

Minnesota Orchestra

Klaus Mäkelä, conductor
Cameron Carpenter, organ

Friday, April 20, 2018, 8 pm | Orchestra Hall
Saturday, April 21, 2018, 8 pm | Orchestra Hall

Modest Mussorgsky /orch. Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov	Prelude to <i>Khovanshchina</i>	ca. 5'
Sergei Rachmaninoff /arr. Cameron Carpenter	Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, Opus 23, arranged for Organ and Orchestra <i>Cameron Carpenter, organ</i>	ca. 23'
I N T E R M I S S I O N		ca. 20'
Dmitri Shostakovich	Symphony No. 5 in D minor, Opus 47 Moderato Allegretto Largo Allegro non troppo	ca. 48'

Please join us onstage following the Saturday evening concert for a reception with Minnesota Orchestra musicians.

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.



Klaus Mäkelä, conductor

Finnish conductor and cellist Klaus Mäkelä makes his Minnesota Orchestra debut in these concerts. He has already made a significant impact on the Finnish musical landscape and is now making major debuts across Europe, Scandinavia, the U.S., Canada and Japan. In the 2018-19 season, Mäkelä will be principal guest conductor with the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra and artist in association with Tapiola Sinfonietta. This season he also debuts with the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra, National Arts Centre Orchestra (Ottawa), Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra, NDR Radiophilharmonie, Orchestre National

du Capitole de Toulouse and Iceland Symphony Orchestra. He has conducted many Finnish orchestras and appears regularly with the Helsinki Philharmonic, Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Tampere Philharmonic, Turku Philharmonic, Tapiola Sinfonietta and Ostrobothnian Chamber Orchestra. More: harrisonparrott.com, klausmakela.com.



Cameron Carpenter, organ

Cameron Carpenter is the world's most visible organist, and the first ever nominated for a Grammy Award for a solo album. A virtuoso composer-performer, he is known for breaking down the stereotypes of organists, organ music and classical music. He has

performed at top venues including Royal Albert Hall and the Leipzig Gewandhaus, and he performs regularly with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, Berlin Philharmonic and National Symphony Orchestra. His first major work for organ and orchestra, *The Scandal*, was commissioned by the Cologne Philharmonie and premiered in 2011 by the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie under the direction of Alexander Shelley. His newest album, *All You Need Is Bach*, was released by SONY and topped the Billboard Classical charts at #1 in both the U.S. and Europe. He travels and performs on his International Touring Organ (ITO), the world's first truly artistic digital organ. Turn to the Rachmaninoff program note beginning on page 34 for additional information. More: camimusic.com, cameroncarpenter.com.

one-minute notes

Mussorgsky: Prelude to *Khovanshchina*

Delicate harmonies, sweet folk tunes and morning church bells animate this exquisite tone poem, extracted from an unfinished Russian nationalist opera, that depicts dawn on the Moscow River.

Rachmaninoff/Carpenter: Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini

A twisting Paganini melody is the basis for Rachmaninoff's ingenious set of 24 variations. The famous 18th variation turns Paganini's theme upside down, transforming it into a gorgeous, moonlit love song. Rachmaninoff wrote the solo part for piano, but tonight it is played on organ in an exciting new version that arranger-performer Cameron Carpenter calls "Rachmaninoff on steroids."

Shostakovich: Symphony No. 5

Shostakovich's Fifth, the most frequently performed of his 15 symphonies, is forceful and questioning. It imitates the form of a classical symphony until its icy third movement, scored without brass, as gorgeous melodies rise and fall. Dueling critics have interpreted the finale as either triumphant or biting sarcasm.



Modest Mussorgsky

Born: March 21, 1839,
Karevo, Russia
Died: March 28, 1881,
St. Petersburg, Russia

Prelude to *Khovanshchina*

Premiered: February 21, 1886

The most original voice among the “Mighty Handful” of five 19th-century Russian composers was that of Mussorgsky, who was both the genius of the group and its most unstable personality. When he died from the effects of alcoholism at age 42, he left several of his most important compositions unfinished, including the opera *Khovanshchina*, to which Rimsky-Korsakov then put his hand. While Mussorgsky’s *Boris Godunov* has become one of the most well-known Russian operas, *Khovanshchina* has held the stage far less often. In the meantime we must make do with the attractive orchestral episodes that have carved a place in the concert hall.

a prolonged project, rescued by Rimsky-Korsakov

As we know from *Boris Godunov* and *Pictures at an Exhibition*, Mussorgsky was an avid Russian nationalist. His most eloquent expression of the national soul was in songs and operas, while his purely orchestral efforts were minimal. In 1872 he began to collect historical and musical materials for *Khovanshchina*. The work dealt with the political disturbances under the regency which preceded Peter the Great’s full accession to the throne, probing the collision between the old feudalism and the czarist reforms, a crucial time in late 17th-century Russian history.

