

## End of the line

BY CHARLES WARD  
Chronicle Staff

**S**ERGIU Comissiona has come to Houston with one goal: to raise the orchestra's standards to those of international-class orchestras. "Absolutely," he says in his still heavily accented speech. "Otherwise, I should not be here."

In December, Comissiona made the long-expected announcement that he would be leaving the Baltimore Symphony and his 15-year association with that orchestra to become the Houston Symphony's new music director. Last week, in his first visit since the appointment was made public, he spoke both candidly and carefully about his future here.

In looking back over Comissiona's career, the conclusion has to be drawn that this is his final chance for the big time. Born in Bucharest, Romania, in 1928, he emigrated to Israel in 1959 and began building his career. His progression from orchestra to orchestra has been steadily upward — Haifa, Israel, to Goteborg, Sweden, to Baltimore and now to Houston, a city which at least potentially could support an orchestra known internationally.

"I did not come here for a retirement village — Sunset City, Ariz.," he quips, but rather "to retire" at an orchestra with a high reputation.

But along the way to that lofty goal lie some difficult challenges.

"I think that the main goal now is to bring the audience to the concerts." Houston Symphony concerts are not packed and Comissiona wants to change this. There are financial reasons for that, of course, but he suggests that the public also is part of the triad of conductor, orchestra and listener necessary for creating the magic of live performance. "You cannot enjoy making music by yourself."

Attracting an audience while keeping the repertoire varied and challenging for the orchestra will require balancing many elements. "I never thought of the programs as being very avant-garde in Houston," he says, but the symphony's recently finished marketing survey suggested how traditional the tastes here can be.

"Such a survey for marketing was very interesting and (there were) good things and bad things. We did not know that French music is not popular. Debussy is one of the contemporary composers on the bottom of the list. Sorry to say this. And Shostakovich is not one of the composers (who are) favorites." Surveyed audience members liked the traditional repertoire by Beethoven and Mozart, first of all, plus Bach, Brahms and Tchaikovsky, the report said.

He will use these tastes as guides. "So, obviously I should not put Debussy and Shostakovich on the same program, which in fact I had on one program for the next season!"

"But it does not mean that I should not make choral works," which also were not favorites, "or I shall not do Debussy or Shostakovich. But I think I shall wrap and present them in a different (way)." To that end, he's throwing out lots of ideas to see whether any might succeed in attracting audiences, such as having late-afternoon concerts for downtown workers. "I have different ideas which I am exploring — saying 200 stupid things and maybe I shall get one good idea out of it."

In another humorous quip, he repeated, "As I said before, I am now the official doctor of music for Houston."

That role means that he will have to establish a sense of authority in the public's mind — to create "the partnership with the public." He hopes that the public will start to have confidence in him and, "in one or two years, even if they don't like Varese, for example, they say, 'Well, if Comissiona think it's important to hear, probably he's right. Let's listen to it.'" This happened in other places where he conducted, he says. "You cannot expect it overnight, but I hope this duplicates here."

Another area of improved musical health lies in raising the expectations of the orchestra members themselves.

"What I am trying (to do) is to inject them with the desire, to have more desire of perfectionism, of perfect preparation, of, if I should say in one word, 100 percent commitment." Now, it not always 100 percent, he notes.

"I have to say this. It is a wonderful group and most of them are extremely dedicated, but I want 100 percent, all the time, from the very first second to the last second — the full commitment in every respect." The high professionalism is already there, he says, "but I want it in such a degree, in such a concentrated manner"



Photo by Carlos Antonio Rios, Chronicle Staff

Sergiu Comissiona: "I am now the official doctor of music for Houston."

## Comissiona committed to success in Houston

that it will bring the improved results in the quality of music-making that he desires.

"And I must say that maybe the orchestra felt that my position as artistic adviser was not a full commitment and I hope that with my full commitment they will give me the same commitment in return."

From comments made by players, the musicians are anxious about what Comissiona's full commitment will mean to them. "I didn't come here for my directorship to be confused with dictatorship," Comissiona replies. "I'm not that type, but I'm expecting full command and to be given everything that I'm asking for."

Does that, then, suggest personnel changes, perhaps of players whose expertise has flagged some? Comissiona sidesteps any direct answer. "It is very difficult to combine the title of being music director with (being a) human being — I'm the official bastard."

But he frames his approach by a couple of principles. "If a musician is playing (here) in the past 30 years of his life, and even if he's not in the shape as he was before, I respect this musician because he has built this orchestra. I never had in my past positions a reputation that I dismiss or fire musicians with such a long stay in the orchestra. I have not. I respect them too much; they invest their lives here. I shall not ask people (to retire). There are unions (to protect players), but I shall not even try to offend a man who, as I say, gave his life."

Yet, the balance is drawn. "In every decision I'm doing, I'm thinking one part of my credo is 'Do what is good for the 96 musicians, not what is good for the one.'"

He probably is hoping that the professionalism of the individual musician will be the final guide and that pride will dictate whether a musician stays (and improves if necessary).

In pursuing the goal of excellence, Comissiona did obtain firm guarantees about a number of activities from the Houston Symphony's board of directors before he made his decision.

Although the precise details and chronology have not been worked out yet, says executive director Gideon Toeplitz, the board's commitments involve enlarging the orchestra to 100-102 players from the current 97; major tours in the United States and abroad, roughly every other year; three or four records a year, providing a company is willing to record the symphony, and expanded media coverage including national radio syndication of Houston Symphony concerts, television programs, etc., again providing the demand is there.

These were things Comissiona had in Baltimore and were among the reasons why making the decision to leave was so difficult for him.

"It was a place where I enjoyed a good life. A place where I was reborn as an American citizen." In 1976, on July 4, Comissiona and his wife became American citizens. "A place where for the first time in my life, and my wife's, we grew

some roots. We never stayed so long in any place, apart from the place where we were born in Romania, in Bucharest, which we wanted to leave, and we were happy to cut ties. But otherwise, we were seven years in Israel, seven years in Sweden, five years in England. Certainly we became attached to the place, the people, the music-making. We had a very fine relationship with the public.

"And the decision was also difficult because Texas has a very different mentality and lifestyle. This also made very exciting to change but also a little frightening.

"In effect, it was a positive thing to decide to come here because, 15 years ago, I should have said no, because we (didn't) care to come here."

But then he thinks of the adaptability he gained from living "in different places, in completely different landscapes and cultures.

"Romania: Latin. Home country. Fighting. War. Anti-Semitism.

"Israel: A flow of very natural, very relaxed, self-confidence. Relaxation.

"Sweden: Strong discipline. Punctuality to the fact of (it's a) crime to be one second late. To hide sentiment. To be friends, to be friendly without showing sentimentalism or effusion or affection.

"From Romania with a very Latin temperament of very extrovert to go to introverted England and Sweden where you have long lines, where you can stand six hours and talk only to one person about one subject. To go to England and it's impossible to act with my temperament like a British. But still to be accepted.

"And then, U.S., specifically Baltimore, which was a transition between European (traditions) but also had the friendliness of Americans."

In Baltimore he found a home, a place "to make a balance of all this experiences of life and finally to say, if you are American, you should be as you are, and not to hide (your character) and not to be as you are. And suddenly (from all these varied elements) it was created Comissiona, was born Comissiona an American.

"I'm very happy the way I am now. I don't want to be as I was in Romania. I don't want to be as I was in Israel. I don't want to be Swedish or British. I am an American because I am as I am.

"And suddenly I started to be better conductor, better musician and to have a very sincere, normal relationship with everyone. And I think this is one of the secrets to be a good conductor — to be as you are."

After all, he notes, "music is an X ray. You cannot hide anything."

(His conducting in other countries was affected by the culture — "not consciously," he says. "But you have a certain relationship with the public. Your neck becomes very sensitive.")

How that change as a human being affected his music-making is hard to define, Comissiona says. "Before it was a certain selfishness or egocentrism or ambition. But I had been missing the sincerity and the warmth — the natural."

"I could not sleep all the night after the concerts — obviously you cannot be happy after a concert — but I was seeing the half-empty bottle always. I started to see now much more the half-full bottle. I think I became more positive in relationship with the musicians, I hope. With music, with myself.

"Of course, with age I improved as a musician. Obviously. And I hope to continue the growth."

He summarizes that growth in terms of his conducting positions:

"Haifa, where I did a mediocre job. Sweden, where I did a good job. Baltimore — where I did a very good job. I think now I should do a very, very good — excellent — job."

One final thing about Houston attracted Comissiona.

"Astrologically, my signs and Houston's signs are in the same lunar — I don't know exactly how (to explain it)." He had an astrologer in New York prepare his chart and the chart of Houston. In process he discovered that the orchestra's birth sign was the same as his — Gemini.

"And my chart was in conclusion that my signs show a continuation of success, life, happiness.

"There are only two cities in the world which are coinciding with my line of birth — Houston and London."

He has made Houston his home.

# Houston Symphony Orchestra and Chorale

**HOUSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA AND CHORALE** — Sergiu Comissiona conducting, with mezzo-soprano Jan DeGaetani, tenor David Rendall and bass-baritone John Shirley-Quirk. Presented Saturday night in Jones Hall. Repeats 2:30 p.m. Sunday, with baritone Michael Devlin replacing Shirley-Quirk.  
Berlioz: *Romeo et Juliette*, Op. 17 (complete).

By **WILLIAM ALBRIGHT**

On Saturday night, Sergiu Comissiona, the Houston Symphony's artistic adviser for the last three years, conducted his first concert since Tuesday's official announcement of his promotion to music director.

He led the orchestra and Houston Symphony Chorale in a sensitive and powerful reading of Hector Berlioz's *Romeo and Juliet*, being given its first complete performance in Houston. But let's hope the rest of his tenure is marked by better luck in the soloist department.

## Review

*Romeo and Juliet* is not a cantata or oratorio, it's a "dramatic symphony after Shakespeare's tragedy." The solo singers don't have all that much to do, especially the mezzo-soprano and tenor. To show they are basically part of the entire ensemble rather than soloists, Comissiona placed them well upstage, amid the orchestra, rather than down front next to the podium.

British bass-baritone John Shirley-Quirk didn't stay there long, though. He moved to the footlights because he lost his voice. Under the weather since Saturday morning, the poor man started out sounding far foggier than usual (pressured and diffuse, his voice is pretty woolly normally). But when his voice evaporated to a whisper, he had to get closer to the audience so it could at least hear him a little.

Considering his indisposition (which was never made known to the paying customers), it is impossible to make any comments about Shirley-Quirk's performance beyond saying that his phrasing in Friar Laurence's aria, a hauntingly beautiful elegy for the dead star-crossed lovers, was supple and heartfelt. Michael Devlin will replace Shirley-Quirk at Sunday afternoon's repeat of the program.

Fellow Briton David Rendall was apparently in perfect health, but his singing was poor anyway. The Houston Symphony management must think bleaty tenors are ideal Berlioz interpreters. It hired the strangled Robert White for the Requiem a few seasons back and brought the fluttery-voiced Rendall here for *Romeo's* fleeting "Queen Mab" solo, virtually all of which he sang flat. Why import the likes of him when there are plenty of lousy *American* tenors?

"Premiers transports que nul n'oublie!" is a lovely piece, its liquid melody poised like a butterfly on an

airy harp accompaniment. Jan de Gaetani's phrasing was meltingly caressing, fluid and poised. But her mezzo has a rather hard core, and Saturday it became even less voluptuous when she raised the volume or altitude.

The Houston Symphony Chorale made some gorgeous sounds, though. Especially just before "Premiers transports," when Comissiona luxuriated in those dreamily sensuous lines. Their work in the finale was wonderfully sonorous and stirring, though. Too good, in fact, to be spoiled by Comissiona's silly theatrical gimmick. After Friar Laurence's sermon over the bodies of Romeo and Juliet, their feuding families bury the hatchet. The truce was dramatized by reuniting the two halves of the Chorale (the Capulets and Montagus,

get it?).

When not playing stage director, though, Comissiona was superb.

His stylish and rapturous reading overflowed with both gossamer delicacy and buoyant fervor. The long melodies were drawn in broad spans that never sagged. Though the dance music in Part Two could have started with more crackle, it snowballed with rousing sweep and power. The Queen Mab Scherzo was like silken gauze, the unpredictable French horns on their best behavior in its scintillating but hazardous writing.

Special mention must also be made of Louis Rutenberg's achingly songful and poignant oboe solos in the Part Two ("Romeo alone" and the Love Scene).

Houston Chronicle ★★★★★ Sunday, January 9, 1983

## Review

# Sergiu Comissiona's HSO debut as director marred by vocals

HOUSTON SYMPHONY presented the ninth concert program of the 69th season Saturday evening in Jones Hall. Sergiu Comissiona conducted with mezzo-soprano Jan DeGaetani, tenor David Rendall and bass-baritone John Shirley-Quirk as soloists and the Houston Symphony Chorale. To be repeated at 2:30 p.m. today with Michael Devlin as the baritone soloist.

### PROGRAM

BERLIOZ..... *Romeo et Juliette*, Op. 17

BY **CHARLES WARD**  
Chronicle Staff

Sergiu Comissiona began his tenure as music director-designate of the Houston Symphony with a performance of Berlioz's *Romeo and Juliet* that unfortunately was marred by the vocal problems of bass-baritone John Shirley-Quirk.

The "dramatic symphony," in the composer's subtitle, is receiving the first complete performances in Houston, the HSO says, in the weekend's pair of concerts in Jones Hall. (They are the first Comissiona is conducting since the announcement of his decision to accept the post of music director in Houston and resign a similar post in Baltimore at the end of next season.) Saturday, the long and involved piece for three soloists, chorus and orchestra featured mezzo-soprano Jan DeGaetani, tenor David Rendall and Shirley-Quirk, as well as the Houston Symphony Chorale (in somewhat reduced numbers at times).

The baritone has a key dramatic and musical role to play in the work's third part. There, representing Friar Laurence in the Shakespeare play, he serves to explain the death of Romeo and Juliet and to serve as the catalyst for the reconciliation of the Montagues and Capulets. Musically, the section with the baritone and chorus brings a large measure of relief after an hour or more of relatively soft and delicate music.

Unfortunately, Shirley-Quirk was having vocal problems Saturday evening. Though he chose to perform — he will be replaced by Michael Devlin in today's performance at 2:30 p.m. — his singing didn't have much authority or polish.

Comissiona had scrupulously prepared the orchestra and it played his directions with superb polish. However, the second part, which comprises three major symphonic movements, had a terribly flat musical pro-

file. Even the *Queen Mab* scherzo, with its bustling tempo, was lightly and almost hesitantly shaped. Consequently, the common contrasts, particularly of volume, that can relieve musical boredom were largely missing for much of the evening. The final part should have provided the contrast but it didn't.

In the Prologue and Introduction, the chorale presented its dominant approach to singing for the evening. Facing a chant-like melody, the reduced-sized ensemble sang softly in a way that suggested the singers were not fully supporting the tones they were producing. When the large ensemble appeared for the third part, that characteristic was present as well.

In their brief roles in the first part, DeGaetani sang with a luminous richness that faded only in the upper notes. Rendall's part was so short and so intertwined with the chorus that it was difficult to tell whether he could produce a richer and more brilliant tone than he did.

Noise pollution is seeping into the orchestral concerts more and more. At one moment early into the concert, a paging device started beeping loudly (given the musical circumstances). The owner fumbled to turn the beeper off and then, instead of going outside to get his message, he outrageously listened to the message at his seat in the midst of the music. The operator's squawking voice simply boomed out into the hall. It's these sorts of rude and uncaring incidents that cause some organizations in Houston to urge patrons to turn their devices completely off and check in with an usher.

Then, in the third part of the work, when principal clarinetist Richard Pickar was producing some exquisitely soft music, the drink-vendors chose that moment to start heaving lots of bottles around out in the lobby. That noise was deafening in the hall. (The post-intermission cleanup at the bar is never quiet.) Jones Hall does not have a sound-isolated auditorium like many modern concert halls. Noise from the highly resonant lobby can easily seep into the hall through the cracks around the doors and often does.

## Star-crossed symphony

**THIS WEEKEND**, Sergiu Comissiona presents his first concerts as the Houston Symphony's music director-designate by conducting the orchestra and the Houston Symphony Chorale in a complete performance of Berlioz's *Romeo and Juliet*, the composer's third symphony (after *Symphonie Fantastique* and

between the families (with entering the musical drama end, Friar Laurence's explanation of the reconciliation).

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# Star-crossed symphony

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In *Romeo and Juliet*, Berlioz was addressing a complex musical problem: how to deal with a dramatic subject both in purely musical ways and in the more familiar idiom, as in opera, of setting words to music. In his solution, Berlioz demonstrated the powerful ability of music for speechless musical expression: Key parts of the story — the scene when Romeo falls in love with Juliet, for example — are told by the orchestra alone. In fact, the core of Berlioz's *Romeo and Juliet* is for orchestra alone.

Much of the play's story is told sketchily: The warring between the Capulets and Montagues is outlined in the introduction and prologue (which is Part One). Romeo falls in love with Juliet at a Capulet ball in Part Two. In Part Three, Berlioz depicts the procession to Juliet's tomb, Romeo's visit there, the fighting

between the families (with the chorus re-entering the musical drama) and, at the end, Friar Laurence's explanation of the tragedy and the reconciliation of the families.

Yet, in writing the work, Berlioz stressed the importance of a cohesive musical organization. His model, as it were, was Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in which the solo voices and chorus entered the musical drama in the last movement (which also summed the previous musical ideas).

*Romeo and Juliet* begins with a large vocal introduction and prologue that sets the dramatic situation and gives hints of following movements. Then come the three instrumental sections of Part Two (*Fete chez Capulets*, *Scene d'amour* and *La reine Mab*); these sections are comparable to the opening movement, slow movements and scherzo of the traditional symphonic form. Part Three is the finale — an involved instrumental-vocal movement that doesn't follow traditional formal procedures but does serve both to unify and to resolve the work's drama.

Performances are scheduled for 8 p.m. Saturday and 2:30 p.m. Sunday in Jones Hall. Tickets are available at the Houston Ticket Center in Jones Hall (227-ARTS) and all Ticketron outlets including Joske's stores.

— CHARLES WARD

HOUSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA  
SIXTY-NINTH ANNIVERSARY SEASON  
1982-83 Winter Subscription Series  
Ninth Concert Program

Jesse H. Jones Hall for the Performing Arts  
Saturday, January 8, 8:00 pm  
Sunday, January 9, 2:30 pm

SERGIU COMISSONA, Conducting

BERLIOZ

\*\* *Romeo et Juliette*, Op. 17

- Act I: Introduction
- Prologue
- Verses
- Recitative and Scherzo
- Act II: Romeo Alone
- Night Scene
- Queen Mab

INTERMISSION

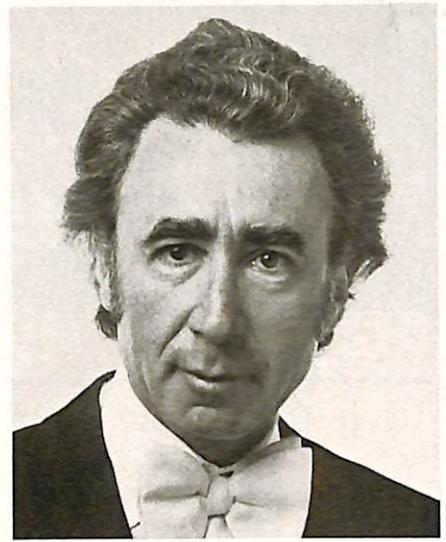
Act III: Juliet's Funeral Procession  
Romeo at the Tomb of the Capulets  
Finale

JAN DeGAETANI, Mezzo-Soprano

\* DAVID RENDALL, Tenor

JOHN SHIRLEY-QUIRK, Bass-Baritone *Sot. Replaced by Michael Devlin Sun.*

HOUSTON SYMPHONY CHORALE  
Virginia Babikian, Director



SERGIU COMISSONA



JAN DeGAETANI

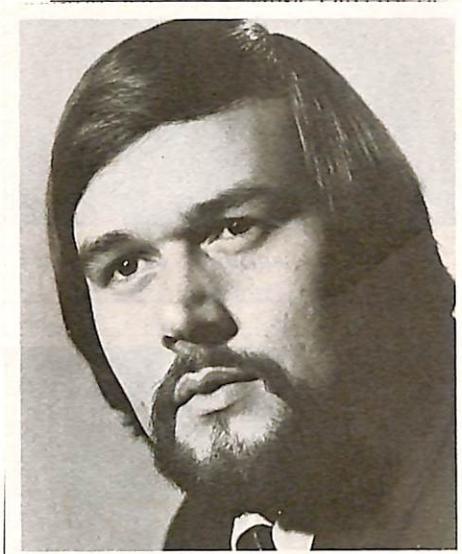
- \* Houston Symphony debut
- \*\* First complete performance in Houston

The performances will conclude at approximately 10:00 pm on Saturday evening and 4:30 pm Sunday afternoon.

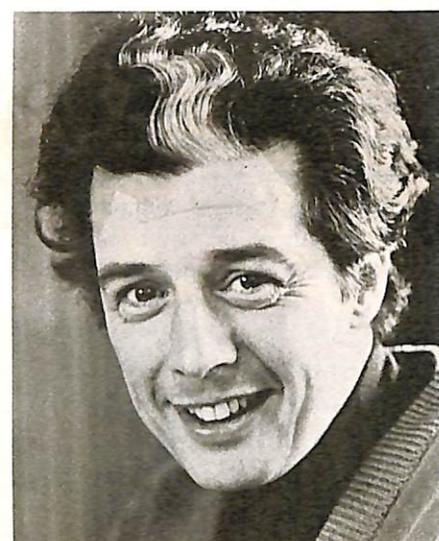
Broadcast of this concert will be sponsored by RepublicBank Houston on KLEF-FM 94.5, Tuesday, January 18, at 8:00 pm

The activities of the Houston Sympho from the City of Houston through the the Arts, and from the National Endo agency.

The STEINWAY is the official piano o Symphony Steinway pianos are dedica BALDWIN is the official organ of the



DAVID RENDALL



JOHN SHIRLEY-QUIRK

DIVISOR

Gan Israel Chamber Orchestra, and in 1963 took it on a 43-concert tour of the United States and Canada.

In 1962 he was invited to England, where he conducted all the major orchestras of London and the Royal Opera at Covent Garden. In 1965, he returned to the United States for his debut conducting the Philadelphia Orchestra.

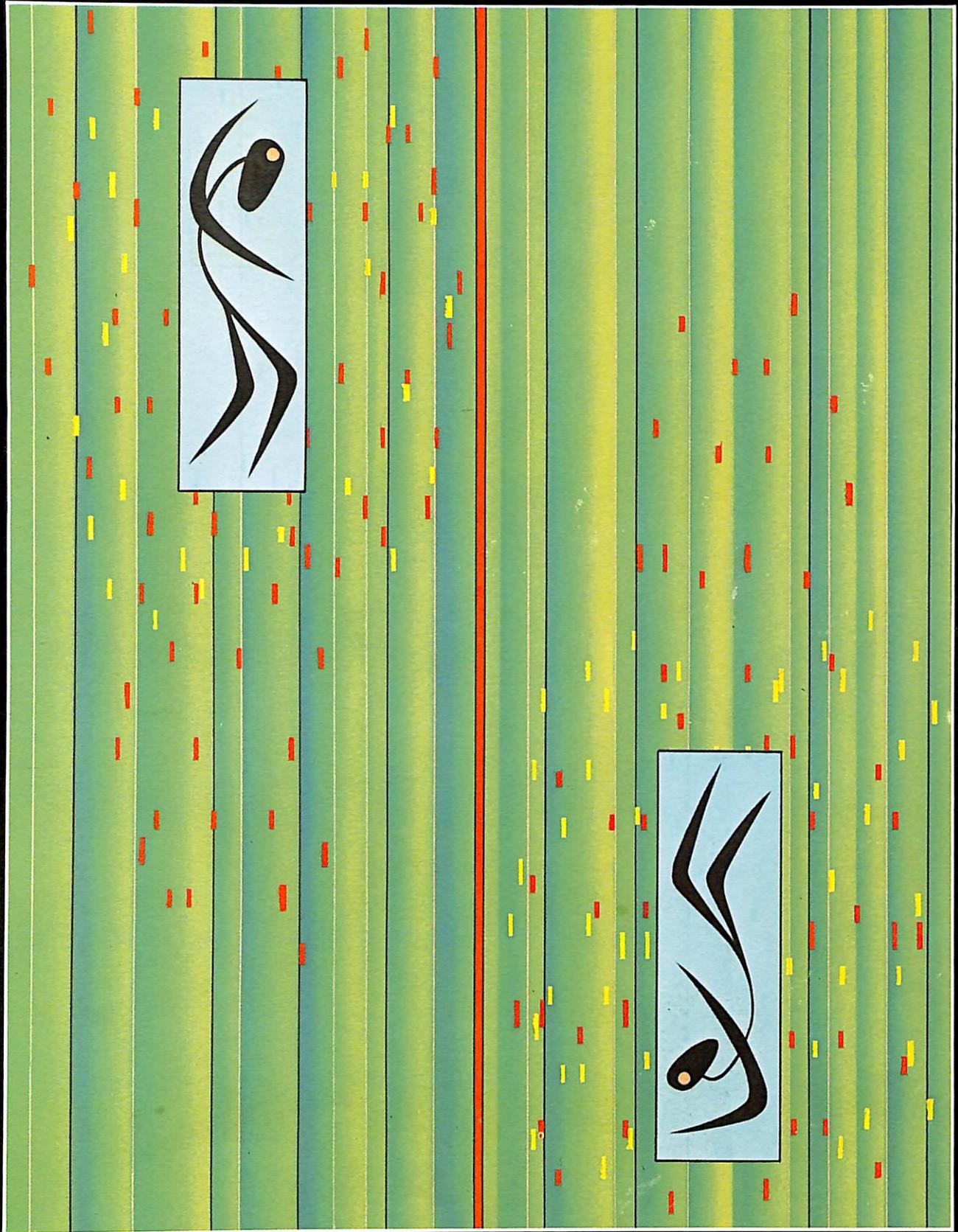
Directorial and advisory posts with the Göteborg Symphony in Sweden and the Northern Ireland Orchestra occupied Comissiona during the 1966-67 season. The 1967-68 season marked his first appearance with the Baltimore Symphony, and two years later he began his tenure as Music Director there.

Sergiu Comissiona made his first guest appearance in Houston in October 1973, and in 1979 was engaged as Artistic Advisor of the Houston Symphony Orchestra, beginning with the 1980-81 season. Since assuming that position, he has fostered important innovations in the Orchestra's activities such as the Performer Conducts series, free Open Rehearsals and more frequent appearances throughout Houston and the Southwest. Comissiona conducted the Houston Symphony in two new recordings for Vanguard Records of works by Debussy and Franck — the Orchestra's first recording activity since 1976.

Comissiona's early interest in opera has resulted in appearances at the historic Drottningholm Court Theater in Sweden for *Così fan Tutte* and *La Buona Figliola*, Covent Garden for *The Barber of Seville*, Baltimore Opera for *Falstaff*, and the New York City Opera for *La Fanciulla del West*. In 1980-81 he won critical acclaim when he led performances of a new production of Verdi's *Attila* at the New York City Opera, and in the coming season conducts the opera again in New York and Los Angeles. An annual participant in Colorado's Aspen Festival, he formerly led the Ambler and Chautauqua music festivals. On records he is heard on the Deutsche Grammophon, Vanguard, Vox, Turnabout, Philips, Desto and London labels.

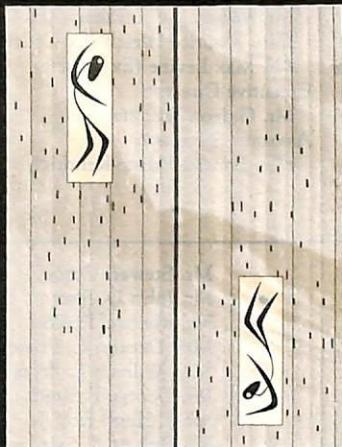
Abroad, Comissiona has conducted London's New Philharmonic, the ORTF of Paris, the Residentie of The Hague, Netherlands Radio Orchestra (where in 1981 he was appointed Principal Guest Conductor), the BBC and Halle Orchestras of Manchester, England, the

# SYMPHONY



SERGIU COMISSONA, ARTISTIC ADVISOR  
JANUARY, 1983

# SYMPHONY



SEIGEL COMMISSION, ARTISTIC ADVISOR  
JANUARY, 1981

## ON THE COVER

Born in Klamath Falls, Oregon in 1957, Richard Howard came to Texas in 1975 to study at Texas Christian University. Howard currently lives in Houston.

*Romeo and Juliette*  
Gouache on Board  
20¼" x 15"  
©1982 Richard Howard

Houston's performing arts groups  
enhance our city and enrich our  
lives enormously. We encourage  
everyone's continual support

"The Dancer"—A porcelain figurine



PHOTOGRAPHY: F. WALLACE & A-CUBE

# PIANO MAN

The Houston Post  
Fri., Feb. 4, 1983

## Radu Lupu to perform 2 concerts

By CARL CUNNINGHAM  
Post Music Editor

Some of the world's truly great soloists are also the most elusive. Such a person, it seems, is Romanian-born pianist Radu Lupu, who makes his fifth and sixth Houston Symphony appearances Saturday and Sunday in Jones Hall.

Wherever Lupu performs, he is hailed as one of the most individual and creative musicians of our time. But the 38-year-old pianist comes and goes quietly, stays out of the public spotlight and almost never grants an interview.

His only goal is to make the finest music his artistry can summon and communicate it to those who come to hear just that. A couple of years ago, an interviewer quoted Lupu as saying, "I would rather have 300 who come to hear the music rather than a crowd of 3,000 who come to hear some 'stage personality' and have to be seduced by publicity to come."

But Lupu did take a moment to talk over the phone last week from Minneapolis, where he was performing the same Mozart B-flat Major Concerto, K. 456, that he will play with Sergiu Comis-

Please see Piano/page 7E

### Romanian-born Radu Lupu

he thoroughly understands it. German Romantic music has been the bulwark of his repertoire and the source of his great reputation. Houston Symphony audiences have heard some of the most in-

ing year.

But, instead of immediately launching a career as most pianists would do, Lupu returned to complete his training in Moscow and did not make his professional



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# Piano . . .

From page 1

siona and the orchestra this weekend in Houston.

"I'm taking it easy this season; I have very few concerts," he began. "Most of the concerts are in London and in England, so I can be near my home."

Then he reeled off a list of solo appearances with orchestras that included Basel, Switzerland, Los Angeles, Houston and Minnesota (including Carnegie Hall and Kennedy Center tour dates with the Minnesota Orchestra) and solo recitals in Montreal, Cincinnati and Baltimore.

Next, the European wing of his tour — appearances with L'Orchestre de Paris under conductor Daniel Barenboim, the London Philharmonic under Klaus Tennstedt, recitals in Brussels, Amsterdam, London, Switzerland "and a whole bunch of engagements in Germany. Don't ask me where, because I can't remember them all."

Though that doesn't quite sound like Lupu is "taking it easy," he insists he "took an oath several years ago to keep it down to 60-70 concerts a year." A perfectionist to the core, Lupu has always been cautious about branching out into any of the piano literature until he feels he thoroughly understands it. German Romantic music has been the bulwark of his repertoire and the source of his great reputation. Houston Symphony audiences have heard some of the most in-

spiring performances of 19th-century Germanic concertos from his hands.

These have included a three-day marathon of all five Beethoven concertos at his 1973 debut, an epic performance of the Brahms D-minor Concerto in 1975, and, for a slight change of nationality, the famed A-minor Concerto by Norway's Edvard Grieg in 1977. He played the Beethoven Fourth Concerto at his last Jones Hall appearance, two years ago.

Lupu's recordings of Brahms' solo piano music have been acclaimed as some of the most revealing interpretations ever put on disc, and he is currently involved in a long-term project of recording all of Franz Schubert's piano sonatas.

But he candidly admits he is still hesitant to perform the music of Chopin, Debussy or Ravel in public. "Privately, I start doing some impressionistic music, some Chopin pieces," he says. "But I don't yet have the security to perform them."

To some extent, that same need for more security made him delay the start of his professional career during the mid-1960s. In the midst of a seven-year stay as a scholarship student at the Moscow Conservatory, he won the 1966 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition and Romania's Enescu Competition the following year.

But, instead of immediately launching a career as most pianists would do, Lupu returned to complete his training in Moscow and did not make his professional

debut until he won the 1969 Leeds Piano Competition in England. "Don't take it as extraordinary in itself," he cautions. "In a communist country, you are expected to complete a course of study." But he also admits: "I felt instinctively that starting a career then would be too early."

For the audience, one of the most singular facets of a Radu Lupu performance is the fact that he sits, not on a piano stool leaning forward into the keyboard, but with his back firmly supported in a chair. His broad shoulders and arms hang perfectly relaxed, ready to draw a large, singing tone from the piano.

What is the origin of this technical

approach? "It's not a technical approach at all but a matter of comfort," he retorts. "I have no piano stool at home. This changing from chair to piano stool is inconvenient for me.

"It is also a residue of my dreams of conducting," he confesses with a wry touch of humor at a dream apparently long abandoned. "When I sat on a piano stool, I tended to get into the keys. When I sit in a chair, I am in a more detached position. I hear the sound from a different perspective.

"There is a parallel with a conductor. I am at a distance. I *command* the piano much more!"

