TODD ROSENBERG PHOTOGRAPHY

CHICAGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
RICCARDO MUTI, ZELL MUSIC DIRECTOR

DAVID AFKHAM, CONDUCTOR

Saturday, October 26, 2019, at 7:30pm

Foellinger Great Hall

PROGRAM

CHICAGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
RICCARDO MUTI, ZELL MUSIC DIRECTOR

DAVID AFKHAM, CONDUCTOR

Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)	*Symphony No. 44 in E Minor (Mourning)*
Richard Strauss (1864-1949)	*Death and Transfiguration, Op. 24*

20-minute intermission

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)	*Symphony No. 3 in F Major, Op. 90*

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This program is partially supported by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council Agency.

This program is subject to change.

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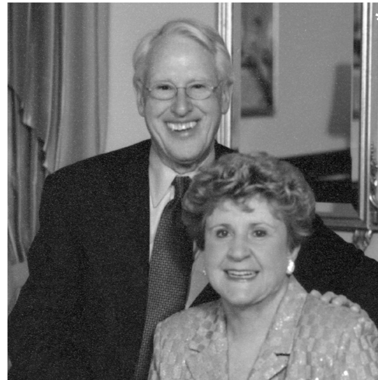

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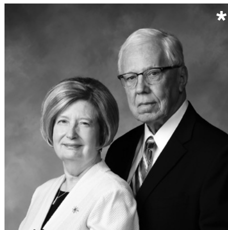

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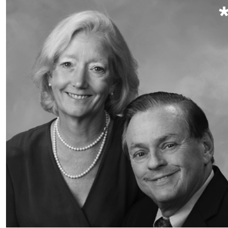

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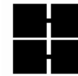

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JOSEPH HAYDN
Born March 31, 1732, in Rohrau, Lower Austria
Died May 31, 1809, in Vienna, Austria
Symphony No. 44 in E Minor (Mourning)

It is said that Haydn asked to have the Adagio from this E minor symphony played at his funeral. As it turned out, Vienna was conquered by Napoleon's armies just two weeks before Haydn's death and under the circumstances, little attention was paid to the passing of one of the city's most distinguished citizens. Haydn was buried on June 1, 1809, with little fanfare and no music. When his death was more properly noted at a grand memorial service two weeks later, the music was Mozart's *Requiem*.

Although Haydn's request may be pure fiction, it has given the symphony a nickname—the *Trauersinfonie*, or symphony of mourning—which is quite appropriate. Certainly the E major Adagio movement Haydn singled out is as touching and poignant as any music written in the eighteenth century. The whole symphony is powerful and inspired. It's one of Haydn's finest works and like its numerical neighbor No. 45, the *Farewell*, represents a high point in the most productive time of the composer's life. In the early 1770s, Haydn wrote some 16 symphonies, 12 string quartets, half a dozen piano sonatas, two masses, several operas, and a number of small—but not always insubstantial—works.

The E minor symphony begins not in mourning, but with a strong, urgent unison theme marked Allegro con brio. (This familiar tempo marking, so common in Beethoven—it launches both the *Eroica* and Fifth symphonies—is rare in Haydn's extensive output.) Listen carefully to the first four notes, for they are the main ingredients of the movement and will turn up often, from the bottom of the bass line to the first violins. Like the symphony itself, this movement runs a wide emotional and dynamic range, with music as tempestuous as any Haydn had yet written, as well as pianissimo passages of a lovely tranquility.

Haydn usually has a good reason for putting the minuet second before the slow movement; here it's an effective ray of sunshine between two darker movements. The minuet is a strict canon at the octave, played out between the top and bottom lines. (The low strings always appear to be lagging a measure behind.) The Adagio—as mournful as any music from this period written in a major key—creates its mood entirely with a few simple phrases from the strings. There is a lovely swelling of emotion when the winds enter, but the movement maintains its composure to the end. Like the first movement, the finale also begins in unison—the first seven notes set the course for all that happens—and continues at a breakneck pace, filled with tension and a consistent high-excitement level rare in eighteenth-century music.

