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

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Tuesday, May 10, 2011, at 7:30

Riccardo Muti Conductor

Hindemith

Symphony in E-flat
Very lively
Very slow
Lively—
Moderately quick half note

INTERMISSION

Rands

Danza Petrificada

World premiere

Commissioned for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra by The Edward F. Schmidt Family Commissioning Fund

Strauss

Death and Transfiguration, Op. 24

This concert series is generously made possible by Mr. & Mrs. Dietrich M. Gross.

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Paul Hindemith

Born November 16, 1895, Hanau, Germany.
Died December 28, 1963, Frankfurt, Germany.

Symphony in E-flat

On March 25, 1918, Paul Hindemith was playing through Claude Debussy's string quartet with three other German soldiers when they were told that Debussy had just died in Paris. "It was as if our playing had been robbed of the breath of life," he later remembered.

> But we realized for the first time that music is more than style, technique, and the expression of powerful feelings. Music reached out beyond political boundaries, national hatred, and the horrors of war. On no other occasion have I seen so clearly what direction music must take.

That sensibility would drive Hindemith's career from that point on, and it would govern his every move, almost literally, during the Second World War.

When the Nazis came to power in Germany in 1933, Hindemith was destined to be branded as a decadent composer, largely because Hitler had walked out of a performance of Hindemith's opera *Neues vom Tage* (News of the day), scandalized by the sight of a soprano singing from her bathtub. (For the record, she was merely extolling the joys of modern plumbing.) "It is obvious that [it] shocked the Führer greatly," Hindemith wrote to his publisher late in 1934. "I shall write him a letter . . . in which I shall ask him to convince himself to the contrary." But in the meantime, Joseph Goebbels spoke out publicly about the horror of modern composers

COMPOSED
1940

FIRST PERFORMANCE
November 21, 1941, Minneapolis, Minnesota

FIRST CSO PERFORMANCE
August 5, 1954, Ravinia Festival. Georg Solti conducting

MOST RECENT CSO PERFORMANCE
January 27, 1974, Orchestra Hall. Sir Georg Solti conducting

INSTRUMENTATION
three flutes and piccolo, two oboes and english horn, two clarinets and bass clarinet, two bassoons and contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones and tuba, timpani, bass drum, snare drum, cymbals, glockenspiel, triangle, tambourine, rute, strings

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME
36 minutes

"allowing naked women to appear on the stage in obscene scenes in a bathtub, making a mockery of the female sex." Hindemith wasn't mentioned by name, but the message was clear. He made a powerful statement on the value of art—and the role of the artist in society—in his opera *Mathis der Maler,* about the sixteenth-century German painter Mathias Grünewald, who was himself torn between his commitment to art and a life of political activism. That work, too, was attacked and eventually banned. After Hindemith figured prominently in the exhibition of *Entartete Musik* (Degenerate music) in 1938, he had little choice but to leave his native Germany for good.

Hindemith had come to the United States for the first time in 1937; he returned in 1938 and 1939, and the letters he wrote home to wife Gertrude reveal a man struggling to find his place—and a job—in a new world. On his first U.S. tour, Hindemith appeared as viola soloist in his *Der Schwanendreher* with members of the Chicago Symphony at the Chicago Arts Club. The next year, Hindemith made his American conducting debut with the CSO, leading his *Kammermusik* no. 1 and the Symphonic Dances. In 1939, Hindemith returned to Chicago to attend a concert of his music given by University of Chicago students, but he didn't appear with the Orchestra. During his visit, however, he met with CSO music director Frederick Stock, who asked him to write a piece for the Orchestra's fiftieth anniversary, then two seasons away. "The specifics still need to be discussed," Hindemith wrote to Gertrude in March.

In February 1940, Hindemith reluctantly left Switzerland, where he had been living for the past two years, for the U.S. Feeling unsure of himself and unsettled in his new home at first, he was soon invited to give a series of lectures at Yale University, and those led to a position as visiting professor (Lukas Foss was one of his students). Teaching was important to Hindemith, not only for its salary and the sense of stability it provided. "I don't get ideas just sitting around waiting for them," he once said. "They come from somewhere, and I get them teaching." In no time, ideas did begin to flow. His renewed activity teaching and composing was mirrored by a sudden interest in his music—in a country where he had previously been almost completely unknown by the general public.

