American Expressions: Future Classics—Emerging Composers Spotlight

Minnesota Orchestra
Osmo Vänskä, conductor
Tengku Irfan, piano | Rui Du, violin
Kevin Puts, Composer Institute director | Fred Child, host

American Expressions

Friday, January 18, 2019, 8 pm | Orchestra Hall

During the American Expressions festival we gratefully recognize an anonymous couple for their generous contribution to the Minnesota Orchestra's Investing in Inspiration campaign.

We are deeply grateful to the late Hella Mears Hueg for her generous support of the Composer Institute.

The program order will be announced from the stage. There will be one intermission.

TJ Cole  
Nightscape  ca. 5’

Viet Cuong  
Moxie  ca. 8’

Jonathan Cziner  
Resonant Bells  ca. 12

Will Healy  
Kolmanskop  ca. 10’

Matthew Ricketts  
Melodia for Piano and Orchestra
Tengku Irfan, piano  ca. 16’

Connor Elias Way  
Over Collapsing Cities of Steel  ca. 10’

Alyssa Weinberg  
in somnis for Violin and Orchestra
Rui Du, violin  ca. 7’

The Minnesota Orchestra Composer Institute is co-presented by the Minnesota Orchestra and the American Composers Forum. Program notes and profiles of the composers, soloists, Kevin Puts and Fred Child are provided in the Composer Institute booklet. Osmo Vänskä’s profile appears on page 6.

The audience is invited to stay in the auditorium after the concert for a Q&A with the composers, Kevin Puts and Osmo Vänskä.

Thank you
The January 2019 Composer Institute is generously sponsored by The Amphion Foundation, The Aaron Copland Fund for Music, Hella Mears Hueg and an award from the National Endowment for the Arts.

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.
The Minnesota Orchestra
and American Composers Forum
present
The 16th Annual
MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA
COMPOSER INSTITUTE
JANUARY 14–18, 2019
Welcome to the Minnesota Orchestra Composer Institute! We’re thrilled that the program continues to thrive in its 16th year. The program’s success and longevity are a tribute to the friends, funders and listeners who have supported the Institute since its inception, including founding director Aaron Jay Kernis, our partners at the American Composers Forum, and especially Music Director Osmo Vänskä and all musicians of the Minnesota Orchestra, who are committed not only to their spirited devotion to the great repertoire of the past but also to fostering the growth of vital new work from today’s brightest young voices. This year I’m especially delighted that, for the first time, the Future Classics concert will feature two works with a soloist, showcasing the talents of the Orchestra’s Assistant Concertmaster Rui Du and guest pianist Tengku Irfan. I’m thrilled that the Orchestra has embraced this new direction for the Institute, and I hope we’ll go even further with it in future seasons.

This week the seven composers invited as this year’s Institute participants are expanding their understanding of orchestral writing as their works come alive through the artistry of the Orchestra’s musicians. Intensive workshops with musicians, one-on-one mentoring sessions, meetings with Osmo Vänskä, and seminars with leaders in the music industry will hone the composers’ skills for both the business and artistic sides of their professions. These unique collaborations allow the Composer Institute to open doors to the professional orchestra world that are often inaccessible to aspiring composers.

The week culminates in our annual Future Classics concert, conducted by Osmo Vänskä, which features one work by each participating composer. Adding still more interest to the event is an onstage interview of each composer by Performance Today host Fred Child. We’re thrilled that our audience will share in the adventure of discovering new music from talents as distinctly inventive as these. And we are deeply grateful that Osmo Vänskä is so keenly and fundamentally involved in the Institute and its future. It is no small task to introduce seven substantial new works in one evening, and this concert, under Osmo’s baton, will be a thrilling end to the week’s events.

This year it is with deepest appreciation that we recognize the late Hella Mears Hueg, a longtime Composer Institute supporter and Minnesota Orchestra Director Emeritus who passed away in 2017. We continue to recognize her major gift that is supporting and sustaining the program annually for five years. We’re grateful for her wonderful dedication and generosity, and we miss her deeply.

For me, there is simply nothing more exciting than hearing a work as it is performed by a world-class ensemble for the first time. It is a pleasure to share this experience with all of you, our friends in the audience, as we unveil these Future Classics!

