



*International  
Presentations of  
Music & Dance*

THE UNIVERSITY MUSICAL SOCIETY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

# *May Festival*

THE PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA

RICCARDO MUTI, *Music Director*

EUGENE ORMANDY, *Conductor Laureate*

WILLIAM SMITH, *Associate Conductor*

EUGENE ORMANDY, *Conducting*

BELLA DAVIDOVICH, *Pianist*

SATURDAY EVENING, MAY 1, 1982, AT 8:30  
HILL AUDITORIUM, ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

P R O G R A M

\*Overture to *Egmont*, Op. 84 . . . . . BEETHOVEN

\*Concerto No. 1 in F-sharp minor, Op. 1,  
for Piano and Orchestra . . . . . RACHMANINOFF

Vivace  
Andante  
Allegro vivace

BELLA DAVIDOVICH

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

\*Symphony No. 2 in E minor, Op. 27 . . . . . RACHMANINOFF

Largo, allegro moderato  
Allegro molto  
Adagio  
Allegro vivace

*Angel, \*RCA Red Seal, Delos, Telarc, and \*CBS Masterworks Records.*

*The Philadelphia Orchestra performs in 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.*

## PROGRAM NOTES

by RICHARD FREED

Overture to *Egmont*, Op. 84 . . . . . LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN  
(1770–1827)

Few terms in music have been used to identify so many different notions as the word "overture"—to which basic idea so many more elaborate forms can trace their ancestry. From the Italian opera overture we derived the symphony itself; the overture is still labeled "*Sinfonia*" in Italian opera scores, and we might remember that Haydn's final symphonies were billed in London as "Grand Overtures." From the French overture, Baroque composers devised the instrumental suite. Another sort of opera overture, essentially a potpourri of tunes from the work being introduced, gave rise to the rhapsodic fantasies—particularly those on national themes—which are also called "overtures." And, while Liszt is generally credited with having "invented" the symphonic poem, it must be acknowledged that Beethoven and Mendelssohn both preceded him most actively in that genre—though they called their symphonic poems "overtures."

Like Beethoven's *Leonore* Overtures of 1805 (No. 2) and 1806 (No. 3), his *Egmont* Overture of 1810 is genuine theatre that grew beyond its originally intended dimensions to establish itself as a self-sustaining concert piece of descriptive character—a symphonic poem in everything but name. In none of these overtures does Beethoven attempt to unfold the respective drama scene-by-scene, or even to represent all the important characters; what he gives us is the essence of the drama, in terms of mood and tension. In this music he is celebrating the concept of heroic idealism, a theme of great personal importance to him and one that made the respective stage works so attractive to him.

When Goethe wrote his drama *Egmont* in the 1770s he specified music in his stage directions, but did not hear Beethoven's music for *Egmont* until 1814, four years after it was first performed in Vienna; he expressed the heartiest approval, especially for the handling of the final scene. As for Beethoven, his enthusiasm for writing this incidental music was so great that he quite uncharacteristically refused payment for the score.

The drama is set in Brussels during the Spanish occupation. Egmont (based on the historical Prince Lamoral, Count of Egmont and Gaure), a suspected leader of the brewing rebellion, is arrested by the Duke of Alba, Philip II's representative, and sentenced to be hanged. On the eve of his execution a vision of his fiancée, Clärchen (who had killed herself on learning of his sentence), appears to him as the spirit of freedom, and he faces the gallows with an exhortation to his compatriots to rise up and crush their oppressors. At the end of this final scene, as Egmont is led away, Goethe called for a "Symphony of Victory," and this is what Beethoven provided. The Overture grandly and majestically sets a mood of high tragedy and heroic resolve, and its thrilling coda is nothing less than the "Symphony of Victory" in full. In no other single piece is Beethoven's prevailing concern with "heroic idealism" more succinctly or impactfully projected than in his Overture to *Egmont*.

Concerto No. 1 in F-sharp minor, Op. 1,  
for Piano and Orchestra . . . . . SERGEI RACHMANINOFF  
(1873–1943)

Rachmaninoff was only 18 years old when he composed his First Piano Concerto, but its designation as his Op. 1 is a little misleading, in two respects: first, because he had been active as a composer for some time before he created the work, and second, because we do not hear it now as he composed it in 1891, but in the rather substantial revision he undertook some 26 years later, by which time he had composed two more concertos, two symphonies, a number of tone poems, the choral symphony *The Bells* and three operas, and had established himself on both sides of the Atlantic as a major pianist and conductor as well as an important composer.

At that time the young composer advised that he was "pleased with the concerto," which he dedicated to his cousin and teacher Alexander Siloti (1863–1945), a pupil of Liszt and an active propagandist, as pianist, conductor and concert organizer, for new music by his compatriots. On March 17, 1892, Rachmaninoff performed the Concerto for the first time, with Vasily Safonov conducting, in Moscow. Seven years after the première he found himself a good deal less pleased with the work than he had been—so much so that he declined to perform it in London. Two years after that he had another concerto which he was very happy to perform, and it was not until 1908 that he decided "to take my First Concerto in hand, look it over, and then decide how much time and work will be required for its new version, and whether it's worth doing, anyway." His letter of April 12, 1908, to Nikita Morozov continued: "There are so many requests for this concerto, and it is so terrible in its present form, that I should like to work at it and, if possible, get it into decent shape. Of course it will have to be written all over again, for its orchestration is worse than its music."

