Minnesota Orchestra  
Han-Na Chang, conductor  
Stephen Hough, piano

Wednesday, April 3, 2019, 7:30 pm  |  Orchestra Hall  
Thursday, April 4, 2019, 11 am  |  Orchestra Hall

Sean Shepherd  
Silvery Rills  
ca. 4’

Felix Mendelssohn  
Concerto No. 1 in G minor for Piano and Orchestra  
Molto allegro con fuoco  
Andante  
Presto – Molto allegro e vivace  
*Stephen Hough, piano*  
ca. 20’

INTERMISSION  
ca. 20’

Ludwig van Beethoven  
Symphony No. 3 in E-flat major, Opus 55, *Eroica*  
Allegro con brio  
Marcia funebre: Adagio assai  
Scherzo: Allegro vivace  
Finale: Allegro molto  
ca. 51’

Concert Preview with Phillip Gainsley, Stephen Hough and Sean Shepherd  
Wednesday, April 3, 6:30 pm, Auditorium  
Concert Preview with Phillip Gainsley and Sean Shepherd  
Thursday, April 4, 10:15 am, Auditorium

The concert on Thursday, April 4 will be broadcast live on stations of *Classical Minnesota Public Radio*, including KSJN 99.5 FM in the Twin Cities.
Stephen Hough, piano

Stephen Hough has been a regular guest soloist with the Minnesota Orchestra at Orchestra Hall and on tour since his first performances here in 1996. He has appeared with the BBC, Czech, London, Los Angeles, Netherland, New York and Royal Philharmonic; the Atlanta, Baltimore, BBC, Boston, Chicago, Houston, Montreal, National, NHK, Pittsburgh, San Francisco, St. Louis and Toronto symphonies; and the Budapest Festival, Cleveland, Philadelphia, Russian National, and Tonhalle Zurich orchestras. This season, he performs individual Beethoven concertos with the Naples Philharmonic, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Cape Town Philharmonic, Phoenix Symphony and Tokyo Symphony Orchestra, as well as all five Beethoven concertos over two days with the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, in addition to many other solo engagements. His 60-plus recordings on the Hyperion label—including Tchaikovsky’s piano concertos and Concert Fantasia with the Minnesota Orchestra—have garnered international prizes, including several Grammy nominations and eight Gramophone Magazine Awards. Also a noted writer, he regularly contributes to *The New York Times, The Guardian, The Times, Gramophone* and *BBC Music Magazine*, and he wrote a blog for *The Telegraph* for seven years. His first novel, *The Final Retreat*, was released in 2018. More: [stephenhough.com](http://stephenhough.com).

Han-Na Chang, conductor

Han-Na Chang is the artistic leader and chief conductor of the Trondheim Symphony Orchestra in Norway. She makes her Minnesota Orchestra conducting debut in these performances. Her other guest engagements this season include concerts with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra, Gothenburg Symphony and Naples Philharmonic. She has recently worked with the Philharmonia Orchestra, Oslo Philharmonic, Staatskapelle Dresden, WDR Sinfonieorchester Köln, Bamberg Symphony, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra, Orchestra del Teatro di San Carlo di Napoli, and the symphony orchestras of Cincinnati, St. Louis, Indianapolis, Seattle, Gothenburg, Singapore and Tokyo, among other ensembles. She made an acclaimed conducting debut at the BBC Proms in 2014 and held the post of principal guest conductor of the Trondheim Symphony Orchestra from 2013 to 2017. She began her music career as a cellist, soloing with many orchestras worldwide, including the Minnesota Orchestra in 1997 and 2001, and winning awards including the Rostropovich International Cello Competition at age 11. More: [harrisonparrott.com](http://harrisonparrott.com).

Shepherd: *Silvery Rills*

Contemporary composer Sean Shepherd pays tribute to his home state of Nevada in a brief, colorful work that he says reflects “the fast-flowing ice-cold waters that descend from the mountains to the desert.”

Mendelssohn: Piano Concerto No. 1

Urgent gestures and bravura solos fill the opening movement of this work, while the touching *Andante* is a dreamy song led by piano, cellos and violas. A fanfare launches the dancing finale, which dashes to a show-stopping conclusion.

Beethoven: Symphony No. 3, *Eroica*

The *Eroica* Symphony, which Beethoven originally intended to evoke thoughts of Napoleon, opens majestically and turns next to a somber funeral march that speaks of triumph and tragedy. The dazzling variations of the finale build to a powerful *Presto* coda.
Throughout music history, composers have found inspiration from their home cities, states and countries. The results can range from sublime natural portraits such as the famous *Blue Danube* waltz of Vienna’s Johann Strauss, Jr., to stirring evocations of nationalism like Sibelius’ *Finlandia*, to the unabashedly silly shenanigans of Nevada native Eric Whitacre’s *Godzilla Eats Las Vegas*.

