

# Minnesota Orchestra

Osmo Vänskä, conductor  
Joshua Bell, violin

Monday, April 23, 2018, 7:30 pm | Orchestra Hall

<b>Jean Sibelius</b>	<i>En Saga</i> , Opus 9	ca. 17'
<b>Henri Wieniawski</b>	Concerto No. 2 in D minor for Violin and Orchestra, Opus 22 Allegro moderato Romance Allegro con fuoco – Allegro moderato (à la zingara) <i>Joshua Bell, violin</i>	ca. 22'
<b>Pablo de Sarasate</b>	<i>Zigeunerweisen</i> (Gypsy Airs) for Violin and Orchestra, Opus 20 <i>Joshua Bell, violin</i>	ca. 9'
	I N T E R M I S S I O N	ca. 20'
<b>Ludwig van Beethoven</b>	Symphony No. 7 in A major, Opus 92 Poco sostenuto – Vivace Allegretto Presto Allegro con brio	ca. 42'

This Minnesota Orchestra performance is broadcast live on stations of [Classical Minnesota Public Radio](#), including KSJN 99.5 FM in the Twin Cities.



**Osmo Vänskä**, conductor

Profile appears on page 6.



**Joshua Bell**, violin

With a career spanning more than 30 years as a soloist, chamber musician, recording artist and conductor, Joshua Bell is one of today's most celebrated violinists. He was most recently heard with the Minnesota Orchestra in season opening concerts in September 2016, performing Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto. An exclusive Sony Classical artist, Bell has recorded more than 40 albums garnering Grammy, Mercury and Gramophone awards, and he is a recipient

of the Avery Fisher Prize. Named the music director of the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields in 2011, he is the only person to hold this post since 1958 when Sir Neville Marriner formed the orchestra.

In 2018, Bell tours with the Academy to the United Kingdom, Germany, the U.S. and Asia. He performs recitals in Europe and America with pianist Sam Haywood, and he recently reunited with pianist Jeremy Denk for a Carnegie Hall recital broadcast live. His additional season highlights include dates with the Philadelphia Orchestra and Danish National Symphony, and an all-Beethoven program with the Orchestre National de Lyon. His most recent release is *Joshua Bell – The Classical Collection*, a 14-CD set of albums of classical repertoire; slated for May 2018 is a recording with the Academy of Bruch's *Scottish Fantasy* and G-minor Concerto.

Convinced of the value of music as an educational tool, Bell is a member of Turnaround Arts and Education Through Music, which provide arts education to low-performing elementary and middle schools. Bell performs on the 1713 Huberman Stradivarius violin. More: [joshuabell.com](http://joshuabell.com).

### one-minute notes

#### **Sibelius: *En Saga***

Hypnotic rhythms and dark orchestral coloring permeate this tone poem, which conveys the sense of a primordial adventure, fiercely urgent, and tragic as well as exhilarating.

#### **Wieniawski: Violin Concerto No. 2**

Wieniawski's show-stopping Second Violin Concerto is rich in Polish tradition, featuring Gypsy rhythms and fiery fiddling. The work is dedicated to Wieniawski's friend and fellow violinist, Pablo de Sarasate, whose own work follows this one on tonight's program.

#### **Sarasate: *Zigeunerweisen (Gypsy Airs)***

A riveting lament, embellished with an array of trills and dramatic ornamentation, leads to a furious, brilliant and breathtaking conclusion.

#### **Beethoven: Symphony No. 7**

Beethoven's lively Seventh Symphony, famously called "the apotheosis of the dance" by Wagner, builds a series of astonishing musical moments from short, simple figures. The second movement, based on a repeating rhythm, has been an audience favorite since its premiere two centuries ago.



