

1965

Eighty-seventh Season

1966

UNIVERSITY MUSICAL SOCIETY  
THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Charles A. Sink, President

Gail W. Rector, Executive Director

Lester McCoy, Conductor

Second Program

Twentieth Annual Extra Series

Complete Series 3492

The Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra  
EVGENI SVETLANOV, *Conductor*

Soloist

IGOR OISTRAKH, *Violinist*

TUESDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 16, 1965, AT 8:30  
HILL AUDITORIUM, ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

P R O G R A M

Prelude to *Khovanstchina* . . . . . MOUSSORGSKY-SHOSTAKOVICH

Symphonic Dances, Op. 45 . . . . . RACHMANINOFF

INTERMISSION

Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in E minor, Op. 64 . . . MENDELSSOHN

Allegro molto appassionato

Andante

Allegro non troppo; allegro molto vivace

IGOR OISTRAKH

*La Mer* ("The Sea")—Trois esquisses symphoniques . . . DEBUSSY

From Dawn till Noon on the Sea

Sport of the Waves

Dialogue of the Wind and Sea

*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

PAUL AFFELDER

### Prelude to *Khovanstchina* . . . . . MODEST PETROVITCH MOUSSORGSKY

The idea that Moussorgsky should follow his first opera *Boris Godunov* with another historical drama came from Vladimir Stasov, literary adviser to the Russian nationalist composers. The subject he suggested was the religious and political schism between old and new Russia and the revolt of the Streltsi, a regiment of the Czar's guards, in Moscow in the 1680s. The title of the opera, *Khovanstchina*, was derived from the word used as an expression of contempt by the young Czar Peter—later to become Peter the Great—in referring to the rebellious leader of the Streltsi, Prince Ivan Khovansky, and his son.

Moussorgsky called the Prelude to *Khovanstchina* "Dawn on the Moskva River." It consists of five variations on a theme of truly national character. "The form of melodic variations is a method of musical expression long familiar to the Russian people, through their popular songs," writes Oskar von Riesmann in his biography of Moussorgsky. "When a song is sung in a Russian village—especially by several singers in succession—no two stanzas are usually sung alike. Each singer tries to introduce individual variations in the melody to suit his or her own voice and mood, and in accordance with the meaning of the particular verse. Thus the song loses all rigidity and seems to be a living, breathing organism, capable of varying with every moment. This peculiarity of Russian folksong becomes in Moussorgsky's hands a most effective means of musical expression, which he employs in many of his works, and nowhere more successfully than in this prelude; it is always the same landscape, somewhat melancholy and monotonous, that we see before us, and yet it seems constantly to change its appearance, in accordance with the changing light."

### Symphonic Dances, Op. 45 . . . . . SERGEI RACHMANINOFF

The *Symphonic Dances* constitute Rachmaninoff's first and only composition written in this country. He worked on them during the summer and autumn of 1940 at his home in Huntington, Long Island, while he was resting from a heavy schedule of winter concerts. One has the impression that the "symphonic" portion of the title bears more significance than the "dance" part; for, with the possible exception of the second of the three movements, the music is far more symphonic than dance-like. This point was further stressed by the composer at the time of the première, when he declared that the *Symphonic Dances* were definitely not intended for ultimate interpretation as a ballet.

Originally, Rachmaninoff planned to give titles to the three *Symphonic Dances*, calling them, respectively, *Midday*, *Twilight*, and *Midnight*, but he later abandoned the idea because he was afraid that audiences might attempt to attach some meaningless program to them.

The first movement, which contains some strongly rhythmed sections, is marked *Non allegro*, and features a solo for alto saxophone, a real rarity for Rachmaninoff. The second movement, *Andante con moto* (*Tempo di valse*), is a bona fide waltz.

### Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in

#### E minor, Op. 64 . . . . . FELIX MENDELSSOHN-BARTHOLDY

Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto was the result of a long friendship between the composer and the prominent violinist Ferdinand David. When Mendelssohn assumed the conductorship of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra in 1835, he made David his concertmaster, a post he retained for thirty-seven years. And when ill health prevented the conductor from appearing, David took over many of the preparatory rehearsals and occasionally directed a concert.

Though Mendelssohn's principal instruments were the piano and organ, he had studied both the violin and viola as a youth, and enjoyed playing the latter when he participated in informal chamber music sessions. While still in his teens he had composed a concerto for violin and string orchestra and another for violin, piano, and string orchestra.

The first mention of the present Violin Concerto was in a letter that the composer wrote to David on July 30, 1839, in which he said, "I should like to write a violin concerto for you next winter. One in E minor runs through my head, the beginning of which gives me no peace."

Evidently, the work did not haunt him too strongly, for he did not compose it the following winter. David must have kept after him, however, as evidenced by another letter Mendelssohn wrote him from Hochheim, near Coblenz, on July 24, 1839: "It is nice of you to press me for a violin concerto! I have the liveliest desire to write one for you, and if I have a few propitious days here, I'll bring you something. But the task is not an easy one. You demand that it be brilliant, and how is such a one as I to manage that? The whole of the first solo is to be for the E string."

It required another five years for the completion of the concerto, during which time there were many consultations between the composer and the violinist over details of the solo and orchestral parts. David had many suggestions to offer regarding the violin solos; and it is believed that the cadenza, in its present form, is principally the result of his labors.

As was quite natural, David was the soloist when the E-minor Concerto received its initial performance, at a Gewandhaus concert on March 13, 1845. Unfortunately, Mendelssohn was unable to be present, as he was taking an enforced rest at Frankfurt. Two weeks after the première, David wrote to Mendelssohn, "I should have written you before of the success that I made with your violin concerto. Forgive me if I do so only now. The work pleased extraordinarily well, and it was unanimously declared to be one of the most beautiful compositions of its kind."

The concerto is in three movements, which are intended to be played without pause. The opening movement, *Allegro molto appassionato*, opens with but one measure of introduction, after which the solo violin takes up the flowing, melodious principal theme. This was contrary to the usual practice of placing an extended orchestral introduction before the entrance of the solo instrument. Another unusual feature of this movement is the position of the cadenza; instead of coming toward the end of the movement, after the Recapitulation, it appears between the Development and Recapitulation sections.

A single sustained note on the bassoon is the connecting link between the first and second movements, the latter marked *Andante*. A brief introduction, *Allegretto non troppo*, ushers in the brilliant, scherzo-like finale, *Allegro molto vivace*, representing Mendelssohn in one of his typically carefree musical moods, and serving as a fitting conclusion to a great concerto.

### *La Mer* ("The Sea"), Trois esquisses symphoniques CLAUDE ACHILLE DEBUSSY

Throughout his life Debussy had an intense love for the sea, yet his only travels upon it were a few crossings of the English Channel. In 1903 we find him writing to Andre Messager from Burgundy, "You will remark that the ocean does not exactly bathe the hills of Burgundy . . . I am working on three symphonic sketches entitled: (1) *Mer belle aux Iles Sanguinaires*; (2) *Jeux de vagues*; (3) *Le vent fait danser la mer*—under the general title of *La Mer*. You do not know, perhaps, that I was intended for the fine career of a sailor and that only the chances of life led me away from it. Nevertheless I have still a sincere passion for it."

Debussy's passion for the sea was such that it actually prevented him from composing when he was near the ocean. As a result, most of *La Mer* was written in Burgundy and in Paris, where he could rely on his vivid memories of the seaside towns he had visited. He did finish the score by the sea, however; when he went to England in 1905 he took *La Mer* with him, completing it at Eastbourne, "a little English seaside place, silly as these places sometimes are."

