

PRESS RELEASE

MINNESOTA
ORCHESTRA

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THE MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA ANNOUNCES 2026-27 SEASON

Music Director Thomas Søndergård shares plans for his fourth Minnesota Orchestra season which includes launch of Sound Unbound series—highly visual, creative treatments of music in the concert hall—including Stravinsky’s *The Firebird* with designer Tal Rosner and Puccini’s *Tosca* with creative director Adam Larson

Nordic Soundscapes Festival returns with Søndergård sharing the podium with Conductor Laureate Osmo Vänskä to explore northern Europe’s orchestral music of past and present

Søndergård delves into music of American present with the Composer Institute, highlighting compositions from top emerging composers across the U.S.

Orchestra embarks on California tour with violinist Augustin Hadelich

Classical season will feature soprano Ailyn Pérez, mezzo Sasha Cooke, violinists Himari and Stella Chen, cellist Johannes Moser, pianists Isata Kanneh-Mason and Daniil Trifonov, and Minnesota Orchestra musicians Erin Keefe, Susie Park, Anthony Ross and Fei Xie

Live at Orchestra Hall offerings include performances by Ben Folds, Andrew Bird, Samara Joy, Guster, Wynton Marsalis and Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra, Leslie Odom, Jr. and Thorgy Thor, as well as film performances of *Amadeus*, *Jaws* and *Vertigo*, among others

Molly Turner joins organization as associate conductor

For a chronological listing of all Orchestra events for the 2026-27 season, please see the separate Season Calendar

The Minnesota Orchestra and Music Director Thomas Søndergård today announced plans for the Orchestra’s 2026-27 season, a year that showcases top artists from returning pianist Daniil Trifonov to debuting violinist Himari; unveils theatrical performances of Stravinsky’s *Firebird* and Puccini’s *Tosca* as part of the Sound Unbound series; celebrates the third annual Nordic Soundscapes Festival; features large-scale orchestral works from Corigliano’s First Symphony to Mahler’s Fifth; and brings back the biennial Minnesota Orchestra Composer Institute, giving voice to some of the nation’s top emerging composers.

“When we put together a new season we try to create each program with great care and attention so that every concert experience is something special for the audience,” said Music Director

Thomas Søndergård. “Some programs are built to be viscerally thrilling, in others we want to tell a story or transport listeners into another space, but we are always aiming to share artistry, emotion and a little magic.”

Leading 12 weeks of concerts, Søndergård opens the season in September 2026 performances featuring Van Cliburn Competition Gold medalist Vadym Kholodenko interpreting Prokofiev’s Second Piano Concerto and leads his final season performances in June 2027 with South Korean pianist Yeol Eum Son making her Minnesota Orchestra debut in Richard Strauss’ only work for piano and orchestra, *Burleske*.

In February, Søndergård and the Orchestra will embark on a tour to Santa Barbara and Palm Desert, California, with Grammy Award-winning violinist Augustin Hadelich performing Prokofiev’s Violin Concerto No. 1.

The season encompasses programming designed for concertgoers of all ages and interests, including Classical, Chamber Music, Live at Orchestra Hall, Holiday, Young People’s Concerts and Family Concerts.

CLASSICAL CONCERTS

Season Opening Celebrations

The Orchestra’s 124th concert season—and Søndergård’s fourth season as music director—will kick off with two celebratory weeks of season opening concerts. The first set, September 25-26, 2026, featuring **Vadym Kholodenko** and Prokofiev’s Piano Concerto No. 2, opens with George Walker’s *Icarus in Orbit* and—extending the flight theme—culminates in Igor Stravinsky’s complete ballet *The Firebird*, which will be visually brought to life as part of the Sound Unbound series through evocative video, graphics and lighting by London-based creative designer **Tal Rosner**, a BAFTA-winning video artist known for establishing striking visual worlds in concert, theatrical, museum and dance performances.

