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| 1 | Siegfried-Idyll (1870) (17:08) | Richard Wagner
(1813-1883) |
| 2 | Fantasia on a Theme
by Thomas Tallis (1909) (17:13) | Ralph Vaughan Williams
(1872- 1958) |
| 3 | Verklaerte Nacht, Op. 4 (1899) (28:54)
(Transfigured Night) | Arnold Schoenberg
(1874-1951) |

The Symphony of the Air
Leopold Stokowski, conductor

Recorded in concert at The Library of Congress, November 17, 1960

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In 1960, Leopold Stokowski conducted his *Symphony of the Air* in the Coolidge Auditorium of the Library of Congress. It was his third and last appearance there. Three works from the program are on this recording. Arnold Schoenberg's *Verklaerte Nacht* ("Transfigured Night") has special significance for the Library, as it was the favorite composition of Gertrude Clarke Whittall, under whose auspices the concert was given. "If you play it when I'm gone," she said near the end of her long life, "I'll come back." Because of her admiration for it, she had enabled the Library to buy the original manuscript from the composer in 1950. *Verklaerte Nacht*, in the composer's arrangement of 1943 for string orchestra, together with Ralph Vaughan Williams's *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis*, is one of this century's great pieces for string ensemble. Both are works for which Stokowski, famous for the exceptionally fine string sound of his orchestras, had a special affinity. He first recorded both for RCA Victor in 1952, but he never made a commercial recording of the third work on that program, Wagner's *Siegfried-Idyll*; hence this is the first release of its performance under Stokowski.

STOKOWSKI AND SCHOENBERG

Leopold Stokowski (1882-1977), Arturo Toscanini (1867-1957) and Serge Koussevitzky (1874-1951) established themselves after World War I as the three most celebrated orchestral conductors of their time. Stokowski, the youngest, was, as a showman, by far the most successful--some would say notorious. He appeared in Hollywood movies (with Deanna Durbin), collaborated with Walt Disney (*Fantasia*), and took full advantage of his highly photogenic appearance to perform the role of maestro in a way calculated to appeal to a wide audience.

At the same time, Stokowski devoted much of his energy to the performance of new music. This brought him into several conflicts, notably with the managements of the Philadelphia and the NBC Orchestras. In his vigorous support of modern music, he shared with Koussevitzky the distinction of giving many important new works a chance to be heard, and although he did not commission music, as did Koussevitzky, his range of musical interests was broader and included composers as diverse as Lou Harrison, Charles Ives, Carl Ruggles and Arnold Schoenberg.

Such interests in general, and his performance of a work by Schoenberg in particular, brought his rivalry with Toscanini to a head and resulted in Stokowski's dismissal after his two-year appointment with the NBC Orchestra, which he co-directed with Toscanini from 1942 to 1944. Toward the end of two seasons featuring an amount of new music unprecedented for the conservative NBC Orchestra, Stokowski had insisted, over Toscanini's objection, on giving the premiere of Schoenberg's Piano Concerto. Oliver Daniel, in *Stokowski: A Counterpoint of View* (N.Y.: Dodd, Mead & Co. 1982), tells how Stokowski approached the Concerto.

Edward Steuermann was the soloist. Stokowski had arranged to hear the work first at Schoenberg's home in Los Angeles where Leonard Stein assisted Steuermann by playing the piano reduction of the orchestral part. In New York, Stokowski continued to learn the score by hearing it with Steuermann and another second pianist. In the midst of the first of an unusually large number of rehearsals Stokowski had scheduled, Steuermann became increasingly concerned that Stokowski was not

correcting mistakes in the orchestra. Consequently, he and Felix Greissle, a music editor with G. Schirmer and Schoenberg's son-in-law, responded to Stokowski's earlier invitation to give him written comments by preparing a twelve-page list of mistakes. Daniel relates Greissle's recollections:

The next day Felix rather hesitantly told Stoki: "I have here a few sheets and I have put down a few things which we noted." Stoki took the papers and "with one hand opened them like a pack of cards, put them together again, put them into the pocket of his jacket, and turned around without saying one word." Felix regretted that he had said anything and felt that Stokowski was probably offended. But as he began to rehearse, he took out the twelve sheets of corrections and said, "Gentlemen, there are a few things which I want you to note." And he read the mistakes and corrections from beginning to end.

