

Ann Arbor May Festival

THE UNIVERSITY MUSICAL SOCIETY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra

LORIN MAAZEL, *Music Consultant*

CHRISTOPH ESCHENBACH

Conductor

ISAAC STERN, *Violinist*

SATURDAY EVENING, MAY 3, 1986, AT 8:00
HILL AUDITORIUM, ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

PROGRAM

Overture to *Benvenuto Cellini* BERLIOZ

Concerto in D major for Violin and Orchestra, Op. 77 BRAHMS

Allegro non troppo

Adagio

Allegro giocoso, ma non troppo vivace

ISAAC STERN, *Violinist*

INTERMISSION

La valse RAVEL

Bolero RAVEL

PROGRAM NOTES

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

Overture to *Benvenuto Cellini* HECTOR BERLIOZ (1803-1869)

Benvenuto Cellini, an artist whose genius was acknowledged by Michelangelo, lived from 1500 to 1571. Both a sculptor and goldsmith, it was as a goldsmith that Cellini was at his best. His masterpiece, the saltcellar of Francis I, displays significant attributes of his style, primarily its grace and extreme ornamentation. His love for the art of Grecian and Roman antiquity shaped this piece of tableware into an expressive art work of classical elegance.

Cellini's style of living was sumptuous and reckless, his amours extravagant even when measured by the extreme standards of the Renaissance. The master craftsman was equally skillful with more dangerous tools than those of his trade; he used a blade or a gun with precision, when other means of persuasion failed.

It was this flamboyant artist who became the hero of a three-act opera by Hector Berlioz. The first performance of the opera, in 1838, was a failure. Berlioz devoted special effort to the creation of an appropriate overture for this music drama and completed two orchestral preludes: the *Roman Carnival Overture* and the one identified by the opera's title. In keeping with tradition, Berlioz selected the motivic material for the overture to *Benvenuto Cellini* from the opera itself. The introductory motive sets a mood of buoyancy, but the music halts shortly after it has begun. Following a pause, we hear a *largo* recalling the aria of Cardinal Salviati. It is Ash Wednesday; the prince of the church offers absolution to the crowd. Among the sinners is Cellini; he seeks forgiveness for the murder of Pompeo, who had been involved in a plot to capture Teresa, Cellini's love (and the opera's leading lady). Next we hear the song of the harlequin (from the second act). The themes are briefly worked out until the stormy introduction returns. The overture rushes on in full flow, reaching a new subject, heard *cantabile*. This melody, set for winds, bespeaks Cellini's love for Teresa, but the lyrical music has a lively accompaniment which pertains to the opera's carnival background. The music once more continues with whimsical patterns as other motives come and go, until the cardinal's aria becomes the cantus firmus and the overture resumes its lively course. A *stretta* rushes to the end.

Concerto in D major for Violin and Orchestra, Op. 77 JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)

The Violin Concerto, which is dedicated to Joseph Joachim, dates from 1878 and was first performed in the Leipzig Gewandhaus on January 1, 1879, with Joachim as soloist and the composer conducting.

Within an interval of 14 years, three composers of the late romantic era each dedicated a violin concerto to Joseph Joachim: Bruch (1866), Brahms (1878), and Dvořák (1880). In addition, Brahms wrote for Joachim the Double Concerto in A minor for violin and cello (1887). What was it in Joachim's personality that inspired such devotion from such respected composers?

Joseph Joachim (1831-1907) was an encyclopedic musician, a composer in his own right, an outstanding pedagogue, a brilliant violin virtuoso, and a master of chamber music. Born in Kitsee, a small Hungarian town near Pressburg (now known as Bratislava), he began to concertize at the age of seven, and at age twelve was selected to perform before a very critical audience in a Leipzig Gewandhaus concert. Eventually, he became assistant concertmaster of the Gewandhaus Orchestra and a teacher at Leipzig's famous conservatory. In Berlin he rose to the directorship of the Hochschule für Ausübende Tonkunst, which he transformed into one of Germany's most prestigious cultural institutions. As an interpreter of chamber music he had no equal, and in 1869 he founded the quartet bearing his name. Apart from his brilliance as an instrumental virtuoso, Joachim's profundity as an interpreter elicited the admiration of the finest musicians of his time. His popularity reached Great Britain, where he was successively awarded the honorary degree of doctor of music from the universities of Cambridge, Oxford, and Glasgow.

Probably Joachim's most brilliant student, and one whose memory is still internationally revered, was Bronislaw Huberman (1882-1947), a *wunderkind* from Czestochowa, Poland. Joachim taught him the Brahms Violin Concerto and Bronislaw mastered the fiendishly difficult new work in record time. He then performed it at a concert in 1896, with Brahms in attendance. Max Kalbeck, the first biographer of Brahms, reported that from the first stroke of the bow, the composer listened attentively, visibly surprised by the quality of his interpretation. After the finale, he rushed to the artist's room, "embraced the young boy and caressed his cheeks." The young violinist's career developed meteorically, and for an entire generation he was considered the incomparable interpreter of the Brahms Concerto.

