Grant Park Orchestra and Chorus
Carlos Kalmar, Principal Conductor
Christopher Bell, Chorus Director

The Fiddler’s Child
Friday, August 2, 2013 at 6:30PM
Saturday, August 3, 2013 at 7:30PM

Harris Theater for Music and Dance
Grant Park Orchestra
Carlos Kalmar, Conductor
Jeremy Black, Violin

REVISED PROGRAM

ELGAR

Nursery Suite
Aubade
The Serious Doll
Busy-ness
The Sad Doll
The Wagon Passes
The Merry Doll
Dreaming — Envoy

JANÁČEK

The Fiddler’s Child

JEREMY BLACK

TCHAIKOVSKY

Suite from The Nutcracker
Ouverture miniature
Marche
Danse de fée-dragée
Danse russe trepak
Danse arabe
Danse chinoise
Danse des mirlitons
Valse des fleurs
CARLOS KALMAR’s biography can be found on page 8.

Violinist JEREMY BLACK has been the Concertmaster of Chicago’s Grant Park Orchestra since 2005, and a member of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra’s first violin section since 2002. A native of Evanston, Illinois, he started the violin at age five, and was soon accepted to the studio of Mark Zinger, retired faculty member of DePaul University and a student of virtuoso David Oistrakh. At age twelve Mr. Black was applauded for his “musical fire” and “effortless technique” by the Chicago Tribune in his debut performance with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, winning first prize in the nationally broadcast 1991 Illinois Bell/WTTW Young Performers Competition. At Grant Park, Mr. Black has received critical acclaim for his leadership and solos, including a collaboration in 2008 with Pinchas Zukerman of J. S. Bach’s Concerto for Two Violins. Of his 2012 performance of Scheherezade, Dennis Polkow of Chicago Classical Review wrote: “It was rare and wonderful to hear a violinist and an orchestra be so on the same page... Black played the solo sections with dazzling precision and exquisite intonation even in the highest register. His performance was never over-Romanticized and always full-bodied yet tranquil, allowing these familiar passages to sound remarkably fresh and poetic.” Mr. Black’s orchestral career began in 2000 as a section first violinist in the Grant Park Symphony Orchestra and a frequent substitute with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Now splitting his time between Pittsburgh and Chicago, he has performed numerous recitals and given masterclasses and coachings in both regions, and is strongly committed to community service and teaching at Pittsburgh-area hospitals, schools, and youth music programs. His violin was made by Lorenzo and Tommaso Carcassi, dated 1783.

NURSERY SUITE (1931)
Sir Edward Elgar (1857-1934)

Elgar’s Nursery Suite is scored for pairs of woodwinds plus piccolo, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, harp and strings. The performance time is 24 minutes. The Grant Park Orchestra first performed this Suite on July 20, 1938, with Gladys Welge conducting.

Elgar provided the following musical synopsis of his Nursery Suite: “Aubade (Awake) should call up memories of happy and peaceful awakings; the music flows in a serene way; a fragment of a hymn tune (Hear Thy Children, Gentle Jesus — written for little children when the composer was a youth [and published in 1898 as Drake’s Broughton]) is introduced; the movement proceeds to develop the opening theme, the hymn is repeated more loudly and dies away to a peaceful close: the day has begun. The Serious Doll is a sedate, semi-serious solo for flute. In Busy-Ness! fingers fly and there is a suggestion of tireless energy. The Sad Doll gives a suggestion of a pathetic, tired little puppet. The Wagon Passes explains itself: a remote rumbling is heard in the distance increasing in volume as the wagon approaches; the wagoners’ song or whistle accompanies the jar and crash of the heavy horses and wheels, dying away to a thread of sound as remote as the beginning. The Merry Doll represents a vivacious person. Dreaming is intended to depict tender childish slumbers. It leads into: Envoy, a solo violin playing a cadenza which introduces fragments of the preceding movements. A reference, somewhat more extended, to the first movement brings the Suite to a peaceful and happy end.”
THE FIDDLER’S CHILD (1912)
Leoš Janáček (1854-1928)

The Fiddler’s Child is scored for pairs of woodwinds plus bass clarinet, three horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, harp and strings. The performance time is twelve minutes. This is the first performance of this work by the Grant Park Orchestra.

