



THE UNIVERSITY MUSICAL SOCIETY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

*presents*

## Renaissance City Chamber Players

MISHA RACHLEVSKY

*Artistic Director*

Sunday Morning, June 30, 1985, at 11:00  
Rackham Auditorium, Ann Arbor, Michigan

### PROGRAM

Rounds for String Orchestra ..... Diamond  
Allegro molto vivace  
Adagio  
Allegro vigoroso

Chamber Symphony in C minor, Op. 110a ..... Shostakovich  
Largo  
Allegro molto  
Allegretto  
Largo  
Largo

*The audience is requested to refrain from applause following this piece.*

Contrapunctus No. 1 from The Art of the Fugue ..... Bach

Symphony for Strings in C major, No. 9 ..... Mendelssohn  
Grave, allegro  
Andante  
Scherzo  
Allegro vivace

Sonata for Strings in A major, No.2 ..... Rossini  
Allegro  
Andantino  
Allegro

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## PROGRAM NOTES

by Larry Giannola and Avigdor Zaromp

Rounds for String Orchestra . . . . . David Diamond  
(b. 1915)

Born in Rochester, New York, David Leo Diamond studied at the Eastman School and later in France with Nadia Boulanger. There, Diamond made other contacts which influenced his work, including Gide, Ravel, and Stravinsky. His first orchestral piece of popularity, *Psalm*, was written in 1936 and received the Juilliard Publication Award. From that point, his work has been performed by orchestras and conductors of great merit. Diamond has taught at Salzburg, Harvard, and the Manhattan School of Music, where he chaired the composition department. His work is almost all neoclassical, including pieces in various genres for strings.

"Rounds" was commissioned by Dimitri Mitropoulos, who conducted its première in 1944. The composer recalls: "Almost all of the new music Mitropoulos had been performing at this time was of the twelve-note school, and he was undergoing depressions and doubts as to the quality of general melancholia in this music. So he asked me, 'Write me a happy work. These are distressing times. . . make me happy.'"

The piece is in three movements, played without pause. The counterpoint is remarkable, ingeniously using every note to its fullest impact. As expected, "Rounds" is composed of canons and fugues intricately woven into all three movements. The first movement opens with a staccato figure, passed from section to section of the orchestra. Other ideas follow, presented also in "round" fashion. As the tempo shifts, the slow movement begins. Here the range of each of the instruments of the orchestra is explored with frequent solo interludes. The finale returns to the main theme presented in the beginning, but surrounds and contrasts it with new complex material.

L. G.

Chamber Symphony in C minor, Op. 110a . . . . . Dmitri Shostakovich  
(1906-1975)

Shostakovich is clearly the first internationally acclaimed composer to emerge from the Soviet regime. He was always intensely loyal to his country, despite the sometimes fickle nature with which he was treated by officials there. He fell into disfavor twice during his lifetime, but was accepted back into their good graces before too much time elapsed. He accepted these irresolute fluctuations with great resiliency.

This Chamber Symphony is an adaptation from the composer's String Quartet No. 8, and it is both autobiographical and intensely personal. During the Second World War, Shostakovich lived through the terrible siege of Leningrad, which he memorialized in his Seventh Symphony, saying that the Russian people would never forget or forgive the Nazis' attempt to destroy Slavic culture. On July 14, 1960, he finished his Eighth String Quartet and dedicated it to "the memory of the victims of fascism and War." He even gave it his signature, the notes D, E-flat, C, B, which are a sort of musical cryptogram derived from the German designations of the notes of the scale and the German spelling of his name: D. SCHostakovitch. These are the opening notes of the first, third, and fifth movements and are interlaced through the entire work as well.

