

APRIL 2026

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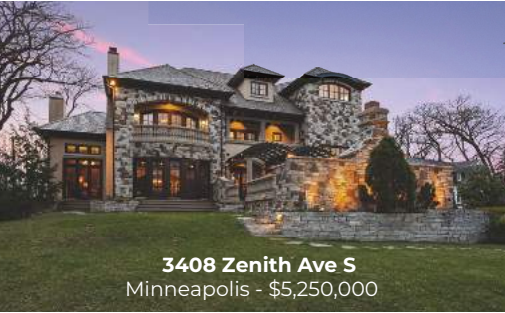


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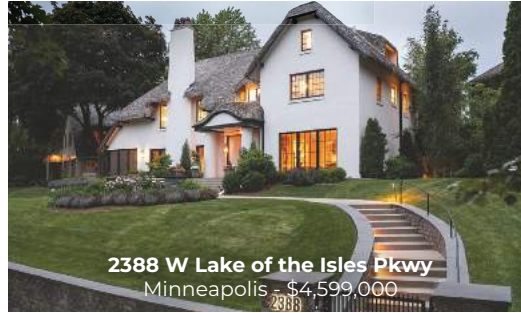
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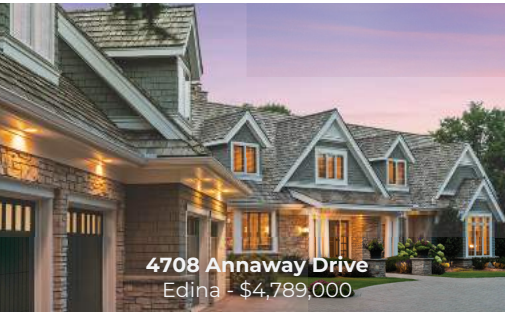
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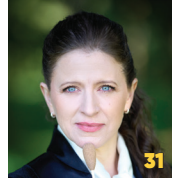
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ORCHESTRA HALL INFORMATION



**ABOUT THE COVER:** Principal Oboe Nathan Hughes performing Mozart’s Oboe Concerto under Thomas Søndergård’s direction in September 2023; this month Hughes plays the Richard Strauss Oboe Concerto. Photo: Greg Helgeson.

**EDITOR’S NOTE:** The March 2026 *Showcase* cover photograph of Thomas Søndergård was taken by Nate Ryan.

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**APRIL 2026**

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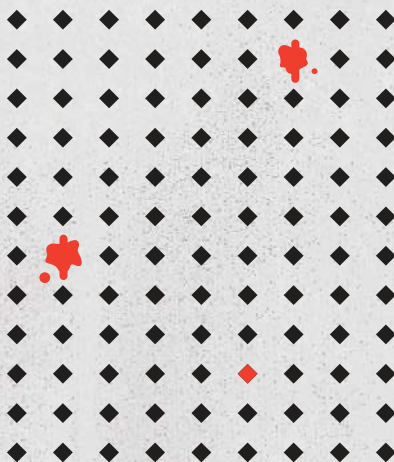


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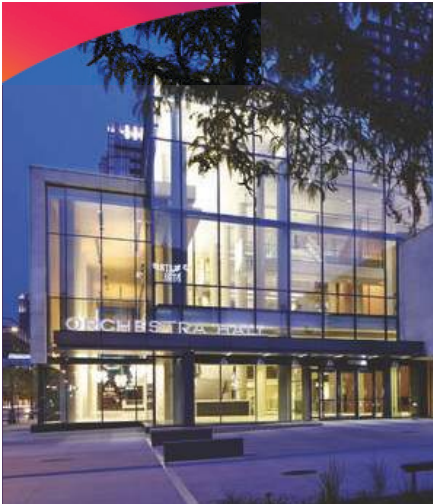
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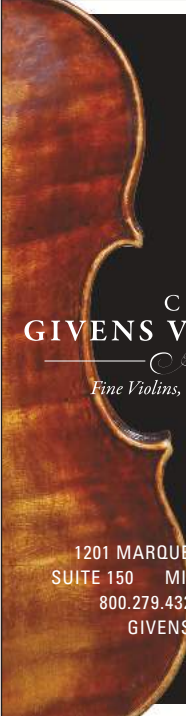
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## PROFILE

# 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](https://minnesotaorchestra.org).



# Westminster Performing Arts Series

The Westminster Performing Arts Series' final performance of the season will be held on two dates, at two locations.

**Reena Esmail's  
*This Love Between Us***

April 25 | 7pm | Macalester College  
April 26 | 4pm | Westminster

*The Westminster Choir will join forces with the Macalester College Choirs under the direction of Dr. Amanda Weber to present an evening of choral music that centers Reena Esmail's piece, This Love Between Us.*

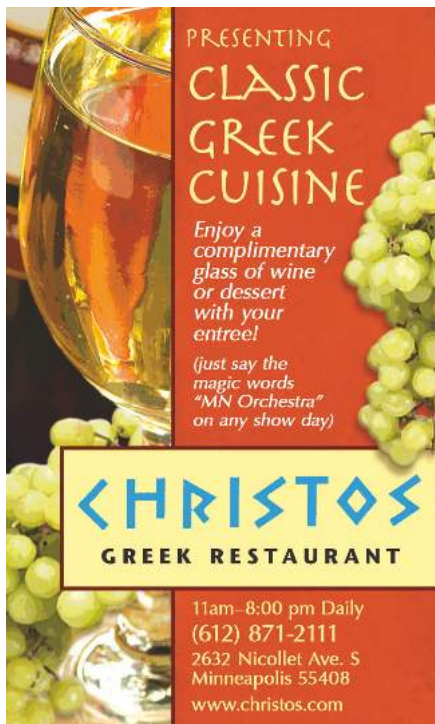
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## RETIRING MUSICIAN SPOTLIGHT: BRIAN LIDDLE

After three decades as a member of the Minnesota Orchestra's bass section, Brian Liddle retired following concerts at the end of March. A graduate of the Curtis Institute of Music, he gained his first professional experience as a substitute with the Philadelphia Orchestra while still a student.

Liddle's first season in Minnesota coincided with Eiji Oue's arrival as music director. "I remember his picture being on Wheaties boxes and billboards all over the city," he recalls. "The Orchestra played the National Anthem at the opening Vikings game, and it was a time of great excitement."

Across 30 years, Liddle performed thousands of concerts at Orchestra Hall and around the world. His favorite memories include sharing the stage with distinguished pianists Peter Serkin, Alfred Brendel and André Watts, as well as international tours to Europe and beyond—ranging from a reception in Vienna to an exciting performance at the Proms with Osmo Vänskä. His family life also intersected with his career. When his daughters were young, Liddle cherished performing family-friendly works such as *Peter and the Wolf* and *Amahl and the Night Visitors*.

"I'm grateful to have worked for the Minnesota Orchestra these past 30 years," he reflects. "It enabled me to provide for my family and get to know many wonderful individuals. I'm often struck by the incredible individual talent assembled on



Zoe Prinds-Flash

our stage, which was especially evident in our recent performance of Bruckner's Eighth Symphony. I especially appreciate the efforts of Ken and Judy Dayton, Ron Lund, and John and Nancy Lindahl. Their tireless support and generous contributions are greatly appreciated, as they enabled the Orchestra to bring quality classical music to the Twin Cities and beyond."

Liddle credits the bass section's teamwork as one of the most rewarding aspects of his career. "There is great camaraderie among the bass section," he says. "We play as a cohesive ensemble at a very high level. I'm thankful to have been a member of this outstanding section."

