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## **CSO MUSICNOW 2022/23 SERIES CONTINUES ON NOVEMBER 21 WITH AWARD-WINNING MUSICIANS XAVIER FOLEY AND MARK O'CONNOR**

### **Program to Celebrate Living Composers and Kindred Spirits Works**

CHICAGO — Created to connect Chicago audiences with the widest possible range of today's new music, the 2022/23 Season of CSO MusicNOW continues November 21. The program, titled "Common Ground," highlights the works of two composer-performers: bassist Xavier Foley, a Sphinx Competition and Young Concert Artist award winner, and violinist Mark O'Connor, a multiple Grammy and Country Music Award (CMA) winner. CSO Mead Composer-in-Residence and violinist Jessie Montgomery, who was recently named Musical America's 2023 Composer of the Year, curates the CSO MusicNOW series and is in the second year of her three-year appointment that continues through 2024.

Reflecting on her plans for the second program of the CSO MusicNOW series, Montgomery says:

"I am so pleased to welcome Xavier Foley and Mark O'Connor for this program. Bringing them to Chicago to collaborate with the musicians here at the CSO, especially on their own works, is a rare opportunity for audiences to experience the connection between the musician as a performer and composer and how the composer really embodies their own music. On this concert we will also present the first of several MusicNOW commissions this season with Xavier Foley's new work, *Good Times*."

The connection between composers Mark O'Connor, Xavier Foley and Jessie Montgomery dates back to 2015. Mark O'Connor recalls, "I came to know Jessie and Xavier in 2015, when they toured my string symphony 'Elevations,' a work which musically describes how the American violin (the fiddle) was equally influenced by Euro American, African American and Native American populations. As members of the

Sphinx Virtuosi, they performed my composition, along with their own works, in about 30 cities across the country and at Carnegie Hall. They were all masterful performances of my string piece, and I really couldn't imagine it better played than what the ensemble did with it."

The November 21 program opens with Foley's Irish Fantasy, arranged for violin and bass, first premiered at World Café Live in 2014. Foley, who counts O'Connor among his ongoing musical influences, also took inspiration for this work from sources ranging from the Irish folksong "The Clergyman's Lamentation" by Tulough O'Carolan (1670-1738) to themes from the Nintendo video game *Super Mario World 2*. The program continues with his Etude No. 10, *The Dance*, and a solo work for double bass. Foley's work *Good Times*, a MusicNOW Commission, will receive its world premiere on this program. The piece is scored for two violins, viola, cello and bass.

Born in Marietta, Georgia, Foley is an alumnus of the Perlman Music Program and earned his Bachelor of Music from the Curtis Institute of Music, studying with Edgar Meyer and Hal Robinson. He is the winner of the prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant, was recognized on New York WQXR's "19 for 19" Artists to Watch list and featured on PBS Thirteen's NYC-ARTs. As a composer, Foley was co-commissioned by Carnegie Hall and the Sphinx Organization for a new work entitled "For Justice and Peace" for violin, bass and string orchestra, which was recently performed at venues including Carnegie Hall. Foley won the 2016 Young Concert Artists International Auditions, along with four performance prizes and a Pailko Foundation Fellowship and First Prizes at Astral's 2014 National Auditions, Sphinx's 2014 Competition, and the 2011 International Society of Bassists Competition.

Also featured on this program are two works by Mark O'Connor, an American fiddle player who has won three Grammys and seven CMA awards, as well as several national fiddle, guitar and mandolin champion titles. His distinguished career has also included performances for several U.S. presidents and recording projects with his multiple Grammy-winning New Nashville Cats, and the Sony Classical recordings *Appalachia Waltz* and *Appalachian Journey* with Yo-Yo Ma, which sold more than 1 million CDs. O'Connor's Fiddle Concerto has become the most-performed violin concerto composed in the last 50 years and his groundbreaking ninth concerto, *The Improvised Violin Concerto*, was recorded in Boston's Symphony Hall. He is the author of a series of educational books called *The O'Connor Method*, which detail the fastest growing violin method in the country with many young string players crediting the O'Connor books for helping them learn to play stringed instruments. The O'Connor Method features American music styles, creativity, cultural diversity and western classical technical training.

