Minnesota Orchestra
Juraj Valčuha, conductor
Kirill Gerstein, piano

Thursday, March 1, 2018, 11 am   Orchestra Hall
Friday, March 2, 2018, 8 pm   Orchestra Hall
Saturday, March 3, 2018, 8 pm   Orchestra Hall

Anatol Lyadov  
The Enchanted Lake, Opus 62  
cia 7'

Sergei Rachmaninoff  
Concerto No. 3 in D minor for Piano and Orchestra, Opus 30  
cia 44'
  Allegro ma non tanto
  Intermezzo: Adagio
  Finale: Alla breve
  [There is no pause before the final movement.]

Kirill Gerstein, piano

INTERMISSION  
cia 20'

Ottorino Respighi  
The Fountains of Rome  
cia 15'
  The Fountain of Valle Giulia at Dawn
  The Triton Fountain in the Morning
  The Fountain of Trevi at Mid-day
  The Villa Medici Fountain at Sunset

Claude Debussy  
La Mer  
cia 23'
  From Dawn to Noon on the Sea
  Play of the Waves
  Dialogues of Wind and Sea

Debussy’s La Mer  
mar 1, 2, 3

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.
Artists

Kirill Gerstein, piano

Kirill Gerstein, now appearing with the Minnesota Orchestra for the third consecutive season, was appointed music director of the Teatro di San Carlo in Naples, Italy, in 2016, and is first guest conductor of the Konzerthaus Orchester Berlin. From 2009 to 2016 he was the chief conductor of the RAI National Symphony Orchestra in Turin, Italy, with which he toured to music centers including the Vienna Musikverein and Berlin’s Philharmonie. He has conducted the Berlin Philharmonic, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, Dresden Staatskapelle, Vienna Symphony, Munich Philharmonic, Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra, Orchestre National de France, Orchestre de Paris and Philharmonia of London, as well as major American orchestras from coast to coast. Last season, he led the Chicago Symphony and Cleveland Orchestra and made return appearances with the New York Philharmonic and the San Francisco, Pittsburgh and Montreal symphonies. This season he will also conduct in Munich, London, Berlin, San Francisco and Cincinnati. More: kirillgerstein.com.

Juraj Valčuha, conductor

Juraj Valčuha, now appearing with the Minnesota Orchestra for the third consecutive season, was appointed music director of the Teatro di San Carlo in Naples, Italy, in 2016, and is first guest conductor of the Konzerthaus Orchester Berlin. From 2009 to 2016 he was the chief conductor of the RAI National Symphony Orchestra in Turin, Italy, with which he toured to music centers including the Vienna Musikverein and Berlin’s Philharmonie. He has conducted the Berlin Philharmonic, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, Dresden Staatskapelle, Vienna Symphony, Munich Philharmonic, Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra, Orchestre National de France, Orchestre de Paris and Philharmonia of London, as well as major American orchestras from coast to coast. Last season, he led the Chicago Symphony and Cleveland Orchestra and made return appearances with the New York Philharmonic and the San Francisco, Pittsburgh and Montreal symphonies. This season he will also conduct in Munich, London, Berlin, San Francisco and Cincinnati. More: jurajvalcuha.com.

one-minute notes

Lyadov: The Enchanted Lake
Lyadov loved writing about “the realm of the non-existing”—here, a magical lake, misty, moonlit and shimmering.

Rachmaninoff: Piano Concerto No. 3
This concerto balances moments of song-like simplicity and thunderous virtuosity. The opening Allegro is subtle and soulful, while the latter movements offer catchy themes, ingenious variations and a feather-light waltz.

Respighi: The Fountains of Rome
Respighi desired to make the fountains of Rome sing in his four-movement symphonic poem that ranges from plaintive and gentle to triumphant and bold. Each movement celebrates a particular fountain and its own unique environment, and each at a different moment of day from dawn to dusk.

