

Stanley St
PRESENTS

Celebrate Christmas

7.30pm, Friday 13 December
3pm, Saturday 14 December
Holy Trinity Cathedral

Conductor Stephen Layton
Tenor Emmanuel Fonoti-Fuimaono

The Graduate Choir New Zealand
Director Terence Maskell

 The New Zealand Herald
Premier Series

**Auckland
Philharmonia.**

City Lights

 **7.30PM, THURSDAY 28 NOVEMBER**

**Auckland
Council**
By Kaitiaki & Te Kaitiaki



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CONDUCTOR Giordano Bellincampi

VIOLIN Andrew Beer

WYNTON MARSALIS Violin Concerto

BERNSTEIN Symphonic Dances from *West Side Story*

GERSHWIN *An American in Paris*

Programme Notes



For artist biographies,
please visit our website

Wynton Marsalis (b.1961)

Violin Concerto (2015)

New Zealand premiere

- I. *Rhapsody*
- II. *Rondo Burlesque*
- III. *Blues*
- IV. *Hootenanny*

DURATION: c.43'

While Wynton Marsalis is best known as a jazz trumpeter and bandleader, he has also written many orchestral works. His violin concerto, composed for Nicola Benedetti in 2015, is one of his most substantial and personal creations. Marsalis combines traditions from across the violin's history, veering seamlessly between Mendelssohn-like romanticism, Scottish reels, Gershwin- and Ellington-inspired concert jazz, and the blues. Noting the challenge of conveying the spontaneity of jazz and blues and their rhythmic drive in an orchestral setting, Marsalis settled on an exploration of the Anglo-Celtic influences on African American jazz. Each of the four movements highlights a different aspect of this influence.

The dreamlike first movement introduces these topics; the second and third borrow from New Orleans jazz and Delta blues, respectively, to carry the abstract narrative

forward; between these movements comes a long violin cadenza accompanied by drum kit. The fourth movement is a raucous 'barnyard throwdown' that nods to Appalachian fiddling.

Through this concerto, Marsalis demonstrates that the seemingly divergent styles of American music are not so different as they first appear. The concerto is a classical version of jazz fusion.

INTERVAL

Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990)

Symphonic Dances from
West Side Story (1961)

- I. *Prologue*
- II. *Somewhere*
- III. *Scherzo*
- IV. *Mambo*
- V. *Cha-cha*
- VI. *Meeting Scene*
- VII. *Cool Fugue*
- VIII. *Rumble*
- IX. *Finale*

DURATION: c.22'

In addition to being a great composer and conductor, Leonard Bernstein knew the music market; he understood that suites

drawn from his larger dramatic works could help give them further life in the concert hall. The Symphonic Dances from *West Side Story* transform much of the dance music from his 1957 musical into a concert work.

Most composers who work on Broadway do not do their own orchestrations because of the extreme time pressure involved: in the try-out period, music might be written one day and be expected to be in the show the next, so the labour of composition is split between the composer and the orchestrator, vocal arranger, dance arranger, and other members of the music team. The orchestrations for *West Side Story*, as well as the arrangement of the suite, were completed by Bernstein's colleagues Irwin Kostal and Sid Ramin. The Broadway orchestration had been written for about 30 musicians (the usual size for a big musical in the 1950s), so their first task was to expand the score for a full symphony orchestra. The major expansion came in the strings: the pit band had 12 string players (and no violas!) so Kostal and Ramin were able to use thicker voicings and more divided parts. It is also the custom for Broadway woodwind players to double: so complex was the *West Side Story* doubling that five musicians played 23 different instruments in the orchestra pit. For the concert version the orchestrators could expand the wind parts into a standard triple wind orchestral lineup.

Bernstein decided on the order of movements, based on musical flow rather than the order in which the dances appear in the musical itself, and he wrote a few new transitions to bring the suite together as a single unit. It was premiered in 1961, a few months before the film adaptation was released, stimulating even more interest in the musical.

George Gershwin (1898-1937)

An American in Paris (1928)

FIVE SECTIONS PLAYED CONTINUOUSLY

DURATION: c.18'

Gershwin went to Paris in the 1920s and was inspired by his trip to write a tone poem that would combine a tourist's excitement about the city as well as the homesickness for New York that he felt. In *An American in Paris* the Seine and the Hudson flow together in a series of contrasting melodies assembled rhapsodically. Gershwin acknowledged influences from recent French music (specifically Debussy and the group Les Six), and the piece demonstrates new skills of motivic manipulation and counterpoint. Ravel was also an important influence; in early 1928 Gershwin even asked Ravel for composition lessons. Ravel famously replied that lessons would only result in Gershwin writing 'bad Ravel' (the influence went both ways, with Ravel's 1931 piano concerto in G major clearly inspired by Gershwin).

Where the earlier *Rhapsody in Blue* had been orchestrated by Ferde Grofé, Gershwin felt his technique had advanced enough that he orchestrated *An American in Paris* himself. He notably included taxi horns, which he had brought home from Paris to be used at the Carnegie Hall premiere by the New York Philharmonic. Music critic Deems Taylor came up with an elaborate narrative to include in the programme at the premiere, but there is little evidence that Gershwin was thinking so literally when he wrote the piece; it is best heard as an impressionistic series of musical thoughts about Paris. While a few critics could still only hear Gershwin as a song-plugger, most who were at the premiere understood that the score marked a major advance; it has been a standard part of the orchestral repertoire ever since.

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Notes Fund: Music for this concert has been supported by Geoffrey Haughey & Sally Rich