

THE PHILHARMONIC-SYMPHONY SOCIETY 1842 OF NEW YORK 1878

CONSOLIDATED 1928

• 1941 *Centennial Season* 1942 •

CARNEGIE HALL

Sunday Afternoon, December 7, 1941

AT THREE

3799th Concert

Under the Direction of
ARTUR RODZINSKI

Assisting Artist:
ARTUR RUBINSTEIN, *Pianist*

PROGRAM

SHOSTAKOVICH Symphony No. 1, Op. 10

- I. Allegretto; Allegro non troppo
- II. Allegro
- III. Lento: Largo
- IV. Allegro molto

INTERMISSION

BRAHMS Concerto for Piano and Orchestra in B-flat major,
No. 2, Op. 83

- I. Allegro non troppo
- II. Allegro appassionato
- III. Andante
- IV. Allegretto grazioso

ARTUR RUBINSTEIN

ARTHUR JUDSON, Manager

BRUNO ZIRATO, Associate Manager

MR. RUBINSTEIN uses the STEINWAY Piano

THE STEINWAY is the Official Piano of The Philharmonic-Symphony Society

COLUMBIA AND VICTOR RECORDS

BRONZE MEDALS, *commemorating the Centennial of the Philharmonic-Symphony Society, can be obtained from the ushers or at the box office.*

The proceeds go to the Orchestra Pension Fund.

Those who wish to obtain scores of any of the works on this program for home study should apply at the Music Branch of the New York Public Library, 121 East 58th St., which has a large collection of music available for circulation.

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

By ROBERT BAGAR AND LOUIS BIANCOLLI

Symphony No. 1, Op. 10

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH

(Born September 16, 1906, in St. Petersburg, now Leningrad, where he still resides)

Dmitri Shostakovich's music is almost unique in having been written about almost as if it were a chapter in Karl Marx's *Das Kapital*. Political and social theory has played a dominant role in appraising his work, and Shostakovich's own statements on Soviet institutions and the role of music in a classless society have stimulated analysts to keener research into symphonic polemics. For a time many outside Russia regarded his work as a kind of regimented materialism stated in symphonic terms, and the shadow of the Kremlin was held to bulk over his esthetics.

From the time the outer world began to take notice of him, Shostakovich never hesitated to outline his aims and purposes, and of course they adhered so closely to the dialectical teachings of Marx, Engels, and Lenin, not to overlook Stalin, that many quite reasonably jumped to the conclusion that the dictates of propaganda were straitjacketing an exciting new talent. Others didn't give a hang and heard only music. The fact that some of Shostakovich's symphonies celebrated the October Revolution and a May Day vision of world socialism only made matters worse. This startling young genius, many felt, was assuredly working in a groove, probably against his will. They pounced on statements like the following as admission of doctrinaire rigidity and submission to authority.

"I am a Soviet composer, and I see our epoch as something heroic, spirited and joyous. . . . Music cannot help having a political basis—an idea that the bourgeoisie are slow to comprehend. There can be no music without ideology. The old composers, whether they knew it or not, were upholding a political theory. Most of them, of course, were bolstering the rule of the upper classes.

"We revolutionists have a different conception of music. Lenin himself said that 'music is a means of unifying broad masses of people.' Not a leader of masses, perhaps, but certainly an organizing force! It is no longer an end in itself, but a vital weapon in the struggle."

The plain, irrefutable fact of the matter, according to a later verdict, is that Shostakovich is the typical Soviet youth, nurtured during a revolutionary upheaval, knowing no other social order, and trained to view all phenomena, including art, as rooted in and reflecting political and economic reality. To what extent the Marxist method, as pure theory, works side by side with native genius in his creative processes is indeterminate. Deciding how much of Shostakovich's output is the direct result of dia-

lectics carried consciously into practice and how much the normal artistic reaction of genius to external stimuli is futile speculation. Yet, Shostakovich cannot be considered apart from his milieu. But, then, that also applies to Palestrina, Beethoven, and Wagner. It is merely a shift in focus and emphasis.

