Program 2

Thursday,
October 22, 2026
7:30pm

Saturday,
October 24, 2026
7:30pm

Sunday,
October 25, 2026
3:00pm

Jan Lisiecki Plays Grieg

Antonello Manacorda, conductor
Jan Lisiecki, piano

Kaija Saariaho
Ciel d'hiver

Edvard Grieg
Piano Concerto in A Minor, Op. 16
I. Allegro molto moderato
II. Adagio
III. Allegro moderato molto e marcato

Intermission

Johannes Brahms
Symphony No. 2 in D Major, Op. 73
I. Allegro non troppo
II. Adagio non troppo
III. Allegretto grazioso (quasi andantino)
IV. Allegro con spirito

The October 24 performance is generously supported by the Estate of Ann Coneybeare.

Ciel d'hiver *by Kaija Saariaho presented under license from G. Schirmer Inc. and Associated Music Publishers, copyright owners.*

Kaija Saariaho (1952–2023)

Ciel d'hiver

Composed 2013

10 min

In 2000, Finnish composer Kaija Saariaho captivated the opera world with the transcendent première at the Salzburg Festival of the first of her six works in the form—*L'Amour de loin* (*Love from Afar*). The meditative, ethereal love story was based on the tale of Jaufre Rudel, a 12th-century French troubadour who falls in love with a woman across the sea whom he has never seen, the Countess of Tripoli.

Supporting the poetic libretto by Amin Maalouf is Saariaho's mystical, sometimes haunting score, in which she draws on percussion instruments, electronic elements, and the flute, and uses the chorus at times like musical instruments, interacting with the orchestra with non-word phrases. In short, the composer, who died in 2023 at the all-too-young age of 70, created a wholly original aural world that made the opera an instant masterwork and further established her as one of the transformative composers of her time.

After Saariaho's musical studies in Finland, her artistic outlook was turned upside down in 1980 by the first of her three years at the Darmstadt Summer Course in Germany, where she met such pioneers of spectral and computer music as Gérard Grisey, Tristan Murail, and Hugues Dufourt. In 1982, she moved to Paris to study at IRCAM—an institute founded by famed composer Pierre Boulez that is devoted to the research of music and sound—and remained in France for the rest of her life and was marked by that country's culture and language.

Saariaho soon began writing computer-assisted works like her *Jardin secret* trilogy (1985–1987), and she went on to frequently combine electronics with live performance. At the same time, she emphasized timbre, texture, and other qualities of sound over concerns surrounding melody and harmony.

Although the composer is arguably best remembered for her work in opera, she has written important works in other forms as well. Her *Ciel d'hiver* (*Winter Sky*), is a 10-minute arrangement of the second movement of her 2002 symphonic piece, *Orion*, which was commissioned by Musique nouvelle en liberté. The Orchestre Lamoureux presented the world première in 2014 in Paris, and it has since been performed more than 100 times in North America and Europe, making it one of the most successful new classical works of the last decade or so.

Ciel d'hiver opens with a haunting piccolo solo hovering over a wash of quiet, low-register strings, which sets the tone for this entire spare, mysterious, and sometimes other-worldly work that continues with solos for a few other instruments, including a searching, inward-looking one for clarinet. About midway through, the piece builds to a kind of climax, but even with the slightly heightened emotions at that point, it still remains restrained and self-contained.

The overall feeling is one of meditative unsettledness, with some spooky touches along the way, like eerie slides in the strings and a creepy, iterative motif for the celeste that begins about halfway through the piece. Much as Saariaho did in *L'Amour de loin*, she sculpts in *Ciel d'hiver* a distinctive, transporting soundscape, but she manages to do it with more minimal means and conventional instrumentation—caveats that make her accomplishment here in some ways even more impressive.

—Program note by Kyle MacMillan

Edvard Grieg (1843–1907)

Piano Concerto in A Minor, Op. 16

Composed 1868

30 min

In 1864, Edvard Grieg befriended another young Norwegian composer, Rikard Nordraak. Nordraak believed that the future of their country's art music lay not in a continued reliance on Germanic models, but in tapping into the rich heritage of folk song. Grieg quickly came to share this view. Nordraak died of consumption in March 1866, at 23. For a time, Grieg's grief led him to consider abandoning the nationalist path he and his friend had agreed upon, but a visit to Nordraak's grave convinced him to stay the course.

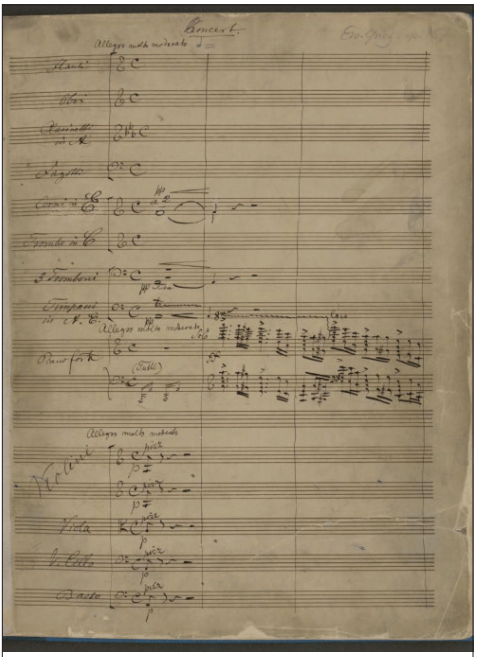
Grieg expressed himself most successfully in miniature forms. The songs and brief piano works, such as the many books of *Lyric Pieces*, stand among his finest achievements. His only significant large-scale instrumental composition is this piano concerto.

