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GUIDO CANTELLI

NBC SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

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Stravinsky: Le Chant du Rossignol (The Song of the Nightingale)

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|---|--|-------|
| 1 | 1st mvt. - Presto | 2:28 |
| 2 | 2nd mvt. - Marche chinoise | 3:22 |
| 3 | 3rd mvt. - Le Chant du Rossignol | 3:16 |
| 4 | 4th mvt. - Le Jeu du Rossignol mécanique | 10:57 |

Beethoven: Symphony No. 5 in C minor, Op. 67

- | | | |
|---|-----------------------------|------|
| 5 | 1st mvt. - Allegro con brio | 7:59 |
| 6 | 2nd mvt. - Andante con moto | 9:55 |
| 7 | 3rd mvt. - Allegro | 5:20 |
| 8 | 4th mvt. - Allegro | 8:53 |

Live broadcast concert at Carnegie Hall, 21st February 1954
This transfer remastered from a later BBC re-broadcast transmission.
Transfer and XR remastering by Andrew Rose at Pristine Audio, September 2008
Cover artwork based on a photograph of Guido Cantelli

Total duration: 52:10 © 2008 Pristine Audio.

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FINAL NBC CONCERT



BEETHOVEN: SYMPHONY NO. 5
STRAVINSKY: LE CHANT DU ROSSIGNOL
CARNEGIE HALL, 21ST FEBRUARY, 1954

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CANTELLI'S FINAL NBC CONCERT

STRAVINSKY: LE CHANT DU ROSSIGNOL BEETHOVEN: SYMPHONY NO. 5 IN C MINOR

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CANTELLI'S FINAL NBC CONCERT, 1954
CANTELLI, NBC SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Stravinsky's **Le Chant du Rossignol**, commonly referred to as *The Song of the Nightingale*, is a symphonic poem written in 1917. The song is an adaptation from his earlier work, *Le Rossignol* (*The Nightingale*), an opera from 1914. The opera, based on Hans Christian Andersen's tale *The Nightingale*, is set in three acts, told from the point of view of a Chinese fisherman. In the orchestral version, Stravinsky mostly uses music from acts two and three.

The opera, the first act written in 1908 and the later two in 1913–14, was the first ever to be written by Stravinsky. The delay between writing the first and the latter acts was because of his commission to write *The Firebird* and *The Rite of Spring* for impresario Sergei Diaghilev's Ballets Russes in 1909. After this lapse of time in which Stravinsky established himself as a ballet composer, he was unsure of returning to *Le Rossignol*, and although he did finish it, he chose to also create a purely symphonic version, *Le Chant du Rossignol*.

Says Stravinsky in his autobiography, "*I reached the conclusion—very regretfully, since I was the author of many works for the theatre—that a perfect rendering can be achieved only in the concert hall, because the stage presents a combination of several elements upon which the music has often to depend, so that it cannot rely upon the exclusive consideration which it receives at a concert. I was confirmed in this view when two months later, under the direction of Ansermet, Le Chant du Rossignol was given as a ballet by Diaghilev at the Paris Opera.*"

Le Chant du Rossignol's symphonic debut, conducted by Ernest Ansermet at the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, was met with criticism, much like that of *The Rite of Spring*. Stravinsky's untraditional use of dissonance and instruments was unwelcome in later performances of the piece as well. It is possibly due to this public reaction that he then let Diaghilev turn it into a ballet.

The piece's ballet debut occurred in February 1920 at the Theatre National de l'Opera in Paris. This also was met with some skepticism. Stravinsky himself was not entirely pleased. "*I had destined Le Chant du Rossignol for the concert platform, and a choreographic rendering seemed to me to be quite unnecessary,*" he says later in his autobiography.

Stravinsky agreed to do a revival of the ballet in 1925. Well-known artist, Henri Matisse, was assigned to the artistic design of the performance. Originally, the choreography was to be done by Massine, but when that fell through, Diaghilev chose one of his newest students, George Balanchine, to choreograph the ballet. This is when Stravinsky first met Balanchine, who later became his most important creative partner.

The ballet follows the main plot line of Stravinsky's *Le Rossignol*, based on Andersen's *The Nightingale*. The first scene shows the Nightingale singing (or in this case, dancing) for the Emperor of China, who is pleased. In the music, the song of the nightingale is chromatic and swooping, it sounds free and natural, like the song of a bird. The second scene introduces the gift of the mechanical nightingale from the Emperor of Japan. All are mesmerized by its song and ignore the real Nightingale, who she flies away. The music here is short and clear, without the smooth runs of the "real" Nightingale and more sounds of a mechanical automaton. In the third scene, the Emperor meets Death, due to illness and suffering from having lost the nightingale. Then the Nightingale appears outside the Emperor's window and convinces Death to let the Emperor go. The final scene shows the courtiers discovering that the Emperor is now well, although his Nightingale leaves once again, returning to nature.

Motifs of the story include the natural versus the artificial, with the real Nightingale juxtaposed with its mechanical replacement. It is interesting to note that this was not the first (or last) piece by Stravinsky centered on the character of a bird, nor was it his first fascination with a seemingly perfect machine, as records tell us Stravinsky often preferred the sound of a mechanical pianolo, to the human (and inevitably imperfect) performance on a real piano.

Stravinsky was always specific about the use of movement with music. He once said, "*I do not see how one can be a choreographer unless, like Balanchine, one is a musician first,*" in praise of the famous choreographer who began working with Stravinsky for the revival of *Le Chant du Rossignol*. Balanchine was in fact a musician himself, and already a fan of Stravinsky's work. He was immediately willing to take the challenge. "*I learned the music well, and so when Diaghilev asked me to stage Stravinsky's ballet Le Chant du Rossignol, I was able to do it quickly,*" Balanchine is quoted to have said.

Le Chant du Rossignol, though not a necessarily critically acclaimed piece, marked the beginning of an important relationship between Stravinsky and Balanchine, composer and choreographer. The Diaghilev and Stravinsky relationship weakened during *Le Chant du Rossignol*, as each liked to be the director in charge. As Balanchine was allowed more of a role, however, it was clear that the Balanchine-Stravinsky relationship was a lasting one. They had similar taste in art, music, and movement and lived to create. Stravinsky and Balanchine continued as a team for several years, creating a number of famous ballets.

NOTES FROM WIKIPEDIA - FULL NOTES ON THIS RECORDING CAN BE FOUND AT WWW.PRISTINECLASSICAL.COM