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JAN 10 PIANO
Rudolf Buchbinder

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Karina Canellakis & Randall Goosby

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ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-SIXTH SEASON

Thursday, November 5, 2026, at 7:30
Friday, November 6, 2026, at 1:30
Saturday, November 7, 2026, at 7:30
Sunday, November 8, 2026, at 3:00

Marek Janowski Conductor
Mao Fujita Piano

WAGNER — Prelude to *Parsifal*

STRAUSS — *Burlesque* for Piano and Orchestra in D Minor
MAO FUJITA

INTERMISSION

BEETHOVEN — Symphony No. 5 in C Minor, Op. 67
Allegro con brio
Andante con moto
Allegro—
Allegro—Presto

This concert is generously sponsored by Robert H. Aland and Family in loving memory of Fraida N. Aland.
Chicago Symphony acknowledges support from the Illinois Arts Council.

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RICHARD WAGNER

Born May 22, 1813; Leipzig, Germany
Died February 13, 1883; Venice, Italy

Prelude to *Parsifal*



On April 14, 1865, Richard Wagner wrote to his adored and wonderful friend (to use his salutation), King Ludwig II of Bavaria:

> A warm and sunny Good Friday, with its mood of sacred solemnity, once inspired me with the idea of writing *Parzifal:* since then, it has lived on within me and prospered, like a child in its mother's womb. With each Good Friday it grows a year older, and I then celebrate the day of its conception, knowing that its birthday will follow one day.

The idea of *Parsifal* lived within Wagner for thirty-six years, the longest gestation of any of his works, including the entire *Ring* cycle. Wagner first read Wolfram von Eschenbach's thirteenth-century epic *Parzifal* on a summer holiday in Marienbad in 1845 and was captivated by the story of a young man who sets out to find his place in the world and instead discovers human compassion and the Holy Grail. But over the next years, his reading introduced other subjects that he wanted to set to music first, including the sixteenth-century guild of mastersingers and a magic ring.



Still, the hero Parsifal was never far from his thoughts. (Wagner changed the spelling because he mistakenly thought that Parsifal was Persian for "pure fool," the perfect representation of his guileless hero.) Wagner first wrote an opera about the hero's son, Lohengrin, and later toyed with the idea

COMPOSED
1877–81 (opera)

FIRST PERFORMANCE
December 25, 1878; Bayreuth, Germany (prelude)

July 26, 1882; Bayreuth, Germany (opera)

INSTRUMENTATION
3 flutes, 3 oboes and english horn, 3 clarinets, 3 bassoons and contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, strings

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME
14 minutes

FIRST CSO PERFORMANCES
April 1 and 2, 1892, Auditorium Theatre. Theodore Thomas conducting

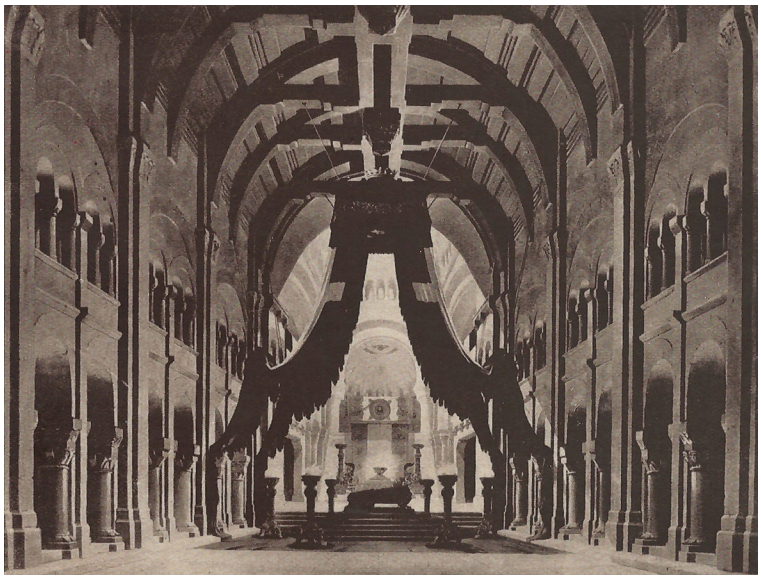
August 2, 1936, Ravinia Festival Werner Janssen conducting

MOST RECENT CSO PERFORMANCES
August 11, 2000, Ravinia Festival. Christoph Eschenbach conducting

