

GRANT PARK ORCHESTRA AND CHORUS

Carlos Kalmar Artistic Director and Principal Conductor

Christopher Bell Chorus Director

Friday, August 9, 2019 at 6:30 p.m.

Saturday, August 10, 2019 at 7:30 p.m.

Jay Pritzker Pavilion



A MASS OF LIFE: A CELEBRATION OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT

Grant Park Orchestra and Chorus

Carlos Kalmar Conductor

Christopher Bell Chorus Director

Melody Moore Soprano

Ewa Płonka Soprano

Andrew Staples Tenor

Nathan Berg Bass-Baritone

Frederick Delius

A Mass of Life

Part I

- I. O Du mein Wille!
- II. Erhebt eure Herzen
- III. In dein Auge schaute ich jüngst
- IV. Wehe mir!
- V. Nacht ist es

INTERMISSION

Part II

Auf den Bergen (Orchestra)

- I. Herauf! nun herauf
- II. Süsse Leier!
- III. Lento (Orchestra) — La-la-la — Lasst vom Tanze nicht ab
- IV. Heisser Mittag schläft
- V. Gottes Weh ist tiefer
- VI. Kommt! Lasst uns jetzo wandeln

MELODY MOORE

EWA PŁONKA

ANDREW STAPLES

NATHAN BERG

This concert is presented with generous support from
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Soprano **Melody Moore** returned during the 2018-2019 season to Houston Grand Opera for the roles of Senta in the season-opening production of *Die fliegende Holländer*, led by Music Director Patrick Summers, and Donna Elvira in Mozart's *Don Giovanni* in a new production by Kasper Holten. She also returned to Los Angeles Opera to make her role debut as Gertrude in *Hänsel und Gretel* under the baton of Music Director James Conlon. On the concert stage, Ms. Moore debuted with the Dresden Philharmonie in the roles of Giorgetta in Puccini's *Il Tabarro* and Santuzza in Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana*, both of which were recorded for commercial release by Pentatone Records. She revisited her critically acclaimed portrayal of Strauss' *Salome* in Daegu, South Korea and additionally recorded a solo album of American music with pianist Bradley Moore for Pentatone Records.



Polish soprano **Ewa Płonka**'s 2018-2019 season included performances of Karol Szymanowski's *Stabat Mater* at Carnegie Hall with the Oratorio Society of New York in a concert marking the centennial of Polish independence, as well as debuts with Finland's Oulu Symphony Orchestra in Wagner's *Wesendonck Lieder* and Opéra Orchestre de Montpellier France in Mahler's Symphony No. 3. On the opera stage, she returned to Badisches Staatstheater Karlsruhe for Donizetti's *Anna Bolena*. Among Ms. Płonka's other appearances are those with Oper Frankfurt, Royal Opera House Covent Garden, Badisches Staatstheater Karlsruhe, San Antonio Symphony, Dallas Opera, Munich Radio Orchestra, Nürnberg Symphony Orchestra and Jazz at Lincoln Center. Ms. Płonka has been awarded the Silver Medal in the Young Texas Artists Music Competition, First Prize in the New Jersey Association of Verismo Opera International Vocal Competition, Deborah Voigt Special Prize in the Marcello Giordani International Vocal Competition, Third Prize in the Gerda Lissner Foundation Vocal Competition, and a career grant from the Licia Albanese Puccini Foundation Competition. Ewa Płonka is a recent vocal performance graduate of Juilliard, holds bachelor's and master's degrees in piano performance from the Academy of Music in Poznań, Poland, and earned a second master's degree from Oklahoma City University and a doctorate from the University of Utah, both in piano. As a concert pianist, Ewa Płonka has performed widely and received multiple awards in international competitions.



Andrew Staples, tenor, one of Britain's most versatile singers, has performed works by Handel, Mozart and Britten as well as Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius*, Verdi's *Requiem* and Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde*. He sings regularly with conductors Simon Rattle, Daniel Harding and Yannick Nézet-Séguin, and with such leading orchestras as the Berlin Philharmonic, Vienna Philharmonic, Swedish Radio Orchestra, Bayerischer Rundfunk Sinfonieorchester, Rotterdam Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia and London Symphony Orchestra. In opera, Mr. Staples is a regular guest at the Royal Opera House, where he has sung Tamino (*Die Zauberflöte*), Flammand (*Capriccio*), Narraboth (*Salome*) and Artabenes (Arne's *Artaxerxes*). Andrew Staples also appears in Salzburg, Hamburg, Brussels and Prague.



