

= Grant Park Music Festival =

The Grant Park Music Festival (formerly Grant Park Concerts) is an annual ten @-@ week classical music concert series held in Chicago , Illinois , USA . It features the Grant Park Symphony Orchestra and Grant Park Chorus along with featured guest performers and conductors . The Festival has earned non @-@ profit organization status . It claims to be the nation 's only free , outdoor classical music series . The Grant Park Music Festival has been a Chicago tradition since 1931 when Chicago Mayor Anton Cermak suggested free concerts to lift spirits of Chicagoans during the Great Depression . The tradition of symphonic Grant Park Music Festival concerts began in 1935 .

The Festival is housed in the Jay Pritzker Pavilion in Millennium Park section of Grant Park in the Loop community area of Chicago . The 2004 season , during which the Festival moved to the Pritzker Pavilion , was the 70th season for the Festival . On occasion , the Festival has been held at the Harris Theater instead of the Pritzker Pavilion . Formerly , the Grant Park Music Festival was held at the Petrillo Music Shell in Grant Park . The Festival began when the music shell was located in its original location and moved when it was relocated .

Over time the Festival has had various financial supporters , three primary locations and one name change . The Festival has at times been nationally broadcast and has consistently enjoyed the efforts of many of the world 's leading classical musicians . Recently , the Festival organizers have agreed to release some of the concerts to the public via compact disk recordings .

= = Funding = =

Originally , the series was almost completely funded by the Park District . The Park District was responsible for performer payrolls , concert advertising and marketing , administered orchestra auditions , coordinated the scheduling for each season list of guest artists . Advertising costs for printed media designed by Park District graphic designers were funded through the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Federal Arts Program . The tradition of posters for Chicago Transit Authority buses , Chicago ' L ' trains and stations and field houses continued even after WPA relief funding ended .

In 1977 , the Grant Park Concerts Society evolved to coordinate all fund @-@ raising for the Festival . It coordinated both general marketing and the membership program . By hosting fund @-@ raising events and selling Festival memberships , it supplemented the Parks District funding , which was in the \$ 1 @. @ 5 ? 2 @. @ 0 million range . In 1996 , the Park District and Festival staff discontinued their relationship with the Concerts Society . The Park District resumed its responsibility as the sole marketing and fund @-@ raising department .

At the end of the 1990s the Festival was recognized as a non @-@ profit organization and developed ties with the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs . The relationship had the city department taking charge of some administrative duties . As of 2009 , The Festival featured the Grammy @-@ nominated Grant Park Symphony Orchestra and Chorus and is sponsored by the Chicago Park District , the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and the Grant Park Orchestral Association . The park district provides over half of the operating costs , while the Department of Cultural Affairs contributes logistical support . The remaining funding come from a variety of private sources including foundations , corporations and thousands of individual patrons . The park district pays the salaries of principal conductor Carlos Kalmar , chorus director Christopher Bell , and members of the orchestra and Grant Park Chorus . The Festival also receives grants and broadcast fees . In 2010 , the \$ 2 million of the total Festival \$ 4 million budget that was not covered by the Park District and was raised through memberships and private philanthropy . This money finances guest soloists and major collaborations .

= = History = =

The first concert occurred after the completion of the original Petrillo Music Shell on July 1 , 1935

with a march from Richard Wagner 's Tannhäuser . In the past , National Broadcasting Company (NBC) and CBS Broadcasting Inc . (CBS) have broadcast the free concerts . The first summer boasted an attendance of approximately 1 @. @ 9 million for 65 concerts . In 1939 , the single @- @ concert attendance record was set with over 300 @, @ 000 for the Lily Pons concert . Pons shared the stage with her husband Andre Kostelanetz in what was described as the largest audience of her career . David Rubinoff was estimated to have drawn as many as 225 @, @ 000 . Current attendance at the approximately thirty annual concerts is estimated at three hundred thousand in total . The free Festival has always had a picnic @- @ like atmosphere . In the 1930s , the concerts were presented on national radio broadcasts to dozens of radio stations .

In addition to lifting spirits , the Grant Park Music Festival has been able to provide musicians a living wage . In 1938 , when the minimum wage was \$ 0 @. @ 25 / hour , the musicians were paid \$ 10 (\$ 168 @. @ 11 today) for a 2 @- @ hour concert . In the early years , through the 1940s the Chicago Woman 's Symphony performed often at the Festival . In 1944 , the Festival developed its own professional Grant Park Symphony Orchestra . Also in 1944 , WGN (AM) began the nationally syndicated Theater of the Air live from Grant Park . In 1945 , Nikolai Malko became the Festival 's first resident conductor . He served in that role until 1954 .

