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Information about the program and the performers for this concert

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Phillip Huscher Program Annotator
Gerald Virgil Senior Content Editor
Laura Sauer Content Editor
Kristin Tobin Designer
Bryan Dowling Exclusive Agent
708-434-5869
bryan@media8midwest.com

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DECEMBER 2018/JANUARY 2019
Zell Music Director Riccardo Muti recently spoke to the audience before a concert about the importance of cultural values passed from one generation to the next. During this festive time of year, many families and friends are able to join us, and we are honored to be part of their holiday traditions. The Chicago Symphony Orchestra gives us the gift of hearing classical repertoire performed at the highest level, making these musical experiences the perfect means for celebration year after year.

Now is also a season for giving and expressing gratitude. All of our programs are made possible through generous gifts from friends like you. Your generosity makes you part of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra Association’s ongoing pursuit of artistic excellence, development of new audiences, innovative education and community programs, and sharing the music we love with listeners here in Chicagoland and around the world. It also ensures that the important work of the CSOA continues for generations to come.

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On behalf of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Chorus, Civic Orchestra of Chicago, Negaunee Music Institute, our trustees, volunteers, administration, and above all, the many people whose lives are enriched each year through music, we thank you for your support.

We send our warmest wishes for a music-filled, happy and healthy New Year. We look forward to seeing you in Orchestra Hall soon.

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The Chicago Symphony Orchestra Brass prepares for its annual concert on December 19.

BY MIKE THOMAS

Long celebrated for its lyricism, dynamism, and virtuosity, the brass section of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra has been a standout element of a world-class ensemble since the days of Fritz Reiner. As a separate artistic entity, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra Brass has cultivated a rock star–like following of deeply dedicated fans worldwide. Its concerts, including the annual December showcase at Symphony Center, receive boisterous ovations.

“We actually sell extra seats onstage [to the CSO Brass annual concert], so we’re a little cocky about that,” says CSO trombone Michael Mulcahy, the group’s director, with a laugh. “We’re just a small section of the Orchestra, but we have a pretty strong draw.” Along with Mulcahy, the CSO Brass consists of horns Daniel
Gingrich (acting principal), James Smelser, David Griffin, Oto Carrillo, and Susanna Gaunt; trumpets Mark Ridenour (acting principal), John Hagstrom, and Tage Larsen; trombones Jay Friedman (principal) and Charles Vernon; and tuba Gene Pokorny (principal).

The origins of the CSO Brass concerts date to the early 1950s, when legendary musicians such as Adolph Herseth, Arnold Jacobs, and Frank Crisafulli formed the Chicago Symphony Brass Quintet. Members of the full section began performing stand-alone concerts in the 1970s. Since 2006, as part of the Symphony Center Presents Special Concerts offerings, the CSO Brass has offered its annual showcase. Although the concerts take place around Christmas, they are not holiday-themed. Of the works on this year’s program, only Tchaikovsky’s

“I am very honored to be part of the ensemble. The reputation of the brass section developed in the mid-1940s with Arnold Jacobs (tuba) on one end and, later, a new hire Adolph Herseth (trumpet) on the top. With malleable colleagues in the middle between these strong bookends, a formidable brass section was forged.”

—GENE POKORNY, PRINCIPAL TUBA

“I attended my first CSO concert in 1969. I remember climbing the stairs to the gallery and feeling very much out of place—a teenager in Orchestra Hall. Solti conducted Mahler’s Symphony no. 2 that day, and I was transported to a world where I felt I did indeed belong. As I descended those stairs, I was determined to do everything in my power to become a professional musician.”

—DANIEL GINGRICH, ACTING PRINCIPAL HORN
Suite from *The Nutcracker*, arranged by Timothy Higgins, fits that bill. “That’s not really our forte,” replies Mulcahy concerning holiday fare. “We belong to a very significant institution, so the program itself has to have musical and artistic integrity, as well as being engaging and entertaining. As part of that, every program [features] music that was originally written for brass, not just arranged [for these instruments].”

An example on this year’s program is Raymond Premru’s *Symphony for Brass and Percussion* (1994). Premru’s distinguished career as a trombonist include his longtime membership of the Philharmonia Orchestra of London in addition to leading several jazz groups and brass ensembles and performing and recording with jazz and rock legends from Oscar Peterson and Ella Fitzgerald to Pink Floyd, the Rolling Stones, and the Beatles (including the iconic *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band* album). The symphony encompasses many of these brass styles and timbres with which Premru was familiar as a performer and composer.

Performing music by composers who are themselves brass players has distinct advantages. “Sometimes young composers, in particular, will write something with no knowledge of how any instrument works, so you can only play an approximation,” Mulcahy explains. “Whereas something like Premru’s symphony is very informed and very idiomatic to play, but very challenging, too.”

Because the CSO Brass performs this annual concert in addition to its CSO performances, "Having a job in the CSO is a great honor, but it’s also tough. It’s not like winning an Olympic medal, where once you get it you’re forever seen as a champion. As a CSO musician, you have to keep demonstrating superlative skill every single week. Your commitment to excellence does not end after your audition—it’s a way of life.”

—JOHN HAGSTROM, TRUMPET
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Mulcahy is ever mindful of the group’s endurance when choosing (with input from his colleagues) repertoire. The program represents a lot of extra work, he acknowledges, “and sometime it’s like, ‘Wow, we’ve got to climb this mountain again.’ But when we give this concert, when we go onstage, we [think], ‘Oh, yeah.’ This is a special atmosphere that’s not present in that way in any other forum. There is an electricity, and our audience goes pretty crazy.”

Mulcahy also knows from extensive personal experience how taxing brass instruments are to play—especially when they make up the majority of instruments onstage. “Musically speaking, we have to represent the entire pallet of the orchestra with about twenty musicians, so it’s artistically challenging,” he says, “And it’s physically challenging, because we have to play all the notes. No one doubles our parts.”

“The Chicago Symphony Brass is famous for dynamics and articulation,” adds Mulcahy. “The ability to play smoothly, the ability to sing, the ability to play with great clarity and articulation, and to sustain a very smooth line are specifically hallmarks of the CSO brass section. And that tradition precedes all of us who are currently in the section.”