# WINTER SUBSCRIPTION SERIES 12

HOUSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA  
SIXTY-NINTH ANNIVERSARY SEASON  
SERGIU COMISSIONA, Music Director-designate  
1982-83 Winter Subscription Series  
Twelfth Concert Program

This weekend's concerts have been sponsored by  
**Deloitte Haskins & Sells.**

Jesse H. Jones Hall for the Performing Arts  
Saturday, February 5, 8:00 pm  
Sunday, February 6, 2:30 pm

SERGIU COMISSIONA, Conducting

SALIERI  
Overture to *Axur, re d'Ormus*

MOZART  
\*\* Piano Concerto No. 18 in B-flat Major, K. 456  
Allegro vivace  
Andante un poco sostenuto  
Allegro vivace  
RADU LUPU, Piano

## INTERMISSION

RAVEL  
La Valse

RAVEL  
Pavane pour une infante défunte

RAVEL  
*Daphnis et Chloe* Suite No. 2  
Daybreak — Pantomime — General Dance  
HOUSTON SYMPHONY CHORALE  
Virginia Babikian, Director

\*\* First Houston Symphony performance

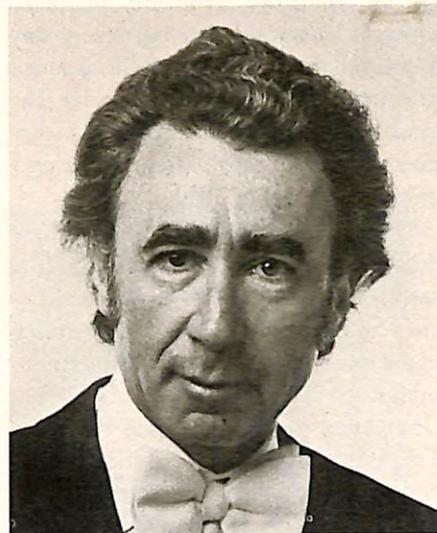
The performances will conclude at approximately 9:55 pm on Saturday evening and 4:25 pm Sunday afternoon.

The audience is kindly requested to refrain from applauding until the completion of each composition.

Broadcast of this concert will be sponsored by RepublicBank Houston on KLEF-FM 94.5, Tuesday, February 15, at 8:00 pm

The activities of the Houston Symphony Orchestra are made possible in part by grants from the City of Houston through the Cultural Arts Council, the Texas Commission on the Arts, and from the National Endowment for the Arts in Washington, D.C., a Federal agency.

The STEINWAY is the official piano of the Houston Symphony Orchestra. The Houston Symphony Steinway pianos are dedicated to the memory of Miss Ima Hogg. The BALDWIN is the official organ of the Houston Symphony Orchestra.



SERGIU COMISSIONA

Music Director-designate Sergiu Comissiona is a conductor in demand, a man in action. His annual schedule includes conducting engagements with the Houston Symphony Orchestra, where he has been Artistic Advisor from 1980 through the 82-83 season, the Radio Philharmonic Orchestra of the Netherlands, where he is principal guest conductor, and the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, where he has been Music Director since the 1969-70 season.

Beginning with the 1983-84 season, Maestro Comissiona will become the Houston Symphony's first Music Director since the departure of Lawrence Foster in 1978. In addition to making Houston his principal residence, he will build on the innovations he has brought to the Orchestra during his tenure as Artistic Advisor, such as, the free Open Rehearsals, more frequent appearances in Houston and throughout the Southwest, and the Orchestra's first recordings since 1976. Under Maestro Comissiona, Houston Symphony performances have been taped by QUBE/Gulf Coast Cable Television and the BRAVO cable network. In addition, he has led the Orchestra in two indoor summer festivals since coming to Houston.

Born in 1928 in Bucharest, Sergiu Comissiona studied violin, theory, composition and conducting, and made his operatic conducting debut at

the age of 17 at Sibiu, conducting Gounod's *Faust* with his mother singing Marguerite. He made his formal debut a year later with the Bucharest Opera Orchestra, and became prominent in Romanian musical life as music director of the Romanian States Ensemble Orchestra and as principal conductor at the State Opera before emigrating to Israel in 1959.

The cancellation of a scheduled conductor resulted in his being pressed into service to lead the Haifa Symphony Orchestra. Not only did he achieve overnight success, but was the next day signed to be the orchestra's Music Director, a post he held for six years. There, in addition to his duties as head of a major orchestra, he organized and conducted the Ramat Gan Israel Chamber Orchestra in 1960, offering a new and innovative repertory. Three years later, he led this chamber group on a 43-concert tour of the United States and Canada, marking his first American appearances.

Comissiona's musical accomplishments in Romania had garnered attention in England, and he was invited to conduct there in 1962. In that year he made his first conducting appearances abroad with the London Philharmonic Orchestra and at the Royal Opera, Covent Garden.

Returning to the United States in 1965, following his tour with the Israel Chamber Orchestra, he made his debut conducting the Philadelphia Orchestra, and has made several guest appearances since then.

A Scandinavian connection was established when he was appointed Music Director of the Göteborg Symphony in 1966. There he espoused the cause of Swedish composers, including Allan Pettersson, and over the following years conducted extensively in Sweden — with the Stockholm Philharmonic, and with the historic Drottningholm Court Theater's production of *Così fan Tutte* (1972) and *La buona figliola* (1977), among others.

Comissiona's first appearance in 1967 with the Baltimore Symphony was the beginning of a close association which led, two years later, to his appointment as the orchestra's Music Director. In 1977, he became Music Advisor of the American Symphony in New York City, the resident orchestra at Carnegie Hall.

He held that position for 5 years.

In the 1980-81 season he began as Artistic Advisor to the Houston Symphony, and in the summer of 1981 initiated a Tchaikovsky Festival, the first indoor summer activity in the orchestra's history. The Summer Festival of 1982 was a tribute to Haydn, Stravinsky and Ravel.

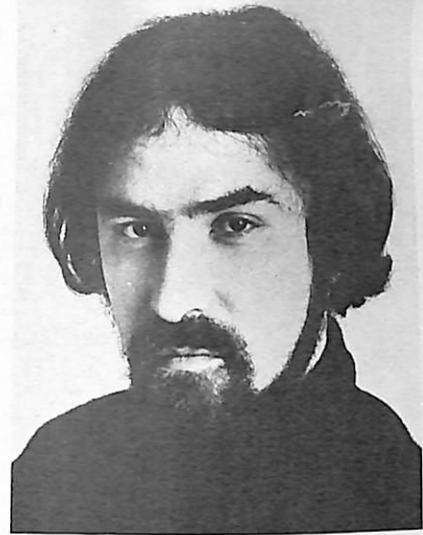
Comissiona has been Music Advisor and Conductor of the Northern Ireland Orchestra; toured Europe with the Residentie Orchestra of The Hague; guest conducted London's New Philharmonic and the ORTF Orchestra of Paris; and has conducted recordings by l'Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, Houston, Baltimore, Göteborg and Haifa Symphonies, the Stockholm Philharmonic and Israel Chamber Orchestra.

As an opera conductor, in addition to his appearances at Covent Garden and Sweden's Drottningholm Court Theater, Comissiona has led Verdi's *Falstaff* at the Baltimore Opera, and Puccini's *La Fanciulla del West* at New York City Opera. He conducted a new production of Verdi's *Attila* at the New York City Opera in 1981, to outstanding acclaim, and led repeat performances in New York and Los Angeles.

Comissiona has been the recipient of many honors. In 1973, he was the first non-citizen to receive the Gold Medal of the City of Göteborg for distinguished service on behalf of Swedish music. Houston and Baltimore both designated a "Sergiu Comissiona Day" in recognition of his accomplishments. Honorary doctorates have been awarded by the Peabody Conservatory and Loyola University. And in May 1982, Sergiu Comissiona was voted an honorary member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Music, the only foreign member chosen that year.

In September 1982, Sergiu Comissiona was appointed Artist in Residence in Conducting at Rice University's Shepherd School of Music. As Artist in Residence, he works with some of the advanced student conductors at the Shepherd School in workshops and master classes when he is in Houston.

Maestro Comissiona became an American citizen on July 4, 1976, in Bicentennial ceremonies at Fort McHenry, birthplace of "The Star-Spangled Banner."



RADU LUPU

Since winning the 1969 Leeds Piano Competition, Radu Lupu has established himself as one of the most prominent pianists of his generation. *Gramophone* in London wrote of Lupu, "his talent is the kind of which legends are made." Although based in London, where he has played with all the leading British orchestras, his concert career has taken him all over the world.

Following his first major American appearances with the Cleveland Orchestra and Daniel Barenboim in New York in 1972, and an enormous success with the Chicago Symphony under Carlo Maria Giulini, Lupu has appeared and been re-engaged in every important American city. He has played with the Los Angeles Philharmonic under Mehta and Foster, the Chicago Symphony under Solti, the New York Philharmonic, the Boston Symphony and the Philadelphia Orchestra. In Europe, he is a regular visitor to all the great music centers both in recital and orchestral concerts. He has been a soloist many times with the Berlin Philharmonic and the Vienna Philharmonic. His debut with the Berlin Philharmonic was at the Salzburg Festival with Herbert von Karajan during Easter, 1978. He performs regularly with the Israel Philharmonic, and has played with the Concertgebouw and L'Orchestre de Paris.

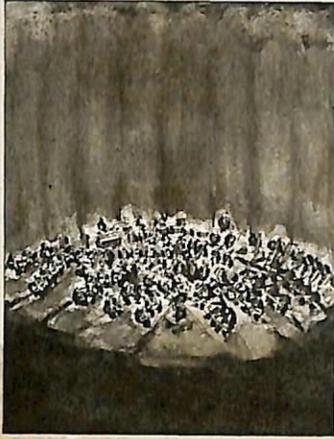
Radu Lupu was born in Rumania in 1945. He began studying the piano at age six, making his public debut with a complete program of his own music at twelve. He continued his studies for a number of years with Florica Musicescu

# SYMPHONY



SERGIU COMISSONA, MUSIC DIRECTOR-DESIGNATE  
FEBRUARY, 1983

# SYMPHONY



RIGGS, CELESTINA, MUSIC DIRECTUS DESIGNATE  
FEBRUARY, 1981

## ON THE COVER

This month's cover artist, Lucy Wells Riggs, is a native Houstonian with a BFA degree from the University of Texas. She is presently pursuing her career at the Art Institute of Houston where she is studying commercial art.

"The Orchestra" is a mixed-media collage, as was her previous work "Original Score for Strings" which appeared on the *Symphony* cover of March 1982. In this work each orchestra member is represented by a musical note taken from actual sheet music.

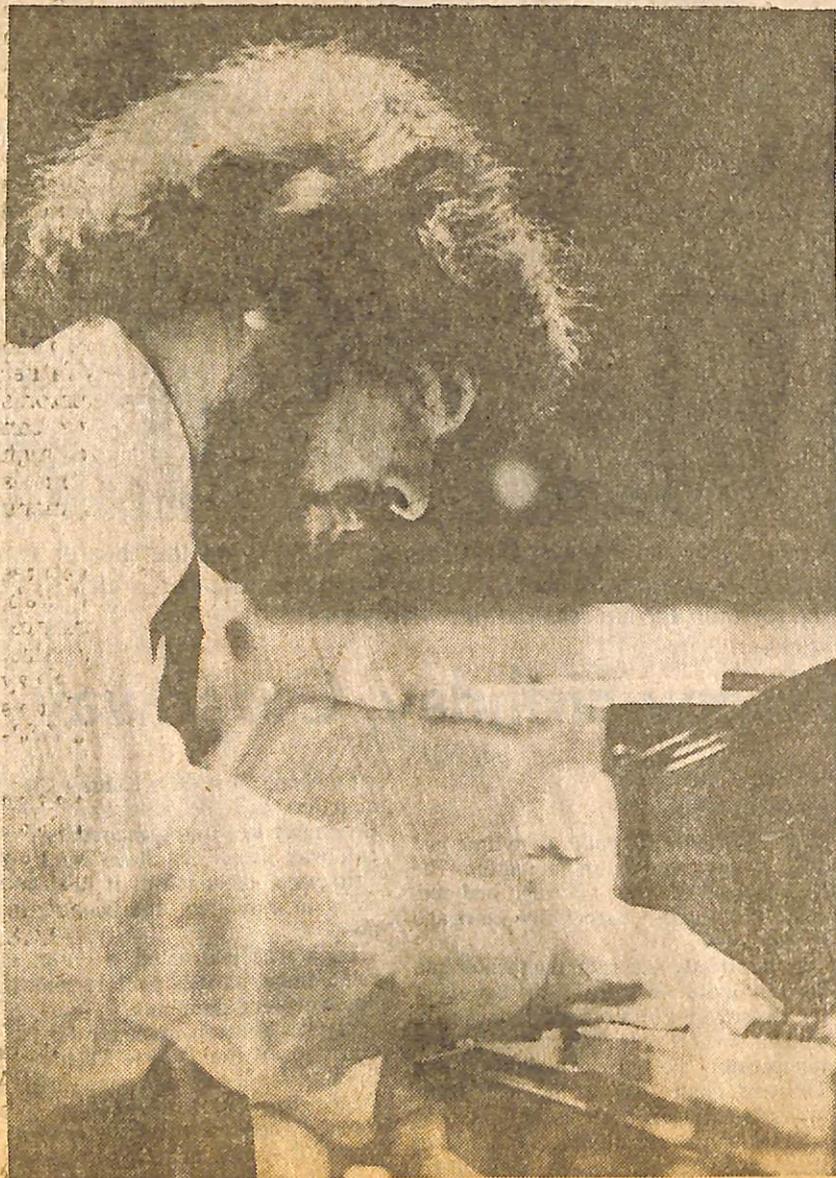
*The Orchestra*  
Mixed-media collage  
© 1983 Lucy W. Riggs

Houston's performing arts groups enhance our city and enrich our lives enormously. We encourage everyone's continual support.

"Skip-to-my-loo"—A bronze by Glenna Goodacre

PHOTOGRAPHY: F. WALLACE & A-CUBE





## Juxtaposed rivals

**I**N A SMALL way, Peter Schaffer's play *Amadeus* comes to life at the Houston Symphony concerts this weekend when works of Antonio Salieri and Mozart are juxtaposed. Salieri, who in the play was Mozart's great rival, will be represented by his Overture to *Axur, re d'Ormus* which precedes Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 18. Music director-designate Sergiu Comissiona will conduct three works of Ravel to complete the evening: *La Valse*, *Pavane pour une Enfante Defunte* and Suite No. 2 from *Daphnis and Chloe*. (The Ravel pieces will be recorded by the orchestra later this season.)

Radu Lupu will be the pianist for the Mozart Concerto. Acclaimed wherever he plays, Lupu first appeared in Houston in 1973 when he played all five Beethoven piano concertos in three successive concerts. This weekend's performances will mark his fifth visit to the HSO.

Concerts are 8 p.m. Saturday and 2:30 p.m. Sunday in Jones Hall. Tickets are available at the Houston Ticket Center in Jones Hall (227-ARTS) and all Ticketron outlets including Joske's stores.

— CHARLES WARD

Radu Lupu will be the soloist with the Houston Symphony this weekend in Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 18.

## Review

## Pianist Lupu's performance near perfect

HOUSTON SYMPHONY performed the 12th concert program of the 49th season Saturday evening in Jones Hall. Sergiu Comissiona conducted with pianist Radu Lupu, as soloist, and the Houston Symphony Chorale. To be repeated at 2:30 p.m. today.

## PROGRAM

SALIERI..... Overture to *Axur, re d'Ormus*  
 MOZART..... Piano Concerto No. 18 in B-flat Major, K. 456  
 RAVEL..... *La Valse*  
 ..... *Pavane pour une Infante defunte*  
 ..... *Daphnis et Chloe, Suite No. 2*

BY CHARLES WARD  
 Chronicle Staff

A few artists almost never spoil a listener's high expectations and Radu Lupu is one of the them.

The Romanian pianist is the soloist this weekend with the Houston Symphony and Saturday evening in Jones Hall he opened the pair of concerts with the kind of performance that leaves the picky listener counting the imperfections on one hand.

Though the program opens with the HSO premiere of Antonio Salieri's short Overture to *Axur, re d'Ormus*, which received a brisk performance Saturday, the concert really pits Mozart versus Ravel: Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 18 in B-flat Major versus Ravel's *La Valse*, the *Pavane for a Dead Princess* and the Suite No. 2 from the ballet *Daphnis and Chloe* (with the Houston Symphony Chorale.)

In his superb performance of the Mozart concert, Lupu gave the symphony audience a very different tonal experience of the orchestra's newer Steinway piano. His handling of

the instrument was the best since Horacio Gutierrez baptized the instrument last spring. Where Gutierrez showed the piano to be capable of sweeping and grand intensity, via his performance of Prokofiev's Second Piano Concerto, Lupu and his Mozart suggested how superlatively crystalline and delicate the piano's tone can be.

Lupu's playing was brilliantly shaded with the most minute gradations of tone quality. (They were so effective that the slightest miscalculation tended to be very noticeable, such as a hint of aggressiveness in opening the second movement's cadenza or slightly too much emphasis on the second to last chord of the piece). With that achievement as his basis, he brought lightness and vigor to the outer movements and a sense of elegance to the slow, middle movement.

In his success, he was aided and equaled by music director-designate Sergiu Comissiona and the orchestra. The accompaniment they fashioned was equal in refinement and polish to Lupu's efforts. Together, soloist and orchestra gave us a brilliant account of the concerto.

Some of the same characteristics carried into the well played performances of the Ravel works, which are being prepared for a recording session in April.

The air of refinement was expertly folded into the two larger works — *La Valse* and the

*Daphnis and Chloe* Suite. Comissiona, orchestra and chorale moved the music along very well by stressing the large-scale pulse of the music. At the same time, the myriad details of the music were allowed to emerge with grace and beauty and Comissiona effectively polished important ones that many conductors do not always emphasize. For instance, the solo of principal flutist Byron Hester in *Daphnis* was supple and pliant; it was folded into a larger musical texture that ended up with a short, tonally luscious solo by David Colvig on the alto flute. Those were instances of the handsome playing of the orchestra.

*La Valse* particularly benefitted from the notion of conducting from an overview. Comissiona got the basic waltz rhythm to flow graciously and effortlessly throughout the work. The music was given totally, and rightly, a French view of the Viennese dance form.

On the other hand, the *Pavane* intermittently cried for a little more control of the detailed rhythmic ideas in order to give the work more tension and drive. In this work as well, the orchestra played well — the opening solo of Thomas Bacon, the principle horn, for example. However, the middle part of the work needed a firmer shape than the broadly molded one given Saturday evening.

The concert will be repeated at 2:30 p.m. today.

# Music: Houston Symphony

/The Houston Post/Sun., Feb. 6, 1983 ★★

HOUSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA AND CHORALE — Sergiu Comissiona conducting with pianist Radu Lupu as soloist Saturday evening. To be repeated at 2:30 p.m. Sunday in Jones Hall. Virginia Babilkian, director of the Houston Symphony Chorale.

Salieri: Overture to *Axur, re d'Ormus*; Piano Concerto in B-flat Major, K. 456; Ravel: *La Valse*, *Pavane pour une Infante defunte*; *Daphnis et Chloe, Suite No. 2*.

By CARL CUNNINGHAM

After several sweeping, epic interpretations of Romantic concertos from pianist Radu Lupu in past Houston Symphony engagements, his delicate, pensive interpretation of Mozart's B-flat Major Concerto, K. 456, Saturday evening in Jones Hall came as a special delight and novelty of the orchestra's current season.

As always, it was a deeply thoughtful, very personal performance that proceeded from a very relaxed style of playing and resulted in many lovely tonal effects. But in this instance, those tonal effects were scaled down to the softest volume levels, so that

some fast passage work in the opening movement had the kind of fragile pinging tone that makes one think of fine crystal.

Lupu applied the gentlest caressing strokes to the beguiling G-minor slow movement, a sort of captivating combination of the variation and French rondeau forms, set to the dance rhythm of a gavotte. In a telephone interview several days before this weekend's performances, Lupu expressed a special fondness for this movement, saying that it sparked his interest in the complete concerto.

Conductor Sergiu Comissiona tended to encourage a bolder, tonally fuller orchestral performance of the bucolic first movement than Lupu did, so that the soloist was slightly overshadowed. But Comissiona, the orchestra and Lupu achieved a much more satisfying balance in the final two movements.

The concerto was preceded by a brief but quite charming overture by Mozart's Viennese rival, Antonio Salieri. It was melodically colorful, engagingly arranged for the orchestra and suavely performed under Comissiona's baton.

Viennese classicism on the first half of the program was balanced by a large dose of Ravel following intermission, as Comissiona and the orchestra restudied three works they had performed on last summer's Haydn/Stravinsky/Ravel festival.

An imminent recording session is the cause of this Ravel rerun. It had been scheduled last summer following the festival, but had to be postponed because a key member of the recording team became seriously ill.

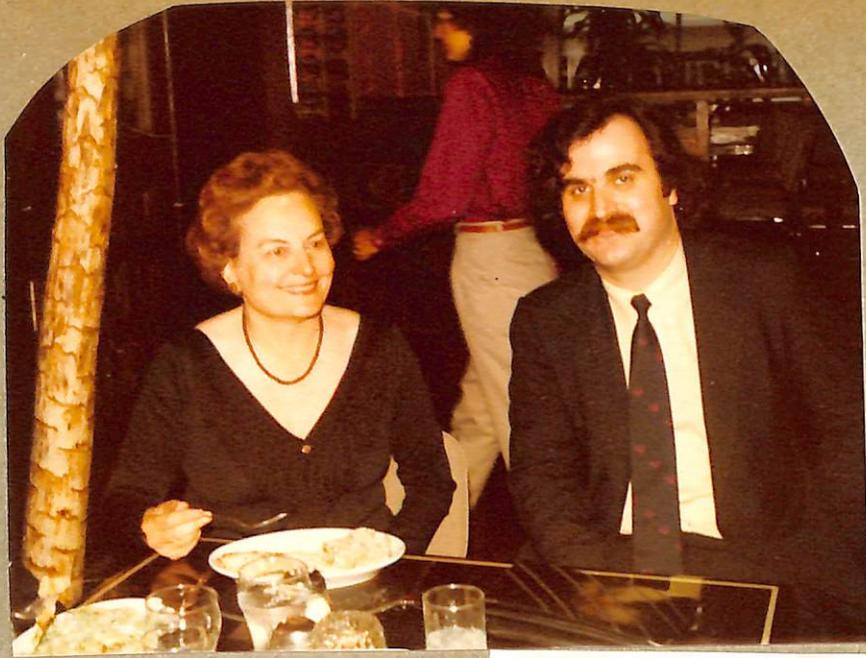
As heard Saturday, Ravel's Second Suite from the ballet, *Daphnis et Chloe*, was ready for the microphones. Comissiona, the orchestra and Houston Symphony Chorale gave it a tonally iridescent performance that brought the concert to gorgeous sounding conclusion. The flute/piccolo section, led by Byron Hester, gave a particularly distinguished account of their extended solo/ensemble section at the center of the suite.

Ravel's gentle *Pavane* was nearly as beautiful, as performed immediately preceding the ballet suite. Comissiona phrased the music in a most touching fashion, the strings had a lovely sheen and principal French horn player Thomas Bacon won a justly deserved solo bow for his playing. However, the remaining woodwinds, particularly the flutes, were far less even and well blended in their playing.

With Ravel's *La Valse*, the problem seemed to be more interpretive than technical. The orchestra's playing was generally quite clean and the dark, ominous string colors at the beginning of the work seemed to prophesy an interesting performance of Ravel's psychotic transformation of a Viennese waltz.

But that feeling of a waltz gradually dissolving into a kind of dance orgy did not take place in the performance, which instead proceeded rather jerkily toward its bombastic conclusion.

## Review



**CHORALE PARTY  
FEBRUARY 1983  
AFTER PERFORMANCE OF DAPHNIS ET CHLOE**



# Music

## Symphonic survey

### Houstonians want 'more excitement' from orchestra

By **CARL CUNNINGHAM**  
Post Music Editor

**WHERE IS OUR** audience and how do we reach it? That is the most pressing question addressed in a huge, apparently unprecedented marketing study conducted by the Gelb Consulting Group Inc. for the Houston Symphony.

Gabriel Gelb and his staff gathered and collated information from nearly 1,000 people off questionnaires they circulated and interviews they held this summer. Hundreds of views were expressed in the two-volume study, said to be the first ever conducted in behalf of a major symphony orchestra.

If one were to boil down a few of the major answers, one could conclude that people think highly of our orchestra and its conductor. They do enjoy the experience it provides, but they aren't as dedicated symphony-goers as people in northern cities. They'd like bigger stars at symphony concerts and they have some ill-defined urge for "more excitement" from the symphonic experience.

Yes, they'd like about 80 percent of their listening to be soul-stirring music from the Romantic era. But they seem to be more decently receptive to early, modern and unfamiliar music than the League of Philistines for the Preservation of the 19th Century give them credit for. Curiously, they say they're skittish about choral music, except in small doses or in larger helpings of very familiar choral/orchestral works.

They say a lot of other things, too — that they're more likely to subscribe for a full season of concerts if they live inside Loop 610, that the opera, ballet and other events compete for their social-entertainment time and dollar.

Basically, they're an approving audience that would like to have more contact with the symphony, but somehow don't get the messages the Houston Symphony is sending to coax them to come and hear its music. Therefore, they say the orchestra needs to market its wares more effectively.

That's probably true, but I would also say they're a typical lackadaisical Houston audience, and the Houston Symphony is by no means the only organization wondering how in the world it's going to wake them up and get them to come out to a concert.

But the Houston Symphony is striving mightily to do just that. As its 70th anniversary approaches, the orchestra's

board and management are involved in a deep and searching campaign to find and reach that audience. They are striving to achieve financial stability, to improve the quality of concerts, and to restore the cultural glory and eminence the Houston Symphony once enjoyed. And why not, since the symphony happens to be the cornerstone of our whole musical life.

No one has worked harder than executive director Gideon Toeplitz, who has spent much of his first 18 months here trying to define all the orchestra's problems and rein in its rampant deficits. By last fall, he succeeded in making the orchestra live within its budget. "That was my Christmas present to myself," Toeplitz said. "We have proved that we can control expenses. We contained the disease — now we've got to cure it."

**THE HOUSTON** Symphony's annual budget will grow from its current \$7.2 million to \$9.3 million by 1986-87. But Toeplitz and the board's finance committee intend to increase annual earnings and contributions to the point that they meet expenses by that time, thus eliminating deficits.

To do so, they must climb a very high mountain. The marketing study indicates the orchestra earned only 28 percent of its total budget in 1981-82. This year, it is earning 32 percent. Next year's goal is 36 percent.

"Our battle plan is geared to subscription sales for the core of our activities," Toeplitz says. The winter subscription series, as listed below, is the main source of income. Supplementing it are funds provided by Houston Grand Opera in leasing the orchestra for its performances, the symphony's summer Jones Hall festival, touring and "runout" engagements to nearby communities, and the growing Houston Symphony Pops series.

Close monitoring and frequent reports on the progress of the subscription campaign are key factors in Toeplitz's battle plan. "By June, we will have a clear idea of where we are, so we can regroup," he says.

For one thing, the symphony is restoring five concerts to its historic Monday night series, bringing that total to 15. Monday evening used to be opening night at the Houston Symphony, and the reduction of that series annoyed many longtime subscribers as the orchestra moved heavily into the Saturday-Sunday format.

Looking ahead to a possible move by

the opera and ballet companies out of Jones Hall into the proposed but yet unfunded Lyric Theatre, Toeplitz sees a need to fill seats by the time more become available in Jones Hall. Over the long term, his plan is to increase the 55 performances of 20 programs next season to 72-75 performances of 24 programs.

"Small-orchestra activities (the defunct Stokowski Legacy Series, the current Contemporary Trends and Performer Conducts series) until now have been money-losing entities," Toeplitz says. "My commitment is: Either we present a project that will carry itself (financially), or we do one of two things: We will not do it, or we will convince the (symphony board's) executive committee of its artistic importance."

Next season, the money-losing Performer Conducts series will be transformed into a more selective small-orchestra series with broader public appeal to suburban audiences. As replacements, Toeplitz suggests two evenings devoted to Bach's Brandenburg concertos and orchestral suites, a Beethoven program and a Mozart program.

During opera performance weeks, the Houston Symphony frequently has a 30-member chamber orchestra component ready and available to play somewhere, because only about 65 of the 97 symphony musicians can be squeezed into the Jones Hall orchestra pit. For Toeplitz, the question is, what is the best way to use them? "I would like to divert some of these possible performances to outreach concerts for minorities, but in a well-planned way. We will not just fill services — there must be a reason for it."

**COMMISSIONA** AND Toeplitz feel that the Jones Hall acoustics can be improved to give audiences that so-called "excitement" they say they're missing. According to Toeplitz, Andre Previn was the last conductor to experiment with the adjustable hexagon-shaped clouds in the ceiling. Previn claims he once had them arranged in a way that enhanced the sound of the orchestra.

However, Toeplitz reports that the computer control manual that lowers and raises the acoustical clouds has been out of operation since the late 1960s and they have never been adjusted since. Comissiona and Toeplitz want to consult an acoustician and find a free two-week period when they can put the orchestra onstage and run a series of acoustical tests.



GARY BERTINI



HENRYK SZERYNG



BIRGIT FINNILAE



ANDRE MICHEL SCHUB



KATHERINE CIESINSKI



CHRISTOPH ESCHENBACH



REYNALD GIOVINETTI



MARK ZELTSE



ALEXIS WEISSENBERG

# Comissiona . . .

From page 1

made, everyone in Baltimore, even the baggage porter at the airport, came running after me, took my hand and said: 'Maestro Comissiona, why are you leaving us?'

"But when I took my clothes to the cleaners in Houston the other day, the man asked, 'What name?' and I said, 'Comissiona.' He asked, 'What initial?' and I said, 'S.' He said, 'Oh, you are the conductor!'

"So, now I know Texas is home," Comissiona said with a quietly proud grin.

**T**EXAS WILL BE home for at least the last three years of his four-year contract. It calls for him to make Houston his residence and he is indeed purchasing a home here. He is only the third conductor in the orchestra's modern history to live in Houston, the others being Ernst Hoffmann and Lawrence Foster.

To symphony executive director Gideon Toeplitz, a Houston residence is very important, for it means that when Comissiona has a few days off and returns home from guest engagements elsewhere, he will come to Houston, not Baltimore or some New York hotel. He will be readily available for administrative conferences, auditions for new players and occasional public appearances — an important availability Houston has largely been denied the past few seasons.

Comissiona's Baltimore contract stipulated

he could not be named conductor or music director of any other American orchestra. During the past three years, Comissiona circumvented that stipulation with the oblique title "artistic adviser" here.

Profiting from that experience the Houston Symphony has been a little firmer in its contract language. Toeplitz states that it stipulates he may not "accept the music directorship or any similar position" with any other American orchestra without the permission of the Houston Symphony Society.

In past years, Comissiona was notorious for accepting various overlapping titles committing him to orchestras and festival organizations on the East Coast and in Sweden and Israel. But he has greatly reduced these commitments. Apart from Houston and Baltimore, his only current long-term attachment involves an annual six weeks with the Radio Orchestra of the Netherlands.

**A**CCORDING TO TOEPLITZ, 18 weeks is the contract guideline for the amount of time Comissiona will spend in Houston each season. But that is flexible, according to the amount of work available for him. Next season, it will be only 16 weeks, including 11 of the 20 subscription programs, the 1983 summer festival (yet to be announced) and a Texas tour in September.

Looking at the goals he has achieved and those that remain unfulfilled, Comissiona can justifiably point with pride to the resumption

of recording activities on the Vanguard label, two televised concerts, the Casals Festival tour, the establishment of a major annual summer festival in Jones Hall, an increase in the size of the orchestra from 94 to 97 musicians and the satellite Performer Conducts series in suburban areas.

"But I did not achieve a larger contact with the public — a substantial increase in attendance," Comissiona says urgently and with an undertone of discouragement. "There has been no major change in attendance. In Baltimore, you couldn't find an empty seat in the house this season."

Filling the hall has been his primary goal and Houston's traditionally phlegmatic symphony audience has yet to be coaxed into it in larger numbers. In part, Comissiona wonders if communication with his audience might have been hampered by public confusion about that "artistic adviser" title. Doubtless, his gradual transition from Baltimore to Houston has had its dampening effect on the normal burst of public enthusiasm one would expect to greet a new music director.

**"I AM CONCERNED,"** Comissiona admits. "Not scared, but concerned." But he is also more resolved than ever to bring people back to the symphony. "There is a geometric progression," he says. "One good concert brings one more person, a second brings two more people, a third brings four.

"At this stage of my life and career, I am confident. I believe I can do it."

## Houston Symphony

HOUSTON SYMPHONY — 16th winter series program conducted by Moshe Atzmon Saturday evening, featuring violinist Cho-Liang Lin and women of the Houston Symphony Choral (Virginia Babikian, director). To be repeated at 2:30 p.m. Sunday in Jones Hall.

Beethoven: Overture to *Egmont*, Op. 84; Vieuxtemps: Violin Concerto in A-minor, Op. 37; Liszt: *Dante* Symphony (first Houston Symphony performance).

By CARL CUNNINGHAM

Taiwanese-born violinist Cho-Liang Lin provided the highlight of Saturday's Houston Symphony concert with a powerful, exciting performance of a relatively rare work from the concerto literature, the A-minor Concerto by 19th century Belgian virtuoso, Henri Vieuxtemps.

Lin's big, rich tone and powerful bow arm projected the solo part with great strength. His fingers raced almost breathlessly up and down the violin fingerboard to keep pace with the plethora of notes in the final pages of the concerto.

Though not a great piece of music, the Vieuxtemps concerto is a pleasant, gracefully composed work with nice thematic lines, a good deal of brilliance and appealing orchestral touches. Guest conductor Moshe Atzmon led the orchestra in a capable, alert accompaniment of the work.

