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ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-SIXTH SEASON

Friday, November 13, 2026, at 7:30
Saturday, November 14, 2026, at 7:30

Andrew Bird Violin and Vocals
Jacomo Bairos Conductor

BIRD — *The Mysterious Production of Eggs,* Side A (arr. Thatcher)
/=/
Sovay
A Nervous Tic Motion of the Head to the Left
Fake Palindromes
Measuring Cups
Banking on a Myth
Masterfade
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INTERMISSION

RAVEL — *Pavane pour une infante défunte*

BIRD — *The Mysterious Production of Eggs,* Side B (arr. Thatcher)
Skin Is, My
The Naming of Things
MX Missiles
/=/=/
Tables and Chairs
The Happy Birthday Song

Chicago Symphony acknowledges support from the Illinois Arts Council.

A TANGLED EGG

By 2001 Andrew Bird had released three albums with his band, the Bowl of Fire. By now it was fair to hope for something more than good reviews, long drives, a few hundred bucks a night split five ways, and a hotel bed shared with a bandmate. Tim Tuten, the loquacious co-owner of the Hideout, was a tireless cheerleader for the local scene, so Bird was shocked when Tuten took him aside and said, "Man, if you really want this stuff to happen, you probably should go to New York or LA."

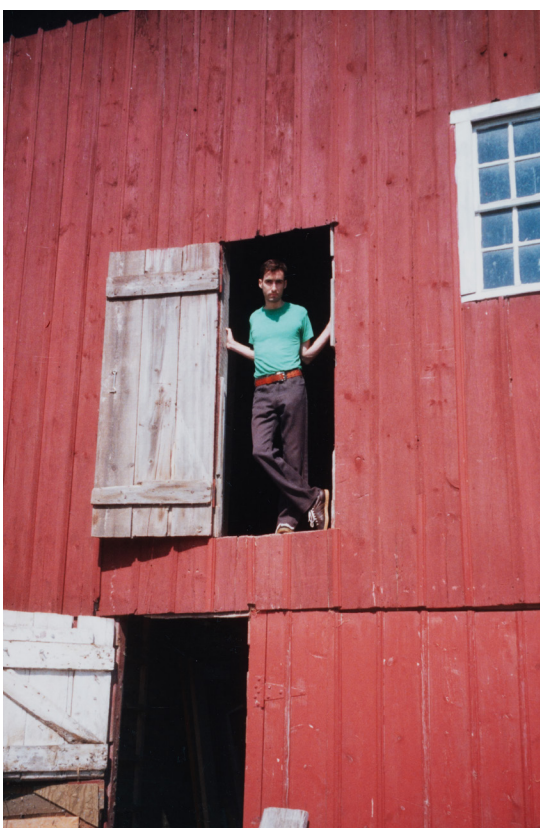
"I don't know," Andrew said. "I think I'm gonna move out to a barn in western Illinois instead."

Years earlier, his folks had bought a century-old farm in the country. At eighteen, Bird sat on its porch and wrote his first original song. Now, looking for a live-work space, he settled on its old red barn.

In regular visits that year, he cleared hay, hung drywall, and stained boards. His dad and a carpenter handled the skilled finishing work. By February 2002, "I fit as much stuff into my van as I could and drove out there by myself," Bird says. "The barn wasn't finished. It had a Norwegian stove in it, but no heat." On arriving, he remembers, "It was dusk and it was kind of this purple sky. Snow was falling, and I thought, 'What the heck am I doing?' "

With urban distractions stripped away, what remained was the music. The space was filled with instruments and recording gear, so whatever Bird wanted was close at hand: the violin, pianos, a glockenspiel—the vibraphone-like percussion instrument—and guitars that he was teaching himself to play. And he had a Line 6 looping pedal, a small, boxy device for recording and playback triggered by foot switches. At the push of a button, Bird could capture a phrase he played; push it again, and the phrase repeated back. He began to toy with the layers, stacking graceful, bowed phrases and glimmering pizzicato plucked notes, pulling melodies in new directions, whistling or singing over the top. The ideas felt like liquid, flowing from the instrument. The loops and layers allowed them to interact, combining and recombining, splitting off again—or solidifying into something that hadn't previously existed but now, as if it had always been there, was an actual song.

Spring came, and soon, Bird says, "everything was lush and green and beautiful." He had a new awareness of the natural world—the hundred ways the sky could look, from first light to flaming sunsets, how thunderheads would



ABOVE: Andrew Bird at the barn, photo by Andrea Troolin

billow in the west, overtake everything, soak the landscape, and sail away. He watched it all, and his new music began to reflect it.

That fall, Bird was asked to open a handful of shows for the Handsome Family. No band members were available, but Andrew decided to play them anyway. He wasn't exactly confident. Layering his loops in the barn was one thing; doing it live onstage was different, especially for a crowd that had paid good money to see the headliner. Bird remembers thinking, "I don't think anyone's gonna go for this."

He devised a strategy to command attention: The "surprise attack" of his otherworldly whistle. "I'd just fill my lungs and hold one note," he says. Clinking glasses? Rowdy yakkers? No problem. "It just cuts right through. People are like, 'What is that, a fire alarm? What the hell is that?' It would stop the ambient chatter, and then I could sing a song with people focused and try to hold them."

