

UNIVERSITY MUSICAL SOCIETY

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Sixth Concert

1957-1958

Complete Series 3226

Seventy-ninth Annual
Choral Union Concert Series

THE DETROIT SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

PAUL PARAY, *Conductor*

MONDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 17, 1958, AT 8:30

HILL AUDITORIUM, ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

PROGRAM

Overture to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* MENDELSSOHN

*Symphony in B-flat major, Op. 20 CHAUSSON

Lento; allegro vivo

Très lent

Animé; très animé

INTERMISSION

Suite from the Ballet Pantomime, "Namouna" LALO

An American in Paris GERSHWIN

*Mercury Recordings.

*The Steinway is the official piano of the University Musical Society; and of
the Detroit Symphony Orchestra.*

NOTE.—The University Musical Society has presented the Detroit Symphony Orchestra on 43
previous occasions since 1919.

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

PROGRAM NOTES

by J. DORSEY CALLAGHAN

(Music Critic, *Detroit Free Press*)

Overture to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

FELIX MENDELSSOHN-BARTHOLDY

The reality that one rather suspects is part of the Fairyland of childhood is discovered in this charming music for the greatest fairy tale ever told. Mendelssohn, with the pure genius of the ever young, matches grace for grace with Shakespeare and brings us messages direct from Never-Never Land. And as the music entrances us, we hear and we are ready to believe.

The music covers a wide span of Mendelssohn's life. The overture was written in 1826 and laid aside. The rest of the score was composed in 1843 when King Frederick William the Fourth of Prussia commissioned Mendelssohn to write incidental music for the plays *Antigone*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *Athalie*.

Written first as a piano duet, the Overture was performed for Moscheles by the composer and his sister on November 19, 1826. Later it was done by an orchestra in the garden house of the Mendelssohn estate. It was first played publicly at Stettin in February, 1827, with Karl Lowe conducting from manuscript. It is interesting to note that a critic who reviewed the work in the publication *Harmonicum* could find little use for it.

The Overture (*Allegro di molto*, E major 2/2) for all its grace and lightness is a very compactly made work. It establishes its thematic material almost at the beginning, develops it, introduces other themes pertinent to the subject matter of the Shakespeare play, and concludes with a charming coda.

Symphony in B-flat major, Op. 20 ERNEST CHAUSSON

Chausson was one of that select group of Frenchmen, headed by Vincent d'Indy, who composed within a musical idiom which shows to some extent the influence of Richard Wagner, and who extended the ideas first advanced in Cesar Franck's D-minor Symphony. Other compositions of a similar nature, besides Chausson's B-flat Symphony, were d'Indy's "Symphony on a French Mountain Air" and the second symphony of the same composer.

Chausson's symphony, the only one from his pen, was completed in 1890 and was performed for the first time at a concert of the Société Nationale in Paris on April 18, 1891. It did not, however, receive the full attention of the Parisians until a performance by the Berlin Philharmonic, directed by Arthur Nikisch, at the Cirque d'Hiver on May 13, 1897. In 1905, six years after Chausson's death, it was performed for the first time in America under the direction of d'Indy, who had been at once Chausson's mentor and intimate friend.

The composition lies, in the main, along rather sombre lines, beginning in the first movement with an introduction in a broad and severe style, with a clearly defined figure in unison (violas, double bass, cellos, clarinet, and horns) which establishes the mood and announces, in their essence, the leading motives of the symphony.

The first part of the movement becomes a matter of short episodes after which the orchestra becomes quieter and a little run of violins and woodwinds introduces a change of mood to *allegro vivo*. The chief theme is one of healthy but restrained joy, exposed by horns and bassoons and handed on to the oboe and cello and from them, in fragments, to other instruments. There is a *fortissimo tutti*, followed by the second theme, somewhat more exuberant than the first. In the final measures the basses repeat the elements of the *allegro*.

The title of the second movement, instead of simply *molto lento* (with great intensity of expression), might well be "Grief." At first there is a deep lament beginning and ending in D minor without straying far in its modulations. The English horn, to the accompaniment of triplets in the strings, speaks the phrase of affliction, with consoling sentences stated now and then by flutes and violins. The lament is heard again and the English horn returns with its song of woe. Violins and cellos repeat the song of the English horn, it is taken up by the whole orchestra, and there is a return to the hopeless sorrow of the beginning.

The final movement begins with a loud *tutti*, followed at once by a rapid figure in cello and basses, above which the trumpets are heard sounding a demanding summons. The pace quickens and the underlying theme of the finale emerges in cellos and bass clarinet. This theme is colored curiously by sustained horn chords and is led by interesting contrapuntal devices to a thunderous chromatic scale in unison, which in turn introduces a serene chorale, first in D major and then in A major. There is a

return to the key of the symphony. A theme recalls one of those in the first movement, developing to an ending in continued and gentle murmuring of the horns in thirds, above which the clarinet traces the chorale melody. The oboe interjects a message of melancholy, but the trombones enter to proclaim the chief theme of the first movement. The master rhythm of the finale appears in the basses, while the religious song intoned by the brasses continues to dominate. There are sustained chords and the basses repeat the first measures of the introduction.

Suite from the Ballet Pantomime "Namouna"

VICTOR EDOUARD ANTOINE LALO

The ballet "Namouna" was written under considerable pressure during a period of four months in 1882, while the composer was struggling to have his opera *Le Roi d'Ys* mounted at the Paris Opéra. During that time, while working fourteen hours a day, he suffered a stroke of paralysis during rehearsal.

