

1931.06.0001

Erie Philharmonic Society

First Season---1931-1932

First Orchestral Concert



Strong Vincent High School

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 1932, 3:00 P. M.

PROGRAM

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|-------------------------------------------|-----------|----------------------|
| Three Dances from "Coppelia" | Delibes | |
| Mazurka | Czardas | Entr'actes and Valse |
| "En Saga," tone poem for orchestra, Op. 9 | Sibelius | |
| Triumphal Entry of the Boyars | Halvorsen | |

INTERMISSION

- | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| "Carmen"—Prelude and Entr'actes | Bizet |
| To Act II, Act III, and Act IV
(The Entr'acte to Act II will follow the prelude without pause.) | |
| Overture to "Phedre" | Massenet |
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GENERAL COMMENT

The composers represented on this program are French and Nordic. The French composers were contemporaries, all having been born within six years of each other; the Nordic composers were also contemporaries of about one generation later, and were born only one year apart.

The French compositions are all from works for the stage—one a ballet, one an opera, and one dramatic. Halvorsen's March is also a ballet piece.

"En Saga" is purely a narrative.

Bizet frequently ends a piece with pizzicati chords. All three Entr'actes end this way.

Those who are familiar with "Finlandia," which predates "En Saga" by about ten years, will find the latter a much more complicated score, setting forth a message of much deeper emotion, of far greater delicacy and refinement, but at the same time replete with solidity and power.

Massenet's overture to "Phedre," and Bizet's overture "Patrie," the first of his works to bring him favorable recognition, were composed for the same occasions. (See notes on "Phedre," in this program.)

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

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

Three Dances from the Ballet "Coppelia" **Clement Philibert Leo Delibes**

(Born at St. Germain du Val (Sarthe), France, Feb. 21, 1836; died in Paris, Jan. 16, 1891)

"Coppelia" deals with the familiar story of the maker of automatons and dabbler in magic who tries to bring one of his creations alive. The scene is a town in Galicia, where, of course, the Mazurka and the Czardas are as indigenous as the pines. Early in the ballet young people join in this Mazurka as they gather in the village square, and a little later others swirl thru the Czardas as their elders watch from the comfortable shade of surrounding trees, clanging their tankards to the rhythm of the dance.

To the engaging strains of the Valse itself Swanilda, one of the village belles, dances before the house of the old necromancer Coppelius, in an effort to attract the attention of a beautiful girl seated there before a window, perfectly motionless. Swanilda has reason to believe that her fiance is not indifferent to the charms of this lovely creature. Later on, determined to find out something about her fancied rival, she and some companions surreptitiously invade the workshop of Coppelius while he is away. The Entr'acte and Valse accompany this invasion and the breathless, excited investigation of its awesome contents that follows. Obviously, Swanilda's rival turns out to be only a doll—Coppelia!

In the field of the ballet Delibes was unrivalled in his time. The success of "La Source" (1866), produced at the Paris Opera, for which he had written only a part of the score, led to his being entrusted with the setting of an entire ballet founded on the comedy "Coppelia" (1870.) This resulted in a triumph for him. The grand mythological ballet "Sylvia" (1876) established his superiority in dance music.

Essentially a melodist, his music is forceful, charming, brilliant, as occasion demands, and always delightful and expressive.

"En Saga," tone poem for orchestra, Op. 9

Jean Sibelius

(Born at Tavastehus, Finland, Dec. 8, 1865; now living at Jarvenpaa, Finland)

The composer of this "Legend" has given no program for it, no slightest clue as to the characters of which it tells nor what befalls them. Mrs. Rosa Newmarch, the eminent writer about music and musicians, says of it, "The music certainly suggests the recital of some old tale in which the heroic and pathetic elements are skilfully blended, while the title indicates that it belongs to Scandinavian rather than Finnish history." And to Dr. Walter Niemann, the distinguished German author and composer, "En Saga" is "one of the most magnificent, most heart-rending and strongly affecting tone pictures of our time."

