

ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-EIGHTH SEASON

Chicago Symphony Orchestra

Riccardo Muti Zell Music Director

Yo-Yo Ma Judson and Joyce Green Creative Consultant

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Tuesday, March 19, 2019, at 7:00
South Shore Cultural Center

All-Access Chamber Music Series

THE WABASH AVENUE MUSIC COLLECTIVE

Rong-Yan Tang Violin

Max Raimi Viola

Karen Basrak Cello

Emma Gerstein Flute

Daniel Paul Horn Piano

MOZART

Variations on “Ah vous dirai-je, maman” (arr. Raimi)

RONG-YAN TANG

MAX RAIMI

KAREN BASRAK

MOZART

Flute Quartet in D Major, K. 285

Allegro

Adagio

Rondo

RONG-YAN TANG

MAX RAIMI

KAREN BASRAK

EMMA GERSTEIN

RAIMI

“Havenu Sholem Aleichem”: Variations and Theme

RONG-YAN TANG

MAX RAIMI

KAREN BASRAK

EMMA GERSTEIN

DANIEL PAUL HORN

INTERMISSION

MENDELSSOHN

Piano Quartet No. 3 in B Minor, Op. 3

Allegro molto—Più allegro

Andante

Allegro molto

Finale: Allegro vivace

RONG-YAN TANG

MAX RAIMI

KAREN BASRAK

DANIEL PAUL HORN

The All-Access Chamber Music series is generously underwritten by an anonymous donor, who attended similar concerts forty-five years ago.

WOLFGANG MOZART

Born January 27, 1756; Salzburg, Austria

Died December 5, 1791; Vienna, Austria

Variations on “Ah vous dirai-je, maman” (Arranged by Max Raimi)



COMPOSED
1781

A musical icon, the tune for “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star” first appeared in print in *Les amusements d’une heure* (An hour’s amusements), published in Paris

in 1761 under the title “Ah vous dirai-je, maman” (“Ah shall I tell you, mother”). The source of the tune is unknown (the *Neue Mozart Ausgabe* calls it anonymous), but it is one of the family of melodies that probably dates back to the Middle Ages. The familiar English text, entitled *The Star*, was written by a British children’s poet and published (without music) in London in 1806 in *Rhymes for the Nursery*. Mozart probably became acquainted with “Ah vous dirai-je, maman” during his unsuccessful job-hunting trip to Paris in 1778, when he composed variations on two other French themes: “Je suis Lindor,” K. 354 and “Lison dormait,” K. 264. The composer’s twelve variations on “Ah vous dirai-je, maman” were not composed until after he had settled in Vienna in 1781, however. Though their style and progressively increasing technical demands indicate that they were probably written for his students, Mozart used his matchless creative alchemy to conjure touching and timeless feelings and memories of childhood from the music.

—Richard E. Rodda

Max Raimi on his Variations on “Ah vous dirai-je, maman”

More than twenty years ago, I played in a string trio that was preparing Dmitry Sitkovetsky’s brilliant arrangement of Bach’s *Goldberg Variations*. There was a problem with the program length; we didn’t have quite enough music and needed about ten more minutes. I happened to be in my car one day as Chicago’s classical radio station played a recording of a set of variations for piano that Mozart wrote on the melody we know as “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star.” I realized that Mozart consistently utilized textures that could be executed with great success by a violin, viola, and cello. Indeed, some of the most beautiful writing featured three distinct melodic lines sounding simultaneously . . . and the piece was about ten minutes long! I spent some very happy hours rewriting Mozart’s charming variations for string trio and found that, surprisingly, few alterations were required to make it work. I kept almost every note of the original. It served as an excellent companion piece to Bach’s *Goldberg Variations*, but I like to think it can work on concerts that don’t feature Bach’s masterpiece as well. ■

WOLFGANG MOZART

Quartet for Flute and Strings in D Major, K. 285



COMPOSED

1777

During his stay in Mannheim at the end of 1777, Mozart met a Dutch surgeon named Ferdinand Dejean, “a gentleman of means and a lover of all the sciences.” Dejean

numbered among his accomplishments a certain ability on the flute, and had heard of the twenty-one-year-old musician’s extraordinary talent from a mutual friend. Dejean commissioned Mozart to write three flute concertos and at least three quartets for flute and strings, and since he was, as always, short of money, Mozart accepted the proposal. The next leg of his travels would take him from Mannheim to Paris in search of permanent employment, and the flute pieces could help pay the bills. Mozart could not generate much enthusiasm for the project. He was flustered over a love affair recently hatched with a local singer, and letters from his father in Salzburg persistently badgered him about his lack of dependable income. Most of all, however, the flute works took time that he wanted to spend composing opera, the most alluring avenue to success for an eighteenth-century musician. He vented his frustration on the closest target—the flute—and expressed what drudgery it was to have to write for an instrument for which he cared so little. Still, Mozart was too full of pride and good taste to make hack work of these pieces, and he wrote to Papa Leopold, “. . . such a thing as this goes out

