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JACKSON BROWNE HASN'T BEGUN TO RUN ON EMPTY

VOLUME 8, NUMBER 12

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#SOCIALUPGRADE your summer with Ravinia's ticket contests. Keep an eye on our social sites for information on how you can win FREE tickets to Ravinia this summer.

A MESSAGE FROM RAVINIA

Ravinia truly has so much to celebrate this season!

In 2015 Ravinia celebrates the accomplishments of an artist and friend who has helped shape so much of our recent history. James Conlon has programmed his final season as music director of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's residency at Ravinia with specific composers and pieces that call to mind the supreme performances that have defined his association with the festival from his earliest days as a guest conductor in the 1970s. As music director, he gave us a multiyear, complete Mahler symphony cycle; the complete Mozart piano concertos; high-quality opera performances, including Mozart in the Martin; a deep concentration on the music of the Russian masters; and his hallmark "Breaking the Silence" series, which turned our attention back toward the music plunged into obscurity by the Holocaust. Each issue of *Ravinia* Magazine this summer will feature a Conlon focus.

We're also celebrating the 80th birthdays of two Chicago legends who both happen to be Ravinia Life Trustees—fine-arts sculptor Richard Hunt and jazz pianist Ramsey Lewis.

Richard started Ravinia's sculpture collection in 1971 by contributing his own massive outdoor work *Music For A While*. Ravinia has commissioned several other pieces from this artist whose works grace galleries around the world, and Richard remains influential in the selection and placement of new additions, such as significant pieces by Fernando Botero, Lynn Chadwick, Boaz Vaadia, and (most recently) Jaume Plensa that have come to the festival in the past decade. All these works together greatly contribute to the beauty and unique park setting of Ravinia.

As a young piano student, Ramsey was told to abandon his drive to become a classical pianist because no major orchestra would hire a black man. This year, however, he achieves his sidelined dream by making his CSO debut as both composer and soloist with his Concerto for Jazz Trio and Orchestra, commissioned by Ravinia for this milestone. With such a backstory, it's no wonder that Ramsey has been so influential in developing Ravinia's REACH*TEACH*PLAY education programs, which reach 75,000 people through such initiatives as El Sistema–based student orchestras and a free family music school.

We're also continuing to celebrate gains in expanding and developing Ravinia's audience. We've made lawn admission to all classical concerts free for children and students through college, and priced most Pavilion seats to all CSO concerts at only $25. We've expanded our programming over the past several years to bring new listeners to the CSO, even as audiences for classical music continue to wane worldwide. We took a page from the CSO's own handbook downtown to create movie nights, such as this year's amalgam of Disney's *Fantasia* and *Fantasia 2000* (the original soundtracks of which were performed by the Philadelphia and Chicago Symphony Orchestras) as well as Danny Elfman's music from Tim Burton films. Recognizing that movie scores are often the first place

This year Ravinia is celebrating the 80th birthdays of two men who have had (and continue to make) a lasting impression on the festival, sculptor Richard Hunt (left, on his Music For A While*) and jazz pianist Ramsey Lewis (above), who his making his CSO debut on August 8 with the world premiere of his Ravinia-commissioned Concerto for Jazz Trio and Orchestra.*

A MESSAGE FROM RAVINIA

where young people hear the sound of a symphony, orchestras around the world—from New York to London—are programming film music to attract new listeners, especially families, to the live symphonic experience.

With one of the most extensive chamber series in the world, Ravinia also makes music affordable and accessible with its acclaimed $10 BGH Classics series, through which patrons can experience such headliners such as cellist Alisa Weilerstein and jazz pianist Cyrus Chestnut with the Turtle Island Quartet in our intimate 450-seat, state-of-the-art venue for less than the cost of a movie. This series also includes performances by the fiercely talented fellows of Ravinia's Steans Music Institute (RSMI), young professionals who hone their performance skills with the talented guest artists and educators who perform at Ravinia.

This year the Martin Theatre welcomes superstars at the pinnacle of success, from soprano Karita Mattila to pianist Yefim Bronfman, as well as acclaimed artists who are about to take the world by storm, such as pianist Igor Levit. This 850-seat hall—the only building that dates back to Ravinia's 1904 construction—is considered one of the finest venues for chamber music and recitals.

Of course, we cannot get through this message without celebrating this year's "showmance" of Tony Bennett and Lady Gaga. Not only were their two concerts the fastest selling in Ravinia history, but they also exemplify the liquidity of genres and the co-mingling of audiences that is central to Ravinia's identity. And what better time to bring such a glamorous focus to the Great American Songbook than in Frank Sinatra's centennial year, when we'll have artists such as Seth MacFarlane, Ramsey Lewis, Harry Connick Jr., Diana Krall, Concert Dance Inc., and Frank Sinatra Jr. performing some of these classic songs.

In his final season as music director of the CSO's residency, James Conlon will be recalling the major musical thrusts be brought to the festival over the past 10 years, culminating in Ravinia's first complete concert performance of Wagner's The Flying Dutchman.

As a not-for-profit, Ravinia earns about half the money it needs to make all this work through ticket sales. The rest comes from private donors and corporate sponsors. And, of course, we can never thank—or celebrate—them enough. We send a special welcome and thank-you to Allstate for signing on as Ravinia's first Lead Classical Sponsor. Thanks also go to the generous and practical leadership and largesse of our Board of Trustees and Life Trustees; the Women's Board, the most generous funder in Ravinia's history; and the Associates Board, coming off its most successful Music Matters fundraiser ever.

Maybe we don't think about it much or say it aloud, but it bears decalring in print that every season (indeed, every day) at Ravinia is a "celebration" of the one before, a thankful nod to the musical continuum that has grown here amid the trees and breeze since Ravinia was established in 1904. So many genres. So many artists. So many geniuses with their so many masterworks. Not to mention more memories than any scrapbook can contain. We salute the artists, administrators, and audiences that came before us, and smile at what our future may bring.

Thanks for celebrating with us tonight!

MISSION STATEMENT OF THE RAVINIA FESTIVAL ASSOCIATION

Ravinia is an internationally renowned, not-for-profit music festival that presents outstanding performances by the world's greatest artists. Ravinia's principal objectives are

- to present performances of a full range of classical music in its open-air Pavilion and enclosed recital halls, by the world's greatest composers and musicians, along with a variety of other kinds of light classical, jazz and popular music;
- to maintain a beautiful park that is welcoming to all and attractive to families in which the music experience is enhanced by a beautiful environment and excellent dining opportunities;
- to enable gifted young performers to study under great teachers and perform in concert settings; and
- to develop broader and more diverse audiences for classical music through education and outreach programs and by maintaining affordable ticket prices.

John L. Anderson
Chairman,
Ravinia Festival Association

Welz Kauffman
President and CEO,
Ravinia Festival Association

Pedro de Jesus

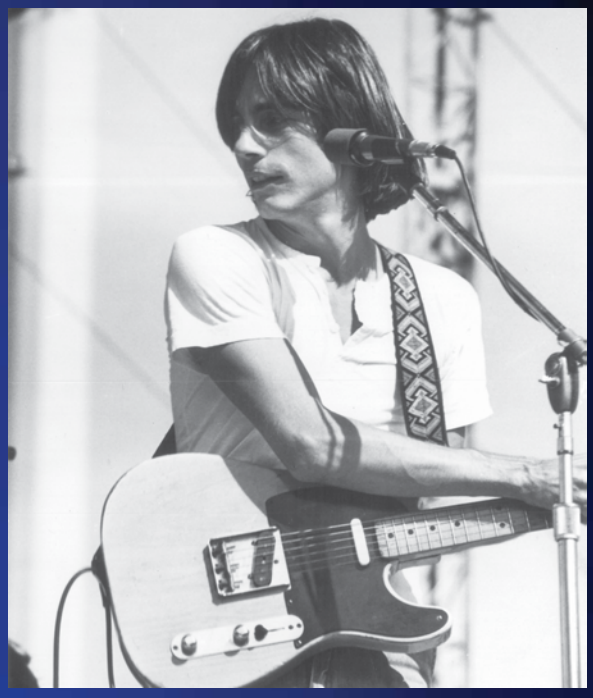
No Pretender

Jackson Browne has given his music a personal touch for over 40 years

By Web Behrens

Whether responding to the tangled politics of the human heart or the heartless policies of human governments, Jackson Browne brings a distinctive approach to his art. With a poet's eye and musician's ear, he crafts songs with lyrics that stick and melodies that soar. He doesn't give you easy answers after asking the hard questions, but he does deliver catharsis: Even his most haunting songs help you, somehow, feel better.

These are the reasons that elevated Browne to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame back in 2004, and the Songwriters Hall of Fame three years later. In the course of a career spanning nearly five decades—born in 1948, the prodigy began composing and performing as a teen—he's recorded 14 studio albums (along with a number of live recordings, plus sundry one-offs for compilations and soundtracks). His most recent release, 2014's *Standing in the Breach*, prompts his current tour, which brings him to Ravinia on September 5.



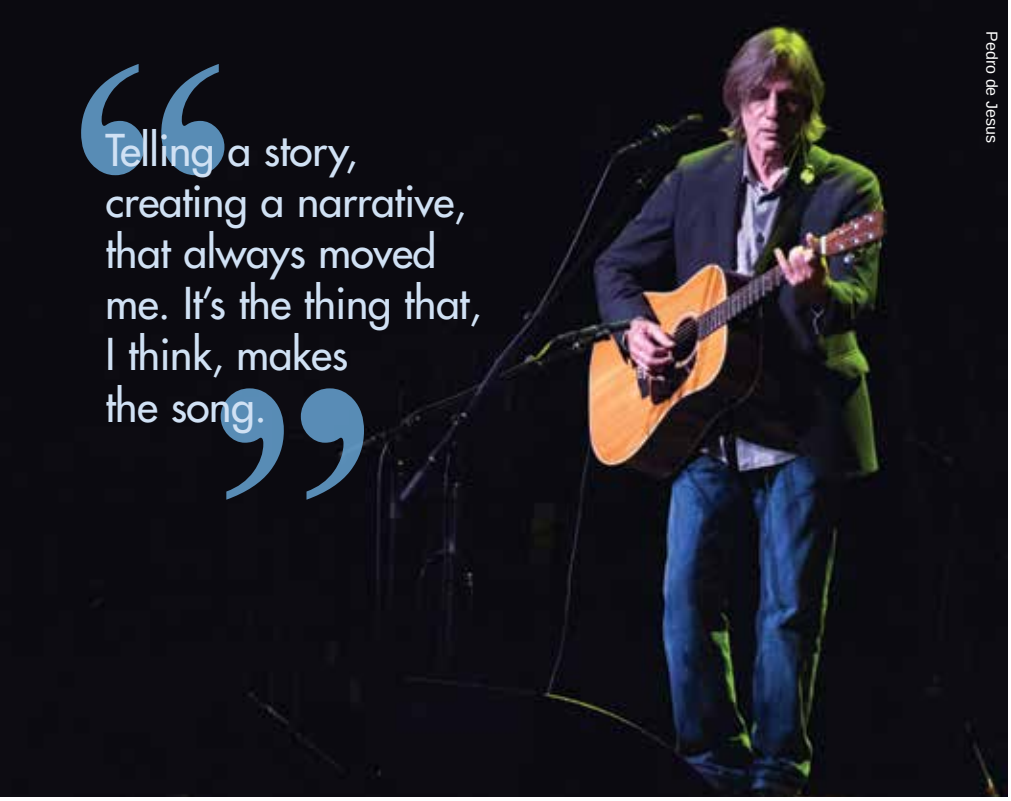
In some ways, though, *Breach* isn't his latest work. Time and again, its tracks harken to years past. His most profound trip in the Wayback Machine is a Byrds-influenced song that kicks off the release: "The Birds of St. Marks." Previously only heard on his *Solo Acoustic* release from the mid-'00s (a two-CD set, though originally released separately), it's a song he first wrote in 1967 as an ode to Nico, the German chanteuse best known for her part in Velvet Underground. Browne and Nico met in New York, and he performed on her first solo album.

