CHICAGO SYMPHONY PRESENTS

NINETY-SIXTH SEASON

Sunday, November 1, 2026, at 3:00

Bruce Liu Piano

LIGETI	*Fanfares* from Etudes, Book 1
BEETHOVEN	Sonata No. 14 in C-sharp Minor, Op. 27, No. 2 *(Moonlight)* Adagio sostenuto— Allegretto— Presto agitato
CHOPIN	Two Nocturnes, Op. 27 Nocturne in C-sharp Minor, Op. 27, No. 1 Nocturne in D-flat Major, Op. 27, No. 2
RAVEL	Alborada del gracioso from *Miroirs*

INTERMISSION

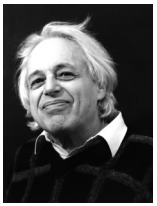
DEBUSSY	*Rêverie*
BEETHOVEN	Sonata No. 21 in C Major, Op. 53 *(Waldstein)* Allegro con brio Introduzione: Adagio molto— Rondo: Allegretto moderato
MOMPOU	Glossa sobre *Au clair de la lune*
ALBÉNIZ	El puerto from *Iberia*, Book 1
LISZT	*Rhapsodie espagnole*

Chicago Symphony acknowledges support from the Illinois Arts Council.

GYÖRGY LIGETI

Born May 28, 1923; Dicsöszentmarton, Hungary
Died June 12, 2006; Vienna, Austria

Fanfares from Etudes, Book 1



COMPOSED
1985

György Ligeti, one of music's greatest modern masters, was born into a Jewish family in the then Hungarian province of Transylvania. He studied composition at the conservatory in his boyhood home of Kolozsvár during the early years of World War II, when he also took private lessons in Budapest with the noted Hungarian pianist and composer Pál Kadosa. In 1944 Ligeti, with many other Jews, was pressed by the Nazis into forced labor in dangerous situations, including working in a munitions dump just in front of the Russian advance. After the war, Ligeti continued his studies at the Budapest Academy of Music. He pursued field research in Romanian folk music briefly after graduating in 1949, but returned to the Budapest Academy a year later, when he was appointed professor of harmony, counterpoint, and analysis. He fled Hungary in the wake of the Russian occupation of 1956 and settled in Vienna. He achieved his first wide recognition when his *Apparitions* was performed at the International Society for Contemporary Music Festival in Cologne in 1960. Ligeti continued to compose prolifically while teaching in Europe and America and received many prestigious honors, including the Bach Prize of the City of Hamburg and the German decoration *Pour le mérite*.

Fanfares, with its incessant scalar ostinato, short-phrased melody, irregular beat pattern (3+2+3), and modal harmonies, is rooted in the subtilized gestures that Béla Bartók extracted from Hungarian folk music.

THIS PAGE: György Ligeti, photo by H.J. Kropp, Schott-Music | OPPOSITE PAGE: Ludwig van Beethoven, copperplate engraving by Johann Joseph Neidl (1776–1832) after a lost portrait by Gandolph Ernst Stainhauser von Treuberg (1766–1805), ca. 1800–01

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

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

Sonata No. 14 in C-sharp Minor, Op. 27, No. 2 *(Moonlight)*



COMPOSED
1801

The *Moonlight* Sonata of 1801 did not receive its well-known sobriquet until five years after Beethoven's death, when the work's passion and emotional intensity inspired the romantic German poet and music critic Ludwig Rellstab to describe it as "a vision of a boat on Lake Lucerne by moonlight." In noting the experimental nature of the work's form, Beethoven indicated that it is a sonata "in the manner of a fantasy" *(sonata quasi una fantasia)*. The traditional classical model for the instrumental sonata comprised three independent movements: a fast movement in sonata form, an adagio or andante arranged as variations or a three-part structure, and a closing rondo in galloping meter. In the *Moonlight* Sonata, Beethoven altered the traditional fast—slow—fast sequence in favor of an innovative organization that shifts the expressive weight from the beginning to the end of the work and made the cumulative effect evident by instructing that the movements be played without pause. Instead of opening with a large symphonic-style, sonata-form essay, the *Moonlight* initially falls upon the listener with a somber, minor-mode Adagio of great introspection. Next comes a subdued scherzo and trio whose delicacy is undermined by its off-beat syncopations. The expressive goal of the sonata is achieved with its closing movement, a powerful sonata-form essay filled with tempestuous feeling and dramatic gesture. *C*

FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN

Born February 22, 1810; Żelazowa-Wola, near Warsaw, Poland
Died October 17, 1849; Paris, France

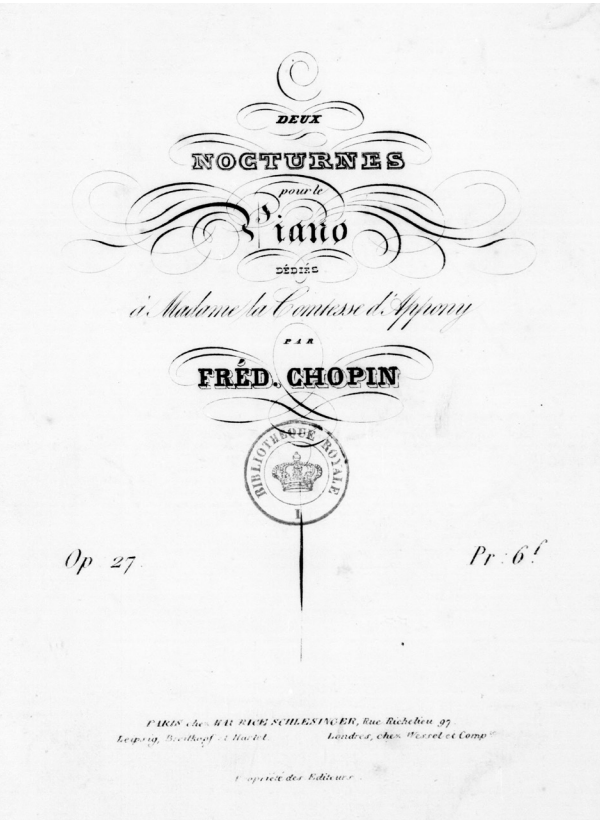
Two Nocturnes, Op. 27



COMPOSED
1835

Contemporary accounts of Chopin's piano playing invariably refer to the extreme delicacy of his touch, the beauty of his tone, and the poetic nature of his expression, qualities faithfully reflected in the twenty-one nocturnes he created between 1827 and 1846. Chopin derived the name and general style for these works from the nocturnes of John Field, the Irish composer-pianist, who spent most of his life in Moscow and Paris. Both composers were influenced in the rich harmonies and long melodic lines of their nocturnes by the bel canto operatic style that was popular at the time, though Chopin's examples exhibit a greater depth of expression and a wider range of keyboard technique than do those of Field. The introspective moods of the nocturnes pierced to the heart of the romantic sensibility and, along with the waltzes, were Chopin's most popular works during his lifetime.

The Nocturne in C-sharp minor, op. 27, no. 1, regarded by many as Chopin's finest work in the form, is, according to Alan Rich, "a powerful, virile outcry, one of the most personal utterances in the entire realm of piano



music." It is shrouded in a mood of disquiet so strong that Ernest Hutcheson said it creates "an atmosphere of morbid pessimism, heavy and oppressive." The attempt to rise to heroic declamation in the middle section founders and breaks into a sobbing recitative-cadenza before the opening music returns.

