

Toronto Symphony Youth Orchestra

Simon Rivard, TSO Resident Conductor & TSYO Conductor

Sunday, November 25, 2018 at 3:00pm

George Weston Recital Hall

Simon Rivard, conductor

Leonard Bernstein
Overture to *Candide*

Claude Debussy
Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune

Johannes Brahms
Academic Festival Overture, Op. 80

Intermission

Leonard Bernstein
Symphonic Dances from *West Side Story*

Prologue

Somewhere

Scherzo

Mambo

Cha-cha

Meeting Scene

“Cool” Fugue

Rumble

Finale

ABOUT THE WORKS

Leonard Bernstein Overture to *Candide*

5
min

Born: Lawrence, Massachusetts, USA, August 25, 1918

Died: New York, New York, USA, October 14, 1990

Composed: Between 1953 and 1956

Conductor, composer, pianist, author, broadcaster, humanitarian—Leonard Bernstein left indelible marks on an astonishing range of endeavours. He was the New York Philharmonic's music director from 1958 to 1969, the first native-born conductor to take charge of a major American orchestra. In later years, his guest-conducting engagements earned him as lofty an international reputation as the one he enjoyed in America.

He composed music throughout his career, ranging from witty, light-hearted songs and superb stage musicals to substantial operas, ballets, concertos, and symphonies. What unites them is a strong sense of communication, reflecting his deep understanding and celebration of the human condition.

The Broadway musicals *Candide* and *West Side Story* came into being during the same period. *West Side Story* won success from the start, but *Candide* has had a troubled history. The book for the original version, written by famed playwright Lillian Hellman, proved too dark

and weighty for the show to find success in the popular theatre. *Candide* had a disastrous initial run of just 73 performances. Bernstein and several different collaborators created further versions, none entirely successful.

The plot comes from a satiric tale by the 18th-century French author Voltaire. *Candide* is a young man who believes in the philosophy, set out by his teacher, that everything that happens must be for the best. His adventures take him around the world and involve him in a long series of catastrophes. In the end, he renounces his former outlook and resolves to build a new, honest, and hopeful life.

Bernstein's bright and witty music has always been *Candide*'s strong suit. It pays satiric homage to the play's period setting through take-offs on the classical dances and the empty-headed operatic conventions of the story's period. The Overture weaves together snippets of the score's themes into a bright, vivacious potpourri that makes it the perfect curtain-raiser for concerts of many kinds.

Program note by Don Anderson

Claude Debussy

Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune

10
min

Born: St. Germaine-en-Laye, France, August 22, 1862

Died: Paris, France, March 25, 1918

Composed: Between 1892 and 1894

Première in Paris on December 22, 1894, with Gustave Doret conducting, this masterpiece of musical atmosphere heralded the emergence of Debussy's mature style. Poet Stéphane Mallarmé had written "L'après-midi d'un faune" in 1876. When Debussy encountered it some ten years later, he recognized in it a style similar to his view of music.

The words of the poem are those of a faun or satyr, a lazy, pleasure-loving half-man, half-goat creature from Classical mythology. Debussy described his musical reflection as "a very free rendering of Mallarmé's beautiful poem. It does not purport to contain everything that is in the poem. It is rather a succession of scenes in which the desires and dreams of the faun pass through in the heat of the afternoon. Then, tired of chasing the frightened nymphs and naiads, he gives in to intoxicating sleep."

Music as free and sensuous as this had never been heard before. Its improvisational quality would become a Debussy trademark. Conjured out of silence by the unaccompanied call of the faun's flute, it evokes Mallarmé's hazy, dream-like ideas with effortless tonal

magic. Short phrases melt one into the other; solo winds take the spotlight in turn; coolness alternates with passion.

Recalling the première, conductor Gustave Doret wrote, "There was a vast silence in the hall as I ascended the podium with some emotion, but full of confidence. I waited a long moment, after imposing silence on the audience, then our marvellous flutist Barrère unrolled his opening theme. Suddenly I felt behind my back a completely captivated public! The triumph was complete, so much so that I did not hesitate to break the rule forbidding encores. The orchestra was delighted to repeat this work, which it had come to love and which, thanks to them, the audience had now accepted."

The grateful Mallarmé gave Debussy a copy of the poem, inscribed with a verse which may be translated as:

*Oh forest god of breath primeval
If your flute be true,
Listen now to all the light
Debussy will breathe through you.*

Program note by Don Anderson

ABOUT THE WORKS

Johannes Brahms

Academic Festival Overture, Op. 80

10
min

Born: Hamburg, Germany, May 7, 1833

Died: Vienna, Austria, April 3, 1897

Composed: 1880

Brahms created his only two concert overtures during the same brief period. They are utterly different in character. “One weeps, the other laughs,” was how he described the *Tragic Overture* and the *Academic Festival Overture*.