Stokowski's response supports the view that his first concern was the music and not his image as an infallible musician. Greissle called the results "very good, satisfactory." Schoenberg, who heard the performance on the air, was uncharacteristically

effusive: he wrote to Stokowski that it was "great." It was one of the last concerts Stokowski gave with the NBC Orchestra, for his contract was not renewed.

STOKOWSKI AND RECORDED SOUND

If Stokowski's insistence on performing such works as the Schoenberg Piano Concerto angered Toscanini, the acoustical improvements he made in Toscanini's NBC studio must have irritated him at least as much. Stokowski had long been experimenting with such things as the placement of musicians on the stage for balance and with unorthodox free bowing in the string sections for the sound he wanted, and he took an unusually active interest in new methods of recording. His involvement with multi-track recording for films in Disney's *Fantasia* is famous; it is less well known that in 1931, he conducted the Philadelphia Orchestra in the first, non-commercial stereo microgroove recordings. He had already taken time to study radio engineering on his own, and after a visit to the Bell Laboratories, he permitted them to install recording equipment in the concert hall so that rehearsals and performances of the

orchestra could provide a source for the research and development of better broadcasting and recording techniques. These interests continued throughout his career. In preparing his concert at the Library of Congress in 1960 for broadcast, he listened to playback in the Recording Laboratory and consequently ordered risers to be installed to improve the balance of the basses.

STOKOWSKI AND THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

The record of Stokowski's association with the Library of Congress begins in 1915, when he became a user of the Music Division's collection of scores, which he borrowed from time to time. He had worked with Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge even before the opening of her Auditorium in the Library in 1925, for he had been invited to conduct at the Library soon after the inaugural concert in 1925. His schedule with the Philadelphia Orchestra, however, prevented him from conducting a concert in the Coolidge Auditorium until October 9, 1929. Although his concert was not part of the Coolidge Festival, he was then serving as a judge in the Coolidge Prize competition, reading

scores submitted for the contest and returning them with his evaluations. The file of letters between Stokowski and the Library that year, therefore, is unusually large: there is weekly, sometimes daily, correspondence between Stokowski and Carl Engel, Chief of the Music Division, concerning Stokowski's concert and his work on the prize committee.

On March 14, 1929, Engel wrote Stokowski that he was sending him the score of Wolfgang Graeser's new orchestration of Bach's *Art of Fugue*, drawing Stokowski's attention to Graeser's article on it in the *Bach-Jahrbuch*, 1924. This arrangement had been premiered in Leipzig in 1927 and was awaiting its first American performance. "I have arranged the dates of our festival," Engel continues, "to suit your convenience. We are planning to begin on the evening of Monday, October 7, with a concert of 'Gothic Music' under the direction of Professor Rudolf Ficker of the University of Vienna with the assistance of the choir boys of the Vienna Burgkapelle." It should be recalled that, in 1929, the notion of performing early music on the instruments in use at the time of its composition had scarcely begun to interest musicologists or performers. Even respected

scholars, like Ficker, thought nothing of arranging music such as the 12th century liturgical music of Perotin for modern instruments as well as voices. Stokowski lived to see a strong reaction beginning in the 1950s against such practices, but we must not forget that his own orchestral transcriptions, and arrangements such as Graeser's, were the only way many were able to hear the music of Bach and, as arrangements, are indeed masterworks of their kind.