Several major works, including the Symphony in E-flat of 1940 that is performed on this concert, a cello concerto also composed in 1940, the *Symphonic Metamorphosis after Themes by Carl Maria von Weber* of 1943, and the 1946 *Symphonia serena,* were all written with the high-powered virtuosity of the American symphony orchestra in mind. The work Hindemith began for the Chicago Symphony's anniversary—a kind of free fantasy, as he called it, on an old Virginian ballad about poor Lazarus and the rich man—was abandoned midway, apparently

when the composer realized he had been so busy writing other pieces that he couldn't finish it in time for the 1940–41 Chicago season. (Fifteen other works commissioned by the CSO came through on schedule, including Kodály's Concerto for Orchestra and Stravinsky's Symphony in C; Hindemith's score for *Poor Lazarus* was later published in its incomplete state.) If Hindemith originally feared he would face a debilitating writer's block living in a strange new country, he had quickly overcome those doubts, and, at the same time, begun the complicated process of distancing himself from his native Germany. The requiem "for those we love," *When lilacs last in the door-yard bloom'd,* a setting of Walt Whitman's poetry dating from 1946—he originally wanted to call it *An American Requiem*—is the work in which he finally voiced his reaction to the Holocaust—his main material is derived from the Jewish melody "Gaza"—and expressed his thanks to the country that had taken him in.

Hindemith began the Symphony in E-flat in the summer of 1940, while he was lecturing at Tanglewood—"for variety's sake, I've started a symphony," he wrote to Gertrude that August. It had been commissioned by Koussevitzky's Boston Symphony, which Hindemith heard regularly that summer, and it was tailor-made for the orchestra's brilliant playing. The first movement of the "grown-up symphony"—as Hindemith called it once he got going—was completed in September, with each of the subsequent movements following a month at a time. When the final pages of the score trickled in just before Christmas, Koussevitzky pulled the premiere from that winter's programs—he claimed there wasn't adequate time to prepare the work—causing a falling-out between composer and conductor that was never repaired. The symphony was premiered the next year by the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra under Dmitri Mitropoulos, where it was well received by critics who noted its ancestry in Beethoven and Bruckner, and by an audience that, according to a local critic, had been noticeably cool toward "atonal" music in the past.

The very fact that Hindemith would choose to compose a four-movement symphony and include a key in its title in 1940 (though, oddly, there is no key signature in the opening measure of the score itself) suggests how he viewed his place in the chaotic world of modern music. (Hindemith's interest in the traditional forms of music was there from the start: among his earliest pieces, written in the 1920s, are string quartets and the first of his series of chamber concertos—the landmark *Kammermusik*.) Ironically, both Stravinsky and Schoenberg introduced new works in classical forms in 1940—Stravinsky's Symphony in C and Schoenberg's Violin Concerto. Both of those composers had already taken music down paths Hindemith resisted, and their return to the symphony and

concerto was a way of putting new wine in old bottles—Schoenberg's score is a twelve-tone work, after all—rather than embracing the past.

For Hindemith, composing a "tonal" symphony was a rallying cry. His important 1937 treatise, *The Craft of Musical Composition,* is a declaration of the preeminence of tonal music. He once said that music without a tonal center was no more than "a mental activity scarcely superior to the invention or solution of a crossword puzzle"—a stance that got him in hot water with the avant-garde and lost him the sympathy of a new generation of composers forever. To a great extent, Hindemith's music still struggles to overcome its late-twentieth century dismissal as old-fashioned, conservative, even reactionary. Hindemith never saw himself that way—"only a coward retreats into history," he once said—but thought of his finest works, such as this E-flat symphony, as part of a grand, centuries-spanning continuum.

The first movement, with its strong main theme, rhythmic drive, and impressively worked-out development, is the kind of symphonic opening that ties Hindemith unmistakably to the grand Germanic musical heritage of his upbringing. The prominence and brilliance of the brass writing throughout the work was inspired by the sound of the Boston orchestra that Hindemith had in his ear while he was composing. The slow second movement is broad and richly melodic. Even Francis Poulenc, whose own music came from a completely different tradition, said he loved Hindemith's lyricism "both heavy and lively, like quicksilver." Hindemith's third movement is a scherzo in both structure and style (though it is not so titled), with a contrasting trio launched by an expansive oboe solo. The finale, which follows without pause, begins as a march, turns brilliant and brassy, relaxes into an intermezzo, as Hindemith calls it, and continues with a grand apotheosis. The last pages confirm Hindemith's belief that the composer cannot escape the pull of the major triad "any more than the painter his primary colors or the architect his three dimensions."

After the Symphony in E-flat, Hindemith continued to write "symphonies" of various kinds, including one in B-flat for concert band, the popular Weber metamorphosis, and finally, in 1958, the *Pittsburgh* Symphony, which quotes both a Pete Seeger song and Webern's Symphony, op. 21 as if to embrace the Germanic heritage he had never completely put behind him as well as his status as a U.S. citizen, with a recently purchased house in New Haven, Connecticut, and a newly acquired taste for American culture.

