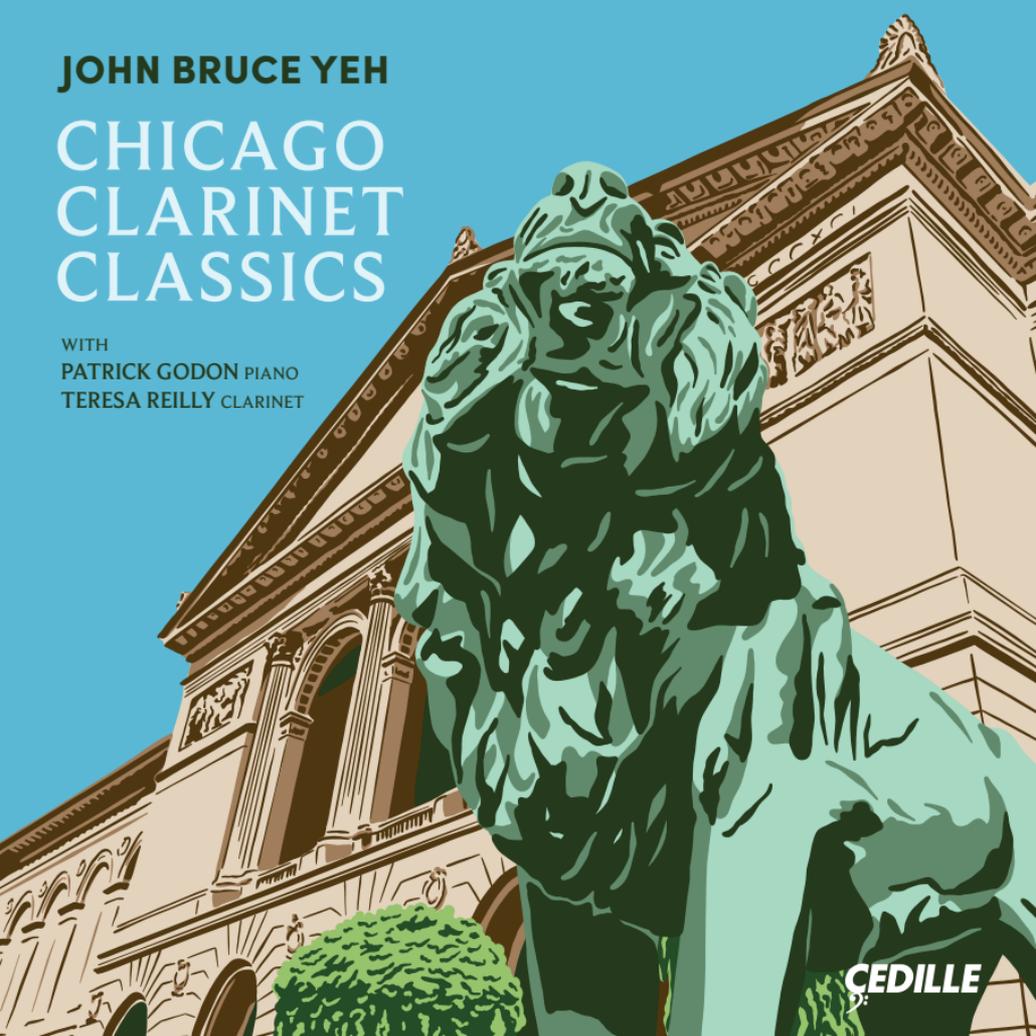


**JOHN BRUCE YEH**

# CHICAGO CLARINET CLASSICS

WITH  
PATRICK GODON PIANO  
TERESA REILLY CLARINET

**CEDILLE**  
S



JOHN BRUCE YEH

# CHICAGO CLARINET CLASSICS

ALEXANDER TCHEREPNIN (1899–1977)

- 1 **Sonata in one movement for clarinet and piano (5:04)**

WITH PATRICK GODON

STACY GARROP (B. 1969)

