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**CURATED BY MEAD COMPOSER-IN-RESIDENCE JESSIE MONTGOMERY  
CSO MUSICNOW's 2021-22 SEASON OPENS ON NOVEMBER 1  
WITH CELEBRATION OF COMPOSERS WITH CHICAGO TIES**

CHICAGO — Created in 1998 to connect Chicago audiences with the widest possible range of today's new music, the CSO MusicNOW series kicks off on November 1 with a concert at Symphony Center celebrating contemporary composers with Chicago ties. Titled "Homecoming," this presents the world premiere of a new CSO MusicNOW commission from Elijah Daniel Smith, recent works by Ted Hearne and Nathalie Joachim, and vocal compositions by series curator Jessie Montgomery, who begins a three-year tenure as the CSO's Mead Composer-in-Residence this season. The performance features guest artists including soprano Whitney Morrison, a Chicago native and recent alumna of Lyric Opera of Chicago's Ryan Opera Center, with musicians from the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Michael Lewanski, the conductor of Chicago's Ensemble Dal Niente and Curatorial Director of the city's Ear Taxi Festival 2021, leads the works by Smith and Hearne.

A winner of both the Sphinx Medal of Excellence and the ASCAP Foundation's Leonard Bernstein Award, series curator Jessie Montgomery has emerged as one of the most compelling and sought-after voices in new music today; as the *New York Times* recently reported, she is "pretty much changing the canon for American orchestras." Reflecting on her plans for CSO MusicNOW this season, Montgomery says:

"When you experience new music, you get something you've never expected before, and I think we all crave that sense of adventure. Coming to a live performance and seeing something new and fresh is a very special experience, and I think we all should take advantage of that. Our first CSO MusicNOW concert is going to feature composers with Chicago connections, including myself, because although I am a native New Yorker, I'm now a Chicago resident guest as well. We're celebrating the work of some of the amazing people who live here, who have connections to the city."

Bringing together four composers with close ties to Chicago, CSO MusicNOW's November 1 concert opens with the world premiere of *Scions of an Atlas*, commissioned by CSO MusicNOW from rising star composer Elijah Daniel Smith, a Chicago native and graduate of the Chicago Academy for the Performing Arts. Scored for 13-piece ensemble, his new composition represents a 21st-century take on the Baroque *concerto grosso*. He explains:

“Rather than focusing on any one player’s technical and musical virtuosity (although there is plenty of it to be found here), the work focuses on the ensemble’s collective virtuosity paired with the remarkable impression that a group of musicians playing aggressive yet precise material leaves on one’s memory.”

Now a President’s Fellow at Princeton University, where he is studying for a PhD in composition, Smith has had works premiered and performed by such distinguished ensembles as Contemporaneous, Earspace, Ensemble Linea, Mivos Quartet and Sō Percussion.

*Scions of an Atlas* shares the program with *Seen* by Grammy-nominated Haitian-American composer Nathalie Joachim, a familiar face on Chicago’s new music scene. Commissioned by the Phillips Collection in Washington, DC, *Seen* draws inspiration from Whitfield Lovell’s *Kin Series*, a set of conté drawings depicting unknown African Americans through symbolic found objects. Building on this exploration of cultural identity and memory, *Seen* comprises five intimate musical portraits for wind quintet.

The program concludes with a performance of *Authority* by Chicago native Ted Hearne, a Pulitzer Prize finalist whose output has been recognized as “staggering in its impact” (*New Yorker*). A substantial work for ten-piece ensemble, *Authority* is written as a series of ten overlapping movements to be played without stops. It premiered in 2019 under the leadership of Lewanski, who conducts the ensemble in this performance.

The latter two pieces bookend two of Montgomery’s own vocal works. A tribute to New York’s Lower East Side, the neighborhood where she was raised, *Loisaida, My Love* takes its text from an unpublished 1974 poem by Bittman “Bimbo” Rivas, who coined the name “Loisaida” to honor his home turf and its Puerto Rican community. Originally commissioned for Orchestra of St. Luke’s 2017 Five Boroughs Festival, Montgomery’s setting of the poem is scored for voice and cello and receives its Chicago premiere in the MusicNOW performance by Whitney Morrison and CSO cellist Katinka Kleijn.

A work for voice and string quintet, Montgomery’s three *Lunar Songs* were commissioned by ASCAP for the 2019 Leonard Bernstein centennial and written in collaboration with poet J. Mae Barizo, whose work has appeared in the *Boston Review* and *Los Angeles Review of Books*. It was a performance showcasing both *Loisaida, My Love* and *Lunar Songs* that prompted *New York Music Daily* to marvel: “Whoever thinks that new chamber music doesn’t have any social relevance missed this show.” Soprano Morrison joins CSO musicians Qing Hou (violin), Lawrence Neuman (viola), Katinka Kleijn (cello) and Robert Kassinger (bass) for the CSO MusicNOW program, following a preview performance of *Lunar Songs* at Chicago’s 2021 Ear Taxi Festival.