He did not proceed to revise the First Concerto then, however, but composed his Third, for his first American tour. By the time he did get around to the revision, during the 1917 Revolution, he was 44 years old and an infinitely more polished craftsman than he had been when he composed the original version. He was able to preserve the youthful enthusiasm of the work (one of his most extroverted compositions) while tightening its structure, giving a more professional cast to the writing for both the piano and the orchestra, and replacing the original cadenza in the first movement with a longer and more appealing one.

Since Rachmaninoff admired Tchaikovsky profoundly, and received a good deal of encouragement from him during the older composer's last years, it is hardly surprising that a work written at that time should open in a distinctly Tchaikovskian vein, as this one does, with a horn proclamation followed immediately by the entrance of the piano. Almost at once, however, the melodic contours take on the character familiar to us—particularly from the Second Symphony and the two concertos composed between the first and final versions of this work—as Rachmaninoff's own. A simple four-note motif emerges as the thematic "germ," not only of the opening movement but of the Concerto as a whole.

No sooner has the first movement come to its rather abrupt end than the second opens with a variant of the "germ" motif, or "motto," stated by the horn. The luminous nocturne that grows out of this introduction gives way in turn to an extremely energetic finale, surely modeled after Tchaikovsky. The middle section of this movement brings one of Rachmaninoff's happiest lyrical inventions, the "big tune" hinted at in the preceding movements but only now fully unveiled; the end is head-long and boisterous.

## Symphony No. 2 in E minor, Op. 27 . . . . . RACHMANINOFF

While Rachmaninoff eventually grew dissatisfied with the original version of his First Concerto, and finally overhauled the score some 25 years after he first performed the work, he did perform the original version with some frequency for a half-dozen years or so, and enjoyed a considerable success with it. His launching of himself as a symphonist, however, proved to be traumatic and nearly put an end to his creative activity before he was out of his twenties. He composed his First Symphony in 1895 and its was introduced a few days before his 24th birthday, in a prestigious concert of the Russian Symphony Society, conducted by Alexander Glazunov. The event was a fiasco. While the young Rachmaninoff was regarded as one of the great hopes of Russian music and so important a work as a symphony from him was approached with the most friendly anticipation, the première brought forth an outpouring of condemnation and invective. Rachmaninoff was stunned, hurt—and paralyzed as a creator. He continued to perform, but withdrew his Symphony after its single performance (it was not heard again until after his death, and now is making its way into the general repertory) and was unable to write anything new for nearly three years until, after a prolonged series of almost daily psychiatric treatment, he produced his Second Concerto. The successful introduction of that work in November 1901 confirmed his full recovery from the long period of depression, and he became more active than ever, not only as a composer and pianist, but also as a conductor. Because his performing activity was eating into the time he needed for composing, Rachmaninoff decided to cut down after his two enormously successful seasons as conductor at the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow, and in 1906 he took his wife and infant daughter to Dresden. It was during this three-year period that both the Second Symphony and the tone poem *The Isle of the Dead* were composed.

Rachmaninoff was not happy with the first draft of the Symphony, and had to force himself to complete the score, after declaring that he had neither the ability nor the desire to write symphonies. Perhaps the failure of the First Symphony still rankled, even after nearly a full decade, after his success in all his subsequent endeavors, after having received the Glinka Prize for the Second Concerto in 1904. In any event, he did complete the Second Symphony, and he conducted the first performance himself on February 8, 1908, in St. Petersburg; the work was a great success, and ten months after the première it brought him another Glinka Prize.

While the Symphony is a long one (it is usually performed, as in the present concert, with some discreet cuts sanctioned by the composer in the 1930s), its language is so straightforward that detailed analysis would be gratuitous. Rachmaninoff's masterly writing for the orchestra, his subtle and evocative use of color, and his sure sense of structural proportion need no more pointing out than the enchanting themes themselves. The four movements constitute a sort of dramatic sequence identified with the specifically Russian symphonic tradition and typified in particular by the Fifth symphonies of Tchaikovsky (1888) and Prokofiev (1944). The first movement, following its brooding and mysterious introduction, is intensely dramatic, alternating between stormy conflict and serene visions and preparing us for still more variety of mood in the movements to come.

In both of Rachmaninoff's four-movement symphonies (the last, No. 3, is in three movements) the scherzo precedes the slow movement. In this work it is vigorous to the point of abandon, but with a lyrical second subject related to the initial motif of the preceding movement, which in fact serves as a "motto" for the entire work. The no less brilliant trio, less animated than the scherzo proper, suggests a procession or parade through a village fair. The brief brass chorale at the end of the movement, suddenly grim and chilling, makes it clear that the scherzo theme itself is actually derived from the *Dies irae*, the ancient chant for the dead, a motif which so obsessed Rachmaninoff throughout his creative life that he cited it in virtually all of his major works—conspicuously in some, subtly disguised in others. (The aforementioned "motto" is also related to it.)

