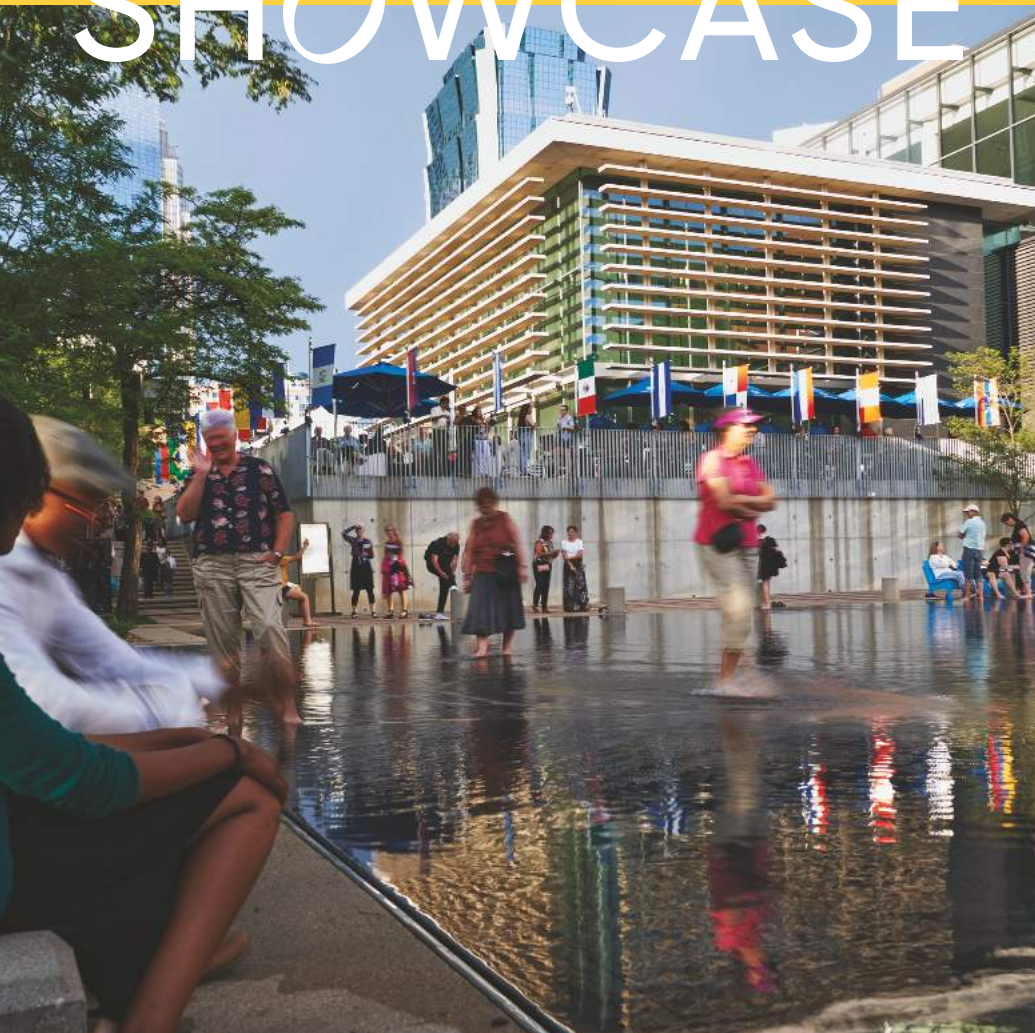


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Karolina Heller



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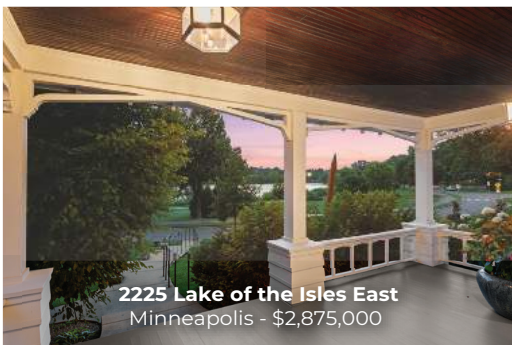
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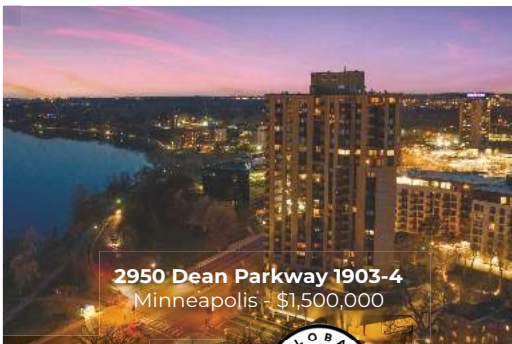
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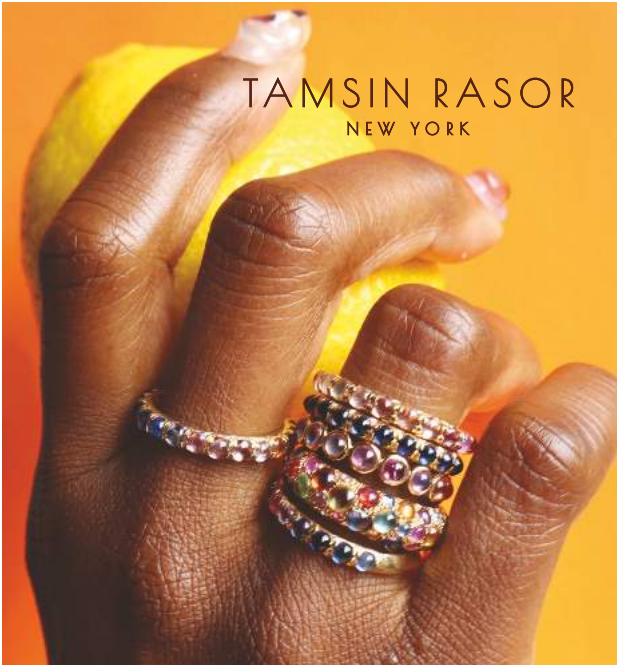
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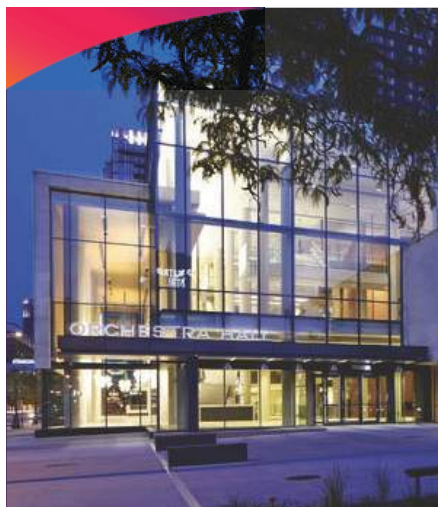
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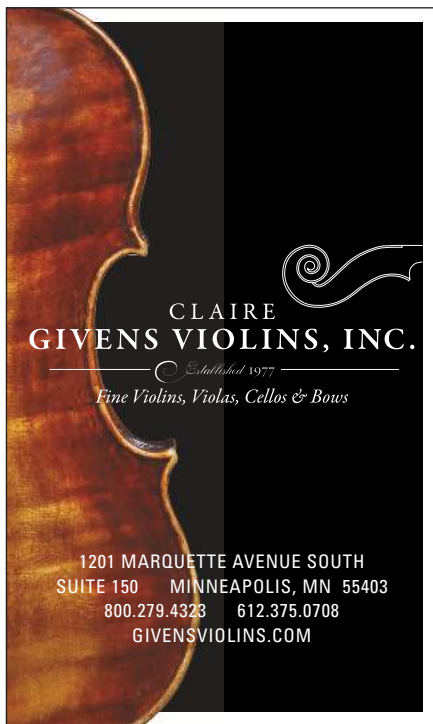
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RETIRING MUSICIAN SPOTLIGHT: MARNI J. HOUGHAM

— This summer the Minnesota Orchestra celebrates the career of English horn and oboe player Marni J. Hougham as she enters retirement after 29 years with the Orchestra. A Los Angeles native who studied with William Criss at the University of Southern California, she joined the Orchestra in 1997 after being a member of the San Antonio Symphony and playing with additional ensembles in the U.S. and abroad. Winning a position in the Twin Cities was a doubly good fortune since Hougham already had family in the area, including a brother-in-law, Burt Hara, just one row back in the Orchestra's clarinet section.