A "saga" is "any of the narrative compositions in prose that were written in Iceland and Norway during the middle ages;" or "a narrative having the real or supposed characteristics of the Icelandic sagas; a story of heroic achievement or marvelous adventure;" or "an ancient Scandinavian legend or tradition of considerable length, relating either mythical or historical events; a tale; a history."

Sibelius is profoundly individual and nationalistic. Everywhere in his music is found the complete expression of his racial and national heritage,—rugged strength, a sturdy and courageous self-reliance, independence and integrity, a fine earnest intelligence and idealism, loyalty, tenderness, deep affection, and an all-pervading mysticism. We feel too the reflective melancholy born of long winters and enduring intimacy with countless quiet lakes, with stern rocky hills and silent moors and tumbling cataracts—and everywhere the deep shadows of pine forests.

Just one trait of the Finnish temperament is missing—the cheery

element that in a hardy people is bound to be their reaction to hardship.

Melodically and rhythmically he has been strongly affected by the Finnish runic lays and folk music; and altho Sibelius says that he has never used an actual folk-tune and that his themes are all of his own invention, many of them are so completely in the Finnish folk idiom that the influence of these native elements is continually present.

The "runos" are sung to short musical phrases, used over and over for each successive line, changes of key giving the only relief during numberless repetitions. Here is the origin of the "short-breath" melody so characteristic of Scandinavian music. In Sibelius' earlier pieces the themes are constantly cast in this mould. In his maturer works there is vastly more freedom, much of the melody being broadly and lengthily developed and taking on the inflections of many different and varying moods and emotions. But the runic quality, tho now less prominent, is always discernible—occasionally in an important element of the tonal fabric—persistently in underlying and subordinate motives and figurations.

His harmony is of a texture all his own—often dissonant, tho not repellently nor blatantly so—often poignantly sweet and soothing.

The Finnish government and many of his countrymen have provided Sibelius with gifts and annuities so that he might devote his life to composition. How wise and generous a thing to do—and yet how practical—for Sibelius, freed from the cares and stifling necessities of first having to eke out a livelihood, has lavishly justified this help and faith. The fruits of his labors are works that without question are among the truly great of all time, and that add mightily to the eternal lustre of Finnish art.

Sibelius has written in all forms and for a wide range of instrumental and vocal combinations. The opus numbers run well over a hundred and include at least seven symphonies; many symphonic poems, nearly all founded on mythological subjects; "The Maid of the Tower," the first opera ever written by a Finn; a great number of beautiful songs, and much chamber music.

"En Saga" was published in 1903. Two unusual features are the absence of tympani, and in the introduction and again in the finale, the rolling of a cymbal accomplished by beating it with tympani sticks.

Triumphal Entry of the Boyars

Johann Halvorsen

(Born in 1864; now living in Oslo, Norway)

The boyars of old Russia were the higher aristocracy, or in some localities the tribal chieftains.

Halvorsen's ballet suite "Queen Tamara" is based on a poem by Lermontov (1814-1844), "the poet of the Caucasus."

Tamara was a legendary queen of Georgia, whose favorite pastime seems to have been to invite Boyars and Circassian Princes to her castle high on the cliffs above the river Terek, and then choose one of them to be her lover. When she had grown weary of his company, she would have the unsuspecting victim ushered out of her presence, forcibly if necessary, by way of a door in the castle wall, beyond whose threshold he was to find nothing more substantial than the space thru which he plunged to be swallowed up by the torrent far below.

This March heralds the approach and reception of some of these guests.

Halvorsen has written four other suites for orchestra. He has been for several years a conductor at the National Theatre in Oslo.

Balakirev's symphonic poem "Tamara" is founded on this same legend, and to it Fokine wrote the ballet "Thamar" given by Diaghilev's Russian Ballet in its American tours about twenty years ago.

