FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

UPDATE: 2016-17 Chicago Philharmonic Season Opens with Legendary Lovers, Features Harp Duo in Foyer

Chicago, IL – (September 9, 2016) The Chicago Philharmonic’s 2016-17 season, Love, begins with a concert exploring “Legendary Lovers” as depicted in music. Couples including Romeo & Juliet, Ruslan & Ludmila, and Tristan & Isolde all feature. Emily Birsan and John Irvin, Ryan Opera Center alumni recently heard at the Lyric Opera, sing duets by Verdi, Bernstein, and Gounod, and the orchestra performs symphonic works by Ravel, Wagner, Glinka, and Diamond. The Belle Harmonie harp duo, featuring Krista Hagglund and Anna Hirons of the Midwest Young Artists Conservatory, will perform in the foyer before the concert.

Legendary Lovers

Sunday, September 18, 2016, 3 pm
Pick-Staiger Hall (50 Arts Circle Drive, Evanston)

Scott Speck, conductor
Emily Birsan, soprano
John Irvin, tenor
Foyer Music: Krista Hagglund and Anna Hirons, harp

Richard Wagner: Prelude and Liebestod from Tristan and Isolde
Charles Gounod: Love Duet from Romeo and Juliet
Mikhail Glinka: Overture to Ruslan and Ludmila
Giuseppe Verdi: “Signor né principe” from Rigoletto
David Diamond: Music for Romeo and Juliet
Leonard Bernstein: Balcony Scene from West Side Story
Maurice Ravel: Daphnis and Chloé, Suite 2

Tickets: $25 - $75 (https://web.ovationtix.com/trs/pe.c/10084850)
Subscriptions: $45 - $281 (https://web.ovationtix.com/trs/store/34171/packages)
More information: http://www.chicagophilharmonic.org/legendary-lovers/
ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

Emily Birsan, Soprano
Soprano Emily Birsan has been praised by the Chicago Tribune for her “fineness of expression…” and by Madison Isthmus as having a “…strong, clear, handsomely balanced and beautiful voice,” and as “…an artist with a very great promise for the future.” Birsan is an alumnus of the Patrick G. and Shirley W. Ryan Opera Center at the Lyric Opera of Chicago and was most recently heard on the main stage of the Lyric Opera of Chicago as Servilia in the critically acclaimed Sir David McVicar production La clemenza di Tito and the 1st Flower Maiden in a new production of Wagner’s Parsifal.

In addition, Birsan has covered multiple roles at the Lyric Opera including Adele in Die Fledermaus, Violetta in La traviata, and Norina in Don Pasquale. The 2014-2015 season marked her return to the Lyric Opera for their 60th anniversary season as the Italian Singer in Strauss’s Capriccio. Additionally, she sang Leïla in Les pêcheurs de perles with Florida Grand Opera, Strauss’s Alpine Symphony with the Knoxville Symphony Orchestra, the cover of Violetta in La traviata with Fort Worth Opera, and Anne Trulove in The Rake’s Progress with the Edinburgh International Festival. This season, she will debut with Boston Lyric Opera and Madison Opera as Musetta in La bohème and join the Dubuque Symphony for Brahms’ Ein deutsches requiem and Bangor Symphony as Mimi in La bohème.

John Irvin, Tenor
Most recently seen at Lyric Opera of Chicago for the highly anticipated world premiere of Lopez’s Bel Canto, John Irvin brought “a handsome tenor voice and talented hands to the production with a searing portrayal of the diva’s doomed accompanist. Earlier this season at Opera Theatre of St. Louis, Irvin garnered rave reviews for his “irresistibly charming, commanding, clarion tenor” and “virile performance” in the challenging role of Matthew Gurney in a new production of Tobias Picker’s Emmeline. Future engagements include Irvin’s European debut as the tenor soloist in Berlioz’s Grande Messe des Morts with Bochumer Symphoniker, Rodolfo in a new production of Puccini’s La bohème at Theater Heidelberg, and Lucas in the world premiere of Thomas Ades’ The Exterminating Angel at the Salzburg Festival.