Two major tours came early in Hougham's tenure, which she calls simply "amazing"—travels to Japan and Europe in 1998—plus a stop at Carnegie Hall. "Part of the Carnegie performance was an aria from Verdi's opera *Attila* with Kathleen Battle," she recalls. "The lights onstage went out while only three musicians were playing—myself, Principal Harp Kathy Kienzle and Principal Flute Adam Kuenzel. Kathleen kept singing, and so Kathy, Adam and I kept playing, our eyes inches from the music. It was so scary—and then when we got to Kathleen's cadenza, the lights went on! An unforgettable performance!"

Because the English horn—the larger, lower-toned relative of the oboe—is called for less often than most other standard woodwind instruments, its moments in the spotlight seem all the more moving and memorable. High on the list of the instrument's



Zoe Prinds-Flash

times to shine are Dvořák's *New World* Symphony, Sibelius' *The Swan of Tuonela* and Copland's *Quiet City*—all of which Hougham performed multiple times during her tenure, in addition to recording the Sibelius work with the Orchestra in 2002. She cites additional favorite works with major English horn parts including Shostakovich's Eighth Symphony, Mahler's symphonies, Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique* and Lutosławski's Concerto for Orchestra, just to name a few. "There are so many moments—I can't list them all!" she says.

In retirement, Hougham looks forward to spending more time with family. Both she and her husband Craig Hara, a multifaceted musician who has also appeared with the Orchestra, "are blessed with family here," she notes. As she prepares to leave the stage at summer's end, her thoughts turn to the people who have supported the Orchestra throughout her career. "I would like

[Continued on page 12](#)

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RETIRING MUSICIAN SPOTLIGHT: MARNI J. HOUGHAM
CONTINUED

to thank all of our amazing patrons,” she says—a fitting farewell from a musician whose artistry on one of the Orchestra’s most deeply expressive

instruments has reverberated in Orchestra Hall for nearly three decades.

A NEW MUSIC VENUE POWERED BY PARTNERSHIPS

— Minneapolis’ Community Performing Arts Center (CPAC) amphitheater, which will be operated as a joint venture between the Minnesota Orchestra and First Avenue, is one step closer to reality, following a groundbreaking ceremony in early May along the Mississippi River on the city’s Northside.

Slated to open next summer, the 8,000-capacity outdoor concert venue will host around 50 ticketed events, plus community activities, each year from May to October. A portion of the venue will be enclosed for smaller events year-round, focusing on Northside residents, businesses and organizations.

The Orchestra joined the initiative in 2023 and has helped raise private funds from a consortium of supporters to advance the public-private partnership at the heart of the project. When the venue is complete, the Orchestra will play both a performance role—occasionally playing at the venue—and an operational one, working alongside First Avenue.

Developed over a decade with a great deal of community input, the project includes a unique provision to reinvest revenue—specifically a \$3 fee for every ticket sold—directly into the local community through a partnership with the African American Community Development Corporation (AACDC).

The amphitheater is one component of the much larger Upper Harbor redevelopment that reconnects North Minneapolis to the river. In addition to the amphitheater, the site will provide affordable housing, living-wage jobs, new commercial spaces and a riverfront regional park, which opens this summer.



City of Minneapolis

Representatives from the city, state, AACDC, First Avenue and Minnesota Orchestra broke ground for the new amphitheater, launching the next phase of a project that has been a decade in the making.

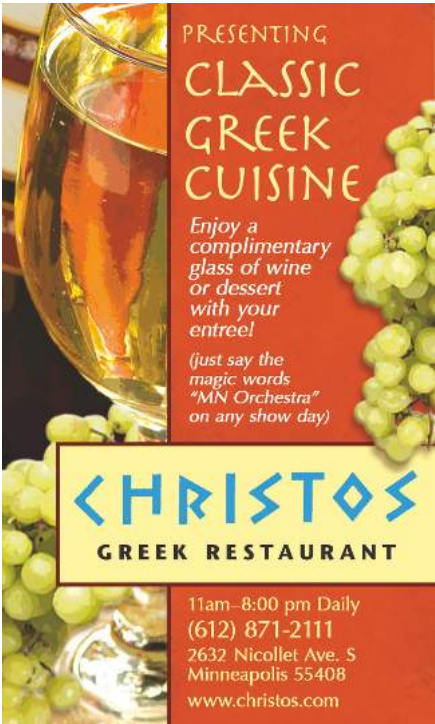
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MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA

**SUMMER PRE-CONCERT
EXTRAS**

————— It's summer at Orchestra Hall, and that means more than just Minnesota Orchestra concerts: various lobby spaces will be enlivened by a variety of pre-concert performances, activities and an expanded array of food vendors. The activities are free to enjoy—although a concert ticket is required.

Prior to the concerts on July 16 through 18, host Phillip Gainsley previews the program starting 45 minutes before each concert in the Target Atrium. The remainder of the summer's Orchestra concerts will be preceded by performances in the Target Atrium starting an hour and 15 minutes before each concert. July 23, 24 and 25 bring, respectively, Mwago Kuria, the Mary Louise Knutson Trio and Spoonbridge. On July 26, listen to the Peter Kogan Quintet. July 31 brings Ginger Bones, and on August 1 comes Heart and Soul Drum Academy. Summer wraps up with pre-concert performances by Dan Turpening (August 7) and Chris Lomheim (August 8).

Other activities at select concerts include complimentary caricatures by Twin Cities Caricatures, lawn chess, bird watching and a reading lounge, while local food vendors include Gondolier Coffee, Nibbles Hot Dogs, Bao Bao Buns, Manny's Tortas, and Honey and Milk Ice Cream Cart. Visit minnesotaorchestra.org/summer for more details!



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Benjamin Britten	Simple Symphony for String Orchestra Boisterous Bourrée Playful Pizzicato Sentimental Sarabande Frolicsome Finale	CA. 16'
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Ludwig van Beethoven	Concerto in C major for Violin, Cello, Piano and Orchestra, Opus 56, <i>Triple</i> Allegro Largo Rondo alla polacca [No pause before the final movement.] <i>Sarah Grimes, violin</i> <i>Silver Ainomäe, cello</i> <i>Alessio Bax, piano</i>	CA. 35'
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I N T E R M I S S I O N CA. 20'

Robert Schumann	Symphony No. 3 in E-flat major, Opus 97, <i>Rhenish</i> Lebhaft Scherzo: Sehr mässig Nicht schnell Feierlich Lebhaft	CA. 35'
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Profiles of the conductor and soloists appear on pages 41 through 43.
 Visit minnesotaorchestra.org/pre for details about pre-concert activities.

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PREMIERED:
March 6, 1934

— The setting: It's late December of 1933 in Lowestoft, England. Twenty-year-old composer Benjamin Britten is at home during the Christmas holiday sorting through drawers filled with hundreds of short pieces he'd composed between the ages of 9 and 12. He rescued eight themes and shortly thereafter packaged them into one of the most charming and ingenious works in the Western string orchestra repertoire—*Simple Symphony*, an affectionate dialogue with Britten's younger self.

BRILLIANCE FROM THE BEGINNING

A musical prodigy from the county of Suffolk on England's eastern coast, Britten was envisioned by his mother as the "Fourth B," positioning him alongside Bach, Beethoven and Brahms. He went on to study at the Royal College of Music in London and became one of the defining voices of 20th-century British classical music, achieving fame with his opera *Peter Grimes* (1945) and the *War Requiem* (1962).

Britten composed the four-movement *Simple Symphony* in the early months of 1934, amid his final year at the Royal College of Music. Spanning about 16 minutes, this reflective symphony is dedicated to Audrey Alston, Britten's childhood viola teacher. As noted in the conductor's score, it is entirely based on material the composer wrote in his youth. Some passages were reworked, and others left exactly as originally written.

Rather than discarding his earliest music as many composers do, Britten held it up to the light. In the tradition of Edward Elgar's *Wand of Youth* suites, which rescued tunes from a childhood play, Britten was transparent about his sources, giving *Simple Symphony* a playful yet sophisticated tone. Scored for string orchestra, the work received its premiere at Stuart Hall in Norwich on March 6, 1934, with Britten conducting an amateur orchestra.

THE SYMPHONY IN BRIEF

BOISTEROUS BOURRÉE. The opening launches with energetic and crisp strings in lively, articulated dialogue. Sudden dynamic contrasts give it a teasing edge.

PLAYFUL PIZZICATO. The second movement, marked to be played “as fast as possible,” is built entirely on plucked strings. The music flickers past with precision and whimsy. Irresistible, and over in a flash.

SENTIMENTAL SARABANDE. Here the symphony offers its emotional heart. A sustained, arching melody unfolds with beautiful harmonies. Reflective and unhurried, this tune written by a 9-year-old carries so much depth and feeling that it’s perhaps the work’s greatest surprise.

