

UNIVERSITY MUSICAL SOCIETY

CHARLES A. SINK, PRESIDENT

THOR JOHNSON, CONDUCTOR

Fourth Concert

1940-1941

Complete Series 2809

Sixty-second Annual
Choral Union Concert Series

THE PHILHARMONIC-SYMPHONY SOCIETY
OF NEW YORK

1842-1878. Consolidated in 1928. Concert No. 3672

JOHN BARBIROLI, *Conductor*

SUNDAY AFTERNOON, NOVEMBER 24, 1940, AT 3:00
HILL AUDITORIUM, ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

PROGRAM

Concerto Grosso for String Orchestra in B-flat major, Op. 6, No. 7 . . . HANDEL

Largo
Allegro
Largo, e piano
Andante
Hornpipe

Symphony in A major ("Italian"), Op. 90 MENDELSSOHN

Allegro vivace
Andante con moto
Con moto moderato
Saltarello: Presto

INTERMISSION

Symphony in D major, No. 2, Op. 43 SIBELIUS

Allegretto
Tempo andante ma rubato
Vivacissimo
Finale

NOTE.—The New York Philharmonic Orchestra, Josef Stransky, Conductor, appeared in the Choral Union Series March 17, 1916. The New York Symphony Orchestra, Walter Damrosch, Conductor, has appeared as follows: January 16, 1918; October 15, 1925; and February 1, 1928. The Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra, John Barbirolli, Conductor, appeared in the Series November 27, 1939.

THE PHILHARMONIC-SYMPHONY SOCIETY OF NEW YORK

ARTHUR JUDSON, *Manager*

BRUNO ZIRATO, *Assistant Manager*

*The Steinway is the official piano of the Philharmonic-Symphony Society
and the University Musical Society
Victor Records*

A R S L O N G A V I T A B R E V I S

PROGRAM NOTES

By PITTS SANBORN

Concerto Grosso for String Orchestra in B-flat major,

Op. 6, No. 7 GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL
(Born at Halle, Saxony, February 23, 1685; died in London, April 14, 1759)

Handel, with astonishing facility, began to compose his "Twelve Grand Concertos" for strings on September 29, 1739, and completed the task on the last day but one of the following month. In form his concerto grosso has been happily described as a dialogue between a group of soloists, the "concertino" (two solo violins and solo 'cello), and a chorus of full string band, while the cembalo looks after the "continuo" or figured bass. No. 7, however, lacks the "concertino."

The concerto grosso heard today begins with a short Largo (B-flat major, 4-4), which serves as a stately introduction to an elaborate Allegro (B-flat major, 4-4). This movement consists of a lively fugue on a strikingly simple, but effective, subject marked by a reiterated tone, which has been humorously compared to the cackling of a hen. It leads off the Allegro in the highest part, first in half notes, then in quarter notes, finally in eighth notes. As the movement proceeds, stirring up a first-rate hubbub, the theme is hidden among the busy contrapuntal strands, but its telling rhythm makes itself felt whether the passage be gay and graceful, drolly shrewish, or positively beetle-browed.

The third movement (Largo, *e piano*, G minor, 3-4), freely polyphonic and harmonically rich, reveals a fervid lyric exaltation that foreshadows Beethoven. Though the highest part is usually charged with the melody, the other parts occasionally stand out with an expressive melodic turn.

An Andante (B-flat major, 4-4) follows, homophonic and Italian in style.

The finale (B-flat major, 3-2) is a frolicsome hornpipe. In the very first measure of this rustic and downright dance one recognizes the rhythmic device known as Scotch snap or catch (short note followed by long), which, incidentally, found particular favor in the eighteenth century as far away from Scotland as Italy.

Symphony in A major ("Italian"), Op. 90 FELIX MENDELSSOHN-BARTHOLDY (Born in Hamburg, February 3, 1809; died in Leipzig, November 4, 1847)

Though this symphony has been called a perfect work, Mendelssohn was dissatisfied with it and did not allow it to be published during his lifetime. He confessed that writing it had caused him some of his bitterest moments, and his avowed purpose of revising the last movement he never carried out. It is hard to see how he could have bettered the Finale, and Parry wisely observes that there are no indications of bitterness in the music as it stands—a blow to those who would have it that every work of art mirrors the immediate spiritual and physical state of the author.

