

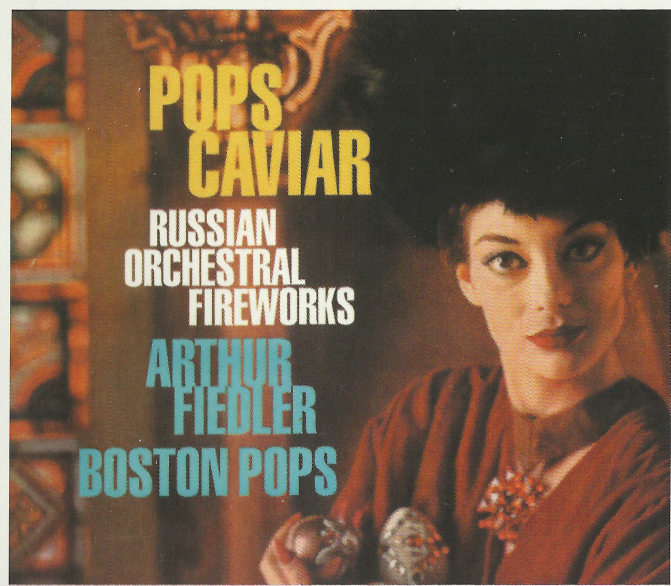


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SUPER AUDIO CD



ALEXANDER BORODIN (1833-1887)

- 1 In the Steppes of Central Asia 7:42

NIKOLAI RIMSKY-KORSAKOV (1844-1908)

- 2 Russian Easter Overture 13:22

BORODIN

Prince Igor

- 4 Overture 10:07
5 Polovtsian Dances 11:03
(Recorded June 20 & 21, 1957)



3

ARAM KHACHATURIAN (1903-1978)

Gayane

- 5 Lullaby 4:57
6 Lezghinka 2:48
7 Dance of the Rose Maidens 2:03
8 Dance of the Kurds 1:58
9 Sabre Dance 2:28
(Recorded May 23, 1958)

RIMSKY-KORSAKOV

- 10 **Tsar Saltan:** The Flight of the Bumblebee 1:26
(Recorded May 30, 1958)

PIOTR IL'YICH TCHAIKOVSKY (1840-1893)

- 11 **Eugene Onegin:** Polonaise 4:34
(Recorded June 27, 1958)
- 12 **The Sleeping Beauty:** Waltz 4:32

KHACHATURIAN

- 13 **Masquerade Suite:** Galop 2:40
(Recorded June 25, 1959)

Boston Pops Orchestra
Arthur Fiedler, conductor
(Recorded Symphony Hall, Boston)

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It would be difficult to select from the symphonic literature of the world works which could set forth more brilliantly the power and glory of orchestral music; difficult to find the equal of these performers and these performances; impossible to surpass the convincing facsimile which this recording projects of the endless variety, color, character and peculiar powers of each orchestral instrument and of the *tout ensemble*. Rimsky-Korsakov and Borodin were distinguished masters of orchestration—Rimsky-Korsakov perhaps the greatest in the history of music; the present works are among the most effective of either composer; the orchestra has few peers, and the conductor, in his *métier*, none. The recording, literally, speaks for itself.

The Soviet government created in its capital a monument to Alexander Porfirievich Borodin, "man of science." Eminent though Borodin was as the

author of such treatises as *The Solidification of Aldehydes and Researches on the Fluoride of Benzol*, and as a founder of the School of Medicine for Women, it seems probable that he may be longer remembered for his music—precisely for the music we have here, or even for his contribution to a set of paraphrases on the good old tune *Chopsticks*.

The Overture to *Prince Igor* is perhaps unique in that it was never written down by the composer, but is, in effect, a synthesis of themes from the opera as Glazunov and Rimsky-Korsakov remembered hearing them played on the piano by the composer, plus certain other material from the opera. The background of the opera is historical; it treats of the military exploits of Igor, Prince of Novgorod, against the Polovtsi tribes in the twelfth century. It is rich in scenes of romantic love, and of military and courtly magnificence under fierce patriotic passions.

The darkly melancholy opening is related to Igor's grief because of defeat in battle; the violent passages suggest the battle and victory of the Polovtsi Khan.

The *Polovtsian Dances* are in the second act, where they are interspersed with choral parts, these usually omitted in concert performances. The Polovtsi were nomad tribes inhabiting the steppes of far eastern Russia. Their dances vary in rhythm and significance. There are dances of wild men, of young boys and girls, of slave girls and prisoners, dances to celebrate the victories of the great Khan, and a wild general dance. The occasion for the dances is the feast Konchak Khan, chief of the Polovtsi, devises for the entertainment of Igor, whom he has captured but regards highly as warrior and man.