FROLICSOME FINALE. The finale is a unification of threads from the earlier movements. The energy of the *Bourrée* and plucked wit of the *Pizzicato* drive this movement toward an exhilarating close. As this symphony radiates unabashed joy, any lingering feeling that these are mere children’s themes is swept aside.

Instrumentation: string orchestra

PROGRAM NOTE BY MARTA SIKORA.



**LUDWIG VAN
BEETHOVEN**

B: December 16, 1770
Bonn, Germany

D: March 26, 1827
Vienna, Austria

**Concerto in C major for
Violin, Cello, Piano and
Orchestra, Opus 56,
Triple**

COMPOSED: 1804

— Ludwig van Beethoven wrote this unusual concerto for three soloists during the spring and summer of 1804, a time of unbelievable creativity. In those months he revised the recently completed *Eroica* Symphony, began the *Waldstein* Sonata, and made sketches for the *Appassionata* Sonata and for his opera *Leonore* (later renamed *Fidelio*). Beethoven himself was apparently unsure how to classify his new orchestral work. After the work was completed, he referred to it as a “concertante for violin, violoncello and pianoforte with full orchestra.” Today it is most often called the Triple Concerto.

Such a concerto posed two particular problems for Beethoven: how to give each soloist enough individual attention, and how to keep the cello from becoming buried within this complex texture. He solved these problems ingeniously: the first by having his three soloists play often just as a trio, the second by allowing the cellist the first statement of many of the themes.

A CONCERTO LIKE NO OTHER

The Triple Concerto contrasts sharply with the other music Beethoven was composing in these years. Whereas the *Eroica*, the opera and the two piano sonatas burn with a sense of urgency and dramatic fury, the Triple Concerto lacks their tension: this is expansive music, relaxed and agreeable rather than striving.

ALLEGRO. The opening movement gets off to a grand start with a full-orchestra exposition of its themes, but textures thin out considerably when the soloists enter. Beethoven often has the soloists play by themselves with only unobtrusive orchestral accompaniment, punctuated by tutti outbursts. The thematic material in this movement is genial rather than distinctive, the rhythms slightly swung rather than sharp-edged. The most impressive feature of this movement may be its span: at 17 minutes, it is one of the longest in any of Beethoven's concertos and symphonies.

LARGO. By contrast, the second is very brief, almost an interlude between the dynamic outer movements. Beethoven rarely used the tempo indication *Largo*, a marking that suggests very slow and dignified music. An orchestra of muted strings introduces the *Largo*, but this lyric movement belongs almost entirely to the three soloists—it is essentially chamber music. Once again, the cello leads the way, this time marked *molto cantabile*.

RONDO ALLA POLACCA. Beethoven marks the finale *Rondo alla polacca*, or a rondo in the style of a polonaise. The cello introduces the main theme and launches this jovial movement on its way. Near the end comes a surprising passage: a polonaise is in 3/4, but now Beethoven resets his principal theme in 2/4, shortening it and making it dance in new ways before going back to 3/4 for the coda and cadence.

Though completed in 1804, the Triple Concerto did not make its way quickly into the repertoire, and it has remained one of Beethoven's less familiar works. Despite several private performances, this music did not receive its public premiere in Vienna until April or possibly May 1808, nearly a year after it had been published. Beethoven dedicated it to his patron Prince Lobkowitz, also the dedicatee of the *Eroica*.

Instrumentation: solo violin, cello and piano with orchestra comprising flute, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY ERIC BROMBERGER.

**ROBERT SCHUMANN****B:** June 8, 1810
Zwickau, Germany**D:** July 29, 1856
Bonn, Germany**Symphony No. 3 in E-flat
major, Opus 97, *Rhenish*****PREMIERED:**
February 6, 1851

— On the evening of September 2, 1850, Robert Schumann and his family arrived in Düsseldorf, where he had agreed to take up the position of the orchestra's music director. It was a much-needed fresh start: Schumann had spent the previous six years in Dresden, in various stages of depression, and now he was delighted to escape a city he associated with creative blockage and begin anew. In Düsseldorf he and Clara were feted with a flurry of concerts, dinners and dances, and four weeks later they traveled 30 miles up the Rhine river for the enthronement of Archbishop Geissel of Cologne as a Cardinal. Though the Schumanns were not Catholic, this solemn ceremony in the still-unfinished cathedral made a deep impression on the composer.

A REJUVENATED COMPOSER

His spirits revived, Schumann plunged into work, quickly composing his Cello Concerto and beginning to conduct the Düsseldorf orchestra. In the midst of this, he set to work on a new symphony. This would be listed as his Third, even though it was the last of the four he composed: he sketched the first movement between November 2 and 9, made another quick visit to Cologne, and had the entire work complete on December 9. The composer led the successful premiere of the Third Symphony in Düsseldorf on February 6, 1851.

Schumann himself contributed the nickname *Rhenish* for the new symphony, but that name needs to be understood carefully. This music paints no scenes and tells no story; it does not set out to translate the fabled Rhine into sound. Rather, it is music inspired by a return to the river on which Schumann had spent happy student days 20 years earlier and which was now the setting for his new job and, he hoped, a return to health. Several movements originally had descriptive titles, but Schumann excluded these from the completed score: he wanted this symphony understood purely as music. To his publisher, Schumann explained simply that the symphony “perhaps mirrors here and there something of Rhenish life.”

THE SYMPHONY: ENERGY, CHARM, GRANDEUR

LEBHAFT. The structure of the symphony is unusual: it opens with a huge and dramatic sonata-form movement, which is then followed by four relatively short movements. The opening *Lebhaft* (lively) has no introduction—Schumann plunges directly into this music with a theme that swings and thrusts its way forward. This music is also remarkable for its syncopations and rhythmic displacements: the effort to beat the downbeats will quickly end in confusion, so skillfully has Schumann written against the expected pattern of the measures. The second subject is a delicate, waltz-like tune introduced by the woodwinds, but it is the opening material that dominates this movement.

SCHERZO: SEHR MÄSSIG; NICHT SCHNELL. The next two movements, melodic and charming, function as interludes. The *Scherzo*, “very moderate,” is like a comfortable country dance that flows along the easy swing of its main theme; the trio section turns a little darker, and Schumann ingeniously combines these themes in the reprise. The third movement, marked simply *Nicht schnell* (not quickly), alternates the clarinets’ delicate opening idea with the violas’ expressive second subject.

FEIERLICH. The atmosphere changes completely in the fourth movement, marked *Feierlich* (solemn). Silent until now, three trombones darkly intone the somber main idea in E-flat minor, which Schumann treats to some impressive polyphonic extension, developing this idea in tight imitative canon. This solemn movement drives to a grand close on a series of ringing chords.

LEBHAFT. Out of their echoes, the finale bursts to life. Commentators have universally been unable to resist comparing this moment to stepping from out of a dark cathedral into the sunlight—and they may well be right. This music leaps to life, but it is worth noting that Schumann marks this beginning *dolce*: “gentle, sweet.” Like the first movement, also marked *Lebhaft*, the finale overflows with energy, and Schumann drives it to a climax that recalls the solemn trombone theme from the fourth movement, now played so loudly that it should shake the hall, and a quick reference to the grand swing of the opening of the first movement. A brisk coda drives this wonderful music to a close fully worthy of its nickname.

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

PROGRAM NOTE BY ERIC BROMBERGER.

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Olympic Fanfare and Theme CA. 4'

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March from 1941 CA. 4'

Theme from *Schindler's List* CA. 4'

LEADING WOMEN

Sayuri's Theme, from *Memoirs of a Geisha* CA. 4'

Devil's Dance, from *The Witches of Eastwick* CA. 5'

MOMENTOUS MEETINGS

Symphonic Suite from *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* CA. 10'

Duel of the Fates, from *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace* CA. 4'

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

CA. 20'

EPIC BATTLES

March of the Resistance, from *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* CA. 3'

Theme from *The Patriot* CA. 7'

FLIGHTS OF FANCY

Love Theme, from *Superman* CA. 5'

Flying Theme, from *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial* CA. 4'

HEROES' HOMECOMING

Raiders March, from *Raiders of the Lost Ark* CA. 6'

Harry's Wondrous World, from *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* CA. 4'

Throne Room and End Title, from *Star Wars: A New Hope* CA. 6'

Profiles of the conductor and composer appear on pages 43 and 48.

