

program notes

BY DR. RICHARD E. RODDA

Festive Overture, Op. 96

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH ■ 1906-1975

Among the grand symphonies, concertos, operas and chamber works that Dmitri Shostakovich produced are also many occasional pieces: film scores, tone poems, jingoistic anthems, brief instrumental compositions. Though most of these works are unfamiliar in the West, one — the *Festive Overture* — has been a favorite since it was written in the autumn of 1954. Shostakovich composed it for a concert on November 7, 1954 commemorating the 37th anniversary of the Russian Revolution, but its jubilant nature suggests it may also have been conceived as an outpouring of relief at the death of Joseph Stalin one year earlier. One critic suggested that the *Overture* was “a picture of streets and squares packed with a young and happy throng.” As its title suggests, the *Festive Overture* is a brilliant affair, full of fanfare and bursting spirits. It begins with a stentorian proclamation from the brass as preface to the bracing main theme of the piece. Contrast is provided by a broad melody initiated by the horns, but the breathless celebration of the music continues to the end.

Concertino for Organ and Orchestra (2017)

ERIC EWAZEN ■ BORN IN 1954

Eric Ewazen, born in Cleveland in 1954, studied at the Eastman School of Music and Juilliard. Ewazen (ee-WAY-zen) has taught at Juilliard since 1980,

and has also served on the faculties of the Hebrew Arts School and Lincoln Center Institute. From 1982 to 1989, he was Vice President of the United States Section of the League of Composers—International Society of Contemporary Music. He also served as Composer-in-Residence with the St. Luke’s Chamber Ensemble from 1996 to 1999, and has lectured in the New York Philharmonic’s “Musical Encounters” series. Ewazen’s honors include a Tanglewood Fellowship, BMI Award, Gershwin Memorial Foundation Fellowship and Rodgers & Hammerstein Scholarship.

Ewazen wrote, “Concertino for Organ and Orchestra is gratefully dedicated to the Allen Organ Company, who commissioned the piece, the Allentown Symphony Orchestra, conducted by my friend Diane Wittry, and the organ soloist, Hector Olivera. My Concertino is a two-movement work celebrating the beautiful, resonant colors of the organ in tandem with the rich colors of a symphony orchestra. Throughout the piece, organ and orchestra toss melodies and themes back and forth, often joining together in resonant, even heroic moments. The first movement is filled with lively themes with an ‘Americana’ feel, in the tradition of Copland and Bernstein, with folk-inspired melodies and dance-like, playful and energetic rhythms. The second movement begins with smooth lyrical lines and melodies supported by a lilting and flowing rhythm leading to contrasting passages, bold and grand, full of life and excitement, bringing the piece to an exhilarating finale.”

Gloria for Soprano, Choir and Orchestra (1974)

JOHN RUTTER ■ BORN IN 1945

John Rutter is among today's most successful and widely admired choral composers and conductors. Born in London in 1945, Rutter studied at Clare College, Cambridge, where his principal teacher was Sir David Willcocks, then director of the famed King's College Choir. Rutter wrote his first published compositions and conducted his first recording while still a student. From 1975 to 1979, he was Director of Music at Clare College. After giving up the post at Clare to allow more time for composition, he formed the Cambridge Singers as a professional chamber choir primarily dedicated to recording, and he now divides his time between composition and conducting. In 1980, he was made an honorary Fellow of Westminster Choir College in Princeton, New Jersey, and in 1988, a Fellow of the Guild of Church Musicians. In 1996, the Archbishop of Canterbury conferred a Lambeth Doctorate of Music upon Rutter in recognition of his contribution to church music, and he was awarded CBE in 2007 for his services to music.

Rutter wrote, "*Gloria* was composed as a concert work rather than a liturgical one. It was commissioned by the Voices of Mel Olson in Omaha, Nebraska, and premiered by them under my direction on the occasion of my first visit to the United States in May 1974. The Latin text, drawn from the Ordinary of the Mass, is a centuries-old challenge to the composer: exalted, devotional and jubilant by turns. The setting, which is based mainly on one of the Gregorian chants associated with the text, is in three movements roughly corresponding to traditional symphonic structure. The outer movements make quite a joyful

noise unto the Lord, but the middle movement is soft and introspective."

Violin Concerto No. 2 in G minor, Op. 63 (1935)

SERGEI PROKOFIEV ■ 1891-1953

When Prokofiev returned to Russia late in 1933 after his long residency in the West full of allegiance to the socialist cause, he dedicated his art to fulfilling the dream of the Revolution. In his 1946 autobiography he wrote, "It is the duty of the composer, like the poet, sculptor or painter, to serve his fellow men, to beautify human life and point the way to a radiant future." Prokofiev wasted no time in putting into practice his theory of creating music that would communicate simply and directly to listeners, and within three years, he composed some of his most enduringly popular scores: *Lt. Kijé*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Peter and the Wolf* and the Second Violin Concerto.

