

## GRANT PARK MUSIC FESTIVAL

**Carlos Kalmar** Artistic Director and Principal Conductor

**Christopher Bell** Chorus Director



Thursday, June 29, 2023 at 6:30 p.m.

Jay Pritzker Pavilion

Friday, June 30, 2023 at 6:30 p.m.

South Shore Cultural Center

# TCHAIKOVSKY SYMPHONY NO. 4

**Grant Park Orchestra**

**Valentina Peleggi**, conductor

**Stewart Goodyear**, piano

**Valerie Coleman**

*Umoja*

**Camille Saint-Saëns**

Piano Concerto No. 2

Andante sostenuto

Allegro scherzando

Presto

STEWART GOODYEAR

INTERMISSION

**Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky**

Symphony No. 4

Andante sostenuto

Andantino in modo di canzona

Scherzo: Pizzicato ostinato

Finale: Allegro con fuoco

Piano provided by Steinway Piano Gallery of Chicago

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



**Valentina Peleggi** has been Music Director of the Richmond Symphony since the 20/21 season and has already revitalized the orchestra’s artistic output, from pioneering new concert formats to collaborations with the local universities to championing new works. During the pandemic, she sat on the jury of the first virtual Menuhin Competition hosted by the Richmond Symphony. Beyond Richmond, she is working with major orchestras and opera companies across the Americas and Europe. In addition to studying with David Zinman and Daniele Gatti, she took part in

the Taki Alsop Conducting Fellowship from 2015-2017 under Marin Alsop.



Proclaimed “a phenomenon” (Los Angeles Times) and “one of the best pianists of his generation” (Philadelphia Inquirer), **Stewart Goodyear** is also an accomplished improviser and composer. Mr. Goodyear has performed with, and has been commissioned by, many of the major orchestras and chamber music organizations around the world. His discography includes the complete sonatas and piano concertos of Beethoven, as well as concertos by Tchaikovsky, Grieg and Rachmaninov.

He’s also recorded his own compositions and transcriptions, including Tchaikovsky’s “The Nutcracker (Complete Ballet)”, chosen by the New York Times as one of the best classical music recordings of 2015.



**VALERIE COLEMAN** (b. 1970)

**UMOJA (2019)**

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

**Performance time:** 10 minutes

**First Grant Park Orchestra performance**

*Umoja* takes its title from the Swahili word for “unity.” Umoja, the first of the seven principles of Kwanzaa, is the unity of family, community, race, and nation reflected in the ubuntu philosophy “I am because we are.” Valerie Coleman originally composed *Umoja* as a simple song for women’s choir in 1997. This sung version, she explains, “embodied a sense of ‘tribal unity,’ through the feel of a drum circle, the sharing of history through traditional ‘call and response’ form, and the repetition of a memorable sing-song melody.” Two years later, Coleman arranged the piece for her chamber ensemble, Imani Winds (“Imani” being the seventh principle of Kwanzaa, meaning “faith”). Coleman has since arranged *Umoja* for various instrumental configurations, including this full-orchestra version in 2019 upon commission from the Philadelphia Orchestra.

The full-orchestra version of *Umoja* expands upon the short and sweet melody at the heart of the original choral piece. The solo violin introduces this melody after the bowed vibraphone and winds establish an ethereal soundscape. The melody is passed around the different sections of the orchestra. Eventually, it is interrupted by what Coleman terms “dissonant viewpoints led by the brass and percussion sections,

which represent the clash of injustices, racism, and hate that threatens to gain a foothold in the world today.” After an aggressive exchange between the upper winds and percussion, kindness and humanity ultimately prevail with a return to the main melody. The brass then lead the entire ensemble in a call for unity.



## CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS (1835 - 1921)

### CONCERTO NO. 2 IN G MINOR FOR PIANO & ORCHESTRA, OP.22 (1868)

**Scored for:** two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two French horns, two trumpets, timpani, percussion, strings, and solo piano

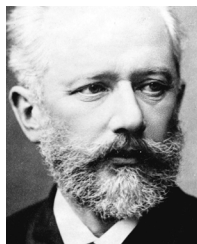
**Performance time:** 24 minutes

**First Grant Park Orchestra performance:** July 23, 1948; Antal Doráti, conductor and Ervin Laszlo, piano

When writing his Piano Concerto No. 2 in G minor, Camille Saint-Saëns set himself up for failure—or at least a massive challenge. The famous Russian pianist Anton Rubinstein had come to Paris for a series of concerto concerts conducted by Saint-Saëns in the spring of 1868. Before the end of the series, Rubinstein decided he wanted to trade places with Saint-Saëns and make his Parisian conducting debut with the composer as the soloist. Saint-Saëns was an accomplished pianist himself, having been a piano prodigy as a child and widely considered the best organist of his day. The most convenient date for this game of musical chairs was in just three weeks. Instead of preparing an existing piece, Saint-Saëns quickly set to work on a new concerto. He completed his Piano Concerto No. 2 in only seventeen days and premiered it a few days later.

