

# Ann Arbor May Festival

THE UNIVERSITY MUSICAL SOCIETY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

## Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra

LORIN MAAZEL, *Music Consultant*

SIR ALEXANDER GIBSON

*Conductor*

DAME KIRI TE KANAWA, *Soprano*

SATURDAY EVENING, MAY 4, 1985, AT 8:30  
HILL AUDITORIUM, ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

*Dedicated to the memory of Eugene Ormandy, 1899-1985  
May Festival conductor 1937-1982 inclusive*

Overture in D minor ..... HANDEL  
*arr. ELGAR*

Lascia ch'io pianga, from *Rinaldo* ..... HANDEL

Let the bright seraphim, from *Samson* ..... HANDEL

KIRI TE KANAWA

In the South, Op. 50 ..... ELGAR

### INTERMISSION

Four Sea Interludes from *Peter Grimes*, Op. 33a ..... BRITTEN

Dawn  
Sunday Morning  
Moonlight  
Storm

Four Last Songs ..... STRAUSS

Frühling  
September  
Beim Schlafengehen  
Im Abendrot

KIRI TE KANAWA

In spite of the beautiful setting of Alassio, as well as a series of pleasant excursions and charming episodes, Elgar suddenly decided to return to England. The main reason for his change of mind was that the Mediterranean climate did not behave according to his expectations. January turned out to be cold and windy. The house was poorly heated and uncomfortable. But there were considerable compensations. Elgar had started the composition of his orchestral score *In the South*, the third of his concert overtures. He dedicated the work to his friend Leo F. Schuster, and it was first performed at the 1904 Elgar Festival in London, the composer conducting. A special feature of the music became widely known as "Canto popolare," which became one of Elgar's most successful melodies, eventually published in independent arrangements with the subtitle "In Moonlight." The expressive theme, entrusted to a viola solo, occurs in a central section marked *meno mosso, molto tranquillo*. The placid subject, at first set against a chordal accompaniment of harp and four solo violins, is spun forth by other solo instruments (horn, first violins, and two solo cellos). Allusions to other earlier-heard motives are subtly integrated in the gossamer texture.

The overture begins *vivace* with a fiery upward surge by flutes, clarinets, bassoons, violins, and violas, *fortissimo*. This energetically moving main theme, with its accent on the second beat, its triplets and motivic sequence, is announced by clarinets, horn quartet, violas, and cellos. As the overture develops, this principal subject provides a counterpoint to the rich motivic material and makes its first reappearance after a sustained passage marked *nobilmente*.

In its formal structure, the overture arrives at a balance between its highly descriptive, programmatic material and the legalities of absolute musical structure. Thematicism and brilliant orchestration disclose undeniable Straussian traits. Richard Strauss became Elgar's first and foremost advocate on the Continent; Elgar's admiration for his German colleague probably expresses itself more strongly in this concert overture than in any other of his works.

The romantic character of Elgar's music is reflected in two poetic quotations which appear in the composer's manuscript, but not in the printed edition. For a motto he chose the following verses by Tennyson (reminiscent of Goethe's poem quoted previously):

. . . What hours were thine and mine, in lands of palm and southern pine,  
In lands of palm, of orange blossom, of love, aloe, and maize and vine.

The manuscript bears a further quotation from sixth canto of Byron's *Childe Harold*:

. . . a land which *was* the mightiest in its old command, and *is* the loveliest . . .  
Wherein were cast . . . the men of Rome! Thou are the garden of the world.

#### Four Sea Interludes from *Peter Grimes*, Op. 33a . . . . . BENJAMIN BRITTEN (1913-1976)

"I spent the greatest part of my life in close touch with the sea. In my opera *Peter Grimes*, I wanted to give expression to the eternal struggle of men and women whose existence depends on the ocean . . ."

In this statement, Benjamin Britten epitomizes the inspirational source of his most successful music drama *Peter Grimes*, Op. 33. The work was commissioned by the Koussevitzky Foundation, and Britten completed the score in 1945. The first performance in London's Sadler's Wells Theatre on June 7, 1945 was hailed as an event: some critics considered *Peter Grimes* the best English opera since Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* (1689).

