

PROGRAM

ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-FIRST 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 
Global Sponsor of the CSO

Thursday, October 13, 2011, at 8:00

Friday, October 14, 2011, at 1:30

Saturday, October 15, 2011, at 8:00

Tuesday, October 18, 2011, at 7:30

Susanna Mälkki conductor
J. Lawrie Bloom bass clarinet

Ives

The Unanswered Question

Christopher Martin, *trumpet*

Musgrave

Autumn Sonata, A Concerto for Bass Clarinet and Orchestra

Oscuro e misterioso—

Svegliato—

Alla marcia, con furore—

Lamentoso—

Oscuro e misterioso—

Adagio sostenuto

J. LAWRIE BLOOM

United States premiere

Ives

Three Places in New England

The "St. Gaudens" in Boston Common

Putnam's Camp, Redding, Connecticut

The Housatonic at Stockbridge

INTERMISSION

Strauss

Also sprach Zarathustra, Op. 30

CSO Tuesday series concerts are sponsored by United Airlines.

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



Charles Ives

Born October 20, 1874, Danbury, Connecticut.

Died May 19, 1954, New York City.

The Unanswered Question

Ives originally called this, his most famous piece, *A Contemplation of a Serious Matter or The Unanswered Perennial Question*. Its companion work, composed at the same time, is *A Contemplation of Nothing Serious or Central Park in the Dark in the Good Old Summer Time*. Both are short works (with deceptively long titles) of extraordinary vision; each explores the radical—and at the time unprecedented—idea of combining several independent layers of music, all at different tempos and intended for performance in different areas of the hall.

In *The Unanswered Question*, as it came to be known, there are three spheres: a single trumpet,

repeatedly asking the question of existence; a quartet of winds, struggling to find answers; and a string chorale (still, hushed, ethereal, and remote) representing eternity. Seven times the trumpet raises its question (the pitches are always the same except for the last note). The answers are increasingly opinionated. Throughout—and indifferent to all—is the shimmering presence of the strings. The winds proceed at their own pace (if the strings are offstage, a separate conductor is helpful). When they don't respond to the trumpet's seventh and final question, the sound of eternity, marked *ppp* and then *pppp* decrescendo, suddenly seems deafening. ■

COMPOSED

1906, often revised until 1935

FIRST PERFORMANCE

unknown

FIRST CSO PERFORMANCES

July 6, 1963, Ravinia Festival.
Aaron Copland conducting

January 29, 1966 [Popular Concert], Orchestra Hall.
Morton Gould conducting

MOST RECENT

CSO PERFORMANCE

November 9, 2002, Orchestra Hall. Christoph von Dohnányi conducting

INSTRUMENTATION

solo trumpet, four flutes, strings

APPROXIMATE

PERFORMANCE TIME

6 minutes

CSO RECORDINGS

1966. Adolph Herseth, trumpet; Morton Gould conducting. RCA

1986 (original and revised versions). Adolph Herseth, trumpet; Michael Tilson Thomas conducting. CBS



Thea Musgrave

Born May 27, 1928, Edinburgh, Scotland.

***Autumn Sonata*, A Concerto for Bass Clarinet and Orchestra**

The bass clarinet has always struck me as evocative of other worlds—worlds that exist as reality only in dreams,” Thea Musgrave says of the solo instrument she chose for her 1994 concerto, *Autumn Sonata*. Musgrave has a great deal of experience writing for winds, in small ensembles as well within the large orchestral fabric, and she has become very sensitive to the peculiarities of each instrument, including the bass clarinet. “With its haloed and haunting tone,” she continues,

its presence in any score seems to conjure internal worlds far below the surface. Although its range is extensive, its unique timbre is most compelling in the lowest register, plummeting to depths at the core of the earth. The

challenge of writing effectively for the solo bass clarinet in a concerto setting is, of course, how to balance it with the orchestra. It is very much like balancing the low male voice in an opera so that the character’s personal communication can be heard in full expressivity without losing all the colors and power of the full orchestra.

