

The University Musical Society

of
The University of Michigan



Presents

The ANN ARBOR

May Festival

THE PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA
EUGENE ORMANDY, *Music Director and Conductor*
WILLIAM SMITH, *Assistant Conductor*

EUGENE ORMANDY, *Conducting*

Soloist

RUDOLF SERKIN, *Pianist*

THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 1, 1975, AT 8:30
HILL AUDITORIUM, ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

PROGRAM

Second Essay for Orchestra, Op. 17 BARBER

*Concerto No. 1 in C major for Piano and Orchestra, Op. 15 BEETHOVEN

Allegro con brio
Largo
Allegro scherzando

RUDOLF SERKIN

INTERMISSION

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

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

The Philadelphia Orchestra records exclusively for RCA Red Seal
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PROGRAM NOTES

by

RICHARD FREED

Second Essay for Orchestra, Op. 17 SAMUEL BARBER (1910-)

In the last two decades Barber has become especially identified with music for voice; his operas *Vanessa*, *A Hand of Bridge*, and *Antony and Cleopatra* were produced in that period, as well as the choral *Prayers of Kierkegaard* and the *scena* for soprano, *Andromache's Farewell*. Indeed, one of his earliest works of importance was a setting of Matthew Arnold's *Dover Beach* for baritone and string quartet, which he composed at the age of twenty-one (Barber himself sang the first performance, with the Curtis Quartet, and recorded the work with that ensemble). During his later twenties, though, Barber earned recognition for a stunning series of brief orchestral works—the Overture to Sheridan's *School for Scandal*, *Music for a Scene from Shelley*, the one-movement Symphony No. 1, the Adagio for Strings and the Essay for Orchestra (Op. 12). The "Adagio," transcribed in 1937 at the request of Arturo Toscanini from the slow movement of the String Quartet No. 1 composed the previous year, has become one of the most widely performed American works of any period.

The first *Essay for Orchestra* was introduced in the same NBC Symphony Orchestra broadcast in which Toscanini first conducted the "Adagio," and was performed shortly afterward by Eugene Ormandy and The Philadelphia Orchestra, who made the first recording of the work—a concise, dramatic piece which might be described as a tone poem without a specific "program." The success of the first "Essay" prompted the creation of a second at about the same time the revision of the First Symphony was completed, and both the "Second Essay" and the revised version of the Symphony were premièred by the New York Philharmonic under Bruno Walter on April 16, 1942. Neither of the two "Essays" has been performed as frequently as such works warrant, but the "Second Essay" has recently begun to receive a good deal of attention; no fewer than six American orchestras are performing it this season.

Like its predecessor, the "Second Essay" is a serious and thoughtful work—intense, dramatic, frequently lyrical, sometimes brooding—but not a tragic one; the story or remembrance on which it ruminates is perhaps both too familiar and too vague to be verbalized. A brief chorale-like coda resolves these various moods in a convincingly affirmative summing-up.

Concerto No. 1, in C major, for Piano and Orchestra, Op. 15 LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770–1827)

In a letter to the Leipzig publisher Hofmeister, dated December 15, 1800, Beethoven referred to "a pianoforte concerto, which I really do not give out for one of my best, as well as another which will be published here by Mollo (this as news for the Leipzig critics), *because I intend to keep the better one for myself until I make a tour with it . . .*" The work offered to Hofmeister (with the further comment that "it will not in any way disgrace you to print it") was the Concerto in B-flat, composed in 1795 and eventually published as No. 2, Op. 19; the "better one" which Beethoven reserved for his own use was the Concerto in C major, composed about two years later than the B-flat but published in the same year (1801) as No. 1, Op. 15. There was a certain artistic justification for reversing the original chronological sequence in publication, for the B-flat had been substantially revised in 1798; there was no need to revise the C major, a work whose superior quality Beethoven estimated quite accurately.

