NORDIC SOUNDSCAPES
SØNDERGÅRD, PARKER AND SIBELIUS

Thomas Søndergård, conductor
Jon Kimura Parker, piano
Brian Newhouse, broadcast host

THU NOV 5 11AM | FRI NOV 6 8PM | SAT NOV 7 7PM

Nordic Soundscapes is generously supported by ***Karen and David Grandstrand.***

Edvard Grieg/ orch. Hans Sitt	Selections from Norwegian Dances, Opus 35 I. Allegro marcato IV. Allegro molto	**CA. 14′**
Anders Hillborg	Concerto No. 2 for Piano and Orchestra, *The MAX Concerto* [in one movement] *Jon Kimura Parker, piano*	**CA. 21′**
	INTERMISSION	**CA. 20′**
Jean Sibelius	Symphony No. 2 in D major, Opus 43 Allegretto Andante, ma rubato Vivacissimo Finale: Allegro moderato	**CA. 44′**

Profiles of the conductor, soloist and broadcast host appear on pages 12, 53 and 54.
Visit minnesotaorchestra.org/pre for details about pre-concert activities.

THANK YOU

The 2026-27 Classical season is presented by **Ameriprise Financial.**

Friday night Classical concerts air live on YourClassical Minnesota Public Radio. The November 6 concert will also be broadcast live on Minnesota PBS and stream live on the Minnesota Orchestra's YouTube channel. Learn more at minnesotaorchestra.org/TIMO.



EDVARD GRIEG

B: June 15, 1843
Bergen, Norway

D: September 4, 1907
Bergen, Norway

Selections from Norwegian Dances, Opus 35, orchestrated by Hans Sitt

COMPOSED: 1880 (original two-piano version); 1890 (Sitt orchestration)

Very few classical composers are more closely identified with the music of their home country than Norway's Edvard Grieg. Except for his beloved Piano Concerto and some chamber music, almost all of Grieg's music that we hear today was based on Norwegian sources.

FOLK TUNES SHOW THE WAY

As a young man, Grieg followed the path of many promising musicians from northern Europe, leading him to Leipzig. There he learned the musical language of past German masters from Bach to Beethoven, but he realized that this formal training could only take him so far. "It then struck me that I could develop myself further only on a national foundation. It was our Norwegian folk tunes that showed me the way," he later recalled. Grieg embraced his national identity, saying, "To paint in music the Norwegian landscape, Norwegian life, Norwegian history and Norwegian folk poetry was, for me, where I believed I could achieve something."

In 1880 Grieg wrote his four Norwegian Dances, Opus 35, for piano four hands—which is to say, two players sharing one keyboard. This was and remains a popular way for amateurs and professionals to make music together. Brahms' Hungarian Dances and Dvořák's Slavonic Dances are well-known examples in this genre. For his set, Grieg used original Norwegian melodies found in the collection *Old and New Mountain Tunes*, published by Ludvig Mathias Lindeman.

Grieg's publisher wanted orchestral versions of the new dances, but the composer did not want to make the arrangements himself. Hans Sitt was given the job and in 1890 produced the wonderfully idiomatic settings heard today.

ENERGETIC AND DRAMATIC DANCES

This week's performances include the first and fourth movements from the set of dances.

ALLEGRO MARCATO. Grieg's first dance is announced by a curtain-raising "ta-daaa!" for full orchestra. A rollicking setting of *Sinclair's March* follows. The high spirits of the march fade into a central interlude featuring a lyrical melody played by the oboe. The march returns with its manic "oompah" accompaniment and the movement is brought to a breathless conclusion.

ALLEGRO MOLTO. Dance No. 4 follows the same three-part form as the preceding dances, but with the addition of a brooding introduction complete with a dramatic horn call. The clouds part with the appearance of a lively country dance known as a *halling*. Contrast is provided by a slower section that places the mournful melody of the introduction in dialogue with fragments of the dance tune. The *halling* is reprised, and Grieg rounds off the movement with a coda in which the rhythmic energy ebbs away only to be interrupted by a final burst of Norwegian sunshine that brings the curtain down on the dances.

Instrumentation: 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, cymbals, triangle and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY **JEFFREY STIRLING.**



ANDERS HILLBORG

B: May 31, 1954
Sollentuna, Sweden

Concerto No. 2 for Piano and Orchestra, *The MAX Concerto*

PREMIERED:
October 12, 2023

We often think of the piano concerto as a genre of a singular, virtuosic hero soloist playing against the orchestra, with fistfuls of notes being hurled through hammers and strings at the ensemble, its preordained march towards the final cadenza and triumphant punctuation by the entire ensemble. Swedish composer Anders Hillborg's 2023 Piano Concerto No. 2, *The MAX Concerto*, strives to amend this tradition, giving shape to a new function of the soloist, as a virtuosic compatriot of the ensemble, playing with the textures and harmonic overtones of the ensemble—a work that prefers complement and curiosity rather than contrast.

