MusicNOW 2016/17 SERIES OPENING CONCERT FEATURES
TWO MusicNOW-COMMISSIONED WORLD PREMIERES

Final Event of the Ear Taxi Festival—Concert Includes Works by
Four Chicago-Based Composers—Marc Mellits, Sam Pluta,
Katherine Young and Kyle Vegter of Manual Cinema

October 10, at 7:00 p.m. at the Harris Theater

CHICAGO—The opening program of the 2016/17 season of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra’s acclaimed MusicNOW series takes place on Monday, October 10, at 7:00 p.m. at the Harris Theater for Music and Dance in Millennium Park (205 E. Randolph Dr., Chicago). The evening of contemporary music also serves as the final concert of the inaugural Ear Taxi Chicago Festival of New Music, (October 5-10, 2016) co-curated by former CSO Mead Composer-in-Residence Augusta Read Thomas and conductor Stephen Burns. Now in their second season as CSO Mead Composers-in-Residence, Samuel Adams and Elizabeth Ogonek host the program of works by Chicago-based composers Marc Mellits and Sam Pluta, as well as composer and bassoonist Katherine Young and Kyle Vegter, one of the co-founders of Manual Cinema, a performance collective, design studio, and film/video production company. The works by Young and Vegter are MusicNOW commissions and receive their world premiere at the concert.

CSO Mead Composers-In-Residence, Samuel Adams and Elizabeth Ogonek co-curate MusicNOW which presents works from established contemporary composers and new voices across today’s active and varied contemporary music scene. “For the new season, we knew that we wanted to develop a MusicNOW commissioning initiative,” the composers-in-residence stated. “The creation of new music in direct collaboration with composers and performers is important and rewarding, and we look forward to sharing five new works with our audiences this season.”

The diverse evening of music opens with Marc Mellits’ Splinter, a rhythmically intriguing 17-minute work with eight short movements written for reed quintet (oboe, clarinet, alto saxophone,
bassoon and bass clarinet). Modeled after the form of a baroque suite, each movement or “splinter” is inspired by different types of trees such as the Linden, Sugar Maple and Red Pine. Composed in 2014 for the Bay Area-based reed quintet Splinter Reeds, the work was recorded on the group’s debut album Got Stung (2015). Mellits is an Assistant Professor of Music at the University of Illinois at Chicago and also directs and performs in his own ensemble, the Mellits Consort.

The first of two world premieres on the program and a MusicNOW commission, composer and bassoonist Katherine Young’s where the moss glows is the second work in a cycle called When Stranger Things Happen. The cycle draws inspiration from award-winning author Kelly Link’s story “The Girl Detective,” which follows a young girl whose curiosity leads her to unexpected places: up trees, into dreams, and to an underworld full of lost things and misplaced trinkets. Young’s piece investigates these small (and sometimes big) items—both those mentioned in Link’s story and those Young and her fellow performers have lost—and the sounds they make. Scored for violin, viola, cello, clarinet, bassoon, tuba, percussion and electric guitar, Young’s work utilizes amplification and electronics as well as recorded sounds. The first work in the cycle was premiered in Germany in August 2016 by guitarist Nico Couck, a commission of the Darmstadt Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik. The final work in Young’s new cycle is being written for Third Coast Percussion for their Emerging Composers Commission. In the fall of 2017, the entire cycle will be premiered together by Ensemble Dal Niente. Young is pursuing her DMA in composition at Northwestern University’s Bienen School of Music and also teaches at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Sam Pluta’s Tile Mosaic (after Chagall) was written as a commission for Yarn/Wire, a quartet of two pianists and two percussionists, and was featured on their 2010 release, Tone Builders. Inspired by idyllic and colorful imagery in the works of artist Marc Chagall, the piece consists of “small sounds, joyful hues, and playful counterpoint” says Pluta, “arranged in a sea of pastels; swirling and rotating; converging and dissipating.” Tile Mosaic received its world premiere in New York in a 2010 performance by Yarn/Wire, and receives its Chicago premiere in this performance. Previously based in New York, Sam Pluta joins the faculty of the University of Chicago in fall 2016 as Assistant Professor of Composition and Director of the computer music studio.

