

## Minnesota Orchestra

Osmo Vänskä, conductor

Burt Hara, clarinet

Thursday, November 5, 2009, 7:30 pm	Orchestra Hall
Friday, November 6, 2009, 8 pm	Orchestra Hall
Saturday, November 7, 2009, 8 pm	Orchestra Hall

<b>Kalevi Aho</b>	<i>Minea: Concertante Music for Orchestra*</i>	ca. 18'
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<b>Igor Stravinsky</b>	<i>The Song of the Nightingale</i>	ca. 20'
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I N T E R M I S S I O N	ca. 20'
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<b>Bernhard Henrik Crusell</b>	Concerto No. 2 in F minor for Clarinet and Orchestra, Opus 5	ca. 24'
	Allegro	
	Andante pastorale	
	Rondo: Allegretto	
	<i>Burt Hara, clarinet</i>	

<b>Richard Strauss</b>	Suite from <i>Der Rosenkavalier</i> , Opus 59	ca. 21'
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\* World premiere, a Minnesota Orchestra commission.

Violinist Nathan Cole serves as guest concertmaster for these performances.

## thank you

With Thursday's concert, we recognize the support of **corporate donors to the Guaranty Fund**.

With Friday and Saturday's concerts, we recognize the support of the **Ecolab Foundation**.

Minnesota Orchestra concerts are broadcast live Friday evenings on stations of **Minnesota Public Radio**. The concerts are also featured in **American Public Media's** national programs, **SymphonyCast** and **Performance Today**. Regional broadcasts are supported by the Minnesota Orchestra; **Patterson, Thunte, Skaar and Christensen, P.A.**; **UBS**; and **DTS Digital Entertainment**.

music  
up close

Grand Symphonic  
Winds Concert

**Dr. Matthew J. George**, conductor

11/5 at 6 pm

11/6 at 6:30 pm

11/7 at 6:30 pm

Orchestra Hall Auditorium

**Jack Stamp:**

*Gavorkna* Fanfare

**J.S. Bach**/tr. Stauffer:

Little Prelude and Fugue

**Percy Grainger:**

Hill Song No. 2

**Ingolf Dahl:**

Sinfonietta

**Frank Ticheli:**

*Blue Shades*

**Karl L. King:**

*Cyrus the Great*

Ask Osmo!

11/7, post concert

Stay after the Saturday night concert for a Q&A with the Music Director.



**Osmo Vänskä**, conductor

Profile appears on page 14.



**Burt Hara**, clarinet

Since joining the Minnesota Orchestra as principal clarinet in 1987, Burt Hara has drawn acclaim for his frequent solo and chamber music performances here—in works of Debussy, Bartók, Beethoven and others. His recent solos have included the Mozart and Copland Clarinet Concertos, Messiaen's *Abyss of the Birds*, Mozart's Sinfonia concertante and the Bernstein Clarinet Sonata.

**Soloist:** He has been featured with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Tucson Symphony and Cedar Rapids Symphony, among others.

**Festivals:** Hara has performed at Sommerfest numerous times and has appeared at the music festivals of Aspen, Pensacola, Santa Fe and La Jolla.

**Educator:** He presents master classes across the U.S. and is a faculty member at the University of Minnesota.

**Previously:** Hara has held the principal clarinet post with the Philadelphia Orchestra and Alabama Symphony.

**More:** [minnesotaorchestra.org](http://minnesotaorchestra.org).

one-minute notes

**Aho: *Minea***

In this concert opener—now receiving its premiere—each instrument is given a chance to shine as volume and tempo increase throughout. Adding flavor are percussion instruments and rhythms from non-Western cultures.

**Stravinsky: *The Song of the Nightingale***

Stravinsky's opera *The Nightingale* found new life in this tone poem, which offers an Eastern-flavored march and portrayals of an exotic nightingale and a mechanical bird. The emotional finale fades peacefully into silence.

**Crusell: Clarinet Concerto No. 2**

This concerto by a Finnish contemporary of Beethoven begins with a dramatic *Allegro*, proceeds into a song-like pastoral movement with flowing triplets, then closes with a brisk *Rondo* that spotlights the clarinet's playful side.

**Strauss: Suite from *Der Rosenkavalier***

This popular suite from Strauss' opera abounds with exquisite textures, beautifully balancing the story's romance, rowdy farce and sentimentality. Highlights include a youthful lovers' song and a courtly Viennese waltz.



