

Sir Eugene Goossens, (born May 26, 1893, London—died June 13, 1962, Hillingdon, Middlesex, Eng.), prominent English conductor of the 20th century and a skilled composer.

His father, Eugène Goossens (1867–1958), and his grandfather, Eugène Goossens (1845–1906), were both noted conductors. He studied at the Bruges Conservatory in Belgium, at the Liverpool College of Music, and at the Royal College of Music in London.

In 1921, after several years of association with Sir Thomas Beecham, he formed an orchestra that gave a series of concerts and performed one of his compositions. He was director of the Rochester (N.Y.) Philharmonic Orchestra (1923–31), director of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra (1931–46), and resident conductor of the Sydney (New South Wales, Australia) Symphony Orchestra and director of the New South Wales Conservatorium of Music (1947–56). He was knighted in 1955.

His early compositions were influenced by impressionism. Later he developed a polyphonic style at times utilizing impressionistic harmonies but at times becoming highly chromatic, almost atonal. His chamber music includes the Suite for Flute, Violin, and Harp (1914) and the Pastoral and Harlequinade for Flute, Oboe, and Piano (1924). He composed two operas, Judith (produced 1929) and Don Juan de Mañara (1937); a ballet, L'École en crinoline (1921); two symphonies; songs; and pieces for piano, cello, and violin. He also wrote a book, Overture and Beginners (1951).



For some time Balakirev tried to persuade Tchaikovsky to compose a work based on a program drawn by Vladimir Stasov from Byron's *Manfred*, finally succeeding in 1884. In April 1885, Tchaikovsky began work on what would become the *Manfred Symphony*, his only program work in more than one movement. Its great length -- about one hour -- and unwieldy structure clearly set it apart from his other orchestral compositions.

The first of the four movements deals with the tormented *Manfred* wandering in the Alps, pondering his past failings and his love for *Astarte*, all of which cause him to sink into the depths of despair. The movement opens with a dark and intense descending theme that occurs throughout the work, expressing virtually the same grim mood in subsequent appearances, typically Tchaikovskian, full of yearning and darkness, depression and gloom. In contrast, the music representing *Astarte* -- or rather *Manfred's* memories of her -- is lovely and gentle, consoling in its warmth. But thoughts of her only result in anguish and regret for *Manfred*, the music seeming to cry out and turn despairing in the closing sections.

The ensuing scherzo depicts *Manfred's* encounter with the Alpine fairy in a rainbow. It is marked *Vivace con spirito* and stands in stark contrast to the epic grimness of the preceding panel. Its main section is built upon several related short themes, all delicate and

colorful, gossamer and often playful. The trio features an unforgettable theme, relaxed and joyous, full of sunshine.

The third movement, marked *Andante con moto*, is pastoral in mood, depicting the quiet life of Alpine hunters. The main theme seems to stroll lazily, but is not typically Tchaikovskian in its lack of warmth and passion. Still, the music is beautiful and atmospherically effective, not least because of the composer's imaginative scoring.

The finale is the longest movement and is structurally the most problematic. The music depicts the subterranean palace of *Arimanes* and an infernal orgy, after which *Astarte's* spirit foretells *Manfred's* release from suffering. *Manfred* is pardoned and then dies. The music is fairly complex throughout, first presenting two fast themes (*Allegro con fuoco*), then following with a brief *lento* section. Eventually a fugal passage using the first idea appears and development of all the material ensues. Tchaikovsky then returns to the first movement's thematic wares, which includes a beautiful restatement of *Astarte's* theme and a brief recapitulation of the latter part of the opening movement. While the structure of the finale is weak, its music is dramatic and powerful, compelling most of the time.

# **Tchaikovsky**

# **Manfred Symphonic Poem**

## **Sir Eugene Goossens**

## **The London Symphony Orchestra**

- 1 Lento Ligubre: Lento Ligubre 12:52**
- 2 Vivace con spirito 9:08**
- 3 Andante con moto 10:02**
- 4 Allegro con fuoco 16:40**

**Recorded by Everest Records 1958**

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