Between the scheduling of Van Cliburn 's 1958 Grant Park Music Festival appearance and his actual July 16 appearance , he won the quadrennial International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow that April . He was catapulted to international fame for winning one of the world 's elite music competitions . As a result , he was greeted with a celebration that included a ticker tape parade down Michigan Avenue and his Grant Park Music Festival appearance was a major event .

In the 1960s , the Festival took a more adventurous direction featuring works by the likes of Arnold Schoenberg , Sergei Prokofiev , Gustav Mahler and Anton Werbern who highlighted the 1964 schedule under the new direction of Edward Gordon . In 1962 , Thomas Peck became the leader of the newly formed Grant Park Chorus , which he directed until his death in 1994 . In 1963 , the Festival introduced the interactive daytime Young People 's Concerts led by Irwin Hoffman and at times by youth audience members . Gordon also introduced opera in concert as part of the Festival in 1964 .

The 1970s saw declining attendance at the Festival . Mitch Miller , who derived popularity from the Sing Along with Mitch television show was a regular conductor and one of the largest draws . Steven Ovitzky , became concert manager in 1979 and served until 1990 . During the 1980s the Festival earned a reputation for performing works by American musical composers . Ovitzky focused on living American composers such as William Bolcom , John Adams , Michael Torke and Paul Freeman . The 1980s also saw a host of elite principal conductors such as Zden?k Mácal , Leonard Slatkin , Hugh Wolff , David Zinman and Robert Shaw .

The 1990s saw wide @- @ ranging performances such as the Russian opera Prince Igor , a narration of Casey at the Bat by Jack Brickhouse with orchestral accompaniment , six Chicago Bulls National Basketball Association championship celebrations and a celebrated return visit of Van Cliburn for the sixtieth season . The Van Cliburn visit rivaled the Pons attendance figures with estimates exceeding 300 @, @ 000 . In 1992 , the Grant Park Concerts officially became the Grant Park Music Festival . From 1994 to 1997 , Hugh Wolff served as principal conductor of the Festival and it took until 2000 for an elaborate search to yield Kalmar as his successor .

In 2000 , the Festival reached an agreement with Cedille Records to record the Grant Park Orchestra . It produced six CDs during the decade . In 2001 , Boston Landmarks Orchestra was founded for the purpose of providing a free summer concert series in Boston 's Hatch Memorial Shell and now claims to also provide an annual free summer music series . On July 16 , 2004 , the Festival moved to the state of the art Pritzker Pavilion , where it shares space with a regular world music series (" Music Without Borders ") , a jazz series (" Made in Chicago ") and a variety of annual performances by Steppenwolf Theatre , Lyric Opera of Chicago and Chicago Symphony Orchestra . Nonetheless , the Festival remains the core of the summer program with its Wednesday , Friday and Saturday evening performances for ten weeks during the heart of the summer . At the end of the 2005 Grant Park Music Festival season in August , the Festival 's Grant Park Orchestra and Carlos Kalmar presented Pulitzer Prize @- @ winning composer Adams ' On the Transmigration

of Souls , which was written at the request of the New York Philharmonic to honor the victims of the September 11 attacks . In 2006 , the Joffrey Ballet celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in a collaboration with the Festival . During the decade , the Festival hosted an innovative array of talents such as Chinese erhu player Betti Xiang , pipa player Yang Wei , Portuguese fado singer Mariza , Cuban classical and jazz clarinetist Paquito D 'Rivera , Hungarian @-@ Roma fiddler Roby Lakatos and Mediterranean singer Maria del Mar Bonet .

= = Performances = =

The performance schedule includes ten consecutive weeks of performances on Wednesday , Friday and Saturday from mid June to mid August . Currently , performances usually begin at 6 : 30 on Wednesday and Friday and 7 : 30 on Saturday with band shell seats reserved for subscribers . Unclaimed seats are released to the public 15 minutes before each performance . The lawn seating is free and commonly adorned with blankets and families . Harris Theater hosts occasional Grant Park Music Festival events . The orchestra and chorus have open rehearsals at the Pritzker Pavilion during performance season with sessions usually running from 11 : 00 am to 1 : 30 pm and approximately 2 : 30 or 3 : 00 pm until 5 : 00 pm . The Festival is represented by a staff of trained guides , called docents , that field questions and provide educational talks during the rehearsals . The rehearsals have programs available .

