Chicago Symphony Orchestra
Riccardo Muti Zell Music Director
Yo-Yo Ma Judson and Joyce Green Creative Consultant

Friday, October 14, 2016, at 8:00
Tuesday, October 18, 2016, at 7:30

Riccardo Muti Conductor
John Sharp Cello

Dvořák
Husitská Overture, Op. 67

Schumann
Cello Concerto in A Minor, Op. 129
Not too fast—
Slow—
Very lively

JOHN SHARP

INTERMISSION

Hindemith
Concert Music for String Orchestra and Brass, Op. 50
Part 1: Moderately fast and with power—Very broad, but always flowing
Part 2: Lively—Slow—Lively

Mussorgsky, orch. Ravel
Pictures from an Exhibition
Promenade
1. Gnomus
   Promenade—
2. The Old Castle
   Promenade—
3. Tuileries
4. Bydlo
   Promenade—
5. Ballet of the Chicks in their Shells
6. Samuel Goldenberg and Schmuyle
7. The Market Place at Limoges
8. Catacombs: Sepulcrum romanum—
   Promenade: Con mortuis in lingua mortua
9. The Hut on Hen’s Legs (Baba-Yaga)—
10. The Great Gate of Kiev

This evening’s performance is generously sponsored by Margot and Josef Lakonishok.
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Antonín Dvořák
Born September 8, 1841; Mühlhausen, Bohemia (now Nelahozeves, Czech Republic)
Died May 1, 1904; Prague, Bohemia

Husitská Overture, Op. 67

This triumphant music closed the first concert ever given by the Chicago Orchestra, on October 16, 1891. It was handpicked by the Orchestra’s founder, Theodore Thomas, to follow music by the men he then considered the pillars of the repertoire, Beethoven and Wagner, as well as newer works—Tchaikovsky’s First Piano Concerto, which had been premiered in Boston in 1876, and this overture—brand-new music, really, composed and premiered within the past decade.

Dvořák was one of Thomas’s favorite composers. In 1867, when Thomas returned to Europe for the first time since his family had moved to the United States from Germany more than two decades earlier, he sought out Dvořák, and the two men met after attending the opera in Berlin. Years later, shortly after the Chicago Orchestra was founded, Thomas sent a contingent of powerful Chicagoans to Spillville, Iowa, where Dvořák was spending the summer of 1893, to convince him to join the Orchestra at the World’s Columbian Exposition that August. He agreed, becoming the first of the great European composers to visit Chicago. (Dvorak Park, located in the heart of what is today Pilsen, was later established in honor of his visit.) During the exposition, Thomas arranged to send a string quartet to the composer’s hotel to read through a new quartet, now known as the American, that he had just written in Spillville. The following year, Thomas and the Orchestra gave one of the first performances of the New World Symphony.

The Husitská Overture is one of Dvořák’s most rousing, yet least known, compositions. “Great originality and an exquisite gift for choice musical combinations of tone color, as well as rhythm, characterize all his works,” the Chicago Orchestra’s first program annotator, Adolph W. Dohn, wrote, when the Husitská Overture was performed here. The overture was composed to reopen the National Theatre in Prague in 1883, two years after it was devastated by fire. The theater director stipulated the subject of the Hussite wars, which erupted after John Huss, a religious reformer, was burned at the stake, and his followers fought for their religious liberty. “Dvořák has employed part of one of those stirring war songs of the Hussites as the leading theme, which is worked up with great ingenuity,” the Orchestra’s first program book said, “and at the close of the overture appears under the triumphant escort of trumpets and trombones.”

