from the editor

With the eyes of the sporting world about to turn to the Twin Cities for February's big football game, the Minnesota Orchestra is engaging in an impressive athletic feat of its own: a Tchaikovsky Marathon. Across two weeks, audiences will hear six of the Russian composer’s symphonies and five of his most famous pieces for soloist and orchestra, among other works, all led by Music Director Osmo Vänskä. The Marathon’s starting gun fires on New Year’s Eve with a performance of the youthful First Symphony and the famous First Piano Concerto, while the Orchestra crosses the finish line on January 14 not in arms-raised celebration, but with the somber closing tones of the Pathétique Symphony.

Minnesota Orchestra audiences have never before heard all of this music in such a concentrated time period—and in fact, neither did Tchaikovsky himself, as the Marathon includes one work premiered after his death (the Third Piano Concerto), plus several others rarely heard in his lifetime. How might he react to such an extravaganza of his music in the “Bold North” of Minnesota? With surprise, perhaps, but also likely a sense of vindication, validating a career filled with naysayers who initially rejected some of his greatest masterpieces.

January is not Tchaikovsky’s alone: a dose of the 21st century arrives in the form of singer-songwriter-pianist Ben Folds, performing with the Orchestra under Sarah Hicks’ direction. And late in the month, the Orchestra embarks on a tour to Chicago’s Symphony Center and college campuses in Illinois and Indiana. Watch minnesotaorchestra.org and our social media channels for updates from the road!

Carl Schroeder, Editor
editor@mnorch.org

about the cover

Principal Cello Anthony Ross—who in 2018 celebrates his 30th anniversary of joining the Minnesota Orchestra—takes center stage this month as soloist in Tchaikovsky’s Variations on a Rococo Theme. Photo: Travis Anderson.

in this issue

2 Minnesota Orchestral Association
4 Minnesota Orchestra
6 Profile: Music Director Osmo Vänskä
7 Profile: Minnesota Orchestra
8 Minnesota Orchestra Staff
10 Orchestra News
15 Information
43 Thanks to Our Donors

concerts

17 A New Year Celebration: Tchaikovsky Piano Concerto No. 1: classical concerts
23 Tchaikovsky Symphony No. 4: classical concert
28 Tchaikovsky Symphonies No. 2 and 5: classical concerts
32 Tchaikovsky Symphony No. 3 and Piano Concerto No. 3: classical concert
37 Tchaikovsky Symphony No. 6: classical concerts
42 Ben Folds with the Minnesota Orchestra: Live at Orchestra Hall

Osmo Vänskä, pages 17, 23, 28, 32, 37
Inon Barnatan, page 17
Ben Folds, page 42

James Ehnes, page 37
Photo: Benjamin Ealovega
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Feb. 16–18
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Finnish conductor Osmo Vänskä, the Minnesota Orchestra’s tenth music director, is renowned internationally for his compelling interpretations of the standard, contemporary and Nordic repertoires. He has led the Orchestra on five major European tours and a historic Cuba tour that was the first by an American orchestra since the thaw in Cuban-American diplomatic relations, as well as numerous tours to communities across Minnesota. Late this month he and the Orchestra are embarking a Midwestern U.S. tour, performing on the Chicago Symphony Orchestra’s Symphony Center Presents series and stopping at the campuses of Indiana University and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign for residencies and concerts.

Vänskä’s recording projects with the Minnesota Orchestra have met with great success, including a cycle of the complete Sibelius symphonies, the second album of which won the 2014 Grammy Award for Best Orchestral Performance. This past summer BIS released the first album in a new Mahler series, featuring the Fifth Symphony. It has received a 2018 Grammy nomination. Other recent releases include an album of in-concert recordings of Sibelius’ Kullervo and Finlandia and Kortekangas’ Migrations; two albums of Beethoven piano concertos featuring Yevgeny Sudbin; a two-CD Tchaikovsky set featuring pianist Stephen Hough; To Be Certain of the Dawn, composed by Stephen Paulus with libretto by Michael Dennis Browne; and a particularly widely-praised Beethoven symphonies cycle, of which individual discs were nominated for a Grammy and a Classic FM Gramophone award.

As a guest conductor, Vänskä has received extraordinary praise for his work with many of the world’s leading orchestras, including the Boston and Chicago symphony orchestras, the Philadelphia Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, London Philharmonic, Berlin Philharmonic, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Vienna Symphony, Hong Kong Philharmonic and Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Orchestra. In 2014 he became the Iceland Symphony Orchestra’s principal guest conductor; since then he has been named the ensemble’s honorary conductor. He is also conductor laureate of the Lahti Symphony Orchestra, which, during two decades as music director, he transformed into one of Finland’s flagship orchestras, attracting worldwide attention for performances and for award-winning Sibelius recordings on the BIS label.

Vänskä began his music career as a clarinetist, holding major posts with the Helsinki Philharmonic and the Turku Philharmonic. Since taking up the instrument again for Sommerfest 2005 he has performed as clarinetist at Orchestra Hall, other Twin Cities venues, the Grand Teton Festival and the Mostly Mozart Festival. This season he plays clarinet in a VocalEssence “Finlandia Forever” program and in a program with the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society.

During the 2017-18 season he debuts with the National Symphony Orchestra in Taipei and the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra and makes return visits to the San Francisco Symphony, Pittsburgh Symphony, Iceland Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre de Paris, Orchestra National de Lyon, SWR Symphonieorchester Stuttgart, Radio Filharmonisch Orkest in Amsterdam, Helsinki Philharmonic, Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra, and Toronto Symphony Orchestra, among other ensembles. For more information, visit minnesotaorchestra.org.

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he Minnesota Orchestra, led by Music Director Osmo Vänskä, ranks among America’s top symphonic ensembles, with a distinguished history of acclaimed performances in its home state and around the world. Founded in 1903, it is known for award-winning recordings as well as for notable radio broadcasts and educational engagement programs, and a commitment to new orchestral repertoire.

decade spotlight: 1930s

- On October 17, 1930, the Minnesota Orchestra—then known as the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra—performed its first subscription concert at Cyrus Northrop Memorial Auditorium at the University of Minnesota. The 4,850-seat hall, which the Orchestra helped inaugurate in 1929, would be its primary home for the next 44 years.

- The Orchestra entered its first golden age under the leadership of its third and fourth music directors, both virtual unknowns upon their arrival in Minnesota who would go on to great fame. In 1931 the young Hungarian conductor Eugene Ormandy became the ensemble’s third music director. After Ormandy departed in 1936 to start a 44-year tenure with the Philadelphia Orchestra, he was succeeded by Athens-born Dimitri Mitropoulos.

- The Orchestra greatly expanded its national and international reach through a pair of prestigious recording contracts: first with RCA Victor in 1934, then with Columbia Masterworks in 1939. Altogether it recorded 65 works during the decade, including its first Beethoven symphony, the Fourth, and its first Mahler symphony, the Second (Resurrection).

- Despite the Great Depression, the Orchestra maintained a robust national touring schedule, cementing its reputation as “The Orchestra on Wheels.” Finances were kept afloat by special community fundraising campaigns, musicians’ willingness to accept salary cuts, and steady leadership by the first woman to manage the Orchestra, Mrs. Carlyle Scott.
## Minnesota Orchestra Staff

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<td><strong>Kevin Smith</strong> – President and CEO</td>
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<td><strong>Beth Kellar-Long</strong> – Vice President of Orchestra Administration</td>
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<td><strong>Karl Marshall</strong> – Director of Artistic Planning</td>
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<td><strong>Michael Abramson</strong> – Lighting Technician</td>
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<td><strong>Kris Arkis</strong> – Orchestra Personnel Manager</td>
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<td><strong>Casey Collins</strong> – Artistic Planning Coordinator</td>
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<td><strong>Maureen Conroy</strong> – Principal Librarian</td>
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<td><strong>Don Hughes</strong> – Stage Manager</td>
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<td><strong>Janelle Lanz</strong> – Assistant Orchestra Personnel Manager</td>
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<td><strong>Valerie Little</strong> – Assistant Principal Librarian</td>
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<td><strong>Grant Meachum</strong> – Director, Live at Orchestra Hall</td>
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<td><strong>Joel Mooney</strong> – Technical Director</td>
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<td><strong>Michael B. Pelton</strong> – Artistic Planning Manager and Executive Assistant to the Music Director</td>
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<td><strong>Jay Perlman</strong> – Sound Technician</td>
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<td><strong>Eric Sjostrom</strong> – Associate Principal Librarian</td>
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<td><strong>Mele Willis</strong> – Artistic Operations Manager</td>
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<td><strong>Matthew Winiecki</strong> – Stage Manager</td>
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<td><strong>Jessica Leibfried</strong> – Director of Education and Community Engagement</td>
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<td><strong>Michael Mossaad</strong> – Learning and Engagement Coordinator</td>
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<td><strong>Jessica Ryan</strong> – Manager of Community Engagement</td>
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<td><strong>Dianne Brennan</strong> – Vice President of Advancement Operations</td>
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<td><strong>Michael Black</strong> – Manager of Development Operations</td>
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<td><strong>Emily Boigenzahn</strong> – Director of Planned Giving and Campaign Management</td>
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<td><strong>Sarah Blain Chaplin</strong> – Director of Individual Giving</td>
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<td><strong>Chris Cunnington</strong> – Special Events Coordinator</td>
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<td><strong>John Dunkel</strong> – Manager of Corporate Relations</td>
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<td><strong>Katie Johansson</strong> – Data Coordinator</td>
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<td><strong>John Kaiser</strong> – Development Assistant</td>
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<td><strong>Dawn Loven</strong> – Director of Major Gifts</td>
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<td><strong>Rob Nygaard</strong> – Foundation and Government Relations Manager</td>
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<td><strong>Amanda Schroder</strong> – Manager of Individual Giving</td>
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<td><strong>Angela Skrowaczewski</strong> – Director of Special Events</td>
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<td><strong>Charles Yarbrough</strong> – Building Services Cleaner</td>
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<td><strong>Marcus Valerio</strong> – Vice President of Finance and Operations</td>
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<td><strong>Kathleen Otto</strong> – Director of Human Resources</td>
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<td><strong>Angela Haughton</strong> – Mail Clerk/Stage Door Receptionist</td>
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<td><strong>Leslie Schroeder</strong> – Senior Payroll/Human Resources Administrator</td>
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<td><strong>Tracy Slepica</strong> – Payroll/Human Resources Assistant</td>
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celebrating a Grammy nomination

In late November, the Minnesota Orchestra community celebrated news of a Grammy Award nomination for the Orchestra’s recording of Mahler’s Fifth Symphony—the first disc in a new series of Mahler symphony recordings on the BIS Records label. The honor marks the fourth time in the past decade that Music Director Osmo Vänskä and the Orchestra have been nominated in the Grammy’s Best Orchestral Performance category. One album in the ensemble’s Beethoven symphony cycle and two in its Sibelius symphony cycle were recognized with nominations, and in 2014 the Orchestra took home the Grammy for its recording of Sibelius’ First and Fourth Symphonies. That award is now on display in the Orchestra Hall lobby. The 60th Grammy Award ceremony will take place in New York City on Sunday, January 28; visit grammy.com for information on how to tune in.