## Jean Sibelius

**Born:** December 8, 1865,  
Tavastehus, Finland  
**Died:** September 20, 1957,  
Järvenpää, Finland

### *En Saga*, Opus 9

**Premiered:** February 16, 1893

In his mid-20s Sibelius studied for a year in Berlin, and then for another year in Vienna. He had at first intended to be a violinist, but in Berlin he heard the *Aino* Symphony of his senior compatriot Robert Kajanus, which was all the impetus he needed for giving a higher priority to composing, and to turn his own creative effort toward the furtherance of Finnish nationalism. *Aino* is one of the heroines of the Finnish national epic, the *Kalevala*; Sibelius' wife was one of the numerous Finnish women named for her. Early in 1892 in Vienna, Sibelius completed the first of his own several works based on the *Kalevala*: the vast five-part symphony *Kullervo*, in which solo singers and a male chorus depict episodes in the life of the eponymous tragic hero. Kajanus saw to it that the *Kullervo* Symphony was performed in Helsinki that April, and its success prompted him to ask Sibelius for a shorter piece that could be performed more frequently. Sibelius responded, at about the time of his wedding, in June of that year, with *En Saga*, in which he recycled material from an octet for winds and strings he had composed in Berlin.

The new piece was not a success when the composer conducted the premiere in Helsinki, on February 16, 1893, but nine years later, when Ferruccio Busoni invited him to present *En Saga* in Berlin, he subjected the score to a major revision, which made such a positive impression when he introduced it in Helsinki on November 2, 1902, that it immediately took its place in the general repertory. (Kajanus, for his part, eventually gave up composing in order to devote himself to conducting Sibelius' works; in his last years he went to London to make the premiere recordings of several of them.)

It was not until four decades later still, when he had written the last of his works and the world had celebrated his 75th birthday, that Sibelius said anything at all about the extra-musical significance of this work. At that time (the early 1940s) he remarked, "*En Saga* is the expression of a state of mind. I had undergone a number of painful experiences at the time, and in no other work have I revealed myself so completely. It is for this reason that I find all literary explanations quite alien." Still later, according to his most distinguished biographer, Erik Tawaststjerna, Sibelius "answered an inquiry from abroad by saying that if one

had to find a literary or folkloristic source for *En Saga* the atmosphere of the piece was far closer to the [Icelandic] *Eddas* than to the *Kalevala*."

### elemental forces

As Sibelius' early symphonies show traces of Tchaikovsky and Borodin, *En Saga* might be said to owe something to such Russian works as Balakirev's *Tamara* and Rimsky-Korsakov's *Skazka*. (The latter title, in fact, has a meaning similar to that of *En Saga*, but with less fearsome connotations: "A Tale," or "Legend," or in some cases "A Fairy Tale.") The freedom Sibelius gained by *not* attempting to tell a specific story or paint a specific picture, though, gives *En Saga* a universality and directness altogether beyond the scope of those charming and colorful works. This music may not actually make us "want to wrestle a polar bear," as the enthusiastic Sibelian Olin Downes suggested on hearing *En Saga* in the 1930s. But it is powerfully evocative in a more general sense, and it may touch us on deeper levels—may convey a sense of some primordial adventure—involving elemental forces rather than individuals, and both tragic and exhilarating in its fierce urgency.

The themes, strong and persistent, seem to grow directly out of one another, in the nature of metamorphoses. The rhythms are hypnotic, the darkish orchestral coloring (with a bass drum *replacing*, rather than augmenting, the timpani) as deftly achieved as anything from Rimsky-Korsakov, Strauss or Ravel. The overall effect is one of striking originality, a style as unlikely to be successfully imitated or duplicated as it is to be mistaken for that of anyone but Sibelius himself.

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

*Program note by Richard Freed.*



### Henri Wieniawski

**Born:** July 30, 1835,  
Lublin, Poland  
**Died:** March 31, 1880,  
Moscow, Russia

### Concerto No. 2 in D minor for Violin and Orchestra, Opus 22

**Premiered:** November 27, 1862

Most of the violin heroes from Paganini, who was born in 1782, to Adolf Busch, who died in 1952, were composers of considerable competence. It is different today, when a violinist such as Joshua Bell, daring to write his own cadenza for the Brahms concerto and doing so with flair and originality, is very much an exception among his colleagues.

