

17–19 March
Sydney Opera House

GERSHWIN'S RHAPSODY IN BLUE

Presenting Partner

CREDIT SUISSE



Series Partner



RoyalCaribbean
INTERNATIONAL

SYDNEY
SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA

Principal Partner



SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

PATRON **Her Excellency The Honourable Margaret Beazley** AC KC

Founded in 1932 by the Australian Broadcasting Commission, the Sydney Symphony Orchestra has evolved into one of the world’s finest orchestras as Sydney has become one of the world’s great cities. Resident at the iconic Sydney Opera House, the Sydney Symphony Orchestra also performs in venues throughout Sydney and regional New South Wales, and international tours to Europe, Asia and the USA have earned the Orchestra worldwide recognition for artistic excellence.

The Orchestra’s first chief conductor was Sir Eugene Goossens, appointed in 1947; he was followed by Nicolai Malko, Dean Dixon, Moshe Atzmon, Willem van Otterloo, Louis Frémaux, Sir Charles Mackerras, Zdeněk Mácal, Stuart Challender, Edo de Waart and Gianluigi Gelmetti. Vladimir Ashkenazy was Principal Conductor from 2009 to 2013, followed by David Robertson as Chief Conductor from 2014 to 2019. Australian-born Simone Young commenced her role as Chief Conductor in 2022, a year in which the Orchestra made its return to a renewed Sydney Opera House Concert Hall.

The Sydney Symphony Orchestra's concerts encompass masterpieces from the classical repertoire, music by some of the finest living composers, and collaborations with guest artists from all genres, reflecting the Orchestra's versatility and diverse appeal. Its award-winning education program is central to its commitment to the future of live symphonic music, and the Orchestra promotes the work of Australian composers through performances, recordings and its commissioning program.

