GRANT PARK ORCHESTRA AND CHORUS
Carlos Kalmar Artistic Director and Principal Conductor
Christopher Bell Chorus Director

Wednesday, June 19, 2019 at 6:30 p.m.
Jay Pritzker Pavilion

MOZART PIANO CONCERTO NO. 23

Grant Park Orchestra
Carlos Kalmar Conductor
Inon Barnatan Piano

Carl Maria von Weber
Overture from the Incidental Music to Wolff’s Preziosa

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
Piano Concerto No. 23 in A Major, K. 488
  Allegro
  Adagio
  Allegro assai
INON BARNATAN

Ferruccio Busoni
Symphonic Suite, Op. 25
  Praeludium: Allegro giusto
  Gavotte: Moderato
  Gigue: Allegro vivace
  Langsames Intermezzo: Adagio non troppo
  Alla breve: Allegro energico

This concert is presented with generous support from the Elizabeth F. Cheney Foundation

Piano provided by Steinway Piano Galleries of Chicago

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Inon Barnatan, piano, is recipient of both a 2009 Avery Fisher Career Grant and Lincoln Center's 2015 Martin E. Segal Award, which recognizes “young artists of exceptional accomplishment.” He was recently named Music Director of the La Jolla Music Society Summerfest. A regular soloist with many of the world’s foremost orchestras, the Israeli pianist recently completed his third and final season as the inaugural Artist-in-Association of the New York Philharmonic. After his recent debuts with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, Hong Kong Philharmonic and Chicago, Baltimore and Seattle symphonies, he opened the season with the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl, and made debuts with the London and Helsinki Philharmonic orchestras. In recital this season, Mr. Barnatan returns to New York’s 92nd Street Y, London’s Wigmore Hall and Southbank Centre, and makes Carnegie Hall appearances with soprano Renée Fleming and his regular duo partner, cellist Alisa Weilerstein. He is a former member of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center’s CMS Two program and makes regular CMS appearances. He has commissioned and performed many works by living composers, including premieres of pieces by Thomas Adès, Sebastian Currier, Avner Dorman, Alan Fletcher, Andrew Norman and Matthias Pintscher. Barnatan’s critically acclaimed discography includes recordings of Schubert’s solo piano works, as well as Adès’ Darknesse Visible, which scored a place on The New York Times’ “Best of 2012” list. His most recent release is a live recording of Messiaen’s Des canyons aux étoiles (“From the Canyons to the Stars”).

CARL MARIA VON WEBER (1786-1826)
OVERTURE FROM THE INCIDENTAL MUSIC TO WOLFF’S PREZIOSA (1820)

Scored for: pairs of woodwinds, two horns, two trumpets, timpani, percussion, and strings
Performance time: 9 minutes
First Grant Park Orchestra performance: July 11, 1947, Nikolai Malko, conductor

