The University of Georgia Symphony Orchestra

Friday
November 10 2017
8:00 p.m.

conductor Mark Cedel
conducting assistant Jean Gómez
guest conductor Cynthia Johnston Turner
guitar Daniel Bolshoy

PROGRAM

Bernstein  Three Dance Episodes from *On the Town*
Cynthia Johnston Turner, Guest Conductor

Rodrigo  *Concierto de Aranjuez*
  Allegro con spirito
  Adagio
  Allegro gentile
  Daniel Bolshoy, Guitar

Sibelius  Symphony No. 1 in E Minor, Op. 39
  Andante, ma non troppo – Allegro energico
  Andante (ma non troppo lento)
  Scherzo: Allegro
  Finale (quasi una Fantasia) Andante – Allegro molto

INTERMISSION

Program Notes
By Steven Ledbetter

**Leonard Bernstein** (1918-1990)

Three Dance Episodes from *On the Town*

Leonard Bernstein was born in Lawrence, Massachusetts, on August 25, 1918, and died in New York on December 2, 1990. He composed *On the Town* in 1944. The show opened in Boston on December 13, 1944; its New York opening, at the Adelphi Theater took place on December 28. The three dance episodes call for flute (doubling piccolo), oboe (doubling English horn), two clarinets (first doubling E-flat clarinet, second doubling bass clarinet), two horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, alto saxophone, timpani and percussion (snare drum, bass drum, drum set, suspended cymbal, triangle, wood block, xylophone), piano, and strings. Performance time is approximately eleven minutes.

At the beginning of 1944, the twenty-five-year-old Leonard Bernstein was a new celebrity, having shortly before made a dramatic stand-in for an ailing Bruno Walter to conduct a concert of the New York Philharmonic that was broadcast nationwide. By the end of that year, he was known as a singularly successful composer of unusually wide range. In January, his *Jeremiah Symphony* was premiered in Pittsburgh; the ballet *Fancy Free* opened in New York in April, and by the end of the year, his first Broadway show, *On the Town*, was playing on Broadway, sparking the careers of a series of brilliant newcomers to the theater: Bernstein himself, Betty Comden and Adolph Green, who wrote the words and music; and choreographer Jerome Robbins.

The plot of *On the Town* came from the scenario already developed for *Fancy Free*, a light hearted romp tracing the experiences of some sailors on leave for twenty four hours in Manhattan. Gabey, Chip, and Ozzie each sets out with his own plan to enjoy their first visit to New York and to get a girl. But ultimately it is Gabey’s wishes that determine the course of the story. He falls in love at first sight with the photo of a girl on a subway poster, “Miss Turnstiles,” and he enlists the aid of his friends in locating her.

The songs capture equally the bustle and energy of New York and the loneliness of a stranger in the big city. And, unlike most Broadway composers, who turn the composition of the “ballet music” entirely over to an assistant, Bernstein composed brilliantly conceived, elaborate dance numbers.

In *On the Town*, the hectic pace is wonderfully captured in the first of the three Dance Episodes, depicting “The Great Lover” searching for that perfect girl. One of Bernstein’s most beautiful and poignant melodies, “Lonely Town,” underlies the *pas de deux*. The lively depiction of Times Square that ends the three dance episodes was also the finale of the show’s first act (and it briefly quotes the most famous song in the show, “New York, New York,” where “the Bronx is up and the Battery’s down.” In this concert version, the dance episodes are dedicated to the three women who played the principal roles in the original show: Sono Osato, Betty Comden, and Nancy Walker.
The Spanish composer Joaquín Rodrigo, though blind from the age of three, began early music lessons in his native Valencia. By the time he was twenty-three, the local orchestra had played a work of his. In 1927, he entered the Schola Cantorum in Paris, where he was a pupil of Dukas; here he encountered Manuel de Falla, the leading Spanish composer of the day, who offered him encouragement. In the mid-1930s he also studied musicology at the Sorbonne. He lived in Paris and in Germany during the Spanish Civil War, returning to his homeland only in 1939. The following year the premiere of his most popular work, the Concierto de Aranjuez, led Rodrigo to be hailed as a significant new light in Spanish music.

