

Choral Union Series

Forty-eighth Season

Third Concert

No. CCCCLV Complete Series

The Detroit Symphony Orchestra

Ossip Gabrilowitsch, Conductor

Hill Auditorium, Ann Arbor, Michigan

MONDAY, DECEMBER 13, 1926 AT EIGHT O'CLOCK

PROGRAM

OVERTURE, "Der Freischütz" *Weber*

SYMPHONY, No. I, in C minor, Op. 68..... *Brahms*

Un poco sostenuto; allegro

Andante sostenuto

Un poco allegretto e grazioso

Adagio-Allegro non troppo, ma con brio

INTERMISSION

TONE POEM, "Viviane"..... *Chausson*

SUITE FROM THE BALLET, "Firebird"..... *Strawinsky*

1. The Enchanted Garden; Firebird's Dance

2. Procession of the Princesses

3. Infernal Dance of Kastchei and his Subjects

4. Lullaby; Sunrise; Apotheosis; Finale

The Mason & Hamelin is the official piano of the Detroit Symphony Society.
Jefferson B. Webb, Manager.

OVERTURE TO THE OPERA, "Der Freischütz".....von Weber

Carl Maria von Weber was born December 18, 1786 at Eutin, died June 5, 1826, at London.

Weber's most popular Opera, "Der Freischütz" was composed between 1817 and 1820 and was first performed at Berlin in 1821. The plot, which differs from those of contemporary operas is founded upon German Folk Lore; the music draws heavily upon simple folk tunes in which charming melodies and spritely rhythms make a direct appeal. While Weber was acquiring his technic as an opera composer through years of service at the conductor's desks in various German Opera Houses, he sensed keenly the need for a truly German style of opera, and in this work created the model which has influenced all succeeding German operas, even the work of Richard Wagner.

The Overture, which is played on the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of the composer's death, is built almost exclusively on themes from the opera. The usual *Sonata Allegro* design is treated freely. The work begins with an introduction in slow tempo in which a theme of great beauty is announced by the horns. In the Allegro section the themes are principally from; (a) Max's "Song of Despair," (b) the scene in the Wolf's Glen, typifying the powers of evil; (c) Agathe's Aria, which soars buoyantly and triumphantly throughout the work, and typifies the powers of good.

SYMPHONY No. 1, C minor, Opus 68.....Brahms

Johannes Brahms was born May 7, 1833, at Hamburg; died April 3, 1898, at Vienna.

The reputation of Brahms has consistently made headway and he has gloriously redeemed all that Robert Schumann so enthusiastically prophesied. His position has become unassailable, and circles that at first were lukewarm, or coldly respectful, have become ardent in their appreciation of the elevated concepts and purity of expression that characterize every product of his genius. While the reputation and influence of many contemporaries of the Vienna master have declined somewhat in recent years, his hold on the world of music has been growing more secure. A significant scheme of concerts cannot be imagined in which he is not represented, and strangely enough, the qualities which many thought were lacking in his style are those through which he now makes his strongest appeal. He was considered cold, lacking in melody, deficient in imagination, etc., etc., but no one dreams of making such strictures on his art nowadays.

The symphony on our program will never be as popular as the perennial D major offering in this form, but although it was his first it contains no hint of the apprentice; it grasps one at the outset, and the grip is tightened when we come to the glorious last movement. Symphonic literature contains many works in which the inspiration runs well for a season, but becomes attenuated before the end, so that they frequently stop without ending—dying of inanition. No such criticism can hold when applied to Brahms' work. As a matter of fact, reference is generally made to a superabundance of thematic material and too prodigal a use of orchestral color, the first leading to lack of clearness in outline, and the latter to a clouding of detail through "muddy" orchestration. Fuller-Maitland, in his admirable book on Brahms, referring to this particular symphony, takes up the cudgels in his defense by saying (page 157) "the case is almost parallel to certain poems of Browning—the thoughts are so weighty, the reasoning so close, that the ordinary means of expression are inadequate. To try to re-score such a movement (as the first), with the sacrifice of none of its meaning, is as hopeless a task as to rewrite 'Sordello' in sentences that a child should understand." The German critics have gleefully pointed out the rhythmic resemblance of the principal theme of the last movement to the finale of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, but in this connection we must remember Richard Wagner's statement that "The Almighty created Art in order that German criticism might have a new joy."