The first movement (Allegro vivace, A major, 6-8) opens brilliantly with a dashing theme in the violins. The second subject, in E major allotted to the clarinets, is of a more leisurely nature. A third theme, treated fugally, introduces the development section.

The second movement (Andante *con moto*, D minor, 4-4) has been called a Pilgrims' March. Doubtless it was suggested by a religious procession in the streets of Naples. But why Grove heard in the introductory measures the "cry of a muezzin from his minaret" is hard to understand.

The ingratiating third movement (Con *moto moderato*, A major, 3-4) is virtually a minuet. Especially beautiful is the trio, in E major, with its hint of profundities below the rippling surface.

The finale (Presto, A minor, 4-4) is the famous Saltarello, based on three themes, of which the third, with its series of uninterrupted triplets, the invariably accurate Rockstro declares is not a saltarello theme at all but a tarantella!

Symphony in D major, No. 2, Op. 43 JEAN SIBELIUS (Born at Tavastehus, Finland, December 8, 1865; living in Finland)

No symphony since Tchaikowsky's "Pathétique" has achieved such popularity in this country as Sibelius's Second. It has attained the household-word class, and its most conspicuous theme is as familiar as "Home, Sweet Home." Indeed, it is now far oftener whistled and hummed. Because Sibelius is a Finn, native of a northern land where the lakes are frozen for months at a time and the fields blanketed with snow, where primeval forests abound and legend wears the guise of elemental truth, this composer, perhaps the foremost living symphonist, is regarded with a species of awe that no other maker of music now inspires.

Of the Second Symphony that distinguished critic, the late Philip Hale, observes: "This music is extremely northern, at times bleak and wind-swept. Arresting and impressive music; and lo, suddenly Sibelius drops into Tschaikowsky mood and even speaks the self-torturing Russian's speech! Yet Sibelius is generally in the foreground, and his speech is generally his own. It is when he would touch the heart of the public that Tschaikowsky pushes him aside."

Georg Schneevoight, the eminent Finnish conductor and close friend of Sibelius, is quoted by Hale as saying that the composer's intention was to depict in the first movement the quiet pastoral life of the Finns, undisturbed by thought of oppression. The second movement, according to the same authority, is charged with patriotic feeling, but the thought of a brutal rule over the people brings with it timidity of soul. The third, in the nature of a scherzo, portrays the awakening of national feeling, the desire to organize in defense of their rights, while in the Finale hope enters their breasts, and there is comfort in the anticipated coming of a deliverer.

The Second Symphony was composed in 1901-1902 and brought out at Helsingfors at a concert given under the composer's direction on March 8 of the latter year. It was introduced to America by Theodore Thomas at one of his concerts in Chicago on January 2, 1904. Josef Stransky added it to the repertory of the Philharmonic Society of New York in the season of 1916-17.

* * *

The key to both the strength and the weakness of Sibelius, his doughty English champion, Cecil Gray, declares in *A Survey of Contemporary Music*, is to be found in his "essentially primitive mentality—using the word primitive in its truest and best sense, for it is a word which has been used loosely and indiscriminately to denote two quite definite and distinct qualities of mind. First, there is the type to which the English Pre-Raphaelites and Debussy belong, and of which Matisse and Stravinsky are the most characteristic living representatives. The mediaevalism of the former and the barbarism of the latter two are the result of the attraction which the remote, the exotic, and the strange perpetually exercise over us.

"They are 'primitives' from being hyper-civilized, super-cultured, over-refined. With them primitivism is simply a form of romanticism, like the cult of orientalism a hundred years ago, and there is as little real relation between the art of Rossetti and that of the Middle Ages, between that of Matisse and African idols, as there was between the East of Victor Hugo's imagining and the East as it really is.

"Secondly, there are the true primitives, such as Moussorgsky, Borodin, and Sibelius in music, or Van Gogh and Henri Rousseau in painting. They are primitive not from any theoretic or sentimental yearnings, but simply because their minds are simple, direct, and unsophisticated; they cannot help being so. As a matter of fact they would have been different if they could. For in the same way that the typical modern man has the perpetual craving for the simple, the savage, and the barbaric, so primitive man constantly aspires towards the culture and refinements of civilization.