## Kalevi Aho

**Born:** March 9, 1949, in Forssa, Finland; currently residing in Helsinki

### *Minea*: Concertante Music for Orchestra

This first premiere of the Minnesota Orchestra's 2009-10 season is the byproduct of a friendship that extends back two decades. Osmo Vänskä and Kalevi Aho first met in 1989, when Vänskä conducted the Lahti Symphony Orchestra in a recording of Aho's Violin Concerto and Symphony No.1. Since then, Vänskä has led premieres of some 20 compositions by Aho and has played an active role in commissioning more than a half dozen of them. He has earned a reputation as an authoritative interpreter of Aho's music.

Aho, widely regarded as Finland's most distinguished symphonist since Sibelius, studied with Einojuhani Rautavaara at the Sibelius Academy. He has become a major figure in European musical circles and has worked as a freelance composer since 1994. Aho is best known for large-scale works: 14 symphonies between 1969 and 2007 and, in the past decade, a series of important instrumental concertos.

He is currently working on his Symphony No.15, scheduled for a spring 2011 premiere by the BBC Symphony in Manchester, UK. After that symphony is

## unusual percussion in *Minea*: window to world music

Aho's interest in world music is broad.

"I have listened to a great deal of classical Arabian, Indian, Chinese and Japanese music," he states, and instruments and techniques from those non-Western musical cultures have found their way into his compositions. In *Minea*, whose score specifies a large percussion battery, the most unusual instrument Aho includes is *darabukka*, a goblet-shaped drum prominent in North African and Middle-Eastern music. Aho also featured *darabukka* in his Symphony No.14, *Rituaaleja* (Rituals), and employed it in his Oboe Concerto, both composed in 2007.



"I really like the sound of a good *darabukka*," declares Aho. "A typical phenomenon in Arabian music is rhythmic patterns that repeat through the whole piece. Those patterns can be long and complicated. *Minea* also has complex rhythmic patterns, which are repeated dozens of times before they change. *Minea*'s form is connected to classical Northern Indian music, which generally begins with a slow section lacking a clear pulse. Eventually a pulse begins, normally with a *tabla* player drumming. The tempo becomes faster and faster. At the end, the virtuosity and speed of the music increase to a maximum."

Aho compares the *tranquillo* section that opens *Minea* to the opening of an Indian *raga*, which designates a particular scale pattern, patterns of rising and falling pitches, and mood. The ensuing *Allegro*, *Furioso* and *Presto* sections correspond to the more rhythmic sections of an Indian composition; however, he has added inflections from Arabian music. "And at the beginning," he adds, "you might also hear a little Japanese flavor."

### at the same time...

#### Crusell's Second Clarinet Concerto receives its first documented performance in 1815, the year:

- Napoleon suffers his final military defeat near the Belgian city of Waterloo
- Indonesia's Mount Tambora erupts, killing more than 50,000 people in one of history's deadliest volcanic events
- British chemist Humphry Davy invents the miner's safety lamp

#### In 1911, when Strauss' opera *Der Rosenkavalier* premieres:

- Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen leads the first expedition to the South Pole
- Physicist Marie Curie wins a Nobel Prize for her pioneering research in radioactivity
- The Indianapolis Motor Speedway holds its first 500-mile automobile race

completed, he will return to the concerto genre. “One of my lifetime projects is to write a concerto for every central orchestra instrument,” he explains. That goal is within reach. He currently has commissions for a Double Concerto for Flute and Viola da Gamba, as well as solo concertos for trombone, percussion and horn.

### virtuoso roles for all

*Minea*, completed in 2008, marks a bit of a departure for Aho, who has composed only two shorter symphonic works: *The Rejoicing of Deep Waters* and *Louhi*. “It was Osmo’s idea that I compose a shorter piece for the Minnesota Orchestra,” recalls Aho. “We discussed the prospect in January 2005 during my first visit to Minneapolis, when the orchestra played my Seventh Symphony. Osmo proposed a piece of about 16 to 20 minutes, for a large orchestra, about 100 musicians. He wanted every musician of the Minnesota Orchestra to have an opportunity to shine.”