Debussy: La Mer
Debussy’s classic oceanic portrait recreates the feeling of a visit to the sea. Two slower movements surround a scherzo as a kaleidoscopic stream of musical fragments eventually builds to a stormy, dissonant close.
October 1906 Rachmaninoff moved from Moscow to Dresden with his wife and their daughter, Irina, aiming to take himself out of circulation. He was a busy pianist and conductor—he had just concluded two years as principal conductor at the Bolshoi Opera—and he longed for time just to write. But as offers to play and conduct kept coming in, he decided to accept an invitation to visit the United States. It was for this tour that he wrote his Third Piano Concerto, and on November 28, 1909, he introduced it with Walter Damrosch and the New York Symphony. Soon after he played it again, and to his much greater satisfaction, with the New York Philharmonic under Gustav Mahler, another conductor struggling to find time to compose.

“give me a fairy tale…”

As a composer, Lyadov was essentially a miniaturist, best remembered for his short piano pieces like The Musical Snuffbox. Perhaps understandably, the larger forms proved difficult for him: he wrote no operas, no symphonies, no concertos, no chamber music—his output consists exclusively of a few brief orchestral works, choral music, songs and piano pieces. Lyadov, who was very interested in Russian folk music, was happiest when he could enter the magical dream-world of folk legend. He once said: “My ideal is to find the unearthly in art. Art is the realm of the non-existing. Art is a figment, a fairy tale, a phantom. Give me a fairy tale, a dragon, a water sprite, a wood demon—give me something that is unreal, and I am happy.”

In about 1905, Rimsky-Korsakov, trying to get Lyadov to produce something worthy of his talents, suggested that he write an opera on folk legends. Lyadov liked the idea and made some sketches. And though he abandoned the project, those sketches turned into two brief orchestral pieces that have become his most popular works: both The Enchanted Lake and Kikimora spring from that “realm of the non-existing” where Lyadov was happiest.

The Enchanted Lake, first performed in 1909, is a mood-piece, mutated and evocative rather than crowded with incident or drama—and one can understand why Diaghilev thought Lyadov might have been right for The Firebird. The shimmering sounds of the opening set exactly the right mood for Lyadov’s portrait of the magical lake, and throughout this brief piece he shifts colors deftly, so that his lake is by turns misty, moonlit and murmuring as the music makes its way to the subdued close.

Instrumentation: 3 flutes, 2 oboes, 3 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, timpani, bass drum, harp, celesta and strings

Program note by Eric Bromberger.
singing.” What he found invites, for precision and delicacy, comparison with the workmanship in Mozart’s concertos. The accompaniment does indeed let the singing through, but even while exquisitely tactful in its recessiveness, it is absolutely specific—a real and characterful invention, the fragmentary utterances of the violins now anticipating, now echoing the pianist’s song, the woodwinds sometimes and with utmost gentleness reinforcing the bass or joining the piano in a few notes of its melody. The further progress of the movement abounds in felicities and ingenuities, sharply imagined and elegantly executed.

**intermezzo: adagio.** “Intermezzo” is a curiously shy designation for a movement as expansive as this, though we shall discover that it is in fact all upbeat to a still more expansive *Finale*. It is a series of variations, broken up by a feather-light waltz. The clarinet-and-bassoon melody of the waltz is close cousin to the concerto’s principal theme, and the piano’s dizzying figuration, too, is made of diminutions of the same material.

**finale: alla breve.** When the *Intermezzo* yields to the explosive start of the *Finale*, we again find ourselves caught up in a torrent of virtuosity and invention. Rachmaninoff gives us the surprise of a series of variations on what pretends to be a new idea but is in fact an amalgam of the first movement’s second theme and the beginning of the finale. His evocations of earlier material are imaginative and structural achievements on a level far above the naive quotation-mongering of, say, César Franck or even Dvořák.

Rachmaninoff was anxious to put his best foot forward in America. His Second Concerto had already been played in New York, and Rachmaninoff wanted his new work to convey a clear sense of his growing powers as composer and pianist. It does have features in common with the Second: the sparkling, dense, yet always lucid piano style, a certain melancholy to the song, an extroverted rhetorical stance, the apotheosized ending, even the final YUM-pa-ta-TUM cadential formula that is as good as a signature. But the differences are even more important, and they are essentially matters of ambition and scope. The procedures that hold this work together are far beyond the capabilities of the composer of the Second Concerto eight years earlier.

Also, much more is asked of the pianist. The Third Concerto makes immense demands on stamina, the orchestral passages that frame the *Intermezzo* being the soloist’s only moments of respite. Rachmaninoff sees the soloist not merely as someone who can sing soulfully and thunder imposingly, but as an alert, flexible, responsive musician who knows how to listen, blend and accompany. And even in this non-prima-donna role the challenge is greater here than in the Second Concerto.

