

# GRANT PARK MUSIC FESTIVAL

**Carlos Kalmar** Artistic Director and Principal Conductor

**Christopher Bell** Chorus Director



Friday, August 18, 2023 at 6:30 p.m.

Saturday, August 19, 2023 at 7:30 p.m.

Jay Pritzker Pavilion

## RACHMANINOV SYMPHONIC DANCES

### Grant Park Orchestra and Chorus

**Carlos Kalmar**, conductor

**Michael Black**, guest chorus director

**Corinne Wallace-Crane**, alto

**Miles Mykkanen**, tenor

**Alex DeSocio**, baritone

**David Govertsen**, bass

### Modest Mussorgsky

*Night on Bald Mountain*

### Felix Mendelssohn

*The First Walpurgis Night*

Overture

May is smiling

Would ye, then, so rashly act?

Who fears today his rites to pay

Spread out, brave me, here

Those dull priests

Come with prong, come with fork

It's come so far

Comrades, quick! Your aid afford!

As from the smoke is freed the blaze

INTERMISSION

### Sergei Rachmaninov

*Symphonic Dances*

Non allegro - Lento - Tempo I

Andante con moto (Tempo di valse)

Lento assai - Allegro vivace

CORINNE WALLACE-CRANE

MILES MYKKANEN

ALEX DESOCIO

DAVID GOVERTSEN

This concert is generously supported as part of  
the Dehmlow Choral Music Series.

Friday's concert will be broadcast and  
streamed live on 98.7WFMT/wfmt.com.



Australian native **Michael Black** has served as chorus master at Lyric Opera of Chicago since 2013. He was chorus master at Opera Australia in Sydney from 2001 to 2013 and has served in this capacity at the Edinburgh International Festival, Opera Holland Park (London), and, in Australia, the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, the Philharmonia Choir, Motet Choir, the Cantillation chamber choir, and the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. Other activities include preparing *The Damnation of Faust* chorus at the Grant Park Music Festival, where he worked for two seasons.

As one of Australia's most prominent vocal accompanists, Black has performed on numerous broadcasts and recordings.



Praised for her “sassy, big-voiced” presence by the Chicago Classical Review, **Corinne Wallace-Crane** joined the Grant Park Chorus in the 2011 season. Since then, she has been a featured soloist in a number of concerts. Ms. Wallace-Crane is also in the regular chorus of the Lyric Opera of Chicago. Some notable performances include the Night Maid in *My Fair Lady*, a Sprite in *Cendrillon*, and Sister Lillianne in *Dead Man Walking*. She sang the role of Hansel in Lyric Opera's *Hansel and Gretel* in the Park. Ms. Wallace-Crane trained as a young artist at The Natchez

Opera Festival, Central City Opera, and Sarasota Opera.



**Miles Mykkanen** has garnered recognition on the world's concert and operatic stages for his “focused, full-voiced tenor” (*The New York Times*). Recently, he sang the title role in *Albert Herring* at Chicago Opera Theater and Fenton in *Falstaff* at the Staatsoper Hamburg. He has appeared in numerous productions at the Metropolitan Opera. A champion of new music, he has sung the world premieres of Ricky Ian Gordon's *27*, Jack Perla's *Shalimar the Clown* and of Matthew Aucoin's *Crossing* at the American Repertory Theatre. Miles Mykkanen is

the founder and artistic director of the Emberlight Festival.



**Alex DeSocio's** “buttery, booming baritone” (*The New York Times*) has been featured extensively with opera companies across the United States. This past season, he sang Figaro in Shreveport Opera's *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, as well as Schaunard in *La bohème* with Pensacola Opera. He was a resident artist with Pittsburgh Opera and an alum of the prestigious Merola Opera Program. Mr. DeSocio earned his Bachelor of Music from Northwestern University and his Master of Music at the University of Maryland. He is also the only opera singer certified

as an actor combatant in The Society of American Fight Directors.



Chicago-native **David Govertsen** recently stepped in on short notice at Lyric Opera of Chicago where he “handsomely replaced the ill Peter Rose as the producer La Roche” opposite Renée Fleming and Anne Sophie von Otter. Mr. Govertsen also appeared on short notice in *Pelléas et Mélisande* with the Chicago Symphony and as a soloist in James MacMillan’s *Quickening* with the Grant Park Orchestra. A former member of the Ryan Opera Center, he continues to appear in Lyric

and Central City Opera apprentice programs and holds degrees from Northwestern University, Northern Illinois University and the College of DuPage.



