

# Minnesota Orchestra

Courtney Lewis, conductor

Kirill Gerstein, piano

Thursday, November 6, 2014, 11 am | Orchestra Hall  
 Friday, November 7, 2014, 8 pm | Orchestra Hall  
 Saturday, November 8, 2014, 8 pm | Orchestra Hall

**Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky**      Selections from *The Snow Maiden*      ca. 22'

Introduction  
 Melodrama No. 1  
 Entr'acte  
 Appearance of the Wood Devil and Shadow of the Snow Maiden  
 Melodrama No. 2  
 Entr'acte  
 March of Tsar Berendey  
 Dance of the Tumblers

**Dmitri Shostakovich**      Concerto No. 2 in F major for Piano and Orchestra, Opus 102      ca. 17'

Allegro  
 Andante  
 Allegro  
*Kirill Gerstein, piano*

I N T E R M I S S I O N      ca. 20'

**Sergei Prokofiev**      Concerto No. 1 in D-flat major for Piano and Orchestra, Opus 10      ca. 16'

Allegro brioso  
 Andante assai  
 Allegro scherzando  
 (The movements are played without pause.)  
*Kirill Gerstein, piano*

**Igor Stravinsky**      Divertimento: Symphonic Suite from *The Fairy's Kiss*      ca. 23'

Sinfonia  
 Dances suisses  
 Scherzo  
 Pas de deux

## music up close

Concert Preview with Phillip Gainsley  
 Thursday, November 6, 10:15 am, Auditorium  
 Friday, November 7, 7:15 pm, Target Atrium  
 Saturday, November 8, 7:15 pm, Target Atrium

Minnesota Orchestra concerts are broadcast live on Friday evenings on stations of [Minnesota Public Radio](#), including KSJN 99.5 FM in the Twin Cities.





**Courtney Lewis**, conductor

Belfast native Courtney Lewis, who this past summer concluded a four-year tenure as the Minnesota Orchestra’s associate conductor, took up two major appointments this fall—music director of the Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra and assistant conductor of the New York Philharmonic.

**Minnesota Orchestra:** During his time in Minnesota, Lewis led more than 160 performances on a variety of the Orchestra’s series, from Young People’s Concerts and classical subscription concerts to Common Chords and tour programs around the state.

**Recent, upcoming:** In 2011 he debuted with the Los Angeles Philharmonic while serving as a Dudamel Fellow. His current

engagements include debuts with the Vancouver Symphony, Lausanne Chamber Orchestra, Edmonton Symphony, Jacksonville Symphony, Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony and Memphis Symphony, as well as returns to the Alabama Symphony and RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland.

**Of interest:** Lewis, once a student of music composition and clarinet at the University of Cambridge, founded and was director of the Boston-based Discovery Ensemble.

**More:** [opus3artists.com](http://opus3artists.com).



**Kirill Gerstein**, piano

Russian-born American pianist Kirill Gerstein, now welcomed for his

Minnesota Orchestra debut, has rapidly ascended into classical music’s highest ranks since earning one of the top prizes for pianists, the Gilmore Artist Award, becoming only the sixth pianist to be so honored.

**Recent, upcoming:** During the current season he appears with such prestigious ensembles as the Boston Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, Vienna Philharmonic, London Philharmonia, BBC Symphony Orchestra, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra and São Paulo Symphony Orchestra. In addition, he appears in recital on Carnegie Hall’s Keyboard Virtuosos series.

**Contemporary music:** Gerstein is active in commissioning new music by such composers as Oliver Knussen, Chick Corea, Brad Mehldau, Timothy Andres and Alexander Goehr.

**Discography:** His recordings include a disc of recital works that was named one of the 10 best recordings of 2010 by *The New York Times*. Newly released is an album of Mussorgsky and Schumann works.

**More:** [imgartists.com](http://imgartists.com), [kirillgerstein.com](http://kirillgerstein.com).

one-minute notes

**Tchaikovsky: Selections from *The Snow Maiden***

Lilting folk melodies—including a “Tumblers’ Dance”—are at the heart of Tchaikovsky’s incidental music for a play based on a Russian fairy tale, music the composer felt was “imbued with the joys of spring.”

