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**CHICAGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA'S FIRST PERFORMANCES OF
PHILHARMONIA FANTASTIQUE: THE MAKING OF THE ORCHESTRA
BY FORMER MEAD COMPOSER-IN-RESIDENCE MASON BATES
ARE PART OF SCHOOL AND FAMILY CONCERTS IN MAY**

**New Sony Classical Soundtrack Recording
Featuring the Chicago Symphony Orchestra Available Now**

CHICAGO — The Chicago Symphony Orchestra Association (CSOA) announces details for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's first performances of *Philharmonia Fantastique: The Making of the Orchestra*, written by [Mason Bates, former CSO Mead Composer-in-Residence and composer of the Grammy Award-winning opera *The \(R\)evolution of Steve Jobs*](#). The new work, a CSO co-commission with five other U.S. orchestras, represents a collaboration between Bates and multi-Oscar and BAFTA-winning sound designer Gary Rydstrom and Oscar-nominated Hollywood animator, Jim Capobianco. The 25-minute concerto for orchestra and animated film features the mercurial character "Sprite" who explores the different instrument families of the orchestra and interacts with the conductor and musicians, further connecting stage and screen. *Philharmonia Fantastique: The Making of the Orchestra* is part of School Concerts taking place [May 12 and 13](#) at Symphony Center, with more than 2,000 Chicago Public School students attending with complimentary tickets and transportation offered through the Negaunee Music Institute at the CSO. CSO for Kids: Family Matinee concerts featuring the new work take place on [May 14 at 11:00 a.m. and 12:45 p.m.](#) Conductor Edwin Outwater leads these CSO concerts which also include excerpts from Bates' *Mothership* and music by Walker, Fung, Gounod and Dukas, with ticket information available at [cso.org](#). The soundtrack for the animated film, which is scheduled for release in theaters and on a major streaming platform later this year, was recorded by Outwater and the CSO in Orchestra Hall at Symphony Center in February 2021 and is now available as a [Sony Classical release](#).

Philharmonia Fantastique was created for a new generation of listeners in the tradition of works like Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf* and Britten's *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra*, which introduce the audience to the unique qualities and capabilities of the different instruments in the orchestra. Its name is a nod to *Symphonie Fantastique*, composer Hector Berlioz's epic

achievement in orchestration and instrumental color.

Philharmonia Fantastique portrays the four families of the orchestra as distinct entities, each with their own unique sound worlds and musical motifs: the slinky, sophisticated noir-jazz of the woodwinds; the lush romanticism of the strings; the bold techno-fanfares of the brass; and the percussion section “drum circle” in all its versatility. Ultimately the work’s message is one of unity: the diverse instruments of the orchestra are most powerful when working together as one giant instrument. The story unfolds through music and visuals alone, without narration, creating a piece without language barriers that is accessible and entertaining for audiences of all ages.

Composer Mason Bates explains:

“The Sprite has to figure out a way to bring the families together, and the way they do that is to learn to play each other’s themes. That became a key inspiration for us as the piece unfolded. When an orchestra plays, the integration of so much engineering into one giant instrument is a real model of ‘unity from diversity.’ All these different materials and technologies – and people – syncing together to make beautiful music is a real model for how we should all behave as people.”

The Chicago Symphony Orchestra’s co-commission of *Philharmonia Fantastique: The Making of the Orchestra* is in recognition of the 100th anniversary of the founding of the concert series for children that began in 1919. The series was established by the Orchestra’s second music director, Frederick Stock and this programming continues today, along with extensive educational and community engagement programs produced by the Negaunee Music Institute at the CSO. The Chicago Symphony Orchestra was originally scheduled to present the world premiere performances in March 2020, which were rescheduled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. During the pandemic, Bates, Outwater and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra came together in Chicago in February 2021 to rehearse and record the original soundtrack for the new work, overcoming challenges and exploring creative solutions to bring this music to life.

Read “Recording in a time of COVID,” Bates account of the recording session in Chicago, [here](#).

Watch [“Making of *Philharmonia Fantastique* with the CSO”](#).

Watch [Official Trailer](#) for *Philharmonia Fantastique: The Making of the Orchestra*.

For CSO for Kids: Family matinee concerts at Symphony Center, proof of vaccination is required for all patrons 5 years of age and older. Currently, masks are required when inside Symphony Center. Ticket information is available at [cso.org](https://www.cso.org) or by calling 312.294.3000 and additional patron and safety protocol information is available at [cso.org/safeandsound](https://www.cso.org/safeandsound).

Artists and programs are subject to change.

Philharmonia Fantastique: The Making of the Orchestra was commissioned by Chicago Symphony Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, Dallas Symphony Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra and American Youth Symphony.

The CSO's co-commission was made possible through the Helen Zell Commissioning Program.

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About the Artists

Composer **Mason Bates**, whose opera *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs* was recognized as best opera recording at the 2019 Grammy Awards, also serves as the first composer-in-residence of the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. His music fuses innovative orchestral writing, imaginative narrative forms, the harmonies of jazz and the rhythms of techno. His symphonic music is the first to receive widespread acceptance for its unique integration of electronic sounds, and he was named the most-performed composer of his generation in a recent survey of American music. His activities as a DJ have highly informed not only his compositional approach, but his distinctive curating projects. Bates has become a visible advocate for bringing new music to new spaces, whether through institutional partnerships such as his former position as Mead Composer-in-Residence with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (2010-2015), or through his club/classical project Mercury Soul, which transforms commercial clubs into exciting hybrid musical events. He has also composed for films, including Gus Van Sant's *The Sea of Trees* starring Matthew McConaughey and Naomi Watts.

Writer and director **Gary Rydstrom** has been nominated for 18 Academy Awards, winning seven for his work in film sound on films including *Jurassic Park*, *Titanic*, and *Saving Private Ryan*. As an animation director, he was nominated for an Academy Award for his Pixar short film *Lifted*, and in 2015 directed *Strange Magic*, a Lucasfilm/Disney musical that features innovative integration of music and animation.

Story artist and animator **Jim Capobianco** has worked on many major animated films, including *Lion King*, *Fantasia 2000*, *Finding Nemo* and *Inside Out*. He received an Academy Award nomination for Best Original Screenplay for *Ratatouille*. His love of traditional animation is evident in the imaginative end credits he created for *Wall-E*, in his Pixar short *Your Friend the Rat*, and in *Leonardo*, a hand-drawn animation that has been screened at numerous international film festivals. He also supervised the animation sequences for Disney's 2018 live-action feature film *Mary Poppins*.

Chicago Symphony Orchestra: 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 10th 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. 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.

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.