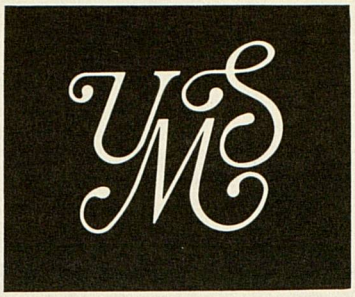

International Presentations of Music & Dance

THE UNIVERSITY MUSICAL SOCIETY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

May Festival

THE PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA

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

ALDO CECCATO, *Conducting*
SUSAN STARR, *Pianist*

THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 29, 1982, AT 8:30
HILL AUDITORIUM, ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

PROGRAM

Symphony No. 2 for Piano and Orchestra,
"The Age of Anxiety" . . . . . BERNSTEIN

Part One
The Prologue
The Seven Ages
The Seven Stages

Part Two
The Dirge
The Masque
The Epilogue

SUSAN STARR

INTERMISSION

*Symphony No. 4 in F minor, Op. 36 . . . . . TCHAIKOVSKY
Andante sostenuto, moderato con anima
Andantino in modo di canzona
Scherzo: pizzicato ostinato
Finale: allegro con fuoco

*Angel, *RCA Red Seal, Delos, Telarc, and *CBS Masterworks Records.*

The Philadelphia Orchestra performs in Ann Arbor this week as part of the "American Orchestras on Tour" Program of the Bell System, partially funded by the Bell System in association with the Bell Telephone Company of Michigan.

PROGRAM NOTES
by RICHARD FREED

Symphony No. 2, "The Age of Anxiety" . . . . LEONARD BERNSTEIN (1918–)

As a composer, Leonard Bernstein's surest instincts have been of and for the theatre, as evidenced early on by the ballet *Fancy Free* and the brilliant musical comedy *On the Town* (which might be called an expansion of the ballet's scenario, but with new music), both produced in 1944 and followed over the years by such works as *Trouble in Tahiti, Facsimile, Wonderful Town, Candide, West Side Story, Mass* and *Dybbuk*. His three symphonies, too, reflect these instincts, in increasing measure, in fact, as the cycle has progressed from the *Jeremiah* of 1943 to the *Kaddish* produced twenty years later. Bernstein himself has referred to an "inner sense of theatricality" at work in the creation of his Second Symphony, and has further acknowledged "a deep suspicion that every work I write, for whatever medium, is really theatre music in some way." The theatricality of this work made itself felt in a more direct sense when choreographer Jerome Robbins created a dance version of *The Age of Anxiety* which the New York City Ballet introduced on February 26, 1950, less than a year after the music's concert première, which was given by the Boston Symphony Orchestra on April 8, 1949, with Serge Koussevitzky conducting and the composer at the piano.

The Second is the only one of Bernstein's three symphonies to have an instrumental soloist rather than vocal participants, and the only one whose title does not indicate a connection with Judaic or Biblical lore, but it is, like the *Kaddish,* concerned with man's quest for faith. The impetus came from W. H. Auden's poem *The Age of Anxiety: A Baroque Eclogue,* published in 1946. Bernstein read the poem in the summer of the following year, found it "fascinating and hair-raising," and immediately conceived the idea of a large-scale symphony based on it. The composition was commissioned by the Koussevitzky Foundation, and the score was completed on March 20, 1949, less than three weeks before the première.

The content of the poem is made clear in the composer's introductory notes on the music, which he prepared for the Boston première of 1949:

"I imagine that the idea of writing a symphony with piano solo emerges from the extremely personal identification of myself with the poem. In this sense, the pianist provides an almost autobiographical protagonist, set against an orchestral mirror in which he sees himself, analytical, in the modern ambience. [More recently Bernstein remarked: "The pianist represents myself, I suppose, through Auden's character Malin."] The work is therefore no 'concerto,' in the virtuosic sense, although I regard Auden's poem as one of the most shattering examples of pure virtuosity in the history of English poetry.

