

ON THE TOWN: THREE DANCE EPISODES (1945)

LEONARD BERNSTEIN (1918 - 1990)

Bernstein's first musical, *On the Town*, grew out of Jerome Robbins' and Bernstein's ballet, *Fancy Free*. The musical was later distilled by Bernstein into this concert suite.

In *The Great Lover Displays Himself*, a dream sequence depicts a sailor's fantasies about his ideal woman. The second episode, *Lonely Town: Pas de deux*, confronts the difficulty of finding love in the cold city. Finally, *Times Square: 1944* showcases the musical's signature hit *New York, New York* as sailors take to the streets of the Big Apple.

WORLD EVENTS:

World War II ends, Franklin Roosevelt dies, United Nations charter ratified

FIRST PERFORMANCE:

February 13, 1946, San Francisco, the composer conducting

MOST RECENT TSO PERFORMANCE:

September 22, 2012

RHAPSODY IN BLUE (1924)

GEORGE GERSHWIN (1898 - 1937)

George Gershwin was the first to make a name for himself on Broadway as well as in the concert hall. This, his first work for the concert hall, was written in less than a month. Its genesis is quite a story.

Gershwin's brother Ira read in the January 4th *New York Tribune* about a concert advertised by Paul Whiteman's orchestra for which "George Gershwin is at work on a jazz concerto." Gershwin called Whiteman to refute the report, whereupon the bandleader invited Gershwin to do just that. The 25 year old composer and pianist would need to complete it

to perform it on February 12. Gershwin was busy with a musical comedy and said he didn't know how to orchestrate. Whiteman countered that a sketch of the parts was sufficient, as Ferde Grofe, Whiteman's staff arranger (whose music will be featured later this season) would do the orchestration.

On the way to *Sweet Little Devil's* premiere, the work took shape: "It was on the train, with its steely rhythms, its rattley-bang that is often so stimulating... There I suddenly heard—and even saw on paper—the complete construction of the *Rhapsody*... I heard it as a sort of melting pot, of our unduplicated national pep, of our blues, our metropolitan madness." It was soon completed, except for a few piano passages which he improvised at the premiere. Grofe completed the orchestration just in time.

The piece begins with the low slow clarinet trill morphing into a sliding effect that isn't supposed to be possible on the clarinet. Originally written as a trill followed by a 17 note rising scale, Whiteman's clarinetist, Ross Gorman, played it with the scooping glissando that is now the iconic opening.

Tunes chase each other in rapid succession, with the piano commenting on everything in virtuosic detail. Halfway through, the flowing sentimental theme is followed by brilliance all around highlighting both orchestra and soloist.

WORLD EVENTS:

First Macy's parade, Hubble discovers other galaxies, Lenin dies

FIRST PERFORMANCE:

February 12, 1924, New York, the composer as soloist

MOST RECENT TSO PERFORMANCE:

December 8, 2010 - Rich Ridenour, Piano; September 28, 1991, James Rivers, Piano

I GOT RHYTHM VARIATIONS FOR PIANO AND ORCHESTRA (1934)

GEORGE GERSHWIN (1898 - 1937)

Rhapsody in Blue made Gershwin a household name and the musical that soon followed, *Girl Crazy*, was also a huge success. This work is based on one of the musical's beloved songs, now one of the most popular jazz standards.

The variations you hear tonight were dedicated to the original song's lyricist, Ira Gershwin. Like *Rhapsody in Blue*, the work opens with a clarinet solo, a flurry by the piano, and the orchestra stating the melody. In the second variation, the orchestra is in three while the piano plays an obbligato. The third variation keeps the melody in the orchestra, while the piano and xylophone simulate traditional Asian instruments. Jazz sounds alternate with the piano in Variation 4. In the Finale, the melody alternates with the build to the finish. His last concert work, this orchestration was completed by the composer.

WORLD EVENTS:

Donald Duck created, a gallon of gas costs 10 cents, Ralph Nader is born

FIRST PERFORMANCE:

January 14, 1934, Boston, the composer as soloist

MOST RECENT TSO PERFORMANCE:

TSO Premiere

WEST SIDE STORY SYMPHONIC DANCES (1960)

LEONARD BERNSTEIN (1918 - 1990)

Although born in Massachusetts, Leonard Bernstein had an ongoing love affair with New York City, evidenced by much of his compositional output. *West Side Story* had been suggested to him and he welcomed the challenge to be the first to write a serious musical. The story illu-

minates the struggles of urban violence and troubled youth, along with that of the Shakespearean star-crossed lovers.

The *Symphonic Dances* comprise a suite that Bernstein excerpted from the 1957 musical's score, orchestrated under his direction by Sid Ramin and Irwin Kostal. The dances are played without pause, in sections described by Jack Gottlieb, Bernstein's assistant:

- *Prologue*: The growing rivalry between two teenage gangs, the Jets and Sharks.
- *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 processional, which recalls, in tragic reality, the vision of "Somewhere."

The connection between our two composers for this evening is strong, from their piano playing and New York roots to their embracing of genre-bridging work. Bernstein prominently soloed in and conducted Gershwin's *Rhapsody* in a 1959 recording.

WORLD EVENTS:

To Kill a Mockingbird published, "The Twist" hits #1, Kennedy elected president

FIRST PERFORMANCE:

February 13, 1961, New York

MOST RECENT TSO PERFORMANCE:

April 20, 2002

Alexander Tutunov is widely recognized as one of the most outstanding virtuosos of the former Soviet Union. First Prize winner of the Belarusian National Piano Competition and winner of the Russian National Piano Competition, Tutunov's playing was described by Soviet Culture, Moscow, as "exhilarating and inspired, and which demonstrated a unique talent".

Dr. Tutunov maintains a busy performing schedule in Europe, China, Mexico, and the United States as a recitalist, soloist with orchestra, and on radio and television. Dr. Tutunov is also in demand as an adjudicator for piano competitions.

Tutunov's recording of the Abellovich Piano Concerto was featured as part of the Emmy award winning soundtrack for the History Channel documentary, *Russia: Land of Tsars*; Tchaikovsky Concert Fantasy with the Russian Philharmonic Orchestra. Other recordings include: Tchaikovsky Concert Fantasy with the Russian Philharmonic Orchestra, Concerto for Piano & Orchestra by Peter Sacco with the Czech National Symphony Orchestra (Albany Records) and the solo piano works of Lev Abellovich Sonatas & Frescoes, Trio, Songs (Altarus Records).

Tutunov graduated magna cum laude from the Central Music School of the Moscow Conservatory (studies with Anna Artobolevskaya and Lev Naumov) and University of North Texas (piano studies with Joseph Banowetz). Awarded his doctoral diploma with honors in concert performance from the Belarusian State Conservatory, Dr. Tutunov has taught at the Minsk College of Music, the University of North Texas, and Illinois Wesleyan University.

Alexander Tutunov enjoys living in the scenic Rogue Valley's Ashland, where he is Professor of Piano and Artist in Residence at Southern Oregon University. A successful piano pedagogue, he continues to prepare award-winning students. Dr. Tutunov has been the Artist in Residence at the University of Alaska Southeast, Principal Guest Soloist with the Port Angeles Symphony, Artistic director of the SOU International Piano Institute, and was recently named the Director of the Chinese-American International Piano Institute in Chengdu, China.

