

RAVINIA

2015 PREVIEW

MAGAZINE



COMPLETE SEASON PREVIEW

- Recalling James Conlon's four decades with Ravinia
- Ramsey Lewis celebrates 80th with CSO debut
- Seeing the music of *Fantasia*, *Gladiator*, *Star Trek* and Tim Burton's films



FOUR SCORE...

The natural beauty of Ravinia makes us forget that almost every aspect of the festival that delights us—beyond fireflies and lake breezes—is the product of individuals making choices. Nightly during the summer, Ravinia’s family of artists, board members, docents, landscapers, chefs and administrators offer their collective vision of what is wonderful to an extended family of concertgoers. Two individuals whose superb taste and shrewd judgment have been particularly vital to shaping Ravinia for nearly 50 years, sculptor Richard Hunt and jazz legend Ramsey Lewis, will be honored this season. Each will be turning 80, although Ravinia President and CEO Welz Kauffman is quick to point out that for these remarkable men, “80 isn’t a stop sign or even a plateau. These are artists who will continue to excite us with their genius.”

Confirming that he is still going strong, pianist and composer Ramsey Lewis confides, “I never thought about age till my wife threw me a surprise birthday party 10 years ago. She planned it up under my nose and I never suspected a thing. There were a hundred people waiting for me at the Four

Seasons.” After that brief, festive glance at 70, Lewis resumed his usual outlook. “I feel like 50. Age has no importance to me, other than knowing better than to waste time.”

Lewis will be the focus of multiple events during the course of the summer, including the August 8 premiere with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra of his first piano concerto, coincidentally his debut with the remarkable ensemble. “Of course, that honor for him is just as much his gift to us,” Kauffman points out. On June 29 sculptor Richard Hunt, who is similarly vigorous in the pursuit of his art, will receive the Marion Lloyd Life Trustee Award, Ravinia’s highest honor, at a gala dinner preceding that night’s performance by the Juilliard String Quartet.

Hunt’s associations with Ravinia are long-standing and various. “My mother was interested in music,” he recalls, “and we’d go when I was a kid.” These outings

...AND

contributed to his lifelong love of the baroque, and he came to see Ravinia as “continuing a tradition of creating an encompassing sense of place in which different features of music, art and landscape all reinforce each other. Ravinia continues a long history. Think of Handel’s ‘Fireworks Music’ played in the Vauxhall Gardens as an antecedent to what Ravinia does.” His own tribute to the baroque pastoral is echoed in the title of his magnificent work installed at Ravinia in 1976, *Music For A While*. The line from Dryden’s *Oedipus* concludes “shall all your cares beguile,” and the passage was set to music later in the 17th century by Henry Purcell.

Hunt’s first professional encounter with Ravinia came in the mid-’50s. As a student at the Art Institute, he recalls, “I was invited to exhibit sculpture in the Casino Building by Ravinia’s Mildred Fagen. She was a terrific woman.” (Her portrait by Salvador Dalí suggests that she was a striking combination of motherly and unconventional.) Hunt was also encouraged by Stanley Freehling, a notable former chairman of the Ravinia Board of Trustees. “One day in the late ’60s, Stanley asked me to meet. I thought I was just getting a free lunch, but he invited me to be a member of the board.”

During his tenure on the board, now as a Life Trustee, Hunt has created five sculptures for Ravinia that have matched and inspired the judicious modernization of Ravinia’s art and architecture. While they are various, they share a quality that Hunt describes as “ascendancy, flight, a strong

vertical gesture creating a sensibility of happiness and elation.” The most recent, installed in 2013 and exhibited in the John D. Harza Building, home of Bennett Gordon Hall and Ravinia’s Steans Music Institute (RSMI), is *Piano Passion*. *Joan’s Bench*, dedicated in 2012 to the memory of Freehling’s wife, is exactly that—a nook that comfortably seats and shelters a couple, remarkable because Hunt has managed to make steel cozy, supple, and airy. Another favorite with concertgoers is *Beyond the Frame*, which hangs by the entrance of the Park View Restaurant and is also dedicated to the Freehlings. This piece, so named for the swooping, exultant curve of golden metal bursting beyond its rectilinear outline, is in part inspired by the woodblock print *The Great Wave off Kanagawa* by Hokusai. Discussing the Japanese artist’s remarkable longevity, and his habit of giving himself a new name whenever he entered a new artistic period, Hunt jokes that Hokusai’s final name change to Gakyo-Rojin—“old man who’s crazy about art”—would do for him as well.

Discussing the overarching vision for his work at Ravinia, he adds, “In my work here I have thought of sculpture in relation to dance. In dance, space is what you move through. In sculpture, you also move through space. Moving around the sculpture as you take it in, you became the dancer.”

This wordless, slow dance of appreciation, however, is strictly for grown-ups. As Kauffman points out, children respond to the soaring message of *Music For A While* by “climbing on it and playing hide-and-seek around it. Richard is charmed by that. Even though the sculpture—which consists of two pieces—is huge, Richard thinks of it as having movement, because of that kind of interaction.”

Hunt’s impact on the look of Ravinia is not limited to his own work. As a crucial member of the festival’s

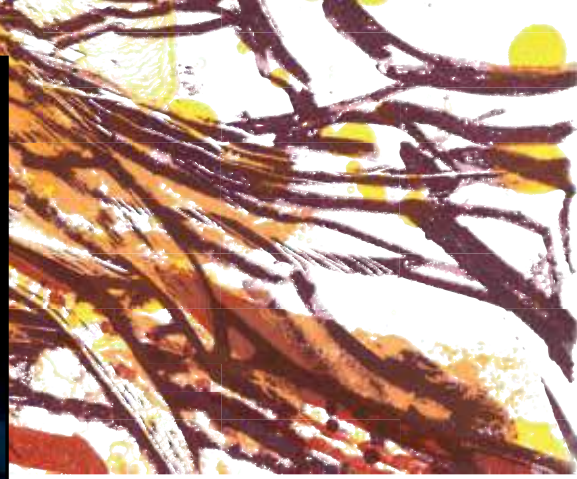


Richard Hunt is best known for his outdoor metal sculpture, but he has also made wall-hanging pieces, such as *Beyond the Frame* (receiving its finishing touches; above) and *Piano Passion* (page 10), as well as lithograph prints like *Variation* (left), which he created for Ravinia 30 years ago.

MANY YEARS TO GO

RAMSEY LEWIS AND RICHARD HUNT ARE STILL HELPING SHAPE RAVINIA

By Penelope Mesic



PROCLAMATION OF HOPE

sculpture committee, he contributes an expertise that has, Kauffman says, “given us the calm and confidence that validates the growth of Ravinia’s collection. In just the last decade or so, longtime Ravinia supporters like Avrum Gray and Harriet and Harry H. Bernbaum—for whom the sculpture path is named—have given us really significant works by Fernando Botero, Lynn Chadwick and Boaz Vaadia, and most recently Joel and Carole Bernstein lent us a marvelous piece by Jaume Plensa. These works, as Richard knows, will make Ravinia a magnet for other internationally known artists.”

The contribution of Ramsey Lewis, Ravinia’s longtime artistic director of jazz, has been equally transformative. He brings to Ravinia and to his music an enormous dedication. It might shock young piano students to learn this, but Lewis still begins each day “with scales and arpeggios to keep my chops up.” He then moves on to Bach or Chopin etudes or to composing. His creative energy has generated more than 80 albums, many regarded as jazz classics, and he moves fluidly between musical genres. “Ramsey longed to play classical music as a young man,” Kauffman explains, “but he was barred by racial politics. I think Ravinia’s invitations

to write new works to perform with the CSO baffle and delight him.”

While there is little that seems actually to baffle the relaxed and self-possessed Lewis, his Ravinia commissions do cause, not trepidation, but a certain sharpening of attention. “I started composing the performance for August 8 sometime last year,” Lewis says. “I wanted to give myself plenty of time.”

But clearly he finds this new involvement gratifying. “I’ve always written a few songs for each album,” Lewis says casually, as if composing a couple hundred songs was nothing to remark on. “But a few years back Welz said, ‘I want you to write a long-form work, an hour or more, for the Joffrey Ballet to share with its dancers.’ He just says, ‘Do this! I know you can,’ then changes the subject.”

The work for Joffrey was *To Know Her ...*, and its contemplative grace delighted its premier audience in 2007. “After the performance one of my sons [Lewis is the father of seven children] came backstage. He said, ‘That’s the first concert you didn’t play one of your hits, and there was a standing ovation.’” Another Kauffman-instigated venture was *Proclamation of Hope*, composed by Lewis to celebrate the 200th

“I ANTICIPATE MY RAVINIA DATE EVERY YEAR WITH GREAT GLEE. PUT IT IN MY CALENDAR IN RED AND CIRCLE IT.”



Lewis enjoys the moment during the premiere of *To Know Her ...* in 2007 (top) and was honored by former governor Pat Quinn in 2011 (above) following the performance of *Proclamation of Hope* at the Kennedy Center. He also brought the Olympic torch through Ravinia on its way to Salt Lake City in 2002 (page 8).



**"80 ISN'T A STOP SIGN OR EVEN
A PLATEAU. THESE ARE ARTISTS WHO
CONTINUE TO EXCITE US WITH THEIR GENIUS."**

—WELZ KAUFFMAN

anniversary of Lincoln's birth in 2009. It, too, was a memorable success. Other commissioned works have included *Clouds in Reverie* and *Watercolors*, solo piano pieces for Ravinia's *One Score*, *One Chicago* programs in 2006 and 2007, respectively; *Muses and Amusements*, performed with the Turtle Island Quartet; and *Quiet Moments*, an art song for the 25th anniversary of RSMI that set text to a melody Lewis had written for Kauffman's 50th birthday.

Embarking on new ventures has been made easier by the fact that Lewis has been playing at Ravinia since 1966, when he appeared with his legendary trio. "That first time I thought of Ravinia as way up there by the Canadian border. I'd have to take a bus for six hours from Chicago. And it seemed not just geographically distant

but culturally. Miles away and highbrow. But I found that the audience at Ravinia sits back and says, 'Let's see what you got. And I say, 'Here's what I got.'" Over 50 years, Ravinia has gotten a lot closer. "I now anticipate my Ravinia date every year with great glee,"

Lewis laughs. "Put it in my calendar in red and circle it and add a smiley face."

That's just as well, because this year's calendar will be full of those red-letter days. Besides the concert on August 8, there will be a performance for Highland Park's "Focus on the Arts" on April 14 starring Lewis. Ravinia's tribute concert to him and Frank Sinatra happens on May 16. On June 17 he will give a master class for the members of the RSMI jazz program.

This engagement brings to mind Lewis's long involvement with mentorship programs at Ravinia, working both to introduce the history of jazz to young audiences and to encourage young jazz musicians: "I remember one young man in Ravinia's jazz program, a drummer. When my drummer couldn't make a performance, I called his house. His dad answered and said, 'I'm sure he'd love to play with you, but he's on the road with ...,' and he named some big group. So there are some of these young people with enormous talent who do become professional musicians. And that's wonderful. But that's not all this is about." Lewis's underlying aim, he says, is to "get kids hooked on music. The two things you can use as bait for kids are music and sports, and at Ravinia, music

ELEVENTH HEAVEN

James Conlon's final season as music director celebrates his long association with Ravinia



Following his Chicago Symphony Orchestra debut at Ravinia in 1977, James Conlon has been a frequent guest conductor of that incomparable ensemble at the festival, where since 2005 he has also been music director of the orchestra's summer residency. The conclusion of the 2015 season, however, will also mark his last in that position. "Everything has its time, and after 11 years I feel it is the moment to pass on this responsibility," Conlon said. He has worked year-round since 1974 with countless orchestras, festivals and opera companies, and next year will see the culmination of another of his celebrated tenures, as music director of the Cincinnati May Festival. "There are things I wish to accomplish, both musical and personal, and I need dedicated time to realize these projects," he continued. "I am deeply appreciative to the Ravinia 'family' for the confidence they placed in me over a decade ago. To [Ravinia President and CEO] Welz Kauffman, who graciously understood and accepted my decision; to the board of trustees, Chairman John Anderson and all the past chairmen—especially Eden Martin, who presided over my hiring—the Women's Board, and the Associates Board; to the entire Ravinia staff, some of whom I have known since my earliest visits to the festival; to the supportive public; and most of all to the CSO for the years of beautiful and exciting music making."

