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Erie Philharmonic Society

Sixth Season — First Orchestra Concert

November 10, 1936

8:30 P. M.

Overture to "Der Freischutz" von Weber

Symphony No. 5, in C minor, Op. 67 Beethoven

Allegro con brio

Andante con moto

Allegro

Allegro—Tempo I—Allegro—Presto

— Intermission —

Polovtsian Dances from "Prince Igor" Borodin

"The Swan of Tuonela"—Legend from the Finnish Folk-Saga, "Kalevala," Op. 22, No. 3 Sibelius

Spanish Caprice, Op. 34 Rimsky-Korsakov

NOTE—It is suggested that the listener refrain from applause after the First Movement of the Symphony—even though moved to bestow it—so that the full effect of contrast between this movement and the second may not be disturbed.

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PRESERVE THIS PROGRAM. References will be made to these notes in later programs.

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Visitors are welcome at rehearsals, which are held at Strong Vincent High School—for the full orchestra Sunday mornings, 10:30 to 1:00; for the string sections, Wednesday evenings, 6:30 to 8:15.

These notes are arranged with a view to presenting the subject matter in its most logical order. Topics are indicated in heavy-faced type, so that if desired, the reader may select for early perusal those portions most helpful to an understanding of the music.

Overture to the Opera, "Der Freischutz" Carl Maria Friedrich Ernst, Freiherr (Baron) von Weber

Born at Eutin, Oldenburg, Germany, December 18, 1786; died at London, England, June 5, 1826

In the second decade of the nineteenth century the musical populace of Germany was divided into two camps over the question as to whether German opera, or works in the style of the Italian operatic school, should dominate the operatic boards in Germany. The advocates of the latter were strongly in the ascendant, largely because King Friedrich Wilhelm III of Prussia himself prominently supported them.

The practitioners of the Italian style aimed almost entirely to please the ear with their music, to give every opportunity for "bel canto" (literally "beautiful singing") and vocal display for their own sakes, regardless of the appropriateness of their music to its concurrent dramatic situation. They were concerned very little, or not at all, with any attempt to reflect in their music the scene, the action, the atmosphere, the emotional ebb and flow and interplay, and so on, as they were set forth and unfolded on the stage. The exploitation of the voice was their main pre-occupation, and all expressive possibilities and requirements were sacrificed thereto. The inevitable result of such a method was a cut-and-dried succession of more or less loosely strung together "pieces"—arias, recitatives, duets, quartets, choruses, etc.—often very beautiful in themselves, but producing an effect that was transient, stereotyped and artificial, and was obviously incompatible with the Germans' love and admiration for things logical and substantial.

At this time Count Karl Friedrich Moritz Paul von Bruhl, (1772-1832) was intendant-general (general manager) of the Prussian royal theatres. He was a friend of Goethe and a very important figure in the development of the drama in Germany. He resented deeply the Italianizing of the operatic performances given in the theatres under his supervision, and he was determined to do whatever he could to combat this trend and restore native opera to its rightful position on the German stage. He knew a young musician whose help he wanted, a man of high ideals, an abiding faith in German art, great originality, and the courage to fight for his convictions—Carl von Weber. Count von Bruhl selected him for intendant of the Schauspielhaus (theatre) in Berlin. Negotiations for his engagement had been entered into between them, when in 1817 this playhouse was destroyed by fire, and with it von Weber's chance to serve German art in that capacity.

Before long a new and finer Schauspielhaus was under way, but before its completion the King had invited Spontini, then living in Paris and at that moment the great popular opera composer, to come to Berlin as general director of all musical matters at the capitol, and with virtually dictatorial powers. In 1820 Spontini arrived. This, of course, created a conflict of authority and a very trying situation for von Bruhl, who nevertheless labored faithfully to cooperate with the vain and temperamental Spontini. But the setting-up of a foreigner in so important a musical post—especially one from Paris, an Italian, and the arch representative of his native operatic school—was deeply resented by a group of patriots who still, perhaps too vividly, recalled the sacrifices Prussia had been called upon to make in the wars against Napoleon, and who had been anxiously watching for a German who would resurrect for their own opera the glories bestowed upon it by Handel, Gluck, Mozart, and Beethoven (with his only opera, "Fidelio"). So far such a one had not made himself known.