Composed: ca. 1771
First Performance: 1771-72
Instrumentation: two oboes, bassoon, two horns, strings
Approximate Performance Time: 22 minutes

RICHARD STRAUSS
Born June 11, 1864, in Munich, Germany
Died September 8, 1949, in Garmisch, Germany
Death and Transfiguration, Op. 24

Shortly before he died at the age of 85, Richard Strauss told his daughter-in-law that he wasn't afraid of death: it was just as he had composed it in *Death and Transfiguration*. Only a few months before, Strauss had read Joseph Eichendorff's poem "Im Abendrot" (At Sunset). When he came to the lines "How tired we are of wandering—could this perhaps be death?," he took his pencil and jotted down the magnificent theme from *Death and Transfiguration* that he had written nearly 60 years earlier. And then, summing up his life's work, he wove it into the closing pages of his Eichendorff setting, now known as the last of the *Four Last Songs*.

It's the Marschallin, in Strauss' *Der Rosenkavalier*, who says, "To be afraid of time is useless, for God, mindful of all his children, in his own wisdom created it." But like the Marschallin, Strauss always heard the ticking of the clock, and he couldn't help thinking about death. He claimed that from an early age he had wanted to compose music that followed the dying hours of a man who had reached toward the "highest ideal goals," and who, in dying, sees his life passing before him.

In 1888, without a gray hair on his head and with another 60 years of life and music ahead of him, Strauss wrote knowingly of a man's last days on earth. It's a young man's view of death and a romantic vision of old age, scarcely touched by the chilling truths of infirmity and hopelessness, but it apparently still satisfied Strauss at the end of his own life. The first edition of the score, as well as the earliest printed programs, included a poem by Alexander Ritter (a fervent Wagnerian who had married Wagner's niece Julie) that was written after Strauss had finished the music and was offered as a literary guide to the piece.
At the time, Strauss thought Ritter's scenario indispensable to an understanding of the score, but the best guide is really the one the composer himself wrote in a letter to a friend in 1894:

> It was about six years ago when the idea occurred to me to represent the death of a person who had striven for the highest ideal goals, therefore possibly an artist, in a tone poem. The sick man lies in bed asleep, breathing heavily and irregularly; agreeable dreams charm a smile on his features in spite of his suffering; his sleep becomes lighter; he wakens; once again he is racked by terrible pain, his limbs shake with fever—as the attack draws to a close and the pain subsides he reflects on his past life, his childhood passes before him, his youth with its striving, its passions, and then, while the pain resumes, the fruit of his path through life appears to him, the ideal, the ideal which he has tried to realize, to represent in his art, but which he has been unable to perfect, because it was not for any human being to perfect it. The hour of death approaches, and the soul leaves the body, in order to find perfected in the most glorious form in the eternal cosmos that which he could not fulfill here on earth.

A born opera composer, Strauss begins with a deathbed scene, dark and uncertain, and filled only with the sounds of the sick man's faltering heartbeat. A sudden, convulsive passage depicting the struggle with death ultimately gives way to the work's central theme, an impressive six-note motif characterized by an octave leap, which represents the artist's ideals. The flood of memories begins pointedly with his storybook-like infancy. ("Childhood is the kingdom where nobody dies," wrote Edna St. Vincent Millay, the once-popular poet who died the year after

Strauss.) Strauss then moves on through youth, marvelously evoked by the self-confident swagger of the horns, to romances of such passion that their recollection brings on a spell of heart palpitations (rendered by the low brass and timpani). The hero revels in remembrance before there is one final, defiant moment of struggle. Death itself arrives accompanied by the solemn striking of the tam-tam. The transfiguration is like one of Strauss' own great opera finales, weaving the work's main themes together, through a series of moving climaxes, in music of radiant beauty.

