

The eminent American-born (of Australian parents) Australian conductor, (Alan) Charles (MacLaurin) Mackerras, was taken to Sydney, Australia, as an infant. He studied oboe, piano, and composition at the New South Wales State Conservatorium of Music. Then he was principal oboist in the Sydney Symphony Orchestra (1943-1946). Subsequently he went to London, where he joined the orchestra at Sadler's Wells and studied conducting with Michael Mudie. He won a British Council Scholarship in 1947, which enabled him to study conducting with Václav Talich at the Prague Academy of Music. Returning to London in 1948, Charles Mackerras was an assistant conductor at Sadler's Wells until 1953. The he was engaged as principal conductor of the BBC Concert Orchestra (1954-1956).

Subsequently he appeared as a guest conductor with British orchestras, and also had engagements on the Continent. In 1963 he made his debut at London's Covent Garden conducting Dmitri Shostakovich's Katerina Izmailova. From 1966 to 1970 he held the post of 1st conductor at the Hamburg State Opera. In 1970 he became music director at the Sadler's Wells Opera (renamed the English National Opera in 1974), a position he held until 1978. In October 1972 he made his Metropolitan Opera debut in New York conducting Gluck's Orfeo ed Euridice. From 1976 to 1979 he was chief guest conductor of the BBC Symphony Orchestra in London. After serving as chief conductor of the Sydney (Australia) Symphony Orchestra (1982-1985), he was artistic director of the Welsh National Opera in Cardiff (1987-1992). He was principal guest conductor of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra in Glasgow (from 1992). In February 1993, Sir Charles was appointed Principal Guest Conductor of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra in London and later conducted its first professional performance in the UK of the "original version" of Glagolitic Mass with the Brighton Festival Chorus at the Royal Festival Hall. In 1993 he was also appointed Principal Guest Conductor of the San Francisco Opera.

Charles Mackerras distinguished himself as an opera conductor by championing the works of Janáček. He is a specialist in the Czech repertory, notably Janáček. He has also conducted operas by George Frideric Handel, Glück, and Johann Christian Bach. He likewise is a discriminating interpreter of the orchestral repertoire.

Charles Mackerras undertook a great deal of research into performance practice of the 18th and 19th centuries. One of the highlights of the 1991 season was the reopening of the Estates Theatre in Prague, scene of the original premiere of Don Giovanni, in which Sir Charles conducted a new production of that opera to mark the bicentenary of Mozart's death. He has recorded all the symphonies and serenades of Mozart with the Prague Chamber orchestra for Telarc, and since becoming Principal Guest Conductor of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra has recorded The Magic Flute, Così fan tutte, Le Nozze Di Figaro, and in 1999, a new performance of Abduction from the Seraglio, which, in a joint production with the BBC and Antelope Productions, was filmed on location at the Topkapi Palace in Istanbul. The new recording is scheduled for release in June 2000.

Charles Mackerras was for many years associated with the Royal Opera House and he returns to Covent Garden in 1999-2000 to conduct Romeo et Juliet and Martinu's The Greek Passion. In addition to his many appearances with the San Francisco Opera, he conducts regularly at the Metropolitan Opera, New York, where his recent appearances include The Makropulos Case, Katya Kabanova, Die Zauberflöte, and Lucia di Lammermoor. He made one of his many visits to Australia last year to conduct Opera Australia in a new production of Jenufa. He also made his debut at the Salzburg Festival conducting hugely successful performances of Le Nozze di Figaro with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra. Charles Mackerras recorded a cycle of his operas with the Vienna Philharmonic. His vast discography includes an award-winning cycle of Janáček operas with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, Benjamin Britten's Gloriana (awarded Gramophone Magazine's Best Opera Recording for 1994), and Dvorak's Rusalka with the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra. Notable are his recent highly acclaimed recordings of the Brahms symphonies and serenades with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra for Telarc.

Charles Mackerras was made a Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 1974, and was knighted in 1979 for his services to music. At the end of 1996 he received the Medal of Merit from the Czech Republic, and last year he was made a Companion of the Order of Australia. He is a DMus (hon) of the Universities of Hull, York, Nottingham, Brno in the Czech Republic, Griffith in Brisbane, Australia, and Oxford. Sir Charles celebrated his seventieth birthday in 1995 with gala concerts with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra in Edinburgh, Welsh National Opera in Cardiff and with San Francisco Opera. Sir Charles Mackerras died of cancer in London at age 84.



DELIBES

BALLET MUSIC - "LA SOURCE" ACT 2

played by

THE ROYAL OPERA HOUSE ORCHESTRA, COVENT GARDEN

conducted by

CHARLES MACKERRAS

MIKADO OVERTURE - DONNA DIANA OVERTURE HUNTING PARSON OVERTURE

played by

PHILHARMONIA ORCHESTRA - ROYAL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

conducted by

CHARLES MACKERRAS

"HIS MASTER'S VOICE"
HIGH FIDELITY

STEREO SONIC

TAPE RECORDING



HIGH DEFINITION TAPE TRANSFERS

From February 1955 EMI began recording in Stereo in earnest with Nicolai Malko and the Philharmonia Orchestra in Prokofiev and Tchaikovsky. After this most HMV UK sessions seem to have had some sort of Stereo set present although as Walter Legge disliked Stereo Columbia was far more patchy in using the new medium. However the Karajan/Philharmonia Orchestra/Vienna Singverein Beethoven Symphony No.9 and Mozart Ave Verum Corpus were recorded at the Musikvereinsaal in Vienna between 24-29 July 1955 in a rudimentary Stereo although not very satisfactory. (The Mozart was issued on SAX 2389 in 1961 But the Beethoven was not issued until 2014.

