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ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-SIXTH SEASON

Wednesday, November 11, 2026, at 7:30

Carlos Miguel Prieto Conductor
Yo-Yo Ma Cello

GINASTERA

Four Dances from *Estancia*
The Land Workers
Wheat Dance
The Cattlemen
Final Dance (Malambo)

SHOSTAKOVICH

Cello Concerto No. 1 in E-flat Major, Op. 107
Allegretto
Moderato—
Cadenza—
Allegro con moto
YO-YO MA

INTERMISSION

RACHMANINOV

Symphonic Dances, Op. 45
Non allegro
Andante con moto (Tempo di valse)
Lento assai—Allegro vivace

This concert is generously sponsored by The Negaunee Foundation.

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ALBERTO GINASTERA

Born April 11, 1916; Buenos Aires, Argentina
Died June 25, 1983; Geneva, Switzerland

Four Dances from *Estancia*



In his native Argentina, Alberto Ginastera was recognized as a major composer from the first public performance of his music. His ballet suite *Panambí* was an overnight sensation when it was played at the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires in 1937; the complete ballet was successfully staged three years later. (Ginastera eventually destroyed all his scores composed before *Panambí,* giving the impression that he burst on the scene a fully formed talent.)

In 1941 the U.S. government sent Aaron Copland, a brand-name composer as American as hot dogs and baseball, on a goodwill fact-finding tour of Latin America. Before Copland left—his itinerary planned by the Committee for Inter-American Artistic and Intellectual Relations (its title a marvel of high-handed bureaucratic prose)—he agreed to take careful notes so that he could give a full report and recommend composers for study in the States. In his diary entry for September 26, Copland mentions a young man who is considered to be the hope of Argentine music:

> He is now twenty-five and is certainly the first candidate for a trip to the States from any standpoint. Alberto Ginastera would profit by contacts outside Argentina. He is looked upon with favor by all groups here, is presentable, modest almost to the timid degree, and will, no doubt, someday be an outstanding figure in Argentine music.

But Ginastera was slow to make his entry into the musical life of the United States. In 1941 the success of *Panambí* persuaded Lincoln Kirstein to commission a ballet from Ginastera for the American Ballet Caravan, a company he

COMPOSED
1941

FIRST PERFORMANCE
1943; Buenos Aires, Argentina

INSTRUMENTATION
flute and 2 piccolos, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani, percussion, piano, strings

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME
12 minutes

FIRST CSO PERFORMANCES
July 2, 1960, Ravinia Festival. Arthur Fiedler conducting (Final Dance [Malambo])

July 11, 1965, Ravinia Festival. Seiji Ozawa conducting

September 16 and 17, 1970, Orchestra Hall. Henry Mazer conducting (Wheat Dance and Final Dance [Malambo])

May 23, 24, 25, and 26, 2019, Orchestra Hall. Giancarlo Guerrero conducting

MOST RECENT CSO PERFORMANCES
August 7, 2013, Ravinia Festival. Carlos Miguel Prieto conducting

September 19 and 20, 2024, Orchestra Hall. Andrés Orozco-Estrada conducting

CSO RECORDING
1967. Seiji Ozawa conducting. CSO *(Chicago Symphony Orchestra: The First 100 Years)*

THIS PAGE: Alberto Ginastera, ca. 1950. Photo by Library of Congress/Corbis/VCG via Getty Images | NEXT PAGE, FROM TOP: *Un alto en el campo* (A Rest in the Countryside), depicting travelers resting beneath a large ombú tree. Oil on canvas by Prilidiano Pueyrredón (1823–1870), 1861. National Museum of Fine Arts, Buenos Aires, Argentina. | A group of Argentine gauchos, ca. 1880s, as captured by Samuel Boote (1844–1921), a leading photographer in late nineteenth-century Argentina, born to English immigrant parents





was then managing for George Balanchine, who was slated to provide the choreography. But by the time Ginastera had completed *Estancia,* the troupe had disbanded and the premiere was off. *Estancia* wasn't staged for another ten years, even in Argentina; the complete original score wasn't played in the United States until 1991, although by then this suite of four dances from the ballet had become popular concert fare.

