



Grant Park Music Festival

Seventy-sixth Season

Grant Park Orchestra and Chorus

Carlos Kalmar, *Principal Conductor*

Christopher Bell, *Chorus Director*

Seventh Program: Chorus A Cappella: French Sensuality

Tuesday, July 6, 2010 at 6:30 p.m.

Thursday, July 8, 2010 at 6:30 p.m.

Harris Theater for Music and Dance

GRANT PARK CHORUS

Christopher Bell, *Chorus Director and Conductor*

SAINT-SAËNS	Deux Choeurs, Op. 68 Calme des nuits Les fleurs et les arbres
DURUFLÉ	<i>Quatre Motets sur des Thèmes Gregoriens</i> , Op. 10 Ubi caritas et amor Tota pulchra es, Maria Tu es Petrus Tantum ergo Sacramentum
DEBUSSY	<i>Trois Chansons de Charles d'Orléans</i> Dieu! qu'il la fait bon regarder Quant j'ai ouy le tabourin Yver, vous n'êtes qu'un vilain <i>Short Pause</i>
MESSIAEN	<i>O Sacrum Convivium</i>
POULENC	<i>Quatre Motets pour le Temps de Noël</i> O magnum mysterium Quem vidistis pastores Videntes stellam Hodie Christus natus est <i>Short Pause</i>
RAVEL	Trois Chansons Nicolette Trois beaux oiseaux du Paradis Ronde
PASSEREAU	<i>Si vous la baisez, comptez quinze</i> <i>Il est bel et bon</i>

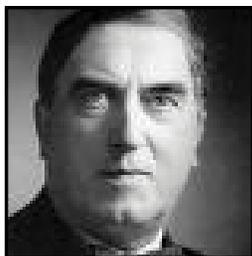
CHRISTOPHER BELL's biography can be found on page 12.



DEUX CHOEURS, OP. 68 (1881)
Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921)

The performance time of this work is approximately five minutes. This is its first performance by the Grant Park Chorus.

Saint-Saëns' art is one of beauty, of precision, of formal perfection that he never intended to plumb great emotional depths. Since he maintained that "anyone who does not take thorough pleasure in a simple chord progression, well-constructed, beautiful in its arrangement, does not love music," it is hardly surprising that his vocal works are as much concerned with the prosody and proper declamation of the poems that he set as with their emotions. His vocal compositions, some 140 songs and nearly eighty sacred and secular pieces for chorus, are meticulous in finding musical equivalents for the stresses and rhythms of the spoken text, encircling the verses with music rather than penetrating to their expressive essence. Perhaps inspired by his election to the prestigious Académie des Beaux-Arts in November 1881 (an honor for which he was chosen over Delibes, Lalo, Franck and other notable musicians), Saint-Saëns wrote two poems in praise of the natural world early the following year — *Calme des nuits* ("Nocturnal Calm") and *Les fleurs et les arbres* ("Flowers and Trees") — and gave them lovely *a cappella* settings that are resonant in sonority and exquisite in harmony; they were published a year later as his *Deux Choeurs*, Op. 68.



QUATRE MOTETS SUR DES THÈMES GREGORIENS ("FOUR MOTETS ON GREGORIAN THEMES"), OP. 10 (1960)
Maurice Duruflé (1902-1986)

The performance time of this work is approximately eight minutes. This is its first performance by the Grant Park Chorus.

Maurice Duruflé composed his *Four Motets on Gregorian Themes*, Op. 10 in 1960; each is prefaced by the "incipit" (i.e., the opening phrase) of the chant on which it is based. *Ubi caritas et amor* ("Where Love and Charity Are") is a hymn (i.e., non-Biblical) sung during the Eucharist on Holy Thursday. Its melody is among the oldest in the Gregorian repertory and its text may date to the days before the formalization of the Mass. *Tota pulchra es, Maria* ("Thou Art All Beauty, Mary") takes its text and thematic material from the opening antiphon of the Vespers service for the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary (December 8). *Tu es Petrus* (Matthew 16:18-19, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my church"), the foundational scripture of Roman Catholicism, occurs during the feasts of Sts. Peter and Paul (June 29) and *San Pietro ad vincula* (August 1), the commemoration of "Peter in Chains." The *Tantum ergo Sacramentum* ("So Great a Sacrament") comprises the last two verses of the *Pange Lingua*, a strophic hymn in the style of Gregorian chant for the office of Corpus Christi (the first Thursday after Pentecost) with a text by the 13th-century Italian theologian and philosopher St. Thomas Aquinas.



