

STOKOWSKI CONDUCTS Music FROM THE THEATRE

TCHAIKOVSKY: Aurora's Wedding - Ballet Suite (arr. Diaghilev)

- [1] Introduction (Prologue) (2:35)
 - [2] Polacca (Act 3) (1:46)
 - [3] Pas de Six (Prologue) (9:35)
 - [4] Danse des duchesses (Act 2) (1:02)
 - [5] Danse des marquisés (Act 2) (1:38)
 - [6] Farandole: Danse - Tempo di Mazurka (Act 2) (1:47)
 - [7] Pas de Quatre (Act 3) (2:12)
 - [8] Pas de Caractère - Chaperon rouge et le Loup (Act 3) (1:13)
 - [9] Pas de quatre - Adagio (Act 3) (1:54)
 - [10] Pas de quatre - Variation 1 - Cinderella and Prince (Waltz) (Act 3) (0:43)
 - [11] Pas de quatre - Variation 2 - Bluebird and Florissé (Act 3) (0:42)
 - [12] Pas de quatre - Coda (Act 3) (1:21)
 - [13] Pas de deux - Coda - Allegro Vivace (The Three Ivans) (Act 3) (1:21)
 - [14] Pas de Deux - Adagio (Act 3) (3:53)
 - [15] Finale - Tempo di Mazurka (Act 3) (3:12)
 - [16] Finale - Apollhrosis (Act 3) (2:48)
- Leopold Stokowski and his Symphony Orchestra, recorded 8-9 April, 1953, issued as RCA Victor LM 1774

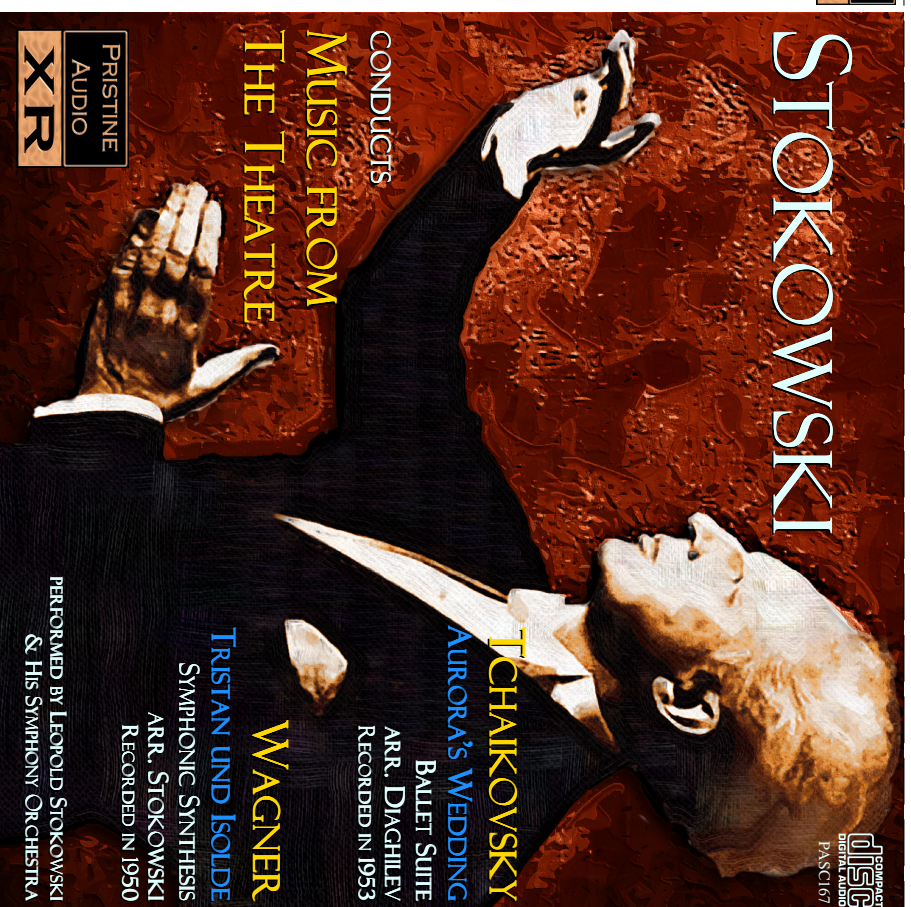
WAGNER: Tristan und Isolde - Symphonic Synthesis (arr. Stokowski)

- [17] Prelude (10:32)
 - [18] Liebesnacht (22:02)
 - [19] Liebestod (5:33)
- Leopold Stokowski and his Symphony Orchestra, recorded 17 October & 9 November 1950, issued as RCA Victor LM 1174

Transfers from the collection of Edward Johnson
XR remastering by Andrew Rose at Pristine Audio, July 2009
Cover artwork based on a photograph of Leopold Stokowski

Total duration: 75:49 ©2009 Pristine Audio.