In 1942 Ginastera was awarded a Guggenheim Foundation grant to visit the United States, but the trip was postponed because of the war. Finally, in 1945, the composer and his family came to this country as temporary political refugees following Juan Perón's assumption of power. This was the first of many visits. For sixteen months beginning in December 1945, he lived and composed in the United States; he spent the summer of 1946 at Tanglewood, where he again met up with Copland. But Ginastera continued to roam; after Perón was removed from power in 1955, he returned to Argentina, where he became an indispensable part of the country's cultural life.

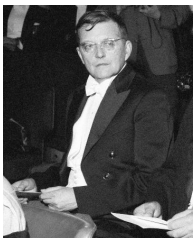
Estancia is based on the narrative poem *El Gaucho Martín Fierro,* written by the Argentine José Hernández in 1873, which pits a civilized urban experience against the cowboy way of life. (An *estancia* is a large cattle ranch set in the plains of Argentina.) Taking place in the space of a single day, it tells of the infatuation between a city boy and a cattle rancher's daughter. (As the sun is setting, she is finally won over by his unexpected mastery of handling horses—and dancing.) Neither Kirstein nor Balanchine ever choreographed the work.

The suite Ginastera extracted from the complete score begins in the morning, with the powerful, folklike dance of the Land Workers. The Wheat Dance, in contrast, offers rhapsodic melody and abundant atmosphere in the Pampas, the vast plains that stretch for miles across the land, shimmering in the early sunlight. The Cattlemen's dance is rich in rhythm, vigor, syncopation, and the energy of the great outdoors. The finale—inspired by the bold malambo dance of the Argentine cowboys—is noisy, intoxicating music of struggle and triumph, as the boy takes part in a traditional dancing competition and wins, over all the gauchos. *C*

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH

Born September 25, 1906; Saint Petersburg, Russia
Died August 9, 1975; Moscow, Russia

Cello Concerto No. 1 in E-flat Major, Op. 107



Dmitri Shostakovich made three trips to the United States. On the first, in 1949, he was asked to play the scherzo from his famous Fifth Symphony on an upright piano in Madison Square Garden for a crowd of 30,000 curious spectators. The last, in 1973, just two years before his death, brought him to Evanston to accept an honorary doctorate from Northwestern University. In between came a month-long stay in 1959, arranged as part of a cultural exchange allowed by the new Khrushchev regime. Shostakovich and several other Russian musicians traveled from New York to a number of major American cities, including Philadelphia, where Mstislav Rostropovich played the American premiere of Shostakovich's First Cello Concerto.

Rostropovich had given the world premiere of this new concerto only a month before in Leningrad. Composed early in 1959, the concerto marked the beginning of Shostakovich's brief but intense fascination with the solo cello, which was inspired by Rostropovich's exceptional playing. Over the next six years, Shostakovich wrote



COMPOSED
1959

FIRST PERFORMANCE
October 4, 1959; Leningrad, Russia

INSTRUMENTATION
solo cello, 2 flutes (2nd doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons (2nd doubling contrabassoon), horn, timpani, celesta, strings

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME
28 minutes

FIRST CSO PERFORMANCES
August 4, 1968, Ravinia Festival. Frank Miller as soloist, Seiji Ozawa conducting

September 26, 27, and 28, 1985, Orchestra Hall. Lynn Harrell as soloist, Sir Georg Solti conducting

MOST RECENT CSO PERFORMANCES
July 18, 2004, Ravinia Festival. Dimitri Maslennikov as soloist, Christoph Eschenbach conducting

April 4, 5, and 6, 2024, Orchestra Hall. Sol Gabetta as soloist, Klaus Mäkelä conducting

