

ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-SEVENTH SEASON

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

**Bank of America**   
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Thursday, September 28, 2017, at 8:00  
Friday, September 29, 2017, at 1:30  
Sunday, October 1, 2017, at 3:00

**Riccardo Muti** Conductor

**Rossini**

Overture to *William Tell*

**Ogonek**

*All These Lighted Things*

(three little dances for orchestra)  
exuberant, playful, bright  
gently drifting, hazy  
buoyant

**World premiere. Chicago Symphony Orchestra commission**

**INTERMISSION**

**Bruckner**

Symphony No. 4 in E-flat Major (*Romantic*)

Moving, not too fast  
Andante quasi allegretto  
Scherzo: Moving  
Finale: Moving, but not too fast

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These performances are made possible by the Juli Plant Grainger Fund for Artistic Excellence.

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

## Gioachino Rossini

Born February 29, 1792; Pesaro, Italy

Died November 13, 1868; Passy, a suburb of Paris, France

### Overture to *William Tell*



Time has not been kind to Rossini. Today he is identified with a handful of comic operas (often dismissed as implausible and silly, and frequently staged as sophomoric slapstick) and a dozen or so overtures, the most famous of which brings to

mind a television cowboy who rode high in the ratings from 1949 until 1965 instead of the heroic figure of William Tell. The opening sentence of Philip Gossett's article in *The New Grove* offers a healthy corrective: "No composer in the first half of the nineteenth century enjoyed the measure of prestige, wealth, popular acclaim, or artistic influence that belonged to Rossini."

Rossini was born less than three months after the death of Mozart ("He was the wonder of my youth," Rossini later wrote, "the despair of my maturity, and he is the consolation of my old age"), was a professional contemporary of Beethoven and Schubert (as well as the young Mendelssohn and Berlioz), and lived into the era of Wagner and Brahms. But he retired in 1830, at the height of his career, leaving behind the world of opera where he had reigned since 1812, when his *La pietra del paragone* (The

touchstone) triumphed at La Scala. During the remaining four decades of his life he didn't write another opera (for a while he contemplated a treatment of Goethe's *Faust*), choosing instead to preside over his celebrated salon (one of the most famous in all Europe) and to putter in the kitchen (touredos Rossini are his most famous concoction). Only occasionally did he put pen to manuscript paper.

*William Tell* was his last opera. It is a vast, imposing, and richly beautiful work in four acts, and in its day it was extravagantly praised (Donizetti said act 2 was composed not by Rossini but by God) and frequently staged, though seldom complete. (Once, when the head of the Paris Opera encountered Rossini on the street and boasted that the second act of *Tell* was being performed that very night, the composer replied, "Indeed! All of it?") In our time, productions of *William Tell* are almost unheard of—Rossini's serious operas, more important historically than the comedies, are relatively unknown to us today. Ironically, the overture to *William Tell* has become one of the most popular pieces in the orchestral repertory.

The opera is based on Friedrich Schiller's retelling of the story of the Swiss patriot William Tell and his famous bow and arrow. A complex tale with a strong political theme (the scene is

Above: Rossini, from a lithograph by Charlet Ory, engraved by Pierre-Louis Henri Grevedon, 1828

#### COMPOSED

1828–29

#### FIRST PERFORMANCE

August 3, 1829; Paris, France

#### INSTRUMENTATION

flute and piccolo, two oboes and english horn, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, triangle, bass drum, cymbals, strings

#### APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME

12 minutes

#### FIRST CSO PERFORMANCES

October 22, 1892, Auditorium Theatre. Theodore Thomas conducting

July 1, 1937, Ravinia Festival. Gennaro Papi conducting

#### MOST RECENT

##### CSO PERFORMANCES

August 2, 1992, Ravinia Festival. Erich Kunzel conducting

September 22, 2017, Orchestra Hall. Riccardo Muti conducting

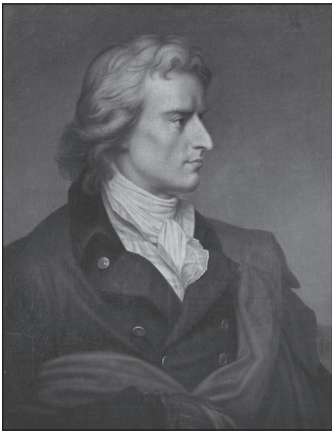
##### CSO RECORDING

1958. Fritz Reiner conducting. RCA

Switzerland during the Austrian occupation), it first attracted Goethe, who contemplated writing an epic poem on the tale, and then Schiller, who made it the subject of his last completed play. (Tell's status has fallen in our day: an exhibition in Lausanne in 1994 downgraded him from national hero to the purely fictional creation of Swiss folklore.)

