

Welcome to the 2023 BBC Proms



A very warm welcome to the 2023 BBC Proms. It's thrilling to be sharing in an experience in which tradition and innovation sit side by side, and I hope these concerts continue to delight you with familiar favourites and entice you to discover new composers and artists.

Our composer celebrations reflect both sides of that coin, from the works of Sergey Rachmaninov (born 150 years ago) – whose music has featured regularly at the Proms since 1900 – to the less familiar worlds of Dora Pejačević and Samuel Coleridge-Taylor. This summer's extensive opera and choral programme brings you landmark operas by Berlioz and Poulenc alongside the UK premiere of György Kurtág's Beckett-inspired *Endgame* and the first complete performance at the Proms of Schumann's ravishing *Das Paradies und die Peri*. Opera also forms part of our family offering this year, with the *Horrible Histories* team taking an irreverent look at the art form, while a bank holiday concert delves into fantasy, myths and legends from TV, film and video games. And, following our series last year of 'Proms at' chamber music Proms around the UK, this year there are performances by leading soloists, ensembles and chamber choirs in Aberystwyth, Dewsbury, Gateshead, Perth and Truro.

The Proms celebrates genres and artists from around the world. This year we bring Portuguese fado and Northern Soul to the Proms for the first time, as well as a tribute to Bollywood playback singer Lata Mangeshkar. We also welcome four very individual artists in special orchestral collaborations – Rufus Wainwright with the BBC Concert Orchestra, Cory Henry with the Jules Buckley Orchestra, Jon Hopkins with the BBC Symphony Orchestra and – as part of our weekend at Sage Gateshead – Self Esteem with the Royal Northern Sinfonia. Visitors from further afield include orchestras from Berlin, Budapest and Boston. The Proms continues to redefine the boundaries of a classical music festival but one thing remains constant – we seek out and showcase the very best.

Every Prom here at the Royal Albert Hall and in our 'Proms at' series is broadcast live on BBC Radio 3, where the station's expert engineers and presenters bring you the live experience wherever you are – and you can listen again on BBC Sounds. You can also enjoy 24 Proms on BBC TV, all available for 12 months on BBC iPlayer.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which reads "David Pickard".

David Pickard
Director, BBC Proms



Tonight *at the* Proms

Welcome to tonight's concert, in which the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra makes its annual visit, together with its Domingo Hidoyan, who is already making waves just two seasons into his Chief Conductorship with the ensemble. They begin with a real rarity, Arthur Honegger's energetic, brashly violent tone-poem celebrating the sport of rugby.

The Japanese pianist Nobuyuki Tsujii joins the orchestra for the Third Concerto of Sergey Rachmaninov, whose 150th birthday we've been celebrating this year. The composer wrote it as a vehicle for himself, resulting in a work famous for its sheer technical difficulties, abundant lyricism and epic scale.

Another great pianist forms the inspiration behind Gabriela Ortiz's *Clara*, which receives its UK premiere tonight. At its heart is an exploration of the relationship between Clara Schumann, her husband Robert and Ortiz herself. We end on a high, with the hugely characterful Symphonic Dances from Bernstein's *West Side Story*.



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Royal Albert Hall

If you leave the auditorium during the performance, you will only be readmitted when there is a suitable break in the music.



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Prom 70

FRIDAY 8 SEPTEMBER • 7.30pm–c9.50pm



Arthur Honegger Rugby *8'*

Sergey Rachmaninov Piano Concerto No. 3 in D minor *43'*

INTERVAL: 20 minutes

Gabriela Ortiz Clara *UK premiere 17'*

Leonard Bernstein Symphonic Dances from 'West Side Story' *24'*

Nobuyuki Tsujii *piano*

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra Thelma Handy *leader*

Domingo Hindoyan *conductor*

RADIO 3 SOUNDS

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ARTHUR HONEGGER (1892–1955)

Rugby (Symphonic Movement No. 2) (1928)

In one of the final bursts of musical enthusiasm in the Paris of the 1920s, two bankers, the brothers Ménard, and their sister underwrote the foundation of a new orchestra, the Orchestre Symphonique de Paris. Its first concert, on 19 October 1928, included not only Alfred Cortot in Franck's *Variations symphoniques* and as continuo player in Bach's Second 'Brandenburg' Concerto but also a specially commissioned work by Arthur Honegger; and the fact that this was the only work they commissioned for the occasion speaks of Honegger's high standing in the Parisian musical circles of the time.

No doubt they were hoping for a repeat of his hugely successful *Pacific 231*, and they were not disappointed. Again, rhythm is the predominant element, and on the harmonic front we are given enough glimpses of D major along the way, especially in the second 'half', to make the final blaze of that chord both relevant and satisfying. The overall pattern of apparent anarchy resting on a basis of rules is obviously appropriate to the game in question, which the composer found 'more spontaneous, more direct, closer to Nature than football, which is more scientific'. The necessary ingredient of athletic vigour is achieved partly through rhythm, partly through huge melodic intervals, as it were stretched to the limit and beyond.

