

The Philadelphia Orchestra

Yannick Nézet-Séguin Music Director

SEASON 2020-2021



Our
World

A Modern-Day
Carmen Fantasy

March 4, 2021

Jessica Griffin

The Philadelphia Orchestra

Thursday, March 4, at 8:00
On the Digital Stage

Yannick Nézet-Séguin Conductor

Brian Sanders' JUNK:

Kelly Trevlyn Carmen

Joe Rivera Himself/José Navarro

Teddy Fatscher A Picador Named Lucas

Avi Wolf Borouchoff Garcia the One-Eyed

Shchedrin *Carmen* Suite (after Bizet)

- a. Introduction
- b. Dance
- c. First Intermezzo
- d. Changing of the Guard
- e. Carmen's Entrance and Habanera
- f. Scene
- g. Second Intermezzo
- h. Bolero
- i. Torero
- j. Torero and Carmen
- k. Adagio
- l. Fortune-Telling
- m. Finale

Additional cast:

Jess Adams

Julia Higdon

Laura Jenkins

Desirée Navall

This program runs approximately 1 hour and will be performed without an intermission.

Conceived and Directed by **Brian Sanders**

Assistant Direction by **Nick Schwasman**

Costume Design and Masks by **JoAnne Jacobs**

Assistant to the Artistic Director **Sara Harris Brown**

This concert is sponsored by **Tobey and Mark Dichter** and the **Salkind Family Foundation**.

Philadelphia Orchestra concerts are broadcast on WRTI 90.1 FM on Sunday afternoons at 1 PM, and are repeated on Monday evenings at 7 PM on WRTI HD 2. Visit www.wrti.org to listen live or for more details.

The Philadelphia Orchestra

Yannick Nézet-Séguin Music Director

Our
World

NOW

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The Philadelphia Orchestra

Yannick Nézet-Séguin

Music Director

Walter and Leonore Annenberg Chair

Nathalie Stutzmann

Principal Guest Conductor Designate

Gabriela Lena Frank

Composer-in-Residence

Erina Yashima

Assistant Conductor

Lina Gonzalez-Granados

Conducting Fellow

Frederick R. Haas

Artistic Advisor

Fred J. Cooper Memorial Organ Experience

First Violins

David Kim, Concertmaster

Juliette Kang, First Associate
Concertmaster

Joseph and Marie Field Chair

Marc Rovetti, Assistant Concertmaster

Barbara Govatos

Robert E. Mortensen Chair

Jonathan Beiler

Hirono Oka

Richard Amoroso

Robert and Lynne Pollack Chair

Yayoi Numazawa

Jason DePue

Larry A. Grika Chair

Jennifer Haas

Miyo Curnow

Elina Kalendarova

Daniel Han

Julia Li

William Polk

Mei Ching Huang

Second Violins

Kimberly Fisher, Principal

Peter A. Benoliel Chair

Paul Roby, Associate Principal

Sandra and David Marshall Chair

Dara Morales, Assistant Principal

Anne M. Buxton Chair

Philip Kates

Davyd Booth

Paul Arnold

Joseph Brodo Chair, given by Peter A. Benoliel

Dmitri Levin

Boris Balter

Amy Oshiro-Morales

Yu-Ting Chen

Jeoung-Yin Kim

Christine Lim

Violas

Choong-Jin Chang, Principal

Ruth and A. Morris Williams Chair

Kirsten Johnson, Associate Principal

Kerri Ryan, Assistant Principal

Judy Geist

Renard Edwards

Anna Marie Ahn Petersen

Piasecki Family Chair

David Nicastro

Burchard Tang

Che-Hung Chen

Rachel Ku

Marvin Moon

Meng Wang

Cellos

Hai-Ye Ni, Principal

Priscilla Lee, Associate Principal

Yumi Kendall, Assistant Principal

Richard Harlow

Gloria dePasquale

Orton P. and Noël S. Jackson Chair

Kathryn Picht Read

Robert Cafaro

Volunteer Committees Chair

Ohad Bar-David

John Koen

Derek Barnes

Alex Veltman

Basses

Harold Robinson, Principal
Carole and Emilio Gravagno Chair

Joseph Conyers, Acting Associate
Principal
Tobey and Mark Dichter Chair

Nathaniel West, Acting Assistant Principal

David Fay

Duane Rosengard

*Some members of the string sections voluntarily
rotate seating on a periodic basis.*

