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Performances

THE UNIVERSITY MUSICAL SOCIETY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

The ANN ARBOR

May Festival

THE PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA

EUGENE ORMANDY, *Music Director*
RICCARDO MUTI, *Principal Guest Conductor*
WILLIAM SMITH, *Associate Conductor*

EUGENE ORMANDY, *Conducting*

VICTORIA DE LOS ANGELES, *Soprano*

WEDNESDAY EVENING, APRIL 25, 1979, AT 8:30

HILL AUDITORIUM, ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

P R O G R A M

- *"Mathis der Maler" ("Matthias, the Painter") HINDEMITH
 The Angelic Concert
 The Entombment
 The Temptation of Saint Anthony
- "Shéhérazade" for Soprano and Orchestra RAVEL
 Asie
 La Flûte enchantée
 L'Indifférent

VICTORIA DE LOS ANGELES

I N T E R M I S S I O N

- Scythian Suite, Op. 20 PROKOFIEV
 The Adoration of Veles and Ala
 The Enemy God and the Dance of the Black Spirits
 Night
 The Glorious Departure of Lolli and the Procession of the Sun
- "Voi che sapete" from *The Marriage of Figaro* MOZART
 "Una voce poco fà" from *The Barber of Seville* ROSSINI
 "Dich, teure Halle" from *Tannhäuser* WAGNER
- MME DE LOS ANGELES

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PROGRAM NOTES

by RICHARD FREED

Symphony, "Mathis der Maler" PAUL HINDEMITH
(1895–1963)

Hindemith wrote his own libretto for his opera *Matthias the Painter*, a work which had deep personal significance for him and which has been regarded as a declaration of artistic conscience. It was written in 1933 and 1934, and centers about the painter Mathis Nithardt, known as Grünewald (ca. 1480–1530), whose famous altarpiece for St. Anthony's Church in Isenheim is preserved at the Unterlinden Museum in Colmar. In the opera Grünewald resigns from the service of the Archbishop of Mainz and puts his creative work aside in order to take an active part in the Peasants' War of 1524, but, following a sequence of highly dramatic events and even more dramatic visions based on his own paintings, he is persuaded that the way he can best serve mankind is through his art.

The period in which *Matthias* was composed was an extremely difficult one for Hindemith, and the work had far-reaching consequences even before it was performed. Hindemith's differences with the regime that had just taken power in Germany were well known, but at first he neither left the country, as many others did, nor made the "inner emigration" of Karl Amadeus Hartmann, who remained in Germany but himself prohibited the performance of his music in his own country until after World War II. In November 1934, Wilhelm Furtwängler, whose plans to stage *Matthias the Painter* in Berlin had been thwarted, wrote a strong letter to a newspaper in defense of Hindemith's music. The answer was a blast from Goebbels, who denounced Hindemith for "*Kultur-Bolschewismus*" and placed a ban on his "degenerate" works; Furtwängler protested by resigning from his prestigious positions. (He reacquired them through a public apology a few months later, but the gesture was sincere and impactful at the time it was made.)

Although the opera was not performed until May 28, 1938, when it was staged in Zurich, Hindemith had fashioned a three-movement symphony from portions of the work early in 1934. The Symphony, bearing the same title as the opera, was given its first performance by Furtwängler and the Berlin Philharmonic on March 12 of that year, and recorded shortly thereafter by the same orchestra under the composer's direction; the first American recording of the work, by Eugene Ormandy and The Philadelphia Orchestra, was released early in 1942, and within a decade of its composition the Symphony *Mathis der Maler* established itself as not only the most admired of Hindemith's orchestral works, but one of the outstanding symphonic offerings of its time. (The special affinity for this work on the part of Mr. Ormandy and The Philadelphia Orchestra has been further documented by two additional recordings since the original one on 78s.)

Each of the three movements bear the title of one of the panels of Grünewald's altarpiece. The first movement, *Angelic Concert*, is the instrumental prelude to the opera—or rather, the substitute for a conventional overture or prelude—in more or less its original form. The second, *Entombment*, is an orchestral interlude from the last of the opera's seven scenes. The final movement, *Temptation of Saint Anthony*, is an instrumental adaptation of the climactic penultimate scene, in which the confrontation between Saint Anthony and Saint Paul serves as a symbolic representation of Mathis's confrontation and reconciliation with his Archbishop; following episodes of self-torture and doubt, the work ends with majestic affirmation based on the alleluias of the two saints.

