1966 Eighty-Eighth Season 1967

UNIVERSITY MUSICAL SOCIETY

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Charles A. Sink, President

Gail W. Rector, Executive Director Lester McCoy, Conductor

Sixth Program Eighty-eighth Annual Choral Union Series Complete Series 3545

First program in the Sesquicentennial Year of The University of Michigan

Detroit Symphony Orchestra

SIXTEN EHRLING, *Conductor*

SUNDAY AFTERNOON, JANUARY 8, 1967, AT 2:30

HILL AUDITORIUM, ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

PROGRAM

Overture to "Don Giovanni" . . . . . MOZART

Symphony No. 8 in F major, Op. 93 . . . . . BEETHOVEN

Allegro vivace e con brio
Allegretto scherzando
Tempo di menuetto
Allegro vivace

Variations for Orchestra . . . . . LESLIE BASSETT

1966 Pulitzer Prize Composition (Ann Arbor première)

INTERMISSION

Symphony No. 2 in D major, Op. 73 . . . . . BRAHMS

Allegro non troppo
Adagio non troppo
Allegretto grazioso quasi andantino
Allegro con spirito

Steinway Piano

PROGRAM NOTES

Overture to *Don Giovanni* . . . Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

The Overture begins with an extensive, rather menacing introduction, which contains two themes from the final scene in which the statue of the commander receives Don Giovanni's dinner invitation. The main body of the overture *(molto allegro)* is in sonata allegro form.

Symphony No. 8 in F major, Op. 93 . . Ludwig van Beethoven

Standing between the giant Seventh and Ninth Symphonies, the F-major Symphony has often been looked upon as a jolly, likeable, little cousin but one without much substance. Beethoven even contributed to this impression by calling it "my little one." It is not so often remembered, however, that he went on to say that it was "much better" than the Seventh. Though brief, lacking a deeply felt slow movement, and full of good humor, this is not merely a trivial bauble to be admitted condescendingly to respectable concert programs. It is an important and fascinating work which in some ways is the most experimental of all nine Beethoven symphonies.

Allegro vivace e con brio, ¾; F major; sonata-allegro form. Abrupt contrasts give an impulsive air to the first movement. The joyous first theme is presented in the violins without introduction. A mysterious ritard darkens the humor of the second theme momentarily. The concentrated development, constructed largely from the first measure of the first theme, builds to the triple-forte dynamic level which announces the recapitulation.

Allegretto scherzando, 2/4; B-flat major; sonata-without-development form. Instead of the expected slow movement, Beethoven presents the mechanically rhythmic caricature which many have taken to be a satire of the then recent invention of the metronone.

Tempo di Menuetto, ¾; F major; expanded ternary form. Wagner considered it significant that Beethoven headed this movement not "menuetto" but "tempo di menuetto." Although it is in typical minuet and trio form—each one in the expected three-part song form—Wagner felt that it is not to be played, as it usually is, as a Beethoven scherzo but in a quieter and more dignified manner.

Allegro vivace, 2/2; F major; sonata-allegro form. It has been said that in the finale "joy is truly unconfined and the music roars and billows with the impact of Olympian laughter." Indeed there is laughter, but the true secret of the movement lies in the struggle to establish the F-major key. It strains and strains to be recognized throughout the brief exposition, development, and recapitulation, but does not finally come into its own until the huge coda which is almost a second development and recapitulation itself.

Variations For Orchestra . . . . . Leslie Bassett

Dr. Bassett was born in Hanford, California, and is now Professor of Music at The University of Michigan.

The *Variations for Orchestra* were composed in Rome between late November, 1962, and May, 1963. The first performance was given by the Radio Orchestra of Rome, Ferruccio Scaglia conducting, at Foro Italico, on July 6, 1963. The first performance in the United States was given by the Philadelphia Orchestra, Eugene Ormandy conducting, in Philadelphia on October 22, 1965.

The *Variations for Orchestra* won Mr. Bassett the 1966 Pulitzer Prize in Music, and was chosen for presentation at the UNESCO Rostrum of Composers in Paris.

Leslie Bassett received his early musical training in Fresno, California. This was followed by undergraduate study at Fresno State College as a trombonist with an army band, in service during World War II. He came to The University of Michigan for graduate work in 1947, and, except for four years, has been there since. He has studied with Ross Lee Finney, Nadia Boulanger, Arthur Honegger, and Roberto Gerhard. In addition to the 1966 Pulitzer Prize, Mr. Bassett has been the recipient of a Fulbright Grant (1950–51), the award from the Society for the Publication of American Music (1960), the *Prix de Rome* (1961–63), a citation and grant from the National Institute of Arts and Letters (1964), and a grant from the National Council on the Arts (1966).

Professor Bassett has provided the following description of the Variations:

The *Variations for Orchestra* constitutes the last work composed during my two years as holder of the *Prix de Rome* at the American Academy in Rome, 1961–63. . . . The *Variations* took shape with the sounds of the Radio Orchestra of Rome

(RAI) in my ears. I attended most of the concerts of this excellent ensemble; and, knowing that it would be giving the première of the work, I realized that I could ask for things that would be beyond the capabilities of lesser orchestras. I wanted to write a large, powerful, single-movement work that would place the listener in the midst of a form he could perceive, and yet at the same time involve him in the gradual unfolding of a thematic-motivic web that would require his most thoughtful attention.

