Minnesota Orchestra

Osmo Vänskä, conductor
Emanuel Ax, piano

Friday, September 21, 2018, 8 pm  Orchestra Hall
Saturday, September 22, 2018, 8 pm  Orchestra Hall

With these concerts the Minnesota Orchestra recognizes the extraordinary leadership of Marilyn Carlson Nelson, Chair of the Board of Directors.
We are deeply grateful for her dedication, her service and her generosity in all ways.

John Stafford Smith/
arr. Stanislaw Skrowaczewski  The Star-Spangled Banner  ca. 2'

Joan Tower  Fanfare for the Uncommon Woman, No. 1  ca. 3'

Aaron Copland  Appalachian Spring (1945 Orchestration)  ca. 24'

INTERMISSION  ca. 20'

Johannes Brahms  Concerto No. 2 in B-flat major for Piano and Orchestra, Opus 83  ca. 50'
Allegro non troppo
Allegro appassionato
Andante
Allegretto grazioso
Emanuel Ax, piano

OH+  Concert Preview with Akiko Fujimoto
Friday, September 21, and Saturday, September 22, pre-concert; visit minnesotaorchestra.org/ohplus for times, locations and guests

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.
Osmo Vänskä, conductor

Profile appears on page 8.

Emanuel Ax, piano

Grammy Award-winning pianist Emanuel Ax first captured public attention in 1974 when he won the first Arthur Rubinstein International Piano Competition in Tel Aviv. That August, he debuted with the Minnesota Orchestra, performing Brahms' First Piano Concerto in one of the Orchestra’s final concerts at Northrop prior to the opening of Orchestra Hall in October 1974. In partnership with violinist Leonidas Kavakos and cellist Yo-Yo Ma, he begins the 2018-19 season with concerts in Vienna, Paris and London performing the trios of Brahms, which the same three musicians recorded for an album recently released by Sony Classical. In the U.S. he also returns to perform with the orchestras of Cleveland, Chicago, New York, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Washington, Detroit, Pittsburgh, Nashville and Portland, Oregon, and to Carnegie Hall for a recital to conclude the season. In Europe he can be heard in Munich, Amsterdam, Berlin, Rome, Vienna and London, and on tour with the Budapest Festival Orchestra in Italy. A Sony Classical exclusive recording artist since 1987, his other recent releases include Mendelssohn Trios with Yo-Yo Ma and Itzhak Perlman, Strauss' Enoch Arden narrated by Patrick Stewart, and discs of two-piano music by Brahms and Rachmaninoff with Yefim Bronfman. More: emanuelax.com.

**one-minute notes**

**Tower: Fanfare for the Uncommon Woman, No. 1**
The season begins with Tower's 1986 Fanfare for the Uncommon Woman, which pays both sly and sincere homage to Copland's Fanfare for the Common Man through three minutes of visceral brass and percussion music which the composer dedicates to “women who take risks and who are adventurous.”

**Copland: Appalachian Spring**
Copland’s ballet suite is pure musical Americana, telling the tale of a young pioneer couple in rural Pennsylvania through square dances, country fiddling and a famous finale built on the Shaker song Simple Gifts.

**Brahms: Piano Concerto No. 2**
This glorious, richly-scored work, one of the longest and most difficult concertos in the repertoire, exploits the full resources of both solo piano and symphony orchestra. Magical horn calls extended by the piano soloist or orchestra in the first movement, a famous cello solo early in the Andante, gypsy touches in the finale—these are among the concerto's many notable features.
Tower’s Fanfare No. 1 comprises three minutes of colorful curtain-opening razzle-dazzle. Brilliant brass notes strut, gallop and spin around themselves, as if growing dizzy from their own galvanic energy. Temple blocks cluck and hammer; suspended cymbals flash and flare. More than once, waves of sound shake the seats, creating a visceral collective experience for audiences and artists alike. The ending, and the breathless moment of awed silence that follows it, explodes like an invisible aural firework. If Copland’s Fanfare is a tribute to noble resolve, Tower’s is one to the necessity of movement and action.

