

PROGRAM

ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-FIRST SEASON

Chicago Symphony Orchestra

Riccardo Muti Music Director

Pierre Boulez Helen Regenstein Conductor Emeritus

Yo-Yo Ma Judson and Joyce Green Creative Consultant

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Thursday, April 12, 2012, at 8:00

Friday, April 13, 2012, at 1:30

Charles Dutoit Conductor

Gautier Capuçon Cello

Debussy

Images for Orchestra

Gigues

Ibéria

In the Streets and Byways

The Fragrance of Night—

Morning of the Festival Day

Rondes de printemps

INTERMISSION

Dutilleux

Tout un monde lointain . . .

Énigme—

Regard—

Houles—

Miroirs—

Hymne

GAUTIER CAPUÇON

Ravel

La valse

Friday's matinee concert is endowed in part by Elaine Frank in memory of Zollie Frank.

This concert is supported in part by The Walter E. Heller Foundation in memory of Alyce Decosta.

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Claude Debussy

Born August 22, 1862, Saint Germain-en-Laye, France.

Died March 25, 1918, Paris, France.

Images for Orchestra

These *Images* are Debussy's last concert-hall orchestral works, followed only by *Jeux*, which was designed for dancing. They began as piano music, however—a third installment in Debussy's sets of *Images* for piano. Debussy planned them in 1905, the same year he completed *La mer* and the second set of piano *Images*. His original idea was to compose this new set for two pianos; he even proposed titles to Jacques Durand, his publisher: *Gigues tristes*, *Ibéria*,

and *Valses*—portraits in sound of three different countries.

But Debussy eventually changed his mind about two of his titles and one of his subjects—leaving, as it were, the waltz idea to Ravel—and decided to score the pieces not for two pianos but for large orchestra. (The 1905 piano *Images* had already required three staves on each page to accommodate the rich textures and complexity of Debussy's ideas.) In the end, it would be another eight years before these *Images* were finished and played together.

COMPOSED

Gigues: 1909–1912

Ibéria: 1908–1909

Rondes de printemps:
1905–1909

FIRST PERFORMANCE

Gigues: January 26,
1913, Paris

Ibéria: February 20,
1910, Paris

Rondes de printemps:
March 2, 1910, Paris. The
composer conducting

FIRST CSO

PERFORMANCES

November 18, 1910 (Rondes
de printemps); November 10,
1911 (Ibéria); November 13,
1914 (U.S. premiere of
Gigues), Orchestra Hall.
Frederick Stock conducting

MOST RECENT CSO PERFORMANCE

March 1, 2008,
Orchestra Hall. Pierre
Boulez conducting

INSTRUMENTATION

three flutes and two
piccolos, two oboes, oboe
d'amore (in Gigues only)
and english horn, three
clarinets, bass clarinet (in

Gigues only), three bassoons
and contrabassoon, four
horns, four trumpets, three
trombones, tuba (in Ibéria
only), timpani, cymbals,
snare drum, xylophone,
castanets, tambourine,
bells, triangle, celesta, two
harps, strings

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME

35 minutes

CSO RECORDINGS

1957 (Ibéria only). Fritz
Reiner conducting. RCA

A 1967 performance of the
complete *Images*, conducted
by Jean Martinon, is included
in *From the Archives*, vol. 12.

Debussy's new project began well enough; in a letter to Durand dated July 7, 1906, he said that *Ibéria* would be finished "next week" and that the other two would follow by the end of the month. But the next year, when none of them were done, he attempted to explain to Durand why the *Images* were such slow going: "I'm trying to write 'something different'—realities, in a manner of speaking—what imbeciles call 'impressionism,' a term employed with the utmost inaccuracy, especially by art critics, who use it as a label to stick on Turner, the finest creator of mystery in the whole of art!" With important, groundbreaking works such as *La mer* and *Pelleas and Melisande* behind him, and with these *Images* still on the drafting table, Debussy was struggling to articulate—both to understand and to define—the continually evolving "newness" of his work. He wrote to Durand that same year: "I feel more and more that music, by its very essence, is not something that can flow inside a rigorous, traditional form. It consists of colors and of rhythmized time."

Of the three pieces, only *Ibéria* was composed relatively quickly and without serious interruption or flagging interest. It was finished on Christmas Day 1908, and, although the other two pieces were completed in short score within a matter of days, neither one reached its final form for many months. For one thing, Debussy got sidetracked by the idea of turning Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher* into an opera. (He worked on it off and on

until he died.) But this was also an unsettled and difficult time for Debussy—his productivity was compromised by the messy details of divorce and remarriage, and by the first symptoms of the colon cancer that would later kill him. In 1909, Debussy posed for the Parisian photographer Nadar (the Richard Avedon or Annie Liebovitz of the day), who had captured all the reigning celebrities from Rossini to Delacroix. Debussy wore an expensive but ill-fitting suit, and as his close friend René Peter noted, "Our Claude, still so young and eager, has taken on a sort of patina and no longer looks himself." That same year, when the first French biography of the composer was published, Debussy seemed uncomfortable with the attention ("I am not sure of being absolutely all that you say I am," he wrote to the author, Louis Laloy).