The Steppes is frankly program music, music that is expected to tell a story—which indeed it does, if you know the story. It would be more suggestive if we

were to regard it, rather, as limning a picture—which, by its wonderful employment of instrumental resources and strangely fascinating harmony, it does magnificently. Certainly the unending distance and unchanging face of the vast steppes, their monotony and agonizing loneliness, are suggested with inspired simplicity in the fifty-three measures with violins on a high "E" that establish the atmosphere of desolateness at the beginning. Various instruments and groups of instruments—English horn, solo oboe, violins in unison, and the like—suggest the songs of the Russians and the Asiatics who meet on the common ground of the steppes; and in the low strings pizzicati one may imagine the stately stride of camels and the nervous footsteps of horses. But the composer himself, on the flyleaf of his score, gives us a description:

"Over the sandy steppes of Central Asia come the unwanted sounds of a

peaceful Russian song. From the distance are heard the stamping of horses and camels and the peculiar sound of an Oriental melody. A native caravan draws near. It pursues its way, safe and free from care through the boundless desert under the protection of Russian arms. It moves farther and farther away. The song of the Russians and the melody of the Asiatics combine to form a common harmony, the sounds of which are gradually lost in the air of the steppe."

Rimsky-Korsakov's *Russian Easter Overture* is thrilling music—music that in its solemnity, abandon, austerity, feverish gaiety, breathless quiet and mighty sonorities, exploits the resources of the modern orchestra as very few compositions do. Phrases from two ancient Russian hymns—*Let God Arise!* and *An Angel Mourned*—are the basis of the solemn introduction. These phrases encyst the germs of the restless figures that later

rage so furiously through the music. Sonorous brasses declaim, and the orchestral choirs as piously respond. There are in the music, says the composer, recollections of the gloom that overlay the sepulcher of Christ after the Resurrection, when His friends came and found the tomb empty. But these do not endure for long. At the realization of the Resurrection, the central proof of redemption according to Christian belief, joy is unbridled, frantic, wild. A short solo for timpani quietly establishes the rhythm and inaugurates the pace for the remainder of the overture, which is a gorgeous orgy of orchestral sound, rising to a whirling climax of electric brilliance and crushing power.

FROM NOTES BY GERALD GOODE (1959)

When the ballet *Gayane* was first performed, at the Kirov Theatre in Leningrad on December 9, 1942, Aram Khachaturian was already a distinguished Soviet composer, his forte being the skillful use of the folk elements of his native Armenia in music of classical forms. Born in Tiflis in 1903, the son of a bookbinder, Khachaturian acquired no technical knowledge of music until the age of nineteen when he entered the Moscow State Conservatory. After his First Symphony and his Piano Concerto he was awarded the Order of Lenin for cultural services to Armenia. His Violin Concerto later became an international concert item, and his first ballet, *Happiness*, was a distinct success. *Gayane*, his second ballet, won him a Stalin Prize; the *Sabre Dance* by itself cut a worldwide swath of popularity. The action of the ballet is perhaps too

ponderous for the Western taste. The heroine, *Gayane*, is an honest working girl married to *Giko*, a drunkard and hence a poor patriot. To charges that he is faithless to his fellow workers, *Giko* replies by setting fire to bales of collective cotton. He takes flight just as *Kazakov*, commander of a Red Army border patrol, comes to the rescue. Once *Giko* is exiled, there is not a fraction of a doubt who will marry the straightforward and lovely *Gayane*. Nonetheless, Khachaturian's score is electrifying.

The *Flight of the Bumblebee* is the most famous of the orchestral excerpts Rimsky-Korsakov extracted from *Tsar Sultan*, one of his magical operas, this one set in the enchanted kingdom of Tmutarakhan. The Tsar's wife and infant son are banished as a result of machinations by the Tsaritsa's two sisters. The child grows into a noble youth and wants to see his native land. The Swan Princess changes him into a great bumblebee, a versatile form in which he explores the court at Tmutarakhan unrecognized.

Another orchestral piece frequently played apart from its opera is the *Polonaise* from Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*. Tatiana, the opera's heroine, is rebuffed by Onegin, whom she has vowed will be the love of her life. The final act, however, finds Tatiana married to another man, and she sees Onegin again at a party in her St. Petersburg

home. This time, though she still loves him, she turns him away. A ballet is performed at the party to the *Polonaise*.

