

# notes

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## BERNSTEIN'S FAMOUS 1943 BROADCAST

By Dr. Richard E. Rodda

**30 SECOND NOTES:** Leonard Bernstein in 1989 remembering his November 14, 1943 broadcast debut with the New York Philharmonic as a last-minute replacement for the ailing Bruno Walter: *"I never thought I would have to walk out there [the Carnegie Hall stage] on my own. When it came to the time — that very day — all I can remember is standing there in the wings shaking and being so scared. I had just come from seeing Bruno Walter — wrapped up in blankets because he had the flu.... The time seemed to hang heavy till 3:00 p.m. There was no rehearsal and I had to go on and do, untried, this thing of such difficulty.... I strode out and I don't remember a thing from that moment — I don't even remember intermission — until the sound of people standing and clapping and cheering."* The same compositions heard on that occasion are performed at this Des Moines Symphony concert as a tribute to the 100th anniversary of Leonard Bernstein's birth. 🎵



### ROBERT SCHUMANN

Born June 8, 1810 in Zwickau, Germany; died July 29, 1856 in Endenich, near Bonn.

#### OVERTURE TO LORD BYRON'S DRAMATIC POEM *MANFRED*, OP. 115 (1852)

- First performed on March 14, 1852 in Leipzig, conducted by the composer.
- These concerts mark the first performances of this piece by the Des Moines Symphony.  
(Duration: ca. 11 minutes)

It is not surprising that a man of Schumann's deep sensibilities and refined literary tastes (his father was a bookseller) would be irresistibly

drawn to the writings of that quintessential figure of English Romanticism, George Gordon — Lord Byron. The work of Byron that most affected Schumann was the verse drama of 1817, *Manfred*. Clara noted in her diary that her husband was "stirred to an extraordinary degree" by what she called Byron's "witch drama." In his study of Schumann, André Boucourechliev described the plot, such as it is, of Byron's phantasmagoric epic: "Manfred [a Swiss nobleman] had loved his sister, Astarte, and after her death sought by magic means to forget her, while at the same time wishing to evoke her spirit. Being unable to appease his torment, he attempted to die and Astarte appeared before him to prophesy his end. He died surrounded by the genies he had conjured up, defying them and refusing the help of a holy man." Byron himself described *Manfred* to his

publisher as being “of a very wild, metaphysical and inexplicable kind. Almost all of the persons — but two or three — are spirits of the earth and air, or the waters; the scene is in the Alps; the hero is a kind of magician, who is dominated by a species of remorse, the cause of which is left half-explained. He wanders about, invoking these spirits, which appear to him and are of no use; at last he goes to the very abode of the Evil Principle to evoke a ghost, which appears and gives him an ambiguous and disagreeable answer; and in the third act he is found by an attendant, dying in a tower, where he has studied his art.”

Though Schumann left no specific “program” for his *Manfred Overture*, it seems likely that he intended the music to mirror the progression of the poem. The dramatic opening gesture, three stabbing chords, may represent the mysterious “crime” that haunts Manfred. The brooding slow introduction that follows seems to convey the hero’s troubled nature. The main body of the *Overture* is occupied with a large sonata form whose tempestuous, syncopated main theme evokes Manfred’s struggle within himself, while the more lyrical subsidiary melody conjures a vision of his sister. The development reflects the mounting intensity of Manfred’s unrest. After an altered recapitulation of the earlier themes, the coda, which recalls the unsettled mood and music of the introduction, suggests the death of Manfred at the close of Byron’s poem.

**The score calls for flutes, oboes, clarinets and bassoons in pairs, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, timpani and the usual strings consisting of first violins, second violins, violas, violoncellos and double basses.**



## MIKLÓS RÓZSA

**Born April 18, 1907 in Budapest;  
died on July 27, 1995 in Los Angeles.**

### **THEME, VARIATIONS AND FINALE, OP. 13 (1934, REV. 1943)**

- First performed on October 1, 1934 in Duisberg, Germany, conducted by Otto Volkmann.
- These concerts mark the first performances of this piece by the Des Moines Symphony.  
(Duration: ca. 20 minutes)