"The ironic part is, the way you're hearing it now is how I was hearing it at the time, but it took me until now to figure out how to do that. I almost had to go to Byrds school," jokes Browne during a phone interview with *Ravinia* Magazine. In fact, he'd originally hoped to get his friend David Crosby, a founding member of The Byrds, to sing harmony on the track, but in the end, Browne recorded it with another singer, thereby retaining the homage factor.

"That was built into my idea of the song," he explains. "Because Nico is Nico and nobody associates her with California—even though she spent time there—nobody would guess that she was a fan of The Byrds. She loved 'Eight Miles High' and 'So You Want to Be a Rock 'n' Roll Star.' She loved The Byrds! So I wrote it as a song to her, as I left [New York]. I only worked for her for a couple months, and then I went back to California. That was one of those songs you write on an occasion of leaving—but it took many years for that song to come into being."

For an artist so thoroughly identified with Southern California, where he's spent all but a few years of his life, it might be a surprise that Browne (along with two of his siblings) was born in Germany. His father worked for the *Stars and Stripes* newspaper there in the aftermath of World War II, but after moving around the country for a few years, the family returned to the West Coast, so Browne retains no actual memories of his birth nation. (Amusingly, he recalls that, once in the United States, his parents "only spoke German when they didn't want us to know what they were talking about.")

But it was his father's passion rather than vocation that guided Browne's destiny. The senior Browne played piano as well as a range of horns. "This was a central thing in our lives growing up, that our dad was a musician," he says. "My dad collected instruments. He had a sort of alcove for his desk, and there were pegs all around this alcove [holding] a



Pedro de Jesus

First appearing at Ravinia in 1977, the same year his bestselling album *Running on Empty* was released, Jackson Browne most recently shared his earnest musical narratives with the festival in 2013.

trumpet, a trombone, a sousaphone, and a French horn. When we were out in the neighborhood playing and it was time to come home, he'd get out on the front porch with one of his horns and play a little call. He was eccentric in a lot of ways, and I learned a lot about music from him.

"Everybody played," Browne continues. "My brother played sax; my sister played piano. We were all taught music. I wanted to play piano, but he insisted I play the trumpet." Young Jackson eventually rebelled, giving up all music, but that didn't last. In high school he picked up guitar; later, he taught himself the piano that he'd always dreamed of playing.

Influenced by what he calls "the folk boom in the '60s," Browne taught himself classic folk tunes, "and then Bob Dylan came along," helping impart another lesson about making music: the importance of telling a story. "That's still what matters to me in music," he says. "That's still what's at the heart for everyone from Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers to Wilco to Dawes. They may have grown up playing primarily rock 'n' roll, but it was the telling of a story, creating a narrative, that always moved me. It's the thing that, I think, makes the song."

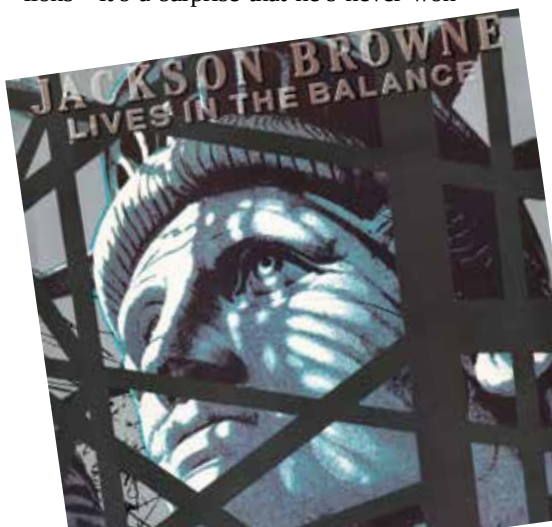
While still in his teens, Browne played venues in Los Angeles before leaving for his stint in New York City. A mere lad of 18, he fell into the Greenwich Village music scene, playing with Tim Buckley and Nico. In fact, she was the first to record one of Browne's earliest compositions, "These Days," which he wrote at age 16. Browne played guitar on the track, and while this early recording experience served as testimony both to Browne's talent and good fortune, it also provided a prescient sign of things to come: He was bound for success, both as songwriter for others as well as for himself.

Browne moved back to Southern California in 1968 and began recording his eponymous debut album in 1971. Before its release the following year, The Byrds recorded the lead track, "Jamaica Say You Will," for its *Byrdmaniax* album. Ironically, his first big hit came shortly after *Jackson Browne* hit record shelves, but via someone else's recording. He couldn't finish writing the catchy ditty "Take It Easy" to his satisfaction, but his buddy Glenn Frey, who was on the same open-mic circuit, had heard the song-in-progress and loved it. Browne gave it to him to finish, and Frey recorded it with The Eagles for their debut. Released as the group's first single, it rocketed up the charts, putting the band on the map. (Browne soon caught up with his own songs: On his sophomore release, 1973's *For Everyman*, he sang his own versions of "These Days" and "Take It Easy.")

Browne quickly blossomed into a musician whose sound helped define the singer-songwriter sound of the '70s. With his very personal songs about love, loss, and life, he ensured that his name would become associated with the upper echelon of folk-influenced musicians of that vibrant decade, along with Carole King, James Taylor, and Carly Simon. During the '80s he segued into a hybrid of pop and rock, with tracks like "That Girl Could Sing" and "Boulevard." In another moment of commercial irony, his highest-charting single, "Somebody's Baby," belonged not to one of his own albums but to the soundtrack of the 1982 film *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*.

Browne's commercial heyday came during those first two full decades of his recording career—unsurprisingly, mostly before he began singing explicitly about social and environmental ills. As the Reagan era marched on, he picked up an overtly activist stance for which he's still proudly known. He signaled that shift with 1983's *Lawyers in Love*, but it came into powerful fruition in 1986 with *Lives in the Balance*, an album full of criticism of US foreign policy. Its cover depicted a close-up of the Statue of Liberty's face, surrounded by scaffolding that gave the effect of prison bars.

Still, for an artist of Browne's stature—having achieved popularity with both critics and the public, as well as record sales numbering in the tens of millions—it's a surprise that he's never won




Jim Shea

Among his numerous collaborators over the years, Browne counts former longtime bandmate David Lindley (right) as one of his most treasured. The pair recently reunited for a tour of Spain that was captured on Browne's 2010 live album *Love Is Strange*.

a Grammy Award. On the other hand, the activist-musician has been honored with a number of accolades he's likely more proud of, including the John Steinbeck Award, which is given to artists whose social- and environmental-justice work reflect Steinbeck's values. He's also the co-founder of MUSE, Musicians United for Safe Energy. That's not simply a title; he owns a ranch that's entirely off the grid, powered by wind and solar energy.

"It's a getaway, but I could live there," Browne says. "I have a garden and chickens, and I have a piano. It produces electricity by photovoltaic cells and a wind generator. But I wouldn't want to live as rurally as that while trying to make records. The music is all I've got, so I tend the fires of music by being close to other musicians. The reason I created the ranch off the grid was [because] it was the only way I could do it [at first], because it was very rural. Eventually, electricity was brought into the canyon, and I had the chance to change, but I'd already been off the grid for 20 years. Why hook up to the grid now? But also, I was involved in the No Nukes concerts, opposing nuclear energy, and I'd been arrested blockading the local nuclear power plant, which is not that far from this ranch. So I just wanted to see what it would take. I was saying, 'No, we don't need nuclear power'—and in fact we don't, and I proved it to myself. It's very doable.

"It's here. The future is here," he continues. "You don't have to use fossil fuels. You don't have to drive a car with gas. I've had a Chevy Volt for about three years, and I have only used 50 gallons of gas in that time. The problem is, not enough people think that's important." But even when he feels weary, considering the troubles facing the world, he reminds himself—much in the way his music reminds his listeners—"You mustn't lose hope. You mustn't give up."

The list of renowned musicians with whom Browne has collaborated in some form could fill a whole page. His early brushes with Nico, Buckley, Frey, and Crosby were just the beginning; in the years to come, he toured with such icons as Linda Ronstadt and Joni Mitchell, and he made music with everyone from Warren Zevon to Bonnie Raitt to Bruce Springsteen. So it's hard not to wonder, from such an embarrassment of riches, do any of those collaborations stand out for him as favorites?

"Well, I think—" the always-thoughtful Browne pauses, considering this answer even more carefully than most. "The collaborations that I did with my bandmates are probably the [favorites]. They may not be the best known, like 'Call It a Loan' with David Lindley. We collaborated musically on songs that I had written myself. David made them sound the way they sound, just by virtue of playing on them. He doesn't get a songwriter's credit for his solo in 'Late for the Sky,' but my collaboration with him is a little closer to the bone than sitting down with another songwriter and tossing some lines back and forth." Full-on songwriting collaborations, he further explains, "are rare for me, because I need to be alone to find out what I think about anything."

It's no surprise, then, that he took nearly 50 years to record "The Birds of St. Marks." And you can find thoughtful nods to his past throughout *Breach*. One track, "You Know the Night," marries a Browne composition to Woodie Guthrie lyrics. The rockabilly swing of "Leaving Winslow" winks, both in sound and title, to The Eagles and that famed corner of Winslow, AZ, from "Take It Easy." The opening notes of "The Long Way Around" deliberately echo the intro to "These Days," while his opening lyric croons, *I don't know what to say about these days*. Although it sounds like an updated, upbeat cover, the lyrics reflect the older artist, musing about societal ills—overconsumption, gun proliferation, and even the Supreme Court's controversial Citizens United decision—and then marrying those larger anxieties to personal reflection about his life's journey, traced back to his early days: *I made my breaks and some mistakes / Just not the ones people think I make*.

"This whole record is full of stuff like that. I don't think I can go on doing it this way," Browne says with a wry chuckle. "It takes too long. This is like me cleaning house, in a way." R

A native of the Windy City, Web Behrens covers arts, culture, and travel for the *Chicago Tribune* and *Crain's Chicago Business*. He's also worked as an editor and contributor for *Time Out Chicago* and the *Chicago Reader*.

