

The Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, or, as it is often called, the Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra, was founded in 1888, its first concert taking place on November 3 of that year. Concertgebouw means concert hall in Dutch, and the ensemble adopted that name from the lavish site where it has been based since 1888. The building, known for its splendid acoustics, houses a large auditorium (the Grote Zaal) and a small one (Kleine Zaal).

The Orchestra's first conductor was Willem Kes, who enforced a common etiquette on Dutch audiences previously unobserved: eating, late arrivals, and talking during performance were banned. Kes built the orchestra into a fine one, even if it still fell short of world-class caliber. Upon Kes' departure in 1895, the legendary Willem Mengelberg was appointed music director. He would serve for nearly 50 years in that capacity, molding the orchestra into a first-rate ensemble and making many famous recordings with the group.

During his reign Mengelberg took sabbaticals to conduct other orchestras in Europe and America, including the New York Philharmonic. During his absences, other conductors were engaged to serve as substitutes, including Pierre Monteux and Bruno Walter. While Mengelberg was highly respected and his orchestra widely admired, the repertoire tended to be somewhat narrow, focusing largely on the Germanic sphere, especially on Beethoven and Richard Strauss. But he conducted works by Gustav Mahler, and the orchestra featured appearances by Rachmaninov and Prokofiev in performances of their works.

During World War II, Mengelberg sided with the Nazis, and after 1945 was banned from conducting the ensemble for six years. That same year Eduard van Beinum was appointed his successor. He broadened the repertoire and maintained the orchestra's high performance standards during his 14 years on the podium. He died in 1959 during a rehearsal, and for the next four years, leadership of the orchestra was shared by Eugen Jochum and Bernard Haitink. Haitink was appointed chief conductor in 1963 and served in that capacity until 1988. During his tenure, the orchestra made numerous highly acclaimed tours and recordings.

Haitink's successor was Riccardo Chailly, who further broadened the repertoire of the orchestra, and like his predecessors, produced a spate of critically acclaimed recordings. In 2004, Mariss Jansons was appointed conductor of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra. Today the ensemble consists of 120 players and is widely considered one of the finest orchestras in the world.

A conductor of wide-ranging authority in a varied repertoire, Anatole Fistoulari is nonetheless remembered most vividly for the several ballet recordings he made for Mercury Records. The son of a noted conductor, Fistoulari maintained that he had made his debut before an orchestra at the age of seven. Beyond dispute is his broad exposure to Russian musical culture, thoroughly absorbed before he concentrated his activities in Europe and, eventually England, where he became a British subject. Fistoulari learned most of his technique and repertoire from his father, Gregor Fistoulari, a student of Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov and Anton Rubinstein. The work allegedly conducted by the seven-year-old Anatole in Kiev was Tchaikovsky's "Pathétique" Symphony, a score of enormous depth and complexity. In 1933, he leapt into the fire with an appointment to conduct for the Grand Opéra Russe in Paris, a company assembled around the famously temperamental Russian bass baritone Feodor Chaliapin. His ability to maintain a cool head there led to a 1938 engagement with Leonid Masim's Ballets Russes; with that company, Fistoulari toured the Continent and America, where his work was much admired. During WWII, Fistoulari became a popular figure in England. After conducting a 1942 production of Mussorgsky's unfinished Sorochintsi Fair, he was made principal conductor of the London Philharmonic Orchestra in 1943. In 1954, he returned to ballet as guest conductor of the Royal Ballet and, in 1956, led the London Philharmonic in a tour of Russia that brought enthusiastic audiences to the halls of Moscow and Leningrad. Other guest engagements took Fistoulari to several other parts of the world, notably New Zealand and the Mideast, but he continued to base his activities in England. Active in the recording studio, Fistoulari built a substantial discography. In addition to his much-praised Mercury recordings of Delibes' Sylvia and Adam's Giselle, he recorded excerpts from Tchaikovsky's Sleeping Beauty; Alexandre Luigini's short, but effective Ballet Egyptian; and several works by Khachaturian. Fistoulari's direction of Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsodies was praised, as were recorded collaborations with pianists Vladimir Ashkenazy, Earl Wild, and Shura Cherkassky, as well as violinists Nathan Milstein (Brahms) and Ruggiero Ricci (Khachaturian).