The libretto for *Peter Grimes*, written by Montague Slater, is based on the narrative poem "The Borough," by George Crabbe, a physician and theologian who lived during the nineteenth century in Aldeburgh. This fishing village in Suffolk became the home of Benjamin Britten and the seat of a music festival under his direction.

The somber action of *Peter Grimes* centers around an ill-reputed, rough fisherman: Peter Grimes is reviled by his fellow villagers and envied for his adroitness and unaccountable success with the nets. A series of accidents results in the death of his two apprentices, for which Grimes is blamed by the townsmen. The growing agitation and turbulence in the village are too much for him to bear; he becomes mad and disappears into the sea with his boat. Peace returns to the Suffolk village. The three acts of the opera are replete with psychological implications as well as social criticism.

Britten extracted orchestral excerpts from the opera score; in particular, the Passacaglia and four Sea Interludes are frequently heard in concert. The four Sea Interludes are usually performed in the following sequence: Dawn, Sunday Morning, Moonlight, and Storm.

*Dawn* — Three motives (the *dolcissimo* of the flutes and violins in high position; the broken triads of the clarinets, harps, violas; and, finally, the brass choir of horns, trumpets, trombones, and tuba) suggest the sounds of the wind, of the leaves, and the noise of gravel beneath feet on the beach. In the theater, the *lento e tranquillo* of this interlude unites the prologue and the first act. Britten claimed to have returned to the classical practice of separate numbers that crystallize the emotion at certain moments of the dramatic action.

*Sunday Morning* — We hear a mood picture of impressionistic colorfulness. It is a holiday in the fishing village. The *allegro spiritoso* prominently employs the woodwinds with a lively staccato. The strings join in a poetic sweep. Eventually, church bells become part of the festive sonorities. In the opera, Sunday Morning introduces Act II.

*Moonlight* — This movement is likewise highly descriptive. Village and sea are flooded by moonlight, reflected on the ancient roofs of the town and the calm waves of the North Sea. In the theater, the andante comodo e rubato precedes the third act.

*Storm* — The symphonic sequence of the Sea Interludes concludes with a presto con fuoco. The tone picture of a tempest, threatening both coast and sea, unfolds with fury. From the opening timpani strokes (accentuating a biting motive of four notes) to the final roar of the full orchestra and its chromatic descent, we hear a relentless finale of many dynamic gradations. Just as the preceding Sea Interludes, so this storm music is organized according to a strictly musical plan. It is precisely in this blend of suggestive tone painting with inherent tonal legalities where the strength of Britten's compositional technique is anchored.

#### Four Last Songs . . . . . RICHARD STRAUSS (1864-1949)

Richard Strauss spent his last four years in Switzerland. During this time of introspection, the old artist looked back on his long life of struggle and of triumph, ending with disillusionment in a foreign country.

Strauss had abandoned his home in Bavaria. His outer world — the opera houses and concert halls of Austria and Germany — was destroyed. Very few of his spiritual allies were still alive: Hugo von Hofmannsthal had died before the war, Stefan Zweig committed suicide in Brazil, and Romain Rolland had passed away in 1944. It was a lonely finale for Strauss. Those who visited the German master in these years of his Swiss refuge speak of his philosophical resignation. His loneliness and isolation were apparent. But Strauss was determined to complete his life doing what he had always done — composing and studying.

Strauss's career was distinguished by remarkable productivity. A few months before his death, he borrowed the monographs on Goethe by Grimm and marked with pencil a passage in which the author speaks of the creative significance of longevity: "With Goethe, the second part of life emerged as the fulfillment of what was begun in the first." And Strauss believed with Goethe that "there was nothing more miserable than a man living in comfort, but without work."