Canadian bass-baritone **Nathan Berg**'s career has spanned a vast range of repertory in concert and opera. His recent work has earned acclaim around the globe. He has appeared in Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius* with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Vancouver Symphony, Minnesota Opera, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Houston Symphony, Salzburg Festival, Teatro alla Scala, Finnish National Radio Orchestra, St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, Elbphilharmonie, Beijing's National Centre for the Performing Arts, Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra, Semperoper

Dresden, Orquesta Sinfónica del Principado de Asturias, San Diego Symphony, Saskatoon Symphony and Grand Teton Music Festival. Mr. Berg has also established himself in the works of Wagner with appearances at the Cincinnati Opera Festival, Opéra de Montréal, Badisches Staatstheater and National Taichung Theater, Taiwan; he covered the roles of Alberich in the Metropolitan Opera's complete *Ring* during the 2018-2019 season. As a Grammy and Juno Award-winning recording artist, he has performed on over thirty recordings of works ranging from the 17th to 20th century with Les Arts Florissants, Opéra de Paris, Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and Glyndebourne Festival. Mr. Berg's recent releases include *Wozzeck* (Doktor) with the Houston Symphony, Dvořák's *Requiem* with the Royal Flemish Philharmonic, Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 with the San Francisco Symphony, and *Les Indes Galantes* with the Théâtre du Capitole, Toulouse. Soon to be released are *Rusalka* (Vodnik) on DVD and *Donna del Lago* (Duglas) on CD. Born in Saskatchewan, Nathan Berg studied in his native Canada, the United States, Paris and at the Guildhall School of Music, London, where he won the prestigious Gold Medal for Singers.



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FREDERICK DELIUS (1862-1934)

A MASS OF LIFE FOR SOPRANO, MEZZO-SOPRANO, TENOR AND BASS SOLOISTS, CHORUS AND ORCHESTRA (1904-1905)

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

Performance time: 100 minutes

First Grant Park Orchestra performance

Friedrich Nietzsche — philosopher, cultural critic, writer, poet, teacher, philologist, Greek and Latin scholar — was one of the most influential figures in late-19th-century European thought and letters. Born in 1844 into the family of a Lutheran pastor in Lützen, twenty miles southwest of Leipzig, Nietzsche had a thorough education during which he tried composing poetry and music and demonstrated a particular gift for languages, especially Greek, Latin, Hebrew and French. In 1864, he entered the University of Bonn to study theology and classical philology (i.e., the study of the structure, development and relationships of languages) with a view toward entering the clergy, but he quickly became disillusioned with the Christianity in which he has been raised, and in June 1865 wrote to his deeply religious sister Elisabeth, “Hence the ways of men part: if you wish to strive for peace of soul and pleasure, then believe; if you wish to be a devotee of truth, then inquire.”

Nietzsche concentrated on his philology studies and began to read deeply in classical and modern philosophy, and in 1869 he was appointed to the faculty of the University of Basel in Switzerland, where he befriended Richard Wagner and his wife, Cosima. His first publications, in the early 1870s, were influenced by Schopenhauer but he developed his own more positive worldview during the following years. Failing health and eyesight forced him to resign his teaching post in 1879, but he continued to travel and write. It was while staying at Lake Silvaplana in the Alps of southeastern Switzerland in 1883 that he conceived what became his best-known work: the philosophical novel *Also sprach Zarathustra* (“Thus Spake Zarathustra”), in which he codified his concept of the *Übermensch*, the “perfected man.” (*Übermensch* is often translated as “Superman,” from the Latin for “above, beyond,” but the idea and intent of Nietzsche’s self-fulfilling individual should not be confused with the society-saving American comic book hero.) Nietzsche posited that this perfected human state is achieved by the “will to power,” the quest for complete personal fulfillment that could raise a person to a higher plane of existence entirely through individual initiative, that the truest purpose of life is the continuous striving for the highest ideals the individual can envision, without any divine intervention. It was a powerful idea in a world knocked off its ancient religious foundation by the appearance of Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* in 1859. “Man is a rope,” Nietzsche wrote, “tied between beast and *Übermensch* — a rope over an abyss.... What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not an end.” *Zarathustra* was written in four parts between 1883 and 1885, first published separately and then in a complete edition in 1892, and had an immediate impact on European culture, not least on musicians — Richard Strauss’ eponymous tone poem and Gustav Mahler’s Third Symphony, whose third movement sets a poem (*O Mensch! Gib Acht!* — “Oh Man, Take Heed!”) from *Zarathustra*, were both completed in August 1896.