Eventually Debussy finished the remaining *Images*, though not without effort and growing apathy—Léon Vallas, the composer's reliable biographer, even says that the orchestration of *Gigues* was completed by André Caplet. Of the three pieces, premiered piecemeal, only *Ibéria* enjoyed an enthusiastic reception. The other two have



Caplet and Debussy

never achieved the popularity of *Ibéria*, and the set as a whole is not regularly performed. Still, from the beginning, these *Images* have had important champions—Gustav Mahler gave the U.S. premieres of *Rondes de printemps* and *Ibéria* (in 1910 and 1911, respectively) with the New York Philharmonic, and Frederick Stock led the American premiere of *Gigues* with the Chicago Symphony in November 1914, less than two years after Debussy conducted the first performance in Paris.

At this week's performances, Charles Dutoit conducts the three *Images* in the order in which Debussy finally published them (which is neither the order in which they were composed or premiered): *Gigues*, *Ibéria*, *Rondes de printemps*.

Gigues

Debussy originally called this piece *Gigues tristes* (Sad jigs), and even though he dropped the adjective, the music is haunted and melancholy. As in *Rondes de printemps*, Debussy quotes folk song to help provide local color—in this case, it's a Scottish tune mournfully sung by the oboe d'amore, which makes its only appearance in *Images* for just this purpose. (The bassoons also suggest "The Keel Row.") What drives the music forward is the interplay of two distinct worlds—the leisurely folk tune and a jaunty dotted rhythmic figure. (Caplet, who is credited with carrying out

Debussy's wishes in orchestrating *Gigues* and who clearly wanted to hear it as program music, detected a battle between "a wounded soul" and a "grotesque marionette.") They collide, overlap, and intersect, lending the piece a sense of the unpredictable and giving it a complexity quite at odds with its supposed folk roots.

Ibéria

Debussy spent only a single afternoon in Spain. He went to San Sebastián, just over the French border, to catch a bullfight, and was back in Saint-Jean-de-Luz in time for bed. But Debussy was haunted by the spirit of the place—"a country where the roadside stones burn one's eyes with their brilliant light, where the mule drivers sing so passionately from the depths of their hearts," as he later wrote. In 1903, he wrote his first Spanish piece, *Night in Granada* for piano, which Manuel de Falla found to be "nothing less than miraculous when we consider that this music was written by a foreigner guided almost entirely by his visionary genius." But *Ibéria* is Debussy's greatest achievement evoking a Spain he scarcely knew—"truth without authenticity," as Falla put it.

Ibéria itself is a triptych, with two richly detailed and vigorous movements (the first set against a snappy, virtually ever-present rhythm) framing a voluptuously textured nocturne. All three are remarkably vivid and suggestive, without ever succumbing to tone painting.

Debussy himself saw a watermelon vendor and heard children whistling in the third piece, though he truly grasped its essential quality when he remarked that “it sounds like music that has not been written down—the whole feeling of rising, of people and nature waking.”

Ravel (along with a number of composers including Stravinsky), who was present at the premiere of *Ibéria* in 1910, was moved to tears by “this novel, delicate, harmonic beauty, this profound musical sensitiveness.” Falla felt that Debussy had perfectly recreated his afternoon in San Sebastián—“the light in the bull-ring, particularly the violent contrast between the one half of the ring flooded with sunlight and the other half deep in shade.” But Debussy’s accomplishment, despite the clarity of his memory and his powers of evocation, lies much deeper, in the substance of the music itself.

Debussy makes free use of local color, calling for tambourine and castanets and borrowing the rhythms and melodic ideas of Spanish folk music. But his imaginative and thoroughly individual treatment of the material recalls what he himself said of Albéniz: “He does not exactly quote folk tunes, but he is so imbued with them and has heard so many that they have passed into his music and become impossible to distinguish from his own inventions.” The middle movement, suggesting the sensuousness of a southern night, is the most subtly Spanish

of the three pieces, with its fluid melodies freely unfolding over a languid habanera rhythm. Debussy himself was particularly proud of the way he moves from that music to the third movement, allowing the sounds of the day to gradually overtake the night—not the blaring dawn of Wagner’s *Götterdämmerung* and Strauss’s *Zarathustra*, but the elusive moment of awakening we know from the Turner paintings he so loved.

