



*International
Presentations of
Music & Dance*

THE UNIVERSITY MUSICAL SOCIETY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

YEHUDI MENUHIN

Conductor

TUESDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 19, 1985, AT 8:30
HILL AUDITORIUM, ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

PROGRAM

- Overture, *La Gazza Ladra*..... ROSSINI
- On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring DELIUS
- Variations on an Original Theme, Op. 36 ("Enigma")..... ELGAR

INTERMISSION

- Symphony No. 6 in B minor, Op. 74 ("Pathétique")..... TCHAIKOVSKY
Adagio, allegro non troppo
Allegro con grazioso
Allegro molto vivace
Adagio lamentoso, andante

Mr. Menuhin: Angel, Seraphim, Deutsche Grammophon, Mercury, Electrola, and HMV Records.

Royal Philharmonic: RCA, CBS, Seraphim, Turnabout, Odyssey, Mercury, London, and Deutsche Grammophon Records.

PROGRAM NOTES

Overture, *La Gazza Ladra* GIOACCHINO ROSSINI (1792-1868)

During the first half of the 19th century, Italian opera flourished as one of the most lavish and spectacular vogues in music history. The dominating figure of this era was Rossini, a highly talented, overweight, prolific, yet basically lazy man who wrote forty operas and then retired from the business of writing operas at the age of thirty-seven. As it is with anyone who achieves many successes, Rossini also had many failures. Many of his less successful operas were not relegated to complete obscurity, for they often had scintillating overtures which are regularly performed by symphony orchestras; *La Gazza Ladra* is a case in point.

This frothy operatic comedy was written in 1817, with a libretto by Giovanni Gherardini. Based upon a melodic French play, the opera tells of a servant girl who was accused of stealing a silver spoon, was found guilty and was sentenced to hang. Unlike the original story, in which the truth is discovered too late, Gherardini's ending has one of the crowd noticing a magpie with a silver spoon hanging from its mouth as the girl approaches the gallows. The opera concludes with an expression of joy on all parts.

The overture begins with a near and far rolling of drums that launches a brisk march tune. The main theme of the work is taken from a lyric third-act duo and proceeds at a breathless pace to the final measure. If there seems to be a hurried quality about this work, it could be explained in Rossini's own words: "I wrote the overture to 'La Gazza Ladra' the day of its opening in the theater itself, where I was imprisoned by the director and under the surveillance of four stage hands who were instructed to throw my original text through the window, page by page, to the copyists waiting below to transcribe it. In default of pages, they were ordered to throw me out the window bodily."

On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring FREDERICK DELIUS (1862-1934)

This work, written in 1912, is one of a group of miniatures Delius wrote for small orchestra. The main theme is made up of short repeated phrases, and in its second half makes a deliberate reference to a Norwegian folk-song, "In Ola Valley," heard by Delius on one of his several holidays in that country. The cuckoo, heard quietly on a clarinet in the middle of the piece, surely is a melody that sang to Delius in his beautiful riverside garden at Grez-sur-Loing, where he lived in the closest harmony with nature.

Variations on an Original Theme, Op. 36 ("Enigma") EDWARD ELGAR (1857-1934)

The second page of Elgar's score bears the following inscription:

*Dedicated to
My Friends Pictured within
Malvern, 1899*

Here is our first clue to the content and form of this music: It is a set of variations which "pictures" successively different personalities close to Elgar's heart. The chief theme has two strains. An *andante* rises above a simple bass line. The melody lies in the first violins; the strings offer harmonic support. With the entrance of the winds, we hear the second strain; clarinets assume prominence; the *sostenuto* returns.

The first variation is a tribute to Alice Elgar, the composer's wife. The music adheres to the tempo of the preceding *andante*; the tenderness of this music is immediately felt. This second variation is a portrait of the pianist H. D. Stuart-Powell. His manner of practicing is sketched here with an obvious touch of friendly irony.

A brief *allegretto* recalls the humor of Richard Baxter Townsend, an actor, who was adroit in changing his bass voice into a grotesque *false* *setto* when impersonating an old man. Suggesting this, bassoon solos climb, at the variation's end, the full range from the low to the high pitched register. An *allegro di molto* of turbulent character bespeaks the violent temper and energy belonging to an English country squire, Mr. William M. Baker. The loud dynamics of the full orchestra are only shortly relieved by the staccato of the woodwinds.

A piece of predominantly earnest character suggests the personality of a pensive young man, Richard P. Arnold. The melody is broadly bowed on the G strings by all the violins; bass instruments sound the main theme in counterpoint. An expressive viola solo varies the main theme over wide arches. The *andantino* tells of Miss Isabel Fitton who was a fine amateur viola player.