Instead of drafting a cogent scenario, Mussorgsky assembled fragments of a libretto, being carried away by the historical sources into which he delved. By 1873 he began to create the music, which occupied him intermittently until the summer of 1880. Noting his obsessive drinking, his friends worried about the future of the opera. Their fears were not unfounded, and *Khovanshchina* loomed importantly in the pile of unpublished manuscripts left at his death in 1881. It was the first work to be rescued by Rimsky-Korsakov. Once completed and orchestrated, the opera was produced by an amateur group in St. Petersburg on February 21, 1886. Rimsky-Korsakov omitted some passages that were subsequently orchestrated by Ravel and Stravinsky; Shostakovich also produced his own version and orchestration of the opera.

pastel washes of sound

The first act of *Khovanshchina* begins at daybreak in front of a church in a Moscow square. The tranquil, pastel washes of sound in the introductory Prelude evoke, in the composer’s own words, “the growing light of the rising sun,” depicting a dawn on the Moscow River. As orchestrated by Rimsky-Korsakov, the principal theme is announced by an oboe against shimmering background of tremulous and divided strings before being taken up by other colorful instrumental combinations. The image of bells, signaling early Mass, infiltrates the music.

Instrumentation: 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons,
4 horns, timpani, tamtam, harp and strings

Program note by *Mary Ann Feldman*.



Sergei Rachmaninoff

Born: April 1, 1873,
Oneg, Novgorod, Russia
Died: March 28, 1943,
Beverly Hills, California

Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, Opus 23, arranged for Organ and Orchestra by Cameron Carpenter

Premiered: November 7, 1934
(original version); July 17, 2015
(Cameron Carpenter arrangement)

In the spring of 1934 Rachmaninoff, then 61, and his wife moved into a villa they had just built on Lake Lucerne in Switzerland. They were delighted by the house, its opulent size and its view across the beautiful lake. Rachmaninoff was especially touched to find a surprise waiting for him there: the Steinway Company of New York had delivered a brand new piano to the villa.

a tune that beckons composers

Rachmaninoff spent the summer gardening and landscaping, and he also composed. Between July 3 and August 24 he wrote a set of variations for piano and orchestra on what is undoubtedly the most varied theme in the history of music, the last of Niccolò Paganini’s Twenty-Four Caprices for Solo Violin. Paganini had written that devilish tune, full of rhythmic spring and chromatic tension, in 1820, and he himself had followed it with 12 variations. That same theme has haunted composers through each century since—resulting in variations on it by Liszt (*Transcendental Etudes*), Schumann (12 Concert Etudes) and Brahms (the two sets of Paganini Variations) in the 19th century,

followed in the 20th century by Witold Lutosławski, Boris Blacher and George Rochberg. And there may be more to come.

After considering several titles for his new work, the composer settled on Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, a title that places the focus on melody and somewhat disguises the ingenious variation-technique at the center of this music. The first performance, with the composer as soloist, took place in Baltimore on November 7, 1934, with Leopold Stokowski conducting the Philadelphia Orchestra. Pleased and somewhat surprised by the work's reception, Rachmaninoff observed dryly: "It somehow looks suspicious that the Rhapsody has had such an immediate success with everybody."

bravura solos, brilliant contrasts

The Rhapsody has a surprising beginning: a brief orchestral flourish containing hints of the theme leads to the first variation, which is presented *before* the theme itself is heard. This gruff and hard-edged variation, which Rachmaninoff marks *Precedente*, is in fact the bass line for Paganini's theme, which is then presented in its original form by both violin sections in unison. Some of the variations last a matter of minutes, while others whip past almost before we know it (several are as short as 19 seconds). The 24 variations contrast sharply in both character and tempo, and the fun of this music lies not just in the bravura writing for keyboard but in hearing Paganini's theme sound so different in each variation. In three of them, Rachmaninoff incorporates the old plainsong tune *Dies Irae* (Day of Wrath) used by Berlioz, Saint-Saëns and many others, including Rachmaninoff, for whom this grim theme was a virtual obsession. Here it appears in the

solo part in the seventh and tenth variations, and eventually it drives the work to its climax.

Perhaps the most famous of Rachmaninoff's variations, though, is the 18th, in which Paganini's theme is inverted and transformed into a moonlit lovesong. The soloist states this variation in its simplest form, and then strings take it up and turn it into a soaring nocturne. The 18th variation has haunted many Hollywood composers, and Rachmaninoff himself noted wryly that he had written it specifically as a gift "for my agent."

