

CHICAGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA



SEPTEMBER-NOVEMBER 2023



ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-THIRD SEASON

CHICAGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

RICCARDO MUTI Music Director Emeritus for Life

Thursday, September 28, 2023, at 7:30

Friday, September 29, 2023, at 1:30

Saturday, September 30, 2023, at 7:30

Riccardo Muti Conductor

GLASS

The Triumph of the Octagon

World premiere. CSO commission

Commissioned by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra through the generous support of the Helen Zell Commissioning Program

MENDELSSOHN

Symphony No. 4 in A Major, Op. 90 (*Italian*)

Allegro vivace

Andante con moto

Con moto moderato

Saltarello: Presto

INTERMISSION

STRAUSS

Aus Italien, Op. 16

In the Country

Amid the Ruins of Rome

On the Shores of Sorrento

Neapolitan Folk Life

This performance is made possible with the generous sponsorship of Josef and Margot Lakonishok.

Bank of America is the Maestro Residency Presenter.

United Airlines is the Official Airline of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

This program is partially supported by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council Agency.

PHILIP GLASS

Born January 31, 1937; Baltimore, Maryland

The Triumph of the Octagon



When Riccardo Muti was a boy growing up in the southern Italian town of Molfetta, just north of Bari on the shore of the Adriatic Sea, he and his family traveled by carriage one night to Castel del Monte, the celebrated thirteenth-century octagonal castle that stands on a rocky hill, dominating the Apulian countryside. They arrived at dawn. “Opening the curtains,” Muti

recalled much later, “I was surprised to find the castle built by Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II right before my eyes, like an enormous crown fallen from heaven, a striking sight I’ve never forgotten.” Throughout his years as the Chicago Symphony’s music director, a photo of the Castel del Monte hung in Muti’s studio in Orchestra Hall—a memento of his childhood and a reminder of the piece of land he now owns and loves to visit that sits nearby.

When Philip Glass came to Chicago for the Orchestra’s first performance of his Eleventh Symphony under Muti’s direction in February 2022, Glass noticed the photo hanging on the wall. He and Muti began to talk, and in a way that can only happen when two creative spirits are charmed to meet and get to know one another a bit, that brief encounter was the inspiration for this new piece that Glass has written for Muti and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

Glass first came to Chicago in 1952, at the age of fifteen, to begin an unusual University of Chicago program that allowed students to skip their last two years of high school and begin a university education. He soon found his way to the Chicago Symphony Orchestra just as it was beginning to work with its new music director, Fritz Reiner, and was playing at the peak of its powers. On Friday afternoons, Glass hopped the Illinois Central train from Hyde Park to Orchestra Hall to buy a cheap student ticket to the Chicago Symphony’s matinee programs. Last year—sitting in a box this time—for the first time Glass heard the orchestra that he had admired seventy years earlier in Bartók and Stravinsky play his own music. *The Triumph of the Octagon* is the first work he has written with the Chicago Symphony in mind.

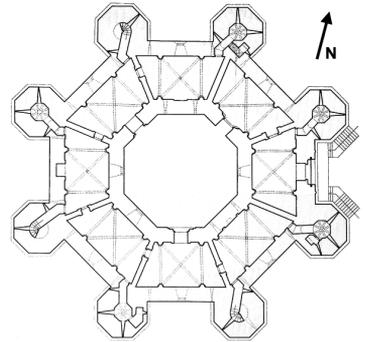
Glass’s title, *The Triumph of the Octagon*, refers to the castle’s famous eight-sided floor plan, with eight octagonal

COMPOSED
2023

INSTRUMENTATION
two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets,
harp, strings

These are the world premiere performances.

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THIS PAGE, FROM TOP: Philip Glass, portrait in oil by Luis Álvarez Roure (born 1976), 2016. Collection of the National Portrait Gallery of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

Floor plan of Castel del Monte, the thirteenth-century castle and citadel located in the Apulia region of southeastern Italy

OPPOSITE PAGE: The Castel del Monte, which Riccardo Muti saw for the first time at the age of five. A large photo of the castle hung in his Orchestra Hall studio, as well as a smaller handpainted version nearby. (Photo by Alfio Giannotti/ REDA&CO/Universal Images Group via Getty Images)

towers at each of the eight points—a layout of exceptional precision and rarity in the thirteenth century. In 1996 Castel del Monte (Castle of the Mountain) was named a UNESCO World Heritage site, as a unique piece of medieval architecture; it is also the basis for the castle in Umberto Eco’s novel *The Name of the Rose*, and appears on the Italian-issued 1 euro cent coin. Now, with Glass’s new score, the Castel del Monte joins

the very slight list of architectural landmarks that have inspired music—a structure built of sustained chords and rolling arpeggios rather than blocks of limestone.

Philip Glass on *The Triumph of the Octagon*

In February 2022 I traveled to Chicago for performances of my Symphony no. 11. It was a thrill to hear this great orchestra and conductor in the hall where I would visit as a student in the early 1950s. After those performances, we began conversations about writing a new piece specifically for this orchestra with the initial idea to create an “Adagio for Muti.” The final title of the work came from a suggestion from Maestro



Riccardo Muti about Castel del Monte, a thirteenth-century castle in southeastern Italy.

The mystery of this ancient place and the uniqueness of its geometric proportions, specifically its eight octagonal towers, was an interesting catalyst; while I have written music about people, places, events, and cultures, I cannot recall ever composing a piece about a building. What became clear was that I was not writing a piece about Castel del Monte per se, but rather about one’s imagination when we consider such a place.

I dedicate this work to Maestro Muti, in honor of his many successes as conductor of the CSO and important contributions to the world of music. ■