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THE UNIVERSITY MUSICAL SOCIETY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

The ANN ARBOR
May Festival

THE PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA

EUGENE ORMANDY, *Music Director*

RICCARDO MUTI, *Principal Guest Conductor*

WILLIAM SMITH, *Associate Conductor*

STANISLAW SKROWACZEWSKI, *Conducting*

RUDOLF FIRKUSNY, *Pianist*

THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 24, 1980, AT 8:30

HILL AUDITORIUM, ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

P R O G R A M

Concerto No. 25 in C major for Piano and Orchestra, K. 503 . . . MOZART

Allegro maestoso

Andante

Finale: allegretto

RUDOLF FIRKUSNY

I N T E R M I S S I O N

*Symphonie fantastique, Op. 14a BERLIOZ

Dreams, Passions

A Ball

Scene in the Meadows

March to the Scaffold

Dream of a Witches' Sabbath

*Available on RCA Red Seal Records.

*Rudolf Firkusny: London, Candide, Seraphim, Columbia, Turnabout, Vox,
and DGG Records.*

PROGRAM NOTES

by RICHARD FREED

Concerto No. 25 in C major for
Piano and Orchestra, K. 503 WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART
(1756-1791)

The piano concerto is the category in which Mozart reached the highest degree of perfection as a composer of instrumental music, and this particular Concerto in C major may well be the one concerto in which he achieved the fullest integration of technical and expressive elements. The work suffered a long neglect from Mozart's time to our own, and it is only in the last 30 years or so that it has taken its place in the grand repertory. A parallel may be drawn with the history of neglect and revival of Mozart's opera *Così fan tutte*, and it happens that there are more pertinent musical parallels as well.

Mozart completed this Concerto in Vienna on December 4, 1786, just two days before he finished the score of the *Prague* Symphony (No. 38 in D major, K. 504). The Symphony he introduced in the Bohemian capital the following month when he was basking in the success of *The Marriage of Figaro*; the Concerto may have been performed at once in Vienna or saved for a Lenten première there. His last three concertos before this one—No. 22 in E-flat, K. 482; No. 23 in A, K. 488; No. 24 in C minor, K. 491—are associated with *Figaro*, Nos. 23 and 24 having been written while he was actually at work on the opera, with many apparent echoes of it, especially in the expressive writing for the wind instruments. *Don Giovanni*, commissioned during that visit to Prague, was produced the following October, and *Così fan tutte* did not materialize until January 1790, but it is with *Così*, rather than *Don Giovanni*, that the Concerto shares its most striking features. The parallel, as H. C. Robbins Landon has suggested, is one between "the stage work in which Mozart most brilliantly and perfectly solved the structural, dramatic and musical problems which had occupied so much of his best operatic efforts" and the concerto which "contains the essence of Mozart's approach to the sonata form: unity within diversity." That both *Così* and the K. 503 Concerto are so well known today is a double compliment to today's audiences as well as to the musicians who perform these works.

The opening of this Concerto has been compared frequently with that of the *Jupiter* Symphony: it is not merely festive, as so many C-major works of the period are, but more specifically *majestic*. This was a distinction which Cuthbert Girdlestone emphasized in his book on the Mozart piano concertos, citing the marking of *maestoso* (rather than *brillante*) and stating: "Few of Mozart's compositions show themselves to the world with as original a frontispiece and none opens in such bold tones. Its heroic nature is apparent in its first bars—not the sham heroism of an overture for which a few impersonal formulas suffice, but that which expresses greatness of spirit." For Girdlestone, the parallel was not with the *Jupiter* Symphony but with the String Quintet in C major, K. 515.

The opening tutti is elaborate as well as majestic, introducing four themes. The third, rather startlingly, seems to be a minor-key "pre-echo" of the *Marseillaise*. After the piano enters, we find that this motif and all the others in this movement are related to, or directly derived from, the rhythmic figure in its first four notes. These materials, intriguing enough in their own right, are perhaps less memorable than the themes of several of Mozart's other concertos; it is the masterly handling of them, as more than a few commentators have pointed out, that brings the ever-fresh surprises and delights of this movement—and indeed the work as a whole. "No other work of Mozart's," as Alfred Einstein observed, "has such dimensions, and the dimensions correspond to the power of the symphonic construction and the drastic nature of the modulations. In no other concerto does the relation between the soloist and the orchestra vary so constantly and so unpredictably."

While Robbins Landon cites "the complete negation of any deliberate virtuoso elements" in this Concerto, the polyphonic working-over given the "*Marseillaise*" theme at the end of the first part of the double exposition—eight parts in triple canon—surely qualifies as a brilliant display on the composer's part. It is the sort, however, that is far less likely to be noticed by the listener than bravura passages for the soloist.