**Phoenix Rising for Solo Clarinet<sup>1</sup> (10:49)**

- 2 I. Dying in embers (4:59)  
3 II. Reborn in flames (5:49)

LEO SOWERBY (1895–1968)

**Sonata for Clarinet and Piano, H 240a\* (26:32)**

- 4 I. Slow and sombre (5:46)  
5 II. Exuberantly, but not too fast (5:07)  
6 III. Quietly flowing (7:43)  
7 IV. Bright and merry (7:45)

WITH PATRICK GODON

*This recording is made possible  
by generous support from the  
Sage Foundation*

SHULAMIT RAN (B. 1949)

- 8 **Spirit for Solo Clarinet  
(in memory of Laura Flax)\* (5:45)**

TERESA REILLY (B. 1976)

**The Forgiveness Train for two clarinets\* (11:28)**

- 9 I. The Derailment of Fear (3:22)  
10 II. The Gifts Beneath the Wounds (3:54)  
11 III. The Rhythm of Birth (4:06)

WITH TERESA REILLY

ROBERT MUCZYNSKI (1929–2010)

**Time Pieces for Clarinet and  
Piano, Op. 43 (16:35)**

- 12 I. Allegro risoluto (2:44)  
13 II. Andante espressivo (6:06)  
14 III. Allegro moderato (2:12)  
15 IV. Introduction: Andante molto –  
Allegro energico (5:24)

WITH PATRICK GODON

TT: (76:51)

\*World Premiere Recording

<sup>1</sup>Premiere Recording of version for clarinet

# PERSONAL NOTE

by John Bruce Yeh

Back in 2020, toward the beginning of the COVID pandemic that turned the world upside down, I got a message from my friend, Cedille Records mastermind Jim Ginsburg, asking if I could convene a group to record Leo Sowerby's 1916 Wind Quintet. Chicago Pro Musica went on to perform this quintet for a CSOtv episode in the Spring of 2021. In the meantime, Jim's request sparked an ongoing exploration that we decided to call "Chicago Clarinet Classics." In researching Sowerby, I discovered his 1938 *Sonata for Clarinet and Piano* (published in 1944), a massive work on the scale of a Brahms Sonata. The next discovery was Alexander Tcherepnin's delightful 1939 miniature, *Sonata in one movement*. With these two contrasting Sonatas, grouped with Robert Muczynski's 1983 *Time Pieces*, already a classic with clarinet players, my long-time piano collaborator, Patrick Godon, and I had the basis for an album. Jim and I agreed that diversity in the form of three 21st-century clarinet works by outstanding composers with whom I've had decades-long associations, would be the ideal complement to this collection. Accordingly, we are delighted to present the first recordings of Stacy Garrop's 2017 *Phoenix Rising for Solo Clarinet*, Shulamit Ran's 2017 solo clarinet work *Spirit*, and my wife Teresa Reilly's recent clarinet duet, *The Forgiveness Train* (2020). I truly hope you enjoy this program of works by these six composers, all with strong personal and musical ties to Chicago.

I dedicate this album to the loving memory of my generous clarinet mentor in my formative years, Gary Gilbert Gray, who passed away too soon in Los Angeles on December 12, 2021, and also to composer/pianist Easley Blackwood, another Chicago Classic, who passed away January 22, 2023, just weeks before this album's release.

# PROGRAM NOTES

## Alexander Tcherepnin: Sonata in one movement (1939)

Russian-born composer and pianist Alexander Nikolayevich Tcherepnin (1899–1977) was part of an extraordinarily musical family. His father, Nikolai (pupil of Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov), and his sons, Serge and Ivan, along with two of his grandsons (sons of Ivan), Sergei and Stefan, were composers. Serge was involved in the earliest development of electronic music and instruments. Alexander's mother was a member of the artistic Benois family, a niece of Alexandre Benois.

