

HUXFORD SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Tuesday, November 15, 2022
Concert Hall
7:30 p.m.

Joseph Lee, Conductor

PROGRAM

Cantus in Memory of Benjamin Britten Arvo Pärt
(b. 1935)

*In lieu of applause, a moment of silence for those who have perished
in the Russia-Ukraine War will be observed.*

Romeo and Juliet: Suite No. 2, Op. 64ter Sergei Prokofiev
(1891-1953)
I. The Montagues and Capulets
II. The Young Juliet
III. Friar Laurence
IV. Dance
V. Romeo and Juliet Before Parting
VI. Dance of the Girls with Lillies
VII. Romeo at Juliet's Grave

-INTERMISSION-

Symphony No. 5 in D minor, Op. 47 Dmitri Shostakovich
(1906-1975)
I. Moderato
II. Allegretto
III. Largo
IV. Allegro non troppo

*The Huxford Symphony Orchestra and the University of Alabama
School of Music are grateful to Camilla Huxford for her
continued generous support of UA's orchestra program.*

82nd Program of the 2022 - 2023 Season

Biography

Joseph Lee, conductor, is the Interim Director of Orchestral Studies at the University of Alabama. He is also the Resident Conductor of the Huntsville Symphony Orchestra, Music Director of the Huntsville Youth Orchestra, Music Director of the Tennessee Valley Music Festival, Music Director of the Festival Internacional de Música Cóbano (Costa Rica), the Director of Music Ministries at East End United Methodist Church in Nashville, TN, the Principal Conductor of Nashville's professional modern music ensemble, "chatterbird," and the Artistic Director of Nashville in Harmony's youth chorus for LGBTQIAP+ and allied youth, Major Minors. On stage, he has led a diverse group of performers including Grammy award winning artists Eileen Ivers and Immigrant Soul, the world-famous Canadian Brass, the performers of *Cirque de la Symphonie*, Act of Congress, *Riders in the Sky*, Tony Award nominee Jodi Benson, and other Broadway stars including Gary Mauer, Julia Murney, Virginia Woodruff, Burke Moses, and many others. Mr. Lee has also led the Huntsville Ballet Company in over 100 performances of Tchaikovsky's "Nutcracker."

Mr. Lee served on the conducting staff of the Sewanee Summer Music Festival from 2007-2011 and served as the conductor of the University Orchestra at Sewanee from 2011-2014. In the Spring of 2011, Mr. Lee returned to his alma mater to serve a one-semester appointment at Vanderbilt's Blair School of Music as Adjunct Assistant Professor of Orchestra and Conducting. In 2018, Mr. Lee founded the University Orchestra at the University of Alabama in Huntsville, and led that ensemble until December 2021. In addition to his regular conducting activities, Mr. Lee frequently travels the Southeast US and Central America leading clinics, adjudicating band and orchestra festivals, and guest conducting. Originally a bassoonist and cellist, Mr. Lee has a passion for Eastern music and studies the Japanese shakuhachi and the Armenian duduk. Mr. Lee is the President of the Alabama Orchestra Association, and currently pursuing a Master of Divinity at Claremont School of Theology.

Program Notes

Arvo Pärt (1935-present) is one of the most well-known composers of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Born in Estonia, Pärt studied in the country's Academy of Music throughout his young adulthood, though his studies were interrupted by service in the Soviet Army from 1954–56. Pärt's early experimentation with modern compositional styles such as serialism departed from the values of the Soviet Union's Composer's Union, and Pärt's tense relationship with the Soviet government characterized much of his life and travels. Pärt believed his faith affected everything he did, and a major turning point in Pärt's life was his 1972 conversion from Lutheranism to Orthodox Christianity. Almost all of Pärt's work has a sacred connotation, and this came to a head in his invention of "tintinnabuli," a compositional technique grounded in philosophy that appeared in many of his best-known works such as *Fratres* and *Tabula rasa*. Tintinnabuli is a style influenced by early chant music with a two voice texture, where one plays notes of the tonic harmony and another which moves diatonically by stepwise motion. Today, Pärt continues to compose and is the second-most performed living composer in the world behind John Williams.