Paradoxically, it is both a more highly individualized work than Op. 19, and at the same time the concerto in which Beethoven is closest to both the outline and the spirit of the typical Mozart concerto. The opening tutti is a characteristically Mozartean "ideal march," in which the prominent trumpets and drums evoke comparisons with Mozart's best known concerto in the same key (No. 21, K. 467); the various themes, as they are introduced, reinforce this impression, and there is even a rhythmic figure, familiar from Mozart's D minor Concerto (No. 20, K. 466). Once the soloist begins his comments on this material, however, it is clear that the young composer of this Concerto was in no sense an imitator, but had merely selected the best of all models for guidance in constructing a wholly and provocatively original work.

In terms of originality, and of depth as well, the slow movement is the crown of this work. It is an expansive *Largo* in a *cantabile* style Beethoven had already made his own; in its general outline, and even in the shape of its angelically simple theme, it looks forward directly to the corresponding movement in the work with which Beethoven would end his series of concertos in 1809.

Concerning the vigorous, good-natured final Rondo, in the style Beethoven was later to describe as *aufgeknöpft* ("unbuttoned"), his pupil Ferdinand Ries left this interesting note: "I recall only two instances in which Beethoven told me to add a few notes to his composition: once in the theme of the rondo of the *Sonate Pathétique*, (Op. 13), and again in the theme of the rondo of his First Concerto in C major, where he gave me some passages in double notes to make it more brilliant. He played this last rondo, in fact, with an expression peculiar to himself. In general he played his own compositions very freakishly, holding firmly to the measure, however, as a rule and occasionally, but not often, hurrying the tempo. At times he would hold the tempo back in his *crescendo* with *ritardando*, which made a very beautiful and highly striking effect. In playing he would give a passage now in the right hand, now in the left, a lovely and absolutely inimitable expression; but he very seldom added notes or ornaments. . . ."

Symphony No. 2 in D major, Op. 73 JOHANNES BRAHMS
(1833–1897)

Brahms did not approach the idea of symphonic creation lightly. As early as his twenty-first year, he made some starts in the direction of a symphony, but those early efforts were either abandoned or converted for use in other works (most notably the First Piano Concerto). He was to a degree genuinely intimidated by the spectre of Beethoven, as indicated by his well-known remark on "how the likes of us feels to hear the tread of such a giant behind us," and he did not produce a completed symphony until 1876, when he was forty-three. Once the First was accomplished, though, Brahms produced his next symphony quickly and confidently. He started work on the Second while completing the piano duet arrangement of the First, in the summer of 1877, and the new Symphony was not only completed but actually performed before the year ended. The First had had a hard birth, and emerged as though chiseled from hardest granite; the Second flowed with cheerful spontaneity and is the most lyrical and sunlit of all the Brahms symphonies. The First was spoken of as "Beethoven's Tenth" when it appeared—an intended compliment hardly pleasing to Brahms; the Second might be described as a Pastoral Symphony, but without reference to the works of any other composer, whether so titled or not.

The radiant mood of the work is established at once by the three-note motif in the lower strings and the answering horn-call which open the first movement. The second theme is one of Brahms's most characteristic outpourings of warm, glowing contentment, related in both shape and spirit to the well-loved *Cradle Song* (Op. 49, No. 4) and the piano Waltz in A-flat (Op. 39, No. 15). There is a rhapsodic effect in the soaring and intermingling of these themes. The first theme is treated fugally in the development, and new motifs spun off by variations in the rhythm are hailed and dismissed by clipped utterances from the brass. The horns enjoy prominence throughout the movement, and in the coda there is a lovely horn solo before the movement ends even more tenderly than it began.

The mood turns more serious in the second movement, redolent of forest depths at twilight and all the thrice-familiar but nonetheless endearing woodland scenes of pastoral romances. With the second theme, a hymnic quality begins to pervade the music.

The pastoral element is especially strong in the *Allegretto*, which is not a scherzo but an intermezzo of great charm and intimacy. The unexpectedly animated middle section serves to heighten the serenity of the *Allegretto* itself. At the première this movement had to be repeated.