From here on, the tempo picks up, and the final six variations accelerate to a monumental climax. The excitement builds, the *Dies Irae* is stamped out by the full orchestra, and suddenly, like a puff of smoke, the Rhapsody vanishes before us on two quick strokes of sound.

"Rachmaninoff on steroids"

Today's performance of the Paganini Rhapsody is unlike any ever heard at Orchestra Hall: Cameron Carpenter will perform his own version of the solo piano part on the International Touring Organ (ITO), a one-of-a-kind instrument built for Carpenter by digital organ pioneers Marshall & Ogletree. The ITO is billed as the world's first truly artistic digital organ, with sophisticated technology that reproduces the sounds of the finest historical organs, providing Carpenter with great flexibility in performances spaces and in his concert repertoire.

Unveiled by Carpenter in a 2014 performance at New York's Lincoln Center, the ITO features a modular five-keyboard console;



Cameron Carpenter with his International Touring Organ, on which he performs at tonight's concert.

a processing system that utilizes samples from several organs key to Carpenter's artistic development; and a "geographic" concert audio system scalable to venues ranging from concert halls to nightclubs, as well as open-air use and television.

Carpenter's version of the Rachmaninoff Paganini Rhapsody, which debuted on July 17, 2015, with the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Long Yu, takes full advantage of the ITO's capacities while leaving all the orchestral parts as originally written. Carpenter explains:

"In transcribing Rachmaninoff's great exploration of Paganini's theme, I haven't changed one note or phrase of the orchestral material. That is fortunate, since Rachmaninoff's writing is incredibly economical, lacking any extra notes or gestures. In the piano part, many interior melodies, figures and other events are given greater tonal contrast on the organ than is possible in the piano, and the organ's much larger dynamic range—obvious in any comparison between the piano in general with any large organ, but even more extreme in the case of the International Touring Organ—is exploited to the maximum.

"When performing this work on the organ, I think of it as a kind of darkly theatrical, sinister magnification of the original that exaggerates its dynamic and emotional heights and depths to even more extreme degrees, while emphasizing the music's prolific counterpoint in a way that makes it clearer and more structurally obvious than in the original. It is intended to be Rachmaninoff on steroids: the organ's powers of perspective and contrast, its ability to indefinitely sustain tone, and to crescendo, tremulate and otherwise alter held tones, afford many technical capabilities of which no piano or pianist is capable; and these are utilized to the full. Rooted in the *Dies Irae*, a natural match for the organ's usual imagery, this version strives at moments to invoke a pall of mythic doom, while its sensuous moments should be supercharged with unheard-of horsepower."

Instrumentation: solo organ with orchestra comprising 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, triangle, glockenspiel, harp and strings

Program note by **Eric Bromberger**.



Dmitri Shostakovich

Born: September 25, 1906,
St. Petersburg, Russia

Died: August 9, 1975,
Moscow, Russia

Symphony No. 5 in D minor, Opus 47

Premiered: November 21, 1937

Shostakovich's Fifth is at once the most popular symphony since Mahler and the most enigmatic. It was composed in the aftermath of the savage January 1936 attack by *Pravda* on Shostakovich's opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*, which probably had been ordered by Stalin himself. Before that, Shostakovich had been the bright young star of Soviet music, hailed as a product of that system and acclaimed around the world for his witty, sardonic music. Now, virtually overnight, he found himself in disgrace, his career in ruins and he himself perhaps ticketed for a labor camp.

After a great deal of soul searching, Shostakovich composed his Fifth Symphony very quickly (between April 18 and July 20, 1937), and its triumphant premiere in Leningrad on November 21 of that year signaled his artistic and political rehabilitation. One of the most striking features of this music is Shostakovich's return to classical form, a move that has signaled capitulation to some Western critics. But it may well be that Shostakovich felt that there was justice in the *Pravda* description of his music as "fidgety, screaming, neurotic," and that his music did need greater balance, restraint and stability.

a symphony of intense drama

There is a great deal of superb music in the Fifth Symphony. This is an intensely dramatic score, so powerful that it is easy to overlook the control and unity of Shostakovich's writing.

moderato. The first movement opens with ominous canonic exchanges between string sections, and these give way to the violins' quietly twisting main theme. Almost incidentally, Shostakovich introduces the simple rhythmic motif (short-short-long) that will saturate and unify the entire symphony. There follows a beautiful episode: over string accompaniment that pulses along on the rhythmic motif, first violins sing a melody full of wide leaps. But the wonder is that this peaceful theme, which sounds completely new, is actually a subtle transformation of the powerful canonic introduction to the Symphony. This sort of ingenious transformation of material marks the entire Fifth Symphony.