into the world, so it is my wish that I need not be ashamed that it carries my name.” By the time he left Mannheim, Mozart had managed to finish three quartets and two concertos. He settled with Dejean for just less than half of the original fee, and let it go at that. Despite his disparagement of the instrument, Mozart’s compositions for flute occupy one of the most delightful niches of his incomparable musical legacy. Musicologist Rudolf Gerber characterized them as combining “the perfect image of the spirit and feeling of the rococo age with German sentiment.”

The D-major quartet opens with a crystalline sonata-form movement that the flute initiates with the presentation of a dashing principal melody. By the time the music has arrived at the second theme, a rising scalar configuration in triplet rhythms, it is clear that Mozart has endowed the flute with concerto-like prominence in this movement. Only in the central development section does it relinquish its leadership in favor of some more democratic motivic discussion with its companions. The Adagio is a nocturnal cantilena for the flute couched upon a delicate cushion of plucked string sonorities. In his biography of the composer, Alfred Einstein wrote that this movement, suffused with “the sweetest melancholy, [is] perhaps the most beautiful accompanied flute solo that has even been written.” This irresistible quartet closes with a buoyant rondo enlivened by frequent dialogues of flute and first violin. ■

—Richard E. Rodda

MAX RAIMI

Born June 21, 1956; Detroit, Michigan

“Havenu Sholem Aleichem”: Variations and Theme**COMPOSED**
2018

When I was a child, we would gather at my paternal grandparents' home almost every Friday night to celebrate the Jewish Sabbath.

My grandparents were not particularly religious, but they felt profound nostalgia for the food, songs of their childhood, and the Polish shtetl where they had grown up (I should perhaps point out that they harbored no such nostalgia for the anti-Semitism, poverty, and limited opportunity they had left behind). We celebrated with traditional *Shabbos* foods, recited the ancient prayers, and sang the songs they had brought with them from a bygone world. There is great power in the experience of singing while surrounded by people you love, and I often think that these early musical memories pointed the way for me to make a career in music. When Miles Hoffman commissioned me to write a set of variations for the American Chamber Players,

I decided that I would use one of the melodies that I have been singing practically since I was born, “Havenu Sholem Aleichem,” which is Hebrew for “We bring you peace.” My technique in writing variations is unorthodox. I don’t follow the melodic line or the harmonies that provide the song’s structure in any remotely systematic way. Rather, I take the different ideas that create the melody and treat them almost like Lego blocks; I deconstruct them, use them as a point of departure for musical development, and put them back together in a different order. This set of variations is also idiosyncratic in that it takes the traditional variation procedure and reverses the order of things. Instead of beginning with the theme, I save it for the end. The statement of the “Havenu Sholem Aleichem” melody is the culmination of all the variations, not the starting point. It is almost as if one were to try to put together an Ikea bookshelf, and only afterwards were allowed to look at the directions—except, I very much hope, somewhat more enjoyable. ■

—Max Raimi

FELIX MENDELSSOHN

Born February 3, 1809; Hamburg, Germany

Died November 4, 1847; Leipzig, Germany

Quartet for Violin, Viola, Cello, and Piano No. 3 in B Minor, Op. 3**COMPOSED**
1825

If one were to conduct a scientific experiment with the intention of creating the ultimate musical child prodigy, it would be difficult to improve upon the conditions

that brought us Felix Mendelssohn. A brilliant

young man, he acquired knowledge and a variety of skills—which included painting and writing—with almost supernatural ease. But his genius was just the beginning; Mendelssohn combined extraordinary talent with extraordinarily fortunate circumstances. His family was wealthy, extremely cultured, and perfectly situated in Berlin during a time when the arts were enjoying a remarkable flowering in central Europe. His grandfather Moses was a celebrated philosopher and arguably

as important in Jewish cultural history as was his grandson in the pantheon of classical music. Felix's father Abraham was an extremely successful banker, and the family bank that was his life's work thrived for more than a century until the Nazis liquidated it in 1938. Abraham also was a passionate amateur musician and helped to establish the Sing-Akademie zu Berlin, a prominent choral society. Felix was taught from an early age by some of the finest musicians in Europe, and had access to a well-rounded liberal arts education that would be hard to surpass; among his childhood mentors was Goethe.

