

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

MARILYN HORNE, *Soprano*

SUNDAY EVENING, MAY 7, 1972, AT 8:30
HILL AUDITORIUM, ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

PROGRAM

*Tocatta, Adagio and Fugue in C major BACH
Transcribed for Orchestra by EUGENE ORMANDY

"Di tanti palpiti" from *Tancredi* }
Willow Song and Prayer from *Otello* } ROSSINI
"Cruda sorte, amor tiranno" from *L'Italiana in Algeri* }

MARILYN HORNE

INTERMISSION

Siegfried's Rhine Journey }
Siegfried's Death and Funeral Music from *Die Götterdämmerung* } WAGNER

Brünnhilde's Immolation and Closing Scene from *Die Götterdämmerung* WAGNER

MISS HORNE

RCA Red Seal

* Available on Columbia Records

PROGRAM NOTES

by

GLENN D. MCGEOCH

Toccatà, Adagio and Fugue in C major BACH
Transcribed for orchestra by Eugene Ormandy

"There is no musical field in which Bach is not dominant and indispensable," wrote Charles Sanford Terry in *Bach, The Historical Approach*. "Music emanated from him with apparent equal ease in all its forms, but not, one is sure, with equal satisfaction. Inadequate material, vocal and instrumental, too often alloyed his pleasure, particularly in the rendering of his larger concerted works. On that account, if for no other, he was happiest at the organ, on which his supreme virtuosity completely expressed his design. Of all others it was the medium most responsive to the emotion that swayed him. In its company he soared in free communion with the high intelligences that inspired him. To it he confided his most intimate thoughts, and could he have foreseen the immortality that posterity bestowed on him, he would undoubtedly have associated it with his favorite instrument."

The Toccata, Adagio and Fugue in C major dates from 1708-17, when Bach was employed as court organist to the Duke of Weimar. During these happy years, the young composer, then in his early twenties, acquired all of the details and subtleties of the organ idiom, in which he soon surpassed all of his predecessors and contemporaries.

As in the case of every other form Bach touched, he likewise transformed the Toccata into a medium of profound expression. In his hands it took on a musical value and architectural firmness quite foreign to it. From an improvisatory, rhapsodic introduction, he gave this Toccata a fullness and completeness of form by passing into a second section, serene and contemplative by contrasts through a transitional passage of great harmonic suspensions, to a telling climax in a highly developed Fugue, where all the brilliant technical devices that can be imagined retain the spirit of the old Toccata.

Mr. Ormandy's transcription has, with telling effect, made full use of the color possibilities of the modern orchestra.

"Di tanti palpiti" from *Tancredi* ROSSINI

Gioacchino Antonio Rossini (1792-1868) began composing operas in 1810. In the next nineteen years he wrote thirty-seven, averaging a new one every three months. In 1829, he wrote his last, *William Tell*, and retired from the field to live on for forty unproductive years. He was one of the giants of the era, and his popularity was unparalleled in the annals of opera. In 1823, at the age of thirty-one, twenty-three of his operas were being performed throughout the world; the public in Spain and Portugal would listen to no other composer. He became equally famous in Russia, South America, and Mexico. In no way was he an intellectual. According to his biographer, Toye, his career was "a tragedy of bad librettos." Yet to Richard Wagner, he was "the first man in the world of art who was truly great and worthy of reverence."

Tancredi was Rossini's tenth opera, and was written when he was twenty-one. It had its première at La Fenice in Venice, February 6, 1813. The first of his serious operas, it established his international fame. It was not designated, however, as an *opera seria*, but rather as a *melodramma eroica*, with a happy ending. Throughout his career, Rossini tried to reform the absurdities that marked Italian opera in his day. In spite of his attempts to curtail the practice, arias were sung with additional and arbitrary vocal ornaments. In *Tancredi*, the role of the hero, originally composed for a contralto, in the castrato tradition, was immediately usurped by the fabulous sopranos of the time, for whom many of the composers specifically wrote their operas. Due to the presence today of such remarkable exponents of the bel canto type of singer for whom Rossini wrote—Callas, Sutherland, Sills, Caballé—this practice has prevailed, and Miss Horne's own embellishments, chosen in these arias to best display the expressive qualities of her particular voice and individual style, is not only traditional but justifiable and desirable.