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A NIGHT IN THE TROPICS

Sarah Hicks, conductor

Charles Lazarus, trumpet

Tommy Barbarella, piano and keyboards

Bill Chouinard, bass

David Schmalenberger, drums

Daryl Boudreaux, percussion

SUN JUL 26 2PM

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



CHARLES LAZARUS, TRUMPET

Charles Lazarus, a Minnesota Orchestra musician since 2000, is a multi-faceted performer, composer, producer and bandleader whose career has included tenures in Dallas Brass, Meridian Arts Ensemble and Canadian Brass. He has created several crossover orchestral shows featuring his various ensembles, with which he has released

five recordings, and his Merry & Bright holiday performance has been a fixture at Orchestra Hall for more than a decade. His live recording of Steve Heitzeg's *American Nomad* concerto and a children's animated short film collaboration with author Michael Hall are available online. He has recorded five albums, including his newest collaboration with Tommy Barbarella, *The Modern Hymn Project*, a collection of modern jazz interpretations of traditional hymns and spirituals. He has appeared as a soloist with orchestras around the U.S. and Canada, and has performed and taught master classes in every U.S. state, Canada, and throughout Asia and Europe. More: minnesotaorchestra.org, charleslazarus.com.

A profile of conductor Sarah Hicks appears on page 43.

Visit minnesotaorchestra.org/tropics for a repertoire list and additional soloist profiles.

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

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CHRIS THILE

Daniela Candillari, conductor
Chris Thile, mandolin and vocals
Alex Sopp, vocals
Susie Park, violin
David Stevens, drums
Members of the Minnesota Chorale, Jerry Rubino, special projects conductor

FRI JUL 31 8PM | SAT AUG 1 7PM

Samuel Barber	Overture to <i>The School for Scandal</i>	CA. 7'
Caroline Shaw	<i>And So</i> <i>Chris Thile, mandolin and vocals</i>	CA. 6'
Duke Ellington	Selections from <i>The River Suite</i> Spring Meander Giggling Rapids	CA. 12'
	I N T E R M I S S I O N	CA. 20'
Chris Thile	<i>ATTENTION!</i> Attention Lord Starbucks The Rooftop Carrie Freaking Fisher <i>Chris Thile, mandolin and vocals</i> <i>Alex Sopp, vocals</i> <i>Susie Park, violin</i> <i>David Stevens, drums</i> <i>Members of the Minnesota Chorale</i>	CA. 40'

Profiles of the conductor, soloists and Chorale, and a list of Chorale members, appear on pages 42 and 44 through 48.

Visit minnesotaorchestra.org/shawtext for the text to Caroline Shaw's *And So*, and visit christhile.com/attention for the text to Chris Thile's *ATTENTION!*

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

The July 31 concert airs live on [YourClassical Minnesota Public Radio](#).

**SAMUEL BARBER**

B: March 9, 1910
West Chester,
Pennsylvania

D: January 23, 1981
New York City

**Overture to *The School
for Scandal***

PREMIERED:
August 30, 1933

Samuel Barber was only 26 when he wrote the Adagio for Strings, his best-known work, but he was even younger when he wrote the Overture to *The School for Scandal*: it precedes the famous Adagio by five years. Barber was still studying at the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia when he wrote this effervescent work, which later served as his graduation thesis.

The overture became Barber's first orchestral composition to be published and his first to be performed by a major orchestra. The premiere was given on August 30, 1933, with Alexander Smallens conducting the Philadelphia Orchestra before an audience of 8,000; the location was Robin Hood Dell, a natural amphitheater in Fairmount Park, Philadelphia. Barber was in Italy at the time, so he could not attend.

As noted in the score, the music was “suggested by Sheridan’s comedy,” meaning that it intends only to capture the spirit of mirth, wit and laughter of Richard Sheridan’s 1777 play, which harkens back to the Restoration period of a century earlier, rather than to portray any particular characters or scenes. The eight-minute work conforms to the sonata-allegro design that would have been found in most symphonic movements in Sheridan’s time, hence, also the time of Mozart.

ORCHESTRAL LAUGHTER AND RAPIER WIT

Following a raucous call to attention, in which chords in one key grate against those in another (a startling harmonic juxtaposition, to say the least!), violins present the sprightly first theme—memorable if hardly singable. The headlong rush of energy dissipates in time for the lyrical, beautiful second theme in the solo oboe. Further thematic elements are heard in the solo clarinet, then solo flute. The brief development section culminates in a virtuosic *tour de force* for madly swirling strings, and the recapitulation proceeds in the expected manner, with the haunting second theme now going to English horn. More bursts of orchestral laughter, rapier wit and musical pokes in the ribs bring the Overture to a rollicking close, a sure-fire way to start a program.

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

PROGRAM NOTE BY ROBERT MARKOW.



CAROLINE SHAW

B: August 1, 1982
Greenville, North Carolina

And So

PREMIERED:
March 12, 2019 (original
version for chamber
orchestra and voice)

Caroline Shaw is one of today's most accomplished composers of vocal, orchestral and chamber music, holding the honor of being the youngest recipient of the Pulitzer Prize for Music for her a cappella composition *Partita for 8 Voices*; she has also earned four Grammy Awards. Her music has also been heard on screen in the 2022 film *Tár* and in Ken Burns' 2024 documentary series about Leonardo da Vinci, the latter garnering her an Emmy nomination. In addition to her incredible compositional achievements, she is a founding member of the award-winning contemporary vocal ensemble Roomful of Teeth, which premiered *Partita for 8 Voices* in 2013.

Shaw has composed music for numerous combinations of instruments and voices, but her output for orchestra alone is comparatively small, perhaps explaining why the Minnesota Orchestra first performed her music only two years ago. Her orchestral works *The Observatory* and *Entr'acte* were played here in March 2024 and December 2025, respectively.

A MELDING OF CENTURIES

And So is the final piece in Shaw's *Is A Rose* trilogy, which includes three works commissioned by the Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra in 2016 for mezzo Anne Sofie von Otter. The trilogy reimagines poetry from the 18th and 21st centuries, culminating in *And So*, Shaw's own musing on poets Robert Burns, Jacob Polley and Gertrude Stein. While each part of the trilogy had its own premiere, *And So* was first performed to a sold-out audience at Alice Tully Hall at Lincoln Center in March 2019 as part of Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra's "New Music for Old Instruments" initiative.

And So has seen numerous arrangements since it was first composed, including versions for percussion ensemble, electro-pop duo and wind band. The one performed today—tailored specially for soloist Chris Thile—utilizes a string orchestra, solo voice and mandolin. Through the all-too-brief five-minute work, the vocalist chants the poetic lyrics, navigating fluidly between sung and spoken text in the tradition of Baroque recitative, while supported by a mesmerizing blend of crystalline pizzicato and captivating, suspended string harmonies.

Visit minnesotaorchestra.org/shawtext for the text to *And So*.

Instrumentation: solo mandolin and voice with string orchestra

PROGRAM NOTE BY EMMA PLEHAL.



DUKE ELLINGTON

B: April 29, 1899
Washington, D.C.

D: May 24, 1974
New York City

Selections from *The River Suite*

PREMIERED:
June 25, 1970 (original ballet score)

— When Edward Kennedy “Duke” Ellington was commissioned by the American Ballet Theatre to celebrate the company’s 30th anniversary in 1970, the result was a collaboration that merged the brilliance of two creative American minds, Ellington and famed choreographer Alvin Ailey. (Ailey had notably founded the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in 1960; it remains thriving to this day as America’s largest modern dance company.)

For the occasion, Ellington initially planned to create a suite of 12 movements, but by the time of the final rehearsals, only seven were complete. When the ballet premiered at Lincoln Center’s New York State Theater on June 25, 1970, Ailey could only share a portion of the planned work. It was presented under the title *Seven Dances from a Work in Progress entitled “The River”*—a candid admission that the piece was still finding itself, though it did nothing to dim the critical admiration the production received.

FROM CRADLE TO RACING

For these concerts, the Minnesota Orchestra performs the first three movements, which are described by the composer in his autobiography, *Music is My Mistress*. The *Spring* movement, Ellington says, “is like a newborn baby. He’s in his cradle...spouting, spinning, wiggling, gurgling, squirming, squealing, making faces...” Then, in *Meander*, the baby “hits the floor the first time out of the cradle” and thinks to himself, “This must be the biggest world in the world. Look at all that space out there!” In *Giggling Rapids*, the child “races and runs and dances and skips and trips all over the backyard.”

SPRING. The opening movement unfolds gently, led by solo horn before an oboe adds a new harmonic layer. Then, the woodwinds gradually pass the single pastorello melody among themselves—each voice taking it up in turn. A solo harp carries the movement to its close, glistening quietly like light on a peaceful spring day.