Flutes

Jeffrey Khaner, Principal
Paul and Barbara Henkels Chair

Patrick Williams, Associate Principal
Rachelle and Ronald Kaiserman Chair

Olivia Staton

Erica Peel, Piccolo

Oboes

Philippe Tondre, Principal
Samuel S. Fels Chair

Peter Smith, Associate Principal

Jonathan Blumenfeld
Edwin Tuttle Chair

Elizabeth Starr Masoudnia,
English Horn
Joanne T. Greenspun Chair

Clarinets

Ricardo Morales, Principal
Leslie Miller and Richard Worley Chair

Samuel Caviezel, Associate Principal
Sarah and Frank Coulson Chair

Socrates Villegas

Paul R. Demers, Bass Clarinet
*Peter M. Joseph and Susan Rittenhouse
Joseph Chair*

Bassoons

Daniel Matsukawa, Principal
Richard M. Klein Chair

Mark Gigliotti, Co-Principal

Angela Anderson Smith

Holly Blake, Contrabassoon

Horns

Jennifer Montone, Principal
Gray Charitable Trust Chair

Jeffrey Lang, Associate Principal
Hannah L. and J. Welles Henderson Chair

Christopher Dwyer

Jeffrey Kirschen

Ernesto Tovar Torres

Shelley Showers

Trumpets

David Bilger, Principal
Marguerite and Gerry Lenfest Chair

Jeffrey Curnow, Associate Principal
Gary and Ruthanne Schlarbaum Chair

Anthony Prisk

Trombones

Nitzan Haroz, Principal
Neubauer Family Foundation Chair

Matthew Vaughn, Co-Principal

Blair Bollinger, Bass Trombone
Drs. Bong and Mi Wha Lee Chair

Tuba

Carol Jantsch, Principal
Lyn and George M. Ross Chair

Timpani

Don S. Liuzzi, Principal
Dwight V. Dowley Chair

Angela Zator Nelson, Associate Principal

Percussion

Christopher Deviney, Principal
Angela Zator Nelson

Piano and Celesta

Kiyoko Takeuti

Keyboards

Davyd Booth

Harp

Elizabeth Hainen, Principal

Librarians

Nicole Jordan, Principal

Steven K. Glanzmann

Stage Personnel

James J. Sweeney, Jr., Manager

Dennis Moore, Jr.



Jessica Griffin

The Philadelphia Orchestra is one of the world's preeminent orchestras. It strives to share the transformative power of music with the widest possible audience, and to create joy, connection, and excitement through music in the Philadelphia region, across the country, and around the world. Through innovative programming, robust educational initiatives, and an ongoing commitment to the communities that it serves, the ensemble is on a path to create an expansive future for classical music, and to further the place of the arts in an open and democratic society.

Yannick Nézet-Séguin is now in his ninth season as the eighth music director of The Philadelphia Orchestra. His connection to the ensemble's musicians has been praised by both concertgoers and critics, and he is embraced by the musicians of the Orchestra, audiences, and the community.

Your Philadelphia Orchestra takes great pride in its hometown, performing for the people of Philadelphia year-round, from Verizon Hall to community centers, the Mann Center to Penn's Landing, classrooms to hospitals, and over the airwaves and online. The Orchestra continues to discover new and inventive ways to nurture its relationship with loyal patrons.

In March 2020, in response to the cancellation of concerts due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Orchestra launched the Virtual Philadelphia Orchestra, a portal hosting video and audio of performances, free, on its website and social media platforms. In September 2020 the Orchestra announced Our World NOW, its reimagined season of concerts filmed without audiences and presented on its Digital Stage. Our World NOW also includes free offerings: HearTOGETHER, a podcast series on racial and social justice; educational activities; and Our City, Your Orchestra, small ensemble performances from locations throughout the Philadelphia region.

