

The University Musical Society

of
The University of Michigan



Presents

LOS ANGELES PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

ZUBIN MEHTA, *Conductor*

SATURDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 7, 1970, AT 8:30
HILL AUDITORIUM, ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

P R O G R A M

Symphony No. 96 in D major ("Miracle") HAYDN

Adagio; Allegro
Andante
Menuetto; Allegretto
Vivace

Six Pieces for Orchestra, Op. 6 WEBERN

Moderately fast eighth-notes
Fast
Gently flowing
Very measured
Slow: funeral march
Gently flowing

INTERMISSION

Symphony No. 4 in E-flat BRUCKNER

With movement, not too quickly
Andante quasi allegretto
Scherzo: With movement
With movement, but not too quickly

London Records

PROGRAM NOTES

Symphony No. 96 in D major ("Miracle") FRANZ JOSEPH HAYDN

The symphony catalogued as No. 96 in D major enjoys the distinction of having served as Haydn's introduction to the London public at the famous series of concerts in which the impresario Johann Peter Salomon presented the composer in 1791-92 and again in 1794-95.

At least twenty-nine of Haydn's one hundred and four symphonies are known by identifying titles or nicknames—most of them neither invented nor sanctioned by the composer. No. 96 is known as the "Miracle" because of a long accepted story to the effect that at the first performance the crowd in the rear rushed forward to get a better view of the composer. At that moment a heavy chandelier crashed to the floor where the audience had been and no one was injured. Many persons were said to have shouted "Miracle! Miracle!"

But the symphony performed on that occasion was not No. 96, still known today as the "Miracle," but No. 102. Both the disaster and the "miracle" appear to have been greatly exaggerated.

Six Pieces for Orchestra, Op. 6 ANTON VON WEBERN

If a poll were conducted as to what was to be considered "abstract music," the work of Anton von Webern would no doubt emerge as a prototype. Many regard his compositions as the epitome of nonassociative essays in the domain of tones. This judgment is but one of several misconceptions concerning Webern's music (just as the circumstances of his life and death were distorted by fallacies). The large contingent of vocal music within the composer's output already reflects his leaning on literary inspiration, and the choice of poems mirrors his essentially lyrical temperament. What has not been known is the fact that preparatory sketches of Webern's purely instrumental works also contain numerous indications of specific associations underlying the musical ideas. These sources of inspiration revolve around the two great poles of his world: his family and nature. The names of his wife and children, favorite localities, as well as cherished manifestations of nature, from the microcosmos of flowers to alpine grandeur, recur in the structural outlines with which Webern prefaced many of his compositions, even during his latest period. While it would be exaggerated to assign Webern's music "programmatic" character because of such preconceived guidelines, it can certainly be stated that he approached each work with definite visions and corresponding emotions, and not as an abstruse mathematician operating from a kind of notational drafting board.

Notwithstanding the fact that the composer was acclaimed the prophet of a new age (that "Age of Webern" began in the early fifties, when a young generation of composers like Boulez and Stockhausen discovered in him their precursor), it is interesting to observe how much he actually was a child and product of Romanticism. His earliest compositions, while already revealing a strong and thoroughly original talent, are fully immersed in the mainstream of tradition. *Im Sommerwind* (1904) vividly depicts the exhilaration of a summer day in the country, and the music follows its varying moods from serenity to exuberance, all pervaded by a hymnlike God-in-nature worship.

The work assumes special significance since it is the last composition written by Webern before he began studying with Arnold Schoenberg in the fall of 1904. By then, he had received academic training under such respected musicians as Graedener and Navratil at the University of Vienna where, in 1906, he attained the Doctor of Philosophy degree in musicology. The musical breakthrough of the years that followed, and the achievements of the Vienna triumvirate ((Schoenberg, Berg and Webern) have since become history.

The suddenness and extent of that musical revolution is evident in the *Six Pieces for Orchestra*, Op. 6, written only five years after *Im Sommerwind*. Comparison between the two works reveals radical differences. The rhetoric has changed from expansiveness to a style of deliberate compression. After indulging in the sheer revelry of tone painting, the composer now is concerned only with the taut expression of emotional states, among which the harsh and eruptive rank next to the tender and delicate. A letter by Webern to Schoenberg describes the mood prevailing in these pieces. They actually form a closely-knit sequence written under the continuing impact of the death, in 1906, of the composer's mother whom he had loved very deeply, and to whose memory he had pledged all his future artistic pursuits. The first piece, according to Webern's own description

in that letter, reflects his anxiety over the mother's illness; the second, his shock and agony on receiving the news of her death. The third piece, atmospheric in shape and essence, portrays a place in the woods, beloved by Webern as a secret haunt, where he picked wild flowers to place on his mother's casket. In the fourth piece, designated "Marcia funebre" in the work's first (1909) version, the composer sees himself walking in the funeral procession, numbed by grief and oblivious to the world around him as the death bell chimes from the steeple of the little church at Schwabegg.

