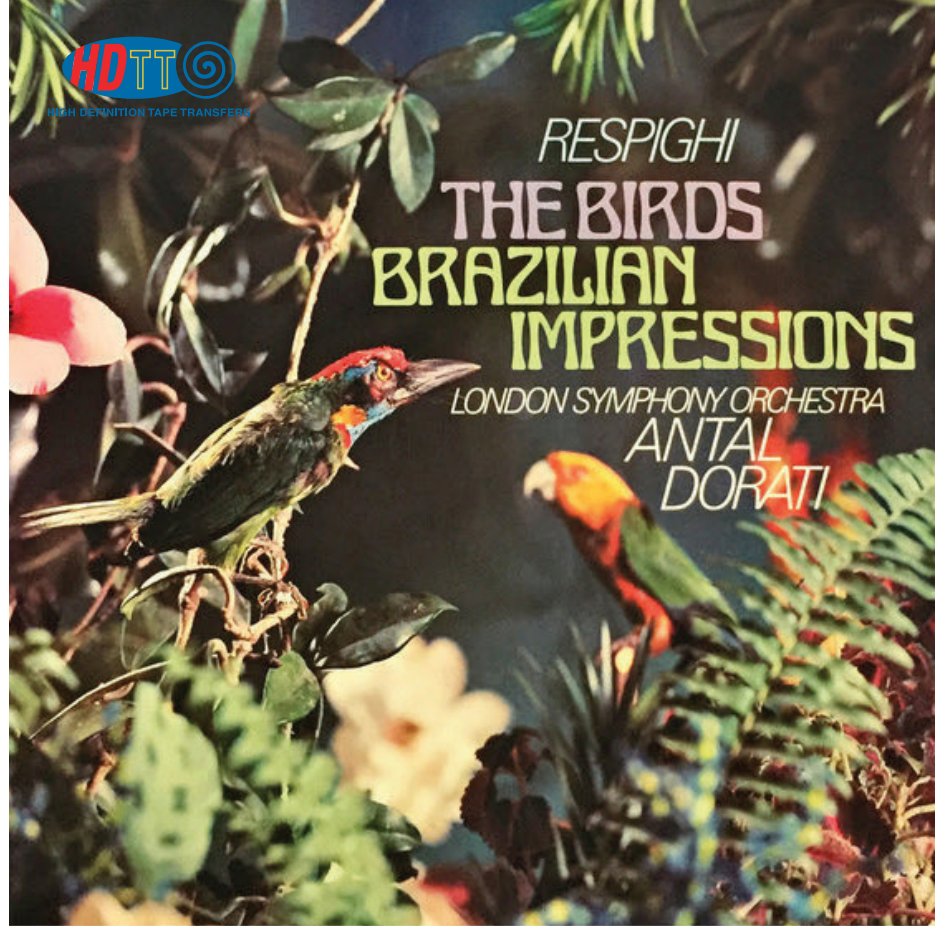


is set in a snake farm visited by the Respighis that was maintained by the Butantan Reptile Institute. Thousands of snakes were being bred for the collection of medicinal venom; judging from the tense atmosphere of the piece, one may deduce that the composer was somewhat unnerved by this experience. Rattling tambourines and slithering clarinets (marked "strisciante") represent the massive pits of reptiles; towards the end a snaky "Dies Irae" may be heard in the strings, perhaps signifying a great need to take leave of this scene. The concluding "Canzone e danza" is based on folk dances heard at Carnival. Compared to the fireworks Respighi displays in conclusions such as that of The Pines of Rome, "Canzone e danza" is restrained, rather short and surprisingly low-key. Brazilian Impressions as a whole has something of a travelogue quality, suggesting that if Respighi did absorb Brazilian music and culture, he did not do so very deeply, or not at least with the all-embracing enthusiasm of French composer Darius Milhaud. However the Brazilian Impressions is highly attractive music of excellent quality, makes brilliant use of orchestral color and provides a pleasant, exotic diversion of about 20 minutes' duration.



Respighi's affection for and knowledge of early music is amply demonstrated in his three suites of Ancient Airs and Dances. *Uccelli* (1928) represents another expedition into the past, in which Respighi transforms five characteristic keyboard pieces from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries into a genial suite for orchestra.

The orchestration of early keyboard music is a risky undertaking: The bright, uninflected timbre of an instrument like the harpsichord cannot adequately be conveyed by orchestral sonorities. Wisely, Respighi makes no attempt to do so. Instead, he uses the borrowed material to exploit the innate strengths of the orchestra, relying on melodic ingenuity, sparkling instrumental color, and swift contrasts of volume and tempo for interest. While none of these five movements conveys the brittle brilliance of the original pieces, each is witty, playful, and unpretentious.

After a graceful Prelude based on a work by Bernardo Pasquini, the "uccelli" (birds) of the title make their appearances as follows: the dove (after Jacques de Gallot), the hen (after Jean-Phillippe Rameau), the nightingale (Anonymous, seventeenth century), and the cuckoo (after Pasquini). The Prelude's main theme returns in various guises throughout, and the work ends with a restatement of melodic fragments from earlier movements.

Ottorino Respighi made his first trip to Brazil in May 1927, in the company of his wife Elsa. Engaged to lead a concert series of his own music in Rio de Janeiro, Respighi struggled to bring to terms an orchestra largely schooled in opera and zarzuela accompaniment and thus unused to purely instrumental performance. To this end Respighi acquitted himself, and the concert series was a success. Before his return to Europe, Respighi announced to the Brazilian press that he'd been absorbing local music and custom during his stay and would return the following year with a five-part orchestral suite based on his experiences. Respighi did, in fact, return to Rio de Janeiro in June 1928, but more pressing matters had weighed upon him in the interim, and the promised five-movement suite was presented only as a three-movement work entitled *Brazilian Impressions*. It nonetheless was warmly received; the result being that Respighi subsequently dropped the plan to add the two additional movements.

"Tropical Night," the first movement, is a boldly colored and highly impressionistic piece which is paced very slowly and is decorated with light sprays of harp and distantly intoned Brazilian folk tunes. A bit more on edge is the second movement, "Butantan" (In a Snake Garden Near São Paulo) which



Respighi The Birds - Brazilian Impressions - Dorati, London Symphony Orchestra

Respighi

The Birds - Brazillian Impressions

Antal Dorati, London Symphony Orchestra

The Birds

- 1 1. Prelude 2:59
- 2 2. The Dove 4:20
- 3 3. The Hen 2:57
- 4 4. The Nightingale 4:21
- 5 5. The Cuckoo 4:13

Brazilian Impressions

- 6 1. Noite Tropicale 9:44
- 7 2. Butantan 4:42
- 8 3. Canzone E Danza 4:30

Total Time: 37:46

Recorded by Mercury Records at Watford Town Hall London 1959

Engineer - Robert Fine Producer - Wilma Cozart Fine Mastered By – George Piros

Respighi The Birds - Brazilian Impressions - Dorati, London Symphony Orchestra



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