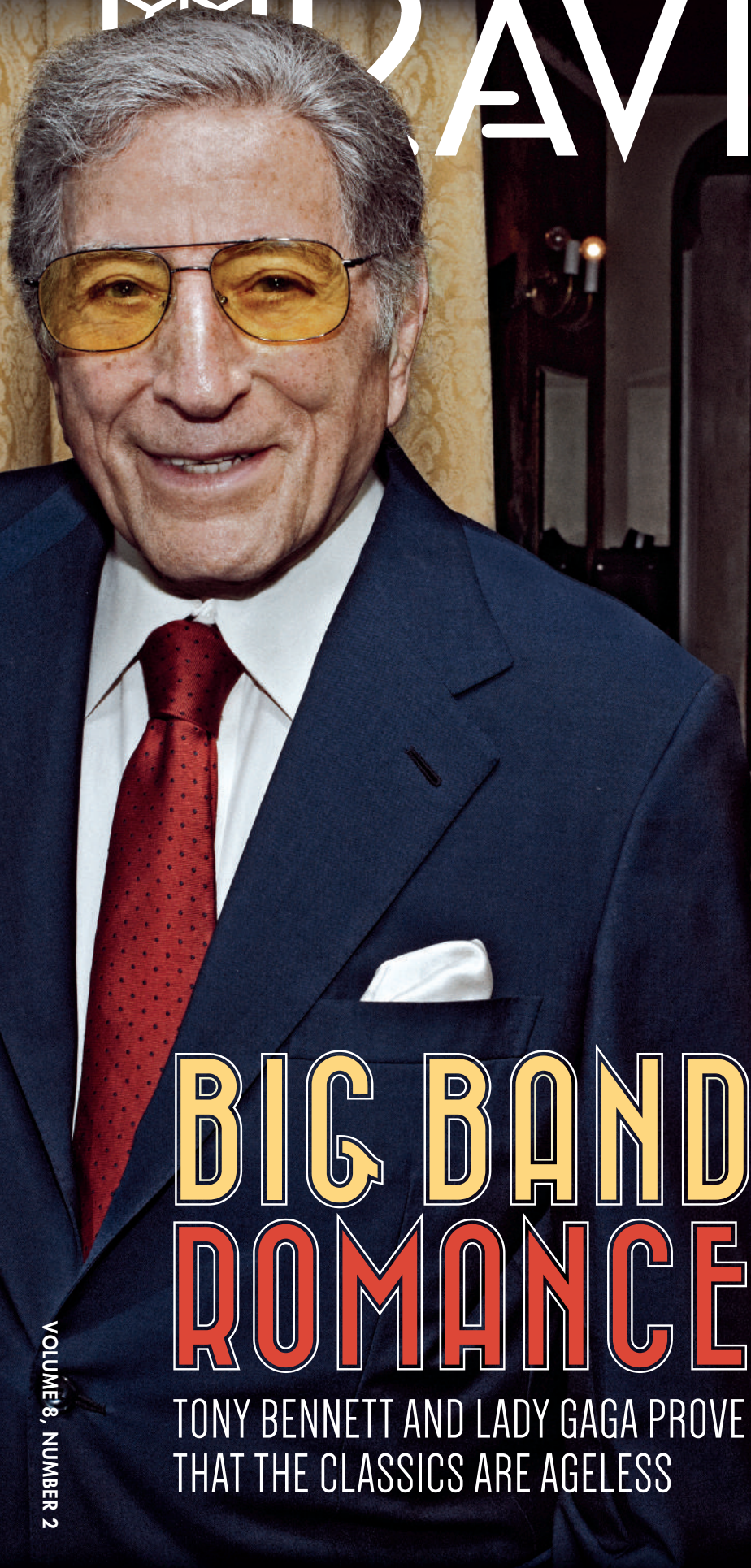


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Keep an eye on our social sites for information on how you can win **FREE** tickets to Ravinia this summer.



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 is 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.

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.



In his final season as music director of the CSO's residency, James Conlon will be recalling the major musical thrusts he 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—they 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!



John L. Anderson
Chairman,
Ravinia Festival Association



Welz Kauffman
President and CEO,
Ravinia Festival Association

TYPICALLY ATYPICAL

Alan Cumming likes to keep his audience, and himself, guessing

By Martin Bernheimer

Alan Cumming doesn't seem inclined to be a nuclear physicist. His credentials as a Sumo wrestler may be dubious. Otherwise he appears able, and more than willing, to do just about anything. And not just do it well but differently—differently, that is, on his own creative terms.

Unique must be the most overused, also most misused, descriptive term in the annals of public locution. In Cumming's case, however, it fits—snugly, mysteriously and comfortably.



Ravinia gets to sample at least one of his many talents on June 19 when he presents an intimate concert devoted to what he labels “sappy songs” in the Martin Theatre. Accompanied by pianist Lance Horne and cellist Eleanor Norton, the artist intriguingly billed as “Scotland’s beloved man-child” is poised to sing ballads and tell stories, though the exact nature of the performances remain shrouded in mystery. When cornered, however, Cumming offers some illumination.

“The sappy songs,” he explains, “are a variety of different styles and genres that all share one thing that makes them sappy: their emotional content. All these songs are ones that I feel I can act when singing, and also many of them are well known and perhaps songs we’d not normally expect me to sing. But I want to make the audience reassess their opinions about them. Also, saying [these] songs are sappy and using that as the title of the show lets the audience know that it’s going to be a certain type of evening, one that has some wit and irony but also hopefully one with some real emotion and connection.”

Since spontaneity lies high both in his expressive vocabulary and his *modus operandi*, Cumming proves a bit cagey about disclosing the specific sappy songs he will feature. Under gentle pressure, however, he drops three typically atypical titles: Billy Joel’s “And So It Goes,” “I Won’t Send Roses” from Jerry Herman’s show *Mack & Mabel*, and “Somewhere Only We Know,” composed by the British alternative-rock band Keane.

The Café Carlyle in Manhattan got to experience Cumming’s special sappiness earlier in June. Call it, if you will, an out-of-town tryout for Ravinia. One wonders if New York hosted a preview of the Cumming attraction. “Who knows?” he muses. “I doubt it.”

“No show is ever the same, even if it has the same set list,” Cumming insists. “The way I relate to the audience, the city and the circumstances I find myself in all combine to make each show one-of-a-kind. In the past

when I have toured my concert show I have changed songs, dropped some and added others; told some stories one show and dropped them the next. That's what makes it exciting. For me it is an adventure every time."

Fans longing for a permanent souvenir of the evening, or some facsimile thereof, may find eventual comfort in a recording or video. "I hopefully will

he declares. "Lance has been my musical director for every concert I have ever done, and we have written several songs together, and I sometimes sing songs of his. Eleanor has played with [us] for the last couple of years. They're my little musical family. I include them in the stories I tell, and I ad-lib about and with them. They are a very big part of the evening." It is Horne, not incidentally,

negative answer, the young man underwent DNA testing. To his disappointment, the result was positive.

When he could escape his home life, miserable on any level, he found opportunities to dabble in the varied pursuits that eventually defined his far-reaching talents, interests and contradictions, including acting, singing and writing (not necessarily in that order). He also

Alan Cumming (center) takes a bow with his performing partners pianist Lance Horne (left) and cellist Eleanor Norton (right).



David Lee Simmons, Times-Picayune/Landov

make [an] album of this show," he says, "just like I did of my first show, 'I Bought a Blue Car Today.' I want to wait and see which songs work and what the shape of the evening needs to be. It's quite a nebulous thing, trying to make the perfect cabaret or concert, and the only way to know is to just play it in front of audiences."

For these types of engagements, Cumming insists he relies heavily upon his performing colleagues, who play with him all evening long. "Absolutely,"

who adapts the music to Cumming's strengths and specifications. "He does the hard work of arranging after we have bashed out the tone and feel together."

Cumming was born in Aberfeldy, Perthshire, Scotland, on January 27, 1965. His painful childhood, documented in his memoir *Not My Father's Son* (2014), was dominated by violent mental and physical abuse at home. For some time there was confusion as to whether or not the abuser, Alex Cumming, was biologically Alan's father. Hoping for a

took an active interest in the mysterious world of fashion, authoring chic magazine pieces, including an article reporting on his experiences dressing as a woman for a day. He became fascinated with photography, launching the first of several ambitious and successful exhibits in Hollywood. He marketed a line of perfumes and beauty products, the first being a fragrance called "Cumming." With characteristic wit, this was followed six years later by "The Second Cumming."

