Minnesota Orchestra

Santtu-Matias Rouvali, conductor
Gil Shaham, violin

Thursday, October 18, 2018, 11 am  Orchestra Hall
Friday, October 19, 2018, 8 pm  Orchestra Hall

With these concerts we gratefully recognize an anonymous couple for their generous contribution to the Minnesota Orchestra's Investing in Inspiration campaign.

Richard Strauss
Suite from Der Rosenkavalier, Opus 59  ca. 21'

Sergei Prokofiev
Concerto No. 1 in D major for Violin and Orchestra, Opus 19  ca. 22'
Andantino
Scherzo: Vivacissimo
Moderato
Gil Shaham, violin

INTERMISSION  ca. 20'

Johannes Brahms
Symphony No. 1 in C minor, Opus 68  ca. 45'
Un poco sostenuto – Allegro
Andante sostenuto
Un poco allegretto e grazioso
Adagio – Piu andante – Allegro non troppo, ma con brio

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.
Gil Shaham, violin

Gil Shaham’s extensive history with the Minnesota Orchestra dates back to 1992, when he performed Mozart’s *Turkish* Violin Concerto. A Grammy Award-winner and *Musical America*’s 2008 Instrumentalist of the Year, he is sought after worldwide for concerto performances with leading orchestras and conductors, in addition to recitals and festival appearances. Recent highlights include the acclaimed recording and performances of Bach’s complete sonatas and partitas for solo violin, as well as recitals throughout North America, Europe and Asia with his longtime duo partner, pianist Akira Eguchi. Appearances with orchestra regularly include the Berlin Philharmonic, Boston Symphony, Chicago Symphony, Israel Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, New York Philharmonic, Orchestre de Paris and San Francisco Symphony, as well as multi-year residencies with the Orchestras of Montreal, Stuttgart and Singapore. He has more than two dozen concerto and solo CDs to his name, which have earned multiple Grammys, a Grand Prix du Disque, Diapason d’Or and *Gramophone* Editor’s Choice. More: opus3artists.com.

Santtu-Matias Rouvali, conductor

Finnish conductor Santtu-Matias Rouvali is currently chief conductor of the Tampere Philharmonic Orchestra, principal guest conductor of the Philharmonia Orchestra and chief conductor of the Gothenburg Symphony, with which he will tour Germany and Austria in February 2019. In addition to his return to Minnesota for these concerts, this season he returns to conduct the Detroit Symphony Orchestra and makes his debut with the Munich Philharmonic. In spring 2018, he led the world premiere of Finnish composer Olli Kortekangas’ *My Brother’s Keeper* with the Tampere Opera. He regularly works the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra and Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester in Berlin. He recently debuted with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, Munich Philharmonic and Spanish National Orchestra in Madrid. Rouvali’s newest recording features the Nielsen and Sibelius violin concertos with the Tampere Philharmonic Orchestra and Baiba Skride, released in summer 2015 on ORFEO. More: harrisonparrott.com.

**Strauss: Suite from Der Rosenkavalier**

This popular suite from Richard Strauss’ opera abounds with exquisite textures, beautifully balancing the story’s romance, rowdy farce and sentimentality. Highlights include a youthful lovers’ song and a courtly Viennese waltz.

**Prokofiev: Violin Concerto No. 1**

The lyrical melodies and romantic style of this concerto stand in stark contrast to the revolutionary chaos that enveloped Russia when it was being composed. Shortly after completing the work, Prokofiev fled to California, and eventually to France, where the concerto received its premiere.

**Brahms: Symphony No. 1**

Brahms’ First Symphony—sometimes called “Beethoven’s Tenth” for its kinship with that composer’s nine symphonies—has an anguished opening. But at its buoyant close, a brilliant horn call clears the way for a melody in which we recognize the influence of the “Ode to Joy.”
Young daughter of a nouveau riche army contractor who is as eager to benefit from Ochs’ title as Ochs is to get hold of some of the Faninal money. Custom—and this is entirely an invention of Hofmannsthal’s—demands that the formal proposal of marriage be preceded by the presentation to the prospective bride of a silver rose: can the Marschallin suggest a young man of suitable background and bearing to take on the role of the rose-bearing knight, the “Rosenkavalier”? She suggests Octavian, her cousin-lover. He and Sophie fall in love at first sight. By means of a series of degrading tricks the projected Ochs-Faninal alliance is undermined, and the Marschallin and Ochs renounce Octavian and Sophie respectively, the former with sentimental dignity, the latter in an atmosphere of rowdy farce.

The first *Rosenkavalier* Suite came out as early as 1911. In addition to the (presumably) Rodziński Suite of 1945, there are excellent and interesting concert sequences by three eminent Strauss conductors, Antal Dorati, Erich Leinsdorf and William Steinberg.

