

While Albert Coates has long been associated with Wagner and Russian music of the Romantic era, his championing of contemporary music has been less recognized, particularly in the area of recording reissues. The current release addresses this by presenting all of his recordings of Stravinsky and Ravel which have not already appeared on Pristine along with his complete recordings of works by Scriabin, Prokofiev, Holst, Bax and Respighi. Some of the works were last reissued nearly half a century ago on LP, while others are being revived here for the first time.

At a time when Columbia did not have a single Beethoven symphony in its catalog, it is remarkable that the label brought out a complete recording on three discs of a then-challenging contemporary work by Scriabin, *The Poem of Ecstasy*. In the event, it was not quite complete. At the break between Sides 4 and 5 (15:44 in the track), 19 bars totaling around a minute of music from Figure 30 to 32 in the score are missing. It was less likely an intentional cut than an oversight, as the music could have fit on either side. Sides 3 and 4 were first recorded a week after the others, and it is likely that Coates and the session producer forgot where Side 5 had begun and inadvertently left the bars out. Although one gets a general idea of Coates' approach, the acoustic process could not really do justice to this colorful score, and it is a shame that he never got to re-record it electrically.

Coates had previously recorded the 1911 version of Stravinsky's *Firebird* Suite acoustically in 1924 (reissued on Pristine PASC 303). This electric remake of two of the numbers generates a great deal of excitement, although the orchestral choirs in the "Infernal Dance" are noticeably out-of-sync at some points. Coates' single disc of *The Song of the Nightingale* is labeled "Chinese March", although here this section appears between the opening "Celebration" music and the last minute or so of the final segment, the "Funeral March". Those following the score will note that Coates takes a repeat starting around 2:20 in the first section, incorporating music which does not appear elsewhere; and in the last section, the flute phrase two bars before Figure 96 is transposed upward by a full tone.

Coates' disc of music from *The Love for Three Oranges* was the first recording of any Prokofiev orchestral music ever made, predating Koussevitzky's more famous first Boston version by two years. The composer's *Le pas d'acier* (most helpfully translated as *The Dance of Steel*) was a ballet containing descriptive scenes in a Soviet foundry. One of Coates' last recordings for HMV, it was taken down complete; but the two sides containing numbers 7 through 9 of the score were never released.

Sir Adrian Boult's long association with Holst's *The Planets* has obscured the work's connection to Coates; but while Boult conducted the first (incomplete) performance to a privately-invited audience in 1918, Coates presented the first public performance with the LSO in 1920. Six years later, he recorded the four movements presented here with essentially the same ensemble. Coates' "Mars" is taken at a much faster clip than most performances, while the central section of his "Jupiter" is, by contrast, broadly paced, with an affectionate nobility that Elgar might have envied.

While Coates made several discs of operatic choruses by Wagner, Mussorgsky and others, Bax's *Mater ora Filium* was his only recording as director of an *a cappella* choir. It was one of the earliest electrical recordings HMV made outside their studios. The *Fountains of Rome* was the first recording of any of Respighi's "Roman Trilogy", besting Molajoli's version by nine months.

Coates had previously recorded Ravel's *Ma mère l'Oye* Suite acoustically (PASC 303) before making the première recording of his *La valse* (which, oddly, was not released in the UK). It showcases a brilliant performance of great energy and detail, in sound that utterly belies its one hundred years.

Mark Obert-Thorn



albert
coates
conducts 20th century music

PRISTINE
AUDIO
PASC 768

bax
holst
prokofiev
ravel
respighi
scriabin
stravinsky

london symphony orchestra
leeds festival choir

studio recordings · 1920 - 1932

Obert-Thorn

**disc one
(57:22)**

1. **SCRIABIN** The Poem of Ecstasy, Op 54 (1905-08) (19:11)
- STRAVINSKY** The Firebird (1910)
2. The Princesses' Game with the Golden Apples (2:39)
3. Infernal Dance of All Kashchei's Subjects (4:15)

- STRAVINSKY** Song of the Nightingale (*excerpts*) (1914-21)
4. Celebration at the Palace of the Emperor of China (3:42)
5. Chinese March (3:17)
6. Funeral March (*conclusion*) (1:21)

- PROKOFIEV** The Love for Three Oranges, Op. 33 (1921)
7. Infernal Scene (2:48)
8. March (1:43)
9. Scherzo (1:21)

PROKOFIEV Le pas d'acier, Op. 41 (1926)

10. 1. Entrance of the characters (2:09)
11. 2. The train of trading peasants (2:13)
12. 3. The commissars (1:52)
13. 4. The little street vendors (1:55)
14. 5. The orator (1:55)
15. 6. The sailor with bracelets and the working girl (2:20)
16. 10. The hammers (1:34)
17. 11. Finale (3:08)

**disc two
(64:20)**

HOLST The Planets, Op. 32 (1914-17)

1. 1. Mars, the Bringer of War (6:03)
2. 3. Mercury, the Winged Messenger (3:34)
3. 4. Jupiter, the Bringer of Jollity (7:24)
4. 6. Uranus, the Magician (5:25)

5. **HOLST** *The Perfect Fool* - Ballet Music, Op. 39, H150 (1918-22)
- Introduction - Dance of Spirits of Earth (3:31)

6. **BAX** Mater ora Filium (1921) (11:05)

RESPIGHI The Fountains of Rome (1916)

7. The Fountain of Valle Giulia at Dawn (4:08)
8. The Triton Fountain in the Morning (2:30)
9. The Trevi Fountain at Noon (3:24)
10. The Villa Medici Fountain at Sunset (5:57)

11. **RAVEL** La valse (1919-20) (11:20)



Producer and Audio Restoration
Engineer: Mark Obert-Thorn

Cover artwork based on a
photograph of Albert Coates

Special thanks to the late
Don Tait for records from
his collection

Full discographic information can
be found on the Pristine Classical
website page for this release

Total duration: 2hr 1:42

London Symphony Orchestra

(CD 1; CD 2, Tracks 7-10)

Symphony Orchestra

(CD 2, Tracks 1-5 and 11)

Leeds Festival Choir

(CD 2, Track 6)

Albert Coates, conductor



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