The entrance of the piano signals the beginning of the development. It has been said that in this symphony Shostakovich does not so much develop his material as brutalize it, and now themes that had been peaceful at their introduction are made shrill, almost hysterical in their intensity. The movement reaches a climax on a furious tamtam stroke as brass stamp out the rhythmic motif. After all this fury, Shostakovich resolves the tensions beautifully: the themes now return peacefully and, with its energy spent, the movement ends quietly.

allegretto. Many have felt the influence of Mahler in the bittersweet second movement that waltzes past in quickstep time. Much of the fun here lies in the instrumental color—the sardonic solo clarinet, the solo violin’s slides in the trio and the rattling sound of the xylophone.

largo. The third movement is more complex. Its scoring is unique: Shostakovich eliminates the brass, divides the strings into eight parts, and gives a prominent role to the harp, piano and celesta. He wrote this movement in one great arc, and the *Largo* features lean textures, an icy sound and some of his most beautiful melodies. It rises to a great climax, then falls away to end quietly on the spooky sound of harp harmonics.

allegro non troppo. Out of this quiet, the finale rips to life with pounding timpani, ringing brass and boundless energy; an angular second subject arrives in the solo trumpet over whirring strings. The militaristic bombast of this movement has bothered some listeners, but Shostakovich rescues it by his stunning transformation of this bluff beginning. Gradually these themes are made to slow down and sing, and material that had been strident on its first appearance yields unsuspected melodic riches in the subdued center section. Shostakovich gathers his forces and drives the symphony to a triumphant, if somewhat raucous, close in D major.

interpreting the music

Music this dramatic cries out for interpretation, and ideological critics on both sides of the Iron Curtain have been happy to supply violently divergent explanations of its “meaning.” Prompted by authorities to provide a politically correct program, Shostakovich obliged: “The theme of my symphony is the stabilization of a personality. In the center of this composition—conceived lyrically from beginning to end—I saw a man with all his experiences. The finale resolves the tragically tense impulses of the earlier movements into optimism and the joy of living.” So existential an explanation even led to this symphony’s being labeled the *Hamlet* Symphony in some Soviet circles.

More recently, the Fifth Symphony has become the *locus classicus* of what might be called “The Great Shostakovich Debate”

between two groups: those who regard this symphony as sincere and consciously heroic, and those Western critics who wish to rescue Shostakovich from his past and are unwilling to accept the proposition that great music might have been composed under the Soviet system. These critics have been able to accept this symphony only by declaring the entire piece ironic. Its triumph, they say, is hollow, a conscious nose-thumbing at a political regime that insisted on happy endings from its artists.

To such extremes have ideological critics been driven by their politics—and it is clear that the Cold War lives on in the minds of those engaged in this debate. Perhaps, in this century, it may be possible to approach Shostakovich’s symphony as it *should* be understood: as music. Heard for itself, it remains an exciting work, satisfying both emotionally and artistically. Far from being a capitulation, Shostakovich’s Fifth Symphony marks a refinement of his musical language and an engagement with those classical principles that would energize his music for the next 40 years.

Instrumentation: 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, E-flat clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, tamtam, triangle, glockenspiel, xylophone, harp, piano, celesta and strings

Program note by *Eric Bromberger*.



The Minnesota Orchestra first performed **Mussorgsky’s Prelude to Khovanshchina** on October 29, 1925, at the St. Paul Auditorium Theater, with Henri Verbrugghen conducting. The Orchestra has made three commercial recordings of music from *Khovanshchina*: one in 1928 under Verbrugghen’s direction, another in 1959 led by Antal Dorati, and the last in 1998 with Eiji Oue conducting.

The Orchestra added **Rachmaninoff’s Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini** to its repertoire on November 29, 1935, at Northrop Memorial Auditorium under the baton of Eugene Ormandy, with a very special guest performer at the piano—the composer himself, Sergei Rachmaninoff. This performance came only a year after Rachmaninoff premiered the work with the Philadelphia Orchestra in November 1934.

Orchestra audiences first heard **Shostakovich’s Symphony No. 5** on February 28, 1941, at Northrop Memorial Auditorium, with Dimitri Mitropoulos conducting. Later that year Mitropoulos led the Orchestra in a costumed “period” performance of Haydn’s *Farewell* Symphony for which he and the musicians donned 18th-century-style velvet breeches and powdered wigs.