



PASC200



TCHAIKOVSKY

FIRST STEREO ORCHESTRAL RECORDINGS

- 1 1812 Overture, Op. 49* (15:05)
- 2 Capriccio Italien, Op. 45 (14:04)
- 3 Marche Slave, Op. 31 (9:57)

Recorded 2nd and 8th May, 1958, Kingsway Hall, London

Mono production team: Pr: Erik Smith, Eng: Peter van Biene

Stereo production team: Pr: Michael Williamson, Eng: Kenneth Wilkinson

First issued in August 1958 as Decca SXL2001

The London Symphony Orchestra
conductor **Kenneth Alwyn**

with *The Band of H.M. Grenadier Guards
Director of Music Major F. J. Harris MBE

Transfers and XR remastering by Andrew Rose at Pristine Audio, November 2009

Total duration: 39:06 ©2009 Pristine Audio.

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TCHAIKOVSKY



1812 OVERTURE CAPRICCIO ITALIEN - MARCH SLAVE

London Symphony Orchestra
conductor **Kenneth Alwyn**

Decca stereo studio recordings from 1958

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MARCHE SLAVE

CAPRICCIO ITALIEN

1812 OVERTURE

ALWYN, LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

PRISTINE
AUDIO

TCHAIKOVSKY

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FIRST STEREO ORCHESTRAL RECORDINGS

Kenneth Alwyn (born Kenneth Alwyn Wetherell, 28 July 1925, London) is a British orchestral conductor. He is principally known for his performances and recordings of film and ballet music. He is a former principal conductor at The Royal Ballet, Covent Garden.

Alwyn's recording career dates to 1958, when he recorded the first stereo version of Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture* for Decca Records with the London Symphony Orchestra and the Band of the Grenadier Guards. The recording famously featured slowed-down gunshots instead of cannon fire. It remained a mainstay of the classical catalogue for almost forty years, although has yet to reappear on CD (except in Japan).

Alwyn has elsewhere specialised in British music, giving the Japanese premiere of Gustav Holst's suite *The Planets* and recording of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast* for Decca with the Welsh National Opera.

Alwyn has also appeared and recorded with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, the Philharmonia, the BBC Concert Orchestra, the Royal Ballet Sinfonia and the City of Prague Philharmonic. He has released three CDs of the music of Richard Addinsell, including much of Addinsell's film music previously believed lost, but reconstructed by Philip Lane amongst others.

Alwyn has also composed several pieces for orchestra. His piece *Fighter Command 1940* is a standard RAF Ceremonial march.

Transfer notes

By 1958, Decca has been recording in stereo for four years, regularly sending out two production teams, one to make the stereo master, the other the mono master. Each team of producer and engineer worked independently of the other to produce the optimum sound for their system. However, when a system for the successful replay of stereo discs was finally unveiled in 1958, it seems the company decided a new and spectacular recording was required for the very first record in their new stereo series of SXL discs, something that could utilise all of the experience amassed over the previous as-then-unreleased stereo sessions.

Clearly the *1812 Overture* here is designed as a showpiece. The stereo imagery is both very wide and very precise, and if the studio trickery that produced the "cannon shots" (over-dubbed speeded-down gunshots panned around on tape and chopped roughly together) sounds desperately primitive today, the effect when heard for the first time was surely enough to launch a hundred discs of stereo marching bands and steam trains to thunder through your living room. Yet, as the Gramophone reviewer in October 1958 pointed out, "This is all loud music; or at least it certainly has its share of loud moments. It would seem to be a good programme for showing off the, new medium (not only in consideration of the more massive passages); and as a programme it is helped notably by 1812 being allowed to conclude a side, as it clearly must a programme... This combination should be, and is, shattering; but, even so, the virtues of the recording are perhaps more readily perceived in some quieter moments—particularly in the Italian Capriccio, which reproduces the music in places with quite startling clarity."

It is a very well-recorded album, and this transfer, from a near-mint and very well pressed first edition LP, demonstrates this very well. I have resisted the temptation to pull in the extreme stereo width a little. Beyond correcting an odd frequency gap at around 260Hz and lifting the extreme top end (above 10kHz) a little, the sound is pretty much unaltered beyond a general 'tightening up'. Some surface swish on the second side required intervention, but otherwise it's a pretty honest representation of that 1958 release. As the Gramophone reviewer concluded, "In every respect, in fact, this is a first-class record".

NOTES FROM WIKIPEDIA AND BY ANDREW ROSE - FURTHER NOTES ONLINE AT WWW.PRISTINECLASSICAL.COM

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ALWYN, LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

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