Originally a pianist, Irvin discovered his passion for singing in 2008 where he went on to earn his Bachelor of Music magna cum laude from Georgia State University (2010) and Professional Certificate from Boston University’s Opera Institute (2012). An alumnus of The Patrick G. and Shirley W. Ryan Opera Center at Lyric Opera of Chicago, Irvin covered and performed over twenty roles for Lyric Opera’s mainstage season. Highlights include stepping in as Don Ottavio for the Stars of Lyric Opera at Millennium Park performance, as Lord Percy in the final dress rehearsal of Donizetti’s Anna Bolena, and as Alfred for two performances of Strauss’s Die Fledermaus. In addition to the main stage, he has performed selections from Schubert’s Die Winterreise with artist and director William Kentridge, performed selection of Strauss songs with Civic Orchestra at Symphony Center, and portrayed Ferrando (Cosi fan tutte, Act 1) with the Grant Park Music Festival. During this time, Irvin also made debuts with Madison Opera (Il barbiere di Siviglia with John DeMain), Chicago Symphony Orchestra (Beyond the Score with Stephane Deneve), Los Angeles Philharmonic
(Giuseppe, Verdi’s *La Traviata* and Don Curzio, Mozart’s *Le nozze di Figaro* with Gustavo Dudamel) and Melbourne Symphony Orchestra (Beethoven Symphony no. 9 with Sir Andrew Davis).

**Scott Speck, Artistic Director**
Scott Speck has inspired international acclaim as a conductor of passion, intelligence, and winning personality. He is the Artistic Director of the Chicago Philharmonic and Music Director of the Joffrey Ballet and Mobile (AL) and West Michigan Symphony Orchestras.

Speck led four performances for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in 2014-15 and was immediately reengaged for four more concerts the following season. His concerts with the Moscow RTV Symphony Orchestra in Tchaikovsky Hall garnered unanimous praise. His gala performances with Yo-Yo Ma, Itzhak Perlman, Joshua Bell, Midori, Evelyn Glennie, and Olga Kern have highlighted his recent and current seasons as Music Director of the Mobile Symphony. He was invited to the White House as former Music Director of the Washington Ballet.

In past seasons Speck has conducted at London’s Royal Opera House at Covent Garden, the Paris Opera, Chicago’s Symphony Center, Washington’s Kennedy Center, San Francisco’s War Memorial Opera House, and the Los Angeles Music Center. He has led numerous performances with the symphony orchestras of Chicago, Houston, Baltimore, Paris, Moscow, Shanghai, Beijing, Vancouver, Romania, Slovakia, Buffalo, Columbus (OH), Honolulu, Louisville, New Orleans, Oregon, Rochester, Florida, and Virginia, among many others.

Previously he held positions as Conductor of the San Francisco Ballet, Music Advisor and Conductor of the Honolulu Symphony, and Associate Conductor of the Los Angeles Opera. During a tour of Asia he was named Principal Guest Conductor of the China Film Philharmonic in Beijing.

In addition, Speck is the co-author of two of the world’s best-selling books on classical music for a popular audience, *Classical Music for Dummies* and *Opera for Dummies*. These books have received stellar reviews in both the national and international press and have garnered enthusiastic endorsements from major American orchestras. They have been translated into twenty languages and are available around the world. His third book in the series, *Ballet for Dummies*, was released to great acclaim as well.

**ABOUT THE CHICAGO PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY**

The Chicago Philharmonic Society is a collaboration of over 200 of the highest-level classical musicians performing in the Chicago metropolitan area. Governed under a groundbreaking structure of musician leadership, the Society presents concerts at venues throughout the Chicago area that cover the full spectrum of classical music, from Bach to Britten and beyond. The Society’s orchestra, known simply as the Chicago Philharmonic, has been called “one of the country’s finest symphonic orchestras” (*Chicago Tribune*), and its unique chamber music ensembles, which perform as the Chicago Philharmonic Chamber Players (cp3), draw from its vast pool of versatile musicians. The Society’s outreach programs connect Chicago-area youth to classical music and provide performance
opportunities for members of the community. Founded 26 years ago by principal musicians from the Lyric Opera Orchestra, the Chicago Philharmonic currently serves as the official orchestra of the Joffrey Ballet, continues its 21-year association with the Ravinia Festival, and presents symphonic concerts in Chicago’s North Shore region and, beginning in May 2016, at the Harris Theater.

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