The Philadelphia Orchestra continues the tradition of educational and community engagement for listeners of all ages. It launched its **HEAR** initiative in 2016 to become a major force for good in every community that it serves. **HEAR** is a portfolio of integrated initiatives that promotes **H**Health, champions music **E**Education, enables broad **A**ccess to Orchestra performances, and maximizes impact through **R**esearch. The Orchestra's award-winning education and community initiatives engage over 50,000 students, families, and community members through programs such as PlayINs, side-by-sides, PopUP concerts, Free Neighborhood Concerts, School Concerts, sensory-friendly concerts, the School Partnership Program and School Ensemble Program, and All City Orchestra Fellowships.

Through concerts, tours, residencies, and recordings, the Orchestra is a global ambassador. It performs annually at Carnegie Hall, the Saratoga Performing Arts Center, and the Bravo! Vail Music Festival. The Orchestra also has a rich history of touring, having first performed outside Philadelphia in the earliest days of its founding. It was the first American orchestra to perform in the People's Republic of China in 1973, launching a now-five-decade commitment of people-to-people exchange.

The Orchestra also makes live recordings available on popular digital music services and as part of the Orchestra on Demand section of its website. Under Yannick's leadership, the Orchestra returned to recording, with eight celebrated CDs on the prestigious Deutsche Grammophon label. The Orchestra also reaches thousands of radio listeners with weekly broadcasts on WRTI-FM and SiriusXM.

For more information, please visit philorch.org.



Jessica Griffin

Music Director **Yannick Nézet-Séguin** will lead The Philadelphia Orchestra through at least the 2025–26 season, a significant long-term commitment. Additionally, he became the third music director of New York's Metropolitan Opera in 2018. Yannick, who holds the Walter and Leonore Annenberg Chair, is an inspired leader of The Philadelphia Orchestra. His intensely collaborative style, deeply rooted musical curiosity, and boundless enthusiasm have been heralded by critics and audiences alike. The *New York Times* has called him "phenomenal," adding that "the ensemble, famous for its glowing strings and homogenous richness, has never sounded better."

Yannick has established himself as a musical leader of the highest caliber and one of the most thrilling talents of his generation. He has been artistic director and principal conductor of Montreal's Orchestre Métropolitain since 2000, and in 2017 he became an honorary member of the Chamber Orchestra of Europe. He was music director of the Rotterdam Philharmonic from 2008 to 2018 (he is now honorary conductor) and was principal guest conductor of the London Philharmonic from 2008 to 2014. He has made wildly successful appearances with the world's

most revered ensembles and at many of the leading opera houses. Yannick signed an exclusive recording contract with Deutsche Grammophon in 2018. Under his leadership The Philadelphia Orchestra returned to recording with eight CDs on that label. His upcoming recordings will include projects with the Philadelphians, the Metropolitan Opera, the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, and the Orchestre Métropolitain, with which he will also continue to record for ATMA Classique.

A native of Montreal, Yannick studied piano, conducting, composition, and chamber music at Montreal's Conservatory of Music and continued his studies with renowned conductor Carlo Maria Giulini; he also studied choral conducting with Joseph Flummerfelt at Westminster Choir College. Among Yannick's honors are an appointment as Companion of the Order of Canada; an Officer of the Order of Montreal; *Musical America's* 2016 Artist of the Year; and honorary doctorates from the University of Quebec, the Curtis Institute of Music, Westminster Choir College of Rider University, McGill University, the University of Montreal, and the University of Pennsylvania.



Brian Sanders' JUNK was founded in 1992. Its mission is to create and produce experiences that are simultaneously accessible, unpredictable, and unconventional with provocative and physically intense performances. It is known for its ingenious use of found objects and clever inventions that bridge the gap between dance and physical theater. Sanders' choreography blends traditional dance theater with an inventiveness and physicality. JUNK maintains its home season in Philadelphia each fall as a mainstay of the Fringe Festival.