LIEBERMAN PHOTOGRAPHY

Facing Forward

Frederica von Stade cherishes new challenges

By Martin Bernheimer

Frederica von Stade has enjoyed a unique, lengthy, wide-ranging career that has brought her fame and, one hopes, fortune. She has always been a favorite with international aficionados who appreciate style, quality, sensitivity, and versatility. Even admirers who do not happen to know her personally flash her nickname, "Flicka."

She is, of course, an extraordinary opera star, first and foremost. That occupation, however, has never been a full-time obsession.

In addition to her work in the world's best musical theaters, she has been a fixture at various presidential events. At the inauguration of Jimmy Carter, she sang "Take Care of This House" from *1600 Pennsylvania Avenue* by Leonard Bernstein and Alan Jay Lerner. Demonstrating what might be regarded as political versatility—or neutrality—she also sang at the 50th Presidential Inaugural Gala, which marked the second inauguration of Ronald Reagan. Not incidentally, she was warmly introduced on that occasion by the comic actor Tony Randall, and her surprisingly sophisticated vehicle turned out to be an aria from Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots*. She also illuminated the opening ceremonies of the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, and she sang with the Mormon Tabernacle Choir at the Cultural Olympiad held in conjunction with the games.

She got around, musically speaking. And she still does.

After ending a long and extraordinarily successful period centered on the so-called standard opera and concert repertory, von Stade expanded her realm of activity with contemporary explorations, many challenges created specifically for her. It is true, she admits, that the focus of her professional life has changed. "But," she adds, "that is not because of some deliberate plan. I think it is a question of blind luck and really just saying yes to ideas that were proposed to me. I've loved every minute of these different adventures and am so grateful for the opportunities."

Her career at the Metropolitan Opera spanned 300 performances, many of them in so-called *Hosenrollen*—"trouser roles." She looked great in pants, and had what seemed like an easy knack for impersonating adolescent boys, from Octavian in Richard Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier* to Nicklausse in Offenbach's *The Tales of Hoffmann* to Hänsel

MARTY SOHL

CAROLYN MASON JONES

As a mezzo-soprano, Frederica von Stade often sang—and excelled in—roles of young, male characters (so-called "trouser roles") like her signature role, Cherubino in Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*, the vehicle of her 1972 San Francisco Opera debut (left). However, she also starred in an abundance of female roles, including Rosina in Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* at the Lyric Opera of Chicago in 1994 (right).

in Humperdinck's *Hänsel and Gretel* to Cherubino in Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*. With that company alone she sang Mozart's amorous pageboy 48 times, the second most by any mezzo in its history (excepting Mildred Miller, who played the part 61 times).

Von Stade made her debut, most modestly, in 1970 at age 25. Her vehicle: the fleeting ensemble duties of the Third Genie in Mozart's *The Magic Flute*. She mustered her Met farewell, 31 years later, in the title role of Lehár's *The Merry Widow*, opposite the romantic tenor Plácido Domingo. It seems silly to ask, but one wonders if she harbors any career regrets.

"No regrets whatsoever," she replies, her tone emphatic. "I loved it from the day I walked into the Met. It was like a magic experience that I never could have imagined. In the beginning, I barely knew how to get around the opera house, much less the stage. I was taught by masters in every corner—directors, conductors, artists, and nearly every member of the Met family—and it was really a family when I was first there.

"There were the wonderful ladies, Winnie and Mary at the reception desk when you walked in; Jimmy Pinto, who made us all look marvelous; Nina Lawson, who managed the wig department with such ease and good will; and dear Rosie, who took care of the costumes. If you saw a costume walking down the hall with no one holding it, you could be sure that Rosie was under there somewhere delivering it to a dressing room. I always think that it takes many, many people to make an opera singer, hundreds of supporting, kind, gifted people who put all their talents into us, often without recognition."

Did she follow a specific career-progress plan? The answer is firm: "That's just the way it happened, and I loved the beginning as much as the end." Actually, she claims exultation regarding her grand finale. "Can it get better than waltzing out the door with Plácido?"

One of the secrets of her remarkable success must entail careful choice of repertory, and cautious avoidance of assignments that might invite vocal stress or strain. She did, however, attempt one role at the Met for which she hardly seemed predestined: Adalgisa, the seconda donna in Bellini's *Norma*. She was smart enough to sing it lyrically in 1975, never pushing for heroism beyond her norm. Donal Henahan, chief critic of the *New York Times*, found her "sensitive portrayal the best thing about this *Norma*." He conceded that "her voice sometimes did not seem robust enough … but she conveyed shades of emotion in a recognizably Bellinian style." Still, he did note that the mezzo-soprano was oddly paired with Rita Hunter, a heroic Wagnerian soprano seemingly miscast in the title role.

"I loved attempting Adalgisa," von Stade now recalls with classic candor, "but that's what it was: an attempt. I was always in love with the music, and I was asked. I never did it anywhere else. I learned my lesson."

For her Ravinia program on September 10 she shares the stage with Laurie Rubin, a most successful, younger mezzo-soprano who has been blind since birth. In 2012, Seven Stories Press published her memoir, *Do You Dream in Color? Insights from a Girl Without Sight*. In it she demonstrates her determination to surpass and redefine popular expectations. According to her website, Rubin continues to hope that her story will resonate with young people contemplating two fundamental questions: "Who am I?" and "Where do I fit in?"

Von Stade, who praises the book as "wonderful," finds that it "shows

Mezzo-soprano Laurie Rubin with the first copy of her memoir, *Do You Dream in Color? Insights from a Girl Without Sight*

Von Stade gave her final Chicago-area opera performance at Ravinia in 2010, portraying the scheming maid Despina in Mozart's *Così fan tutte*. (Photos: Patrick Gipson)

the same clarity, honesty, and devotion that Laurie has always had with her art." Pola Rosen, publisher of *Education Update*, seconds the critical motion: "Laurie Rubin's memoir should be required reading in that it underscores the triumph of the human spirit. Rubin serves as a role model for all of us, whether or not we face a disability."

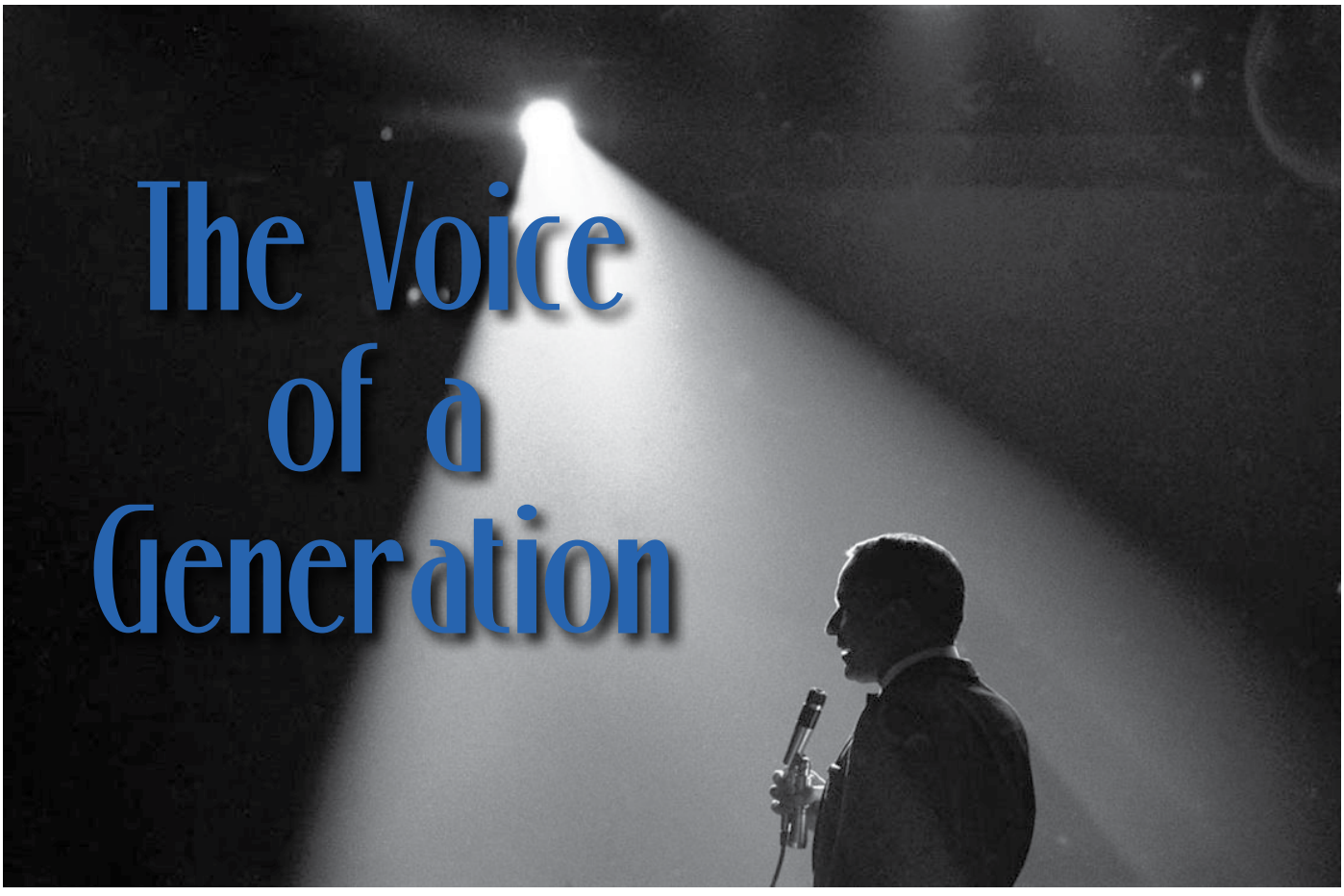
The projected musical menu for the von Stade–Rubin duo at Ravinia spans virtually everything from soup to nuts, from Mozart to Stephen Sondheim. "Here," von Stade confirms, "we go back and forth. I would have loved to have put together a program that featured the differences in our ages and experience and all. We did try to do that to a certain extent. I met Laurie when she was 16 and have watched her grow and mature over the last 10 or 15 years. The first time I sang with her, I invited her to join me for a benefit for a marvelous organization called the Foundation to Fight Blindness. I became involved as one of my daughter's dear friends had a disease that has rendered her nearly completely blind and deaf today. Then over the years I kept in touch with Laurie. She has never ceased to develop her very special talents."

The next major challenge on von Stade's agenda is an opera by Jake Heggie called *Great Scott*, which receives its world premiere at the Dallas Opera in October. The libretto, written by Terrence McNally, concerns an opera star who returns to her hometown to save the struggling ensemble that had launched her career. Opening night, unfortunately, falls on the same night as the home team's first Super Bowl. Problems ensue as the woman who runs the opera company is also married to the owner of the football team. The central role falls to Joyce DiDonato, conspicuously supported by von Stade, who expresses elation at the prospect. "*Great Scott*," she declares, "is sensational. We did a workshop in April and it was just wonderful. Jake has created another wonderful work, full of pathos, humor, great music, and a hysterical libretto—to say nothing of the thrill of working with Joyce and a marvelous cast, director, and on and on. I play the lady who runs the opera company, and I have a lovely little duet with Joyce when we reminisce about how much we loved to listen to the Met broadcasts. Jake has been so good to me over the years, and my admiration for him is only surpassed by my affection for every corner of his soul." [Not coincidentally, several of Heggie's songs feature on her September program at Ravinia, including selections from a song cycle the festival commissioned from him in 2007, *Facing Forward/ Looking Back*.]

