as a civic imperative, as opposed to a relic of the past. This is essential as we envision the future of what it means to be an orchestra in the 21st century.

Read the full interview at: minnesotaorchestra.org

M N
— O



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THE MUSIC OF PINK FLOYD

Brent Havens, conductor

Randy Jackson, vocals

FRI FEB 6 8PM | SAT FEB 7 7PM

The program for today's concert will be announced from the stage. There will be one 20-minute intermission.



BRENT HAVENS, CONDUCTOR

Berklee-trained arranger and conductor Brent Havens has written music for orchestras, feature films and television. His TV work includes movies for ABC, CBS and ABC Family, commercials, sports music for networks such as ESPN and cartoons. He recently completed the score for the film *Quo Vadis*, a Premier Pictures remake of the 1956 gladiator film. In 2013

he worked with the Baltimore Symphony and the NFL's Baltimore Ravens to arrange and produce the music for the Thanksgiving Day halftime show between the Ravens and Pittsburgh Steelers. He has conducted many of the world's great orchestras and is the arranger and guest conductor for all of the symphonic rock programs for Windborne Music. More: windbornemusic.com.



RANDY JACKSON, VOCALS

Randy Jackson is the lead singer and guitarist for the rock band Zebra. His first foray into recording success began with the self-titled *Zebra* debut album, released on Atlantic Records in 1983 to sales of 75,000 copies the first week. "Who's Behind The Door" and "Tell Me What You Want," written by Jackson, received serious notice in the press, and helped to form legions of Zebra

fans almost instantly. The latest Zebra release, *Zebra IV*, was also produced and engineered by Jackson. In 1989 he toured as keyboardist, guitarist and backing vocalist with the original, reunited Jefferson Airplane in their last tour together. More: randyjackson.com.

Upcoming Concerts

M N
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Søndergård Conducts Bruckner

FRI MAR 6 8PM

SAT MAR 7 7PM

BRUCKNER *Symphony No. 8*

Søndergård, Gerstein and Bernstein

FRI MAR 13 8PM

SAT MAR 14 7PM

Kirill Gerstein, piano

WILSON *Shango Memory*

ADÈS *Piano Concerto*

RAVEL *Piano Concerto for Left Hand*

BERNSTEIN *Symphonic Dances from
West Side Story*



Kirill Gerstein

Family Concert: Symphonic Storytelling

SUN MAR 15 2PM

Thomas Søndergård, conductor

Kids' tickets are **FREE!**

Beethoven Symphony No. 9

THU MAR 19 11AM

FRI MAR 20 8PM

SAT MAR 21 7PM

Eun Sun Kim, conductor

Minnesota Chorale and distinguished soloists

FRANK *Pachamama Meets an Ode*

BEETHOVEN *Ah! Perfido*

BEETHOVEN *Symphony No. 9, Choral*



Thomas Søndergård



Eun Sun Kim



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TCHAIKOVSKY AND RACHMANINOFF

Juraj Valčuha, conductor

FRI FEB 13 8PM | SAT FEB 14 7PM

Bernard Herrmann	<i>Prelude, Nightmare and Love Scene</i> from <i>Vertigo</i> Prelude Nightmare Love Scene	CA. 11'
Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky	<i>Romeo and Juliet, Fantasy-Overture</i>	CA. 21'
I N T E R M I S S I O N		CA. 20'
Sergei Rachmaninoff	Symphony No. 3 in A minor, Opus 44 Lento - Allegro moderato Adagio ma non troppo - Allegro vivace Allegro	CA. 38'

A profile of conductor Juraj Valčuha appears on page 53.
Visit minnesotaorchestra.org/pre for details about pre-concert activities.

THANK YOU

The 2025-26 Classical season is presented by Ameriprise Financial.

Friday night Classical concerts air live on [YourClassical Minnesota Public Radio](#).

**BERNARD HERRMANN**

B: June 29, 1911
New York City

D: December 24, 1975
Los Angeles, California

*Prelude, Nightmare and
Love Scene from Vertigo*

PREMIERED:
May 9, 1958 (original film)

In the pantheon of film director-composer pairings, few have been as iconic as the 11-year collaboration between Alfred Hitchcock and Bernard Herrmann, resulting in the likes of *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, *North by Northwest*, *Psycho* and, in 1958, *Vertigo*. “Benny,” as Herrmann was called, and “Hitch” forged a perfect partnership, with Herrmann’s scoring adding significantly to Hitchcock’s successes. After their partnership ended, neither’s work approached their earlier standard, though Herrmann’s *Taxi Driver*, his final offering, directed by Martin Scorsese, was a posthumous 1977 Oscar and Grammy nominee for best motion picture score.

To refer to Herrmann’s movie scores as “incidental music” does his work a serious injustice. There is nothing “incidental” about it. Especially in *Vertigo*, with 80 minutes of music, Herrmann’s score advances the plot. *Vertigo*, starring Kim Novak (in the double role of Madeleine Elster and Judy Barton) and James Stewart (as Scottie Ferguson), has been ranked in some lists of best films alongside Orson Welles’ great *Citizen Kane*, whose music was also Herrmann’s. The suite heard tonight is culled from the movie’s opening credits and two crucial scenes.

MUSIC FROM A PSYCHOLOGICAL THRILLER

PRELUDE. Movies filmed in wide-screen VistaVision usually began with the brand’s own music. This time, however, it is Herrmann’s score that accompanies the words “VistaVision,” and each credit is announced with a blast from the brass section and undulating strings and winds, with a touch of the celeste and Hammond organ. The first visual is a portion of a female face. The credits fade to a nighttime police chase, then to the sunny apartment of Scottie’s girlfriend, where we learn that Scottie suffers from acrophobia—a fear of heights that causes vertigo.

NIGHTMARE. Scottie is a San Francisco cop who retired from the force because of his vertigo. This passage accompanies a nightmare he suffers, reliving a fellow officer’s fatal fall from a rooftop while saving Scottie from the same fate. Scottie’s nightmare follows a coroner’s inquest into Madeleine’s “death” by a fall from on high, in which he was unwittingly implicated.

The nightmare’s music is accompanied by a collage of disturbing multi-colored visuals, including a whirlpool into which he is drawn and from which he falls. The segment opens with wild strings and it tells us precisely when Scottie awakens, in a cold sweat.

LOVE SCENE. In fact, Madeleine is not dead; she is very much alive under the identity of Judy. Herrmann gives us Madeleine’s theme—Herrmann at his most sensuous—influenced by Wagner’s *Liebestod* from the opera *Tristan and Isolde*. Scottie and “Judy” are in a prolonged embrace. But Scottie notices a necklace that confirms Madeleine has been alive all along. It wasn’t Madeleine who fell; it was the look-alike wife of a man who wanted his wife killed, and Madeleine was in on the plot. Herrmann’s tremolos accompany Scottie’s thoughts as he considers his next move. The scene changes as Scottie takes Madeleine on a long drive to the scene of the crime, to meet her own fate.

Instrumentation: 3 flutes, 2 oboes, English horn, 3 clarinets, 2 bass clarinets, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, castanets, small suspended cymbal, tambourine, tam-tam, small triangle, vibraphone (2 players), 2 harps, celesta, Hammond organ and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY PHILLIP GAINSLY.