Tancred (1078–1112) was a hero of the first crusade, taking an active part in the sieges of Antioch and Jerusalem. His exploits are related in Torquato Tasso's epic poem, *Jerusalem Delivered* (1575), and in Voltaire's tragedy, *Tancredi* (1760). Upon these sources Rossini's librettist, Gaetano Rossi based his story. The opera was revived in 1952 for the Florence Festival.

Tancredi has returned to his native land and, in the aria, "Di tanti palpiti," he speaks of his pain and suffering when away from his beloved Amenaide during a forced banishment.

"O tu del mio dolor" ("Willow Song") and "Deh calma, O Ciel" ("Prayer")
 from *Otello* ROSSINI

Rossini considered *The Barber of Seville*, Act II of *William Tell*, and the last act of *Otello*, in which the excerpt on tonight's program occurs, his most significant works, and believed that they, if no others, would survive him. *Otello* was first performed at the Teatro del Fondo in Naples, December 4, 1816. His librettist, one Marchese Berio, took scandalous liberties with Shakespeare's drama, destroying the continuity of the action, transforming Otello into a raving maniac, Iago into a conventional villain, and the famous handkerchief scene into a love letter! Rossini, forced to comply to the persistent demands and wretched taste of his audiences, provided an alternative closing scene in which Otello, convinced of Desdemona's innocence, sings a final conciliatory duet with her, the music of which was taken bodily from his opera, *Armide*.

In the "Willow Song" Desdemona recounts the legend of a maiden wounded by love, as she weeps beneath the sighing branches of a willow tree. Near the end, she interrupts her story, as she has a forboding of her death at the hands of Otello. This moment is dramatically indicated in the music. In the Prayer she asks for surcease from her own grief. Originally written with directness and simplicity, the artistic validity of the embellishments is dependent upon the innate taste of the singer.

"Cruda sorte, amor tiranno" from *L'Italiana in Algeri* ROSSINI

Rossini's first full length *opera buffa*, *L'Italiana in Algeri*, was composed in the same year as his first serious opera, *Tancredi* (1813). Two such diverse and brilliant achievements composed within three months of each other, at the age of twenty-one, attest to his undisputed genius.

The story is a lively farce that revolves around Mastaphá, Bey of Algiers, who, weary of his dull faithful wife, decides to replace her with one of the lively and seductive Italian girls, of whom he has been informed. Conveniently, by a trick of fate, one arrives, unsought. Isabella, the spirited and resourceful heroine, is in search of her beloved Lindoro, captured by pirates and sold to the Bey as a slave. Her ship is driven by a storm to the shores of Algiers, and after being reunited, the lovers, through a number of wily stratagems of incredible complications, sail away, leaving the Bey with no alternative but to return to his faithful wife.

The aria on tonight's program is from Act I. In it, Isabella laments the misfortunes which her fidelity to Lindoro has brought her, but at the end she leaves no doubt in our minds that she is fully capable of meeting any exigency that may arise.

Excerpts from *Die Götterdämmerung* WAGNER

Richard Wagner (1813–83) reached the very peak of his artistic maturity in *The Ring*. Here he towered to the sublime and reached one of the summits of human inspiration. Nothing else in music evidences such tremendous sweep of imagination, such comprehensive conception, so unparalleled integration of divergent elements, and such an overwhelming richness of effect.

In the words of Lawrence Gilman: "There is no such example of sustained and vitalized creative thinking as *The Ring*, which begins in the ancient river's depths and ends in the flaming heavens that consume Valhalla's deities and bring the promise of a new day. It was a work without precedent or pattern. No one before had dreamed of creating a dramatic symphony lasting fourteen hours, organized and integrated and coherent. Only a fanatically daring brain and imagination, only a lunatic or genius, could have projected such a thing; only a superman could have accomplished it."

