

Apollo Resurrected

Introduction

‘Throw, snatch, shower, cascade’. These are just some of the juggling terms and patterns we at the United Strings of Europe have become familiar with throughout the development of *Apollo Resurrected*.

You won’t actually get to see us juggle our instruments and bows – we’re collaborating with performers from the celebrated troupe Gandini Juggling, who have helped us develop new means of expression inspired by their artistry and the inherent musicality of their artform.

The original story of Stravinsky’s ballet centres on Apollo, the Greek god of song, music, and poetry, who is visited by Three Muses: Terpsichore, muse of dance and music; Polyhymnia, muse of mime; and Calliope, muse of poetry. Following their intervention, Apollo undergoes a fundamental transformation (apotheosis). Our vision as retold by director/ storyteller Bill Barclay updates the story for our times and recasts the mythical protagonist as an artist down on his luck, depressed, and in urgent need of inspiration. Implicitly, the drama’s context relates to the recent Covid-19 pandemic, but it speaks more generally to the struggles artists face due to external pressures or personal factors.

Programme Notes

Tenebrae

Osvaldo Golijov grew up in an Eastern European Jewish household in La Plata, Argentina surrounded by classical chamber music, Jewish liturgical, klezmer and the new tango of Astor Piazzolla.

His blending of genres and seamless integration of voices speak to his distinctive approach and style, a musical language that can only be termed “Golijovian.” The United Strings of Europe recorded Golijov’s *Three Songs for Soprano* with British soprano Ruby Hughes on their second album *Renewal* out on BIS Records (BIS-2549).

Golijov wrote that *Tenebrae* was “a consequence of witnessing two contrasting realities in a short period of time in September 2000. I was in Israel at the start of the new wave of violence [...], and a week later I took my son to the new planetarium in

New York, where we could see the Earth as a beautiful blue dot in space. I wanted to write a piece that could be listened to from different perspectives. That is, if one chooses to listen to it "from afar", the music would probably offer a "beautiful" surface but, from a metaphorically closer distance, one could hear that, beneath that surface, the music is full of pain.

I lifted some of the haunting melismas from Couperin's *Troisième Leçon des Ténèbres*, using them as sources for loops, and wrote new interludes between them, always within a pulsating, vibrating, aerial texture. The compositional challenge was to write music that would sound as an orbiting spaceship that never touches ground. After finishing the composition, I realized that *Tenebrae* could be heard as the slow, quiet reading of an illuminated medieval manuscript in which the appearances of the voice singing the letters of the Hebrew Alphabet (from Yod to Nun, as in Couperin) signal the beginning of new chapters, leading to the ending section, built around a single, repeated word: Jerusalem."

Apollon musagète

Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971) was one of the most influential and innovative composers of the 20th century.

His compositional career was notable for its stylistic diversity. He drew inspiration from many historical musical forms but was also inspired by mythology, ragtime, jazz and other influences. The ballet *Apollon musagète* was composed between 1927 and 1928 and choreographed by George Balanchine who was only 24 years old at the time. Coco Chanel designed the costumes in 1929. In his *Poetics of Music* (1942) Stravinsky wrote: "Summing up: What is important for the lucid ordering of the work – for its crystallization – is that all the Dionysian elements which set the imagination of the artist in motion and make the life-sap rise must be properly subjugated before they intoxicate us, and must finally be made to submit to the law: Apollo demands it."

Another Eden (United Strings of Europe commission)

Described as "one of today's leading composers for the voice" (*The Guardian* 2019), British composer Joanna Marsh divides her time between Dubai and the UK. The inspiration for Joanna's compositions often comes from the past. She has a strong interest in Tudor and Elizabethan choral music which is reflected in some of her choral output. The United Strings of Europe recorded a string arrangement of Joanna's vocal work *In Winter's House* on their second album *Renewal* out on BIS Records (BIS-2549).

Another Eden, commissioned by United Strings of Europe, is a work inspired by the idea of a perfect world which we have somehow lost. Musically, it is based on a 4-bar ground with its revolutions building to much longer and larger structures. Often these are disrupted or held in a 'holding pattern' before the repeating harmony is restored.

It was written as a response to the idea that as we come out of the pandemic, we want to regain or rebuild the beauty that we eroded: we want another chance.

The piece is dedicated to Joanna's godson Apollo Cosimo Vardag Bence.

—> **Pls get in touch for current bios and photos**