[Continued on page 14](#)



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Tue, Nov 10, 2026 • 10:30 AM  
Wed, Nov 11, 2026 • 7:30 PM

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Alexandra Nepomnyashchaya, *piano*  
Sun, Jan 10, 2027 • 3:00 PM

Trio Afiori  
Fleur Barron, *mezzo soprano*  
Anthony McGill, *clarinet*  
Gloria Chien, *piano*  
Tue, Feb 23, 2027 • 7:30 PM

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## RETIRING MUSICIAN SPOTLIGHT: BRIAN LIDDLE

Continued from page 12

“Brian has been a key contributor to our mighty bass section for over 30 years,” says Principal Bass Kristen Bruya. “I don’t think I’ve ever heard a bigger, fatter sound from a single bass—it’s a beautiful cushion of bass fundamental that we will miss. We’ll also miss his quick wit. He’s always ready with a one-liner that has us all laughing.”

In retirement, Liddle plans to spend more time with his wife, daughters

and dog, and hopes to volunteer in support of military veterans. He will continue to carry gratitude for both colleagues and audiences. “The Orchestra often feeds off the energy the audience puts out,” he said. “It’s a joy to play for such an appreciative and loyal community.”

Visit [minnesotaorchestra.org/stories](https://minnesotaorchestra.org/stories) to read an extended Q&A with Liddle.

## CRITICS’ CORNER: RECENT CONCERT REVIEWS

— “[The Dvořák Sixth Symphony] benefited from the orchestra’s sublimely blended string sound and overflowed with exceptional solos from among the winds, particularly principal French horn Michael Gast. He expressed the urgency and open-hearted nature of romanticism with expert eloquence...”

—Sheila Regan, *Pioneer Press*,  
February 27, 2026

“[Leila Josefowicz] stamps a very distinctive mark on [Thomas Adès’ Violin Concerto]....Josefowicz receives enormously characterful support from the Minnesota Orchestra under Thomas Søndergård...It’s a thoroughly rewarding disc...”

—David Kettle, *The Strad*,  
March 2026

“[Yo-Yo Ma] sang out the [Elgar Cello Concerto’s] resonant world-weary tone, dipping into the adrenaline of those who use it to endure hardship before concluding in a valedictory mood that felt like it could stand as a career capper for an artist who’s been visiting the Twin Cities for four decades. It was the climax of a concert that felt like the consummation of the orchestra’s identity as [Thomas] Søndergård’s ensemble....[T]his was a night best remembered as when Ma offered bittersweet solace to a metropolis in need.”

—Rob Hubbard,  
*The Minnesota Star Tribune*,  
March 4, 2026

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## NEW PRINCIPAL GUEST CONDUCTOR, NEW SUMMER COLLABORATORS

The Minnesota Orchestra announced a major artistic appointment in mid-February when Greek conductor-violinist Leonidas Kavakos was named principal guest conductor, a role set to begin in fall of 2027. The three-year appointment revives a position last filled four decades ago; past principal guest conductors were Leonard Slatkin, Klaus Tennstedt and Charles Dutoit.

The new post builds on Kavakos' long relationship with the ensemble, dating to his 1995 debut—and even further back, in fact, to Kavakos' youth in Athens, when he listened to Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra albums led by Dimitri Mitropoulos. Kavakos will appear in multiple programs each season as both conductor and violin soloist. “I am tremendously looking forward to working more in depth with this fantastic Orchestra and creating powerful musical experiences for the city of Minneapolis,” said Kavakos. Music Director Thomas Søndergård praised Kavakos' “integrity and creativity” and will lead concerts with Kavakos appearing as violin soloist in May 2028.

Additional exciting news was unveiled in mid-March when the Orchestra announced plans for the 2026 Summer at Orchestra Hall season. Running from July 16 to August 8, the festival will spotlight two acclaimed artists—singer-mandolinist Chris Thile and countertenor John Holiday—each headlining a week of concerts that display disparate sides of their musical personalities. Further highlights include a celebration of John Williams' film scores led by Sarah Hicks, and a collaboration with singers Jearlyn Steele and Jevetta Steele, featuring repertoire from the Great American Songbook. Visit [minnesotaorchestra.org](http://minnesotaorchestra.org) for the full details on summer concerts—as well as the newly announced 2026–27 season.



Leonidas Kavakos

Marco Borggreve



Chris Thile

Josh Goleman



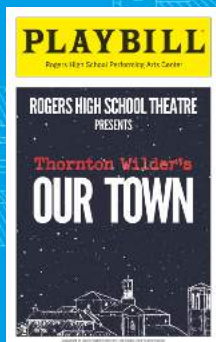
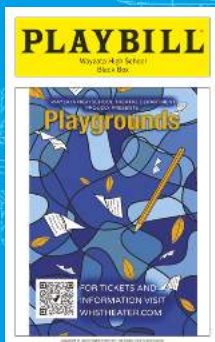
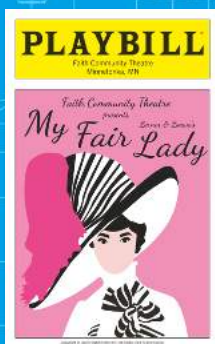
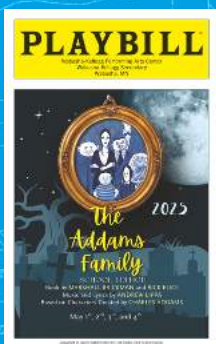
John Holiday

Shervin Lainez

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## TCHAIKOVSKY SYMPHONY NO. 6

John Storgårds, conductor  
 Leila Josefowicz, violin  
 Sarah Hicks, broadcast host

THU APR 9 11AM | FRI APR 10 8PM

George Antheil *McKonkey's Ferry, Concert Overture* CA. 8'

John Adams *Violin Concerto* CA. 32'  
 [Quarter=78 – Quarter=112]  
 Chaconne: Body through which  
 the dream flows  
 Toccata  
*Leila Josefowicz, violin*

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

CA. 20'

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky *Symphony No. 6 in B minor,* CA. 45'  
*Opus 74, Pathétique*  
 Adagio – Allegro non troppo  
 Allegro con grazia  
 Allegro molto vivace  
 Finale: Adagio lamentoso

Profiles of the conductor, soloist and broadcast host appear on pages 46 through 48. 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.  
 These concerts are co-sponsored by Catherine R. and Steven Webster.

Friday night Classical concerts air live on [YourClassical Minnesota Public Radio](#).  
 The April 10 concert will also be broadcast live on [Twin Cities PBS \(TPT 2\)](#) and  
 stream live on the Orchestra's YouTube channel.

**GEORGE ANTHEIL****B:** July 8, 1900  
Trenton, New Jersey**D:** February 12, 1959  
New York City***McKonkey's Ferry,*  
Concert Overture****PREMIERED:**  
December 12, 1948

The life of American composer George Antheil—who proclaimed himself the “Bad Boy of Music”—was full of dichotomies. Born at the start of the 20th century to German immigrants and raised bilingually, Antheil developed his most famous works in a “mechanical” style after moving to Europe in 1922. After a successful debut concert in London and a brief period of living in Berlin (where he met Igor Stravinsky—an influential figure in his life), he moved to Paris and became part of a circle of visual artists and writers who supported him significantly. Following the tremendous success of his *Ballet Mécanique* in 1926, Antheil changed his composition style and fell out of favor with audiences and supporters in both Europe and the U.S.

Antheil eventually moved back to America, settling first in New York and ultimately in Hollywood, and focused on composing film music, Neoclassical pieces, theatrical ballets (some in collaboration with choreographers Martha Graham and George Balanchine), symphonies and a few operas. Aside from music, Antheil’s activities were versatile, to say the least. He collaborated with Austrian-American actress Hedy Lamarr in inventing a frequency hopper radio guidance system for torpedoes and wrote an autobiography, newspaper and magazine articles (including one about endocrinology) and a mystery novel. In 1959 he suffered a fatal heart attack in New York City.

