

Concerts of Thursday, October 19, and Saturday, October 21, 2017, at 8:00p

Ludovic Morlot, Conductor

Ray Chen, violin

Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990)

***Divertimento* for Orchestra (1980)**

I. *Sennets and Tuckets*

II. *Waltz*

III. *Mazurka*

IV. *Samba*

V. *Turkey Trot*

VI. *Sphinxes*

VII. *Blues*

VIII. *In Memoriam; March: "The BSO Forever"*

Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953)

Concerto Violin and Orchestra No. 2 in G minor, Opus 63 (1935)

I. *Allegro moderato*

II. *Andante assai*

III. *Allegro, ben marcato*

Ray Chen, violin

Intermission

Henri Dutilleux (1916-2013)

***Métaboles* (1964)**

I. *Incantatoire*

II. *Linéaire*

III. *Obsessionnel*

IV. *Torpide*

V. *Flamboyant*

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

***La valse*, Choreographic Poem for Orchestra (1920)**

Notes on the Program by Ken Meltzer

***Divertimento* for Orchestra (1980)**

Leonard Bernstein was born in Lawrence, Massachusetts on August 25, 1918, and died in New York on October 14, 1990. The first performance of the *Divertimento* took place at Symphony Hall in Boston, Massachusetts, on September 25, 1980, with Seiji Ozawa conducting the Boston Symphony Orchestra. The *Divertimento for Orchestra* is scored for two piccolos, three flutes, two oboes, English horn, E-flat clarinet, two clarinets in B-flat, bass clarinet, two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba (doubles baritone euphonium), timpani, four snare drums (high to low), bass drum, cymbals (pair), large cymbals (pair), suspended cymbal, tam-tam, triangle, tambourine, woodblock, two Cuban cowbells (high and low), sandpaper blocks, rasp and maracas, three bongos and two conga drums, four temple blocks, trap set, glockenspiel, xylophone, chimes, piano, harp, and strings. Approximate performance time is fifteen minutes.

These are the first Classical Subscription Performances.

Although Leonard Bernstein will forever be associated with New York City, the life and career of the American conductor, composer, pianist, and teacher had their roots in Boston. Leonard Bernstein was born on August 25, 1918 in Lawrence, twenty-five miles northwest of Boston. Despite the protestations of his father, Leonard Bernstein displayed an early and profound affinity for music. He originally harbored ambitions for a career as a concert pianist, but at the age of fourteen, Bernstein attended a concert of the Boston Pops Orchestra, led by Arthur Fiedler. Bernstein immediately began to experience “all sorts of fantasies” about becoming a great conductor.

After graduating from Boston Latin School in 1935, Bernstein attended Harvard University, receiving his degree in 1939. Following studies at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, Bernstein became the Assistant at Tanglewood to Boston Symphony Orchestra Music Director Serge Koussevitsky. Bernstein maintained a close association with both the Boston Symphony and Tanglewood for the remainder of his life. On August 19, 1990, Leonard Bernstein led the Boston Symphony in the Serge and Olga Koussevitsky Concert in Tanglewood. It proved to be his final podium appearance. Two months later, Leonard Bernstein died the age of 72.

A decade earlier, Leonard Bernstein composed his *Divertimento* to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. BSO Music Director Seiji Ozawa conducted the premiere in Boston's Orchestra Hall on September 25, 1980. Bernstein dedicated his *Divertimento* “with affection to the Boston Symphony Orchestra in celebration of its First Centenary.” According to

the notes by Jack Gottlieb that appear as a preface to the score: “Leonard Bernstein’s *Divertimento* is an expression of his love affair with the city of his youth and its symphony orchestra...It is a nostalgic album filled with affectionate memories of his growing up in Boston...” As Bernstein commented:

When Stravinsky wrote his *Symphony of Psalms*, commissioned by the BSO in honour of its fiftieth birthday, he dedicated the work to the glory of God and the Boston Symphony Orchestra. This dedication elicited a witty reaction at the time: “That is what you call making the best of two worlds at once.” If I dared to put myself in Stravinsky’s league, I’d follow his example by having the double dedication: “To the Boston Symphony Orchestra and My Mother.” Or I might even go one better by offering a *triple* dedication: “To the Boston Symphony Orchestra, My Mother, and Boston, my old home town.”