Composed: 1888-November 18, 1889
First Performance: June 24, 1890; Eisenach, Germany, the composer conducting
Instrumentation: three flutes, two oboes and english horn, two clarinets and bass clarinet, two bassoons and contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones and tuba, timpani, tam-tam, two harps, strings
Approximate Performance Time: 24 minutes

JOHANNES BRAHMS
Born May 7, 1833, in Hamburg, Germany
Died April 3, 1897, in Vienna, Austria
Symphony No. 3 in F Major, Op. 90

The Chicago Symphony Orchestra played Brahms' Third Symphony in its very first season. By then, Johannes Brahms, still very much alive, had stopped writing symphonic music. It was a time of tying up loose ends, finishing business, and clearing the desk. (At the end of that season in the spring of 1892, Theodore Thomas, the Orchestra's first music director, invited Brahms to come to Chicago for the upcoming World's Columbian Exposition, but the composer declined, saying he didn't want to make the long trip.) It's hard today to imagine that Brahms' Third Symphony was once a challenging work of contemporary music. Yet several hundred people walked out of the first Boston Symphony performance in 1884, and the critic for the *Boston Gazette* called it "painfully dry, deliberate, and ungenial." (It had been introduced to America a month before at one of Frank van der Stucken's Novelty Concerts in New York.)

Even when Brahms' music was new, it was hardly radical. Brahms was concerned with writing music worthy of standing next to that by Beethoven; it was this fear that kept him from placing the double bar at the end of his First Symphony for 20 years. Hugo Wolf, the adventuresome song composer, said, "Brahms writes symphonies regardless of what has happened in the meantime." He didn't mean that as a compliment, but it touches on an important truth: Brahms was the first composer to develop successfully Beethoven's rigorous brand of symphonic thinking.

Hans Richter, a musician of considerable perception, called this F major symphony Brahms' *Eroica*. There's certainly something Beethovenesque about the way the music is developed from the most compact material, although the parallel with the monumental, expansive *Eroica* is puzzling, aside from the opening tempo (Allegro con brio) and the fact that they are both third symphonies. Brahms' Third Symphony is his shortest and his most tightly knit. Its substance came to him in a relatively sudden spurt: it was mostly written in less than four months—a flash of inspiration compared to the 20 years he spent on his First Symphony. Brahms was enjoying a trip to the Rhine at the time, and he quickly rented a place in Wiesbaden where he could work in peace and canceled his plans to summer in Bad Ischl. The whole F major symphony was written nonstop.

The benefit of such compressed work is a thematic coherence and organic unity rare even in Brahms. Clara Schumann wrote to Brahms

on February 11, 1884, after having spent hours playing through the work in its two-piano version: “All the movements seem to be of one piece, one beat of the heart.” Clara had been following Brahms’ career ever since the day he showed up at the door some 30 years earlier, asking to meet her famous husband Robert. By 1884, Robert Schumann—Brahms’ first staunch advocate—was long dead, and Brahms’ on-again-off-again infatuation with Clara was off for good. But she was still a dear friend, a musician of great insight, and a keen judge of his work.

Surely, in trying to get her hands around the three massive chords with which Brahms begins, Clara noted in the top voice the rising F, A-flat, F motive that had become Brahms’ monogram for “frei aber froh” (free but joyful), an optimistic response to the motto of his friend Joseph Joachim, “frei aber einsam” (free but lonely). It’s one of the few times in Brahms’ music that the notes mean something beyond themselves. That particular motive can be pointed out again and again throughout the symphony—it’s the bass line for the violin melody that follows in measures three and four, for example. Clara also can’t have missed the continual shifting back and forth from A-natural to A-flat, starting with the first three chords and again in the very first phrase of Brahms’ cascading violin melody. Since the half step from A-natural down to A-flat darkens F major into F minor, the preeminence of F major isn’t so certain in this music, even though we already know from the title that it will win in the end.

In four measures (and as many seconds), Brahms has laid his cards on the table. In the course of this movement and those that follow, we could trace, with growing fascination, the progress of that rising three-note motive, or the falling thirds of the violin theme, or the quicksilver shifts of major to minor that give this music its peculiar character. This is what Clara meant when she commented that “all the movements seem to be of one piece,” for, although Brahms’ connections are intricate and subtle, we sense their presence, and that they are unshakable.

For all its apparent beauty, Brahms’ Third Symphony hasn’t always been the most easily grasped of his works. Brahms doesn’t shake us by the shoulders as Beethoven so often did, even though the quality of his material and the logic of its development is up to the Beethovenian standards he set for himself. All four movements end quietly—try to name one other symphony of which that can be said—and some of its most powerful moments are so restrained that the tension is nearly unbearable.