Brian Sanders grew up in Princeton, New Jersey, as a brother of six. His reckless fun was easily channeled once he found his love for gymnastics and classical dance. Inspired by shows such as Bob Fosse's *Dancin'* and *Pilobolus on Broadway*, he resolved to become a choreographer. He would eventually sustain

an extensive working relationship with one of the founding members of Pilobolus, Moses Pendleton, who also founded MOMIX. Mr. Sanders choreographed and performed worldwide with MOMIX for 10 years. He has gone on to choreograph and perform nationally and internationally for dance, television, theater, and video. In Italy he choreographed two nationally televised mini-series and a touring show, *NOGRAVITY*, which was performed at the 2006 Paralympic Winter Games in Torino. In 1992 Mr. Sanders founded JUNK. His recent creative visions with the company include partnering with renowned mural artist Meg Saligman to launch Figmago and choreographing Pennsylvania Ballet's *Chicken Bone Brain*. He recently launched a new virtual reality and performance experience entitled *2nd Sanctuary* in collaboration with Drexel University, which premiered at the 2019 Philadelphia Fringe Festival. Mr. Sanders made his Philadelphia Orchestra debut in April 2019 with Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet*.



Nick Schwasman (assistant director) is a performing artist based in Philadelphia. He holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the University of the Arts as well as a graduate certificate from the University of the Arts/Pig Iron School. He is a co-founder/co-director of Drip Symphony, a local experimental

performance company, and serves on the board of Plays and Players Theatre. Mr. Schwasman was an apprentice at the Lantern Theater

Company for its 2019–20 season. He has worked with choreographer David Gordon, Pig Iron Theatre Company, Lightning Rod Special, Brian Sanders' JUNK, the Arden Theatre Company, and the Renegade Company.



Kelly Trevlyn (Carmen) grew up in Media, Pennsylvania, and began her dance training at a young age at Media Dance Center and then the Rock School West in West Chester. She later attended Point Park University and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in dance in 2013. During her time at Point Park, she

performed original works by such choreographers as Sidra Bell, Christopher Huggins, Garfield Lemonius, Ron Tassone, and Patrick Frantz, as well as explored her own choreographic ideas. Upon graduating she joined Dissonance Dance Theatre and Deviated Theatre in Washington, D.C., as a company member. In 2014 she joined Brian Sanders' JUNK. In 2015 JUNK competed on truTV's *Fake Off*, where they landed a spot in the semifinals. Also in 2015 she performed with JUNK at the Jacob's Pillow Inside-Out Theatre in Becket, Massachusetts. Along with JUNK, she is also a performer with Matter Movement Group and Gunnar Montana Productions and has collaborated as a guest artist with SHARP Dance Company and Nickerson-Rossi Dance. She made her Philadelphia Orchestra debut in *Romeo and Juliet* in 2019.



Joe Rivera (Himself/José Navarro) is a native of Puerto Rico. At the age of 14 he came to the United States, where he found his love for dance in high school. He attended the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, where he received a bachelor's degree in dance performance in 2006. He relocated to Las

Vegas, Nevada, in 2007 to join the cast of Donn Arden's *Jubilee*. Since then he has appeared with Cirque du Soleil's *Zumanity* at the New York-New York Hotel & Casino, *Le Rêve/The Dream* at Wynn Las Vegas, *The Lion King* on Broadway and its national tour, and the first national tour of *On Your Feet!*; he also performed in the original Step One Dance Co. exclusively at Holland America Cruise Lines. His television credits include *The Kennedy Center Honors*, *The Talk*, *The Latin Grammy Awards*, *Dancing with the Stars*, *The Daytime Emmy Awards*, and a music video with Kristine W. This production

of A Modern-Day Carmen Fantasy marks Mr. Rivera's Philadelphia Orchestra debut.



Teddy Fatscher (A Picador Named Lucas) was born and raised in Massapequa, New York. After attending Long Island High School for the Arts, he moved to Philadelphia to attend the University of the Arts, which provided many opportunities to work with such world renowned artists and choreographers as Roni

Koresh, Douglas Becker, and Brian Sanders. Mr. Fatscher began working with Brian Sanders' JUNK during his freshman year. Since 2011 he has performed with JUNK annually in the Philadelphia Fringe Festival, among other programs and tours. In 2015 he had the opportunity to work with MOMIX, with which he toured Dubai. In 2016 he choreographed and produced his first production for the Fringe Festival and has created a show each year since. In 2018 he founded his own company, Matter Movement Group, a physical theater company with an emphasis on dance, athleticism, and creativity. Mr. Fatscher has worked with other local artists such as Sebastienne Mundheim and Gunnar Montana, and is a regular performer at Fabrika, a dinner theater in Philadelphia's Fishtown neighborhood. He made his Philadelphia Orchestra debut as Romeo in Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* in 2019.



