

UNIVERSITY MUSICAL SOCIETY

CHARLES A. SINK, PRESIDENT

THOR JOHNSON, CONDUCTOR

Eighth Concert

1940-1941

Complete Series 2817

Sixty-second Annual
Choral Union Concert Series

MINNEAPOLIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

DIMITRI MITROPOULOS, *Conductor*

TUESDAY EVENING, JANUARY 28, 1941, AT 8:30
HILL AUDITORIUM, ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

PROGRAM

Overture to "Prometheus," Op. 43 BEETHOVEN

Symphony No. 2 in C major, Op. 61 SCHUMANN
Sostenuto assai—Allegro, ma non troppo
Scherzo: Allegro vivace
Adagio espressivo
Allegro molto vivace

INTERMISSION

Symphonic Poem, "The Moldau" SMETANA

Adagio for Strings SAMUEL BARBER

Fantasia and Fugue in G minor BACH-MITROPOULOS

*The Steinway piano and the Skinner organ are the official concert
instruments of the University Musical Society*

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

PROGRAM NOTES

Compiled by CARLO FISCHER

Overture to the Ballet "Prometheus," Op. 43 BEETHOVEN

(Born in 1770, at Bonn; died in 1827, at Vienna)

"Prometheus," or "Die Geschöpfe des Prometheus," as the original German title has it, is the first of Beethoven's many essays in dramatic composition. His interest in drama was keen, though it mainly appears in the untheatrical guise of so-called "abstract" forms—sonatas and symphonies. Like many a dramatist, also, Beethoven had one favorite theme which he presents in many different guises. To Wagner, almost invariably, this underlying theme was one aspect or another of human redemption—usually accomplished through the agency of the "eternal feminine." Beethoven was by no means insensitive to feminine charm; but for him redemption was to be sought in that high accord of human purposes which is the ideal of democracy. The Ninth Symphony is his final exaltation of that theme. However, while the mythological story of Prometheus undoubtedly had its great appeal for Beethoven, the urge to write the music came from quite an outside source. Beethoven's social position, as a special favorite of court circles in Vienna, led Salvatore Vigano, a Neapolitan dancer and a shrewd diplomat, to induce Beethoven to write the incidental music for a ballet performance at the Imperial Royal Court Theatre in Vienna to do honor to Maria Theresa, second wife of the Emperor Francis. Beethoven wrote an overture and sixteen numbers, the first performance taking place in 1801. It scored such a great success that "Prometheus" had quite a run both that and the following year. The music was so popular that it was immediately published as a piano solo.

The overture, written about the same time as the First Symphony, employs a comparatively small orchestra which, however, in no way detracts from its dramatic and sonorous character.

Symphony No. 2 in C Major, Op. 61 ROBERT SCHUMANN

(Born in 1810, at Swickau; died in 1856, at Emdenich)

It was a rather unusual period in Schumann's life that brought forth his second symphony. The work was sketched during the year 1845 at Dresden, whither he had temporarily retired for rest and seclusion which, it was hoped, would benefit the condition of his health. Schumann had been greatly overworked by his duties in Leipzig, and his musical absorption for a long time had been so intense that it had given rise to grave nervous symptoms that caused his physician and friends much apprehension. Because Dresden at that time was a city of little musical activity, he was sent there. But musicians of Schumann's quality carry their atmosphere with them.

When it is recalled that Richard Wagner was conductor at the Dresden opera in 1845 and that an intimacy had sprung up between Schumann and Ferdinand von Hiller, a prominent musician of that period, one is not surprised to find this year prolific in important compositions, including the C-major Symphony. A glimpse of the conditions under which the symphony was written is given by the composer himself in a letter to a friend: "I composed the symphony," he wrote, "when I was still far from well; I think this ought to be known. Only in the last movement did I begin to be myself again, and it was not until the end that I became completely well."

The first performance of the work took place at Leipzig in the fall of 1846, with Mendelssohn conducting. Though the work found a certain appreciation among a few of Schumann's enthusiastic admirers, many years passed before the general public recognized the true value and beauty contained in the music.

INTERMISSION

Symphonic Poem, "The Moldau" FRIEDRICH SMETANA

(Born in 1824, at Leitomischl; died in 1884, at Prague)

Smetana's symphonic poem, "The River Moldau," is the second of a cycle of six works intended to glorify the country of the composer's birth, Bohemia, or, as it was known up to two years ago, Czechoslovakia. Printed in the orchestral score of "The Moldau" is the following descriptive program: "Two springs pour forth their streams in the shades of the Bohemian forest, one warm and gushing, the other cold and tranquil. Their waves, flowing over their rocky beds, unite and sparkle in the morning sun. The forest brook, rushing on, becomes the river Moldau, which, speed-

ing through Bohemia's valleys, grows into a mighty stream. It flows through dense woods in which are heard the sounds of the hunt. * * * It flows through meadows and lowlands where there is being celebrated with song and dance a wedding feast. At night, in its shining waves sparkling in the moonlight, wood and water nymphs hold their revels, and in these waves are reflected many a fortress and castle, witnesses of bygone splendor and chivalry. * * * At the rapids of St. John the stream speeds on, winding its way through cataracts and hewing its path through the rocky chasm into the broad river bed in which it flows on in majestic calm towards Prague, welcomed by the time-honored fortress Bysehrad, to disappear in the far distance from the poet's gaze."

