

The University Musical Society

of

The University of Michigan



Presents

THE DETROIT SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

SIXTEN EHRLING, *Conductor*

Soloist

JUDITH RASKIN, *Soprano*

SUNDAY AFTERNOON, SEPTEMBER 27, 1970, AT 2:30

HILL AUDITORIUM, ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

P R O G R A M

Overture, "The Corsair," Op. 21 BERLIOZ

"Shéhérazade"—Three Poems for Voice and Orchestra RAVEL

Asie
La Flute enchantée
L'Indifferent

JUDITH RASKIN

INTERMISSION

Symphony No. 4 in G major for Orchestra and Soprano Solo MAHLER

Heiter bedächtig. Nicht eilen—Recht gemächlich
In gemächlicher Bewegung. Ohne Hast
Ruhevoll (poco adagio)
Sehr behaglich

MISS RASKIN

Today's concert marks the fiftieth appearance of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra since their first concert here in the Choral Union Series on November 17, 1919.

PROGRAM NOTES

Overture, "The Corsair," Op. 21 HECTOR BERLIOZ

The overture begins with a stormy passage for the strings, answered by chords in the wind instruments. After this has been repeated a number of times the composer leads into an *Adagio*, which may be interpreted as indicative of the Corsair's "tender nature." The tumultuous introduction is then repeated with modulations until a new subject appears in the brass instruments. This energetic and firm theme is then elaborated at length. Particularly interesting is the canon in the octave which the composer has given to the basses and to the trumpets and trombones; so, too, the manner in which he completely changes the theme's decisiveness into tenderness, as if to illustrate "the strange combination of apparently contradictory feelings."

"Shéhérazade"—Three Poems for Voice and Orchestra RAVEL

In the exacting art of song writing, Maurice Ravel evolved, as he did in every medium he touched, a highly individual style. His vocal line, a *quasi-parlando* quite distinct from the free recitative of Italian opera or the *Sprechstimme* of Arnold Schönberg, has often been characteristically referred to as "Ravelian declamation." The melodic content in his songs invariably lies in the accompaniment, where the independent piano or instrumental parts, subtly rhythmic and highly developed harmonically, carry the main musical interest.

Shéhérazade is Ravel's only orchestral song cycle, and, in this genre, it has few rivals. In 1903, he set three poems from a volume of verse by a young poet-painter-musician (Tristan Leclerc) who wrote under the *nom de plume* of Tristan Klingsor. The following translation of the text is taken from Columbia Records—4289:

Asia (L'Asie)

Asia! the wonderful old land of nurses' tales, where fantasy dwells like an empress in a forest full of mystery. I should like to take flight on the vessel that rocks this evening in the mysterious and solitary port and that presently will unfold its violet sails like a huge night-bird in the golden sky.

I should then go toward flower-covered isles, while listening to the wayward sea sing in an old enchanting rhythm. I should see Damascus and the Persian cities, with their delicate minarets, the fine silk turbans on black faces with luminous teeth, the dark amorous eyes with pupils that glitter joyfully in skins yellow as the orange, the velvet cloaks and the garments with long fringes.

I should see the long-stemmed pipes in mouths surrounded by white beards, the sharp merchants with their suspicious glances, and the cadis and viziers who, with the single gesture of a finger, grant life or death according to their desire.

I should see Persia, and India, then China, corpulent mandarins under their umbrellas, and princes with slender hands; and the learned who debate among themselves on the subject of poetry and beauty.

I should loiter in enchanted places and, like a foreign traveler, contemplate at leisure those landscapes painted on fabric framed in fir-wood, with a figure standing in the midst of an orchard. I should see assassins smiling at the executioner who cuts an innocent neck with his large curved Oriental sword. I should see paupers and queens, roses and blood, those who die out of hatred. Then I should return later to recount my adventure to those curious about dreams, raising from time to time, like Sinbad, my old Arabian cup to my lips, artfully to interrupt my tale.

The Enchanted Flute (La Flute enchantée)

The shade is sweet and my master sleeps, his head covered with a pointed cap, and his long yellow nose in his white beard. But I am still awake, and outside I hear a flute pouring out an alternately sad and joyous song. An air now languorous, played by my beloved; and when I approach the window, each note seems sent from the flute to my cheek like a mysterious kiss.

