

MINNESOTA  ORCHESTRA

January 2017 / SHOWCASE



*Young
Guns in
tuxes*

PLAYBILL®

Minnesota Orchestra

Osmo Vänskä, conductor | Dawn Upshaw, soprano

Saturday, December 31, 2016, 8:30 pm | Orchestra Hall

Sunday, January 1, 2017, 2 pm | Orchestra Hall

Kevin Puts	<i>Millennium Canons</i>	ca. 7'
Kurt Weill/ arr. Danny Troob	"My Ship," from <i>Lady in the Dark</i>	ca. 3'
Vernon Duke/ arr. Jonathan Tunick	"Autumn in New York," from <i>Thumbs Up!</i>	ca. 4'
Vernon Duke/ arr. Troob	"April in Paris," from <i>Walk a Little Faster</i>	ca. 3'
Leonard Bernstein	"Somewhere," from <i>West Side Story</i>	ca. 2'
Leonard Bernstein	"A Little Bit in Love," from <i>Wonderful Town</i>	ca. 3'
George Gershwin	"Someone to Watch Over Me," from <i>Oh, Kay!</i>	ca. 3'
Stephen Sondheim/ arr. Michael Starobin	"What More Do I Need?" from <i>Saturday Night</i>	ca. 3'
Stephen Sondheim/ orch. Larry Wilcox	"There Won't Be Trumpets," from <i>Anyone Can Whistle</i>	ca. 2'

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

ca. 20'

Sergei Rachmaninoff	Symphony No. 2 in E minor, Opus 27 Largo – Allegro moderato Allegro molto Adagio Allegro vivace	ca. 60'
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The December 31 concert is followed by a New Year's Eve party and countdown in the lobby featuring music by The King Baron Hot Several.

The Minnesota Orchestra's New Year's Day matinee concert will be broadcast live on stations of [Classical Minnesota Public Radio](#), including KSJN 99.5 FM in the Twin Cities.



Osmo Vänskä, conductor

Profile appears on page 6.



Dawn Upshaw, soprano

Dawn Upshaw, who has performed with the Minnesota Orchestra numerous times since her debut here in 1989, has achieved worldwide celebrity as a singer of opera and concert repertoire ranging from the sacred works of Bach to the freshest sounds of today. Her acclaimed performances on the opera stage comprise the great Mozart roles (Susanna, Ilia, Pamina, Despina and Zerlina) as well as modern works by Stravinsky, Poulenc and Messiaen. A five-time Grammy Award-winner, she most recently received the 2014 Grammy for Best Classical Vocal Solo for her performance of Maria Schneider's *Winter Morning Walks* on the ArtistShare label. She is featured on

more than 50 additional recordings. In 2007, she was named a Fellow of the MacArthur Foundation, becoming the first vocal artist to be awarded the five-year "genius" prize, and in 2008 she was named a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.



one-minute notes

Puts: *Millennium Canons*

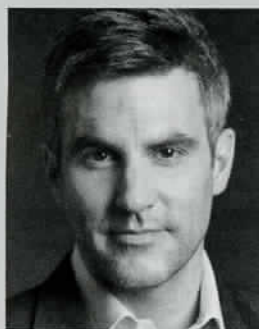
Millennium Canons employs canons—the echoing or imitation of melodies at staggered time intervals—and layers of driving rhythms. A spirited and dynamic work, it celebrated the dawn of a new millennium at its 2001 premiere, and now helps us usher in a new year.

Weill, Duke, Bernstein, Gershwin and Sondheim: Broadway selections

At the heart of this program, soprano Dawn Upshaw delivers eight gems from Broadway, including salutes to both New York and Paris by Vernon Duke; Bernstein's tragic and passionate "Somewhere" from *West Side Story*; Gershwin's heartfelt ballad "Someone to Watch Over Me"; and two selections from Sondheim's lesser-known early musicals.

