ISRAEL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

Gala Concert

LONDON COLISEUM
SEPTEMBER 16 1971

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J.N.F. 70th Anniversary

THE JEWISH NATIONAL FUND

in association with

THE FRIENDS OF THE I.P.O.

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THE YEHUDI MENUHIN SCHOOL OF MUSIC

UNDER THE PATRONAGE OF H.E. THE ISRAEL AMBASSADOR AND MADAME COMAY

proudly present

The Israel Philharmonic Orchestra

Conductor: Zubin Mehta

Soloist: Artur Rubinstein

in the presence of

Their Royal Highnesses

THE DUKE AND DUCHESS OF KENT

London Coliseum

St. Martins Lane, W.C.2

Thursday, September 16, 1971

(Net Proceeds in aid of J.N.F. Charitable Trust)

PROGRAMME

(Programme Notes by Joan Chissell)

THE MIRACULOUS MANDARIN — Bartok (1881—1945)

Bartok wrote only three works for the stage: the opera Duke Bluebeard's Castle (1911); the ballet The Wooden Prince (1914–16); and lastly another ballet, The Miraculous Mandarin (1918–19). All encountered obstacles of one kind or another, but most of all The Miraculous Mandarin—not so much because of the pungent, uncompromising music, but rather on account of the scenario by Lengyel, set in the room of a prostitute.

Cologne eventually took the plunge with a stage performance in 1926, but scruples were not overcome in Budapest until 1946. In the meantime, Bartok had made an orchestral suite from the full score (omitting the ballet's provocative final episode), which had its first performance in Budapest in 1928.

The opening music depicts the ruthlessness and raucousness of city life, with thugs who use a prostitute as a decoy so that they can rob and beat up her victims. Here Bartok relies on jagged rhythms, relentless ostinatos and dissonance extracted basically from a scale with an augmented octave and a chord built of superimposed diminished and perfect fourths. A sudden lull heralds the first episode, as the prostitute (seductively characterised by a clarinet), attracts a penniless old *roué* (caricatured by cor anglais over a dryly rhythmic accompaniment) who soon gets insistent (trombone glissandi) and is speedily thrown out.

In the second episode, the clarinet becomes still more erotically enticing, for the new victim is a shy young man, attractive enough to be briefly encouraged, although poor, in a suave five-four dance before he, too, is set upon and ejected.

In the third episode, the siren-like clarinet now touches the peak of sensual provocation (aided and abetted by shivers and tingles from piano and harp) for the latest visitor is an inscrutable mandarin, proud and rich, announced by a pentatonic, oriental-type theme from trombones and tubas. Slow at first to respond to the prostitute's languorous waltz, he eventually breaks into a frenzy of desire, which, frightening her, prompts a furious, sometimes fugal, harshly scored orchestral chase.

In the suite, Bartok brings down the curtain at this point, omitting the final episode of the ballet, in which the mandarin miraculously remains alive even though stabbed and strangled; in compassion the prostitute embraces him, and only then do his wounds begin to bleed, as he dies his Liebestod.

PIANO CONCERTO No. 4, in G major — Beethoven (1770—1827)

Allegro moderato
Andante con moto
Rondo: Vivace

Beethoven, himself a considerable pianist, gave the first performance of his G major Concerto in Vienna towards the end of 1808, approximately two years after its completion. Momentous experiences had come to him after the turn of the century—earthquakes of the heart, disillusionment over his erstwhile hero, Napoleon, and not least the tragedy of deafness. But in this music all demonstratively dramatic gestures are put aside in favour of intimate self-communion; forgetful, almost, of an audience, the composer confides many of his most personal thoughts, "recollected in tranquillity", as it were, to the piano and orchestra, as Mozart so often did in his later piano concertos.

Perhaps it was from Mozart's E flat Concerto, K.271, that Beethoven borrowed the idea of allowing the piano to begin the concerto instead of conforming to the general practice of starting with a full orchestral exposition. Those five supremely eloquent bars not only introduce the first movement's all-important first subject, but also manage to summarise the concerto's autumnal mellowness as potently as the opening phrase of the Tristan prelude summarises the emotional essence of that whole opera.

There are four distinct new tunes belonging to the second subject group (only one is heard during the preliminary orchestral exposition—the rest are reserved till the piano re-enters), yet it is that remarkable first subject which claims the composer's attention in most of the development section and which draws from him some of his most breath-taking strokes throughout the movement—such as the orchestra's entry in the sixth bar in the remote key of B major, or the contrast between the plaintiveness of the piano's unexpected minor version of it at the start of the development section and its triumphant G major recall at the start of the recapitulation. The cadenza, here as in the finale, is Beethoven's own.