Capability was also the salient positive trait of Atzmon's conducting in the

first Houston Symphony performance of Franz Liszt's descriptive *Dante* Symphony, which briefly featured women of the Houston Symphony Choral at the end of the work.

The *Dante* Symphony is also a work that fails to qualify as a great orchestral masterpiece. Like its longer companion piece, Liszt's *Faust* Symphony, it is a rambling, ruminative work. But Liszt's two-movement tour through Dante's Hell and Purgatory is unfortunately a good bit duller than his character portraits of Faust, Gretchen and Mephistophiles, largely because it lacks the structural cohesion he built into the earlier *Faust* Symphony.

Unfortunately, Atzmon let Liszt's symphonic tour bus meander its way through the score, stopping and starting at all the points of interest without much imaginative commentary from the tour conductor. A more imaginative musician could have shored up the piece's shortcomings with more pliant phrasing, more interesting dynamics and all those niceties that search out interesting details in the music. Atzmon seemed mainly interested in the limited goal of getting safely from one phrase to the next and maintaining a clear beat and clean ensemble.

This, unfortunately, was all too often the case with Beethoven's *Egmont* Overture, as well. Atzmon opened the program with one of the most unimaginative, squarely phrased performances that work has ever received in Houston. The brass tone was also quite harsh sounding, a quality that carried over into his performance of the Liszt work.

### Review

Houston Chronicle

Sunday, March 20, 1983

### Reviews

## Violinist's triumph highlights weekend Symphony concert

HOUSTON SYMPHONY performed the 16th concert program of the 69th season Saturday evening in Jones Hall. Moshe Atzmon conducted with violinist Cho-Liang Lin as soloist. To be repeated at 2:30 p.m. today.

PROGRAM  
BEETHOVEN..... *Egmont* Overture, Op. 84  
VIEUXTEMPS..... Violin Concerto No. 3 in a minor, Op. 37  
LISZT..... *Dante* Symphony

BY CHARLES WARD  
Chronicle Staff

One lesser known work on the Houston Symphony's current program provided a triumph for violinist Cho-Liang Lin while a second provoked a wish not to hear Liszt's *Dante* Symphony again.

Lin is soloist in for the orchestra's weekend pair of concerts — the second is scheduled for 2:30 p.m. today in Jones Hall. He is playing Vieuxtemps' Violin Concerto No. 5 with Hungarian-born conductor Moshe Atzmon on the podium. Beethoven's *Egmont* Overture and the Liszt work complete the program.

Saturday, Lin was in excellent shape technically and musically. Throughout the concerto he provided a big, rich tone and a lot of very impressive work with his bow arm. The sound brought a sheen and fullness to the music that was perfect for it. His execution was the kind that commands attention without getting in the way of interpretive matters and provided the foundation for the excitement for his playing. In musical matters, he gave a sweeping, intense performance that made a rather shallow work seem strong, warm and vigorous. Atzmon and the orchestra added to that success with a sympathetic accompaniment of intelligence and precision.

Those same characteristics made the post-intermission performance of the *Dante* Symphony equally successful technically. Atzmon has prepared the two-movement work with careful attention to bringing clarity to the texture and a clear shape to the work's structure. And, in general, the orchestra played very well with few problems coming along the way. (A main one was aligning the attacks and articulation of the lower brass instruments and double basses in several unison/octave melodies.) The women of the Houston Symphony Choral sang the closing section of the work with ethereal beauty.

In those terms, the Liszt work was played successfully. However, it is a large, over-blown, dully written piece that unfortunately rambles on endlessly. Ultimately, it produces for the listener a too real experience of the *Purgatory* that Liszt was trying to depict in the second movement.

Before Lin came on, Atzmon and the orchestra gave an equally persuasive account of the *Egmont* Overture. In their account Saturday, the piece had a strength and dignity that was very memorable.

HOUSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA  
 SERGIU COMISSIONA, Music Director-designate  
 SIXTY-NINTH ANNIVERSARY SEASON  
 1982-83 Winter Subscription Series  
 Sixteenth Concert Program

## The Elizabeth A. Keck 1983 Concerts

Jesse H. Jones Hall for the Performing Arts  
 Saturday, March 19, 8:00 pm  
 Sunday, March 20, 2:30 pm

MOSHE ATZMON, Conducting

BEETHOVEN  
*Egmont* Overture, Op. 84

VIEUXTEMPS  
 Violin Concerto No. 5 in A minor, Op. 37  
 (played without pause)  
 Allegro non troppo  
 Adagio  
 Allegro con fuoco  
 CHO-LIANG LIN, Violin

### INTERMISSION

LISZT  
 \*\* "Dante" Symphony  
 Inferno  
 Purgatorio  
 WOMEN OF THE HOUSTON SYMPHONY CHORALE  
 Virginia Babikian, Director

\*\* First Houston Symphony performance

The performances will conclude at approximately 9:45 pm on Saturday evening and 4:15 pm on Sunday.

This program is presented as part of the Houston Festival, a celebration of the arts in Houston.

The audience is kindly requested to refrain from applauding until the completion of each composition.

Broadcast of this concert will be sponsored by RepublicBank Houston on KLEF-FM 94.5, Tuesday, March 29, at 8:00 pm

The activities of the Houston Symphony Orchestra are made possible in part by grants from the City of Houston through the Cultural Arts Council, the Texas Commission on the Arts, and from the National Endowment for the Arts in Washington, D.C., a Federal agency.

The STEINWAY is the official piano of the Houston Symphony Orchestra. The Houston Symphony Steinway pianos are dedicated to the memory of Miss Ima Hogg. The BALDWIN is the official organ of the Houston Symphony Orchestra.



MOSHE ATZMON

**B**orn in Hungary in 1931, Moshe Atzmon emigrated to Israel in 1944, where he studied both conducting and composition at the Academy in Tel Aviv. His training as a cellist and horn player gave him a broad knowledge of the orchestra, and a scholarship enabled him to further his studies in London.

From the beginning of his career Atzmon captured many coveted musical awards, including the Leonard Bernstein Prize, second prize in the Dimitri Mitropoulos Competition, and First Prize in the international competition for conductors in Liverpool. This latter competition resulted in numerous important engagements with England's leading orchestras, including the BBC, the London Symphony, the London Philharmonic and the Royal Philharmonic and the Philharmonia Orchestra.

Atzmon made his Salzburg debut with the Vienna Philharmonic in 1967. This was followed by engagements with the Berlin Philharmonic and Radio Orchestras, concerts in Vienna, Madrid, Hamburg, Munich, Stockholm, Rome and Isarel, as well as his debut at the Hamburg and Basel Operas.

Maestro Atzmon became the Chief Conductor of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra in 1969 and in 1972 was appointed successor to Hans Schmidt-Isserstadt as Chief Conductor of the NDR Symphony Orchestra in Hamburg, a position he held for six years.



# SYMPHONY



SERGIU COMISSONA, MUSIC DIRECTOR-DESIGNATE  
MARCH, 1983

# SYMPHONY



BERDET COMBES, NA, ACHE, DESH, FOR DESH, NAZE  
MAY 19, 1991

## ON THE COVER

Founder of the annual Festival of Photography in Arles (Les Rencontres Internationales de la Photographie), Lucien Clergue has published two dozen books in his native France and has issued a number of limited portfolios of his work, including "The Urban Nude," available through the Palladium Press in New York. In addition, he has produced fifteen short films, including a 1971 retrospective of his close friend Picasso entitled *Picasso: War, Love, and Peace*, which was recently shown at The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Cover Photo

Le Saltimbanque ©1983 Lucien Clergue

Houston's performing arts groups enhance our city and enrich our lives enormously. We encourage everyone's continual support.

"Skip-to-my-oo"—A bronze by Cienna Goodacre

PHOTOGRAPHY: F. WALLACE & A-CUBE



"As the sun colors flowers,  
so does art color life."  
Lord Avebury

# Sir William Walton, composer, succumbs to heart attack at 80

Chronicle News Services

Sir William Walton, the elder statesman of British composers, died today in Ischia, Italy. He was the third major figure in contemporary music to die in as many days.

American mezzo-soprano Cathy Berberian, 57, died of a heart attack in Rome Sunday. Composer-conductor Igor Markevitch, who wrote his first work at 11 and led his first orchestra at 18, died Monday in Antibes, France, also of a heart attack.

Sir William, 80, who was reworking a composition for Britain's Royal Ballet, apparently suffered a heart attack at his villa off the coast of Naples.

He was a versatile and witty artist who began his career in 1923 by scandalizing London society with his musical rendition of Dame Edith Sitwell's satirical poem, *Facade*.

Of living British composers, only Sir Michael Tippett compared with him in popularity.

Sir William's most familiar work is the 1931 oratorio *Belshazzar's Feast* for baritone, chorus and large orchestra.

String players owe him two of the century's most praised showpieces: the *Viola Concerto* of 1929, and the *Violin Concerto* of 1939. A *Cello Concerto* for Gregor Piatigorsky followed in 1957.

But he could write anything and often did — including opera, ballets, coronation marches for King George VI and Elizabeth II, tinkly waltzes and love songs for the stage and films.

Born on March 29, 1902, in the northern England industrial town of Oldham, Walton was the second of four children. His father was a choirmaster and his mother a contralto.

In the 1930s and early 1940s he wrote many of his best works. During World War II he drove ambulances — "very badly," he said — on the home front.

He was knighted in 1951 and in 1968 became the last of a trio of 20th century British composers, after Ralph Vaughan Williams and Benjamin Britten, to receive the Order of Merit, the nation's highest honor to outstanding public figures.

Walton had been in poor health since last year, but had continued working.

His wife, Susana Gil Passo, said he had been having

lung trouble.

Funeral plans were not known immediately.

Miss Berberian, a mezzo-soprano, was known as a leading performer of modern music, including experimental forms.

Miss Berberian, born in Attleboro, Mass., lived in Milan. She was in Rome to perform in a special program for Italian television, friends said.

In addition to her career in the world's opera houses, Miss Berberian wrote music, including a series of songs titled *Stripsody* which also involved cartoons.

Such composers as Milhaud and Stravinsky wrote works for her.

Miss Berberian was married in 1950 to Italian composer Luciano Berio and the couple had a daughter, Christina Luisa.

Markevitch, at one time conductor of the Boston Symphony as well as orchestras in Madrid, Rome and Monte Carlo, had just returned home from a tour of Japan and the Soviet Union.

At 17, he became a protege of Serge Diaghilev, director of the Ballet Russe. His best-known compositions included a piano concerto, the cantata *The Flight of Icarus* with French poet Jean Cocteau and a ballet, *Paradise Lost*.

Markevitch once was married to Kyra Nijinsky, daughter of the famous Ballet Russe dancer. He was married in 1946 to Topazia Caetani with whom he had a son and two daughters.

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# ainment composer Walton

"How he know," Walton myself in a the stiller was

# Entertainment

## British composer Walton dies

### Post News Services

British composer Sir William Walton, a leader of 20th-century music who wrote everything from movie scores to oratorios and the music for Queen Elizabeth's coronation, died Tuesday on the island of Ischia, Italy. He was 80.

Walton died of an apparent heart attack shortly after 7 a.m. at his villa on the island, near Naples.

The composer's wife, Susana, said Walton "died in my arms," the London Standard said. The couple had lived in Ischia since 1960.

Lady Walton said the body would be taken to Florence for cremation and the ashes would be interred at a cemetery there.

**ONLY LAST SUNDAY**, Walton completed the final bars of a version of his *Varil Capricci*, an orchestral work originally written in 1975, for a ballet by Sir Frederick Ashton. The Royal Ballet plans to give its world premiere in New York April 19 as part of the "Britain Salutes New York" activities.

For 60 years Walton produced a steady output of well-crafted music that largely ignored the atonality adopted by so many of his contemporaries and blended romantic lyricism, wit and humor with contemporary rhythms and a sure knowledge of orchestral and vocal technique.

His works ranged from waltzes and love songs to oratorios such as *Belshazzar's Feast* to film scores for *Henry V*, *Hamlet* and *Richard III*.

Both George VI and Queen Elizabeth II marched into Westminster Abbey for their coronations to Walton's stirring music. Crown Imperial was written for the king in 1937 and *Orb and Sceptre* for Elizabeth in 1953.

The composer was knighted in 1951. In 1967, the queen honored Walton with the Order of Merit, Britain's highest distinction, limited to 24 members.

**WALTON WAS EDUCATED** at the Cathedral Choir School of Christ Church at Oxford



**SIR WILLIAM WALTON**

and began composing while in his teens.

The Sitwell literary family staged one of his earliest and still best known works, *Facade*, in 1923. This was a setting of Edith Sitwell's poems — for the performance she stood at the back of the hall reciting her poetry. Walton later revised the music and choreographer Ashton used the score for a ballet.

Hundreds walked out of Walton's First Symphony in Chicago and Philadelphia in 1935 and there was some restlessness at his opera *Troilus and Cressida*, which he described as a "spectacular flop" at its premiere in London in 1954. But the opera eventually won the acclaim of the New York critics circle.

The Leeds Festival Choir went on strike at the first run-through of his mighty *Belshazzar's Feast*, written over 18 months in 1930-31, and festival director Sir Thomas Beecham had to send Malcolm Sargent there to mediate.

"How he talked them around, I don't know," Walton said. "I went down to Leeds myself in a panic. But by the time I got there the strike was over and the singers were actually beginning to like my music. At first choirs found *Belshazzar* extremely difficult. Now it gives nobody any trouble."

**BEECHAM DIDN'T REALLY** think much of it while it was being written.

"Since this work will never be performed," he told Walton, "I advise you to throw in all you can — say a couple of brass bands for good and useless measure."

Walton did just that. The oratorio made his reputation.

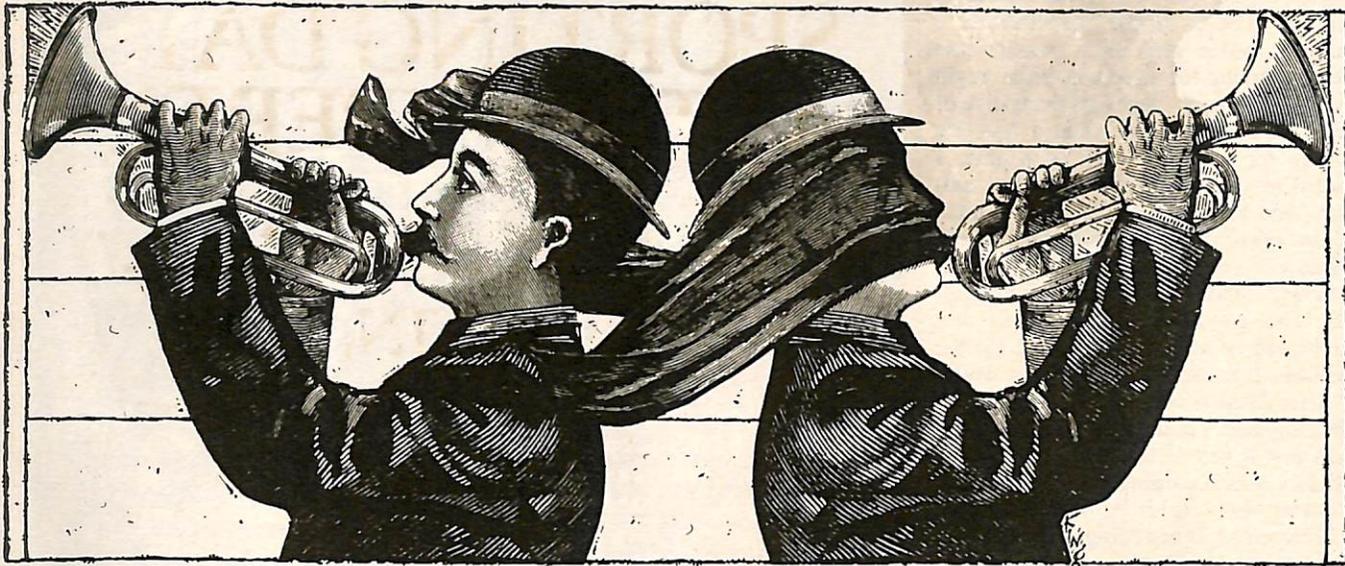
*Belshazzar's Feast* is scheduled for performance by the Houston Symphony Orchestra and Chorale on the season's final program, May 21-23, under the baton of principal guest conductor Sir Alexander Gibson.

Walton had several noteworthy connections with musical organizations in Houston. He personally conducted the Houston Symphony in 1969 at the invitation of then conductor Andre Previn, who has been a staunch advocate of his music. His viola and cello concertos have been performed here and abroad by symphony principal violist Wayne Crouse and principal cellist Shirley Trepel. Both of his symphonies and several other works have also been performed here.

In 1978, Houston Ballet staged Walton's *Facade*, in a production that featured artistic director Ben Stevenson and guest dancer Gwen Verdon in leading roles.

When his opera, *Troilus and Cressida*, was due for a major revival at London's Covent Garden in the fall of 1976, Previn was scheduled to conduct it. But Previn was forced to cancel the engagement and was replaced by Lawrence Foster, who made his Covent Garden debut with the opera and subsequently recorded it.

Foster was music director of the Houston Symphony at the time, but was idled that fall by a five-month work stoppage that resulted from a contract dispute.



## THOSE RAUCOUS BABYLONIANS

*The Houston and Dallas symphonies both took on the biblical extravaganza Belshazzar's Feast. Let us forgive them their trespasses.*

**S**ymphonies like to conclude their seasons with a bang, and that usually means a loud, crowd-pleasing choral work. This year both the Houston Symphony and the Dallas Symphony chose the same piece to achieve that crescendo, *Belshazzar's Feast*, by William Walton. It can be splashy—if the necessary players are on hand and a canny conductor whips them up to a proper froth. And these performances had the potential for considerable nostalgic impact, since the British composer died at the age of eighty in March. In this Walton sweepstakes, I'd say Dallas was the better orchestra, but Houston knew what to do with the music.

*Belshazzar's Feast* draws its words entirely from the Bible. The first long section sets to music the psalm mourning the Jews' deportation to Babylon. Walton makes this a choral elegy. The middle section is the feast itself. Belshazzar, the king of the Babylonian conquerors, disports himself shamefully, drinking out of the sacred vessels stolen from the Jewish temples. Then the handwriting miraculously appears on the wall, announcing

the downfall of the wicked Babylonians. The final section of *Belshazzar's Feast* is another psalm of the Jews, this time one of rowdy celebration at the demise of their conquerors.

Written in 1931, the year after Stravinsky's masterpiece *Symphony of Psalms*, Walton's piece borrows from it the concept of a three-part work using text from psalms in the Bible. The first and last sections occasionally echo the Russian master musically too, but the music in the key central section is original in its picture-postcard style. Sometimes the results are quaint, as when Walton luridly emphasizes the "co-o-o-ncubines" who took part in the feast. At other times the composer finds vividly theatrical effects, as when the chorus shouts, "In that night was Belshazzar the King slain/And his Kingdom divided." The overall effect is rather Cecil B. De Mille.

The Dallas performance, conducted by music director Eduardo Mata, wasn't nearly uncouth enough. The orchestra played well, although the offstage brass bands, so important to achieving the requisite gaudiness, were almost inaudible.

The young voices of the North Texas State University Grand Chorus were healthy and hefty enough to satisfy the score's tough requirements, but they lacked the ripeness that comes with age. Baritone Douglas Lawrence distinguished himself in the soloist's part. Still, biblical extravaganzas should not be so careful and bloodless.

The Dallas Symphony is undersized and its first-chair string players, except for concertmaster Eliot Chapo, are weak; nonetheless, it has a fine, tight sound. Mata is on his way to building the best orchestra in the state. As a musical software engineer he is tops, and he can pull off the most complicated twentieth-century scores without a hitch. But when is he going to quit tinkering with the computer and bare his soul?

At least Mata experiments. The trend in symphonic music recently has been to establish authentic performance practices in eighteenth-century music, an approach that Mata embraces. For instance, he began the evening with Handel's *Water Music Suite*. The jerky and hard-edged rhythms of the overture, despite their his-

torical accuracy, disconcerted not only the local critics but even some of Mata's own players. I found the results more interesting and convincing, however, than his previous forays into the baroque—a sign of Mata's capacity for growth.

Unfortunately, he missed the core of theatricality in *Belshazzar's Feast*. Perhaps he's been away from the theater too long, an oversight that may right itself now that he has become artistic adviser to the Mexican National Opera. The vagaries of the opera house may be just what Mata needs to loosen him up.

Houston's *Belshazzar's Feast* certainly didn't lack for drama. The performances were the farewell of Sir Alexander Gibson, who has served as the Houston Symphony's principal guest conductor for the last two seasons. Gibson has had plenty of theatrical experience; he got his start in opera and founded the Scottish Opera. Anyone who remembers the Houston Grand Opera performances of Janáček's *Jenufa* and Verdi's *Falstaff* of a few seasons back can testify to the power of his dramatic instincts. His parting gift to Houston, this *Belshazzar's Feast* could not accurately be described as overwhelming, but it was rambunctious and lots of fun.

The first half of Gibson's program was not promising. Some malcontents even left at the intermission, scared away by the orchestra's scrawny playing in the Sibelius Symphony No. 6 and Benjamin Luxon's labored singing in Mahler's *Songs of a Wayfarer*. The Sibelius work is the composer's least-played symphony, and its performance marked the end of a complete cycle in Houston led by Gibson. But the orchestra's desultory playing, especially from the violins, made me suspect that the reason the Sibelius Sixth isn't played is because it isn't very good. Luxon's appearance was eagerly anticipated—he might be called the national baritone of Great Britain—but his woolly sound and cracked high notes made me reluctant to hear him lumber through Babylon.

Gibson's major asset for *Belshazzar's Feast* was the Houston Symphony Chorus, one of the best large choruses in the country. And in the end he had a whale of a performance, one much more exciting than his recording of the work. The orchestra, so flimsy in the first half and so inconsistent in general, rose to the occasion. Luxon, though his tonal quality was mediocre, got into the blood-and-thunder melodrama of the text. The Houston Symphony Chorus—thank goodness, the only component true to form—showed off its beautiful sound and its power. In the second and third parts of the piece, the two offstage bands bugled mightily from the right- and left-hand projections of the first balcony of Jones Hall. No stereo rig could hope to compete with that blast of brass. Gibson's *Belshazzar's Feast* was a boisterous send-off for a conductor who will be missed. ♣

# Gibson's tenure with symphony ends with rousing performance

HOUSTON SYMPHONY performed the 20th concert program of the 1982-83 season Saturday evening in Jones Hall. Sir Alexander Gibson conducted with the Houston Symphony Chorale and with baritone Benjamin Luxon as soloist.

## PROGRAM

SIBELIUS.....Symphony No. 6 in d minor, Op. 104  
 MAHLER.....Songs of a Wayfarer  
 WALTON.....Belshazzar's Feast

BY CHARLES WARD  
 Chronicle Staff

Sir Alexander Gibson ended his two-year tenure as the Houston Symphony's principal guest conductor with a rousing performance of Sir William Walton's choral work *Belshazzar's Feast*.

Gibson was engaged to focus on two areas of the repertoire — the music of Jean Sibelius, one of his specialties, and a few of the orchestral works of British composers. (Gibson is music director of the Scottish Opera and the Scottish National Orchestra.)

Both facets are included on the final program of the symphony's season: Sibelius, through his Symphony No. 6, and Britain through the Walton work, which features the Houston Symphony Chorale and baritone Benjamin Luxon as the soloist. Luxon is also singing Mahler's early *Songs of a Wayfarer* (*Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*).

Walton's piece is a setting of the Biblical story of Belshazzar and the fall of Babylon (including the famous incident of the hand writing on the wall). The piece is noisy, boisterous, and great fun with its driving, often jazzily syncopated rhythms.

All these aspects were strongly stressed in the performance Saturday evening in Jones Hall. The noise, in the good sense, was almost always present, as produced by the chorale, full orchestra and, sometimes, even by the two small groups of extra brass players placed in the boxes on either side of the hall.

The piece is not subtle. That was a fortunate characteristic Saturday for all the musicians were primed for a high torque performance. When in the middle the music, the chorale sang with its customarily attractive sound; however, in exposed places, the thin, uneven singing of the sopranos and tenors suggested they were less in control of their voices than in other appearances of this and other seasons. (As well, entries by the chorus were consistently uneven. That can partly be attributed to Sir Alexander's idiosyncratic conducting style which might cause singers to jump in early once or twice; but it is even enough for them not to do it consistently.) The orchestra played with great gusto to produce a wall of enjoyable music, built to a smashing conclusion. The performance was proof once more of Sir Alexander's skill in conducting music that is theatrical in scope and proportions.

In *Belshazzar's Feast* Luxon had several brief solos that were almost recitatives. He sang them with perfect

detail and showed how magnificent a voice he has.

That was less the case in the Mahler songs. They began, and continued, as if the baritone were not completely warmed up. His singing was initially muffled and tight. It loosened and became at times powerful and strong only to change suddenly back to its initial state (a key high note at the end of the second song wavered and then cracked, for instance). Luxon gave a thoughtful interpretation but his vocal color was not quite as burnished as needed for these songs.

Here Gibson and the orchestra gave a less confident performance of the music. Gibson's conducting style is erratic enough these days not to inspire total confidence in musicians and that showed in the uneven polishing of small details in very detailed-oriented music. Even though the music blossomed when Gibson pushed it toward an almost Wagnerian concept, the performance was for the most part a little timid.

Likewise, the Sibelius symphony suffered a little from a lack of final polishing. Throughout the four movements the basic elements of the composer's style were beautifully shaped — the often boiling legato sound that is played off of a more agitated and animated music — but Gibson allowed the music to achieve a certain level of warmth and intensity only to let it stay there without the extra push toward a strong, fully shaped performance. However, the orchestra, most noticeably the strings, gave a tonally lustrous account of the work.

The program will be repeated at 2:30 p.m. today and 8 p.m. Monday.

/The Houston Post/Sun., May 22, 1983

## Music: Houston Symphony

HOUSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA AND CHORALE — 20th and final program of the season conducted by principal guest conductor Sir Alexander Gibson Saturday evening, with baritone Benjamin Luxon as soloist. Virginia Babikian, director of the Houston Symphony Chorale. To be repeated at 2:30 p.m. Sunday and 8 p.m. Monday in Jones Hall.

Sibelius: Symphony in D-minor, Op. 104; Mahler: *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*; Walton: *Belshazzar's Feast*.

By CARL CUNNINGHAM

The late Sir William Walton's bold, brash, brassy oratorio, *Belshazzar's Feast*, made an exciting climax to the Houston Symphony's final program of the season, conducted in the first of three performances by principal guest conductor Sir Alexander Gibson Saturday evening in Jones Hall.

In general, it was a performance more distinctive for clean orchestral playing than choral singing. Gibson led the instrumentalists in a quite thrilling, incisive performance of the intense, muscular score. The orchestra's brass section and the two additional brass choirs placed at the front of the boxes filled the hall with especially shining tone.

However, Gibson had less success in garnering clear choral enunciation of Osbert Sitwell's setting of the biblical text about the handwriting on the wall that led to the death of King Belshazzar, the partitioning of his Kingdom of Babylon and freedom for its enslaved Israelites. Some difficulty with the high range of the soprano line and problems of intonation in some of Walton's more acerbic chordal dissonances also dulled the choral sound.

Nevertheless, the dramatic substance of the piece was well conveyed and British baritone Benjamin Luxon made an authoritative debut in the narrative solo line of the oratorio.

Luxon was even more impressively featured as the soloist in Mahler's *Wayfarer* Songs. His tone had a burnished, golden quality and he sensitively adapted his singing to the volatile changes of mood in Mahler's cycle of a wandering, rejected lover, sorrowing in his memories amid the beauties of nature he encounters along his path.

One high tone was flawed at the end of the second song, but it did not destroy the beautiful musing quality Luxon imparted to the music at the point. Gibson and the Houston Symphony joined him in a bright, keenly expressive performance of Mahler's colorful orchestral accompaniment to the four songs.

Jean Sibelius's quiet, brooding Sixth Symphony

opened the concert in a performance that was, like the Walton, more noteworthy for certain aspects of its musical substance than its cleanliness of detail. Gibson often conveyed music with a good, honest feeling for its abrupt style and the organic growth and evolution of its thematic cells. But little rhythmic nuances and contrapuntal lines were not always seamlessly aligned and a sense of overall direction in the music was not convincingly set forth.

The Sixth Symphony is the most delicate of the whole cycle of seven Sibelius symphonies Gibson has conducted during his tenure, which concludes with this program. Because of that, it is also a hard work to fit into an orchestral program and would probably have been paired with one of the composer's other works to better advantage.

Review

# WINTER SUBSCRIPTION SERIES 20

HOUSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA  
SIXTY-NINTH ANNIVERSARY SEASON  
SERGIU COMISSONA, Music Director-designate  
1982-83 Winter Subscription Series  
Twentieth Concert Program

## The Tenneco Endowed Concerts

Jesse H. Jones Hall for the Performing Arts  
Saturday, May 21, 8:00 pm  
Sunday, May 22, 2:30 pm  
Monday, May 23, 8:00 pm

SIR ALEXANDER GIBSON, Conducting

### SIBELIUS

Symphony No. 6 in D minor, Op. 104  
Allegro molto moderato  
Allegretto moderato  
Poco vivace  
Allegro molto

### MAHLER

*Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* ("Songs of a Wayfarer")  
Wenn mein Schatz Hochzeit macht  
Ging heut' morgen über's Feld  
Ich hab ein glühend Messer  
Die zwei blauen Augen  
\*BENJAMIN LUXON, Baritone

### INTERMISSION

### WALTON

*Belshazzar's Feast*  
BENJAMIN LUXON, Baritone  
HOUSTON SYMPHONY CHORALE, Virginia Babikian, Director

### \*Houston Symphony debut

The performances will conclude at approximately 10:00 pm on Saturday and Monday evenings and 4:30 pm Sunday.

The audience is kindly requested to refrain from applauding until the completion of each composition.

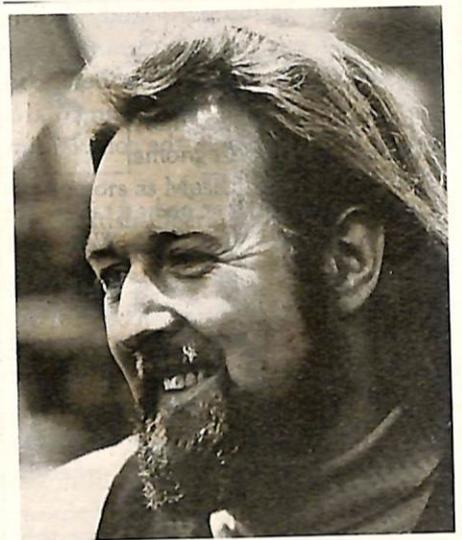
Broadcast of this concert will be sponsored by RepublicBank Houston on KLEF-FM 94.5, Tuesday, May 31, at 8:00 pm

The activities of the Houston Symphony Orchestra are made possible in part by grants from the City of Houston through the Cultural Arts Council, the Texas Commission on the Arts, and from the National Endowment for the Arts in Washington, D.C., a Federal agency.

The STEINWAY is the official piano of the Houston Symphony Orchestra. The Houston Symphony Steinway pianos are dedicated to the memory of Miss Ima Hogg. The BALDWIN is the official organ of the Houston Symphony Orchestra.



SIR ALEXANDER GIBSON



BENJAMIN LUXON

British baritone Benjamin Luxon is one of the most successful, versatile artists appearing today, internationally in demand for opera, orchestra and lieder, as well known for his recordings and television and radio broadcasts as he is for his stage performances. He is a regular guest at Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, Glyndebourne, the Edinburgh Festival, the Aldeburgh Festival, in Munich, Vienna and throughout the United States.

Luxon made his Metropolitan Opera debut in *Eugene Onegin* in January 1980. A favorite guest with the Boston Symphony and Seiji Ozawa, he appeared with them once again as soloist in Dvorak's *Stabat Mater* both in Boston and in New York. Other U.S. engagements have included *Belshazzar's Feast* with the National Symphony, the *Messiah* with the New York Philharmonic and recitals at the University of Connecticut and Wesleyan University.

A prolific recording artist, Benjamin Luxon is especially noted for his recordings of British composers such as Britten, Delius, Vaughan Williams and Walton.

Born in Cornwall, Luxon completed his studies at the Guildhall School of Music and won the School's Gold Medal and a prize in the Munich International Competition. He is one of the few British singers to achieve success in Germany as a lieder singer. Throughout his early career he was closely associated with the English Opera Group and in 1970 Benjamin Britten invited him to create the title role in his television opera *Owen Wingrave*.

\*denotes members of the Board of Governors of the Chorale.  
12 SYMPHONY

### VIOLA

Wayne Crouse  
Principal  
Wayne Brooks  
Assoc. Principal  
William Welch

Assoc. Principal  
David Colvig  
Carol Slocomb

PICCOLO  
Carol Slocomb

Julie Landsman  
Co-Principal  
Philip Stanton  
James Horrocks  
Nancy Goodearl  
Jay Andrus

Sir Alexander has not only presided over the orchestra's concerts in Scotland, in its many visits to England and its tours of Europe and the United States, but also has produced with the orchestra an enviable list of recordings on several major labels.

Apart from his work with Scottish Opera and the SNO, Sir Alexander travels extensively in Europe and the United States as well as Australia and South America. His visits to the Caramoor Festival and to Houston have become annual events — his conducting of *Jenufa* and *Falstaff* were highlights of the Houston Grand Opera seasons, as have been Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius* and his Sibelius cycle with the Houston Symphony. He made his first visit to Israel in 1979 to conduct the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra. He was named Principal Guest Conductor of the Houston Symphony for a two-year term beginning with the 1981-82 season.

