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ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-SIXTH SEASON

Chicago Symphony Orchestra
Riccardo Muti Zell Music Director
Yo-Yo Ma Judson and Joyce Green Creative Consultant

Thursday, June 15, 2017, at 8:00
Friday, June 16, 2017, at 8:00
Saturday, June 17, 2017, at 8:00

Susanna Mälkki Conductor
Branford Marsalis Saxophones

Bizet
Symphony in C Major
Allegro vivo
Adagio
Allegro vivace
Allegro vivace

Fauré
Pavane, Op. 50

BRANFORD MARSALIS, Soprano Saxophone

Williams
Escapades FROM Catch Me If You Can
Closing In
Reflections
Joy Ride

BRANFORD MARSALIS, Alto Saxophone
Robert Kassinger, bass
Cynthia Yeh, vibraphone

INTERMISSION

M. Wagner
Proceed, Moon
World premiere. Chicago Symphony Orchestra commission

Debussy
Ibéria FROM Images for Orchestra
In the Streets and Byways
The Fragrances of Night—
Morning of a Festival Day

These concerts are generously sponsored by BMO Harris Bank.
The Chicago Symphony Orchestra is grateful to 93XRT FM for its generous support as media sponsor of the Classic Encounter series.
This program is partially supported by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council Agency.
Georges Bizet  
Born October 25, 1838; Paris, France  
Died June 3, 1875; Bougival, near Paris, France

Symphony in C Major

This now-famous symphony by Georges Bizet, never performed during the composer’s lifetime, waited eighty years for its premiere. Reynaldo Hahn, a close friend (and lover) of Marcel Proust and a composer of operettas and charming, though slight songs, owned the manuscript for years, but didn’t consider it worthy of attention. It had been given to him, along with several other of Bizet’s manuscripts, by the composer’s widow Geneviève, who evidently exceeded Hahn in her lack of appreciation for her husband’s music. In 1933, Hahn donated his Bizet scores to the Paris Conservatory, without offering the least hint that they included one of music’s little miracles—this delightful Symphony in C major composed by a precocious seventeen-year-old. More than eighty years later, it is Bizet’s symphony that has found a secure place in the repertoire, while Hahn’s works are rarely performed.

Georges Bizet was a remarkable young talent. He was admitted to the Paris Conservatory two weeks before his tenth birthday and won the first of many prizes only six months later. (Over the years, he was given prizes—several of them first-place awards—in solfeggio, piano, organ, and fugue; his piano playing, in particular, won the praise of Liszt and Berlioz.) Bizet began to study counterpoint with Pierre Zimmerman, a distinguished teacher near retirement age, whose main contribution to his student’s development may have been his frequent absences from the classroom, when his substitute was Charles Gounod, then on the verge of international fame. (Gounod was married to Zimmerman’s daughter Anna.) Gounod quickly recognized Bizet’s exceptional gifts and asked him to assist with various musical projects, and, in 1855, to make a piano-duet version of his new First Symphony. It is surely no coincidence that later that year Bizet decided to write his own.

Bizet began his symphony on October 29, 1855, just four days after his seventeenth birthday. Perhaps because the model of Gounod’s score was still in his mind, Bizet worked with apparent ease and speed, finishing the work in less than a month. But despite the brilliance of this first effort, Bizet was not destined to be a symphonic composer. He began and abandoned a new symphony twice after winning the Prix de Rome in 1857. Another symphony, begun in 1860, occupied him on and off for eight years before he finally introduced it as an orchestral suite entitled Roma. (It originally was planned as a symphonic tour of Italy, with separate movements for Rome, Venice, Florence, and Naples.)

But in the 1860s, Bizet found his true calling. The Pearl Fishers, which was premiered in 1863, was not a success with the public or the critics (except for the invariably perceptive Berlioz), but...
it is the work of a born opera composer, overflowing with the promise that would ultimately be fulfilled in his final work, Carmen. Bizet didn’t live to see Carmen acclaimed as one of the true classics of music theater. He fell ill shortly after the premiere and died the night of the thirty-third performance. (That night, the Carmen, Célestine Galli-Marié, is said to have been so overcome with premonition in the scene where she reads death in the cards that she fainted while leaving the stage.) Although it wasn’t an immediate hit, Carmen soon found many admirers, including Brahms, who went to see the opera twenty times in 1876 alone, and Nietzsche, who thought it the ideal antidote to Wagner mania. (Wagner himself dismissed it as “much tastelessness,” according to his wife Cosima.) Eventually Carmen’s overwhelming popularity substantially elevated Bizet’s posthumous status, although he unfairly became known as a one-work composer in the process.