The program concludes with a second MusicNOW commission and world premiere performance of Kyle Vegter’s Monday or Tuesday, a 10-minute work scored for clarinet, bass clarinet, cello, percussion and piano, and accompanied by visuals and shadow puppetry from members of Manual Cinema. Julia Miller of Manual Cinema serves as director of the new work. Monday or Tuesday is based on a prose poem of the same name by Virginia Woolf. Though the prose of the poem itself and the volume of short stories from which it comes went largely unnoticed at the time they were written in 1921, they proved to be a turning point in Woolf’s move to her more characteristic, stream-of-consciousness writing. In Vegter’s new work, the audience follows the complex character of Woolf herself and inhabits the world of the poem with her, encountering scenes of tumultuous, industrial London alongside idyllic images of the English countryside. The performance takes place in an open format which allows the audience to see
both the finished product on the big screen and the inner workings of the visual and musical performance on stage. Kyle Vegter founded Manual Cinema along with Drew Dir, Sarah Fornace, Ben Kauffman, and Julia Miller in 2010. Vegter’s compositions with Manual Cinema have been performed worldwide, and he is currently at work on two large-scale productions with Manual Cinema’s Artistic Director Randy Weiner.

The remaining concerts in the CSO’s MusicNOW 2016/17 season continue on Monday, November 21 at 7:00 p.m., with a program that celebrates the 80th birthday of iconic American composer Steve Reich and features Reich’s Different Trains for string quartet and tape loop, Proverb, with musicians from Northwestern University’s Bienen School of Music, and the Pulitzer Prize-winning work, Double Sextet. The third series program, Illuminating Boulez, honors the legacy of Pierre Boulez and takes place on Monday, April 3, 2017 at 7:00 p.m., while the final program explores the idea of the 21st Century Concerto and takes place Monday, May 22, 2017 at 7:00 p.m.

New to MusicNOW in 2016/17 is a partnership with the Chicago-based collaborative design practice, Thirst. Inspired by the music on each of the four MusicNOW programs, Thirst artist John Pobojewski creates an original artwork for each program that will be available as a complimentary commemorative poster for up to 150 audience members at each performance, while supplies last. Pobojewski notes that his first piece for the October 10 Concert was created “To celebrate a tapestry of Chicago-influenced composers in a collage of cellphone photography featuring some of our city’s recognizable architectural gems.”

Each MusicNOW concert includes special elements such as video introductions to each work on the program and an opportunity to meet with the CSO musicians and composers in an informal setting during post-concert receptions with complimentary food and beverages.

Special thanks to Helen Meyer and Meyer Sound for graciously donating sound equipment support for MusicNOW.

MusicNOW receives funding through a leadership challenge grant from Irving Harris Foundation, Joan W. Harris. Major support is provided by Cindy Sargent and the Sally Mead Hands Foundation and the Elizabeth Morse Charitable Trust. MusicNOW Media Sponsors are WBEZ and RedEye.

Subscriptions for the four-concert MusicNOW series are $76. There is also a $32, four-concert student subscription available with valid student ID. Single tickets are $27 or $15 student ticket, with valid student ID.

Tickets for all MusicNOW concerts can be purchased by phone at 800-223-7114 or 312-294-3000; online at cso.org, or at the Symphony Center box office: 220 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago, IL 60604.
MusicNOW concerts for the 2016/17 season take place on Mondays at 7 p.m. at the Harris Theater for Music and Dance located at 205 E. Randolph in Chicago.

Artists, programs and prices are subject to change.

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Tickets: $27, General Admission
$15, Students

CSO Mead Composers-in-Residence
Samuel Adams
Elizabeth Ogonek
Cliff Colnot, Principal Conductor, MusicNOW

About the Ear Taxi Festival – October 5-16, 2016
The first-ever Ear Taxi Festival of New Music showcases Chicago’s vibrant new music scene, with performances, meet-and-greets, lectures, and webcasts, all taking place in venues across the city. Co-curated by former CSO Mead Composer-in-Residence Augusta Read Thomas and conductor Stephen Burns, the festival showcases some of the brightest new talents in contemporary music alongside some of the city’s best-known creators and innovators. More information about the Ear Taxi Chicago Festival can be found here.
Featured Composers and Artists for October 10, 2016 Program:

Marc Mellits
Chicago-based composer Marc Mellits is one of today’s most programmed contemporary composers, his music receiving performances from the Detroit Symphony, the Atlanta Symphony, the Boston Symphony, eighth blackbird, and numerous others. Mellits has received commissions the Kronos Quartet, the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra (Holland), Bang On A Can All-Stars, and many others. Aesthetically, Mellits’ music has been described as driving and visceral, concise but full of motion and color.

Katherine Young
Chicago-based composer and bassoonist Katherine Young works in acoustic and electro-acoustic music to create sonically diverse compositions which are organic in timbre and utilize unexpected instrumental techniques. A frequent collaborator, Young’s quartet Pretty Monsters released an album by the same name in 2012, adding to her extensive list of discography. Seldom without her bassoon in hand, Young often amplifies and modifies her instrument using electronic means. Young recently received a DMA in composition from Northwestern University, and received her master’s in composition from Wesleyan University where she studied with jazz innovator Anthony Braxton.

