

The University Musical Society



of The University of Michigan

Presents

The ANN ARBOR *May Festival*

THE PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA
EUGENE ORMANDY, *Musical Director and Conductor*
WILLIAM SMITH, *Assistant Conductor*
EUGENE ORMANDY, *Conducting*

SOLOIST
DIETRICH FISCHER-DIESKAU, *Baritone*

THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 4, 1972, AT 8:30
HILL AUDITORIUM, ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

PROGRAM

Symphony No. 3 (in one movement) HARRIS

Kindertotenlieder MAHLER

Nun will die Sonn' so hell aufgeh'n
Nun seh' ich wohl, warum so dunkle Flammen
Wenn dein Mütterlein
Oft denk' ich, sie sind nur ausgegangen
In diesem Wetter!

DIETRICH FISCHER-DIESKAU

INTERMISSION

*Fantastic Symphony, Op. 14a BERLIOZ

Dreams, Passions
A Ball
Scene in the Meadows
March to the Scaffold
Dream of a Witches' Sabbath

* Available on Columbia Records RCA Red Seal

PROGRAM NOTES

by

GLENN D. MCGEOCH

Symphony No. 3 (in one movement) ROY HARRIS

A little over a quarter of a century ago a virile and tremendously active group of composers appeared in America. Among the outstanding names were those of Marc Blitzstein, George Antheil, Aaron Copland, Henry Cowell, Randall Thompson, Virgil Thomson, Howard Hanson, Walter Piston, Roger Sessions, and Roy Harris (Feb. 12, 1898-). These composers energetically espoused the cause of American music, although as individuals they represented every variety of background, attitude, and musical style. Some were mildly conservative, others daringly experimental, but, in their enthusiasm and newly awakened nationalistic feeling, they possessed a common goal—to uphold the autonomy of their art, to free it from all the extramusical trappings inherited from nineteenth-century Europe, and to make the world aware that America had come of age musically through the discovery of an idiom that was indigenous to her. According to Roger Sessions, writing in *Modern Music* in November of 1927, “young men are dreaming of an entirely different kind of music—a music which derives its power from forms beautiful and significant by virtue of inherent musical weight, rather than intensity and utterance; a music whose impersonality and self-sufficiency preclude the exotic, which takes its impulse from the realities of a passionate logic, which in the authentic freshness of its moods, is the reverse of the ironic, and in its very aloofness from the concrete preoccupations of life, strives rather to contribute form, design, a vision of order and harmony.”

In the decade between 1930 and 1940, the name of Roy Harris emerged with persistent frequency, as the white hope of American music. Critical accolades were showered upon him from every quarter, and, without doubt, during this period he remained the most frequently performed of our serious composers.

Today, however, Harris' idiom, still highly individual, has lost much of its novelty, and the words of prophecy uttered in the twenties and thirties have only partly been fulfilled. His popularity today rests upon relatively few compositions, and of these few, the Third Symphony seems to be the one that has retained all of its original freshness and novelty. It has established itself as one of the most popular and ingratiating works written by a contemporary American, and has remained consistently in the repertoire of our major orchestras. It is the quintessence of his best writing to date, filled as it is with a profusion of elastic, broadly-conceived melody that avoids symmetrical and sequential patterns and, constructed with a largeness of style and firmness of form, all of its factors are co-ordinated toward a unified and eloquent expression. It was written late in 1938 and on February 24, 1939, had its world première in Boston under Serge Koussevitzky, who referred to it as “the first truly great orchestral work to be produced in America.” Few American composers have achieved a greater technical control of their medium and at the same time, a more spontaneous communication of the emotional parallels of human experience.

Kindertotenlieder MAHLER

Perhaps the finest and most representative work of Mahler (1860-1911) as a composer is to be found, not in his lengthy, wandering, and often redundant symphonies, but here where he was free, yet disciplined by the inherent demands of the song, to achieve his effects with directness and immediacy.

The *Kindertotenlieder* was based upon poems written by Friedrich Rückert after the death of his two children. From thirty or more poems, Mahler selected five to set to music, much against the will of his wife, who has written:

"I found this incomprehensible," wrote Frau Alma Maria Mahler, in *Gustav Mahler Memories and Letters*. "I could understand setting such frightful words to music if one had no children, or had lost those one had . . . What I could not understand was bewailing the death of children who were in the best of health and spirits, hardly an hour after having kissed and fondled them. I exclaimed at the time, 'For heaven's sake, don't tempt providence.'"

Providence had either been tempted, or Mahler had had a fateful premonition of a personal tragedy, for in 1907 he lost his eldest daughter, Maria Anna, who died at the age of five. Mahler never escaped from this overwhelming grief until his own death four years later.

Kindertotenlieder

I. Now the sun will rise so brightly, as if the night had brought no misfortune! Misfortune befell me alone! The sun shines on all! Thou must not enfold the night within thee, but must submerge it in eternal light! A little lamp went out before my shrine! Hail the joyous light of the world!

II. Now I see well why such dark flames flashed before me in so many moments! O eyes! O eyes! It is as if thy power had been condensed to a single glance! I did not sense, surrounded by mists of blended destinies, that the ray was sent to prepare a homecoming to the place from which all radiance stems. Thou wouldst have told me with thy light; We would remain with thee, but destiny has struck that from us. Behold us now, for soon we shall be far from thee! What now are only eyes to thee shall be but stars in nights to come.

