International Presentations of Music & Dance

THE UNIVERSITY MUSICAL SOCIETY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Atlanta Symphony Orchestra

ROBERT SHAW
Music Director and Conductor

SUNDAY AFTERNOON, OCTOBER 21, 1984, AT 4:00
HILL AUDITORIUM, ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

PROGRAM

Symphony No. 98 in B-flat major ..... HAYDN
Adagio, allegro
Adagio
Menuet
Finale: presto

Symphonic Suite (1984) ..... KAREL HUSA
Celebration
Meditation
Vision

INTERMISSION

Symphony, "Mathis der Maler" ..... HINDEMITH
Angelic Concert
Entombment
Temptation of St. Anthony

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The Atlanta Symphony Orchestra is grateful for continued support from the National Endowment for the Arts.

PROGRAM NOTES
by Nick Jones

Symphony No. 98 in B-flat major ..... Franz Josef Haydn (1732-1809)

Commerce brings competition, and competition fosters excellence, as we in America are so fond of reminding ourselves and each other. London in the eighteenth century enjoyed a rich diet of publicly subscribed performances, and competition was keen in the 1790s, when promoter/violinist Johann Salomon brought Josef Haydn, Europe's most admired composer, to town. Salomon's chief rival, doing business as the Professional Concerts, quickly set about spreading the rumor that Haydn, who was fifty-nine, was too old and feeble to contribute more than his name to the concerts. When the vigorous composer laid that notion to rest, they tried to hire him away — to his credit, he refused to be disloyal to Salomon. For Haydn's second season in London (1792) the rival Professional Concerts brought in their own continental celebrity, Ignaz Pleyel, who was later to establish a publishing house and the piano-making firm that bore his name for over a century. Since Pleyel happened to be Haydn's former pupil and good friend, the two Austrian musicians remained above the fray, dining and attending operas together.

Still, the Professional Concerts were advertising that Pleyel would provide a "new" work for each of his concerts, and Haydn felt compelled to announce the same policy. He wrote to a friend, "Never in all my life have I written so much in one year as I have in the past twelve months."

Haydn's third concert of the season (March 2, 1792), saw the introduction of a new Haydn symphony in B-flat, now known as No. 98. The composer happily noted that the first and last movements had to be encored, and the whole symphony had to be repeated the following week by popular request. A third performance came on April 13, and the reviewer for the *Morning Chronicle* called it "one of the grandest compositions we have heard."

An austere and foreboding introduction leads to a sombre and turbulent *Allegro,* a major-key version of the introduction's minor melody. A highly contrapuntal struggle resorts ever more often to the minor mode. The *Adagio* compliments Haydn's British hosts by using a main theme derived from "God Save the King." Eloquent and serious, it attains the stature of the best slow movements by his late friend, Mozart. Indeed, it may have been written in tribute after Haydn received confirmation that Mozart had died that December. Less courtly than vigorous and aggressive, the *Menuet* follows a miniature sonata form and seems to point the way to the kind of scherzo with which Beethoven would later replace the minuet in his symphonies. The Finale is a brisk *Presto,* not without touches of the gravity which is the hallmark of this work. The solo violin passages no doubt were played by concertmaster Salomon at the first performances. Near the end, a rippling keyboard accompaniment reminds us that Haydn usually led his London symphonies from the fortepiano or harpsichord.

Symphonic Suite (1984) ..... Karel Husa (*b.* 1921)

"I have been trying to preserve what little is still visible and useful from the past, but mostly my concern is to write music of today and, also, find some new paths for tomorrow. Most of the works of the past and present mirror the period in which they were composed, so I hope my music can reflect the exciting, passionate, and also tragic times of today."

To a large extent Karel Husa has succeeded in living up to those words. His music is modern in no isolated or inaccessible sense, but captures the temper of our time through imaginative use of the entire modern compositional vocabulary. Compassion and involvement are inherent in his choice of subject matter and in the conviction with which he weds program material to musical content.

Husa had violin and piano lessons as a child in Prague, but in 1938 he entered technical school, intending to become an engineer. The Nazis closed the university the following year, however, and Husa found himself in danger of being deported. He finally was able to fill the last available opening at the Prague Conservatory, having taken private composition lessons in order to qualify. While there, he had several student works performed, and at least one was published. After the war's end, Husa continued his studies in Paris, his teachers including Arthur Honegger, Nadia Boulanger, and André Cluytens. In the following years he had numerous engagements as guest conductor in France and Switzerland, and his own music continued to gain favorable notice. Husa moved to the United States in 1954 (becoming a citizen five years later) and joined the music faculty of Cornell University, where he has maintained an association for thirty years. He has served as principal conductor of the Cornell University Orchestra, the Ithaca Chamber Orchestra, and the Cayuga Chamber Orchestra.

