

GRANT PARK ORCHESTRA

Carlos Kalmar Artistic Director and Principal Conductor

Christopher Bell Chorus Director



Friday, July 14, 2023 at 6:30 p.m.

Saturday, July 15, 2023 at 7:30 p.m.

Jay Pritzker Pavilion

PROKOFIEV ROMEO AND JULIET

Grant Park Orchestra and Chorus

Kevin John Edusei, conductor

Joyce Yang, piano

Anna Clyne

This Midnight Hour

Franz Liszt

Totentanz

JOYCE YANG

INTERMISSION

Sergei Prokofiev

Suite from *Romeo and Juliet*

The Montagues and the Capulets

The Child Juliet

Madrigal

Minuet: The Arrival of the Guests

Masks

Romeo and Juliet (Balcony Scene)

The Death of Tybalt

Friar Laurence

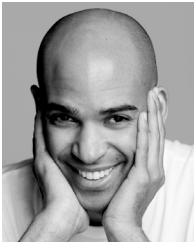
Romeo and Juliet before Parting

Romeo at Juliet's Grave

The Death of Juliet

Piano provided by Steinway Piano Gallery of Chicago

Friday's concert is being recorded for broadcast on 98.7WFMT



German conductor **Kevin John Edusei** is sought after the world over. He is praised for the drama and tension that he brings to his music-making, for his attention to detail, sense of architecture, and the fluidity, warmth and insight that he brings to his performances. He is deeply committed to the creative elements of performance, presenting classical music in new formats, cultivating audiences, introducing music by underrepresented composers and conducting an eclectic range of repertoire. During the 2023-24 season, he can be seen with orchestras and opera companies worldwide. He most recently served as chief conductor of the Munich Symphony Orchestra and is principal guest conductor of the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra.



ANNA CLYNE (b. 1980)

THE MIDNIGHT HOUR (2015)

Scored for: three flutes including piccolo, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four French horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, and strings

Performance time: 12 minutes

First Grant Park Orchestra performance

Anna Clyne's *This Midnight Hour* draws inspiration from two poems: Charles Baudelaire's "Harmonie du soir" ("Evening Harmony") and a poem by Juan Ramón Jiménez that simply reads, "¡La musica; mujer desnuda, corriendo loca por la noche pura!" ("Music, a naked woman, running crazed through the pure night!"). Clyne writes, "Whilst it is not intended to depict a specific narrative, my intention is that it will evoke a visual journey for the listener." That visual journey is no serene moonscape. The propulsive energy of the opening creates an atmosphere of urgency and foreboding that is heightened by sudden shifts in textures, stark dynamic contrasts, and unsettling pauses. Lyrical melodic elements try to break through, but each attempt is slightly off-kilter, including a purposely out-of-tune organ grinder waltz. Eventually, a delicate melancholy melody arises from the tumult. Introduced by the solo bassoon, the melody is repeated by each wind section, with a chromatically decorated descant emerging in the horns. We are lulled into a dream-like state before a final timpani blow brings us back to reality.



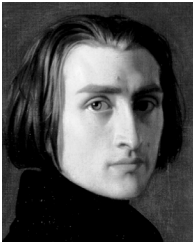
CENTERSTAGE

XAVIER FOLEY, COMPOSER
AND DOUBLE BASS
JOYCE YANG, PIANO

SUNDAY, JULY 16, 2 PM

INDOORS ON THE STAGE OF THE
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FRANZ LISZT (1811 - 1886)

**TOTENTANZ, S.126; FANTASY FOR PIANO & ORCHESTRA
(1ST VERSION) (? 1847)**

Scored for: three flutes including piccolo, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two French horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, strings, and solo piano

Performance time: 17 minutes

First Grant Park Orchestra performance: July 27, 1947;
Arthur Fiedler, conductor and Jesus Maria Sanroma, piano

The thirteenth-century plainchant *Dies irae* (Day of Wrath) has been used as a musical shorthand for doom and gloom for centuries. Commonly attributed to the Franciscan monk Thomas of Celano (c. 1185–1265), the hymn vividly portrays the Last Judgment—the day when Christians believe God judges the living and the dead to decide their eternal fate in either heaven or hell. From the fourteenth century until the 1960s, *Dies irae* formed part of the Roman Catholic Mass for the Dead. Having gained a sinister connotation, the melody—especially the first four notes—has made countless appearances in secular music, from Hector Berlioz’s *Symphonie fantastique* and Gustav Mahler’s Second Symphony to such film scores as *The Lion King*, *The Lord of the Rings*, *Star Wars*, and *It’s a Wonderful Life*. Franz Liszt goes one step further in his *Totentanz* (“Dance of Death”), which presents a sequence of five virtuosic variations on the Gregorian chant, though as many as thirty iterations or fragments of the theme appear throughout the work.

