

GRANT PARK ORCHESTRA AND CHORUS

Carlos Kalmar Artistic Director and Principal Conductor

Christopher Bell Chorus Director



Wednesday, August 14, 2019 at 6:30 p.m.

Jay Pritzker Pavilion

FLIGHT OF THE BUMBLEBEE

Grant Park Orchestra

Carlos Kalmar Conductor

Amy Beach

Variations on Balkan Themes, Op. 60d

Orchestral version completed by Hector Valdivia

Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov

Suite from *The Tale of Tsar Saltan*, Op. 57

The Tsar's Farewell and Departure (Introduction to Act I)

The Tsarina in a Barrel at Sea (Introduction to Act II)

The Flight of the Bumblebee

The Three Wonders (Introduction to Act IV, Scene 2)

Morton Gould

Cowboy Rhapsody

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AMY (MRS. H.H.A.) BEACH (1867-1944)

VARIATIONS ON BALKAN THEMES, OP. 60D (1904)

Orchestral version completed (1999) by Hector Valdivia

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

Performance time: 20 minutes

First Grant Park Orchestra performance

In this land of pioneers, Amy Beach stood tall among the artistic avant-garde — the most prominent female American composer of her day, one of the leading keyboard artists during the years around World War I, the first native woman composer to earn recognition abroad, the first woman musician to receive her entire professional training in this country, the first to write a symphony. Born Amy Cheney in 1867 in Henniker, New Hampshire to a family of colonial descent, she early showed an exceptional talent for music. She received her earliest instruction in piano from her mother, began composing melodies at four, and gave her debut recital (in her first formal dress, she later proudly recalled) a year later, at which she played some waltzes of her own invention. In 1875, when she was eight, the family moved to Boston, where Amy pursued her studies of piano with Ernest Perab (a student of Moscheles) and Carl Baermann, and theory with Junius W. Hill. Her sessions with Prof. Hill were the only formal instruction she ever received in composition. On October 23, 1883, she made her public debut with orchestra in Boston in works by Moscheles and Chopin, and pursued a successful career as a soloist for the following two years; she first performed with the Boston Symphony Orchestra on March 28, 1885, to much acclaim.

In December 1885, Amy Cheney married the prominent Boston surgeon Henry Harris Aubrey Beach, and thereafter referred to herself exclusively in the Victorian fashion as “Mrs. H.H.A. Beach” (initials only). Dr. Beach, an excellent amateur musician, encouraged his wife to cultivate her gift as a composer, so she largely curtailed her public appearances during the following years to devote herself to the intense study of theoretical treatises and music by both old and contemporary masters. She produced some piano pieces in 1886, and then began the earliest of her large compositions, the Mass in E-flat. The Mass took three years to complete, and was introduced by Boston’s Handel and Haydn Society in 1892, the first music by a woman composer to be performed by that venerable ensemble. Her aria *Eilende Wolken* (“*Scudding Clouds*”) marked a similar milestone for the New York Philharmonic when it was given the following year. Beach began receiving notice from the musical establishment, and she was commissioned to write works for the Woman’s Building at the Chicago World’s Fair (1892), Trans-Mississippi Exposition at Omaha (1898) and Pan-American Exposition in San Francisco (1915). Her *Gaelic Symphony*, premiered by Emil Paur and the Boston Symphony in 1896, was the first such work by an American woman. Her Piano Concerto followed four years later.

Following the death of her husband in 1910, Amy Beach resumed an active performing career, and in 1911 she made her first trip to Europe, where her original compositions and her performances in Rome, Berlin, Munich, Dresden, Leipzig, Hamburg and elsewhere were so warmly received that she remained abroad for three years. She returned to the United States in 1914 and settled in New York, making numerous concert tours at home and overseas during the next quarter century. Among the compositions of her later years are an opera (*Cabildo*, 1932), scores for chorus *a cappella* and with orchestra, several chamber pieces, many songs and numerous piano

works; her catalog runs to more than 150 opus numbers. The high estimation in which Beach was held by her contemporaries is evidenced by the fact that only three of her works remained unpublished during her lifetime, a remarkable achievement for any composer. Following her death from a heart attack in 1944 at the age of 77, her music quickly slipped into near obscurity, however, and it remained largely unperformed until Morton Gould and pianist Mary Louise Boehm re-introduced the Piano Concerto with the American Symphony Orchestra in 1976, an event that sparked further performances, recordings and research. Today, Beach's music is again recognized as an important and integral part of this country's artistic and cultural heritage.

