

GRANT PARK ORCHESTRA AND CHORUS

Carlos Kalmar Artistic Director and Principal Conductor

Christopher Bell Chorus Director



Friday, August 4, 2017 at 6:30 p.m.

Saturday, August 5, 2017 at 7:30 p.m.

Harris Theater for Music and Dance

DEBUSSY *LA MER*

Grant Park Orchestra

Carlos Kalmar Conductor

François Leleux Oboe

Paul Hindemith

Concert Music for Strings and Brass, Op. 50

Part I

Mässig schnell, mit Kraft —Sehr breit, aber stetsfliessend

Part II

Lebhaft—Langsam—Lebhaft

Richard Strauss

Oboe Concerto in D Major

Allegro moderato

Andante

Vivace — Allegro

Played without pause

FRANÇOIS LELEUX

INTERMISSION

Felix Mendelssohn

Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage, Op. 27

Claude Debussy

La Mer, Three Symphonic Sketches

From dawn to noon on the sea

Play of the waves

Dialogue of the wind and the sea



FRANÇOIS LELEUX has established parallel international careers as oboist and conductor, and regularly appears with the world's leading orchestras, festivals and concert series as soloist and player/director in repertory ranging from Baroque to newly commissioned works. His 2016-2017 season includes concerto performances with the Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Utah Symphony Orchestra, Aurora Orchestra at the Beethovenfest Bonn, and Münchener Kammerorchester; a residency with the hr-Sinfonieorchester in Frankfurt as soloist, conductor and chamber musician; and engagements as conductor and soloist with Tonkünstler-Orchester Niederösterreich (with whom he makes his conducting debut at Vienna's Musikverein), Camerata Salzburg, Norwegian Chamber Orchestra, Orchestre de chambre de Paris, and the Stavanger, Aalborg and Gävle symphony orchestras. François Leleux has released several CDs on Sony Classical. His latest release — an album of works by Hummel and Haydn recorded with Münchener Kammerorchester — was awarded an Echo Klassik prize in 2016.



Paul Hindemith (1895-1963)
CONCERT MUSIC FOR STRINGS AND BRASS,
OP. 50 (1930)

Scored for: four horns, four trumpets, three trombones, tuba and strings

Performance time: 20 minutes

First Grant Park Orchestra performance

Like most great creative figures, Paul Hindemith went through several phases during his compositional career. His first works (including the opera *Murder, Hope of Women* and *Das Nuschli-Nuschli*, a musical play for Burmese puppets), which date from the early 1920s, the most turbulent period of musical iconoclasm in modern times, were expressionistic and self-consciously avant-garde. In the wake of his appointment to the administrative committee of the Donaueschingen Music Festival in 1923 and his growing concern over Germany's economic and political difficulties under the government of the tottering Weimar Republic, however, Hindemith adopted what Ian Kemp called "a more responsible outlook" regarding his music, and formulated a style that, Kemp continued, "directed attention to the energy in the human soul rather than to its capacity for introversion or self-advertisement." Hindemith turned at that time to the music of J.S. Bach for both his inspiration and his model, and he devised a neo-Classical (or better, neo-Baroque) language characterized by: propulsive rhythmic constructions generated by the continuous contrapuntal working-out of a few motives; singularity of mood throughout an entire movement or section, without the strong contrasts of 19th-century music; and an expressive objectivity markedly different from the inflated emotionalism of post-Romanticism. In the mid-1930s, Hindemith added to this neo-Bachian style a stronger feeling for traditional tonality and harmonic progressions, more lyrical melodic writing and a certain fullness of sonority, qualities first seen in

the 1934 opera *Mathis der Maler*. Standing on the cusp of this last creative period, which continued until Hindemith's death in 1963, is the *Concert Music for Strings and Brass* of 1930.

The *Concert Music for Strings and Brass* was commissioned by the Boston Symphony Orchestra in celebration of its 50th anniversary. Hindemith was himself a master viola player, and his writing for strings in this work is consistently challenging. For their part, the brasses must negotiate breath-taxing arches of melody, rapid staccato passages and the difficult intonation problems presented by Hindemith's complex harmonic language. The *Concert Music* is in two large parts, each subdivided. Part I comprises two sections: *Moderately fast, with vigor* leading directly to *Very broad, but constantly flowing*. The second part is divided into three portions: *Lively, Slowly* and a modified recapitulation of the *Lively* section.



Richard Strauss (1864-1949)

OBOE CONCERTO IN D MAJOR (1945)

Scored for: two flutes, English horn, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns and strings

Performance time: 28 minutes

First Grant Park Orchestra performance

Strauss largely withdrew from public life after 1935 to his villa at Garmisch-Partenkirchen in the Bavarian Alps. He lived there throughout World War II, spared the physical ravages of the conflict but deeply wounded by the loss of many friends and the bombing of Dresden, Munich and Vienna. In October 1945, under the threat of being called before the Denazification Board, he moved to Switzerland, where he lived for the next four years. He and his wife, Pauline, stayed in various hotels in several towns and cities (her shrewish tantrums and complaints led to frequent management requests for them to seek lodgings elsewhere) before settling into the Palace Hotel in Montreux. Strauss was cleared by the Denazification Board in June 1948, but he chose to stay in Switzerland for medical treatment that winter, returning to Garmisch in May 1949, just four months before his death. Though increasingly feeble during his Swiss sojourn, his mind was clear, and he continued to compose.

