

## 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](https://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.

## 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](https://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](http://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](http://opus3artists.com), [yo-yoma.com](http://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](http://jonmcl.com).