

Conductor Sir Thomas Beecham was born into wealth; his father, Sir Joseph Beecham, was the manufacturer of "Beecham's Pills," an all-purpose remedy very popular in Britain. More importantly, though, Sir Joseph was also a lover of music and exposed his son to it from an early age; happily, he raised no objection to Thomas' pursuit of a musical career.

After both formal and autodidactic training, Beecham made his professional debut as a symphony conductor in 1905 with members of the Queen's Hall Orchestra. When he wanted an orchestra to conduct full time, he simply used the resources of the family fortune to start one, which he led for a number of years. In 1910 Beecham began producing operas as a private impresario; he brought to the stage the British premieres of Strauss' Salome and Elektra, and operas by Delius. He founded the Beecham Opera Company, mainly made of British singers, in 1915.

However, even a fortune the size of his could not keep pace with the expenses of such activities. He was declared bankrupt in 1919 and withdrew from music to put his financial affairs into order. Having recovered by 1923, he returned to the podium, and his conducting career soon flourished. In 1928 he made his American debut with the New York Philharmonic; characteristic of his championing of Delius, he founded a festival dedicated to the music of that composer in 1929.

In 1932, Beecham, dissatisfied with the standards of the orchestral scene, founded the London Philharmonic Orchestra, staffing it with the finest players. It quickly became a top-rank ensemble and successfully toured the Continent. He became artistic director at Covent Garden in 1932, and ruled there in his customary autocratic manner. When the war began, Beecham toured the United States and Australia. He was appointed music director and conductor of the Seattle Symphony Orchestra (1941-1943) and was a frequent guest conductor at the Metropolitan Opera Company until he returned to England in 1944.

Upon his arrival in England, Beecham discovered that the orchestras there weren't overly enthusiastic at the prospect of working permanently in proximity to his withering tongue and dictatorial manner. Even the London Philharmonic Orchestra, with a new charter that permitted it to make some of its own decisions, showed little interest in having him at the helm full-time. So, typically, Beecham founded a new orchestra in 1946 -- the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra -- and maintained his relationship with this group for the remainder of his career. Beecham had already made a notable number of recordings before World War II. With the coming of the LP record after the war, and into the beginning of the stereo era, he recorded frequently. His recordings of Mozart, Haydn, Handel (he did not like Bach), Delius, Mendelssohn, Berlioz, and Sibelius are particularly esteemed; his recordings of Carmen and Madama Butterfly remain classics.



Rimsky-Korsakov

Scheherazade

Sir Thomas Beecham
Royal Philharmonic Orchestra



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 Sindbad'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

Sir Thomas Beecham
Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

- 1 The Sea And Sinbad's Ship 10:04
 - 2 The Story Of The Kalender Prince 12:02
 - 3 The Young Prince And The Young Princess 10:42
 - 4 The Festival Of Baghdad - The Sea
The Ship Goes To Pieces On A Rock Surmounted By A Bronze Warrior 12:51
- Total Time: 45:41

Soloist, Violin - Steven Staryk

Recording Info: Transferred from a 2-track tape 15ips tape

Recorded by EMI Records 1958



For more info e-mail us:
admin@highdeftapetransfers.com
or visit our website:
www.highdeftapetransfers.com