

This release brings together all of the acoustic recordings of Sir Thomas Beecham, which were omitted from the Warner Classics Beecham "Mono Era" CD box. They shed an invaluable light on the conductor's activities in London during the 1910s, and feature 16 works that Beecham never re-recorded during his long career. They are presented here in matrix number order, based on the discography published by Michael Gray in 1979 for the conductor's centenary.

When the 31-year-old Beecham entered the Gramophone Company's London studios in July, 1910, he had already been conducting for eleven years, most recently with the ensemble he had founded the previous year, the Beecham Symphony Orchestra, whose ranks included such future luminaries as Albert Sammons, Lionel Tertis and Eric Coates. That summer, he was heavily involved with operatic productions held at His Majesty's Theatre featuring his own Beecham Opera Company. Both *Tales of Hoffmann* and *Die Fledermaus* were given during this season.

Another session held a month later produced a recording whose attribution is somewhat controversial. On 31 August, a symphonic band recorded several titles for the Gramophone Company. Their matrix book identified the ensemble as the Black Diamonds Band, a group which recorded prolifically for the label, making recordings "for the Berlin branch". They were released in Germany credited to the "Grammophon-Orchester", which Gray described as "an all-purpose name used for orchestral recordings made outside Germany."

One of the titles, however – a potpourri of tunes from Eugen d'Albert's opera, *Tiefland* – was released in England credited to the Beecham Symphony Orchestra. Because Beecham was at the time preparing for the British première of the opera at Covent Garden, the attribution was accepted in Gray's discography and reflected in some reissues of his early recordings. However, because several of the other titles made at the session were of non-Classical repertoire that Beecham would not have conducted, it seems likely that this was a misattribution by the Gramophone Company, perhaps an intentional one to link the record with Beecham's production. (A similar potpourri from Verdi's *Nabucco*, recorded directly after the *Tiefland* sides but credited only to the Grammophon-Orchester, is included in the download version of this release.)

The next group of recordings was made around two years later for the Odeon label, whose recordings were as crude sounding as their pressings were noisy, but whose rarity make them highly sought after by collectors. One can hear the increasingly tight ensemble work of Beecham's orchestra, far above the average level of playing for London orchestras of the time, in such works as the *William Tell* Overture.

In 1915, Beecham signed with Columbia, the label for which he would make most of his recordings for the next couple decades. In contrast with other labels, Columbia for the most part did not reorchestrate to make recordings "register" more impactfully using the acoustic process. Timpani are clearly heard in the "Polovtsian Dances", and double basses in the *Bartered Bride* Overture are discernable, if just barely. However, the bass drum is omitted from the *Damnation of Faust's* "Hungarian March".

Additionally, Columbia allowed relatively complete recordings of some overtures to be made. Beecham's first Columbia disc, the *Magic Flute* Overture, is uncut; and their *Oberon* Overture, despite some internal cuts, was still allotted two sides. (The *Roman Carnival* Overture was apparently recorded complete as well, but only the second side was issued.)

These recordings again reflect some of Beecham's recent productions. The conductor had given the British première of *Der Rosenkavalier* in 1913; but the selection of waltzes heard on the Columbia disc is not the familiar Otto Singer arrangement. That same year, Beecham produced a series of Russian ballets at the Drury Lane Theatre featuring Nijinsky among others. The excerpts from the first version of the *Firebird* Suite made three years later appear to be the earliest recording of any Stravinsky work, as well as Beecham's only representation of the composer on disc.