In 1933, Jean Chantevoine, a respected Beethoven scholar, inventoried the Bizet holdings at the Paris Conservatory and uncovered the Symphony in C major. Initially no one showed any interest in the work—a popular opera composer’s student symphony—until D.C. Parker, who had recently published the first English biography of Bizet, brought it to the attention of the influential conductor Felix Weingartner. Weingartner immediately grasped the significance of the discovery and arranged to give the premiere in Basel in 1935. The symphony quickly became an audience favorite, and, in Balanchine’s brilliant 1947 choreography, one of the most performed of all ballet scores. (Balanchine introduced it as Le palais de cristal [The crystal palace], and later called it simply Symphony in C.)

Although Bizet may well have withheld his score because of its obvious indebtedness to Gounod’s First Symphony, he apparently failed to recognize how superior it is to its model in every respect. Gounod’s own models were those of Haydn and Beethoven’s early symphonies, and Bizet’s score inevitably recalls the clarity and grace of high classicism. But there is nothing in any of these predecessors to match the youthful freshness and melodic charm of Bizet’s work. Each of the fast movements—a spirited opener in sonata form, a breezy third-movement scherzo, and the light-footed finale—spills over with original ideas, handled with unassuming confidence and verve. The slow movement, with a fugal episode straight out of Gounod, contains a beautifully sinuous oboe solo that Carmen might well envy.

Even in the work of a seventeen-year-old, writing his first major orchestral score, we can detect the fine ear for color and rhythmic élan that later distinguishes virtually every page of Carmen. Tchaikovsky’s admiring verdict of that opera could as easily apply here: “The music has no pretensions to profundity, but it is so charming in its simplicity, so vigorous, not contrived but instead sincere . . . .” Bizet’s career cannot be compared to those of the other, more famous teenage composers—Mozart, Schubert, and Mendelssohn, who all also died young—but as the work of an exceptionally gifted young man, this first symphony has rarely been surpassed.
Gabriel Fauré
Born May 12, 1845; Pamiers, Ariège, France
Died November 4, 1924; Passy (a suburb of Paris), France

Pavane, Op. 50

A version of Gabriel Fauré turns up in Proust’s In Search of Lost Time as Vinteuil, the composer of a violin sonata so evocative that, like the author’s famous madeleine cakes dipped in tea, it can unlock potent memories. (Proust confessed he was “intoxicated” by Fauré’s music.) The real Fauré knew his way around the world of Parisian high society that Proust would record so memorably; his good looks and flawless manners made him a much-desired guest in the salons Proust himself frequented.

Fauré’s early love for music was first noticed by an old blind woman who listened to him play the harmonium in the church next door every day after school. At the age of nine, he was sent to the École Niedermeyer in Paris, an institute that specialized in sacred music. When Saint-Saëns arrived to teach piano seven years later, Fauré found both a mentor and a soul mate. Saint-Saëns introduced him to contemporary music, particularly the scores of Liszt and Wagner, and encouraged his own writing. They remained close friends until Saint-Saëns’s death in 1921. Eventually, Fauré himself would become an important teacher, his students including Nadia Boulanger and Maurice Ravel (who recalled that Fauré often arrived as much as forty-five minutes late for class).

The Pavane, op. 50 is a perfect specimen of Fauré’s special talent. Its essence is no more than an eloquent, sinuous—and unforgettable—melody over a gentle, plucked accompaniment. The composer said it was “elegant, but not otherwise important,” pinpointing the very quality that has led critics to underestimate the enduring value and quiet strength of his music. (In 1924, Aaron Copland wrote an article defending him as “a neglected master.”) The pavane was originally conceived for chorus and orchestra—the text was by Robert de Montesquiou, who was thought to be the model for the Baron du Charlus in Proust’s great novel—but the vocal parts are optional, and it is often played by orchestra.

Above: Fauré, photographed in 1887, Guille & Nievsky

COMPOSED
1887

FIRST PERFORMANCE
date unknown

INSTRUMENTATION
soprano saxophone, two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, strings.