The concerto's subtitle, *The MAX Concerto*, is a cheeky nod to the premiering soloist, the giant of the 20th and 21st centuries Emanuel

"Manny" Ax (shortened as "M. Ax" to form the concerto's title). The concerto was commissioned for Ax by the San Francisco Symphony; these forces premiered the work on October 12, 2023, with a close friend of Hillborg's, Esa-Pekka Salonen, on the conductor's podium.

A SINGULAR CONCERTO IN TEN SECTIONS

Despite its *MAX* title, Hillborg's concerto does not maximize the orchestra's size; rather, it is relatively light on forces. The lean complement of winds and brass is magnified through Hillborg's deft attention to orchestration and color. The 21-minute concerto flows continuously through ten seamless sections. Throughout, the individual sections continually recast the piano soloist's role—grand, toy, hard, soft, ascending—interspersed with moments of reflection and pause—*Mist* and *Chorales and Echo Chamber*. As with his 2006 orchestral work *Eleven Gates*, Hillborg returned to the completed music and gave its delineated sections evocative titles.

The opening, *Grand Piano*, features grand flourishes, like a refracted nod to Beethoven's famed *Emperor* Concerto. The two *Mist* sections act as a subtle breath from the ensemble, with spectral textures of sustained notes slowly shifting in and out of focus. The *Toy Piano* sections feature light, bright, almost childlike figures with a twinkling repetition and pattern-based texture in the translucent upper register. *Chorales and Echo Chamber* sections feature Baroque-like ornamentation from the piano with long sustained chorales punctuated by harp and crotales, while winds answer with oscillating echoes, creating a dual echo effect. *Hard Piano* has a faster-moving texture from the soloist, with a jagged, bluesy feel that drives towards the exposed solo cadenza. The orchestra and pianist reprise the opening theme before *Soft Piano* arrives, with sweeping fluid arpeggios flowing seamlessly into the following second *Chorales and Echo Chamber* section, gradually picking up the winds' echo gesture. The final section, *Ascending Piano*, offers a last celestial reflection, with sustained notes from earlier in the work reemerging with their spectral delicacy. The piano in this section is slightly more declamatory than in other "Piano" sections, its dense chordal sonorities radiating outward into the ensemble as the work dissipates until one final flick upward brings the concerto to a peaceful but arresting close.

Instrumentation: solo piano with orchestra 2 flutes (both doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets (1 doubling bass clarinet), 2 bassoons (1 doubling contrabassoon), 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 2 trombones, conga, crotales, 2 tom-toms, glockenspiel, chimes, harp and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY **NICHOLAS LANDRUM.**



JEAN SIBELIUS

B: December 8, 1865
Hämeenlinna, Finland

D: September 20, 1957
Järvenpää, Finland

Symphony No. 2 in D major, Opus 43

PREMIERED:
March 8, 1902

Jean Sibelius' Second Symphony is one of several of the composer's works linked to the man to whom it is dedicated, Baron Axel Carpelan. Carpelan, an amateur violinist, first introduced himself to Sibelius in October 1900, but he had already been writing letters to the composer, full of advice, suggestions, interference, trivia, insight, gossip, hypochondriac laments and unsolicited opinions. Even before their meeting, Carpelan had commanded Sibelius to go to Italy, and his intuition was on target.

AN EXTRAORDINARY TURNAROUND

In February 1901 Sibelius arrived in Rapallo, just below Genoa. Still depressed by the death of his youngest daughter, Kirsti, from typhus the year before, worried about the tough line taken toward Finland by Russia, inclined to drink and smoke too much, his marriage uneasy, the composer was in poor shape. But the tonic effect of Italy was extraordinary.

By May, home again, Sibelius had accomplished much, particularly by way of sketching what he thought of as a four-movement orchestral fantasy before realizing it was a real symphony. When the first performances took place—four concerts in March 1902, with Sibelius conducting the Helsinki Philharmonic—the composer's triumph was complete.

