

Minnesota Orchestra

Dima Slobodeniouk, conductor

Kari Kriikku, clarinet

Friday, March 3, 2023, 8 pm | Orchestra Hall
 Saturday, March 4, 2023, 8 pm | Orchestra Hall

George Walker	<i>Icarus in Orbit</i>	ca. 7'
Kaija Saariaho	<i>D'OM LE VRAI SENS</i> for Clarinet and Orchestra L'Ouïe (Hearing) La Vue (Sight) L'Odorat (Smell) Le Toucher (Touch) Le Goût (Taste) À mon seul Désir (To my only desire) <i>Kari Kriikku, clarinet</i>	ca. 35'
I N T E R M I S S I O N		ca. 20'
Antonín Dvořák	Symphony No. 7 in D minor, Opus 70 Allegro maestoso Poco adagio Scherzo: Vivace Finale: Allegro	ca. 38'

pre-concert

Discussion and Demonstration of Extended Playing Technique with Minnesota Orchestra musicians
 Friday, March 3, 7:15 pm, Target Atrium
 Saturday, March 4, 7:15 pm, Target Atrium

thank you

This concert is co-sponsored by **Vicki and Chip Emery**.

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Dima Slobodeniouk, conductor

Dima Slobodeniouk, one of the most sought-after conductors of his generation, has earned praise from musicians and audiences alike for his exhilarating approach and energetic leadership. From 2013 to 2022 he served as music director of the Orquesta Sinfónica de Galicia. A frequent guest of the Minnesota Orchestra since his debut in 2019, he appeared at Orchestra Hall most recently in February 2022, leading performances that featured violin soloist Baiba Skride. His conducting schedule this season includes debuts with the BBC Symphony, Pittsburgh Symphony, Vienna Symphony and Danish National Symphony, as well as returns to the Boston Symphony, Netherlands Philharmonic and London Philharmonic, among many other ensembles. In past seasons he has led such distinguished orchestras as the Berlin Philharmonic,

Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, Concertgebouw Orchestra, New York Philharmonic and Tokyo's NHK Symphony Orchestra. From 2016 to 2021 he was principal conductor of Finland's Lahti Symphony, with which he recorded works by Kalevi Aho for an album that won the 2018 BBC Music Magazine Award. More recently he led an acclaimed recording of Esa-Pekka Salonen's Cello Concerto with the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra and soloist Nicolas Altstaedt. Born in Moscow, Slobodeniouk originally studied violin before taking up conducting while a student at Helsinki's Sibelius Academy. More: dima-slobodeniouk.com.



Kari Kriikku, clarinet

A champion of contemporary music, Finnish clarinetist Kari Kriikku is renowned for his interpretations 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. This week's performances mark his Minnesota Orchestra debut, an engagement rescheduled from the 2021-22 season. This season he is also performing Saariaho's *D'OM LE VRAI SENS* with the Orquesta y Coro Nacionales de España and the Kristiansand Symphony Orchestra; with the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra he performs Kimmo Hakola's Clarinet Concerto. Kriikku premiered the Saariaho work with the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra in 2010 and has introduced several other major works, including Unsuk Chin's Clarinet Concerto with the Gothenburg Symphony in 2014 and Magnus Lindberg's Clarinet Concerto with BBC Symphony Orchestra at the 2007 BBC Proms. He has appeared with many additional top orchestras around the globe including the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Seoul Philharmonic and New Zealand Symphony Orchestra. In addition to his career as an award-winning recording artist of many works he has premiered, Kriikku was the 2009 recipient of the prestigious Nordic Council Music Prize for his work as soloist, commissioner and artistic director of the Avanti! chamber ensemble. More: kdschmid.de.

one-minute notes

Walker: *Icarus in Orbit*

In vivid musical colors, George Walker illustrates the ancient Greek myth of Icarus—the mortal who famously flew too close to the sun, melting his suit of wings—in music that ends with a falling flute line representing the protagonist's fatal plummet.

Saariaho: *D'OM LE VRAI SENS*, Clarinet Concerto

Kaija 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 concert hall in a variety of locations on and offstage.

