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FABIEN SEVITZKY

Indianapolis Symphony Volume One

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Producer's Note

Fabien Sevitzy was born in Vishny Volochyok, Russia on 29 September 1891 (not 1893, as other sources list). A nephew of Serge Koussevitzky's, his original last name was the same, but later shortened at his uncle's request to avoid confusion. Like him, Sevitzy took up the double bass in order to win a conservatory scholarship. After playing in orchestras in Russia and Poland, Sevitzy joined Stokowski's Philadelphia Orchestra in 1923. Two years later, he organized members of the ensemble's string section into the Philadelphia Chamber String Simfonietta. (Their complete recordings have been reissued on Pristine PASC 375.) He left the Philadelphia Orchestra in 1930, although he continued to conduct the chamber ensemble until 1941.

Sevitzy was appointed conductor of the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra in 1937, a post he held until 1955. He retired to Florida, where he became a faculty member at the University of Miami, leading the school's orchestra and continuing to guest conduct internationally. It was during one such appearance in Athens that Sevitzy died on 3 February 1967.

Between 1941 and 1946, Sevitzy and the Indianapolis Symphony made a series of 78 rpm recordings for RCA Victor. His final recordings were made for Capitol LPs in 1953. The present program is the first in a series which aims to reissue them all, some for the first time since their initial release. None of them have ever received an "official" CD reissue.

The first two selections come from Sevitzy's earliest Indianapolis sessions. The Russian Overture comes on like gangbusters, showing off the exuberance and virtuosity of the ensemble and conductor in sound that was state-of-the-art for its time; and its discmate, Rimsky's setting of the revolutionary folksong "Dubinushka", builds to a tremendous climax. It is worth noting that Sevitzy studied under both Rimsky and Liadov at the St. Petersburg Conservatory; and in the latter's Baba Yaga, he paints a vivid tonal characterization of the same mythical witch who inspired "The Hut on Fowl's Legs" section of Mussorgsky's Pictures.

Sevitzy's recording of the Tchaikovsky Manfred Symphony was the first complete version made of the work (Albert Coates had previously recorded the second movement alone), and would remain the only one until Toscanini's 1949 recording, with a cut of some 100 bars in the finale, appeared on LP. It is dramatically paced, with much excitement in the faster sections. However, some parts are played much more slowly than we are used to. The third movement's "Andante con moto" is here more of an "Adagio molto"; and the second movement's trio is not "l'istesso tempo" as marked by Tchaikovsky, but something considerably slower.

Even more curious is Sevitzy's substitution of a snare drum (side drum) for the tambourine in the bacchanal which opens the fourth movement. The conductor could have interpreted the "tamb." marked in the score as referring to a "tamburo piccolo" or snare drum. However, the first page of the score spells out "tambourine", so there should have been no confusion. Its presence here remains a mysterious precedent that no other known conductor has followed. (I am indebted to writer Edward Johnson for pointing this out.)

The sources for the transfers were American Victor 78 rpm shellacs: late pre-war "Gold" label pressings for the Glinka and Rimsky items; postwar copies for the Liadov and Onegin Waltz; and "Silver" label wartime pressings for the Manfred. Multiple copies of the records were sourced, with the best sides from each used. Some portions of the Manfred were problematic, owing to suboptimal wartime shellac and processing.

Mark Obert-Thorn

fabien sevitzy

indianapolis symphony vol. 1

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tchaikovsky 'manfred' symphony

world première recording

overtures & short works by:

tchaikovsky
rimsky-korsakov
glinka
liadov

victor studio recordings · 1941 – 1946

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FABIEN SEVITZKY AND THE INDIANAPOLIS SYMPHONY - VOLUME I
SEVITZKY, INDIANAPOLIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

sevitzky

indianapolis vol 1

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Producer and Audio Restoration
Engineer: Mark Obert-Thorn

Cover artwork based on a
photograph of Fabien Sevitzy

Special thanks to Nathan Brown,
Frederick P. Fellers and Charles Niss

All works recorded in the Murat
Theatre, Indianapolis, Indiana

Total duration: 79:00

1 GLINKA *Ruslan and Ludmilla* - Overture (5:13)
Recorded 8 January 1941 - CS 057573-2 - Victor 17731

2 RIMSKY-KORSAKOV *Dubinushka*, Op. 62 (4:15)
Recorded 7 January 1941 - CS 057574-1 - Victor 17731

3 LIADOV *Baba Yaga*, Op. 56 (3:51)
Recorded 9 February 1945 - D5-RC-827-1 - RCA Victor 11-9247 in album M-1066

4 TCHAIKOVSKY Waltz from *Eugene Onegin* (5:16)
Recorded 19 March 1946 - D6-RC-5259-1A - RCA Victor 12-0044 in album M-1189

TCHAIKOVSKY *Manfred*, Op. 58

5 1st mvt. - Lento lugubre - Moderato con moto - Andante (16:41)

6 2nd mvt. - Vivace con spirito (10:49)

7 3rd mvt. - Andante con moto (14:37)

8 4th mvt. - Allegro con fuoco (18:18)

Recorded 27-28 January 1942

Matrix Nos. CS 071331-1, 071332-1A, 071333-2, 071334-2, 071335-1, 071336-1, 071337-1,
071338-1, 071339-1A, 071340-1, 071341-1, 071342-1, 071343-1A & 071344-1

Victor 11-8331/7 in album M-940

Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra
Fabien Sevitzy, conductor

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