### **MODEST MUSSORGSKY** (1839 - 1881)

***NIGHT ON BALD MOUNTAIN (IVANOVA NOCH' NA LÍŠOY GORE; ST JOHN'S NIGHT ON BALD MOUNTAIN)* (1866)**

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

**Performance time:** 12 minutes

**First Grant Park Orchestra performance:** August 6, 1935; Leo Kopp, conductor

As early as 1860, Mussorgsky shared with fellow composer Mily Balakirev that he had written some material for a play by Baron Georgy Mengden titled *Ved'ma (The Witch)*. This project evolved into *Night on Bald Mountain*, which portrays an ancient Russian legend that takes place near Kyiv on St. John’s Night. In the story, a demon named Chernobog summons spirits to participate in a devilish hilltop party and fire rituals throughout the night (many will remember this terrifying scene in Disney’s 1940 classic *Fantasia*). The revelry disperses upon the tolling of a bell coming from a church in the village below as day breaks.

Suitably, Mussorgsky completed the original version of *Night on Bald Mountain* on St. John’s Eve itself. Mussorgsky proudly called the piece “Russian and original” and “hot and chaotic,” but Balakirev, who had previously advocated for his music, disagreed. He asked the composer to make changes prior to its premiere, but Mussorgsky refused, which ultimately led to the work not being performed by an orchestra during his lifetime. His original orchestration wasn’t published until 1968.

Many of Mussorgsky’s works were changed and reworked after his death, principally by composer Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov. When it came to *Night on Bald Mountain*, Rimsky-Korsakov notably altered the feel of the piece’s end; Mussorgsky had opted for a severe, ferocious ending, while Rimsky-Korsakov softened it to reflect dawn’s break. Over the years, a belief had arisen proclaiming Mussorgsky to be technically inept when it came to composition; perhaps revisers utilized this false narrative to excuse their tinkering, which sometimes greatly distorted Mussorgsky’s original work. Five years after Mussorgsky’s death, Rimsky-Korsakov brought *Night on Bald Mountain* to performance, and the version with his ending is what is most often played today.

The tense, macabre atmosphere in *Night on Bald Mountain* is created by many musical components, including tightly wound, relentless string and wind writing punctuated with sudden brass outbursts. Sinister dance rhythms are embellished by

bass drum and cymbal interruptions to help paint a portrait of the devilish revelry. As the church bells echo, a rolling harp invites tender moments from the entire orchestra. Clarinet and flute subdue the demons as the village below welcomes a new day.



## **FELIX MENDELSSOHN** (1809 - 1847)

### ***DIE ERSTE WALPURGISNACHT, OP.60* (1832)**

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

**Performance time:** 34 minutes

**First Grant Park Orchestra performance:** August 16, 2002; Carlos Kalmar, conductor and Karen Brunssen, mezzo-soprano; Scott Ramsay, tenor; Lester Lynch, baritone; Myron Meyers, bass

Felix Mendelssohn's *The First Walpurgis Night* is a setting of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's ballade poem of the same name. In August 1831, Mendelssohn wrote to the German writer, "Permit me to express my gratitude for the heavenly text. When the old druid brings his sacrifice and the whole thing becomes solemn and incomparably grand, there is no need to write music—it is all already so clearly present and resonant that I always sang the verses to myself—without meaning to. My only hope is that people will hear in my music how deeply I have felt the beauty of the text." Mendelssohn had begun composing his setting just weeks after meeting with Goethe in the fall of 1830 (the two met and corresponded many times). The composer told singer Eduard Devrient in a letter that he had started on the piece "just because I liked it and it spoke to me."

Walpurgis Night is a holiday that dates back many centuries to celebrations of fertility rites and the coming of spring. Goethe's poem uses the story to highlight the struggle for religious freedom, specifically between Christianity and paganism. As Mendelssohn composed his musical setting, he outlined his vision for his friend and sister, "The thing is now putting itself together, and I'm going to compose the entire poem for choruses and large orchestra . . . there are majestic elements in it. . . . At the beginning it is full of spring songs and there is also the witches' spookiness—you know that I have a particular fondness for that. Then the druids who make the sacrifices appear with their trombones, and then again the watchmen, who are afraid of the druids (here I mean to introduce an eerie, lightly mysterious chorus); and then finally, at the end, the complete sacrificial hymn."