"James hasn't had a summer free in decades and deserves the time he wants to take for himself," said Kauffman. "His presence will be felt at the festival for a long time, both in terms of his witty, fun-loving personality that was rooted in his

is what we can offer.” The discipline and vitality of music, Lewis says, “keeps kids engaged. Many have stayed with music and others have not, but the music has kept them moving along. We want them to make it to college. They come back and say, ‘It was all about music when we met, but now I’m a lawyer or now I’m a doctor.’ They didn’t know that was our aim all along!” he exclaims, with the glee of a parent who has managed to outsmart a child for his or her own good.

In listening both to Hunt, who has executed more public commissions than any other sculptor in America, and to Lewis, a jazz legend, it is clear that they have gone beyond honors and awards. The ability to continue working and share their work with others is what keeps them moving forward. As Kauffman says, “I like thinking of a night at Ravinia as something like a dinner party. The audience is our guest. We offer food and drink on a level of excellence to match the CSO, and we offer an array of music, not only to please our guests with what is familiar and beloved, but also to pique their interest in something offbeat—contemporary music is like the new vegetable, the fried okra or arugula in the salad. And the great thing is that after dining out, you go home and try the new thing yourself—listen, perform, enjoy!”

The key here is that the work of Hunt and Lewis is both the comfortingly familiar and startlingly novel. There is half a century of continuity in what they do, but because they continue to explore, their work still has the power to surprise, and to engage the listener

devoted passion for classical music and in the legacy of his powerful programs.” From the very beginning of his directorship, Conlon led complete cycles of both Mahler’s symphonies—commemorating the anniversaries of the composer’s birth and death—and Mozart’s piano concertos, as well as extensive explorations of works by the Russian masters and composers whose works were suppressed by the Nazi regime. “And when it comes to Mozart, what could have been better than James taking the CSO into the Martin Theatre to perform Mozart’s operas in the size of concert hall the composer himself would have known?

“Considering James’s worldwide acclaim as an opera conductor, it’s no wonder that his celebration of grand, romantic operas repeatedly blew the roof off the Pavilion,” Kauffman continued. “He has drawn on his vast experience and knowledge of the contemporary opera scene to cast Ravinia’s performances at the highest international level. We’ll never forget Patricia Racette in *Salome*, *Madame Butterfly* and *Tosca*—the latter with Bryn Terfel and Salvatore Licita—nor *Rigoletto* with Dmitri Hvorostovsky and *Aida* with Latonia Moore, Michelle DeYoung and Roberto Alagna.”

In addition to making fine music with the CSO, Conlon has brought his teaching acumen to Ravinia’s Steans Music Institute—where his wife, Jennifer Ringo, has also lent her expertise as a vocal coach—leading master classes for the programs for singers and for piano and string musicians. “James is a true believer, a lover of music and a musician with boundless capacity for empathy and artistry,” said Anderson, “sharing his insights and decades of performing experience with these young artists. We will always be grateful to him.”

and onlooker in that slow dance of appreciation Hunt talks about. “Having friends and people I admire who my work has meant something to matters to me,” he says. “Being involved at Ravinia, the public art I’ve done, I’m glad to have contributed to a sense of place and how it affects the people who come there.” There’s only one thing more to wish for: “My work, shaping metal, is fairly physical. Being able to continue, to finish the works I see in my head, that’s very important to me.”

Lewis acknowledges that he also values the impact his art has had on other people’s lives: “There are some songs, 40 or 50 years old like ‘Sun

Goddess’ or ‘The “In” Crowd,’ and I’ll hear someone whistling or singing ‘em and see it’s a person who looks like a kid!” But he doesn’t think long about this absolute proof of his art’s endurance, or about the work he has done to keep the music of other jazz masters alive in the minds of the young. “Mainly what I think about is,” says Lewis, “when do I get back to the piano?” Another Master Gakyo-Rojin, still crazy about art after all these years. R

Penelope Mesic has written for a variety of local and national magazines, including *Chicago*, *North Shore* and *Town and Country*.



IDYLL PLEASURES

THE CSO PROVIDES A LUSH MUSICAL LANDSCAPE

Every summer in the Chicago area brings the promise of many of our favorite pastimes: picnics and celebrations with family and friends, taking in the cool air off the lake, lying out in the sun with a good book, and enjoying a concert under the stars. For 111 years Ravinia has offered the winning combination of all of these things, and since 1936 the festival has hosted the illustrious Chicago Symphony Orchestra for a weeks-long residency as part of the latter. Of course, that partnership was cultivated decades earlier when Ravinia was known as the “summer opera capital of the world”—presenting the world’s biggest stars of the stage, a tradition we carry on to this day—and dates back even further to Ravinia’s first years as an amusement park for the train line that still brings in music lovers today.



THIS SUMMER,
AS WITH HIS
RAVINIA AND CSO
DEBUT IN 1977,
JAMES CONLON’S
PROGRAMS REFLECT
HIS LABORS OF LOVE.



Throughout the summer, Ravinia will be celebrating the tenure of **Maestro James Conlon** as music director of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra residency through programs that recall many of his passions and themes that he brought to audiences in the nearly four decades since his debut with the CSO at Ravinia. There could be no more fitting capstone to his directorship than the festival’s first complete performance of Wagner’s *The Flying Dutchman* in concert. His most immediate opera, the work represents a major milestone in the composer’s career, being the first to feature the theme of redemption through love (a staple of many of his later masterworks), and draws on his experience traversing tumultuous waters as a young man as he sought recognition for his music. The drama centers on the legend of the ghost ship *The Flying Dutchman* and its captain, who is doomed to sail the world for eternity until he can earn the undying love of a woman, which he is only able to seek every seven years. On August 15 Conlon will be at the helm

to take audiences on the Dutchman’s journey, with **Greer Grimsley** in that title role. The bass-baritone has earned accolades for his portrayal of the character across the country, with the *Pittsburgh City Paper* reveling in his “masterful, dark-hued voice. ... Every tortured syllable that leaves his lips is pure poetry and ethereal delight.” The object of his desire, Senta, will be portrayed by Richard Tucker Award-winning soprano **Amber Wagner**, whom audiences may recognize from her recent appearance as Leonora in Verdi’s *Il trovatore* with Lyric Opera of Chicago and who will be essaying the character on the Metropolitan Opera stage in the near future. The *Chicago Tribune* declared that she “spun reams of gorgeous, creamy tone” in the role, and the *Sun-Times* has observed that “music pours naturally from her at all times, whether in mournful or soaring sections.” The cast also features bass **Kristinn Sigmundsson**, who the *San Francisco Chronicle* calls a “powerhouse,” as her ship-captain father, Daland, and tenor **Simon O’Neill** as her former lover



Erik. O'Neill has earned praise around the world for his performances as Verdi's titular Otello, with London's *Telegraph* proclaiming him "the best heroic tenor to emerge over the last decade."

CONLON CONVIVIU

This summer also marks the 35th anniversary of Ravinia's first "Tchaikovsky Spectacular" to feature live cannons in its presentation of the composer's celebratory "1812" Overture. This flourish quickly made the annual concert one of the festival's signature programs, and this year the performance becomes the grandest celebration of all as the Ravinia Women's Board merges it with its annual Gala Benefit Evening to give Conlon a dynamite sendoff. On August 1 he will lead the CSO in that explosive piece and excerpts from Tchaikovsky's luxurious score to the ballet *Swan Lake*, as well as the Romantic master's Violin Concerto, with **Maxim Vengerov** returning to the festival as the featured

soloist. Two years ago the violinist marked his return to the concert stage in the US with two exclusive performances at Ravinia, captivating listeners with "a sweetness [and] propulsive drive that was tremendously exciting" (*Chicago Tribune*).

Three more beloved Russian composers will be featured on Conlon's July 23 program. At the center of the evening, **Lise de la Salle** will take the stage with the CSO to perform Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 1—one of his finest works, rife with youthful exuberance and fiendish virtuosity. At the same age he began the work, de la Salle won the Young Concert Artists competition, and now she is regarded as "a pianist so in love with music, so memorably and naturally immersed in the task in hand, [that] she moves within its realm as naturally as a fish swims or a bird flies" (*Gramophone*). The program also includes three excerpts from Mussorgsky's *Khovanshchina* and Shostakovich's enduringly popular Symphony No. 5, which is said to have so moved its premier audience that it brought them not only to their feet with its muscular climax but also to tears with the elegiac third movement.

It's been nearly 40 years since Conlon made his CSO debut at Ravinia, and even back then his programs reflected the

labors of love he would heap upon the festival when he became music director of the CSO residency in 2005. For his first program of the summer, on July 22, Conlon will re-create one of his concerts from his 1977 debut, featuring selections from what became two of his major musical thrusts at the festival—complete cycles of Mahler's symphonies and Mozart's piano concertos. His first purely orchestral composition, Mahler's Symphony No. 1 borrows melodies from his *Songs of the Wayfarer* as well as folk tunes and dances to illustrate a "tone poem" both rooted in nature—he even mimics bird song with the woodwinds—and full of theatrical, exaggerated expressions. Mozart, on the other hand, uses such exaggeration to develop the character of a solo instrument in the same way he would a protagonist in one of his operas. As he did with the contemporaneous *The Marriage of Figaro*, Mozart seamlessly blends popular appeal with technical marvel in his Piano Concerto No. 23, on which Conlon will be joined by his great friend **Garrick Ohlsson**,

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THE RAVINIA WOMEN'S BOARD GIVES
CONLON A GRAND SEND-OFF AS ITS
GALA COMBINES WITH THE EXPLOSIVE
TCHAIKOVSKY SPECTACULAR,
FEATURING MAXIM VENGEROV.



Come and listen for
more / It's music with
a view / Where the
melodies bring you
joy with ease

In addition to the Pavilion stage that the Chicago Symphony Orchestra has graced for over 100 years, Ravinia is home to a pair of indoor concert halls that play host to an extensive range of guest artists, ranging from solo instrumentalists to chamber groups to orchestras. The Martin Theatre—Ravinia's oldest building, dating back to the park's opening in 1904—is a stunning Arts and Crafts hall resounding with intimate acoustics, giving its 850 audience members the feeling of a

THREE'S HARMONY



personal evening with the performers, while Bennett Gordon Hall immerses its 450 in the experience of a musical salon.

A GROUP EFFORT

The closeness offered by the Martin Theatre accentuates the familial nature of folk music, providing the ideal setting for **The Knights'** panoply of worldly melodies on July 5. The New York-based chamber orchestra will be joined by longtime friend and collaborator soprano **Dawn Upshaw** for Berio's *Folk Songs*, a cycle of 11 pieces in nine different languages and dialects that the composer had written for his wife, Cathy Berberian, showcasing a range of simultaneously authentic and novel harmonies. The Knights will also perform Zhou Long's arrangement of eight Chinese folk songs for string ensemble as well as two dance-inspired works in Dvořák's *Czech Suite* and Ligeti's wild and vivid *Romanian Concerto*. The *Washington Post* has said, "Every player [in The Knights] is viscerally caught up in the shape of every phrase. ... The precision of balance and ensemble bespeaks the highest level of musicianship and preparation."

Many composers used the string quartet genre to create their most personal and affecting works, so it is little surprise that it has been one of the most popular forms of music since Haydn "fathered" it centuries ago. Haydn also serves as a prime example of a composer using quartets to experiment with new musical ideas, since they were traditionally performed for private gatherings as opposed

Over three performances Yefim Bronfman will play Prokofiev's complete piano sonatas in the Martin Theatre. Tickets to all three concerts are available at a special package price.



to the public forum of symphony concerts. In a way Haydn anticipated the vim and vigor of Beethoven's muscular scherzos in his "Russian" Quartets, the fifth of which the **Juilliard String Quartet** will perform at Ravinia on June 29. The work abounds in frenetic energy, from extreme dynamic shifts to the racy and rhythmic minuet that he dubbed a "scherzo," a surprise in the truest sense from the Classical master. The ensemble will also perform Berg's String Quartet and Schubert's transcendent "Death and the Maiden" Quartet, which was perhaps inspired by the composer's brush with death and the Romantic vogue of treating death as fulfillment rather than something to fear, drawing on melodies from his famed art song of the same name.

