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## Minnesota Orchestra takes off for Europe

BY ROB HUBBARD  
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All over Europe, people spend much of August "on holiday," and their travels often land them at one or more of the many festivals featuring music, theater and dance that dot the European landscape this month.

And, starting today, the Minnesota Orchestra will begin doing some festival hopping of its own. Osmo Vanska and the ensemble have been invited to some of the world's most esteemed classical music festivals, presenting six concerts in five countries in nine days. It's a whirlwind tour, but it's one of the most significant performing opportunities in the orchestra's 100-plus-year history.

Though recent air travel restrictions complicated final preparations for the flight, "it's been more an inconvenience, not something that would break or end the tour," said orchestra spokeswoman Gwen Pappas.

Some of the orchestra members who like to carry their instruments on the airplane won't be able to do so on flights out of the United Kingdom, Pappas said, but that only affects about 20 musicians — carrying a small flute or an expensive violin, for example. All the instruments will be packed in large crates. About 100 of the crates travel with the orchestra.

### LEGENDARY HALL

The first stop is Amsterdam, where the orchestra is to perform at the legendary Concertgebouw during the annual Robeco Zomerconcerten festival Wednesday evening. The orchestra's concertmaster, Jorja Fleezanis, said this is the concert about which she's most excited.

"The Concertgebouw is renowned for its acoustics," she said by phone from California. "It's one of those venues that just makes an orchestra sound glorious. There are many definitions of 'glorious,' but this is one that I think is just at that pinnacle of what it is to hear a great orchestra in a visceral, qualitative sense. It's like the cream of the cream."

"Glorious" has also been used to describe the voice of soprano Dawn Upshaw, who will solo on Osvaldo Golijov's Three Songs for Soprano and Orchestra at the Concertgebouw. But it's the other piece on the program, Gustav Mahler's Fifth Symphony, that Fleezanis sees as a key moment for the orchestra.

"When I think of Mahler and Amsterdam," she said, "I think of Willem Mengelberg and the Concertgebouw. This is a man who knew Mahler and who was bringing the music to light when the ink was still wet on the page. That's a very exciting collision of our programming and that venue, particularly. That's the one that's going to be most moving for me to play."

Then it's off to the Proms in London, where the orchestra will make its debut at classical music's most famous festival. It takes place at another venerable venue, the Royal Albert Hall, and will feature the same program as offered in Amsterdam. But Fleezanis said the atmosphere will be quite different.

"The Proms, I think, will really surprise some members of the orchestra who don't know the whole dynamic. ... There's this group of people lying at our feet, kind of caged there. They are the quintessential music lovers, in that they are willing to sacrifice sitting in a chair.

"But it's such an immense space. And then there's the whole historical significance of the hall surviving the bombing of London. And the idea that it trudged on. For a lot of people, it's a place that just signified what it is to survive."

### LIVE BROADCAST

The Proms concert will be broadcast live on Minnesota Public Radio at 1:30 p.m. Thursday (repeated Sept. 4) and will be videotaped for a Sept. 6 broadcast on Twin Cities Public Television.

The next stop is the Edinburgh Festival, arguably the world's greatest multidisciplinary festival, where the music of many genres is presented alongside theater, dance and opera. On Friday, pianist Llyr Williams will solo on Beethoven's Third Concerto alongside some Samuel Barber and Stravinsky.

Vanska's native Finland will host his orchestra at the Helsinki Festival, where they'll perform two concerts (Aug. 27-28). The first will feature Viktoria Mullova continuing the festival's 55-year-old tradition of having a different violinist perform the Sibelius Violin Concerto each year.

Audiences there will also hear the Mahler symphony and will be the only ones on the tour to hear what the orchestra does with a Beethoven symphony (the "Eroica").

Closing out the tour will be an Aug. 31 concert at the Ascona Festival in Locarno, Switzerland, where the Sibelius Violin Concerto and Mahler Fifth will be performed.

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## Notes from the tour

Keep up with the Minnesota Orchestra on tour in special reports on the A&E Live page and at [www.twincities.com](http://www.twincities.com) from one of our freelance contributors, Pamela Hill Nettleton, who is accompanying the orchestra (and her husband, assistant principal bass William Schrickel) on the tour. The orchestra will have photos, blogs and reviews on its site at [www.minnesotaorchestra.org](http://www.minnesotaorchestra.org).