

## PROGRAM

ONE HUNDRED TWENTIETH SEASON

### **Chicago Symphony Orchestra**

**Riccardo Muti** Music Director

**Pierre Boulez** Helen Regenstein Conductor Emeritus

**Yo-Yo Ma** Judson and Joyce Green Creative Consultant

**Bank of America**   
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Thursday, March 3, 2011, at 8:00

Friday, March 4, 2011, at 1:30

Saturday, March 5, 2011, at 8:00

Sunday, March 6, 2011, at 3:00

**Esa-Pekka Salonen** Conductor

### **Wagner**

Prelude to *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*

### **Donatoni**

*Esa (In cauda V)*

First Chicago Symphony Orchestra performances

### **INTERMISSION**

### **Bruckner**

Symphony No. 7 in E Major

Allegro moderato

Adagio: Very solemn and very slow

Scherzo: Very fast

Finale: Moving, but not fast

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Steinway is the official piano of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

This program is partially supported by grants from the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

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## Richard Wagner

Born May 22, 1813, Leipzig, Germany.

Died February 13, 1883, Venice, Italy.

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### Prelude to *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*

**D***ie Meistersinger von Nürnberg* has always stood apart from the rest of Wagner's output because it is, on the surface, a comic opera; it warrants comparison with few other comic operas beyond those of Mozart because it is essentially so serious and moving. Virgil Thomson said that "it is all direct and human and warm and sentimental and down-to-earth. It is unique among Wagner's theatrical works in that none of the characters takes drugs or gets mixed up with magic." Wagner wrote *Die Meistersinger* in a slump, financially and emotionally. After having

abandoned work on the *Ring*, the greatest undertaking of his career, with little hope of ever getting it on the stage, he turned out two enormously successful masterpieces, *Tristan and Isolde* (arguably the most important score of that masterpiece-packed century), and *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (The mastersingers of Nuremberg).

In listening to the prelude to *Die Meistersinger*, there is no need to know Wagner's story beyond what Thomson called a "never-never land where shoemakers give vocal lessons, where presidents of music societies offer their daughters as

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#### COMPOSED

prelude: 1862  
opera: 1862–67

#### FIRST PERFORMANCE

prelude: November 1,  
1862, Leipzig  
opera: June 21, 1868, Munich

#### FIRST CSO PERFORMANCE

December 18,  
1891, Auditorium  
Theatre. Theodore  
Thomas conducting

#### MOST RECENT

##### CSO PERFORMANCES

October 29, 1996,  
Orchestra Hall. Takashi  
Asahina conducting  
June 26, 1999, Ravinia  
Festival. Christoph  
Eschenbach conducting

#### INSTRUMENTATION

two flutes and piccolo, two  
oboes, two clarinets, two  
bassoons, four horns, three  
trumpets, three trombones  
and tuba, timpani, triangle,  
cymbals, harp, strings

#### APPROXIMATE

##### PERFORMANCE TIME

10 minutes

#### CSO RECORDINGS

1926. Frederick Stock  
conducting. Victor  
1959. Fritz Reiner conduct-  
ing. RCA  
1972. Sir Georg Solti  
conducting. London  
1994. Daniel Barenboim  
conducting. Teldec  
1995 (complete opera),  
Sir Georg Solti conduct-  
ing. London

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prizes in musical contests, and where music critics believe in the rules of composition and get mobbed for preferring young girls to young composers.” Wagner wrote the prelude first, reversing the usual process, and said that he saw in it “the clear outlines of the leading themes of the whole drama.” Indeed, we begin in the majesty of C major with the important music of the masters-ingers’ guild and then hear the prize-winning song of the young

aspirant Walther, followed by the festive procession of the masters. Those are the three main themes, though Wagner also works into the prelude the eager apprentices and the chattering spectators at the song competition. Though designed as a curtain-raiser, the prelude is a brilliant achievement as pure music, crowned by the stroke of the triangle, marking the moment when Wagner brings together, in magnificent polyphony, his three principal themes. ■

## Symphony Center Information



The use of still or video cameras and recording devices is prohibited in Orchestra Hall.



Latecomers will be seated during designated program pauses.



Please use perfume, cologne, and all other scented products sparingly, as many patrons are sensitive to fragrance.



Please turn off or silence all personal electronic devices (pagers, watches, telephones, digital assistants).

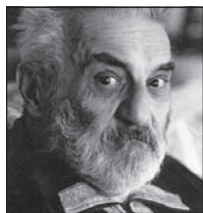


Please note that Symphony Center is a smoke-free environment.

**Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.**

**Note:** Fire exits are located on all levels and are for emergency use only. The lighted Exit sign nearest your seat is the shortest route outdoors. Please walk—do not run—to your exit and do not use elevators for emergency exit.

Volunteer ushers provided by The Saints—Volunteers for the Performing Arts ([www.saintschicago.org](http://www.saintschicago.org))



## Franco Donatoni

Born June 9, 1927, Verona, Italy.

Died August 17, 2000, Milan, Italy.

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### *Esa (In cauda V)*

**A**lthough Franco Donatoni's parents thought their studious and unpopular boy was best suited for the career of a bank clerk, Donatoni himself was slowly drawn to the idea of spending his life in music. He first took violin lessons in his hometown of Verona—family outings to hear opera in the celebrated arena there were childhood highlights—and later studied composition in Milan and Bologna. A radio broadcast of Bartók's Fourth String Quartet impressed him greatly, suggesting a direction for his young career as a composer. The decisive event in his creative life, however, was his encounter with Bruno Maderna, the Italian avant-garde composer, in 1953. "Till I was thirty, I copied Bartók," he later said with characteristic candor. "After I met Maderna, I copied Boulez."

Donatoni's own language was certainly changed, almost overnight, by the impact of post-Webern serialism. Although he

began to compose in the advanced serial language of Pierre Boulez, who was particularly influential at Darmstadt, which Donatoni visited for the first time in 1954, he also was fascinated by Stockhausen, as well as by the first twelve-tone works by Schoenberg. For a while, he became obsessed with the iconic quintet instrumentation of *Pierrot lunaire*, Schoenberg's watershed work of 1912. All of these encounters fed into his own understanding of what it meant to be a composer in the mid-twentieth century, although he eventually lost patience with Stockhausen precisely because he was "always perfecting his ego and his music, while I want to destroy both the one and the other."

"Then I got interested in John Cage, had my negative period, and so on," Donatoni once said, telescoping years of artistic upheaval. In the sixties, Donatoni began to explore the idea of chance music, as a result of his exposure to the work of Cage. But he quickly became

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#### COMPOSED

2000

#### FIRST PERFORMANCE

February 16, 2001. Los Angeles Philharmonic, Esa-Pekka Salonen conducting

These are the first CSO performances

#### INSTRUMENTATION

two flutes, piccolo and alto flute, two oboes and english horn, two clarinets, E-flat clarinet and bass clarinet, three bassoons and contrabassoon, six horns, four trumpets, four trombones and

tuba, timpani, percussion (xylophone, glockenspiel, marimba, vibraphone, bells, gong), piano, harpsichord, harp, strings

#### APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME

12 minutes

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disillusioned with the lack of form in Cage's works, which "was putting music in great danger, so that its survival as an art was being put into doubt." In time, Donatoni began to question everything about his own work as well—he became painfully aware of "the impossibility of being the author of one's own intellect, of one's own will"—which led to a long, dark period. The tragic death of Maderna in 1973 devastated him. In 1975, Donatoni quit composing, gave up the lease on his studio, and took a job as an editor in his music publisher's office.

He only began to compose again when his wife begged him to honor an earlier commitment to write a new chamber piece. With that score, *Ash*, for eight instruments, and in particular with the 1977 work *Spiri*, he found that he was liberated and able to work with a new freedom and that he was filled with new ideas. The composer himself described *Spiri* as "joyous, almost euphoric." Suddenly, Donatoni had entered a dazzling late summer of creativity—in 1983 alone he composed ten new works—with a focus on scores for novel chamber groupings, as well as a sequence of pieces for solo instruments, comparable to Berio's *Sequenze* series. Although Donatoni's earlier music was difficult to characterize—he was a serial composer with a lifelong love of Rossini's operas—his late music is almost uniformly expressive, brilliant, and even playful.

*Esa (In cauda V)*, composed in 2000, is Donatoni's last work.

(The first of the pieces he titled *In cauda*—*cauda* is Latin for 'tail'—was commissioned by Boulez and premiered in 1982.) Since by 2000, he was no longer able to write himself, he dictated the score to his assistants from his bed in Milan's Niguarda Hospital, where he died that August. Commissioned by the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the score was dedicated to Esa-Pekka Salonen, who was one of Donatoni's composition students and makes abundant use of the notes E and A, the "musical" letters in Salonen's name. When he premiered the piece in Los Angeles in February 2001, only six months after Donatoni's death, Salonen told the audience that at first he thought the score was too private to perform on the stage. But then he saw the joy in the music and understood it as "my old teacher's message to me, something like 'Carry on, son, it will be OK.'"