After that, Rodrigo’s style remained essentially the same. His music was shaped by his French teacher Dukas and by the Spanish nationalist composers. His works are filled with Spanish ambience and attractive tunes. It would probably be safe to say that the Concierto de Aranjuez has become the single most popular concerto composed in the 20th century. Part of its popularity, of course, stems from the fact that the guitar won constantly new adherents throughout the century because of the decades of superb musicianship of Andrés Segovia, both in his own right and as a teacher and inspiration for at least two generations of fine players after him. Actually the Concierto de Aranjuez was not composed for Segovia, but for another Spanish guitarist named Regino Sainz de la Maza. But for most audiences of the current generation, the modern history of the guitar as a concert instrument begins with Segovia. Rodrigo did write a concerto for him—the Fantasia para un gentilhombre (Fantasy for a Gentleman) in 1954.

The title Concierto de Aranjuez refers to the locale, twenty-nine miles south of Madrid, where, over the centuries, the Spanish kings built and elaborated several royal residences, the last of which included a building inspired by the Trianons at Versailles. The concerto has no explicit program, but it is filled with musical gestures that recall the Golden Age of Spain, starting immediately with the strummed guitar chords in alternating 6/8 and 3/4 time, probably the single most fundamental “Spanish” musical gesture in music. After this figure vamps for a time through the orchestra, the violins enter with the principal theme of equally Spanish character.

The slow movement is the longest part of the concerto (fully half its length) recalls the saeta, a song performed by the women of Seville from their balconies during an annual religious procession through the streets. They sing in a gently sustained, nasal, high-pitched style that is imitated in the concerto by the English horn, a modern equivalent of the Renaissance shawm that would have been known to the original singers of this kind of song. The guitar takes up this melody and decorates it sensitively and lavishly. Eventually the guitar begins an extended cadenza, to which the orchestra responds loudly, though the solo then calms the ensemble and leads to the tranquil close.

The poignancy of this melody comes from personal tragedy. Rodrigo composed it during sleepless nights spent in anguish after the stillborn birth of his first child and his wife’s dangerous illness. He was recalling their honeymoon in the gardens of Aranjuez, and filled the music with all the expression of love and of loss.

The last movement is a lively dance alternating 2/4 and 3/4 time, and concentrating on showing off the soloist with the greatest possible virtuosity and brilliance.
Finland in 1891, he composed the choral symphony *Kullervo*, which was so successful at its premiere in April, 1892, that he was immediately established as a leading figure in Finnish music, a position that was never seriously challenged thereafter.

The following seven years saw the composition of a series of scores for dramatic production, a failed operatic attempt, and—most important—a group of purely orchestral scores, *En saga* and the four symphonic poems about Lemminkäinen, a character from the Finnish national epic *Kalevala*. These culminated in his first symphony, composed evidently in part as a musical response to Tchaikovsky’s *Pathétique* Symphony, which had already been performed in Helsinki in 1894 and again in 1897.

By the autumn of 1898, Sibelius was totally absorbed in the work at a time of great political tension in Finland and of personal concern as well. A diary entry of September 9 reflects his mood: “Autumn sun and bitter thoughts. . . . How willingly I would have sacrificed some of the financial support I have received if I only had some sympathy and understanding of my art—if someone loved my work. O, you slave of your moods, their plaything. “ These feelings may be reflected in the autumnal colors of much of the score, and especially in its lonely opening, a solitary clarinet bravely singing its lament over the chill background tension in Finland and of personal concern as well.

But although he complained of misunderstanding and lack of sympathy, his art was still rooted in the nineteenth century both harmonically and thematically. His Second Symphony in 1904 was received with general incomprehension in Boston, for example, even by such future prominent proponents of his music as critic Olin Downes. But the First offered fewer knotty problems, and once it achieved performance, it was generally accorded favor with audiences both in Finland and elsewhere.

Because of Sibelius’s keen interest in the *Kalevala*, not to mention the passionately dramatic character of much of the music in the symphony, some critics claimed to find a literary program in the music, every theme functioning like a Wagnerian *leitmotiv* for a character or event. But Sibelius emphatically denied that there was any connection whatever; his symphony (by implication) is a purely abstract musical structure, however characterful its content.

