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FESTIVE OVERTURE

by Dmitry Shostakovich (1906 - 1975)

A celebratory mood would not have been expected of Dmitry Shostakovich in 1954 when, on just three days' notice, he was invited to compose a piece honoring the anniversary of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution. For decades his art had tested the limits of banal Soviet taste and endured the criticism of the culture police. Twice he was formally rebuked. He lived in fear that some midnight he would “disappear,” as had several of his friends. But Stalin had died; Shostakovich and the Soviets seemed ready to give his art yet another chance.

Rising above his acute personal conflict and reportedly laughing and chuckling as he frenetically transferred musical thought to notes on paper, he gave the world this intensely charismatic musical celebration. The opening brass fanfare and bass prelude introduce first a light-hearted theme in the strings turning then to a more lyrical but no less cheerful second theme in the horns and cello before racing to a *presto* close.

Despite its ignoble birth, *Festive Overture* has secured its place in the orchestral repertoire of celebration, including prominence as the theme for the 1980 Olympics in Moscow. In hindsight, some speculate that Shostakovich himself was secretly celebrating the death of Stalin.

CONCIERTO MEXICANO

composed, arranged and orchestrated by Allen Vizzutti (1952-)

Concierto Mexicano was born from an idea and an opportunity. I had been mulling over the concept of a multi-movement concerto type work with a Mexican theme for some time when I

received the invitation to appear once again with the Greater Bridgeport Symphony Orchestra. Coincidentally the concert was to have a Latin theme so I jumped at the chance to write a new piece based on my bubbling ideas. I promised the concerto, gave it a name, and committed to the performance before having written one note! I managed to finish the work along with an arrangement of the Joachim Rodrigo, *Concierto de Aranjuez*, 2nd movement theme, in a few weeks during November 2006 and January 2007.

Mexican culture is steeped in tradition and is as rich as any culture on earth. It was my desire in *Concierto Mexicano* to capture elements of Mexican folk melody and harmony as well as present a piece with some exciting ‘Vizzutti’ flair. As a result I found, altered, and orchestrated two existing pieces (for trumpet and piano), by Mexican composers and wrote two more completely original pieces to complete the set of four movements. My artistic choice of five movements resulted from a desire to create a substantial work of about twenty minutes filled with variety, interest and fun.

1. “Zapateado,” by Pablo de Sarasate, is named for “a Spanish flamenco dance in which the performer stamps and taps rhythmically with the heels.” While this instrumental version does not literally involve stamping of the heels it is easy to imagine this lilting 6/8 melody accompanying flamenco dancers. I took the liberty of adding some technical fun in the solo trumpet part in lieu of attempting to click my heels!

2. “Luciernaga” is Spanish for firefly. This movement is flashy and light in character. The blazing nature of the solo trumpet part should leave you glowing. I hate to illuminate the obvious but this trumpet part is difficult, so wish me luck!

3. “Trumpetista Celestial” is dedicated to the late legendary Mexican trumpet artist, Rafael Mendez. It was Rafael Mendez who was responsible for introducing much of the world to the charm and beauty of Mexican music in a classical setting. It was Rafael Mendez who shattered the accepted

limits of trumpet technique by performing as if playing a violin and phrasing as if singing opera. This movement, whose title is translated, “Heavenly Trumpeter” is entirely original and based on melodies from my heart.

4. “Fandango” is an animated Spanish dance in triple time. The charming and decidedly Mexican melodies composed by Rafael Mendez, provided the musical material from which I constructed this final movement. Mendez lived and performed in southern California for much of his career, passing on in 1981. The harmonies and melodies of his “Fandango” reflect the influences of Mendez’s musical life in Hollywood. I reworked the form, some of the harmony and added several difficult solo trumpet passages to the piece taking care to maintain the delightful Mexican character of the original.

--Allen Vizzutti

LAURA VINCENT VIZZUTTI grew up on the family farm in Filer where playing the piano was as expected as the morning breakfast, and lessons were just another form of motherly love. She started her studies at the age of 4, by 12 was playing for her own love of it, and by 14 had won her first concerto competition. Laura entered the prestigious Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York, on scholarship and earned a bachelors degree in piano performance, then moved to Los Angeles, where she was awarded a Master of Music at the University of Southern California.

ALLEN VIZZUTTI was growing up at exactly the same time in Missoula, Montana, where he was introduced to music by his father, also a trumpet player. At age 16 he won the concerto competition and was awarded first chair in the World Youth Symphony at Interlochen, Michigan. He went on to earn his bachelors and masters degrees and Performer’s Certificate from the Eastman School along with the only Artist’s Diploma ever awarded there to a wind player.

Allen and Laura met while studying at Eastman and married 17 years later. Their life has

since been filled with family, recording, and touring the world to perform as soloists and together in recital. Hear them on CDs entitled “The Carnival of Venus” and “A Trumpeter’s Dream” and on recent releases with the international trumpet ensemble, “Ten of the Best.”

International appearances have brought Allen to 55 countries, and he has released 12 solo recordings in both classical and jazz genres. He has also become respected as a composer and arranger. He counts among his many concert appearances, premier performances with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Rochester (New York) Philharmonic, the Budapest Radio Orchestra and the London Symphony. His trumpet artistry can be heard on over 150 movie sound tracks, including “Star Trek” and “Back to the Future.” Today he continues an active tour schedule, continues to compose and arrange, and maintains a position as “Artist in Residence” at the University of Washington in Seattle.

Laura can also be heard on movie sound tracks, including “Zeus and Roxanne,” and has recorded “Rhapsody in Blue with “Ten of the Best.” She also tours with Allen and maintains an exclusive teaching studio.

Allen and Laura have raised three children, all musicians from an early age in the traditions of their parents and grandparents, and all already successful and poised for professional careers in music. They live in Seattle. Read more at www.vizzutti.com.