Understatement has never been von Stade's forte. For that, she is simply too generous. R

"Flicka" has enthralled Ravinia audiences since 1988, both in recital and with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

Martin Bernheimer won the Pulitzer Prize for criticism while at the *Los Angeles Times*. He now covers music in New York for the *Financial Times*.



The Voice of a Generation

Frank Sinatra set the standard in "his kind of town"

By John McDonough

There was more to the Greatest Generation than Roosevelt, the New Deal, and Normandy. There was its music: Gershwin, Ellington, Porter, Fitzgerald, Crosby, Berlin, Rodgers, Kern, Armstrong, Goodman, Holiday, Shaw, Miller. Nothing like it, before or since. And there was Sinatra.

In the late summer of 1939 an unknown Frank Sinatra first came to Chicago as a band singer, spending seven weeks in the Sherman House Hotel across from City Hall. Some may have heard him, but none could have guessed his future. More than half a century later, in 1994, he returned to Chicago for the last time; more than 20,000 fans saw him then in the United Center.

In the 55 years between the Sherman House and the United Center, Sinatra bent the axis of American music to his will, and there were milestones in that process that played out in Chicago. But they didn't come suddenly; instead, they came in phases through a procession of Sinatras—each added layers of emotional identity to the one that had come before. As he grew as an artist, he grew larger in our imaginations. As he grew into his songs (and then beyond them), the songs grew with him. By the time he finally stepped down, what had once been considered simply pop tunes had become an honored repertory—the Great American Songbook.

September 15, 1939: "This young Frank Sinatra handles the ballads"

Frank Sinatra is said to have played Chicago as part of a *Major Bowes Amateur Hour* road show in the fall of 1935, but any evidence has long since been lost. His first confirmed appearance in the city was with the Harry James Orchestra, opening Friday, September 15, 1939, in the Panther Room of the Sherman House Hotel. For the next several weeks anyone willing to pay 75 cents could go to Clark and Randolph Streets and be present for the genesis. Nearly every hot swing band carried a "boy singer," and James had only eight weeks earlier picked up Sinatra while he was performing in the Rustic Cabin in Englewood Cliffs, NJ. Sinatra came to Chicago as one band

singer among many; all were romantic, though Sinatra didn't yet look the part. But with only radio and records as the music media, sex appeal still resided in the voice and the imagination, not the eye. "This young Frank Sinatra handles the ballads," James told Chicago-based *DownBeat* magazine at the time. "We think he is doing a fine job."

December 21, 1939: "He's nothing to look at, but he's got a sound"

It was in Chicago that Sinatra's stars first began to seriously align. The Tommy Dorsey Orchestra moved into the prestigious Empire Room of the Palmer House on October 12. Sinatra, who was still working two blocks away at the Sherman, knew that Dorsey was looking to replace his singer, Jack Leonard. One day in the Wrigley Building, a CBS radio music executive asked Dorsey if he'd ever seen Sinatra. "He's nothing to look at, but he's got a sound," he told Dorsey. "My back was to the bandstand, but when the kid started taking a chorus, I had to turn around."

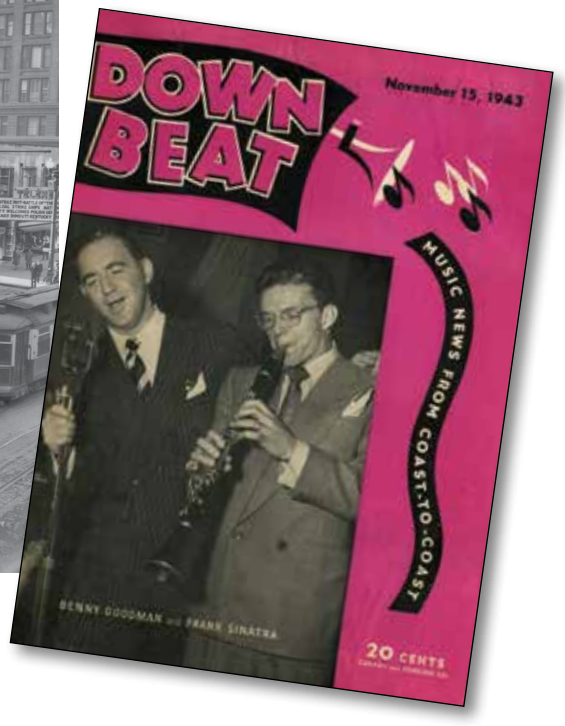
Sinatra left Chicago with James in early November. But the band swung back through town in mid-December for a one-week stand at the Chicago Theatre. Sinatra was still a nobody; the theater manager called him a "scarecrow." But the night before closing on December 20, James agreed to play Mayor Ed Kelly's "Night of Stars" gala in the Chicago Stadium. Dorsey's band was also on the program, but he may or may not have heard Sinatra that night; the show ran seven hours through 40 acts. Nonetheless, Sinatra met him the next afternoon in his suite in the Palmer House. Dorsey led the most popular band in the country, had a weekly radio show, and was building a showboat of talent that included Buddy Rich, Sy Oliver, Paul Weston, Axel Stordahl, and a stock company of singers. He offered Sinatra $125 to come on board, and Sinatra accepted.

On January 26, 1940, Sinatra took a train to Rockford, IL, where that night at the Coronado Theater he stepped in front of the Dorsey band for the first time. A week later the band returned to Chicago for a brief stop at the Merchandise Mart where Sinatra made the first of what would be 83 records with Dorsey: "The Sky Fell Down" and "Too Romantic."

July 16, 1942: The beginnings of a personal songbook

Sinatra would not be back in Chicago for two and a half years, but when he did return he was a different Sinatra—on the threshold of uncharted stardom and eager to get on with it. "No doubt half the town will be journeying to the Chicago Theatre this week to hear Tommy Dorsey and his celebrated orchestra," the *Chicago Tribune* (correctly) predicted. A week later, when the band left, it had set a summer attendance record. Sinatra was becoming a force. He was now being billed in the ads, first among the featured talents. More important, he had built the beginnings of a personal songbook with Dorsey that he would forever carry: "I'll Be Seeing You," "East of the Sun," "Street of Dreams," "Without a Song," "Violets for Your Furs," "The Song Is You," "Stardust," and "I'll Never Smile Again." But six weeks later Sinatra departed Dorsey's lineup and never looked back.

Frank Sinatra's star started to rise while he was touring with the Harry James Orchestra (bottom), but within a short time he was poached by the nation's top bandleader, Tommy Dorsey (top), to front his big band, with whom Sinatra rapidly gained notoriety as the foremost voice of the time.



During Sinatra's first heyday in the 1940s, the Chicago Theatre was the place to be to catch a glimpse of the star singer. On the cover of the Windy City's *DownBeat* magazine, he playfully traded roles with another jazz icon of the day, Benny Goodman.

May 17, 1946: "The Voice" and the "Jennies"

After the war Sinatra was a national sensation. He had become a rolling dynamo of sexual magnetism, able to ignite young passions with a whispered rubato or the intimate swerve of note from sharp to flat. He was "The Voice," according to his first album. During the previous few years, Chicagoans had brief glimpses of this emergent and puzzling power. The venue was always the Dearborn Street Station, the transfer point of the nation's Who's Who as they arrived from Los Angeles on the Super Chief and departed for New York on the Twentieth Century a few blocks away. In 1943 the local press began to cover Sinatra's brief layovers and the small riots that broke out as hundreds of swooning fans—"stage door Jennies"—stampeded the station hoping to touch him.

When Sinatra returned for his third time to the Chicago Theatre, fans began lining up at dawn, four abreast. "Something new has been added to the stage show," the *Tribune* noted. "A brace of burly policeman arranged … in plain sight at both sides of the stage." In the new frontier of fame that Sinatra was exploring, "security" was on its way to becoming a permanent part of the concert landscape. The pandemonium went on all week. The irony was that nothing Sinatra was doing invited such mayhem. He sang magnificent love songs ("I've Got a Crush on You," "Someone to Watch Over Me," "You Go to My Head") and serious concert pieces ("Soliloquy" from *Carousel*). He seemed as baffled by it all as the cultural anthropologists who scrambled to suss out the reasons.

June 9, 1952: "Time has marched on"

By the summer of 1952, when Sinatra came back to Chicago for a week at the Chez Paree, the mayhem has subsided. Except for two brief Knights of Columbus events in 1946 and '47 and a benefit at the Opera House in 1950, it was his first major Chicago appearance in six years. The Chez Paree had the kind of old-fashioned, velvety swank you see only in 1940s movies now. The adult nightclub setting accommodated around 900 and offered dinner, dancing, and floor shows featuring the biggest stars in show business. It was Sinatra's natural habitat—a smallish saloon where the intimacy of the performance correlated to the space it occupied—but he was in a slump. Columbia Records and MCA had dropped him that summer, and the crowds weren't coming.

It was in Chicago that Sinatra's stars first began to seriously align.

In late November 1962, Sinatra reignited Chicago's passion for his signature standards with a series of concerts at an otherwise sleepy venue in the near northwest suburbs, the Villa Venice. The audiences were treated not only to his revitalized magnetism, but also fellow Rat Pack members Dean Martin (left) and Sammy Davis Jr. (middle).

Chicago columnists covered his Chez Paree stand as if he were a nostalgia act. "It's difficult to realize it was nine years ago that Frank Sinatra swept across the American scene," wrote Will Leonard in the *Tower Ticker*. "Time has marched on, and Sinatra looks strangely dated. Ask a youngster of 16 today what she thinks of Sinatra and she'll look at you as if you were dredging up something from the horse-and-buggy age. Outside [the Chez] on opening night there was no trace of a juvenile toting an autograph book. Times have changed." It would be another 10 years before Chicago would see Sinatra again, but when it did, he would be the coolest man in the world.

November 26, 1962: "Madness at the Villa"

This writer's first in-person glimpse of Sinatra's furious magnetism, which had been reconstructed into a pillar of the American power structure itself, happened in the most unexpected place you could imagine—a fading roadhouse called the Villa Venice, tucked along an unincorporated stretch of Milwaukee Avenue just south of Palatine Road. But there was more. Not only did Sinatra play two shows a night, but so, too, did Rat Pack members Dean Martin and Sammy Davis Jr.

When he walked onstage unannounced after Martin's 20 minutes, he radiated certainty. The humor was mostly PG, but not PC. There may not have been any four-letter words uttered, but a lot of the hoary gags would not pass today's public standard. Davis seemed to draw a million race jokes, but for all the cracks, you knew those brothers were there for each other.

Like some suburban Brigadoon, the Villa Venice was incendiary for seven brief days, then *poof*, it was gone. Herb Lyon called it "Madness at the Villa … where some 2,000 screaming fans turned out to pay homage to show biz royalty." Sinatra was the king among kings. But when he left, the Villa went dark.

