

Minnesota Orchestra

Gilbert Varga, conductor

Jorja Fleezanis, violin

Classical Season Sponsor: UBS

Thursday, April 2, 2009, 11 am	Orchestra Hall
Friday, April 3, 2009, 8 pm	Orchestra Hall
Saturday, April 4, 2009, 8 pm	Orchestra Hall
Sunday, April 5, 2009, 2 pm	Benedicta Arts Center, College of Saint Benedict

Henryk Górecki	Three Pieces in Old Style, for String Orchestra	ca. 10'
Karol Szymanowski	Concerto No. 1 for Violin and Orchestra, Opus 35 <i>Jorja Fleezanis, violin</i>	ca. 23'
	I N T E R M I S S I O N	ca. 20'
Paul Dukas	<i>The Sorcerer's Apprentice</i>	ca. 10'
Richard Strauss	<i>Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks</i> , Opus 28	ca. 15'

Following the concerts on April 2, 3 and 4, you are invited to take part in a champagne toast in honor of Jorja Fleezanis in the Orchestra Hall lobby.

thank you

With these concerts, we recognize the support of **Ameriprise Financial**.

Minnesota Orchestra concerts are broadcast live Friday evenings on stations of **Minnesota Public Radio**. The concerts are also featured in **American Public Media's** national programs, **SymphonyCast** and **Performance Today**. Regional broadcasts are supported by the Minnesota Orchestra; by **Patterson, Thuente, Skaar and Christensen, P.A.**; and by **UBS**.

music
up close

Szymanowski and Górecki

with Michael Steinberg
4/2 at 10:30 am
4/3 at 7 pm
4/4 at 7 pm
Orchestra Hall Auditorium
4/5 at 1:15 pm
Instrument Rehearsal Hall
Benedicta Arts Center

one-minute notes



Gilbert Varga, conductor

London-born Gilbert Varga has an international reputation as conductor of both symphony and chamber orchestras. He made his American debut conducting this Orchestra in 2002, and has since made successful debuts with ensembles including the Philadelphia Orchestra and Dallas Symphony. He last appeared here late in 2007, leading two concert weeks featuring Orchestra members as concerto soloists.

Recent, upcoming: His current season includes engagements with the Dallas and Atlanta Symphony Orchestras, Malaysian Philharmonic and Taipei Symphony Orchestra.

Positions: In 2008 he concluded a 10-year tenure as music director of the Basque National Orchestra. Earlier he had been chief conductor of the Hof Symphony and Hungarian Philharmonic, and principal guest conductor of the Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra and Malmö Symphony.

Of interest: He initially focused on chamber orchestras, including the Tibor Varga Chamber Orchestra, named for his late father.

More: intermusica.co.uk.



Jorja Fleezanis, violin

Now in her 20th and final season as the Minnesota Orchestra's concertmaster, Jorja Fleezanis has become a favorite of area music lovers via her many solos, performances with chamber ensembles and inspired teaching. Next season she takes a professor's post at Indiana University's esteemed Jacobs School of Music.

Premieres: Ever a champion of contemporary music, she has premiered major works by Adams and Tavener commissioned for her by the Orchestra, and others by Kernis and Maw.

Discography: Among the many works she has recorded are Kernis' *Brilliant Sky*, *Infinite Sky*, the complete violin sonatas of Beethoven with fortepianist Cyril Huvé, and Stefan Wolpe's Violin Sonata with pianist Garrick Ohlsson.

Instrument: Fleezanis plays a violin made in 1700 by the Venetian Matteo Goffriller that was donated to the Orchestra for her use.

Of interest: She is married to musicologist, lecturer and writer Michael Steinberg, whose program notes frequently appear in *Showcase*.

More: minnesotaorchestra.org.

Górecki: Three Pieces in Old Style

This stream of charming melodies is rooted in the modal harmonies of medieval and Renaissance Poland.

Szymanowski: Violin Concerto No. 1

Passion and lyricism rule in this one-movement concerto featuring our concertmaster. It opens with brilliant flashes of sound, then continues with hints of humor and extended passages of joyful, carefree song.

Dukas: *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*

Dukas' witty scherzo chronicles the misadventures of a young man and his enchanted broom. A gradual accumulation of orchestral power leads to an outburst of chromatic scales, after which musical order is restored.