Henri Wieniawski, born a half-century after Paganini, was one of the most esteemed Romantic violinist-composers. His mother, Regina Wolff, was an able pianist, and his uncle, Edouard Wolff, quite a celebrated one, as well as an active composer. At the age of eight, when Henri had already been playing the violin for some years, he was admitted to the Paris Conservatory, where he soon entered the class of Lambert Massart, one of the pedagogic eminences of the day. By the time he was 13, Wieniawski was a busy performer, usually with his younger brother Józef at the piano, but in 1849 he returned to Paris in order to take up the serious study of composition.

#### always on the road

The violinist Leopold Auer recalled running into Wieniawski at the gambling tables at Wiesbaden, Germany. On tour with the great Anton Rubinstein, Wieniawski thought he had figured out a way to beat the system and bankrupt the casino; when that happened, he told Auer, he would give up concertizing, play only for his pleasure, and concentrate on composing. That happy day never arrived, and Wieniawski's life was that of a traveling virtuoso. He lived in Saint Petersburg, where he was a ubiquitous presence on the musical scene, but his career constantly took him all over Europe. In 1872 he began a two-year tour of the United States, giving 215 concerts with Rubinstein in the first year alone, then continuing on almost as exhausting a schedule with the soprano Pauline Lucca.

Wieniawski returned to Europe with shattered health and a lot of money. He settled in Brussels, succeeding Henri Vieuxtemps at the Paris Conservatory. But being the sort of man who spent whatever he earned as soon as he could, he was under continuing pressure to stay on the road and play. A heart condition gave him ever more trouble. In November 1878 he collapsed during a

performance in Berlin of his Concerto No. 2. His colleague Joseph Joachim was in the audience, and Wieniawski asked him to finish the concert for him. A month later, in Moscow, he was obliged to break off a performance of the *Kreutzer* Sonata after the first movement. Undeterred, he was soon off and running again, this time with soprano Désirée Artôt, who had once briefly been engaged to a young Tchaikovsky. Once again, though, the tour had to be called off so that Wieniawski could enter hospital in Odessa. When he died he was not yet 45.

For all his physical tribulations, Wieniawski was a cheerful sort and delightful company, a man who could never resist a pun and was a captivating raconteur. His marriage to an Irishwoman, Isabella Hampton, brought him much happiness. Accounts of Wieniawski's playing invariably take note of its technical brilliance but remark even more on its fire and ardor. His compositions of course demand these qualities.

#### the concerto in brief

Wieniawski composed his Second Violin Concerto in 1862 and gave the first performance on November 27 of that year in Saint Petersburg, with Nikolai Rubinstein conducting. The score is dedicated to a fellow violinist-composer, Pablo de Sarasate, whose *Zigeunerweisen* (Gypsy Airs) follows the Wieniawski concerto on tonight's program. The Concerto No. 2 is the only one of Wieniawski's larger works to have taken a firm hold in the repertory, though a few modern violinists, notably Midori, have made a persuasive case for the Concerto No. 1, which is more pyrotechnical than the Second, but with less soul.

**allegro moderato.** The first of the Second Concerto's three movements is an *Allegro moderato*, more lyric than excited, and Auer recalled that Wieniawski himself used to play it "rather quietly, more *moderato* than *allegro*." There is, of course, enough brilliant passagework to constitute a barrier to all but the most secure fiddlers. For years, having come to know this concerto through Heifetz's wonderfully played 1935 recording, I had no idea that Wieniawski had begun the movement with an extended orchestral exposition that introduces the main themes and that midway through there is a similarly broad passage for orchestra alone: Heifetz cut all that out and came straight to what he conceived to be the point, namely Himself. But these passages do attest to the seriousness of Wieniawski's intentions and to his sense of proportion, and they are not badly carried out. He is not quite as adventurous, fluid and skilled as his older contemporary Henri Vieuxtemps, but he is streets ahead of such predecessors as Paganini and Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst.

**romance.** A shapely and spacious phrase for clarinet alone makes a bridge into the second movement, a *Romance*. Here Wieniawski

is at his most likeable and touching best. The melody is lovely, and the accompaniment imaginative and euphonious.

