

UNIVERSITY MUSICAL SOCIETY

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Fourth Concert

1951-1952

Complete Series 3064

Seventy-third Annual
Choral Union Concert Series

THE CLEVELAND ORCHESTRA

GEORGE SZELL, *Conductor*

HILL AUDITORIUM, ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN
SUNDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 4, 1951, AT 8:30

PROGRAM

"Tragic" Overture, Op. 81 BRAHMS

Divertimento for String Orchestra BARTÓK
Allegro non troppo
Molto adagio
Allegro assai

INTERMISSION

"Ein Heldenleben" ("A Hero's Life"), Tone Poem, Op. 40 . . . STRAUSS
The Hero
The Hero's Adversaries
The Hero's Helpmate
The Hero's Battlefield
The Hero's Works of Peace
The Hero's Release from the World and the
Fulfillment of His Life
(Played without pause)

NOTE—The University Musical Society has presented the Cleveland Orchestra on previous occasions as follows: Mar. 28, 1935; Nov. 9, 1937; Nov. 7, 1938; Nov. 9, 1941; Nov. 8, 1942; Artur Rodzinski, conductor; Nov. 7, 1943, Erich Leinsdorf, conductor; Nov. 12, 1944, George Szell, guest conductor; Nov. 11, 1945, Erich Leinsdorf, conductor; Nov. 10, 1946; Nov. 9, 1947; Nov. 7, 1948; Nov. 6, 1949; and Nov. 5, 1950, George Szell, conductor.

The Steinway is the official piano of the University Musical Society

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

ANNOTATIONS

By GEORGE H. L. SMITH

"Tragic" Overture, Op. 81 JOHANNES BRAHMS

"The '*Tragic* Overture,'" wrote Philip Hale, "is among the greatest works of Brahms, by its structure, and by its depth of feeling. There is no hysterical outburst; no shrieking in despair; no peevish or sullen woe; no obtruding suggestion of personal suffering. The German commentators have cudgelled their brains to find a hero in the music: Hamlet, Faust, this one, that one. They have labored in vain. The soul of Tragedy speaks in the music."

Brahms chose his title with circumspection. The overture is not "tragic" in the plain sense of the word. It is not concerned with pathos. Rather does it evoke the classical ideal of tragedy as laid down by Aristotle. The earnestness of the music, its loftiness and intensity, reflect a hero struggling against a relentless destiny. The inexorable calm of a great spirit is portrayed. There are the flashes of eloquence, the terror of comprehension. Great silences, solemn, lonely, brooding, suffuse the music. The petty, the pathetic are not to be found; relief is through release, through the emotional *katharsis* which was the aim of Greek tragedy.

The overture is in D minor, *Allegro ma non troppo*, 2-2. The two crashing chords at the opening form a part of the majestic first theme that is subjected to impassioned treatment by the whole orchestra. A sustained passage represents the crushing weight of the forces which bear upon the hero. Trombones introduce more comforting measures in a transitional passage modulating to F major, the key in which the violins sing the consolatory subsidiary theme. New fragments evolve from these themes. Syncopated repetitions of the fortissimo chords heard at the beginning bring the explosion to a stormy close.

In the brief development section the main theme is transformed into a funeral march which, with its dignity, its brooding suspense, its effortlessness, becomes the very marrow of the overture. These moving measures would honor the obsequies of any sufficiently heroic figure.

The recapitulation, omitting the first subject so intensively exploited in the development section, reviews the parade of subsidiary themes. There is a climactic coda.

Divertimento for String Orchestra BÉLA BARTÓK

The *Divertimento for String Orchestra* belongs to that group of orchestral masterpieces that Bartók composed during the last decade of his life in Europe and America. In his middle fifties he had reached his full maturity as a composer, and he was now simplifying his style, leaving behind the enigmatic complexities of some of his earlier works. The *Divertimento*, which is in three short movements, exploits fully the resources of the string orchestra. The various sections are frequently divided, and there is much use of solo instruments, sometimes with the choirs, sometimes as a string quartet, or in other combination. The scoring is obviously that of a master who knows the innermost secrets of his instruments. One is struck by the richness of musical ideas, and the skill with which they are developed and combined in a vital texture with a marvellous sense of movement. The harmony, firmly based in traditional tonality, is always interesting to the ear, even when following its most original progressions.

The first movement is an *Allegro non troppo*, 9-8. The opening theme is announced by the first violins over throbbing strings. The first six notes serve as a motto for the entire work, and will be heard in the main themes of the slow movement and the finale. Muted second violins first spin the melody of the slow movement, *Molto adagio*, 4-4, over the chromatic murmur of the lower strings, likewise muted. The song

is continued canonically by violas and first violins. There is an impassioned contrasting subject and one of those wild outbursts of elemental urgency that Bartók learned from the ancient folk music of Hungary. Folk elements also have left their impress upon the themes of the scherzo-like finale, *Allegro assai*, 2-4. Characteristic rising and falling scales introduce a texture of repeated eighth notes, and the solo violin plays the dance-like theme over them. There is a brief lyric theme, also for solo violin, and a strong fugue subject growing out of it, which is played in unison, and then worked out. The solo violin has a cadenza, and there is a moment of rest after which the main theme returns in inverted form. The lyric theme also returns in its inversion. The accompanying figures shift from eighth notes to triplets and the tempo increases to a *Vivacissimo*, again in eighth notes. The triplets return *Vivace*, and again the onrushing *Vivacissimo*. The hastening tempos are only momentarily relaxed before the vigorous conclusion.