Critical praise for the Orchestra’s Mahler album has arrived steadily since its release last summer. Classical Voice declared: “The recording of the Mahler Fifth is, in a word, revelatory.” The Guardian stated that “the orchestral playing is exceptional throughout.” To purchase the recording, stop by the Orchestra Hall box office or visit minnesotaorchestra.org.

meet a musician: Peter McGuire

Orchestra member since: 2003-2012, 2016-present
Position: Principal Second Violin
Hometown: Mankato, Minnesota

Do you come from a musical family?
Yes, and a very Minnesotan one—I’m from Mankato. My dad, Jim McGuire, a classical and jazz guitarist and teacher, was inducted last year into the Minnesota Music Hall of Fame. My brother, Colin, is also a violinist.

Tell us about your career journey.
My first position was in Des Moines, Iowa, with the Pioneer String Quartet. Four years later, I moved to Minneapolis to play as a substitute violinist with the Minnesota Orchestra. After a brief stint as principal second violin of the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, I joined the Minnesota Orchestra’s first violin section. Then, I spent a few years in Zurich, Switzerland, as Second Konzertmeister of the Tonhalle Orchester, before returning last year to serve in my current position. Along the way, I’ve played as a guest with many orchestras, including the Berlin Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony, SWR Sinfonieorchester-Stuttgart, OSR-Geneva, Seattle Symphony, Gürzenich-Orchester Köln and the All-Star Orchestra.

What are you listening to lately?
I’ve been enjoying Renaissance choral music lately. It is so elemental and a good palette cleanser. Schubert, Bruckner—I’m really into the classicists.

Tell us about someone who has influenced you most.
There are so many people that come to mind, but I’d like to acknowledge Fred Halgedahl as a terrific balance of violinist, teacher, writer and thoughtful human being.

What are your proudest career moments?
Joining the Minnesota Orchestra in 2003, and rejoining the Orchestra as principal second violin in 2016, are two favorites. These were life-changing events for my family.

Which solo moment in the violin’s orchestral repertoire do you love?
Beethoven’s Missa solemnis is my favorite.

Which concerts this season are most exciting to you?
We’re continuing recording all the symphonies of Mahler, and when we perform them in concert, the Orchestra will be in top form.

What is your favorite Minnesotan food or activity to enjoy?
I love a good hot dish. Actually, I love that it is a portable gesture of comfort. If we can’t talk about it, we can at least bring a hot dish.

After the full-Orchestra concert on January 13, McGuire will perform Tchaikovsky’s Piano Trio in A minor with Anthony Ross and Timothy Lovelace at a NightCap performance in the Target Atrium. (A separate ticket is required.)

Read an extended version of this interview at minnesotaorchestra.org/showcase.

Orchestra Hall box office or visit minnesotaorchestra.org.
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fond farewells: Arnold Krueger and Sachiya Isomura

In recent months, the Minnesota Orchestra has honored two beloved longtime musicians upon their retirement from the ensemble. In November, cellist Sachiya Isomura played his final Orchestra concerts, concluding his 39-year tenure. Violinist Arnold Krueger, a member of the Orchestra since 1972, performs in his last program at the December 31 and January 1 New Year Celebration. Combined, Isomura and Krueger have contributed a remarkable 85 years of service to the Orchestra.

Krueger, a native of South Dakota who grew up in the southern Minnesota town of Owatonna, joined the Orchestra a year after graduating from the University of Minnesota in 1971. “When I was hired by Stanislaw Skrowaczewski, my dream of becoming a professional musician in the Minnesota Orchestra came true,” he said. “For 45 years I have been honored to be a member of one of the greatest symphony orchestras in the world. Playing music with five music directors, world-class guest conductors and soloists, and musicians of the Minnesota Orchestra is an experience I would not trade for anything else.”

Isomura holds a unique position in the Orchestra’s history as the first musician hired by the late Music Director Sir Neville Marriner. A native of Japan, he studied at the Juilliard School in New York and the Toho School of Music in Tokyo. “Since coming to Minnesota in 1979, I’ve enjoyed wonderful musical experiences and made so many great friends,” he says. Isomura counts among his career highlights several performances with the Saito Kinen Orchestra at the invitation of Seiji Ozawa in Matsumoto, Japan. He also served on the faculty at the University of Northwestern – St. Paul for 15 years.

Visit minnesotaorchestra.org for more on these musicians, and please join us in congratulating them both on their many years of service.

welcome on Board

At the Minnesota Orchestra’s Annual Meeting on November 29, the Orchestra welcomed nine newly-elected members to the Board of Directors, along with one new Director Emeritus, Jane P. Gregerson. Pictured here from left to right are Jane P. Gregerson, Kate T. Kelly, Patrick G. Mahoney, Mary G. Lawrence, Orchestra Board Chair Marilyn Carlson Nelson, Maurice Holloman, Orchestra President and CEO Kevin Smith, and Gordon M. Sprenger. Not pictured are new Board members Yvonne Cheek, Minsok Pak, Anita M. Pampusch and Dimitrios Smyrnios.

In addition, in his comments during the Meeting, Kevin Smith shared that he would step down from his position at the conclusion of Fiscal 2018, as has long been planned. Nelson reported that a search for Smith’s successor has been launched. Life Director Nancy Lindahl and former Board Chair Warren Mack are leading the 15-person search committee, comprising Orchestra board, staff and musicians.
#MNorch: social media roundup

Audiences of all ages are sharing their Minnesota Orchestra experiences through social media, and you can join the fun as well by using the hashtag #MNorch—and you may see your photos and content shared in an upcoming issue of Showcase magazine!

Visit us on Facebook, too: there you can view the entire first half of the Orchestra’s MPR 50th anniversary concert; a short video featuring the Orchestra’s bassoon section sharing insights and a passage from Dukas’ The Sorcerer’s Apprentice; a Young People’s Concert clip of a Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony “sportscast”; inside looks at this month’s Tchaikovsky Marathon from Orchestra musicians; and a recap of October’s Send Me Hope concert by guest blogger Mandy Meisner. Hop on Twitter to see live videos and photos as select Orchestra concerts take place, plus a series of tweets celebrating Sibelius’ birthday, among other highlights. On Instagram, relive our day-in-the-life “takeovers” by Orchestra musicians from earlier this season. We’ll see you online!

Audience members at Little Mermaid in November.

Principal Conductor of Live at Orchestra Hall Sarah Hicks backstage with singer-songwriter-pianist Rufus Wainwright in December.

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Just about everyone knows at least a little Tchaikovsky: from the famous opening of his First Piano Concerto to the soaring love theme of Romeo and Juliet to the characteristic Nutcracker dances, his music overflows with memorable melodies, gorgeous harmonies and dramatic rhythmic drive. For all of his fame, though, many listeners have merely scratched the surface of his wildly prolific output. That changes from December 31 to January 14, when the Minnesota Orchestra presents a Tchaikovsky Marathon that features the Russian composer’s six numbered symphonies, five of his works for soloist and orchestra, a suite from the ballet Swan Lake, and an additional mixture of familiar and rarely-heard works. We extend our gratitude to Kathy and Allen Lenzmeier, whose extraordinary generosity we recognize during the Marathon.

Canadian violinist James Ehnes, the featured artist of the Minnesota Orchestra’s 2017-18 season, kicked off the classical season last September with the U.S. premiere of Anders Hillborg’s Violin Concerto No. 2, and he returns on January 13 and 14 to perform Tchaikovsky’s Violin Concerto. Of that work, he states: “This piece really doesn’t need much of an introduction—it is one of the truly perfect pieces, and audiences should just sit back and enjoy! I can’t think of any concerto that has a more wonderful mix of lyricism and virtuosity.”

This year marks the 25th anniversary of Ehnes’ debut with the Orchestra in 1993. He recently recalled a performance of Brahms’ Violin Concerto with the Orchestra in 2012: “That was the first time I had worked with Osmo Vänskä and the Orchestra together, and it was exciting to see the obvious chemistry that as we all know has blossomed into one of the great partnerships in the musical world.” He added: “I love the spirit of this orchestra. There is always a sense of 100 percent commitment and an openness to explore all options to make the music speak as powerfully as possible.”

visiting the Windy City and more

The Minnesota Orchestra caps this month with a performance tour of the Midwest, as the ensemble visits Chicago for a performance on the Chicago Symphony Orchestra’s Symphony Center Presents series, and engages in residencies and performances on the campuses of Indiana University and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. For updates from the road, watch the Minnesota Orchestra’s Facebook, Twitter and Instagram pages—visit minnesotaorchestra.org for links.
Just about everyone knows at least a little Tchaikovsky: from the famous dances, Romeo and Juliet, Swan Lake, to the characteristic dramatic rhythmic drive. For all of his melodies, gorgeous harmonies and his music overflows with memorable melodies, the composer’s six numbered symphonies, five of his works for soloist and orchestra, a suite from the ballet a suite from the ballet, and we will be seated at pauses as determined by the conductor. The Power of Performance

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Minnesota Orchestra
Osmo Vänskä, conductor
Inon Barnatan, piano
Minnesota Dance Theatre, Lise Houlton, artistic director

Sunday, December 31, 2017, 8:30 pm | Orchestra Hall
Monday, January 1, 2018, 2 pm | Orchestra Hall

With these concerts we gratefully recognize Kathy and Allen Lenzmeier for their generous contribution to the Minnesota Orchestra’s Investing in Inspiration campaign.

All works by Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Symphony No. 1 in G minor, Opus 13, Winter Dreams
Allegro tranquillo
Adagio cantabile ma non tanto
Scherzo: Allegro scherzando giocoso
Finale: Andante lugubre – Allegro moderato – Allegro maestoso

Minnesota Dance Theatre

INTEMISSION
ca. 20’

Serenade in C major for Strings, Opus 48
Pezzo in forma di sonatina: Andante non troppo – Allegro moderato
Walzer: Moderato – Tempo di valse
Elégie: Larghetto elegiaco
Finale (Tema Russo): Andante – Allegro con spirito

Concerto No. 1 in B-flat minor for Piano and Orchestra, Opus 23
Allegro non troppo e molto maestoso
Andantino semplice
Allegro con fuoco

Inon Barnatan, piano

ca. 43’

ca. 29’

ca. 33’

The December 31 concert is followed by a New Year’s Eve party and countdown in the lobby.

Minnesota Orchestra’s New Year’s Day matinee concert will be broadcast live on stations of Classical Minnesota Public Radio, including KSJN 99.5 FM in the Twin Cities.
Artists

Osmo Vänskä, conductor
Profile appears on page 6.

Inon Barnatan, piano
Inon Barnatan was last heard with the Minnesota Orchestra in May 2016, when he performed Rachmaninoff’s First Piano Concerto. He recently completed his third and final season as the inaugural Artist-in-Association of the New York Philharmonic. He received Lincoln Center’s Martin E. Segal Award in 2015 and the prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant in 2009. Barnatan’s passion for contemporary music has led him to commission and perform many works by living composers, including premieres of works by Thomas Adès, Sebastian Currier, Avner Dorman, Matthias Pintscher, Alasdair Nicolson, Andrew Norman and others. His newest album is a live recording of Messiaen’s 90-minute masterpiece Des canyons aux étoiles (From the Canyons to the Stars), with an ensemble conducted by Alan Gilbert at the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival. Barnatan is currently in the process of recording the complete cycle of Beethoven piano concertos with the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields. More: inonbarnatan.com.