The Concerto's direct lyrical expression and clean formal lines are evident from its first gesture. The slightly melancholy main theme, built around a simple triadic configuration, is presented by the unaccompanied violin. The second subject, one of Prokofiev's greatest melodic inspirations, is sung by the soloist above a quiet, undulating string accompaniment. The development, an elaboration of the two main themes, achieves a masterful balance of flashing virtuosity, thematic manipulation and lyrical effusion. The recapitulation is begun by cellos and basses. The *Andante* is one of the most rapt, transcendent inspirations of 20th-century music, unabashedly romantic and filled with a haunting, bittersweet emotion. The finale is in traditional rondo form. Its theme is an ebullient dance melody with the fiery spirit of a Gypsy fiddler.

***The Pines of Rome* (1923-1924)**

OTTORINO RESPIGHI ■ 1879-1936

The Pines of Rome is the second work of Respighi's trilogy on Roman subjects. The first was *The Fountains of Rome* of 1916; the last, *Roman Festivals*, dates from 1928. These compositions depict various aspects of the city through Respighi's musical impressions. He wrote that *The Pines of Rome* "uses nature as a point of departure, in order to recall memories and visions. The centuries-old trees that dominate so characteristically the Roman landscape become testimony for the principal events in Roman life.

"1. *The Pines of the Villa Borghese*. Children are at play in the pine grove of the Villa Borghese, dancing the Italian equivalent of *Ring around the Rosy*; mimicking marching soldiers and battles; twittering and shrieking like swallows at evening; and they disappear. Suddenly the scene changes to ... 2. *The Pines near a Catacomb*. We see the shadows of the pines, which overhang the entrance of a catacomb. From the depths rises a chant which re-echoes solemnly, like a hymn, and is then mysteriously silenced. 3. *The Pines of the Janiculum*. There is a thrill in the air. The full moon reveals the profile of the pines of Gianicolo's Hill. A nightingale sings. 4. *The Pines of the Appian Way*. Misty dawn on the Appian Way. The tragic country is guarded by solitary pines. Indistinctly, incessantly, the rhythm of innumerable steps. To the poet's fantasy appears a vision of past glories; trumpets blare, and the army of the Consul advances brilliantly in the grandeur of a newly risen sun toward the Sacred Way, mounting in triumph the Capitoline Hill."

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Rutter: Gloria

Gloria I

Gloria in excelsis Deo,
et in terra pax hominibus
bonae voluntatis.
Laudamus te, benedicimus te,
adoramus te, glorificamus te.
Gratias agimus tibi propter
magnam gloriam tuam.

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to men
of good will.
We praise you, we bless you,
we worship you, we glorify you.
We give you thanks
for your great glory.

Gloria II

Domine Deus, Rex coelestis,
Deus pater omnipotens.
Domine Fili unigenite
Jesu Christe,
Domine Deus, Agnus Dei,
Filius Patris,
qui tollis peccata mundi:
miserere nobis;
qui tollis peccata mundi:
suscipe deprecationem nostram;
qui sedes ad dexteram Patris:
miserere nobis.

Lord God, heavenly King,
God the Father almighty.
The only-begotten Son,
Lord Jesus Christ,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
Son of the Father,
you take away the sin of the world:
have mercy on us;
you take away the sin of the world:
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
have mercy on us.

Gloria III

Quoniam tu solus sanctus,
tu solus Dominus,
tu solus altissimus,
Jesu Christe,
cum sancto spiritu,
in gloria Dei Patris.
Amen.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High,
Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

ALLENTOWN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

APRIL 18-19, 2020
8:00 P.M., SYMPHONY HALL

P R O G R A M

DIANE M. WITTRY MUSIC DIRECTOR/CONDUCTOR

Festive Overture, Op. 96 DIMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH

Concertino for Organ and Orchestra ERIC EWAZEN
Allegro energico
Allegro moderato
Organ Soloist: Hector Olivera

Gloria for Soprano, Chorus and Orchestra JOHN RUTTER
Gloria in excelsis Deo: Allegro vivace
Domine Deus: Andante
Quoniam tu solus sanctus: Vivace e ritmico
/ , Soprano
Allentown Symphony Chorus
/ , Director

INTERMISSION

Violin Concerto No. 2 in G minor, Op. 63 SERGEI PROKOFIEV
Allegro moderato
Andante assai
Allegro, ben marcato
Violin Soloist: Irina Muresanu

The Pines of Rome OTTORINO RESPIGHI
The Pines of the Villa Borghese
Pines near a Catacomb
The Pines of the Janiculum
The Pines of the Appian Way
Played without pause
Allentown Band
/ , Director