

Minnesota Orchestra

Osmo Vänskä, conductor | Claudio Puntin, clarinet

Friday, November 11, 2016, 8 pm | Orchestra Hall
 Saturday, November 12, 2016, 8 pm | Orchestra Hall

With these concerts, we offer our deepest gratitude to the more than 7,000 Guaranty Fund donors who help the Orchestra enrich lives with outstanding orchestral music.

Please turn to the following page for a message from Guaranty Fund Chair Lloyd Kepple.

Claudio Puntin	<p><i>AROMA: imaginative spaces</i> for Clarinet, Bass Clarinet, Electronic Effects and Orchestra* ELEM ZMER TRASLO NOMOLITUM DUALGANG FLOOX VIA CHOMIN GRAND PAISO [There are no pauses between movements.] <i>Claudio Puntin, clarinet</i></p>	ca. 25'
	I N T E R M I S S I O N	ca. 20'
Gustav Mahler	<p>Symphony No. 6 in A minor Allegro energico, ma non troppo Andante moderato Scherzo: Wuchtig (Heavily) Finale: Allegro moderato – Allegro energico</p>	ca. 80'

* World premiere

CD Signing with Osmo Vänskä

Please join us in the lobby following these concerts as Music Director Osmo Vänskä signs CDs, including the Minnesota Orchestra's new album of Sibelius' Symphonies No. 3, 6 and 7. These Guarantors' Concerts are dedicated to the memory of **John and Kitty Pillsbury**.

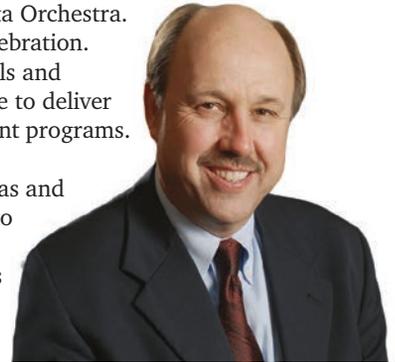
Minnesota Orchestra concerts are broadcast live on Friday evenings on stations of [Classical Minnesota Public Radio](#), including KSJN 99.5 FM in the Twin Cities.

THANK YOU!

“We offer our deepest gratitude to all donors who contribute to the Guaranty Fund of the Minnesota Orchestra. We are delighted to recognize your generosity through these concerts during our 2016 Guarantors' Celebration. Through these performances, we thank and celebrate our many generous contributors—the individuals and organizations whose financial gifts provide the critical support necessary for our Orchestra to continue to deliver thrilling live performances of orchestral music as well as innovative education and community engagement programs.

We applaud each of you who are Guarantors of the Minnesota Orchestra. Your tremendous support was and continues to be pivotal to the Orchestra's growth and financial well-being. Your gifts are a testament to the value of the Orchestra in your life and the lives of others throughout the community. I hope you take personal pride in knowing that you are the reason our Orchestra is not only strong today, but has a bright future ahead.

I thank you for your investment in the Minnesota Orchestra. Every time you hear a concert, attend an event or read about the incredible things *your* Orchestra is accomplishing—at home in Orchestra Hall, across Minnesota and beyond—be proud to know it is you who helps make this great music possible. Thank you!”



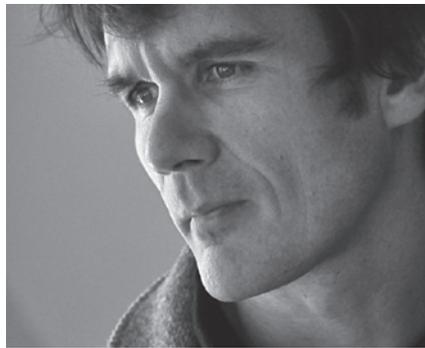
Lloyd Kepple

Guaranty Fund Chair, 2016-17



Osmo Vänskä, conductor

Profile appears on page 8.



Claudio Puntin, composer and clarinet

Claudio Puntin is a clarinetist, composer and producer who is considered one of the leading creative soloists and improvisers on all types of clarinet. Extending his interests beyond music, he is also an accomplished goldsmith. He has developed his own natural musical language with a combination of strong rhythmical approach, electronica, alternative techniques and self-invented instruments. His compositions and productions include works for alternative ensembles, symphony orchestras, choirs, electronics, soundtracks for radio plays, films, theater and other art forms. He has collaborated with symphony orchestras around the world, other ensembles, and artists such as Skúli Sverrisson, Fred Frith, Hermeto Pascoal,

Maria Schneider, Carla Bley, Steve Swallow, Sidsel Endresen and Steve Reich, among many others. His primary musical mentor was Romanian conductor Sergiu Celibidache. Puntin has been recognized with numerous awards in creativity and jazz performance, and has recorded with ECM, Arjunamusic and Deutsche Grammophon. More: puntin.com.

one-minute notes

Puntin: AROMA: imaginative spaces
 AROMA, a showcase of the composer-soloist's virtuosity and rich imagination, fuses episodes of improvisation—making each performance unique—with Romanian folk melodies, Klezmer music, electronic effects and much more.