HIGH DEFINITION TAPE TRANSFERS

TCHAIKOVSKY

Swan Lake

HIGHLIGHTS

THE
CONCERTGEBOUW
ORCHESTRA
OF
AMSTERDAM

ANATOLE FISTOULARI



While the composition of Swan Lake came in the period of 1875–1876, it incorporated music from an 1871 unpublished effort entitled *The Lake of the Swans*, the composer's first attempt at ballet. In addition, a second-act waltz was said to have been adapted from his 1869 opera *Undine*. Swan Lake was not a success initially, but shortly after the composer's 1893 death, it began to take hold. The work was then staged in the Riccardo Drigo version, which, with many excisions, additions, and reordering of numbers, became the standard performing version for many years.

For Swan Lake Tchaikovsky composed an introduction and 29 dance numbers, which fall into four acts. The story, set in medieval Germany, centers on Prince Siegfried and his Princess-mother, who, reproaching her son for a lavish celebration at his chateau, commands him to take a bride from among a group of princesses invited to a ball for him the following day. Later the same evening the suddenly-bored Siegfried, at the behest of his friend Benno, gives chase with a group of hunters to a flock of swans. At a lakeside that night the Prince meets the beautiful maiden, Odette, who beseeches him to abandon the hunt for the swans, since they are her companions, cursed, like her, to adopt a winged appearance by the sorcerer Von Rotbart, except between midnight and dawn when they return to their human form. At the ball the next evening, Siegfried cannot choose a

bride, but notices some strange guests, the disguised Von Rotbart and his daughter Odile, to whom the sorcerer has given the exact likeness of Odette. The unwitting Siegfried chooses her for his bride and swears to an oath of loyalty to her. In a dramatic lakeside finale, Odette throws herself into the lake and Siegfried joins her, thereby destroying Von Rotbart and his evil power. The young maidens are freed from their swan form and Siegfried and Odette are reunited when the lake vanishes.

The music associated with Odette and the swans is probably the most famous in the ballet. It first comes near the close of the first act in the "Flight of the Swans." The oboe introduces the enchanting theme with harp accompaniment, the whole creating a fantasy-like atmosphere of wonder and expectation. In the Act Four finale, this music is played faster and with agitation in preparation for the main characters' demise. There are, of course, many other famous themes in this colorful work, including the waltz in the Act One "Entrance of the Guests." It is both carefree and festive in its nonchalance and brilliant colors.

Tchaikovsky also wrote a number of dances of ethnic flavor, including an Hungarian czardas, a Spanish dance, Neapolitan dance, and mazurka, all colorfully imagined and brilliantly orchestrated. A complete performance of this ballet can range from slightly over two hours to about two hours and 20 minutes.

TCHAIKOVSKY

Swan Lake

HIGHLIGHTS

**THE
CONCERTGEBOUW
ORCHESTRA
OF
AMSTERDAM
ANATOLE FISTOULARI**

Act I

- 1.Introduction 2:59
- 2.Scène (No. 1) 2:18
- 3.Valse (No. 2) 4:28
- 4.Danse Des Coupes (No. 8) 3:45

Act II

- 5.Scène (No. 10) 2:54
- 6.Scène (No. 11) 4:38
- 7.Danses Des Petits Cygnes (Allegro Moderato) (No. 13.IV) 1:16
- 8.Danses Des Cygnes (Andante) (No. 13) 6:15

Act III

- 9.Danse Hongroise - Czardas (No. 20) 2:49
- 10.Pas De Deux (No. 5.II) 2:56
- 11.Scène (No. 24) 2:14

Act IV

- 12.Danses Des Petits Cygnes (Moderato) (No.27) 3:41
 - 13.Scène Finale (No. 29) 6:05
- Total Time 46:18

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Concertgebouw, Amsterdam
Engineer - Kenneth Wilkinson Producer - Ray Minshull



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