Musgrave first studied at the University of Edinburgh and in Paris, where for four years in the early 1950s she worked with Nadia Boulanger—the teacher of a wide-ranging roster of celebrated composers, including Aaron Copland, Elliott Carter, Leonard Bernstein, and Philip Glass. (In 1958, Musgrave studied with Copland himself at Tanglewood.)

COMPOSED

1994

FIRST PERFORMANCE

July 13, 1994, Cheltenham International Festival, England. The composer conducting

These are the United States premiere performances

INSTRUMENTATION

solo bass clarinet, two flutes and piccolo, two oboes and english horn, two clarinets and bass clarinet, two bassoons and contrabassoon, three horns, two trumpets, two trombones, timpani, tam-tam, bass drum, cymbals, snare drum, tom-toms, vibraphone, bells, crotales, strings

APPROXIMATE

PERFORMANCE TIME

20 minutes

Musgrave eventually became known for the inherently dramatic nature of her own music, whether in purely instrumental forms—she composed a series of powerful, even theatrical concertos in the late 1960s and early 1970s (for orchestra, clarinet, horn, and viola)—or in opera itself (several of hers have a historical figure as their subject, such as *Mary, Queen of Scots* in 1975 or *Simón Bolívar* in 1992).

Many of Musgrave's works take their inspiration from the other arts—Greek legends (*Orfeo* and *Narcissus* for flute), painting (*The Seasons* was written after a trip to the Metropolitan Museum in New York City, *Turbulent Landscapes* is a response to the paintings of J.M.W. Turner), or poetry. When she began to work on her bass clarinet concerto, she realized that she was haunted by the poems of Georg Trakl, the Austrian writer who died in a Polish hospital during World War I. Musgrave had already set one of Trakl's poems in *Wild Winter*, the piece that immediately preceded *Autumn Sonata*. Writing the new concerto, she returned to his work and chose short fragments to preface each major section of the score. (Those fragments are reprinted on pages 35–35B.) *Autumn Sonata* is a kind of sequel to *Wild Winter*, which was written to commemorate the siege of Lichfield. "Neither work is intended as a direct description of war," Musgrave says, "but rather a memory, alternating between dream and nightmare."

Musgrave describes the autumnal dream landscape of the concerto,

written as five connected movements followed by a coda:

As the piece opens (I: *Oscuro e misterioso*), a dreamer approaches a dark, menacing forest, where "crows scatter" at the sound of "black footsteps," where (II: *Svegliato*) mysterious dark forces are awakening and bells toll the alarm. The echoing sound of deadly weapons now erupts (III: *Alla marcia, con furore*), and culminates in a pounding march, the major climax of the work. Eventually the march subsides and the "dark flutes of Autumn" greet the ghosts of heroes (IV: *Lamentoso*). Here the ancient chant, *Dies irae*, is embodied in the musical texture in much the same way as it was in the setting of the Trakl poem in *Wild Winter*. A reprise of the opening section follows (V: *Oscuro e misterioso*). The "black footsteps" now become the "Steps of madness in black rooms, / Shadows of old men under open doors" and an offstage bass clarinet shadows the music of the solo bass clarinet. The crows once again scatter, but now "their flight is like a sonata, full of fading chords and manly despair" (VI: *Adagio sostenuto*): this is the coda, where both music and descriptive words culminate in a quotation from Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata* and we hear the three musical elements that open this famous sonata (the dotted rhythm of

the melody, the accompanying triplet figure, and the low resonant bass), which all have been individually hinted at throughout the concerto. The accompanying soft chordal clusters in the muted brass veil this quotation so that it is like

a memory, a dream. At the final cadence, violas, cellos, and basses retune and play a series of natural harmonics on the resulting C-sharp string—the key of the Beethoven sonata—and the music softly dissolves “in a golden cloud.” ■

EXCERPTS FROM THE POEMS OF GEORG TRAKL (1887–1914)

I. Oscuro e misterioso

Herbst: schwarzes Schreiten am Waldsaum; . . .
Krähen, die sich zerstreuen; drei. . .