FROM TOP: Dmitri Shostakovich during his visit to Helsinki, Finland, 1958, as photographed by Holger Eklund (active 1950s–90s)
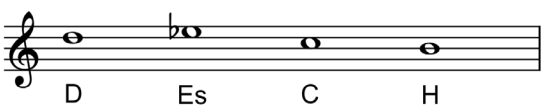
From left, Dmitri Shostakovich, cellist Mstislav Rostropovich (1927–2007), and conductor Gennady Rozhdestvensky (1931–2018) at the London premiere of Shostakovich's Cello Concerto no. 1, Royal Festival Hall, September 21, 1960. Photo by Erich Auerbach (1911–1977)/ Getty Images

a second cello concerto (also dedicated to Rostropovich) and reorchestrated the cello concerto by Robert Schumann.

Aside from an early, lightweight piano concerto, which he wrote when he was in his twenties, Shostakovich became interested in the concerto form relatively late in his life and as a direct result of his contact with important performers like Rostropovich, or, in the case of the two violin concertos, David Oistrakh. A second piano concerto was written for his son Maxim (who played it for the first time on his nineteenth birthday). The small number of concertos in his vast output is surprising considering that Shostakovich produced fifteen symphonies and fifteen string quartets; three dozen film scores; several opera and ballet scores; and a great many songs, choral works, piano pieces, and arrangements of other music (including, of all things, "Tea for Two," which became the *Tahiti Trot*).

SHOSTAKOVICH'S MUSICAL MONOGRAM

In several compositions, beginning with the First Violin Concerto of 1948, Shostakovich spells out his signature in musical notation. This four-note motive is derived from the German transliteration of the composer's own name, D. SCHostakowitsch. In German notation, E-flat is "es" and B-natural is H. Thus, DSCH is D, E-flat, C, B. The tradition for this kind of musical signature dates back at least to the time of Bach.



The First Cello Concerto begins with the solo cello playing a four-note motive (G, E, B, B-flat) that will surface again and again throughout the work. At one point, the motive is transposed and its intervals tightened to produce C, B, E-flat, D, a variant of the composer's personal musical motto D, E-flat, C, B (see sidebar, below). The music is lightly scored, with important solos for the horn, the only member of the brass section Shostakovich included in the orchestra. The tone throughout is lively and energetic, but not lighthearted.

The following movement, although not slow (marked moderato), suggests repose and introspection and is crowned by a long, singing line from the cello. Lyrical solos for the horn are prominent, and, near the end, the celesta and the solo cello engage in dialogue. The soloist then begins an extended cadenza, which Shostakovich indicates as a separate movement, placing a roman numeral III above the word "cadenza." Although Shostakovich still maintains the cadenza's historical definition as brilliant, unaccompanied virtuosic display music for the soloist, he has now elevated it in size and function to its own movement—moving even beyond its role in his earlier First Violin Concerto, where it linked the slow movement and the finale. Here, too, the cadenza leads without pause into the last movement, a tight, brief, ferocious allegro that concludes by recalling the concerto's opening four-note theme. *C*

ELECTRONIC DEVICES
Before the concert begins, cell phones and other electronic devices must be turned off or set to silent mode. The use of photography, audio, and video recording equipment is not permitted during the music. Please refrain from any screen use during the performance.



SERGEI RACHMANINOV

Born April 1, 1873; Semyonovo, Russia
Died March 28, 1943; Beverly Hills, California

Symphonic Dances, Op. 45



After finishing his Third Symphony in 1936, Rachmaninov quit composing, discouraged by the lukewarm reception several of his recent scores had met. He was tired of trying to juggle his careers as a composer, conductor, and pianist—and in recent years it seemed that he was only guaranteed success in his role as pianist (he was, after all, one of the greatest of all time). Perhaps he also had grown weary of having his music dismissed as old-fashioned and irrelevant—invariably pitted against the radical work of Stravinsky and Schoenberg, the two giants of the day.