The musical ideas flow one to the other in an uninterrupted sequence of five movements. Shostakovich borrowed from his own works and wove them into a tapestry which reveals poignant emotionalism in the slow movements and a plaintive outcry against the cruelties of war in the hard-driving, malevolent-sounding faster sections. We hear bits and pieces of his First Symphony, the Piano Trio, and the First Cello Concerto. The fourth movement reveals a quotation from the lingering beauty of the revolutionary Russian song "Languishing in Prison." Immediately following is a melody from Act III of *Lady Macbeth*. This composition is a fitting tribute to what is now called Shostakovich's middle period.

L. G.

Contrapunctus No. 1 from The Art of the Fugue . . . . . Johann Sebastian Bach  
(1685-1750)

The Art of the Fugue is a monumental work on a single theme, which Bach undertook during the last phase of his life. Unfortunately, he did not leave precise instructions as to the order of the

fugues, and even the musical instruments were not specified. An organ performance is considered among many to be the most authentic. Indeed, the voices are within an easy grasp of a keyboard player with an average hand span. It should be noted, however, that Bach himself published many of his scores with more than one instrumental arrangement, suggesting that the choice of instruments, within reason, is not authentically crucial.

The basic theme of this work is based on the D minor triad, D-A-F-D, which, in itself, is not very unusual or extraordinary. However, the ideas that are built on this combination, with the subsequent continuation, are among the most profound achievements of the human mind. The first of these pieces, which presents the theme in its basic form, is an ingenious four-part fugue. The subsequent fugues (not performed on this occasion) present the theme in different shapes and forms, which include inversions, mirror reflections, different rhythmic patterns, and combinations of the above.

A. Z.

Symphony for Strings in C major, No. 9 . . . . . Felix Mendelssohn  
(1809-1847)

Opinions about Mendelssohn's status as a composer vary. Those who claim that his music was not as profound as that of Mozart or Beethoven bring up the fact that he was born into an affluent family, and thus did not receive his fair share of suffering and misery. One may come up with numerous non-affluent composers, however, who still failed to reach the height of the most prominent masters. While it can be reasonably argued that Mendelssohn's music is not as daring and innovative as that of Beethoven, the rich charm of his music cannot be denied.

Like Mozart, Mendelssohn was a child prodigy, and his material wealth did not result in a substantially longer life. It did, however, help him to receive early recognition. Among Mendelssohn's early output were the twelve symphonies for strings, which he composed between 1821 and 1823. These youthful works were subsequently rejected by the composer and were saved from oblivion by his sister, Fanny. Even so, they were gathering dust in the Berlin State Library as recently as 1970.

The first six symphonies show the heavy influence of earlier composers, in particular C. P. E. Bach and Wilhelm Friedemann Bach. Mendelssohn was under the spell of the Bach family during most of his life, even though his mature style reflected his own period. The Symphonies Nos. 7 and 8 serve a pivotal role between the early influence and his later development. The ninth string symphony is the first one in which he breaks away almost completely from these earlier influences.

That such a dramatic development took place between the ages of 12 and 14 is nothing short of amazing. These works are not merely some curious creations of a gifted child, but represent highly developed musical concepts and forms that would be considered an enviable achievement at any age. The movements have a structure similar to that of a symphony, except that they were written for strings only. (No. 8 has been fully orchestrated.) Furthermore, most of the string symphonies contain three movements, rather than the traditional four.

A. Z.

Sonata for Strings in A major, No. 2 . . . . . Gioacchino Rossini  
(1792-1868)

Rossini is known, of course, primarily for his operas and some of their famous overtures. One common characteristic of the overtures is the long, gradual crescendo, which is his most telling stylistic signature. This element is not so conspicuously present in his set of six sonatas for strings, and for good reason. He was only twelve years old when he wrote them. A substantial influence of the styles of Haydn and Mozart is readily recognizable.

While these pieces might not be profound in the absolute sense, they nevertheless display an astonishing maturity for a twelve-year-old. According to the manuscript, these sonatas were composed in three days. Even if one doubts this claim, his incredibly fast output was well documented during his later years.