“Anyone who plays for the Bulls knows there was a certain Michael Jordan in town in the 1990s,” Mulcahy notes, “and that [fact] will forever hover over you.” So while Mulcahy and his colleagues are intensely present onstage, the past is never far away.

—JAY FRIEDMAN, PRINCIPAL TROMBONE

Mike Thomas, a Chicago-based writer, is the author of the books You Might Remember Me: The Life and Times of Phil Hartman and Second City Unscripted: Revolution and Revelation at the World-Famous Comedy Theater.
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100 years ago, CSO music director Frederick Stock started the Chicago Symphony Orchestra’s concert series for children, and it continues to this day. As part of the centennial celebration, the Negaunee Music Institute is collecting stories and memories of these concerts. If you’ve ever attended a CSO School or Family concert, we would love to hear from you.

Please visit cso.org/CentennialStories to share your experience.
Civic Fellows prepare for the future by studying the past

Since its founding in 1919 by the CSO’s second music director, Frederick Stock, the Civic Orchestra has strived to be an ensemble that serves Chicago, offering free performances at Symphony Center as well as innovative programming in communities across the city. Throughout the orchestra’s 100 seasons of growth and evolution, its members have immersed themselves in the rich culture of Chicago’s diverse neighborhoods in order to ensure that Civic’s identity as an orchestra for the city endures.

CSO Judson and Joyce Green Creative Consultant Yo-Yo Ma inspired the founding of the Civic Orchestra Fellowship program, which launched in September 2013. Since then, the fellows have been at the forefront of Civic’s work in Chicago’s neighborhoods: teaching and mentoring young musicians, creating interactive concerts for students in schools, and designing musical projects that respond to community need.

On a rainy Friday in early September, fifteen Civic Orchestra of Chicago Fellows crossed the street to see two exhibits at the Art Institute of Chicago: John Singer Sargent and Chicago’s Gilded Age and Never a Lovely So Real. The first exhibit featured portraits of prominent Chicagoans from the turn of the twentieth century, a period when the city was striving for recognition as a center for art and culture; the second presented photography and film from 1950 to 1980 depicting a cultural history of Chicago’s neighborhoods, many of them fiercely segregated. The dichotomy of these portrayals of Chicago was fitting for a year in which the Civic Orchestra considers its own 100-year history and its role of the city’s cultural future.

Back at Symphony Center, the fellows reflected on what they saw and considered how Chicago’s complicated sociopolitical history can inform the work they do and the art they create this season. The Civic Fellows will design musical projects that draw inspiration from the past 100 years of Chicago’s history across all of its neighborhoods. According to first-year Civic Fellow Juan Olivares, “It’s important that we don’t position
ourselves as the guardians of culture, but rather create work that celebrates the stories, culture, and art that already exist in this city.”

In January 2019, the Civic Fellows will create a memorized, interactive musical program that they will perform in thirteen public elementary, middle, and high schools. The program will feature excerpts from symphonies by Florence Price, who became the first black American woman to have an orchestral work performed by a major American orchestra with the 1933 premiere of her Symphony in E minor by the Chicago Symphony under Stock.

The fellows will also collaborate with teaching artists from the Irene Taylor Trust, a London-based organization, to write original songs that tell the stories of Chicago teens involved with the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice and with Chicagoans who have lost family members to gun violence.

You can follow the activities of the 2018–19 Civic Fellows at CIVICFELLOWS.ORG.
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Access program notes before and after the performance on each concert’s event page at CSO.ORG or at CSOSOUNDSANDSTORIES.ORG/CATEGORY/PROGRAM-BOOKS. You can enjoy learning about the music and the CSO even if you cannot attend a performance!
From the Civic Orchestra of Chicago to the Chicago Symphony Orchestra: 100 seasons

Since 1919, young artists have sought membership in the Civic Orchestra of Chicago to develop their talents and prepare for careers as professional musicians. Founded by Frederick Stock, second music director of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the Civic Orchestra is the only season-long training orchestra of its kind affiliated with a major American orchestra.

The then Civic Music Student Orchestra was intended to function as a means “to reduce the dependence of this country upon European sources of supply for trained orchestral musicians” as well as a reserve from which talent could be drawn into the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Five hundred young musicians auditioned in January 1920, eighty-six were accepted, and the ensemble made its debut on March 29. Frederick Stock, assistant conductor Eric DeLamarter, and CSO violin and viola George Dasch shared conducting duties, leading works by Elgar, Godard, Grieg, Halvorsen, Keller, and Tchaikovsky in this first concert.

The Civic Orchestra’s first roster in 1919–20 included several future Chicago Symphony Orchestra members, among them cellist Theodore Ratzer, hired by Stock in 1920 and a member of the section until 1957. Currently, fourteen Chicago Symphony Orchestra musicians are Civic Orchestra alumni.
The program’s unique access to the CSO through immersive experiences with its musicians and some of today’s most sought-after conductors—including the CSO’s Zell Music Director Riccardo Muti—helps many Civic alumni go on to prestigious professional positions. Each season there are side-by-side rehearsals, coaching sessions, mock auditions, and private lessons with CSO musicians; reading sessions with guest conductors; career development workshops; master classes with CSO guest artists as opportunities arise; and numerous opportunities throughout the season to play chamber music.