Bernstein intended the opening movement (*Sennets and Tuckets*—an allusion to a Shakespearean direction for fanfares) to comprise the entire piece. However, the work soon blossomed into its final eight-movement form. Each of the brief movements is based upon two pitches—B (for “Boston”) and C (for “Centennial”).

While the *Divertimento* is scored for a large orchestra, several of the movements spotlight individual instrument families. The *Waltz* (in 7/8 time) is scored only for the strings. The succeeding *Mazurka* features the double-reed instruments and the harp. The penultimate *Blues* movement highlights the brass and percussion. The work is “replete with allusions to the repertoire with which Mr. Bernstein grew up in Symphony Hall, some quite obvious, others more secret messages for the players themselves.”

The *Divertimento* abounds with the eclecticism, passionate, heartfelt emotion, and unbounded *joie de vivre* that personified Leonard Bernstein and his music. Much of Bernstein’s *Divertimento* is in a lighthearted vein that befits its title. However, the final movement opens with a trio for flutes, titled *In Memoriam*, a moving tribute to “the conductors and members of the Boston Symphony Orchestra no longer with us.” A brief segue resolves to the lively concluding *March* that celebrates the past and future legacy of the composer’s beloved “hometown” orchestra.

I. *Sennets and Tuckets*

II. *Waltz*

III. *Mazurka*

IV. *Samba*

V. *Turkey Trot*

VI. *Sphinxes*

VII. *Blues*

VIII. *In Memoriam; March: "The BSO Forever"*

Concerto No. 2 for Violin and Orchestra in G minor, Opus 63 (1935)

Sergei Prokofiev was born in Sontsovka, Russia, on April 23, 1891, and died in Moscow, Russia, on March 5, 1953. The first performance of the Violin Concerto No. 2 took place in Madrid, Spain, on December 1, 1935, with Robert Soëtans as soloist and Enrique Arbós conducting the Madrid Symphony Orchestra. In addition to the solo violin, the Concerto is scored for two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, triangle, suspended cymbal, castanets, snare drum, bass drum, and strings. Approximate performance time is twenty-seven minutes.

First Classical Subscription Performances: February 5, 6 and 7, 1976, Viktor Tretyakov, Violin, Michael Palmer, Conductor.

Most Recent Classical Subscription Performances: January 15 and 17, 2015, Julian Rachlin, Violin, Marin Alsop, Conductor.

Following years of self-imposed exile, Sergei Prokofiev returned to his native Russia in 1933. In 1935, while at work on his ballet, *Romeo and Juliet*, Prokofiev received a commission for a Second Violin Concerto (the First was completed in 1917).

In his autobiography, Prokofiev recalled:

In 1935 a group of admirers of the French violinist (Robert) Soëtans asked me to write a violin concerto for him, giving him exclusive rights to perform it for one year. I readily agreed since I had been intending to write something for the violin at that time and had accumulated some material. As in the case of the preceding concertos, I began by searching for an original title for the piece, such as "concert sonata for violin and orchestra," but finally returned to the simplest solution: Concerto No. 2. Nevertheless, I wanted it to be altogether different from No. 1 both as to music and style.

The variety of places in which that concerto was written is a reflection of the nomadic concert-tour existence I led at that time: the principal theme of the first movement was written in Paris, the first theme of the second movement in Voronezh, the orchestration I completed in Baku, while the first performance was given in Madrid, in December 1935 (with Robert Soëtans as soloist and Enrique Arbós conducting the Madrid Symphony Orchestra).

After the 1935 premiere, Prokofiev's "nomadic" existence continued throughout the winter, as he and Soëtans toured for concerts in Spain, Portugal, Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia.

Despite Prokofiev's apparent desire that his Second Violin Concerto stand in contrast to the First, most commentators have noted the elegant and lyric nature of the two works. Perhaps the beautiful and highly accessible Second Concerto served as a point of departure not from its 1917 predecessor, but from other, more controversial works. As Prokofiev once exclaimed in a moment of great frustration: "Why does everyone speak of me as a composer that can only write in a satirical or sarcastic vein, or as an *enfant terrible* that plays around with dissonances? I have already abandoned this approach!"