Minnesota Dance Theatre
Lise Houlton, artistic director
The Minnesota Dance Theatre and School has been a leader in performing, teaching and celebrating the art of dance for more than five decades. Since its founding in 1962 by choreographer, teacher and producer Loyce Houlton, it has collaborated with the Minnesota Orchestra more than 250 times. Now under the direction of Lise Houlton, a former member of the American Ballet Theatre and Stuttgart Ballet, the Minnesota Dance Theatre and School fosters talent in the Twin Cities by providing a comprehensive classical and contemporary training curriculum. More: mndance.org.

Jeremy Bensussan
Katelyn Boche
Kaitlyn Deyo
Sam Feipel
Maia Nguyen
Gates Northrup
Solana Temple
Zachary Tuazon
Isabelle Tudor

one-minute notes

Tchaikovsky: Symphony No. 1, Winter Dreams; Serenade for Strings; Piano Concerto No. 1
Tchaikovsky's First Symphony, nicknamed Winter Dreams, begins with harmonies that evoke the crispness of a fresh winter's snow; the work grows with a fiery energy that burns brilliant until the final note.

Tchaikovsky's Serenade for Strings is the composer's nod back to Mozart and his music of the same genre. Throughout the serenade's four movements, the strings sparkle and dance, are graceful yet animated, relaxed but incredibly beautiful. The first chorale theme makes a remarkable return at the very end of the work.

Like Beethoven, who angrily removed Napoleon’s name from his Eroica Symphony, Tchaikovsky furiously scratched out the name Nikolai Rubinstein, the intended dedicatee of his famous First Piano Concerto—and it became an instant success in the hands of the man he then honored with the dedication, Hans von Bülow. It begins with high drama, retreats to a place of calm and rushes toward its close in a mood of white-hot energy.

18 MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA  SHOWCASE
Tchaikovsky Marathon: Music by a (mostly) young composer

Some composers achieve success effortlessly. Others struggle for years. Tchaikovsky was in the latter camp. He made his first attempt at composition at age 4, but his apprenticeship was long and difficult. Compounding the problem was Tchaikovsky's sensitivity to criticism, both from others and from continual self-doubt. Yet even as a young composer he produced some radiant scores, and this concert offers two pieces that had to overcome much opposition. The First Piano Concerto provoked the most destructive criticism the composer ever faced. But it also revealed a tough confidence beneath his perpetual self-doubt: Tchaikovsky refused to make any changes, and the concerto went on to become one of his best-loved works.

In December 1865, Tchaikovsky graduated from the St. Petersburg Conservatory and took the only steady job he ever had. The Rubinstein brothers—composer Nikolai and pianist Anton—invited him to join the faculty of the Moscow Conservatory, and Tchaikovsky moved to Moscow in January 1866 to become a professor of harmony. Nikolai led a successful performance in March 1866 of Tchaikovsky's Overture in F major, and the brothers encouraged him to take on the most imposing of orchestral forms, the symphony. It was a daunting prospect for a young composer still uncertain about his abilities, and the composition of what would become his first symphony proved harrowing.

Tchaikovsky made a first draft between March and August 1866, but when he showed his manuscript to Anton, the reaction was so caustic that Tchaikovsky went back and completely rewrote it. In fact, the stress was so great that Tchaikovsky came near to collapse—he was doubtless relieved when his doctors ordered him to put the work aside for awhile and collect his faculties. He had the score done by December 22, but the symphony had to wait a year for its premiere. It was worth the wait: that performance, which took place in Moscow on February 15, 1868, was a great success.

Tchaikovsky's First Symphony has not really held a place in the repertory, but this music—youthful, melodic, and far from the tortured intensity of some of Tchaikovsky's later scores—has pleasures of its own. It also has a curious nickname, one for which Tchaikovsky himself was partially responsible. This is not programmatic music, as Tchaikovsky was intent on mastering the symphony on its own terms. He did, however, give the first two movements subtitles, and the one he gave the first movement (“Dreams on a wintry road”) has been transformed into a general nickname for the symphony: Winter Dreams (sometimes rendered as Winter Daydreams). That is an evocative title, but it may not make for an ideal entry into this music, which at moments is full of a fire and excitement far removed from our usual sense of winter.

The music: wintry inspiration and a folksong finale allegro tranquillo. Certainly no one would on his or her own guess that the first movement should be subtitled “Dreams on a wintry road,” and listeners should take this at most as a suggestion of general atmosphere. This sonata-form movement gets off to a wonderful start: over rustling strings, solo flute and bassoon in octaves outline the main theme, and Tchaikovsky quickly spins a rhythmic sub-theme from this. Solo clarinet has the second subject, and these two theme-groups develop at some length.

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allegro cantabile ma non tanto. Tchaikovsky's subtitle for the second movement, “Land of gloom, land of mist,” is misleading, for this lovely music is so appealing that it has occasionally been performed by itself. Once again, it is based on two theme-groups, which Tchaikovsky simply alternates across the span of the movement. Muted strings make for a lush beginning, and solo oboe introduces what at first seems a melancholy second subject, but the cellos quickly pick this up and make it dance.

scherzo: allegro scherzando giocoso. Neither of the final two movements has a subtitle; perhaps at this point Tchaikovsky had abandoned the wintry inspiration. His performance marking for the Scherzo is worth noting: he wants this movement not just scherzando (jesting) but also giocoso (happy). Its energetic main idea tumbles and cascades along the 3/8 meter. The trio section has been called the first of Tchaikovsky's great orchestral waltzes. He preserves the 3/8 meter of the scherzo, and this waltz dances energetically.

finale: andante lugubre—allegro moderato—allegro maestoso. The finale begins with a slow introduction based on the old Russian folk tune “The Garden Bloomed,” and which he specifies should be lugubre (gloomy). But sunlight shines through at the Allegro...
**Serenade in C major for Strings, Opus 48**

**Premiered:** December 3, 1880 (private performance); October 30, 1881 (public performance)

In the fall of 1880, Tchaikovsky set to work simultaneously on two very different pieces. One was the Serenade for Strings; the other was the *1812* Overture. The composer loved the first of these, but had no use for the second.

To his benefactress, Madame Nadezhda von Meck, he wrote: “I have written two long works very rapidly: the festival overture and a Serenade in four movements for string orchestra. The overture will be very noisy. I wrote it without much warmth or enthusiasm; and therefore it has no great artistic value. The Serenade on the contrary, I wrote from an inward impulse: I felt it; and I venture to hope that this work is not without artistic qualities.”

In a way, the two pieces are opposites, for the Serenade—lyric, open, relaxed—is everything the bombastic *1812* Overture is not, and it comes as no surprise that Tchaikovsky had such fondness for this music.

**the music: Tchaikovsky at his friendliest**

*pezzo in forma di sonatina: andante non troppo–allegro moderato.*

Tchaikovsky intended this work’s opening movement as an homage to one of his favorite composers: Mozart. Although Tchaikovsky called the composition a serenade and specifically set the first movement in sonatina form—both of which suggest an absence of rigorous formal development—this music is nevertheless beautifully unified. The powerful descending introduction quickly gives way to the *Allegro moderato*, based on two subjects: a broadly-swung melody for full orchestra and a sparkling theme for violins. Tchaikovsky brings back the introductory theme to close out the movement.

**walzer: moderato–tempo di valse.** Waltzes were a specialty of Tchaikovsky, and this movement is one of his finest. It gets off to a graceful start, grows more animated as it proceeds, then falls away to wink out on two pizzicato strokes.

**élégie: largetto elegiac.** The third movement, titled *Elegie*, begins with a quiet melody that soon grows in intensity and beauty. The mood here never becomes tragic—the Serenade remains, for the most part, in major keys—but the depth of feeling with which this *Larghetto elegiaco* unfolds makes it the emotional center of the entire work.

**finale (tema Russo): andante–allegro con spirito.** The finale has a wonderful beginning. Very quietly the violins play a melody based on a Russian folk tune, reputedly an old hauling song from the Volga River, and suddenly the main theme bursts out and the movement takes wing. The *Allegro con spirito* theme is closely related to the introduction of the first movement, and at the end Tchaikovsky deftly combines these two themes to bring one of his friendliest compositions to an exciting close.

**Instrumentation:** strings alone

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**Piano Concerto No. 1 in B-flat Minor, Opus 23**

**Premiered:** October 25, 1875

Tchaikovsky drafted this most famous of piano concertos in November and December 1874, when he was a young professor at the Moscow Conservatory. Only modestly talented as a pianist and insecure about his handling of larger forms, Tchaikovsky sought the advice of Nikolai Rubinstein, head of the Conservatory and the man to whom he intended to dedicate the concerto. Rubinstein listened in silence as Tchaikovsky played the new work through, and then, as the composer later recounted:

“There burst from Rubinstein’s mouth a mighty torrent of words. He spoke quietly at first, then he waxed hot, and finally he resembled Zeus hurling thunderbolts. It seems that my concerto was utterly worthless, absolutely unplayable. Certain passages were so commonplace and awkward they could not be improved, and the piece as a whole was bad, trivial, vulgar. I had stolen this from somebody and that from somebody else, so that only two or three pages were good for anything and all the rest should be wiped out or radically rewritten.”

**a triumphant premiere**

Stung (and furious), Tchaikovsky refused to change a note, erased the dedication to Rubinstein, and instead dedicated the concerto to the German pianist-conductor Hans von Bülow, who had championed his music. Bülow promptly took the concerto on a tour of the United States, and it was in Boston on October 25, 1875, that Tchaikovsky’s First Piano Concerto was heard for the first time.
It was a huge success on that occasion, and Bülow played it repeatedly in this country to rhapsodic reviews. A critic in Boston, taking note of that success, described the concerto as an “extremely difficult, strange, wild, ultra-modern Russian Concerto,” but back in Russia the composer read the press clippings and was beside himself with happiness: “Think what healthy appetites these Americans must have! Each time Bülow was obliged to repeat the whole finale of my concerto! Nothing like that happens in our country.” Rubinstein eventually saw the error of his initial condemnation and became one of the concerto’s great champions. (It should be noted, though, that in 1889—perhaps more aware of Rubinstein’s criticisms than he cared to admit—Tchaikovsky did in fact take the concerto through a major revision, and it is in this form that we know it today).

the music: a famous, ephemeral opening

**allegro non troppo e molto maestoso.** The concerto has one of the most dramatic beginnings in all the literature, ringing with horn fanfares and cannonades of huge piano chords, followed by one of Tchaikovsky’s Great Tunes, in which that horn fanfare is transformed into a flowing melody for strings. This opening has become extremely famous, but this introductory section has many quirks. It is in the “wrong” key (D-flat major), and—however striking it may be—it never returns in any form: Tchaikovsky simply abandons all this tremendous material when he gets to the main section of the movement.

