



Grant Park Music Festival

Seventy-fifth Season

Grant Park Orchestra and Chorus

Carlos Kalmar, *Principal Conductor*

Christopher Bell, *Chorus Director*

Fourth Program: Enigma Variations

Wednesday, June 17, 2009 at 6:30 p.m.

Jay Pritzker Pavilion

GRANT PARK ORCHESTRA

Carlos Kalmar, *Conductor*

James Ehnes, *Violin*

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS	Fantasia on <i>Greensleeves</i>
WALTON	Violin Concerto Andante tranquillo Presto capriccioso alla napolitana — Trio (Canzonetta) — Tempo I Vivace
JAMES EHNES	
ELGAR	Variations on an Original Theme, “Enigma,” Op. 36 Theme: Andante Variation I (C.A.E.): <i>L'istesso tempo</i> Variation II (H.D. S.-P): <i>Allegro</i> Variation III (R.B.T): <i>Allegretto</i> Variation IV (W.M.B.): <i>Allegro di molto</i> Variation V (R.P.A.): <i>Moderato</i> Variation VI (Ysobel): <i>Andantino</i> Variation VII (Troyte): <i>Presto</i> Variation VIII (W.N.): <i>Allegretto</i> Variation IX (Nimrod): <i>Adagio</i> Variation X (Dorabella): <i>Intermezzo: Allegretto</i> Variation XI (G.R.S.): <i>Allegro di molto</i> Variation XII (B.G.N.): <i>Andante</i> Variation XIII (* * *): <i>Romanza: Moderato</i> Variation XIV (E.D.U.): <i>Finale: Allegro</i>

CARLOS KALMAR's biography can be found on page A2.

JAMES EHNES has rapidly established a pre-eminent reputation among concert violinists. He has performed with such renowned conductors as Vladimir Ashkenazy, Sir Andrew Davis, Charles Dutoit, Ivan Fischer, Lorin Maazel, Michael Gielen, Hans Graf, Miguel Harth-Bedoya, Richard Hickox, Paavo Järvi, Andrew Litton, Zdenek Macal, Sir Charles Mackerras, David Robertson, Stanislaw Skrowaczewski, Christian Thielemann, Bramwell Tovey, and Bobby McFerrin, appearing with orchestras throughout Europe, Asia, the United States, and Canada. Recent engagements include appearances in Europe with the London Symphony Orchestra, the Philharmonia, the BBC Symphony Orchestra, the BBC Philharmonic, the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, the Ulster Orchestra, the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie, the Orchestre de Lyon, the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, the Budapest Festival Orchestra, and the Finnish Radio Orchestra, in Asia with the NHK Symphony Orchestra (Tokyo), the Malaysian Philharmonic and the Hong Kong Philharmonic, and in North America with the major orchestras of New York, Boston, Chicago, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, Detroit, Minnesota, St. Paul, Houston, Dallas, Seattle, Vancouver, Calgary, Winnipeg, Toronto, and Montreal. An extremely prolific and multi-award-winning recording artist, James Ehnes has recorded repertoire ranging from the violin sonatas of Bach to John Adams' *Road Movies*. Some of his awards include back-to-back Juno awards in 2001 and 2002, Gramophone and Grammy Awards in 2008 and Juno Award in 2009. James Ehnes plays the "Ex Marsick" Stradivarius of 1715 and gratefully acknowledges its extended loan from the Fulton Collection. He currently lives in Bradenton, Florida with his wife, Kate.





FANTASIA ON GREENSLEEVES (1913, 1928)

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)

Vaughan Williams' Fantasy on "Greensleeves" is scored for flute, harp and strings. The performance time is four minutes. This is the first performance of the Fantasia by the Grant Park Orchestra.

