

Fritz Reiner was one of the most acclaimed conductors of the 20th century -- noted for the vast range of his repertoire, which included both symphonic and operatic pieces spanning from the traditional canon to contemporary material, he was also an influential educator who counted among his pupils Leonard Bernstein. Reiner was born in Budapest, Hungary, on December 19, 1888; despite earning a law degree from the University of Bucharest, he pursued a career in music, and at age 21 was named chorusmaster of the Budapest Opera. A stint as conductor with the Budapest Volksoper followed before Reiner was chosen in 1914 to serve as principal conductor of the Royal Opera in Dresden, where he collaborated with Richard Strauss on productions of several of the composer's early operas.

In 1922 Reiner left Europe to relocate to America, settling in Cincinnati, OH, and signing on as conductor with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra; a decade later he was tapped to head the orchestral and opera departments at Philadelphia's Curtis Institute of Music, where his students included Bernstein. After next serving as the music director of the Pittsburgh Symphony between 1938 and 1948, he served five years with the

Metropolitan Opera. While Reiner's frequent migration might have been attributed largely to a restless creativity, he was also a notoriously difficult personality who frequently alienated those around him -- many of the musicians under his command openly loathed him, although he inevitably inspired the best work of their careers.

Reiner's own best work was undoubtedly his tenure with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, which he elevated into one of the most celebrated ensembles in the world. Moving over to the CSO in 1953, he not only established the orchestra as a top-flight live attraction but also as a popular recording entity -- the countless albums they made for RCA's Living Stereo series during Reiner's decade-long tenure were much acclaimed by collectors for both the power of the performances and the unusually high fidelity of the recordings themselves. Releases like Fritz Reiner Conducts Richard Strauss and Fritz Reiner Conducts Bartók in particular remain definitive interpretations of the composers in question. Health problems forced Reiner to resign his position in 1962, and he died in New York City on November 15 of the following year.



Tchaikovsky

Nutcracker excerpts

Fritz Reiner

The Chicago Symphony Orchestra



HIGH DEFINITION TAPE TRANSFERS

The Nutcracker, Op. 71, Russian Shchelkunchik, ballet by Pyotr Tchaikovsky. The last of his three ballets, it was first performed in December 1892.

The story of The Nutcracker is loosely based on the E.T.A. Hoffmann fantasy story The Nutcracker and the Mouse King, about a girl who befriends a nutcracker that comes to life on Christmas Eve and wages a battle against the evil Mouse King. Hoffmann's story is darker and more troubling than the version that reached the stage; the Imperial Russian Ballet choreographer Marius Petipa chose to follow a light adaptation of the story written by Alexandre Dumas père.

Tchaikovsky began work in February 1891, continuing his efforts while on an American tour later that year for the opening of Carnegie Hall. His homeward journey took him through Paris, where he discovered a new instrument: the celesta, whose clear, bell-like tone was perfectly fitted to The Nutcracker's fairy-tale ambience. In the celesta's ethereal notes, Tchaikovsky recognized the "voice" of his Sugar Plum Fairy, and he immediately wrote to his publisher, asking that the instrument be acquired for the performance.

Selections from The Nutcracker were first performed as an orchestral suite in March 1892. The ballet proper debuted in

December of that year. It was presented at St. Petersburg's Mariinsky Theatre on a double bill with Tchaikovsky's one-act opera, *Iolanta*. In a letter to a friend, Tchaikovsky himself remarked, "Apparently the opera gave pleasure, but the ballet not really; and, as a matter of fact, in spite of all the sumptuousness it did turn out to be rather boring." He thought little of it, describing it as "infinitely worse than *Sleeping Beauty*." The reference was to the second of his three ballets; the first had been *Swan Lake*.

Yet responsibility for the failure was not, apparently, wholly the composer's. Petipa had fallen ill, and the choreography was instead devised by his less-inspired assistant. Additionally, the scenery and costumes were panned as tasteless, and the performance of the ballerina who danced the role of the Sugar Plum Fairy was widely criticized. The newspapers reviled Tchaikovsky, and he did not live to see the piece succeed. Despite the failure of its initial performance, The Nutcracker has become the most frequently performed of all ballets and has served as an introduction to classical music for many young people. Because the first act is set at a Christmas party, the ballet is often presented at Christmastime.

Tchaikovsky Nutcracker

excerpts

Fritz Reiner

The Chicago Symphony Orchestra

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| 1 Overture 3:08 | 8 Trépak 2:04 |
| 2 Christmas Tree Scene 4:15 | 9 Dance Of The Mirlitons 2:41 |
| 3 Marche 2:06 | 10 Mother Gigogne And The Clowns 6:30 |
| 4 Divertissement 1:14 | 11 Waltz Of The Flowers 4:15 |
| 5 Spanish Dance 3:10 | 12 Pas De Deux 2:42 |
| 6 Arabian Dance 1:01 | 13 Variation I - Tarantella 4:47 |
| 7 Chinese Dance 1:01 | 14 Variation II - Dance Of
The Sugar Plum Fairy Coda 1:25 |
| | Total Time 40:19 |

Transferred from a 15ips 2-track tape Engineer Lewis Layton Producer Richard Mohr Recorded by RCA 1960



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