"Donatoni was himself as a craftsman, an artisan, i.e., a manufacturer of music, not the lonely romantic genius who wanders in forests and feels *Weltschmerz*," Salonen wrote before the premiere of the work. "His point of view is typically Italian: clear, practical, light (as opposed to heavy), unsentimental. The key to composing is to work meticulously and precisely: 'lavorare e lavorare, sempre lavorare' he used to say. . . . I love the kaleidoscopic world of Donatoni, the sudden twists and turns and the sheer beauty of the surface of the music. Not only did he manage to develop his very own language: he also learned to speak it." ■



## Anton Bruckner

Born September 4, 1824, Ansfelden, Upper Austria.

Died October 11, 1896, Vienna, Austria.

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### Symphony No. 7 in E Major

**B**ruckner was sixty years old when he tasted public success for the first time. The ovations that greeted him following the premiere of his Seventh Symphony lasted a full fifteen minutes, and the press was not only ecstatic, but also dumbfounded by the discovery of this mature talent. “How is it possible,” a local Leipzig critic wrote, “that he could remain so long unknown to us?” Although Bruckner never again enjoyed the easy success of his Seventh Symphony, from that point on, he was recognized as one of the few composers whose every work demanded attention, and his name

quickly became as famous as those of his contemporaries, Brahms and Wagner.

What is surprising isn’t that public acceptance came so late to Bruckner, but that he survived that long without it. Bruckner was the most insecure of composers—he regularly caved in to the advice of his detractors, revised his scores to please his critics, and often faced long stretches of writer’s block when his confidence was entirely spent. Of all the major composers, Bruckner also took the longest to find his own voice. After years of composing for the church, he wrote his first significant instrumental

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#### COMPOSED

September 1881–September 1883

#### FIRST PERFORMANCE

December 30, 1884. Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, Arthur Nikisch conducting

#### FIRST CSO PERFORMANCE

March 9, 1906, Orchestra Hall. Frederick Stock conducting

#### MOST RECENT

##### CSO PERFORMANCE

December 9, 2008, Orchestra Hall. Bernard Haitink conducting

#### INSTRUMENTATION

two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, four Wagner tubas, three trumpets, three trombones and tuba, timpani, cymbal, triangle, strings

#### APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME

64 minutes

#### CSO RECORDINGS

1979. Daniel Barenboim conducting. Deutsche Grammophon

1986–87. Sir Georg Solti conducting. London

2007. Bernard Haitink conducting. CSO Resound  
A 1963 performance (first movement only) with Paul Hindemith conducting and a 1984 performance with Klaus Tennstedt conducting were released on *Chicago Symphony Orchestra in the Twentieth Century: Collector’s Choice*.

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music in 1862, at the age of thirty-eight; the following year he composed his first symphony (a *Studiensymphonie*, as he called it)—one last student exercise, at thirty-nine.

Bruckner's sudden and unlikely decision to begin writing symphonies is one of music's miracles. The mid-nineteenth century was the time of Wagner and Liszt, the heyday of the music drama and the symphonic poem. The classical symphony was no longer of interest to serious, forward-thinking composers. Schumann, the last master of the form, had died nearly a decade before Bruckner began his first symphony, and no one yet knew that Brahms was working on one. Still, some time around 1863 or 1864, Bruckner, the least self-confident of composers, realized that the symphony was to be his ideal form, despite his almost total lack of experience in writing for orchestra. But from that point on, it was his main interest. Bruckner's discovery of Wagner's music in 1863, when *Tannhäuser* was staged in Linz for the first time, was the most decisive event in his creative life. The experience unlocked something inside Bruckner, freeing the boldness and individuality of his own ideas. Once he tackled the symphony, form and content came together, and Bruckner became the first composer to translate the essence of Wagnerian language to instrumental music.

Bruckner found his model for a large-scale structure—a big first movement, a spacious adagio, a scherzo in sonata form, and a

wide-ranging finale that gathers many threads together in a new light—in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. Six of Bruckner's symphonies start with the kind of mysterious, unformed material that he picked up from the opening of Beethoven's Ninth and then focus on an important theme. Bruckner's role as the principal heir to this symphonic tradition wasn't lost on his admirers, and when Arthur Nikisch conducted the premiere of the Seventh Symphony, he commented, "Since Beethoven there has been nothing that could even approach it."