All of this suggests the state of mind in which Strauss composed the songs which we hear on this program. They are his farewell, the documents of an aging mind and heart which sought creative expression for a last time. The old musician turned to the art song, the medium which had been closest to him since his youth. He looked for texts which could convey his state of mind and found them in the poetry of the German romantic poet Joseph von Eichendorff and Nobel Prize-winning novelist and poet Hermann Hesse. The music to which Strauss set these poems was to be his "swan song," becoming known to the world after the composer's death. The score was published under the title *Vier letzte Lieder für Sopran und Orchester* (Four last songs for soprano and orchestra).

The songs express world weariness, lightened by a ray of hope in the unknown. No one should expect to find in these songs something intrinsically new. The style of the *Four Last Songs* is essentially a review, a summation. The melodies and harmonies recall the music of the younger Strauss, but the spark is gone. And yet, this final evocation of the lyrical spirit is extremely moving; the accompanying orchestration is masterful.

With the closing lines of the final song, "Im Abendrot," we hear the main theme from *Death and Transfiguration*. "Wie sind wir wandermüde — ist dies etwa der Tod?" (How tired we are of wandering — is this perhaps death?) These, then, are the final bars of the 84-year-old Richard Strauss. He set them to his father's instrument, the horn, which he so often heard as a child. The symbolism is as obvious as it is touching: the old man has found home again and fulfilled the circle of his life.

*Frühling (Spring)* (Hesse) — In half light I waited, dreamed all too long of trees in blossom, those flowing breezes, that fragrant blue and thrushes' song. Now streaming and glowing from sky to field with light overflowing, all these charms are revealed. Light gilds the river, light floods the plain; Spring calls me: and through me there quiver life's own loveliness, life's own sweetness returned again.

*September* (Hesse) — These mournful flowers, rain-drenched in the coolness are bending, while summer covers, mute as he waits for his ending. Gravely each golden leaf falls from the tallest Acacia tree; summer marvels and smiles to see his own garden grow faint with grief. Ling'ring still, near the roses long he stays, longs for repose, languid, slow to the last, his weary eyelids close.

*Beim Schlafengehen (Time to Sleep)* (Hesse) — Now the day has wearied me, all my gain and all my longing like a weary child's shall be night, whose many stars are thronging. Hands, now leave your work alone; brow, forget your idle thinking; all my thoughts, their labor done, softly into sleep are sinking. High the soul will rise in flight, freely gliding, softly swaying in the magic realm of night. Deeper laws of life obeying.

*Im Abendrot (At Dusk)* (Eichendorff) — Here both in need and gladness we wandered hand in hand; now let us pause at last above the silent land. Dusk comes the vales exploring, the darkling air grows still, alone two sky-larks soaring in song their dreams fulfill. Draw close and leave them singing, soon will be time to sleep; how lost our way's beginning! This solitude, how deep. O rest so long desired! We sense the night's soft breath. Now we are tired, how tired — can this perhaps be death?

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## About the Artists

**Dame Kiri Te Kanawa** is universally recognized as one of the great singers of our time. A leading star of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, Metropolitan Opera, Paris Opera, and San Francisco Opera, she also appears with La Scala, Vienna Staatsoper, Salzburg Festival, Munich Opera, and Cologne Opera. She is equally renowned in recital, with orchestra, and on recordings, film, and television.

Kiri Te Kanawa was catapulted to international stardom in 1971 when she appeared as Countess Almaviva in Covent Garden's new production of *Le Nozze di Figaro*. She has subsequently performed there regularly in nearly every role of her repertoire, including Amelia, Micaela, Desdemona, Marguerite, Donna Elvira, Mimi, Tatiana, Fiordiligi, Arabella, Rosalinda, Pamina, Violetta and, most recently, her first *Manon Lescaut*.

Dame Kiri made another sensational debut with the Metropolitan Opera in 1974 when, on a few hours notice, she substituted as Desdemona in a performance broadcast live throughout the United States. She returned to the Metropolitan for Countess Almaviva, Fiordiligi, and opened its 1982-83 season as the Marschallin, which was broadcast "Live From the Met." In the fall of 1983 she sang *Arabella* in a new production mounted for her by the Metropolitan, and she repeated the role for another new production of *Arabella* with the Lyric Opera of Chicago in the fall of 1984.

