

Fritz Reiner was one of the most acclaimed conductors of the 20th century -- noted for the vast range of his repertoire, which included both symphonic and operatic pieces spanning from the traditional canon to contemporary material, he was also an influential educator who counted among his pupils Leonard Bernstein. Reiner was born in Budapest, Hungary, on December 19, 1888; despite earning a law degree from the University of Bucharest, he pursued a career in music, and at age 21 was named chorusmaster of the Budapest Opera. A stint as conductor with the Budapest Volksoper followed before Reiner was chosen in 1914 to serve as principal conductor of the Royal Opera in Dresden, where he collaborated with Richard Strauss on productions of several of the composer's early operas.

In 1922 Reiner left Europe to relocate to America, settling in Cincinnati, OH, and signing on as conductor with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra; a decade later he was tapped to head the orchestral and opera departments at Philadelphia's Curtis Institute of Music, where his students included Bernstein. After next serving as the music director of the Pittsburgh Symphony between 1938 and 1948, he served five years with the Metropolitan Opera. While Reiner's frequent migration might have been attributed largely to a restless creativity, he was also a notoriously difficult personality who frequently alienated those around him -- many of the musicians under his command openly loathed him, although he inevitably inspired the best work of their careers.

Reiner's own best work was undoubtedly his tenure with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, which he elevated into one of the most celebrated ensembles in the world. Moving over to the CSO in 1953, he not only established the orchestra as a top-flight live attraction but also as a popular recording entity -- the countless albums they made for RCA's Living Stereo series during Reiner's decade-long tenure were much acclaimed by collectors for both the power of the performances and the unusually high fidelity of the recordings themselves. Releases like Fritz Reiner Conducts Richard Strauss and Fritz Reiner Conducts Bartók in particular remain definitive interpretations of the composers in question. Health problems forced Reiner to resign his position in 1962, and he died in New York City on November 15 of the following year.



