

GRANT PARK MUSIC FESTIVAL

Carlos Kalmar Artistic Director and Principal Conductor

Christopher Bell Chorus Director



Wednesday, July 19, 2023 at 6:30 p.m.

Jay Pritzker Pavilion

PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION

Grant Park Orchestra

Ken-David Masur, conductor

Esther Yoo, violin

Carlos Simon

Profiles

The Block

Empress of the Blues

City of Light

Alexander Glazunov

Violin Concerto

Moderato - Andante sostenuto

Più animato - Allegro

ESTHER YOO

Modest Mussorgsky/Sergei Gorchakov

Pictures at an Exhibition

Introduction - Promenade

Gnomus

Il vecchio castello

Tuileries

Bydło

Ballet of Little Chicks in their Shells

Two Polish Jews

Limoges

Catacombae - Cum mortuis in lingua
mortua

Baba-Yaga - The Hut on Hen's Legs

The Great Gate of Kyiv

This concert is generously sponsored by Colleen and Lloyd Fry
and the Lloyd A. Fry Foundation.

The appearance of Ken-David Masur and tonight's program
are made possible with generous support from
Lori Julian for the Julian Family Foundation.

Tonight's concert is being broadcast and streamed live
on 98.7WFMT and wfmt.com



Hailed as “fearless, bold, and a life-force” (*San Diego Union-Tribune*) and “a brilliant and commanding conductor with unmistakable charisma” (*Leipzig Volkszeitung*), **Ken-David Masur** is the music director of the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra and principal conductor of the Civic Orchestra of Chicago. Other engagements include subscription weeks with the Nashville and Omaha Symphony Orchestras, and a return to Poland’s Wrocław Philharmonic. Masur has conducted distinguished orchestras around the world. He is passionate about the growth,

encouragement and application of contemporary music and is devoted to music education and to working with the next generation of young artists.



Esther Yoo first came to prominence at 16 when she became the youngest prizewinner of the International Sibelius Violin Competition. In recent years, she’s made debuts with orchestras across Europe and North America. Born in the U.S. and raised in Europe, Esther began playing the violin at the age of 4 and made her concerto debut at age 8. On her YouTube channel, Yoo hosts videos on violin technique, cooking, and life as a touring artist. She has recorded on the Deutsche Grammophon and Decca labels. Esther plays the 1704 “Prince Obolensky”

Stradivarius, generously lent to her by a private collector.



CARLOS SIMON (b. 1986)

PROFILES (2022)

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

Performance time: 15 minutes

First Grant Park Orchestra performance

Written in 2022, Carlos Simon’s *Profiles* is based on the output of influential visual artist Romare Bearden (1911–1988). Each of the three movements draws inspiration from a different Bearden piece. First is “The Block,” a six-panel work depicting various neighborhood institutions in one Harlem block. Just as Bearden uses multiple mediums in his signature cut-paper collage technique, Simon employs a variety of musical textures to capture the vibrant energy of Harlem. A painting of blues singer Bessie Smith inspired the second movement. “To emulate the voice and character of Bessie Smith,” Simon explains in his note on the piece, “this movement features several solos supported by musical idioms associated with the Blues.” The last movement evokes a stained-glass window Bearden designed for the Westchester Square station in the Bronx. To capture the bright colors and the trains weaving through the dense cityscape, Simon’s fast-moving music features “the brass section stabbing and jabbing under a bed of perpetually driving arpeggios in the strings.”



ALEXANDER GLAZUNOV (1865 - 1936)

CONCERTO IN A MINOR, OP.82, FOR VIOLIN & ORCHESTRA (1904)

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

Performance time: 21 minutes

First Grant Park Orchestra performance: July 15, 1939; Henry Weber, conductor and Michael Wilkomirski, violin

Alexander Glazunov was an important stabilizing force in early twentieth-century Russian music. He taught at the St. Petersburg Conservatory for thirty years, acting as its director from 1905 to 1930. Though the next generation of composers like Prokofiev and Shostakovich came to regard him as staunchly old-fashioned, he saw the conservatory through a tumultuous time and produced an impressive catalog of works.

As a child, Glazunov demonstrated an exceptional musical memory. After a few years of piano and composition lessons, he started studying with composer Rimsky-Korsakov in 1879. "His musical development progressed not by the day, but literally by the hour," Rimsky-Korsakov said of his teenage pupil. Though Glazunov would only study with Rimsky-Korsakov for two years, the two became lifelong friends and colleagues. The height of Glazunov's creativity came around the same time as becoming director of the conservatory. Though he had already composed seven symphonies, he had not yet tried his hand at a concerto by the time he set to work on his Violin Concerto in the summer of 1904. The violin was an unexpected choice for his first entrée into the genre, given that his main instrument was the piano, not the violin. But Shostakovich later reported that Glazunov learned how to play the violin while writing the piece, exemplifying his practical approach to composition.