***Rondes de printemps* (Spring rounds)**

This is the only one of the *Images* prefaced by a motto: “Long live May! Welcome May with its rustic banner.” Debussy quotes a fifteenth-century Italian poet, but he transplants the setting from Tuscany to his own France. He further underlines the French connection with several passing references to a children’s song, “*Nous n’irons plus au bois*” (We’ll go to the woods no more), which he had used three times before, most recently in the piano piece *Jardins sous la pluie* (Gardens in the rain). The song itself is never quoted, but reflected as if from a distant source, each time from a slightly different angle. The music is limpid and highly fluid—Debussy often writes five beats to the bar, much as in *Fêtes*, the second of his orchestral *Nocturnes*—and Ravel noted its “vivid charm and exquisite freshness.” ■



Henri Dutilleux

Born January 22, 1916, Angers, France.

Currently resides in Paris.

Tout un monde lointain . . . for Cello and Orchestra

Henri Dutilleux was born into the great French tradition: one of his great-grandfathers was a painter and a friend of Corot and Delacroix; his maternal grandfather was a friend of Fauré. When Dutilleux began to compose, he followed the conventional route at the Paris Conservatory, where he took top honors in harmony, counterpoint, and fugue. His compositions, perhaps inevitably, revealed the powerful influence of Fauré and Ravel, who was then at the height of his popularity. His professors never mentioned serialism. “We knew the name Schoenberg,” Dutilleux later recalled, “but not his works.” His student years were capped by winning the prestigious Prix de Rome for a cantata about Solomon and the queen of Sheba.

When, after just a few months, his residency in Rome was cut short by the outbreak of World War II and he was forced to return to Paris, Dutilleux began to question the essence of his art and his responsibility to tradition. He destroyed all but one of his compositions in an attempt to erase the influence of Ravel (a composer he still greatly admires, nonetheless), and decided to start over. (The piano sonata of 1947, he recently said, is the earliest of his works that pleases him.) He caught up with the music that was forbidden during the war, particularly the works of the Viennese triumvirate—Schoenberg and his pupils Berg and Webern. As Dutilleux undertook this process of self-examination—and re-education—he sought not

COMPOSED

1967–1970

FIRST PERFORMANCE

July 25, 1970, Aix en Provence, France

ONLY PREVIOUS CSO PERFORMANCES

March 5–7, 11, 1998, Orchestra Hall. Lynn Harrell, cello; Herbert Blomstedt conducting

INSTRUMENTATION

solo cello, two flutes and piccolo, two oboes, two clarinets and bass clarinet, two bassoons and contra-bassoon, three horns, two trumpets, two trombones and tuba, celesta, harp, timpani, percussion (bongos, tom-toms, snare drum, bass drum, crotales, triangle, suspended cymbals, cymbals, gongs, tam-tams, xylophone, marimba, and glockenspiel), strings

APPROXIMATE

PERFORMANCE TIME

26 minutes

only to distance himself from the rigidity of conservatory training, but from the avant-garde as well. As a result, he cleared for himself a solitary path that sometimes ventured in the direction of his colleagues, but that has retained its fierce independence throughout the years. “He rejects all that seems false,” wrote his biographer Jean Roy, “does not seek to amaze, and follows the quest of an interior truth.”

Like Ravel, Dutilleux is a fastidious craftsman; his catalog contains a relatively brief list of major compositions, including two symphonies and several works with fanciful and alluring titles—*At the Mercy of the Waves*; *The Tree of Dreams*; and *Starry Night*, inspired by van Gogh’s painting.

The cello concerto, *Tout un monde lointain* . . . (A whole distant world), was inspired by the poetry of Charles Baudelaire. Dutilleux originally was commissioned to write a ballet honoring the centenary of the poet’s death in 1967. When the project was canceled, Dutilleux was so deeply immersed in Baudelaire’s world that he took his ideas with him into a new commission—for a cello concerto from Mstislav Rostropovich.

Tout un monde lointain . . . is no ordinary concerto. Two years before he began this work, Dutilleux made clear his feelings about another classical form: “When I utter the word ‘symphony,’ I see faces grow long. You think of something outsize, boring, rigid. . . . Recall Debussy’s phrase about ‘those

studious and congealed exercises that are called symphonies.’ And Debussy wrote no symphonies, neither did Ravel nor Bartók.” But Dutilleux had already written two symphonies that are models of adventure and exploration, and this concerto shows a similarly original outlook on a traditional form.