Rachmaninoff: *Symphony No. 2*

Rachmaninoff's longest, grandest and most expansive symphony is built on the opening motif, a somber figure for low strings. The lyrical third movement is a standout, containing several gorgeous melodies and an extended clarinet solo of ardent longing. The finale is soaring and magnificent, culminating in a blaze of orchestral sound.



Kevin Puts

Born: January 3, 1972,
St. Louis, Missouri;
now living in
Yonkers, New York

Millennium Canons

Premiered: June 19, 2001

With the New Year's celebration upon us, we begin these concerts with music altogether new to Orchestra Hall and the Minnesota Orchestra—*Millennium Canons* by Kevin Puts, one of today's most acclaimed and most performed composers of music for both concert and opera stages. Puts' steadily-increasing catalog of compositions includes commissions and performances from such leading orchestras as the New York Philharmonic, St. Louis Symphony, Atlanta Symphony, Baltimore Symphony, National Symphony and Boston Pops. The Minnesota Orchestra commissioned and premiered his *Sinfonia concertante* in 2006 and appointed him director of its annual Composer Institute in 2014.

Puts' status as a major voice in contemporary music was affirmed in 2012 when he received the Pulitzer Prize for his first opera, *Silent Night*, which the Minnesota Opera had premiered in 2011. Minnesotans also had the privilege of viewing the world premiere of Puts' second opera, *The Manchurian Candidate*, again with the Minnesota Opera in March 2015. His next opera, an adaptation of Peter Ackroyd's gothic novel *The Trial of Elizabeth Cree*, will be premiered by Opera Philadelphia in September 2017. His most recent compositions include *The City*, an orchestral work premiered in Baltimore and New York last April, and *Letters from Georgia*, a song cycle written for soprano Renée Fleming, who premiered it this past November at the Eastman School of Music in New York.

Millennium Canons was commissioned by the Boston Pops Orchestra and the Hanson Institute for American Music. Keith Lockhart conducted the Pops for the premiere in June 2001. The composer states: "I wrote *Millennium Canons* to usher in a new millennium with fanfare, celebration and lyricism. Its rising textures and melodic counterpoint are almost always created through use of the canon, which also provides rhythmic propulsion at times. This piece conveys its bright texture and rhythmic drive through canon, a contrapuntal compositional technique that employs a melodic statement with one or more imitations at staggered time intervals." In his review of the CD recording, *Fanfare* critic William Zagorski called the seven-minute work "delightfully very."



Kurt Weill

Born: March 2, 1900,
Dessau, Germany
Died: April 3, 1950, New York City

"My Ship," from *Lady in the Dark*

Premiered: January 23, 1941

Kurt Weill left his native Germany in 1933 in the face of the Nazi onslaught, eventually settling in New York City in 1935, where he remained for the rest of his all-too-brief life. Weill knew from the age of 19 that his destiny lay in the theater. His first opera, *Der Protagonist* (1926) proved such a success that he created a dozen more before leaving Germany. The most famous of these were two of his eight collaborations with Bertolt Brecht: *Mahagonny* (1927; later to become the full-length *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*) and *The Three-Penny Opera* (1928), which saw more than 10,000 performances in 18 languages in its first five years alone.

"My Ship" is the final song of the 1941 Broadway musical *Lady in the Dark*. Magazine editor Liza Elliott sings snippets of it throughout the show, most of which is staged as dream sequences as Liza undergoes psychoanalysis. Only at the end, when she fully understands the cause of her anxiety, is she able to recall the whole song, remembered from childhood. Ira Gershwin, who wrote the lyrics, described the song as "orchestrated by Kurt to sound sweet and simple at times, mysterious and menacing at others." It was inexplicably omitted from the 1944 film version of the musical.

musician resolutions

New Year's resolutions from Minnesota Orchestra musicians

"One thing I love most about orchestra music is that it keeps me in the moment. My New Year's resolution is to practice that type of mindfulness in everything I do. There are far too many distractions in this world, and I want to focus on creating positive energy in each interaction."

— Ellen Dinwiddie Smith, horn, Orchestra musician since 1993

"I love visiting with audience members after concerts, and in 2017, I am resolving to head to the lobby as often as possible to say hello!"