With the outbreak of war in 1939, Rachmaninov and his wife Natalya left Europe for the last time and settled in Orchard Point, an estate he had rented on Long Island, near his friends Vladimir and Wanda Horowitz; his former secretary, Evgeny Somov; and choreographer Michel Fokine, who recently had made a popular ballet of the *Paganini* Variations. Throughout the summer of 1940, Rachmaninov was busy preparing for his upcoming concert tour—he regularly practiced every day from early morning until eleven at night—and, for the first time in years, he found that he couldn't resist the urge to compose.

On August 21 he wrote to Eugene Ormandy, who had conducted some of Rachmaninov's greatest successes with the Philadelphia Orchestra, "Last week I finished a new symphonic piece, which I naturally want to give first to you and your orchestra. It is called Fantastic Dances. I shall now begin the orchestration." Even with his impending tour, Rachmaninov managed to complete the scoring that October. By then, the dances had become symphonic rather than fantastic, and he also had given up his original idea to identify the three movements as midday, twilight, and midnight. ("It should have been called just Dances," he later told a newspaper reporter, "but I was afraid people would think I had written dance music for jazz orchestra.")

Before Ormandy even had a chance to see the score, Rachmaninov played through parts of it at the piano for Fokine, hoping that he would want to collaborate on another ballet—this was a set of dances, after all—and repeat the international success of their Paganini project. Fokine was

COMPOSED
1940

FIRST PERFORMANCE
January 3, 1941; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

INSTRUMENTATION
2 flutes and piccolo, 2 oboes and english horn, 2 clarinets and bass clarinet, alto saxophone, 2 bassoons and contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (triangle, tambourine, cymbals, bass drum, tam-tam, glockenspiel, xylophone, snare drum, chimes), harp, piano, strings

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME
35 minutes

FIRST CSO PERFORMANCES
December 11 and 12, 1941, Orchestra Hall. Frederick Stock conducting

July 19, 1949, Ravinia Festival. Dimitri Mitropoulos conducting

MOST RECENT CSO PERFORMANCES
April 3, 4, and 5, 2025, Orchestra Hall. Karina Canellakis conducting

August 1, 2026, Ravinia Festival. Marin Alsop conducting

THIS PAGE: Sergei Rachmaninov, George Grantham Bain Collection, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

NEXT PAGE: The composer with his grandchildren, Princess Sophie Wolkonsky (1925–1968) and Alexander Conus (1933–2012), at Villa Senar, his home on Lake Lucerne, Switzerland, ca. 1936. Bettmann Collection/ Getty Images

enthusiastic—"it seemed to me appropriate and beautiful," he wrote to Rachmaninov, after hearing the music—but his death, in August 1942, robbed the composer of both a friend and another hit ballet.

The Philadelphia premiere was well received, but a subsequent performance in New York was panned. Rachmaninov was hurt that Ormandy didn't appear interested in recording the new work, even though he had made best-selling recordings of practically all his previous orchestral pieces. The Symphonic Dances turned out to be his last score, and Rachmaninov died believing that it would never find the kind of popularity his earlier music had so easily won. (Although Rachmaninov had spent long periods of time in the United States since 1918, the Symphonic Dances is the only score he composed in this country—earlier, he regularly wrote, on breaks from concert tours, in his villa near Lucerne.) But in recent years, the score has become a favorite of orchestras and audiences alike—Rachmaninov's star is once again on the rise.



