

FICCIONES



American Symphony Orchestra
Leon Botstein, Conductor

**Commissioned by the American Symphony Orchestra,
Richmond Symphony Orchestra, Vermont Symphony Orchestra,
Meridian Symphony Orchestra, and Youth Orchestras of San Antonio**

FICCIONES

LEON BOTSTEIN, CONDUCTOR

ROBERTO SIERRA (b. 1953)

Ficciones, Concerto for Electric Violin and Orchestra (2022)

I. Aleph

II. Tlön

III. Asterión

IV. Flaminio

TRACY SILVERMAN, Electric Violin

This film's duration is approximately 29 minutes.

Instruments for this performance: 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 French horns, 2 trumpets, 2 trombones, 1 tuba, timpani, percussion (xylophone, glockenspiel, bongos, claves, large gong, tom-toms, vibraphone, güiro, vibra-slap, suspended cymbal, triangle, snare drum, bass drum, marimba, congas, tam-tam, cowbell, and tubular bells), piano, 18 violins, 6 violas, 6 cellos, 5 double-basses, and solo electric violin

Premiered on June 5, 2022 in New York, NY at the Rose Theater, Jazz at Lincoln Center's Frederick P. Rose Hall by the American Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Leon Botstein with soloist Tracy Silverman, electric violin

A NOTE FROM THE COMPOSER

By Roberto Sierra

Born October 9, 1953, in Vega Baja, Puerto Rico

I first read Jorge Luis Borges' short story *El Aleph* when I was a student at the University of Puerto Rico. The paradox of a point of light where one could see the totality of everything simultaneously was a moment of revelation to me. In *El Aleph* what seems empirically impossible is possible. In this first movement I composed dissimilar sections and gestures that only when the movement concludes they are perceived as forming a totality and belonging together. The differences are subsumed by the strict use of pitch content governed by four modular scales. Borges' short story is a metaphor for what I always believed: we comprehend musical form only when the totality of the musical content is absorbed.

Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius is a profoundly philosophical story that describes the existence of a planet called Tlön. In this strange world, with an ontological structure based on philosophical idealism, there are poems created by just one enormous word, and all that exists is just a pure creation of the mind. How is the music of *Tlön*? My answer is: if the note C is present at all moments, any chord, melody, or rhythm can happen. The only way to write music in Tlön is by the omnipresence of C!

In *La casa de Asterión* Borges rewrites the myth of the Minotaur. The desperate life of Asterión is ended by Theseus, who, in a surprising Borgean turn of events, tells Ariadne that the Minotaur did not fight back. Here I constructed a musical labyrinth that starts with all 12 chromatic pitches that are gradually dropped until only ethereal noise remains.

In Borges' *The Immortal*, Marco Flaminio Rufo was a Roman military tribune who, after drinking from a river, becomes immortal. He ends up tragically roaming the world in search of the waters of another river that can make him mortal again. The perpetual motion of this movement ends in exuberance, perhaps just as Flaminio felt when he recovered his mortality.

THE ARTISTS



Leon Botstein, Conductor

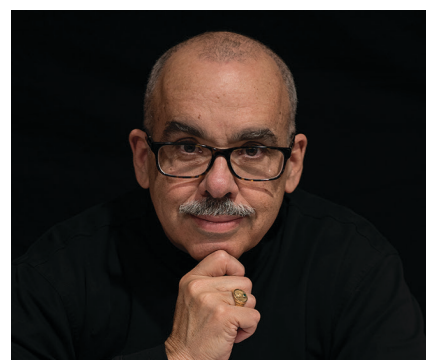
Photo by RIC KALLAHER

Leon Botstein has been music director and principal conductor of the American Symphony Orchestra since 1992. He is also music director of The Orchestra Now, an innovative training orchestra composed of top musicians from around the world. He is co-artistic director of Bard SummerScape and the Bard Music Festival, which take place at the Richard B. Fisher Center for the Performing Arts at Bard College, where he has been president since 1975. He is also conductor laureate and principal guest conductor of the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra, where he served as music director from 2003–11. In 2018 he assumed artistic directorship of the Grafenegg Academy in Austria.