The clarinet solo that opens the symphony dies away on a sustained G, the preceding melodic phrase hinting that the piece will be in G minor. But just as the clarinet settles on its last note, the second violins begin a tremulous sextuplet figure consisting of the notes G and B, which thus hint at G major. We are in fact listening to the home key coalesce out of the very ether, the tonic of E minor appearing clearly only after the first violins begin their muscular statement. A contrasting idea built on a pair of hovering alternating notes in a characteristic rhythm leads seamlessly to a *fortissimo* restatement for full orchestra of the main E-minor theme. A bright tremolo in the strings, joined by the harp, brings in the woodwinds with a dancelike transitional idea derived possibly from the opening clarinet line. An extraordinarily long pedal point—a note held in the bass without changing—underlies the second theme material, which appears in expressive dialogues between the woodwind instruments over a hushed rumbling in the strings. The exposition ends with a unison pizzicato in the strings, twice repeated.

The musical argument of the development further intertwines the musical ideas already heard, but with a tendency to grow progressively more chromatic. A momentary lyrical interlude (with two solo violins in dialogue) turns into more dramatic stuff with the climax of downward-moving chromatic scales in the woodwinds against upward-rushing chromatic figures (at twice the speed) in the lower strings. Suddenly, against all this activity, the upper strings sing the melody from early in the movement that preceded the *fortissimo* statement of the first theme. Sibelius works this around to G major (where we first heard it) and plunges us into the heart of the recapitulation, omitting the first main theme statement, since the *fortissimo* repetition is about to return full force. The recapitulation is a condensed intensification of the beginning, ending in darkly muttering strings.

The slow movement is often cited as the part of the symphony most strikingly influenced by Tchaikovsky’s *Pathétique*. It is a kind of poignant rondo, its C-minor melody alternating with other ideas based on the same rhythms and phrase structure, sometimes inverted from a falling to a rising theme. Except for a few woodwind interludes, the colors are predominantly dark. The sadness sometimes explodes in an outburst which eventually dies away in the return of the main theme.

The rambunctious third movement has some of the earthiness of Bruckner’s symphonic scherzos, the headlong rhythmic drive of the pizzicato strings at the opening reinforced by the vigor of the timpani and the most important thematic motive in the strings, which has a modal, folklike character. The Trio is a shade slower and altogether more lyrical, even pastoral in feeling, evoking dreams of the countryside driven out by the sudden return of the scherzo.

At the beginning of the Finale, the strings give out in unison an expansive, passionate version of the hesitating clarinet melody heard at the very opening of the symphony, now harmonized by the brasses. A certain degree of questioning in the woodwinds, eventually answered by the strings, leads into the dramatically charged Allegro theme that runs through the bulk of the movement, except for the striking moments of contrast provided by the wonderful singing theme on the violins’ G string, bringing a chorale-like dignity into the heart of the activity. The symphony closes with an echo of the pizzicato chords that ended the first movement.

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About the Soloist

Daniel Bolshoy

Daniel Bolshoy has recently been appointed to the faculty of the Hugh Hodgson School of Music where he directs the guitar program. One of Canada’s leading concert artists, he has performed as a soloist with more than sixty orchestras internationally including the Mexico City Philharmonic, Israel Chamber, Volgograd Symphony (Russia), and the symphony orchestras of New Mexico, Vancouver, Toronto, Edmonton, Calgary, Kingston, Victoria, Okanagan, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia, as well as the Manitoba Chamber Orchestra, the Ottawa Chamber, and many others.

An active chamber musician, he has performed at numerous chamber music festivals and concert series throughout North America, Europe, Russia, Asia, and the Middle East. He appears on seven commercial recordings and two documentary films on the Bravo! TV network. His recordings and live performances are often broadcast on CBC Radio, NPR, and various classical music stations. He has recently completed a tour of concerts and master classes in China, including a residency at the Beijing Central Conservatory.

Bolshoy has adjudicated many international music competitions, including the Guitar Foundation of America, Guitar-Gems festival in Israel, the Tabula Rasa festival in Russia, and the National Finals of the Canadian Federation of Music Festivals. Bolshoy holds a D.M. Degree from the Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University. His students have won awards in competitions, and scholarships to leading Universities and Conservatories, including awards in the Federation of Canadian Music Festival, the Northwest, The Guitar Foundation of America, the Parkening, and the Alessandria (Italy) International Guitar competitions.

Daniel Bolshoy is a D’Addario Strings Gold Performing Artist. For more information please visit www.danielbolshoy.com.