Looping himself live, Bird was walking a metaphorical wire with no net, a fiddle under his arm and a guitar slung over his back. The limitations made him strip back the arrangements. He slowed down. The time and space opened new vistas in the songs.

Andrew Bird & the Mysterious Production of Eggs was released to the world on February 8, 2005—almost exactly three years after he'd pulled up to the farm.

If the album has a unifying theme, it's the struggle for youthful innocence and wonder against the monsters of the adult world, where specters like money, mortality, and apocalypse cast frightful shadows, though their forms are never fully seen in these songs. "I would describe it as being mostly about childhood, and childhood imagination, versus the forces that are trying to quantify it so it can be sold," Bird says. "*Mysterious Production of Eggs* almost felt to me like a concept album of this child, a Maurice Sendak child, going off and fighting the dragons of conformity."

Twenty years after its release, *Eggs* still stands as the album that defined Bird's style. "A fully realized artist's statement," producer Tony Berg says, out of time, following no trend, as fresh and strange and captivating today as when it was released, his fans' favorite.

It had taken Andrew far longer than he could have imagined and demanded so much more. What the journey of discovery revealed was himself, the art that only Bird could make. "I had to teach myself how to make the album," he reflects now. "I had to clear the room to find out what was really going on in my head. And, slowly, I realized that the vacuum I put myself in cleared the space for this deep stuff in me to come out."

It's the conclusion Andrew reached in a 2021 episode of the podcast *Meditative Story*. "When we go to a place where we can actually hear ourselves, we hear what is speaking to us," he said. "And if we can hear it, then we can make it sing." *C*

Excerpted from the liner notes to the twentieth-anniversary deluxe box set reissue of *The Mysterious Production of Eggs*

—Anders Smith Lindall

ELECTRONIC DEVICES
Before the concert begins, mobile phones and other electronic devices must be turned off or set to silent mode. Please limit distractions and refrain from photography, audio and video recording, and using illuminated screens during the music.



MAURICE RAVEL

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

Pavane pour une infante défunte

COMPOSED
1899, for piano

1910, orchestrated

INSTRUMENTATION
2 flutes, oboe, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, harp, strings



Maurice Ravel was born in the French Pyrenees, only a few miles from the Spanish border, a geographical boundary he often crossed in his music. Even though his family moved to Paris while he was still a baby, Ravel came by his fascination with Spain naturally, for his mother was Basque and grew up in Madrid. (His Swiss father inspired in his son a love for things precise and mechanical that carried over into his impeccable music, provoking Stravinsky to dismiss him as a "Swiss watchmaker.")

One of Ravel's earliest pieces—written just after he left the Paris Conservatory in 1895—was a habanera for two pianos, the first indication that he would join that group of French composers, which includes Bizet, Lalo, and Chabrier, who have written some of our best Spanish music. The habanera was Ravel's first music to be performed publicly, in March 1898, and, despite the two pianists' inability to stay together, it made a strong impression on Claude Debussy, who was in the audience. (He hadn't yet met the composer whose name would one day be linked with his own.) Debussy asked to borrow the score, and his *La soirée dans Grenade* (Night in Grenada), written five years later, suggests that he studied it carefully. (The suspicious similarity of the two pieces contributed to the eventual falling-out between the composers.)

Like the habanera, the *Pavane pour une infante défunte* (Pavane for a Dead Princess) was conceived as piano music and benefited greatly from the translation to a full orchestral score. The piano piece was an instant success. Ravel later realized that music of such apparent ease—a simple melody over broken chords—is doomed to a life at the hands of amateur pianists, and so eleven years later he rescued the *Pavane* and rescored it for the modern virtuoso orchestra.

A pavane is a slow processional dance from Padua (Pava is a dialect name for Padua). According to an old Spanish tradition, however, it was performed in church as a stylish gesture of farewell to the dead. As to the identity of the dead princess, Ravel finally admitted he picked the title because he liked the sound of the words. *c*

—Phillip Huscher

Anders Smith Lindall is a Chicago-based writer. He collaborated with Sam Beam on Love and Some Verses: The Lyrics and Art of Iron & Wine *(2024) and is a regular contributor to the UK music monthly* Uncut.

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.*

ABOVE: Maurice Ravel, etching by Achille Ouvré (1872–1951), 1909. Gallica Digital Library, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris

Andrew Bird Violin and Vocals



Andrew Bird is an internationally acclaimed, Grammy Award–nominated and Emmy Award–winning multi-instrumentalist, vocalist, whistler, and songwriter who picked up his first violin at the age of four and spent his formative years soaking up classical repertoire completely by ear. Since beginning his recording career in 1997, Bird has released eighteen studio albums and performed extensively worldwide. He has been a featured TED Talks presenter, a New Yorker Festival guest, and an op-ed contributor for the *New York Times,* and he has headlined concerts at Carnegie Hall in New York, Sydney Opera House, Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles, Red Rocks Amphitheatre in Colorado, and festivals worldwide. This year, Andrew Bird won the Emmy for Outstanding Original Music and Lyrics for his song "Need Someone," written for HBO Max's *The Pitt*.

