

Klaus Mäkelä returns to The Cleveland Orchestra podium

by Mike Telin



Since making his Cleveland Orchestra debut in July of 2019, visits by Finnish conductor Klaus Mäkelä have become highly anticipated events. Tonight at 8:00 pm Mäkelä returns to Severance Music Center to lead the Orchestra in Andrew Norman's *Sustain* (replacing Truls Mørk's *Cello Concerto*), Debussy's *Images* and Ravel's *Boléro*. The program will be repeated on Friday at 7:30, Saturday at 8, and Sunday at 3. Tickets are available [online](#)

I caught up with the friendly conductor by phone backstage at Severance for a brief chat.

Mike Telin: You just finished a rehearsal — I trust it went well.

Klaus Mäkelä: It did. I can say that I am absolutely delighted to be here. The way they play all of these pieces, especially *Images*, which is one of the most complicated pieces. There's so much detail, but that should never be the point, it needs to become part of the piece. But this orchestra is so wonderful, that is not a problem.

MT: I was sorry there needed to be a program change but the Norman is a great piece. Did you select it?

KM: I did. But first I want to say that I was very sorry that Truls [Mørk] had to cancel. He is a good friend of mine.

The pieces on the second half of the program are for a really big orchestra. *Boléro* has two saxophones and Oboe d'amore — everything. So I was thinking what would complement all its richness of color and texture and I thought of the Norman. I have conducted it before and I am a great admirer of his work. So I thought this is a great opportunity to do it. The piece is perfect for the first half of the program, and the Orchestra was very willing to take it on.



MT: This Saturday you're doing a masterclass for the Cleveland Cello Society. You were a cellist for many years, and I guess you still are.

KM: Thank you for asking, and yes, in my heart I am still very much a cellist. For me it is necessary to play every once in a while because I need to feel connected to actual sound. When you are a conductor you're always asking people to do things. You imagine sounds, but playing the cello brings a reality. I always come back to the instrument, and it's great to see young cellists play. For me, this will be the highlight of the week.

On Saturday: 11:00 am – Cleveland Cello Society: Masterclass with Klaus Mäkelä. Reinberger Chamber Hall at Severance Music Center, 11001 Euclid Ave, Cleveland. Free, but registration is required. Click [here](#) to register.

Next week Mäkelä will lead the Orchestra in Unsuk Chin's *SPIRA – Concerto for Orchestra* and Mahler's *Symphony No. 5*. Tickets are available [online](#).

We'll continue and expand our conversation with Klaus Mäkelä later this weekend.

Published on ClevelandClassical.com February 2, 2023.

Click here for a printable copy of this article

[Return to the Front Page.](#)