About this time the new Schauspielhaus was nearing completion. Count von Bruhl had determined that in spite of everything it should be opened with a German work, and his choice was a new opera by his friend von Weber, which would thus have its premier—the romantic opera "Die Jagersbraut", founded on a German folk legend. Von Weber had been occupied with its composition off and on for several years. The last part to be written, the overture, was begun February 22, 1820, and on May 13 following Weber wrote in his dairy, "Overture to 'Die Jagersbraut' finished, and with it the whole opera. God be praised, and to Him alone be the glory".

The theatre was not ready as soon as expected, so the opening was delayed; but in due course, on June 18, 1821, the premier of von Weber's new opera, its title changed at von Bruhl's suggestion to "Der Freischutz", and with the composer conducting, started the new theatre on the brilliant career that is now in its one-hundred-and-fifteenth year. Concerning that performance von Weber's diary tells us that the audience was aroused to "incredible enthusiasm; Overture and Folk-song were en-chored; fourteen out of seventeen music-pieces were stormily applauded. Everything went exceedingly well, and was sung *con amore*. I was called before the curtain and took Mad. Seidler and Mile. Eunike (two of the cast) with me, as I could not get hold of the others. Verses and wreaths came flying, 'soli Deo Gloria'." Some of those verses were malicious jibes at Spontini, which von Weber genuinely regretted. The applause after the overture was so tremendous that although the composer bowed repeatedly, the audience would not allow the performance to proceed until it had been played through a second time. The whole affair was such a stupendous success that the followers of Spontini were quite put to rout. "Der Freischutz" then and there established itself with the Berlin public.

Thus von Weber, through the success of "Der Freischutz", restored to German opera a just and full recognition of its right to be produced on German stages. But of far greater significance than this is the fact that he carried on in his field the work that Beethoven was doing in the realms of chamber music, the sonata and the symphony—that of emancipating music from the fetters of formality and convention that had deprived the art of the deeper, loftier, more intimate and more powerful expressiveness of which it was capable. These two, by their freedom, naturalness, originality, warmth and forcefulness laid the foundation for the romanticists of the next generation, of whom Schumann, Schubert, Mendelssohn, Liszt, Brahms, Wagner and Tchaikovsky were the greatest. Wagner he clearly foreshadowed by making music serve, interpret and reflect the other elements of action, dialogue, scene and situation, and so on; by uniting all in a related and mutually complementary whole for the truly dramatic unfolding of plot, character and atmosphere; and, most important, by associating a definite musical idea with a particular character or object or quality or emotional state, which is the device Wagner developed into the "leit-motiv". Weber was not only the father of German romantic opera, as he is so often called, but his new and fresh idealism became as well the point of departure for the best of German music of the last century.

DER FREISCHUTZ is founded on the German tradition that any hunter may receive from the Demon Huntsman, Zamiel (the devil), seven magic bullets which, when fired from the hunter's weapon, will unfailingly hit their mark regardless of the accuracy of his aim. Six of the bullets the hunter may direct as he chooses, but the seventh is reserved by Zamiel to direct according to his own designs. In return the hunter must surrender his soul to Zamiel, who will claim it when the bullets are exhausted; but if the hunter bring another victim to Zamiel before that time, his own life will be extended and he will receive a fresh supply of the charmed missiles.

The Plot. Agathe, beautiful daughter of Cuno, head ranger for Prince Ottokar of Bohemia, is loved by Max, one of her father's young rangers. Cuno consents to their marriage if Max wins a coming contest of marksmanship. In the early trials Max has not done well; the peasants taunt him and he is angry and despondent. Another of the rangers, Caspar, has already sold himself to the Demon and his time on earth is to be up the next day—unless, of course, he produces a new victim. He suggests to Max that with the charmed bullets he yet could surely win the contest. Max refuses. Caspar tempts him to shoot at an eagle soaring so high that it can scarcely be seen, and hands Max his own gun. Max fires. The bird drops. Caspar then tells him the gun was loaded with one of the enchanted missiles. Max sees what these would mean to him in the contest and agrees to meet Caspar at midnight in the Wolf's Glen, where amid scenes of the wildest horror Zamiel casts for Max his seven bullets. Next day at the contest Max has successfully fired six of them. Zamiel appears to guide the seventh. The Prince directs that Max bring down a white dove hovering nearby. Agathe had been warned by a hermit of grave impending danger. As Max raises his gun she exclaims, "Don't shoot, Max; I am the White Dove". But too late,—Max has pulled the trigger, and she falls. Then it is discovered that Caspar has also fallen, and that Agathe has only swooned. For Zamiel, having no power over the pure maiden, directed the bullet to Caspar, whose soul he already possesses, and whom he now carries away. Max confesses what he had done and the Prince at first sentences him to lifelong banishment; but after the pleas of Agathe and the hermit this punishment is commuted to a year, in which he is to repent and prove himself worthy of his lovely bride.