Kevin Puts, Composer Institute director

Osmo Vänskä, conductor

Finnish conductor Osmo Vänskä, the Minnesota Orchestra’s tenth music director, is renowned internationally for his compelling interpretations of the standard, contemporary and Nordic repertoires. Since becoming the Minnesota Orchestra’s music director in 2003, he has led the ensemble on several major international tours, including historic tours to Cuba and South Africa and six visits to Europe. As a guest conductor, he has led all the major U.S. and European orchestras, along with several major orchestras in Asia. He has earned wide acclaim for his support of contemporary works and composers, and has received a Champion of New Music Award from the American Composers Forum. In 2006 he expanded the Minnesota Orchestra Composer Institute to include the Future Classics concert, with which he has since introduced Minnesota audiences to 72 new works. Additional works he has premiered with the Orchestra range from Olli Kortekangas’ Migrations and concertos by Rautavaara and MacMillan to the oratorio To Be Certain of the Dawn, composed by Stephen Paulus to a libretto by Michael Dennis Browne, and Harmonia Ubuntu by Bongani Ndodana-Breen, which was commissioned by Classical Movements for the Orchestra’s August 2018 South Africa tour. Earlier this month he led the Orchestra in a performance of Steve Heitzeg’s trumpet concerto American Nomad, which the Orchestra and soloist Charles Lazarus premiered in 2015. Later this season he will lead the U.S. premiere of Mark-Anthony Turnage’s Martland Memorial. Vänskä, who began his music career as a clarinetist, held the co-principal chair of the Helsinki Philharmonic (1977–82) and the principal chair of the Turku Philharmonic (1971–76). For a more complete profile, please see page 6 of January 2019 Showcase or visit minnesotaorchestra.org.

“The Composer Institute is vital to the Orchestra and our community as we cultivate new music and a new generation of composers. We are entrusted to be curators of all orchestral repertoire—both the historic works as well as music of today.”

—Osmo Vänskä, Minnesota Orchestra music director
**Kevin Puts, Composer Institute director**

Kevin Puts, now in his fifth season as director of the Minnesota Orchestra Composer Institute, won the 2012 Pulitzer Prize for the opera *Silent Night*, which was commissioned and premiered by the Minnesota Opera, as was his 2015 opera *The Manchurian Candidate*. His work has been commissioned and performed by leading orchestras in the U.S. and abroad, including the New York Philharmonic, Boston Pops, Zurich Tonhalle Orchestra and Minnesota Orchestra. In recent seasons the Minnesota Orchestra has performed several of his works including *Two Mountain Scenes, Millennium Canons, Rivers Rush, Inspiring Beethoven*, and Symphony No. 4, *From Mission San Juan*. He has written five symphonies as well as concertos premiered by prominent soloists including Yo-Yo Ma and Evelyn Glennie. His most recent works have received world premieres on both coasts. His first chamber opera, an adaptation of Peter Ackroyd’s gothic novel *The Trial of Elizabeth Cree* with libretto by Mark Campbell, was commissioned and premiered by Opera Philadelphia in September 2017. In the orchestral realm, his Oboe Concerto, *Moonlight*, was commissioned by the Baltimore Symphony for its principal oboist Katherine Needleman, who premiered it in June 2018 and reprised it in November with Marin Alsop conducting. In addition, *Silent Night Elegy*, an orchestral fantasy based on music from *Silent Night*, was premiered last fall by the San Francisco Symphony. He is currently at work on an orchestral song cycle based on the letters of Georgia O’Keeffe and Alfred Stieglitz titled *The Brightness of Light*, which will be performed by Renée Fleming and Rod Gilfry and several orchestras in the coming seasons. His music is also well-represented on recordings, including *Loves Comes in at the Eye*, released in July 2018 by Albany Records. For more information, visit kevinputs.com or minnesotaorchestra.org.

**Rui Du, violin**

Rui Du, assistant concertmaster of the Minnesota Orchestra since 2015, was previously a member of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra; in Baltimore he won fourth chair in the first violin section in 2012 and soon after was named acting assistant concertmaster. He had previously been concertmaster of the Annapolis Symphony, associate concertmaster of the Aspen Music Festival Orchestra and concertmaster of the Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra. In addition, he has served as guest concertmaster of the Qingdao and Hebei symphony orchestras in China.

Du has won numerous competitions, including grand prize at the 2006 Canetti International Violin Competition. He has performed as soloist and recitalist in locations including France, Turkey, Finland, Singapore and China, in addition to appearing in solos with the orchestras mentioned earlier and the orchestras of Shanghai and Fuzhou in China. Also an accomplished chamber musician, Du has performed with renowned artists at the Tanglewood, Canetti and Aspen music festivals, among others, and in 2011 was featured in Aspen's Baroque Evening Concert Series under the direction of Nicholas McGegan. For more information, visit minnesotaorchestra.org.