Indeed, it is to Goethe that the B minor piano quartet is dedicated. Composed when Mendelssohn was fifteen years old, it is probably his first true masterpiece, though it has since been overshadowed by two subsequent products of his teenage years: his String Octet and *Midsummer Night's Dream* Overture. The first movement of the Piano Quartet in B minor seethes and broods, yet manages to maintain a light touch and gorgeous lyrical quality. Like Mozart, Mendelssohn seemed incapable of writing a phrase that does not sing. This movement supports Schumann's famous declaration that Mendelssohn was "the Mozart of the nineteenth century, the most brilliant musician, the first to reconcile the contradictions of this period." Whereas Mozart's early works are remarkable for having been composed by one so young, the teenage Mendelssohn wrote works that would have been remarkable for a composer of any age. Mendelssohn increases the tempo in the central section, which lends a new urgency and intensity to the musical ideas already heard. Though the Andante is considered a slow movement, it moves with appealing grace. This forward motion—even in slow movements—came to be a specialty of Mendelssohn's over the course of his career. Many have expressed surprise at the depth of feeling that the composer could summon at such a young age. By all accounts, he was a compassionate and gentle human being as well as a great musician, and we sense this in the loving interplay between the strings and piano in this movement. The Allegro molto is perhaps Mendelssohn's first great scherzo (scherzo means "joke" in Italian and describes a

short dancelike movement typically with three beats to a measure). In Hector Berlioz's memoirs, he recounts his friendship with the young Mendelssohn and describes one incident in which he remarked to his friend that Mercutio's speech from *Romeo and Juliet* would be an excellent subject for a scherzo. Immediately after saying this, Berlioz cursed his own stupidity; he knew that if Mendelssohn wrote a scherzo on this subject, there would be no point in any other composer ever approaching it, since nobody alive could hope to write one with Mendelssohn's lightness and fantastic flights of imagination. Those qualities are on display here, yet there also is a diabolical feel not often heard in his later compositions in the form. The virtuosic piano writing reminds us that the composer was one of the great pianists of his time. The finale returns to the intensity and drama of the first movement, and there are even some references to musical ideas from the beginning of the quartet. One of the central problems in extended works of classical music is how to tie the different movements together and make four different "chapters" one overarching narrative. With subtle references to the first movement reintroduced in the finale, Mendelssohn takes on this challenge in a manner that was progressive for its time, belying the conventional view of Mendelssohn as a classicizing conservative.

It is said that Mendelssohn's father was hesitant to let his son pursue a career in music. To determine if young Felix could truly excel and prosper as a composer, he arranged for composer Luigi Cherubini to take part in a reading of the B minor quartet and share his thoughts. Cherubini, the story goes, declared the work a masterpiece and its composer a genius. We cannot know for certain if this actually happened, but the accuracy of this verdict is incontestable. ■

—Max Raimi

Richard E. Rodda, a former faculty member at Case Western Reserve University and the Cleveland Institute of Music, provides program notes for many American orchestras, concert series, and festivals.

Rong-Yan Tang Violin



Rong-Yan Tang was appointed to the first violin section of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra by Daniel Barenboim in 2003. After graduating from the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, she came to the United States on full scholar-

ship to study with Camilla Wicks at Louisiana State University and Donald Weilerstein at the Cleveland Institute of Music. Prior to joining the CSO, Tang held several titled orchestral positions, most recently associate concertmaster of the Fort Wayne Philharmonic. As a soloist, she has performed in China, Hong Kong, and France, as well as with several U.S. orchestras.

A former protégé of Isaac Stern, Tang plays on a violin from Stern's private collection, and by his invitation performed at Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall.

Tang also has extensive experience as a chamber musician. As first violin of the Fry Street Quartet, she has appeared on Carnegie Hall's Rising Stars series, the New School's Schneider Concerts series, and at New York City's famed 92nd Street Y. A winner of numerous awards and competitions, Tang considers the Fischoff National Chamber Music Competition's Millennium Grand Prize and first prize in the Yellow Springs National Chamber Music Competition her most notable.

Tang currently performs on the CSO's Chamber Music series and for educational concerts at Chicago Public Schools. She has appeared in recital at the Art Institute of Chicago and on Chicago's WFMT-FM radio broadcasts, and also as a soloist with regional orchestras.