March 14, 15, and 16, 2013, Orchestra Hall. Ascher Fisch conducting

CSO RECORDING
1999. Daniel Barenboim conducting. Teldec

THIS PAGE, FROM TOP: Richard Wagner, carte-de-visite portrait by London-based studio Elliott & Fry, ca. 1880 | Left to right: Amalie Materna/Kundry (1844–1918), Emil Scaria/Gurnemanz (1838–1886), and Hermann Winkelmann/Parsifal (1849–1912) from the 1882 premiere production of Wagner's *Parsifal* at Bayreuth | NEXT PAGE: Stage design for *Parsifal* by Christian Jank (1833–1888), 1879



of having Parsifal appear at Tristan's bedside. But *Parsifal* didn't take shape until a particularly lovely morning in 1857, when he quickly sketched a drama in three acts, later insisting, despite the evidence, that the day was Good Friday. It was still another twenty years before he actually began work on it, and the score took him more than three years to complete. Wagner always intended *Parsifal* to be his final work, and, in fact, he died seven months after the premiere was given in Bayreuth on July 26, 1882.

The prelude is the first music Wagner wrote for *Parsifal;* it was composed during the summer of 1877. Wagner orchestrated it a year later (the opera itself was only half done) so that it could be performed for his wife Cosima's forty-first birthday on Christmas Day 1878. Wagner told Cosima, "My preludes must consist of the elements, and not be dramatic like the *Leonore* overtures, or the drama becomes superfluous." The *Parsifal* prelude isn't dramatic, but it is an extraordinarily powerful piece that prepares us for the drama that follows. Wagner sets out his elements side by side—often separating them by wide-open spaces—but he doesn't throw them into action yet.

Parsifal begins magically, with a striking sonority—muted violins and cellos with a single clarinet and bassoon (joined briefly by english horn)—that's as individual and instantly recognizable as a familiar voice. A seamless melody unfolds slowly, as if without pulse or direction at first, leading, after reflection, to new ideas. Writing for the first time in his long career for the acoustics of the theater he had painstakingly designed at Bayreuth, with submerged orchestra pit, Wagner mixes orchestral colors with extraordinary individuality and refinement. (The opening phrase calls for just one player on each stand of violins; using the entire section would subtly, but perceptibly, affect the way the theme sounds.)

So sensitive was Wagner's ear that a single sonority can change the complexion of the music. A soft tremolo on one note in the low strings, for example, alters the way we hear the opening theme when it returns otherwise unchanged—it's as if a cloud has crossed the sun. Even the silences are conceived as colors in the palette of this music; they aren't merely pauses between phrases or sections, but indispensable elements in Wagner's design. (It's equally important where they do *not* occur—a great brass statement ends only to reveal the strings already playing, to stunning effect.) The prelude is spacious and reflective; with each sentence in this measured opening paragraph, Wagner suggests the pace and magnitude of the opera that follows.

When Wagner conducted a private performance of the prelude for King Ludwig II of Bavaria on November 12, 1880, he gave Ludwig a program note which outlines the music's three themes: Love—the opening melody, slow and seemingly unmeasured, like plainchant; Faith—the choral "Dresden Amen" Wagner appropriated from Lutheran usage; and Hope—the steady march of the brass. *c*

RICHARD STRAUSS

Born June 11, 1864; Munich, Germany
Died September 8, 1949; Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Austria

Burlesque for Piano and Orchestra in D Minor



Barely twenty-one years old, Richard Strauss took a new job as assistant to the greatest conductor of the day, Hans von Bülow. Bülow had already begun to champion Strauss's music, calling him "the most striking personality since Brahms" (having overcome his first impression of an "unripe and precocious" talent). In October 1885, when Strauss moved to Meiningen to work with Bülow and his small orchestra (as fine as the Vienna Philharmonic, but with only half as many players), he hadn't written any of the music we regularly perform today. His first big hit, *Don Juan,* the earliest of his tone poems to thrill audiences, was still four years in the future, and the triumphant premiere of his first successful opera, *Salome,* wouldn't take place for another two decades.

Strauss made his debut in Meiningen as a pianist, playing Mozart's C minor concerto—one of the few scores by Mozart to have thrived during the romantic era. (Strauss, who loved Mozart's music throughout his career, wrote his own cadenzas.) "If you didn't have it in you to be something better," Bülow remarked, "you could even make it



COMPOSED
1885

FIRST PERFORMANCE
June 21, 1890; Eisenach, Germany. The composer conducting

INSTRUMENTATION
solo piano, 2 flutes and piccolo, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani, strings

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME
19 minutes

FIRST CSO PERFORMANCES
December 11 and 12, 1925, Orchestra Hall. Rudolph Reuter as soloist, Frederick Stock conducting

August 17 and 20, 1966, Ravinia Festival. Gordon Boelzner as soloist, New York City Ballet (George Balanchine, artistic director), Robert Irving conducting