The opening hesitant descending second intervals of the first movement are indicative of Haydn's influence. The first theme is likewise Haydnesque or Mozartian in character, but the following flamboyant scale passages already hint at a later style. The second movement is unpretentious and lyrical, a rather transparent imitation of Mozart. The concluding Rondo is a fast, merry movement, not thematically very inventive — the short main theme is repeated throughout the movement — but it is concise and not boring by any means. It is a very youthful classical style, and a secondary theme near the end is almost a direct quotation from Mozart.

A. Z.

## About the Artists

Since its founding in 1978 by Misha Rachlevsky, Renaissance Concerts has become a major cultural resource in Michigan, serving an audience of over 200,000 people through more than 500 live concerts and radio broadcasts. In July 1979 Renaissance Concerts launched the "Nightcap with Mozart" series of late-night chamber concerts in the Birmingham Unitarian Church in Bloomfield Hills, a series which provides an intriguing and entertaining alternative to more commonplace late-night entertainments. An additional space for chamber music was then found in the Edsel & Eleanor Ford House in Grosse Pointe Shores, which continues to be one of the group's most popular locales. The 1981-82 season was highlighted by the introduction of the "Music for a Renaissance City" series at Detroit's Orchestra Hall. Another audience was found in 1982 by introducing a series of weekday luncheon concerts at the Ford House targeted primarily at senior citizens. To date, the program has served over seventy senior citizen and community groups in the tri-county area. Providing further outreach in the community is Detroit's classical music station WQRS-FM, which has co-sponsored many of the activities of Renaissance Concerts since 1979. This cooperation between WQRS and Renaissance Concerts represented the station's first co-sponsorship arrangement with a local arts organization.

In January 1984 Renaissance Concerts announced the formation of the Renaissance City Chamber Players, a conductorless ensemble of eleven string virtuosi chosen from 500 applicants in nationwide auditions. Performing as a chamber orchestra and in quartets, trios, and other combinations, this full-time ensemble provides chamber music concerts in a variety of settings and locations. Its first full season, 1984-85, included series at Orchestra Hall, the Edsel & Eleanor Ford House, and "Nightcap with Mozart" in Bloomfield Hills.

Following this Summer Festival appearance, their first in Ann Arbor, the Renaissance City Chamber Players will embark for France, where they will present this same concert in the Toulon Summer Festival on July 3, and also give a concert in Tours. Later in the summer, the Players will journey to Finland, where they will serve as the resident chamber ensemble in the festival at Vaasa.

Misha Rachlevsky, founder and artistic director of Renaissance Concerts, was born in Moscow in 1946. He began playing at the age of five and was giving public performances two years later. By the time he was nineteen, he was a member of the Moscow Chamber Orchestra. He continued his education at the Moscow Institute of Music, from which he graduated in 1970 in both teaching and performing. Mr. Rachlevsky left Russia in 1973, and, prior to coming to Detroit to play with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra in 1976, he worked with orchestras and made solo appearances in Israel, South Africa, Mexico, and Canada.

After his arrival in Detroit, Misha Rachlevsky began to formulate some of his dreams and goals, based upon his love of chamber music and his belief that chamber music is the highest form of music-making. Thus, Renaissance Concerts was born, and the creation of the Renaissance City Chamber Players in 1984 completes the spectrum of performing arts organizations in Detroit, providing full seasons of chamber music in a wide variety of settings and locations.

A most important date in Misha Rachlevsky's life: July 4, 1983. On that day at Detroit's Hart Plaza, he was sworn in as a citizen of the United States. He now answers the question "Where are you from?" firmly and truthfully, "West Bloomfield."

## The Musicians

### *Violins*

Misha Rachlevsky  
Anatoli Cheiniouk  
Ann Elliott  
Marla Smith  
Sharon Stanis  
Daria Tedeschi

### *Violas*

Joanna Hood  
Margaret Lang Van Lunen

### *Cellos*

Pamela Highbaugh  
Martha Reikow

### *Double Bass*

Jeffrey Turner

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