Max Raimi Viola



A native of Detroit, Michigan, Max Raimi has been a violist in the Chicago Symphony Orchestra since 1984. He is an active chamber musician and served as a chamber music coach at Northwestern University for many years. A prolific

composer, Raimi has received commissions from many ensembles and institutions, including the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the Library of Congress, and the American Chamber Players. In 1998, his *Elegy* for twelve violas, harp, celesta, and percussion was performed on three Chicago Symphony subscription concerts conducted by Daniel Barenboim. Riccardo Muti and the CSO commissioned and performed the world premiere of his *Three Lisel Mueller Settings* in 2018. Raimi's arrangements have enjoyed wide circulation and have been played by Daniel Barenboim, among many other artists. In the summer of 1985, a sold-out crowd at Comiskey Park heard the Chicago Symphony viola section play his arrangement of "The Star-Spangled Banner" before a Chicago White Sox game; a three-violist ensemble twice performed another arrangement of the anthem at Chicago Stadium before Chicago Bulls games. On two occasions, Riccardo Muti has conducted Raimi's orchestration of the University of Michigan fight song "Hail to the Victors" at Hill Auditorium in Ann Arbor. Raimi resides in Chicago with his wife Barbara and their son Paul.

Karen Basrak Cello



Karen Basrak joined the cello section of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in 2012. A native of Arlington Heights, Illinois, Basrak began her studies with Adele O'Dwyer, Gilda Barston, and Richard Hirschl. She

received a bachelor of music degree in cello performance from the University of Southern California, where she studied with Eleonore Schoenfeld. While at USC, Basrak received several honors, most notably the Gregor Piatigorsky Award. Before returning to Illinois, Basrak was a member of the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra, beginning in 2001 as associate principal cello; she served as acting principal from 2002 to 2005 and principal from 2005 to 2012. Basrak has performed extensively throughout the United States and Europe, and has appeared with the Los Angeles Philharmonic; the Northwest, Harper, Kishwaukee, Elmhurst, Skokie Valley, and Greenville symphony orchestras; Winnetka Chamber Orchestra; Marina del Rey–Westchester Symphony; and American Youth Symphony. As an advocate of music education, she has performed in schools throughout the nation. In recognition of her efforts, she was awarded the key to the city of Greenville, South Carolina. Basrak is on the faculty of the Chicago College of Performing Arts at Roosevelt University.

Emma Gerstein Flute



Appointed second flute by Zell Music Director Riccardo Muti, Emma Gerstein joined the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in 2017. Before joining the Orchestra, she performed as a guest several times, including on the CSO's 2016 tour to Asia with Muti.

Most recently, Gerstein served as principal flute of the Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra in New Zealand. Previously, she was a flute fellow with the New World Symphony from 2013 to 2016, and principal flute of the Lexington Philharmonic Orchestra in Kentucky for the 2012–13 season. She also has performed as part of the flute section of the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, and as guest principal flute of the Seattle Symphony. Gerstein has participated in the Aspen, Spoleto USA, Sarasota, Orford, and Cabrillo music festivals. A

native of Chicago's Hyde Park neighborhood, she began her flute studies at the age of eight and later was a member of the Chicago Youth Symphony Orchestra. She went on to study at the Manhattan School of Music with Robert Langevin and at Indiana University with Thomas Robertello. Gerstein has taught privately in Auckland and has given master classes at Northwestern and Auckland universities.

Daniel Paul Horn Piano



An active recitalist, Daniel Paul Horn frequently collaborates with members of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and has performed chamber music at Door County's Midsummer's Music, the Beijing Modern Music Festival, and with the

Ying Quartet, Rembrandt Chamber Players, violinist John Dalley, cellists Leonardo Altino and Stephen Balderston, and pianists Alexander Djordjevic and Caroline Hong. Horn's collaborations with singers include performances with Michelle Areyzaga, Sylvia McNair, Denise Gamez, Gerard Sundberg, and Stephen Morscheck, and he has made solo appearances with the Sarajevo Philharmonic and the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. Horn has premiered works by Jacob Bancks, Jacob Beranek, Delvyn Case, David M. Gordon, Patrick Kavanaugh, Daniel Kellogg, Shawn Okpebholo, and Max Raimi. In 2020, he will introduce a commissioned work by Richard Danielpour. Horn's recordings include the critically praised *Wanderings*, *Sehnsucht: Music of Robert Schumann*, *Napolean's Cellist*, and *The Bliss of Solitude*. A Detroit native, he studied at the Peabody Institute at John Hopkins University and the Juilliard School. A professor and keyboard chair at the Wheaton College Conservatory of Music, Horn also has served on the summer faculties of the MasterWorks, Sewanee, Adamant, and Dakota Sky festivals. He is treasurer of the American Liszt Society.

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