The work's pace and energy are relentless – no stoppages for throw-ins or oranges at half-time. But Honegger was among other things a master of timing (a gift that would serve him well as a film composer in the following years),

and within this extended expression of energy there are enough changes in texture to keep our interest alive. He insisted that the piece is not programme music but 'simply tries to describe in musical language the game's attacks and counterattacks, and the rhythm and colour of a match at the Stade de Colombes'. This 'colour' of French rugby of the time included extreme violence, and occasionally death – leading in the early 1930s to France's expulsion from the Five Nations Championship. Honegger's achievement is to turn this violence to exciting artistic account.

Programme note © Roger Nichols

Roger Nichols is a writer, translator and critic with a particular interest in French music. His books include studies of Debussy, Ravel, Messiaen, Satie and Poulenc. *From Berlioz to Boulez* was published last year (Kahn & Averill). In 2007 he was appointed chevalier de la Légion d'honneur.

PREVIOUSLY AT THE PROMS

Honegger's second tone-poem was given its first performance in England at these concerts in 1929. Still very much a 'novelty' (to use Proms founder-conductor Henry Wood's way of referring to new music), it was the fourth item in an evening of improbable length and diversity. The other composers represented, sometimes more than once, were Otto Nicolai, Mendelssohn, Félicien David, Stanley Herbert Wilson (conducting his own Piano Concerto), Gounod, Vincenzo Tommasini, Schubert, Liszt, Hamilton Harty, Pearl Gildersleeve Curran, William Wallace, John Hatton and Smetana. Much of the repertoire would have been presented in inflated arrangements in accordance with the tastes of the day, a few items conversely slimmed down so that the evening's soloists could offer star turns with piano accompaniment after the interval. *Rugby* was reprised in 1932 but has not been tackled again until tonight.

© David Gutman

David Gutman is a writer and critic who since 1996 has contributed extensively to the BBC Proms programmes. His books cover subjects as wide-ranging as Prokofiev and David Bowie, and he reviews for *Gramophone* and *Classical Source*.

Delve into Proms history for yourself by searching the online database of all Proms performances at bbc.co.uk/proms/archive.

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Deborah, could you ask Alamy for caption info: there's nothing on the website

et et omni, inquit et mos
nonsecum evellandae
cullam quaecto et erferup
tassum quiant apidus exerati
to dollabo. Ut maiorep

ARTHUR HONEGGER



Arthur Honegger was born on 10 March 1892 in Le Havre to cultured, middle-class, Swiss Protestant parents. From 1909 he spent two years at the Zurich Conservatory and was then accepted by the one in Paris. Here he studied with Widor and d'Indy,

and met Milhaud in André Gedalge's counterpoint class. Gedalge's teaching, based on Bach's *48* and his chorales, was especially suited to Honegger's essentially serious temperament.

After the scandal of his ballet score *Le dit des jeux du monde* in 1918, written in a gritty, atonal idiom, he found further notoriety in 1920 as one of 'Les Six', even if his leanings in general were away from such fripperies (he also loathed jazz). His first great success was the oratorio *King David* (1922) but here he displeased his comrades, Poulenc finding it 'falsely grandiose' and Milhaud worrying that so much unadulterated D major might give people the wrong idea about contemporary French music.

Any such concerns were blown away in 1923 by *Pacific 231*, a mesmerising exercise in brutal, rhythmic energy. For the rest of the 1920s this strong, handsome man rode high in popular opinion. Then, in the wake of the Wall Street Crash in 1929, commissions dried up; and through the 1930s he made a living writing mainly film scores, one of the finest of which was for *Crime and Punishment* in 1934, in which his music broods with a baleful intensity.

One of his most enthusiastic supporters was the dancer and impresario Ida Rubinstein and her last commission was the oratorio *Joan of Arc at the Stake*, premiered in Basle in 1938. Although Honegger was a Swiss citizen, he stayed in Paris throughout the Occupation, and his magnificent Third Symphony, completed in December 1945, proclaims a utopian vision of a better world.

His life after the war was dominated by the coronary thrombosis he suffered in New York in the summer of 1945. Of the two major works he completed before his death 10 years later, the *Concerto da camera* shows his charming side, while the Fifth Symphony is shot through with pessimism.

There will always be people for whom Honegger's music is just too earnest – even self-important, though all knowledge of the man contradicts this. But, at his best, he carries you along on a powerful stream of invention: here was a composer who, without a hint of pastiche, put his early study of J. S. Bach to remarkable account.

Profile © Roger Nichols

Poster border cropped
out to fit image

SERGEY RACHMANINOV

(1873–1943)

Piano Concerto No. 3 in D minor, Op. 30 (1909)

- 1 **Allegro ma non tanto**
- 2 **Intermezzo: Adagio –
Un poco più mosso –**
- 3 **Finale: Alla breve**

Nobuyuki Tsujii *piano*

Between his Second and Third Piano Concertos, Rachmaninov's career as composer, pianist and conductor advanced on all fronts, creating problems by its very success. In 1906–7 he wintered in Dresden, largely to avoid the temptation to conduct and thereby to help him forge ahead with composing his Second Symphony and First Piano Sonata. Still much exercised by financial worries, he had the lucrative prospect of an American tour as pianist, for which he had in mind a third piano concerto, whose ideas began to germinate at this time.