Symphony No. 4 in E-flat ANTON BRUCKNER

The Fourth was for long the favorite among Bruckner's symphonies, and it is not difficult to see why. More mature than the first two, more fully integrated than the Third, more genial and approachable than the monumental Fifth, Eighth and Ninth, more direct than the Sixth, it has a continual flow of appealing melody that is only rivalled by No. 7—and indeed, that work stood for an equally long time as second favorite. Today, now that we are beginning to be familiar with his whole output, we can see that the Fifth, Eighth and Ninth are really his greatest achievements, owing to their awe-inspiring scale and power and depth of feeling—just as Beethoven's Ninth must ultimately be set above all his others for the same reason. And yet, of course, Bruckner's Fourth remains a glorious work that has something special to offer that none of the others can provide—like Beethoven's "Pastoral," for instance. In fact, if we actually wanted a title, "The Pastoral" would be a more accurate one than "The Romantic": as with none of the other Bruckner symphonies, there is a pervasive sense of being in the countryside—perhaps because of the persistent use of horns. We find this especially in the distant echoes amid the mysterious vistas of the *Andante*, the brilliant fanfares of the "hunting" *Scherzo*, and the primeval horn-call at the beginning of the whole work, as if from the depths of some dark German forest—which is surely one of the very greatest openings in the complete symphonic literature.

There is an old joke that Bruckner did not actually compose nine symphonies, but only one symphony nine times—this because certain general features are common to all of them. There is no truth in this jibe, since the general features concerned always are conceived in entirely new terms, and are deployed in entirely new formal ways. The first movement of the Fourth certainly follows one general Bruckner pattern: it has a primeval-type first theme against string *tremolando*, a lyrical second theme with a singing counter-melody, and a powerful double-unison third theme, followed by development and recapitulation. Moreover, it contains one almost indispensable Bruckner element—a chorale-theme on the brass. Yet none of the themes bears the remotest resemblance to any idea in another Bruckner symphony: the first has a shattering simplicity all its own, the second a quite individual delicacy, and the third not only has a sweeping confidence unusual for Bruckner in such a context, but is actually first introduced much earlier, between the first and second themes. And the mighty brass chorale functions in a completely original way, being used not as one of the main themes at all, but as an entirely new and "once only" idea near the end of the development to clear the way for the *pianissimo* opening of the recapitulation.

The same may be said of the other movements. If the *Andante* adheres to Bruckner's favorite procedure of alternating two themes twice and building a climax out of the final return of the first, it does so in its own special way; and it is anyway a march, or at least a "walk," unlike any other Bruckner slow movement. Moreover, one thematic type peculiar to Bruckner—a single-line string melody with a string accompaniment of detached chords—is used here, most daringly, for *both* themes; and yet the necessary contrast is still achieved, by giving the first to the cellos with *staccato* accompaniment and the second to the violas with *pizzicato* accompaniment.

As for the *Scherzo*, the only Brucknerian procedure it follows is that of being utterly different from any of Bruckner's others—since he, more than any other composer, found a way of making each of his scherzos inhabit a world of its own. This ebullient hunting music, with its etherealized Austrian *Ländler* for its trio-section—who could have imagined anything like it, if Bruckner had not actually created it? The Finale begins in a characteristic Bruckner way, working up in a quiet *ostinato* until it explodes into a colossal clarion theme for the full orchestra. And it ends characteristically too, hammering out the rhythm of the opening of the whole work, but what happens in between? Simply what happens in every Bruckner finale—a series of surprises, shocks, and quite unpredictable masterstrokes.

When the work is over, we have to recognize that it is unique in Bruckner's output, and indeed in symphonic music as a whole. And we realize too that, in spite of the pervasive "pastoral" character of the music, there is also quite a lot of that awe-inspiring scale, power, and depth of feeling that belongs essentially to the Fifth, Eighth and Ninth though here these qualities are largely at the service of expressing pure joy in existence.

