

# Minnesota Orchestra

Osmo Vänskä, conductor | James Ehnes, violin

Thursday, September 14, 2017, 11 am | Orchestra Hall  
 Friday, September 15, 2017, 8 pm | Orchestra Hall  
 Saturday, September 16, 2017, 8 pm | Orchestra Hall

*These performances are dedicated to the memory of **Stanislaw Skrowaczewski**, the Minnesota Orchestra's music director from 1960 to 1979, who passed away last February at the age of 93.*

*With these concerts we gratefully recognize **Nancy and John Lindahl** for their generous contribution to the Minnesota Orchestra's **Investing in Inspiration** campaign.*

<b>John Adams</b>	<i>Short Ride in a Fast Machine (Fanfare for Great Woods)</i>	ca. 4'
<b>Maurice Ravel</b>	<i>Pavane pour une infante défunte (Pavane for a Dead Princess)</i>	ca. 6'
<b>Anders Hillborg</b>	Violin Concerto No. 2 * <i>James Ehnes, violin</i>	ca. 24'
	I N T E R M I S S I O N	ca. 20'
<b>Hector Berlioz</b>	<i>Roman Carnival Overture</i>	ca. 9'
<b>Igor Stravinsky</b>	Suite from <i>The Firebird</i> (1919 revision) Introduction and Dance of the Firebird Dance of the Princesses Infernal Dance of King Kashchei Berceuse Finale	ca. 19'

\* U.S. premiere; a Minnesota Orchestra co-commission

<b>OH+</b>	<p><b>Concert Preview</b> with Phillip Gainsley and James Ehnes                  Thursday, September 14, 10:15 am, Auditorium                  Friday, September 15, 7:15 pm, N. Bud Grossman Mezzanine                  Saturday, September 16, 7:15 pm, N. Bud Grossman Mezzanine</p>
<b>thank you</b>	<p>We recognize the generous corporate support of this performance by <b>General Mills</b>.</p>

Minnesota Orchestra concerts are broadcast live on Friday evenings on stations of **Classical Minnesota Public Radio**, including KSJN 99.5 FM in the Twin Cities.



**Osmo Vänskä**, conductor

Profile appears on page 8.



**James Ehnes**, violin

Canadian violinist James Ehnes first performed with the Minnesota Orchestra in 1993 and returns again in January 2018 to play the Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto. He has been featured with the major orchestras of Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, Pittsburgh and New York, and with the London Symphony, London Philharmonia, BBC Philharmonic, Czech Philharmonic, DSO Berlin and NHK Symphony, among many other ensembles. He has also performed recitals worldwide and is a

regular guest at Wigmore Hall in London. During the 2016-17 season he premiered Aaron Jay Kernis' Violin Concerto, written especially for him, with the Toronto, Seattle and Dallas symphony orchestras. His extensive discography has earned many awards including a Gramophone Award, a Grammy Award and 11 JUNO Awards. He was named 2017 Instrumentalist of the Year at the Royal Philharmonic Society Music Awards, is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, and in 2010 was appointed a Member of the Order of Canada. More: [jamesehnes.com](http://jamesehnes.com).

### one-minute notes

#### **Adams: *Short Ride in a Fast Machine***

Fast-paced and brimming with energy, Adams' *Short Ride* is steadily driven by persistent, pulsating wood blocks.

#### **Ravel: *Pavane pour une infante défunte***

Despite its somewhat deceptive title, Ravel's *Pavane for a Dead Princess* was not meant to evoke emotions of great sadness; rather, the composer intended to convey the delicate image of a young Spanish princess from long ago, engaging in a traditional 16th century dance.

#### **Hillborg: *Violin Concerto No. 2***

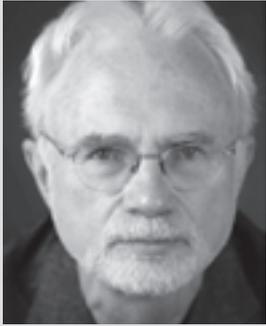
Hillborg's Second Violin Concerto invites listeners to stretch their ears as the solo violin and orchestra together traverse new territories of texture, color and musical contrast.

#### **Berlioz: *Roman Carnival Overture***

The Berlioz opera *Benvenuto Cellini* was a dismal failure, but the composer loved the work and extracted from it the themes and fragments with which he created the splendidly successful *Roman Carnival Overture*.