"Invigorating" is the word for the final movement. Following the energetic and rather mysterious opening, the first theme is restated in an exhilarating orchestral outburst and then, the way cleared by the humorously snarling and crackling winds, the broad second theme makes its entrance, almost like a benediction but totally free of solemnity, in lambent sunset colors. The coda, to which Brahms builds with subtle ingatherings of strength, is a paean of sheer exuberance, in which the lyrical second theme of the finale is transformed into a blazing fanfare which ends the work on a note of Dionysiac exultation unparalleled among Brahms's compositions.

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INTERNATIONAL PRESENTATIONS—1975—76

Choral Union Series / Hill Auditorium

HAGUE PHILHARMONIC/MARTINON	Sunday, October 5
MONTEVERDI CHOIR AND ORCHESTRA OF HAMBURG/JÜRGENS	Thursday, October 16
MOSCOW STATE SYMPHONY/SVETLANOV	Saturday, October 25
SCOTTISH NATIONAL ORCHESTRA/GIBSON	Saturday, November 8
LOS ANGELES PHILHARMONIC/MEHTA	Thursday, November 20
STOCKHOLM PHILHARMONIC/ROZHDESTVENSKY	Monday, November 24
DETROIT SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA/CECCATO AND BACHAUER	Sunday, January 11
LUCIANO PAVAROTTI, <i>Tenor</i>	Sunday, February 15
GULBENKIAN FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA OF LISBON/TABACHNIK	Friday, March 19
DETROIT SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA/CECCATO	Friday, March 26

Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with The University Choral Union and soloists

Series of 10: \$60, \$50, \$40, \$30, \$20

Choice Series / Power Center

MARTHA GRAHAM DANCE COMPANY	Friday, Saturday, Sunday, October 17, 18, & 19
MARIO ESCUDERO, <i>Flamenco Guitarist</i>	Saturday, November 1
FIESTA FOLKLORICO, MEXICO	Monday, November 3
BOB GREENE'S "WORLD OF JELLY ROLL MORTON"	Wednesday, November 19
CANADIAN OPERA COMPANY, <i>La Boheme</i>	Saturday, January 10
CHRISTOPHER PARKENING, <i>Guitarist</i>	Friday, January 30
THE FOUR ROMEROS, <i>Guitarists</i>	Monday, February 9
DANCERS OF LJUBLJANA, YUGOSLAVIA	Sunday, February 22
P.D.Q. BACH/PETER SCHICKELE	Thursday, February 26
ROYAL TAHITIAN DANCE COMPANY	Monday, March 1
THE PENNSYLVANIA BALLET	Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, March 29, 30, & 31

Series of 4: \$28, \$22, \$18, \$14

Series of 8: \$56, \$44, \$36, \$28

Chamber Arts Series / Rackham Auditorium

GUSTAV LEONHARDT, <i>Harpsichordist</i>	Monday, October 13
TOKYO STRING QUARTET	Wednesday, October 22
PAILLARD CHAMBER ORCHESTRA	Monday, November 17
PABLO CASALS TRIO (piano, violin, cello)	Sunday, November 23
BEAUX ARTS TRIO (piano, violin, cello)	Friday, January 16
PRAGUE MADRIGAL ANTIQUA	Sunday, January 25
BERLIN STRING QUARTET	Monday, March 22
WAVERLY CONSORT, "LAS CANTIGAS DE SANTA MARIA"	Thursday, April 1

Series of 8: \$40, \$30, \$20

Asian Series / Rackham Auditorium

BURMESE NATIONAL DANCE THEATER	Sunday, October 26
LHAMO FOLK OPERA OF TIBET	Sunday, November 2
SOLOISTS OF THE ENSEMBLE NIPPONIA	Thursday, March 4
SITARA, KATHAK DANCER	Tuesday, April 6

Series of 4: \$15, \$10, \$8

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UNIVERSITY MUSICAL SOCIETY

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