

Finlandia & Beethoven Eroica

Ken-David Masur Conductor

OCT 25 | 3:00 PM

OCT 26 | 7:30 PM



The 2026–27 Civic Orchestra season is generously sponsored by **Lori Julian for the Julian Family Foundation**, which also provides major funding for the Civic Fellowship program.

Chicago Symphony is grateful to Lori Julian for her steadfast support of the Civic Orchestra of Chicago and its alumni.

CIVIC ORCHESTRA OF CHICAGO

Ken-David Masur Principal Conductor

The Robert Kohl and Clark Pellett Principal Conductor Chair

ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH SEASON

Sunday, October 25, 2026, at 3:00
South Shore Cultural Center

Monday, October 26, 2026, at 7:30
Orchestra Hall at Chicago Symphony Center

Ken-David Masur Conductor

IVES Variations on *America* (orch. Schuman)

HERNÁNDEZ *Parallax (or 33,000 Stolen Sunsets)*

SIBELIUS *Finlandia*, Op. 26, No. 7

INTERMISSION

BEETHOVEN Symphony No. 3 in E-flat Major, Op. 55
(*Eroica*)
Allegro con brio
Marcia funebre: Adagio assai
Scherzo: Allegro vivace
Finale: Allegro molto

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Major support for the Civic Orchestra of Chicago is also provided by John and Leslie Burns; Robert and Joanne Crown Income Charitable Fund; Nancy Dehmlow; Leslie Fund, Inc.; Judy and Scott McCue; Barbara and Barre Seid Foundation; and Paul and Lisa Wiggin.

The Civic Orchestra of Chicago acknowledges support from the Illinois Arts Council.

CHARLES IVES

Born October 20, 1874; Danbury, Connecticut

Died May 19, 1954; New York City

Variations on *America* (Orchestrated by William Schuman)

COMPOSED

1891–92

FIRST PERFORMANCE

Organ version: February 17, 1892, the composer as soloist

Orchestral version: May 20, 1964, the New York Philharmonic. André Kostelanetz conducting

INSTRUMENTATION

3 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, suspended cymbals, triangle, castanets, tambourine, bells, xylophone, strings

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME

7 minutes



Charles Ives's father, George, was a respected bandmaster in the Union Army during the American Civil War, and he provided his son with a great deal of musical

stimulation and opportunity. The young Ives started out as an organist, and with his father's help and encouragement, he became extremely good at it early on, securing employment in churches as a teenager. The hymns that he learned on the job became cornerstones of the compositions he would write later in his

life, which are rife with diverse allusions and borrowings from church, folk, and classical music.

In 1892, for a performance at the Methodist church where he worked, the seventeen-year-old Ives wrote a set of variations on the tune "America," also known as "My Country, 'Tis of Thee." It is a proper showpiece, especially the rousing fifth variation, in which Ives writes quick figures for the pedals that require impressive footwork on the part of the organist. According to his wife, Harmony, the composer found this part "almost as much fun as playing baseball." To be kind to future musicians, he allows a bit of flexibility in this passage, writing in the score "Allegro—as fast as the pedals can go."

William Schuman's orchestration of the variations brings out the good cheer and assorted elements of parody that can be found in the set. The intermittent brassy fanfare at the opening accentuates the melodrama that Ives creates by taking a melody we think of as being pleasantly and securely in a major key and forcing it to dabble in minor. In the first variation, the strings play the theme with utmost sincerity while the flutes and xylophone alternate on absurd countermelodies that sound

like music that might accompany a circus. Schuman sets the fourth variation, a seductive, minor-key polonaise, in the low brass with an infectious castanet accompaniment, lending the music an ironic, vaguely sinister air. Admittedly, this effect came through in the original as well; Ives's father apparently forbade him from playing this variation in church because of its rather disconcerting character.

Ives returned to the piece around 1910, and he inserted two short sections that he had sketched back in 1892 to go between some of the variations. In these interludes, he has separate voices play in different keys, producing dissonant composite sounds that foreshadow the radical polytonal composing techniques that would become typical of his later works. In context, the passages offer momentary, serious steps back from the lighthearted, nationalistic romp of the rest of the variation set.