Liszt was inspired to write the work during his years of travel with Countess Marie d’Agoult. Marie was unhappily married and living separately from her husband when she and Liszt met in 1832. The two carried on a secret liaison before eventually running away together in 1835. They absconded to Switzerland to escape the scandal and spent the next few years traveling around Europe. They wended their way to Italy in 1838. In Pisa, they admired the majestic frescoes at the Camposanto Monumentale in the Piazza dei Miracoli (also home to the Leaning Tower of Pisa). One fresco in particular caught Liszt’s eye: *Il Trionfo della Morte* (“The Triumph of Death”), now widely considered to have been painted by Buonamico Buffalmacco in 1338–39. The dramatic fresco, which Liszt said reminded him of Mozart’s Requiem, is a cautionary tale that life is fleeting and death is indiscriminate. It depicts several scenes. On the left, a group of hunters comes across three open caskets, each with a corpse in a different state of decay. On the right, affluent youths frolic in a garden, while death hovers nearby, personified as an old woman with long, white hair, bat wings, claws, and a scythe. In the center is the vision of the Last Judgment, where angels and demons fight over the bodies of the dead, dragging them to their respective realms.

Liszt sketched an idea for a piano piece based on this fresco in 1839. He returned to the idea ten years later, producing a version that includes another plainchant melody—a setting of Psalm 130 (*De profundis* or *Out of the depths*). He continued to tinker with the score over the next fifteen years, eventually excising the *De profundis* material. The final version for piano solo and orchestra was published in 1865, as well as versions for solo piano and two pianos.



SERGEI PROKOFIEV (1891 - 1953)

ROMEO AND JULIET (VARYING SELECTIONS FROM THREE SUITES) (1935-1936)

Scored for: three flutes including piccolo, three oboes including English horn, three clarinets including bass clarinet, three bassoons including contrabassoon, four French horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, tenor saxophone, timpani, percussion, harp, and strings

Performance time: 52 minutes

First Grant Park Orchestra performance: August 13, 1966; Kenneth Schermerhorn, conductor

"Never was a story of more woe / Than this of Prokofiev's music for Romeo," jested prima ballerina Galina Ulanova in a toast after the premiere of Sergei Prokofiev's ballet *Romeo and Juliet*. This remark came after a complex, five-year struggle to produce the ballet. First, a little backstory: Prokofiev was one of the many artists who had fled Soviet Russia following the October Revolution in 1917. After stints in the United States and Germany, he settled in Paris, where there was a large community of Russian ex-pats. He still kept in contact with friends and colleagues back home and made several extended visits beginning in 1927. During one visit in 1934, the Kirov Ballet in Leningrad (now the Mariinsky Ballet in St. Petersburg) invited him to score Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Prokofiev drafted the entire ballet in four months in the summer of 1935. When the contract with the Kirov Ballet fell through, he pitched it to the Bolshoi Ballet in Moscow, which accepted it for production in the spring of 1936. However, the ballet continued to run into difficulties. The directors at the Bolshoi declared the music "impossible to dance to" and terminated the contract.

The Bolshoi's refusal to stage *Romeo and Juliet* may have had less to do with the music and more to do with the political atmosphere at the time. Prokofiev had permanently moved back to the Soviet Union in 1936 at the height of Stalin's purges, which saw many artists arrested or even executed for not conforming to Soviet artistic ideals. It is unclear why Prokofiev decided to return at this time, but the government may have incentivized the composer to return to bolster its cultural standing. However, he was still regarded with suspicion for his time in the West and reputation as a "modernist." It may have been out of an abundance of caution rather than the music itself that the Bolshoi pulled out of *Romeo and Juliet*, especially given that Prokofiev's score is relatively traditional and unprovocative, written with a Soviet audience in mind.

In 1936, Prokofiev extracted selections from the ballet to create two orchestral suites of seven movements each. He hoped audiences would want to see the full ballet after hearing the suites. This tactic worked. *Romeo and Juliet* was first performed in Brno, Czechoslovakia in 1938, though without the composer's involvement. The ballet finally saw its Soviet premiere in January 1940 at the Kirov Ballet after Prokofiev made some adjustments to the score. After the war, Prokofiev revised the ballet again and extracted a third orchestral suite of six movements in 1946. For these orchestral suites, Prokofiev chose the most self-contained excerpts from the ballet and arranged them in an order that best suited listening in a concert context rather than following the storyline. As such, conductors today frequently choose selections from the different suites and arrange them to better capture the dramatic arc of Shakespeare's famous tragedy.

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