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Aurora's Wedding was devised by Diaghilev when a lavish 1921 London production of Tchaikovsky's complete *Sleeping Beauty* was a costly failure. He salvaged what he could from the production by putting together a single one-act sequence of dances taken from the ballet and called it *Aurora's Wedding*. It has often been performed that way in the theatre, and Stokowski first recorded it in 1953.

Stokowski was the first conductor in the USA to record a substantial selection of music from *The Sleeping Beauty* (over 50 minutes of music taken from all the acts) as opposed to the usual *Suite*, and he did that on RCA 78s in 1947. These were later issued on an early RCA LP and also an HMV LP in the UK.

Then in April 1953 he recorded the Diaghilev one-act selection under it's *Aurora's Wedding* title - though that didn't appear on HMV or indeed anywhere else outside the USA. Some of the numbers are inevitably common to each recording. The 1947 *Sleeping Beauty* set was reissued on Cala Records in 1998. The 1953 *Aurora's Wedding* LP appeared some years ago on a Rediscovery CD, its only other release since its LP days, and allegedly not a very good-sounding transfer. Stokowski later re-recorded *Aurora's Wedding* in 1976 for Sony and that too has come out on Cala. It is slightly more complete than the 1953 LP, which omitted one or two short numbers.

Tristan and Isolde was given the "Symphonic Synthesis" treatment by Stokowski, so that between the *Prelude* and *Liebestod* he interpolated the *Liebesnacht* in which the voices are transferred to solo instruments or full string sections.

Stokowski made three recordings of what is known as the "long version" of his Symphonic Synthesis of *Tristan and Isolde* - two Philadelphia sets in the 1930s and this 1950 LP. The sequence starts with the complete Act 1 Prelude of about 10 minutes. String tremolos herald more music from Act 1 and then it moves to Acts 2 and 3 for the so-called *Liebesnacht* and, for the last 5 minutes or so, the *Liebestod*. (Stokowski also made what he called "*Love Music from Acts 2 and 3*" which is a sequence of about 25 minutes that omits the Act 1 Prelude entirely.) Stokowski never recorded the complete "long version" in stereo but his two assistant conductors did: Matthias Bamert and Jose Serebrier have both recorded it.

"His Symphony Orchestra" for these sessions was chosen from the first desks of the New York Philharmonic, NBC Symphony, and freelance pool, and the principals' names were shown at the bottom right of the LP sleeves. These are listed in full at the Pristine Classical website, and many will recognise some famous names: William Lincer, Leonard Rose, Robert Bloom, James Chambers, and so on.

This remastering was drawn from two excellent transfers of those early 1950s RCA Victor LPs. Of the two, the Wagner shows its age slightly more than the Tchaikovsky, though both have come up remarkably well. In order to construct an accurate tonal reference for *Aurora's Wedding* it was necessary to attempt to 'do a Diaghilev' on a complete recording of *Sleeping Beauty*, and in doing so it became clear how little he actually changed the music. *Aurora's Wedding* is almost entirely a cut-and-paste collection of highlights from the full ballet, engineered by Diaghilev into something he could stage with his existing resources and sets - the degree to which it has been 'arranged' in the traditional musical sense is perhaps debatable: the music and scoring appears to be 99.9% Tchaikovsky, with the intervention being almost entirely confined to cutting and re-ordering. This is not to denigrate *Aurora's Wedding* - it is delightful and at a very digestible 40 minutes a great listen - and this XR remastering has brought out an amazing palette of orchestral colour and depth, something barely hinted at in the original LP incarnation, but always waiting to be released from the confines of those early fifties grooves.

NOTES BY EDWARD JOHNSON & ANDREW ROSE - FURTHER NOTES ONLINE AT WWW.PRISTINECLASSICAL.COM