**PETER ILYICH
TCHAIKOVSKY**

B: May 7, 1840
Votkinsk, Russia

D: November 6, 1893
St. Petersburg, Russia

Romeo and Juliet,
Fantasy-Overture

PREMIERED: March 16, 1870

— Romance remains in the air this Valentine’s weekend with the most famous *Romeo and Juliet* music ever written—though not by a landslide. The fateful story of Shakespeare’s star-crossed lovers has attracted a range of composers, from Bellini to Berlioz, from Gounod to Prokofiev. Perhaps it was inevitable that so dramatic a story should appeal to the young Tchaikovsky, struggling to find his way as a composer. In the summer of 1869, shortly after Tchaikovsky’s First Symphony had been savaged by critics, composer Mily Balakirev suggested that Shakespeare’s play might make a fitting subject for an orchestral work. Balakirev sketched an outline

for the piece and even contributed part of a theme. Intrigued, Tchaikovsky set to work on October 7 of that year and had the score in first draft by November 27. It would (eventually) be his first real success.

THE FRIAR, THE FAMILIES, THE LOVERS

Tchaikovsky based his work on three separate themes, each meant to portray one of the forces in the play. The chorale-like opening passage suggests the pivotal figure of Friar Laurence, alone in his cell. At the *Allegro giusto*, the music leaps ahead with a dark and thrusting idea that reflects the violent struggles between the Montague and Capulet families. And this in turn gives way to the most famous part of this composition, the soaring love music of the young Romeo and Juliet themselves. But Tchaikovsky tries to treat this music symphonically rather than letting it simply become tone-painting. The themes develop in a sonata form-like structure: they alternate, collide, contrast, and finally drive to the great cataclysm of the end, a shattering climax. Then the music falls back to remember the lovers one last time and ends dramatically.

While the themes may represent specific characters, listeners should be careful not to search for too literal a depiction of the events of Shakespeare's play. Rather, *Romeo and Juliet* should be understood as abstract music-drama, inspired by Shakespeare's tale but not bound by the need for exact musical depiction. This may explain Tchaikovsky's curious choice of subtitle: he called this an "Overture-Fantasy after Shakespeare."

The first performance, in Moscow on March 16, 1870, was not a great success. Under Balakirev's guidance Tchaikovsky revised the work several times before he reached a final version in 1880; this may explain why it is one of his few works without an opus number. While early audiences may not have reacted positively, *Romeo and Juliet* soon became a popular favorite, so much so that when Tchaikovsky made a tour of the United States in 1891 to conduct his own music, he included *Romeo and Juliet* on every program.

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

PROGRAM NOTE BY ERIC BROMBERGER.

**SERGEI
RACHMANINOFF****B:** April 1, 1873
Staraya Russa, Russia**D:** March 28, 1943
Beverly Hills, California**Symphony No. 3 in
A minor, Opus 44****PREMIERED:**
November 6, 1936

— In December 1917, Sergei Rachmaninoff left Russia, never to return. He gave concerts in Scandinavia, lived in Copenhagen for almost a year, then sailed for the U.S. He left Russia a famous composer, a highly esteemed conductor and a most distinguished (part-time) pianist, but he was troubled by the problem of keeping those three lives in balance. With a family to support, he resigned himself to the life of a traveling piano virtuoso, full-time. Rachmaninoff the composer, so fertile between 1900 and 1917, did not write a single major work between March 1917 and January 1926.

Rachmaninoff's sense of exile, felt keenly in spite of his popularity in America and the presence of friends and colleagues, must have had something to do with the lack of new works, as did his characteristically concentrated commitment to his new bread-winning career as a pianist. But there was another reason: he was changing as a composer. The well that had yielded the expansive melodies of the Second Symphony, the first three piano concertos and many of the preludes and songs, seemed to have gone dry.

Now Rachmaninoff needed to make the most of his talent for economy, concentration and precision that had been consistently in evidence in his shorter piano pieces. And the Symphony No. 3, written in 1935 and 1936, is among the works that represent the composer at his most formidably intelligent and imaginative: it has strength, integrity, vision and atmosphere—built on a mysterious motto and filled with triplets throughout. Cast in three movements rather than the customary four, the symphony contains an abundance of brilliantly orchestrated vignettes, from a serene opening to a witty finale.

Visit minnesotaorchestra.org/rach3note for an extended description of the symphony's movements.

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

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

CHAMBER MUSIC IN THE HALL

SUN FEB 15 2PM

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

Ludwig van Beethoven	String Quartet No. 10 in E-flat major, Opus 74, <i>Harp</i> Poco adagio – Allegro Adagio ma non troppo Presto – Più presto quasi prestissimo Allegretto con variazioni <i>Emily Switzer, violin</i> <i>Sabrina Bradford, violin</i> <i>Sarah Switzer, viola</i> <i>Erik Wheeler, cello</i>	CA. 30'
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Kenneth Fuchs	<i>Quiet in the Land Idyll (American Idyll)</i> <i>Roma Duncan, flute</i> <i>Gregory T. Williams, clarinet</i> <i>Julie Gramolini Williams, English horn</i> <i>Megan Tam, viola</i> <i>Beth Rapier, cello</i>	CA. 14'
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I N T E R M I S S I O N CA. 20'

Arnold Schoenberg	<i>Verklärte Nacht (Transfigured Night), Opus 4</i> <i>Yi Zhao, violin</i> <i>Sarah Grimes, violin</i> <i>Lydia Grimes, viola</i> <i>Jude Park, viola</i> <i>Sonia Mantell, cello</i> <i>Pitnarry Shin, cello</i>	CA. 30'
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* In remembrance

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

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

VÄNSKÄ, KEEFE AND STRAVINSKY

Osmo Vänskä, conductor

Erin Keefe, violin

THU FEB 19 11AM | FRI FEB 20 8PM

Missy Mazzoli *Sinfonia (for Orbiting Spheres)* CA. 9'Sergei Prokofiev Concerto No. 2 in G minor for
Violin and Orchestra, Opus 63 CA. 26'
Allegro moderato
Andante assai
Allegro, ben marcato
Erin Keefe, violin

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

Igor Stravinsky *Petrushka (1947 revision)* CA. 34'
The Shrovetide Fair
Petrushka's Cell
The Moor's Cell
The Fair (Toward Evening)

Profiles of the conductor and soloist appear on pages 54 and 50.
Visit minnesotaorchestra.org/pre for details about pre-concert activities.

THANK YOU

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Friday night Classical concerts air live on [YourClassical Minnesota Public Radio](#).

**MISSY MAZZOLI**

B: October 27, 1980
Lansdale,
Pennsylvania

Sinfonia (for Orbiting Spheres)

PREMIERED:
April 8, 2014 (chamber
version); February 12, 2016
(orchestra version)

Grammy-nominated American composer Missy Mazzoli has been a significant presence in the world of contemporary music for the past two decades. She was one of the first two women ever commissioned by the Metropolitan Opera, and her music has also been featured on television and in film, including compositions for *Mozart in the Jungle* and the documentary *Detropia*. The 2025-26 season sees her music presented by the San Francisco Symphony, Opera Philadelphia, Konzerthaus Orchestra Berlin and the King's Singers, among many other institutions.