**MUSIC WITH REVOLUTIONARY ROOTS**

In 1930 Antheil’s opera *Transatlantic* premiered in Germany. A farce about a fake U.S. presidential election, the music referenced jazz and popular Americana tunes in an attempt to communicate with a wide range of listeners. The seed of this music blossomed into the sound Antheil solidified in his symphonic music of the ’40s. This sound is crystal clear in his symphonic overture *McKonkey’s Ferry*, completed in 1948 and coming after a decade of intense study of orchestral music and form—focusing particularly on works by Beethoven, Prokofiev and Shostakovich, as well as jazz and other American music.

Antheil had a lifelong love of visual art that resulted in collaborations with Fernand Léger, Man Ray and other visual artists. For *McKonkey's Ferry Overture*, he was inspired by Emanuel Gottlieb Leutze's famous "Washington Crossing the Delaware" oil paintings of 1851. Ironically enough, as Leutze was a German-American artist like Antheil, the paintings celebrate Washington's victory over Hessian forces—German soldiers who aligned with the British in the Revolutionary War—at the Battle of Trenton, New Jersey.

While not expressly stated, this overture could very well be a quiet political statement from Antheil. Antheil's avant-garde music fell out of fashion with the rise of Nazi Germany, and he experienced World War II and Hitler's defeat while living in the U.S. Composing a militaristic overture three years after the end of World War II, inspired by a painting related to the defeat of German forces in another century, could be a statement against German fascism—a quiet statement, but a statement nonetheless.

## AN EVOCATION OF BATTLE

Antheil's eight-minute overture displays clear orchestration, clear melodic themes, call-and-response, counterpoint, canon (the same melody starting at different times, yet still creating logical harmonies), military-style percussion, march rhythms, well-highlighted solo moments (especially for violin, cello, piccolo, English horn and brass), and well-placed harp glissandos that give a wonderful color to specific, punctuated moments. While the inspirational painting depicts soldiers on a boat in the water, the music more strongly symbolizes a battle, perhaps the one in Leutze's companion painting "Washington Rallying the Troops," also dating from 1851.

*McKonkey's Ferry Overture* received its premiere by the National Symphony Orchestra under Hans Kindler's direction on December 12, 1948. Its performances this week are the Minnesota Orchestra's first.

**Instrumentation:** 3 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, castanets, tambourine, triangle, harp and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY ANTHONY R. GREEN.



## JOHN ADAMS

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

## Violin Concerto

**PREMIERED:** January 19, 1994

The idea that there should be a John Adams Violin Concerto was born in the mind of Jorja Fleezanis—the Minnesota Orchestra’s concertmaster from 1989 to 2009—on March 26, 1985, when she heard Adams’ *Harmonielehre* on the radio. The week before, conductor Edo de Waart and the San Francisco Symphony, where Fleezanis was then associate concertmaster, had given the first performances of that remarkable 40-minute orchestral score.

*Harmonielehre* is a milestone in Adams’ development as a composer. It is also an exceedingly difficult piece to play. During the rehearsals, performance and the recording sessions that followed, Fleezanis had been too busy counting to get a coherent impression of the work. When she had a chance to hear *Harmonielehre* from the outside, as it were, she found it a knockout. The moment the broadcast was over, she picked up the telephone, called Adams and asked him to write her a violin concerto.

Much happened over the next eight years. De Waart left San Francisco for Minneapolis to become the Minnesota Orchestra’s eighth music director, and Fleezanis moved here as well, becoming the first woman to hold the Orchestra’s concertmaster position. De Waart reopened the question of a violin concerto, and eventually a triple commission was arranged by the Minnesota Orchestra, New York City Ballet and London Symphony Orchestra.

### “WE HAVE BEGUN IT”

On January 7, 1993, at 8:19 p.m., Fleezanis received a fax from Adams with the words “Wir haben es angefangen”—German for “we have begun it”—and an A-minor chord about five octaves deep. (Adams had previously told her that the work would be in A minor and had promised that it would be “drenchingly beautiful.”)

In no way did Adams approach the task lightly; indeed to begin with he found it quite intimidating. For one thing, so many composers—Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Schumann, Brahms, Tchaikovsky, Sibelius, Elgar, Stravinsky,

Berg, Schoenberg, just to begin a list—have written just one violin concerto. “These,” Adams has remarked, “tend to be among their greatest works, so unless one is completely historically indifferent, which I can’t say I am, one tends to tread lightly.”

At the same time, Adams was excited by the challenge: “The violin commands incredible lyric intensity and has a fantastic capacity to deliver a white-hot message.” Adams wanted to write a truly violinistic piece, and Fleezanis eventually became his partner in it. Suggestions, emendations and counter-suggestions flew back and forth by phone and fax between Berkeley and Edina. Sometimes three alternative new versions of a passage would arrive by fax, and Fleezanis would play the various solutions back over the phone, sometimes into Adams’ answering machine.

Adams originally had imagined a two-movement concerto lasting a little over 20 minutes, something on the scale of Stravinsky’s Violin Concerto. The idea was to have a highly energetic first movement and then a contrasting slow movement, probably a chaconne, which would begin quietly but end grandly. As he worked, Adams became dissatisfied with this design and saw the musical material demand a three-movement plan. Thus the work in its final form has the familiar shape of fast-slow-fast. It is also a far larger work than Adams had originally foreseen and takes something like 32 minutes in performance. As Adams put it, “I was trying at first to avoid a collision with destiny; nevertheless it came out big.”

Fleezanis, de Waart and the Minnesota Orchestra performed the world premiere of the concerto on January 19, 1994—not quite a decade after Fleezanis first proposed the piece—and Fleezanis reprised it here as soloist in November 2003, this time under the direction of Osmo Vänskä. This week’s concerts mark the first time the concerto has been heard at Orchestra Hall with a soloist other than Fleezanis, who passed away in September 2022 at age 70.

## THE CONCERTO: FREEDOM, CONTRAST AND TRADITION

[QUARTER=78–QUARTER=112]. The first music we hear is a figuration in the orchestra—eight notes rising, to begin with—whose presence is constant enough to give us a sense of regularity, but whose details keep changing. The solo violin lays a wonderfully free melody across this pattern. “Composed rhapsodizing,” Fleezanis called it, and this sense of freedom, of something being invented on the spot and born out of the very spirit of the violin, the contrast between this and the firm dance floor provided by the orchestra, is characteristic of the concerto throughout. With a brilliant

passage for flute, the orchestra makes its exit, and after a cadenza for the violin and a brief coda at a more spacious tempo, the music flows directly into the second movement.

**CHACONNE: BODY THROUGH WHICH THE DREAM FLOWS.** The middle movement's title is a phrase taken from a poem by Robert Haas. A chaconne is a set of variations over a repeated bass or harmonic pattern. As such it is, as Adams puts it, "a highly identifiable musical artifact"—the Pachelbel Canon is probably the most familiar example—and the "recognition factor" is definitely part of Adams' plan.

The six-measure repeated bass itself is a cliché, just as the chaconne and passacaglia basses in Baroque and earlier music were generally cliché. While in Baroque music these basses usually stayed at the same pitch and kept their rhythmic shape, Adams' bass begins to travel after the third variation. At first, the rhythm changes, and the pattern that took six measures to traverse when we first heard it is now expanded to nine. Later it will, for example, be compressed to four.

In this movement, too, there is a contrast between firmness and freedom (the body and the dream) as the violin melodies float and soar freely across the bass. Something comparable happens in the harmony as well. The bass, at first, outlines the simplest imaginable major-key harmonies, but later, though it always remains recognizable, moves into other, less familiar modes.