Simone Young

Chief Conductor

Donald Runnicles

Principal Guest

Conductor

Vladimir Ashkenazy

Conductor Laureate

Andrew Haveron

Concertmaster

Chair supported by
Vicki Olsson

FIRST VIOLINS

Andrew Haveron

Concertmaster

Lerida Delbridge

Assistant

Concertmaster

Fiona Ziegler

Assistant

Concertmaster

Jennifer Booth

Brielle Clapson

Sophie Cole

Claire Herrick

Georges Lentz

Emily Long

Alexandra Mitchell

Alexander Norton

Anna Skálavá

Léone Ziegler

Sercan Danis*

Benjamin Tjoo*

Dominic Azzi*

Harry Bennetts

Associate

Concertmaster

Sun Yi

Associate

Concertmaster Emeritus

SECOND VIOLINS

Kirsty Hilton

Principal

Marina Marsden

Principal

Emma Jezek

Assistant Principal

Alice Bartsch

Victoria Bihun

Rebecca Gill

Emma Hayes

Shuti Huang

Monique Irik

Wendy Kong

Benjamin Li

Moja Verunica

Riikka Sintonen*

Marcus Michelsen*

Marianne Edwards

Associate Principal

Nicole Masters

VIOLAS

Amanda Verner

Guest Principal

Anne-Louise

Comerford

Associate Principal

Justin Williams

Acting Associate Principal

Sandro Costantino

Rosemary Curtin

Jane Hazelwood

Stuart Johnson

Leonid Volovelsky

Stephen Wright*

Andrew Jezek*

Tobias Breider

Principal

Graham Hennings

Justine Marsden

Felicity Tsai

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Catherine Hewgill

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Timothy Nankervis

Elizabeth Neville

Christopher Pidcock

Adrian Wallis

Paul Stender*

Ariel Volovelsky*

Kristy Conrau

Fenella Gill

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Dylan Holly

Steven Larson

Richard Lynn

Jaán Pallandi

Hayley Witmore*

Alex Henery

Principal

David Campbell

Benjamin Ward

FLUTES

Emma Shall

Associate Principal

Carolyn Harris

Katie Zagorski*

Joshua Batty

Principal

OBOES

Diana Doherty

Principal

Noah Rudd*

Alexandre Oguey

Principal Cor Anglais

Shefali Pryor

Associate Principal

Callum Hogan

CLARINETS

Francesco Celata

Acting Principal

Alexander Morris

Acting Associate Principal

Christopher Tingay

Romola Smith*

Guest Principal

Bass Clarinet

BASSOONS

Todd Gibson-Cornish

Principal

Fiona McNamara

Noriko Shimada

Principal Contrabassoon

Matthew Wilkie

Principal Emeritus

HORNS

Gabrielle Pho*

Guest Principal

Marnie Sebire

Rachel Silver

Jenny McLeod-Sneyd*

Emily Newham*

Geoffrey O'Reilly

Principal 3rd Horn

Euan Harvey

Acting Principal

TRUMPETS

David Elton

Principal

Brent Grapes

Associate Principal

Cécile Glémot

Anthony Heinrichs

TROMBONES

Ronald Prussing

Principal

Nick Byrne

Christopher Harris

Principal Bass Trombone

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Mark Robinson

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Rebecca Lagos

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Phil South*

Brian Nixon*

HARP

Natalie Wong*

Guest Principal

KEYBOARDS/ EXTRAS

Catherine Davis*

Guest Principal Piano

Michael Duke*

Guest Principal Saxophone

Jay Byrnes*

Saxophone

Nathan Henshaw*

Tenor Saxophone

Gary Vickery*

Banjo

Bold = Principal

Italics = Associate

Principal

* = Guest Musician

= Contract Musician

† = Sydney Symphony

Fellow

Grey = Permanent

Member of the Sydney

Symphony Orchestra

not appearing in

this concert

A WORD FROM CREDIT SUISSE

Welcome to this performance of Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* – *New York Stories*.

As the Orchestra's Premier Partner, we are very proud to present this concert of works by Gershwin and Bernstein, performed by Australian pianist Simon Tedeschi and the Sydney Symphony.

Icons of American composition, Gershwin and Bernstein wrote music that expresses the essence of New York City. *Rhapsody in Blue*, almost a century old, remains as brilliant as it is timeless. From the clarinet's opening notes, we are transported.

With our shared and deep dedication to excellence in serving both audiences and clients, Credit Suisse continues to work in partnership with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra to bring memorable performances to Sydney, a city with its own distinct essence – energetic, generous and buoyant.

Credit Suisse is delighted to continue our decade long support of the world-class Sydney Symphony Orchestra.

We wish you a wonderful concert.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'RG', with a large, stylized loop at the end.

Richard Gibb

Chief Executive Officer
Credit Suisse Australia

CONCERT DIARY

MARCH 2023



MOZART'S GRAN PARTITA SERENADE
RADIANT & JOYFUL

BEETHOVEN
Quintet for Three Horns, Oboe and Bassoon

MOZART Serenade No.10, Gran Partita

SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
MUSICIANS

Classics in the City

Thursday 30 March, 7pm
City Recital Hall



JS BACH'S MAGNIFICAT IN D
EXHILARATING & BEAUTIFUL

BPÄRT Trisagion*

JS BACH Magnificat in D

EŠENVALDS Passion and Resurrection

**Great Classics performance only*

STEPHEN LAYTON conductor

AMY MOORE soprano

CHLOE LANKSHEAR soprano

STEPHANIE DILLON mezzo-soprano

CHRISTOPHER WATSON tenor

DAVID GRECO baritone

SYDNEY PHILHARMONIA CHOIRS
SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
MUSICIANS

Great Classics

Thursday 30 March, 7pm
Friday 31 March, 11am
Saturday 1 April, 2pm

Concert Hall,
Sydney Opera House

APRIL 2023



DONALD RUNNICLES
CONDUCTS BRAHMS 2
LUSH & TRIUMPHANT

DETLEV GLANERT Idyllium

SCHUMANN Piano Concerto

BRAHMS Symphony No.2

DONALD RUNNICLES conductor

ANDREA LAM piano

Royal Caribbean Classics Under the Sails
Sunday Afternoon Symphony

Friday 14 April, 7pm
Saturday 15 April, 7pm
Sunday 16 April, 2pm

Concert Hall,
Sydney Opera House



ELGAR'S CELLO CONCERTO
POWERFUL INSPIRATIONS

ALEX TURLEY Mirage

50 Fanfares Commission

ELGAR Cello Concerto

SHOSTAKOVICH Symphony No.10

DONALD RUNNICLES conductor

NICOLAS ALTSTAEDT cello

Emirates Masters Series
Emirates Thursday Afternoon Symphony

Wednesday 19 April, 8pm
Thursday 20 April, 1.30pm
Friday 21 April, 8pm
Saturday 22 April, 8pm

