

ON THE TOWN & SHOSTAKOVICH 5

"Shuffle and Deal"

APRIL 20, 2024 • 7:30 PM

RACHEL M. SCHLESINGER CONCERT HALL AND ARTS CENTER

APRIL 21, 2024 • 3:00 PM

GEORGE WASHINGTON MASONIC MEMORIAL

James Ross, conductor

PROGRAM

JORGE AMADO

Alexandria Shuffle*

*WORLD PREMIERE - Commissioned by
Classical Movements for the ASO at 80 Project

LEONARD
BERNSTEIN

Three Dance Episodes from *On the Town*

ALDO
LÓPEZ-GAVILÁN

Emporium (2019)

for solo piano and orchestra

- I. Allegretto spiritoso
- II. Liberamente
- III. Presto

Aldo López-Gavilán, piano

- INTERMISSION -

DMITRI
SHOSTAKOVICH

Symphony No. 5 in D minor**

- I. Moderato
- II. Allegretto
- III. Largo
- IV. Allegro non troppo

****Sponsored by CARL and SUSAN BEHNKE**

Performance runtime will be approximately 120 minutes which includes a 20 minute intermission

Three Dance Episodes from *On the Town*

Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990)

*Program Notes by George Hanson
unless where otherwise noted*

The musical and theatrical ideas for the 1944 Broadway musical *On the Town* began percolating in the minds of Leonard Bernstein and dancer Jerome Robbins in 1943, the year of the Alexandria Symphony's founding. The two twenty-five-year-old *Wunderkinds*, each the toast of their town—New York City—embarked on a series of firsts for both: Robbins' first choreography and Bernstein's first ballet, *Fancy Free*, the theatrical and musical inspiration for *On the Town*, the first Broadway production for the creative pair.

Set in wartime 1944 New York City, *On the Town* tells the story of three sailors on 24-hour shore leave. Ozzi, Chip, and Gabey are thrilled by their first encounter with the towering skyscrapers and the promise of adventure. They break into one of Leonard Bernstein's best-known songs, "New York, New York," setting the energy for the rest of the show. *On the Town* was a hit, with nearly 500 performances, finally closing in 1946. The 1949 movie version replaced many of Bernstein's musical numbers with Hollywood-composed material.

The work *Three Dance Episodes from On the Town* was extracted from the musical by Bernstein himself; the premiere in early 1946 was conducted by the composer. The first episode, "The Great Lover Displays Himself," is a dream sequence: Gabey falls asleep on the subway and imagines a flesh-and-blood version of Miss Turnstiles, a beauty portrayed on a poster. The second episode, "Lonely Town: Pas de Deux," pairs a young woman and a sailor in a brief affair which doesn't end happily. The finale, "Times Square: 1944," sums up the incredible energy of the time and place.

Alexandria Shuffle

Jorge Amado (b. 1997)

Program notes from the composer

When Maestro Ross' first suggested the title of *Alexandria Shuffle*, I understood it as a deck of cards dedicated to Alexandria.

After a little more research, I discovered that it can also be translated as a dance, which is perfect for representing Cuban music. Since the piece is specifically dedicated to Old Town Alexandria, I wanted to use traditional rhythms of Cuban music, such as son, mambo, and rumba. However, I could not forget that it's a work dedicated to a city in the United States, so I also wanted to represent American music through the influence of Leonard Bernstein. At Maestro Ross' request, I used the same instrumentation as *On the Town*, a work dedicated to New York City. *Alexandria Shuffle* is dedicated to James Ross, to the ASO and to the wonderful City of Alexandria.



Emporium

Aldo López-Gavilán (b. 1979)

Program notes provided by the composer

A little tune originally written as a birthday present for his twin daughters, and later expanded into a full concerto, *Emporium* is a dynamic and virtuosic composition for piano and symphony orchestra, written by the Cuban-born composer and pianist Aldo López-Gavilán. The piece is characterized by its vibrant rhythms, playful melodies, and intricate interplay between the piano and the orchestra.