A recitalist of incomparable artistry, Dame Kiri appeared at the Metropolitan Opera House on March 11, 1984 with James Levine at the piano. Her 1984-85 North American recital tour included performances in New York on Lincoln Center's Great Performers Series and in Washington, D.C. at the Kennedy Center, as well as in other major cities. Her first major international recital tour, during 1978-79, was inaugurated with a televised and recorded Covent Garden recital debut and included performances at Carnegie Hall, La Scala, and in Vienna, Paris, San Francisco, and Toronto. She appears as soloist with the leading orchestras and conductors of the world, and made a tour of the important European festivals with the Vienna Philharmonic and Claudio Abbado in 1977.

Kiri Te Kanawa appears as Donna Elvira in Joseph Losey's film of *Don Giovanni* and as Countess Almaviva in two films of *Le Nozze di Figaro* — Böhm/Ponnelle and Pritchard/Hall. Her numerous televised performances have included the 1977 New Year's Eve Covent Garden production of *Die Fledermaus*, which was simulcast by the BBC in Europe and by Metromedia in the United States, as well as Metropolitan Opera performances of *Le Nozze di Figaro* and *Der Rosenkavalier* on PBS in the United States. She has been the subject of a BBC profile, and a film of her life was recently released. In 1982 and 1983 she presented her own Christmas television spectacular.

Her many recordings are found on the Angel, CBS Masterworks, Deutsche Grammophon, London, and Philips labels. Operatic recordings include two *Don Giovannis*, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *Hansel and Gretel*, *Carmen*, *Così fan tutte*, *La Rondine* and *Die Zauberflöte*. In addition, she has made several recital recordings and has recorded Berlioz' *Les Nuits d'été*, Beethoven's Symphony No. 9, Brahms's Requiem, Duruflé's Requiem, Mozart's Mass in C minor and Strauss's Four Last Songs with orchestras such as the London Philharmonic, London Symphony, Orchestre de Paris, New Philharmonia, and Chicago Symphony. Her recent popular release, *Songs of the Auvergne*, hit the best-seller charts in England.

Kiri Te Kanawa was made a Dame Commander of the British Empire in 1982, and later that year *Kiri*, her biography by David Fingleton, was published. In 1981 she sang at the wedding of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales to Lady Diana Spencer, and she gave a special recital for Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother marking the 80th birthday celebration. She has recently given several fund-raising concerts to benefit the founding of an opera house in Auckland, New Zealand.

Dame Kiri was born in Gisborne, New Zealand, the child of an Irish mother and Maori father. Encouraged to sing at a young age, as a teenager she began winning competitions and singing on New Zealand television and in Australia. She won a four-year scholarship from the New Zealand Arts Council to study at the London Opera Center and appeared in many productions there and throughout Great Britain. She made her debut at Covent Garden in the 1970-71 season as Xenia in *Boris Godunov* and then appeared as the First Flower Maiden in *Parsifal* before stunning the opera world as Countess Almaviva.

This evening's performance marks her Ann Arbor debut.

**Sir Alexander Gibson** celebrated his twenty-fifth season as musical director of the Scottish National Orchestra during 1984. When he was appointed in 1959, he became the first Scotsman to have held the post.

His career prior to 1959 had been outstandingly successful. Following his studies at Glasgow University and the Royal College of Music in London, where, in 1951, he was awarded the Queen's Prize, he traveled to Salzburg to study at the Mozarteum and to Siena to work at the Accademia Chigiano. At the Bescançon Festival in 1952 he was awarded the special Enesco Prize in the competition for young conductors. In the previous year he had taken up the post of répétiteur at Sadler's Wells, and in 1952 he became assistant to Ian Whyte with the BBC Scottish Orchestra in Glasgow. Two years later he returned to Sadler's Wells as Staff Conductor and in 1957 became music director of this world famous opera company. From Sadler's Wells he returned to Scotland and the Scottish National Orchestra. Within his first five years, he had not only enhanced the prestige of the orchestra nationally and internationally but also had been the principal instigator and founder of the now world famous Scottish Opera. Sir Alexander Gibson has not only presided over the orchestra's concerts in Scotland and during its many tours of Europe and the United States, but also has produced with the orchestra an enviable list of recordings with several leading companies.