TROIS CHANSONS DE CHARLES D'ORLÉANS (1898, 1908)
Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

The performance time of this work is approximately six minutes. This is its first performance by the Grant Park Chorus.

Charles d'Orléans (1391-1465) was the son of Louis, founder of the Valois branch of the French royal family. He was taken captive by the English in 1415 and held prisoner for the next 25 years, but then established a court at Blois that became a center of French literary culture, not least for Charles' own excellent poetry. In 1898, Claude Debussy made *a cappella* settings of two of Charles' verses — *Dieu! qu'il la fait bon regarder* ("God! But She Is Fair") and *Yver, vous n'estes qu'un vilain* ("Winter, You're Naught

But a Rogné”) — for the amateur choir established by his friend Lucien Fontaine that he was then conducting. (Members of the Fontaine family reported that Debussy was an exacting leader who would often single out individual choristers to sing their part. He remained sufficiently friendly with the Fontaines, however, that Lucien stood as a witness at his wedding the following year, along with Erik Satie and the poet and novelist Pierre Louÿs, three of whose faux-antique *Chansons de Bilitis* he had set the year before for voice and piano. Debussy had to give a piano lesson that morning to pay for the wedding luncheon.) Ten years later he added *Quant j’ai ouï le tabourin* (“*When I Heard the Drummer Playing*”) to the set and conducted the formal premiere of the *Trois Chansons de Charles d’Orléans*, his only work for unaccompanied chorus, at the Concerts Colonne on April 9, 1909. Debussy molded the *Trois Chansons* in subtle modal harmonies to evoke the poet’s Renaissance age. *Dieu! qu’il la fait bon regarder* is a sensual paean to a vision of feminine beauty and grace. *Quant j’ai ouï le tabourin* follows the poem’s image of a drum to make of the music a delicate dance. *Yver, vous n’êtes qu’un vilain* juxtaposes stern phrases suggesting the “snow, wind, rain and sleet” of winter with halcyon ones evoking summer’s “livery of green and many other hues.”



O SACRUM CONVIVIUM (“O SACRED FEAST”) (1937)

Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992)

The performance time of this work is approximately four minutes. This is its first performance by the Grant Park Chorus.

Though Olivier Messiaen was one of the 20th-century’s most important composers of organ music for the Catholic service — 63 pieces, more than seven hours of music — *O Sacrum Convivium* (“*O Sacred Feast*”) is his only vocal work specifically for the church. It was composed early in 1937 and when the score was published later that year by Durand, the title page indicated that the work had been commissioned by Abbé F. Brun, a noted authority on Gregorian chant. Messiaen was organist at the Trinité at that time, and the church’s choir almost certainly sang *O Sacrum Convivium* soon after it was written, but the first documented performance was in Messiaen’s arrangement for solo voice and organ at a concert of Les Amis de l’Orgue at the Trinité on February 17, 1938. *O Sacrum Convivium* is an antiphon associated with the Magnificat at the second Vespers service of the feast of Corpus Christi, observed on the Thursday after Trinity Sunday, i.e., eight-and-a-half weeks after Easter; the text is attributed to St. Thomas Aquinas. Messiaen’s setting is hushed and reverent, rising to an expressive peak only when the text refers to “future glory.”



QUATRE MOTETS POUR LE TEMPS DE NOËL (“FOUR MOTETS FOR THE CHRISTMAS SEASON”) (1951-1952)

Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)

The performance time of this work is approximately eleven minutes. This is its first performance by the Grant Park Chorus.