**Shostakovich: Piano Concerto No. 2**

Writing for his 18-year-old son Maxim, Dmitri Shostakovich produced a high-spirited concerto that cleverly incorporates elements of piano students’ practice sessions, from scales and arpeggios to classic five-finger exercises.

**Prokofiev: Piano Concerto No. 1**

Notable features of this concerto include a grandly soaring theme for piano and orchestra in unison and, in the final movement, a thrilling display of energy and wit as piano and orchestra seem pitted against each other. Prokofiev, himself a sensational pianist, performed this exhilarating work as his final exam at the Moscow Conservatory.

**Stravinsky: Divertimento: Symphonic Suite from *The Fairy’s Kiss***

Stravinsky’s fondness for Tchaikovsky shines through in his fairy tale-based ballet: the younger composer interwove bits of the elder’s piano and vocal works with distinctive passages of his own, yielding lyrical and tender music.





## Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky

**Born:** May 7, 1840, Votkinsk, district of Viatka, Russia

**Died:** November 6, 1893, St. Petersburg

### Selections from *The Snow Maiden*

In 1873, Moscow's Maly Theater closed for renovations. Operations were moved to the neighboring Bolshoi Theater, which invited one of Russia's leading dramatists, Alexander Ostrovsky (1823-1886), to write a play that would take advantage of the Bolshoi's music and dance departments as well. Tchaikovsky, then 33, was asked to provide incidental music for the production. Although he was employed at the Conservatory teaching 27 hours a week, he took on the assignment and completed some 80 minutes of music for *The Snow Maiden*—19 solo vocal, choral and orchestral pieces—in just three weeks, dashing off numbers as Ostrovsky turned out pages of text. In fact, Tchaikovsky completed his part of the arrangement even before Ostrovsky finished his play. The first performance was given on May 23, 1873.

Tchaikovsky intended to return to the score and make an opera out of it at some vague point, but Rimsky-Korsakov got there first, in 1882. Tchaikovsky was devastated, and such was the success of Rimsky-Korsakov's opera that Tchaikovsky never did create an opera from this material. He did, however, recycle some of its music into another set of incidental music for *Hamlet* in 1891. (*The Snow Maiden*, incidentally, was not the first Ostrovsky play that brought forth music from Tchaikovsky; in 1864, he had written an overture for *The Storm*. As with *The Snow Maiden* later on, Tchaikovsky intended to expand it into an opera, but again someone else got there first, one Vladimir Kashperov, in 1867.)

Both Tchaikovsky and Rimsky-Korsakov based their music on the same Russian fairy tale, both incorporated folk melodies, and each wrote a "Tumblers' Dance" that became the hit of the score. In this tale, we find elements of Hans Christian Andersen's *Little Mermaid* and of Puccini's *Turandot*. The maiden (Snegurochka) is the offspring of Winter (or Frost) and Spring. She appears to be human, but she has a heart of ice. If this were ever to melt, she would cease to exist. This means she can never fall in love, nor bask in the rays of the sun. Like the Little Mermaid, the

*Snow Maiden* longs for a truly human life, and her wish is eventually granted—with predictable results.

Tchaikovsky wrote to his patroness Nadezhda von Meck in 1879 that *The Snow Maiden* was one of his favorite compositions, noting also that "spring is a wonderful time; I was in good spirits, as I always am at the approach of summer and three months of freedom. I think this music is imbued with the joys of spring that I was experiencing at the time."

**Instrumentation:** 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, triangle, snare drum, bass drum, tambourine, cymbals, harp and strings



## Dmitri Shostakovich

**Born:** September 25, 1906, St. Petersburg

**Died:** August 9, 1975, Moscow

### Concerto No. 2 in F major for Piano and Orchestra, Opus 102

Shostakovich wrote this light-hearted, carefree work in early 1957 for his son Maxim, now a renowned conductor and pianist, but then just 18 and a student at the Moscow Conservatory. Maxim performed the solo part in the world premiere on the occasion of his 19th birthday, on May 10. Years later, history repeated itself when Maxim's own son in turn, Dmitri, Jr., filled the same role in a recording by I Musici de Montréal on the Chandos label, now with Maxim on the podium.

