The Roaring Twenties
Saturday, March 9 2019, 7:30pm
Pick-Staiger Hall, Evanston

Scott Speck conductor
Aldo López-Gavilán piano

John Harbison (b. 1938)
Remembering Gatsby

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)
Piano Concerto in G Major
I. Allegramente
II. Adagio assai
III. Presto

Intermission

Kurt Weill (1900-1950)
Suite from The Threepenny Opera
I. Overture
II. Die Moritât von Mackie Messer
(The Moritat of Mack the Knife)
III. Anstatt-dass Song
(The Instead-of Song)
IV. Die Ballade vom Angenehmen
Leben (The Ballad of the Easy Life)
V. Pollys Lied (Polly’s Song)
VI. Tango-Ballade (Tango)
VII. Kanonen-Song (Cannon Song)
VIII. Dreigroschen-Finale
(Threepenny Finale)

George Gershwin (1898 – 1937)
Rhapsody in Blue

Performance time approximately 1 hour 45 minutes

The Roaring Twenties is supported in part by the
Paul M. Angell Family Foundation.

John Harbison (b. 1938)
Remembering Gatsby (1985)

Pulitzer Prize-winning, Boston-based composer
John Harbison stands among the greatest and
most prolific American composers living today.
He just celebrated his 80th birthday in December
of 2018, with many orchestras commemorating
the occasion with performances of his works
across the world. Remembering Gatsby was
inspired by F. Scott Fitzgerald’s classic American novel The Great
Gatsby. Harbison in fact repurposed the work many years later into
the overture for his opera The Great Gatsby which was premiered by the
Metropolitan Opera in 1999. Harbison’s notes on the piece follow:

“The piece, which runs about eight minutes, begins with a cantabile
passage for full orchestra, a representation of Gatsby’s vision of the
green light on Daisy’s dock. Then the foxtrot begins, first with a kind of
call to order, then a 20’s tune I had written for one of the party scenes,
played by a concertino led by a soprano saxophone. The tune is then
varied and broken into its components, leading to an altered and
reprise of the call to order, and an intensification of the original cantabile. A brief
coda combines some of the motives, and refers fleetingly to the
telephone bell and the automobile horns, instruments of Gatsby’s fate.”

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)
Piano Concerto in G Major (1932)

Parisian composer, pianist, and conductor Maurice
Ravel is often categorized as an impressionist
composer, a term which Ravel vehemently rejected.
Perhaps, then, it is better to consider Ravel by how
he fit within the French music and cultural
ecosystem in the early 20th century: mentee of
composers Claude Debussy and Gabriel Fauré,
contemporary of author Marcel Proust, and friend of American composer
George Gershwin. Ravel was a slow and meticulous composer, he produced
far fewer works than many of his contemporaries and was further hindered
by his military duty in World War I. He wrote just two pieces for piano and
orchestra: Piano Concerto in D Major for the Left Hand (written for pianist
Paul Wittgenstein who lost his right arm in the war) and his Piano Concerto
in G Major.

Both of Ravel’s piano concertos were written after his 1928 trip to America
(he was lured by the promise of $10,000 and a constant supply of Gauloises
Caperal cigarettes). In his travels to Chicago, San Francisco, Boston,
Cleveland, New York, New Orleans, and many other American cities, Ravel’s
interest in jazz and the music of black American performers was
piqued. This influence can be clearly heard in the concerto’s jazzy episodes,
particularly in the open piano riffs reminiscent of George Gershwin’s
Rhapsody in Blue. The first movement contrasts boisterous piccolo, trumpet,
and horn lines with lush piano passages. The second movement, Adagio
assai, begins with a relaxed, waltzing piano solo. The movement is one of
Ravel’s most beautifully composed, with a continuously flowing melody
that seemingly melts from one phrase to the next. The concerto ends with a
bang of a finale, racing past jazzy brass hits, screaming woodwind lines, and
bustling piano solos throughout.