**allegro con fuoco-allegro moderato (à la zingara).** The finale is designed to bring the house down, and for this purpose the soloist regales us with flying 16th-notes, a reprise of a wonderfully soulful theme from the first movement, and an absolutely irresistible spell of gypsy-fiddling abandon.

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

Program note by the late **Michael Steinberg**, used with permission.



**Pablo de Sarasate**  
**Born:** March 10, 1844,  
 Pamplona, Spain  
**Died:** September 20, 1908,  
 Biarritz, France

---

**Zigeunerweisen (Gypsy Airs)  
 for Violin and Orchestra,  
 Opus 20**  
**Premiered:** ca. November 1878

As a parting gift on tonight's program, Joshua Bell delivers a second virtuoso showpiece by a Romantic-era violinist-composer: Spaniard Pablo de Sarasate's *Zigeunerweisen* (Gypsy Airs). Sarasate was known in his day primarily as a performer, but he punched above his weight as a composer, rising to fame in the generation just after Paganini. His music, *Zigeunerweisen* in particular, is yet more evidence that the composers who have written most intelligently and virtuosically for violin have also been violinists—Vivaldi, Mozart, Sibelius, Bruch and Paganini easily come to mind. So, too, does Wieniawski, whose Second Violin Concerto (dedicated to none other than Sarasate) precedes *Zigeunerweisen* on tonight's program.

### royal connections and unmatched technique

Sarasate's credentials as a violinist were formidable, earned at a very young age in spite of his origins in the musical backwater of Pamplona, the Basque city known for its annual Running of the Bulls. As is usually true with prodigious musical talent, one of his parents was a musician—in this case, his father, a violinist and military bandmaster who taught five-year-old Pablo the basics. Perhaps his biggest career break came when his playing caught the attention of her royal highness Queen Isabella of Spain, who sponsored Sarasate's enrollment at the Paris Conservatory at the tender age 12, and gave him a 1724 Stradivarius violin. As a teen, Sarasate quickly rose to fame as a fearless virtuoso with an

unmatched technique that won not only ardent fans, but major competitions in Europe as well. This launched an international touring career that brought him to America twice and regularly to London, where he took audiences by storm. Not since Paganini had a fiddler caused this kind of sensation. He inspired a number of important composers to write pieces for him: among them Bruch, Lalo and Saint-Saëns.

Early in his career, Sarasate began to perform his own works: extended, virtuosic fantasies based on themes from popular operas of the day. His fantasies on Bizet's *Carmen* and Gounod's *Faust* are bravura pieces that only the most gifted virtuosos need attempt. Regarding Sarasate's idiomatic writing for the violin, the playwright and music critic George Bernard Shaw may have said it best when he declared that though there were many composers of music for the violin, there were but few composers of violin music.

### a dash for the finish line

Perhaps Sarasate's best-known work is *Zigeunerweisen* (Gypsy Airs), evoking the Gypsy fire of Romany life. Written in 1878 and recorded by every major violin virtuoso since, it has become a staple for violinists, often as a concert encore. *Zigeunerweisen* begins with about seven minutes of slow, soulful melodies, leading into a spectacular two-minute dash for the finish line—extremely demanding of the performer—that leaves audiences breathless.

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

Program note by **Michael Adams**.



**Ludwig van Beethoven**  
**Born:** December 16, 1770,  
 Bonn, Germany  
**Died:** March 26, 1827,  
 Vienna, Austria

---

**Symphony No. 7 in A major,  
 Opus 92**  
**Premiered:** December 8, 1813

Beethoven turned 40 in December 1810, and things were going very well. True, his hearing had deteriorated to the point where he was virtually deaf, but he was still riding that white-hot explosion of creativity that has become known, for better or worse, as his "heroic" style.

## re-imagining music

Over the decade-long span of that style, 1803 to 1813, Beethoven essentially re-imagined music and its possibilities. The works that crystallized the heroic style—the *Eroica* and the Fifth Symphony—unleashed a level of violence and darkness previously unknown in music and then triumphed over them. In these symphonies, music became a matter not of polite discourse but of conflict, struggle and resolution.

