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**MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA**  
**OSMO VÄNSKÄ, CONDUCTOR**  
**INON BARNATAN, PIANO**

Thursday, January 25, 2018, 7:30pm  
Foellinger Great Hall

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# PROGRAM

**MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA**  
**OSMO VÄNSKÄ, CONDUCTOR**  
**INON BARNATAN, PIANO**

Jean Sibelius  
(1865-1957)

*En Saga, Opus 9*

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky  
(1840-1893)

*Concerto No. 1 in B-flat Minor for Piano and Orchestra, Op. 23*  
Allegro non troppo e molto maestoso  
Andantino semplice  
Allegro con fuoco  
  
Inon Barnatan, piano

*20-minute intermission*

Ludwig van Beethoven  
(1770-1827)

*Symphony No. 7 in A Major, Op. 92*  
Poco sostenuto, Vivace  
Allegretto  
Presto  
Allegro con brio

*This program is subject to change.*

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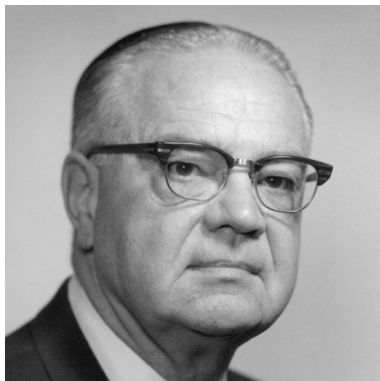
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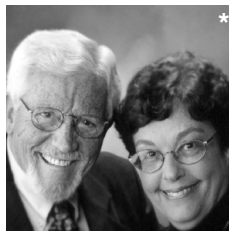


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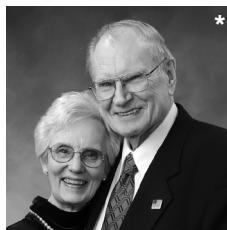
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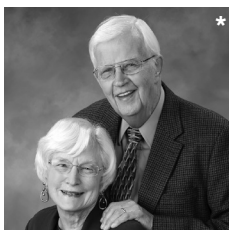
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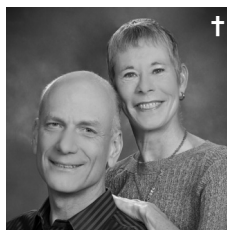
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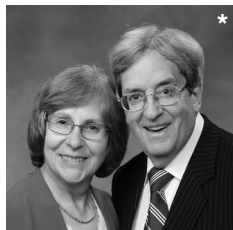
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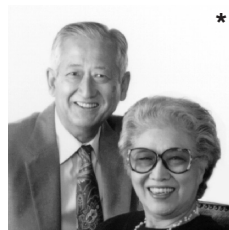
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# PROGRAM NOTES

## JEAN SIBELIUS

Born December 8, 1865, in Tavastehus, Finland  
Died September 20, 1957, in Järvenpää, Finland  
*En Saga*, Opus 9

Premiered: February 16, 1893

In his mid-20s Sibelius studied for a year in Berlin, and then for another year in Vienna. He had at first intended to be a violinist, but in Berlin he heard the Aino Symphony of his senior compatriot Robert Kajanus (1856-1933), which was all the impetus he needed for giving a higher priority to composing, and to turn his own creative effort toward the furtherance of Finnish nationalism. Aino is one of the heroines of the Finnish national epic, the *Kalevala*; Sibelius' wife was one of the numerous Finnish women named for her. Early in 1892, in Vienna, Sibelius completed the first of his own several works based on the *Kalevala*: a vast five-part symphony with solo singers and a male chorus depicting episodes in the life of the tragic hero Kullervo. Kajanus saw to it that the *Kullervo Symphony* was performed in Helsinki that April, and its success prompted him to ask Sibelius for a shorter piece that could be performed more frequently. Sibelius responded, at about the time of his wedding, in June of that year, with *En Saga*, in which he recycled material from an octet for winds and strings he had composed in Berlin.

The new piece was not a success when the composer conducted the premiere in Helsinki, on February 16, 1893, but nine years later, when Ferruccio Busoni invited him to present *En Saga* in Berlin, he subjected the score to a major revision, which made such a positive impression when he introduced it in Helsinki on November 2, 1902, that it immediately took its place in the general repertory. (Kajanus, for his part, eventually gave

up composing in order to devote himself to conducting Sibelius' works; in his last years he went to London to make the premiere recordings of several of them.)

