The Chicago Symphony Orchestra welcomes Gennady Rozhdestvensky, who has graciously agreed to conduct these concerts while CSO Music Director Riccardo Muti recovers from a hip operation. Please note that Ligeti’s *Ramifications* has been replaced by Sibelius’s *Rakastava*.

**PROGRAM**

**ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-FIFTH SEASON**

**Chicago Symphony Orchestra**

**Riccardo Muti** Zell Music Director

**Yo-Yo Ma** Judson and Joyce Green Creative Consultant

Thursday, February 11, 2016, at 8:00
Friday, February 12, 2016, at 8:00
Saturday, February 13, 2016, at 8:00

**Gennady Rozhdestvensky** Conductor

**Stephen Williamson** Clarinet

**Sibelius**

*Rakastava*, Op. 14

The Lover

The Path of the Beloved

Good Evening—Farewell

**Mozart**

Clarinet Concerto in A Major, K. 622

Allegro

Adagio

Rondo: Allegro

**STEPHEN WILLIAMSON**

**INTERMISSION**

**Pärt**

*Orient & Occident*

First Chicago Symphony Orchestra performances

**Tchaikovsky**

Serenade for Strings in C Major, Op. 48

Piece in the Form of a Sonatina: Andante non troppo—Allegro moderato

Waltz: Moderato, tempo di valse

Elegy: Larghetto elegiaco

Finale: Russian Theme. Andante—Allegro con spirito

This concert series is made possible by the Juli Grainger Endowment.

This program is partially supported by grants from the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency, and the National Endowment for the Arts.
Jean Sibelius
Born December 8, 1865, Tavastehus, Finland.
Died September 20, 1957, Järvenpää, Finland.

**Rakastava, Op. 14**

When Sibelius was just seven years old, his family made the forward-looking decision to transfer him from a popular Swedish language preparatory school to the brand new, first-ever Finnish language grammar school. There, he came into contact for the first time with the Finnish folk poetry collections—the *Kalevala* and the *Kanteletar*—finding the source for much of the music that would one day make him famous. Although he didn’t truly master Finnish until he was in his twenties, this exposure to the sounds and rhythms of the language fired his imagination at an early age and sparked his ongoing project of reading and re-reading these poetry collections that had been compiled by Elias Lönnrott in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Sibelius’s first major composition was the expansive *Kullervo* symphony that was based on the *Kalevala*, and it was such a success in 1892 that from that point on Finland looked no further for its greatest composer. In 1893, Sibelius began his first opera, *The Building of the Boat*, also inspired by the *Kalevala*. That same year he set three lyrical love poems from the *Kanteletar* for unaccompanied men’s chorus, titling the set *Rakastava* (The lover). When he entered *Rakastava* in a competition sponsored by the Helsinki University Chorus, he was told, not for the last time in his career, that his music was difficult to perform and too “modern.”

Sibelius knew that *Rakastava* was filled with strong and distinctive musical ideas, and he refused to give up on it. In 1894, the year after the competition, he arranged the work for male chorus and string orchestra, and then four years later he rewrote it again, this time for mixed choir. But it was only when he put the score aside, gave it a rest, and returned to it one last time in 1911, that the real brilliance of *Rakastava* emerged at last. By 1911, Sibelius was a different composer from the one who had found inspiration in the *Kanteletar* texts eighteen years before. Now, internationally famous for *Finlandia* and the composer of four increasingly visionary symphonies, Sibelius completely rethought *Rakastava*. Having uncovered the expressive potential of purely orchestral music, Sibelius now made the radical move of recomposing *Rakastava* for instruments alone, the titles of his three movements the only remaining evidence of the original *Kanteletar* texts. Removing the Finnish words he so loved liberated Sibelius. The fourth and final version of *Rakastava*, in which the rhythm and nuance of the text have been completely internalized, is the one that brought him closest to the emotional content of the *Kanteletar* poems. Scored for strings and minimal percussion (timpani, sparsely and quietly used in the outer movements, with six soft notes for the triangle in the central movement), *Rakastava* is a miniature triptych, with the final panel recalling the unsung narrative of the first.

**COMPOSED**
1893–1911

**FIRST PERFORMANCE**
Date unknown

**FIRST CSO PERFORMANCES**
May 14, 15 & 16, 2009, Orchestra Hall.
Osmo Vänskä conducting

**INSTRUMENTATION**
string orchestra, triangle, timpani

**APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME**
11 minutes
Wolfgang Mozart
Born January 27, 1756, Salzburg, Austria.
Died December 5, 1791, Vienna, Austria.