This “real” beginning, marked *Allegro con spirito*, is finally in the correct key of B-flat minor, and the piano’s skittering main subject is reportedly based on a tune Tchaikovsky heard a blind beggar whistle at a fair in the Ukraine. The expected secondary material quickly appears—a chorale-like theme for winds and a surging, climbing figure for strings—though Tchaikovsky evades expectations by including multiple cadenzas for the soloist in this movement. The piano writing is of the greatest difficulty (much of it in great hammered octaves), and the movement drives to a dramatic close.

**andantino semplice.** The *Andantino semplice* is aptly named, for this truly is simple music in the best sense of that term: over pizzicato chords, solo flute sings the gentle main theme, an island of calm after the searing first movement. A scherzo-like central episode marked *Prestissimo* leads to the return of the opening material and a quiet close.

**allegro con fuoco.** The finale is also well named, for here is music full of fire. It is a rondo based on the piano’s nervous, dancing main theme, and while calmer episodes break into this furious rush, the principal impression this music makes is of white-hot energy, and this “strange, wild, ultra-modern Russian Concerto” rushes to a knock-out close that is just as impressive to audiences today as it was to that first Boston audience in 1875.

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

Program notes by Eric Bromberger.
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Minnesota Orchestra
Osmo Vänskä, conductor
Kyle Orth, piano

Friday, January 5, 2018, 8 pm | Orchestra Hall

With these concerts we gratefully recognize Kathy and Allen Lenzmeier for their generous contribution to the Minnesota Orchestra’s Investing in Inspiration campaign.

All works by Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Capriccio italien, Opus 45
ca. 16’

Concerto No. 2 in G major for Piano and Orchestra, Opus 44
Allegro brillante e molto vivace
Andante non troppo
Allegro con fuoco
Kyle Orth, piano
ca. 29’

INTERMISSION
ca. 20’

Symphony No. 4 in F minor, Opus 36
Andante sostenuto – Moderato con anima
Andantino in modo canzona
Scherzo: Pizzicato ostinato
Finale: Allegro con fuoco
ca. 44’
Pianist Kyle Orth, who makes his Minnesota Orchestra debut in tonight’s performance, was the Grand Prize winner of the Friends of the Minnesota Orchestra Young Artist Competition in 2016. Since making his solo debut at age 15, he has appeared with the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, Israel Symphony Orchestra, Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra, Orquesta Sinfónica de Oaxaca (Mexico), Dallas Chamber Symphony, Missouri Symphony Orchestra and Springfield Symphony Orchestra, among others. He has won many additional awards including first place in the Dallas International Piano Competition, Music Teachers National Association (MTNA) Yamaha Senior Piano Competition, Lennox International Young Artist’s Competition, Midland-Odessa National Young Artist Competition and Hellam Young Artists Competition. He has presented solo recitals in Cabo San Lucas and Oaxaca, Mexico, and at the MFA Boston, Dallas Museum of Art, Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth and Meadows Museum. As an advocate for promoting music education in public schools, he was invited to perform on numerous occasions for the Van Cliburn Foundation’s Musical Awakenings® Program. More: kyleorth.com.

Osmo Vänskä, conductor
Profile appears on page 6.

Kyle Orth, piano
Pianist Kyle Orth, who makes his Minnesota Orchestra debut in tonight’s performance, was the Grand Prize winner of the Friends of the Minnesota Orchestra Young Artist Competition in 2016. Since making his solo debut at age 15, he has appeared with the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, Israel Symphony Orchestra, Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra, Orquesta Sinfónica de Oaxaca (Mexico), Dallas Chamber Symphony, Missouri Symphony Orchestra and Springfield Symphony Orchestra, among others. He has won many additional awards including first place in the Dallas International Piano Competition, Music Teachers National Association (MTNA) Yamaha Senior Piano Competition, Lennox International Young Artist’s Competition, Midland-Odessa National Young Artist Competition and Hellam Young Artists Competition. He has presented solo recitals in Cabo San Lucas and Oaxaca, Mexico, and at the MFA Boston, Dallas Museum of Art, Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth and Meadows Museum. As an advocate for promoting music education in public schools, he was invited to perform on numerous occasions for the Van Cliburn Foundation’s Musical Awakenings® Program. More: kyleorth.com.

one-minute notes

**Tchaikovsky: Capriccio italien; Piano Concerto No. 2; Symphony No. 4**
A delightful ode to Rome, *Capriccio italien* opens with a striking military bugle call and continues with episodes based on Italian songs, both lyrical and lively, before the work closes with a sizzling tarantella dance.

A thundering march launches the Second Piano Concerto, which initially segregates soloist and orchestra. The middle movement offers a surprise—the hint of a triple concerto with violin and cello—while the finale has the spirit of a high-stepping country dance.

Tchaikovsky’s Fourth Symphony, like Beethoven’s Fifth, presents a Fate motif at the outset. This is an adventurous work carrying us through lyrical episodes as well as high drama on the way to the exuberant conclusion.
**Tchaikovsky Marathon: Tchaikovsky and Italy**

All three pieces on this program have a connection to Italy, and all three were at least partially composed there. The connection with *Capriccio italien* is clear: the music was inspired by Tchaikovsky’s visit to Rome in 1880. He fell in love with that great city and incorporated some of its music into the *Capriccio*. The other two works come from a less happy moment in Tchaikovsky’s life, the aftermath of his disastrous marriage, when the stunned composer left Moscow and fled to Western Europe. He did some of the work on the Second Piano Concerto in Rome and completed the Fourth Symphony in San Remo, on the shores of the Mediterranean. Italy is much less an “influence” on these two works than on the *Capriccio*, but the fact that Tchaikovsky—at a moment of great personal distress—would choose to live and work in Italy may tell us all we need to know about his feelings for that country.

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**Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky**

**Born:** May 7, 1840, Votkinsk, Russia  
**Died:** November 6, 1893, St. Petersburg, Russia

*Capriccio italien, Opus 45*  
**Premiered:** December 18, 1880

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Tchaikovsky spent the winter of 1880 in Rome, and he fell in love with that city. It was carnival season, and life blazed around him: crowds, dancers, fireworks, music, the smell of food—all these were part of his impressions of the Eternal City, and suddenly Tchaikovsky felt like writing music. He turned the tunes he heard around him to good use and began writing *Capriccio italien* soon after his arrival. To his patroness Nadezhda von Meck back in Russia, he explained his method: “I am working on a sketch of an ‘Italian Fantasia’ based on folk songs. Thanks to the charming themes, some of which I have heard in the streets, the work will be effective.”

**brilliant Italian episodes**

The term “capriccio” has no formal musical meaning. It is more a suggestion of atmosphere, indicating something unexpected (the “caprice”) or—more often—something spicy and animated. It is in the latter sense that Tchaikovsky intends the title. Formal structures were never his strong point, and he makes his “Italian Caprice” out of a series of sections in different meters and keys. The resulting structure is episodic, but few have complained—

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**Concerto No. 2 in G major for Piano and Orchestra, Opus 44**  
**Premiered:** November 12, 1881

Tchaikovsky’s First Piano Concerto had caused a serious rift between Tchaikovsky and one of his closest friends, the pianist Nikolai Rubinstein (as detailed on page 20). Both wanted to mend fences, and the composer decided to do this by writing a new concerto, tailored to Rubinstein’s fabulous abilities as a pianist. The compositional process spanned a variety of locales: Tchaikovsky began the concerto in October 1879 at his family’s summer estate in Ukraine, then brought the manuscript with him for further work in Paris and Rome, and then back to Russia, where he completed the concerto in March 1880.

**the music: grand, intimate and virtuosic**

*Allegro brillante e molto vivace.* The Second Piano Concerto gets off to an impressive start on the grand stride of the orchestra’s opening statement, with the pianist quickly picking this up as a huge chordal melody. Tchaikovsky offers some quick interplay between soloist and orchestra before an expectant tremolo from the strings sets the stage for the second subject. This falls into two parts: solo clarinet and horn share what might be called an opening phrase, and the piano responds with the tune-like second half. Tchaikovsky develops these over a huge span, and along the way there are two separate cadenzas for the soloist.

*Andante non troppo.* The atmosphere changes completely in this movement, which is—for long periods—simply chamber music. Piano alone announces the principal idea, but is soon joined by solo violin and solo cello, making this movement essentially a concerto for piano trio.
**Jan 5**

Program Notes

allegro con fuoco. The concluding movement has a rondo-like structure based on two completely different ideas. Tchaikovsky gives the pianist a truly virtuoso part, and the themes are so appealing and the music so energetic that they sweep everything before them as the concerto thunders to its close.

**Instrumentation:** solo piano with orchestra comprising 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani and strings

**Symphony No. 4 in F minor, Opus 36**

*Premiered:* February 22, 1878

The Fourth Symphony dates from the most tumultuous period in Tchaikovsky’s difficult life. In July 1877, Tchaikovsky married one of his students at the Moscow Conservatory, Antonina Ivanovna Milyukova. The marriage was an instant disaster. Tchaikovsky abandoned his bride, tried to return, but retreated again. He fled to Western Europe, finding relief in the quiet of Clarens in Switzerland and San Remo in Italy. It was in San Remo—on the sunny shores of the Mediterranean and far from the chaos of his life in Moscow—that he completed the Fourth Symphony in January 1878.

The Fourth Symphony has all of Tchaikovsky’s considerable virtues—great melodies, primary colors, and soaring climaxes—in this case fused with a superheated emotional content. Tchaikovsky said that the model for his Fourth Symphony had been Beethoven’s Fifth, specifically in the way both symphonies are structured around a recurring motif, though perhaps also in the sense that the two symphonies begin in emotional turmoil and eventually win their way to release and triumph in the finale.

年第：a duel with fate

andante sostenuto—moderato con anima. The symphony opens with a powerful brass fanfare, which Tchaikovsky described as “Fate, the inexorable power that hampers our search for happiness. This power hangs over our heads like the sword of Damocles, leaving us no option but to submit.” The principal subject of this movement, however, is a dark, stumbling waltz in 9/8 introduced by the violins. Like inescapable fate, the opening motto-theme returns at key points in this dramatic music, and it finally drives the movement to a furious close.

andantino in modo canzona. The two middle movements bring much-needed relief. The Andantino, in ternary-form, opens with a plaintive oboe solo and features a more animated middle section. Tchaikovsky described it: “Here is the melancholy feeling that overcomes us when we sit weary and alone at the end of the day. The book we pick up slips from our fingers, and a procession of memories passes in review...”

scherzo: pizzicato ostinato. The scherzo has deservedly become one of Tchaikovsky’s most popular movements. It is a tour de force for strings, which play pizzicato throughout, with crisp interjections first from the woodwinds and then from brass. The composer noted: “Here are only the capricious arabesques and indeterminate shapes that come into one’s mind with a little wine...”

finale: allegro con fuoco. Out of the quiet close of the third movement, the finale explodes to life. The composer described this movement as “the picture of a folk holiday” and said, “If you find no pleasure in yourself, look about you. Go to the people. See how they can enjoy life and give themselves up entirely to festivity.” Marked Allegro con fuoco, this movement simply alternates its volcanic opening sequence with a gentle tune that is actually the Russian folk tune “In the field there stood a birch tree.”

