ESA-PEKKA SALONEN RETURNS IN MAY FOR TWO WEEKS OF CSO SUBSCRIPTION CONCERTS AND TO LEAD THE SEASON FINALE CONCERT FOR MUSICNOW

Salonen Leads the CSO in Mahler’s Symphony No. 9

Mitsuko Uchida joins Salonen and CSO as Soloist in Bartók’s Piano Concerto No. 3 on Program that also includes Brahms’s Variations on a Theme by Haydn and Schoenberg’s Transfigured Night

The 20th Season of the MusicNOW Series Concludes with Program Featuring World Premiere Works by Mead Composers-in-Residence Samuel Adams and Elizabeth Ogonek Conducted by Salonen

May 17–26, 2018

CHICAGO—Renowned conductor and composer Esa-Pekka Salonen returns to Chicago to lead the CSO in an array of programs at Symphony Center May 17-26. Salonen’s first subscription concert program (May 17-19 & 22) features Mahler’s monumental Symphony No. 9, last performed by the Orchestra in 2013. The second program (May 24–26) includes Brahms’s Variations on a Theme by Haydn and Schoenberg’s Transfigured Night, as well as Bartók’s Piano Concerto No. 3 with Mitsuko Uchida as soloist. Salonen also conducts the final concert in the 20th season of the MusicNOW series on May 21 in a program that includes works by Magnus Lindberg and Anna Thorvaldsdóttir, as well as the world premieres of MusicNOW-commissioned works by Mead Composers-in-Residence Elizabeth Ogonek and Samuel Adams, who mark the conclusion of their three-year tenures with this program.

Salonen leads the CSO in Mahler’s evening-length Symphony No. 9, the composer’s final symphony and last completed work, in his first subscription program May 17-19 & 22. Often regarded as Mahler’s reflection upon the human experience and farewell to life itself, the powerful work runs an emotional range from abject despair to transcendent elation and utilizes the forces of magnificent brass, as well as deeply poignant string passages to recall life’s
broadth of experiences. The symphony’s traditional four-movement form breaks convention with slow movements to open and close the epic work, whose unsettling undertow is particularly present in the middle scherzo and rondo-burleske movements. The fourth movement’s final bars, performed by the first violins, shimmer and slip away into nothingness. Salonen, who is renowned for his sheer and illuminating interpretation of Mahler’s symphonies, has been praised for “[emphasizing] the almost pointillist nature of the composer’s orchestration, drawing out its latent modernism” (Bachtrack).

Salonen’s second subscription program (May 24–26) features the conductor’s reunion with pianist and longtime collaborator Mitsuko Uchida, appearing together with the CSO for the first time in these concerts. The program opens with Brahms’s Variations on a Theme by Haydn. Borrowing from a theme attributed to Haydn titled “Chorale St. Antoni,” the composer’s variations offer broad, stately gestures, spirited episodes and delicate lyricism. The program continues with Bartók’s Piano Concerto No. 3, completed only days before the composer’s death in New York in 1945. In a departure from Bartók’s more pointed, radical style of keyboard writing, his third piano concerto is more understated, with finely-etched orchestral textures and serene, lyrical gestures in the solo piano part. Schoenberg’s string orchestra arrangement of his Transfigured Night concludes the program. Inspired by the German writer Richard Dehmel’s poem of the same name, Schoenberg’s programmatic, single movement work musically depicts a woman whose deep despair evolves into hope as she and her companion walk through the moonlit night. One of Schoenberg’s most important early works, Transfigured Night is admired today for its harmonic richness and masterful string writing evoking an intensely emotional tone throughout the work. The string orchestra arrangement of the work has become a staple of Salonen’s repertoire and his 1997 recording of Transfigured Night with the Stockholm Chamber orchestra has been recognized as a standout interpretation of Schoenberg’s masterpiece.

Celebrating 20 years of MusicNOW – 2017/18 Season Finale at Symphony Center

On Monday, May 21 at 7:00 p.m., Salonen leads musicians from the CSO and guest musicians in the final concert of the 20th season of the CSO’s contemporary music series MusicNOW in a special presentation at Symphony Center. The MusicNOW series has been co-curated for the last three seasons by CSO Mead Composers-in-Residence Samuel Adams and Elizabeth Ogonek, who extended an invitation for Salonen to lead this program.