"CARMEN"—Prelude and Entr'actes Alexandre Cesar Leopold Bizet

(Born in Paris, Oct. 25, 1838; died at Bougival, near Paris, June 3, 1875)

The scene of the first act is a square in Seville. At one side is a cigarette factory, from which the workers presently emerge, among them Carmen, a fascinating, heartless, fickle gypsy girl. There is a commotion. Carmen has stabbed another of the girls! An officer of the guard, Don Jose, takes her in charge. She sets out to captivate him, and he at once succumbs to her wiles, letting her escape.

The second act is at an inn near Seville, frequented by smugglers, gypsies and a generally questionable clientele. Presently the handsome toreador, Escamillo, enters and is soon the center of an admiring throng. Carmen is waiting to meet Jose, who has been in prison for having let her get away. He comes to the inn instead of rejoining his command. But when he hears distant bugles, passion is on the point of capitulating to honor. Carmen bids him choose between her and duty. Just then his captain appears to order him back. Jose resents this, defies the captain, who is seized by the smugglers, and deserts to throw in his lot with Carmen and her companions.

The third act finds the smugglers encamped in the mountains. The training of a soldier has made it hard for Jose to reconcile himself to their lawless life. Carmen chides him. Escamillo arrives, seeking Carmen. Jose attacks the Toreador, but they are separated. Then comes Micaela, Jose's childhood sweetheart, to tell him that his mother is dying and wants to see him. Jose goes to her, but swears later on to meet his rival.

The final act takes place outside the bullring in Seville. Carmen enters escorted by Escamillo, to whom she has now given her ardent, tho inconstant devotion. He goes on into the Arena while she lingers outside to gossip with some of the crowd. Jose has been standing apart watching all this. He accosts her. At first supplicatingly and swayed entirely by his consuming love, he pleads that she return to him. She refuses, telling him that Escamillo is now everything to her. Jose implores her again. She defies him. This arouses Jose to madness, and in a fit of jealousy he stabs her. As the throng in the Arena is hailing Escamillo's victory, she falls dead.

The Prelude begins with the March from the Fourth Act to which the bullfighters enter the Arena, amid the salutations of the admiring populace. Then four measures of staccato chords by trumpets and trombones introduce the refrain from the Toreador's song of the Second Act. The March returns, ending in a grand flourish. A brief pause—and with a vicious tremolo the strings usher in that ominous motive that so poignantly seems to express the suffering of weak, ardent, jealous Jose—and as well the sinister influence, like the hand of fate, relentlessly leading Carmen to her doom.

The Entr'acte to Act II denotes the passage of time while Jose is in prison. It is founded on a Spanish soldier's song, "The Dragoons of Alcala."

The Entr'acte to Act III is pastoral in character, reflecting the quiet security of the smuggler's camp hidden away in the mountains, and also perhaps, the element of pure love symbolized in the figure of Micaela.

The Entr'acte to Act IV clearly sets the scene for the action to come. Dancers, gaiety, riotous color, high festivity—all are in the verve and sweep of this music! But toward the end there is a faltering and uncertainty, a loss of aplomb,—a presentiment, perhaps, of impending tragedy.

From Bizet's early childhood a fond uncle called him "Georges," and oddly, that name stuck. He was christened as appears above.

Carmen was produced Mar. 3, 1875. The brutal and sensuous elements,

so baldly set forth in Merimee's story, are considerably tempered in the libretto of Meilhac and Halevy; but even so, they were a little too much

~~so baldly set forth in Merimee's story, are considerably tempered in the~~ for the refined tastes of the French public of that day. Largely for this reason Carmen's success developed slowly, and its real vogue did not begin, strangely enuf, until after its presentation in conservative England in 1878. The early critics found the music too Wagnerian (when anything remotely suggesting Wagner was anathema to a Frenchman) and too little Spanish and gypsy. The first criticism, of course, can be dismissed; and as for the second—even tho only two or three actual Spanish and gypsy themes are used, and in places the music is not particularly cast in these dialects, yet the atmosphere and setting of the whole are established with a thoroughness and accuracy that are complete. One of the really great librettos and one of the really great scores are here united to make an undying masterpiece.