CELESTIAL BODIES IN SOUND

In her words from the introduction of a digital performance of her *Sinfonia (for Orbiting Spheres)* in 2020 by the Yale Symphony, Mazzoli states: “I set out to write a piece in the shape of a solar system.” Mazzoli elaborates that the piece begins with “small looping bits of material (planets) that would combine into a massive loop (orbits) so that...the piece would end where it began, but in a slightly different way—the way that a planet in orbit ends up in sort of the same place, but it’s a year later and things are different.”

In keeping with the composition’s title, Mazzoli pushes the orchestra far beyond its traditional orbit of sounds and technique. She does so by incorporating not only unconventional ways of playing the instruments, but also adding in moments of rhythmic fluidity, focusing on sliding pitches, and blending sounds to create surprising, vibrant textures. Further still, Mazzoli calls for some of the musicians to play harmonica, assigns a synthesizer (with an organ sound) to the pianist, includes prerecorded sounds that are played towards the end of the work, and mixes clearly and organically with the acoustic sound world she creates within the orchestra.

The overall effect of the piece is rather reminiscent of the experience one gets when looking up at a starry night sky. The scene itself may seem static—but just keep looking and listening. An entire new world will gradually appear: a world that has a beauty one has never before seen.

Instrumentation: 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons (doubling harmonica), 2 horns (doubling harmonica), 2 trumpets (doubling harmonica), 2 trombones (doubling harmonica), tuba, snare drum, suspended cymbal, boombbox, lion's roar, melodica, opera gong, spring coil, glockenspiel, vibraphone, marimba, piano (doubling synthesized organ sound) and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY ANTHONY R. GREEN.



SERGEI PROKOFIEV

B: April 27, 1891,
Sontsivka, Ukraine

D: March 5, 1953
Moscow, Russia

**Concerto No. 2 in G
minor for Violin and
Orchestra, Opus 63**

PREMIERED:
December 1, 1935

Like many other Russian musicians, Sergei Prokofiev fled to the West in the aftermath of the Communist Revolution of 1917, eventually making his home in Paris, where he wrote music that was brilliant—and often abrasive. Gradually, though, Prokofiev began to feel homesick for Russia. He made the first of many return visits in 1927, began keeping a Moscow apartment in 1933 and moved back completely in 1936. He knew that if he returned to Russia, he would have to relax his style: Socialist Realism demanded music that was lyric and attractive to a mass audience. Whether for this or other reasons, his music grew more lyric and accessible as he made the decision to move to Russia. In 1935 Prokofiev was asked by friends of the French violinist Robert Soëtens to write a violin concerto for him. The first performance was given in Madrid in December of that year.

THE MUSIC: INTIMATE AND LYRICAL

ALLEGRO MODERATO. The intimate, lyric nature of this concerto is evident from the first instant of the *Allegro moderato*, where the solo violin, all alone, lays out the opening theme. This concerto veers between extremes—murmuring and muted one instant, full of steely energy the next—and this contrast is reflected in the bittersweet second subject, also announced by solo violin. The development of this sonata-form movement is energetic, and the movement finally snaps into silence on abrupt pizzicatos.

ANDANTE ASSAI. Pizzicato strings also open the second movement, where they provide a pointillistic accompaniment to the violin's long cantilena. This

melody, which changes meters smoothly between 12/8 and 4/4, evolves through a series of variations until a pair of clarinets introduces the singing central episode. The opening material returns, and Prokofiev closes with an imaginative touch: he has the solo violin take over the pizzicato figure from the opening and “accompany” the orchestra to the quiet close.

ALLEGRO, BEN MARCATO. Briefest and most colorful of the movements, the finale demands virtuoso playing from both soloist and orchestra to solve complex problems of coordination and balance. Here Prokofiev makes distinctive use of his percussion instruments, particularly the castanets. The closing pages are particularly exciting, alternating measures of 7/4, 5/4, 2/2 and 3/2 with the basic pulse of 3/4, and Prokofiev drives the concerto to a saucy close.

Instrumentation: solo violin with orchestra comprising 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, castanets, triangle and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY ERIC BROMBERGER.



IGOR STRAVINSKY

B: June 17, 1882
St. Petersburg, Russia

D: April 6, 1971
New York City

Petrushka (1947 revision)

PREMIERED:
June 13, 1911 (original ballet)

— *Petrushka*, Stravinsky’s ballet about puppets at a Russian Shrovetide carnival, began life as a sort of creative detour. In the summer of 1910, shortly after the successful premiere of *The Firebird*, Stravinsky started work on a ballet about a pagan ritual sacrifice in ancient Russia. But he set aside the manuscript to *The Rite of Spring* when he was consumed by a new idea: “I had in my mind a distinct picture of a puppet, suddenly endowed with life, exasperating the patience of the orchestra with diabolical cascades of arpeggi. The orchestra in turn retaliates with menacing trumpet-blasts. The outcome is a terrific noise which reaches its climax and ends in the sorrowful and querulous collapse of the poor puppet.”

When impresario Serge Diaghilev visited Stravinsky that summer to see how the pagan-sacrifice ballet was progressing, he was horrified to learn

that Stravinsky was doing nothing with it. But when Stravinsky played some of his new music, Diaghilev was charmed and saw possibilities for another ballet. *Petrushka* premiered in Paris on June 13, 1911. In 1947 Stravinsky revised the score, partly to give greater importance to the piano.

THE FOUR TABLEAUX

THE SHROVETIDE FAIR. Swirling music introduces a carnival scene in 1830 St. Petersburg. The crowd mills about, full of organ grinders, dancers and drunkards. An aged magician appears and—like a snake charmer—spins a spell with a flute solo. He brings up the curtain in his small booth to reveal three puppets: *Petrushka*, the Moor and the Ballerina. At the touch of his wand, all three spring to life and, before the astonished crowd, move to the powerful Russian Dance.

PETRUSHKA'S CELL. *Petrushka*, locked in his room, tries desperately to escape and despairs when he cannot. Stravinsky depicts his anguish with clarinets, in C and F-sharp major: their bitonal clash has become famous as the “*Petrushka chord*.” The trapped puppet is distracted by the appearance of the Ballerina, who enters to a tinkly little tune.

THE MOOR'S CELL. Brutal chords take us into the Moor's opulent room, where the Ballerina dances to the accompaniment of cornet and snare drum. She and the Moor waltz together, *Petrushka* enters, and he fights with the Moor over the Ballerina, who chases him out.

THE FAIR (TOWARD EVENING). At the scene of the opening tableau, a festive crowd swirls past. We hear a number of ballet set-pieces: *Dance of the Nurse-Maids*, *The Peasant and the Bear*, *Dance of the Gypsy Women*, *Dance of the Coachmen*, and *Grooms and Masqueraders*. At the very end, poor *Petrushka* rushes in, pursued by the Moor, who kills him with a slash of his scimitar. The magician appears and reassures all that it is make-believe by holding up *Petrushka's* body to show it dripping sawdust. The ghost of *Petrushka* appears above the rooftops, railing defiantly at the terrified magician, who flees. The strings' quiet pizzicato strokes bring the music to an ambiguous end.

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

PROGRAM NOTE BY ERIC BROMBERGER.



