CONDUCTOR JUANJO MENA RETURNS TO LEAD CSO IN PROGRAM FEATURING HOLST’S THE PLANETS

Program Also Includes Composer James Lee III’s Sukkot Through Orion’s Nebula and Soprano Sally Matthews in CSO Debut as Soloist in Two Scenes from Barber’s Antony and Cleopatra

November 21-24

CHICAGO—Conductor Juanjo Mena, Principal Conductor of the Cincinnati May Festival and Associate Conductor for the Spanish National Orchestra, returns to lead the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (CSO) in November subscription concerts at Symphony Center on Thursday, November 21, at 8:00 p.m., Saturday, November 23, at 8:00 p.m., and Sunday, November 24, at 3:00 p.m. The program includes Sukkot Through Orion’s Nebula by composer James Lee III, and two scenes from Barber’s Antony and Cleopatra—with both works receiving their first CSO performances—and Holst’s The Planets. The program is also presented on Friday, November 22, at 7:30 p.m. at Edman Memorial Chapel as part of the CSO’s annual concert series at Wheaton College. The November 22 program also features a free preconcert lecture that begins at 6:15 p.m. in Armerding Recital Hall on the Wheaton College campus.

The program opens with contemporary African American composer James Lee’s Sukkot Through Orion’s Nebula. Originally commissioned by the Sphinx Organization of Detroit, the work takes inspiration from Sukkot, the annual time of thanksgiving and harvest celebrated in the Judaic calendar after Yom Kippur, and features the festive sound of the shofar. Lee’s work also suggests the mystery of the cosmos with ethereal string passages that seem to climb ever
higher toward the stars. The program continues with two scenes from Samuel Barber’s 1966 opera *Antony and Cleopatra*—“Give me some music” and “Death of Cleopatra.” With the text of Barber’s libretto taken directly from the Shakespeare play of the same name, these dramatic episodes from the opera musically depict the fateful affair between the Egyptian queen and Roman general. The program’s references to the cosmos continue with Holst’s *The Planets*, an enduringly popular suite of seven movements depicting the astrological character and psychological influence of each planet—Mars, Venus, Mercury, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune, which features the Women of the Chicago Symphony Chorus prepared by Chorus Director Duain Wolfe. Written between 1914 and 1916, the piece received its U.S. Premiere with the CSO in 1920 under the baton of the Orchestra’s second music director Frederick Stock.

Conductor Juanjo Mena is one of Spain’s most distinguished conductors and currently holds the position of Principal Conductor of the Cincinnati May Festival as well as Associate Conductor for the Spanish National Orchestra. Mena has been a guest conductor at many of the world’s prestigious orchestras, including Berlin Philharmonic, the NHK Tokyo, the Orchestre National de France. Additionally, Mena is an active recording artist with the BBC Philharmonic. His critically acclaimed interpretation of Manuel de Falla works was named a Gramophone Editor’s Choice.

Dr. James Lee III was the winner of the Sphinx Commissioning Consortium for the 2011-2012 season, and his commissions have been premiered by some of the top orchestras in North America, including the National Symphony Orchestra at the Kennedy Center, Baltimore Symphony, Cincinnati Symphony, and the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. Lee is also an associate professor at Morgan State University in Baltimore, Maryland. Religious themes are an important element to Lee’s work, and are featured in many of his pieces.

Soprano Sally Matthews makes her CSO debut in these performances. Matthews is a regular soloist with some of the most distinguished orchestras of the world, including Philharmonia, London Symphony, Rotterdam Philharmonic, Berlin Philharmonic and Bavarian Radio Symphony. She performs regularly with BBC Proms, and most recently gave the European premiere of *Turnage Hibiki* in 2017 with the BBC Symphony Orchestra. Matthews has appeared at many of the world’s major opera houses including the Royal Opera House, Glyndebourne Festival Opera, and the Bayerischer Staatsoper.

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. CSO tickets for select program are also available through the city’s new Teen Arts Pass (TAP) program. More information available at https://teenartspass.urbangateways.org/.

Artists, programs and prices are subject to change.
The appearance of the Chicago Symphony Chorus is made possible by a generous gift from Jim and Kay Mabie.

The November 22 performance is generously sponsored by the JCS Arts, Health and Education Fund of the DuPage Foundation.

Support for the November 22 performance is also provided by Megan and Steve Shebik.

These performances are presented in collaboration with Wheaton College and the Wheaton College Artist Series.

United Airlines is the official airline of the CSO.

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Chicago Symphony Orchestra

**Thursday, November 21, 2019, 8:00 p.m.**
**Saturday, November 23, 2019, 8:00 p.m.**
**Sunday, November 24, 2019, 3:00 p.m.**

Chicago Symphony Orchestra
Juanjo Mena, conductor
Sally Matthews, soprano
Women of the Chicago Symphony Chorus
Duain Wolfe, chorus director

LEE III
* Sukkot Through Orion’s Nebula

BARBER
* Two Scenes from *Antony and Cleopatra*

HOLST
* The Planets, Op. 32

Tickets
$43-$264

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Chicago Symphony Orchestra
Wheaton College Series
Edman Memorial Chapel
401 E. Franklin St. Wheaton, IL

**Friday November 22, 2019, 7:30 p.m.**

Chicago Symphony Orchestra
Juanjo Mena, conductor
Sally Matthews, soprano
Women of the Chicago Symphony Chorus
Duain Wolfe, chorus director

LEE III
* Sukkot Through Orion’s Nebula

BARBER
* Two Scenes from *Antony and Cleopatra*

HOLST
* The Planets, Op. 32

Tickets: $60-$95
**Featured Conductor and Artists for this Performance:**
Juanjo Mena, conductor
Sally Matthews, soprano

**The Chicago Symphony Orchestra:** [cso.org](http://cso.org) and [csosoundsandstories.org](http://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. Missy Mazzoli is Mead Composer-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 61 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. 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.