The slow movement is only seventy-two bars long; no other movement in the whole literature of the concerto manages to say so much in so short a space, or comes nearer to human speech in the process. In E minor, the music takes the form of a dialogue between the strings of the orchestra and the piano. The orchestra announces its stern decree in the first five unison bars; the piano pleads with it in quiet but intensely urgent entreaties (culminating in a cadenza-like outburst of agonising intensity), softening the orchestra's heart a little in the process, yet without any retraction of the initial decree. The final mood is one of desolate resignation.

After so highly concentrated and personal a drama, it could have been no easy task for the composer to know how to restore the light of day in the finale. His method is masterly: at the start he merely whispers his main rondo theme, in which the sad E of E minor is most subtly changed into the happy E of C major. Eventually the piano enters, and with its help the music's basic key of G and benignly mellow mood are both reasserted; in time the pianist is even allowed to indulge in a little concerto-like display. Though fundamentally a sonata-rondo with a recurring second subject as well as a recurring main theme, the movement is extraordinarily close-knit, owing to the fact that Beethoven prefers to develop his main theme instead of introducing a new contrasting episode (as sonata-rondo form normally requires) in the centre of the argument.

Interval 15 Minutes

SYMPHONY No. 1 in C minor — Brahms (1833—1897)

Un pocco sostenuto—Allegro
Andante sostenuto
Un pocco allegretto e grazioso
Adagio—Piu andante—Allegro non troppo ma con brio

The desire to write a symphony first came to Brahms when he was a youth of twenty-one, profoundly disturbed by Robert Schumann's attempted suicide and his own growing love for Clara Schumann. However, he used the ideas which came to him in his first Piano Concerto and the so-called "funeral march" of the Requiem instead, and waited until he was a mature man of forty-three before eventually giving the world what it had so long expected from him—the Symphony No. 1 in C minor, first performed at Karlsruhe under Dessoff on November 4, 1876. Explanation for the delay can be found in his intensely self-critical nature: he wanted to be fully confident before essaying this most formidable of all musical forms, the more so since Beethoven in his great Ninth had, as it were, flung a girdle round the earth and heaven too, leaving little further ground to be explored (so it then seemed) in symphonic form.

In an unguarded moment Brahms once confessed: "You don't know what it feels like to be dogged by that giant, Beethoven". Needless to say, the material of the Symphony had been gestating in Brahms's mind for years. He quoted the famous horn tune from the finale in a letter to Clara Schumann in 1868 and even as early as 1862 he showed sketches for the opening to both Clara and his composer friend, Albert Dietrich. In fact, the tragic mood of the first movement is so strongly akin to that of the first movement of his C Minor Piano Quartet, Op.60, which on his own admission grew from his Wetherian mood during the Schumann crisis, as to suggest that the real starting point of the Symphony may well have been that tumultuous period twenty years before 1876.

Certainly in the mighty first movement there is little suggestion of middle-aged stoicism; the music portrays tragedy with a young man's intensity of feeling, but with the assurance and sense of proportion of a mature craftsman. Most of the movement grows from the opening theme of the slow introduction, an extraordinarily powerful idea whose suggesion of inner conflict derives from the upward semitonal straining of its melody against the downward semitonal pull of the accompaniment, the tug-of-war taking place over an ominously reiterated low C.

Transformed into allegro tempo, this same theme launches the tempestuous main body of the movement, which is cast in traditional sonata-form. With the arrival of the second subject in E flat major there is a momentary feeling of sunshine after storm, though it is somewhat wan sunshine, and very short-lived. (Its derivation from the opening subject can be noted in its initial semitonal ascent). After a turbulent development and recapitulation Brahms eventually brings the movement to rest on a chord of C major, but its arrival is too late and too tentative to introduce any strong feeling of relief.

With its rich fund of melody, the E major slow movement, andante sostenuto (in ternary form), brings perfect contrast and repose after the dramatic stress of the first movement. Its opening section consists of first a warmly harmonised string theme and then an espressivo melody for the oboe; in the recapitulation both these ideas are made still warmer and richer by Brahms's expansive scoring. Melody is still to the fore in the central section of the movement, though a strong pull towards C sharp minor and a general feeling of heightened activity make the atmosphere rather less benign here. In the course of the movement there are several exquisitely delicate orchestral effects to belie the common assumption that Brahms had little interest in tone-colour *per se*.

The following allegretto in A flat major shows Brahms in still more amiable mood; in character it is almost too lyrical to be called a scherzo, though it preserves the traditional ternary form of a scherzo. Clarinets introduce the main ten-bar theme (the last five bars are an inversion of the first five-bar phrase); flutes, clarinets and bassoons in falling scales in thirds add a complementary theme in dotted rhythm which constantly seems on the verge of developing into a lively Hungarian dance. For the central trio section Brahms modulates to B major and changes his time to 6/8, the music working to a rousing climax before recovering its amiability in the re-scored recapitulation.