That last specification led Aho to include brief cameos featuring virtually every principal in the orchestra. And it yielded the subtitle, Concertante Music. “This piece really highlights the virtuosity of the Minnesota Orchestra,” says Aho. “It also has some major solos for individual players, for example a very demanding contrabassoon solo toward the middle of the piece.” As for the title: *Minea* is a play on Minneapolis. “When I finished composing, the work had no name. I began to twist the city name to find a title. I wondered about *Minnea*, then took away one ‘n’ and got *Minea*.”

The form was left to Aho’s discretion. He chose a free structure in several sections with a forward trajectory of tempi and volume. *Minea* opens *Tranquillo*, then steadily accelerates to *Allegro, Furioso*, and finally *Presto*. “The idea is simply that the music becomes faster and faster toward the end,” he explains. “It is like a single, huge *accelerando* and *crescendo*.”

Aho has long had an interest in non-Western music [see sidebar previous page]. *Minea* is one of several works in which he has sought to expand his musical vocabulary beyond the conventional scale with 12 tones or even full atonality. “I have sought a new, fresh relation to tonality by using scales from other musical cultures,” he says. “I find rhythm in Western music less interesting than in African, Arabian or Indian music. In *Minea*, as in my Symphony No.14 and my Oboe Concerto, I have tried to enrich the rhythmic element of my music by using ethnic

percussion and by adopting metric influences and patterns from other musical cultures.”

#### Instrumentation:

3 flutes, piccolo, 3 oboes, English horn, 3 clarinets, bass clarinet, 3 bassoons, contrabassoon, 6 horns, 4 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, vibraphone, glockenspiel, large suspended cymbal, 2 small suspended cymbals, chimes, chains, bass drum, tenor drum, tam-tam, 4 tom-toms, 2 bongos, 2 congas, darabukka, piano, harp and strings



## Igor Stravinsky

**Born:** June 17, 1882, Oranienbaum, Russia

**Died:** April 6, 1971, New York City

### *The Song of the Nightingale*

**W**hen we think of Stravinsky, we think first of ballet: *The Firebird*, *Petrushka*, *The Rite of Spring*, *Pulcinella* and many others. Our thoughts do not immediately turn to opera, a genre in which Stravinsky had keen interest but less success. *The Nightingale* was his first opera, composed between 1908 and 1914—six years during which Stravinsky’s music underwent enormous evolution. Consider, for example, the difference between *The Firebird* (1910) and *The Rite of Spring* (1913). Not surprisingly, *The Nightingale* suffered from some stylistic inconsistency, which drew criticism at the 1914 premiere in Paris.

Three years later, impresario Serge Diaghilev commissioned a ballet based on music from *The Nightingale*. Stravinsky was not happy about this music being used for dance, but he relished the opportunity to collaborate with the painter Henri Matisse, who had been commissioned to design the production, and the choreographer Leonid Massine. The project allowed him to rework the score. Drawing primarily on the opera’s second and third acts, Stravinsky crafted a less disjointed, more cohesive composition. His biographer André Boucourechliev labeled the orchestral version a symphonic suite, and Stravinsky named it *Le Chant du Rossignol*, or *The Song of the Nightingale*, adding the subtitle “Symphonic Poem for Orchestra.”

### an exotic tale, an undercurrent of danger

The opera plot and ballet derive from Hans Christian

Andersen. This particular tale concerns a poor fisherman, a Chinese emperor, a Nightingale who wishes only that her singing move her listeners to tears, and a brush with Death. Stravinsky's orchestral piece divides into three principal sections: a festival in the Emperor's palace featuring a ceremonial march; a segment contrasting the Nightingale's song with that of a mechanical bird presented to the ruler as a gift; and a finale in which the Emperor is feared dead, then recovers miraculously.

Stravinsky's language is unmistakable, merging the exoticism of Far Eastern scale patterns with an atavistic danger reminiscent of *The Rite of Spring*. *The Song of the Nightingale* revels in the oversize ensemble. The orchestral writing is *concertante* in style. Almost every principal in the orchestra has a moment in the spotlight. Principal flute and concertmaster—often playing with a mute—substitute the melodic lines sung by the title character in the opera; principal oboe introduces the voice of the mechanical nightingale.