— Wendy Williams, flute, Orchestra musician since 1992



Vernon Duke

Born: October 10, 1903,
Minsk, Russia (now Belarus)
Died: January 16, 1969,
Santa Monica, California

"Autumn in New York," from *Thumbs Up!*

Premiered: December 27, 1934

"April in Paris," from *Walk a Little Faster*

Premiered: December 7, 1932

Vladimir Dukelsky (Vernon Duke to most of us) was born in what was in 1903 known as a "Governate" of Russia; since 1991 it has been the Republic of Belarus. Duke led a peripatetic life, residing at some point in Constantinople, Paris, London, New York and California, at times bouncing back and forth from one to another. In New York in 1922, he met Gershwin, who suggested that he "Americanize" his name, as Gershwin himself (born Jacob Gershwitz) had done. We remember Duke almost entirely as a composer of popular songs, but he also wrote a considerable amount of concert music as well, including three symphonies and a Cello Concerto for Piatigorsky.

The two songs on tonight's program were both hits in the 1930s. Although not conceived as a pair, they seem eminently suited for each other, as both make reference to seasons in cities where Duke lived. "Autumn in New York" is the final song from the Broadway revue *Thumbs Up!* (1934). This jazz standard has been recorded well over 200 times, by just about everyone from Charlie Parker and Billie Holiday to Frank Sinatra and Mel Tormé to Yehudi Menuhin and Dawn Upshaw, who calls it "a love song to New York in my favorite time of year." Duke wrote his own lyrics.

"April in Paris" (lyrics by E.Y. "Yip" Harburg), another romanticization of a great city, comes from the 1932 show *Walk a Little Faster*. However, the song did not achieve popularity until Count Basie recorded it in 1955. Composer Alex Wilder has written: "There are no two ways about it: this is a perfect theater song. If that sounds too reverent, then I'll reduce the praise to 'perfectly wonderful,' or else say that if it's not perfect, show me why it isn't."

musician resolutions

"My goal for 2017 is to try not to buy any new shoes or clothes for a year and instead make bigger donations to protect our environment!"

– Assistant Principal Cello Beth Rapier, Orchestra musician since 1986



Leonard Bernstein

Born: August 25, 1918,
Lawrence, Massachusetts
Died: October 14, 1990,
New York City

"Somewhere," from *West Side Story*

Premiered: August 20, 1957

"A Little Bit in Love," from *Wonderful Town*

Premiered: February 25, 1953

Throughout his life, Leonard Bernstein was troubled, at times even angry, that the world accorded higher praise to his "popular" works than to his "serious" compositions. His Broadway musicals *Candide* and *West Side Story*, his film score *On the Waterfront*, and his ballets *Fancy Free* and *Facsimile* have captured the public fancy to a far greater degree than have his symphonies, chamber music and liturgical works, stirring though some of these may be. In both songs on this program, we hear Bernstein's amazing gift for melody, his many imaginative touches of orchestration and his uncanny ability to capture the flavor of an era.

Right from its opening night on Broadway on September 26, 1957, *West Side Story* became one of the biggest success stories in the history of American music. The stunning fusion of Arthur Laurents' book, Stephen Sondheim's lyrics, Jerome Robbins' choreography and Bernstein's music brought new meaning to Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet story, which was transported into a modern urban setting (presumably New York), with rival street gangs replacing ancient Veronese families.

"Somewhere" is a song about an idealized world where the gangs are united in friendship, a place where lovers from different racial backgrounds can live happily and freely together. In the stage production, the song is first heard coming from offstage during the "Somewhere Ballet." In the 1961 film version, it comes after the fight in which Tony stabs Maria's brother, Bernardo. "Somewhere" ranked No. 20 in the American Film Institute's *100 Years... 100 Songs* survey of top tunes in American cinema in 2004.