Celebrating Twenty Years of Andrew Bird's *The Mysterious Production of Eggs*

In 2003 Andrew Bird removed himself from the noise of city life in Chicago to work on his music in a barn in rural Illinois. The result was a career-defining recording exploring childhood, creativity, and science with wit, precision, and ambition. *The Mysterious Production of Eggs* crystallized Bird's signature style and introduced the live-looping ingenuity that would define his performances for many years.

Two decades later, its influence still resonates, inspiring artists and audiences alike. To mark the anniversary, Bird embarked on an extended tour, performing *Eggs* in full alongside symphony orchestras and releasing a deluxe box set with versions of the album that had been left behind.

Jacomo Bairos Conductor



Portuguese American conductor and producer Jacomo Bairos is at the vanguard of a new generation of conductors, with a career spanning symphonic masterworks, cross-genre collaborations, and an eclectic discography with Grammy Award–winning artists across genres. As cofounder and artistic director of Nu Deco Ensemble, Bairos continues to redefine what an orchestra can achieve, remaining equally in demand with the world's leading ensembles across North America and Europe.

In the 2026–27 season, Bairos makes debuts with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, and the WDR Radio Orchestra based in Cologne, while returning to the Boston Pops and Detroit Symphony Orchestra and curating programs for the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra. Recent highlights include his London debut with Britten Sinfonia at the Barbican Centre and debuts with the Colorado Symphony and Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra.

Under Bairos's co-leadership, Nu Deco Ensemble has released fifteen albums, including *Duende* (Sony Music Masterworks) and the *Billboard*-charting *Paint the Roses* with Larkin Poe. His long-standing collaboration with the Metropole Orkest includes *Wrapped in Rhythm, Vol. II,* featuring vocalist Tutu Puoane, which won the 2026 South African Music Award for Best Adult Contemporary Album.

A dedicated champion of new music, Bairos has commissioned dozens of new works through Nu Deco Ensemble from artists including Kishi Bashi, Derrick Hodge, Valerie Coleman, and Miguel Atwood-Ferguson.

During his tenure as music director of the Amarillo Symphony (2013–21), Bairos elevated artistic standards, launched the orchestra's first composer residencies, and premiered over twenty new works.

Photos by David Black, Ash-Marie Photography

A Juilliard School–trained tubist, Jacomo Bairos performed and recorded with the New York Philharmonic and Chicago Symphony Orchestra before serving as principal tuba of the Singapore Symphony Orchestra. He later joined the studio of Gustav Meier at the Peabody Institute by personal invitation and studied at the Aspen Music Festival under Robert Spano, with mentorship from Kurt Masur and Jorma Panula. A certified yoga teacher, meditation coach, and breathwork facilitator, he divides his time between Miami Beach, Florida, and Lisbon, Portugal.

Nathan Thatcher Arranger

Nathan Thatcher is a composer, arranger, and author based in Saint Paul, Minnesota. He has collaborated with a wide array of musicians, including Nico Muhly, Shara Nova, Sufjan Stevens, Son Lux, Attacca Quartet, Caroline Shaw, Sarah Kirkland Snider, Christopher Cerrone, indie rock band the National, Andrew Bird, Daniel Wohl, Nadia Sirota, and many others. His arrangements have been performed by the Kronos Quartet, Brooklyn Youth Chorus, the Knights, and orchestras around the world. His work can be heard on the album *Away* by the band Okkervil River, in the recent films *Knives Out* and *Everything Everywhere All at Once,* the new Broadway musical *Illinoise,* and currently in the twentieth-anniversary orchestral tour of Andrew Bird's *The Mysterious Production of Eggs.*

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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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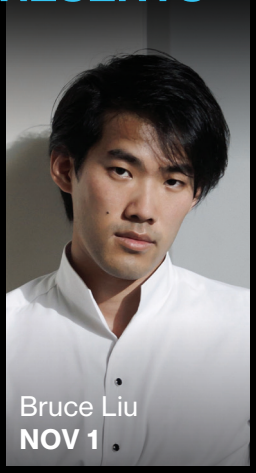
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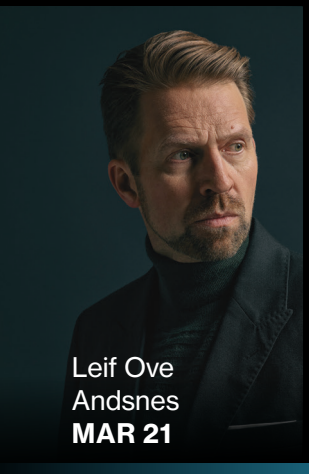






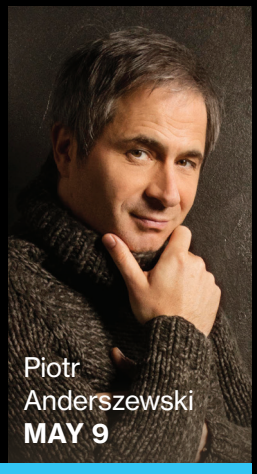
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