If John Bull were a balladeer, his greatest hit would be *Greensleeves*, the haunting melody whose text sings of the timeless sadness of lost love: *Alas my love, you do me wrong/To cast me off discourteously.* The ancient melody has been inextricably linked with the English pastoral tradition since at least 1580, when it was mentioned in the Stationers' Company's Register as "a new Northern Dittie." (The legend that Henry VIII, a competent musician to whom are ascribed some three dozen brief vocal and instrumental pieces, wrote *Greensleeves* around 1530 during his courtship of Anne Boleyn is apparently without factual foundation.) The song had gained so much popularity by the turn of the 17th century that Shakespeare mentioned it twice by name in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. It appeared in song and lute publications regularly in the early 17th century, and during the Civil War was fitted with new, politically meaningful words by the Cavaliers. In the late 19th century, the American clergyman William Chatterton Dix fitted the ancient melody with a new Christmas text, *What Child Is This?*

Ralph Vaughan Williams encountered *Greensleeves* frequently during his folksong researches in 1904-1906, when he was preparing a new edition of the *English Hymnal*, and published it in the *Oxford Book of Carols*. It was therefore fitting that during his tenure in April and May of 1913 as music director for Frank Benson's Shakespeare company at Stratford-upon-Avon, he should have incorporated *Greensleeves* into his incidental music for *Merry Wives* and *Richard II*. In the *Merry Wives*, he used *Greensleeves* as an entr'acte, and filled out the movement with a middle section based on another folksong, *Lovely Joan*, which he had collected in Norfolk in 1908. Fifteen years later, when he was composing his opera *Sir John in Love*, based on Shakespeare's amorous knight, Falstaff, Vaughan Williams again turned to *Greensleeves*. He used as its text the verses which had appeared with it in William Ballet's lute song book of 1584, *A Handefulle of Pleasant Delites*, and assigned it to Mrs. Ford to sing in Act III, just as Falstaff arrives for their tryst. *Greensleeves* also appears later in the opera, in a lovely instrumental arrangement for flute and strings, as the entr'acte before the closing scene in Windsor Forest. In 1934, five years after *Sir John* was premiered at the Royal College of Music, London, Ralph Greaves created the *Fantasia on Greensleeves* by joining the entr'acte with the passage sung by Mrs. Quickly in Act II that is based on *Lovely Joan*.

VIOLIN CONCERTO (1939)

William Walton (1902-1983)

Walton's Violin Concerto is scored for piccolo, flute, oboe, English horn, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, percussion, harp and strings. The performance time is thirty minutes. This is the first performance of Walton's Violin Concerto by the Grant Park Orchestra.



It was with the First Symphony, completed in 1935 after almost three years of painstaking labor, that William Walton came to his artistic maturity. Though he had gained a wide notoriety with his *Faade* (1922), *Viola Concerto* (1929) and the oratorio *Belshazzar's Feast* (1931), it was beginning with the Symphony No. 1 that, according to the British critic Colin Mason, "the impulse is no longer the *desire* to express for others, but the *necessity* to express for himself." The growing evidence of Walton's mastery was not missed by the greatest violinist of the day, Jascha Heifetz, who commissioned the composer to write a concerto for his instrument. Walton began the work in the fall of 1938, and journeyed to America the following May to confer about the details of the violin writing with the soloist; the score was finished in June. Walton was scheduled to return to the United States for the Concerto's premiere by Heifetz and the Cleveland Orchestra conducted by Artur Rodzinski in December, but he was prevented from making the trip by the outbreak of war. The British premiere of the work, on November 1, 1941

at the Albert Hall, London, was the first time that Walton heard any of the music performance. Heifetz had made a recording of the piece with Eugene Goossens and the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, but that document was lost at sea on the way to England, as was Heifetz's own, carefully marked set of parts. (Fortunately, photocopies of the originals made in New York arrived safely in time for the performance.) By the time of the London performance, Walton had already enlisted in the British Armed Forces, and he was assigned to the Ambulance Corps in London, but he was also allowed much time to compose, producing the "comedy overture" *Scapino* for the fiftieth anniversary of the Chicago Symphony, the ballets *The Quest* and *The Wise Virgins*, and scores for the films *Major Barbara*, *Henry V* and *Hamlet* during the war years.

