

Extra Concert Series

Sixth Season

Second Concert

No. CCCCXIX Complete Series

Detroit Symphony Orchestra

OSSIP GABRILOWITSCH, Conductor

VICTOR KOLAR, Assistant Conductor

Soloist—JOHN BARCLAY—Baritone

Hill Auditorium, Ann Arbor, Michigan

MONDAY, DECEMBER 15, 1924, AT EIGHT O'CLOCK

PROGRAM

Overture to Victor Hugo's Drama "Ruy Blas", Op. 95. . . Mendelssohn

Sixth Symphony, in B minor, Op. 74 ("Pathétique") . . . Tchaikovsky

I Adagio; Allegro non troppo

II Allegro con grazia

III Allegro molto vivace

IV Adagio lamentoso

Intermission

Songs with Orchestra:

(a) Aria, "Revenge, Timotheus Cries" Handel

(b) "La Vague et la Cloche" Duparc

Mr. Barclay

Polovtsian Dances from "Prince Igor" Borodin

The Mason and Hamlin is the official piano of the Detroit Symphony Society.

Mr. Barclay records for Brunswick

Overture to "Ruy Blas," Op. 95.....Mendelssohn

(Jacob Ludwig) Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy was born February 3, 1809, at Hamburg; died November 4, 1847, at Leipzig.

Writing to his mother from Leipzig, under date of March 18, 1839, Mendelssohn sets forth the unusual conditions which surrounded the commission, writing, copying, rehearsing and the first performance of this fresh and inspired work. Victor Hugo's play "Ruy Blas" was to be given in Leipzig for the benefit of the Theatrical Pension fund, and

"six or eight weeks since * * * I was requested to compose an overture to it, and the music of the *romance* of the piece, for it was thought that the receipts would be better if my name appeared in the bills. I read the piece, which is detestable, and more utterly beneath contempt than you could believe, and said that I had no leisure to write the overture, but I composed the *romance* for them. The performance was to take place last Monday week; on the previous Tuesday the people came to thank me politely for the *romance*, and said it was such a pity that I had not written an overture, but that they were perfectly aware that time was indispensable for such a work, and the ensuing year, if I would permit them, they would give me longer notice. This put me on my mettle. I reflected on the matter the same evening, and began my score. On Wednesday there was a concert rehearsal, which occupied the whole forenoon. Thursday the concert itself, yet the overture was in the hands of the copyist early on Friday, played three times on Monday in the concert room, tried over once in the theatre, and given in the evening as an introduction to an odious play. Few of my works have caused me more amusing excitement. It is to be repeated, by request, at the next concert, but I mean to call it, not the overture to 'Ruy Blas', but to the Theatrical Pension Fund."

As in the case of Mozart and his libretti, here again is direct evidence that genius rises above the level of the text, and derives its inspiration from sources that are pure, clear and full of vitalizing energy. Mendelssohn wrote this overture *in spite* of the play which was to follow; Wagner's theory of the close relationship of overture, prelude or introduction and the succeeding drama had not yet taken form.

The choice of a conventional but highly artistic design, and the employment of instruments customarily used in the orchestras of the romantic period, allows us to center our attention upon the delightful themes themselves and the sheer beauty of their facile manipulation in the hands of so skilled an artisan. The key of the overture is C minor, and the first theme is heard in first violins and flute after two foreshadowings, each separated by a slow succession of chords for the brass and wood winds; the second theme, quite lyric in mood, is heard in the clarinet, bassoon and violoncellos; it is preceded by the slow moving chords, as if more clearly to set it off from the foregoing. These themes together with a short closing theme are treated in the manner usual to the *Sonata-Allegro* design, and the composition is brought to a close with a brilliant coda.

Symphony No. 6 ("Pathétique") in B minor, Op. 74.....Tchaikovsky

Adagio-Allegro non troppo; Allegro con grazia; Allegro molto vivace; Adagio lamentoso

Peter Ilyitch Tchaikovsky was born May 7, 1840, at Wotkinsk;
died November 6, 1893, at Petrograd.

On the return voyage from America to Hamburg in the spring of 1891, Tchaikovsky made some sketches of a symphony which he later destroyed when in one of those depressed moods in which he doubted his genius as a composer. "The symphony is only a work of sheer will on the part of the composer; it contains nothing that is interesting or sympathetic". Thus he wrote in December, 1892, to his favorite nephew, Davidow, to whom the "Pathétique" was later dedicated.