July 11, 1967: The arena Sinatra

By 1967 the Baby Boomers had made music an arena-size attraction, and the economics of entertainment were changing. Sinatra was perhaps the only figure from the pre-war era with the momentum to compete in that league. That July, backed by the Buddy Rich band, he played his first solo arena event in Chicago to a crowd of 15,000 in the International Amphitheater, the equivalent of 16 Villa Venice shows in one performance. Though Sinatra sacrificed intimacy for efficiency, his audience, including new generations of fans he'd picked up in the '50s and early '60s, were more than willing to bring their binoculars. According to *Tribune* critic Tom Willis, Sinatra at 51 "still [had] what it takes."

April 26–27, 1974 and beyond: Sinatra at cruising speed

After his famous "retirement" concert in 1971, and as his movie career wound down, Sinatra's touring schedule ramped up and the venues got ever bigger. Two April 1974 concerts in the Chicago Stadium drew nearly 40,000 people. A new generation of critics held the 60-year-old Sinatra up to the younger versions they'd heard about. They probed his performances for telltale cracks in the mortar—a wayward pitch, a tiny frog—but it was irrelevant. The arc of his fame was beyond the reach of any critic's second guessing. He was now at cruising speed in the calm stratosphere of his own legend.

Sinatra returned to the stadium in May 1975, in September (with Ella Fitzgerald and Count Basie), and again in October 1978. Then he passed six nights at the Arie Crown Theater in February 1979. But he drew by far the largest Chicago crowd of his career on August 10, 1982, when an enormous, multigenerational audience of 50,000 cheered Sinatra at Navy Pier in a free ChicagoFest performance. More Chicagoans saw Sinatra in those few years than in the previous 40 combined. "Forget

Sinatra at McCormick Place, May 4, 1983

about farewells, he seemed to be saying," Larry Kart wrote in the *Tribune*. "You're as young as you feel, and I feel great."

June 7, 1977; September 10, 1986; and March 19, 1988: Some sentimental journeys

In 1977 Sinatra grew nostalgic for the low ceilings, clinking glasses, and smoky air of the few old-fashioned nightclubs that still remained outside Las Vegas. One of them was the Sabre Room on 95th Street in Hickory Hills, where for four nights in June 1977 Sinatra and Martin played their last Chicago-area cabaret gig. But even the $100-per-person cover charge didn't scare away the customers; it was a sellout.

Even if the nightclub era was to be consigned to the past, on September 10, 1986, Sinatra and Count Basie's band helped assure that one of the city's great entertainment landmarks, the Chicago Theatre, would have a future. The palace he had first played nearly a half century before with Harry James was reopening after a $9 million restoration. Sinatra's final Chicago Theatre date came 18 months later and would be a valedictory both triumphant and melancholy. In 1988 the Rat Pack reunited for a sellout national tour, reaching Chicago on March 19 and playing three weekend performances in the same theater where *Ocean's Eleven* had opened in 1960. Conceding little to the passage of 25 years, the threesome of Frank, Dean, and Sammy posed a glamorous reminder of the vanishing show business of cocktails and tuxedos. "Show biz," a spellbound Rick Kogan wrote, "in all its freewheeling glory." It would never be seen again. Dean Martin was hospitalized the next day and never returned to the tour. The Rat Pack came to an end in Chicago.

October 21, 1994: The Final Curtain

In August 1993 Sinatra presided over the three-night baptism of the Hollywood Casino in Aurora. Using prompters to help him with lyrics and son Frank Jr. to conduct, some thought it might be his final Chicago stand. But there was still the United Center to open. Billy Joel and Eric Clapton could only be warm-up acts so long as Sinatra lived to crack the champagne bottle on October 21, 1994. "I had the ominous feeling that this would be the last time dad would perform in Chicago," Nancy Sinatra wrote later on. "And I believe he had the same feeling." Yet, sitting in the third row among 20,000 fans and watching Sinatra in action, this writer believed he'd see him again. No one had to cut him any slack. It was a heroic show. The *Tribune*'s Howard Reich would be the last in a 55-year procession of critics to judge a Sinatra concert. He pronounced him "still top of the heap."

Sinatra remained a force longer than any performer of his era. His presence and his music penetrated a succession of generations. Now, the further Frank Sinatra and his music slip from the sentiments of nostalgia into the emotional neutrality of history, the more we will appreciate how good it all really was. R

A contributor to *DownBeat* and National Public Radio, John McDonough teaches jazz history at Northwestern University.

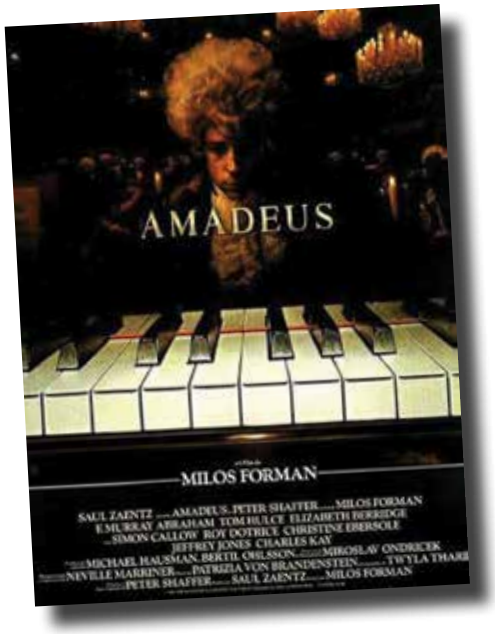
Fewer Is More

Alon Goldstein delights in a small-ensemble look at Mozart concertos

By Mark Thomas Ketterson

It has often been observed that the classical music neophyte who wishes to know the joys of Mozart might best begin with the piano concertos. Two that particularly display a representative Mozartean consciousness are the popular Concertos No. 20 in D Minor, K. 466, and No. 21 in C Major, K. 467. Composed a scant few weeks apart from one another during a period of febrile creativity in 1785, these marvelous pieces reveal Mozart taking a momentous step forward in compositional maturity, and they provide tantalizing glimpses of the dramatic intensity that would grace his mature operas as well as the polyphonic glory of his later symphonies. Ravinia's audience will have a chance to savor these two emblematic concertos in Bennett Gordon Hall on September 8, when the celebrated Israeli/American piano virtuoso Alon Goldstein is joined by the Fine Arts Quartet in a rarely heard arrangement of the works for piano and string quintet. Rachel Calin, on double bass, will complement the assemblage in what promises to be a captivating musical adventure.

MEAGAN CIGNOLI



The conversational quality of Mozart's Piano Concertos Nos. 20 and 21 led them to be used, respectively, in the Oscar-winning drama based on the composer's life, *Amadeus* (the French theatrical release poster of which is shown above), and the enchanting Swedish film *Elvira Madigan* (bottom), a pairing so famous the title is sometimes appropriated as a nickname for the Concerto No. 21.

Goldstein is a familiar presence at the festival. A 1994 graduate of Ravinia's Steans Music Institute, he was its first alumnus to return as faculty. He has been lauded for his impeccable technical polish and sensitive musical intelligence in a career that has taken him to virtually every major musical center in the United States and Europe, under the batons of such illustrious conductors as Zubin Mehta, Leon Fleisher, Yoel Levi, Herbert Blomstedt, and many others. With his palpable warmth and lightning-quick intelligence (and great accent), Goldstein is also a delight to speak with. Born just outside Tel Aviv, his was not a musical family, although his maternal grandfather was an all-around artist who earned a living as a painter, played the violin, and even did Charlie Chaplin routines. Goldstein's parents were eager for their four children to receive a well-rounded education, so each of them studied an instrument. The young pianist's aptitude was immediately apparent (though he is careful to elucidate that he was "not a prodigy child"), and he kept at his musical studies after his siblings had long moved on to other interests. A watershed moment came at age 17 when he attended a concert of young musicians conducted by Zubin Mehta. "I was so envious," Goldstein reminisces. "I remember the next morning I thought, let's wake up every day at 6 a.m., practice for five hours, and see what happens. It was an awakening. Every day in my life I try to give 150 percent, so if something goes wrong maybe 120 percent will be on the stage. And the following year I played under Mehta! It wasn't that I didn't play well before, but I realized that playing well was not enough—it is either give 150 percent or do something else."

Mozart's Concertos Nos. 20 and 21 are two of Goldstein's cherished pieces, and indeed both have been audience favorites since their 1785 premieres. Beyond the concert hall, they have achieved pop culture familiarity through their use in such films as *Amadeus*, and in the case of No. 21, *Elvira Madigan*. (The concerto's association with that film is so strong that many today believe that "Elvira Madigan" is the work's proper name. "Whatever sells," Goldstein quips darkly.) Their ubiquity is more than justified by a stunning level of compositional inspiration. "These concertos were written within the same month, which is staggering in terms of how different they are," Goldstein observes. "And what is more staggering is the concerto written just before, number 19. That is young Mozart. It is dangerous to say, because he wrote great masterpieces before, but there is something about 20 and 21 where you draw a line and enter a different era. My teacher, the legendary Leon Fleisher, liked to say it was useful to put words on the patterns you play, because you get more inflections, momentum, you understand how the phrases go. When I play Mozart I have to put those words in Italian. In the 20th and 21st concertos, the vocabulary is so much more enriched; he has so many more words to express himself, a greater number of characters he is introducing.

"In Mozart there is always a turn of event that is totally unexpected. In *Le nozze di Figaro* we have one of the great climaxes in Western music, when the Count catches Cherubino in the closet with the Countess. Everyone is there, and suddenly the *gardener* comes in, and it's like, 'What are you doing here; you are supposed to be in some other opera!' In the concertos, too, suddenly he introduces a new theme that might never come back, just as that gardener comes in and then leaves. It adds another level of humanity to something which is so out of this world divine.

"I like to think of keys as colors, and the key of D minor, how different it is from C major! D minor is tragic. It is the key of the Requiem, of *Don Giovanni*. D minor enters your heart in places it hurts the most. It is almost like setting the tone for the entire Romantic era, almost like the Mozart D minor is the first Romantic concerto."

The transcriptions for piano and string quintet to be heard at Ravinia are credited to composer Ignaz Lachner, who lived from 1803 to 1890. Exactly

ROBERT DEVERS

The Fine Arts Quartet has a long history as a pioneering force in chamber music, and is returning to Ravinia for the first time since 1960.

how and why they came about is a matter of "finding the treasure," Goldstein quips. The first violinist of the Fine Arts Quartet found the scores in a library in Australia. "The idea of arranging music for other purposes was much more common in Mozart's time. The whole idea of arranging music was not an 'event.' Today when we think of Ravel and his orchestration of *Pictures at an Exhibition*, we know the exact date, time, and what he drank that morning! But in that earlier era, it was part of the basic education to be an amateur musician, to compose. We celebrate Ravel's arrangement of *Pictures*, but I don't think there was any celebration of Mozart arranging Bach. You wanted to play this glorious music at home, for domestic use."