In the fall of 1811, Beethoven began a new symphony, his Seventh, which would differ sharply from those two famous predecessors. Gone is the sense of cataclysmic struggle and hard-won victory. Instead, this music is infused from its first instant with a mood of pure celebration.

Such a spirit has inevitably produced interpretations as to what this symphony is “about”: Berlioz heard in it a peasants’ dance, Wagner called it “the apotheosis of the dance,” and more recently Maynard Solomon has suggested that the Seventh is the musical representation of a festival, a brief moment of pure spiritual liberation.

But it may be safest to leave the issue of meaning aside and instead listen to the Seventh simply as music. There had never been music like this before, nor has there been since: this symphony contains more energy than any other piece of music ever written. Much has been made (correctly) of Beethoven’s ability to transform small bits of theme into massive symphonic structures, but here he begins not so much with theme as with rhythm: tiny figures, almost scraps of rhythm. Gradually he releases the energy locked up in these small figures and from them creates one of the mightiest symphonies ever written.

## the symphony: small ideas transformed

**poco sostenuto–vivace.** The first movement opens with a slow introduction so long that it almost becomes a separate movement of its own. Tremendous chords punctuate the slow beginning, which gives way to a poised duet for oboes. The real effect of this long *Poco sostenuto*, however, is to coil the energy that will be unleashed in the true first movement, and Beethoven conveys this rhythmically: the meter of the introduction is a rock-solid (even square) 4/4, but the main body of the movement, marked *Vivace*, transforms this into a light-footed 6/8. This *Vivace* begins in what seems a most unpromising manner, however, as woodwinds toot out a simple dotted 6/8 rhythm and the solo flute announces the first theme. This simple dotted rhythm saturates virtually every measure of the movement, as theme, as accompaniment, as motor rhythm, always hammering into our consciousness. At the climax, horns sail majestically to the close as the orchestra thunders out that rhythm one final time.

**allegretto.** The second movement, in A minor, is one of Beethoven’s most famous slow movements, but the debate continues as to whether it really is a slow movement. Beethoven could not decide whether to mark it *Andante*, a walking tempo, or *Allegretto*, a moderately fast pace. He finally decided on the latter, though the actual pulse is somewhere between those two. This movement too is built on a short rhythmic pattern, in this case the first five notes: long-short-short-long-long—and this pattern repeats here almost as obsessively as the pattern of the first movement. The opening sounds like a series of static chords—the theme itself occurs quietly inside those chords—and Beethoven simply repeats this theme, varying it as it proceeds. The central episode in A major moves gracefully along smoothly-flowing triplets before a little fugato on the opening rhythms builds to a great climax. The movement winds down on the woodwinds’ almost skeletal reprise of the fundamental rhythm.

**presto.** The scherzo explodes to life on a theme full of grace notes, powerful accents, flying staccatos and timpani explosions. This alternates with a trio section for winds reportedly based on an old pilgrims’ hymn, though no one, it seems, has been able to identify that hymn exactly. Beethoven offers a second repeat of the trio, then seems about to offer a third before five abrupt chords drive the movement to its close.

**allegro con brio.** These chords set the stage for the finale, again built on the near-obsessive treatment of a short rhythmic pattern, in this case the movement’s opening four-note fanfare. This pattern punctuates the entire movement: it shapes the beginning of the main theme, and its stinging accents thrust the music forward continuously as this movement almost boils over with energy. The ending is remarkable: above growling cellos and basses (which rock along on a two-note ostinato for 28 measures), the opening theme drives to a climax that Beethoven marks *fff*, a dynamic marking he almost never used. This conclusion is virtually Bacchanalian in its wild power. No matter how many times we’ve heard it, it remains one of the most exciting moments in all of music. Beethoven led the first performance of the Seventh Symphony in Vienna on December 8, 1813—a huge success, with the audience demanding that the second movement be repeated.

**Instrumentation:** 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons,  
2 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani and strings

Program notes by **Eric Bromberger.**