

Minnesota Orchestra

Karina Canellakis, conductor
 Francesco Piemontesi, piano

Thursday, February 13, 2020, 11 am | Orchestra Hall
 Friday, February 14, 2020, 8 pm | Orchestra Hall
 Saturday, February 15, 2020, 8 pm | Orchestra Hall

Zosha di Castri

Lineage

ca. 11'

Maurice Ravel

Concerto in G major for Piano and Orchestra
 Allegramente
 Adagio assai
 Presto
Francesco Piemontesi, piano

ca. 21'

I N T E R M I S S I O N

ca. 20'

Béla Bartók

Concerto for Orchestra
 Introduzione: Andante non troppo - Allegro vivace
 Giuoco delle coppie: Allegretto scherzando
 Elegia: Andante non troppo
 Intermezzo interrotto: Allegretto
 Finale: Pesante - Presto

ca. 38'

pre-concert

Concert Preview with Peter Mercer Taylor
 Thursday, February 13, 10:15 am, Auditorium
 Friday, February 14, 7:15 pm, N. Bud Grossman Mezzanine
 Saturday, February 15, 7:15 pm, Target Atrium

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.



Karina Canellakis, conductor

Karina Canellakis, now making her Minnesota Orchestra debut, begins her tenure as chief conductor of the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic in the 2019-20 season. This season she also becomes the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra's first principal guest conductor and is featured as its Artist in Focus. Internationally acclaimed for her emotionally-charged performances, technical command and interpretive depth, she has conducted many of the world's top orchestras since winning the Sir Georg Solti Conducting Award in 2016. Her 2019-20 season includes additional debuts with the Atlanta Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, London Symphony

Orchestra, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Munich Philharmonic, NDR Hamburg and Rotterdam Philharmonic. Her return engagements this season include appearances with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the symphony orchestras of Toronto, Dallas, Houston and North Carolina, as well as the Orchestre de Paris, Stockholm Philharmonic, Gurzenich Orchester and Zurich Opera. She was previously assistant conductor of the Dallas Symphony Orchestra. More: karinacanellakis.com, opus3artists.com.



Francesco Piemontesi, piano

Pianist Francesco Piemontesi, also appearing with the Minnesota Orchestra for the first time this week, is widely

renowned for his interpretations of Mozart and the early Romantic repertoire, as well as the later 19th century and 20th century repertoire of Brahms, Liszt, Dvořák, Ravel, Debussy and Bartók. He regularly appears worldwide with major orchestras such as the London Symphony Orchestra, the Boston Symphony, the NHK Symphony and the Cleveland Orchestra. In solo recitals, he has appeared in many prestigious venues including Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, the Berlin Philharmonie, Zürich Tonhalle, Carnegie Hall, Avery Fisher Hall and Suntory Hall in Tokyo. He rose to international prominence with prizes at several major competitions including the 2007 Queen Elisabeth Competition, and between 2009 and 2011 he was chosen as a BBC New Generation Artist. Since 2012, he has been the Artistic Director of the Settimane Musicali di Ascona. More: francescopiemontesi.com, colbertartists.com.

one-minute notes

Di Castri: *Lineage*

Zosha di Castri pays homage to her late grandmother and explores the concepts of memories, identity and cultural heritage in a work built around a recurring chorale, as well as an ostinato that calls to mind the stories told by elders.

Ravel: Piano Concerto

This popular work opens with a jazz-spiced movement highlighted by a bravura cadenza and proceeds into a serene, sparsely accompanied *Adagio*. In the mischievous *Presto* with which it concludes, the piano chases the orchestra.

Bartók: Concerto for Orchestra

Bartók upends the concerto form by treating each section of instruments in a soloistic and virtuosic manner. The mood progresses from stern to spooky to life-affirming, with two witty scherzos scattered into the mix. Upon the work's 1944 premiere, conductor Serge Koussevitzky called it "the best orchestral piece of the last 25 years."