Apart from his work with Scottish Opera and the Scottish National Orchestra, Maestro Gibson has traveled extensively in Europe and the United States as well as in Australia and South America. His visits to New York's Caramoor Festival and to Houston have become annual events — his performances of *Jenufa* and *Falstaff* were highlights of the Houston Opera seasons, as were his performances of *The Dream of Gerontius* with the Houston Symphony. His first visit to Israel was in 1979 to conduct the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra. His appearances with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, both in Pittsburgh and Ann Arbor, highlight the current season, and he will appear with the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra during the 1985-1986 season.

During his career, Sir Alexander Gibson has received awards and honors from the universities of Aberdeen, Stirling, and his own University of Glasgow. He was made a Fellow of the Royal Scottish Academy of Music in 1973, and his home town of Motherwell made him a Freeman in 1964. Ten years later he became an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. Especially rewarding to him was Glasgow's St. Mungo's Prize, which was awarded to him in 1970 for the most distinguished contribution to the life of the city. Other citations are "Musician of the Year" (1976) by the Incorporated Society of Musicians and the Sibelius Medal in 1978 for "an outstanding contribution to the appreciation of Sibelius' music throughout the world."

Maestro Gibson previously visited Ann Arbor with his Scottish National Orchestra in 1975.

## *Tricentennial Celebration*

by DR. FREDERICK DORIAN  
in collaboration with DR. JUDITH MEIBACH

The year 1685 was destined to become one of the most providential in the history of western music: it witnessed the birth of George Frideric Handel, of Johann Sebastian Bach, and of Domenico Scarlatti, three towering masters of the baroque era.

Handel and Bach were born less than a month apart, on February 23 and March 21 respectively. The distance between Halle and Eisenach, their native cities (today both in East Germany), is approximately eighteen miles. Scarlatti was born in Naples on October 26 of that fateful year. (The nineteenth century was marked by a comparable coincidence of birth dates: Giuseppe Verdi and Richard Wagner, who were to profoundly alter the course of romantic opera, came into the world during 1813.)

This current season, the entire civilized world pays homage to the three baroque composers, not only by the performance of their music, but also by the publication of a rich diversity of musicological studies as well as essays in both scholarly journals and daily papers.

### **Glances At Handel's Life**

George Frideric Handel was the son of a widely respected surgeon who died when the boy was only eleven years old. Nonetheless, the prodigious youth was able to continue his training with the best musicians in Halle and soon was appointed organist at the principal churches of the German town. In 1702 Handel entered the university to study law, according to the wishes of his deceased father. But during the spring of 1703, Handel left Halle to try his luck as a violinist at the Hamburg Opera Theater on the Gansemarkt. This theater, under the direction of Reinhold Keiser, had developed into Germany's finest opera house. In 1705 *Almira*, Handel's first opera, was received in Hamburg with great success. Eager to expand his musical horizons, Handel decided to leave for Italy where he steeped himself in the great vocal traditions of the land in which opera had been invented a century earlier by the Florentine Camerata. Having absorbed what Italy could offer, the young German musician yielded to his wanderlust and traveled to England.

### **Arrival In London**

Handel was twenty-five. Musical activities in eighteenth-century London were flourishing. The English court, in essence, controlled art life; some members of the royal family occasionally participated in musical performances. By the time Handel arrived in the British capital, Purcell, the baroque master of English opera, had been dead for fifteen years. Italian opera prevailed, and Handel promptly set to work on *Rinaldo*, based on an Italian libretto. In spite of the signal success the opera brought him, he remained in London for only half a year. He returned to his native Germany where, in 1712, he was appointed court conductor by George, the prince elector of Hanover. After the British capital, Handel found the atmosphere in Hanover provincial and artistically confining and asked his patron for a leave of absence to visit England once again.