He wrote the merry *Academic Festival Overture* as a gesture of thanks for a degree that the University of Breslau bestowed upon him. His Honorary Doctorate of Philosophy bore the inscription, “first among today’s masters of serious music in Germany.” His ironic sense of humour, plus the fact that he had received his musical education from private teachers rather than by attending “institutes of higher learning,” led him to make it as jolly and informal as the university was conservative and stuffy. He didn’t care for the title but couldn’t come up with a better one. Comparing it with the music of the original master of Viennese operetta, he referred to it as a “boisterous medley of student songs à la (Franz von) Suppé.”

He conducted the première in Breslau in January 1881. The faculty frowned at his anti-traditional audacity, but the students laughed and cheered for the same reason.

He scored the overture for the largest orchestra he ever used, including a handful of

percussion instruments. The quiet yet bustling introduction appears to be based on original Brahms material. It playfully gives what proves to be a mistaken impression of seriousness and solemnity.

The main section quickly changes all that. Brahms founded it upon four traditional German student songs. After a soft timpani roll, the brass play “We Had Built a Stately House”. This is followed by “Most Solemn Song to the Father of the Country”, a heartfelt tune first heard in the strings. Next is “What Comes There from on High”, a satiric ditty which Brahms introduces on the bassoons. He developed all this material extensively and ingeniously, then crowned the overture with a majestic setting of the best-known of the songs, “Gaudemus igitur”, a solemn medieval hymn in praise of student life.

Here is a translation of the first verse:

*Let us rejoice therefore
While we are young.
After a pleasant youth
After a troublesome old age
The earth will have us.*

Program note by Don Anderson

Leonard Bernstein

Symphonic Dances from *West Side Story*

22
min

Born: Lawrence, Massachusetts, USA, August 25, 1918

Died: New York, New York, USA, October 14, 1990

Composed: 1957

Leonard Bernstein's stage musical *West Side Story* premiered on Broadway on September 26, 1957. This orchestral suite, *Symphonic Dances*, was premiered by conductor Lukas Foss and the New York Philharmonic on February 13, 1961, in the wake of the show's 1961 film version, which won ten Academy Awards including Best Picture. It uses the original Broadway orchestrations by Sid Ramin and Irwin Kostal, expanded under Bernstein's supervision to full symphony orchestra.

The virtually operatic *West Side Story* is Bernstein's masterpiece of musical theatre. It updates the spirit of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* into contemporary times, placing the star-crossed lovers, Tony and Maria, on opposite sides of a conflict between street gangs in the slums of New York's Manhattan Island.

Dance—dramatic, even violent in nature—plays a prominent role in the show and provided plentiful material for this symphonic synthesis, which links together many of the most familiar themes into a digest of the plot. Even if you aren't familiar with the storyline, it provides grand entertainment and a banquet of memorable melodies.

The following synopsis appears in the published score:

Prologue: The growing rivalry between the teenage street gangs, the Sharks and the Jets.

Somewhere: In a visionary dance sequence, the two gangs are united in friendship.

Scherzo: In the same dream, they break through the city walls and suddenly find themselves in a world of space, air and sun.

Mambo: Reality again; competitive dance between the gangs.

Cha-cha: The star-crossed lovers see each other for the first time and dance together.

Meeting Scene: Music accompanies their first spoken words.

"Cool" Fugue: An elaborate dance sequence in which the Jets practice controlling their hostility.

Rumble: Climactic gang battle during which the two gang leaders are killed.

Finale: Love music developing into a procession, which recalls, in tragic reality, the vision of *Somewhere*.

Program note by Don Anderson

THE ARTISTS



Toronto Symphony Youth Orchestra

For more than 40 years, the Toronto Symphony Youth Orchestra (TSYO) has been dedicated to providing a high-level orchestral experience for talented young musicians aged 22 and under. The TSYO program delivers a unique, powerful, and life-enriching opportunity that encourages significant achievement, regardless of the career path participants choose to pursue. The TSYO has a close affiliation with the

Toronto Symphony Orchestra (TSO): TSO musicians serve as coaches throughout the season, TSO guest artists lead masterclasses for TSYO members, and the TSYO performs annually with the TSO in a side-by-side concert at Roy Thomson Hall.



Simon Rivard Conductor

Simon Rivard is one of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's 2017 "30 Hot Canadian Classical Musicians under 30". He is the newly appointed Resident Conductor of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra and Conductor of the Toronto Symphony Youth Orchestra. In 2019, he will make his *début* with Symphony Nova Scotia.