The Nocturne in D-flat major, op. 27, no. 2, is one of Chopin's most entrancing crepuscular evocations. After hearing Chopin play this nocturne, Charles Hallé, the English pianist-composer whose name is memorialized by Manchester's chief orchestra, wrote, "He carried you away with him into a dreamland in which you would like to dwell forever." *C*



MAURICE RAVEL

Born March 7, 1875; Ciboure, Basses-Pyrénées, France
Died December 28, 1937; Paris, France

Alborada del gracioso from *Miroirs*



COMPOSED
1905

The *alba,* or "song at dawn," is one of music's most ancient forms—the earliest extant example, from the repertory of the troubadours of Provence in southern France, dates from the eleventh century. These poems dealt with a lover's departure in the early morning after a night spent with his beloved and are often cast in the form of a dialogue between the lover and a watchman who warns of approaching danger. (Wagner revived the form in the second act of *Tristan and Isolde,* during which Brangäne alerts the fated couple of King Marke's return.) As an alborada (instrumental serenade), it was later taken over by the musicians of Galicia in northern Spain, who made it a type of dance played on a rustic oboe called a *dulzaina,* accompanied by a small drum. Ravel, a native of the Basque region of southern France that shares many aspects of its cultural heritage with its Spanish neighbors, knew the alborada and other Spanish music,

OPPOSITE PAGE, FROM TOP: Frédéric Chopin, detail from an unfinished double portrait with George Sand by Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863), 1838 | Title page of Chopin's Two Nocturnes for Piano, op. 27, published by M. Schlesinger, Paris, 1836. Bibliothèque nationale de France | THIS PAGE, FROM TOP: John Field, engraving by Anton Wachsmann (1765–1836), 1820. Gallica Digital Library, Bibliothèque nationale de France | Ravel, as photographed by Pierre Petit (1831–1909) in 1907

and he incorporated its spirit and style into several of his important works, including the Alborada del gracioso (Morning song of the jester), the fourth of five pieces written in 1905 for the piano suite *Miroirs*.

"The title *Miroirs,*" Arbie Orenstein wrote, "implies an objective, though personal, reflection of reality, and each composition is pictorial to some extent." The picture Ravel painted in the outer sections of Alborada del gracioso is one of thrumming guitars ringing across a sun-baked landscape. The contrasting central section calls forth another image—the gracioso, or Spanish clown or jester. The gracioso was a popular character in the Spanish theater, depicted by Calderón and Lope de Vega as the fool in love in the household of a nobleman. The jester soon forgets his love, however, and the scintillating music of the opening returns to bring Alborada del gracioso to a whirling conclusion. *C*

CLAUDE DEBUSSY

Born August 2, 1862; Saint Germain-en-Laye, near Paris, France
Died March 25, 1918; Paris, France

Rêverie



COMPOSED
1890

Debussy graduated from the Paris Conservatory in 1880 with a degree in theory, harmony, and composition and a burning ambition to be a professional composer. He spent most of the following decade pursuing his goal through the accepted path of the Prix de Rome, finally winning the coveted prize in 1884 with the cantata *L'enfant prodigue* (The Prodigal Son) after unsuccessful submissions in the two previous years. The award's mandatory three-year residence at the Villa Medici in Rome was intended to polish a creative neophyte into a finished artist, but Debussy detested the city and the situation, and he longed to return to Paris, though when he finally got back, in February 1887, he was without either steady income or immediate prospects. He moved in with his parents, took on a few piano students, and started making ambitious plans and even a

THIS PAGE: Debussy, ca. 1890–1910, Atelier Nadar (studio of Gaspard-Félix "Nadar" Tournachon). From *Reference Album of Atelier Nadar*, vol. 13. Gallica Digital Library, Bibliothèque nationale de France | OPPOSITE PAGE: Ludwig van Beethoven, portrait on ivory by Christian Horneman (1765–1844), 1803. Bodmer Collection, Beethoven-Haus Bonn, Germany