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME
6 minutes

FIRST CSO PERFORMANCES
December 31, 1994, Orchestra Hall. Bobby McFerrin as soloist and conductor

July 27, 2002, Ravinia Festival. James Galway as soloist, Andrew Litton conducting

These are the Chicago Symphony Orchestra’s first subscription concert performances.
alone; Fauré himself also arranged it for chorus with piano accompaniment, and for solo piano (Fauré made a piano roll of this version early in the twentieth century). Since Fauré’s time, there have been many other arrangements—Bobby McFerrin has sung it; it is sampled in Little Mix’s “Little Me”—including this week’s adaptation of the original score for soprano saxophone and orchestra. To describe Fauré’s pavane, one can do no better than to quote the words Nadia Boulanger wrote as a tribute to her teacher in 1922: “His music is inwardly moving; without pose, vain exclamations, or outcry, it ponders, loves, and suffers.”

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**John Williams**  
Born February 8, 1932; New York, New York

**Escapades for Alto Saxophone and Orchestra**  
FROM *Catch Me If You Can*

For a composer who never expected to end up writing film scores, John Williams has won a position of unrivaled prominence—over the span of more than half a century—composing the music for many of our most popular and widely acclaimed films. He has received fifty Academy Award nominations—essentially one for every year he’s been in the business—and he has taken home five statuettes. (Some years he has even been nominated for more than one score; in 1977, when the music for *Star Wars* won out over *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, he lost to himself.) He has had a forty-year partnership with Steven Spielberg; he’s been an integral part of the blockbuster serial *Star Wars*, *Indiana Jones*, and *Harry Potter* packages; and his is the music that will always be linked in our minds with some of cinema’s greatest heroes—Indiana Jones, Luke Skywalker, E.T., and Oskar Schindler.

All by himself, Williams has written a chapter in film music to rival Hollywood’s golden age—a glorious two decades beginning in the mid-1930s—when the most successful motion picture composers were nearly all classically trained: Erich Korngold, Miklós Rózsa, Max Steiner, Alfred Newman (singer-songwriter Randy is his nephew), and Bernard Herrmann. Williams, in fact, got his introduction to the medium working as a pianist and arranger with Rózsa, Newman, and Herrmann, and his scores are, to a great extent, the logical outgrowth of theirs.

The range of Williams’s output has always been remarkable—think of the brassy swagger of the *Star Wars* theme, the heartbreaking lament from *Schindler’s List*, the soaring melody of E.T.’s flight. But even so, his score for *Catch Me If You Can*, Spielberg’s delicious caper starring Leonardo DiCaprio came as something of a surprise—Williams’s music mingling perfectly with the familiar sounds of Frank Sinatra, Stan Getz, and Dusty Springfield. Reviewing the film for *The New York Times*, Stephen Holden said that Williams’s “uncharacteristically jaunty,
saxophone-flavored score” ideally captured the film’s “spirit of frisky devil-may-care merriment.”

**John Williams on Catch Me If You Can**

The 2002 film *Catch Me If You Can* constituted a delightful departure for director Steven Spielberg. It tells the story of Frank Abagnale, the teenaged imposter, who baffled FBI agents with his incredible exploits. The film is set in the now nostalgically tinged 1960s, and so it seemed to me that I might evoke the atmosphere of that time by writing a saxophone-flavored score” ideally captured the film’s “spirit of frisky devil-may-care merriment.”

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**Melinda Wagner**

Born February 25, 1957; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

**Proceed, Moon, Fantasy for Orchestra**

It has now been nearly a quarter century since Melinda Wagner was introduced to Chicago Symphony Orchestra audiences with the world premiere performance of *Falling Angels*, which had been commissioned by the Orchestra. The Chicago Symphony’s faith in a young, little-known composer was not misplaced; in 1999 she was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for her Concerto for Flute, Strings, and Percussion, and performances of her music quickly began to proliferate. Another CSO premiere soon followed—*Extremity of Sky*, a piano concerto that grew out of the Prince Prize that was jointly awarded to Wagner and the Orchestra. (It was performed here in 2003.) And now with *Proceed, Moon*, the Orchestra is, for the third time, introducing one of Wagner’s major orchestral scores.

