

GRANT PARK ORCHESTRA AND CHORUS

Carlos Kalmar Artistic Director and Principal Conductor

Christopher Bell Chorus Director



Friday, June 23, 2017 at 6:30 p.m.

Saturday, June 24, 2017 at 7:30 p.m.

Jay Pritzker Pavilion

STRAVINSKY *FIREBIRD*

Grant Park Orchestra

Carlos Kalmar Conductor

Conrad Tao Piano

Schiff

Infernal (after Stravinsky's *Firebird*)

Khachaturian

Piano Concerto

Allegro maestoso

Andante con anima

Allegro brillante

CONRAD TAO

INTERMISSION

Stravinsky

The Firebird, Ballet in Two Scenes

Tonight's concert is sponsored by
Marion and Chuck Kierscht
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Julian Oettinger, in memory of Sheila Oettinger

The Walter E. Heller Foundation is proud to support works
by American composers, in memory of Alyce DeCosta.

The appearance of Conrad Tao is sponsored in part
by Jeannette and Jerry Goldstone.

Piano provided by Steinway Piano Galleries of Chicago.

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



CONRAD TAO has appeared worldwide as a pianist and composer. In 2011, the White House Commission on Presidential Scholars and Department of Education named him a Presidential Scholar in the Arts, and the National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts awarded him a YoungArts Gold Medal in Music. Later that year, Mr. Tao was named a Gilmore Young Artist, an honor awarded every two years to the most promising American pianists. In 2012, he received a prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant. Mr. Tao's 2016-2017 season includes:

the world premiere of David Lang's new opera *the loser* at Brooklyn Academy of Music, where he joined baritone Rod Gilfry atop suspended platforms performing to a mezzanine-seating-only audience; the premiere of his new orchestral work, *I got a wiggle that I just can't shake*, commissioned by the Pacific Symphony; premiered a new piano concerto commissioned by the Atlantic Classical Orchestra; debuted the second work commissioned from him by Jaap van Zweden and the Hong Kong Philharmonic; and performed with leading orchestras in the United States, Canada, Europe and Mexico. Conrad Tao, born in Urbana, Illinois in 1994, studied piano with Emilio del Rosario in Chicago and Yoheved Kaplinsky in New York, and composition with Christopher Theofanidis.



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David Schiff (b. 1945)

***INFERNAL (AFTER STRAVINSKY'S FIREBIRD)*
(2005)**

Scored for: piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, English horn, three clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, three trumpets, two trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, piano and strings

Performance time: six minutes

First Grant Park Orchestra performance.

David Schiff, R.P. Wollenberg Professor of Music at Reed College in Portland, Oregon, was born in New York City in 1945 and holds degrees in English literature and music from Columbia University, Cambridge University, Manhattan School of Music and the Juilliard School; his composition teachers include John Corigliano, Ursula Mamlok and Elliott Carter. Among Schiff's creative output are three musical theater pieces (the two-act opera *Gimpel the Fool* has a Yiddish libretto by Isaac Bashevis Singer), orchestral scores, concertos for jazz violin, clarinet and timpani, sacred music, and numerous works for varied chamber ensembles, many written on commissions from the Detroit Symphony, Seattle Symphony, Oregon Symphony, Minnesota Orchestra, Juilliard School, Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center and other distinguished organizations. David Schiff's honors include the ASCAP Deems Taylor Award, League of Composers-ISCM Award, and grants and commissions from the National Endowment for the Arts, National Endowment for the Humanities, Merrill Foundation and Amphion Foundation. Schiff is also active as a conductor and music critic, and has written books about the music of Elliott Carter and George Gershwin. His articles appear regularly in *The Atlantic Monthly*, *The New York Times*, *Opera News* and *Tempo*. Recordings of his works have been issued on the Delos, Argo, CRI, Naxos and New World labels.

Schiff wrote of *Infernal*, "Igor Stravinsky has been my favorite composer ever since I heard the *Firebird Suite* played in the Baths of Caracalla in Rome when I was twelve — with fireworks! Some might accuse me of terminal chutzpah to even think about rearranging such a famous piece by one of the greatest orchestrators of all time, but, in a sense, Stravinsky himself started this when he rearranged music by Pergolesi in *Pulcinella* and Tchaikovsky in *The Fairy's Kiss*. And, as I discovered, Stravinsky also substantially re-scored the original *Firebird* in 1919 and 1945. *Infernal* is freely based on 'The Infernal Dance of Kashchei's Subjects' from *Firebird*. I have given Stravinsky's score a rock groove with a couple of jazz moments and a West African coda so all the rhythms and instrumentation are different. *Firebird*, after all, is more than a hundred years old; I wanted to give it the sound of today's music, and I also wanted to give it some attitude — like a double shot of caffeine!"



