

George ENESCU (1881-1955)

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| 1 | Rumanian Rhapsody No.1 | 9:55 |
| | Recorded - 20 February 1947 | |

Alexander BORODIN (1833-1887)

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| 2 | Dances of the Polovetzki Maidens (arr. Stokowski) | 12:49 |
| | Recorded - 27 November 1949 | |

Claude DEBUSSY (1862-1918)

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| 3 | The Engulfed Cathedral (orch. Stokowski) | 6:52 |
| | Recorded - 13 February 1947 | |

Marion BAUER (1882-1955)

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| 4 | Sun Splendor, Op.19c | 8:40 |
| | Recorded - 25 October 1947 - World Premiere | |

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| 5 | Announcer | 1:01 |
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Benjamin BRITTEN (1913-1976)

Piano Concerto, Op.13

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| 6 | I. Toccata: Allegro molto e con brio | 11:22 |
| 7 | II. Waltz: Allegretto | 4:47 |
| 8 | III. Impromptu: Andante lento | 7:01 |
| 9 | IV. March: Allegro moderato sempre a la marcia | 7:21 |

Recorded - 27 November 1949 - First US broadcast

JACQUES ABRAM, piano [6-9]
PHILHARMONIC-SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA OF NEW YORK
LEOPOLD STOKOWSKI



**LEOPOLD
STOKOWSKI**

BRITTEN

Piano Concerto

ENESCU

Rumanian Rhapsody No.1

BORODIN

Dances of the
Polovetzki Maidens

DEBUSSY

The Engulfed Cathedral

BAUER

Sun Splendor

JACQUES ABRAM piano
**PHILHARMONIC-SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA OF NEW YORK**

Recorded 1947 & 1949



A GUILD HISTORICAL RELEASE

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have appealed to Stokowski's character to the point where he would wish to investigate it further. It remains a pity that this remarkable score is not better-known (students of 20th-century American music would do well to consider Bauer's influence upon her younger contemporaries as exemplified by *Sun Splendor*) – and, in the absence of a published score, we can readily appreciate Stokowski's commitment to the work. This dramatic score remains unpublished, which has meant that performances have been very few indeed since Stokowski's premiere, but one hopes that the issue of this recording will encourage the work of this remarkable musical figure to be investigated fully and take its rightful place in the pantheon of twentieth-century American composers.

We can also appreciate Stokowski's commitment to the final work here, Benjamin Britten's Piano Concerto Opus 13. This Concerto was written in 1938 and first performed in London at the Henry Wood Promenade concerts that season with Britten himself as soloist. During the next few years, he was to play the Concerto around a dozen times, in Europe and in the United States (to where Britten had emigrated in 1939). Britten had returned to England in 1942, at the height of the war, and in 1946 issued a revised version of the work, with a completely new third movement, 'Impromptu', replacing the original 'Recitative and Aria'.

It is this revised version that the brilliant young American pianist Jacques Abram plays with Stokowski. A year before this New York performance, Abram had given the American premiere of the revised Concerto in Salt Lake City under Maurice Abravanel; the performance on this record is of the New York premiere. Abram made his name in this work, playing it in London at the 1952 Henry Wood Proms (in a concert which also included Britten's Violin Concerto, played by Bronislaw Gimpel) and in January 1956 he made the first recording of the Piano Concerto for HMV with the Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Herbert Menges.

This 1949 New York performance is of exceptional interest in that it was only one of three occasions that Stokowski conducted the Concerto – Britten had celebrated his 36th birthday just five days before. As so often with Stokowski in partnership with a concerto soloist, and despite the relative unfamiliarity of the music for the orchestra, the performance is a fine one indeed as we may still appreciate through the radio recording of the time – the engineers almost getting caught out by the sudden beginning to the work: no chance of a retake here!

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When, after a quarter of a century, Leopold Stokowski left his position as conductor of the Philadelphia Orchestra in the late 1930s, his international reputation was assured, reinforced by a long series of recordings for the RCA-Victor company. Those 78rpm records, which were distributed worldwide outside of the United States by 'His Master's Voice', include some of the most famous ever made, but perhaps the most remarkable aspect of Stokowski's early discography was the wide range of the repertoire he covered. It remains an extraordinary, and certainly a unique, achievement, the more so when we consider that today – 80 or 90 years after that series of recordings was under way – a number of the more unfamiliar works in that discography remain the only recordings ever made of those scores.

From the first, it would seem, Stokowski was never a conductor who relied on what might be termed the standard repertoire as the basis for his programming: of course, the normal orchestral repertoire featured in his concerts, and in those early recordings – for example, it is not generally known that Stokowski was the first conductor in the history of the gramophone to make an integral recording of the symphonies of Brahms. In his concert-giving he gave either the American or world premieres of many works now regarded as staples of the repertoire – with Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* and Eighth Symphony, Elgar's Second Symphony, Rachmaninoff's Third Symphony, Shostakovich's First, Sixth and Eleventh Symphonies, among them. Stokowski was the only conductor to perform all of Schoenberg's orchestral music during the composer's lifetime (he also conducted the world premieres of the composer's Violin Concerto and Piano Concerto). But alongside the staple repertoire of the Austro-Germanic, French and Russian-Scandinavian traditions – and those works which Stokowski introduced which have also joined the repertoire – we may set a long list of compositions by contemporary composers which he not only programmed but also recorded in the decades before World War II.