Glasgow's St. Mungo's Prize, for the most distinguished contribution to the life of the city, was awarded him in 1970, and four years later he became an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. The Sibelius Society of Finland awarded him the Sibelius Medal in 1978 for "an outstanding contribution to the appreciation of Sibelius's music throughout the world," and he was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II in her Jubilee Honors List of 1978, the only conductor in Great Britain honored that year.



BENJAMIN LUXON

tists appearing today, internationally in demand for opera, orchestra and lieder, as well known for his recordings and television and radio broadcasts as he is for his stage performances. He is a regular guest at Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, Glyndebourne, the Edinburgh Festival, the Aldeburgh Festival, in Munich, Vienna and throughout the United States.

Luxon made his Metropolitan Opera debut in *Eugene Onegin* in January 1980. A favorite guest with the Boston Symphony and Seiji Ozawa, he appeared with them once again as soloist in Dvorak's *Stabat Mater* both in Boston and in New York. Other U.S. engagements have included *Belshazzar's Feast* with the National Symphony, the *Messiah* with the New York Philharmonic and recitals at the University of Connecticut and Wesleyan University.

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## SYMPHONY NO. 6 IN D MINOR, OP. 104

JEAN SIBELIUS

Born December 8, 1865, in Tavastehus  
Died September 20, 1957,  
in Järvenpää, Finland

*Last performed on the subscription series  
concerts of January 24 and 25, 1966, Jussi  
Jalas conducting.*

Jean Sibelius is one of the few composers from the Scandinavian north to become a musical figure of worldwide importance. There was a time when serious critics, especially in England and

the United States, described his seven symphonies in terms usually reserved for Beethoven and Brahms, but a later generation assigned him a place with the finest national composers of Europe: Tchaikovsky, Dvorák and Grieg, for example.

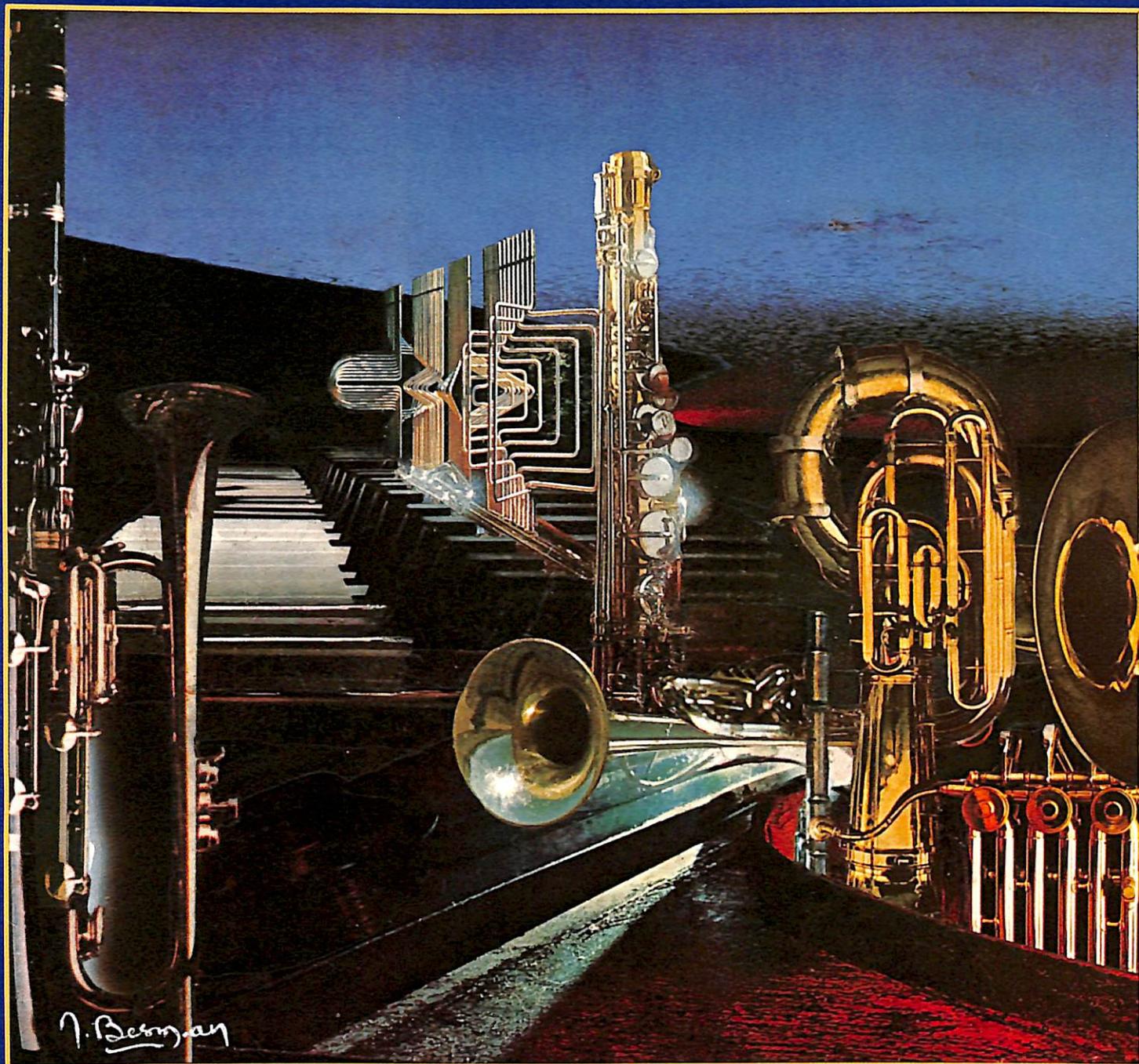
The old idea of Sibelius as a solitary figure, alone and separate from Europe on the distant Karelian peninsula, was never correct. He studied in Berlin and Vienna, and was published in Leipzig. He made concert tours to the principal cities of Europe, and he went quite often to England, where his works were very popular. He taught for a while at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston, and was awarded an honorary degree by Yale. He was a cosmopolitan musician and an international figure.

When Sibelius wrote his First Symphony, in 1899, he was experimenting with a form that was a new means of musical expression for him. It is clear that he looked backward for models and found them in the symphonies of Tchaikovsky. With his Second Symphony, Sibelius set out on a new and independent path. He began to write music of greater individuality, with a strong Nordic flavor and only a nod in the direction of Tchaikovsky and his other symphonic forebears.

For several years after the Fifth Symphony, which was composed in 1914 and 1915, Sibelius wrote only short and relatively light works, as though gathering his strength for the final great outburst of creative energies that gave the world his Sixth and Seventh Symphonies, in 1923 and 1924, and the symphonic poem *Tapiola* in 1925. A few minor works appeared during the next four years, but from 1929 until the end of his life, in 1957, he wrote no more. For many years there were rumors of an Eighth Symphony in progress, or perhaps even completed and withheld for posthumous performance, but it was never written.

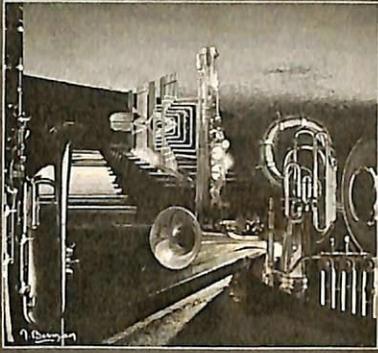
In his early plans for the Sixth Symphony, Sibelius said that it would be "wildly impassioned in character, with pastoral contrasts, the end rising to a somber roaring of the orchestra, in which the main theme is drowned. The plans may be altered as the musical ideas develop. As usual I am a slave to

# SYMPHONY



SERGIU COMISSONA, MUSIC DIRECTOR-DESIGNATE  
MAY, 1983

# SYMPHONY



REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON  
MAY 1982

## ON THE COVER

Michel Bezman also designed the December cover. A professor of architecture at the University of Houston, he is known for his collages, which are part of a number of private and corporate art collections. He is represented by the DuBose Gallery, where he had a one-man show last August, the next one being scheduled for October 83. He was commissioned by "Performing Arts Magazine" for both a commemorative poster and the Houston Shakespeare Festival cover. In addition he created the 1982 Houston Shakespeare Festival poster. Last year he received the Paddington Award and was selected for "Dimension Houston 1982," the art show sponsored by the Art League of Houston. In April he designed the cover for L5 Space Development Conference where he also exhibited a selection of his work.

*Concerto in Blue for Orchestra and Distant Piano*  
© 1982 Michel Bezman

JOE

Houston's performing arts groups  
enhance our city and enrich our  
lives enormously. We encourage  
everyone's continual support.

"Skip-to-my-loo"—A bronze by Glenna Goodacre



PHOTOGRAPHY: F. WALLACE & A-CUBE

# THE HOUSTON SYMPHONY CHORALE

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DIRECTOR

David A. Wehr  
Associate Director

Thomas Avinger  
Musical Assistant

Anne Schnoebelen  
Accompanist

Lee Stevens  
Chorus Manager

J.R. Lowery  
Properties Manager

## SOPRANO

Ara Lynn Bauman  
Betty Ann Bough  
Jacqueline Brodeur  
Ann Janzen Caito  
Nancy Cobbs  
Heidi Engleking  
Julia L. Forsythe  
Kathryn E. Fritz  
Beverly Graeter  
Helen Gremillion  
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Luclair Kilgore  
LaNell Lacy  
Cynthia Shauer Langstaff  
Pamella J. Lyons  
Elizabeth Madsen  
Ann C. McAllister  
Carolyn McShan  
\*Maxine Moore  
Janis Parish  
Nancy C. Phillips  
Elaine A. Powers  
Nancy A. Ricca  
Lorelee J. Rude  
Jan Russell  
Ellie Seedborg  
Sarah Smith  
Lee Stevens  
Menthola Stevenson  
Beth Thornley

## ALTO

Laverne Acord  
Paula Arwood  
Fran Avera  
JoAnn Avinger  
Virginia Beilharz  
Rhonda Boccarossa  
Antoinette Boecker  
Lucy Brown  
Mary Bundrick  
Carolyn Coker  
Karen B. Dougherty  
Linda Francis  
Jennifer Giese  
Judy E. Gill  
Dianna Gray  
Linda Harding  
Nancy Hawley  
\*Carolyn Hess  
Earle Jensen  
\*Dottie Lytle  
Peggy Matlock  
Nancy McClain  
Rosemary P. Mullin  
Patricia J. Noll  
Kathy Olenderski  
Kari Perkins  
Denna Potenza  
\*Billie Roark  
Kathleen B. Smith  
Lynda Sparks  
Diane Stine  
Jeanie Stokes  
Margaret Tucker  
Urara Vella  
Ann Wade  
Lori White

## TENOR

Joseph R. Abston  
Jeff Addington  
Michael Ammons  
Loren D. Bernhardt  
Robert Browning  
\*James R. Carazola  
David W. Carter  
Cary Cobb  
Kenneth Cordray  
Phil Crichton  
John V. Crooks  
Anthony Denmore  
Steve T. Donohue  
Mike Duffy  
James J. Feeney  
John C. Flanagan  
Chris Gamble  
Marvin Gaspard  
\*John P. Grady  
John F. Kracht  
David H. Langstaff  
W. J. Laughlin  
Tom Milner  
David G. Nussmann  
Peter Peropoulos  
Glen Scratchley  
Ted Snedden  
Donald I. Snyder  
Tony Vazquez  
Larry Ward

## BASS

\*Bob Acosta  
Forbes Alcott  
Jeffrey M. Bartlett  
Bruce Boyle  
J. Wesley Brown  
A.W. Buescher  
William K. Cheadle  
Donald Conrad  
Bill Cumberland  
Tom Everage  
Al Feiveson  
Lloyd Francis  
Bruce Frizzell  
Bill Goddard  
Strait Hicklin  
Paul Hyde  
Randall Jeter  
Robert Q. Kluttz  
Nathaniel C. Lee  
Reuben Leslie, Jr.  
J.R. Lowery  
David Mathis  
John W. Rogers  
Cody S. Scace  
Daniel J. Shea  
Wally Shuttlesworth  
Philip Smith  
David A. Stampley  
David O. Stotlar  
Warren Thompson  
Paul Van Gorder  
Paul Weber  
\*Bob Wilbur  
Howell Yi  
Stan W. Yoder

\*denotes members of the Board of Governors of the Chorale.

Music Director-designate  
Roy and Lillie Cullen Chair

**SIR ALEXANDER GIBSON**  
Principal Guest Conductor  
Lyndall and Gus Wortham Chair

**C. WILLIAM HARWOOD**  
Associate Conductor

**TOSHIYUKI SHIMADA**  
Assistant Conductor

**FIRST VIOLIN**

Ruben Gonzalez  
Concertmaster  
Alan Traverse  
Co-Concertmaster  
David Chausow  
Ass't Concertmaster  
Carolyn Plummer  
Ass't Concertmaster  
Josephine McAndrew  
Lisa Johnson  
Mi-Hee Chung  
Doris Derden  
John Oliveira  
Stacy Hirsch  
Barbara Shook-Cleghorn  
Amy Teare  
James Stephenson  
George Maxman  
Betty Stephenson  
Christine Pastorek  
Susan Valkovich

Phyllis Herdliska  
Hugh Gibson  
Joy Plesner  
Thomas Molloy  
Kyla Bynum  
Fay Barkley  
Bernice Beckerman  
Linda Goldstein  
Violeta Moncada

**CELLO**

Shirley Trepel  
Principal  
Winnie Safford Wallace Chair

Thomas Bay  
Assoc. Principal

Robert Deutsch  
Dorothy Moyes  
Marian Wilson  
Kevin Dvorak  
Hyunjin Cho  
Myung Soon Lee  
Samuel Magill  
Deborah Toth

**CONTRA-BASS**

Paul Ellison  
Principal  
Harold Robinson  
Assoc. Principal  
David Malone  
William Black  
Robert Pastorek  
Kendrick Wauchope  
Newell Dixon  
Michael McMurray

**FLUTE**

Byron Hester  
Principal  
General Maurice Hirsch Chair

Lynette Mayfield  
Assoc. Principal

David Colvig  
Carol Slocomb

**PICCOLO**

Carol Slocomb

**ALTO FLUTE**

David Colvig

**OBOE**

Raymond Weaver  
Principal  
Louis Ruttenberg  
Assoc. Principal  
Barbara Hester  
Larry Thompson

**ENGLISH HORN**

Larry Thompson

**CLARINET**

Richard Pickar  
Principal  
David Peck  
Assoc. Principal  
Don G. Slocomb  
Richard Nunemaker

**E-FLAT CLARINET**

Don G. Slocomb

**BASS CLARINET**

**SAXOPHONE**  
Richard Nunemaker

**BASSOON**

Benjamin Kamins  
Principal  
Eric Arbiter  
Assoc. Principal  
Richard Hall  
Gregg Henegar

**CONTRA-BASSOON**

Gregg Henegar

**HORN**

Thomas Bacon  
Principal  
Julie Landsman  
Co-Principal  
Philip Stanton  
James Horrocks  
Nancy Goodearl  
Jay Andrus

**TRUMPET**

John DeWitt  
Principal  
Mack Guderian  
Assoc. Principal  
Ned Battista  
Dick Schaffer

**TROMBONE**

Allen Barnhill  
Principal  
John McCroskey  
Co-Principal  
David Waters

**BASS TROMBONE**

David Waters

**TUBA**

David Kirk

**TIMPANI**

David Wuliger

**PERCUSSION**

James Simon  
Principal  
Fraya Fineberg  
George Womack

**HARP**

Beatrice Rose

**PERSONNEL MANAGER**

Larry Thompson

**ASS'T PERSONNEL MGR**

Dick Schaffer

**LIBRARIAN**

James T. Medvitz

**ASS'T LIBRARIAN**

Michael McMurray

**STAGE MANAGER**

Don Jackson

**STAGE TECHNICIAN**

Noel Crenshaw

**VIOLA**

Wayne Crouse  
Principal  
Wayne Brooks  
Assoc. Principal  
William Welch

# THE HOUSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

## SERGIU COMISSIONA

Music Director-designate  
Roy and Lillie Cullen Chair

### SIR ALEXANDER GIBSON

Principal Guest Conductor  
Lyndall and Gus Wortham Chair

### C. WILLIAM HARWOOD

Associate Conductor

### TOSHIYUKI SHIMADA

Assistant Conductor

#### FIRST VIOLIN

Ruben Gonzalez  
Concertmaster  
Alan Traverse  
Co-Concertmaster  
David Chausow  
Ass't Concertmaster  
Carolyn Plummer  
Ass't Concertmaster  
Josephine McAndrew  
Lisa Johnson  
Mi-Hee Chung  
Doris Derden  
John Oliveira  
Stacy Hirsch  
Barbara Shook-Cleghorn  
Amy Teare  
James Stephenson  
George Maxman  
Betty Stephenson  
Christine Pastorek  
Susan Valkovich

#### SECOND VIOLIN

Raphael Fliegel  
Principal  
Charles Tabony  
Assoc. Principal  
Robert Perry  
Margaret Ruttenberg  
Deborah Moran  
Ruth Zeger  
Margaret Bragg  
Martha Chapman  
Kevin Kelly  
Vera Jelagin  
Jan Karon  
Elena Diaz  
Inessa Kunin  
Dorothe Robinson  
Harvey Weschler

#### VIOLA

Wayne Crouse  
Principal  
Wayne Brooks  
Assoc. Principal  
William Welch

Phyllis Herdliska  
Hugh Gibson  
Joy Plesner  
Thomas Molloy  
Kyla Bynum  
Fay Barkley  
Bernice Beckerman  
Linda Goldstein  
Violeta Moncada

#### CELLO

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Principal  
Winnie Safford Wallace Chair

Thomas Bay  
Assoc. Principal  
Robert Deutsch  
Dorothy Moyes  
Marian Wilson  
Kevin Dvorak  
Hyunjin Cho  
Myung Soon Lee  
Samuel Magill  
Deborah Toth

#### CONTRA-BASS

Paul Ellison  
Principal  
Harold Robinson  
Assoc. Principal  
David Malone  
William Black  
Robert Pastorek  
Kendrick Wauchope  
Newell Dixon  
Michael McMurray

#### FLUTE

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Principal  
General Maurice Hirsch Chair  
Lynette Mayfield  
Assoc. Principal  
David Colvig  
Carol Slocomb

#### PICCOLO

Carol Slocomb

#### ALTO FLUTE

David Colvig

#### OBOE

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Principal  
Louis Ruttenberg  
Assoc. Principal  
Barbara Hester  
Larry Thompson

#### ENGLISH HORN

Larry Thompson

#### CLARINET

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Principal  
David Peck  
Assoc. Principal  
Don G. Slocomb  
Richard Nunemaker

#### E-FLAT CLARINET

Don G. Slocomb

#### BASS CLARINET SAXOPHONE

Richard Nunemaker

#### BASSOON

Benjamin Kamins  
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Eric Arbiter  
Assoc. Principal  
Richard Hall  
Gregg Henegar

#### CONTRA-BASSOON

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Fraya Fineberg  
George Womack

#### HARP

Beatrice Rose

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Larry Thompson

#### ASS'T PERSONNEL MGR

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#### LIBRARIAN

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#### ASS'T LIBRARIAN

Michael McMurray

#### STAGE MANAGER

Don Jackson

#### STAGE TECHNICIAN

Noel Crenshaw

# Luxon, Crofut blend superbly on folk

BY CHARLES WARD  
Chronicle Staff

Crossover is big in music these days. Plácido Domingo is crossing over, that is, singing popular songs when his great forte is opera. German tenor Peter Hoffman is trying and getting crucified. Whole hosts of popular singers are moving between idioms. (A decade ago, who'd ever imagine that Willie Nelson would be singing the songs he is these days.)

Much crossover singing by trained opera singers is a dud, but Sunday evening British baritone Benjamin Luxon showed how well a singer can move into other idioms without any evidence of pretense or artificiality.

The occasion was a program of British and U.S. folk music Luxon presented with American folk singer and banjoist Bill Crofut in Memorial Drive Presbyterian Church.

Much of the evening was spent illustrating, in a very pleasing way, what happened to British folk songs when they crossed the Atlantic to the United States. Luxon readily admitted that the telling of the story became more focused and concise (a song about the devil and a farm-

er's wife was an entertaining example), and Crofut observed how a lot of the lyrics got cleaned up a bit (*The Foggy Foggy Dew* was the evidence). The pair did demonstrate through their singing that the music didn't usually change any for the better or worse.

Crofut gave one sample of some good banjo picking as well as other items in his repertoire. He sparingly explored the contemporary practice of using folk styles as a means of social commentary. After telling how he was chastised by the publishers of e.e. cummings for using a poem without authorization, Crofut commented that texts were everywhere and proceeded to sing his setting of the contents of a container of non-dairy creamer given to him in an airport restaurant. He sang the list of awful-sounding ingredients, strummed a while and concluded with "Is it any wonder that I play the blues?"

Too, as an encore, he sang a setting of a long U.S. foreign service regulation itemizing the personal and human qualities a member of the service should have. The rule ends with the caveat that the above list is not to be considered all-inclusive. Crofut added other items, such as set-

tings of poems by Robert Louis Stevenson and some simple songs Woodie Guthrie wrote for his children.

Luxon gave his finest work in a series of three Irish folk songs that included *The Sally Gardens* and the original 1790s version of *When Johnny Comes Marching Home*. The latter was an awesome experience as Luxon drew on his extensive operatic experience to express the storm of emotions and pathos that such a seemingly simple folk song carries. (Some day this reviewer would like to hear Luxon, Crofut and a pianist do a program that puts the pair's simple rendition of such items as *Sally Gardens* against Benjamin Britten's arrangements of the same songs.)

The two singers complemented each other well: Luxon's smooth, trained voice that often illuminated a song with light quasi-falsetto singing and Crofut's gravely enthusiastic voice that follows the American folk tradition of Guthrie and many others.

Finally, the program officially ended with the inevitable: an American folk song that has gone to Britain. Crofut drew the audience into singing the classic American Shaker folk song, *Simple Gifts*.

Chronicle Nov. 7, 1982

Debussy: *La Mer, Nocturnes*  
Sergiu Comissiona, conductor  
Vanguard VA 25015

The first of the series of recordings the Houston Symphony is making for Vanguard Records is out — Debussy's *La Mer* and his *Nocturnes* are the works — and it shows the exciting level of music-making that the orchestra can achieve. Unfortunately, the recording also is the kind that causes reviewers to throw up their hands in despair, for the good parts are countered by a series of small flaws that mar the quality of the recording.

The strength of the performances comes in the rhythmic excitement that Comissiona and the orchestra generate. In each of the six movements, three per piece, the playing slowly



Comissiona: a Houston look at Debussy

achieves a sense of motion that can irresistibly draw the listener into the music to move with the music's ebb and flow. Several times, as well, the music moves to excellently developed peaks. But, other things are noticeable. The engineers don't get an even, unobtrusive sound out of Jones Hall; the role of the hall is quite noticeable at times. Then, small problems of execution (mostly intonation) crop up rather often and the women of the Houston Symphony Chorus don't produce a consistently mysterious sound in the *Nocturnes*. Had those items been solved, the album would have been top quality.

★★★ — CHARLES WARD

#### How we rate the albums

- ★★★★★ Excellent
- ★★★★ Very good
- ★★★ Good
- ★★ Fair
- ★ Poor



The Houston Symphony and Franck

Franck: *Symphony in d minor*  
Sergiu Comissiona, conductor  
Vanguard VA 25016

Franck's *Symphony in d minor* is the subject of the second of four records being made by music director-designate Sergiu Comissiona and the Houston Symphony on the Vanguard label. (The second pair will be taped in April).

This recording has many of the same characteristics of the Debussy album that was the first release. Again, Comissiona and the orchestra play much of the music very well. The first movement has an attractive tension that is firmly controlled as the music builds toward its expressive peaks and then is let loose with explosive effect when they are reached. The same energy energizes the last movement as well. Only the second movement flags a little. A quiet, flowing confidence predominates rather than the more intense and brooding introspection that the music suggests. These good points are countered by the acoustical problems the engineers found in Jones Hall. While the music often sounds luxurious, certain spots have a spongy quality and very shallow depth.

★★★ — CHARLES WARD

## HOUSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA STAFF

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Simone Plante-Kendrick,  
Administrative Assistant

### ORCHESTRA OPERATIONS

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Martin A. Jacobs, Operations Manager  
Jackie Satterfield, Education Director  
Barbara Davis, Production Secretary

Stephen M. Aechternacht, Artistic  
Administrator and Director of Publications

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Davis Allen, Associate Director  
Janice Birks, Assistant Director  
Betty Stinson, Executive Assistant  
Kay Gough, Records Coordinator

Cherrie Carapetyan, Director of  
Community Relations  
Betty Houghtaling, League Secretary  
and Volunteers Coordinator

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Judy Robinson, Group Sales Coordinator  
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Peggy Cantrell, Accounting Assistant  
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Michael Clements, Subscription Services  
Coordinator  
R. Steven Bramer, Research Assistant  
Helen Swann, Computer Services Coordinator  
Jean Robinson, Computer Assistant

## Symphony Chorale audition set

The Houston Symphony Chorale will hold auditions for new members at 7 p.m. Tuesday in the rehearsal room of Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana.

Singers in all voice categories are needed, especially tenors and basses. Audition requirements include singing one song in any style.

The Chorale will be singing Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms* on the HSO's 70th-birthday concert in June and will participate in the symphony's summer festival in July. As well, six dates are set for the 1983-84 winter season.

For more information and an audition time, call 224-4240.

■ The Houston Symphony Chorale will hold auditions for new members at 7 p.m. Tuesday in the Jones Hall Rehearsal Room, 615 Louisiana. Singers are needed for all voice categories, especially tenors and basses. The chorale will perform Leonard Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms* at the orchestra's 70th anniversary concert June 21, plus performances on the Houston Symphony Summer Festival in July and six performances on the 1983-84 season concerts. For audition information, call the symphony office at 224-4240.

## Leonard Bernstein to guest-conduct at celebration marking HSO's 70th

Leonard Bernstein and Sergiu Comissiona will conduct an all-Bernstein program on June 21 in Jones Hall to celebrate the Houston Symphony's 70th birthday.

Bernstein will open the concert by conducting his Overture to *Candide* and the Symphonic Suite from his score for the movie *On the Waterfront*. On the second half of the program, Comissiona will conduct *The Chichester Psalms* and the *Divertimento*, which was written for the

100th anniversary of the Boston Symphony.

Bernstein's appearance with the Houston Symphony will take place while he is in Houston for the June 17 premiere of his new opera, *A Quiet Place*, which Houston Grand Opera is staging in tandem with his only other opera, *Trouble in Tahiti*. The symphony's birthday concert will be his only conducting appearance while in Houston, the orchestra said.

Ticket information for the birthday concert will be announced at a later date.



Bernstein

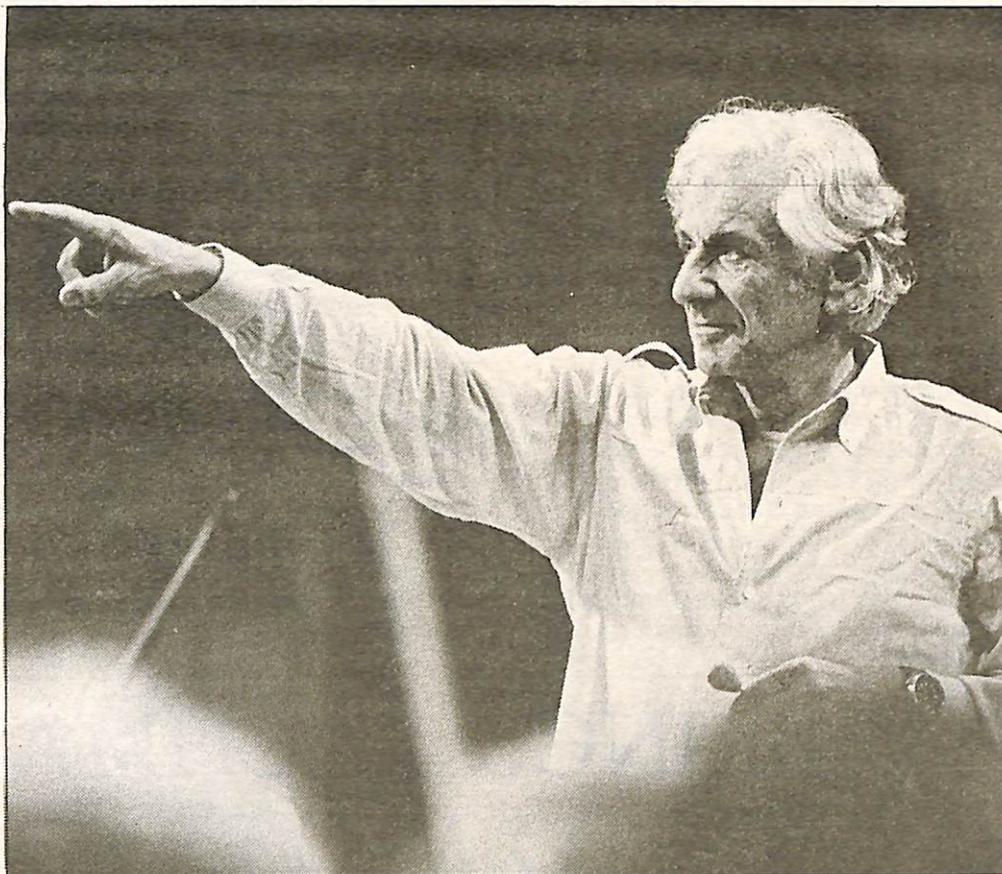
# COMMISSIONA, BERNSTEIN FEATURED AT ANNIVERSARY CONCERT

Symphony Celebration Brings Excitement to Miller Theatre

Exactly seventy years, 3½ hours and twelve music directors after its first performance, the Houston Symphony Orchestra celebrated its birthday with a special concert led by Music Director-designate Sergiu Comissiona and guest conductor Leonard Bernstein.

On Tuesday, June 21, at 8:30 p.m. in Miller Theatre, the Symphony noted its birthday with an all-Bernstein concert. The first half, featuring the Overture to *Candide* and the symphonic suite from the film *On the Waterfront*, was conducted by Bernstein, who was in town to lead the world premiere of his new opera, *A Quiet Place*. The second half of the program was led by Maestro Comissiona, who conducted the *Chichester Psalms* (with the Houston Symphony Chorale) and one of Bernstein's more recent works, the *Divertimento* for Orchestra—which, incidentally, was written for the Boston Symphony's 100th anniversary.

The first Houston Symphony concert ever given was an experiment—a trial concert on June 21, 1913 at 5:00 p.m. at the Majestic Theatre (908 Rusk). Miss Ima Hogg and an informal committee she had organized wanted to find out if Houston would sup-



Guest Conductor Leonard Bernstein

port an orchestra, as was the case in Europe and many of the major American cities. The orchestra for that trial concert consisted of just 35 musicians led by Julien Paul Blitz, a cellist and cafe orchestra conductor.

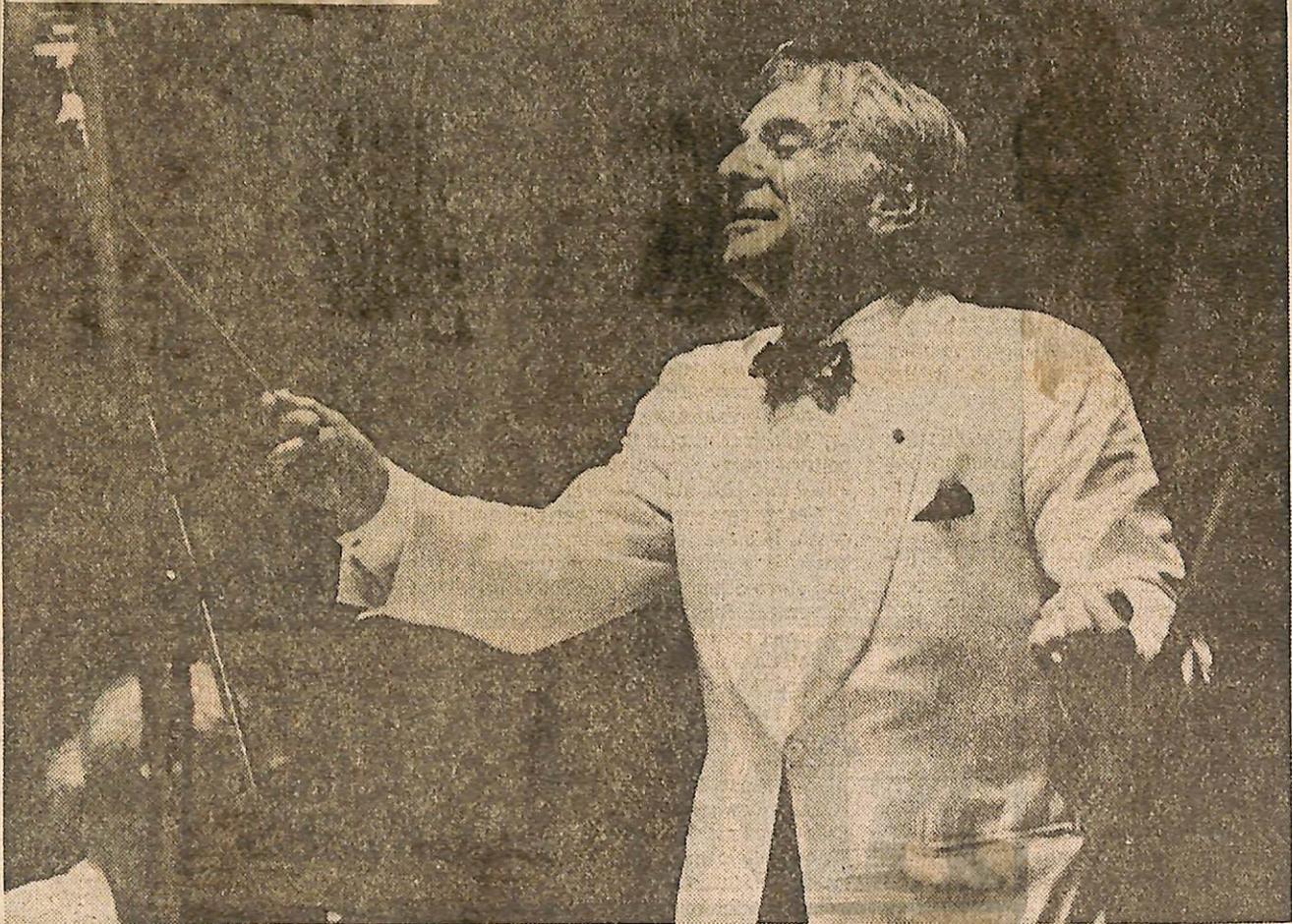
The success of that trial concert led, in the fall, to the founding of the Houston Symphony Society and the first series of three subscription concerts. Since then, with only one pause after World War I, the Houston Symphony has continued to grow and bring the best in symphonic music of all genres to the audience of the Houston area.

