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DIGITAL AUDIO
PASC 354

Leo Blech

Overtures and Dances

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Cherubini (1760-1842), an old friend of my youth, is remembered by only the overtures of his operas. I should like to see one of them. Perhaps this classical soul was too easily satisfied with a libretto—a weakness that has put many an opera on the shelf, though I do not think it is entirely crippling. "*Amarion, or Fugitive Love*" came out in 1803, and went in very soon after. The overture is the kind of music that, I think, can be heard now and again with brisk pleasure. There is a pompous choral preface, and then some sweet wood-wind calls and answers. The material deals considerably in one or two figures (mark the quiet start, and the long crescendo, a plan which Rossini used so freely). The music is no brain-stormer, or brain-stormer rather, a mostly-Mozartean spirit working with French needs in view. "*Amarion* may not be the ideal subject for an opera, though he sang of themes that filled so many stages—pleasure, the sportive life, lyricism, and the grape (without a headache); not forgetting lovely woman, bless her, who, as the poet sings, denied the weapons of all other creatures, is given "Beauty, this both her arms and armour is; She, that can this weapon use, Fire and sword with ease subdues." And so forth (but distrust the too trustful Moore's translations of what he thought was Amarcion). Dr. Blech always turns out reliable, tasteful work. The level of recording is such as my fibre can endure, and I enjoy. Enough, but not too much.

W. R. A. The Gramophone, April 1938 - *review of Cherubini, Amarion Overture, HMV DB.1674*

Producer's Note

This program presents a wide cross-section of Leo Blech's repertoire, from opera and operetta to ballet and concert music. Blech had recorded with the London Symphony Orchestra before (a pioneering Schubert 9th in 1927); but the impetus for having the present series done with them rather than with his usual Berlin State Opera Orchestra may have been HMV's contract with the LSO, which mandated a certain number of sessions each year with the ensemble.

Over three days of recording in both Kingsway and Queen's Hall, Blech led the orchestra in some 23 sides, all but three of which are presented here. (The odd side, the Mozart Divertimento Minuet, had to wait until the following year for Blech to record a discreate with the Berlin Philharmonic.) The missing items from the London sessions, all by Mendelssohn, were two orchestrated "Songs without Words" on a 12-inch side, and the finale of the Italian Symphony on two 10-inch sides. (Jongame Blech reissue collectors may have them on the 1978 Past Masters LP, PM-14.)

The sources for the transfers of the Cherubini and Mendelssohn works, as well as the last two Grieg dances, were American Victor "Z" pressings. The Mozart ballet music and the Brahms Sereenade movements came from pre-war Victor "Gold" label pressings, while the first two Grieg dances came from a later "Silver" label disc. The Weber overture was transferred from an Italian Voce del Padrone pressing, and the remaining items came from British HMV shellacs.

An electrical problem in the original recording sessions produced low frequency sputters and pops on several of the masters. These are particularly noticeable in the quiet passages on the first side of the Mendelssohn. I have removed the worst of them and attempted to filter the rest, but some of the noise remains on a few of the recordings. **Mark Ober-Thorn**

FULL PROGRAMME NOTES CAN BE FOUND ONLINE AT WWW.PRISTINECLASSICAL.COM
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Overtures and Dances

London Symphony Orchestra

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MOZART • CHERUBINI • WEBER • MENDELSSOHN
AUBER • OFFENBACH • BRAHMS • GRIEG

HMV Studio recordings, 1931

Obert-Thorn

Blech Overtures & Dances

MOZART Les petits riens, K.299b - Ballet

- 1 No. 1: Overture (3:03)
- 2 No. 6: Gavotte (1:07)
- 3 No. 10: Pantomime (1:34)
- 4 No. 12: Gavotte (2:38)

Matrices: 2B 1515-2 and 1516-2 • First issued on HMV DB 1676

5 **MOZART** Minuet from Divertimento No. 17 in D major, K.334 (3:27)

Matrix: 2B 1197-1 • First issued on HMTV DB 1714

6 **CHERUBINI** *Anacréon - Overture* (8:28)

Matrices: 2B 1190-2 and 1191-1 • First issued on HMV DB 1674

7 **WEBER** *Oberon - Overture* (8:11)

Matrices: 2B 1511-2 and 1512-2 • First issued on HMV DB 1675

8 MENDELSSOHN Calm sea and prosperous voyage, *Overture, Op. 27* (11:17)

Matrices: 2B 1523-2, 1524-2 and 1525-1 • First issued on HMV DB 1671 and 1672

9 AUBER *Le domino noir - Overture* (6:36)

Matrices: 0B 1517-2 and 1518-2 • First issued on HMV DA 1264

[10] **OFFENBACH** *Orpheus in the Underworld - Overture* (7:49)

Matrices: 2B 1194-2 and 1195-2 • First issued on HMV DB 1673

BRAHMS Serenade No. 1 in D major, Op. 11

- 11 4th Mvt - Menuetto 1 & 2 (4:18)
- 12 5th Mvt - Scherzo: Allegro (3:37)

Matrices: 2B 1193-2 and 1192-2 • First issued on HMV DB 1670

GRIEG Norwegian Dances, Op. 35

- [13] **No. 1: Allegro marcato** (4:06)
 [14] **No. 2: Allegretto tranquillo e grazioso** (3:50)
 [15] **No. 3: Allegro moderato alla Marcia** (3:21)
 [16] **No. 4: Allegro molto** (4:26)

Matrices: 2B 1519-2, 1520-1, 1521-2 and 1522-1 • First issued on HMV DB 1668 and 1669

London Symphony Orchestra Leo Blech



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

Cover artwork based on a photograph of **Leo Blech**

Tracks 1 - 4 and 7: Recorded 27th
October, 1931 in Kingsway Hall, London

Track 9: Recorded 27th – 28th October, 1931 in Kingsway Hall, London

**Tracks 8 and 13 - 16: Recorded 28th
October, 1931 in Kingsway Hall, London**

**Tracks 5, 6 and 10 - 12: Recorded 29th
October, 1931 in Queen's Hall, London**

Total duration: 77:48

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