### **About Mead Composer-in-Residence Jessie Montgomery**

As Mead Composer-in-Residence, Jessie Montgomery serves as curator of CSO MusicNOW through the 2023-24 season. The 2021-22 season will include two concerts in the Spring on March 14 and May 23 2022 – both performances will be at the Harris Theater. She will also receive commissions to write three new orchestral works for the Chicago Symphony and a number of new chamber pieces for CSO MusicNOW.

Montgomery is already fast developing a presence in Chicago. CSO MusicNOW’s 2018-19 season featured both her string quartet *Break Away* and the world premiere of her string ensemble arrangement of Julius Eastman’s *Gay Guerrilla*, while CSOtv’s 2020-21 digital season saw virtual performances of her

orchestral work *Starburst*, by the Civic Orchestra of Chicago, and her chamber piece *Strum*, the string orchestral version of which also received a live CSO performance in June 2021. This season, Chicago audiences can look forward to performances of her 2017 orchestral work *Coincident Dances*, in October subscription concerts led by Manfred Honeck, and of her new CSO commission, scheduled to receive its world premiere under the baton of Riccardo Muti next spring.

### **Tickets and patron information**

Tickets for CSO MusicNOW's "Homecoming" concert on November 1 are \$20. Patron Services representatives are available to assist with ticket purchases by web chat at [cso.org](http://cso.org), by calling 312-294-3000 (Tuesday–Friday, 10am–4pm), or by emailing [patronservices@cso.org](mailto:patronservices@cso.org).

The performance takes place at Symphony Center (220 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago) with safety measures in place. Proof of vaccination or negative COVID-19 test are required for entry, and masks are required inside Symphony Center. More patron information is available at [cso.org/safeandsound](http://cso.org/safeandsound).

All artists and programs are subject to change.

The Mead Composer-in-Residence at the Chicago Symphony Orchestra is endowed through a generous gift from Cindy Sargent and the late Sally Mead Hands.

The CSO thanks the following donors who provide major support for new music programming: the Zell Family Foundation, Cindy Sargent, the Sally Mead Hands Foundation and the Julian Family Foundation.

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### **CSO MusicNOW**

**Monday, November 1 at 7:00 p.m.**

**Symphony Center (220 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago)**

#### **"Homecoming"**

Musicians from the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and guest artists

Michael Lewanski, conductor

Whitney Morrison, soprano

Program curated by Jessie Montgomery, Mead Composer-in-Residence

SMITH: *Scions of an Atlas* (World Premiere of CSO MusicNOW Commission)

MONTGOMERY: *Loisaida, My Love*

MONTGOMERY: *Lunar Songs*

JOACHIM: *Seen*

HEARNE: *Authority*

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### **Chicago Symphony Orchestra: [cso.org](http://cso.org) and [experience.cso.org](http://experience.cso.org)**

Founded by Theodore Thomas in 1891, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra is consistently hailed as one of the greatest orchestras in the world. Since 2010, the pre-eminent conductor Riccardo Muti has served as its 10<sup>th</sup> music director. Jessie Montgomery is Mead Composer-in-Residence, and Hilary Hahn is CSO Artist-in-Residence.

From baroque through contemporary music, the CSO commands a vast repertoire. Its renowned musicians annually perform more than 150 concerts, most at Symphony Center in Chicago and, each summer, at the

suburban Ravinia Festival. They regularly tour nationally and internationally. Since 1892, the CSO has made 62 international tours, performing in 29 countries on five continents.

People around the globe listen to weekly radio broadcasts of CSO concerts and recordings on the WFMT radio network and online at [cso.org/radio](http://cso.org/radio). Recordings by the CSO have earned 63 Grammy Awards, including two in 2011 for Muti's recording with the CSO and Chorus of Verdi's *Messa da Requiem* (Muti's first of eight releases with the CSO to date). Find details on these and many other CSO recordings at [cso.org/resound](http://cso.org/resound).

The CSO is part of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra Association, which also includes the Chicago Symphony Chorus (Duain Wolfe, Director and Conductor) and the Civic Orchestra of Chicago (Ken-David Masur, Principal Conductor), a training ensemble for emerging professionals. Through its prestigious Symphony Center Presents series, the CSOA presents guest artists and ensembles from a variety of genres—classical, jazz, world and contemporary.

The Negaunee Music Institute at the CSO offers community and education programs that annually engage more than 200,000 people of diverse ages and backgrounds. Through the Institute and other activities, including a free annual concert led by Muti, the CSO is committed to using the power of music to create connections and build community.

The CSO is supported by thousands of patrons, volunteers and institutional and individual donors. The CSO's music director position is endowed in perpetuity by a generous gift from the Zell Family Foundation. The Negaunee Foundation provides generous support in perpetuity for the work of the Negaunee Music Institute.