

BILLINGS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA & CHORALE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 10, 2019

Spend a jazz-inspired opening night with Gershwin's *An American in Paris* and Ravel's *Piano Concerto in G Major*, featuring American composer and pianist, Conrad Tao.

BILLINGS MT- The Billings Symphony Orchestra & Chorale (BSO&C) opens the 2019-2020 season on Saturday, September 21, at 7:30 pm with **A 1920's Evening** featuring world renowned pianist, Conrad Tao. The Symphony season will take place at the Lincoln Center at 415 N. 30th St. in downtown Billings. Concert Cues, an interactive discussion about the evening's performance, takes place at 6:45 pm. Doors open at 6:30 pm.



Conrad Tao

Conrad Tao has appeared worldwide as a pianist and composer, performing to acclaim from critics and audiences alike. The former prodigy continues to emerge as a mature, thoughtful and thought-provoking artist, confidently pushing boundaries as a leading performer, composer, curator, and commissioner, championing new music while continuing to present core repertoire in a new light.

In addition to being the only classical musician selected to *Forbes 30 Under 30* in 2012 (at age 17), a few of Tao's numerous accolades and awards include being a Presidential Scholar in the Arts, an Avery Fisher Career Grant-winner, and a Lincoln Center Emerging Artist. His career as composer garnered eight consecutive ASCAP Morton Gould Young Composer Awards before he turned 18, and he has been commissioned by the New York Philharmonic, the Dallas Symphony, the Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia, and others.

Tao's Warner Classics recordings have been praised by NPR, *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker's* Alex Ross and others, and *New York Magazine* called him "The kind of musician who is shaping the future of classical music."

An American in Paris

In the spring of 1928, George Gershwin took his fifth trip to Europe. Before departing, he made sketches for an orchestral piece requested by conductor Walter Damrosch for the fledgling New York Philharmonic. (This was his second Damrosch commission; the first having been the 1925 Piano Concerto in F). During Gershwin's travels, the sketches developed into what would become one of his most popular works—the amiable tone poem, *An American in Paris*. Gershwin actually was an American in Paris for part of that time, and his brother Ira reported that the entire "blues" section of the piece was composed in the Hotel Majestic in that city.

Gershwin's interpretation of Paris in the 1920's was heavily influenced by the sounds of the city. He was so taken with the sounds of Parisian taxi horns he brought some back with him and gave them a prominent position in his new piece. Gershwin completed *An American in Paris* just four weeks before its scheduled December 13, 1928 premiere at Carnegie Hall. While the audience loved it, Gershwin



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wasn't completely satisfied with Damrosch's interpretation, thinking his tempos were sluggish and dragging. Some critics, despite finding it better crafted than the Concerto in F, didn't believe it belonged on a classical program. Gershwin responded to the critics, "It's not a Beethoven Symphony, you know... It's a humorous piece, nothing solemn about it. It's not intended to draw tears. If it pleases symphony audiences as a light, jolly piece, a series of expressions musically expressed, it succeeds."

Maurice Ravel's Piano Concerto in G Major

Ravel began formulating a plan for what would become his **Piano Concerto in G Major** in 1906 while he was traveling Europe and the United States. Due to other projects he had going at the time, he couldn't continue working on it until 1929. He was surprised that few Americans were influenced by the jazzy sounds prevalent in Paris at the time.

His original plan was to perform the piece himself upon completion. Unfortunately, his declining health prevented him from doing so. He reached out to French pianist, teacher, and friend, Marguerite Long, to play in his stead. She eagerly agreed. Soon after the premier in January 1932, with the Orchestre Lamoureux, Ravel and Long embarked on a lengthy tour across Europe where they and the piano concerto were well received. Ravel would later dedicate his **Piano Concerto in G Major** to Long. The American premiere took place in two locations simultaneously on April 22, 1932 with the Boston Symphony Orchestra and the Philadelphia Orchestra.

Before the season opener, on Wednesday, September 18 from 6-7 pm, the BSO&C is having a **Symphony Sneak Peek** in the Taproom at the Pub Station. Join Maestra Anne Harrigan and members of the BSO&C for a sneak peek of the BSO&C's 2019-2020 Symphony Season *Live at the Lincoln Center*. Maestra Harrigan will focus on the jazz inspired opening night, including stories and histories of Gershwin and Ravel. She will also provide insights into the whole season. This is an opportunity to learn about what the symphony has to offer beyond the concert hall this upcoming season. This is a free event with a no-host bar and light snacks provided.

A 1920's Evening concert is sponsored by John Vondra, Bruce & Susan Barrow, and Don Harr. Guest artist Conrad Tao is sponsored by Lynn Marquardt & Jim Gutenkauf. The Billings Symphony Orchestra & Chorale's 2019-2020 season is proudly sponsored by The Oakland Companies. The 2019-2020 Host Hotel is The Northern Hotel, and the media sponsor is KTVQ-2.

***A 1920's Evening and Symphony Sneak Peek** are part of North by Northwest, a collective collaboration of local arts and culture, which takes place between Sept 12-22.*

Season subscriptions are still available. There are two types of season subscriptions available for purchase: The Full Season Package, starting at \$134, and the Pick Four Package, starting at \$94. The Full Season Package includes one ticket to each of the six season concerts for each package purchased. The Pick 4 Package includes one ticket to four concerts of the subscriber's choosing. Pick Four subscribers must select the concerts they want to attend at the time of purchase. The new Under 30/Student subscriptions are also available, starting at \$67 for the Full Season Package, and \$47 for the Pick Four Package.

Under 30/Student Packages and Under 30/Student single tickets are not available online. Please call 406-252-3610 or visit the BSO&C office at 2721 2nd Avenue North in downtown Billings to enroll. Adult



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Packages are available online. Single ticket prices range from \$10 to \$52. For more information on the 2019-2020 season, please visit billingsymphony.org.

New this year! The BSO&C are offering a Family Deal. With the Purchase of an **ADULT SINGLE TICKET**, you can get a **FREE** ticket for kids 8-18 years of age. This offer does not include subscriptions, Tier 1 seating or Special Events and cannot be purchased online.

The Billings Symphony Orchestra & Chorale (BSO&C) is the largest professional orchestra in Montana. Established in 1951, the BSO&C strives to enrich lives through music. Consisting of over 135 musicians, the BSO&C serves a regional population of 400,000 people located throughout South Central and Eastern Montana, and Northeastern Wyoming by introducing music to children, youth, adults and seniors through Explore Music! the BSO&C's community engagement program.

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For more information about **A 1920's Evening** visit: billingsymphony.org/a-1920s-evening
For tickets call 406-252-3610 or visit billingsymphony.org.

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