The entire history of the ballet was dogged by misfortune, including a threat of legal action by a disgruntled dancer and injuries to the leading dancer. The story of the ballet is highly romantic. It goes like this in its essential details:

A certain Corsair named Adriani loses his fortune in a dice game with Don Ottavio. Included was the slave girl Namouna. Ottavio frees her, whereupon she falls in love with him. She incites the slaying of Adriani and flees with Ottavio despite the efforts of the pirate band to prevent them. The music is in five sections, as follows:

I. Prelude, *andante*, G major, 4-4 time, is a tone picture in which coloration is of prime importance to the setting of the scene and atmosphere of the dance.

II. Serenade, *allegro*, D minor. The strings are played pizzicato almost throughout the section, forming with the harps an effect which was described by Berlioz as that of a huge guitar.

III. Theme and Variations, *andante*, E major, 3-4 time. The theme is given to muted violins and violas, with soft chords by woodwinds and harp. The variation for flute is designed to accompany a dance by the heroine.

IVa. Parades de foire, *allegro vivace*, G minor, E-flat, and C minor, 3-8 and 2-4. A parade in the sense of this ballet is a burlesque show at a fair which is presented by acrobats, clowns, or strolling comedians. It is a free show in front of a booth to lure the people into paying admission to the spectacle inside. It is a very old entertainment form in France, dating to the old miracle and morality plays.

IVb. Fête foraine, *presto*, E-flat, 3-8. This is a continuous development of a dance theme with hunting calls, also reflecting the gaiety of a festival day.

An American in Paris GEORGE GERSHWIN

The music of George Gershwin has the virtue of individuality to identify it, not only as a personal expression but as a recognizable American expression as well. That is to say that if one were to hear it in no matter what surroundings, it would at once be known as a product of this land and this culture.

It is not entirely a matter of melody, of which he had an inexhaustible store. Harmonically he was just as important. His death at an early age prevented the entire development of his genius, but the music he left us, faulty as it might be from a textbook point of view, is one of the world's treasures. There is a verve and lift to his music that endows it with eternal youth and makes his early melodies as fresh today as when they were introduced.

Gershwin's tone poem, "An American in Paris," resulted from a visit he made to the French capital in 1928, on vacation from a life of social and artistic drive. His intention was to devote himself to the study of serious music, or was it the serious study of music? Whatever the case, he fell at once under the spell of the city's witchcraft and never did settle down to studying. The trip, though, was not wasted artistically, for Gershwin brought back from it one of his most important orchestral works. Sketches for the composition were completed in Paris; the orchestration begun in Vienna, and the work in final form completed on a second visit to Paris. It was introduced by Walter Damrosch in December, 1928, at a concert by the New York Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra.

The opening of the composition brings forth a brisk theme which evokes the feeling of a walk through the Paris streets. There is a noise of typical Parisian taxicab horns, and the brief sound of a trombone as doors open and close briefly on a music hall.

There is a second "walking theme" in clarinets which is then developed with the first theme. There is a graceful melody, quite brief, by solo violin, which can be nothing other than the passing of a young woman. Suddenly the touring American becomes homesick, and his nostalgia finds expression in a blues song which turns out to be the principal material of the work. The exhilaration of a beautiful day in Paris is not to be denied, however, and the music ends with a feeling of well-being.

MAY FESTIVAL

MAY 1, 2, 3, 4, 1958

THE PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA AT ALL CONCERTS

THURSDAY, MAY 1, 8:30 P.M.

LILY PONS, Coloratura Soprano of the "Met" (songs and operatic arias). "Credendum" (Schuman); Symphony in D minor (Franck). **EUGENE ORMANDY**, Conductor.

FRIDAY, MAY 2, 8:30 P.M.

"**Samson and Delilah**"—opera in concert form, with **UNIVERSITY CHORAL UNION**; **CLARAMAE TURNER**, Contralto; **BRIAN SULLIVAN**, Tenor; **MARTIAL SINGHER**, Baritone; and **YI-KWEI SZE**, Bass. **THOR JOHNSON**, Conductor.

SATURDAY, MAY 3, 2:30 P.M.

Program of Hungarian music. **GYORGY SANDOR**, Pianist, in Bartók Concerto No. 2. Suite in F-sharp minor (Dohnanyi); Rakoczy March (Liszt); and Dances from "Galanta" (Kodaly). **WILLIAM SMITH**, Conductor.

SATURDAY, MAY 3, 8:30 P.M.

GEORGE LONDON, Baritone (operatic arias). "Don Juan" (Strauss); "The Louisiana Story" (Thomson); and Symphonic Suite, from **Boris Godunov**. **EUGENE ORMANDY**, Conductor.

SUNDAY, MAY 4, 2:30 P.M.

MICHAEL RABIN, Violinist, in Concerto in D major (Tchaikovsky). **UNIVERSITY CHORAL UNION** and **MARTIAL SINGHER**, Baritone; in music of three faiths: In Ecclesiis (Gabrieli); Sacred Service—Parts 1, 2, 3 (Bloch); and "Canticle of the Martyrs" (Giannini). **THOR JOHNSON**, Conductor.

SUNDAY, MAY 4, 8:30 P.M.

GLENN GOULD, Pianist, in Concerto No. 4 in G major (Beethoven). Overture to "Egmont" (Beethoven); Quiet City (Copland); and Pictures at an Exhibition (Moussorgsky-Ravel). **EUGENE ORMANDY**, Conductor.

Season ticket orders now on sale—Block A, \$13.00; Block B, \$10.00; Block C, \$9.00; Block D, \$8.00. Address: University Musical Society, Burton Memorial Tower.