**TOCCARE.** The finale's title is an Italian verb meaning both to touch and to play a keyboard instrument—and we are more familiar with "toccata," the noun derived from it. In post-Baroque music, a toccata is usually a brilliant display piece with a steady rat-tat of 16th notes, and this *Toccare* is a finale in that spirit. Adams' wife, the photographer Deborah O'Grady, referred to the fast movements of his Chamber Symphony as "caffeine music"—one of the most characteristic features of the Adams-O'Grady household is the aroma of fresh and strong coffee—and this heady, high-spirited finale is definitely of that ilk. And no nonsense about decaf, either.

**Instrumentation:** solo violin with orchestra comprising 2 flutes (both doubling piccolo), 2 oboes (1 doubling English horn), 2 clarinets (1 doubling bass clarinet), 2 bassoons, 2 horns, trumpet, timpani, bass drum, 2 bongos, claves, 2 congas, high cowbell, suspended cymbal, guiro, tambourine, marimba, vibraphone, chimes, 2 synthesizers and strings

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



PETER ILYICH  
TCHAIKOVSKY

B: May 7, 1840  
Votkinsk, Russia

D: November 6, 1893  
St. Petersburg, Russia

Symphony No. 6 in  
B minor, Opus 74,  
*Pathétique*

PREMIERED: October 28, 1893

— Much conjecture has surrounded the “program” of Tchaikovsky’s Sixth Symphony. During its composition he wrote to his nephew Vladimir Davidov that “the program will be of a kind that will remain an enigma to all—let them guess... This program is saturated with subjective feeling... while composing it in my mind I shed many tears.”

### PASSIONATE, NOT PATHETIC

Tchaikovsky considered calling it the “Tragic,” but when his brother Modeste suggested *pateticheskyy*, the composer exclaimed, “Excellent, Modya, bravo, pateticheskyy!” The word was inscribed immediately on the score’s title page and taken to the publisher Jurgenson. Within a day Tchaikovsky changed his mind. But Jurgenson, no doubt with an eye towards the sales potential of such a catchy title, let the work go out as *Symphonie pathétique*, and the name stuck. It is worth noting that the word *pathétique* derives from the Greek *patheticos*, which has a different flavor than in most modern English contexts, where it usually implies inadequacy and pity, as in “a pathetic attempt.” The Russian *pateticheskyy* refers to something passionate, emotional and, as in the original Greek, having overtones of suffering.

Death seems to lurk in much of the work. The words “death” and “dying” occur in a letter Tchaikovsky wrote explaining the plan of the symphony. Some listeners hear an expression of a hypersensitive artist given to alternating moods of exaltation and dejection, and try to follow each emotional state in the music as a mirror of the composer’s soul. Others take their cue from critic Philip Hale, who wrote: “Here is a work that, without a hint or a suggestion of a program, sums up in the most imaginative language the life of man, with his illusions, desires, loves, struggles, victories, unavoidable end.”

Tchaikovsky began working on his last symphony in February 1893 and conducted the first performance on October 28 in St. Petersburg. It was only mildly successful, yet he felt that it was “the best and especially the most sincere of my works. I love it as I have never loved any of my other musical

creations.” At the second performance, three weeks later, conducted by Eduard Nápravník, the symphony left a powerful impression. But the composer was dead: his *Symphonie pathétique* had become his swan song.

### THE SYMPHONY: POIGNANT AND TRAILING TO SILENCE

**ADAGIO–ALLEGRO NON TROPPO.** The introductory bassoon solo, which crawls slowly through the murkiest colors of the orchestra, becomes the melodic material for the *Allegro* section’s principal theme. The second theme, presented by the violins, is probably the most memorable of the entire work, haunting in its beauty, poignancy and sad lyricism. The clarinet brings this theme down to the limits of audibility. A crash shatters the mood abruptly, and the development section ensues, one of the most violent and ferocious passages Tchaikovsky ever wrote. A brief recapitulation is followed by a consoling coda.

**ALLEGRO CON GRAZIA.** The second movement, in 5/4 meter, has famously been called a “broken-backed waltz, limping yet graceful.” A *Trio* section in the middle, also in 5/4, is noteworthy for the steady, pulsing notes in the bassoons, double basses and timpani.

**ALLEGRO MOLTO VIVACE.** The *Pathétique*’s third movement combines elements of a light scherzo with a heavy march. So festive and exuberant does the march become that one is tempted to stand and cheer at the end, making all the more effective the anguished cry that opens the finale.

**FINALE: ADAGIO LAMENTOSO.** The finale’s infinitely warm and tender second theme in D major works itself into a brilliant climax and crashes in a tumultuous descent of scales in the strings. The first theme returns in continuously rising peaks of intensity, agitation and dramatic conflict. Finally the energy is spent, the sense of struggle subsides, and a solemn trombone chorale leads into the return of the movement’s second theme, no longer in D major but in B minor—dark, dolorous, weighted down in inexpressible grief and resignation. The underlying heart throb of double basses eventually ceases and the symphony dies away into blackness... nothingness.

**Instrumentation:** 3 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, tam-tam and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY ROBERT MARKOW.

2026/27

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**Sarah Hicks**, conductor

FRI APR 17 7PM | SAT APR 18 2PM

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Today's performance lasts approximately 1 hour and 40 minutes, including a 20-minute intermission. Out of respect for the musicians and your fellow audience members, please remain seated until the conclusion of the concert.



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A profile of conductor Sarah Hicks appears on page 46.  
Visit [minnesotaorchestra.org/pre](https://minnesotaorchestra.org/pre) for details about pre-concert activities.

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## BRAHMS SYMPHONY NO. 4

Kristiina Poska, conductor

Nathan Hughes, oboe

THU APR 23 11AM | FRI APR 24 8PM

*Kristiina Poska's appearance in these concerts is supported by Dr. Jennine Speier and her late husband John, dedicated advocates for the work of women conductors.*

Julia Adolphe *Underneath the Sheen* CA. 8'

Richard Strauss Concerto in D major for Oboe and Small Orchestra CA. 25'  
 Allegro moderato  
 Andante  
 Vivace – Allegro  
 [No pause between movements]  
*Nathan Hughes, oboe*

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

Johannes Brahms Symphony No. 4 in E minor, Opus 98 CA. 40'  
 Allegro non troppo  
 Andante moderato  
 Allegro giocoso  
 Allegro energico e passionato

Profiles of the conductor and soloist appear on pages 47 and 48.  
 Visit [minnesotaorchestra.org/pre](https://minnesotaorchestra.org/pre) for details about pre-concert activities.

## THANK YOU

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**JULIA ADOLPHE**

**B:** May 16, 1988  
New York City

*Underneath the Sheen*

**PREMIERED:**  
September 27, 2018

For today's composers, embarking on a new orchestral work might pose something of a quandary: is there such a thing as too much inspiration? After all, living composers have thousands of years' worth of music, artwork, literature, history and more to use for inspiration—easily accessible at their fingertips and increasing every year. This potentially overwhelming amount of source material drives some to take a dialectical approach like the one articulated by the German idealist and philosopher Georg Hegel. His theory describes how an entity can advance a status quo (thesis), which prompts a reaction (antithesis), eventually combining to create something new (synthesis), and this “something new” eventually becomes the status quo, allowing for the cycle to begin again.

**MUSICAL SYNTHESIS AND NATURE**

Contemporary American composer Julia Adolphe's *Underneath the Sheen* (2018) may be a perfect example of a synthesis composition. Adolphe combines elements of older styles with elements of more bold, direct and experimental contemporary composition. Perhaps her approach is a combination of her geography, family history and education. Adolphe was born in 1988 in New York City, a place known for constantly providing old and new artistic content of high quality. She currently lives in Nashville, having studied at Cornell University and the Thornton School of Music at the University of Southern California. Adolphe also has an uncle who is an active composer, pianist and influencer in the New York music scene.