“Unless it has lyrics, music is genderless,” Tower has proclaimed. That said, she believes that music has a role to play in honoring women. She writes in the composer’s note to her Fanfare No. 1 that it is “dedicated to women who take risks and who are adventurous.” Listening to the works of Joan Tower and other female composers programmed in the Minnesota Orchestra’s 2018-19 season, the truth becomes clear: in classical music, uncommon women are more common than we’ve yet dared to realize.

Instrumentation:
- 4 horns
- 3 trumpets
- 3 trombones
- tuba
- timpani
- snare drum
- tenor drum
- bass drum
- 3 suspended cymbals
- castanets
- dinner bell
- maracas
- sleigh bells
- tambourine
- temple blocks
- 2 wood blocks
- glockenspiel
- vibraphone
- xylophone

Program note by Emily Hogstad.

Tonality in serious music seems to come in waves. In the 1980s it became “permissible” among academic composers to write accessible music again, in a sea-change that some called “the new Romanticism.” But such shifts in fashion and dogma are seen through the centuries. When Aaron Copland returned to the United States from Paris in 1924, he entered what he called a “period of austerity,” during which he explored 12-tone composition and other modern techniques. Then, toward the end of the 1930s, he found himself dissatisfied with the state of American music, and with the relationship of composers to their audiences.
“The conventional concert public continued apathetic or indifferent to anything but the established classics,” he wrote in 1941. “It seemed to me that we composers were in danger of working in a vacuum. I felt it was worth the effort to see if I couldn’t say what I had to say in the simplest possible terms.” It was in this spirit that Copland embarked upon a series of enduring works that assured his position as the quintessential American classical composer: Fanfare for the Common Man, the ballet Rodeo, A Lincoln Portrait and Appalachian Spring.

**the Martha Graham factor**

The spark for Appalachian Spring was Martha Graham, who had helped re-make American dance with her innovative modern style. (Copland’s original working title for the ballet was “Ballet for Martha.”)

“When I wrote Appalachian Spring, I was thinking primarily about Martha and her unique choreographic style, which I knew well,” the composer wrote. “Nobody else seems quite like Martha: she’s so proud, so very much herself. And she’s unquestionably very American: there’s something prim and restrained, simple yet strong, about her which one tends to think of as American.”

Graham and Copland had often planned to collaborate, but it was not until Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge attended a Graham performance in early 1942 that funding became available. The fabulously generous benefactress commissioned Graham to create three new ballets for the 1943 Fall Festival of the Coolidge Foundation in Washington, D.C.

Appalachian Spring was one of those three, but it didn’t get to the stage that year. Graham’s script was delayed, so Copland didn’t finish the score until June 1944. The premiere that October in Washington—with Graham, Merce Cunningham and May O’Donnell in the company—was a full year later than originally planned. Louis Horst conducted the 13-member chamber ensemble for which the piece was originally composed.

“a pioneer celebration”

The ballet depicts, in Copland’s words, “a pioneer celebration in spring around a newly built farmhouse in the Pennsylvania hills in the early part of the last century.” The composer’s description continues: “The bride-to-be and the young farmer-husband enact the emotions, joyful and apprehensive, that their new partnership invites. An older neighbor suggests now and then the rocky confidence of experience. A revivalist and his followers remind the new householders of the strange and terrible aspects of human fate. At the end the couple are left quiet and strong in their new house.”

The suite from the ballet created for full orchestra in 1945, and given its premiere that year by Artur Rodzinski and the New York Philharmonic, is the form in which it is best known today. The suite is in eight sections played without pause. Copland himself summarized it:

- **very slowly.** Introduction of the characters, one by one.
- **fast.** Sudden burst of unison strings in A-major arpeggios starts the action.
- **moderate.** Duo for the bride and her intended; scene of tenderness and passion.
- **quite fast.** The revivalist and his flock.
- **still faster.** Solo dance of the bride; presentiment of motherhood.
- **very slowly.** Transition scene.
- **calm and flowing.** Scenes of daily activity for the bride and her farmer husband. There are five variations on a Shaker theme...published under the title “The Gift to be Simple.”
- **moderato.** The bride takes her place among her neighbors. At the end the couple are left in their new house.

