



**GRANT PARK
MUSIC FESTIVAL**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Jill Hurwitz
jill.hurwitz@gpmf.org

THE GRANT PARK MUSIC FESTIVAL
“ADVOCATE FOR THE ARTS AWARDS” BENEFIT
RAISES OVER \$845,000 TO SUPPORT
ARTISTIC PROGRAMS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

*The Festival’s 2019 Advocate for the Arts Honorees include
civic and arts leader Robert J. Buford
and global financial institution William Blair
for their outstanding contributions to arts and culture
and their transformative impact on the Grant Park Music Festival*

CHICAGO (October 8, 2019) — More than 500 of Chicago's most prominent civic and arts leaders packed the Four Season Hotel Chicago on Tuesday, October 1 for the Grant Park Music Festival’s signature fundraising event, the **Advocate for the Arts Awards Benefit**.

The event raised a record-breaking \$845,000 in support of the Festival’s ten-week season of free concerts at the Jay Pritzker Pavilion in Millennium Park, and helps to underwrite *Festival Connect*, the Festival’s education and community engagement initiative that benefits more than 800,000 children and adults from Chicago and around the world.

A highlight of the evening was the presentation of the eighth annual *Advocate for the Arts Awards*. This year’s honorees, civic and arts leader **Robert J. Buford** and the global financial institution, **William Blair**, were lauded for their contributions to the arts and the cultural scene of Chicago, and their transformative impact on the Grant Park Music Festival.

-MORE-

Chicago's own violin virtuoso **Rachel Barton Pine**, and members of the Festival's **Project Inclusion** vocal and instrumental fellowship program wowed the crowd with performances throughout the evening. *Project Inclusion* is a professional development program that aims to increase diversity, equity and inclusion among orchestra and vocal ensembles.

The evening's presenters included the Festival's Artistic Director and Principal Conductor **Carlos Kalmar**, Chorus Director **Christopher Bell**, President and CEO **Paul Winberg**, event co-chairs **Julian Oettinger** and **Sondra Berman Epstein**, and board member **Amy Boonstra**. The Advocate for the Arts Awards Benefit was presented by the Grant Park Orchestral Association, and hosted by broadcast legend and longtime Festival supporter **Ron Magers**.

Amy Boonstra presented the award to Robert J. Buford, honoring the enduring impact he has made in music and art. An extraordinary philanthropist and leader for many Chicago arts organizations, Buford credits the Grant Park Music Festival in its role as a catalyst for Chicago's vast music scene.

"What a blessing to be able to sit in the iconic setting of Millennium Park, in the heart of one of the world's greatest cities, to listen to this marvelous orchestra," said Buford. "The Festival is an integral part of the rich cultural fabric of Chicago—an open doorway to the arts for all."

John Ettelson, President and CEO of the global financial institution William Blair, accepted the Advocate for the Arts Award from Julian Oettinger and Sondra Berman Epstein.

Project Inclusion is just one of the programs of *Festival Connect*, the comprehensive initiative aimed to increase music education and engagement opportunities for audiences of all ages. This summer, music lovers throughout the city had a chance to hear the Grant Park Orchestra and Chorus, as well as the *Project Inclusion String Quartet* and *Project Inclusion Vocal Fellows* in neighborhoods throughout the city. The *Young Artists Showcase*, along with the arts immersion program, *Classical Campers*, the Festival's pre-concert lectures and open rehearsals, round out the suite of programs that comprise *Festival Connect*.

For more than 80 years, the Grant Park Music Festival has been Chicago's summer musical sensation, demonstrating that classical music, performed by a world-class orchestra and chorus can have a transformative impact on the city. Showcased in

the city's most spectacular setting, the Festival continues to be the summer gathering place for all of Chicago. The Jay Pritzker Pavilion in Millennium Park is the official home of the Grant Park Music Festival, with free seats available for every concert. For more information about the Grant Park Music Festival and the 2020 season, running June 10—August 15, visit gpmf.org or call 312.742.7638.

The Grant Park Music Festival is led by Artistic Director and Principal Conductor Carlos Kalmar, along with Chorus Director Christopher Bell, Grant Park Orchestral Association President and CEO Paul Winberg, and Board Chair Stephen Smith. The Festival is proudly presented by the Grant Park Orchestral Association with key support from the Chicago Park District and the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events.

###