Dvořák: *Symphony No. 7*

In Dvořák's Seventh Symphony—lesser-known than his Ninth, but equally masterful—dark sonorities dominate the opening melody, yielding in the second movement to gentle, then bolder, themes. The *Scherzo* abounds with rhythmic vitality, and the *Finale* alternately builds and releases tensions before concluding with drama and brilliant harmonies.





George Walker

Born: June 27, 1922,
Washington, D.C.

Died: August 23, 2018,
Montclair, New Jersey

Icarus in Orbit

Premiered: June 6, 2004

Although the music that begins today's concert came from the pen of an octogenarian composer, we have young people to thank for its existence—namely, the students of the New Jersey Youth Symphony. At a June 2004 concert celebrating the organization's 25th birthday, the Youth Symphony's orchestras and flute ensembles premiered six new commissioned works by New Jersey-based composers. The crown jewel of this set was the Greek mythology-based *Icarus in Orbit* by then 81-year-old George Walker, winner of the 1996 Pulitzer Prize for Music. One would be remiss not to acknowledge an additional young—though apocryphal—person central to the creation of this drama-filled music: none other than Icarus himself.

the boy who flew too high

If you've ever been told "don't fly too close to the sun," then you have been given the same advice as Icarus, the teenager from the ancient Greek myth whose story inspired Walker's *Icarus in Orbit*. The legend of Icarus has served as a moral lesson for millennia. In the story, Icarus was the son of a talented craftsman named Daedalus. The father-and-son pair found themselves trapped on the island of Crete as a punishment from King Minos after a complex series of events that included the birth of the first half-man, half-bull minotaur by the King's wife and the creation of an elaborate labyrinth by Daedalus and Icarus.

To escape the island and the wrath of the King, Daedalus crafted two sets of wings using bird feathers and beeswax. The father and son plotted to fly across the sea to safety together, but only by following Daedalus' rules very carefully: Fly too low and the moisture of the sea would weigh down the feathers; fly too high and the sun would heat the wax. The only way to survive the flight was to travel between the two extremes. Unfortunately, Icarus' hubris and defiance of his father's commands led to his literal downfall—the melting of his wings and fatal plummet.

In more modern times, Icarus has been an inspiration for visual art—such as a famous painting by Henri Matisse—as well as

theater and film, where he has made pop-culture appearances as a Nintendo video game character and factors in the storyline of a recurring Marvel Comics character named Ikaris, most recently played by Richard Madden in the 2021 Marvel Cinematic Universe film *The Eternals*.

the music

Walker's *Icarus in Orbit* opens with a single accented *fortissimo* note in the brass, percussion and strings. Then, softly, woodwind chords build, depicting the beginning of Daedalus and Icarus' journey as they first catch the wind and feel the sensations of flight. Rapid and agitated 16th notes signal an increase in speed and energy, traveling from the string section upward into the winds and back down again. Strings lead this forward motion, accompanied by scattered, edgy figures throughout the rest of the ensemble. Percussion also plays a key role in this short ride, with xylophone, glockenspiel, glass chimes, vibraphone, marimba and celesta all adding bright punctuations that seem to illustrate the swerves in direction or obstacles encountered as the pair navigates the open sky. It's a treacherous adventure to maintain a steady position in the middle zone, not too close to the water or to the sun.

Walker's music ascends to a sustained high note in the woodwinds just two minutes into the piece. This is the moment when Icarus soars too high, disregarding his father's directions, empowered by the transcendence of flight. From here, things move quickly. The sun's heat melts the wax that holds Icarus' wings together and they begin to fall apart. A solo flute cadenza spirals downward note by note, depicting Icarus' long descent, and the final aggressive notes from the orchestra mark his crash into the sea. A long, low, *fortissimo* chord concludes the tragic tale.

the composer

George Theophilus Walker—whose middle name is the same as one of three on Mozart's birth ledger—started piano lessons at age 5 and enrolled at Oberlin College at age 14 with the goal of becoming a concert pianist. Four years later he continued his studies at the Curtis Institute, earning artist's diplomas in both piano and composition. Walker was immediately a success story on the piano, performing as a soloist with the Philadelphia Orchestra at age 21 and giving a New York Town Hall recital at age 23.