The program opens with a performance of Related Rocks, a work by Salonen’s Finnish compatriot Magnus Lindberg. Written in 1997, the colorful work for two pianos, percussion and electronics seamlessly integrates acoustic timbres with digitally sampled sounds to create diffuse soundscapes and layered instrumental textures. Also featured on the program is Ró, a 2013 work by Icelandic composer Anna Thorvaldsdóttir. The title, which roughly translates as “Tranquility,” suggests the austere tonal effects and delicate, atmospheric restraint that pervade the piece scored for string quartet, bass flute, bass clarinet, prepared piano and percussion. Thorvaldsdóttir has been recognized by The New York Times for her “seemingly boundless textural imagination.”
The MusicNOW program also includes world premieres of two MusicNOW-commissioned works by Mead Composers-in- Residence Elizabeth Ogonek and Samuel Adams conducted by Salonen. These premieres for Adams and Ogonek mark their second commissions for the MusicNOW series, with Adams’s 11 -movement instrumental/vocal work Light Readings having received its world premiere in May 2016 and Ogonek’s chamber violin concerto In Silence having received its world premiere in June 2017.

Ogonek’s new MusicNOW -commissioned work, The Water Cantos, is a series of musical portraits of places that inspire the composer’s creativity and the specific memories associated with those places. “The thing that united all of these places—two of which are in New Mexico, and two are on the Southern coast of Oregon—is the way in which water manifests differently in all of them,” Ogonek remarks. The unconventional instrumentation of the work, which is scored for flute, two clarinets, three percussionists, piano, four cellos and double bass, was grounded in the relationships Ogonek has formed with CSO musicians over the course of her residency. “In my mind, it’s about my relationships with the musicians in the CSO,” says Ogonek, “but it’s also about celebrating MusicNOW, because so many of these people I’ve written for are people who’ve invested a lot of time in [the series] and are very committed to new music.” CSO musicians Emma Gerstein (flute), John Bruce Yeh (assistant principal clarinet), Alexander Hanna (principal bass), Cynthia Yeh (principal percussion) and Vadim Karpinos (assistant principal timpani/percussion) and guest musicians perform Ogonek’s new work.

Adams’s Chamber Concerto is his second violin concerto and his first collaboration with Karen Gomyo, who makes her Symphony Center debut in these performances. Adams first heard Gomyo’s playing in 2015, and was particularly captivated by her performances of works by Sibelius, Shostakovich and Bach. Gomyo’s distinguished interpretations of such masterworks served as the inspiration for the new concerto, which engages with wide -ranging musical styles and traditions that span from fugue to tango, but also seeks to redefine the musical relationship between the players. “In this piece, I’m particularly interested in looking at an older history of violin concertos going back to the Baroque era, and a kind of relationship between the soloist and the ensemble that’s less about opposition, and more about cooperation,” Adams says. “You’ll hear the ensemble highlighting the gestures that the violinist is playing, rather than presenting a kind of barrier through which the soloist must break.” In addition to Gomyo, CSO musicians Emma Gerstein (flute), John Bruce Yeh (assistant principal clarinet), Baird Dodge (principal second violin), Hermine Gagné (violin), Matous Michal (violin), Sunghee Choi (viola), Alexander Hanna (principal bass), Cynthia Yeh (principal percussion) and Vadim Karpinos (assistant principal timpani/percussion) and guest musicians perform Adams’s new work.

The May 21 MusicNOW concert includes an opportunity to meet with the musicians and composers in an informal setting during a post-concert reception in the Rotunda lobby at Symphony Center with complimentary food and beverages. Free, commemorative posters for the May 21 program, designed by John Pobojewski of Thirst Design, will be available at the reception for MusicNOW patrons while supplies last.
About Samuel Adams and Elizabeth Ogonek – CSO Mead Composers-in-Residence

Appointed to a three-year term as the CSO’s Mead Composers-in-Residence by Zell Music Director Riccardo Muti in 2015, Samuel Adams and Elizabeth Ogonek have co-curated the MusicNOW series for the last three seasons. The series enters its 21st year in the 2018/19 season with new artistic leadership to be announced at a later date.

Over the last three years, Adams and Ogonek placed a renewed emphasis on commissioning works for the CSO’s contemporary music series, having commissioned nine works total since 2015. Other MusicNOW programming highlights during their tenure include the presentation of Tristan Perich’s *Surface Image* performed by pianist Vicky Chow; participation in the first-ever Ear Taxi festival created by former CSO Mead Composer-in-Residence Augusta Read Thomas; presentation of programs honoring the musical legacies of new music luminaries Pierre Boulez and Pulitzer Prize-winner Steve Reich and the 2018 world premiere of Amy Beth Kirsten’s evening length vocal and theater work *Savior*, inspired by the life and death of Joan of Arc. Adams and Ogonek also helped to develop a new collaboration with the Art Institute of Chicago for an evening of new music in the museum’s galleries featuring museum curators, CSO musicians and guest musicians in celebration of 20 years of MusicNOW in May 2018.