Autumn: black footsteps at the forest's edge; . . .
Crows scatter apart; three of them . . .

**Verwandlung des Bösen [A prose poem]
[Transformation of evil]**

Mondeshelle Sonate . . .

Moonlit sonata . . .

Hohenburg

II. Svegliato

. . . Und das Erwachen am Saum des dämmernden Walds . . .

. . . And, at dusk, the awakening at the forest's edge. . . .

Hohenburg

(Please turn the page quietly.)

III. Alla marcia, con furore

Am Abend tönen die herbstlichen Wälder
Von tödlicher Waffen. . . .
. . . umfängt die Nacht
Sterbende Krieger, die wilde Klage
Ihrer zerbrochenen Münder.

In the evening, the sound of deadly weapons
Echoes through the autumn woods. . . .
. . . night encircles
The dying soldiers, the savage cries
From their broken mouths.

Grodek

IV. Lamentoso

Zu grüssen die Geister der Helden, die blutenden Häupter;
Und leise tönen im Rohr die dunkeln Flöten des Herbstes.

To greet ghosts of the heroes, the bloodied heads,
The dark flutes of Autumn play softly in the reeds.

Grodek

O die Flöte des Lichts; o die Flöte des Tods.
Was zwang dich still zu stehen auf verfallener Stiege,
im Haus deiner Väter? . . . Drunten ans Tor klopft ein
Engel mit kristallem Finger.

O flute of light; O flute of death.
What made you stand so quietly on the broken-
down steps of your father's house? Down below
an angel knocks at the door with crystal fingers.

Verwandlung des Bösen

V. Oscuro e misterioso

Die Stufen des Wahnsinns in schwarzen Zimmern,
Die Schatten der Alten unter der offenen Tür . . .

Steps of madness in darkened rooms,
Shadows of old men under the open door . . .

Helian

Krähen, die sich zerstreuen; drei. Ihr Flug gleicht einer
Sonata, voll verblichener Akkorde und mänlicher Schwermut;

Crows scatter apart; three of them. Their flight is like
a sonata, full of fading chords and manly despair . . .

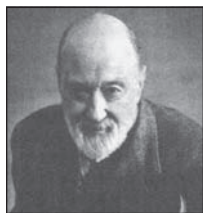
Verwandlung des Bösen

Adagio sostenuto

. . . leise lost sich eine goldene Wolke auf.

A golden cloud softly dissolves.

Verwandlung des Bösen



Charles Ives

Three Places in New England

Charles Ives and Harmony Twitchell married on June 9, 1908. One Sunday morning in July, they set out for a walk by the Housatonic River near Stockbridge. “We walked in the meadows along the river,” Ives later recalled,

and heard the distant singing from the church across the river. The mist had not entirely left the river bed, and the colors, the running water, the banks and elm trees were something that one would always remember.

Two days later—the impression of the landscape and the

distant hymn tune still fresh in his mind—Ives sat down at the desk in his new home, on West 11th Street in New York City, and made a few notes—just one measure of music—to fix the moment on paper, like a notation in a diary. That was the first piece in one of Ives’s greatest jigsaw puzzles of a composition—a work not so much composed as assembled over many years, with bits and pieces lifted from Ives’s life jostling with hymns and marching tunes and sudden flashes of great personal revelation. It would be another six years before *Three Places in New England* came together in a meaningful way—as a rich, Proustian memory book of the

COMPOSED

1911–14, revised for smaller ensemble in 1929, rescored for midsize orchestra in 1935

FIRST PERFORMANCE

January 10, 1931, New York City. Nicolas Slonimsky conducting

FIRST CSO PERFORMANCE

November 27, 1969, Orchestra Hall. Georg Solti conducting

MOST RECENT

CSO PERFORMANCES

April 15, 2000, Orchestra Hall. Markus Stenz conducting

July 2, 2004, Ravinia Festival. Christoph von Dohnányi conducting

INSTRUMENTATION

three flutes and piccolo, two oboes and english horn, two clarinets, two bassoons and contrabassoon, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones and tuba, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, gong, piano, celesta, organ, two harps, strings

APPROXIMATE

PERFORMANCE TIME

18 minutes

CSO RECORDINGS

1967 (Putnam’s Camp only). Morton Gould conducting. RCA

A 1985 performance with James Levine conducting is included on *From the Archives*, vol. 18.

indelible sights and sounds of early twentieth-century American life.