Mahler: Symphony No. 6
 The opening movement of Mahler's Sixth, at times chilling, also contains an eloquent theme that represents the composer's wife. The *Scherzo's* eerie mood and the balm of the *Andante* give way to a *Finale* in which we imagine a hero who goes forth to conquer but is struck down by fate, as dramatic hammer blows shatter all hope.



Claudio Puntin

Born: October 13, 1965, Zug, Switzerland; now living in Berlin, Germany

AROMA: imaginative spaces for Clarinet, Bass Clarinet, Electronic Effects and Orchestra

Premiered: November 11, 2016

Claudio Puntin is a musical polymath: clarinetist, composer, and producer of music for film, theater, exhibitions and radio plays. A master of his instrument, he is equally at home in jazz, classical, Klezmer, contemporary, folk and electronic music. Several of his broad-based interests provide creative sparks in *AROMA*, his new work for clarinet and orchestra.

“a great opportunity”

Minnesota Orchestra Music Director Osmo Vänskä’s first exposure to Puntin’s music was through listening to a recording of *East*, Puntin’s 2002 album for clarinet and string quartet, which synthesized Eastern European elements into a classically structured six-movement composition. Vänskä had no familiarity with Puntin’s work in improvisation, electronics, jazz, and new music. But he was intrigued—surely in part because Vänskä himself began his musical career as a clarinetist.

When they met in Berlin two years ago, Vänskä proposed that Puntin compose a symphonic work for solo clarinet. “He had in mind a 25-minute piece incorporating some Klezmer flavor,” Puntin recalls. “A great opportunity for me as composer and soloist!” Klezmer music was a major influence for Puntin as a young clarinetist; he was drawn to what he perceives as its closeness to the human voice. Also attracted to Romanian folk music in his youth, he developed a passion for Balkan styles. Aspects of Greek, Bulgarian, Turkish and Serbian folk song and dance rhythms find their way into *AROMA*, along with Klezmer, jazz and traditional Western techniques.

AROMA does not adhere to three-movement concerto structure. Each of its nine sections has its own distinct melodic and atmospheric character. Clarinet cadenzas provide transitions, so that the sections unfold as an uninterrupted sequence, rather like cinematic fade-outs and fade-ins. Much of the solo part is not written out, including the cadenzas, introductions and epilogue, which makes soloistic improvisation central to *AROMA*.

“Cadenzas were always meant to create space for the soloist within a concerto, especially in the Baroque and Classical eras,” the composer observes. “A professional orchestra requires a fully written

out score and parts for the orchestral players, but sometimes my part in *AROMA*’s score is just a guideline. I have many opportunities to do different things—to create faraway atmospheres.”

“the soloist must choose”

While not virtuosic in the traditional sense, Puntin’s clarinet part requires virtuoso technique in terms of musical decisions. “The soloist must choose sounds and musical material, and introduce composed themes that then pass to instruments in the orchestra,” he says.

The soloist’s musical inventions are similar to a cook who decides, based on experience, what spices (aromas) he adds to his culinary creation. Aroma is, of course, associated with the sense of smell, while music appeals to one’s hearing. Puntin thinks of “aroma” in more conceptual terms, as the flavor of an impulse. “I like the transmission to a musical situation. The nose can identify many thousands of aromas, while the tongue is limited to five basic tastes. That inspires me. There’s a similar proportion between the ear and the eye.”

Other ‘flavors’ in *AROMA* include the addition of electronic processings to the solo clarinet part by means of electronic devices. Puntin explains: “My electronic processing always uses the source of the clarinet’s sound and adds spaces, delays, loops, and other sound processes to obtain alternative possibilities of expression and new mixtures together with the orchestral sound. In *AROMA*, some of the electronic sound effects are indicated in my part. At other points I have the challenge to find compelling sounds in the moment of performance.”

fanciful titles

Puntin’s fanciful movement titles seek to stimulate the listener’s imagination and connect it to the musical experience. Some are intentionally ambivalent, like *VIA*. “In Italian it can mean a street, but also ‘away’ or ‘let’s go’ or ‘start,’” offers Puntin. “This movement is a driving dance with a wedding character, initiated by two trumpets that take the entire orchestra with them to their party.

