11/29/31

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EXTRA CONCERT SERIES, 1922-1923

FOURTH SEASON FIRST CONCERT

No. CCCLXXXI COMPLETE SERIES

THE DETROIT SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

OSSIP GABRILOWITSCH, Conductor

INA BOURSKAYA, Soprano, Soloist

MONDAY, OCTOBER 30, 1922, AT EIGHT O'CLOCK
HILL AUDITORIUM, ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

PROGRAM

OVERTURE TO "OBERON" . . . . . *von Weber*

SYMPHONY No. 1, C minor, Opus 68 . . . . . *Brahms*

I. Un poco sostenuto; Allegro
II. Andante sostenuto
III. Un poco allegretto e grazioso
IV. Adagio-Allegro non troppo, ma con brio

Intermission

(a) AIR OF LEL, from the Opera "Sniegourotchka" . *Rimsky-Korsakoff*
(b) BALLADE, from the Opera "Rognieda" . . . . . *Seroff*

MADAME BOURSKAYA

OVERTURE, "1812," Opus 49 . . . . . *Tschaikovsky*

The Mason & Hamlin is the official piano of the Detroit Symphony Society.

MANAGER, WILLIAM E. WALTER

The date of the MARY GARDEN concert in the Choral Union Series has been changed to Tuesday evening, December 5.

OVERTURE TO "OBERON" . . . . . *von Weber*

Carl Maria von Weber was born December 18, 1786, at Eutin; died June 5, 1826, at London.

Few musical works are associated with a more tragic chain of events, or have a stronger appeal to human interest, than does von Weber's last opera, "Oberon." The popularity in London of "Der Freischütz" (produced at Berlin in 1821) had been so great, in spite of the fact that the opera had been presented only in garbled versions, that Kemble, who was the manager of Covent Garden Theater from 1823 until 1837, determined to approach the master with a view to obtaining from him a dramatic composition specially to be written for the London house. With this purpose in view, he left in July, 1825, to make personal negotiations with Weber, who was taking the waters at Ems. With Kemble went Sir George Smart, who was bound for Vienna in order to interview Beethoven in regard to the *tempi* of the movements in that master's symphonies—for Smart was the conductor of the Philharmonic Society in London. Kemble's visit to the composer of "Der Freischütz" was the result of a correspondence concerning the new opera which had ended unsatisfactorily. In his letters, however, Kemble had suggested that Weber should compose an opera of German character, and he mentioned as possible subjects "Faust" and "Oberon." The former was not sympathetic to the composer, but he eagerly fastened on the latter. "Oberon," he was convinced, was the one story that was likely to bring forth the best qualities of his genius. The manager and the musician were still haggling about the remuneration for the work, and it was to settle this matter that Kemble paid his visit to Ems. Weber had long been failing in health before Kemble held out to him the promise of much fame and many riches in Britain. Tuberculosis already was far advanced before he began work upon the score. There was doubt in Weber's mind as to whether the flame of life would burn within him long enough to permit him to complete the opera, and even more doubt concerning the possibility of his being able to conduct the performances of it which his contract with Kemble would require. Dr. Hedenus, the composer's physician, assured him that to compose "Oberon" and to proceed to London in the depth of winter was to invite death. "If you give up any idea of conducting or composing, start at once for Italy, and remain in idleness for at least one year, you may live five or six years longer," said he. "And if not?" asked Weber. "Then it can be a question only of a few months or perhaps of a few weeks." Weber took but a moment to decide. To go to London and to fulfill his contract there would mean considerable money to his family later on. Death was inevitable; a few months more or less would make but little difference. He decided to go on with the composition of the opera and to proceed to London to conduct it.

The narrative is continued by Felix Borowski as follows: "Weber worked with feverish energy upon the score. In his anxiety lest death should overtake him before the last note had been set down, he even made use of material which previously had been employed for other works. The opera, however, was still not quite completed when its creator departed for London, February 7, 1826. The flute player, Fürstenau, devotedly attached to Weber, determined to accompany him on the journey. Sir George Smart had invited the composer to be his guest during the period of his residence in London, but Weber was in parlous case when he arrived in the British metropolis, and Smart, who cared for his illustrious visitor with the most tender solicitude, was far from sanguine that the composer of 'Oberon' would be able to return to Germany. Weber was gambling with Fate. If he could live until the fulfillment of his contract a sum of nearly £1,000 ($5,000) would be ensured to his family. With almost superhuman energy he pulled himself, his hacking cough, his shivering frame, down to the rehearsals at Covent Garden, which began March

19. In general, the rehearsals went well. It is true, however, that some of the singers gave trouble by their demands for more effective arias, and that Weber's nerves and temper were tried by the stage mangaer, Fawcett, whose continual refrain, when this aria or that chorus went badly, was, 'Cut that out!'