COMPOSED
August 9–September 9, 1883

FIRST PERFORMANCE
November 18, 1883; Prague, Bohemia

INSTRUMENTATION
two flutes and piccolo, two oboes and english horn, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones and tuba, timpani, percussion, harp, strings

FIRST CSO PERFORMANCES
October 16 & 17, 1891, Auditorium Theatre. Theodore Thomas conducting

MOST RECENT CSO PERFORMANCES
December 12, 13, 14 & 17, 2013, Orchestra Hall. Miguel Harth-Bedoya conducting

CSO RECORDING
1991. Rafael Kubelík conducting. CSO (From the Archives, vol. 7: A Tribute to Rafael Kubelík)
Robert Schumann
Born June 8, 1810; Zwickau, Saxony, Germany
Died July 29, 1856; Endenich, near Bonn, Germany

Cello Concerto in A Minor, Op. 129

Sometime in 1832, after injuring his right hand while practicing the piano with a contraption designed to strengthen his fingers, Robert Schumann took up the cello. It would never become his instrument—even after his hand was so crippled that he had to give up the piano for good. He never studied the cello sufficiently to perform in public, and he wrote very little music for it. But the single cello concerto he composed in 1850 is among his finest and most idiomatic works.

By 1850, Clara Schumann, a very accomplished pianist, had become Robert’s right hand in more than one sense. Now that he had been forced to give up performing, she regularly played her husband’s music in public, campaigned to further his reputation, and continued to push him to try different genres and to move in new directions.

On September 1, 1850, Robert, Clara, and their six children moved from Dresden to Düsseldorf, where Robert was to succeed Ferdinand Hiller as conductor of the local music society. At first, life seemed uncommonly pleasant—more “easygoing” than in Dresden, as Clara put it, but this didn’t last. The members of the Düsseldorf orchestra found Schumann difficult and quarrelsome, and he occasionally seemed ill-prepared or forgetful on the podium. Within a few years, he was asked to resign. In February 1854, Schumann attempted suicide by throwing himself in the Rhine. Shortly afterwards, he was committed to the private asylum in Endenich, where he died two-and-a-half years later, after being haunted by the voices of angels and visions of tigers and hyenas.

Schumann began this cello concerto less than six weeks after he settled in Düsseldorf. It was finished in just fifteen days (seven to draft and eight more to orchestrate), and it opened a new period of frenetic creative energy. This was not a spurt of inspiration devoted to one medium, like his celebrated year of song writing in 1840, or the symphonic and chamber music years that immediately followed. But it was the last sustained productive stretch of his career—during the rest of 1850 and the beginning of the next year he composed his Rhenish Symphony; revised the D minor symphony that was later published as his fourth; and wrote violin sonatas, a series of tragic overtures, two cantatas, and several songs and other small works.

On November 16, 1850, Clara mentioned the new concerto in her diary: “It pleases me very much and seems to me to be written in true violoncello style.” A year after it was completed, the score still sat on Robert’s desk. In October 1851, Clara wrote:

I have played Robert’s cello concerto through again, thus giving myself a truly musical and happy hour. The romantic quality, the vivacity, the freshness and humor, also the

COMPOSED
October 1850

FIRST PERFORMANCE
June 9, 1860; Leipzig, Germany

INSTRUMENTATION
solo cello, two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, timpani, strings

FIRST CSO PERFORMANCES
December 9 & 10, 1910, Orchestra Hall. Paul Gruppe as soloist, Frederick Stock conducting
June 27, 1940, Ravinia Festival. Emanuel Feuermann as soloist, Eugene Ormandy conducting

MOST RECENT CSO PERFORMANCES
August 3, 2001, Ravinia Festival. Claudio Bohórquez as soloist, Daniel Barenboim conducting
May 12, 13 & 14, 2011, Orchestra Hall. Yo-Yo Ma as soloist, Riccardo Muti conducting
highly interesting interweaving of cello and orchestra, are indeed wholly ravishing, and what euphony and deep feeling one finds in all the melodic passages!

Robert canceled plans for a performance in 1852 and apparently shelved the score. But in February 1854, during one of his worst periods of depression, he got out of bed and fussed with this concerto to temporarily silence the “eternal sound” of the demons and angels he constantly heard. No further plans were made for a performance, and the concerto wasn’t premiered until four years after the composer’s death, at a concert in Leipzig marking the fiftieth anniversary of his birth.