Concert Hall,
Sydney Opera House



ARABELLA STEINBACHER
PERFORMS LENTZ
LUMINOUS & TRANSCENDENT

BIBER Battalia in D

GEORGES LENTZ "...to beam in distant heavens..." – Violin Concerto

R STRAUSS Thus Spoke Zarathustra

UMBERTO CLERICI conductor

ARABELLA STEINBACHER violin

Royal Caribbean Classics Under the Sails

Friday 28 19 April, 7pm
Saturday 29 April, 7pm

Concert Hall,
Sydney Opera House

A WORD FROM ROYAL CARIBBEAN

Welcome to *Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue* concert, part of the *Classics Under the Sails* series.

As the first Presenting Partner of the inaugural *Classics Under the Sails* series, we are both proud and delighted to be bringing audiences the opportunity to hear classical music's greatest works performed by the world's leading artists.

In this concert, Australian pianist Simon Tedeschi brings the jazz-era masterpiece of Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* to life, while Bernstein's music from *West Side Story* paints an iconic picture of New York.

When in port, our beautiful ships are a feature of the stunning backdrop of Sydney Harbour, a backdrop shared by the equally iconic Sydney Symphony Orchestra.

We are immensely proud of our inaugural partnership with the Sydney Symphony, and with an unwavering focus on creating extraordinary experiences, both Royal Caribbean and the Orchestra share a deep and longstanding commitment to excellence.

We hope you enjoy these performances of Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue – New York Stories*, just one of the five extraordinary concerts in the 2023 *Classics Under the Sails* series.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Gavin Smith". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a small flourish at the end.

Gavin Smith

Vice President & Managing Director
Royal Caribbean Australia & New Zealand

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ROYAL CARIBBEAN CLASSICS UNDER THE SAILS

Friday 17 March, 7pm

Saturday 18 March, 7pm

SUNDAY AFTERNOON SYMPHONY

Sunday 19 March, 2pm

Concert Hall,
Sydney Opera House

GERSHWIN'S RHAPSODY IN BLUE

NEW YORK STORIES

ANDREA MOLINO conductor

SIMON TEDESCHI piano

PAUL-ANTONI BONETTI (born 1981)

The Bright Day Clarion Calls the Quaking Earth
50 Fanfares Commission

GEORGE GERSHWIN (1898–1937)

Rhapsody in Blue

CHARLES IVES (1874–1954)

Central Park in the Dark

LEONARD BERNSTEIN (1918–1990)

Symphonic Dances from *West Side Story*

i. *Prelude*

ii. *Somewhere*

iii. *Scherzo*

iv. *Mambo*

v. *Cha-Cha*

vi. *Cool, Fugue*

vii. *Rumble*

viii. *Finale*

Pre-concert talk by
Genevieve Lang in the
Northern Foyer at 6.15pm
(Friday and Saturday)
and 1.15pm (Sunday)

ESTIMATED DURATIONS

8 minutes, 16 minutes,
interval 20 minutes,
8 minutes, 24 minutes

The concert will conclude
at approximately 8:30pm
(Friday and Saturday) and
3:30pm (Sunday).

COVER IMAGE

By Rebecca Shaw

Paul-Antoni Bonetti's *The Bright Day Clarion Calls the Quaking Earth* was made possible through the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's 50 Fanfares Project and was commissioned by the Staff Commissioning Circle.

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CREDIT SUISSE 

SERIES PARTNER



PRINCIPAL PARTNER



ABOUT THE ARTISTS

ANDREA MOLINO conductor

Andrea Molino, composer and conductor, was born in Turin and studied in Turin, Milan, Venice, Paris and Freiburg. He lives in Paris and Zurich.

With the Pocket Opera Company in Nuremberg he realized *the smiling carcass* (1999) and *Those Who Speak in a Faint Voice* (2001), first examples of his commitment to innovative, multimedia-oriented music theatre.