THE SYMPHONY: COHERENCE AND FRAGMENTATION

ALLEGRETTO. At an easygoing pace, strings quietly play a series of 11 chords that might be the beginning of a theme or an accompaniment in search of a theme. The 11 chords are repeated, then just the first five, twice. Now, in darker colors, the process begins again. Only this time, woodwinds and clarinets add a prettily chirping melody. Before the oboes and clarinets have gotten very far, the horns tell them they have the character all wrong, it should be soulful and slower. The woodwinds resume their version. The strings, having first experimented to see what the woodwind tune sounds like when you play it pizzicato, upside down and very slowly, return to a basic-Finnish version of their chords; that is, only the gesture remains, the

tune is gone. The horns carry on with their ruminations. And they all seem pretty much to ignore one another.

Gradually we come to feel the coherence of this music. What Sibelius wants us to perceive as most important, he positions accordingly, playing it more often or more emphatically. It is as though he had set himself the task of discovering the coherence and hierarchical placement of all these fragments. He himself put it more picturesquely when he once wrote, "It is as though the Almighty had thrown the pieces of a mosaic down from the floor of heaven and told me to put them together." So, stones into mosaic, that is the scenario of this movement.

ANDANTE, MA RUBATO. A timpani roll sets the scene for the second movement. Basses alternating with cellos, both pizzicato, spell out a long line. Horns and timpani add punctuation to the bassoon melody, and quickly the heat is turned up, everything becoming louder, faster and more agitated. Antiphonal cries flung back and forth between winds and strings push the music to an almost strident climax; from there, it falls back in exhaustion from *fff* to *ppp*. When the music resumes after a long silence, the world has changed. Peace, however, is short-lived. Fragmentation overpowers coherence, and the music ends with a troubling abruptness.

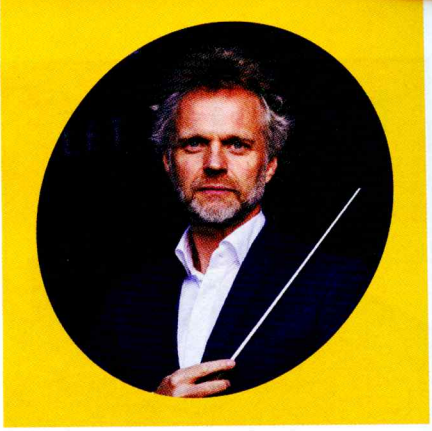
VIVACISSIMO. A version of Sibelius' buzzing-string music sets the very quick scherzo in motion. A long silence, broken only by five drumbeats that descend from *p* to *pppp*, clears the air for the trio, an oboe melody, distinctly *triste,* that begins with nine repetitions of its initial note. The scherzo begins again, the trio returns; but before long a new idea—three ascending notes—insists on making itself heard, and this soon bursts forth as the principal theme of the finale.

FINALE: ALLEGRO MODERATO. This theme, simple as it is, generates powerfully thrusting forward motion. The most fascinating feature of this *Finale,* however, is a wistful melody played obsessively over running eighth-notes in the lower strings. This passage was written in memory of the composer's sister-in-law, who had recently taken her own life. The issue of this obsession when it seizes the music for the second time is the renewed blaze of D major in which the symphony so triumphantly ends.

Instrumentation: 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani and strings

PROGRAM NOTE EXCERPTED FROM THE LATE **MICHAEL STEINBERG'S** *THE SYMPHONY: A LISTENER'S GUIDE* (OXFORD, 1995), USED WITH PERMISSION.

PROFILE
THOMAS SØNDERGÅRD



Danish conductor Thomas Søndergård, now in his fourth season as music director of the Minnesota Orchestra, is a highly regarded conductor in both the orchestral and opera spheres. He has earned a reputation for incisive interpretations of works by composers from his native Denmark, a great versatility in a broad range of repertoire, and a collaborative approach with the musicians he leads.

Søndergård first conducted the Minnesota Orchestra in December 2021, establishing an immediate rapport with musicians and audiences. Highlights of his 2026–27 season here will include Sound Unbound performances of Puccini's *Tosca* and a festival of music from Nordic countries. The Orchestra's first album with him, released by Pentatone, features works of Adès including the Violin Concerto with Leila Josefowicz, while a forthcoming album will include two Prokofiev symphonies.

Søndergård is in his final season as music director of the Royal Scottish National Orchestra (RSNO), after which he will become music director emeritus. He previously served as principal conductor and musical advisor to the Norwegian Radio Orchestra and then as principal conductor of the BBC National Orchestra of Wales (BBC NOW). As a guest conductor he has led major European and North American orchestras including the Berlin Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony, Gewandhaus Orchestra, London Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic and New York Philharmonic. This season, in addition to a full slate of RSNO concerts at home and on a European tour, he appears as guest conductor with the Gürzenich-Orchestra Cologne, Royal Danish Opera and City of Birmingham Symphony.