Civic Orchestra musicians develop as exceptional orchestral players and engaged artists, cultivating their ability to succeed in the rapidly evolving world of music in the twenty-first century. Following is a current list of Civic coaches that work directly with Civic members each season:

- **Robert Chen** Concertmaster
  *The Louis C. Sudler Chair, endowed by an anonymous benefactor*

- **Baird Dodge** Principal Second Violin

- **Li-Kuo Chang** Acting Principal Viola
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- **John Sharp** Principal Cello
  *The Eloise W. Martin Chair*

- **Alexander Hanna** Principal Bass
  *The David and Mary Winton Green Principal Bass Chair*

- **Sarah Bullen** Principal Harp

- **Stefán Ragnar Höskuldsson** Principal Flute
  *The Erika and Dietrich M. Gross Principal Flute Chair*

- **Scott Hostetler** Oboe and English Horn

- **Stephen Williamson** Principal Clarinet

- **William Buchman** Assistant Principal Bassoon

- **Daniel Gingrich** Acting Principal Horn

- **Mark Ridonou** Acting Principal Trumpet

- **Jay Friedman** Principal Trombone

- **Charles Vernon** Bass Trombone

- **Gene Pokorny** Principal Tuba
  *The Arnold Jacobs Principal Tuba Chair, endowed by Christine Querfeld*

- **David Herbert** Principal Timpani
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- **Vadim Karpinos** Assistant Principal Timpani, Percussion

- **Cynthia Yeh** Principal Percussion

- **Mary Sauer** Former Principal Keyboard

- **Peter Conover** Principal Librarian

The Civic Orchestra is very grateful for the mentorship of CSO musicians as well as proud of the myriad distinguished alumni that have graduated from the program. To learn more about the Civic Orchestra’s centennial season visit [CSO.ORG/CIVIC](http://CSO.ORG/CIVIC).
The Chicago Symphony Orchestra Association is profoundly grateful to the leaders and volunteers listed here and invites you to consider these volunteer opportunities.

**GOVERNING MEMBERS** are leading individuals of the CSOA family and serve as its first established volunteer group, celebrating their 124th year in the 2018–19 season. GMs provide elevated enthusiasm and support for the CSOA’s artistic excellence and educational innovation. Members receive opportunities to gain a deeper connection with CSO’s musicians and organization, as well as with fellow members through special access, ticketing services, events, and meetings. To learn more, call 312-294-3337.

The **WOMEN’S BOARD** promotes the artistic excellence and exemplary education programs of the Orchestra by engaging women leaders in advocacy and fundraising efforts. The board supports annual fundraising events to benefit the Orchestra, including its signature event, Symphony Ball. To learn more, please call 312-294-3160.

The **LEAGUE** is a creative, vibrant, and dedicated group of over 250 members with over an eighty-year history of supporting the CSO. Members plan and produce fundraising and social events; implement outreach opportunities for adults and children, such as the Young Artists Competition and the Docent Program; and support audience development. To learn more, please call 312-294-3170 or email wardw@cso.org.

The **OVERTURE COUNCIL** is a dynamic group of young professionals ages 21 to 45 who have a love of music and a desire to learn more about how to support the CSO. Members have many opportunities to attend social activities and concert evenings together. Connect with new friends who share the same interests! Check out the Overture Council’s innovative event Soundpost—open to all! Learn more at cso.org/overturecouncil and cso.org/soundpost.

The CSO **LATINO ALLIANCE** is a liaison and partner that connects the CSO with Chicago’s diverse community by creating awareness, sharing insights, and building relationships for generations to come. The group encourages individuals and their families to discover and experience timeless music with other enthusiasts in concerts, receptions, and educational events.

To learn more, email csolatinoalliance@cso.org, visit cso.org/latinoalliance, or join the CSO Latino Alliance Facebook group.

The mission of the CSOA’s **AFRICAN AMERICAN NETWORK** is to engage Chicago’s culturally rich African American community through the sharing and exchanging of unforgettable musical experiences. The AAN seeks to serve and encourage individuals and families, educators and students, musicians and composers, and churches and businesses to experience the timeless beauty of music. To learn more about how you can be involved, contact Sheila Jones, director of community stewardship, at africanamericannetwork@cso.org or call 312-294-3045.

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Contact Karen Bullen at 312-294-3192 or visit cso.org/PlannedGiving for more information.
CSOA’s Annual Symphony Ball
October 6, 2018

On the evening of October 6, Zell Music Director Riccardo Muti conducted the Chicago Symphony Orchestra’s annual Symphony Ball concert. The program, supported by presenting sponsor Northern Trust, included four of Brahms’s Hungarian Dances, Puccini’s intermezzo from Manon Lescaut, and waltzes by Josef Strauss and Johann Strauss, Jr. Described by the Chicago Tribune as “poetry on the keyboard,” David Fray performed Mozart’s Piano Concerto no. 24. It was a rich evening of Austro-German and Italian musical splendor.

The night began with a champagne reception with hors d’oeuvres and performances by members of the Civic Orchestra of Chicago. After the CSO concert, Symphony Ball guests continued their evening with dinner and dancing in the Grand Ballroom of the Palmer House.

Presented by the Women’s Board of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra Association and chaired by Leigh Ann and Casey Herman along with co-chairs Donna L. Kendall and David E. McNeel, the gala event raised over $1.31 million for the organization. The evening also honored longtime supporters Richard and Helen Thomas with many attendees making gifts in tribute to their generosity.

Presented by the Women’s Board of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra Association

SYMPHONY BALL CHAIRS
Leigh Ann and Casey Herman

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LEFT TO RIGHT
David E. McNeel, Casey and Leigh Ann Herman, Donna L. Kendall, Riccardo Muti, and Keiko and Jeff Alexander

Mimi and Robert Murley celebrate the start of the season on the dance floor.
Members of the Women's Board of the CSOA enjoy Symphony Ball, an event they present each season.

Keith Crow and Elizabeth A. Parker with Leigh Ann and Casey Herman

CSO violins Gina DiBello, Qing Hou, Yuan-Qing Yu (assistant concertmaster), Sando Shia, Rachel Goldstein, Florence Schwartz, Zell Music Director Riccardo Muti, Susan Synnestvedt, Stephanie Jeong (associate concertmaster), and Aiko Noda backstage at the Symphony Ball concert

Herald trumpets welcome guests to the Palmer House
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**STRAVINSKY**

Concerto in D Major for String Orchestra
Vivace—
Arioso: Andantino—
Rondo: Allegro

**PROKOFIEV**

Violin Concerto No. 2 in G Minor, Op. 63
Allegro moderato
Andante assai
Allegro, ben marcato

NICOLA BENEDETTI

**INTERMISSION**

**TCHAIKOVSKY**

Symphony No. 6 in B Minor, Op. 74 (*Pathétique*)
Adagio—Allegro non troppo
Allegro con grazia
Allegro molto vivace
Finale: Adagio lamentoso

Nicola Benedetti is the Nuveen Emerging Artist.