From 2000 to 2006 he was Artistic Director of Fabbrica Musica. His multimedia project CREDO was premiered at the Staatstheater Karlsruhe; in 2005 it opened the Queensland Music Festival. WINNERS was premiered at the Brisbane Festival and later performed at the Centre Pompidou in Paris. *Three Mile Island* was first performed in 2012 at the ZKM in Karlsruhe (Music Theatre Now Award 2013). — *there is no why here* — was premiered at the Teatro Comunale di Bologna in 2014 and revived in May 2015 in Antwerp for the Vlaamse Opera. In 2021 *The Garden of Forking Paths* was premiered at Palazzo Madama in Turin. In 2021 he was appointed Creative Chair for the Tracce project at the Orchestra della Svizzera Italiana, Lugano.

Recent projects as a conductor include Berg's *Wozzeck*, Shostakovich's *The Nose* and Bartok's *Bluebeard's Castle* at the Sydney Opera House for Opera Australia; *The Cellist* at the Royal Opera House in London and Szymanowski's *Król Roger* at the Royal Opera in Stockholm. At the Teatro La Fenice in Venice he conducted the world premiere of Maderna's *Requiem* (CD Stradivarius 2022) and Goebbels' *Surrogate Cities* for the Biennale Musica among other projects.

He conducted the Orchestra del Maggio Fiorentino, the Brussels Philharmonic, the Bochumer Symphoniker, the Badische Staatskapelle Karlsruhe, the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, the Queensland Symphony Orchestra, the Orchestre du Capitole de Toulouse, the Orchestre National de Lyon at the Edinburgh Festival, Vienna Konzerthaus, Berliner Festspiele, Sydney Festival, Queensland Festival, Brisbane Festival, Teatro Comunale in Bologna, Teatro dell'Opera in Rome, Théâtre du Capitole de Toulouse, RomaEuropa Festival among others.

His recordings are published by Stradivarius, ECM, Naïve and ABC Classics, among others. His compositions are published by RAI Com, Nuova Stradivarius and Ricordi.



Andrea Molino

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

SIMON TEDESCHI piano

Simon Tedeschi is one of Australia's most renowned classical pianists, recipient of prizes such as Symphony Australia's Young Performer of the Year Award, the Legacy Award from the Creativity Foundation (USA), first prize in the Keyboard division of the Royal Overseas League Competition (UK), and a Centenary of Federation Medal. He has performed in major concert halls and for festivals throughout Europe, North America, Asia, and Australia, and for world leaders including former US President George W. Bush and the Dalai Lama.

As a writer, he has written for a number of publications, including *Seizure Magazine*, *Art Edit Magazine*, *SBS Feast Magazine*, the *Sydney Morning Herald* and many others. In 2022, Simon's first book, *Fugitive*, was released by Upswell. In May of the same year, Tedeschi was awarded the Calibre Prize (*Australian Book Review*) for his essay 'This woman my grandmother'.

Acclaimed by respected critics and peers as "True greatness" (*Sydney Morning Herald*), Simon Tedeschi performed his first Mozart piano concerto in the Sydney Opera House at age nine. Based in the USA for several years courtesy of the American Australian Association and the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust, in 2009 Tedeschi performed in Carnegie Hall, won the 'New York Young Jewish Pianist Award' and performed as soloist with the Colorado, Fort Worth and Illinois Symphony Orchestras (USA).

Tedeschi performs as soloist with all the major Australian orchestras as well as Christchurch Symphony Orchestra (New Zealand), and with classical chamber and jazz collaborators in leading festivals, venues and concert series including the Abu Dhabi International Arts Festival, Shanghai Arts Festival, Sydney, Brisbane and Fremantle Festivals, for Sydney Opera House' Utzon Music Series, Musica Viva, UKARIA Cultural Centre (Adelaide) and Perth Theatre Trust.

A seasoned collaborator and chamber musician, Tedeschi also performs with Sydney Symphony Orchestra Concertmaster Andrew Haveron, flautist Sally Walker and with jazz pianist Kevin Hunt.

Tedeschi also holds a Masters in Arts (Writing and Literature) degree from Deakin University.