The vigorous *presto* connotes Arthur Troyte Griffith, an excitable companion capable of violent arguments that might end, like this variation, with a sharp crash (here accentuated by the cymbal). The mood changes to one of tranquility. In delicate woodwind phrases we have a tone picture of Miss Winifred Norbury and her gracious old English house.

In the "Nimrod" variation the strings intone an *adagio*. Nimrod, the biblical hunter's name, refers to August Jaeger, one of Elgar's closest friends. Variation 10, significantly called *Intermezzo*, provides relaxation. Miss Dora Penny, its heroine, had a peculiar manner of speech, of which the woodwinds take discreet cognizance.

A stormy *allegro di molto* depicts Dr. George Robertson Sinclair, organist of the Hereford Cathedral. But this worthy church musician was rarely seen without his bulldog. We hear "barking" accents in the orchestra, and rather growling canine noises in this lively scene.

Elgar enjoyed playing chamber music with his friends. Basil Nevinson, a cellist, was one of his loyal partners. The texture of this variation evokes the spirit of chamber music with the solo cello leading. The motto of the next variation is a quote from Mendelssohn's "Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage." From this overture, Elgar borrowed the clarinet theme. Lady Mary Lygo's cruise to Australia is celebrated in this variation.

The final variation is Elgar's self-portrait. With the *allegro* the composer seems to start out with another of his splendid marches. But the variation develops symphonic structure. We note the contrapuntal integration from the first variation (Alice Elgar) and from the ninth (Nimrod). The companionship of themes assumes a touching symbolism. Our knowledge of Elgar's personality might prompt an interpretation of this finale as the manifestation of his lofty ideals, and of his struggle in life and art. The music conveys unconquerable spirit.

Symphony No. 6 in B minor, Op. 74, "Pathétique" . . . PETER ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY (1840-1893)

There was a program — not a specific story, perhaps, but certainly an idea — behind the music of Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony. Tchaikovsky admitted this, but refused to tell what it was. "Let him guess it who can," he wrote. There was no lack of guessers until, between World Wars I and II, there turned up among Tchaikovsky's sketches a sheet of music paper with the following penciled notes:

The ultimate essence of the plan of the symphony is LIFE. First part — all impulsive passion, confidence, thirst for activity. Must be short. (Finale DEATH — result of collapse.) Second part love; third disappointments; fourth ends dying away (also short).

After sifting the evidence, authorities on Russian music, and especially on Tchaikovsky, concluded that the sheet belongs to 1892, the year when Tchaikovsky began this symphony. The music was completed in 1893, and first performed under the composer's direction on October 28, 1893 in St. Petersburg. A few weeks later, Tchaikovsky died.

It might be well to bear in mind, in listening to this symphony, that the word "pathétique" in its Russian sense bears a close relation to the original Greek "pathos," meaning sorrow, rather than the Anglicized "pathetic," with its connotation of "pitiful." Sorrow there is in this great work, but it is the epitome of dignity and the strength of eulogy.

The motive of the principal subject of the first movement is forecast in the introduction by the bassoon, which creates the mood of melancholy so characteristic of the entire symphony. This fragment of melody appears in a more vigorous guise in woodwinds and strings. There is a crescendo which leads to a powerful climax, subsiding in the voices of celli against dark chords in the tuba and trombones. The second theme, songful and expressive, is spoken by violins and celli. A portion of the theme follows in the flute, imitated by bassoon, after which there is a return to the first section of the theme. The coda, consisting of a solemn cadence for trumpets and trombones, over plucked strings, brings the movement to a close.

The second movement reveals a feeling of gaiety which somehow contrives to become a determined, yet hampered, struggle towards happiness. The end result is always one of pensive grief. The main theme, announced at once by the celli, is the principal song. The trio introduces a wistful theme by first violins above a pedal point in drums, bassoons, and basses.

The third movement, in contrast to the surrender of its predecessors, is a statement by the composer that, after all, submission to sorrow is not its solution. The music becomes triumphant, with stirring exploitation of the brass. There is a tremendous growth in intensity, with the persistent march of the movement being given to full orchestra against the conflict of scale passages between woodwinds and strings.

There is the finality of death in the fourth movement. It is felt in the requiem-like manner of its beginning. There is a despairing first subject, announced immediately in the strings. The second subject replies in consolatory terms by violins and violas over a syncopated figure in the horns. There is a magnificent climax which finally dies down to an ominous stroke on the gong. The symphony returns to the abyss of despair from which it emerged.