Søndergård’s second set of concerts, October 1-3, feature **Stefan Jackiw** in Mozart’s brilliant Violin Concerto No. 5, *Turkish*, bookended by Gabriela Smith’s evocative nature-scape *Tumblebird Contrails*—which she describes as “imagining the ecstasy of wind in the wings”—and Prokofiev’s penultimate symphony, the Sixth.

Nordic Soundscapes in November

November 2026 will bring a **new iteration of the Nordic Soundscapes Festival**, this season featuring both Søndergård and Minnesota Orchestra Conductor Laureate **Osmo Vänskä** on the podium for programs exploring northern Europe’s orchestral music of past and present. The festival opens November 5-7 with Søndergård leading selections from Grieg’s *Norwegian Dances* and Sibelius’ sweeping Symphony No. 2, while pianist **Jon Kimura Parker** performs Swedish composer Anders Hillborg’s Piano Concerto No. 2, *MAX*, a 2023 work described by *The*

Wall Street Journal as brimming with “joyful insouciance and effortless creativity.” When Vänskä takes the podium, November 13-14, it is to lead **Stella Chen** in the Violin Concerto of Vänskä’s late friend, Finnish composer Jaakko Kuusisto, as well as Outi Tarkiainen’s *Songs of the Ice* and Carl Nielsen’s Symphony No. 6.

For the first time, Nordic Soundscapes will feature a **Family Concert**. Led by Søndergård on Sunday, November 8, it spotlights *The Musical Tales of Hans Christian Andersen*.

Future Classics

Søndergård leads the **Future Classics** concert on April 30, 2027, sharing new compositions from some of the top emerging classical composers of our day. The program is the culmination of a week-long **Minnesota Orchestra Composer Institute** that is directed by Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Kevin Puts and features sessions on multiple aspects of the symphonic world—from publishing and orchestrating to public speaking—as well as mentoring sessions with Søndergård and Puts. The culminating concert will be hosted by Puts, and participating composers will be announced next season. For the first time, the 2027 Future Classics concert will feature the premiere of a new commissioned work by a Composer Institute alumnus, Soomin Kim, who participated in 2025; Kim’s work will be reprised by the Orchestra on June 3-4, 2027.

Sound Unbound

Sound Unbound, a multi-year series offering highly visual, creative experiences in the concert hall, will feature one of the most revered of Puccini operas on May 6 and May 8, 2027: **Tosca**. Søndergård will lead a cast headlined by soprano **Ailyn Pérez** (Tosca), tenor **Joshua Guerrero** (Cavaradossi), baritone **Gevorg Hakobyan** (Scarpia) and the Minnesota Chorale in the tempestuous tragedy. Creative Director **Adam Larsen**, a collaborator with companies from Sante Fe Opera to Los Angeles Opera, will incorporate lighting design and digital projections to create a deeply atmospheric, highly immersive experience for audiences.

Larsen will become a regular collaborator over the next several seasons with Søndergård and the Orchestra, serving as creative director for additional operas in the signature series. Audiences will first experience his work this season in May 2026 when his designs and projections will heighten the psychological drama and oppressive atmosphere of Bartók’s *Bluebeard’s Castle*; and he will return to create dramatic moods for performances of **Richard Strauss’ Elektra** in 2028.

“We’re excited to build additional theatrical elements into these signature opera performances that will create an immersive world for audiences,” said Søndergård, “while keeping the Orchestra itself front and center in the performances.”

Søndergård Conducts: From Marsalis to Mahler

Thomas Søndergård's affinity for Brahms will come to light in a March 18-20, 2027, program featuring the German composer's Third Symphony and First Piano Concerto, performed by Grammy Award-winning piano phenomenon **Daniil Trifonov**—described by *The New York Times* as “one of the most awesome pianists of our time”—who returns to the Minnesota Orchestra for the first time in over a decade.

A range of **eclectic programs** across the season will also see Søndergård conducting Rachmaninoff's rarely-performed choral symphony *The Bells* featuring soprano **Felicia Moore**, tenor **John Matthew Myers** and the **Minnesota Chorale** (March 12-13, 2027); Wynton Marsalis' recently premiered Concerto for Orchestra on a program that also features pianist **Isata Kanneh-Mason** making her Minnesota Orchestra debut in Gershwin's Concerto in F (May 13-15, 2027); and Mahler's magnificent Symphony No. 5 (June 10-12, 2027).

