

The University Musical Society

of
The University of Michigan



Presents

ORCHESTRA OF L'ACCADEMIA DI SANTA CECILIA, ROME

FERNANDO PREVITALI, *Conductor*

THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 23, 1969, AT 8:30

HILL AUDITORIUM, ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

P R O G R A M

Dedicated to the United Nations on the eve of the twenty-fourth anniversary of its founding.

Overture to *The Siege of Corinth* ROSSINI

Symphony No. 3 in A Minor, Op. 56 ("Scotch") MENDELSSOHN
Andante con moto; allegro un poco agitato
Vivace non troppo
Adagio
Allegro vivacissimo; allegro maestoso assai
(played without pause)

INTERMISSION

Symphonic Suite from the Ballet *La Follia d'Orlando* GOFFREDO PETRASSI
Introduction
Dance of Astolfo
Warrior Dance

Ma Mere L'Oye Suite (Mother Goose Suite) RAVEL
Pavane of the Sleeping Beauty
Hop o' My Thumb
Laideronnette, Empress of the Pagodas
Beauty and the Beast Converse
The Fairy Garden (Awakening of Sleeping Beauty)

Overture to *I Vespri Siciliani* (The Sicilian Vespers) VERDI

PROGRAM NOTES

by PAUL AFFELDER

Overture to *The Siege of Corinth* GIOACCHINO ROSSINI

The history of Rossini's opera *The Siege of Corinth* is strange, if not atypical for this composer. The work began life as *Maometto II* (*Mahomet II*), which had an unsuccessful production in Naples in 1820. Two years later, the composer made some revisions in the score, and offered it first in Venice, then at La Scala in Milan, though it was not particularly well received in either place. Finally, he rewrote the opera with a French libretto, called it *Le Siège de Corinthe*, and scored a triumph with it at the Paris Opera in 1826. Thereafter, it made its way successfully throughout Europe, and was sung not only in French but in German and, as *L'Assedio di Corinto*, in Italian.

The story of the opera, which takes place during the war between Greece and Turkey, concerns a Greek girl who chooses to share death with her father, the Governor of Corinth, rather than wed her nation's conqueror, the Turkish Sultan Mahomet II, with whom she had fallen in love before she discovered his identity.

Even stranger than the history of the opera is that of its overture. In its original form, *Maometto II* had no overture of its own. This was written for the Venetian production of 1822, then carried over as the curtain-raiser for *Le Siège de Corinthe*. The overture begins, however, with a brief *Allegro vivace* which Rossini lifted bodily from the overture to his 1819 opera *Bianca e Falliero*. This leads to an *Andante* of melancholy character, a *Marcia lugubre greca*. The melody of this *Greek Funeral March*, it turns out, was borrowed by Rossini, without so much as a "by-your-leave," from Simon Mayr, Bavarian-born composer of Italian operas, who had been Donizetti's teacher in Bergamo; but later research revealed that Mayr had himself borrowed the tune from one of the Psalm paraphrases by Benedetto Marcello. From this point on in the overture, the music proceeds more according to the familiar Rossinian formula: the tempo accelerates to *Allegro assai*, and we hear some lively, dramatic, and tuneful music, including one of those famous Rossini crescendos. The work concludes with some of the same terse chords with which it began.

Symphony No. 3 in A minor, Op. 56 ("Scotch") FELIX MENDELSSOHN-BARTHOLDY

The history of the *Scotch* Symphony begins in the spring of 1829, when the twenty-year-old Mendelssohn paid his first visit to the British Isles. After making a highly successful concert debut in London in May, he and his friend Karl Klingemann set out for a trip through Scotland. In Edinburgh they witnessed the annual competition of Highland pipers and visited the ruins of Holyrood Palace, where Mary, Queen of Scots, lived, loved, and was crowned. In a letter to his sister Fanny, Mendelssohn wrote that in the chapel of the palace he believed he had found the beginning of his *Scotch* Symphony. The sixteen measures of music that he sketched out in the letter were to form the opening of the introduction to the symphony's first movement.

Not long after his return from Great Britain, Mendelssohn was off on an extended trip to Italy during the fall and winter of 1830-31. It was in Rome and Naples that he worked on the sketches of the *Scotch* Symphony and started another composition in this form—the *Italian* Symphony. He finished the latter—published as the Symphony No. 4—in 1833, but the *Scotch* Symphony—published as No. 3—was not ready until nine years later. It was completed on January 20, 1842, and Mendelssohn conducted its première with the Gewandhaus Orchestra in Leipzig on March 3 of that year.

Though Mendelssohn himself referred to this symphony as the *Scotch* or *Scottish*, he was always wary about attaching descriptive titles to his compositions. By the time the score was ready for publication in 1843, he had removed the name. This does not alter the fact, however, that the symphony contains a number of characteristic Scottish tunes and rhythms. Nevertheless, when he first heard the *Scotch* Symphony, Robert Schumann mistook it for the *Italian*, and said that it evoked such a beautiful picture of Italy that it compensated the hearer who had never been there.

The *Scotch* Symphony is in four movements which are intended to be played without pauses between them. It begins with a slow introduction, *Andante con moto*, which already suggests the main theme of the ensuing principal section of the movement, a lilting *Allegro*

un poco agitato. The second movement—the scherzo, though it is not so marked—is a light-footed *Vivace non troppo* with a marked Scottish flavor. There follows a songful *Adagio*, and the symphony concludes with another decidedly Scottish movement that begins with a marchlike *Allegro vivacissimo* and switches near the end to a majestically swaying *Allegro maestoso assai*.

