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Ensemble Concerts: Symphony Orchestra, October 29, 1972

Arthur Corra Conductor

Konstantin Simonovitch Guest Conductor

Aline Van Barentzen Piano

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Illinois State
University

SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

ARTHUR CORRA, Conductor
KONSTANTIN SIMONOVITCH, Guest Conductor
ALINE VAN BARENTZEN, Pianist

Capen Auditorium
Sunday Evening
October 29, 1972
8:15 p.m.

A FESTIVAL
OF THE ARTS
AND CULTURE
OF FRANCE

PROGRAM

SYMPHONIE FANTASTIQUE, OPUS 14

BERLIOZ

Largo; Allegro agitato e appassionato assai

Valse: Allegro non troppo

Adagio

Allegretto non troppo

Larghetto; Allegro

ARTHUR CORRA, Conductor

Intermission

SINFONIETTA FOR STRINGS, OPUS 52

ROUSSEL

Allegro molto

Andante

Allegro

KONSTANTIN SIMONOVITCH, Conductor

PIANO CONCERTO NO. 2 IN G MINOR, OPUS 22

SAINT-SAENS

Andante sostenuto

Allegro scherzando

Presto

ALINE VAN BARENTZEN, Pianist
KONSTANTIN SIMONOVITCH, Conductor

The three composers whose music is being performed tonight each came to music by quite different paths—Berlioz through an uncompromising vision and necessity, through college drop-outism; Roussel by a much more round-about route after living quite a different role; and Saint-Saens, relatively speaking, up through the ranks, through the establishment.

Whether or not Hector Berlioz, of the three, should be exalted for his blatant rebelliousness depends partly on one's point of view (it would surely seem that times haven't changed all that much), but it also depends on what came of his asserted independence. And one thing is sure—no Festival of French Art and Culture should take place without including at least one of his works. He *was* a genius, an extraordinary one, and what came from his courage of conviction was not only an historical land mark but some marvelously original and beautiful music.

The story of his dropping out is not unusual by today's standards; by his father's plan he attended classes in medicine for more than two years and did well before his passion for music finally took over completely and he refused to continue, this against the will of his family and despite the retraction of his allowance from home and the financial hardship this brought. At that time it was not only that music was not a lucrative activity (let alone profession), it was thought to be perditious by many, especially Berlioz' mother.

This is not to say though that he was not well-educated; much the contrary. He had grown up in a provincial town near Grenoble, and his entire education was undertaken by his father, a prominent doctor there (and an outstanding man whom Berlioz always respected and whose approval he sought and eventually won). Berlioz was well grounded in science, the classics, in literature and in the arts, music among them. Claims that he never mastered an instrument are not true. At one point he was having two flute lessons a day; he played the instrument well and was also a fine guitarist (what he did not play was the piano, the "standard" composer's instrument). He went beyond his music teachers in composition which accounts for his being thought of as "self-taught," but he did have good teaching at the start. He had a life-long literary interest (both Shakespeare and Goethe were enormously important influences), and he himself wrote prolifically: music criticism and his own *Memoirs*.

Because of his geographic and cultural isolation Berlioz obviously would not have been a prodigy, but his great talent showed itself early none-the-less. The opening theme, for instance, of the *Symphonie Fantastique* is a theme he wrote when he was twelve, years before he ever went to Paris or was to hear the music of Beethoven or Schubert. By the time he was a full-time student of Lesueur at the Conservatory at the age of 21 in 1824 he already had very individual ideas about music and composing, an individuality which his teachers and listeners found hard to comprehend; but there never seemed to be any wavering in his will, he absolutely believed in himself. Writing an appeal for endorsement to his father, "I am voluntarily driven towards a magnificent career...and I am not in the least heading for perdition. For I believe I shall succeed. Yes, I really believe it...I think, indeed I am convinced, that I will attain distinction in music; everything points that way from outside, and from within the voice of nature is stronger than the most rigorous dictates of reason. I have every conceivable chance in my favor if you will back me."—a touching plea.

Berlioz eventually won the respect he deserved, but he made many tries before his point was made. One of his early attempts at a Conservatory prize was deemed "unplayable." In actuality it was not playable by a pianist: what happened was that the judging was based on a piano rendering of the entered orchestra pieces; the pianist couldn't play Berlioz' score—it had literally been conceived for orchestra and was not an orchestration of a keyboard work. Later, on his third bid for the Prix de Rome, the criticism went this way: "My dear fellow, why did you do it?... We wanted to give you the prize...I couldn't help saying to my colleagues yesterday that with your way of writing you must despise us from the bottom of your heart. You refuse to write like everybody else. Even your rhythms are new. You would invent new modulations if such a thing were possible!" He did win the Prix de Rome finally on his fourth try the next year in 1830 with a relatively "regular" work, *Sardanapale*.

The *Symphonie Fantastique* was performed the same year, when Berlioz was only 26, and is probably the best known of his compositions. It is feted in the books as a prototype of program music; Berlioz himself gives the following program: "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 result in death, plunges him into a heavy sleep accompanied by the strangest visions, during which his sensations, sentiments and recollections are translated in his sick brain into musical thoughts and images. The beloved woman herself has become for him a melody, like a fixed idea which he finds and hears everywhere."

