

Toronto Symphony Orchestra

Sir Andrew Davis, Interim Artistic Director

Wednesday, November 21, 2018 at 8:00pm

Friday, November 23, 2018 at 7:30pm

Saturday, November 24, 2018 at 8:00pm

John Storgårds, conductor

Kirill Gerstein, piano

John Adams

City Noir

(TSO Co-commission)

1. The City and Its Double
2. The Song Is for You
3. Boulevard Night

Timothy McAllister, saxophone

Intermission

Ludwig van Beethoven

Piano Concerto No. 4 in G Major, Op. 58

- I. Allegro moderato
- II. Andante con moto
- III. Rondo: Vivace

Maurice Ravel

Boléro

ABOUT THE WORKS

John Adams

City Noir (TSO Co-commission)

35
min

Born: Worcester, Massachusetts, USA, February 15, 1947
Composed: 2009

City Noir is a symphonic work co-commissioned by the Los Angeles Philharmonic Association, the London Symphony Orchestra in association with Cité de la Musique, the Zaterdag Matinee, and the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. It received its first public performance, by the Los Angeles Philharmonic, on October 8, 2009, conducted by Gustavo Dudamel, with Carrie Dennis (viola), Timothy McAllister (alto saxophone), William Lane (horn), Donald Green (trumpet), and James Miller (trombone) playing the prominent solo parts.

The work's TSO Première was on March 5, 2011, as part of the TSO New Creations Festival, with the composer, John Adams, conducting, and Timothy McAllister as guest on alto saxophone. For these performances, McAllister returns on alto saxophone, with Nicolò Eugelmi (Guest Principal Viola), Neil Deland (Principal Horn), Andrew McCandless (Principal Trumpet), and Gordon Wolfe (Principal Trombone) as the other prominent soloists.

In his own notes for the piece, Adams explains that its primary inspiration was the work of historian Kevin Starr on urban California in the late 1940s and early 1950s. As Starr described it, the sensational journalism and dark, eerie chiaroscuro of the Hollywood films of the late '40s and early '50s revealed the dark underside of a City of Angels that, "for all its shoddiness possessed a certain sassy, savvy energy. It

was, among other things, a Front Page kind of town where life was lived by many on the edge, and that made for good copy and good film noir."

"Those images and their surrounding aura whetted my appetite," Adams writes, "for an orchestral work that, while not necessarily referring to the soundtracks of those films, might nevertheless evoke a similar mood and feeling tone of the era. I was also stimulated by the notion that there indeed exists a bona fide genre of jazz-inflected symphonic music, a fundamentally American orchestral style and tradition that goes back as far as the early 1920s (although, truth to tell, it was a Frenchman, Darius Milhaud who was the first to realize its potential with his 1923 ballet *La création du monde*, a year before Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* première in New York)."

Adams describes the overall musical form of *City Noir* as "pockets of high energy... nested among areas of a more leisurely—one could even say 'cinematic'—lyricism." The first movement, "The City and Its Double", owes its title to the French playwright Antonin Artaud whose writings contrast the vitality of the viewer's sensual experience with the contrivance of theatre as a literary form. Similarly, Adams says, "My 'city' can be imagined not just as geographic place or even as a social nexus, but rather as a source

of inexhaustible sensual experience. As a child watching the early days of television I remembered well the program that always ended with the familiar tag line, ‘There are eight million stories in the Naked City. This has been one.’”

“The movement opens with brief, powerful ‘wide screen’ panorama that gives way to a murmuring dialogue between the double bass pizzicato and the scurrying figures in the woodwinds and keyboards...a late-hour empty street scene, if you like. After a broad and lyrical melodic passage in the strings, the original *scorrevole* movement returns, charged with increasingly insistent impulse and building up steam until it peaks with a full-throttle orchestral tutti. A surging melody in the horns and celli punctuated by jabbing brass ‘bullets’ brings the movement to a nearly chaotic climax before it suddenly collapses into shards and fragments.”

After the frenzy of the first movement’s ending, “The Song Is for You” takes its time assembling itself, Adams says. “Gradually a melodic profile in the solo alto sax emerges

from the surrounding pools of chromatically tinted sonorities. The melody yearns toward but keeps retreating from the archetypal ‘blue’ note. But eventually the song finds full bloom in the voice of the solo trombone, [which]... picks up motion and launches a brief passage of violent, centripetal energy, all focussed on a short obsessive idea first stated by the sax. Once spent of its fuel, the movement returns to the quiet opening music, ending with pensive solos by the principal horn and viola.”