Tcherepnin played the piano and composed prolifically from a very early age. He was stimulated by the atmosphere at home which, thanks to his family's Benois-Diaghilev connections, was a meeting place for renowned musicians and artists of the day. By the time he began formal theory and composition studies during his late teens, he had already composed hundreds of pieces, including over a dozen piano

Notes by John Bruce Yeh  
(except as indicated)

sonatas. He went on to study at the St. Petersburg Conservatory. After the 1917 Russian Revolution, however, the family fled the city and settled in Tbilisi, Georgia.

Due to the harsh political environment in Tbilisi after Georgia was sovietized, the Tcherepnins decided to leave Russia permanently in 1921. They settled in Paris, where Alexander completed his studies at the Conservatoire and became associated with a group of composers that included Bohuslav Martinu. From Paris, Tcherepnin launched an international career as a pianist and composer. In 1925, he won the Schott Prize for his *Concerto da Camera*, Op. 33. He began yearly visits to the United States in 1926 and later went to the Far East, making several extended visits to China and Japan between 1934 and 1937.

While in China, he met the young Chinese pianist Lee Hsien Ming (1915–1991), and the two later married in Europe. They had three sons together: Peter, Serge, and Ivan. The family lived in France during World War II. They came to the United

States in 1948, settling in Chicago in 1950. Alexander acquired U.S. citizenship in 1958. He and his wife both taught at Chicago's DePaul University. In 1964, they moved to New York and Tcherepnin subsequently divided his time between the U.S. and Europe.

Not much has been written about Tcherepnin's *Sonata in one movement*, Op. posthumous. Presumably composed in Paris just before World War II, the piece employs some of the hybrid scalar patterns found in many of his subsequent works.

## **Stacy Garrop: Phoenix Rising for Solo Clarinet (2017)**

Stacy Garrop's (b. 1969) music is centered on dramatic and lyrical storytelling. She notes that the sharing of stories is a defining element of our humanity; we strive to share with others the experiences and concepts we find compelling. Stacy Garrop shares stories by taking audiences on sonic journeys — some simple and beautiful, others complicated and dark — shaped by the needs and dramatic arc of each story.

A full-time freelance composer based in the Chicago area, Garrop served

as Chicago Opera Theater's first Vanguard Emerging Opera Composer-in-Residence (2018–2020). She also served as composer-in-residence for the Champaign-Urbana (Illinois) Symphony Orchestra (2016–2019), a position funded by New Music USA and the League of American Orchestras. Theodore Presser publishes her works. Garrop is a Cedille Records artist with works currently on a dozen Cedille CDs. Her music is also available on numerous other record labels.

Stacy Garrop writes:

Legends of the phoenix are found in stories from ancient Egypt and Greece. While each culture possesses a range of stories encompassing the phoenix myth, these tales tend to share similar traits: a sacred bird with brilliantly colored plumage and a melodious call lives for typically 500 years; then the bird dies in a nest of embers, only to be reborn among the flames.

In Egyptian stories, the phoenix gathers scented wood and spices for its funeral/rebirth pyre, then collects the ashes from its earlier incarnation and flies them to the temple of the sun in Heliopolis to offer as a tribute to the sun god.

In Greek myths, the phoenix was approximately the size of an eagle and was adorned with red and gold feathers; it would fly from either India or Arabia to Heliopolis to give its offering. The bird's association with immortality and resurrection are particularly intriguing aspects of these tales, providing numerous writers (including Shakespeare, C.S. Lewis, and J.K. Rowling) a rich resource for their own stories.

*Phoenix Rising* consists of two movements. I. "Dying in embers" represents an old phoenix settling on top of a pile of embers and breathing its last breath. II. "Reborn in flames" depicts the newly reborn phoenix enjoying its first taste of flight.

Originally composed in 2016 for soprano saxophone, *Phoenix Rising* was commissioned by saxophonist Christopher Creviston, who recorded the work on the Blue Griffin label. Stacy Garrop has subsequently made versions for flute, clarinet, and violin (all versions are available from Theodore Presser Company). The clarinet edition is dedicated to Jennifer Woodrum.

"In Greek myths, the phoenix was approximately the size of an eagle and was adorned with red and gold feathers; it would fly from either India or Arabia to Heliopolis to give its offering."