Engel's telegram of March 23 to Stokowski concerns the performers: "What is your choice of apparently two harpsichordists needed for Bach. If Landowska is unavailable or too exacting in demands would you consider Lewis Richards and Frank Bibb or have you other suggestions." Stokowski replied on March 25 that he did not know Richards or Bibb but would take Engel's recommendation. "I imagine," Stokowski writes, "they are young American artists and I am keen to do everything possible to develop resources of this kind in our own country as it makes the carrying out of our plans simpler, and is a good thing from every standpoint." It is interesting to reflect on Stokowski's emphasis on using American musicians. Although

he had been born and raised in London, and was to make quite a production out of his Polish background (cultivating a Slavic accent that, it was noted, became more pronounced after his arrival in Philadelphia), he had become an American citizen in 1915. He was certainly aware of the tendency among Americans to undervalue domestic talent in favor of European imports. Among his later efforts to rectify the situation were the establishment of the All-American Youth Orchestra and the American Symphony Orchestra in 1940 and 1962, respectively. On May 1, regarding the October concert, he adds: "We are assured by Breitkopf & Härtel that we are to have (for the tidy sum of \$150.00) the first American performance of Bach-Graeser. I believe we are stealing a march on Bodansky." (The Austrian-born conductor Arthur Bodansky was director from 1916-1931 of New York's Society of Friends of Music, with which he apparently hoped to beat Stokowski to the American premiere of the Bach-Graeser *Art of Fugue*.)

Stokowski wrote to Engel before leaving for Europe on May 11. There is then a pause in communications until September, for it was not only Stokowski who took leave in the summer months.

Before the Second World War (and before air-conditioning) Washington was generally in recess from June to September. The October concert, which included the *Art of Fugue* and Hindemith's Organ Concerto, was a great success, as further correspondence attests.

SCHOENBERG, THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, AND VERKLAERTE NACHT

The acquisition of the original manuscript of Schoenberg's *Verklaerte Nacht* by Mrs. Whittall reflects on the generosity of not one but two great patrons of the Library. The Coolidge Foundation had commissioned both Schoenberg's Third and Fourth String Quartets before Mrs. Whittall, through the Library, approached Schoenberg about his *Verklaerte Nacht* manuscript. In response, the composer made an offer, which was accepted, whereby the Library--which already had his Coolidge quartets--would have to purchase not only the remaining quartets but *Pierrot Lunaire* and the Serenade, Op. 24, as well. Through the Coolidge commissions, the Whittall purchase, and the additional commission from the Koussevitzky Foundation for

A Survivor from Warsaw, the Library became Schoenberg's most important supporter during his American years, as well as the custodian of the holographs of some of his greatest works.

Stokowski himself enters the story of Schoenberg and the Library of Congress in a connection other than his performance of *Verklaerte Nacht*. In 1954, the conductor gave to the Library an early painting by Schoenberg from the composer's period of association with the Munich group of artists established in 1911 by Wassily Kandinsky and other dissident artists, the *Blaue Reiter*. Painted in 1910, it is entitled "Vision." Schoenberg had given it to Stokowski in 1949.

Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951) was born in Vienna, and when he was a youth Strauss and Mahler were the rising stars of new music, Wagner and Brahms being still the dominant influences. Although the latter was regarded as the embodiment of traditional values and, in the perspective of Wagnerians, reactionary, nevertheless, throughout his life, Schoenberg deeply admired and appreciated Brahms and both wrote and lectured on his highly original contributions to music. On Schoenberg's own

youthful masterpiece, *Verklaerte Nacht*, its highly chromatic Wagnerian harmonic style notwithstanding, Brahms exerts an important influence on the structure of the work, which, as Richard Swift points out (in *19th Century Music*, July 1977) consists of two sonatas joined by a transition, with much of the thematic material of the second sonata consisting of “transfigurations” of themes from the first. The classical structure is articulated by a basic tonality (D minor/major), the key being asserted by frequent preparation rather than by actual arrival at the tonic. Schoenberg wrote about the influences on *Verklaerte Nacht* of Wagner and Brahms in *My Evolution*:

The thematic construction is based on Wagnerian “model and sequence” technique above a moving harmony, on the one hand, and on Brahms’ technique of developing variation, as I call it, on the other. The imparity of measures must also be ascribed to Brahms.