Music, however, was not Huberman's only vocation: he was deeply involved in the larger social and political issues of his era. He envisioned a master plan for a united Europe, but the advent of Hitler destroyed all hopes for "Pan-Europa." Another powerful idea took root in Huberman's fertile imagination: impressed by the idealism and creative energy of the people of the Holy Land, he decided to found an orchestra in Palestine. Sensational support came from Arturo Toscanini, who agreed to conduct the inaugural concerts of the orchestra. And so, on December 27, 1936, Toscanini raised his baton for the opening performance of the Palestine Symphony. Huberman's fantasy had become a reality.

Some general aspirations that mark the achievements of Joachim and Huberman also characterize the lifework of Isaac Stern. Beyond their high level of music-making, the three virtuosos have transgressed the limits and routine of concertizing, freeing themselves for additional humanitarian involvement. Just as his illustrious predecessors, Stern is a man of vision and action, a builder of musical organizations, and a guardian and protector of musical heritage. In this anniversary year of Andrew Carnegie, one cannot forget that it was Stern who saved New York's Carnegie Hall from demolition. He devotes a great deal of his time and energy to the development of musical life on a global scale, from America to Israel, and reaching to the Orient. Aspects of his work have been seen on film and admired everywhere.

In Israel, that young nation with a fomenting culture, daily struggling for its very existence, Stern is recognized as *spiritus rector* of cultural life. During October of 1975, along with Jerusalem's mayor Teddy Kolleck, Stern established the Jerusalem Music Center which has become the scene of extraordinary music-making, much of which has been recorded on the center's audio-visual equipment. In this developing country, Stern has helped and guided numerous gifted young musicians to launch their careers, violinists of the first rank, Itzhak Perlman and Pinchas Zukerman, among them.

As an interpreter of the Brahms Concerto, Stern displays some of the qualities in the bygone performances of Joachim. Nurtured on classical models, as were both Joachim and Huberman, Stern shares their masterful repose, dignity, and flawless technique. Equally reminiscent of his predecessors is Stern's unswerving determination to interpret Brahms's notescript with loyalty both to the letter and to the spirit.

La valse MAURICE RAVEL
(1875-1937)

As the twenty-first century moves closer, the decisive musical figures of our present century emerge with clarity and technical definition. Today, the lifework of Maurice Ravel provides significant scores in almost every medium and genre. His influence on the symphonic repertory cannot be doubted and is in evidence wherever professional orchestras play. What is bound to be continually admired in Ravel's art is his superb craft, the amalgamation of classical French tradition with an experimentation that was ingenious for its time.

"I am Basque!" was Ravel's favorite statement concerning his ethnic and cultural background. His mother was Basque; his father, a French-Swiss engineer. Though he grew up in Montmartre, the traditional seat of the artists' colony in the French capital, the usually taciturn composer spoke warmly of his solidarity with this region marked for centuries by an indigenous culture. The majority of the Basque people live in four of Spain's northern provinces; the minority, to which Ravel belonged, had settled across the border in France. Implacable enemies of tyranny, the Basques are driven by a fierce desire for sovereignty and have long opposed undemocratic policies of government. Soon after the birth of Maurice, the family left their village of Ciboure and settled in Paris. In spite of this move, Ravel keenly felt his ethnic roots throughout his life.

Over several years, Ravel planned the composition of a large-scale symphonic work based on the Viennese waltz. In 1918 Serge Diaghilev (the noted Russian impresario) commissioned Ravel to compose a ballet with a subject of his own choice, and Ravel returned to the waltz project that had remained so long dormant in his mind. Diaghilev, however, did not like the completed score and consequently refused to produce the ballet. Ravel found Diaghilev's response insulting, and a breach between the two artists resulted, never to heal.

Ravel's orchestral allegory, devoted to Johann Strauss, finally received the title *La valse*. In this score, Ravel suggests the ambiance of a Viennese ball. But the French trademark of Ravel's personal style, his blend of lyricism tinged with gentle irony, always rises to the surface. Ravel's score is technically a *tour de force*. The flow of the music is unbroken; the motivic continuity is never lost. *La valse* received its Paris première on December 20, 1920, with Michel Fokine in charge of the production.

Ravel defined his creative intent in the following scenic directions which he added to the orchestral score: "At first the scene is dimmed by a kind of swirling mist, through which one discerns, vaguely and intermittently, the waltzing couples. Little by little the vapors disperse, the illumination grows brighter, revealing an immense ballroom filled with dancers; the blaze of the chandeliers comes to full splendor. An Imperial Court about 1855."

Bolero RAVEL

Ravel wrote Bolero as a ballet in 1928 and dedicated the work to Ida Rubinstein, the noted dancer who commissioned the score. The first concert performance was given in Paris in 1930 by the Lamoureux Orchestra, the composer conducting.