The C minor Symphony was begun as early as 1862, and was still unfinished late in 1875. It was first produced at Karlsruhe, November 4, 1876.

1. The main movement is preceded by an Introduction (*Un poco sostenuto*, C minor, 6-8 time) the material of which is related to the matter presented in the following *Allegro*. The principal subject of this does not begin at the outset of the *Allegro*, but in the first violins, four measures after it has started. This is worked over at considerable length, and the second theme makes its appearance in the woodwind in E flat major. Note the persistent suggestions of the principal subject in the accompanying parts.

The Development is of great elaborateness. It opens with a working out of the principal subject, but all the material of the first part is woven into the contrapuntal fabric. The Recapitulation brings back the principal themes in the usual keys, and a coda, based on the material which opened the movement, brings this division of the symphony to an end.

II. (*Andante sostenuto*, E major, 3-4 time.) The theme opens in the strings. Sixteen measures after it has begun, the woodwind brings forward a continuing section. This is followed by a new idea, presented by the first violins, and a passage in which, in succession, the oboe and the clarinet take a prominent part. There is development and a partial return of the material heard at the beginning of the movement, some of it being sung by a solo violin.

III. There is no scherzo, but in its place a movement (*Un poco allegretto e grazioso*, A flat major, 2-4 time) "which," says Grove, "is not a scherzo so much as a sort of national tune or volkslied of simple sweetness and grace." The opening subject is brought forward by the clarinet, and later by the first violins. Following this comes a new figure in the woodwind, and there is a partial rehearing in the clarinet of the subject which opened the movement. The second part (in reality a trio, although not so named on the score, brings forward a contrasting theme in B major, 6-8 time. The third part does not repeat the first in its entirety, nor even are the subjects presented thematically exact. This concluding division is in reality more of a suggestion than a re-presentation of the opening section.

IV. The Finale (in this, trombones are employed for the first time in the work) opens with an Introduction (*Adagio*, C minor, 4-4 time) sixty-one measures long. The three descending notes in the lower strings and double bassoon are given development in later portions of the movement, and the theme in the first violins, immediately following them, is a foreshadowing of the principal subject of the main division. In the middle of the Introduction a passage of considerable import makes its appearance (*Piu andante*, C major) in a motive for the first horn, the muted strings tremulously sustaining the harmony and being reinforced by the sombre notes of the trombones.

The movement proper (*Allegro non troppo, ma con brio*, C major, 4-4 time) begins with the principal subject in the first violins. At the production of the symphony in Vienna there was much talk about what was considered by many to be an intentional allusion in this subject to the opening theme of the Finale of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. Of this similarity, which is more of spirit than of notes, Miss Florence May in her biography of Brahms wrote: "There is no doubt whatever that everybody who listens to Brahms' First Symphony thinks, immediately on the entrance of the final allegro, of Beethoven's Ninth. The association passes with the conclusion of the subject; Brahms' movement develops on its own lines, which do not resemble those of Beethoven."

The principal theme is followed by considerable development, in which figures the horn motive that had been heard in the course of the Introduction. The second subject is announced, *piano*, by the strings, the accompanying bass being taken from the three descending notes that opened the Introduction. There is a further melody of vigorous character stated, *ff*, by the violins, and a triplet figure that plays an important part, following which the first theme returns, more fully scored than at the beginning of the movement. Development and episodic material now succeed. The Recapitulation does not bring forward the principal theme, but the second subject in C minor. The movement closes (*Piu allegro*, 2-2 time) with a coda, in which a new idea is announced by the strings.

