

CONCERT 11 May 2020

Hello everyone,

I am featuring two composers only for this week's concert. Both were 20th century giants in their respective genres, although half a century or more separate most of their great works. Both understood the visual and the amazing emotional effect music had on heightening the experience of the audience. The first is the great French film composer and conductor Maurice Jarre.

From *Laurence of Arabia* in 1962 right through the next three decades Jarre was composing extraordinary scores to blockbuster films. Many of which were directed by director and friend David Lean. He also collaborated with other directors. In fact David Weir the Australian director employed him to write the music for *The Year of Living Dangerously* (1982) and *Witness* (1985) both recorded in Melbourne, and in which I played a part. Jarre, along with other top film composers at the time such as Gerry Goldsmith, began the very successful cross-pollination of synthesised and acoustic recordings, creating a new dynamic soundscape highlighted in the much improved sound systems being installed in theatres. Goldsmith, through his contact with Brian May and Peter Weir at Paramount studios, was also persuaded to record at Alan Eaton studios in St. Kilda, the first of many Hollywood films recorded here in the 1980s. It is however, the blockbuster scores that are best remembered, such as *Doctor Zhivago*, *A Passage to India* and *Ryan's Daughter* to name a few. So for the first half of the concert YouTube: A musical tribute to David Lean conducted by Maurice Jarre.

The second composer of the week is Igor Stravinsky, arguably the greatest influence on the direction of 20th century music.

His output was enormous, from sacred music to chamber music, choral and instrumental. He is particularly known for his ballet scores, two of which I will encourage you to listen to this week. His early years, according to letters published in 1978, refer less to his piano practising than to painting and acting in amateur theatricals. Good training for his later understanding of the relationship between stage, movement and orchestration.

In 1901 he received his certificate of admission to study Law at St. Petersburg University and was musically entrusted to the care of Rimsky-Korsakov, thus gaining admission to a circle of artists in many fields. His relationship with R-K and others was to be torn apart when R-K and his followers refused to accept the success of *The Firebird* and *Petrushka* ballet music. I still love to reference a wonderful book, very kindly given to me by Whitehorse Orchestra more than 20 years ago, containing many letters written to and from Stravinsky.

Anyway let's cut to the chase.

The first piece highlighted this week is "Pulcinella". First performed by the "Ballets Russes" in May 1920 and based on the unpublished music of Italian composer Pergolesi. Quoted in a letter to a friend Stravinsky states: "being in Italy, I ransacked the libraries with Diaghilev. We discovered many interesting and unknown themes." The original playbill reads "Music by Pergolesi arranged and orchestrated by Stravinsky". Pergolesi's name gradually disappeared and scholars have since shown that a lot of the music was not his, but Stravinsky's, original ideas. As it turned out, Diaghilev ended up not working on this one act opera, which was made all the more famous because of Stravinsky's collaboration with his great friend Picasso, who designed costumes and many of the sets. There is a beautiful video on YouTube of the Ballet Pulcinella with Volodimir Balyk. The picture is a little dark, but the chamber strings and solo wind playing is first class.

The second ballet score is the one and only "Le Sacre du Printemps" premiering in 1913. The story is too long to tell, plenty of information available. I must urge you to watch part 1 and 2, perhaps at different times, as it is like great poetry, hard to concentrate through for the first time. There is a stunning performance on YouTube of Michael Tilson Thomas conducting at a prom concert. The

directing of the camera work is the best I have ever seen, creating a textbook on the instrumentation and an intimate insight in to the orchestration of this amazing and seminal 20th Century masterpiece. (Geoff two contras!!)