

Minnesota Orchestra

Osmo Vänskä, conductor | Kari Kriikku, clarinet

Thursday, September 30, 2021, 11 am	Orchestra Hall
Friday, October 1, 2021, 8 pm	Orchestra Hall
Saturday, October 2, 2021, 8 pm	Orchestra Hall

Valerie Coleman

Umoja, Anthem of Unity for Orchestra

ca. 11'

Anders Hillborg

Through Lost Landscapes

ca. 13'

Kaija Saariaho

D'OM LE VRAI SENS for Clarinet and Orchestra

ca. 35'

L'Ouïe (Hearing)

La Vue (Sight)

L'Odorat (Touch)

Le Toucher (Smell)

Le Goût (Taste)

A mon seul dési (To my only desire)

Kari Kriikku, clarinet

I N T E R M I S S I O N

ca. 15'

Sergei Prokofiev

Selections from *Romeo and Juliet*, Ballet Music, Opus 64

ca. 37'

Introduction

The Duke's Decree

The Young Girl Juliet

Masks

The Knights' Dance

The People Make Merry

The Duel: Tybalt and Mercutio Fight

Romeo Resolves to Avenge Mercutio's Death

Tybalt's Funeral Cortège

Juliet's Bedroom

Juliet's Funeral and Death of Romeo

The Death of Juliet

Minnesota Orchestra concerts are broadcast live on Friday evenings on stations of [YourClassical Minnesota Public Radio](#), including KSJN 99.5 FM in the Twin Cities. The October 1 concert will also be broadcast live on [Twin Cities PBS](#) (TPT-2) and available for streaming on minnesotaorchestra.org and social media.





Osmo Vänskä, conductor

Profile appears on page 8.



Kari Kriikku, clarinet

A champion of contemporary music, Finnish clarinetist Kari Kriikku is renowned for his interpretation of

virtuosic new works written for him by composers such as Michel van der Aa, Unsuk Chin, Magnus Lindberg, Kimmo Hakola, Kaija Saariaho and Jukka Tiensuu. His recent scheduled engagements include performances with the BBC Scottish Symphony, Real Orquesta Sinfonica de Sevilla, Kristiansand Symphony Orchestra and Arctic Philharmonic. In addition to touring with the Avanti! Chamber Orchestra, he takes his “Bizarre Bazaar” performances, featuring arrangements for solo clarinet and chamber orchestra of folk music ranging from Klezmer tunes to Portuguese fado and Hungarian dance, to Finland, Slovakia and Serbia. His musical inventiveness and fresh attitude towards traditional performances not only as a soloist and commissioner but also as artistic director of Avanti! Chamber Orchestra were recognized in 2009, when he was announced recipient of the prestigious Nordic Council Music Prize. More: karikriikku.com.



Sarah Hicks, host and writer

For the concert on Friday, October 1, Sarah Hicks serves as host of the Twin Cities PBS broadcast and online livestream, *This Is Minnesota Orchestra*, a role she has played over the last year. She also serves as the Minnesota Orchestra’s principal conductor of Live at Orchestra Hall and has led a broad range of programs since joining the Orchestra as assistant conductor in 2006. Her notable projects here have included co-creating the Inside the Classics and Sam & Sarah series with Orchestra violist Sam Bergman; conducting a live-in-concert recording with singer-rapper Dessa; and leading many original Orchestra programs and Movies & Music concerts. More: minnesotaorchestra.org.

one-minute notes

Coleman: *Umoja*

Coleman’s *Umoja*, which exists in several versions for vocal and instrumental ensembles, is a stirring anthem that draws its title from the Swahili word for “unity.” The composer states: “Now more than ever, *Umoja* has to ring as a strong and beautiful anthem for the world we live in today.”

Hillborg: *Through Lost Landscapes*

Hillborg’s *Through Lost Landscapes* alludes to the disaster-struck state of the planet today. Its greatly varied scoring includes dense tone clusters, jazz-style piano, solo passages for soprano saxophone and haunting imitations of bird calls.

Saariaho: *D’OM LE VRAI SENS*

Saariaho’s unique six-movement clarinet concerto, dedicated to this week’s soloist Kari Kriikku, explores the five well-known senses and a mysterious sixth sense—possibly emotion or love—as the soloist traverses the hall in a variety of locations on and offstage.

Prokofiev: Selections from *Romeo and Juliet*

These *Romeo and Juliet* selections from Prokofiev’s ballet, chosen by Osmo Vänskä in the story’s chronological order rather than in one of Prokofiev’s more standard concert suites, summon vivid images, from a masked ball to a violent duel to a blissful wedding night. The somber closing music reflects the star-crossed lovers’ tragic end.