The works of another three composers who have a musical language all their own comprise the **Emerson String Quartet's** July 21 program. Beethoven, in his 16th quartet and final complete composition, drew his musical legacy full circle with the combination of his pure, Classical structures and the broad melodic and rhythmic textures characteristic of his "late period." Dvořák became well known for his eloquent renderings of the folk music of his Czech homeland, but he was later celebrated for the creation in his "New World" Symphony of a new aesthetic that uniquely harnessed the depth of American history and was further developed in his "American" String Quartet. The performances of these quartets by Beethoven and Dvořák will surround the Chicago premiere of Lowell Liebermann's String Quartet No. 5, which

THE MUSIC WORLD ACCORDING TO BGH

\$10 CONCERT SERIES SPANS ERAS, GENRES AND FORMS

Completing Ravinia's bountiful cornucopia of music is the year-round \$10 BGH Classics series, which offers the chance to hear "an impressive lineup" (*Chicago Tribune*) of world-famous artists in the personal setting of Bennett Gordon Hall. Since 2011 audiences have been able to reap the benefits of the extraordinary musicianship that can be found on the world's grandest stages at a fraction of the ticket price to hear the same superlative performances elsewhere. This most intimate of Ravinia's stages has also been key to bolstering the international acclaim of many artists, such as the **Lincoln Trio**—called "one of the hottest young [piano] trios in the business" by *Fanfare* magazine—who return on August 30 for a program of works by Arno Babajanian, Rebecca Clarke and Frank Martin.

The piano has a prominent role in collaborative chamber music, often playing backup to other soloists, but also sometimes taking the spotlight to show off its expressive capabilities in combination with other instruments. **Alon Goldstein** will demonstrate that depth of musicality on September 8, when he teams his piano with the **Fine Arts Quartet** and a bassist for a rare performance of Mozart's Piano Concertos Nos. 20 and 21 that presents the works closer to their original Classical proportions. For decades Ravinia audiences have enjoyed Misha and Cipa Dichter's devotion to and cultivation of masterful piano duets, and on September 5 the next-generation husband-and-wife duo of **Orion Weiss** and **Anna Polonsky** will give a complementary performance of works by Brahms and Schubert, as well as selections from Dvořák's Slavonic Dances.

STRIKING STRINGS

Praised by *Gramophone* for their "great efforts to enter the expressive world of all composers" and their "high level of technical assurance," Illinois-native violinist **Jennifer Koh** returns to Ravinia on September 6 with her



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was commissioned for the ensemble. Liebermann's "open-hearted lyricism" (*Time Magazine*) has captivated a wide range of audiences—from his piano works, championed by Stephen Hough, to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, his "astonishing operatic debut" (*New York Times*). "For all the lyrical fervor of Liebermann's beguiling idiom," *Gramophone* has said, "it rarely cloy, thanks in no small measure to the formidable craft he so abundantly possesses."

The enrapturing quality of these string-quartet ensembles owes something to their continuous partnership over hundreds, perhaps thousands of performances—the Emerson Quartet only recently had its first membership change in over 30 years—but there is also musical magic to be made in the combination of the world's most esteemed performer/teachers on stage for a concert, as Ravinia does each year with the luminaries that inform its Steans Music Institute. On July 3 violinists **Miriam Fried** and **Midori** join forces with violists **Atar Arad** and **Paul Biss** as well as cellists **Frans Helmerson** and **Gary Hoffman** for a pair of chamber

masterworks by Schubert and Brahms. For all of Vienna's collective musical imagination during the ascension of the Romantic era, string quintets remained in Mozart's mold of adding a second viola—until Schubert shook things up with his final chamber work, the D. 956 Quintet. His addition of a second cello to the standard quartet lent the lyrical baritone voice he had perfected in his lieder to the high-lying elegance of the rest of the strings. Brahms further developed Schubert's and other melodic and textural inventions over the course of his life, and that influence can be sensed in his early works, such as the String Sextet No. 1. The sextet, too, was a relatively new instrumentation, and Brahms used it to maximum effect, coaxing Schubertian expansiveness from an ensemble similarly not much larger than a tight-knit quartet. The work also demonstrates Brahms's recent

growth into the first iteration of his mature musical voice, tempering Romantic passion with folk-like sweetness.

Those same characteristics can also be found in Brahms's Piano Quartet No. 1. Like many of his first attempts at writing for a particular form, the work took some time in its development, but the composer's intense labor resulted in another signature mix of breezy Hungarian character and complex thematic structures that challenged the limits of melodic depth. This boundless musicianship will be realized at Ravinia on June 20 by violinist **Mark Peskanov**, the winner of the inaugural Isaac Stern Award at Carnegie Hall in 1985; Emerson String Quartet violist **Lawrence Dutton**; "impassioned and soulful" (*New York Times*) cellist **Nicholas Canellakis**; and longtime Ravinia-favorite pianist **Misha Dichter**. On the same program, Misha will be joined by his wife, **Cipa Dichter**, for a selection of the duo-piano works they have championed for over 40 years, including pieces by Mozart and Schubert, as well as selections from Bizet's *Children's Games*.



In addition to phenomenal ensembles and soloists, Ravinia's chamber music series features such monumental violin-piano duos as Augustin Hadelich with Joyce Yang (left) and Itzhak Perlman with Emanuel Ax (right).

88 KEYS TO SUCCESS

Brahms's greatest proponent, other than discerning audiences today, was perhaps his mentor and friend, Robert Schumann. The latter provided an ample model for expressive piano writing, especially in his early works while he was still courting his future wife, Clara, a virtuosic pianist and composer in her own right. On July 9 **Vladimir Feltsman** will apply his "effortless yet Herculean technique" and "formidable ability to stretch a piece to its stylistic limits" (*Union Tribune*) to three of these piano works with romantic (in every sense of the word) affectations. Schumann's *Scenes from Childhood* is a collection of 13 small pieces the composer had selected from a trove of 30 he had written purely from the inspiration of a loving comment Clara had once made to him. Indeed, each piece has the character of an ornate children's

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VIDEO THE BUILT

By Michael Cameron

There are two current trends in classical music presentation that are driven by a desire to connect with younger audiences, a reflection of the fear among many that the graying of contemporary audiences bodes ill for the future of the genre. There is ever-increasing adoption of visual media like YouTube to extend lines of communication beyond the live concert experience or traditional audio-only, hard-copy studio recordings. Another is a growing sense that the formalized, distant approach of musicians has strayed too far from the roots of classical music, which in many respects is more sanitized today than it was in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Of course neither of these concepts is, strictly speaking, new. Classical artists have used televised performances and talk-show appearances for over half a century, and even the YouTube phenomenon could be seen as long in the tooth in an era when decade-old technology might be considered obsolete.

Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center cellist Nick Canellakis and pianist Michael Brown met as fellows at Ravinia's Steans Music Institute in 2008. They made a joint appearance last fall at the festival, and Canellakis is slated to join pianist Misha Dichter, violist Lawrence Dutton and violinist Mark Peskanov in a performance of Brahms's G-minor

Photos: Julia Wesely

CLASSICAL STAR IGUDESMAN AND JOO ARE IN THE VANGUARD OF GROWING AN AUDIENCE THROUGH **YouTube**

piano quartet at Ravinia on June 20. This concert, like many of his duo concerts with Brown, adheres closely to the tried-and-true chamber music format audiences are most familiar with. But fans of Canellakis and Brown know that their interests are more expansive than these recital programs might suggest.

On a whim several years ago, Canellakis turned on a video camera during a rehearsal break with his colleague. They thought that a mock interview might serve as an interesting promo for upcoming concerts, but the dialogue soon morphed into an even less serious affair. “As we were going along,” remembers Canellakis, “the banter deteriorated, and we began to rip into each other. We put it up on YouTube, and it became quite popular with our friends.” Christening the series *Conversations with Nick Canellakis*, they were soon inundated with requests from fellow musicians interested in taking part in the joke, a formula that bears a close kinship with the “fake” interviews on Jon Stewart’s *Daily Show* and the recently departed *Colbert Report*. Alisa Weilerstein, Jonathan Biss—who has made his own extra-musical impact online through his demystifying of Beethoven’s piano sonatas—and the Emerson String Quartet are but three of the many artists who have subjected themselves to their playful self-ridicule.

The violin-piano duo Aleksey Igudesman and Hyung-Ki Joo are just as passionate and skilled in the classical canon as Canellakis and Brown, but their shows are designed as elaborately constructed

farces, in part as an attempt to throw cold water on the austere pretensions that they believe suffocate what should be a joyous concert experience. From their current location before a concert in Hungary, and right after the premiere of their “Concerto Fantastique” in Dusseldorf, pianist Joo described a 2013 performance of “Big Nightmare Music” with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra as “one of the best nights of our lives.” The duo will perform the riveting companion piece, “A Little Nightmare Music,” at Ravinia on July 30.

If Canellakis and Brown find some inspiration in late-night political comedies, Igudesman and Joo’s models seem more far-reaching, and in some cases, surprising. One could guess correctly that Victor Borge, P.D.Q. Bach and Dudley Moore were important sources, but their list also includes such disparate figures as Trey Parker and Matt Stone of *South Park* and *The Book of Mormon*, Seth MacFarlane of *Family Guy* and *Ted*, the Monty Python troupe, Samuel Beckett, Oscar Wilde, George Bernard Shaw, Leonard Bernstein and Glenn Gould, to name several from a much longer list. “We value good music and good craftsmanship, but we also like it laced with satirical or philosophical commentary. There is always an underlying message, but we don’t care at all if anyone gets that message.”

The term “classical crossover” used to refer to classically trained artists who bridged the classical-pop chasm without entirely giving up their roots, and often held out some expectation that their efforts in vernacular idioms might draw

Performing duo Nick Canellakis and Michael Brown (bottom) took their idea for a mock-interview concert promo and turned it into an entire web series, getting a mouthful from their session with Aleksey Igudesman and Hyung-Ki Joo (top) last year.



some into the more rarified world of the Western classical canon. The Piano Guys, who come to Ravinia on August 26, are a fine example of that original paradigm. Indeed, music by Beethoven, Vivaldi, Fauré and Mozart can be heard alongside renditions of radio staples by One Direction, Coldplay, OneRepublic and David Guetta in the group’s YouTube videos that can accumulate upwards of 30 million views each. But on a list of their most popular videos, hot on the heels of The Piano Guys’ version of Adele’s “Rolling in the Deep” are their interpretations of Bach’s First Cello Suite and Beethoven’s “Moonlight” Sonata. For other new crossover sensations, like violinist Lindsey Stirling, the popular arrangements are an end in themselves, and pieces like her *Les Misérables* medley don’t seem intended to stoke interest in her roots as a classically trained artist.

Another group of soloists in the latter category is the red-hot duo 2cellos,

perennial competitors with Stirling on *Billboard's* Classical Crossover chart. But with the near-total reliance of the duo and Stirling on pop-tune arrangements, the only remnant of Western classical tradition in their shtick is the instrumentation, and even that is often obscured by a maze of electronica and Vegas-level production values. It's not likely that their legion of fans will seek out Vivaldi's Concerto for Two Cellos after hearing the duo's souped-up version of the James Bond theme "Live and Let Die."

Yet even the relatively contemporary Bond persona has receded into the past for many in the younger set. Joo related an anecdote involving a conversation with two girls after a gig in California. The show included a mash-up of Mozart's G-minor symphony with another tune from a James Bond flick. They assumed that the familiar movie track would provide a bridge to the more "serious" world of a classical, symphonic standard. Instead it was the Mozart melody that was known to them, and they expressed curiosity about the identity of "that Bond person."