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

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LUNAR NEW YEAR

Chia-Hsuan Lin, conductor | **Roz Tsai**, host
Rui Du, violin | **Yazhi Guo**, suona | **Fei Xie**, artistic consultant

THU FEB 26 7PM

Chia-Hsuan Lin's appearance in this concert is supported by Dr. Jennine Speier and her late husband John, dedicated advocates for advancing the work of women conductors.

Zhou Tian	<i>Gift</i>	CA. 9'
Hong Nan-pa/ arr. Texu Kim	<i>Spring in My Hometown *</i>	CA. 4'
Hao-Fu Zhang	<i>The River Crosses the Desert</i> <i>Yazhi Guo, suona</i>	CA. 17'
Traditional/ arr. Huihui Cheng	<i>Hundreds of Birds Worshipping the Phoenix</i> <i>Yazhi Guo, suona</i>	CA. 3'
I N T E R M I S S I O N		CA. 20'
Bright Sheng	<i>The Flying Horses, from</i> <i>Concerto for Orchestra: Zodiac Tales</i>	CA. 6'
Ma Sicong	<i>Nostalgia</i> <i>Rui Du, violin</i>	CA. 7'
Gordon Shi-Wen Chin	<i>Seed of Eternal Love</i> <i>Rui Du, violin</i>	CA. 10'
Wang Chenwei	<i>Confluence</i>	CA. 9'
Huang Ruo	<i>Flower Drum Song from Feng Yang,</i> <i>from Folk Songs for Orchestra</i>	CA. 4'
Li Huanzhi	<i>Spring Festival Overture</i>	CA. 5'

* World premiere; commissioned by the Minnesota Orchestra

Profiles of the conductor, host, soloists and artistic consultant appear on pages 49, 51, 53 and 54.

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

ZHOU TIAN

Gift

Grammy-nominated composer Zhou Tian (b. 1981) crafts a musical language that draws freely from both Eastern and Western traditions. Born into a musical family in Hangzhou, China, at age 19 he moved to the U.S. to pursue his musical studies. He participated in the May 2006 Minnesota Orchestra Composer Institute and was commissioned the following year to compose *First Sight* for the Orchestra's Young People's Concert series. Today he serves as professor of composition at Michigan State University.

Composed during his residency with the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra, Zhou's 2019 orchestral work *Gift* represents what the composer calls a "homecoming"—a reflective exploration of identity after nearly two decades of living abroad. The title pays homage to a fifth-century Chinese poem, *Music as a Gift of Decency* by Shen Yue, suggesting music as an offering of both beauty and moral spirit. At the heart of the score lies a simple, folk-like four-note motif, which continually rises and falls as it passes through a richly colored orchestral landscape. In Zhou's words, the work is ultimately "a gift to fellow musicians."

HONG NAN-PA/arr. Texu Kim

Spring in My Hometown

Tonight's performance brings a special treat: the premiere of a new arrangement of *Spring in My Hometown* by Minnesota Orchestra Composer Institute alumnus Texu Kim (b. 1980). A native of Korea, Kim is a highly regarded composer of orchestral, chamber and choral music who serves as a tenured professor at San Diego State University.

Spring in My Hometown is one of Korea's most beloved art songs. The words came first, in the form of a poem written in 1926 by 15-year-old Lee Won-su. Three years later, Lee's poetry was set to music by Hong Nan-pa (1898-1941), a pioneering composer who played a central role in the development of Korean Western-style art music. The song was created during the period of Japanese colonial rule in Korea, when Korean language and cultural expression were heavily restricted. Although its text simply describes the peaceful scenery of spring—green fields, flowers and childhood memories—the song came to symbolize longing for home, national identity and hope in times of hardship.

Musically, the original setting is lyrical and tender, with a flowing melody and clear harmonic structure that make it easily remembered and widely loved. Its simplicity is a key part of its emotional power. In its orchestral

arrangement, the song's expressive world is expanded through warm string textures, gentle woodwind colors and transparent orchestration.

HAO-FU ZHANG

The River Crosses the Desert

— Hao-Fu Zhang, born in China in 1952 and now a naturalized Belgian citizen, occupies a distinct place in contemporary music through his synthesis of Eastern philosophical thought and Western compositional structure. Trained at the Xi'an Conservatory, Royal Conservatory of Brussels and École Normale de Musique de Paris, Zhang further refined his language at IRCAM in Paris in the early 1990s. He has served as professor of composition at the Royal Conservatory of Brussels and holds honorary professorships at several major conservatories in China.

In *The River Crosses the Desert* for Suona (a piercing double-reed woodwind instrument) and Orchestra, Zhang draws on the powerful symbolism of the Yellow River—long regarded as the cradle of Chinese civilization—and the vast stillness of the desert to shape a dramatic musical landscape. Composed in 2010, the work unfolds as a dialogue between the intensely expressive soloist and the richly layered timbres of the ensemble, blending traditional sonorities with contemporary techniques of texture, register and rhythmic vitality.

TRADITIONAL/arr. Huihui Cheng

Hundreds of Birds Worshipping the Phoenix

— *Hundreds of Birds Worshipping the Phoenix* is one of the most celebrated works in the Chinese folk tradition, originating in the rural musical cultures of Henan, Anhui (especially northern Anhui), Shandong and Hebei provinces. Its bright, jubilant melodies and vivid imitations of birdsong evoke a scene of springtime abundance, renewal and harmony in nature. The work is heard tonight in an arrangement by Chinese composer Huihui Cheng (b. 1985).

The piece is famous not only for its brilliance but also for its extreme technical difficulty. It demands years of disciplined training, refined breath control and mastery of circular breathing. The work achieved national recognition in 1953 when it was performed as a suona solo by the Heze ensemble of Shandong Province. Soon after, the influential folk musician Ren Tongxiang refined the traditional material for the concert stage, clarifying its structure, streamlining bird-call passages and expanding the climactic ending. Further developments in the 1970s introduced a newly composed introduction, expanded virtuoso ornamentation and

rapid double-tonguing techniques. In its orchestral setting, the piercing, expressive sound of suona remains at the center, supported by colorful winds, resonant percussion and warm string textures.

BRIGHT SHENG

The Flying Horses, from Concerto for Orchestra: *Zodiac Tales*

— Bright Sheng (b. 1955) is a Chinese-born American composer, pianist and conductor whose career has been defined by a vivid synthesis of Eastern and Western musical traditions. Raised in Shanghai, he began piano studies at age 4 and later trained at the Shanghai Conservatory before continuing his education at Queens College and Columbia University. A recipient of a MacArthur Fellowship and twice a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize, Sheng has become one of the most frequently performed living classical composers. Since 1995 he has served on the faculty of the University of Michigan.

Tonight's program features *The Flying Horses*, the exhilarating final movement of Sheng's Concerto for Orchestra: *Zodiac Tales*. This six-movement work draws on legends of the Chinese zodiac, transforming mythological imagery into a vivid orchestral spectacle. *The Flying Horses* evokes the Chinese myth of celestial horses that race a thousand miles a day across the sky. Sheng imagined "thousands of them dashing over the horizon," a vision reflected in the music's relentless momentum. At its core is a passacaglia derived from Buddhist chant, adapted from singing Sheng heard at his mother's deathbed—an intimate, meditative thread within the movement's brilliant, electrifying orchestral finale.