The story of Ives as a moonlighting composer is well known and has become part of the lore of American music. Although he studied composition at Yale, Ives went on to a highly successful career as an insurance executive, composing only at night and on weekends. His clandestine profession produced some two hundred songs, four symphonies, two piano sonatas, and a number of other works of a uniquely American sensibility and pioneering spirit.

It was only after he stopped composing sometime around 1920 that word of his vision and crusty individuality began to spread, and Ives eventually became a legendary figure in American music—the great innovator, father of the avant-garde, New England eccentric. Today he is still esteemed for his experiments (with twelve-note systems, quarter tones, and polyrhythms long before they were commonplace) and his avowed disdain for traditional music (the three Bs had “too much of the sugarplum”) and popular performers (“Rachnotmanenough”). But he also is recognized for the seriousness and importance of his output. A century after he began composing, Ives remains an original—a man of exciting, dazzling, sometimes puzzling, highly compelling musical ideas and a composer who continues to claim our attention.

The evolution of *Three Places* is characteristic of Ives’s individual way of working, particularly in composing one of his loose assemblages—sets, as he called them—of

disparate, yet oddly related pieces. By 1911, the diary entry of the afternoon by the Housatonic had been developed into an ink sketch of an entire movement. That sum-



Saint-Gaudens’s bas-relief on Boston Common

mer, in a rented cottage in rural Hartsdale, New York, he composed a “black march,” a musical reflection on the racial dilemma during the Civil War. Sitting at the piano that August, he remembered Augustus Saint-Gaudens’s bas-relief on Boston Common, which portrays the soldiers of the famous black 54th Regiment of the Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry and their white colonel, Robert Gould Shaw. By the end of the month, he had finished sketching The “St. Gaudens” in Boston Common.

During the autumn of 1911, Ives pulled out two old marches he had composed in 1903 and pieced them together into a single work. Part *Country Band March* and part *Overture and March 1776*, the new score is quintessential Ives—at

once outrageous and subtle, cheeky yet moving, nostalgic but irreverent, rain water–fresh one moment and maddeningly chaotic the next. After Ives finished Putnam’s Camp, as he called it, he began to turn the Housatonic experience into a song, but shelved the idea, no doubt deciding that a memory of such rich texture and nuance, of such subtle colors and elusive moods, would need the full resources of the orchestra. By 1913, all the pieces of the puzzle were ready. We don’t know when Ives first realized that the three landscape portraits belonged together in a set, but by 1914, according to his own statement, these *Three Places in New England* were “completely scored for large orchestra.”

After that, the history of this work, like that of virtually all of Ives’s major compositions, is a story of neglect, ridiculously late discovery, misunderstanding, and failure. As Aaron Copland once said, Ives “lacked neither the talent nor the ability, nor the *métier*, nor the integrity of the true artist, but what he shamefully and tragically lacked was an audience.” For fourteen years after it was completed,

Three Places in New England went unnoticed. Then, in 1928, the conductor Nicolas Slonimsky offered to program something by Ives with his Chamber Orchestra of Boston, and Ives quickly set about reworking *Three Places* for a smaller ensemble. Slonimsky glanced at the score and “experienced a strange, but unmistakable feeling that I was looking at a work of genius.” Slonimsky remembers the premiere, in New York City in 1931, as “somewhat scrambling.” Ives said simply, “This was just like a town meeting, everyone for himself. Wonderful how it came out!” But although the *Three Places* won Ives a few friends among the forward-thinkers in the music world, he still lacked an audience. Unfortunately, that would hardly change during his lifetime.