*The First Walpurgis Night* begins with an instrumental overture that portrays the change of seasons from winter to spring. Mendelssohn divides Goethe's poem into nine sections that explore the tense relationship between the Druids and Christians—and the notion of tension and conflict between groups in general. As the Druids welcome in May with sacred ritual, they clash with the others who stubbornly insist that the seasons will change regardless of what the Druids do. Mendelssohn's "majestic elements" appear most strongly in the fifth, sixth, and seventh movements. When the Druids disguise themselves as devils in an attempt to escape their Christian enemies, the composer writes a chilling march that gradually builds its layers as the men's chorus is joined by more of the orchestra and then treble voices. Cymbal crashes and tumbling brass emphasize the gravity of the situation as the Druids prepare to clash with those who they feel do not understand them.

Ultimately, the entire chorus sings that no person can rob another of their inner light.

Mendelssohn carefully revised *The First Walpurgis Night* over many years until a final version emerged in 1843. Sadly, Goethe never heard Mendelssohn's *Walpurgis*; the writer died before its premiere.



## **SERGEI RACHMANINOV** (1873 - 1943)

### ***SYMPHONIC DANCES, OP.45* (1940)**

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

**Performance time:** 35 minutes

**First Grant Park Orchestra performance:** August 9, 1969;

Kenneth Schermerhorn, conductor

Late in 1939, Rachmaninov settled into a place on Long Island, New York, with his wife in hope of finding a more peaceful environment, as World War II had begun that fall, and Rachmaninov had recently had surgery. The virtuosic pianist was preparing for a significant performance tour and unexpectedly felt compelled to compose, which he had not done for some years. Having developed some neuroses, he could not write music if he knew others could overhear the process, but he didn't wish to be completely isolated, either. His New York estate provided the perfect place to practice and write in relative seclusion. Rachmaninov worked feverishly, often devoting 14-hour days to piano practice and his efforts on *Symphonic Dances*.

Rachmaninov began composing *Symphonic Dances* in midsummer 1940 and, by August, offered the piece to the Philadelphia Orchestra for its premiere. This was the only work he wrote entirely while living in America. He was optimistic that the dances could turn into another ballet since he had previously collaborated on one with Russian choreographer and friend Mikhail Fokine, but Fokine died before it came to full fruition. When the piece made its premieres in Philadelphia and subsequently New York, one negative review read, "The piece teems with weird sound . . . Mr. Rachmaninov's orchestra is definitely haunted, especially the wind section."

Rachmaninov leverages deep knowledge of orchestral color to great success in *Symphonic Dances*. A lover of each instrument's particular tone qualities, he decided to feature one previously unused in his works: alto saxophone. He consulted composer and Broadway arranger Robert Russell Bennett to figure out which saxophone he should use and how to incorporate it into the orchestration, then submitted its part to Bennett for feedback. This careful craftsmanship resulted in a solo that somehow showcases the instrument *and* blends it seamlessly with the wind section. In addition to the saxophone's appearance, the first movement is shaped by a galloping theme sprinkled with tambourine and piano.

Muted brass introduce the second movement—a stretchy waltz. Soft woodwinds and strings lead into the final movement, which alternates between two contrasting tempos: *lento assai* (very slow) and *allegro vivace* (fast and lively). After an exclamation point at the beginning, quiet bells launch the *allegro vivace*. The signature lushness of Rachmaninov's melodies are tinged with an air of reminiscence—this is Rachmaninov's

final work, after all. He wrote “I thank thee, Lord” at the end of the score and told a friend it was likely his “last flicker.”

It wasn't typical for Rachmaninov to quote his own music in his works, but it occurs in a few sections throughout *Symphonic Dances*. In the first movement, he quotes the opening theme of his First Symphony, which was very poorly received at its premiere to the point that it sent Rachmaninov into a horrible depression. The final movement includes the “Alleluia” theme from his *All-Night Vigil* and a nod to Russian Orthodox hymns. The fact that Rachmaninov quoted some of his best- and worst-received works suggests an all-encompassing gratitude for the *entirety* of his musical journey, not just his successes.