The *Variations* are not based upon a theme. The opening motivic introduction consists of four small areas or phrases, each of which is more memorable as color or mood than as theme, and each of which serves in some respect as the source of two variations. The first variation, for example, grows from the short repeated notes that appear early in the introduction, the second from a quintuplet figure and other minutae from the second phrase, the third from a short but soaring clarinet line in the third phrase, and so on.

Naturally the early variations expose a significant amount of material that is not directly drawn from the introduction, but which I believed would be able to project and complete the sections. The later variations take up some aspects of the introduction that may have been overlooked or minimized in earlier sections. Some of the variations are attached to those that follow or precede them, others are not.

A sizeable conclusion, opening rather like the beginning, completes the work, after revealing once again several of the motivic elements in climactic context.

The musical material of the *Variations* came about by very personal means. Reflection on the many possibilities of orchestral texture eventually led me to the opening double-bass *divisi a 4* passage, the sound of which I believed would convey the impression of introduction, of the expectation of things to come, of upbeat. Likewise I strove to maintain what might be called a backdrop of basically unimportant sounds (colors, really—soft percussion, muted figures, harmonics, etc.) that would continue the expectant quality of the introduction into many of the variations that followed, giving the entire form a thrust toward the conclusion.

One 12-note series (I drew it from a set of pieces for women's choir that I had completed shortly before beginning the variations) appears occasionally and has certainly had some influence upon the musical language, but this work is quite removed from serial process. There is an unobtrusive tonal organization, nonfunctional in the usual sense, yet meant to increase the significance of two or three pitches.

The work is scored for flute and piccolo, clarinet and bass clarinet, oboe and English horn, bassoon and contra-bassoon, 2 trumpets, 4 French horns, 3 trombones and tuba, timpani, percussion, celeste, harp, piano, and strings.

Symphony No. 2 in D Major, Op. 73 . . . Johannes Brahms

Though he wrote only four symphonies, Brahms's pure musical thought process was of a symphonic nature—he thought, even in his early years, symphonically. Hence, when Schumann first heard the two early piano sonatas he hailed them as "veiled symphonies," Tovey called the two serenades for orchestra "symphonies in every sense of the word," and Specht described the D-minor Piano Concerto as being "more radically shaped into a symphony with an outstanding piano part than even Beethoven's concertos."

But for Brahms the act of creating a symphony *per se* was, as he himself put it, "no joke." Thus, working in the shadow of Beethoven, Schubert, and Schumann, he spent fifteen agonizing years drafting, erasing, re-writing, probing, doubting, searching and struggling until, at the age of forty-three, when he was already famous, he completed his first symphony. In terms of his artistic development, it was his single most important feat, a conquest of self-confidence over self-doubt.

Once the long initial symphonic struggle was won, Brahms moved directly to his Second Symphony, completing it less than a year later. Whereas the First reflects the Herculean battle, the Second is the essence of ease and of confident mastery. Its light, airy atmosphere naturally led to the usual epithets then in vogue. Seeing no small degree of "*gemütlichkeit*" in the work, some referred to it as his "Vienna Symphony." Others, always eager to form comparisons with Beethoven, likened Brahms's First and Second Symphonies to the older master's Fifth and Sixth; and others to his Third and Fourth—the pastoral or light work following the dramatic or heroic one in each case. And, of course, there were those romanticists who were compelled to look to external influences, citing that the Second Symphony clearly reflects the beautiful lake country around Pörtschach-am-See where Brahms composed it. Yet, though sunny and pastoral it may appear to be, there is throughout the entire piece a tragic undertone; the yearning, the seeking permeates even the lightest sections.

The Sesquicentennial Year of The University of Michigan, 1967, will serve to focus world attention on a definition of the purpose and place of a great University in world society. The year-long observance with its central theme, "Knowledge, Wisdom, and the Courage to Serve" will provide an opportunity for bringing together knowledgeable people from throughout the state, nation, and world to discuss the future course of higher education. It will be a time for alerting the world to the vast resource that is a university; a time for activities which suitably illustrate the important place a university holds in the world today, and must hold in the society of the future.

There will be five major focal points during the year. These all-University ceremonies will be:

The Alumni Celebration, March 1–4—alumni will gather to pay tribute to their University, in a program which combines festivity with thoughtful consideration of current topics

International Conference on "Higher Education in Tomorrow's World," April 26–29—heads of major foreign and domestic universities will discuss the place of the university in the coming society

"The University and the Body Politic," July 12–14—leaders in government, business, education, and the arts will explore the special relationships between the public university and the society it serves

"Voices of Civilization," October 1–6—some of the world's great intellectual leaders will spend a week on the campus to share with us their wisdom and creativity

"Fertility and Family Planning: A World View," November 15–17—health and population experts will meet to discuss aspects of this vital world problem.

Throughout the anniversary year, the schools and colleges of the University will hold colloquiums and conferences pertinent to their disciplines. Meetings of national and international professional and learned societies will take place on the campus. Special exhibits, concerts, theatrical productions, and publications will commemorate this unique and significant occasion in the life of a great institution.

A special U of M Sesquicentennial event

ARTUR RUBINSTEIN . . . 2:30 P.M., Sunday, March 5

Tickets: $5.00—$4.50—$4.00—$3.50—$2.50—$1.50

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