MA SICONG

Nostalgia

— Ma Sicong (1912–1987) stands as one of the central figures in the development of modern Chinese classical music. Celebrated in his homeland as the "King of Violinists," he was both a virtuosic performer and a composer who bridged Western classical forms with the rich melodies of Chinese folk tradition. Born in Guangdong and trained in both China and France, Ma devoted much of his creative life to giving national voice to personal expression.

Among Ma's most enduring works is *Nostalgia*, composed for violin in 1937 and expanded into orchestral form around 1939. *Nostalgia* is the second movement of the *Inner Mongolia (Suiyuan)* Suite, and its principal theme is drawn from the Suiyuan folk song *Galloping on the City Wall*. Ma encountered such melodies during his travels collecting folk songs,

a journey undertaken during a time when many northern students were fleeing south amid the Japanese invasion, singing of their lost homes. This atmosphere of exile and yearning permeates the work—an intimate reflection of personal memory transformed into collective emotion. Structured in a ternary form with subtle variation, *Nostalgia* unfolds as a broad, song-like lament. Its expressive, pentatonic-inflected melody conveys both tenderness and quiet sorrow, while the orchestral setting deepens the emotional range through shifting colors, dynamics and tempo.

GORDON SHI-WEN CHIN

Seed of Eternal Love

— Gordon Shi-Wen Chin (b. 1957) stands among the most prominent and prolific composers in contemporary Taiwanese music. A native of Taiwan, Chin currently serves on the faculty of National Taiwan Normal University and is music director of the Yinqi Chorus and Orchestra in Taipei.

Seed of Eternal Love for Violin and Orchestra is drawn from Chin's larger sacred orchestral-choral work *Fragrance of Christ to God*. The title reflects a spiritual metaphor in which a single seed represents faith, renewal, and the promise of eternal transformation. In this concerto-like setting, the solo violin serves as a deeply expressive vessel, unfolding long lyrical lines against a richly colored orchestral landscape. The music alternates between quiet introspection and impassioned intensity, suggesting both the vulnerability and resilience inherent in spiritual devotion.

WANG CHENWEI

Confluence

— Wang Chenwei (b. 1988) stands among the most influential musical voices in Singapore today, bridging Chinese musical traditions with contemporary global practice. He is currently composer in residence of the Singapore Chinese Orchestra and an adjunct faculty member at both the National Institute of Education and Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts.

Confluence (2009) is among Wang's most celebrated works. Originally commissioned for chamber ensemble and later adapted for Chinese and symphony orchestras, the piece weaves together Chinese, Indian, Malay-Indonesian and Western musical languages with striking imagination. An Indian-style flute melody opens the work, giving way to a remarkable fugue in which an Indian-inspired subject—often voiced by the pipa—interacts with a gamelan-like counter-subject. A recurring 3/8 cross-rhythm set against a steady 4/4 meter becomes a powerful metaphor for

“harmony in diversity.” In the radiant final section, multiple cultural motifs sound together in layered coexistence.

HUANG RUO

Flower Drum Song from Feng Yang, from *Folk Songs for Orchestra*

Chinese-American composer Huang Ruo (b. 1976) is celebrated for his distinctive voice that fuses elements of Eastern and Western musical traditions. Born on Hainan Island, China, and educated in the United States, Huang often bridges ancient folk roots with contemporary soundscapes.

Folk Songs for Orchestra (2012) is a four-movement suite in which Huang reimagines traditional Chinese melodies through a modern orchestral lens. The first movement, *Flower Drum Song from Feng Yang*, draws from the Fengyang Flower Drum Song, a centuries-old folk tune from Anhui province. The original song was historically performed by singers and drummers during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). In Huang’s arrangement, this lively character is retained and transformed, with vibrant rhythmic energy, colorful orchestration, and layered textures that evoke both the pulse of traditional percussion and the lyricism of Chinese song.

LI HUANZHI

Spring Festival Overture

Spring Festival Overture—the first movement of Li Huanzhi’s *Spring Festival Suite*—has become hugely popular in many regions of the world, and it exists in numerous arrangements for Chinese and Western instruments in both orchestral and chamber ensembles.

A prolific composer who wrote over 400 pieces, Li (1919-2000) often incorporated folk music and dance in his music. In *Spring Festival Overture*, Li immediately creates a cheerful mood by using lively melodies from folk dance tunes that originate in the northwestern Chinese province of Shaanxi. The middle section features a more subtle and lyrical approach that is followed by another Shaanxi folk dance tune, soon leading to an accelerated tempo and an exciting percussive return to the original theme.

Born in Hong Kong in 1919, Li studied at what is now known as the Shanghai Conservatory of Music and at the Lu Xun Institute of Arts in Yan’an. Li went on to serve as dean of the music department in the Arts and Literature Institute of North China United University and as the chairman of the Chinese Musicians’ Association. He composed *Spring Festival Overture* in 1955-56.

PROGRAM NOTES BY GAO HONG AND PAUL DICE.

BEN RECTOR: SYMPHONIES ACROSS AMERICA FEATURING JON MCLAUGHLIN

Sarah Hicks, conductor

Ben Rector, piano, guitar and vocals

Jon McLaughlin, piano and vocals

FRI FEB 27 8PM | SAT FEB 28 7PM

The program for today's concert will be announced from the stage.
There will be one 20-minute intermission.



BEN RECTOR, PIANO, GUITAR AND VOCALS

Singer-songwriter Ben Rector has independently released seven studio albums including *Brand New* and *Magic*, which both charted #1 on the U.S. Folk and #2 on the U.S. Rock and U.S. Indie Billboard chart. His songs have received both RIAA Gold and RIAA Platinum certifications, amassing more than a billion streams, and have been licensed in more than 100 ad

campaigns, TV shows and movies.

In “Symphonies Across America,” audiences will experience a new dimension to his music only experienced at the symphony. Pulling from more than 15 years of cross-country travel as a touring artist, Rector masterfully brings anthem sing-alongs, quippy humor and deep, meaningful lyrics—all beautifully backed by orchestral arrangements. Joining Rector on his symphony tour across America is his good friend Jon McLaughlin, whose depth and talent are sure to create a perfect complement to Rector on stage. Audiences will enjoy a moment of levity and reverence about the places we come from—a musical respite from the idea that more separates us than binds us in our shared and varied experience of calling America home. More: benrectormusic.com.

Profiles of Sarah Hicks and Jon McLaughlin appear on pages 50 and 52.



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YO-YO MA WITH THE MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA

Thomas Søndergård, conductor
Yo-Yo Ma, cello

TUE MAR 3 7PM

William Walton *Scapino, A Comedy Overture* CA. 8'

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor *Ballade in A minor for Orchestra, Opus 33* CA. 13'

Benjamin Britten *Four Sea Interludes from Peter Grimes* CA. 16'
Opus 33a
Dawn: Lento e tranquillo
Sunday morning: Allegro spiritoso
Moonlight: Andante comodo e rubato
Storm: Presto con fuoco

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

Edward Elgar *Concerto in E minor for Cello and Orchestra, Opus 85* CA. 26'
Adagio
Lento – Allegro molto
Adagio
Allegro
Yo-Yo Ma, cello

Profiles of the conductor and soloist appear on pages 10 and 51.
Visit minnesotaorchestra.org/pre for details about pre-concert activities.