MOST RECENT CSO PERFORMANCES
August 13, 1977, Ravinia Festival. Rudolf Buchbinder as soloist, Lawrence Foster conducting

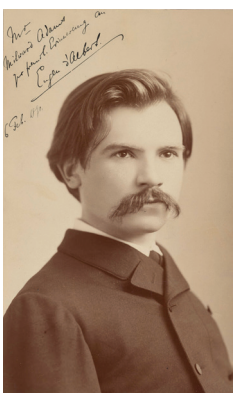
December 5, 6, and 7, 2002, Orchestra Hall. Daniel Barenboim as soloist, Pierre Boulez conducting

CSO RECORDING
1946. Claudio Arrau as soloist, Désiré Defauw conducting. RCA

THIS PAGE, FROM TOP: Richard Strauss, portrait, 1886, from family photo album | The Meiningen Court Orchestra with conductor Hans von Bülow (1830–1894), 1882. Meiningen Museums | NEXT PAGE: Portrait of Eugen d'Albert (1864–1932), who gave the first performance of Strauss's *Burlesque,* June 21, 1890, Eisenach, Germany. Photograph inscribed to Chicago theater manager and first manager of the Orchestral Association Milward Adams (1857–1923), ca. 1890. Newberry Library, Milward Adams Photograph Collection

as a pianist." But Bülow knew that Strauss had great ambitions as a composer, and he asked Strauss to conduct his own F minor symphony*, the most accomplished of his works, to close the program. Brahms, who was in Meiningen rehearsing the orchestra for the premiere of his Fourth Symphony later in the month, was in the audience that night. "Quite pretty, young man," he told Strauss after the symphony, and then recommended that Strauss take a good look at Schubert's dances and concentrate on writing simple eight-bar melodies. "Your symphony is too full of thematic irrelevancies," he concluded. Strauss took the advice to heart at the time, but a few years later, when his own music was all the rage, he dismissed Brahms as "a foothill, like Schumann. The peaks are Beethoven, Wagner, Bach, and Mozart."

This *Burlesque,* originally called simply a scherzo, is what Strauss composed in Meiningen that fall. It's his idea of a piano concerto one hundred years after Mozart, and he wrote it for Bülow to perform. Unfortunately, Bülow took one look at the elaborate solo part and said it was unplayable. (As Strauss later admitted, Bülow's hands were so small they could barely reach an octave.) Strauss himself tried it out with the Meiningen orchestra a few weeks later and dismissed the score as "pure nonsense." But four years later, after the premiere of *Don Juan,* when he was suddenly the most celebrated composer in Europe, Strauss reluctantly showed the scherzo to the pianist Eugen d'Albert, a famous virtuoso at the time. With d'Albert's encouragement, Strauss touched up the work, renamed it *Burlesque,* and agreed to conduct d'Albert in the premiere.



In June 1890 the two men, both just twenty-six, unveiled the *Burlesque* in Eisenach on the same night Strauss led the premiere of his brand-new tone poem, *Death and Transfiguration.* (Seven months later, d'Albert played the *Burlesque* in Berlin under Bülow, now apparently content to conduct what he had refused to play.) Strauss continued to have misgivings about the score and delayed having it published (despite offers) for another four years. But late in his life he admitted a special fondness for the youthful *Burlesque,* and he even picked it for the last concert he ever conducted, in London in October 1947.

In the *Burlesque,* we meet for the first time the same composer whose tone poems would soon captivate audiences with their wit and charm, seemingly inexhaustible supply of memorable themes, and astonishing orchestral brilliance. Here is the bravado of *Don Juan,* the sumptuous color of *Death and Transfiguration,* and the lighter-than-air virtuosity and sparkling fantasy of *Till Eulenspiegel.* Strauss was so pleased that he thought of beginning the piece with four unaccompanied timpani that he quoted the passage in a letter to his father, one of Europe's greatest horn players and an old colleague of Bülow. It's merely the first in a long series of great opening lines in Strauss's career. The work continues with lively, quick-witted repartee between piano and orchestra, based on the timpani motive, eventually relaxing into a seductive waltz—one of the first by a composer whose name made him a natural waltz composer (although he wasn't related to *those* Strausses). The timpani theme is never far off, and it returns front and center to battle it out with the piano for the right key at the reprise of the opening music. The fade-out ending is as unexpected as the timpani solo at the beginning. *C*

*During his tenure as music director of the New York Philharmonic, Theodore Thomas—later the Chicago Orchestra's founder and first music director—led the world premiere of Richard Strauss's F minor symphony on December 13, 1884, at the Academy of Music in New York City. It was the first work by Strauss heard in the United States. The manuscript score is part of the Theodore Thomas Collection held in the Chicago Symphony Rosenthal Archives.