Many are convinced Shostakovich takes his creed too literally and regard the politics as irrelevant. Marxists doubtless accept it as exemplifying the doctrine of art as struggle. At any rate, Shostakovich is an active cog in the Soviet machine. Its heroes are his and its criteria of heroic deeds evidently his pride and guide. He worships the memory of Lenin, and his bookshelves are said to be laden with the writings of the founding Marxist fathers. Today in the bomb-cellars of Lenin's city he completes his Seventh Symphony and helps defend his own birthplace as a fire warden.

"I cannot think of my further progress apart from our socialist structure," he admitted frankly in 1936; "and the end which I set to my work is to contribute at every point toward the growth of our remarkable country. There can be no greater joy for a composer than the inner assurance of having assisted by his works in the elevation of Soviet musical culture, of having been called upon to play a leading role in the recasting of human perception."

Though only thirty-five, Shostakovich has for many years been considered a kind of "composer-laureate to the Soviet State." His "October" Symphony, composed when he was twenty-one for the tenth anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, was presented simultaneously in Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, and Karkoff as part of the nation-wide celebration. It has since been repeated annually at similar festivities. His "May Day" symphony, written two years later, in 1929, is also an annual rite, reportedly "stirring Russian audiences on each succeeding May Day." Shostakovich suffered a temporary but significant eclipse early in 1936 when his opera "Lady Macbeth of Mzensk" was denounced by Soviet critics as "un-Soviet, unwholesome, cheap, eccentric, tuneless, and [of all things!] leftist." Others flouted its "bourgeois formalistic tendencies" and "vulgar realism", and the issue was raised of "folkconsciousness" versus "an indulgence in fruitless devices to enrapture the art-gourmands". The composer whom the outside world feared too deeply enmeshed in theories of proletarian culture, was now charged with failing to talk to the people "in a new, powerful, and intelligible language". As an "advanced" Soviet composer, he had failed to "plunge into the social currents swirling around him." His Fifth Symphony re-established him at home and gave him greater prestige abroad.

The First Symphony was completed in 1925, "the product," Shostakovich tells, "of my culminating studies at the Conservatory." He had entered the Leningrad academy in 1919, after studying music for four years, and won his diploma in 1925. After taking courses in piano and composition with L. Nikolaiev, counterpoint with M. Sokolov, and harmony and orchestra with Maximilian Steinberg, he attended postgraduate lectures in composition given by Steinberg.

"I was then absorbing with enthusiasm and quite uncritically all the knowledge and fine points being taught me," he writes. "But once my

studies were completed, the necessity of assorting a large part of the musical baggage which I had acquired arose. I sensed that music was not merely combinations of sounds, arranged in a particular order, but an art capable of expressing through its own means the most varied ideas and feelings. This conviction I did not reach without difficulty. During the whole of 1926 I did not write a single note, but from 1927 I have never stopped composing."

According to the American writer Nicolas Slonimsky and the Leningrad critic I. I. Sollertinsky, Shostakovich's earliest music reflected the Rimsky-Korsakoff and Glazounoff tradition still flourishing at the Leningrad Conservatory. "Yet his first symphony," writes Mr. Slonimsky, "shows some definite departure from traditionalism. Thus, the recapitulation in the first movement reverses the order of the subjects (he uses the same method in his 'Cello Sonata of 1934, which shows that it is no youthful whim.) The harmony of the symphony is far more acrid than any academic training would justify and the linear writing is hardly counterpoint conscious. There are such strange interludes as a kettledrum solo. The melody structure is angular, chromatic at times, and then again broad, suggesting a folk song rather than a subject for a symphony. Yet, there is enough symphonic academism in this first important work of Shostakovich to connect it with his academic training."

The symphony was first heard in Leningrad on May 12, 1926, at a concert directed by Nicolas Malko. By the following year it had carried the name of Shostakovich to other parts of Europe. Bruno Walter conducted it in Berlin in November, 1927, and on November 2, 1928, Leopold Stokowski introduced it to America at a concert of the Philadelphia Orchestra. The New York Philharmonic-Symphony brought the work into its repertory on April 8, 1931, when Arturo Toscanini directed. The score fails to number the symphony, merely labelling it "Symphony for Orchestra, Opus 10".

Unlike the "May Day" and "October" symphonies, as well as the Fifth, composed in 1937 for the Soviet Republic's twentieth anniversary, and the Seventh, inspired by the siege of Leningrad, Shostakovich's First Symphony is not avowedly "an utterance of political and economic faith." Lawrence Gilman termed it "primarily an aesthetic expression rather than a tonal tract," pointing out that if the music is a vehicle of economic doctrine, "Shostakovich has kept the fact to himself."

