Minnesota Orchestra

Jane Glover, conductor
Karen Gomyo, violin | Roma Duncan, piccolo

Thursday, January 31, 2019, 11 am | Orchestra Hall
Friday, February 1, 2019, 8 pm | Orchestra Hall

With these concerts we gratefully recognize Dr. Ralph and Jodi Chu for their generous contribution to the Minnesota Orchestra’s Investing in Inspiration campaign.

Maurice Ravel
Le Tombeau de Couperin
Prélude
Forlane
Menuet
Rigaudon
c. 16’

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
Concerto No. 5 in A major for Violin and Orchestra, K. 219, Turkish
Allegro aperto
Adagio
Rondeau: Tempo di Menuetto
Karen Gomyo, violin
c. 31’

INTERMISSION
c. 20’

Antonio Vivaldi
Concerto in C major for Piccolo and Orchestra, RV 443, Opus 44, No. 11
[Allegro]
Largo
Allegro molto
Roma Duncan, piccolo
c. 12’

Georges Bizet
Symphony No. 1 in C major
Allegro vivo
Adagio
Allegro vivace
Allegro vivace
c. 28’

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.
Artists

Karen Gomyo, violin

Karen Gomyo made her solo debut with the Minnesota Orchestra at Sommerfest 1999 while still a student at the Juilliard School of Music. She was heard at Orchestra Hall most recently in February 2017 performing Bartók's Violin Concerto No. 2. In May 2018, she performed the world premiere of Samuel Adams' new Chamber Concerto, written for her, with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Esa-Pekka Salonen, to great critical acclaim. Highlights of her 2018-19 season include debuts with the Philharmonia Orchestra and the Royal Northern Sinfonia, as well as returns to the San Francisco Symphony, Houston Symphony, Oregon Symphony, St. Louis Symphony, Vancouver Symphony, Dallas Symphony and WDR Sinfonieorchester Köln. She regularly performs with Astor Piazzolla's longtime pianist and tango legend Pablo Ziegler and his partners, and with guitarist Ismo Eskelinen. More: seldycramerartists.com.

Rome Duncan, piccolo

Rome Duncan, who joined the Minnesota Orchestra in 2003, has been featured with the Orchestra in Vivaldi's C-major Piccolo Concerto twice before, in 2005 and 2007. She appears regularly on the Orchestra’s chamber music series, most recently performing Bach’s Sonata in E minor with Orchestra colleagues in January 2017. She is also often featured on the Young People's Concert series, including as narrator in Kleinsinger’s Tubby the Tuba and as a soloist in Kling’s The Elephant and the Fly. She has been a featured soloist with several orchestras in her native Canada, including l’Orchestre Symphonique de Trois-Rivières, l’Orchestre Symphonique de Québec and the Windsor Symphony. Prior to her Minnesota appointment, she was a member of the Fort Wayne Philharmonic, Orchestra London in Canada, and the Ann Arbor, Windsor and Warren symphony orchestras. More: minnesotaorchestra.org.

one-minute notes

Ravel: Le Tombeau de Couperin
Ravel shaped Le Tombeau as an elegant tribute to the 18th-century French composer Couperin, and to Ravel's friends fallen in World War I. The oboe takes a starring role in lively and gentle dance rhythms borrowed from the French Baroque.

Mozart: Violin Concerto No. 5, Turkish
Mozart's fifth and final violin concerto, arguably his most popular, requires an elegant virtuosity from the soloist. An episode at the center of the final movement swirls with exotic folk tunes, giving the concerto its Turkish nickname.

Vivaldi: Piccolo Concerto in C major
The soloist barely pauses for breath in this cheerful work for the highest-pitched wind instrument—a jewel among the prolific composer's some 500 concertos.