A postscript. In March 1963, at the very end of his life, Hindemith returned to conduct the Chicago Symphony Orchestra; he died ten months later. The program was the *Academic Festival* Overture by Brahms, Hindemith's own Concert Music for strings and brass, and Bruckner's Seventh Symphony. ■

Bernard Rands

Born March 2, 1934, Sheffield, England.

Danza Petrificada

If you have ever been in Mexico, you probably know why a composer should want to write a piece of music about it," Mexican-born composer Carlos Chávez once told Aaron Copland. Bernard Rands's new work, *Danza Petrificada,* is the latest in a long line of compositions inspired by Mexico and its musical culture—including Copland's own *El salon México,* named after the dance hall he and Chávez visited together in 1932.

When Riccardo Muti first asked Rands to write a short piece to open one of his concerts in his first season as music director of the Chicago Symphony, his only stipulation was "that the new work would, in some way, pay tribute to Mexico on the two hundredth anniversary of that country's revolution, and the one hundredth anniversary of Mexico's independence," Rands recalls. Like Copland, who wrote *El salon México* back home in New York, Rands composed *Danza Petrificada* in downtown Chicago, where he now lives. But it is suffused with the musical spirit of Mexico, a country Rands knows well.

After receiving the Chicago Symphony commission, Rands realized that he did not want to follow the predictable route of arranging Mexican folk songs for orchestra (the default method for various kinds of musical travelogues throughout history), the way that Chabrier's *España* and Debussy's *Ibéria,* for example, both quote

COMPOSED
2010

Commissioned for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra by The Edward F. Schmidt Family Commissioning Fund

Written for *Mexico in Chicago 2010,* a citywide celebration of the bicentennial of Mexico's independence and the centennial of the Mexican Revolution

INSTRUMENTATION
three flutes, piccolo and alto flute, two oboes and english horn, three clarinets, E-flat clarinet and bass clarinet, two bassoons, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones and tuba, two harps, celesta, timpani, percussion (marimbas, button gongs, suspended cymbals, bongos, maracas, vibraphone, cow bells, tam-tams, roto toms, snare drum, sand blocks, claves, xylophone, tubular bells, bass drum, güiro, conga, temple blocks, cabasa, triangles, tom-toms, tubo), strings

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME
9 minutes

Spanish melodies to provide local color. Rands took a different tack: "In spite of the immediately appealing qualities of much Mexican popular/folk music," he reasoned, "such an approach seemed to limit the opportunities for a more original musical outcome."

> Having visited Mexico many times, I am familiar with many Mexican melodies (old and new), but have always been fascinated by the rhythmic vitality, the timbral qualities of the music, and also the sound world of the environment of all areas of Mexico. I think it is no coincidence that percussion instruments used in much Mexican music (maracas, güiro, cabasa, Mexican bean, etc.) so closely resemble the noise of cicadas which permeate the air in Mexico!

Rands decided to select certain rhythms and sounds found in a wide variety of Mexican music and weave them suggestively into the orchestral fabric. The result is a work less overtly Mexican, yet more in sync with the essence of the country's musical traditions—more concerned with sense of place than with picture-postcard realism. Rands found his title in a line from the poem by the Mexican-born, Nobel Prize–winning poet Octavio Paz, *1930: Vistas Fijas* (1930: Scenic views), in which he describes a Mexican village:

> . . . festín de formas, danza
> petrificada bajo las nubes
> que hacen y se deshacen
> y no acaban de hacerse,
> siempre en tránsito hacis so
> forma venidera, . . .
>
> . . .a banquet of forms, a petrified dance under the clouds
> that make and unmake and
> never stop making themselves,
> always in transit toward their
> future forms . . .

As Rands says: "Such a wonderful description of the phenomenon of music itself!"

Danza Petrificada opens with a slow, fanfare-like trumpet theme above the "noise" of harps and percussion. A second section is anchored by a haunting melody derived from an actual Mexican processional tune, followed by music (marked "Intenso") dominated by brass and two marimbas, a combination found in much Mexican music. Then comes the lively *Danza* itself, played four times, each time transformed yet still recognizable, and interspersed with contrasting episodes; finally, with a new burst of energy, a last statement of the *Danza* brings the work to a close.

A postscript on Bernard Rands, Riccardo Muti—and Vincent van Gogh.