The story raises the questions of if they feel the need to tailor jokes to particular audiences or fear that too many of the gags might be understood only by the musical cognoscenti. Joo confided, "This is something we consider frequently. We don't want to alienate audiences, and we don't want to be hypocrites. If we can't resist an insider pun, we make sure that we balance that with more obvious and even slapstick humor." This dual approach is easy to detect on such classic Igudesman/Joo gags as "Rachmaninov Had Big Hands." Musicians may be well aware of the difficulty most pianists face when confronted with some of the Russian composer's massive spans, but it's likely that few of the five-million-plus who have viewed this video don't get the joke until they see Igudesman hand Joo an apparatus of long wooden planks to play the gargantuan chords in Rachmaninoff's Prelude in C-sharp Minor by strategically slamming it on the keyboard.

One area of classical controversy that often rears its clamorous head in discussions with these artists is the

modern prohibition of applause between movements or, heaven forbid, in the midst of the performances themselves. Igudesman and Joo are quick to remind their audiences that this taboo is a relatively modern convention, born of a wish by composers like Mahler and Schoenberg that nothing interrupt the pure flow of their music. *New Yorker* critic Alex Ross explored this tradition in his essay "Hold Your Applause: Inventing and Reinventing the Classical Concert," and conductor Erich Leinsdorf remarked that "the notion, once entertained by questionable historians, was that an entity must not be interrupted by the mundane frivolity of handclapping. The great composers were elated by applause, wherever it burst out."

Igudesman pulls no punches in his disdain for the embargo: "Composers like Mozart were upset when their music wasn't interrupted by applause, not when it was." Joo even goes so far as to suggest that musicians themselves dislike the modern concert format so much that if the tables were turned, they would avoid their own performances. While this may seem like a stretch, and would no doubt provoke stern denials from many artists, there does seem to be a growing expectation that in intimate spaces at least, some kind of verbal dialogue with audiences is expected: "There is something very wrong when

people come to a concert and fall asleep, which of course is a very expensive nap!"

All four of these artists are superb musicians, but both duos put on public faces that deviate from the norm, and they are eager to wallow in an often wicked sense of humor. Yet it's there that the similarities in their public personas end. Canellakis and Brown thrive in serious music presentations, while Igudesman and Joo seem (happily) unable to take anything seriously. As it happens, the latter pair is the subject of one of the *Conversations with Nick Canellakis*. As Joo casually and loudly munches popcorn, Brown makes an attempt at a genuine compliment.

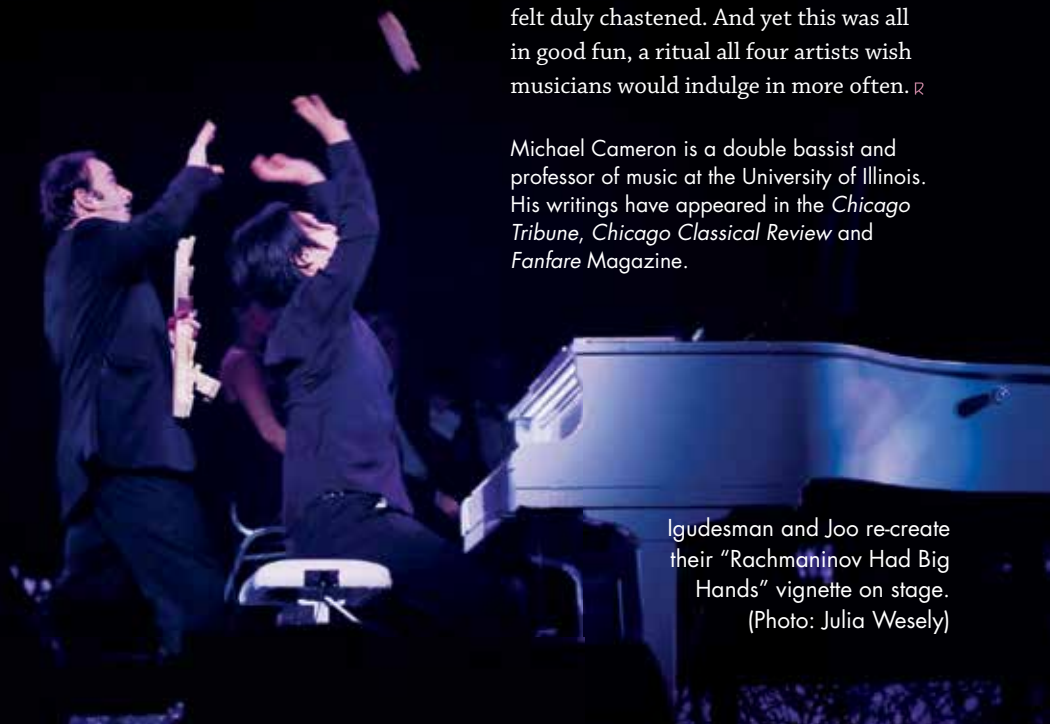
BROWN: You find a way to bring music to a wider audience, but with a great deal of sophistication.

IGUDESMAN: That's exactly the kind of boring, nondescript comment that we get from most interviews, blah, blah, blah ...

CANELLAKIS: C'mon, you're in it for the scratch, like we are. Next, I'll ask you a question I'm sure you've never been asked before: Where did you guys meet?

After watching this YouTube video and the guffaws faded, this writer realized that he had asked both duos this identical, mundane question and felt duly chastened. And yet this was all in good fun, a ritual all four artists wish musicians would indulge in more often. ▢

Michael Cameron is a double bassist and professor of music at the University of Illinois. His writings have appeared in the *Chicago Tribune*, *Chicago Classical Review* and *Fanfare Magazine*.



Igudesman and Joo re-create their "Rachmaninov Had Big Hands" vignette on stage. (Photo: Julia Wesely)

BEHIND THE CURTAIN

By Brian McCormick



For some it is a high-definition marvel of modern technology. Others tend to view it with a tinge of nostalgia, evoking memories of the drive-in movie experiences of a different era. For the vast majority of Ravinia patrons, however, the giant lawn screen has become just another element in the local landscape, as integral to—and integrated into—the Ravinia experience as the stately oaks, the chirping crickets and the sea of picnic baskets.

That general acceptance and the relative lack of resistance from “pastoral purists” are among the biggest and most pleasant surprises in the organization’s decade-long odyssey to introduce and expand a visual element to the lawn, according to Ravinia President and CEO Welz Kauffman. “It is essential that we evolve to the point where seeing a performance is possible from every point in Ravinia,” he says. “We are not there yet; as a 111-year-old institution, we tend to be careful with change.”

One of the benefits of taking a go-slow approach, Kauffman says, is that Ravinia is able to learn from the cautionary tales provided by peer institutions, such as the Hollywood Bowl and Tanglewood, that have adopted video elements more quickly and expansively. Those lessons, he adds, are both philosophical and aesthetic.

In some cases these institutions found their patrons preferred seeing the performance on a screen farther away from the stage, he says, and Ravinia wants to make sure not to “cannibalize” its Pavilion audience as it expands the use of its lawn screen.

As for the concern that the use of screens that are too big, too bright and too numerous will detract from the Ravinia experience, he says the organization is striving to strike the right balance between tradition and change. “Our landscape is a major asset. We need to preserve the sanctity of it and not turn the park into a drive-in,” he says. But he insists the benefits

From Oz to Middle-earth, Ravinia's lawn screen has come a long way and will continue to boldly go ...



of expanded video programming far outweigh the concerns.

Those benefits include bringing in new audiences and enhancing the experience for those who are already loyal patrons. For instance, with the flagship use of the lawn screen—Ravinia's four "movie nights" with film scores performed live by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra—the CSO sees a significant expansion of its audience, as do other orchestras around the world that are employing similar strategies. "Film score performances are clearly drawing a new audience, here and elsewhere," according to Kauffman. "They offer a great introduction for people who might otherwise be intimidated by an orchestral experience."

Video also serves to make the audience a more attentive one. Ravinia estimates that on nights when a CSO performance is shown on the lawn screen, the volume of lawn "chatter" drops by one-half—meaning that those listeners are more "in the concert," like their Pavilion-seated compatriots. And by providing perspectives that were previously unavailable, such as a conductor's facial expression or a pianist's hands, the video element is enhancing the experience for patrons in the Pavilion as well as for those on the lawn. Kauffman remembers a conversation with a longtime patron during the 2009 season, the first in which

the screens flanking the Pavilion stage were in use. He'd heard some grumbling about the decision to "put the CSO on TV," so he assumed he was in for more of the same when the patron, in his early 80s, approached. "What he said, however, was that in 66 years of enjoying classical music, he'd never fully understood what was going on until he saw the perspectives the monitors provided." Kauffman has heard similar comments ever since, extolling the virtues of the intimate "chamber music feeling" those screens impart on the large-ensemble performances, from giving a bird's-eye view of a piano soloist's hands fluttering across the keyboard to revealing the intense passion of a conductor that normally only the orchestra would see.

For the past several seasons, the lawn screen has also helped to enhance audience members' experience hours before the first note is played onstage. With increasing frequency since the 2011 season, the screen serves as a giant "Twitter wall," facilitating a social-media conversation among patrons from 15 minutes after the park opens until 15 minutes before the show starts. "We have an audience that is already talking to each other on Twitter; we just meet them there," says Pedro de Jesus, Ravinia's manager of press and social media.

Enthusiastic followers start tweeting while they are still on the train or in the parking lot, de Jesus says, and

“IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT WE EVOLVE TO THE POINT WHERE SEEING A PERFORMANCE IS POSSIBLE FROM EVERY POINT IN RAVINIA.”

“WE HAVE AN AUDIENCE THAT IS ALREADY TALKING TO EACH OTHER ON TWITTER: WE JUST MEET THEM THERE.”



spurs like trivia contests—initiated by Ravinia staffers or audience members—draw other patrons in. The moderated conversations remain the core element of the Twitter wall, with each evening having its own Twitter hashtag, such as #rflotr (for Ravinia Festival *Lord of the Rings*), but enhancements like the addition of a “slider” element that posts images and information about upcoming Ravinia events and the use of Instagram and other photo apps to add images to the text postings of audience members have added to the wall’s luster. De Jesus says the latter innovation allows Ravinia to moderate photo-related interactions like the “Best Picnic Spread” contests they conducted last season, and it also gave wider exposure to some unusual sightings in the park in recent years, such as the occasional *Lord of the Rings* cosplayer (a fanatic of the film series who appears at screenings in full Middle-earth costume). As he prepares to develop the Twitter wall even further this season, de Jesus says the focus is on enhancing functionality. “We are looking to upgrade the appearance of the wall, optimize the way it is laid out.” He adds that the goal of any design facelift will be enhancing the wall’s visibility and readability. “We want it to be equally accessible for people up close and those who are 300 feet or more away.”

The Twitter wall’s evolution mirrors a similar, but in many ways even more pronounced and dramatic evolution in the screen itself, which in turn has been a part of Ravinia’s myriad park improvements of the past decade—from the dining pavilion renovation to parking lot enhancements to the train-line underpass leading to the main entrance. While the festival started utilizing big-screen images on the lawn in 2005—for one of the world’s first showings of *The Wizard of Oz* with live orchestral accompaniment—with

Ravinia’s Twitter wall has helped clue audiences in to pre-concert goings-on, from contests to trivia to superfan sightings.

a front-screen projection model, the first giant technological leap came with the transition to an LED screen in 2007, according to Mike Robinson, Ravinia’s technical director. The front projection model had several serious problems, he recalls, including poor image quality and an inability to make those images visible in daylight.

While that first LED model was much more advanced than its predecessor, it was itself subsequently rendered obsolete by newer models that today provide a significantly larger screen with resolution that is dramatically better than that first model. In addition, the current model weighs half as much and uses about half the electrical power of its first-generation predecessor. The explosion of innovation in this technology means Ravinia was wise to rent, rather than purchase, this technology, Robinson adds.