#### **Stravinsky: *Suite from The Firebird***

The heroic Prince Ivan and a magical Firebird are revealed with brilliant orchestral colors. The gentle dance of captive princesses, the prince's effort to free them, the evil sorcerer's defeat by the Firebird—all is painted in the most vivid musical imagery.



### John Adams

**Born:** February 15, 1947,  
Worcester, Massachusetts;  
now living in  
Berkeley, California

#### ***Short Ride in a Fast Machine*** **(*Fanfare for Great Woods*)**

**Premiered:** June 13, 1986

John Adams is one of the greatest success stories among today's "classical" composers, a success boosted in its earliest stages by one of the Minnesota Orchestra's past music directors, Edo de Waart, and by one of the Orchestra's former program annotators, the late Michael Steinberg. In one such nexus, the Orchestra co-commissioned and premiered one of Adams' most important compositions, the Violin Concerto, with de Waart conducting and then-Concertmaster Jorja Fleezanis as soloist at the 1994 premiere. Steinberg later wrote about this work in his highly-regarded book *The Concerto: A Listener's Guide*—with Adams being one of just four living composers spotlighted in the volume.

Virtually every major orchestra in the world, from Stockholm to Sydney and from Singapore to Syracuse, has played Adams' music. In fact, in some years he is the most frequently-programmed contemporary American composer on the schedules of major orchestras. Audiences invariably are seduced by his music's rhythmic energy, hypnotic pulsations, brilliant orchestration, and the imaginative ways in which he incorporates familiar concepts and materials into music uniquely his own and undeniably American. He is well-known for his historically-based operas including *Nixon in China*, *The Death of Klinghoffer* and *Doctor Atomic*, and for orchestral works including *On the Transmigration of Souls*, which won Adams the 2003 Pulitzer Prize for Music and the 2005 Grammy Award for Best Contemporary Composition.

Ensembles around the world are marking Adams' 70th birthday year in 2017; two highlights are an Adams residency with the Berlin Philharmonic and the world premiere of his latest opera, *Girls of the Golden West*, in San Francisco in November.

#### **a "ride in a terrific sports car"**

*Short Ride in a Fast Machine* is one of the most frequently-performed orchestral works by a living American composer. This four-minute concert opener was first performed on June 13, 1986, at the inaugural concert of the Great Woods Festival in Mansfield, Massachusetts (hence the work's subtitle, *Fanfare for Great Woods*), where the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra was in residence for the summer; Michael Tilson Thomas conducted the premiere.

The large orchestra includes two synthesizers and much percussion. The rhythmic activity, as befits the title, is driving and frenetic, the dynamic level almost consistently loud. As Michael Steinberg reported in his annotation for the San Francisco Symphony, "Adams describes the woodblock's persistence as 'almost sadistic' and thinks of the rest of the orchestra as running the gauntlet through that rhythmic tunnel." As for the title, Adams remarks: "You know how it is when someone asks you to ride in a terrific sports car, and then you wish you hadn't."

**Instrumentation:** 2 flutes, 2 piccolos, 2 oboes, English horn, 4 clarinets, 3 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 4 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, 2 synthesizers, snare drum, large bass drum, pedal bass drum, sizzle cymbal, suspended cymbal, tambourine, tamtam, triangle, high and low wood blocks, glockenspiel, crotales, xylophone and strings



### Maurice Ravel

**Born:** March 7, 1875, Ciboure,  
Pyrénées-Atlantiques, France  
**Died:** December 28, 1937,  
Paris, France

#### ***Pavane pour une*** ***infante défunte*** **(*Pavane for a Dead Princess*)**

**Premiered:** February 27, 1911

Throughout his compositional career, Ravel turned often to dance as inspiration. The waltz, minuet, bolero, habanera and pavane he all set twice or more; also given due attention were the malagueña, rigaudon and forlane. One of his first successful works was the exquisite piano miniature *Pavane pour une infante défunte*, written in 1899 while the composer was still a student, and dedicated to the Princess of Polignac, a noted patron of the arts. In the composer's words: "It is not a lament for a dead child, but an evocation of the pavane which might have been danced by a tiny princess such as was painted by Velasquez at the Spanish Court." The first performance of the solo piano version was given by Ricardo Viñes in Paris on April 5, 1902.