"Shéhérazade" for Soprano and Orchestra MAURICE RAVEL
(1875–1937)

When he was twenty-three years old Ravel, responding to the stimulus of the fantasy elements in Weber and Wagner as well as such Russian orchestral works as Rimsky-Korsakov's *Antar* and Balakireff's *Tamara*, conceived his first idea for an opera and roughed out his own libretto for *Shéhérazade*, based on Galland's *Mille et une nuits*. The opera was abandoned before he got very far with it, but he did complete two *Shéhérazades* in other forms. One was his very first orchestral work, which he designated an "ouverture de féerie." Ravel made his conducting debut introducing that *Shéhérazade*, on May 27, 1899; it was hissed by the audience, trounced by the critics, and withdrawn by the composer, who never performed it again and did not allow the score to be published. (It is only within the last six or seven years that the overture received its second performance, and as recently as the fall of 1975 that a first recording of it was released.) Some of the material in this overture, however, was re-used in 1903 for a second, and far more successful, *Shéhérazade*, the sumptuous orchestral song-cycle to texts of Tristan Klingsor.

"Tristan Klingsor" was the pseudonym of Ravel's friend Leon Leclère, one of the most versatile members of the circle of "Apaches." Leclère/Klingsor was known primarily as a painter and poet, but had also composed songs; as Roland-Manuel noted in his biography of Ravel, Klingsor "teased

all the Muses, and came to no harm." As soon as his *Shéhérazade* was published, in 1903, Ravel indicated his eagerness to set some of the poems. He began at once, completed his orchestral settings before the end of the year, and attended the very successful première on the following May 17, when Jane Hatto sang and Alfred Cortot conducted, in a concert of the Société Nationale de Musique in Paris.

A few years after the première, Klingsor himself wrote that Ravel's "love of difficulty made him choose, together with *L'Indifférent* and *La Flûte enchantée*, [a poem] whose long narrative made it appear quite unsuitable for his purpose: *Asie*. For at that time he was engaged in a study of spoken verse, and was aiming at emphasizing accents and inflections and magnifying them by melodic transposition; to fix his design firmly, he insisted on my reading the lines aloud. . . . For Ravel, setting a poem meant transforming it into expressive recitative, to exalt the inflections of speech to the state of song, to exalt all the possibilities of the word, but not to subjugate it. Ravel made himself the servant of the poet."

In his *Shéhérazade* Overture Ravel had made use of Debussy's whole-tone scale; he acknowledged in so many words that "Debussy's spiritual influence at least is fairly obvious" in these orchestral songs. "In them again," he added, "I have succumbed to the profound fascination which the East has held for me since childhood."

Scythian Suite, Op. 20 SERGEI PROKOFIEV
(1891-1953)

In June 1914, following his graduation from the St. Petersburg Conservatory (where his performance of his First Piano Concerto earned him a prize as pianist but not as composer), Prokofiev visited London for the opening of Diaghilev's season of Russian ballet. There he met the famous impresario, who commissioned him to write the music for a ballet "on a Russian fairy-tale or prehistoric theme." Both Diaghilev and Prokofiev, of course, were mindful of the enormous impact made by Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* (subtitled "Pictures of Pagan Russia") the previous year, and Prokofiev set to work before the summer was over, in collaboration with the young poet Sergei Gorodetzky, who devised a scenario about the ancient inhabitants of the area along the north coast of the Black Sea known in pre-Christian times as Scythia. They called their ballet *Ala and Lolli*.

The Scythians, described by Herodotus, Hesiod, and other Greek writers as a singularly unattractive people, seem to have died out about 100 B.C. They are thought to have been a mixture of Mongol and Aryan strains; they left no literature, but did leave some striking artifacts, and something is known of their religion, which accommodated a sizable roster of major and minor gods, both good and evil, with the sun god Veles as their chief deity. In the ballet scenario *Ala*, the daughter of Veles, is tormented by the evil god Chuzhbog; her rescuer Lolli heroically challenges Chuzhbog and prevails, but only with the intervention of the sun god himself.

Diaghilev, without really explaining himself, decided not to produce *Ala and Lolli*. From the rejected score, Prokofiev salvaged the materials for his first major orchestral work; when he conducted the first performance of the *Scythian Suite* in Petrograd on January 29, 1916, the audience reaction was, on a smaller scale, not unlike that provoked by Stravinsky's *Rite* in Paris nearly three years earlier. The huge orchestra, the barbaric rhythms, the uninhibited colors were beyond anything in the experience of those conservative listeners, and tended to solidify the young Prokofiev's image as an irreverent iconoclast.

The four movements of the suite encapsulate the original scenario in full. The first section, *Adoration of Veles and Ala*, represents the worship of the sun and a sacrifice to an idol of *Ala*. *The Enemy God and Dance of the Black Spirits*, a counterpart of the Infernal Dance in Stravinsky's *Firebird*, depicts the frenetic dance of homage to Chuzhbog by the seven monsters summoned from the Underworld to serve him. In *Night*, Chuzhbog menaces *Ala* in the darkness; he flees as the moon-maidens come to console the goddess. In the final movement, *The Glorious Departure of Lolli and the Procession of the Sun*, we have the battle between the hero and the evil god, the latter vanquished by the blazing light of the rising sun.