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This program is partially supported by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council Agency.
The Chicago Symphony Orchestra is grateful to

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IGOR STRAVINSKY
Born June 18, 1882; Oranienbaum, Russia
Died April 6, 1971; New York City

Concerto in D Major for String Orchestra

Shortly after Stravinsky conducted the world premiere of his Symphony in C in Chicago in November 1940, he and his new wife Vera bought a house at 1260 North Wetherly in West Hollywood. In the spring of 1941, they moved in. It would remain their home for nearly two decades, and there, only a few houses away from the flash and hubbub of Sunset Strip, Stravinsky would compose nearly all his last works, including the Mozartean opera The Rake’s Progress; Agon, his first venture into the twelve-tone world; and this piece for string orchestra.

During the war years, Los Angeles was a refuge for a great many expatriates, and the Stravinskys enjoyed the company of a large and varied circle of friends, including Rachmaninov, Thomas Mann, Alma Mahler (and her husband, Franz Werfel), Rubinstein, and Aldous Huxley, who hooked him up with W.H. Auden to work on The Rake’s Progress. Mann later said that “Hollywood during the war was a more intellectually stimulating and cosmopolitan city than Paris or Munich had ever been.” Schoenberg and his family were settled in nearby Brentwood Park, but the two men, each viewed by the other as “the opposition,” never met once. “Musicians came from all over the world to visit them,” Robert Craft wrote, “not mentioning to one composer their meetings with the other one.”

Stravinsky became a U.S. citizen in 1945. The following year, he received his first European commission in a dozen years, a request from Paul Sacher, the Swiss conductor and patron, for a work to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the Basel Chamber Orchestra he had founded at the age of twenty. Over the past two decades, Sacher had introduced several important scores in Basel, including Bartók’s Divertimento, as well as his landmark Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta. The twentieth-anniversary concert, which was held on January 27, 1947, included a new work Sacher had commissioned—Bohuslav Martinů’s Toccata e due canzoni, Arthur Honegger’s Fourth Symphony, and Stravinsky’s Concerto in D, which is sometimes called his Basel Concerto (primarily to distinguish it from his other Concerto in D, for violin and orchestra).
Stravinsky’s Concerto in D is one of his final essays in his particular brand of neoclassicism. It flirts with both D major and D minor as its primary tonal anchors, and is obsessed in general with the interval of a minor second, but it also toys with many other keys and with the blurring of tonal boundaries in its itinerary. Stravinsky writes three movements, with two spirited sections embracing the central Arioso, with its big, elegant B-flat melody.

In 1951, Stravinsky’s score was choreographed by Jerome Robbins as The Cage, a horror story about murderous insects, and premiered by the New York City Ballet on June 10. The Cage was a great success, despite the fact that Robbins’s subject and Stravinsky’s music make an odd match—as The New York Times opening night review noted, “It is set upon the music of Stravinsky’s Basler [sic] Concerto for Strings, which is by no means vicious or brutal in character, with a curious fitness that does it no violence whatever.” The Cage has often been revived over the years, but the concerto itself remains a rarity in the concert hall.

A postscript. Over the summer, Stravinsky’s former house on North Wetherly Drive went on the market—it was originally listed at $4 million; the price has since been dropped, first to $4 million and then to $3.75 million. Two years ago, the Thomas Mann house, in LA’s Pacific Palisades, went on the market, sparking fears that it would be torn down. But the German Foreign Office bought it for more than $13 million; it is now a residence for visiting German artists, scientists, and scholars. There are no current plans to preserve the Wetherly Drive house as a tribute to Stravinsky. ■
Prokofiev wrote his first violin concerto shortly before he left Russia in 1918; the second concerto was composed seventeen years later, as he was preparing to return home. Why Prokofiev decided to go back has been variously attributed to patriotism, opportunism, nostalgia, and political naïveté. In the United States, he had found limited popularity and financial difficulty as a wandering pianist and composer; in Paris he was more successful and more comfortable, but he increasingly longed “to see real winters again, and spring that bursts into being from one moment to the next.” In 1933, he concluded that “the air of foreign lands does not inspire me because I am Russian, and there is nothing more harmful to a man than to live in exile, to be in a spiritual climate incompatible with his race.” Nearly all the music Prokofiev is remembered for was written in his homeland. And in 1933 he couldn’t foresee the harm that would ultimately come to him under Joseph Stalin, who, in a stroke of fate no work of fiction would dare, died on the same day as Prokofiev in 1953.

Most of Prokofiev’s celebrated Soviet contemporaries had either immigrated permanently, like Stravinsky and Nabokov, or stayed put, like Shostakovich and Pasternak. Prokofiev tried for the best of both worlds, although when he left Russia in May 1918, he expected to be back in a few months. But he found life outside his homeland too promising. Prokofiev received his first official invitation to return to Russia in 1923. He declined the offer, and the next year’s as well. When he did return in 1927, for a three-month tour, he was greeted as a celebrity. The next years were a time of increasing frustration—Prokofiev recognized the urgent need to settle on both a compatible musical style and a home base. He decided to resume Soviet citizenship as early as 1932. (He didn’t close up his Paris apartment until 1936, however.) In 1934, he paved the way for his move by publicly addressing the question of “what kind of music should be written at the present time” in the Soviet Union. For Prokofiev, the solution rested on the abiding strength of melody—“simple and comprehensible, without being repetitive and trivial . . . . We must seek a

SERGEI PROKOFIEV
Born April 23, 1891; Sontsovka, Ukraine
Died March 5, 1953; Moscow, Russia

Violin Concerto No. 2 in G Minor, Op. 63

Prokofiev wrote his first violin concerto shortly before he left Russia in 1918; the second concerto was composed seventeen years later, as he was preparing to return home. Why Prokofiev decided to go back has been variously attributed to patriotism, opportunism, nostalgia, and political naïveté. In the United States, he had found limited popularity and financial difficulty as a wandering pianist and composer; in Paris he was more successful and more comfortable, but he increasingly longed “to see real winters again, and spring that bursts into being from one moment to the next.” In 1933, he concluded that “the air of foreign lands does not inspire me because I am Russian, and there is nothing more harmful to a man than to live in exile, to be in a spiritual climate incompatible with his race.” Nearly all the music Prokofiev is remembered for was written in his homeland. And in 1933 he couldn’t foresee the harm that would ultimately come to him under Joseph Stalin, who, in a stroke of fate no work of fiction would dare, died on the same day as Prokofiev in 1953.