The following is a paraphrase of Lawrence Gilman's extended descriptions:

Siegfried's Rhine Journey

Siegfried and Brünnhilde have dwelt for a while in Brünnhilde's mountain retreat. The stage-setting is the summit of the Valkyrie's rock. Day dawns, as Siegfried and Brünnhilde enter from a cave. Brünnhilde urges him to fresh exploits, whereupon the hero begins his Rhine-journey. Brünnhilde watches as Siegfried disappears down the mountainside. From afar in the valley comes the sound of his horn. As the curtains close, Wagner's orchestra passes into an extended interlude—a magnificent tonal epic, descriptive of Siegfried's Rhine-journey, from its exultant beginning to its tragic end.

Siegfried's Death and Funeral March

In the second scene of Act III, Siegfried, resting in the woods with the assembled huntsmen, relates to them the tale of his life and adventures. As his narrative approaches its end, two ravens fly up from a bush, and as Siegfried turns to look after them, Hagen, his treacherous enemy, thrusts a spear into his back. The stricken hero sings his last greeting to Brünnhilde and dies. The vassals lift the body of Siegfried upon his shield and bear it in solemn procession over the heights, while the mightiest death-song ever chanted ascends from the instrumental choir.

This is no music of mortal lamentation. It is rather a paean, a tonal glorification. "There is grief for the hero's passing, and there is awe at the catastrophe. But the grief is mixed with thoughts of the high estate into which the chosen one has entered and the awe is turned into exultation, for Wotan will make a place for him at his board among the warriors."

Brünnhilde: Immolation and Closing Scene

This great scene, the finale of *Götterdämmerung*, reveals Wagner at his greatest as a musico-dramatic artist, and nowhere has he reached more exalted heights than in the closing scene of this tremendous music drama. The setting is that of the third scene of Act III of *Götterdämmerung*, beside the Rhine. It is night. The body of the murdered Siegfried lies on its bier in the center of the hall. Brünnhilde, veiled and sovereign, no longer wholly of this world, advances with quiet and tragic solemnity from the back. Then, after gazing long upon Siegfried's body, she turns to the awe-struck vassals, and orders them to build a funeral pyre by the river's edge and to kindle thereon a towering fire that shall consume the dead hero and herself.

As the vassals erect the funeral pyre, Brünnhilde begins that matchless valedictory, overwhelming in its utterance of grief, reproach, and prophecy and lofty dedication, which is the dramatic and musical culmination of the whole Tetralogy. It is a farewell to earth and earthly love and all felicity beside which every other leave-taking in poetry or drama seems dwarfed and limited. But it is also an implied foreshadowing of the new order, the new day of love and justice, which is to succeed the twilight of the gods and the night of their destruction. Brünnhilde's vision is that of a seeress discerning a regenerate world of love and equity; and she prepares to join her dead hero on the pyre in order that she may fulfill the last necessity which shall make that vision a reality.

She turns toward the back, where Siegfried's body has already been laid upon the flower-strewn pyre. She seizes a great firebrand from one of the staring vassals, and hurls it among the logs, which break into sudden flame. In rising ecstasy, she cries aloud her greeting to the dead Siegfried, swings herself onto her horse, and together they leap into the flames.

The fire blazes up, filling the whole space before the hall, as the terrified men and women crowd toward the back. The Rhine overflows, and the Rhine-maidens are seen swimming forward. High in the violins and flutes the motive of "Redemption Through Love" soars above the wreckage and the selfish pride of gods. The hall falls in ruins, an increasing glow in the heavens reveals the doomed god and heroes seated within. Flames seize the castle of those who were once so mighty, and so ruthless, and so proud; and in the orchestra, a final transfigured repetition of the motive of Redeeming Love tells us of the passing of the old order and the coming of a new.

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* Died, February 25, 1972