

## Minnesota Orchestra

Osmo Vänskä, conductor

Garrick Ohlsson, piano

Thursday, February 18, 2010, 11 am	Orchestra Hall
Friday, February 19, 2010, 8 pm	Orchestra Hall
Saturday, February 20, 2010, 8 pm	Orchestra Hall

<b>Ludwig van Beethoven</b>	<i>Grosse Fuge</i> (Great Fugue) in B-flat major, Opus 133, arranged for String Orchestra by Michael Steinberg	ca. 17'
<b>Frédéric Chopin</b>	Concerto No. 2 in F minor for Piano and Orchestra, Opus 21 Maestoso Larghetto Allegro vivace <i>Garrick Ohlsson, piano</i>	ca. 30'
	I N T E R M I S S I O N	ca. 20'
<b>Wolfgang Amadè Mozart</b>	Symphony No. 40 in G minor, K. 550 Molto allegro Andante Menuetto: Allegretto Allegro assai	ca. 22'

## thank you

With Friday's concert, we recognize the support of the **General Mills Foundation**.

With Saturday's concert, we recognize the support of **RBC Wealth Management**.

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; **Patterson, Thunte, Skaar and Christensen, P.A.**; **UBS**; and **DTS Digital Entertainment**.

music  
up close

Meet a Musician

Jonathan Magness,  
associate principal second violin  
2/18 at 10:30 am  
2/19 at 7 pm  
2/20 at 7 pm  
Orchestra Hall Auditorium

Ask Osmo!

2/20, post-concert  
Stay after the Saturday night  
concert for a Q&A with Music  
Director Osmo Vänskä.



Osmo Vänskä, conductor

Profile appears on page 12.



Garrick Ohlsson, piano

Garrick Ohlsson, one of the world's most respected pianists, commands a repertoire of some 80 concertos—ranging from works of Haydn and Mozart to compositions of the 21st century. Lauded particularly for his interpretations of Chopin, he also specializes in the music of Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert.

**Minnesota Orchestra:** Since his debut here in 1971, Ohlsson has been welcomed back for many subscription and Sommerfest programs, including recitals and chamber concerts.

**Currently:** He is honoring Chopin's bicentenary with a series of all-Chopin recitals for presenters including La Jolla Music Society and Lincoln Center; he is also featured in a documentary film about Chopin's life and music. This season he appears with the New York Philharmonic, BBC Scottish Symphony, St. Petersburg Philharmonic and other orchestras.

**Chamber music:** Ohlsson is a founding member of the FOG Trio, which includes Jorja Fleezanis and Michael Grebanier.

**Awards:** He is the first American to win Poland's Chopin International Piano Competition; in 2008 he won a Grammy for a disc of Beethoven sonatas.

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

at the same time...

Chopin's Second Piano Concerto premieres in 1830, the year:

- America's first passenger railroad begins service between Baltimore and Elliott's Mills, Maryland
- English engineer Edwin Beard Budding patents the lawnmower
- Sarah Josepha Hale publishes the classic children's poem "Mary Had a Little Lamb"

In 1788, when Mozart composes his Symphony No. 40:

- The U.S. Constitution, ratified by nine states, goes into effect
- Britain sends the first prisoners to its new penal colony, Australia
- Fire destroys more than three-quarters of New Orleans' buildings

one-minute notes

Beethoven: *Grosse Fuge*

The Great Fugue, heard here in Michael Steinberg's arrangement, is a work full of surprises and contradictions, with dissonant counterpoint, complex rhythms and unexpected silences giving way to powerful moments of clarity.

Chopin: Piano Concerto No. 2

This intimate concerto, written when Chopin was just 19, relegates the orchestra to the shadows in favor of the composer's signature instrument. Its famous middle movement is slow and operatic, an outpouring of youthful love.

Mozart: Symphony No. 40

A sense of urgency runs throughout this work, one of only two minor-key Mozart symphonies. The breathless opening movement leads to a sensual *Andante*, then to a stern minuet; the finale is exciting and explosive.



## Ludwig van Beethoven

**Born:** December 16, 1770, Bonn  
**Died:** March 26, 1827, Vienna

### **Grosse Fuge (Great Fugue) in B-flat major, Opus 133,**

arranged for String Orchestra by Michael Steinberg

After completing his Ninth Symphony early in 1824, Beethoven devoted the rest of his life to composing string quartets. He had been exploring ways of breaking away from the standard three- and four-movement design for sonatas and quartets, and his Quartet in B-flat, Opus 130, is a most adventurous such piece. It is in six movements, the first, expansive one being followed by four shorter, exceedingly diverse character pieces. The sequence is then capped by an uncompromisingly difficult, dissonant fugal finale that accounts for more than a third of the length of the entire quartet.

