

UNIVERSITY MUSICAL SOCIETY

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Tenth Concert

1954-1955

Complete Series 3162

Seventy-sixth Annual
Choral Union Concert Series

THE PHILHARMONIC-SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA OF NEW YORK

DIMITRI MITROPOULOS, *Conductor*

113th Season

5442d Concert

SUNDAY AFTERNOON, MAY 22, 1955, AT 2:30
HILL AUDITORIUM, ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

PROGRAM

- Overture "Colas Breugnon" KABALEVSKY
- "Show Piece" for Orchestra GOULD
- | | |
|----------------|----------|
| Tune up, Theme | Serenade |
| Scene | Ballad |
| March | Toccata |
- Greek Dances SKALKOTTAS
- | | |
|------------------|-----------|
| Peloponnisiakos | Hostianos |
| Epirotikos No. 1 | Kleftikos |

INTERMISSION

- *Symphony No. 10 in E minor SHOSTAKOVICH
- | |
|-------------------------------|
| Moderato |
| Allegro |
| Allegretto; largo; allegretto |
| Andante; allegro |

*Columbia Records

Victor Records

*The Steinway is the official piano of the Philharmonic-Symphony Society of New York,
and of the University Musical Society.*

Arthur Judson and Bruno Zirato, Managers
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A R S L O N G A V I T A B R E V I S

PROGRAM NOTES

By Irving Kolodin

Overture, "Colas Breugnon" DMITRI KABALEVSKY

In an annotation written for the Philharmonic-Symphony Society several years ago, Robert C. Bagar described "Colas Breugnon" as "set to a libretto by V. Bragin which, in turn, is derived from Romain Rolland's work of the same name . . . Not the most operatic subject in the world, Rolland's 'Colas Breugnon' is, in effect, a day-by-day diary—for one year—of philosophic and humorous reflections by a Burgundian craftsman of the sixteenth century. It is a succession of anecdotes or incidents without a recognizable story, some of which, absorbing in themselves, pertain to a siege, a riot, and a fire."

There is, however, nothing of antique France in the bustling overture, which is rather clearly modeled on such a Russian masterpiece as Glinka's overture to *Ruslan and Ludmilla*. The rousing first theme is heard several times later in various transformations, and there is sufficient contrast in the succeeding matter to give the work a recurrent place in the orchestral repertory.

"Show Piece" for Orchestra MORTON GOULD

The recent, vast improvement in the technics of reproducing recorded sound is directly responsible for the creation of this work. It was written in the spring of 1954 on commission from Columbia Records Incorporated, as the musical element in a disk demonstrating its most advanced means of reproducing orchestral instruments. Given this genesis, it may be readily understood that "Show Piece" is an apt title, and that a fair share of virtuosity in performance has been written into the score.

Gould has chosen as the framework for his thoughts the theme and variations procedure, with (as might be expected of his agile mind) a difference. If the players seem to be tuning up while the conductor is in place and giving them cues, no contretemps has occurred. Section I of "Show Piece" is titled "Tune Up," with the oboe, according to classical procedure, sounding the A, followed by the flute, clarinet, and horn, strings, brass, a massed crescendo with snare drum, and explosive full orchestra chord, diminishing to prismatic effects in the harp and celesta, thinning out to a woodwind overhang. (It is actually a "variation" before the theme.)

From this emerges the Theme, a ten measure sequence of rhythmically varied phrases heard first from the strings. It is repeated in the high woodwinds over cello pizzicatti. No uncommon effects are introduced here, as it is conceived, in part, as a point of reference to the "normal sound" of orthodox orchestral writing.

Variation II is titled "Scene," ("Tune Up" is actually Variation I) and gives prominence to rippling figures in the middle and low register for flutes, bass clarinet, bassoon, etc., divided violins, the seconds *con sordino*, the firsts not muted. The harp enters with sustained tones noted to be played "with measured tread." Resonant brass chords follow, as the episode broadens to a quiet conclusion.

"Harsh percussive attacks, interlaced with stopped horns, muted brass and percussion" are Gould's words of description for the opening of Variation III, a March. The movement softens to a percussive pattern played by the strings with the wood back of the bow (*col legno*), over lightly clanged cymbals, bass drum and "marching machine." This last is described as "suspended blocks in a frame." Bugle call effects are introduced, leading to a climax. The march variant then returns.