Given the catastrophic events of his life during this music’s composition, Tchaikovsky may well have come to feel that Fate was inescapable, and the reappearance of the opening motto amid the high spirits of the finale represents the climax—musically and emotionally—of the entire symphony. This spectre duly acknowledged, Tchaikovsky rips the symphony to a close guaranteed to set every heart in the hall racing at the same incandescent pace as his music.

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

Program notes by Eric Bromberger.

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The Minnesota Orchestra first performed Tchaikovsky’s *Capriccio Italian* on November 7, 1905, at the Minneapolis Auditorium, with founding Music Director Emil Oberhoffer conducting. The *Capriccio* was the fifth Tchaikovsky work ever performed by the Orchestra; the first, in December 1903, was the famous Waltz from The Sleeping Beauty.

The Orchestra introduced Tchaikovsky’s *Second Piano Concerto* to its repertoire on March 27, 1914, again at the Minneapolis Auditorium with Oberhoffer conducting; the soloist was Yolanda Mero, a Hungarian-American pianist, impresario and philanthropist. In the following half-century, the Orchestra performed the concerto just once, in 1950.

Tchaikovsky’s Symphony No. 4 was first heard by Orchestra audiences on November 1, 1907, also at the Minneapolis Auditorium with Oberhoffer conducting. Last year, a video clip of Associate Conductor Roderick Cox leading the Orchestra in the symphony’s finale spread widely on social media, and has been viewed on Facebook more than 3 million times.
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Tchaikovsky Symphonies No. 2 and 5

Minnesota Orchestra
Osmo Vänskä, conductor
Anthony Ross, cello

Saturday, January 6, 2018, 8 pm  Orchestra Hall
Friday, January 12, 2018, 8 pm  Orchestra Hall

With these concerts we gratefully recognize Kathy and Allen Lenzmeier for their generous contribution to the Minnesota Orchestra’s Investing in Inspiration campaign.

All works by Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Symphony No. 2 in C minor, Opus 17, Little Russian
Andante sostenuto – Allegro vivo
Andantino marziale, quasi moderato
Scherzo: Allegro molto vivace
Finale: Moderato assai – Allegro vivissimo

Variations on a Rococo Theme, for Cello and Orchestra, Opus 33
Anthony Ross, cello

INTERMISSION

Symphony No. 5 in E minor, Opus 64
Andante – Allegro con anima
Andante cantabile con alcuna licenza
Valse: Allegro moderato
Finale: Andante maestoso – Allegro vivace – Moderato assai e molto maestoso

Concert Preview with Akiko Fujimoto and Anthony Ross
Friday, January 12, 7:15 pm, Target Atrium

Minnesota Orchestra concerts are broadcast live on Friday evenings on stations of Classical Minnesota Public Radio, including KSJN 99.5 FM in the Twin Cities.
Tchaikovsky: Symphony No. 2; Variations on a Rococo Theme; Symphony No. 5

A single horn sings the opening solo of Tchaikovsky’s Second Symphony, which—in typical Tchaikovsky fashion—quotes a variety of Eastern European folk tunes. Traditional melodies from Ukraine, or “Little Russia,” as it was then called, inspired both the musical ideas and the nickname for this work.

From an original theme in the cello, through seven variations and a lively coda, Variations on a Rococo Theme is light, elegant and full of charm. When Franz Liszt first heard it performed, he simply exclaimed, “This is indeed music!”

Tchaikovsky’s popular Fifth Symphony—whose primary theme, he wrote, represents “complete resignation before fate”—is filled with wonderful mottos, orchestral color, balletic beauty and high drama. Watch for the finale’s false conclusion, a great climax that tricks many listeners into thinking the performance is complete.

Anthony Ross, cello

Anthony Ross, now in his 30th year as a Minnesota Orchestra member, assumed the principal cello post in 1991. He has been a soloist many times with the Orchestra, performing concertos by Dvořák, Walton, Brahms, Victor Herbert, James MacMillan, Beethoven, Saint-Saëns, Elgar and Shostakovich, as well as many chamber works. In 2015, he performed Schumann’s Cello Concerto under the direction of the late Stanislaw Skrowaczewski—thereby becoming the final musician to perform a concerto under Skrowaczewski’s baton at Orchestra Hall. An avid chamber musician, Ross is a member of Accordo, an ensemble composed of principal string players from the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra and Minnesota Orchestra; he also plays regularly with the Chamber Music Society of Minnesota and with ensembles of his Orchestra colleagues. He has performed at music festivals in the U.S. and Europe and has been a faculty member at the Grand Teton, Aspen, Madeline Island and Indiana University festivals. His recordings include Bernstein’s Three Meditations, made with the Minnesota Orchestra, and Carter and Rachmaninoff sonatas for Boston Records. More: minnesotaorchestra.org.

Ross comments on the work he performs on this program: “The Tchaikovsky Rococo Variations is truly one of the premier showpieces for the cello. Amid the stunningly beautiful melodies are a myriad of long jumps, high jumps, high wire acts and wind sprints. This piece will move you one moment and make you chuckle with its humor in the next phrase.”
Tchaikovsky Marathon: Influences

We think of Tchaikovsky as so original, so unique, that it comes as a surprise to recognize that there were strong influences on his music. The first of these was Russian folk music. Like many other Russian composers of his generation, Tchaikovsky felt the charm of the music he heard sung around him on the streets and in the fields. His Second Symphony—which opens this program—incorporates a number of ancient folksongs from the Ukraine. Another (and quite unexpected) influence on Tchaikovsky was the music of Mozart. Those two may seem very different people and composers, but Tchaikovsky admired the clarity and emotional balance of Mozart’s music; the Rococo Variations represent his effort to write this kind of music. The Fifth Symphony, however, finds Tchaikovsky speaking in a voice that is very much his own.

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Born: May 7, 1840, Votkinsk, Russia
Died: November 6, 1893, St. Petersburg, Russia

Symphony No. 2 in C minor, Opus 17, Little Russian
Premiered: February 7, 1873

Relations between Tchaikovsky and “The Five,” that influential band of Russian nationalist composers, were always a little tender. Those five—Mussorgsky, Borodin, Cui, Balakirev and Rimsky-Korsakov—admired Tchaikovsky’s talents but were suspicious of his conservatory training and his use of Western forms. Tchaikovsky’s Second Symphony, in fact, occasioned one of their few moments of cordial contact.

Tchaikovsky composed this symphony between June and November 1872, and it was first performed in Moscow on February 7, 1873. The symphony seemed to have a popular success, but César Cui, a member of The Five, savaged it in a review. Always vulnerable to criticism, Tchaikovsky was stung by this review, and seven years later he came back to the symphony and revised it. He was now a better composer, and he knew it.

To his patron Madame von Meck he wrote: “Today I set out to remodel my Second Symphony. It went so well that before lunch I had made a rough draft of nearly half of the first movement... How much seven years can mean when a man is striving for progress in his work!”

A symphony infused with folk songs

The Second is Tchaikovsky’s shortest symphony, but what makes this music distinctive is his use of folk tunes for some of its themes. This was a technique favored by The Five, and Rimsky-Korsakov in particular was impressed when Tchaikovsky played this music for him on the piano. The authentic folk tunes that Tchaikovsky employed here come from the Ukraine, a region sometimes known as “Little Russia.” The nickname Little Russian, however, did not originate with the composer. It was coined by the music critic Nicholas Kashkin, and in Russia that nickname would have been understood to mean simply “Ukrainian.”

Andante sostenuto–allegro vivo. The first movement opens with a long solo for French horn based on the Ukrainian folksong “Down by Mother Volga.” The music leaps ahead at the Allegro vivo, which itself sounds folksong-derived. Tchaikovsky may have had difficulty with symphonic form, but this movement is beautifully-made: the development treats both the main theme of the exposition and the horn theme from the introduction.

Andantino marziale, quasi moderato. The second movement was originally the wedding march from Tchaikovsky’s ill-fated opera Undine. Over the timpani’s steady tread, woodwinds sing the little march tune; a more lyric second idea follows.

Scherzo: allegro molto vivace. The third movement is a propulsive scherzo in ABA form. Metric units are quite short here: the outer sections are in 3/8, the trio in 2/8.

Finale: moderato assai. Tchaikovsky’s brassy opening theme of the finale bears a striking resemblance to the “Promenade” theme of Mussorgsky’s Pictures at an Exhibition, though the Tchaikovsky was written first—but it is in fact a derivation of the Ukrainian folk tune “The Crane.” This theme accelerates until it suddenly is transformed into the athletic main idea, and Tchaikovsky offers a lilting second idea in the violins. It is no surprise that this finale—with its imaginative ideas about structure, unusual harmonic progressions, and use of folk tunes—should have delighted Rimsky-Korsakov. This movement was, in fact, Tchaikovsky’s own favorite.

Instrumentation: 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, tamtam and strings
Variations on a Rococo Theme, for Cello and Orchestra, Opus 33
Premiered: November 30, 1877

If we automatically identify Tchaikovsky with colorful and emotional music, we need to remember that he was also drawn to the formal clarity of eighteenth-century music and loved Mozart above all other composers. One of the finest examples of this attraction is his Variations on a Rococo Theme, composed in December 1876. The immediate impulse to write it came in a commission from the cellist Wilhelm Fitzenhagen, one of Tchaikovsky’s good friends. When Fitzenhagen asked Tchaikovsky to write a piece for cello and orchestra for him, the composer responded with a set of variations based on what he called a “rococo” theme and scored for what was essentially Mozart’s orchestra (pairs of woodwinds and horns, plus strings).

The music: lyric, athletic and ingenious
A briefly orchestral introduction (how light and clear this music sounds!) gives way to the entrance of the solo cello, which sings the “rococo” theme. That theme, Tchaikovsky’s own, is marked espressivo on its first appearance and falls into two eight-bar phrases. Seven variations follow. These are nicely contrasted: some are lyric, some athletic. Some emphasize the cello, while others vigorously toss the theme between soloist and orchestra. Tchaikovsky varies key and meter throughout the set, and he ingeniously turns the final variation into an exciting coda.

Instrumentation: solo cello with orchestra comprising 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns and strings

Symphony No. 5 in E minor, Opus 64
Premiered: November 17, 1888

In the winter of 1887-88, Tchaikovsky made a tour of Western Europe, conducting his own works in Leipzig, Hamburg (where he met Brahms), Berlin, Prague, Paris and London. Those audiences responded enthusiastically to his music (Brahms was an exception), and Tchaikovsky returned to Russia ready to attempt a new symphony. In April 1888, he moved into a villa in Frolovskoye, northwest of Moscow, where he could work on his new symphony and take long walks in the woods. His Fifth Symphony was done by August, and Tchaikovsky led the premiere in St. Petersburg on November 17, 1888.

“resignation before fate”
The Fifth Symphony—full of those wonderful Tchaikovsky themes, imaginative orchestral color, and excitement—has become one of his most popular works. As he did in the Fourth, Tchaikovsky builds this symphony around a motto-theme, and in his notebooks he suggested that the motto of the Fifth Symphony represents “complete resignation before fate.” But that is as far as the resemblance goes, for Tchaikovsky supplied no program for the Fifth Symphony, nor does this music seem to be “about” anything. The motto theme returns in each of the four movements, but it may be best to understand this motto as a unifying device rather than as anything so dramatic as the Fourth Symphony’s “sword of Damocles.”

