Wednesday, January 6, 2016, at 6:30 (Afterwork Masterworks, performed with no intermission)

Jonathan Nott Conductor
Johannes Moser Cello

Haydn
Cello Concerto in C Major

Strauss
Ein Heldenleben, Op. 40

Robert Chen, violin

The Chicago Symphony Orchestra is grateful to WBBM Newsradio 780 and 105.9 FM for its generous support of the Afterwork Masterworks series.

Thursday, January 7, 2016, at 8:00
Friday, January 8, 2016, at 1:30
Saturday, January 9, 2016, at 8:00

Jonathan Nott Conductor
Johannes Moser Cello

Brahms
Academic Festival Overture, Op. 80

Haydn
Cello Concerto in C Major
Moderato
Adagio
Allegro molto

JOHANNES MOSER

INTERMISSION

Strauss
Ein Heldenleben, Op. 40

Robert Chen, violin

This work is part of the CSO Premiere Retrospective, which is generously sponsored by the Sargent Family Foundation.

This program is partially supported by grants from the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency, and the National Endowment for the Arts.
Johannes Brahms
Born May 7, 1833, Hamburg, Germany.
Died April 3, 1897, Vienna, Austria.

**Academic Festival Overture, Op. 80**

This is the music Brahms wrote to make up for his bad manners. In 1879, when he was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Breslau, Brahms mailed a postcard expressing his thanks. Bernhard Scholz, the recipient and also a friend, pointed out that, in all fairness, the university expected a “doctoral symphony [or] at the very least a solemn ode.” More than a year later (punctuality also was not one of his strengths), Brahms wrote this far from solemn overture as an expression of thanks to Breslau.

It is not clear where Brahms, who never attended a university, got the idea of honoring academic life with a medley of drinking songs. He was probably thinking of two months in 1853, when he visited his friend, the great violinist Joseph Joachim, at the university in Göttingen, and enjoyed student life without cracking a book. Brahms described the overture as a potpourri of student songs in the style of Franz von Suppé, the popular composer of operettas (his *Light Cavalry* Overture is still a regular item on pops concerts). The *Academic Festival* Overture is particularly breezy and unbuttoned for Brahms, and he makes use of the largest orchestra he would ever employ, including three trumpets—for the only time in his career—as well as cymbals, triangle, and bass drum. Brahms worried that his title sounded too dry—Scholz agreed that it was “damned academic and boring”—but he thought Scholz’s suggestion, the *Viadrina* Overture, even worse. (Besides, no one knew what it meant. It is the ancient name for the river that flows through Breslau.)

Brahms derives most of his thematic material from four popular German songs, including one about building stately mansions (played like a great chorale); a hymn to the fatherland; the traditional freshman initiation song (it is begun, in a moment of wonderful silliness, by two bassoons); and the often-quoted thirteenth-century tune “Gaudeamus igitur.” “Let us live then,” its text reads, “and be glad while youth is still before us.” Brahms sets it boisterously, without a touch of the nostalgia that often comes with middle age.

**COMPOSED**
1880

**FIRST PERFORMANCE**
December 6, 1880; Berlin, Germany (private)

January 4, 1881; Breslau, Poland (public)

**FIRST CSO PERFORMANCES**
October 28 & 29, 1892, Auditorium Theatre. Theodore Thomas conducting

August 5, 1938, Ravinia Festival. Eugene Ormandy conducting

**MOST RECENT CSO PERFORMANCES**
November 30, 1998, Orchestra Hall.
Hugh Wolff conducting

August 8, 2013, Ravinia Festival. Itzhak Perlman conducting

**INSTRUMENTATION**
two flutes and piccolo, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons and contra-bassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, triangle, strings

**APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME**
10 minutes

**CSO RECORDINGS**
1963. Paul Hindemith conducting. CSO (Chicago Symphony Orchestra: The First 100 Years)

1963. Paul Hindemith conducting. VAI (video)


1982. Eugene Ormandy conducting. CSO (From the Archives, vol. 5: Guests in the House)

1993. Daniel Barenboim conducting. Erato
Joseph Haydn
Born March 31, 1732, Rohrau, Austria.
Died May 31, 1809, Vienna, Austria.