"Moderately moving, song like and flowing" is the playing instruction for Variation IV, a Serenade. The theme is more readily recognizable here than in the preceding variation, and the implication of the title is carried out by the soft, relaxed texture of sound. Solo violin, castanet, tambourine and gourd, are some of the details in the scoring. A slower section utilizing darker colorations—oboe, English horn, solo viola, etc.—follows. Full strings sing the melody, and the section dies away with plucked simulations of guitar, etc.

"Ballad," as Variation V is titled, is a study for strings and harp alone. All elements of the string choir are divided, so that with the double-stoppings employed, as many as sixteen notes may be sounding simultaneously. Of course when the harp enters, with its sweeping resonance, the air fairly vibrates.

The Toccata which comprises Variation VI is the longest of the set, and as suits its concluding position, the most elaborate in design. Bits of the theme are first heard

from elements as widely diverse as xylophone in the top register and bass clarinet, as the brass and percussion develop a driving momentum. The main melodic line is evolved from the violins, gradually enveloping the entire orchestra in a weaving texture of lines and colors, accents and attacks. It thins out to woodwinds and strings, then adds details which cumulatively convey the effect in the composer's words of "the different sections of the orchestra 'going by' faster and more frenetically." The final chord finds no tacit (silent) voice in the thirty-stave division of the orchestra score.

Greek Dances NICHOLAS SKALKOTTAS

The recent (1954) publication of this music by the Universal Edition in Vienna (Alfred A. Kalmus in London) has belatedly introduced to the world a musician of uncommon gifts and accomplishments, though they were little known in his lifetime. A violinist by training at the conservatory of Athens, Skalkottas (the native form of the name would be Nikos Skalkottas) took the gold medal in 1920, at the age of twenty.

In the next year, Skalkottas went to Berlin to study on a fellowship, eventually turning to composition and coming under the influence of the late Arnold Schoenberg at the Hochschule. He remained in Berlin almost as long as Schoenberg did, returning to Greece in 1932. According to Dimitri Mitropoulos, the distinguished composer-pedagogue regarded Skalkottas as second only to Alban Berg among the musicians who worked with him. In his native country, Skalkottas's advanced tendencies did not find a ready audience, and the outbreak of war obviously reduced his opportunity of finding an international audience.

However, he worked on with unflagging energy, producing a concerto for brass instruments, a classical symphony for the same ensemble, thirteen concerti of the symphony concertante style, half a dozen string quartets, two large symphonic suites (including one of an hour and a half's length), an overture on the "Return of Ulysses," innumerable smaller works and songs, as well as thirty-six settings of Greek dances. It is the latter which have now become available for the first time. In style they are simpler than his more characteristic writings, and treat the folk material in a manner appropriate to it.

The dances herein represented are related to various regional areas of Greece, or to aspects of its folk lore. The first, Peloponnesiakos is related to the part of Greece south of the isthmus of Corinth. It begins *Molto feroce*, and is developed in this manner before a middle section *Andante*, after which the opening is repeated. The second in the series is Epirotikos, or the area of Epiros near Albania. It is a *moderato*, beginning with a flute solo, taken up by the violins. The oboe also contributes to a pastoral effect. Hostianos is an area in more central Greece, the dance derived from it one of the most elaborate in the series. It begins *Moderato, molto ritmato*, with a peculiar swaying rhythm in $\frac{7}{8}$, broken into three eighths followed by two quarters. Throughout, the measure is divided into units of three beats followed by groupings of four. The final section Kleftikos has an association of another sort. It concerns the Greek struggle for independence against Turkey, which reached a successful outcome near the end of the last century. The Klefts were guerilla fighters or partisans of the mountain areas who played a heroic part in this struggle. In their honor the orchestra is reinforced with snare drums and other martial percussion, and a Peitsche (whip) is introduced for additional emphasis.

Symphony No. 10 in E minor DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH

The present work is the first new symphony by Shostakovich in nearly eight years. It was first performed in Leningrad on December 17, 1953, under the direction of Eugene Mravinsky. Shostakovich has described his work as one in which he has tried to express the "thoughts and aspirations of our contemporaries"; of people who ardently love peace, who resist the drift to war, who regard man's mission on earth to be creative, not destructive. Here, of course, Shostakovich has engaged a major issue of our time; whether it is one that can be argued persuasively in musical terms is another matter. Some might concede that it could be thus argued, with the proof of persuasion on the shoulders of the composer. Others could state, with equal logic, that the whole project is outside the realm of music's province.