Vladimir Horowitz (1903–89), whose 1930 premiere recording of Rachmaninov's Third Piano Concerto with Albert Coates conducting the London Symphony Orchestra helped cement its reputation

In fact the concerto was not composed until more than two years later, largely at Rachmaninov's favourite summer retreat of Ivanovka, being finished in Moscow in September 1909. It was dedicated to the Polish-American pianist Josef Hofmann, who, however, never played it. Rachmaninov practised the fiendishly demanding solo part on a dummy keyboard during his Atlantic crossing, before giving the premiere himself on 28 November 1909 with the New York Symphony Orchestra under Walter Damrosch in New York's New Theater. Nineteen days later he played the new concerto with the New York Philharmonic under Gustav Mahler at Carnegie Hall, professing admiration for the Austrian maestro's attention to detail and ability to make the musicians stay on, unprotesting, long after the scheduled end of a rehearsal. On 4 April 1910 Rachmaninov introduced the concerto to Russia, with the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Yevgeny Plotnikov. Russian critical responses were warmer than those of their American counterparts but in general European critics considered the work more a splendid vehicle for Rachmaninov's pianism than a noteworthy composition in its own right. Yet only a few years later the Third Concerto's success had become so huge that even as self-confident a spirit as Prokofiev was awestruck by the piece and determined to outdo it with his even more gargantuan Second Concerto.

...

The Third Piano Concerto opens with a sense of palpable anticipation, its modest pulsation being destined to unleash waves of astonishing power and energy. The strings are kept muted while the tempo accelerates, and ideas spin off that will blossom further on – such as the trumpet counterpoint that will soon support the second subject, first heard on strings alone, before the piano is

sent into dreamy raptures by it. The remainder of the exposition is built on a further series of accelerandos.

All this is but a preparation for the still more colossal accumulations of the development section. An initial dip down gathers energy for the long ascent, during which the music traverses a bewildering succession of keys, and in place of a reprise is a cadenza of comparably heroic proportions. After its titanic climax this cadenza ushers in a phase of relaxation, the piano supporting snippets of the opening theme on flute, oboe, clarinet and horn in turn, and the movement concludes with a brief review of all its material.

As in the first movement, the main ideas of the second are in a more intense state of harmonic flux than their counterparts in Rachmaninov's previous concertos. A hyper-passionate climax seems to purge the movement of its expressive longings and a mercurial episode fleetingly recalls the main first-movement theme, woven around the piano's repeated-note figurations. Now that the piano has seemingly got the urge to rhapsodise out of its system, it pushes through to a mini-cadenza, which serves as an imposing upbeat to the Finale.

The galloping main theme of the Finale is actually a close paraphrase of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Russian Easter Festival* overture, a reference that lends support to those who would trace religious imagery in the work back to its chant-like opening theme. A foretaste of the heroic victory to come eventually subsides into a long chain of episodes, initially fairly relaxed but gradually building into a vast accompanied cadenza (which the composer himself significantly cut when he made his gramophone recording). As with Rachmaninov's Second Symphony, a redemptive wide-intervalled theme eventually unites piano and orchestra in a dazzling apotheosis.

Programme note © David Fanning

David Fanning is a Professor of Music at the University of Manchester, the author of books on Nielsen, Shostakovich and Weinberg, and a critic for *Gramophone* and *The Daily Telegraph*.

PREVIOUSLY AT THE PROMS

Rachmaninov never performed at the Proms, although he did play his Second Piano Concerto at our founder-conductor's Jubilee concert at the Royal Albert Hall just days after the end of the 1938 season, which took place, as was then the custom, at the old Queen's Hall. The stalwart Henry Wood was a consistent advocate of Rachmaninov's music, directing the UK premieres of several compositions, including the First Piano Concerto and *The Isle of the Dead*, unveiled during the Proms seasons of 1900 and 1915 respectively. Rachmaninov's Third Piano Concerto arrived in 1925 courtesy of another composer/pianist, Arthur Benjamin. He is best remembered today for the *Jamaican Rumba* and his *Storm Cloud Cantata*, written for a suspense sequence set inside the Royal Albert Hall in Alfred Hitchcock's *The Man Who Knew Too Much*. Generally unpopular with intellectuals and musicologists, the concerto went unheard between 1968 and 1983 but it quickly bounced back. Benjamin's successors at the keyboard have included such famous names as Shura Cherkassky (1956 and 1962), John Ogdon (1968), Peter Donohoe (1983), Sir Stephen Hough (1990), Jean-Yves Thibaudet (1992), Grigory Sokolov (1995), Leif Ove Andsnes (1996), Arcadi Volodos (1998), Lang Lang (2001), Nikolai Lugansky (2008 and 2013), Behzod Abduraimov (2016) and Alexander Gavrylyuk (2017). Most recently, in 2019, Yuja Wang played it in the company of Myung-Whun Chung and the Dresden Staatskapelle. It is a decade since tonight's remarkable soloist made his Proms debut with Rachmaninov's Second Piano Concerto.