In his own catalog, Schumann listed this work as a concert piece for cello with orchestral accompaniment. As Clara rightly noted, the forces are ingeniously interwoven. They are also balanced with uncommon care: the cello part is virtuosic but not exhibitionistic; interaction with the orchestra is intimate and generous, never confrontational. The cadenza in the third movement is lightly accompanied, rather than a solo turn in the spotlight. The three movements are closely related and carefully dovetailed, so that they are played without pause. The opening chords of the concerto return to haunt the slow movement, and the cello’s first theme becomes a recitative linking that movement and the finale.

The cello establishes a voice of authority with its opening line, a rich and lyrical run-on sentence that spans thirty measures and almost the entire range of the instrument before pausing for breath. Without ever lightening the virtuosic demands, Schumann proceeds to underplay his soloist’s leading role, continually drawing the cello into conversation with the instruments of the orchestra. In the slow middle movement, he even engages the soloist in a duet with the orchestra’s principal cello, underlining the concept of musical community. This is a concerto that explores common ground and collaboration rather than contrast and drama, and, as such, it is highly unusual and highly successful. In spirit, if not in actual sonority, it comes daringly close to the heart of chamber music.

Paul Hindemith
Born November 16, 1895; Hanau, Germany
Died December 28, 1963; Frankfurt, Germany

Concert Music for String Orchestra and Brass, Op. 50

On YouTube, you can see Paul Hindemith conducting the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in a portion of his Concert Music for String Orchestra and Brass. The video is taken from a live television broadcast in Orchestra Hall on April 7, 1963, Hindemith’s final appearance with the Orchestra. He died less than nine months later, lionized in obituaries as one of music’s greatest modern masters. From the Chicago video, you can see that as a conductor, Hindemith was all business, unsmiling, slightly forbidding. His technique is square, clunky, and seemingly uninspired until he suddenly lurches forward with surprising physical impact, as if he were possessed by the music. He does not convey what audiences know as charisma. But the overall impact is that of a conductor who knows the orchestra inside out, and who knows precisely what he wants from it—and how to get it. As Thomas Willis wrote in the Chicago Tribune, reviewing Hindemith’s appearance with the Chicago orchestra at the Ravinia Festival two years earlier, “From the first note of the concert to the last, it was apparent that here was a man the orchestra respected, understood, and was willing to play to the limit for.”

Hindemith had first come to the United States in 1937, but his connection with Chicago dates back to 1930, the year he composed the Concert Music for String Orchestra and Brass. That year,
Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge, the Chicago arts patron, commissioned the composer to write a small-scale piece for a contemporary music festival she was producing. Hindemith sent her a score also titled Concert Music, this one scored for piano, two harps, and brass. It was first performed by members of the Chicago Symphony, conducted by Hugo Kortshak, a former violinist in the Orchestra, on October 13, 1930. *Konzertmusik* was a designation Hindemith gave to several of his works during this time, reflecting his taste for plain, utilitarian titles. (They are the counterpart to the seven pieces of chamber music from the same period, each for a different combination of instruments, that he simply labeled *Kammermusik.*) The Concert Music for String Orchestra and Brass that immediately followed the Chicago score—the two were published consecutively as op. 49 and op. 50—was completed in Berlin that December. It is the largest of his various concert music pieces, and, coincidentally, the last score he would give an opus number.

Hindemith’s score was commissioned by Serge Koussevitzky, the music director of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Hindemith was one of several composers invited to honor the orchestra’s fiftieth anniversary, including Prokofiev, Copland, Respighi, and Stravinsky, who produced his landmark *Symphony of Psalms* for the occasion. Hindemith, just thirty-four, was probably not an obvious choice. He was still young and had a reputation as something of an *enfant terrible*. But Koussevitzky had known Hindemith both as an unusually gifted composer and a virtuoso violist for several years (he had hired him as soloist in his own *Kammermusik* no. 5 for Viola and Chamber Orchestra in Paris in 1928).