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Born December 16, 1770; Bonn, Germany
Died March 26, 1827; Vienna, Austria

Symphony No. 5 in C Minor, Op. 67



This is the symphony that, along with an image of Beethoven, looking agitated and disheveled, has come to represent greatness in music. In fact, many people know only the very opening seconds, just as they may remember vividly and accurately no more than the *Mona Lisa*'s smile, or the first ten words of Hamlet's soliloquy. It's hard to know how so few notes, so plainly strung together, could become so popular. There are certainly those who would argue that this isn't even Beethoven's greatest symphony, just as the *Mona Lisa* isn't Leonardo's finest painting—Beethoven himself preferred his *Eroica* to the Fifth Symphony. And yet, it's hardly famous beyond its merits, for one can't easily think of another single composition that, in its expressive range and structural power, better represents what music is all about.

Beethoven's Fifth Symphony has spoken forcefully and directly to many listeners—trained and untrained—over the years; we each listen and understand in our own way. We can probably find ourselves somewhere here, among the characters of E.M. Forster's *Howard's End:*

> Whether you are like Mrs. Munt, and tap surreptitiously when the tunes come—of course not so as to disturb the others; or like Helen, who can see heroes and shipwrecks in the music's flood; or like Margaret, who can only see the music; or like Tibby, who is profoundly versed in counterpoint, and holds the full score open on his knee; or like their cousin, Fräulein Mosebach, who remembers all the time that Beethoven is "echt Deutsch"; or like Fräulein Mosebach's young man, who can remember nothing but Fräulein Mosebach: in any case, the passion of your life becomes more vivid, and you are bound to admit that such a noise is cheap at two shillings.

That is why we still go to concerts, and, whether we see shipwrecks or hear dominant sevenths, we may well agree, when caught up in a captivating performance, "that Beethoven's Fifth Symphony is the most sublime noise that has ever penetrated into the ear of man."

COMPOSED
1804–08

FIRST PERFORMANCE
December 22, 1808; Vienna, Austria

INSTRUMENTATION
2 flutes and piccolo, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons and contrabassoon, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani, strings

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME
36 minutes

FIRST CSO PERFORMANCES
October 16 and 17, 1891, Auditorium Theatre. Theodore Thomas conducting

July 18, 1936, Ravinia Festival. Willem van Hoogstraten conducting

MOST RECENT CSO PERFORMANCES
October 12, 13, 14, and 15, 2023, Orchestra Hall. Jaap van Zweden conducting

July 13, 2024, Ravinia Festival. Marin Alsop conducting

CSO RECORDINGS
1944. Désiré Defauw conducting. CSO *(From the Archives,* vol. 17: *Beethoven)*

1959. Fritz Reiner conducting. RCA

1961. George Szell conducting. VAI (video)

1968. Seiji Ozawa conducting. RCA

1973. Sir Georg Solti conducting. London

1986. Sir Georg Solti conducting. London

1990. Sir Georg Solti conducting. CBS/Sony (video)

1994. James Levine conducting. Disney (excerpts from the first movement for *Fantasia 2000*)

COMMENTS

For a while, this piece was somewhat overshadowed by the Ninth Symphony, which seemed to point the way to the rest of the nineteenth century and emboldened generations of composers to think differently of the symphony, or of music in general. But the Fifth has never really lost its appeal. Robert Schumann, whose musical predictions have often come true, wrote that "this symphony invariably wields its power over men of every age like those great phenomena of nature. . . . This symphony, too, will be heard in future centuries, nay, as long as music and the world exist." It is surely no coincidence that Theodore Thomas, the founder and first music director of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, included this symphony on the ensemble's inaugural concerts in 1891, as well as the concert given in 1904 to dedicate Orchestra Hall. "I care not from what the station in life come the thousands who sit before me," Thomas once told a reporter. "Beethoven will teach each according to his needs."

A familiarity earned by only a handful of pieces in any century has largely blunted much of the work's wild power for our ears today. And, knowing the many works that couldn't have been written without this as their example has blinded us to the novelty of Beethoven's boldest strokes: the cross-reference between the famous opening and the fortissimo horn call in the scherzo, the way the scherzo passes directly—and dramatically—into the finale, and the memory of the scherzo that appears unexpectedly in the finale—all forging the four movements of the symphony into one unified design. The idea of a symphony tracing the journey from strife to victory is commonplace today, but Beethoven's Fifth was an entirely new kind of symphony in his day.