The first mention of another symphony occurs in a letter written by the composer to his brother, Anatol, early in February, 1893: "I believe that it comes into existence as the best of all my works." Writing to Davidow, the next day, he goes into detail that justifies the following rather full quotation:

"I must tell you how happy I am about my work. As you know, I destroyed a symphony which I had partly composed and orchestrated in the Autumn. I did wisely, for it contained little that was really fine—an empty pattern of sounds without any inspiration. Just as I was starting on my journey (the visit to Paris in December, 1892) the idea came to me for a new symphony. This time with a program; but a program of a kind which remains an enigma to all—let them guess it who can. The work will be entitled 'A Program Symphony' (No. 6). This program is penetrated by subjective sentiment. During my journey, while composing it in my mind, I frequently shed tears. Now I am home again, I have settled down to sketch out the work, and it goes with such ardor that in less than four days I have completed the first movement, while the rest of the symphony is clearly outlined in my head. There will be much that is novel as regards form in this work. For instance, the Finale will not be a great Allegro, but an Adagio of considerable dimensions. You can imagine what joy I feel in the conviction that my day is not yet over, and that I may still accomplish much."

In spite of his enthusiasm for the work, it did not proceed as quickly as the above might indicate. In August, 1893, he speaks of the difficulties the orchestration was giving him. The

composition of the symphony was accomplished at Klin, a secluded spot on the high road to Moscow.

The first performance of the work in Petrograd, October 28, 1893, did not elicit the enthusiasm for the symphony, either among the performers or the auditors that he had expected. It was applauded and the composer-conductor was recalled; but the success was only moderate compared to the deeply moved feeling that the later performances of the work aroused.

The morning after the concert, the score was to be sent to his publisher, Jurgenson, of Moscow, and a title must needs be decided upon. The name "program symphony" had already been abandoned. Modeste, Tchaikovsky's brother, being in the room at the time, was asked for a title, and suggested "Tragic Symphony". This did not exactly satisfy the composer, and Modeste left the room while his brother was still in a state of indecision. Suddenly the word "Pathétique" occurred to Modeste, and he returned in haste to suggest it. Tchaikovsky was overjoyed, and exclaimed: "Bravo, Modeste, splendid! Pathétique!", and forthwith added to the score the title by which it has always been known.

FIRST MOVEMENT, *Adagio-Allegro non troppo*, B minor, 4-4 time. The bassoons announce in an eighteen measure introduction the melody, out of which the principal theme of the *Allegro* is evolved. The mood of the movement is established at the outset. The two themes of the movement are in striking contrast, both in rhythm, harmony and orchestration. The principal theme is a surging, restless melody given out first by the violas and 'cellos in four part harmony, and later repeated, expanded and recolored by the orchestra. A series of climaxes increase the emotional intensity, and soon yield to one of Tchaikovsky's most beautiful and emotional melodies—the second theme in D major, and heard in muted violins over a rich accompaniment of horns and lower woodwind. The breadth of this second theme, and its essentially lyric quality have contributed in no small measure to the pleasure this movement gives. After a Development Section in which the principal theme is presented in a fugal treatment between upper and lower strings, the Recapitulation brings back both themes, richer in coloring and more intense in form. Another distinct departure is to be noted in Tchaikovsky's treatment of the Coda: new in material and mood. The effect is of great solemnity; the major has supplanted the minor; over a descending *pizzicato* in the strings, the brass and woodwinds sound a sombre phrase. The movement ends with an ominous chord by trombones, punctuated by drum beats.

SECOND MOVEMENT, *Allegro con grazia*, D major, 5-4 time. The use of a five beat rhythmical structure gives to the graceful song, heard first in the 'cellos, a quality or flavor that pervades the entire movement. Naive, and charming, the whole current of sound flows by with an elusiveness that is alluring. The contrasts that must be present to avoid monotony are so deftly managed that they scarcely appear as variety.

THIRD MOVEMENT, *Allegro molto vivace*, C major, 12-8 (4-4) time. Traditionally, the third movement of a symphony is a *minuet* or *scherzo*. Tchaikovsky, while still maintaining the spirit of the *scherzo* by the light scampering figure given out at the outset, and which serves as background in one form or another throughout the movement, has brought into this art form the lowly and often vulgar *march*. To be sure it is highly idealized here, but the life and vigor its stirring rhythm imparts is one of the delights of this movement. The infectious gaiety, the glitter and sparkle of the interplay of orchestral colors, the unusual turns of the themes, and the brilliant climaxes serve but to strengthen the contrast between this and the succeeding movement.