**Instrumentation:** 3 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 3 oboes (1 doubling English horn), 3 clarinets (1 doubling E-flat clarinet), bass clarinet, 3 bassoons (1 doubling contrabassoon), 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, ratchet, tambourine, triangle, glockenspiel, 2 harps, celesta and strings

Excerpted from a program note by the late Michael Steinberg, used with permission.

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**Richard Strauss**

*Born:* June 11, 1864
*Munich, Germany*

* Died:* September 8, 1949,
*Leipzig, Germany*

**Suite from**

**Der Rosenkavalier, Opus 59**

**Premiered:** January 26, 1911

(full opera)

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**Sergei Prokofiev**

*Born:* April 23, 1891
*Sontzkovka, Ukraine*

* Died:* March 5, 1953,
*Moscow, Russia*

**Concerto No. 1 in D major for Violin and Orchestra, Opus 19**

**Premiered:** October 18, 1923

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Prokofiev, who was indifferent to politics, rode out World War I by concentrating on composition. He discovered within himself a deep lyric vein that was waiting to be tapped—a gift for melody such as that which opens the D-major Violin Concerto. He conceived this gentle strain in 1915, intending it to lead off a short violin concerto. Within two years, however, the gradually accumulated work emerged as a full-scale concerto, bright in tone and full of compelling themes.

In the meantime, Prokofiev had come within the range of gunfire, yet somehow he managed to avoid being snared in the
revolutionary upheaval that struck St. Petersburg in 1917. Retreating to a small village not far from the city, he spent the summer of that apocalyptic year dealing with his works in progress—the Classical Symphony as well as the First Violin Concerto—and training himself to compose away from the keyboard.

Though Prokofiev tried to remain detached from the momentous changes that produced the Soviet Union, it became obvious that his career would not escape the impact of political change: in the wake of the October Revolution of 1917, plans for the November premiere of the First Violin Concerto had to be cancelled. The following spring, with the approval of the newly-appointed Soviet Minister of Culture, Prokofiev boarded a train bound for Siberia, the first leg of a journey to America by way of Japan. Since he did not plan to be away for long, he took little with him—though the Violin Concerto No. 1 was carefully packed into his bags. That it waited nearly six years for a performance was partly due to the composer’s peripatetic life, but also because several violinists, including Bronislaw Huberman, declined to learn it.

In 1922, when plans collapsed for a Chicago production of his opera The Fiery Angel, the disillusioned composer moved to Paris. There, on October 18, 1923, Serge Koussevitzky conducted the premiere of the Violin Concerto No. 1 with his concertmaster, Marcel Darrieux, as soloist. “[He] did quite well with it,” Prokofiev later recalled, but noted that “The critics were divided; some of them commented not without malice on its ‘Mendelssohnisms.’”

The score seemed too abrasive for diehard conservatives, and too Romantic not only for the avant garde but for those who considered themselves au courant. But the following summer, when Joseph Szigeti introduced the concerto at the 1924 festival of the International Society for Contemporary Music in Prague, the work at last hit its mark. Szigeti lost no time in taking the First Violin Concerto to the major music capitals of Europe. The Fiery Angel opera

The First Violin Concerto is the creation of a young man, confident and energetic, and determined not to produce a hackneyed note. Both lyric and roguish by turns, it already displayed the traits of his mature style. Despite its pungent harmonies and rhythmic bite, the work overall conveys an impression of abundant lyricism and joyful exuberance. There is no sentimentality here, only deep expressivity.

andantino. The main theme, “which must not be dragged,” Prokofiev stressed, is the soul of the work. He instructs that it be rendered sognando (dreamily) against the silvery glow of tremulous violas, divided, and soon joined by violins. Both orchestra and soloist explore the subject. Glistening trills, heady runs, bounding leaps and other devices prepare the way for the second subject, which is narrative in character. So far every element is lucid as well as persuasive, speaking directly, as if in the clearest human language. But the development of these notions distorts them almost beyond recognition, acquiring a sardonic edge along the way. Taking on a mechanized quality, the lyric opening strain becomes almost unidentifiable, while the folk-tale rhetoric of the second theme is lost in whirling figurations. Prokofiev forges a machine-like power, mocking the beauties of his original thoughts as he gears into an accelerando of hydraulic energy. Suddenly the reprise restores the original loveliness. Only the principal idea returns, now in a single flute, floating in ethereal regions and accompanied by delicate violin tracery.

scherzo: vivacissimo. A fast movement, replacing the customary concerto slow movement, forms the core of the work. It is played as swiftly as fingers and bow will move—no small assignment, considering the mischief of Prokofiev’s technical demands. The solo violin springs into action only to leap and glide with such speed that if its essence were a visual line instead of an aural experience, we would be hard put to follow it. Nor do the demonic episodes offer relief from this refrain. Structured as a five-part rondo, the movement soon abandons its gaiety.

moderato. After the bristling antics of the middle movement, lyricism prevails in the finale. Thus the framework of the concerto is essentially gentle and full of loveliness, as Prokofiev reverts to the mood of the opening. After crisp staccatos and a doleful statement by the bassoons, the violin in all its songfulness unfolds a broad melodic line. At the core of the movement, however, when the tempo shifts to moderately fast, a sardonic tone is reasserted, but held in check. Upon the onset of an enormous and lofty coda, the sublime theme of the opening Andantino is revived, more tranquil than before and ingeniously combined with the finale’s principal subject. The flute, whole distinctive timbre frequently colors this score, adds a quietly cadential gesture, a long melisma that floats upward as weightlessly as a leaf caught by a breeze.

