



Grant Park Orchestra and Chorus
Carlos Kalmar, Principal Conductor
Christopher Bell, Chorus Director

Bruckner's Romantic Symphony

Friday, July 15, 2016 at 6:30 p.m.

Saturday, July 16, 2016 at 7:30 p.m.

Jay Pritzker Pavilion

GRANT PARK ORCHESTRA

Christoph König, *Guest Conductor*

HAYDN Symphony No. 55 in E-Flat, "The School Master"
 Allegro di molto
 Adagio, ma semplicemente
 Menuetto
 Finale: Presto

INTERMISSION

BRUCKNER Symphony No. 4 in E-Flat, "Romantic"
 Bewegt, nicht zu schnell
 Andante quasi Allegretto
 Scherzo: Bewegt — Trio: Gemächlich
 Finale: Bewegt, doch nicht zu schnell

This concert is supported in part by Marion and Chuck Kierscht.

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



CHRISTOPH KÖNIG is Principal Conductor of the Orquestra Sinfónica do Porto Casa da Música (Portugal) and Principal Conductor and Music Director of the Solistes Européens, Luxembourg. Mr. König is also in demand as a guest conductor. His recent performances include engagements with the Orchestre de Paris, Royal Philharmonic (London), Danish National Symphony, Netherlands Philharmonic, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Norwegian Radio Orchestra, Mozarteum Orchestra Salzburg, Barcelona Symphony, Tampere Philharmonic, Real Filharmonía de Galicia, Madrid Radio Orchestra (RTVE), Orquesta y Coro de

la Comunidad de Madrid, New Zealand Symphony, Scottish Chamber Orchestra and BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, which he led on a highly successful tour of China in 2008. Since his American debut in 2010, he has conducted the orchestras of Pittsburgh, Toronto, New Jersey, Los Angeles, Houston, Indianapolis, Baltimore, Vancouver, Oregon, Milwaukee and Colorado. Christoph König's reputation as an opera conductor rose after directing Jonathan Miller's production of *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*'s 2003 at the Zurich Opera. He has also led Zurich Opera productions of *Die Zauberflöte* and *Il Turco in Italia* with Cecilia Bartoli and Ruggero Raimondi, and conducted at the Teatro Real in Madrid, Staatsoper in Stuttgart, Deutsche Oper Berlin and Bonn Opera/Beethoven. His recordings with the Orquestra Sinfónica do Porto Casa da Música, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Malmo Symphony Orchestra and Solistes Européens have been issued on the BIS, Ao Vivo, Hyperion, DB Productions and SEL Classics labels. Christoph König was born in Dresden, where he sang in the celebrated Dresdner Kreuzchor and studied conducting, piano and voice at the Dresdner Musikhochschule. He also participated in master classes given by, among others, Sergiu Celibidache and Sir Colin Davis, with whom he worked as Assistant Conductor at the Dresden Opera.



**SYMPHONY NO. 55 IN E-FLAT,
"THE SCHOOL MASTER" (1774)
Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)**

Haydn's Symphony No. 55 is scored for two oboes, two bassoons, two horns, and strings. The performance time is 22 minutes. This is the first performance of the work by the Grant Park Orchestra.

Haydn was one of the most industrious composers in the history of music. He summarized his philosophy of no-nonsense professionalism when he wrote, "I know that God has bestowed a talent upon me, and I thank Him for it. I think I have done my duty and been of use in my generation by my works. Let others do the same." His talent for simple hard work and seemingly boundless fecundity was apparent as soon as he joined the musical staff of the Esterházy family in 1761, his employer for the next half century. Not only did he compose, but he was also general administrator of the music establishment, chief keyboard player for chamber and orchestral concerts and conductor of the orchestra. Regarding the press of his duties, H.C. Robbins Landon related an amusing anecdote about Haydn during these years: "He was extremely busy at this time, and when he wrote out the score of the First Horn Concerto he mixed up the staves of the oboe and the first violin and wrote on the score, as he corrected his mistake, 'Written while asleep.'"

From the time he joined the Esterházy household, in 1761, until 1776, when the institution of an annual opera season at the family's magnificent Hungarian palace required him to give most of his time to administering, producing and composing stage works, Haydn concentrated much of his creative effort on the symphony. His output in this genre was not only large, but also of superb quality and challenging originality. When once asked about his working methods, he replied, "Well, you see, I get up early, and as soon as I have dressed I go down on my knees and pray God and the Blessed Virgin that I may have another successful day. Then when I've had some breakfast I sit down at the keyboard and begin my search. If I hit on an idea quickly, it goes ahead easily and without much trouble. But if I can't get on, I know that I must have forfeited God's grace by some fault of mine, and then I pray once more for grace till I feel I'm forgiven." He told his friend and first biographer, George August Griesinger, that he would pace back and forth in his room when he was stuck on a piece, squeeze a rosary between his fingers, mutter a few "Hail, Marys," wait for the ideas to flow again and then go back to work.