Rands first came in touch with Riccardo Muti when he was living in Florence, Italy, where Muti was music director of the Maggio Musicale. Born in Sheffield, England, and a student of music and literature at the University of Wales, Rands had become

fascinated with the lyrically inclined serial music of the Italian composer Luigi Dallapiccola, and he went to Italy in 1958 to study not only with Dallapiccola, but also with Luciano Berio and Roman Vlad. In the early 1960s, he attended the composition classes of Pierre Boulez and Bruno Maderna at Darmstadt. (Less than a decade later, Boulez and the BBC Symphony Orchestra commissioned three works from him.) In 1966, Rands was awarded a Harkness International Fellowship that brought him to the United States; he spent a year at both Princeton and the University of Illinois. He returned to England to teach at York and at Oxford, but immigrated to the United States in 1975 and became a citizen in 1983. Within a year, this new U.S. citizen had won the 1984 Pulitzer Prize for his song cycle for tenor and orchestra, *Canti del sole* (Songs of the sun). In 1989, Rands became the resident composer of the Philadelphia Orchestra, where Riccardo Muti was music director, and the two developed a close working relationship. Muti commissioned, performed, and recorded several of Rands's major works, including *Le tambourin,* suites 1 and 2—the earliest of his compositions on the subject of the Dutch painter Vincent van Gogh—which won the 1986 Kennedy Center Friedheim Award.

Rands's interest in van Gogh, which began when he visited the Vincent van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam on its opening day in 1973 and has only deepened over the past decades, reached a climax on April 8, when Indiana University gave the premiere of his long-awaited opera *Vincent,* with a libretto by J. D. McClatchy, which was commissioned to honor the institution's centennial. ■

Richard Strauss

Born June 11, 1864, Munich, Germany.
Died September 8, 1949, Garmisch, Germany.

Death and Transfiguration, Op. 24

Shortly before he died at the age of eighty-five, Richard Strauss told his daughter-in-law that he wasn't afraid of death: it was just as he had composed it in *Death and Transfiguration.* Only a few months before, Strauss had read Joseph Eichendorff's poem "Im Abendrot" (At sunset). When he came to the lines "How tired we are of wandering—could this perhaps be death?", he took his pencil and jotted down the magnificent theme from *Death and Transfiguration* that he had written nearly sixty years earlier. And then, summing up his life's work, he wove it into the closing pages of his Eichendorff setting, now known as the last of the Four Last Songs.

It's the Marschallin, in Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier,* who says, "To be afraid of time is useless, for God, mindful of all his children, in his own wisdom created it." But like the Marschallin, Strauss always heard the ticking of the clock, and he couldn't help thinking about death. He claimed that from an early age he had wanted to compose music that followed the dying hours of a man who had reached toward the "highest ideal goals," and who, in dying, sees his life passing before him.

In 1888, without a gray hair on his head and with another sixty years of life and music ahead of him, Strauss wrote knowingly of a man's last days on earth. It's a

COMPOSED
1888–November 18, 1889

FIRST PERFORMANCE
June 24, 1890, Eisenach, Germany. The composer conducting

FIRST CSO PERFORMANCE
February 22, 1895, Auditorium Theatre. Theodore Thomas conducting

CSO PERFORMANCES, THE COMPOSER CONDUCTING
April 1 and 2, 1904, Orchestra Hall

MOST RECENT CSO PERFORMANCES
May 3, 2003, Orchestra Hall. Daniel Barenboim conducting

INSTRUMENTATION
three flutes, two oboes and english horn, two clarinets and bass clarinet, two bassoons and contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones and tuba, timpani, tam-tam, two harps, strings

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME
24 minutes

CSO RECORDINGS
A 1947 performance conducted by Désiré Defauw is included in *Chicago Symphony Orchestra: The First 100 Years.* A 1977 performance conducted by Sir Georg Solti is included in *From the Archives,* vol. 4.

young man's view of death and a romantic vision of old age, scarcely touched by the chilling truths of infirmity and hopelessness, but it apparently still satisfied Strauss at the end of his own life. The