The music: a wealth of melodies, excitement—and a false ending
andante–allegro con anima. Clarinets introduce the somber motto-theme at the beginning of the slow introduction, and gradually this leads to the main body of the movement, marked Allegro con anima. Over the orchestra’s steady tread, solo clarinet and bassoon sing the movement’s surging main theme, and there follows a wealth of thematic material. This lengthy movement is built on three separate-theme groups, full of those soaring and sumptuous Tchaikovsky melodies.

andante cantabile con alcuna licenza. Deep string chords at the opening of the Andante cantabile introduce one of the great solos for French horn, and a few moments later the oboe has the graceful second subject. For a movement that begins in such relaxed spirits, this music is twice shattered by the return of the motto-theme, which blazes out dramatically in the trumpets.

valse: allegro moderato. Tchaikovsky springs a surprise in the third movement—instead of the expected scherzo, he writes a lovely waltz. He rounds the movement off beautifully with an extended coda based on the waltz tune, and in its closing moments the motto-theme makes a fleeting appearance, like a figure seen through the mists.

finale: andante maestoso–allegro vivace–moderato assai e molto maestoso. However misty that theme may have seemed at the end of the third movement, it comes into crystalline focus at the beginning of the finale. Tchaikovsky moves to E major here and sounds out the motto to open this movement. The main body of the finale, marked Allegro vivace, leaps to life, and the motto-theme breaks in more and more often as it proceeds. The movement drives to a great climax, then breaks off in silence. This is a trap, and it often tricks the unwary into premature applause, for the symphony is not yet over. Out of the ensuing silence begins the real coda, and the motto-theme now leads the way on constantly-accelerating tempos to the (true) conclusion in E major.

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

Program notes by Eric Bromberger.
Minnesota Orchestra

Osmo Vänskä, conductor
Adam Neiman, piano

Thursday, January 11, 2018, 11 am | Orchestra Hall

With these concerts we gratefully recognize Kathy and Allen Lenzmeier for their generous contribution to the Minnesota Orchestra’s Investing in Inspiration campaign.

All works by Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Symphony No. 3 in D major, Opus 29
   Introduzione ed allegro – Moderato assai (Tempo marcia funebre)
   Alla tedesca: Allegro moderato e semplice
   Andante: elegiaco
   Scherzo: Allegro vivo
   Finale: Allegro con fuoco (Tempo di Polacca)

Concerto No. 3 in E-flat major for Piano and Orchestra, Opus 75
   [in one movement]
   Adam Neiman, piano

INTERMISSION

Suite from Swan Lake, Opus 20
   Introduction (Overture)
   Scene
   Waltz (Corps de ballet)
   Scene
   Dance of the Swans
   Pas d’Action (Odette and the Prince)
   Mazurka
   Final Scene

The January 11 Minnesota Orchestra concert will be recorded for a future broadcast on stations of Classical Minnesota Public Radio, including KSJN 99.5FM in the Twin Cities.
Tchaikovsky: Symphony No. 3; Piano Concerto No. 3; Suite from Swan Lake

The Third Symphony by Tchaikovsky is an oddity among the composer’s collection, straying from many of the structures expected of a symphonic work. It contains a German waltz, carries the Polish nickname, but is especially Russian in character. It is the composer’s only symphony based in a major key, yet it begins with a funeral march. Tchaikovsky even ventured away from routine by adding a fifth movement to the standard four-movement form.

Tchaikovsky’s one-movement Piano Concerto No. 3 offers moments of chamber-like intimacy as well as grand theatrics, with a glittering cadenza at its core.

In the fairy tale on which the worldwide audience favorite Swan Lake is based, Prince Siegfried triumphs over an evil sorcerer, rescuing his beloved Odette and other maidens who had been transformed into swans. Music Director Osmo Vänskä has selected a suite for today’s performance that includes the famous Waltz marking the Prince’s birthday celebration, the delicate Dance of the Swans and the fiery Mazurka, among other evocative movements.

Osmo Vänskä, conductor
Profile appears on page 6.

Adam Neiman, piano
Grammy Award nominee Adam Neiman debuted with the Minnesota Orchestra in 2003 when he performed Tchaikovsky’s First Piano Concerto. He has performed as soloist with many of the world’s leading orchestras and conductors, and as a recitalist throughout the United States, Mexico, Canada, Europe, Korea and Japan. After three seasons as a member of Trio Solisti, Neiman capped his tenure with the ensemble with a presentation of the complete chamber music of Johannes Brahms in a series of three concerts at Carnegie Hall. He was recently appointed artistic director of the Manchester Music Festival in Vermont. In addition, he is the founder and CEO of the record label Aeolian Classics, LLC, and in 2016 he created the Aeolian Classics Emerging Artist Award Competition at the Chicago College of Performing Arts at Roosevelt University, where he serves on the full-time piano faculty. He maintains an active profile as a composer, and his compositional output includes two symphonies, a body of chamber music and vocal works, and a growing number of solo piano pieces. His extensive discography includes numerous albums for labels such as VAI, Bridge, Naxos, Sono Luminus, Lyric and Aeolian Classics. More: adamneiman.com.
At first glance, this program might seem to offer a collection of Tchaikovsky’s misfires. It opens with his least-familiar symphony, a piano concerto he assembled from an abandoned symphony, and concludes with a ballet score that brought down on the poor composer the most painful failure he ever endured professionally. Though these three works were not immediate triumphs for Tchaikovsky, they clearly flow from the pen of a master, and are most worthy of listening. 

It may seem incomprehensible that Tchaikovsky’s music for Swan Lake could have been attacked for its complexity or derided for being “too Wagnerian,” yet it was. Today it ranks as one of his most popular ballets (and in recent years, crossed paths with cinema through its central focus in the film Black Swan). The Third may be the least-played of Tchaikovsky’s symphonies—it is the only one in a major key and the only one to ramble, the movements do not depend on contrast and organic growth, and there seems little relation between the five movements. Yet the cheerful Third Symphony has virtues that will continue to please audiences for years to come: its three central movements are extremely attractive, the symphony offers some of Tchaikovsky’s most infectious melodies, and the music—at many points reminiscent of Tchaikovsky’s ballet scores—is brightly-colored and energetic.

**Tchaikovsky Marathon: Hardly failures**

At first glance, this program might seem to offer a collection of Tchaikovsky’s misfires. It opens with his least-familiar symphony, continues with a piano concerto he assembled from an abandoned symphony, and concludes with a ballet score that brought down on the poor composer the most painful failure he ever endured professionally. Though these three works were not immediate triumphs for Tchaikovsky, they clearly flow from the pen of a master, and are most worthy of listening.

It may seem incomprehensible that Tchaikovsky’s music for Swan Lake could have been attacked for its complexity or derided for being “too Wagnerian,” yet it was. Today it ranks as one of his most popular ballets (and in recent years, crossed paths with cinema through its central focus in the film Black Swan). The Third may be the least-played of Tchaikovsky’s symphonies, but it offers distinct pleasures of its own: it is Tchaikovsky’s only symphony in a major key, and one senses its kinship with ballet throughout. Tchaikovsky composed a symphony in 1892, but abandoned it. Rather than burning his manuscript, though, he converted the symphony’s first movement into a piano concerto. This concerto is rarely played, so enjoy this performance—Tchaikovsky himself never heard it.

**Symphony No. 3 in D major, Opus 19**

Premiered: November 19, 1875

following the Moscow Conservatory’s spring term in 1875, Tchaikovsky spent a relaxed summer visiting friends and relatives in Russia and the Ukraine. That summer he began his Third Symphony, but he was in no hurry. To friends he wrote that he was “working in a leisurely way...I don’t sit for hours at a time, but walk a great deal.” Nevertheless, the 35-year-old composer had the symphony complete by August 12, and Nikolai Rubinstein led the premiere in Moscow at a concert of the Russian Music Society on November 19. The work had a reasonable success, but the perpetually self-critical composer offered his own ambivalent review to his fellow Russian composer Rimsky-Korsakov: “It seems to me that the symphony doesn’t present any particularly successful ideas—but technically it’s a step forward.”

The Third is the most unusual of Tchaikovsky’s six numbered symphonies—it is the only one in a major key and the only one with five movements—yet it remains the least familiar of that cycle. The standard criticism is that the Third demonstrates Tchaikovsky’s problems with symphonic form: development tends to ramble, the movements do not depend on contrast and organic growth, and there seems little relation between the five movements. Yet the cheerful Third Symphony has virtues that will continue to please audiences for years to come: its three central movements are extremely attractive, the symphony offers some of Tchaikovsky’s most infectious melodies, and the music—at many points reminiscent of Tchaikovsky’s ballet scores—is brightly-colored and energetic.

**the music: charming inner movements and an energetic finale**

**introduzione ed allegro–moderato assai (tempo marcia funebre).** The symphony may nominally be in D major, but it begins in D minor with a slow introduction that Tchaikovsky specifies should be “In the tempo of a funeral march.” This music hardly sounds funereal, however, and it gradually accelerates to the sturdy Allegro brillante main idea, now firmly in D major. The second theme—a falling lyric melody for oboe marked molto espressivo—is especially effective. Tchaikovsky develops both of these at length and drives the movement to a full-throated conclusion.

**alla tedesca: allegro moderato e semplice.** The three inner movements are cut from entirely different material, and each has a different charm. Tchaikovsky himself felt that the symphony had two scherzo movements, but few would call the second movement a true scherzo. Tchaikovsky marks it Alla tedesca (“In the German style”), and it is in fact a graceful waltz, introduced by woodwinds over pizzicato strings; a middle section based on chattering triplets leads to the return of the opening material and a quiet close.

**andante: elegiac.** This “elegy” returns to D minor as flutes sing the delicate main opening; consolation comes in the second section, a warm and flowing idea for strings that Tchaikovsky specifies should be molto espressivo.

**scherzo: allegro vivo.** The fourth movement is the true scherzo, and it has occasioned much comment. Tchaikovsky was apparently aiming for the kind of shimmering rush that Mendelssohn achieved in his scherzos, and he succeeds admirably in this movement, built on whirling, skittering textures. The music itself is virtually athematic; Tchaikovsky’s contemporary César Cui noted that this movement is “interesting only as sound, almost without musical content.”

**finale: allegro con fuoco (tempo di Polacca).** The energetic finale bursts to life as the full orchestra shouts out the spirited opening. A firm woodwind choir brings the second section, but the opening theme will dominate this movement. Perhaps anxious to show off his developing symphonic technique, Tchaikovsky anchors the development on fugal treatments of the opening theme. The
splendid coda, though, makes use of both themes and drives the Third Symphony to its powerful concluding chords.

**a note on the title**

Tchaikovsky's Third Symphony has for many years been tagged with a completely spurious nickname: *Polish*. Tchaikovsky marked the last movement “tempo di Polacca,” but this music bears no relation to Polish themes or rhythms. That marking, though, did inspire the English conductor Sir August Manns to “discover” an elaborate program for this music, which he felt depicted “Poland mourning in her oppression and rejoicing in her regeneration.”