The middle movement, while marked *Andante*, is actually a long-breathed *adagio* in feeling. Its relative simplicity and serenity make it both an effective foil for the preceding movement and an ideal transition to the lightness of the concluding rondo, in which the simplest of themes is carried to exalted heights through Mozart's inspired treatment. Here we have witty passages to remind us directly of *Così fan tutte*, passing episodes of affecting tenderness, and over all an impression as aristocratic and majestic, in its way, as that created by the opening movement.

The orchestral complement for this Concerto is the same as for the *Jupiter* Symphony: flute, two oboes, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, timpani and strings.

Symphonie fantastique, Op. 14a HECTOR BERLIOZ
(1803-1869)

On September 11, 1827, the 23-year-old Berlioz attended a performance of *Hamlet* given by a visiting English troupe and was, he recorded later, "overwhelmed," not only by "the sudden and unexpected revelation of Shakespeare," but also by Harriet Smithson, the young Irish actress who played Ophelia. The impact of Shakespeare was to produce several of his finest works—the "dramatic symphony" *Roméo et Juliette*, the three pieces for *Hamlet*, the opera *Béatrice et Benedict* (after *Much Ado About Nothing*) and the *King Lear* Overture—as well as *Lélio*, the curious sequel to the *Symphonie fantastique*, which contains a fantasia on *The Tempest*. The impact of Harriet Smithson inspired the *Fantastique* itself.

As late as 1830, the lady had not even granted Berlioz an audience. In despair over his failure to meet her, and reeling from the gossip circulating about her, he composed the *Symphonie fantastique* (which he published under the title *Episode in the Life of an Artist*) to impress her with the intensity of his ardor. At the première, given at the Paris Conservatoire on December 5, 1830, Berlioz circulated a detailed program for the work, far more explicit than the one ultimately published with the score, and he played the timpani in that first performance, his blazing eyes searching the hall for his beloved as he punished his drums. But Harriet was not there and did not hear the work or read the program (by then less lurid than the original version) until two years later. On that occasion she and Berlioz finally met; they were married the following year and were together through 21 stormy years, until Harriet's death from paralysis (whereupon Berlioz married his mistress, Marie Recio).

The *Symphonie fantastique* may surely be regarded as the grandest revolutionary manifesto of the Romantic era. In addition to its unprecedented quotient of nervous excitement and passion, it shows the simple programmatic character of Beethoven's *Pastoral* Symphony carried to a degree of explicitness never before attempted in a work of such proportions, and Berlioz's introduction of the *idée fixe* was to lead to the *leitmotiv* as exemplified in its use by Wagner. Most significant, though, was the use of the orchestra itself: previously unimagined devices and techniques, for which Berlioz is still regarded as the father of modern orchestration, unleashed for the first time the orchestra's full potential for dramatic color.

There could be no better guide to the programmatic content of the work than Berlioz himself, who described it as follows in his preface to the score:

"A young musician of morbid sensibility and ardent imagination poisons himself with opium in a fit of amorous despair. The narcotic dose, too weak to cause death, plunges him into a heavy sleep accompanied by the strangest visions, during which his sensations, sentiments and recollections are transformed in his sick brain into musical thoughts and images. The beloved one herself has become a melody, a fixed idea which haunts him everywhere.

"DREAMS, PASSIONS. At first he recalls that weariness of soul, those indefinable despairs, the melancholy and the joy which had come and gone inexplicably before he first saw his beloved—then the volcanic passion she had caused to erupt in him, his furious jealousy, his return to tenderness, the consolation of religion.

"A BALL. He finds his beloved at a ball, amid the tumult of a brilliant *fête*.

"SCENE IN THE MEADOWS. On a summer evening in the country he listens to two shepherds playing the *Ranz des vaches* [the tune Swiss cowherds play on their horns or pipes to call their charges]. This pastoral duet, the quiet scene, the gentle rustling of the trees stirred by the breeze, some prospects of hope, which have come to him—all give his heart repose. . . . But *she* returns again: his heart stops, and painful forebodings fill his being—that she would prove false! One of the shepherds resumes his melody, but the other no longer answers him. . . . The sun sets . . . thunder rumbles in the distance . . . solitude . . . silence.

"MARCH TO THE SCAFFOLD. He dreams that he has killed his beloved, that he has been condemned to death and is being led to the scaffold. The procession advances to the sound of a march that is alternately somber and wild, brilliant and solemn. . . . The outbursts of the crowd are followed without pause by the measured tread of ghastly marchers. At last the *idée fixe* returns, a last thought of love—cut short by the fatal fall of the axe.