The Overture begins solemnly, Adagio, 4-4 time (strings and woodwinds). Then to a weaving, tranquil accompaniment of strings the horns have a most lovely

song,—picturing, perhaps, the peaceful depths of the forest of a summer night. Suddenly this is interrupted by an ominous tremor of the strings, through which we hear a sinister pronouncement from the cellos—the music of the demon Zamiel. (This occurs also when Caspar invokes the demon in the Wolf's Glen, and when Zamiel carries off the mortally wounded Caspar near the end). Now the music becomes highly agitated (strings at first, *Molto Vivace*, 2-2 time)—this being taken from the scene in the Wolf's Glen. Gradually it works up to a high pitch, reaching a climax (an upward rush of strings) which during the action marks the casting of Max's seventh bullet. A sudden letting down, and a clarinet (strings tremolo) sings a theme associated with Max. Then violins and clarinets reply with an aria of Agathe. Soon the Wolf's Glen music returns, a rapidly rising and falling passage for first violins, chords in other strings, and presently at intervals the magic bullets can be heard dropping from the mold (a note, then a drop to one lower: two from bass trombone, three from the bass and another trombone, two from third and fourth horns). There comes another passage of deep foreboding, with Zamiel's theme (violins, then cellos). Then, like a paean of joy, bursts forth the theme of Agathe heard before, as though to celebrate the triumph of love and purity, personified in her, over the powers of evil. This closing of the overture is also the finale of the opera.

"Der Freischutz" means a "free shot", as applied to a missile that freely finds its mark rather than to a shooter who fires with a free aim and accidentally hits his mark.

Symphony No. 5, in C minor, Op. 67

Ludwig van Beethoven

Born at Bonn, Germany, December 16(?), 1770; died at Vienna, Austria, March 26, 1827

Beethoven began serious work on this symphony in 1804, but his notebooks contain sketches of its first three movements made in 1800 and 1801. In fact, there is a sketch made in 1795 of a movement in C minor that is identifiable with the third movement of this work. He was occupied with it in 1806, when he put it aside to compose the Fourth Symphony, after which he returned to the C minor and finished it in 1807. It was first performed at the Theatre an der Wien, Vienna, December 22, 1808, the "Pastoral" (No. 6) having its premier at the same concert.

In his biography of Beethoven, Anton Schindler tells of inquiring of the composer as to the meaning of the first motive of this symphony. "Beethoven expressed himself", he wrote, "in something like vehement animation, when describing to me his idea, 'It is thus that fate knocks on the door'."

Schindler became a sort of secretary and general factotum to Beethoven, and lived with him for a time from 1814 on, and again toward the end of Beethoven's life. During those years his personal contact with the master was probably the most intimate of any of Beethoven's contemporaries and Beethoven was wont to converse with him quite frankly.

His statement about the "knock of fate" has been called into question in these latter years, when it has become fashionable to discount and disparage so many of our beliefs and traditions about the great and near-great of former days. Not the veracity of this statement is doubted (all seem to concede that it was actually made) but the seriousness with which it was made. The principle basis of this skepticism is that Schindler, though Beethoven's devoted disciple and meticulous recorder, was also gullible, and could at times irritate Beethoven more than a little with his inquisitiveness and persistence. When vexed with him Beethoven would often give some impatient, even scornful, reply. Yet, beyond pure conjecture, no evidence has been produced that this reply was such a one. All the earlier writers who mention it accept Schindler's declaration at face value; only the later ones cavil over it. True, earlier writers were naturally influenced by Schindler's statement, for to the best of their knowledge it was a first-hand report of a sincere utterance. Even so, if authors like Sir George Grove, Frederick J. Crowest and Ernst von Elterlein had been doubtful, some questioning would surely have arisen nearer Beethoven's lifetime, which would then have led to investigation. Apparently this did not happen. Thus it seems far more rational and logical to assume that the remark was indeed made in all seriousness and good faith, and expressed Beethoven's own conception of the motive's meaning. There seems to be no reason why Schindler's word in this instance should not be as much entitled to credence as to skepticism, and that up to this point the weight of evidence for adopting it without reservation is at least equal to that opposed.