Ives was a sincere patriot, but not a dewy-eyed one. He came from a family of staunch abolitionists who recognized that long after the Civil War, the righteous cause of emancipation was an ongoing struggle that had to be continually renewed. It is striking, if probably coincidental, that he added



back these harsher, more critical takes on a patriotic song at a time when racist violence was on the rise and Jim Crow laws were clawing back hard-won rights from Black Americans. Listening to the piece now, it is hard not to hear in it a reminder that there is an extraordinary amount to celebrate about America, but also much to mourn. **C**

—Nicky Swett

COMMENTS

J.E. HERNÁNDEZ

Born 1993; Tabasco, Mexico

Parallax (or 33,000 Stolen Sunsets)

COMPOSED

2025

FIRST PERFORMANCE

September 2025, Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra

INSTRUMENTATION

2 flutes and piccolo, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones and tuba, timpani, percussions, piano, strings

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME

10 minutes



J.E. Hernández is a Mexican-born, San Diego/Houston-based composer, audio/visual practitioner, researcher, and ethnographer focusing on bridging the gap

between inner and outer genealogies through a sonic and multidisciplinary practice. His work has been performed at the Tanglewood Music Center, Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, and Houston Grand Opera, among others, as well as in a wide variety of films.

Hernández's artistic practice is centered on fostering dialogue between histories, communities, and artistic disciplines. By integrating multiaxial artistic frameworks with contemporary

technologies such as real-time sound processing and wearable movement devices, he seeks to create spaces where originary and modern knowledge can engage in dialogic performance. His work is about activating memory, sound, and movement as tools for understanding and being in a postcolonial world. His interest in interdisciplinary storytelling extends beyond composition, integrating cinematography, movement, and site-responsive performance as ways to engage with the spaces and people that shape his work.

J.E. Hernández on *Parallax (or 33,000 Stolen Sunsets)*

The title of this work is a double reference, the meaning of one nested into the other. In 2013 I stood incarcerated for sixty days inside an ICE prison, located in Houston, Texas. The whole array of experiences there was multifaceted, both in the depth of its misery and the profundity of its meaning. Back then, it was mandated by law that every single day there had to be 33,000 people detained in U.S. migrant detention centers nationwide. Of the myriads of experiences that colored my time jailed, one that I have kept thinking about is how, due to a lack of windows

ABOVE: J.E. Hernández, photo by Spencer Young

in the prison, we never saw the sun set and rise. Of my entire life, and of the lives of those 33,000 people who were there with me in those two months, we were missing sunrises and sunsets that we would never get back. And it struck me how I couldn't think of a more primordial thing to be denied than the right of us as living beings, lucky enough to have sight, to see the sun rise and set. The sun, which has provided us with warmth, energy, and has been an inexorable ingredient in life since time immemorial, was stolen from us.

I had been thinking of this piece for a long time, and over the course of that time, I made a connection to the visual phenomenon of parallax. This is the name for the visual sensation in which the background seems to be moving slower than the foreground—something we observe as we walk, as we run, as we drive, as we fly. Stellar parallax is used to measure the distance of celestial bodies, much like our sun, against a background of stars. In this way, I eventually settled on this property of parallax—distance—and its parallels within our lives. I thought about the distances that permeate us—physical distance, temporal distance, cultural distance, social distance, etc., always from one point to another, distorting our views of ourselves and that other. I thought about how when we have a falling out with someone, and even if they are physically close to us, there is a distance created that is immediate, biting, like a vast and cold ocean. And I also thought about a distance that we can feel to a culture—a closeness, a warmth, something that is

infinitesimally close and near. Human misery and joy are so close together, always on the verge of pouring into one another. When I learned I would be leaving the ICE center, I leaped for joy and screamed at the top of my lungs in relief. It's a powerful idea that such things can be literally overlapping like that—joy and misery—and how that's a fact of life. In some ways, that's what this piece is about.