The first dance has an extended solo for saxophone, an instrument for which Rachmaninov had never written. (He consulted with his friend, the Broadway orchestrator Robert Russell Bennett, who was amazed that, when the composer played the score for him, "he sang, whistled, stamped, rolled his chords, and otherwise conducted himself not as one would expect of so great and impeccable a piano virtuoso.") He also got advice on string bowings from no less an artist than Fritz Kreisler. (At the first rehearsal, when Ormandy remarked on their difficulty, Rachmaninov said, "Fritz did those for me," knowing he need say no more.) In the coda of the first dance, Rachmaninov privately quotes the opening theme of his First Symphony, which was the greatest failure of his career (after its disastrous premiere in 1897, Rachmaninov wrote nothing for three years). Rachmaninov knew that only he would catch the reference, because he had long since destroyed the score, hoping to erase painful memories along with the music itself. But shortly after his death a copy of a two-piano arrangement, and then a set of orchestra parts, turned up in Leningrad, bringing Rachmaninov's secret quotation to light.

The second movement is a melancholy waltz (in 6/8 time) that only turns more anxious and wistful as it progresses. The finale quotes the chant of the Russian Orthodox liturgy as well as the Gregorian melody of the *Dies irae* from the Mass for the Dead. It also recycles part of his *All-Night Vigil,* an a cappella choral work dating from 1915, but this is no secret quotation, for Rachmaninov writes the original text, "Alliluya," in the score at that point. Perhaps guessing that this would be his final work—"It must have been my last spark," he said at the time—Rachmaninov wrote at the end of his manuscript, "I thank thee, Lord." *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, *is published by The University of Chicago Press.*

Carlos Miguel Prieto Conductor

FIRST CSO PERFORMANCES
July 14, 2008, Pritzker Pavilion, Millennium Park. Tchaikovsky's *Capriccio italien,* Williams's Olympic Fanfare and Theme and *The Olympic Spirit,* Jenkins's Allegretto from *Palladio* with Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, Gould's arrangement of Fisher's *Chicago* with John Bruce Yeh, and Foster's *The Power of the Dream* with Roderick Dixon, Christ Universal Temple Ensemble, and Merit School of Music Gospel Choir

May 13, 14, and 15, 2010, Orchestra Hall. Revueltas's Suite from *Redes,* Yanov-Yanovsky's Cello Concerto with Yo-Yo Ma, and Shostakovich's Symphony no. 6

August 7, 2013, Ravinia Festival. Vaughan Williams's *Serenade to Music* with vocal soloists from Ravinia's Steans Music Institute, Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto with Itzhak Perlman, Ginastera's Four Dances from *Estancia,* and Ravel's *Rapsodie espagnole* and *Boléro*

MOST RECENT CSO PERFORMANCES
August 5, 2022, Ravinia Festival. Debussy's *Ibéria,* Ravel's Piano Concerto in G major with Conrad Tao, Ortiz's *Téenek-Invenciones de Territorio,* Copland's *El salón México,* and Moncayo's *Huapango*

May 1, 2023, Orchestra Hall. Elgar's Cello Concerto with Yo-Yo Ma and Tchaikovsky's Symphony no. 4



Known for his charisma and expressive interpretations, Grammy Award–winning Mexican conductor Carlos Miguel Prieto has established himself not only as a major figure in the orchestral world, but also as an influential educator, cultural change-maker, and champion of new music.

Highlights include engagements with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, NDR Elbphilharmonie, Frankfurt Radio Symphony, the Hallé in Manchester, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Cleveland Orchestra, New Jersey Symphony, Dallas Symphony Orchestra, Toronto Symphony Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Minnesota Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra, New World Symphony in Miami Beach, Houston Symphony, Spanish National Orchestra based in Madrid, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Strasbourg Philharmonic Orchestra, Auckland Philharmonia, and a successful BBC Proms debut at Royal Albert Hall in London.

Named music director of the North Carolina Symphony in 2023, Prieto has also been music director of Orquesta Sinfónica de Minería since 2008, with which he earned a Best Classical Music Album Latin Grammy nomination. From 2007 to 2022, Prieto was music director of the National Symphony Orchestra of Mexico in Mexico City, the country's leading ensemble, and significantly raised the caliber of the orchestra. He was also music director of the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra from 2006 to 2023, and he helped lead the cultural renewal of New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina.