But after all, very little argument for accepting the "knock of fate" idea should be needed other than the symphony itself, for by its acceptance we are provided with

a key to a broad conception of the whole work so natural, so fitting and so reasonable as to well-nigh defy refutation. Every consideration confirms the authenticity of this conception, and all that it implies; the music is utterly appropriate to the philosophical plan it unlocks.

Von Elterlein has aptly pointed out that with the symphonies of Beethoven's two great predecessors, Haydn and Mozart, "it is possible to regard them all collectively, from one identical viewpoint; the ideal center being the same throughout. This, in the case of Haydn, may be characterized as a pure, childlike ideality: in that of Mozart, as a noble, harmonious humanity; all their symphonic works being but modifications of the one central idea. It is far otherwise with the symphonies of Beethoven. Their number is but small yet each represents a world in itself, with an ideal center of its own. Thus . . . tragical conflict with fate, and eventual victory, is the theme of the fifth . . ."

It must be remembered that Beethoven was an introvert. He was immensely absorbed in his own conflicts and struggles, his ecstasies and infatuations, and all the complexities of his own spiritual life. His objective interest in human experience was largely confined to its manifestations as they affected him. And all this was intensified by the time of composing the Fifth Symphony by the advent of that greatest affliction for a musician—deafness. By 1805 it had progressed to such a degree that he fully realized its tragic import, and this fate was hard indeed to contemplate. No man has ever lived to whom this faculty was more indispensable and who could less afford to be deprived of it. He did not submit at first without violent inward protest, but gradually he came to face the silent future with fortitude, and then with determination that he would not allow it to impair his creative achievement. He would, despite this supreme adversity, carry on to the final consummation of his labors. How obvious becomes the parallel between Beethoven's own destiny and the philosophical doctrine summed up in the C minor Symphony!

This, then, is the great plan of this symphony—the familiar, universal experience of all courageous humanity: per aspera ad astra—through darkness unto light; from the depths to the stars; through trial and hardship to achievement; through conflict and suffering to triumph! And to the separate movements may be ascribed these aspects—

I. The struggle against opposing forces in life, against Fate in all its infinite manifestations—natural, physical, mental, spiritual.

II. Consolation and repose; refuge and comfort to be found in love and beauty; reassurance gained through reflection.

III. Doubts and forebodings. In the Trio, a rough humor, typical of Beethoven, the rude, practical joker. In the Transition to the Fourth Movement, mysticism, tense uncertainty, the awakening of courage and self-confidence, and at last—

IV. Triumph, and the mastery of one's destiny.

THE MUSIC. First Movement. Allegro con brio, C minor, 2-4 time. Although this movement adheres to sonata form, because it is almost completely dominated by the fate motive it can best be considered as a huge development of that motive with a contrasting theme (the second subject) and one other contrasting section (the retransition).

It is opened forthwith by the "knock of fate"—that amazing, unbelievably simple motive on four tones, out of which proceeds the first subject.

Thereafter, except for very brief intervals and one fairly long passage (the retransition) it dominates the whole movement, hammering away through 494 of its 626 measures. Though its outline is constantly changing, its rhythm is immutable. The energy and intensity of it are astounding. There is nothing more remarkable in all music than the sustained effort imparted to this short motive.

In the fifty-ninth measure the horns defiantly blare it out, whereupon the violins announce the contrasting second subject, soothing and tender; but even through this Fate is knocking away (cellos and basses). It rises to quote an ecstatic climax, only to be beaten down by that fateful hammering. Development is given over wholly to the motive. Several times Fate knocks at the door. At length comes a passage wherein chords alternate between strings and wind instruments—wherein for a spell the contending forces must rest from sheer exhaustion. Rudely Fate interrupts. Another short respite. Then the struggle is resumed and carried on as at the beginning (Recapitulation). The long Coda begins with strings and wind instruments hurling the motive furiously back and forth.

Second Movement. Andante con moto, A-flat major, 3-8 time. A set of simple variations on two similar themes, the first beginning the movement in cellos and violas, the second entering in the twenty-second measure in clarinets and bassoons to string accompaniment.