Concerning *Underneath the Sheen*, Adolphe cites nature as the primary source of inspiration. In a 2018 interview, she states that the piece “envisions the movement of light edging and shining through a canopy of leaves and branches as observed from the forest floor. The endurance and quiet omnipotence of California's Redwood trees served as the source of inspiration.” Additionally, there is a personal element to Adolphe's compositional approach. She confesses that “the music explores this oddly foreign yet deeply intimate atmosphere, a sense of a lost home, a state of vulnerability.”

*Underneath the Sheen* was premiered on September 17, 2018, by the Los Angeles Philharmonic, with Gustavo Dudamel conducting.

## THE MUSIC IN BRIEF

A sheen is defined as a gentle, soft glow on a surface. Adolphe achieves this shimmering sound through the use of distinct orchestrations including sustained dissonant harmonies; resonant percussion sounds from the cymbals, vibraphone, tam-tam and the crotales; filigree textures (small, virtuosic gestures that weave together to combine intricate rhythms) in the harp, keyboard percussion and piano; resonant brass expressions; and notated resonance reminiscent of Christopher Theofanidis' symphonic exploration *Rainbow Body*. Throughout the eight-minute work, the energy slowly waxes and wanes. There is no real melody, but there are a number of small melodic fragments that hint at melody within clear harmonies. The conclusion of the piece strongly suggests a melody that is never fully revealed. Perhaps a longer, clear melody is lying underneath the sheen?

**Instrumentation:** 2 flutes (1 doubling piccolo and alto flute), 2 oboes (1 doubling English horn), 2 clarinets (1 doubling bass clarinet), 2 bassoons (1 doubling contrabassoon), 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, crotales, suspended cymbal, maracas, tambourine, tam-tam, temple blocks, 2 tom-toms, vibraphone, harp, piano and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY ANTHONY R. GREEN.



### RICHARD STRAUSS

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

**D:** September 8, 1949,  
Garmisch-Partenkirchen,  
Germany

**Concerto in D major  
for Oboe and Small  
Orchestra**

**PREMIERED:**  
February 16, 1946

Late in life, Richard Strauss rediscovered the charms of absolute, that is, non-programmatic, music for instruments. In 1879 he had begun his career as a composer with *Tailor's Polka* for piano, and with *Aus Italien* in 1886 he began a flirtation with illustrative music, soon taking a more decisive step in that direction with *Macbeth*. From then until 1903, the year of *Symphonia domestica*, the orchestral tone poem was Strauss' principal concern; with *Salome*, finished and performed in 1905, he completed the shift to what he thought of as his real *métier*, that of opera composer.

When Strauss was in his 70s, things changed. As always, he was motivated by practical considerations. The Nazi regime he had neither endorsed nor repudiated had plunged the world into war, and prospects for opera were not good. Theaters were going up in flames or collapsing as rubble, musicians and technical personnel were absorbed into the armed forces, and in 1944 the theatrical establishments that had still been functioning were shut down as part of an attempt to alleviate the fuel crisis.

Having completed his last opera, *Capriccio*, in 1941, Strauss next wrote his Second Horn Concerto and additional substantial works, as well as this Oboe Concerto. However it came about, the old man found the strength and the concentration to present to the world one more bundle of masterpieces, major and minor, and, even at their most lightweight, music of elegance and purity.

## THE COMPOSER AND THE GIs

Among the music-loving American soldiers stationed in Bavaria whose curiosity was aroused by Strauss' Garmisch villa was Alfred Mann, who would later become a distinguished musicologist and teacher as well as an enlivening conductor of Baroque music. As a refugee from the Third Reich, Mann was fluent in German and thus particularly welcomed when he called to pay his respects. He was invited to return, and on several later visits brought along a younger friend, John de Lancie, who had joined the army as a bandsman but was later transferred to the Office of Strategic Services.

Though only 21 when he was drafted, de Lancie had already been Fritz Reiner's principal oboe in the Pittsburgh Symphony; in 1954 he went on to succeed his teacher, the great Marcel Tabuteau, as principal oboist of the Philadelphia Orchestra, and in 1977 he was appointed successor to Rudolf Serkin as director of his alma mater, the Curtis Institute of Music.

"During one of my visits with Strauss," de Lancie recalled, "I asked him if, in view of the numerous beautiful, lyric solos for oboe in almost all his works, he had ever considered writing a concerto for oboe. He answered 'NO,' and there was no more conversation on the subject. He later told a fellow musician friend of mine (Alfred Mann...) that the idea had taken root as a result of that remark. He subsequently, in numerous interviews and letters, spoke of this concerto in reference to my visits with him, and I have a letter from him inviting me to the first performance in Zurich.... After my return to America and civilian life in 1946, I corresponded with the family. I received a letter from the editor of Boosey [& Hawkes, Strauss'

English publisher] informing me of a request from Strauss that I should be offered the first performance in America....”

That was not to be: the first American performance was given in 1948 on a broadcast by Mitch Miller and the Columbia Concert Orchestra under Daniel Saidenberg. Strauss’ autograph score is headed “Oboe Concerto 1945/ suggested by an American soldier/oboist from Chicago”; nonetheless, until he recorded it in 1988, de Lancie had only a single opportunity to perform “his” concerto, and that was with Eugene Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra at Interlochen, Michigan, in the summer of 1964.

## AN ENDURANCE CHALLENGE

Oboists of course long for opportunities to play this work, but they also tend to go pale when you say the words “Strauss Concerto.” Most particularly this response has to do with the opening, where, after two twitches from the cellos, the oboe has a solo of 57 measures in a fairly leisurely tempo and with not so much as a single 16th-rest. To give the oboist some places to breathe, John de Lancie published and recorded an edition that provides occasional interjections of flute, clarinet and horn. However, Strauss’ original version is used for these performances.

In fact, for sustaining very long wind chords, Strauss urges Bernhard Samuel’s aerophone, or aerophor, described in the tenth edition of *The Oxford Companion to Music* as “a device patented in 1912 to help wind instrument players. A small bellows, worked by one foot, communicated by means of a tube with a corner of the mouth of the player, leaving him free to carry on his normal breathing process through his nose whilst his mouth is supplied with the air required for his instrument by means of the bellows.” Today’s wind players wax derisive at the thought of using a mechanical aid of this sort. They have also become increasingly adept at circular breathing, that is, simultaneous inhalation and exhalation.

By whichever means, after having conquered the technical difficulty of endless breath supply, the oboist finds a melodic line that is sinuous and lovely, thoroughly vocal in manner: the oboe seems to be a kind of *seconda donna*, somewhere between serious or semi-serious heroine and soubrette. The orchestral framework of the concerto is delightfully detailed as well as managed with admirable (and necessary) discretion and tact.

## THE CONCERTO IN BRIEF

The cello twitch that starts the music rolling turns out to be a pervasive feature of the first movement; it is also a bit of common ground between that movement and the gentle *Andante*. Here, too, Strauss begins with a

cruel endurance challenge, an unbroken cantilena 33 measures long. The *Andante* spills into an elaborate cadenza with orchestral punctuation, which in turn leads directly into a spirited rondo, gracefully nostalgic for the 18th century. By way of another, shorter cadenza, Strauss moves into an expansive coda. The tempo of this *Allegro* is actually slower than that of the preceding *Vivace*; however, the leisurely beats allow for subdivision into very fast notes so that the effect of the close is nicely brilliant.