Touring

Søndergård will lead the Orchestra to **California** for performances at the McCallum Theater in **Palm Desert** (February 5-6, 2027) and Granada Theater in **Santa Barbara** (February 7, 2027), as well as educational engagements in the Coachella Valley. A fire and water-themed program will open with Thomas Adès' *Inferno Suite*, from his three-part ballet score *Dante*, and violinist **Augustin Hadelich** in Prokofiev's First Violin Concerto before a sea-inspired second half spotlights Benjamin Britten's Passacaglia from *Peter Grimes* and Claude Debussy's *La Mer*. The program will be shared with Minnesota audiences February 11-13, 2027.

The Orchestra will continue to offer livestreamed concerts and digital extras as part of its Emmy Award-winning *This Is Minnesota Orchestra* series; the specific 2026-27 concerts to be broadcast will be announced at a later date. Additionally, Minnesota Orchestra Friday evening classical concerts will be broadcast regionally on YourClassical MPR stations, continuing a longtime partnership with Minnesota Public Radio.

Guest Artists and Conductors

The 14-year-old violinist **Himari**—hailed as a once-in-a-generation talent who became the youngest student ever admitted to the Curtis Institute of Music in 2022—will make her Minnesota Orchestra debut, performing the Glazunov Violin Concerto (October 16-17, 2026). Led by **Kahchun Wong**, also in a debut, the program opens with Ifukube's *Dance of the Seven Veils* from *Salome* and concludes with Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*. Another double debut comes later in the season (April 9-10, 2027) when **Anja Bihlmaier**, principal guest

conductor of the BBC Philharmonic, leads Beethoven's Seventh Symphony on a program that also features Munich-based violinist **Veronika Eberle** in Karl Amadeus Hartmann's *Concerto funebre*, a work written as a reaction to the outbreak of World War II that is often cited as a neglected masterpiece.

Returning soloists include **Simon Trpčeski** in the Liszt Piano Concerto No. 2 (October 22-23, 2026); mezzo **Sasha Cooke** with Elgar's oceanic song cycle *Sea Pictures* (November 19-20, 2026); and cellist **Johannes Moser** in Anna Thorvaldsdottir's *Before we fall*, described by *The Times* (London) as "a volcanic new concerto" that "pushes into new worlds" (January 8-9, 2027). **David Afkham** leads the latter program, which also includes Shostakovich's Symphony No. 8. Later in January conductor **Hannu Lintu** returns to lead John Corigliano's watershed Symphony No. 1, written in 1988 as a memorial to friends lost in the AIDS epidemic, on a program that also features **Sergey Khachatryan** in the Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto. In February **Marta Gardolińska** brings forward Alexander Zemlinsky's musical retelling of the Hans Christian Andersen tale in *The Mermaid*, alongside pianist **Alice Sara Ott** performing Ravel's Piano Concerto in G (February 25-26, 2027).

Associate Conductor Molly Turner

Beginning in September 2026, conductor **Molly Turner** will take up a one-year appointment as the Minnesota Orchestra's associate conductor. Described by *The Washington Post* as "a force of nature from the podium," Turner previously served as a Dudamel fellow with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and a conducting fellow with the New World Symphony. Also a composer and violinist-violist, Turner is a graduate of the Juilliard School and Rice University.

In her new post, she'll lead a variety of performances, including the 2027 Lunar New Year celebration, Young People's Concerts and Symphony for the Cities performances. Turner will make her subscription concert debut in July 2027, leading soprano **Ellie Dehn** in Barber's *Knoxville: Summer of 1915*, bookended by Jerod Impichchaachaaha' Tate's *Pisachi* and Beethoven's Symphony No. 6.