Simon Tedeschi.
Photo by Cole Bennet.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

PAUL-ANTONI BONETTI (born 1981)

The Bright Day Clarion Calls the Quaking Earth

Brisbane-based composer Paul-Antoni Bonetti has completed several major works for ensembles such as the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra Victoria, Adelaide Chamber Singers, Brisbane Chamber Choir, Queensland Symphony Orchestra String Quartet and The Australian Voices.

He writes:

This fanfare brazenly evokes the sound of a rambunctious news theme: As was undoubtedly the case for many other artists in recent times, it was impossible not to be mindful of the many events playing out across the world stage while writing this music. In this way, the 'clarion call' in the title refers to a frequently reoccurring melody that represents a sense of determination, hope and steely resolve amidst unsettling times.

The fanfare begins with a hip-hop-derived rhythmic groove played by percussion and pizzicato strings, then a brief full orchestral flourish.

This gives way to the first occurrence of a 'clarion call' motif, aptly introduced by trumpets, brass and pizzicato strings. The rapid up-and-down melodic contour of this motif is also reminiscent of the bird call of the Pied Currawong, with its characteristically languid upwards whistling slide followed by a brisk slide downwards.

Following this, a surging, insistent melodic theme is soon taken up by the cellos, accompanied by accented flashes of sound that jostle amongst a hip-hop rhythmic groove. Urging onwards and growing more insistent, this theme reoccurs, joined by violas and later the whole string section.

Frenzied intensity builds through these various melodic and rhythmic themes, forging on with the persistent urgency of minor key tonality, visceral lashes of hip hop styled percussion, bold, riffy brass,



Paul-Antoni Bonetti

ABOUT THE MUSIC

and stark flanks of full orchestral sound. Yet surging towards a hopeful resolve, the music culminates with a short bold full-orchestral statement of the ‘clarion call’ motif.

GEORGE GERSHWIN (1898–1937)

Rhapsody in Blue

It is now commonplace for composers to move between the disciplines of classical music and jazz, but Brooklyn-born George Gershwin was a pioneer.

He started out on Tin Pan Alley, churning out what he hoped would be hit tunes. His first published piece of music was the song *When you want 'em, you can't get 'em, when you got 'em, you don't want 'em* (lyrics by Murray Roth), but he ‘struck gold’ — royalties of \$10,000 in the first year alone — with *Swanee*, recorded in 1919 by Al Jolson.

Gershwin, however, always wanted to be recognised as a ‘serious’ composer. He had begun taking harmony lessons with Edward Kilenyi in 1915, and composed a lullaby for string quartet in the same year as *Swanee*. His second ‘serious’ work was the opera *Blue Monday*, withdrawn after one performance in 1922.

He was a little nervous when band leader Paul Whiteman commissioned him to write a piano concerto for a projected concert *An Experiment in Modern Music* in 1924, but Whiteman convinced Gershwin that he truly had the talent to write the piece in less than a month (!) and assured him that he could delegate the orchestration to Ferde Grofé, the band’s arranger, later composer of the *Grand Canyon Suite*. The concert took place at New York’s Aeolian Hall on 12 February 1924, with people like Jascha Heifetz, Rachmaninov, numerous critics and Tin Pan Alley composers in the audience. *Rhapsody in Blue* was so successful that Gershwin was soon fulfilling commissions for Walter Damrosch of the New York Symphony-Philharmonic (*Concerto in F* and *An American in Paris*). From now on, though, he was determined to do his own orchestration.



George Gershwin

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Rhapsody in Blue falls clearly into the standard ‘classical’ fast-slow-fast pattern but has a popular feel in its melodies and blues inflection. The opening clarinet cadenza is probably the most obvious ‘jazz’ feature.

It seems strange now, when ‘serious’ composers who are ignorant of jazz seem ignorant themselves, that Gershwin ever had a hang-up about being regarded as ‘serious’. Schoenberg recognised his innate musicality. Indeed Gershwin testified to themes for this piece welling up spontaneously in his head: ‘I suddenly heard – and even saw on paper – the complete construction for the *Rhapsody*, from beginning to end,’ and Ravel advised him to remain a first-rate Gershwin, not a second-rate Ravel. (Stravinsky found out how much he earned and said, ‘How about I take lessons from you?’) *Rhapsody in Blue* is probably more often criticised these days for not really being jazz, which is, after all, by definition largely improvised. But we could ask if any of this criticism is much to the point. The piece is almost profoundly American.

