



CHICAGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA ASSOCIATION

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News

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MUSIC DIRECTOR RICCARDO MUTI LEADS TWO WEEKS OF SUBSCRIPTION CONCERTS AND ACTIVITIES IN FINAL CSO RESIDENCY OF THE 2018/19 SEASON

CSO Piccolo Jennifer Gunn and CSO Bass Trombone Charles Vernon are Soloists in Program that Features Piccolo Concertos by Vivaldi and Ken Benshoof and World Premiere of CSO-Commissioned Bass Trombone Concerto by Composer James Stephenson (June 13, 14 & 15)

Muti Leads the CSO and Chorus along with an All-Star Roster of Soloists in Performances of Verdi's *Aida* (June 21, 23 & 25)

JUNE 13–25, 2019

CHICAGO—Music Director Riccardo Muti returns to Chicago in June for his final residency of the 2018/19 season to lead the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (CSO) in two subscription concert programs. Muti conducts Beethoven's Symphony No. 2 and Gershwin's *An American in Paris* on a program that also features Jennifer Gunn as soloist in piccolo concertos by Vivaldi and Ken Benshoof, and Charles Vernon in the world premiere of composer James Stephenson's CSO-commissioned Bass Trombone Concerto on [Thursday, June 13, at 8:00 p.m.](#), [Friday, June 14, at 1:30 p.m.](#) and [Saturday, June 15, at 8:00 p.m.](#) The Chicago Symphony Chorus (CSC), under the direction of Duain Wolfe, joins Muti and the Orchestra and a roster of distinguished soloists for concert performances of Verdi's *Aida* on [Friday, June 21, at 8:00 p.m.](#), [Sunday, June 23, at 3:00 p.m.](#) and [Tuesday, June 25, at 7:30 p.m.](#)

During the June residency, Muti also leads a CSO rehearsal open to invited senior and community groups on June 13, and receives an award for Distinguished Service to Music Education from the Chicago West Community Music Center at the organization's 20th anniversary gala benefit on June 22. Muti will also participate in a special signing event immediately following the performance of Verdi's *Aida* on June 23. Copies of Muti's new book in Italian, *L'infinito tra le note: Il mio viaggio nella musica* (*The Infinity Between the Notes: My*

RICCARDO MUTI
Music Director

HELEN ZELL
Chair, Board of Trustees

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President

YO-YO MA
Judson and Joyce Green Creative Consultant

Journey into Music), as well as the recent CSO Resound release, *Riccardo Muti Conducts Italian Masterworks* and *A Portrait in Four Movements: The Chicago Symphony under Barenboim, Boulez, Haitink, and Muti*—the new release from University of Chicago Press chronicling the recent history of the CSO through the writings of the late critic Andrew Patner—will be available at the signing event.

In the first subscription program ([June 13, 14 & 15](#)), Muti leads a varied program that includes Beethoven's Symphony No. 2 and Gershwin's *An American in Paris*, as well as several concertos featuring CSO musicians as soloists. Jennifer Gunn is soloist in Vivaldi's Piccolo Concerto in C Major, RV 444, and the Orchestra's first performances of American composer Ken Benshoof's Concerto in Three Movements for Piccolo and Orchestra, a work that Gunn performed at its world premiere in 2016. The music of this concerto explores the colorful timbral range of the instrument, highlighting its throaty lower register as well as its characteristically shimmering upper range in movements entitled "Flowing," "Calm" and "On the move." Benshoof, a former Fulbright scholar, has an extensive body of work that includes many chamber works, among them eight scores commissioned for the Kronos Quartet.

Gunn was appointed Piccolo/Flute of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra by Daniel Barenboim in 2005. Her previous solo appearances with the Orchestra include 2008 performances of Vivaldi's Piccolo Concerto in C Major, RV 443, and most recently of Bach's *Brandenburg* Concertos Nos. 2, 4, and 5 in 2014.

This program also features Charles Vernon in the world premiere of the Bass Trombone Concerto by composer James Stephenson. The work was commissioned for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra by the Edward F. Schmidt Family Commissioning Fund, which has a distinguished legacy of supporting new works for brass. A Chicago-area native, composer and trumpeter James Stephenson dedicated the work to Charles Vernon, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Music Director Riccardo Muti.