Cello Concerto in C Major, Hob. VIIb:1

Until 1961, there was just one cello concerto, in D major, by Haydn. It was long treasured by audiences and cellists alike as the single work of its kind from the great Viennese classical triumvirate—neither Mozart nor Beethoven wrote cello concertos. An earlier cello concerto by Haydn, in C major, thought to have disappeared during the composer's lifetime, had been given up for lost. That concerto was listed—along with the opening snatch of music—in both of Haydn's own catalogs: the “draft catalog” he began in 1765 and added to periodically; and the comprehensive 1805 catalog disarmingly titled “A list of all the compositions which I can at present recall having composed from my eighteenth until my seventy-third year” (which does not exactly inspire confidence in its comprehensibility).

Then, in 1961, Oldřich Pulkert, the archivist of the Prague National Museum, uncovered a set of parts for the C major cello concerto that had been lost for nearly two centuries. The parts were apparently written by Joseph Weigl, the principal cello in Haydn’s orchestra from 1761 to 1768. (The run on Haydn discoveries continued. A mass dating from 1768, and lost for more than two hundred years, turned up in 1983. It was widely considered the most exciting event in modern Haydn scholarship since the discovery of the C major cello concerto. Then in 1993, six keyboard sonatas—turned over to a local music teacher by an elderly woman in Münster, Germany—were immediately proclaimed as genuine and then, almost as quickly, deemed fakes.)

The frequent revelations of modern Haydn scholarship have not dimmed our pleasure in the newly found music itself. This score is as engaging as any concerto Haydn wrote, including the popular E-flat trumpet concerto, and it is a welcome and worthy companion to the D major concerto. Unlike either of those pieces, the C major concerto is an early work, written during Haydn’s first four years working for the Esterházy family, when he often favored his players with prominent solos in his symphonies and treated his best musicians to concertos written with them in mind. This cello concerto was composed for Weigl, a good friend, and, by all accounts, an excellent musician. We do not know when he first played it.

Although Haydn never found the concerto form as congenial or stimulating as Mozart, his best works in the genre, like the C major cello concerto, are supremely assured pieces, always sensitive to the capabilities of the solo instrument and every bit as brilliantly crafted as the symphonies. Certainly this expansive Moderato, with its winning energy and lyricism, is as impressive as the opening of any early Haydn symphony. And the slow movement, an eloquent aria for cello with string accompaniment, would be welcome in any of the operas Haydn would soon write for the Eszterháza court. If it is the finale that sounds most like Haydn to us today, it is because we recognize the quick wit and down-to-earth charm that characterize so much of his best-known music.

**COMPOSED**

1761 to 1765, manuscript lost

**FIRST PERFORMANCE OF REDISCOVERED SCORE**

May 19, 1962, Prague

**FIRST CSO PERFORMANCES**

December 3 & 4, 1964, Orchestra Hall. János Starker as soloist, Jean Martinon conducting

**MOST RECENT CSO PERFORMANCES**

July 15, 1972, Ravinia Festival.

János Starker as soloist, István Kertész conducting

April 29, 20, May 1 & 4, 2010, Orchestra Hall. Pavel Gomziakov as soloist, Trevor Pinnock conducting

**INSTRUMENTATION**

solo cello, two oboes, two horns, strings

**APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME**

25 minutes
Richard Strauss
Born June 11, 1864, Munich, Germany.
Died September 8, 1949, Garmisch, Germany.

Ein Heldenleben, Op. 40
Performed as part of the CSO Premiere Retrospective

In 1898, after lending music of lasting brilliance to heroes taken from the pages of Shakespeare, Nietzsche, and Cervantes, and to two great legendary characters—Don Juan and Till Eulenspiegel—Richard Strauss could think of no other subject more suitable than himself. At the top of his last great tone poem he wrote “Ein Heldenleben” (a hero’s life, or a heroic life), leaving little doubt of the title character’s identity. As Strauss told Romain Rolland, “I do not see why I should not compose a symphony about myself; I find myself quite as interesting as Napoleon or Alexander.” The mention of Napoleon was no coincidence, for Ein Heldenleben was Strauss’s response to the Eroica, Beethoven’s Napoleon-inspired symphony—“admittedly without a funeral march, but yet in E-flat, with lots of horns, which are always a yardstick of heroism.”