**Instrumentation:**

2 flutes (2nd doubling piccolo), 2 oboes (2nd doubling English horn), clarinet, E-flat clarinet, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, snare drum, cymbals, tam-tam, tambourine, triangle, celesta, piano, two harps and strings



## Bernhard Henrik Crusell

**Born:** October 15, 1775, Nystad, Finland  
**Died:** July 28, 1838, Stockholm

### Concerto No. 2 in F minor for Clarinet and Orchestra, Opus 5

no one disputes the primacy of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven in the classical era. In fact, their world teemed with other fine composers. In the late 18th century and early 19th century, music flourished to

a degree that is almost dizzying to comprehend. Opera and an increasing number of public concert series were centered in major musical capitals such as Vienna, Paris, and London; however, musical pursuits were by no means limited to those cities. Throughout Europe, public and private musical events abounded.

This evening's program opened with a new work by Finland's Kalevi Aho. The music of another Finnish-born composer, Bernhard Crusell, opens the concert's second half. Crusell, a younger contemporary of Beethoven, spent much of his career in Sweden. He is a fine example of an important composer who had a sterling reputation two centuries ago and is largely overlooked today. He also falls squarely into the tradition of a composer-performer, which reached its apogee in the Romantic era through such celebrated figures as Paganini and Liszt.

The clarinetists who hold a place in music history are remembered primarily because of the composers who wrote for them. Thanks to Anton Stadler, we have Mozart's Clarinet Concerto, Clarinet Quintet, and the lovely *Kegelstatt* Trio. Heinrich Baermann inspired Carl Maria von Weber to write two concerti, a concertino, and several chamber works for clarinet. Later in the 19th century, Richard Mühlfeld's playing so captivated Brahms that he resumed composing, producing four magnificent late chamber compositions.

### the clarinetist as composer

By contrast, Crusell was writing for himself. He understood the instrument inside out. At age 12 he was playing as a volunteer with a military band. Three years later he moved to Stockholm. Before his 18th birthday, he was named principal clarinet in the Stockholm Court Orchestra. His subsequent training included clarinet study in Berlin and a six-month sojourn in Paris, where he took composition lessons with Gossec and Berton, but he was based with the Swedish royal ensemble until 1833.

Above: *The Song of the Nightingale*, painting by William Adolphe Bouguereau, 1895.

## a master of his instrument— and a student again

Principal Clarinet Burt Hara wishes he had a dollar for every time someone has asked him over the years if he plays the Crusell concertos (there are three for clarinet). In fact, this weekend will be his maiden voyage performing any of them, which goes to show that even the professionals still have something to learn and want to stretch themselves.



“During my years at Curtis [the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia], there were all these terrific string players around, so I concentrated on chamber music,” explains Hara. “As a result, I didn’t get to cover a lot of the concerto repertoire. I certainly had no expectations of landing a job like principal clarinet of the Minnesota Orchestra at age 24! In a way, I’m catching up.”

“The Crusell is a great piece, and learning a new concerto at this stage is a wonderful adjunct to my experience,” Hara continues. “My preparation is different now. There are a few tricky spots. I find that my practicing is affected by my children’s Suzuki violin lessons. That has altered my process.”

Hara points out that the modern clarinet has made many technical advances since the early 19th century. “Crusell wrote *around* his instrument’s limitations, for example by avoiding certain notes and staying in specific keys. His concerto is clarinet-friendly: not technically any more of a stretch than Weber, and favoring things like wide leaps that the clarinet does more easily than other wind instruments.”

As for the music, Hara allows that the opening movement is his favorite, but he believes the finale is the most difficult to pull off. “The *Rondo* can be so charming, but if it’s played too quickly, it risks sounding superficial. On the other hand, if it unfolds too slowly, you can lose the quality of the instrument. Finding the right tempo makes a difference in bringing out the character of Crusell’s music.”

Crusell’s three clarinet concertos were the first works to enter the repertoire after Mozart. He was his own best interpreter, and does not appear to have played works by his contemporaries Spohr and Weber. The chronology of the Second Concerto is murky, but the first documented performance was 1815, with publication following in 1818.

Crusell’s musical style favors German classical models, with a full double exposition in the first movement and a monothematic structure, meaning that the second theme bears a strong motivic relationship to the principal theme, an approach that Haydn also favored. The melodies are straightforward and attractive, with little motivic development but plenty of opportunity to display a bravura technique. Sometimes the clarinetist embroiders the themes with melodic passage work; elsewhere he plays busy accompanimental textures interwoven in the instrument’s lower register.