*La Mer* was first performed at a concert of the Lamoureux Orchestra in Paris on October 15, 1905, Camille Chevillard conducting. The reception of the new work at that time was rather quiet and a bit cool, owing, perhaps, to the somewhat uninspired interpretation. On January 19, 1908, Debussy himself conducted *La Mer* with the Orchestra of the Concerts Colonne. He could hardly have given it much of an interpretation either, for he was making his first public appearance as a conductor. On this occasion, however, pandemonium broke loose at the end of the performance, those in favor of the work acclaiming it loudly while those opposed to it hissed their disapproval with equal volume. When the din had subsided, the violinist Jacques Thibaud came onstage and began to play the Bach *Chaconne*, but he was obliged to stop midway in the piece when the controversy commenced anew. Two weeks later, when Debussy conducted *La Mer* at a Queen's Hall concert in London, it was quite favorably received.

Debussy later revised his symphonic sketches, giving them the titles they now bear: *De l'aube à midi sur la mer* (*From Dawn Till Noon on the Sea*); *Jeux de vagues* (*Sport of the Waves*) and *Dialogue du vent et de la mer* (*Dialogue of the Wind and Sea*). The music follows with vivid strokes and atmospheric suggestions the ideas set forth in these titles.

# UNIVERSITY MUSICAL SOCIETY

## INTERNATIONAL PRESENTATIONS

All presentations are at 8:30 P.M. unless otherwise noted.

### In Hill Auditorium

"Carmen" (Bizet)—N.Y. City Opera Co. . . . .	Saturday, November 20
"Pagliacci" and "Cavalleria Rusticana"— N. Y. CITY OPERA Co. . . . . (2:30)	Sunday, November 21
"Barber of Seville" (Rossini)—N.Y. CITY OPERA Co. . . . .	Sunday, November 21
GRAND BALLET CLASSIQUE DE FRANCE . . . . .	Tuesday, November 23
<i>Program includes: "Giselle" (complete)—Ballet pantomime in two acts.</i>	
MESSIAH (Handel) . . . . .	Friday, December 3
	Saturday, December 4
	(2:30) Sunday, December 5
<i>Soloists: BENITA VALENTE, Soprano</i> <i>STANLEY KOLK, Tenor</i>	
<i>DORIS MAYES, Mezzo-Soprano</i> <i>MALCOLM SMITH, Bass</i>	
PHYLLIS CURTIN, <i>Soprano</i> . . . . .	Thursday, January 20
RUMANIAN FOLK BALLET . . . . .	Wednesday, February 16
MONTE CARLO NATIONAL ORCHESTRA . . . . .	Saturday, February 26
<i>PAUL PARAY, Conductor</i>	
<i>MICHEL BLOCK, Piano Soloist</i>	
RUDOLF SERKIN, <i>Pianist</i> . . . . .	Monday, March 7
NATIONAL BALLET, from Washington, D.C. . . . . (2:30)	Sunday, March 27

### In Rackham Auditorium

HERMANN PREY, <i>Baritone</i> . . . . .	Wednesday, February 2
<i>Program: Twelve Songs from "Kerner-Lieder" (Schumann)</i>	
<i>Twelve Songs from "Mörrike-Lieder" (Wolf)</i>	
VIENNA OCTET . . . . .	Tuesday, March 1
I SOLISTI VENETI . . . . .	Wednesday, March 16
CHICAGO LITTLE SYMPHONY . . . . .	Thursday, March 31

CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL . . . . .	February 18, 19, (2:30) 20
New York Chamber Soloists, including ADELE ADDISON, <i>Soprano</i> ; and CHARLES BRESSLER, <i>Tenor</i> .	

Series Tickets: \$7.00—\$5.00—\$4.00  
Single Concerts: \$4.00—\$3.00—\$2.00

**1966 MAY FESTIVAL.** Orders for series tickets accepted and filed beginning  
December 1.

For tickets and information, address  
UNIVERSITY MUSICAL SOCIETY, Burton Tower