© David Gutman

“As a pianist Rachmaninov was one of the finest artists of his time; as a composer he can hardly be said to have belonged to his time at all, and he represented his country only in the sense that accomplished but conventional composers like Glazunov or Arensky did. He had neither the national characteristics of the Balakirev school nor the individuality of Taneyev or Medtner. Technically he was highly gifted, but also severely limited. His music is well constructed but monotonous in texture, which consists in essence mainly of artificial and gushing tunes accompanied by a variety of figures derived from arpeggios.”

The fifth edition of *Grove's Dictionary of Music & Musicians* (1954)

SERGEY RACHMANINOV



Born in the environs of Novgorod on 1 April 1873, Rachmaninov had piano lessons locally before entering the St Petersburg Conservatory. In 1885 he came under the wing of the celebrated teacher Nikolay Zverev in Moscow, while also studying counterpoint

with Taneyev and harmony with Arensky. He graduated in piano from the Moscow Conservatory with highest honours in 1891, and in the following year excelled in his composition finals with his one-act opera *Aleko*, given its premiere at the Bolshoi Theatre in 1893 – an occasion on which Tchaikovsky, the most potent influence on Rachmaninov's early music, applauded heartily.

The disastrous 1897 premiere of the First Symphony, however, severely undermined his confidence. With composition at a low ebb, Rachmaninov consulted Dr Nikolay Dahl, who had been experimenting with forms of hypnosis. This has led to wildly exotic speculation as to what his treatment involved, but it seems likely that Dahl, as a cultured man and skilled musician, simply had a series of morale-boosting conversations with the composer, the outcome being that ideas formed for Rachmaninov's Second Piano Concerto, the work that fully released his personal creative voice. The next two decades saw a steady stream of major scores, including the piano Preludes and *Études-tableaux*, the mature songs, the Second Symphony (1906–7) and Third Piano Concerto (1909), together with two more operas, *Francesca da Rimini* (1900, 1904–5) and *The*

Miserly Knight (1903–5), and key choral works including the Edgar Allan Poe-inspired *The Bells* (1912–13) and the Russian Orthodox *All-Night Vigil* (1915).

Following the 1917 October Revolution, Rachmaninov and his family emigrated from Russia, settling at different times in the USA and Switzerland, where he concentrated more on his concert career than on composition. For the next 25 years he was lionised as one of the finest pianists the world has ever known. If later works such as the *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* (1934), the Third Symphony (1935–6) and the *Symphonic Dances* (1940) have more recourse to incisive rhythms, clarity of texture and piquancy of orchestration than earlier ones, his entire *oeuvre* mines deep seams of the Russian character, shot through as it is with a sense of fatalism and with a richness of language that can encompass intense brooding, vigorous energy and passionate sincerity of soul. Rachmaninov died at his home in Beverly Hills on 28 March 1943, shortly before his 70th birthday.

Profile © Geoffrey Norris

Geoffrey Norris's study of Rachmaninov is published by OUP. He is on the editorial board of the new Rachmaninov Collected Edition, for which he is currently compiling an anthology of the press interviews that the composer gave. Until February 2022 he lectured at the Gnessin Academy in Moscow.

INTERVAL: 20 MINUTES

Now playing on BBC Radio 3 ...

Writer and broadcaster Edward Seckerson joins Radio 3's Martin Handley to discuss Bernstein's *West Side Story*.

Available on BBC Sounds



GABRIELA ORTIZ (born 1964)

Clara (2021)

UK premiere

- 1 Clara –
- 2 Robert –
- 3 My response –
- 4 Robert's subconscious –
- 5 Always Clara

I cannot begin to discuss *Clara* without first thanking Gustavo Dudamel for his generosity in having invited me to compose a work based on the relationship between two great artists: Clara Wieck Schumann and Robert Schumann. Thanks to him, I was able to delve into the broad legacy of both more deeply; especially that of Clara who, in addition to being a splendid composer and one of the most important pianists of the 19th century, was the editor of her husband's complete works, as well as a teacher, mother and wife.

Except for 'My response', all five sections comprise intimate sketches or imaginary outlines of the relationship between Clara and Robert. My original idea was to transfer onto an ephemeral canvas the internal sounds of each one



Clara Schumann at the piano; not only was she acclaimed as one of the greatest pianists of the Romantic era, she was also a composer, a devoted wife, mother and editor of her husband's works

without attempting to illustrate or interpret, but simply voice and create, through my ear, the expressiveness and unique strength of their complex but also fascinating personalities. *Clara* departs from the idea that music will grant us access to a non-linear conception of time that is more circular, where the past (them) and the present (me) can meet, converse and get to know one another. During these imaginary dialogues of a poetic and musical nature, an intimate diary began to grow in me, filled with nuances, confessions and internal contradictions that find in music their own reference, significance and internal coherence, expressing all that which cannot be read or explained, but rather must be heard. I like to think that through *Clara*, Clara Wieck Schumann is here, in this concert hall with us.