And how do the concertos sound sans full orchestrations? "There are certain aspects of these arrangements that I must say I do like better!" Goldstein says. "The music of Bach is arranged to so many different instruments, yet it works. Chopin on the other hand has been arranged for other instruments, and it doesn't work. So one of the questions I asked myself was, does this music belong to the instrument or [vice versa]? So much of Bach arranged for other instruments works fantastically, so it's almost like Bach's music does not belong to any specific instrument. Can this Mozart piece work like Bach does, when it is arranged for other instruments? It works magnificently, I think.

"We are making chamber music," Goldstein continues. "The ideal, when you play Mozart concertos—it is a story; you converse with the oboe or with the first-violin section or the flute, and that is so difficult when you have [just] a dress rehearsal and a concert with an orchestra. When you do chamber music you have five or six rehearsals, and it really gets to the intimacy when we are sitting one seat from one another. The instruments accompany or support or react to one another. So, if we are saying an ideal is to sound like a chamber conversation, you might as well *play* a chamber conversation. There is a certain level of intimacy in these arrangements which I find incredibly difficult to achieve in an orchestral performance. Well, now you get the chamber feel *par excellence*!

"It is no revelation," Goldstein reminds us, "to say that these Mozart concertos are miniature operas. So in the concert we are telling a dramatic story about an infinite array of characters; we are going to have the maid, we are to have the Count, we are going to have the gardener—all these characters coming to life. And it is nicer to speak to them close!"

Were it not for the intervention of Ravinia President and CEO Welz Kauffman, we might not have this chance to hear the conversation at all—at least not in 2015, with the season being solidly booked. Goldstein's manager suggested the pianist contact Kauffman personally on the matter. "He called right back," Goldstein chuckles, "and said, 'What are you doing September 8?' Welz is a good friend.

"I always say [Ravinia] was my favorite festival as a student," Goldstein reflects. "I went to seven or eight major festivals and all of them were fantastic places with great qualities. And yet Ravinia was my favorite. The leadership has such a sense of integrity. It was very personal. The festival was about *you*, not the big machine that makes the money. And the faculty that came! One week with Fleisher, one with Pressler, one with Claude Frank, one with Christoph Eschenbach. Are you kidding me? You don't have that anywhere. My association with Ravinia now is that one week I come to teach at Steans. It is one of the highlights of my season, every season."

Those who are unable to attend the concert in Bennett Gordon Hall can still hear Goldstein in these intimate arrangements of Mozart's enchanting concertos on a new CD from Naxos, released earlier this summer. "And," Goldstein beams, "it says 'world premiere'!"

Mark Thomas Ketterson is the Chicago correspondent for *Opera News*. He has also written for the *Chicago Tribune, Playbill, Chicago* magazine, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Houston Grand Opera, and Washington National Opera at the Kennedy Center.

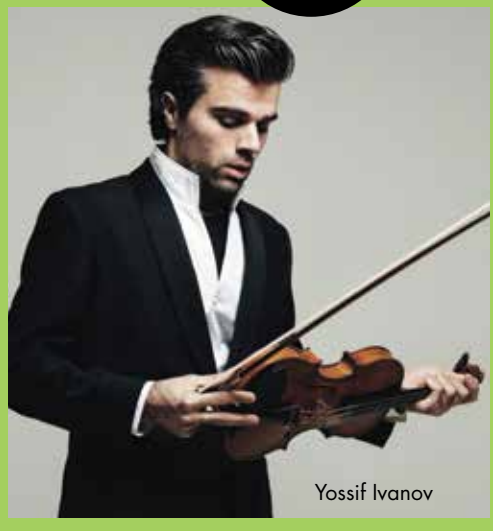
THE WORLDLY SERIES OF MUSIC

RAVINIA'S BENNETT GORDON HALL CONCERTS ARE NEVER OUT OF SEASON

$10

Ravinia's concert calendar has long featured a veritable cornucopia of the world's venerated artists, from established masters to cutting-edge talents. With the 2011 launch of the $10 BGH Classics series, the festival's most intimate concert space—the 450-seat Bennett Gordon Hall—became host to a microcosm of Ravinia's musical diversity, and since 2012 that superlative cultural experience has been available year-round. And best of all, the series offers music lovers the chance to hear "an impressive lineup, by any standard," (*Chicago Tribune*) of world-stage stars at a fraction of the ticket price commanded elsewhere.

Just ahead of his first performance with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra downtown, in 2012 Tchaikovsky Competition–winning pianist Daniil Trifonov appeared on the BGH series at Ravinia, where he returns in 2016 as a soloist with the CSO. The *Tribune* said he "brought a coiled-spring energy" to his recent performance at Symphony Center, but also "rendered with rapt fluidity so many enticing shades of softness" in his solo encore of Debussy's *Reflets dans l'eau*, just one of the many works that had formed his Ravinia recital. Last season Ravinia audiences similarly got to experience the pianism of Denis Kozhukhin ahead of his CSO debut playing Ravel's Concerto for the Left Hand, in which the *Tribune* proclaimed, "It was hard to believe he could deliver such commanding sound and spot-on accuracy using only five fingers." Plaudits have also followed Benjamin Grosvenor since his 2013 Ravinia debut on the BGH series. Making his debut at London's Barbican earlier this year, the pianist "played with filigree delicacy and a feeling for pianistic color that will have won new admirers" (*The Telegraph*), and *The Guardian* observed that "the engulfing tone of [his] climaxes was impressive, yet the quieter moments … were just as striking."


Yossif Ivanov


Marta Aznavoorian


David Kadouch

The fall/winter/spring leg of the $10 BGH Classics series begins on October 24 with pianist **David Kadouch**. Named "Young Artist of the Year" in the 2011 International Classical Music Awards, he has navigated recitals at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the Louvre in Paris, as well as the Verbier Festival and Salle Pleyel, en route to his Ravinia debut with a program that epitomizes the worldliness of classical music. Via Germany, Kadouch will traverse endless, mysterious forests in Schumann's *Waldszenen*, a collection of nine vignettes similar in spirit to the composer's beloved *Scenes from Childhood* (*Kinderszenen*). He also takes view of Sweden from that Classical-era hub of music, but from an unexpected vantage: Bach's *Capriccio on the Departure of His Beloved Brother*, an early sketch of "program music" arising from the composer's older brother entering royal service overseas. The *Washington Post* observed, "Kadouch's lavishly embellished interpretation captured the sense of a tender, heartfelt farewell." The pianist will also essay Brahms's folksong-inspired Piano Sonata No. 1. Though this early work drew on the folk melodies of the composer's native Germany, Brahms later earned great fame for his use of music from the Eastern European homeland of Janáček, whose ethereal suite *In the Mists* lends an air of drama to Kadouch's program.

At the other end of the series, on April 30, **Yossif Ivanov**, "one of the top violinists of tomorrow" (*Diapason*) and "a player of impressive authority" (*The Strad*), makes his Ravinia debut with Lincoln Trio pianist **Marta Aznavoorian** on a program that similarly crosses a wide world of repertoire. Ivanov covers both ends of the grand Romantic sonata tradition, beginning with Beethoven's first full-feature entry for violin and then reaching across to Grieg's expansive C-minor sonata, which surges with the same energy that characterized Beethoven's works in that key. In Stravinsky's *Divertimento*, the violinist will be evoking the delicate and soaring balletic melodies of Tchaikovsky as honored and interpreted through the lens of the modern-day Russian master's own ballet *The Fairy's Kiss*. Ivanov will also perform a solo flourish with Ysaÿe's dark-hued and somber Sonata No. 3, which gradually evolves like a Chopin Ballade to simultaneously recall flamboyant gypsy melodies and Bach's labyrinthine *Chaconne*.

The world can thank Broadway for introducing many of the greatest earworms of the past century, but the history of the quintessentially American music showcased along the Great White Way goes beyond the glimmering mar-

quees and footlights. On November 14 **Chicago a cappella** will take its Ravinia audience through the Jewish roots of Broadway, exploring the influences and forebears of such brilliant musical icons as George Gershwin, Irving Berlin, and Jerome Kern. With singing "polished, committed, and fresh" (*American Record Guide*), as well as "appealing charisma" and "seamless blend" (*Chicago Tribune*), the ensemble will give full voice to not only some of the best-loved American Songbook standards but also the traditions of European synagogue music and Yiddish vaudeville that inspired so many grand nights of singing.

Deep-rooted Jewish heritage will also be celebrated by the **Cavatina Duo**, whose "unerring technical skill and an understanding of the emotional intentions in music" are enhanced by "an X factor of duo synchronicity" (*Santa Barbara Independent*). After many years of playing together, the flute-and-guitar duo of Eugenia Moliner and Denis Azabagic discovered their shared cultural link to the Sephardic Jews that fled Spain in the late 15th century, and in exploring that legacy unearthed a wealth of folk music that inspired their "Sephardic Journey" program, which will receive its world premiere at Ravinia on March 12. The duo invited five composers to connect that ancestral music to the modern instrumental landscape, commissioning works not only for flute and guitar but also elements of a string quartet. The **Avalon**


Cavatina Duo


Chicago a cappella


The Singers

String Quartet, called "one of the most polished and dynamic string quartets" by the *Chicago Tribune* and praised for its "electrifying character" in *The Strad*, will join in the premier performance.

Wintertime music occupies a unique place in the hearts and memories of music lovers of all ages and tastes, bringing people together in joyous harmony, much like the season itself. As calendars turn to their final pages, Ravinia celebrates this "most wonderful time of the year" with two pairs of Friday-night holiday concerts. "One of the best choral ensembles in America, if not the entire world" (KUSC Los Angeles), **The Singers** return to Ravinia to fill Bennett Gordon Hall with the spirit of the season on December 4. The choir has recently treated the festival's audiences to such sacred masterworks as Rachmaninoff's "Vespers" and Poulenc's G-major Mass, as well as modern-day masterpieces by Morten Lauridsen and John Tavener, and in its home state of Minnesota, it has been praised for the "bell-like clarity" and "rousing climaxes" (*Minneapolis Star Tribune*) of its annual Christmas programs. On December 11 **Boston Brass** will also make a triumphant return to offer "a welcome relief from the usual staid holiday fare" (*Indianapolis Performing Arts Examiner*) with its "Christmas Bells Are Swingin'" program. The brass quintet dazzled its Ravinia audience in 2013 with its Stan Kenton Orchestra–inspired twists on tunes ranging from *The Nutcracker* to "The Christmas Song," and this year will bring back more of its festive arrangements that effortlessly skip from jazz


Avalon String Quartet

and ragtime to Latin, Motown, and pop idioms. "Whether solo, in combos, or all at once, the effect was dazzling," *Charleston Today* noted of the group's musical camaraderie. "The musicians left nothing more to be desired."