Avi Wolf Borouchoff (Garcia the One-Eyed), who is making his Philadelphia Orchestra debut, began dancing at age 18 after being inspired by the dance company Pilobolus. Having become involved in the theater program at the Milwaukee High School of the Arts, he fell in love with dance after one

of his mentors encouraged him to enroll in a jazz class. He now holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts in dance from Temple University. With a background in competitive cross country, gymnastics, and swim, Mr. Wolf Borouchoff has developed a unique blend of athleticism and dance. He has worked with the Montreal Cirque Festival as a featured dancer in collaboration with Anthony Venisse and Lucie Vigneault. He has also performed with Gunnar Montana Productions and has performed with Mr. Montana for the past two years in the Philadelphia Fringe Festival and at New York's La Mama. Mr. Wolf Borouchoff performs aerial straps, solo, and with his partner,

Maria Artim, every weekend at Fabrika in Philadelphia. In addition, he has showcased his aerial capabilities at venues like House of Yes in New York and the Philadelphia School of Circus Arts.



Jess Adams is a performing artist from Oreland, Pennsylvania. After receiving her Bachelor of Fine Arts in dance from the University of the Arts in 2016 she worked as a dancer/aerialist for Norwegian Cruise Lines. She returned to Philadelphia where she presented her own solo choreography and performed as a freelance artist for the Jim Bunting Dance Company and Kevin Sullivan and Dancers. Since 2017 she has performed and taught for Almanac Dance Circus Theatre. In 2016 she first volunteered for JUNK's Snowball at Union Transfer as an event dancer. Two years later she danced in JUNK's Fringe Festival show *Plunge* and has performed for the company ever since. A month after joining JUNK, she also joined Project Moshen as a company dancer. This past fall she appeared in the music video for "We Rule the Night" by Matthew Schuler. She continues her training in aerial work at Secret Circus and hand balancing with Nicole Burgio. Ms. Adams, who made her Philadelphia Orchestra debut in 2019 in *Romeo and Juliet*, teaches classes at several dance studios in the suburbs.



Julia Higdon began her dance lessons at age nine. By 13 she had trained at professional and university level institutions and had started a full-time schooling dance education from the Kirov Academy of Washington, D.C. She acquired over 10,000 hours of professional training before turning 18 and supplemented with summer studies at various prestigious schools such as American Ballet Theatre in New York and the Rock School for Dance Education in Philadelphia. Since 2005 she has danced with dozens of companies, reintroducing herself to the Philadelphia dance scene in 2011 as a dance major at the University of the Arts. For the last six years she has performed for and collaborated with Brian Sanders' JUNK, with which she made her Philadelphia Orchestra debut in 2019 as Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*. She has also collaborated with several other local dance companies, including Gunnar Montana Productions, Cardell Dance Theater, and in the production of *Let 'em Move You*. In 2018 she expanded her career to include entrepreneurship through the joint ownership of Dancewear on Broad.



Laura Jenkins, who is making her Philadelphia Orchestra debut, grew up in Poughkeepsie, New York, and moved to Philadelphia in 2003 to attend the University of the Arts; she graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in modern dance performance. In 2007 she began her own collaborative dance company, PINK HAIR AFFAIR, and choreographed/directed various productions including a music video, "Human Cannonball," that won Best Music Video at the New York City Independent Film Festival. She was also a professional NFL cheerleader for the Philadelphia Eagles and was one of five selected to perform for the military in Kuwait and Iraq. In 2011 she ended her final season as captain. Ms. Jenkins started working with Brian Sanders in college. In 2012 she joined JUNK full-time and toured around the United States and Dubai. She made her JUNK Fringe Festival debut in *Hush Now Sweet High Heels and Oak*. When she's not dancing she's running her own business, Massage Studio of Philadelphia. She is a massage therapist for the Philadelphia Eagles and the Pennsylvania Ballet, among many others.



