

For Immediate Release

Grand Rapids Symphony opens 2017-18 season with Ravel's *Bolero*

*Famed violinist Sarah Chang joins Marcelo Lehninger and music from
'West Side Story'*

GRAND RAPIDS, MI., August, 31, 2017 – Before embarking on a North American tour in 1928, Maurice Ravel was asked by a friend to transcribe a set of piano pieces by Isaac Albéniz to serve as music for a Spanish-flavored ballet. The French composer, an admirer of all things Spanish, agreed.

But Ravel ran into a snag when he discovered movements of the piece titled *Iberia* already had been orchestrated by Spanish conductor Enrique Fernández Arbós.

Undaunted, Ravel decided to write a piece of his own for his friend, Russian dancer Ida Rubinstein. The 15- minute piece, initially called *Fandango*, would become one of Ravel's most famous works under the title, *Bolero*.

[Grand Rapids Symphony](#) opens its 2017-18 season with [Ravel's *Bolero*](#), a spicy audience favorite, along with a world premiere by Grand Rapids Symphony's own **Jeremy Crosmer** at 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday, September 15-16, in DeVos Performance Hall.

Music director Marcelo Lehninger, who will lead his first season-opening concerts with the Grand Rapids Symphony, will conduct the orchestra in Sergei Rachmaninoff's *Symphonic Dances*.

The **Richard and Helen DeVos Classical** series also welcomes guest artist **Sarah Chang**, performing **Suite from *West Side Story* for Violin and Orchestra**, which was arranged especially for Chang by film composer David Newman from Leonard Bernstein's well-known Broadway musical. Chang last appeared with the **Grand Rapids Symphony in November 2005**.

Spectrum Health is the Concert Sponsor. Guest artist sponsor is the **Edith I. Blodgett Guest Artist Fund**.

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Ravel, whose transcription of Modest Mussorgsky's little-known piano duet, *Pictures at an Exhibition*, established the work as a fixture of the orchestral repertoire, is one of the greatest orchestrators in the history of classical music.

With *Bolero*, Ravel crafted a work that focused almost entirely on orchestral color with little-to-no melodic or harmonic development. He considered it an experiment of little importance, at least compared with the rest of his works. But among listeners, *Bolero* has become Ravel's most popular work of all time.

Rachmaninoff's *Symphonic Dances*, premiered in 1941, is Rachmaninoff's final composition before his death in 1943, more than 20 years after he emigrated from Russia, never to return. All three of its movements reference Rachmaninoff's earlier work, offering a romantic remembrance of the homeland he once knew but that no longer existed.

West Side Story Suite, commissioned by Chang, transforms the Broadway musical into a concerto for violin and orchestra. Inspired by the story of Shakespeare's star-crossed lovers, Romeo and Juliet, *West Side Story's* jazzy, Latin-American inspired score casts the violin as the voices of Tony and Maria with the lush landscape of the orchestra telling the story of the Sharks and the Jets in 1950s New York City.

Sarah Chang, though just 36 years old, has enjoyed a major international career for nearly 30 years since her debuts at age 8 and 9 with the New York Philharmonic and Philadelphia Orchestra. Accepted into The Juilliard School's pre-collegiate program at age 5, the American-born daughter of Korean immigrants is among classical music's true child prodigies.

Winner of a 1992 Avery Fisher Career Grant followed by the Avery Fisher Prize in 1999, Chang became the youngest inductee to-date in Hollywood Bowl's Hall of Fame in 2004. In 2005, Yale University dedicated a chair in Sprague Hall in Sarah Chang's name, and in 2012 Harvard University gave her the Distinguished Leadership in the Arts Award. In 2011, Chang was **St. Cecilia Music Center's Great Artist**, performing in Royce Auditorium with pianist Andrew von Oeyen.

Ozark Traveler, by Jeremy Crosmer, commissioned by the Grand Rapids Symphony, celebrates American classical music of the 20th century. The title takes its cue from Aaron Copland's *Appalachian Spring*. Crosmer, a native of Little Rock, Arkansas, grew up near the Ozark Mountains.

In 2012 at age 24, Crosmer graduated from the University of Michigan with his Doctorate of Musical Arts degree after having completed three master's degrees in composition, theory and cello pedagogy. He then was appointed associate principal cellist of the Grand Rapids Symphony, holding the chair for five years. This fall, he takes up a new position in the cello section of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra.

Crosmer, who plays old-time fiddle in his spare time, has composed several works for the Grand Rapids Symphony including works for its Music for Health Initiative.

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- **Inside the Music**, a free, pre-concert, multi-media presentation sponsored by **BDO USA**, will be held before each performance at 7 p.m. in the DeVos Place Recital Hall.
- The complete *Ravel's Bolero* program will be rebroadcast on March 4, 2018, at 1 p.m. on [Blue Lake Public Radio](#) 88.9 FM or 90.3 FM.

Tickets

Tickets start at **\$18** and are available at the **GRS box office**, weekdays 9 am-5 pm, at 300 Ottawa Ave. NW, Suite 100, (located across from the Calder Plaza), or by calling 616.454.9451 x 4. (Phone orders will be charged a \$2 per ticket service fee, with a \$12 maximum.)

Tickets are available at the **DeVos Place ticket office**, weekdays 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. or on the day of the concert beginning two hours prior to the performance. Tickets also may be purchased online at [GRSymphony.org](#).

Full-time students of any age are able to purchase tickets for only **\$5** on the night of the concert by enrolling in the [GRS Student Tickets](#) program. This is a [MySymphony360](#) eligible concert.

About the Grand Rapids Symphony

Organized in 1930, the [Grand Rapids Symphony](#) is nationally recognized for the quality of its concerts and educational programs. Led by Music Director Marcelo Lehninger, Principal Pops Conductor Bob Bernhardt and Associate Conductor John Varineau, nine concert series are presented, featuring a wide range of music and performance styles. More than 400 performances are given each year, touching the lives of some 200,000, nearly half of whom are students, senior citizens and people with disabilities all reached through extensive education and community service programs. Affiliated organizations include the Grand Rapids Symphony Chorus; Grand Rapids Youth Symphony and Classical Orchestra; and Grand Rapids Symphony Youth Choruses. GRS provides the orchestra for performances by [Opera Grand Rapids](#) and the [Grand Rapids Ballet](#) and sponsors the biennial [Grand Rapids Bach Festival](#), which was held in March 2017 and returns in 2019.

To learn more about the [Grand Rapids Symphony](#), please visit the website or
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