In justice to Shostakovich and his purpose, it may be further noted that he does not regard this as a program to be realized through contemplation and inaction. The aspiration for peace, he holds, is not a matter for passive expectation of blissful calm and tranquility. Those who yearn for it, who love humanity and value the cultural heritage it has assembled, must apply their best labor, creativeness and capacity for perseverance to it. Love for peace means love and devotion to one's own people and

homeland, but, at the same time, a deep feeling for the national feelings of other peoples. Whatever the universal acceptance of this thesis, the particular argument on its behalf must be valued in terms exclusively musical.

Taken as a whole, the four movements are reasonably traditional. The first is an ample symphonic design, with a slow introduction followed by a main movement in brisker tempo. Movement two is a scherzo, compact and energetic. The third movement is slow, then slower, with some interesting elements of procedure that will be noted below. The finale begins in slow tempo, but proceeds at headlong pace thereafter. An orchestra of substantial but not inordinate size is utilized, with a pronounced inclination to the woodwind choir, at the extremes of register, low and high. Although no key signature is attached to the score, the first movement is clearly in E minor, the finale as clearly in E major. Dissonances and chromatics are freely employed, but always within a range of readily recognizable tonal centers.

The moderato section of movement one begins with a six note motto in even quarters ('celli and basses) that will be heard many times later. It is elaborated, with rhythmic alterations, in the next dozen bars. It has a questioning aspect, intensified by chromatic clashes in the answering instruments. After some fifty measures of this, the pace quickens for a lyric theme introduced by the clarinet. The tempo change is indicated by a metronome marking rather than a verbal indication. This is orchestrally discussed at some length, followed by the introduction of a third subject in the flute, more active, rhythmically, than either of the foregoing. An unusual feature, shortly after this, is the projection of theme two as a duet between bassoon and contra-bassoon, in which the clarinet soon joins. The ensuing development plays off the varied character of the themes against each other, with the original motif crawling through the bass. Hard sonorities in the middle register are evoked by use of trumpets. When the argument is at its peak, the third subject enters as a quieting agent. The clarinets utilize it for duet purposes. Eventually the opening mood returns, now not quite so questioning. The higher instruments (woodwind especially) are utilized to give a suggestion of serenity to the ending.

The three-minute or so scherzo begins *allegro*, and proceeds without slackening of pace or diminution of force to the end. Two smashing chords send it on its way, with a saturnine theme in the woodwinds. The matter is whipped, orchestrally, into a froth, with insolent snare drum raps and snarling brass. It is, temperamentally, a scherzo movement, if not formally defined as such. There is a counter motif that could be regarded as trio to the scherzo. In any case, after a blaring development of the first matter, it is heard again, followed by a powerful reprise of the opening idea. In terms of orchestral effect it is an unquestionable tour de force.

The philosophic essence of the work would seem to be concentrated in movement three, which begins *allegretto*, with a theme of folkish, narrative quality, developed, in the strings, by imitations. In the course of the movement, quotations from both the first and second movements are utilized. At what might be regarded as a moment of indecision, a solo horn enters with a call to nobler purposes. The strings answer with a likeness of the motto with which the work began. From this emerges the main *largo* portion of what Shostakovich terms a "nocturne." The horn phrase is expanded over darkly pizzicato strings, as though its import, whatever it might be, were not immediately trusted. The English horn reverts to the opening matter of this movement, out of which develops a vigorous section utilizing the rhythm of the scherzo. The horn call again persists, but is hammered back by the scherzo rhythm in the brass. The opening matter of this movement is reprised in fragmentary form, followed by the hopeful horn call, sneered down by flute, piccolo, etc.

The *andante* introduction of movement four recalls, in its oboe solo, not only the lyric aspiration of the slow movements of earlier Shostakovich symphonies (Nos. 1 and 5 especially), but much other quintessential Russian music. It has a tinge of Orientalism and exoticism, especially when the bassoon becomes involved, a la *Scheherzade*. In due course, a new trend is taken to prepare, in slow tempo, a theme which emerges as the principal idea of the final allegro. It has, at first, a Schubertian snap, but as one ingredient is added to another, it veers from Marche Militaire to Marche Slave. The Tchaikovskian method of churning up effects is recalled, in a tempest which may be intellectually universal but which is, musically, Russian. A marchlike theme borrowed from the scherzo is among the elements employed. At a propitious moment in the duel for orchestral supremacy, the opening motto theme is introduced in the orchestral bass, followed by a rousing conclusion.

**CHORAL UNION SERIES and EXTRA CONCERT SERIES,
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dent, University Musical Society, Burton Memorial Tower.**