Rossini's overture was immediately popular and it often was played independently from the opera during the composer's lifetime. When Berlioz wrote a long and detailed review of *William Tell* in 1834, he could not disguise his admiration for Rossini's music. He noted that the overture was in an entirely new, enlarged form, and had "in fact become a symphony in four distinct movements instead of the piece in two movements usually thought to be sufficient."

The overture opens unexpectedly with music for solo cellos, one of Rossini's greatest masterstrokes. "It suggests the calm of profound solitude," Berlioz wrote, "the solemn silence of nature when the elements and human passions are at rest." A mountain storm blows up, its turbulence and erupting tension suggesting that both bad weather and patriotic war lie just over the horizon. "The inevitable decrescendo of the storm is handled with unusual skill," Berlioz writes of the magical passage that leads the listener directly down to the mountain valley, where an english horn plays an Alpine herdsman's melody. Then the galloping allegro vivace begins—a dazzling finale, full of brilliant, incisive effects and irresistible energy. Even in 1834 Berlioz commented, with a touch of envy, that its brio and verve "invariably excite the transports of the house." ■



An oil portrait of Friedrich Schiller (1759–1805) by Gerhard von Kügelgen (1772–1820), 1808–09. Frankfurt Goethe-Museum and Goethe House. The Yorck Project: 10,000 Masterpieces of Painting



Preparatory drawing for an engraving by Charles-Abraham Chasselat (1782–1843), 1829, depicting Tell poised to shoot an apple from his son Jemmy's head in act 3, scene 2 of the opera. National Library of France

## Elizabeth Ogonek

Born May 26, 1989; Anoka, Minnesota

### **All These Lighted Things (three little dances for orchestra)**



PHOTO BY TODD ROSENBERG

“As soon as I wrote my first piece,” Elizabeth Ogonek told a reporter in 2015, the same year she was appointed as our Mead Composer-in-Residence, “I knew instantly that I would spend the rest of my life

composing.” It is that kind of commitment, coupled with an early sense of her life’s purpose, which has carried Ogonek from her characteristically searching student days, when she first thought that she would pursue a career as a concert pianist, to having her music premiered by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Once she fixed on a path, her focus didn’t falter: she holds degrees from the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music and the University of Southern California Thornton School of Music, and in 2015 she completed doctoral studies at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London.

*All These Lighted Things*, her new piece for the Orchestra, took nearly five months “and many, many sleepless nights” to write. Ogonek used to compose a piece “in order,” that is from the first page to the last. But that process has already changed in her still-young career, and this new score was written in fits and starts, hopping between its three dance-like movements. It was mostly composed in her home studio and in her campus office in Oberlin, Ohio, where she is assistant professor of composition at the Oberlin

Conservatory, a position she began the first year of her Chicago residency. She started the score in Santa Fe, New Mexico, at the Women’s International Study Center (based in a home originally built by members of Sibelius’s extended family). During ten days there, she defended her dissertation (on Skype); finished *In Silence*, which was commissioned by MusicNOW and premiered here in May; and put onto paper her first ideas for the Chicago Symphony piece. Months later, she finished the score only minutes before heading out to teach her freshman composition class at Oberlin. “That particular class saw a very human Elizabeth: weary, relieved but uncertain, excited but nervous.”

*All These Lighted Things* began with a deceptively simple yet deeply earnest desire to compose something happy and melodic. She had come to realize, partly through writing, but even more through teaching, that when she whittles down her musical values to the most fundamental ones, she is always left with the idea of a melodic line. “So that’s where I chose to start.”