Bizet: Symphony No. 1
Bizet's First Symphony, which the composer considered a student exercise, was rediscovered and premiered 60 years after his death. A highlight is the Adagio and its poignant oboe solo.
At the outbreak of World War I in 1914, Maurice Ravel was as war-intoxicated as most Frenchmen, for whom the defeat by the Prussians in 1871 was still a burning issue. But tiny and frail as he was, he had been rejected by the army as physically unfit. Now he desperately wanted to serve his country, not least because his younger brother Edouard had, as had most of his friends. In September he got himself accepted as a military nurses’ aide at Saint-Jean-de-Luz near his birthplace of Ciboure. For the time being he was at least able to think about music, though several larger projects had to be put on hold.

In October he wrote that he had begun two series of piano pieces, one being “a French suite—no, it isn’t what you think: la Marseillaise will not be in it, but it will have a forlane and a gigue...” This is the first mention of what would become Le Tombeau de Couperin.

Having failed to get into the air force (he had thought his diminutive stature might be an advantage), Ravel became a truck driver for the 13th Artillery Regiment in March 1915. Not surprisingly, this activity put a stop to composition. Ravel’s health suffered, and the death of his mother at the beginning of 1917 was a blow and an occasion for grief that he overcame with the greatest difficulty. Some months later he was discharged from the army. While resting at the country house of friends he was at last able to complete Le Tombeau de Couperin.

Tombeau literally means “tomb” or “grave,” but the French elegantly use it to suggest a memorial tribute. He dedicated each of its movements to a friend who had fallen at the front, though these dedications are not carried over to the orchestral version. Ravel intended Le Tombeau to be an homage to French 18th-century music in general, but he invoked the name of François Couperin, a great master of the French Baroque, to make the title more vivid.

The original piano version of Le Tombeau de Couperin, premiered by Marguerite Long in 1919, was an immense success. Later that year Ravel orchestrated four of the six movements, and this version was introduced by the Pasdeloup Orchestra under Rhené-Baton on February 20, 1920.

**Program Notes**

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**Maurice Ravel**

**Born:** March 7, 1875, Ciboure, Basses-Pyrénées, France

**Died:** December 28, 1937, Paris, France

**Le Tombeau de Couperin**

**Premiered:** February 20, 1920

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**a tour de force for the oboe**

**prélude.** The Prélude, with its non-stop 16th-notes, is also a kind of toccata. In the orchestral version these figurations, which lie so nicely under the pianist’s hand, become an exceedingly taxing tour de force for the oboe. For that matter, most of Le Tombeau is a feast of opportunities for the solo oboist. In the piano suite this movement is dedicated “to the memory of Lieutenant Jacques Charlot,” a musician friend.

**forlane.** A forlane is a lively dance that may have originated in Friuli in the extreme northeast of Italy but which made itself at home at the French court. Musically it takes many forms. Ravel’s Forlane resembles the one by Couperin that he transcribed. This is a wistful piece in a lilting 6/8 meter, and the harmonies are fascinatingly oblique. The dance is dedicated to Lieutenant Gabriel Deluc.

**menuet.** The Menuet is inscribed to Jean Dreyfus, at whose parents’ house Ravel had completed Le Tombeau de Couperin. The trio is a musette in minor key, the reprise combines the minuet and musette, and there is an expansive coda, all that adding up to a fresh and inventive approach of the familiar minuet-and-trio design. The music is of the utmost gentleness, though it does once rise to what is in fact the only fortissimo in the first three movements. Here too is a splendid moment for the solo oboe.

**rigaudon.** Ravel dedicated the Rigaudon to his childhood friends, Pierre and Pascal Gaudin. A rigaudon is a vigorous French folk dance in duple meter, also “civilized” and brought to court. This one, firmly grounded in C major, brings Le Tombeau de Couperin to a cheery close.