“A lot of life has happened since I composed *Falling Angels*, Wagner says today, “and my sensibilities have changed quite a bit.” She has grown as a creative artist during a time, as she points out, when composers have access to so much richly diverse music from so many places. “My own musical ‘toolbox’ has therefore become bigger,” she says, “and I have a greater sense of freedom stylistically.” And yet the anchor of Wagner’s outlook remains much the same—an emphasis on telling a purely musical story (“my strong suit is narrative,” she recently told an interviewer) with no hint of programmatic intent. “Music is never really about things that can be described with words,” she said when she wrote *Falling Angels*. “Music just is.” And that has

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**INSTRUMENTATION**

three flutes and piccolo, three oboes and english horn, two clarinets and bass clarinet, two bassoons and contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones and tuba, timpani, percussion (vibraphone, triangles, suspended cymbals, tambourine, bongo, tom-toms, glass wind chimes, glockenspiel, bass drum, hi-hat cymbals, bell-tree, finger cymbal, wrist/ankle bells, rute, claves, xylophone, crotale, wind gong, temple blocks, woodblocks, maraca, marimbas, chimes, tam-tam, crash cymbals), harp, piano, celesta, strings |

**APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME**

18 minutes
remained the case even though *Extremity of Sky* was composed in the shadow of September 11, 2001—she was at work on the second movement of the concerto at the time; she and her family could see smoke rising above Manhattan from a ridge in their New Jersey hometown—and her new score, *Proceed, Moon*, pays homage to the death of her mother. With *Extremity of Sky*, for the first time Wagner realized that she was composing “while thinking about something on the earth,” and the relationship between music and life grew subtly more complicated.

Wagner has always wanted listeners “to hear that while I enjoy the cerebral exercise, I am led principally by my ear and my heart.” As a result, her music is instinctive and surprisingly personal (“it’s as much a part of me as my brown eyes, my dislike of liver and marzipan, and my love of potato chips,” she recently said). Melody has always been the gateway, as she calls it, to her approach to writing music. Wagner was raised on the standard repertoire—Bach, Mozart, Beethoven—and those composers remain her benchmark, in a sense—a model of music that is about nothing but music, a narrative of ideas about sheer sound. She still regularly returns to Bach, for example, “because all of the drama and beauty and excitement and angst in that music is built into the notes.”

Wagner has always been attracted most of all by writing for orchestra, which she admits is the toughest kind of project and takes the longest. Wagner’s love of orchestral music, and of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in particular, goes back to her days as a student at the University of Chicago, where she worked with Shulamit Ran—the Orchestra’s composer-in-residence from 1990 until 1997—and Ralph Shapey. (She also studied at the University of Pennsylvania, where her teachers included Richard Wernick and George Crumb.) “I think it’s because of the sheer magnitude of the ensemble that it’s so rewarding to compose for orchestra,” she says. For years, Wagner has tacked the pages of her big orchestral scores to the wall or laid them out on the floor, so that she can get a bird’s-eye view of the work while it is still in progress, moving through the piece page by page to judge the narrative flow or the effect of the big gestures.

“I still walk through my music, conducting as I go along,” she says. “*Proceed, Moon* took up a lot of room in my house! Working this way enables me to see/hear the big picture (no scrolling), and allows me to use location (the window, the corner . . .) as a mnemonic. I also imagine I’m hearing the work in the concert hall.”

For Wagner, pieces tend to “reveal” themselves to her about one third of the way in. The ultimate form that *Proceed Moon* took is a fantasy, a free unfolding of ideas. “Every piece surprises me,” Wagner says, “and I didn’t plan to compose a fantasy—that’s just what came out.” Titles normally suggest themselves to Wagner only at the end of composition; they are reflective rather than generative. *Extremity of Sky* was drawn from Shakespeare’s *King Lear* (after Wagner had finished that score, she realized that Shakespeare’s image captured the unimaginable atmosphere the year she was composing the concerto). As Wagner explains, the title for *Proceed, Moon*, too, comes from Shakespeare.