The newly married, 25-year-old composer spent the summer of 1868 in Denmark, living and working in the village of Søllerød. He shared a house with pianist Edmund Neupert, who gave him regular advice on the concerto's solo part, and to whom, in gratitude, he dedicated the piece. The première proved hugely successful. This led to numerous further performances, and the foundation of Grieg's international fame.

The first movement boasts one of the most familiar openings in the entire concerto repertoire. Much of its memorability springs from its very simplicity. The movement proper wears a rather melancholy expression, although warmth is amply present as well. A long, taxing solo cadenza near the end says about all there is to say, so Grieg follows it with only the briefest of summings-up.

The second movement, ushered in by muted strings, is a tender song without words. The finale follows on directly, led off by an insistent, almost march-like theme. It is modelled on the *springdans* (leaping dance), a Norwegian folk step. The second theme offers strong contrast. At first it has the character of as wistful and poetic a melody as Grieg ever penned. In the concluding pages he demonstrates that it also has the capacity to become a grand, triumphant hymn.

—Program note by Don Anderson



The first page of Grieg's Piano Concerto manuscript, clearly showing the solo instrument's iconic opening flourish.

Johannes Brahms (1833–1897)

Symphony No. 2 in D Major, Op. 73

Composed 1877

39 min

In the late 19th century, the symphony, though lacking the "progressive" credentials of the Lisztian symphonic poem or the Wagnerian music drama, remained the most hallowed genre of instrumental music. The symphony was equated with Beethoven, after all, and, to the composer who took it on, the pressure to match Beethoven's standard could be crippling. To write a symphony was, implicitly, to take up a gauntlet—and no one felt this more keenly than Brahms. He was past 40 and had written almost every other kind of music before he went public, in 1876, with his First Symphony, over which he had laboured for more than 15 years. It was a self-consciously "sublime" and monumental work sufficiently dramatic in its trajectory and elevated in its rhetoric to merit comparison with Beethoven's Fifth and Ninth. By contrast, Brahms composed his Second Symphony astonishingly quickly, between June and mid-October 1877, just a year after the completion of his First. Hans Richter conducted the Vienna Philharmonic in its public première, on December 30, and Brahms later led performances around Germany.

The Second appears, superficially, to be the sunniest, most relaxed, and genial of Brahms's four symphonies—his pastorale—though the music throbs with dark undercurrents and is full of ambiguities that may reflect what Brahms called his "severely melancholic" temperament. Much of the first movement flows like a waltz, yet, significantly, the passages that anchor its structure—introduction, development, coda—are profoundly conflicted. The idyllic tone of the opening bars, for instance, is immediately undermined by sombre, skeptical trombones and ominous timpani; later, at the heart of a stormy development, there are some searing dissonances from the trombones. Though expansive and pervasively lyrical, the first movement is as structurally concentrated and organic as Brahms's other mature instrumental music, and unfolds in rich counterpoint. Several motifs introduced at the beginning—especially the three-note motif planted by the cellos and basses in the first bar—serve as the bricks from which the movement is built. Indeed, a complex network of thematic relationships binds the whole symphony together.

The adagio is long, imposing, and intensely passionate. Here the melancholy implicit within the first movement is given full voice. The music is frequently ambiguous harmonically, and in the middle of the movement there are two strange transitional passages in which a trombone and other bass instruments intone the three-note motif from the first movement as the strings quake and the woodwinds stammer—like something out of Weber's opera *Der Freischütz*. The brief third movement is one of those gentle pastorales Brahms liked to write in place of a minuet or scherzo (the trumpets, trombones, tuba, and timpani are silent). The main theme is a stylized country dance, like a *ländler*, and the two contrasting (somewhat Bohemian) trio sections are speeded-up variations on that theme. (Brahms wrote this symphony in the "cheerful and lovely" countryside of southern Austria.) The finale is optimistic and full of brio. Though not without its own dark moments, it provides, at last, the euphoric confirmation that the first movement never attains, and so can be heard as a resolution of the symphony's many ambiguities.

—Program note by Kevin Bazzana



Antonello Manacorda, conductor

These performances mark Antonello Manacorda's TSO début.

