



REGINA
SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA

Gordon Gerrard
Music Director

2021
2022
SEASON

ISSUE TWO

ENCORE



ROMEO & JULIET
Classics Series

*Presented by Rod McDonald
& Maureen Hawley*

JESS MOSKALUKE
Pops Series

ADIZOKAN
Classics Series

WELCOME TO THE 2021-2022 RSO SEASON



Photo: Chris Graham

Welcome back! After a long period of silence, your Regina Symphony Orchestra is thrilled to return to what we do best—making music for you.

Over the past 18 months, we all have largely been deprived of the chance to be in the same room with each other. The connections we forge between us are what make our community stronger, and the RSO cherishes its place in helping to strengthen these connections. Music is the best way we know to create a space for open dialogue, shared conversation, and for the exchange of important ideas. The 2021-22 season has been designed to do just this. We have taken the opportunity to reflect on our traditions, to make some exciting changes and to come back with a renewed sense of purpose. I hope you will find things in this season that reawaken your imagination, inspire your enthusiasm and challenge your ideas of what can be expressed by a symphony orchestra.

This has been a difficult time for the musicians of the RSO, as I'm sure it has been for many of you. I know I speak for all of my colleagues on the stage when I say that we are overjoyed to be able to share with you again. I hope you will take every opportunity you can find to get to know these wonderful musicians. They—along with you—make our community a richer place.

Yours very fondly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Gordon Gerrard".

Gordon Gerrard

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GORDON GERRARD

MUSIC DIRECTOR

Conductor Gordon Gerrard is among the new generation of music directors changing how orchestras work in Canada. Currently in his sixth season leading the Regina Symphony Orchestra, Gordon has distinguished himself as a leader in innovative and inclusionary programming. Trained first as a pianist and subsequently as a specialist in operatic repertoire, he brings a fresh perspective to the podium that has endeared him to audiences and musicians alike.

After an international search, Gordon was appointed Music Director of the Regina Symphony Orchestra, where he has taken bold steps reimagining the orchestra's programming, including its *Forward Currents Festival* dedicated to social change and community engagement. He was the Associate Conductor of the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra for four seasons and Resident Conductor of Calgary Opera from 2007-2011. He has returned to Calgary Opera to lead productions of *La Bohème*, *Roméo et Juliette*, *Die Fledermaus*, *Lakmé* and the Canadian premiere of Mark Adamo's *Little Women*, which was recorded for

national broadcast on CBC's Saturday Afternoon at the Opera. In 2019, Gordon made his debut with Edmonton Opera leading the western Canadian premiere of Rossini's *Le Comte Ory*. Gordon has made appearances with many of Canada's leading orchestras, including Toronto, Kitchener-Waterloo, and Victoria. He has worked regularly with the National Ballet of Canada, and in 2016, he made his European debut at *Kammeroper Schloss Rheinsburg* in Germany.

Gordon is a passionate and gifted educator. He demonstrates his commitment to education through his regular work with the young artists at Calgary Opera, the Atelier Lyrique de l'Opéra de Montréal and has spent many seasons working with students at the Banff Centre, Opera Nuova (Edmonton), UBC Opera (Vancouver) and Opera McGill (Montréal) and the Glenn Gould School in Toronto. This season sees Gordon returning to the Victoria Symphony, UBC Opera in Vancouver for Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro* and to Calgary Opera for *La Traviata*.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The RSO creates, inspires, and educates on Treaty 4 Territory, which is the traditional homeland of the Cree, Saulteaux, Dakota, Nakoda, Lakota and Métis Peoples. In the spirit of reconciliation and collaboration, we affirm our relationship and partnership with the First Nations and Métis people who live here.

RSO MUSICIANS

VIOLIN 1

Christian Robinson, Concertmaster✱
Carmen Constantinescu, Assistant
Concertmaster✱

Katie Gannon
Maria Guidos-Albert
Carmelle Pretzlaw
Elizabeth Stirr
Amanda Contreras
Rudolf Sternadel

VIOLIN 2

Heng-Han Hou✱◆
David Johnson•
Beatrice Hodgkins
David Hopkinson
Jeff Looyzen
Paulo Pallas
Oxana Ossiptchouk
Resa Fiorante

VIOLA

Jonathan Ward✱◆
Megan Zak•
Jonathan Achtzehner
Erin Hillis
Virginia Hector

CELLO

Simon Fryer✱◆
Amelia Borton•
Catherine Folstad
Joel MacDonald
Catherine McLellan

BASS

Christopher Jones✱◆
Curtis Scheschuk
Brent Gelsinger
Stephen Krueger

FLUTE

Marie-Noelle Berthelet✱◆
Tara Sample•

OBOE

Tamsin Johnston✱◆
Wing Lok Soo•

CLARINET

Hyon Suk Kim✱◆
Timothy Yung•

BASSOON

Anna Norris✱◆
Jennifer Tenford•

HORN

Richard Burdick✱◆
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ROMEO & JULIET