This interpretation, which came six years after Tchaikovsky's death and inspired the nickname, is nonsense, and the subtitle *Polish* should be forgotten.

**Concerto No. 3 in E-flat major for Piano and Orchestra, Opus 75**

**Premiered:** January 19, 1895

Throughout his life Tchaikovsky worried that he had dried up as a composer. After his Fourth Symphony of 1877, he fell into a long creative trough and did not write his Fifth Symphony until 11 years had passed. In May 1892 he moved to a new house in Klin, outside of Moscow, and there he tried to write another symphony. Almost immediately he ran into trouble, noting in a letter to a friend: “I have begun to compose a symphony but it doesn’t go as smoothly as I might wish. I’m afraid that this is the beginning of the end, i.e., that is that I’ve written myself out.”

Tchaikovsky pressed on with the symphony across all of 1892, and by December he had it sketched and partially orchestrated. But at that point the despondent composer gave up: he said that the “impression it creates is far from flattering” and decided to destroy it.

**transforming the music**

But Tchaikovsky did not destroy the manuscript for the symphony. Instead, he concluded that while it might not be successful as a symphony, it could be converted into music for solo piano and orchestra, and he re-cast its opening movement as his one-movement Piano Concerto No. 3. Tchaikovsky died suddenly in November 1893 without ever having heard this work.

Its premiere did not take place until January 19, 1895, when Sergei Taneyev was the soloist in St. Petersburg, and since then the Third Piano Concerto has remained one of the least-familiar of Tchaikovsky's major works.

Transforming a symphonic movement into a concerto movement brings particular challenges. In a symphonic movement, the emphasis is on the development of the musical argument, while a concerto movement is conceived from the beginning to spotlight a soloist’s virtuosity. To insert a piano soloist into the first movement of what had been intended as a symphony, Tchaikovsky had to re-write a number of orchestral passages for solo piano, sometimes changing the register and the rhythm of the music to suit the piano. And to compensate for the absence of a high-profile part for the soloist, Tchaikovsky composed a massive and very difficult cadenza. The result may be a hybrid, but the Third Piano Concerto contains some very appealing music and deserves to be heard more often.

**lone movement, with a brilliant cadenza**

The piano enters almost unobtrusively as part of the orchestra's opening exposition, but Tchaikovsky soon gives it a soloistic profile, with much of the writing in brilliant octaves. The *espressivo* second subject had been scored for clarinet in the symphony, but now Tchaikovsky transforms this into a lovely passage for solo piano. The movement builds to what in a symphonic movement would be the start of the recapitulation, and here—as if to compensate for a lack of high-profile solo writing—Tchaikovsky supplies his soloist with a lengthy, brilliant, and episodic cadenza based on themes introduced earlier. The orchestra rejoins the pianist, and this one-movement concerto races to its conclusion along a *Vivacissimo* coda.

**Suite from Swan Lake, Opus 20 (Suite amalgamated by Osmo Vänskä)**

**Premiered:** March 4, 1877

Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* is such a favorite of audiences around the world that it comes as a surprise to learn that the ballet was an abject failure at its premiere. Tchaikovsky, then a young composition teacher at the Moscow Conservatory, had been commissioned by the Imperial Theater to write music for a production of this new ballet at the Bolshoi, and he worked on the score from August 1875 until April 1876. The first performance, on March 4, 1877, was a disaster: it had poor scenery, costumes, and dancing, and—worst of all—it had a conductor so alarmed by Tchaikovsky's striking music that he cut large sections of it, substituting “safe” music by other composers in their place.

The reviews were scathing, one critic declaring: “I must say that I have never seen a poorer presentation on the stage of the Bolshoi Theatre. The costumes, decor and machines did not hide in the least the emptiness of the dances.” The same critic conceded that
the music showed "the hand of the true master," but that did Tchaikovsky little good: he never heard the music again and died believing that it would always be a failure. To the contrary: a revival in January 1895—14 months after the composer's death—launched Swan Lake on its way to the acclaim it enjoys today.

a story of eternal charm

Swan Lake tells a story of eternal charm: Prince Siegfried discovers a flock of beautiful white swans on the lake in a forest. Their queen Odette tells him that they are all maidens who have been transformed by the evil sorcerer Von Rothbart. Though deceived by Von Rothbart and his daughter Odile (the black swan) during the climactic ball in Act III, Siegfried eventually triumphs over the sorcerer and is united with Odette.

Because Tchaikovsky never arranged the music from Swan Lake into orchestral suites, conductors are free to make their own selections. For today's performance, Music Director Osmo Vänskä has assembled a suite of eight excerpts, drawn from all four acts of the ballet and performed in chronological order.

The rarely-heard Introduction is the anticipatory music heard just before the curtain comes up, and this is followed by two excerpts from Act I. The Scene, full of excitement and expectancy, introduces Prince Siegfried and his friends drinking wine before a beautiful setting: in the distance are a castle and a bridge across a stream. The famous Waltz is danced as part of the celebration of Prince Siegfried's birthday.

Next come three excerpts from Act II. The Scene that opens this act, with its plangent and wistful oboe solo, has become some of the most characteristic music of this ballet, and it sets the complex mood here perfectly. This is followed by the Dance of the Swans, during which Siegfried and his fellow hunters discover the swans on the forest lake. The Pas d'action, for Odette and the Prince, begins with a long harp, followed by a deservedly-famous duet for solo violin and harp.

Act III brings the ball in the Great Hall of Siegfried's castle; it is during this ball that Von Rothbart tricks Siegfried into choosing his daughter Odile over Odette, triggering the events of the final act, when Siegfried finally swears his devotion to Odette and the evil Von Rothbart is vanquished and dies. Tchaikovsky had a particular flair for national dances, and this concert offers the energetic Mazurka, a dance from Poland. This suite concludes with music from the very end of Act IV. In this Final Scene the prince enters and the ballet comes to its grand conclusion.
Minnesota Orchestra

Osmo Vänskä, conductor
James Ehnes, violin

Saturday, January 13, 2018, 8 pm | Orchestra Hall
Sunday, January 14, 2018, 2 pm | Orchestra Hall

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All works by Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Marche Slave, Opus 31
c. 10’

Concerto in D major for Violin and Orchestra, Opus 35
c. 34’
Allegro moderato
Canzonetta: Andante
Finale: Allegro vivacissimo
James Ehnes, violin

INTERRUPTION
c. 20’

Symphony No. 6 in B minor, Opus 74, Pathétique
c. 45’
Adagio – Allegro non troppo
Allegro con grazia
Allegro molto vivace
Finale: Adagio lamentoso

NightCap
NightCap: Tchaikovsky’s Piano Trio
Post-concert performance by Peter McGuire, Anthony Ross and Timothy Lovelace
Saturday, January 13, 10:30 pm, Target Atrium; separate ticket required

OH+
Concert Preview with Akiko Fujimoto and James Ehnes
Saturday, January 13, 7:15 pm, Target Atrium
Sunday, January 14, 1:15 pm, Target Atrium

The January 13 Minnesota Orchestra concert will be broadcast live on stations of Classical Minnesota Public Radio, including KSJN 99.5 FM in the Twin Cities.
Tchaikovsky: Marche Slave; Violin Concerto; Symphony No. 6, Pathétique

Marche Slave, constructed using motives from high-spirited Serbian folksongs and the Russian national anthem, was a resounding success at its premiere in 1867 and rapidly became a cherished symbol of Slavonic patriotism.

Tchaikovsky's dazzling Violin Concerto, once called “unplayable,” is now the vehicle of great virtuosos. It is noted equally for bravura passagework and the pure romantic realism for which the composer is known, with soulful melodies yielding to folk-like dance tunes and rhythms in the exhilarating Finale.

Darkly, tenderly, beautifully, Tchaikovsky's Sixth and final symphony communicates a mood of deep suffering. Brilliant touches include a waltz in 5/4 time, a dramatic scherzo and a lamenting melody that sinks away to silence.

Osmo Vänskä, conductor

Profile appears on page 6.

James Ehnes, violin

Canadian violinist James Ehnes, the Minnesota Orchestra’s featured artist for the 2017-18 season, first performed with the Orchestra in 1993. He was heard here only a few months ago as the soloist in Season Opening concerts, performing the U.S. premiere of Anders Hillborg’s Violin Concerto No. 2 to critical acclaim. He has been featured with the major orchestras of Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, Pittsburgh and New York, as well as the London Symphony, London Philharmonia, BBC Philharmonic, Czech Philharmonic, DSO Berlin and the NHK Symphony orchestras, among many others. He has also performed recitals worldwide and is a regular guest at the Wigmore Hall in London. During the 2016-17 season he premiered Aaron Jay Kernis’ Violin Concerto, which was written especially for him, with Toronto, Seattle and Dallas Symphony Orchestras. His extensive discography has earned many awards including a Gramophone Award, a Grammy Award and 11 JUNO awards. He was named 2017 Instrumentalist of the Year at the Royal Philharmonic Society Music Awards, is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, and in 2010 was appointed a Member of the Order of Canada. More: jamesehnes.com.
Tchaikovsky Marathon: Slavic heritage

Like so many Russian composers, Tchaikovsky was proud of his Slavic heritage. “I love passionately the Russian character in all its expression,” he said, a sentiment that would be echoed by The Mighty Five—Cui, Balakirev, Borodin, Mussorgsky, and Rimsky-Korsakov—and by many other Russian composers. This program begins with two works, both written when Tchaikovsky was in his thirties, that make that passion clear. His Marche Slave (Slavic March) had a frankly political purpose: Tchaikovsky was enlisted to aid the effort to get the Russian government to intervene militarily to protect their Serbian cousins. The Violin Concerto had no such purpose, but this music—in a purely classical form—is infused with a Russian character all its own, as a hostile critic was quick to point out. Eduard Hanslick, doyen of the Viennese musical establishment, recoiled before the concerto’s “Russian-ness.” Today we value it precisely for that distinct character.

Marche Slave, Opus 31
Premiered: November 17, 1876

In the summer of 1876 Tchaikovsky’s friend Nikolai Rubinstein asked the composer for an orchestral work to be performed at a concert to benefit Serbian victims of Turkish aggression. Part of the motive for this concert was to help generate pro-Slavonic sentiment in Russia, so that the larger nation would enter the war on the side of the Serbs.

dark beginning to triumphant close

Tchaikovsky completed the score to his Marche Slave on October 7, 1876, and the premiere took place at the benefit concert six weeks later, on November 17. The title needs to be understood carefully. It does not mean “Slave March,” but rather “Slavic March.” In this piece Tchaikovsky set out to underline the bond between the Russians and the Serbs by using musical materials from their common Slavic heritage.