There's no way to know what the first audience thought. For one thing, that concert, given at the Theater an der Wien on December 22, 1808, was so inordinately long (even by nineteenth-century standards) and jammed with so much important new music that no one could truly have taken it all in. Johann Friedrich Reichardt, who shared a box with Prince Joseph Franz von Lobkowitz, later wrote: "There we sat from 6:30 till 10:30 in the most bitter cold, and found by experience that one might have too much even of a good thing."

Reichardt and Lobkowitz stayed till the end, their patience frequently tried not by the music—to which these two brought more understanding than most—but by the performance, which was rough and unsympathetic. Surely some in the audience that night were bowled over by what they heard, though many may well have fidgeted and daydreamed, uncomprehending, or perhaps even bored. Beethoven's was not yet the most popular music ever written, and even as great a figure as Goethe would outlive Beethoven without coming to terms with the one composer who was clearly his equal. As late as 1830, Mendelssohn tried one last time to interest the aging poet in Beethoven's music, enthusiastically playing the first movement of the Fifth Symphony at the piano. "But that does not move one," Goethe responded, "it is merely astounding, grandiose."

Take the celebrated opening, which Beethoven once, in a moment he surely regretted, likened to Fate knocking at the door. It is bold and simple, and like many of the mottoes of our civilization, susceptible to all manner of popular treatments, none of which can diminish the power of the original. Beethoven writes eight notes, four plus four—the first ta-ta-ta-TUM falling from G down to E-flat, the second from F to D. For all the force of those hammer strokes, we may be surprised that only strings and clarinets play them. Hearing those eight notes and no more, we can't yet say for certain whether this is E-flat major or C minor. As soon as Beethoven continues, we hear that urgent knocking as part of a grim and driven music in C minor. But when the exposition is repeated, and we start over from the top with E-flat major chords still ringing in our ears, those same ta-ta-ta-TUM patterns

PREVIOUS PAGE: Ludwig van Beethoven, portrait, oil on ivory, by Danish artist Christian Horneman (1765–1844), 1803. Bodmer Collection, Beethoven-Haus Bonn, Germany

sound like they belong to E-flat major. That ambiguity and tension are at the heart of this furious music—just as the struggle to break from C minor, where this movement settles, into the brilliance of C major—and will carry us to the end of the symphony.

If one understands and remembers those four measures, much of what happens during the next thirty-odd minutes will seem both familiar and logical. We can hear Fate knocking at the door of nearly every measure in the first movement. The forceful horn call that introduces the second theme, for example, mimics both the rhythm and the shape of the symphony's opening. (We also can notice the similarity to the beginning of the Fourth Piano Concerto—and, in fact, ideas for both works can be found in the same sketchbooks, those rich hunting grounds where brilliance often emerges in flashes from a disarray matched by the notorious condition of the composer's lodgings.)

Although the first movement is launched with the energy and urgency of those first notes, its progress is stalled periodically by echoes of the two long-held notes in the first bars; in the recapitulation a tiny, but enormously expressive oboe cadenza serves the same purpose. The extensive coda is particularly satisfying not because it effectively concludes a dramatic and powerful movement, but because it uncovers still new depths of drama and power at a point when that seems unthinkable.

The Andante con moto is a distant relative of the theme and variations that often turn up as slow movements in classical symphonies. But unlike the conventional type, it presents two different themes, varies them separately, and then trails off into a free improvisation that covers a wide range of thoughts, each springing almost spontaneously from the last. The sequence of events is so unpredictable, and the meditative tone so seductive that, in the least assertive movement of the symphony, Beethoven commands our attention to the final sentence.

Beethoven was the first to notice his scherzo's resemblance to the opening of the finale of Mozart's great G minor symphony—he even wrote out Mozart's first measures on a page of sketches for this music—but while the effect there is decisive and triumphant, here it is clouded with half-uttered questions. Beethoven begins with furtive music, inching forward in the low strings, then stumbling on the horns, who let loose with their own rendition of Fate at the door. At some point, when Beethoven realized that the scherzo was part of a bigger scheme, he decided to leave it unfinished and move directly, through one of the most famous passages in music—slowly building in tension and drama, over the ominous, quiet pounding of the timpani—to an explosion of brilliant C major. Composers have struggled ever since to match the effect, not just of binding movements together—that much has been successfully copied—but of emerging so dramatically from darkness to light. The sketchbooks tell us that these fifty measures cost Beethoven considerable effort, and, most surprisingly, that they weren't even part of the original plan. Berlioz thought this transition so stunning that it would be impossible to surpass it in what follows. Beethoven, perfectly understanding the challenge—and also that of sustaining the victory of C major once it has been achieved—adds trombones (used in symphonic music for the first time), the piccolo, and the contrabassoon to the first burst of C major and moves forward toward his final stroke of genius.