TONE ROEM, "Viviane," Op. 5.....Chausson

Ernest Chausson was born at Paris, June 21, 1855, died at Limay, June 10, 1899.

Like many of the most distinguished French composers of recent decades, Chausson was so fortunate as to come into close touch, both as a student and a man, with that rare spirit, César Franck. Chausson was not a prolific composer but his creative activity for the twenty-one years prior to his tragic death in 1899 displayed itself in a goodly number of compositions in all the serious forms. His Symphony in B Flat, Concerto in D Major for Piano, Violin and String Quartet have already been heard in this city.

"Viviane", as indicated by the Opus number, is an early work, and the score bears the following inscription:

"Viviane and Merlin in the forest of Broceliande. Love scene.

"Trumpet calls. Messengers of King Arthur scour the forest in search of the enchanter.

"Merlin remembers his errand. He fain would fly the embraces of Viviane.

"Scene of the bewitchment. To detain him, Viviane puts Merlin to sleep, and binds him with blooming hawthorns."

The Chausson conception of Merlin and Viviane is not the one of Tennyson in his *Idyl*. The tone poem is bathed in dreamy light. The two lovers are represented in an atmosphere of great beauty.

SUITE FROM THE BALLET, "Firebird"*Strawinsky*

Igor Strawinsky was born June 5, 1882, at Oranienbaum (near Petrograd) Russia.

The story of this ballet, drawn from Russian Fairy Lore, was arranged for Strawinsky by Michel Fokine. "*L'Oiseau de Feu*," was performed as a ballet by the company directed by Serge de Diaghileff, at the Opéra, Paris, June 25, 1910. On this occasion Gabriel Pierné, the eminent French composer and conductor, directed the orchestra.

The score of the ballet written in 1910 and dedicated to Rimsky-Korsakow, employed an exceedingly large orchestra. In order that the music might have greater possibilities of performance, in 1919 Strawinsky constructed a concert suite from the original score, and reorchestrated this version for a symphony orchestra of the usual proportions.

Music to the "Firebird" is that of Strawinsky in his late twenties, and presages, only a few of the orchestral effects of his later and more violent period. The score is full of flaming colors and represents the modern spirit of the dance. The plot of the "Firebird" is as follows:

Ivan Tsarevich, wandering in the night, observes in the gloom the Fire Bird, plucking golden apples from a silver tree. He attempts to seize the Fire Bird and, after a chase, succeeds in capturing her. The bird entreats Ivan to release her, and, after receiving from her a glowing feather, he permits the Fire Bird to escape. As the dawn comes, Ivan Tsarevich perceives that his wanderings have taken him into the park of an ancient castle. From that building there emerge thirteen maidens, who pluck the apples from the silver tree and throw them to each other. Ivan, who had concealed himself in order that he might watch the playing of the maidens, now reveals himself and is given one of the golden apples. The maidens withdraw into the castle, which is the home of the monstrous Kastchei, who turns into stone all the adventurous travelers who may enter his domain. Ivan determines to penetrate into Kastchei's abode. Upon opening the gate he is confronted by a horde of monsters, and eventually by the fearsome Kastchei himself. He attempts to petrify Ivan, but the latter is given protection by the glowing feather which has been given him by the Fire Bird. Soon the Fire Bird comes to Ivan's assistance and wards off the magic that, wielded by the enchanter, would have brought Ivan to the fate of previous trespassers upon the monster's domain. The bird causes the frightful company of Kastchei's retinue to break into a frenzied dance. The casket in which the fate of the wizard is contained is revealed. In it is an egg which Ivan dashes to the ground. The death which it contains unites itself with its owner, and Kastchei expires. His castle vanishes; its beauteous prisoners are freed, and Ivan receives in marriage one of them, the Beautiful Tsarevna.