Maintaining dual citizenship and spurred on by political idealism, Cumming also spent much time, ultimately in vain, advocating independence for Scotland. And in an early literary flight he wrote a provocative book, *Tommy's Tale*, subtitled "A Novel of Sex, Confusion, and Happy Endings."

Early in his career he portrayed a relatively conventional *Hamlet*, followed years later by an unprecedented *Macbeth* in which he undertook all—repeat, all—the roles. In London he also enlivened *Bent*, Martin Sherman's excruciating play about Nazi persecution and the so-called Night of the Long Knives. Equally notable, and vastly dissimilar, was his assumption of Mack the Knife in Brecht and Weill's *Threepenny Opera*.

TV audiences currently admire him as the smart politician Eli Gold on the hit CBS series *The Good Wife*. The role is modeled, to a degree, on Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel. "I've never met him," Cumming says, "but people I know have told me he asked them to say he liked my interpretation of Eli, who is of course an homage to Mr. Emanuel."

Given his impossible schedule and insatiable involvements, one would be

pardoned to ask if and when Cumming sleeps. He shrugs off the silly question: "I'm a night owl."

It could be argued that the defining role of Cumming's career has been the proudly decadent Emcee of the Kit Kat Klub in the Kander and Ebb musical *Cabaret*. The role was created, wittily yet gently, by Joel Grey, but Cumming made it his own in 1993 with a decidedly more dangerous, more flamboyant, more controversial characterization. Since then he has given a virtually endless string of performances in this signature piece, spanning two continents, that ended, at least for the nonce, in New York in March. For many his outlandish, uninhibited, sleazily charming, daringly costumed (and partially uncostumed) portrayal reflects his not-so-private life. Openly bisexual (sometimes he calls himself pansexual), the actor was married first to a woman and currently to a man, the graphic artist Grant Shaffer. Despite these official relationships, he proclaims a dislike for, and disinterest in, monogamy. "I don't believe it is feasible," he says. Keen observers also claim the accent and focus of his interpretation—OK, impersonation—has shifted from performance to

performance, sustaining both his attraction and attention.

"I wouldn't have done it for so long if I had been tired," Cumming explains. "It was an amazing thing to go back to a character three different times at very different times in my life, and very different times in history. Each time I came back to it I felt I had more to offer, I understood my role in it better and I was more relaxed and entrenched in the production. In a way it is not really a character. He doesn't interact with the other actors very much, he is much more engaged with the audience, and so as the audience changes every night, it meant that I never had the same show twice. There was also a lot of improv and picking up on the mood of the evening and knowing how to guide and manipulate the audience. And so that kept it alive and exciting for all those performances."

If nothing else (and there is much else), Alan Cumming knows how to guide and how to manipulate. He does it his own wondrous way. [R](#)

Pulitzer Prize-winning critic Martin Bernheimer covers music in New York for the *Financial Times*.

Alan Cumming toasts his audience after a recent show at the Joy Theater in New Orleans.



David Lee Simmons, Times-Picayune/Landov

A Spirited Soul

There's no keeping
up with this Jones

By Donald Liebenson



JACOB BUCKENSTAFF

As characteristically eclectic as this season's lineup is, it would not be too much of a stretch to call this Ravinia's summer of soul. The "Queen of Soul," Aretha Franklin, returns to Ravinia on July 11 after an absence of eight years. On September 11 the "Empress of Soul," Gladys Knight, will make her first appearance at Ravinia since 1992. But kicking things off on June 21 is Sharon Jones, taking the stage with her band, the Dap-Kings, for a bill shared with the Tedeschi Trucks Band as part of their joint "Wheels of Soul" tour.

This will mark Jones's Ravinia debut, and even before she sings a note it can be considered a triumph. Jones was on the Ravinia schedule in 2013, but she had to bow out following a devastating diagno-

sis of pancreatic cancer. She underwent surgery to remove a tumor and endured chemotherapy. Her record company postponed not only the tour that year, but also the release of the album that has now brought Jones her widest audience yet, the Grammy-nominated *Give the People What They Want*.

During her recovery, she didn't even listen to music. "That would make me want to sing, and I couldn't," she said during a phone interview.

There have been many songs in which the singer proclaims herself a survivor. Jones is a *real* survivor. She is cancer free, in good health and in high spirits. "I'm really feeling good," she proclaimed. "My doctor says everything is okay. I'm going to the gym when

I can and I'm working with a trainer. I take it one day at a time and as long as I've got my health and my strength, I'll keep busy and keep my music going." And Jones has never been busier. From Ravinia, she's off to Michigan, then New York and Ohio, then Canada and Texas. And that's just the next two weeks.

Considering what she's been through, one would understand if Jones, known for her high-energy shows, took it down a notch onstage. But that would not be, as per the album title, giving the people what they want. One need only check out a video posted on YouTube of a live performance in Paris last summer to see that the jubilant Jones is bursting with all the vivacity of Tina Turner. One song from the new album, "Get Up and Get



KYLE DEAN REINFORD



Jones has been described as “the biggest star you don’t know about.” But that is changing.

Out,” written about bedbugs, Jones confides, took on a new meaning for her after she beat her cancer. In the video, with a fervor that recalls her earliest years singing gospel in church, she testifies:

The reason I shout is because I got something to shout about. When I was layin’ in the hospital, tubes all down my nose, didn’t know if I would live to see another day. ... They said I was coming back too soon. ... I’m glad I came back on this stage, so I could shout. This is what I told that cancer. I said, “Cancer, I want you to get up and get out of my body. And if you don’t get out, I’m gonna shout you out in my church.” We shout when we want somethin’ to happen. We shout when we feeling good ... and tonight ... I’m feeling good.

Jones, 59, is not an overnight sensation. She recorded her first album when she was 40. She has, she said, always had the music in her, whether it was playing piano like her grandmother, or banging out Otis Redding’s “Shake” on the toy drum her mother bought her. Born in Augusta, GA, she grew up in New York during the golden age of AM radio and basked in Motown, Aretha, Otis, Tina, Gladys, and James Brown. The first album she bought was the Jackson Five’s *ABC*.

But singing was “it” for her. She vividly remembers her role in her church’s Christmas play, singing “Silent Night” to the baby Jesus. She was in the third grade then. “I never stopped singing after that,” she said. “It’s what I was meant to do.”

Jones performed with neighborhood funk bands and wedding bands (which she would draw on when Martin Scorsese later cast her as a wedding singer in *The Wolf of Wall Street*). She went through her “20 Feet from Stardom” phase, performing as a backup singer in the studio or onstage for the jam



band Phish as well as Lou Reed. To make ends meet, she worked as a corrections officer at Rikers Island, giving new meaning to the phrase “captive audience,” though she only sang once for her charges. “One night they refused to go into lock-up unless I sang for them,” Jones said. “I sang one verse and chorus of ‘Greatest Love of All’ and they went into their cells.”

In 1996 she paired up with the Dap-Kings and recorded several singles for the fledgling Daptone Records label, gaining critical acclaim and a cult following among soul and funk aficionados and collectors. They’ve since recorded six full-length albums in the classic Motown idiom. But Jones resists the label of retro soul singer. “To me, retro means a young person trying to imitate another singer,” she said. “I’m not imitating anybody.”

Yet she does proudly carry the flame for the artists who influenced her. “I’m putting a little bit of everyone I honor into these songs,” she said. “It’s going to

sound like it was done back in the day.”

Jones is thrilled to know she is sharing the summer schedule with two of her idols and inspirations. Though she has never met Knight, Jones includes a couple of the Empress’s songs: “I Heard It Through the Grapevine” and “Every Beat of My Heart.” Jones met Franklin in 2010 on the occasion of an Apollo Theatre tribute, for which she performed one of the Queen’s signature songs, “Respect.”

Playing the legendary venue and performing for Franklin was an emotional experience, Jones said. “I literally ran to knock on her [dressing room] door. I was hyperventilating like I was a little kid. I said, ‘It’s such an honor to sing your songs. I’m sorry I’m babbling.’ And then I ran back to the stage for the finale. Later I got to take my picture with her.”

Jones has been described by entertainment reporter Roger Friedman as “the biggest star you don’t know

about.” But that is changing. *Rolling Stone* hailed *Give the People What They Want* as “sublime in period accuracy and in-the-moment passion.” The magazine also called Jones and the band “a national treasure and instant soul party.” She made high-profile appearances in support of the CD on the late-night circuit with the two Jimmys—Kimmel and Fallon—as well as David Letterman. “I don’t know if the album is a breakthrough,” she reflected. “I think we were just on our way up. It does put us on a different level.”