Bernstein's first musical comedy was *On the Town* (1944), a vehicle for three sailors to go on a carefree, 24-hour romp through "New York, New York, it's a wonderful town." Nearly a decade later, Bernstein repeated the miracle with another show portraying New York as a colorful, lively, friendly place. *Wonderful Town* (1953) won five Tonys, including Best Musical. Two sisters from Ohio have come to Greenwich Village to try to make careers for

themselves. Eileen, an aspiring dancer, finds herself falling in love with a Walgreens manager in one of the classics from Bernstein's bright and breezy score, "A Little Bit in Love," with lyrics by Bernstein, Betty Comden and Adolph Green.



George Gershwin

Born: September 26, 1898,
Brooklyn, New York
Died: July 11, 1937,
Hollywood, California

"Someone to Watch Over Me," from *Oh, Kay!*

Premiered: November 8, 1926

It is surely symbolic that George Gershwin, one of the most beloved songwriters of all time and one of our greatest composers, was born on one shore of America (Brooklyn) and died on the other (Hollywood), for his music has been played, embraced, loved and cherished as has that of virtually no other classical composer this country has ever produced.

Gershwin's style derived from the American soul and spirit. He came to prominence during the roaring '20s, the age of Tin Pan Alley, Broadway musicals and silent films. His output of over 500 songs, many of them written to lyrics by his older brother Ira, is all the more astonishing in that Gershwin lived only 38 years. Critic and musicologist Robert Marsh observed that "his greatest songs blend a vocal line of extraordinary flexibility and beauty with words that accent, amplify, and illuminate the musical ideas in a manner one takes for granted in the German *Lied* but is unaccustomed to find in a form regarded as popular art....In his music we hear the New York of the 1920s as clearly and forcefully as in Mozart we hear the Vienna of the 1780s."

"Someone to Watch over Me," with lyrics by Ira Gershwin, comes from *Oh, Kay!*, a 1926 vehicle for Gertrude Lawrence. Kay is serving as a cook in the household of Jimmy Winter, who is about to marry another woman when he falls in love with Kay. Kay definitely does need someone to watch over her while the legal and matrimonial problems are sorted out, so that she and Jimmy can live happily ever after.

musician resolutions

"My New Year's resolutions are to drink fewer Cokes, make emergency kits for downtown's homeless population, and to keep making beautiful music as a librarian and violist!"

—Assistant Principal Librarian Valerie Little, Orchestra musician since 2009



Stephen Sondheim

Born: March 22, 1930,
New York City;
now living there

"What More Do I Need?" from *Saturday Night*

Premiered: December 17, 1997

"There Won't Be Trumpets," from *Anyone Can Whistle*

Premiered: ca. March 1964

Stephen Sondheim is widely regarded as the finest living lyricist and composer of musical plays. Frank Rich of *The New York Times* called him "the greatest and perhaps best-known artist in the American musical theater."

Sondheim's first major contribution to Broadway, at age 25, was as lyricist for Leonard Bernstein's score of *West Side Story* (1957). Works like *Sweeney Todd* (1979), *Sunday in the Park with George* (1984), *Into the Woods* (1987) and *Passion* (1994) have made Sondheim into a household name. Now, at the age of 86, he can look back on a career spanning more than six decades. He was writing shows, scripts and scores while still in college, though this was perhaps not so surprising since his family had a close relationship with Oscar Hammerstein II, from whom Sondheim inevitably learned much. (Interestingly enough, he also studied with the fiercely avant-garde classical composer Milton Babbitt.) He has won more Tony Awards (seven) than any other composer. He is one of only a few who have won an Academy Award, a Pulitzer Prize, and multiple Tonys and Grammys. In December 2007, the Stephen Sondheim Center for the Performing Arts opened in Fairfield, Iowa. In November 2015, he was honored as a recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom, America's highest civilian honor.

"What More Do I Need?" comes from *Saturday Night*. This show was originally supposed to have opened on Broadway way back in 1955, when Sondheim was just 25. It would have been his musical debut on Broadway, but the lead producer died before *Saturday Night* reached the stage, and the project was shelved indefinitely. After productions in England and Chicago in the late 1990s, it eventually reached off-Broadway in 2000. "What More do I Need?" is the lead song, in which four young bachelor friends itemize the advantages of living in New York.

