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Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

Vladimir Ashkenazy, Music Director and Conductor

Monday Evening, November 16, 1992, at 8:00
Hill Auditorium, Ann Arbor, Michigan

PROGRAM

Overture and Incidental Music
to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Mendelssohn
 Overture
 Intermezzo
 Wedding March

Tintagel Bax

INTERMISSION

Symphony No. 10 in E minor, Op. 93 Shostakovich
 Moderato
 Allegro
 Allegretto — Largo
 Andante — Allegro

The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra appears by arrangement with ICM Artists, Ltd., New York, Lee Lamont, President.
Special thanks go to Mark Rosenfeld, Jon Gordon, Alan Mandel, Ann Schriber, and others at Jacobson's for their commitment
to the University Musical Society and the arts of this region.

Overture and Incidental Music to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Op. 21

Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847)

When Mendelssohn was seventeen, he and his sister Fanny used to sit in the garden of their Berlin home on warm summer days, reading aloud the German translations of Shakespeare's plays. Young Felix was especially captivated by *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and would often act out some of the roles. In July, 1826, he thought of writing a descriptive piece to be called *A Midsummer Night's Dream Overture* and in August it was done. Fanny and he played it for friends as a piano duet in November; the next month it was orchestrated, and in February 1827 it had its premiere.

Young Mendelssohn dedicated the overture to the Crown Prince of Prussia. In 1843, when the Prince had become King Friedrich Wilhelm IV, he asked Mendelssohn to write some incidental music for a production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in the theater of his new palace in Potsdam.

The *Overture*, an astounding invention for a composer of seventeen or seventy, conjures up the fairyland envisaged by Shakespeare and sets the scene and spirit of what is to come. The *Intermezzo* is a passionate piece played after a supernatural spell breaks up old loves and brings together new ones. The famous *Wedding March* introduces Act I and the celebration of the marriages of three pairs of characters in the play.

Tintagel, Symphonic Poem

Sir Arnold Bax (1883–1953)

Bax was an unabashedly romantic artist whose temperament was formed not at the Royal Academy of Music, which he left in mid-course, but in a kind of Bohemian ferment that reached a climax in a love affair in and with Russia. He was also drawn to the Celtic revival, the poetry of W. B. Yeats, and developed a personal friendship with the poet-philosopher-painter George Russell (known as "A.E."). Bax spent

long periods of time in Ireland and even wrote and published several novels there under an Irish pseudonym. In later years, he was showered with official recognition, named an honorary Doctor of Music by Oxford University, knighted by King George VI at his coronation in 1937, and appointed Master of the King's Musick in 1941. His weighty life's work includes seven important symphonies that used to be widely performed in Europe and America.

Among the finest works of his early maturity are several symphonic poems inspired by Celtic legend and poetry. One of the best of them is *Tintagel*, composed between 1917 and 1919, the musical evocation of the ruins of a Norman castle of that name on the coast of Cornwall, which is said to have been the birthplace of King Arthur. Although the composer said the piece has "no definite program, this work is intended to evoke a tone-picture of the castle-crowned cliff of Tintagel, and more particularly the wide distances of the Atlantic as seen from the cliffs of Cornwall on a sunny but not windless summer day. In the middle section of the piece, it may be imagined that with the increasing tumult of the sea arise memories of the historical and legendary associations of the place, especially those connected with King Arthur, King Mark, and Tristram and Iseult. Regarding the last named, it will be noticed that at the climax there is a brief reference to one of the subjects in the first act of [Wagner's] *Tristan*."

Symphony No. 10 in E minor, Op. 93

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906–1975)

The number ten has long been a stumbling block for composers of symphonies. Both Bruckner and Mahler wrote nine symphonies but were superstitious about a tenth. Bruckner died before he had completed the work we call his Symphony No. 9, but if we count an unnumbered symphony he wrote as a young man, it is in fact his tenth. Mahler avoided the issue by calling one of his ten completed symphonies a "song-symphony," and giving it no number. When he died, he left an incomplete tenth symphony that was actually his eleventh. Since the time of Haydn and

Mozart, the only well-known composer to reach ten is Shostakovich, who wrote fifteen symphonies.