III. When your mother steps to the door, and I turn my head to greet her, her glance does not fall upon me but upon the place near the threshold where we saw your lovely face when you, my little daughter, used to come in with her, so radiant with joy. When your mother steps to the door in the shimmering candle-light, it seems to me as if you came with her and slipped into the room as you once did. Oh you, heart of your father's heart, light of joy so quickly snuffed out!

IV. Often I think they have only gone out! Soon they will come home again! The day is fine! Be not afraid! They are only taking a long walk. Yes, they have only gone out, and now they will come home! Be not afraid, the day is fine! They are only going to the height! They have only gone before us and will never wish to come home! We shall find them on the height in the sunshine! The day is fine on the height!

V. In this weather, in this tumult, I should never have sent the children out. They were taken from us, taken away, I dared say nothing. In this weather, in this storm, I should never have let the children out. I should have been afraid that they would be taken ill. Now those are idle thoughts. In this weather, in this gruesome atmosphere, I let the children go. I feared they would die the following day. Now there is nothing to be done. In this weather, in this storm, in this tumult, they sleep as if in their mother's house, frightened by no thunder, covered with God's hand; they sleep as if in their mother's house.

Fantastic Symphony, Op. 14a BERLIOZ

Among the Romanticists in art, music, literature, and politics, Hector Berlioz (1803–69) was the most dramatic—the one who most theatrically symbolized the new movement of revolt, not only in his native France, but in all Europe. So intimately identified was his personality and art with the radically progressive spirit of the new literary and social movement that he personified it.

All complexities of the Romantic movement are mirrored in this spectacular music. Although Berlioz occasionally revealed a sensitive, introspective, poetic side, his real creative nature was manifest in a burst of daemonic originality and turbulent passion. He was to the music of his time what his contemporaries Gericault and Delacroix were to painting. As has been said of Delacroix' brush, Berlioz seemed to compose with a "drunken" pen. Like the writings of Victor Hugo and Alexander Dumas, his music became a "glowing tapestry of bewitching color schemes." In his scores, he displayed an immense organizing and creative power beside which the extravagances of many of the other artists of his period seemed reticent and inarticulate. His penchant for the abnormal, grim, and grotesque forced music with such suddenness into new channels of expression that he alone became the source of an entirely new art of orchestration. Here his genius found the greatest scope.

The Fantastic Symphony, composed in 1829-30 when Berlioz was twenty-seven years of age, marked a turning point in his career. It opened an era in which he was to become one of the most influential composers of the century, unremittingly shaping the characteristic musical idioms of his day.

In September of 1827 an English troupe of actors came to Paris and revealed Shakespeare to a generation of rebellious young artists. The open construction of his plays, his disregard for the unities, the violence of his action, and the truthfulness of his characterizations created a sensation. Berlioz attended the first performance of *Hamlet* and was not only intoxicated by Shakespeare, but enraptured by the beauty and talent of a young Ophelia named Harriet Smithson. While writing the Fantastic Symphony, he was in a state of emotional confusion induced by a seemingly hopeless attachment for the beautiful and talented Irish actress. Before the first performance, in compliance with the times that welcomed verbally expressed meanings in music, he provided his symphony with a detailed descriptive program. Unfortunately, he also subtitled the work, an *Episode in the Life of an Artist*. Both imply that the symphony was intended to be a sort of musical autobiography, describing the mental torture of a young man in the throes of unrequited love. The titles of each movement are sufficient to indicate Berlioz' intention, without reproducing it here in all its detail, for immediately after having written it, he expressed his hope that it would not be printed at concerts, but that the music would "of itself, and irrespective of any dramatic aim, offer an interest in the musical sense alone."

In spite of the long appended story, Berlioz did not go beyond the principles of symphonic construction established by Beethoven. Aesthetically, it is impossible to retain them in any measure, and at the same time submit to extramusical intentions, which in themselves would determine the freedom of formal procedures. Berlioz called his symphonies "instrumental dramas," and, endowed as he was with an extraordinary aural and pictorial imagination, he merely conferred upon the fundamental eighteenth-century symphonic framework an incredible variety of melodic, rhythmic, and color contrasts completely unknown to his day. From savage massed effects he could move to the most delicate filigree of sound. For his amazing orchestral sonorities and bizarre instrumentation, he had no models or guides. It is in this area that the "Symphonie" is truly "fantastique." Nothing revolutionary can be said about the formal outline of the work: the first movement (Reveries and Passions) begins with a conventional slow introduction and adopts a modified sonata form with first and second subjects, exposition, and recapitulation; the second movement (A Ball), although a waltz, is in the tradition of the classical *scherzo*; the third movement (Scene in the Meadows) is a large two-part *adagio* (like Beethoven in the choral Ninth Symphony, he reverses the classical order of the second and third movements); the fourth movement (March to the Scaffold) is inserted into the usual four-movement symphony (Beethoven had done the same in his "Pastoral Symphony" No. VI). The fifth movement (Dream of a Witches' Sabbath) has a slow introduction and contrasting themes. It is in the last two movements that the greatest daring and originality are in evidence. Here are heard sonorities and intensities of expression, brought about by dissonant harmonies, clashing rhythms, and polytonality (two or more keys at the same time) utterly unknown before Berlioz created them out of his incredibly fertile mind.