Regardless of Prokofiev's stated intent in composing the Second Violin Concerto, it is a work of enduring charm and grace that demands the highest level of technical mastery from the soloist. Both of Prokofiev's Violin Concertos remain among the most popular 20th-century works in their genre, for audiences and performers alike.

Musical Analysis

I. *Allegro moderato*—The first movement opens with the violinist's solo introduction of the melancholy initial theme. The soloist also presents the second principal theme, an extended yearning and lyrical motif, comprising a series of descending figures. A lengthy development section offers a number of contrasting episodes in which the lyricism of the work's opening alternates with moments of agitation and energy. The cellos and basses softly reprise the initial motif. The violinist's hushed, *dolce* restatement of the second theme is even more restrained and poignant than in its original appearance. A staggered reprise of the initial theme by the orchestra and soloist leads to a rather terse conclusion.

II. *Andante assai*—Clarinets and pizzicato strings introduce an ascending figure that accompanies the soloist's introduction of the tender, lyrical principal theme. Restatements of the melody alternate with contrasting sections of varying moods and colors. At the close, traditional roles are reversed, as the soloist offers the pizzicato accompaniment to the winds' and cellos' final statement of the principal melody.

III. *Allegro, ben marcato*—The finale, a rondo in the style of a rustic peasant dance, stands in sharp contrast to the refinement of the preceding two movements. Angular rhythms and melodic contours, as well as prominent use of percussion (particularly the bass drum), reinforce the brusque nature of the final movement. The finale is also the most overtly virtuosic of the three, especially as the movement draws to its climactic *tumultuoso* resolution.

***Métaboles* (1964)**

Henri Dutilleux was born in Angers, France, on January 22, 1916, and died in Paris, France, on May 22, 2013. The first performance of *Métaboles* took place at Severance Hall in Cleveland, Ohio, on January 14, 1965, with George Szell conducting the Cleveland Orchestra. *Métaboles* is scored for two piccolos, four flutes, three oboes, English horn, E-flat clarinet, two clarinets in B-flat, bass clarinet, three bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, four trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, cowbell, Chinese cymbals, three tom-toms (high, medium, and low), xylophone, orchestra bells, snare drum, two temple blocks, triangle, cymbals, suspended cymbal, tam-tams (medium and low), celesta, harp, and strings. Approximate performance time is seventeen minutes.

First Classical Subscription Performances: November 10-12, 1977, Robert Shaw, Conductor.

Métaboles, by French composer Henri Dutilleux was commissioned by The Musical Arts Association on the occasion of the 40th Anniversary of the Cleveland Orchestra, George Szell, Music Director. Dutilleux dedicated the work to Szell, who conducted the Cleveland Orchestra in the January 14, 1965 world premiere. At the time, Robert Shaw was in the final years of his tenure as the Cleveland Orchestra's Assistant Conductor. It was Shaw who led the only previous Atlanta Symphony Orchestra subscription performances of *Métaboles*, in November of 1977.

In notes for a 2001 EMI recording (5 57143 2), Dutilleux noted that the sound of Szell's Cleveland Orchestra had a profound impact upon the way he composed *Métaboles*:

Does a great orchestra (and hence its conductor) have a particular "sound" which is capable of influencing a composer, in the same way as a great soloist can stimulate and inspire him by his touch and technique? When George Szell commissioned my piece called *Métaboles*, I had very much in mind as I wrote it the "metallic" timbre (I would say "steel-blue") of the woodwind group in the Cleveland Orchestra, which explains the particular coloring of the first section, *Incantoire*. I have seldom found this colouring again with other orchestras since the first performance of the work in January 1965.

Dutilleux offered the following explanation of the work's title:

In ancient Greek music this name was given to the passage connecting the conjunct system to the disjunct system (or vice-versa). It was therefore a sort of modulation, a transformation, a change. In the field of rhetoric, it's a stylistic figure by which one repeats in the second part of the sentence words used in the first part of the sentence in order to modify the idea. But it is most

importantly a different figure which consists of repeating a single idea in different ways. In the world of physiology, metabolism is a slow and progressive chemical transformation that causes the elements to undergo a change of their basic properties.... I am basically concerned with presenting one or several ideas in a certain order and from different aspects to the point where they undergo, through successive stages, a true alteration of their essential nature. There is a *métabole* on the scale of the entire piece.