Zosha di Castri

Born: January 16, 1985,
Calgary, Alberta, Canada;
now living in New York

Lineage

Premiered: April 20, 2013

When Florida's New World Symphony and the San Francisco Symphony co-commissioned young Canadian-born composer Zosha di Castri to write a piece for large orchestra in 2013, the opportunity came at a time of personal loss: the composer's grandmother had recently passed away. Di Castri had grown up listening to her grandmother's tales of life in the "old country." Those stories—and importantly, di Castri's reaction to them—became the inspiration for *Lineage*, her second work for large orchestra.

In a 2014 interview, di Castri stated: "I was thinking of doing a piece that was kind of a tribute to [my grandmother], but I was also reflecting on what it meant to be a third-generation Canadian and how we relate to our culture." Di Castri wondered: as each of us re-engage with these passed-down "secondhand memories," what changes—and what stays the same? Which memories do we return to, and why? What do those memories say about our own identities and lineages? And what might these ideas sound like when portrayed by an orchestra?

a rising talent

With this week's performances of *Lineage*, Minnesota Orchestra audiences are being introduced to the music of a composer on the rise. This season *Lineage* is also being performed by the Philadelphia Orchestra, Toronto Symphony Orchestra and Montclair State University Symphony Orchestra. Di Castri reached her largest audience to date last July, when the BBC Symphony and BBC Singers premiered her *Long Is the Journey, Short Is the Memory*, commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Apollo 11 moon landing, at the opening concert of the 2019 BBC Proms. Her current projects include a commissioned work for the Grossman Ensemble at the University of Chicago, scheduled for premiere in June 2020, and her first album, *Tachitipo*, was released in November to immediate critical acclaim.

Born in 1985 in Edmonton in Canada's Alberta province, di Castri earned her bachelor's degree in piano performance and composition at McGill University in Montreal, then went

on to complete her doctorate at Columbia University, where she is currently the Francis Goelet Assistant Professor of Music. Her compositional output includes concert music, projects with electronics, sound arts, and interdisciplinary collaborations with video and dance. To date she has written six works for orchestra.

a recurring landmark

One of di Castri's goals in *Lineage* was to create a recurring structural landmark that listeners could grab hold of and return to as the work progressed. She chose to make that landmark a chorale (described as "distant" in the score). This chorale appears three times, much like a trio of columns supporting a porch: once at the beginning, once in the middle and once at the end. It loosely cycles through a particular pitch pattern: the notes sink down, haunting and dispirited, then leap up, seemingly intrigued, creating a cycling undulating shape that suggests rise and fall, departure and return, simultaneously.

Part of the chorale's eerie atmosphere is due to di Castri's use of microtones: notes that are either slightly too sharp or slightly too flat to be played on a piano. In the orchestral world, microtones are encountered most often in experimental 20th- and 21st-century works; however, microtones aren't a modern invention, as they appear in some cultures' folk music. In *Lineage*, the microtones serve as a recurring callback to di Castri's cultural heritage. The composer is firm that she doesn't mean to quote folk music directly or even authentically here, but rather wants to create a musical analogue to the "secondhand memories" she herself received from her grandmother by writing hints of imagined folk music.

Weaving its way in and out of the entire piece is a recurring ostinato: a rhythm or phrase that repeats itself again and again, much like a grandparent's story. In *Lineage* this ostinato appears in different guises played by different instruments. Wherever it shows up, whether it's in the haunted-sounding woodwinds or the muted trumpets or the frantic strings, the ostinato provides a sense of scurrying propulsion, always providing direction and pointing the way forward. By the end of the work, however, that propulsion has largely faded, finally replaced by a shaky set of otherworldly murmurs in the strings' upper registers. (The score's last instruction for the percussion players reads: "Fade out with the natural resonance of the gongs and tam tams.") In the end, this mysterious world of music and memory seems to be without weight.

In a composer's note that prefaces the score, di Castri writes that *Lineage* "is a combination of change and consistency, a re-imagining of places and traditions I've known only second-hand, the sound of a fictitious culture one dreams up to keep the memories of another generation alive."