An advocate for music education, Prieto has conducted the Youth Orchestra of the Americas since its inception. Alongside Gustavo Dudamel, Prieto served as the orchestra's principal conductor from 2001 to 2011, when he was appointed music director. In 2018 he conducted the orchestra on a tour of European summer festivals, which included performances at Rheingau and Edinburgh and at Hamburg's Elbphilharmonie. He has also worked regularly with the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain and Carnegie Hall's NYO2 in New York.

Carlos Miguel Prieto is renowned for championing new and lesser-known Latin American and African American music. He has conducted over a hundred world premieres of works by Mexican and American composers, many of which he commissioned. Prieto has recorded on the Deutsche Gramophone, Naxos, and Sony labels, and he was recognized by *Musical America* as the 2019 Conductor of the Year.

A graduate of Princeton and Harvard universities, Prieto studied conducting with Jorge Mester, Enrique Diemecke, Charles Bruck, and Michael Jinbo.

Photo by Lorena Alcaraz & Bernardo Arcos

Yo-Yo Ma Cello

FIRST CSO PERFORMANCES
December 13, 14, and 15, 1979, Orchestra Hall. Kabalevsky's Cello Concerto, Leonard Slatkin conducting

July 1, 1982, Ravinia Festival. Haydn's Cello Concerto in D major, Charles Dutoit conducting

MOST RECENT CSO PERFORMANCES
August 5, 2011, Ravinia Festival. Tchaikovsky's Andante cantabile and Variations on a Rococo Theme, James Conlon conducting

May 1, 2023, Orchestra Hall. Elgar's Cello Concerto, Carlos Miguel Prieto conducting



Yo-Yo Ma's multifaceted career is testament to his belief in culture's power to generate trust and understanding. Whether performing new or familiar works for cello, bringing us together to explore culture's role in society, or engaging unexpected musical forms, Yo-Yo Ma seeks to foster connections that reinforce our humanity.

Yo-Yo Ma and his creative team at Sound Postings collaborate with partners around the globe to develop and produce initiatives that advocate for a world guided by humanity, curiosity, and connection. Their recent projects include a six-continent tour of Bach's cello suites exploring how culture strengthens communities today, and Our Common Nature, a journey celebrating the ways that culture can reconnect us to the natural world. Both endeavors reflect his lifelong commitment to stretching the boundaries of genre and tradition to ask how music can help us imagine and build a better future.

Yo-Yo Ma was born in 1955 to Chinese parents living in Paris. He began to learn cello with his father at the age of four and three years later moved with his family to New York City, where he continued his studies at the Juilliard School before pursuing a liberal arts education at Harvard.

He has received numerous awards, including the Avery Fisher Prize (1978), the National Medal of the Arts (2001), the Presidential Medal of Freedom (2010), Kennedy Center Honors (2011), the Polar Music Prize (2012), and the Birgit Nilsson Prize (2022). Among other roles, Yo-Yo Ma is a United Nations Messenger of Peace; a member of the board of Nia Tero, an organization supporting the role and influence of Indigenous Peoples; and founder of the global music collective Silkroad. He has performed for ten American presidents.

His discography of more than 120 albums (including twenty Grammy Award winners) ranges from iconic interpretations of the Western classical canon to recordings that defy categorization, such as *Hush* with Bobby McFerrin and *The Goat Rodeo Sessions* with Stuart Duncan, Edgar Meyer, and Chris Thile. Yo-Yo Ma's recent releases include *Six Evolutions,* his third recording of Bach's cello suites; *Merci* with pianist Kathryn Stott; and *Beethoven for Three: Symphony No. 3* (Eroica) *and Leonore Overture No. 3,* the fifth in a series of recordings of works by Beethoven with pianist Emanuel Ax and violinist Leonidas Kavakos.