**Tengku Irfan, piano**

Tengku Irfan, 20-year-old Malaysian pianist, composer and conductor, debuted at age 11 performing Beethoven’s Piano Concerto No. 4, improvising his own cadenzas with Claus Peter Flor and the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra. He has performed as soloist with orchestras worldwide under conductors Neeme Järvi, Kristjan Järvi, Robert Spano, George Stelluto and Jeffrey Milarsky, among others. His other performances have included engagements with AXIOM, Singapore Symphony, São Paulo State Youth, Estonian National Symphony and Peoria Symphony orchestras, and the MDR Sinfonieorchester. He won the 2013 Aspen Music Festival composition competition for his piano concerto *Momo*, which he performed with the Royal Northern Sinfonia in November 2013.

“*The composers we invite each year are among the most brilliant and promising in the world, and I always learn something from hearing their music played so well. It’s inspiring to hear an orchestra play so well, with such preparation. We composers don’t receive opportunities like that very often. I always go home imagining pieces I want to write for the Minnesota Orchestra!*”

—Kevin Puts, Composer Institute director
Festival Prokofiev Piano Concerto No. 2 Competition and served for four consecutive years as pianist for the Aspen Contemporary Ensemble. He received the 2012 ASCAP Charlotte Bergen Award and the ASCAP Morton Gould Young Composer Award in 2012, 2014 and 2017. His compositions have been premiered by the New York Philharmonic, MDR Sinfonieorchester, New York Virtuoso Singers, MusicaNova, Malaysian Philharmonic and the Singapore Symphony orchestras. He debuted as a conductor with the MusicaNova Orchestra in 2015, and recently conducted the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra for its 20th Anniversary Gala Concert.

Irfan is a double major in piano and composition at Juilliard, under Veda Kaplinsky and Robert Beaser, respectively, and studies conducting with George Stelluto and Jeffrey Milarsky. He is a proud recipient of a Kovner Fellowship at The Juilliard School, and he was recently appointed as Youth Ambassador of the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra. For more information, visit tengkuirfan.com.

Fred Child, host
Fred Child, host of American Public Media's Performance Today, is also commentator and announcer for Live from Lincoln Center. He previously hosted and directed programs at WNYC in New York and was a public radio host for ten years in his native Oregon. He has also been heard on National Public Radio and BBC Radio 3, and he has contributed to Billboard magazine. In 2011 he made his acting debut, collaborating with composer Philip Glass and violinist Timothy Fain in a live performance and video project called Portals. His musical background includes studies in piano, as well as experience playing guitar, percussion and bagpipes. For more information, visit yourclassical.org.

TJ Cole / Nightscape
PROGRAM NOTE
My composition Nightscape was a response to an experience I had after stargazing one summer in northern Michigan. Visually, I reflected on how objects in the sky gradually revealed themselves, while the entirety of the scene shifted and expanded over time. Emotionally, I was struck by the beauty of the night sky while feeling equally terrified by its vastness. About two-thirds of the way through the piece, the music represents a brief moment from my experience: looking past individual objects in the sky and instead seeing the sky in its entirety. Nightscape was premiered by the Curtis Symphony Orchestra with conductor Paul Bryan on April 2, 2016, in Philadelphia's Gould Rehearsal Hall.

–TJ Cole

BIOGRAPHY
TJ Cole, originally from the suburbs of Atlanta, began her musical studies at a young age when she started taking piano lessons. At age 6, she wrote her first composition, a piano lullaby for her new baby brother. In her early teens, she played cello with local youth orchestras. At age 16, she realized that she did not want to pursue a life of performance, but a life dedicated to creation. So she began to focus her pursuits on her passion for composing.

Besides taking commissions, Cole is also interested in artistic community service projects. She collaborated with bassist Ranaan Meyer as an orchestrator on his project The World We All Deserve Through Music, and with First Person Arts by co-curating and performing in a musical story slam. During a year-long ArtistYear Fellowship, she was able to co-run and collaborate in musical performances and songwriting workshops with residents of Project HOME, a Philadelphia-based organization fighting to end chronic homelessness.

Cole has been commissioned by the Cincinnati Symphony, Louisville Orchestra, Baltimore Symphony, Time for Three and Sun Valley Summer Symphony, among other ensembles, and served as a composer in residence at the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music in 2014. She received her bachelor's degree in composition from the Curtis Institute of Music. In addition to composing, she enjoys drawing, baking, and taking care of the various cats in her life: Xena, Zelda, Simmie and Bruce. For more information, visit tjcolemusic.com.
Viet Cuong / Moxie

PROGRAM NOTE
When we say someone has “moxie,” we imply that they have a surprising amount of confidence and nerve, especially for someone of their stature or age. By orchestrating an extremely simple musical line into something much bigger and bolder than itself, my piece Moxie sets out to prove that (with enough nerve) the simple can sound complex, the small can sound mighty, and, most importantly, a whisper can actually scream. This last idea is carried out as the piece comes to a close and music distills itself to its core; even though this final texture thins out dramatically, I feel the energy is only heightened by doing so. Ultimately, the piece has the moxie to believe that sometimes the simplest move is right. Moxie was premiered on March 31, 2018, by the Curtis Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Carlos Agreda.