In 2018, he was invited to participate in the first Conducting Mentorship Program at the Verbier Festival Academy (Switzerland). In addition to being mentored by Valery Gergiev and Derrick Inouye, he acted as assistant conductor to Sir Simon Rattle, Gianandrea Noseda, Marc Minkowski, and Gábor Tákacs-Nagy. At the conclusion of the Verbier Festival, he was awarded a Special Prize, to help him pursue his mentorship with Gergiev and Noseda.

In 2017/18, as Resident Conductor of the Thunder Bay Symphony Orchestra, he conducted over 30 concerts with the orchestra and chorus. Throughout the season, he was an advocate for collaboration with Indigenous artists as well as local arts organizations, and he received mentorship from Music Director Paul Haas. Also in 2017, he stepped in for Jean-Philippe Tremblay as Music Director of the Orchestre de la Francophonie, leading successful performances in Montreal, Quebec City, Domaine Forget, and Ottawa.

Social transformation through music plays a significant role in his professional life. He has been associated with the Orchestre des jeunes de l'Ontario français—an orchestra for young

francophones from all over Canada—since August 2017. He has also worked at the Fondation du Dr Julien, an organization offering free music lessons to socio-economically disadvantaged children in Montreal. In 2015, he travelled to a Haiti orphanage with a team of professionals to offer three weeks of music, arts, and theatre lessons to the children.

He studied violin performance with Anne Robert and orchestral conducting with Raffi Armenian at the Montreal Conservatory of Music. He completed an MMus in Orchestral Conducting at McGill University under Alexis Hauser and Guillaume Bourgogne. He was also taught by Louis Laviguer, Harold Farberman, Apo Hsu, Raymond Harvey, Johannes Schlaefli, Kenneth Kiesler, Jean-Philippe Tremblay, and Jean-Sébastien Vallée.

He received support from the Millennium Excellence Awards, Sibylla Hesse Foundation, Jeunesses Musicales Canada, McAbbie Foundation, Schulich School of Music (Wayne Riddell and Gerald Wheeler prizes), and Verbier Festival.

In Affiliation with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra

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DOUBLE BASS, TSO

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TSYO CONDUCTOR

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Etsuko Kimura

VIOLIN COACH

ASSISTANT CONCERTMASTER, TSO

Peter Seminovs

ASSISTANT VIOLIN COACH

VIOLIN, TSO

Theresa Rudolph

VIOLA COACH

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL VIOLA, TSO

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Pierre Rivard

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THE ARTISTS

Members of the Toronto Symphony Youth Orchestra

Violins

Brando Alberga
Sarah Albishara
Juliana Cao
Hannah Corbett
Joelle Crigger
Claire Hur
Jennifer Jiang
Akasia Kellman
June Kim
Grace Lau
Joseph Lee
Ingrid Malmberg
Sarina Mao
Duncan McDougall
David Mok
Towa Paisley
Evan Pyne
Isabel Shen
Shelley Shen
Ellie Sievers
Kay Tozawa
William Wang
Jessica Xiong
Ian Ye
Jennifer Yeung
May Yu

Violas

Matthew Chan
Janet Chen
Ji-A Choi
Mathew Ko
Vena Ching Wen Lin
Maya Joy Lindstrom-Parkins
Csenge Magyar
Rosaleen Ryel
Emad Zolfaghari

Cellos

Alonso Flores Esquivel
Maya Grittani
Ashley Jong
Lucas Kim
Daniel Lee
Jake Lee
Yuna Lee
Ellamay Mantie
Eugene Ye
Justin Zhou

Double Basses

Tomas Casciato
Dean Chen
Avery Chiu
Kalvin Coate
William Dietrich
Tyson Morishita
Ryan Qiu
Eugene Zhang

Flutes

Nurses Amirkhanyan
Michelle Hui
Yelin Youn

Oboes

Sophie Abbott
Daniel Mok
Cheng Han Wu

Clarinets

Zachary Goldstein
Glen Hung
Bruce Luo
Audrey Michel

Bassoons

Quentin Kamieniecki
Matthew So

Horns

Jocelyn Chong
Lucy Nesbitt
Paolo Rosselli
Sophie Shah
Shin Yu Wang

Trumpets

Andrew Mendis
Natalie O'Donnell
Adrian Rogers
Matthew Smith

Trombones

Selena Cai
Linus Chen
Jake Colautti
Jason Zhang

Tuba

Benjamin Whitby

Percussion

Samuel Kerr
Nicola Loghrin+
Jacob Valcheff+

Harp

Sebastian Gobbels

*On leave

+Guest musician