Valerie Coleman

Born: 1970,
Louisville, Kentucky

Umoja, Anthem of Unity for Orchestra

Premiered: September 19, 2019

born and raised in Louisville, Kentucky, in the same neighborhood as Muhammad Ali, Valerie Coleman was introduced to classical music by her mother very early—in fact, before her birth. (Coleman’s mother would often play classical music, especially Beethoven’s Sixth Symphony, for her unborn child.)

By her teenage years, Coleman was composing complete symphonies and studying flute performance. Today, she is Grammy Award-nominated, was named the 2020 Classical Woman of the Year by the radio program *Performance Today* and was named one of the “Top 35 Female Composers in Classical Music” by the *Washington Post*. She has performed with numerous orchestras, is the founder of the highly influential Imani Winds ensemble, and is active as a composer, arranger, performer, educator and adjudicator. She is also the creator of the Imani Winds Chamber Festival, an annual event in New York City that brings artists from around the world together for chamber music training and performances.

a signature work with many versions

Coleman’s *Umoja* first began as a work for women’s choir, composed in 1997, and then revised for woodwind quintet in 1999, becoming one of the Imani Winds’ signature works over the last two decades. A few years ago the Philadelphia Orchestra commissioned Coleman to expand and re-orchestrate *Umoja* for a full symphonic ensemble; the work as you hear it this weekend was premiered just two years ago on September 19, 2019.

Coleman’s musical visions often stem from inspiration she finds in poetry, paintings, and biographies about unique individuals and cultures throughout history. *Umoja*, a Swahili word meaning “unity,” is also the first principle of Kwanzaa—encouraging people to strive for and maintain unity in family, community, nation and race. Coleman explains: “This work is through a traditional call-and-response, and the call-and-response tradition was a way of passing on history, messages, stories, whatever it may be. As a composer, I’m a storyteller, so *Umoja* is going to take the listener on a story about unity.”

Coleman’s introductory note in the *Umoja* score also includes the following lyrics:

Listen my people,
Children of ALL
It’s time for Unity
Hear the Winds call.

Oh a-hum, a-hum Nkosi ah.
Oh a-hum, a-hum Nkosi ah.

“the meaning of freedom and unity”

What started as a short, yet mighty anthem for choir has been expanded into a 10-minute orchestral poem that grows beautifully out of a sustained, songful introduction. Vivid patterns and rhythms dance throughout the winds and strings, and aggressive musical gestures represent conflict and clashes of injustice, racism and hate throughout history and into our modern day. Woven throughout the piece is the constant reminder of the value of unity, through gentle brass chorales and shared melodies across the ensemble.

With the orchestral arrangement, Coleman shares that this music “...honors the simple melody that ever was, but is now a full exploration into the meaning of freedom and unity. Now more than ever, *Umoja* has to ring as a strong and beautiful anthem for the world we live in today.”

Instrumentation: piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, trombone, bass trombone, tuba, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, ride cymbal, suspended cymbal, tambourine, temple blocks, triangle, glockenspiel, vibraphone, xylophone, marimba, harp, piano and strings

Program note by **Emma Plehal**.





Anders Hillborg

Born: May 31, 1954,
Sollentuna, Sweden

Through Lost Landscapes

Premiered: February 7, 2020

The music of Anders Hillborg, one of the leading Swedish classical composers working today, first arrived at Orchestra Hall in 2014, when Minnesota Orchestra audiences heard soprano Renée Fleming perform Hillborg's *The Strand Settings*. In September 2017 the Orchestra performed the American premiere of Hillborg's Second Violin Concerto, which was commissioned by a consortium that includes the Minnesota Orchestra. This week brings another U.S. premiere of a Hillborg work co-commissioned by the Minnesota Orchestra: *Through Lost Landscapes*.

a leading creative voice

Born in 1954 in Sollentuna, Sweden, and educated at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm, Hillborg has produced a large and varied compositional catalog across four decades that includes works for orchestra, choir and chamber combinations, as well as film scores and pop music. His music is regularly commissioned and performed by major orchestras around the world. Among the conductors he has been closely associated with is Esa-Pekka Salonen, who has conducted and commissioned a number of his works, including *Sirens*, which was jointly commissioned by the Los Angeles Philharmonic and Chicago Symphony Orchestra. In recent years Hillborg has twice been honored with the Swedish Gramophone Award for Best Classical CD of the Year for albums featuring his music.

