

The University Musical Society

of
The University of Michigan



Presents

Philharmonia Hungarica

REINHOLD PETERS, *Music Director*
ZOLTAN ROSNAY, *Founding Conductor*

RICHARD KAPP, *Conducting*
BALINT VAZSONYI, *Pianist*

SUNDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 23, 1977, AT 8:30
HILL AUDITORIUM, ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

PROGRAM

Two Portraits BARTÓK
Ideal
Grotesque

Concerto No. 2 in F minor, Op. 21, for Piano and Orchestra CHOPIN
Maestoso
Larghetto
Allegro vivace

BALINT VAZSONYI

INTERMISSION

Symphony No. 9 in E minor, Op. 95 ("From the New World") DVOŘÁK
Adagio; allegro molto
Largo
Molto vivace
Allegro con fuoco

*The Philharmonia Hungarica available on Vox, London and Mercury Records;
Balint Vazsonyi available on Deutsche Gramophon, Vox, Pye, and Genesis Records.*

PROGRAM NOTES

by LEONARD BURKAT

Two Portraits, Op. 5 BÉLA BARTÓK
(1881–1945)

Two Portraits, Op. 5, is music of Bartók's youth, composed in 1907 and 1908 but not put into its present form until 1911. It dates from the early years of his research in folklore—the time when he was first beginning to find his unique, personal style—and some of its musical material is shared with several other compositions of those years.

In the second half of 1907, Bartók wrote a Concerto for a well known violinist, Stefi Geyer, with whom he was in love. For some reason it was withheld from publication and performance while they lived, and was played for the first time in 1958. The first of the Two Portraits is identical with the first movement of the Concerto. Bartók described it as the “musical portrait of the idealized Stefi Geyer, transcendent and intimate.” It is a delicate, lyrical piece whose solo part is now usually played by the orchestra's concertmaster.

There is no solo part in the second Portrait, which depicts the “cool, indifferent, silent Stefi.” This one was originally written for piano in 1908 and was probably orchestrated in 1911. Later, Bartók thought of this as a grotesque portrait. In the meantime, however, he included the original piano version in his Fourteen Bagatelles, Op. 6, where he called it *Waltz: My Beloved Is Dancing*. It is a wild, strident piece for orchestra, without solo violin, that Bartók might imaginably have used in the early Concerto if he had not separated from Geyer.

Concerto No. 2 in F minor, Op. 21, for Piano and Orchestra FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN
(1810–1849)

In the summer of 1829, at the age of nineteen, Chopin completed his studies at the Warsaw Conservatory and set off for Vienna to see about the possibility of publishing some of his music. While there, he gave a concert that critics said “electrified the public.” His playing was delicate, they said, but his style original and his technique of “indescribable perfection.” When he yielded to demands for a second concert, it was less to please the Viennese public than to impress the people back home in Warsaw. Unfortunately the Polish press mistranslated the reviews and he gained nothing but the knowledge that he could successfully face an audience in a great city and that he must prepare to make his career abroad.

When he gave his first public concert in Warsaw that December, a reviewer wrote, “Cannot Poland appreciate his talent? Among his latest works is said to be a Concerto in F minor that is the equal of the music of the finest composers in Europe.” He had finished the Concerto not long before and, after a few private performances, he played it at the National Theater on March 17, 1830, with great success.

In the summer of 1830, Chopin wrote another Piano Concerto, in E minor, which we now know as the First because it was published before the F-minor Concerto. He played the new one for the first time at a farewell concert in Warsaw that October, and set off to seek his fortune.

At the end of a year of wandering, Chopin arrived in Paris, where a group of aristocratic Polish émigrés helped launch him. At his first concert, Liszt, twenty-one years old, and Mendelssohn, twenty-three, led the applause. Powerful, conservative critics in Paris, as in Vienna, praised the innovations of a young man with original ideas and a new style that they found elegant, free, graceful, pure, and effective. Years later, Liszt recalled his enthusiasm that day for Chopin's “new kind of poetic sentiment combined with felicitous formal innovations.”