Third Movement. Allegro, C minor, 3-4 time. This is really the scherzo, though not so marked. Basses and cellos at once introduce its groping, indecisive main theme, to which other strings and winds add themselves, as though trying to be helpful. In high contrast, Fate challengingly intervenes (horns). These two themes oppose each other for a time, and give way at length to the Trio, that bit of rough humor so like the jesting Beethoven delighted to inflict on friend as well as foe. The other two themes return. Soon comes that mystical, almost insensate passage of transition (begun by long sustained tones in strings and a subdued knocking on a tympano) in which, seemingly, strength and resolution are being gathered up for the final victory.

Fourth Movement. Allegro, C major, 4-4 time. A jubilant, magnificent paean of triumph, nobility and faith. It is told that a soldier of Napoleon's old guard on hearing its inspiring opening chords, oblivious of all around him, leaped to his feet with the cry, "It is the Emperor!"

Four themes belong to this movement, all of equal importance; the first is its opening theme, introduced by three impressive chords (full orchestra, trombones and piccolo entering here for the first time in the symphony); following this is a descending passage of four measures leading to the second theme (woodwinds and horns, carried on by strings); the third theme is more restrained and has a figure of three notes every other beat (first violins); the fourth is again strong and active (strings, clarinets and bassoons with short ascending runs in first violins). Well along in the movement the third and a variant of the first are worked out together at some length.

Fate intrudes once more, pointing a warning finger. But only for a brief spell, for straightway it is overwhelmed by the triumphal first theme. The other themes follow in turn. The end is most impressive. The tempo quickens. The melody swings along on a tide of lofty ecstasy. For the last fifty-seven measures only the pure harmonies of dominant and tonic appear, and the final twenty-nine measures are entirely on the key chord. Eight majestic chords bring this stupendous work to a close, like a mighty benediction.

Polovtsian Dances from the opera, Alexander Porphyrievich Borodin "Prince Igor"

Born in Leningrad (then St. Petersburg), Russia, November 12, 1834; died there February 27, 1887

BORODIN studied to become a physician, but gave up that career because his deeply sensitive nature could not stand close and continual contact with suffering. Instead he pursued the science of chemistry, attaining therein an eminent position. Although he is now remembered and revered chiefly as one of Russia's great composers, music was really his avocation. By far the major portion of his time was given to his profession, and he jokingly referred to himself as a "sunday musician".

THIS OPERA is founded on one of the oldest Russian manuscript chronicles, now accepted as an account of actual events, and probably written by a contemporary bard or monk—"The Epic of the Army of Igor". It tells of an expedition in the twelfth century of a number of Russian princes and their followers against the Polovtsi, a nomadic oriental tribe who were invading Russia.

The suggestion of writing an opera on this ancient tale came from the eminent critic V. V. Stassov. Borodin provided his own libretto. He began work on "Prince Igor" in 1867 or 1868, about the time he was finishing his first symphony. For sixteen years he steeped himself in the atmosphere of the chronicle; he read all the old Russian epics, collected and studied Central Asiatic and Russian folk songs, delved into history and archeology—everything that would help him to fully and faithfully re-create the story. He was himself descended from an ancient Caucasian princely house, the scene of the story was his native soil. Being intensely patriotic, the conflict between Russian and Asiatic forces stirred him deeply. Add to all this a nature singularly fitted to absorb all the elements of time and place and human character inherent in the tale, a genius vastly able to transmit them and aroused to a high pitch of interest by his historical researches, and the outcome was a lyrical opera of purest national hue and fibre, and absolutely indigenous music—miraculously vivid, barbaric and stimulating, physically and emotionally.

When Borodin died at the early age of fifty-three, he had been at the actual composition of "Igor" for some three or four years, and it was far from completed. Rimsky-Korsakov and Glazounov finished it from the portions that were found. The former did most of the orchestrating, including these dances. Although Borodin had worked out, or indicated his intentions in this regard sufficiently to guide Rimsky-Korsakov, so that the scoring may be considered essentially Borodin's own, Rimsky-Korsakov undoubtedly colored it to some extent from his own superb mastery of the orchestral palette. Glazounov completed the instrumentation, and from memory wrote out the overture, none of which had been put to paper, but which he had often heard Borodin play and discuss at the piano.