–Viet Cuong

BIOGRAPHY
The music of Viet Cuong has been performed on six continents by musicians and ensembles including Sō Percussion, Eighth Blackbird, Alarm Will Sound, Sandbox Percussion, PRISM Quartet, JACK Quartet, Kaleidoscope Chamber Orchestra, Jacksonville Symphony and Albany Symphony, in venues such as Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, Kennedy Center, International Double Reed Society Conference, U.S. Navy Band International Saxophone Symposium and the Midwest Clinic. His awards include the Barlow Endowment Commission, ASCAP Morton Gould Award, Copland House Residency Award, Suzanne and Lee Ettelson Award, Theodore Presser Foundation Music Award, New York Youth Symphony First Music Commission, Cortona Prize and Walter Beeler Memorial Prize. He has held artist residencies at Yaddo, Ucross and the Atlantic Center for the Arts, and was a fellow at the Mizzou International Composers Festival, Eighth Blackbird Creative Lab, Cabrillo Festival Young Composers Workshop, Copland House’s CULTIVATE Institute, and the Aspen and Bowdoin music festivals.

Currently an Artist Diploma student at the Curtis Institute and a Naumburg and Roger Sessions Doctoral Fellow at Princeton University, he holds bachelor’s and master’s degrees from the Peabody Conservatory. His teachers include Kevin Puts, Oscar Bettison, Steve Mackey, Donnacha Dennehy, David Ludwig and Jennifer Higdon. His recent and upcoming works include a percussion quartet concerto for Sandbox Percussion with the Albany Symphony and a double oboe concerto for the Kaleidoscope Chamber Orchestra. For more information, visit vietcuongmusic.com.

Jonathan Cziner / Resonant Bells

PROGRAM NOTE
...Yet the ear distinctly tells
In the jangling
And the wrangling
How the danger sinks and swells
By the sinking or the swelling in the anger of the bells...

We live in unsettling times. Bells by nature can be advisory or prophetic, and in a world that is wracked with turbulence, the words of Edgar Allan Poe's “The Bells” ring true. Resonant Bells captures the essence of alarm bells, and the implication of warning that echoes in the ears of those who hear them. The piece opens mysteriously, with the announcement of a repeated rhythmic motive. After a vertical unfolding of harmony, the music explodes, introducing us to premonitory tolling bells played by the percussion section. The lyrical passage that follows is thwarted by the bells, and after the dust settles, meandering woodwind solos are interspersed with a new iteration of the original rhythmic motive. The music pushes forward into a dizzying scherzo, at times playful, at other times demonic. Chaos erupts in an apocalyptic reprise of the lyrical passage, and the music is derailed by the tolling of the bells, now in the entire orchestra. The piece closes with an elegiac flute solo, and the final moments return to the very opening, as if to remind us that “we were warned.”

The premiere of Resonant Bells took place on July 14, 2018, with the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra performing under conductor David Robertson.

–Jonathan Cziner

BIOGRAPHY
Jonathan Cziner’s music has been performed throughout the U.S. and Europe and combines colorful harmony and texture with nostalgic lyricism, creating a sound-world that ranges from dark and mysterious to vibrant. His recent awards include a 2018 Charles Ives Scholarship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, a BMI Student Composer Award, where he also received the William Schuman Prize for most outstanding score, and two consecutive Palmer Dixon prizes, awarded to the most outstanding composition from the Juilliard School. Other commissions include Transient Bodies for the New Juilliard Ensemble, Once New for the Lyric Chamber Society and harpist Emily Levin, and Fantasy Chorale for the American Guild of Organists. Equally dedicated to scoring for film, he is scoring director Nora Unkel’s first feature film, A Nightmare Wakes, for release in 2019.
Cziner, based in New York City, is currently the associate artistic director of the Charles Ives Concert Series, which focuses its programming on the music of Ives, as well as other past and present American composers. He received a bachelor of music degree at New York University, and a master of music degree at the Juilliard School, where he is currently a doctoral candidate. His teachers include Robert Beaser and Justin Dello Joio. For more information, visit jonathancziner.com.

