

The Swiss conductor, Ernest Ansermet, came from a musical family; he successively studied the clarinet, violin and brass instruments, which he used in fanfares; later he wrote military marches for the Swiss army which he did not consider important. Besides Music, he studied Mathematics in Lausanne and graduated with a Diploma in 1903; until 1906 he taught at the Lausanne Grammar School, then he decided to continue his studies at the Sorbonne and, at the same time, to attend courses at the Paris Conservatory. After his return to Lausanne, he taught Mathematics for one more year before devoting himself entirely to music.



Ansermet was a particular advocate of the Swiss composers Arthur Honegger and Frank Martin. He conducted the first performances of the following works of A. Honegger: *Horace victorieux* (1921), *Chant de joie* (1923), *Rugby* (1928) and *Pacific 231* (1923), which was dedicated to him, and of the following works of Frank Martin: *Symphonie* (1938), *In terra pax* (1945), *Der Sturm* (1956), *Le mystère de la Nativité* (1959), *Monsieur de Pourceaugnac* (1963) and *Les Quatre Éléments*, which were dedicated to him. Also important were the first performances of Benjamin Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia* (1946) and *Cantata misericordium* (1963).

Scheherazade

Rimsky-Korsakov

Ernest Ansermet
conducting
L'Orchestre De La
Suisse Romande

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Scheherazade, also spelled Sheherazade, orchestral suite by Russian composer Nicolay Rimsky-Korsakov that was inspired by the collection of largely Middle Eastern and Indian tales known as *The Thousand and One Nights* (or *The Arabian Nights*). Exemplary of the late 19th-century taste for program music—or, music with a story to tell—the piece evokes an image of Scheherazade (Shahrazad), the young wife of the sultan Schahriar (Shahryar), telling tales to her husband to forestall his plan to kill her. Colourful and highly varied in mood, the work has a recurring violin solo that represents Scheherazade herself and a deep, ponderous theme that corresponds to the sultan. The composition was completed in 1888, and it premiered on November 3 of that year, in Saint Petersburg, with the composer himself conducting.

Scheherazade derives its themes from the evocative stories of characters, such as Sindbad the Sailor and the woodcutter Ali Baba, that became widely known in Europe during the 1800s. Rimsky-Korsakov, renowned as a virtuoso of orchestral coloration, recognized in these tales an ideal realm in which to give free rein to his abilities. He subsequently created a work that he himself described as “an orchestral suite...closely knit by the community of its themes and motifs, yet representing, as it were, a kaleidoscope of fairy-tale images.”

The suite is structured in four movements, which originally were untitled but later were given names by Rimsky-Korsakov's former student Anatoly Lyadov. The first movement, “The Sea and Sind-

bad's Ship,”” starts with the deep, formidable “voice” of the sultan in the winds and strings, calling for his newest wife to entertain him; Scheherazade, represented by a light, lyrical solo violin melody, begins to develop her tale. The second movement, “The Story of the Kalandar Prince,”” opens with Scheherazade's now familiar violin line, which dissolves into animated marchlike passages, intermittently interwoven with suggestions of the sultan's theme. The whimsical third movement, “The Young Prince and the Young Princess,”” recounts a love story in waltz time. The theme of the sultan, now somewhat less foreboding, introduces the agitated finale, “Festival at Baghdad; the Sea; the Ship Goes to Pieces on a Rock Surmounted by a Bronze Warrior,”” which revisits and recasts many of the themes from the preceding movements.

Although the names of the movements derive from the original stories from *The Thousand and One Nights*, Rimsky-Korsakov always insisted that the music was not intended as an exact portrayal of any particular tale or any part of the collection. Other than the ominous opening theme of the sultan and a recurring sinuous violin solo that is intended to suggest Scheherazade herself, no character motifs are used in the work. “In composing *Scheherazade*,” wrote the composer in his memoirs,

I meant these hints [themes] to direct but slightly the hearer's fancy on the path which my own fancy had traveled, and to leave more minute and particular conceptions to the will and mood of each.

Rimsky-Korsakov Scheherazade

Symphonic Suite, Op. 35

Ernest Ansermet & L'Orchestre de la Suisse Romande

- 1 The Sea And Sinbad's Ship 10:05
 - 2 The Story Of The Kalandar Prince 11:11
 - 3 The Young Prince And The Young Princess 9:36
 - 4 Festival At Baghdad - The Sea 12:26
- Total Time: 43:18

Transferred from a 15ips 2-track tape

Recorded November 1960 at Victoria Hall, Geneva.

Recording Producer: James Walker Recording Engineer: R.G. Wallace



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