Cantus in Memoriam Benjamin Britten (1977) is one of Pärt's most famous works. Pärt deeply admired the work of the English composer Benjamin Britten (1913–76) and strived to replicate the "unusual purity" he perceived in Britten's music. The piece uses an early form of Pärt's tintinnabuli style written in two primary parts, with a moving melodic voice representing the subjective "daily

egoistic life of sin and suffering” and the harmony in the background depicting the “objective realm of forgiveness.” After hearing the silence with which the piece opens, listeners first hear chimes from a single bell, seeming to announce the death of Britten. The entire piece consists of descending A-minor scales, giving listeners a feeling of endless falling into either sadness or the eventual acceptance of death. Each string section except for the violas is divided into two parts and they increase in volume throughout the entire work. In addition to tintinnabuli, another main feature of this piece is a Renaissance-era technique known as a prolation or mensuration canon, in which each part plays the same musical line, but the rhythmic values of each voice become proportionally longer. For example, the second violins play at half the speed of the first violins and so on until the basses enter at 1/16th speed of the first violin part. These mathematically off-set layers create a mass of sound that resolves after the different parts finish their statement of the scale and land on a sustained A-minor chord. In the same way the piece begins, listeners are left with silence as the echoes of a *pianissimo* bell toll reverberate in the hall. Just as the piece represents the sadness and struggle of dealing with death, it offers listeners hope in a transcendent reality beyond their present experience.

The Huxford Symphony orchestra dedicates this performance of *Cantus in Memoriam Benjamin Britten* to those who have lost their lives in the recent conflict between Russia and Ukraine. We ask that you not applaud following the performance of this piece, and this performance will be followed by a moment of silence to honor their memory.

Romeo and Juliet Suite No. 2, Op. 64ter by **Sergi Prokofiev** (1891-1953) is the second of three suites Prokofiev’s made from his ballet score. If you attended the previous Huxford Symphony Orchestra Concert, you heard Tchaikovsky’s musical depiction of *Romeo and Juliet*. Unlike Tchaikovsky’s suite which was written as an orchestral piece, Prokofiev’s music was written in the context of a ballet. A full performance of the original ballet takes over two hours. As with the Tchaikovsky, you will recognize some of the music from popular culture. Rather than Tchaikovsky’s sublime love theme, the recognizable bit from *Prokofiev’s Romeo and Juliet Suite No. 2* is the aggressive conflict between the Capulets and Montagues. The ballet was written during a pivotal period in Prokofiev’s life. Born in the late stages of the Russian Empire, young Prokofiev studied at the Saint Petersburg Conservatory while he was 12 years old. Through his musical connections, Prokofiev began to write ballets, which he continued to write throughout his life. Towards the end of his studies at the conservatory, the Russian civil war was creating difficult artistic conditions in Russia, and Prokofiev left Russia for the United States. After seasons of touring, opera, ballet, and concerts of varied success, Prokofiev was nomadic for in the late 1920s and early 1930s, with stints across the U.S. and Paris, France. Eventually the composer returned home to Russia, now the USSR in 1936. During this period Prokofiev was commissioned to write a Shakespearean ballet. Prokofiev faced unpredictable reactions to his works, largely due to the differences in his many audiences. The Americans, Parisians, and Russians all heard different things in his music, and certain audiences loved pieces that other audiences disdained. The composer was attempting to produce *Romeo and Juliet* during a time of turn-over in the Russian ballet he was working with, and the project as a whole was quite challenging. The suite moves through the characters and events we know from the story, concluding with the seventh movement, “Romeo at Juliet’s Grave”.

Russian composer **Dmitri Shostakovich** began his musical career at a young age, following his formal piano and composition studies. During his lifetime he composed works representing a diverse range of musical genres, including many notable works within the string quartet, vocal, and instrumental genres. But some of his greatest works can be found among his fifteen symphonies. Today, Shostakovich is regarded as one of the greatest symphonic composers of the mid-twentieth century.

Shostakovich gained international fame at a young age with his First Symphony. But despite a strong start to his career, Shostakovich had to navigate the challenges that arose from living during the Stalinist regime. In the time between the premiere of the first symphony and the fifth, Shostakovich received some harsh reviews. Critics accused him of “formalism,” a term which had lost its traditional compositional meaning and had instead become an insult used to attack artistic works that failed to sufficiently appeal to communist sensibilities. Going forward, Shostakovich had to strike a fine balance within his music in order to avoid rebuke, or even censure, from political entities associated with the regime.

A prime example is the Fifth Symphony, composed in 1937 and premiered in November of that same year. It is comprised of four movements, beginning with a (relatively) fast first movement in sonata form followed by a scherzando-like second movement. The slow, lyrical third movement precedes a dramatic finale. There are two main themes juxtaposed within the first movement: the first is driven by a dotted-rhythmic figure, and the second is sustained with wide intervallic leaps. The second movement is in scherzo form, but at times leans toward heavy or grotesque rather than light-hearted. The third slow movement does not employ the full forces of the orchestra, which creates a new color that lends itself to a peaceful, mournful quality. In the fourth movement, Shostakovich explores some previous themes and introduces new ones. Much of the music is assertive, but even in the softest and most introverted moments, intensity continually builds. The symphony concludes with a turn to the triumphant major key.

