



THE PLYMOUTH SYMPHONY SOCIETY
presents the
PLYMOUTH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Wayne Dunlap, Conductor
in its

Fifth Concert of the Fourteenth Season

assisted by
Marilyn Mason, Harpsichordist
Sunday, February 28, 1960
Plymouth High School Gymnasium
4:00 p.m.

Program

Overture to the opera, "The Sicilian Vespers" Verdi
Prelude in C Major Bach
The Hen Rameau
Concerto for Harpsichord and Orchestra, Op. 4, No. 5. Handel
Larghetto. Allegro
Alla Siciliana
Presto

Marilyn Mason, Soloist

Intermission

Serenade No. 10 in B flat major,
for 13 Wind Instruments, K. 361 Mozart
Largo. Allegro molto
Adagio
Rondo Allegro molto
Essay for Orchestra, Op. 12 Barber
Rapsodie Espagnole Ravel
Prelude a la nuit
Malaguena
Habanera
Feria

PROGRAM NOTES

by

William J. Weichlein

Overture to I vespri siciliani **Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901)**
(First Performance at these Concerts)

The year 1813 is most significant in the history of opera for in that single year were born the two greatest opera composers of the nineteenth century, Giuseppe Verdi and Richard Wagner. The latter, with his creation of the gigantic "music drama," altered the whole concept of operatic construction and his influence was felt not only in the works of his contemporaries but was apparent for generations after his time. Giuseppe Verdi, on the other hand, represented the complete antithesis of the Wagnerian ideal. He, through the sheer force of his own genius, was able to keep the traditional Italian opera alive against the insidious rising tide of Wagnerianism. As Donald Grout has pointed out in his history of opera, the differing concept of opera between Wagner and Verdi was, "the old struggle between Latin and German, southern and northern music in opera — incarnate ... in the works of Verdi and Wagner who represented the two ideals in all their irreconcilable perfection."

I vespri siciliani (The Sicilian Vespers) was Verdi's eighteenth opera and dates from the year 1855, two years after **La traviata** and two years before the first version of **Simone Boccanegra**. The story revolves around the occupation of Sicily by the French during the thirteenth century, and the efforts of the population to rid their country of the treacherous invaders. The title derives from the fact that the ringing of the church bells for vespers was to be the signal for the uprising of the public.

The overture, generally considered to be the best feature of a rather uneven score, is built upon three themes from the opera. The melody of the first **Allegro** section is that associated with the massacre of the French, the other two more lyric themes are from the "farewell scene" of the fourth act and the duet between the two principal male characters in the third act. As Francis Toye has said in his definitive biography of Verdi, "... the overture represents, better than the opera itself, the gloom, the fury, and the pathos of the dramatic idea."

Concerto for Harpsichord and Orchestra,
Opus 4, No. 5 **George Frideric Handel (1685-1759)**

This concerto was not originally a keyboard work but was based upon a Sonata for Recorder and Continuo which Handel had written earlier. In its present form it is one of a group of six concertos for the organ which were composed during the mid-1730's and which were published by Walsh in 1738. Many of these concertos were designated by the composer as being also adaptable for performance upon the harpsichord and frequent performances utilize this stringed keyboard instrument.

Much editing of the organ concertos has had to be done for modern performance as the original manuscripts are sadly lacking in many details, often consisting of little more in the solo part than a sort of musical shorthand which could be a guide to the performer who was also the composer. Handel frequently performed such pieces between the parts of the oratorios and often movements of the organ concertos are based thematically upon the vocal work which had just been heard by the audience. It has been suggested by Oliver Daniel in a short monograph on the organ concertos that performers of these works, "may well have played their sprightly allegros with the uninhibited verve of musicians at a jam session. In their improvisational nature there was a decided kinship."

The concerto, Opus 4, No. 5, is somewhat shorter than the others of the group and is in four movements marked **Larghetto**, **Allegro**, **Alla Siciliana**, and **Presto**. The "Siciliana" movement, reminiscent of the Italian dance in 12/8 meter, contains much music of a decidedly high quality.

This work was performed on the organ at the Plymouth Colony Concerts on June 28, 1959 with Gordon Wilson as soloist.

PROGRAM NOTES (Continued)

**Serenade No. 10 in B-flat for
13 Wind Instruments, K. 361 W. A. Mozart (1756-1791)**

(First Performance at these Concerts)

In all Mozart composed twelve of these serenades as entertainment music for various noble patrons. There is no consistent scoring in the works as some were written for winds alone, some for strings, and some for a combination of both. They are all multi-movement compositions usually containing two minuets, a slow movement, and a gay rondo to bring the work to a close.

Composition of the B-flat Serenade was begun in Munich and completed in Vienna during the early months of 1781 when Mozart was twenty-five years of age. This was the same year which saw the production of his Italian serious opera **Idomeneo** and a number of instrumental compositions for various media of performance. Scored for pairs of oboes, clarinets, and basset horns, four horns and a contra bassoon this is Mozart's most ambitious composition for wind instruments. It bears the title "Gran Partita" or "Large Suite" possibly bestowed on the work by the composer himself.

