MUSIC DIRECTOR RICCARDO MUTI APPOINTS JESSIE MONTGOMERY AS CSO MEAD COMPOSER-IN-RESIDENCE FOR 2021-24

CHICAGO—The Chicago Symphony Orchestra Association (CSOA) is pleased to announce the appointment of composer, violinist and educator Jessie Montgomery as its next Mead Composer-in-Residence. A winner of both the Sphinx Medal of Excellence and the ASCAP Foundation’s Leonard Bernstein Award, Montgomery has emerged as one of the most compelling and sought-after voices in new music today. Appointed by Music Director Riccardo Muti, she will begin her three-year tenure on July 1, 2021, and will continue in the role through June 30, 2024.

Described as “turbulent, wildly colorful and exploding with life” (Washington Post), Montgomery’s music includes such frequently performed works as Banner (2014), Starburst (2012) and Strum (2006; rev. 2012), which have collectively been programmed almost 500 times to date, with more than 100 live and virtual performances of Starburst in the past year alone. As Mead Composer-in-Residence, she will receive commissions to write three new orchestral works for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, one to premiere during each of her three seasons in the role. In addition, she will curate MusicNOW, the CSO’s annual contemporary music series, and will receive commissions for a number of new chamber pieces to premiere in the series’ 2022-23 and 2023-24 seasons. MusicNOW will also present the Chicago premieres of some of her existing works.

Founded in 1998, MusicNOW strives to bring Chicago audiences the widest possible range of today’s new music. As part of her work for the series, Montgomery will explore new artistic and multi-disciplinary collaborations within the Chicago community and beyond, helping to identify and evaluate composers new to the CSO, as well as nurturing its established cultural connections and partnerships. She will also collaborate with both the Negaunee Music Institute at the CSO, which oversees the orchestra’s education and community engagement activities, and the Civic Orchestra of Chicago, its premier pre-professional training ensemble.

Music Director Riccardo Muti notes: “The Chicago Symphony Orchestra has an important tradition of sharing new music with audiences. I am looking forward to continuing that tradition and introducing audiences to the music of composer Jessie Montgomery, whose work I have come to know and admire, in making this selection of the orchestra’s next composer-in-residence.”
Jessie Montgomery responds:
"It is an incredible opportunity and a tremendous honor for me to serve as the new Mead Composer-in-Residence of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. I am deeply grateful to Maestro Muti for having faith in my experience and perspective, for giving me the chance to bring new and exciting music to the CSO, and for sharing his artistry to premiere my own works for symphony orchestra. In my curatorial role, I’m particularly excited about engaging more closely with the new music community in and around Chicago, as well as bridging connections between the CSO and other artists, especially composers with diverse backgrounds, experiences and approaches to music creation. I am truly honored to contribute to the CSO’s legacy at this time in history, and I can’t wait to get started!"

Montgomery is already fast developing a presence on Chicago’s new music scene. This is thanks in part to current CSO Mead Composer-in-Residence, Missy Mazzoli, under whose curation MusicNOW featured both Montgomery’s string quartet Break Away (2013) and the world premiere of her string ensemble arrangement of Julius Eastman’s Gay Guerilla. These 2019 performances fostered a connection between Montgomery and Chicago audiences that helped inspire the CSO’s continued commitment to her music. The present season has already seen virtual performances of Starburst by the Civic Orchestra of Chicago and of Strum by a quintet of CSO musicians. Next, on May 20, Montgomery looks forward to joining Mazzoli online for “From the Composer’s Studio,” a livestreamed conversation hosted by the CSO about what it means to be a composer working with symphony orchestras in 2021. The webinar will be followed by a Q&A and is free and open to the public. Advance reservation is required, and more information is available here. Click here to see members of the CSO perform an excerpt from Montgomery’s Strum for string quintet.

About Jessie Montgomery
Jessie Montgomery’s growing body of work includes solo, chamber, vocal and orchestral pieces, commissioned by such organizations as the Albany Symphony, American Music Festival, Chicago Sinfonietta, Joyce Foundation, National Symphony Orchestra, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, Sphinx Organization, Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, St. Louis Symphony Orchestra and Young People’s Chorus of New York. The first recording devoted to her music, Strum: Music for Strings, was released by Azica Records in 2015.

