

Ninetieth
**Ann Arbor
May Festival
1983**

THE PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA

RICCARDO MUTI, *Music Director*
EUGENE ORMANDY, *Conductor Laureate*
WILLIAM SMITH, *Associate Conductor*

RICCARDO MUTI, *Conducting*

SATURDAY EVENING, APRIL 30, 1983, AT 8:30
HILL AUDITORIUM, ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

PROGRAM

Overture, *I Vespri Siciliani* VERDI

*Symphony No. 4 in D minor, Op. 120. SCHUMANN
Ziemlich langsam, lebhaft
Romanze: ziemlich langsam
Scherzo: lebhaft
Finale: lebhaft

INTERMISSION

*Symphony No. 9 in C major ("The Great") SCHUBERT
Andante, allegro ma non troppo
Andante con moto
Scherzo: allegro vivace
Finale: allegro vivace

*RCA Red Seal, CBS Masterworks Records.

Our special 90th May Festival Souvenir Book is available for only two dollars in the main floor and first balcony lobbies. Its more than 60 pages contain complete program annotations and extensive artist biographies for all four concerts, plus a pictorial section devoted to the May Festival from its inception in 1894 . . . on sale during intermission and before and after each concert.

The University Musical Society expresses thanks to Malloy Lithographing, Inc. for its generosity and service to the community in partially underwriting the printing costs of this concert program.

This concert by The Philadelphia Orchestra has been underwritten, in part, by the Bell Telephone Company of Michigan in association with the Bell System's "American Orchestras on Tour" program.

PROGRAM NOTES

by RICHARD FREED

Overture, *I Vespri Siciliani* GIUSEPPE VERDI (1813-1901)

I Vespri Siciliani ("The Sicilian Vespers"), commissioned for the Paris Exhibition of 1855, was the 19th of Verdi's operas, the first one he wrote to a French libretto (by Eugène Scribe and Charles Duveyrier), and his first to have its première at the Paris Opera (June 13, 1855). The story of a patriotic uprising against the French occupation forces in 13th-century Sicily, though it didn't disturb the French audiences some five centuries after the event, was not approved for presentation in Italy at that time, and Verdi's music, adapted to an entirely different libretto by E. Caimi, was presented at La Scala under the title *Giovanna di Guzman* on February 4, 1856. Five years later, with Italian independence at last a reality, the original libretto was translated into Italian, and since then the opera has been best known in this version, as *I Vespri Siciliani*.

The qualifying comment, of course, is that the opera itself is not at all well-known. It is generally adjudged one of Verdi's weaker efforts and, with the exception of the noble bass aria "*O tu, Palermo*," it is remembered only for its Overture, of which Francis Toye, Verdi's first English biographer, wrote: "Undoubtedly the best thing about the opera is the overture, perhaps the most successful written by the composer, which is both vigorous and ingenious." Fiery and lyrical themes, all of them typical of Verdi at his most dramatically expressive, alternate in such a way as to constitute a most effective little tone poem embodying the essence of the drama.

Symphony No. 4 in D minor, Op. 120..... ROBERT SCHUMANN (1810-1856)

Schumann characteristically concentrated on a single medium at a time in his creative efforts, and 1841 was a year for symphonies. In addition to the "Concert Fantasy" which eventually became the first movement of his Piano Concerto, he wrote his First Symphony, in B-flat, which he labeled the *Spring* Symphony, and this Symphony in D minor, which was then his Second.

Less than a week was required for Schumann to compose this Symphony, and not much longer to orchestrate it. When Ferdinand David conducted the première in Leipzig, on December 6, 1841, the work was billed as "Symphony No. 2." Schumann was not entirely pleased with it, and withheld it from publication for more than a decade, during which time he published his C major Symphony of 1846 as No. 2 and the *Rhenish* Symphony of 1850 as No. 3. When he undertook his revision of the D minor in December 1851, he considered retitling it "Symphonic Fantasia," but it became instead his Symphony No. 4, and in accordance with the new chronology it was given the opus number 120. Schumann conducted the revised version in Düsseldorf and elsewhere in 1853.

The revisions, in both form and orchestration, were extensive. A part for guitar in the original version of the slow movement was eliminated and several orchestral parts were doubled. In addition to modifying certain tempo markings and tightening the structure of the individual movements, Schumann also decreed in his revision that the four movements be played without pause (hence the notion of calling the work a Fantasia). The "cyclic" reappearance of themes, or fragments of themes, throughout the sequence is a further unifying factor.

The first movement opens with an atmospheric introduction during which thematic elements gradually take shape. The *Allegro* ("*Lebhaft*," in Schumann's German marking) begins with a vigorous statement of the theme which is to be the "motto" throughout the Symphony. The movement's course is a journey from darkness into light, ending in an exultant blaze of D major which might be said to foreshadow the finale of Brahms's symphony in that key.

The *Romanze*, brief and exquisitely fashioned, has a more direct connection with Brahms, who based the third movement of his own Third Symphony on this movement's main theme, as a memorial gesture nearly 30 years after Schumann's death.

One of Schumann's finest symphonic movements is the Scherzo, whose theme is basically an elaboration of the "motto" motif, but is also strikingly similar to that of the corresponding movement — a *Menuetto* — of the Symphony No. 1 in F minor of Johann Wenzel Kalliwoda (1801-1866). Schumann knew Kalliwoda, and both he and Clara performed as soloists with the orchestra Kalliwoda conducted in Munich; he must have known the Symphony in F minor, too, which was composed in 1826 and was one of Kalliwoda's most popular works. In any event, while the similarity of themes is striking enough to be mentioned, the one is not an exact duplicate of the other, and the relationship of Schumann's Scherzo theme to the "motto" of the D minor Symphony is no less apparent. By way of pronounced contrast, this conspicuously energetic Scherzo is provided with an extremely gentle Trio, in B-flat.