Composed in 1899 in a few weeks (though more than the three given in one account) as a string sextet, and published the same year, it achieves a synthesis of style and technique that is highly original. The work was initially rejected for performance. “It

sounds as if someone had smeared the score of *Tristan* while it was still wet,” was one remark the sextet drew, and the piece was not performed until 1902. Thereafter, it did not have to wait long for acceptance, and in 1917 Schoenberg made his first arrangement of it for string orchestra, adding a double-bass part. The one performed here is the later arrangement he made in 1943.

This work, really a dramatic tone-poem, is based on Richard Dehmel’s poem of the same name as it appeared in the first edition of his *Weib und Welt* (“Woman and World”). Dehmel later used the same poem in his verse novel, *Zwei Menschen*, which has resulted in confusion about the original title of the *Verklaerte Nacht* poem, since it begins with the words “Zwei Menschen.” Carl Schorske, in *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (N.Y.: Vintage, 1981) includes Dehmel’s poem among other, in his words, “literary texts on the favored fin-de-siècle themes of erotic affirmation and the dissolution of boundaries” and speaks of it as “a truly pan-erotic period piece.” Although Dehmel’s literary reputation has suffered since the turn of the century when his poetry was held in high regard, he was a

genuine influence on Schoenberg's music at least to the time of World War I. "People who know my music," Schoenberg wrote to Dehmel in 1912 in response to his praise and gratitude on hearing a performance of *Verklaerte Nacht*, "can bear witness to the fact that my first attempts to compose settings for your poems contain more of what subsequently developed in my work than there is in many a much later composition."

The following English paraphrase of Dehmel's poem is by Henry Edward Krehbiel:

Two mortals walk through a cold, barren grove. The moon sails over the tall oaks, which send their scrawny branches up through the unclouded moonlight. A woman speaks. She confesses a sin to the man at her side: she is with child, and he is not its father. She had lost belief in happiness and, longing for life's fullness, for motherhood and mother's duty, she had surrendered herself, shuddering, to the embraces of a man she knew not. She had thought herself blessed, but now life had avenged itself upon her by giving her the love of him she walks with. She staggers onward, gazing with lackluster

eye at the moon which follows her. A man speaks. Let her not burden her soul with thoughts of guilt. See, the moon's sheen enwraps the universe. Together they are driving over chill waters, but a flame from each warms the other. It, too, will transfigure the little stranger, and she will bear the child to him. For she has inspired the brilliant glow within him and made him, too, a child. They sink into each other's arms. Their breaths meet in kisses in the air. Two mortals wander through the wondrous moonlight.

Stokowski wrote of the piece in his notes for his 1952 RCA Victor recording: "The tonal design is in two great masses, with a pivotal turning point at the intense chord of D major in bar 229. Before this moment, the music expresses doubt, depression, groping, despair. After the turning point courage, resolution, the romantic beauty of a moonlit night, the ecstasy of love."

Bar 229 begins the second of the two sonatas--Stokowski's "two great masses"--which comprise the piece. Hence, while it parallels the poem, Schoenberg's music is also quite self-

contained, its structure being, though coincidental with, also independent from the form of Dehmel's poem.

FANTASIA ON A THEME BY THOMAS TALLIS

Unlike Schoenberg's sextet, Vaughan Williams's *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis*, first performed in London in 1909, was well received at once. It is a masterpiece that, unlike Schoenberg's *Verklarte Nacht*, remains characteristic of Vaughan Williams's later work. Most immediately striking, in contrast to Schoenberg's tonally-oriented chromaticism, is the modality which gives Vaughan Williams's *Fantasia* its archaic flavor: its returns to--rather than avoidance of--the tonic. Moreover, the separation of the string orchestra into three groups of different sizes (large and small string orchestras, plus string quartet) permits an antiphonal treatment that further recalls the 16th-century musical tradition from which this piece grows.