Strauss: *Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks*

This ode to a German rogue presents several escapades, from a mad dash through the marketplace to a grim visit to the gallows. Horn and clarinet introduce the protagonist's themes, heard in various guises throughout.

concert guide

charm, poetry and mischief

There is no heavy lifting on this program—except for the violin soloist who has mastered Szymanowski's virtuosic and deeply poetic concerto. Karol Szymanowski, a composer too little played and sung these days, is the finest Polish composer since Chopin (and second to no one else on the Polish musical firmament). He is a master of atmosphere and color, endlessly imaginative in the way he deploys instruments, and he was fortunate to have an ally in his compatriot, the great violinist Paweł Kochański. (Check out Kochański's Brahms CD with Arthur Rubinstein!) Szymanowski's dazzling Concerto is Kochański's memorial as well as the composer's own.

We begin with a charmer, Henryk Górecki's *Three Pieces in Old Style*, a visit to the 16th century, but looking through 20th-century glasses. The program is completed with two sparkling orchestral showpieces. *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* by Paul Dukas, made even more famous than it already was through Walt Disney's *Fantasia*, translates into music the Goethe ballad that tells the story of what happens when you know how to turn things on but not off. Compulsory reading for politicians, it ought to be. And we finish with Richard Strauss's unbuttoned micro-biography of the rogue of rogues, the fearless German scallywag Till Eulenspiegel.

Concert Guide and Program Notes by **Michael Steinberg**.



Henryk Górecki

Born: December 6, 1933, Czernica, Poland;
now living in Zakopane, Poland

Three Pieces in Old Style, for String Orchestra

Henryk Górecki (pronounced Górecski) is the Polish master, now 75, who startled the new-music world in 1992, when David Zinman's recording with the soprano Dawn Upshaw of his Symphony No. 3, *Symphony of Sorrowful Songs*, became a best-seller and turned the composer, a respected member of the European avant-garde, into an international sensation. The album was at the top of the charts in the United States and Britain (pop as well as classical in the latter), and in two years more than 700,000 copies had been sold, at least 400 times the expected lifetime sales of a symphony by a relatively unknown composer. An account of the phenomenon can be found in my book *The Symphony: A Listener's Guide*.

The Symphony No. 3 was not Górecki's first retrograde voyage into that ever fascinating country, the past, with its softer harmonies and multitude of familiarities. His *Epitafium* of 1958, an exquisite miniature for chorus and instrumental ensemble, is usually reckoned as marking the composer's pledge of allegiance to the avant-garde. Early in 1964, for example, Górecki presented the Warsaw ensemble *Con moto ma cantabile* with his recently completed *Three Pieces in Old Style*. They were a hit, and as many as eight recordings followed in short order.

a charming excursion into the past

The composer's stylistic choice was not uncontroversial, and Adrian Thomas suggested in his book on Górecki that any new piece that made reference to old music, particularly church music, could be read as "something of a finger in the eye of state authorities." Górecki had been interested in Renaissance and medieval Polish music since his student days, and the *Three Pieces* are not an excursion in isolation. We note, though, that Górecki did not give the piece an opus number, suggesting that it is not to be counted among his major works.

at the same time...

Szymanowski's First Violin Concerto premieres in 1922, the year:

- Warren G. Harding becomes the first U.S. President to give a speech broadcast by radio
- British archaeologist Howard Carter discovers the entrance to King Tutankhamen's tomb
- Russia and three neighboring republics form the Soviet Union

In 1895, when Strauss' *Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks* is first performed:

- American businessman King C. Gillette invents the disposable-blade "safety razor"
- German physicist Wilhelm Röntgen takes the first medical X-ray—an image of his wife's hand
- H.G. Wells popularizes the concept of time travel in his novel *The Time Machine*

Major or not, the Three Pieces are not wanting in charm. A publisher had teased Górecki for the dearth of tunes in his recent music, and the composer makes up for this here. All Three Pieces are firmly rooted in modal harmonies, and the last of them is based on the 16th-century Song on the Wedding of King Zygmunt II.

Instrumentation:
strings



Karol Szymanowski

Born: October 3, 1882, Tymosówka, Ukraine
Died: March 29, 1937, Lausanne, Switzerland

Concerto No. 1 for Violin and Orchestra, Opus 35

If Elgar's Violin Concerto is in spirit the last of the great 19th-century examples of the genre (its actual calendar date is 1910), Szymanowski's Violin Concerto No. 1, written in 1915-16, is the first in an amazing series of truly 20th-century violin concertos that would, over the next 25 years, come to include masterpieces by Stravinsky, Berg, Prokofiev, Sessions, Schoenberg, Bartók, Bloch, Barber, Britten, Hindemith, Piston, Walton and Hartmann among others—not to forget Szymanowski's own Second Concerto of 1932.