**coming home to Nevada**

Like Whitacre, composer Sean Shepherd hails from Reno, Nevada. Although Shepherd’s musical studies took him out of the Silver State— to Indiana University, the Juilliard School and Cornell University—his hometown beckoned when the Reno Philharmonic Orchestra named him its first-ever composer in residence from 2010 to 2012. (Shepherd’s original affiliation with that institution had been as a performer, as he had played bassoon in the Reno Philharmonic Youth Orchestra.) During his residency, he composed two new works for the ensemble: *Silvery Rills* and *Desert Garden*, both inspired by the state’s natural surroundings, and both premiered in 2011 under the direction of Laura Jackson.

Although *Silvery Rills* runs just four minutes, it covers a substantial amount of musical terrain, with a wide variety of instrumental textures; an emphasis on short and interconnected musical ideas rather than long melodic lines; and a symmetrical succession of tempo designations, from slow to fast and back. The closing measures are particularly poignant, when a descending solo clarinet and a backdrop of sustained strings are silenced by the toll of a chime.

The composer has provided the following comments on the title, inspiration and content of *Silvery Rills*:

“The clear question the title of this piece presents is obvious: what exactly is a rill? I understood it from the lyric I pulled from the official state song of Nevada (which is where I and my family come from, going back to the homesteading ranchers and shepherders of four and five generations ago): ‘...out by the Truckee’s silvery rills, out where the sun always shines.’ I think of a rill as the ripple caused during the flowing of a shallow river (the Truckee River flows from Lake Tahoe to Pyramid Lake in northern Nevada) or stream over water-polished smooth stones.

“This short piece, with its nearly constant shifts of character, mood, gesture and scope, is meant as a reflection of the fast-flowing ice-cold waters that descend from the mountains to the desert (as so much of the water in the West does; the Colorado and Rio Grande rivers being other examples). And, as a piece commissioned and premiered by my hometown orchestra, the Reno Philharmonic, it’s also meant as a postcard-sized letter from home; a reminder to myself of that strange, beautiful, sunny place where I no longer live, and of that fresh water in those rills, which grows more precious with each season, surely for the next four or five generations to come.”

**a rocketing career**

Since the Reno Philharmonic residency, Shepherd’s career as an orchestral composer has continued to ascend, as he has completed a tenure as Daniel R. Lewis Composer Fellow of the Cleveland Orchestra, and has been commissioned by prestigious ensembles such as the New York Philharmonic, National Symphony Orchestra, Boston Symphony Orchestra and Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, the last of which opened its 2018-19 season with the European premiere of his *Express Abstractionism*.

With these concerts, Shepherd is making his return to Orchestra Hall, as he was a participant in the May 2006 Minnesota Orchestra Composer Institute, when his *surface tension* received a reading under Osmo Vänskä’s direction. Like many other Institute alumni, Shepherd is making waves—not just rills—in the world of new music. This week’s performances offer a brief glimpse at his talent, and Minnesota Orchestra audiences can now join many around the world in anticipating more of his music in the years ahead.

**Instrumentation:**

- 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons,
- 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, harp, snare drum, bass drum, antique cymbal, suspended cymbal, castanets, maracas, ratchet, sleigh bells, tambourine, temple blocks, triangle, vibraslap, xylophone, glockenspiel, vibraphone, tubular bell and strings

*Program note by Carl Schroeder.*
Felix Mendelssohn was the cherished crown prince in his cultured, prosperous and seemingly happy family. It was the blessed lot of such well-to-do young men to be sent on an educational grand tour. Mendelssohn’s lasted a year and took him via Munich and Vienna to Italy, Switzerland, Munich for a second time, Paris, London, and home to Berlin.

**attending to the ladies—and the concerto**

Mendelssohn, however, played the premiere himself on October 17, at a concert devoted entirely to his own music. Also included were his Symphony No. 1, the astounding Overture he had written at 17 for Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, and some keyboard improvisations.

**a tempestuous beginning**

The audience at the Munich Odeon, which included the King, must have been astonished by the way the concerto begins—not just by the tempestuous orchestral crescendo but even more by the entrance of the piano after only seven preparatory bars. In five concertos he had written in his teens, Mendelssohn had provided the full orchestral exposition listeners expected. In the Piano Concerto No. 1, the drastic short-circuiting of formal conventions consorts well with the urgent gestures of this music—*Sturm und Drang* revisited.

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

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**Felix Mendelssohn**

**Born:** February 3, 1809, Hamburg, Germany

**Died:** November 4, 1847, Leipzig, Germany

**Concerto No. 1 in G minor for Piano and Orchestra, Opus 25**

**Premiered:** October 17, 1831

**molto allegro con fuoco.** The piano enters not just soon and impetuously, but with an imposing display of brawn. Alone, it also begins a lyric second theme, to which the violins add just a touch of delicate commentary. This episode, a brief moment of relaxation, begins in B-flat major, which, as the relative major of the home key, G minor, is normal—although at the same time, Mendelssohn is careful not to stabilize B-flat too much, keeping his melody poised over a dominant pedal. Moreover, he almost immediately repeats its opening phrase in B-flat minor, then uses that change as a hinge to go into D-flat major, and by now he has moved very far away from home. Thunderous octave scales begin the development, which is full of pianistic and harmonic adventure.