few sketches for operas, symphonies, tone poems, and concertos but finished little more than a few songs to texts by modern French poets such as Verlaine, Banville, and Mallarmé. He scraped together enough money to have his *Ariettes oubliées* published in 1888 and the *Cinq poèmes de Baudelaire* a year later, bringing his music to the attention of several established firms. In 1891 he sold some small numbers to a half-dozen publishers, including a group of five recent piano pieces *(Ballade slave, Tarantelle styrienne, Valse romantique, Nocturne,* and *Rêverie)* to the publishing house Éditions Choudens. Choudens soon thought better of its purchase and turned the pieces over to Georges Hartmann, founder of the Concerts Colonne, the Wagner estate's representative in Paris, and an active promoter of the publication of works by contemporary French composers Franck, Saint-Saëns, Bizet, Lalo, and Massenet under the imprint of his colleague Fromont. Fromont did not publish *Rêverie* until 1905, however, by which time Debussy had established his own distinctive creative personality with the String Quartet in G minor, *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun, Nocturnes, Pelleas and Melisande,* and several masterful piano compositions. He was not happy to see *Rêverie* issued at a time when he had progressed well beyond its youthful style, and he informed Fromont that "I very much regret your decision. I wrote *Rêverie* in a hurry years ago, purely for material considerations. It is a work of no consequence. I frankly consider it absolutely no good." Few agreed. *Rêverie,* with its evocative harmonies and its dreamy lyricism, became one of Debussy's most beloved miniatures, not only in its original piano version but also in a variety of arrangements for other instruments and as the 1930s pop song "My Reverie." *C*

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Sonata No. 21 in C Major, Op. 53 *(Waldstein)*



COMPOSED
1804

One of the characteristics of Beethoven's artistic maturation was an increasing concern with the overall proportions of his musical forms, a careful calculation of the relation, balance, and proportion of one movement to the next. He had originally composed a large set of variations to occupy the center of the *Waldstein* Sonata (whose soubriquet honors Count Ferdinand von Waldstein of Bonn, an important early patron of the composer) but decided that their delicacy diminished the vaulting heroism of the outer movements that he intended to be the essence of the work. He excised the movement, issued

it separately as the *Andante favori* in F major (WoO 57), and replaced it with a short, moody, harmonically advanced paragraph that is the perfect foil to the vigor and exultation of the surrounding movements. "If mountains, cliffs, and forests could sing," wrote Hugo Leichtentritt of the opening Allegro, "they would praise their Creator in such tones as these." The movement is in an extraordinary and daring sonata form that explores far-flung, emotionally expressive tonalities for its hymnlike second theme so dramatically that the German scholar Paul Bekker noted that "a hitherto unknown world of sound was revealed" by this sonata. The following Adagio proceeds without pause to the finale, a vast rondo built on a superb diatonic (a scale consisting of intervals of five whole steps and two half steps) theme that is expounded with grandeur, confidence, and triumph. *C*

FEDERICO MOMPOU

Born April 16, 1893; Barcelona, Spain
Died June 30, 1987; Barcelona, Spain

Glossa sobre *Au clair de la lune*



COMPOSED
1946

Federico Mompou started taking piano lessons as a young boy with Pedro Serra at the Conservatorio del Liceo in Barcelona and gave his first public concert at fifteen. A recital of Fauré's piano works performed by Marguerite Long in 1909 fixed Mompou's ambition to devote himself to music and further his career in Paris. Two years later, armed with a letter of recommendation from Granados, Mompou descended on the French capital, where he studied harmony with Marcel Samuel-Rousseau and piano with Ferdinand Motte-Lacroix, with whom he became close friends. Mompou, like César Franck, realized that his retiring personality made the life of a touring virtuoso impractical, so he chose to devote himself to composition. His first important works, a set of *Impresiones íntimas* (Intimate Impressions), were premiered to acclaim in Paris by Motte-Lacroix in 1914. World War I drove Mompou back to Barcelona, but in 1921 he returned to Paris, where he lived until the Nazis overran the city twenty years later. From 1941 until his death in 1987, he made his home in Barcelona, living out of the public eye and occasionally playing his compositions for friends. Mompou was recognized as one of the masters of modern Spanish music—he was elected to membership in the Royal Academies of San Jorge in Barcelona and San Fernando in Madrid, made a Knight of the Order of Arts and Letters by the French government, and awarded

the National Music Award by Spain for his lifetime's work.