*Presented by Rod McDonald &
Maureen Hawley*

Gordon Gerrard, conductor
Kerson Leong, violin

Saturday, Sept 25, 2021
Conexus Arts Centre
7:30 pm

HO: Dragon Realms

**HE ZHANHAO: The Butterfly
Lovers. (Liang Shanbo
yu Zhu Yingtai)**

**PROKOFIEV: Romeo and
Juliet (Romeo i Dzhuletta),
Op.64**

Photo: Bruno Schlumberger

KERSON LEONG

BIOGRAPHY

Canadian violinist Kerson Leong is quickly emerging as one of the finest musicians and instrumentalists of his generation. He continues to win over both colleagues and audiences alike not only with his “supreme mastery” (Le Devoir) of his instrument or his unmistakable tone, but also his unique ability to combine an honest, intellectual approach with raw intensity and spontaneity, resulting in a truly compelling musicality.

Kerson first gained international attention by winning Junior First Prize at the Menuhin Competition 2010 in Oslo. After subsequent debuts at major international festivals as well as four return performances with the Oslo Philharmonic, he has since distinguished himself as a powerful and individual musical voice, having played in such venues as Carnegie Hall’s Stern Auditorium, Wigmore Hall, the Auditorium du Louvre and the National Center for the Performing Arts in Beijing.

A sought-after soloist, Kerson was hand-picked by Yannick Nézet-Séguin to be his artist-in-residence with the Orchestre Métropolitain de Montréal during the 18/19 season and has performed with such ensembles as the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Vienna Chamber Orchestra, Kansai Philharmonic Orchestra, and Stavanger Symphony Orchestra among others.

Other recent highlights include recording John Rutter’s *Visions*, a piece written especially for him, with the composer himself and the Aurora Chamber Orchestra, after giving its world premiere in London, UK.

Music outreach and pedagogy are growing passions for Kerson. Renowned schools such as Indiana University’s Jacobs School of Music and the Sibelius Academy have recognized his unique approach as well as his ability to inspire the new generation by inviting him to teach and lecture. A natural communicator on and off the stage, he is cementing his significant role in reaching young people and potential music lovers with his art.

Kerson is an associated artist of the Queen Elisabeth Music Chapel in Belgium, where he was mentored by Augustin Dumay. Kerson performs on the ‘ex Bohrer’ Guarneri del Gesù violin courtesy of Canimex Inc, Drummondville (Quebec), Canada.

PROGRAM NOTES

ROMEO & JULIET

Vincent Ho: DRAGON REALMS

This piece represents my initial efforts in bridging Eastern and Western musical styles (a reflection of my own bi-cultural background). Throughout the piece, I incorporated numerous instrumental colors and sounds that I collected over the years of writing chamber music. These sounds not only characterize my current musical language but they also embody visceral elements that define the work's orchestral sound-world (eg. gentle breezes accompanied by wind chimes, distant bells, quiet rustlings, etc). By having this palette, the materials I created embody experiential qualities that would conjure up personal or emotional associations for the listener.

Formally, the piece is built on six "images" (each one spanning between 1 to 3 minutes in duration) that unfold in a dream-like sequence:

- I. *Under the Dragon's Wing*
- II. *"I hear the Dragon singing..."*
- III. *The Lake of Dreams*
- IV. *"Something wicked this way comes..."*
- V. *Chasing the Dragon*
- VI. *"Ashes to ashes, dust to dust..."*

Each image is presented as an understated rhetorical event, leaving the listener afloat as the music unfolds. Hence, my goals were two-fold: to not only convey a dream-like journey through the landscape of a mythical world but to put the listener (and performers) into the dream itself – to create a connection to a primordial realm. The order of the "images" creates a structure that holds the dramatic narrative thread, culminating to the work's final kinetic moments.

Program note by Vincent Ho

He Zhanhao, Chen Gang: BUTTERFLY LOVERS VIOLIN CONCERTO

In 1949, Mao Zedong proclaimed the founding of the People's Republic of China in Tiananmen Square, Beijing. "Literature and art should be powerful weapons for uniting and educating the people and for attacking and destroying the enemy," Mao said on his cultural policy. Far from merely parroting the cultural policies of neighbouring Stalinism, Mao's approach to art had deep roots: Confucius wrote in the fifth century BCE that a country "should begin its educational and moral development first with poetry, then with Li (ethics), and finally with Music."

The Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto, written in 1959 by He Zhanhao and Chen Gang while they were still students at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, explores all three: poetry, ethics and music. The work follows a folkloric story of doomed lovers set in the Eastern Jin dynasty, which ran 266–420 AD. Although the details differ according to the retelling, the core elements of the story involve the conventions of a genre called *caizi-jiaren*, or "scholar-beauty": romantic stories that often feature women disguising themselves and living as men for the sake of education.

In the *Butterfly Lovers* story, the female hero is Zhu Yingtai, who disguises herself as a man and travels to Hangzhou to study for a man's education. On her way she meets fellow student Liang Shanbo, and the two take to each other to the extent of immediately taking an oath of brotherhood. Towards the end of their studies Zhu Yingtai attempts to legitimize their loving relationship by inviting Liang Shanbo back to her family to meet and marry her "sister" — who is, of course, herself. Unfortunately, Zhu Yingtai's father has already promised her to another man. When Liang Shanbo discovers both that the man he loved is a woman, and that he

PROGRAM NOTES

ROMEO & JULIET CONTINUED

cannot marry her, he dies of heartbreak. As Zhu Yingtai takes part in her own wedding procession towards her fate of marrying a man she does not love, she passes Liang Shanbo's grave, which opens with a clap of thunder. She dives into it to join him, and their spirits emerge from the ground as a pair of butterflies.

The same elements of the story that make it appealing to a Western audience (it is frequently described in the English-speaking world as "Chinese Romeo and Juliet," though given the respective ages of each tale it would probably be more accurate to characterize Romeo and Juliet as "English Butterfly Lovers") made it appealing to the Communist Party as a suitable artistic focus for Chinese artists. The Party aimed to liberate Chinese women from the feudal traditions of arranged marriage, bound feet and lack of access to education— with, of course, the aim of liberating them *into* serving the Party as workers and soldiers as well as mothers and wives. Zhu Yingtai, committed to both education and the integrity of her love, was a suitable protagonist. New adaptations of the story were in vogue in 1946, an all-female opera company in Shanghai called the Xuesheng Company staged the tale with a focus on "the theme of free love and marriage."

Three years later, Chen Gang and He Zhanhao worked together to produce a concerto on the subject— one which was close to Chen Gang's heart. "I felt that I shared the fate of the female protagonist, that we breathed together," he later wrote. Indeed, he already had several things in common with her: he falsified his age, instead of his gender, to enter school, having aged himself up from 14 to 18 to take the entrance examinations to university. He also understood lost love: shortly before the composition of the concerto he had been labelled a "rightist

son" opposed to the ideals of his fatherland, sent to labour in the countryside, and lost his relationship with his first love as a result.

The concerto tells the story of the lovers in seven sections, with the violin representing Zhu Yingtai and the cello as Liang Shanbo. The first movement portrays Zhu Yingtai's childhood and her oath of fraternity with Liang Shanbo the second, their three years of schooling together; the third, the pain of their parting and the invitation to marry Zhu Yingtai's "sister"; the fourth, the protagonist's struggle against her father's choice of husband; the fifth, a duet between the two lovers after the revelation of Zhu Yingtai's identity; the sixth, the anger and heartbreak of Liang Shanbo's grief and Zhu Yingtai's subsequent suicide; and the seventh, the two souls' transformation into butterflies.

Sergei Prokofiev: ROMEO AND JULIET, OP. 64 (ROMEO I DZHULETTA)

The recitation of the horror and fear involved in repressive cultural climate of the Soviet Union is a standard feature of any Soviet composer. It is impossible to understand the works of composers like Shostakovich, Khachaturian, or Prokofiev without considering their delicate balancing act between the demands of the state and the demands of art. Of the great Soviet composers, Prokofiev holds a peculiar distinction. He alone, after having left the USSR to work in the relatively liberal artistic climates of the US and France, chose to return.

When Prokofiev left the USSR in 1918, it was on a passport procured for him by Anatoly Lunacharsky, the head of the organization in charge of education and culture. "You are a revolutionary in music, we are revolutionaries in life," said Lunacharsky to the departing composer. "We ought to work

PROGRAM NOTES

ROMEO & JULIET CONTINUED

together. But if you want to go to America I will not stand in your way."

From the vantage point of the misfortunes that befell his career while abroad, Prokofiev likely looked back fondly on the support and artistic latitude afforded to him by Lunacharsky. His first stop was Chicago, where he attempted to stage one of his operas;; however, the conductor fell ill, the premiere was postponed, and the venture fell apart for want of money. Broke and embarrassed, he moved to Paris, where he had more success in collaborating with Diaghilev's famous Ballets Russes. His reception there was at times enthusiastic and at times tepid the same was true of his relationship with the other major Russian composer in Paris at the time, Igor Stravinsky, with whom he once nearly came to blows over the merits of Prokofiev's opera *The Love for Three Oranges*.