The innovation is also paying dividends for patrons in an area that most don’t consider—safety. “That first model had no vents; when the wind blew, it was like a sail,” says Robinson, albeit a 10-thousand-pound sail. Ventilation slits in the current model allow wind to pass through, significantly lessening the risk of it toppling, even in high winds. Safety concerns, while always a priority, were heightened for festivals and regulators after the 2011 collapse of a stage at the Indiana State Fair during a storm, which resulted in the death of seven people and serious injuries to dozens more. In the wake of that tragedy, Robinson says, his crew and the screen’s vendor are required by state regulators to re-engineer the screen’s fittings and its goal-post-style structural skeleton every six months, to have wind and other weather monitors on site at every performance, and to have a variety of weather-related contingency plans in place. Such precautions have since become an integral part of Ravinia’s overall inclement-weather and disaster refuge preparedness plans.

Robinson says he is grateful he’s never needed to put those contingency plans into action. “The closest we ever

came was when a storm came in as we were taking the screen down,” he recalls. “Fortunately that was on a Monday morning; if that storm had rolled in during a performance, we would have been in an evacuation situation.”

The installation and dismantling of the screen, which happens several times each season, is a major undertaking. Robinson says it involves 20 crew members, a forklift and a stage lift acting as a crane to hoist the screen into place. Kauffman estimates that each time the screen goes up or down, it costs Ravinia between \$50,000 and \$60,000. That cost means it is imperative to get the most bang for Ravinia’s buck, so festival organizers make it a priority to schedule as many lawn-screen-friendly evenings as possible adjacent to its movie nights. Kauffman says he hopes to have the screen in use for 10 performances this year in addition to the films. And while most of those will likely be for concerts with 10 thousand patrons or more in the Pavilion and on the lawn, the screen has also proved effective for more intimate events. “We used it for [classical guitarist] Miloš Karadaglić’s performance in the Martin Theatre last year, and it was one of the highlights of the season,” Kauffman recalls. “He’s a very photogenic, charismatic and well-spoken person. There were probably a thousand people watching on the lawn as he performed, and there was a hush about it; it was a magical evening.”

THE LAWN SCREEN HAS BECOME AS INTEGRAL TO—AND INTEGRATED INTO—THE RAVINIA EXPERIENCE AS THE SEA OF PICNIC BASKETS.

Robinson says that while improved software and the use of permanent, dedicated cables and electrical wiring have combined to greatly enhance the reliability of feeding video to the lawn screen, hopefully eliminating the glitches that plagued a few performances in earlier seasons, he adds that he still sees technical challenges. One of those involves positioning the screen to optimize its visibility to the maximum number of patrons, an obstacle he feels the screen’s position this season will overcome. Another minor problem involves syncing the visual image with the audio at various parts of the park. Because Ravinia’s speaker array was designed to relay sound to the lawn at the same instant it would have naturally arrived from the Pavilion to any given location, the sonic experience in some corners can be noticeably out of sync with a vocalist or a player’s visual image on the screen. One of the goals this season, he says, will be to strike a balance that will minimize those differences.

Meanwhile, Kauffman says another impediment that was seriously restricting the use of the lawn screen at Ravinia a decade ago—artist resistance—has all but disappeared, yet another sign of the rapid changes in technology and its role in society. “We used to get a lot of push-back from artists who were

concerned about bootleg video of their performances being taped and sold,” he recalls. “We have seen a 180-degree change in that attitude, with most artists now seeing those same videos as great marketing for them.” He points to an incident from the 2006 season as a case in point. That summer, Patti LuPone starred in a concert version of *Gypsy* and several audience members surreptitiously taped the performance and posted the videos to then nascent YouTube. One of those recordings found its way to the play’s co-author Arthur Laurents, who subsequently agreed to mount and direct a Broadway revival of the play starring LuPone that earned her critical raves and a Best Actress Tony Award.

The sea change in artists’ attitudes and the audience embrace of improved visual technologies are both clearing the way for Ravinia’s expanded use of the lawn screen and other video monitors. “This is clearly where the live music world is heading,” Kauffman says. “We may be heading there cautiously and carefully, but this is where we are going.” [R](#)

Brian McCormick is a Chicago Public School teacher and a freelance journalist who writes for *Crain’s Chicago Business*, *Chicago* magazine and the *Chicago Tribune*.

The original, projector-style lawn screen bled light out the back, a deficiency solved by the new LED screen.



RAVINIA IS THE PERFECT SITE FOR MUSIC ON A SUMMER NIGHT

It has long been Ravinia's mission to introduce its audiences to a wide variety of classical music genres and artists, but that diversity of musical experience also extends to the festival's slate of non-classical programs, from jazz standards to cutting-edge rock, pop and country. The 2015 season kicks off with vivacious Latin flair as the **Gipsy Kings** return to the festival on June 17. For over 25 years these raconteurs of Spanish and Roma heritage have delighted the world with their trademark mix of flamenco and contemporary pop, and "the group's trademark virtuosity and verve are as engaging as ever," says the *Washington Post*. Real-life guitar hero **Santana** will follow up his enrapturing 2012 Ravinia debut with a pair of performances on August 29 and 30 to show off his greater immersion in the Latin rock that defines his "unmistakable, undeniable sound" (*Rolling Stone*) on his recent *Corazón* album. Originally an ad-hoc ensemble formed by roots musician Ry Cooder in the late '90s, the **Orquesta Buena Vista Social Club** reintroduced the world to the electrifying tradition and unique sound of Cuban club culture, but now the veteran group is bidding *adios* to the concert stage, and on August 12 Ravinia audiences will have a chance to take in its "breathless atmosphere" (*The Independent*) one last time.

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GOLDEN STANDARDS

Having performed at the festival almost every year since 1984, **Tony Bennett** has been one of the most enduringly popular artists in Ravinia's history, but on June 26 and 27 fans can hear him like never before when he brings to the stage his cohort in the international sensation and Grammy-winning album *Cheek To Cheek*, superstar **Lady Gaga**, for her Ravinia debut. "A

charming old swing cat ... Bennett was keen to work on a collection of jazz chestnuts he knew his fellow New York Italian could handle," *Billboard* said. "On *Cheek To Cheek*, Gaga justifies his faith."

Another standard bearer for classic croons, **Frank Sinatra Jr.** will showcase the irresistible charm his father's music has held for eager listeners with a centenary celebration of the birth of the "Chairman of the Board" on September 4. The multimedia event will recall not only the big-band sound of the swinging '40s but also images from the grand, bygone

era, both familiar and never-before-seen. In 2011 that musical mantle was also taken up with unexpected affection and authenticity by **Seth MacFarlane**—who is best known for the acerbic wit he heaps upon *Family Guy* and the *Ted* films—on his debut album, *Music Is Better Than Words*, and again on his recent *Holiday for Swing!* record. "I love that era of high orchestral musicality," he told *Billboard*, adding, "Against all the comedy [of *Family Guy*] is a legitimate regard for the importance of music. It's virtually the only show left on TV that uses a live orchestra for every episode." MacFarlane will demonstrate that zeal

on August 21 when he makes his Ravinia debut backed by a full orchestra.

On July 11 **Aretha Franklin** will lend her legendary vocal talents to “The Great Diva Classics”—a mélange of the greatest hits by female singers, from Etta James to Barbra Streisand to Adele—“scatting and vamping her way through vocals that are ravenous and free, adventurous and loony” (*New York Daily News*), and on June 19 **Alan Cumming** will be the master of his own ceremonies as he comes to Ravinia hot off his return to Broadway in the *Cabaret* role that earned him a Tony Award in 1998. “Gracious and talented, [with] vaudevillian expertise,” the *New York Times* raved, “Cumming knows how to slink across the stage while wearing an insinuating grin that conveys a blush-worthy concupiscence.”

A LITTLE BIT COUNTRY ...

One of the fastest growing and most diverse genres today, country music is well-represented at Ravinia, no matter your preferred flavor. For more than 25 years **Alan Jackson** has been a champion of the traditional country sound, and as one of its most decorated singer-songwriters, he was recently honored with ASCAP’s inaugural Heritage Award in country music. With a lifetime of hits—from “Here in the Real World” to “Good Time”—to enchant listeners old and new, Jackson makes his Ravinia debut on August 31. Though the newest member of the Grand Ole Opry, **Little Big Town** didn’t get there by assimilating a trendy, Top 40 sound, instead relying on the bedrock of its own inimitable talents. The group “rarely stops surprising with its lyrical twists and stunning performances by all four members,” according to *Billboard*, often drawing comparisons to Fleetwood Mac for the emotional resonance of its songs, as well as its tight vocal harmonies. On August 28 Little Big Town will bring its glorious ensemble sound to the festival, along with dramatic balladeer **David Nail**, to whose “When They’re Gone” from chart-burning *I’m a Fire* the group lent its signature sound, and **Ashley Monroe**,

who *Paste* praised for “keeping the mountains in her voice and the Parton-esque shimmer in her airy soprano” on her solo-debut album, *Like a Rose*.

Fellow Opry and Ravinia newcomer **Old Crow Medicine Show** takes the stage on July 31 with its similar mix of effortless harmony and electric instrumentation—even if none of the instruments are “plugged in”—wrapped up in soul-stirring Americana. The group’s own classic-rock connection, to Bob Dylan, is not without coincidence: its first big hit, “Wagon Wheel” (the same song that Darius Rucker recently took to the top of the charts), was an adaptation of the folk legend’s “Rock Me Mama,” and its recent Grammy-winning *Remedy* features a reworking of “Sweet Amarillo.” That same night Ravinia audiences will again have a chance to behold the beguiling voice of **Brandi Carlile**, who *Paste* says would be “right at home on the Opry stage, crooning tortured ballads alongside Patsy [Cline] and Loretta [Lynn].” One crow that never gets old, however, is **Sheryl Crow**, who returns to the festival on June 25. Having always dabbled on the roots side of rock, she dove headlong into country music in 2013 with *Feels Like Home*, on which *Rolling Stone* said she “makes every twang her own ... [serving] a half-century’s worth of styles without sounding like a history teacher.”

... AND A LITTLE BIT ROCK 'N' ROLL

A touch of Americana has long been at the heart of rock ‘n’ roll, especially in the case of the blues-inflected rock popularized in the mid-’60s by groups like the **Steve Miller Band**, which brings its swirling sound and golden notes back to Ravinia on July 10 along with Illinois native **Matthew Curry**, who the *Edmonton Sun* says “can shout like Joe Cocker [and] play guitar like a young Jeff Beck.” Pearlescent guitar work has long been the trademark of another blues rock fixture, **ZZ Top**, whose gruff and driving sound has been perfected over 45 years with the same trio of musicians. “Listening to ZZ Top is like hearing

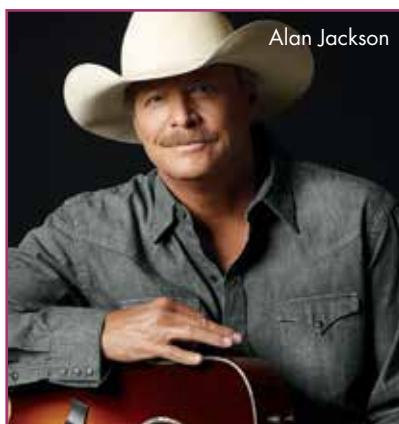
where rock ‘n’ roll was discovered,” wrote the *Baltimore Sun*, “underneath a stone, just so pure and basic but so brutal and large.” The trio—unmistakable beards and sunglasses included—will make its eagerly anticipated Ravinia debut on August 27. That same night, the “churning riffs and perfectly crafted songs” of **Blackberry Smoke** will transport listeners to a world where small towns are



ZZ Top and Sharon Jones & the Dap-Kings are both due to make their much-anticipated Ravinia debuts this season.

remembered with a touch of melancholy and “southern-fried boogie ... invests well-worn sentiments with a convincing sense of yearning” (*The Guardian*). East-coast roots-rockers **O.A.R.**, who the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* says “[turns a] concert from just a regurgitation of songs on their albums [into] a night of musical talent,” will bring their own heartland beat to the festival on September 6.