## Leo Sowerby: Sonata for Clarinet and Piano, H240a (1938)

Note by Francis Crociata

Leo Sowerby (1895–1968) began as an aspiring concert pianist and wunderkind composer and ended life as the generally acknowledged Dean of American Church Musicians. His life-history was as variegated as his catalog of 550 works in every form (except opera), almost equally divided between concert works and music for organ and the church. He was born in 1895 in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and moved to Chicago at age 13 to study theory and piano. Later, he studied briefly with Percy Grainger, who had come to Chicago in 1915. His main contribution to Sowerby's musical development was to encourage him to learn to play the clarinet in case the U.S. should enter the World War. By the time Sowerby was 18, the Chicago Symphony had premiered his Violin Concerto. Two years later, the Symphony presented an all-Sowerby concert at Orchestra Hall, conducted by Sowerby mentor/colleague Eric DeLamarter. From those early concerts until music director Frederick Stock's passing a quarter-century later, Sowerby

acted as the CSO's de facto composer-in-residence. Even after Stock's death in 1943, Sowerby continued to be performed by the CSO, although less often than during Dr. Stock's regime, and finally conducted the CSO himself in 1954, leading his 1946 Pulitzer Prize-winning cantata *The Canticle of the Sun*.

In addition to receiving the fourth Pulitzer Prize for music, Sowerby gained the first American Prix de Rome fellowship in music in 1921. He wrote a dozen large works and performed throughout Europe from the base of the American Academy in Rome from 1921–1924. Apart from his Rome sojourn and a year as a clarinetist and Second Lieutenant/Bandmaster in the US Army 332<sup>nd</sup> Field Artillery, Sowerby lived and worked exclusively in his adopted city of Chicago in two parallel posts: professor of theory and composition at his alma mater, the American Conservatory, and organist/choirmaster of St. James Episcopal Church (later Cathedral). He left those posts and the city in 1962 to become founding director of the College of Church Musicians at Washington Cathedral, a post he held until his death in 1968.

1938 was a particularly busy year for Sowerby, albeit less prolific than typical for him in that period. The Chicago Symphony played three of his works, including the Organ Concerto he wrote for E. Power Biggs, who premiered it earlier that season with Koussevitzky in Boston. Sowerby himself conducted the New York Philharmonic in his suite, *A Set of Four: Ironics for Orchestra* and returned to Italy to hear Dimitri Mitropoulos conduct his Second Piano Concerto at the Naples Festival. Sowerby wrote no orchestral works that year, although he began sketching his third orchestral symphony (that prominently features the clarinet), which became his contribution to the Chicago Symphony's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Season of 1941–1942. The Sonata for Clarinet (or Viola) and Piano, H 240, composed between October 15 and November 19, is the most substantial of the works he completed that year.

Sowerby wrote his sonata in gratitude to a now mostly forgotten musical polymath, Burnet Corwin Tuthill (1888–1982). The son of the designer of Carnegie Hall, Tuthill was a musicologist, composer, music educator and administrator, founding

conductor of the Memphis Symphony, founder of the Society for the Publication of American Music, and a clarinetist who took an entrepreneurial approach to the expansion of repertory for wind instruments. In 1937, Tuthill wrote for *The Musical Quarterly* the most extensive scholarly (and sympathetic) examination of Sowerby's life and music to appear during his lifetime. Tuthill already had had a hand in the publication of five Sowerby instrumental works. After the Clarinet Sonata's publication in 1944, Tuthill would also instigate Sowerby's Trumpet Sonata for the Chicago Symphony's new young principal (who went on to serve for over 50 years), Adolph Herseth.

