

**“Blumine” from Symphony No. 1 in D Major****Gustav Mahler**

Blumine (flower piece) was the title of a rejected second movement of Mahler's first symphony. This symphony was composed between 1884 and 1888 and is sometimes referred to as the “Titan” due to its original idea as a tone poem based loosely on Jean Paul's novel, “Titan.” Premiered in 1889, the symphony was not a success. Mahler revised the score and five years later it received audience approval. However, after three performances in Germany, Mahler dropped the Blumine part of this symphony and the work was not rediscovered until 1966. Blumine originates from some incidental music Mahler wrote for Joseph von Scheffeld's poem “Der Trumpeter von Sakkingen.” Originally scored for small orchestra with a gentle lyrical trumpet serenade sounding much like a post horn, it was a contrast to the rest of this massive work. It is seldom included today when the symphony is performed.

**Chrysanthemum****Giacomo Puccini**

Few listeners know that Puccini wrote music other than his famous operas. His talent was in the theatre, but he also had an understanding of the string quartet and wrote five of these works. Chrysanthemum, said to have been written in one night, was an elegy composed in 1890 as a tribute on the death of the Duke of Savoy. This lovely one movement piece with its so melodies spun out served Puccini in the last act of his opera “Manon Lescaut” composed in 1893. Written for string quartet it is heard in an arrangement for string orchestra.

**Habenera and Seguedilla from “Carmen”****Georges Bizet**

Bizet's opera Carmen is a classic in the opera world. Setting Merrimee's story to music, Bizet exploited to the fullest his flair for dramatic musical characterization and brilliant orchestration. His use of long flowing melodic lines had critics accusing him of “Wagnerism” and they also dislike the unhappy ending. However, Carmen soon became a favorite.

The Habanera is from Act I. The workers from the cigarette factory gather in the square to take a break. The men tease Carmen and ask when she will

give her heart. In this famous Habanera she declares it might be today or tomorrow or never. She compares love to a bird that can't be caught, or to a gypsy, wild and free. When the workers return to the factory Carmen tosses the flower from her hair to a young soldier, Don Jose.

The Seguedilla is also from the latter part of Act I. There is a commotion in the factory as Carmen and Manuelita have traded insults and gotten in a fight. They are brought to the square where Carmen brazenly ignores the commander of the troops and hums to herself. In exasperation he bids Don Jose to tie her hands and take her to jail. Carmen then sings the Seguidilla in which she urges him to free her and come with her for a life of love and freedom. He succumbs to her wiles and loosens the ropes and she escapes.

### **The Birds**

### **Ottorino Respighi**

Ottorino Respighi was brought up in Bologna, Italy in an artistic family. His father taught him piano, but his main musical studies were concentrated on the violin. He was encouraged to pursue literary and philosophical studies as well. He made his debut as a concert violinist in a recital which also included some of his own compositions. In 1900 he went to Russia to play in the Imperial Theatre orchestra in St. Petersburg. He met Rimsky-Korsakov in his subsequent years in Russia and learned much of his brilliant orchestration from this master. In 1913 he was appointed Professor of Composition at the Academy of St. Cecilia in Rome. Always interested in the past, he spent many hours in libraries searching for old forgotten manuscripts of music. This passion came to fruition in 1927 with his suite *The Birds*.

The Prelude, with its evocative five note motive which is used throughout the work, was from Bernardo Pasquini (1637-1710)

The Dove is based on a 17th century lute piece by Jacques de Gallot. Oboe and flute solos are accompanied by muted strings.

The Hen is based on a work by the famous French composer Rameau. Woodwinds are employed against clucking sounds in the strings. At the close the clarinet sounds an indigent note announcing the arrival of the rooster.

The Nightingale features the woodwinds and horn to create the delicate sound of this bird. The celesta adds to its song.

The Cuckoo is a return to the opening theme and ingeniously varying all the birds including the two note call of the cuckoo. This final movement ties the entire suite together.

### **El Amor Brujo**

### **Manuel de Falla**

Spanish composer Manuel de Falla was taught piano by his mother. As he progressed rapidly he was sent to more specialized teachers. In 1896 he went to Madrid to study composition and moved to Paris in 1907. Here he met Debussy, Ravel, and Paul Dukas and came under the influence of impressionism. They encouraged him to compose using his own nationalistic style. In 1914 he returned to Spain to the Andalusian area. When the Spanish Civil War broke out he moved to Argentina, never to return to his homeland.

*El Amor Brujo* was commissioned in 1914-15 by Pastora Imperio, renowned gypsy flamenco dancer. Scored for voice, actors, and chamber orchestra, the first performance was not a success. A year later de Falla revised the work for symphony orchestra. Eventually it was also made into a ballet. The music is Andalusian in character with remarkable originality.

The story is about Candela a young Andalusian gypsy girl. Her unfaithful husband has died and she has fallen in love with Carmelo. The husband comes back to haunt the couple. The gypsies form a circle around the campfire at midnight.

Candela steps into the circle to perform The Ritual Fire Dance which makes the ghost appear. She dances with the ghost and as they whirl around faster and faster the magic of the fire dance causes the ghost to be drawn into the fire and vanish.

Program Notes by Annette Albright