Orchestra Musicians in the Spotlight

Many of the Orchestra's principal players will be spotlighted center stage in 2026-27, beginning with First Associate Concertmaster **Susie Park** who will interpret Szymanowski's Violin Concerto No. 2 (March 12-13, 2027), followed by Concertmaster **Erin Keefe** who will take on the demands of the Shostakovich Violin Concerto No. 1, April 1-2, 2027. Principal Cello **Anthony Ross** will solo in Bloch's *Schlemomo: Rhapsodie hébraïque* in a program led by Elias Grandy that also features Sibelius' *Lemminkäinen* Suite (April 15-16, 2027). Led by Søndergård, Principal Bassoon **Fei Xie** will introduce Minnesota audiences to Kevin Puts' Bassoon Concerto,

a recent work that was co-commissioned by the Minnesota Orchestra, New York Philharmonic and St. Louis Symphony (June 3-4, 2027).

Chamber Music

The talent of individual musicians will also shine in a series of three chamber music concerts programmed and performed by Orchestra musicians. Held in the Lindahl Auditorium at Orchestra Hall, the concerts will take place on October 25, 2026 (featuring pianist Simon Trpčeski alongside Minnesota Orchestra musicians in the Brahms' Piano Quartet No. 3); January 24, 2027 (featuring works by Barriere, Britten, Fisher and Beethoven) and April 11, 2027 (featuring works by Dvořák, Bacewicz and Schubert).

LIVE AT ORCHESTRA HALL

The Live at Orchestra Hall series presents thrilling performances and collaborations with popular artists of many genres, films presented live in concert and musical celebrations of a variety of holidays. The season is curated and primarily conducted by **Sarah Hicks**, the Orchestra's principal conductor of Live at Orchestra Hall.

Musical Stars

Trumpeter **Wynton Marsalis** will appear with the **Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra**, in his final season as its artistic director, on October 13, 2026. Vocalist-pianist **Ben Folds** brings his impressive catalogue to the Orchestra in a single performance on October 24, 2026, led by Sarah Hicks. On November 21, 2026, Hicks leads Grammy-nominated singer-songwriter-violinist **Andrew Bird** in his Minnesota Orchestra debut to celebrate the 20th anniversary of his acclaimed record *The Mysterious Production of Eggs*; the concert will include a beginning-to-end performance of the album with lush orchestrations. Phenomenal jazz talent **Samara Joy**—dubbed a “classic jazz singer from a new generation” by NPR—makes her Minnesota Orchestra debut on February 27, 2027, and boundary-pushing alt-rockers **Guster** reimagine their music for full symphony orchestra in a pair of March 5-6, 2027, concerts.

The music of **21st-Century Broadway** will be celebrated in an April 17, 2027, program led by Steven Reineke and featuring four vocal soloists to bring to life songs from *Wicked*, *Dear Evan Hansen* and *Hamilton*, among others. The music of Lin-Manuel Miranda's *Hamilton* will be showcased again on June 5, 2027, when Tony and Grammy Award-winning singer **Leslie Odom, Jr.** returns to sing the best of Broadway and the American songbook. Conductor **Steve Hackman** takes the podium on June 25, 2027, for a genre-bending concert that pairs the music of **Beethoven x Beyoncé**, including a fusion of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony with Beyoncé's soaring “Halo.” On June 26, 2027, violinist and drag performance artist **Thorgy Thor**, the self-proclaimed “Queen of Classical Music” who is well-known from appearances on *RuPaul's Drag Race*, debuts with the Orchestra on Pride weekend.

U.S. Bank Movies & Music Series

The Minnesota Orchestra's movies and music programming presents live performances of film scores while the major motion pictures are screened in high definition above the stage. The series launches with *Star Wars: Return of the Jedi* in four October 2026 performances, followed by *Vertigo*, Alfred Hitchcock's classic thriller with a harrowing score from Bernard Herrmann for Halloween weekend. Sarah Hicks leads DreamWorks' *How to Train Your Dragon* (the original 2010 animated version) over Thanksgiving weekend, and in January 2027 the multi-Academy Award-winning 1984 epic *Amadeus* brings the magnificence of Mozart to Orchestra Hall in three performances that will also feature the Minnesota Chorale. The Chorale joins the Orchestra again in May 2027 performances of *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban in Concert*[™], the third film in the series and the last to be scored by John Williams. Steven Spielberg's blockbuster *Jaws*, featuring another unforgettable score by Williams, comes to Orchestra Hall in June 2027.