It was Hindemith’s idea to score the concert music for brass and strings only (the violins are not divided into firsts and seconds, but play together)—a wonderfully bracing instrumentation choice, especially coming from a composer who could play nearly every instrument in the orchestra at least passably and who knew how to write for each one with uncommon expertise. There are two movements—the first moving dramatically from a moderate tempo into slower, broadly flowing music; the second in the familiar fast-slow-fast pattern. Throughout the piece, Hindemith writes distinctive, idiomatic music for the two instrumental groups. The opening pits energetically racing strings against somber brass chords, but then the tables are turned and the dialogue between forces grows more complex. Sometimes the two operate in opposition; at other times, they toss ideas back and forth. The second movement begins and ends with a bristling, rapid-fire fugato; yet the slow middle paragraphs are richly expressive, inventive, and unexpectedly poetic (at one point, Hindemith specifies “very tender”). After the successful premiere under Koussevitzky in Boston in April 1931, Hindemith himself often picked the Concert Music for the concerts he conducted around the world, regularly pairing it with Bruckner’s Seventh Symphony, as he did in Chicago in 1963.

The 1930s were a difficult—and ultimately decisive—time for Hindemith. After the Nazis came to power in Germany in 1933, he was branded as a degenerate composer, largely because Hitler had walked out
of Hindemith’s opera *Neues von Tage* (News of the day), scandalized by the sight of a soprano singing from her bathtub. Hindemith’s subsequent opera, *Mathis der Maler* (Matthias the painter), a powerful and pointed statement on the value of arts and the role of the artist in society, was officially attacked and later banned. After Hindemith figured prominently in the exhibition of *Entartete Musik* (Degenerate music) in 1938, he had little choice but to leave his native Germany for good. He had already set his sights on the United States. On his first trip to this country in 1937, he appeared as viola soloist in his *Der Schwanendreher* with members of the Chicago Symphony at the Chicago Arts Club. When he returned to this country the next year, he made his U.S. conducting debut with the CSO, leading his Symphonic Dances and appearing once again as soloist in *Der Schwanendreher*. In 1939, he returned to Chicago to attend a concert of his music given by University of Chicago students, but he didn’t appear with the Orchestra. During his visit, however, he met with CSO music director Frederick Stock, who asked him to write a piece for the Orchestra’s fiftieth anniversary, then two seasons away. “The specifics still need to be discussed,” Hindemith wrote home to his wife Gertrude in March. Hindemith began a piece for the Chicago Symphony’s anniversary—a kind of free fantasy, as he called it, on an old Virginian ballad about poor Lazarus and the rich man—but then abandoned it midway when he realized he had been so busy working on other scores that he couldn’t finish it in time. Hindemith’s score for *Poor Lazarus* was later published in its incomplete state.

Several footnotes. The video of Hindemith’s televised Chicago Symphony concert, which includes Brahms’s *Academic Festival Overture* and the first movement of Bruckner’s Symphony no. 7—he conducted the complete symphony that week in concert, but the final three movements were omitted from the broadcast in order to keep the telecast to an hour—is available from VAI Music. I am indebted to Michael Henoch, the Chicago Symphony’s assistant principal oboe since 1972, for his research into Hindemith’s early connection to Chicago. The Chicago Symphony Orchestra principal viola chair is named after Paul Hindemith, who was one of the great violists of his time. The donors who endowed the chair in perpetuity during the 2012–13 season recently decided that it will be known as “The Paul Hindemith Principal Viola Chair, endowed by an anonymous benefactor.”

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**Modest Mussorgsky**

Born March 21, 1839; Karevo, Russia  
Died March 28, 1881; Saint Petersburg, Russia

**Pictures from an Exhibition** (Orchestrated by Maurice Ravel)

When Victor Hartmann died at the age of thirty-nine, little did he know that the pictures he left behind—the legacy of an undistinguished career as artist and architect—would live on. The idea for an exhibition of Hartmann’s work came from Vladimir Stassov, the influential critic who organized a show in Saint Petersburg in the spring of 1874. But it was Modest Mussorgsky, so shocked at the unexpected death of his dear friend, who set out to make something of this loss. “Why should a dog, a horse, a rat have life,” he is said to have asked, paraphrasing King Lear, “and creatures like Hartmann must die?”