Deep in the South, where the blues were brewed, rockers have also fused soul into their musical vernacular, making for an unmatched chorus of soaring vocals and fevered instrumentals. The Allman Brothers Band long provided the template, but now its protégé Derek Trucks (ranked the 16th greatest guitarist of all time by *Rolling Stone*) and his wife Susan Tedeschi—together leading the **Tedeschi Trucks Band**—carry the banner. “Both could, and did, forge respectable careers under their own names,” observed the *Boston Globe*. “But each offers something the other can use, and ... there [isn’t] much of an argument in favor of reverting to a pair of solo acts.” Their powerhouse 11-piece band returns to the festival on June 21, bringing with them **Sharon Jones & the Dap-Kings** (who, like ZZ Top, are



Alan Jackson

making their protracted Ravinia debut). *Spin* magazine says Jones “has a knack for commanding the full spectrum of emotion, cramming it all inside her throat until her voice is blue-black, and then unloading all of that complexity in

a way [that] feels so damn good.” **Doyle Bramhall II**, a longtime Eric Clapton and now Tedeschi Trucks Band collaborator, will get the “wheels of soul” rolling for the night’s audience. At the other end of the season, on September 11, “Empress of Soul” (as declared by the Society of Singers) **Gladys Knight** will bring her unique and timeless Motown sound to Ravinia along with R&B group **The O’Jays**, who the *Columbus Dispatch* says sound “impressively tight ... like they were touring behind current chart toppers.”

SONGS IN THE KEY OF SUMMER

Preeminent jazz mistress **Diana Krall** is no stranger to testing new sonic waters, having danced her fingers through decades of worldly standards and new charts alike, but with her recent *Wallflower* album she champions a new set of standards: the pop and rock hits of her youth, from Bob Dylan to The Eagles to Elton John. “Krall’s elegant, personalized readings ... give [these songs] the glint of a modern standard,” wrote *Rolling Stone*, and they will set the night of August 9 asparkle when she brings them to Ravinia. A blend of jazz and pop standards has long been the calling card of **Harry Connick Jr.**, who, after his first national tour in 1990 included a stop at Ravinia, earned high praise from the *Chicago Tribune*: “Thanks to performers such as Connick, the great old songwriting traditions remain in very good hands.” He has since added many of his own songs to a repertoire that has earned him the most number-one albums on *Billboard*’s Jazz chart, as well as embarked on an acting career that has included Broadway, film and TV, recently joining the panel of judges on *American Idol*. On August 7 audiences can make him the next Ravinia idol as he kicks off a weekend of jazz that includes Krall as well as **Ramsey Lewis** performing his greatest ensemble hits on August 8 after he makes his CSO debut with the world premiere of his first classical piano concerto. **Pink**

Martini will also be returning to the festival on July 1 to lead listeners on one of its signature jazzy jaunts around the world that grew to include the hills



Aretha Franklin



Gladys Knight

of Austria with its recent album *Dream a Little Dream*, which featured **The von Trapps**—a group descended from the family immortalized in *The Sound of Music*—who will also be performing that night, along with rock-ontour **Aimee Mann**, whose “subtly expressive vocals,” *Pitchfork* says, “[are] so even and melodic that the slightest crack speaks volumes.”

Some of the most popular rock groups to come out of the ’70s earned their notoriety with their own unique fusions of jazz and pop, often featuring large and elaborate instrumental sections. No group better exemplified the successful pairing of a jazzy horn line with rock guitars and rhythm than that which uses our great metropolis as its namesake, **Chicago**, which returns to Ravinia for two nights, August 22 and 23. The elusive duo that gave fans

heaping servings of both radio staples and quirky, complex deep cuts, **Steely Dan**, continues its new life delivering its pensive prose mixed with “world-class chops and jazzy, postgraduate soul sound” (*Rolling Stone*) directly to concertgoers on July 24 and 25. But for a brief period in the mid-’70s and early ’80s when its music was reminiscent of these two groups, **The Doobie Brothers** espoused a grittier combination of R&B and rock that strongly influenced the genre of Americana, setting up the group’s recent, country-flecked album, *Southbound*, and keeping its long train (of hits) runnin’. The Doobie Brothers return to invite fans to listen to the music at Ravinia on June 30.

Some of the most energetic, as well as the most soothing music of the summer comes from singer-songwriters that cut a figure onstage as bold as any complete band. One of the artists who helped define that role for folk-rock music was **Jackson Browne**, who *Paste* says “seamlessly reconciles the ... tug of war between the romantic poet and the surging outcry.” He will bring that characteristic mix of emotive and message-driven songs to the festival on September 5. Growing up during the singer-songwriter boom of the ’70s, **David Gray** has taken that tradition into the 21st century with the addition of ethereal electronics to accentuate his wistful themes of nature, flight and freedom, creating “a romantic and spiritual bliss that feels just as good as it sounds” (*Boston Globe*). On June 28 he will share a bill at Ravinia with folk and soul rocker **Amos Lee**, whose “dusty voice and populist Americana ... straddle the real estate staked out by Levon Helm, Little Feat and John Prine. In his songs, wonder isn’t wide-eyed, but knowing—and that makes the emotional charge more resonant” (*Paste*).

Many singer-songwriters, however, use their bands as the primary vehicle for their music. From a seemingly endless string of hits with Matchbox Twenty to the Grammy-winning “Smooth” off Santana’s *Supernatural* album to two

solo albums of his own, **Rob Thomas** has an undeniable knack turning ears; the Songwriters Hall of Fame even awarded him its first Starlight Award for the lasting influence he has already had on music with so many more years in front of him. This year he comes to Ravinia for a solo set on July 18. One of the most famous artists in the singer-songwriter idiom, however, is the co-founder of The Beach Boys, **Brian Wilson**, who will team up with two of his former “surf rock” bandmates, Al Jardine and Blondie Chaplin, for a July 6 show at the festival shared with psychedelic blues rocker **Rodríguez**, the star and subject of the 2012 Oscar-winning documentary *Searching for Sugar Man*.

Around the same time the group made its Ravinia debut last summer, **Umphey’s McGee** had secreted away to London for a recording session at the legendary Abbey Road studios, and with the surprise album—described to *Rolling Stone* as “a historical primer, [the] band’s evolution story”—now released to the world, Chicago’s own jam band returns to the festival on August 14 to continue “unfurling corkscrew harmony [and] guitar heroism” (*New York Times*). Over the past two years, Ravinia’s audiences have been treated to diligent, live re-creations of Pink Floyd’s *The Dark Side of the Moon* and The Beatles’ *Abbey Road* by **Classic Albums Live**, and on September 12, to close out the season, the group

will return to honor another seminal British rock album, *Led Zeppelin II*.

IN IT TOGETHER

Music becomes infectious not only for the audience but also for the performers themselves when they team up with like-minded artists for extended tours. One such pair with an edge and an attitude belying their storied careers, **Blondie** and **Melissa Etheridge** share a bill on the Pavilion stage July 2. In the wake of Nirvana’s abrupt departure from the music world it so greatly affected, bands like **3 Doors Down** and **Bush** burst onto the scene to meld the group’s revolutionary sound into the post-grunge rock culture. On August 17 both of these bands unite at Ravinia to slash out the churning guitar riffs and growling vocals that defined a decade. The late ’90s also saw the emergence of alternative rock as a staple of radio airplay and the backdrop for countless summertime gatherings, large and small. As in 2013, **Sugar Ray** comes to the festival with a collection of the top rock voices under the sun on August 18: **Better Than Ezra**, **Uncle Kracker** and **Eve 6**. The following night, **Needtobreathe** brings the soulful swagger of its homey, Southern rock to Ravinia for the final stop of its “Tour de Compadres” that also brings **Switchfoot**, **Drew Holcomb & the Neighbors** and **Colony House** to the festival for the first time. R

Superstar Jazz Weekend: Harry Connick Jr., Ramsey Lewis, Diana Krall



whose “crisp and precise playing, unruffled rhythmic palette, and gentle touch make the music all the more affecting” (*San Francisco Chronicle*).

Another of Conlon’s great passions is his championing of composers and their works that were suppressed by the Nazi regime. One particular composer whose works he has reintroduced to the musical world is Alexander Zemlinsky (Conlon has even earned special honors for these efforts), who found musical inspiration in—and, in the end, personal identification with—Hans Christian Andersen’s tale *The Little Mermaid*, many years before Disney famously adapted the story into an animated movie. On July 29 Conlon offers a performance of Zemlinsky’s “orchestral fantasy” *The Mermaid*—equal parts evocative, Straussian tone poem and master stroke of Wagnerian leifmotifs—which he introduced to



Garrick Ohlsson

audiences in 2007 as part of Ravinia’s exploration of “water music” for *One Score, One Chicago*. The program will also feature Brahms’s Piano Concerto No. 1, performed by star pianist **Jorge Federico Osorio**, who the *Cincinnati Enquirer* says “matches elegance with brilliance and effortless virtuosity.”

CELEBRATED WITH HONORS

During the 2015 season, Ravinia will celebrate another musical master

who has left an indelible mark on the festival, **Ramsey Lewis**, who has been artistic director of jazz at Ravinia since 1993 and is celebrating his 80th birthday this year. Designated both a “living treasure” of Illinois and a National Endowment for the Arts Jazz Master in 2007, he is known the world around for his renditions of “The ‘In’ Crowd,” “Wade in the Water” and “Hang on Sloopy,” and more recently he has had several original works commissioned by and premiered at Ravinia, including his solo piano works *Clouds in Reverie* and *Watercolors* (later featured on his 2010 album *Songs from the Heart: Ramsey Plays Ramsey*); his ballet score *To Know Her ...*, praised as “some of the most poetic music of Lewis’s career” by the *Chicago Tribune*; and his critically acclaimed symphonic poem *Proclamation of Hope*, which celebrated the bicentennial of Abraham Lincoln and featured choreography by Bill T. Jones. On August 8 he will mark another milestone in his foray into classical composition when he premieres his first piano concerto with the CSO, which will also be the vehicle of his debut with the orchestra.

We will also be paying tribute to a musical master who Ravinia audiences were thankfully able to share in the experience of shortly before his passing in 2012, the Pulitzer-, Emmy-, Grammy-, Oscar- and Tony-winning composer Marvin Hamlisch. Last year frequent collaborator and pianist **Kevin Cole** premiered a multimedia tribute—“Play It Again, Marvin!”—with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra (of which Hamlisch was principal pops conductor for 17 years), hailed for being “unabashedly sentimental, [just as] Hamlisch wore his heart, so genuinely, on his sleeve” by the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*; on July 26 he will bring that program to Ravinia



Ramsey Lewis

along with audience favorite **Sylvia McNair** and other star vocalists.

BE OUR GUEST

When the CSO’s annual residency began in 1936, George Gershwin was the featured soloist on a program of his own works, including his symphonic masterpieces *Rhapsody in Blue* and *An American in Paris*, a medley of his famous Broadway show tunes, and a suite from his opera *Porgy and Bess*—then a mere 9 months old, and this year Ravinia’s *One Score, One Chicago* selection. To celebrate the centennial of the composer’s birth, polyphonic vocalist and conductor **Bobby McFerrin** led a concert version of the opera from coast to coast, and he will revisit that project for the opening night of the CSO’s 80th annual residency on July 8. After his 1936 concert, Gershwin famously wrote that “a more delightful spot for a concert I cannot imagine. ... That evening at Ravinia will have a niche all its own in my pleasant memories.” The audience used every possible vantage point that night to see the composer and hear his music; relive that magic when McFerrin and the CSO are joined by soprano **Nicole Cabell**, vocalist **Brian Stokes Mitchell** and a chorus assembled by award-winning choir director **Josephine Lee** to perform the greatest hits from the first quintessential American opera, including “Summertime,” “My Man’s Gone Now” and “It Ain’t Necessarily So.”