It was not until four decades later still, when he had written the last of his works and the world had celebrated his 75th birthday, that Sibelius said anything at all about the extra-musical significance of this work. At that time (the early 1940s) he remarked, "*En Saga* is the expression of a state of mind. I had undergone a number of painful experiences at the time, and in no other work have I revealed myself so completely. It is for this reason that I find all literary explanations quite alien." Still later, according to his most distinguished biographer, Erik Tawaststjerna, Sibelius "answered an inquiry from abroad by saying that if one had to find a literary or folkloristic source for *En Saga* the atmosphere of the piece was far closer to the [Icelandic] *Eddas* than to the *Kalevala*."

### *elemental forces*

As Sibelius' early symphonies show traces of Tchaikovsky and Borodin, *En Saga* might be said to owe something to such Russian works as Balakirev's *Tamara* and Rimsky-Korsakov's *Skazka*. (The latter title, in fact, has a meaning similar to that of *En Saga*, but with less fearsome connotations: "A Tale," or "Legend," or in some cases "A Fairy Tale.") The freedom Sibelius gained by not attempting to tell a specific story or paint a specific picture, though, gives *En Saga* a universality and directness altogether beyond the scope of those charming and colorful works. This music may not actually make us "want to wrestle a polar bear," as the enthusiastic Sibelian Olin Downes suggested some 75 years ago, but it is



powerfully evocative in a more general sense, and it may touch us on deeper levels—may convey a sense of some primordial adventure—involving elemental forces rather than individuals, and both tragic and exhilarating in its fierce urgency.

The themes, strong and persistent, seem to grow directly out of one another, in the nature of metamorphoses. The rhythms are hypnotic, the darkish orchestral coloring (with a bass drum replacing, rather than augmenting, the timpani) as deftly achieved as anything from Rimsky-Korsakov, Strauss, or Ravel. The overall effect is one of striking originality, a style as unlikely to be successfully imitated or duplicated as it is to be mistaken for that of anyone but Sibelius himself.

Instrumentation: 2 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, bass drum, cymbals, triangle, and strings

*Program note by Richard Freed*

## **PETER ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY**

Born May 7, 1840, in Votkinsk, Russia  
Died November 6, 1893, in St. Petersburg, Russia  
*Piano Concerto No. 1 in B-flat Minor, Opus 23*

Premiered: October 25, 1875

Tchaikovsky drafted this most famous of piano concertos in November and December 1874, when he was a young professor at the Moscow Conservatory. Only modestly talented as a pianist and insecure about his handling of larger forms, Tchaikovsky sought the advice of Nikolai Rubinstein, head of the Conservatory and the man to whom he intended to dedicate the concerto. Rubinstein listened in silence as Tchaikovsky played the new work through, and then, as the composer later recounted:

“There burst from Rubinstein’s mouth a mighty torrent of words. He spoke quietly at first, then he waxed hot, and finally he resembled Zeus hurling thunderbolts. It seems that my concerto was utterly worthless, absolutely unplayable. Certain passages were so commonplace and awkward they could not be improved, and the piece as a whole was bad, trivial, vulgar. I had stolen this from somebody and that from somebody else, so that only two or three pages were good for anything and all the rest should be wiped out or radically rewritten.”

*a triumphant premiere*

Stung (and furious), Tchaikovsky refused to change a note, erased the dedication to Rubinstein, and instead dedicated the concerto to the German pianist-conductor Hans von Bülow, who had championed his music. Bülow promptly took the concerto on a tour of the United States, and it was in Boston on October 25, 1875, that Tchaikovsky’s First Piano Concerto was heard for the first time.

It was a huge success on that occasion, and Bülow played it repeatedly in this country to rhapsodic reviews. A critic in Boston, taking note of that success, described the concerto as an “extremely difficult, strange, wild, ultra-modern Russian Concerto,” but back in Russia the composer read the press clippings and was beside himself with happiness: “Think what healthy appetites these Americans must have! Each time Bülow was obliged to repeat the whole finale of my concerto! Nothing like that happens in our country.”

Rubinstein eventually saw the error of his initial condemnation and became one of the concerto’s great champions. (It should be noted, though, that in 1889—perhaps more aware of Rubinstein’s criticisms than he cared to admit—Tchaikovsky



did in fact take the concerto through a major revision, and it is in this form that we know it today).

*a famous, ephemeral opening*

*allegro non troppo e molto maestoso*. The concerto has one of the most dramatic beginnings in all the literature, ringing with horn fanfares and cannonades of huge piano chords, followed by one of Tchaikovsky's Great Tunes, in which that horn fanfare is transformed into a flowing melody for strings. This opening has become extremely famous, but this introductory section has many quirks. It is in the "wrong" key (D-flat major), and—however striking it may be—it never returns in any form: Tchaikovsky simply abandons all this tremendous material when he gets to the main section of the movement.