When Mompou's Barcelona apartment was being cleared out following his death in 1987 at age ninety-three, three folders of manuscripts were discovered containing unpublished songs, piano pieces, a work for flute and string orchestra, and an unfinished string quartet. Among the piano scores were two based on the old French folk song "Au clair de la lune" (By the Moonlight). The first, Glossa sobre (Commentary on) *Au clair de la lune,* is an impressionistic setting of the source melody.

ISAAC ALBÉNIZ

Born May 29, 1860; Camprodón, Spain
Died May 18, 1909; Cambô-les-Bains, France

El puerto from *Iberia*, Book I



COMPOSED
1906

Iberia, Isaac Albéniz's set of twelve piano pieces depicting places and scenes in his native country, is widely considered his masterpiece. "While composing my music, I thought of nothing but Spain and the Spanish," he explained. "*Iberia* is the Alhambra, it is the Castilian plain, it is the Catalan coast . . . it is something that speaks of a glorious past and a dolorous present." Debussy held that *Iberia* was Albéniz's best work: "Never has music achieved such diversified, such colorful impressions. . . . One closes one's eyes, dazzled by the sight of such a wealth of images." Blanche Selva overcame her fear that the music's difficulty made it "unplayable," and gave the acclaimed premieres of each of the four volumes of *Iberia* as they were published between 1906 and 1909.

El puerto paints a sun-splashed festival day in a southern port city (which Gilbert Chase identified precisely as "Puerto de Santa Mariá, on the river Guadalete" in his survey of Spanish music) through a medley of three Andalusian dances: *polo, bulerías,* and Roma *seguidilla*.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Federico Mompou, date unknown | THIS PAGE: Photograph of Isaac Albéniz from 1886. Foundation Albéniz, Madrid, Spain | NEXT PAGE: Liszt, oil portrait by Miklós Barabás (1810–1898), 1847. Hungarian National Museum

FRANZ LISZT

Born October 22, 1811; Doborján, Hungary (now Raiding, Austria)
Died July 31, 1886; Bayreuth, Germany

Rhapsodie espagnole



COMPOSED
1863

A great man's reputation precedes him, and Liszt followed where his led. One of Europe's most famous and sought-after personalities in the nineteenth century, Liszt traveled the length and breadth of the Continent, astounding audiences with his piano wizardry. He turned many of his experiences on the road into original piano compositions, and one of the most atmospheric of his travel pieces is the *Rhapsodie espagnole,* inspired by his Iberian visit during the winter of 1844–45. His first stop was in the village of Pau, in the Pyrénées, to see a childhood sweetheart, Madame d'Artigaux, née Caroline de Saint-Cricq. After that reunion, he made a triumphant procession to Madrid (fourteen major concerts in two months), Lisbon (twelve more performances), Seville, Gibraltar, and Barcelona. He sketched a solo piano work on themes he heard during those months, but it was not until 1863 that he brought the music to its definitive form, basing his *Rhapsodie espagnole* on two traditional Spanish melodies. The first, la folia, was an ancient dance strain of Portuguese or Spanish origin that appeared in concert music as early as 1649, and which also served as the basis of compositions by Frescobaldi, Alessandro Scarlatti, Bach, Rachmaninov, and others; Liszt knew it from Corelli's D minor violin sonata, op. 5, no. 12. The other melody Liszt employed was a jota, a rapid triple-meter dance that he heard in the northern province of Aragon. (The Russian composer Glinka, who was also in Spain in 1845, used that same theme in his Jota aragonesa.)