#### **an exquisite orchestration**

The *Pavane's* popularity grew even more when the composer orchestrated it in 1910. In Ravel's treatment of the pavane (a stately 16th-century Spanish court dance), we find a haunting, graceful melody set against a gently undulating rhythmic accompaniment. Strings are muted throughout, adding a touch of veiled mystery to the subtly archaic character. The small orchestra includes also a harp, an oboe, and pairs of flutes, clarinets, bassoons and horns. The orchestration's premiere was conducted by Sir Henry Wood in Manchester, England, on February 27, 1911.



Although Ravel did not leave a recording of himself conducting the work, he did critique the orchestral version's premiere. He lamented the *Pavane's* "excessively flagrant influence" of French Romantic composer Emmanuel Chabrier, and also claimed that the original piano version's popularity was due to what he considered its conservative, unimaginative character. Regardless of Ravel's assessment, the *Pavane's* quaint charm, evocative mood and idyllic tranquility have endeared it to millions, and no critic, not even the composer, can undo the touching effect this exquisite musical gem has on us.

**Instrumentation:** 2 flutes, oboe, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, harp and strings



### Anders Hillborg

**Born:** May 31, 1954,  
Sollentuna, Sweden;  
now living in  
Stockholm, Sweden

### Violin Concerto No. 2

**Premiered:** October 20, 2016

Minnesota Orchestra audiences first encountered the music of Swedish composer Anders Hillborg in 2014, when soprano Renée Fleming introduced Hillborg's *The Strand Settings* to Minnesota following the work's highly-acclaimed premiere in Carnegie Hall. This week we experience the American premiere of Hillborg's Second Violin Concerto, which was co-commissioned by the Minnesota Orchestra, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra and Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra.

### concertos, pop music and more

Concertos feature prominently in Hillborg's catalog. His first work of this kind, dating from 1992, was the First Violin Concerto. Also for solo violin is the *Bach Materia*, premiered this past March and due for its American premiere later this fall by the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra. He may be the only composer of his stature to have written both a Trombone Concerto and a Concerto for Two Trombones. Then there are concertos for piano, flute, percussion and oboe. Currently he is working on a Concerto for Orchestra. Hillborg received most of his musical training at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm, but he also absorbed what various visiting composers had to offer, especially the English avant-garde figure Brian Ferneyhough. His enormous range of activity encompasses music for orchestra, film scores and pop music. Commissions have come from such leading orchestras as the New York Philharmonic, Berlin Philharmonic, Los Angeles

Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Zurich's Tonhalle Orchestra and most of Sweden's major orchestras. In recent years he has been honored with the Swedish Gramophone Award for Best Classical CD of the Year for the disc *Eleven Gates*, which features four of his orchestral works; served as Roger D. Moore Distinguished Visitor in Composition at the University of Toronto; and was composer in residence with the NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchester in Hamburg.

### "like Dali's melting watches"

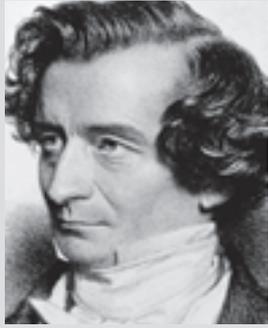
Conductor and composer Esa-Pekka Salonen has vividly described the characteristic contrasts inherent in Hillborg's music: "the static and the hyperactive, the mechanical and the human, the nobly beautiful and the banally brutal, the comic and the moving. Almost never sentimental, but surreal in a way—like Dali's melting watches." Other images suggested by Hillborg's music, taken from various sources, include "a seething sonic cauldron," "an aircraft revving up for take-off" and "a softly shimmering and slowly changing sonic mist." These qualities and more are found in the Second Violin Concerto, premiered by its dedicatee Lisa Batiashvili with Sakari Oramo conducting the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic on October 20, 2016.

The Second Violin Concerto is laid out in a single movement, lasting about 25 minutes. The soloist's role is tightly integrated with the orchestra, so much so that it is impossible to imagine one without the other. The emphasis is less on melody than on textures, colors, motoric patterns and the contrasts Hillborg draws from both orchestra and soloist, creating an absorbing, at times even fascinating voyage through a sonic landscape.