Beach used folk sources, mostly from America and Britain, in some thirty of her compositions, but she only became interested in Eastern European folk music in 1904, when Rev. William W. Sleeper, a missionary to Bulgaria, played her several folk melodies he had collected in the region. She wove four of Sleeper's songs into the large set of *Variations on Balkan Themes* she wrote for piano later that year and premiered on February 8, 1905. Though the response to the piece was generally favorable, there were some comments about its length, and she revised it in 1936, when she made a shorter version for both solo piano and two pianos and began an orchestration of the score. She left the orchestration unfinished, however, and it was not available for performance until conductor, violinist and musicologist Hector Valdivia, of Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota, completed the task in 1999 and recorded it on Centaur with the Moravian Philharmonic the following year.

"Haunting melodies, reflecting, mirror-like, the rare beauty and pathos of mountain legend, the tragedy and happiness of a wondrous people and a primitive life," Beach wrote in a preface to the score of *Variations on Balkan Themes*. "Of unknown origin, these tunes have passed from generation to generation of peasants who could neither



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read nor write music. They are to be heard everywhere in the vicinity of the mountains and neighboring villages, sung by the little peasant-girls as they dance, played by the shepherds on their pipes and fiddles, chanted by the soldiers at their bivouac fires, and loved by everyone."

Beach created most of the *Variations* around *O Maiko Moya*, whose text reflects the long and brutal Turkish rule of the Balkans: "O my poor country, to thy sons so dear, Why art thou weeping, why this sadness drear?" Three other Balkan melodies are referenced in the piece: *Stara Planina* ("Old Mountain"; Stara Planina is the mountain range dividing northern and southern Bulgaria); the dance-tune *Nasadil ye Dado* ("Grandpa has planted a little garden"); and a nameless "Macedonia appeal for help" probably dating from the late 19th century, when Bulgaria had overthrown Turkish hegemony but Macedonia was still ruled (until 1912) by the Ottomans.



NIKOLAI RIMSKY-KORSAKOV (1844-1908)

SUITE FROM THE TALE OF TSAR SALTAN, OP. 57 (1899-1900)

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

Performance time: 21 minutes

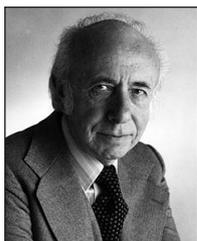
First Grant Park Orchestra performance: August 2, 1938, with Nikolai Malko, conductor

Alexander Pushkin (1799-1837), widely regarded as Russia's greatest 19th-century poet, inspired some of the country's finest operas: *Boris Godunov*, *Eugene Onegin*, *Ruslan and Ludmilla*, *The Queen of Spades* and a host of others were based on his writings. Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov used three of Pushkin's tales as the sources for his *Mozart and Salieri* (1897), *Le Coq d'Or* ("The Golden Cockerel," 1906) and *The Tale of Tsar Saltan*, composed in 1899-1900. *The Fairy Tale of the Tsar Saltan, his Son the Renowned and Mighty Paladin, the Prince Gvidon Saltanovich, and the Beautiful Swan Princess Lebed*, to give the opera its full title, was rendered into a libretto by Vladimir Belsky from Pushkin's fantasy poem of 1832. (Belsky also provided the text for *Le Coq d'Or*.)

