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NIKOLAI RIMSKY-KORSAKOV (1844-1908)

Le Coq d'or—Suite

- 1 King Dodon in his Palace 9:43
- 2 King Dodon on the Battlefield 4:45
- 3 King Dodon with the Queen of Shemakha 6:59
- 4 March 3:34

(Recorded November 25, 1956)

GIOACHINO ROSSINI (1792-1868)

- 5 **William Tell Overture** 11:46

(Recorded November 26, 1956)



3

PIOTR IL'YICH TCHAIKOVSKY (1840-1893)

- 6 **Marche slave** 9:41

(Recorded November 26, 1956)

EMMANUEL CHABRIER (1841-1894)

- 7 **España** 6:22

(Recorded June 26, 1958)

FRANZ LISZT (1811–1886)

8 Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2 9:34

Pasquale Cardillo, clarinet

(Recorded January 3, 1960)

9 Rákóczy March 6:42

(Recorded January 4, 1960)

Boston Pops Orchestra

Arthur Fiedler, conductor

(Recorded Symphony Hall, Boston)

Produced by Richard Mohr

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These were original three-track stereo recordings; in SACD multi-channel mode, the music will be heard only from the front left, center and right channels.

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The close link between the Boston Pops Orchestra's conductor and high-fidelity recording was established long ago, when the term "hi-fi" was scarcely known outside professional engineering circles. The title above, indeed, might well be applied to the whole Fiedlerian discography, which, from its beginnings over twenty years ago, has consistently exemplified the dramatic progress of audio technology in ever-more-faithful reproduction of authentic tonal qualities. Its use here, however, has special pertinence and timeliness, since the present three recordings have been specifically designed to demonstrate the newest heights yet attainable in the never-ending but ever-closer approach to perfect sonic replicas of the original "live" symphonic performances.

Yet to focus attention exclusively on sensational sound qualities (scintillating high and subterranean low frequencies, dynamic contrasts between barely audible

pianissimos and overwhelming *fortissimos*, or even the immaculate purity of tones unflawed by any kind of distortion) would dilute if not falsify the basic implications of "fidelity"—fidelity to the composers' and conductor's intentions, which are not only to create pleasurable sound patterns, but to endow those patterns with infectious feeling and eloquent meaning. Like all good recorded music, the works played here can be fully appreciated only by listeners completely responsive to *what* is expressed, as well as wholly alert to *how* it is inflected, phrased, and colored. And it is the supreme virtue of hi-fi not to command admiration for itself alone, but for serving as the crystal-transparent medium through which the listener can establish seemingly direct and intimate contact with the living air-borne music.

In the Suite of four tableaux from Rimsky-Korsakov's last, posthumous opera, *Le coq d'or* (1910), it is perhaps most difficult—and least necessary—to minimize the rôle

of hi-fi, since it is so obviously the composer's intention not merely to enchant his listeners with exotic melodies and toe-tickling rhythms, but also to depict kaleidoscopic tonal scenes whose magical coloring and drama would be lost unless his sonic palette is reproduced in all its vibrant polychromatic piquancy. The atmosphere is established less by the fantastic story here (of King Dodon slumbering in his castle until awakened by the Golden Cockerel's warning...of the King's arrival at the battlefield where his sons lie slain...his dancing with the Queen of Shemakha...their festive Bridal Procession and the King's fatal end) than it is by Rimsky-Korsakov's incredibly imaginative exploitation of instrumental timbre potentialities, every nuance of which (from the "loud-muted" trumpet warning to the tiniest triangle tinkle and tambourine "chink") adds a fleck of impressionistic color indispensable both to the tone-painting itself and to the listener's delighted aural titillation.

In the more familiar Overture to Rossini's *William Tell* (1829) and Tchaikovsky's *Marche slave* (1876), the strictly colorist elements ordinarily are taken for granted, or even ignored, by listeners primarily captivated by the irresistible appeal of the salient melodies. Here it is hi-fi's special function to restore the original fresh zestfulness with which these works electrified their first hearers, and incidentally to rehabilitate the fame of Rossini and Tchaikovsky as orchestrators. It is only necessary to compare piano or other transcriptions of these scores to comprehend how much is lost when only the bare skeletons are preserved, divested of the glowing flesh, blood and muscularity realized by Rossini's divided cellos, plaintive English horn, and rousing trumpet fanfares, or by Tchaikovsky's groaning low strings, plangent brasses, and jubilant percussion.

Spanish dance tunes, native or invented, are the material for Chabrier's *España* rhapsody, where they are presented in many orchestral tints and move at a vivid assortment of paces. This widely acclaimed music has the kaleidoscopic freedom to which a first-rate rhapsody is entitled, and it all might have been written with hi-fi in prospect. Immediately, as the needle meets the rhapsody, there is a ringing pizzicato in all the strings, and the impression of a guitar band sets in. From there on, everything seems to sing and dance.

There is a comfortable magic about this music by Franz Liszt. The magic is in the drama and sparkle of the scores, which continue, about a century after their creation, to hold potent charm—and even surprises—for many listeners. The comfortable quality lies in the solidity of this music. It is good company. Here

is music with variety of color, sentiment and sound...a wide span, from the sturdy thrusts of the heroic themes to the whimsicalities of the lighter moments in the *Hungarian Rhapsody*. Whatever its moods, it is always on friendly listening terms with the hearer. One may accept these compositions in terms of beautiful sound, and they will prove highly rewarding on this premise. There are, of course, many other grounds for consideration, both in content and technique, and there are many details of particular interest for the analytical auditor. The works of Liszt make up a huge catalogue, and they range from the massive to the *morceau*. There is a great range of appeal in this roster; and there is also a wide range of attraction within many of the individual writings—as in the orchestral offerings here brought to you by Arthur Fiedler and the Boston Pops.

The second *Hungarian Rhapsody*, like all of the Liszt rhapsodies which have orchestral editions, made its first appearance as piano music, and was scored for orchestra by Liszt and Franz Doppler. Like its fellow rhapsodies it is stylistically improvisatory, dealing with the melodic and rhythmic vocabulary of Hungarian folk music.

The *Rákóczy March*, too, received both pianistic and orchestral presentation by Liszt. A detailing of his keyboard settings of the march includes the fifteenth *Hungarian Rhapsody*, which is a virtuoso treatment. He also made transcriptions for groups of pianists (four hands and eight hands) and an "édition populaire"—a simpler version for solo piano. Liszt's own orchestral handling of the march here played, may be something of a novelty for some hearers, because it seems that this work has not had the recent circulation of many other items from the Liszt list.

This music of Franz Liszt is made welcome, in all of its delightful possibilities, by Mr. Fiedler, the Boston Pops Orchestra, and the RCA Victor recording staff—who now invite you to share the substantial and kaleidoscopic pleasures of its comfortable magic!

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—later called the Fiedler 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.