Although she rarely begins to work with a title already in mind, *All These Lighted Things*, a line from a poem by Thomas Merton, came to her before she wrote a note, and in many ways it guided the direction of the piece. She had been thinking about the liturgy of the hours and how, as a ritual, it marks the progress of light throughout the day. She knew Merton’s *A Book of Hours*, with its poems about dawn, day, dusk, and dark, and was especially taken by his evocation of dawn—“By ceasing to question the sun/I have

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#### COMPOSED

2017

Commissioned by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra

#### INSTRUMENTATION

two flutes and two piccolos, two oboes, two clarinets and E-flat clarinet, two bassoons, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones and tuba, timpani, percussion (crotales, marimba, slapstick, piccolo woodblocks, rainsticks, triangles, burma bells, chinese opera gongs, vibraphone, vibraslap, tubular bells, glockenspiel, japanese singing bowls, suspended cymbals, sizzle cymbal, egg shakers, bass drum), strings

#### APPROXIMATE

#### PERFORMANCE TIME

15 minutes

These are the world premiere performances.

become light.” To Ogonek the message was clear: I have chosen to trust that light will appear and it has. *All These Lighted Things* explores the various ways “in which musical objects are made visible by this metaphorical light.”

Poetry has regularly played an important role in Ogonek’s music. (*Falling Up*, the piece that introduced her to MusicNOW audiences here in March 2016, used the writings of both Arthur Rimbaud and Shel Silverstein as a starting point.) The way that words are an “expressive and freeing medium” for poets became a lens through which she has tried to make sense of her own work as a composer. She began turning to poetry as a way of structuring her musical ideas—“of holding me accountable for the decisions I would eventually make”—and to provide a framework to work within. She likes to quote Stravinsky: “The more constraints one imposes, the more one frees one’s self. And the arbitrariness of the constraint serves only to obtain precision of execution.”

*All These Lighted Things* brings together many strands in Ogonek’s life, from her early love for playing the piano and her part Polish heritage (she is also a quarter Croatian and half Indian) to her current role in Chicago. With *All These Lighted Things*, she was thinking not only about writing for the musicians of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, but also about the kinds of things Muti brings to music—the drama that he elicits from the Orchestra, his natural physical connection to the music-making process (she recalls the excitement of seeing him leap into the air at the very end of *La mer* at a concert he led in Geneva, Switzerland), and “how his musical rapport with the Orchestra results in this incredibly flexible, almost caramel-like sound.”

Although the score is one of Ogonek’s few works for full orchestra, she says she’s always felt an affinity for orchestral music—an attraction to the spectrum of sounds and colors you can get out of a vast community of musicians. “The orchestra,” she says, “is an environment in which my imagination really has the ability to run

free.” But writing for orchestra is also the most challenging thing she has done: “Not only does it take me forever to write music, but it can also be overwhelming to know that you are responsible for every single musician on stage.”

Ogonek is now at work on a cycle of pieces for fourteen players to be premiered on the final MusicNOW concert of the season.

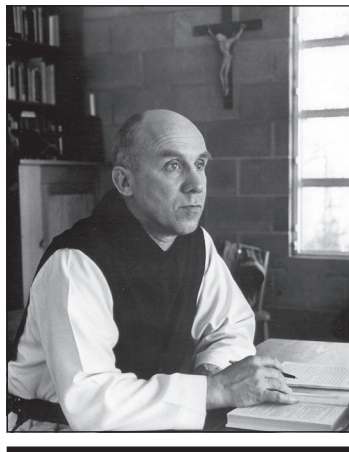
### Elizabeth Ogonek on *All These Lighted Things*

When I began working on *All These Lighted Things*, I set out to write a set of mazurkas based on musical fragments from the other two works on the program (*William Tell* / Bruckner’s Fourth). I would get up every day and scavenge for material that I could transform into something I thought would be interesting. Every day, despite my efforts, I would fail miserably. I quickly gave up on that plan.

Something inside of me was fervently committed to the mazurka: perhaps my Polish heritage, perhaps the joyful abandon with which Polish people dance the mazurka, or perhaps my unabashed love of Chopin.

Chopin has been a preoccupation of mine lately. I think it’s because the piano music is some of the first music I really fell in love with as a kid. When I think back to my earliest memories as a musician, I’m reminded of Chopin’s F minor ballade or the D-flat major nocturne or the A minor mazurka (op. 17, no. 4), and how my heart would leap out of my chest as I listened to those pieces, and to so much other of Chopin’s piano music. There’s something about the unapologetic lyricism, the manipulation of time, the burgeoning intensity, and range of expression—as Chopin returned again and again to the same forms—that gets me every single time.