"There were sixteen rehearsals altogether, and on the 12th of April, 1826, 'Oberon' was produced for the first time before a house packed with all the notabilities of the kingdom. When Weber entered the orchestra there was intense stillness in the theater, but when he mounted his little platform the throng burst into a storm of enthusiastic welcome. 'For nigh a quarter of an hour,' wrote Baron Max von Weber in his biography of his illustrious father, 'the shouting, the cries of "Hurrah!" the thumping on the benches, the clapping of hands, and, perhaps, more than all, the strange noise of the striking of the fiddle-sticks upon the fiddles, with which in England the musicians greet a musical celebrity, and which was still new to Weber's ears, so bewildered the poor agitated man that he could scarcely recover his scattered senses. With difficulty quiet was restored and the opera permitted to commence.' Throughout the unfolding of the work the applause was incessant. The overture was encored and an attempt was made to encore the whole of the finale of the second act. When the curtain came down upon the last act the enthusiasm rose to extraordinary heights and there were loud calls for the composer. The curtain was raised and Weber, trembling and exhausted, stood before the multitude. 'By God's grace,' he wrote to his wife after the performance, 'I have had tonight such a perfect success as never before.' But the reaction arrived next day. When the faithful Fürstenau came to Weber's rooms in Sir George Smart's house, the composer was lying weak and almost voiceless in an arm-chair. Weber waved aside medicine which his friend pressed upon him. 'Go, go; all these attempts are of no avail,' he gasped. 'I am a shattered machine. Would to God it could be held together until I might embrace once more my Lina and my boys'!

"Exhausted and ill as he was, Weber still had to conduct eleven more performances of 'Oberon' and to appear at a number of concerts in London. He dragged himself to all, growing weaker every day, every hour more certain that it was not the German ocean which rolled between him and his beloved family, but boundless eternity itself. Occasionally he was able to bring himself to the belief that perhaps, after all, destiny would be kind and would grant him time and strength to return to Germany to die. 'How will you receive me? In Heaven's name, alone!' Weber wrote to his wife. 'Let no one disturb my joy of looking again upon my wife, my children, my dearest and my best. Thank God! The end of all is fast approaching!' These were prophetic words. Weber was still speaking of his journey home when he sat panting in his arm-chair on the evening of June 4. Sir George Smart, Moscheles, Fürstenau and Goschen urged him to retire to bed. 'God reward you for all your kind love to me,' he said to them as Fürstenau helped him to mount the staircase to his room. 'Now let me sleep,' the master said as his loyal follower laid him on the bed. They were Weber's last words, for when the composer of 'Oberon' failed to answer to the call next morning the door of his room was broken open by Fürstenau and Sir George Smart, and Weber was discovered lying with his head upon his left arm—dead."

The overture to "Oberon" was written at Sir George Smart's house. Upon the autograph there stands in the composer's writing the following inscription in German: "Finished April 9, 1826, in the morning, at a quarter to twelve, and with it the whole opera 'Oberon.' Soli Deo Gloria!!! C. M. v. Weber."

The overture to "Oberon" is written in sonata form, its material being drawn from music in the opera itself. It begins with a slow Introduction (*Adagio sostenuto*, D major, 4-4 time), the first notes of which represent the sound of Oberon's magic horn, which is answered by muted strings. The figure for flutes and clarinets is taken from the first

scene of the opera (Oberon's palace; introduction and chorus of elves). A tiny march, pianissimo, precedes a short, dreamy passage for strings, which ends in the violas, an exquisitely phrased passage. Then comes a full orchestral crashing chord signalling the main body of the overture.

The brilliant opening measures are taken from the accompaniment figure of the quartet in Act II, "Over the dark blue waters." Then the horn of Oberon is heard again, and is answered by the fanciful, skipping fairy figure leading into the second subject, in A major, given out by the clarinet, which is a quotation from Huon's air, "From Boyhood Trained in Battlefield." The third theme is taken from the peroration of an Act II air of Rezia's, beginning "Ocean! Thou might monster," and is given as a conclusion to the violins, ending the first part (Exposition) of the overture.