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COMPOSED
1935

FIRST PERFORMANCE
December 1, 1935; Madrid, Spain

INSTRUMENTATION
solo violin, two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, bass drum, snare drum, triangle, cymbals, castanets, strings

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME
26 minutes

FIRST CSO PERFORMANCES
April 1 and 2, 1943, Orchestra Hall. Patricia Travers as soloist, Hans Lange conducting
July 25, 1954, Ravinia Festival. Nina Geverts as soloist, Pierre Monteux conducting

MOST RECENT CSO PERFORMANCES
November 10, 11, 12, and 15, 2011, Orchestra Hall. Leonidas Kavakos as soloist, Stéphane Denève conducting
August 10, 2016, Ravinia Festival. Gil Shaham as soloist, David Zinman conducting

CSO RECORDINGS
1983. Shlomo Mintz as soloist, Claudio Abbado conducting. Deutsche Grammophon
1993. Itzhak Perlman as soloist, Daniel Barenboim conducting. Erato

LEFT
Sergei Prokofiev, photo by Pierre Choumoff (1872–1936). Bibliothèque nationale de France
new simplicity.” It was a shrewd battle cry—both politically correct and consistent with Prokofiev’s genuine beliefs.

The Second Violin Concerto was Prokofiev’s last non-Soviet commission; it was written for the French-Belgian violinist Robert Soetens. Prokofiev recalled:

In 1935, a group of admirers [of Soetens] asked me to write a violin concerto for him, giving him exclusive rights to perform it for one year. I readily agreed, since I had been intending to write something for violin at that time and had accumulated some material. As in the case of the preceding concertos, I began by searching for an original title for the piece, such as “Concert Sonata for Violin and Orchestra,” but I finally returned to the simplest solution: Concerto no. 2. Nevertheless, I wanted it to be altogether different from no. 1 in both content and style.

Prokofiev worked on the concerto at the same time as the ballet Romeo and Juliet during the summer of 1935; the two have much in common, particularly an ardent and voluptuous lyricism. The concerto was begun in Paris, continued in a number of hotel rooms, and completed in Russia, a reflection of Prokofiev’s “nomadic concert-tour existence,” as he put it, but also a reminder of how he straddled two worlds at the time.

The concerto begins with the solo violin playing an unaccompanied G minor melody, as if Prokofiev wished to establish from the outset the preeminence of melody and a new simplicity of language. The first movement, based on classical sonata form, is almost relentlessly lyrical; the essential drama of contrast comes only from the switch of key and mode to B major for the second theme. The second movement, in E-flat major, combines a light accompaniment, like the ticking of a clock, with a sweet and soaring melody in the violin. The mood is serene, disturbed only from time to time by more urgent and searching music. These roles are reversed at the very end, as the violin plays pizzicato triplets to the main tune, now low in the orchestra. In complete contrast, the finale is brash and athletic, with a rustic main theme that suggests peasants dancing and the unexpected use of castanets—a touch of local color that seems to predict that the world premiere would be given, on another of Prokofiev’s whirlwind tours, in Madrid.
PYOTR TCHAIKOVSKY
Born May 7, 1840; Votkinsk, Russia
Died November 6, 1893; Saint Petersburg, Russia

Symphony No. 6 in B Minor, Op. 74 (Pathétique)

Five days after he conducted the premiere of this symphony, Tchaikovsky drank a glass of unboiled water, a careless move that year in Saint Petersburg, where countless cases of cholera had recently been reported. He died four days later. When the symphony was performed for a second time the following week, the hall was draped in black and a bust modeled after the composer’s death mask was prominently displayed. An eleven-year-old boy, who would soon become Russia’s most celebrated composer, attended that concert with his father, the great baritone Fyodor Stravinsky. Little Igor, whose own music would eventually refute much of what Tchaikovsky’s glorified, understood, even at the time, the magnitude of this loss—not just to his family (his father was famous for his interpretations of several Tchaikovsky roles) but to the larger music world as well.

At the time he died, Tchaikovsky was one of the great figures in music: he was at the peak of his creative powers, and he was both famous and beloved far beyond his native Russia. His death came as a shock (he was only fifty-three), and the suspicious circumstances surrounding his fatal illness, coupled with the tragic tone of his last symphony—curiously entitled Pathétique—produced a mystique about the composer’s last days that still persists today. In 1979, the Russian émigrée musicologist Alexandra Orlova published a now-infamous article proposing that Tchaikovsky had in fact committed suicide by poison, on the orders of his fellow alumni of the School of Jurisprudence, to cover up his alleged affair with the nephew of Duke Stenbock-Thurmor. For a time in the 1980s, suicide and homosexuality replaced the quaint old tale of cholera and drinking water, and, as Tchaikovsky’s obituary was rewritten, the Pathétique Symphony became the chief musical victim in this tabloid tale. Even Tchaikovsky’s biographer David Brown, writing in the sacrosanct Grove, accepted Orlova’s theory. But in recent years, scholars have wisely backed off—evidence is almost totally undocumented—and a number of musicologists, including the biographer Alexander

COMPOSED
February–August 1893

FIRST PERFORMANCE
October 28, 1893, the composer conducting

INSTRUMENTATION
three flutes and piccolo, two oboes, two clarinets and bass clarinet, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones and tuba, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, tam-tam, strings

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME
45 minutes

FIRST CSO PERFORMANCES
April 27 and 28, 1894, Auditorium Theatre. Theodore Thomas conducting
July 29, 1937, Ravinia Festival. Vladimir Golschmann conducting

MOST RECENT CSO PERFORMANCES
February 18, 19, and 20, 2016, Orchestra Hall. Manfred Honeck conducting
July 12, 2018, Ravinia Festival. Marin Alsop conducting

CSO RECORDINGS
1952. Rafael Kubelik conducting. Mercury
1957. Fritz Reiner conducting. RCA
1984. James Levine conducting. RCA
1986. Claudio Abbado conducting. CBS
1998. Daniel Barenboim conducting. Teldec

ABOVE
Pyotr Tchaikovsky, photo by Franciszek de Mezer (1829–1919), 1890
Poznansky, have refuted Orlova convincingly.