Many of Hillborg's works bear intriguing and sometimes enigmatic titles; among his most recent works are *Sound Atlas* (2018) for orchestra, *The Breathing of the World* (2019) for choir, soprano saxophone and cello, and *Through Lost Landscapes* (2019) for orchestra. In addition, the last two years have brought concertos for cello and viola. Virtuoso parts are a calling card of his music, and some of his earlier works were at first deemed unplayable before musicians rose to the challenge.

speaking to the moment

The title *Through Lost Landscapes* has, sadly, become increasingly apt since Hillborg composed the 13-minute work two years ago.

Each day seems to bring new images of desolation around the world brought by fires, floods and other natural and manmade disasters. Although this music does not follow a specific extramusical program, it alludes to the state of the planet today both through its title and its recurring haunting bird calls, among other special effects.

Through Lost Landscapes was commissioned jointly by the Minnesota Orchestra, Orquesta Sinfónica de Castilla y León, BBC Radio 3, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic and Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra, and received its world premiere in Spain in February 7, 2020, with the Orquesta Sinfónica de Castilla y León performing mere weeks before COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic. It is scored for a fairly large orchestra, with the standard layout augmented by larger-than-usual wind complements, soprano saxophone and percussion instruments such as congas, guiro and two large vibraslaps.

the music in brief

The composer has endorsed program annotator Martin Anderson's summary of *Through Lost Landscapes*:

"The piece opens with what must be the grandest yet of Hillborg's clusters, supported with three huge chords, the third marked *Ecstatic*. That unleashes a hectic chase, a jazzy piano prominent in the texture. The texture begins to shimmer, with waves of color from piano and celesta in particular. Another series of massive chords, linked by rolling melodic lines, suggests the image of the forest, with tree-trunks of cathedral grandeur holding up a vast carpet of vegetation; a solo soprano saxophone emerges in a rare island of calm.

"Another chase (an echo of the monkeys in Koechlin's symphonic poem *Les bandar-log?*) initiates a never-ending downwards glissando, initiating the idea that will underlie most of the rest of the piece. A series of woodwind patterns suggests some treetop activity, an idea that becomes hard to resist when, two pages later in the score, Hillborg marks them as 'imitating bird calls.' (Whether by accident or design, these calls sound very like those of the Greater Bird-of-Paradise, *Paradisaea apoda*.) Under the cover of another glissando, the bird calls are transformed into a swift pulse, but it soon falls silent, leaving room for another passage of noisy bird calls. The shimmering waves of piano and celesta return, slowing down to allow another grandiose chord to envelope the orchestra. The Birds-of-Paradise are heard again, twice, and the music sinks gently to rest."

Instrumentation: 3 flutes (all doubling piccolo), 3 oboes, 3 clarinets, soprano saxophone, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, 3 congas, large guiro, 4 tom-toms, triangle, 2 vibraslaps, glockenspiel, crotales, chimes, piano, celesta and strings

Program note by **Carl Schroeder**.



Kaija Saariaho

Born: October 14, 1952,
Helsinki, Finland

D'OM LE VRAI SENS for Clarinet and Orchestra

Premiered: September 8, 2010

This week's program includes not one but two works by renowned contemporary Nordic composers born in the 1950s, the latter of whom, Kaija Saariaho, is featured on a Minnesota Orchestra classical concert for the first time. (Her *Asteroid 4179: Toutatis* was part of the Orchestra's Symphony Ball in 2019.)

Saariaho has recently drawn wide acclaim, including highly favorable notices in *The New Yorker* and *The New York Times*, for the world premiere this past July of her newest opera, *Innocence*—one of the first premieres of an opera by a major composer in the COVID-19 pandemic era. It premiered at the Festival International d'Art Lyrique d'Aix-en-Provence in southern France, and future stagings are planned by the Metropolitan Opera and San Francisco Opera.

Born in 1952 in Helsinki, Saariaho studied composition in Helsinki, Freiburg and Paris, where she has lived since 1982. Although many of her works are for chamber ensembles, in the past three decades she has produced several works for larger forces, including the operas *L'Amour de Loin*, *Adriana Mater*, *Emilie* and *Only The Sound Remains*, as well as the oratorio *La Passion de Simone*, portraying the life and death of the philosopher Simone Weil. In 2003 she was awarded one of the highest honors for classical composers, the Grawemeyer Award, one of her many honors. She is also an active educator, including a recent residency at the University of California, Berkeley.

a note from the composer

The first thing to note about Saariaho's six-movement clarinet concerto, which was composed for tonight's soloist Kari Kriikku, is its unusual name: *D'OM LE VRAI SENS*. It is the composer's only composition title that is rendered in all-capital letters, and one that comes from medieval French, translating as "Man's True Sense," a phrase that has multiple meanings. Wordplay is at work here, specifically the rearranged letters of an anagram, and the composition's inspiration is complex and fascinating.