Strauss undertook the Oboe Concerto in September 1945, shortly before he left Garmisch for Switzerland, at the request of John de Lancie, a young performer stationed with the American occupation troops in Bavaria. De Lancie, who was one of several American musicians the venerable composer welcomed to his lovely villa in Garmisch, returned home to become principal oboist of the Philadelphia Orchestra and, later, director of the renowned Curtis Institute of Music in that city. When Strauss and Pauline left for Switzerland in October, he took along his sketches for the new Concerto, and finished the score at the village of Baden-bei-Zürich soon after he arrived.

Strauss authority Ernst Krause noted that the Oboe Concerto creates “an Arcadian atmosphere of shimmering transparency.” The first movement follows

the traditional sonata pattern, though here the form's structural junctures are smoothly elided rather than sharply demarcated. The *Andante* is a three-part song: a wistful aria for oboe surrounds a more animated middle section, incorporating the main theme of the previous movement. A mellow cadenza for the soloist leads without pause to the *Finale*, an animated rondo-like chapter with several subsidiary episodes, some of which recall motives from the opening movement. This lovely Concerto is brought to an end by gossamer fillips and charming filigree.



Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)

CALM SEA AND PROSPEROUS VOYAGE, OP. 27
(1828)

Scored for: piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, contrabassoon, two horns, three trumpets, tuba, timpani and strings

Performance time: 12 minutes

First Grant Park Orchestra performance

To enhance the experience of his first excursion upon the ocean, taken during a family holiday in 1824 at the Baltic resort of Dobberan, Mendelssohn read Goethe's pair of brief poems titled *Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage*, which had previously served as the subject for song settings by Johann Friedrich Reichardt and Schubert and a choral work of 1815 by Beethoven. In 1828, the verses inspired a concert overture from Mendelssohn, the first mention of which appears in a letter of June 18th from his sister, Fanny, to the family's friend Karl Klingemann in London: "Felix is writing a big instrumental piece, *Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage*, after Goethe. He wished to avoid an overture with introduction and has kept the whole in two scenes standing side by side." The score was completed sufficiently that summer for a private try-out at the Mendelssohn mansion on September 7th, but Mendelssohn continued to tinker with the piece until 1832, when he conducted its formal premiere at the Berlin Singakademie on December 1st.

Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage is arranged in the form of two musical chapters (slow-fast) capped by a majestic coda suggesting the safe arrival of the vessel. Though the age of motorized ships has made the "calm sea" a symbol of good fortune, Mendelssohn's time of wind-driven vessels viewed such a condition with foreboding. The music is solemn, nearly motionless, "the calm dream of movement without being able to move," wrote Niels Gade, the Danish composer and conductor, and friend and successor to Mendelssohn at the Gewandhaus. A breath of air — a rising wisp of melody from the flute — signals the resumption of the voyage. Music of optimism and vibrant energy, fitted into a finely crafted form modeled on the Classical sonata, depicts the vessel on its journey. A noble coda, perhaps indicating an official ceremony of welcome, greets the travelers on their arrival in port. The work closes, however, not with fanfare brilliance, but with a tiny, quiet thematic reminiscence of the voyage, "a poetic surprise of a high order," according to the esteemed English musicologist Sir Donald Tovey.



Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

LA MER (“THE SEA”) (1903-1905)

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

Performance time: 23 minutes

First Grant Park Orchestra performance: July 28, 1965;
Irwin Hoffman, conductor

“You may not know that I was destined for a sailor’s life and that it was only quite by chance that fate led me in another direction. But I have always held a passionate love for the sea.” With those lines written on September 12, 1903 to the composer-conductor André Messager, Debussy prefaced the notice that he had begun work on *La Mer*. Debussy’s father was a sailor and his tales of vast oceans and exotic lands held Claude spellbound as a boy. A family trip to Cannes when he was seven years old ignited his life-long fascination with the thoughts and moods evoked by moving water. Twenty years later, he discovered an aspect of the sea very different from the placid one he had seen on the resort beaches of the Mediterranean. In early June of that year, he was traveling with friends along the coast of Brittany. Their plans called for passage in a fishing boat from Saint-Lunaire to Cancale, but at the time they were scheduled to leave a threatening storm was approaching and the captain advised canceling the trip. Debussy insisted that they sail. It turned out to be a dramatic, storm-tossed voyage with no little danger to crew and passengers. Those experiences of the sea — one halcyon, the other threatening — were captured years later in *La Mer*.

In addition to the memories of his own experience of the ocean, Debussy brought to *La Mer* a sensitivity nourished by visual renderings of the sea. He was certainly in sympathy with the Impressionistic art of his French contemporaries, but more immediate inspiration for the work seems to have come from the creations of two foreign artists — the Englishman Turner, whom Debussy called “the finest creator of mystery in art,” and the Japanese Hokusai. A selection of Turner’s wondrous, swirling sea paintings, as much color and light as image, was shown in Paris in 1894 and probably seen there by Debussy. Japanese sea- and landscapes were also popular in Paris during the 1890s as a result of their introduction there at the Universal Exhibition of 1889, and the exquisite drawings of Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849) so pleased Debussy that he chose one of them, *The Hollow of the Wave off Kanagawa*, for the cover of the score of *La Mer*.

From Dawn to Noon on the Sea, built around the play of thematic and rhythmic fragments rather than conventional melodies, is perfectly suited to expressing the changing reflections of the morning sun in the air, clouds and water. *The Play of the Waves* is a brilliant essay in orchestral color, woven and contrasted with the utmost evocative subtlety. *Dialogue of the Wind and the Sea* reflects the awesome power of the sea as well as its majesty.

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