Indeed, the album earned Jones her first Grammy nomination in the R&B category, but don’t get her started on that. Though “proud and grateful” to be nominated, she insists that there should be a separate category for soul music, separate from today’s more pop-oriented R&B. “Don’t get me wrong,” Jones insists. “I’m not saying it’s not great. Just don’t call it soul.”

In addition to her fleeting cameo in *The Wolf of Wall Street*, she also had a role opposite Denzel Washington in *The Great Debaters*. Does the future hold any more film appearances? She would love to provide the voice for an animated Disney character. “How cool would that be?” she enthused.

What is certain is that next year marks the 20th anniversary of Jones and the Dap-Kings. They have two albums in the works, one of them a Christmas collection. She doesn’t ponder what would have happened if she had attained instant success. “Everything happens in the time it was meant to,” she said. “If it was meant to happen for me when I was younger, it would have.”

For now, she is “grateful and thankful” to be singing her songs: “I’m blessed just to be out performing and giving the people what they want.”

And what do the people want?

“They want what we’re going to give them,” she said, laughing, “good soul music.” R

Donald Liebenson is a Chicago-based entertainment writer. His work has appeared in the *Chicago Tribune*, *Chicago Sun-Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, and on *RogerEbert.com*. The first Ravinia concert he attended without his parents was Procol Harum in 1970.



It's Got That Swing

Music means everything to
Tony Bennett and Lady Gaga

By Andy Argyrakis

He's been putting a masterful spin on the Great American Songbook since the 1950s, earning the unparalleled distinction of landing albums on the *Billboard* charts in every decade from then through the present, selling over 50 million titles, and scooping up 18 Grammy Awards, a pair of Emmy Awards, plus a plethora of other esteemed distinctions too numerous to mention.

She's been one of the most provocative and creative presences in pop music since exploding onto the scene in 2008, selling an astounding 28 million albums and 140 million singles, taking home a half dozen Grammys and 13 MTV Video Music Awards, and being crowned by *Rolling Stone* as the "Queen of Pop."



BRYAN ADAMS, TRUNK ARCHIVE; KEVIN MAZUR, GETTY IMAGES; STEVEN KLEIN

Tony Bennett and Lady Gaga have been enjoying a winter-spring “showmance” in the recording studio and on stage.

At fast glance, the 88-year-old Tony Bennett and 29-year-old Lady Gaga might not share much in common other than superstardom, but despite their age gap and divergent core musical disciplines, the relatively recent tag team in the studio and onstage (who appear in sold-out concerts at Ravinia on June 26 and 27) might not be as unlikely a pair as initially assumed. For starters, Astoria, Queens, native Bennett has always been one to study the greats who helped forge his musical foundation, from Bing Crosby to Judy Garland, Louis Armstrong and, of course, Frank Sinatra, “The Chairman of the Board,” who personally endorsed the budding performer (and will coincidentally be honored September 4 at Ravinia via the Sinatra Centennial multimedia celebration starring Frank Sinatra Jr. and the Ravinia Festival Orchestra). As for the Lady (and fellow New Yorker), she gleaned her surname from Queen’s famed single “Radio Ga Ga” and has clearly studied David Bowie’s theatricality and Madonna’s ability to consistently reinvent herself, even going so far as to commission her own production team, Haus of Gaga (think Andy Warhol’s Factory), for costumes, stage sets and a slew of other inventive endeavors.

And while neither is shy about wearing such influences on their sleeves, both Bennett and Gaga are true innovators and mavericks in their respective fields, remaining fiercely independent amidst changing cultural trends and, by doing so, becoming the very barometers by

which they’re measured. But perhaps most important in the case of their current tour together, the pair didn’t just become fast friends following a fateful meeting at a New York benefit for the Robin Hood Foundation in 2011; they also learned they share a voracious affinity for so many unforgettable standards that transcend genre and generation.

“I had never heard anything that she did, so after I finished performing, I went in to see what she was doing,” recalls Bennett, immediately settling in like a dear friend, of that first meeting. “She had a huge audience and I couldn’t get over how much the public loved her. The reaction was so phenomenal, I thought, ‘I’ve gotta go backstage and say hello to her.’ So at the end of her show, I went backstage and her mother and her father were there. When she came out and I said, ‘I’m Tony Bennett,’ she said, ‘Oh my God!’ She was thrilled that I had come, and I said, ‘You know, you went over so big! I never heard the public love somebody as much as they love you!’ And she said, ‘Oh, I would do anything to be able to sing with you.’ So I said, ‘Let’s do an album together,’ and she said, ‘Good, let’s do it.’”

Bennett and Gaga got their first taste of working together in a studio while recording “The Lady Is A Tramp,” the lead track from the former’s chart-topping 2011 project *Duets II*, as well as verification that their chemistry proved so impenetrable that it demanded a full-length follow-up. After scanning through the annals of

seminal and downright ageless songwriters like Cole Porter, Irving Berlin, Cy Coleman, Dorothy Fields and Jimmy Van Heusen, the pair got right down to the business of sculpting 2014’s sophisticated *Cheek To Cheek*. Not only did the collection sell a million copies straight out of the gate and win the Grammy for Best Traditional Pop Vocal Album earlier this year, but it also marked Gaga’s third consecutive number-one album in America (a record among female artists this decade) while extending Bennett’s reign as the oldest artist to ever land in the top spot.

“They’re hit songs and that’s what happens,” a sweet and unhurried Gaga muses, stepping outside of her larger-than-life personality to shine the spotlight on the songs, many of which she’s been singing since childhood. “These are the true American hits, and you can only pray and hope that your music will stay around as long as the classics. These songs are able to transcend the era they were created in and travel through time into the future and have a life of their own with new experiences and new people. I think this music is extremely powerful; it was created during an emotional time and it stands the test of time. Jazz music was created out of the suffering and the fury of the African-American people as they were struggling to be treated equally. Tony is also such a huge proponent of the civil rights movement, and he was such a major figure during all of that. What’s nice to consider when we’re at Ravinia and we’re performing is that there’s that

extremely strong history, not just behind the repertoire, but with Tony himself. There is something that is extremely powerful and authentic, and the message is very, very strong still.”

A quick scan of the CD case, vinyl sleeve or online playlist instantly indicates just how much history is packed into *Cheek To Cheek*, from their duet on the Duke Ellington and Irving Mills original “It Don’t Mean a Thing (If It Ain’t Got That Swing)” to Bennett’s suave solo rendition of Ellington’s instrumental (turned Mitchell Parish–penned) “Sophisticated Lady” and Gaga’s individual rendering of Billy Strayhorn’s breathtaking “Lush Life.” So what’s exactly been the source of the material’s longevity after all these years, according to a man who’s cast fresh interpretations for nearly as long?

“Well, because they’re very honest musicians and they’re very creative,” hypothesizes Bennett. “It’s so improvisational and it’s spontaneous, so they express how they feel about things through their instruments, and what happens is, when you perform that way, your music never sounds old-fashioned or dated. If you listen to a Louis Armstrong record today, it still sounds like he’s still around, and Duke Ellington’s the same way. And of course the great Sinatra, who

does the Great American Songbook [like no other]. No other country has ever given that many wonderful songs—George Gershwin, Cole Porter, Jerome Kern and all the greatest composers that came out of that era. Those songs will never die!”

Ravinia audiences will have the chance to experience these living, breathing compositions firsthand with the pair promising plenty of songs from *Cheek To Cheek* and the surrounding era presented as both duets and periodic solo performances. Bennett ensures “a big swinging band” that includes a string section, while Gaga confides that the show changes from night to night, with edits to the set list taking place right up until the curtain rises.

“It’s a really nice show that is 100 percent focused on the music and 100 percent focused on the relationship between me and Tony and our growth together as friends,” she continues, sounding just as excited about her debut at the venue. “I think it’s going to be a fantastic show and I think that the people in Ravinia will really, really enjoy it. I’m always excited to connect with all the people that we get to meet in these different communities as we travel and to get to play them these classic records. It’s an exciting experience; it’s always new and it’s always magical. Getting to see them light up as they

watch Tony also makes me excited. More than anything, I hope they see the genuine exchange of love between Tony and me. I think it’s extremely rare in today’s industry for there to be a true, authentic collaboration. Tony and I just adore each other and we adore this music.”