Among many honors and awards in his distinguished career are the Pulitzer Prize in 1969 for his String Quartet No. 3, election to the Royal Belgian Academy of Arts and Sciences, an honorary doctorate from Coe College in Iowa, and two Guggenheim fellowships.

Two of Husa's most successful and popular works are "Music for Prague — 1968," a sorrowful reaction to the Soviet invasion and repression of freedoms in his homeland, and "Apotheosis of This Earth" (1970). Many of his works have been recorded, often under his own baton, such as his ballet "The Trojan Women."

His latest composition, Symphonic Suite, was commissioned by the University of Georgia to commemorate the 200th anniversary of its chartering. Begun in 1983, the work was finished just two months ago at Interlaken, New York. It was first performed at the opening Bicentennial Convocation on the University campus on October 1, 1984, with the University of Georgia orchestra conducted by the composer. In preparation for the composition, Husa visited the state of Georgia. He was impressed by its beautiful and gentle landscape, saying, "I want to capture that, even within the bounds of excitement." He has also given a brief description of the suite:

"The titles of the movements express, I believe, sufficiently my aims: The 'Celebration' of the achievements from the beginnings to the present; the 'Meditation' of thoughts and reflection over the past, including our errors; and the 'Vision' of foreseeing, of intuition, and of never ceasing expansion of nature and man's energy."

Symphony, "Mathis der Maler" (Mathias the Painter) ..... Paul Hindemith (1895-1963)

For his friendly relationships with Jewish musicians and for allowing his music to be heard in concerts involving the participation of Jews, Hindemith was hounded by the Nazis during the 1930s. Refusing either to drop his friends or to fawn on those in authority, he gradually saw all opportunity slip away for a German première of his new opera, "Mathis der Maler." He finally had to leave Germany, settling eventually in the United States. The opera's première came in Switzerland in 1938, fully eight years after its completion.

The painter of the title is Mathias Grünewald (*c.* 1480-1528), whom Hindemith admired for cleaving to his own Medieval style despite the Italian Renaissance influences that were strong in Germany at the time. In the opera, Mathias becomes involved in the Peasants' Rebellion, but finds the harsh reality of its butchery at odds with his artistic ideals.

Orchestral interludes within the opera take the form of considerations of scenes from Grünewald's greatest masterpiece, the Isenheim Altarpiece. This painted set of wings — doors within doors within doors covering a carved altar — presents moments from the life of Christ and of various saints in glowing contrasts of bright color and deep shadow.

While still in Germany, seeking to gain a foothold for the opera in the public consciousness, Hindemith issued his Symphony, "Mathis der Maler," based on three of these interludes. The Symphony received its first performance at Berlin in 1934 and has continued in popularity, becoming his best-known work.

Angelic Concert. This scene spreads across two doors of Grünewald's altarpiece. On the right is the Madonna adoring her new-born child, while rays of light beam from the heavens where sits the Creator, surrounded by his winged host. On the left, serenading the mother and child, is a consort of viols played by haloed angels, sheltered by an architectural canopy. Objects nearby symbolize the divinity of Christ and his teachings to come. Though sitting in a dark area (the scene apparently takes place at dawn), the angelic players all glow with a reddish-golden aura, as though illuminated by modern theatrical lighting.

The music, a reworking of the opera's prelude, perfectly captures the mood of majestic peace and wondering devotion.

The Entombment. Mounted below the others, a long, low panel shows the body of Christ being prepared for burial. This is not a smooth, beautiful *Pietà*. The body is riddled with sores and scars. A greenish cast suffuses the skin. The hands are twisted in agony, and the feet are rotted and eaten away as though by leprosy. (Isenheim's hospital patients are said to have been brought to view this and other panels depicting suffering, that they might find courage to endure their own.)

The stillness and poignancy of the scene find their echo in the breath-held quality of Hindemith's music, the sorrow too great even to find utterance.

Temptation of St. Anthony. Patron saint and namesake of the monastery for which Grünewald painted the altarpiece, Anthony appears in three of the panels. The scene of his temptation is gruesome in its violence. Grotesque demons, roaring and shrieking, their bodies caricatures of animal life, beat the old man with clubs and tear his hair. A heavenly figure in the clouds above is silent witness to his torment.

