

UNIVERSITY MUSICAL SOCIETY

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Second Concert

1955-1956

Complete Series 3167

Tenth Annual
Extra Concert Series

HERBERT VON KARAJAN
and the
PHILHARMONIA ORCHESTRA OF LONDON

First American Tour

WEDNESDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 9, 1955, AT 8:30
HILL AUDITORIUM, ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

PROGRAM

Symphony No. 39 in E-flat major, K. 543 MOZART
Adagio; allegro
Andante
Minuetto; trio
Finale

Variations on a Theme by Haydn, Op. 56 BRAHMS

INTERMISSION

Symphony No. 5 in E-flat major, Op. 82 SIBELIUS
Tempo molto moderato; allegro moderato
Andante mosso, quasi allegretto
Allegro molto: un pochettino largamente

Angel Records

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

PROGRAM NOTES

By William Mann

Symphony No. 39 in E-flat major, K. 543 MOZART

Mozart's piano concertos are, as a corpus, far more diverse, masterful, and original than his symphonies; but the world accords a special place to the last three symphonies which Mozart composed, very rapidly, in the summer of 1788, and of which this E-flat symphony is the first.

Each of these last three symphonies is differently scored, in the supply of wind instruments: the Jupiter has two oboes but no clarinets; this E-flat symphony has clarinets but no oboes. One can imagine Mozart, who was caustic about the dreadful noises wind players made, wondering which instrument was the more trustworthy. Clarinets were the instruments of sensuous beauty for him, and this symphony is above all a treatise on beauty.

Haydn was accustomed to begin his symphonies with a slow introduction. This is only the third, and the last, time that Mozart used such an introduction in a symphony. The introduction to the Prague Symphony was dramatic and poignant. The E-flat symphony begins in state, with the generous opening gesture that stood Mozart in frequent good stead; the cascading scale passage, immediately on its heels, is more than a sweep of the arm—it is paraded up and down several times, and appears later in the *Allegro*. At the end of the *Adagio*, which has been notably dignified and formal (Alfred Einstein believed that this symphony had connections with freemasonry), Mozart suddenly drops the mask of courtesy and shows his true feelings in four bars of heart-rending music; even so this pathos is achieved by counterpoint, as if to say: "Look, I can't help this morbidity; it's just the way the parts move." The first theme of the *Allegro* is a trim pattern, whose shapes are repeated elsewhere—each phrase is imitated as soon as the tune appears. The subsidiary ideas are numerous, but packed together tightly; Mozart only bothers to develop the last of them.

The *Andante con moto* is unusual in Mozart for its large scale planning and taut thematic organization; this is Mozart's first slow movement that steps beyond the unpretentious dalliance of the serenade—he worked the spell again in the two subsequent symphonies. This was certainly a lesson well learned from Haydn. The first melody falls into two strains, each repeated; and each strain is built on the same two ideas, *viz* the first two phrases of the movement. There is another idea, just as important; it begins with repeated notes that steal up the compass of the woodwind choir. There is also a passionate, rather operatic episode in F minor; some people would say that it indicates Mozart's true feelings, but the whole movement is full of profound feeling, and it is not all pathetic.

The minuet need not sound as pompous as amateur piano duettists like to make it; it is marked *Allegretto*. The trio brings the clarinets into relief, with echo effects from the flute (only one flute in these last symphonies). So far from reflecting anxiety or morbid reflections, the finale is a sublime comic turn, for it is almost entirely built on one theme, and that a tuneful one of the patter-song variety. Mozart drags it through many keys, and dresses it with countersubjects and harmonic surprises. It is still chattering merrily as the final chords shut the door.

Variations on a Theme by Haydn, Op. 56 BRAHMS

Musicologists now tell us that the correct title of Brahms's work should be "Variations on Corale St. Antonii." The Chorale comes from a divertimento long ascribed to Haydn; in this divertimento the tune was frankly labelled "Corale St. Antonii," the composer thus disclaiming credit for what was an old Burgenland pilgrims' hymn.

Brahms had the chorale from Haydn's biographer C. F. Pohl, who had discovered the divertimento supposedly by Haydn. It was scored for two oboes, two horns, three bassoons, and serpent. Brahms remembered the serpent when he wrote his variations, and included a contrabassoon in his orchestra, though otherwise his orchestral demands are not heavy, and trombones are absent from the score. Brahms made simultaneous versions of the Variations for two pianos and for orchestra; the music is to all intents and purposes the same (though the tempo indications differ) but neither can be called a transcription of the other.

The Chorale is a simple andante AABA melody, each half of which is repeated. The memorable features of its shape, ones that Brahms develops consistently in his variations, are two changing semitones that occupy the first two bars and corresponding places later on, and the repeated B-flats at the end of the whole theme. The rhythm of the first phrase is important too. These striking features, essential to any theme designed for variation treatment, have to be remarked here, since Brahms's variation technique

is symphonic rather than decorative: which is to say, it is far from strict. The very first variation, *poco piu animato*, anchors itself to the theme by hanging on to the repeated B-flats, and weaving round them two flowing counterpoints. Variation 2, *piu vivace*, takes the rhythm of the first three notes and plays with it, making a point of strong dynamic contrast. Variation 3, *con moto*, is more gracious; it begins with the first three notes again, but moves off on a new melodic track based on the harmonic scheme of the chorale. Variation 4, *andante con moto*, moves into B-flat minor and adopts triple time; its anchor is the pattern of the second and third bars of the chorale. Variation 5 is in the major again, *vivace*, 6/8; it inverts the pattern of the first bar of the chorale, and puts it in the bass, against brilliant machine-gun thirds for wind and strings; syncopation and mixed metre are involved. Variation 6, *vivace*, returns to 2/4 and keeps more recognizably to the outline of the chorale, though the harmonic scheme is much changed. Variation 7, *grazioso*, 6/8, is a pastoral lyric, far removed from the theme, and with an even more memorable tune. Variation 8, *presto non troppo*, uses the first three notes of the theme for a new scurrying figure upside down as well as right way up; the music is soft throughout. The finale, *Andante*, forms a ground bass from the outline of the chorale's first sentence, and builds up a huge and complex structure on repetitions of the ground. The chorale makes a last triumphant reappearance.