An Italian with a strong affinity for the German repertoire, and a "natural melodist" (*Der Tagesspiegel*) who knows how to convincingly transfer the attention to detail of stylistically informed interpretative practice to the large ensemble, Antonello Manacorda is a true orchestral practitioner whose artistic creativity is combined with a desire for a collaborative style of music-making. His versatility as a conductor is rooted in his rich musical and cultural background: Born in Turin into an Italian-French family, educated in Amsterdam, and based in Berlin for many years, Manacorda was a founding member and long-time concertmaster of the Mahler Chamber Orchestra, founded by Claudio Abbado, before studying conducting with the legendary Finnish artist Jorma Panula. Today, Manacorda can be heard just as often in opera productions at the world's most important opera houses as he can at the podium of leading symphony orchestras. Since summer 2025, he has been the honorary conductor of the Kammerakademie Potsdam, which he had led as artistic director and principal conductor since 2010. Manacorda has been appointed Music and Artistic Director of Les Siècles, one of Europe's leading ensembles for historically informed performance practice, starting in the 2027/28 season. The orchestra was founded in 2003 by François-Xavier Roth with the aim of applying the art of stylistically authentic performance to every musical era. Manacorda will continue the ensemble's successful programming while further refining its affinity for the French repertoire through the inclusion of works from the German and broader European musical traditions.

Opera productions in the 2025/26 season took Manacorda to the Opéra national de Paris (*Le nozze di Figaro*)—where he returns in the 2026/27 season with *Idomeneo*—Royal Opera House in Covent Garden (*La traviata*), Deutsche Oper Berlin (*Zar und Zimmermann*), and Metropolitan Opera (*La traviata*). In the field of symphonic music, Manacorda conducts subscription weeks in the 2026/27 season with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, NHK Symphony Orchestra, and San Francisco Symphony, amongst others.

In recent seasons, Manacorda has worked with the Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, Berlin Philharmonic, Cleveland Orchestra, Danish National Symphony Orchestra, Gewandhaus Orchestra, Mahler Chamber Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra, Sächsische Staatskapelle Dresden, Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich, and others. He celebrated great successes at the Metropolitan Opera in New York and the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden, as well as with new productions of Weber's *Der Freischütz* directed by Dmitri Tcherniakov at the Bavarian State Opera and of Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* at the Opéra national de Paris. A highlight celebrated by audiences and press alike was his operatic début at the 2025 Salzburg Festival conducting the Vienna Philharmonic in a new production by Ulrich Rasche of Donizetti's *Maria Stuarda*.

With the Kammerakademie Potsdam, Manacorda has recorded a Mendelssohn cycle and a Schubert cycle for Sony Classical, both of which have been critically acclaimed. At the 2015 Echo Klassik awards, the Kammerakademie Potsdam received the prize in the Orchestra of the Year category for its complete cycle of Schubert symphonies. In October 2022, Manacorda and the Kammerakademie Potsdam were awarded the Opus Klassik in the same category for their recording of Mozart's last symphonies. Their recording of Beethoven's complete symphonies was released by Sony Classical in May 2024, and their recording of Beethoven's Fifth and Sixth Symphonies, previously released in October 2023, was awarded the Opus Klassik in the Best Symphonic Recording category.



Jan Lisiecki, piano

Jan Lisiecki made his TSO début in January 2012.

Canadian pianist Jan Lisiecki looks back on a career spanning a decade and a half on the world's greatest stages. He works closely with the foremost conductors and orchestras of our time, performing over a hundred concerts a year.

The 2026/27 season includes return engagements with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Orchestre National de France, Orchestra Sinfonica Nazionale della RAI, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, NDR Radiophilharmonie in Hanover, Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra, and Barcelona Symphony, where he opens the orchestra's season, among others. He also makes his long-awaited début with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and Sinfonieorchester Basel, and returns to the São Paulo State Symphony Orchestra for a two-week residency.

His current recital program juxtaposes various dances by Martinů, Szymanowski, Schubert, Chopin, Bartók, and Falla, and was recently presented in 25 cities worldwide, including at the Philharmonie Berlin, the Vienna Konzerthaus, and the Palau de la Música Catalana in Barcelona. It will next be heard in San Francisco, Portland, Cologne, Wiesbaden, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Ravello, and Trento, among other destinations.

Previous orchestra engagements include the New York Philharmonic, Berlin Philharmonic, Cleveland Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre de Paris, Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich, and Staatskapelle Dresden. Lisiecki is a fixture at major summer festivals across Europe and North America, has performed at the Salzburg Festival, and recently made his third appearance at the BBC Proms.

At the age of 15, Lisiecki signed an exclusive recording contract with Deutsche Grammophon. He has since released 11 acclaimed albums for the label, most recently *Mozart: Piano Concertos Nos. 9 & 22* with the Bamberger Symphoniker and Manfred Honeck in April 2026. His recordings have received numerous distinctions including a JUNO Award, Echo Klassik, *Gramophone* Critics' Choice, Diapason d'Or, and Edison Klassiek.

At 18, he received both the Leonard Bernstein Award and *Gramophone*'s Young Artist Award, becoming the youngest ever recipient of the latter. He was named UNICEF Canada Ambassador in 2012.



Jan Lisiecki leads the orchestra from the piano during *All Beethoven with Lisiecki* on February 5, 2025—one of his three appearances as a 2024/25 TSO Spotlight Artist.