Musically, then, the structure of this piece follows those principles. I set out to create an architectural structure for the orchestration and the combinations of musical matter and instruments that follows a proverbial observer navigating the orchestra from one point to another, observing this musical parallax—of ideas, of music, of form, of shapes—unfold. In this way, the piece yields some uncommon combinations of instruments and ideas. I incorporated some elements from previous versions of the piece, ultimately leading the work toward something a bit psychedelic in nature, a bit unusual yet familiar, exploring this ground of difference and distance. This work is not an articulation of a societal sickness (which I certainly think this system of ICE detention is); instead, I offer an intimate look at the gamut of feelings and thoughts that have been persistent within me as time marches on after that period of time in my life. It is an invitation into an array of states of being—meditation, prayer, immense frustration, countless tears, endless oppression, and immense happiness. 

—jhernandez.music

COMMENTS

JEAN SIBELIUS

Born December 8, 1865; Tavastehus, Finland
Died September 20, 1957; Järvenpää, Finland

Finlandia, Op. 26, No. 7

COMPOSED
1899

FIRST PERFORMANCE
December 14, 1899; revised 1900

INSTRUMENTATION
2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons,
4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba,
timpani, bass drum, cymbals, triangle, strings

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME
8 minutes



In the 1890s Sibelius was recognized by Finland as its greatest composer; after 1900, he became world famous. *Finlandia* marked the turning point. Its popularity surprised no one more than Sibelius, who had agreed to contribute some music for a political demonstration in Helsinki. But 1899 was a time of heightened political tension, as Russia's hold on Finland grew tighter, so a simple, brief but stirring composition called *Finland Awakes*, crowned by a big, singable tune, struck home like a thunderbolt. The following year, Sibelius revised the score and gave it the title *Finlandia*, before the Helsinki Philharmonic, then only eighteen months old, took it on its first major tour, carrying Sibelius's name and music throughout Europe (the tour ended at the Paris World Exposition). Despite

the narrow political circumstances of its creation, *Finlandia* turned out to have universal appeal, and in very little time, it made Sibelius the best-known living Finn in the world.

Like other works of great musical patriotism, such as Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture, *Finlandia* does not necessarily represent the composer's finest hour. As a musical achievement, it is scarcely more advanced than Sibelius's model, the tone poems by Franz Liszt. Yet that is irrelevant in light of the personal fame, sweeping popularity, and national pride that these few minutes of music inspired. Just as *Boléro* eventually hounded Ravel, the success of *Finlandia* came to irritate Sibelius, particularly when it overshadowed greater and more substantial works. Still, this is highly effective music, richly scored and imaginatively colored—those dark clouds at the top are particularly unforgettable. Best of all, it boasts one of music's great melodies, although, as in Elgar's most famous *Pomp and Circumstance* march, it sometimes catches audiences by surprise, coming at the very last minute. Finland gained its independence from Russia shortly after the Russian Revolution; its autonomy was officially recognized in October 1920. **C**

—Phillip Huscher

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Born December 16, 1770; Bonn, Germany

Died March 26, 1827; Vienna, Austria

Symphony No. 3 in E-flat Major, Op. 55 (*Eroica*)

COMPOSED

1803

FIRST PERFORMANCE

April 7, 1805; Vienna, Austria. The composer conducting

INSTRUMENTATION

2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 3 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani, strings

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME

50 minutes



The story of how the *Eroica* Symphony got its title is nearly as famous as the music itself. We know that Beethoven intended to name his third symphony for Napoleon

Bonaparte and his fight against political tyranny, that he tore up the title page in a fit of rage when he learned Napoleon had appointed himself emperor, and that he opted for the title *Sinfonia eroica* (Heroic Symphony) instead. The subtexts—idealism and disillusionment, personal greed and the lust for power, the struggle between art and politics,

among others—are timeless and intense, and they have come to overshadow one of the most remarkable, even revolutionary works of art we have. A century after Beethoven, Toscanini tried to restore reason, famously brushing aside a hundred years of connotations: “Some say it is Napoleon, some Hitler, some Mussolini. For me it is simply *Allegro con brio*.”