Beethoven skipped the first performance of Opus 130, preferring to wait in a nearby pub for reports. That the fourth and fifth movements were encored didn't impress him; why not the fugue? "Cattle! Asses!" he roared. Some listeners had been excited, exalted by the fugue; more were bewildered. Some professionals called it incomprehensible. Beethoven himself seems to have had some doubts, for he was eventually talked into writing, late in 1826, a new finale in his most amiable, non-controversial vein. What Beethoven doubted about the fugue—or at least what he was persuaded to question—was its appropriateness as a finale. It was published as a separate work for string quartet (Opus 133), and Beethoven himself wrote an arrangement for piano four-hands, a setting both illuminating and exceedingly difficult (Opus 134).

### the music

The title pages of each of these versions describe them as "Great Fugue, in part free, in part worked." The beginning, which Beethoven calls *Overtura*, is as "free" as can be: here is music of extreme disjunction, its gestures separated by unmeasured silences, and in its 30 measures changing

tempo twice and character more often than that. Beethoven hurls scraps of material about, all related to what has been heard earlier in the quartet, and it is up to the rest of the piece to demonstrate the coherence of what is presented here in so violently dissociated a manner. After five beginnings, the fugue proper, the "worked" part, gets under way. It is a double fugue, the theme of the *Overtura* played by the violas, the first violins adding a leaping figure of ungainly and totally captivating energy. Beethoven develops this music in a series of variations of growing rhythmic and textural complexity, unrelieved in ferocious energy, bold without limits in harmony. There is a softer interlude, from which leaps forth a new movement, quicker than anything we have heard so far. The disjunctions and the violence of the leaps also surpass anything we have encountered up to this point, with interruptions and reappearances of earlier passages, both sometimes so startling that we might think we are dealing with a copyist's error. The interference of the free with the worked is fierce and outrageous. The resolution is surprising and touching, a mixture of the exalted and the humorous that only Beethoven could have invented.

### versions for string orchestra

Hans von Bülow seems to have been the first conductor to have a full string orchestra play the work; that was in the early 1880s, when it had the reputation of being a mad extravagance, impossible to execute and hardly ever attempted by quartets.

To make a string orchestra version means primarily to make decisions about when the basses should double the cellos an octave below. Felix Weingartner, the first to publish such an edition, did a good job on the whole, but he filled the score with sentimentalizing changes of tempo and dynamics.

The edition used in these performances was prepared after close scrutiny of Beethoven's own piano translation, which entails some decisions so bold that only a composer—the composer—would dare them. We can't listen to a recording made the way Beethoven would have preferred. But his two-piano arrangement is invaluable in revealing his ideas concerning the placement of accent and the distinction of light and shade. This version was originally completed in 1982 for Edo de Waart and the San Francisco Symphony.

**Instrumentation:**  
strings alone

*Excerpted from a program note by Michael Steinberg, who contributed many notes to Showcase until his death last July; we are honored to have permission to continue publishing them.*



## Frédéric Chopin

**Born:** February 22, 1810, Zelazowska Wola, near Warsaw, Poland  
**Died:** October 17, 1849, Paris

### Concerto No. 2 in F minor for Piano and Orchestra, Opus 21

Chopin's extraordinary gifts were evident early—one of his teachers described him in two words in an end-of-term evaluation: "Musical genius." His parents, however, were careful not to exploit the boy or to push him into a career as a prodigy. Chopin did not give an official public concert in Warsaw until March 1830, a few weeks after his 20th birthday. In the fall of 1829, knowing that that occasion was coming, Chopin had set to work on a piece worthy of the event, a piano concerto.

#### "subtle rapture"

On March 3, 1830, a small orchestra crowded into the Chopin home in Warsaw as young Frédéric gave the premiere before invited friends. Two weeks later, on March 17, he played the public premiere at the National Theatre in Warsaw, and the reviews were rhapsodic. Wrote one critic just after the concert: "He plays with such certainty, so cleanly that his Concerto might be compared to the life of a just man: no ambiguity, nothing false.... His music is full of expressive feeling and song, and puts the listener into a state of subtle rapture, bringing back to his memory all the happy moments he has known."

This work did not, as we might expect, become known as Chopin's first piano concerto. Later that year he wrote another piano concerto, in E minor. That fall, on his way to Paris, he mislaid the orchestral parts of the F-minor Concerto, and they had to be completely reconstructed. The E-minor concerto was published in 1833 as Chopin's Piano Concerto No. 1, and when the F-minor Concerto finally appeared in 1836, it was listed as his Concerto No. 2.

#### focus on the piano

These are the only piano concertos Chopin ever wrote. Mozart and Beethoven had transformed the piano concerto into a great form, a symphonic argument in

which soloist and orchestra were equal protagonists. Chopin might respect such music, but it was not for him: he was interested, first and foremost, in the piano. In his concertos the musical interest lies in the piano part, and the orchestra functions only as a framework for the soloist. While Chopin can create a Romantic fullness of sound in the Concerto No. 2, he scores it for a smaller ensemble, essentially Mozart's orchestra increased by just one instrument, a trombone.

**maestoso.** The Concerto No. 2 is in the conventional three movements. Chopin marks the first movement *Maestoso* (majestic), but the opening impulse is lyric, as the orchestra launches the concerto with a graceful falling idea that will shape much of the movement. With the entrance of the soloist, however, the orchestra retreats to the shade, and the pianist will dominate the remainder of the movement.