A Pulitzer Prize for his Third Symphony in 1948, more than forty years after its composition, spread word of Ives’s achievement. But the dignitaries and power brokers of the music business still showed no interest, and the general public heard very little of his music. At the time of his death in 1954, Ives remained America’s great musical secret. ■



Richard Strauss

Born June 11, 1864, Munich, Germany.

Died September 8, 1949, Garmish, Germany.

Also sprach Zarathustra, Op. 30

Without music, life would be an error,” Friedrich Nietzsche wrote. The German philosopher was an accomplished pianist and a competent composer (he wrote mainly choral works, songs, and piano pieces), and music was his greatest passion. The central, defining event in his life was his acquaintance with Richard Wagner, which progressed from adulation (of the fanatical sort that Wagner particularly encouraged) to disillusionment, rejection, and finally radical estrangement.

Nietzsche’s influential prose poem *Also sprach Zarathustra* (Thus spoke Zarathustra) wasn’t even a decade old when Strauss picked up a copy while on holiday in Egypt

late in 1892. Strauss was then the hottest new name in the music world following the success of his tone poems *Don Juan* and *Death and Transfiguration*. He particularly identified with Nietzsche’s polemic against organized religion, and he was intrigued with the idea of the *Übermensch* (Superman), who overcomes the finiteness of life and rises above what Nietzsche called “Christian herd morality.”

But Strauss didn’t at first think of *Zarathustra* as a musical subject. He had gone to Egypt to escape Munich’s bitter winter (he had suffered from severe bronchitis the previous spring) and to finish his opera *Guntram*. The opera proved to

COMPOSED

February 4—August 24, 1896

FIRST PERFORMANCE

November 27, 1896,
Frankfurt. The
composer conducting

FIRST CSO PERFORMANCE

February 5, 1897,
Auditorium Theatre (U.S.
premiere). Theodore
Thomas conducting

MOST RECENT CSO PERFORMANCE

February 10, 2007,
Orchestra Hall. David
Zinman conducting

INSTRUMENTATION

three flutes and two
piccolos, three oboes and
english horn, two clarinets,
E-flat clarinet and bass
clarinet, three bassoons
and contrabassoon, six
horns, four trumpets,
three trombones and two
tubas, timpani, bass drum,
cymbals, triangle, bells, two
harps, organ, strings

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME

35 minutes

CSO RECORDINGS

1940. Frederick Stock
conducting. Columbia

1947. Artur Rodzinski
conducting. RCA

1954. Fritz Reiner
conducting. RCA

1962. Fritz Reiner
conducting. RCA

1975. Sir Georg Solti
conducting. London

1996. Pierre Boulez conduct-
ing. Deutsche Grammophon

be a commercial failure (personally, it was more rewarding—Strauss married its leading soprano, Pauline de Ahna, a few months after the premiere), but Strauss's next tone poem, *Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks*, was a triumph, and he continued to write orchestral music.

Early in the winter of 1896, Strauss decided to make *Zarathustra* the hero of a new tone poem. Nietzsche's work has cast an unusually strong spell over composers—Mahler's Third Symphony, Delius's *A Song of Life*, and Lukas Foss's *Time Cycle* are among the works it has inspired—and Nietzsche even said that it could be thought of as a musical composition itself. The prose poem, organized in four parts, contains eighty-two brief and highly varied reflections on the human condition—the titles range from “On the Flies in the Market Place” to “On Involuntary Bliss”—each one ending with the line, “Thus spoke Zarathustra.” Strauss picked eight of Nietzsche's topics that suggested music to him and arranged them, without regard for Nietzsche's original sequence or overall intent, to allow for the development of certain purely musical ideas. We don't know what Nietzsche thought of Strauss's effort, but the tone poem was quickly acclaimed as one of the composer's finest works, and it proved to be a score of considerable influence. (Bartók was inspired to devote his life to composition after hearing the Budapest premiere in 1902.)