In the 1930s , the concerts lured some of the most prominent performers and conductors in the world : Pons , Jascha Heifetz , Bobby Breen , Rudy Vallee , Helen Morgan , conductor Andre Kostelanetz , violinists David Rubinoff , Mischa Elman , Efrem Zimbalist and Albert Spalding , pianist Moriz Rosenthal , sopranos Marion Claire , Edith Mason and Vivian Della Chiesa , tenors Tito Schipa , John Carter , Lawrence Tibbett and baritone John Charles Thomas .

The 1940s saw a broad spectrum of performers including Mario Lanza , clarinetist Benny Goodman , soprano Kirsten Flagstad and actor @-@ singer Paul Robeson . Other performers included sopranos Claire , Eileen Farrell , Grace Moore and Della Chiesa , tenors Giovanni Martinelli , Richard Tucker and Jan Peerce , baritone Robert Merrill , violinist Mischa Mischakoff and conductors Frederick Stock , Leo Kopp , Arthur Fiedler and Antal Doráti .

Beginning in the 1950s Chicago Mayor Richard J. Daley greeted the opening night crowds nearly every year during his 21 @-@ year tenure . Among the performers of the 1950s were sopranos Beverly Sills and Farrell , tenor Peerce , pianists , Van Cliburn , Jorge Bolet , Gary Graffman and Earl Wild , violinists Elman and Michael Rabin and cellist Janos Starker .

The 1960s upheld the tradition of diverse audiences and performers such as contralto Marian Anderson , pianists Alfred Brendel , Daniel Barenboim , Leon Fleisher , Lorin Hollander and Christoph Eschenbach , violinists Itzhak Perlman , Ruggiero Ricci , Charles Treger , Jaime Laredo , cellist Leonard Rose , conductor Leonard Bernstein , tenor Plácido Domingo , mezzo @-@ sopranos Maryilyn Horne and Tatiana Troyanos , soprano Martina Arroyo and Roberta Peters , as well as a host of dance companies such as the American Ballet Theatre , Joffrey Ballet and Maria Alba Spanish Dance Company . The Joffrey Ballet performed Gerald Arpino and George Balanchine works .

In the 1970s , the Festival hosted soprano June Anderson , vocalist Gordon MacRae , pianists Dave Brubeck , Alicia de Larrocha , Jerome Lowenthal and Sheldon Shkolnik and violinists Elaine Skorodin . Dancers from both the Chicago City Ballet and New York City Ballet were also featured . Conductors included Mitch Miller , Leonard Slatkin , Aaron Copland and David Zinman . Dancer Edward Villella and soprano Kathleen Battle also made appearances .

In the 1980s , featured performers included pianists Walter Klein , Hollander , André Watts and Garrick Ohlsson , clarinetist Richard Stoltzman , the Vermeer Quartet , baritone Merrill , bass Paul Plishka , soprano Arleen Auger and harmonica player Corky Siegel . Conductors included Macal , Slatkin , Wolff , Zinman and Shaw .

Performers in the 1990s included Van Cliburn , mezzo @-@ soprano Frederica von Stade , Rosemary Clooney , violinist Joshua Bell , conductor Maxim Shostakovich (who led works by his father Dmitry Shostakovich) , trumpeter Doc Severinsen and soprano Deborah Voigt .

In the new millennium 's first decade the Festival welcomed sopranos Battle , Dawn Upshaw , Karina Gauvin and Erin Wall , tenor Vittorio Grigolo , pianist Stephen Hough , violinists Rachel Barton Pine , James Ehnes , Roby Lakatos , Christian Tetzlaff and Pinchas Zukerman , vocalists Otis Clay , Mariza and Maria del Mar Bonet and rock band The Decemberists . Other performers include pianist Valentina Lisitsa , soprano Jonita Lattimore , baritone Nathan Gunn and mezzo @-@ soprano Jennifer Larmore . The Joffrey Ballet also performed with the Festival .

The principal conductor is Carlos Kalmar . Guests in the 2007 season included Marc @-@ André Hamelin , Russell Braun , Erin Wall , Glen Ellyn Children 's Chorus and many more performing the works of composers such as Brahms , Beethoven , Mendelssohn , Leo Brouwer , Heitor Villa @-@ Lobos , Tan Dun and Ferruccio Busoni .

The 2010s included a scheduled Grant Park 's screening of the BBC 's nature documentary Planet Earth Live on July 21 , with live orchestral accompaniment featuring the score by five @-@ time Academy Award @-@ winning composer George Fenton , who served as conductor .

= = Reception = =

Frommer 's describes the Festival as " One of the city 's greatest bargains " , and it notes that the series is popular . One of the special editions notes that the Festival is continuing to uphold its Depression era mission of lifting Chicagoans ' hearts and suggests that you arrive at the Festival an hour early to get good lawn seats . It also notes that the afternoon rehearsals are a good substitute for the evening performances .