Mr. Botstein is also active as a guest conductor and can be heard on numerous recordings with the London Symphony (including a GRAMMY-nominated recording of Popov's First Symphony), the London Philharmonic, NDR-Hamburg, and the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra. Many of his live performances with the American Symphony Orchestra are available online. His recording with the ASO of Paul Hindemith's *The Long Christmas Dinner* was named one of the top recordings of 2015 by several publications, and his recent recording of Gershwin piano music with the Royal Philharmonic was hailed by *The Guardian* and called "something special... in a crowded field" by *Musicweb International*.

Mr. Botstein is the author of numerous articles and books, including *The Compleat Brahms* (Norton), *Jefferson's Children* (Doubleday), *Judentum und Modernität* (Böhlau), and *Von*

Beethoven zu Berg (Zsolnay). He is also the editor of *The Musical Quarterly*. For his contributions to music he has received the award of the American Academy of Arts and Letters and Harvard University's prestigious Centennial Award, as well as the Cross of Honor, First Class from the government of Austria. Other recent awards include the Bruckner Society's Julio Kilenyi Medal of Honor for his interpretations of that composer's music; and the Leonard Bernstein Award for the Elevation of Music in Society. In 2011 he was inducted into the American Philosophical Society.



Roberto Sierra, Composer

Photo by VIRGINIA SIERRA

For more than four decades, the works of GRAMMY-nominated and Latin GRAMMY winner Roberto Sierra have been part of the repertoire of many of the leading orchestras, ensembles, and festivals in the USA and Europe. At the inaugural concert of the 2002 world renowned Proms in London, his *Fandangos* was performed by BBC Symphony Orchestra in a concert that was broadcast by both the BBC Radio and Television throughout the UK and Europe. Many major American and European orchestras and international ensembles have commissioned and performed his works. Among those ensembles are the orchestras of Boston, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Atlanta, New Mexico, Houston, Minnesota, Dallas, Detroit, San Antonio and Phoenix, as well as the American Composers Orchestra, the New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, National Symphony Orchestra, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, the Tonhalle Orchestra of Zurich, the Spanish orchestras of Madrid, Galicia, Castilla y León, Barcelona, Continuum, St. Lawrence String Quartet, Opus One, and others.

Commissioned works include: Concerto for Orchestra for the centennial celebrations

of the Philadelphia Orchestra commissioned by the Koussevitzky Music Foundation and the Philadelphia Orchestra; Concerto for Saxophones and Orchestra commissioned by the Detroit Symphony Orchestra for James Carter; *Fandangos* and Missa Latina commissioned by the National Symphony Orchestra of Washington DC; Sinfonía No. 3 "La Salsa," commissioned by the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra; Danzas Concertantes for Guitar and Orchestra commissioned by the Orquesta de Castilla y León; Double Concerto for Violin and Viola co-commissioned by the Pittsburgh and Philadelphia Orchestras; *Bongo+* commissioned by Juilliard School in celebration of the 100th anniversary; *Songs from the Diaspora* commissioned by Music Accord for Heidi Grant Murphy, Kevin Murphy, and the St. Lawrence String Quartet; and *Concierto de Cámara* co-commissioned by the the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, Chamber Music Northwest and Stanford Lively Arts.

In 2021 Roberto Sierra was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters and in 2017 he was awarded the Tomás Luis de Victoria Prize, the highest honor given in Spain to a composer of Spanish or Latin American origin. In 2010 he was elected to the prestigious American Academy of Arts and Sciences. In 2003 he was awarded the Academy Award in Music by the American Academy of Arts and Letters. The award states: "Roberto Sierra writes brilliant music, mixing fresh and personal melodic lines with sparkling harmonies and striking rhythms..." His Sinfonía No. 1, a work commissioned by the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, won the 2004 Kenneth Davenport Competition for Orchestral Works. In 2007 the Serge and Olga Koussevitzky International Recording Award (KIRA) was awarded to Albany Records for the recording of his composition Sinfonía No. 3 "La Salsa". Roberto Sierra has served as Composer-In-Residence with the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, The Philadelphia Orchestra, The Puerto Rico Symphony Orchestra and New Mexico Symphony.