Instrumentation: solo violin with orchestra comprising 2 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, tuba, timpani, snare drum, tambourine, harp and strings
a momentous encounter took place on September 30, 1853, the day on which Robert Schumann noted in his diary, “Brahms to see me (a genius).”

Touring Germany as pianist for the Hungarian violinist Reményi, the 20-year-old Brahms had detoured through Düsseldorf in order to pay a call on Schumann, his artistic ideal. For his part, Schumann was so impressed with both the compositions and the keyboard skills of his visitor that he hailed the “young eagle” in a prophetic article published in Neue Zeitschrift für Musik. When success and fame came quickly to Brahms, everyone took for granted that he would soon produce a symphony in the Beethoven mold.

They waited a long time. “To write a symphony is no joke,” Brahms explained, ultimately postponing his debut as a symphonist until the age of 40. Few challenges have occupied a composer over so long a time. Finally, more than two decades after he had first contemplated such a project, Brahms’ Symphony No. 1 resonated in the hall at Karlsruhe on November 4, 1876. It was a triumph.

**“savior” of Viennese tradition**

Just three months before the C-minor Symphony debuted, Richard Wagner also realized an ambitious pursuit: three complete performances of his gigantic Ring cycle at the festival theater built expressly for it at Bayreuth. To the conservative faction, at odds with the Gesamtkunstwerk (the “total work of art” represented by the composer-dramatist Wagner), Brahms’ persuasive symphony had not appeared a moment too soon. To them, he was the savior of the heathen—those lured from Viennese tradition by the extravagant wiles of Wagnerism. Thus the Symphony No. 1 caught on fast, and with the rapid proliferation of orchestras across the United States it became a staple of the repertory on two continents.

To the relief of the musical world, Brahms had demonstrated the ongoing vitality of the Viennese classical tradition. Affirmed by a new and original voice, the Beethoven principles stood up very well. Hans von Bülow referred to Brahms’ First as “the Tenth”—an epithet that flattered as well as provoked the composer. But Bülow only meant that Brahms was carrying on where Beethoven had left off. Not superficial resemblances, but a kinship of creative spirit and architectural mastery linked the two great symphonists.

**the music: Brahms’ symphonic breakthrough**

un poco sostenuto—allegro. There is no mistaking the characteristic Brahms tone in the powerful introduction, where a ponderous throbbing in the bass underlies the anguished double theme upon which the symphony embarks. As a chromatic motif struggles upward in the violins, a compassionate thought descends in the winds, these conjunctive strands forming a motto that unifies the movement and is prophetic of the Allegro about to erupt. Winds drive it to a piercing start, and what before was melancholy now emerges fierce and ready for combat.

andante sostenuto. Whereas the dramatic opening movement was drawn from a dark palette, the slow interlude is sketched in pastel tones suited to its chamber-like intimacy. Strings, with a lone bassoon, give out the instrumental song, which is soon upstaged by a lyric oboe theme that becomes the heart of a trio in which horn and violin join.

un poco allegretto e grazioso. Since a quicksilver scherzo would have been incompatible with the basic temperament of this granitic work, Brahms offers a thoughtful rather than impetuous intermezzo, unfolding upon a brace of themes.

adagio—più andante—allegro non troppo, ma con brio. The mighty portal to the finale—austere, even hinting at tragedy—makes way for a statement of great purpose. When this strain’s resemblance to Beethoven’s Ode to Joy theme was pointed out to Brahms, he curtly rejoined: ‘Any jackass can see that.’ Analysis, however, dilutes the resemblance.

The late Minnesota Orchestra program annotator Donald N. Ferguson has left a succinct commentary on the rest of the movement: “In the course of the development a horn-call from the introduction (Brahms heard it in the Alps, and it seems to have become for him a symbol of spiritual freedom) is made to achieve great vividness. After this, a recapitulation, which however lacks the principal subject, leads to the coda. Here the joyous energy that was born of the introduction reaches incredible vigor and becomes almost hoarse with triumph. Significant in this great outburst is a religious-sounding phrase in the brass which serves, as did the chorale theme in the first movement, to suggest that the energies displayed are directed towards a purpose not discoverable on the plane of the earth.”

**Instrumentation:** 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani and strings

Program notes for the Prokofiev and Brahms works by
Mary Ann Feldman.