Budapest-born Miklós Rózsa showed a precocious talent for music and began studying violin at age five, and two years later started composing and performing in public. At his high school in Budapest, Rózsa was elected president of the Franz Liszt Society and, to the dismay of school officials, organized concerts of the latest works by Kodály, Bartók and other recent Hungarian composers; for his advanced training in composition he went to the Leipzig Conservatory. After a successful concert of his chamber music in May 1932 in Paris, he moved to that city, and quickly established his reputation as a concert composer. In 1935, he was invited by the Markova-Dolin Company of London to compose the score for a ballet titled *Hungaria*, based on Hungarian folk and traditional tunes. The film director Jacques Feyder saw the production and arranged for Rózsa to write the music for his movie *Knight Without Armor*, starring Marlene Dietrich and produced by the composer’s fellow expatriate Hungarian, Sir Alexander Korda. Korda liked Rózsa’s work and asked him to join the music staff of his London Film Productions. Rózsa

contributed scores to eight other Korda productions before World War II forced suspension of the production of *The Thief of Baghdad* in 1940, when Korda moved his operation, including Rózsa, to Hollywood. Their last collaboration was for the 1942 *Jungle Book*, which yielded the first commercial American film score recording and caused a sensation. Rózsa left Korda in 1943 and worked for five years as a free-lance film composer before joining the staff of MGM; he became a United States citizen in 1946. Given the demanding schedule of his film career, Rózsa also produced a surprising number of concert compositions — a symphony; concertos for string orchestra, violin, piano, cello, viola, and violin and cello; two serenades; a dozen independent orchestral scores; numerous pieces for chamber ensembles; several songs and choruses; and some works for piano. From 1945 to 1965, he was Professor of Film Music at the University of Southern California, and in 1955, he was elected President of the Screen Composers Association, a position he held for a decade. He received three Academy Awards: *Spellbound* (1945), *A Double Life* (1948) and *Ben Hur* (1959). Miklós Rózsa died in Los Angeles on July 27, 1995.

Rózsa first gained international recognition with the *Theme, Variations and Finale*, composed in 1933 during his brief residency in Paris. The work was premiered in October 1934 in Duisberg, north of Düsseldorf, and immediately taken up by such noted conductors as Charles Munch, Eugene Ormandy and Bruno Walter, who scheduled it for his concert with the New York Philharmonic on November 14, 1943, when his illness allowed the 25-year-old Leonard Bernstein to substitute at the last minute (without a rehearsal) and make his reputation before a national radio audience. The work comprises a theme deeply imbued with the spirit of Hungarian folk music (Rózsa said that he conceived it on the boat trip along the

Danube), eight variations encompassing a wide variety of moods and styles, and a rousing finale.

**The score calls for piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, three horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, snare drum, triangle, tam-tam, xylophone, celesta, harp and the usual strings.**



## **RICHARD STRAUSS**

**Born June 11, 1864 in**

**Munich;**

**died September 8, 1949 in  
Garmisch-Partenkirchen.**

### ***DON QUIXOTE, FANTASTIC VARIATIONS ON A THEME OF KNIGHTLY CHARACTER FOR CELLO, VIOLA AND ORCHESTRA, OP. 35 (1898)***

- First performed on March 8, 1898 in Cologne, conducted by Franz Wuellner.

- First performed by the Des Moines Symphony on May 6 & 7, 1984 with Yuri Krasnapolsky conducting and Janos Starker as soloist.

*(Duration: ca. 42 minutes)*

*Don Quixote* by Cervantes is not only among the earliest examples of the novel in world literature (1605), but also one of the most admired and widely enjoyed. Cervantes sketched his hero thus: "Through little sleep and much reading, he dried up his brains in such sort as he wholly lost his judgment." Thereupon, "He fell into one of the strangest conceits that a madman ever stumbled on in this world ... that he should become a knight-errant, and go throughout the world with his horse and armor to seek adventures and practice in person all he had read was used by knights of yore...."

Knights in shining armor were as much out of fashion in Cervantes' day as covered wagons and the pony express are in ours, but the nostalgic, historical romance they represent is the source of much of the poignancy Don Quixote elicits and that served as the emotional engine for Richard Strauss' superb tone poem of 1898, as well as for works by some sixty other composers, including Telemann and Purcell. In his setting, Strauss chose to emphasize the dramatic elements of the tale by assigning a theme representing Quixote to the solo cello, and then varying the melody to depict several episodes from the novel. Along for the adventure, as well as much abuse from his master, is the faithful squire, Sancho Panza, usually played by solo viola, but also given to the tenor tuba and the bass clarinet.

Strauss's tone poem portrays ten of Quixote's exploits.

*Introduction:* The elderly hero's fancy teems with the "impossible follies" of the romantic works he has been reading and in his madness he vows that he will become a knight-errant.

*Theme:* *Don Quixote, the Knight of the Rueful Countenance; Sancho Panza.* The theme of the hero is announced by the solo cello. Sancho Panza's theme emerges first in the bass clarinet, then in the tenor tuba, and later in the solo viola.

*Variation I. The Knight and his Squire Start on Their Journey.* Inspired by the beautiful Dulcinea of Toboso, the Knight attacks some "monstrous giants," who are nothing more than windmills revolving in the breeze.