Of course, Bennett’s no stranger to Ravinia, having lost count after dozens of appearances throughout his illustrious career—with a “sold out” sign above the box office in practically every instance. “Well, you know how much I love it. Every time I play, the reaction is beautiful,” he says of what’s already been a record-setting run at the oldest outdoor musical festival in America. “How can I be treated better than the way I’ve been treated at Ravinia? It’s so beautiful there to feel all the citizens of the Chicago area cheering me on. The Chicago audience has been so great to me through the years. They’ve kept me right on top and I’ll never get over how wonderful they’ve treated me. And now coming in there with Lady Gaga, I can’t wait because the show is going over so big. I think it’s gonna just be thrilling for me to watch the reaction.”

Though each vocalist is a touring titan in their own regard, aside from the PBS performance turned DVD *Tony Bennett and Lady Gaga: Cheek To Cheek Live!*

“These are the true American hits, and you can only pray and hope that your music will stay around as long as the classics. These songs are able to transcend the era they were created in and travel through time into the future and have a life of their own with new experiences and new people.”
—Lady Gaga



ERIK KABIK

and a few other select engagements, this summer marks their first full-fledged collaborative tour. No wonder both artists seem genuinely fascinated and elated by the rapturous public reception thus far in what's shaping up to be one of the most diverse bodies of record buyers and concertgoers either has ever seen, spanning the very young to the still young at heart.

"It's always so exciting to sell records, especially an album that is bridging a 60-year gap between its partners, and I think this music touches just about everyone," enthuses Gaga. "Tony and I are just serving the composers and keeping this wonderful music alive. I'm serving Tony in honoring the years and years of dedication that he's had to this music. You have to remember that Tony was making jazz music right when rock 'n' roll was invented, and as soon as [that happened], jazz and its relationship with the public changed because of radio. It's very similar to the things that I deal with today as pop music changes from day to

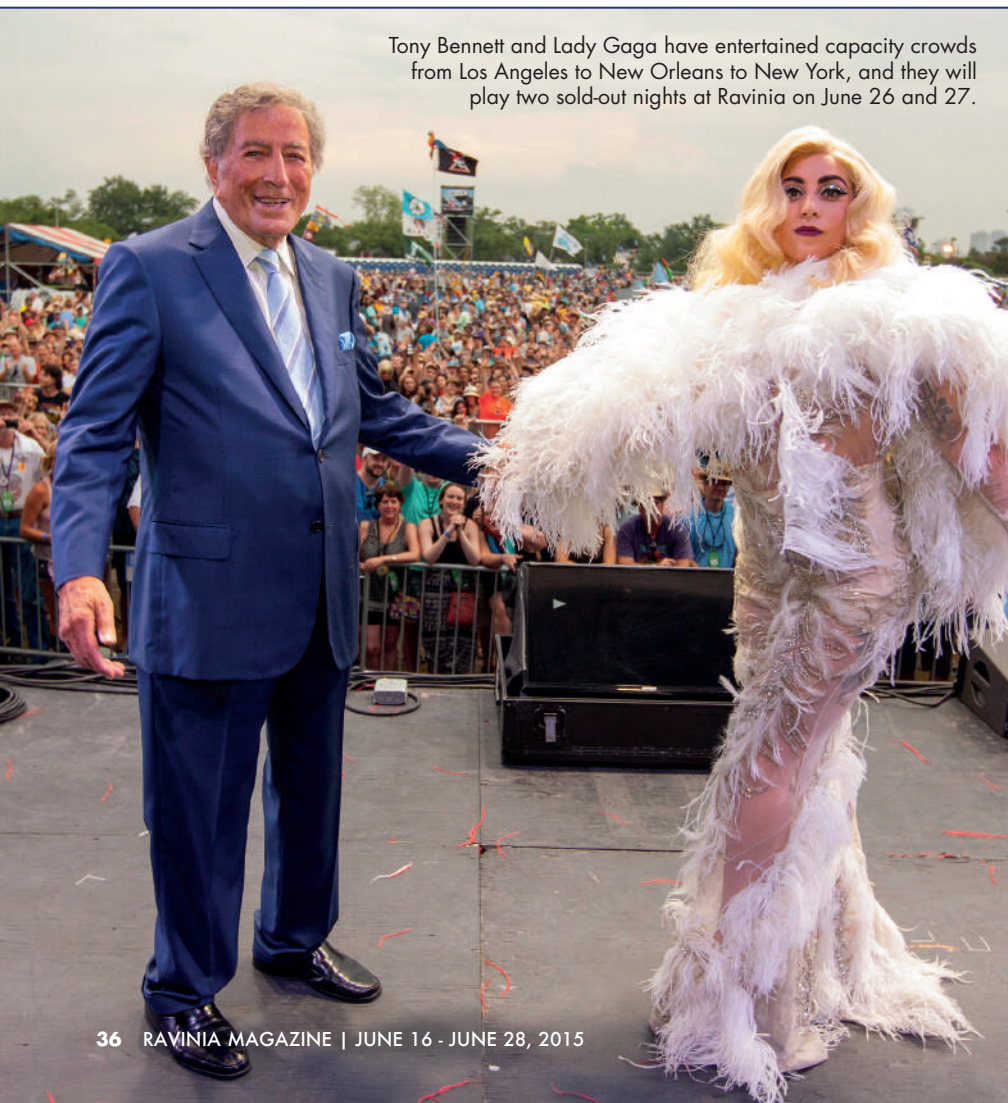
day. Tony had the same experience, so I like to think that it's extremely important that I show the world and my fans as much as possible what it means to have a heart and to be loyal and dedicated to your craft, to not be in it for the money or the fame, but to show them what it is to live a life of dedication to art and beauty, which is Tony Bennett. He really is an incredible man and I hope that my fan base [comes to understand] the power of passion that this man has displayed. And I hope that his fans see that my generation is able to conceive of that hard-working spirit, that ambition and that passion and to celebrate it."

Bennett is quick to return the compliments, both firsthand and those he's heard from longtime listeners who profess to be aficionados of the classic canon. "When they heard her sing, [they said] she's a great jazz singer!" he confirms. "The way she sings, it's never going to sound old-fashioned! She's a great, spontaneous singer and she plays great jazz piano.

She's had very good schooling and she knows what she's doing. She was just playing to little teeny boppers, but what I love is when [they picked up the album I did with her], those little teeny boppers had never heard swing music in their life. Those standards never get old, they get better every year! Now, working with Lady Gaga is twice as good as before. She has her audience, I have my audience, and together it's everybody. It's not about the young or the old; it's back to the audience being a family of all different ages."

As the interview draws to a close, Gaga can't resist giving Bennett one additional tribute, crediting him with more than simply rejuvenating her musical muse, but also becoming a personal mentor whose wisdom lasts long after the stage lights dim. "Tony has taught me so much," she reiterates. "I like people who like to get deep quickly, and I don't like to sit around on the surface for too long with anyone. Tony is just like me and he goes straight to a more emotional, life-changing conversation. He's interested in touching people's lives, and so am I. He's been through so much. He shared so many amazing life stories with me—amazing stories like his friendship with Duke Ellington—and I'm just extremely honored. Working with Tony, I have realized how young I truly am and how much I have ahead of me. I felt so weary from the business, but he really helped to cure that in me with this music because I was instantly reawakened as my 14-year-old self singing these tunes, and I remembered why I got into music to begin with. Nobody can teach you how to sing jazz—you either got it or you don't. And I'll tell you something, if I couldn't sing jazz, he sure as hell wouldn't be singing with me. He would not have made an album with me. I have a lot of reverence for Tony and he's extremely important to me in my life." R

Tony Bennett and Lady Gaga have entertained capacity crowds from Los Angeles to New Orleans to New York, and they will play two sold-out nights at Ravinia on June 26 and 27.



BARRY BRECHSEIN

Andy Argyrakis is a Chicago-based writer/photographer whose credits include the *Chicago Tribune*, *Chicago Sun-Times*, *Daily Herald*, *Illinois Entertainer*, *Concert Livewire*, *Chicago Now*, *Redeye*, *Metromix*, *Paste*, *Downbeat*, *MTV.com*, *Fuse TV*, *Pollstar* and *Celebrity Access*, among many others. He also is the founder and content curator for ChicagoConcertReviews.com.

COME HELL OR BLACK WATER

The Doobie Brothers
are determined to
keep you on your feet

By Tricia Despres





“Do you really want to do this?”

