

The University Musical Society

of
The University of Michigan



Presents

MOSCOW STATE SYMPHONY

(U.S.S.R. State Symphony)

MAXIM SHOSTAKOVICH, *Conducting*

NIKOLAI PETROV, *Pianist*

FEODOR LUZANOV, *Cellist*

WEDNESDAY EVENING, MARCH 12, 1969, AT 8:30

HILL AUDITORIUM, ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

P R O G R A M

Overture to *Ruslan and Ludmilla* GLINKA

Variations on a Rococo Theme for Cello and Orchestra, Op. 33 . . . TCHAIKOVSKY
FEODOR LUZANOV

Concerto No. 3 in C major, Op. 26, for Piano and Orchestra . . . PROKOFIEV
Andante, allegro
Andantino (theme and variations)
Allegro, ma non troppo

NIKOLAI PETROV

INTERMISSION

Symphony No. 5, Op. 47 SHOSTAKOVICH
Moderato
Allegretto
Largo
Allegro non troppo

Steinway Piano

Melodiya—Angel Records

PROGRAM NOTES

by

PAUL AFFELDER

Overture to *Ruslan and Ludmilla* MIKHAIL GLINKA

The overture contains so small an amount of the musical material found in the subsequent pages of the opera as to be hardly representative of it. It is clearly written in the classical form. The principal theme (D major, 2-2) is announced in the full orchestra. The second theme (F major) is given out by the cellos and violas, accompanied by the strings. There is the customary development and recapitulation, and the overture ends with a coda.

Variations on a Rococo Theme for Cello and Orchestra, Op. 33 PIOTR ILYITCH TCHAIKOVSKY

Tchaikovsky composed his Variations on a Rococo Theme in December of 1876, the same winter that also saw the completion of two of his better-known masterpieces, *Francesca da Rimini* and *Marche Slave*. The Variations did not receive a public performance until June 8, 1879, when they were played at a concert of the Deutsche Musikverein in Wiesbaden. The soloist was Tchaikovsky's friend Wilhelm Karl Friedrich Fitzenhagen, professor of cello at the Moscow Conservatory, first cellist of the orchestra of the Imperial Russian Musical Society, and a member of the quartet which gave the first performance of Tchaikovsky's String Quartet No. 2 in F major.

The adjective "rococo," as applied to these variations, is an architectural term signifying an ornate style popular during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In the original Italian, however, the word means "old-fashioned," and it was in this sense that Tchaikovsky intended it to be taken. The entire work has an antique air about it; both the theme and variations are treated in a style that is at once more simple and more ornate than one is accustomed to hear from the pen of this composer. Even the orchestration is conservative; besides the solo cello, the scoring calls only for pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, and horns, plus the usual complement of strings. This is a smaller orchestra than Beethoven used for his First Symphony.

After several introductory measures, the theme is announced by the solo cello, following which it is subjected to seven variations, each of which is separated from its neighbors by a short refrain, or motto. The work has a brilliant closing section.

Concerto for Piano and Orchestra No. 3 in C major, Op. 26 SERGEI PROKOFIEV

Sergei Prokofiev must be ranked not only as a leading Russian composer but as one of the most imaginative creative musicians of the twentieth century.

In his biography of Prokofiev, Israel Nestyev traces four predominant characteristics in his music: classicism (or neoclassicism) and frequent use of old classical forms and patterns, fantasy and grotesqueness, lyricism, and humor. Though all of these do not make their appearance in every work by this composer, they are all amply represented in the Third Piano Concerto.

Ideas for this concerto were accumulated over a period of years—one or two are traceable as far back as 1911—but actual work on it was not begun until 1917, while Prokofiev was in Leningrad. Shortly thereafter, however, the composer embarked on a tour which took him to the United States, and the composition of the concerto was temporarily suspended. It was ultimately completed at St. Brevin, France, in October 1921. The first performance was given by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Frederick Stock conducting, on December 16 of that year, with Prokofiev himself playing the solo piano part. It was well received by the public and press of Chicago, but when the composer played it with the New York Symphony Orchestra under Albert Coates ten days later, it was condemned. Since then, it has taken its place as one of the important modern piano concerti.

The concerto's first movement is a brilliant *Allegro* preceded by an introduction, *Andante*, that reappears in the middle of the movement as a lyrical contrast. The second movement is a marchlike theme with five variations. The finale, *Allegro ma non troppo*, is alternately dancelike and broadly melodic.

Symphony No. 5, Op. 47 DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH

Dmitri Shostakovich has doubled his symphonic output since this work was first performed in 1937, but for many it remains a high point in his creative course. He had, just previously, been rebuffed for tendencies not in keeping with the state-decreed aesthetic. It was not to be the last time, but he made his recovery promptly and well. It was asserted that he had thrown off "the fetters of formalism, which . . . prevented him from creating works profound in conception." He was urged to "follow up this new trend in his work. He must turn more boldly toward Soviet reality. He must understand it more profoundly and find in it a new stimulus for his work."

To be sure, what was "Soviet reality" in 1937 might not necessarily be "Soviet reality" in 1964. But what was vital and compelling in Shostakovich's musical conception retains its force, regardless of edicts or fiats. To some observers of the composer's career, the Symphony No. 5 begins the "second period" of his compositional course, though where it ended, or whether it has been succeeded by other "periods," remains ill-defined. As a fact of itself, however, there is no question of its continuing, absorbing life.