NEXT! Music in the Foyer
Students from the Jazz Studies Program
University of Illinois at Chicago
Salomon Flores, saxophone
Ian Walsh, guitar
Kevyn Miller, bass

The University of Illinois at Chicago is a major research university
located in the heart of Chicago. The university is recognized as
one of the most ethnically rich and culturally diverse universities in
America. Education in Jazz at the UIC School of Theater & Music
is designed for the student seeking a professional career in jazz and
related fields of contemporary music, developing the special talents
of the creative jazz artist as well as the flexible skills required of
the successful musician through information, exposure and experience.
Kurt Weill (1900-1950)
**Suite from The Threepenny Opera (1928)**

In 1928, German-Jewish composer Kurt Weill wrote and premiered the music to *The Threepenny Opera*, a “play with music” by German playwright Bertolt Brecht. The work, a biting satire and sharp political critique based on John Gay’s 1728 play “The Beggar’s Opera”, paved the way for musical theater as we know it today and inspired later hits like *Cabaret* and *Chicago*. *The Threepenny Opera* was an instant smash, captivating audiences in bohemian Berlin and across Europe. Mack the Knife later became a hit for Bobby Darin, Louis Armstrong, Frank Sinatra and countless other pop musicians.

A few months after the play’s premiere, Weill composed *Kleine Dreigroschenmusik* (*Little Threepenny Music* or *Suite from The Threepenny Opera*) for wind ensemble. *Little Threepenny Music* combines popular, jazz, and avant-garde classical music to create a unique style. Current concert goers might think of as hokey, old timey jazz was in fact cutting edge composition in the 1920s. Complete with slurry trombone lines, cheesy vibrato, and a staunch Socialist political message, *Little Threepenny Music* still represents a major cultural moment in 20th century music and theater.

George Gershwin (1898 – 1937)
**Rhapsody in Blue (1924)**

American Broadway composer George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* was an instant hit, combining elements of symphonic music with the free-spirited style of jazz and popular music of the 1920s. It catapulted Gershwin to a new level of stardom and cemented his place as a composer of “serious” classical music alongside international contemporaries. Nearly a century later, it still epitomizes what so many Americans take pride in: a flawed but beautiful melting pot constantly creating new cultural phenomena, tradition be damned. Themes from the piece are used today in the concert hall and commercially; you may have heard *Rhapsody* playing in the connecting concourses in Terminal 1 at the O’Hare airport, in a United Airlines advertisement, or as the inspiration and soundtrack to Woody Allen’s 1979 film *Manhattan*.

*Rhapsody in Blue* was composed at the request of jazz bandleader and “King of Jazz” Paul Whiteman for an all-jazz concert held in a classical music venue that would be called an “Experiment in Modern Music”. Gershwin composed the piece for two pianos (one solo, one accompanying) in just five weeks and handed off an incomplete score to Whiteman’s arranger Ferde Grofé. Grofé, who later became famous for his *Grand Canyon Suite*, arranged *Rhapsody* for Whiteman’s jazz ensemble. He also arranged the piece for full symphony orchestra in 1942. The piece begins with one of the most recognizable solos in classical music: a schmaltzy smear of a clarinet glissando. The line was originally written as a trill and then 17-note scale, but clarinetist Ross Gorman (apparently due to either boredom or exhaustion during rehearsal) replaced the scale with a glissando, and the rest is history.

Aldo López-Gavilán, piano

“A dazzling technique and rhythmic fire
- The Seattle Times

“A formidable virtuoso” - The Times of London

Aldo López-Gavilán was born in Cuba to a family of internationally acclaimed classical musicians. His first international triumph was at the age of 11, when he won the Danny Kaye International Children's Award, organized by UNICEF. He made his professional debut at the age of 12 with the Matanzas Symphony Orchestra. Parallel to his classical abilities, López-Gavilán developed remarkable improvisational skills. He was invited to perform in the world-famous Havana Jazz Festival with legend Chucho Valdés, who called López-Gavilán “simply a genius, a star.”

In 1999, he recorded his first CD, *En el ocaso de la hormiga y el elefante*, which won the 2000 Grand Prix at Cubadisco. He was also invited by Maestro Claudio Abbado to perform as soloist in a special concert dedicated to the 250th anniversary of Mozart’s birth, in which he was accompanied by the Simón Bolívar Youth Orchestra of Venezuela. The following year, Abbado invited him to perform Prokofiev's Concerto No. 1 in Caracas and Havana. López-Gavilán’s remarkable professional career also includes composing original music for award winning films, arranging his own compositions for international orchestras as well as performing in some of the world’s greatest concert halls, such as Amadeo Roldán (Cuba), Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center (USA), Teresa Careño (Venezuela), Bellas Artes (Mexico), Royal Festival Hall (U.K.), Nybrokajen 11 (Sweden), The Hall of Music (Russia), and Duc de Lombard et Petit Journal Montparnasse (France).