It's a simple enough question between a father and a daughter, perhaps on the day she goes off to college or the day she takes the hand of her spouse. But when asked by Doobie Brothers' lead singer Tom Johnston to his aspiring-musician daughter, the question took on a whole new gravity, coming from not only a father with the best interests of his daughter in mind, but a musician who has gone through his share of ups and downs within the constantly evolving world of music.

The Doobie Brothers may have changed personnel over the years, but since the group's Ravinia debut in 1997, its look has scarcely wavered.



His daughter's answer to the thought-provoking question didn't surprise him all that much, Johnston says, because it was the same exact answer he once gave all those years ago back in California to all who doubted his own musical dreams. Here and now, Johnston's daughter, Lara, is a singer-songwriter like dad, and is opening for his legendary rock band at its June 30 show at Ravinia.

"Ravinia is such a beautiful place," begins Johnston, speaking over the phone from a tour bus on a rare day off in the middle of San Antonio, TX, where he and his Doobie Brothers bandmates Patrick Simmons and John McFee will play a show the next day. "There is something about looking at the greenery and playing amidst that beautiful background that definitely gives you a lift as a band. Plus the crowds are always responsive at Ravinia ... always."

A co-founder of the Doobie Brothers back in 1969 (alongside Simmons), Johnston currently finds himself in the middle of a cramped tour schedule that will take the revitalized band all over the country in the coming months, including a late-summer stint of shows with classic rocker Gregg Allman. "I think that Chicago is one of the towns that the band always looks forward going to," Johnston says. "Selfishly, we would love some time off there to just hang around Michigan Avenue and eat at all the amazing restaurants and just soak up the atmosphere there. It's one of those cities that we put red stars on the calendar for. [Laughs] It's just so different than all the other big cities. There is such a laid-back attitude there even though it's a big city. It's hard to explain. All I know is that it's just very comfortable for us to be there."

With a more than 40-year career during which the band has sold over 48 million albums, snagged four Grammy Awards and amassed five top-10 singles and 16 top-40 hits, the Doobie Brothers currently find themselves in that sweet spot where they not only love where they are, but also love reminiscing on all the places they have been. "If I were to look back on everything we've done and pick a favorite time in the span of our career, I would have to say it would be that period of time before we hit it big," recalls Johnston, who served as songwriter on such Doobie Brothers hits as "Listen to the Music," "Rockin' Down the Highway," "Long Train Runnin'," and "Jesus Is Just Alright." "We were having a great time. We were broke. We barely had money to pay the rent, but we could play music all day. We were going to college and hanging out with a lot of people that we really liked. My Volkswagen had gas in it and I could go wherever I wanted. [Laughs] It was just a really cool time for me."

When stardom arrived for the Doobie Brothers, everything changed. "We hit this point where our songs were being played on the radio and we were winning awards. Pretty soon we were gone all the time, and that carefree, happy-go-lucky vibe pretty much walked right out of the door," Johnston intones in a more mellow voice. "All of a sudden, you are out working 260 dates a year and if you are not on the road, you are in the studio. It was like being on some sort of wild and crazy carnival ride."

The carnival ride continues for the Doobie Brothers, but Johnston says that these days everything feels so incredibly different. "Those days where you could just be footloose and fancy-free, playing some pizza parlors in the mountains and



The Doobie Brothers' ax men, Tom Johnston, Patrick Simmons, and John McFee (left to right), keep their long train of hits runnin'.

hoping to make it in this crazy music business are long gone," he explains. "These days, you have to play all the time and build a following. I mean, it's tough out there. The sheer number of people trying to get in the business has skyrocketed, and there are a lot less doors to walk through."

Fortunately, there has remained a vibrant, strong and loyal fan following for the band from California. "We are really lucky to have had fans stick with us for such a long time," Johnston says. "Plus we continue to be able to pick up younger audiences that have gotten turned on to the band. In the crowds in front of us, we see everyone from teens to people our age. It's really fascinating."

Indeed, young and old alike latched onto the band's 2014 release, *Southbound*, a collaborative album that reunited the band with former lead singer Michael McDonald and a slew of country artists, including Blake Shelton, Sara Evans and the Zac Brown Band. "It was a challenge but also quite a kick for us," Johnston recalls. "It brought us in front of a totally different crowd that we had never played to, and culminated with our performance on the CMA Awards. Heck, it drew me to sit down and do some songwriting with some amazing people in Nashville, which is something I might have never done if it wasn't for this album."

These days one of the Doobie Brothers' main goals is putting on a live show that gets their crowds up dancing and having fun. "One of the most rewarding things for us to do at

this point in our career is to play our music and get that sort of reaction from the crowd," says Johnston. "If we can get people up on their feet and dancing, we have accomplished what we came to do." Of course, they do have some other goals. "We will put out new music, but I just don't know when," Johnston says. "Things are so different now. Albums are not selling, even downloading is going down, and now streaming is the thing to do. [Sighs] We just need to take the time to write once we get off the road. I'm curious as to what we may come up with. I wouldn't mind taking it in a few different directions."

For now the proud father is content watching his daughter make strides in the music business, knowing deep down that she might just end up following in his fateful footsteps. "Watching her go through this, I just try to be as encouraging as I can," Johnston concludes. "As a musician and a singer and a songwriter, she is just incredible, and she has worked so very hard. I am amazed that she has the heart and determination to do it."

So what was her answer when he asked her if she really wanted to do this? "She told me that she couldn't imagine doing anything else," Johnston says. "And I know exactly what she means." R

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Tom and Lara Johnston at the ASCAP Pop Music Awards, where the Doobie Brothers were given the Voice of Music Award earlier this year.



IT AIN'T NECESSARILY SO

Bobby McFerrin hears the history behind the Gershwins' *Porgy and Bess*

By Mark Thomas Ketterson

Some years ago I was browsing through bins of CDs at a music superstore and one album virtually jumped off the rack and yelled, “Buy me!” The album was entitled *Hush*, and pictured on the cover were two smiling gentlemen I admired very much: cellist Yo-Yo Ma and the inimitable, multiple Grammy Award-winning singer and conductor Bobby McFerrin. It was a happy photo, and a very happy CD. The title cut was a delightful rendition of “Hush Little Baby” that had me bobbing my head the whole drive home. Ma did wonderful things, and McFerrin, who

returns to Ravinia on July 8 to conduct the hits from Gershwin’s *Porgy and Bess*, revealed himself to be an amazing one-man band as he provided percussion, counterpoint and, of course, the vocals—all in that unique voice of his. His sound, with its bits of pop, funk and dashes of other things, was impossible to classify, almost as if McFerrin embodied the muse of music itself.

That musical spirit was likely inborn: McFerrin is the son of singer Sara Copper and the great Robert McFerrin, who is well remembered as the first African-American man to sing at the



