

UNIVERSITY MUSICAL SOCIETY

CHARLES A. SINK, PRESIDENT

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Second Concert

1937-1938

Complete Series 2473

Fifty-Ninth Annual
Choral Union Concert Series

CLEVELAND SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

ARTUR RODZINSKI, *Conductor*

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 1937, AT 8:30
HILL AUDITORIUM, ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

PROGRAM

- Prelude to "Die Meistersinger" WAGNER
- Symphony in G minor (K. 550) MOZART

INTERMISSION

- Symphony No. 1 in C minor, Op. 68 BRAHMS
Un poco sostenuto—Allegro
Andante sostenuto
Un poco allegretto e grazioso
Adagio—piu andante—allegro non troppo, ma con brio

NOTE.—The Cleveland Orchestra, Artur Rodzinski, Conductor, has been heard in the Choral Union Series on one previous occasion, March 28, 1935.

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

Prelude to "Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg" WAGNER

Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg is the play in which Wagner articulates his own aesthetic principles. He dramatizes them by putting them into the mouths of the sixteenth-century characters.

In order to create a proper musical atmosphere for this setting, he gives to the "Prelude" some seemingly appropriate archaic temporal color. Thus we hear near the beginning a number of contrapuntal passages which have a resemblance to certain supposedly old-fashioned musical formulas. Moreover, Wagner uses one authentic old melody as one of the themes. It is the marchlike tune played by the brass, entering assertively just after the whirring, unison flourish of the violins near the beginning. This melody is alleged to be a production of the actual Nuremberg mastersingers.

But the "Prelude" may have another *raison d'être* beyond that of its dramatic appropriateness. Some of the numerous tribe of those who dislike Wagner's subjugation of music to purely dramatic ends were so foolish as to claim that his startling procedures were gestures by which he concealed his fundamental impotence in the handling of traditional musical forms. "He really is an incompetent musician," they said, "so he acts queer to make you think he is important."

In the "Prelude" Wagner fashioned a stupendous proof of his superlative mastery of the older musical crafts, those of counterpoint and of thematic development. It is a towering piece of absolute music, regardless of the fact that its themes are also leading motives within the body of the opera. It was a smashing blow to his unfair critics. Yet those who still did not like music drama had one retort left. They claimed, and still claim, that this "Prelude" is the best thing Wagner ever wrote.

Symphony in G minor (K. 550) MOZART

The city of Prague, birthplace of *Don Giovanni*, afforded Mozart the unfamiliar satisfaction of an enthusiastic public acclaim. He returned to his Vienna home only to endure a series of discouragements. His appointment as a court composer was more of a humiliation than a satisfaction. The salary was wretchedly inadequate, and he was not commissioned to write any music of importance. On the back of the receipt for his quarterly stipend he wrote: "Too much for what I do, not enough for what I could do." Debts were threatening to engulf him; on top of all, his six-month old daughter died.

In the midst of this depression he embarked upon one of his most remarkable enterprises. He composed his three greatest symphonies within a period of nine weeks. The *Symphony in G minor*, the second of the group, was completed in July, 1788.

The vitality of Mozart's music seems to continue unimpaired as the changing decades roll by. There is more interest in his best works and appreciation of them today than there has ever been since they issued from his lively brain. The nineteenth century enjoyed him qualifiedly. It was preoccupied in building up its brassy orchestra, its powerful triple-stringed, metal-framed pianoforte, its thick harmony. Mozart's apparatus seemed small by comparison, and that gave our grandfathers the illusion that his music was "simple" or "naïve."

Today few competent performers struggling with the execution of the clear, fine, firm, rapid lines of his musical texture would admit that his best works were in any sense simple or easy. Indeed, the exquisite euphony of his chord distributions, the piquancy of his carefully placed dissonances, the transparency and logic of his voice-leading are now seen to be the very height of sophistication. To the musical gourmet, unimpressed by mere violence or mass, his works afford the maximum of aural ecstasy. Among all the composers, Mozart is the most refined auditory sensualist.

Symphony No. 1 in C minor, Op. 68 BRAHMS

The *First Symphony* was, of all Brahms' works, the one most painfully begotten. The germinal thought of the composition, in all probability, was conceived during the 1850's, and considerable work must have been done upon it immediately during and after those years. Albert Dietrich, a friendly musician, reports that he saw a manuscript incorporating essential parts of what is now the first movement, as early as 1860. Brahms did not bring himself to regard it as completed and to release it for public performance until 1876. For twenty years he labored on his plan: adding, subtracting, altering, filing down, cleaning up, throwing floods of mature reconsideration upon every smallest detail of the whole.