Since 1988 Ravinia's Steans Music Institute has been one of America's most sought-after summer conservatories for young professional musicians looking to take the final step into their performing careers, and for over 15 years, that convergence of talent has been showcased on a national tour in the spring. Each year, world-renowned violinist Miriam Fried, the director of the RSMI Program for Piano and Strings, selects a handful of recent alumni to demonstrate the "uncommon polish and energy" (*Washington Post*) that is instilled in each artist across the centuries-wide repertory of chamber music. These **Musicians from RSMI** perform from coast to coast, and have even recently given several concerts in Cuba, and this year the tour begins from the ensemble's home stage at Ravinia on April 8. The program features Mozart's dramatic and impassioned Piano Quartet No. 1, in which the composer let the keyboard thunder as if the work were one of his concertos yet still complement the lone violin, viola, and cello. Those latter three instrumental forces will be showcased in Schoenberg's String Trio, a work bursting with thematic contrasts inspired by the composer's return to health after grave illness (a motive also utilized by Beethoven and Schubert), as well as a variety of colorful playing techniques. Brahms's String Quintet No. 2 will unite the trio with another violin and viola for what the composer once considered to be his final work, upon which he bestowed a sort of summation of all his life's themes, from lyrical passages to luxurious harmonies to expressive variations to a vivacious, animated Hungarian dance.


Boston Brass

Since "program music" achieved its modern definition in the early 19th century by way of Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*, the genre primarily remained the domain of orchestral music, but at the dawn of the 20th century, Schoenberg shocked the music world just like his French forebear with *Verklärte Nacht*. The Chicago-based **Fifth House Ensemble** takes that concept of narrative chamber music to the next level. Praised by the *New York Times* for its "conviction, authority, and finesse" and admired by the *Chicago Tribune* for "the sheer imaginative chutzpah these young performers bring to their envelope-pushing enterprise," the group returns to Ravinia on April 2 to expand on Schoenberg's creative vision with its original arrangement of the lavish, late-Romantic string sextet for its ensemble of 10 wind and string instruments. Fifth House Ensemble will also perform three works by the composers-in-residence at its recent fresh inc chamber music festival: *Frammenti* by Stacy Garrop (also a close collaborator with the Lincoln Trio) and Dan Visconti's *Soundings* and *Low Country Haze*, a "mesmerizing" (*Cleveland Plain Dealer*) tone poem featuring "a raw, primordial sound that evolves to a Copland-inspired peak" (*Austin Chronicle*). [Fifth House Ensemble, like many of the artists that appear on the BGH series, regularly team up with Ravinia's REACH*TEACH*PLAY education programs to bring music into underresourced schools in the Chicago area through such initiatives as Guest Artists in the Classroom. Beginning this school year, that important work is being extended into Lake County.]

A complete evening can be made of any of the concerts on the $10 BGH Classics series this fall, winter, and spring with dinner provided by Nieto's and hosted in the Freehling Room, Ravinia's restaurant located in the same building as the concert hall. Ticket-and-dinner packages are only $45; visit Ravinia.org or contact the box office for more information on the concert series.


Fifth House Ensemble

SIMON FOWLER

Nicola Benedetti

Sweet Sixteen

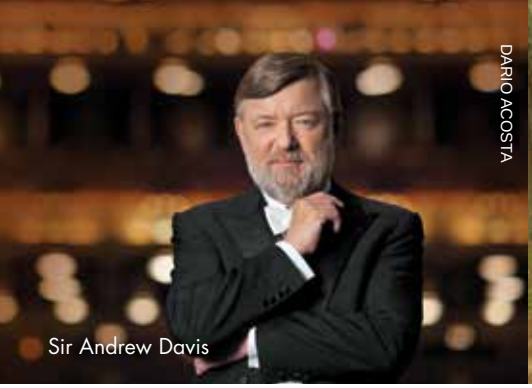
Ravinia's 2016 Chicago Symphony Orchestra concerts take shape

Though shortening daylight puts the end of summer clearly within sight, it also signals that anticipation for the next Ravinia season is beginning to grow ever larger. As the festival marks the 80th anniversary of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's annual residency—the centerpiece of each season—in 2016 Ravinia also celebrates the 45th anniversary of the debut of the conductor who would become the residency's steward for 20 years: James Levine. In addition to the long-awaited return of this longtime, former music director, Ravinia also welcomes six new faces to the podium, four of whom will simultaneously be making their CSO debuts, as well as a range of guest soloists, from Nicola Benedetti and Alisa Weilerstein to Itzhak Perlman and Lynn Harrell.

"We're very excited to present the 2016 lineup of esteemed favorites and new experiences, in terms of both repertoire and artists," says Ravinia President and CEO Welz Kauffman, who programs the festival. "One of the greatest strengths of Ravinia is its ability offer something for everyone, and we have high expectations that next summer's programs will satisfy the connoisseur as well as the first-time listener. Building the audience for symphonic music—especially enticing younger listeners—is job number one for Ravinia." To that end, the festival is continuing to make most seats in the Pavilion for all CSO concerts available for just $25 each, and lawn tickets for most of those nights remain just $10, or as little as $7 with the 10-punch lawn pass. Of course, children and students through college still receive free admission to all classical concerts, including the CSO's residency.

The CSO's 17-concert 2016 residency begins on July 12 and runs through August 21. That first concert features the American premiere of jazz legend Wynton Marsalis's first violin concerto, co-commissioned by Ravinia for **Nicola Benedetti**. The performance will mark the first return of the violinist, who the *Sydney Morning Herald* says "plays with a natural instinct for shape and contour … drawing the listener compellingly into the musical narrative." She first appeared at the festival in 2012 with her piano trio and as a soloist with the CSO under Christoph Eschenbach. The premiere will be led by **Cristian Măcelaru**, winner of the 2014 Sir Georg Solti Conducting Award and conductor-in-residence at the Philadelphia Orchestra, who the *Chicago Sun-Times* called "the most insightful and serious young conductor out there today."

Following that Ravinia-debut appearance, Măcelaru will retake the podium on July 13 for the Midwest premiere of Holst's celestial suite *The Planets* as paired with a film prepared by NASA that reveals the wonder of our solar system through startling and vivid images collected over its many space explorations, shown on the large screens in the Pavilion and on the lawn. Such new horizons could scarcely have been conceived by Richard Strauss when he wrote *Also sprach Zarathustra*—now ingrained in pop culture as the theme to Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*—nor had New Horizons yet mapped Pluto when John Adams wrote


DARIO ACOSTA
Sir Andrew Davis


ROBIN THOMSON
Alisa Weilerstein


MARK MCMUNLTY
Vasily Petrenko

Short Ride in a Fast Machine, but both works will set the pace for the stellar evening of film and music with the CSO.

After a nearly decade-long absence from the festival, Lyric Opera of Chicago Music Director **Sir Andrew Davis** returns to Ravinia on July 16 to pick up where he left off, conducting from Beethoven's sublime *oeuvre* and thus inaugurating a season-long focus on the composer's works, beginning with the inimitable Fifth Symphony. The native Englishman will also lead the CSO in a pair of late-Romantic works by his countrymen, Vaughn Williams's harmonious *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis* and Elgar's Cello Concerto with **Alisa Weilerstein** as the soloist. Few works have had such singular champions as Elgar's concerto did in the late cellist Jacqueline du Pré and conductor Daniel Barenboim, who together made the benchmark recording 50 years ago. That Barenboim recently recorded the piece with Weilerstein bespeaks the talent of the young American cellist, who gave a solo recital at Ravinia in July. "[Her] interpretation is one of poise, heft, and ardor," the *New York Times* wrote of Weilerstein's recording, "persuading with its lyrical urgency and regal command."

On July 20 the CSO will take direction from **Vasily Petrenko**, who the *Chicago Tribune* said "inspired the orchestra to go well beyond its normal megawatt virtuosity," in a recent performance downtown, "scaling each climax so it registered even more intensely than the one before." He makes his Ravinia debut with "sophisticated and suave" (*New York Times*) pianist **Jean-Yves Thibaudet** on a program that features Liszt's Second Piano Concerto. The work carries many characteristics of a tone poem, an orchestral genre Liszt pioneered that was later continued by Richard Strauss, whose own tone poem *Don Juan* also features on the program, along with Rachmaninoff's Second Symphony.

Ravinia's longtime music director **James Levine** will celebrate the 45th anniversary of his Ravinia debut by returning to the festival for the first time since concluding his directorship in 1993. "My only regret is that I am leaving," he said at the time. "The thought of not being with the [CSO] regularly feels terrible to me." Levine ascended to the post of music director two years after conducting Mahler's "Resurrection" Symphony for the festival's gala concert on June 24, 1971, as a last-minute substitute, and on July 23, 2016, he will lead that same work with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Chorus for the 50th annual Gala Benefit Evening. The gala is Ravinia's only concert fundraiser supporting the not-for-profit festival and its REACH*TEACH*PLAY education programs, and is organized by its Women's Board.

One of REACH*TEACH*PLAY's many initiatives is *One Score, One Chicago*, which each year, like the namesake book program, puts a citywide spotlight on a single piece of music. The selection for 2016 is Stravinsky's ballet score *The Firebird*. On July 26 Ravinia will present the work as Chicago has never seen it before, in a production created by Janni Younge of Handspring Puppet Company, widely praised for its London and Broadway spectacular *War Horse*. **Ben Gernon** makes his CSO and Ravinia debuts conducting the program, which also includes Debussy's *La mer* and Britten's Four Sea Interludes from *Peter Grimes*.

The large Pavilion and lawn screens will return on July 29 and 30 for what promises to be one of the biggest movie events of the summer, even before Hollywood releases its annual slate of blockbusters: the Midwest premiere of James Cameron's *Titanic* with live orchestra. The international sensation tied *Ben-Hur* for the most Academy Awards won by a single film (11), including for Best Song ("My Heart Will Go On") and Best Score for composer James Horner, who died tragically earlier this summer. *Titanic* remains the best-selling orchestral soundtrack of all time. Like with Ravinia's recent presentations of *The Lord of the Rings*, *West Side Story*, *Gladiator*, and *Star Trek*, the music is digitally removed from the film so the CSO, conducted by **Ludwig Wicki**, can perform the score live while


MARTY SOHL
James Levine

the complete film is shown. A chorus and soprano soloist, who'll sing the Irish-tinged vocalizations throughout the film (as well as the celebrated theme song made famous by Celine Dion), will join the orchestra onstage.

One of the world's hottest young pianists, **Daniil Trifonov**, who's racked up nearly as many major awards (including first prize in both the Tchaikovsky and the Rubinstein Piano Competitions in 2011) as birthdays, will perform Schumann's Piano Concerto with the CSO on August 2. Trifonov was introduced to Chicago audiences at Ravinia as part of its $10 BGH Classics series, and last spring he earned rave reviews for his performances of Rachmaninoff's First Piano Concerto with the orchestra at Symphony Center. The *Financial Times* says, "This pianist has a lightness of touch that has to be heard to be believed. But whether at his most delicate or most thunderous, what stands out above all else is his musical sincerity." **Gustavo Gimeno**, newly named music director of the Luxembourg Philharmonic, makes his CSO and Ravinia debuts conducting the program, which also includes Dvořák's "New World" Symphony.