In 1925, Lunacharsky persuaded the Central Committee of the Communist Party to extend invitations back to three departed musicians: Stravinsky, Alexander Borovsky, and Prokofiev. Stravinsky and Borovsky declined. Prokofiev decided to dip his toes into the water and began to tour inside the USSR. He mounted *The Love for Three Oranges* in Leningrad unlike Stravinsky, Lunacharsky adored it, and secured him permission to travel freely between the USSR and the rest of the world for as long as Lunacharsky was in office. He did so for many years, and finally made up his mind and moved his family permanently to Moscow as the Great Depression was hitting America and Europe.

But if the free and revolutionary artistic society Lunacharsky envisioned had ever existed, it was certainly on the wane by the time Prokofiev was settled back at home. Lunacharsky had died in 1933, and after the death of Lenin, Stalin had moved quickly to adjust the course of society to his liking. He

closed the Women's department of the Central Committee, which had made Russia the first country in the world to legalize abortion, on the grounds that all women's issues in the USSR had already been solved. He re-criminalized previously legal homosexuality, outlawed research in Mendelian genetics and put dissenting scientists to death— and along with his cultural policies, kept an iron grip on the production of art.

Although Prokofiev's ballet about Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* was not overtly political orpolitically impeded, it suffered a series of setbacks as a result of the general climate of jumpiness and conservatism. The Kirov Theatre in Leningrad first suggested the ballet, but backed out quickly. He brought it to Moscow's Bolshoi next, but they declared it was impossible to dance to. He spent several years revising it and was rejected again on the grounds that the music was too soft and the rhythms too indistinct. Prokofiev nearly gave up, until they asked him to listen to his music not from the audience, but from the vantage point of the stage, where the dancers would hear it. He reluctantly agreed that they were right and went back to his revisions.

When the finished work finally premiered at the Bolshoi it saw immediate and enormous success— but in the meantime, unsure if the music would ever be deemed fit to dance to, he had extracted several orchestral suites from it, which are now as frequently performed as the ballet. At the premiere, the great ballerina Galina Ulanova, who was dancing Juliet, is said to have summed up the achievement of the performance with a quip adapted from Shakespeare:

*Never was a story of more woe
Than this of Prokofiev's music for Romeo.*



2021 | 2022
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JESS MOSKALUKE

Gordon Gerrard, conductor
Jess Moskaluke, vocalist

Saturday, Oct 16, 2021
7:30 pm
Conexus Arts Centre

Saskatchewan's own Jess Moskaluke continues to dazzle the country music world, with awards, chart topping albums and heartfelt lyrics. Hear Moskaluke's textured vocals and emotive sensibilities with the lush, beautiful sounds of the Regina Symphony Orchestra.



Photo: Munz Media

JESS MOSKALUKE

BIOGRAPHY

An internationally celebrated artist, Jess Moskaluke continues to break barriers in the country music world with her big voice, pop-infused hooks and sonic versatility. The first Canadian female country artist since Shania Twain to achieve CRIA Platinum single status with the hit 'Cheap Wine and Cigarettes', Moskaluke has since gone on to earn CRIA Gold certifications for 'Take Me Home', 'Kiss Me Quiet' and a nod for her feature on Paul Brandt's 'I'm An Open Road'. She was also notably the first Canadian female country artist since 2008 to have a song in the Top 3 with 'Drive Me Away', and has notched another SIX Top 10 hits in addition to that including her first ever NUMBER ONE 'Country Girls'. The 2017 JUNO Award winner for 'Country Album of the Year', Moskaluke is also the 2018 CCMA Award winner for 'Album of the Year', a three-time consecutive CCMA 'Female Artist of the Year' Award winner – the first resident of Saskatchewan in the history of the awards to achieve this title – a 2017 SOCAN Award winner and

recently took home the 2020 WCM Award for 'Country Artist of the Year'. Kicking off 2020 with 'Country Girls' topping the charts, Moskaluke's follow-up track 'Halfway Home' landed in the Top 5 at Australian country radio, where in 2019, she played the C2C Music Festival and took part in CMC's 'Songs and Stories' series, performing six songs for a one-hour special. She delivered her Top 15 single 'Mapdot', a personal ode to small-town pride and the place she's proud to call home, ahead of the release of *The Demos* in February, and her current Top 40 track 'Nothin' I Don't Love About You' continues to rise at Canadian Country radio. In addition to her music, Moskaluke continues to explore other avenues including her highly anticipated 'Handpicked by Jess' subscription box drops, with previous versions selling out in less than 24 hours.