The free fantasia (Development Section) begins with the repeated chords in bassoons, horns, drums and basses; short periods develop the first theme which yields to a new theme, treated in fugato against a running contrapuntal counter-theme in the strings. The second theme is treated without elaboration, giving place in turn to the third section (Recapitulation), which contains the first theme and the Rezia motive with which the overture is brought to a showy conclusion.

The overture is scored for two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, kettledrums, and strings.

SYMPHONY No. 1, C minor, Opus 68 . . . . . *Brahms*

Johannes Brahms was born May 7, 1833, at Hamburg; died April 3, 1898, at Vienna.

The reputation of Brahms has consistently made headway and he has gloriously redeemed all that Robert Schumann so enthusiastically prophesied. His position has become unassailable, and circles that at first were lukewarm, or coldly respectful, have become ardent in their appreciation of the elevated concepts and purity of expression that characterize every product of his genius. While the reputation and influence of many contemporaries of the Vienna master have declined somewhat in recent years, his hold on the world of music has been growing more secure. A significant scheme of concerts cannot be imagined in which he is not represented, and strangely enough, the qualities which many thought were lacking in his style are those through which he now makes his strongest appeal. He was considered cold, lacking in melody, deficient in imagination, etc., etc., but no one dreams of making such strictures on his art nowadays. This may be stating it overstrongly, but whereas such criticisms were stated in chorus at one time, the voices are now those of a few isolated solo performers.

The symphony on our program will never be as popular as the perennial D major offering in this form, but although it was his first it contains no hint of the apprentice; it grasps one at the outset, and the grip is tightened when we come to the glorious last movement. Symphonic literature contains not a few works in which the inspiration runs well for a season, but becomes attenuated before the end, so that they frequently stop without ending—dying of inanition. No such criticism can hold when applied to Brahms' work. As a matter of fact, reference is generally made to a superabundance of thematic material and too prodigal a use of orchestral color, the first leading to lack of clearness in outline, and the latter to a clouding of detail through "muddy" orchestration. Fuller-Maitland, in his admirable book on Brahms, referring to this particular symphony, takes up the cudgels in his defense by saying (page 157) "the case is almost parallel to certain poems of Browning—the thoughts are so weighty, the reasoning so close, that the ordinary means of expression are inadequate. To try to re-score such a movement (as the first), with the sacrifice of none of its meaning, is as hopeless a task as to rewrite 'Sordello' in sentences that a child should understand." The German critics have gleefully pointed out the rhythmic resemblance of the principal theme of the last movement to the finale of

Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, but in this connection we must remember Richard Wagner's statement that "The Almighty created Art in order that German criticism might have a new joy." These musical Jack Horners have long since come out of their corners.

(A. A. S.)

The C minor Symphony was begun as early as 1862 and was still unfinished late in 1875. It was first produced at Karlsruhe, November 4, 1876. On March 8, 1877, it was given by the Cambridge Musical Society under the direction of Joachim.

The instrumentation of the C minor Symphony calls for an orchestra of two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, double bassoon, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, kettledrums, and strings.

I. The main movement is preceded by an Introduction (*Un poco sostenuto,* C minor, 6-8 time) the material of which is related to the matter presented in the following *Allegro.* The principal subject of this does not begin at the outset of the *Allegro,* but in the first violins, four measures after it has started. This is worked over at considerable length, and the second theme makes its appearance in the woodwind in E flat major. Note the persistent suggestions of the principal subject in the accompanying parts.

The Development is of great elaborateness. It opens with a working out of the principal subject, but all the material of the first part is woven into the contrapuntal fabric. The Recapitulation brings back the principal themes in the usual keys, and a coda, based on the material which opened the movement, brings this division of the symphony to an end.

II. (*Andante sostenuto,* E major, 3-4 time.) The theme opens in the strings. Sixteen measures after it has begun the woodwind brings forward a continuing section. This is followed by a new idea, presented by the first violins, and a passage in which, in succession, the oboe and the clarinet take a prominent part. There is development and a partial return of the material heard at the beginning of the movement, some of it being sung by a solo violin.