In his Violin Concerto, Walton combined the rich harmony, exuberant rhythms and brilliant orchestration of the First Symphony with dazzling virtuosity and "a strong feeling for lyricism" (the composer's words). The work is disposed in three movements, of which the first, as in his Viola and Cello Concertos, is the slowest and most introspective. The main theme consists of three motives: an accompanimental figure of open intervals given immediately by the clarinet; the principal song of the soloist, distinguished by its opening octave leap; and a smooth counter-melody in the bassoons and cellos. The complementary theme, a long, arched-shaped strain, appears in the flutes, violins and violas above a background of harp arpeggios and rustling clarinet figures. The extensive working-out of the motives which occupies the center of the movement leads to a condensed recapitulation of the main theme to close the movement.

The second movement, labeled "alla napoletana" ("in the Neapolitan manner," perhaps influenced by the traditional dance, the *tarantella* — Walton loved Italy and lived on the Isle of Ischia in the Bay of Naples from 1948 until his death), is in the traditional three-part (A–B–A) scherzo form. The outer sections, which call for significant feats of virtuosity from the soloist, surround a central trio (subtitled "*Canzonetta*") whose folk-like melody is initiated by the solo horn. The Finale opens with a staccato theme begun by the low strings and soon appropriated by the soloist. Contrast is provided by a long, lyrical inspiration entrusted to the solo violin that Alan Frank thought "may be the most haunting piece of melodic invention in all Walton's work." A development section and a full recapitulation of the themes in heightened settings are followed by a coda containing returns of the opening movement's main theme (in sonorous double-stops) and the *tarantella* motive of the scherzo. The closing pages are a sort of modern quick march decorated with scintillating figuration from the soloist.



VARIATIONS ON AN ORIGINAL THEME, "ENIGMA," OP. 36 (1899)

Sir Edward Elgar (1857-1934)

Elgar's Enigma Variations is scored for piccolo, flute, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, optional organ and strings. The performance time is 29 minutes. The Grant Park Orchestra first performed this work on August 7, 1940; Hans Lange conducted.

In 1920, George Bernard Shaw, brandishing his steely tipped pen like a curmudgeonly sword, wrote, "The phenomenon of greatness in music had vanished from England with Purcell.... England had waited two hundred years for a great English composer, and waited in vain.... For my part, I expected nothing of any English composer; and when the excitement about *The Dream of Gerontius* began, I said, wearily, 'Another Wardour-street festival oratorio!' But when I heard the Variations [in 1899] I sat up and said, 'Whew! I knew we had got it at last.'" Bernard Shaw was given to excitement over few musical matters that were not Richard Wagner, but he saw in these two works — the "Enigma" Variations and the oratorio *The Dream of Gerontius* — the long-desired emergence of a major creative personality in British music. That composer, Edward Elgar, had been writing for over twenty years when he undertook these two pieces in 1898, but they were the first to gain him a solid reputation, not only among his countrymen but also abroad.

Elgar's triumph in London came by a Continental route, through the eminent German conduc-

tor Hans Richter. Richter, who played a major role in the popularization of Wagner's music in the Britain, had a close relationship with the English musical community and its audiences, and for his series of concerts there in 1899 he investigated new scores by English composers that might be presented on his programs. His agent in London regularly dispatched manuscripts to Germany, and one such parcel arrived with an especially high recommendation. It contained the score for a new set of "Variations on an Original Theme" by Elgar. Richter's enthusiasm grew as he read through the pages, and he determined to present the work not only in London, but also on his provincial concerts. Those performances spread the composer's fame so quickly and successfully that he was knighted for his services to British music only five years later, in 1904.