### “shepherds piping”

The slow movement is an operatic *cantilena* in gently flowing triplets, with some echo effects that underscore the pastoral atmosphere. (Think shepherds piping across a valley.) Crusell limits the orchestra to strings, allocating a lovely *obbligato* part for principal cello to complement the soloist. The concerto closes with a brisk rondo in a quasi-*gavotte* rhythm. As in the first movement, Crusell relieves the darkness of the F-minor tonality by switching to the parallel major at the end.

Crusell left no written cadenzas for the Second Concerto, although an opportunity exists for one in all three movements. (He would have improvised his own in performance.) For the finale, Burt Hara will play an original cadenza he describes as “short and unobtrusive.” “My attitude,” he says, “is that if you can’t do a cadenza in one breath, it’s too long.”

#### Instrumentation:

solo clarinet with orchestra comprising flute, 2 oboes, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani and strings

“If you can’t do a cadenza  
in one breath, it’s too long.”

—Burt Hara



## Richard Strauss

**Born:** June 11, 1864, Munich  
**Died:** September 8, 1949, Garmisch

### Suite from *Der Rosenkavalier*, Opus 59

Is there any more joyous opening in all opera than the exuberant horn fanfare of *Der Rosenkavalier*? In those seven upward-swooping notes are compressed all the optimism of youth, the zany machinations of practical jokes, and the compassion and humanity inherent in the Marschallin (the opera's central character). Strauss was far too good a man of the theater to forgo such a pregnant and promising beginning. The fanfare begins the Suite, which takes much of its pacing and chronology from the operatic source.

*Der Rosenkavalier* was a surprise to almost everyone in 1911. Strauss had concentrated on orchestral tone poems for much of his youth. Works like *Till Eulenspiegel*, *Don Juan* and *Ein Heldenleben* all predate 1900. After the turn of the century, however, Strauss focused almost exclusively on opera. The two stage works that preceded *Rosenkavalier*, *Salome* (1905) and *Elektra* (1909), were both expressionist canvasses with deliberate and powerful shock elements. *Rosenkavalier* could not be further from them in spirit: it is set in Maria Theresa's Vienna and was conceived as a tribute to Mozart. It is Strauss' masterpiece, a brilliant combination of romance, farce, sentimentality and human compassion.

### young love wins the day

After the beginning horn call, the music moves directly to that of the opening scene in the opera, which takes place at the end of a lovers' tryst between the Marschallin and Octavian in her private apartments. Next we move to the ineffable sweetness of the "Presentation of the Rose" music from Strauss's Act II. Here Octavian presents the silver rose to beautiful young Sophie on behalf of the Marschallin's country bumpkin cousin, Baron Ochs. Time stands still as the two young people fall instantly in love, and momentarily forget that there are others about them. It is one of the most enchanted moments in all opera—

and it translates magnificently to the orchestral idiom.

The Suite proceeds to an excerpt from Act III, when Octavian's henchmen are booby-trapping an inn, preparing to publicly embarrass the oafish Baron Ochs. From here Strauss makes a smooth transition to the Baron's waltz, the most famous melody from the opera. How ironic that the music that best summarizes the spirit of Maria Theresa's 18th-century Viennese court society should be given to the clumsy, conceited Ochs!

If the Baron's music is the most characteristically Viennese, the segment that follows is the most Straussian: the final Trio, in which the Marschallin relinquishes her lover Octavian, recognizing that her youth has passed, and that the two young lovers Octavian and Sophie should have the opportunity to bring theirs to full fruition. Making her final exit from the stage, she drops a handkerchief. The opera closes with her blackamoor dashing back to the room to retrieve it.

Over the years, different performing traditions have evolved concerning the Suite. Its history has been somewhat complicated by the fact that Strauss revised the opera's unforgettable waltzes during the Second World War, expressing an objection that they had been "unjustly vulgarized." He favored the longer, brilliant conclusion with a reprise of Baron Ochs's Waltz that Osmo Vänskä leads tonight, an arrangement attributed to the Polish-born conductor Artur Rodzinski.

#### Instrumentation:

3 flutes (3rd doubling piccolo), 3 oboes (3rd doubling English horn), three clarinets (3rd doubling E-flat clarinet), bass clarinet, 3 bassoons (3rd doubling contrabassoon), 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, snare drum, cymbals, glockenspiel, ratchet, triangle, celesta, two harps and strings

Program notes by Laurie Shulman ©2009.



*Der Rosenkavalier*: costume drawings by Alfred Roller, 1910.