ADIZOKAN



Gordon Gerrard, conductor
Red Sky Performance
Sandra Laronde, director
Nelson Tagoona, throat boxer

Saturday, November 27, 2021
Conexus Arts Centre
7:30 pm

RAVEL La valse
BRITTON Adizokan Suite
SIBELIUS Valse Triste
RACHMANINOFF
Symphonic Dances Op.45



Photo: Bruce Zinger

RED SKY PERFORMANCE

BIOGRAPHY

Red Sky Performance is a leading company of contemporary Indigenous performance in Canada and worldwide.

Their mission is to create inspiring experiences of contemporary Indigenous arts and culture that transform society. They drive our passion forward and elevate Indigenous arts and culture in ways that celebrate, uplift, and respect Indigenous cultures.

Now in their 21st year of performance (dance, theatre, music and media), Red Sky's work highlights the originality and power of contemporary performance, enabling new creations to expand the breadth and scope of Indigenous-made work in Canada.

The vision of Red Sky Performance derives from its creator Sandra Laronde (Misko Kizhigoo Migizii Kwe) which means "Red Sky Eagle Woman" in Anishinaabemowin (Ojibway) language from the Teme-Augama Anishinaabe (People of the Deep Water). Her vision is dedicated to expanding and elevating the ecology of contemporary performance informed by Indigenous worldview and culture.

Laronde's concept of performance explores the relationship between movement, live music, theatricality, and image. Her engagement in these disciplines involves collaborations with dancers, musicians, composers, choreographers, visual artists, actors,

writers, designers, researchers, and culture keepers are integral to Red Sky Performance's distinct productions. Red Sky Performance provides many opportunities to emerging and established artists as they hone their artistic practice through a collaborative Indigenous process, offering unique opportunities for these practitioners to thrive creatively and professionally.

Touring since 2003, Red Sky has delivered over 2,755 performances across Canada including international performances in 17 countries on four continents, including two Cultural Olympiads (Beijing and Vancouver), World Expo in Shanghai, Venice Biennale, and Jacob's Pillow, among others. At the same time, Red Sky remains deeply rooted and invested on a grassroots level and regularly perform in urban, rural, and reserve communities across Turtle Island.

Red Sky has been the recipient of 16 Dora Mavor Moore awards and nominations, two Canadian Aboriginal Music Awards, three International Youth Drama Awards from Shenzhen, China, and the Smithsonian Expressive Award, among other recognitions.

More than Dance, Red Sky Performance is a Movement.

SANDRA LARONDE

BIOGRAPHY



Sandra Laronde is of the Teme-Augama Anishinaabe (People of the Deep Water) and an award-winning arts innovator and cultural leader in Canada. Her mission in life is to reveal the hope, promise, and vibrancy of Indigenous peoples through the expression and dissemination of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit artistry. As an arts leader, creator, and innovator, Sandra creates, choreographs, produces, directs, and disseminates world-renowned Canadian works of artistic value and significance.

As the founder of Red Sky Performance in 2000, Sandra's exceptional artistry and programming contribute to building vibrant Indigenous communities across Ontario, Canada, and worldwide. Because of her mentoring and leadership, there has been substantial growth in place-based culture and innovative new approaches to programming that has raised the artistic ceiling of contemporary

Indigenous artistry in Canada and throughout the world.

Sandra was also the Director of Indigenous Arts at the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity from 2007 to 2017. During her 10-year tenure as Director, she realized her vision to create exceptional cutting-edge programming informed by Indigenous cultures and world views, and excelled at bringing world-class faculty to the Centre. Substantial growth for Indigenous Arts at the Banff Centre was achieved under her leadership, involving hundreds of Indigenous artists across Canada and from around the globe.

NELSON TAGOONA BIOGRAPHY



Nelson Tagoona improvises with traditional throat singing and beat-boxing, developing a technique he has termed “throat boxing”. This unique performance has garnered Tagoona high praise throughout Canada, including being awarded at the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee, and named one of the “Top 10 Canadian Artists under 20” by CBC Music. Tagoona performed during the opening of the Northern Scene Festival at the National Arts Centre, Pan Am Games, and at numerous other festivals and events Canada-wide.

ELIOT BRITTON BIOGRAPHY



Eliot Britton (b.1983) - integrates electronic, audiovisual and instrumental music through an energetic and colourful personal language. His creative output reflects an eclectic musical experience, from gramophones to videogames, drum machines to orchestras. Rhythmic gadgetry, artistry and the colours of technology permeate his works. By drawing on these sound worlds and others, Britton’s compositions tap newly available resources of the 21st century. As a member of the Manitoba Metis Federation, Britton is passionate about Canadian musical culture, seeking new and engaging aesthetic directions that use technology to enhance expression.