When Strauss's *Also sprach Zarathustra* was performed in Berlin

shortly after the Frankfurt premiere, the composer commented:

I did not intend to write philosophical music or portray Nietzsche's great work musically. I meant rather to convey in music an idea of the human race from its origins, through its various phases of development, both religious and scientific, up to Nietzsche's idea of the *Übermensch*. The whole symphonic poem is intended as my homage to the genius of Nietzsche, which found its greatest exemplification in *Also sprach Zarathustra*.

Strauss also slips a disclaimer into the score's subtitle: tone poem for large orchestra, *freely* after Nietzsche.

Strauss conceived his work as one continuous movement (the eight chapter headings are printed in the score, but the divisions between sections aren't always easy to hear). The music is governed by the use of two keys, C and B—their roots so close and yet their harmonies so far apart—to represent the unyielding force of nature on one hand and the ever-searching spirit of man on the other.

Taking his cue from Nietzsche, Strauss begins at sunrise, and there are few sunrises—in music or in nature—more spectacular. (The familiarity of this passage from Kubrick's 1968 film *2001*, and from its unfortunate use in countless subsequent television commercials, has perhaps dimmed its luster for many listeners.) At the head of the

score, Strauss printed the opening lines of Nietzsche's prologue, in which Zarathustra descends from the mountains where he has lived for ten years and addresses the sun. Above the lowest Cs the orchestra can provide (in the contrabassoon, string basses, and organ over a timpani roll), Strauss writes a three-note motif of nearly irreducible simplicity (C-G-C, rising an octave) to signify nature. Once the sun rises, quickly and brilliantly (it's every bit as noisy as the dawn in Wagner's *Götterdämmerung*), Strauss begins his condensed traversal of Nietzsche's work.

Strauss first takes on religion. In "Of the Backworldsmen," the first of the eight chapters taken from Nietzsche, he sketches those who are naively imprisoned by their concern with the afterlife. The horns intone the first phrase of the chant "Credo in unum Deum" (I believe in one God)—Strauss even writes the words into the horn part—and the strings, subdivided into as many as twenty parts, begin a passage of luscious but self-indulgent beauty.

"On the Great Longing" depicts man's desire to move beyond ignorance. The tonal worlds of B and C begin to collide and, at the peak of activity, Strauss moves directly into "On Joys and Passions," in which the conflict between spirituality and sensual abandon grows increasingly heated. In "The Grave Song," Zarathustra laments man's plight—his voice is taken by oboe and english horn solos—and in "On Science," he turns to learning for illumination. (Nietzsche's word, *Wissenschaft*, carries the

broader meaning of scholarship and erudition.) Strauss writes a strict, methodical fugue on a theme that contains all twelve notes of the chromatic scale—it begins with the three-note nature motif in C major, followed by three notes of the B minor scale.

At the climax of the fugue, Strauss begins "The Convalescent," detailing Zarathustra's breakdown and healing—a large and vigorous passage that develops many earlier ideas and peaks with a flashback of the C major sunrise, followed by an entire measure of silence and then the darkness of B minor. Strauss couldn't resist calling on his famous namesakes, the *other* Strausses, in "The Dance Song," where Zarathustra succumbs to a picture-postcard rendition of a Viennese waltz led by a solo violin. (Composed thirteen years before his opera *Der Rosenkavalier*, this is the first of Richard's many waltzes.) At the sumptuous climax of the dance, a bell begins to toll twelve times, progressively diminishing the music's force to a mere whisper. This is "The Night-Wanderer's Song," based on the famous passage in Nietzsche beginning "O Mensch, gib Acht" (O man, take heed), where each line in the poem should be followed by the ringing of a bell. (This is the text Mahler sets in his Third Symphony.) The music gradually fades into silence, as the tonalities of C and B jockey for a final word, in a precarious and unsettling cliff-hanger conclusion. ■

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