Stassov’s memorial show gave Mussorgsky the idea for a suite of piano pieces that depicted the composer “roving through the exhibition, now leisurely, now briskly, in order to come closer to a picture that had attracted his attention, and at times sadly, thinking of his departed friend.” Mussorgsky worked feverishly that spring, and by June 22, 1874, *Pictures from an Exhibition*
was finished. Mussorgsky may well have had an inflated impression of Hartmann’s artistic importance (as friends often do), but these Pictures guaranteed Hartmann a place in history that his art alone could never have achieved. There’s no record of a public performance of Pictures in Mussorgsky’s lifetime, and the composer didn’t even play the work on his extensive 1879 concert tour, perhaps finding it too personal for the stage. It was left to Rimsky-Korsakov, the musical executor of Mussorgsky’s estate, to edit the manuscript and bring Pictures to the light of day.

The thought of orchestrating Pictures evidently never occurred to Mussorgsky. But it has intrigued musicians ever since his death, and over the years several have tried their hand at turning Mussorgsky’s black-and-white pieces into full color. The earliest was that of Rimsky-Korsakov’s student, Mikhail Tushmalov, conducted (and most likely improved) by the teacher himself. (The Chicago Symphony’s first performances, in 1920, were of this version.) In 1915, Sir Henry Wood, an eminent British conductor, produced a version that was popular until Maurice Ravel unveiled his orchestration in 1922.

Although Ravel worked from the same Rimsky-Korsakov edition of Pictures that Tushmalov and Wood used (he had tried without success to find a copy of Mussorgsky’s original, which wasn’t published until 1930), his orchestral version far outstrips theirs in the brilliance of its colors and its sheer ingenuity. Ravel was already sensitive to Mussorgsky’s style from his collaboration with Igor Stravinsky on an edition of Khovanshchina in 1913, and, since most of his own orchestral works started out as piano scores, the process of transcription was second nature to him. Ravel remained as faithful as possible to the original; only in the final Great Gate of Kiev did he add a few notes of his own to Mussorgsky’s.

The success of Ravel’s edition inspired still further efforts, including one by Leopold Stokowski that was popular for many years (the Chicago Symphony played it as recently as 1998). Mussorgsky’s Pictures also has been rescored for rock band, brass ensemble, acoustic guitar, massed accordions, and even rearranged for solo piano by Vladimir Horowitz. (Essentially a piano transcription of Ravel’s orchestration—a translation of a translation, in other words—Horowitz’s Pictures are far removed, stylistically, from Mussorgsky’s). But Ravel’s orchestration remains the best-known guide to Mussorgsky’s picture collection.

Mussorgsky chose eleven of Hartmann’s works for his set of piano pieces. He owned the sketches of Samuel Goldberg and Schmuyle, which were combined in one “picture”; most, though not all, of the other works were in Stassov’s exhibition. Some of the original pictures have since disappeared. (Of the four hundred Hartmann works exhibited, less than a hundred have come to light; only six of those in Mussorgsky’s score can be identified with certainty.)

Mussorgsky referred to Pictures as “an album series,” implying a random, ad hoc collection of miniatures, but the score is a coherently designed
whole, organized around a recurring theme and judiciously paced to progress from short pieces to a longer, majestic finale—creating a kind of crescendo effect like that of Schumann’s *Carnaval*. Mussorgsky had no use for the conventional forms of the earlier classical masters—“I am not against symphonies,” he once wrote, “just symphonists, incorrigible conservatives.” We don’t know when Mussorgsky settled on the overall layout of his picture series, but a letter he wrote to Stassov suggests that he had worked on at least the first five in order, and apparently had the entire set in mind when he started.