Symphony No. 5 in E-flat major, Op. 82 SIBELIUS

Jean Sibelius, whose ninetieth birthday will be celebrated this December, was fortunate in being granted an annual pension by the Finnish Senate when he was thirty-two. This enabled him to devote himself to composition, and almost at once he embarked on the remarkable series of seven symphonies which stands out like the beam of a lightship amid twentieth century symphonic literature.

It is tempting to characterize these symphonies by reference to nature; to bare windswept mountains, huge granite rocks, rugged plains, and thick forests buffeted by storms. Sibelius has himself admitted the influence of Finnish landscape in his orchestration in general, and in particular passages in his symphonies as well as his descriptive tone poems. Nevertheless the temptation must be held in check. A symphony is an abstract musical argument, concerned with the formation of patterns into an extended organism of musical thought. The argument is carried out in colour and a variety of moods; these give point to the argument, and express the personality of the arguer, as phraseology lends weight and character to the utterance of a speaker. Sibelius, the first great Finnish nationalist composer, is himself because of his country, we may admit; but his symphonies are not descriptive. It is the patterns and their musical significance on which listeners to his symphonies have to concentrate.

The fifth symphony was commissioned for 1915 by the Finnish Government in celebration of Sibelius' fiftieth birthday. It reached its present form in 1919 after extensive revision. The four movements are dovetailed into three.

The first movement can be regarded as a sonata-allegro leading to a scherzo, or as a conflation of the two, since the scherzo recapitulates the material of the allegro, taking over the recapitulation after eight bars. That material is built up from a few ideas. They are clearly memorable; the horn call at the beginning, the woodwind pairs 'chasing their own tails in thirds, and the languorous rise and fall of upper wind in octaves, that enters over shivering strings and a drum roll a little farther on. There is a brisk rise in tension and then another theme that seems to tread heavily on the ground at every step. All this material is restated before the development so that, when that section is over, it is natural to vary the recapitulation. The horn call returns at a climax triumphantly on trumpets to mark the point of recapitulation, and the rest of the restatement follows in a scherzo manner, building up tension more and more until the end bursts in a flood of E-flat major.

The middle movement brings respite from the heroics of E-flat, in the shape of an apparently artless, but really highly subtle, set of variations. The theme is like a duologue, plucked strings alternating with staccato wind, line by line. The beginning of each variation is clearly heard, for the tune never loses its characteristic shape nor its rhythm (notable for the feminine ending of each line). It is still the same tune when the wind rounds off the movement with an unassuming cadence, but if development has changed it not at all, it has undergone some revealing metamorphoses.

The finale, marked *allegro molto*, finds strings scrubbing away mysteriously, holding the listener's attention for the arrival of a principal character. Cellos and basses give a hint and then the horns announce the impressive phrase for which we have been waiting. It has grown from the idea in the first movement, a hesitant but strangely striking movement of the bass round the keynote. In the fourth of the variations it had nearly taken shape. Now it blooms, and above it the shadowy figure intrudes, eventually to become one with the horn theme; then tension grows excitingly to a majestic finish with the horn theme reduced to its basic form, the notes of the E-flat triad, which are hammered out with crushing finality.

COMING CONCERTS

- NATHAN MILSTEIN, *Violinist* (C.U.) Monday, November 14
 Sonata in G minor (Devil's Trill) TARTINI
 Partita in D minor (violin alone) BACH
 Sonata in F major, Op. 24 BEETHOVEN
 Concerto in D major PAGANINI
- ROBERT SHAW CHORALE AND ORCHESTRA (C.U.) . Tuesday, November 22
 Magnificat in D major BACH
 King David, Symphonic Drama HONEGGER
- BOSTON POPS TOUR ORCHESTRA (Extra) Sunday, January 8
 ARTHUR FIEDLER, *Conductor*
- VIENNA CHOIR BOYS (C.U.) 2:30 P.M. Sunday, January 15
- MYRA HESS, *Pianist* (Extra) Wednesday, February 15
- TORONTO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA (C.U.) . Wednesday, February 22
 SIR ERNEST MACMILLAN, *Conductor*
- ARTUR RUBINSTEIN, *Pianist* (C.U.) Thursday, March 1
- TERESA STICH-RANDALL, *Soprano* (Extra) Friday, March 9
- VIRTUOSI DI ROMA (C.U.) Tuesday, March 13
- WALTER GIESEKING, *Pianist* (C.U.) Monday, March 19

Tickets: \$3.50—\$3.00—\$2.50—\$2.00 and \$1.50.

Messiah

- "MESSIAH" (Handel) December 3 and 4, 1955
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| ELLEN FAULL, <i>Soprano</i> | DONALD GRAMM, <i>Bass</i> |
| LILLIAN CHOOKASIAN, <i>Contralto</i> | CHORAL UNION and ORCHESTRA |
| HOWARD JARRATT, <i>Tenor</i> | LESTER MCCOY, <i>Conductor</i> |
| MARY MCCALL STUBBINS, <i>Organist</i> | |

Tickets: 75c and 50c (either concert).

Chamber Music Festival

- BUDAPEST STRING QUARTET February 17, 18, 19, 1956
 Assisted by ROBERT COURTE, *Viola*

Season Tickets: \$3.50 and \$2.50.

Single Concerts: \$1.75 and \$1.25.

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