Though firmly within the late-Romantic tradition, Glazunov's Violin Concerto has several structural oddities. Instead of the expected three movements, Glazunov's concerto has two. These are connected by an extended cadenza, which unfolds without pause. The violin soloist also plays an unusually dominant role throughout the concerto. Rather than themes alternating between the soloist and the orchestra, the violin soloist introduces all the main themes in the first movement. The orchestra then accompanies, develops, and expands upon the soloist's ideas, rarely introducing original material itself.

The wistful first movement forgoes dramatic, dynamic contrasts in favor of luxurious lyricism. The heart-wrenching opening melody almost yearns for a world quickly slipping away from the composer's grasp. The fully notated cadenza transforms the first movement's themes into dazzling displays of virtuosity. At the end of the cadenza, a soft timpani drumroll ushers in a trumpet fanfare, signaling the start of the finale. The second movement is much brighter, aided by the shimmering sonorities of the glockenspiel, piccolo, and triangle. For the soloist, the finale presents numerous technical challenges, including perilous harmonics, double stops, tremolos, and left-hand pizzicatos. At one charming moment, the soloist even imitates a balalaika, a traditional Russian stringed instrument. This strumming texture adds to the movement's joyful, folk-dance feel.



MODEST MUSSORGSKY (1839 - 1881)

PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION (1874) (orchestrated by Sergei Gorchakov, 1954)

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

Performance time: 31 minutes

First Grant Park Orchestra performance of this orchestration

The visual arts have long captured composers' imaginations. In addition to Carlos Simon's *Profiles*, so far this season we've heard Vivian Fung's *Aqua*, based on a Chicago skyscraper, and Franz Liszt's *Totentanz*, inspired by a medieval Italian fresco. Modest Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* is perhaps the most famous piece of classical music inspired by visual art. Mussorgsky had the idea to write *Pictures at an Exhibition* after attending an art retrospective featuring the work of his recently departed friend Viktor Hartmann in 1874. Hartmann, an architect and painter, had died of an aneurysm the previous summer at only thirty-nine years old. Deeply affected by the loss, Mussorgsky set out to memorialize his friend through a piano suite of ten movements, with each movement depicting one of Hartmann's works. Unfortunately, the piano suite was never publicly performed in Mussorgsky's lifetime. When the composer died from complications relating to alcoholism at forty-two, the score lay largely neglected until conductor Serge Koussevitzky commissioned Maurice Ravel to orchestrate it in 1922. Though Ravel's orchestration is the most commonly performed version, tonight you will hear Sergei Gorchakov's orchestration, completed in 1954.

Pictures at an Exhibition famously opens with the "Promenade" theme, a musical characterization of the composer as he walks through the exhibit. Each time the theme recurs, it is transformed depending on his reaction to the works on display. The first artwork he comes across is "The Gnome," a design for a nutcracker with crooked little legs, its awkward movements conveyed through irregular rhythms and erratic scurrying figures. Next, we see "The Old Castle," an architectural sketch of a medieval Italian castle with a troubadour playing a gentle siciliano outside. "Tuileries" takes us from Italy to Paris, where children play with their nannies in the Tuileries Gardens. In stark contrast to the frivolity of the children's games, "Cattle" portrays a lumbering ox cart passing by in the Polish countryside. "The Ballet of the Little Chicks in Their Shells" was based on costume designs for a children's ballet, the bubbly melody capturing the pitter-patter of the dancers' little feet.

"Two Polish Jews" is based on sketches of two Jewish men, one rich and one poor. Samuel Goldenberg, the wealthier of the two, is given a deep, noble melody, while Schmuyle's shivering can be heard in the high, repeated-note figure. "Limoges" transports us to a bustling marketplace in France, whereas "Catacombs" takes us somewhere rather darker. At the end of "Catacombs," the "Promenade" theme reemerges, perhaps as the wandering composer contemplates his own mortality. Next, "The Hut on Fowl's Legs" depicts the hut of Baba Yaga, a witch in Russian folklore who eats children. But never fear—the witch is banished with a majestic chorale in "The Great Gate of Kyiv," based on an architectural sketch for a grand archway complete with a chapel and bell tower. Though many of Hartmann's works have since been lost to the ravages of time, in *Pictures at an Exhibition*, Mussorgsky succeeded in creating a lasting legacy for his friend—and ultimately for himself as well.

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