Poulenc composed his *Quatre Motets pour le Temps de Noël* (“*Four Motets for the Christmas Season*”) in 1951-1952, immediately after completing his *Stabat Mater*. These simple settings of Latin verses for the season, for four-voice mixed choir in chordal style, are enriched by the composer’s characteristic lyricism and suavity of harmonic invention to evoke both the serenity and the jubilation of Christmastide. *O magnum mysterium* (“*Oh, what a great mystery*”), which Poulenc composed in April 1952 at his country retreat in Noizay, a tiny village in the Loire Valley, uses the text of the Fourth Responsory from the Third Nocturne of Matins, the liturgical office that precedes the Midnight Mass of Christmas Eve and begins the magnificent cycle of worship that marks the birth of Christ in the Roman Catholic calendar. *Quem vidistis pastores dicite* (“*What did you see, shepherds, tell us?*”), written in Marseille in December 1951, is based on the words of another responsory taken from earlier in the same Matins service. *Videntes stellam* (“*At the sight of the star*”), finished in November 1951 at Aix-en-Provence, treats the verses of the antiphon for the Magnificat on the first day (January 7th) after Epiphany, the feast which

celebrates the adoration of the Magi. *Hodie Christus natus est* (“*This day Christ is born*”), completed, according to the score, on Sunday, May 18, 1952 in Paris, borrows the text of the antiphon for the Magnificat of the Christmas evening Vespers, the last liturgical words to be pronounced on the day of the Church’s most jubilant feast.



TROIS CHANSONS (1914-1915)

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

The performance time of this work is approximately seven minutes. This is its first performance by the Grant Park Chorus.

Ravel was tormented by the First World War. Through a determined effort fueled by his patriotic zeal, he was accepted into the armed forces despite his small stature and his delicate health. His physical constitution was not nearly robust enough to withstand the rigors of combat, however, and he was eventually discharged for medical reasons. No sooner had he reached home to recuperate than his beloved mother lapsed into her final illness, and the shock of her death prostrated him. Due to his own failing health and his mental anguish over the war and the loss of his mother, that time saw little creative work from him. His only original compositions of the war years — *Le Tombeau de Couperin* and the *Trois Chansons* for Chorus — were both inspired by earlier French music: the Baroque harpsichord suite of Couperin in one, the Renaissance chanson of Jannequin in the other, making these compositions continuations of the historic traditions of Gallic culture and thought in a time of despair and national peril. The *Trois Chansons*, Ravel’s only mature work for chorus, were written to the composer’s own texts between December 1914 and February 1915. *Nicolette* concerns a girl who goes picking flowers in the woods. First she meets a wolf, from whom she flees, then a handsome but penniless suitor, from whom she flees, and finally a corpulent old man who offers her gold, from whom she doesn’t. *Trois beaux oiseaux du Paradis* (“*Three Beautiful Birds of Paradise*”) embeds the poignant image of a lover lost to war within the symbolism of birds blue, white and red, the colors of the French flag. *Ronde* (“*Roundelay*”), a cautionary inter-generational tale, is a showpiece of ensemble agility and diction for virtuoso choir.



TWO CHANSONS

Pierre Passereau (flourished 1509-1547)

The performance time of these works is approximately four minutes. This is their first performance by the Grant Park Chorus.

Though Pierre Passereau was one of the most popular composers of the fashionable early-16th-century French polyphonic chanson, information about his life is sketchy. The dates and places of his birth and death are unknown. The first documentary evidence of him is in 1509, when he was a singer in the chapel of the Duke of Angoulême (later King Francis I); an otherwise unsubstantiated statement in the encyclopedic *Biographie Universelle des Musiciens* (1834) of François-Joseph Fétis said that he was a priest at the church of St. Jacques-de-la-Boucherie in Paris. Passereau later appeared in the records of the cathedrals in Bourges and Cambrai; he was documented as a singer at the latter church between 1525 and 1530. His known works, some two dozen French chansons and a single Latin motet, were published in several collections during the 1530s and 1540s, most notably by the firm of Pierre Attaingnant, then the most important Parisian music publisher and the first anywhere to employ movable type in music printing. Passereau’s chansons follow the conventions of the form: four voices, graceful melodies, vivacious rhythms, and lighthearted texts frequently enlivened with puns, word plays, onomatopoeia and ribaldry. In *Il est bel et bon*, a woman describes how “handsome and fine” her husband is: he doesn’t beat her, he washes the dishes, and he feeds the chickens (which can be heard clucking) while she amuses herself elsewhere. *Si vous la baisez comptez quinze* (“*For your kiss, you get fifteen*”) puts a lustful counting game to music.

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