



Grant Park Music Festival

Seventy-fifth Season

Grant Park Orchestra and Chorus

Carlos Kalmar, *Principal Conductor*

Christopher Bell, *Chorus Director*

Twenty-first Program: Italian Variations

Wednesday, August 12, 2009 at 6:30 p.m.

Jay Pritzker Pavilion

GRANT PARK ORCHESTRA

Carlos Kalmar, *Conductor*

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| BRITTEN | <i>Matinées Musicales</i> , Op. 24
March
Nocturne
Waltz
Pantomime
Moto Perpetuo |
| BERIO | Four Original Versions of <i>Ritirata Notturna di Madrid</i>
by Luigi Boccherini, Superimposed and Transcribed
for Orchestra |
| STRAUSS | <i>Aus Italien</i> , Symphonic Fantasy for Large Orchestra
in G major, Op. 16
Auf der Campagna: Andante
In Rom's Ruinen: Allegro molto con brio
Am Strande von Sorrent: Andantino
Neapolitanisches Volksleben (Finale): Allegro molto |

CARLOS KALMAR's biography can be found on page 8.



MATINÉES MUSICALES, OP. 24 (1941)

Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)

Britten's Matinées Musicales is scored for pairs of woodwinds with piccolo, two horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, percussion, harp, celesta and strings. The performance time is sixteen minutes. The Grant Park Orchestra first performed this work on August 4, 1951, Hans Schwieger conducting.

In 1933, when he was nineteen, Benjamin Britten withdrew from the Royal College of Music, London, disillusioned by the hidebound conservatism he encountered at the school. To provide a living while establishing himself professionally, he began writing background music for documentary films produced by John Grierson's GPO (General Post Office) Film Unit. In 1935, Grierson formally put Britten on staff and assigned him to a number of projects, including one to provide music for a short film titled *The Töcher*, which concerned the attempt of a young Scottish man to win the hand and the dowry ("tocher") of a highland lass. Britten included in his score an arrangement for chamber ensemble of a march from Rossini's *William Tell* as well as two short numbers from his *Soirées Musicales*, a collection of miscellaneous vocal duets and solo songs that Rossini jotted down between 1830 and 1835, after he had retired from the hurly-burly of the opera world in 1829 at the hardly advanced age of 37. Two years later Britten added two more movements to the set and re-worked the pieces for full orchestra as a "Suite of Five Movements from Rossini" that he titled *Soirées Musicales*.

Early in 1941, during Britten's extended residency in the United States, Lincoln Kirstein, director of the American Ballet Company, asked him for a second set of Rossini-based pieces that the troupe's choreographer, George Balanchine, could use with the *Soirées Musicales* as the music for a new ballet titled *Divertimento*. Britten made sparkling arrangements of five more musical delights from Rossini's catalog and gave them the complementary title of *Matinées Musicales*; the ABC premiered *Divertimento* in Rio de Janeiro in June 1941 during a South American tour. The opening *March of the Matinées Musicales* is based on the *Pas de Six* from Rossini's *William Tell*, in which three couples dance as part of the celebration of their triple wedding. The three middle movements derive from Rossini's *Soirées Musicales*: *Nocturne* (based on No. 10, *La Pesca* ["Fishing"]: *Già la notte s'avvicina — Already night is approaching*); *Waltz* (No. 4, *L'Orgia* ["The Orgy"]: *Amiamo, cantiamo — Let's love and sing*); and *Pantomime* (No. 2, *Il Rimprovesa* ["The Reproach"]: *Mi lagnerò tacendo — In silence I will complain*). The closing *Moto Perpetuo* is modeled on a selection from Rossini's *Gorgheggi e Solfeggi* ("Trills and Scales"), a book of textless vocal studies Rossini published in Paris in 1827 that were intended, according to the volume's subtitle, to "make the voice agile and to help the singer understand the modern vocal art."



FOUR ORIGINAL VERSIONS OF RITIRATA NOTTURNA DI MADRID BY LUIGI BOCCHERINI, SUPERIMPOSED AND TRANSCRIBED FOR ORCHESTRA (1975)

Luciano Berio (1925-2003)

Berio's Ritirata Notturna di Madrid is scored for piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, four trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, harp and strings. The performance time is ten minutes. This is the first performance of the work by the Grant Park Orchestra.