By the time Weber met him during a concert tour stop in Weimar in 1812, Pius Alexander Wolff had established himself as one of Germany’s foremost actors, renowned especially for his portrayal of Hamlet. Wolff also harbored ambitions as a dramatist, and in 1811, he created an adaptation of Cervantes’ 1613 novella La Gitanilla (“The Gypsy Girl”) titled Preziosa. Preziosa was staged successfully in Leipzig and Vienna during the following two years, but Wolff failed to have the play produced in Berlin until Count Carl von Brühl accepted it in 1819 for the new theater that he was opening in the city. For the incidental music for Preziosa, Brühl turned to Carl Maria von Weber, whom he had recently contracted to compose an opera for his house based on a tale of legend and fantasy titled Der Freischütz. Soon after completing Der Freischütz in May 1820, Weber set to work on the music for Preziosa, writing for it an overture, four choruses, one song, three melodramas (musical background to spoken text) and three dances — “half an opera,” according to the composer. Though the critics responded coolly to this elaborate collaboration when it was premiered at Brühl’s Berlin Opera on March 14, 1821, the public enjoyed it, and Weber staged several revivals of the piece in Germany and England before his death in London five years later.
Preziosa reflected both the Romanticists’ admiration of Cervantes and the German taste for the lure and exoticism of the Mediterranean world. John Warrack summarized Cervantes’ tale in his biography of Weber: “It is a colorfully told anecdote, filled with vivid observation, of Preziosa, a fifteen-year-old Gypsy girl whose fair looks and skillful singing and dancing make her the prize of her tribe and win her the love of a young aristocrat who abandons his home in order to follow her. Eventually she is recognized as the daughter of a noble house who had been stolen as a child by the Gypsies, and is restored to her birthright and the opportunity of a ‘respectable’ marriage to her lover. It shows a detailed knowledge of Gypsy ways and is written in a style less sharply satirical, more warmly romantic than that familiar to readers of Don Quixote alone.” Weber, who gained local color for his score by modeling some of his themes on the traditional idioms he culled from a collection of Spanish songs, described the Overture in a letter to Wolff: “It begins with a passage [in the style of a bolero] that emphasizes the Spanish character of the work. This is followed by a Gypsy March, which leads to a fiery Allegro, the purpose of which is to provide a joyful conclusion and to express the spirit of both Preziosa herself and of Spain.”

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756-1791)
PIANO CONCERTO NO. 23 IN A MAJOR, K. 488 (1786)
Scored for: flute, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, and strings
Performance time: 26 minutes
First Grant Park Orchestra performance: August 4, 1943, Nikolai Malko, conductor, with Sonia Gamburg as soloist

The year 1786 was the crucial one of Mozart’s decade in Vienna. The five years after his arrival in 1781 were marked by a steady increase in his local popularity and the demand for his works and performances: the tuneful and exotic Abduction from the Seraglio was a great hit in 1782; many chamber works and symphonies were commissioned; he had composed fifteen piano concertos for his own concerts in Vienna by the end of 1786.

During his early years in Vienna, Mozart was able to attract audiences because he was the best piano player in town, because he was something new, and because of a certain public curiosity about the durability of an aging child prodigy. As his novelty diminished, it would have been necessary for him to compose exactly what the Viennese audiences wanted to hear if he were to continue to draw listeners, and what they wanted was a good time, a frivolous entertainment, full of frothy tunes easily heard and quickly forgotten. By 1786, however, Mozart’s genius was leading him in a different direction — into musical realms that were well outside the conservative Viennese taste. For the Lenten programs of 1786, Mozart composed not only this beautiful and deeply felt A Major Concerto, but also one in the tragic key of C Minor (K. 491). The Viennese public would have none of that. From that time, his fortunes and finances steadily declined.

One need not look far in the A Major Concerto to discover the wealth of emotion that so disturbed the Viennese audiences of Mozart’s day. The tonality of A Major was, for Mozart, one of luminous beauty shadowed by somber melancholy — of “concealed intensities,” according to the great Mozart scholar Alfred Einstein. The opening Allegro is invested with a surface beauty that belies its depth of feeling. The movement begins with a presentation of the lovely and abundant thematic material by the orchestra. The soloist then takes up the themes and embroiders them with glistening elaborations. The central section is not based on the earlier themes, but rather takes up a new motive. The
key of the second movement, F-sharp Minor, is rare in Mozart’s works, and it here evokes a passionate, tragic mood. “The Finale seems to introduce a breath of fresh air and a ray of sunlight into a dark room,” wrote Einstein. The movement is an involved sonata-rondo form that gives absolutely no trouble to the ear, which Sir Donald Tovey dubbed “a study in euphony.”