Mendelssohn scored the *Scotch* Symphony for two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, kettledrums and strings. After its first performance in England on June 13, 1842, he was invited to visit and play for Queen Victoria who, in turn, sang for him. At that time, he obtained her permission to dedicate the symphony to her, declaring that “the English name would suit the Scottish piece charmingly.”

Symphonic Suite from the Ballet *La Follia d'Orlando* . . . GOFFREDO PETRASSI

Goffredo Petrassi, one of the leading contemporary Italian composers, did not begin the formal study of music until he was twenty-one. Though he spent his early years as a choir-boy, he was later obliged to earn a living as an assistant in a music shop. This, however, only served further to whet his appetite for a career as a creative musician. He enrolled in the Accademia di Santa Cecilia in Rome, receiving the diploma in composition in 1932 and that in organ the following year. Almost immediately after graduation, he began to attract international attention with his orchestral, chamber, and choral music, most of it written along neoclassic or neobaroque lines. Though he was not a pupil of the composer, conductor, and pianist Alfredo Casella, Petrassi was profoundly influenced by him. His early choir experience also had an effect upon his vocal music.

The Symphonic Suite on this program is derived from the music Petrassi composed in 1942–43 for the ballet *La Follia d'Orlando* (*The Madness of Orlando*). This work, first produced at La Scala, Milan, on April 12, 1947, included recitatives sung by a solo baritone. Its plot was based on Ariosto's version of the legend of Orlando—or Roland—the knight who served Charlemagne with such heroism but who, when he discovered that the woman he loved, the proud Queen of Cathay, had fallen in love with a Saracen youth and married him, became for a time a violent, destructive madman.

Ma Mere l'Oye Suite (Mother Goose Suite) . . . MAURICE RAVEL

Ravel first wrote the Mother Goose Suite for the piano—four hands, in 1908. He later orchestrated the set for a ballet in 1912. The first section is slow and tender and only twenty measures long. The second part carries the quotation from Perrault: “He believed he would easily find the path by means of bread crumbs which he scattered wherever he had passed. But he was very much surprised to learn the birds had come and eaten everything up.” Ravel uses the third section to interweave strains of Oriental sounds, which were new to France at the time (brought there via the great international exhibitions of the 1880's). The Conversation between Beauty and the Beast alternates between a delicate waltz and descriptive “growls.” The Fairy Garden is the final apotheosis: the awakening of Sleeping Beauty. The ending is happy, brilliant, and festive.

Overture to *I Vespri Siciliani* (*The Sicilian Vespers*) . . . GIUSEPPE VERDI

In February 1852, Verdi signed a contract to write an opera to be presented during the Great Exposition in Paris in 1855. The libretto, written by Scribe and Duveyrier, caused the composer a great deal of trouble, not only because there were certain scenes which did not suit him but mainly because the subject they ultimately chose was *The Sicilian Vespers*, the story of the French occupation of Sicily in the thirteenth century and the ultimate liberation of the island through the massacre of the invaders. This could scarcely be called an appropriate subject for an Italian composer who was writing his first opera for French consumption.

Nevertheless, after many difficulties and delays, *Les Vepres Siciliennes*—it was originally presented in French—was completed in the fall of 1854, and had its première at the Paris Opera on June 13, 1855. Despite its controversial libretto, the opera achieved an immediate success, and enjoyed fifty consecutive performances.

I Vespri Siciliani is heard rather infrequently today, but its strongly dramatic overture, which ranks among Verdi's finest curtain-raisers, still holds its place on concert programs.

1969—INTERNATIONAL PRESENTATIONS—1970

CHORAL UNION SERIES

Hill Auditorium

ROYAL CHORAL SOCIETY AND PLAYERS . . . Tuesday, November 4

Program: Coronation Anthem
Eryri (composed for the investiture of Prince Charles, 1969) HANDEL
Mass in C major HODDINOTT
BEEHOVEN

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

Single Concert Tickets: \$7.00—\$6.50—\$6.00—\$5.00—\$3.50—\$2.50

* (A few remaining tickets at \$6.50—\$3.50 and \$2.50)

DANCE SERIES

Hill Auditorium

*JOSE LIMON DANCE COMPANY Saturday, November 1

Program: La Malinche—music by Norman Lloyd
The Moor's Pavane—music by Henry Purcell
The Exiles—music by Arnold Schönberg
The Winged—incidental music by Hank Johnson

*NIKOLAIS DANCE COMPANY Wednesday, January 21

DANZAS VENEZUELA Tuesday, February 17

ROYAL WINNIPEG BALLET 2:30, Sunday, March 15

* Lecture-demonstrations, October 31 and January 20, respectively. Admission \$1.00. (As part of a 3-day residency presented with the support of the Michigan State Council for the Arts.)

Tickets: \$6.00—\$5.50—\$5.00—\$4.00—\$3.00—\$2.00

SPECIAL PERFORMANCE

BUDAYA TROUPE Saturday, November 8

Indonesian dancers and gamelan orchestra.

Tickets: \$3.00—\$2.50—\$2.00—\$1.50

CHAMBER ARTS SERIES

Rackham Auditorium

PRAGUE CHAMBER ORCHESTRA Monday, November 10

Program: Bach Sinfonia in E-flat; Haydn Symphony in D; Beethoven “Prometheus” Overture; and
Vorisek Symphony in D.

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 MUSICIANS AND DANCERS, from Bangkok . . . Monday, March 2

Single Concert Tickets: A limited number available at \$5.00 and \$4.00

All programs begin at 8:30 unless otherwise indicated.

UNIVERSITY MUSICAL SOCIETY

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