Adams has also collaborated with musicians of the Civic Orchestra of Chicago with support from the Negaunee Music Institute at the CSO to establish The Civic Orchestra New Music Workshop, an annual project that facilitates the development of new music through coachings with the International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE) and public performances.

Beyond, their MusicNOW commissions, Adams and Ogonek have each been commissioned to write a work for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra during their tenures as Composers-in-Residence. Adams’s work, *many words of love*, received its world premiere by the CSO led by Riccardo Muti on March 16, 2017 at Symphony Center. It was also performed during the Orchestra’s 2018 East Coast tour with Muti at The Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., at Carnegie Hall in New York and in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Anne Midgette of *The Washington Post* noted that Adams’s work “draws on the full palette of orchestral color, with an interleaving of electronics, to create something that is more soundscape than dramatic narrative.”

Ogonek’s work, *All These Lighted Things*, received its world premiere by the CSO led by Riccardo Muti on September 28, 2017 at Symphony Center. It was also performed during the Orchestra’s 2017 tour to Kansas City and the West Coast with Muti with performances in Kansas City and in Berkeley, California. Wynne Delacoma of *Musical America* called Ogonek’s *All These Lighted Things* “a joyful, luminous work,” also noting it for its “buoyant dance rhythms” and “sumptuous” orchestral texture.

Tickets for all CSOA-presented 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.
Discounted student tickets for select concerts can be purchased, subject to availability, online in advance or at the box office on the day of the concert. For group rates, please call 312-294-3040.

Artists, programs and prices are subject to change.

Bank of America is the Global Sponsor of the CSO.

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The CSO concerts on May 17-19 & 22 and May 24-26 are made possible with the generous support additional support from Robert J. Bufo and Jim and SuAnne Lopata.

The CSO concerts on May 24-26 are made possible with the generous support of The Negaunee Foundation

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**Chicago Symphony Orchestra**

Thursday, May 17, 2018, at 8:00 p.m.
Friday, May 18, 2018, at 1:30 p.m.
Saturday, May 19, 2018, at 8:00 p.m.
Tuesday, May 22, 2018, at 7:30 p.m.

Chicago Symphony Orchestra

Esa-Pekka Salonen, conductor

MAHLER  Symphony No. 9

Tickets: $36-250

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**Chicago Symphony Orchestra**

MusicNOW

Symphony Center
220 S. Michigan Ave
Chicago, IL 60604

Monday, March 21, 2018, at 7:00 p.m.

Musicians from the Chicago Symphony Orchestra

Esa-Pekka Salonen, conductor

Karen Gomyo, violin

Samuel Adams, Mead Composer-in-Residence

Elizabeth Ogonek, Mead Composer-in-Residence

LINDBERG  Related Rocks

OGONEK  The Water Cantos [notes from quiet places]

[World Premiere, MusicNOW Commission]
THORVALDSDÓTTIR  
SAMUEL ADAMS  
Ró  
Chamber Concerto  
[World Premiere, MusicNOW Commission]

Tickets: $28

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**Chicago Symphony Orchestra**

**Thursday, May 24, 2018, at 8:00 p.m.**  
**Friday, May 25, 2018, at 1:30 p.m.**  
**Saturday, May 26, 2018, at 8:00 p.m.**

Esa-Pekka Salonen, conductor  
Mitsuko Uchida, piano

**BRAHMS**  
Variations on a Theme by Haydn  
**BARTÓK**  
Piano Concerto No. 3  
**SCHOENBERG**  
*Transfigured Night*

Tickets: $34-221

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**Featured Conductor and Artists for these Performances:**

- Esa-Pekka Salonen, conductor  
- Mitsuko Uchida, piano  
- Karen Gomyo, violin  
- Samuel Adams, Mead Composer-in-Residence  
- Elizabeth Ogonek, Mead Composer-in-Residence

**The Chicago Symphony Orchestra:** [www.cso.org](http://www.cso.org) and [www.csosoundsandstories.org](http://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](http://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](http://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 led by Muti, 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. Bank of America is the Global Sponsor of the CSO. 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.