Holiday Concerts

The Orchestra's holiday offerings in December 2026 begin with **A Charlie Brown Christmas: Live at the Symphony** on December 8-9. The production features actors bringing the beloved *Peanuts* characters to life, alongside big-screen animations and Vince Guaraldi's jazz-infused score, conducted by **Jason Seber**. The featured holiday film is *Home Alone in Concert*, spotlighting the Minnesota Boychoir in four performances, December 11-13. Conductor **Jane Glover** returns December 18-19 for performances of Handel's *Messiah*, featuring soprano **Lauren Snouffer**, mezzo **Clara Osowski**, tenor **Eric Ferring**, bass-baritone **Michael Sumuel** and the **Minnesota Chorale**. Orchestra trumpeter **Charles Lazarus** and his brass ensemble bring a jazzy holiday vibe in **Merry & Bright** on Sunday, December 20, and the season concludes with **A New Year's Celebration**, December 31-January 1, 2027, featuring Principal Harp **Cheryl Losey Feder** in dances by Debussy. Led by **Carlos Miguel Prieto**, the celebratory program concludes with Ravel's *Boléro* to welcome the new year.

Holiday celebrations are interwoven through the spring season as well. The Orchestra will mark its sixth annual **Lunar New Year** concert on February 19, 2027, toasting the Year of the Goat in a concert led by Molly Turner and featuring liuqin soloist Yang Ge. Conductor Kellen Gray leads the Orchestra's fifth annual **Juneteenth** concert on June 17, 2027, spotlighting vocalist **Imani-Grace Cooper**.

EDUCATION AND FAMILY CONCERTS

A tradition since 1911, the Minnesota Orchestra's **Young People's Concerts** are designed for students in grades 1-6. Scheduled during the school day, they provide educational field trips for student and home school students across Minnesota. Over the course of the 2026-27 season, the

Orchestra will present three distinct programs encompassing 18 total performances. These concerts include:

- Peter and the Wolf (October 2026)
- Under the Red Lanterns (February 2027)
- Philharmonia Fantastique (April 2027)

The 2026-27 season also features two **Family Concerts**. Led by Søndergård, the first shares the *Musical Tales of Hans Christian Andersen* (November 2026) and the second, conducted by Molly Turner, celebrates the Lunar New Year in *Under the Red Lanterns* (February 2027). Both are presented as one-hour programs designed for young audiences and individuals with autism or sensory sensitivities.

The Orchestra will also offer three small ensemble **Sensory Friendly** concerts in the intimate space of the Target Atrium, hosted by music therapist Lyndie Walker. Programs are scheduled for October 17, 2026, March 20, 2027, and May 18, 2027.

TICKET PURCHASING INFORMATION

Ticket packages of three or more concerts are on sale beginning March 13 and can be purchased at minnesotaorchestra.org or by calling 612-371-5642. Single tickets for the Minnesota Orchestra's 2026-27 programs will be available on July 28, 2026. For groups of 10 or more, call 612-371-5662.

The 2026-27 Classical Season is presented by Ameriprise Financial.

The Movies & Music series is presented by U.S. Bank.

The Chamber Music Series is sponsored by Dr. Jennine and John* Speier.
**in remembrance*

The Family Concert series is sponsored by PNC.

Programs on December 18-19, February 25-26, and April 9-10 are supported by Dr. Jennine Speier and her late husband John, dedicated advocates for advancing the work of women conductors

Young People's Concerts are presented by 3M, Ameriprise Financial, Midwest Radiology, RBC Wealth Management and YPSCA.

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All programs, artists, dates, times and prices subject to change.

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