PATRON

HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH THE QUEEN MOTHER

Yehudi Menuhin, *President/Associate Conductor*

André Previn, *Music Director*

Antal Dorati, *Conductor Laureate*

Walter Weller, *Principal Conductor*

Yuri Temirkanov, *Principal Guest Conductor*

Sir Charles Groves, *Associate Conductor*

Barry Griffiths, *Leader*

This is the sixth American tour of the **Royal Philharmonic Orchestra**, and the first time Yehudi Menuhin has toured North America as conductor with one of the major orchestras of the world. In addition to maintaining its own concert schedule, the Philharmonic appears at the world's leading music festivals and has made numerous overseas tours. Last season the orchestra made an extensive tour of Germany, and gave concerts in Paris, Brussels, and various cities in Spain, and appeared at the festivals in Naples, Bergen, Seine Maritime, and Athens. Upon returning from a three-week tour of Japan and South Korea in October 1984, they made a five-day tour to the North of England, where they not only gave public concerts, but also visited schools and conducted workshops and classes. Other tours this season include the current four-week tour of North America, a tour including visits to Lichtenstein, Austria, and the Prague Spring Festival, and visits to East Germany and Bulgaria.

The Royal Philharmonic is also active in providing music for the film industry, most recently for "Greystoke" and "A Passage to India," and for television's "Mountbatten." With literally hundreds of recordings to its credit, the orchestra's 1981 "Hooked on Classics" album has sold over ten million copies and reached the "Top 10" in both Britain and America. It was also nominated for an international Grammy award.

The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra was founded in 1946 by the intensely individualistic Sir Thomas Beecham, and within two years it was established as one of the finest orchestras in existence. In 1950 Beecham and the Philharmonic sailed to America for a nine-week tour, delighting audiences with fifty-one concerts in forty-five cities, one of which was Ann Arbor. After Sir Thomas Beecham's death in 1961, Rudolf Kempe became principal conductor, and celebrated the 15th anniversary of his association with the Philharmonic in 1975. He was followed by Antal Dorati, who later became music director and conductor of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. André Previn is the newly appointed music director of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, and will appear for the first time on the concert platform in that capacity in June 1985. The occasion will be celebrated by a two-week festival in the Royal Festival and Queen Elizabeth Halls on London's South Bank.

The Royal Philharmonic has given three previous concerts in Ann Arbor — in 1950 under Beecham, in 1968 under Vaclav Neumann, and in 1972 under Rudolf Kempe.

While **Yehudi Menuhin's** name is synonymous with the violin, he is also regarded as one of today's finer conductors. In addition to his official title as Associate Conductor of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, he serves as its president as well. As a guest conductor he has led many of the world's leading orchestras, which include the New York Philharmonic, London Symphony Orchestra, Berlin Philharmonic, English Chamber Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, and the National Symphony Orchestra of Washington, D.C. He has also founded and directed several major European music festivals, among them the Bath and Windsor festivals in England and the festival bearing his name in Gstaad, Switzerland.

Mr. Menuhin's deep involvement in Indian music led to a collaboration with the well-known sitar player Ravi Shankar. Together they gave concerts for the United Nations in New York and elsewhere, and their recordings have sold into the millions. His latest excursion is into the jazz violinist world where, with the great jazz violinist Stephane Grappelli, he has appeared on BBC Television and at concerts. Their joint recordings are also best sellers.

Mr. Menuhin's keen interest in others inspired him to found the Yehudi Menuhin School at Stoke D'Abernon, Surrey, England, in 1963, directed toward talented youngsters in need of guidance toward professional careers. Recently, in 1980, he not only played in China for the first time, but also helped young musicians there through special seminars.

Because of his musical eminence and numerous humanitarian activities, Yehudi Menuhin is one of the most honored Americans in the world today. Queen Elizabeth has bestowed upon him the highest honor for a non-British subject, making him an Honorary Knight Commander of the British Empire. France has presented him with the Cross of Lorraine, and made him both Chevalier of the Order of Arts and Letters and the youngest recipient of the French Legion of Honor. The latter was in recognition of his countless performances for the military of many countries, in hospitals, for charities, during and following World War II. His contributions to music have been recognized by fourteen honorary doctorates, including those from the University of Oxford in England and the Sorbonne in Paris. Among his total of fifty-one honors is India's Nehru Award for International Understanding.

Mr. Menuhin began violin lessons with Louis Persinger at the age of five and played his first concert at the age of eight in San Francisco. Following studies in Europe with Georges Enesco and Adolf Busch, he returned to the United States after making his Paris debut, and at the age of eleven he played the Beethoven Concerto in New York. The rest is musical history.

Yehudi Menuhin first performed in Ann Arbor in 1932 at the age of sixteen. He has given eleven recitals on this stage, was soloist with The Philadelphia Orchestra at the 1974 May Festival, and has appeared in five concerts as conductor/violinist (Bath Festival Orchestra, Menuhin Festival Orchestra, and University Symphony Orchestra Benefit Concert.)

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