Will Healy / Kolmanskop

PROGRAM NOTE
Kolmanskop is a ghost town located in a desert near the coast of Namibia. It was a German diamond mining settlement until its abandonment in the 1950s, and the surrounding sands have long since filled the homes. The first time I came across pictures of Kolmanskop, I was awestruck by the beauty and strangeness of the place. The photographs looked like surrealist art, with mountains of sand inundating ornate colonial houses.

In 2014, I went to Kolmanskop and composed a piece based on that setting. I spent countless hours sitting in the houses sketching out a plan for the piece. In the end, I wanted to represent more than just the visual elements of Kolmanskop. I tried to depict the idea of decay as the sand fills the houses, the sense of loss and nostalgia as the structures fade away, and the passage of time. The whole town is a bit like an hourglass—the more time that passes, the higher the sand becomes. This piece is written in memory of my teacher Steven Stucky. He and I had many discussions about time, loss and how those themes could be represented through music, and those discussions took on new meaning after his sudden death in February 2016. I want to thank him, as well as John Corigliano, Samuel Adler and Harold Meltzer for their guidance on the piece.

Melodia was premiered on August 9, 2017, with Robert Spano conducting the Aspen Philharmonic and Tengku Irfan as piano soloist. I’m very pleased that he is also the soloist at this week’s concert.

–Matthew Ricketts

BIOGRAPHY
Matthew Ricketts is a Canadian composer currently based in New York City. His music often engages with text-music
relationships, quotation, impersonation and ekphrasis, moving from extremes of presence and absence, clamor and quietude. He is the recipient of eight prizes in the SOCAN Foundation’s Awards for Young Composers, a 2013 ASCAP Morton Gould Young Composer Award, the 2015 Salvatore Martirano Memorial Composition Award, the 2016 Mivos/Kanter Prize, the 2016 Jacob Druckman Prize from the Aspen Music Festival, the 2016 Lili Boulanger Memorial Fund Prize and the 2018 Elliott Carter Memorial Fellowship from the Tanglewood Music Center.

Active as a writer as well as a composer, Ricketts has published articles, reviews, poetry and libretti, and has worked closely with renowned authors and poets Lauren J. Rogener, Paul Legault and Tomson Highway on multiple collaborative projects. His other collaborative endeavors include recent works for dancer-choreographers Brendan Drake and Jennifer Nichols. He holds degrees in music composition and theory from McGill University’s Schulich School of Music and Columbia University. His principal mentors include Brian Cherney, John Rea, Chris Paul Harman, George Lewis and Fred Lerdahl. He is currently a Core Lecturer at Columbia University. For more information, visit matthewricketts.com.

Connor Elias Way / Over Collapsing Cities of Steel

PROGRAM NOTE
Over Collapsing Cities of Steel derives its name from a short poem titled “Sleep” by Georg Trakl—shown below in a translation from original German by Christopher Ciampoli.

Curse you, dark poisons,
White sleep!
This outlandish garden
Twilit trees
Pregnant with snakes, moths,
Spiders, bats.
Strange one! Your shadow lost
under the red glow of the setting sun,
A grim corsair
on misery’s salty sea.
White birds flutter on
Night’s fringe
Over collapsing cities
Of steel.

Although my piece is not intended to act as a depiction of the poem, I was inspired by the way in which Trakl took such macabre imagery and somehow made it feel heroic. In perhaps a similar way, my piece revolves around a colossal, Herculean sonority which is never far from sudden erosion, devastation and total collapse. Tonight’s performance marks the work’s world premiere.

–Connor Elias Way

BIography
Connor Elias Way is a composer from Atlanta, Georgia. He holds a bachelor’s in composition (summa cum laude) from Georgia State University and a master’s in composition from the Peabody Institute of The Johns Hopkins University, where he was presented with the Gustav Klemm Award in Composition. Way’s piece Harlequin was selected as a finalist in the League of Composers/ISCM 2014 Composition Competition, and in 2017 he was awarded a fellowship from Yale’s Norfolk New Music Workshop. His music has been performed by the NeoPhonia New Music Ensemble, Chamber Cartel, Terminus Ensemble, Omnibus Ensemble, The Occasional Symphony, Now Hear This, and at the Charleston Symphony’s Magnetic South series. He is currently a Roger Sessions Doctoral Fellow at Princeton University where he is working towards a doctorate in music composition. For more information, visit connoreliasway.com.