In order to identify clearly the five sections, I have employed two fundamental musical tools: a brief rhythmic sequence that appears constantly as a leitmotif or *idée fixe*, acting as a thread to guide me between the sections that correspond to Robert or Clara, and a melodic theme represented by the oboe that, in a more personal way, represents the latter's private world. At the end of the piece, this leitmotif can be heard as breathing, leaving implicit the permanence and legacy of both figures. In the central part of the work ('My response') I seek two objectives: first, to bring Clara and Robert into my own world, one of a rhythmic strength and colour characteristic of my language, of the unique vitality that is absolutely fundamental to the land I come from; and second, to explore a quote considered to be very controversial, in which Clara wrote: 'I once believed that I possessed creative talent, but I have given up this idea; a woman must not desire to compose – there has never yet been one able to do it. Should I expect to be the one?'

Throughout history, women have had to overcome major obstacles marked by gender differences. We have

gradually emerged from within the musical arts with great difficulty. However, as is well known, there are many of us who have rebelled against these evident forms of injustice and struggled to gain recognition and a place in society. This piece represents an acknowledgement of Clara, a tribute to her, and my definitive, resounding response to her question. It also signals my gratitude to all the women who, in their time, challenged the society they were raised in by manifesting their artistic *oeuvre*.

Programme note © Gabriela Ortiz

“Gabriela is one of the most talented composers in the world. Not only in the continent, not only in Mexico, in the world. She has an ability to bring harmonies that connect with you.”

Gustavo Dudamel

GABRIELA ORTIZ

image is missing

Born into a musical family, Gabriela Ortiz has always felt she didn't choose music, but that music chose her. Her parents were founding members of the group Los Folkloristas, a renowned music ensemble dedicated to performing Latin American folk music.

Ortiz's multifaceted music education reflects the cosmopolitan metropolis of Mexico City where she grew up. While playing charango (a small guitar from the Andes) and guitar with her parents' group, she was also learning classical piano. She began her composition studies under the mentorship of leading Mexican composers Daniel Catán, Julio Estrada, Federico Ibarra Groth and Mario Lavista. Later she pursued studies in the UK at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama with Robert Saxton and earned a doctorate in composition and electronic music from City, University of London under the guidance of Simon Emmerson.

Ortiz's music incorporates seemingly disparate musical worlds, from traditional and popular idioms to avant-garde techniques and multimedia projects. This is, perhaps, the most salient characteristic of her output: a merging of distinct sonic worlds. While Ortiz continues to draw inspiration from Mexican subjects, she is interested in composing music that speaks to international audiences. As she recently expressed: 'I can still represent my culture, my country, but I can do something beyond that.' From massive orchestral compositions (*Yanga*, 2019), concertos (*Fractal*, 2020),

politically charged operas (*Únicamente la verdad*, 2008), haunting chamber works (*Altar de muertos*, 1997) and intimate solo pieces (*Canto a Hanna* for tenor recorder, 2005), Ortiz's music reveals a sophisticated compositional technique and a meticulous attention to rhythm and timbre. Her works have been performed by internationally prestigious orchestras and ensembles such as the Berlin, Los Angeles, New York and Royal Liverpool Philharmonic orchestras, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Kronos Quartet and Southwest Chamber Music.

Ortiz has received multiple awards and fellowships, including the Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship, Fulbright-García Robles Fellowship, National Prize for Arts and Literature, Fine Arts Medal and two Latin Grammy nominations. She is a member of the prestigious Academy of the Arts and has been admitted to El Colegio Nacional, Mexico's society of intellectuals. In addition to her composing, she has sustained a major career as an educator. She currently teaches at the National Autonomous University of Mexico and travels regularly to give courses and masterclasses at institutions throughout the Americas and Europe.

Profile © Ana Alonso-Minutti

Ana Alonso-Minutti is the author of *Mario Lavista: Mirrors of Sounds* (OUP, 2023) and co-editor of the journal *Twentieth-Century Music* (CUP). She is Associate Professor of Musicology at the University of New Mexico.

LEONARD BERNSTEIN (1918–90)

Symphonic Dances from ‘West Side Story’ (1957, arr. 1960)

Prologue (Allegro moderato) – ‘Somewhere’ (Adagio) – Scherzo (Vivace leggiero) – Mambo (Vivace leggiero) – Cha-Cha (Andantino con grazia) – Meeting Scene (Meno mosso) – ‘Cool’ Fugue (Allegretto) – Rumble (Molto allegro) – Finale (Adagio)

When *West Side Story* opened on Broadway in the autumn of 1957, the dance critic for *The New York Times* declared it had ‘no tunes’, while the paper’s music critic felt that ‘where it counts most, Leonard Bernstein’s score is disappointing.’ Such assessments seem almost laughable given the enduring popularity of Bernstein’s score and the lauded status of the show today, but they point to the way the music was seen as out of the ordinary for a musical at the time.