In the meantime, however, Brahms completed many other works: chamber music and piano and choral compositions. But the construction of a symphony touched on a particularly dangerous complex of associations and emotions. Given Brahms' ideological tendencies, any possible symphony of his would inevitably be compared to Beethoven's. A merely interesting, attractive work in symphonic form would not do. It would have to have some of the titanic Beethovenian grasp and spirit.

When the *Symphony* was finally launched into the world, there were a few who felt that the magic wand of Beethoven had, indeed, found a new master. Von Bülow, greatest interpreter of his time, hailed it as the "Tenth Symphony." Among the general public, however, it created little stir. In Vienna it was listened to "with a respectful lack of understanding." But that unresponsiveness could hardly discourage Brahms. It tended, perhaps, to reassure him of the true excellence of his work. It is conceivable that a truly novel and significant work of art might be at once recognized and acclaimed by large masses of people; yet, on the whole, such widespread immediate acceptance is rather the fate of derivative, meretricious, counterfeit productions.

Sober analysis was just what Brahms wished for his *Symphony*. The twenty years of self-nagging had given the work a tightness impregnable to the most competent carpings. He could wait for general comprehension to catch up with him. He erected a monument more enduring than brass, and sixty years after its issuance its glory is undimmed.

The very beginning, with its awesome drumbeats, leads us to suspect that we are in the presence of a "spirit of no common rate." The ascending strings and descending woodwind form searing friction surfaces; we feel there will be no trifling in this work. The principal theme of the "Allegro" is not, as is usual, a simple melodic phrase. It consists rather of twin motives, sometimes singly, sometimes simultaneously deployed. The little woodwind phrase just as the "Allegro" begins is as important thematically as the rugged violin phrase which immediately follows, and which is often mistakenly regarded as the real theme.

The finale is of gigantic proportions; it takes as much time as the rest of the *Symphony* combined. Its introduction is unique among the composer's mature works; its gloomy colors, its disturbed rhythmic bursts and accelerations seem to give us a startling look into the crater of the primordial Brahms. But the noble notes of the horn rescue us from despair. The "Allegro non troppo" is an affirmation of faith, a firm assurance of the ultimate rightness of things. The material of the unruly introduction reappears, but ordered and straightened, disciplined to the needs of the higher organization of the movement.

Coming Musical Events

HILL AUDITORIUM

Choral Union Concerts

8:30 P.M.

- RICHARD CROOKS, *Tenor* Friday, November 19
FRITZ KREISLER, *Violinist* Monday, November 29
BOSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA Wednesday, December 8
SERGE KOUSSEVITZKY, *Conductor*
RUTH SLENCZYNSKI, *Pianist* Monday, January 10
FINNISH CHORUS from the University of Helsinki . Tuesday, January 18
MARTTI TURUNEN, *Conductor*
GINA CIGNA, *Soprano* Friday, January 28
ROTH STRING QUARTET from Budapest . . Thursday, February 17
FERI ROTH, *First Violinist*
JENO ANTAL, *Second Violinist*
FERENC MOLNAR, *Viola*
JANOS SCHOLZ, *Violoncellist*
GEORGES ENESCO, *Violinist* Tuesday, March 1

School of Music Concerts

Given without admission charge

- E. WILLIAM DOTY, *Organist*, 4:15 P.M., Hill Auditorium
Wednesday, November 10
FACULTY CONCERT, 4:15 P.M., Hill Auditorium . Sunday, November 14
LITTLE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA, 8:00 P.M., Michigan League
Sunday, November 21
SCHOOL OF MUSIC ORCHESTRA, 4:15 P.M., Hill Auditorium
Wednesday, December 1
"CREATION" by Haydn, 8:30 P.M., Hill Auditorium
Wednesday, December 15
BAND CONCERT, 4:15 P.M., Hill Auditorium . Sunday, January 23
LITTLE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA, 8:00 P.M., Michigan League
Sunday, January 30
BAND CONCERT, 4:15 P.M., Hill Auditorium . . Sunday, February 27
GLEE CLUB CONCERT, 8:30 P.M., Hill Auditorium . Thursday, March 24
BAND CONCERT, 8:30 P.M., Hill Auditorium . . Monday, April 4

Carillon Recitals

Wilmot F. Pratt, Carillonneur, will play the carillon for a period of one hour each Thursday and Sunday evening from 7:30 to 8:30 until further notice.

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.

The concerts in the Faculty and Organ Recital Series are given without admission charge; for obvious reasons small children will not be admitted.