However, he determined early on that piano was not the only thing he wished to do with his musical career. In a 2012 interview, Walker explained: "when I went to the Curtis Institute and decided to study composition with Rosario Scalero, it was primarily because I had so much energy and the idea of spending just 5 hours practicing piano...what else am I going to do?"

In 1946, one year after his Philadelphia debut as a pianist, Walker composed a string quartet whose second movement became

his most famous work for string orchestra, the *Lyric for Strings*. He subsequently earned his doctorate in composition from the Eastman School of Music in 1955 and, 41 years later, received a Pulitzer Prize for his soprano-and-orchestra work *Lilacs*—becoming the first Black composer to earn this prestigious honor. He continued generating new works well into his 90s and died in 2018 at age 96 in Montclair, New Jersey. It was in this state where a new work for youth orchestra flowed graciously from his pen and now makes its way to the Minnesota Orchestra's music stands for the first time.

Instrumentation: 2 flutes, piccolos, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 3 horns, 3 trumpets, 2 trombones, tuba, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, suspended cymbal, glass chimes, maracas, tambourine, tamtam, temple block, timbales, triangle, vibraphone, wood block, xylophone, marimba, glockenspiel, chimes, harp, celesta and strings

Program note by *Emma Plehal*.



Kaija Saariaho

Born: October 14, 1952,
Helsinki, Finland

D'OM LE VRAI SENS for Clarinet and Orchestra

Premiered: September 8, 2010

This week's Minnesota Orchestra concerts offer evidence that good things come to those who wait, as a work by contemporary Finnish composer Kaija Saariaho originally slated for performance in fall 2021 finally makes its way to the Orchestra Hall stage (and, in fact, to the whole auditorium—more on that later). Saariaho's six-movement clarinet concerto *D'OM LE VRAI SENS*, a musical meditation on a beguiling series of six French medieval tapestries relating to the human senses, was swapped out of that 2021 program, and a flute concerto by Saariaho took its place.

Between then and now, the composer celebrated a personal milestone with an extended artistic triumph: her native country's classical music community came together to celebrate her 70th birthday. Soloists, ensembles, educational institutions and the Finnish National Opera offered more than two dozen concerts in the latter months of 2022 featuring music from throughout her career—including the first revival of her earliest stage work *Study*

for *Life* since its 1981 premiere and the Finnish premiere of her newest opera *Innocence*. Several concerts also featured new works written by other composers who cite Saariaho as an inspiration.

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 who was recently in residence at the University of California, Berkeley.

a note from the composer

Saariaho's inspiration and subject matter varies greatly from work to work. Her 2018 opera *Innocence* is of the here-and-now, addressing the aftermath of a school shooting, but the clarinet concerto *D'OM LE VRAI SENS* turns the clock back to Paris circa 1500 and a set of thematically linked tapestries that have come to be known as *The Lady and the Unicorn*.

The first thing to note about *D'OM LE VRAI SENS*—which was composed for this week's soloist Kari Kriikku, who premiered it with the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra in September 2010—is its unusual name. 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 [the artist] Raija Malka in 1993.

“The tapestries are named after the five senses, and I have titled the movements of my concerto accordingly: *L’Oûie* (Hearing), *La Vue* (Sight), *Le Toucher* (Touch), *L’Odorat* (Smell), *Le Goût* (Taste) and the ambiguous *À 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 *À 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 (*À mon seul désir*) 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.

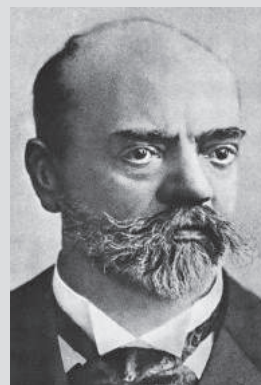
“D’OM LE VRAI SENS is dedicated to Kari Kriikku, whose vast experience and frequent consultations were invaluable to me in composing the solo part.”

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: solo clarinet and orchestra comprising
 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**, with movement descriptions by **Kaija Saariaho**.