Bizet's faculty for creating atmosphere and local color were extraordinary. The oriental in some of the early operas, the spanish in "Carmen," the provencal in "L'Arlesienne"—all are deftly and consumately reflected. When he wandered from delineations like these his inspiration was apt to flag a bit. His works are about the first of the definitely realistic school, and his influence on other composers of this school, especially in Italy, was powerful. His orchestration is original and telling.

Bizet died June 3, 1875, after a few hours illness from a heart attack—in his thirty-seventh year,—three months to the day after the first performance of his first truly great opera. He was just attaining his full capacity. From the promise of the earlier works, and the sure confirmation of the later ones, it must be evident that the world sustained an irreparable loss in his untimely passing.

Overture to "Phedre"

Jules Emile Frederic Massenet

(Born at Montaud, near St. Etienne (Loire), France, May 12, 1842; died in Paris, Aug. 14, 1912)

At the beginning of the musical season of 1873-1874, Jules Padeloup, then conductor of the Concerts Populaires in Paris, asked Bizet, Massenet and Guiraud each to write a symphonic overture to be played on successive Sundays. Bizet's contribution was "Patrie," Massenet's was "Phedre," and Guiraud's a "Concert Overture," played respectively on February 15 and 22 and March 1, 1874. ("Phedre" was written in the fall of 1873.) Padeloup conducted its first performance.

Massenet intended it as an introduction to Racine's tragedy, giving it this motto from the text of the play—

"Ce n'est plus une ardeur dans mes veines cachees,

C'est Venus tout entiere a sa proie attachee;"

"Not merely passion 's hidden in my breast away,

'Tis Venus all herself doth take me for her prey."

Twenty-six years later (1900) he wrote incidental music to accompany the action of the play, and entr'actes which sum up the preceding action and prepare for what is to follow.

The version of the Greek legend used by Racine holds Venus responsible for the events that led to the tragic destruction of Phedra and Hippolytus. This most noble youth was the son of Theseus and his first wife, Hippolyte (Antiope.) Hippolytus loved Diana, and with a singularly pure and ardent devotion. But Venus herself loved Hippolytus, and when he utterly disregarded her she took revenge by arranging his undoing, but in a most sordid way.

Theseus' second wife was Phedra. Venus inspired in her a violent passion for her stepson. He, naturally, rejected her advances, as he had those of Venus. Thereupon Phedra, stung to deep resentment and anger, vilely slandered him to his father. Outraged, holding Hippolytus in horror and contempt—and of course ignorant of the truth—Theseus called

upon his own father Poseidon (Neptune), God of the Sea, to avenge the wrong he thought had been done. So while Hippolytus was driving his chariot one day along the shore, Poseidon sent up from the sea a most hideous monster. Despite all his strength and skill the youth could not keep his terrified steeds in hand. In the horrible melee that followed the chariot was wrecked and Hippolytus killed. Phedra, despairing and overwhelmed with remorse, strangled herself.

In the opening measures, the harsh blasts and the anguished answering phrases of the strings are unquestionably the decree of an angry and vengeful Goddess and the despondency of Phedra. The plaintive theme (clarinet) that follows, to a monotonous accompaniment, is Phedra herself. This theme is carried on in a duet for two oboes—the scene in which Phedra seeks advice and solace of Oenone, a nymph of Mount Ida who had the gift of prophecy. The full orchestra takes this up, to be rudely interrupted by the opening blasts and responses, but this time uttered with a fearful determination—the Fates have been invoked and have ordained—there shall be no mercy!

Next we hear the theme of Hippolytus—strong and active (cellos and bassoons). Suddenly a pause, broken by a single note from a horn—the glance, perhaps, that touched off the consuming flame—and then the love music. - - One who knows and greatly admires this Overture has described this passage as “ineffably lovely.” It is impossible to qualify or add to this description; it is sufficient.

Hippolytus returns, now driving along by the shore, and then with a guttural, threatening leer (cellos, basses, bassoons, violas) the monster wallows up out of the sea. In the welter that ensues we hear the snorting and neighing of the terrified horses (high woodwinds,) the derisive gloating of the monster (brasses.) From here on the themes already heard are worked over. There is a stirring coda (brasses) developed from the theme of Hippolytus by doubling the time value of each note. And at the end, a final vindictive proclamation of Fate,—Phedra’s last, despairing protest—and all is over!