On Monday 4th April 1955 the inaugural demonstration of the "His Master's Voice" "Stereosonic" Tape Records was given at the recording studios, Abbey Road N.W.8. with an introduction by Sir Malcolm Sargent (probably more compered as he wasn't known as "Flash Harry" for nothing – a great showman who introduced millions to the beauties of classical music) and a technical description by Mr. H.A.M. Clark (technical manager of the record division). In No.3 studio they provided cocktails and there was a chance to see the new "Stereosonic" reproducer with more music being played in No.2 studio. The music that was played at the inaugural demonstration is listed below:-

1. Tchaikovsky: Suite No.3 4th Movement Variations Nos.4-9 - Sir Malcolm Sargent Philharmonia Orchestra
2. Brahms: Variations on a fugue by Handel (excerpts) - Widold Malcuzyński
3. Mozart: The Marriage of Figaro Excerpts from Finale Act 4 - Marcus Dods/The Sadler's Wells Orchestra/Marjorie Shires/Joan Stuart/Elizabeth Robinson/Frederick Sharp/Denis Dowling (NB:This was not the Glyndebourne Recording which wasn't made until June 1955)
4. Jazz me Blues - from "Dance to Don Felipe" HSD 2801

The actual launch of the first issue of Stereosonic tape records and the HMV Reproducer Model No.3 was in October of 1955. However the first review of these tapes by The Gramophone magazine didn't occur until August 1956 by Roger Fiske. He was very enthusiastic and said "what I was getting did not seem like a substitute for the real thing. It was the real thing." He went on to say that "aurally the illusion was complete...or is it? Anyway this is immeasurably better than anything one has heard before. A surprising number (of tapes) have been sold already, surprising for the equipment (to play them on) is inevitably very expensive. " However his most telling comment concerns the simple recording technique "But one of the glories of the new system is that it makes multi-mic technique a thing of the past where serious music is concerned. The dual microphone can be placed surprisingly far back and still achieve both definition and

reverberation. The greater distance from the sound source itself increases the realism of the resulting sound, for few of us are used to sitting in the front row. It also means that the players must achieve internal balance and not rely, as so often in the past, on the unfortunate technician to see them through." Perhaps this is an area that we should return to today when an orchestral recording can use anything up to 70 microphones.

Reviews for Stereosonic tapes were very favourable. In Gramophone June 1956 is a report of an HMV demonstration on 26th April at the Royal Festival Hall in London. The Paul Tortellier/Sir Malcolm Sargent/Philharmonia recording of the Dvorak Cello Concerto was found "entirely satisfying, and the placing...of the instrumentalist was most realistic. It also says that the Geraint Jones Franck Chorale in A Minor No.3 was also entirely satisfying. (Track 1 Disc 1 of this compilation.) The review finished by saying "What impressed me once again, and most particularly, was the sheer quality at both ends of the scale that is obtainable by the Stereosonic method. In August 1956 again in Gramophone Roger Fiske noted that he had missed the first public demonstration of Stereosonic tapes at the National Radio and Television Exhibition in August 1955 (for which the Demonstration tape on these CD's was evidently made.) He went on to say that "what I was getting did not seem like a substitute for the real thing. It was the real thing (the) aural illusion is complete. Or is it? Anyway this is immeasurably better than anything one has heard before." He then went on to point out that "The choice of music is curiously adventurous. It seems to presuppose that the type of man who buys this equipment prefers out-of-the-way music to more obvious fare. However although a surprising number were sold the tapes made little commercial impact which was probably just as well as they in all probability cost far more to produce than they sold for but as loss leaders to whet the public's appetite for Stereo sound on disc which eventually came in 1958 they were a success.

Over 130 stereosonics were issued on HMV & Columbia (EMI UK). 2 track (international CCIR standard) 7 1/2 ips. All had leader and tail printed tape attached .. Only HMV imported into US by RCA (Columbia was not part of RCA agreement) In 1958 EMI set up Angel Reel tapes made in UK but only sold in USA.

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- 1 Divertissement
- 2 Scene
- 3 Pas de Naila
- 4 Scene et Pas d' Action
- 5 Mazurka
- 6 Scene
- 7 Marche dansee et Final
- 8 Mikado Overture
- 9 Donna Diana Overture
- 10 Hunting Parson Overture

Please Note: In the interest of preserving the superb sound quality of these historic recordings, they have been preserved in their original, pristine state for maximum fidelity. Transferred from commercially released, analog reel-to-reel tapes (some of which are more than 50 years old), the recordings themselves can be subject to certain "artifacts" which are an inseparable part of the original analog recording process, such as tape "hiss" or other defects, and these may be audible on certain music tracks.

Because your CD or DVD-A was individually "burned" in order to realize superior sound quality to stamped, mass-produced versions, microscopic cosmetic blemishes may be visible. Please regard these tiny marks as evidence of the "human touch" in the care and individual attention that each and every HDTT disc receives during its very demanding manufacturing process.