Esteemed Mexican “podium charmer” (*Chicago Sun Times*) **Carlos Miguel Prieto** returns to Ravinia on July 17 to conduct a program featuring Spanish music by Falla, including the festival’s first complete performance of the composer’s comic ballet *The Three-Cornered Hat*. The score is often heard in the guise of two symphonic suites Falla extracted from its lively dance and expressive folk melodies, but the complete ballet also includes two sweetly somber songs set to flamenco music, which will be performed by

“a perfect and marvelous pianist,” and who has earned “a cult status among pianophiles” (*Gramophone*)—with a performance of Beethoven’s climactic “Emperor” Concerto, a work near and dear to the composer’s period of “musical nationalism” in response to the rise and fall of Napoleon’s empire.

Complete mastery of the piano will also be on display on August 5 when **Peter Serkin** takes up the mantle of Mozart’s jocular and colorful Piano Concerto No. 19 with the CSO, headed up by “the thinking person’s idea of a

with a sense of enchantment and longing, mixing the expressiveness of Scottish folk ballads with the lyricism of his “songs without words.”

A product of Venezuela’s immersive “El Sistema” music system, conductor **Rafael Payare** makes his CSO debut at Ravinia on August 6 with a program steeped in drama. He will first lead the orchestra through the leaping dance steps of Berlioz’s *Roman Carnival Overture*, which takes its paces from the composer’s jaunty opera *Benvenuto Cellini*, before recounting the tales of the



Ravinia’s Pavilion stage will be bristling with talent all season long as the CSO is joined by (left to right) festival favorite mezzo-soprano Michelle DeYoung as well as first-timers conductor Rafael Payare, pianist Dubravka Tomšič, and conductor Pablo Heras-Casado.

mezzo-soprano **Michelle DeYoung**, an outstanding alumna of Ravinia’s Steans Music Institute (RSMI) “whose lustrous voice is matched by interpretive acuity” (*Cleveland Plain Dealer*). She will head up the evening with a performance of Falla’s melodically loaded collection of seven Spanish folksongs, accompanied by longtime collaborator **Kevin Murphy**, who recently became director of RSMI’s Program for Singers. Prieto will also introduce Ravinia audiences to Slovenian virtuoso **Dubravka Tomšič**—a protégée of Artur Schnabel, who considered her

hotshot young conductor” (*New York Times*), **Pablo Heras-Casado**, who *Musical America* says “shows talent, skill, judgment and courage that make him very, very interesting.” The 2013 *Musical America* “Conductor of the Year” will also lead the orchestra in Beethoven’s Overture to *Egmont*, in which the composer captures the struggle to retain one’s spirit in the midst of bloody conflict, and Mendelssohn’s “Scottish” Symphony. As in his popular “Fingal’s Cave” Overture, Mendelssohn depicts the misty atmosphere of Scotland

world’s shrewdest storyteller through Rimsky-Korsakov’s *Scheherazade*. In *The Arabian Nights*, Sheherazade cleverly deflects her sultan’s mistrust of all women by enrapturing him with a different story on each of 1001 nights, only finishing each story on the successive night to ensure she would live to the next day. In much the same way Sheherazade connected her stories together, Rimsky-Korsakov wove a musical tapestry of four of her tales into a symphonic suite. To introduce the audience to Rimsky-Korsakov’s storyteller—the violin—Payare brings

Pinchas Zukerman to the stage for Bruch's rhapsodic Violin Concerto No. 1.

One of the most eloquent orchestral stories of all time was told nearly 50 years earlier, when Berlioz introduced his *Symphonie fantastique*. The composer poured into music both his infatuation with and (imagined) betrayal by an actress of whom he had become enamored from afar. In the five-movement work—a classic tragedy has five acts—he rendered both himself and his “beloved” as characters in the groundbreaking and intensely personal orchestral drama. Berlioz's musical persona, driven to self-destruction over his passion, instead experiences a series of wild hallucinations with all the colors of the composer's expansive, prototypically Romantic orchestration. Hailed for his “silky deftness, free of cloying over-sentimentality” (*The Times*), **Nikolaj Znaider** makes his Ravinia debut on July 16 conducting Berlioz's masterwork and also makes his violin bow his baton for a performance of Mozart's Violin Concerto No. 3.

CSO GOES TO THE MOVIES

Music and storytelling are intertwined not only on the concert and theater stages, but also deeply so in film. One might expect the score to Ridley Scott's Oscar-winning epic *Gladiator* to be packed with driving marches and intense exchanges of notes worthy of life-or-death battle, but composers Hans Zimmer and Lisa Gerrard deliver much more. Some of Maximus (Russell Crowe)'s fights take on an almost waltz-like character, and as he dreams of the home and family he yearns for, the music becomes ethereal in combination with a chorus and solo vocalist. On August 2 the CSO, led by **Justin Freer**, will guide concertgoers along Maximus's journey through exotic lands—and suitably otherworldly soundscapes—back to imperial Rome.

Audiences will truly be taken to another world, however, on August 16.

When director J.J. Abrams resurrected the *Star Trek* film franchise in 2009, he naturally turned to the composer with whom he had worked for so many years on his hit TV series *Alias* and *Lost*, as well as when he first ventured into cinema with *Mission Impossible III*—Michael Giacchino—to complement his visuals with music. Conductor **Steven Reineke** will boldly lead the orchestra in Giacchino's soaring, Grammy-nominated score that, like Abrams's film, pays homage to the original series while simultaneously opening up a new universe (and generation of fans).

Such a dedicated team of movie director and composer is not without precedent, and few pairs have been more successful than Tim Burton and Danny Elfman. Since their perfect meeting of the minds 30 years ago on *Pee-wee's Big Adventure*, Elfman has earned eight major award nominations for his scores to Burton's movies. On July 14 conductor **Ted Sperling** will lead a revue of the dark and sonorous music that has highlighted their partnership, from that first score through such critically acclaimed films as *Beetlejuice*, *Batman* and *Edward Scissorhands*, as well as Burton's macabre masterpieces of stop-motion animation, *The Nightmare Before Christmas* and *Corpse Bride* (a modern evolution of the spectacles forged by Ray Harryhausen and composer Bernard Herrman that Elfman so revered) and much more.

Film scores are often created to complement and accentuate the director's visuals, but back in 1940 groundbreaking animator Walt Disney sought to do just the opposite—create a set of stunning vignettes to help introduce audiences to already masterful music. This was his vision of a “concert feature,” which grew out of Disney's collaboration with conductor Leopold Stokowski on the original and most iconic of the vignettes: Mickey Mouse acting out the tale of “The Sorcerer's Apprentice,” set to Dukas's music of the same name. *Fantasia*, as the result came to be known, dazzled generations of concert- and movie-lovers alike with such fantastic features as hippo ballerinas twirling to Ponchielli's “Dance of the Hours” from *La Gioconda* and a civilization of centaurs living out Beethoven's “Pastoral” Symphony. These visual and musical delights and more will form a live celebration of Disney's perfect introduction to the best that classical music has to offer on July 12, also conducted by Sperling. When Walt's

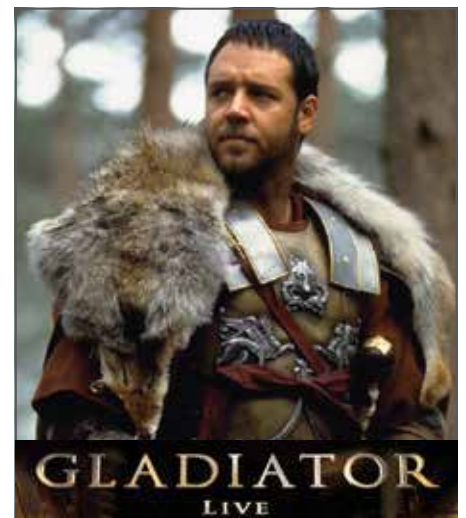


DURING RAVINIA'S FOUR MOVIE NIGHTS WITH THE CSO, AUDIENCES WILL BE TRANSPORTED TO BOTH IMPERIAL ROME AND THE FAR FUTURE AS WELL AS REMINDED OF THE PERFECT MARRIAGE OF MUSIC AND VISUALS, NO MATTER WHICH COME FIRST.

nephew Roy E. Disney created the long-awaited sequel in 1999, he called upon those who Ravinia audiences have long known to be among the finest classical minds around—James Levine and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra—to record the new collection of visual-musical masterworks, including Stravinsky's *Firebird Suite*, Respighi's *Pines of Rome* and many more works that will also be featured on the concert.

For each of these concerts, the films will be shown on massive screens in the Pavilion and on the lawn while the CSO performs the score live, as if your favorite orchestra had provided the soundtracks to your favorite movies all

along. There's no better introduction to the magical sound of a symphony than experiencing the power music has to give a new dimension to figures on a screen, as eager audiences have attested, from Los Angeles to New York to Lucerne and Paris, and even downtown in the CSO's home concert hall. [R](#)



toy: simple enough for a developing performer, but full of minute details for a seasoned artist to articulate—Vladimir Horowitz would often play the middle scene, *Träumerei*, as an encore. Feltsman will also perform Schumann's Fantasy in C Major, into which the composer poured his lament for being separated from Clara, and his musical "prank" on Viennese audiences, *Faschingsschwank aus Wien*.

Bach similarly left a template for generations of composers to come in his collection of "keyboard workouts," the first set of which comprises his six partitas for solo keyboard instrument. Pianist **Igor Levit**'s recent recording of the complete partitas was named *Gramophone*'s "Recording of the Month" for October last year, and he will perform all six in one night at Ravinia on July 15. The *New Yorker* praised his "transfixing ... playing of technical brilliance, tonal allure, intellectual drive and an elusive quality," and the *New York Times* says he is "one of the most probing, intelligent and accomplished artists of the new generation." The partitas doubled as free-flowing dance suites, while Bach's fourth "workout" is a set of elaborate variations on a single lilting melody—the "Goldberg" Variations. One of the Everests of keyboard music and the prime example of the theme-and-variations form, the work will be surmounted on July 7 by **Jeffrey Kahane**.

Prokofiev's piano sonatas provide an overview of the composer's musical trajectory—ranging from his early melodic ideas to shades of his ballet and symphonic music to his juxtapositions of modern and neoclassical styles to his attempts to appease the post-World War II Russian regime.

To hear them all in context is a rare opportunity, and Ravinia is providing just that over three concerts—August 9, 11 and 13—given by **Yefim Bronfman**. "Not to burden Bronfman with the pejorative tag 'specialist,'" the *New York Times* says, "his Prokofiev is special in its intellectual embrace, stylistic flair and sheer technical brilliance," also observing that employing a mixed sequence of the complete cycle of sonatas, as he will across his performances here, "makes for better musical contrasts [than a chronological survey.]"

Well known for his thundering piano concertos, Tchaikovsky wrote his "grand sonata" for the instrument to similarly be a virtuosic showpiece, but the work was overshadowed by his massively popular Symphony No. 4 and Violin Concerto, written and published the same year. The work's mosaic of flashy originality and allusions to other composers will be offered up for rediscovery on August 4 by pianist **Nikolai Lugansky**, who, "true to the Russian Romantic heritage, plays with a plush sound and plenty of impetuosity ... but he is also an analytic musician" (*New York Times*). He will also essay two scherzos



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longtime piano partner, **Shai Wosner**, to perform their "Bridge to Beethoven" program, highlighting three of that premier Romantic composer's violin sonatas and a new companion piece that links the duo's musical lineage to his famed "Kreutzer" Sonata. Similar plaudits have also recently been given to violinist **Augustin Hadelich**, who will make his Ravinia debut on August 22, and pianist **Joyce Yang**, a veteran of the festival, both solo and with the CSO. Their program will include Previn's *Tango Song and Dance*, which the *Washington Post* called "at once light and fiendishly difficult, a great showcase for [their] winking flashes of humor and embracing melody," and Pulitzer Prize winner David Lang's *mystery sonatas*, a solo piece written for Hadelich, who the *Los Angeles Times* said "displayed complete command ... beautiful, pure tone ... songful stretches and shadowy flutterings" in his Los Angeles Philharmonic debut. *Musical America*'s "New Artist of the Month" for August 2014 and recent Avery Fisher Career Grant winner violinist **Simone Porter**, whose performances the *Los Angeles Times* proclaimed to be "bold and dramatic, her body seemingly at one with her instrument, her technical skill and timing carefully honed," will also be making her Ravinia debut on September 4.