The vivacity of music found in early-20th-century America penetrates pianist and conductor **Jeffrey Kahane**'s August 3 program with the CSO. After combining those two roles into one for a performance of Gershwin's swirling showpiece *Rhapsody in Blue*, he will take to the podium and strike up the band for two sets of "symphonic dances." Rachmaninoff's *Symphonic Dances* may not be overtly jazz-inflected, but the inclusion of a prominent saxophone part surely hinted at the influence of living out his final years in the United States; Bernstein's, however, have no such illusion. After the wild success of his musical *West Side Story*, the composer extracted several of its most popular songs, dances, and orchestral sections into a suite that traces through the kaleidoscope of moods and emotions evoked by the modern-day adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*.

Named Conductor of the Year in 2013 by the Royal Philharmonic Society and currently principal conductor of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, **Kirill Karabits** makes his dual Ravinia and CSO debut on August 5. Hailed as "a most astute conductor of Beethoven" (*The Guardian*), he will bring that expertise to the podium for the composer's Fourth Piano Concerto, featuring soloist **Paul Lewis**, whose complete cycle of Beethoven's piano sonatas was called "one of the most highly prized recording marathons of recent years … an unmissable benchmark" (*Gramophone*). The program will also feature Prokofiev's balletic and high-spirited Fifth Symphony. Karabits has earned similar acclaim for his extensive recordings of Prokofiev's symphonies, "illuminating the scores with sensitivity, panache, and … ear-catching spark" (*The Telegraph*).

Conductor **David Zinman**, who will be celebrating his 80th birthday in 2016, returns to Ravinia for the first time in over two decades for back-to-back programs featuring symphonies by Brahms. On August 9 he pairs the composer's second symphony with that of Bernstein, also known as "The Age of Anxiety." The latter work doubles as a dazzling piano concerto and will feature **Misha Dichter** in his first appearance with the CSO at Ravinia since 2007. The following night Zinman will lead the orchestra through the vast sonic architecture of Brahms's First Symphony as well as Prokofiev's Second Violin Concerto, a work that resonates with the variety of cultures the composer encountered in his career as a peripatetic performer. Violinist **Gil Shaham** returns to the festival with his "go-for-broke passion … silvery tone, and meticulously molded phrasing" (*Washington Post*) as the featured soloist.


JACK LIEBECK
Paul Lewis

On August 12 superstars violinist **Joshua Bell** and trumpeter **Chris Botti** join forces with the CSO for a potpourri of classical, jazz, and symphonic pops led by **George Hanson**, a Bernstein protégé, in his Ravinia debut. Both Hanson and Botti make their CSO debuts on the program.

Beethoven is the sole focus of **Bramwell Tovey**'s August 20 return to Ravinia. The principal guest conductor of the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl, described by *Musical America* as "one of the most versatile and charismatic musicians in the world," will be joined by the legendary **Itzhak Perlman** for the composer's impassioned Violin Concerto, and he will also lead the CSO in a performance of Beethoven's trailblazing and thoroughly


DARIO ACOSTA
Daniil Trifonov


SASHA GUSOV
Kirill Karabits


LUKE RATRAY
Gil Shaham


PHIL KNOTT

Joshua Bell


FABRIZIO FERRI

Chris Botti


LISA-MARIE MAZZUCCO

Itzhak Perlman

ANDREW STUART

Lynn Harrell

romantic Seventh Symphony.

The following night, to put the final punctuation on the 2016 CSO residency, Perlman will himself ascend the podium to conduct Ravinia's annual "Tchaikovsky Spectacular," which celebrates the music of the arch-Romantic composer and concludes with the festival's signature presentation of the "1812" Overture, complete with live cannon fire. In addition to those pyrotechnics, cellist **Lynn Harrell**, returning to Ravinia for the first time since 2007, will showcase the razor's edge of his instrument's capabilities with Tchaikovsky's *Variations on a Rococo Theme*. Perlman also leads the orchestra in the composer's songful Fifth Symphony, rounding out the program with the work's transformation of darkness into triumph. R

MOREOVER, BEETHOVEN

Ravinia's season-long exploration of Beethoven's works extends beyond the orchestral works featured in the CSO's residency to include the composer's equally venerated output of chamber works. On August 16, celebrated Spanish cellist **Adolfo Gutiérrez Arenas**, whose "mastery of [the instrument's] tonal qualities allows it to emerge … as a transfigured and chameleonic presence (*Nueva España*), and Bernstein Award–winning pianist **Christopher Park** will perform Beethoven's complete sonatas for cello and piano on the $10 BGH Classics series, both making their Ravinia debuts.

A favorite soloist of recent seasons, **Jonathan Biss** returns to the festival to launch a three-year illumination of the composer's piano sonatas, beginning with five on August 18, including the "Waldstein." On August 20 Biss will essay four more, including the "Tempest" and "Appassionata" Sonatas, and continues with five on August 22, including the "Moonlight." The pianist is currently in the midst of recording a complete cycle of the sonatas for the Onyx label, and was commissioned to write a book about performing the works, *Beethoven's Shadow*, published in 2011. He's also the curator of an online course for Coursera called *Exploring Beethoven's Piano Sonatas*, which has been taken by tens of thousands of music lovers.

The **Pacifica Quartet**, which has been in residence at the University of Chicago since 1999, will perform Beethoven's complete string quartets over five concerts between August 26 and 28. For string ensembles, the *Chicago Sun-Times* says, "the ultimate proving ground are the 16 string quartets of Ludwig van Beethoven, which span the composer's lifetime and reveal his radical musical evolution."


BENJAMIN EALOVEGA

Jonathan Biss

Sinatra Always Asks for Him

By Jack Zimmerman

For a few years, I was a professional musician—not very successful, but I did make a few bucks at it. I had taken up the trombone as a high-school freshman, studied it through college, played in a Navy band for four years, and then played professional jobs in and around Chicago into my early 30s.

One of those jobs was a dance and floor show in a dive near Milwaukee. The show consisted of a pair of roller skaters with sparklers attached to their skates leaping over banquet tables in a darkened hall. That's when I called it quits, sold my horn for 350 bucks, and applied the money towards basement waterproofing.

Had I been talented and steered in the right direction, I might have studied at a major music school and eventually won a major symphony audition. But none of that happened. Even though I'd auditioned for several symphony orchestras (among them the New York Philharmonic), I never made it to the finals. Most times, I wasn't allowed to finish a preliminary round.

Though I studied and loved classical music, I played very little of it. But I have played generous amounts of big-band music. My high school had an 18-piece dance band that played at every school dance—at least one per week. We played music that was popular during our parents' youth: "String of Pearls," "Woodchopper's Ball," "Sentimental Journey," "Mood Indigo," Benny Goodman's "Let's Dance," and my favorite, Buddy Morrow's "Night Train."

Musically speaking, my Navy years were a repeat of high school. I was in a fleet band (in Norfolk, VA) and spent most of the time providing music for officers' dances. I played the same tunes as I did in high school, except now there were a few rock-tinged additions. Even so, I can't remember a single working day of my Navy years that I didn't play "String of Pearls" or "In The Mood."

Once out of the Navy I hung around Chicago, playing occasional shows at the Empire Room, the Lake Geneva Playboy Club, or a couple of different dinner theaters in Indiana. Most of those shows featured entertainers like Engelbert Humperdinck, Abbie Lane, Phyllis Diller, or Henny Youngman. It didn't matter where I was working, with little variation I played with the same musicians. Most of the band members were in their 40s and 50s, and most were veterans of the last years of the big-band era. They were known as "jobbers," musicians who played well—maybe not as well as they once did—but they knew the style and the ins and outs of playing together, and they were available at a moment's notice.

But every so often a new guy who was remarkably good would show up. Whether he was a lead trumpet player, trombonist, saxophonist, or drummer it didn't matter. He'd infuse every arrangement with excitement and through his playing he'd lift the entire band to the next level.

"Who's that?" I'd whisper to anyone sitting near me.

I'd be told his name, which was inevitably followed by, "Sinatra always asks for him when he comes to Chicago."

Playing for Sinatra was the professional pinnacle for working musicians. The musical arrangements that Sinatra used by Nelson Riddle, Billy May, Neil Hefti, and others were greatly admired by those who played them. For a jobber, working with Sinatra was like playing on a Triple-A baseball team and one day getting called up to the Majors. Having Frank Sinatra ask for you was a life-affirming event.

Unfortunately, Sinatra never asked for me, but I will be in the Pavilion audience on Friday, September 4, when Ravinia presents Frank Sinatra Jr. and his Sinatra Centennial, a multimedia celebration of the Chairman of the Board, with the Ravinia Festival Orchestra.

Had I continued with my playing career, I might be on the Pavilion stage that night. I regret that I won't.

On the positive side, I still have a dry basement.

Jack Zimmerman has written a couple of novels and numerous newspaper columns and has told stories his entire life.

LAWN CLIPPINGS

FoodStuff

By Ali Saboor, Executive Chef at Ravinia

One of the things I enjoy most about working for Levy Restaurants is that it has given me an opportunity to travel all over the country and experience a multitude of culinary trends based on locality. Shortly after moving to Chicago several years ago, I discovered the city's love for condiments, dips, and sauces. I think some of this affection comes from the communal feeling these items add to a dining table, encouraging dining interaction and the sharing of flavors amongst a variety of dishes. Additionally, these convenient flavor enhancements let diners feel some amount of a personal contribution to the tastes on their plates, no matter who has prepared their meal.

I must admit my favorite Chicago condiment has to be giardiniera. This spicy mixture of pickled vegetables can be found just about anywhere in Chicago and is used in a variety of ways. Originating in Italy, "giardiniera" roughly translates to "from the garden," since all the ingredients you find in this dish are coming straight from the garden. There are many different preparations and applications which further demonstrates the versatility of this all-star condiment.

Sometimes you will see something prepared "alla giardiniera" which usually implies a dish made with fresh chopped or cooked vegetables. Other times you will see it referred to as a relish or a pickled relish. But here in Chicago it usually means one thing: Italian beef condiment. Most well-known Chicago establishments make their own giardiniera and many boast to make the best, usually consisting of bell peppers, onions, and another Chicago staple: sport peppers.

Inspired by my new home town, I have unleashed my own giardiniera recipe and combined it with another Chicago favorite: pizza. In the Ravinia Market this season I am serving up a spicy sausage and pepper pizza using my house-made giardiniera. I feel it truly represents how sometimes traditional local trends never go out of style. Come by Ravinia Market and try it for yourself or whip some up at home and add it to your own culinary creations.

Cheers,
Chef Ali Saboor

Homemade Spicy Giardiniera

Ingredients

½ cup table salt
1 cup small-diced carrots
4 to 8 jalapeño peppers, sliced
(depending on heat level desired)
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 stalk celery, diced small
1 cup artichoke hearts
½ cup distilled white vinegar
2 cups canola oil
1 tablespoon dried oregano
½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

Directions

Combine 2 cups water and the salt in a glass or non-reactive bowl. Mix until the salt is dissolved. Add the carrots, jalapeño peppers, garlic, celery, and artichokes to the salt water and stir to combine. Cover and refrigerate overnight.

Drain and rinse the vegetables. In a clean bowl, mix vinegar, oil, oregano, and pepper. Add the vegetables and mix to combine. Place in air-tight Mason jars to marinate overnight. Giardiniera will keep in the fridge for at least 2 to 3 weeks.