Sam Pluta
Composer Sam Pluta is perhaps best known for his laptop performances, creating a unique interplay between the sonic and electronic. Pluta has received numerous commissions for his instrumental music, including those from the International Contemporary Ensemble, Ensemble Dal Niente, the Mivos Quartet, and many others. As an improviser, Pluta is a member of Peter Evans Quintet (with whom he collaborates frequently), the free-improvisation group Rocket Science, the synth duo exclusiveOr, and Sonic Overload. Pluta is Technical Director for the Wet Ink Ensemble, where he is both a composer and performer. Pluta received his DMA in composition and electronic music at Columbia University, and has taught courses at Bennington College, Columbia College, the Walden School, and the Manhattan School of Music. Pluta previously joined MusicNOW to perform Eric Wubbel’s Katachi on last season’s March 7 concert.

Kyle Vegter
Kyle Vegter is a versatile composer whose concert music has been commissioned by numerous groups such as the Chicago Composer’s Orchestra, Homeroom Chicago and TIGUE. Vegter’s multifaceted interests have led him to roles as a producer, sound designer, and most notably founder and Managing Artistic Director of Chicago based theatre company Manual Cinema, which specializes in cinematic shadow puppetry. Co-founder of Chicago’s only contemporary art music label Parlour Tapes+, Vegter has produced such artists as THIN HYMNS, Spektral Quartet, and Tim Munro (of eighth blackbird). Vegter is currently working with Manual Cinema to create two large-scale productions (Sleep No More, The Donkey Show) to be premiered in China in the coming months.

Manual Cinema
Manual Cinema is a Chicago-based visual arts studio and performance cooperative with an eye towards shadow puppetry and creative cinematic techniques, which incorporate immersive sound design and music in their work. The collective was founded in 2010 by Drew Dir, Sarah Fornace, Ben Kauffman, Julia Miller, and Kyle Vegter, and has since had presentations across the globe at The Metropolitan Museum of Art (NYC), The Noorderzon Festival (Netherlands), The Tehran International Puppet Festival (Iran), Davies Symphony Hall (SF), and numerous other places, while Manual Cinema has upcoming productions which will take place in Beijing and Shanghai. They have collaborated with Chicago’s eighth blackbird, StoryCorps (NYC), Erratica (London), and many others, and were ensemble-in-residence at the University of Chicago in the Theater and Performance Studies program in 2012. The company plans to premiere three new feature-length works in the coming year, including a self-produced short film based on Virginia Woolf’s The Haunted House in late 2017.
The Chicago Symphony Orchestra: www.cso.org and www.csosoundsandstories.org/

Founded in 1891, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra is consistently hailed as one of the greatest orchestras in the world. Since 2010, the preeminent conductor Riccardo Muti has served as its 10th music director. Yo-Yo Ma is the CSO’s Judson and Joyce Green Creative Consultant, and Samuel Adams and Elizabeth Ogonek are its Mead Composers-in-Residence.

From baroque through contemporary music, the CSO commands a vast repertoire. Its renowned musicians annually perform more than 150 concerts, most at Symphony Center in Chicago and, each summer, at the suburban Ravinia Festival. They regularly tour nationally and internationally. Since 1892, the CSO has made 59 international tours, performing in 29 countries on five continents.

People around the globe listen to weekly radio broadcasts of CSO concerts and recordings on the WFMT radio network and online at cso.org/radio. Recordings by the CSO have earned 62 Grammy Awards, including two in 2011 for Muti’s recording with the CSO and Chorus of Verdi’s Messa da Requiem (Muti’s first of four releases with the CSO to date). Find details on these and many other CSO recordings at www.cso.org/resound.

The CSO is part of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra Association, which also includes the Chicago Symphony Chorus (Duain Wolfe, Director and Conductor) and the Civic Orchestra of Chicago, a training ensemble for emerging professionals. Through its prestigious Symphony Center Presents series, the CSOA presents guest artists and ensembles from a variety of genres—classical, jazz, world, and contemporary.

The Negaunee Music Institute at the CSO offers community and education programs that annually engage more than 200,000 people of diverse ages and backgrounds. Through the Institute and other activities, including a free annual concert with Muti and the CSO, the CSO is committed to using the power of music to create connections and build community.

The CSO is supported by thousands of patrons, volunteers and institutional and individual donors. The CSO’s music director position is endowed in perpetuity by a generous gift from the Zell Family Foundation. The Negaunee Foundation provides generous support in perpetuity for the work of the Negaunee Music Institute.