“Another example: *ELEM ZMER*, a contraction of ‘ELEMents of kleZMER,’ which uses embellishments of Klezmer style—not in its usual character, but with a calm cloud of strings leading to the next theme, *TRASLO*,” he continues. “In Italian, ‘trasloco’ means moving (as in relocation) or changing place, but here the music retains its character.”

The composer’s note follows.

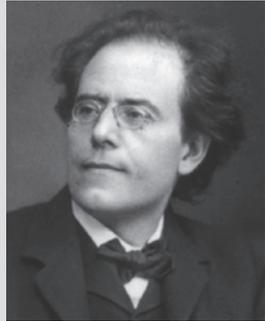
“The concert suite *AROMA* is based on inventions, connected and inspired by the flavor of musical languages related to Klezmer or Balkan music, but always following emotional atmospheres,



creating starting points for new climatic creations. The work itself is not to be considered as part of those traditions. Rather, it is perfumed by their spirit.

“All the movements are performed *attacca* (without pause), to make the change of moods fluid. The nine movements (spaces) are composed to allow freedom for imagination and improvisation: ‘rooms’ for the soloist and emotional orchestral atmospheres between now and then, fantasy and tradition. The lyrical titles of the spaces follow this idea of imaginative freedom, chosen to keep each listener’s or performer’s personal picture open. Each performance by the soloist will be essentially different, illuminating an almost-lost faculty in classical music: spontaneous creation within the creation.”

Instrumentation: solo clarinet and bass clarinet with orchestra comprising 2 flutes (1 doubling alto flute), piccolo, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bass clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, castanets, tamtam, triangle, chimes, vibraphone, harp, electronic effects and strings



Gustav Mahler
Born: July 7, 1860, Kalischt, Bohemia
Died: May 18, 1911, Vienna, Austria

Symphony No. 6 in A minor
Premiered: May 27, 1906

mahler’s Sixth is the only one of his ten symphonies whose conclusion is in minor mode. In all the others, some elements of hope, of optimism, of positive thinking allowed him to see a silver lining in the thunderclouds so often implied by his music. Not so in this work.

Mahler acknowledged that his Sixth is a very difficult symphony to conduct. The symphony was misunderstood during his lifetime, enjoying fewer performances than any other work he completed. Even in Amsterdam, where his music was admired by the public and championed by Willem Mengelberg, the Sixth remained unperformed while Mahler lived. Remarkably, it was not heard in the United States until 1947. The Minnesota Orchestra’s first performance came in 1974.

why so tragic?

Why is this symphony so tragic? The circumstances surrounding its composition seemed to encourage a work entirely opposite in character. Mahler was in an expansive and romantic mood during the summers of 1903 and 1904, when he was composing it. He

was on holiday in the Austrian mountain village of Maiernigg with his beautiful young bride, Alma, and their daughter Maria (“Putzi”) who had been born in 1902; a second daughter, Anna, was on the way. Mahler had every reason to be pouring forth joyous music.

But logic is not always a prevailing factor in the artistic process, and for whatever reason, the symphony that Mahler composed during those two fateful summers was a brooding work, filled with grim resolution entirely inconsistent with his life at the time. (One is struck by the inverse parallel with Beethoven, who penned the exuberant Second Symphony shortly before the tortured and impassioned Heiligenstadt Testament.)

Mahler himself was always deeply moved by the tragic power of his own music, particularly in this symphony. But there is also a significant element of mystery and enigma associated with the Sixth. To his biographer Richard Specht he wrote: “My Sixth will propound riddles the solution of which may be attempted only by a generation which has absorbed and truly digested my first five symphonies.”

Even with these prophetic words—for his prediction proved accurate, as generations of Mahler lovers have devoured the Sixth along with its siblings—Mahler wrought extensive and frequent revisions on the Sixth, as with all his middle symphonies.

Two musical memories of this symphony remain with the listener long after departure from the concert hall. One is a single chord, brilliantly declaimed by the trumpets, *fortissimo*, in A-major; then abruptly fading to somber oboes, *pianissimo*, in A-minor with the inexorable pounding of funeral percussion in the bass beneath it. One hears this gesture early on, and it recurs several times. This is the “fate” or “tragedy” motive of the symphony, a constant and menacing reminder of imminent doom. The percussive pattern associated with it recurs in two of the three succeeding movements.