The form of Liszt's *Rhapsodie espagnole* follows the sectional design familiar from his Hungarian rhapsodies. Following an introductory cadenza, the folia theme is presented in the dark lower reaches of the keyboard. Increasingly brilliant treatment of the theme ensues. A series of flashing scales leads directly into the ebullient Jota aragonesa, an infectious tune that is treated at some length with virtuosic display. In the final pages, the opening folia theme is recalled and combined in heroic fashion with the jota to fashion a grand close. 𝄐

Richard E. Rodda, a former faculty member at Case Western Reserve University and the Cleveland Institute of Music, provides program notes for many American orchestras, concert series, and festivals.

Bruce Liu Piano



After being awarded first prize at the Eighteenth International Chopin Piano Competition in 2021, Bruce Liu has found a distinctive voice that unites elegance, spontaneity, and technical mastery.

In demand across the globe, Liu performs with the world's finest ensembles and conductors, including the London, Boston, and Chicago symphony orchestras, New York Philharmonic, Staatskapelle Dresden, Wiener Symphoniker, and Orchestre National de France, under Daniele Gatti, Manfred Honeck, Paavo Järvi, Petr Popelka, Santtu-Matias Rouvali, Lahav Shani, and Dalia Stasevska.

The 2026–27 season sees Liu undertake several major international tours, including appearances with the London Symphony Orchestra and Sir Antonio Pappano in China, the Budapest Festival Orchestra and Iván Fischer in Japan, the Montreal Symphony Orchestra with Rafael Payare in Hong Kong and Korea, and the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra with Ryan Bancroft in Europe. He also makes his debuts with the Netherlands Philharmonic, Spanish National Orchestra, and Danish National Symphony Orchestra and returns to the New York Philharmonic and the Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra. Further highlights of the season include New Year's concerts at the Konzerthaus Berlin and a concert for the Chopin Competition's centennial anniversary in Warsaw.

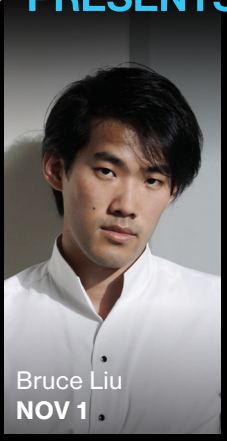
A sought-after recitalist, Liu performs at major venues such as the Concertgebouw Amsterdam, Carnegie Hall, and the Berlin Philharmonic. In the 2026–27 season, he performs at the Boston Celebrity Series, Chicago Symphony Center, Philharmonie de Paris, Bozar Bruxelles, Muziekgebouw Amsterdam, Wigmore Hall, and major venues in Houston, Seattle, Spain, and Portugal. He is a regular guest at various international festivals, including Edinburgh, Klavier-Festival Ruhr, Verbier, La Roque-d'Anthéron, Rheingau, Aspen, and Tanglewood.

An exclusive recording artist with Deutsche Grammophon, Bruce Liu released his latest solo album, *Lunaris,* in August 2026. In 2024 he was awarded Opus Klassik's Young Talent of the Year for his debut studio album, *Waves,* and his second studio album, featuring Tchaikovsky's *The Seasons,* received rave reviews.

Born in Paris and raised in Montreal, Bruce Liu possesses an artistry that reflects his multicultural heritage—blending European refinement, North American dynamism, and the long tradition of Chinese culture. He studied with Richard Raymond and Dang Thai Son.

Photo by Christoph Koestlin

CHICAGO SYMPHONY PRESENTS


Bruce Liu
NOV 1


Lukas Sternath
DEC 6


Rudolf Buchbinder
JAN 10


Mitsuko Uchida
JAN 31

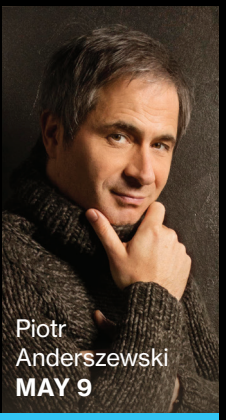
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Sundays at 3:00


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Yuja Wang
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