**FERRUCCIO BUSONI** (1866-1924)
SYMPHONIC SUITE, OP. 25 (1883)
Scored for: piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, bass clarinet, three bassoons, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion and strings
Performance time: 40 minutes
First Grant Park Orchestra performance

Ferruccio Busoni was perhaps the most cosmopolitan musician of the early 20th century. The son of an Italian virtuoso clarinetist father and a German pianist mother (he was fluent in both Italian and German from infancy), Busoni was born in 1866 near Florence, raised in Austria, studied in Leipzig, taught in Helsinki (where his students included Jean Sibelius) and Moscow (where he married the daughter of a Swedish sculptor) and Bologna and Weimar and Boston and New York, toured extensively in Europe and America, and chose Berlin as his residence. Such internationalism, coupled with his probing intellectualism, gave Busoni a breadth of vision as composer, conductor and pianist that few musicians of his time could match, but it also meant that he was something of an outsider everywhere, not unequivocally
belonging to any single land. He therefore became a man without a comfortable country during World War I, since the Germans regarded him as a foreigner living in Berlin (despite his having resided there for almost two decades) and the Italians felt he had long since abandoned the country of his birth. When he approached the German Embassy in Washington, D.C. about arranging concerts or finding a teaching post in America, he was coldly refused with the excuse that the ambassador was unable to offer aid to a citizen of a hostile nation. He had little choice but to move to neutral Switzerland, where he waited out the war in Zurich. Though he had earlier regarded Switzerland as something of a cultural backwater, Busoni liked Zurich and he developed rewarding associations there among both the Swiss and the many refugees who made the city an international haven. In Switzerland, he conducted, gave recitals, read voraciously, acquired as a companion a St. Bernard dog (which he named “Giotto”), and composed, most notably the one-act opera *Arlecchino*, premiered in Zurich with good success on May 11, 1917. He came to be regarded locally with such high regard that the University of Zurich conferred an honorary Doctorate of Philosophy degree upon him in July 1919. He considered making the city his permanent residence, but a lucrative appointment to the faculty of the Prussian Academy of Arts the following year lured him back to Berlin, where he lived until his death in 1924.

Busoni had already been composing for nearly a decade — piano pieces, songs, chamber music, a Requiem for chorus and orchestra — when he wrote his first work for orchestra, the *Symphonic Suite*, in 1883, at the age of seventeen. He had entered the Vienna Conservatory when he was nine, absorbed all the school had to offer in two years, and then began establishing himself, with his father’s guidance, as a composer and pianist. To nurture his creative gifts, in 1881 he put himself under the tutelage of the Austrian composer and pedagogue Wilhelm Mayer (who published under the pseudonym W.A. Rémy). When Busoni polished off the rigorous two-year course in fifteen months, Mayer recommended him for membership in the venerable Accademia Filarmonico in Bologna, which counted Corelli, Mozart, Verdi, Rossini, Wagner and Brahms among its members. As an informal graduation thesis from Mayer’s curriculum, Busoni composed the ambitious *Symphonic Suite*, a half-hour in length, fully developed in form, and sonorously scored, and gave its premiere at Trieste on June 9, 1883. At the urging of his father and Mayer, the teenage composer convinced Hans Richter, conductor of the Vienna Philharmonic, to read through the piece; they did, but it lost by one vote among the musicians to give it a public performance. (The Philharmonic was, and is, a self-governing institution.) The score was published in Leipzig in 1888, but its performances have been both rare and welcome.

In a letter of September 5, 1883 to Antonio Zampieri, an old family friend, Busoni described the influences and expressive intent of the opening movements of the *Symphonic Suite*: “The first part [Praeludium] is reminiscent of Handel. The second [Gavotte] is kind of recitative in a style that could be Bach–Mendelssohn if it didn’t also contain a little Busoni (there’s pride for you). It represents that mixture of classical and modern for which I am striving.” The *Gigue* traces its style to a Renaissance dance type, though its sensibility is hobgoblinish Romantic. The warm lyricism of the outer sections of the *Langsames [slow] Intermezzo* are balanced by a central episode of more agitated character. Busoni made the closing *Alla breve* [i.e., in a quick, two-beat meter] a showcase for his skills in counterpoint and thematic development.

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