This was, after all, music to accompany tragedy, not comedy. A tale of forbidden romance amid a bitter turf-war



Ariana DeBose as Anita and David Alvarez as Bernardo in Steven Spielberg’s acclaimed 2021 film of *West Side Story*, showing the universality of its themes of love across a cultural divide; it is Bernardo’s murder at the hands of Tony that sets in motion the seemingly endless cycle of violence between rival factions

between rival gangs of Puerto Ricans (the Sharks) and self-styled Americans (the Jets), the contemporary reimagining of *Romeo and Juliet*. It was choreographed and directed by Jerome Robbins with a book by Arthur Laurents and lyrics by a young and largely unknown Stephen Sondheim that retained the violence and bleak inevitability of its Shakespearean inspiration.

Bernstein responded with a stylistically ambitious score defined by its rhythmic complexity, striking dissonances and intense lyricism. His lifelong love of Latin melodies and rhythms found an outlet in his music for the Sharks, and his ability to riff on cool jazz and vaudeville accompanied the pent-up energy of the Jets. Robbins's extraordinary skill at storytelling through dance led Bernstein to pack his score with propulsive dance music and tender ballets, while tritones – dark and destabilising musical intervals – reverberate throughout and cut across sweet soaring lines that speak to the innocence and hope of those caught up in the events.

Over nine movements, played continuously and structured to make musical sense rather than follow the plot, the Symphonic Dances capture much of this. To help transform moments from the theatrical score into a suite fit for the concert hall, Bernstein brought in Sid Ramin and Irwin Kostal, the show's orchestrators. No longer bound by the limitations of a small pit band, they were able to revel in the possibilities of a full symphony orchestra. As Ramin remembered: 'We were in ecstasy! Every orchestral colour was ours for the asking; strings could be subdivided ad infinitum, percussion could be spread out among many players, winds and brass were expanded.' Bernstein and Ramin had known each other since 1932; the Dances are dedicated to Ramin 'in friendship'.

The first performance was given by the New York Philharmonic on 13 February 1961 in a one-off 'Valentine

to Leonard Bernstein' concert at Carnegie Hall. Bernstein was in the audience and his old friend Lukas Foss conducted. Though the odd critic considered the music overblown in its new version, it was a triumph with the audience. Foss, too, was taken. As he wrote to Bernstein: 'Love it more and more. I am proud to do it!!'

Programme note © Sophie Redfern

Sophie Redfern lectures in music at King's College London. She is a specialist in 20th-century American music and dance, and author of *Bernstein and Robbins: The Early Ballets* (Univ. of Rochester Press, 2021).

PREVIOUSLY AT THE PROMS

Bernstein appeared twice at the Proms as conductor in the 1980s but his music arrived earlier, in 1975, when Aaron Copland inaugurated his own BBC Symphony Orchestra conducting date with his friend's *Candide* overture. Much more of Bernstein's output has been sampled since his death in both mainstream classical programmes and special crossover events. Soprano Dawn Upshaw pointed the way with her 1996 Late Night 'Dawn at Dusk' showcase, placing material from three Bernstein musicals alongside such previously excluded talents as Richard Rodgers, Stephen Sondheim and Marc Blitzstein. *West Side Story* was finally performed with the score substantially complete in an authorised concert version presented by the John Wilson Orchestra on successive nights in 2018. The purely orchestral Symphonic Dances extracted from the show made their Proms debut during Sir Mark Elder's Last Night of 1987. Especially memorable was the fifth rendition of 2007, when the 'Mambo' was encored after a costume change by Gustavo Dudamel's Simón Bolívar National Youth Orchestra of Venezuela. Increasingly staple fare, the Symphonic Dances brought down the curtain on last year's Anglo-American evening from Thomas Søndergård and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra. Also played, between suites from stage works by Adès and Britten, was Wynton Marsalis's Violin Concerto; it was played by Nicola Benedetti, for whom it was written. Much of the programme was repeated the next morning in the context of a Relaxed Prom welcoming those with sensory and communication issues or learning disabilities; Benedetti doubled as presenter.

© David Gutman

LEONARD BERNSTEIN



Leonard Bernstein grew up near Boston in a middle-class Jewish family. His earliest musical memories were of being at the synagogue, but he devoured new music at the piano during his teens, put on productions of Gilbert & Sullivan with family and

friends, and went to concerts whenever he could. His student years at Harvard (1935–9) left him frustrated by the traditional curriculum, but meeting Aaron Copland in 1937 was a turning point: Bernstein admired Copland's music enormously, and the older man quickly became a father-figure, confidant and the closest thing Bernstein had to a composition teacher.

