



**CHICAGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA ASSOCIATION**  
**RICCARDO MUTI** Music Director

220 South Michigan Avenue  
Chicago, IL 60604-2559

# News

**For Immediate Release:**  
June 5, 2019

**Press Contacts:**  
[Eileen Chambers](#): 312-294-3092  
[Dana Navarro](#): 312-294-3090

## **CHICAGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA ASSOCIATION ANNOUNCES WORLD PREMIERE AND CO-COMMISSION OF NEW WORK BY FORMER MEAD COMPOSER-IN-RESIDENCE MASON BATES**

***World's Greatest Synth: The Making of the Orchestra—a New Work for  
Audiences of All Ages—Receives World Premiere Performances  
in March 2020 at CSO School and Family Concerts***

**Commission Celebrates the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the  
CSO's Series of Concerts for Children**

CHICAGO—The Chicago Symphony Orchestra Association (CSOA) announces details for *World's Greatest Synth: The Making of the Orchestra*, a world premiere work by former CSO Mead Composer-in-Residence Mason Bates, co-created with writer and director Gary Rydstrom and story artist and animator Jim Capobianco. Co-commissioned by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (CSO), the San Francisco Symphony, the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra and the National Symphony Orchestra, *World's Greatest Synth* receives its world premiere performances by the CSO with guest conductor Edwin Outwater at Symphony Center in School Concerts on March 26 and 27, 2020 and Family Matinee concerts on [March 28, 2020](#).

The commission is in celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the CSO's concert series for children that began in 1919, a series that was established by the Orchestra's second music director, Frederick Stock. This programming continues today along with other extensive educational and community engagement programming produced by the Negaunee Music Institute.

*World's Greatest Synth* is a kinetic, cutting-edge, multimedia work that integrates film and pre-recorded sound with live orchestra performance. Imaginatively blending traditional and modern

animation styles, the piece offers an engaging, educational glimpse inside the inner workings of the orchestra in a vividly composed “concerto for orchestra and animation,” which presents the modern orchestra as the perfect synthesis of art and science. The collaboration between the piece’s creators – who are innovators in the worlds of music, storytelling and animation, respectively – similarly demonstrates this groundbreaking intersection of artistic disciplines. “*World’s Greatest Synth* flies inside musical instruments to explore the age-old connection of creativity and technology,” said Bates, “and the centennial of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra’s education program is the perfect launching point for this multimedia work.”

In the new piece, we meet the character of Sprite, an energetic, colorful guide who leads audiences on a visual tour through the music by taking us inside the instruments of the orchestra and interacting with the conductor and musicians, further connecting stage and screen. The story unfolds through music and visuals alone, without narration, creating a piece without language barriers that is accessible and entertaining for audiences of all ages. *World’s Greatest Synth* also continues the legacy of great orchestral works that introduce the instruments of the orchestra to new listeners such as Prokofiev’s *Peter & the Wolf* and Britten’s *Young Person’s Guide to the Orchestra*.

The CSO’s co-commission of the work emerges from a fruitful ongoing relationship between Bates and the Orchestra. “It’s so meaningful to bring this piece to life with the musicians of the CSO, whose artistry under the direction of Riccardo Muti has hugely impacted my musical imagination over the years,” said Bates, who served along with fellow composer Anna Clyne as the CSO’s Mead Composers-in-Residence from 2010 to 2015.

“The CSOA is very pleased to continue our relationship with Mason Bates through this new commission,” said CSOA President Jeff Alexander. “Mason is one of the most singular and creative voices in orchestral music today, and he is gifted with a collaborative spirit and a passion for education and innovation. *World’s Greatest Synth* presents a wonderful opportunity to welcome a new generation of listeners into the inspiring world of orchestral music, and we look forward to sharing this music with our audiences.”

“Discovering the music of Mason Bates during his time with the CSO was so joyful,” said Helen Zell, CSOA Board Chair and sponsor of the CSO commission. “His music takes audiences on journeys of the imagination, and I look forward to the ways that his new work will engage listeners.”

Composer Mason Bates, whose opera *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs* was recognized as best opera recording at the 2019 Grammy Awards, also serves as the first composer-in-residence of the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. His music fuses innovative orchestral writing, imaginative narrative forms, the harmonies of jazz and the rhythms of techno. His symphonic music is the first to receive widespread acceptance for its unique integration of electronic sounds, and he was named the most-performed composer of his generation in a recent survey of American music. His activities as a DJ have highly informed not only his compositional approach, but his distinctive curating projects. Bates has become a visible advocate for bringing new music to new spaces, whether through institutional partnerships such as his former position

as Mead Composer-in-Residence with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, or through his club/classical project Mercury Soul, which transforms commercial clubs into exciting hybrid musical events. He has also composed for films, including Gus Van Sant's *The Sea of Trees* starring Matthew McConaughey and Naomi Watts.

Writer and director Gary Rydstrom has been nominated for 18 Academy Awards, winning seven for his work in film sound on films including *Jurassic Park*, *Titanic*, and *Saving Private Ryan*. As an animation director, he was nominated for an Academy Award for his Pixar short film *Lifted*, and in 2015 directed *Strange Magic*, a Lucasfilm/Disney musical that features innovative integration of music and animation.

Story artist and animator Jim Capobianco has worked on many major animated films, including *Lion King*, *Fantasia 2000*, *Finding Nemo* and *Inside Out*. He received an Academy Award nomination for Best Original Screenplay for *Ratatouille*. His love of traditional animation is evident in the imaginative end credits he created for *Wall-E*, in his Pixar short *Your Friend the Rat*, and in *Leonardo*, a hand-drawn animation that has been screened at numerous international film festivals. He also recently supervised the animation sequences for Disney's 2018 live-action feature film *Mary Poppins*.

CSO [School Concerts](#) and [Family Matinees](#), presented by the Negaunee Music Institute, engage approximately 40,000 audience members each season. These affordable and age-appropriate concerts feature the extraordinary musicians of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra to inspire the next generation of audience members and music lovers. Concerts are supplemented by preparatory curriculum, online Parent's Guides and preconcert activities. CSO School Concerts and Family Matinee programs for the 2019/20 season will take place in November 2019, March 2020 and May 2020. Inquiries about ticket reservations for the March 26 and 27 School Concert performances can be made by calling 312-294-3076 or contacting [educationconcerts@csso.org](mailto:educationconcerts@csso.org).

*World's Greatest Synth: The Making of the Orchestra* is commissioned by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra Association, Riccardo Muti, Zell Music Director; made possible through the generous support of Helen Zell.

###

---

**Chicago Symphony Orchestra**

[Saturday, March 28, 2020, 11:00 a.m. & 12:45 p.m.](#)

**Chicago Symphony Orchestra**

**Edwin Outwater**, conductor

**Gary Rydstrom**, writer, director & sound designer

**Jim Capobianco**, story & animation supervisor

**Mason Bates**, writer, music & electronica

**Program to include:**

BATES *World's Greatest Synth: The Making of the Orchestra*  
[CSO Co-Commission, World Premiere]

---

**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 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, Missy Mazzoli is Mead Composer-in-Residence, and Erina Yashima is the Sir Georg Solti Conducting Apprentice.

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 61 international tours, performing in 30 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. 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.