Shostakovich completed his Tenth Symphony in October 1953; Eugene Mravinsky and the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra gave its premiere on December 17. It was introduced to America by Dmitri Mitropoulos and the New York Philharmonic in 1954, and despite a mixed reception, it won the New York Music Critics Circle Award as the outstanding new orchestral work of the year. In Moscow, a three-day conference of such official bodies as the Union of Composers, the Committee on Music Criticism, and the Committee on Chamber and Symphonic Music at first attacked the composer for his pessimism and for favoring form over content in the score. But soon influential voices were raised on its behalf. The composer Aram Khachaturian called it "a true symphony of deep emotional and philosophical content." After listening to professional critics, Shostakovich said, "it would be much more interesting to me to know what the listener thinks. I wanted to portray human emotions and passions," and, he added, he wished the Symphony to tell of the ideas and aspirations of people who love and strive for peace.

The entire work seems to generate from a somber basic motto played by the low strings at the beginning of the first movement, *Moderato*. The motion is enlivened into an undulating waltz, a development section builds tension, and the movement closes quietly with the slow motto. The second movement is a short, frenzied scherzo, *Allegro*, strongly underlined by the percussion section. In the third movement, *Allegretto*, the principal theme is a transformation of the opening motto. There is a slow and serious contrasting middle section, *Largo*, which the composer described as a nocturne. Soon the music becomes more animated and dramatic, but then it dies away with recollections of earlier themes. A long and serious *Andante* introduces the finale, but one of its most touching phrases is converted into a cheerful and saucy theme that opens the main portion of the movement, a spirited *Allegro*.

Another serious slow section quotes from the third movement, but the animated music returns to bring the Symphony to a rousing conclusion. —

Notes by Leonard Burkat

ABOUT THE ARTISTS



Vladimir Ashkenazy

In the thirty years since **Vladimir Ashkenazy** confirmed his international standing with his First Prize at the 1962 Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow, his life has already encompassed more than one career. Internationally recognized as a master pianist, he appears each season in the great music centers, both in concert and in recital, offering a wide range of works from his expansive repertoire.

During the last fifteen years he has become increasingly active as a conductor and, in 1987, was appointed Music Director of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. Since then he has maintained an intensive schedule of engagements with the orchestra in London and abroad.

A particular highlight among his recent projects with the RPO were concerts in Moscow in November 1989, marking Mr. Ashkenazy's first return to the Soviet Union in twenty-six years. The performances were recorded and broadcast to an international television audience, which was able to share in the opening concert live by satellite. The Moscow concerts were followed by an equally successful tour of Japan. In September

It's A Grand Night for Singing

Handel's Messiah Ann Arbor Symphony Orchestra University Choral Union

Saturday, December 5,
8 p.m.

Sunday, December 6,
2 p.m.

Hill Auditorium

Join this Ann Arbor holiday tradition when the University Choral Union celebrates its 250th performance of *Messiah* during the 250th anniversary of its premiere in Dublin. With soloists Kaaren Erickson, Gail Dubinbaum, Jon Humphrey, and Gary Relyea.

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1991, Mr. Ashkenazy and the RPO completed the first tour of South America in recent years by a London orchestra.

Since September 1987 Mr. Ashkenazy has been Principal Guest Conductor of the Cleveland Orchestra, with whom he performs for several weeks each season in Cleveland and on tour in the United States. In October 1989, he became Chief Conductor of the Radio Symphony Orchestra Berlin, where his tenure extends to 1998. His close association with this orchestra includes many concerts and radio broadcasts in Berlin, as well as extensive touring throughout Europe, Japan, and North America.

Other orchestras with which Mr. Ashkenazy has recently appeared as guest conductor include the Boston Symphony, the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra and the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. This season he is scheduled to conduct the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra.

As a recording artist, Vladimir Ashkenazy maintains a vast catalogue for London/Decca, covering almost all the major works for piano by Mozart, Beethoven, Chopin, Rachmaninoff and Scriabin. His list of recordings as a conductor is growing rapidly and already encompasses the Rachmaninoff symphonies with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Sibelius and Beethoven symphonies and Mozart Piano Concertos with the Philharmonia, and works by Prokofiev and Strauss with the Cleveland Orchestra. He is currently recording the complete Shostakovich symphonies with the RPO, and further major recording projects are planned with the RPO, the Cleveland Orchestra and the RSO Berlin.

Mr. Ashkenazy also remains active as a chamber musician, notably in partnership with Itzhak Perlman and Lynn Harrell, with whom he has performed and recorded many of the great works of the classical and romantic repertoire.

He resides with his family in Lucerne.

Tonight's concert marks Mr. Ashkenazy's seventh appearance in Ann Arbor since his local debut in 1968. Only once before has he performed here as a conductor—with the English Chamber Orchestra in 1978.



Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

Founded by Sir Thomas Beecham, the **Royal Philharmonic** gave its first concert on September 15, 1946. In 1963 the members of the orchestra incorporated themselves into a limited liability company. Each player is a shareholder member of RPO Ltd and elects its ten directors, who include six players, three representatives of business and the Managing Director of the orchestra. In 1966 the Queen conferred the Royal title upon the orchestra.