The voice behind Szymanowski's two concertos is that of Paweł Kochański, fiery and sweet-toned virtuoso, and one of the most admired violinists in a brilliant time. The plan was for Kochański, who wrote the cadenza for Szymanowski's First Violin Concerto and to whom the work is dedicated, to give the first performance in St. Petersburg at the end of 1917, but the Russian Revolution got in the way. The premiere finally took place in Warsaw on November 1, 1922, with Jósef Ozimiński as soloist and Grzegorz Fitelberg conducting.

Karol Maciej Szymanowski was a member of an interestingly lively and talent-filled family. His father, an impassioned patriot, was a landowner who dabbled in science, read voraciously in many languages and played cello and piano, both well. His mother, remotely

descended from Swedish nobility, was a good pianist, and two of his grandparents were amateur musicians of more than ordinary accomplishment. His four siblings were a pianist and composer of light music, a highly regarded soprano, a poet and a painter. He himself studied first with his father and with another musical relative, Gustav Neuhaus, but it was really after this, in the course of travel, independent study and quite simply experience, that his true education began. He had been brought up on the three B's plus Chopin and, surprisingly for so conservative an environment, Scriabin. Now his horizons expanded to embrace Wagner, Strauss and Reger, then Debussy and Ravel, eventually and crucially Stravinsky, whose *Firebird* and *Petrushka* he saw in their original productions by Diaghilev, about whom he wrote the first serious articles in Polish, and who became a friend as well.

a language all his own

Szymanowski's music moved away from German Romanticism to become—what? To say “more French” would be both true but also too limiting, for what he wrote, in words as well as music, more and more reflected his contacts with cultures removed in time and place from 20th-century Europe. He had made long journeys through Sicily, with its evocative remnants of the Greek and Byzantine worlds, and through North Africa. He read the Greek classics, Plato and histories of the Byzantine, Islamic, Roman and early Christian worlds. Admiring Bartók and what he was doing for and with Hungarian music, Szymanowski began to study and imaginatively to utilize Polish folk music. As a patriot he was—or at least became—his father's son, and the political climate, with Poland's new-won independence and Paderewski's assumption of the prime minister's office, nourished these sentiments.

In sum, Szymanowski drew on many sources, but fused them into a colorful, malleable language all his own. The *Myths*, *Songs of a Fairy Tale Princess*, *The Song of the Night* (Symphony No. 3), the Violin Concerto No. 1, the opera *King Roger* and the *Stabat Mater*, to name just a handful of the most important scores, amount to a legacy of unusual diversity, imposing originality and expressive strength.

the concerto: a poem

Szymanowski cast his First Violin Concerto as a single movement of about 23 minutes' duration. The analytical ear and eye readily enough distinguish different sections and the recurrences of certain ideas, but what the spontaneous listening ear responds to is the seamless, self-

generating flow. (In what might seem paradoxical, violinist and conductor must be fully aware of the former in order to create the impression of the latter.) The dominant impression is that of an intensely lyric, enchantingly colorful music that is in constant flux. The work is as much a poem as it is a concerto, being in fact based on a rhapsody, *Summer Night*, by one of the composer's literary contemporaries, Tadeusz Miciński. *Summer Night* is a feast of fantastical images—donkeys in crowns settled majestically on the grass, fireflies kissing the wild rose, and many birds—and it is not surprising that the sounds often come close to those in Bartók's haunting “night musics,” such as we find in works from the piano suite *Out of Doors* to the Third Piano Concerto.

Christopher Palmer has vividly described the opening in his Szymanowski monograph for the *BBC Music Guides*: “Its fantastic little dashes and flashes of sound, bitonally propelled, fluttering and dancing like a thousand tiny fires, suggest endless parallels, musical and otherwise: a distant fireworks display; a *pointillist* canvas; an imperial Fabergé jewel aglitter with sequins; César Franck's wonderful definition of the nervous appeal of Debussy's music as ‘de la musique sur la pointe des aiguilles,’ music on needlepoints.”

When Szymanowski first actually heard this music in rehearsal in Warsaw he was thrilled and wrote to Kochański: “The sound is so magical that people here were completely transfixed. And just imagine, Pawelecicka, *the violin is continually on top.*” With the magic of the fireflies goes the ecstasy of lyric song. The Concerto is a work of white-hot passion, set in a magical landscape inhabited by, among others, the figure of Pan, part humorous, part threatening, whom Szymanowski invokes so wonderfully in the third of the *Myths*. Szymanowski said that the true national music of his country was not “the stiffened ghost of the polonaise or mazurka, nor a fugue on the *Chmielu* wedding song ... but the solitary, joyful, carefree song of the nightingale in a fragrant night in Poland.” In this Concerto, he set that ecstatic song down for us to share.