Clarinet Concerto in A Major, K. 622

This concerto is the last important work Mozart finished before his death. He recorded it in his personal catalog without a date, right after *The Magic Flute* and *La clemenza di Tito*. The only later entry is the little *Masonic* Cantata, dated November 15, 1791. The Requiem, as we know, didn’t make it into the list.

For decades the history of the Requiem was full of ambiguity, while that of the Clarinet Concerto seemed quite clear. But in recent years, as we learned more about the unfinished Requiem, questions about the concerto began to emerge. The Requiem riddles are now largely solved, damaging a fair amount of romantic myth and cinematic drama in the process. But an accurate account of the Clarinet Concerto seems more uncertain today than ever.

Let’s start with Anton Stadler. Mozart tells us that he wrote the concerto for this great virtuoso clarinet player, a close friend, a fellow Mason (although a member of a different lodge), and, on numerous occasions, a spirited gambling companion. Mozart enjoyed Stadler’s friendship and admired his talent, easily accepting that the latter was infinitely more generous and reliable than the former. The musical skill was evidently prodigious: “One would never have thought,” wrote a critic in 1785, “that a clarinet could imitate the human voice to such perfection.” But Sophie Haibel, Mozart’s sister-in-law, remembered Stadler as one of the composer’s “false friends, secret bloodsuckers, and worthless persons who served only to amuse him at the table and intercourse with whom injured his reputation.” Perhaps she had learned from Constanze of the 500 guldin Mozart lent Stadler, a hefty sum that was still unpaid when officials tallied the composer’s estate.

Stadler’s true debt to Mozart is one clarinetists still owe him today: pages upon pages of music as precious as any in the repertory. It’s likely that Mozart first heard Stadler play in March 1784, in a performance of his B-flat wind serenade (K. 361). The Clarinet Trio, written two years later and supposedly finished in a bowling alley on one of the many occasions when Mozart couldn’t separate music from life, may have been composed with Stadler in mind. By 1789, the year of the magnificent Quintet for Clarinet and Strings (K. 581), virtually every note Mozart wrote for the instrument, including the added clarinet parts for the great G minor symphony, was written for Stadler.

We now come to the last year of Mozart’s life. In late August 1791, Mozart set off for Prague to supervise the first performances of *La clemenza di Tito*, accompanied by Stadler, who was to play in the Prague orchestra; Franz Xaver Süssmayr, who would soon inherit the task of finishing the Requiem; and Constanze. Mozart worked on the opera in the coach, writing two virtuoso obbligato solos for Stadler. The premiere on September 6 was decently received, though the empress Maria Luisa is said to have shouted from her box, “Una porcheria tedesca!” (“German rubbish,” to use the imperial translation.) Mozart returned home to Vienna, leaving Stadler behind to accept thunderous applause and cheers from...
his fellow orchestra members for his big solos each night.

On September 28, Mozart entered *The Magic Flute* in his catalog; the premiere, two nights later in a suburban Viennese theater, was only a partial success. Sometime in the middle of this crazy schedule—two opera premieres in less than a month, plus work on a requiem that had recently been commissioned through a mysterious messenger—Mozart began what would be his last concerto, for Stadler’s clarinet. But there’s no mention of the concerto until October 7, when Mozart wrote to Constanze, who had gone to Baden, boasting that after she left he played two games of billiards, sold his horse for fourteen ducats, sent out for black coffee, and smoked a splendid pipe of tobacco before orchestrating “almost the whole Rondo for Stadler.” A letter dated October 14 (Mozart’s last) describes the evening Mozart took Salieri to see *The Magic Flute*, an outing unfairly embellished in Peter Shaffer’s *Amadeus*. Little more than a month later, Mozart fell ill; he died in less than three weeks.

We come now to the questions, some still unanswered. Around the time Mozart met Anton Stadler, he had begun to play a large new clarinet—today called a basset clarinet, though in Mozart’s day it had no particular name. This curious instrument extended the clarinet’s glorious lower register down a major third, reaching four new deep and resonant notes. It seems clear that this is the instrument Mozart had in mind when he wrote both the celebrated quintet and this final concerto.