The circumstances surrounding the composition of the Pathétique Symphony are dramatic and mysterious, if less lurid than pulp fiction. In December 1892, Tchaikovsky abruptly decided to abandon work on a programmatic symphony in E-flat major on which he had been struggling for some time—“an irreversible decision,” he wrote, “and it is wonderful that I made it.” But the failure of the new symphony left Tchaikovsky despondent and directionless, and he began to fear that he was “played out, dried up,” as he put it. (“I think and I think, and I know not what to do,” he wrote to his nephew Bob Davydov, whose friendship and encouragement would help see him through this crisis.) Although he felt that he should give up writing “pure music, that is, symphonic or chamber music,” within two months he had begun the symphony that would prove to be his greatest—and his last.

Renewed—and relieved—by the old, familiar joy of composing, Tchaikovsky wrote frantically. Within four days, the first part of the symphony was complete and the remainder precisely outlined in his head. “You cannot imagine what bliss I feel,” he wrote to Bob on February 11, 1893, “assured that my time has not yet passed and that I can still work.” The rest went smoothly and the symphony was completed, without setbacks, by the end of August.

Tchaikovsky conducted the premiere of his new symphony on October 16 in Saint Petersburg. The audience—“all Saint Petersburg”—rose and cheered when the composer appeared on stage. But after the symphony, the applause was half-hearted; the crowd didn’t know what to make of this sober, gloomy music. Leaving the concert hall, Tchaikovsky complained that neither the audience nor the orchestra seemed to like the piece, although two days later he decided that “it is not that it wasn’t liked, but it has caused some bewilderment.”

The morning after the premiere, the composer told his brother Modest that the symphony needed a title. (Tchaikovsky had originally thought of calling it the Program Symphony.) Modest first suggested Tragic and then Pathétique, which in Russian carries a meaning closer to passionate, full of emotion and suffering. Tchaikovsky agreed at once, and in his brother’s presence wrote on the first page the title that “remained forever,” as Modest later recalled, although the composer himself soon had second thoughts. (Tchaikovsky’s publisher, who knew the marketing value of a good title, ignored the composer’s urgent request that it simply be printed as Symphony no. 6.)

Like the abandoned E-flat major symphony, the new B minor score was programmatic, but, as he wrote to Bob, “with such a program that will remain a mystery to everyone—let them guess.” Bob was only the first to ponder, in vain, the meaning of this deeply personal work. (And even he, to whom Tchaikovsky would ultimately dedicate the score, couldn’t draw a satisfactory answer from the composer except that it was “imbued with subjectivity.”)

Tchaikovsky carried his program with him to the grave. Cryptic notes scribbled among his sketches at the time refer to a symphony about life’s aspirations and disappointments—yet another manifestation of the central theme of both Swan Lake and Eugene Onegin, and in fact the great theme of the composer’s life: the painful search for an ideal that is never satisfied.

As scholars have learned more about Tchaikovsky’s unfulfilled homoerotic passion...
for his nephew Bob—a mismatch of youth and middle age, and a tangle of sexual persuasions in a society fiercely intolerant of homosexuality—the temptation to read this symphony as the composer’s heartbreaking confession of a painful, repressed life has inevitably proved irresistible. In the inexhaustibly expressive, but sufficiently ambiguous language of music, Tchaikovsky could tell the story of his life—honestly and unsparingly—without ever giving up its secrets. The abstract nature of music has, arguably, never been so fearlessly tested.

The temptation to read something tragic into this score is as old as the music itself. Even the composer, who didn’t want to divulge his meaning, admitted before the premiere that it had something of the character of a requiem. (The trombone incantations in the first movement actually quote a Russian Orthodox chant for the dead.) And surely the first audience was stunned—or bewildered, as Tchaikovsky noted—by the unconventionally slow and mournful finale, trailing off into silence at the end, with just cellos and basses playing pppp. When Tchaikovsky died so suddenly and violently on the heels of the premiere, the symphony became identified at once, perhaps inextricably, with its composer’s death. By the memorial performance on November 6, the Russian Musical Gazette had already determined that the symphony was “indeed a sort of swan song, a presentiment of imminent death.” (More than a century later, Orlova’s devotees were to make much of the slowly fading final pages as a depiction of suicide.)

The score itself, though perhaps dulled by familiarity, is one of Tchaikovsky’s most inspired creations. All of its true masterstrokes are purely musical, not programmatic. It begins uniquely, with the sound of a very low bassoon solo over murky strings. (This slow introduction is in the “wrong” key; but eventually works its way into B minor.) The entire first movement sustains the tone, although not the tempo, of the somber opening. The soaring principal theme, to be played “tenderly, very songfully, and elastically,” is one of Tchaikovsky’s greatest melodies. (Tchaikovsky carefully directs the emotional development of this rich and expansive tune all the way down to a virtually unprecedented thread of sound, marked ppppppp.) The recapitulation reorders and telescopes events so that the grand and expressive melody, now magically rescored, steals in suddenly and unexpectedly, to great effect.

The central movements are, by necessity, more relaxed. The first is a wonderful, singing, undanceable waltz, famously set in 5/4 time. (There’s a real waltz, in 3/4, in Tchaikovsky’s Fifth Symphony.) The second is a brilliant, dazzlingly scored march, undercut throughout by a streak of melancholy.

The finale begins with a cry of despair, and although it eventually unveils a warm and consoling theme begun by the violins against the heartbeat of a horn ostinato, the mood only continues to darken, ultimately becoming threatening in its intensity. In a symphony marked by telling, uncommonly quiet gestures—and this from a composer famous for bombast—a single soft stroke of the tam-tam marks the point of no return. From there it is all defeat and disintegration, over a fading, ultimately faltering pulse.