THANK YOU

The 2025-26 Classical season is presented by Ameriprise Financial.

**WILLIAM WALTON**

B: March 29, 1902
Oldham, England

D: March 8, 1983
Ischia, Italy

Scapino, A Comedy
Overture

PREMIERED: April 3, 1941

— Tonight’s program of works by British composers begins with a work rooted in a different country’s tradition—the commedia dell’arte, a theatrical form that flourished in Italy in the 17th and 18th centuries. This form was the origin of characters such as Harlequin and Colombine. Although the form declined, many of its stock figures live on in music, where they have inspired such works as Schumann’s *Carnaval*, Stravinsky’s *Petrushka* and *Pulcinella*, Schoenberg’s *Pierrot Lunaire*, Rachmaninoff’s *Polichinelle* and Milhaud’s *Scaramouche*.

A WILY CHARACTER

In Walton’s *Scapino* we meet the titular character, a crafty servant always alert to cutting a good deal, whether for himself or for his master. The young Englishman William Walton chose *Scapino* as a subject when, to celebrate its 50th anniversary in 1941, the Chicago Symphony extended commissions to a number of composers. In the score Walton noted that “*Scapino* is one of the less familiar characters of the commedia dell’arte, the hero of Molière’s *Les Fourberies de Scapin*, who may figure in the complicated ancestry of Figaro. We owe him the word ‘escapade,’ which is descriptive of the character’s stock-in-trade.”

By the time Walton began work on the score in 1940, he was already in the British army, and he worked on the piece as his military duties allowed. *Scapino* was, in fact, one of Walton’s few concert works composed during the war; most of his time went to film scores, such as Laurence Olivier’s *Henry V*. His description of *Scapino* as “A Comedy Overture” is exactly right: this is not a musical portrait of that wily figure, but an evocation of his spirit. Tempos tend to be very fast, and the sonority is high, bright and glittering, often full of the sound of brass and xylophone.

The overture is in a straightforward three-part structure. It gets off to a sizzling start (Walton’s marking is *Molto vivace*), and violas quickly introduce a gliding, sinuous tune that is soon picked up by the violins and other instruments—this will be the musical backbone of *Scapino*. The more

lyric central episode, introduced by solo cello (on a variant of the overture's main theme), offers a moment of relative repose before the opening tempo returns and *Scapino* races to its high-energy conclusion.

Frederick Stock and the Chicago Symphony gave the first performance of *Scapino* on April 3, 1941. Because of the war and his military duties Walton could not attend, and he did not hear the piece until some time later. He revised the score in 1950, and it is the revised version that is always heard today.

Instrumentation: 3 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, English horn, 3 clarinets (1 doubling bass clarinet), 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, castanets, Chinese temple blocks, tambourine, triangle, xylophone, glockenspiel, harp and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY ERIC BROMBERGER.



**SAMUEL
COLERIDGE-TAYLOR**

B: August 15, 1875
London, England

D: September 1, 1912
Croydon, England

**Ballade in A minor for
Orchestra, Opus 33**

PREMIERED:
September 12, 1898

British composer Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's outstanding achievements in music—foremost among them authoring *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast*, the most successful new cantata of his era—are all the more remarkable given his passing of pneumonia at the young age of 37. Sadly, Coleridge-Taylor's fame did not lead to great fortune. His publisher reaped the financial benefits of *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast* when, prior to the oratorio's premiere in 1898, the 23-year-old composer sold the work's full rights for 15 shillings. When the oratorio became a roaring success, Coleridge-Taylor quickly capitalized with two sequels, *The Death of Minnehaha* and *Hiawatha's Departure*, which like *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast* were based on Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's epic poem *The Song of Hiawatha*. These two cantatas enjoyed moderate success, but not on the level of the first in the series. Coleridge-Taylor spent the rest of his life generating compositions at a rapid pace, but only scraping by financially.

RIGHT BEFORE FAME

Hiawatha's Wedding Feast wasn't Coleridge-Taylor's only success in 1898. That February he conducted a conservatory string section in a concert at the Croydon Conservatoire of Music at which Jessie Walmisley, his former classmate at the Royal College of Music, sang his music—part of a blossoming relationship that grew into marriage the next year. In September, two months before the premiere of *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast*, Coleridge-Taylor's Ballade for Orchestra was warmly received in its first performance at the Three Choirs Festival in Gloucester, England, with the composer conducting.

Edward Elgar, who was about to compose his famous *Enigma* Variations, helped facilitate Coleridge-Taylor's connection with the Three Choirs Festival by recommending the young composer to the festival's leaders. The commission was soon secured, and Coleridge-Taylor delivered a single-movement work spanning 13 minutes for an orchestra of typical wind, brass and string complements plus timpani, with piccolo brightening the tone of the wind section, and cymbals as the sole percussion instrument. The piece evidently pleased the festival's leadership, as Coleridge-Taylor returned the next year to conduct the premiere of his *Solemn Prelude*, and in 1903 he contributed a third work, *The Atonement*.

CONFIDENCE, PASSION AND TENDERNESS

The Ballade in A minor is the second of three works Coleridge-Taylor titled Ballade, all of them in minor keys: a D-minor Ballade preceded it in 1895 and a C-minor Ballade came in 1909. This A-minor Ballade conveys confidence, passion and tenderness without a specific programmatic story. Although Coleridge-Taylor designates the key of A minor, the score contains six key changes, all in the work's latter half. The opening is an exciting, dramatic show of strength, with trilling winds above unison strings—but before long the music turns slower, passionate and romantic. These two moods alternate throughout the work, with the urgency of the opening theme ultimately triumphing.

Instrumentation: 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, cymbals and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY CARL SCHROEDER.

**BENJAMIN BRITTEN**

B: November 22, 1913
Lowestoft, England

D: December 4, 1976
Aldeburgh, England

***Four Sea Interludes from
Peter Grimes, Opus 33a*****PREMIERED:**

June 7, 1945 (complete opera);
June 14, 1945 (suite)

Peter Grimes, one of the great operas of the 20th century, depends for much of its force on Britten's superb evocation of the harsh and violent Suffolk coast. But surprisingly enough, the opera got its start in Southern California. Britten had left England for Long Island in 1939. He accepted an invitation to spend the summer of 1941 in Escondido, just north of San Diego, with Peter Pears.

FROM POEM TO OPERA

Early that summer, Pears bought a volume of the poetry of George Crabbe, with which the two young men found themselves enthralled. Britten was particularly taken with Crabbe's *The Borough* (1810), which tells of a deadly collision between a Suffolk fishing village—which represents convention, religion, law and smugness—and Peter Grimes, an outcast, violent, perhaps demented, yet longing for acceptance by the community he despises. The composer returned to England in April 1942, fired by a new passion for his native Suffolk. He composed *Peter Grimes* in 1944-45, and its premiere in June 1945 was a triumph.

The opera is in three acts, and as preludes to the acts or as interludes between scenes Britten composed six orchestral interludes, brief mood-pieces designed to set a scene, establish a mood or hint at character. Even before the opera had been staged, Britten assembled a suite made up of four of these, which he called *Sea Interludes*, and led the London Philharmonic in its premiere on June 14, 1945.