We close the Broadway portion of today's program with "There Won't Be Trumpets," from *Anyone Can Whistle*. Like *Saturday Night*, this is early Sondheim, and this show too got off to a rocky

start. In fact, it was a downright flop. It opened on April 4, 1964, and closed after just a few performances, following poor reviews and what Sondheim called a “hostile” audience. But “There Won’t Be Trumpets,” cut during previews, has become something of a cult favorite. In the song, nurse Fay Apple dreams of a hero who will come to save her bankrupt little town from the corruption and madness that are strangling it.



Sergei Rachmaninoff

Born: April 1, 1873, Semyonovo, district of Starorussky, Russia

Died: March 28, 1943, Beverly Hills, California

Symphony No. 2 in E minor, Opus 27

Premiered: January 26, 1908

One of the most surprising things about Rachmaninoff’s Second Symphony is that it was written at all. The premiere of his First Symphony in 1897 was a debacle, plunging the composer into a depression so profound that he wrote nothing for several years thereafter. It wasn’t just that the public didn’t like it, or the critics, or his friends, or his colleagues. *No one* liked it, including its own author. A long series of treatments involving hypnosis by a Dr. Dahl brought him to the point where he could write his Second Piano Concerto, completed in 1900. But it was ten years before Rachmaninoff could face the prospect of writing another symphony. And at first, he told no one about his endeavor.

a success from the start

He had moved to Dresden at the time, in the fall of 1906, to escape the demands of public life in Moscow, where he was in constant demand as a pianist, conductor, committeeman, guest and collaborator on all things musical. The stately old city, where Rachmaninoff and his wife had spent their honeymoon several years earlier, appealed strongly to the composer. Also, the peace and anonymity he found in Dresden were conducive to artistic creativity. His Second Symphony was fully sketched by New Year’s Day of 1907. Revisions and orchestration took place over a longer period, both back home in Russia and during a return visit to Dresden. Rachmaninoff conducted the first performance, which took place on January 26, 1908, in St. Petersburg. He also led the Moscow premiere a week later, as well as an early American performance with the Philadelphia Orchestra in November 1909.

In each case the audience responded enthusiastically, and the symphony has enjoyed an unbroken run of popularity to this day. The score was published in 1908, but then the manuscript went missing for nearly a century. Musical sleuths rejoiced when, in

September of 2004, it turned up in a cellar in Switzerland. Until then, it was the only Rachmaninoff manuscript not accounted for, making it all the more tantalizing as a prize find. Rachmaninoff specialist Geoffrey Norris notes that “quite apart from the score’s potential monetary value, its significance for musicians and scholars is priceless, because, with the hundreds of emendations, crossings-out and annotations that Rachmaninoff made on the manuscript, it gives clues to his earlier thoughts on the symphony.”

the music

largo – allegro moderato. Most of the symphony’s melodic material derives from a single motif, heard in the opening bars in the somber colors of low cellos and basses. In a multifarious variety of guises and transformations, this “motto” haunts the entire symphony in both obvious and subtle ways, infusing it with coherence and compelling impetus. After its initial statement, the motto passes to other instruments, eventually giving birth to a sinuous violin phrase, which grows to an impressive climax as it weaves its way through lushly orchestrated textures and luxuriant counterpoint. Following the slow introduction, the main *Allegro moderato* section of the movement is ushered in with a shivering, rising figure in the strings. Violins then spin out a long, winding, aspiring theme based on the motto. The delicate, gentle second theme, divided between woodwinds and responding strings, also derives from the motto.

allegro molto. The second movement, a scherzo, is built on the motif of the *Dies Irae*, the medieval Gregorian chant for the dead. Four horns in unison proclaim a boldly exuberant version of the *Dies Irae*, which itself has its seeds in the symphony’s motto. (This motif was used in the composer’s Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini.) Two contrasting ideas of note are the warmly flowing lyrical theme for the violins and a brilliant fugato section that demands the utmost in virtuosity from the strings.