The Sonata for Clarinet and Piano — the title emphasizing the two instruments having equal voice — reflected Sowerby's adaptation of sonata form into what he sometimes dubbed “fantasy-sonatas.” This becomes immediately apparent in the sonata's atmospheric opening movement (“Slow and sombre”), essentially a prelude in which all of the sonata's thematic material appears. Sowerby then develops the two main themes in surprising ways by cutting

them apart, inverting the pieces, and then reassembling them in the three more traditionally structured sonata movements that follow. The second movement is a scherzo with the two solo instruments using wry jazzy insinuation to poke gentle fun at one another. The third movement, marked “Quietly flowing,” again states and then breaks apart the themes introduced in the first movement, this time constructed as a canon in which the clarinet and piano alternate stating the main theme, with the instrumental interplay weaving a sensual love duet. Sowerby brings the sonata to a rollicking climax with a rondo marked “Bright and merry” in which the clarinet pokes gentle fun at both the thematic material and the piano, which mostly takes the lead to move the piece to its optimistic climax.

### **Shulamit Ran: Spirit for Solo Clarinet (in memory of Laura Flax) (2017)**

Shulamit Ran (b. 1949) joined the faculty at the University of Chicago (where she is now Professor Emeritus) in 1973. She was subsequently named the Andre MacLeish Distinguished Service Professor in the Department of Music and became the artistic director of Contempo (formerly the Contemporary Chamber Players). She was also elected as a member of both the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Ran’s achievements include fellowships and commissions from the Ford Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, Guggenheim Foundation, Fromm Music Foundation, Serge Koussevitzky Music Foundation, American Academy of Arts and Letters, and numerous major American symphony orchestras, among many, many others. She became the Chicago Symphony Orchestra’s second composer-in-residence in 1990, served until 1997, and won the Pulitzer Prize for music with her Philadelphia Orchestra-commissioned *Symphony* in 1991. Her

works are published by Theodore Presser Company and the Israeli Music Institute.

Shulamit Ran writes:

*Spirit* was composed in memory of Laura Flax (1952–2017), the renowned New York-based clarinetist and my cherished friend. Our musical and personal association began in 1977 when Laura invited me to compose a solo clarinet work, *For an Actor: Monologue for Clarinet*, in memory of her mother, Hazel Flax, whom I had known.

After composing *For an Actor* for Laura, I came back to the clarinet in many of my compositions over the years, sometimes as a lead instrument and at other times as an important voice. In all of my clarinet music Laura is present. The rich sound, blazing technique, and brain and guts that she brought to her playing, and her remarkable person, have inspired me in so many ways during the four decades of our friendship, and beyond.

I did not want *Spirit* to be about absence, though. I wanted the piece to exhibit a wider range of emotions, as well as capture at least a tiny glimpse of Laura's brilliant

spirit and spiritedness. Only in the work's final stretch does the sense of "parting," and of loss, take over.

Upon completing *Spirit* on October 21, 2017, I found myself compelled to add at the bottom of the score the words "To Laura, always in my heart," as though in an effort to reach out, for a brief moment, and touch the unreachable.

"I wanted the piece to exhibit a wider range of emotions, as well as capture at least a tiny glimpse of Laura's brilliant spirit and spiritedness."

## **Teresa Reilly: The Forgiveness Train for two clarinets (2020)**

**Note by Teresa Reilly**

While I have never had formal training as a composer, I have always enjoyed writing music. As part of my musical training over the years, I am fortunate to have been inspired by, and to work informally with, these special Chicago composers and music educators: Bill Karlins, David Bloom, and Janice Mitchell.

*The Forgiveness Train* was spawned during the spring and summer of 2020 in response to the coronavirus pandemic. During that time, on one of my darkest days, I had a dream about being on a train that took me through the forest. The train derailed and was left hanging over an open body of water. As I lay there in a capsized train, I heard bird songs as clear as day. There was peace and beauty in the forest amidst the frightening and precarious train wreck. The pandemic seemed to unearth past trauma within me and in the outside world as well. All I wanted to do was wrap myself in a blanket and hibernate until it was over!

My Grandmother, Geraldine Porto, was famous for hand-making quilts for everyone in the family. With her in mind, I wove together the many motifs that came to me during the pandemic lockdown. The quilt-like forms of the outer movements are programmatic, like story quilts. The middle movement is aleatoric in nature and represents an opening, a sort of magical forest oasis. Here, the two clarinets read from the same selection of musical motifs but choose them individually in the moment.