MEANDER. A jazz groove anchors this movement from the start, with low winds, brass and strings settling into an easy, swaying pulse. Above them, a free-flowing solo flute wanders without urgency before the full orchestra opens up into swinging, big-band textures.

GIGGLING RAPIDS. A syncopated piano introduction sets the stage for a playful exchange between horns, woodwinds and glockenspiel. The string section’s swirling figures mimic the churn of rushing water while Bebop-inflected melodies dart throughout the texture.

Instrumentation: 2 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 2 oboes (1 doubling English horn), 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, congas, claves, drum set, xylophone, glockenspiel, harp, piano and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY EMMA PLEHAL.

**CHRIS THILE**

B: February 20, 1981
Oceanside, California

ATTENTION!

PREMIERED:
June 29, 2023

If you only know Chris Thile as the host of the public radio variety show *Live from Here*, the successor to *A Prairie Home Companion*, then you've seen just a few dimensions of this Grammy Award-winning singer-songwriter-mandolinist, founding member of the string bands Nickel Creek and Punch Brothers, and recipient of a MacArthur Foundation "genius grant." Thile has collaborated with numerous artists across the music spectrum, from Yo-Yo Ma to Fiona Apple to Brad Mehldau, and in recent years has increasingly crossed into the classical music world, soloing alongside ensembles such as the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, Chicago Symphony and National Symphony. This week's performances mark his Minnesota Orchestra debut.

Since 2023 Thile has appeared often in his massive autobiographical orchestral composition *ATTENTION!*, formally subtitled "A narrative song cycle for extroverted mandolinist and orchestra." Thile plays mandolin, sings, narrates and acts in this singular 40-minute work, which also includes featured parts for an additional vocal soloist, the orchestra's concertmaster, a drum set player and a small chorus.

Through four movements bearing whimsical titles such as *Lord Starbucks* and *Carrie Freaking Fisher*, the genre-defying *ATTENTION!* tells stories of unusual events and encounters from Thile's life, using the composer's own original text. The narrative culminates in an encounter with the late actress Carrie Fisher—Princess Leia of *Star Wars* fame. Thile and the New York-based orchestra The Knights performed the world premiere of *ATTENTION!* at the Tanglewood festival on June 29, 2023.

BACKGROUND FROM THE COMPOSER-SOLOIST

Without spoiling the contents of *ATTENTION!* much further, Thile has offered this background and summary of the piece's creation.

"I adore orchestras. Whether scaled up for grandeur, or down for intimacy, nothing makes me prouder to be human than hearing a stage full of highly skilled orchestral musicians practicing their craft together. It's magic,

and it's something I've been desperate to participate in since the early aughts, when a hero of mine, Edgar Meyer, walked me through the score of a violin concerto he wrote for another hero of mine, Hilary Hahn. In the late aughts I wrote a mandolin concerto, but after performing it quite a bit for a year or so with some truly lovely orchestras, I realized that it was basically the musical equivalent of fan fiction (like I'm tempted to rename it 'Bartók meets Adès for coffee at Edgar's'). So, I went back to admiring orchestral music from afar, even as I continued to monitor my inner ear for something that might justify another attempt.

"A year or two ago, a tantalizing text from my pal, Eric Jacobsen ('Thile, whatever you wanna do with orchestra, we can make it happen!') prompted more pro-active monitoring and I started hearing bits of what would eventually become *ATTENTION!* I was confused at first, 'cause these little aural visions included not just mandolin and orchestra, but singing *and* talking as well. Whoa, ok...*fun*. Further dreaming led to the conviction that there should be an actual *story*, not just loosely related vignettes (which has pretty much been my M.O. on long form pieces with vocals up to this point).

"But *what* story? I've always loved writing songs based on short stories, so I started there, widened the search to essays, then read a bunch of plays, but every time I got excited about something, a nagging little voice (probably remembering my last orchestral piece) would say 'Yeah, but why would *you* be the one to musicalize this story?' Ugh. Fair. Ok, fine then: what is a story I like to tell about something that happened to me that my friends seem to like hearing? Ah *ha!* *This one*, hands down, no contest. If you've ever had a couple rounds with me at a good cocktail bar, chances are I've trotted it out, and the thought of turning it into a piece of orchestral music got my inner ear cranking like never before. It's a ridiculous story, but it's 100% true, and the more I've worked on the telling of it, the more aware I've become of what a profound impact the whole experience had on me as a person who loves to make things and show them to other people."

The lyrics of *ATTENTION!* are available at christhile.com/attention—but Thile recommends "only using it when my diction isn't up to snuff (I'm working on it, swear to God!)."

Instrumentation: solo mandolin and voice, additional solo voice, solo violin and small mixed chorus with orchestra comprising 2 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 2 oboes (1 doubling English horn), 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, bass trombone, timpani, drum set and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY CARL SCHROEDER, WITH BACKGROUND BY CHRIS THILE.

JOHN HOLIDAY AND BEETHOVEN'S FIFTH

Jonathan Taylor Rush, conductor
John Holiday, countertenor

FRI AUG 7 8PM

Jessie Montgomery	<i>Coincident Dances</i>	CA. 12'
Carlos Simon	<i>Songs of Separation</i> The Garden Burning Hell Dance We Are All the Same <i>John Holiday, countertenor</i>	CA. 20'
I N T E R M I S S I O N		CA. 20'
Reynaldo Hahn/ arr. Franck Villard	<i>À Chloris</i> (To Chloris) <i>John Holiday, countertenor</i>	CA. 3'
Reynaldo Hahn/ arr. Andreas Tartemann	<i>L'Énamourée</i> (Enamored One) <i>John Holiday, countertenor</i>	CA. 4'
Ludwig van Beethoven	Symphony No. 5 in C minor, Opus 67 Allegro con brio Andante con moto Scherzo: Allegro Allegro – Presto	CA. 36'

Profiles of the conductor and soloist appear on pages 44 and 45.
The English text of Carlos Simon's *Songs of Separation* and the English translation of the French text for the two songs by Reynaldo Hahn will be projected as surtitles.
Visit minnesotaorchestra.org/holidaytexts for the Simon text and the Hahn texts and translations.
Visit minnesotaorchestra.org/pre for details about pre-concert activities.

**JESSIE MONTGOMERY**

B: December 8, 1981
New York City

Coincident Dances

PREMIERED:
September 16, 2017

Jessie Montgomery, one of today's most prominent living classical composers, has garnered many accolades across her career, including being named the 2025 Classical Woman of the Year by *Performance Today*. Minnesota Orchestra audiences have heard eight of her orchestral and chamber works in the past six years, including *Starburst* and *Strum*—both pieces that showcase the composer's prowess in harnessing rhythmic energy and texture with a complex palette of harmonic masterstrokes. Her 2017 work *Coincident Dances* travels these same lines, beginning tonight's concert with an American flair—and a celebration of multiculturalism—a month after the U.S. marked its the 250th anniversary.

URBAN RHYTHM AND POLYRHYTHM

Montgomery grew up on Manhattan's Lower East Side, the daughter of a musician father and a theater artist and storyteller mother, both of whom were active in the community artistic scene and brought her to marches and cultural events from a young age. Montgomery credits these experiences with shaping her exposure to the music of *Coincident Dances*. Left alone, any one motivic part of the whole would suggest its own unique origin, from swing to samba to Ghanaian mbira dance, to older English styles and the techno-filled sounds of today's clubs and dance halls.

Montgomery writes, "My reason for choosing these styles sometimes stemmed from an actual experience of accidentally hearing a pair simultaneously, which happens most days of the week walking down the streets of New York, or one time when I heard a parked car playing Latin jazz while I had rhythm and blues in my headphones," adding that "working in this mode, the orchestra takes on the role of a DJ of a multicultural dance track."

THE MUSIC: DANCES FROM ALL AROUND

The first motif heard in *Coincident Dances* comes in the form of an athletic series of leaps by a solo string bass. One by one, new rhythms and dance motives appear, from a graceful sigh in the cellos to a triplet-laden consort jig in the high woodwinds that progresses in stark juxtaposition to the

more strident pizzicato rhythm of the lower voices. The music constantly oscillates by deftly switching between a variety of simple and compound meters in increasingly passionate flourishes—showcasing Montgomery’s command of complex polyrhythms.

Brass instruments begin to drive the ensemble forward in a procession-like march with percussive shouts and a three-note motive passed around the higher voices. From here, we hear a solo trumpet usher in the inclusion of latin samba, African-inspired drums, and a new heroic theme laid on top of the rhythmic panoply that would not sound out of place in a Fifth Avenue parade or military march.