**Instrumentation:** solo oboe with orchestra comprising 2 flutes, English horn, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns and strings

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



### JOHANNES BRAHMS

**B:** May 7, 1833  
Hamburg, Germany

**D:** April 3, 1897  
Vienna, Austria

Symphony No. 4 in  
E minor, Opus 98

**PREMIERED:**  
October 25, 1885

Johannes Brahms knew from the outset that his Fourth Symphony was different from the other three, and he apparently entertained fears that it might not be received as warmly. Composed in 1884 and 1885, on the heels of the extroverted Third Symphony of 1883, the Fourth was at once the composer's most passionate and his most abstract symphonic outpouring. As with the Second Symphony, he joked self-consciously about its unique quality, stating in a letter that it consisted of "a few entr'actes and polkas that I happened to have lying around."

### A TROUBLED SYMPHONY

Like the first two symphonies, the Third and Fourth also form a pair, one clear-eyed and direct, the other gray and troubled. The English critic Donald Francis Tovey called the Fourth "one of the rarest things in classical music, a symphony which ends tragically." (The torrid First had broken into triumphant C-major at the end.)

Evidence suggests that the source of the Fourth's high drama was not personal crisis but Brahms' interest during the 1880s in the Greek tragedies of Sophocles and others. Brahms' friendship with conductor Hans von

Bülow beginning in 1881 was also a factor. Bülow, who had just been named director of the Meiningen Court Orchestra, offered Brahms a first-class ensemble with which the composer could “try out” the Fourth and other works.

Bülow prepared the Meiningen Orchestra’s first performance of the Fourth Symphony, which Brahms conducted on October 25, 1885. The composer then took the piece on tour with the Orchestra, performing it throughout northern Germany and the Netherlands, before allowing Hans Richter to present it to the Viennese public in January 1886.

### “UN-BRAHMSIAN,” THEN TRIUMPH

The initial response was surprisingly cool, considering the extent to which the city had lionized Brahms throughout the 1870s and early 1880s. The Fourth was declared “un-Brahmsian.” (At an earlier private performance of a four-hand piano version, the biographer Max Kalbeck reportedly suggested that the fourth movement be omitted altogether.)

Brahms did not lay a finger on the work. And sure enough, by the end of the composer’s life the Viennese public had gained a deeper appreciation not only for the Fourth, but for a whole career of symphonic music that it seemed to sum up. A performance of the Fourth in 1897, a month before the composer’s death, indicated the depth of the shift of opinion.

Here is Florence May’s description of the emotional evening: “A storm of applause broke out at the end of the first movement, not to be quieted until the composer, coming to the front of the artists’ box in which he was seated, showed himself to the audience. An extraordinary scene followed the conclusion of the work. The applauding, shouting audience, its gaze riveted on the figure standing in the balcony, so familiar and yet in present aspect so strange, seemed unable to let him go.

“Tears ran down his cheeks as he stood there shrunken in form, with lined countenance, a strained expression, white hair hanging lank; and through the audience there was a feeling as of a stifled sob, for they knew that they were saying farewell.”

Four weeks later, hordes of admirers turned out for the composer’s funeral.

### TRAGEDY OF THE CLASSICAL KIND

**ALLEGRO NON TROPPO.** The first movement is uniquely tragic in tone, yet glowing with an inner warmth that is unprecedented in Brahms’ orchestral output. “It acts its tragedy with unsurpassable variety of expression and power of climax,” Tovey writes. One is tempted to wonder why tragedy

should sound so beautiful. Some have also found echoes of Beethoven's *Hammerklavier* Sonata in the obsessive descending thirds. (Brahms' appreciation of late Beethoven had deepened recently as a result of hearing his works played by Bülow, who was also one of the great pianists of his day.)

**ANDANTE MODERATO.** The slow movement is a moody intermezzo, lightening the tone to take some of the first movement's weight from the listener's chest.

**ALLEGRO GIOCO.** The third movement is one of the composer's splashiest and most "bacchanalian" scherzos. Its finale-like fervor caused Tovey to ask, "After three movements so full of dramatic incident, what finale is possible?"

**ALLEGRO ENERGICO E PASSIONATO.** The finale Brahms devised for the Fourth Symphony was indeed singular, and was the chief point of controversy when the symphony was introduced. It was perhaps also the work's chief point of contact with the last Beethoven piano sonatas, and with the Renaissance and Baroque music that had recently occupied Brahms the scholar. It is a set of variations on the bass from Bach's Cantata No. 150, *Nach Dir, Herr, verlangst mich* (For Thee, Lord, Do I Long).

Brahms inflects the bassline with a tiny, "Romanticizing" chromatic alteration before submitting it to a set of variations that gradually reduces the "theme" to a vague, schematized scaffolding. Such a procedure calls to mind not only Baroque works such as Bach's Chaconne for solo violin but also the variation movements of late Beethoven. The Opus 111 Sonata, Beethoven's last, also ends with an ethereal set of variations whose theme is slowly reduced, bit by bit, to little more than an abstract harmonic skeleton.

In retrospect, the orchestral variations were perhaps the only way Brahms could have ended the Fourth Symphony—with a conservative twist that set musical limits by evoking Baroque harmonic ideals, yet creating closure through subtle thematic reminiscences and a reduction to harmonic essentials.

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

PROGRAM NOTE BY PAUL HORSLEY.

# Upcoming Concerts

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## Søndergård Conducts Wagner and Bartók

FRI MAY 8 8PM

SAT MAY 9 7PM

Michelle DeYoung, mezzo

Nathan Berg, bass-baritone

WAGNER Prelude to *Lohengrin*

WAGNER Prelude and *Liebested*  
from *Tristan and Isolde*

BARTÓK *Bluebeard's Castle*

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## Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets™ in Concert

MAY 14–16 7PM + MAY 14: JUST ADDED! +

MAY 17 2PM

Sarah Hicks, conductor

## Hindoyan and Rieppel

THU MAY 28 11AM

FRI MAY 29 8PM

Domingo Hindoyan, conductor

Erich Rieppel, timpani

HAILSTORK *An American Port of Call*

AKIHO *Timpani Concerto*

FRANCK *Symphony in D minor*

## Søndergård, Barton and Prokofiev

THU JUN 4 11AM

FRI JUN 5 8PM

SAT JUN 6 7PM

Jamie Barton, mezzo

BARBER *Adagio for Strings*

LIEBERSON *Neruda Songs*

PROKOFIEV *Symphony No. 7*



Thomas Søndergård



Erich Rieppel



Jamie Barton

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## MORE TO HEAR: THE LISTENING PROJECT

Thomas Søndergård, conductor

Janai Brugger, soprano

Henry Dorn, host

FRI MAY 1 8PM

Zhou Tian *Metropolis* CA. 10'

Florence Price/  
orch. Lior Rosner *The Heart of a Woman:* CA. 18'  
Nine Songs for Soprano and Orchestra  
Dream Ships  
My Dream  
To My Little Son  
Beside the Sea  
The Heart of a Woman  
The Poet and His Song  
Songs to the Dark Virgin  
Don't You Tell Me No  
Travel's End  
*Janai Brugger, soprano*

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

Miguel Fariás *Estallido* CA. 13'

William Grant Still *Wood Notes* CA. 19'  
Singing River  
Autumn Night  
Moon Dusk  
Whippoorwill's Shoes

Visit [minnesotaorchestra.org/heart](https://minnesotaorchestra.org/heart) for the text of *The Heart of a Woman*. The text will also be projected as surtitles.

Profiles of the conductor, soloist and host appear on pages 10, 45 and 46.

Visit [minnesotaorchestra.org/pre](https://minnesotaorchestra.org/pre) for details about pre-concert activities.

### THANK YOU

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This concert will be recorded for later broadcast by [YourClassical Minnesota Public Radio](#).