Here are the thoughts that inspired my music:

### **Movement I: The Derailment of Fear**

We hear a train motif — the train, it's always running.

You just need to hop on.

It's a bumpy ride at times.

There are breakdowns.

Birdsong brings us out of our fear.

### **Movement II: The Gifts Beneath the Wounds**

Two voices, independent, yet dependent on each other.

Like birds in the forest.

We choose our themes in the moment.

Creating something beautiful, and sometimes dissonant.

### **Movement III: The Rhythm of Birth**

From bird song to earth song.

Strong rhythms take us from the heavens back to earth.

Something new is being born.

Screams push through the upper range of the clarinet and we approach breakdown.

However, playfulness pokes through.

We step out and see where the train has taken us.

### **Robert Muczynski: Time Pieces for Clarinet and Piano, Op. 43 (1983)**

Polish-American, Chicago-native, composer Robert Muczynski (1929–2010) studied piano and composition (with Alexander Tcherepnin) at Chicago's DePaul University, where he received his Bachelor (1950) and Master (1952) of Music degrees in Piano Performance. Muczynski later taught at DePaul, Loras College, and Chicago's Roosevelt University. In the 1960s he joined the faculty of the University of Arizona in Tucson, serving as a composer-in-residence and chairman of the composition department until his retirement in 1988.

Among Muczynski's over-50 published works, his Sonata for flute and piano, Op. 14 (1961), Sonata for alto saxophone and piano (1970), and *Time Pieces* for clarinet and piano (1983) have entered the repertory and remain frequently performed in recitals, as has much of his solo piano music. His works have also appeared with increasing frequency on programs in the U.S., Europe, the Far East, Australia, and Mexico. His orchestral music has been performed by the Chicago, Cincinnati, Tucson, and National Symphony Orchestras, the Minnesota Orchestra, and other orchestras in the U.S. and abroad.

Muczynski dedicated his *Time Pieces*, Op. 43, to commissioning clarinetist Mitchell Lurie, who was Principal Clarinet of the Chicago Symphony in 1949–1950. The work's premiere took place at the Clarinet Congress of the International Clarinet Society in London on August 15, 1984. The performers were Lurie on clarinet with the composer at the piano.

Robert Muczynski writes about *Time Pieces*:

Technically and musically there is quite a lot going on in this four-movement suite, and much of the time both instruments share the action equally. The music is made up of a number of elements: energetic, syncopated rhythms, long and sustained melodic lines, cadenzas for solo clarinet, tongue-in-cheek humor, and an overall “up” feeling. For me, the title refers to when and where I was composing the work, sort of a frozen-in-time idea. However, some listeners have offered their own interpretations as to what I HAD IN MIND.... And that keeps things lively.

Although Muczynski describes the title, *Time Pieces*, as having no relation to mechanical clocks, it is rumored that he had a fascination with clocks and all kinds of mechanical time pieces. Muczynski also noted that the piece is about an “awareness . . . [that] everything exists in time: history, our lives and, in a special way, music.”

“The music is made up of a number of elements: energetic, syncopated rhythms, long and sustained melodic lines, cadenzas for solo clarinet, tongue-in-cheek humor, and an overall ‘up’ feeling.”



*Photo: Todd Rosenberg*

## JOHN BRUCE YEH

John Bruce Yeh is the longest-serving clarinetist in Chicago Symphony Orchestra history. Having joined the CSO in 1977 at the invitation of Sir Georg Solti as Clarinetist and Solo Bass Clarinetist, John is currently Assistant Principal Clarinet and Solo E-flat Clarinet of the orchestra. He served the CSO as Acting Principal Clarinet from 2008–2011 and has performed as Guest Principal Clarinet of the Philadelphia Orchestra, Seoul Philharmonic, Guangzhou Symphony, and Guest Bass Clarinet with the Mariinsky Orchestra and Hong Kong Philharmonic. A prize winner at both the 1982 ARD Munich International Music Competition and 1985 Naumburg Clarinet Competition in New York, Yeh continues to solo with orchestras around the globe.

