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DIGITAL AUDIO
PASC 104

Rimsky-Korsakov

Le Coq d'Or (The Golden Cockerel)

Pristine
XR

Preface to *The Golden Cockerel* by librettist V. Belsky (1907)

The purely human character of Pushkin's story, *The Golden Cockerel* – a tragi-comedy showing the fatal results of human passion and weakness – allows us to place the plot in any surroundings and in any period. On these points the author does not commit himself, but indicates vaguely in the manner of fairy-tales: "In a certain far-off kingdom", "in a country set on the borders of the world".... Nevertheless, the name Dodon and certain details and expressions used in the story prove the poet's desire to give his work the air of a popular Russian tale (like Tsar Saltan), and similar to those fables expounding the deeds of Prince Bova, of Jerouslan Lazarevitch or Erhsa Stchetinnik, fantastical pictures of national habit and costumes. Therefore, in spite of Oriental traces, and the Italian names Duodo, Guidone, the tale is intended to depict, historically, the simple manners and daily life of the Russian people, painted in primitive colours with all the freedom and extravagance beloved of artists.

In producing the opera the greatest attention must be paid to every scenic detail, so as not to spoil the special character of the work. The following remark is equally important. In spite of its apparent simplicity, the purpose of *The Golden Cockerel* is undoubtedly symbolic.

This is not to be gathered so much from the famous couplet: "Tho' a fable, I admit, moral can be drawn to fit!" which emphasises the general message of the story, as from the way in which Pushkin has shrouded in mystery the relationship between his two fantastical characters: The Astrologer and the Queen.

Did they hatch a plot against Dodon? Did they meet by accident, both intent on the king's downfall? The author does not tell us, and yet this is a question to be solved in order to determine the interpretation of the work. The principal charm of the story lies in so much being left to the imagination, but, in order to render the plot somewhat clearer, a few words as to the action on the stage may not come amiss.

Many centuries ago, a wizard, still alive today sought, by his magic cunning to overcome the daughter of the Aerial Powers. Failing in his project, he tried to win her through the person of King Dodon. He is unsuccessful and to console himself, he presents to the audience, in his magic lantern the story of heartless royal ingratitude.

Producer's Note

As with a number of Soviet-era recordings, the background to this recording is a little murky. I trying to find out why two conductors appear I discovered that it was a recording made for broadcast, but beyond this there is little. Both conductors were experienced, with similar styles, and so one can only offer conjecture as to why they were both involved: time constraints, studio bookings clashing with other commitments, illness, all are possible. The recording itself is very well made and these transfers, from mint Melodiya LPs, offer very fine quality sound indeed, as well as correction to some rather intrusive pitch problems during the second and third acts. The companion *Suite* from *The Invisible City of Kitezh* and the *Maiden Fenronia* in the original LP issue, too long to include here, is available as a free download from our website. **Andrew Rose**

FULL PROGRAMME NOTES CAN BE FOUND ONLINE AT WWW.PRISTINECLASSICAL.COM
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STEREO

RIMSKY-KORSAKOV

Le Coq d'Or

Aleksey Korolev - King Dodon
Yuri Yelnikov - Tsarevich Gvidon
Aleksandr Polyakov - Tsarevich Afron
Leonid Ktitorov - General Polkan
Antonina Klescheva - Amelfa
Gennady Pishchayev - Astrologer
Klara Kadinskaya - Shemakhan Tsaritsa
Nina Polyakova - Golden Cockerel

Moscow Radio Choir
and Opera Symphony Orchestra

Aleksey Kovalev & Yevgeny Akulov, conductors

PRISTINE SOVIET SERIES

Melodiya stereo studio recording, 1962

RIMSKY-KORSAKOV *Le Coq d'Or*

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XR remastering by Andrew Rose

Cover artwork based on a photograph of Rimsky-Korsakov and original set artwork for the Diaghilev 1914 production of *Le Coq d'Or* by Natalia Goncharova

RIMSKY-KORSAKOV *Le Coq d'Or*
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Total duration: 1hr 57:29

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CD1

- 1 **Introduction** - The astrologers enter (4:14)
- 2 **Act 1** - King Dodon's monologue (3:20)
- 3 Gwidon's plan (2:43)
- 4 Afron's plan (5:56)
- 5 The astrologers enter (6:16)
- 6 The Parrot scene (5:49)
- 7 Dodon's siesta - Lullaby (8:42)
- 8 King Dodon's dream (6:07)
- 9 The Cockerel's scene (5:16)

CD2

- 1 **Act 2** - Soldier's Chorus (8:07)
- 2 The Queen of Shemakha's Hymn to the Sun (16:42)
- 3 Queen of Shemakha, King Dodon (11:35)
- 4 Dance of the Queen of Shemakha (6:52)
- 5 Chorus of slaves, King Dodon (2:27)
- 6 **Act 3** - Wedding Procession (9:50)
- 7 King Dodon, Queen of Shemakha, Astrologer (5:33)
- 8 King Dodon's death - The Cockerel's voice (6:08)
- 9 **Epilogue** (1:54)

Moscow Radio Soloists, Choir
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