This "real" beginning, marked *Allegro con spirito*, is finally in the correct key of B-flat minor, and the piano's skittering main subject is reportedly based on a tune Tchaikovsky heard a blind beggar whistle at a fair in the Ukraine. The expected secondary material quickly appears—a chorale-like theme for winds and a surging, climbing figure for strings—though Tchaikovsky evades expectations by including multiple cadenzas for the soloist in this movement. The piano writing is of the greatest difficulty (much of it in great hammered octaves), and the movement drives to a dramatic close.

*andantino semplice*. The *Andantino semplice* is aptly named, for this truly is simple music in the best sense of that term: over pizzicato chords, solo flute sings the gentle main theme, an island of calm after the searing first movement. A scherzo-like central episode marked *Prestissimo* leads to the return of the opening material and a quiet close.

*allegro con fuoco*. The finale is also well named, for here is music full of fire. It is a rondo based on the piano's nervous, dancing main theme, and while calmer episodes break into this furious rush, the principal impression this music makes is of white-hot energy, and this "strange, wild, ultra-modern Russian Concerto" rushes to a knock-out close that is just as impressive to audiences today as it was to that first Boston audience in 1875.

Instrumentation: solo piano with orchestra comprising 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani and strings

*Program note by Eric Bromberger*

## **LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN**

Born December 16, 1770, in Bonn, Germany  
Died March 26, 1827, in Vienna, Austria  
*Symphony No. 7 in A Major, Opus 92*

Premiered: December 8, 1813

Beethoven turned 40 in December 1810, and things were going very well. True, his hearing had deteriorated to the point where he was virtually deaf, but he was still riding that white-hot explosion of creativity that has become known, for better or worse, as his "heroic" style.

*re-imagining music*

Over the decade-long span of that style, 1803 to 1813, Beethoven essentially re-imagined music and its possibilities. The works that crystallized the heroic style—the *Eroica* and the Fifth Symphony—unleashed a level of violence and darkness previously unknown in music and then triumphed over them. In these symphonies, music became a matter not of polite discourse but of conflict, struggle, and resolution.

In the fall of 1811, Beethoven began a new symphony, his Seventh, which would differ sharply from those two famous predecessors. Gone is the sense of cataclysmic struggle and hard-won victory. Instead, this music is infused from its first instant with a mood of pure celebration.

Such a spirit has inevitably produced interpretations as to what this symphony is “about”: Berlioz heard in it a peasants’ dance, Wagner called it “the apotheosis of the dance,” and more recently Maynard Solomon has suggested that the Seventh is the musical representation of a festival, a brief moment of pure spiritual liberation.

But it may be safest to leave the issue of meaning aside and instead listen to the Seventh simply as music. There had never been music like this before, nor has there been since: this symphony contains more energy than any other piece of music ever written. Much has been made (correctly) of Beethoven’s ability to transform small bits of theme into massive symphonic structures, but here he begins not so much with theme as with rhythm: tiny figures, almost scraps of rhythm. Gradually he releases the energy locked up in these small figures and from them creates one of the mightiest symphonies ever written.

#### *small ideas transformed*

*poco sostenuto–vivace.* The first movement opens with a slow introduction so long that it almost becomes a separate movement of its own. Tremendous chords punctuate the slow beginning, which gives way to a poised duet for oboes. The real effect of this long *Poco sostenuto*, however, is to coil the energy that will be unleashed in the true first movement, and Beethoven conveys this rhythmically: the meter of the introduction is a rock-solid (even square) 4/4, but the main body of the movement,

marked *Vivace*, transforms this into a light-footed 6/8. This *Vivace* begins in what seems a most unpromising manner, however, as woodwinds toot out a simple dotted 6/8 rhythm and the solo flute announces the first theme. This simple dotted rhythm saturates virtually every measure of the movement, as theme, as accompaniment, as motor rhythm, always hammering into our consciousness. At the climax, horns sail majestically to the close as the orchestra thunders out that rhythm one final time.

*allegretto.* The second movement, in A minor, is one of Beethoven’s most famous slow movements, but the debate continues as to whether it really is a slow movement. Beethoven could not decide whether to mark it *Andante*, a walking tempo, or *Allegretto*, a moderately fast pace. He finally decided on the latter, though the actual pulse is somewhere between those two. This movement too is built on a short rhythmic pattern, in this case the first five notes: long-short-short-long-long—and this pattern repeats here almost as obsessively as the pattern of the first movement. The opening sounds like a series of static chords—the theme itself occurs quietly inside those chords—and Beethoven simply repeats this theme, varying it as it proceeds. The central episode in A major moves gracefully along smoothly-flowing triplets before a little fugato on the opening rhythms builds to a great climax. The movement winds down on the woodwinds’ almost skeletal reprise of the fundamental rhythm.