**ZHOU TIAN****B:** December 22, 1981  
Hangzhou, China*Metropolis***PREMIERED:**  
September 9, 2022

— This month marks exactly one score—20 years—since a score by Chinese-American composer Zhou Tian was first brought to life at Orchestra Hall, when his *Palace of 9 Perfections* received a reading at the 2006 Minnesota Orchestra Composer Institute. Born in 1981 in Hangzhou, China, Zhou was raised in a musical family and moved to the U.S. at age 19 to study at the Curtis Institute of Music. He continued his education at the Juilliard School and University of Southern California. Among his many successes is a 2018 Grammy nomination for his Concerto for Orchestra.

**POETRY AND CULTURES IN MUSIC**

Zhou's work *Metropolis* was premiered in the composer's home country by the Guangzhou Symphony in September 2022. The piece is loosely inspired by the city of Guangzhou itself, and the music was commissioned to celebrate the local orchestra's 65th anniversary. Zhou explains the piece's impetus thusly: "Inspired by a poem from the Tang dynasty describing the sumptuous metropolitan city of Southern Yue (Guangzhou today) titled 'Remembering a Thousand Years of Yue.' The piece explores the intersection between cultures, reflecting my own upbringing."

After a brief introduction, this music is off on an inspirational adventure, opening with bright brass fanfares and rapid woodwind gestures. The first two minutes go by in a flash. Then, low strings offer a transition through gentle pizzicato, which opens up into a stunning horn solo. Woodwinds and harp join, taking turns echoing and supporting the horn's leading role, eventually taking it on as their own. Soon, the strings are also included, painting broad, lush strokes as a divinely unified section. The music here is sweet and tender. A slight moment of pause—this one held by celesta, harp and percussion—leads the transition back to the original *Allegro* theme. Markedly accented rhythmic ideas are connected by swirling flourishes from the woodwinds and upper strings. The same rush of excitement from the piece's beginning returns, powerful and thrilling with constant momentum.



### FLORENCE PRICE

- B:** April 9, 1887  
Little Rock, Arkansas
- D:** June 3, 1953  
Chicago, Illinois

*The Heart of a Woman:  
Nine Songs for Soprano  
and Orchestra,  
orchestrated by  
Lior Rosner*

**PREMIERING:** May 1, 2026

— Born in 1887 in Little Rock, Arkansas, Florence Price is widely known as America’s first prominent Black female composer of classical concert music. Price was the first Black American woman to have her music played by a major American symphony orchestra—specifically, the Chicago Symphony at the Chicago World’s Fair in 1933, under the direction of conductor Frederick Stock.

A pianist, organist, teacher and composer, Price wrote more than 300 pieces of music. However, much of her music went missing after her death in 1953. It was only in recent years that many of her manuscripts were re-discovered in both an abandoned house outside of Chicago and as part of an auction of music from a private collection. Since these discoveries and multiple ongoing efforts to engrave and publish what was found, Price’s music has seen a significant increase in performances around the world.

## A WEALTH OF SONGS

Among her broad collection of works are nearly 100 songs for voice and piano. The set of nine shared in today’s concert was curated and orchestrated by Lior Rosner, an accomplished composer and orchestrator of music for films, television and the concert hall. Rosner’s work can be heard in hundreds of TV episodes and hit films, including the series *Will & Grace* and the 2016 film *X-Men: Apocalypse*.

Of this particular set of Price’s music, which Rosner selected and shaped from a collection of 44 art songs and spirituals by Price, the orchestrator writes: “Price’s art songs touch upon themes of love, spirituality and the African American experience. Her compositions reflect the struggles and triumphs of her community in a racially divided society...Price’s chosen texts came from a variety of poets with whom she had shared heritage: Langston Hughes, Paul Laurence Dunbar and James Weldon, among others. My intent was to achieve an arc of a life-well-lived: starting with dreams and aspirations, going through struggles and triumphs, and lastly—arriving at a peaceful return home, which could also be interpreted as an end of life’s journey.”

These nine songs—heard tonight as a complete set for the first time in Rosner’s orchestration—together weave a tale of a life of dreams, both the simple, everyday type and the enchanting, aspirational kind. Through Price’s music and the words of others, we listen to stories of sailing ships, crashing waves and weary travelers; honor a mother’s love and the strength and resilience of marginalized communities; and reflect on the beauty of poetry and music and humanity.

**MIGUEL FARIÁS**

**B:** December 1, 1983  
Maracaibo, Venezuela

*Estallido*

**PREMIERED:**  
March 5, 2022

— The work of composer, writer and scholar Miguel Farías explores partnerships between music, literature and social-political events, particularly highlighting the culture of his Chilean homeland. He currently serves as an associate professor at the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile. His music has been premiered by major orchestras around the world, including the Los Angeles Philharmonic, which in March 2022 premiered the piece heard on today’s program, *Estallido*.

**A TIME OF UPRISING**

Farías composed *Estallido* in 2019 during a historic social uprising in Chile. This period of intense national protest began with demonstrations and vandalism in Santiago’s rail system. A buildup of many of these smaller events swelled into a historic gathering of more than one million citizens demanding sweeping government reforms. The movement ultimately led to the formation of a new constitutional convention. Farías channels the atmosphere of urgency, volatility and collective energy into a piece with a title that translates in English as *Explosion*.

*Estallido* opens with a powerful outburst that contains the primary musical material that is used throughout the entire piece; elements within it are then stretched, compressed, bent in pitch and layered in shifting rhythmic combinations. This gives a series of complex feelings of searching, urgency and power, as well as a touch of the lasting, lingering emotions

of the period after societal upheaval. Fariás employs a striking range of extended techniques and imaginative colors—seagull-like wind effects, precisely notated pitch bends, overlapping disjunct rhythms and a pulsing, rhythmic vibrato that heightens tension. The initial surge of energy gradually gives way to a calming conclusion.



### WILLIAM GRANT STILL *Wood Notes*

**B:** May 11, 1895  
Woodville, Mississippi

**D:** December 3, 1978  
Los Angeles, California

**PREMIERED:**  
April 22, 1948

— William Grant Still was referred to by his musical contemporaries as the “Dean of African American composers.” When his Symphony No. 1, *Afro-American*, received its world premiere in 1930, in a performance by the Rochester Philharmonic, it marked the first time that a major American orchestra had ever performed a symphony by a Black American composer.

Still grew up in Little Rock, Arkansas, where he excelled at learning musical instruments, most notably cello and oboe. He studied composition and conducting at several schools including Wilberforce University, Oberlin College and the New England Conservatory. His most influential education, however, happened outside of the college classroom, when French composer Edgard Varèse took Still under his wing. In addition, his freelance career led him to arrange music for the band of W.C. Handy, the self-described King of the Blues.

### A MUSICAL CONFLUENCE

Still’s 1948 suite *Wood Notes* is a confluence of these life experiences, showcasing powerful African American spirituals, sumptuous French impressionism, and the enthusiasm of American jazz and blues. The piece was inspired by the poetry of Alabama writer and clergyman Joseph Mitchell Pilcher, as well as the broad, pastoral scenery of the American South.

**SINGING RIVER.** Strings and flute introduce the scene: vibrant colors and rich textures, the warmth of a sunny day outside. A four-note motive moves throughout the ensemble, balanced by a pattern of eighth-notes swirling

underneath. Sparked by one of Pilcher's poems in which he gazed upon an Alabama River, Still blends the energy and force of traditional spirituals with the gentle, perpetual movement of flowing water.

**AUTUMN NIGHT.** Solo flute takes the lead at the start of the second movement, with other woodwinds following in turn. The colors are slightly darker, and the pace quicker, offering a dose of intrigue as evening rolls in.

**MOON DUSK.** Slow and lush, *Moon Dusk* highlights Still's skills with impressionism. Dark chords in the brass support a hushed conversation by the woodwinds, invoking the stillness of night under the moon's glow.