Saariaho describes her composition in this detailed program note:

"The idea of a clarinet concerto for Kari Kriikku had been going round in my mind for some years. While I was composing my second opera (*Adriana Mater*, 2006) the clarinet part began to be increasingly soloistic, and I found the instrument was speaking to me in a new way. I set about planning a concerto but did not begin actually composing it until autumn 2009.

"The form was inspired by six medieval tapestries, *The Lady and the Unicorn*, in which each tapestry depicts, with rich symbolism, the five senses and a 'sixth sense'—whatever that is (emotion? love?). I had already seen the tapestries in the Musée national du Moyen Age (the Medieval Museum) in Paris while seeking material for my first opera, *L'amour de loin*, and their richness also inspired the exhibition *La Dame à Licorne* I held with Raija Malka the artist in 1993.

"The tapestries are named after the five senses, and I have titled the movements of my concerto accordingly: *L'Ouïe* (Hearing), *La Vue* (Sight), *Le Toucher* (Touch), *L'Odorat* (Smell), *Le Goût* (Taste) and the ambiguous *A mon seul Désir*, which could be translated as "To my only desire." The name and subject matter of the sixth tapestry have been widely interpreted and examined. What interested me in particular was an article about the meanings hidden in the letters of the name of the sixth tapestry. One of these [an anagram of *A mon seul Désir* from a time when u and v were the same letter] is *D'OM LE VRAI SENS*. This is medieval French and alludes both to the senses and to the true meaning of humankind.

"All this was, of course, just the initial impetus for composition. Using the names of the different senses as the headings for the movements gave me ideas for how to handle the musical material and for the overall drama. In the first movement (**Hearing**) the calmly breathing orchestra is interrupted by a call from the clarinet. **Sight** opens up a more mobile landscape in which the orchestra gets into position behind the solo instrument to develop the musical motifs this supplies. **Smell** is color music. I associate the harmony with scent; it is immediately recognizable intuitively and the impression is too quick for thought. The clarinet languidly spreads its color over the orchestra, where it hovers, transforming as it passes from one instrument to another.

"In **Touch** the soloist arouses each instrumental section in turn from the pulseless, slightly dreamy state of the previous movement. This is the concerto's liveliest movement, and the most virtuosic in the traditional sense, and the clarinet and orchestra engage in a dialogical relationship. The fifth movement (**Taste**) is dominated by rough surfaces, tremolos and trills, which the clarinet serves to the orchestra around it.



“While composing the last movement [*A mon seul dési*] I experienced a sense of entering a new, intimate and timeless dimensionality. The end of a work is always the last chance to discover its quintessence. I often approach it by stripping the music down to its most ascetic elements. Here, too.

“It came as a surprise even to me that the work began to come alive in its space, and that the clarinet—itself a unicorn—plays only some of its music in the soloist’s position. This appropriation of space became an inherent element of the work at the composition stage.

D’OM LE VRAI SENS is dedicated to Kari Kriikku, whose vast experience and frequent consultations were invaluable to me in composing the solo part.”

throughout the hall

Saariaho’s score further directs that the solo clarinetist is to play each movement at a different position in the concert hall, with a general description to be adapted for each specific space. In the opening movement, the clarinetist “is somewhere in the hall, among the audience or behind it, not to be seen, only heard.” In the second movement the clarinetist approaches the stage, while in the third, the soloist plays behind the orchestra, optionally on a podium. The fourth movement calls for the clarinetist to continue playing behind the orchestra, then approach the stage. The penultimate movement calls for the soloist to sit in the middle of the orchestra or in front, while the final movement directs the clarinetist to stand in front of the orchestra, then leave the stage. Saariaho notes that “the violin parts have also been written so that the musicians can leave their places, if wanted.”

Instrumentation: 2 flutes (1 doubling piccolo and 1 doubling alto flute), 2 oboes (1 doubling English horn), 2 clarinets (1 doubling E-flat clarinet), bass clarinet, bassoon (doubling contrabassoon), 4 horns, trumpet, timpani (with cymbal), tenor drum, bass drum, 4 suspended cymbals, frame drum, guiro, mark tree, tamtam, 3 tom-toms, triangle, marimba, glockenspiel, crotales, vibraphone, chimes, glass chimes, shell chimes, wood chimes, harp, celesta and strings

Program note by **Carl Schroeder**.