"I have divided Auden's six sections into two large parts, each containing three sections played without pause. . . .:

"PART ONE

"The Prologue finds four lonely characters, a girl and three men, in a Third Avenue bar, all of them insecure, and trying, through drink, to detach themselves from their conflicts, or, at best, to resolve them. They are drawn together by this common urge and begin a kind of symposium on the state of man. Musically, the *Prologue* is a very short section consisting of a lonely improvisation by two clarinets, echotone, and followed by a long descending scale which acts as a bridge into the realm of the unconscious, where most of the poem takes place.

"The Seven Ages. The life of man is reviewed from the four personal points of view. This is a series of variations which differ from conventional variations in that they do not vary any one common theme. Each variation seizes upon some feature of the preceding one and develops it, introducing, in the course of the development, some counter-feature upon which the next variation seizes. It is a kind of musical fission, which corresponds to the reasonableness and almost didactic quality of the four-fold discussion.

"The Seven Stages. The variation form continues for another set of seven, in which the characters go on an inner and highly symbolic journey according to a geographical plan leading back to a point of comfort and security. The four try every means, going single and in pairs, exchanging partners, and always missing the objective. When they awaken from this dream-

odyssey, they are closely united through a common experience (and through alcohol), and begin to function as one organism. This set of variations begins to show activity and drive and leads to a hectic, though indecisive, close.

"PART TWO

"The Dirge is sung by the four as they sit in a cab en route to the girl's apartment for a nightcap. They mourn the loss of 'colossal Dad,' the great leader who can always give the right orders, find the right solution, shoulder the mass responsibility, and satisfy the universal need for a father-symbol. This section employs, in a harmonic way, a 12-tone row out of which the main theme evolves. There is a contrasting middle section of almost Brahmsian romanticism, in which can be felt the self-indulgent, or negative, aspect of this strangely pompous lamentation.

"The Masque finds the group in the girl's apartment, weary, guilty, determined to have a party, each one afraid of spoiling the others' fun by admitting that he should be home in bed. This is a kind of scherzo for piano and percussion alone (including harp, celesta, glockenspiel and xylophone) in which a kind of fantastic piano-jazz is employed, by turns nervous, sentimental, self-satisfied, vociferous. The party ends in anticlimax, and the dispersal of the actors; in the music the piano protagonist is traumatized by the intervention of the orchestra for four bars of hectic jazz. When the orchestra stops, as abruptly as it began, a *pianino* [small upright piano] in the orchestra is continuing the *Masque,* repetitiously and with waning energy, as the *Epilogue* begins. Thus a kind of separation of the self from the guilt of escapist living has been effected, and the protagonist is free again to examine what is left beneath the emptiness.

"The Epilogue. What is left, it turns out, is faith. The trumpet intrudes its statement of 'something pure' upon the dying *pianino:* the strings answer in a melancholy reminiscence of the *Prologue:* again and again the winds reiterate 'something pure' against the mounting tension of the strings' loneliness. All at once the strings accept the situation, in a sudden radiant pianissimo, and begin to build, with the rest of the orchestra, to a positive statement of the newly recognized faith."

In the original version the piano was silent in the *Epilogue* except for "one eager chord" at the end. Bernstein considered this the least successful part of the work because "the non-participation of the solo piano did not so much convey the intended 'detachment' as rob the soloist of his concertante function," and it was for this reason that he revised the finale in 1965, "so as to include the solo pianist, even providing him with a final burst of cadenza before the coda."

Symphony No. 4 in F minor, Op. 36 . . . PETER ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY (1840–1893)

The Fourth Symphony received its première in Moscow on March 4, 1878, and was more or less a failure (though it succeeded brilliantly in St. Petersburg the following winter). Tchaikovsky's former pupil Sergei Taneyev complained that it had failed because it had obviously been written as "program music," a gesture which degraded a noble form. Tchaikovsky replied to this quickly:

"I never want to write a symphonic work consisting of meaningless harmonies and modulations and rhythmical scheme expressing nothing. Of course my symphony is program music, but I could not put the program into words. . . . Isn't a program precisely what one would expect from a symphony, the most lyrical of musical forms? Should it not express everything that words cannot—things that rise in the heart and cry out for expression? In my innocence I thought the idea behind my symphony was so plain that everyone would grasp it, or at any rate its chief outlines, without the need of a written program. . . . I don't express any new thought, and haven't even tried to."