Those who knew Strauss thought him an unlikely hero. There was nothing about him—apart from his own dazzling music—to compare with the bold and fearless character who throws open the first page of this score and then holds our attention for one enormous paragraph of music—the 116 measures of nonstop orchestral exhibitionism that Strauss labels The Hero. The moment of silence that follows is broken by the squabbling of the woodwinds, introducing The Hero’s Adversaries. This is Strauss’s depiction of his critics, and it is rendered with such hatred (Strauss requests “snarling” oboes and “hissing” cymbals) that we would think he had never received a good review in his life. (In fact, aside from his first opera Guntram, Strauss probably had read more glowing reviews of his music than any major composer of the day.)

Next we meet Strauss’s wife, Pauline Strauss de Ahna, an accomplished soprano who sings here with the voice of a solo violin. Richard had met Pauline de Ahna in the summer of 1887, when his uncle suggested he give lessons to the neighbors’ daughter, a young woman with a generous voice and a boisterous temperament. She needed coaching and discipline; she found romance instead. Pauline was a complex woman—wildly impetuous and often fractious and stubborn—but Richard quickly realized he couldn’t live without her. She gave him advice and encouragement, and she was the only critic who mattered to him. “She is the spice that keeps me going,” the composer later told their children. As Strauss admitted, Pauline was a “very complicated” subject to portray, “different each

| COMPOSED | 1897–December 1898 |
| FIRST PERFORMANCE | March 3, 1899; Frankfurt, Germany. The composer conducting |
| 125 FIRST CSO PERFORMANCES U.S. premiere | March 9 & 10, 1900, Auditorium Theatre. Theodore Thomas conducting |
| August 3, 1939, Ravinia Festival. Artur Rodzinski conducting |
| MOST RECENT CSO PERFORMANCES | July 24, 1998, Ravinia Festival. Edo de Waart conducting |
| November 17 & 19, 2011, Orchestra Hall. Semyon Bychkov conducting |
| November 18 & 20, 2011, Orchestra Hall. Semyon Bychkov conducting (Beyond the Score) |
| APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME | 46 minutes |
| INSTRUMENTATION | three flutes and piccolo, four oboes and English horn, two clarinets, E-flat clarinet and bass clarinet, three bassoons and contrabassoon, eight horns, two piccolo trumpets and three trumpets, three trombones, two tubas, timpani, tam-tam, triangle, cymbals, snare drum, tenor drum, bass drum, two harps, strings (including a prominent violin solo) |
| CSO RECORDINGS | 1954. Fritz Reiner conducting. RCA |
| 1990. Daniel Barenboim conducting. Erato |
| 2008. Bernard Haitink conducting. CSO Resound |
Following the success of the U.S. premieres of Richard Strauss’s *Till Eulenspiegel’s Merry Pranks* on November 15, 1895; *Also sprach Zarathustra* on February 5, 1897; and *Don Quixote* on January 6, 1899; Theodore Thomas added a fourth to the list, leading the Chicago Orchestra in the composer’s *Ein Heldenleben* on March 9, 1900.

The program that week also included selections from Beethoven’s *The Creatures of Prometheus* and Ninth Symphony (omitting the fourth movement, “owing to the present unavailability of the adjuncts necessary to its performance”) and Siegfried’s Funeral March from Wagner’s *Götterdämmerung*. The program book was dedicated almost exclusively to the description of *Ein Heldenleben*—Beethoven’s symphony and Wagner’s opera “are both so well known as to require no comment at this time”—and included numerous and extensive musical examples.

“The magnitude and complexity of this work are so extraordinarily great as to make it next to impossible to pass anything like final judgment upon it without deeper reflection and further study than a single hearing affords. It may be said, however, that this gigantic piece made a profound impression upon the musicians who were present in addition to its achievement of a fine popular success, the applause being loud at its conclusion and continuing for a considerable length of time,” wrote the reviewer in the *Chicago Tribune*. “As to the performance of this mighty composition, there can be but one verdict, it was virtuoso playing, of the most advanced description. The score is one of almost unparalleled difficulty, both for the individual players and for the orchestra collectively. But under Mr. Thomas’s steady and commanding baton the whole was carried to a successful and brilliant culmination.”