Divided into what Stephenson describes as two "chapters," the concerto takes inspiration from the journey of life, with the bass trombone soloist serving as the protagonist. Chapter I evokes the uncertainties and joys of youth through ambling melodies and jazzy interludes. Chapter II opens with a triumphant theme, symbolizing the protagonist at the height of life, which gives way to poignant melodies that represent what the composer calls emotional "life-moments" before settling into a mood of solemn reflection in the Epilogue. In addition to being an accomplished performer, having spent 17 seasons as principal trumpet of the Naples Philharmonic, James Stephenson has developed an active career as a composer of orchestral music and specialty concertos. His music has received premieres from ensembles including the Boston, Minnesota and St. Louis symphony orchestras, among others.

Vernon was appointed Bass Trombone of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in 1986. His previous solo appearances with the Orchestra include the 1991 world premiere of Ellen Taaffe Zwilich's Concerto for Bass Trombone; the 2006 world premiere of *Chick'a'Bone Checkout*, a concerto for alto, tenor and bass trombones by trombonist and composer Christian Lindberg;

and in the 2018 world premiere of Jennifer Higdon's Low Brass Concerto, which was also performed at Carnegie Hall as part of the CSO's 2018 East Coast tour.

The 2018/19 subscription season finale program features Muti leading the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, prepared by Duain Wolfe, and a roster of international soloists in concert performances of Verdi's *Aida* ([June 21, 23 & 25](#)). These performances receive support from the Aida Patrons Circle, a group of 15 generous CSO patrons committed to this special program. One of Verdi's masterworks, *Aida* is a tragic love story set against a backdrop of war between two nations. The opera's heroine is Aida, an Ethiopian princess captured by the Egyptians. Aida and the Pharaoh's daughter Amneris are both in love with the Egyptian general Radamès, but Amneris conspires to keep Aida and Radamès apart.

Considered today's preeminent interpreter of Verdi's music, Muti most recently conducted *Aida* to wide critical acclaim at the Salzburg Festival in 2017. "Bar by bar, scene by scene, Riccardo Muti's command of Verdi's *Aida* is absolute," hailed *The Telegraph*. "He draws out details in the score that have languished unsuspected under other conductors; he clarified every line of the most complex vocal ensembles; he makes every color, every note, every pause tell." Previously during his tenure as music director, 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).

Soloists for these performances of Verdi's *Aida* include internationally renowned soprano Krassimira Stoyanova in the title role. Stoyanova, who last performed with Muti and the CSO and Chorus in critically hailed June 2018 performances of Rossini's *Stabat mater*, also delivered acclaimed performances as Aida at La Scala in 2018 and at the Metropolitan Opera in 2017. Stoyanova previously appeared with Muti and the CSO and Chorus in the 2011 performances of Verdi's *Otello*. Anita Rachvelishvili, who Muti called "without a doubt the best Verdi mezzo-soprano today on the planet," in a 2018 *New York Times* article, makes her CSO debut singing Amneris, a role she last performed at the Metropolitan Opera in September and October 2018. Tenor Francesco Meli reprises his role as Radamès, which he debuted with Muti at the Salzburg Festival performances in 2017. He has since appeared under Muti in Verdi's *Macbeth* at the Ravenna Festival in July 2018 and as soloist in Verdi's Requiem with the CSO and Muti in Tokyo during the Orchestra's 2019 Asia tour, and at Festspielhaus Baden-Baden in April 2019. Meli also previously appeared with Muti and the CSO in the 2013 performances of Verdi's *Macbeth*. Making his CSO debut as Amonasro is baritone Kiril Manolov, whose recent performances include those at the Ravenna Festival and the Teatro de la Maestranza.

Having last appeared at Symphony Center with Muti and the CSO in Verdi's Requiem in October 2013, Russian bass Ildar Abdrazakov returns to sing Ramfis. In recent seasons, Abdrazakov has made celebrated appearances at the Metropolitan Opera, La Scala, the Salzburg Festival, and the Lyric Opera of Chicago. He is also featured with the CSO and Muti in Shostakovich's *Suite of Verses of Michelangelo Buonarroti* on a 2016 CSO Resound recording. Internationally renowned bass-baritone Eric Owens returns as the King, having recently given performances in Wagner's *Götterdämmerung* at the Metropolitan Opera in April and May 2019.

Owens has appeared with Muti and the CSO on multiple occasions, including the 2011 performances of Verdi's *Otello*. Tenor Issachah Savage makes his CSO debut as the Messenger; earlier this season, Savage sang Manrico in Verdi's *Il trovatore* at the Seattle Opera in January 2019 and the title role in *Otello* at the Austin Opera in November 2018. Chicago Symphony Chorus sopranos Kimberly Gunderson and Tasha Koontz alternate in the role of the Priestess in these performances.