Sergei Prokofiev

Born: April 23, 1891,
Sontsovka, Russia

Died: March 5, 1953,
Moscow, Russia

Selections from Romeo and Juliet, Ballet Music, Opus 64

Premiered: December 30, 1938
(complete ballet)

In 1934 the Kirov Theater in Leningrad approached Sergei Prokofiev with the proposal that they collaborate on a ballet based on Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*. Prokofiev completed the massive score by the end of the summer of 1935, but the project came to seem nearly as star-crossed as Shakespeare’s young lovers. The Kirov Ballet backed out, and the Bolshoi Theatre of Moscow took over the project. Prokofiev’s first plan had been to give the story a happy ending in which Romeo would rescue Juliet before her suicide—because, as he explained, “living people can dance, the dying cannot.” Fortunately, this idea was scrapped, but when the Bolshoi finally saw Prokofiev’s score, they called it “undanceable” and refused to produce it.

While *Romeo and Juliet* languished in limbo, Prokofiev transformed excerpts from the ballet’s 52 numbers into a series of orchestral suites. The first two suites were premiered in 1936 and 1937—thus much of the music from the ballet was familiar to audiences long before it was produced on the stage. The third suite was compiled in 1946.

a tale of woe?

The premiere of the ballet itself took place not in Russia but in Brno in 1938. Preparations for the first Russian performance brought more trouble, including a fight between Prokofiev and the choreographer, disputes with the dancers and a threatened walk-out by the orchestra. When the Russian premiere finally took place in Leningrad on January 11, 1940, it was a triumph for all involved. Still, ballerina Galina Ulanova, who danced the part of Juliet, touched on the ballet’s difficult birth when she paraphrased the play’s final lines in her toast to the composer after the opening performance:

Never was a tale of greater woe,
Than Prokofiev’s music to Romeo.

For these concerts, Osmo Vänskä has opted to create his own suite rather than present one of the three assembled by Prokofiev,

because they do not follow the chronological order of the story. The 12 movements Vänskä has selected from the ballet show the plot as it unfolds—conjuring in sound, to magical effect, the characters, actions and moods of the drama.

music tender and dramatic

The *Introduction*, set in the early morning on the quiet streets of Verona, pulls us into this tale of young love and tragedy with themes that hint at what is to come. *The Duke's Decree*, commanding the Montagues and Capulets to put down their swords and live in peace, is expressed in grinding dissonances that alternate with quiet but eerie string chords. *The Young Girl Juliet* captures the girl's sprightly energy with racing violins and teasing motifs, though wistful interludes also suggest a depth to her character.

In the witty *Masks*, Mercutio and Benvolio have talked Romeo, a fellow Montague, into crashing the ball at the Capulets, and this music accompanies their stealthy entrance. *Dance of the Knights* (often titled *The Montagues and the Capulets*) is one of the most famous excerpts from the ballet, forging ahead powerfully as it depicts the swagger of the rival families; its quiet central episode features several striking sounds, including a tenor saxophone solo and wispy glissandos for muted violas. *The People Make Merry* (also familiar as *Dance*) accompanies a scene from the ball. The violence that triggers the concluding tragedy explodes in the next three movements: Romeo and Mercutio encounter Tybalt, a Capulet, on the street; Tybalt kills Mercutio, and Romeo, once the voice of calm, becomes furious and kills Tybalt. These excerpts offer some of the most dramatic and most often heard music from the ballet. *The Duel* between Tybalt and Mercutio, marked *Precipitato*, is full of tense, driven music. *Romeo Resolves to Avenge Mercutio's Death* brings the terrific swordfight between Romeo and Tybalt, which rips along a furious perpetual motion from the violins. In *Tybalt's Funeral Cortege*, cellos and horns sing the funeral song above rolling drums.

With *Juliet's Bedroom* (also known as *Romeo and Juliet before Parting*), Prokofiev depicts in extraordinarily moving music the final meeting of the young lovers, before Romeo, because he killed Tybalt, must flee Verona. When the young couple's plan goes awry, Romeo, believing Juliet dead, kills himself, represented in the soaring, intense music of *Juliet's Funeral and Death of Romeo*, marked *Adagio funebre*. In the final scene, *The Death of Juliet*, the heroine finds her lover dead, and distraught, she kills herself with a dagger. In the aftermath of all this tragedy, the rival families pledge to live in peace.

Instrumentation: 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, tenor saxophone, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 6 horns, 3 trumpets, cornet, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, tambourine, triangle, xylophone, chimes, 2 harps, piano (doubling celesta) and strings

Program note by *Eric Bromberger*.