**Instrumentation:** 2 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, 2 trombones, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, suspended cymbal, claves, tabor, triangle, wood block, glockenspiel, xylophone, harp, piano and strings

**Program note by Paul Horsley.**

---

**Johannes Brahms**

**Born:** May 7, 1833, Hamburg, Germany  
**Died:** April 3, 1897, Vienna, Austria

**Concerto No. 2 in B-flat major for Piano and Orchestra, Opus 83**  
**Premiered:** November 9, 1881

ike German poets, painters and musicians before him, including Dürer and Goethe, Brahms found solace and inspiration in crossing the Alps to Italy. He was 44 when he indulged in his first Italian sojourn, touring as far south as Sicily, and during these travels he drafted his initial ideas for a second piano concerto.
Three years had passed when, after a second Italian journey, Brahms applied himself to the work in earnest, and within two months it was finished. He himself was soloist at the premiere, on November 9, 1881, in Budapest.

To master the B-flat Concerto, the pianist must have at his or her command powerful chords, a wide span of the hands, and the technical prowess to contend with challenging passages in octaves, thirds and sixths, as well as with Brahms’ complex and subtle rhythms. Such a vehicle tests the greatest pianists of each succeeding generation. Since Brahms’ Second was first performed by the Minneapolis Symphony in 1926 with the noted Russian pianist and conductor Ossip Gabrilowitsch (the son-in-law of Mark Twain), guest artists playing it with this Orchestra have included Arthur Rubinstein, Rudolf Serkin and today’s soloist Emanuel Ax, who previously performed it at Orchestra Hall in 1981, 1987 and 2000.

**The music: Big statements, high drama and grace**

*allegro non troppo.* The dreamy phrase with which the horns inaugurate the concerto hints at far more than will be delivered at so early a stage in the work. Immediately the piano responds with quiet, plush chords, and not further along than the sixth bar, the winds interject their own response, which is destined to play a major role in the course of the spacious sonata design. Once the piano has burst forth with a big statement all its own, the orchestra confirms the idea in its full sonority, and the movement shifts into high gear.

*allegro appassionato.* This radiant and lyric concerto was so “harmless”—to borrow one of the composer’s sly adjectives—that he was impelled to insert a jolting and tempestuous scherzo. Announced by the keyboard, the surging figure rolls in like a great tidal wave. Latent violence is contained by a contrasting strain, tranquil in the upper strings, and offset by a heroic trio section in D major. But the sweeping force of Brahms’ subject is only briefly deflected, and once again it engulfs the scherzo.

*andante.* An outpouring of solo cello song unlocks the *Andante,* melancholy and nocturnal in mood; for the moment the piano is silent as the melody unfolds over a rocking 6/4 pulse. When the soloist at last begins to ruminate upon the theme, the subject is never quite stated in full, though its character is preserved throughout the rhapsodic figurations.

Eventually the placid scene dissolves, and the music grows turbulent with menacing trills and high voltage arpeggiations—gestures that seem wild, yet they are a variant of the lyric cello theme. The storm soon passes, and in one of the most affecting moments of the concerto, the keyboard serves as accompanist to the exalted strain flowing quietly from a pair of clarinets, the tempo even slower than before.

*allegretto grazioso.* After the high drama of the slow movement, the finale is at risk of seeming anti-climactic, especially since its very heading suggests charm and gracefulness, and its topic is a lilting refrain. But in substituting grace for grandeur, Brahms has created music that turns out to be thoroughly disarming. Structurally, this conclusion is an airy rondo, light of heart and agile in movement. Such well-bred merriment has antecedents in the 18th century, which suddenly does not seem so remote from this Romantic concerto.

**Instrumentation:** solo piano with orchestra comprising 2 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani and strings

**Program note by Mary Ann Feldman.**