Bernstein's composing breakthrough came in 1944 with the premieres of three works: the 'Jeremiah' Symphony, the ballet *Fancy Free* and the musical *On the Town*; the previous year he had also become the assistant conductor of the New York Philharmonic and made a sensational debut standing in at short notice for Bruno Walter in a nationally broadcast concert. Bernstein's letters from the time find him agonising over whether to devote himself to composition or carry on conducting, and whether he should write musicals or aspire to something more 'serious'. He never resolved these quandaries but concert pieces such as the Symphony No. 2, 'The Age of Anxiety' (1949, rev. 1965) and the violin concerto *Serenade* (1953–4), as well as the 'Jeremiah' Symphony, sit happily alongside the musical *Wonderful Town* (1953) and his film score for *On the Waterfront* (1954): it's Bernstein's

prodigious variety that makes him such a charismatic figure in American music.

A few days after *West Side Story* opened in 1957, Bernstein became Principal Conductor of the New York Philharmonic – more evidence of the brilliant and bewildering range of his gifts and, as an educator, his flair for explaining music at the Young People's Concerts inspired a generation. Bernstein hated to be alone and he was at his best working with other people, whether talking to an audience, making music with an orchestra or collaborating on stage works. The success of *West Side Story* was never repeated – nor could it be, as conducting took up more time. A sabbatical was set aside for a new musical in 1964 but this was abandoned – although its accidental but happy outcome was *Chichester Psalms* (1965). The more Bernstein was in demand as a conductor, the more he believed that composing was his true vocation. With its dancers, rock and blues bands, marching band and street musicians, as well as choirs and full orchestra, *Mass* (1971) was perhaps his most daring theatre piece, but his last musical, *1600 Pennsylvania Avenue* (1976), was a disaster on Broadway, despite its beautiful score. Even with his busy conducting schedule, Bernstein still made time to compose and short pieces such as *Halil* (1981) show that he still had memorable things to say. Among other late pieces, *A Quiet Place* (1983) was his only full-length opera. Bernstein died in 1990 but his multifaceted legacy endures, above all through compositions that reflect his passionate embrace of every kind of music.

Profile © Nigel Simeone

Nigel Simeone is editor of *The Leonard Bernstein Letters* (2013) and author of a book about *West Side Story* (2009).



The Proms Listening Service

As Radio 3's *The Listening Service* revisits earlier episodes reflecting some of this summer's Proms programming, presenter Tom Service takes a wide-angle view of the common themes in this weekly feature

Week 8 Mozart's 'Requiem'

Mozart's *Requiem* is restless. It always has been, ever since Mozart's death at the age of only 35 in December 1791, which is the very moment the myths of the *Requiem* – which he didn't live to finish – were born: that the composer was poisoned, that the Freemasons murdered him, that the piece was commissioned by a mysterious messenger for an aristocrat who wanted to pass off Mozart's music as his own.

In fact, that last myth-like story – perhaps the strangest of all – is the only one that's true, and so too is the certainty that Mozart knew he was writing his last music in a delirium of disease, during which he was nonetheless able to transmit his wishes as fully as he could to his friends and pupils, like Franz Xaver Süssmayr, whose completion forms the backbone of Raphaël Pichon's performance this week at the Proms with Pygmalion.

Pichon's performance also includes his own interpolations of a scintillating selection of Mozartiana in between the *Requiem*'s movements. And generations of musicians and listeners have used the incompleteness of the *Requiem* as a chance to open up its meanings and resonances.

Scholarly debate has raged since Süssmayr's completion was published: did he follow Mozart's instructions closely enough? Can you hear the difference between *echt*-Mozart and Mozart/Süssmayr – that composite composer who is the real author of every movement of the *Requiem*, apart from the opening Introit? Performers and musicologists

from Robert Levin to Duncan Druce have made their own completions, including writing an 'Amen' fugue that Mozart probably planned but which Süssmayr didn't dare compose. Most radically and creatively, the British composer Michael Finnissy made a version in 2011 that fills in the gaps of music-historical time, writing in references to Schubert, Busoni and Charles Ives, and leaving "traces" (as he calls them) of other composers who have had an impact on him.

And that means following Mozart's example, because the *Requiem* is full of traces of music by other composers whom he loved. The Introit in particular is clearly made of music inspired by the composer he most admired: Handel. Mozart had already arranged Handel's music, including *Messiah*, and in the *Requiem* he recomposes it. He uses tunes and ideas from Handel's *Dettingen Te Deum*, his *Funeral Anthem for Queen Caroline* and *Messiah*, transcending them in the new context of the *Requiem*.

Even if Mozart had completed it, it wouldn't alter the fact that this *Requiem* isn't a single statement, but a dialogue with music history. Its incompleteness allows us to be as imaginative as we like in our responses to it, so that each set of performers and audiences remakes it in their own image. That's the creative restlessness that Mozart bequeathes to us in the paradoxically complete experience of his unfinished *Requiem*.

Pygmalion under Raphaël Pichon performs Mozart's 'Requiem' this week on Thursday 7 September.