Both the second and third movements hold back as much as they reveal. For long stretches, Brahms writes music that never rises above piano; when it does, the effect is always telling. The Andante abounds in beautiful writing for the clarinet, long one of Brahms’ favorite instruments. (The year the Chicago Symphony first played this symphony, Brahms met the clarinetist Richard Mühlfeld who inspired the composer’s last great instrumental works, the Clarinet Trio and the Clarinet Quintet.) The third movement opens with a wonderful, arching theme for cello—another of the low, rich sounds Brahms favored—later taken up by the solo horn in a passage so fragile and transparent it overrules all the textbook comments about the excessive weight of Brahms’ writing.

There *is* weight and power in the finale, although it begins furtively in the shadows and evaporates into thin air some 10 minutes later. The body of the movement is dramatic, forceful, and brilliantly designed. As the critic Donald Tovey writes in his famous essay on this symphony, “It needs either a close analysis or none at all.” The latter will save the sort of scrutiny that’s not possible in the concert hall, but two things do merit

mention. The somber music in the trombones and bassoons very near the beginning is a theme from the middle of the third movement (precisely the sort of thematic reference we don't associate with Brahms). And the choice of F minor for the key of this movement was determined as early as the fourth bar of the symphony, when the cloud of the minor mode crossed over the bold F major opening. Throughout the finale, the clouds return repeatedly (and often unexpectedly), and Brahms makes something of a cliffhanger out of the struggle between major and minor. The ending is a surprise, not because it settles comfortably into F major, but because, in a way that's virtually unknown to the symphony before the twentieth century, it allows the music to unwind, all its energy spent, content with the memory of the symphony's opening.

First Performance: December 2, 1883; Vienna, Austria
Instrumentation: two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons and contrabassoon, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, strings
Approximate Performance Time: 40 minutes

Phillip Huscher has been the program annotator for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra since 1987.

PROFILES

DAVID AFKHAM has just been announced as Chief Conductor and Artistic Director of the Spanish National Orchestra and Chorus from September 2019. This position will build on the success of his tenure as Principal Conductor of the orchestra since 2014, which has featured critically acclaimed performances of Schoenberg's *Gurrelieder*, Mahler's *Symphony No. 6*, Bruckner's *Symphony No. 9*, Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*, Brahms' *Requiem*, Haydn's *The Creation* as well as several world premieres and semi-staged projects with Wagner's *The Flying Dutchman*, Strauss' *Elektra*, Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*, and Bartók's *Bluebeard's Castle*.

Born in Freiburg, Germany, in 1983, David Afkham is in high demand as a guest conductor with some of the world's finest orchestras and opera houses and has established a reputation as one of the most sought-after conductors to emerge from Germany in recent years. Future highlights as a guest conductor include returns with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Philadelphia Orchestra, Munich Philharmonic, HR Symphony Orchestra Frankfurt, Swedish Radio Symphony, and NHK Symphony Orchestra, as well as debuts with the Pittsburgh Symphony, Minnesota Orchestra, and Dresden Philharmonic.

As an opera conductor, Afkham made a noted debut at Glyndebourne Festival Opera in 2014 with Verdi's *La Traviata*, later reviving the production for performances around the United Kingdom and Ireland for Glyndebourne on Tour. In 2017, he conducted Ginastera's *Bomarzo* at Teatro Real in Madrid in a new production by Pierre Audi to unanimous critical acclaim, which led to an immediate re-invitation. In season 2018-19, he made his German opera debut at Frankfurt Opera with Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel*, followed by Stuttgart Opera with Wagner's *The Flying Dutchman*. He opens his 2019-20 season at Theater an der Wien with Dvořák's *Rusalka*. Future opera plans include Wagner's *Parsifal*, Weinberg's *The Passenger*, Mozart's *Così fan tutte*, and Strauss' *Arabella*.

David Afkham began piano and violin lessons at the age of six in his native Freiburg. At 15, he entered the city's University of Music to pursue studies in piano, music theory, and conducting and continued his studies at the Liszt School of Music in Weimar. He was the first recipient of the Bernard Haitink Fund for Young Talent and assisted Maestro Bernard Haitink in a number of major projects, including symphony cycles with the Chicago Symphony, Royal Concertgebouw, and London Symphony orchestras. He was the winner of the 2008 Donatella Flick Conducting Competition in London and was the inaugural recipient of the Nestle and Salzburg Festival Young Conductors Award in 2010. He was assistant conductor of the Gustav Mahler Youth Orchestra from 2009 to 2012.