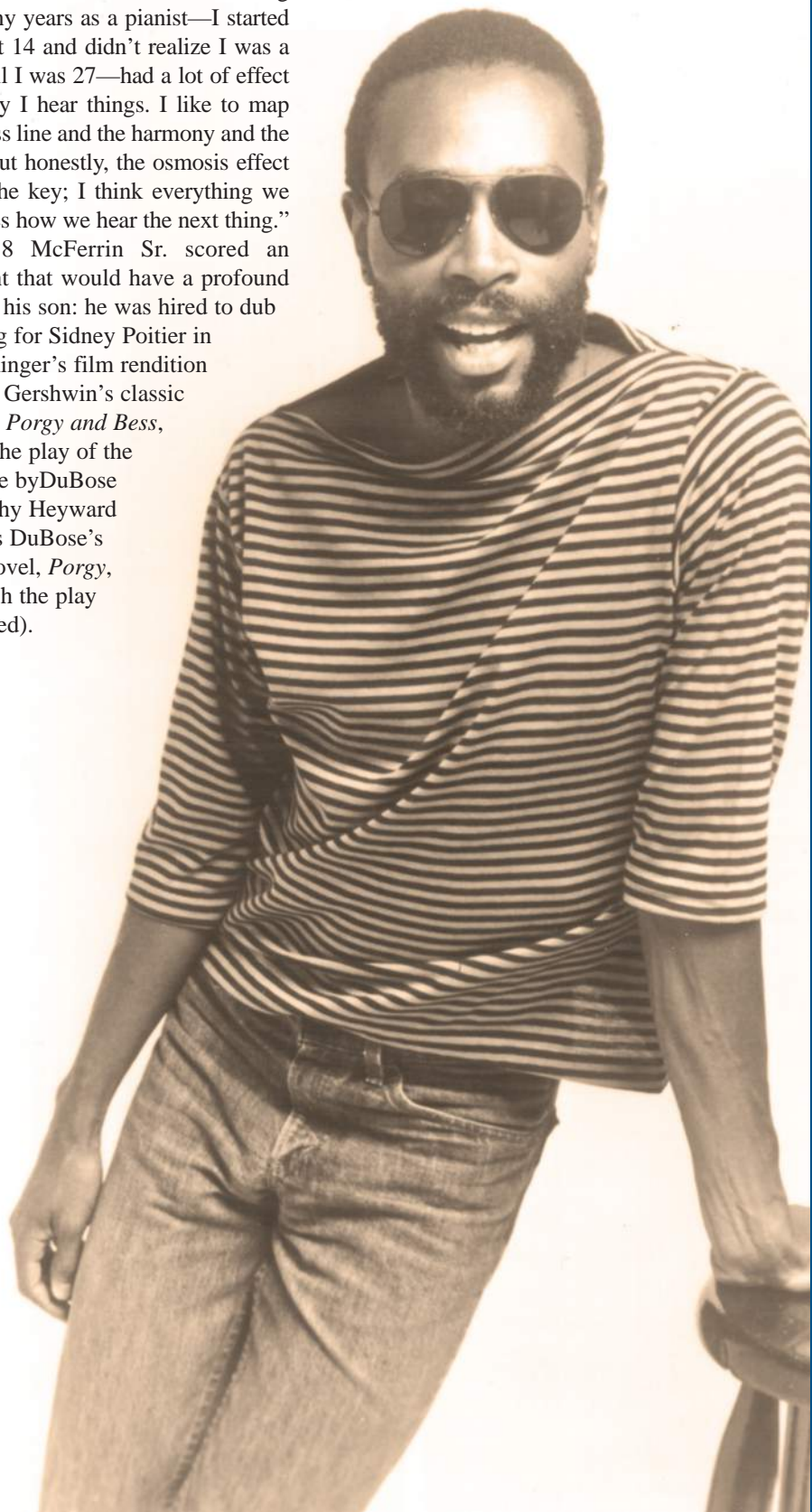
Bobby McFerrin (above, far right) first appeared at Ravinia in 1987, the year before “Don’t Worry, Be Happy” made him a worldwide sensation. Coincidentally, his father, Robert McFerrin (right), sang at Ravinia in 1957, the year before he dubbed the singing voice of Porgy in Otto Preminger’s film version of *Porgy and Bess*. Two years earlier he had become the first African-American man to sing at the Metropolitan Opera, performing the role of Amonasro in Verdi’s *Aida*; he is pictured here in costume reading fan mail.

Metropolitan Opera. McFerrin Sr. bowed at the Met in 1955, three weeks after contralto Marian Anderson broke the color barrier for Met singers with her historic performance in Verdi's *Un ballo in maschera*. Opera buffs tend towards diva obsession, so the parade of female singers who graced the company in the wake of Anderson's success has tended to eclipse the contributions of the gentlemen (not to mention that of ballerina Janet Collins, who was actually the first black artist at the Met). McFerrin Sr. had already distinguished himself on Broadway and at the New York City Opera with a glorious, ringing baritone that made him an ideal interpreter of Verdi. He was to remain for several years at the Met, where his assignments included Amonasro in *Aida* (the vehicle of his debut) as well as the title role of *Rigoletto* and Valentin in Gounod's *Faust*. His milieu was music; quite a heady environment for his son Robert Jr. (who we all know as "Bobby") and his daughter Brenda. "I grew up in a house full of music," Bobby McFerrin recalls. "All kinds of music. I can't begin to tell you how grateful I am for that. I have lots of specific memories: all of us singing together, hiding under the piano listening to my father teach and practice, going to church with my mother to sing in the choir, 'conducting' our stereo as it played Beethoven, my mom putting on music to make me feel better when I was sick. I know all those experiences shaped me as a musician and as a person."

Although we tend to associate Bobby McFerrin as a vocalist, he began his formal musical training on the clarinet, later turning to piano. "I never imagined I'd be anything but a musician," he explains. "I thought I'd be different from everyone else in the family by becoming an instrumentalist instead of a vocalist." Vocal influences in this household were inescapable, however, and McFerrin soon found himself studying voice "by osmosis." "I listened to my father practice and teach. He was very hard on his students, and even harder on himself; he held a very high standard for music making. I can't imagine a better formal education. But I also just spent a lot of time alone in a room, singing and singing, learning to

make the sounds I could hear in my head. I can think of many moments when influences really hit hard: watching the movie *Zulu* with Michael Caine, there was a scene with African music and dance; listening to Sly Stone; hearing Herbie Hancock with the Mwandishi band—too many to count. And I know that working for so many years as a pianist—I started working at 14 and didn't realize I was a singer until I was 27—had a lot of effect on the way I hear things. I like to map out the bass line and the harmony and the melody. But honestly, the osmosis effect was still the key; I think everything we hear shapes how we hear the next thing."

In 1958 McFerrin Sr. scored an assignment that would have a profound impact on his son: he was hired to dub the singing for Sidney Poitier in Otto Preminger's film rendition of George Gershwin's classic folk opera *Porgy and Bess*, based on the play of the same name by DuBose and Dorothy Heyward (as well as DuBose's original novel, *Porgy*, from which the play was adapted).



3. SUITE FROM "PORGY AND BESS"

Much experimentation has been done in the cause of the native American Opera. There seems to be a confirmed opinion that the only genuine American theme is that of the colored man, and the trend is strongly in that direction. Even our popular writers are feeling the pull, and Mr. Gershwin has written in his own inimitable style an opera that has been hailed as the best of its kind. The story is the usual slightly sordid tale of negro life, and the results of "happy dust" that is the bane of the race. Several of the numbers are well known from frequent radio and concert production, especially the baritone solo "I got plenty o' nuttin'" and the soprano song that seems to have been based on an old folk tune from its unusual intervals.

With its recent popularity, *Porgy and Bess* has also come under scrutiny for its portrayal of African-American culture. When Gershwin conducted his suite from the opera at Ravinia in 1936, the program notes (above) were less than sympathetic about the recurring theme of drug use, represented at left in San Francisco Opera's 2009 broadcast production.

I could have used the overture he wrote for the film." McFerrin categorically denies reports that he sought to rescue the score from classical musicians who lost its jazz elements, however. "I really don't think I've ever said that. On the contrary, sometimes it's hard for orchestra musicians to swing, but I've conducted this score many times and I don't remember a single time it was a problem. The swing is written into the score. He [Gershwin] knew exactly what he wanted."

The influence of *Porgy and Bess* on the music world is inestimable. The opera premiered in 1935 at the Alvin Theatre on Broadway (a proper unveiling in an opera house for a work cast with black singers was deemed unthinkable in those less enlightened times), where it ran for an impressive 124 performances. A toehold in the operatic repertory took some time to achieve, at least in the United States. Paradoxically, given that the piece is now regarded as the Great American Opera, America was a bit late to her own party. *Porgy and Bess* enjoyed operatic currency in Europe before becoming fully established at home, sometimes performed by Caucasian performers in blackface (a practice the Gershwin estate soon clamped down on). A celebrated mounting at Houston Grand Opera in 1976

"When my father got the job singing the part of Porgy, everything changed for my family and for me. The memories are all mixed up together: moving to Los Angeles, going to the beach, listening to dad sing the songs, seeing the palm trees, getting to meet Sammy Davis Jr., watching the choir rehearse under Ken Darby. Then the album came out and we played it over and over again. The music

became the background music for our lives for a good long while."

The score has become essential for McFerrin as an adult as well. Since the 1990s he has won great acclaim with a concert version that has graced various musical centers, including Ravinia in 1997. "I got to meet André Previn, too," he remembers. "When I first conducted the piece, I called him. I wished



Eric Owens (Porgy, right) reassures Laquita Mitchell (Bess, left) that “Bess, You Is My Woman Now” in San Francisco Opera’s 2009 production of *Porgy and Bess*. The aria’s lyrics have been a source of controversy among *Porgy* interpreters, with some preferring to substitute the grammatically correct “are.” Owens adhered to Gershwin’s original lyrics in San Francisco and in the Lyric Opera of Chicago’s recent production.

led to a much-needed re-evaluation, and *Porgy and Bess* finally entered the repertory of the Metropolitan Opera in 1985. Lyric Opera of Chicago has twice enjoyed tremendous success with the piece, first in 2008 and again in 2014. In the meantime, *Porgy and Bess* has seen innumerable reinterpretations in every conceivable musical genre from pop to rock to jazz—it’s estimated that “Summertime,” the score’s biggest hit tune, has been covered by over 33,000 artists.