Victor Belaiev, in close touch with Soviet music, once summed up the music of Shostakovich as follows: "Although this composer does not belong to the Stcherbachev school, and though his composition is inspired by the events of the Russian Revolution, his music, like Popov's, shows clearly distinguishable graces of modern western influence. At first we see Milhaud and Hindemith, but at the end of the work they unexpectedly give place to Glazounoff.

"Shostakovich's style of writing is curious; it might be described as the negation of thematic development, and consists in the systematic adoption of a method which is the converse of Liszt's 'transformation of themes.' Shostakovich not only refrains in general from repeating a theme in its original or in a transformed version—the accepted custom

with symphonic composers—but in writing a theme he even avoids the repetition of identical motifs and melodic turns of phrases.

“One gets the impression that he wants every bar of his composition to be different from the rest. He applies this method also to the distribution of the parts, striving to attain a completely independent design for each of the orchestral parts in the score.”

L.B.



Concerto for Piano and Orchestra in B-flat major, No. 2, Op. 83 JOHANNES BRAHMS

(Born at Hamburg, May 7, 1833; died in Vienna, April 3, 1897)

That eminent thorn in the side of Wagner and bright boutonniere in the coat of Brahms, Eduard Hanslick, labelled this work a “symphony with piano obbligato.” The prodigious worth of the piece, its symphonic size and scope, its four movements, all were taken into consideration, of course, in the coining of that phrase. However, it might have been closer to the truth to regard it as a symphony for piano and orchestra, because the term, “with piano obbligato,” does seem to give it an undeserved parlor petiteness.

The Concerto was first performed in the Redouten Saal, Budapest, on November 9, 1881. On that occasion the program offered also the Cherubini Overture to *Medea* and Brahms' C-minor Symphony. The composer appeared as soloist in the Concerto (conducted by Alexander Erkel) and he conducted the other pieces.

Some two decades previously Brahms had written a First Concerto, which had never known real popularity. The second essay in the form came at a most opportune time, for Brahms, doing a good deal of concert playing, felt the need for such a work. So, established as he had become, thanks to the First and Second Symphonies, and with many music “centers” his own to have and to hold, he approached the task of composing it with considerable enthusiasm and, it is safe to say, seriously aware of the capriciousness of public favor.

The idea of a second concerto first came to him according to Billroth, during his first journey to Italy, in April, 1878. It seems that he fell easy prey to the Italian spring, visiting Rome, Naples and Sicily, and he was overjoyed with the sights and sounds and atmosphere of the country. On his return to Pörtlach, on the Carinthian Wörther See, he made his initial sketches of the projected work. About three years later he again departed for Italy, again in the spring, and the fascination exerted its influence anew. Not only did he revisit his old haunts, but he made the acquaintance of new ones at Venice, Florence, Pisa, Siena and Orvieto, not neglecting trips of discovery through the earlier itinerary of Rome, Naples and Sicily. Returning to Vienna on May 7, the occasion of his forty-eight birthday, he idled about for two weeks, then settled down to serious labors at the villa of Mme. Heingartner in nearby Pressbaum. The tasks at immediate hand were the completion of a setting of Schiller's *Nänie* and, of course, the Concerto. Without fanfare, some months later, he wrote to his friend, Elisabeth Herzogenberg, that he had finished a Concerto. These were his words, “I don't mind telling you that I have

written a tiny, tiny pianoforte concerto with a tiny, tiny wisp of a scherzo. It is in B-flat, and I have reason to believe that I have worked this udder, which has yielded good milk before, too often and too vigorously."

A tour was soon arranged, calling for Brahms to appear as soloist in his number, Budapest being first on the list. Hans von Bülow conducted it at Meiningen, November 27, and later introduced it at Berlin and Hamburg. It met with success everywhere, save in Leipzig where, despite the local intelligentsia's growing respect of Brahms, Mendelssohn was still considered the ne plus ultra of piano concerto composers. Nevertheless, Leipzig did somersaults in capitulating to the piece when Brahms made his last public appearance as a conductor at the Gewandhaus years later (January 31, 1895). So much so that the listeners responded with unbridled enthusiasm to both concertos, played by Eugen d'Albert.