The Indifferent One (L'Indifférent)

Your eyes are as gentle as a girl's, young stranger, and the fine curve of your handsome face, shadowed with down, is even more seductive. At my door a song rises from your lips in a language as strange and charming as music out of tune. Enter, and let my wine cheer you. But no, you pass on, and I see you recede from my threshold, waving a graceful farewell, your torso inclined by your womanish and weary gait.

Symphony No. 4 in G major, for Orchestra and Soprano Solo . . . GUSTAV MAHLER

Although he was much given to gigantic forms and metaphysical thought, Mahler also was strongly attracted to the simplicity and naïveté of folk art. This attraction is especially clear in his Second, Third, and Fourth Symphonies. All three symphonies of this group are inter-connected through their use of poems from the famous Romantic collection of folk poetry, *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*. The Fourth Symphony is thematically connected to the Third because the finale of the Fourth Symphony was originally conceived as a movement of the Third.

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The Fourth is the shortest of Mahler's symphonies, the most unpretentious, ingratiating, and, in its first three movements, the most orthodox in form of any symphony he had written up to this point. The Fourth Symphony was evolved backwards from the finale. Thus, the first three movements are all thematically related to the finale.

I. *Heiter bedächtig. Nicht eilen—Recht gemächlich.* The glittering color of four flutes and sleigh bells, with which the symphony opens, suggests, as Mahler's music so often does, an unadmitted descriptive inspiration. The bright chirping sound of these opening bars is taken from the fourth movement, where it is a recurrent refrain. Here it serves as introduction to the principal theme. Almost immediately the first violins take up the graceful, easy-going melody. After a few bars the chief secondary theme, a lilting melody in folk-song style is "sung broadly," according to the composer's directions, by the cellos. As the movement develops, other simple melodies are added before the opening themes are recalled in approximately their original form.

II. *In gemächlicher Bewegung. Ohne Hast.* The movement is a strange sort of scherzo which Mahler characterized with the words, *Freund Hein spielt auf* ("Death leads the music"). The concertmaster is directed to alternate between two violins, one of which is tuned a whole tone higher than normal and played "like a fiddle" (a primitive sort of violin) very assertively.

III. *Ruhevoll (Poco adagio).* Bruno Walter once asked Mahler what lay behind the "profound quiet and clear beauty" of this movement. Mahler explained that the movement had been inspired by a vision of a church sepulchre, with the reclining stone figures of the dead, "their arms closed in eternal peace." Formally, it is an amalgam of variation and sonata form.

IV. *Sehr behaglich.* The finale originally had the title *The Celestial Life*. The mood is light and joyous, as befits a peasant vision of the green pastures of heaven. The vocal solo is set to verses from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, with intervening orchestral ritornellos featuring the cheery chirping sounds which open the first movement. Mahler directs that the vocal solo should be sung "with child-like, bright expression, and without the slightest suggestion of parody":

All heavenly joys are ours,
Pleasures of earth we disdain.
No worldly strife
Mars our heavenly life.
We live here in sweetest peace.

We lead an angelic life,
Yet are merry as can be.
We dance and spring,
We jump and sing
While St. Peter in Heaven looks on.

The lamb we have from St. John,
Herod, the butcher will be.
We lead the meek
And innocent
Little lamb to the death.

St. Luke slaughters the oxen
Without any worry or heed.
The wine costs us naught
From our heavenly draught
And the angels bake us our bread.

The finest vegetables grow
In the garden of Heaven.
Good beans, asparagus,
Whatever we want,
Whole plates-full just wait to be eaten.

Good apples, good pears, good grapes!
The gardeners give what we wish.
And roebucks and hares
Run into our arms
Here in the open streets!

And when there is a Fast Day
The fish come swarming in.

St. Peter he runs
With his net and bait
To fish in the heavenly pond.
St. Martha must cook the catch.

On earth there is no music
To be compared with ours.
The eleven thousand virgins
Make bold to dance.
And St. Ursula smiles on the scene.

Cecilia, her kith and her kin
Play like a royal band.
And choirs of angels
Lift up our spirit
To the highest of heavenly joys.

Judith Raskin, American soprano, first sang in Ann Arbor in 1957 with the NBC Opera Company in the role of "Susanna" in Mozart's opera *Marriage of Figaro*—her professional debut. She also appeared here in the May Festival of 1968. As a concert artist and member of the Metropolitan opera company, she has become well known in America, and in Europe she has sung with the Glyndebourne and Paris opera companies.

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