It is sometimes said that Beethoven was writing without themes at the beginning of the first movement; the comment is not meant disparagingly, but as proof that the essence of Beethoven’s language is not melody but tension and movement. The very opening of the *Eroica* consists of no more than two E-flat major chords, played forte, followed by the cellos jumping back and forth over the notes of an E-flat triad. The first exceptional event comes when the cellos stumble on C-sharp, a note we never expected to hear, and one that opens unforeseen vistas only seven bars into the piece. From there, Beethoven continues to spread his wings, even settling

OPPOSITE PAGE: Jean Sibelius, portrait in oil by brother-in-law Eero Järnefelt (1863–1937), 1892 | THIS PAGE: Ludwig van Beethoven, portrait on ivory by Christian Horneman (1765–1844), 1803. Bodmer Collection, Beethoven-Haus Bonn, Germany | NEXT SPREAD: The title page for the *Eroica* Symphony, showing where Beethoven deleted the dedication to Napoleon | Etching of the Michaelerplatz, Vienna, including, at right, the old Burgtheater, where Beethoven gave his first benefit concert in 1800. Carl Schütz (1745–1800), late eighteenth century

COMMENTS

comfortably in the very remote key of E minor just moments before he whisks us back to the E-flat major chords with which he began. Beethoven's writing, in the most expansive piece he had yet composed, is tight and closely unified. Although analysts often point out the unprecedented use of a new theme in the development section, it's not unique (see Mozart's Symphony no. 33), nor is the theme truly new.

Ries was perhaps the first person to be misled by the "premature" entry of the horn four bars before the start of the recapitulation, and he lost Beethoven's respect forever when he rushed up to tell him that the player had come in at the wrong place. It's one of Beethoven's

little jokes, all the more effective for being told at a whisper. The coda is as big and important as a movement in itself, but something of this stature is needed to bring us back to earth before we move on.

The Adagio is a funeral march of measured solemnity, pushed forward by the low rumble of the basses, like the sound of muffled drums. Beethoven raised some eyebrows by placing the funeral music so early in the symphony, but this is music, not biography. The two interludes are particularly moving—the first because it casts a sudden ray of sunlight on the grim proceedings; the second, because it carries the single thread of melody into a vast



double fugue of almost unseemly magnificence. The music ends with some consolation, but even more grief.

Beethoven's funeral music gives way to a brilliant (though often very quiet) scherzo, just as the prisoners in *Fidelio* emerge from the dungeon into the blinding daylight. Here, the modest minuet of Haydn and Mozart has become something truly symphonic in scope.

Beethoven's finale is a set of variations on a theme he had used several times before, principally in his ballet *The Creatures of Prometheus*. This is an unusually complex and multifaceted piece of music. It's not just the conclusion, but the culmination, of all that came before. Beethoven begins with a simple, unattached bass line before introducing the theme itself. The variety and range of style are extraordinary: a fugue on the bass line, a virtuosic showpiece for flute, a swinging dance in G minor, and an expansive hymn. Beethoven moves from one event to the next, making their connections seem not only obvious, but inevitable. Some of it is splendid solemnity, some high humor, and Beethoven touches on much



in between. A magnificent coda, which continues to stake out new territory even while wrapping things up, ends with bursts of joy from the horns. **C**

—Phillip Huscher

Cellist, writer, and music researcher Nicky Swett holds a PhD in music from the University of Cambridge, where he was a Gates Scholar. From 2016 to 2018, he was a section member and community engagement fellow in the Civic Orchestra of Chicago.

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.

Ken-David Masur Conductor



Ken-David Masur celebrates his eighth season as principal conductor of the Chicago Symphony's Civic Orchestra, his first summer as artistic partner with the

Oregon Bach Festival, and the conclusion of his tenure as music director of the Milwaukee Symphony.

Highlights of his 2026–27 season include a return engagement with the National Symphony Orchestra and Nashville Symphony and debuts with the Houston Symphony, Charleston Symphony, Charlottesville Symphony, ProMusica Chamber Orchestra of Columbus, and Symphony San Jose. In January 2027 Masur embarks on a tour with renowned violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter, leading the Tokyo Philharmonic and the China National Center for the Performing Arts Orchestra in Beijing, and later in the season he leads the Dresden Philharmonic with baritone Thomas Hampson.

Masur's tenure in Milwaukee was notable for innovative thematic programming and bridge-building, including a festival celebrating the music of the 1930s, when the Bradley Symphony Center was built; the Water Festival, which highlighted local community partners whose work centers on

water conservation and education; and a new annual citywide Bach Festival, celebrating the abiding appeal of J.S. Bach's music in an ever-changing world.

