



CHICAGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA ASSOCIATION

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News

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**CSOA ANNOUNCES CAST FOR
JUNE 2019 PERFORMANCES OF VERDI'S AIDA
LED BY MUSIC DIRECTOR RICCARDO MUTI**

**Soprano Krassimira Stoyanova as Aida and Tenor Francesco Meli as Radamès in
Return Appearances and Mezzo-Soprano Anita Rachvelishvili as Amneris
in her CSO Debut**

**Cast also features Return Appearances for Bass Ildar Abdrazakov as Ramfis
and Bass-Baritone Eric Owens as The King and
Baritone Kiril Manolov as Amonasro in his CSO Debut**

June 21, 23 & 25, 2019

CHICAGO—The Chicago Symphony Orchestra Association (CSOA) announces the cast for the concert performances of Verdi's *Aida* featuring the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Chorus led by Music Director Riccardo Muti on [Friday, June 21, 2019, at 8:00 p.m.](#); [Sunday, June 23, 2019, at 3:00 p.m.](#) and [Tuesday, June 25, 2019, at 7:30 p.m.](#) As previously announced, Verdi's *Aida* marks the final subscription program of the 2018/19 season and features internationally acclaimed soprano Krassimira Stoyanova in the title role. These performances mark the fourth Verdi opera presented by the CSOA and led by Muti, widely considered to be today's preeminent interpreter of Verdi's music. Previously, Muti has led the assembled forces of the CSO and Chorus and renowned soloists in concert performances of Verdi's *Otello* (2011), *Macbeth* (2013) and *Falstaff* (2016).

Celebrated soprano Krassimira Stoyanova, who has previously performed with Muti and the CSO in Verdi's *Requiem* and *Otello*, brings her exceptional artistry to the role of Aida, which recently won her acclaim for her 2017 performances in the role at the Metropolitan Opera. Stoyanova leads the cast which also features mezzo-soprano Anita Rachvelishvili in her CSO debut as Amneris and tenor Francesco Meli, who makes his first CSO return appearance since Verdi's *Macbeth* in 2013, as Radamès. Both leading Verdi interpreters, Rachvelishvili triumphed

RICCARDO MUTI
Zell Music Director

HELEN ZELL
Chair, Board of Trustees

JEFF ALEXANDER
President

YO-YO MA
Judson and Joyce Green Creative Consultant

as Azucena in the Met's 2018 production of *Il trovatore* and Meli garnered praise as the Duke of Mantua in the Royal Opera's production of *Rigoletto* in London this season. Meli also performed in the critically hailed 2017 Salzburg Festival production of Verdi's *Aida* with Muti.

Renowned Bulgarian baritone Kiril Manolov makes his CSO debut as Amonasro, having performed the title role of Falstaff with Muti at the Ravenna Festival and also in a critically hailed production of Verdi's *Falstaff* at Deutsche Oper Berlin. Bass Ildar Abdrazakov makes a return appearance with the CSO and Muti in the role of Ramfis following previous appearances with Muti for Shostakovich's *Suite on Verses of Michelangelo Buonarroti*—also released on a 2016 CSO Resound recording—and in performances of Verdi's Requiem. Bass-baritone Eric Owens, who has performed with Muti and the CSO on multiple occasions including the 2011 performances of Verdi's *Otello*, returns in the role of the King. American tenor Issachah Savage makes his CSO debut in the role of the Messenger. Chicago Symphony Chorus sopranos Kimberly Gunderson and Tasha Koontz alternate in the role of the Priestess in these performances, which also feature the Chicago Symphony Chorus, under the direction of Duain Wolfe.

Tickets for these and other CSOA-presented performances in the 2018/19 season are currently available to subscribers; and after August 10, 2018 to single ticket buyers at cso.org, via phone at 312-294-3000, or in person at the Symphony Center box office, 220 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago.

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Chicago Symphony Orchestra

[Friday, June 21, 2019, 8:00 p.m.](#)

[Sunday, June 23, 2019, 3:00 p.m.](#)

[Tuesday, June 25, 2019, 7:30 p.m.](#)

Chicago Symphony Orchestra

Riccardo Muti, conductor

Chicago Symphony Chorus

Duain Wolfe, chorus director

Krassimira Stoyanova, soprano (*Aida*)

Anita Rachvelishvili, mezzo-soprano (*Amneris*)

Francesco Meli, tenor (*Radamès*)

Kiril Manolov, baritone (*Amonasro*)

Ildar Abdrazakov, bass (*Ramfis*)

Eric Owens, bass-baritone (*The King*)

Issachah Savage, tenor (*Messenger*)

Kimberly Gunderson, soprano (*The Priestess*)

Tasha Koontz, soprano (*The Priestess*)

VERDI *Aida*

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Riccardo Muti

Riccardo Muti, born in Naples, Italy, is one of the preeminent conductors of our day. In 2010, when he became the tenth music director of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (CSO), he already had more than forty years of experience at the helm of the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, Philharmonia Orchestra, Philadelphia Orchestra, and Teatro alla Scala. He is a guest conductor for orchestras and opera houses all over the world: the Berlin Philharmonic, the Vienna Philharmonic, the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Vienna State Opera, the Royal Opera House, the Metropolitan Opera, and many others.