Despite the failure of *Swan Lake* in Moscow, Tchaikovsky was commissioned to write a ballet for St. Petersburg, to a scenario based on Charles Perrault's fairy tale of the enchanted princess and her awakener. Tchaikovsky regarded the score as one of his finest; however, those who attended the premiere in 1890 did not respond, much to the composer's disappointment. But, with the most stimulating, colorful and melodious music ever written for dance, *The Sleeping Beauty* established itself in Russia and around the world. The immortal *Waltz* is danced in the garden of the royal palace by villagers who have come to help celebrate Princess Aurora's sixteenth birthday.

In 1939 Khachaturian wrote a set of entr'actes and interludes for a Moscow production of Lermontov's *Masquerade*.

The composer abandoned the lure of his native Armenia to succumb to the broader Western tradition of Glinka, Borodin and Tchaikovsky, for the setting of the tragedy is not the exotic terrain of south Russia but an early nineteenth-century Russia of titled gamblers and sumptuous masquerades—of sophisticated passion and intrigue. Lermontov indicts the festive glitter and masked pretense beneath which lurk coarseness and hypocrisy. From his incidental music Khachaturian assembled a concert suite, the final section of which is *Galop*, a racing tour de force crisscrossed with slashing rhythms and snarling colors.

Arthur Fiedler, the best-selling conductor in history and director of the Boston Pops for 50 years, was born in Boston in 1894 and began to study the violin with his father; after high school he continued his musical training—piano and conducting as well as violin—in Berlin. He began his illustrious career in 1915 as a violinist with the Boston Symphony Orchestra. During his years with the BSO, he organized and conducted the Boston Sinfonietta. In 1929 he founded the famous Esplanade concerts and began his lifelong commitment to bring "light" classical music to the public. A year later he was appointed music director of the Boston Pops, a post he held until his death in 1979.

In his 50 seasons with the Pops, Arthur Fiedler forged a musical legacy that, through concerts, television and radio broadcasts, and recordings brought the

joy of classical music to millions of Americans. His record albums, featuring classical favorites, orchestral settings of Broadway show tunes, pop songs, jazz standards and patriotic music, sold almost 50 million copies during his career, a level of popular acclaim that may never be challenged. His love for all musical styles and his remarkable ability to communicate the universality of the musical language were legendary, as were his charming performance demeanor and his commitment to the people of Boston. And Boston returned this affection; during the Bicentennial celebration of July 1976, over 400,000 people gathered to hear one of Mr. Fiedler's last Esplanade concerts, and gave him a standing ovation that lasted well into the night.

Arthur Fiedler's penchant for the light classic was matched by his voracious appetite for new orchestral works. He "discovered" and recorded many,

including Jacob Gade's *Jalousie*, RCA's first classical recording to sell one million copies. His love for music and commitment to his audience remains a model for any musician, and every American who loves classical music owes him an incalculable debt.

THE HISTORY OF LIVING STEREO

On October 6, 1953, RCA Victor made its first experimental "binaural" recordings. At New York's Manhattan Center, Leopold Stokowski conducted a pick-up orchestra in Enesco's *Roumanian Rhapsody No. 1* and Tchaikovsky's *Waltz from Eugene Onegin*. In December RCA continued stereo tests in Manhattan Center with Pierre Monteux and members of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Then, in February 1954, RCA took equipment to Boston's Symphony Hall, where Charles Munch and the Boston Symphony were recording Berlioz's *The Damnation of Faust*. For the first time, RCA engineers captured the performance on both mono and two track tape. These experiments, combined with further technological refinements employed in Chicago's Orchestra Hall in March 1954, were the first forays into the world of stereo.

At the time that RCA initiated multi-track sessions, disc mastering and consumer playback technology were monaural. RCA Victor proceeded to use two- and three-track equipment to record the world's greatest artists—Heifetz, Piatigorsky, Reiner, Munch, Rubinstein, Fiedler—in anticipation that home technology would catch up to stereo sound. Finally, in 1955, 1/4" 7 1/2ips stereo-phonetic tape players arrived on the consumer market, and RCA released its first Stereo Orthophonic tapes.

Stereo Orthophonic tapes redefined high fidelity. In 1958, the Western Electric Company produced the breakthrough Westrex stereo disc cutter, thereby revolutionizing master disc production. Stereo playback equipment was developed to coincide with the new disc cutting technology. The same year, Living Stereo LP records were launched, ushering in the golden age of stereo high fidelity.