Many composers have sought to lay bare the emotive qualities of string instruments in the same way that a piano's range is bespoken—with only a solo player's artistry to create immersive soundscapes. One of the most famous such essays is regarded as a monumental test of a violinist's abilities: Bach's Six Sonatas and Partitas, the second partita of which stands out as a virtuosic showpiece with its powerful *Chaconne*. The International Classical Music Awards (ICMA) "Artist of the Year" for 2013, violinist **Carolin Widmann**, will open Ravinia's 2015 season on June 16 with that work as well as Bartók's solo sonata and more. Bach also wrote a collection of six suites for solo cello, but in the 20th century the instrument experienced a renaissance of focused compositions that show off its own power of musical

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years of performing together. Back in 1993 Ravinia audiences first heard **Maxim Vengerov** and **Itamar Golan** performing together, and over the more than 20 intervening years the pair has only grown more in tune, with the *Chicago Sun-Times* observing from their 2013 recital at the festival that “Golan is a dynamite pianist, and Vengerov [showed] his interest in deep music as well as showpieces.” Their return program on August 3 in the Martin Theatre, following Vengerov’s appearance on Ravinia’s gala concert on August 1, will similarly feature a mix of shining sonatas by Elgar and Prokofiev and a variety of virtuosic musical vignettes by Brahms, Dvořák, Wieniawski, Kreisler, Paganini and Ysaÿe. The *Financial Times* said that Vengerov “makes every note matter” in Elgar’s rarely heard sonata, and *The Independent* concluded that, through Prokofiev’s Sonata No. 1, “he proves himself a worthy successor to [David Oistrakh].”

When musical partners are of the same mind about their art, their performances can take on a similar level of connection

and a sonata by Schubert as well as three of Grieg’s Lyric Pieces. Perhaps best known for his music to *Peer Gynt*, which features “Morning Mood” and “In the Hall of the Mountain King,” Grieg wrote more than 60 similarly sweeping and effervescent miniatures for piano over the course of his life, and Lugansky’s selections from these Lyric Pieces—*Arietta*, *Butterfly* and *Wedding Day at Trolldhaugen*—are among those that helped establish Norway’s musical identity and even attracted the admiration of Tchaikovsky.

PARTNERS IN SUBLIME

The piano is an essential component of much of the chamber music repertoire, not only as a solo instrument but also as the voice behind other soloists, such as a violin. When undisputed masters of each of these instruments take up the mantle of history’s finest violin sonatas, that balance and interplay comes all the more to the forefront of the music. On September 9 **Itzhak Perlman** and **Emanuel Ax** take the Pavilion stage to fill the park with the velvety melodies of sonatas by Fauré and Richard Strauss, as well as the soaring strains of one by Mozart.

There is also little substitute for the rapport developed by a violin-and-piano duo over many

with their audience, and few have achieved such resonance with the new generation of classical music listeners as violinist **Aleksey Igudesman** and pianist **Hyung-ki Joo**. The pair has followed in the footsteps of such famed stage personalities as Jack Benny, Victor Borge and Peter Schickele (a.k.a. P.D.Q. Bach)—perhaps even a little Bugs Bunny and Elmer Fudd—combining shades of slapstick comedy and popular culture with their undeniable talent as musicians to draw new audiences in to one of the world’s grandest artistic traditions. Many of classical music’s finest artists have gotten in on the act with them, too, from Julian Rachlin and Joshua Bell to Gidon Kremer and Emanuel Ax, who said, “I had the time of my life when I first saw them live in action, and felt honored to put in a cameo in some of their nutty skits.” Not only are Igudesman and Joo a runaway hit on YouTube, having amassed tens of millions of views with their videos, but they also have given numerous performances around the world with their engaging shows, both with full orchestra and as a tightly knit duo. On July 30 Igudesman and Joo will bring “A Little Nightmare Music” to Ravinia for an evening the pair says “is sure to captivate you and crack

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dynamism. On July 27 **Alisa Weilerstein**, a 2011 MacArthur Fellow, will perform a selection of these robust works for the cello that she featured on her recent Decca album, *Solo*, including Kodály's solo sonata and Osvaldo Golijov's *Omaramor*. The *American Record Guide* said, "All of these compositions demand a virtuoso technique that Weilerstein is a mistress of [and] are strong and expressed with passion. ... Her intensity is impressive."

CLAVIER COLLECTION

The magic of the piano is its ability to evoke a wide range of not only musical textures but also musical origins. This makes it the ideal instrument for "versatile and sensitive pianist" (*Washington Post*) **Joel Fan**—a veteran of Yo-Yo Ma's Silk Road Project—who will give a polyglot performance of works from Asia, South America and Europe on August 23. Such a confluence of musical ideas will also be heard on August 19 as **David Kaplan** brings his program of "New Dances of the League of David" to Ravinia. A total of 16 composers—including Timo Andres, Mohammed Fairouz, Augusta Read Thomas and Pulitzer Prize winner Caroline Shaw—were commissioned to interpose new piano miniatures into those of Schumann's *Dances of the League of David* as if they had taken on one of Schumann's two musical alter egos, Eusebius and Florestan, to whom the composer attributed each movement of the original. "New Dances' is no gimmick," the *New York Times* wrote. "Rather, reaching back to a time when borrowing a master's music was a compliment, the composers honor Schumann by reacting to and even [reimagining] his music, and it was fascinating to hear Schumann through the ears of these perceptive, stylistically varied contemporary composers."

ICMA "Solo Artist of the Year" for 2014 **Joseph Moog** will display his "innate musicality and agile touch" (*Denver Post*) on September 3 with a program combining the delicate impressionism of Liszt's *Two Legends* and Debussy's "forgotten" *Images* with the extravagance of Godowsky's and Friedman's fantasies on Johann Strauss Jr.'s operatic melodies.



Joseph
Moog



Alisa Weilerstein



Peter Jablonski, who won an Edison Award for his performance of music by Russian and Polish composers, will bring that expertise to Ravinia on August 20 with a program of dances by Chopin and Szymanowski, piano miniatures by Rachmaninoff, and Scriabin's "Black Mass" Sonata, as well as Copland's festive *El salón México*; the *Washington Post* says, "None in living memory has brought the same strength, confidence, finesse and sense of rediscovery to these [well-known] notes." **Ingolf Wunder**, whose "dazzling resolution of extrovert and introvert sensibilities ... [display] a poise and tonal command way beyond his tender years" (*The Independent*), will illustrate that trait on September 7 with Chopin's *Andante spianato* and *Grand polonaise brillante* as well as one of the composer's somber nocturnes, juxtaposed with Schubert's probing final sonata. A combination of Schubert and Chopin also studs the August 27 concert by **Llŷr Williams**, featuring the former's dramatic and mesmerizing penultimate sonata and the latter's unfettered Fantasy Op. 49. Cuban pianist **Frank Fernández** will make his American debut at Ravinia on August 18 with a program pairing some of the world's most-loved classics with those of his homeland, including his own Suite for Two Pianos. Through the efforts of Fernández and longtime Ravinia supporters Madeleine Plonsker and Diane Karzas, the annual Musicians from Ravinia's Steans Music Institute tour included a performance at Havana's Festival de Música de Cámara last year.

AMERICAN ICONS

Though for many years the United States struggled with its musical identity, many composers and even entire genres have emerged as being quintessentially "American." On July 26 Cleveland International Piano Competition winner **Stanislav Khristenko** will showcase two centuries of American classical music with his "Music of the New World" program, featuring Barber's Piano Sonata—called "the first truly great [American] piano work in the form" by Vladimir Horowitz—and *George Gershwin's Song-Book*, that inimitable composer's reimagination of 18 of his most famous show tunes as scintillating piano pieces. **Richard Glazier** will shine a spotlight on music from that most American form of music theater, Broadway

musicals, as well as our other claim to entertainment fame, Hollywood movies, for a “thoughtful performance [that] captures his intimate charm with suppleness and sensitivity” (*Fanfare*) on August 25. The glitz and glamor of Broadway will also be set alight on August 21 as **Spider Saloff**—who has “a wicked way with a lyric and a glint of well-controlled mischief” to the ears of the *New York Times*—sings the modern-day classics of Stephen Sondheim.

In the early 20th century, the soulful and sweet sounds of jazz were spreading across America, and as the classical minds of Europe began making their way to the New World more frequently, so too did jazz grow into their vernacular. As the **Turtle Island Quartet** wraps up its 30th anniversary, the group, along with pianist **Cyrus Chestnut**, will pay homage to the ragtime classics—from Jelly Roll Morton to Thelonius Monk—that helped bring two musical worlds together in “Jelly, Rags and Monk” on August 29. The string quintet **Sybarite5** has taken similar cues, assimilating the music of Radiohead with the same deftness as Christopher O’Riley, while also treating a range of classical works—from Mozart to Piazzolla to Barber to Dvořák—and new pieces written for the group by Andy Akiho, Dan Visconi and more “with relish, a sense of comfort, and a frisson of missionary zeal” (*Washington Post*). The ensemble will perform “Everything In Its Right Place,” a survey of the musicianship that has earned Sybarite5 “rock star status” (*Sarasota Herald-Tribune*), on August 26. **Concert Dance Inc.** will also be contributing to the crossover between jazz and classical music when the company performs a tribute to the “Chairman of the Board,” Frank Sinatra, in recognition of what would be his 100th birthday this year, on September 1 and 2. Throughout the summer season, musicians from the three conservatory programs of **Ravinia’s Steans Music Institute** will also have concerts featured on the \$10 BGH Classics series: the jazz artists will lay down their own, original charts on June 19; the piano and string musicians will highlight solo and ensemble repertoire on July 12 and 20; and the vocalists will perform arias and art songs on August 10 and 17.



Simone
Porter



David Kaplan

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you up, whether you’re a classical music enthusiast or the type who runs for cover at the mere mention of Mozart.”

YouTube has similarly helped propel the duo of pianist Jon Schmidt and cellist Steven Sharp Nelson into the consciousness of a broad base of music lovers. With a team of audio and video engineers they became **The Piano Guys**, captivating listeners with a stunning fusion of famous classical melodies, movie music and songs soaring on the radio airwaves, as well as arresting visuals. “The Piano Guys are a kind of vaudeville,” wrote *Buffalo News*, “and sometimes it goes straight to your heart.” Their four studio albums for Sony have all not only topped *Billboard*’s Classical Albums chart but also steadily ascended the *Billboard* 200, with last year’s *Wonders*—featuring their mashup of “Let It Go” from Disney’s *Frozen* with “Winter” from Vivaldi’s *The Four Seasons* that has alone attracted over 30 million views—reaching number 12. The Piano Guys will bring their irresistible musicianship to the festival on August 26.

VOCAL CHORDS

Duets take on an entirely different character when the voice is the instrument of choice, and when the legendary mezzo-soprano **Frederica von Stade** is involved, “she seems to have a wonderful time onstage, and it’s impossible not to have a good time along with her” (*Chicago Tribune*). On September 10 “Flicka” returns to Ravinia with fellow mezzo **Laurie Rubin**, whom the *Los Angeles Times* praises for her “especially acute intuition about the power and subtleties of sound,” for a program spanning over two centuries of song, from opera and art song to Broadway and cabaret.

Finnish soprano **Karita Mattila**, who recently earned plaudits for her first performance as the title character of Richard Strauss’s *Ariadne auf Naxos* at London’s Royal Opera, returns to Ravinia for a recital of German and Finnish songs by Strauss, Brahms, Sibelius and Merikanto on August 10. “She has a voice that is most often described in terms reserved for varieties of light—radiant, luminous, incandescent, shining,” wrote *Opera News*. “The same adjectives apply to the lady herself, whose artistry and integrity literally seem to brighten whatever she sings.” Gramophone Hall of Fame baritone **Thomas Hampson**, who finds in the Romantic tradition of art song “a world of refuge and reflection that is exhilarating, entertaining and beautiful,” will combine the genre-defining music of Schubert and Mahler with contemporary American works by Samuel Barber and Jennifer Higdon on his July 28 program. **R**