The bolero, a folk dance of Spanish origin, with its castanets accentuating the $\frac{3}{4}$ rhythm, became popular in the early nineteenth century. Ravel originally conceived his *Bolero* as a ballet, and its première in 1928 was enthusiastically greeted. The production displayed a splendid setting, recalling a painting by Goya. To quote the scenario: "On a platform, a girl executes a stylized interpretation of the bolero amid the growing excitement of a crowd of spectators, encouraging her with their applause and their pounding heels."

Technically, Ravel's *Bolero* is based on a consistent, almost relentless employment of the ostinato principle. A melody of 18 bars is set to the bolero rhythm. From its initial quiet announcement, the bolero theme is led through five distinct periods, always accompanied by the ostinato. The instrumental garb of the bolero theme continuously gains in luster and finally emerges in the full splendor of Ravel's virtuoso palette.

After the Paris première, the composer discussed his work in a letter published in the *London Daily Telegraph* in July 1931: "I am particularly desirous that there should be no misunderstanding about this work. It constitutes an experiment in a very special and limited direction and should not be suspected of aiming at achieving anything other or more than it actually does. Before its first performance I issued a warning to the effect that what I had written was a piece . . . consisting wholly of 'orchestral tissue without music' — of one very long, gradual crescendo. There are no contrasts and there is practically no invention save the plan and the manner of its execution. The themes are altogether impersonal . . . folk tunes of the usual Spanish-Arabian kind, and (whatever may have been said to the contrary) the orchestral writing is simple and straightforward throughout, without the slightest attempt at virtuosity . . ."

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About the Artists

Hailed as one of the foremost violinists of this century, **Isaac Stern** looms much larger than that of an instrumental virtuoso: he is one of the most influential cultural forces here and abroad, dedicating his mind and artistry to the good of music and the benefit of mankind. (Please see Dr. Frederick Dorian's overview of the artist included in the Brahms Concerto program note.)

Isaac Stern began his career more than fifty years ago in San Francisco and has performed almost constantly since then, winning critical acclaim worldwide for his virtuosity and range of expression. In addition to his highly acclaimed interpretations of the standard repertoire, Stern is also an avowed champion of contemporary music and has given premières of violin works by Bernstein, Hindemith, Penderecki, Rochberg, and Schuman.

Known equally as well for his best-selling recordings, Stern has received numerous Grammy nominations and awards. In December 1984, when he renewed his recording contract with Columbia Records for another ten years, Columbia recognized his forty-year contribution to their company by naming him Artist Laureate of Columbia Records. His film documentary *From Mao to Mozart: Isaac Stern in China*, which recorded both his concerts and his experiences on that landmark tour, received an Academy Award for the best full-length documentary of 1981 and a special mention at the Cannes Film Festival.

Active as an advocate of many artistic issues, Isaac Stern serves as president of the Carnegie Hall Corporation, was a founding member of the National Council of the Arts, and is chairman of the board of the American-Israel Cultural Foundation. He has received numerous honors from heads of government, the music and business communities, and from humanitarian institutions. He is the first recipient of the Albert Schweitzer Music Award for "a life dedicated to music and devoted to humanity." In December 1984 he was presented with the Kennedy Center Award by President Reagan for his "significant contributions to American culture."

In Ann Arbor Isaac Stern is making his tenth appearance on the Hill Auditorium stage. Tonight marks his fifth May Festival appearance (performing the Brahms Concerto as he did in his 1947 Ann Arbor debut), interspersed with five recitals.

Christoph Eschenbach, long regarded as one of the world's leading pianists, has come to prominence as a conductor in the last decade. Currently principal conductor of the Tonhalle Orchestra of Zurich, he made his first appearance as a conductor in 1972, and in 1975 he made his American podium debut with the San Francisco Symphony. Since that time he has conducted all the major American orchestras and has appeared as conductor at leading American summer festivals. In addition, he has been principal guest conductor of the London Philharmonic and has appeared regularly with the foremost orchestras of Europe.

Born in Breslau, Germany, in 1940, Christoph Eschenbach studied piano first with his mother and subsequently in Hamburg with Eliza Hansen, a former pupil of Artur Schnabel. He won several prizes in his teens, continued his studies at the Cologne Conservatory, and began his active career with extensive tours in 1963. In October 1967 Eschenbach made his Canadian debut in Montreal to great acclaim, and, with the Cleveland Orchestra, made his United States debut in Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 19, K. 459, under George Szell. Since that time he has appeared as soloist with all the major orchestras of this country and has been widely heard in recital. He continues to appear throughout Europe and also has toured Japan, South America, and Israel.

Eschenbach has an extensive discography on the Deutsche Grammophon label in collaboration with Herbert von Karajan, Hans Werner Henze, Seiji Ozawa, Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, and Justus Frantz. His many solo albums include the complete sonatas of Mozart. His EMI recording of Schubert's four-hand piano music with Frantz won a 1983 Edison Award.

Since Christoph Eschenbach's first engagement with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra in 1972, he has appeared many times with the Symphony as piano soloist, conductor, and conductor/pianist. Most recently, he conducted the opening three weeks of the Pittsburgh's 1985-86 season subscription concerts. His two concerts in this May Festival mark his Ann Arbor debut.

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