**Instrumentation:** 2 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 2 oboes (1 doubling English horn), 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, trumpet, harp and strings

Excerpted from a program note by the late Michael Steinberg; used with permission.
Wolfgang Amadè Mozart
Born: January 27, 1756, Salzburg, Austria
Died: December 5, 1791, Vienna, Austria

Concerto No. 5 in A major for Violin and Orchestra, K. 219, Turkish
Composed: ca. December 1775

Mozart’s musical talents, over and above composition, included proficiency on the piano, organ, violin and viola. Proficiency, however, is probably not really the right word. He was considered to be one of the greatest keyboard virtuosos of his day. His violin playing was cultivated by his father, Leopold—himself a famous pedagogue—who encouraged young Wolfgang with the words, “If you would only play with boldness, spirit and fire, you would be the finest violinist in Europe.”

Wolfgang spent most of his nineteenth year (1775) in the service of Count Hieronymous von Colloredo, Archbishop of Salzburg. Here, within the space of six months, he wrote four of his five authenticated violin concertos (the First dates probably from 1773, and two more spurious ones exist). We are not certain whether they were intended for Mozart’s own use as a soloist or for another man who shared Mozart’s duties at the court as concertmaster and leader of the orchestra, Gaetano Brunetti.

Stylistically, these works grew out of the Italian violin tradition as seen in Tartini, Geminiani, Nardini and Boccherini. The music is steeped in the qualities of the style galant, which implies elegance, grace, charm and gentle sentiments. But in the Concerto No. 5, Mozart goes beyond the usual galanterie to produce a more spacious, varied and thematically developed work than is normally encountered in music of the late 18th century.

The concerto in brief
allegro aperto. The first movement is in sonata form, yet Mozart plays with our expectations and frustrates our preconceptions of form. For example, following the airy orchestral opening, the soloist enters with a surprising adagio passage (a misplaced slow introduction, perhaps?) before launching into a brilliant new theme, accompanied by the orchestra playing material that we have, up until now, thought to be the principal theme.

adagio. The second movement is one of Mozart’s loveliest, of a lyrical beauty he seldom equaled even in later, more mature music. Today we chuckle to learn that Brunetti asked for an alternate movement for this one, which he considered too artificial!

Antonio Vivaldi
Born: March 4, 1678, Venice, Italy
Died: July 27/28, 1741, Vienna, Austria

Concerto in C major for Piccolo and Strings, RV 443, Opus 44, No. 11
Composed: date unknown

Vivaldi spent nearly 40 years as music director of the Ospedale della Pietà, a home for illegitimate, abandoned or orphaned girls in Venice. The Ospedale believed that teaching these girls to play an instrument would give them a useful skill, rescue them from a life of poverty and keep them from becoming lifelong burdens on the state. Vivaldi’s responsibilities there were to teach violin and to write music for the girls to play, and it was for the use of these girls that he wrote most of his concertos—of which there are about 500. The vast majority of them are for the composer’s own instrument, the violin, and other string instruments. He also wrote concertos for winds, including the Concerto in C major for Piccolo and Strings.

A virtuoso challenge
Like virtually all of Vivaldi’s works, this work is impossible to date—but there is no question about its authenticity, for the composer’s manuscript survives. Vivaldi fully exploits the piccolo’s brilliant high range in this concerto, which is set in the standard three movements of the Italian concerto.

[a allegro]. Introduced by a powerful orchestral ritornello, the opening movement has a virtuosic solo part: its long runs demand a seemingly endless supply of breath from the soloist, who must play at almost stratospheric heights.

Largo. The middle movement, in E minor, belongs exclusively to the soloist, who projects a sustained and florid melodic line over the orchestra’s steady and subservient rhythms.
**Program Notes**

_The music:_ influenced by other greats

**allegro vivo**. The crisp, arpeggiated opening for unison strings brings Beethoven to mind, as do the abrupt changes in dynamic level and the military tone, not to mention the same key as Beethoven chose for his first symphony. Long crescendos à la Rossini (one of Bizet’s favorite composers) and deft orchestral touches reminiscent of Mendelssohn also peek through the pages of the score. But it is probably Schubert who mostly comes to mind, as much for the beguiling, lyrical second theme played by oboe as for the frequent, unexpected extensions of themes into other keys. Yet for all the echoes of the past, the music still impresses for its youthful spontaneity, melodic inventiveness, and buoyant spirit.