Instrumentation:

solo violin with orchestra comprising 3 flutes (3rd doubling piccolo), 3 oboes (3rd doubling English horn), 3 clarinets (3rd doubling E-flat clarinet), bass clarinet, 3 bassoons (3rd doubling contrabassoon), 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, bass tuba, timpani, triangle, tambourine, snare drum, cymbals, bass drum, glockenspiel, celesta, piano, two harps and strings



Paul Dukas

Born: October 1, 1865, Paris

Died: May 17, 1935, Paris

The Sorcerer's Apprentice

Dukas composed *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* in 1897, just 100 years after Johann Wolfgang von Goethe wrote the ballad on which it was based. Dukas himself conducted the first performance at a concert of the Société Nationale de Musique in Paris on May 18, 1897.

I am sure that for many of you, as for me, *Fantasia* was the introduction to Dukas' masterful scherzo. Much about Disney's film is questionable—the bra-clad centaurettes, the Crystal Cathedral *Ave Maria*, Leopold Stokowski's derangements of Beethoven and Stravinsky—but much of it is inspired and full of life, surely nothing more so than casting Mickey Mouse as the ingenious apprentice who outsmarts himself. It is more than 60 years since I have seen *Fantasia*; I have not wanted to jostle happy memories of the film that did more than anything to turn me on to classical music. Recently I read, and read with delight, Goethe's swift and crackling ballad, but what I see is M. Mouse, cone-hatted, urbane and, finally, in wide-eyed alarm.

the importance of being able to stop

Thus Disney, with some variation of detail, retells Dukas, who retells Goethe, who in fact retells a story he found in the writings of the second-century Greek satirist Loukianos or Lucian. The story is that of a sorcerer-in-training who, in his master's absence, thinks to save himself trouble by commanding the broom to assume something like human form, with two legs and a head, and to fetch the bathwater from the river. He has, however, forgotten the command to stop, and no amount of verbal abuse does the trick. Meanwhile the house is flooded. He thinks of a solution—to take a cleaver and destroy the relentlessly industrious broom. This gives him two water-carrying brooms instead of one. Panicked, he calls the sorcerer: “Master, the peril is great./I cannot be rid/Of the spirits I called.” The sorcerer restores order and lays down the law: only he, and for his purposes alone, will summon these spirits.

Dukas: cultured and thoughtful

Paul Dukas came from a cultured and well-to-do Jewish family. His mother was a good amateur pianist, but she died when Paul was only five. He was very close to his father and to his older brother Adrien, whose death in 1908 brought him the greatest grief of his life. He was an exceedingly private man who married late, at 50, and whose personal life was contained: one wife, one daughter, no mistresses, few travels.

He learned his craft from Ernest Guiraud, a composer who was born in New Orleans but spent most of his professional life in Paris. As a young man, Dukas made his living as a critic, and he was a singularly thoughtful one. Later Dukas taught at the Paris Conservatory and the École Normale; the list of his pupils includes Olivier Messiaen, Tony Aubin and Joaquín Rodrigo.

Like so many in his generation, Dukas in his youth was spellbound by Wagner, something one hears clearly in his handsome *Polyeucte* Overture (after Corneille). He wrote one symphony, a generous, attractive, high-spirited work that would be worth reviving, and one piano sonata, a piece of many notes—many at a time as well as many in a row. The fragrant, atmospheric opera *Ariane et Barbe-Bleue*, on the same subject as Bartók's almost contemporary *Bluebeard's Castle*, is something of a cult work that has always had impassioned admirers. *La Péri*, a dance score, is a wonderfully seductive, richly erotic essay in the language of Debussy.

After *La Péri*, which dates from 1912, Dukas seems to have suffered some kind of shipwreck. In 1920 he joined Stravinsky, Falla, Ravel and others in contributing to a *tombeau* for Debussy. Four years later he made a lovely setting of a sonnet by the 16th-century poet Pierre de Ronsard. And that was all. Only weeks before his death he burned the manuscripts of his early works as well as the more recent sketches of, among other things, a Symphony No. 2 and a Violin Sonata.

