**Symphony No. 1** – *Benjamin Ellin*

*(Commissioned by the Evgeny Svetlanov International Conducting Competition)*

The towering figure of the Russian Conductor and Composer Evgeny Svetlanov has left an indelible impression on my development as a musician. His quote when it comes to commitment to the arts, ‘as if your life depended on it’, is never far from my mind and this Symphony, written to commemorate the 20th Anniversary of his passing, is in honour of him. It is my own gesture of deep respect and admiration for a musician who also composed in such genres and marks the end of a twenty-year journey in the first chapter of my own career.

Upon starting to write in full score earlier this year, Russia attacked Ukraine. The inevitable and tragic suffering of innocent people, the wondering of how humans are capable of such extreme actions almost left me incapable of continuing to compose – particularly in the wake of a global pandemic where the very existence of the creative arts had been under grave threat and is still very much in the balance. However, my composition draws on the energy and spirit of towering figures of the past, such as ‘Maestro’, who have stood witness to their own epoch and created. My music embraces the awe of the natural world, (the wonder of the sea in particular – a love that both Maestro and myself share) as well as the incredible passion and fire of the human spirit that continues to move forward when faced with seemingly impossible odds. At the centre of work, there is a deeply reflective setting of Lermontov’s wonderful poem, ‘Sail’; one of Maestro’s favourite works. Therefore, while the backdrop to the composition of my symphony is conflict and humanitarian dissonance, as per the poem, it seeks to offer us all the chance to look in the mirror and explore the true strength of our own spirit to continue embracing the impossible and move ourselves forward.

Thirsk, UK, May 2022

**Instrumentation:**

Picc,2,2\*,2\*,2\* - 4,2,3,1 – hp – tmp+2 – strings (solo baritone)

**Duration:** 20-25 minutes

**ПАРУС** *(Михаил Юрьевич Лермонтов – 1832)*

Белеет парус одинокой
В тумане моря голубом!..
Что ищет он в стране далекой?
Что кинул он в краю родном?...
Играют волны — ветер свищет,
И мачта гнется и скрыпит...
Увы! Он счастия не ищет
И не от счастия бежит!
Под ним струя светлей лазури,
Над ним луч солнца золотой...
А он, мятежный, просит бури,
Как будто в бурях есть покой!

**Sail** *(Mikhail Yuryevich Lermontov - 1832)*

White sail out in the bay
billowing in the wind.
Why sail so far away?
Why leave so much behind?

Winds must play on the seas
and masts creak in the wind.
Fortune is not what he seeks,
nor what he's left behind.

A golden light still pours
down onto deep blue seas;
this rebel, alas, seeks storms,
as if in storms lies peace.