Despite his advising Taneyev "I could not put the program into words," Tchaikovsky did just that, and in some detail. Fate, indeed, is the theme of the Fourth Symphony, whose movement-by-movement program he described in a letter to Nadezhda von Meck, his benefactress to whom the work is dedicated:

"I. The introduction is the kernel . . . of the whole work. The main idea, first in the trumpets and then in the horns, is Fate, the inexorable power that hampers our search for happiness. . . . The main theme of the *Allegro* describes feelings of depression and hopelessness.

Would it not be better to forsake reality and lose oneself in dreams? . . . Fate returns to waken us, and we see that life is an alternation of grim reality and fugitive dreams of happiness.

"II. The second movement shows another aspect of sadness. Here is the melancholy feeling that overcomes us when we sit weary and alone at the end of the day. The book we pick up slips from our fingers, and a procession of memories passes by in review. We remember happy times of youth as well as moments of sorrow. We regret what is past, but have neither the courage nor the will to begin a new life. . . . There is a bittersweet comfort in losing oneself in the past. . . .

"III. There is no specific feeling or exact expression in the third movement [a much imitated model in which the strings play *pizzicato* only]. Here are only the capricious arabesques and indeterminate shapes that come into one's head with a little wine. The mood is neither sad nor gay. If one gives free rein to one's imagination, one may envision a drunken peasant singing a street song, or hear a military band passing in the distance. These are disconnected pictures . . . they have no connection with reality. . . .

"IV. If you find no joy in yourself, look about you. Go to the people: see how they can enjoy life and give themselves up to festivity. But hardly have we had a moment to enjoy this when Fate, relentless and untiring, makes his presence known. [In addition to a reappearance of the Fate motif which opened the Symphony, Tchaikovsky makes use in this movement of the well-known Russian folk song *In the Field There Stood a Birch Tree,* putting it through several changes of mood.] The others take no notice in their revelry. . . . There still is happiness, simple and naïve; rejoice in the happiness of others and you can still live."

About the Artists

Aldo Ceccato, well-known to area concertgoers as Music Director and Conductor of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra from 1973 through 1977, is an international maestro who is eagerly sought as guest conductor by virtually all of the world's top music organizations. The list of guest appearances is long: the symphony orchestras of Philadelphia, Chicago, Washington, New York, Cleveland, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Pittsburgh, Minnesota, Cincinnati, Boston, Montreal, and Toronto; abroad, he has conducted throughout Argentina, Chile, and Venezuela, in Israel, Berlin, Vienna, Dresden, and London. He holds the permanent post as Music Director of the Hamburg Philharmonic, and Principal Guest Conductor of the Dresden Philharmonic. Maestro Ceccato has also conducted opera with distinction, at Milan's Teatro Nuovo and La Scala, London's Covent Garden, the Paris Opèra, and at Glyndebourne. His recordings with Beverly Sills of *La Traviata* and *Maria Stuarda* appear on classical bestseller lists in the United States, while in Europe he is well-known for his recordings of Russian music.

Tonight's concert marks Aldo Ceccato's seventh appearance in Ann Arbor.

This evening, **Susan Starr** repeats her collaboration with Aldo Ceccato in the Bernstein Second Symphony, for it was in 1979 that she performed this work in a triumphant debut with the Hamburg Philharmonic, proclaimed "sensational" by the Hamburg critics. That debut came within an eight-week period, during which she was heard on three different continents. Her active international career has taken her on three tours of the Soviet Union, six tours of the Far East, eight throughout South America, as well as concerts throughout the United States and Europe. Summer months have found her as soloist at such festivals as Ravinia, Ambler, Robin Hood Dell, Chautauqua, Meadowbrook, Grant Park, Saratoga, and the Festival of Two Worlds in Spoleto, Italy.

A native of Philadelphia, Miss Starr began piano studies with Eleanor Sokoloff, and later became a student of Rudolf Serkin at the Curtis Institute of Music. While a student there, she was a prize winner in the first International Dimitri Mitropoulos Competition. Her record of success began when, at the age of six, she became the youngest soloist ever to appear with the Philadelphia Orchestra, the first of more than thirty subsequent performances with the Philadelphians. As a winner in the Second International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow, Miss Starr was thrust into the international spotlight as one of America's finest young artists. She appears in Ann Arbor this evening for the second time.