Following his CSO residency in May, Muti participated in a special program in Milan, Italy, to launch his new book, entitled *L'infinito tra le note: Il mio viaggio nella musica (Infinity Between the Notes: My Journey Into Music)*, which was released by the Italian publisher Solferino on May 23. Later in May, Muti traveled to northern Italy to lead the Luigi Cherubini Youth Orchestra in performances in Pavia on May 25 and 26, and in Florence on May 28 in a program that included Giovanni Paisiello's *Missa defunctorum* featuring soprano Benedetta Torre, mezzo-soprano Daniela Barcellona, tenor Giovanni Sala and bass Gianluca Buratto as soloists. On June 5, Muti and the Luigi Cherubini Youth Orchestra perform with pianist Maurizio Pollini at the Palazzo Mauro de André in Ravenna, Italy.

At the conclusion of Muti's season-finale programs in Chicago, he travels to Athens, Greece, to lead the Luigi Cherubini Youth Orchestra and Greek musicians in a July 9 performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, as part of the annual Roads of Friendship concerts, presented by the Ravenna Festival. The concert will be performed again on July 11 in Ravenna at the Palazzo Mauro de André. Other summer 2019 activities for Muti include his annual Italian Opera Academy in Ravenna, this year with sessions for young conductors and répétiteurs planned around Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*. Muti, who has maintained a close relationship with the Salzburg Festival and with its great orchestra, the Vienna Philharmonic, for more than 45 years, also returns to the Festival in August 2019 for performances of Verdi's Requiem with the Vienna Philharmonic, the Vienna State Opera Chorus and soloists including Krassimira Stoyanova, Anita Rachvelishvili, Francesco Meli and Ildar Abdrazakov.

The CSO's music director position is endowed in perpetuity by a generous gift from the Zell Family Foundation.

Bank of America is the Global Sponsor of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

United Airlines is the Official Airline of the CSO.

The Bass Trombone Concerto by James Stephenson was commissioned for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra by the Edward F. Schmidt Family Commissioning Fund.

The performances on June 13, 14 and 15 are made possible by the Juli Plant Grainger Fund for Artistic Excellence.

The performances on June 21, 23 and 25 are generously sponsored by the Zell Family Foundation, Theckla Family Fund, Randy L. and Melvin R. Berlin, Margot and Josef Lakonishok, Julie and Roger Baskes, Nancy and Sanfred Koltun, Ms. Marion A. Cameron, Mr. Daniel Fischel

and Ms. Sylvia Neil, Sue and Melvin Gray, Pamela Kelley Hull and Roger B. Hull, Sandra and Earl Rusnak, Jr., Anonymous, Jared Kaplan and Maridee Quanbeck, Chet Gougis and Shelley Ochab, and Ling Z. and Michael C. Markovitz.

The appearance of the Chicago Symphony Chorus is made possible by a generous gift from Jim and Kay Mabie.

These programs are supported in part by awards from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Illinois Arts Council Agency.

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.

Artists, programs and prices are subject to change.

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Chicago Symphony Orchestra

[Thursday, June 13, 2019, 8:00 p.m.](#)

[Friday, June 14, 2019, 1:30 p.m.](#)

[Saturday, June 15, 2019, 8:00 p.m.](#)

Chicago Symphony Orchestra

Riccardo Muti, conductor

Jennifer Gunn, piccolo

Charles Vernon, bass trombone

VIVALDI

Piccolo Concerto in C Major, RV 444

BENSHOOF

Concerto in Three Movements for
Piccolo and Orchestra

BEETHOVEN

Symphony No. 2

STEPHENSON

Bass Trombone Concerto [World
Premiere, CSO Commission]

GERSHWIN

An American in Paris

Tickets: \$52-\$244

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*

Tickets: \$57-\$319

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 more than forty-five 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. 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/>

Other Featured Artists for these Performances

[Jennifer Gunn, piccolo](#)

[Charles Vernon, bass trombone](#)

[Chicago Symphony Chorus](#)

[Duain Wolfe, chorus director](#)

[Krassimira Stoyanova, soprano \(Aida\)](#)

[Anita Rachvelishvili, mezzo-soprano \(Amneris\)](#)

[Francesco Meli, tenor \(Radamès\)](#)

[Kiril Manolov, baritone \(Amonasro\)](#)

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[Issachah Savage, tenor \(Messenger\)](#)

[Kimberly Gunderson, soprano \(The Priestess\)](#)

[Tasha Koontz, soprano \(The Priestess\)](#)

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 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. 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. 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.