STRAUSS IN CHICAGO

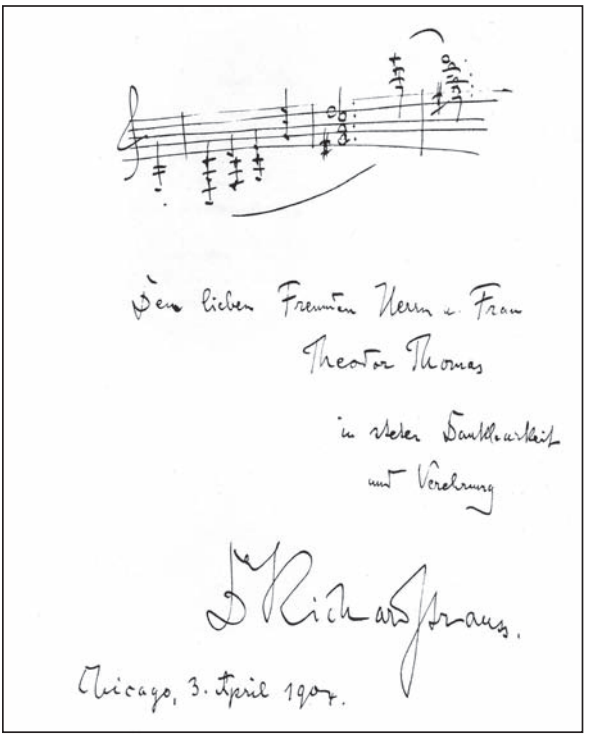
Shortly after Theodore Thomas settled in Chicago in 1891 as the first music director of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, he began to play the new music of Richard Strauss. Under Thomas's baton, the Chicago orchestra gave the American premieres of many of the great tone poems, beginning with *Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks* on November 15, 1895, only ten days after the world premiere in Cologne, and arriving at *Ein Heldenleben* on March 10, 1900, one year and seven days after Strauss himself led the first performance in Frankfurt.

In 1904, Thomas invited Strauss to Chicago as the Orchestra's first internationally known guest conductor. Strauss's program for the concerts of April 1 and 2 included *Also sprach Zarathustra, Till Eulenspiegel,* and *Death and Transfiguration,* along with a number of songs for his wife Pauline to sing. At the end of his first rehearsal in Chicago, Strauss turned to the musicians and said:

> I came here in the pleasant expectation of finding a superior orchestra, but you have far surpassed my expectation, and I can say to you that I am delighted to know you as an orchestra of artists in whom beauty of tone, technical perfection, and discipline are found in the highest degree.

Thomas planned to present *Till Eulenspiegel* himself the following season, the first in a brand new Orchestra Hall, but after his sudden death in December 1904, it was left to his successor, Frederick Stock, to begin playing Strauss in the Orchestra's new home. In the following years, Frederick Stock often programmed *Ein Heldenleben* as a memorial to Thomas. Scarcely a season since has passed without the Orchestra offering one of the tone poems it introduced to the United States, confirming time and time again that in Chicago, Strauss found the ideal orchestra for his music.

—P.H.



Strauss wrote the main theme from his *Death and Transfiguration* and dedicated it to Mr. & Mrs. Theodore Thomas "with constant gratitude and respect," when he came to conduct the Chicago Symphony in April 1904.

first edition of the score, as well as the earliest printed programs, included a poem by Alexander Ritter (a fervent Wagnerian who had married Wagner's niece Julie) that was written after Strauss had finished the music and was offered as a literary guide to the piece. At the time, Strauss thought Ritter's scenario indispensable to an understanding of the score, but the best guide is really the one the composer himself wrote in a letter to a friend in 1894:

> It was about six years ago when the idea occurred to me to represent the death of a person who had striven for the highest ideal goals, therefore possibly an artist, in a tone poem. The sick man lies in bed asleep, breathing heavily and irregularly; agreeable dreams charm a smile on his features in spite of his suffering; his sleep becomes lighter; he wakens; once again he is racked by terrible pain, his limbs shake with fever—as the attack draws to a close and the pain subsides he reflects on his past life, his childhood passes before him, his youth with its striving, its passions, and then, while the pain resumes, the fruit of his path through life appears to him, the ideal, the Ideal which he has tried to realize, to represent in his art, but which he has been unable to perfect, because it was not for any human being to perfect it. The hour of death approaches, and the soul leaves the body, in order to find perfected in the most glorious form in the eternal cosmos that which he could not fulfill here on earth.

A born opera composer, Strauss begins with a deathbed scene, dark and uncertain, and filled only with the sounds of the sick man's faltering heartbeat. A sudden, convulsive passage, depicting the struggle with death, ultimately gives way to the work's central theme, an impressive six-note motif characterized by an octave leap, which represents the artist's ideals. The flood of memories begins pointedly with his storybook-like infancy. ("Childhood is the kingdom where nobody dies," wrote Edna St. Vincent Millay, the once-popular poet who died the year after Strauss.) Strauss then moves on through youth, marvelously evoked by the self-confident swagger of the horns, to romances of such passion that their recollection brings on a spell of heart palpitations (rendered by the low brass and timpani). The hero revels in remembrance before there is one final, defiant moment of struggle. Death itself arrives accompanied by the solemn striking of the tam-tam. The transfiguration is like one of Strauss's own great opera finales, weaving the work's main themes together, through a series of moving climaxes, in music of radiant beauty. ■

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