Throughout his life Elgar had a penchant for dispensing startling or mystifying remarks just to see what response they would elicit. Turning this trait upon his music, he added the sobriquet "Enigma" above the theme of the work after it had been completed. He posited not just one puzzle here, however, but three. First, each of the fourteen sections was headed with a set of initials or a nickname that stood for the name of the composer's friend portrayed by that variation. Though the speculation on the identity of the individuals began immediately, Elgar did not confirm any guesses until 1920. The second mystery dealt with the theme itself, the section that specifically bore the legend, "Enigma." It is believed that the theme represented Elgar himself (note the similarity of the opening phrase to the speech rhythm of his name — Ed-ward EL-gar), thus making the variations upon it portraits of his friends as seen through his eyes. Elgar gave a helpful clue to the solution of this mystery when he used the melody again, in *The Music Makers* of 1912, and said that it stood there for "the loneliness of the creative artist." The final enigma, the one that neither Elgar offered to explain nor for which others have been able to find a definitive solution, arose from a statement of his: "Furthermore, through and over the whole set another and larger theme 'goes' but is not played... So the principal theme never appears." Conjectures about this unplayed theme that fits each of the variations have ranged from *Auld Lang Syne* (which guess Elgar vehemently denied) to a phrase from *Parsifal*. One theory was published in 1975 by the Dutch musicologist Theodore van Houten, who speculated that the phrase "never, never, never" from the grand old tune *Rule, Britannia* fits the requirements, and even satisfies some of the baffling clues that Elgar had spread to his friends. ("So the principal theme *never* appears.") We shall never know for sure. Elgar took the solution to his grave.

Variation I (C.A.E.) is a tender depiction of the composer's wife, Caroline Alice, who was not only his loving spouse but also his most trusted professional advisor. *Variation II (H.D. S.-P.)* represents the warming-up finger exercises of H.D. Stuart-Powell, a piano-playing friend who was a frequent chamber music partner of Elgar. *Variation III (R.B.T.)* utilizes the high and low woodwinds to portray the distinctive voice of Richard Baxter Townsend, an amateur actor with an unusually wide vocal range. *Variation IV (W.M.B.)* suggests the considerable energy and firm resolve of William Meath Baker. *Variation V (R.P.A.)* reflects the frequently changing moods of Richard Penrose Arnold, son of the poet Matthew Arnold. *Variation VI (Ysobel)* gives prominence to the viola, the instrument played by Elgar's pupil, Miss Isobel Fitton. *Variation VII (Troyte)* describes the high spirits and argumentative nature of Arthur Troyte Griffith. *Variation VIII (W.N.)* lithely denotes the charm and grace of Miss Winifred Norbury. *Variation IX (Nimrod)*, named for the great-grandson of the Biblical Noah, who was noted as a hunter, is a moving testimonial to A.J. Jaeger, an avid outdoorsman and Elgar's publisher and close friend. The composer wrote, "This Variation is a record of a long summer evening talk, when my friend grew nobly eloquent (as only he could be) on the grandeur of Beethoven, and especially of his slow movements." *Variation X (Dorabella): Intermezzo* describes Miss Dora Penny, a young friend hesitant of conversation and fluttering of manner. *Variation XI (G.R.S.)* portrays the organist George R. Sinclair and his bulldog, Dan, out for a walk by the River Wye. The rhythmic exuberance of the music suggests the dog's rushing about the bank and paddling in the water. *Variation XII (B.G.N.)* pays homage to the cellist Basil G. Nevinson. *Variation XIII (* * *)*: *Romanza* was written while Lady Mary Lygon was on a sea journey. The solo clarinet quotes a phrase from Mendelssohn's *Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage Overture* and the hollow sound of the timpani played with wooden sticks suggests the distant rumble of ship's engines. *Variation XIV (E.D.U.): Finale*, Elgar's brilliant self-portrait, recalls the music of earlier variations.

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