But by the time the Clarinet Concerto was published, a decade after Mozart’s death, Stadler’s basset clarinet had gone out of favor, and the concerto was printed in a version rewritten for the narrower range of the standard clarinet. Even though a contemporary review argued that this wasn’t the music Mozart wrote, and Stadler was still alive to protest, players and audiences quickly came to accept this revised version. Mozart’s autograph score has been lost. There is, however, a fragment, 199 measures long and written entirely in Mozart’s hand, of a concerto in G for basset horn (another ancient member of the clarinet family) that nearly duplicates more than half of the first movement of the Clarinet Concerto. Apparently Mozart first conceived this music for basset horn, perhaps as early as 1787, and later rewrote and finished it for Stadler’s modified clarinet. We can’t be sure for whom the earlier concerto was intended, nor why he chose to rewrite it for Stadler at one of the most hectic times in his life. But we do know that Mozart had nothing to do with the version for standard clarinet—the one that generations of musicians have come to love, and the one that Stephen Williamson performs this week.

The concerto is one of Mozart’s most personal creations; like the final piano concerto, it’s as intimate and conversational as chamber music, rather than grand and dramatic. We can’t blame historians—or playwrights for that matter—for suggesting Mozart knew his time was running out, for the music implies as much. The slow movement carries an almost unnatural burden of sadness on its simple phrases; it is one of Mozart’s greatest arias and a testament to the power of music to say what words cannot. Of the two outer movements, with their endless, natural lyricism, no words are more apt than those Mozart scholar H. C. Robbins Landon remembered from Shakespeare: “The heart dances, but not for joy.”

Anton Stadler, the fellow-Mason for whom Mozart wrote his Clarinet Concerto. Anonymous silhouette

Mozart’s wife Constanze. Oil portrait by Joseph Lange painted about 1782, Vienna
In 1968, in the middle of a flourishing career as a composer, Arvo Pärt abruptly stopped writing music. During the next eight years, after turning away from the dramatic twelve-tone works for which he was well known in his native Estonia, he began to study medieval music after hearing a snippet of Gregorian chant on the radio. This self-imposed exile brought about one of the most remarkable stylistic changes a composer can undergo. When Pärt (pronounce Pairt) broke his silence in 1976, it was with a tiny, astonishingly spare piano piece, *Für Alina*, a quiet and unassuming score of extremely high and low notes, sounding like distant bells. (This music recalls Pärt’s childhood experiments on the family piano, a huge concert grand with a damaged middle register—“like a five-year-old child with teeth missing,” as he once said—which forced him to play only at the top and bottom of the keyboard.) “That was the first piece that was on a new plateau,” Pärt says. “It was here that I discovered the triad series, which I made my simple, little guiding rule.” Surprisingly, out of such familiar, old-fashioned material, Pärt was able to create something entirely new.

The music that has followed—and made him a cult figure—is austere and meditative, suffused with a stillness and a gentle strength that set it apart not only from Pärt’s earlier work (“It’s as if it’s by another person,” he says), but from almost any music ever written. In his previous compositions, as Pärt told *New Yorker* music critic Alex Ross, he later realized that there were simply many notes thrown down on the page. “I was not guarding these notes as treasures,” he said. “I was not holding them, one after another, in my hands. Every note is decisive, every note is telling.” Because the music he began writing in the late 1970s uses so few notes and so much repetition, in a largely tonal context, Pärt often has been labeled a minimalist. But Pärt’s quiet, nuanced, and deeply emotional voice has little in common with the bracing urban sound world of such composers as Philip Glass or Steve Reich. (“Am I really a minimalist?” Pärt once asked, with customary detachment. “It’s not something that concerns me.”) Instead, Pärt has picked his own word, *tintinnabuli*, from the Latin for bells, to label his recent work.

Pärt has steadfastly refused to talk about his own music in detail. (“Franz Schubert explained nothing,” he once said. “He wrote songs. They are the best explaining.”) He admits few specific influences, although the death of Benjamin Britten in late 1976 affected him deeply at the time he was beginning to compose again. (“I had just discovered Britten for myself,” Pärt remembers. “Just before his death I began to appreciate the unusual purity of his music.”) His few, carefully chosen words about his own born-again simplicity are often quoted:

I have discovered that it is enough when a single note is beautifully played. This one note, or a silent beat, or a moment of silence, comforts me. I work with very few elements, with one voice, with two voices. I build with the most primitive materials—with the triad with one specific tonality.

