

After Frederick Stock's December, 1930 sessions with the Chicago Symphony for Victor, the label essentially shut down its symphonic recording program, due to the economic exigencies of the Great Depression. For the next few years, only Stokowski's Philadelphia Orchestra was recorded with any regularity, and that was only made possible by the use of drastically reduced forces playing in a small studio. While the Boston Symphony and New York Philharmonic came back to the fold after a few years, the Chicago Symphony remained unrecorded for nearly a decade.

In November of 1939, Stock and the Chicagoans rejoined their original label, Columbia, for a new set of recordings. The move came at an auspicious moment, for the label had just begun recording directly on lacquer master discs, where a wider frequency range than previously available on shellac discs could be captured. Indeed, the first item of their first session (the *Nutcracker* Suite) was the first such master recording Columbia made. Although at the time the lacquers were used for dubbing to standard wax 78 rpm masters, they later serendipitously proved to be a sonically superior source for transfer to LPs.

The present reissue utilizes, wherever possible, the early 1950s remasterings for Columbia's Entré LP series, taken from quiet, high-quality lacquer masters, as the basis for new restorations. Although most of Stock's Chicago recordings from this period were reissued in this series, a few never appeared on LP, including *Also Sprach Zarathustra* and the *Euryanthe* Overture. These have been transferred from their only published source, sonically compromised 78 rpm shellac dubs.

The Chicago Symphony that we hear on these recordings is a bit different from the ensemble on the 1925-30 Victor series. Playing practices had changed over the prior decade, with string portamento now being used more sparingly and discreetly. The now 67-year-old Stock conducts with his customary high energy; but there are fewer examples of the kind of willful, idiosyncratic touches he displayed in, for example, his 1927 Tchaikovsky Fifth (although he still inserts *Luftpausen* to divide sections in the outer movements of the Mozart "Prague"). His interpretations have seemed to move a bit more to a somewhat objective middle – if not quite Toscaniniesque, then at least prefiguring what Fritz Reiner would later bring to this orchestra.

Mention of Reiner begs the observation that Stock was the first conductor to record *Also Sprach Zarathustra* with the Chicago Symphony, a tradition which was to continue under music directors Artur Rodzinski (reissued on Pristine PASC 569), Fritz Reiner (twice – 1954, on PASC 411, and 1962) and Sir Georg Solti, as well as Pierre Boulez. Concertmaster John Weicher played the violin solos on the first three recordings. Stock brings a thoroughly idiomatic sweep and drama to this score (which, oddly, never saw a Columbia LP reissue, even though there was not another recording of the work in the label's catalog).

It is interesting to see so much of the repertoire that was associated with Leopold Stokowski's best-selling recordings with the Philadelphia Orchestra chosen for Stock's Columbia sessions (here, the *Nutcracker* Suite, *Swan of Tuonela*, *Danse Macabre*, even *Procession of the Sardar*). One wonders whether Columbia saw Stock as a good marketing match to counter Stokowski's Victor repertoire.

Along with *Zarathustra*, the Schubert Ninth takes pride of place among the works presented here as one of Stock's finest interpretations on disc. *Fanfare* critic Mortimer Frank called it "a superb account [...] which, even in today's heavy competition, would shine as one of the great recordings of the score." Frank also called attention to "[t]wo aspects of the performance [that] are especially interesting: a march-like insistence in the second movement and the playing of the two final measures of the first movement strictly in tempo, thereby italicizing their motivic relationship to what has preceded. Toscanini, so far as I can recall, was the only other conductor on record to do this [...]"

The recording dates shown are taken from the late Don Tait's unpublished CSO discography, which utilized data from Columbia's recording logs, some of which was missing or ambiguous. The matrix and take numbers of the issued 78s bear no relationship to the lacquer masters, and were assigned at the time of dubbing.

Mark Obert-Thorn



disc one
(74:58)

TCHAIKOVSKY Nutcracker Suite, Op. 71a

1. Miniature Overture (3:06)
2. March (2:20)
3. Dance of the Sugar-Plum Fairy (1:42)
4. Russian Dance (Trepak) (1:05)
5. Arabian Dance (3:38)
6. Chinese Dance (1:10)
7. Dance of the Flutes (2:08)
8. Waltz of the Flowers (6:13)

MOZART Symphony No. 38 in D major, "Prague" K.504

9. 1st Mvt. - Adagio - Allegro (9:18)
10. 2nd Mvt. - Andante (9:13)
11. 3rd Mvt. - Finale (Presto) (3:56)

R. STRAUSS Also Sprach Zarathustra, Op. 30

12. Sonnenaufgang (*Sunrise*) (1:42)
13. Von den Hinterweltlern (*Of the Backworldsmen*) (3:42)
14. Von den großen Sehnsucht (*Of the Great Longing*) (1:41)
15. Von den Freuden und Leidenschaften (*Of Joys and Passions*) (1:53)
16. Das Gräblich (*The Song of the Grave*) (2:03)
17. Von der Wissenschaft (*Of Science and Learning*) (4:28)
18. Der Genesende (*The Convalescent*) (4:09)
19. Das Tanzlied (*The Dance Song*) (7:11)
20. Nachtwandlerlied (*Song of the Night Wanderer*) (4:20)

disc two
(71:11)

1. **SIBELIUS** The Swan of Tuonela (from *Lemminkäinen Legends*, Op. 22) (8:08) (rec. 1940)
2. **IPPOLITOV-IVANOV** Procession of the Sardar (from *Caucasian Sketches*, Op. 10) (3:58) (rec. 1940)
3. **SAINT-SAËNS** Danse Macabre, Op. 40 (6:56) (rec. 1940)
4. **WEBER** Euryanthe - Overture (7:36) (rec. 1940)

SCHUBERT Symphony No. 9 in C major, "The Great" D.944 (rec. 1940)

5. 1st Mvt. - Andante - Allegro ma non troppo - Più moto (12:59)
6. 2nd Mvt. - Andante con moto (12:29)
7. 3rd Mvt. - Scherzo. Allegro vivace (7:54)
8. 4th Mvt. - Finale. Allegro vivace (11:11)

Frederick Stock · Chicago Symphony Orchestra

John Weicher, *solo violin* (R. Strauss, Saint-Saëns)
Robert M. Mayer, *solo English horn* (Sibelius)

PRISTINE
AUDIO

PASC 721

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Cover photo of Frederick Stock
by George Nelidoff kindly
provided by the Rosenthal
Archives of the Chicago
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(Frank Villella, archivist)

Full discographic information
is available online

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