AFRO-CUBAN PIANO MASTERS CHUCHO VALDÉS AND GONZALO RUBALCABA BRING THEIR TALENTS TO SYMPHONY CENTER PRESENTS JAZZ SERIES

Havana Jazz Artists Unite Their Distinctive Voices for an Evening of Musical Dialogue

Friday, February 23, at 8 p.m.

CHICAGO—Chucho Valdés, the leader and pianist of the landmark Cuban ensemble Irakere, joins forces with dynamic Cuban pianist Gonzalo Rubalcaba to present their duo project, Trance, at Symphony Center on Friday, February 23, at 8 p.m., as a part of the Symphony Center Presents (SCP) Jazz series. The duo, which represents two generations of the distinguished Afro-Cuban tradition, appear at Symphony Center as part of their 2017/18 international tour with the project.

In their two-piano project Trance, Cuban piano masters Chucho Valdés and Gonzalo Rubalcaba explore the profound connection of sharing a musical tradition across generations. Though Valdés and Rubalcaba differ in age by more than two decades—in fact, Rubalcaba grew up listening to Valdés’ music—their friendship and mutual admiration shines through their melodic repartee. Building upon the Afro-Cuban tradition of their homeland, the duo infuses elements of rock and classical music with jazz in a repertoire of original duets and traditional Cuban works.

Though both artists have previously appeared in Orchestra Hall as leaders of their own groups, this performance marks their Symphony Center debut as a pair. Most recently, Valdés appeared at Symphony Center in November 2015 with Irakere 40, a celebration of his decades-long career and the 40th anniversary of his landmark band, which previously appeared on the SCP Jazz series in 1999. A distinguished bandleader in his own right, Rubalcaba made a splash with
his trio in his 1999 debut at Symphony Center and has performed here several times including a solo set in 2012 that the Chicago Tribune called “an ear-opening tonic.”

Award-winning jazz pianist and composer Chucho Valdés is considered one of the most influential figures in modern Afro-Cuban jazz. Born to a musical family in Havana province, Cuba, Valdés was a musical prodigy, graduating from the Conservatoria Municipal de Música de la Habana at age 14. His landmark group Irakere, formed in 1973, was discovered by legendary jazz trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie in 1977, launching a decades-long career for Valdés as a distinguished jazz pianist and bandleader. His countless recordings as a leader and co-leader have earned Valdés six Grammy and three Latin Grammy awards, including the 2016 Grammy for Best Latin Jazz Album for Tribute to Irakere: Live at Marciac, a celebration of the band he founded and directed for more than three decades.

Pianist and composer Gonzalo Rubalcaba began playing drums in his father’s orchestra at age six. By his mid-teens, he was performing as both a drummer and pianist in hotels, concert halls and jazz clubs around Havana. Upon graduating, Rubalcaba immediately began touring Cuba, Europe, Africa and Asia with the band Orquesta Aragón, as a sideman in various jazz groups and, in 1984, leading his own Afro-Cuban jazz rock fusion band Grupo Proyecto. Encounters with jazz legends like Dizzy Gillespie led to introductions of Rubalcaba’s talents to the United States, expanding his jazz career. Rubalcaba’s international recording career has earned him 16 nominations from both the Grammys and Latin Grammys. Rubalcaba has been serving on the faculty of the University of Miami’s Frost School of Music since 2015.

Tickets for all Symphony Center Presents Jazz series 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.

The Symphony Center Presents Jazz series is sponsored by Exelon.

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**Symphony Center Presents**

**Jazz**

**Friday, February 23, 8 p.m.**

Chucho Valdés and Gonzalo Rubalcaba: **Trance**

Chucho Valdés, piano
Gonzalo Rubalcaba, piano

Tickets: $28 - $89

**Featured Artists for this Performance:**
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 pre-eminent 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.

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.