Phillip Huscher has been the program annotator for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra since 1987.
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Michael Tilson Thomas is music director of the San Francisco Symphony, cofounder and artistic director of the New World Symphony, and conductor laureate of the London Symphony Orchestra.

Born in Los Angeles, Tilson Thomas studied piano, conducting, and composition at the University of Southern California, and as a young musician also worked with leading performers including Gregor Piatigorsky and Jascha Heifetz and composers including Stravinsky, Boulez, Stockhausen, and Copland. In 1969, after winning the Koussevitzky Prize at Tanglewood, he was appointed assistant conductor and pianist of the Boston Symphony Orchestra and also led the BSO in his New York debut. Later serving as BSO principal guest conductor until 1974, he held subsequent appointments as music director of the Buffalo Philharmonic (1971–79), principal guest conductor of the Los Angeles Philharmonic (1981–85), and principal conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra (1988–95).

In 1988, he cofounded the New World Symphony, an orchestral academy in Miami dedicated to preparing gifted music graduates for leadership roles in classical music. As artistic director, he works with NWS Fellows to further their artistic and professional development.

Tilson Thomas was appointed music director of the San Francisco Symphony in 1995, and his tenure has been a period of significant growth and heightened international recognition for the orchestra. In addition to exploring the standard repertoire, he has led SFS in championing contemporary and American music and enriching the concert experience through semi-staged performances. In 2020, he concludes his directorship and becomes SFS music director laureate, continuing to lead the orchestra regularly in concert, as well as in special projects.

His guest conducting engagements have included the major orchestras of Europe and the United States, and he is also a two-time Carnegie Hall Perspectives artist, curating and conducting series from 2003 to 2005 and from 2018 to 2019.

A winner of eleven Grammy awards, Tilson Thomas appears on more than 120 recordings, including a critically acclaimed Mahler cycle with SFS and pioneering recordings of American music. His television work includes a BBC series with the LSO; the New York Philharmonic Young People’s Concerts; PBS’s Great Performances; and Keeping Score with SFS, which also includes web and radio content.

Throughout his career, he has been an active composer, and his major works include From the Diary of Anne Frank, commissioned by UNICEF and premiered in 1991 with narrator Audrey Hepburn; Šówa/Shoâh, commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the Hiroshima bombing; and a setting of Carl Sandburg’s poem Four Preludes on Playthings of the Wind, to receive its New York premiere during the current Carnegie Hall Perspectives series.

Tilson Thomas is a Chevalier of the Order of Arts and Letters of France and a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and has been profiled on CBS’s 60 Minutes and ABC’s Nightline. He was awarded the National Medal of Arts and was recently inducted into the California Hall of Fame and the American Academy of Arts and Letters.
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Nicola Benedetti Violin

FIRST CSO PERFORMANCES
July 13, 2012, Ravinia Festival. Brahms’s Concerto for Violin and Cello with Leonard Elschenbroich, Christoph Eschenbach conducting

MOST RECENT CSO PERFORMANCES
July 12, 2016, Ravinia Festival. Marsalis’s Concerto in D, Cristian Măcelaru conducting

These concerts mark Nicola Benedetti’s subscription concert debut with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

Nicola Benedetti is one of the most sought-after violinists of her generation. Her ability to captivate audiences with her innate musicianship and dynamic presence, coupled with her wide appeal as a high-profile advocate for classical music, has made her one of the most influential classical artists of today.

With concerto performances at the heart of her career, Nicola Benedetti is in much demand with major orchestras and conductors across the globe. Conductors with whom she has worked include Vladimir Ashkenazy, Jiří Bělohlávek, Stéphane Denève, Christoph Eschenbach, James Gaffigan, Hans Graf, Valery Gergiev, Alan Gilbert, Jakub Hrůša, Kirill Karabits, Andrew Litton, Kristjan Järvi, Vladimir Jurowski, Cristian Măcelaru, Zubin Mehta, Andrea Marcon, Peter Oundjian, Vasily Petrenko, Donald Runnicles, Thomas Søndergård, Krzysztof Urbanski, Juraj Valčuha, Edo de Waart, Pinchas Zukerman, and Jaap van Zweden.

She enjoys working with the most prominent orchestras, including the London Symphony Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, National Symphony Orchestra in Washington (D.C.), the Mariinsky Theatre Symphony Orchestra, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, Frankfurt Radio Symphony, Camerata Salzburg, Czech Philharmonic, Danish National Symphony Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra at the Ravinia Festival.

The summer of 2018 saw Nicola Benedetti in her debut at the Philharmonie de Paris with the Orchestre de Paris and Karina Canellakis. She returned to the BBC Proms with the BBC Concert Orchestra and Andrew Gourlay to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of BBC Young Musician.

This season, the artist makes her debut with the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic and collaborates with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, Lucerne Symphony Orchestra, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse, Orchestre Symphonique de Bretagne, Seattle Symphony, San Francisco Symphony, Frankfurt Opera and Museum Orchestra, Arturo Toscanini Philharmonic, and the Philharmonia Orchestra in London with Pablo Heras-Casado. She also undertakes tours with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra performing Mozart’s violin concertos and the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain in Bruch’s Violin Concerto.

Winner in the Best Female Artist category at the 2012 and 2013 Classical BRIT Awards, Nicola Benedetti records exclusively for Decca (Universal Music). Her most recent recording of violin concertos by Shostakovich and Glazunov has been met with critical acclaim. Her disc Homecoming: A Scottish Fantasy made her the first solo British violinist since the 1990s to enter the top-20 of the Official UK Albums Chart.

Nicola Benedetti was awarded the Queen’s Medal for Music in 2017, the youngest-ever recipient, and was appointed as a Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (MBE) in the 2013 New Year Honors in recognition of her international music career and work with musical charities throughout the United Kingdom. In addition, she has received eight honorary degrees.