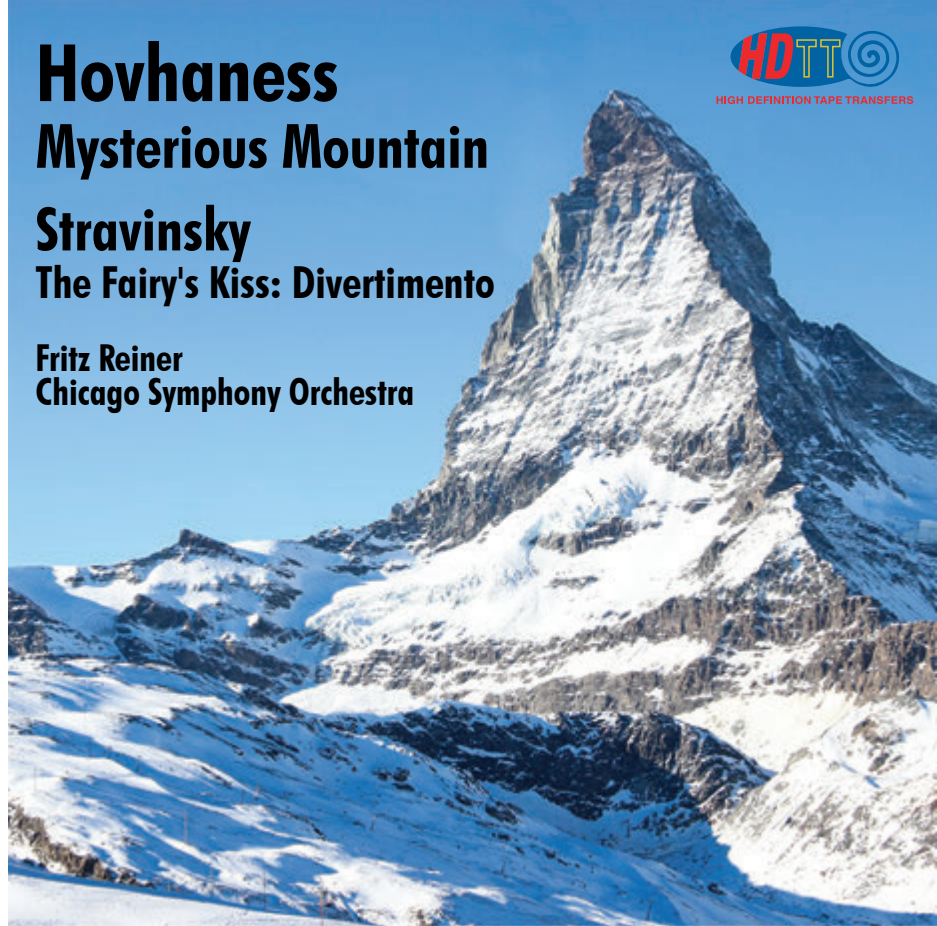
Hovhannes

Mysterious Mountain

Stravinsky

The Fairy's Kiss: Divertimento

Fritz Reiner
Chicago Symphony Orchestra



The Symphony No. 2 ("Mysterious Mountain") is without a doubt Hovhanness' best-known and most popular work. The work was commissioned by Leopold Stokowski, one of the composer's most consistent advocates, and premiered by the Houston Symphony on its first program under the legendary conductor. The concert was telecast nationwide, and Stokowski subsequently featured the work during guest appearances with many of America's leading orchestras. However, the disproportionate success of "Mysterious Mountain" is probably chiefly attributable to a 1958 RCA Victor recording of the work by the Chicago Symphony under Fritz Reiner. Though the work has been recorded a number of times, the Reiner recording has scarcely waned in popularity and has remained in print for over 40 years.

The Symphony No. 2 is notable for a pervasive sense of spiritual serenity. The first of its three movements alternates between richly consonant hymnlike passages and calm, gentle instrumental solos; throughout, the peaceful mood is never broken. The second movement is a double fugue: the first subject is pentatonic, its development resembling the polyphonic techniques of Renaissance masters like Josquin Desprez; the second subject is quite vigorous and provides the only moments of agitation in the entire work. (This material, incidentally, appears in more primitive form in Hovhanness' 1936 String Quartet No. 1). Eventually the two subjects come together in a majestic, awe-inspiring climax. The third movement returns to the calm, peaceful mood of the opening. A melody, barely audible at first, is repeated rather ominously at an ever-increasing dynamic level until it peaks in a full climax. The Symphony ends with an epilogue that expresses an exquisite spiritual rapture -- a passage, the composer maintained, that came to him in a dream.

As was his usual practice with his larger works, Stravinsky extracted pieces of his "Tchaikovsky" ballet Divertimento from *Le baiser de la fée*

(*The Fairy's Kiss*) (1928) to form a concert suite (recall also the suites from *The Firebird* and *Petrushka*). In the case of *Le baiser de la fée*, however, Stravinsky entitled the resulting work *Divertimento*. In fact, Stravinsky was not the first to extract pieces from the work to form a concert suite: Ernest Ansermet, Stravinsky's preferred conductor since he had given the premiere of *Pulcinella* (1919–20), performed a concert suite of dances from *Le Baiser* in Geneva in February 1931. Stravinsky's own *Divertimento* was completed in 1934 and has much the same form as Ansermet's concert suite.

Stravinsky's *Divertimento* is in four movements: 1. Sinfonia, 2. "Dances suisses," 3. Scherzo, and 4. Pas de deux, consisting of Adagio, Variation, and Coda. The Sinfonia is most of Scene One from the ballet. The "Dances suisses" is the first portion of Scene Two of the ballet. The Scherzo is a slightly shortened version of the opening of the third scene. The Pas de deux consists of the last three numbers of the ballet's Pas de deux with the Entrée omitted. The *Divertimento* is scored for an orchestra of the same size as that of *Le Baiser*: three each of flutes, oboes, and clarinets, and two bassoons; four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, and tuba; timpani, percussion, harp, and strings.

Like *Le baiser de la fée*, Stravinsky's *Divertimento* is a pastiche work, a work that takes piano pieces and songs composed by Tchaikovsky and uses them as the raw material for Stravinsky's own work. In this case, Stravinsky has used not only Tchaikovsky's music but his style as well, and the work sounds like more of a collaboration between the two composers than Stravinsky's Pergolesi pastiche *Pulcinella*. Pastiche was a method of composition Stravinsky continued to use through his serial works of the 1950s and 1960s.

Hovhaness Mysterious Mountain Stravinsky The Fairy's Kiss

Fritz Reiner

Chicago Symphony Orchestra

Hovhaness Mysterious Mountain, Op. 132

(Symphony No. 2) 19:08

Andante 7:27

Moderato Maestoso 2:42

Allegro Vivo 2:58

Andante Espressivo 5:51

Stravinsky The Fairy's Kiss

Divertimento 24:00

Sinfonia 5:42

Danses Suisses 7:02

Scherzo 3:58

Pas De Deux 7:10

Total Time: 43:08

Recorded by RCA April 28, 1958

Producer: Richard Mohr - Engineer: Lewis Layton



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www.highdeftapetransfers.com