"The silk top-hat has vanished from the streets of London and is now almost exclusively worn by naked Negroes in the tropical forests and steaming swamps of Central Africa. There are no longer any fetishes to be found on the Congo; they are all in the windows of the Parisian art-dealers in the Rue de la Boétie.

"And so in creative art. The true primitive artist is irresistibly attracted to the great traditions and procedures from which the modern decadent endeavors constantly to escape; and just as a primitive race, on being brought into contact with a civilization in an advanced stage of social and intellectual development, tends inevitably to acquire only its least worthy aspects, so the primitive musician is apt to assimilate only the baser characteristics of our civilized traditions; the cheap mirrors and the glass beads of the salon and the ballad concert, the tawdry, brightly-colored cotton shift of 'modernity', and the cheap line of craftsman's tools supplied by German conservatoires and harmony text-books.

"In other words, he only acquires the vices of traditional musicianship without the virtues which alone are capable of transforming and renewing them. Hence the vein of shallow and conventional operatic Italianism into which Borodin frequently relapsed; hence the facile and commonplace *clichés* in a great deal of Moussorgsky's music; hence the amiable banalities and meretricious elegances in the works of Sibelius.

"But if I call Sibelius a primitive, I do not intend to suggest that his work is necessarily crude, unfinished, or technically incompetent. All I mean to imply by this misused adjective is a type of mind which works instinctively rather than consciously and intellectually; and, as the instincts of a primitive race are cleaner and surer than those of civilized races, so the resultant art has nothing of the clumsiness and uncertainty which we habitually associate with their workings. On the contrary, a great deal of primitive art is extremely subtle, highly finished, and supremely accomplished. When Sibelius's music seems bare and uncouth, it is always with a very definite purpose in view.

(Over)

"Finally, it would be a mistake to imagine that I called Sibelius primitive because he happens to come from a country which stands somewhat off the beaten track. There are doubtless as many highly civilized persons in Finland, in proportion to the population, as in any other country. His primitivism is a personal and not a national characteristic, and he would probably have possessed a similar mentality even if he had been born in Paris or in London.

"Although primitivism is primarily answerable for all his characteristic shortcomings, it must not be forgotten that it is likewise responsible for his great and outstanding qualities. The famous 'elimination of unessentials' which the pseudo-primitive artist is constantly striving to achieve with such a conspicuous lack of success, is actually achieved by Sibelius."

Choral Union Concerts

HILL AUDITORIUM

8:30 P.M.

- RICHARD BONELLI, *Baritone* Tuesday, December 3
BOSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA Wednesday, December 11
SERGE KOUSSEVITZKY, *Conductor*
VLADIMIR HOROWITZ, *Pianist* Wednesday, January 15
MINNEAPOLIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA Tuesday, January 28
DIMITRI MITROPOULOS, *Conductor*
BUDAPEST STRING QUARTET Thursday, February 20
GEORGES ENESCO, *Violinist* Tuesday, March 4
-

The UNIVERSITY MUSICAL SOCIETY announces a Chamber Music Festival of three concerts to be given by:

THE MUSICAL ART QUARTET OF NEW YORK

SASCHA JACOBSEN, *First Violin* WILLIAM HYMANSON, *Viola*
PAUL BERNARD, *Second Violin* MARIA ROEMAET-ROSANOFF, *Violoncello*

The concerts will be given Friday evening, Saturday afternoon, and Saturday evening, January 24 and January 25, 1941, in the Main Lecture Hall of the Rackham Building.

Tickets will be on sale over the counter, beginning Monday morning, November 25, at 8:30, at the offices of the University Musical Society in Burton Memorial Tower. Season tickets (3 concerts), \$2.00; individual concerts, \$1.00.

"MESSIAH" by Handel will be given Wednesday evening, December 18, at 8 o'clock sharp.

The following will participate: Thelma von Eisenhauer, Soprano; Joan Peebles, Contralto; William Hain, Tenor; Richard Hale, Bass; Palmer Christian, Organist; The University Choral Union; The University Symphony Orchestra; Thor Johnson, Conductor.

NOTICES: The right is reserved to make such changes in the dates and artists announced as necessity may require. While wide and prompt publicity is given to dates thus changed, to avoid inconvenience it is suggested that, so far as possible, out-of-town guests confirm the dates in advance.