The plot of the *Tsar Saltan* is elaborate and fantastic. One day, as Tsar Saltan journeys about his kingdom, he overhears each of three sisters tell how she would treat him if she were his bride. The first would bake him a magnificent bread; the second would spin him fine linens; and the third would bear him a beautiful heir. The Tsar chooses the third sister as his wife, and invites the other two sisters to live with them in his palace. The unchosen sisters, however, are livid with jealousy, and when a son is born to the Tsar while he is away at the wars, they plot their malevolence. They send him false messages that his wife has given birth to a monster, and when he responds that he will come to see for himself, they alter his words to such effect that they become an order to cast the mother and her child, enclosed in a barrel, into the sea. The cask washes onto the island of Buyan, where the boy, Prince Gvidon, grows daily in beauty and spirit. One day, the Prince saves the life of a swan possessed of magical powers, which, in gratitude, bestows three wonders upon the island. The first is a whistling squirrel that extracts emeralds from nuts with shells of pure gold. The second is a tidal wave that carries in its billows 33 armed warriors to defend the Prince. The third is a Princess of incomparable beauty, whose hair shimmers like moonbeams. Despite these miracles, Prince Gvidon still longs to see his father, so the magic swan transforms him into a bumblebee, allowing him to fly in search of the Tsar. After many virtuous adventures, Gvidon is united with his father on the island of Buyan,

where the Prince marries the Princess, who, at the opera's conclusion, is revealed as the magical swan metamorphosed.

The Suite from *Tsar Saltan*, which consists of the introductions to Acts I and II, the final scene (each preceded, as they are in the opera, by the same trumpet fanfare), and the well-known *Flight of the Bumblebee*, was introduced at a Russian Musical Society concert in St. Petersburg in honor of the 35th anniversary of Rimsky-Korsakov's career (dated from the completion of his First Symphony) on December 16, 1899, conducted by the composer; the full opera was not staged until late the following year in Moscow.



MORTON GOULD (1913-1996)

COWBOY RHAPSODY (1940)

Scored for: piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, harp, guitar and strings

Performance time: 10 minutes

First Grant Park Orchestra performance: June 9, 1940, with Harold Bachman, conductor

Morton Gould, composer, conductor, pianist, arranger and administrator, was born on December 10, 1913 in New York City. By the age of four, he was playing the piano and composing; at six, he had one of his first compositions published (a waltz called, appropriately, *Just Six*); by the time he was eight, he had played piano on broadcasts of WOR Radio in New York. In 1932, when he was nineteen, he became staff pianist at Radio City Music Hall. After a brief stint with NBC, Gould was engaged as composer, arranger and conductor by WOR, where he did a weekly broadcast; from 1942 to 1945, he performed the same duties for the *Cresta Blanca Carnival* and *Chrysler Hour* programs on CBS. In addition to his light compositions for radio, Gould wrote for film (*Windjammer*), television (the *World War I* series, *Holocaust* and *Celebration*), ballet (*Fall River Legend*), Broadway (*Billion Dollar Baby* and *Arms and the Girl*), orchestra, symphonic band, chamber ensembles and chorus. He was also a Grammy-winning conductor. In 1994, Gould was one of five recipients of the Kennedy Center Honors, the highest award given by the United States to its artists; the following year he received the Pulitzer Prize for his *Stringmusic*. In addition to his careers as composer, performer, arranger and conductor, Morton Gould was also president of ASCAP from 1986 to 1994. He died on February 21, 1996, while in Orlando to conduct seminars at the Disney Institute.

Gould composed *Cowboy Rhapsody* in two versions — for band (premiered in March 1940 by the University of Michigan Concert Band, to whom the score is dedicated) and for full orchestra (premiered by the St. Louis Symphony in 1944). Gould wove several well-known western songs into his brilliantly scored Rhapsody — *The Trail to Mexico*, *Little Old Sod Shanty*, *Home on the Range*, *Old Paint* — mining some of the same thematic and expressive territory Aaron Copland explored in his ballets *Billy the Kid* (1938) and *Rodeo* (1942), all indicative of the surge in national pride during World War II.

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