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PASC 395

WALTER DAMROSCH

Conducts Gluck, Saint-Saëns, Ravel

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Producer's Note

For seven decades, Walter Damrosch (1862 – 1950) occupied a singular place in the American musical scene as conductor, composer and commentator. The son of conductor Leopold Damrosch, he emigrated from Germany with his family to America in 1871. Beginning his career at the age of 19, he returned to Germany for a period to study under Hans von Bülow, and became an assistant conductor for the fledgling Metropolitan Opera in New York in 1884. The following year, he led the first (non-staged) American performance of Parsifal only three years after its première, and succeeded his father as music director of the New York Symphony Orchestra.

It was with that ensemble that Damrosch began his recording career in 1903 for Columbia, setting down the first record made by an American orchestra under its own music director. He recorded only sporadically, returning to Columbia for another series with the NYSO in the 1920s. The selections here comprise his complete electrical recordings save for a 1928 Brahms Second Symphony. On them, we hear well-disciplined (for their time) ensembles, which use string portamento surprisingly sparingly. We also hear a conductor who can bring out both the colorful excitement of the Saint-Saëns and also the heartfelt tenderness of the Ravel (and sometimes both at once, as in the final movement of the Gluck).

The Beethoven lecture brings up another important aspect of Damrosch's career, that of popularizer/explainer of Classical music to the masses. David Sarnoff appointed Damrosch to be the music director for NBC; (indeed, the National Symphony Orchestra which performs here is not the ensemble created in 1931 in Washington, DC, but rather the National Broadcasting Company's house orchestra, a forerunner of the NBC Symphony). From 1928 to 1942, Damrosch hosted the Music Appreciation Hour radio program, broadcast weekdays for use in school classrooms, through which a generation of students was exposed to Classical music. While the type of "analysis" Damrosch presented, which envisions the Eroica Funeral March as highly-detailed program music, may strike modern listeners as, at best, naïve, it provided a convenient entry point for neophytes.

The sources for the present transfers were pre-war Victor "Gold" label pressings for all of the National Symphony recordings except for the first two sides of the Saint-Saëns, which came from a late Orthophonic disc; American Columbia "Viva-Tonal" editions for the Beethoven talk, the Pierné and the last movement of the Ravel; and Columbia "Full-Range" label pressings for the remainder of the Ravel. The Bach and Moszkowski sides were apparently only issued in inferior-sounding dubbed editions.

Mark Obert-Thorn

FULL PROGRAMME NOTES CAN BE FOUND ONLINE AT WWW.PRISTINECLASSICAL.COM
SARL Pristine Audio, 144 Rue de l'Eglise, 24610 St. Méard de Gurçon, France

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DAMROSCH

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Gluck

Airs de Ballet

Saint-Saëns

*Ballet Divertissement
from Henry VIII*

Ravel

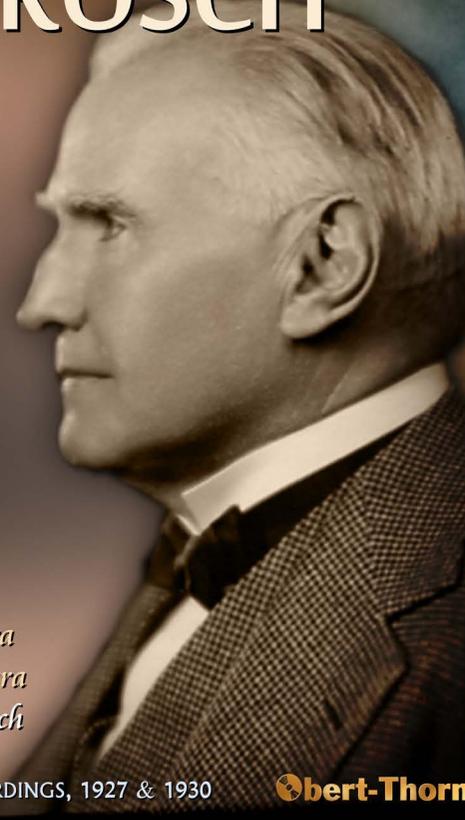
Mother Goose – Suite

*Plus works by Bach, Moszkowski,
Fauré, Pierné, Beethoven*

*National Symphony Orchestra
New York Symphony Orchestra
conducted by Walter Damrosch*

COLUMBIA & VICTOR STUDIO RECORDINGS, 1927 & 1930

 **Obert-Thorn**



Walter Damrosch

GLUCK (arr. Gevaert) *Airs de Ballet*

- 1. Air from *Iphigenia in Aulis* (1:43)
- 2. Slaves' Dance from *Iphigenia in Aulis* (2:49)
- 3. Tambourin from *Iphigenia in Aulis* (1:03)
- 4. Gavotte from *Armide* (1:56)
- 5. Chaconne from *Iphigenia in Aulis* (5:38)
- 6. **BACH** (arr. Leopold Damrosch) Gavotte in D (from Sonata No. 6 for Solo Cello) (4:19)

SAINT-SAËNS *Ballet Divertissement from Henry VIII*

- 1. Introduction and Entrance of the Clans (4:35)
- 2. Scotch Idyl (4:20)
- 3. Dance of the Gypsy (2:42)
- 4. Jig and Finale (3:42)
- 7. **FAURÉ** Pavane, Op. 50 (4:47)
- 8. **MOSZKOWSKI** Perpetual Motion (from Suite No. 1, Op. 39) (4:29)
- 9. **PIERNÉ** Entrance of the Little Fauns (from *Cydalise et le Chèvre-Pied*) (3:00)

RAVEL *Mother Goose - Suite*

- 1. Pavane of the Sleeping Beauty (1:57)
- 2. Hop o' My Thumb (4:55)
- 3. Laideronette, Empress of the Pagodas (3:36)
- 4. Conversations of Beauty and the Beast (4:07)
- 5. The Fairy Garden (3:38)
- 10. **BEETHOVEN** Funeral March from Symphony No. 3 (Eroica) explained at the piano by Walter Damrosch (8:38)

National Symphony Orchestra *tracks 1-12*
 New York Symphony Orchestra *tracks 13-18*
 Walter Damrosch *conductor, piano (track 19)*

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

Cover artwork based on a
 photograph of **Walter
 Damrosch**

Gluck *Airs de Ballet*

Recorded 13 May 1930 in Liederkrantz
 Hall, New York City. Matrix nos.: CVE
 59788-1, 59789-3 and 59790-1. First
 issued on Victor 7321 and 7322

Saint-Saëns *Ballet Divertissement*

Recorded 16 and 20 May 1930 in
 Liederkrantz Hall, New York City.
 Matrix nos.: CVE 59793-2, 59794-2,
 59795-1 and 59799-3. First issued on
 Victor 7292 and 7293

Ravel *Mother Goose Suite*

Recorded 7 and 9 June 1927 in New
 York City. Matrix nos.: W 98363-2,
 98364-3, 98365-2, 98366-3 and 98368-2.
 First issued on Columbia 67343-D
 through 67345-D in Set 74

Full 78rpm disc information online

Total duration: **71:54**

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