Desirée Navall is a native of Fredericksburg, Virginia, where they took their first steps in a dance studio at the age of two. They trained all over Washington, D.C., Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia in many styles, including acrobatics, singing, and theater. They eventually moved to New York where they trained for a year at the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. A year later, they moved to Philadelphia where they trained at the University of the Arts. They have performed various works with Debbie Allen, Frank Hatchett, Sidra Bell, and others. While living in Philly, they found themselves venturing into the circus world collaborating with Almanac Dance Circus Theatre. In 2019 they co-produced and performed in *The Edge*, their first production in Philadelphia's Fringe Festival, where it was nominated for a Barrymore Award. They first worked with Brian Sanders' JUNK in *2nd Sanctuary* in October 2019. This current performance marks their Philadelphia Orchestra debut.

Georges Bizet's *Carmen* quickly became one of the most beloved and frequently performed operas ever written, although the unfortunate 36-year-old composer died just three months after its unsuccessful premiere and never knew what a hit he had created. Not just is the original opera continuously performed, but its magnificent melodies and dramatic flair have inspired many orchestral suites, arrangements, and movies.

This concert presents one of the most imaginative recastings of Bizet's music: the great Russian composer Rodion Shchedrin's *Carmen Suite*, which he wrote in the mid-1960s to be danced by his wife, the legendary ballerina Maya Plisetskaya. Shchedrin scored the work for a string orchestra and a large battery of percussion instruments: four separate stations in addition to timpani.

True to *Carmen's* theatrical roots, in this performance we also experience the visual magic of the riveting Philadelphia-based dance company Brian Sanders' JUNK in its second collaboration with The Philadelphia Orchestra after a widely hailed presentation of Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* in April 2019.

The Philadelphia Orchestra is the only orchestra in the world with three weekly broadcasts on SiriusXM's Symphony Hall, Channel 76, on Mondays at 7 PM, Thursdays at 12 AM, and Saturdays at 4 PM.