“the calm before the brainstorm”

The brilliant music of *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* hardly

“Master, the peril is great.
I cannot be rid of the spirits
I called.”

needs exegesis. Dukas begins with a slow introduction that both provides a frame for the story and depicts the calm before the brainstorm. Debussy remembered this beautiful page when he came to write his ballet *Jeux*, and it is also part of the storehouse on which Stravinsky drew for *The Firebird*. But even in this calm, something is germinating. For the moment it is a quiet phrase, first played by the clarinet, its outline reinforced by bright harmonics on the harp. Then the music bursts into crazily energized life, and after a thud on the timpani and a long silence the story begins. The broom gets to its newly found feet and begins its work to the clarinet tune, now given to the bassoon and, by being made staccato, quite transformed in character. It is one of those themes that are so simple one can hardly conceive of their needing to be invented.

In an ingenious, brilliantly scored series of continuing variations, the piece builds to its first crisis, the hacking to bits of the broom. What follows, the coming to life of the fragments, the flood, the panicked call to the sorcerer, the sorcerer's command, all that is vividly set before us. The quiet opening music returns to complete the frame. This time Dukas adds a regretful phrase for a single viola, alone unmuted among all the strings. And the last two bars remind us that this is, after all, a scherzo.

Instrumentation:

2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet,
3 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 4 trumpets,
3 trombones, timpani, bass drum, cymbals,
suspended cymbal, bells, triangle, harp and strings



Richard Strauss

Born: June 11, 1864, Munich
Died: September 8, 1949, Garmisch

Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks, Opus 28

There was an actual Till Eulenspiegel, born early in the 14th century near Braunschweig and gone to his reward—in bed, not on the gallows as in Strauss' tone poem—in 1350 at Mölln in Schleswig-Holstein. Stories about him have been in print since the beginning

of the 16th century, the first English version coming out around 1560 under the title *Here beginneth a merye Jest of a man that was called Howleglas* (*Eule* in German means “owl” and *Spiegel*, “mirror,” or “looking-glass”). The consistent and serious theme behind his jokes and pranks, often in themselves distinctly coarse and even brutal, is that of an individual getting back at society, specifically, the shrewd peasant more than holding his own against a stuffy bourgeoisie and a repressive clergy. The most famous version of *Till Eulenspiegel* is the one published in 1866 by the Belgian novelist Charles de Coster.

Richard Strauss knew de Coster’s book, and it seems also that in 1899 in Würzburg he saw an opera called *Eulenspiegel* by Cyrill Kistler, a Bavarian composer once proclaimed Wagner’s heir. Strauss’ first idea was to compose an *Eulenspiegel* opera, but, as he wrote in a letter, “the figure of Master Till does not quite appear before my eyes.”

“let them guess at the musical joke”

But if Strauss could not see Master Till, he could hear him, and before 1894 was out, he had begun the tone poem that he finished the following May. As always, he could not make up his mind whether he was engaged in tone painting or “just music.” To Franz Wüllner, who conducted the first performance in Cologne on November 5, 1895, he wrote: “I really cannot provide a program for *Eulenspiegel*. Any words into which I might put the thoughts that the several incidents suggested to me would hardly suffice; they might even offend. Let me leave it, therefore, to my listeners to crack the hard nut the Rogue has offered them. By way of helping them to a better understanding, it seems enough to point out the two *Eulenspiegel* motifs [Strauss jots down the opening of the work and the virtuosic horn theme], which, in the most diverse disguises, moods and situations, pervade the whole up to the catastrophe when, after being condemned to death, Till is strung up on the gibbet. For the rest, let them guess at the musical joke a Rogue has offered them.”

On the other hand, for Wilhelm Mauke, the most diligent of early Strauss exegetes, the composer was willing to offer a more detailed scenario—Till among the market-women, Till disguised as a priest, Till paying court to pretty girls, and so forth—the sort of thing guaranteed to have the audience anxiously reading the program book instead of listening to the music, probably confusing

priesthood and courtship anyway, wondering which theme represents “Till confounding the Philistine pedagogues,” and missing most of Strauss’s dazzling invention in the process.

It is probably useful to identify the two Till themes, the very first violin melody and what the horn plays about 15 seconds later, and to say that the opening music is intended as a “once-upon-a-time” prologue that returns after the graphic trial and hanging as a charmingly formal epilogue with a rowdily humorous “kicker.” For the rest, Strauss’ compositional ingenuity and orchestral bravura plus your attention and fantasy will see to the telling of the tale.

Instrumentation:

3 flutes, piccolo, 3 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, E-flat clarinet, 3 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, triangle, ratchet and strings

All program notes by **Michael Steinberg**; note on *Szymanowski’s First Violin Concerto* excerpted from his book *The Concerto: A Listener’s Guide* (Oxford University Press, 1998), by permission of the author.



From a 16th-century German woodcut: Till Eulenspiegel, complete with *Eule* (owl) and *Spiegel* (mirror).