Lineage received its world premiere performance on April 20, 2013, with Michael Tilson Thomas conducting the New World Symphony in Miami Beach, Florida.

Instrumentation: 3 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 3 oboes (1 doubling English horn), 3 clarinets (1 doubling E-flat clarinet and 1 doubling bass clarinet), 3 bassoons (1 doubling contrabassoon), 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, China cymbal, splash cymbal, 4 suspended cymbals, 3 almglocken, 6 nipple gongs, ocean drum, rain stick, 2 tamtams, 2 wood blocks, xylophone, marimba, glockenspiel, vibraphone, chimes, harp, piano, celesta and strings

Program note by *Emily Hogstad*.



Maurice Ravel
Born: March 7, 1875,
 Ciboure, Pyrénées-Atlantiques,
 France
Died: December 28, 1937,
 Paris, France

**Concerto in G major for
 Piano and Orchestra**
Premiered: January 14, 1932

Ravel was 54 before he wrote any concertos, and then, in the fall of 1929, he set to work simultaneously on two. His Concerto for Piano Left Hand, dark and serious, was for the pianist Paul Wittgenstein, and the other, the much lighter Piano Concerto in G major, was intended for the composer's own use. But by the fall of 1931, when the G-major Concerto was complete, failing health prevented the composer from performing this music himself. Instead, he conducted the premiere in Paris on January 14, 1932; the pianist was Marguerite Long, to whom Ravel dedicated the concerto, and who had also given the first performance of Ravel's *Le Tombeau de Couperin* in 1919.

brilliant, transparent and sultry

Ravel described this work as "written in the spirit of Mozart and Saint-Saëns," but listeners would hardly make those associations. What strikes audiences first are the concerto's virtuoso writing for both piano and orchestra, the brilliance and transparency of the music, and the influence of American jazz. It is possible to make too much of the jazz influence, but Ravel had heard jazz during his tour of America in 1928 and found much to admire. When asked about its influence on this concerto, he said: "It includes some elements borrowed from jazz, but only in moderation." Ravel was quite proud of this music and said that in it, he had expressed his thoughts just as he had wished.

allegro moderato. The first movement opens with a whipcrack, and immediately the piccolo plays the jaunty opening tune, picked up in turn by solo trumpet before the piano makes its sultry solo entrance. Some of the concerto's most brilliant music occurs in this movement, which is possessed of a sort of madcap energy, with great splashes of instrumental color, strident flutter-tonguing by the winds, string glissandos and a quasi-cadenza for the harp.

adagio assai. In a three-minute solo that opens the *Adagio assai*, one of Ravel's most beautiful slow movements, the pianist lays out at length the haunting main theme, which later returns to great effect with the English horn heard over delicate piano accompaniment. Despite its seemingly easy flow of melody, this movement gave Ravel a great deal of trouble, and he later said that he wrote it "two bars at a time."

presto. The finale explodes to life with a five-note riff that recurs throughout, functioning somewhat like the ritornello of the Baroque concerto. The jazz influence shows up here in the squealing clarinets, brass smears and racing piano passages. The movement comes to a sizzling conclusion on the phrase with which it began.

Instrumentation: solo piano with orchestra comprising flute, piccolo, oboe, English horn, clarinet, E-flat clarinet, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, trumpet, trombone, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, slap stick, tamtam, triangle, wood block, harp and strings

Program note by *Eric Bromberger*.



Béla Bartók
Born: March 25, 1881,
 Sânnicolau Mare, Romania
Died: September 26, 1945,
 New York City

Concerto for Orchestra
Premiered: December 1, 1944

Béla Bartók and his second wife Ditta fled to the United States in October 1940 to escape World War II and the Nazi domination of Hungary, but their hopes for a new life in America were quickly shattered. Wartime America had little interest in Bartók or his music, and the couple soon found themselves living in near poverty. Then came the catastrophe: in the spring of 1942 Bartók's health failed. By the following spring

his weight had dropped to 87 pounds (a ghastly photo from these months shows an emaciated figure, his bones pressing through his skin), and he had to be hospitalized. Bartók fell into a deep depression, convinced that he would neither recover nor compose again. To his publisher he wrote, “Artistic creative work generally is the result of an outflow of strength, high-spiritedness, joy of life, etc.—All these conditions are sadly missing with me at present.”