Musically, Marche Slave proceeds from a dark beginning to a triumphant close, doubtless an optimistic look ahead to the victory of the Serbian cause. Tchaikovsky marks the beginning

Concerto in D major for Violin and Orchestra, Opus 35
Premiered: December 4, 1881

Tchaikovsky wrote his Violin Concerto in Switzerland during the spring of 1878, sketching it in 11 days and completing the scoring in two weeks. Without asking permission, he dedicated it to the famous Russian violinist Leopold Auer, concertmaster of the Imperial Orchestra. Tchaikovsky promptly ran into a bad surprise. Auer refused to perform the concerto, reportedly calling it “unplayable.” The concerto had to wait three years before Adolph Brodsky gave the premiere in Vienna on December 4, 1881.

an infamous review

That premiere was the occasion of one of the most infamous reviews in the history of music. Eduard Hanslick savaged the concerto, saying that it “brings to us for the first time the horrid idea that there may be music that stinks to the ear.” He went on: “The violin is no longer played. It is yanked about. It is torn asunder. It is beaten black and blue…The Adagio, with its tender national melody, almost conciliates, almost wins us. But it breaks off abruptly to make way for a Finale that puts us in the midst of the brutal and wretched jollity of a Russian kermess. We see wild and vulgar faces, we hear curses, we smell bad brandy.”

Hanslick’s review has become one of the best examples of critical Wretched Excess: the insensitive destruction of a work that would go on to become one of the best-loved concertos in the repertory. But for all his blindness, Hanslick did recognize one important feature of this music—its “Russian-ness.” Tchaikovsky freely—and proudly—admitted his inspiration in this concerto: “My melodies and harmonies of folk-song character come from the fact that I grew up in the country, and in my earliest childhood was impressed by the indescribable beauty of the characteristic features of Russian folk music; also from this, that I love passionately the Russian character in all its expression; in short, I am a Russian in the fullest meaning of the word.”
the music: drama and Russian spirit

**Allegro moderato.** The orchestra’s introduction makes a gracious opening to the concerto, and the solo violin quickly enters with a flourish and settles into the lyric opening theme, which had been prefigured in the orchestra’s introduction. A second theme is equally melodic—Tchaikovsky marks it *con molto espressione*—but the development of these themes places extraordinary demands on the soloist, who must solve complicated problems with string-crossings, multiple-stops, and harmonics. Tchaikovsky himself wrote the brilliant cadenza, which makes a gentle return to the movement’s opening theme; a full recapitulation leads to the dramatic close.

**Canzonetta: andante; finale: allegro vivacissimo.** Tchaikovsky marks the second movement *Canzonetta* (Little Song) and mutes solo violin and orchestral strings throughout this movement. It leads without pause to the explosive opening of the finale, marked *Allegro vivacissimo*, a rondo built on two themes of distinctly Russian heritage. These are the themes that reminded Hanslick of a drunken Russian brawl, but to more sympathetic ears they evoke a fiery, exciting Russian spirit. The very ending, with the violin soaring brilliantly above the hurtling orchestra, is one of the most exciting moments in this—or in any—violin concerto.

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

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

Premiered: October 28, 1893

Tchaikovsky began a new symphony in February 1893. It grew out of a note he had written to himself the previous year: “The ultimate essence of the plan of the symphony is LIFE. First movement—all impulsive passion, confidence, thirst for activity. Must be short. (Finale DEATH—result of collapse.) Second movement love; third disappointments; fourth ends dying away (also short).”

This note was the seed for Tchaikovsky’s Sixth Symphony, though the plan would be considerably modified in the course of composition. To his nephew Tchaikovsky wrote, “I had an idea for a new symphony, this time with a program—but a program of a kind that will remain an enigma to all. Let them guess it who can...This program is permeated with subjective feeling...While composing it in my mind, I wept frequently.”

Clearly, the new symphony was important to its creator, and he wished to take measure of its emotional significance with a suitable nickname. His brother Modest suggested *Pathétique*, and the composer agreed immediately. The term *pathétique* is difficult to translate into English—Tchaikovsky understood it to mean “emotional” or “passionate.” Yet the “meaning” of this symphony remains elusive.

**The music: beginning and ending in darkness**

**Adagio—allegro non troppo.** The *Pathétique* begins in darkness. Solo bassoon sings the somber opening melody, and this smoothly evolves into the movement’s main subject at the *Allegro non troppo*. The second episode is a heartfelt falling melody for strings that Tchaikovsky marks “tenderly, singing, expansive.” The exposition trails off into silence, but out of that silence the orchestra explodes, and the tumultuous development centers on the opening theme. The climax comes on two huge smashes of sound—the first like a crack of thunder, the second exhausted and falling away—and a noble brass chorale draws this movement to its consoling close.

**Allegro con grazia.** The second movement is a waltz, but instead of writing it in the waltz meter of 3/4, Tchaikovsky casts this one in 5/4. Despite the sour critic who claimed that this waltz could be danced only by someone with three feet, this is graceful music.

**Allegro molto vivace.** This music, one of Tchaikovsky’s most exciting movements, is both scherzo and march. It opens with skittering triplets, and solo oboe quickly sounds the sharp-edged march tune. This movement is beautifully controlled: Tchaikovsky gradually builds these simple materials into a powerful march that drives to a smashing close. It is a close that inevitably brings a burst of applause, but the true ending is still to come.

**Finale: adagio lamentoso.** The symphony concludes with a grieving slow movement that Tchaikovsky significantly marks *Adagio lamentoso*. It rises to an agitated climax, then slowly slips back into the blackness from which the symphony began.

Tchaikovsky led the premiere on October 28, 1893, before a St. Petersburg audience that could make little sense of so unexpected an ending. Nine days later Tchaikovsky was dead at the age of 53. At a second performance of this symphony 12 days after his death, the audience was overwhelmed by music that had left them mystified earlier, and the proximity of Tchaikovsky’s death to the premiere of this dark music gave rise to all kinds of interpretations of its meaning. Tchaikovsky himself gave no indication beyond his cryptic comment: “Let them guess it who can.”

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

Program notes by Eric Bromberger.
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with the Minnesota Orchestra

Ben Folds, vocals and piano
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Ben Folds is widely regarded as one of the major music influencers of our generation. He has created an enormous body of genre-bending music that includes pop albums with Ben Folds Five, multiple solo albums, and collaborative records with artists ranging from Sara Bareilles and Regina Spektor to William Shatner. His most recent album is a blend of pop songs and his Concerto for Piano and Orchestra that reached No. 1 on both the Billboard classical and classical crossover charts. For more than a decade, he has performed with some of the world’s greatest symphony orchestras, and was recently named as the first ever Artistic Advisor to the National Symphony Orchestra at the Kennedy Center.

Folds continues to perform with symphonies, and also recently returned to cross-country solo touring reminiscent of his earliest years, delivering a high-energy rock performance using the intimacy of just a piano. An avid photographer, Folds is a member of the distinguished Sony Artisans of Imagery, and recently completed an assignment as a photo editor for National Geographic. He is also an outspoken advocate for music education and music therapy as a member of the Americans for the Arts and as a member of the Board of Directors of the Nashville Symphony. More: benfolds.com.

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. During the 2017-18 season, she conducts Orchestra performances with Pink Martini, Cloud Cult and Cirque de la Symphonie, and the Inside the Classics series. She recently led a brand-new “Home for the Holidays” program conceived and directed by Peter Rothstein and written by Kevin Kling, as well as several film music concerts including Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets™ and La La Land. She debuts this season with the Calgary Symphony and the Danish National Symphony Orchestra. She has recently conducted the San Francisco Symphony, Cincinnati Pops Orchestra and San Diego Symphony, and debuted with the major orchestras in Melbourne, Brisbane, Montreal, Toronto and Lisbon. More: minnesotaostringstream.org.
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We are grateful to the following individuals, who are members of the Maestro’s Circle and Concertmaster’s Circle, for their annual gifts to the Guaranty Fund.

For information on giving at these or other levels, please call Sarah Blain Chaplin at 612-371-5687 or visit the giving pages at www.minnesotaorchestra.org/giving.

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Nathalie Stutzmann conducting Prokofiev’s Classical Symphony during Guarantors’ Week, October 2017. Photo: Frank Merchelewitz

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Maestro’s Circle

Conductor Rafael Payare debuting with the Orchestra in a program of Dukas, Ravel and Brahms, November 2017. Photo: Greg Helgeson

Music Director Osmo Vänskä, composer Sebastian Currier, Minnesota Chorale Artistic Director Kathy Saltzman Ronney and the Minnesota Orchestra accepting applause after the premiere of Currier’s RE-FORMATION, November 2017. Photo: Courtney Perry

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Nancy and Spencer Holmes
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Randy and Thang Holt
Karen and Stanley Hubbard
Carlton Hunke
Sally Hwang
Martha and Rich Ingram
Sachiya Isomura
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Wayne and Margaret Johnson
Rollins and Ann LeVuo Juhnke
Joseph and Georgia Karolka
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Shirley and Arnold Kaplan
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Plan for the future, enjoy benefits today

When you include the Minnesota Orchestra in your estate plans, you become a member of the Laureate Society—and you’ll enjoy these benefits:

- Invitation to the annual Laureate Society Luncheon with Minnesota Orchestra musicians
- Backstage tour of Orchestra Hall
- Complimentary refreshments at intermission in the Kathy and Charlie Cunningham Green Room during classical subscription season concerts
- Recognition as Laureate Society members in publications such as Showcase
- Communications about charitable estate planning news and estate and financial seminars
- VIP ticket services for Laureate members who also donate to the Guaranty Fund at the Maestro’s Circle level

If you have included the Minnesota Orchestra in your estate plans, 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.
Estate Gifts

The Laureate Society

The Laureate Society recognizes those who have included the Minnesota Orchestra in their estate plans.

If you would like information about planned giving, please contact Emily Boigenzahn 612-371-7138 or eboigenzahn@mnorch.org.
The spirit of Paris runs like the Seine through this program with two 18th-century symphonies dedicated to the City of Light and a hauntingly beautiful 19th-century religious work by one of Paris’ most treasured composers, Fauré.

**West Side Story**
*Complete Film with Live Orchestra*

Thu Feb 15 11am  
Fri Feb 16 & Sat Feb 17 8pm  
David Newman, conductor  
The Minnesota Orchestra performs Leonard Bernstein’s electrifying score live while the remastered film *West Side Story* is shown in glorious high definition on the big screen.

**André Watts Plays Beethoven’s Emperor**

Fri Feb 23 & Sat Feb 24 8pm  
John Storgårds, conductor / André Watts, piano  
André Watts brings a fearless virtuosity to the piano, exactly what Beethoven asks for in his *Emperor* Concerto—where master composer and master performer meet.

**Debussy’s La Mer**

Thu Mar 1 11am  
Fri Mar 2 & Sat Mar 3 8pm  
Juraj Valčuha, conductor / Kirill Gerstein, piano  
Juraj Valčuha returns to conduct Rachmaninoff’s powerful Third Piano Concerto and Debussy’s shape-shifting picture of the sea, *La mer*.

**Pink Martini**
*featuring singer China Forbes with the Minnesota Orchestra*

Fri Mar 9 8pm & Sat Mar 10 8pm  
Sarah Hicks, conductor  
Pink Martini mixes a fabulous cocktail of swoon-worthy music and multilingual flourishes for a performance that will be the talk of the town.
Invite the greatest artists to perform at your next gathering. Steinway’s Spirio is the first high-resolution player piano capable of delivering the nuance and passion of music’s legendary artists’ live performances. It’s a masterpiece of artistry and craftsmanship worthy of the Steinway & Sons name and a place in your home. The perfect place to play it, listen to it, and entertain with it. Experience Spirio at Schmitt Music.

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