"Voi che sapete" from
The Marriage of Figaro, K. 492 WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART
(1756-1791)

Le Nozze di Figaro, the first of Mozart's operas with a libretto by Lorenzo da Ponte, was based on the comedy of Beaumarchais and was first produced in Vienna on May 1, 1786; its popularity has remained both uninterrupted and unparalleled since then. Count Almaviva's young page, Cherubino, is one of the most endearing characters in the work. He is hopelessly in love with the Countess, whose husband is sending him away in punishment for his affair with Barbarina, the gardener's daughter, and he has an eye for Susanna, too (just as the Count himself does). In Act II, Figaro, Susanna, and the Countess plan their little trick on the Count, which involves disguising Cherubino as a girl. (Since the role is sung by a woman, this gives us a woman pretending to be a boy pretending to be a girl.) In the course of their preparations, Cherubino sings of his helplessness and confusion as "One moment I burn, the next I freeze, in a fever of love . . ."

"Una voce poco fà" from *The Barber of Seville* GIOACCHINO ROSSINI
(1792-1868)

Il Barbiere di Siviglia, which Rossini originally titled *Almaviva, ossia La precauzione inutile*, was his sixteenth opera, composed in 1816 and produced that same year in Rome. The libretto by Cesare Sterbini is based on an earlier Beaumarchais comedy, peopled with many of the same characters who appear later in *The Marriage of Figaro*. Here the Count Almaviva is not the roué Mozart and da Ponte depicted, but a young man ardently in love with Rosina, who is, of course, to become his Countess. In their first meeting he does not reveal his true identity, but introduces himself as a poor student named Lindoro. This is the name over which Rosina rhapsodizes in her ecstatic soliloquy, shortly after their meeting.

"Dich, teure Halle" from *Tannhäuser* RICHARD WAGNER
(1813-1883)

Tannhäuser und der Sängerkrieg auf Wartburg ("Tannhäuser and the Song Contest at the Wartburg"), with libretto by Wagner himself, was composed between 1843 and 1845 and first produced on October 19 of the latter year at the Dresden Court Opera under the composer's direction. The story of the opera was based on a legend traced back to 13th-century Thuringia and involving the famous Minnesinger Walther von der Vogelweide as well as the lesser-known Heinrich Tannhäuser. The latter, having spent a year at the court of Venus, returns to the world, where young Elisabeth had been grieved by his absence. His song in praise of Venus, at the song contest held by Elisabeth's uncle, the Landgrave, leads to his banishment; he makes an unsuccessful pilgrimage to Rome to beg for absolution, and when he returns he finds Elisabeth dead of a broken heart, whereupon he expires of the same cause; only then does word of divine forgiveness arrive. The happiest scene in the opera is the opening of the second act, in which Elisabeth, elated by Tannhäuser's return from his mysterious absence, joyously greets the hall in which the contest is about to take place.

"My heartiest congratulations to the University Musical Society in its 100th anniversary year. My first visit to the Ann Arbor May Festival was on May 12, 1937, a year after I became Music Director of the Philadelphia Orchestra. Since that time I have conducted the Festival annually and it has become a poignant part of my long career. Each year I look forward with pleasure to our visits to, by now, this internationally-famous festival and I hope to go on conducting it as long as my affiliation with the Philadelphia Orchestra will continue."

—EUGENE ORMANDY

From the time Eugene Ormandy became Music Director of the Philadelphia Orchestra, through his recently announced retirement in August 1980, this eminent musician will have conducted one hundred and forty-four concerts in Ann Arbor, including his two appearances at this Festival and two at next year's Festival. With one exception, the Benefit Concert of 1977 when the maestro appeared as guest artist with the University Symphony Orchestra, these appearances have been with the Philadelphia Orchestra in every May Festival annually since 1937.

Victoria de los Angeles is making her first May Festival appearance this evening. She has previously given recitals here in 1951 and 1977 and most recently, Monday evening of this week, performed in joint recital with Alicia de Larrocha.

Commemorative Album

In celebration of one hundred years of great music at The University of Michigan is this limited edition, two-record boxed set featuring two of the world's great conductors and the University Symphony Orchestra. Recorded in Hill Auditorium from the Benefit Concerts of 1976 and 1977 are Bartók's *Divertimento for Strings* conducted by Yehudi Menuhin, and Beethoven's *Leonore Overture No. 3* and *Symphony No. 5* conducted by Eugene Ormandy. The album is offered as a keepsake and collector's item for both personal collections and gift-giving, and will include a commemorative booklet of the history of music at The University of Michigan in the last century. The album may be ordered through May 1979 for delivery in early 1980; proceeds will be shared by the University Musical Society and School of Music Scholarship Fund. A reservation card may be obtained by calling 764-2538 or 764-6118.

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