Roberto Sierra's music may be heard on CD's by Naxos, EMI, IBS Classics, UMG's EMARCY, New World Records, Albany Records, Koch, New Albion, Koss Classics, BMG, Fleur de Son and other labels. In 2011 UMG's EMARCY label released Caribbean Rhapsody featuring the *Concierto for Saxophones and Orchestra*, commissioned and premiered by the DSO with James Carter. In 2004 EMI Classics released his two guitar concertos, *Folias*

and *Concierto Barroco*, with Manuel Barrueco as soloist (released on Koch in the USA in 2005). Sierra has been nominated twice for a GRAMMY under best contemporary composition category, first in 2009 for *Missa Latina* (Naxos) and in 2014 for his *Sinfonia No. 4* (Naxos). In addition, his *Variations on a Souvenir* (Albany) and *Trio No. 4* (Centaur) were nominated for Latin GRAMMYS in 2009 and 2015. In 2021 his *Sonata para guitarra* won the Latin GRAMMY for Best Classical Contemporary Composition.

Roberto Sierra was born in 1953 in Vega Baja, Puerto Rico. He studied composition both in Puerto Rico and Europe, where one of his teachers was György Ligeti at the Hochschule für Musik in Hamburg, Germany. The works of Roberto Sierra are published principally by Subito Music Publishing (ASCAP).



Tracy Silverman, Electric Violin

Photo by DANIEL DUBOIS

Lauded by BBC Radio as "the greatest living exponent of the electric violin," Tracy Silverman is the world's foremost electric violin soloist, bringing concert hall legitimacy to this next-generation instrument.

Pulitzer and GRAMMY award-winning composer John Adams raves: "No one makes that instrument sing and soar like Tracy, floating on the cusp between Jascha Heifetz and Jimi Hendrix."

As part of Silverman's vision for the "future of strings," he has premiered and recorded several major new electric violin concertos written specifically for him by composers John Adams (*The Dharma at Big Sur*), Terry Riley (*The Palmian Chord Ryddle*), Nico Muhly (*Seeing is Believing*), Roberto Sierra (*Ficciones*), Kenji Bunch (*Embrace*), and three concertos of his own:

AMERICAN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Tracy Silverman, contd.

appearing with the LA Philharmonic, BBC Symphony and many others at Carnegie Hall, Disney Hall, Royal Albert Hall, and stages all over the world.

Formerly first violinist with the innovative Turtle Island String Quartet, Silverman was named one of 100 distinguished alumni by The Juilliard School and is notable not only for his development and use of the electric 6-string violin, but also for what he terms “progressive string playing,” an evolution of classical string playing that embraces contemporary popular idioms such as rock, jazz, and hip hop.

TV/internet and radio includes a solo *Tiny Desk Concert* on NPR, *A Prairie Home Companion*, *Performance Today*, *St. Paul Sunday*, and a profile on *CBS News Sunday Morning*.

A longtime proponent of string education, Silverman is the author of *The Strum Bowing Method: How to Groove on Strings* and *The Rhythm String Player: Strum Bowing in Action*, as well as numerous étude books and online courses on the Strum Bowing Groove Academy. Silverman is on the faculty of Belmont University in Nashville, TN.

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Now in its 61st season, the American Symphony Orchestra was founded in 1962 by Leopold Stokowski, with a mission of providing great music within the means of everyone. Music Director Leon Botstein expanded that mission when he joined the ASO in 1992, creating thematic concerts that explore music from the perspective of the visual arts, literature, religion, and history, and reviving rarely-performed works that audiences would otherwise never have a chance to hear performed live.

The ASO’s signature programming includes its Vanguard Series, which presents concerts of rare orchestral repertoire at Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center and various other events dedicated to enriching and reflecting the diverse perspectives of American culture. During the summer months, the ASO is the orchestra-in-residence at Bard’s SummerScape Festival and performs at the Bard Music Festival.

As part of its commitment to expanding the standard orchestral repertoire, the ASO has released recordings on the Telarc, New World, Bridge, Koch, and Vanguard labels, and live performances are also available for digital download. In many cases, these are the only existing recordings of some of the forgotten works that have been restored through ASO performances.

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Leon Botstein, *Conductor*

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Dudley Raine

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Principal
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Maureen Hynes
Eliana Mendoza
Deborah Assael-Migliore
Melissa Westgate

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Jordan Frazier
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Oboe

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Audio and Visual Recording captured June 2, 2022

Cary Hall at the DiMenna Center for Classical Music

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