The final depiction of the New York of Montgomery’s formative years brings the ensemble’s voices and motives in sync with one another, as if her proverbial stroll through the streets of the Lower East Side has now taken all its varied musical cultures along with her. Following a shimmering crescendo of percussion instruments, the rhythmic texture of the ensemble begins to thin, leaving woodwinds behind to trade a three-note motive that gradually dissipates like a flock of receding birds into the summer skies.

Instrumentation: 2 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets (1 doubling bass clarinet), 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, suspended cymbal, caxixi, cowbell, hi-hat, shaker, tambourine, timbales, triangle, wood block, xylophone and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY JONAH HERZOG.



CARLOS SIMON

B: April 13, 1986
Washington, D.C.

Songs of Separation

PREMIERED:
April 21, 2023

— In the three years since Minnesota Orchestra audiences witnessed the world premiere of Carlos Simon’s *brea(d)th*—a collaboration with spoken word artist Marc Bamuthi Joseph commissioned by the Orchestra in the wake of George Floyd’s murder—the American composer has

continued to expand his artistic renown, most recently being named composer in residence at Amsterdam's Concertgebouw for the 2026–27 season.

CENTURIES-OLD TEXT, UNIVERSAL THEMES

In his 2023 work for mezzo soloist and orchestra, *Songs of Separation*—with the solo role performed at these concerts by countertenor John Holiday—Simon pairs his Americana-tinged neo-Romantic style with text by the 13th-century Sufi mystic and poet Jalāl al-Dīn Muhammad Rūmī, whose universal appeal stems from the deeply human and spiritual dimensions of his work. Simon writes that the four movements depict grief, sorrow, hope and encouragement, drawing especially on Rūmī's reminder that "What hurts you, also blesses you."

The four movements outline the progression of separation's effects on the psyche: understanding suffering, experiencing suffering, choosing life anyway, and finally discovering shared longing and oneness. Together, the cycle charts a gradual dissolution of the isolated self through grief and human connection.

THE SONG CYCLE IN BRIEF

THE GARDEN. The cycle begins with open American pastoral sonorities as the garden comes into view, framed by the shimmering light of bells and vibraphone. The voice wades into the string harmonies as the soloist explores the suffering of separation and searches for what hope it can yield, stating, "But listen to me: for one moment, quit being sad. Hear blessings dropping their blossoms around you. What hurts you, blesses you. Darkness is your candle."

BURNING HELL. The second movement provides an exceedingly clear aural representation of hell, with strings scrubbing away at repeating descending lines in a quick, off-kilter 5/4 meter, as though the vocalist is stumbling haphazardly at first through an unfamiliar landscape. The movement explores a unique color of the vocalist's range, with near-shouted phrases and long melismas—the same syllable sung across multiple pitches—in the lowermost register; the tone is declamatory as the singer repeats the second part of the final phrase, "I go to the highest heaven—it's a burning hell."

DANCE. A turning point in the work, *Dance* explores the decision to choose life amid the grief of separation, with its opening proclamation: "Dance,

when you're broken, Dance, if you're torn." The music itself chooses to dance, swaying along in a billowing 6/4 waltz.

WE ARE ALL THE SAME. The final movement is a moment of ego death, as the text explores the idea of universal oneness—the breaking down of the self. As in the second movement, Simon extends the colors of the solo voice by incorporating spoken text. A brushed, jazz-style drum kit enters for the first time in the piece at “back to the one, back to the only one” before the final section, repeating “We are all the same, all the same,” a final mantra excerpted from Rūmī’s timeless text, expressing a universal truth about separation and human nature.

Visit minnesotaorchestra.org/holidaytexts for the text of *Songs of Separation*.

Instrumentation: solo countertenor and orchestra comprising 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, suspended cymbal, bell tree, drum set, tam-tam, triangle, vibraphone, glockenspiel, harp and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY NICHOLAS LANDRUM.



REYNALDO HAHN

B: August 9, 1874
Caracas, Venezuela

D: January 28, 1947
Paris, France

À Chloris (To Chloris),

arr. Franck Villard

COMPOSED: 1916

Although Reynaldo Hahn’s music may be new to Orchestra Hall—the Minnesota Orchestra’s only previous documented performance of his music came in 1916—this versatile French composer, singer, conductor, educator and writer was hardly obscure in his day. Born in Venezuela in 1874, then raised in Paris from a young age, Hahn was well-connected in musical circles, studying composition with Jules Massenet, Camille Saint-Saëns and Charles Gounod, among others. In addition to teaching voice at the École Normale de Musique de Paris, he factored greatly in the Parisian high society’s salon scene and widely performed and recorded his vocal music. He also achieved renown as a music critic, while a career capstone came late in life when he became director of the Paris Opéra two years before his passing in 1947. Hahn mingled in the literary world as well, notably collaborating on several projects with his longtime friend and partner for

several years, Marcel Proust, including a piece melding Hahn's music with Proust's spoken poetry.

Hahn's absence from Minnesota Orchestra programs may have more to do with his area of expertise than with the quality of his compositions. Although he composed in many genres, Hahn found his greatest success as a composer of art songs for piano and voice, writing more than 100—most of which have not been adapted for orchestra. Fortunately, new editions are becoming more prevalent as his music has undergone a revival in recent decades. Tonight we hear two heartfelt Hahn songs, *À Chloë* and *L'Énamourée*, orchestrated respectively by Franck Villard and Andreas Tarkmann.

A CONFESSION OF LOVE

For the text to his 1913 song *À Chloë* (To Chloë), Hahn reached back three centuries to the French libertine poet Théophile de Viau (1590-1626). The tempo is marked *Très lent* (Very slow), and oboe—often delivering triplet figures—plays a prominent role as the sole wind instrument joining strings. The singer proclaims their love for Chloë—an idealized muse whose name comes from the Greek mythological nymph associated with springtime, flowers and renewal—and hope for reciprocation. At one point only the violas accompany the singer, a striking effect, and the text closes with a compliment for Chloë's eyes, while oboe and strings have the last word.

Instrumentation: solo countertenor and orchestra comprising oboe and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY CARL SCHROEDER.

REYNALDO HAHN

L'Énamourée (Enamored One),
arr. Andreas Tarkmann
COMPOSED: 1891

A larger orchestra—with woodwinds, horn, timpani and harp joining the string section—backs the singer in the similarly slow-paced *L'Énamourée* (Enamored One). Composed in 1891 by a teenager Hahn—not yet 18—the song sets a poem by the Frenchman Théodore de Banville (1823-1891). The singer enters after just a measure's introduction and relates the tale of a lover who has lost their beloved, fondly recalls the romance and hopes for a reconciliation. Imagery of birds—a dove and a swan—begins and ends the song, which is structured in three brief sections. The harp is

the most active of the instruments, delivering arpeggios near-constantly throughout.

Visit minnesotaorchestra.org/holidaytexts for the French text and English translation for the two songs by Reynaldo Hahn.

Instrumentation: solo countertenor and orchestra comprising 2 flutes, oboe, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, timpani, harp and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY CARL SCHROEDER.



LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

B: December 16, 1770
Bonn, Germany

D: March 26, 1827
Vienna, Austria

Symphony No. 5 in C minor, Opus 67

PREMIERED:
December 22, 1808

— The opening measures of Ludwig van Beethoven's Fifth Symphony feature the most well-known notes in classical music, and Beethoven's Fifth is certainly the most famous symphony ever written. Music so white-hot in intensity, so universal in appeal, cries out for interpretation. To some, it is Fate knocking at the door. Others see it as the triumph of reason over chaos and evil. But engaging as such interpretations are, they tell us more about the people who make them than about the music itself. The sad truth is that this music is so overfamiliar that we have lost the capacity to listen to it purely as music, to comprehend it as the astonishing and original musical achievement that it is.

THE MUSIC: FROM FURY TO TRIUMPH

ALLEGRO CON BRIO. The opening of the first movement is both very simple and charged with volcanic fury: it is an assaultive beginning, as Goethe instinctively recognized. The seemingly simple four-note figure that saturates this movement will reappear in many forms throughout the symphony, shaping the main theme, generating the rhythms and pulsing insistently in the background. It even becomes the horn fanfare that announces the second theme. The torrent unleashed at the beginning is unrelenting, and this brief movement hammers to a close with the issues it has raised still unresolved.