Luciano Berio, composer, conductor, editor, linguist, author and champion of modern music, was one of the outstanding creative figures of the late 20th century and perhaps the best-known and most frequently performed Italian composer after Puccini. Berio was born into a family of church musicians in a small town on the Italian Riviera not far from Monaco. After high school, he briefly studied law in Milan but found his true vocation as a composer when the post-war musical

revival allowed him to hear the works of Bartók, Stravinsky, Webern and other modernists. Study with Giorgio Ghedini in composition and Carlo Maria Giulini in conducting at the Milan Conservatory followed; he spent the summer of 1952 at the Tanglewood Music Festival as a student of Luigi Dallapiccola on a Koussevitzky Foundation Fellowship. In 1955, Berio established the *Studio di Fonologia* in Milan, an electronic music laboratory founded under the auspices of the Italian Radio, where his duties included editing the new music journal *Incontri Musicali* (“Musical Encounters”) and running a concert series with Bruno Maderna. Berio lived in the United States from 1963 to 1971, holding teaching positions at Mills College, Harvard and Juilliard while producing many original compositions, including the eclectic but widely praised *Sinfonia* in 1968. He returned to Europe in 1971 to join his musical ally Pierre Boulez in the new *Institut de Recherche et de Coopération Acoustique/Musique* (IRCAM) in Paris, a daring venture to study acoustical, scientific and computer technology as related to music. After providing an artistic direction for the program at IRCAM, Berio saw his job there as completed, and he returned to Italy in 1977, devoting his creative energies thereafter principally to large-scale concert and music-theatre works. He died in Rome in May 2003.

Berio showed a particular interest in the art of musical commentary. Besides arrangements of works by Monteverdi, Purcell, Weill, Gabrieli, Frescobaldi and even Lennon & McCartney, among his best-known compositions is the *Sinfonia*, one of whose sections is a gloss on an entire movement taken intact from Mahler’s Second Symphony. The *Sequenzas* are elaborations upon some of his own earlier works. His *Four Original Versions of “Ritirata Notturna di Madrid” by Luigi Boccherini, Superimposed and Transcribed for Orchestra* is based on the theme-and-variations movement from Boccherini’s String Quintet in C major of 1780. While preparing to write the work, Berio discovered four versions of Boccherini’s music in various sources which differ in texture and ornamentation, and he decided to use all four simultaneously, superimposing one upon the other and giving it all a distinctly 20th-century timbral luster. (He refused to revise the work when a fifth version was brought to his attention after the piece was published.) This piling-up of variant versions creates a brilliant welter of figurations in the central section of the work, a sort of 18th-century jam-session. Throughout, the drums provide a steady cadence for the marchers as they approach, pass and then depart.



AUS ITALIEN (“FROM ITALY”), SYMPHONIC FANTASY FOR LARGE ORCHESTRA IN G MAJOR, OP. 16 (1886)

Richard Strauss (1864-1949)

Strauss’ Aus Italien is scored for piccolo, two flutes, oboe, English horn, two clarinets, two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, percussion, harp and strings. The performance time is 47 minutes. This is the first performance of the work by the Grant Park Orchestra.

In the autumn of 1885, Hans von Bülow, music director of the Meiningen Orchestra, appointed the 21-year-old Richard Strauss as his conducting assistant. Within months, Strauss was asked to become von Bülow’s successor, but he declined the offer in favor of a post as third conductor for the Court Opera in Munich, his hometown. In addition to the experience gained in Meiningen working with one of Europe’s best orchestras, Strauss also met there the violinist and sometime composer Alexander Ritter, who introduced him to the revolutionary works of Wagner and Liszt, music that Strauss’ reactionary father, the most renowned horn player of his day, had forbidden him to hear. Strauss became convinced by Ritter, and the musical examples he provided, that an instrumental piece could spring from the inspiration of what Strauss later called “a poetic idea,” and not need be restricted to the abstract expression of the Classical masterworks that had served as the models for his earlier compositions.