The concerto fairly bubbles over with youthful high spirits. Though highly extrovert and superficially virtuosic much of the time, it is not particularly difficult in a technical sense. Shostakovich was careful to write music playable by a young performer. The finale even contains a joke in the form of a passage from the famous (or infamous!) Hanon five-finger exercise book known to nearly every young pianist. Elsewhere are suggestions of other routines aspiring pianists have to practice: scales, arpeggios, chords, repeated notes, octaves, etc., all cleverly disguised in Shostakovich's concerto as "real" music.

The opening passage for the soloist is a comically rigid line so simple that a young child could play it. This is followed

by more difficult writing, a zippy tune that suggests to some listeners a child's toy shop and to others the American ditty "What Shall We Do with the Drunken Soldier?" The two styles alternate and even combine at times throughout the movement, always with prankish good humor and ebullient effect. The slow movement simmers down for a sweetly sentimental interlude. Without pause comes the vivacious finale, whose most notable feature is its second theme set to a lopsided rhythmic pattern in 7/8 meter.

**Instrumentation:** solo piano with orchestra comprising 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, timpani, tenor drum and strings



### Sergei Prokofiev

**Born:** April 23, 1891, Sontzovka, near Ekaterinoslav, Ukraine

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

### Concerto No. 1 in D-flat major for Piano and Orchestra, Opus 10

Sergei Prokofiev showed his talents early. He was composing before he was six, he had produced an opera by 12, and for his application to the St. Petersburg Conservatory, at 13, he submitted four operas, two sonatas, a symphony and several piano works. During his teens he studied with such luminaries as Glière, Rimsky-Korsakov, Liadov and Tcherepnin. As a pianist he was no less sensational. He appeared as soloist in his own First Piano Concerto when he was 21 (July 25, 1912, in Moscow) and less than two years later played the same work, in place of the traditional classical concerto, for his final examination at the St. Petersburg Conservatory before a panel of 20 judges, each of whom had the published score in his hands. Prokofiev considered it his first "more-or-less mature composition," and it became his first published work.

#### the music

The concerto is a cross between a single-movement work in several sections and a compressed concerto, its three movements played without pause. A grandly soaring theme for piano and orchestra in unison opens the work, returns at the concerto's midpoint and again at the very end, providing a set of structural pillars. The tremendously exuberant opening material is followed by a hell-for-

leather passage for the soloist before the music finally settles down to a more temperate and lighthearted theme, also initiated by the soloist, in the concerto's home key of D-flat major. A contrasting idea, somewhat introspective and dour, is presented by the darker-colored instruments of the orchestra. The *Andante assai* passage maintains the position of the traditional slow movement, but is rather too short to fulfill this role. It is more of an episode, consisting of a single, long-breathed lyrical idea shared by orchestra and soloist in turn. The exhilarating *Allegro scherzando* pits piano against orchestra in a thrilling display of athletic prowess, motoric energy and witty interplay of ideas. For the cadenza, the piano re-engages the principal theme of the opening movement, and the concerto comes to a resplendent close with the grandly soaring subject in D-flat major with which it opened.

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



### Igor Stravinsky

**Born:** June 17, 1882, Oranienbaum, near St. Petersburg

**Died:** April 6, 1971, New York City

### Divertimento: Symphonic Suite from *The Fairy's Kiss*

It is entirely appropriate that this Russian program open with Tchaikovsky and close with Stravinsky, for since childhood, Stravinsky had been a fond admirer of Tchaikovsky's music. So when the dancer Ida Rubinstein approached him in 1927 for a ballet for her new company, he responded eagerly to the suggestion that he compose something inspired by the music of his compatriot. The fee offered was \$7,500, a princely sum in those days. (Rubinstein in the following year also commissioned Ravel's *Boléro* and in 1933 Stravinsky's *Perséphone*.) Both the subject and the scenario were for Stravinsky to choose, and for these he went to the world of fairy tales, just as Tchaikovsky had for his *Snow Maiden* music.