The third movement, “Boulevard Night”, is a study in cinematic colours: the moody “Chinatown” trumpet solo near the beginning is “languorous and nocturnal”; the jerky stop-start coughing engine music in the staccato strings is “animal and pulsing”; the slinky, sinuous saxophone theme that keeps coming back, “each time with an extra layer of stage makeup,” is “in-your-face brash and uncouth.” It should all have the slightly disorienting effect, Adams says, “of a very crowded boulevard peopled with strange characters, like those of a David Lynch film—the kind who only come out very late on a very hot night.”

Program note by David S. Perlman

Ludwig van Beethoven Piano Concerto No. 4 in G Major, Op. 58

34
min

Baptized: Bonn, now in Germany, December 17, 1770

Died: Vienna, Austria, March 26, 1827

Composed: 1805 (approx.)

Beethoven’s Fourth Piano Concerto had its première in Vienna on December 22, 1808, with the composer conducting from the keyboard—the last time he performed a concerto in public. (He “played astonishingly well at the fastest possible tempos,” one listener noted.) In this most lyrical, poetic, and fantastical of his concertos, Beethoven does not abandon

Mozartian concerto form but imbues it with a genuinely Romantic voice, reconceived in ways all the more expressive for their audacity. The work is rich in themes, some of them appearing as dreamy digressions or with piquant details of harmony, texture, and ornamentation. All three movements feature sudden shifts of mood; the work is

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ardent and melancholy, heroic and ethereal, anguished and whimsical. Beethoven draws novel, vibrant colours from both orchestra and piano (this was his first concerto to exploit the tonal resources of the new six-octave Viennese fortepiano), and the relationship of the two forces is unusually complex and dramatic. The piano writing is brilliant and rhapsodic, full of sensuous melodies, sweeping scales and arpeggios, and decorative figuration in the highest register.

In the *Andante con moto*, an astonishingly original conception, the two forces play utterly different music: the orchestra (strings only) makes jagged, forceful pronouncements to which the piano replies with quiet chords and poignant melody, and, as this dialogue unfolds, the strings are calmed by the piano's entreaties. (At the première, Beethoven "sang on his instrument with a deep melancholy feeling.") The rhetoric of protagonist and antagonist and the recitative-like textures hint at a dramatic situation. Indeed, many commentators have heard this movement as a meditation on the myth of Orpheus, who, shielded by the music of his lyre, braves the Underworld to retrieve his dead beloved, Euridice, winning over hostile Furies with his song, guiding Euridice through the gloom, but losing her again when he breaks his vow and looks back at her. (Note the piano's heartrending dissonance on the downbeat of the last bar.)

The whole work, in fact, may relate to the myth; it would explain certain curious features in the outer movements. The meditative chords for unaccompanied piano in the opening bars—in a striking departure from concerto convention—perhaps evoke Orpheus tuning his lyre (Czerny recommended that the chords be broken, harp-like). Jander, for one, views the whole work as a cycle—an "Orpheus concerto"—and relates the outer movements to other episodes of the myth: the first movement to "the Song of Orpheus" (during which Orpheus amazes all of nature), and the closing rondo to "the grisly tale of Orpheus torn limb from limb by the vengeful Bacchantes." The playful and dance-like finale seems to undercut the Orphean argument. Yet there may be at least one telling correspondence: according to Ovid, the Bacchantes drown out Orpheus's magical lyre by playing "wind instruments, brass instruments, and drums"; Beethoven pointedly withholds the trumpets and drums of his orchestra until bar 32 of the finale.

No documentary evidence proves that Beethoven wrote this concerto with Orpheus in mind; though the correspondences between myth and music are so compelling, and make sense of so many strange departures from Classical models, that they are difficult to dismiss as coincidental. Regardless, this music is unusually vivid, picturesque, and imaginative—that much is undeniable.