**Instrumentation:** solo piano with orchestra comprising 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, suspended cymbal and strings

*Program note excerpted from the late Michael Steinberg’s The Concerto: A Listener’s Guide (Oxford University Press, 1998), used with permission.*

**Otto Respighi**

**Born:** July 9, 1879, Bologna, Italy  
**Died:** April 18, 1936, Rome, Italy

**The Fountains of Rome**

**Premiered:** March 11, 1917

Ottorino Respighi’s three sets of Roman tone poems—*The Fountains of Rome* (1916), *The Pines of Rome* (1924) and *Roman Festivals* (1928)—are among the most popular of all orchestral works, but their early success was precarious, and the discouraged composer almost abandoned the concept. In 1916 Respighi, then a professor of composition at the Conservatory of St. Cecilia in Rome, composed a suite for orchestra inspired by four of Rome’s striking fountains. The composer had high hopes for this music, but with an apparently indifferent performance, it fell flat at its premiere in March 1917.

When Arturo Toscanini saw the score he asked to perform it at a concert in Rome to benefit Italian artists wounded in World War I. Respighi was too demoralized to attend, and predictably, Toscanini’s performance in February 1918 was so incandescent that it swept the audience away. The firm of Ricordi published the score, and *The Fountains of Rome* quickly established an international reputation for its surprised composer.

**expressing "sentiments and visions"**

The influences on the Roman trilogy have often been noted. Respighi’s studies with Rimsky-Korsakov show up in the sumptuous sound of the orchestra, while Richard Strauss’ tone poems provide the model for this sort of orchestral pictorialism. Yet Respighi transcends those influences: he writes for a larger, more varied orchestra than Rimsky-Korsakov ever used, and his musical aims are different from those of Strauss. While Strauss used the orchestra to tell a story, Respighi is not so much interested in musical narrative as he is in creating atmosphere.
And Respighi was a master at evoking atmosphere. He made his intentions clear in a preface to the score: “In this symphonic poem the composer has endeavored to give expression to the sentiments and visions suggested to him by four of Rome’s fountains, contemplated at the hour in which their character is most in harmony with the surrounding landscape, or in which their beauty appears most impressive to the observer.”

**Synopses from the Composer**

In the score, Respighi also provided brief synopses of the four movements of *The Fountains of Rome*, which are played without pause.

**The Fountain of Valle Giulia at dawn.** The first part of the poem, inspired by the Fountain of Valle Giulia, depicts a pastoral landscape; droves of cattle pass and disappear in the fresh, damp mists of a Roman dawn.

**The Triton Fountain in the morning.** A sudden loud and insistent blast of horns above the trills of the whole orchestra introduces the second part, the Triton Fountain. It is like a joyous call, summoning troops of naiads and tritons, who come running up, pursuing each other and mingling in a frenzied dance between the jets of water.

**The Fountain of Trevi at mid-day.** Next there appears a solemn theme, borne on the undulations of the orchestra. It is the Fountain of Trevi at mid-day. The solemn theme, passing from the woodwinds to the brass instruments, assumes a triumphal character. Trumpets peal; across the radiant surface of the water there passes Neptune’s chariot, drawn by seahorses and followed by a train of sirens and tritons. The procession then vanishes, while faint trumpet blasts resound in the distance.

**The Villa Medici Fountain at sunset.** The fourth part, the Villa Medici Fountain, is announced by a sad theme, which rises above a subdued warbling. It is the nostalgic hour of sunset. The air is full of the sound of tolling bells, birds twittering, leaves rustling. Then all dies peacefully into the silence of the night.

**Instrumentation:** 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, cymbals, suspended cymbal, triangle, glockenspiel, chimes, 2 harps, piano, celesta, organ and strings

Program note by Eric Bromberger.

In the summer of 1903, the 41-year-old Debussy took a cottage in the French wine country, where he set to work on a new orchestral piece inspired by his feelings about the sea. To André Messager he wrote, “I expect you will say that the hills of Burgundy aren’t washed by the sea and that what I’m doing is like painting a landscape in a studio, but my memories are endless and are in my opinion worth more than the real thing, which tends to pull down one’s ideas too much.”