*presto.* The scherzo explodes to life on a theme full of grace notes, powerful accents, flying staccatos and timpani explosions. This alternates with a trio section for winds reportedly based on an old pilgrims’ hymn, though no one, it seems, has been able to identify that hymn exactly. Beethoven offers a second repeat of the trio, then seems about to offer a third before five abrupt chords drive the movement to its close.

*allegro con brio*. These chords set the stage for the finale, again built on the near-obsessive treatment of a short rhythmic pattern, in this case the movement's opening four-note fanfare. This pattern punctuates the entire movement: it shapes the beginning of the main theme, and its stinging accents thrust the music forward continuously as this movement almost boils over with energy. The ending is remarkable: above growling cellos and basses (which rock along on a two-note ostinato for 28 measures), the opening theme drives to a climax that Beethoven marks *fff*, a dynamic marking he almost never used. This conclusion is virtually Bacchanalian in its wild power. No matter how many times we've heard it, it remains one of the most exciting moments in all of music. Beethoven led the first performance of the Seventh Symphony in Vienna on December 8, 1813—a huge success, with the audience demanding that the second movement be repeated.

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

*Program note by Eric Bromberger*

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# PROFILES

## **OSMO VÄNSKÄ, MUSIC DIRECTOR AND CONDUCTOR**

Finnish conductor Osmo Vänskä, the Minnesota Orchestra's tenth music director, is renowned internationally for his compelling interpretations of the standard, contemporary and Nordic repertoires. He has led the Orchestra on five major European tours—most recently on a four-country circuit in 2016—as well as a historic tour to Cuba in 2015 that was the first by an American orchestra since the thaw in Cuban-American diplomatic relations. He has also led the ensemble on numerous tours to communities across Minnesota. This month he is leading the Orchestra on a Midwest tour, performing on the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's Symphony Center Presents series and visiting the campuses of Indiana University and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign for residencies and concerts.

Vänskä's recording projects with the Minnesota Orchestra have met with great success, including a cycle of the complete Sibelius symphonies, the second album of which won the 2014 Grammy Award for Best Orchestral Performance. Their newest album, featuring Mahler's Fifth Symphony, has been nominated for a 2018 Grammy Award in the same category. Other recent releases include an album of in-concert recordings of

Sibelius' *Kullervo* and *Finlandia* and Kortekangas' *Migrations*; two albums of Beethoven piano concertos featuring Yevgeny Sudbin; a two-CD Tchaikovsky set featuring pianist Stephen Hough; *To Be Certain of the Dawn*, composed by Stephen Paulus with libretto by Michael Dennis Browne; and a particularly widely-praised Beethoven symphonies cycle, of which individual discs were nominated for a Grammy and a Classic FM Gramophone award.

As a guest conductor, Vänskä has received extraordinary praise for his work with many of the world's leading orchestras. In 2014 he became the Iceland Symphony Orchestra's principal guest conductor; since then he has been named the ensemble's honorary conductor. He is also conductor laureate of the Lahti Symphony Orchestra, which, during two decades as music director, he transformed into one of Finland's flagship orchestras, attracting worldwide attention for performances and for award-winning Sibelius recordings on the BIS label. He began his music career as a clarinetist, holding major posts with the Helsinki Philharmonic and the Turku Philharmonic.

For more information, visit [minnesotaorchestra.org](http://minnesotaorchestra.org).

## **INON BARNATAN, PIANO**

"One of the most admired pianists of his generation," according to *The New York Times*, Inon Barnatan is celebrated for his poetic sensibility, musical intelligence, and consummate artistry. He was a recipient of Lincoln Center's Martin E. Segal Award in 2015, recognizing "young artists of exceptional accomplishment," as well as the prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant in 2009. A regular performer with many of the world's most celebrated orchestras and conductors, he recently completed his third and final season as the inaugural Artist-in-Association of the New York Philharmonic, a position created by former Philharmonic Music Director Alan Gilbert, who calls him "the complete artist: a wonderful pianist, a probing intellect, passionately committed, and a capable contemporary-music pianist as well." Gilbert and Barnatan have since collaborated numerous times and are in the process of recording the complete cycle of Beethoven piano concertos with the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields, marking that orchestra's first complete recorded Beethoven concerto cycle.