Mussorgsky begins with a promenade, which takes him into the gallery and later accompanies him as he walks around the room, reflecting a change in mood from one picture to another. (Despite his considerable girth, Mussorgsky apparently was a fast walker—the promenade is marked allegro, rather than andante [Italian for “walking”]—and Mussorgsky was precise in his tempo markings.)

1. **Gnomus.** Hartmann’s drawing, which has since been lost, was for a Christmas tree ornament—“a kind of nutcracker, a gnome into whose mouth you put a nut to crack,” according to Stassov’s commentary in the catalog. Mussorgsky’s music, with its awkward leaps, bizarre harmonies, and slippery melodies, suggests the gnome’s “droll movements” and “savage shrieks.”

2. **The Old Castle.** Two drawings of medieval castles are listed in the catalog, both sketched while Hartmann was in France, just before he met Mussorgsky. The music gives song to the troubadour standing in front of the castle. Mussorgsky’s melody, which Ravel memorably gives to the alto saxophone, is clearly indebted to Russian folk music, despite the provenance of the castle.

3. **Tuileries.** Hartmann lived in Paris long enough to get to know the famous park with its squabbling children and their nurses.

4. **Bydlo.** Stassov describes a Polish wagon (“bydło” is Polish for cattle) drawn by oxen. Although Mussorgsky wanted the piece to begin fortissimo—“right between the eyes,” as he told Stassov—Rimsky-Korsakov switched to a pianissimo opening followed by a crescendo to create the illusion of the approaching cart and the tread of hooves.

5. **Ballet of the Chicks in their Shells.** Hartmann designed costumes for a ballet, *Trilbi*, in 1871. The music depicts a scene where “a group of little boys and girls, pupils of the Theatre School, dressed as canaries, scampered on the stage. Some of the little birds were wearing over their dresses big eggshells resembling breastplates.”

6. **Samuel Goldenberg and Schmuyle.** Mussorgsky owned these two drawings entitled “A Rich Jew in a Fur Hat” and “A Poor Jew,” to which he gave proper names. Hartmann,
whose wife was Polish, visited Sandomierz, in southern Poland, in 1868; there he painted scenes and characters in the Jewish ghetto, including these two men, as well as Bydlo. Mussorgsky begins with the commanding Goldenberg; Ravel makes Schmyle’s whining reply wonderfully grating.

7. The Market Place at Limoges. Hartmann did more than a hundred and fifty watercolors of Limoges in 1866, including many genre pictures. In the margin of his score, Mussorgsky brings the scene to life: “Great news! M. de Puissangeout has just recovered his cow . . . Mme de Remboursac has just acquired a beautiful new set of teeth, while M. de Pantaleon’s nose, which is in his way, is as much as ever the color of a peony.”

8. Catacombs: Sepulcrum romanum. Hartmann, a friend, and a guide with a lamp explore underground Paris; to their right in Hartmann’s watercolor is a pile of skulls.

Promenade: Con mortuis in lingua mortua. At the end of Catacombs, Mussorgsky penciled in his manuscript: “Con mortuis in lingua mortua” (With the dead in a dead language), signaling the start of this mournful rendition of the promenade.

9. The Hut on Hen’s Legs (Baba-Yaga). Hartmann sketched a clock of bronze and enamel in the shape of the hut of the witch Baba-Yaga. Mussorgsky concentrates not on the clock, but on the child-eating Baba-Yaga herself, who, according to Russian folk literature, lived deep in the woods in a hut on hen’s legs, which allowed her to rotate to confront each approaching victim. (Incidentally, Stassov’s first impression of Hartmann was of him dressed as Baba-Yaga at a masked ball in 1861.)

10. The Great Gate of Kiev. Hartmann entered this design in a competition for a gateway to Kiev that was ultimately called off for lack of funds. Hartmann modeled his gate on the traditional headdress of Russian women, with the belfry shaped like the helmet of Slavonic warriors. Mussorgsky’s piece, with its magnificent climaxes and pealing bells, finds its ultimate realization in Ravel’s orchestration.

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