**larghetto.** When Chopin wrote the second movement, he had, like many other teenagers, fallen in love, in this case with a young singer, Constantia Gladkowska. He wrote to his friend Titus Woyciechowski: "I have—perhaps to my misfortune—already found my ideal, which I worship faithfully and sincerely. Six months have elapsed, and I have not yet exchanged a syllable with her of whom I dream every night. While my thoughts were with her I composed the *Adagio* of my concerto." In ternary form, this movement has been compared to opera music, particularly to the music of Bellini, a great favorite of young Chopin. The quiet opening recalls *bel canto*, while the middle section grows more dramatic, as the piano declaims its animated song over rustling strings.

This movement has been much admired. Schumann exclaimed "What are ten editorial crowns compared with one such slow movement!" and Liszt said: "The whole of this piece is of a perfection almost ideal; its expression, now radiant with light, now full of tender pathos."

**allegro vivace.** Solo piano leads off the concluding *Allegro vivace*, and Chopin marks its opening theme *semplice ma graziosamente* (simple but graceful). Some have heard folk tunes in this movement, but all the material appears to have been original with Chopin. A great fanfare from the horns leads to a properly spirited conclusion.

#### Instrumentation:

solo piano with orchestra comprising 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, bass trombone, timpani and strings

Program note by **Eric Bromberger**.





## Wolfgang Amadè Mozart

**Born:** January 27, 1756, Salzburg  
**Died:** December 5, 1791, Vienna

### Symphony No. 40 in G minor, K. 550

**m**ozart entered this symphony into his own catalogue on July 25, 1788. This date refers to Mozart's original version. The one most often heard—and the one presented in these concerts—adds a pair of clarinets; it was probably made for concerts in Vienna on April 16 and 17, 1791. The conductor on that occasion was the composer Antonio Salieri, who, ironically, is most apt to be remembered today in connection with the libel that he poisoned Mozart.

Which version? Almost always nowadays the answer is “with clarinets.” It has a special appeal in that the clarinet is so much the Mozartian instrument par excellence. Think of the Concerto, the Quintet, the Trio with viola and piano, all written for Mozart's friend Anton Stadler; of the wind serenades, of the basset horns in the Requiem, of Donna Anna's “Non mi dir,” the farewell trio in *Così fan tutte*, the stirrings of Tamino's heart in *The Magic Flute's* portrait aria, not to forget the extraordinary solos (also for Stadler) in *La clemenza di Tito*.

The great Stadler was almost certainly the inspiration for the revision of the G-minor Symphony, for we know that he and his younger brother, Johann, took part in Salieri's concerts at the Burgtheater in April 1791. In any event, from what we know of Mozart's work habits, we can be sure that he would not have put himself to the trouble of the revision except with a specific performance in view.

### a mood of urgency

Robert Schumann surprises us by speaking of the G-minor Symphony's “weightless, Hellenic grace.” At the other extreme, some conductors surprise us—to be polite about it—by converting the first movement into a pathetic *andante*. But what the score suggests above all is urgency, something that at once distinguishes the symphony from the other members of Mozart's G-minor family: the Viola Quintet,

K. 516; Pamina's aria from *The Magic Flute*; and even the precocious and impressive Symphony No. 25 of 1773.

**molto allegro.** The violas' breathless accompaniment that, for a second or two, precedes the melody immediately establishes a sense of tremendous urgency. How astonished the first audience must have been by such a beginning, and accompaniment only, and *piano!* This is reinforced by the melody itself, upbeat leading to upbeat leading to upbeat. We know, too, that Mozart altered the tempo marking from *Allegro assai* to *Molto allegro*, which in 18th-century usage is a change toward the faster.

**andante.** The second movement is both somber and sensual, the opening music rich and strange. Mozart continues to explore the first movement's world of aching chromatic harmony. For the little descending two-note figures that are such prominent features here, the 18th century had a technical term, “Seufzer,” or sighs.

**menuetto: allegretto.** Polyphony, powerfully used in the first movement, comes to the fore again in the ruggedly stern minuet. Mozart's sense of harmonic strategy also creates the pathos of the minuet's pastoral trio, where, for the only time in this symphony, the composer settles in G major.

**allegro assai.** The finale brings the most explosive music Mozart ever wrote: those eight measures of rude octaves and frozen silences that launch the development. It is the normality of most of the finale and the sense of direct momentum it generates that most markedly establish the difference between this movement and the first *allegro*. The first movement raises questions, posits instabilities, opens abysses. But for all the anguish Mozart still feels and expresses, and even though it is in this movement that he brings his language closest to the breaking point, the finale must at last be a force that stabilizes, sets solid ground under our feet, seeks to close wounds, and brings the voyager safely—if bruised—into port.

#### Instrumentation:

flute, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns and strings

Excerpted from **Michael Steinberg's** *The Symphony: A Listener's Guide* (Oxford University Press, 1995).  
*Michael Steinberg contributed many program notes to Showcase until his death last July, and we are honored to have permission to continue publishing them.*