THESE DANCES occur at the end of the second act. Igor, Prince of Sewersk, and his son Vladimir have been captured by the Polovtsi. In the camp of their leader, the Khan Kontchak, Igor and Vladimir are treated more as guests than as prisoners, so greatly did the Khan admire and respect the valor of Igor and his men. The Khan orders entertainment for Igor, which various of his retainers and retinue brilliantly provide—these dances being part of the spectacle.

I. Introduction. Andantino, 4-4 time. The dancers gradually enter. Flutes, and then clarinets, have a theme that is prominent later. A pause, then the Dance of the Slave Maidens follows, woodwinds, harp and cellos making a dull, throbbing accompaniment to the swaying, languid theme played first by an oboe, then by english horn with an obbligato in violins. To this the maidens sing in unison of their native land, far away,

"On the wings of gentle zephyrs,
Seek thou, O tender song, my native country,
The land where many a time I used to listen
To songs most sweet and dear to free-born maidens.
Where soft airs around us were so gently wafted,
Where the mountains slumber by the sea, enwrap'd in clouds;
Or, in turn, green-clad, the mountains,
Glowing in waves of light, are bath'd in sunshine;
Where roses blow and scent the air around them,
Where in the leafy woods the birds are singing,—
In woods so green, where berries are early ripe,
To that land haste thee, my song!"

This leads without pause into the Dance of Savage Men, *allegro vivo*, having the same rhythmic pattern as the Slave Maidens' Dance, but its whole aspect changed to one of wild barbarity. It is begun by a clarinet (8 measures); piccolo and flute carry it on, against which other woodwinds have the introductory theme (8 measures); then strings take the dance, horns and bassoons the throbbing accompaniment, the other woods the introductory theme; finally, high woods and strings have the dance, trombones the introductory theme, and the rest of the orchestra the accompaniment.

II. Dance of the Archers. *Allegro*, 3-4 time. A theme of simplest outline, but imbued with tremendous physical force. The archers leap high into the air, performing amazing feats of skill with their weapons, and the bystanders sing—

"Glory, honor to our mighty chief!
Glory, honor to our master! Hail!
Hail our chief! Hail, all hail! Hail him!
Bright as sunlight is his mighty pow'r!
Nowhere shall you find his equal! Hail!"

There is next a quiet passage in the same rhythm, to which the Female Slaves dance and sing—"Sire, thy maidens praise thee as their mighty Lord, hail thee as their mighty Lord." During this time the Khan says to Igor, "See'st thou these slave maidens? They are beauties that I have imported over the Caspian. Tell me which of them pleases you best, my lord; straightway I'll give you the maiden you choose for your own!"

The archers return, and there is a tranquil ending.

III. Grand Ensemble. Presto, 6-8 time. Dance of Prisoners: first of Little Boys (oboe and clarinet in imitative dialog), then of Men with chorus (full orchestra), singing—

"Like thy forefathers art thou famous,
Great, mighty Khan!
Like thy forefathers art thou great,
Mighty, strong, dreaded Khan!"

These repeat, the dialog of the Boys' Dance in the violins, the chorus in its turn singing—"Hail, O Khan! Hail, all hail!" The tempo changes to *moderato alla breve*, 2-2 time, for the Dance of Young Girls with Undulating Movements, being the same theme and song as those of the original Slave Maidens' Dance (32 measures), the melody first for oboe and violas, repeated for english horn and cellos. Next a Slow Dance of Young Girls and Rapid Dance of Little Boys—the Girls' theme in violins while the Boys' skips through the woodwinds. The Dances of the Little Boys and of the Men with chorus return and alternate as at first. The finale is a General Dance, *Allegro con spirito*, 4-4 time. At first the Savage Men's Dance theme in woodwinds, chords in the strings, to which is soon added the introductory theme. All sing—

"For the pleasure of your master, dance ye maidens, sing ye maidens!
Dance ye sprightly maidens, dance now for your noble prince!
Gayly dance ye now before him, lovely maidens!
Sing and dance for the pleasure of your master.
Hail, O Khan! All hail, O Khan!"