In *Métaboles*, Dutilleux introduces and develops thematic material throughout the course of the work's five parts. The composer observes:

at a certain stage in the evolution, toward the end of each (part), the distortion is so marked that it engenders a new figure, and this appears like a watermark beneath the symphonic argument. This figure serves as a starting-point for the following (part), and so on until the final one...

In order to emphasize the organic nature of the work, the score includes the following: "The five parts constituting these *Métaboles* are linked without interruption, and can never give rise to fragmentary execution." Each of the first four parts focuses upon a certain portion of the orchestra; *Incantatoire* (winds), *Linéaire* (strings), *Obsessionnel* (brass), and *Torpide* (percussion). The entire ensemble joins forces for the concluding *Flamboyant*.

***La valse*, Choreographic Poem for Orchestra (1920)**

Maurice Ravel was born in Ciboure, Basses-Pyrénées, France, on March 7, 1875 and died in Paris, France, on December 28, 1937. The first performance of *La valse* took place in Paris on December 12, 1920, with Camille Chevillard conducting the Lamoureux Orchestra. *La valse* is scored for piccolo, three flutes, three oboes, English horn, two clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, orchestra bells, triangle, snare drum, tambourine, castanets, tam-tam, cymbals, suspended cymbal, crotales in C, bass drum, two harps, and strings. Approximate performance time is thirteen minutes.

First Classical Subscription Performance: March 16, 1954, Henry Sopkin, Conductor.

Most Recent Classical Subscription Performances: March 13, 15, and 16, 2014, Donald Runnicles, Conductor.

Maurice Ravel completed *La valse* in March 1920; however, the idea for the work first occurred to the composer several years earlier. In a letter dated February 7, 1906, Ravel informed writer Jean Marnold:

What I'm undertaking at the moment is not subtle—a grand waltz, a sort of homage to the memory of the great Strauss—not Richard, the other one, Johann. You know of my deep sympathy for these wonderful rhythms, and that I value the joie de vivre expressed by the dance...

Ravel originally conceived of the work as a “Symphonic Poem” entitled *Wien*. Ravel ultimately changed the title of the work to *La valse*, because it was “more in keeping with the aesthetic nature of the composition.” It was not until after World War I that the work finally materialized. Sergei Diaghilev, Director of the Ballets Russes, agreed to stage *La valse* as part of the 1920 summer season. Previously, Diaghilev’s company had presented the world premiere of the composer's *Daphnis et Chloé* (1912). Ravel composed *La valse* during the winter of 1919.

In the spring of 1920, Ravel and Marcelle Mayer performed the composer’s two-piano version of the score for an audience that included Diaghilev, Francis Poulenc, Igor Stravinsky, and choreographer Léonide Massine. According to Poulenc, once the performance concluded, Diaghilev commented: “Ravel, it’s a masterpiece...but it’s not a ballet...It’s the portrait of a ballet...the painting of a ballet.” Ravel calmly gathered his manuscript and left the room. He and Diaghilev never again worked together.

The premiere of *La valse*, a “Choreographic Poem for Orchestra,” took place in Paris on December 12, 1920, as part of the Concerts Lamoureux, with Camille Chevillard conducting. The first ballet staging of *La valse* took place several years later.

In his score, Ravel provided a brief choreographic argument for *La valse*:

Through whirling clouds, waltzing couples may be faintly distinguished. The clouds gradually scatter: one sees an immense hall filled with a swirling throng.

The stage is gradually illuminated. The light of the chandeliers reaches its peak at the *fortissimo*.

An imperial court, about 1855.

Ravel also offered the following insights during interviews conducted in 1922 and 1924:

It is a dancing, whirling, almost hallucinatory ecstasy, an increasingly passionate and exhausting whirlwind of dancers, who are overcome and exhilarated by nothing but “the waltz.”

Some people have seen in this piece the expression of a tragic affair; some have said that it represented the end of the Second

Empire, others said that it was postwar Vienna. They are wrong. Certainly, *La valse* is tragic, but in the Greek sense: it is a fatal spinning around, the expression of vertigo and of the voluptuousness of the dance to the point of paroxysm.