A sought-after chamber musician, Barnatan was a member of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center's CMS Two program from 2006 to 2009, and is still a regular performer on CMS programs at home in New York and on tour. His passion for contemporary music has led him to commission and perform many works by living composers, including premieres of works by Thomas Adès, Sebastian Currier, Avner Dorman, Matthias Pintscher, Alasdair Nicolson, Andrew Norman and others.

Barnatan's critically acclaimed discography includes Avie and Bridge recordings of Schubert's solo piano works, as well as *Darknesse Visible*, which scored a coveted place on *The New York Times*' "Best of 2012" list. Barnatan's latest album release is a live recording of Messiaen's 90-minute masterpiece, *Des canyons aux étoiles (From the Canyons to the Stars)*, in which he played the exceptionally challenging solo piano part with an ensemble conducted by Alan Gilbert at the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival. In 2015 he released *Rachmaninov & Chopin: Cello Sonatas* on Decca Classics with Alisa Weilerstein, which earned rave reviews on both sides of the Atlantic.

For more information, visit [inonbarnatan.com](http://inonbarnatan.com).

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# MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA

The Grammy Award-winning Minnesota Orchestra, led by Music Director Osmo Vänskä, is recognized for distinguished performances around the world, award-winning recordings, radio broadcasts, educational engagement programs, and commitment to building the orchestral repertoire of the future.

Founded in 1903 as the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra, the ensemble played its first regional tour in 1907 and made its New York City debut in 1912 at Carnegie Hall, where it has performed regularly ever since. Outside the United States, the Orchestra has played concerts in Australia, Canada, Europe, the Far East, Latin America, and the Middle East. In 2015 Vänskä and the Orchestra performed two historic concerts and collaborated in educational projects in Havana, Cuba, becoming the first major American orchestra to perform in the island nation since the United States and Cuban governments announced steps to normalize relations between the two countries. Under Vänskä, the ensemble has undertaken five European tours, most recently a four-country tour in August 2016, as well as numerous tours to the broader Minnesota community.

The Orchestra's recordings have drawn acclaim since the early 1920s, when the ensemble became one of the first to be heard on disc.

Under Vänskä's leadership, the Orchestra has undertaken several acclaimed recording projects, most notably its highly-praised cycles of the Beethoven and Sibelius symphonies. Last season BIS Records released the ensemble's two newest albums, one including Sibelius' *Kullervo* and Kortekangas' *Migrations* and the other featuring Mahler's Fifth Symphony, the Grammy-nominated first album in a new series of Mahler recordings.

The Orchestra's season encompasses nearly 175 programs annually, held primarily at Orchestra Hall in downtown Minneapolis and heard live by 300,000 individuals. The Orchestra connects with more than 85,000 music lovers annually through family concerts and educational programs including Young People's Concerts. Through its innovative Common Chords program of week-long residency festivals, the Orchestra has been welcomed in recent seasons to the Minnesota cities of Grand Rapids, Willmar, Hibbing, Bemidji, and Detroit Lakes. The Orchestra has commissioned and/or premiered more than 300 compositions and has won 20 awards for its adventurous programming from the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP).

For more information, visit [minnesotaorchestra.org](http://minnesotaorchestra.org).

## **2017-18 SEASON**

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Star Tribune Chair  
Kari Sundström  
William C. and Corinne J. Dietrich Chair

## **BASS TROMBONE**

Andrew Chappell

## **TUBA**

Steven Campbell, principal

Robert Machray Ward Chair

Jason Tanksley

Rosemary and David Good Fellow

## **TIMPANI**

Jason Arkis, acting principal

Dimitri Mitropoulos Chair

Kevin Watkins, acting associate principal

## **PERCUSSION**

Brian Mount, principal

Friends of the Minnesota Orchestra Chair

Kevin Watkins, acting associate principal

Opus Chair

## **HARP**

Kathy Kienzle, principal

Bertha Boynton Bean Chair

## **PIANO, HARPSICHORD, AND CELESTA**

Open, principal

Markell C. Brooks Chair

## **LIBRARIANS**

Maureen Conroy, principal

Eric Sjostrom, associate principal

Valerie Little, assistant principal

## **PERSONNEL MANAGER**

Kris Arkis

## **ASSISTANT PERSONNEL MANAGER**

Janelle Lanz

## **TECHNICAL DIRECTOR**

Joel Mooney

## **STAGE MANAGERS**

Don Hughes

Matthew Winiecki

## **LIGHTING TECHNICIAN**

Michael Abramson

## **SOUND TECHNICIAN**

Jay Perlman

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+ *Leave of Absence*

\* *Replacement*

*Many string players participate in a voluntary system of revolving seating. Section string players are listed in alphabetical order.*