Eventually, the mazurka plan fell by the wayside as well. But what stuck was a collection of little dance-like figures that I had composed



**Thomas Merton (1915–1968)  
at the Abbey of Gethsemani in  
Trappist, Kentucky**



as I tried to make each iteration of my initial compositional plan work. As I thought about how time transformed the bones of the mazurka for Chopin, it occurred to me that I could take my dance figures and cast them through imaginary “filters” to see how they might bend and warp. For example, the first dance explores the ways in which a tune possessing several qualities characteristic of the mazurka (triple and dotted rhythms, second beat emphasis, in three) might fluidly transition between contentedness, ecstasy, and irrational danger. The second dance presupposes that a sarabande has been stretched out and submerged in water. Elements of the slow, stately dance surface only occasionally. Lastly, the third dance is, in my mind, more

communal than the other two. Each section begins with a small grouping of instruments and, like a fly strip, begins to attract more and more members of the orchestra doing their own thing until the independent lines become indistinguishable. The result is a composite sound made up of all the kinks and quirks that give way to individual personalities.

The title, *All These Lighted Things*, comes from a line in a poem about dawn, written by Thomas Merton. At the heart of the piece is celebration and reverence for the things that bring joy. It comes on the heels of several very dark works and, thus, is a kind of first morning light. ■

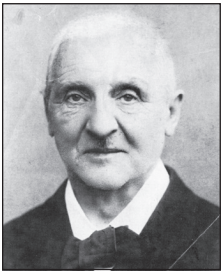
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## Anton Bruckner

Born September 4, 1824; Ansfelden, Upper Austria  
Died October 11, 1896; Vienna, Austria

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### Symphony No. 4 in E-flat Major (*Romantic*)



Anton Bruckner was forty years old when he wrote his first significant large-scale work—a mass in D minor—and forty-two before he wrote the first symphony he was willing to claim. After years as a diligent student, Bruckner

had finally found his own voice, but he wasn't confident enough to trust it. The third and fourth symphonies were the toughest for him, and, in both cases, he needed several separate attempts—and a number of smaller touch-ups—before he was satisfied. He began the Fourth Symphony in 1874. Four years later, he wrote a new scherzo and finale. In 1880, he made further changes, reaching what was, for the time being, his final score. But in the late 1880s, he picked up his pencil and returned to the E-flat symphony. (It is the 1886 version, published in the edition

of Leopold Nowak, that is performed at these concerts).

Bruckner was responding not just to his own second thoughts, but also to the trivial—though deeply wounding—criticism of others. Well-meaning friends suggested pruning (Bruckner has always seemed long-winded to the unsympathetic listener) and recommended other changes, which Bruckner dutifully considered and often accepted. Franz Schalk and Ferdinand Löwe—two favorite, though unfaithful disciples—thought the scherzo of the Fourth Symphony ought to end pianissimo the first time around, rather than in a blaze of brass as Bruckner conceived it. And so it does, in the first printed edition that they prepared in 1890. (However, when it came time to authorize that edition, Bruckner refused to sign the printer's copy; it was published anyway.)

Bruckner was certainly not the first composer to suffer at the hands of insensitive friends and colleagues. A tall, awkward man with a severely

Above: Bruckner, cabinet photograph by Anton Huber (1852–1936), 1890. Vienna, Austria

cropped Prussian haircut and a wardrobe of seriously misshapen suits, his very appearance seemed to invite doubt and scorn, if not ridicule. (Beethoven, once arrested as a vagrant, had already proved that fashion plays no role in musical greatness.) But Bruckner's problem lay deeper. From his earliest days, he fought a devastating insecurity that frequently damaged his dealings with people, made his life one of perpetual misery, and almost denied him a career as a composer.

Yet, despite his doubts, the failure of several important performances, the hostility of musicians (the Vienna Philharmonic rejected his first three symphonies as unplayable), and the disloyalty of his students, Bruckner managed to get something down on paper that pleased himself, if no one else. In time, his unorthodox style, with its leisurely pace, slowly unfolding harmony, obstinate repetition of simple motives and chords, and apparent resistance to wrap things up, found other receptive listeners.

Six of Bruckner's symphonies start with a vague rumble that Bruckner picked up from the opening of Beethoven's Ninth and then focus on an important theme as it breaks through. Sometimes the effect is almost improvisational, as if Bruckner sat at the piano—or at the organ, for that was his instrument—one hand waiting to see what the other would do. In the Fourth Symphony, it takes us a surprisingly long time to figure out how quickly the music is moving. A calm, clear horn call beckons over string tremolos. But as the theme emerges, it brings with it faster countermelodies and increasing activity.