After so much geniality in the two middle movements, Brahms's return to his opening world of stark tragedy comes as no small surprise in the introduction of the finale. Indeed the first twenty-nine bars of the movement contain the most dramatic and frightening thoughts he ever committed to manuscript paper.

Small wonder that J. B. Priestley's naïve Mr. Smeeth (in "Angel Pavement") felt as if "all the workhouses and hospitals and cemeteries of North London had been flashed past his eyes" as he heard this music.

But crisis is averted with the change to C major for the glowing *ranz des vaches* horn tune that Brahms quoted to Clara Schumann in 1868 (to the words "Hoch auf'm Berg, tief im Tal, gruss ich dich viel tausend mal!") and soon the tempo changes to allegro for the famous, swinging C major theme which made Mr. Smeeth feel as if he had "a thousand glorious years to live". When told of the similarity between this tune and the one used by Beethoven in the finale of the Choral Symphony, Brahms's reply was: "Any ass can see that".

Thereafter the movement pursues the course of sonata-form, its triumphant, indeed exultantly jubilant mood, suggesting that like Beethoven, Brahms could also cry out: "I shall take fate by the throat; it shall not wholly overcome me".

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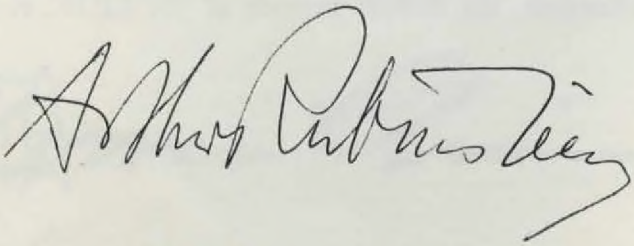

ARTUR RUBINSTEIN

Artur Rubinstein was born in Lodz in January, 1886, the youngest of seven children. His remarkable musical gifts revealed themselves very early and at the age of eight, after receiving serious encouragement from Joseph Joachim, he was sent to Berlin where he studied piano with Heinrich Barth, a pupil of Buelow, Tausig and Liszt.

At 11, he played in public for the first time with Joachim conducting, and a little later began giving concerts in the main towns of Germany and Poland. In 1905 he made his first tour of the U.S.A., playing in Philadelphia and New York, where the criticisms showed a certain reserve. He then went back to Berlin and Paris and played in the principal European cities.

In 1916 he was received with acclaim in Spain, where he gave 120 recitals, and where he became a familiar figure in royal circles. A similar success awaited him in South America and it was there that Rubinstein's outstandingly successful international career commenced. From 1919 onwards he toured the U.S.A. achieving a triumphant success to which the years have only added lustre.

In 1932 he married the beautiful Aniela Mlynarski, daughter of conductor Emil Mlynarski under whose baton he had played in Warsaw when he was 14. There are four children of the marriage.

Rubinstein became an American citizen in 1946 and eight years later he also acquired a home in Paris by the Bois de Boulogne, near the house in which Debussy spent the last 13 years of his life. There and in his American home Rubinstein lives in between the tours that take him all around the world, and where he is fêted as one of the greatest pianists of our time.

To us, however, Artur Rubinstein is much more than one of the greatest pianists of our time: he is, above all, one of the great benefactors of Israel and the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra. He appears in Israel with the I.P.O. every year and gives recitals while there, but he has consistently refused to accept a fee from the Orchestra for his concert appearances, and has donated all the proceeds from his recitals to the foundation of the Artur Rubinstein Trust, from which scholarships are awarded to promising young pianists. In addition he himself has found time while in Israel to adjudicate the final competition for this award.

The Orchestra for its part has placed the fees Rubinstein should have received in a special fund to endow a Chair of Musicology in his name at the Hebrew University and the Artur Rubinstein Chair of Musicology was officially inaugurated in his presence in 1964.

The soloists' room at the Mann Auditorium has been named the Artur Rubinstein Room as has the Principal Artists' Suite in the Clariça and Fred Davidson Guest House. Thus his name is permanently linked with the musical education of Israelis as well as with the concert hall, where he has given so much pleasure and inspiration to many thousands.

A further gift to the Orchestra from Artur Rubinstein is his appearance tonight, for he is donating his services without fee. We are glad to have this further opportunity of welcoming this superb artist and of recording our gratitude to him, both in our own name and in that of the Orchestra, for his boundless generosity and for the lustre he has bestowed on our Gala Concert.