1967

Shchedrin

Carmen Suite

Music

Rodrigo

Concierto andaluz

Literature

Stoppard

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead

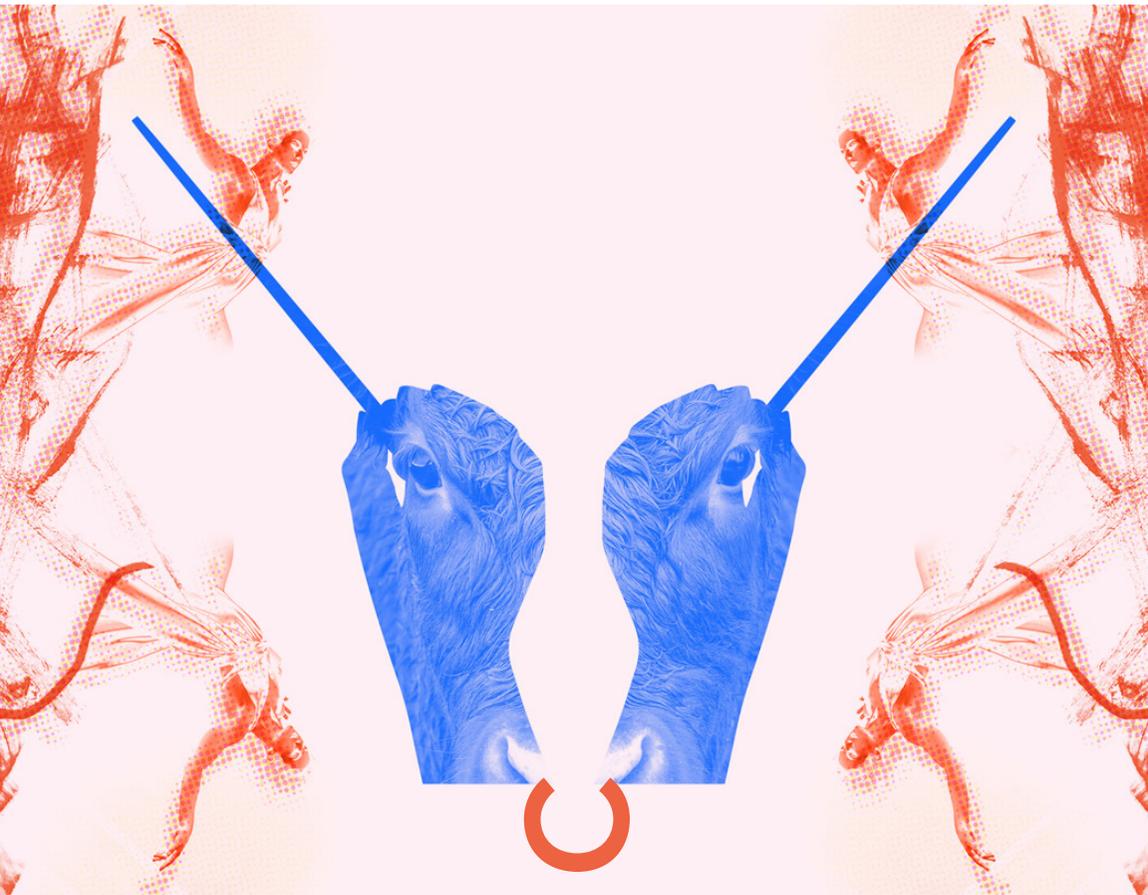
Art

Johns

0 through 9

History

Hanoi attacked by US



***Carmen* Suite (after Bizet)**

Rodion Shchedrin

Born in Moscow, December 16, 1932

Now living in Munich and Moscow



It is hardly surprising that great stories featuring remarkable characters inspire many retellings and continuous reinventions. Countless composers, for example, have been drawn to Shakespeare's plays. Just because Rossini wrote a famous *Othello*, that did not stop Verdi from setting the story in his own way. And after Verdi's *Falstaff* (which had already been a successful opera by Salieri) Ralph Vaughan Williams nonetheless tried his hand at portraying the unforgettable corpulent knight. Versions of Romeo and Juliet's ill-fated love are even more extensive. Goethe's *Faust* continues to engender all manner of offspring.

The story of the alluring gypsy Carmen has likewise seduced many artistic figures to tell her tale in new ways. It started with French author Prosper Mérimée's popular 1846 novella, which was loosely based on a real-life scandal. The story became much more famous some 30 years later when Georges Bizet's brilliant opera premiered in Paris. His music in turn inspired many arrangements, movies, and theatrical productions.

On this concert we hear one of the most imaginative progeny of Bizet's opera. In the 1960s the Russian composer Rodion Shchedrin became involved with a project to create a Carmen ballet starring his wife, Maya Plisetskaya, a legendary prima ballerina at the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow. He quickly realized that he could not escape the seductive allure of Bizet's music and so, if he could not start from scratch, he decided to reimagine what the French composer had done 90 years earlier and give it a mid-20th-century spin.

A Posthumous Triumph

While one might not want to go so far as to say that the opera's initial failure killed Bizet, a slew of problems and harsh criticism

surrounded the 1875 premiere of *Carmen*, exactly three months before the composer's death of a heart attack at age 36. What is now one of the most popular operas ever written did not take long to become beloved, but unfortunately Bizet was not alive to enjoy his triumph.

The initial problems were largely due to its risqué subject matter. In 1873 the directors of the Opéra-Comique in Paris commissioned a three-act opera from Bizet to be written in collaboration with the seasoned librettists Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy, best known for their words in operettas by Jacques Offenbach. The name of the prominent commissioning theater is somewhat misleading as its repertory was not limited to comedies but rather to presentations that had spoken dialogue, like most musicals today. The problem that emerged with Bizet's opera was the scandalously sensuous nature of the title character and the realistic unfolding of events that culminated with her bloody murder at the hands of her jealous lover, Don José, after she falls for the dashing bullfighter Escamillo. This was hardly the family entertainment expected at the Opéra-Comique.

From French Opera to Russian Ballet

One can imagine that had Bizet lived he would have extracted orchestral excerpts from *Carmen* to fashion into an orchestral concert suite—he had, after all, enjoyed unusual success a few years earlier with suites drawn from his incidental music for the play *L'Arlésienne* (The Girl from Arles). But with his death it fell to the publisher to figure out how to repackage parts of *Carmen* and over time various suites were made as well as all manner of arrangements, adaptations, and famous fantasies. The opera also inspired many films, including Otto Preminger's all-Black-cast *Carmen Jones* (1954) that in turn led in 2001 to *Carmen: A Hip Hopera* starring Beyoncé.

