



# Grant Park Music Festival

Seventy-sixth Season

Grant Park Orchestra and Chorus

Carlos Kalmar, *Principal Conductor*

Christopher Bell, *Chorus Director*

**Ninth Program: Sibelius: Symphony No. 2**

**Friday, July 9, 2010 at 6:30 p.m.**

**Saturday, July 10, 2010 at 7:30 p.m.**

Jay Pritzker Pavilion

GRANT PARK ORCHESTRA

Xian Zhang, *Guest Conductor*

CHEN YI      *Ge Xu (Antiphony)*

PROKOFIEV      Suite from *The Love for Three Oranges*, Op. 33a

Prelude: "The Ridiculous Fellows"

Infernal Scene

March

Scherzo

Nocturne: "The Prince and the Princess"

Flight

SIBELIUS      Symphony No. 2 in D major, Op. 43

Allegretto

Tempo Andante, ma rubato

Vivacissimo — Lento e suave — Tempo primo —

Lento e suave —

Finale: Allegro moderato



**XIAN ZHANG** took up the position of Music Director of La Verdi (the Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano Giuseppe Verdi) at the start of the 2009/10 season. Prior to this appointment, she served as New York Philharmonic's Associate Conductor (and the first holder of the Arturo Toscanini Chair) for three years, having previously held the position of their Assistant Conductor. She maintains a regular relationship with the orchestra and returns to conduct them again this season. March 2010 marked her debut with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra. Other European engagements include the London Symphony Orchestra, Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Residentie Orkest, Royal Stockholm and Oslo Philharmonic Orchestras, Zurich Tonhalle, NDR Sinfonieorchester Hamburg, SWR Sinfonieorchester Stuttgart, Wiener Symphoniker at the 2011 Bregenz Festival and the Radio-Symphonieorchester Wien at the Wiener Konzerthaus. In North America, as well as this appearance at Grant Park, her engagements include debuts with the New Jersey Symphony, National Symphony (Washington) and Minnesota Orchestra, and she returns to conduct the Juilliard Orchestra at the Lincoln Center, following a successful tour to China last season. She will next come to Chicago in December 2010 for a Tchaikovsky project with Chicago Symphony Orchestra. As an opera conductor, Xian Zhang made a sensational debut with *La Bohème* for English National Opera in spring 2007 and conducted *Turandot* in Beijing in May 2009. Her next opera engagement will be a Stravinsky double bill (directed by Robert Lepage) for Netherlands Opera in 2012/13.

# 2010 2011 SEASON



*Don Quixote*

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**GE XU (ANTIPHONY) (1993-1994)****Chen Yi (born in 1953)**

*Ge Xu is scored for piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, harp and strings. The performance time is approximately eight minutes. This is the work's first performance by the Grant Park Orchestra.*

Chen Yi, a native of Guangzhou, China, was born on April 4, 1953 into a family of doctors with a strong interest in music; she began violin and piano studies at the age of three. When the Cultural Revolution overtook China in the 1960s, she was sent for two years of forced labor into the countryside, but took along her violin. A positive aspect of that experience was the knowledge she gained of the wider life and music of her homeland and its people. When she was seventeen, Ms. Chen returned to her home city and then served as concertmaster and composer with the Beijing Opera Troupe. When the school system was restored in 1977, Ms. Chen enrolled in the Beijing Central Conservatory, where she studied composition (with Professor Wu Zu-qiang and visiting British composer Alexander Goehr), continued her violin studies, and began an eight-year study of Chinese traditional music. In 1983, Ms. Chen composed the first Chinese concerto for viola. Three years later the Chinese Musicians Association, the Central Conservatory of Music, Radio Beijing, CCTV and the Central Philharmonic of China jointly gave, in Beijing, an entire program devoted to her orchestral works. She was the first woman in China to receive the degree of Master of Arts in Composition. In 1986, Chen Yi came to the United States for further musical studies. In 1993, she received her Doctor of Musical Arts, with distinction, from Columbia University, where she studied with Chou Wen-chung and Mario Davidovsky. She taught at the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore from 1996 to 1998, after which she accepted her current position as Cravens/Millsap/Missouri Distinguished Professor at the Conservatory of the University of Missouri in Kansas City. Chen Yi has received numerous awards and prizes, including a Grammy Award (for *Written on a Rainy Night* and *Wild Grass*, recorded by Chanticleer), the ASCAP Concert Music Award and the Elise Stoeger Award from Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center; from 2001 to 2004, she held the prestigious Charles Ives Living Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. In addition to composing and teaching, Dr. Chen is also active as a violinist in new music and as an ethnomusicologist specializing in Chinese music. She is a frequent guest lecturer and resident composer at universities and in composition workshops, and has served as composer advisor for the American Composers Orchestra, New Music Consort, Music From China in New York City, Old First Concerts in San Francisco, and National Endowment for the Arts in Washington, D.C.