Highlights among Afkham's guest conducting projects to date include the Boston Symphony Orchestra at the 2016 and 2017 Tanglewood festivals, the London Symphony Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Staatskapelle Berlin, DSO-Berlin, Staatskapelle Dresden, Orchestre National de France, Gothenburg Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, as well as the Mostly Mozart Festival New York; tours with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, German Chamber Philharmonic, and Mahler Chamber Orchestra; and regular appearances at the Musikverein with the Vienna Philharmonic and the Gustav Mahler Youth Orchestra.

PHOTO BY GISELE SCHENKER

The **CHICAGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA** (CSO), now celebrating its 129th season, is consistently hailed as one of the world's leading orchestras. In September 2010, renowned Italian conductor Riccardo Muti became its tenth music director. His vision for the Orchestra—to deepen its engagement with the Chicago community, to nurture its legacy while supporting a new generation of musicians, and to collaborate with visionary artists—signals a new era for the institution.

Founded in 1891 by its first music director, Theodore Thomas, the CSO's other distinguished music directors include Frederick Stock, Désiré Defauw, Artur Rodzinski, Rafael Kubelík, Fritz Reiner, Jean Martinon, Sir Georg Solti, and Daniel Barenboim. From 2006 to 2010, Bernard Haitink served as principal conductor, the first in CSO history. Pierre Boulez was appointed principal guest conductor in 1995 and then named Helen Regenstein Conductor Emeritus in 2006, a position he held until his death in January 2016. Cellist Yo-Yo Ma served as the CSO's Judson and Joyce Green Creative Consultant from 2010 to 2019 and, most recently, Missy Mazzoli was appointed the CSO's Mead Composer-in-Residence in 2018.

The musicians of the CSO command a vast repertoire and annually perform more than 150 concerts, most at Symphony Center in Chicago and since 1936, at the Ravinia Festival in the summer. The CSO also tours nationally and internationally. Since its first tour to Canada in 1892, the Orchestra has performed in 29 countries on five continents in 61 international tours.

Since 1916, recording has been a significant part of the Orchestra's activities. Current releases on CSO Resound, the Orchestra's independent recording label, include the Grammy Award–winning release of Verdi's Requiem led by Riccardo Muti. Recordings by the CSO have earned 62 Grammy awards from the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences. Listeners around the world can hear the CSO in weekly airings of the CSO Radio Broadcast Series, which is syndicated on the WFMT Radio Network and online at CSO.org/Radio. In addition, the CSO's YouTube video of Beethoven's Symphony No. 9, conducted by Muti, has received over 17 million views.

Annually, the CSO engages more than 200,000 people of diverse ages, incomes, and backgrounds through the innovative programs of the Negaunee Music Institute at the CSO. The Institute also manages the Civic Orchestra of Chicago, the only pre-professional training ensemble of its kind affiliated with a major American orchestra.

The parent organization for the CSO is the Chicago Symphony Orchestra Association (CSOA), which also includes the acclaimed Chicago Symphony Chorus directed by Duain Wolfe. Under the banner of its presentation series, entitled Symphony Center Presents, the CSOA annually presents dozens of prestigious guest artists and ensembles from a variety of musical genres.

Thousands of patrons, volunteers, and donors—corporations, foundations, government agencies, and individuals—support the CSOA each year. The CSO's music director position is endowed in perpetuity by a generous gift from the Zell Family Foundation. The Negaunee Foundation provides generous support in perpetuity for the work of the Negaunee Music Institute.

CHICAGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
RICCARDO MUTI, ZELL MUSIC DIRECTOR

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Missy Mazzoli *Mead Composer-in-Residence*

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Sylvia Kim Kilcullen *Assistant Principal*
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Fox Fehling
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John Hagstrom
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Michael Mulcahy
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**Assistant concertmasters are listed by seniority.* ‡ *On sabbatical* § *On leave*

The Louise H. Benton Wagner Chair currently is unoccupied.

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.