

The conductor and composer Antal Doráti was one of the most distinguished musicians of the 20th century. He was born in Budapest on April 9 1906 and rose to become the youngest ever conductor of the Royal Opera House in his native city soon after graduating at age 18. In 1928 he went to Dresden as assistant to Fritz Busch and subsequently was engaged as conductor at the opera house in Münster/Westfalia, where he stayed until 1933. From 1934-1941 he was first second conductor, later music director of the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo and, subsequently, of the American Ballet Theater in New York. His American debut as a symphony conductor came in 1937, when he guest-conducted the National Symphony in Washington, D.C. He became an American citizen in 1947. From 1945-1949 Doráti directed and greatly revitalized the Dallas Symphony. He became music director of the Minneapolis Symphony in 1949, where he stayed for 11 years.



In 1963 he was appointed Chief conductor of the BBC Orchestra, a post he held for 4 years. This was followed by a similar position with the Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra (from 1965-1972). Parallel to his European activities he became music director of the National Symphony in Washington in 1970, followed by the same position 1977 in Detroit. At the same time (since 1975) Antal Doráti accepted the Royal Philharmonic's invitation to become their chief conductor. From 1981 he became "Conductor Laureate" for life of 3 orchestras (RPO London, Stockholm Philharmonic and Detroit Symphony).

Antal Doráti's recording activities commenced in 1936, his total number of recordings reached nearly 600. Many of them won international prizes, amongst others 32 "Grand Prix". His most important recording project was the complete recording of the 107 Haydn symphonies and 8 of the composer's operas.

Antal Doráti's influence in the musical world has been highly significant, not only as a conductor. He has an impressive number of compositions to his credit, which are performed worldwide more and more.

His teaching activities include regular masterclasses at the Royal College of music in London as well as at the Music Academy in Budapest. Both institutions made him their honorary member. Also masterclasses at the Salzburg Festival, Dartington and Bern - Basel are mentionable.

His autobiography "Notes of seven decades" was published in 1975. A second book "For inner and outer peace" - a subject which interested him greatly during his last years- was edited after his death in 1988. In this period he also returned to his other talents, which included drawing and painting.

His distinctions included the post of Honorary President of the Philharmonia Hungarica, four honorary doctor degrees, the rank of Chevalier of the order of Vasa of Sweden, the Cross of Honour, 1st class "Artibus et Litteris" of Austria, the order of "Chevalier des Arts et Lettres" de France and others. The Royal Academy of Music in London honoured Antal Doráti by appointing him an Hon.R.A.M. And in 1983 her Majesty the Queen appointed him an Hon. KBE (Knight of the British Empire) in recognition for his service to music in Britain.

Antal Doráti died in his Swiss home in Gerzensee on november 13, 1988.

STRAVINSKY



The Firebird Ballet (complete)

LONDON
SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA

ANTAL
DORATI

The Firebird was Stravinsky's first major success, the first of his ballets to be premiered by Sergei Diaghilev's famous Ballets Russes. Its fantasy-like story tells of Prince Ivan, who befriends the Firebird and later summons the magical creature to aid him in defeating the evil magician Kastchei and his fiendish monsters.

Cast in two scenes and having 22 dance numbers, the ballet opens with the "Introduction," which is dominated by an ominous, searching ostinato, initially heard in the bass strings. The mood remains dark and mysterious in the ensuing "Kastchei's Enchanted Garden," but things brighten in the glittering instrumentation that depicts the appearance of the Firebird and in the "Dance of the Firebird," where you can almost see the creature flit and flutter. This music corresponds to the second movement in the 1919 Suite No. 2, the most popular of the three the composer extracted from the ballet.

After the Firebird's capture, the music turns dark and fills with yearning as the creature desperately pleads to Prince Ivan for its release, which he grants, thus gaining its favor. The music in the next four numbers deals with the enchanted princesses and is light and playful in the first two, reflective and sentimental in the latter pair.

"Daybreak" is vigorous and colorful, but conveys an ominous sense, a sense that continues when the Prince enters Kastchei's palace. The next several numbers deal with Kastchei and his retinue of monsters, and with the capture of the Prince. In these the music becomes threatening and dark, but without ever losing its fantasy-like character.

The music depicting the Firebird's reappearance to save the Prince again features a colorful, busy character. The dance of Kastchei's court and the famous Infernal dance follow, the latter a grotesque, rhythmic piece that many listeners will recognize as comprising the seventh movement of the Suite No. 2.

"The Lullaby" follows, featuring an exotic, lonely theme on bassoon. This section serves as the source music for the eighth movement. The brief "Kastchei Awakens" precedes the most famous music in the ballet -- "Kastchei's Death" -- which also comprises the Suite No. 2's finale. It features a soaring, stately melody -- probably the most familiar theme in any Stravinsky work -- that grows grander and louder as it proceeds, crowning the ballet with an absolute sense of triumph.

STRAVINSKY

The Firebird Ballet

London Symphony Orchestra / Antal Dorati

The Firebird (original 1910 version) 41:18

1 Introduction 2:22

2 Scene 1: Night. Kastchei's Enchanted Garden 1:33

3 Scene 1: The Firebird enters, pursued by Ivan Tsarevich 1:54

4 Scene 1: The Firebird's Dance 1:18

5 Scene 1: Ivan Tsarevich captures the Firebird :57

6 Scene 1: The Firebird begs to be released 5:21

7 Scene 1: Entrance of the Thirteen Enchanted Princesses 1:43

8 Scene 1: The Princesses play with the golden apples (Scherzo) 2:22

9 Scene 1: Ivan Tsarevich appears 1:23

10 Scene 1: The Princesses' Khorovod (Round Dance) 3:44

11 Scene 1: Daybreak 1:23

2 Scene 1: Magic Carillon - Appearance of Kastchei's Guardian Monsters
- Capture of Ivan Tsarevich 1:16

13 Scene 1: The entrance of Kastchei the Immortal 1:14

14 Scene 1: Dialogue between Kastchei and Ivan Tsarevich :58

15 Scene 1: The Princesses plead for mercy :50

16 Scene 1: The Firebird enters :29

17 Scene 1: Dance of Kastchei's retinue under the Firebird's magic spell :43

18 Scene 1: Infernal Dance of Kastchei and his subjects under the
Firebird's magic spell 4:25

19 Scene 1: The Firebird's Lullaby 2:42

20 Scene 1: Kastchei awakens :55

21 Scene 1: Kastchei's death 1:04

22 Scene 2: Kastchei's spell is broken, his palace disappears,
and the Petrified Knights return to life. General Thanksgiving 2:42

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