The Symphony No. 55 in E-flat major was written in 1774 and has been known, because of the delightful pedanticism of its second movement, as "The School Master" since at least the time it was mentioned in German lexicographer Ernst Ludwig Gerber's 1814 biographical dictionary of composers. The sobriquet does not appear in Haydn's manuscript, but a theme from a now-lost divertimento similar to that of the *Adagio* that Joseph Elssler, the composer's long-time assistant and copyist, entered into his 1805 catalog of his patron's works was labeled "*Der verliebte Schulmeister*" ("*The Schoolmaster in Love*"), perhaps at Haydn's suggestion, perhaps an artifact from some incidental music for a forgotten play.

The Symphony's opening *Allegro* is one of those apparently effortless sonata-form creations in which Haydn perfectly satisfied the musical Enlightenment's requirements for reason and order, for contrast and balance, for tension and resolution. The phrases of the main theme juxtapose loud and soft, virile and dulcet, bounding and smooth. A bustling transition leads to the second subject, similarly built but from complementary components. All the thematic elements figure in the development section, which pauses early in its progress for a polite iteration of the smooth main theme before proceeding to more dramatic matters. The recapitulation of the exposition's events, somewhat altered and properly adjusted as to key, provide the movement with expressive and formal closure.

The *Adagio* is a set of variations based on a melody of almost exaggerated austerity whose "two characteristic features," according to the eminent Haydn scholar H.C. Robbins Landon, "are, on the one hand, the '*semplice*' [*simple*] sections, and on the other, the '*dolce*' [*sweet*] sections, the first emphasizing the strict, pedantic teacher, and the other, the same teacher shattered by love." The *Menuetto* is by turns stately and delicate and takes a true trio — two violins and cello — for its central episode. The *Finale* is a hybrid of sonata, rondo and variations based on a catchy theme that returns in various guises (including a delightful one featuring bassoons and horns), is developed rather aggressively at the movement's center and recapitulated in its original form near the end.



**SYMPHONY NO. 4 IN E-FLAT,
"ROMANTIC" (1878-1880 VERSION)
Anton Bruckner (1824-1896)**

Bruckner's Symphony No. 4 is scored for pairs of woodwinds, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani and strings. The performance time is 70 minutes. The Grant Park Orchestra first performed this Symphony on July 21, 1971, with Sergiu Comissiona conducting.

"Bruckner's entire symphonic career was an incredible mass of afterthoughts, of deletions, of additions, of simplifications, amplifications, reorchestrations, revisions and new versions: some reluctantly permitted on the pressing advice of well-meaning conductors and friends, some taken out of discouragement and fear lest his music prove too difficult to perform or to understand, and some spontaneously as the result of later and finer inspiration." These words of Edward Downes are proven nowhere more true than in the Fourth Symphony, a work that occupied some fourteen years of Anton Bruckner's life.

Bruckner began his Fourth Symphony on January 2, 1874, only two days after he had finished the Symphony No. 3; the completed score was inscribed, "November 22nd 1874 in Vienna, at 8:30 in the evening." (Bruckner meticulously dated all of his manuscripts, even his sketches, usually glancing at his watch as he penned the last note.) During the following year, the Vienna Philharmonic read through the piece at a test rehearsal for new works, but deemed only the first movement fit for public per-

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formance. "The rest," Bruckner was told, "is idiotic." He was hurt by such stinging criticism, of course, but it did not wilt his determination to go on with the Symphony. With his hectic schedule, however, crowded with thirty hours a week of teaching, his duties as Court Organist, the completion of his Fifth Symphony and the revisions of the Symphony No. 3, he was unable to return to the E-flat Symphony until 1878, when he thoroughly revised its orchestration, tightened its structure, reworked extended passages, and fitted it with a completely new Scherzo; two years later he rewrote the Finale.

In the process of these alterations, which took over two years and brought the Symphony largely to the form in which it is familiar today, Bruckner added to the score the sobriquet "Romantic" (probably in the sense of the Medieval literary romance) and some sketchy programs for three of the movements. (His tacking-on of extra-musical images may well have been influenced by Wagner, Bruckner's adulated hero, who did the same for Beethoven's Ninth Symphony.) The first movement he described as "A citadel of the Middle Ages. Daybreak. Reveille is sounded from the tower. The gates open. Knights on proud chargers leap forth. The magic of nature surrounds them." The third movement was dubbed a "Hunting Scherzo," whose trio portrayed a "dance tune during the hunters' meal." The finale depicted a "folk festival." Bruckner, however, seems not to have regarded his own program too seriously — later, when he was asked specifically about the story of the last movement, he said, "I've forgotten completely what picture I had in mind." It is not impossible that the program, added only after the music was complete, was simply a device to make this Symphony, still unheard by the public, more easily accessible.