Vladimir Ashkenazy became Music Director in January 1987, following such illustrious predecessors as Beecham (who held the position until his death in 1961), Rudolf Kempe, Antal Dorati, Walter Weller and, most recently, Andre Previn.

The RPO tours extensively throughout the world and has appeared at many leading international festivals including Athens, Edinburgh, Schleswig-Holstein, Prague Spring, Lucerne and Stresa. Major tours with Mr. Ashkenazy, Andre Previn, and Yehudi Menuhin in recent years have taken the orchestra to the United States, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, the Soviet Union, and throughout Europe.

During the summer of 1990 the orchestra performed on the QE2 with Andre Previn as part of Cunard's 150th anniversary transatlantic cruise. Other recent tours have encompassed Germany and Switzerland (October 1990), Spain (April 1991), and Italy (May 1991).

The orchestra has recorded soundtracks for films, television, and radio, and performed on

television broadcasts. The RPO has an extensive discography that includes several recordings with Andre Previn, with whom the orchestra is currently recording all of the Beethoven symphonies for release on the RCA Victor label. With Ashkenazy the RPO has begun a series of Shostakovich recordings for London/Decca in addition to a number of Tchaikovsky albums. Yuri Temirkanov, the RPO's Principal Guest Conductor, is currently recording a Stravinsky and Tchaikovsky series for RCA Victor.

In 1986 the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra launched RPO Records, becoming the first symphony orchestra in the world to have its own record company. RPO Records is now well established with an impressive catalogue of award-winning recordings that spans nearly three centuries of music in performances with such distinguished artists as Andre Previn, Sir Yehudi Menuhin, Sir Charles Groves, Paul Tortelier and Maria Ewing. RPO Records is particularly proud to have the orchestra's Music Director, Vladimir Ashkenazy, represented in its catalogue with two live recordings from concerts in Moscow, which marked his historic return to the Soviet Union.

After tonight's concert, the RPO will have performed in Ann Arbor six times with as many conductors. The orchestra's association with the University Musical Society goes back to 1950, when it appeared under the direction of its founder, Sir Thomas Beecham. Since then, the RPO has performed here under Vaclav Neumann, Rudolf Kempe, Yehudi Menuhin, and, most recently, Andre Previn.

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

Vladimir Ashkenazy, Music Director

FIRST VIOLINS

Jonathan Carney***
David Towse**
Richard Layton**
Russell Gilbert
Julian Cummings
Kevin Duffy
Charles Nolan
Ken Lawrence
Clive Dobbins
Andrew Klee
Charles Beldom
James Warburton
Marilyn Germains
Geoffrey Palmer
Harriet Davies
Trevor Williams

SECOND VIOLINS

Raymond Ovens*
Michael Dolan
Christopher Lydon
Alain Petitclerc
Cyril Newton
Gil White
Peter Nutting
David Herd
Stephen Merson
Stephen Kear
Guy Bebb
Nina Whitehurst
Colin Huber
Peter Dale

VIOLAS

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David Newland
Mary Samuel
Robin Del Mar
Andrew Sippings
Robert Turner
Peter Sermon
Donald Thompson
Harry Jones
Martin Chivers
Elizabeth Butler
Timothy Welch

CELLOS

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Francois Rive
Andrew Fuller
Tamsy Kaner
Nigel Pinkett
Peter Vel
Christopher Irby
Laurence Cromwell
Helena Binney
William Heggart

DOUBLE BASSES

Jack McCormack*
Roy Benson
Peter Hetherington
Gareth Wood
Neil Watson
Albert Dennis
John Holt
Peter Hodges

FLUTES

Robert Winn*
Julian Coward
Stewart McIlwham
Philip Rowson

PICCOLO

Stewart McIlwham*

OBOES

Christopher Cowie*
Leila Ward*
Susan Smyth
Geoffrey Browne

ENGLISH HORN

Geoffrey Browne*

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Douglas Mitchell
Nicholas Carpenter
Ian Scott

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Michael Chapman*
Alan Hammond
David Chatterton
Philip Tarlton

HORNS

Jeffrey Bryant*
John Binson*
James Rattigan
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Gerald Ruddock
Joseph Atkins

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John Sibley
Roger Argente

TUBA

Christopher McShane*

TIMPANI

Michael Baker*
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Stephen Quigley*
Martin Owens
Peter Chrippes
Gerald Kirby

HARP

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**Associate Concertmaster

*Principal