

SOUTHBANK CENTRE

Gustavo Dudamel & Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra

Thursday 28 August 2025, 7pm

Royal Festival Hall

We could not be more thrilled to welcome back the Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra of Venezuela and its music director Gustavo Dudamel, after almost a decade, for this special anniversary concert!

Now celebrating its 50th year, the orchestra has performed here many times over its evolution from a youth orchestra to one of the world's most acclaimed ensembles. Born out of the El Sistema movement – an origin that speaks to our own commitment to opening up classical music – the orchestra remains a powerful symbol of how music can bring us together, regardless of our background.

Toks Dada, Head of Classical Music, Southbank Centre

Repertoire

Bernstein Overture, <i>Candide</i>	4'
Falla <i>Nights in the gardens of Spain</i> for piano & orchestra	24'

Interval

Falla <i>The Three-cornered Hat</i> , Suite No.2	13'
Bernstein <i>Symphonic Dances</i> from <i>West Side Story</i>	23'

Performers

Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra of Venezuela
Gustavo Dudamel *conductor*
Javier Perianes *piano*

Leonard Bernstein (1918 – 90)

Overture, *Candide*

Two musical pioneers share the limelight in tonight's vibrant concert. While Manuel de Falla injected the distinctive flavours of his native Spain into more strait-laced classical forms, as we will hear shortly, Leonard Bernstein collided together the worlds of jazz and classical like never before (and seldom since). The two pieces by Bernstein that bookend this evening's performance – or at least the larger stage works they come from – were created almost concurrently in the late 1950s, and highlight the twin poles of the composer's distinctive style. His 1956 operetta *Candide*, created in collaboration with playwright Lillian Hellman, reworks Voltaire's satirical 1759 novella as a larger-than-life adventure whose eponymous hero learns some hard lessons about a brutal, unforgiving world to challenge his naive idealism. And though the drive and energy of Bernstein's score are unmistakable, it also looks back with appropriate respect and affection to the source text's 18th-century origins. *Candide*'s brief but punchy Overture has stood apart from the stage work as a concert piece since its earliest days: Bernstein himself conducted the New York Philharmonic in its concert premiere just a few months after the operetta's unveiling, and it quickly became – alongside the *Symphonic Dances* from *West Side Story* – one of his most enduringly popular pieces. After its attention-grabbing opening fanfare – which returns again and again – a bustling main tune with more than a hint of the circus contrasts with a more graceful later answering melody, all culminating in a breathless dash to the finish.

This performance lasts approximately 2 hours, including a 20-minute interval.

Tonight's performance is being recorded for release on Platoon, so please make sure your phone's on silent. Thank you.

Manuel de Falla (1876–1946)

Nights in the gardens of Spain for piano & orchestra

1. *In the Generalife*
2. *Distant dance*
3. *In the gardens of the Sierra de Córdoba*

Born in Cádiz, Manuel de Falla studied in Madrid and lived in Paris between 1907 and 1914, where he hobnobbed with many of the early 20th century's cultural giants – from composers Debussy, Ravel and Stravinsky to ballet impresario Sergei Diaghilev. But even amid the French capital's artistic whirlwind, he maintained a passion for his native Andalusia, especially its music, dance and language. *Nights in the gardens of Spain* began life as a set of nocturnes for solo piano, but it was Ricardo Viñes – also from Spain, and a long-time Paris resident, as well as a close friend of Ravel, Debussy, Satie and others – who suggested that Falla should transform it into a piece for piano and orchestra. Which goes some way to explaining the piano's somewhat unusual role in the piece: rather than being a conventional concerto soloist, the pianist instead weaves their way through the orchestra, sometimes grabbing the limelight, but often happily accompanying in the background. Falla completed the piece back in Spain, when he was forced to leave Paris by the onset of World War One. Its sensual, intoxicating music falls into three movements. The first, 'In the Generalife', is based around the lavish, elegant gardens of the 14th-century Moorish palace of the Alhambra in Granada (or at least on paintings of those gardens by Catalan artist Santiago Rusiñol, collected in the book *Jardins d'Espanya* – Falla hadn't yet visited the city). Its brooding opening is shattered by the piano's liquid first entry, perhaps evoking the Generalife's famously sparkling water jets. An unidentified garden is the location for the second movement's sultry but energetic 'Distant dance', which leads without a break into the fiery 'In the gardens of the Sierra de Córdoba', thought to be a depiction of a Zambra Gitana, or wild party of Roma flamenco music and dance – though the movement's incandescent energy dissipates magically at its dreamy close.