adagio. The third movement is one of the lyric highlights of all Rachmaninoff. No fewer than three gorgeous melodies are heard, beginning with one of the most popular ever written. Following immediately on this theme of great repose and tranquility comes one of the glories of the solo clarinet repertory—an extended theme full of ardent longing.

allegro vivace. The enormously energetic finale too is a broadly expansive movement, beginning with a boisterously robust idea that might easily conjure up the spirit of a carnival. This is followed by a dark, grim, march-like episode, then by another of Rachmaninoff’s most famous themes—a magnificent, soaring affair that sweeps onward over an expanse of more than one hundred measures. Rachmaninoff’s longest, grandest, most expansive symphonic work ends in a veritable blaze of sound.

Program notes by **Robert Markow**.



essay

Be It Resolved...

by Kim Ode

Making New Year's resolutions is a rite of, well, each new year.

Recalling a report card's line noting "room for improvement," we resolve to do better, do more, do less, do anything to improve our lives—and maybe even the lives of those who put up with us. Often, this involves doughnuts (fewer), sit-ups (more), or a renewed (these *are* annual rites) commitment to being better organized. The possibilities are endless. But the goal of resolutions is the same: to follow something through to completion, to bring chaos into order, dissonance into harmony, Size 14 to Size 10.

Composers must have similar goals. How else to explain the way that pieces of music almost invariably end with a chord that resolves? With the movement of just a few tones, the final note resounds with the harmony of a long-sought goal achieved.

To put it another way, in less erudite example: Here in Minnesota, the vein of traditional hymn-singing still pulses. You may thus be familiar with hungry parishioners in a church basement singing the Doxology, and the way they invariably break into harmony as they reach the final word. "Ahhhh..." pours forth in an unresolved chord, and then—with the sort of hive mind subconsciousness that passes all understanding—resolves to a major chord for that final "...men."

After a moment's satisfied reflection upon themselves, everyone eats. That's resolution.

I'd be bluffing if I pretended to know music theory. So I'll turn to the sages at Wikipedia for a definition of musical resolution. They tell me it's "the move of a note or chord from dissonance (an unstable sound) to a consonance (a more final or stable sounding one)." Resolution, then, is a central component of music. And while we often sense what the final chord will be, the joy is in how we reach it.

If a piece is familiar, we can settle in, knowing that

however far the harmonic journey from the home key, all will be resolved. The final rewarding chord will be an apt metaphor for the life skill of staying the course. And if a piece is new, we trust that it will end in a way that will let us exhale. For here's the thing: Until a chord is resolved, it seems we can't quite breathe with complete ease.

Granted, throughout a piece, there are smaller resolutions of dissonance to consonance—and these shallow breaths can create a wonderful tension. There is a trust factor at work. We trust we will be rewarded, trust that composers, however circuitous their journey through the scales, also seek a sense of completion. Sometimes they take us right up to the brink.

Igor Stravinsky was a master of the circuitous journey. *The Rite of Spring* is notorious for its dissonance, which Stravinsky keeps coming back to, until the final explosive, and yet resolved, chord. His *Firebird Suite* is slightly more hum-your-way-back-to-the-parking-ramp-friendly. And is there a better soundtrack for personal victory (size 10!) than the finale's brassy chords and off-kilter drum beats? Yet he then backs down to a building series of unresolved chords that have us holding our breath until that final pristine conclusion. Feeling once again on solid ground, we exhale.

Maybe this is why we make resolutions. Even if our best intentions end up getting cast aside by St. Patrick's Day, we have tried to bring order to chaos. We have sought to stay the course. We have tried. And trying counts—regardless of whether we attain the glorious heights of Bach or Beethoven, Tchaikovsky or Stravinsky.

Can I get an "Amen?"

Kim Ode is a longtime feature writer at the Star Tribune, cookbook author and lover of fine musical ensembles. She's a trombonist who, while no longer playing in a fine ensemble, still can't bring herself to sell the dang thing. Because you never know.... She and her husband live in Edina.