Some of Mozart's finest writing for winds is to be found in this work. It is certainly not the sort of piece which would seem to have been turned out simply as a light-hearted divertimento for an afternoon garden party. Each of the parts is handled in an individual fashion, and in addition a great many varieties of color combinations are obtained through various ensemble scorings. The basset horn which is called for in the score is a now obsolete member of the clarinet family, actually an alto clarinet in F with a narrower bore and a slightly lower range than the more familiar clarinet. Mozart used this instrument in a number of his opera scores, in the **Requiem**, and in many of the wind ensembles.

The entire Serenade No. 10 consists of seven movements of which only three (the first, third, and seventh) are performed today. The opening movement is a strictly formed sonata-allegro preceded by a slow introductory section. The second, a lyric **Adagio** is followed by a gay rollicking **Rondo** based on thematic material which Mozart borrowed from the Finale of the Piano Sonata for four hands, K. 19d, written when the composer was nine years of age.

First Essay for Orchestra, Opus 12 Samuel Barber (1910--)

(First Performance at these Concerts)

The American composer Samuel Barber was born in West Chester, Pennsylvania in 1910 and entered the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia in 1924 where he studied piano, conducting, and composition, the latter with Rosario Scalero. Following his graduation from the Institute in 1932, he went on to win the Prix de Rome in 1935, the Pulitzer Prize for Music in 1935 and in 1936, and a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1947.

Barber has composed a great deal of music both vocal and instrumental. One of his most successful recent compositions is the opera **Vanessa** composed to a libretto written by his friend and fellow student at the Curtis Institute, Gian-Carlo Menotti. His works have been performed all over the world and many of them are now standard items of the orchestral repertoire.

The **First Essay for Orchestra** was written in 1938 and received its initial performance by the Philadelphia Orchestra under Eugene Ormandy during the same year. An intensely dramatic composition, the Essay opens with a slow lyric section based on the lengthy development of a single four-measure theme. The **Allegro** section which follows is essentially rhythmic, in contrast to the lyricism of the beginning, and is constructed upon a short melodic motif drawn from a characteristic dropping interval in the opening slow theme. The climax of the work brings a powerfully dramatic combination of the two thematic members and a subsequent denouement which brings the work to a quiet close with only a passing reference to the opening theme in the upper strings.

Rapsodie Espagnole Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

(First Performance at these Concerts)

In view of the fact that Ravel was born in the French Basque country (the mountainous region just across the border from Spain) it seems quite under-

PROGRAM NOTES (Continued)

standable that so many of his compositions are based on Spanish melodies and rhythms. Ravel was not the only French composer, however, for whom the Spanish idiom seemed to hold a special charm; in the works of Claude Debussy, Eduard Lalo, and Georges Bizet are found numerous compositions based on Spanish themes.

The **Spanish Rhapsody** was written in 1907 and received its first performance at the Concerts Colonne in Paris on March 15, 1908. In the work Ravel has captured all of the vividness and color of the Spanish scene with his exotic harmonies and subtle shades of orchestral color. Here may be found, as one writer has pointed out, "the mysteries of a Spanish twilight, charged with secret yearnings, sweet scents and sensuous suggestions; the provocative rhythms; the ecstasies of Spanish dances, the flaming color and vivid life of a Spanish festival—these are the texture of this rapturous and incandescent music."

Ravel has formed his **Rapsodie** as a suite in four movements which are to be performed without pause. The opening section, "Prelude a la nuit" is an evocative, evanescent movement dominated by a short motif of four descending notes. The harmonic and coloristic sequences of this figure are interrupted only by a cadenza for two clarinets which is echoed a few measures later by two bassoons. The descending figure returns and the movement closes as it began.

This atmospheric beginning is followed by two dances, the first a Malaguena, originally a dance of Southern Spain in which the traditional fan and castanets played an important role. Ravel sets up the rhythmic figure of the dance as a kind of ostinato which weaves its way through the various voices of the orchestra stopping only for a lyric moment with the English horn. This initial dance is followed by a Habanera, originally a Cuban dance from Havana, it was brought to Spain around the middle of the nineteenth century. The musical material of this section appeared first in a Habanera for two pianos which Ravel wrote in 1895.

The concluding section entitled, "Feria" is a colorful musical description of the bustle and activity associated with the country fair. All of the veiled atmospheric quality and the subtle rhythms of the preceding movements are here forgotten in the full blazing power of the orchestra and in the wild fury of songs and dances of carnival time.

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About our Soloist . . .

Marilyn Mason studied at Fontainebleau in France, taught at Columbia University and is now teacher of organ at the University of Michigan. Miss Mason is also a recording artist.

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Notes from the Woman's Committee . . .

Tickets are going fast for "The Music Man," March 25th at the Riviera Theatre in Detroit. A few of the \$6.50 (downstairs) seats are left. Call Mrs. Ralph Snoke, GL 3-2077 or Mrs. A.A. Cooksey, GL 3-2871 for reservations real soon.

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We invite your comments about the concerts, and will you please write them on the cards enclosed in your programs? Also you may be the lucky winner of a record from Melody House if your name is the one drawn at the close of the concert. The record certificate will be mailed to the winner.

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See you at the luncheon tomorrow!

Tuesday!

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Nursery facilities available at all concerts