Manuel de Falla

The Three-cornered Hat, Suite No.2

1. *The Neighbours' Dance*
2. *The Miller's Dance*
3. *Final Dance*

The same year as the Madrid premiere of *Nights in the gardens of Spain*, on 9 April 1916, Falla began work on a 'pantomime' based on the comic novella *El corregidor y la molinera* (The Magistrate and the Miller's Wife) by Pedro Antonio de Alarcón. When his Parisian acquaintance Diaghilev was hunting for new material for his Ballets Russes dance company – which was becoming increasingly popular (and profitable) in neutral Spain during World War One – a reworking of the pantomime's vivacious music seemed like the obvious choice. But what became the ballet *The Three-cornered Hat* ended up as a lavish affair, bringing together some of the biggest cultural names of the time: Falla supplying music, artist Pablo Picasso looking after sets and costumes, and Léonide Massine working traditional Spanish moves into his choreography. No wonder it was a dazzling success – helped, no doubt, by its bawdy storyline of a pompous Andalusian magistrate getting his comeuppance after pursuing the wily wife of a hardworking miller. Falla's score crackles with energy and sparkles with colour, and the Second Suite contains some of

its most powerful music, taken from the ballet's dénouement. 'The Neighbours' Dance' is an elegant, bustling set of swirling seguidillas as villagers gather to celebrate the Feast of St John, while 'The Miller's Dance' contains the ballet's fieriest, most furiously intense music, as its eponymous protagonist shows off his bristling athleticism. The celebratory 'Final Dance' marks the ballet's somewhat chaotic conclusion, as the magistrate is pursued around the village, and finally bounced up and down on a blanket to confirm his humiliation.

Leonard Bernstein

Symphonic Dances from West Side Story

Just after he had begun work on *Candide*, Bernstein launched into an additional project – the result of which was arguably the 20th century's most iconic musical. *West Side Story* was another collaboration between eminent figures in their fields – in this case composer Bernstein, lyricist Stephen Sondheim and book-writer Arthur Laurents, drawing on an original idea by choreographer Jerome Robbins. It updated Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* to the warring gangs of Manhattan's Upper West Side in the 1950s, and it was a stunning success at its Broadway premiere in September 1957, running for two years. Bernstein himself extracted the *Symphonic Dances* for a New York Philharmonic fundraising gala in 1961. The result is a foot-tapping celebration of the musical's vibrant dance music: two of the show's best-known vocal numbers ('Somewhere' and 'Maria') find their way into the piece, but many others don't. With its slinky sax melody and finger clicks, the opening 'Prologue' describes the growing tensions between rival gangs the Sharks and the Jets, with only a cop's whistle putting a lid on its more aggressive later music. 'Somewhere' takes us to an idyllic vision, too good to be true, where the two gangs coexist in peace, a mood continued in the 'Scherzo', which imagines these youngsters finding freedom and happiness away from the city in distinctly Copland-style rural evocations. We are back with a jolt in the real world with the clattering Latin percussion of 'Mambo', which describes a competitive gym work-out between the two gangs. The music calms for lovers Tony and Maria's first tentative dance together in 'Cha-cha', and the brief 'Meeting Scene' – led by Bernstein's famous 'Maria' rising motif – accompanies their first words to each other. The pace picks up again in 'Cool', as the Jets' leader goads his gang into open hostility, and violence finally erupts in the brutal 'Rumble', leaving several dead, and a lone flute to consider the devastation. In the shocked, quiet 'Finale', the gangs find an uneasy sense of peace, as well as grief, and – perhaps – hope.