Program note by Kevin Bazzana

Maurice Ravel

Boléro

14
min

Born: Ciboure, France, March 7, 1875

Died: Paris, France, December 28, 1937

Composed: 1928

Boléro was premièred as a ballet, in Paris on November 22, 1928, danced by the Ida Rubinstein Company and conducted by Walther Straram. Earlier that year, dancer Ida Rubinstein had commissioned a new ballet score from Ravel, and he had planned to answer her request with orchestrations of piano music by a composer he admired—the Spaniard Isaac Albéniz. Discovering that the transcription rights had already been spoken for, he decided instead to create an original work with Spanish flavouring. Oddly enough for someone well versed in Spanish music, he chose as the title a form—the traditional folk dance, the boléro, is a lively step—that bears little relation to the music. When friends pointed this out to him, he shrugged and replied, “It’s not important.”

He also used the opportunity to conduct a musical experiment. As he put it, the score would be “uniform throughout in its melody, harmony and rhythm, the latter being tapped out continuously on the drum. The only element of variety is supplied by the orchestral crescendo.” Instrumental colouring plays a major role as well, an area in which Ravel had attained supreme mastery.

His suggestions for the ballet’s setting and choreography involved a factory, a group of workers, and an amorous, eventually murderous rendezvous between one of the

women, her jealous lover, and a toreador. Instead, choreographer Bronislava Nijinska set it in a Spanish inn. A woman (Rubinstein) danced alone atop a table surrounded by men. As her steps grew more and more animated, her observers became increasingly excited, eventually pounding the table in rhythm to the music. At the climax, knives were drawn and a brawl broke out.

After its first, wildly successful ballet performance, *Boléro* quickly won popularity in the concert hall as well. The whole affair surprised Ravel and also embarrassed him. As composer Arthur Honegger recalled: “Ravel said to me, in that serious, objective manner which was characteristic of him: ‘I’ve written only one masterpiece, *Boléro*. Unfortunately, there’s no music in it.’” As to the latter assertion, countless audiences have begged to differ. It may not be wise to hear *Boléro* too often, but when everything falls into place, it has the power to mesmerize the senses and quicken the pulse.

Program note by Don Anderson

THE ARTISTS



John Storgårds conductor

John Storgårds made his TSO début in February 2012.

Principal Guest Conductor of the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra as well as Canada's National Arts Centre Orchestra in Ottawa, John Storgårds has a dual career as a conductor and violin virtuoso and is widely recognized for his creative flair for programming. He additionally holds the title of Artistic Director of the Chamber Orchestra of Lapland and served as the Chief Conductor of the Helsinki Philharmonic from 2008 to 2015.

Internationally, Mr. Storgårds appears with such orchestras as the Leipzig Gewandhaus, Radio Symphony Orchestra Berlin, WDR Symphony Orchestra in Cologne, Bamberg Symphony, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Orchestre National de France, Vienna Radio Symphony, and the London Philharmonic, as well as all of the major Scandinavian orchestras. Further afield, he is a regular guest with the Sydney, Melbourne, and NHK symphonies.

Mr. Storgårds made his North American début with the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra during the 2005/06 season. Highlights of his 2018/19 North American season include subscription débuts with the Boston, Pittsburgh, and Dallas symphonies, and return appearances with the Cleveland Orchestra at Blossom, as well as with the National, Detroit, Toronto, St. Louis, and Cincinnati Symphony Orchestras.

Highlights of his 2018/19 season in Europe include a return to the BBC Proms with the BBC Philharmonic, début appearances with the Munich Philharmonic, Dresden Staatskapelle, and Seoul Philharmonic, as well as the Radio Symphony Orchestra Berlin at the Berlin Philharmonie, and on tour conducting Bruckner Symphony No. 5.

Equally at home in the opera house, John Storgårds conducted the Finnish premières of both Haydn's *Orlando Paladino* and Schumann's only opera, *Genoveva*, and, in summer 2016, he led a new production of *Don Giovanni* at the Savonlinna Opera Festival. He has also conducted most of the Mozart operas as well as the major operas of Strauss and Verdi. In September 2017, Storgårds gave the world première of Sebastian Fagerlund's new opera *Höstsonaten* (Autumn Sonata) at the Finnish National Opera with Anne Sofie von Otter in the leading role.

His conducting repertoire includes not only all of the Sibelius, Nielsen, Bruckner, Brahms, Schubert, Beethoven, and Schumann symphonies, but also many works by today's leading composers, including world premières of works by Kaija Saariaho, Brett Dean, Per Nørgård, and Peteris Vasks, several of whom have dedicated their works to him.