At intermission of the 70th Anniversary Concert, a special presentation ceremony was held onstage honoring Maestro Bernstein and to recognize the part of the Houston Symphony Orchestra has played in Houston's musical life for the past seventy years. A 70th Anniversary birthday cake was brought out at the conclusion of the concert.

Leonard Bernstein's only previous appearance with the Houston Symphony came in a subscription series concert on January 5, 1948 in a program of Mozart, Ravel and Schumann.

*LEONARD BERNSTEIN  
70<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE SYMPHONY  
CHICHESTER PSALMS  
JULY 21, 1983*





## Bernstein conducts orchestra in Miller Outdoor Theatre

— Post photo by Fred Bunch

# Music: Houston Symphony and Chorale

**HOUSTON SYMPHONY AND CHORALE** — Free 70th anniversary concert conducted by Leonard Bernstein and music director-designate Sergiu Comissiona Tuesday evening at Miller Outdoor Theatre. David Owen, boy alto soloist. Virginia Babikian, Houston Symphony Chorale director  
Bernstein: Overture to *Candide*, Symphonic Suite from *On the Waterfront*, Chichester Psalms, Divertimento

## Review

By **CARL CUNNINGHAM**

It didn't matter that the whole area around Miller Outdoor Theatre was a rain-soaked mud pie Tuesday evening. A crowd of 20,000 or more still jammed the place, so that people, blankets and lawn chairs sprouted all over the grass on the hill behind the theatre. They lined the side aisles, crowded all the seats and propped themselves anywhere they could get a peek at Leonard Bernstein helping the Houston Symphony celebrate its 70th anniversary.

The famed maestro, taking a busman's holiday from the premiere of his new opera at Jones Hall, made it a truly festive evening. He was not only the featured guest conductor, sharing the podium with music director-designate Sergiu Comissiona, but was the featured composer, as well.

Fortunately, the rain ceased shortly before concert time and left a pleasantly cool evening in its wake. Airplanes, helicopters and sirens — the bane of Miller Theatre concert life — also kept their

distance during the first half of the concert. Unfortunately, two aerial noise-makers interrupted the second half, conducted by Comissiona.

Bernstein's unflagging energy and charismatic manner made it probably the most exciting evening of music heard in the Houston Symphony's 42 years of free outdoor summer concerts. He began with an exuberant performance of his *Candide* Overture, which simply filled the open-air theatre with wonderful orchestral sound. With a full symphonic ensemble, it was an oversized performance of the cheery little work, but nonetheless exciting.

The Symphonic Suite from Bernstein's film score, *On the Waterfront*, was the highlight of the evening's interpretations. He thrust home all the tense urgency of the dissonant score in a magnificent performance that won well deserved solo bows throughout the orchestra's woodwind and brass sections.

It was fascinating to hear this nearly 30-year old musical score from the fresh perspective of Bernstein's brand-new op-

eratic score to *A Quiet Place*. It was also particularly rewarding to hear him conduct it and impart so much fierce conviction to the music.

Intermission brought proclamations from Gov. Mark White and Mayor Kathy Whitmire, a loving cup as a gift to Bernstein from the Houston Symphony Society and a special salute to its president emeritus, Gen. Maurice Hirsch, who was present in the audience as he was 70 years ago at the orchestra's first concert in the now-defunct Majestic Theater. Hirsch commented privately that he hoped to be present for the Houston Symphony's 100th birthday.

Comissiona took over the baton for a deeply felt, often sensitive and elegantly phrased performance of Bernstein's Chichester Psalms by the orchestra and the Houston Symphony Chorale. He brought the concert to a properly light-hearted conclusion with clean, jaunty interpretation of Bernstein's tongue-in-cheek Divertimento for Orchestra. An obligatory chorus of "Happy Birthday" served as a proper and richly-deserved encore.

With a new amplification system, the orchestral tone was much improved, but percussion, harp and piano were too prominent during *On the Waterfront* while the chorus was somewhat slighted during the Chichester Psalms.

# Symphony's anniversary a hit with Leonard Bernstein's baton

HOUSTON SYMPHONY presented its gala 70th anniversary concert Tuesday evening in Miller Theater. Leonard Bernstein and Sergiu Comissiona conducted with the Houston Symphony Chorale.

## PROGRAM

BERNSTEIN ..... Overture to *Candide*  
 ..... *On the Waterfront* Symphonic Suite  
 ..... *Chichester Psalms*  
 ..... Divertimento

BY CHARLES WARD  
 Chronicle Staff

Without question, the Houston Symphony's 70th anniversary concert at Miller Theater was a smashing success.

In a big coup — the biggest, probably, in the theater's history — the symphony persuaded Leonard Bernstein to join music director-designate Sergiu Comissiona on the podium Tuesday for an all-Bernstein program. The composer led his Overture to *Candide* and *On the Waterfront* Symphonic Suite. Comissiona conducted the *Chichester Psalms*, with the Houston Symphony Chorale, and the Divertimento.

Bernstein has to be the reason why thousands of people flocked to Hermann Park for the concert and why many sat through the showers that inundated the area before the concert began. Theater officials estimated that as many as 25,000 attended with some trickling in as late as intermission. People jammed the hill and flowed down its sides. Parking was chaotic, as usual.

The occasion was festive despite the rain. Greetings from Texas Gov. Mark White were read. Mayor Kathy Whitmire proclaimed Tuesday Houston Symphony Orchestra 70th Anniversary Day in Houston. Mrs. Edward W. Kelley Jr., president of the Houston Symphony Society, introduced General Maurice Hirsch, the esteemed Houston philanthropist and former symphony president who attended the first Houston Symphony concert in 1913. Bernstein was given a glass ice bucket as a memento of the occasion.

Too, the new speakers at Miller Theater were ready for use. During the concert's first half the balances and sense of depth were askew, but in the second half, the quality of sound suggested that with more work this set of speakers will bring a major improvement in sound to the symphony's upcoming summer concerts at Miller (nine events spread over two weeks beginning June 29).

Both historically and musically, the event was a thrilling, once-in-a-lifetime event. Not the least important gesture was the fact that Comissiona was making the first, maybe second, appearance of a Houston Symphony music director at Miller since Ernst Hoffman founded the summer concerts in 1940.

The second he emerged from the stage's wings, Bernstein was greeted with a standing ovation. He proceeded to lead the kind of the flamboyant performances one would expect from a man with his kind of personality. The Overture to *Candide* was played rambunctiously, as if conductor and the orchestra were hyping the audience for the later works.

But, the *On the Waterfront* Suite turned serious through a searing, soul-searching performance that could have made any listener want to hear the playing indoors in an acoustically superb environment. Moments of extroversion were heard in this look at the work but its real strength came from an inner tension woven into the entire performance. Unfortunately, given the environment, all the subtleties of the interpretation could not really be appreciated. (Bernstein's casualness on stage was best demonstrated when a dog barked just as he was ready to start *On the Waterfront*. He simply dropped his arms and shoulders in mock resignation. Everyone laughed.)



Photo by Steve Campbell, Chronicle Staff

An enthusiastic Leonard Bernstein conducts the Houston Symphony Orchestra during a concert Tuesday night at Miller Theater.

Comissiona brought both a different podium style and a different view of the music. Where Bernstein was often angular in his conducting — jabbing, poking, leaping and finally ending movements with slashing, body-length gestures — the HSO music director was more sweeping and choreographic in his movements.

His view of *Chichester Psalms* stressed the lyrical side of the music. In the first section, where Bernstein might have danced right off the podium with the rhythmic energy, Comissiona reined in the drive somewhat. But elsewhere, Comissiona led the Houston Symphony Chorale in a glowing, tonally lustrous performance. David Owen sang the part for boy soprano with quiet confidence and straight-forward musicality and singing. Again, the values of the piece were so impressive that the performance deserved to be heard indoors.

Finally, with Divertimento Comissiona introduced symphony audiences to a piece written in 1980 for the 100th anniversary of the Boston Symphony. The eight sections proved to be highly characterful and full of fun. One could be painfully aware, however, that in them Bernstein presented few new ideas. The idiom, style and expression were all directly descended from the music heard earlier in the concert.

The symphony should be ecstatic with Tuesday's results — including the impressive playing of the orchestra's members. Perhaps the management can even be encouraged to consider presenting next season the program originally chosen for the anniversary. Before Bernstein entered the picture, Comissiona had scheduled Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. He should do it next year. Not once, but two or three times. With the annual Tchaikovsky night and now with Bernstein, the symphony has proven that with the right music people will come to Miller in great numbers to hear the orchestra. The Ninth Symphony could be the next big attraction.



# Gala 70th Anniversary Concert

*Honoring the Birthday  
of the*

HOUSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA



MUSIC OF LEONARD BERNSTEIN  
LEONARD BERNSTEIN AND SERGIU COMISSONA, CONDUCTING  
MILLER OUTDOOR THEATRE  
HERMANN PARK  
HOUSTON, TEXAS  
JUNE 21, 1983                      8:30 P.M.

# 70th ANNIVERSARY CONCERT

## TONIGHT'S PROGRAM

All Works by Leonard Bernstein

Overture to *Candide*

Symphonic Suite from the film "On the Waterfront"

Leonard Bernstein, Conducting

Intermission

\*\**Chichester Psalms*

I. Psalm 108, Verse 2 • Psalm 100

II. Psalm 23 • Psalm 2, Verses 1-4

III. Psalm 131 • Psalm 133, Verse 1

\*DAVID OWEN, boy soprano

HOUSTON SYMPHONY CHORALE; Virginia Babikian, Director

SOLOISTS:

SOPRANOS: Laura Overstreet; Kathryn E. Fritz; Debbie Taylor

CONTRALTOS: Lynda Sparks; Laurie Rutherford

TENORS: Russell Clark; Randolph Lacy

BASSES: Joe Shockler; Douglas Yates

\*\*Divertimento for Orchestra

Sennets and Tuckets • Mazurka

Waltz • Samba

Sergiu Comissiona, Conducting

\*Houston Symphony debut

Turkey Trot  
Sphinxes

Blues  
March

\*\*First performance by the Houston Symphony

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to the Houston Grand Opera, David Gockley, General Director, for their cooperation in making Mr. Bernstein's participation in this 70th Anniversary Concert possible.

The Houston Symphony gratefully acknowledges the support of the following in making this Birthday celebration possible:

Goldilocks Bakery/Presentation Cake; Alfred's Bakery; Ashcraft Bakeries; Bellfort Donut Shop and Bakery; Michaels; Three Brothers Bakery; Austrian Cellar Wines, Inc.; Distributors of Kloster-Secc; Baldwin Pianos and the Baldwin/Lively Piano and Organ Center; L'Elegance Limousines, Inc.; Hillman Distributing Co./Stroh's Beer

### A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE HOUSTON SYMPHONY

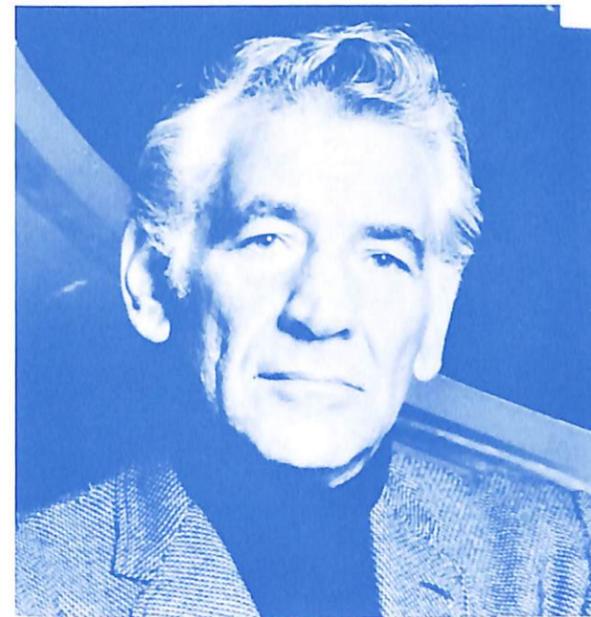
The individual principally responsible for the birth of the Houston Symphony Orchestra was Miss Ima Hogg, who remained a supporter of the HSO from its first concert (June 21, 1913, in the Majestic Theatre) until her death in 1975. Julien Paul Blitz and Paul Berge were the first conductors of the fledgling orchestra. The growth of the Houston Symphony began in earnest under the baton of Ernst Hoffmann, who came recommended by Serge Koussevitzky in Boston. In 1937-38 the orchestra had its first sold-out concerts in City Auditorium, on the site where Jones Hall now stands. Hoffmann led the Symphony's first free

concerts in Miller Outdoor Theatre in Hermann Park and also took the orchestra on its first Texas Tour.

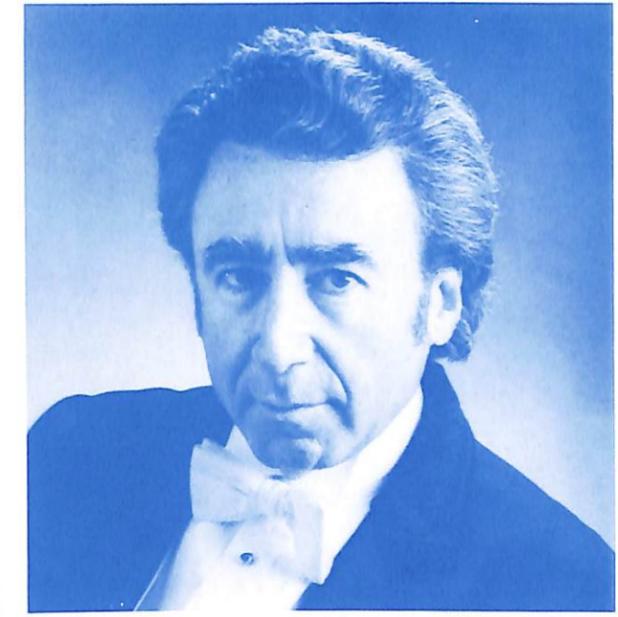
Guest conductors during the late 40's and early 50's included such legends as Charles Munch, Sir Thomas Beecham, Dmitri Mitropoulos, Eugene Ormandy, Ernest Ansermet, Bruno Walter and Leopold Stokowski. The Stokowski era (1955-61) was marked by memorable premieres, including the world premiere of Hovhanness' *Mysterious Mountain* on national television, and the Symphony's first recordings (notably, the premier recordings of Orff's *Carmina Burana* and Gliere's *Ilya Murometz* symphony). Stokowski's farewell season in 1961 began with the announcement that Sir John Barbirolli had been engaged as Principal Conductor. He remained in that position through 1964 and continued as Conductor-in-Chief until 1967. Jones Hall was completed in Barbirolli's last season, and he conducted the inaugural concert (October 3, 1966) before retiring with the title of Conductor Emeritus.

The orchestra remained in the capable hands of such conductors as Andre Previn, Antonio de Almeida, A. Clyde Roller, and Lawrence Foster. Sergiu Comissiona was signed in July of 1979 as Artistic Advisor to the Houston Symphony and was named Music Director in December, 1982. Under his leadership, the Houston Symphony has renewed its recording activities with four new discs on the Vanguard label, and television activities, with concerts taped and aired by Bravo Cable Network and QUBE/Cable. Maestro Comissiona inaugurated the indoor Summer Symphony Festival, took the orchestra to the Festival Casals in San Juan, Puerto Rico (the second orchestra ever to be invited there) and led the HSO on its April East Coast Tour to highly praised critical acclaim. Comissiona has directed major symphony orchestras and opera orchestras in 21 countries, on 6 continents, and recorded with 6 orchestras.

### PROGRAM NOTES



Leonard  
Bernstein



Sergiu  
Comissiona

#### Overture to *Candide*

Leonard Bernstein's ability to cross the barrier between serious music and the American musical theater makes him a unique figure in this country's musical life. He has achieved enormous successes in both genres, and changes styles and approaches with Janus-like facility. *Candide*, based on the Voltaire play of 1759, opened on Broadway in 1956. Although initially not a success (awkward staging inhibited the performances), several subsequent productions have assured *Candide* its place in the history books of the American musical theater. The Overture to *Candide* is very possibly the most performed curtain-raiser written in the 20th Century. Its bright, witty ebullience has made it accessible to countless numbers of music lovers through thousands of "Pops" performances, as well as the concert hall.

#### Symphonic Suite from the film "On the Waterfront"

Two years before the opening of *Candide*, Bernstein tried his hand at scoring the Elia Kazan film, "On the Waterfront," starring Marlon Brando. This film score, along with the 1957 Broadway musical success, *West Side Story*, bring to music a savage, yet tender musical portrait of New York City, the latter in the slums of Manhattan, the former on the teeming quays of the Hudson River. Bernstein's intent in collating a Symphonic Suite from the ambulatory film music was "to salvage some of the music that would otherwise have been left on the floor of the dubbing room." In this way, Bernstein was able to give full credence to music that would otherwise be submerged under the dialogue and action of this gripping film. The opening theme sets the general mood of the Suite, and is followed by an agitated section dominated by the percussion. A love theme provides respite, and a scherzo-like section leads directly into a restatement of the love theme as the Suite ends. The movements are played without pause.

#### *Chichester Psalms*

The *Chichester Psalms* were composed in 1965, when Bernstein was on a sabbatical leave from his post as conductor of the New York Philharmonic. They were the result of a commission from the choral festival held each year in the English cathedral of Chichester. As Jack Gottlieb

has pointed out in his notes on the composition, "Bernstein suggests that faith might be grasped through the vision of childlike innocence, that perhaps knowledge itself is pain." Although composed after experimentations with 12-tone writing, the *Psalms* are firmly grounded in tonality, are drenched with melodic lines, and filled with rhythmic vitality. The opening *Psalm* is a joyful, dance-like setting praising God. A lyrical setting of the boy soprano intoning the 23rd *Psalm* is repeated with a soprano soloist from the chorus, but interrupted by a belicose, agitated setting of *Psalm 2*. An orchestral interlude of great personal depth and emotion precedes the final section: a warm, peaceful song of resignation and reconciliation.

#### English Texts for *Chichester Psalms*

I

Awake, psaltery and harp!  
I will rouse the dawn!

Make a joyful noise unto the Lord all ye lands.  
Serve the Lord with gladness.

Come before His presence with singing.  
Know ye that the Lord, He is God.

It is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves.  
We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.

Enter into His gates with thanksgiving.  
And into His courts with praise.

Be thankful unto Him, and bless His name.  
Make a joyful noise unto the Lord all ye lands...

For the Lord is good, His mercy is everlasting,  
And His truth endureth to all generations.

II

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.  
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures,

He leadeth me beside the still waters,  
He restoreth my soul,

He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness,  
For His name's sake.

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.  
Yea, though I walk

Through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I will fear no evil,

For Thou art with me.  
Thy rod and Thy staff

They comfort me.  
The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

Why do the nations rage,

And the people imagine a vain thing?

The kings of the earth set themselves,  
And the rulers take counsel together

Against the Lord and against His anointed.  
Saying, let us break their bands asunder,

And cast away their cords from us.  
He that sitteth in the heavens

Shall laugh, and the Lord  
Shall have them in derision!

Why do the nations rage...  
Thou preparest a table before me

In the presence of mine enemies,  
Thou anointest my head with oil,  
My cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy  
Shall follow me all the days of my life,  
And I will dwell in the house of the Lord

Forever.  
The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

III  
Lord,

My heart is not haughty,  
Nor mine eyes lofty,  
Neither do I exercise myself

In great matters or in things  
Too wonderful for me.  
Surely I have calmed

And quieted myself,  
As a child that is weaned of his mother,  
My soul is even as a weaned child.

Let Israel hope in the Lord  
From henceforth and forever.  
Behold how good,

And how pleasant it is,  
For brethren to dwell  
Together in unity.

Amen  
Divertimento for Orchestra

The Boston Symphony Orchestra commissioned Bernstein for a work to celebrate its 100th Anniversary. The resulting piece was this lively Divertimento, completed in 1980. It is one of Bernstein's wittiest and most imaginative works. Constantly light in flavor, the Divertimento examines many of Bernstein's musical memories, with allusions to other compositions by both himself and other composers. It is in eight contrasting sections, each one marked by its own brand of wit and spirit.

# THE HOUSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

## SERGIU COMISSONA

Music Director-designate

Roy and Lillie Cullen Chair

PRINCIPAL GUEST CONDUCTOR

(Vacant)

Lyndall and Gus Wortham Chair

TOSHIYUKI SHIMADA

Assistant Conductor

### FIRST VIOLIN

Ruben Gonzalez

Concertmaster

Alan Traverse

Co-Concertmaster

David Chausow

Ass't Concertmaster

Carolyn Plummer

Ass't Concertmaster

Josephine McAndrew

Lisa Johnson

Mi-Hee Chung

Doris Derden

John Oliveira

Stacy Hirsch

Barbara Shook-Cleghorn

Amy Teare

James Stephenson

George Maxman

Betty Stephenson

Christine Pastorek

Susan Valkovich

Phyllis Herdlika

Hugh Gibson

Joy Plesner

Thomas Molloy

Kyla Bynum

Fay Barkley

Bernice Beckerman

Linda Goldstein

Violeta Moncada

### CELLO

Shirley Trepel

Principal

Winnie Safford Wallace Chair

Thomas Bay

Assoc. Principal

Robert Deutsch

Dorothy Moyes

Marian Wilson

Kevin Dvorak

Hyunjin Cho

Myung Soon Lee

Samuel Magill

Deborah Toth

### CONTRA-BASS

Paul Ellison

Principal

\*Harold Robinson

Assoc. Principal

David Malone

William Black

Robert Pastorek

Kendrick Wauchope

Newell Dixon

Michael McMurray

Mark Shapiro

### FLUTE

Byron Hester

Principal

General Maurice Hirsch Chair

Lynette Mayfield

Assoc. Principal

David Colvig

Carol Slocomb

### PICCOLO

Carol Slocomb

### ALTO FLUTE

David Colvig

### OBOE

Raymond Weaver

Principal

Louis Ruttenberg

Assoc. Principal

Barbara Hester

Larry Thompson

### ENGLISH HORN

Larry Thompson

### CLARINET

Richard Pickar

Principal

David Peck

Assoc. Principal

Don G. Slocomb

Richard Nunemaker

### E-FLAT CLARINET

Don G. Slocomb

### BASS CLARINET

### SAXOPHONE

Richard Nunemaker

### BASSOON

Benjamin Kamins

Principal

Eric Arbiter

Assoc. Principal

Richard Hall

Gregg Henegar

### CONTRA-BASSOON

Gregg Henegar

### HORN

Thomas Bacon

Principal

Julie Landsman

Co-Principal

Philip Stanton

James Horrocks

Nancy Goodearl

Jay Andrus

### TRUMPET

John DeWitt

Principal

Mack Guderian

Assoc. Principal

Robert Walp

Ass't. Principal

Robert Walp

Dick Schaffer

### TROMBONE

Allen Barnhill

Principal

John McCroskey

Co-Principal

David Waters

### BASS TROMBONE

David Waters

### TUBA

David Kirk

### TIMPANI

David Wuliger

### PERCUSSION

James Simon

Principal

Fraya Fineberg

George Womack

### HARP

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### ASS'T LIBRARIAN

Michael McMurray

### STAGE MANAGER

Don Jackson

### STAGE TECHNICIAN

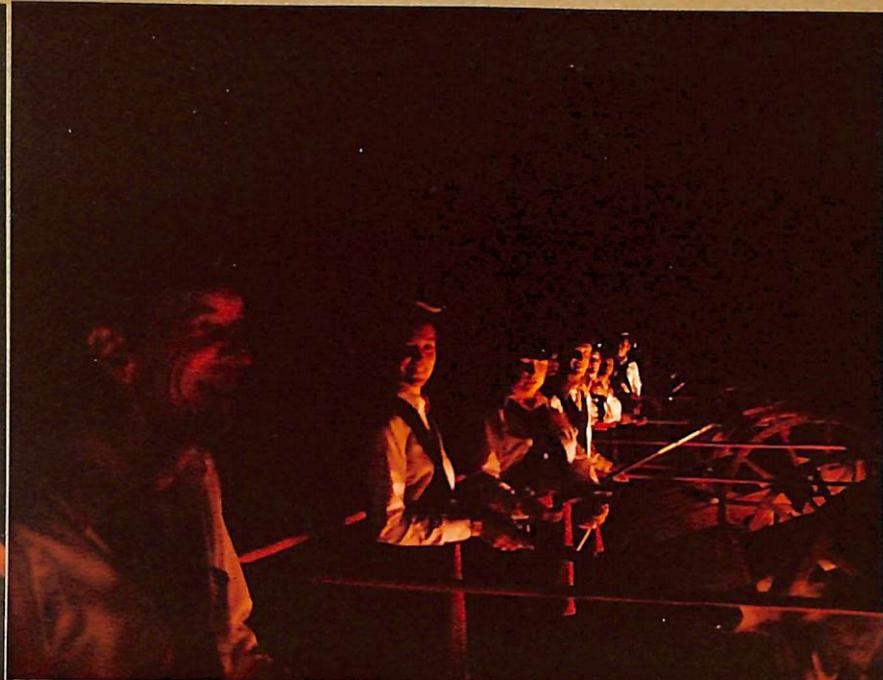
Noel Crenshaw

\* On sabbatical for the 1983-84 season.

GIDEON TOEPLITZ, Executive Director



*TCHAIKOVSKY WITH A BANG  
JULY 4, 1983  
BILL HARWOOD'S LAST APPEARANCE  
AS ASSOCIATE CONDUCTOR OF THE SYMPHONY*



# Fun on the Fourth

## Tchaikovsky with a bang

Could we celebrate the Fourth of July without a bit of phosphorus? Of course we couldn't and that's why the Houston Symphony is adding its annual cannonade and sparkler display to Monday evening's free Tchaikovsky concert at Miller Outdoor Theatre.

The 1812 Overture is the excuse for all the firecrackers and smoke and it's due to end the symphony's enormously popular midsummer spectacle. This year, the concert will actually take place on the Fourth of July, since the symphony musicians are taking their own holiday on another day. The concert will also be William Harwood's last engagement as associate conductor of the symphony. The symphony and Harwood

have two other free concerts on the docket this weekend. Friday evening is Rachmaninoff Night with the popular Second Piano Concerto and the Second Symphony on the program. Saturday is the evening Western Night Returns, so wear your boots for the music of Aaron Copland, Ferde Grofe and that great cowboy composer, Gioachino Rossini.

Concert time is 8:30 p.m. and free tickets — two per person — will be available on the day of each performance from 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. at the Miller Theatre box office and the street-level box office in Jones Hall, Capital at Louisiana.

— CARL CUNNINGHAM





**CHORALE PARTY  
SUMMER 1983**





# 1983 SUMMER FESTIVAL IS THREE FESTIVALS IN ONE

HSO To Present Works of Beethoven, Brahms, Tchaikovsky

Friday, July 15, 1983

Houston Chronicle

## Review

### HSO begins '83 summer festival

HOUSTON SYMPHONY presented the first program in its 1983 Summer Festival Thursday evening in Jones Hall. Sergiu Comissiona conducted with pianist Russell Sherman as soloist and the Houston Symphony Chorale as the chorus.

#### PROGRAM

BEETHOVEN..... *Leonore Overture No. 3, Op. 72b*  
..... *Fantasia in C minor for piano, chorus and orchestra, Op. 80*  
..... *Piano Concerto No. 3 in C minor, Op. 37*

BY CHARLES WARD  
Chronicle Staff

Not a lot of people showed up for the first concert of the Houston Symphony's 1983 Summer Festival, but those who did heard a refreshing view of some familiar music.

To these ears, at least, it was pleasant to have returned to Jones Hall after the orchestra's two weeks at Miller Theater — back to confines flattering to the orchestra and the music at hand and back to listening unencumbered by the noise of helicopters, airplanes and pop-top cans.

Beethoven and his five piano concertos are the focus of the first weekend of festival concerts. Thursday evening's program attracted 969 people, or about a third of the auditorium's capacity, to hear pianist Russell Sherman as soloist in the Third Concerto and the Choral Fantasy for pianist, chorus and orchestra. The *Leonore Overture No. 3* opened the concert which was conducted by music director-designate Sergiu Comissiona.

The attractiveness of the performances of the two major works on the program lay in the fact that neither soloist nor conductor and orchestra tried to make the music seem weightier than it is. Certainly the C minor concerto has a certain forbidding quality in its opening but that gives way to a much more flexible and expressive mood that really dominates the first pieces. Then, the Choral Fantasy provides the chance for the musicians to cover almost the entire interpretive range from all-out bombast to pianissimo intimacy.

Generally, Sherman et al. were more successful with the concerto (despite the fact that he seemed to love to slug out off-beat accents). Solo parts and accompaniment had a sense of style that made the music light, provocative and energetic. The movements flowed easily and gracefully. The pianist provided many moments of exceptionally fine tonal beauty and for the most part he curtailed what was a fairly apparent urge towards overblown, romanticized playing (except, perhaps, for the first movement's cadenza).

That admirable restraint actually lessened the impact of the Choral Fantasy. The performance was nicely sculptured on a surprisingly intimate level up to the point where the vocal soloists and chorus entered. From there, the momentum built in the blustery, but controlled, manner needed for the end of the piece to work. But before that, even in the bold opening piano solo, Sherman and orchestra were loath to let the music be as rambunctious as it can be. The Houston Symphony Chorale sang with precision but the six soloists chosen from its ranks sang unevenly. In both works, Comissiona and the orchestra provided a solid, incisive accompaniment.

Each program of this weekend is opening with one of the *Leonore Overtures*. The third was performed Thursday in a straightforward manner that could have used a sharper profile of the music's structure and emotions.

The festival continues tonight at 8 with Stephen Bishop-Kovacevich as soloist in the first and fourth concertos. Saturday, Malcolm Frager will play the second and fifth.

/The Houston Post/Fri., July 15, 1983

## Music: Symphony Summer Festival

**SYMPHONY SUMMER FESTIVAL** — Sergiu Comissiona conducting the Houston Symphony Orchestra and Chorale in the opening Summer Festival program Thursday evening in Jones Hall. Different programs and soloists at 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday. Russell Sherman, pianist. Virginia Babikian, director of the Houston Symphony Chorale.

By CARL CUNNINGHAM

The Houston Symphony opened its third annual Summer Festival with some admirable Beethoven performances Thursday evening in Jones Hall. But the music was unfortunately played to a good many empty seats, the reported ticket count being a mere 969.

This opening weekend of festival concerts offers symphony audiences their first extended exposure to music director-designate Sergiu Comissiona's Beethoven conducting. Comissiona has programmed all the Beethoven piano concertos and the composer's three *Leonore* overtures in the course of the festival's first three programs.

### Review

In general, Comissiona's interpretations displayed the intensity and nervous energy of Beethoven's music with fine effect. The orchestra's playing was clean, clear and precise, notwithstanding occasional bobbles in the horns at various points in the concert and one in an offstage trumpet call of the Third *Leonore Overture*, which began the concert. The brooding introduction to the overture had an especially mesmerizing quality.

Pianist Russell Sherman proved to be a fastidious soloist. His essentially light tone and keenly proflied articulation put the classical element in Beethoven's music properly in focus. But his phrasing gave evidence of an inquiring mind that produced imaginative musical results, very much in keeping with the searching originality of Beethoven's genius.

Sherman was in no mood to rush the music, so he gave rather leisurely, often ruminative interpretations to the solo part of Beethoven's Fantasy, Op. 80 for Piano, Chorus and Orchestra and the composer's C-minor Piano Concerto. The improvisatory character of the Fantasy was freely indicated in Sherman's playing.

Sherman was also a remarkably unobtrusive accompanist in those places where the piano serves as accompanist to thematic variations in the flute — cleanly played by Lynette Mayfield — and other small ensembles in the orchestra.

His interpretation of the Beethoven C-minor Concerto was even more interesting, beginning with some of the most carefully measured scale passages you could ever expect to hear from any pianist at the start of the solo part. Beethoven's rhythm was perfectly maintained, with no attempt to turn them into virtuoso flourishes.

Sherman also insisted upon a remarkably measured pace in the closing rondo, not allowing the "Allegro" tempo marking of this intricate music to be interpreted as any sort of a race with time. But, where Beethoven did call for freedom of expression, as in the cadenza to the slow movement, Sherman allowed the melody to hesitate and finally drop off dramatically, as if it had suddenly sighed its last breath.

Given the leisurely quality of the performances, the Houston Symphony Chorale and a solo sextet gave a generally airy performance of the bucolic choruses that end the Choral Fantasy.