Friedrich Smetana is known in musical history as the father of Bohemian music. He was the first to draw on the folk songs and dances of his country as material for his orchestral, operatic, and other works. Among his operas, "The Bartered Bride" had a sensational success and is known wherever opera is given. Of orchestral compositions, the symphonic poems and the Overture to the opera, "The Bartered Bride," are the best known.

Adagio for Strings SAMUEL BARBER
(Born in 1910, at Westchester, Pennsylvania)

The following comment is taken from the program book of the New York Philharmonic Society's concerts, on the occasion of the performance of the piece in January, 1940:

This piece was composed in 1936 as the slow movement of a string quartet in B minor and in the course of the same year was played in Rome by the Pro Arte String Quartet. The first performance by string orchestra occurred on November 5, 1938. The occasion was the broadcast of the NBC Symphony, under the direction of Arturo Toscanini. The work bears this dedication: "To my aunt and uncle, Louise and Sidney Homer."

The Adagio is based on a single lyric subject, given out immediately by first violins. The violas take it up and there is canonic treatment. The theme appears in the other voices, eventually rising in the high strings to a fortissimo culmination.

Samuel Barber, whose mother is a sister of the famous contralto, Louise Homer, began to study music at the age of six, and in another year was composing. At thirteen he entered the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, where Isabel Vengerova was his piano teacher, and Emilio de Gogorza his singing teacher. Composition, however, which he studied with Rosario Scalerò, was his chief interest. In turn came graduation from the Curtis Institute in 1932, the Prix de Rome in 1935, and the Pulitzer Prize for Music both in 1935 and 1936 (the first case of its being conferred twice on the same musician).

Fantasia and Fugue in G Minor BACH
(Born in 1685, at Eisenach; died in 1750, at Leipzig)
(Orchestrated by Dimitri Mitropoulos)

This is an orchestral version of the famous Fantasia and Fugue in G minor composed by Bach for the organ.

In the words of the late Lawrence Gilman, "The Fantasia must be ranked among the most magnificent works in Bach's vast repertoire of masterpieces. Here he is in almost his grandest vein * * * Here are those dramatic, declamatory recitatives, those tremendous chord progressions with their chains of suspension, audacious dissonances and modulations As for the Fugue (known to organists as the 'Great' G minor), Georg Polchau a century ago declared it to be 'the very best pedal piece by Herr Johann Sebastian Bach.' Spitta draws attention to the contrast it offers to the Fantasia by the 'grand, calm modulations, by the soaring imagination and lavish and inexhaustible variety of form, the crystal lucidity and modest naturalism and deep contentment which strike awe into the hearer and at the same time tempt him to shout with joy'—a happy summarization!"

CHORAL UNION CONCERTS

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 8:30

THE BUDAPEST STRING QUARTET: **Josef Roismann**, First Violin; **Alexander Schneider**, Second Violin; **Boris Kroyt**, Viola; **Mischa Schneider**, Violoncello; will give the ninth concert in the Choral Union Series. The program is as follows:

Quartet in A minor, Op. 51, No. 2 Brahms
Quartet Movement in C minor (Op. Post.) SCHUBERT
Italian Serenade Wolf
Quartet in C-sharp minor, Op. 131 Beethoven

TUESDAY, MARCH 4, 8:30

NATHAN MILSTEIN, Violinist, Artur Balsam, accompanist, will give the tenth concert in the Choral Union Series, taking the place of Georges Enesco, who is unable to come to this country on account of the war. The program is as follows:

Adagio and Rondo Karl Stamitz
Prelude and Gavotte in E major (for violin alone) Bach
Sonata in F major, Op. 24 ("Spring Sonata") Beethoven
Meditation Tschaikowsky
Burlesque Josef Suk
Concerto in A minor, No. 5 Vieuxtemps

MAY FESTIVAL CONCERTS

Six Concerts—May 7, 8, 9, 10, 1941

THE CHORAL UNION, **Thor Johnson**, Festival Conductor, will sing "Alleluia" by Randall Thompson; "Requiem" by Brahms; and "Eugene Onegin," an opera in three acts, by Tschaikowsky, in concert form.

THE PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA will participate throughout the Festival. **Eugene Ormandy**, Conductor, and **Saul Caston**, Associate Conductor.

THE YOUTH CHORUS, **Juva Higbee**, Conductor, will sing "St. Mary Magdalene" by d'Indy.

DISTINGUISHED SOLOISTS, both vocal and instrumental, with whose managers negotiations are pending, will participate in all six programs.

FOR INFORMATION concerning tickets or programs, please call at the offices of the **University Musical Society** in Burton Memorial Tower, or address **Charles A. Sink**, President.