His award-winning discography includes rarities by Holmboe and Vask, which feature him as violin soloist. Two cycles of symphonies by Sibelius (2014) and Nielsen (2015) with the BBC Philharmonic were released to critical acclaim by Chandos. His most recent recording with the BBC Philharmonic is works by American avant-garde composer George Antheil. Additional recordings

include discs of works by Nørgård, Korngold, Aho, and Rautavaara. Storgårds's recording with the Chamber Orchestra of Lapland of concertos for theremin and horn by Kalevi Aho received the distinguished ECHO Klassik award in 2015.



Kirill Gerstein **piano**

Kirill Gerstein made his TSO debut in May 2013.

Pianist Kirill Gerstein's curiosity and versatility have led to a powerful engagement with a wide range of repertoire and styles. From Bach to Adès, his playing is distinguished by its clarity of expression, discerning intelligence, and virtuosity. Gerstein's energetic and imaginative musical personality has rapidly taken him to the top of his profession.

Brought up in the former Soviet Union studying both classical and jazz piano, at 14, Gerstein moved to the US where he was the youngest student to attend Boston's Berklee College of Music. An American citizen based in Berlin, Gerstein balances his career between the US and Europe. Highlights of his 2018/19 season in North America include re-engagements with the Cleveland and Philadelphia Orchestras, as well as with the Toronto, Atlanta, St. Louis, Detroit, and Cincinnati Symphony Orchestras, and a tour with the Czech Philharmonic in California. During the season, he premières Thomas Adès's second piano concerto, which was commissioned for him by the Boston Symphony, and plays two-piano recitals with Mr. Adès in Boston and at Zankel Hall at Carnegie.

International 2018/19 highlights include performances with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, Rotterdam Philharmonic, London Symphony, Staatskapelle Dresden, Vienna Symphony, and the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France in Paris. Mr. Gerstein also records the second and third Tchaikovsky Piano Concertos with the Czech Philharmonic under the baton of Semyon Bychkov for Decca.

Autumn 2017 marked the release of Scriabin's *Piano Concerto in F-sharp Minor* with the Oslo Philharmonic and Chief Conductor Vasily Petrenko (LAWO Classics), and the recording of Scriabin's *Prometheus: The Poem of Fire* with the same forces. Early 2018 saw the release of Gershwin's *Piano Concerto in F* and *Rhapsody in Blue* with the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra and David Robertson for Myrios, joining previous recordings for that label that include Liszt's *Transcendental Études*, Tchaikovsky's *Piano Concerto No. 1* in the composer's own final version from 1879; and *Imaginary Pictures*, coupling Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* with Schumann's *Carnaval*. Mr. Gerstein's next release will be a live recording of the Busoni Piano Concerto with the Boston Symphony, also on the Myrios label.

In 2010, he was awarded both an Avery Fisher Career Grant and the Gilmore Artist Award, which provided the funds for him to commission new works from Timo Andres, Chick Corea, Alexander Goehr, Oliver Knussen, and Brad Mehldau.

Keenly aware of the importance of working with young musicians, Gerstein taught at the Stuttgart Hochschule Musik from 2007 to 2017 and, beginning in the fall of 2018, will teach at the Kronberg Academy's newly announced Sir András Schiff Performance Program for Young Artists.

THE ARTISTS



Timothy McAllister **saxophone**

Timothy McAllister made his TSO début, in this work, in March 2011.

Timothy McAllister is one of today's premier wind soloists, a member of the renowned PRISM Quartet, and a champion of contemporary music credited with more than 40 recordings and 200 premières of new compositions by eminent and emerging composers worldwide.

McAllister has appeared with more than 40 of the world's most prestigious orchestras and ensembles in over 20 countries, and he has the distinction of being only the second saxophone soloist to appear in the 120-year history of the BBC London Proms concerts. He is featured on two Grammy Award-winning recordings of the music of John Adams and Gavin Bryars on Nonesuch and ECM, respectively, and also appears on the AUR, Albany, Berlin Philharmonic Recordings, Centaur, Deutsche Grammophon, Equilibrium, Innova, Naxos, New Focus, New Dynamic, Parma, Soundset, Stradivarius, Summit, and XAS/Naxos labels.

A revered teacher of his instrument, McAllister is Professor of Saxophone at the University of Michigan School of Music, Theatre and Dance, following renowned American saxophone pedagogues Larry Teal and, his mentor, Donald Sinta.