**The Sea as a Concept**

Had Richard Strauss written this work, he would have made us hear the thump of waves along the shoreline, the cries of wheeling sea-birds, the hiss of foam across the sand. Debussy’s aims were far different: he wanted this music to give us the feeling of being in the ocean’s presence, to feel the idea, particularly his own idea.

Japanese painter Hokusai’s *The Great Wave off Kanagawa*, a version of which appeared on the original score cover of Debussy’s *La Mer*.
of the ocean. Thus *La Mer* sets out not to make us see whitecaps—but to awaken in us a sense of the sea’s elemental power and beauty.

*La Mer* consists of two moderately paced movements surrounding a scherzo, created from seeming fragments of musical materials. We discover hints of themes, rhythmic shapes and flashes of color that reappear throughout the work, like kaleidoscopic bits in an evolving mosaic of color and rhythm.

*from dawn to noon on the sea*. The work begins with a murmur, quiet yet strong. Out of darkness, glints of color and motion emerge, and solo trumpet and English horn share a fragmentary tune that will also return in the final movement. As the morning brightens, the music becomes more animated, and a wealth of ideas follows: swirling rhythms, a noble horn chorale, a dancing figure for the cello section. At the movement’s close, the horn chorale builds to an unexpectedly powerful climax. Out of this splendid sound, a solitary brass chord winds the music into silence.

*play of the waves*. Opening with shimmering swirls of color, the second movement is brilliant, dancing and surging throughout—it has a sense of fun and play, as a scherzo should. One moment it can be sparkling and light, the next it will surge up darkly. In the delicate close, solo instruments seem to evaporate into the shining mist.

*dialogue of wind and sea*. The mood changes sharply at the beginning of the final movement, which Debussy specifies should sound “animated and tumultuous.” The ominous growl of lower strings prefaces a restatement of the trumpet tune from the very beginning, and soon the horn chorale returns as well. Woodwinds sing gently and wistfully before the music builds to a huge explosion. Moments later their tune returns in a touch of pure instrumental magic: against rippling harps and the violins’ high harmonics, solo flute brings back this melody with the greatest delicacy. The effect is extraordinary—suddenly we feel a sense of enormous space and calm. Yet within seconds this same shape roars out with all the power of the full orchestra. Earlier themes are recalled and whipped into the vortex as the music hurtles to a tremendous climax, with dissonant brass shrieking out the final chord.

Debussy may be popularly identified as the composer of “impressionistic” moods, full of muted color and subtle understatement. The conclusion of *La Mer*, however, is anything but the music of water lilies: it is driven by a force beyond human imagination. The normally understated Debussy makes us feel that wild strength in the most violent ending he ever wrote.

**Instrumentation:** 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, 3 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 2 cornets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, tam-tam, triangle, glockenspiel, 2 harps and strings

*Program note by Eric Bromberger.*

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The Minnesota Orchestra first performed Lyadov’s *The Enchanted Lake* on January 14, 1912, in the Minneapolis Auditorium, with the Orchestra’s founding Music Director Emil Oberhoffer conducting. This performance came less than three years after the work’s premiere in Russia, and less than two years after the premiere of Stravinsky’s revolutionary ballet score *The Firebird*—a commission which had originally been offered to Lyadov.

Minnesota Orchestra audiences first heard Rachmaninoff’s *Third Piano Concerto* on March 10, 1933, at Northrop Memorial Auditorium, with Eugene Ormandy conducting and Vladimir Horowitz as soloist. Other pianists who have performed the work with the Orchestra include Van Cliburn, Garrick Ohlsson, Lang Lang and, in this decade, Jon Kimura Parker, Natasha Paremski and Simon Trpčeski.

The Orchestra added Respighi’s *The Fountains of Rome* to its repertoire on October 14, 1921, at the Minneapolis Auditorium under the baton of Emil Oberhoffer. This was the first concert in the last season of Oberhoffer’s 19-year tenure as music director.

The Orchestra gave its initial performance of Debussy’s *La Mer* on December 16, 1921, again at the Minneapolis Auditorium with Oberhoffer conducting. By coincidence, this performance occurred on the same day as the death of Debussy’s fellow French composer and frequent rival, Camille Saint-Saëns.