“It is not too much to say that this descriptive writing is as fine as any ever given to the world. The new Strauss composition was a decided success,” concurred the *Chicago Chronicle*. “This tone poem is one of the most striking and at times startling examples of descriptive composition ever yet presented by a composer.”

Frank Villella is the director of the Rosenthal Archives. For more information regarding the Chicago Symphony Orchestra’s anniversary season, please visit cso.org/125moments.
minute from what she was a minute earlier.” The Hero’s Companion, as Strauss calls this mercurial section, is a full-length portrait, and it is not always complimentary. Certainly Pauline noticed that her husband painted himself in a warm, flattering light, while “her” violin solo is marked, at various points: “flippant,” “angry,” and “nagging.” But no one who knew Pauline ever took issue with Richard’s appraisal, though many wondered why she put up with such treatment. (Years later, when she was portrayed in an even less complimentary way in the opera Intermezzo, she told the soprano Lotte Lehmann, who sang her role, “I don’t give a damn.”) Nevertheless, theirs was a great love match, and sumptuous love music soon overpowers her voice and encompasses the entire orchestra.

The hero’s adversaries again raise their sharp voices, and he prepares to attack. The Battle Scene is noisy and thrillingly chaotic for a very long stretch, and for many years, this was one of the most notoriously difficult passages in all music; the technical advances of the ensuing decades have scarcely softened its impact. Gradually the hero is strengthened by thoughts of love and he rises above his adversaries. A broad ascent to victory is marked by the return of the opening theme, now at full cry, and the Eroica horns Strauss promised. (The way they dart around the big tune is particularly bold.) At the climax, the horns let loose with the great, vaulting signature tune from Don Juan, prompting the appearance of other themes from Don Juan and Also sprach Zarathustra before the music gradually fades.

In a quiet daydream (a gently swaying barcarole), Strauss recalls music from all his previous tone poems as well as many of his songs, and even (or perhaps most pointedly) the failed Guntram. These are The Hero’s Works of Peace. (“Of course I haven’t taken part in any battles,” Strauss wrote to his publisher years later, “but the only way I could express works of peace was through themes of my own.”) The critics reappear briefly; Strauss rises up against them in one last tirade. The final section is labeled The Hero’s Escape from the World and Fulfillment. The music now slips into a simple pastorale, with an English horn calling out over a quiet drum tap. The violins repeatedly hint at a new theme, which finally rises from total silence—a melody so noble and disarming that we do not recognize it as the same sequence of notes first uttered rather ineloquently by Pauline. It’s one of Strauss’s greatest themes, all the more moving for coming so near the end, like a grand benediction. There is one last, disruptive assault from the critics, and then the loving voice of Pauline, obviously quite undone by some of her husband’s most sublime music.

Ein Heldenleben wasn’t the last of Strauss’s family portraits. Five years later, with the Domestic Symphony, he became the twentieth century’s first great realist painter, depicting life at home with Pauline—bathing the baby, making love, quarrelling—with surgical precision and in painstaking detail. (Strauss boasted that he had reached the point where he could differentiate musically between a knife and a fork.) And with the operatic comedy Intermezzo, even Strauss wondered if he had gone too far, blurring the line between public and private in ways that made audiences uncomfortable and angered his own family.

Today, of course, it’s easier to view Ein Heldenleben as an innocent orchestral fantasy—simply to enjoy its abundant musical pleasures. Strauss’s hero and his companion are still vividly real, but they aren’t real-life people to us. As the art historian Ernst Gombrich wrote, “The consummate artist conjures up the image of a human being that will live on in the richness of its emotional texture when the sitter and his vanities have long been forgotten.” Both Richard and Pauline Strauss have now been dead for more than half a century. Among the dozens of Strausses in the Munich phone book, there is still a Richard—the composer’s grandson, born twenty-eight years after Heldenleben premiered. Another grandson, Christian, lives down the road from the Strauss family house in Garmisch. They are the only people who could conceivably care how their family is portrayed in Heldenleben. For the rest of us, this music holds the same fascination as any great portrait—for a few moments we feel we actually know these people, we enjoy the thrill of peering into another time and place, and then we return to our own lives.

Phillip Huscher has been the program annotator for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra since 1987.