An uneasy stasis hangs over much of the music, broken on three occasions by short episodes of violent rhythmic activity. The dynamic range can explode from *ppp* to *fff* in a fraction of a second, or go the reverse route. A huge canvas is suggested by the vast difference in range between the lowest notes of the basses and the stratospheric lines of the solo violin. Hillborg's orchestra is not large, but he uses it with great imagination. At several points, woodwinds sound as though they are imitating the early-morning sounds of an aviary. Strings are often subdivided into multiple parts (up to 17), creating dense sound masses that slide like thick lava flows. In short, the Second Violin Concerto is a work that will stretch the ears of many listeners, but mostly in beguiling and captivating ways.

**Instrumentation:** solo violin with orchestra comprising 2 flutes (both doubling piccolo), 2 oboes (1 doubling English horn), 2 clarinets, bassoon, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 2 trombones, kick drum, 2 congas, pedal glockenspiel, crotales, chime in C-sharp, bass marimba and strings

*Program notes on the Adams, Ravel and Hillborg works by Robert Markow.*



### Hector Berlioz

**Born:** December 11, 1803,  
La Côte-St. André, France  
**Died:** March 8, 1869,  
Paris, France

### **Roman Carnival Overture**

**Premiered:** February 3, 1844

Berlioz made a characteristic choice when he decided to write his first opera about Benvenuto Cellini, the 16th-century goldsmith, sculptor, adventurer—and author of a self-conscious autobiography. Berlioz, who would later write his own splendidly self-conscious autobiography, was strongly drawn to the figure of Cellini, but the opera was a complete failure at its premiere in Paris in September 1838. It had only four performances, French audiences sneered at it as “Malvenuto Cellini,” and Berlioz noted, with typical detachment, that after the overture “the rest was hissed with admirable energy and unanimity.” Liszt led a successful revival at Weimar in 1852, but *Benvenuto Cellini* has not held the stage.

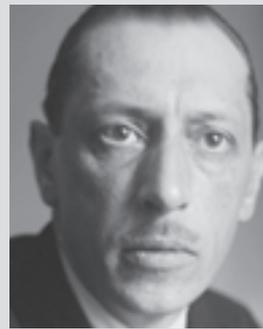
### an overture that outshines the opera

Berlioz was stung by the failure of the opera, but he continued to love its music, and years later he would speak of its “variety of ideas, an impetuous verve, and a brilliancy of musical coloring.” In 1843, five years after the failed premiere, he pulled out two of its themes and from them fashioned an overture that he planned to use as an introduction to the second tableau of the opera set in Rome’s Piazza Colonna during carnival season. Those two themes are the aria “O Teresa, vous que j’aime plus que la vie,” which Benvenuto sings to his 17-year-old lover in the first tableau, and the *saltarello* from the second tableau, which the players from Cassandro’s theater dance to attract crowds during the pre-Lenten festivities. Berlioz may have intended that his new overture would serve as part of the opera, but when he led the overture as a concert piece in Paris on February 3, 1844, it was such a success that it had to be encoored, and it has become one of his most popular works on its own, entirely divorced from the opera that gave it life.

The *Roman Carnival Overture*, as this music was eventually named, opens with a great flourish that hints at the *saltarello* theme to be heard later—Berlioz marks this flourish *Allegro assai* and further specifies that it should be *con fuoco*, “with fire.” The music quickly settles as the English horn sings Benvenuto’s plaintive love song, and this is extended briefly before the music leaps ahead at the *saltarello*, originally a dance from the

Mediterranean area in a lively 6/8 meter. This is a wonderful moment: the crispness of Berlioz’s rhythmic energy is nicely underlined by his decision to keep the strings muted during the first part of the *saltarello*. Along its spirited way, Berlioz brings back the love-song theme and turns it into a fugato, and there is some deft combination of the main ideas. Finally, though, it is the dance that triumphs, and the ending explodes with all the sonic fireworks appropriate to a carnival in Rome.

**Instrumentation:** 2 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 2 oboes (1 doubling English horn), 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 2 cornets, 3 trombones, timpani, cymbals, 2 tambourines, triangle and strings



### Igor Stravinsky

**Born:** June 17, 1882,  
Oranienbaum, Russia  
**Died:** April 6, 1971,  
New York City

### **Suite from *The Firebird* (1919 revision)**

**Premiered:** June 25, 1910  
(original ballet)

In 1909, following a successful visit of the Ballets Russes to Paris, the Russian impresario Serge Diaghilev and his choreographer Michel Fokine made plans for a new ballet to be presented in Paris the following season and based on the old Russian legend of the Firebird. They decided to take a chance on an unknown young composer named Igor Stravinsky. Recognizing that this was his big chance, Stravinsky set to work in November 1909 and finished the score the following spring. The first performance, in Paris on June 25, 1910, was a huge success. Though Stravinsky would go on to write quite different music over the remainder of his long career, the music from *The Firebird* remains his most popular creation. Of the three concert suites Stravinsky drew from the ballet score, the 1919 revision heard here is performed most often.