Themes for the concerto began spontaneously to run through Gershwin’s head on a train trip to Boston for the premiere of his musical comedy *Sweet Little Devil*. The clickety-clack of the long-distance trip inspired rhythms which we recognise to be as American as anything which came out of Hollywood or Broadway in the 1920s. Gershwin himself heard the piece as ‘a sort of musical kaleidoscope of America — of our vast melting pot, of our unduplicated national pep, of our blues, our metropolitan madness’. As African-American conductor William Eddins said, ‘Gershwin’s Gershwin...it just reeks of the Roaring Twenties, and the Depression. It’s part of our culture, part of our DNA.’

ABOUT THE MUSIC

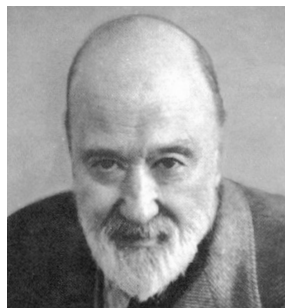
CHARLES IVES (1874–1954)

Central Park in the Dark

Charles Ives, the son of a Civil War bandmaster, was arguably America's first authentic musical genius. Proudly, indeed ruggedly, American — as you can tell from some of his titles (*Lincoln, the Great Commoner, Some Southpaw Pitching*) — he imbibed music from the hymns, rags, and other social music in his surroundings. His father taught him to be musical in a fiercely independent way. Ives would be encouraged to sing in one key while his father accompanied him in another, and though he played in his father's band and later became a church organist, the plethora of unorthodox youthful influences bucked against the lessons of his formal training at Yale where he studied under Horatio Parker.

Ives figured out early on that he would make very little money from the sort of music he wanted to write, so he went into the insurance business, becoming very successful. Freed from the need to earn a living through music, he was able to indulge his eccentric individuality in 'isolation', and produce some of the 20th century's most visionary works, prefiguring atonality and aleatoric processes.

Ives seemed to value music more as a human activity than as sound in its own right. He cared less how it sounded as long as it was vigorous, healthy and daring. 'Stand up and use your ears like a man,' he once challenged a concert-goer hissing a piece of modern music. Inspired by the American Transcendentalists (writers such as Emerson and Thoreau), he was aiming for a truth beyond music, trying to capture life. This partly explains his use of the musical vernacular in his writings: his harking back to the fate motif from Beethoven's Fifth, or allusions to *Columbia, Gem of the Ocean* or *In the Sweet By and By*.



Charles Ives

ABOUT THE MUSIC

But it would be wrong to play ‘spot the tune’ with his music. The tunes are not just there as undigested lumps; they coalesce with Ives’ own vision, morph into more or less familiar shapes, and then merge back into the composer’s own mystical soundworld. Real-life events can be sourced as the background to moments in his music – the climax of *Central Park* depicts a runaway horse smashing into a fence, as heard by Ives and his baseball buddy JS Myrick at 65 Central Park West in July 1906.

Central Park in the Dark is one of two relatively quiet ‘contemplations for small orchestra’ (the other being *The Unanswered Question*) written around 1908, though not performed until the 1950s. *The Unanswered Question* is sub-headed ‘A Contemplation of a Serious Matter’, while *Central Park in the Dark* is the contemplation of ‘Nothing Serious’.

The background is atonal with tonal tunes in the foreground, in contrast with *The Unanswered Question*, where atonal solo trumpet and woodwind quartet play against tonal strings. *Central Park in the Dark* is meant to suggest the sorts of sounds you might hear if you were sitting on a bench in Central Park, New York, on an evening ‘In “The Good Old Summertime”’ (to quote Ives’ full title) ‘before the combustion engine and radio monopolized the earth and the air.’ We hear the sounds of a nightclub, passers-by singing hit tunes, traffic: streetcars and a fire engine. A horse bolts. Night returns.

LEONARD BERNSTEIN (1918–1990) ***Symphonic Dances from West Side Story***

In a 1984 documentary of the making of a recording of *West Side Story* with opera singers Kiri Te Kanawa and José Carreras, Leonard Bernstein at one point describes how he can’t get over how ‘funky’ this music is. The image of the composer praising his own music is galling at first, until one recognises that he is describing a score which came off his desk nearly 30 years before — and that he is right!



