

CONCERT 4 May 2020

As it is official Star Wars day may the fourth be with you!

The LSO won the contract to be what was arguably the most lucrative film score ever written when on tour to the US in 1978. Andre Previn, the then conductor, (and by then successful film score writer) suggested he contact John Williams, who then told him he had just begun writing a score, but it would not interest the LSO because it was all “up in the universe”. In fact they were thinking of calling it Star Wars. Within 24 hours the then chairman, Anthony Camden, had organised the 18 sessions required within the month at Denham Studios in London, most starting late at night after full days of rehearsals and concerts already committed to.

The first sound Maurice Murphy, the legendary first trumpet, claims he produced in his position of principal trumpet for the LSO was the opening note of William’s score. Barry Tuckwell was also on those sessions. No wonder the sound is so wonderful. From then on the LSO became John William’s orchestra of choice. I have performed the full score a few times with the VCO. It would be a good piece for us to play. There is a lovely recording of John Williams at the Albert Hall with the LSO.

To maintain the excitement let’s turn to Georgian composer, Aran Khachaturian. We have performed the adagio from Spartacus before, but possibilities are also the Waltz from Masquerade and Sabre Dance from his Gayanah Suite. The Waltz has many YouTube offerings but if you like it with costume and dance you will find it ON TRENDING. There is a fine version of the Sabre Dance with the Vienna Philharmonic or, for something completely different, the Sabre Dance played by Vanessa Mae.

Sergei Prokofiev was one of the greatest 20th Century composers and a wonderful pianist. He wrote his first two concerti before being allowed to leave Russia to further his career in America and Germany. He began sketches for this work in 1913 pre revolution, completing the work in 1921. He returned to Russia in the mid 1930s as the depression and lack of opportunity drew him back. From the opening phrase on the clarinet to the soaring melody in the strings in the last movement his Piano Concerto No. 3, is one of my favourite piano concertos and to me encapsulates what the Russian nation was experiencing in those years. Find a performance by Yuja Wang with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra. Wang, born in Beijing and studying there and in the US at the Curtis Institute, I believe really understands the subtext of this work, performing it with great technical power and flair.

As a delicate sweet to finish, google a delightful third movement of the Tchaikovsky 4th Symphony performed by the Manheimer Philharmoniker conducted by Boian Videnoff. Strings, get your pizzicato fingers working, it’s not all bow technique. If you have time, listen to the whole symphony. The melody, first on oboe then celli, in the second movement is one of the best.