Of *Ge Xu (Antiphony)*, commissioned in 1993 by the Women's Philharmonic of San Francisco during Chen Yi's residency, the composer writes (in the third person), "For celebrating the Chinese lunar New Year or Mid-Autumn Festival, Zhuang minority people in Southern China often gather in the field and sing mountain songs in solo, choir or antiphonal forms. In the antiphonal singing [i.e., in alternation], distinct groups or individuals make up the texts in the style of antithetical couplets, like a competition between the two. This vivid scene has inspired the composer to write music for keeping the high spirit and ideal hope alive."

**SUITE FROM THE LOVE FOR THREE ORANGES, OP. 33A (1919)****Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953)**

*The Suite from The Love for Three Oranges is 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, two harps and strings. The performance time is approximately fifteen minutes. The Grant Park Orchestra first performed this Suite on June 26, 1953, Nicolai Malko conducting.*

Sergei Prokofiev enjoyed a great success at his American debut in November 1918 in New

York, and won even greater acclaim in Chicago a few weeks later when Frederick Stock conducted the *Scythian Suite* and the First Piano Concerto, with the composer as soloist. While in Chicago, Prokofiev met Cleofonte Campanini, principal conductor and general manager of the Chicago Opera, who awarded him a commission to compose a new work for the company. The timing was perfect. Even before he left Russia, Prokofiev had been working on a libretto (in French) based on a fantasy by the 18th-century Italian satirist Carlo Gozzi, and the Chicago commission came just as he was preparing to begin serious work on the music. (The opera's name, *The Love for Three Oranges*, derived not only from Gozzi's play but also from the title of a Russian theatrical journal, to whose avant-garde philosophies Prokofiev enthusiastically subscribed.) *The Love for Three Oranges* was premiered in Chicago on December 30, 1921.

In writing of the satirical nature of the opera, Donald J. Grout noted its “merrily lunatic plot [which is] well suited to Prokofiev's sharp rhythmic style of this period and to his talent for humor and grotesquerie.” David Ewen offered the following summary of the plot: “Prokofiev's opera is a play within a play. A highly demonstrative audience of Cynics, Emptyheads, Glooms and Joys watches the performance of a burlesque opera about a legendary Prince. The young man, dying of gloom, can be cured only by laughter. A wicked sorceress, Fata Morgana, thwarts every attempt to lighten his spirits, but when she takes a ridiculous fall during a scuffle with the palace guards, the Prince laughs and is cured. The sorceress now decrees that he must find and fall in love with three oranges. When the Prince finds the oranges in a desert, he learns that each contains a beautiful Princess. Two of the young women perish of thirst. The Cynics of Prokofiev's audience revive the third with a bucket of water. After more trials, the Prince and Princess are united and the sorceress and her evil cohorts meet suitable justice.” In this fantastic opera, Prokofiev ridiculed the conventions of the traditional theater with absurd stage action and mocking music. Lifted from its theatrical context as a concert suite, the music loses some of its sardonic implications but still displays the steely brilliance and thrusting motor rhythms typical of many of Prokofiev's early works.

