

REVIEW:

For Strauss Suite, it was Vänskä on clarinet Minnesota Orchestra concert also featured the young pianist Andrew Staupe

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The Minnesota Orchestra’s three-week Richard Strauss Festival surged into its second week Thursday morning at Orchestra Hall, offering unusual repertoire under the assured guidance — and clarinet expertise — of Osmo Vänskä. The program included three early works — the Suite in B-flat Major for Thirteen Wind Instruments, the Burleske in D minor for Piano and Orchestra and the tone poem “Death and Transfiguration.” Alongside these was one of the most tender, heartfelt works that Strauss ever wrote, his memorial for the destruction of the Munich Opera House during the last months of World War II and, by extension, the entire German cultural tradition, “Metamorphosen; A Study for 23 Solo Strings.”

The concert leapt from one peak to another. St. Paul native Andrew Staupe... was the immaculate and nimble soloist in “Burleske,”

which opened the second half. The title suggests the spirit of the work, though most pianists pound the music to a pulp as an exercise in humorless — and over-fast — virtuosity. Staupe and Vänskä set a more sensible pace, allowing the music to breathe and sparkle.

Staupe, who just turned 30, has fabulous technique. There was fire and wit in the performance but also an affectionate regard for the work’s often-ignored lyrical moments. His phrasing of the big cadenza near the end was downright droll. When it was over, audience members stood and cheered.

