



Stokowski

PRISTINE
AUDIO

conducts Schoenberg, Dubensky, Hindemith

Although completed at a time when his compositions had become increasingly atonal, Schoenberg's *Gurrelieder* is an apotheosis of late Romantic music, starting with the influence of the "Liebesnacht" from Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* and ending with a huge choral affirmation that might have come from his mentor Mahler's Eighth Symphony. It was perhaps the connection to the latter work that led Leopold Stokowski, who had first put the Philadelphia Orchestra on the national map by conducting its U.S. premiere in 1916, to try for a similar achievement with *Gurrelieder*. For besides being a first-rank musician, Stokowski was also a showman; and the idea of mounting such a huge work (532 performers were involved) during the depths of the Depression must have been an irresistible challenge.

That RCA Victor recorded the work live is an equally amazing feat. The performances were given in Philadelphia's Metropolitan Opera House, perhaps to accommodate the huge choral forces without having to build out the stage of the Academy of Music, as had been done for the Mahler Eighth. The first performance on Friday, April 8th 1932 was marred by singer and ensemble problems, and the final two sides were left unrecorded. The following day, a second attempt was made directly onto 33 1/3 rpm wax masters and issued on Victor's short-lived "Program Transcription" series. The third performance on April 11th, presented here, was recorded on twenty-seven 78 rpm sides. The following month, Stokowski set down an explanatory talk which was used as a filler to the album, which initially cost \$28 (the equivalent of \$531 in 2020!)

While *Gurrelieder* was recorded direct to disc with a switch sending the audio signal from one wax matrix to the next without overlap, RCA began experimenting with a different system for live recording later that year. In December of 1932, three concerts by Stokowski and the Philadelphia were recorded during performances in the Academy of Music using optical film tracks that were later dubbed to wax disc masters. A number of works were taken down using this method, including a Wagner-Stokowski *Siegfried* Synthesis and Richard Strauss' *Tod und Verklärung*, but only one would ultimately be issued: Arcady Dubensky's setting of Poe's *The Raven* for speaker and orchestra, reuniting Stokowski with Benjamin de Loache from the *Gurrelieder* cast. Two ten-inch picture records were issued, with a photo of the conductor and an illustration of the poem on one side of each disc and the complete text on the other sides. Never issued outside the U.S. on 78 rpm, the original discs are among the rarest Stokowski/Philadelphia records, and command high prices among collectors (though still not as high as the "Program Transcription" version of *Gurrelieder*).

The final work, Hindemith's *Kammermusik No. 2*, was one of the recordings from this series that was not issued on 78 rpm. The soloist was Minneapolis-born pianist Eunice Norton, who had studied in England with Tobias Matthay. The performance only survives in a private collection as a worn acetate dubbing of five original 12-inch shellac sides whose whereabouts are now unknown. The source for *Gurrelieder* was a nearly complete set of vinyl test pressings, augmented by shellac discs; and *The Raven* was transferred from vinyl, as well. Some distortion in the first side of the Wood-Dove's song is inherent in the original master.

MARK OBERT-THORN

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PASC 612

stokowski

conducts schoenberg

schoenberg gurrelieder

paul althouse - waldemar
jeanette vreeland - tove
rose bampton - die waldtaube
abrasha robofsky - bauer
robert betts - klaus-narr
benjamin de loache - sprecher

princeton glee club
fortnightly club
mendelssohn club

dubensky the raven
benjamin de loache, speaker

hindemith kammermusik no. 2
eunice norton, piano

the philadelphia orchestra

live recordings, 1932

Obert-Thorn

stokowski

conducts schoenberg

disc one

1. Stokowski discusses *Gurrelieder* (4:43)
Sylvan Levin piano

SCHOENBERG Gurrelieder

(Text by Jens Peter Jacobsen; German translation by Robert Franz Arnold)
PART 1

2. I. Orchestervorspiel (7:49)
3. II. Nun dämpft die Dämm'ung - Waldemar (4:41)
4. III. O, wenn des Mondes Strahlen - Tove (3:23)
5. IV. Ross! Mein Ross! - Waldemar (2:26)
6. V. Sterne jubeln - Tove (2:30)
7. VI. So tanzen die Engel vor Gottes Thron nicht - Waldemar (2:36)
8. VII. Nun sag ich dir zum ersten Mal - Tove (3:59)
9. VIII. Es ist Mitternachtszeit - Waldemar (7:31)
10. IX. Du sendest mir einen Liebesblick - Tove (5:43)
11. X. Du wunderliche Tove! - Waldemar (5:22)
12. XI. Orchesterzwischenspiel (5:26)
13. XII. Tauben von Gurre! (*Lied der Waldtaube*) - Waldtaube (11:15)

Paul Althouse tenor (Waldemar)
Jeanette Vreeland soprano (Tove)
Rose Bampton contralto (Die Waldtaube)
Abrasha Robofsky bass (Bauer)
Robert Betts tenor (Klaus-Narr)
Benjamin de Loache speaker (Sprecher)

Princeton Glee Club, Alexander Russell, director
Fortnightly Club, Henry Gordon Thunder, director
Mendelssohn Club, Bruce Carey, director

disc two

PART 2

1. XIII. Herrgott, weißt du, was du tatest - Waldemar (4:12)

PART 3 *Die Wilde Jagd*

2. XIV. Erwacht, König Waldemars Mannen wert! - Waldemar (2:08)
3. XV. Deckel des Sarges klappert und klappt - Bauer (4:29)
4. XVI. Gegrüßt, o König - Waldemars Mannen (6:13)
5. XVII. Mit Toves Stimme flüstert der Wald - Waldemar (4:25)
6. XVIII. Ein seltsamer Vogel ist so'n Aal - Klaus-Narr (6:09)
7. XIX. Du strenger Richter droben - Waldemar (3:17)
8. XX. Der Hahn erhebt den Kopf zur Kraht - Waldemars Mannen (5:43)
Der Sommerwindes wilde Jagd (Melodram)
9. XXI. Orchestervorspiel (3:08)
10. XXII. Herr Gänsefuß, Frau Gänsekraut - Sprecher (5:24)
11. XXIII. Seht die Sonne! - Chor (4:26)

12. DUBENSKY The Raven (Text: Edgar Allan Poe) (12:03)
Benjamin de Loache speaker

HINDEMITH Kammermusik No. 2, Op. 36, No. 1

(Concerto for piano and orchestra)

13. 1st mvt. - Sehr lebhafte Achtel (3:22)
14. 2nd mvt. - Sehr langsame Achtel (7:50)
15. 3rd mvt. - Kleines Potpourri: Sehr lebhafte Viertel (1:37)
16. 4th mvt. - Finale: Schnelle Viertel (5:26)
Eunice Norton piano

The Philadelphia Orchestra
conducted by Leopold Stokowski

Producer and Audio Restoration Engineer: **Mark Obert-Thorn**

Cover picture based on a photograph of Leopold Stokowski c.1912, the year *Gurrelieder* was first published
Live recordings, Philadelphia, April & December 1932. *Full discographic information available online*

Total duration: **2hr 21:50** CD1: 67:25 CD2: 79:51

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