Montgomery looks forward to a number of important premieres this summer. Set to her chamber music and including new arrangements of works written with her duo partner Eleonore Oppenheim, I was waiting for the echo of a better day – a major new dance collaboration with choreographer Pam Tanowitz – receives its world premiere at New York’s Bard SummerScape festival in July. American vocalist Julia Bullock premieres Montgomery’s Five Freedom Songs at Idaho’s Sun Valley Music Festival and Wyoming’s Grand Teton Music Festival, before reprising it with orchestras including the San Francisco and Boston Symphonies. Summer also brings the virtual premiere of Montgomery’s Flute Quartet (title TBD), commissioned by the National Flute Association for its annual convention, and the first performance of a new commission from Chicago’s Grant Park Music Festival.

Beyond the launch of her CSO residency, Montgomery’s 2021-22 highlights include the world premieres of Because – a collaboration with children’s author and Kennedy Center Education Artist-in-Residence Mo Willems – by the National Symphony Orchestra, and of her Piano Concerto – an Art of the Piano Foundation commission – by pianist Awadagin Pratt, who will perform the work with orchestras including the Baltimore Symphony and record it with A Far Cry ensemble. Other current commissions include a
percussion quartet for the Indianapolis Percussive Arts Society (PAS), slated to premiere at next year’s PAS International Convention; a cello concerto for Thomas Mesa, jointly commissioned by Carnegie Hall, the New World Symphony and the Sphinx Organization; the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra’s premiere of *Shift, Change, Turn* (2019), a co-commission with Orpheus Chamber Orchestra; an orchestral piece for a consortium led by the Dallas Symphony Orchestra; and *I Have Something To Say*, a large-scale work for the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra and Cathedral Choral Society of Washington, DC. Montgomery was also selected by the New York Philharmonic as a featured composer for Project 19, celebrating the centennial of the 19th Amendment, which granted equal voting rights to U.S. women.

“One of the most powerful advocates at work today for diversity in the arts” (*Strings* magazine), Montgomery is a member of the Recording Academy’s new Black Music Collective and was one of three Black composers chosen to join the Metropolitan Opera’s collaborative commissioning program with Lincoln Center Theater. Since 1999, she has been affiliated with the Sphinx Organization, which supports young African-American and Latinx string players, and has served as composer-in-residence for its flagship professional touring ensemble, the Sphinx Virtuosi.

Similarly dedicated to her work as a violinist, educator and curator, she regularly appears with the Silkroad Ensemble, Sphinx Virtuosi and, with Eleonore Oppenheim, as the string duo big dog little dog, besides being a former member of the Catalyst Quartet and a founding member of PUBLIQuartet. A professor of violin and composition at New York’s Mannes School of Music at The New School, she also undertook a recent educational residency at Dance Theater of Harlem. She is presently curating two multimedia programs, one in collaboration with mezzo-soprano Isabel Leonard, in the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra’s “Close Quarters” streaming series.

Montgomery has previously undertaken residencies at Florida’s Hermitage Artist Retreat, New Hampshire’s Avaloch Farm Music Institute and the Banff Centre for the Arts. Her other appointments include the 2021 and 2018 Toulmin Fellowship at New York University’s Center for Ballet and the Arts, the 2020 Dumbarton Oaks Musician Fellowship, and 2015-16 Composer-in-Residence of the Albany Symphony. She has been recognized with grants and awards from the American Composers Orchestra, ASCAP Foundation, Chamber Music America, Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Joyce Foundation and Sorel Organization. Currently a Graduate Fellow in Music Composition at Princeton University, she holds degrees from New York University and the Juilliard School.

**About the CSO’s Mead Composer-in-Residence**
The Chicago Symphony Orchestra’s first Composer-in-Residence was John Corigliano, appointed by Sir Georg Solti in 1987. Corigliano was succeeded three years later by Shulamit Ran, who held the post until 1997, when Daniel Barenboim appointed Augusta Read Thomas. In 2002, the position was endowed by CSOA Trustee Cynthia Sargent and Governing Member Sally Mead Hands, after which Thomas continued her tenure as Mead Composer-in-Residence until 2006. Then Osvaldo Golijov and Mark-Anthony Turnage shared the post until 2010, when Riccardo Muti appointed Mason Bates and Anna Clyne. They concluded their tenure in 2015, when Muti appointed Samuel Adams and Elizabeth Ogonek, succeeded two years later by Missy Mazzoli, whose tenure concludes in June 2021.

Click [here](#) for high-resolution photos and more.

The Chicago Symphony Orchestra’s music director position is endowed in perpetuity by a generous gift from the Zell Family Foundation.
The Mead Composer-in-Residence at the Chicago Symphony Orchestra is endowed through a generous gift from Cindy Sargent and the late Sally Mead Hands.

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Chicago Symphony Orchestra: cso.org and experience.cso.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 63 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 63 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 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 (Ken-David Masur, Principal Conductor), 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.