Muti studied piano under Vincenzo Vitale at the Conservatory of San Pietro a Majella in his hometown of Naples, graduating with distinction. He subsequently received a diploma in composition and conducting from the Giuseppe Verdi Conservatory in Milan, also graduating with distinction. His principal teachers were Bruno Bettinelli and Antonino Votto, principal assistant to Arturo Toscanini at La Scala. After he won the Guido Cantelli Conducting Competition—by unanimous vote of the jury—in Milan in 1967, Muti's career developed quickly. In 1968, he became principal conductor of Florence's Maggio Musicale, a position that he held until 1980. In 2017, Muti led the Orchestra of the Maggio Musicale in performances that were part of the historic G-7 Culture Summit which explored the use of culture as an instrument of dialogue among different peoples and nations.

Herbert von Karajan invited him to conduct at the Salzburg Festival in Austria in 1971, and Muti has maintained a close relationship with the summer festival and with its great orchestra, the Vienna Philharmonic, for now forty-five consecutive years. When he conducted the philharmonic's 150th anniversary concert in 1992, he was presented with the Golden Ring, a special sign of esteem and affection, and in 2001, his outstanding artistic contributions to the orchestra were further recognized with the Otto Nicolai Gold Medal. Muti was also invited by the Orchestra to lead his fifth New Year's concert in 2018. He is also a recipient of a silver medal from the Salzburg Mozarteum for his contribution to the music of W.A. Mozart. He is an honorary member of Vienna's Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde (Society of the Friends of Music), the Vienna Hofmusikkapelle, the Vienna Philharmonic, and the Vienna State Opera. In 2015, he founded the Riccardo Muti Italian Opera Academy in Ravenna, Italy, to train young conductors, répétiteurs, and singers in the Italian opera repertoire.

Muti succeeded Otto Klemperer as chief conductor and music director of London's Philharmonia Orchestra in 1973, holding that position until 1982. From 1980 to 1992, he was music director of the Philadelphia Orchestra, and in 1986, he became music director of Milan's Teatro alla Scala. During his nineteen-year tenure, in addition to directing major projects such as the Mozart–Da Ponte trilogy and Wagner Ring cycle, Muti conducted operatic and symphonic repertoire ranging from the baroque to the contemporary, also leading hundreds of concerts with the Filarmonica della Scala and touring the world with both the opera company and the orchestra. His tenure as music director, the longest of any in La Scala's history, culminated in the triumphant reopening of the restored opera house with Antonio Salieri's *Europa riconosciuta*, originally commissioned for La Scala's inaugural performance in 1778.

Throughout his career, Muti has dedicated much time and effort to training young musicians. In 2004, he founded the Orchestra Giovanile Luigi Cherubini (Luigi Cherubini Youth Orchestra), based in his native Italy. He regularly tours with the ensemble to prestigious concert halls and opera houses all over the world.

Since 1997, as part of *Le vie dell'Amicizia* (The paths of friendship), a project of the Ravenna Festival in Italy, Muti has annually conducted large-scale concerts in war-torn and poverty-stricken areas around the world, using music to bring hope, unity, and attention to present day social, cultural, and humanitarian issues.

Muti has received innumerable international honors. He is a Cavaliere di Gran Croce of the Italian Republic, Officer of the French Legion of Honor, and a recipient of the German Verdienstkreuz. Queen Elizabeth II bestowed on him the title of honorary Knight Commander of the British Empire, Russian President Vladimir Putin awarded him the Order of Friendship, and Pope Benedict XVI made him a Knight

of the Grand Cross First Class of the Order of Saint Gregory the Great—the highest papal honor. Muti also has received Israel's Wolf Prize for the arts, Sweden's prestigious Birgit Nilsson Prize, Spain's Prince of Asturias Award for the Arts, and the gold medal from Italy's Ministry of Foreign Affairs for his promotion of Italian culture abroad. In March 2017, the Italian government recognized Muti with its prestigious Presidente della Repubblica award, presented to Muti for his exceptional contribution to Italian culture in the field of music. He has received more than twenty honorary degrees from universities around the world.

Considered one of the greatest interpreters of Verdi in our time, Muti wrote a book on the composer, *Verdi, l'italiano*, published in Italian, German, and Japanese. His first book, *Riccardo Muti: An Autobiography: First the Music, Then the Words*, also has been published in several languages, including Chinese.

Riccardo Muti's vast catalog of recordings, numbering in the hundreds, ranges from the traditional symphonic and operatic repertoires to contemporary works. His debut recording with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Chorus of Verdi's *Messa da Requiem*, released in 2010 by CSO Resound, won two Grammy awards. His second recording with the CSO and Chorus, Verdi's *Otello*, released in 2013 by CSO Resound, won the 2014 International Opera Award for the Best Complete Opera.

During his time with the CSO, Muti has won over audiences in greater Chicago and across the globe through his music making as well as his demonstrated commitment to sharing classical music. His annual free concerts for the city of Chicago attract tens of thousands of people. He regularly invites subscribers, students, seniors, and people of low incomes to attend, at no charge, his CSO rehearsals. Muti's commitment to artistic excellence and to creating a strong bond between an orchestra and its communities continues to bring the Chicago Symphony Orchestra to ever higher levels of achievement and renown.

<http://www.riccardomutimusic.com/>

The Chicago Symphony Orchestra: www.cso.org and www.csosoundsandstories.org

Founded by Theodore Thomas 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 60 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 eight 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.