Strauss left his post at Meiningen in April 1886, and did not have to report for his new duties at the Munich Court Opera until August, so, encouraged by Brahms, who shared with the young musician his fond memories of his visits to Italy, he undertook a trip across the Alps during April and May. The journey, financed by his father and by his uncle Georg Pschorr, a wealthy Munich brewer (Pschorr Beer is still a Bavarian favorite and a mainstay of the famous Oktoberfest), took

Richard to Verona, Bologna, Rome, Naples, Florence and many smaller cities. Despite losing his leather suitcase in Naples, his laundry in Rome and his Baedeker in a theater, being overcharged by the local merchants, and having to skip a stop in Venice because of an outbreak there of cholera, he thoroughly enjoyed the junket. He was deeply touched by the ruins, the architecture, the countryside, the art (Raphael's *St. Cecilia* in Bologna moved him to tears), and even some of the music (*Aida* he thought to be "Redskin Music," but Verdi's *Requiem* was judged "pretty and original"), and he wrote long letters home describing not just the sights but also the musical thoughts that they ignited in him — he even made a point of noting the specific keys of his inspirations in the margins. When he returned to Munich in late May, Strauss was bubbling with ideas for a new work, and he immediately set about creating the set of four tone pictures that became the "Symphonic Fantasy" titled *Aus Italien* ("From Italy"). The score was completed on September 12, 1886.

The premiere of *Aus Italien* on March 2, 1887 at the Munich Odeon, conducted by the composer, created a great deal of excitement. Strauss noted that the work represented "the connecting link between the old and the new method" — an indication that the abstract, Classical scores of his youth were being superseded by the brilliant programmatic compositions that were to bring him international fame. "There has been much ado here over the performance of my Fantasy," he wrote to a friend. "General amazement and wrath because I, too, have now begun to go my own way, to create my own form and bother the heads of indolent persons. The first three movements were tolerably well received, but for the last part, *Neapolitan Folk Life*, which, I admit, is somewhat extravagantly crazy (life in Naples, to be sure, is boisterous), there was not only lively applause, but real hissing, which of course amused me greatly. Well, I console myself; I know the way I want to travel quite well. No one has ever become a great artist who was not held by thousands to be crazy.... This is the first work of mine to have met with opposition from the mob, so it must be of some importance." Actually, Strauss was delighted with the publicity caused by the premiere because he realized that this concert was an important step on his rise to fame. Not only was he soon in demand throughout Europe as a conductor of his own works, but performances of *Aus Italien* carried his name to England and the United States within two years. The earliest of his tone poems, *Macbeth*, was written in 1888, and *Don Juan*, his first masterpiece in the genre, was introduced the following year.

In 1889, Strauss provided an analysis of *Aus Italien* for the *Allgemeine Musikzeitung* that gives clues to the relationship of his Italian inspirations and the musical content of the movements:

"1. *Auf der Campagna* ('In the Country'). This prelude reproduces the mood experienced by the composer at the sight of the broad extent of the Roman Campagna bathed in sunlight as seen from the Villa d'Este at Tivoli.

"2. *In Roms Ruinen* ('Among Rome's Ruins'). Fantastic images of vanished glory, feelings of melancholy and grief amid the brilliant sunshine of the present. The formal structure of the movement is that of a great symphonic first movement.

"3. *Am Strande von Sorrent* ('On the Shore at Sorrento'). This movement represents in tone painting the tender music of nature, which the inner ear hears in the rustling of the wind in the leaves, in bird song and in all the delicate voices of nature, and in the distant murmur of the sea, whence a solitary song reaches the beach. Contrasting with that distant song are the sensations experienced by the human listener. The interplay in the separation and partial union of these contrasts constitutes the spiritual content of this mood-picture.

"4. *Neapolitanisches Volksleben* ('Neapolitan Folk Life'). The principal theme is a well-known Neapolitan folk song [Strauss was incorrect. This melody is actually the familiar *Funiculi-Funicula* by the Italian composer Luigi Denza, but it was so ubiquitous in Naples that he assumed it to be a traditional tune.] In addition, a tarantella which the composer heard in Sorrento is used in the coda. After a few noisy introductory bars, the statement of the principal theme by the violas and cellos launches this crazy orchestral fantasy, which attempts to depict the colorful bustle of Naples in a hilarious jumble of themes; the tarantella, at first heard only in the distance, gradually asserts itself towards the end of the movement, and provides the conclusion for this humoresque. A few reminiscences of the first movement may express nostalgia for the peace of the Campagna."

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