Donald Francis Tovey has had shrewd things to say about the Second Concerto, "Of all existing concertos in the classical form," he declares, "this is the largest. It is true that the first movement is shorter than either Beethoven's E-flat concerto or that of his Violin Concerto; shorter also than that of Brahms' own First Concerto. But in almost every classical concerto the first movement is as large or larger than the slow movement and finale taken together, and there is no scherzo. Here, in his B-flat Concerto, Brahms has followed the first movement by a fiery, almost tragic *Allegro*, which, though anything but a joke, more than fills the place of the largest possible symphonic scherzo; the slow movement is easily the largest in any concerto, while the finale, with all its lightness of touch, is a rondo of the most spacious design. We thus have the three normal movements of the classical concerto at their fullest and richest, with the addition of a fourth member on the same scale.

"If there could be any doubt as to the purpose of that stormy second movement, the first notes of the *Andante* should settle it. The key is B-flat, the key of the first movement, and its emotion is a reaction after the storm, not after a triumph. Thus, both in harmony and mood it would be fatally misplaced immediately after the first movement. After the second its emotional fitness is perfect, while the harmonic value of its being in the tonic of the whole work is the value of a stroke of genius. It gives this slow movement a strangely poetic feeling of *finality*, though the slow tempo and the lyric style make it obviously unlikely that it can really be the end. The first had its storms; the second movement was all storm, and here we are not only enjoying a calm, but safe at home again.

"And now we have the finale. What tremendous triumph shall it express? Brahms' answer is such as only the greatest of artists can find; there are no adequate words for it (there never are for any art that is not itself words—and then there are only its words). But it is, perhaps, not misleading to say here, as can so often be said with Beethoven, something like this:—'We have done our work—let the children play in the world which our work has made safer and happier for them.'

"There are no trumpets and drums in this finale. Neither are there any storms. There is abundance of young energy and grace, and there is all that greatness of design which, as Mozart and the Greeks have proved, is unfailingly sublime whatever the ostensible range of the subject. Here the emotional reaction is so convincing that, with all the 'roaring cataracts

of nonsense' that were poured out on the subject of Brahms' concertos when they were new, it has, as far as I know, never been suggested that this finale was too light-hearted for the rest of the work. In the same way it has never been suggested by even the most sacerdotal Wagnerians that *Die Meistersinger* is in any way a slighter work than *Tristan*. Such cases are really well worth noting for the light which they throw on the relation between the 'subject' of a work of art and the emotions which the art itself calls forth."

R.C.B.

ARTUR RUBINSTEIN

Born at Lodz in Russian Poland, Artur Rubinstein revealed musical talent at a very early age and is even said to have played the piano before he was able to walk. When only four, we are told, he attracted the attention of the great violinist Joseph Joachim, who had him go to Berlin, where Joachim arranged a public appearance for him. He saw to it later that the boy studied with Eugène d'Albert and Theodor Leschetizky, and he conducted the orchestra for him when Mr. Rubinstein made his mature début in Berlin.

Mr. Rubinstein visited this country for the first time in 1906. He has made extensive tours the world over, winning particular favor in England, France, and the Americas. His wife is the daughter of the Polish violinist, conductor, and composer, Emil Młynarski.

COMING PHILHARMONIC-SYMPHONY CONCERTS AT CARNEGIE HALL

Under the Direction of
ARTUR RODZINSKI

THURSDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 11, AT 8:45

FRIDAY AFTERNOON, DECEMBER 12, AT 2:30

HANDEL-HARTY

Water Music Suite

SIBELIUS

Symphony in E-flat major, No. 5, Op. 82

INTERMISSION

SMETANA-BYRNS

Bohemian Dance Suite

(First concert performance)

STRAUSS

"Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks", Op. 28

SUNDAY AFTERNOON, DECEMBER 14, AT 3:00

Assisting Artist:

CARROLL GLENN, Violinist

(Winner of the Schubert Memorial Award)

WEBER

Overture to "Euryanthe"

SIBELIUS

Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in D minor, Op. 47

CARROLL GLENN

INTERMISSION

VIRGIL THOMSON

Suite from the Ballet, "Filling Station"

(First concert performance)

STRAUSS

"Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks", Op. 28