SIEGFRIED IDYLL

In April 1866, following the death of his first wife, Richard Wagner settled in Tribschen, his secluded lakeside home near

Lucerne (now a Wagner museum) where he lived until 1872. In May 1866, Cosima von Bülow, Franz Liszt's daughter, who was still married to the conductor Hans von Bülow, left her husband to join Wagner at Tribschen. The previous year she had given birth, on the first day von Bülow conducted rehearsals for *Tristan*, to Wagner's first child, Isolde. In February of the following year, 1867, their second child, Eva, was born, and in June 1869, while he was completing *Siegfried* (after an interruption of a decade), Cosima bore his son of the same name. The next year, 1870, on Christmas Day, Cosima (whose thirty-third birthday it was) awoke in the morning to the sounds of a small orchestra gathered at the foot of the staircase. She wrote in her *Diary* (*Cosima Wagner's Diaries*. Vol. 1 Geoffrey Skelton, transl. N.Y.: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978):

When I woke up I heard a sound, it grew ever louder, I could no longer imagine myself in a dream, music was sounding, and what music! After it had died away, R. came in to me with the five children [Wagner's and Bülow's] and put into my hands the score of his "Symphonic Birthday Greeting." I was in tears, but so, too, was the whole household; R. had set up his

orchestra on the stairs and thus consecrated our Tribschen forever! The Tribschen Idyll-thus the work is called. The title page of the manuscript of the Idyll reads: Tribschen Idyll, with Fidi's [Siegfried's] Bird-song and Orange Sunrise, presented as a Symphonic Birthday Greeting to his Cosima by her Richard, 1870.

Regarding the "Orange Sunrise," we learn from Cosima's *Diary* that on the morning Siegfried was born, Wagner, upon returning to his room, was

surprised by an incredibly beautiful, fiery glow which started to blaze with a richness of color never before seen, first on the orange wallpaper beside the bedroom door; it was then reflected in the blue jewel box containing my portrait, so that this, covered by glass and set in a narrow gold frame, was transfigured in celestial splendor.

The *Siegfried-Idyll*, as the piece for small orchestra finally came to be called, was never intended for publication. We learn from Cosima's *Diary* that she regarded it as a personal acquisition to

be jealously guarded from the outside world. She was disturbed by its performance at home ("great sorrow on my part to see it performed in front of so many strangers"); two years after its presentation to her Wagner confided that he had thought of selling it ("how sad that would have made me--my 'sweet secret' thus betrayed!"); and the next Christmas she slept with it under her pillow.

Two of the principal themes from the *Idyll* were probably conceived by Wagner in 1864, the year he met Cosima and three years before resumption of work on *Siegfried*, where they appear in the love duet between Siegfried and Brunhilde. These are the opening theme heard in the strings ("Ewig war ich, ewig bin ich") and the theme first heard at bar 148 in the woodwinds ("O Siegfried, Herrlicher! Hort der Welt!"). The fact that they are used together in counterpoint in the *Idyll* but not in *Siegfried* is used by Ernest Newman, in his *Life of Richard Wagner* (Vol. 3. N.Y.: Knopf, 1941), to support the quite plausible theory that they were composed together and with another purpose than *Siegfried* in mind. In reference to the *Idyll*, Cosima alludes in her *Diary* to Wagner's writing "the first theme that time when I

visited him in Starnberg.” An 1864 sketch for it survives. Apparently, Wagner intended to compose a string quartet for Cosima at the time, and although the quartet was either not finished or lost, the first musical idea for the *Idyll* was the two related themes inspired by their meeting.