"Ein Heldenleben" ("A Hero's Life"),

Tone Poem, Op. 40 RICHARD STRAUSS

With *Ein Heldenleben* Strauss brought to a close that altogether remarkable decade he had begun in 1888 with *Don Juan*. As the year 1898 ticked away he could count no less than six masterpieces completed in a little more than eleven years.

The subject of *Ein Heldenleben*, covering the full circle of a life of struggle and triumph, a life rich in romantic aspiration, recalls both *Tod und Verklärung* and *Don Quixote*. Indeed Strauss made it clear that he conceived *Ein Heldenleben* as a companion piece to *Don Quixote*: "Having in this latter work sketched the tragi-comic figure of the Spanish Knight whose vain search after heroism leads to insanity, he presents in *A Hero's Life* not a single poetical or historical figure, but rather a more general and free ideal of great and manly heroism—not the heroism to which one can apply an everyday standard of valour, with its material and exterior rewards, but that heroism which describes the inward battle of life, and which aspires through effort and renouncement towards the elevation of the soul."

The six divisions of the work with their obviously appropriate titles are curiously not identified in the printed score, which shows only a continuous musical unfoldment. Whether the titles are by Strauss himself or one of his ever-willing analysts can only be surmised, but there can be no doubt that he had some such ideas in mind as he composed the contrasting sections of the work.

Strauss was also content to let the analysts point out that just as *Don Quixote* employs a greatly extended variation form, and *Till Eulenspiegel* maintains the basic principles of the rondo (both forms are identified in the subtitles of these works), so *Ein Heldenleben* may stand as a vast symphonic movement. The first two divisions contain the first subject, elaborately set forth with many subsidiary motives, the "Hero's Helpmate" supplying the lyric second subject; on the "Battlefield" we find the working out of these themes, and their restatement in a kind of recapitulation; the fifth and sixth sections may be taken together as a coda of extreme proportions.

The score calls for an abundant orchestra: three flutes and piccolo, four oboes and English horn, one clarinet in E-flat, two clarinets in B-flat, one bass clarinet, three bassoons and double-bassoon, eight horns, five trumpets, three trombones, a tenor tuba, a bass tuba, kettledrums, bass drum, snare drum, tenor drum, cymbals, two harps, and much divided strings (designated as sixteen first and sixteen second violins, twelve violas, twelve violoncellos, and eight double basses).



COMING EVENTS

ALEXANDER BRAILOWSKY, *Pianist*, Friday, November 16, at
8:30 P.M. (Choral Union Series).

PROGRAM

Toccata and Fugue in D minor	BACH-BUSONI
Rondo a capriccio in G major, Op. 129, "Rage Over a Lost Penny"	BEETHOVEN
Fantasy in C major, Op. 17	SCHUMANN
Impromptu in F-sharp major }	CHOPIN
Ballade in A-flat major }	
Nocturne in C minor }	
Waltz in E-flat major }	
Polonaise in A-flat major }	
Ce qu'a vu le vent d'ouest }	DEBUSSY
Jardins sous la pluie }	LISZT
Un Sospiro }	
Hungarian Rhapsody No. 12 }	

DEPAUR INFANTRY CHORUS will be heard Tuesday, November 20, at 8:30 (Extra Concert Series), in a program of songs by contemporary composers, Folk Songs from Latin America, Songs of World War II, Negro Spirituals, and Songs of Faith.

Tickets (tax exempt): \$2.50—\$2.00—\$1.50

"MESSIAH" (HANDEL)—Saturday, December 8, 8:30:

NANCY CARR, <i>Soprano</i>	OSCAR NATZKA, <i>Bass</i>
EUNICE ALBERTS, <i>Contralto</i>	UNIVERSITY CHORAL UNION
DAVID LLOYD, <i>Tenor</i>	MUSICAL SOCIETY ORCHESTRA
LESTER MCCOY, <i>Conductor</i>	

A repeat performance will be given Sunday, December 9, at 2:30 P.M.

Tickets: (tax exempt): 58¢ and 42¢. Now on sale.

BUDAPEST QUARTET in the Twelfth Annual Chamber Music
Festival, February 15, 16, 17, in Rackham Auditorium.

Season tickets (tax exempt): \$3.25 and \$2.25

Single concerts: \$1.75 and \$1.25

Now on sale

For tickets or for further information address: Charles A. Sink, President, University Musical Society, Burton Memorial Tower.