

THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES ASSOCIATION



PROGRAMS OF
RECORDED MUSIC



The National Archives Auditorium

PROGRAM No. 1

December 8, 1942



1. Le Carnaval romain - Overture (Opus 9)

Hector Berlioz

London Philharmonic Orchestra
Sir Thomas Beecham conducting
(2 record sides)

(Born at La Côte-Saint André
December 11, 1803; died at
Paris, March 9, 1869.)

As early as 1834 Hector Berlioz, the great French romanticist composer of the first half of the nineteenth century who has been called "the father of modern orchestration" and who ardently championed the cause of program music as against abstract music, conceived the idea of composing an opera based on the life of the Renaissance Italian sculptor and goldsmith, Benvenuto Cellini. The work was produced at the Paris Opéra on September 10, 1838, but proved to be a complete failure save for the overture. In the words of Berlioz himself, the overture was "received with exaggerated applause" whereas the opera itself "was hissed with admirable energy and unanimity."

Berlioz, however, set to work to revise the opera and in so doing introduced an overture to the second act. The plot of the opera centers around an imaginary episode in the life of the hero, wherein Cellini falls in love with the daughter of the Pope's treasurer. But since her father has already promised her elsewhere, Cellini plots an elopement. As part of his scheme, he plans to attend a Roman Carnival in disguise. The *Roman Carnival Overture* is intended to set the stage for the second act.

The work was first performed independently of the opera at a concert given by Berlioz of his own works at the Salle Herz, Paris, on February 3, 1844. Its success was immediate and has attended it down to our own day.

The overture is based on two main themes. One is the melody of a tenor solo "O Teresa, vous que j'aime" in Act I, assigned in the Overture to the English horn and bassoon, and the other a Saltarello danced at the Carnival in Act II.

2. Variations symphoniques

César Franck

Walter Gieseking and the
London Philharmonic Orchestra
Sir Henry J. Wood conducting
(4 record sides)

(Born at Liège, December 10, 1822;
died at Paris, November 8, 1890.)

César Auguste Franck, the quiet, self-effacing, deeply religious Belgian composer who established his residence in Paris and served for many years as organist of Ste. Clothilde, was, in the last years of his life, deeply concerned over what he believed to be the decadence of piano music since Beethoven. To his efforts to revive piano music we are indebted for the *Symphonic Variations*.

In this work Franck proved an innovator by his fusion of the piano and orchestral portions into an intimately related pattern. That is, the piano is treated as though it were a part of the orchestra rather than as a solo instrument. The symphonic proportions of the work are still further emphasized by the fact that the variations do not stand by themselves as separate entities, but are connected by transitional passages.

Following a very short introduction, the first melody appears in the piano, its two phrases being interrupted by a modified passage from the introductory bars. The second theme is presented over a sustained roll on the dominant kettle drum. In spite of their varied treatment, the chief melodies are never obscured, even though they may appear now in the piano, now in the orchestra, at one time in the treble, or at another in the bass strings.

The *Symphonic Variations* were composed in 1885 and played for the first time at a concert of the Société Nationale de la Musique, Paris, the pianist being Louis Diémer, to whom the work was dedicated. At a concert a year and a half later, the same orchestra went completely to pieces as a result of insufficient rehearsing and it seemed as though the work were doomed to failure. The unperturbable Franck, however, remained blissfully serene. The first performance of the *Symphonic Variations* in the United States took place at a concert in Carnegie Hall, New York, on March 7, 1898 in honor of the great French organist, Alexandre Guilmant.

(Walter Gieseking was born in Lyons, France, November 5, 1895, of German parents. He was trained at the Hanover Conservatory and has won great renown as an interpreter of modern French music, particularly Debussy. He now resides in Germany.)

(Intermission)

3. Symphony in B Flat Major (Opus 20)

Ernest Chausson

1. Lent - Allegro, vivo
(3 record sides)
2. Très lent
(2 record sides)
3. Animé - Très animé
(3 record sides)

(Born at Paris, June 21, 1855;
died at Limay, near Nantes,
June 10, 1899.)