For his musical source material, Stravinsky decided upon an assemblage of Tchaikovsky's piano and vocal pieces and wove them together with a deft compositional hand.



Stravinsky incorporated ideas from no fewer than 11 piano pieces and five songs into his 45-minute ballet *Le Baiser de la fée* (The Fairy's Kiss). Eric Walter White, in his monograph on the composer, states that "when [Stravinsky] came to assemble his pickings, he found his appetite as a composer so quickened by contact with Tchaikovsky's individual genius that he was able to continue quite fluently in the same vein where Tchaikovsky had left off....The result was that although the major part of the score of *The Fairy's Kiss* consists of authentic borrowings from Tchaikovsky, there are also numerous passages and fragments of his own invention." White later describes the complete assimilation of one composer by another as follows: "The melos may remind one of Tchaikovsky; but the total music is Stravinsky's."

Continuing this train of thought, Lawrence Morton has imaginatively written that where Tchaikovsky's characteristic patterns appear, "instead of being Tchaikovsky's inevitable squares, they are Stravinsky's rhomboids, scalenes, trapeziums or trapezoids—shapes somehow stretched or shrunken into asymmetry and arranged in unpredictable combinations. Tchaikovsky's faults—his banalities and vulgarities and routine procedures—are composed *out* of the music, and Stravinsky's virtues are composed *into* it."

For the scenario, Stravinsky turned to another great artistic figure of the 19th century, Hans Christian Andersen, with whom Tchaikovsky, in Stravinsky's words, "had so much in common ... a great poet with a gentle, sensitive soul whose imaginative mind was wonderfully akin to that of the musician." From Andersen, Stravinsky chose as his theme the story of "The Ice Maiden."

Six years after the world premiere in Paris (November 27, 1928), the composer created a shortened version of *The Fairy's Kiss* for concert performance only (not to be danced). Using about two-thirds of the original material, he assembled the four-movement Divertimento.

### a fairy from an icy kingdom

In the ballet, the *Sinfonia* opens with music suggestive of a lullaby, as a woman carries a child in her arms through the windswept snow. The Snow Fairy's attendants kidnap the child, bringing it to the Fairy. To the lullaby music (solo flute), she imprints a kiss on the child's forehead. The child is abandoned, then found and rescued by passing peasants.

Without a break in the music, the scene shifts to a village fair 20 years later. The child, now grown, is seen dancing with his betrothed in *Danses suisses* (Swiss dances). Stravinsky cleverly evokes sounds of a village band, which provides various dance steps in duple and triple meter.

The *Scherzo* takes place by the mill. The young man watches his betrothed and her friends preparing for the wedding. The girls dance gaily and leave. The *Pas de deux* for the two lovers consists of three sections: a tenderly lyrical *Adagio* with ornate arabesques in the woodwinds, a solo variation for the fiancée danced to a lightly tripping melody for two flutes, and a vigorous dance in which the lovers are joined again by the crowd of peasant girls.

This concludes the Divertimento, but in the complete ballet, the Fairy reappears in the guise of the man's fiancée and tricks him into showing her his love. With the man now firmly in her power, the Fairy bears him off to her icy kingdom, "a land beyond time and place" as Stravinsky calls it, from where he will never depart and where she kisses him once again, this time on the sole of his foot.

In the preface to the score, Stravinsky wrote: "I dedicate this ballet to the memory of Peter Tchaikovsky by relating the Fairy to his Muse, and in this way the ballet becomes an allegory, the Muse having similarly branded Tchaikovsky with her fatal kiss, whose mysterious imprint made itself felt in all this great artist's work."

**Instrumentation:** 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, English horn, 3 clarinets (1 doubling bass clarinet), bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, harp and strings

Program notes by **Robert Markow**.