HOUSTON SYMPHONY  
SUMMER FESTIVAL

**HOUSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**  
**SERGIU COMISSIONA, Music Director-Designate**  
**70TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON**

1983 Summer Festival

First Concert

Jones Hall

Thursday, July 14, 8:00 pm

SERGIU COMISSIONA, Conducting

**ALL-BEETHOVEN PROGRAM**

*Leonore Overture No. 3, Op. 72b*

Fantasia in C minor for piano, chorus and orchestra, Op. 80,  
"Choral Fantasy"

Adagio

Finale: Allegro — Allegretto ma non troppo, quasi andante con moto

RUSSELL SHERMAN, Piano

**HOUSTON SYMPHONY CHORALE AND SOLOISTS**

Soprano: ~~Catherine Gujardo~~ <sup>Hazel Yates</sup>

Tenor: Vladika Makarios

Mary Nepveux

Bass: Douglas Yates

Alto: Laurie Rutherford

Joseph Shockler

**INTERMISSION**

Piano Concerto No. 3 in C minor, Op. 37

Allegro con brio

Largo

Rondo: Allegro

RUSSELL SHERMAN, Piano

The Houston Symphony gratefully acknowledges the **Soleil String Quartet** for their lobby entertainment during this evening's intermission.

The performance will conclude at approximately 9:40 pm.

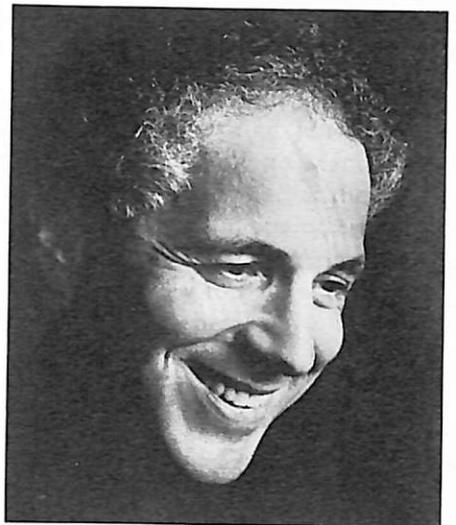
The audience is kindly requested to refrain from applauding until the completion of each composition.

The activities of the Houston Symphony Orchestra are made possible in part by grants from the City of Houston through the Cultural Arts Council, the Texas Commission on the Arts, and from the National Endowment for the Arts in Washington, D.C., a Federal agency.

The STEINWAY is the official piano of the Houston Symphony Orchestra. The Houston Symphony Steinway pianos are dedicated to the memory of Miss Ima Hogg. The BALDWIN is the official organ of the Houston Symphony Orchestra.



SERGIU COMISSIONA



RUSSELL SHERMAN

Russell Sherman, hailed as "a piano legend in his own time" (*New York Daily News*), is performing in recitals and soloing with orchestras across the continent as well as in Europe this season. Sherman has been described as "the most original and arresting and powerful pianist before the public" (*Boston Globe*) and as "an artist of immense authority and imagination with a dazzling technique" (*New York Post*).

Highlights of Russell Sherman's engagements during the 1982/83 season included appearances with the Philadelphia Orchestra, the San Francisco Symphony — the third engagement in three years — and with the Cincinnati Symphony. In addition, he returned to New York to perform in recital at Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts.

1960 formed the Ramat Gan Israel Chamber Orchestra, which he took in 1963 on a 43-concert tour of the United States and Canada, marking his first American appearances. Since then he has conducted major orchestras and in leading opera houses in 21 countries on 6 continents.

As an opera conductor, Comissiona has appeared at Covent Garden and Sweden's historic Drottningholm Court Theater, among other major opera houses. In 1981 he conducted a new production of Verdi's *Attila* at New York City Opera to high acclaim both in New York and at subsequent repeat performances in Los Angeles and at the Holland Festival.

Sergiu Comissiona's Houston debut was in October 1973. He was chosen in the summer of 1979 to serve as Artistic Advisor of the Houston Symphony Orchestra, and during the time he held that position instituted many innovations in the Orchestra's programs, including Open Rehearsals and the Orchestra's first-ever indoor Summer Festival. He recently accepted the title of Music Director effective with the 1984-85 season.

He also currently serves as Principal Guest Conductor of the Radio Philharmonic Orchestra of the Netherlands and music director of the Baltimore Symphony.

In September 1982, Sergiu Comissiona was appointed Artist in Residence in Conducting at Rice University's Shepherd School of Music. Among his other honors are honorary doctorates from the Peabody Conservatory, Loyola College and Johns Hopkins University, and the Gold Medal of the City of Göteborg for his espousal of the music of Swedish composers.

In the field of recording, Maestro Comissiona led the Houston Symphony in two recent Vanguard releases of the music of Debussy and Franck, and recently conducted recording sessions for two future releases on that label. He has also recorded with the orchestras of Göteborg, Stockholm, Haifa and Baltimore, as well as the Israel Chamber Orchestra and l'Orchestre de la Suisse Romande.

The Maestro's wife, Robinne, is a choreographer, teacher and lecturer and the founder of College Dance-Mime Theater in Baltimore. She re-

cently received the 1983 Fredell Lack Award presented by Young Audiences of Houston to recognize outstanding contributions to the goal of merging art and education.

Sergiu and Robinne Comissiona became American citizens on July 4, 1976, in naturalization ceremonies held at Fort McHenry, birthplace of "The Star-Spangled Banner."



RUSSELL SHERMAN

Russell Sherman, hailed as "a piano legend in his own time" (*New York Daily News*), is performing in recitals and soloing with orchestras across the continent as well as in Europe this season. Sherman has been described as "the most original and arresting and powerful pianist before the public" (*Boston Globe*) and as "an artist of immense authority and imagination with a dazzling technique" (*New York Post*).

Highlights of Russell Sherman's engagements during the 1982/83 season included appearances with the Philadelphia Orchestra, the San Francisco Symphony — the third engagement in three years — and with the Cincinnati Symphony. In addition, he returned to New York to perform in recital at Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts.

Born and educated in New York, Russell Sherman studied piano from age 11 with Eduard Steuermann, a pupil and friend of Busoni and Schoenberg. He went on to Columbia University, where he graduated in humanities.

At 15, Sherman made his debut at New York's Town Hall. After subsequent recitals in Town Hall and Carnegie Hall, he was chosen by Leonard

Bernstein to perform Brahms' Concerto in D minor for Piano with the New York Philharmonic. In the early 1950s, he established a reputation as one of the finest exponents of contemporary piano literature, performing and recording works by such composers as Arnold Schoenberg, Stefan Wolpe, Morton Feldman and Roger Sessions.

Then, on the verge of an extraordinary career, Sherman chose to withdraw from the public eye for years of self-imposed "exile," in order to reevaluate his art. The hiatus in his performance career was a period of consolidation and reconciliation, a time to confront the disparate influences of his background. (It should be noted that Sherman did not withdraw completely from the concert world during this time but continued to make occasional appearances, including his debut with the Los Angeles Philharmonic.)

Twenty years later Sherman decided to return to the public in a series of highly acclaimed concert performances. The year was 1975 when Sherman, playing Liszt's 12 Transcendental Etudes, reemerged on the concert stage in both New York and Boston.

## THE LEONORE OVERTURES

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Born December 16, 1770, in Bonn

Died March 26, 1827, in Vienna

In Beethoven's time, as in ours, the most difficult, competitive and enriching field in which a composer could work was the theater. The incidental music then used during the performance of plays was functionally similar to what we now hear only in films and on television, and it has turned out to be of relatively modest artistic importance. The music that Beethoven wrote in 1810 for a production of Goethe's historical tragedy, *Egmont*, is his only important work of the kind.

At various times during his career, Beethoven considered writing operas on several subjects: the foundation of Rome by Romulus and Remus, the destruction of Babylon, the Crusades, Faust, Macbeth, the return of Ulysses and others, but he actually wrote only one, which we now know as *Fidelio*. The source of his subject was the libret-

1 9 8 3  
SUMMER  
FESTIVAL

SERGIU COMISSONA,  
MUSIC DIRECTOR-  
DESIGNATE  
HOUSTON  
SYMPHONY  
ORCHESTRA



# THE HOUSTON SYMPHONY CHORALE

VIRGINIA BABIKIAN  
DIRECTOR

David A. Wehr  
Associate Director

Thomas Avinger  
Musical Assistant

Anne Schnoebelen  
Accompanist

Lee Stevens  
Chorus Manager

J.R. Lowery  
Properties Manager

## SOPRANO

Diane Barton-Brown  
Carol Carthel  
Nancy Cobbs  
Martha Darcy  
Denise Decker  
Julia Forsythe  
Yolande Frazier  
Kathryn E. Fritz  
Beverly Graeter  
Helen Gremillion  
Lisa Gumbert  
Lori Hedrick  
Luclair Kilgore  
Cynthia S. Langstaff  
Augusta Levine  
Pamella J. Lyons  
Christianne Mays  
Ann C. McAllister  
Carolyn McShan  
Barbara McQueeney  
Maxine Moore  
Mary Nepveux  
Laura Overstreet  
Janis Parish  
Nancy C. Phillips  
Elaine A. Powers  
Jana Rader  
Joni Ralls  
Nancy A. Ricca  
Susan Sacry  
Lee Stevens  
Menthola Stevenson  
Linda Summey  
Debbie Taylor  
Beth Thornley  
Cindy Tutt  
Christene Wu

## ALTO

Paula Arwood  
Fran Avera  
Virginia Beilharz  
Rhonda Boccarossa  
Antoinette Boecker  
Mary Bundrick  
Karen Clark  
Nancy Cline  
Orchard Corl  
Francoise Coulton  
Karen Dougherty  
Pat Davidson  
Zelda Dvoretzky  
Martha Jean Eger  
Jennifer Giese  
Alicia Goddard  
Dianna Gray  
Nancy Hawley  
Carolyn Hess  
Earle Jensen  
Rita LaRue  
Cindy Latham  
Dottie Lytle  
Peggy Matlock  
Nancy McClain  
Caren McCurdy  
Rosemary P. Mullin  
Patricia J. Noll  
Kari Perkins  
Billie Roark  
Laurie Rutherford  
Lynda Sparks  
Jeanie Stokes  
Margaret Tucker

## TENOR

Jeff Addington  
Michael Ammons  
Loren Bernhardt  
Russell Clark  
David Cole  
Phil Crichton  
John Crooks  
Mike Duffy  
James Duderstadt  
John C. Flanagan  
Chris Gamble  
John Grady  
Jerry Guel  
Randolph Lacy  
David H. Langstaff  
W. J. Laughlin  
Joey Lege  
Vladika Makarios  
Jeffrey Mitchell  
David G. Nussmann  
John Nicholson  
Robert Samuelson  
Donald I. Snyder  
Tommy Stearns  
Larry Ward  
Jarred Williams  
Jon-Gregoir Williams

## BASS

Bob Acosta  
Forbes Alcott  
Paul Becker  
Andrew Bowden  
J. Wesley Brown  
Donald Conrad  
Gene Cope  
Kenneth Cordray  
Bill Cumberland  
Thomas G. Emerick  
Lloyd Francis  
Bruce Frizzell  
Bill Goddard  
Strait Hicklin  
Paul Hyde  
Richard Ivy  
Keith Kemper  
Robert Q. Kluttz  
J.R. Lowery  
David Mathis  
Darcy McFadden  
Gian Porro  
Roman Rebilas  
John W. Rogers  
Paul Schofield  
Joe Shockler  
Philip Smith  
David O. Stotlar  
Paul Vogler  
Bob Wilbur  
Stan W. Yoder

# Music: Houston Symphony

**HOUSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA AND CHORALE**  
— Fourth winter series program conducted by Music director Sergiu Comissiona Saturday evening, with double-bass player Francois Rabbath, soprano Linda Zoghby, mezzo-soprano Jennifer Jones and tenor James Atherton as soloists. (Virginia Babikian, director, Houston Symphony Chorale). Program to be repeated at 2:30 p.m. Sunday in Jones Hall.

Vivaldi/Rabbath: Double Bass Concerto in F-Major (transcription of Violin Concerto in D Major, Op. 3, No. 9). Frank Proto (Fantasy for Double Bass and Orchestra (first performance); Mendelssohn: Symphony No. 2 in B-flat Major, Op. 52 (*Lobgesang*).

By CARL CUNNINGHAM

Strange bedfellows sometimes make quite good company. So it was with the Houston Symphony's fourth program of the season, which found two double-bass concertos paired with Felix Mendelssohn's great big symphony/cantata, *Lobgesang*, Saturday evening in Jones Hall.

Music director Sergiu Comissiona displayed shrewd taste and practical judgment in tucking the two small-orchestra pieces in with Mendelssohn's expansive choral-orchestral work, which obviously required a lot of rehearsal time from many performers.

All three works came off excellently, including the world premiere of Frank Proto's

charming Fantasy for Double and Orchestra, and the string-orchestra sound which permeated all three works maintained a continuity of orchestral color among the various musical styles heard on the program.

Syrian-born, Paris-based double-bass virtuoso Francois Rabbath exhibited a marvelously free bow arm, a resonantly warm, singing tone and impressive technique. His playing of his none-too-ideal transcription of a Vivaldi violin concerto was occasionally marred by slight pitch miscalculations and a cloudy tone, but these problems disappeared in his fine performance of the colorful two-movement fantasy by Cincinnati Symphony double-bassist/composer Proto.

At first nocturnal, then jazzy in style, the fantasy limits itself to the orchestral colors of strings, flutes and percussion, including the jug-shaped middle eastern drum, the *dombec*, which featured symphony principal percussionist James Simon in a lively staccato duet with Rabbath. It was a delightful piece, delightfully played.

The buoyant lightness of the first half was maintained by Comissiona, the orchestra and Houston Symphony Chorale in Mendelssohn's swelling *Lobgesang* (*Hymn of Praise*) following intermission. Comissiona carried the orchestra briskly through the rather academic sonata-form movement that opens the symphony and brought off the two middle move-

ments — a dancelike G-minor *Allegretto* and a poignant set of slow variations — with an exquisite sense of the neatness and charm of Mendelssohn's style.

These purely instrumental sections featured a haunting little solo cadenza between the first two movements by principal clarinetist Richard Pickar, several beautifully pure, delicate solos by oboist Louis Ruttenberg and handsomely balanced wind/brass choir in the trio section of the *Allegretto*.

Many fine vocal solos highlighted the final cantata section of this work celebrating the 400th anniversary of the Gutenberg printing press. Tenor James Atherton displayed a most appealing blend of lyricism and dramatic tonal thrust in several handsomely sung arias and recitatives.

Soprano Linda Zoghby was often troubled by edgy top tones, but otherwise sang expressively and with a nice legato sound. Mezzo-soprano Jennifer Jones displayed a firm, clear, beautiful, excellently projected tone and the great disappointment of the evening lay in the fact that Mendelssohn gave her only a short duet to sing with Zoghby.

The symphony chorale sang earnestly and expressively, especially in Mendelssohn's tender setting of the chorale, "Nun danket Alle Gott," but clearer enunciation and more generally agile singing would have helped sustain the choral sections more successfully.

## Review

## Review

Houston Chronicle

Sunday, October 9, 1983

# Soloist is uncommon attraction for HSO

HOUSTON SYMPHONY performed the fourth concert program of its 70th season Saturday evening in Jones Hall. Music director Sergiu Comissiona conducted. Soloists were Francois Rabbath, double bass; Linda Zoghby, soprano; Jennifer Jones, mezzo-soprano; and James Atherton, tenor with the Houston Symphony Chorale. To be repeated at 2:30 p.m. today.

**PROGRAM**  
VIVALDI: Concerto in D Major, Op. 3, No. 9 for violin, transcribed to F Major for the double bass.  
PROTO: Fantasy for double bass and orchestra  
MENDELSSOHN: Symphony No. 2 in B-flat Major, Op. 52, *Lobgesang*

BY CHARLES WARD  
Chronicle Staff

An uncommon musical virtuosity is the attraction of the Houston Symphony's concerts this weekend.

Francois Rabbath, a Syrian-born double-bass player who lives in Paris, is the soloist on the unusually varied program which was presented Saturday evening in Jones Hall with a repeat set for 2:30 p.m. today. He is playing a transcription of a Vivaldi violin concerto (Op. 3, No. 9 from *L'estro armonico*) and the world premiere performances of Fantasy for double bass and orchestra by Frank Proto, a double bass player and composer-in-residence with the Cincinnati Symphony. Then, music director Sergiu Comissiona has scheduled the HSO premiere of Mendelssohn's Symphony No. 2, subtitled *Lobgesang* or *Hymn of Praise*, with soprano Linda Zoghby, mezzo-soprano Jennifer Jones, tenor James Atherton and the Houston Symphony Chorale.

Rabbath is the kind of mysterious figure the musical world needs to have. He is self-taught; yet, in that process he developed a technique and artistry that is remarkable. He is able to play his instrument with the fleetness, flexibility and lightness that most violin virtuosos display in their solo work.

That such is possible was the point of the transcription of the Vivaldi concerto, which

was played with a handful of strings for the accompaniment. Rabbath performed the music with the same kind of confidence that any violinist would show. His tone was a bit light and lacked penetration but the accomplishment of playing the piece so easily was astonishing.

Rabbath's better work came with the Proto piece. It is a two-movement work that gives the soloist plenty of showy passages and he simply tossed them off with graceful ease. The attractive work almost begs to be liked. Even though it is couched in strongly dissonant language, Proto's use of the sounds is comforting rather than confrontational. And, in the second, fast movement, the soloist plays against and with a *dombec*, or hand drum, in writing that draws its spirit from the world of jazz and that idiom's interplay between bass soloist and drummer. Rabbath and percussionist James Simon danced their way through these passages.

With its massiveness and Teutonic aesthetic, the Mendelssohn work was a stark contrast. After a large, three-part orchestral opening, the symphony then turns to what the composer called a cantata, i.e., music in the style and structure of his oratorios. And, although not performed often, the piece does have its landmarks of familiarity: a setting of the German chorale *Nun danket alle Gott* (*Now Thank We All Our God*) and a chorus, to the text of "I put my trust in the Lord and he heard my prayers," that is part of the repertoire for church choirs.

This piece also received an excellent performance. Comissiona easily followed that fine line between trying to find deep substance when there was none — and this piece is typical of the Mendelssohn's music in that it is immediate and obvious in its content —

and not taking the music serious enough. At a phrase here and there, a bit more thought would have completed the shaping of the movement, but the bulk of the interpretation was to the point.

The three soloists were led by Zoghby with her clear but firm sound. Jones was a consummate partner in her brief duet work while Atherton declaimed the bulk of the narrative in a firm but slightly warbling manner. As usual the chorale sang with vigor and enthusiasm; its enunciation of the German text wasn't sharp enough, however. In the large orchestral opening, the orchestra played handsomely and kept the text clean and the music flowing purposefully.

Two footnotes: The problem with children making noise during symphony concert cropped up again Saturday evening with a couple of interruptions between movements (one cry sounded like "I wanna go home"). Last season, a child was making so much noise during a symphony concert a guest conductor had to stop in the middle of a piece and ask the parent to take the child out. That must not be allowed to happen again.

Then, the symphony seems to be falling into the belief that audiences like to watch the stagehands move furniture around. Saturday, several minutes passed between the Vivaldi and Proto numbers while chairs were brought on stage to accommodate the larger number of players needed in the second piece. An even more extended passing of time came two programs ago, when close to 10 minutes were consumed while the piano was moved into place for the concerto performance. Waiting for that shuffling of stands and chairs to pass is tedious. The logistics need some improving.

# WINTER SUBSCRIPTION SERIES 4

**HOUSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**  
**SERGIU COMISSIONA, Music Director**  
**70TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON**  
**1983-84 Winter Subscription Series**  
**Fourth Concert Program**

Jesse H. Jones Hall for the Performing Arts  
Saturday, October 8, 8 pm  
Sunday, October 9, 2:30 pm

SERGIU COMISSIONA, Conducting

VIVALDI

Double Bass Concerto in F Major (Transcription of Violin Concerto in D Major, Op. 3, No. 9, from "L'estro armonico")

Allegro

Larghetto

Allegro

\*FRANCOIS RABBATH, Double Bass

FRANK PROTO

\*\*\* Fantasy for Double Bass and Orchestra

Agitato

Allegro

FRANCOIS RABBATH, Double Bass

INTERMISSION

MENDELSSOHN

\*\* Sinfonia No. 2 in B-flat Major, Op. 52, "Lobgesang" (Hymn of Praise)

Allegro

Allegro maestoso e molto vivace

Allegro moderato maestoso (Chorus)

(Chorus)

Recitative Air: Allegro moderato  
(Tenor)

Choral: Andante con moto —  
un poco piu animata

A tempo moderato (Chorus)

Andante sostenito assai

Andante (Chorus)

(Soprano and Tenor)

Allegro un poco agitato  
(Soprano and Tenor)

Allegro non troppo (Chorus)

\*LINDA ZOGHBY, Soprano

\*JENNIFER JONES, Mezzo-Soprano

\*JAMES ATHERTON, Tenor

The performance will conclude at approximately 10:10 pm Saturday and 4:40 pm Sunday

The audience is kindly requested to refrain from applauding until the completion of each composition.

\* Houston Symphony debut

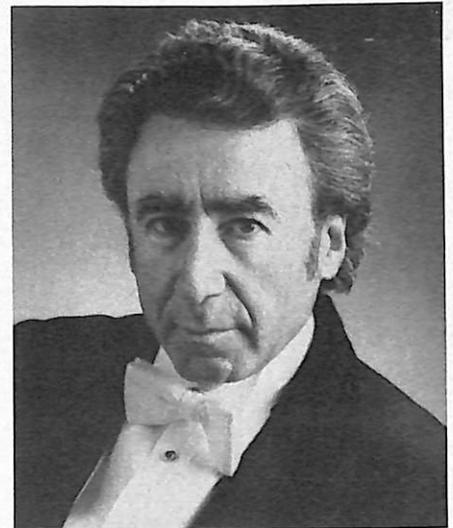
\*\* First Houston Symphony performance

\*\*\* World premiere

Concerts of the Houston Symphony Orchestra are broadcast on a delayed basis over KLEF-FM 94.5, through the sponsorship of RepublicBank Houston.

The activities of the Houston Symphony Orchestra are made possible in part by grants from the City of Houston through the Cultural Arts Council, the Texas Commission on the Arts, and from the National Endowment for the Arts in Washington, D.C., a federal agency.

The work by Frank Proto was commissioned for the Houston Symphony's 70th anniversary by the Carleen and Alde Fridge Foundation.



SERGIU COMISSIONA

Sergiu Comissiona began his musical career in his hometown of Bucharest, Romania, as a violinist. His first conducting opportunity came at age 17, when the scheduled conductor of a performance of Gounod's *Faust* did not show up. He made a formal debut a year later with the Bucharest Opera Orchestra and subsequently became prominent in Romanian musical life as principal conductor of the State Opera and music director of the Romanian State Ensemble Orchestra before emigrating to Israel in 1959.

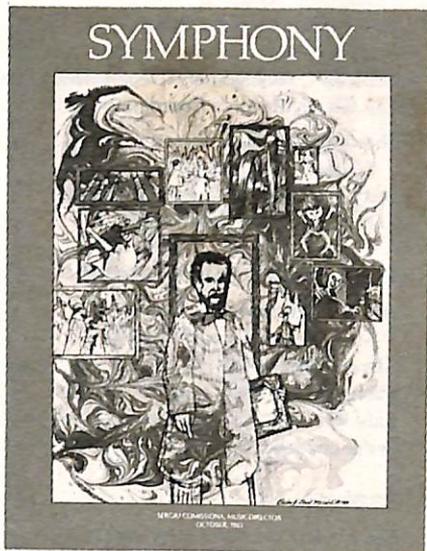
He became music director of the Haifa Symphony Orchestra, and in 1960 formed the Ramat Gan Israel Chamber Orchestra, which he took in 1963 on a 43-concert tour of the United States and Canada, marking his first American appearances. Since then he has conducted major orchestras and in leading opera houses in 21 countries on 6 continents.

As an opera conductor, Comissiona has appeared at Covent Garden and Sweden's historic Drottningholm Court Theater, among other major opera houses. In 1981 he conducted a new production of Verdi's *Attila* at New York City Opera to high acclaim both in New York and at subsequent repeat performances in Los Angeles and at the Holland Festival.

Sergiu Comissiona's Houston debut was in October 1973. He was chosen in the summer of 1979 to serve as Artistic



## ON THE COVER



This month's cover art is by Brian and Gail Merrill, co-owners of a Houston-based graphic art studio, TWO Communications Design.

The piece is entitled, "Pictures at an Exhibition," and is based on Modest Mussorgsky's monumental work by the same name. The composer stands before a gallery of paintings, each describing one of the 10 vignettes in his own program notes (see our own notes following the Mussorgsky/Ravel program to be presented Oct. 22, 23 and 24 by the Houston Symphony Orchestra.)

The colorful, swirling backdrop symbolizes Russia's rich musical heritage, say the artists.

Brian Merrill holds a bachelor of fine arts degree from the State University of New York, while Gail attended the renowned Paier School of Art in Hamden, Conn. The artists' broad range of interests produces a wide variety of paintings, portraits and commercial art in many different, often fascinating styles such as the cover art.

Houston's performing arts groups  
enhance our city and enrich our



"As the sun colors flowers,  
so does art color life."  
Lord Avebury

Porcelain on copper—Based on an oil by Maurice Utrillo

# THE HOUSTON SYMPHONY CHORALE

**VIRGINIA BABIKIAN**  
DIRECTOR

**David A. Wehr**  
Associate Director

**Anne Schnoebelen**  
Accompanist

**Lee Stevens**  
Chorus Manager

**J.R. Lowery**  
Properties Manager

**Carolyn McShan**  
Librarian

## SOPRANO

Diane Barton-Brown  
\* Ara Lynn Bowman  
Jacqueline Brodeur  
Michelle Burrow  
Ann Janzen Caito  
Carol Carthel  
Betsy Dolben Clark  
Nancy Cobbs  
Martha Darcy  
Heidi Engleking  
Julia L. Forsythe  
Kathryn E. Fritz  
Beverly Graeter  
Charlotte Heath  
Lori Hedrick  
Katherine Jackson  
Jean Kilborn  
Cynthia Shauer Langstaff  
Lou Ann Lasher  
Pamella J. Lyons  
Donna Marsh  
Christianne Mays  
Ann C. McAllister  
Joanna McCarty  
Carolyn McShan  
Barbara McQueeney  
Joan Mercado  
Maxine Moore  
Mary Nepveux  
Nancy C. Philips  
Elaine A. Powers  
Denise D. Raimondo  
Nancy A. Ricca  
Linda Rodgers  
Lorelee J. Rude  
Jan Russell  
Holly Sargent  
Lee Stevens  
Menthola Stevenson  
Linda Summey  
Debbie Taylor  
Pamela Wilhite

## ALTO

Paula Arwood  
Fran Avera  
Virginia Beilharz  
Rhonda Boccarossa  
Lucy Brown  
Mary Bundrick  
Nancy Cline  
Gerry Cumberland  
Alice Danka  
Pat Davidson  
Zelda Dvoretzky  
Linda Francis  
Judy E. Gill  
Dianna Gray  
Linda Harding  
Nancy Hawley  
Carolyn Hess  
Earle Jensen  
Barbara Johnson  
Rita LaRue  
Cindy Latham  
Dottie Lytle  
Peggy Matlock  
Nancy McClain  
Caren McCurdy  
Patricia J. Noll  
Kari Perkins  
Rebecca Peterson  
Denna Potenza  
\* Billie Roark  
Kathleen B. Smith  
\* Lynda Sparks  
Diane Stine  
Margaret Tucker  
Urara Vella  
Ann Wade  
Lori White

## TENOR

Jeff Addington  
Michael Ammons  
Robert Browning  
James R. Carazola  
Cary Cobb  
Phil Crichton  
John V. Crooks  
Anthony Denmore  
\* Mike Duffy  
John C. Flanagan  
Chris Gamble  
Thom Gibson  
\* John P. Grady  
John Heft  
Jay Ted Karahan  
John F. Kracht  
David H. Langstaff  
W.J. Laughlin  
Tom Milner  
David G. Nussman  
Glen Scratchley  
Ted Snedden  
Donald I. Snyder  
Berkley Stutts  
Tony Vazquez  
Larry Ward  
Jarrad Williams  
Jon-Gregoir Williams

## BASS

\* Bob Acosta  
\* Forbes Alcott  
James Avera  
Paul Becker  
Bruce Boyle  
J. Wesley Brown  
A.W. Buescher  
William K. Cheadle  
Donald Conrad  
Kenneth Cordrav  
Bill Cumberland  
John Eastland  
Bruce Frizzell  
Bill Goddard  
Roger W. Green  
Tim Hayes  
Strait Hicklin  
Paul Hyde  
Richard Ivy  
Randall Jeter  
John M. Kilgore  
Robert Q. Kluttz  
J.R. Lowery  
Tom Merrill  
Sterling A. Neblett, Jr.  
Greg Perkins  
Larry Phibbs  
Gian Porro  
John W. Rogers  
Cody Scace  
Paul Schofield  
Daniel J. Shea  
Wally Shuttlesworth  
Philip Smith  
David A. Stampley  
Warren Thompson  
\* Bob Wilbur  
James Wilhite  
Stan W. Yoder

\* denotes member of the Board of Governors  
of the Chorale



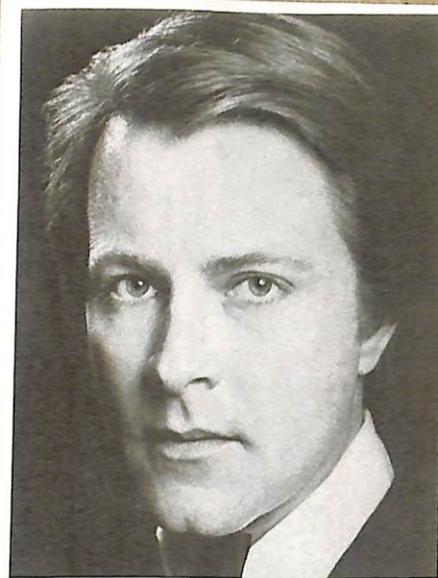
JENNIFER JONES  
Mezzo-Soprano

Jennifer Jones is one of this country's exceptional young singers. In the 1982-83 season she made her debut with the Welsh National Opera in the title role of *Carmen*. Her nine performances include a BBC film production, and she is opening the Welsh National Opera's 1983-84 season in the same opera. Ms. Jones has also appeared with the Houston Grand Opera as Addie in Blitzstein's *Regina* and with the New Jersey State Opera as Clotilde in *Norma*.



LINDA ZOGHBY  
Soprano

On January 19, 1982, Linda Zoghby was given the opportunity artists dream of when, on one hour's notice, the soprano made an unscheduled debut, stepping in for an ailing Teresa Stratas in the Metropolitan Opera's new Zeffirelli production of *La Boheme*. She received a standing ovation and an unadulterated rave from the UPI reviewer: "Her debut was a triumph. She has a warm, pure lyric soprano and started off superbly with 'Mi chiamano Mimi,' needing no time to warm up. Her final-act death scene was sung and acted as movingly as it has been for many years at the Met."

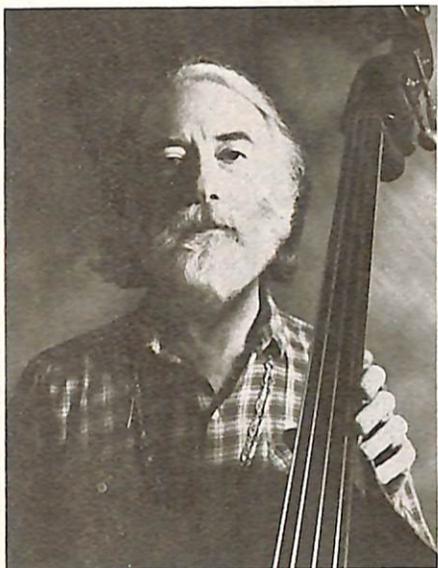


JAMES ATHERTON  
Tenor

Some tenors are known for their ability to portray character roles, while others are almost dependent upon the lyrical quality of their voices for recognition. James Atherton, however, is one of those rare tenors who has been able to combine these two differing characteristics with remarkable ease and excellence.

Atherton's auspicious 1983-84 season further demonstrates this achievement. For his sixth season with the Metropolitan Opera, his roles include Jacquito in *Fidelio* and The Novice in *Billy Budd*. His twenty-five roles at the Met have ranged from Goro in *Madame Butterfly* to Ferrando in *Così fan tutte*. His performances as Borsa in *Rigoletto* and Beppe in *I Pagliacci* were telecast nationwide over PBS in the *Live From Lincoln Center* series.

October 1983 marks Mr. Atherton's Houston Symphony debut, singing Mendelssohn's *Second Symphony* under Sergiu Commissiona. In February the artist returns to Opera Memphis as Lentsky in *Eugene Onegin*.



FRANCOIS RABBATH

Acclaimed today as the world's greatest bassoonist, Francois Rabbath discovered his talent by accident at the age of 13.

The youngest of 10 children growing up in Beirut, Rabbath happened upon an instrument one of his older brothers had brought home from school and left idle. The child picked up the bulky contrabass, which was much bigger than he at the time, and he instantly took a liking to the unusual-looking object.

Rabbath began developing his expertise all on his own, using an old copy of Edouard Nanny's *Contrabass Method* instruction manual. Mastering Nanny's book was somewhat of an achievement in itself, since the boy had no knowledge of French, the language in which the book was written.

However, Rabbath's persistence and determination continued to grow. He worked hard for nine years in Beirut in order to save enough money to fulfill his childhood dream — to travel to Paris, meet Edouard Nanny, then a famous professor at the noted Paris Conservatory, and show Nanny how well he could play the contrabass. Unfortunately, the news had not reached Rabbath's ears in Beirut that Nanny had died several years prior to 1945, when Rabbath finally made it to Paris.