In 1977, Pärt wrote what are now often considered his signature works: *Tabula Rasa*, which, as its title suggests, was written on the blank slate of

---

**Orient & Occident**

**Arvo Pärt**  
his newfound style; the first in an extended family of pieces called Fratres (Brothers); and the Cantus in memoriam Benjamin Britten. (The CSO has performed both Fratres and the Britten memorial.) Fratres, in particular, has remained a touchstone for Pärt; he has returned to it again and again (there are ten different versions of the work to date); it also has represented a point of stability, a kind of musical home base, even as Pärt and his family immigrated, first to Vienna and then to Berlin. In recent years, Pärt has written mostly for chorus or small vocal ensemble. A few works, including Orient & Occident, the 2000 piece that is performed at these concerts, are scored for larger ensembles of strings. Even though these are miniatures, they often seem surprisingly monumental in their gestures and ideas. (Lamentate of 2002, his first work in many years that could be considered symphonic in scope, is a homage to the sculpture Marsyas by Anish Kapoor, the artist of Cloud Gate in Chicago’s Millennium Park.)

In Orient & Occident, Pärt works wonders with his characteristic economy of means. Every gesture carries weight; each shift in sonority or mood feels notable. The score is built of the simplest of materials—blocks of dense chords and a continuous melody colored with exotic intervals and embellishments, like some ancient Eastern cantillation. These contrasting elements—the Western-sounding harmonies and Eastern-tinted melodies, the solid chordal pillars and flowing monody—distill the essence of different cultures and eras into one powerful stream of music. Pärt’s score suggests that a new kind of music—and in fact a sense of harmony—may be emerging from the disparate strands of today’s discordant global conversation.

A footnote. Arvo Pärt turned eighty in September. Last summer, at an exhibition in Manchester, England, he was paired with the painter Gerard Richter, who turned eighty-four on February 9. The two men have become friends in recent years. In Manchester, Richter unveiled eight new paintings dedicated to the composer, and a tiny new choral work by Pärt, Drei Hirtenkinder aus Fátima, which is dedicated to Richter, was performed each day in the gallery spaces—a rare exchange between two artists at the peak of their powers.
Pyotr Tchaikovsky
Born May 7, 1840, Kamsko-Votkinsk, Russia.
Died November 6, 1893, Saint Petersburg, Russia.

Serenade for Strings in C Major, Op. 48

In the autumn of 1880, Tchaikovsky worked on two pieces simultaneously. One, commissioned for the unveiling of a Pushkin memorial in Moscow, was a tiresome project—“What can you write on the occasion of the opening of an exhibition except banalities and generally noisy passages?” he asked. Tchaikovsky said that he wrote it “with no warm feeling of love, and therefore there will probably be no artistic merits in it.” Although Tchaikovsky assumed that the 1812 Overture would prove “unsuitable for symphony concerts,” its bombast and excitement, capped by the firing of real cannon, quickly made it an audience favorite, as well as a staple of Independence Day celebrations throughout the United States, a country Tchaikovsky had visited only once.

The other work of that autumn is this serenade for strings, composed “from inner conviction,” in Tchaikovsky’s words. “It is a heartfelt piece and so, I dare to think, is not lacking in real qualities,” he wrote to Nadezhda von Meck, in whom he often confided. Tchaikovsky began sketching on September 21, thinking at first that this would be a symphony or a string quartet, later that it was a suite for string orchestra, and finally, before it was completed on November 4, that he would call it a serenade. Although Tchaikovsky was surprised with a private performance of the work at the Moscow Conservatory in December, the public didn’t hear the serenade until the following October. It was a great success—the waltz movement had to be repeated—and when Tchaikovsky’s former teacher Anton Rubinstein conducted it that June, he finally showed the sort of enthusiasm he had so carefully withheld in the past by declaring it Tchaikovsky’s best piece.

Tchaikovsky told Mme von Meck that the first movement—“in the form of a sonatina,” as the score indicates—was in deliberate imitation of Mozart’s style. There’s nothing particularly Mozartean about it, although it’s probably the kind of music Tchaikovsky imagined he would have composed had he lived in Mozart’s time. The freshness and charm of the whole serenade, though, confirm how enchanted Tchaikovsky was by Mozart’s Magic Flute, which he had rediscovered that summer. The second-movement waltz is prime Tchaikovsky and features one of his best melodies. The deeply expressive elegy that follows begins with the same ascending scale that launched the waltz tune. The finale is indebted to two folk songs, one for the introduction, the other as the principal theme of the Allegro. The coda reveals that this exuberant folk melody and the broad and solemn theme that opened the serenade are, in fact, distant relatives.

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