THE MUSIC: PORTRAITS OF THE SEA

DAWN. The first interlude comes at the conclusion of the opera's opening *Prologue*, during which the Borough questions Grimes about the death of his previous apprentice. Here is gray daybreak on the bleak Suffolk coast, evoked by the high, clear, pure sound of unison flutes and violins. This is haunting, evocative music, full of the cries of sea birds, the hiss of surf across rocky beaches, and—menacing in the deep brass—the swell of the sea itself.

SUNDAY MORNING. The second interlude, the prelude to Act II, opens with the sound of church bells pealing madly in the horns and woodwinds. The strings have the theme that one character, Ellen Orford, sings in praise of the sunny sea: “Glitter of waves / And glitter of sunlight / Bid us rejoice / And lift our hearts high.”

MOONLIGHT. A portrait of the tranquil sea, broken by splashes of sound from flute, xylophone and harp, serves as the prelude to the opera’s third act.

STORM. The concluding selection depicts a storm that strikes the coasts; it forms the interlude between Scenes 1 and 2 of Act I. The violence of the opening gives way to a more subdued central section before the storm breaks out again and drives the music to its powerful close.

Instrumentation: 2 flutes (both doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets (1 doubling E-flat clarinet), 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, piccolo trumpet, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, tambourine, tam-tam, xylophone, chimes in B-flat and E-flat, harp and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY ERIC BROMBERGER.



EDWARD ELGAR

B: June 2, 1857
Broadheath, England

D: February 23, 1934
Worcester, England

Concerto in E minor for Cello and Orchestra, Opus 85

PREMIERED:
October 27, 1919

— The Cello Concerto was Elgar’s last important work, completed in the summer of 1919. Into this masterpiece he poured his most personal utterances, underscored by a sense of resignation brought on by the traumas of war. Although he would live another 15 years, this work is from the autumn of his life: his health was already in decline.

The cello’s poignant tone seems to emphasize Elgar’s mood of resignation, which is heightened further by his restrained use of the orchestra. Yet despite the seeming melancholy of the music, the Cello Concerto has rightfully gained a place not only as one of Elgar’s best-known compositions, but as one of the most exalted works for the solo instrument, a concerto deeply loved by cellists and audiences alike. The first performance took place on October 26, 1919, with the composer conducting the London Symphony and Felix Salmond as soloist.

A BALANCE OF OPPOSITES

The Cello Concerto is a work of great beauty and great contradiction. Elgar scores the concerto for a large orchestra, but gives a chamber-like delicacy to much of the music. Moods can change abruptly, from a touching intimacy one moment to an extroverted style the next.

ADAGIO. We seem to hear the old confident Elgar in the cello's sturdy opening recitative, marked *nobilmente*, yet at the main body of the movement things change completely. Without any accompaniment, violas lay out the movement's haunting main theme, which rocks along wistfully on its 9/8 meter. This somber idea sets the mood for the entire opening movement. Even the second subject, announced by pairs of woodwinds, is derived from this theme. Throughout, Elgar reminds the soloist to play *dolcissimo* and *espressivo*.

LENTO–ALLEGRO MOLTO. The first movement is joined to the second by a brief pizzicato reminiscence of the opening recitative, and the solo cello tentatively outlines what will become the main theme of the second movement, a scherzo. Once this movement takes wing, it really flies—it is a sort of perpetual-motion movement, and Elgar marks the cello's part *leggierissimo*: “as light as possible.” Tuneful interludes intrude momentarily on the busy progress, but the cello's breathless rush always returns, and the movement races to a sudden—and pleasing—close.

ADAGIO. The music returns to the mood of the opening movement. Metric units are short here (the marking is 3/8), but Elgar writes long, lyric lines for the soloist, who plays virtually without pause. There is a dreamy, almost disembodied quality to this music.

ALLEGRO. The finale, cast in rondo form, has an extended introduction, combining orchestral flourishes, bits of the opening recitative and a cadenza for the soloist, before plunging into the main part of the movement, marked *Allegro, ma non troppo*. This is launched with some of the old Elgarian swagger, and the music at first seems full of enough confidence to knit up the troubled edges of what has gone before. But this is only a first impression. Gone is the confident energy, and we sense that in place of the music Elgar wanted to write he is giving us the music he *had* to write. Finally a vigorous recurrence of the bold, swaggering theme sweeps away the memory of things past, and the work concludes on a grand flourish.

Instrumentation: solo cello with orchestra comprising 2 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY ROBERT MARKOW.

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RUI DU,
VIOLIN

Rui Du, the Minnesota Orchestra's assistant concertmaster since 2015, has been featured as soloist here in Chen Gang and He Zhanhao's *The Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto* and Alyssa Weinberg's *in somnis*. He was previously a member of the Baltimore Symphony and concertmaster of the Annapolis Symphony, among other positions, and has also been a regular guest concertmaster of China's Qingdao Symphony Orchestra. With his wife Hanna Hyunjung Kim, principal pianist of the New York City Ballet Orchestra, he co-founded Ensemble Muzen, a mixed chamber ensemble in the Twin Cities. Last May he performed a work by David Sterrett on the Minnesota Orchestra's chamber series. As an enthusiastic educator, he has given numerous masterclasses and lectures to conservatories and festivals throughout the U.S. and China. Born and raised in Hefei in China's Anhui Province, he studied at the Shanghai Conservatory, National University of Singapore's Yong Siew Toh Conservatory and Peabody Conservatory. More: minnesotaorchestra.org.



YAZHI GUO,
SUONA

Yazhi Guo is recognized as one of the world's foremost suona performers, who has dedicated his career to integrating Chinese music with global musical traditions. In addition to his performance career, Guo has won multiple awards for his patented innovations made to the suona, hulusi and guzheng—including second prize for Scientific and Technological Progress from China's Ministry of Culture in 1993 for inventing the moveable core for suona. After graduating from the Central Conservatory in Beijing in 1990, Guo taught there for nine years before becoming principal suona of the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra. In 2012, he left the orchestra to pursue jazz studies at the Berklee College of Music. Currently a member of the Silk Road Ensemble, Founding President of the World Music Academy and professor at Bard College, Guo's accolades include the 1998 Pro Musicis Award and the 2013 Hong Kong Best Artist of the Year. More: www.yazhigu.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 collaborated with most recently in November 2025. Later this season she will lead the Orchestra in film music concerts featuring *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, *Disney in Concert – The Sound of Magic* and *Disney PRIDE in Concert*, among other concerts. More: minnesotaorchestra.org.



ERIN KEEFE,
VIOLIN

Erin Keefe, the Minnesota Orchestra’s concertmaster since 2011, has appeared numerous times as a soloist with the Orchestra, including in violin concertos by Beethoven, Brahms, Bruch, Mendelssohn and Weill, as well as Bernstein’s *Serenade after Plato’s “Symposium”* and Dvořák’s *Romance for Violin and Orchestra*. A dedicated educator, she joined the violin faculty at the Curtis Institute of Music in fall 2022. Winner of an Avery Fisher Career Grant and the Pro Musicis International Award, she has appeared as soloist with orchestras throughout the world. She has been an Artist of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. As a guest concertmaster, she has appeared with the New York Philharmonic, Pittsburgh Symphony, Seoul Philharmonic and Sao Paulo Symphony. She has recorded a number of violin-and-clarinet works with Minnesota Orchestra Conductor Laureate Osmo Vänskä. In March she will appear on the Orchestra’s chamber music series in a work by Ernest Chausson. More: minnesotaorchestra.org.