The final movement, like the first, has a slow introduction, but in this case it serves more as a bridge passage from the quiet conclusion of the Scherzo to the rumbustious finale proper, which commences with a dramatic proclamation of the "motto" theme and cites other material from the preceding movements along the way. A bustling orchestral buildup leads to a lusty fanfare theme from the horns, and a robust *Ländler*-like motif, unhinted-at before, is introduced by the cellos during a brief respite before the final onrush to the exuberant conclusion.

Symphony No. 9 in C major ("The Great") FRANZ SCHUBERT
(1797-1828)

The last of Schubert's symphonies has always been called "the Great C major," and this reference is frequently assumed to be a gesture of respect, as well it might be; indeed, in announcements of concerts and labeling of recordings the word "Great" is hung on as a sobriquet in the manner of "Pastoral" or "Rhenish." The term in this case did not originally represent a value judgment, however, but was simply a way of saying "Big," in distinguishing this work from Schubert's "Little C major" Symphony, his Sixth.

Together with another Ninth, that of Beethoven, this Ninth of Schubert is one of the most revered of all symphonies, and among musicians themselves it may well be the most beloved of all, occupying a position in the orchestral literature akin to that of Schubert's String Quintet in the same key, completed only weeks before his death, in the realm of chamber music. Schubert never heard either of these masterworks performed, and it seems more than a little ironic that it was the initial resistance on the part of orchestral players that delayed the entry of this Symphony into the repertory.

The prestigious Society of Friends of Music in Vienna, it appears, had scheduled this Symphony for performance in 1828, but rejected it as being too difficult to perform. (It has never been conclusively established that this was indeed the Schubert symphony in question, but it is more than probable.) On that occasion the "Little C major" was substituted, and thus became the only Schubert symphony given a concert performance during the composer's lifetime. It was not until ten years after Schubert's death that the score of the "Great C major" was discovered by Robert Schumann and sent by him to Felix Mendelssohn, who conducted the première performance in Leipzig on March 21, 1839. A few years later, when Mendelssohn put the work into rehearsal for one of his London concerts (for the same Philharmonic Society that had commissioned Beethoven's unprecedented Ninth), the orchestra members so derided portions of the finale that he was forced to withdraw it.

François-Antoine Habeneck, who successfully completed the first "integral" performance of all of Beethoven's symphonies in Paris as early as 1831, tried to introduce the Schubert Ninth in that city a decade or so later, and was confronted by an orchestral rebellion of the sort Mendelssohn had faced in London. In the 1840s the newness of Schubert's masterwork was still intimidating. Significantly, in reporting on his discovery of the score among Schubert's effects, Schumann not only noted the work's "heavenly length," but remarked that "it leads us into regions which — to our best recollections — we had never before explored."

The opening phrase of the introductory *Andante*, given out by the two horns, is majestic and broad, defining the vast scale to which the entire work is drawn. What follows in this expansive introduction and in the movement proper (*Allegro ma non troppo*) reveals some of the more obvious aspects of Schubert's legacy to both Brahms and Bruckner. Brahmsian before the fact is the characteristic texture of the strings' first entrance and the distinctive colors achieved with the winds. Bruckner's style is foretold in the noble simplicity of the opening theme (suggesting massiveness without *being* massive), in the development of most of the movement's materials from the second of the three-note phrases in that theme, and in the elaborate coda which culminates in a glorification of the opening material.

The slow movement, characterized by Donald Francis Tovey as a "heart-breaking show of spirit in adversity," is the sort of music only Schubert could have written: the combination here of lyricism, stark drama, and an intensity made all the more poignant by the obvious effort toward restraint is something uniquely his. This is music from the same grim and pathetic, yet proud world as the song-cycle *Die Winterreise* (completed in 1827). Its key, A minor, as we might recall from the famous Op. 29 String Quartet, had a personal poignancy for Schubert similar to that of G minor for Mozart. The second theme in F major is broad and consolatory, one of the most expansive such gestures in any of Schubert's instrumental works. Schubert builds on these materials to achieve a climax as emotionally explicit as those to come decades later from Tchaikovsky, and in fact caps it in the same way Tchaikovsky did in both his Fourth and Fifth symphonies (and Strauss did in his *Don Juan*, composed in 1888, the same year as Tchaikovsky's Fifth): a sudden "shattering silence," an unexpected void following upon an unrestrainedly violent outcry. Here is unabashedly "confessional" music, at least a few years before Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique* and a full half-century before Tchaikovsky began his "autobiographical" symphonies.

In his first five symphonies, all produced by the time he was 19, Schubert called his third movements minuets, though most of them strike us as scherzos. His first declared symphonic scherzo, in the Sixth Symphony (1818), was clearly modeled after the one in Beethoven's Seventh; the one in the Ninth admits of no models other than those Schubert himself provided in his chamber music and piano sonatas. It is a rough peasant dance given Olympian proportions, and its trio is a similarly idealized *Ländler*.

Quite uncharacteristically, Schubert took the trouble to go over the first three movements and make emendations here and there, but the phenomenal spontaneity of the finale is in no way misleading: it was written at a furious pace (Lawrence Gilman's marvelous phrase was "a sacred fury of inspiration"), and not a note was changed. Along the course of this inexhaustible and truly climactic movement one may hear a fleeting echo — perhaps intentional on Schubert's part, perhaps not — of the theme of the final chorus of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony; it does not seem at all inappropriate, but it appears as a mere flicker in the wholly Schubertian blaze.

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