*Variation II. The Victorious Battle Against the Host of the Great Emperor Alifanfaron.* Quixote spies a huge army but it is only a great herd of sheep. The Knight is stoned by the shepherds.

*Variation III. Colloquies of Knight and Squire.* Quixote speaks of honor, glory, the Ideal Woman.

Sancho, the realist, holds forth for a more comfortable life.

*Variation IV. The Adventure with the Penitents.* Mistaking a band of pilgrims for robbers and villains, Don Quixote attacks, only to receive a sound drubbing from them.

*Variation V. The Knight's Vigil.* Don Quixote spurns sleep. Dulcinea, in answer to his prayers, comes to him in a vision.

*Variation VI. The Meeting with Dulcinea.* Jestingly, Sancho points to a country wench as Dulcinea. Don Quixote vows vengeance against the wicked magician who has wrought this transformation.

*Variation VII. The Ride Through the Air.* Blindfolded, Knight and squire sit astride a wooden horse, which — they have been informed — will carry them aloft. The wooden horse never leaves the ground.

*Variation VIII. The Journey to the Enchanted Park.* Quixote and Sancho embark in an oarless boat. The boat capsizes, but the two reach shore and give thanks for their safety.

*Variation IX. The Combat with Two Magicians.* Quixote violently charges a peaceable pair of monks going by on their mules. In his maddened brain, the monks are mighty magicians, and Quixote is elated beyond measure at their utter rout.

*Variation X. The Duel with the Knight of the White Moon.* The greatest setback of his knightly career is suffered by Quixote at the hands of the Knight of the White Moon, who is, after all, a true friend. He explains that he hoped to cure Don Quixote of his madness, and, having won the duel, orders him to retire peacefully to his home.

*Finale. The Death of Don Quixote.* The worn and harried Knight is no longer bemused. It was all vanity, he reflects, and he is prepared, now, for the peace that is death.

**The score calls for piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, English horn, E-flat clarinet, two B-flat clarinets, bass clarinet, three bassoons, contrabassoon, six horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tenor and bass tubas, harp, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, snare drum, triangle, tambourine, glockenspiel, wind machine, solo cello and the usual strings.**



## **RICHARD WAGNER**

**Born May 22, 1813 in**

**Leipzig;**

**died February 13, 1883**

**in Venice.**

### **PRELUDE TO *DIE MEISTERSINGER VON NÜRNBERG* (“*THE MASTERSINGERS OF NUREMBERG*”) (1862)**

- Prelude first performed on November 1, 1862 in Leipzig, conducted by the composer; complete opera first performed on June 21, 1868 in Munich.

- First performed by the Des Moines Symphony on May 1, 1938 with Frank Noyes conducting. Six subsequent performances occurred, most recently on February 27, 2013 with Joseph Giunta conducting.

*(Duration: ca. 10 minutes)*

The plot of *Die Meistersinger* centers around a song contest held in 16th-century Nuremberg on St. John's Day (June 24th). The winner is to marry Eva, daughter of the goldsmith Veit Pogner. Walther von Stolzing, a young knight from Franconia who has fallen in love with Eva, vows to win the contest and her hand, even though he is not a member of the guild of Mastersingers. He is granted permission to compete despite the attempts of Sixtus

Beckmesser, the town clerk and also a contestant, to discredit him for not knowing the ancient guild rules governing the composition of a song. Eva and Walther communicate their love to the wise cobbler Hans Sachs, who remains their friend and adviser despite his own love for the girl. Sachs helps Walther shape his musical and poetic ideas, which bring a new freshness and expression to the staid ways of the guild. (Walther and his new art, of course, represent Wagner.) Beckmesser, having stolen Walther's poem, gives it a ludicrous musical setting, and makes a fool of himself at the contest. Sachs invites Walther to show how the verses should be sung, and the young knight is acclaimed the winner.

The *Prelude*, written between March and June 1862, was the first part of the score to be completed, and served as the thematic source for much of the opera. It opens with the majestic processional of the Mastersingers intoned by the full orchestra. A tender theme portraying the love of Eva and Walther leads to a second Mastersinger melody, this one said to have been based on *The Crowned Tone* by the 17th-century guild member Heinrich Mögling. The *Prelude's* first section closes with the development of another love motive and phrases later heard in Walther's Prize Song. The central portion is largely devoted to a cackling, fugato parody of the first Mastersinger theme that anticipates Beckmesser's buffooneries. The *Prelude* is brought to a magnificent ending with a masterful weaving together of all of its themes.

**The score calls for piccolo, flutes, oboes, clarinets and bassoons in pairs, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, triangle, cymbals, harp and the usual strings.**