Alyssa Weinberg / in somnis

PROGRAM NOTE
Originally written for violinist Anastasia Agapova and the Curtis Symphony Orchestra in 2014, in somnis, which translates to “in sleep” or “in a dream state,” was inspired by Picasso’s painting The Dream. I frequently use extra-musical sources or other works of art as the initial idea for my works, but I think of these as catalysts for the creative process rather than attempting to create direct or programmatic depictions of them in my music. From this painting I derived an abstract story which became the template for the piece, allowing me to “fill in” how I imagined the woman in the painting’s various states of sub-consciousness might sound. I am always interested in exploring the blurred lines between different states of consciousness, a theme central to Surrealism, so the sections in this piece abstractly represent the blurring and crossing of those different lines, and the idea of dream-states versus reality.
The premiere of in somnis took place in March 2014, with the Curtis Symphony Orchestra performing under the direction of Kensho Watanabe, with Anastasia Agapova as violin soloist.

-Alyssa Weinberg

BIOGRAPHY
Composer Alyssa Weinberg is best-known for crafting visceral, communicative scores. She finds collaboration deeply inspiring, and her music pulls concepts from her work with writers, dancers and visual artists. The 2018-19 season will be Weinberg’s most high-profile to date, with premieres and performances by the Minnesota Orchestra, San Diego Symphony and Chamber Orchestra of San Antonio, as well as commissions for yMusic, the Amaranth Quartet and the New Works for Percussion Project. This season will also feature the premiere of a new cello concerto for Nicholas Finch and the NouLou Chamber Players.

Weinberg’s music has been commissioned and performed by some of the most accomplished artists and ensembles around the world, including Eighth Blackbird, Sō Percussion, the Louisville Orchestra and the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra. In addition, she counts Arx Duo, the Aizuri Quartet and Kaleidoscope Chamber Orchestra among her frequent collaborators. She has received commissions and awards from Chamber Music America, FringeArts, the Pennsylvania Ballet, the Barnes Foundation and the Curtis Institute of Music.

Weinberg received an Artist Diploma from the Curtis Institute of Music, a master’s in composition from the Manhattan School of Music, and a bachelor’s in composition and theory at Vanderbilt University. Her teachers have included Richard Danielpour, Donnacha Dennehy, Jennifer Higdon, David Ludwig, Steve Mackey and Dan Trueman. She is currently a doctoral fellow at Princeton University. For more information, visit weinbergmusic.com.

OUR PARTNER

The Minnesota Orchestra Composer Institute benefits from the support of many partnering organizations and individuals. Our closest and longest-term partner is the St. Paul-based American Composers Forum (ACF), which manages the score submission process, brings word of the program to its large body of constituents—and serves as the Institute’s greatest friend, advisor and resource, continually helping to fine-tune and expand the program.

The American Composers Forum is committed to supporting composers and developing new markets for their music. Through granting, commissioning and performance programs, the Forum provides composers with resources for professional and artistic development. By linking composers with communities, the Forum fosters a demand for new music, enriches communities and helps develop the next generation of composers, musicians and music patrons.

ACF is one of the nation’s premier composer service organizations, with programming that reaches composers and communities in all 50 states. Its 1,500 members include composers, performers, presenters and other individuals and organizations that share the Forum’s goals and support new music. Members come from both urban and rural areas; they work in virtually every musical genre, including orchestral and chamber music, world music, opera and music theater, jazz and improvisational music, electronic and electro-acoustic music, and sound art. More: composersforum.org.
ABOUT THE MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA COMPOSER INSTITUTE

The Minnesota Orchestra Composer Institute, now in its 16th year, is an outgrowth of the Orchestra’s Perfect Pitch program, an annual series of new music reading sessions for emerging Minnesota composers launched during the 1995–96 season in collaboration with the American Composers Forum. In 2002 the program was reformulated as the Composer Institute and opened to composers from across the country, Pulitzer Prize-winner Aaron Jay Kernis became its director, and the program added seminars with industry leaders and Orchestra musicians, mentoring and other activities.

In 2006, the Orchestra added a public Future Classics concert, conducted by Music Director Osmo Vänskä, as the Institute’s capstone—a popular annual tradition ever since. Pulitzer Prize-winner Kevin Puts is now in his fifth season as the Institute’s director, while others instrumental to the program’s success have included the Orchestra’s Artistic Operations Manager Mele Willis and former Institute Co-Director Beth Cowart.

“The week at the Composer Institute was one of the best weeks in my life,” says Ming-Hsiu Yen, a 2008 Institute participant. “The first-rate music education system in the United States is what brought me here from Taiwan, and the conservatory training that I received has been invaluable in making me a better musician. There has been nothing, however, that could compare to what I learned in a week at the Minnesota Orchestra Composer Institute.”