An enthusiastic champion of new music, John Bruce Yeh is the dedicatee of new works for clarinet by numerous composers, ranging from Ralph Shapey to John Williams. His more than two dozen solo and chamber music recordings have earned worldwide critical acclaim. In 2007, Naxos released *Synergy*, an album

of single and double concertos with clarinet featuring John, his wife Teresa, and his daughter Molly. Yeh is director of Chicago Pro Musica, which received a 1986 Grammy Award as Best New Classical Artist. With clarinetist Teresa Reilly, erhu virtuoso Wang Guowei, and pipa virtuoso Yang Wei, Yeh formed Birds and Phoenix, an innovative quartet dedicated to musical exploration by bridging Eastern and Western musical cultures. John is on the artist-faculties of Roosevelt University's Chicago College of Performing Arts and Midwest Young Artists Conservatory in Fort Sheridan, Illinois. He is the proud father of Jenna Yeh, a culinary artist and wine specialist in Chicago; Molly Yeh, a percussionist and Food Network personality in Minnesota; and the multi-talented Mia Reilly-Yeh.

An enthusiastic champion of new music, John Bruce Yeh is the dedicatee of new works for clarinet ... His more than two dozen solo and chamber music recordings have earned worldwide critical acclaim.



Photo: Keri Godon

## PATRICK GODON

Patrick Godon made his debut as soloist with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (CSO) in May 2007, playing one of the solo piano parts (along with Mary Sauer) in Colin McPhee's *Tabuh-Tabuhan*: Toccata for Orchestra and Two Pianos, with Alan Gilbert conducting. Patrick currently performs as Principal Keyboardist regularly with

the CSO on piano, celesta, organ, and synthesizer. He made his debut with the CSO as second keyboardist at Ravinia in 2003. He was invited to play principal keyboard on the CSO's 2018 East Coast tour and January 2017 European tour, and second keyboard on the CSO's 2005 European tour plus nine Carnegie Hall performances. Chicago's Civic Orchestra, then celebrating its 100<sup>th</sup> season, invited Patrick back as a distinguished alumnus to perform the organ part in its February 2020 performance of Saint-Saëns' *Organ Symphony*. Godon also performs as orchestral keyboardist with the Delaware, Milwaukee, and Peoria Symphony Orchestras. Patrick Godon is the Artistic Director and pianist for International Chamber Artists, the vibrant chamber music ensemble he founded in 2006. Godon is also in wide demand as a collaborative pianist and has performed many live broadcasts on Chicago classical radio station WFMT.



Photo: Todd Rosenberg

## TERESA REILLY

Composer/clarinetist Teresa Reilly earned her Master of Music degree at Northwestern University and her Bachelor of Science in Music degree at DePaul University. As a freelance musician, Teresa performs regularly with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and other Chicago-area ensembles. She has performed in Carnegie Hall several times with the CSO as part of the

clarinet section, and she can be heard on various CSO Resound recordings, including Mahler's Symphony No. 3 and Webern's *Im Sommerwind*, both with Bernard Haitink conducting. An avid chamber musician, Teresa has performed on diverse concert series such as the Dame Myra Hess Memorial Concerts, St. James Cathedral concert series, La Jolla Music Society SummerFest, Princeton University Concerts, University of Chicago Presents, University Musical Society of Ann Arbor, and the Fontana Chamber Arts concert series. Teresa has been a guest soloist with many ensembles in the Midwest and her playing is featured on the Naxos recording *Synergy*, performing with John Bruce Yeh on James M. David's *Fantasy Etudes*, Book II for clarinet and basset horn. Her playing is also featured on the CSOtv Sessions video recordings of Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* and Mozart's *Gran Partita*, as well as on UCTV video recordings from SummerFest LaJolla. A passionate and committed music educator, Teresa serves on the Artist-Faculty of the Chicago College of Performing Arts at Roosevelt University.

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