transformed by a commission

At this point, Bartók’s friends rallied around him—and very discreetly too, since the fiercely proud composer would never accept anything that savored of charity. Fritz Reiner and Joseph Szigeti convinced Serge Koussevitzky to ask for a new work from the ailing composer, and the conductor visited Bartók’s hospital room in New York City to tell him that the Koussevitzky Foundation had commissioned an orchestral work for which it would pay \$1,000. Bartók refused. He believed that he could never complete such a work, but Koussevitzky gave Bartók a check for \$500 and insisted that the money was his whether he finished it or not. The visit had a transforming effect: soon Bartók was well enough to travel to Saranac Lake in upstate New York, where he spent the summer. First he rested.

Then once he started on his new commission, he worked fast. He began on August 15, 1943, and completed the score eight weeks later, on October 8. Koussevitzky conducted the Concerto for Orchestra in its first performance, by the Boston Symphony Orchestra, on December 1, 1944. It was an instant success, and Bartók reported that Koussevitzky called it “the best orchestra piece of the last 25 years.” For that premiere, Bartók prepared a detailed program note that addressed not only the title and structure, but—unusual for this composer—also the content of the music.

music of strength and beauty

“The title of this symphony-like orchestral work is explained by its tendency to treat the single orchestral instruments in a *concertante* or soloistic manner,” Bartók wrote. “The ‘virtuoso’ treatment appears, for instance, in the fugato section of the development of the first movement (brass instruments), or in the perpetuum-mobile-like passage of the principal theme of the last movement (strings), and especially in the second movement, in which pairs of instruments consecutively appear with brilliant passages.”

This is music of strength, humanity, beauty and, not least, humor. Bartók’s own description may touch the secret of its emotional appeal: “The general mood of the work represents, apart from the jesting second movement, a gradual transition from the sternness of the first movement and the lugubrious death-song of the third, to the life-assertion of the last one.”

The five movements of the Concerto for Orchestra are in the beautifully symmetric arch form that Bartók sometimes employed. The outer movements, both in modified sonata form, anchor this arch, framing the two even-numbered movements, both of which have the character of scherzos (each is marked *Allegretto*). The central slow movement, which itself is in a symmetric ternary form, becomes the capstone to the arch.

introduzione. The music comes to life with a brooding introduction, and flutes and trumpets hint at theme-shapes that will return later. The movement takes wing at the *Allegro vivace* with a leaping subject (immediately inverted) for both violin sections, and further themes quickly follow: a second subject for solo trombone and a more intimate figure for solo oboe. As part of the development comes a resounding fugato for the concerto’s 11 brass players.

giuoco delle coppie (game of pairs). This charming movement should be understood as a scherzo in the literal meaning of the word: a “joke”—music for fun. A side drum sets the rhythm, and then pairs of woodwinds enter in turn to play a variation on the good-natured opening tune, first heard in the bassoons. Bartók varies the sound by having each “couple” play in different intervals: the bassoons are a sixth apart, the oboes a third, the clarinets a seventh, the flutes a fifth and, finally, the trumpets are a second apart. A noble brass chorale interrupts the fun, after which the woodwinds pick up the opening theme and resume their game.

elegia. At the center of the concerto lies this dark *Andante*, which Bartók called a “lugubrious death-song” and which is based in part on material first heard during the introduction to the first movement. It opens with an inversion of the concerto’s very beginning, which gives way to one of the finest examples of Bartók’s “night-music,” with a keening oboe accompanied by spooky swirls of sound. A great outburst from the violins, also derived from the very beginning, leads to the violas’ *parlando* declarations. The music winds its way back to the eerie night-sounds of the opening before vanishing with only two instruments playing—piccolo and timpani.

intermezzo interrotto (interrupted intermezzo). A sharper sense of humor emerges here. Bartók begins with a woodwind tune whose shape and asymmetric meters suggest an Eastern European origin and continues with a glowing viola melody that must have had specific appeal for him: it is derived from an operetta tune by Zsigmond Vincze that originally set the words “You are lovely, you are beautiful, Hungary.” At the center of the movement comes the interruption.