FOURTH MOVEMENT, *Adagio lamentoso*, B minor, 3-4 time. Here again, Tchaikovsky has defied tradition, and written a great *adagio* instead of a triumphant or dazzlingly technical *allegro*. He touches the depths of human emotion. The very harmonies with which the movement begins are tense and moving; the major mood of the second theme is tinged with sadness; the surgings of the lament culminate in almost overwhelming climaxes. Perhaps Modeste was still under the spell of this movement when he conceived the title "Pathétique", that morning following the first performance in Petrograd. Certainly there is a pathetic and mellowed sweetness that comes from the final phrases of the movement, as they are given by the muted strings over a repeated B played by the double basses.

Aria, "Revenge, Timotheus Cries" from "Alexander's Feast" Handel

Georg Friedrich Handel was born February 23, 1685,
at Halle; died April 14, 1759, at London.

"Alexander's Feast" or the "Power of Music" is a setting of Dryden's Ode, and the score bears the date of January 17, 1736. The first performance was in Covent Garden on February 19th of the same year. The aria on our program occurs in the second part of the work, and is the finer of the two solos allotted to the bass. The text is appended.

Revenge, revenge, Timotheus cries:
See the Furies arise,
See the snakes that they rear,
How they hiss in their hair,
And the sparkles that flash in their eyes!

Behold a ghastly band,
Each a torch in his hand!
Those are Grecian ghosts, that in battle were slain,
And unburied remain
Inglorious on the plain.

Song With Orchestra, "La Vague et la Cloche".....Duparc

Henri Duparc was born in 1848 at Paris; at present resides in Switzerland.

Duparc, a pupil of Franck, has given to music some of the most perfect vocal examples in the French *genre*. His "Extase" has a permanent position in vocal literature, and the song on this program is no less representative of his unique creative gifts. A translation of the text follows:

Once, overcome by a powerful potion, I dreamed that midst the waves and the noise of
the sea I floated rudderless in the night—
Sad rower, without hope of ever reaching the shore.

The ocean spat its scum on my forehead and the wind froze me to the bones with
terror. The waves crumbled to pieces like walls in a slow rhythm interspersed
with silence.

Suddenly everything changed. The sea and its black whirl vanished as the bottom of
the boat fell from under my feet—

And I was alone in an old steeple madly riding a swinging bell.

I clutched the shrieking one obstinately, closing my eyes convulsively under the strain.
The rumbling made the old stones tremble as ceaselessly I accelerated the heavy
swinging.

Why did you not tell me, O dream, whither God leads us?

Why did you not say if it will ever end—the useless work and the eternal din of which
this life is made—alas!—this human life?

Polovtsian Dances from "Prince Igor", Act II, No. 17.....Borodin

Alexander Porphyrievich Borodin was born November 12,
1834, at Petrograd; died there on February 27, 1887.

Borodin had two vocations in each of which he achieved unusual distinction. His scientific works in the field of medicine have become standard works of reference; his second symphony ranks among the most significant of his generation. Borodin took his degree of Doctor of Medicine in 1858, and only found time for musical compositions, as he says "when I was too ill to give my lectures". He was a member of the band of Russian musicians who set out to spread the gospel of Russian Nationalism, and is best known in the field of dramatic music for his opera "Prince Igor". Borodin died before this work was completed, and his friend and fellow member of "The Five", Rimsky-Korsakow, undertook to finish the orchestration with the assistance of Borodin's talented pupil, Glazounow.

"Prince Igor" was to the composer himself "essentially a national opera, interesting only to us Russians, who love to steep our patriotism in the sources of our history, and to see the origins of our nationality again on the stage." The plot for the opera was derived by Stasov from an old national poem *The Epic of Igor's Army*, which deals with a twelfth century expedition of Russian princes against the Polovtsians, a Nomadic race akin to the ancient Turk, who had invaded the Russian principalities. The dances, with which the second act of the opera closes, are full of the oriental qualities of rhythm and color which is so characteristic of Borodin, and run the gamut of emotional expression "from rude savagery to delicate charm."

MONDAY, JANUARY 19, 8:00 P. M.

THE KIBALCHICH RUSSIAN CHORUS, Basile Kibalchich, Conductor;
(Three dozen singers in native costume) will give a concert in the Extra
Concert Series, in Hill Auditorium. Good seats still available at the of-
fice of the University School of Music. Tickets, \$.50, \$1.00, \$1.50, \$2.00.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 28, 8:00 P. M.

ALFRED CORTOT, Pianist, will give a concert in the Choral Union Series,
in Hill Auditorium. A limited number of tickets are still available at
\$1.00, \$1.50 and \$2.00.