CHIA-HSUAN LIN,
CONDUCTOR

Chia-Hsuan Lin captivates audiences with her electric performances. Originally from Taiwan, she serves as music director of the Rochester Symphony and principal guest conductor of the Richmond Symphony, where she inaugurated the 2025–26 subscription series. Following notable debuts with the National Symphony, Charlotte Symphony, Portland Symphony and Britt Festival Orchestra, this season she debuts with the Orlando Philharmonic and returns to the Charlotte Symphony, Virginia Symphony and Portland Symphony. Lin's previous engagements include conducting the Saint Louis Symphony, Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, Chautauqua Symphony Orchestra, Fort Wayne Philharmonic, Baltimore Chamber Orchestra and Taipei Philharmonic Chorus. She has also led numerous concerts with the Minnesota Orchestra since 2020. In 2025, she was the New York Philharmonic's cover conductor at Bravo! Vail and featured in the National Symphony's Emerging Conductors Concert under Gianandrea Noseda's mentorship. More: chiahsuanlin.com.



YO-YO MA,
CELLO

Yo-Yo Ma's multi-faceted career is testament to his belief in culture's power to generate trust and understanding. Whether performing new or familiar works for cello, bringing communities together to explore culture's role in society, or engaging unexpected musical forms, he strives to foster connections that stimulate the imagination and reinforce our humanity. Most recently, he began *Our Common Nature*, a cultural journey to celebrate the ways that nature can reunite us in pursuit of a shared future. *Our Common Nature* follows the Bach Project, a 36-community, six-continent tour of J. S. Bach's cello suites paired with local cultural programming. Both endeavors reflect Ma's lifelong commitment to stretching the boundaries of genre and tradition to understand how music helps us to imagine and build a stronger society. Ma was born in 1955 to Chinese parents living in Paris, where he began studying the cello with his father at age four. When he was 7, he moved with his family to New York City, where he continued his cello

studies before pursuing a liberal arts education. He has recorded more than 120 albums, is the winner of 19 Grammy Awards, and has performed for nine American presidents, most recently on the occasion of President Biden’s inauguration. He has received numerous awards, including the National Medal of the Arts, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, and the Birgit Nilsson Prize. He has been a UN Messenger of Peace since 2006, and was recognized as one of TIME magazine’s 100 Most Influential People of 2020. He first performed with the Minnesota Orchestra in 1977 and appeared at Orchestra Hall most recently in June 2017, playing Dvořák’s *Silent Woods* and Haydn’s C-major Cello Concerto under Osmo Vänskä’s direction. More: opus3artists.com, yo-yoma.com.



Yo-Yo Ma in performance with the Minnesota Orchestra in 2017. Photo: Greg Helgeson



JON MCLAUGHLIN, PIANO AND VOCALS

Indiana-born singer-songwriter and pianist Jon McLaughlin, who makes his Minnesota Orchestra debut this month in concerts featuring Ben Rector, first broke out with his 2007 debut *Indiana*, earning fans through heartfelt songwriting, virtuosic piano work and unforgettable live shows. Since then, he’s toured with Billy Joel, Kelly Clarkson and Adele, collaborated with Sara Bareilles and Demi Lovato, and even performed at the Academy Awards. His newest album, *Scenarios* (October 2025), marks a bold new chapter, featuring brand-new songs that showcase both his storytelling and signature piano-driven sound. This past holiday season, McLaughlin brought his beloved Home for the Holidays tour—featuring Morgan James, Kris Allen, David Davis, and T.3—to 13 U.S. cities after two sold-out years in Carmel, Indiana. More: jonmcl.com.



ROZ TSAI,
HOST

Dr. Benhong Rosaline Tsai serves as chief human resources officer at The Wilder Foundation. Previously, she held senior leadership roles at several Fortune 500 companies, including vice president of talent, learning and organizational effectiveness at Thrivent and vice president of enterprise learning at Ecolab, as well as leadership positions at Honeywell, Lawson Software (now Infor) and Northern States Power Company (now Xcel Energy). A longtime community volunteer, Dr. Tsai currently serves on the boards of the Minnesota Orchestra and BestPrep. A native of Tianjin, China, she earned degrees from Nankai University, St. Cloud State University and the University of Minnesota, where she also serves as adjunct faculty at the Carlson School of Management.



JURAJ VALČUHA,
CONDUCTOR

Music Director Juraj Valčuha, whose tenure with the Houston Symphony has been extended through the 2027-28 season, is recognized for his expressive artistry and incisive musicianship. He was the music director of the Teatro di San Carlo in Naples from 2016 to 2022 and the first guest conductor of the Konzerthausorchester Berlin. He was chief conductor of the Orchestra Sinfonica Nazionale della RAI from 2009 to 2016. His guest engagements in the 2025-26 season will lead him to orchestra and opera performances in San Francisco, Chicago, Berlin and Geneva, among many others. Since his conducting debut in 2005, Valčuha has led ensembles around the world including U.S. orchestras such as the New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, the National Symphony Orchestra, and the symphony orchestras of Boston, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Montreal, Pittsburgh and San Francisco. He is the recipient of the 2018 Premio Abbiati award in the category of Best Conductor. More: jurajvalcuha.com.



OSMO VÄNSKÄ,
CONDUCTOR

Minnesota Orchestra Conductor Laureate Osmo Vänskä, whose 19-year tenure as the Orchestra's music director concluded in 2022, is renowned internationally for his compelling interpretations of the standard, contemporary and Nordic repertoires. Vänskä's recordings with the Orchestra include all of the Mahler, Sibelius and Beethoven symphonies, released by BIS Records on discs that earned a Grammy Award for Best Orchestral Performance and two additional Grammy nominations. Vänskä also led the ensemble on major tours to Cuba, Europe and South Africa. As a guest conductor, this season he appears with Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, Oslo Philharmonic, City of Birmingham Symphony, Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony and Tokyo Symphony, among other ensembles. He previously served as music director of the Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra and Finland's Lahti Symphony. More: minnesotaorchestra.org, harrisonparrott.com.



FEI XIE,
ARTISTIC CONSULTANT

Fei Xie joined the Minnesota Orchestra as principal bassoon in 2017 after serving as principal bassoon of the Baltimore Symphony, an ensemble he first joined as second bassoonist in 2008. When he won the principal role in 2012, Xie became the first Chinese-born bassoonist to hold such a position in a major American symphony orchestra. Xie has performed the Mozart and Jolivet bassoon concertos with the Minnesota Orchestra and this May will perform a Poulenc trio on the chamber music series. He has also been a soloist with the Baltimore Symphony, Festival Mozaic Orchestra and Sichuan Conservatory Symphony Orchestra. He has been the artistic consultant for the Minnesota Orchestra's annual Lunar New Year concerts since 2022. The 2022 and 2024 concerts also saw Xie joined onstage by his mother and father—the professional Peking Opera musicians Mei Hu and Zhengang Xie, who are yue qin and jing hu masters, respectively. More: minnesotaorchestra.org.



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