It begins boldly, affirmatively, with a strong statement in the lower strings, composed of a series of elements, of a true symphonic definition and potential utility. The contrapuntal interesting is strong, the sense of progress strong. Woodwinds and oboes join the accumulating texture, which develops a kind of brooding eloquence typical of Shostakovich at his best, as the violins sing a soaring line over an insistent throbbing rhythm in the lower strings. There is a suggestion of an intrusive contrasting idea, but the strings soar on. However, the grimmer spectre that has been menacing will not be put off, and it is soon in the full cry of an *allegro non troppo*. Combined with it is a transformation of the opening intervallic pattern which might be considered the development phase of the movement. The "ominous" idea now breaks out in a full martial emphasis, with tam-tam, xylophone, etc. in the background. Through a reversion to the opening string motive it is repelled, after further angry mutterings, and the eloquent calm returns, now in the brighter major mode, and with an interlining of heightening inner voices. The coda is wholly in keeping with what has preceded.

The *allegretto* is somewhat reticent in revealing its true character, but after some preliminary sparring, it discloses a clearly dance-like intent. Some of the skill in purposeful distortion which Shostakovich had made famous in his piano pieces and ballet music is utilized for purposes of comic underlining. Pizzicato strings take a turn in duet with the bassoon. The fun is rough, and suggests something mechanized and urbane, rather than bucolic and pastorale, a kind of peasant dance for city dwellers.

The easy mastery of musical means which was so readily at Shostakovich's disposal during the creation of this work enables him to write a *largo* flowing between scherzo and finale like a link in a river system. It has its familial relationship to the string writing of movement one, while developing a profile and personality of its own. Midway in the movement there is a digression for a flute solo which becomes a duet over harp accompaniment. Almost imperceptibly, over a gradually more intense throb in the timpani, the atmosphere grows heavier. But there is still a sense of suspended time in the confiding utterances of oboe, clarinet, and flutes before an unsettling agitation rises like a spectre from the strings. What the full connotation of this may be, perhaps even Shostakovich could hardly say, but the peaceful quiet, when it returns, hardly has the untroubled conviction it possessed at the movement's beginning. The blend of harp harmonics and celesta just before the end is a coloristic stroke of pith and originality.

If the first three movements had been alternately serene and troubled, gay and apprehensive, the finale is a clear-cut call to action. It is not affirmation of faith and spiritual triumph as is typical of a Beethoven or Brahms symphonic finale, but an exhortation. It gathers its strength from march motives and fanfares, dramatized by all the arts of tremolo and syncopation. There is an interlude for a reminiscence of a thoughtful phrase from movement one, but the initial exhortation returns. The ending brings up the dawn, in a Straussian peroration blending the opening march motive (now a chorale in the horns) with Zarathustrian timpani.

The current transcontinental tour of the Moscow State Symphony is under the exclusive direction of Hurok Concerts, Inc.

1969—INTERNATIONAL PRESENTATIONS—1970

Choral Union Series

Hill Auditorium

- NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC 2:30, Sunday, September 21
SEIJI OZAWA, *Conducting*
ANDRÉ WATTS, *Pianist* (Rachmaninoff Concerto No. 3)
- MISHA DICHTER, *Pianist* Monday, October 6
- ORCHESTRA OF L'ACCADEMIA
DI SANTA CECILIA, Rome Thursday, October 23
FERNANDO PREVITALI, *Conducting*
- ROYAL CHORAL SOCIETY AND PLAYERS Tuesday, November 4
- OSIPOV BALALAIKA ORCHESTRA (with stars of the
Bolshoi Opera and Russian Dancers) Thursday, November 13
- NHK SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA, JAPAN Tuesday, November 25
HIROYUKI IWAKI, *Conducting*
- JOAN SUTHERLAND, *Soprano*, with
RICHARD BONYNGE, *Pianist* Friday, January 30
- VLADIMIR ASHKENAZY, *Pianist* Monday, February 9
- "BARBER OF SEVILLE" (Rossini)—
Canadian Opera Company Saturday, February 14
- ANDRES SEGOVIA, *Classical Guitarist* Thursday, February 19

Season Tickets: \$35.00—\$30.00—\$25.00—\$20.00—\$15.00

Dance Series

Hill Auditorium

- NATIONAL BALLET OF CANADA Friday, October 17
- *JOSÉ LIMON DANCE COMPANY Saturday, November 1
- *NIKOLAIS DANCE COMPANY Wednesday, January 21
- DANZAS VENEZUELA Tuesday, February 17
- AMERICAN BALLET THEATER Tuesday, March 17

* For these two modern Dance Companies, Lecture-demonstrations will be scheduled and announced at a later date. Season ticket subscribers to the Dance Series will receive complimentary admission.

Season Tickets: \$17.50—\$15.00—\$12.50—\$10.00

Chamber Arts Series

Rackham Auditorium

- MADRIGAL, from Bucharest Sunday, October 12
MARIN CONSTANTIN, *Conductor*
- PRAGUE CHAMBER ORCHESTRA Monday, November 10
- FRANCO GULLI, *Violinist*, and
ENRICA CAVALLO, *Pianist* (duo from Italy) Monday, November 17
- NEW YORK PRO MUSICA Monday, January 12
- MUSIC FROM MARLBORO Wednesday, January 28
- JEAN-PIERRE RAMPAL, *Flute*, and
ROBERT VEYRON-LACROIX, *Keyboard* Thursday, February 5
- PHAKAVALI DANCERS, from Bangkok Monday, March 2

Season Tickets: \$25.00—\$20.00—\$12.00

Orders for season tickets for all series accepted beginning Friday, March 14.

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