ANDANTE CON MOTO. Next comes a variation-form movement based on two separate themes. Violas and cellos sing the broad opening melody in A-flat major; Beethoven reportedly made 11 different versions of this theme before achieving what he wanted. The second subject, in heroic C major, blazes out in the brass, and Beethoven then alternates these two themes, varying each as the movement proceeds.

SCHERZO: ALLEGRO. The third movement returns to the C-minor urgency of the beginning. Lower strings introduce the sinuous opening idea that curls up out of the depths, and we are back in the darkness of the first movement. But horns quickly ring out the symphony's opening motto, and this scherzo, pitched between darkness and light, never fully recovers its equilibrium. The trio, with its blistering fugal entries in the strings, subtly incorporates the symphony's opening rhythm as it proceeds. At just the point where one anticipates a return to the opening of the scherzo comes one of the most famous—and most original—moments in music.

ALLEGRO-PRESTO. Instead of going back, Beethoven pushes ahead. Bits of the scherzo flit quietly over an ominous pedal, and we seem to be gliding over a dark landscape as muted sunlight flickers around us through the clouds. Suddenly the final movement, a triumphant march in C major, bursts across that darkness like a shaft of golden light. At this same instant Beethoven widens his tonal palette, introducing three trombones (their first appearance ever in a symphony), contrabassoon and piccolo. The lower instruments add impressive heft to the orchestral sound, while the piccolo's slashing, silvery runs enliven much of this finale. Near the middle of this movement Beethoven brings back some of the scherzo. It reminds us of the darkness surrounding this journey and briefly slows progress before the triumphant march bursts out again to drive the symphony to its close. The coda itself is extremely long, and the final cadence—extended almost beyond reason—is overpowering.

No matter how familiar this music is, no matter how overlain it has become with extra-musical associations, the Fifth Symphony remains extraordinary music. Heard for itself, free of cultural baggage, it is as original and exciting and furious today as when it burst upon an unsuspecting audience on that cold winter night in Vienna two centuries ago.

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

PROGRAM NOTE BY ERIC BROMBERGER.

AN AMERICAN SONGBOOK WITH JOHN HOLIDAY

Jonathan Taylor Rush, conductor

John Holiday, countertenor

Jearlyn Steele, vocals

Jevetta Steele, vocals

SAT AUG 8 7PM

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



Countertenor John Holiday

Profiles of the conductor and soloists appear on page 44 through 47.
Visit minnesotaorchestra.org/pre for details about pre-concert activities.



SILVER AINOMÄE,
CELLO

Silver Ainomäe has been the Minnesota Orchestra's associate principal cello since 2016, following seven seasons as the Colorado Symphony's principal cello. He has also appeared as guest principal with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Baltimore Symphony, Philharmonia Orchestra, Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra and Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra. He has performed in more than 30 countries as a soloist, chamber and orchestral musician. His solo debut came in 2000 with the Estonian National Symphony Orchestra; he debuted as soloist with the Minnesota Orchestra in June 2023 performances of Brahms' Double Concerto alongside First Associate Concertmaster Susie Park. An active chamber musician and educator, he has performed and taught at prominent festivals in Finland, Estonia, Switzerland, Greece, Germany and the U.K. He has been awarded prizes and awards at competitions including Isang Yun, Lutosławski and Paulo. He was born in Tallinn, Estonia, and in 1990 his family migrated from Estonia to Finland. More: minnesotaorchestra.org.



ALESSIO BAX,
PIANO

Combining exceptional lyricism and insight with consummate technique, Italian-born pianist Alessio Bax catapulted to prominence with First Prize wins at both the 2000 Leeds International Piano Competition and the 1997 Hamamatsu International Piano Competition. He is now a familiar face on five continents as a recitalist, chamber musician and concerto soloist. He has appeared with nearly 200 orchestras from New York to London to Tokyo, and previously performed with the Minnesota Orchestra in 2015 and 2017. In March 2026, Bax was named founding artistic director of the London Chamber Music Festival at Sinfonia Smith Square. Since 2017 he has been the artistic director of the Incontri in Terra di Siena Festival in Tuscany. His most recent album releases are *Forgotten Dances* and *Debussy & Ravel for Two* with pianist Lucille Chung. He has been on the piano faculty of Boston's New England Conservatory since 2019. More: artsmg.com, alessiobax.com.



DANIELA CANDILLARI,
CONDUCTOR

Daniela Candillari has been principal conductor of Opera Theatre of Saint Louis since 2022. Celebrated for her dynamic artistry and insightful leadership, she is equally at home premiering new works and interpreting classical repertoire. Her international career spans major operatic and symphonic stages, where she has been praised by critics for her confidence, verve and incisive leadership. She makes her Minnesota Orchestra debut this summer in concerts with Chris Thile. Her 2026–27 season includes debuts with the Houston Symphony, Seattle Opera, Baluarte Teatro, Boston Lyric Opera and Charlotte Symphony. She will also return to Lyric Opera of Chicago, Manhattan School of Music and other institutions. Her other engagements include performances with the Metropolitan Opera, New York Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony, Washington National Opera, St. Louis Symphony, London Philharmonic, Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and Deutsche Oper Berlin. She grew up in Serbia and Slovenia. More: imgartists.com, danielacandillari.com.



STEPHANIE CHILDRESS,
CONDUCTOR

Franco-British conductor Stephanie Childress has established herself as a rising star on both sides of the Atlantic, bringing a forward-looking vision to the role of the 21st-century conductor. Acclaimed for her interpretations of Mozart operas, she makes her Opéra de Paris debut in a new production of *Don Giovanni* in spring 2027. Her other operatic credits include *Don Giovanni* and *Le Nozze di Figaro* (Glyndebourne) and *La Traviata* (Finnish National Opera). She has led contemporary operas by Missy Mazzoli at Detroit Opera and Simon Voseček at the Prague State Opera. In June 2026 she collaborated with director Tom Morris on an interdisciplinary exploration of Mahler's Symphony No. 1. Other recent highlights include debuts with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Houston Symphony and San Francisco Symphony, as well as ongoing work as principal guest conductor of the Barcelona Symphony Orchestra. She debuted with the Minnesota Orchestra in July 2024. More: harrisonparrott.com, stephaniechildress.com.



SARAH GRIMES,
VIOLIN

Sarah Grimes is a member of the first violin section of the Minnesota Orchestra. Before joining the Orchestra in 2016, she was a guest musician with the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra and a member of the Civic Orchestra of Chicago. Raised in the Twin Cities in a family of musicians, including her sister, Minnesota Orchestra violist Lydia Grimes, she began studying the violin at age 4 and performed as a young soloist with the Minnesota Orchestra in 2005 and 2010. She studied with Sarah Kwak, former first associate concertmaster of the Minnesota Orchestra, and with Almita Vamos at Northwestern University, where she earned a degree in violin performance. Since 2017, she has been the Mississippi Valley Orchestra's concertmaster, and appears annually with the ensemble as a concerto soloist. She is an active chamber musician in Minnesota and beyond, and participates in music festivals worldwide. More: minnesotaorchestra.org.



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 Doomtreet Records. During the Orchestra's upcoming 2026–27 season she will lead film music concerts of *Star Wars: Return of the Jedi*, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* and *Amadeus* as well as performances with Ben Folds, Guster and Leslie Odom, Jr. More: minnesotaorchestra.org.



JOHN HOLIDAY,
COUNTERTENOR

John Holiday has established himself as one of the finest countertenors of his generation, moving fluidly between Baroque repertoire, contemporary opera and American song with technical assurance, stylistic authority and remarkable storytelling ability. He stars on leading international stages including The Metropolitan Opera, LA Opera and Bayerische Staatsoper, and with orchestras including the New York Philharmonic and San Francisco Symphony, among many others. A committed advocate for new music, he has been featured in premieres of works by Kevin Puts, Caroline Shaw, Luna Pearl Woolf, Matthew Aucoin and Daniel Bernard Roumain. He has curated *The John Holiday Experience*, an eclectic concert program spanning classical, pop, jazz and R&B, and a variety of cross-genre projects at the Apollo Theater. His debut album, *Over My Head*, is out on PENTATONE this summer. Since 2023, he has been associate professor of voice at the University of Maryland School of Music. More: opus3artists.com, johnholiday.com.