During the war, Bartók had been dismayed by the attention paid to Shostakovich’s *Leningrad* Symphony, and he objected

particularly to the obsessive ostinato theme Shostakovich associated with the Nazi invaders (which he had taken from Lehár's *The Merry Widow*). Bartók quotes that tune in the solo clarinet, then savages it: he makes the orchestra “laugh” at the theme, which he treats to a series of sneering variations and finally lampoons with rude smears of sound. This has long been considered Bartók's attack on Shostakovich, but is it possible that Lehár's tune functions in exactly the same way for both Shostakovich and Bartók? For each, it is a symbol of the hated Nazis, it invades their own music, and it is thrown aside in an act of defiant nationalism. Once it is gone, Bartók returns—in one of the most beautiful moments in the concerto—to his “Hungarian” tune, now sung hauntingly by muted violins.

finale. The *Finale* begins with a fanfare for horns, and then the strings take off and fly: this is the perpetual motion Bartók mentioned in his note for the premiere. Beginning very quietly with the *inside* second violins, he soon invests this rush of energy with a slashing strength.

This movement is of a type Bartók had developed over the previous decade, the dance-finale, music of celebration driven by a wild energy. Yet it is a most disciplined energy, as much of the development is built on a series of fugues. Bartók is scrupulous in this score about giving every single section and player a moment of glory. Matters subside into a mysterious quiet, and from this misty murk the fugue theme suddenly blazes out in the brass. The Concerto for Orchestra ends with one of the most dazzling conclusions to *any* piece of music: the entire orchestra rips straight upward in a dizzying three-octave rush of sound.

Instrumentation: 3 flutes (1 doubling piccolo),
3 oboes (1 doubling English horn),
3 clarinets (1 doubling bass clarinet),
3 bassoons (1 doubling contrabassoon),
4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba,
timpani, snare drum, bass drum, cymbals,
tamtam, triangle, 2 harps and strings

Program note by Eric Bromberger.



This week's performances of **di Castri's *Lineage*** mark the first time the Minnesota Orchestra has performed music by Canadian-born composer Zosha di Castri. The Orchestra, however, has several ties to Canada: flute and piccolo player Roma Duncan is from Nova Scotia, while violinist Joanne Opgenorth is a native of Edmonton, violinist Céline Leathead is from Montreal, and the Orchestra's creative partner for summer programming, Jon Kimura Parker, hails from Vancouver. In addition, cellist Arek Tesarczyk was principal cello of the Winnipeg Symphony for 11 years, while Principal Bass Kristen Bruya came to Minnesota from the Toronto Symphony.

The Orchestra's initial performance of **Ravel's *Piano Concerto in G major*** came on February 17, 1938, at Northrop Memorial Auditorium, with then-music director Dimitri Mitropoulos serving as both conductor and piano soloist. This performance came just six years after the work's world premiere. Only one other person has conducted this concerto with the Orchestra while also playing the solo part—Andrew Litton in both 2005 and 2014—while other soloists through the years have included Martha Argerich, Jean Casadesus, Lise de la Salle, Simone Dinnerstein, Alicia de Larrocha, Christopher O'Riley and Jean-Yves Thibaudet.

The Orchestra first performed **Bartók's *Concerto for Orchestra*** on November 4, 1949, at Northrop Memorial Auditorium, with Antal Dorati on the conductor's podium. This was also a fairly new work at the time the Orchestra added it to its repertoire—less than five years had elapsed since its premiere—and the concerto quickly became a calling card of the ensemble, as the Orchestra and Dorati performed it dozens of times on performance tours throughout the 1950s. More recently, the concerto was the centerpiece of an Inside the Classics concert in March 2017 hosted by Orchestra violist Sam Bergman and conducted by Sarah Hicks.