In composing the concerto, Saint-Saëns obviously wasn't taking into account the fact that he would have to perform the piece with very little preparation time. Instead, the concerto is full of glittering virtuosity, particularly in the outer movements. Apparently, the premiere did not go as well as he would have liked. Saint-Saëns wrote, “except for the Scherzo, which was immediately well received, [the concerto] was not a great success; everyone agreed that the first part was incoherent and the finale a complete failure.” He attributed this poor reception to his own performance rather than the piece itself. Even his fluent technique was no match for the challenges he set for himself to overcome in such a short time. Nevertheless, the concerto became immensely popular. Unlike his first piano concerto—published seventeen years after its composition—the second concerto was published the same year. The promptness of its publication is indicative of Saint-Saëns' confidence in the work, despite his slipshod performance.

As one critic at the time put it, Saint-Saëns' Second Piano Concerto “begins with Bach and ends with Offenbach” (of cancan fame). Indeed, the first movement opens and closes with forceful cadenzas akin to Romanticized improvisations on Bach. After the orchestra enters, Saint-Saëns is said to have used a motet (“Tantum ergo,” now lost) by his protégé Gabriel Fauré as the basis for the lyrical theme the pianist introduces. To balance the gravity of the monumental first movement, Saint-Saëns forgoes the typical slow middle movement in favor of a scherzo of elfin lightness. The tempo is ratcheted up yet again in the finale—a muscular tarantella full of sharp trills, athletic leaps, and blistering triplets likely to leave you breathless.



## **PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY** (1840 - 1893)

### **SYMPHONY NO.4 IN F MINOR, OP.36, TH 27 (1877)**

**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:** 44 minutes

**First Grant Park Orchestra performance:** September 8, 1935; Frederick Stock, conductor

“Never yet have any of my orchestral works cost me so much labor, but I’ve never yet felt such love for any of my things. . . Perhaps I am mistaken, but it seems to me that this symphony is better than anything I’ve done so far.” Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky was not being conceited in this note to his patron, the wealthy widow Nadezhda von Meck. But his enthusiasm was uncharacteristic, as he tended to be disparaging of his own work.

Indeed, Tchaikovsky had put a lot of himself into Symphony No. 4. He wrote it in the latter half of 1877 during a tumultuous period in his personal life. We know this because of the 1,200 letters he and von Meck exchanged throughout their thirteen-year friendship. Von Meck was an ardent admirer of Tchaikovsky’s work who, in 1877, had agreed to send Tchaikovsky a generous monthly stipend so he could quit his teaching job and compose full time. She provided this financial support on the condition that Tchaikovsky write her with frequent updates and, curiously, that they never meet.

These letters give us remarkable insight into the composer’s intentions. When von Meck heard Tchaikovsky’s Symphony No. 4 for the first time, she wrote to ask if there was a story behind the music. He responded with a detailed rundown of what each musical theme represented. The ominous opening brass fanfare represents fate, “which hangs above the head like the sword of Damocles, unwaveringly, constantly poisoning the soul.”

Tchaikovsky described the prevailing mood of the second movement as the melancholy one feels at the end of a long, tiring day. This melancholy invokes nostalgia for “happy moments when the young blood boiled, and life was satisfying,” as well as memories of a darker nature. The third movement is highly original in its extensive use of pizzicato (or plucked strings). This movement is much more abstract, with “completely incoherent images which sweep through the head as one falls asleep.” The middle section is then “a picture of drunken peasants and a street song” as a military procession passes in the distance.

The festal atmosphere continues into the finale with the celebratory music of a public festival. Tchaikovsky explained, “If within yourself you find no reasons for joy, then look at others. Go out among the people. See how they can enjoy themselves, surrendering themselves wholeheartedly to joyful feelings.” Tchaikovsky ends on a positive, life-affirming note: “Joy is a simple but powerful force. Rejoice in the rejoicing of others. To live is still possible.”

At the end of the letter, Tchaikovsky couched his description of the symphony in a postscript: “Just as I was about to put the letter in an envelope, I reread it and was horrified at the incoherence and inadequacy of the program I sent to you. This is the first time in my life that I have attempted to translate musical thoughts and images into words, and I could not manage to do this adequately. I was severely depressed last winter when writing the symphony, and it serves as a faithful echo of what I was experiencing. . . They remain general recollections of the passions and mysterious feelings that I experienced.” (*Read more at [gpmf.org](http://gpmf.org)*)

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