That moment comes amid general rejoicing, when the ghost of the scherzo quietly appears, at once disrupting C major with unexpected memories of C minor and leaving everyone temporarily hushed and shaken. Beethoven quickly restores order, and the music begins again as if nothing has happened. But Beethoven still finds it necessary to end with fifty-four measures of the purest C major to remind us of the conquest, not the struggle. *c*

Phillip Huscher has been the program annotator for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra since 1987. His history of the Orchestra, Passing the Baton: The Chicago Symphony Orchestra and the Music Directors Who Shaped Its Greatness, *has recently been published by The University of Chicago Press.*

Marek Janowski Conductor

FIRST CSO PERFORMANCES
July 13, 1982, Ravinia Festival. Beethoven's *Leonore* Overture no. 3; Symphony no. 8; and *Triple* Concerto with Samuel Magad, Frank Miller, and Jeffrey Siegel

May 31, June 1, 2, and 3, 2018, Orchestra Hall. Weber's Overture to *Euryanthe,* Beethoven's Symphony no. 4, and Wagner's Overture and Venusberg Music from *Tannhäuser* and Preludes to acts 3 and 1 of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*

MOST RECENT CSO PERFORMANCES
August 3, 1991, Ravinia Festival. Wagner's Prelude to *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg,* Prokofiev's Violin Concerto no. 2 with Shlomo Mintz, and Beethoven's Symphony no. 3

November 14, 15, and 16, 2024, Orchestra Hall. Weber's *The Ruler of the Spirits* Overture, Liszt's Piano Concerto no. 2 with Francesco Piemontesi, and Bruckner's Symphony no. 3



A master of the German tradition, Marek Janowski is recognized throughout the world for his interpretation of the music of Wagner, Strauss, Bruckner, Brahms, Hindemith, and the Second Viennese School, and for his extensive and distinguished discography in this repertoire. His cycle of operas by Wagner with the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra set a new standard of concert performance.

Marek Janowski enjoys an outstanding reputation among the premier orchestras of the world, returning this season to the Berlin Philharmonic, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra for two concert weeks, NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra, WDR Symphony Orchestra, Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich, and Orchestre Philharmonique de Monte-Carlo, among others. He concludes his conducting career with six concerts celebrating the NHK Symphony Orchestra Tokyo's hundredth anniversary.

He has also regularly worked with such orchestras as the Dresden Philharmonic, Bayreuth Festival and Orchestra, Budapest Festival Orchestra, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Oslo Philharmonic, and Tokyo Spring Festival; in addition to the New York Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, and the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington (D.C.), among others.

Lauded for his ability to create orchestras of international standing, Janowski has been highly sought after. Most recently, he was chief conductor and artistic director of the Dresden Philharmonic Orchestra from 2019 to 2023 and 2001 to 2003. From 2002 to 2016, he was artistic director of the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra, and from 2000 to 2005 he served as music director of the Monte-Carlo Philharmonic Orchestra.

Between 1984 and 2000, as music director of the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Janowski took the orchestra to a position of pre-eminence in France as well as abroad. From 1986 to 1990, in addition to his position in Paris, he was chief conductor of the Gürzenich Orchestra Cologne. He was also first guest conductor of the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin between 1997 and 1999.

Marek Janowski was born in Warsaw, Poland, and educated in Germany. His artistic path led him from assistant positions in Aachen, Cologne, Düsseldorf, and Hamburg to his appointment as general music director in Freiburg im Breisgau (1973–75) and Dortmund (1975–79).

Marek Janowski's distinguished discography, built over the past forty years, includes the iconic recording of Wagner's *Ring* cycle with the Staatskapelle Dresden (1980–83). It also includes many award-winning recordings of opera and symphonic cycles, such as all of Bruckner's symphonies with the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande. Further acclaimed releases on Pentatone include Weber's *Der Freischütz,* with soprano Lise Davidsen and tenor Andreas Schager, the Frankfurt Radio Symphony, and MDR Radio Choir Leipzig; Beethoven's symphonies nos. 5 and 6 with the WDR Symphony Orchestra; and Verdi's *Un ballo in maschera* with the Monte-Carlo Philharmonic Orchestra, the Transylvania State Philharmonic Choir, and a cast headed by Freddie De Tommaso, Lester Lynch, and Saioa Hernández.

Photo by Felix Broede

Mao Fujita Piano

These concerts mark Mao Fujita's debut with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.



Pianist Mao Fujita has already impressed the music world as one of those special talents that come along only rarely, equally at home in the works of Mozart as in the major romantic repertoire.