Mark Obert-Thorn

beecham
complete acoustics

PRISTINE
AUDIO
PASC 755

debussy
petite suite

offenbach
tales of hoffmann

stravinsky
firebird suite

tchaikovsky
symphony no. 6, 'pathétique'

beecham symphony orchestra

studio recordings, 1910-1918

Obert-Thorn

disc one (78:48)

GRAMOPHONE COMPANY RECORDINGS (1910)

OFFENBACH *Tales of Hoffmann*

1. The Doll's Song (3:12)
Caroline Hatchard (soprano) and Beecham Opera Chorus
2. Legend of Kleinsack (3:54)
Walter Hyde (tenor)
3. Drig, drig, drig (2:51)
Beecham Opera Chorus
4. When love is but tender and sweet (2:35)
Walter Hyde (tenor) and Beecham Opera Chorus
5. J. STRAUSS II *Die Fledermaus* - Overture* (3:51)
6. D'ALBERT *Tiefland* - Selections** (8:09)

ODEON RECORDINGS (c.1912)

7. ROSSINI *William Tell* Overture - March (3:00)
8. MISSA *Muguette* - Entr'acte** (3:14)
9. MASCAGNI *Cavalleria Rusticana* - Intermezzo* (3:03)
10. MENDELSSOHN The Bees' Wedding
(*Songs Without Words*, No. 34)* (1:47)
11. MOZART *Le Nozze di Figaro*, K.492 - Overture (3:33)
12. WEBER *Oberon* Overture (3:59)

COLUMBIA GRAPHOPHONE RECORDINGS (1915 - 1918)

13. MOZART *Die Zauberflöte*, K.620 - Overture (6:52)
14. BORODIN *Prince Igor* - Polovtsian Dances (6:47)
15. MASSENET *Manon* - Minuet* (2:34)
16. R. STRAUSS *Der Rosenkavalier* - Waltzes* (4:00)
17. BORODIN *Prince Igor* - Polovtsian March (4:04)

TCHAIKOVSKY Symphony No. 6 in B minor, Op. 74,
"Pathétique"*

18. 2nd mvmt. - Allegro con grazia (3:58)
19. 3rd mvmt. - Allegro molto vivace (3:24)

RIMSKY-KORSAKOV *Antar* - Symphonic Suite, Op. 9

20. 3rd mvmt. - Allegro risoluto alla marcia (4:01)

disc two (73:50)

STRAVINSKY *The Firebird* - Suite (1911 Version) - excerpts**

1. Dance of the Firebird (1:07)
2. The Princess' Game with Golden Apples (2:29)
3. Infernal Dance of All of Koschei's Subjects (3:45)
4. MENDELSSOHN *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Op. 61
Scherzo (3:55)
5. MOZART Divertimento in D major, K.131 - Minuet (3:52)
6. ROSSINI *The Barber of Seville* - Overture* (4:18)
7. BERLIOZ *Roman Carnival* Overture, Op. 9 (3:44)
8. MOZART *Le Nozze di Figaro*, K.492 - Overture (4:02)
9. SIBELIUS *Kuolema*, Op. 44 - Valse triste (4:22)
10. SMETANA *The Bartered Bride* - Overture (4:06)
11. GRIEG Symphonic Dance No. 2, Op. 64 (4:15)
12. GOUNOD *Romeo and Juliet* - Processional March* (3:04)
13. WEBER *Oberon* - Overture (8:02)
14. BERLIOZ *Damnation of Faust* - Hungarian March (4:06)
15. GERMAN (text: Kipling) Have you news of my boy Jack?* (3:59)
Clara Butt (contralto)
16. BIZET *La Jolie Fille de Perth* - Minuet* (3:44)
17. MOZART *Le Nozze di Figaro*, K.492 - Fandango* (1:48)
18. LULLY *Les Amants Magnifiques* - Minuet** (2:17)

DEBUSSY (orch. Büsser) *Petite Suite**

19. 1st mvmt. - En bateau (3:51)
20. 4th mvmt. - Ballet (3:04)

Beecham Symphony Orchestra
conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham

* = Only Beecham recording of the work

** = Only Beecham recording of any work by that composer

Producer and Audio Restoration Engineer: Mark Obert-Thorn

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Cover artwork based on an AI elaboration of a photograph of Thomas Beecham taken in 1910. Full discographic information can be found on the Pristine Classical website page for this release.

Total duration: 2hr 39:21

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