The suite's opening movement, *The Ridiculous Fellows*, is assembled from several passages having to do with the Cynics or *chudaki*, a Russian word also implying an “eccentric” or “oddball.” The music depicts their futile attempts to make the Prince laugh. *Infernal Scene* accompanies the stage action during which Fata Morgana and the King's Magician play a game with huge cards, the stakes being the Prince's life. The *March* (this martial theme may recall to listeners of a certain age a radio program of yore about our national law enforcement agency) suggests the cockeyed atmosphere of the royal court. The *Scherzo* occurs twice in the opera — before and after the scene in which the Prince finds the Oranges. *The Prince and the Princess* occurs immediately after the liberation of the third Princess from her incarcerating orange and the successful efforts of the *chudaki* to revive her with a pail of water. The concluding *Flight*, with the entire court dashing madly after the villains, recalls a breathless chase scene from a rollicking silent movie.



## SYMPHONY NO. 2 IN D MAJOR, OP. 43 (1901-1902)

### Jean Sibelius (1865-1957)

*Sibelius' Second Symphony is scored for pairs of woodwinds, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani and strings. The performance time is approximately 43 minutes. The Grant Park Orchestra first performed this Symphony on July 29, 1936, Robert Sanders conducting.*

At the turn of the 20th century, Finland was experiencing a surge of nationalistic pride that called for independence and recognition after eight centuries of domination by Sweden and Russia. Jean Sibelius became imbued with the country's spirit, lore and language, and several of his early works — *En Saga*, *Kullervo*, *Karelia* and *Finlandia* — earned him a hero's reputation among his countrymen. Sibelius became an emblem of his homeland in 1900 when conductor Robert Kajanus and the Helsinki Philharmonic featured his music on a European tour whose purpose was less artistic recognition than a bid for international sympathy for Finnish political autonomy. The young composer went along on the tour, which proved to be a success for the orchestra and its conductor, for Finland, and especially for Sibelius, whose works it brought before an international audience.

A year later Sibelius was again traveling. Through a financial subscription raised by his friend Axel Carpelan, he was able to spend the early months of 1901 in Italy away from the rigors of the Scandinavian winter. So inspired was he by the culture, history and beauty of the sunny south (as had been Goethe and Brahms) that he envisioned a work based on Dante's *Divine Comedy*. However, a Second Symphony to follow the First of 1899 was gestating, and the Dante work was eventually abandoned. Sibelius was well launched on the new Symphony by the time he left for home. Still flush with the success of his 1901 tour when he arrived home, he decided he was secure enough financially (thanks in large part to an annual stipend initiated in 1897 by the Finnish government) to leave his teaching job and devote himself full-time to composition. Though it was to be almost two decades before Finland became independent of Russia as a result of the First World War, Sibelius had come into his creative maturity by the time of the Second Symphony.

The Symphony opens with an introduction in which the strings present a chordal motive that courses through and unifies much of the first movement. A bright, folk-like strain for the woodwinds and a hymnal response from the horns constitute the opening theme. The second theme exhibits one of Sibelius' most characteristic constructions — a long-held note that intensifies to a quick rhythmic flourish. This theme and a complementary one of angular leaps and unsettled tonality close the exposition and figure prominently in the ensuing development. A stentorian brass chorale closes this section and leads to the recapitulation, a compressed restatement of the earlier themes. The second movement, though closely related to sonatina form (sonata without development), is best heard as a series of dramatic paragraphs whose strengths lie not just in their individual qualities but also in their powerful juxtapositions. The third movement is a three-part form whose lyrical, unhurried central trio, built on a repeated note theme, provides a strong contrast to the mercurial surrounding scherzo. The slow music of the trio returns as a bridge to the sonata-form closing movement, which has a grand sweep and uplifting spirituality that make it one of the last unadulterated flowerings of the great Romantic tradition.

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