He has also instituted a multiseason artist-in-residence program and has led highly acclaimed performances of major choral works, including a staging of the *Saint Matthew Passion*.

He has recorded with the English Chamber Orchestra and the Stavanger Symphony and received a Grammy nomination from the Latin Recording Academy for the album *Salon Buenos Aires*.

Masur and his wife, pianist Melinda Lee Masur, are founders and artistic directors of the Chelsea Music Festival, an annual summer festival in New York City that spans baroque, classical, contemporary, and jazz music, with a special emphasis on the intersection of music, culinary, and visual arts.

Born and raised in Leipzig, Germany, Masur was trained at the Mendelssohn Academy in Leipzig, the Gewandhaus Children's Choir, the Detmold Academy, and the Hanns Eisler Conservatory in Berlin. While an undergraduate at Columbia University in New York, Masur became the first music director of the Bach Society Orchestra and Chorus.

In addition to his work with the Civic Orchestra of Chicago, he has conducted orchestras and led master classes at many international conservatories and festivals.

Civic Orchestra of Chicago

The Civic Orchestra of Chicago prepares its members for multifaceted and meaningful careers in orchestral music and beyond. The prestigious ensemble is part of the Chicago Symphony Negaunee Music Institute and a pillar of the organization's commitment to the future of classical music. It was founded during the 1919–20 season by Frederick Stock, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's second music director. For more than a century, its members have gone on to secure positions in orchestras around the world, including over 160 players who have joined the CSO.

Each season, Civic Orchestra members give numerous performances and participate in rigorous orchestral training with Principal Conductor Ken-David Masur, distinguished guest conductors, and a faculty of coaches comprised of CSO musicians. The Civic Orchestra serves the city by presenting free and low-cost concerts

of the highest quality at Chicago Symphony Center and in venues across Greater Chicago. The Civic Orchestra also anchors the annual Crain-Maling Foundation CSO Young Artists Competition and the Chicago Youth in Music Festival. Civic Orchestra musicians expand their creative, professional, and artistic boundaries and engage diverse audiences through educational performances in neighborhood venues, including Chicago Public Schools.

To further expand professional development opportunities, the Civic Orchestra launched the Civic Fellowship program in the 2013–14 season. The program's curriculum has four pillars: artistic planning, music education, social justice, and project management. Through an array of experiences designed to cultivate creativity and diversify skills, the Civic Fellowship program enables participants to realize their full potential as civically minded and entrepreneurial musicians.

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The Chicago Symphony Negaunee Music Institute produces transformative education and community programs that nurture lifelong engagement with music. Its work reaches students, families, community members, and early-career musicians through free and low-cost programming and world-class musical training. In collaboration with the musicians of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Chorus, and Civic Orchestra of Chicago, the Negaunee Music Institute has a lasting impact in building future audiences, cultivating the next generation of musicians, and empowering people of all backgrounds, across Chicago and around the world.

The Institute oversees the Civic Orchestra of Chicago, a prestigious ensemble for early-career musicians. Civic Orchestra members receive world-class training in orchestral music and play an active role in the Institute's mission to provide inclusive, innovative, and affordable programming for Chicago communities. The ensemble performs throughout the city and anchors many of the Institute's programs for youth, including the annual Crain-Maling Foundation CSO Young Artists Competition and Chicago Youth in Music Festival.

Other Institute programs include a series of CSO School and Family Concerts, open rehearsals, 100 in-depth school partnerships, online learning resources and music education activities that engage communities during the CSO's domestic and international tours. The Institute also highlights the unique ability of music to create empathy and healing through social impact programs such as Notes for Peace, which supports families impacted by gun violence, and collaborations with the Chicago Refugee Coalition.

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Members of the Civic Orchestra receive an annual stipend to offset some of their living expenses during their training. The following donors have generously helped to support these stipends for the 2026–27 season.

Ten Civic members participate in the Civic Fellowship program, a rigorous artistic and professional development curriculum that supplements their membership in the full orchestra. Major funding for this program is generously provided by **Lori Julian for the Julian Family Foundation**.

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