The program’s influence has spread throughout the music world via the success of participants such as 2004 alumnus Andrew Norman, who in 2017 won the Grawemeyer Award, the largest financial prize in contemporary classical music; 2006 alumnus Anna Clyne, a 2015 Grammy nominee; and trailblazers in the field of contemporary opera such as Missy Mazzoli and Matthew Peterson, 2006 and 2015 participants respectively. In 2018 both of the finalists for the Pulitzer Prize for Music were past Institute participants: 2008 alumnus Ted Hearne was recognized for his cantata Sound from the Bench, while 2016 alumnus Michael Gilbertson earned the honor for his Quartet.

Several past participants have gone on to have their music performed on the Orchestra’s subscription season, including Polina Nazaykinskaya and Missy Mazzoli, whose These Worlds in Us will be performed at Orchestra Hall from March 14 to 16, 2019. Alumni have also fostered connections with other local ensembles such as the Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra, which is conducted by William Schrickel, the Minnesota Orchestra’s assistant principal bass.

As of this week, the Minnesota Orchestra Composer Institute and its predecessor, Perfect Pitch, have boosted the careers of 141 composers, with 149 works receiving readings or performances. Following is a complete list of participants.

PERFECT PITCH
(ORIGINAL INCARNATION OF THE COMPOSER INSTITUTE)

1995–96 SEASON
Carol Barnett
Keith M. Bradshaw
Thomas E. Fitch
Randall Stokes
Paul A. Suskind
David Evan Thomas

1996–97 SEASON
Michael Karmon
Russell Platt
David Schober
David Evan Thomas
Michael Wittgraf

1997–98 SEASON
Anthony Gatto
Melissa M. Hannah
David Schober
Michael Wittgraf

1998–99 SEASON
Erika Foin
Philip Fried
Peter Lothringer
Nathaniel Riley
Mark Warhol
Carl Witt

1999–2000 SEASON
Anthony Gatto
Geoffrey Gordon
Brian J. Nelson
Paul Paccione
Justin Henry Rubin

2000–01 SEASON
James F. Crowley
Stacy Garrop
Michael Klingbeil
Mei-Fang Lin
Rich Pressley
Justin Henry Rubin

MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA COMPOSER INSTITUTE

2001–02 SEASON
Gordon Beeferman
Lisa Bielawa
Anthony Cheung
Stacy Garrop
Michael Gatsouka
Keith Murphy
Stephan Prock
Mischa Zupko

2002–03 SEASON
Todd Coleman
Christopher Dietz
Lu Pei
Russell Platt
Erich Stem
Nathan Stumpff
Michael Twomey
Orianna Webb

2003–04 SEASON
Anthony Cheung
Philip Fried
Michael Gatsouka
Gregory Hutter
Mark Koval
Robert Paterson
William A. Ware

2004–05 SEASON
Patrick Burke
Fang Man
Andrew Norman
John Christian Orfe
David Plylar
Sheridan Seyfried
Rob Smith
COMPOSER INSTITUTE HISTORY

2005–06 SEASON
J. Anthony Allen
Mark Dancigers
Matthew Fields
Ed Martin
Norbert Palej
Sean Shepherd
Reynold Tharp
Zhou Tian

2006–07 SEASON
Garrett Byrnes
Anna Clyne
Kurt Erickson
Stephen Gorbos
Missy Mazzoli
Ashley Nail
Alejandro Rutty
Dan Visconti
Gregg Wramage

2007–08 SEASON
Daniel Bradshaw
Jacob Cooper
Trevor Gureckis
Wes Matthews
Elliott Miles McKinley
Xi Wang
Stephen Wilcox

2008–09 SEASON
Antonio Carlos DeFeo
Ted Hearne
Wang Lu
Andrew McManus
Justin Merritt
David Schneider
Ming-Hsiu Yen

2009–10 SEASON
Fernando Buide
Geoff Knorr
Angel Lam
Kathryn Salfelder
Carl Schimmel
Spencer Topel
Roger Zare

2010–11 SEASON
Taylor Brizendine
Wang Jie
Polina Nazaykinskaya
Clint Needham
Ben Phelps
Narong Prangcharoen
David Weaver

2011–12 SEASON
Brian Ciach
Michael R. Holloway
Adrian Knight
Hannah Lash
Andreia Pinto-Correia
Shen Yiwen

2014–15 SEASON
Kati Agócs
Eugene Birman
Texu Kim
Loren Loiacono
Evan Meier
Matthew Peterson
Michael Schachter

2015–16 SEASON
Kirsten Broberg
Matthew Browne
Joshua Cerdnia
Emily Cooley
Nick DiBerardino
Michael Gilbertson
Anthony Vine

2016–17 SEASON
Katherine Balch
Michael Boyman
Judy Bozone
Michael-Thomas Foumai
Tonia Ko
Phil Taylor
Conrad Winslow

