

A HERO'S JOURNEY

Tan Shun Zhong, tuba
Cecilia Ratna, piano



Stevens | Bozza | Prokofiev

25th April 2022 | 6:30 pm

YST Concert Hall

25 April 2022 | MONDAY

Tan Shun Zhong Tuba Recital

Cecilia Ratna, *piano*

Programme

THOMAS STEVENS

Variations In Olden Style

EUGENE BOZZA

Concertino for Tuba and Piano

I. Allegro vivo

II. Andante ma non troppo

III. Allegro vivo Intermission

– Intermission 5 minutes –

PROKOFIEV

Romeo and Juliet Suite No. 1, Op. 64 for Tuba and Piano

1. *Introduction*

2. *The City Awakes*

3. *Public Merry-Making*

4. *The Young Girl Juliet*

5. *Masks*

6. *Montagues and Capulets*

7. *The Death of Tybalt (Mercutio)*

8. *Romeo at Friar Lawrence's*

9. *Romeo and Juliet At Parting*

10. *Juliet's Death and Funeral*

Programme Notes

Variation In Olden Style

Thomas Stevens (1938 - 2018)

Variation In Olden Style consists of a theme with five strict variations. The theme is based on Bach's Polonaise from his French Suite no. 6, BMV 817. The variations are based compositionally, on the late violin sonata style of Corelli. More specifically, the sonata da camera style, which is a simple introduction followed by two of four dances. The sonata da camera style evolves into the dance suite of the classical period.

This piece was written for Roger Bobo, one of the greatest tuba players on this planet.

Concertino for Tuba and Piano

Eugène Bozza (1905 - 1991)

French composer, Eugene Bozza composed Concertino for Tuba (Bass Saxhorn) and Orchestra in 1967. It was originally written for Bass Saxhorn and Orchestra. But due to Industrial Revolution, French Saxhorn has

been replaced by modern tuba which has a bigger bore size, body and bell. This reduction is arranged for Tuba and Piano.

Bozza is known to wind players for his virtuosic writing and the humor with which he presents it. This music is technically demanding on the soloist, because of its extreme range and technical facility. Bozza quoted other compositions both directly and indirectly and his own composition into this concertino.

This is a three movement work with a nimble and light “French” style opening movement. After the first movement, there is a beautiful second movement that seems related to the opening bassoon solo from Stravinsky’s Rite of Spring. This movement is also a twin to his own work New Orleans. And the final movement is a joyful rhythmic dance tune that featured a small excerpt from Dukas’ Sorcerer’s Apprentice in the cadenza.

<https://laitaktak911.wordpress.com/2013/11/05/bozza-program-note/>

Romeo and Juliet Suite No.1, Op. 64 for Tuba and Piano Sergei Prokofiev (1891 - 1953)

All-time favorite ballet, Romeo and Juliet was completed by Prokofiev in 1936 and by all accounts, this was not a good year to be a Soviet musician. It wasn't the low pay or difficult working conditions that were top-of-mind for most, but rather the risk of being dragged from their homes and executed by firing squad. At the same time, Joseph Stalin was getting grumpy and his Great Purge (1936-1938) had begun.

Plans to produce the ballet had to be cancelled, due to its association with a theatre director who had been purged. So in 1937, as friends and neighbours were randomly disappearing from the apartment block where he lived, Prokofiev moved to salvage his ballet by fashioning a number of suites from the score, including one for piano entitled 10 Pieces from Romeo and Juliet, which he performed in public that year and published as his Op. 75. His strategy worked. Performances of the suites, both for orchestra and for piano solo, sparked

interest in mounting productions of the complete ballet, which began in 1938, and *Romeo and Juliet* went on to become one of the composer's most successful works.

In creating a version for piano, Prokofiev was coming full circle, as the original score had been composed for piano first, and then orchestrated. These pieces, then, are not mere orchestral reductions, but pianistically conceived scene paintings with the hands of the virtuoso pianist in mind. In keeping with its role as music for dance performance, the tonal language is relatively simple, in parts reminiscent of the clear textures of his 'Classical' Symphony in D (1917). Also present in abundance are Prokofiev's trademark quirks: quicksilver diversions to remote keys, melody notes that land one note off from where you expect them to go, and his classic "off-road" harmonic wanderings within phrases that always somehow manage to find their way back home just in time for the final cadence.

This version for tuba and piano was arranged by Charles Vernon, a dedication to Gene Pokorny. The suite begins with a dance that

introduces us to the moods and manners of the common folk of fair Verona, where the composer sets his scene. The following Scene: The City Awakes is simpler still, its chipper mood guaranteed by the steady pulse of its prancing accompaniment.

Juliet as a Young Girl sees our 14-year-old heroine playfully scampering around her room as she gets dressed, incessantly fussed over by her Nurse. Moments of tenderness intervene when she catches sight of her own beautiful self in the mirror.

The heavy pulse, eccentric tone clusters, and fractured harmonies of Masks alert us to the fact that Romeo and his best mate Mercutio are crashing the party. Then, Romeo and Juliet meet and dance together for the first time in the most famous and recognizable piece from this ballet, the dance of the Montagues and Capulets. Ominous, elegant, seductive and sinister, this music sums up the entire dramatic conflict of the ballet's storyline.

Mercutio is portrayed as whimsical, brash and self-confident, almost to the point of

recklessness. The amount of wide-ranging keyboard scamper in this piece tells us that here is a guy who runs with scissors.

This is followed by the calm and soothing reassurances of Friar Laurence, whose quiet dignity and seriousness of purpose are conveyed in the steady deliberate pace of his music portrait. The finale is an affectionate look back at Romeo and Juliet before Parting after they have spent the night together. Their drowsiness as they are awoken by the rising sun is conveyed by the static harmonies and chiming pedal tone of the opening. A mood of blissful nostalgia hovers over this piece to bring the suite to a close on a note of romantic reverie.

<https://vanrecital.com/tag/10-pieces-from-romeo-and-juliet-op-75/>

Programme notes by Tan Shun Zhong.