"DREAM OF A WITCHES' SABBATH. He finds himself at a witches' revel, surrounded by hideous spirits, sorcerers, and monsters who have come to attend his funeral. Strange sounds are heard: groans, laughter, distant shrieks, to which other yells and shrieks seem to reply. The beloved melody appears once more, but stripped of its nobility and gentleness: now it is nothing more than a common, grotesque dance tune. *She* has come to the witches' revel, greeted by howls of joy. She throws herself into the infernal orgy. . . . Funeral bells toll . . . a burlesque parody on the *Dies Irae* . . . a round dance of the witches . . . the witches' dance and the *Dies Irae* together."

About the Artists

Stanislaw Skrowaczewski's accomplishments during his 19-year tenure as Music Director of the Minnesota Orchestra, as well as guest conducting leading orchestras throughout the world, have placed him among the major conducting figures of our era. As a young child in his native Poland, Skrowaczewski studied piano, violin, and composition, and at age thirteen made his debut as a pianist and conductor. When an injury to his hands during a World War II bombing raid terminated his piano career, he turned solely to composition and conducting. Several prizes in composition followed, and by the early 1950s his symphonic works, including "Symphony for Strings" and "Music at Night," were absorbed into the European repertoire and later performed by the orchestras of Philadelphia, Cleveland, New York, and Chicago. One of his recent works, "Concerto for English Horn and Orchestra," presented at Carnegie Hall in 1970, has been recorded and played by leading orchestras both in America and Europe.

In 1946 he became permanent conductor of the Wroclaw (Breslau) Philharmonic and during ensuing years served as Music Director of the Katowice Philharmonic, the Krakow Philharmonic, and the Warsaw National Orchestra. His American debut took place in 1958 with the Cleveland Orchestra at the invitation of George Szell. During the next two years he returned to appear again with the Cleveland, the New York Philharmonic, Pittsburgh, and Cincinnati Symphony Orchestras. In 1960 he became Music Director of the Minnesota Orchestra (then the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra), a position he held until last year. He now devotes his time to guest conducting and composing. He has conducted virtually all the major orchestras in the world and has toured internationally with the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, the French National Orchestra, the Hamburg Radio Symphony, and the Israel Philharmonic. He made his debut with the Philadelphia Orchestra in 1964, and in 1966 traveled as guest conductor with the Philadelphians on their tour of South America. His operatic activities have included appearances with the Vienna and Metropolitan Opera Companies, and he has participated in numerous European festivals, most notably those of Salzburg and Lucerne.

Maestro Skrowaczewski has appeared in Ann Arbor on four previous occasions: in 1962, 1965, 1967, and 1972, all with the Minnesota Orchestra.

Rudolf Firkusny is regarded as one of the greatest pianists of our time, one whose musical elegance, brilliant keyboard mastery, and impeccable taste have won him a world of admirers and international critical acclaim. Born in Czechoslovakia near Brno, Firkusny soon outstripped the teaching capacities of his small village and, at age five, was sent to Leos Janáček who "opened for me the gates of music," says the pianist. He made his debut in Prague at age ten, then went to Paris to study with Alfred Cortot. After further studies with Artur Schnabel, Firkusny undertook his first U.S. tour in 1938, followed by a Town Hall recital in New York in 1941. Shortly after that remarkable debut, Sir Thomas Beecham asked him to play Dvorák's Piano Concerto in the first performance of the work in the U.S. in 65 years. Its brilliant success led to a series of standard-setting performances of Czech masterworks the pianist would play in following years. He has since made many dozens of world tours, performing in recital and with most of the world's leading orchestras and conductors.

Now a United States citizen, the artist's ties with his native land remain firm: in 1968 proceeds from a Carnegie Hall recital were for the benefit of the Czechoslovak people, and in 1979 he was awarded Czechoslovakia's rarely-given Janáček Medal for his cultural contributions to Janáček and Czech music.

Mr. Firkusny's performance this evening is his fifth in Ann Arbor: prior appearances were in 1953 with the Philadelphia Orchestra in the May Festival, and in recital in 1968, 1970, and 1975.

"American Orchestras on Tour"

The Philadelphia Orchestra comes to Ann Arbor this week as part of the "American Orchestras on Tour" program of the Bell System, partially funded by the Bell System in association with the Bell Telephone Company of Michigan. The Philadelphia Orchestra is one of several American orchestras receiving support for cross-country tours to some one hundred cities over the next several years, continuing a long tradition of sponsorship of the arts which began in 1940 with "The Bell Telephone Hour."

Concertgoers are invited to view the display of artist photographs in the first balcony lobby, selected from last year's "Gallery of 100" which hung in the main floor lobby for the Musical Society's Centennial Celebration. Autographed by the performing artists during their visits to Ann Arbor, these enlarged photographs rest in an attractive new setting in the space formerly occupied by the Stearns Collection of Musical Instruments.

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