

TSO DOUBLE BASSES PLAY SHOWTUNES

Saturday 5 June, 2pm and 4.30pm
Design Tasmania, Launceston

Stuart Thomson double bass
Aurora Henrich double bass
Matt McGrath double bass
James Menzies double bass

BERNSTEIN (arr. Frampton) West Side Basses (12')
ARLEN (arr. Frampton) Dorothy's Basses from The Wizard of Oz (9')
VERDI (arr. Frampton) La traviata's Basses (7')
SHERMAN (arr. Frampton) Mary Poppins Basses (11')

The four arrangements heard in this concert are by Ashley Frampton, assistant double bass in the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra. Ashley got into the double bass arranging business following a request from the University of Liverpool for an ensemble piece, which resulted in Mary Poppins Basses, the final work in today's program. Since then, he has produced nearly two dozen arrangements for double bass quartet. Although formed in 2016, the TSO Double Bass Quartet redoubled efforts to rehearse and perform during the Covid crisis of 2020. The group gained wide exposure (world-wide, in fact) through its popular video performances on TSO Daily Dose, starting with Basses of the Caribbean. Three further clips on TSO Daily Dose followed.

Leonard Bernstein's West Side Story opened on Broadway in September 1957 and ran until June 1959, before returning for another successful season the following year. With lyrics by Bernstein and Stephen Sondheim, and choreography by Jerome Robbins, it updated Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, relocating it to the upper west side of Manhattan in the late 1950s. Sparring teenage gangs – one Puerto Rican, the other 'American' – replaced Shakespeare's feuding families. An acclaimed film followed in 1961 (it took out the Best Picture Oscar the following year) with yet another film adaptation, directed by Stephen Spielberg, due for imminent release.

Unlike West Side Story, The Wizard of Oz was written specifically as a film musical. The composer, Harold Arlen, began his song-writing career in the early 1930s, composing for cabarets and Broadway before moving on to Hollywood. It was there, in 1939, that he composed The Wizard of Oz, which is based upon L Frank Baum's novel of 1900, The Wonderful Wizard of Oz. This legendary film made a star of 16-year-old Judy Garland and ensured the place of Over the Rainbow in the Great American Songbook. Arlen's other, non-Wizard of Oz songs include Stormy Weather, That Old Black Magic and The Man that Got Away.

Hard to believe, but Giuseppe Verdi's opera La traviata, which is now one of his best-loved works, was a flop when it was first staged in 1853. Based upon the play La dame aux camélias by Alexandre Dumas, it tells the story of courtesan Violetta Valéry and her ill-fated love for high-born and well-connected Alfredo Germont. The lovers are reconciled in the end but it is too late as Violetta, who is terminally ill, collapses and dies.

Songwriter brothers Richard and Robert Sherman collaborated on a number of films for Disney including the 1964 musical Mary Poppins, which won the Best Actress Oscar for Julie Andrews. Famous numbers include Supercalafragelisticexpialidocious, Feed the Birds and A Spoonful of Sugar. The fraught relationship between the Sherman brothers and the author of Mary Poppins, Queensland-born PL Travers, forms part of the plot of the 2013 film, Saving Mr Banks.

Robert Gibson, Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, © 2021

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