Currently Britton is cross appointed between Music Technology & Digital Media and Composition at the University of Toronto Faculty of Music. There he is building a media research-creation facility (Centre BPMC) and renovating the historical UofT Electronic Music Studios (EMS).

PROGRAM NOTES

ADIZOKAN

Maurice Ravel: LA VALSE, POÈME CHORÉGRAPHIQUE

In April of 2021, the New York Times published an essay titled “You Can Be A Different Person After the Pandemic.” In the piece, which went viral and encouraged countless memes of the title juxtaposed with a humorous image of what one could choose to become, writer Olga Khazan encouraged readers to accept and even encourage the way their personalities and priorities may have shifted during the pandemic. It’s an appealing, and somewhat obvious, premise: one cannot live through events that profoundly affect global society without emerging changed.

Such was the case for Maurice Ravel emerging from the First World War. Ravel had enlisted early as a munitions driver in an artillery regiment, entrusted with nighttime missions under heavy German bombardment. He contracted amoebic dysentery, sustained severe frostbite in his feet, and lost his mother to illness during the war. He was also censured by his fellow composers: as a response to the conflict a number of French composers formed a *Ligue Nationale pour la Defense de la Musique Française*, with the goal of banning the performance of German music. Ravel refused to join. “It would be dangerous for French composers to ignore systematically the productions of their foreign colleagues, and thus form themselves into a sort of national coterie,” he told them. Since Ravel was the one among them in the greatest daily physical danger from actual Germans, one would think his opinion on the matter of the enemy combatant’s music ought to have held weight. Instead, they banned his music from their concerts.

As early as 1906, Ravel had planned to write a tribute to the Viennese waltz. It was to be “a grand waltz, a sort of homage to the memory of the great Strauss, not Richard, the other, Johann,” as he wrote to a friend at the time. However, the piece never took

shape before the war. Afterwards, he received a commission from Sergei Diaghilev of the Ballets Russes which encouraged him to return to it. Ravel, as Khazan’s article encourages us to accept the inevitability of, was a different person after the war. He composed more slowly, was in poor health, and rejected offered accolades like the Legion of Honour. The world— and especially France— was no longer a fitting place for a straightforward homage to Vienna.

When Ravel played a draft of the ballet that was to become *La Valse* for Diaghilev, it was evident that not only was the music stranger and more diabolical than Ravel’s pre-war sketches had intended, it was also undanceable. Diaghilev was certainly not the sort to write off music without reason— this was the man who programmed the *Rite of Spring*, after all. Even the location of the meeting had the spirit of the adventurous and avant-garde; Ravel played *La Valse* for him at the home of Misia Sert, the Polish bisexual libertine pianist who frequently came to Diaghilev’s financial aid with her own fortune when his artistic vision threatened to ruin him. When Diaghilev told Ravel that *La Valse* would never be a ballet, Ravel was upset, but believed him. He published the work with the designation *poème chorégraphique*, and a short and somewhat enigmatic description:

Through whirling clouds, waltzing couples may be faintly distinguished. The clouds gradually scatter: one sees at last an immense hall peopled with a whirling crowd. The scene is gradually illuminated. The light of the chandeliers bursts forth at the fortissimo letter B. Set in an imperial court, about 1855.

Set as it is in 1855, the music rejects the easy assumption of being straightforwardly “about” the war— as did Ravel. “This dance may seem tragic...But one should only see in it what the music expresses: an ascending progression of sonority,” he wrote. Even progressions of sororities,

PROGRAM NOTES

ADIZOKAN CONTINUED

however, exist within and refer to their own time and place. Perhaps it is not so much that *La Valse* represents “the predicament of European civilization in the aftermath of the Great War,” as George Benjamin wrote, but that any representation of war that we hear in the music was there in 1855 just as much as it was in 1920. The seeds of War (and the other horsemen Conquest, and Famine, and Pandemic) were already planted in the ballrooms where figures waltz unknowingly through the whirling crowd.

Eliot Britton: ADIZOKAN SUITE

Adizokan is a genre-defying new creation featuring Indigenous vocals, electro-acoustic, and orchestral music, with dance and film. Eliot Britton, Red Sky Performance, and the Toronto Symphony Orchestra partnered together for this World Premiere that explores Indigenous connections to ancestral origins, and features 85 musicians with guest vocalists and dancers. *Adizokan* was premiered with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra at Roy Thomson Hall, Toronto on Saturday, October 7, 2017 at 7:30 pm. It was performed as part of the International Festival of Mayan Culture at the Teatro Peón Contreras, Mérida, Mexico on Tuesday, October 24, 2017 at 9 pm.