Despite the obvious literary connections and the autobiographical implications (it is felt that the "beloved" was Harriet Smithson, the Shakespearean actress whom Berlioz loved), the *Symphony* is most importantly by Berlioz' own claim essentially music: "The composer has aimed at developing from certain scenes what they contain that is musical." Colorful, resoundingly original, unified by his innovative "idée fixe," still seeming today modern in atmosphere, this work is a beauty under any label.

The Roussel *Sinfonietta* was written toward the end of the composer's life, in 1934 when he was 65. By this time he had joined a modern musical vocabulary with his own penchant for neo-classicism.

Albert Roussel had studied academics, music and mathematics when at 18 he began training for the Navy. In the next few years his Navy career took him far from France, to Indo-China, to Tunis, where he stayed a time for health reasons. The Oriental culture was to serve as an important source of musical ideas for him when he eventually turned to composition on a full-time basis, this not until he was in his mid-forties. He began studying music seriously when he was 25 but interrupted this too during the war when he served as an ambulance driver.

Roussel's early composing was influenced by French impressionism, and programmatic titles are common among his works dating before 1925. Then as he turned more and more to classical forms, titles like "Symphonie," "Suite," "Concertino" are more the norm with him. The *Sinfonietta* is one of these—classical in title, in form, and mildly contemporary in its material.

Considering that Camille Saint-Saens' *Second Piano Concerto* was written forty years after the *Symphonie Fantastique*, it is indeed fantastic how almost startlingly anachronistic it sounds in comparison—which is not to condemn it or its composer. Saint-Saens is simply quite a different story from Berlioz. He was a traditionalist, a composer who gathered and synthesized; he disapproved of modern trends. Though he went through his own critical periods in which he struggled with the reaches of harmonic practice and lived through first an affinity for German music and then an adamant reaction against it, he was important in French music for his "establishment" position.

Also unlike Berlioz, Saint-Saens *was* a prodigy, a brilliantly talented one. Having begun piano study early, he gave his first performance in a Paris salon before the age of 5, began composing at 6, and made his debut at 9. He won the first prize for organ at the Paris Conservatory at 16 and eventually became greatly renowned as an organ virtuoso. Saint-Saens was, interestingly enough, a protegee of Berlioz to whom the older composer frequently entrusted the various compositional projects which came his way.

Saint-Saens wrote a great variety of music: along with many works for piano (169 opus numbers), there are operas, ballets, incidental music, choruses, symphonies, abundant chamber music—he was very much an all-round musician. When he did write for piano he brought to these works a wealth of technique and know-how. The *Piano Concerto in G minor* being performed tonight abounds with sophisticated virtuosic display, the work of a man who knew the instrument intimately.

Illinois State University
SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

I VIOLINS

Ruth C. Boedecker,
Concertmaster
Joung-Sook Noh
Frank Schwarzwaldner
Joan Svoboda
Deborah Perry
Deborah Metskas
Terryl Jares
Jung Min Wooh
Martha Barker
Kathryn F. Gray

II VIOLINS

Ae-Sil Kim
Brenda Herbert
Ann Marie Hodges
Elizabeth C. Palma
Alison Holste
Kathryn Romberg
Barbara Fiechtl
Pamela Combs
Rita Koretke
Deborah Foote

VIOLAS

Christine Reichert
Karen Dickelman
Lynn Hirschauer
Marcia Fauble
Michael Traver
Lavon Miller
Kim Chao

CELLOS

Kyung Jin Lee
Peter Garfield
Nancy Hair
David Reece
Jeanne Foster
Mark Condie

BASSES

James March
Pamela Burd
Edna Vogelsang
Susan Kasanov
Holly Hertel
Michael Johannesen
Scott Kreger
Steve Hayes
George Gillman

FLUTES

Janet MacMillan
Sue Reiland
Candice Hildebrandt
Nancy Widmer

PICCOLO

Nancy Widmer

OBOES

Marvin Carlton
Jan Lohs

ENGLISH HORN

Marvin Carlton

CLARINETS

Sarkis Halajian
Margaret Meyer
Joseph Hesh

E-FLAT CLARINET

Sarkis Halajian

BASSOONS

Gayle Johnson
Chris Draiss
Mary Dalziel
Pat Bills

HORNS

William Lawyer
Cathryn Gorman
John Foster
Peter Johnson
Sue Foster
Rodger Burnett
Stan Reimal

TRUMPETS

Tom Fatten
Rick Louis
Gregg Neuleib
John Turnbull

TROMBONES

Brandon Mason
Michael Fischer
David Kotowski

TUBAS

Brian Fredericksen
Joe Lawrence

TIMPANI

Manuel Cepeda
Edward Zajac

PERCUSSION

Philip Henry
Dennis Smith
Gina Wolski

HARPS

Mary Jane Rupert
Eleanor Shettler