II. There is no scherzo, but in its place a movement (*Un poco allegretto e grazioso,* A flat major, 2-4 time) "which," says Grove, "is not a scherzo so much as a sort of national tune or volkslied of simple sweetness and grace." The opening subject is brought forward by the clarinet, and later by the first violins. Following this comes a new figure in the woodwind, and there is a partial rehearing in the clarinet of the subject which opened the movement. The second part (in reality a trio, although not so named on the score, brings forward a contrasting theme in B major, 6-8 time. The third part does not repeat the first in its entirety, nor even are the subjects presented thematically exact. This concluding division is in relaity more of a suggestion than a re-presentation of the opening section.

IV. The Finale (in this trombones are employed for the first time in the work) opens with an Introduction (*Adagio,* C minor, 4-4 time) sixty-one measures long. The three descending notes in the lower strings and double bassoon are given development in later portions of the movement, and the theme in the first violins, immediately following them, is a foreshadowing of the principal subject of the main division. In the middle of the Introduction a passage of considerable import makes its appearance (*Più andante,* C major) in a motive for the first horn, the muted strings tremulously sustaining the harmony and being reinforced by the sombre notes of the trombones.

The movement proper (*Allegro non troppo, ma con brio,* C major, 4-4 time) begins with the principal subject in the first violins. At the production of the symphony in Vienna there was much talk about what was considered by many to be an intentional allusion in this subject to the opening theme of the Finale of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. Of this similarity, which is more of spirit than of notes, Miss Florence May in her biography of Brahms wrote: "There is no doubt whatever that everybody who listens to Brahms' First Symphony thinks, immediately on the entrance of the final allegro, of Beethoven's Ninth. The association passes with the conclusion of the subject; Brahms' movement develops on its own lines, which do not resemble those of Beethoven."

The principal theme is followed by considerable development, in which figures the

horn motive that had been heard in the course of the Introduction. The second subject is announced, *piano,* by the strings, the accompanying bass being taken from the three descending notes that opened the Introduction. There is a further melody of vigorous character stated, *ff,* by the violins, and a triplet figure that plays an important part, following which the first theme ryeturns, more fully scored than at the beginning of the movement. Development and episodical material now succeed. The Recapitulation does no bring forward the principal theme, but the second subject in C minor. The movement closes (*Più allegro,* 2-2 time) with a coda, in which a new idea is announced by the strings.

(a) Air of Lel, from the Opera "Sniegourotchka" . *Rimsky-Korsakoff*

Nicholas Andreievich Rimsky-Korsakoff was born March 18, 1844, at Tikhvin, near Novgorod; died June 21, 1908, at Petrograd.

One of the greatest Russian composers of all time, Rimsky-Korsakoff has left a rich heritage which is an imperishable part of musical literature. An exquisite craftsman, there is an expressive charm in all his work, and rarely does he sink below a high standard of excellence. He is the most nationally Russian of all that famous contemporary group of composers of which he was a foremost figure, and had the unusual dictinction of financial independence which permitted him to devote himself, unharried by economic problems, to his genius.

"Sniegourotchka" (The Snow Maiden) received its American premiere at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York last season, though the aria which appears on this program had been heard in our concert halls for several seasons.

The cloud addressed the thunder:
"You hurl your mighty bolts
While I pout a sweet and gentle rain
Upon the thirsty blossoms.
The girls will pick the berries
And the boys will chase the girls"—
Lel moi—lel moi—leli', leli', lel.

In the forest, the girls dispersed,
Some in the bushes, some in the fields,
Picking the berries merrily.
When, lo, one of them disappeared.
Her companions cried fearfully:
"The Wolf has taken our friend away"—
Lel moi—lel moi—leli', leli', lel.

Perchance, they met a stranger,
A very, very old man, who spoke to them:
"Silly girls, why do you weep and cry
For your friend?
Better seek behind the bushes,
And you will find her."

—*Free translation from the Russian.*

(b) Ballade, from the Opera "Rognieda" . . . . . *Seroff*

Alexander Nicholaevitch Seroff was born January 23, 1829, at Petrograd; died February 1, 1871, at Petrograd.

Seroff occupies an important place in the history of modern Russian music. He owes his position not so much, perhaps, to his talent as a composer as to his skill in literary work and his temperament for criticism and debate. He entered into the controversies on musical topics especially with an enthusiasm that won for him a considerable reputation.

His best creative efforts were in two operas, "Judith" and "Rognieda," both of which attained marked public approval in Russia.