**"The Swan of Tuonela"—Legend from the
Finnish Folk-Saga "Kalevala", Op. 22, No. 3**

**Jean Julius Christian
Sibelius**

Born at Tavastehus, Finland, December 8, 1865; now living at Jarvenpaa, Finland

In the summer of 1893 Sibelius was staying at Kuopio in the interior of Finland. There he met the writer J. H. Erkko, who suggested that they join forces on an opera to be called "Weneen luominen", "The Building of the Boat", in which part of the action was to take place in Tuonela, the underworld of Finnish mythology. Sibelius began the music, but finding the restraints and limitations of operatic form burdensome and difficult to deal with he gave up work on it before it was very far along.

The overture, however, had been completed; this he named "The Swan of Tuonela" and included it as the third part of a Suite of four "Legends", Opus 22, all on subjects from the great Finnish folk-epic, "Kalevala". Not until three years later did he write the other three Legends, "Lemminkainen and the Maiden", "Lemminkainen in Tuonela", "Lemminkainen's Home-faring". Only the latter and the "Swan" are published.

The score is inscribed, "Tuonela, the land of death, the hell of Finnish mythology, is surrounded by a large river with black waters and a rapid current, on which the Swan of Tuonela floats majestically, singing". This picture is strikingly projected. Dreamily the Swan sings its melancholy Song (english horn); gracefully it glides along (the slow, swaying 9-4 rhythm all through melody and accompaniment) on the black waters (the darkly shifting harmonies in strings).

THE LEGENDARY BACKGROUND. Lemminkainen is one of four leading heroes of the Kalevala. He is described by W. F. Kirby in his translation of the Kalevala as a "jovial, reckless personage, always getting into scrapes, from which he escapes either by his own skill in magic, or by his mother's. His love for his mother is the redeeming feature in his character. One of his names is Kaukomieli, and he is, in part, the original of Longfellow's 'Pau-Puk-Keewis'". (And it might be added, of Till Eulenspiegel).

The 13th and 14th Runos of the Kalevala relate how Lemminkainen sought the Maiden of Pohjola, the Northland. He went to her mother, Pohja, to ask how he might win her, and the old woman set him three tasks to prove his worth. Two he accomplished: on snowshoes he captured the elk of Hiisi, and then bridled the fire-eating steeds. The third was to shoot the swan on the river of Tuonela—

"I will only give my daughter, Give the youthful bride you seek for, If the river swan you shoot me, Shoot the great bird on the river;	There on Tuoni's murky river, In the sacred river's whirlpool, Only at a single trial, Using but a single arrow."
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On reaching the river Lemminkainen was slain by the cowherd Markahattu, old and sightless, who had long awaited him, by causing a serpent "like a reed from out the billows" to strike through his heart. His body fell into the black and forbidding stream and floated to Tuoni's dread dwelling-place, where Tuoni's son cut it into many pieces. Lemminkainen's mother heard of his fate, and raked the waters beneath the cataract until she had found all the fragments. By charms and magic salves she put the body together and restored life to it, and Lemminkainen returned home with her.

THE MUSIC. *Andante molto sostenuto*, A minor, 9-4 time. A sombre chord swells up from the lowest depths to the higher reaches of the strings, which are muted. The song of the Swan begins with short utterances (english horn) answered twice by rising phrases for a solo cello and a solo viola, like spirit wraiths floating out into the netherworld, then once by stifled cries of two horns, and undulations in the tonal current of the strings with strange, sweet harmonies, as though the river's swift, smooth flow were disturbed by some submerged rock. Bass drum twice rolls oppressively.

Now the Swan sings a long, haunting melody to string tremolos. A passing climax develops and subsides. The Swan sings again, violins pizzicati giving the impression of water dripping from the roof of some cave cut deep into the river bank. Soon ghostly, warlike calls echo about (horns), as harp, bass drum and tympano add at once a gleam of brightness and deep shadows to the scene. This dies away. Wraiths again pass by (solo cello, solo violin).

Then begins a dull, heavy-handed pounding, the blows in groups of three many times repeated (at first brasses, basses, and tympani struck together, continued by the latter and harp),—undoubtedly a suggestion of Fate akin to the basic motive in the first movement of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. Along with this the Song is heard from all the strings in unison (except basses) as though from some hidden, spectral chorus, dying away at length to be resumed by the english horn, with eerie tremolos (on the wood of the bows) for some strings while others draw their bows. The effect of this whole passage is mystical and deeply affecting.

With a reminiscence of the opening measures this vision of a world beyond human ken fades away.