Among those who gave voice to the rising spirit of Czech nationalism during the closing decades of the 19th century was the poet and novelist Svatopluk Cech (1846-1908), whose historical epics, idyllic pictures of country life and prose satires are imbued with his pan-Slavic sentiments and longing for political freedom. Cech’s writings and views found a sympathetic reader in Leoš Janáček, who in 1912, turned to Cech’s poem The Fiddler’s Child, a moving commentary on the poverty and desperation of many Czech peasants, and drew from it a deeply felt symphonic poem. Jaroslav Vogel recounted the story of The Fiddler’s Child in his study of the composer: “An old fiddler has died. The village takes charge of what is left: his fiddle on the peg and his child in the cradle. An old woman is told to keep watch during the night. At midnight, she has a strange vision. The dead fiddler stands at the cradle luring the child with his playing to another, better world where it will neither die of hunger nor sell its soul like its father. The old woman drives the apparition away by making the sign of the cross at the very moment when the fiddler kisses the child. She then falls asleep. In the morning, when the village mayor arrives, he finds the fiddle gone and the woman rocking the child’s corpse.” Janáček was careful not just in creating the musical materials for this bleak fable, but also in using individual instruments for descriptive purposes: solo violin, of course, for the father; oboe for the sick child; a flute phrase of unsettled tonality for the uncertainty of life for the poor; a trio of violas for the drabness of the village; low strings for the village mayor. There are glimmers of hope as the work unfolds, but they are never fulfilled, at least not during the child’s short life. The music’s final gesture, however, a brief, quiet major chord, suggests happiness in another realm. “In its spirit,” wrote the composer’s biographer Hans Hollander, “The Fiddler’s Child is an expression of Janáček’s philosophy of compassion and his faith in a redemption and beatification beyond all the misery of this world.”

ADVENTURES IN A PERAMBULATOR (1914, 1941)
John Alden Carpenter (1876-1951)

Adventures in a Perambulator is scored for piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, harp, piano, celesta and strings. Performance time is 28 minutes. The Grant Park Orchestra first performed this work on August 1, 2012; Carlos Kalmar conducted.

John Alden Carpenter was born on February 28, 1876 in Park Ridge, Illinois into one of Chicago’s most prominent families. His father was president of a prosperous company that he eventually joined; his mother was a talented singer, trained in Paris, from whom he received his first musical instruction. He studied piano with Amy Fay (who recounted her lessons with Liszt in a charming memoir) and theory with William Seeboeck before entering Harvard University in 1893 as a composition student of John Knowles Paine.

Friday, August 2 and Saturday, August 3, 2013
SUITE FROM THE NUTCRACKER, OP. 71A (1891-1892)
Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)

Late in 1890, Tchaikovsky was approached by Prince Ivan Vselvolozhsky, director of the Imperial Theater in St. Petersburg, and Marius Petipa, the French dancer and choreographer who created an unprecedented standard of ballet production and execution after settling in Russia in 1847, to compose a full evening's entertainment — a one-act opera and a ballet. The subject for the opera was to be of Tchaikovsky's choice (he picked King René's Daughter by the Danish dramatist Hendrik Herz, which the composer's brother Modeste turned into a libretto titled Iolanthe), but that for the ballet was specified as E.T.A. Hoffmann's story of The Nutcracker and the Mouse King, one of the most popular tales in Russia at the time. Tchaikovsky had read Hoffmann's Nutcracker in 1882 “with great pleasure,” and he eagerly accepted the commission.

The scenario devised for the new ballet by Petipa, who had also choreographed the premiere of The Sleeping Beauty, was not based directly on Hoffmann's original story, however, but rather on a French adaptation by Alexandre Dumas pére that considerably softened the grotesque elements and erotic undertones of the German Romanticist's narrative. Tchaikovsky objected to the lack of faithfulness to Hoffmann's original, much of whose interest for him lay precisely in its juxtaposition of the naïve, idyllic images of youth with moments of grotesquerie, but he resigned himself to his contractual agreement, and told Modeste shortly after starting composition in February 1891 that “I am beginning to be reconciled to the subject.” Modeste judged the ballet's premiere, on December 18, 1892, to be only a succès d’estime, but the public's increasing familiarity with the subject and the score soon led to The Nutcracker's wide acceptance. It has remained one of the most popular of all ballets.

The elfin Miniature Overture, ethereally scored just for woodwinds, horns, triangle, violins and violas, precedes the curtain. The ballet opens with a Christmas party at the home of the President of the Town Council and his wife. The door bursts open and Clara and Fritz, the President's children, run in, accompanied by some of their playmates. The President suggests that the children don paper hats and parade about the room (March). Clara receives a giant Nutcracker as a Christmas gift. When the guests depart and everyone else is in bed, Clara steals back into the living room, where the Nutcracker springs to life and leads a battalion of gingerbread men in battle against an invading army of mice. The Nutcracker is confronted by the Mouse King himself, and he appears about to meet his fate when Clara hurls her slipper at the rodent-monster and kills him. The mice, leaderless, flee, and the Nutcracker is transformed into a gallant Prince. As reward for saving his life, he invites Clara to visit his kingdom. She accepts.

Act II is set in the great hall of the castle, where the Prince describes to the assembled court how Clara saved his life. At a sign from the Sugar-Plum Fairy, a sumptuous banquet appears. Clara is ushered to a throne at the head of the table, and a divertissement in her honor begins. The divertissement's dances represent the banquet refreshments: a mysterious and exotic Arabian Dance symbolizes coffee and a bubbling Chinese Dance illustrates tea. A fiery Trepak, the traditional dance of the Russian cossacks, serves as a musical foil for the delicate Dance of the Mirlitons, or toy flutes. The Sugar-Plum Fairy and her retinue pay tribute to Clara in the Dance of the Sugar-Plum Fairy and the Waltz of the Flowers before the entire court joins in the grand finale.