This premiere brought an overwhelmingly positive reception among both critics and audience members. The symphony provided support to the image of Shostakovich as a the ideal socialist composer. But at the same time, the music provided an opportunity for catharsis. The premiere took place in the midst of the Great Terror, a time where state-sanctioned arrests and executions were rampant, resulting in widespread loss of life. There was an inability to grieve openly for fear of retribution. It is not surprising that the premiere inspired such intense emotional responses, ranging from weeping during the third movement to cheering at the conclusion of the fourth. The vast range of emotions expressed throughout are powerful and evocative. The music can be stark, cold, and terrifying. But equally so, there are moments of light: hope shines through in unexpected ways. And even as those dark, intense passages threaten to overtake the brief moments of respite, the symphony concludes with a sense of tentative, yet noticeably present, optimism.

PERSONNEL

Violin | Pärt and Prokofiev

Violin I

Iwona Augustyn, concertmaster
Sebastian López, associate concertmaster
Will Martin
Luke Mondia
Cecelia Erbe
Julia Strassner
Sean Brown

Violin II

Daniel Torres Salazar, principal
Teresa Ford
Ruthie Nguyen
Jon Dickerman
Zumanah Kamal
Will McLelland
Jacob Nieman

Violin | Shostakovich

Violin I

Will Martin, concertmaster
Sebastian López, associate concertmaster
Iwona Augustyn
Luke Mondia
Sean Brown
Cecelia Erbe
Julia Strassner

Violin II

Daniel Torres Salazar, principal
Teresa Ford
Ruthie Nguyen
Jon Dickerman
Zumanah Kamal
Will McLelland
Jacob Nieman

Viola

Ashley Overby - principal, Shostakovich
Jake Pietroniro - principal, Pärt/Prokofiev
McKayla Andersen
Melissa Bonilla Parra
Jedidiah Lightner
Hannah Faulk
Anthony Joyce

Cello

Thomas Maternik - principal, Shostakovich
Avalee Bean - principal, Pärt/Prokofiev
Abigail Byrd
Madison Swann
John Niiler
Jonathan Caudill
Bailee Johnson
Noah Nguyen
Nicholas Pursley
Miguel Mejia
Nereida Sanchez-Tio
Julia Stouges

Double Bass

Lauren Erwin - principal, Shostakovich
Mikey Siverston - principal, Pärt/Prokofiev
Alex Dunn
CeCe Toscano

Flute - Prokofiev

Erin McAfee, I
Stephen Clark, II
Dianna Quilliams, piccolo

Flute - Shostakovich

Stephen Clark, I
Dianna Quilliams, II
Erin McAfee, piccolo

Oboe - Prokofiev

Georgia Nelson, I
Nick Carozza, II
Brett Stafford, English horn

Oboe - Shostakovich

Nick Carozza, I
Georgia Nelson, II

Clarinet - Prokofiev

Jorge Diez, I
Megan Amrine, II
Matthew Rocchio, bass clarinet

Clarinet - Shostakovich

Gabrielle Phillips, I
Madison Emmons, II
Jorge Diez, Eb clarinet

Bassoon - Prokofiev

Katelyn Thomas, I
Travis Nguyen, II
Nelson Menijvar, contrabassoon

Bassoon - Shostakovich

Nelson Menijvar, I
Clara Cagle, II
Katelyn Thomas, contrabassoon

Horn - Prokofiev and Shostakovich

Harrison Bruner, principal
Alexander Chung, II
Tyler Winningham, III
Yu Hirono, IV
Laura Jean Kurtz, assistant principal

Trumpet - Prokofiev

Jacob Kwasniewski, I
Nick Katulka, II
Spence Howell, cornet

Trumpet - Shostakovich

Spence Howell, I
Nick Katulka, II
Jacob Kwasniewski, III

Trombone - Prokofiev

Matthew Willingham, I
Jillian Ochensdorf, II
Kizer Brown, II
Chase Smith, bass trombone

Trombone - Shostakovich

Matthew Willingham, I
Kizer Brown, II
Chase Smith, bass trombone

Tuba

Reid Sayle

Piano/Celesta

Tim Berry

Harp

Abigail Workman

Timpani - Prokofiev

Zachery Langner

Timpani - Shostakovich

Cameron Bright

Percussion

Zachery Langner
Michael Rivera
Matthew Sandridge
Mike Spiller

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