Massenet wrote sixteen operas, the finest being “Manon” (1884), in which the text and music admirably serve each other, and in which he created a device never before used in operatic writing—a lightly scored musical accompaniment or background for the spoken dialogue (not recitative, which is sung or intoned.)

His typical French temperament is strongly marked in all his music, which accounts in large measure for his becoming the most popular modern French composer of opera—at least to Frenchmen. He has an individuality of style that is quite his own, tho he is bound by no particular considerations as to form, adapting his mode and plan of expression to the requirements of each subject he deals with. He is at his best when invoking a mood of tenderness or passion, and many of the love scenes in his operas, and many songs in which the motif is of this nature, are especially beautiful. Undeniably he lacks some attributes of true and lasting greatness, and to many his success is undeserved and inexplicable. The explanation lies in the fact that he has always chosen subjects for his works that appealed to the contemporary taste of the French public and has been able to imbue each of them with a certain individuality of its own, tho a rather excessive sentimentality overlays them all.

Massenet served in the Franco-Prussian war. He was a member of the Legion of Honor and later an officer of it. When elected to the Academy des Beaux-Arts in 1878 at the age of thirty-six he was the youngest to have attained that distinction.

The Structure of a Symphony Orchestra

A symphony orchestra is made up of groups of instruments of four different kinds—woodwind, brass, stringed and percussion. In all but the stringed group there is usually only one player for each part or voice, each player is playing by himself the part written for his instrument and the performance of that part devolves entirely upon him. Thus each player in these groups is virtually a soloist.

This is not true of the stringed group. Here the sections—violins, violas, cellos and bass viols,—are each made up of several players all playing together the same part, the performance of that part devolving on the section as a whole and not on any individual of the section.

The stringed instruments can cover a range of pitch of six octaves, from the lowest note of the bass to the highest note of the violin. Almost two-thirds of that whole range can be played by the violins alone—the upper four octaves (lacking a note or two)—the greatest practical playing range of any of the stringed instruments.

Because of this, the violins are usually given two parts or voices to play, and to make this possible, they are divided into two sections, commonly called the first and second violins. This is the whole reason for dividing them. They thus become like two fingers of your hand in playing the piano—or two hands each playing with only one finger at a time,—they can play two notes together, or two parts or voices running along together. Thus it will be seen that both sections of violins are equally important and equally necessary and both must be able to play equally well. Therefore, if all the violinists are not equally capable and equally experienced each violin section should have in it about the same number of players of each and every degree of ability and experience that there are. Thus will the violin sections be well balanced, and play their respective parts equally well.

It is unfortunate that the two sections of violins came to be called “first” and “second,” because those terms imply a difference of ability, which is not meant and should not be. It would be more descriptive and fairer to call them “right” and “left” according to their place in the orchestra, or better still “high” and “low”, or “upper” and “lower,” according to the parts they generally play.

In addition to this, in every stringed section—both violin sections, violas, cellos, and basses—more experienced and less experienced players must be distributed evenly throughout their sections. Otherwise the playing of the section will be uneven, and perhaps in places uncertain. For if all the stronger players are grouped together in one part of a section, or all in one section, and all the weaker players in another, the result is apt to be that the stronger players will handle their parts well while others may not; part of the section will be sure and solid, but much of the time the rest will be hesitant and feeble, so that the section as a whole will lack cohesion and smoothness and good quality of tone. But with an even distribution of ability and experience—both less and more—within a section, the playing throughout the section will be even, as a whole it will be balanced and unified, sure and solid—for the weaker members will be helped and carried along by the stronger ones—and the result is a constantly improving section, and constant improvement among the individual players.

To many players it makes no difference whatever who is seated beside them or behind them or in front of them. To others it makes a lot of

difference. Personal or musical traits of some sort will be pleasing to one person, disturbing to another. Some temperaments work well together, others do not. One player may need encouragement and drawing along, another should be steadied and restrained. Some natures are complimentary, or supplementary, others are antagonistic.