**adagio**. Of the symphony’s four movements, the _Adagio_ is the most characteristic of Bizet’s mature style, and is generally considered the real jewel of the symphony. The long, sensuous, poignantly hush theme provides the oboe with one of its most cherished solos in the entire repertory. Its faintly Eastern flavor turns up again and again in Bizet’s later works, notably the opera _The Pearl Fishers_ and the incidental music to _L’Arlésienne_. A fugal section built out of the introductory material constitutes the central portion of the movement.

**allegro vivace**. The jocular, sturdy Scherzo shares its principal theme with the Trio section, where the theme becomes lyrical over a drone-like effect to evoke a rustic dance.

**allegro vivace**. The finale, which carries the same _Allegro vivace_ designation as the third movement, flutters along with Mendelssohnian deftness and ebullient spirit, bringing the symphony to a boisterous and joyful close.

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

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**allegro molto**. The orchestra reasserts itself at the animated opening of the finale, and quickly the piccolo sails in, chirping happily above the orchestra’s busy accompaniment. Once again, Vivaldi requires superb breath control from the soloist as this concerto powers its way to a most cheerful close.

**Instrumentation:** solo piccolo with orchestra comprising piano continuo and strings

Program note by Eric Bromberger.

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**Georges Bizet**

_Born:_ October 25, 1838, Paris, France  
_Died:_ June 3, 1875, Bougival, France

_Symphony No. 1 in C major_  
_Premiered:_ February 26, 1935

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The history of music is dotted with exceptionally precocious composers—creators who turned out eminently acceptable works while young children and masterpieces while still in their teens (Mozart, Berlioz, Mendelssohn, Saint-Saëns and Korngold come quickly to mind)—but no one supposed that Bizet ranked among these. At least not until 1933, when his Symphony in C major came to light, 78 years after it had been written.

_a hidden symphony_

This “historical jetsam,” as it has been dubbed, was written within the space of a mere month in late 1855; its composer had just turned 17. He was still a student at the Paris Conservatoire, and regarded the symphony merely as a student exercise. We know of no attempt on Bizet’s part to have it performed or published. In fact, he considered a later work, the _Roma_ Symphony, to be his First. But whereas the Symphony in C had been tossed off in a few weeks, and remains a model of freshness and inspired spontaneity, the _Roma_ Symphony went through a tortured genesis that spanned eight years and lacks the touch of genius that infuses the earlier symphony. The _Roma_ Symphony remains shrouded in obscurity and is heard only rarely (the Minnesota Orchestra last performed it in 1927), in contrast to the earlier symphony that justifiably enjoys status today as a standard repertory item.

After Bizet’s death, the Symphony in C passed, along with other manuscripts, into the hands of his composer-friend Reynaldo Hahn. Eventually it found its way into the archives of the Paris Conservatoire library. Here it lay in total obscurity until the French musicologist Jean Chantavoine revealed its existence in an article in the journal _Le Méneathrel_. This piqued the interest of Bizet’s first English-language biographer, the Scotsman D. C. Parker, who examined the score and recognized it for what it was: a fully-formed masterpiece written by a boy barely turned 17 (the date is entered in the manuscript score). The hitherto accepted theory of Bizet as a slow starter was obviously no longer valid. Parker brought the symphony to the attention of conductor Felix Weingartner, who gave the world premiere in Basel on February 26, 1935.

Bizet’s precociousness did not begin—or end—with this symphony. He was already a student at the Conservatoire at the age of 10, an age when most other boys are still learning five-finger exercises at the piano. His main teacher there was Joseph Zimmerman, but Bizet often had lessons with his assistant, Charles Gounod. In 1855, Bizet became acquainted with Gounod’s First Symphony and was so impressed with it that he arranged it for piano duet. When he came to write his own symphony, the music of Gounod played a strong role in shaping the musical material.

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

Program note by Robert Markow.