Tout un monde lointain . . . has five movements; the second and fourth are slow movements of hypnotic stillness. The concerto opens with a delicate, rhapsodic cadenza, accompanied only by percussion. The cello dominates throughout, even in the more energetic and powerful passages, and often sings at the top of its register. The cello has the last word, unexpectedly, as it suddenly trails off, ad libitum, into silence.

Each of the five movements is headed by a quotation from Baudelaire’s *Les fleurs du mal* (Flowers of evil). Dutilleux later said that he didn’t have these passages in mind when he began to compose and that only later, when he was nearly finished writing, did he seek out the correspondences with Baudelaire’s poetry. (He had intended to call the second movement *Vertige* until he learned that it belonged to one of the large French perfume houses.) The passages from Baudelaire follow.

1. Enigma
. . . And in this strange and symbolic nature

—Poem 28

2. Gaze
... The poison which flows
From your eyes, from your
green eyes,
Lakes in which my
soul trembles
and sees itself upside-down . . .

—“Poison”

3. Surges
... You contain, ebony sea,
a dazzling dream
of sails, of rowers, of flames
and masts . . .

—“The Hair”

4. Mirrors
Our two hearts will be
huge torches
reflecting their double lights
in our two spirits, those twin
mirrors . . .

—The Death of Lovers

5. Hymn
... Nurse your dreams;
Wise men do not have such
beautiful ones as fools!

—The Voice ■

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Maurice Ravel

Born March 7, 1875, Ciboure, France.

Died December 28, 1937, Paris, France.

***La valse* (Choreographic Poem for Orchestra)**

In 1911, Ravel's *Valses nobles et sentimentales* were intended as a loving tribute to the "useless occupation" of social dancing. By 1919, when he wrote *La valse*, the world was a changed place, and after the war the public had lost patience with mere frivolity.

La valse is not the piece Ravel planned to write. In 1906, he began to sketch *Wien* (Vienna), a tribute to Johann Strauss, Jr. and "... a kind of apotheosis of the Viennese waltz, with which is mingled in my mind the idea of the fantastic whirl of destiny." This is still true of the music Ravel finally composed in 1919, at

the request of the impresario Sergei Diaghilev. But fate now made the waltz a bitter reminder of a vanished era, and newsreels showed that Vienna was no longer a city in its glory. Due to widespread famine, in 1918 the official daily food rations there were 5.8 ounces of bread, 1.2 ounces of flour, 1.6 ounces of meat, 0.175 ounces of fat, 0.9 ounces of sugar, and 2.45 ounces of potatoes per person. That year, a flu epidemic broke out, killing the painter Gustav Klimt, the architect Otto Wagner, and Freud's daughter Sophie.

Ravel finished *La valse* in 1920. It wasn't what Diaghilev expected

COMPOSED

1919–1920

FIRST PERFORMANCE

December 12, 1920, Paris

FIRST CSO PERFORMANCE

March 9, 1923, Orchestra Hall. Frederick Stock conducting

CSO PERFORMANCES CONDUCTED BY THE COMPOSER

January 20 and 21, 1928, Orchestra Hall

MOST RECENT CSO PERFORMANCES

April 20, 2010, Orchestra Hall. Carlos Kalmar conducting

July 25, 2010, Ravinia Festival. Christoph Eschenbach conducting

INSTRUMENTATION

three flutes and piccolo, three oboes and english horn, two clarinets and bass clarinet, two bassoons and contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones and tuba, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, triangle, snare drum, castanets, tam-tam, antique cymbals, two harps, strings

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME

13 minutes

CSO RECORDING

1967. Jean Martinon conducting. RCA

A 1960 performance with Fritz Reiner conducting is included on *Chicago Symphony Orchestra: The First 100 Years*, and a 1976 performance conducted by Sir Georg Solti is included on *From the Archives*, vol. 4.



Léon Bakst's portrait of Diaghilev with his housekeeper, 1906

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“choreographic poem for orchestra,” and it was finally danced in Antwerp in 1926 and in Paris in 1928 by Ida Rubinstein’s troupe, which also gave the premiere of *Boléro* just two days later.

and he refused to stage it: “. . . this is not a ballet; it is a portrait of a ballet, it is a painting of a ballet.”

The two men never worked together again.

Nonetheless, Ravel published the piece as a

The first page of the score is marked “mouvement de Valse viennoise.” The music is a masterful evocation of the evasions and collisions between a brilliant surface and dangerous undercurrents. Ravel provided a brief scenario:

Swirling clouds afford glimpses, through rifts, of waltzing couples. The clouds scatter little by little; one can distinguish an immense hall with a whirling crowd. The scene grows progressively brighter. The light of the chandeliers bursts forth at the fortissimo. An imperial court, about 1855. ■

Phillip Huscher is the program annotator for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.