The other vivid aural memory in the Sixth Symphony is that of the hammer blows in the finale. Both instances intensify the sense of tragedy and defeat that permeates this music; each wreaks its peculiar power in a different way.

the music

allegro energico, ma non troppo. Mahler favored march movements to open his symphonies, frequently returning to the march rhythm in later movements. The Sixth provides a characteristic and fine example, with a strong emphasis on brass and percussion highlighting the military character of the march. At more than twenty minutes, *Heftig, aber markig* (vehement, but with plenty of vigor) is an imposing start, grand enough to encompass a wealth of melodic ideas. Of particular note is the whimsical and elusive second theme, in F major, which Mahler

told Alma was his attempt to characterize her in music. “Whether I’ve succeeded or not I don’t know, but you shall have to put up with it!” he said to her. The “Alma” theme is followed by an unusual section featuring xylophone, the sole use of that instrument in all of Mahler’s music. Another evocative episode in this first movement is the introduction of cowbells, which Mahler described as “the last earthly sounds heard from the valley far below by the departing spirit on the mountaintop.”

andante moderato; scherzo: wuchtig (heavily). Both in the concert hall and on recordings, the scherzo sometimes precedes the *Andante* of the Sixth, because Mahler changed his mind more than once concerning the order of the inner movements. Whereas the scherzo (*Wuchtig*), with its strong brass and pounding percussion, echoes the foreboding spirit that dominates the symphony, the slow movement is remote in mood and temperament from the inexorable march of fate introduced in the first movement. By placing it in E-flat major, a tonality far removed from the home key of A minor, Mahler subtly emphasizes that spiritual difference. Cowbells, horn calls, a splendid English horn solo and a woodwind chorale all help to release the near-unbearable tension generated by the rest of the symphony. This is the only movement that successfully sidesteps an otherwise overpowering sense of doom. Like an island, it remains impervious to the themes and motives so dominant in the other movements.

finale: allegro moderato–allegro energico. For his finale, Mahler returns to the enormous proportions of his opening with a massive movement taking more than half an hour. The *Allegro moderato* overflows with big themes: one each for violins, tuba, lower woodwinds and horns. The hammer blows occur at the end of Mahler’s two development sections. Originally there were three hammer blows, but Mahler was superstitious, and feared that three was an unlucky number for blows of fate, so he excised the third.

His premonition was eerily accurate. In 1907, the year after the Sixth Symphony was premiered, three cataclysmic events struck the composer. The first was his forced resignation from the music

directorship of Vienna Opera, prompted by anti-Semitism and the political machinations of his enemies. The second was the death of his older daughter Maria from scarlet fever. The final blow that fateful year was the diagnosis of an incurable heart ailment that obliged him to curtail the active life he so loved.

Many conductors have chosen to restore the third hammer blow in performance; it occurs at a climactic point in the finale, where the second return of the introduction music is cut short by the tragedy motif. Mahler’s valiance and noble spirit come through in this music more powerfully than any other of the purely instrumental symphonies, giving us what English journalist and critic Michael Kennedy has called “Mahler’s most perfect reconciliation of form and matter.”

Instrumentation: 4 flutes, piccolo (2 flutes also doubling piccolo), 4 oboes, English horn (2 oboes also doubling English horn), 4 clarinets (1 doubling E-flat clarinet), bass clarinet, 4 bassoons, contrabassoon, 8 horns, 6 trumpets, 4 trombones, tuba, 2 sets of timpani, snare drum, bass drum, cowbells, cymbals, hammer, rute, tamtam, triangle, glockenspiel, chimes, xylophone, 2 harps, celesta and strings

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coda

These concerts mark the world premiere of **Puntin’s AROMA: imaginative spaces**. Next February the Minnesota Orchestra will present an entire program of new music, giving its first performance of seven works at a “Future Classics” concert of music by emerging composers.

The Orchestra’s first performance of **Mahler’s Sixth Symphony** came on February 14, 1974, at the O’Shaughnessy Auditorium in St. Paul, with Stanislaw Skrowaczewski conducting. Later this month the Orchestra and Osmo Vänskä will record the symphony for a future release on the BIS Records label.

musician’s view



“Mahler’s symphonies have it all in spades: despair, anguish, suffering, longing, peace, hope, joy, love. Personally, I feel that Mahler is the apex of Western civilization. Plus, I get to hit a huge box with a giant hammer during the concert. Everyone should get to do that once!”

– Principal Percussion Brian Mount, Minnesota Orchestra member since 1997