Disappointed greatly, the boy nonetheless stayed in Paris long enough to audition for acceptance into the Paris Conservatory. Although he had only a few days to learn the required pieces, Rabbath finished first among all the con-

testants, shocking the educators. After studying for a brief time at the school, he gained a very strong reputation. For the next 10 years, Rabbath attracted enormous attention and encouragement from such accomplished performers as Jose Iturbi and Yehudi Menuhin. He began earning a living by accompanying Jacques Brel, Charles Aznavour, Gilbert Beaud and Michel Legrand.

In 1963, Rabbath met the renowned Moshe-Naim, and the duo recorded the first album ever made of the contrabass in solo, *The Sound of the Bass*. Rabbath made another record in 1971 when he performed with Paco Ibanez at the Palais des Sports in Paris.

In October 1971, he created the composition *War and Peace*, paralleling Picasso's artistic masterpiece of the same name, in order to honor the great artist on his 90th birthday. When Rabbath later played that work at the Palais des Sports, it proved an instant, roaring success with the 5,000 lustily cheering Frenchmen who heard it.

Rabbath made his American debut in Carnegie Hall in 1975.

The bass virtuoso met Frank Proto, Cincinnati Symphony bassist and composer, in 1978 when Rabbath was giving a solo recital during the International Society of Bassists summer school. The two became good friends and have frequently worked together since then.



# THE COURAGE OF THEIR COMPOSITIONS

*Houston conductor Sergiu Comissiona keeps his symphony challenged and his audience entertained by taking chances on new composers.*

**S**ergiu Comissiona began his official reign as music director of the Houston Symphony Orchestra this fall by tackling one of the toughest jobs of a conductor: keeping the repertoire fresh. Comissiona plunged in with a rare willingness to invest in the future of the art when he scheduled a new piece on his first program. Because the composer, Paul Cooper, teaches at Rice University and because Comissiona has recently accepted a part-time post there himself, a suspicious observer might chalk the venture up to political dues-paying. But in Cooper's *Symphony in Two Movements*, both composer and conductor demonstrated that they were serious about making new music and not just going through the motions.

Cooper has earned respect, if not much renown, through his earlier symphonies, string quartets, and vocal works—his choice of genres reflects his spare classicism. The first movement of his current piece is characteristic; Cooper is music's poet of the air, and the sounds he conjures up invariably suggest wind and weather and birds in flight. He is benignly addict-

ed to the special colors of the harp, celesta, and bells, their glinting tinkle evoking wind chimes heard from afar. He also wisely spaces out his lines for strings and woodwinds so that each has plenty of room to be heard. This new symphony manages to be outdoorsy and ethereal but at the same time dark and nocturnal. From its opening melody, played in the low strings, the mood hints at tragedy; the passionate, brassy middle section of the first movement is especially foreboding. This is the strongest music I have heard from Cooper, persuasive right up until the first movement closes with an ascent of the violins into the stratosphere.

The second movement is more conventional, alternating fugal passages with long lyrical lines. It ends impressively: one of Cooper's loveliest themes is repeated in the highest orchestral register before dying to a trill, then the trill rises to an ecstatic climax. Cooper has a talent for writing music that is almost pretty but never facile or reactionary. If he isn't quite a major composer, he is surely a genuine and irreplaceable minor one.

The Houston orchestra played his music

well. The strings this season have a more cohesive, often velvety sound, which emphasized the work's lyricism, and the brass sections built up the climaxes of the second movement powerfully. The only problems came from the woodwinds, which continue to have occasional moments of poor intonation. But Cooper's symphony turned out to be an investment that paid off. The HSO ought to play the work often and display it on its next big showcase tour—instead of the outdated folderol it programmed for its New York appearance last season.

Comissiona followed the Cooper piece with the most overplayed work of all, Beethoven's *Symphony No. 5*. The conductor made several right choices—he took a lot of seldom-honored repeats, he used tempos justified by scholarly considerations—but Comissiona, even more than most conductors, depends on the inspiration of the moment to make a standard score come alive. And this time the Beethoven hung heavily in the air. Even while obviously trying so hard, Comissiona betrayed a bit of boredom—the same reaction all of us succumb to when

we have heard a piece too often.

Four weeks later Comissiona was continuing to revitalize his orchestra's repertoire, with an adventurous invitation to double bass virtuoso François Rabbath. I suspect that few members of the audience had ever heard the behemoth string instrument played solo on a classical program before; the repertoire for bass and orchestra is tiny and insignificant. Fittingly, the soloist and conductor gave everyone two chances to hear what the bass could do: a transcription of a Vivaldi concerto followed by the premiere of *Fantasy for Double Bass and Orchestra*, by Frank Proto. Proto's reputation as a bass player who turns out a lot of undistinguished work for his instrument did not bode well for the new piece, but it turned out to be one of the most entertaining works to appear in a long time.

To pay homage to the Middle Eastern origins of the bass player, Proto introduced an Arabic sound into his composition. It was not the East-West mishmash that Ravi Shankar composes for himself and orchestra; the exotic tones were well integrated into a modern classical style. The work was a bit like certain performances of troubadour works, those renditions of medieval music that expose the Arabic roots of early Western music. The bass sounded like a rhapsodic ancient fiddle in the slower first movement, and in the second movement (with percussionist James Simon playing a Middle Eastern

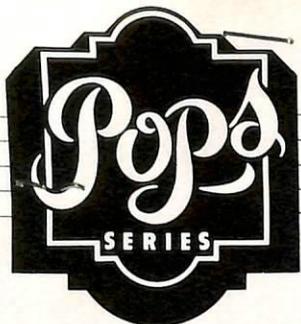
drum called a *dombec*) Rabbath built up a free cadenza to a pounding finish. The audience loved the piece; the jazz and pop experience that player and composer share came to the fore, proving that rhythmic life contributes more to a musical event than perfect intonation and bowing ever could. It is rare that any new concerto—let alone one written for double bass—is so much fun to hear.

On the same program, Comissiona's choice of a nineteenth-century work showed how serious he is about broadening the standard symphonic repertoire. Two or three of Mendelssohn's symphonies are among the most overplayed orchestral works, but seldom does one have a chance to hear the piece now known as Symphony No. 2, or the Hymn of Praise. It requires three vocal soloists and a large chorus, lasts an hour and ten minutes, and consists of an introductory all-orchestral section followed by a long cantata on German texts from the Psalms. It is never unattractive, though on hearing it one understands why it has been neglected. Unlike Beethoven's Ninth, on which it is obviously modeled, the Mendelssohn symphony never adequately ties together its abstract opening movements with the religious choral movements that follow. There is no poetic argument to the work. The typical Romantic trick of bringing the opening motto back at the end of the work doesn't solve the problem at all—the theme, now sung to the words of "Praise Ye the Lord,"

simply seems patched in.

Comissiona and his orchestra, however, made a good case for the piece; the orchestral sections were bouncy and jolly in the appropriate places. But the major vocalists were disappointing. Linda Zoghby and James Atherton have given some fine operatic performances in Texas, but Zoghby's lovely soprano seemed to have lost a bit of its bloom, and Atherton seemed less at ease with straight singing than he does with character parts onstage. The Houston Symphony Chorale compensated with its big, solid tone and its rousing spirit. Even though the new music director's exploration did not net an undiscovered masterpiece this time, the Mendelssohn symphony was much more interesting than a lukewarm version of some too-familiar work would have been.

By programming such pieces, Comissiona has shown that he recognizes the danger of boredom and is doing something about it. Let's hope he continues to trust his orchestra and his audience and gives us more of the things he thinks we need to hear. (For instance, he is known internationally as a champion of the music of the late Swedish composer Allan Pettersson, and he conducted Pettersson's Seventh Symphony in Houston a year ago.) The success of his experiments to date should strengthen his resolve. He may be something of an erratic conductor, but he is the wisest music director we have had in Texas in a long while. ♣



The Houston Symphony Pops Series is co-sponsored by:  
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**HOUSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**  
**SERGIU COMISSIONA, Music Director**  
**70TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON**  
**"Christmas Pops"**

Jesse H. Jones Hall for the Performing Arts  
 Tuesday, Dec. 13, 1983, 8:00 pm  
 Wednesday, Dec. 14, 1983, 8:30 pm

JOHN LANCHBERY, Conducting  
 HOUSTON SYMPHONY CHORALE  
 Virginia Babikian, Director

ANDERSON  
 A Christmas Festival  
 HOUSTON SYMPHONY CHORALE

HELY-HUTCHINSON

Carol Symphony  
 Prelude  
 Scherzo: God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen  
 Andante quasi lento e cantabile  
 Finale: Here We Come a Wassailing

BERLIN  
 White Christmas

ANDERSON  
 Sleigh Ride

ROSSINI-RESPIGHI

La Boutique Fantasque selections  
 Overture  
 Tarantella  
 Mazurka  
 Cossack Dance  
 Can-can  
 Galop

HERBERT  
 Toyland! Toyland!  
 HOUSTON SYMPHONY CHORALE

SMITH & BERNHARD  
 Winter Wonderland

Arr. LANCHBERY  
 Santa Claus is Coming to Town

HANDEL

Messiah selections  
 For Unto Us a Child is Born  
 Worthy is the Lamb  
 Hallelujah  
 HOUSTON SYMPHONY CHORALE

Arr. HAYMAN  
 A Merry Christmas Sing-Along  
 Joy to the World  
 Hark! The Herald Angels Sing  
 It Came Upon the Midnight Clear  
 Oh, Christmas Tree  
 Away in a Manger  
 Jingle Bells  
 We Wish You a Merry Christmas  
 HOUSTON SYMPHONY CHORALE  
 AND AUDIENCE

**INTERMISSION**

TCHAIKOVSKY

*The Nutcracker*, selections  
 March  
 Dance of the Sugarplum Fairies  
 Waltz of the Flowers

The performances will conclude at 10:15 pm on Tuesday and at 10:45 pm on Wednesday.

Concerts of the Houston Symphony Orchestra are broadcast on a delayed basis over KLEF-FM 94.5, through the sponsorship of RepublicBank Houston.

The activities of the Houston Symphony Orchestra are made possible in part by grants from the City of Houston through the Cultural Arts Council, the Texas Commission on the Arts, and from the National Endowment for the Arts in Washington, D.C., a Federal agency.

The Baldwin is the official piano and organ of the Houston Symphony Orchestra, services courtesy of Baldwin-Lively Piano and Organ Centers. The Houston Symphony Steinway piano is dedicated to the memory of Miss Ima Hogg.

Pamela Wilhite

\* Denotes member of the Board of Governors of the Chorale



**JOHN LANCHBERY**

ONE OF THE MOST RENOWNED British ballet conductors, John Lanchbery was Principal Conductor of the Royal Ballet from 1960 to 1972, Musical Director of the Australian Ballet from 1972 to 1977, and Musical Director of the American Ballet Theatre from 1978 to 1980.

John Lanchbery is also a composer and arranger, and has regularly appeared as guest conductor with international orchestras. He maintains his close association each year with the Royal Ballet in London and appears regularly as ballet conductor with most of the world's leading opera houses.

This season's engagements include appearances with the Houston Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl, Boston Pops, New Zealand Symphony, the New Jersey Symphony and the Stockholm Opera, as well as performances in Los Angeles and Detroit of the Boston Ballet's production of Nureyev's *Don Quixote*.

Lanchbery has composed and arranged innumerable ballet scores, including, for the Royal Ballet, *La Fille Mal Gardee*, *The House of Birds*, and *The Dream*; and for the Australian Ballet, *Don Quixote* and *The Merry Widow*. More recently, for the American Ballet Theatre, he has orchestrated the Bruhn/Fracchi production of *Giselle*, and Bruhn's production of *La Sylphide*. For film he has arranged and conducted the scores for *The Turning Point*, Nureyev's *Don Quixote*, Sir Frederick Ashton's *The Tales of Beatrix Potter*, and Agatha Christie's *Evil Under the Sun*.

Born in London in 1923, Lanchbery studied at the Royal Academy of Music under Sir Henry Wood. His first professional conducting post was as Musical Director of the Metropolitan Ballet in London for two years. During that time he composed three ballets and conducted them in England, Norway, Sweden, Holland, and Belgium. Before his appointment to the Royal Ballet, he was Principal Conductor of the Sadlers Wells Theatre Ballet.

In addition to his busy schedule within the world of ballet, John Lanchbery has established himself with orchestras on both sides of the Atlantic and has developed a regular association with the Boston Pops Orchestra.

**SERGIU COMISSIONA, MUSIC DIRECTOR**  
**DECEMBER 1983**

# THE HOUSTON SYMPHONY CHORALE

**VIRGINIA BABIKIAN**  
DIRECTOR

**David A. Wehr**  
Associate Director

**Anne Schnoebelen**  
Accompanist

**Lee Stevens**  
Chorus Manager

**J.R. Lowery**  
Properties Manager

**Carolyn McShan**  
Librarian

## CHRISTMAS POPS CHORUS:

### SOPRANO

Dianne Barton-Brown  
\* Ara Lynn Bauman  
Jacqueline Brodeur  
Michelle Burrow  
Carol Carthel  
Julia L. Forsythe  
Kathryn E. Fritz  
Beverly Graeter  
Charlotte Heath  
Katherine Jackson  
Jean Kilborn  
Lou Ann Lasher  
Christianne Mays  
Ann C. McAllister  
Carolyn McShan  
Barbara McQueeney  
Joan Mercado  
Maxine Moore  
Nancy C. Philips  
Elaine A. Powers  
Linda Rodgers  
Lorelee J. Rude  
Lee Stevens  
Menthola Stevenson  
Linda Summey

### ALTO

Paula Anwood  
Fran Avera  
Rhonda Boccarossa  
Lucy Brown  
Mary Bundrick  
Nancy Cline  
Gerry Cumberland  
Pat Davidson  
Linda Francis  
Judy E. Gill  
Dianna Gray  
Linda Harding  
Nancy Hawley  
Carolyn Hess  
Earle Jensen  
Barbara Johnson  
Dottie Lytle  
Peggy Matlock  
Nancy McClain  
Caren McCurdy  
Rosemary P. Mullin  
Patricia J. Noll  
Rebecca Peterson  
Denna Potenza  
\* Billie Roark  
Kathleen B. Smith  
\* Lynda Sparks  
Diane Stine  
Margaret Tucker  
Ann Wade  
Lori White

### TENOR

Jeff Addington  
Michael Ammons  
James R. Carazola  
Cary Cobb  
Phil Crichton  
John V. Crooks  
Anthony Denmore  
Steve T. Donohue  
\* Mike Duffy  
James J. Feeney  
John C. Flanagan  
Joel A. Framm  
Chris Gamble  
Thom Gibson  
\* John P. Grady  
John Heft  
Jay Ted Karahan  
John F. Kracht  
W.J. Laughlin  
Peter Peropoulos  
Ted Snedden  
Berkley Stutts  
Larry Ward  
Jarrad Williams

### BASS

James Avera  
Dana Bagg  
Paul Becker  
William K. Cheadle  
Donald Conrad  
Bill Cumberland  
Bruce Frizzell  
Bill Goddard  
Roger W. Green  
Strait Hicklin  
Paul Hyde  
Charles G. Izzo  
Randall Jeter  
John M. Kilgore  
J.R. Lowery  
Tom Merrill  
Sterling A. Neblett Jr.  
Greg Perkins  
Larry Phibbs  
Gian Porro  
John W. Rogers  
Cody Scace  
Paul Schofield  
Wally Shuttlesworth  
Philip Smith  
David A. Thompson  
Warren Thompson  
Paul Weber  
Stan W. Yoder

## MESSIAH CHORUS:

### SOPRANO

Dianne Barton-Brown  
Ann Janzen Caito  
Nancy Cobbs  
Heidi Engleking  
Julia L. Forsythe  
Beverly Graeter  
Lori Hedrick  
Cynthia Langstaff  
Pamella J. Lyons  
Donna Marsh  
Mary Nepveux  
Nancy C. Philips  
Elaine A. Powers  
Denise D. Raimondo  
Nancy A. Ricca  
Lorelee J. Rude  
Jan Russell  
Pamela Wilhite

### ALTO

Virginia Beilharz  
Mary Bundrick  
Nancy Cline  
Judy E. Gill  
Nancy Hawley  
Rita LaRue  
Dottie Lytle  
Caren McCurdy  
Rosemary P. Mullin  
Kari Perkins  
\* Billie Roark  
\* Lynda Sparks  
Paula Spiegel  
Urara Vella  
Lori White

### TENOR

Robert Browning  
David W. Carter  
Phil Crichton  
Anthony Denmore  
\* Mike Duffy  
James J. Feeney  
John C. Flanagan  
Joel A. Framm  
David H. Langstaff  
W.J. Laughlin  
Tom Milner  
David G. Nussmann  
Tony Vazquez  
Larry Ward  
Jarrad Williams  
Jon-Gregoir Williams

### BASS

\* Bob Acosta  
\* Forbes Alcott  
Paul Becker  
Bruce Boyle  
J. Wesley Brown  
A.W. Buescher  
William K. Cheadle  
Donald Conrad  
Kenneth Cordray  
John Eastlund  
Bill Goddard  
Strait Hicklin  
Paul Hyde  
Richard Ivy  
Robert Q. Klutz  
J.R. Lowery  
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\* Denotes member of the Board of Governors of the Chorale

# HOUSTON SYMPHONY

MAGAZINE



SERGIU COMISSONA, MUSIC DIRECTOR  
DECEMBER 1983

## ON THE COVER



*(Fanfare, © 1983, Michel Bezman.)*

The cover artwork was created by Houston artist Michel Bezman, who has contributed two other Houston Symphony Magazine cover pieces in the past.

A professor of architecture at the University of Houston, he is known for his collages, which are part of a number of private and corporate art collections. He is represented by the DuBose Gallery.

Mr. Bezman was commissioned by "Performing Arts Magazine" for two collages.

The artist's work has been selected for inclusion in the permanent archives of the Smithsonian Institution.

This collage, entitled "Fanfare," symbolizes Tchaikovsky's "Winter Dreams" Symphony, to be featured in the eighth subscription series concert program, which will take place Dec. 3, 4 and 5, Music Director Sergiu Comissiona conducting.

# Christmas Pops serves up holiday stew of music

**HOUSTON SYMPHONY AND CHORALE** — Christmas Pops program conducted by John Lanchbery Tuesday evening in Jones Hall, with a repetition at 8:30 p.m. Wednesday. Virginia Babilian, director, Houston Symphony Chorale.

By **CARL CUNNINGHAM**

Had your Latin lesson yet this morning?

Don't say you never conjugate verbs before

## Review

breakfast, because "quodlibet" is one of those grammatical constructions that falls between the cracks. If you're going to make soup for supper, the recipe book will tell you to get the pot, go to the vegetable bin and throw in quodlibet you find there.

In case you're wondering what all that has to do with the price of trombones in China, "quodlibet" just happens to be a time-honored musical term, meaning much the same thing as when you've got a rutabaga, three carrots and a few partridge feathers in the pot.

And if you happen to go to the Houston Symphony's Christmas Pops program tonight, I'd suggest passing up supper beforehand, because conductor John Lanchbery, the orchestra and Houston Symphony Chorale will be serving up second and third helpings of holiday soup throughout the program.

At Tuesday's first performance, Lanchbery first stirred the soup with

Hely-Hutchinson's stiffly academic Carol Symphony, a contrapuntal fabric whose successive movements were woven with the tunes of "O Come All Ye Faithful," "The First Noel" and "Here We Come a Wassailing." By and large, it came off smartly, though one movement based on "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen" had to be omitted for lack of sufficient rehearsal time.

Excerpts from Ottorino Respighi's zestful dance suite, *La Boutique Fantasque*, based on Rossini's music, provided a notably bright spot on this program of yuletide stew. Three gargantuan modern orchestral arrangements of excerpts from

Handel's *Messiah* fared less successfully.

That wasn't just because of a gross misrepresentation of the music's proper scale but because Lanchbery couldn't quite get settled into a consistent tempo during the initial "For Unto Us a Child is born" chorus.

Following three neatly played snippets from *The Nutcracker* ballet, it was back to holiday soup with Leroy Anderson's slick combination of "O Come All Ye Faithful" (again) and "Jingle Bells." To finish off, there was a string of Christmas Top 40 tunes, all the way to an appearance by Santa Claus and the inevitable audience sing-along.

## 'Christmas Pops' gives comfortable show for holidays

BY CHARLES WARD  
Chronicle Staff

Even Santa Claus has an nose for publicity!

Who knows how he found out that the Houston Symphony's *Christmas Pops* concert was going to be taped Tuesday evening for showing locally on Christmas Eve (by KTXH, Ch. 20), but what better way to preview his annual jet-stream gift-giving trip than by visiting the first performance of the annual event held in Jones Hall. (A repeat is scheduled for 8:30 p.m. today.)

So to *Santa Claus is Coming to Town*, Jolly Old Nick gingerly slid his way through the first violins to present jolly old Englishman John Lanchbery, the conductor, with his own Santa's cap, which he jauntily donned. Then, Santa slithered through the violas and double basses, handing out little gifts to the musicians, to disappear with a wave. He may have said, as Lanchbery reported, "Merry Christmas, y'all," but, we'll have to think about that.

This *Christmas Pops* was a comfortable variation on past performances. The program had hints of the standard seasonal classical music (selections from Handel's *Messiah* and Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker*), many reminiscences of the popular carols (a *Carol Symphony*, minus its scherzo, by Hely-Hutchinson, and Leroy Anderson's *A Christmas Festival*), some sprightly excerpts from Rossini-Respighi's *La Boutique fantasque*, and a host of popular melodies — Irving Berlin's *White Christmas*, Anderson's *Sleigh Ride*, Victor Herbert's *Toyland! Toyland!* and *Winter Wonderland*. The program concluded with the *Merry Christmas Sing-Along* for audience singing.

The summary of various musical traditions was nicely precise. The playing of the orchestra was generally crisp and vigorous under Lanchbery's enthusiastic leadership. The Houston Symphony Chorale sounded a little strained and under-rehearsed for the *Messiah* selections (which included a funny segue from *Worthy is the Lamb* to the *Hallelujah* Chorus, instead of the extended *Amen* that it usually heralds), but the singing was heartfelt in the other choral selections.

Although the symphony's traditional decorations and lighting were sacrificed to the bright TV lights Tuesday, the evening of music-making was nostalgic and the experience comfortable.



# onoco Christmas Concert

Thursday, December 15, 1983  
Eight o'clock  
Jesse H. Jones Hall

### Houston Symphony Chorale

Joining the Orchestra tonight are doctors, secretaries, physicists, students, bankers, homemakers, and people from almost every field of endeavor—the multi-talented members of the Houston Symphony Chorale.

Founded in 1946, the 175-member chorus, under the direction of Virginia Babikian, is made up of volunteers from all parts of the Houston and Harris County area. Their motivation is the challenge and joy of great music.

Singers are chosen by audition, and rehearse every Tuesday night. With the addition of the Symphony Summer Festival three years ago, participation of the Chorale has become year round.

The group has been privileged to sing the masterpieces of the choral repertoire under some of the world's most brilliant conductors—Leopold Stokowski, Sir John Barbirolli, Igor Stravinsky, Robert Shaw, et al, and they have performed virtually every major work of choral literature in the symphonic genre.

## A MERRY CHRISTMAS SING-ALONG

Arranged by Richard Hayman

### JOY TO THE WORLD

Joy to the world! The Lord is come;  
Let Earth receive her King.  
Let ev-'ry heart—prepare Him room,  
And heaven and nature sing, and heaven and nature sing;  
And heaven, and heaven and nature sing.  
He rules the world with truth and grace;  
And makes the nations prove,  
The glo-ries of—His righteousness,  
And wonders of His love, and wonders of His love;  
And wonders, and won-ders of His love.

### HARK! THE HERALD ANGELS SING

Hark! The her-ald angels sing,  
“Glory to the newborn King.”  
Peace on Earth, and mercy mild;  
God and sin-ners reconciled!  
Joyful, all ye nations rise;  
Join the tri-umph of the skies,  
With th' angelic host proclaim:  
“Christ is born in Bethlehem!”  
Hark! The her-ald angels sing,  
“Glory to the newborn King!”

### IT CAME UPON THE MIDNIGHT CLEAR

It came upon the mid-night clear, that glo-ri-ous song of old.  
From an-gels bend-ing near the Earth, to touch their harps of gold.  
“Peace on the Earth, goodwill to men,  
From Heaven's all gracious King.”  
The world in sol-emn still-ness lay,  
To hear the an-gels sing.

### OH, CHRISTMAS TREE

Oh, Christmas Tree, oh, Christmas Tree;  
How lovely are thy branches.  
Oh, Christmas Tree, oh, Christmas Tree;  
How lovely are thy branches.  
Not only green when summer's here,  
But in the coldest time of year;  
Oh, Christmas tree, oh, Christmas tree;  
You are by all beloved.

### AWAY IN A MANGER

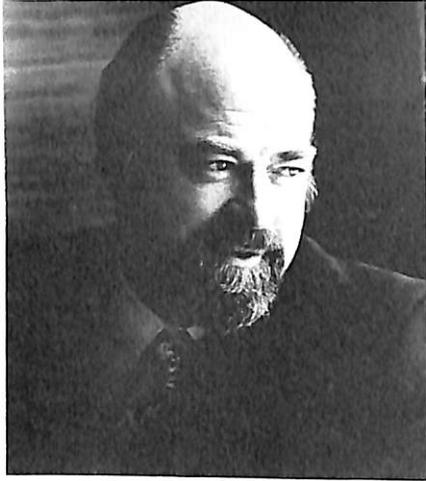
Away in a manger, no crib for his bed,  
The lit-tle Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head:  
The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,  
The lit-tle Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

### JINGLE BELLS

Jingle bells, jingle bells, jingle all the way,  
Oh, what fun it is to ride in a one-horse open sleigh!  
Jingle bells, jingle bells, jingle all the way,  
Oh, what fun it is to ride in a one-horse open sleigh.  
A day or two ago, I thought I'd take a ride,  
And soon my dearest love was seated by my side.  
The horse was lean and lank, misfortune seemed its lot,  
He got in-to a drifted bank and we all got up-sot! Oh!  
Jingle bells, jingle bells, jingle all the way,  
Oh, what fun it is to ride in a one-horse open sleigh!  
Jingle bells, jingle bells, jingle all the way,  
Oh, what fun it is to ride in a one-horse open sleigh!

### WE WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS

We wish you a merry Christmas, we wish you a merry Christmas,  
We wish you a merry Christmas and a happy New Year.  
We wish you a merry Christmas, we wish you a merry Christmas,  
We wish you a merry Christmas and a happy New Year.  
Good tidings to you, where-ever you are,  
Good tidings for Christmas and a happy New Year.  
We wish you a merry Christmas, we wish you a merry Christmas,  
We wish you a merry Christmas and a happy New Year.



**JOHN LANCHBERY**  
conductor

One of the most renowned British ballet conductors, John Lanchbery was Principal Conductor of the Royal Ballet from 1960 to 1972, Musical Director of the Australian Ballet from 1972 to 1977, and Musical Director of the American Ballet Theatre from 1978 to 1980. Mr. Lanchbery is also a composer and arranger, and has regularly appeared as guest conductor with international orchestras. He maintains his close association each year with the Royal Ballet in London, and appears regularly as ballet conductor with most of the world's leading Opera Houses.

This season's engagements include appearances with the Houston Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl, Boston Pops, New Zealand Symphony, New Jersey Symphony, and the Stockholm Opera, as well as performances in Los Angeles and Detroit of the Boston Ballet's production of Nureyev's "Don Quixote."

Mr. Lanchbery has composed and arranged innumerable ballet scores, including, for the Royal Ballet, "La Fille Mal Gardée," "The House of Birds," and "The Dream;" and for the Australian Ballet "Don Quixote" and "The Merry Widow." More recently for the American Ballet Theatre, he has orchestrated the Bruhn/Fracchi production of "Giselle," and Bruhn's production of "La Sylphide." For film, Mr. Lanchbery has arranged and conducted the scores for "The Turning Point," Nureyev's "Don Quixote," Sir Frederick Ashton's "The Tales of Beatrix Potter," and Agatha Christie's "Evil Under the Sun."

Born in London in 1923, John Lanchbery studied at the Royal Academy of Music under Sir Henry Wood. His first professional conducting post was as Musical Director of the Metropolitan Ballet in London for two years. During that time he composed three ballets and conducted them in England, Norway, Sweden, Holland, and Belgium. Before his appointment to the Royal Ballet, he was Principal Conductor of the Sadlers Wells Theatre Ballet.

In addition to his busy schedule within the world of ballet, John Lanchbery has established himself with orchestras on both sides of the Atlantic and has developed a regular association with the Boston Pops Orchestra.

## Houston Symphony Chorale

Joining the Orchestra tonight are doctors, secretaries, physicists, students, bankers, homemakers, and people from almost every field of endeavor—the multi-talented members of the Houston Symphony Chorale.

Founded in 1946, the 175-member chorus, under the direction of Virginia Babikian, is made up of volunteers from all parts of the Houston and Harris County area. Their motivation is the challenge and joy of great music.

Singers are chosen by audition, and rehearse every Tuesday night. With the addition of the Symphony Summer Festival three years ago, participation of the Chorale has become year round.

The group has been privileged to sing the masterpieces of the choral repertoire under some of the world's most brilliant conductors—Leopold Stokowski, Sir John Barbirolli, Igor Stravinsky, Robert Shaw, *et al*, and they have performed virtually every major work of choral literature in the symphonic genre.



## HOUSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Sergiu Comissiona, Music Director

Gideon Toeplitz  
Executive Director

Russell P. Allen  
Orchestra Manager

# MESSIAH

## HOUSTON SYMPHONY CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

### Handel's *Messiah*

Westbury Baptist Church (10425 Hillcroft)

Monday, Dec. 19, 1983, 8:00 pm

Tuesday, Dec. 20, 1983, 8:00 pm

- \* VITTORIO NEGRI, Conducting
- FAYE ROBINSON, Soprano
- SUSANNE MENTZER, Mezzo-Soprano
- \* JOHN GILMORE, Tenor
- \* TERRY COOK, Bass-baritone
- Members of the HOUSTON SYMPHONY CHORALE,  
Virginia Babikian, Director

#### PART I

##### Sinfonia

Comfort Ye, My People: Tenor, Recitative

Ev'ry valley shall be exalted: Tenor, Aria

And the Glory of the Lord: Chorus

Thus saith the Lord: Bass, Recitative

But who may abide: Mezzo-Soprano, Aria

And He shall purify: Chorus

Behold, a virgin shall conceive: Mezzo-Soprano, Recitative

O Thou, that tellest good tidings to Zion: Mezzo-Soprano, Air and Chorus

For behold, darkness shall cover the earth: Bass, Recitative

The people that walked in darkness: Bass, Air

For unto us a child is born: Chorus

Pastoral Symphony

There were shepherds abiding in the field: Soprano, Recitative

And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them: Soprano, Recitative

And the angel said unto them: Soprano, Recitative

And suddenly there was with the angel: Soprano, Recitative

Glory to God in the Highest: Chorus

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion: Soprano, Air

Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened: Mezzo-Soprano, Recitative

He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: Mezzo-Soprano and Soprano, duet

His yoke is easy, His burthen is light: Chorus

#### INTERMISSION

#### PART II

Behold the lamb of God: Chorus

He was despised: Mezzo-Soprano, Air

All we like sheep have gone astray: Chorus

Thy rebuke hath broken His heart: Tenor, Recitative

Behold and see: Tenor, Air

He was cut off out of the land of the living: Tenor, Recitative

But Thou didst not leave His soul in hell: Tenor, Air

Lift up your heads, O ye gates: Chorus

The Lord gave the word: Chorus

Why do the nations so furiously rage together?: Bass, Air

Let us break their bonds asunder: Chorus

He that dwelleth in heaven: Tenor, Recitative

Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron: Tenor, Air

Hallelujah!: Chorus

#### PART III

I know that my Redeemer liveth: Soprano, Air

Since by man came death: Chorus

Behold, I tell you a mystery: Bass, Recitative

The trumpet shall sound: Bass, Air

Worthy is the Lamb that was slain-Amen: Chorus

The Houston Symphony is using the Tobin edition of the *Messiah* in these performances.

The performances will conclude at approximately 10:30 pm.

\* Houston Symphony debut

The activities of the Houston Symphony Orchestra are made possible in part by grants from the City of Houston through the Cultural Arts Council, the Texas Commission on the Arts, and from the National Endowment for the Arts in Washington, D.C., a Federal agency.

The Baldwin is the official piano and organ of the Houston Symphony Orchestra, services courtesy of Baldwin-Lively Piano and Organ Centers. The Houston Symphony Steinway piano is dedicated to the memory of Miss Ima Hogg.

\* Denotes member of the Board of Governors of the Chorale



VITTORIO NEGRI

CONDUCTOR VITTORIO NEGRI, acclaimed throughout the world for his interpretations of baroque music and especially that of the Venetian masters, returns to America during the 1983-84 season to lead the National Symphony Orchestra in the Brandenburg Concerti at the J.F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington D.C., the Houston Symphony in the *Messiah*, the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra and the 92nd Street Y Chamber Symphony (his New York debut).

Maestro Negri, "perhaps today's leading advocate of Vivaldi's choral and operatic works" (*Boston Globe*), recently led the Boston Symphony Orchestra in a week of subscription concerts devoted to his choral works.

A native of Milan, Vittorio Negri studied at the Conservatoire of Music in that city, where he obtained a degree in composition and conducting. He began his conducting career at the Salzburg Mozarteum as assistant to Bernard Paumgartner.

Negri has made a significant contribution to contemporary knowledge of Vivaldi's vocal music, conducting the first recording of his complete sacred choral music with the John Alldis Choir and the English Chamber Orchestra; and both the first modern performances (at La Scala, Milan) and the first recording (on Philips) of his opera "Tito Manlio."