The work begins with a lively and syncopated piano solo, which sets the stage for the orchestra's entrance. The strings join in with a pulsing rhythm, providing a rhythmic foundation for the piano to build upon. The piano and orchestra engage in a lively dialogue, with each taking turns leading and following.

Throughout the piece, López-Gavilán showcases his impressive technical skill as a pianist, incorporating dazzling runs and intricate patterns that push the limits of the instrument. The symphony orchestra provides a rich and colorful backdrop, with lush harmonies and soaring melodies that complement the piano's virtuosity. The work is a vibrant and lively tribute to the vibrant culture and energy of Havana, Cuba and celebrates the joy and energy of music-making, with its exuberant rhythms and playful melodies.

Symphony No. 5 in D minor

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975)

It is difficult to imagine the terror that gripped Shostakovich while composing his Fifth Symphony. In 1936, known as “The Great Terror” for the excesses of the Soviet state, Stalin denounced the composer twice in “unattributed” editorials. Shostakovich’s music did not serve the cause of the Soviet Union. “Muddle instead of music. It jangles and expresses nothing,” wrote Stalin. Words like that meant an arrest was forthcoming.

As dozens of the composer’s friends began disappearing from their apartments, Shostakovich packed a suitcase and slept on the staircase below his apartment hoping the NKVD would not wake his family when they came for him. He was warned that he must change his approach to composition; just a few months later he composed his Fifth. He was praised for having “learned his lesson.” But did he?

The Fifth was a triumphant success at its 1937 premiere in Leningrad. Audience members wept openly at the performance. The composer had reached the hearts of Russian people, and convinced Stalin he had indeed “learned his lesson”—quite a trick! And that’s exactly what it was. Buried in the score were secret references to texts that gave away what the composer held in his heart—a disdain for the regime. In the first movement, Shostakovich camouflages a quote from a Mahler song, the text of which is “He goes to the rivers and preaches to the fishes.” Some of the clues were seen only when viewing the score itself, a technique known as “eye music.”

The first movement begins with a violent exchange among the strings, proceeds to a calm expression of fatigue, reaches a brutal climax and drifts away into silence. The scherzo’s humor serves as a break from the intensity of the first and third movements, the latter of which expresses first warmth, abruptly juxtaposed with incredibly emotional highs and lows. About the finale, the composer wrote in 1937, “the tragically tense impulses of the earlier movements are resolved in optimism and the joy of living.” Stalin was convinced by these words. But through the manipulation of tempo markings in the score of the movement’s coda, Shostakovich’s “triumph” became that of the human spirit over tyranny.



Aldo López-Gavilán is a Cuban-born virtuoso pianist, composer, arranger, and award-winning musician known for his exceptional talent and innovative approach to music. He comes from a musical family, with a father, mother, and older brother who are all very accomplished musicians. Aldo's musical journey began at an early age when he displayed prodigious abilities on the piano. He received formal training at the Manuel Saumell and Amadeo

Roldán Music Conservatories in Havana, and later at the Trinity Laban Conservatoire in London, UK, where he quickly gained recognition for his exceptional technique and captivating performances.

Throughout his career, López-Gavilán has collaborated with renowned artists and orchestras worldwide, showcasing his versatility and musical prowess. His compositions often incorporate complex rhythms, rich harmonies, and improvisational elements, reflecting his Cuban heritage and his deep understanding of various musical traditions. In addition to his virtuosity as a pianist, López-Gavilán is a prolific composer, creating works that encompass a wide range of emotions and themes. His compositions have been performed by prominent orchestras and chamber ensembles, earning him accolades and recognition for his innovative contributions to contemporary music.

López-Gavilán's performances and compositions have transcended cultural boundaries, captivating audiences across the globe. His music not only showcases technical brilliance but also resonates with deep emotional depth, inviting listeners to embark on a musical journey that is both intellectually stimulating and profoundly moving. As a trailblazer in the world of music, Aldo López-Gavilán continues to push artistic boundaries, fusing genres, and creating a musical legacy that bridges cultures and celebrates the universal language of music. His ability to communicate complex emotions through his music and his dedication to pushing artistic boundaries make him a true luminary in the modern musical landscape.