With that popularity has come controversy, particularly in this post-civil rights era, when the depiction of southern blacks in *Porgy and Bess* has been seen by some as patronizing and demeaning, despite the ineffably beautiful music. Rumors circulated about one Met baritone who declined to sing “Bess, You Is My Woman Now” as written, preferring to substitute the grammatically correct “are.” Composer Ned Rorem, when commissioned for an operatic adaptation of another Heyward novel, *Mamba’s Daughters*, withdrew from the project, stating, “How could a white artist, however compassionate, presume to depict a black nightmare from the inside out?”

“As we look back at it now, it seems dated and stereotypical,” McFerrin admits. “But I think Gershwin was making a sincere effort to tell the truth. He did his homework, he visited churches and neighborhoods, and I can tell he

was sincerely, personally drawn to the sounds and tried to follow the music and let it lead. The question of dialect and pronunciation comes up around the spirituals, too. I have such incredible memories of my dad in our living room working on the spirituals with the legendary [composer/arranger] Hall Johnson. He coached both Marian Anderson and my dad in singing that material and spearheaded a lot of the efforts to bring those songs into the concert halls. His grandmother was a slave, and he had very specific ideas about the ‘right’ way to pronounce the lyrics. And maybe those ways sound contrived or politically incorrect now, but for him that was the true sound of it. If I thought there was real racism in the piece, I’d talk to the audience about it when I perform it. It is fascinating how the piece has functioned in the freelance economy. It’s needed the casting of a lot of wonderful African-American singers, and I think that’s good. I’m glad they are working.”

They certainly are. A glance at the resumés of some of the most internationally celebrated singers of the last several decades, from Leontyne Price and William Warfield, to Grace Bumbry and Simon Estes, as well as Adina Aaron and Eric Owens, reveals an association with *Porgy and Bess*. Even Maya Angelou once took part in an international tour of the work. Ravinia’s audience will have

the opportunity to savor McFerrin’s take on Gershwin’s masterpiece with singers including Broadway’s Brian Stokes Mitchell and the delectable soprano Nicole Cabell. He’s also enlisted Josephine Lee—with whom he’s worked on his last two Ravinia appearances, including the 2003 gala with Kathleen Battle and Denyce Graves—to assemble and prepare the chorus.

Before wrapping up, I cannot resist telling McFerrin how much he cheered me up with that *Hush Little Baby* collaboration with Yo-Yo Ma. “Collaborations are a joy,” he enthuses, “and I’ve had some great ones: Yo-Yo, Chick Corea, the Yellowjackets, Voicestra, the Spirityouall band. All different, all wonderful.

“I think my job as an artist is to bring joy. That’s it. When I’m on stage I try to invite the audience into the incredible feeling of joy and freedom I get when I sing, when I follow the music forward. I want the audience to leave the theater feeling better than they felt when they came in. I want to remind us all of what a joy it is to be alive, to dance and sing, to make music together.” **R**

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

No Time (Capsule) Like the Present

Finding finality with
five concerts of favorites

By James Conlon





This summer marks 41 years since I first visited Ravinia, 38 since I first conducted here, and 10 years (making it 11 seasons) since I became music director of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's residency.

Ravinia has been with me in one form or another for almost the entirety of my adult life. I have conducted many concerts, met many people, watched the CSO go through an entire generational change, and made many friends.

I designed my programs for this my final season as music director to represent some of the major themes of the past 11 seasons. Each of the five programs has great significance for me.

The concert on July 22 is a re-creation of one of the two programs I conducted for my Ravinia-debut weekend in 1977. For that original performance Mozart's Piano Concerto in A Major, K. 488, was played by John Browning, who back then was a fixture at the festival, and this year's concert will feature Garrick Ohlsson, who has similarly become a regular guest at Ravinia. Mahler's First Symphony made up the second half of the concert. At the time, I chose two pieces I loved, but the program in a way previewed the major cycles of those two composers' works I would present over the course of my years as music director.

A cycle consisting of all of Mozart's piano concertos occupied several seasons. Many artists—some established and some just starting out—took part. Taken as a whole, the piano concertos are monumental. The limitless invention, variety of moods, deep expression and virtuosity have very few parallels in the classical music repertory. The same can be said of the composer's operas, which formed the second Mozart cycle. In the Martin Theatre, over six years we produced semi-staged versions of seven Mozart operas (reprising two that were among his famed collaborations with librettist Lorenzo Da Ponte) with the CSO at the center of the stage.



During his Ravinia directorship, James Conlon has delved deeply into the music of (left to right) Mahler and Mozart; Russian masters, including Mussorgsky, Shostakovich, Rachmaninoff, and Tchaikovsky; and composers whose works were suppressed in their lifetimes, like Zemlinsky.



With the 100th anniversary of Gustav Mahler's death being marked in 2011, rather than trying to do all of the symphonies in one season—as James Levine organized with the CSO at Ravinia in 1979, and in which I took part—we started the cycle several seasons earlier, performing all nine symphonies and the Deryck Cooke edition of the *Adagio* from the Tenth Symphony, as well as *Das Lied von der Erde* and *Das klagende Lied*, by the time of the milestone. So on July 22 I will not only be remembering my debut, but those three cycles that occupied a central place in my programming.

The Russian repertory has also had a major presence during my Ravinia tenure. The three composers represented on my July 23 program—Mussorgsky, Rachmaninoff and Shostakovich—along with Tchaikovsky (who has his own program, which I will detail later) are the

core of the Russian orchestral repertory. That being said, Mussorgsky wrote few works solely for orchestra, and those we know are often in orchestrations by other composers (particularly Ravel, Rimsky-Korsakov and Shostakovich). I can think of almost no composer who left so few completed works that conversely has had an extensive influence on 20th-century music. The three orchestral pieces from *Khovanshchina* are but a small taste of this massive and powerful opera with well over three hours of music. Spiritually, Shostakovich was to the 20th century what Mussorgsky was to the 19th, with the real difference being that the former was disciplined and prolific whereas his predecessor was scattered and unable to produce (or often finish) works and was eventually consumed by his own weakness and died at an early age. I have directed five of Shostakovich's symphonies

(celebrating the centenary of his birth with his final three) as well as two of his concertos at Ravinia, but this, too, is merely a suggestion of a larger body of work when one realizes that he wrote 15 each of symphonies and string quartets, aside a massive number of solo pieces, choral works and several operas. Rachmaninoff is more the direct musical descendent of Tchaikovsky. Mussorgsky and Tchaikovsky were on opposite sides of the 19th-century polemics in Russian music, and one could say that Shostakovich and Rachmaninoff continued those lines respectively in the 20th.

During my Ravinia years I have had the pleasure of working with many young soloists in many different capacities, both on stage and at the Steans Institute. I wanted to represent the success of all those young soloists, and the phenomenal pianist Lise de la Salle fits that bill perfectly.



At Ravinia, Conlon has had a bountiful onstage collaboration with pianist Jorge Federico Osorio, as well as with many young stars, such as Lise de la Salle (below).

An all-Tchaikovsky concert has been a staple of the Ravinia repertory for many years, and I have done quite a few of these. The form is usually the violin or a piano concerto plus an orchestral piece, ending with the “1812” Overture. Upon learning that Maxim Vengerov was available to play with us, it was an obvious year to choose the violin concerto.

When I tried to think of what I had never done in this context and would love to, I immediately thought of *Swan Lake*. Although I have conducted *The Nutcracker* in its entirety as a concert piece, to my regret I have never done the complete *Swan Lake*. For the August 1 concert, I decided to represent that as-yet-unfulfilled wish with several excerpts that I particularly like (if one can even comfortably make such a statement) instead of the traditional suite.

An important feature of almost every Ravinia season in the past 11 years has been a concert opera in the Pavilion. The highlights include Verdi’s *Otello*, *Aida*, *Rigoletto* and *Requiem* (if you consider it, as many do, to be his greatest opera); Puccini’s *Madama Butterfly* and *Tosca*; and Richard Strauss’s *Salome*, alternating in recent years with two performances each of a pair of Mozart’s operas, semi-staged in the Martin Theatre. While I do not consider any operatic season complete without at least one Mozart, Verdi or Wagner opera, I have never conducted any of the latter here.