The revised Fourth Symphony was finally accepted for performance by conductor Hans Richter and the Vienna Philharmonic in 1881, seven years after its first version was finished. Despite some limited recognition that had come his way in the intervening years, Bruckner was still without a major success as a composer, and he followed the rehearsals of the Fourth Symphony with great hope for its triumph. During a rehearsal, Richter stopped the orchestra at one passage that was unclear in the score and asked the composer, "What note is this?" Bruckner, ever eager to please, answered, "Any note you choose, Maestro. Quite as you like." When the rehearsal was done, Bruckner sheepishly approached the conductor, pressed into his palm a *thaler*, and covered the man with blessings and thanks. "That *thaler* is the memento of a day when I wept," Richter recalled. "Bruckner was an old man then. His works were hardly performed anywhere. When the Symphony was over, Bruckner came to me. He was radiant with enthusiasm and happiness. I felt him put something in my hand. 'Take it, and drink a mug of beer to my health.'" Richter wore the coin on his watch chain for the rest of his life. The premiere of the Fourth Symphony on February 20, 1881, probably the first adequate performance of any of Bruckner's symphonies, proved to be an immense success; the composer was called to the stage after every movement, and the Scherzo was encored. Anton Bruckner, at the age of 57, was at long last granted the Viennese recognition that had been denied him since he had arrived in that city nearly a quarter of a century before.

The music of Bruckner is unique in the history of the art. He has been called the "Wagner of the Symphony," after the mortal whom he revered above all others, but this appellation implies that his work is more derivative than can be substantiated by the musical scores or by his life. Bruckner, scion of generations of Catholic peasants, passed most of his life in a sort of ceaseless religious ecstasy and fervent humility that held him aloof from the exigencies of everyday life. Even Wagner, as mean and self-serving as any musician who ever lived, could not resist the guileless simplicity and utter sincerity of this extraordinary man. Bruckner's early works were mostly service music, plainly intended to praise God. When he turned to orchestral music later

in life — his First Symphony did not appear until he was 42 — the intent and philosophy of his sacred compositions were transferred into the newly adopted genre. Bruckner feared constantly that his work would not please his Maker, that God would catch him lazing about rather than utilizing his time and talent to their fullest capacity. His unsuccessful race against death to finish the sublime Ninth Symphony, which he dedicated simply and appropriately to God, is one of the most pitiable episodes in 19th-century music: on many days he forced himself to take pen in hand when he hardly had strength enough to lift a spoon. Still, he felt he had not completely disappointed his Deity. Bruckner often said (and probably constantly thought), “I will present to God the score of my *Te Deum*, and he will judge me mercifully.”

The music created by such a visionary as Bruckner needs special care from the listener. His symphonies have often been called “cathedrals in sound,” and the phrase is appropriate both for the mood they convey and for their implication of grandeur. Such works by their very nature must be large in sonority and temporal duration if the vision is to be realized — a twenty-minute Bruckner symphony would be as ludicrous as the massive baldachino of St. Peter’s dropped onto the altar of the neighborhood parish church. It is this very striving toward the infinite, toward the transcendent, that raises Bruckner’s best works to a plane achieved by few others in the history of music. Those willing to meet Bruckner on his own terms, to partake of the special hour that he grants the listener in each of his symphonies, find an experience as fulfilling and deeply satisfying as any the art has to offer. Wrote Lawrence Gilman, “He was and is a seer and prophet — one who knew the secret of a strangely exalted discourse, grazing the sublime, though his speech was both halting and prolix. He stammered, and he knew not when to stop. But sometimes, rapt and transfigured, he saw visions and dreamed dreams as colossal, as grandiose, as awful [sic] in lonely splendor, as those of William Blake. We know that for Bruckner, too, some ineffable beauty flamed and sank and flamed again across the night.”

The Fourth Symphony, one of Bruckner’s finest achievements of spirit and craftsmanship, could be (and has been) the subject of extensive analysis. (Robert Simpson’s consideration runs to 22 pages.) Suffice it to say for the technically minded that the first movement is in leisurely sonata form, the *Andante* is built from three themes which recur in sequence, the galvanic *Scherzo* is provided with a sharply contrasting trio reminiscent of an Austrian *Ländler*, and the Finale draws together themes from all the preceding movements for a cyclical summation of the entire Symphony. The most fruitful approach for those who prefer to listen without labels, however, is to be swept along by the glorious tide of sound, at some times small and intimate and reverential, at others, mighty and heaven-storming. It is from the building of long, controlled climaxes to move from the tiny to the great that the Symphony derives much of its power, as though these rising lines of musical tension were the machines slowly, inexorably, opening the cathedral vault to the visionary sky above. Deryck Cooke wrote, “The essence of Bruckner’s symphonies is that they express the most fundamental human impulses, unalloyed by civilized conditioning, with extraordinary purity and grandeur of expression; and that they are on a monumental scale which, despite many internal subtleties and complexities, has a shattering simplicity of outline.” Perhaps Bruckner was right — perhaps his talent did, indeed, come directly from God.

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