After its premiere in Leipzig, the Seventh Symphony began to make the rounds of the major music centers. Over the next few months, it was played in Munich (under Hermann Levi, who had recently led the premiere of Wagner's *Parsifal* in Bayreuth), Dresden, Frankfurt, Utrecht, The Hague, New York City, and Chicago. (Only in Chicago, with Theodore Thomas conducting his own orchestra in the symphony's United States premiere, did Bruckner's score fall flat. It was Frederick Stock who later introduced the work to the Chicago Symphony.) The members of the Vienna Philharmonic (Bruckner's hometown orchestra) wanted to play his Seventh Symphony right away, but Bruckner talked them out of it, fearing "the influential Viennese critics, who would be only too likely to obstruct the course of my dawning fame in Germany." And, in fact, when the score *was* performed there in 1886, Eduard Hanslick did bemoan the

“interminable stretches of darkness, leaden boredom, and feverish over-excitement.” But Hanslick was swimming against the public tide, and he had to admit, with obvious



**Three great Bruckner conductors: Hermann Levi (left), Hans Richter (right), and Felix Mottl (standing)**

irritation, that he had never before seen a composer called to the stage four or five times after each movement to accept the

applause. In the end, Bruckner’s Seventh Symphony was the greatest triumph of his career, and it was the most often performed of his symphonies during his lifetime.

This symphony calls for the largest orchestra Bruckner had yet used, but it is characterized by pages of unusual delicacy and transparency. (Schoenberg made a chamber orchestra version of the first movement.) The very beginning—a characteristic Bruckner opening, with a long and noble melody emerging from the shadows—is a model of classical serenity and simplicity. The first theme itself, one of Bruckner’s most distinctive ideas, begins as a standard E major arpeggio and then develops

in unexpected ways. (Schoenberg marveled at how its irregularly shaped phrases, sometimes of three or five measures, sound completely “natural.”) The entire Allegro is conceived as a single paragraph of great breadth, with three large and important themes, a broad development section, and an extensive coda grounded by the unchanging E in the bass (through much of the coda this foundation is stubbornly at odds with rest of the orchestra).

When Bruckner began the Adagio late in January 1883, he was troubled by premonitions of Wagner’s death. “One day I came home and felt very sad,” he wrote to conductor Felix Mottl. “The thought had crossed my mind that before long the Master would die, and then the C-sharp minor theme of the Adagio came to me.” Bruckner had met Wagner for the first time at the premiere of *Tristan and Isolde* in Munich in 1865.

(Eight years later, they spent an afternoon together talking about music, but Bruckner, a teetotaler, drank so much beer out of sheer nervousness that he could scarcely recall what they said.) Bruckner went to Bayreuth for the premieres of the complete *Ring* cycle in 1876 and *Parsifal* in 1882, shortly after he had started to work on this symphony. (Wagner sat behind Bruckner at *Parsifal* and chastised him for applauding too loudly.) On that occasion, which turned out to be their last meeting, Wagner said that he wanted to conduct Bruckner’s symphonies.

On February 13, 1883, as Bruckner was finishing the Adagio

of this symphony, Wagner died in Venice. When he heard the news, Bruckner wrote an extraordinary, quiet yet wrenching coda to the movement, which he always referred to as “the funeral music for the Master.” This magnificent Adagio begins with music for Wagner tubas, the instrument Wagner designed for *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, here making their debut in symphonic music. Like the slow movement of Beethoven’s Ninth, the music is built on two wonderfully contrasted themes, each the subject of further elaboration. Eventually Bruckner reaches the summit of his journey (in C major, an astonishing destination for a movement that began in C-sharp minor), marked by a cymbal crash and the striking of the triangle, over a drum-roll. (Conductors still debate the authenticity of using the cymbal and triangle here, despite their undeniable effect, since they were clearly an afterthought, and were added to the score just in time for the Leipzig premiere, apparently at the suggestion of Arthur Nikisch, who conducted the premiere, or possibly even Bruckner’s meddling students, Ferdinand Löwe and Joseph Schalk.)

The scherzo, in contrast to all that preceded it, is brilliantly

athletic outdoor music dominated by a restless string ostinato and a playful trumpet theme. The contrasting trio is spacious and pastoral. The finale begins much like the opening movement, traverses wide and constantly changing territory, and finally returns to the symphony’s first theme in the bracing E major fanfares of the closing bars. Just before he completed this movement, Bruckner went to Bayreuth, in August of 1883, to visit Wagner’s grave and to pay his respects to the man to whom he owed so much. He finished the score a few days after he returned home. The triumphant premiere of the symphony, fifteen months later, was at a benefit concert to raise money for a Wagner monument. ■

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**Phillip Huscher is the program annotator for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.**