To rectify that omission, *The Flying Dutchman* will be my final concert, on August 15. I am grateful for the collaboration with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and the Chicago Symphony Chorus over these years, and I liked the idea that I would finish my years as Ravinia’s music director together with all of them on the stage of the Pavilion. [R](#)

In future issues of *Ravinia Magazine* this season, James Conlon will recall his favorite memories of conducting at the festival since his 1977 debut.



STEPHANE GALLOS

and works by Adolph Busch, Wilhelm Grosz, Erich Wolfgang Korngold and Darius Milhaud have also been featured. *Die Seejungfrau* represents all of that music that is gradually regaining a much deserved place in the repertory more than half a century after the atrocities that almost consigned them to oblivion were committed.

Zemlinsky was brought up in the school of Johannes Brahms, and so I thought pairing these two composers, by way of the latter’s First Piano Concerto, was an appropriate way to also pay tribute to one of the many artists with whom I have enjoyed an ongoing and fruitful collaboration. Jorge Federico Osorio has perhaps appeared with me as much or more than any other soloist, including for concertos by Mozart and Schumann, as well as a complete cycle of those by Beethoven.

I feel that the longer I live, the more I love Tchaikovsky’s music. I came to Russian music first through Mussorgsky, so perhaps that left me with a reticence to embrace his music. Or possibly it was that strange snobbery that afflicted us musicians in our conservatory years. In any case, that is all over and done. With each passing year I discover more music to love (I just conducted *The Queen of Spades* for the first time) and more to love in the music I already know.

In my first year at the festival, I inaugurated a series featuring rarely played music by composers whose works were suppressed during their lifetimes and whose legacies have been stunted after their deaths. We called the series “Breaking the Silence” at Ravinia (I employed the name “Recovered Voices” in Los Angeles). To represent this cause, I have chosen to feature Alexander Zemlinsky and his massive tone poem *Die Seejungfrau*, which is based on Hans Christian Andersen’s *The Little Mermaid*. I have drawn extensively from the music of Viktor Ullmann, Erwin Schulhoff, Franz Schreker and Kurt Weill in addition to Zemlinsky,



FoodStuff

By Ali Saboor, Executive Chef at Ravinia

Ravinia is wonderfully unique in so many ways, which is why it has become such a tradition for so many generations of music lovers over the years. There are so few places where you can lay out a blanket in fresh-cut grass and bask in the summer sun while listening to some of the best live music in Chicago. While picnicking is one of the most celebrated aspects of Ravinia, by the time you get all your necessary accoutrements in order, you think to yourself, now I have to carry all of this?

Actually, you don't! While planning the menus at Ravinia Market, I keep this concept in mind. Our Grab 'n' Go area is specifically designed both for guests who want to build their picnic from scratch or add a few extra treats to their homemade basket. We have many options for each picnic piece, and plenty of adult- and kid-friendly beverages to round out your meal under the stars.

This year I've added a few new items to our menu based on what I would make for my family and friends on a summer afternoon. I start with kale and artichoke dip, a spin on a classic that is sure to be a crowd pleaser. I've also introduced a broccoli, almond and cranberry salad; steering away from the typical bowl full of lettuce, this hearty dish holds strong even on the hottest of days. The mortadella and feta sandwich might be my favorite new Grab 'n' Go item. Paring these two rich tastes with cucumber, tomatoes, olives and mint makes it the perfect balance of flavor and freshness. At everyone's favorite detour, the Sweet Stop, you will find a wide array of signature cakes, fresh baked cookies, ice cream novelties and a selection of cupcakes with fun, new flavors.

Next time you visit Ravinia, stop by the Market and build a delicious picnic in just a few minutes. While you're at it, stop at the Ravinia Gift Shop next door, where you can buy blankets, chairs and lots of fun things to fancy up your spread. With all these options once you arrive, you can come to your next concert empty-handed.

Cheers!

Chef Ali Saboor

Kale, Spinach and Artichoke Dip

Yield: 6 servings

Ingredients

- 16 ounces Greek yogurt
- 3 tablespoons mayonnaise
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 1 cup kale, finely chopped
- 1 cup spinach, finely chopped
- ¼ cup carrot, finely chopped
- 1 cup artichoke hearts, quartered
- 2 garlic cloves, finely minced or pressed
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- ¼ teaspoon smoked paprika

Directions

Combine all ingredients in a bowl and mix well to combine.

This dip is extra flavorful after it has been refrigerated for a few hours.

Serve with chips, crackers or vegetables.



Mickey, Movies and Music

By Jack Zimmerman

For most of my life, I've listened to classical music. For all of my life, I've gone to the movies. My idea of a good time has nothing to do with a lavish vacation or a dinner at Alinea. Give me a ticket to a Chicago Symphony Orchestra concert or a pass to any movie theater and I'm happy camper.

While the worlds of a high art (classical music) and pop culture (movies) are usually distant from one another, occasionally, they intersect. A movie soundtrack might have an excerpt from the art-music canon, and that coupling of film and music can become the movie's defining moment, at least for me. For instance, *Apocalypse Now* has that epic scene wherein Robert Duvall—who plays whack-job Col. Kilgore ("I love the smell of napalm in the morning")—has a fleet of helicopters attack the enemy. Richard Wagner's "Ride of the Valkyries," blaring from the helicopters, is the chaos-inspiring music that makes that scene so unforgettable.

Or *2001: A Space Odyssey*, with the opening bars of Richard Strauss's *Also sprach Zarathustra* pulsating through the theater's sound system as a tribe of early human wannabes gets booted from their water hole by a rival tribe. One of the wannabes figures out the principle of leverage as applied to head-thumping. He uses a large bone to kill the leader of the other tribe and recaptures the water hole. The scene makes so much more sense than the rest of the movie.

Or Martin Scorsese's *Raging Bull*, the story of a professional boxer who destroys himself and nearly everyone else around him. Scorsese chose the simple and incredibly beautiful *Intermezzo* from Mascagni's opera *Cavalleria rusticana*, which plays

while the opening titles roll. It's one of those perfect cinema moments—so much beauty before so much brutality.

Or the greatest bicycle movie of all time, *Breaking Away*, with Mendelssohn's ever-buoyant and joyful "Italian" Symphony accompanying the hero, a small-town kid with Tour-de-France legs, as he pedals his way to adulthood in Bloomington, IN.

Of course, there's *10* with Dudley Moore as a mid-life troll who becomes obsessed with a young, beautiful and newly married

Beethoven, Tchaikovsky, Debussy, Stravinsky, Ponchielli, Elgar and Respighi are all represented between *Fantasia* and its sequel, *Fantasia 2000*, but it's the animation of Paul Dukas's *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* that completely captivates audiences in both. In a bit of inspired cartoon slapstick, Mickey Mouse is a hapless apprentice who tries out some of his master's magic tricks and things soon get out of control.

These days Paul Dukas is viewed as a one-hit wonder, with *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* being that one hit. Dukas was close friends with Debussy and more than a nodding acquaintance of Saint-Saëns. Born in 1865 to a banker father and pianist mother, Dukas began piano lessons at a young age. At 14 he began composing and by age 16 he was studying at the Paris Conservatory. He wrote *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* in 1892, and the 12-minute piece quickly overshadowed all his other works. In later life he was a highly regarded teacher, and among his students were future compos-

ers Olivier Messiaen, Carlos Chávez, and Joaquín Rodrigo. Dukas was incredibly self-critical. He destroyed a good many of his works simply because he was dissatisfied with them.

Dukas died in 1935 at the age of 69, only five years before *Fantasia* was premiered.

On Sunday, July 12, Ted Sperling conducts the CSO for a showing of highlights from Disney's *Fantasia* and *Fantasia 2000*, and Mickey will don his sorcerer's hat once more.

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



woman played by Bo Derek. Ravel's *Bolero* is the perfect seduction music. Who would have thought that music featuring a snare drum could be so sexy?

But my all-time favorite coupling of classical music and film is Walt Disney's *Fantasia*. It's an animated feature-length movie that's all about classical music and the Disney artists' visual images that the music inspires. Instead of fitting music to already existing pictures, Disney constructed a group of visual stories that fit several established orchestral masterpieces. The original *Fantasia* (1940), which was shown in theaters equipped with special sound systems, featured an orchestra conducted by Leopold Stokowski.

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