"Rognieda" is based upon an old Russian legend dealing with the moment of conflict between Christianity and Slavonic paganism. The text was adapted by Seroff himself and the music employs simultaneously—to carry out the contrast—themes of a really Russian character and melodies and harmonies recalling the Gregorian and folk-song modes of ancient music.

Tschaikovsky says of him: "Seroff knew how to catch the crowd—what sensational effects he succeeds in piling up! Seroff had only a mediocre gift, united to great experience, remarkable intellect and extensive erudition. Therefore it is not surprising to find in 'Rognieda' numbers—rare oases in a desert—in which the music is excellent."

The translation of the text of the Ballade is appended:

The blue sea moans—
The threatening waves
Rise high like mountain peaks
And wreck all ships within their path.
But Rogvolod knows no fear—
Rogvolod, swifter than the wind
Boldly rides the stormy seas;
He cheers his brave warriors,
And his powerful call resounds—Aya!

The blue sea groans—
The threatening waves
Rise high like mountain peaks.
But the sea is not an enemy to Rogvolod—
He cries to his warriors bold,
To cheer them on:
"Thou shalt not steal my prey, strong sea—
Rogvolod, more swift than the wind,
Boldly rides the stormy sea."
His warriors answer him,
And their powerful battle-cry resounds—Aya!

—Free translation from the Russian.

Overture, "1812," Opus 49 . . . . . *Tschaikovsky*

Peter Ilyitch Tschaikovsky was born April 25, 1840, at Wotkinsk (Ural District); died November 6, 1893, at Petrograd.

Nicholas Rubinstein, one of Tschaikovsky's biographers, credits himself with suggesting to the composer that a special composition should be contributed for the consecration of the Temple of Christ in Moscow. This suggestion, he says, was made in 1880. "In addition to the church festivity, Rubinstein wished to organize a musical one which should embody the history of the building of this temple—that is to say, the events of the year 1812. Tschaikovsky's fantasia or overture was to be performed in the public square before the cathedral by a colossal orchestra, the big drums to be replaced by salvos of artillery." There is no record how this startling suggestion was received. The Russian hymn, "God, Preserve Thy People," opens the overture, parts of it being developed by woodwinds, violas and 'cellos, respectively. This is worked up to a climax for full orchestra, followed by a calm passage. Then comes the main body of the overture, representing the battle of Borodino, where the Russian hymn mingles with the "Marseillaise," accompanied by peals of artillery. The movement surges forward to a deafening uproar, wherefrom the Russian hymn emerges triumphant. The overture closes with a coda, with the hymn in the basses, and peal of bells.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

MARY GARDEN will appear in the Choral Union Series on TUESDAY, DECEMBER 5, instead of on the date otherwise announced. This change was necessitated by a delay in her return from Europe.

THE DETROIT SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA, VICTOR KOLAR, Conducting, RAOUL VIDAS, Violinist, will give the second concert in the EXTRA CONCERT SERIES Monday evening, November 20.

THE FIRST FACULTY CONCERT will take place in Hill Auditorium, Sunday, November 5, at 4:15 o'clock. No admission charge.

TWILIGHT ORGAN RECITALS will take place regularly every Wednesday at 4:15 o'clock. They will be omitted on account of conflicts in dates on October 25 and November 22.

THE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MUSIC offers instruction in all branches of music. For catalogue call at office, Maynard Street.

THE UNIVERSITY MUSICAL SOCIETY is organized under an Act of the State of Michigan providing for the incorporation of associations not for pecuniary profit. Its purpose is "to cultivate the public taste for music." All fees are placed at the lowest possible point compatible with sound business principles, the financial side serving but as a means to an educational and artistic end, a fact duly recognized by the Treasury Department of the United States by exempting from war tax admissions to concerts given under its auspices, and by the United States Postoffice Department in admitting its publications to second-class privileges.

TRAFFIC REGULATION.—By order of the Police Department, on the nights of Concerts vehicles of all kinds will be prohibited on North University Avenue between Thayer and Ingalls Streets; taxi-cabs must park on the west side of Thayer Street, facing south between North University Avenue and Washington Street; private autos may be parked on Ingalls and Washington Streets. Persons on foot are requested to refrain from leaving from the taxi-cab entrance at the Thayer Street side of the Auditorium.

LOST ARTICLES should be enquired for at the office of Shirley W. Smith, Secretary of the University, in University Hall, where articles found should be left.

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