The first of the O'Connor works on the program is String Quartet No. 3 (Old-Time), which was composed to mark 400 years since the days of the first European

settlements. The piece was commissioned by the Hudson River Quadricentennial Music Project and premiered in April 2009. The old-time fiddling that dominated the area of the Catskill Mountains is the musical language that was utilized in creating this string quartet. The phrases of the piece have technical twists and turns that become unique while remaining true to the tradition. Mark O'Connor will perform this piece with CSO violinist Matous Michal, CSO violist Danny Lai and guest musician and cellist Chris Wild.

The program concludes with a performance of *Strings and Threads* Suite by Mark O'Connor. The 13-movement work, scored for violin and string orchestra will feature the composer and Maggie O'Connor on violins and Foley on bass. The individual tunes highlight various folk styles appearing in a chronological order, representing the evolution of American folk music as well as mirroring O'Connor's family's migration from Ireland and Holland to America. *Strings and Threads* musically describes how folk music styles hundreds of years apart are interconnected, possessing a common thread from an Irish reel to jazz. The piece was commissioned in 1986 by the Tennessee Dance Theatre and first performed at Nashville's Summer Lights Festival. Violinist and American fiddler Maggie O'Connor is a Grammy Award-winning musician and earned her Bachelors and Master's degrees in violin performance from the Peabody Institute of the John's Hopkins University.

The remaining two concerts in the series take place on Monday evenings at 7:00 p.m. — [February 20, 2023](#) and [April 24, 2023](#) — in Orchestra Hall at Symphony Center, 220 S. Michigan Avenue.

### **Commissioned CSO MusicNOW Artwork**

In celebration of the 25th season of the CSO MusicNOW series, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra Association commissioned original artwork that corresponds to each of the four programs. Created by Chicago-area artist, illustrator and graphic designer [Donovan Foote](#), the second artwork is titled "Kindred Spirits."

About the second of the four works, Foote says, "the goal with each focal instrument was to create something comprised of all or some of the featured instruments. This instrument is assembled from two violins at slightly different angles with a paper double bass headstock. To suggest the traditional fiddle sounds heard in O'Connor and Foley's music, other collage elements frame the instrument in Celtic knotwork, an Appalachian landform map, as well as stars and stripes. An image that, like the music, feels familiar, but modern."

The CSO MusicNOW poster designs by Donovan Foote are available for purchase as framed and unframed prints at [symphonystore.com/musicnow](https://symphonystore.com/musicnow).

### **Postconcert Experience**

At each of the CSO MusicNOW concerts this season, audiences can mingle with CSO musicians and composers following the performance in the Rotunda at Symphony Center. This informal postconcert event includes music, refreshments and giveaways.

### **Tickets and Patron Information**

Tickets for individual CSO MusicNOW concerts start at \$30. Tickets for all CSO MusicNOW concerts can be purchased by contacting Patron Services. Representatives are available to assist with ticket packages by web chat at [cso.org](https://www.cso.org), by calling 312-294-3000 (Tuesday–Friday, 10 a.m.–4 p.m.), or by emailing [patronservices@cso.org](mailto:patronservices@cso.org).

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<sup>t</sup> and the late Sally Mead Hands.

Major support for CSO MusicNOW is generously provided by the Zell Family Foundation, Cindy Sargent<sup>t</sup>, the Sally Mead Hands Foundation and the Julian Family Foundation.

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

Jessie Montgomery, who begins her second season as the CSO's Mead Composer-in-Residence in 2022/23, serves as curator of the CSO MusicNOW series. Montgomery will also receive CSO MusicNOW commissions in 2022/23 and 2023/24 to write small ensemble works.

Montgomery has already developed a significant presence in Chicago. The CSO MusicNOW 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. Montgomery's own music was also featured in CSO MusicNOW concerts during the 2021/22 Season. In April 2022, Riccardo Muti led the world premiere of her CSO-commissioned work, *Hymn for Everyone*, the first of three works she will write for the Orchestra during her appointment as Mead Composer-in-Residence.

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**CSO MusicNOW**

Monday, November 21, 2022, 7:00 p.m.

**Musicians from the Chicago Symphony Orchestra**

**Jessie Montgomery**, Mead Composer-in-Residence

**Mark O'Connor**, violin

**Maggie O'Connor**, violin

**Xavier Foley**, double bass

FOLEY *Irish Fantasy*

FOLEY *Etude No. 10 The Dance*

O'CONNOR *String Quartet No. 3*

FOLEY *Good Times*

(World Premiere, CSO MusicNOW  
Commission)

O'CONNOR *Strings and Threads Suite*

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**Chicago Symphony Orchestra: [cso.org](http://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 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.