Programme notes © David Kettle, 2025

Find out more

- ▶ Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra of Venezuela
- ▶ Gustavo Dudamel
- ▶ Javier Perianes
- ▶ southbankcentre.co.uk

Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra

VIOLIN I

Carlos Vegas *leader*
José Heredia
Humberto Jiménez
Daniela Porto
Orlando Pinto
Idamar Ventura
Ana K. Rodríguez
Ana G. Rodríguez
Sairelis González
Jesús Castillo
Orlando Pérez
Rubén Orozco
Daniel Quijada
Wuilmel Caraballo
Iván Dmitrejschuk
Pathrycia Mendoza
Gabriel Ramos
Luis Maita

VIOLIN II

Anna González
Carlos Perdomo
Luis Pérez
Ana Chouhebar
Karem Silva
Patricio Meriño
Libia Núñez
José Suárez
Víctor Blanco
Genesis Antonetty
Carmelo López
Jesús Cornejo
Emilio Donaire
Isaías Fernández
Yoandry Gómez
Rodolfo Landaeta
Juan Guadarrama

VIOLA

Daniel Linares
Paola Castillo
Isabella Rojas
Petrina Graziano
Gianiel Blanco
Moisés Ruiz
Ismael Infante
Elizabeth Ramos
Carlos Jayaro
Kira Riera
Jocia Estévez
Francia Prado
Diego Mota
Fátima Marcano

CELLO

Edgar Calderón
César Giuliani
Jean Alvarado
Norma Aparicio
Leandro Bandres
Ayyzhkel Chávez
Ricardo Corniel
Mónica Frías
Wilber Herrera
Laura Laya
Carlos Linares
Abner Padrino
Carlos Pizzolante
Jhonn Rujano
Frank Valderrey

DOUBLE BASS

Manuel Ruiz
Gerald Ruiz
Jorge Moreno
Jorge Sánchez
William Suárez
Víctor Trejo
Renzo Benítez
Maria Ynojosa
Misaël Gil
Juan Ortuñez

FLUTE

Aron García
Juan Reyes
Diego Hernández
Yoisy Guaicurba * ~
Sergio Ochoa * ~

OBOE

Joseph González
Ángel Moreno
Maya Rodríguez
Douglas Hernández * ~
Eribec Aponte * ~

CLARINET

Freeman Ramírez
Rafael León
Williams Mora
Miguel Rodríguez
Santiago González
Diego Pedrá * ~

BASSOON

Selene Salgado
Luis Báez
Isnardy Coronado
Marcella Frías*
Javier Cruz ~ †

HORN

Michaelle Hernández
Manuel Córdova
Dieter Barrios
Rosa Avariano
Rosa Avariano ° ~
Félix Ceballos* ~
Nicolás Valero * †
Ángel Díaz ~

TRUMPET

Roderick Alvarado °
Erick Álvarez
Ghreri Barceló ° †
Víctor Caldera
Miguel Tagliafico * †
Wilfrido Galarraga *

TROMBONE

Alejandro Díaz
Joel Rivas
Lisandro Laya
Jesús Fernández
Yeisson Sánchez * ~
Jesús Núñez *
Alexander Medina ~

TUBA

Ysrraidel Ascanio † °
Maykol Fernández * ~

TIMPANI

Rafael Fernández
Rubén Vásquez * ~

DRUMS

Rubén Vásquez

PERCUSSION

Acuarius Zambrano
José García
Simón González
Yohantor Toro
Rafael Fernández *
Rubén Vásquez †

ARPAS

Annette León
Lady Lucente*

KEYBOARD

Vilma Sánchez
Pablo Castellanos †

* *Candide, Overture*

~ *Nights in the gardens of Spain*

† *The Three-cornered Hat*

° *Symphonic Dances from West Side Story*

You might also like...

Bridgerton and Beyond with BBC Concert Orchestra

Friday 26 September 2025, 7.30pm | Royal Festival Hall

Dear Gentle Listener... join the ton for an enchanting evening of music from period dramas
in a live edition of BBC Radio 3's *Friday Night Is Music Night*.