Furthermore, although it is both musically associated with the music drama *Siegfried*, and bore, upon its publication in 1878, a dedicatory poem by the composer to Cosima in gratitude for the birth of his son, the musical theme uniquely associated with the *Idyll* appears in Wagner’s diary entry for December 31, 1868, a year and a half before *Siegfried*’s birth. There, Wagner wrote out the music and words for the cradle song that appears first in bar 92 of the *Idyll*. This allusion was unknown until the publication of an article by Otto Strobel in the *Bayreuther Festspielführer* for 1934 and was not generally available to English readers until the publication of Ernest Newman’s fourth and last volume of the *Life of Richard Wagner*, in which he includes an appendix; “New Light on the *Siegfried-Idyll*” (N.Y.: Knopf, 1946). The words are:

Schlaf, Kindchen, schlafe;

*Im Garten gehn zwei Schafe;
Ein schwarzes und ein weisses;
Und wenn das Kind nicht schlafen will
So kommt das schwarz und beisst es.*

(Sleep baby, sleep. In the Garden are two sheep, a black one and a white one; and if the baby doesn’t go to sleep the black one will come and bite it.)

Newman points to the musical references to this “doggerel” in Wagner’s treatment of the cradle song in the *Idyll*, noting the use of the pastoral oboe and the accompanying parallel thirds depicting “the two sheep walking side by side,” and concluding that Wagner’s indulgence in naive pictorialism, for which there is no purely musical explanation, is evidence that the work was intended for personal use only. Yet Cosima is said to have claimed to Friedrich Nietzsche, an intimate of the Wagners at the time the *Idyll* was composed, that it was the fulfillment of the Lisztian symphonic tone poem. Nevertheless, she was in no hurry to share this announcement with the world.

Donald Francis Tovey, discussing the *Siegfried-Idyll* in his *Essays on Musical Analysis* (London: Oxford University Press, 1934-39), writing several years before the publication of Newman's "New Light on the *Siegfried-Idyll*," warned against seeking an explanation for the music in such personal references. We are likely to seek some middle ground. Like Schoenberg's *Verklaerte Nacht*, the *Idyll*, for all its extra-musical motivation, works perfectly well as pure music. It is in a rather free three-part form: I) E major to bar 114, with the above-mentioned contrapuntally related themes played separately, Brunhilde's "Sleep" motive first heard in the flute as counterpoint to the first theme at bar 37, and the cradle song; II) other keys in a developmental section, the first and second themes combining first at bar 201, and with a new horn-and-bird-call at bar 259; and III) return to E major and first theme at bar 286. Though less chromatic in texture than *Verklaerte Nacht*, it is structurally less tonal in the classical sense, for while it begins and ends in E major, its reasons for being in any particular key at any particular time have more to do with color and instrumentation than with key relationships.

One would do well to heed another of Tovey's cautions, namely that in our understanding of the *Idyll* "the allusions made to the *Idyll* in the opera (*Siegfried*) will not carry us much farther than Virgil's Fourth Eclogue will carry us in New Testament criticism." For the *Idyll* was conceived more or less independently as a piece in its own right with Cosima and the growing family at Tribschen at its emotional center.

Notes by Jon Newsom
Chief, Music Division
The Library of Congress

First Violins

M. Tree (Concert Master)
S. Rosenberg
P. Dimitriadis
N. Carr
J. Tryon
A. Cores

Second Violins

P. Wolfe (First)
C. Treger
H. Kwallwasser
P. Bernard
G. Tetewsky
M. Schumitzky

Violas

A. Granick (First)
B. Zaslav
N. Forrest
M. Thomas
H. Sorkin
J. Glick

Celli

A. Shapinsky (First)
A. Twerdowsky
S. Hunkins
S. Trepel
J. Tekula
P. Cherry
W. Jackson

Basses

D. Walter (First)
S. Sankey
J. Mancini

Flutes

M. Panitz
L. Schaefer

Oboes

L. Arner (First)
H. Schuman

Clarinets

C. Russo (First)
R. Listokin

Bassoons

L. Glickman (First)
M. Newman

Horns

R. Froelich (First)
E. Chapin
J. Rossi
R. Berg

Trumpets

M. Karpilovsky
F. Falcone

Tympani

P. Fein

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