The scoring is unusual, calling for english horn, one oboe, bass clarinet, two bassoons, four horns, three trombones, harp, tympani, bass drum and muted strings which are divided into thirteen parts and some of these often double-stopped. No bright toned instruments are used, and thus the tonal hue throughout is sombre and mysterious. Singular sonorous effects are accomplished by such devices as tuning the tympani to a minor third and striking them simultaneously, a tremolo for part of the strings on the wood of the bow and the same tones doubled by the remaining strings with drawn bows, and some of the high tones of the latter harmonics.

Additional notes on Sibelius and his music will be found in the following programs:

First Season, First Concert, Feb. 7, 1932; Third Season, Second Concert, March 4, 1934; Fifth Season, First Concert, Oct. 22, 1935.

Spanish Caprice, Op. 34

Nicholas Andejevitch Rimsky-Korsakov

Born at Tikhvin, Province of Novgorod, Russia, March 18, 1844; died at (then) St. Petersburg, June 21, 1908

This piece the composer sketched out as a fantasia on Spanish themes for violin and orchestra. Later he decided to make it an orchestral composition, and began work on it in this form in the summer of 1886. The following November the score was submitted to Tchaikovsky, who wrote on the 11th to its composer, "I must add that your Spanish Caprice is a colossal masterpiece of instrumentation, and you may regard yourself as the greatest master of the present day". Quite a handsome compliment from the greatest Russian of them all!

It was first performed at a concert of the Russian Symphony Society in St. Petersburg, (now Leningrad), October 31, 1887, with the composer conducting. He writes of it in his "Chronicle of My Musical Life" as follows—

"At one of the later concerts my Spanish Capriccio was performed. At the first rehearsal the first section (in A major, 2-4 time) had scarcely been finished when the whole orchestra began to applaud. Similar enthusiasm followed all the other sections and wherever the pauses permitted. I asked the orchestra for the privilege of dedicating the work to them. There was general delight at this. The Capriccio went without hitch and sounded brilliant. At the concert itself it was performed with such perfection of execution and such enthusiasm as never was given to it later, even when Nikisch himself conducted it. Despite its length, the work called forth an insistent repetition. The opinion formed both by the critics and the public, that the Capriccio is a magnificent piece of orchestration, is incorrect. The Capriccio is merely a brilliant composition for the orchestra. The change of colors, the happy selection of melodic designs and figurations, exactly adapted to each kind of instrument, the brief virtuoso cadenzas for solo instruments, the rhythm of the percussion instru-

ments, etc., all constitute the very essence of the composition, and not its garb or orchestration. The Spanish themes of dance character supplied me with rich material for the use of variegated orchestral effects. Taking it as a whole, the Capriccio is clearly a purely external work, but sparkingly brilliant for all that. I was a little less successful in its third section (Alborada, B flat major), where the brass instruments rather submerge the melodic design of the woodwinds; but it would be easy to remedy this if the conductor would moderate the indications of nuance in the brass instruments, by replacing the fortissimo by a simple forte."

It is dedicated to the players of the orchestra of the Imperial Russian Opera House at St. Petersburg, whose names—all sixty-seven of them—are inscribed on the title page of the score.

THE MUSIC is divided into five sections—

I. Alborada, "morning piece" or "morning serenade". *Vivo e strepitoso*. A major, 2-4 time. The theme alternates between full orchestra and solo clarinet; at the end solo violin takes it up.

II. Variations. *Andante con moto*, F major, 3-8 time. Low strings accompany the first statement of the theme by horns. After several variations a flute trill leads to the return of the

III. Alborada, which this time has slightly different figuration and quite different scoring and is in B flat major.

IV. Scene and Gypsy Song. *Allegretto*, D minor, 6-8 time. Five cadenzas usher in this section. It is as though Gypsies were gathered about in the camp clearing, and various groups and individuals come forward in turn to do their stunt: trumpeters and horn players, next a violinist; then a moment's respite while flute and clarinet suggest the song to accompaniment of percussion and violins; now a flute solo, then a clarinet, and lastly the harp. Then comes the song. As it gathers volume and abandon, surely the young men and women must take up the dance: even in a concert hall one can scarcely resist. At length, with some upward surges comes avowedly a dance, the

V. Fandango of the Asturias, A major, 3-4 time. Trombones begin it, woodwinds carry it on. The soloists take it up together. Gradually more join in. The gypsy song returns, and lastly the Alborada.