Program Note by Eliot Britton

Jean Sibelius: VALSE TRISTE

Finnish composer Jean Sibelius' *Valse Triste* began as a family affair. In 1888, he was 23 and studying at the Helsinki Music Institute (now renamed the Sibelius Academy in his honour) when his friend Armas Järnefelt invited him to his home. Sibelius went and immediately fell in love with Armas' younger sister Aino. Four years later they were married, and Sibelius had eight new siblings-in-law: not just Armas but also Kasper, Arvid, Erik, Ellida, Ellen, Hilja and Sigrid Järnefelt.

The Järnefelt siblings were the children of Alexander Järnefelt, a general in the Russian army; but with so many apples, at least a few were bound to fall far from the tree. Such was the case with Aino and Armas' brother Arvid Järnefelt. Arvid's career started out conventionally; he studied psychology in Leipzig and Russian at the university of Moscow before becoming a lawyer in Finland and joining the civil service. But then his life took some stranger turns. He was one of the first people in Finland to acquire a copy of Leo Tolstoy's *What I Believe*, his treatise on Christianity whose ideas immediately caused the book to be banned in Russia and Tolstoy excommunicated by the Orthodox Church. Tolstoy defined his version of Christianity, whose adherents and hangers-on came to be called Tolstoyans, by five simple principles defined by the Sermon on the Mount: love your enemies, do not be angry, return evil with good, do not lust, and do not take oaths. Tolstoy rejected the concepts of state and government, promoted vegetarianism, and advocated nonresistance in all circumstances. Arvid Järnefelt was electrified.

He wrote to Tolstoy, “Your works have shown me the light by which I live and will live. I love you for this with all my heart and will never stop loving you.”

Clearly, Järnefelt's career as a lawyer and agent of the state was in opposition to the new guiding force of his life. He abandoned his legal career, bought a farm, refused to pay taxes, and stopped having sex with his wife. He devoted himself to farming, shoemaking, blacksmithing, and writing: specifically, writing works that advanced the principles of Tolstoyanism in Finland. This was a somewhat controversial proposition in the country, where many prominent members of society were advocating resistance by any and all means possible to the Russification of Finland. In the context of forced cultural assimilation and loss of administrative self-determination of the

PROGRAM NOTES

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Finnish people, the advice of a Russian intellectual to place Christian love above all else, never be angry, and turn the other cheek when affronted naturally seemed somewhat suspect.

Despite Arvid's abrupt reorganization of his life, Jean Sibelius remained on good terms with his odd duck brother-in-law. In 1903, Järnefelt finished a play titled *Kuolema*, which simply means "Death." The story is dreamlike, a dark symbolist fairy tale following the life of a protagonist, Paavali. It begins from his boyhood, when he witnesses his mother's death. Death claims her in the form of her late husband. The play follows Paavali through his good deeds for an "old witch" as a young man, to his marriage as foretold by the witch, and finally ending in his death in a house fire, where it is now his late mother taking the form of Death to carry him away. Järnefelt asked Sibelius to compose incidental music for the work, which he did.

Although there were six numbers in total that Sibelius wrote for the play, it was the opening music that took on a life of its own. Originally marked *Tempo di valse lente* and later revised and titled *Valse Triste*, the music depicts the final moments of Paavali's mother. As she lies dying, music begins and she rises from her bed, she begins to dance, and is joined by strange otherworldly waltzing couples, who refuse to meet her eyes. She is exhausted, but gathers herself for a final wild and energetic dance; at the apex of which there is a knock on the door, where Death has come to take her away.

Sergei Rachmaninoff: SYMPHONIC DANCES, OP. 45

"I don't know how it happened," Sergei Rachmaninoff said about the apparent miracle that was his Symphonic Dances, his last composition, written two years before his death. "It must have been my last spark." In the score of the *Dances*, however, Rachmaninoff appears to hint at an explanation, at the end of a work heavily

laced with religious themes, he writes "Aliluya" at the top of the page. The spark, perhaps, was not his own.

Rachmaninoff's relationship to the practice of composition was always tempestuous. The tension between his career as a pianist and as a composer began during his student days, when he was a student of pianist Nikolai Zverev. He was a man who referred to the students he boarded in his home as his "cubs", refused payment for his teaching, dressed them up and paraded them around Moscow to chamber music and opera performances, and frequently fell into a rage and hit them for mistakes. Yet, according to Rachmaninoff, "This was a man of rare intellect, generosity, and kindness. He commanded a great deal of respect among the best people of his time. Indeed, discipline entered my life." One of Zverev's tenets of discipline was that composition was a frivolous pursuit for a promising pianist. Rachmaninoff was not at liberty to compose until later, after he had graduated from Zverev's home-conservatory.