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## **Mendelssohn *Die Erst Walpurgisnacht***

### **1. Overture**

#### **2. Tenor and Chorus**

DER DRUIDEN UND DES VOLKS

Es lacht der Mai!

Der Wald ist frei

Von Eis und Reifgehänge.

Der Schnee ist fort;

Am grünen Ort

Erschallen Lustgesänge.

Ein reiner Schnee

Liegt auf der Höh';

Doch eilen wir nach oben,

Begeh'n den alten heil'gen Brauch,

Allvater dort zu loben.

Die Flamme lodre durch den Rauch!

Hinauf! So wird das Herz erhoben.

#### **3. Alto and Chorus**

EINE ALTE FRAU AUS DEM VOLKE

Könnt ihr so verwegen handeln?

Wollt ihr denn zum Tode wandeln?

Kennet ihr nicht die Gesetze

Unsrer harten Überwinder?

Rings gestellt sind ihre Netze

Auf die Heiden, auf die Sünder.

Ach, sie schlachten auf dem Walle

Unsrer Väter, unsrer Kinder.

Und wir alle nahen uns gewissem Falle.

CHOR DER WEIBER AUS DEM VOLKE

Auf des Lagers hohem Walle

Schlachten sie unsrer Kinder.

Ach, die harten Überwinder!

Und wir alle nahen uns gewissem Falle.

### **1. Overture**

#### **2. Tenor and Chorus**

THE DRUIDS AND THE PEOPLE

May is smiling!

The forest is free

From ice and hoarfrost.

The snow is gone;

Glad songs resound

Across the verdant mead.

Upon the height

The snow lies light,

Yet thither now we go,

There to extol our Father's name,

Whom we for ages know.

The flame blazes through the smoke!

Up! This is how the heart is liften up.

#### **3. Alto and Chorus**

AN OLD WOMAN OF THE PEOPLE

Would ye, then, so rashly act?

Would ye instant death attract?

Know ye not the cruel threats

Of the victors we obey?

Round about are placed their nets

In the sinful heathen's way.

Ah! upon the lofty wall

Wife and children slaughter they;

And we all hasten to a certain fall.

CHORUS OF WOMEN

Ay, upon the camp's high wall

All our children loved they slay.

Ah, what cruel victors they!

And we all hasten to a certain fall.

**4. Baritone and Chorus**

DER PRIESTER UND CHOR

Wer Opfer heut'  
Zu bringen scheut,  
Verdient erst seine Bande.  
Der Wald ist frei!  
Das Holz herbei,  
Und schichtet es zum Brande!  
Doch bleiben wir  
Im Buschrevier  
Am Tage noch im stillen,  
Und Männer stellen wir zur Hut  
Um eurer Sorge willen.  
Dann aber laßt mit frischem Muth  
Uns unsre Pflicht erfüllen.

**5. Chorus**

CHOR DER WÄCHTER DER DRUIDEN

Verteilt euch, wackre Männer, hier  
Durch dieses ganze Waldrevier,  
Und wachet hier im Stillen,  
Wenn sie die Pflicht erfüllen.

**6. Bass and Chorus**

IN WÄCHTER DER DRUIDEN

Diese dumpfen Pfaffenchristen,  
Laßt uns keck sie überlisten!  
Mit dem Teufel, den sie fabeln,  
Wollen wir sie selbst erschrecken.  
Kommt! Mit Zacken und mit Gabeln,  
Und mit Glut und Klapperstöcken  
Lärmen wir bei nächt'ger Weile  
Durch die leeren Felsenstrecken.  
Kauz und Eule  
Heul' in unser Rundgeheule!

**7. Chorus**

CHOR DER WÄCHTER DER DRUIDEN  
UND DES HEIDENVOLKS

Kommt mit Zacken, kommt mit Gabeln,  
Wie der Teufel, den sie fabeln,  
Kommt mit wilden Klapperstöcken  
Durch die leeren Felsenstrecken!  
Kauz und Eule  
Heul' in unser Rundgeheule!

**4. Baritone and Chorus**

A PRIEST AND CHORUS

Who fears to-day  
His rites to pay,  
Deserves his chains to wear.  
The forest's free!  
This wood take we,  
And straight a pile prepare!  
Yet in the wood  
To stay 'tis good  
By day till all is still,  
With watchers all around us placed  
Protecting you from ill.  
With courage fresh, then, let us haste  
Our duties to fulfill.