Permission was granted under the condition that he return to Hanover within a reasonable period of time. Back in London, Handel thrived in the environment of the world metropolis and kept postponing his return to the court of the German principality. Time slipped by; apparently this breach of contract did not sufficiently bother Handel's youthful conscience, and he seemed to have forgotten about his promise to the prince elector of Hanover.

## An Embarrassing Situation — George of Hanover Becomes King of England

Two years passed. Handel was still in London and his popularity was ever increasing. Then, in 1714, Queen Anne died. By a strange twist of fate, the prince, who was now proclaimed king of England, turned out to be none other than George, the German elector — Handel's offended patron from Hanover. Inevitably, this unforeseeable sequence of events placed Handel in a most awkward situation.

Upon the succession of the king, the composer moved out of his apartment in St. James's Palace to less spectacular quarters in Burlington House. Here he stoically awaited the reaction of England's new ruler. George I, it is true, has been accused of many faults by his biographers, and his excessive fondness for the attractive ladies at court is known to have caused certain problems. But no one could criticize the king's love of music, a passion in keeping with German national tradition. George I, whatever his feeling might have been regarding Handel's independence, knew that he could not punish the great composer without hurting himself. An impasse had been reached.

The solution of this conflict is derived from the first biography devoted to the composer, John Mainwaring's *Memoirs of the Life of the Late G. F. Handel* (initially published anonymously in 1760, the year after Handel's death).

To quote Mainwaring: "The King was persuaded to form a party on the water. Handel was appraised of the design and advised to prepare some music for that occasion. It was performed and conducted by himself, unknown to His Majesty, whose pleasure on hearing it was equal to his surprise. He was impatient to know whose it was — the Baron then produced the delinquent and asked leave to present him to His Majesty as one who was too conscious of his faults to attempt an excuse for them. The intercession was accepted without any difficulty. Handel was restored to favor." The score composed for the occasion was the *Water Music*.

In years to come, Handel was honored and often affectionately treated by the court and the high aristocracy. He became the musical idol of England's slowly burgeoning democratic audiences. The people-at-large came to hear his music and proudly claimed Handel as one of their countrymen, although he never lost his heavy German accent.

It was in England that Handel produced the remainder of his truly colossal *oeuvre* of vocal and instrumental scores in every medium known at that time. His genius, of course, was the mysterious source of this compositional achievement. But the amount of energy, discipline, and self-denial required to accomplish such feats is almost beyond comprehension. If we look at the catalog of his collected works in any of the musical dictionaries, we can begin to assess the enormity of Handel's productivity. When in 1824 Joseph Andreas Stumpff, a German musician and harp manufacturer who lived in London for over thirty years, asked Beethoven whom he considered the greatest composer of all time, Beethoven immediately replied: "Handel. To him I bend the knee," and he bent one knee to the floor.

### Tragic Finale

The last years of Handel's life were saddened by blindness, a fate he shared with other great men throughout the ages, among them Homer, Milton, and Handel's contemporary Johann Sebastian Bach. In a contemporary report we read a moving description of Handel's affliction:

"It was a most affecting spectacle to see the venerable musician, whose efforts had charmed the ear of a discerning public, led by the hand of friendship to the front of the stage, to make an obeisance of acknowledgment to his enraptured audience.

"When Handel became blind, though he no longer presided over the Oratorios, he still introduced concertos on the organ between the acts. At first he relied on his memory, but the exertion becoming painful to him, he had recourse to the inexhaustible stores of his rich and fertile imagination. He gave to the band, only such parts of his intended composition, as were to be filled up by their accompaniment; and relied on his own powers of invention to produce, at the impulse of the moment, those captivating passages, which arrested attention, and enchanted his auditors."\*

Handel's former student and devoted friend; John Christopher Smith, faithfully tended him to the very end. According to his wishes, Handel was buried at Westminster Abbey, where a marble monument by the sculptor Roubillac marks his final resting place. We see Handel standing in front of an organ, holding a page from the score of *Messiah* on which we may read the words "I know that my Redeemer liveth."

\*William Coxe, *Anecdotes of George Frederick Handel and John Christopher Smith* (London: W. Bulmer, 1799. Reprint. New York: Da Capo Press, 1979).