The integrity of musical form was not taken as seriously in the Romantic era as it is in our time. In Paris, as in Warsaw, other instrumentalists played solos between the first and second movements. Chopin played the Concerto, in Paris, as a piano solo, without orchestra.

Later, other pianists played the Concerto with the opening section of the first movement greatly altered and abridged. Some changed the ending of the last movement, some inserted cadenzas that Chopin had not thought necessary, and still others completely reorchestrated the accompaniment. All these were misguided attempts to turn Chopin into Beethoven or Brahms. For our time, he is better as himself.

Mendelssohn and others wrote admiringly of the absolute perfection of Chopin's piano technique, and regretfully of the light touch (and the consequent small tone) that made it possible. No one has ever claimed that Chopin wrote well for orchestra, but now we understand that his few orchestra scores provide a light background for a fleet-fingered pianist who attains great variety of expression within a very small range. Conductors now generally try to match the accompaniments, as Chopin wrote them, to the scale of the soloist.

Symphony No. 9 in E minor, Op. 95 ("From the New World") ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK
(1841–1904)

The "New World" Symphony is the finest product of Dvořák's stay in the United States. He came to this country in October, 1892, at the invitation of Mrs. Jeanette M. Thurber, to assume the directorship of the National Conservatory of Music, which she had established in New York. He remained for three years and taught composition to many eager young Americans. He made his home in an apartment near the Conservatory, and spent his summers with his wife and children in the little town of Spillville, Iowa, a community settled by his fellow Czechs.

Among Dvořák's best students at the Conservatory was a young black musician, Henry T. Burleigh, who was to become a prominent singer and composer. Burleigh spent long hours with Dvořák, singing spirituals and slave songs that completely captivated him and became an important part of his inspiration for his "New World" Symphony.

According to Dvořák's sketchbooks, the Symphony was begun on December 19, 1892, and was completed on May 25, 1893. He orchestrated most of the work at Spillville. The Symphony was given its first performance by the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Anton Seidl, at Carnegie Hall, on December 15, 1893.

Its reception is best described in a letter the composer sent to his publisher in Berlin, "The success of the Symphony was magnificent. The newspapers say that never has a composer had such a triumph. I was in a box, and the hall was filled with the most select public in New York. They applauded so much that I felt like a king."

There was a great deal of controversy about the character of the thematic material in the "New World" Symphony. Some said that the work was based almost entirely on actual Negro and American Indian folk themes; others insisted that the music was predominantly Czech, an expression of the composer's intense homesickness—which would later make him turn down the offer of a handsome new contract with the Conservatory. We now believe that Dvořák intended the "New World" Symphony to set an example for our composers of what they could do with themes that were American in character and style, without actually quoting any folk songs.

Shortly before the Symphony's première, he said, "I am satisfied that the future music of this country must be founded upon what are called the Negro melodies. These can be the basis of a serious and original school of composition, to be developed in the United States. When I first came here, I was impressed with this idea, and it has developed into a settled conviction. These beautiful and varied themes are the product of the soil. They are American. They are the folk songs of America, and your composers must turn to them. All the great musicians have borrowed from the songs of the common people."

Several years later, he wrote to a conductor in Berlin, "I am sending Kretzschmar's analysis of the Symphony, but omit that nonsense about my having made use of Indian and American themes—that is a lie. I only tried to write in the spirit of those national American melodies." But the tone of the "New World" Symphony, despite its title, remains decidedly Czech. What many have failed to note is that there is a marked resemblance between some music of the American Indian and of the Czech peasant.

The Symphony opens with a dramatic introduction, *adagio*, followed by a highly rhythmic *allegro molto*. The second movement, *largo*, is one of the best known in all the symphonic literature. Its principal theme, played by the English horn, was originally sketched for a work never written that was to be based on Longfellow's *Hiawatha*. It was very popular for many years in an adaptation as a song called "Goin' Home." The third movement, a lively Scherzo, marked *molto vivace*, and the vigorous finale, *allegro con fuoco*, are both entirely Czech in flavor.

