

CHRIS ROGERSON N born in 1988

Introduction and Fanfare (2021)

WORLD PREMIERE

Chris Rogerson, Allentown Symphony Orchestra Composer-in-Residence, was born in 1988 in the Buffalo suburb of Amherst, New York, and started playing piano at two and cello at eight. He received a baccalaureate from the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, where he studied composition with Jennifer Higdon, a master's degree from Yale University as a student of Aaron Jay Kernis and Martin Bresnick, and a doctorate from Princeton, studying with Steve Mackey and Paul Lansky. Rogerson has also participated in composition master classes with John Corigliano, Osvaldo Golijov, Michael Tilson Thomas, William Bolcom, Krystof Penderecki and Christopher Theofanidis. In 2016, he joined the faculty of the Curtis Institute of Music. Rogerson's music has been performed by orchestras, chamber ensembles and soloists across the country and in Europe, and he has held residencies with Young Concert Artists, Amarillo Symphony, MacDowell Colony, Yaddo, Music from Angel Fire, and Copland House. Rogerson is also co-founder and co-artistic director of Kettle Corn New Music, a new-music presenting organization in New York. His honors include a Charles Ives Scholarship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, Theodore Presser Career Grant, ASCAP Morton Gould Young Composer Award, Aspen Music Festival Jacob Druckman Award, and prizes from the National Foundation for the Advancement of the Arts, National Association for Music Education, New York Art Ensemble and Third Millennium Ensemble.

Rogerson said that *Introduction and Fanfare*, written in 2021 for the Allentown Symphony Orchestra, "was composed during the pandemic. It is a simple ode that has sweetness and happiness as its goal, celebration rather than reflecting back on what was a very dark time. In particular, I thought of my childhood home and of the simplicity of that time."

PETER ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY N 1840-1893

Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 35 (1878)

In the summer of 1877, Tchaikovsky undertook the disastrous marriage that lasted less than three weeks and resulted in his emotional collapse and attempted suicide. He decided that travel outside of Russia would be a balm to his spirit, and he duly installed himself at Clarens on Lake Geneva in Switzerland soon after the first of the year. In Clarens, he had already begun work on a piano sonata when he heard the colorful *Symphonie Espagnole* by the French composer Edouard Lalo. He was so excited by the possibilities of a work for solo violin and orchestra that he set aside the sonata and immediately began a concerto of his own.

Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto opens quietly with a tentative introductory tune. After a few unaccompanied measures, the violin presents the lovely main theme. The second theme begins a long buildup leading into the development, launched with a sweeping presentation of the main theme. A flashing cadenza serves as a link to the recapitulation. The *Andante* suggests the music of a Gypsy fiddler. The finale is imbued with the spirit of a dashing Russian dance.

SERGEI PROKOFIEV N 1891-1953

Suite from Romeo and Juliet, Op. 64 (1935)

When Prokofiev returned to Russia in 1933 after his long sojourn in the West, he had already acquired a reputation as a composer of ballet. His first balletic effort had been the volcanic *Ala and Lolly* written for Diaghilev in Paris in 1914, whose music is better known in its concert form as the *Scythian Suite*. Though Diaghilev did not like the piece and refused to stage it, he remained convinced of Prokofiev's talent and commissioned *Chout* ("The Buffoon") from him in 1921 and produced it with his Ballet Russe. *Le Pas d'acier* ("The Steel Step") followed in 1927, and *The Prodigal Son* in 1928, the last new ballet Diaghilev produced before his death the following year. *Sur le Borysthène* ("On the Dnieper") was staged, unsuccessfully, by the Paris Opéra in 1932. The last two of these works showed a move away from the spiky musical language of Prokofiev's earlier years toward a simpler, more lyrical style, and the Kirov Theater in Leningrad took them as evidence in 1934 that he should be commissioned to compose a full-length, three-act ballet on one of the theater's classic stories of romance — Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.

Prokofiev was immediately taken with the Leningrad Kirov's proposal for a *Romeo and Juliet* ballet, and he spent much time during the spring of 1935 with the company's stage director, Sergei Radlov, working out a detailed scenario. Enough of the music was composed during the summer at Prokofiev's secluded house in Polenovo, near Tarusa, that he could write to a friend in late July, "Juliet is already tripping through the third act." For reasons never made clear (had the outspoken Prokofiev tread on some sensitive political toe?), the Kirov withdrew its offer to produce the ballet, and a contract with the Moscow Bolshoi was arranged instead. A tryout of the music was given in the Beethoven Hall of the Bolshoi Theater in October, but failed to ignite enthusiasm for its balletic potential. "Undanceable," declared some. V.V. Konin, in a dispatch to the Musical Courier, criticized "the awkward incongruity between the realistic idiom of the musical language, which successfully characterizes the individualism of the Shakespearean images, and the blind submission to the worst traditions of the old form." This last comment referred to the "happy ending" of the original scenario, in which Romeo and Juliet survive to join in the finale. ("Dead people don't dance," reasoned Prokofiev.) Whatever its motive, the Bolshoi broke its contract to stage the ballet, so Prokofiev turned to the expedient of extracting music from the complete score for concert performance. Two orchestral suites were assembled and heard in Russia and the United States before the complete ballet was premiered, in Brno, Czechoslovakia in December 1938, a production in which the composer took no part. A third orchestral suite dates from 1944.

At about the time of the Brno performance, Prokofiev met the choreographer Leonid Lavrovsky. Lavrovsky, building on the reputation the *Romeo and Juliet* music had acquired in its concert performances, finally convinced the Leningrad Kirov to stage the work. A satisfactory way

was found to restore the tragic close of the original play. At a celebratory supper party following the successful opening of *Romeo and Juliet*, delayed for a half-decade in its Russian premiere, Galina Ulanova, the production's prima ballerina, ended her toast with a bit of fractured Shakespeare: "Never was a story of more woe/Than this of Prokofiev's music for *Romeo*." *Romeo and Juliet* has since become one of the most popular of all full-length ballets.

From the 52 numbers of the complete score, Prokofiev arranged three suites for orchestra that reflect the story's characters and emotions, but not its dramatic progression. Many conductors choose their own suite from the movements Prokofiev provided. *Montagues and Capulets* incorporates, as slow introduction, the music accompanying the Duke as he forbids further fights between the families on pain of death, the heavy-footed *Dance of the Capulet Knights* from the Act I ballroom scene, and a graceful transformation of the Knights' theme to portray Juliet. *Young Juliet* characterizes the several moods of the heroine, not yet fourteen years old. The rapturous balcony scene is titled, simply, *Romeo and Juliet*. *Death of Tybalt* is based on the music accompanying the duel of Tybalt and Mercutio, Tybalt's death, and his funeral procession. *Romeo and Juliet at Parting* is the music of the lovers' first and only night as man and wife. *Romeo at the Tomb of Juliet* is taken from the ballet's final scene — Juliet's funeral procession and Romeo's grief at her presumed death. *Death of Juliet* is the touching music that closes the ballet.

©2021 Dr. Richard E. Rodda