Born in Tokyo, Japan, Fujita was a student at the Tokyo College of Music in 2017 when he took first prize at the prestigious Clara Haskil International Piano Competition, which first brought him to the attention of the international music community. He was also silver medalist at the 2019 International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow. Following these competition successes, he made his U.S. debut at Carnegie Hall in 2023.

Highlights of the 2026–27 season include the world premiere of a piano concerto by Toshio Hosokawa with the Vienna Philharmonic; debuts with the Staatskapelle Dresden, NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra in Hamburg, Bamberg Symphony, Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra in Stockholm, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande in Geneva, and Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra; and returns to the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra Amsterdam, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, and the Munich Philharmonic. Fujita also embarks on European tours with the Vienna Symphony under Petr Popelka and Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France under Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla, as well as a tour of Spain with the Czech Philharmonic under Semyon Bychkov.

Fujita has worked with many of the leading conductors of our time, including Riccardo Chailly, Elim Chan, Myung-Whun Chung, Christoph Eschenbach, Roberto González-Monjas, Manfred Honeck, Jakub Hrůša, Kent Nagano, Andris Nelsons, Lahav Shani, Kazuki Yamada, and Jaap van Zweden. A sought-after chamber music partner, he has collaborated with Renaud Capuçon, Leonidas Kavakos, Joshua Bell, Emanuel Ax, Kirill Gerstein, Antoine Tamestit, Steven Isserlis, Kian Soltani, and the Hagen Quartet, among others.

Also this season, Fujita continues to appear in recital at the world's most venerated concert halls and festivals, including his debut in the Great Pianists series at the Royal Concertgebouw and at other major series across Europe and Asia. Alongside his solo recital appearances, he tours with Renaud Capuçon throughout 2027, the bicentenary year of Beethoven's death.

Fujita is an exclusive Sony Classical International artist. In 2022 his debut album on the Sony Classical label, a studio recording of all of Mozart's piano sonatas, was released to acclaim. His second album, *72 Preludes,* which champions the twenty-four preludes of Chopin, Scriabin, and Yashiro, was released in 2024. Set for release by Sony Classical later this month, Fujita's third album, *Rachmaninov,* brings together the composer's Piano Concerto no. 3, captured live with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra under Andris Nelsons during season-opening concerts last month, and a selection of solo piano works and song transcriptions, offering a wide-ranging portrait of Rachmaninov's music.

Starting piano lessons at the age of three, Mao Fujita won his first international prize in 2010 at the World Classic in Taiwan and became a laureate of numerous competitions, including the International Rosario Marciano Piano Competition (2013), Zhuhai International Mozart Competition for Young Musicians (2015), and the Gina Bachauer International Young Artists Piano Competition (2016).

As artist-in-residence with the Monte-Carlo Philharmonic Orchestra for the 2026–27 season, Fujita appears in Monaco for solo recital, chamber music, and concerto performances.

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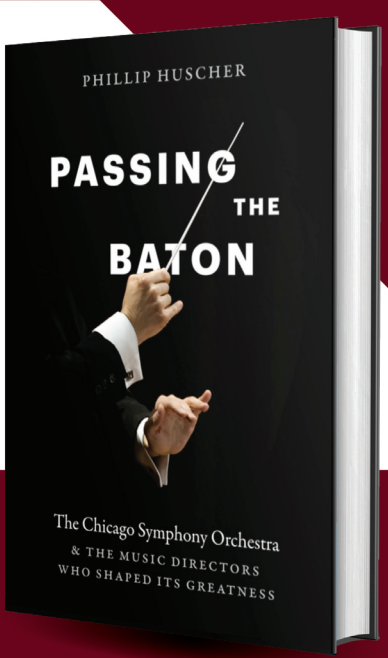
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In ***Passing the Baton: The Chicago Symphony Orchestra and the Music Directors Who Shaped Its Greatness***, longtime CSO program annotator Phillip Huscher traces the Orchestra's remarkable history through the music directors who helped build, challenge and transform the ensemble — from its founding years to the modern eras of Fritz Reiner, Sir Georg Solti, Riccardo Muti and beyond.



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Now in its 136th season, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra is a global artistic leader, hailed as one of the most esteemed ensembles in classical music.

The ensemble's history began in 1889, when Theodore Thomas, the leading conductor in America and a recognized music pioneer, was invited by Chicago businessman Charles Norman Fay to establish a symphony orchestra. Thomas's aim to build a permanent orchestra of the highest quality was realized at the first concerts in October 1891 in the Auditorium Theatre. Thomas served as music director until his death in January 1905, just three weeks after the dedication of Orchestra Hall, the Orchestra's permanent home designed by Daniel Burnham.