### a tale of enchantment

*The Firebird* tells of a young prince, Ivan Tsarevich, who pursues the magic Firebird—part woman, part bird—into the garden of the ogre Kashchei, who imprisons maidens in the castle and turns all knights who come to rescue them to stone. Ivan captures the Firebird, who gives him a magic feather when he releases her. The prince sees 13 princesses playing with golden apples, and when at dawn they hurry back to Kashchei’s castle, he follows them. The monsters there capture him and he is about to be turned to stone himself when he waves the magic feather—and

the Firebird returns, puts the ogres to sleep and shows him where a magic egg is hidden. When Ivan smashes the egg, Kashchei and his fiends disappear, the petrified knights return to life, the maidens are freed, and Ivan marries the most beautiful of the princesses.

### magical music

The *Introduction* brings one of Stravinsky's most striking orchestral effects: a series of rippling string arpeggios played entirely in harmonics. The composer wanted to create here a Catherine-wheel effect, that of fireworks spinning and throwing off light. The music proceeds into the shimmering, whirling *Dance of the Firebird*, Stravinsky's own favorite music from this score.

In the *Dance of the Princesses* Stravinsky uses the old Russian folk tune "In the Garden." The *Infernal Dance of King Kashchei* begins with one of the most violent orchestral attacks ever written. Sharply syncopated rhythms and barbaric growls depict the fiends' efforts to resist the Firebird's spell.

In its aftermath, solo bassoon sings the gentle *Berceuse* with which the Firebird lulls Kashchei and his followers to sleep, and this leads through a magical passage for tremolo strings into the *Finale*. Here solo horn announces the main theme, based on another Russian folksong, "By the Gate." Beginning quietly, this noble tune drives *The Firebird* to a magnificent conclusion on music of general rejoicing.

**Instrumentation:** 2 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 2 oboes (1 doubling English horn), 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, tambourine, triangle, xylophone, harp, piano (doubling celesta) and strings

*Program notes on the Berlioz and Stravinsky works by Eric Bromberger.*



The Minnesota Orchestra gave its initial performance of **Adams' *Short Ride in a Fast Machine*** on February 21, 1987, at Orchestra Hall, under the direction of Edo de Waart. That concert took place less than a year after the work's world premiere.

The Orchestra first performed **Ravel's *Pavane pour une infante défunte*** on October 19, 1922, at the Saint Paul Auditorium Theater, with Henri Verbrugghen conducting. The Orchestra's 1974 recording of this work, made under Stanislaw Skrowaczewski's direction, was featured in the blockbuster 2012 film *The Dark Knight Rises*, as background music during the scene in which Bruce Wayne (Batman) dances with Selina Kyle (Catwoman) at a charity ball.

This week's concerts mark the Orchestra's first-ever performance, as well as the U.S. premiere, of **Hillborg's *Violin Concerto No. 2***. The work received its world premiere on October 20, 2016, in a performance by the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic. Coincidentally, on that same evening, the Minnesota Orchestra was performing a recent work for violin and orchestra by a different contemporary composer, John Adams' *Scheherazade.2*.

The Orchestra introduced **Berlioz' *Roman Carnival Overture*** to its repertoire on March 5, 1909, at the Minneapolis Auditorium, with founding Music Director Emil Oberhoffer conducting. On July 20, 2017, more than 50 amateur musicians joined the Orchestra onstage at Orchestra Hall to perform this piece under Osmo Vänskä's baton, concluding the second-ever Minnesota Orchestra Fantasy Camp.

The first performance of **Stravinsky's *Suite from The Firebird***, in the 1919 revision that the Orchestra performs in these concerts, took place on February 3, 1922, at the Minneapolis Auditorium, again with Oberhoffer conducting. However, the complete ballet was performed even earlier, on November 3, 1916, also at the Minneapolis Auditorium under Oberhoffer's baton.