Paris Conservatory Orchestra—Piero Coppola conducting

Ernest Chausson was born into a wealthy family in Paris on June 21, 1855. In his early twenties he enrolled at the Paris Conservatory as a member of the composition class then presided over by the celebrated operatic composer, Jules Massenet. Chausson, however, was more interested in abstract forms of musical art than in opera and soon placed himself under the guidance of César Franck. Chausson, together with Vincent d'Indy, became Franck's most devoted friend and pupil. Indeed, the development of the French symphony since Franck has been largely the work of his school.

Like the great D Minor Symphony of Franck, Chausson's consists of three movements, omitting the customary scherzo. Furthermore, it exploits the English horn and harp, employs an extended chorale-like theme in the last movement, and in general is suffused with Franckian mysticism.

The work was completed in 1890. Its first American performance occurred in Philadelphia on December 4, 1905 at a concert of the Boston Symphony Orchestra directed by Chausson's colleague, Vincent d'Indy. The symphony is scored for 3 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, English horn, bass clarinet, 3 bassoons, 4 horns, 4 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, 3 kettle drums, 2 harps, and strings. It is dedicated to Henri Lerolle, prominent in the artistic circles of Paris during Chausson's lifetime.

Chausson met his death as the result of a tragic accident. While riding on his estate at Limay, he lost control of his bicycle going downhill and dashed his head against a stone wall.

4. La Valse (Poème choréographique)

Maurice Ravel

San Francisco Symphony Orchestra,
Pierre Monteux conducting
(3 record sides)

(Born at Ciboure, France, March
7, 1875; died at Paris, Decem-
ber 28, 1937.)

"Through an occasional break in the swirling mist one may dimly distinguish couples waltzing. The vapors are dissipated little by little revealing an immense ballroom filled by a dancing crowd. The illumination from the chandeliers blazes forth fortissimo. An Imperial Court about 1885."

Thus does Maurice Ravel preface the score of *La Valse*. According to Madeleine Goss in her recent biography of Ravel (*Bohème, the life of Maurice Ravel* - New York, 1940) Diaghileff "commissioned Ravel to write an 'apotheosis of the waltz'; but when the score of *La Valse* was brought to him, he decided that it was unsuited to his purpose."

Sketched during the first World War and completed in 1920, *La Valse* is believed by Mrs. Goss to be "an expression of the bitterness and depression" experienced by the highly sensitive Ravel during the years of the war. In the words of Lawrence Gilman, "*La Valse*, despite its surface charm and scintillation, is essentially a work of tragic irony. It is as perturbing and ominous as a mobilization order."

Alfredo Casella, Ravel's contemporary in Paris, has described the "poem as a sort of tryptich: (a) The Birth of the Waltz. (The poem begins with dull rumors, as in *Das Rheingold*, and from this chaos gradually takes form and development; (b) The Waltz; (c) The Apotheosis of the Waltz."

La Valse was performed for the first time in Paris at a Lamoureux concert on December 20, 1920. Its first American rendition was by the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, Alfred Hertz conducting, on October 28, 1921. The first performance by the Boston Symphony took place on January 13, 1922, under the direction of Pierre Monteux.

The work is scored for 3 flutes (one interchangeable with piccolo), 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, double bassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, bass tuba, 3 kettle drums, side drum, bass drum, tambourine, cymbals, triangle, castanets, tam-tam, glockenspiel, crotales (small cymbals), 2 harps, and strings.

The National Archives Association gratefully acknowledges the cooperation and assistance of the following persons in planning and presenting these programs: Dr. Solon J. Buck, Mr. John G. Bradley, Mr. C. Patrick Moore, Mr. Robert D. Hubbard, Mr. Thad Page, Mr. Ernest Bryan, Mrs. Mildred Moore, Mr. Alexander Stiles, Mr. Harold E. Hufford and Mr. Harry M. Forker, all of the staff of The National Archives; Miss Perle Eddy, Miss Marie Ryan and Mr. Herbert Hertz of the War Production Board; Mr. Joseph D. Cooper of the War Man Power Commission Personnel Office; Mr. Clayton E. Whipple, Mr. Wulf I. Ladejinski and Miss Lois E. Monie of the Department of Agriculture; Miss Carolyn L. McGowan and Miss Marjorie Day of the War Department; Miss Catherine Nimitz and Mrs. Ethel Wikander of the District of Columbia Public Library.

Program notes written by and records loaned by Mr. Charles L. Stewart of The National Archives.