**Melinda Wagner on *Proceed, Moon***

In finding a name for my new work, I borrowed a tiny snippet of text from Shakespeare’s *Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Although the phrase, “proceed, moon” is merely incidental in its context—hardly even a line—it brought to mind a kind of fantastical directive; I imagined the moon being nudged, by some unearthly, authoritative being, to proceed along its prescribed path. While there is no other intended connection to Shakespeare’s tale of wood fairies, Puck, and love gone awry (indeed, I did not attempt to portray any extramusical character or story), my piece shares with it, nonetheless, an element of fantasy that is played out through the passage of musical time. Nearing the completion of the score, I came to regard *Proceed, Moon* as a kind of abstract figure, a friend perhaps, traversing the landscape of a vivid, eventful dream. From the echoing fanfare heard at the outset, my figure encounters a quick succession of dramas, intrigues, skirmishes, and interruptions; then, as the music fades, its life simply evaporates. As I began to think about how I might describe this work, I could not help but notice that it almost reflects the peculiar way life seems to come at us these days, as if joys, sorrows—and news—are all tumbling over themselves in relentless somersaults.
Debussy spent only a single afternoon in Spain. He went to San Sebastián, just over the French border, to catch a bullfight, and was back in Saint-Jean-de-Luz in time for bed.

But Debussy was haunted by the spirit of the place—“a country where the roadside stones burn one’s eyes with their brilliant light, where the mule drivers sing so passionately from the depths of their hearts,” as he later wrote. He loved to play the piano works by Manuel de Falla and Isaac Albéniz (who lived in Paris off and on after 1893, and with whom he became friendly). In 1903, Debussy wrote his first Spanish piece, Night in Granada for Piano, which Falla found to be “nothing less than miraculous when one reflects that this music was written by a foreigner guided almost entirely by his visionary genius.”

Debussy’s greatest achievement evoking a Spain he scarcely knew (“truth without authenticity,” as Falla put it) is the second of the three Images for Orchestra. These national landscapes, depicting France, Spain, and England, were conceived for piano, four-hands (or for two pianos), and Debussy originally thought of them as independent works. Ibéria, ultimately published

Above: Debussy, photographed by Félix Nadar in 1908

Finally, in the wake of my mother’s recent passing, I will admit that the experience of composing Proceed, Moon was laced with a deep sense of nostalgia and sadness. And so I allowed myself the indulgence of including an excerpt from a 1965 recording of the Swarthmore Elementary School Choir, conducted for many years by Bettejo Wagner. She was a wonderful music teacher, and the children’s soaring rendition of Handel’s “Where E’er You Walk” from the opera Semele is executed with such abandon and confidence! I have always found it to be quite marvelous. (I am indebted to Eric Chasalow for helping me to modify the recording for this performance.)

Proceed, Moon was composed for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in 2016, with love. I am so very grateful for having had, over the years, the opportunity to create music for this wonderful ensemble. It has been an incredible honor, and I have found it enormously gratifying to collaborate with such incomparable artists. Thank you.
Phillip Huscher has been the program annotator for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra since 1987.

as the central panel of the travelogue, was the first of the pieces to be composed.

Ibéria itself is a triptych, with two richly detailed and vigorous movements (the first set against a snappy, virtually ever-present rhythm) framing a voluptuously textured nocturne. All three are remarkably vivid and suggestive, without ever succumbing to tone painting. Debussy himself saw a watermelon vendor and heard children whistling in the third piece, though he truly grasped its essential quality when he remarked that “it sounds like music that has not been written down—the whole feeling of rising, of people and nature waking.”

Maurice Ravel (along with a number of composers including Stravinsky) was present at the premiere of Ibéria in 1910, and he was moved to tears by “this novel, delicate, harmonic beauty, this profound musical sensitiveness.” Falla felt that Debussy had perfectly recreated his afternoon in San Sebastián—“the light in the bullring, particularly the violent contrast between the one half of the ring flooded with sunlight and the other half deep in shade.” But Debussy’s accomplishment, despite the clarity of his memory and his powers of evocation, lies much deeper, in the substance of the music itself.

Debussy makes free use of local color, calling for tambourine and castanets, and borrowing the rhythms and melodic ideas of Spanish folk music. But his imaginative and thoroughly individual treatment of the material recalls what he himself said of Albéniz: “He does not exactly quote folk tunes, but he is so imbued with them and has heard so many that they have passed into his music and become impossible to distinguish from his own inventions.” The middle movement, suggesting the sensuousness of a southern night, is the most subtly Spanish of the three pieces, with its fluid melodies freely unfolding over a languid habanera rhythm. (Pierre Boulez referred to it as a “superior, polished kind of improvisation.”) Debussy himself was particularly proud of the way he moves from that music to the third movement, allowing the sounds of the day gradually to overtake the night.

Detail of the title page of a first-edition score to Debussy’s Ibéria used by Frederick Stock for the Orchestra’s first performances in 1911 and also by Fritz Reiner for the 1957 RCA recording