Leonard Bernstein in 1940

ABOUT THE MUSIC

If we think of American music as typically infectious, brash and exciting, and yet conversely accessible, simple and touching, then *West Side Story* is surely one of America's greatest scores. It has real urban heat, a grasp on the rhythmic springboard that is American popular music's beat, and a melodic simplicity which can get right to the heart of a character. On stage and screen its brilliantly constructed musical ensembles were matched in the choreography and setting.

West Side Story is perhaps one of the most successful of orchestral music's forays into 'jazz influence'. It comes from a classically-trained musician famous as the Principal Conductor of the New York Philharmonic for many years, but who was also one of music's great communicators, as his early telecasts, the Young People's Concerts, attest. *West Side Story* was Bernstein's fourth show, following *On The Town* (1944), *Wonderful Town* (1953) and *Candide* (1956). It opened its New York run of 732 performances in September 1957. The film version in 1961 garnered ten Academy Awards, including best picture.

West Side Story is a 20th-century version of Romeo and Juliet. The idea originated in 1949, when choreographer Jerome Robbins approached Bernstein and playwright Arthur Laurents with the idea of doing a 'Romeo and Juliet story' set on New York's lower east side, the story of a young Jewish boy and a Catholic girl. Busy work schedules prevented the collaborators bringing *East Side Story* to fruition at this point. When they got around to resuming work on the project, the original ethnic conflict seemed old hat.

Instead, *West Side Story* is about Tony, the American descendant of Polish forebears, and Maria, the daughter of recent Puerto Rican immigrants, and their love, played out against the violent background of rival gangs on the upper west side of town. Tony and Maria meet and fall in love at a dance at the local gym, but Maria's brother Bernardo kills Tony's friend Riff, and Tony then kills Bernardo in retaliation. When Maria learns the true circumstances of Bernardo's murder — that he was killed by Tony

ABOUT THE MUSIC

in the heat of the moment — she sends for Tony but he is gunned down by another gang member, Chino, at the moment of their reconciliation.

Bernstein called this concert work collated from the show 'Symphonic Dances' because of the way the musical material is built up from a small number of musical themes. Indeed those few themes, constituting the basic building blocks of the whole score, are transformed and combined symphonically to portray a wide variety of moods, action, songs and dances. The dances begin with the Prelude, suggesting the growing rivalry and smouldering tension between the two gangs: the 'all-American' Jets and the Puerto Rican Sharks. *Somewhere* portrays an ideal oasis of peace in this turbulent world. In Stephen Sondheim's lyrics: 'There's a place for us, somewhere a place for us. Peace and quiet and open air wait for us somewhere.'

An intriguing metre characterizes the charming Scherzo, but the Mambo returns us to the world of underlying violence. This segues into the Cha-Cha, a deft variation of the 'I just met a girl named Maria' melody. Perhaps the most effective musical representation of barely-suppressed rage is *Cool*, which Bernstein turns into a particularly sinuous and finally explosive fugue.

Metric jolts and thematic interjections announce the *Rumble* (1950s slang for a fight), which in the stage version ends Act I with the deaths of Bernardo and Riff. Then the Finale, based on the melody for *I Have a Love*, brings the music to a peaceful if sorrowful conclusion.

Notes by Paul Bonetti and Gordon Kalton Williams
Symphony Services Australia © 2001 (Gershwin)
2000 (Ives) 1997/2006 (Bernstein)

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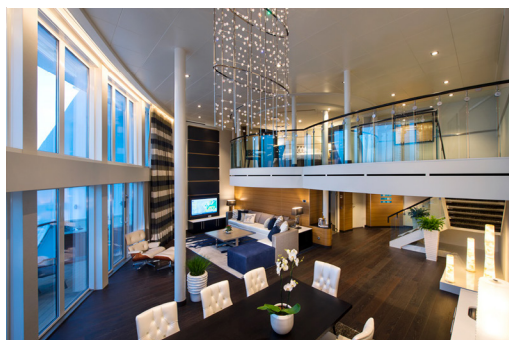

Emirates



HOLIDAY IN EVERY MODE

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