Antonín Dvořák

Born: September 8, 1841,
 Nelahozeves, Bohemia
 (now Czech Republic)
Died: May 1, 1904,
 Prague

Symphony No. 7 in D minor, Opus 70

Premiered: April 22, 1885

Success came late to Dvořák. After years of obscurity, during which he supported his family by giving music lessons and playing the viola in orchestras, Dvořák achieved almost instant fame when, at the age of 37, his first set of Slavonic Dances took his name around the world. Now he found his music in demand—a sure sign of which came in June 1884: the Philharmonic Society of London nominated him for membership and invited him to compose a symphony that he would conduct in London.

“to shake the world”

Shortly after beginning work on the score in December 1884, Dvořák wrote to a friend: “Now I am occupied with my new symphony (for London), and wherever I go I have nothing else in mind but my work, which must be such as to shake the world, and God grant that it may!”

Dvořák completed the symphony on March 17, 1885, and journeyed to London to conduct the premiere on June 22. It was a tremendous success. “The enthusiasm at the close of the work was such as is rarely seen at a Philharmonic concert,” wrote one critic.

Yet the new symphony, the second of Dvořák’s symphonies to be published but today numbered as his Seventh, came as a surprise. The composer of the snappy, exhilarating Slavonic Dances had written a dark and dramatic symphony, and critics ever since have been at pains to discover the source of this new gravity in the details of Dvořák’s own life. Some hear an intensified Czech nationalism in this symphony, some hear signs of an artistic crisis, others feel that the symphony represents an effort to please his friend Brahms, still others feel that it reflects Dvořák’s reaction to the death of his mother in 1882.

But it is better simply to take the Seventh Symphony for what it is: the effort by a powerful creative imagination to expand the scope and dimensions of his art. There can be little doubt that he succeeded: the Seventh is regarded by many not just as Dvořák’s finest symphony, but as one of his greatest achievements.

This symphony has been called Dvořák’s most “Brahmsian” work, but that term needs to be understood carefully. It is not to say that this is an imitative work—every bar of the Seventh Symphony is unmistakably the music of Dvořák. Rather, it acknowledges that this music has the same grandeur, seriousness of purpose and dark sonority that we associate with the symphonies of Brahms, who would remain a close friend of Dvořák throughout his life.

the music: beginning in darkness

allegro maestoso. Those dark sonorities are evident from the work’s first instant: over a deep pedal D, violas and cellos sound the brooding opening idea. We also hear the violins’ rhythmic “kick,” a sharply-rising figure, and a turn-figure first spit out by violins and eventually taken over by the solo horn. The second subject (if it can be called that, after such a dizzying parade of ideas in the opening moments) arrives as a gently rocking melody for flutes and clarinets that Dvořák marks *dolce* (sweetly), but quickly this section too begins spinning off subordinate ideas. Though the development begins quietly, it soon turns dramatic, and the movement builds to a grand climax, then falls away to an

impressive close as two horns sound the dark opening theme one last time.

poco adagio. The second movement stays in D minor. Woodwinds, singly or as a choir, announce most of the melodic material here. The music may be gentle on its first appearance, but this movement too grows to a series of great climaxes. It is left to the cellos to sing the relaxed reprise of the main theme as the music makes its way to the quiet close.

scherzo: vivace. The real fun of the *Scherzo* (and this movement is fun) lies in its rhythmic vitality. Dvořák sets it in the unusual meter 6/4 and marks it vivace, but then complicates matters by placing accents where we don’t expect them: sometimes this meter is accented in two, sometimes in three, sometimes both simultaneously. The music dances madly into the trio section, which seems to begin quietly and simply (some have heard the sound of birdcalls here) but soon introduces complexities of its own; Dvořák makes a powerful return to the scherzo proper and drives the movement to a resounding close.

finale: allegro. The *Finale* returns to the ominous mood that opens the first movement. The cellos’ arching-and-falling opening idea will shape much of this movement, which is launched on its way as Dvořák winds tensions tight and then releases them with a timpani salvo. Cellos eventually provide relief with one of those wonderfully amiable and flowing themes that only Dvořák could write, and from this material he builds another extremely dramatic movement. In fact, Dvořák stays relentlessly in D minor as the movement nears its climax, and it is only in the final seconds that he almost wrenches it into D major for a conclusion that truly does—as Dvořák hoped—“shake the world.”

Instrumentation: 2 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani and strings

Program note by **Eric Bromberger.**