**andante.** After an elegantly tactful introduction by the piano, cellos and violas sing the touching, lightly sentimental song-without-words of the *Andante*. In the middle comes a lovely opportunity for the pianist to show off his or her skill in filigree, while violas and cellos—each section is divided in two to make a gloriously rich crème caramel of a sound—continue the melodic flow. Finally, with violins adding their shimmer to the orchestral palette, the piano reclaims the melody.

**presto–molto allegro e vivace.** Another fanfare rouses us from these dreams, and, with a more expansive imitation of the concerto’s opening—a suspenseful crescendo in the orchestra and a bravura entrance for the soloist—Mendelssohn launches his headlong and glittering finale with its sparkling and dancing themes and decorative counter-themes. For a moment, he relaxes tempo and mood to bring the briefest of recollections of the first movement’s lyric theme; then, the pianist having been given this chance to catch his or her breath, he launches his sure-to-bring-the-house-down coda.

**Excerpted from Michael Steinberg’s The Concerto: A Listener’s Guide (Oxford University Press, 1998), used with permission.**
In May 1803, Beethoven confided to a friend: “I am only a little satisfied with my previous works. From today on I will take a new path.” Over the next six months, he sketched his massive new Third Symphony, a revolutionary work of art that dumbfounded early audiences at private performances and the public premiere on April 7, 1805.

Nearly everyone knows the story of how Beethoven had intended to dedicate the symphony to Napoleon, whose reforms in France had seemed to signal a new age of egalitarian justice. But when the composer learned that Napoleon had proclaimed himself emperor, he tore off the score's title and angrily blotted out Napoleon's name. When published in 1806, the title page bore only the cryptic inscription: “Sinfonia eroica—dedicated to the memory of a great man.”

**allegro con brio.** The “new path” of which Beethoven wrote is evident from the first instant. The music explodes to life with two whip-cracks in E-flat major, followed immediately by the main ideas in the cellos. The theme is built on the notes of an E-flat major chord, but it settles on a “wrong” note, C-sharp, and the resulting harmonic complications are resolved only after much violence.

Rather than the duple meter customary in symphonic first movements, Beethoven chose 3/4, the minuet meter, which had been thought lightweight, unworthy of serious music. But this is music of the greatest violence and uncertainty: in it, what Beethoven's biographer Maynard Solomon has called “hostile energy” is admitted for the first time into what had been the polite world of the classical symphony. This huge movement introduces a variety of themes and develops them with a furious energy; in the powerful coda, the main theme repeats four times, growing more potent on each appearance, and finally it is shouted out in triumph. This truly is a “heroic” movement, raising serious issues and resolving them in music of unparalleled drama and scope.

**marcia funebre: adagio assai.** The second movement brings another surprise—it is a funeral march, something else entirely new in symphonic music. Beethoven moves to dark C minor as violins announce the grieving main idea over growling basses, and the movement makes its somber way on the tread of this dark theme. The C-major central interlude sounds almost bright by comparison—the hero's memory is ennobled here—but when the opening material and tonality return Beethoven ratchets up tensions by treating his material fugally. At the end, the march theme disintegrates in front of us, and the movement ends on muttering fragments of that theme.

**scherzo: allegro vivace.** Out of this silence, the propulsive scherzo springs to life, then explodes. For all its revolutionary features, the *Eroica* employs what was essentially the Mozart-Haydn orchestra: pairs of winds, plus timpani and strings. Beethoven makes only one change, adding a third horn, which is now featured prominently in the trio section’s hunting-horn calls. That seemingly small alteration is yet another signal of the symphony's originality: the virtuosic writing for horns, the sweep of their brassy sonority—all these are new in music.

**finale: allegro molto.** The finale is a theme-and-variation movement, an old form that Beethoven transforms into a grand conclusion worthy of a heroic symphony. After an opening flourish, he presents not the theme but the bass line of that theme, played pizzicato, and offers several variations on this line before the melodic theme itself is heard in the woodwinds, now accompanied by the same pizzicato line. Beethoven puts the theme through a series of dazzling variations, including complex fugal treatment, before reaching a moment of poise on a stately slow variation for woodwinds. The music pauses expectantly, and then a powerful *Presto* coda hurls the *Eroica* to its close.

With this symphony, Beethoven made an extraordinary leap to an entirely new conception of what music might be. Freed from the restraint of courtly good manners, he found in the symphony the means to express the most serious and important of human emotions.

It is no surprise that over the next century, composers would make full use of this freedom. Nor is it a surprise to learn that late in life, Beethoven named the *Eroica* as his favorite among the eight symphonies he then had written.

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

**Program note by Eric Bromberger.**