

Sheffield Symphony Orchestra

Registered Charity number 701526

Ecclesall Parish Church
Saturday 17th November 2018 7.30pm

Conductor: Juan Ortuño
Leader: Martin Usher
Soloist: Sophie Rosa (violin)

Leonard Bernstein....West Side Story: Symphonic Dances
Alexander Glazunov...Violin Concerto in A Minor

INTERVAL

Sergei Prokofiev....Romeo and Juliet: Selection from the
Ballet Suites

Welcome to this evening's concert from the Sheffield Symphony Orchestra, the first of the 2018/19 season. This evening we present one of the more challenging programmes that the orchestra has taken on in a journey through love and death combining two workings of the classic Shakespearian drama 'Romeo and Juliet', one from the West and one from the East.

Leonard Bernstein.....West Side Story: Symphonic Dances

The music for this work is taken from the famous 1957 Broadway Musical 'West Side Story'. This setting of the Shakespeare takes place in New York in the 1950s following Tony and Maria who find themselves in love but on either side of gang warfare between the 'Jets' and the 'Sharks'. The musical fuses ballet, jazz, latin and classical music into a 'musical' style attempting to never become too 'operatic', which was 'revolutionary' at the time of its conception. It had been the idea of Bernstein and the choreographer Jerome Robbins to do this since about 1949 but it took until Bernstein had a space in his busy schedule 7 years later for the project to come to fruition.

Bernstein, supported by Sid Ramin and Irwin Kostal, who had just helped orchestrate the score for the film version, specifically extracted the dance movements from the show and

re-moulded them into this orchestral suite that premiered in 1961, which is what we perform this evening. It was put together for a gala fundraising concert for the New York Philharmonic Orchestra's pension fund that took place on the day before Valentine's Day in that year. The idea of the symphonic dances is that they can be listened to in their own right without having to know the story or be guided by what's happening on a stage. It only features two of the songs from the musical, 'Somewhere', which appears near the beginning and at the end transformed into the music of a funeral procession, and 'Maria' which features in the 'Cha-Cha' section.

The symphonic dances are one continuous movement but the sections run as follows;

Prologue- the scene is set and the rivalry between the two gangs is growing.

Somewhere- a dream ballet scene where the two gangs are friends

Scherzo- still in a dream the dancers 'break free' into light and space

Mambo- a competitive dance between the gangs

Cha-Cha- Maria and Tony meet for the first time and dance together

Meeting scene- Maria and Tony speak for the first time

Cool Fugue- the Jets dance to get themselves ready for a fight

Rumble- a gang battle where the gang leaders are killed

Finale- a funeral procession remembering the dream of harmony from before.

If you enjoy this piece and want to hear more of the songs from the musical, a selection of these will be part of the programme for our New Year Viennese Gala concert on 5th January 2019 at 3pm in this church.

Alexander Glazunov.....Violin Concerto in A minor

Alexander Glazunov (1865-1936) proudly saw himself as a Russian 'Romantic' composer. He showed great musical talent as a child and started studying with Rimsky-Korsakov at the age of 15 with his compositions starting to be published very soon after this. The majority of his music was written prior to 1905 when he took over as the director of the St. Petersburg Conservatory, where he remained until 1928, having survived the Russian Revolution and preserved and developed the conservatory under the new Bolshevik regime. Glazunov was known as a 'nationalist' but also incorporated more 'cosmopolitan' ideas into his music despite its Russian flavour. However, he was not a supporter of more modern styles of music and was seen by his pupils at the conservatory, including Dimitri Shostakovich, as somewhat old-fashioned. It is said that when his death was publicised some people were surprised as they thought he was long dead!

Glazunov was an interesting character and was reported to be alcohol dependent, even drinking from a tube into a hidden bottle of alcohol when he was teaching at the Conservatory. He appears to have grown tired of the regime in Russia as in 1928 he went to Vienna to celebrate the Schubert centenary and just didn't return, living around Europe, mostly in Paris, until his death.



The violin concerto is one of Glazunov's most famous works and was written in 1904 and premiered in 1905 with the violinist Leopold Auer, to whom it was dedicated. The concerto runs all the movements together without breaks, which was unconventional at that time. Although it has some suggestions of the future direction of music in its harmonies, it contains the lyrical melodies of the romantic style and a virtuosic solo part harking back to the style of Paganini. The violinist shows a number of different effects that can be achieved on the violin, prompted by Glazunov's own ability to play the instrument along with piano, cello,

trumpet, trombone, French horn, clarinet and some percussion instruments.

Our soloist this evening is Sophie Rosa who has returned to work with orchestra at the request of both the players and our audiences.

INTERVAL

Sergei Prokofiev.....Romeo and Juliet: Selection from the Ballet Suites

Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953) showed musical talent from a young age composing his first piano piece at the age of 5 and his first opera at the age of 9. At 13 he became known to Alexander Glazunov, the composer of tonight's violin concerto, and was encouraged to apply to the St Petersburg conservatory where he studied music formally. He left Russia after the revolution, with the blessing of the establishment, and lived around the world as a composer, conductor and pianist.

Prokofiev was 'enticed' to return to Russia in 1935 by an offer from the Kirov Theatre of a commission, the subject and content of which was to be entirely of his choosing. As well as being offered artistic freedom, at this point Shostakovich's latest work had just been publicly criticised and this could have been Prokofiev's opportunity to taken over as the 'golden boy' of Russian composition.

Having considered various options a ballet version of Romeo and Juliet was what he settled on and he wrote the original music at an artists' retreat, where he let his imagination run riot in the beautiful surroundings. In his original conception there is actually a happy ending where Friar Lawrence stops Romeo from stabbing himself, Juliet wakes up and the story ends with them both dancing joyously.