2017–18 SEASON
Saad Haddad
Andrew Hsu
Charles Peck
Hilary Purrington
Daniel Schlosberg
Peter S. Shin
Nina C. Young

2018–19 SEASON
TJ Cole
Viet Cuong
Jonathan Cziner
Will Healy
Matthew Ricketts
Connor Elias Way
Alyssa Weinberg
MONDAY, JANUARY 14

9:00–10:00 AM | Target Atrium
COMPOSER INSTITUTE INTRODUCTION
Kevin Puts and Mele Willis provide welcome and introduction

10:30 AM–12:00 PM | Target Atrium
GRANTS AND FUNDING SEMINAR
Sarah Blain Chaplin and Rob Nygaard

12:00–1:45 PM | Target Atrium
LUNCH AND LIBRARY SEMINAR
Maureen Conroy

1:45–5:45 PM | Concertmaster’s Studio
COMPOSER MEETINGS WITH KEVIN PUTS

TUESDAY, JANUARY 15

9:00–10:00 AM | Music Director’s Studio
COMPOSER MEETINGS WITH OSMO VÄNSKÄ

10:00 AM–12:30 PM | Orchestra Hall Auditorium
ORCHESTRA REHEARSAL*

1:30–2:30 PM | Target Atrium
PUBLIC SPEAKING AND ELEVATOR PITCH SEMINAR

2:45–5:45 PM | Concertmaster’s Studio
COMPOSER MEETINGS WITH KEVIN PUTS

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 16

10:00 AM–12:30 PM | Orchestra Hall Auditorium
ORCHESTRA REHEARSAL*

12:30 PM–1:30 PM | Target Atrium
LUNCH WITH ORCHESTRA MUSICIANS

1:35–3:35 PM | Orchestra Hall Auditorium
ORCHESTRA REHEARSAL*

3:45–5:00 PM | Target Atrium
FEEDBACK SESSION WITH ORCHESTRA MUSICIANS

5:00–6:00 PM | Target Atrium
MAKING CONNECTIONS SEMINAR
Frank J. Oteri

THURSDAY, JANUARY 17

9:00–10:00 AM | Music Director’s Studio
COMPOSER MEETINGS WITH OSMO VÄNSKÄ

10:00 AM–12:30 PM | Orchestra Hall Auditorium
ORCHESTRA REHEARSAL*

2:00–3:35 PM | American Composers Forum office, St. Paul
LUNCH AND INTRODUCTION TO THE AMERICAN COMPOSER FORUM AND INNOVA RECORDINGS
Philip Blackburn, Chris Campbell, Tim Igel and Colin J. Rae

3:45–5:00 PM | Target Atrium
SELF-PUBLISHING SEMINAR*
Bill Holab and John Mackey

FRIDAY, JANUARY 18

10:00 AM | Orchestra Hall Auditorium
YOUNG PEOPLE’S CONCERT: FUTURE CLASSICS FOR SECONDARY STUDENTS

8:00 PM | Orchestra Hall Auditorium
CONCERT: OSMO VÄNSKÄ CONDUCTS FUTURE CLASSICS—EMERGING COMPOSERS SPOTLIGHT*
Osmo Vänskä, conductor
Fred Child, host
Followed by Q&A and post-concert reception in the lobby

*Events open to the public
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Program Management
Kevin Puts, Composer Institute director
Mele Willis, artistic operations manager

Seminar Faculty
Philip Blackburn, director, Innova Recordings
Chris Campbell, operations director, Innova Recordings
Sarah Blain Chaplin, director of individual giving, Minnesota Orchestra
Maureen Conroy, principal librarian, Minnesota Orchestra
Bill Holab, owner, Bill Holab Music
Tim Igel, publicist, Innova Recordings
John Mackey, composer
Rob Nygaard, director of institutional giving, Minnesota Orchestra
Frank J. Oteri, composer advocate, New Music USA; co-editor of NewMusicBox
Kevin Puts, composer
Collin J. Rae, CEO, Sono Luminus

Minnesota Orchestra: Instrumental Seminar Faculty

Music Director Osmo Vänskä
Minnesota Orchestra Musicians
American Composers Forum
Fred Child, American Public Media
Composer Selection Panel
Kevin Puts, Oscar Bettison, Kristin Kuster and Dan Welcher

CALL FOR SCORES: 2020 MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA COMPOSER INSTITUTE

Calling all composers! The Minnesota Orchestra and the American Composers Forum are pleased to announce that the next Composer Institute will take place in January 2020, culminating in a public concert conducted by Music Director Osmo Vänskä on Friday, January 10, 2020.

Visit minnesotaorchestra.org/composerinstitute for details on how to apply.

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