From Beethoven's Ninth, Bruckner also found his model for a large-scale structure: a big first movement, a spacious adagio, a scherzo in sonata form, and a wide-ranging finale that gathers many threads together in a new light. It is useless (though accurate) to note that the first movement of Bruckner's Fourth is twice as long as any opening symphonic movement in Mozart or Haydn, and comparable only to those of Beethoven's *Eroica* and Ninth symphonies, among its predecessors. For Bruckner is not Haydn, Mozart, or Beethoven—not in the way he handles themes, plans his harmonic structure, or conceives form—even if he is working with many of the same tools.

It has taken music lovers some time to understand him. Robert Simpson, who wrote one of the first comprehensive studies of the symphonies, describes Bruckner's technique as a manifestation of patience. It is patience that many listeners today do not bring to Bruckner, and he will not divulge his greatness without it. Bruckner has never been known to make a long story short, but he is a masterful storyteller. The slow movement of this symphony moves at a deliberate and relentless gait, but it's shrewdly paced and lovingly told, and there are moments of almost unimaginable beauty. The grand climax is truly impressive only if one has made the slow ascent.

The scherzo, with its combination of hunting calls and brass fanfares, is lively, exciting stuff. But the pace is still leisurely, and the trio (marked "Not too quickly") is delicately scored and even more relaxed. When the scherzo

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#### COMPOSED

1874, revised 1878, 1880–81, 1886, 1888

#### FIRST PERFORMANCE

February 20, 1881; Vienna, Austria. Hans Richter conducting

#### FIRST CSO PERFORMANCES

January 22 and 23, 1897, Auditorium Theatre. Theodore Thomas conducting

July 25, 1961, Ravinia Festival. Paul Hindemith conducting

#### MOST RECENT

##### CSO PERFORMANCES

August 2, 1991, Ravinia Festival. Marek Janowski conducting

October 31, November 1, 2, and 3, 2013, Orchestra Hall. Bernard Haitink conducting

##### CSO RECORDINGS

1972. Daniel Barenboim conducting. Deutsche Grammophon

1981. Sir Georg Solti conducting. London

#### INSTRUMENTATION

two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones and tuba, timpani, strings

#### APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME

69 minutes

returns, it's particularly noticeable how Bruckner relies not on speed, but on sheer sonority—here the full brass band—to create excitement.

A Bruckner finale is always large and complicated, and this one gave him an especially hard time. As the British critic Donald Tovey pointed out long ago, this finale is really a slow movement, with all its customary attributes, despite what Bruckner chooses to call it. It opens, like the symphony, with a serene horn call over low stirrings that leads to increased commotion. Bruckner takes time for any number of detours to distant harmonic regions, enriching the itinerary immeasurably. There is a sense throughout of covering vast distances—an understanding of musical space that is new to the symphony. The shadow of the scherzo hovers. Near the end, after a barrage from the full orchestra, there is a great, unexpected pause, and then the last full paragraph. As Bruckner told the conductor Arthur Nikisch—in explanation of one of his most common idiosyncrasies—he liked to catch his breath before saying something significant. And the ending is important, for it brings us back to the opening of the symphony, with its simple horn call. There is both a sense of wrapping things up and the satisfaction of reunion, as Bruckner gathers together familiar themes, like tourists who have gone their separate ways and meet at the day's end.

A postscript. Scarcely three months after Bruckner's death in Vienna, Theodore Thomas



Scherzhaftes Selbstbildnis des Künstlers.

**A silhouette of Bruckner, entitled "Humorous Self-portrait of the Artist," from the collection Dr. Otto Böhler's Schattenbilder. Published 1914, Vienna, Austria**

and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra introduced his Fourth Symphony to Chicago on January 22, 1897, as a way of "keeping audiences in touch with musical progress," the *Tribune* said. It was the first symphony by Bruckner the orchestra ever played.

A parting word about the subtitle, *Romantic*. This is the only symphony by Bruckner with a subtitle added by the composer himself. It was part of a scheme devised by his friends, after the symphony was completed, to give the music a programmatic storyline as well as a title, to draw a more receptive audience. Bruckner reluctantly agreed, but admitted that even he didn't know what the finale was supposed to depict. ■

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