The same tension confronted him many times throughout his career. After his first symphony was received poorly, he succumbed to depression and a total inability to compose for several years, and thus was forced to make a living solely from giving piano lessons. He described the experience as "like the man who had suffered a stroke and for a long time had lost the use of his head and hands." Composition was, to Rachmaninoff, a limb just as essential as his physical limbs. The limb was once again in danger towards the end of his life, by which point he and his family were living in America. The American public had significantly more interest in Rachmaninoff the pianist than Rachmaninoff the composer, but the fault was not all theirs—it was, at least in part, a self-inflicted amputation. "I left behind my desire to compose," he said about his emigration. "Losing my country, I lost myself also."

PROGRAM NOTES

ADIZOKAN CONTINUED

But not quite. In the *Symphonic Dances*, he not only found again his desire to compose, but he also found his country. In particular, he found and brought into his own compositional style the sounds of the Russian Orthodox Church, which had been with him since his childhood just as much as the twin urges of creation and interpretation had been. In 1883, when Rachmaninoff was ten years old, his father's poor financial management forced the family to sell their ancestral country estate and move to a small flat in the city, where later that year his sister died of diphtheria and his father walked out on them entirely. His maternal grandmother stepped in as a parent and began to bring him to church services. His relationship to the theological aspects of the religious practice are indefinite, but he fell in love with the music, and went to church to worship the music as much as anything else. His friend Alexander Gedike wrote that for as long as he lived in Russia:

quite often, even in winter, he would get up at seven o'clock in the morning and hail a cab in the darkness, mostly to drive to Taganka, to the Andronikov Monastery where he stood in the half-darkness of the enormous church through the whole liturgy, listening to the austere ancient chants from the Oktoekh sung by the monks in parallel fifths.

Bellringing is one of the most important aspects of a Russian Orthodox Church service, the result of a long history that has left its characteristic sound quite different from Western European-style church bells. Each bell in a Western-style set is tuned with the lowest audible pitch the bell produces (called the hum) an octave beneath the highest (called the ring), such that each bell seems to the ear to be a single "note." Russian bells, however, are constructed with a seventh between the hum and the ring, such that every bell has its own palette of tones. Which pitch dominates in the listener's ear depends on

the size of the bell, its construction, and the individual listener. Rachmaninoff was deeply impressed by the bells of his grandmother's faith and remained interested in the sound and affect of bells all his life, he even wrote a choral symphony titled *The Bells* in 1913, with words from Poe's poem of the same name translated idiosyncratically into Russian by symbolist Konstantin Balmont. The orchestral tubular bells reprise their role in the *Symphonic Dances*, contributing to a theme Rachmaninoff had used before: the first of the three dances quotes from his own First Symphony, the public failure of which had led to his years-long crisis at the beginning of his career. With his final major symphonic work, he chose to vindicate his first.

After a waltz-like second section, the third and final "dance" of the set is interrupted by material that is not a dance at all, but a liturgy. The trumpet plays, in its entirety, the Dies Irae chant from the Mass for the Dead. When the written "Aliluya" comes, that too is a reference: to Rachmaninoff's own setting of texts from the Russian Orthodox all-night vigil ceremony.

"Music should bring relief. It should rehabilitate minds and souls...Music cannot be just colour and rhythm," he told the New York Times once. Although the *Symphonic Dances* have plenty of both colour and rhythm, perhaps their true purpose in the rehabilitation of the ailing composer's mind and soul, encapsulated in his final words in the score: "I thank thee, Lord."



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A Message from Holy Rosary Cathedral



The cathedral under construction in August, 1913, with trolley tracks and a wooden sidewalk in front.

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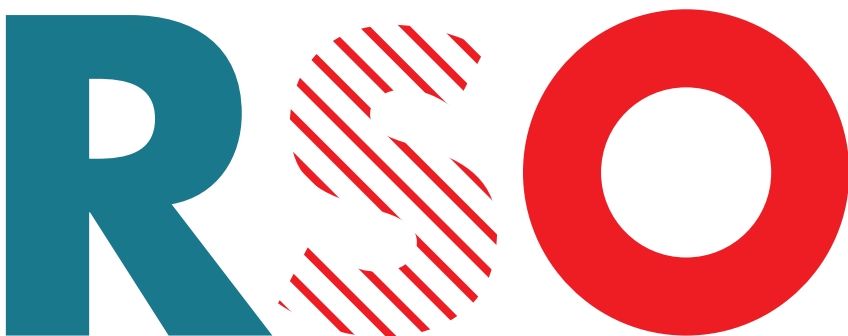
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