**5. Chorus**

CHORUS OF WATCHERS OF THE DRUIDS

Spread out, brave men, here  
Through this whole forest area,  
And watch here in silence,  
While they their rites fulfil.

**6. Bass and Chorus**

A WATCHER OF THE DRUIDS

Let us in a cunning wise,  
Yon dull Christian priests surprise!  
With the devil of their talk  
We'll those very priests confound.  
Come with prong and come with fork,  
Raise a wild and rattling sound  
Through the livelong night, and prow!l  
All the rocky passes round.  
Screech-owl, owl,  
Join in chorus with our howl!

**7. Chorus**

CHORUS OF THE WATCHERS OF DRUIDS  
AND PAGANS

Come with prong, and come with fork,  
Like the devil of their talk,  
Come with wildly rattling sound,  
Prowl the desert rocks around!  
Screech-owl, owl,  
Join in chorus with our howl!

### 8. Baritone and Chorus

EIN PRIESTER UND CHOR DER DRUIDEN  
UND DES HEIDENVOLKS

So weit gebracht,  
Daß wir bei Nacht  
Allvater heimlich singen!  
Doch ist es Tag,  
Sobald man mag  
Ein reines Herz dir bringen.  
Du kannst zwar heut',  
Und manche Zeit,  
Dem Feinde viel erlauben.  
Die Flamme reinigt sich vom Rauch:  
So reing' unsern Glauben!  
Und raubt man uns den alten Brauch,  
Dein Licht, wer will es rauben?

### 9. Tenor and Chorus

EIN CHRISTLICHER WÄCHTER  
Hilf, ach, hilf mir, Kriegsgeselle!  
Ach, es kommt die ganze Hölle!  
Sieh, wie die verhexten Leiber  
Durch und durch von Flammen glühen  
Menschen-Wölf' und Drachen-Weiber.  
Die im Flug vorüberziehen!  
Welch entsetzliches Getöse!  
Laßt uns, laßt uns alle fliehen!  
Oben flammt und saust der Böse,  
Aus dem Boden  
Dampfet rings ein Höllen-Broden.

CHOR DER CHRISTLICHEN WÄCHTER  
Schreckliche, verhexte Leiber,  
Menschen-Wölf und Drachen-Weiber,  
Laßt uns flieh'n!  
Welch entsetzliches Getöse!  
Sieh', da flammt, da zieht der Böse!  
Aus dem Boden  
Dampfet rings ein Höllen-Broden.

### 10. Baritone and Chorus

DER PRIESTER UND CHOR DER DRUIDEN  
UND DES HEIDENVOLKES  
Die Flamme reinigt sich vom Rauch:  
So reing' unsern Glauben!  
Und raubt man uns den alten Brauch,  
Dein Licht, wer kann es rauben!

### 8. Baritone and Chorus

A PRIEST AND CHORUS OF DRUIDS  
AND OF PAGANS  
It's come so far,  
That we by night  
Our Father's praises sing;  
Yet when 'tis day,  
To you we may  
A heart unsullied bring.  
'Tis true that now.  
And often, Thou  
Favourest the foe in fight.  
As from the smoke is freed the blaze,  
So let our faith burn bright!  
And if they crush our olden ways,  
Who e'er can crush Thy light?

### 9. Tenor and Chorus

A CHRISTIAN WATCHER  
Comrades, quick! your aid afford!  
All the brood of hell's abroad:  
See how their enchanted forms  
Through and through with flames are glowing!  
Dragon-women, men-wolf swarms,  
On in quick succession going!  
Let us, let us haste to fly!  
Wilder yet the sounds are growing,  
And the arch fiend roars on high;  
From the ground  
Hellish vapours rise around.

CHORUS OF CHRISTIAN WATCHERS  
Terrible enchanted forms,  
Dragon-women, men-wolf swarms!  
Let us haste to fly!  
Wilder yet the sounds are growing!  
See, the arch fiend comes, all-glowing!  
From the ground  
Hellish vapours rise around.

### 10. Baritone and Chorus

THE PRIEST AND CHORUS OF DRUIDS  
AND OF PAGANS  
As from the smoke is freed the blaze,  
So let our faith burn bright!  
And if they crush our olden ways,  
Whoe'er can crush Thy light?