In the opera this painting is linked to Grünewald's own hallucination of dejection and temptation. He is enticed by various allegorical figures to choose the way of voluptuousness, greed, martyrdom, might, etc. These symbols account for the changing aspects of Hindemith's music for the scene. In the end, St. Paul visits him and points the high road of artistic dedication. The Symphony ends with the music of the "Alleluias" sung by St. Anthony and St. Paul.

About the Artists

The **Atlanta Symphony Orchestra,** now in its 39th season, is one of the youngest American orchestras to achieve national prominence in the past quarter century. Begun as a youth orchestra in 1944, the Atlanta Symphony today serves as the cornerstone of cultural development in the Southeast.

In 1962, a shattering event changed the course of music and the arts in Atlanta. An airplane crashed at Orly Field near a Paris suburb, taking the lives of 130 passengers and crew members. Among the victims were 106 Atlantans, most of them members of the Atlanta Art Association.

Determined that Atlanta's cultural life would continue — partly as a memorial to those who died, partly as a living testament to the power of the arts to give meaning to life — the city responded to plans for a Memorial Arts Center.

Within a year, the Atlanta Symphony, the High Museum of Art, and the Atlanta School of Art (now the Atlanta College of Art) joined together to form the Atlanta Arts Alliance. (They were joined by the Alliance Theatre the following year and by the Atlanta Children's Theatre in 1973.) A gift from Robert W. Woodruff, Atlanta's legendary "Anonymous Donor," provided seed money for the construction of the $13 million Atlanta Memorial Arts Center. Contributions from private individuals of dollars, met and surpassed the goal of matching Woodruff's then anonymous gift.

The Orchestra's national reputation was immeasurably enhanced following its performances in Washington, D.C. and New York City in May 1976. Its concerts at Kennedy Center and Carnegie Hall played to capacity houses — a rare occurrence for visiting orchestras — and to lavish critical praise.

Among the Symphony's more important concerts are those whose audiences include handicapped listeners, senior citizens, disadvantaged persons and others to whom great music might otherwise be denied. The Symphony's reach has grown from a handful of concerts at the Atlanta Municipal Auditorium to appearances throughout the state that include children's hospitals, neighborhood community centers, the Atlanta Arts Festival, and even concerts in nearby prisons, bringing the joy of music to an ever-widening audience.

Robert Shaw, music director and conductor of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and regular guest of the nation's major orchestras, is indisputably a pioneer in music. Of most recent acclaim are his revolutionary digital recordings with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, the first American orchestra ever to use this innovative sonic technology. Hardly less in current impact have been his tours with the Atlanta Symphony.

Shaw is the founder and conductor of the famed Robert Shaw Chorale, builder of the Atlanta Symphony, and protégé of Arturo Toscanini and George Szell. He was appointed by President Carter to serve a six-year term on the National Council of the Arts. Ongoing conducting relationships with The Philadelphia Orchestra, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Dallas, St. Louis, Milwaukee, Pittsburgh, and National Symphonies attest to the national recognition for his outstanding musicianship.

Born in California, Shaw came to music by way of philosophy, English literature, and religion at Pomona College, but illness of the Glee Club conductor changed his direction. He was asked to lead the group for a term, and after Fred Waring heard a concert Shaw conducted he invited him to organize the Waring Glee Club. The rest became musical history.

By 1941 came the Collegiate Chorale and, in 1948, the Robert Shaw Chorale, which toured forty-seven states and thirty countries. Even while the Chorale was scoring its triumphs, Shaw was pursuing his career as a symphonic conductor. He was music director of the San Diego Symphony from 1953 to 1957. He joined The Cleveland Orchestra in 1956, working closely with George Szell. In 1966 Robert Shaw became music director of the Atlanta Symphony and within a few years built what was then a good orchestra into the outstanding one it is today.

Shaw's honors include four Grammy Awards, three ASCAP awards for service to contemporary music, and honorary degrees and awards from thirty U.S. colleges, universities and foundations, including the first Guggenheim Fellowship ever awarded to a conductor, and the Alice M. Ditson (Columbia University) Award for Service to American Music.

Robert Shaw has made five Ann Arbor appearances with his Chorale and, most recently, was guest conductor of The Philadelphia Orchestra and University Choral Union at the 1978 May Festival. The Atlanta Symphony Orchestra gives its first Ann Arbor performance this afternoon.

Gewandhaus Orchestra of Leipzig

Kurt Masur, *Music Director and Conductor*

Thursday, Nov. 8 — Beethoven's Symphony No. 1, Bruckner's Symphony No. 7
Friday, Nov. 9 — Mendelssohn's Symphony No. 4, Beethoven's Symphony No. 3

Tickets available for both concerts.