All sorts of programmatic interpretations have been thrust upon the famous *Adagio*—but none by Rachmaninoff himself. Regardless of the particular spiritual or erotic image the music may evoke on the part of individual listeners, there is little that is earthbound in it. The movement opens with a seamless unfolding of the most beautiful melody Rachmaninoff ever conceived; this theme, first sung by the first violins, is succeeded by two others of almost equal loveliness, introduced, respectively, by solo clarinet and by violins and oboe. All three

are traceable to the "motto" theme, which is to be heard in its original form at the end of the movement, following an emotional peak in the form of a grand *fortissimo* climax. Before that point is reached, the horn, English horn and violin are given eloquent solo passages, and there is an extended and memorable reverie for the clarinet.

The finale is a typically Russian-symphonic summing-up in that it undertakes to sweep away the clouds and uncertainties of the preceding movements in a grand extrovert gesture. This character is established without preamble, the exultant theme being more or less an inversion of the "motto." Reminiscences of the earlier movements are evoked—some in substance, some only in spirit—and the radiant coda sets the seal on the joyous completion of a far-ranging musical and emotional pilgrimage.

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### About the Artists

Thoughts from **Eugene Ormandy**, Conductor Laureate, excerpted from an earlier interview with John Rockwell of the *New York Times*:

"You won't believe me: I sometimes don't believe it. How is it that I am still here? *Why?* The reason is that I simply never noticed I was here that long the whole time. Once or twice I talked to the president of the board and said, 'I think it is not fair to the public or to the orchestra,' and he would say, 'You can have any guest conductor you want here, but you stay as music director.'

"My wife said to me, 'How long are you going to keep on?' I said, 'Stopping conducting is like killing me—like stopping my life.' She said to me: 'You *have* to, I want to *live* with you.' The time has to come for everybody to give way to somebody else [and] Mr. Muti has not made it easier for me. 'Any time you want, you just come,' he said. He wouldn't even let me take my name off the dressing room door. He's a very fine colleague.

"I used to be a concert violinist, and a good one. I had an idea of how the violin should sound. When I began to conduct I tried to get that same sound out of the orchestra. Wherever I went, from small orchestras to Minneapolis to Philadelphia, I had that sound. I do it sub-consciously; I don't know how I do it; it's the way I feel. Once a journalist kept asking me about it, and it came out, 'The Philadelphia sound, c'est moi.' But any musician has his sound. When Heifetz plays any violin, it sounds the same—it's his hand, his bow. Kreisler could make a cheap little cigar box sound like a Stradivarius, which he had. It's the person that makes the sound.

"This orchestra is different from others in one way. They make jokes with you; they're more human. At least they do with any conductor who lets them, and I *always* let them. I'm one of the boys, no better than the last second violinist. We are all *musicians*, my heavens. I'm just the lucky one to be standing in the center telling them how to play.

"It's awful to see a bored conductor. *Timebeaters*—those are the depressing ones. There should be meaning to every beat somebody conducts. Every time I walk out on a stage—the door opens and I walk on—it's a challenge for me, a new experience. Even the Fifth Beethoven for the 3,000th time. I have to *prove* myself again—to the critics, to the audience, and to the orchestra."

**Bella Davidovich** has been established as "a leading pianist of the day" (*New York Times*) in the very short time since her sold-out American debut at Carnegie Hall in October 1979. Until her emigration from Russia to the United States in 1978, her travels had been restricted mainly to the Eastern block countries. Within a month after arriving in the United States, she undertook a tour of Europe that encompassed three concerts in Amsterdam, two in Sweden, a week in Switzerland, and recitals in Antwerp and Munich. Her electrifying Carnegie Hall debut the following fall marked the beginning of a major career in the United States, with over 140 engagements to follow in her first two seasons.

Mme Davidovich was born into a family of musicians in Baku, Azerbaijan, in the Caucasus. She entered the music school in Baku and from there progressed to the Moscow Conservatory, winning First Prize in the 1949 Chopin Competition in Warsaw while a third-year student. Her career as a concert pianist dates from 1950 when she formed a close association with the Leningrad Symphony Orchestra, appearing with them every season for the next 28 years under conductors such as Kiril Kondrashin, Evgeni Svetlanov, Kurt Sanderling, and David Oistrakh. In that period there was scarcely a town within the Soviet Union where Mme Davidovich did not perform. She averaged around 70 concerts per season and made 14 recordings for Melodia which included recitals and concertos. There were also duo performances with her late husband, violinist Julian Sitkovetsky. Following his death in 1958, she formed another duo with violinist Igor Oistrakh, with whom she recorded sonatas by Beethoven and Schubert. In addition to her demanding performance schedule, she also served on the teaching staff of the Moscow Conservatory.

Mme Davidovich, who makes her Ann Arbor debut this evening, now lives in New York with her mother, sister, and son, violinist Dimitri Sitkovetsky.

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