Yo-Yo Ma made his debut with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra at the age of twenty-four in 1979. He went on to record Bloch's *Schelomo,* Brahms's *Double* Concerto (twice), and John Williams's Suite from *Memoirs of a Geisha* with the ensemble. One of Chicago Symphony's most frequent guest artists, Ma has appeared as a concerto soloist, in solo recitals, and in a wide variety of chamber ensembles. He has also performed twice on the Pritzker Pavilion stage in Millennium Park in partnership with the CSO. From 2010 to 2019, he served as the organization's Judson and Joyce Green Creative Consultant. In this role, he strengthened its connections within the Chicago community, premiered three cello concertos, and developed programs that supported a new generation of musicians.

Yo-Yo Ma and his wife have two children. He plays the 1712 "Davidoff" Stradivarius, a 1733 Montagnana from Venice, and modern instruments made by Peter and Wendy Moes.

Photo © Brantley Gutierrez

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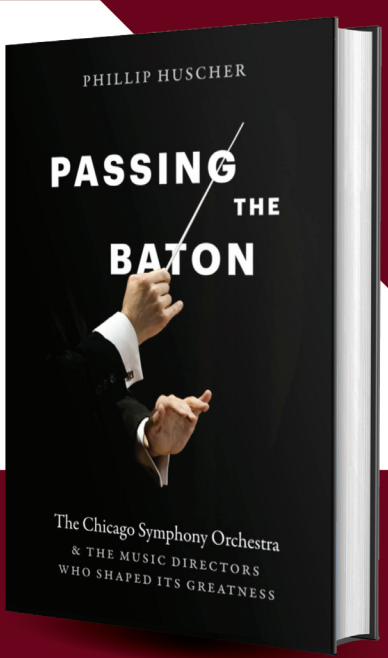
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In ***Passing the Baton: The Chicago Symphony Orchestra and the Music Directors Who Shaped Its Greatness***, longtime CSO program annotator Phillip Huscher traces the Orchestra's remarkable history through the music directors who helped build, challenge 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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CHICAGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

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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Chicago Symphony Orchestra

Klaus Mäkelä Zell Music Director Designate ■ **Riccardo Muti** Music Director Emeritus for Life
Jean-Yves Thibaudet Artist-in-Residence

VIOLINS

Robert Chen Concertmaster
The Louis C. Sudler Chair, endowed by an anonymous benefactor
Stephanie Jeong
Associate Concertmaster
The Cathy and Bill Osborn Chair
David Taylor*
Assistant Concertmaster
The Ling Z. and Michael C. Markovitz Chair
Yuan-Qing Yu*
Assistant Concertmaster
So Young Bae
Cornelius Chiu §
Gina DiBello
Kozue Funakoshi
Russell Hershow
Qing Hou
Youngji Kim
Gabriela Lara
Matous Michal
Simon Michal
Sando Shia
Susan Synnestvedt
Rong-Yan Tang

Baird Dodge Principal
Danny Yehun Jin
Assistant Principal
Lei Hou ‡
Ni Mei
Hermine Gagné
Rachel Goldstein
Mihaela Ionescu
Jasmine Mengjia Lin
Wendy Koons Meir
Florence Schwartz

VIOLAS

Teng Li Principal
The Paul Hindemith Principal Viola Chair
Catherine Brubaker ‡
Youming Chen
Sunghee Choi
Paolo Dara
Wei-Ting Kuo
Danny Lai
Weijing Michal
Diane Mues
Lawrence Neuman
Jikun Qin
Max Raimi

CELLOS

John Sharp Principal
Kenneth Olsen
Assistant Principal
The Adele Gidwitz Chair
Karen Basrak
The Joseph A. and Cecile Renaud Gorno Chair
Richard Hirschl
Olivia Jakyoung Huh
Daniel Katz
Katinka Kleijn
Brant Taylor
The Ann Blickensderfer and Roger Blickensderfer Chair