Frederick Stock, recruited by Thomas to the viola section in 1895, became assistant conductor in 1899 and succeeded the Orchestra's founder. His tenure lasted thirty-seven years, from 1905 to 1942. Stock founded the Civic Orchestra of Chicago—the first training orchestra in the U.S. affiliated with a major orchestra—in 1919, established youth auditions, organized the first subscription concerts especially for children, and began a series of popular concerts.

Three conductors headed the Orchestra during the following decade: Désiré Defauw was music director from 1943 to 1947, Artur Rodziński in 1947–48, and Rafael Kubelík from 1950 to 1953. The next ten years belonged to Fritz Reiner, whose recordings with the CSO are still considered hallmarks. Reiner invited Margaret Hillis to form the Chicago Symphony Chorus in 1957. For five seasons, from 1963 to 1968, Jean Martinon held the position of music director.

Sir Georg Solti, the Orchestra's eighth music director, served from 1969 until 1991. His arrival launched one of the most successful musical partnerships of our time. The CSO made its first overseas tour to Europe in 1971 under his direction and released numerous award-winning recordings. Beginning in 1991, Solti held the title of music director laureate and returned to conduct the Orchestra each season until his death in September 1997.

Daniel Barenboim became ninth music director in 1991, a position he held until 2006. His tenure was distinguished by the opening of Symphony Center in 1997, appearances with the Orchestra in the dual role of pianist and conductor, and twenty-one international tours. Appointed by Barenboim in 1994 as the Chorus's second director, Duain Wolfe served until his retirement in 2022.

In 2010 Riccardo Muti became the Orchestra's tenth music director. During his tenure, the Orchestra deepened its engagement with the Chicago community, collaborated with visionary musicians and composers, and realized many notable performances of operas in concert. In September 2023, Muti became music director emeritus for life.

In April 2024, conductor Klaus Mäkelä was announced as the Orchestra's eleventh music director and will begin an initial five-year tenure as Zell Music Director in September 2027. In July 2025, Donald Palumbo became the third director of the Chicago Symphony Chorus.

Carlo Maria Giulini was named the Orchestra's first principal guest conductor in 1969, serving until 1972; Claudio Abbado held the position from 1982 to 1985. Pierre Boulez was appointed as principal guest conductor in 1995 and was named Helen Regenstein Conductor Emeritus in 2006, a position he held until his death in January 2016. From 2006 to 2010, Bernard Haitink was the Orchestra's first principal conductor. Pianist Jean-Yves Thibaudet is the Chicago Symphony artist-in-residence for the 2026–27 season.

The Orchestra first performed at Ravinia Park in 1905, later helped to inaugurate the Ravinia Festival in 1936, and has been in residence nearly every summer since. Listeners enjoy the weekly CSO Radio Broadcast series as well as releases from the ensemble's extensive commercial discography. Recordings by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Chorus have earned sixty-five Grammy awards from the Recording Academy.

The musicians of the Orchestra are deeply involved in the Chicago Symphony Negaunee Music Institute, which reaches students, families, and early-career musicians through free and low-cost programming and world-class training.

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Baird Dodge Principal
Danny Yehun Jin
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Ni Mei
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The Paul Hindemith Principal Viola Chair
Catherine Brubaker ‡
Youming Chen
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Paolo Dara
Wei-Ting Kuo
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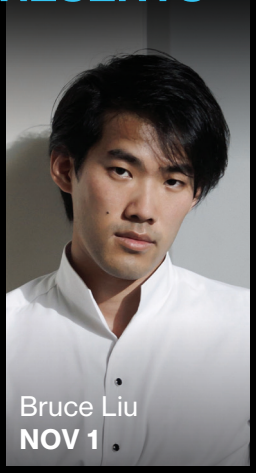
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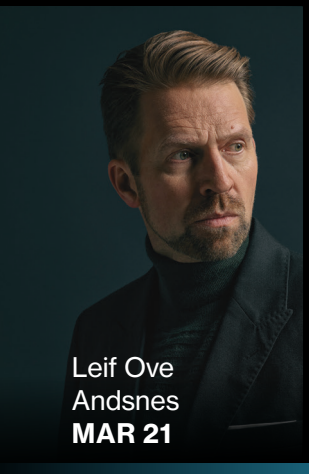






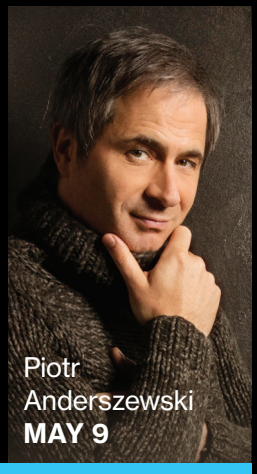
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