There would appear to have been almost something inherently newsworthy about every Stokowski concert, reinforced in the public's mind by newspaper coverage of extra-musical events with which his name was associated, and a number of appearances by him in Hollywood films. Those to whom the appreciation of 'classical music' should always be approached as though the listeners were in church might have felt that certain aspects of Stokowski's career were counter-productive in that regard, but the musical facts speak for themselves, and his legacy of commercial recordings and surviving broadcasts attest to a musician who demonstrably possessed the highest gifts.

But to leave the Philadelphia Orchestra after 25 years may not have been the best moment to do so. Stokowski had certainly raised the orchestra to a position of international pre-eminence, yet the number of comparable American orchestras was less than could be counted upon the fingers of one hand – and each (with the exception of the sudden resignation of Arturo Toscanini from the Philharmonic-Symphony of New York in 1936, leaving a gap soon to be replaced by the young and relatively unknown Englishman, John Barbirolli) was headed by an established conductor of renown. What neither Stokowski – nor anyone else, for that matter – could have foreseen was the outbreak across Europe in September 1939 of World War II, and the immediate consequence of the removal from consideration of a post with any established European orchestra.

The combined factors of Stokowski's eminence, the broad base of his programming, and the lack of opportunity to take up a new appointment of comparable importance would, by 1940, have discouraged any person of less inherent self-belief, experience or proven musicianship. But thirty-five years earlier, in 1905, the 23-year-old Leopold Stokowski had arrived in New York from London, a graduate of the Royal College of Music and of the Royal College of Organists, to take up a post at St Bartholomew's Church in Manhattan.

He had never conducted an orchestra, but during those next 35 years he had become one of the most famous, and one of the finest, conductors in the world. Yet with such inner self-belief as Stokowski possessed could even he have imagined in 1940 that he would have a further 35 years of creative life to look forward to? We cannot answer that, but the inner confidence any creative artist has clearly enabled Stokowski to pursue his post-Philadelphia career with the same certainties that he had demonstrated earlier. Thus it was that during World War II and in the years immediately following, the concerts Stokowski gave were in essence little different from those that had made and enhanced his reputation in Philadelphia: only the orchestras had changed.

The performances on this CD come from four concerts given in Carnegie Hall by Stokowski with the Orchestra of the Philharmonic-Symphony Society of New York (to give the correct title of an orchestra then almost invariably known as the New York Philharmonic – that title was officially adopted in 1959). These concerts took place in the post-war era, from 1947 and 1949, and although the five works here do not all come from the same programme, their variety, and the relatively rarity of the appearance of several of them in concert programmes, are on the one hand not at all untypical

of Stokowski's programme content during his Philadelphia years and on the other of the kind that an audience, drawn perhaps by more familiar items in the concert would not feel discomfited by.

The collection also demonstrates that – a decade or more after leaving the Philadelphia Orchestra – Stokowski was still keen to promote music that for one reason or another he felt was unjustly neglected or otherwise merited performance before the American public. But of course, this did not preclude works that were known and perhaps already part of the general repertoire, and it is interesting to see how Stokowski programmed the various works in our collection.

George Enescu's two Rumanian Rhapsodies, which constitute his Opus 11, date from 1901: they are his most famous compositions, especially No 1, which is one of the most brilliant of all shorter folk-based orchestral works. Stokowski had programmed it frequently during his Philadelphia years, yet – curiously – was not to record it until February 1947 (two years before this New York Philharmonic concert), with 'his' Symphony Orchestra (as it was termed) – an orchestra comprised mainly of musicians from the New York Philharmonic and NBC Symphony Orchestras with whom he particularly enjoyed working, and which was brought together solely for recording. In the 1949 concert, Enescu's Rhapsody closed the programme, succeeding Prokofiev's Third Piano Concerto played by the brilliantly-gifted but tragically short-lived American virtuoso William Kapell.

Two exceptionally well-known short orchestral pieces follow, both in arrangements by Stokowski himself: the *Polovtsian Dances* from Borodin's *Prince Igor* opera, and Debussy's *La cathédrale engloutie* ('The Sunken Cathedral' as the New York Philharmonic had its English title), orchestrated from the first book of *Préludes*, and although these items were well known to concert-goers (and record collectors) at the time, the tone poem *Sun Splendor* by the American composer and musicologist Marion Bauer certainly was not.

This remarkable work, the composer's Opus 19, appears to date from 1936: the uncertainty surrounding the year of composition arises from the fact the Bauer did not fully orchestrate the work until much later: in fact, this 1947 New York performance is believed to be the world premiere of the orchestral version, a score which was not, at that time, published. It further seems that Stokowski himself had to draw up several of the orchestral parts for this performance.

Whatever the provenance of the work, there is no doubt that the conductor's belief in the music was well-founded. Bauer was a truly remarkable figure, whose individuality would doubtless