BASSES

Alexander Hanna Principal
The David and Mary Winton Green Principal Bass Chair
Alexander Horton
Assistant Principal
Chair sponsored by Mr. Giff Zimmerman and Ms. Jennifer Christensen
Dan Carson
Ian Hallas
Robert Kassinger
Mark Kraemer
Stephen Lester
Bradley Opland
Andrew Sommer

FLUTES

Emma Gerstein
Jennifer Gunn

PICCOLO

Jennifer Gunn
The Dora and John Aalbregtse Piccolo Chair

OBOES

William Welter Principal
Lora Schaefer
Assistant Principal
The Gilchrist Foundation, Jocelyn Gilchrist Chair
Scott Hostetler

ENGLISH HORN

Scott Hostetler

CLARINETS

Stephen Williamson
Principal
John Bruce Yeh
Assistant Principal
The Governing Members Chair
Gregory Smith
Pavel Vinnitsky

E-FLAT CLARINET

John Bruce Yeh

BASS CLARINET

Pavel Vinnitsky

BASSOONS

Keith Buncke Principal
William Buchman
Assistant Principal
Miles Maner

HORNS

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James Smelser
David Griffin
Oto Carrillo
Susanna Gaunt

TRUMPETS

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The Adolph Herseth Principal Trumpet Chair, endowed by an anonymous benefactor
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The Bleck Family Chair
Tage Larsen

TROMBONES

Timothy Higgins Principal
The Lisa and Paul Wiggin Principal Trombone Chair
Michael Mulcahy
Acting Assistant Principal
Charles Vernon

BASS TROMBONE

Charles Vernon

TUBA

Gene Pokorny Principal
The Arnold Jacobs Principal Tuba Chair, endowed by Christine Querfeld

TIMPANI

David Herbert Principal
The Clinton Family Fund Chair
Vadim Karpinos
Assistant Principal

PERCUSSION

Cynthia Yeh Principal
Chair sponsored by an anonymous benefactor
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** Assistant concertmasters are listed by seniority.* ‡ *On sabbatical* § *On leave*

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The Louise H. Benton Wagner and Erika and Dietrich M. Gross Principal Flute chairs are currently unoccupied.

The Chicago Symphony Orchestra Assistant Conductor position is sponsored by the Solti Foundation U.S.

The Chicago Symphony Orchestra string sections utilize revolving seating. Players behind the first desk (first two desks in the violins) change seats systematically every two weeks and are listed alphabetically. Section percussionists also are listed alphabetically.

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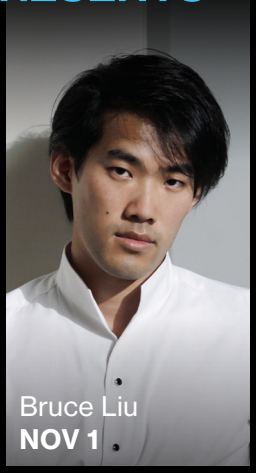
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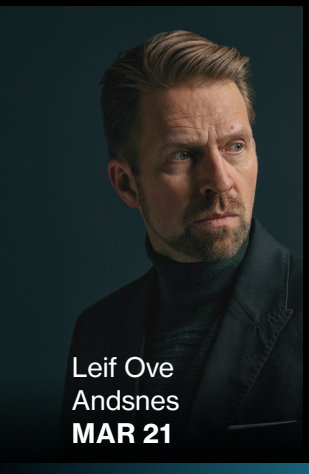






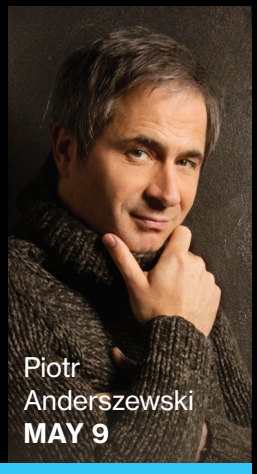
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