Aram Khachaturian (1903-1978)

PIANO CONCERTO (1935)

Scored for: piccolo, flute, two oboes, two clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion and strings

Performance time: 37 minutes

First Grant Park Orchestra performance: July 1, 1955;
Nicolai Malko, conductor and piano

It is not an incidental fact that Aram Khachaturian came to music later than most composers — he was nineteen before he began his formal training. His father, a bookbinder, was too poor to provide Aram with any musical education, so the boy’s knowledge of music was based on what came inevitably to the ear during those early years in his native Armenia: folk songs and dances. When he began composing, Khachaturian found inspiration for both the technique and spirit of his music in those sources.

The three movements of Khachaturian’s Piano Concerto abound in exotic color and melody. The opening *Allegro maestoso* begins with a bold introduction for orchestra. The movement’s main theme, tendered by the soloist, is filled with “extra” melodic notes provided by unusual scales and snapping rhythmic constructions. The second theme in this sonata structure is given, in the best snake-charmer vein, to the reedy sonority of the oboe. The development comprises two parts: the first is based on the main theme; the second is an impetuous rhythmic display of virtuoso pyrotechnics.

The three movements of Khachaturian’s Piano Concerto abound in exotic color and melody.

The slow middle movement partakes of a mystical mournfulness that brings to mind the music of Scriabin. Though Khachaturian later disavowed the use of the “Flexatone,” this movement originally included an important part for the instrument, which combines the tonal effects of a musical saw, orchestra bells and a slide whistle. Some listeners have compared the sound to that of the balalaika.

The finale resumes the vibrant rhythmic motion of the opening movement. Two musical elements vie for dominance: one a bounding duple-meter galop; the other, a quick triple-meter dance (where tapping toe and music refuse to align). After some time spent with both these musical ideas, an involved cadenza for the soloist leads back to a recapitulatory section. A brilliant coda recalls the main theme of the opening movement and combines it with the principal melody of the finale to bring the Concerto to a sonorous end.



Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971)

**THE FIREBIRD, BALLET IN TWO ACTS
(1909-1910)**

Scored for: piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, English horn, clarinet, E-flat clarinet, bass clarinet, two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, harp, piano, celesta and strings

Performance time: 45 minutes

First Grant Park Orchestra performance of the complete ballet.

Fireworks. There could not have been a more appropriate title for the work that launched the meteoric career of Igor Stravinsky. He wrote that glittering orchestral miniature in 1908, while still under the tutelage of Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, and it shows all the dazzling instrumental technique that the student had acquired from his teacher. Though the reception of *Fireworks* was cool when it was first performed at the Siloti Concerts in St. Petersburg on February 6, 1909, there was one member of the audience who listened with heightened interest. Serge Diaghilev was forming his Ballet Russe company at just that time, and he recognized in Stravinsky a talent to be watched. He approached the 27-year-old composer and requested orchestral transcriptions of short pieces by Chopin and Grieg that would be used in the first Parisian season of the Ballet Russe. Stravinsky did his work well and on time.

During that same winter, plans were beginning to stir in the creative wing of the Ballet Russe for a Russian folk ballet — something filled with legend and magic and fantasy. The composer Nikolai Tcherepnin was associated with the Ballet Russe at that time, and it was assumed that he would compose the music for a plot derived from several traditional Russian sources. However, Tcherepnin was given to inexplicable changes of mood and he was losing interest in ballet at the time, so he withdrew from the project. Diaghilev inquired whether Stravinsky had any interest in taking it over, and he agreed. The triumphant premiere of *The Firebird in Paris* on June 25, 1910, rocketed Stravinsky to international fame.

The story deals with the glittering Firebird and the evil ogre Kashchei, who captures maidens and turns men to stone if they enter his domain. Kashchei is immortal as long as his soul, which is preserved in the form of an egg in a casket, remains intact. The plot shows how Prince Ivan wanders into Kashchei's garden in pursuit of the Firebird; he captures it and exacts a feather before letting it go. Ivan meets a group of Kashchei's captive maidens and falls in love with one of them. The princesses return to Kashchei's palace. Ivan breaks open the gates to follow them, but he is captured by the ogre's guardian monsters. He waves the magic feather and the Firebird reappears to smash Kashchei's vital egg; the ogre expires. All the captives are freed and Ivan and his Tsarevna are wed.



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