Frederick Delius, too, was overwhelmed by Nietzsche’s *Zarathustra*. His devoted amanuensis Eric Fenby recalled that Delius told him he had discovered *Zarathustra* in the 1890s during one of his many visits to Norway: “Already as a youth, Delius was a pagan.... One wet day ... he was looking for something to read in the library of a Norwegian

friend with whom he was staying during a walking tour, and had taken down a book, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. He was ripe for it. That book, he told me, never left his hands until he had devoured it from cover to cover. It was the very book he had been seeking all along.... Nor did he rest until he had read every work of Nietzsche he could lay his hands on." Anthony Payne, composer and early-20th-century British music authority, commented, "*Also sprach Zarathustra* embodies Delius' philosophy that each man should stand fearlessly alone in the face of ultimate death, should realize his potentialities, whatever the cost, and immerse himself wholeheartedly in life."

In 1897, Delius made a setting for baritone and piano of the "Midnight Song" from *Zarathustra* — *O man, mark well! [O Mensch! Gib Acht!]/What tolls the solemn midnight bell? ... The world is deep,/And deeper far than day can tell./Deep is her woe:/Joy deeper still than grief of heart./Woe says: "Begone!"/But Joy would have Eternity,/Ne'er ending, everlasting day!* — which he expanded the following year into a work for baritone solo, male chorus and orchestra that was premiered on an all-Delius concert at St. James's Hall in London on May 30, 1899. (Mahler had used the same text in his Symphony No. 3 two years before, but that work was not performed until 1902.) The *Mitternachtslied-Zarathustras* was heard again in 1902 (Elberfeld, Germany) and 1903 (Basle, Switzerland) but never published, though it did serve as the catalyst for Delius' most ambitious concert composition — *A Mass of Life*.

The performance of the *Mitternachtslied* by the Concert Society in Elberfeld was conducted by Hans Haym, an early champion of Delius' music in Germany, who had programmed his *Over the Hills and Far Away* in 1897 and *Paris: The Song of a Great City* two years later. Haym was eager to share his enthusiasm for Delius with Fritz Cassirer when he arrived to become director of the city's opera house in 1903, and did it so effectively that Cassirer conducted the premiere of Delius' opera *Koanga* in Elberfeld on

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June 13, 1904. Cassirer worked closely with the composer during the preparations for that production and learned that Delius wanted to expand the *Mitternachtslied* into an evening-length concert work but was having difficulty selecting appropriate texts from *Zarathustra*. Cassirer offered his help and together they hammered out the libretto for *Eine Messe des Lebens*, which Delius composed (in German) over the next year. Haym and Cassirer continued their advocacy of Delius in Germany — Haym led *Appalachia*, the Piano Concerto and two other works in Elberfeld in October 1904; Cassirer conducted the premiere of *A Village Romeo and Juliet* in Berlin in February 1907 — and brought his music to the attention of Ludwig Hess, the influential music director of the Hofkapelle in Munich. They shared the score of *Eine Messe des Lebens* with Hess, who agreed to perform Part II of the vast and challenging work on June 4, 1908. The complete *A Mass of Life* was first given (in English) at Queen's Hall in London under the direction of Thomas Beecham on June 7, 1909.

“Some might ask why ‘A Mass of Life,’” said Beecham in a recorded talk issued with his 1951 debut recording of the work. “The answer is that it is wholly concerned with existence in a world living in opposition to that which, in the ecclesiastical Mass, is conditioned by beliefs inherent in the promise of a life to come. The whole work is an affirmation of the joys to be found in Man’s span of life on this planet, and on no other. That much of this joy is won by serene contemplation of the outer beauties of the Universe, be they rivers, mountains, sunrises or sunsets, does not invalidate its argument for pleasure of an exalted kind. The composer rejects in total any suggestion that human happiness is necessarily manifested in terms of feverish excitement and mass uproar. In the fourth number of the second part of the work, the principal character, Zarathustra, is heard to say ‘My Soul, how little thou needest to be happy.’” To which Anthony Payne added, “The broad musical span of *A Mass of Life* relates man’s spiritual development to the passing of a day, rising to the ‘glorious noontide’ of maturity and then progressing to the midnight bell of death’s call. Delius responded to Nietzsche’s rich poetry in some of his most virile and exultant music, as well as in passages of a profoundly hypnotic and static calm.”

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