MEMBERS OF THE
MINNESOTA CHORALE
KATHY SALTZMAN ROMEY,
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
JERRY RUBINO,
SPECIAL PROJECTS
CONDUCTOR

The Minnesota Chorale, principal chorus of the Minnesota Orchestra since 2004, in 2023 marked the 50th anniversary of its first appearance with the Orchestra. Its recent collaborations with the Orchestra include performances of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, Puccini’s *Turandot*, Mozart’s Requiem, Johannes Brahms’ *German Requiem* and *Schicksalslied* and the U.S. premiere of Eleanor Alberga’s *Rise Up, O Sun!*, as well as the world premiere of *brea(d)th* by Carlos Simon and Marc Bamuthi Joseph. Founded in 1972 and led since 1995 by Artistic Director Kathy Saltzman Romey—who celebrates her final season leading the ensemble in 2026–27—the Chorale is Minnesota’s preeminent symphonic chorus and ranks among the foremost professional choruses in the U.S. More: mnchorale.org.

SOPRANO	TENOR
Alyssa K. Breece	Andrew Kreye
Elizabeth Longhurst	Andy McCullough
ALTO	BASS
Joy E. Roellinger	Michael R. Tomlinson
Natalie Wishcop	Riley Ano



SUSIE PARK,
VIOLIN

Australian-born Susie Park became the Minnesota Orchestra's first associate concertmaster in 2015. She has been featured as soloist with the Orchestra in Bach's Brandenburg Concertos No. 2 and 4, Barber's Violin Concerto, Ortiz's *Altar de Cuerda* and, with Associate Principal Cello Silver Ainomäe, Brahms' Double Concerto. She has performed solos around the world with European orchestras such as the Vienna Symphony, Orchestre de Lille and Royal Philharmonic; American orchestras including the Pittsburgh, San Francisco, Indianapolis and Memphis symphony orchestras and the Orchestra of St. Luke's; the major Australian orchestras of Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Tasmania, Canberra and Perth; Korea's KBS Orchestra; and Orchestra Wellington in New Zealand. A dedicated chamber musician, Park was the violinist of the Eroica Trio from 2006 to 2012, touring and recording the ensemble's Grammy-nominated eighth album featuring all-American repertoire. She is also a founding member of the East Coast Chamber Orchestra. More: minnesotaorchestra.org.



JONATHAN TAYLOR RUSH,
CONDUCTOR

American conductor Jonathan Taylor Rush brings passion, unique interpretation and a refreshing energy to the orchestral experience. Rooted in his musical upbringing within the church, Rush's approach to conducting is imbued with elements of gospel and soul music. Deeply committed to the music of contemporary and historical Black composers, Rush conducted the Minnesota Orchestra in the premiere of *brea(d)th* by Carlos Simon and Marc Bamuthi Joseph—a recording of which has been released on Decca Classics. Rush's 2025–26 season included his subscription debut with the Nashville Symphony, his European orchestra debut with the Danish Philharmonic, and appearances with the Atlanta and San Francisco symphonies and the Rochester and Buffalo philharmonics. From 2020 to 2023 he served as assistant conductor and associate conductor of the Baltimore Symphony. Concurrently he served as artistic director of the Baltimore Symphony Youth Orchestras, which he led on its first-ever European tour. More: polyarts.co.uk, jonathanrush.com.



ALEX SOPP,
VOCALS

Alex Sopp is a flutist, singer, composer and visual artist living in Brooklyn, New York. As a singer and a songwriter, her debut album of original songs, *The Hem & The Haw*, was released on New Amsterdam Records. She is the flutist and founding member of yMusic, The Knights, Between Worlds Ensemble and NOW Ensemble. She has played principal flute in the New York Philharmonic and Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, and has premiered solo works written for her by Allison Loggins-Hull, Judd Greenstein, Nico Muhly and Gabriel Kahane. Performing iconic vocal lines and whistle solos, Sopp toured the world with yMusic in support of their album with Paul Simon. Her unique visual artwork has been used by musicians such as Osvaldo Golijov and Joshua Bell and cutting-edge organizations like Castle of Our Skins to bring their projects to life. Her appearance alongside Chris Thile this summer marks her Minnesota Orchestra debut. More: alexsopp.com.



JEARLYN STEELE,
VOCALS

Indiana native Jearlyn Steele is a member of the internationally acclaimed musical family The Steeles. After relocating to Minnesota, she began singing in churches, community centers and nightclubs. She has performed at such venues as the Guthrie Theater, State Theatre, Ordway Center for the Performing Arts and Penumbra Theatre. She starred in the pop/gospel musical *The Gospel at Colonus* with her siblings at Carnegie Hall and on Broadway. She has recorded numerous commercials for various national brands and can be heard on albums for artists such as George Clinton, Mavis Staples and Prince—with whom she recorded the duet *Race*. She was a frequent guest on *A Prairie Home Companion* and is former host of WCCO Radio's *Steele Talkin'*. Recently, she began public speaking, sharing stories called "My Songs in the Key of Life" with multiple national organizations. She is a member of the Screen Actors Guild and American Federation of Television and Radio Artists.



JEVETTA STEELE,
VOCALS

Jevetta Steele is a member of the internationally acclaimed musical family The Steeles. She is most noted for her Academy Award-nominated performance of *Calling You* from the movie *Bagdad Café*, which is certified Gold in several European countries. Steele is an original cast member of the Broadway, national and international touring hit *The Gospel at Colonus*; a featured artist on two operas (*Dear Mrs. Parks* and *African Portraits*); a recipient of four Gold records; and the author of two plays—*2 Queens*, *1 Castle: An Autobiographical Musical* and *Point of Revue*, which she contributed to with Don Cheadle. She has recorded four albums, performed on major theatrical stages and lent her voice to artists such as Prince, The Sounds of Blackness, Kirk Whalum and Natalie Merchant. Her voice can also be heard on national/regional radio and television commercials. She currently directs theatrical performances, music videos and online industrial presentations.



DAVID STEVENS,
DRUMS

David Stevens is a percussionist and timpanist based in New York City. As an orchestral musician, he has performed with the New York Philharmonic; National, Detroit, Virginia, and New Jersey symphony orchestras; Kansas City Symphony; New York City Ballet Orchestra; Metropolitan Opera Orchestra; Orchestra of St. Luke's and Orpheus Chamber Orchestra. On Broadway, Stevens has performed as a substitute percussionist in *Chess*; *The Great Gatsby*; *Sweeney Todd*; *Parade*; *The Phantom of the Opera*; *Beetlejuice*; *Into the Woods*; *Hello, Dolly!*; *An American in Paris* and *Pippin*. Additionally, he was the percussionist in the *We Will Rock You* national tour and has held the timpani chair at the *Radio City Christmas Spectacular*. As a chamber musician, Stevens is a member of Exceptet and has performed with Talea Ensemble, Argento Chamber Ensemble and Ensemble Échappé. Stevens received his bachelor's degree from The Juilliard School and his master's degree from Manhattan School of Music.



CHRIS THILE,
MANDOLIN AND VOCALS

Grammy Award-winning mandolinist, singer, songwriter, composer and MacArthur “genius grant” recipient Chris Thile is a multifaceted musical talent. He is a founding member of the influential string bands Punch Brothers and Nickel Creek and has collaborated with luminaries from Yo-Yo Ma to Fiona Apple to Brad Mehldau. For four years, he hosted public radio favorite *Live from Here with Chris Thile*. With his broad outlook, Thile creates a distinctly American canon and new musical aesthetic for performers and audiences. Recently he has been captivating audiences with the playfully ambiguous autobiographical composition *ATTENTION!*, a narrative song cycle for extroverted mandolinist and orchestra. He has recently toured with Nickel Creek in support of the acclaimed 2023 release *Celebrants*. Thile’s 2025–26 solo performances featured selections from his acclaimed solo recordings of Bach’s Sonatas and Partitas, alongside his signature post-genre blend of compositional rigor, folksy stagecraft and improvisation. More: christhile.com.



JOHN WILLIAMS,
COMPOSER

In a career spanning more than six decades, John Williams has become one of America’s most accomplished and successful composers for film and the concert stage. He remains one of our nation’s most distinguished and contributive musical voices. He has composed the music for more than 100 films, including all nine *Star Wars* films, the first three *Harry Potter* films, *Schindler’s List*, *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial*, *Jaws*, *Jurassic Park*, *Saving Private Ryan*, *Lincoln*, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, *Superman*, *Raiders of the Lost Ark* and this year’s *Disclosure Day*. He served as music director of the Boston Pops Orchestra for 14 seasons and remains its Laureate Conductor. He has composed numerous works for the concert stage including two symphonies and more than a dozen concertos commissioned by some of America’s most prominent orchestras. Last year the Boston Symphony premiered his new piano concerto for Emanuel Ax. He has received five Academy Awards and 54 Oscar nominations, seven British Academy Awards, 27 Grammys, four Golden Globes and five Emmys.

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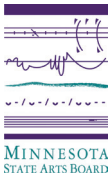
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