And that is what gets us to the Soviet Union in the 1960s. Despite being married to one of the greatest dancers of the 20th century, Rodion Shchedrin was apparently not her first choice to write a *Carmen* score. Plisetskaya initially tried to enlist Dmitri Shostakovich, a friend and mentor of her husband's, and after he politely declined, she approached Aram Khachaturian. Both composers had written successful ballets, but they shied away from this project, the imposing stature of Bizet's opera no doubt causing some of the reluctance. The project was developed with the Cuban choreographer Alberto Alonso, whose Ballet Nacional de Cuba toured the Soviet Union

in 1966. Alonso came up with the scenario and Shchedrin began to compose the music. That is when he realized he too could not shake off the shadow of Bizet's music and apparently felt that if you can't beat them, join them.

Shchedrin, who calls Bizet's score "fantastic, one of the best in the whole history of music," realized it could be the basis for a creative reimagining. He decided it would be scored just for strings and a vast array of percussion instruments—four players and a timpanist. Gone were Bizet's ominous brass blaring forth fate motives. Shchedrin also deftly adapted some of the harmonic and rhythmic features, giving a modern spin to a Romantic classic. In this he was doing something similar to what Igor Stravinsky had 50 years earlier in his Neoclassical pieces, which fellow Russian Sergei Prokofiev disparagingly said were like "Bach with smallpox." We thus get the familiar—beloved melodies and vibrant rhythms—but made strangely fresh and new.

The *Carmen* ballet premiered at the Bolshoi Theatre in 1967 and caused some controversy. For most of his long career, Shchedrin (who is now 88 years old and lives much of the year in Munich) deftly negotiated the fraught politics of being an artist in the Soviet Union. He is a prolific composer of operas, ballets, concertos, symphonies, and a vast array of other significant music. He emerged as a dashing figure and part of a celebrity couple after marrying Plisetskaya in 1958—Americans might think of movie stars, since classical music and dance mattered so much (and still do) within the Russian sphere. The *Carmen* ballet was officially attacked for its sexuality and Shchedrin's distortions of Bizet's classic opera. Shostakovich interceded in support of his colleague and the score went on to become Shchedrin's most performed composition. This popularity has overshadowed some of his other magnificent music, although the composer is philosophical about the situation, which has been financially advantageous, saying in an interview: "My *Carmen* Suite has been good to me and I'm extremely happy about that."

A Closer Look

The 13 movements of the Suite are played with a wide range of tempos and moods that do not necessarily correspond to the unfolding of the story or the order of the music in the opera. It begins with a soft and mysterious **Introduction** featuring evocative chimes playing one of the opera's principal themes. The mood

quickly shifts to a vibrant **Dance** with a distinctive Spanish flavor. The **First Intermezzo** projects a pastoral mood interrupted by the "Fate" motive with ominous drum strokes. The **Changing of the Guard** features a wide range of colorful percussion leading to **Carmen's Entrance and Habanera** with alluring strings first carrying the seductive tune. The sixth movement (**Scene**) is the longest in the Suite as Carmen seduces Don José followed by the **Second Intermezzo**.

The toreador Escamillo (Lucas in the novel) appears in the **Bolero** and **Torero** sections in which Shchedrin cleverly at points has just the accompaniment play, as listeners can provide the melody of the bullfighter's famous theme song in their own minds. **Torero and Carmen** shows the couple together before Don José's "Flower Song" appears in the **Adagio**. After impassioned string writing in **Fortune-Telling** the Suite concludes (**Finale**) with juxtapositions of the bustling bullfight and the lover's ominous fate.

—Christopher H. Gibbs

Shchedrin composed the Carmen Suite in 1967.

Arthur Fiedler conducted the first Philadelphia Orchestra performance of the piece, in August 1969 in Saratoga Springs. It has been heard only once on subscription, with Erich Leinsdorf in February 1992. Most recently, Rossen Milanov led the Suite at the Mann Center in June 2007.

The score calls for timpani, percussion (bass drum, bells, bongos, castanets, claves, cockolo, cow bells, crotales, cymbals, drum, glockenspiel, güiro, high-hat, maracas, marimba, slapstick, snare drums, tambourine, tam-tam, temple blocks, tenor drum, tom-toms, triangle, vibraphone, wood blocks), and strings.

Performance time is approximately 45 minutes.