**WHIPPOORWILL'S SHOES.** *Whippoorwill's Shoes* is over in a flash, but not before exploding into the most joyful, exuberant dance. The woodwinds step blissfully through witty, humorous themes and the strings respond with racing unison passages, connecting all of the dots and maintaining momentum until the final cymbal crash.

PROGRAM NOTES BY EMMA PLEHAL.

Visit [minnesotaorchestra.org/listeningnotes](https://minnesotaorchestra.org/listeningnotes) for extended program notes and instrumentation lists.



## HENRY DORN, HOST

Henry Dorn's compositions build narratives based on lived experiences at the intersection of being a musician and African American, taking ideas and putting them in places where they do not seem to belong. His music has been performed by ensembles including the Minnesota Orchestra, Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, Detroit Symphony Orchestra and Grammy-

winning Harlem Quartet. He is assistant professor of music and conductor of the St. Olaf Band at St. Olaf College, and was formerly assistant director to the Memphis Area Youth Wind Ensemble and director to the Memphis-based Nu Chamber Collective. A 2022 alumnus of the Minnesota Orchestra Composer Institute, he was an Inaugural Future of Music Faculty Fellowship recipient from the Cleveland Institute of Music, and won an ASCAP Foundation Morton Gould Young Composer Award. He holds doctoral degrees in both wind conducting and composition from Michigan State University, and has completed studies at the University of Memphis and at Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University. More: [henrydorn.com](https://henrydorn.com).



**JANAI BRUGGER,**  
SOPRANO

Janai Brugger's current season engagements include her debut as Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni* at the Metropolitan Opera, a role she takes to Edinburgh Festival, followed by her debut as Mimi in *La Bohème* at Los Angeles Opera. She returns to the Met as Michaela in *Carmen*, makes her Seattle Symphony debut with Poulenc's *Stabat Mater* and brings a curated orchestration of Florence Price songs, *The Heart of a Woman*, to the Minnesota Orchestra, a program she sings with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra on July 4. She rounds out the season with an appearance at the Minnesota Orchestra's Symphony Ball and her return to Grant Park Music Festival for the Fauré and Poulenc requiems. Recent season engagements include her spectacular success in the role of Pip the cabin boy in Jake Heggie's *Moby-Dick* at the Met. She returns there next season to appear as Mrs. Hodge in a new production of *Lincoln at the Bardo*. More: [arbourartists.com](http://arbourartists.com), [janaibrugger.com](http://janaibrugger.com).



**SARAH HICKS,**  
CONDUCTOR AND  
BROADCAST HOST

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 Doomtreetree Records. This July she will lead the Orchestra in "A Night in the Tropics" with trumpeter Charles Lazarus and a salute to John Williams; next season she will lead concerts of *Star Wars: Return of the Jedi*, *Amadeus* and *How to Train Your Dragon*, among other performances. More: [minnesotaorchestra.org](http://minnesotaorchestra.org).



**NATHAN HUGHES,**  
OBOE

Nathan Hughes is principal oboe of the Minnesota Orchestra and a member of the faculty at the Juilliard School and Lynn Conservatory of Music. He was previously principal oboe of the Metropolitan Opera as well as the Seattle Symphony and has recorded, toured and made guest appearances as principal oboe with the Chicago Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra and San Francisco Symphony. An avid chamber musician, he has performed with the Philadelphia, La Jolla, Seattle and Brooklyn chamber music societies, as well as at ChamberFest Cleveland and Chamber Music Pittsburgh. He has also appeared at the festivals of Aspen, Bridgehampton, Lucerne, Marlboro, Pacific, Salzburg, Santa Fe, Sarasota, Spoleto and Tanglewood. He has received critical acclaim as soloist with the MET Chamber Ensemble at Carnegie Hall, Mainly Mozart Festival Orchestra, Orchestra of St. Luke's, Seattle Symphony, La Jolla SummerFest Chamber Orchestra and Verbier Festival Orchestra. More: [minnesotaorchestra.org](http://minnesotaorchestra.org).



**LEILA JOSEFOWICZ,**  
VIOLIN

Leila Josefowicz's passionate advocacy of contemporary violin music is reflected in her diverse programs and enthusiasm for performing new works. She has premiered many concertos, including those by Colin Matthews, Luca Francesconi, Matthias Pintscher, John Adams and Esa-Pekka Salonen, all written for her. In 2024 she recorded Thomas Adès' Violin Concerto with the Minnesota Orchestra for release on the Pentatone label. During the 2025-26 season she presents the world premiere of Jüri Reinvere's Concerto for Violin, Harp and Orchestra with the Cleveland Orchestra. Further engagements include concerts with the New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra and Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich, among other ensembles, as well as a recital at Lincoln Center with pianist John Novacek, with whom she also tours Australia. She has received Grammy nominations for recordings with the St. Louis Symphony and Finnish Radio Symphony. She won the 2018 Avery Fisher Prize and was awarded a prestigious MacArthur Fellowship in 2008. More: [leilajosefowicz.com](http://leilajosefowicz.com).



**KRISTIINA POSKA,**  
CONDUCTOR

Kristiina Poska is celebrated as one of today's leading conductors, known for her versatility and distinctive artistry. She is music director of the Orchestre Français des Jeunes, principal guest conductor of the Latvian National Symphony Orchestra, and recently concluded her tenure as chief conductor of the Flanders Symphony Orchestra. She debuted with the Minnesota Orchestra in April 2024. Her 2025-26 season features debuts with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Lucerne Symphony, BBC Symphony, Royal Scottish National Orchestra and the Cincinnati and Baltimore symphonies, alongside a return to the Orchestre National de Metz. In addition, she leads the Orchestre Français des Jeunes on European tours. Poska has won prizes at the Donatella Flick LSO Competition and Malko Competition and was awarded the German Conductors' Prize in 2013. She continues her Beethoven symphony cycle recordings with the Flanders Symphony Orchestra for Fuga Libera. More: [harrisonparrott.com](http://harrisonparrott.com), [kristiinaposka.com](http://kristiinaposka.com).



**JOHN STORGÅRDS,**  
CONDUCTOR

John Storgårds—chief conductor of the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra and the Turku Philharmonic Orchestra and principal guest conductor of Canada's National Arts Centre Orchestra in Ottawa—has a dual career as a conductor and violin virtuoso. He also serves as artistic director of the Lapland Chamber Orchestra and was recently named music director of the National Arts Centre Orchestra and principal conductor and artistic adviser of the Junge Deutsche Philharmonie, with both positions beginning in the 2026-27 season. Highlights of his 2025-26 season include appearances at the BBC Proms, English National Opera and Tokyo Philharmonic, and debuts with San Francisco Symphony and Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin. Storgårds regularly performs world premieres as violinist and conductor. His discography spans works by composers including Schumann, Mozart, Sibelius, Nielsen, Antheil, Tarkiainen and Aho. He received the Finnish State Prize for Music in 2002 and the Pro Finlandia Prize in 2012. More: [kdschmid.de](http://kdschmid.de), [johnstorgards.com](http://johnstorgards.com)

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If you have included the Minnesota Orchestra in your estate plan, please let us know so we can thank you and recognize you personally for your generosity. We will respect your wishes to remain anonymous if you so choose.

If you would like more information about planned giving, please contact **Emily Boigenzahn** at 612-371-7138 or [eboigenzahn@mnorch.org](mailto:eboigenzahn@mnorch.org).

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The Minnesota Orchestra is grateful to the forward-thinking businesses and foundations that value the role of the arts in making our community strong and vibrant. Their generous support fuels dazzling musical experiences that enrich, inspire and serve people throughout Minnesota, across the country and around the world. To find out more about how your organization can play a part, contact David Afdahl at 612-371-7126 or [dafdahl@mnrorch.org](mailto:dafdahl@mnrorch.org).

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