In 1936 he played this original version to Vladimir Mutnikh, the head of the Bolshoi who had acquired the commission from the Kirov to now be performed there, and he agreed for it to be performed in the 1936/37 season. However, the state intervened and Mutnikh 'disappeared', along with many others at that time in the cultural, academic and political spheres, and the performance of the work was postponed in Russia, as it was now linked to a discredited person. A version was premiered in 1938 in Brno, which is in what is now the Czech Republic, but it took some years to receive its Russian premiere.

In 1940 the ballet was finally performed at the Kirov Theatre, but what was heard was a revised version which had been somewhat amended, not necessarily with the permission of Prokofiev, and the tragic ending re-instated. However, it did retain some of the original light-hearted upbeat music, which you will see in the selection we play today, and this 1940 version became the one that modern audiences know, even if it didn't turn out how Prokofiev planned it! It met with the favour of the establishment, and audiences, and was even made into a film version in 1955 despite the difficulty of the syncopated choreography nearly causing a boycott of the performance by the dancers.

Our selection today comes from all three ballet suites and starts with 'Montagues and Capulets' which is famous for both featuring a tenor saxophone and for being the theme music for 'The Apprentice' television programme. The rest of the movements are as follows-

1. Montagues and Capulets
2. Juliet as a Young Girl
3. Masks
4. Romeo and Juliet
5. Death of Tybalt
6. Friar Laurence
7. Dance
8. Romeo at Juliet's Grave/ The Death of Juliet

If you have enjoyed the music of Prokofiev we are playing another of his works, 'Peter and The Wolf', in our Children's concert on 30th March 2019. Please see our annual brochure for all the details of our concerts this season.

SOPHIE ROSA



Sophie Rosa first garnered attention after winning the Second Prize and Audience Prize at the 2nd Manchester International Violin Competition 2011. She has performed across the UK as a recitalist in venues including the Royal Festival Hall, the Purcell Room, Wigmore Hall, Kings Place and Bridgewater Hall and has appeared as soloist with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Manchester Camerata and Skipton

Camerata. Sophie has broadcast for BBC Radio 3 and has released CDs on Champs Hill and EM Records labels to critical acclaim.

As part of a busy performing career, Sophie is regularly invited to perform recitals and chamber music at prestigious concerts and Festivals such as the Manchester Mid-day Concerts Society, Manchester Chamber Concerts Society, Oxford Lieder Festival, Chester Music Festival, Leeds International Concert Series, Aurora Music Festival, The Medical Music Society of London, 22 Mansfield Street and The Music Room, Champs Hill.

As a keen chamber musician, Sophie is a member of Pixels Ensemble and also performs with Psappha ensemble as well as guest leading orchestras across the UK.

Sophie studied at Chetham's School of Music and the Royal Northern College of Music with Wenzhou Li where she was a recipient of the RNCM Gold Medal and the Worshipful Company of Musicians Silver Medal in recognition of her musical achievements. After completing her Masters Degree with Distinction, Sophie completed the RNCM International Artist Diploma in Solo Performance and furthered her studies in America with Midori Goto, Miriam Fried and Donald Weilerstein.

Sophie was kindly supported by several award foundations including the Philharmonia Orchestra Martin Music Scholarship, The Solti Foundation, The Hattori Foundation, The Stephen Bell Charitable Trust, and Help Musicians UK.

Sophie plays on a Joseph Gagliano violin dated 1795 and a Claude Fonclause bow made available through the generous support of the Stradivari Trust.

JUAN ORTUÑO



Spanish conductor Juan Ortuño is enjoying an exciting career in the UK, where he is principal conductor of the *Sheffield Symphony Orchestra* and the *Gorton Philharmonic Orchestra*. He also regularly conducts concerts with Crosby, North Staffordshire, Alderley Edge and Wilmslow Symphony Orchestras.

Coming from a family of singers, Juan is very passionate about working with opera and choral societies. He is Musical Director of the *City of Manchester Opera*, with whom he has most recently conducted thrilling performances of *Carmen* and *The Magic Flute*. Since 2014, he has been Director of Music of *Bury Choral Society*, receiving praising reviews for the performances of *St.*

Matthew's Passion, The Creation and The Armed Man.

Juan also enjoys teaching young talented musicians in the Junior RNCM, where he conducts the symphony orchestra, and has just started a collaboration with the Manchester University Confucius Institute to create an international Chinese choir.

Juan started music lessons in Madrid with his parents. Both were performers in the Spanish National Radio and Television Choir. His first ambition was Astrophysics in which he obtained a Bachelors Degree. At the same time, he was studying voice, piano, and violin. He then decided to focus on a career in music and earned degrees in Orchestral and Choral conducting at the *Royal Conservatory of Madrid*.

After finishing his degrees in Spain, Juan was awarded with a scholarship from the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs to continue further studies in the UK. He obtained his Masters degree from the *Royal Northern College of Music*, where he studied with Clark Rundell and Mark Shanahan and conducted his final concert with the *Manchester Camerata*.

During his academic studies, Juan was selected to take part in the young conductors' project of the Spanish Youth Orchestra (*Joven Orquesta Nacional de España*), working with them as guest conductor in concert tours. He also attended several conducting master classes with Benjamin Zander, George Hurst, Martyn Brabbins, and Antoni Ros-Marbà, and has worked with orchestras such as the the *Royal Scottish National Orchestra*, the *Sappha Ensemble*, *Kammerphilharmonie Graz*, and *Orquestra Simfònica del Vallés* among others. Juan was a finalist in the "*Luigi Mancinelli*" *International Opera Conducting Competition* in Orvieto.