Join Tom Service on his Proms-themed musical odysseys in *The Listening Service* on BBC Radio 3 during the season (Sundays at 5.00pm, repeated Fridays at 4.30pm). You can hear all 220-plus editions of the series on BBC Sounds. Tom's book based on the series was published last year (Faber).



Domingo Hindoyan

conductor

Domingo Hindoyan is the Chief Conductor of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra.

Highlights of his first season in Liverpool included his conducting debut at the 2021 BBC Proms, a

number of recording projects, and participation in Liverpool's 'In Harmony' educational programme. The current season has included a number of world premieres and a recording of music by Roberto Sierra.

Highlights of the 2023/24 season include performances with the RLPO, Aarhus Symphony Orchestra and Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and debuts with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Minnesota and Boston Symphony orchestras. On the opera stage, he returns to the Deutsche Staatsoper Berlin with *Madama Butterfly*, Opéra National de Bordeaux for *Rusalka* and *Turandot* at Opéra de Dijon.

He has conducted leading international orchestras, including the Orchestre National de France, Czech, Dresden and New Japan Philharmonic orchestras, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, Kansas City, New World, San Diego and Simón Bolívar Symphony orchestras and Toulouse Capitole Orchestra, among others. He has also conducted at renowned festivals, including the Menuhin Festival and Festival Radio France Occitanie Montpellier.

He was born in Caracas and began his career as a violinist and member of the famed Venezuelan musical education programme El Sistema; he was a member of Daniel Barenboim's West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, later becoming first assistant to Barenboim at the Deutsche Staatsoper Berlin (2013–16).

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Nobuyuki Tsujii *piano*

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Second para

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Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra

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Second para

Chief Conductor

Domingo
Hindoyan

Principal Guest Conductor

Andrew Manze

Conductor Laureate

Vasily Petrenko

First Violins

Thelma Handy
leader

Eva

Thorarinsdottir

Andrew Harvey

Peter Liang

Martin Richardson

Concettina Del

Vecchio

Alexander Marks †

Stephan Mayer

Ruth McNamara

Susanna Poole

Elizabeth

Lamberton

Emily Mowbray

Rebecca

Steventon

Qian Wu

Claire Stranger

Ford

Katie Foster

Second Violins

Katherine

Richardson

Sarah Brandwood

Spencer

Sophie Coles

Kate Marsden

James Justin

Evans †

Sally Anne

Anderson

Olga Smolen

James Pattinson

Lukas Hank

Frances Evans

Gus Janonyte

Will Chadwick
Charlotte Dowding
Dewi Tudor Jones

Violas

Nicholas Bootiman

Gwendolyn

Cawdron

John Robert

Shepley †

David Ruby †

Fiona Stunden †

Rebecca Walters †

Rachel Jones

Sarah Hill

Ian Fair

Amy Hark

Dani Sanxis

Jayne Coyle

Cellos

Jonathan

Aasgaard

Hilary Browning †

Ian Bracken †

Gethyn Jones †

Ruth Owens

Alexander

Holladay

Mark Lindley

Anna Stuart

Lucy Hoile

Georgina

Aasgaard

Double Bases

Marcel Becker

Jamie Kenny

Ashley Frampton †

Nigel Dufty †

Anthony Williams
Elena Marigomez
Sian Rowley
Nathan Knight

Flutes

Helen Wilson
Lily Vernon Purves

Piccolo

Sameeta Gahir

Oboes

Jonathan Small †
Catrin Ruth
Davies †

Cor Anglais

Drake Gritton

Clarinets

Miquel Ramos
Salvadó
Emma Burgess
Jillian Allan

Bass Clarinet

Ausiàs Garrigós
Morant

Saxophone

Robert Buckland

Bassoons

Nina Ashton
Rebekah Abramski

Contrabassoon

Gareth Twigg

Horns

Timothy Jackson
Simon Griffiths
Stephen Nicholls
Timothy Nicholson
Christopher
Morley †

Trumpets

Russell Bennett
Hannah
MacKenzie
Richard Cowen
Gwyn Owen

Trombones

Simon Cowen
Simon Powell

Bass Trombone

Simon Chappell

Tuba

Robin Haggart †

Timpani

Neil Hitt

Percussion

Scott Lumsdaine
Josephine Frieze
Ben Gray
Jenny Marsden
Jim Goodwin
Charlie Ashby

Harp

Elizabeth McNulty

Piano/Celesta

Ian Buckle

† *25 years' service
award*

*The list of players
was correct at
the time of going
to press*

Artistic Direction

**Artistic Planning
Director
(Orchestra and
Ensembles)**
Sandra Parr †

**Artistic Planning
and Digital
Programme
Manager**

Katy Wakeford-
Brown

**Operations
and Special
Projects Manager**
Sian Waller

**Artistic Liaison
Officer**
Rosemary Barton

**Artistic Planning
Assistant**
Lydia Heyes

**Performance and
Learning**

**Executive Director,
Performance and
Learning**
Peter Garden

**Orchestra
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Julian Munro

**Deputy Orchestra
Manager**

Alex Swift

**Orchestra
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Ffion Edwards

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Alexa Butterworth