She plays the “Gariel” Stradivarius (1717), courtesy of Jonathan Moulds.
Now celebrating its 128th season, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra is consistently hailed as one of the world's leading orchestras. In September 2010, renowned Italian conductor Riccardo Muti became its tenth music director. His vision for the Orchestra—to deepen its engagement with the Chicago community, to nurture its legacy while supporting a new generation of musicians, and to collaborate with visionary artists—signals a new era for the institution.

The Chicago Symphony Orchestra's distinguished history began in 1889, when Theodore Thomas, then the leading conductor in America and a recognized music pioneer, was invited by Chicago businessman Charles Norman Fay to establish a symphony orchestra here. Thomas's aim to establish a permanent orchestra with performance capabilities of the highest quality was realized at the first concerts in October 1891. Thomas served as music director until his death in 1905—just three weeks after the dedication of Orchestra Hall, the Orchestra's permanent home designed by Daniel Burnham.

Frederick Stock, recruited by Thomas to the viola section in 1895, became assistant conductor in 1899, and succeeded the Orchestra's founder. His tenure lasted thirty-seven years, from 1905 to 1942—the longest of the Orchestra's music directors. Dynamic and innovative, the Stock years saw the founding of the Civic Orchestra of Chicago, the first training orchestra in the United States affiliated with a major symphony orchestra, in 1919. Stock also established youth auditions, organized the first subscription concerts especially for children, and began a series of popular concerts.

Three distinguished conductors headed the Orchestra during the following decade: Désiré Defauw was music director from 1943 to 1947; Artur Rodzinski assumed the post in 1947–48; and Rafael Kubelík led the ensemble for three seasons from 1950 to 1953. The next ten years belonged to Fritz Reiner, whose recordings with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra are still considered performance hallmarks. It was Reiner who invited Margaret Hillis to form the Chicago Symphony Chorus in 1957. For the five seasons from 1963 to 1968, Jean Martinon held the position of music director.

Sir Georg Solti, the Orchestra's eighth music director, served from 1969 until 1991. He then held the title of music director laureate and returned to conduct the Orchestra for several weeks each season until his death in September 1997. Solti's arrival launched one of the most successful musical partnerships of our time, and the CSO made its first overseas tour to Europe in 1971 under his direction, along with numerous award-winning recordings.

Daniel Barenboim was named music director designate in January 1989, and he became the Orchestra's ninth music director in September 1991, a position he held until June 2006. His tenure was distinguished by the opening of Symphony Center in 1997, highly praised operatic productions at Orchestra Hall, numerous appearances with the Orchestra in the dual role of pianist and conductor, twenty-one international tours, and the appointment of Duain Wolfe as the Chorus's second director.

From 2006 to 2010, Bernard Haitink held the post of principal conductor, the first in CSO history. Pierre Boulez's long-standing relationship with the CSO led to his appointment as principal guest conductor in 1995. He was named Helen Regenstein Conductor Emeritus in 2006, a position he held until his death in January 2016. Only two others have served as principal guest conductors: Carlo Maria Giulini, who began to appear in Chicago regularly in the late 1950s, was named to the post in 1969, serving until 1972; Claudio Abbado held the position from 1982 to 1985.

In January 2010, Yo-Yo Ma was appointed the CSO's Judson and Joyce Green Creative Consultant by Riccardo Muti. In this role, he partners with Muti, staff, and musicians to provide program development for the Negaunee Music Institute at the CSO.

Mead Composer-in-Residence Missy Mazzoli was appointed by Riccardo Muti and begins her two-year term this fall. In addition to composing, she curates the contemporary MusicNOW series.

Since 1916, recording has been a significant part of the Orchestra’s activities. Current releases on CSO Resound, the Orchestra's independent recording label, include the Grammy Award–winning release of Verdi's Requiem led by Riccardo Muti. Recordings by the CSO have earned sixty-two Grammy awards from the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences.

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December, January & February

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For complete programming, visit cso.org.

Special: December 19
The Chicago Symphony Orchestra Brass

CSO: December 20–23
Handel Messiah
Matthew Halls conductor
Amanda Forsythe soprano
Sasha Cooke mezzo-soprano
Nicholas Phan tenor
Joshua Hopkins baritone
Chicago Symphony Chorus
Duain Wolfe chorus director

Jazz: February 1
Joshua Redman Quartet
featuring Aaron Goldberg,
Reuben Rogers &
Gregory Hutchison

Anat Cohen Tentet

Civic Orchestra: February 5
UChicago Premieres
Cliff Colnot conductor

Special: February 10
Chinese New Year Celebration
China National Peking Opera Company
Hubei Chime Bells National Chinese Orchestra

Visiting Orchestra: February 12
Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra
Daniel Harding conductor
BRAHMS Symphony No. 4
R. STRAUSS Ein Heldenleben

CSO Chamber Music: February 13
Civitas Ensemble
Yuan-Qing Yu violin
Ni Mei violin
Wei-Ting Kuo viola
Kenneth Olsen cello
J. Lawrie Bloom clarinet
Winston Choi piano
Works by Glinka, Khachaturian & Taneyev

CSO: February 14–17
Tchaikovsky Winter Dreams
Symphony & Rachmaninov Piano Concerto No. 3
Pablo Heras-Casado conductor
Simon Trpčeski piano

Film: February 15
North by Northwest
Chicago Symphony Orchestra
Richard Kaufman conductor

CSO: February 21–23
Muti Conducts the Mozart Requiem
Riccardo Muti conductor
Benedetta Torre soprano
Sara Mingardo contralto
Saimir Pirgu tenor
Mika Kares bass
Chicago Symphony Chorus
Duain Wolfe chorus director

Jazz: February 22
Jazz in the Key of Ellison
featuring Will Downing, Nona Hendryx, Quiana Lynell, Nicholas Payton and the Andy Farber Orchestra

CSO Chamber Music: February 24
FULLERTON HALL,
ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO
Pioneering Artists
Oberon Ensemble
Lei Hou violin
Qing Hou violin
Catherine Brubaker viola
Karen Basrak cello
Victor Asuncion piano
Works by Crawford Seeger, Beach & Schumann

Piano: February 24
Beatrice Rana
Works by Chopin, Ravel & Stravinsky

Special: February 28
Kodo One Earth Tour 2019: Evolution

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