

following year, Karajan was appointed General Musical Director there- the youngest in Germany. In 1937 he achieved considerable success conducting, as a guest, a performance of "Fidelio" at the Berlin State Opera. In 1941 he severed his connections with Aachen to concentrate entirely on his work in Berlin.

After the end of the war, he was active in Vienna, where in 1949, he was appointed director of the "Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde." He raised the Vienna Symphony Orchestra to a high level of achievement, toured with the Vienna Philharmonic, and was largely responsible for creating in the newly founded Philharmonia Orchestra of London a precision instrument of the highest quality. As director of the German opera performances at La Scala, Milan, he acted as a producer as well as conductor. His concerts were among the highlights of international music festivals. Thus it was that in the fifth decade of his life, he became the natural, almost inevitable successor to Furtwangler, with added artistic responsibilities .. A guiding spirit also of the Vienna State Opera and of the Salzburg Festivals, Karajan clearly has a unique position in the world of music. No conductor has previously held posts of such importance simultaneously. The multiplicity of his activities, with their attendant demands on his tremendous energy, never interfere with the full-blooded musicality of this conductor, as exemplified in the present recording.

Shura Cherkassky was born in Odessa. His mother, a pianist herself, gave him his first musical training, which Cherkassky later continued in the U.S.A. Cherkassky's steeply rising career as a soloist has more than fulfilled the high expectations of his friends and patrons. The artist has played in every musical center all the world over and everywhere; he has been enthusiastically acclaimed for what is characteristic of his playing: the fusion of vitality and virtuosity which has led to the triumphant successes of his renderings of the piano-concertos by his compatriot Tchaikowsky.

Franz Liszt



"Mazeppa" Symphonic Poem No. 6
Hungarian Rhapsody No. 5 In E Minor
Hungarian Fantasia For Piano And Orchestra

Piano – Shura Cherkassky

Hungarian Rhapsody No. 4

Herbert von Karajan / Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra



The Symphonic Poem "Mazeppa" derives from a piano piece, as Liszt based this work, which dates from 1851, on a much earlier concert etude. This programme's music is based on a poem by Victor Hugo concerning the Cossack leader and Ukrainian national hero Mazeppa. The story is as follows: Mazeppa is tied to a horse by his enemies, and the horse is driven off across the Steppes. Vultures watch their apparently certain prey. As the steed finally falls exhausted, Mazeppa is rescued by his own people, as he had dreamed would be the case. Liszt depicted this story in music of great realism and illustrative power. From an abundance of pictorial detail, the musical highspot is the Mazeppa theme, a heroic subject of unquestionably splendid construction. It is used as a leitmotif, and assists the listener in finding his way through the wealth of illustrative elements in the work. On the whole, this Symphonic Poem represents a thoroughly romantic work.

The composer embodied this conception, as is amply shown by his life and works. A typically romantic characteristic is the lively, creatively fruitful interest of the much-lauded virtuoso pianist and successful composer for the hitherto neglected gypsy music of his native Hungary. Liszt made a comprehensive study of "The Gypsies and their music in Hungary" and wrote a book so entitled on the subject. The "Hungarian Rhapsodies" are the other musical results of this study. Both the book and music reflect Liszt's conviction. That is gypsy music; he had re-discovered the genuine ancient Magyar musical folk art, which he regarded as specifically epic. For that reason, he entitled his works based on this music "Rhapsodies." However, his idea of the originality of gypsy music was incorrect; Bartok and Kodaly have since uncovered the roots of Hungarian folk music and have employed the "creative transformation" of this material, to some extent, in their compositions.

Liszt was working along basically similar lines when, in his Hungarian Rhapsodies, he made use of elements from gypsy music, though with vastly different stylistic

material and differing above all by virtue of the fact that his models had nothing to do with genuine Hungarian folk music. Liszt was influenced primarily by the methods of performance employed by gypsy musicians and their free treatment of popular melodies, many of which had, in fact, been composed only a short time before. In the last group of four Hungarian Rhapsodies (whose total number is nineteen), written between 1882 and 1885, Liszt no longer used melodies already in existence, instead composing all the themes himself, though in the style of gypsy tunes. However, in the first fifteen Rhapsodies, composed before 1853, he adapted to his own use various melodies and rhythms which he had heard performed by gypsies, as well as their characteristic methods of ornamentation. Liszt employed these elements in varying, always very free ways: by fantasy-improvisation, by more or less conventional variation technique, or by a paraphrase. Liszt originally wrote his Hungarian Rhapsodies for piano solo, but he later orchestrated several of them, including the Fourth and Fifth. The 14th Rhapsody received a particularly free transcription. The version of it for piano and orchestra is so independent a work in its own right that Liszt gave this arrangement as a concert piece the title: "Fantasy on Hungarian Folk Tunes." This effective work is based on three such melodies, which proved a source of inspiration to the composer: an almost hymnlike tune, a "Zigeuner" Allegretto, and fiery dance.

Herbert von Karajan was born on the 5th of April 1908 in Mozart's birthplace Salzburg. He laid the foundations of his career with wide-ranging musical studies at the Salzburg Mozarteum, and at the age of nineteen, he received his first engagement as principal conductor at Ulm. The young Salzburg conductor, who intended originally to become a pianist, took over at short notice the direction of the performance of "The Marriage of Figaro" and was at once engaged.

In 1934 the Ulm Opera Director moved to a similar position at Aachen, and in the

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- 1 "Mazeppa" Symphonic Poem No. 6 15:15
- 2 Hungarian Rhapsody No. 5 In E Minor 12:28
- 3 Hungarian Fantasia For Piano And Orchestra 15:48
- 4 Hungarian Rhapsody No. 4 12:587

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