COMING EVENTS

- SUK TRIO Tuesday, October 25
 Beethoven: Trio in G major, Op. 1, No. 2; Dvořák: Trio in B-flat, Op. 21; Brahms: Trio in B major, Op. 8
- MURRAY PERAHIA, *Pianist* Thursday, October 27
 Beethoven: Sonata in E-flat major, Op. 7; Chopin: Four Impromptus; Schubert: Sonata in A major, Op. Posth.
- PRESERVATION HALL JAZZ BAND Friday, October 28
- LAZAR BERMAN, *Pianist* Thursday, November 3
 Bach-Busoni: Chaconne; Prokofiev: Suite from *Romeo and Juliet*; Liszt: Funerailles, Sonata in B minor
- CONCORD STRING QUARTET Sunday, November 6
 Beethoven: Quartet in B-flat, Op. 18, No. 6; Ben Johnston: "Crossings"; Schubert: Quartet in G, Op. 161
- MIRELLA FRENI, *Soprano* Tuesday, November 8
 Songs by Bellini, Donizetti, Rossini, Verdi, Duparc, Debussy; Charpentier: Depuis le Jour from *Louise*
- ROTTERDAM PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA/DE WAART Friday, November 11
 Diepenbrock: Excerpts from *Marsyas*; Dvořák: "Te Deum" (with the Festival Chorus); Mahler: Symphony No. 1
- PENCA & TOPENG BABAKAN, WEST JAVA Saturday, November 12
- THE PENNSYLVANIA BALLET Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday
 November 14, 15, 16
- BALLET FOLKLORICO MEXICANO Saturday, November 19
- SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA OF BRAZIL/KARABTCHEVSKY Sunday, November 20
 Villa-Lobos: Preludio from *Bachianas Brasileiras*, No. 4; Marlos Nobre: In Memoriam; Prokofiev: Piano Concerto No. 3 (Cristina Ortiz, soloist); Brahms: Symphony No. 2
- Handel's *Messiah* Friday, Saturday, Sunday
 December 2, 3, 4
- ENSEMBLE FOR EARLY MUSIC Friday, December 9
- TCHAIKOVSKY'S *Nutcracker* BALLET Thursday, Friday, Saturday
 THE PITTSBURGH BALLET December 15, 16, 17
- MARCEL MARCEAU, *Pantomimist* Saturday & Sunday
 January 7 & 8
- JOSE MOLINA BAILES ESPANOLAS Wednesday, January 11
- ROSSINI'S *Barber of Seville* Sunday, January 15
 CANADIAN OPERA COMPANY
- HUNGARIAN FOLK BALLET Tuesday, January 17
- RUDOLF SERKIN, *Pianist* Wednesday, January 18
- CAMERATA ORCHESTRA OF SALZBURG/JANIGRO Friday, January 20
- LEONTYNE PRICE, *Soprano* Wednesday, January 25
- FRENCH STRING TRIO & MICHEL DEBOST, *Flutist* Friday, February 3
- ELIOT FELD BALLET Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday
 February 20, 21, 22
- CARLOS MONTOYA, *Guitarist* Thursday, February 23
- ALEKSANDER SLOBODYANIK, *Pianist* Saturday, February 25
- THOVIL, SRI LANKA Wednesday, March 1
- BALTIMORE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA/COMISSIONA Sunday, March 19
 Dvořák: Scherzo Capriccioso; Khachaturian: Violin Concerto (Albert Markov, soloist); Kodaly: Hary Janos Suite
- NIKOLAIS DANCE THEATRE Tuesday & Wednesday
 March 21 & 22
- KYUNG-WHA CHUNG, *Violinist* Thursday, March 23
- ORPHEUS CHAMBER ENSEMBLE/FESTIVAL CHORUS Saturday, March 25
- OKINAWAN DANCERS Tuesday, March 28
- AMADEUS STRING QUARTET Thursday, April 6
 Mozart: Quartet in B-flat, K. 458 ("The Hunt"); Britten: Quartet No. 2; Dvořák: Quartet in F, Op. 96 ("American")
- BAVARIAN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA/KUBELIK Saturday, April 8
 Schubert: Symphony No. 3 in D major; Bruckner: Symphony No. 6 in A major

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