Described as a "versatile, cultured and informed musician" (*Boston Globe*), Vittorio Negri is a founding member of the "Societa Italiana di Musicologia," and speaks Italian, English, French and German. He is married to Georgia Schuler.

40 SYMPHONY

in addition to a schedule which takes him to the major opera houses and concert halls of the world, Vittorio Negri regularly participates in such international festivals as Salzburg, Orange, Flanders, Versailles, Sagra Musicale Umbra, Dresden, Montreux and Monte Carlo.

Among his numerous recordings for Philips are Cimarosa's Requiem (Grand Prix du Disque Lyrique, 1970), whose first modern performance he conducted at the Montreux Festival; several recordings of works by Vivaldi which revealed the importance of the composer's vocal music, including the oratorio "Juditha Triumphans" (Grand Prix du Disque Lyrique, 1975, and Japan Art Festival Award, 1976); the "Complete Sacred Choral Music" (Caecilia Award, 1978; Stereo Review Award, 1979, and Opera News Choral Music Award, 1980;) the two-volume "Vivaldi at San Marco;" and a recording of motets featuring soprano Elly Ameling.

For Philips he has also conducted a number of recordings of instrumental music by Vivaldi, Albinoni and other baroque masters, including "Famous Oboe Concertos" with Heinz Holliger and the Dresden Staatskapelle, which won the Japan Record Academy Award in 1973 and nomination for the World Record Award in 1974.

Two of his Vivaldi discs with the Dresden Staatskapelle have been awarded the Grand Prix du Discophile — the "Concerti con molti instrumenti" in 1974, and "Four Violin Concertos" featuring Arthur Grumiaux in 1977.

His recordings of music by Gabrieli for CBS Masterworks received the Grammy Award two years in a row as well as a Grammy nomination.

Negri's award-winning Philips recording (Grand Prix du Disque Lyrique and Diapason d'Or) of Mozart's "Betulia Liberata" established his reputation in conducting works of the classical period and led to many engagements, including a concert and television series with the Orchestre National de France and an invitation to develop their Haydn and Mozart repertoire.

Described as a "versatile, cultured and informed musician" (*Boston Globe*), Vittorio Negri is a founding member of the "Societa Italiana di Musicologia," and speaks Italian, English, French and German. He is married to Georgia Schuler.



FAYE ROBINSON

SOPRANO FAYE ROBINSON'S spectacular rise to operatic stardom has been highlighted by performances in the major musical centers of Europe and the United States. She has sung leading roles with the opera companies of Hamburg, Frankfurt, Vienna, Paris, Cologne, Dusseldorf, Munich, Teatro Colon in Buenos Aires, New Orleans, Philadelphia and the New York City Opera.

This season she returns to Frankfurt Opera for *La Traviata* and *Die Entfuhrung aus dem Serail*, sings the four heroines in *Les Contes D'Hoffman* with the Southern Alberta Opera in Calgary, and debuts with San Diego Opera singing her first Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni*.

As an orchestral soloist Ms. Robinson has sung with virtually every major orchestra including the Concertgebouw, New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, the Symphony Orchestras of Chicago and Boston, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Frankfurt Radio Orchestra, Atlanta Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra, and National Symphony. This season she returns to the Cleveland Orchestra for the final scene from Strauss's *Daphne* under Erich Leinsdorf, which she also sings at Carnegie Hall with the National Orchestra Association; the *Messiah* with the Houston Symphony; Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* in Toronto and Frankfurt, and at Avery Fisher Hall in Lincoln Center; and Bach's *Ascension* and *Easter Oratorios* with Musica Sacra.

Recent engagements include Mahler's Eighth with the Toronto Symphony and at the Vienna Festival (her recording of this work with the Boston Symphony is available on Philips Rec-

*Juliette* and *La Bonheur*. She has sung Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* with the Cincinnati Symphony and his Ninth Symphony with the Cleveland Orchestra in Cleveland and New York. Her Munich Opera debut as Konstanze was in a new production of *Die Entfuhrung* led by the late Karl Bohm.

Her spectacular debut at the Aix-en-Provence Festival in 1974 led to return engagements in each successive season. She has also performed at the summer music festivals of Caramoor, Blossom, Saratoga, Chautauqua, Aspen, Ambler and Israel.

A native of Houston, Ms. Robinson graduated from Bennet College and studied further at Texas Southern University and North Texas State University. She is the recipient of numerous awards, including First Prize in the San Francisco Opera Auditions.



SUSANNE MENTZER

IN 1982, SUSANNE MENTZER made an auspicious debut with the Boston Symphony Orchestra at the Tanglewood Music Festival under the baton of Kurt Masur. That same year, she made her debut with the Dallas Opera under Nicola Rescigno.

The spring of 1983 marked two major engagements for Ms. Mentzer. She sang six performances of Cherubino in Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro* with the Cologne Opera. And immediately upon her return to this country, she sang Beatrice in the St. Louis Opera production of Berlioz' *Beatrice et Benedict*, conducted by John Nelson.

She will sing Cherubino again in the

# THE HOUSTON SYMPHONY CHORALE

**VIRGINIA BABIKIAN**  
DIRECTOR

**David A. Wehr**  
Associate Director

**Anne Schnoebelen**  
Accompanist

**Lee Stevens**  
Chorus Manager

**J.R. Lowery**  
Properties Manager

**Carolyn McShan**  
Librarian

## CHRISTMAS POPS CHORUS:

### SOPRANO

Dianne Barton-Brown  
\* Ara Lynn Bauman  
Jacqueline Brodeur  
Michelle Burrow  
Carol Carthel  
Julia L. Forsythe  
Kathryn E. Fritz  
Beverly Graeter  
Charlotte Heath  
Katherine Jackson  
Jean Kilborn  
Lou Ann Lasher  
Christianne Mays  
Ann C. McAllister  
Carolyn McShan  
Barbara McQueeney  
Joan Mercado  
Maxine Moore  
Nancy C. Philips  
Elaine A. Powers  
Linda Rodgers  
Lorelee J. Rude  
Lee Stevens  
Menthola Stevenson  
Linda Summey

### ALTO

Paula Arwood  
Fran Avera  
Rhonda Boccarossa  
Lucy Brown  
Mary Bundrick  
Nancy Cline  
Gerry Cumberland  
Pat Davidson  
Linda Francis  
Judy E. Gill  
Dianna Gray  
Linda Harding  
Nancy Hawley  
Carolyn Hess  
Earle Jensen  
Barbara Johnson  
Dottie Lytle  
Peggy Matlock  
Nancy McClain  
Caren McCurdy  
Rosemary P. Mullin  
Patricia J. Noll  
Rebecca Peterson  
Denna Potenza  
\* Billie Roark  
Kathleen B. Smith  
\* Lynda Sparks  
Diane Stine  
Margaret Tucker  
Ann Wade  
Lori White

### TENOR

Jeff Addington  
Michael Ammons  
James R. Carazola  
Cary Cobb  
Phil Crichton  
John V. Crooks  
Anthony Denmore  
Steve T. Donohue  
\* Mike Duffy  
James J. Feeney  
John C. Flanagan  
Joel A. Framm  
Chris Gamble  
Thom Gibson  
\* John P. Grady  
John Heft  
Jay Ted Karahan  
John F. Kracht  
W.J. Laughlin  
Peter Peropoulos  
Ted Snedden  
Berkley Stutts  
Larry Ward  
Jarrad Williams

### BASS

James Avera  
Dana Bagg  
Paul Becker  
William K. Cheadle  
Donald Conrad  
Bill Cumberland  
Bruce Frizzell  
Bill Goddard  
Roger W. Green  
Strait Hicklin  
Paul Hyde  
Charles G. Izzo  
Randall Jeter  
John M. Kilgore  
J.R. Lowery  
Tom Merrill  
Sterling A. Neblett Jr.  
Greg Perkins  
Larry Phibbs  
Gian Porro  
John W. Rogers  
Cody Scafe  
Paul Schofield  
Wally Shuttlesworth  
Philip Smith  
David A. Thompson  
Warren Thompson  
Paul Weber  
Stan W. Yoder

## MESSIAH CHORUS:

### SOPRANO

Dianne Barton-Brown  
Ann Janzen Caito  
Nancy Cobbs  
Heidi Englekling  
Julia L. Forsythe  
Beverly Graeter  
Lori Hedrick  
Cynthia Langstaff  
Pamella J. Lyons  
Donna Marsh  
Mary Nepveux  
Nancy C. Philips  
Elaine A. Powers  
Denise D. Raimondo  
Nancy A. Ricca  
Lorelee J. Rude  
Jan Russell  
Pamela Wilhite

### ALTO

Virginia Beilharz  
Mary Bundrick  
Nancy Cline  
Judy E. Gill  
Nancy Hawley  
Rita LaRue  
Dottie Lytle  
Caren McCurdy  
Rosemary P. Mullin  
Kari Perkins  
\* Billie Roark  
\* Lynda Sparks  
Paula Spiegel  
Urara Vella  
Lori White

### TENOR

Robert Browning  
David W. Carter  
Phil Crichton  
Anthony Denmore  
\* Mike Duffy  
James J. Feeney  
John C. Flanagan  
Joel A. Framm  
David H. Langstaff  
W.J. Laughlin  
Tom Milner  
David G. Nussmann  
Tony Vazquez  
Larry Ward  
Jarrad Williams  
Jon-Gregoir Williams

### BASS

\* Bob Acosta  
\* Forbes Alcott  
Paul Becker  
Bruce Boyle  
J. Wesley Brown  
A.W. Buescher  
William K. Cheadle  
Donald Conrad  
Kenneth Cordray  
John Eastlund  
Bill Goddard  
Strait Hicklin  
Paul Hyde  
Richard Ivy  
Robert Q. Kluttz  
J.R. Lowery  
Tom Merrill  
Sterling A. Neblett Jr.  
Daniel J. Shea  
Philip Smith  
\* Bob Wilbur  
James Wilhite  
Stan W. Yoder  
SYMPHONY 13

\* Denotes member of the Board of Governors  
of the Chorale

# HOUSTON SYMPHONY

MAGAZINE



SERGIU COMISSONA, MUSIC DIRECTOR  
DECEMBER 1983

# Vittorio Negri's debut musically sound program

BY CHARLES WARD  
Chronicle Staff

If there's a need or desire to go against the trends of today's trendy *Messiah* performances, Vittorio Negri's way can be held out as an example.

Negri, an Italian-born conductor known for his many award-winning recordings of Baroque music, made his Houston debut Monday evening by leading the Houston Symphony's annual performances of the Handel oratorio in Westbury Baptist Church, 10425 Hillcroft. (A repeat performance is set for 8 tonight.)

Many conductors, particularly the ones featured on the most recent recordings, have stampeded toward the temple of historical accuracy. They've reduced the size of the chorus and orchestra, found instrumentalists who play Baroque instruments, included countertenors and tremble boy voices as soloists and choristers, agonized over the choice of which variations of certain movements to use and what tempos to pick, etc., etc. The goal has been to guess what Handel did in his time and to replicate that. In recent years, under former Associate Conductor C. William Harwood, the Houston Symphony's *Messiah* has been performed in that spirit, often with highly pleasing musical results.

But under Negri's direction, this Houston Symphony *Messiah* seemed almost anti-theatrical. He didn't return to the dated style when the Mormon Tabernacle sang with the full Philadelphia Orchestra, but his interest was surely in putting forward a plausible, musically sound, mainline performance.

That Negri achieved admirably. His approach was leisurely and rested crucially on the use, in the choral movements, of tempos significantly slower than most conductors might take them. (Consequently, the Houston Symphony Chorus was able to articulate all the fast passages with clarity and crispness.) He allowed the soloists — soprano Faye Robinson, mezzo-soprano Susanne Mentzer, tenor John Gilmore and bass-baritone Terry Cook — all the interpretive latitude they wanted and he didn't impose on them a rigid set of principles about ornamenting the music.

The strength and value of Negri's approach was not found in the emotions-goosing realm of fast tempos or the intellect-pleasing results of following scholarly research but in the care, dignity and integrity he brought to the music. The flexibility and pliancy of the playing and singer were highly attractive, while he stressed small details often overlooked by conductors. But, he knew when to

heighten the tension and he built the final chorus, *Worthy Is the Lamb . . . Amen* to a very thrilling conclusion.

Within this context, the performance Monday had some problems. Negri had trouble eliciting consistently clean starts from both orchestra and chorus and there were other small blunders along the way, both vocal and instrumental. Overall, the performance wasn't crisp and invigorating.

Bass-baritone Cook was the big news of the evening. Still very early into his career, he will be singing the lead bass role in the Metropolitan Opera's January production of Handel's *Rinaldo* when Marilyn Horne takes the title role.

Ms. Robinson, a native of Houston, was very pleasing with the simplicity of her work, while Ms. Mentzer, a former Houston Opera Studio member, was lustrous but interpretively too austere.

The Houston Post/Tues., Dec. 20, 1983/

## Negri's 'Messiah' appealing

**HOUSTON SYMPHONY AND CHORALE** — Handel's *Messiah* conducted by Vittorio Negri Monday evening with a repetition at 8 p.m. Tuesday in Westbury Baptist Church, 10425 Hillcroft at Willowbend. Soloists: Faye Robinson, soprano; Susanne Mentzer, mezzo-soprano; John Gilmore, tenor; Terry Cook, bass-baritone. Virginia Babikian, director of the Houston Symphony Chorus.

By CARL CUNNINGHAM

As heard from the baton of guest conductor Vittorio Negri, Handel's *Messiah* became a broad, relaxing experience with a familiar masterpiece at the first of two annual Houston Symphony performances of the work Monday evening at Westbury Baptist Church.

Negri, a noted Vivaldi conductor, brought Italianate traits to the music that were quite natural and appealing. He chose tempos that were generally moderate but within the bounds of good taste and generated a comfortable momentum that suited Handel's flowing rhythms very well.

To a great degree, this flow resulted from a lightening of primary accents and a longer, more lyrical stroke to the beat. That approach to the music provided more lyricism and tonal fullness to the performance, but it also robbed the musical texture of some of its crispness. In contrast to the keen control and dual choral/orchestral conducting technique William Harwood displayed in *Messiah* performances here the past several years, Negri seemed to identify more easily with the chorus than the orchestra.

Thus, orchestral attacks were sloppily aligned during the first part of the performance and there were notable wind/string discrepancies in the bass line of the opening Sinfonia. The standard of precision gradually improved, though bass-baritone Terry Cook was twice victimized by a miscalculated cue from Negri.

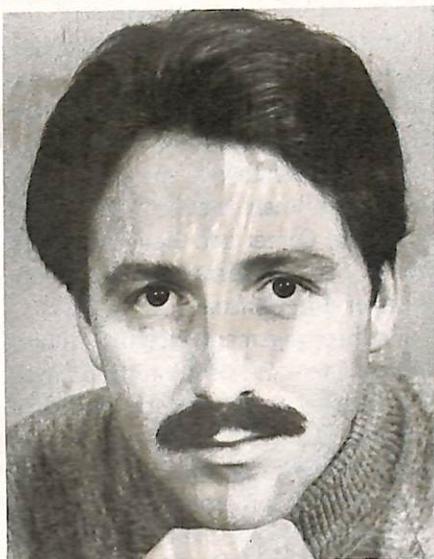
But there were nicely expressive touches of color and dramatic feeling in Negri's choral conducting that provided a depth of feeling not encountered in a typical Harwood performance.

Thus, little musical snippets like the chorale, "Since by man came death," became very memorable moments in the performance.

Soloistically, nothing much happened until soprano Faye Robinson began the recitatives that gradually led to her brightly sung "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion." Her voice steadily acquired greater focus and brilliance and her quick vibrato enabled her to naturally blend vocal ornaments into the melodic line.

The other three soloists sang with far less focus or tonal appeal on the first half, though all three improved following intermission. Technically they were hampered in various ways. Susanne Mentzer's mezzo-soprano was seated too high to handle the low range of the alto arias.

While John Gilmore's tenor had a nice dramatic tinge, his tonal volume was uneven in florid passages. Cook's often pleasant tone was marred by little rough qualities and did not project easily or flow cleanly and freely in florid arias. However, new symphony trumpeter Robert Wap played two brilliant solos.



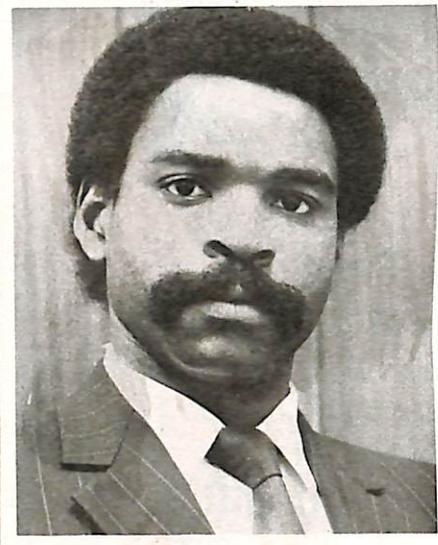
JOHN GILMORE

**YOUNG AMERICAN TENOR** John Gilmore, who made his Metropolitan Opera debut in the all-star revival of Strauss' *Die Frau ohne Schatten* in October 1981 under the baton of Erich Leinsdorf, returned to that august institution during 1982-83 for *Boris Godunov*, *Don Carlo*, *Lucia*, *Macbeth* and *Arabella*.



FAYE ROBINSON

**SOPRANO FAYE ROBINSON'S** spectacular rise to operatic stardom has been highlighted by performances in the major musical centers of Europe and the United States. She has sung leading roles with the opera companies of Hamburg, Frankfurt, Vienna, Paris, Cologne, Dusseldorf, Munich, Teatro Colon in Buenos Aires, New Orleans, Philadelphia and the New York City Opera.



TERRY COOK

**A NATIVE OF PLAINVIEW, TEXAS,** the young bass-baritone Terry Cook made his Paris Opera debut in the summer of 1983 in *Otello* and concert performances of the Verdi *Requiem*. He joined the Metropolitan Opera last season as a member of the Young Artists Development Program, makes his debut in October in *La Traviata* and in the spring sings the leading bass role in the new production of Handel's *Rinaldo*.



SUSANNE MENTZER

**I**N 1982, SUSANNE MENTZER made an auspicious debut with the Boston Symphony Orchestra at the Tanglewood Music Festival under the baton of Kurt Masur. That same year, she made her debut with the Dallas Opera under Nicola Rescigno.

# MESSIAH

AN ORATORIO  
GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL



THE ALICE AND DAVID C. BINTLIFF  
SECOND ANNUAL PRESENTATION

by The  
HOUSTON SYMPHONY CHAMBER ORCHESTRA  
AND CHORALE

is made possible by a generous gift  
from Alice and David C. Bintliff  
Long-time honored and beloved members of this church



*Wednesday, December 21, 1983*

*Seven-thirty o'clock*



FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Dr. William H. Hinson, Pastor  
Dr. Charles S. Hausmann, Director of Music Ministries

1320 Main Street

Houston, Texas

PART I

- I. SINFONIA (Overture)
- II. RECITATIVE (Tenor) *Isaiah 11: 1-3*  
Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God; speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem; and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned.  
The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.
- III. AIR (Tenor) *Isaiah 40: 4*  
Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill made low; the crooked straight, and the rough places plain.
- IV. CHORUS *Isaiah 40: 5*  
And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.
- V. RECITATIVE (Bass) *Haggai 2: 6,7 and Malachi 3:1*  
Thus saith the Lord of Hosts: - Yet once a little while and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come.  
The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his Temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in; Behold, He shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts.
- VI. AIR (Mezzo) *Malachi 3: 2*  
But who may abide the day of His coming, and who shall stand when He appeareth?  
For He is like a refiner's fire.
- VII. CHORUS *Malachi 3: 3*  
And he shall purify the sons of Levi, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.
- VIII. RECITATIVE (Mezzo) *Isaiah 7: 14 and Matthew 1: 23*  
Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call his name Emmanuel, God with us.
- IX. AIR (Mezzo) and CHORUS *Isaiah 40: 9*  
O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion, get thee up into the high mountain; O thou that tellest good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!  
Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.
- X. RECITATIVE (Bass) *Isaiah 60: 2,3*  
For, behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people. But the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee. And the gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.
- XI. AIR (Bass) *Isaiah 9: 2*  
The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; and they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.
- XII. CHORUS *Isaiah 9: 6*  
For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulder; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.
- XIII. THE PASTORAL SYMPHONY
- XIV. RECITATIVES (Soprano) *Luke: 8, 9, 10, 11, 13*  
There were shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night. And lo! the angel of the Lord came upon them and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, fear not; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.  
For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.  
And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying:
- XV. CHORUS *Luke 2: 14*  
Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth, good will towards men.
- XVI. AIR (Soprano) *Zechariah 9: 9, 10*  
Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy king cometh unto thee.  
He is the righteous Saviour, and He shall speak peace unto the heathen.

- XVII. RECITATIVE (Mezzo) *Isaiah 35: 5, 6*  
Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing.
- XVIII. AIR (Mezzo) *Isaiah 40: 11*  
He shall feed His flock like a shepherd; and He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those that are with young.
- XIX. AIR (Soprano) *Matthew 11: 28, 29*  
Come unto Him, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and He shall give you rest. Take His yoke upon you, and learn of Him; for He is meek and lowly of heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.
- XX. CHORUS *Matthew 11: 30*  
His yoke is easy, his burthen is light.

INTERMISSION  
(Fifteen Minutes)

PART II

- I. CHORUS *John 1: 29*  
Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world.
- II. AIR (Mezzo) *Isaiah 53: 3 and 50: 6*  
He was despised and rejected of men: a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.
- III. CHORUS *Isaiah 53: 6*  
All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.
- IV. RECITATIVE (Tenor) *Psalms 69: 20*  
Thy rebuke hath broken His heart; He is full of heaviness. He looked for some to have pity on Him, but there was no man; neither found He any to comfort Him.
- V. RECITATIVE (Tenor) *Isaiah 53: 8*  
He was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgression of Thy people was He stricken.
- VI. AIR (Tenor) *Psalms 16: 10*  
But Thou didst not leave His soul in hell; nor didst Thou suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption.
- VII. CHORUS *Psalms 24: 7-10*  
Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in.  
Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.  
Lift up your heads, O ye gates; be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.  
Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory.
- VIII. CHORUS *Psalms 68: 11*  
The Lord gave the word: great was the company of the preachers.
- IX. AIR (Bass) *Psalms 2: 1,2*  
Why do the nations so furiously rage together [and] why do the people imagine a vain thing?  
The kings of the earth rise up, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against His Anointed.
- X. CHORUS *Psalms 2: 3*  
Let us break their bonds asunder, and cast away their yokes from us.
- XI. RECITATIVE (Tenor) *Psalms 2: 4*  
He that dwelleth in heaven shall laugh them to scorn; the Lord shall have them in derision.
- XII. AIR (Tenor) *Psalms 2: 9*  
Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.
- XIII. CHORUS *Revelation 19: 6; 11: 15 and 19: 16.*  
HALLELUJAH! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.  
The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ: and He shall reign for ever and ever.  
KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS, HALLELUJAH!

- I. AIR (Soprano) *Job 19: 25, 26; I Corinthians 15: 20*  
I know my Redeemer liveth and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and the worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God. For now is Christ risen from the dead, the first-fruits of them that sleep.
- II. CHORUS *I Corinthians 15: 21*  
Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.
- III. RECITATIVE (Bass) *I Corinthians 15: 51, 52*  
Behold, I tell you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.
- IV. AIR (Bass) *I Corinthians 15: 52, 53*  
The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.
- V. CHORUS *Revelation 5: 12, 13*  
Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and hath redeemed us to God by His blood, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.  
Blessing and honour, glory and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever. Amen.

NOTE: The Houston Symphony is using the Tobin edition of the **Messiah**.

The performance will end at approximately 10:00 p.m.

### MESSIAH

GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL, Born Feb. 23, 1685 in Halle, Germany, Died April 14, 1759 in London.

*First performed by the Houston Symphony April 5, 1966, Sir John Barbirolli conducting; last performed Dec. 22, 1982, C. William Harwood conducting.*

In the 1730s, Handel began to turn away from the world of the opera, in which he had worked so well and so long to devote more and more of his effort during the last decades of his life, to the oratorio. This was a closely related kind of musical presentation, little different in structure and content from the opera, but requiring no costumes, scenery or staging. The subjects, generally elevated and noble, were often taken from the Bible, or sometimes from classic myths or other legends.

Handel's oratorios, and *Messiah* in particular, became the first "immortal masterpieces", music performed over and over again long after its novelty was gone, even after its composer's death. Until then, and until some 75 years after Handel had died, musical life depended principally upon novelty, on the newest, latest works. Music of the past, even of the recent past, was performed only with a sense of participating in a revival of something long gone. The current repertoire was contemporary.

The hold that Handel's oratorios had on the English people would not let go. Their popularity spread to Europe, where they inspired Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven, and over a period of time they established the idea that there was an old music too good to abandon, so good in fact, that the new music must be put aside at times.

Handel composed *Messiah* during the few weeks from Aug. 22 to Sept. 14, 1741. The text was assembled from the Bible by his friend Charles Jennens, assisted by his private chaplain and in consultation with the composer.

A few weeks after the score was completed, William Cavendish, Duke of Devonshire and Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, invited Handel to give some concerts of his music in Dublin. He left London early in November, spent a few days at Chester awaiting good weather for the Irish Sea crossing, and arrived on Nov. 18. In December, he began his successful series of subscription concerts.

On March 23, 1742, this notice appeared in two Dublin newspapers:

For the Relief of the Prisoners in the several Gaols, and for the Support of Mercer's Hospital, in Stephen's-street, and of the Charitable Infirmary on the Inn's Quay, on Monday, the 13th of April, will be performed at the Musick Hall in Fishamble-street, *Mr. Handel's new Grand Oratorio, called the Messiah*, in which the Gentlemen of the Choirs of both Cathedrals will assist, with some Concertos on the Organ, by Mr. Handel."

A public rehearsal of *Messiah* was held on April 8 before a large audience, and the next day a newspaper reported that "it was allowed by the greatest Judges to be the finest Composition of Musick that ever was heard." The paper also suggested that ladies should come to the concert without hoops and gentlemen without swords, in order to make room for a larger audience. The public cooperated and the premiere was attended by 700 people instead of the 600 the hall usually accommodated.

Handel returned to London in August, and in March 1743, he began a series of performances of *Messiah* at Covent Garden. London did not immediately share Dublin's enthusiasm, and the clergy even attempted to close the theater on the grounds that "any Work about the Omnipotent should never be performed in a playhouse."

However, Handel's old patron George II attended the London premiere, and legend has it that he was so moved by the *Hallelujah* Chorus that he rose and remained standing until its end. Of course, when the King stood up, the rest of the audience did too, and since that time, almost all audiences have.

Handel said of the *Hallelujah* that while composing it, "I did think I did see all Heaven before me, and the great God Himself!"



# HOUSTON SYMPHONY CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

Sergio Commissiona, Music Director  
Gideon Toeplitz, Executive Director

**VITTORIO NEGRI, Conducting**

## FIRST VIOLIN

Alan Traverse  
Josephine McAndrew  
Mi-Hee Chung  
Stacy Hirsch  
Barbara Shook-Cleghorn  
Amy Teare  
George Maxman  
Christine Pastorek

## SECOND VIOLIN

Charles Tabony  
Ruth Zeger  
Margaret Bragg  
Martha Chapman  
Jan Karon  
Elena Diaz  
Harvey Wechsler  
Inessa Kunin

## VIOLA

W. Brooks  
William Welch  
Phyllis Herdliska  
Joy Plesner  
Tom Molloy  
Kyla Bynum

## CELLO

Tom Bay  
Dorothy Moyes  
Kevin Dvorak  
Myung Soon Lee

## STRING BASS

Paul Ellison  
Robert Pastorek

## OBOE

Ray Weaver  
Barbara Hester

## BASSOON

Ben Kamins

## TRUMPET

Robert Walp  
Richard Schaffer

## TIMPANI

David Wuliger

## HARPSICHORD

Will Volker

## ORGAN

Harold McMannis

## HOUSTON SYMPHONY CHORALE VIRGINIA BABIKIAN, DIRECTOR

David A. Wehr  
Associate Director

J. R. Lowery  
Properties Manager

Scott Holshouser  
Accompanist

Lee Stevens  
Chorus Manager

Carolyn McShan  
Librarian

## Soprano

Diane Barton-Brown  
Ann Janzen Caito  
Nancy Cobbs  
Heidi Engleking  
Julia L. Forsythe  
Beverly Graeter  
Lori Hedrick  
Cynthia Langstaff  
Pamella J. Lyons  
Donna M. Marsh  
Mary Nepveux  
Nancy C. Philips  
Elaine A. Powers  
Denise D. Raimondo  
Nancy A. Ricca  
Lorelee J. Rude  
Jan Russell  
Pamela Wilhite

## Alto

Virginia Beilharz  
Mary Bundrick  
Nancy Cline  
Nancy Hawley  
Dottie Lytle  
Caren McCurdy  
Rosemary P. Mullin  
Kari Perkins  
Billie Roark  
Lynda Sparks  
Paula Spiegel  
Urara Vella  
Lori White

## Tenor

Robert Browning  
David W. Carter  
Phil Crichton  
Anthony Denmore  
Mike Duffy  
James J. Feeney  
John C. Flanagan  
Joel A. Framm  
David H. Langstaff  
W. J. Laughlin  
Tom Milner  
David G. Nussmann  
Tony Vazquez  
Larry Ward  
Jarrad Williams  
Jon-Gregoir Williams

## Bass

Bob Acosta  
Forbes Alcott  
Paul Becker  
Bruce Boyle  
J. Wesley Brown  
A. W. Buescher  
William K. Cheadle  
Donald Conrad  
Kenneth Cordray  
John Eastlund  
Bill Goddard  
Roger W. Green  
Strait Hicklin  
Paul Hyde  
Richard Ivy  
John M. Kilgore  
Robert Q. Kluttz  
J. R. Lowery  
Tom Merrill  
Sterling A. Neblett, Jr.  
Daniel J. Shea  
Philip Smith  
Bob Wilbur  
James Wilhite  
Stan W. Yoder

# IN MEMORIAM: GENERAL MAURICE HIRSCH

**T**he Houston Symphony lost its oldest and dearest friend on Friday, Aug. 6, when Gen. Maurice Hirsch passed away in Hong Kong.

The general suffered a heart attack at the hotel where he and his beloved wife, Winifred, were staying in Hong Kong on a trip around the world with some of their many friends. He was 93 years old, but his spry personality belied that fact.

The general was president emeritus of the Houston Symphony, having served as its president for 14 years, from 1956 to 1970, as well as being a lifetime member of the Symphony board.

A native of Houston, the general was born Jan. 13, 1890. A founder of the law firm Hirsch, Westheimer, Block and Wilk, he began practicing law in Houston in 1914.

General Hirsch was acclaimed by one and all for his outstanding support of the Houston Symphony Orchestra during its growing-up years and since that time. The general's mother was a member of the first board of directors of the Symphony Society, of which Gen. Hirsch became vice-president in 1953, and later, president.

As the *Houston Post* noted, in its tribute to Gen. Hirsch on Aug. 6, "It was the period he served as president of the society which included the terms of three of the society's most internationally famed conductors: Leopold Stokowski, Sir John Barbirolli and Andre Previn. The 14 years he headed the organization were important years in the growth of the orchestra's national and international reputation."

Mrs. J. Griffith Lawhon, a member of the Houston Symphony League since its inception, and a member of the board of the Women's Committee which preceded the League, has many fond memories of Gen. Hirsch. "We all



GENERAL MAURICE HIRSCH

loved him," she said recently. "He and Winifred have always been invaluable to us all these years they have been supporting Symphony activities.

"Of course, the general had worked on the Symphony board for many years before he became its president. All during those years he and his wife entertained many people for the Symphony. You could always count on the Hirsches, as we in the Women's Committee used to say. They would entertain the orchestra's guest artists and conductors and be delighted to do it. The general was always at every meeting and always quite active in every respect."

Another esteemed Symphony supporter, Mrs. Albert Jones, also associated closely with the Hirsches in the early years of the Symphony as a Women's Committee president. "The general was always there for us, just like Miss Ima (Hogg, who preceded Gen. Hirsch as president of the Symphony.) Whenever we were looking for some-

body to do one of the big jobs, no one ever said 'no' to Miss Ima and Gen. Hirsch. It was their unique, personal touch that mattered so much in those days."

During the orchestra's recent 70th anniversary celebration, the general was lauded for his tremendous support of the Symphony over the years. His assistance toward all the arts in the Houston community was legend. Besides the Symphony, he also took on a leadership role with the Houston Museum of Fine Arts, Houston Grand Opera, the Society for the Performing Arts, and the International Council of the Museum of Modern Art in New York. A Rice University Associate, Gen. Hirsch was a great supporter of that educational institution as well. He also worked hard to help Houston develop its park system.

The U.S. Army bestowed its Distinguished Service Medal to him in 1945 for his work on the War Contracts Price Adjustment Board, saying the then-colonel performed "extremely valuable service in bringing private industry and the government together in a common endeavor to wage war at defensible costs to the taxpayer." In 1946, he was nominated by then-President Harry Truman to the rank of brigadier general due to his work on the board.

Terrylin Neale, president of the Houston Grand Opera Association, dedicated the 1983 Opera Ball to Maurice and Winifred Hirsch, "our beloved friends." She noted that "the footsteps behind mark the path ahead... Certainly Maurice and Winifred have set an example for us all in their devotion to Houston and in knowing that it takes tremendous philanthropy to establish a thriving cultural base for the city. Their 'footprints' provide a sure direction for us all to explore and pursue in the years ahead."