Søndergård began his music career as a timpanist, joining the Royal Danish Orchestra after graduating from the Royal Danish Academy of Music. He made his conducting debut in 2005, leading the Royal Danish Opera in the premiere of Ruders' *Kafka's Trial* to wide acclaim; he has returned subsequently many times to the Royal Danish Opera. His discography includes Vilde Frang's debut recording of violin concertos by Sibelius and Prokofiev with the WDR Symphony Orchestra Cologne; numerous works by Poul Ruders; the Lutosławski and Dutilleux concertos with cellist Johannes Moser and the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra; Sibelius works with BBC NOW; and Prokofiev and Strauss works with the RSNO.

For more information, visit minnesotaorchestra.org.



JON KIMURA PARKER,
PIANO

Pianist Jon Kimura Parker, known for his charismatic and dynamic performances, has performed in major international venues including the Berlin Philharmonie and Beijing Concert Hall. Parker serves as artistic director of the Honens International Piano Competition, artistic advisor for the Orcas Island Chamber Music Festival and chairs the keyboard faculty at Rice University's Shepherd School of Music. He was formerly creative partner for Summer at Orchestra Hall. An eclectic and collaborative artist, Parker has performed with Yo-Yo Ma, Susan Graham and Dessa, among others. He co-founded the Montrose Trio and toured Off the Score with Police drummer Stewart Copeland. A Gold Medalist at the 1984 Leeds International Piano Competition, Parker studied with Edward and Keiko Parker, Lee Kum-Sing, Marek Jablonski and Adele Marcus at Juilliard. He is an Officer of the Order of Canada and holds honorary doctorates from the University of British Columbia and the Royal Conservatory of Music. More: jonkimuraparker.com.



JULIAN PELLICANO,
CONDUCTOR

Known for his versatility across a broad spectrum of genres, dynamic interpretations and meticulous technique, American-Canadian conductor Julian Pellicano is a conductor with the National Ballet of Canada and music director of the Okanagan Symphony Orchestra. Passionate about the intersection of music and dance, he has conducted numerous classical and contemporary ballet productions. His film project credits encompass more than 40 titles including Miloš Forman's *Amadeus*, many films scored by John Williams, Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* with its original 1927 score, as well as recent blockbusters and classic films. He has conducted orchestras and ballet companies in North America and abroad, including the Seattle Symphony, San Francisco Symphony, Vancouver Symphony, Hong Kong Ballet, and Orquestra Sinfônica de Porto Alegre, among many others. More: julianpellicano.com.



ENRICO LOPEZ-YAÑEZ,
CONDUCTOR

nrico Lopez-Yañez is one of the most novative and in-demand conductors North America. He is the Dallas ymphony's newly appointed creative rector and principal conductor of ops and specials, and also serves principal pops conductor of the etroit and Pacific symphonies and rincipal guest conductor of pops at e Indianapolis Symphony. He was reviously principal pops conductor of e Nashville Symphony. Highlights his 2026–27 season include concerts ith Aida Cuevas, Bernadette Peters, ina Menzel, Megan Hilty, Cody Fry, etter Than Ezra, Mandy Gonzalez nd Pepe Aguilar, as well as the ew York Philharmonic, Baltimore ymphony and Cincinnati Pops. As composer and arranger, he has ritten for artists such as Big Sean nd Mariachi Los Camperos, and has een commissioned by the Baltimore, etroit and Indianapolis symphonies. e is artistic director and co-under of Symphonica Productions, LC, which develops pops, family nd educational concerts. More: nricolopezyanez.com.



BRIAN NEWHOUSE,
BROADCAST HOST

For the performance on Friday, November 6, Brian Newhouse serves as host and writer of the Minnesota PBS and online livestream *This Is Minnesota Orchestra*. Newhouse hosted his first live Minnesota Orchestra radio broadcast in 1983, and for much of the next four decades welcomed Minnesota Public Radio listeners to the Orchestra's concerts. Off-air, he became managing director of MPR's classical programming, which reaches nearly five million listeners each week. With degrees in voice and English from Luther College, he had an active professional singing career alongside his work in radio and earned an MFA in creative writing from Hamline University, winning a Peabody Award for writing the radio documentary *The Mississippi: River of Song*. In 2020 he joined the Orchestra's staff as associate vice president of individual giving, retiring at the end of 2024. In February 2026, E.C. Schirmer published Dale Warland's *Choral Conducting: A Life of Building*, edited by Newhouse.