All these factors have a very distinct bearing on the playing of an orchestra. They must be constantly observed and heeded. And to promote the harmony and efficiency of the whole organization, shifts among the members from time to time have to be made in the effort to satisfy these principles. Even if there be no changes of personnel among a group of players over many years, it may take a long time to arrive at that disposition of them that will work to the best advantage of each individual, and therefore to the best advantage of the whole.

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Overtures, preludes, entr'actes, interludes, intermezzi and the like are a particular type of stage music. They might be called "accessory" stage music, because they do not directly accompany the stage action but do have varying degrees of connection with it, according to their individual natures or functions. They may be classified into

a) those that are simply time-fillers, have no purpose or connection with the stage action musically, dramatically nor functionally, and are not necessarily in the general mood or atmosphere of the scene or action. They are purely for the entertainment of the audience. (Many of the early Italian operatic overtures are examples.)

b) those that are a collection of parts of the music for the stage action—a sort of musical catalog—with no more important purpose than to present these parts in a pleasing sequence and manner. (Prelude to "Carmen"; most musical comedy overtures.)

c) those that create an atmosphere, or set a scene, or trace the events that precede the stage action, and thus musically preface and prepare for the action to follow; or perhaps establish sequence and logic by summing up what has preceded. ("Carmen," Entr'acte to Acts 3 and 4; Preludes to "Lohengrin," "Das Rheingold;" opening of Weber's Overture to "Oberon," depicting the coming of the fairies before the action begins.)

d) those that become an integral part of the action, tho not accompanying anything taking place on the stage, by describing or commenting on what is supposed to be happening during a lapse in the stage action, ("Carmen," Entr'acte to Act 2.)

e) those that in their own terms, and using little or none of the music accompanying the action, present or review a part or all of the plot and action. (Overture to "Phedre," part of which illustrates the action in the scene between Phedre and Oenone, and the attack of the monster; Beethoven's Overture "Leonore, No. 3"; which in itself encompassed the whole drama.)

f) those that are psychological or analytical, presenting in musical terms traits of character, mental and spiritual attributes and reactions, etc. (Beethoven's Overture to "Egmont," a character sketch of that hero; tragic motive of "Carmen" Prelude; Overture to "Phedre," those parts concerned with the decree of Venus, and Phedra's love and despair.)

g) those that combine two or more of the above. (Weber's Overture to "Oberon," which pictures the coming of the fairies, and then reviews parts of the music of the opera; "Phedre," see "e" and "f" above.)

These discussions will be continued in later programs.

The Erie Philharmonic Society

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Irma Grace
W. H. Hook
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Laura Werzel

CELLOS

Josef Fr. Nieke, Principal
Charles Asmus

Walter Caughey
Byron Cooley
Sigmund Gorney
Lois Henrichs
Hans Kohler
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H. K. Fairbanks
Ida Lopes
John Manch
Theo. Ruger

HARP

Maisie Mayo

FLUTES

J. F. Downing
Richard Storm
George Giesler

PICCOLO

Richard Storm

OBOES

A. L. LeJeal
Joseph Danielli
English Horn
A. L. LeJeal

CLARINETS

Eric H. Norboom
Nerle G. Peck

BASS CLARINET

Arlie J. Neave

BASSOONS

Arlie J. Neave
Arthur R. Scott

TRUMPETS

George Taylor
Calvin A. Franke
Robert Lyons
Roderick T. Adams

FRENCH HORNS

Henry F. Butler
Russell T. Anderson
George A. Wellmon
Harold F. Merrill
Roderick T. Adams

TROMBONES

M. C. Quay
Oscar Nutter
George Woodward

BASS TROMBONE

Arthur Quay

TUBA

Fred A. Thompson

TYMPANI

William B. Feidler

PERCUSSION

Harry L. Shepherd
George R. Metcalf, Jr.
Michael J. Conrad

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