

Tschaikowsky

Music for the Ballet
AURORA'S WEDDING

Played by
THE
LONDON PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA
under the direction of
EFREM KURTZ



M-326

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Peter Ilich Tschaikowsky

(1840-1893)

THE Russia he loved so passionately saw both the birth and the death of Tschaikowsky. The former was little noted; the latter will long be remembered and lamented. A young man of the world, sensitive, introspective, temperamental, Tschaikowsky turned to music as the fulfillment of his life only after he had weighed and found wanting the trivial pastimes of a youth of his class and period.

His was a philosophy which saw in achievement and acclaim only the ephemeral satisfactions of human existence—and in failure the confirmation of his belief in the futility of human endeavor. His life was pitifully lacking in happiness, though his misery came largely from within. For that reason, perhaps, it is even sadder than if he had been confronted with only the ordinary griefs and hardships of living.

He grieves vicariously for all the world, though doubtless the causes of his pessimism were personal and self-centered. His music is a concentration of sorrow for all the woes of humanity. Moments of exaltation, of joy, he certainly had and expressed eloquently, but moving always in the background was a melancholy that shadowed nearly everything he has left us.

Tschaikowsky makes grief beautiful. Melancholy is in some respects the most beautiful of human emotions. Tschaikowsky of all the great composers most clearly saw this, and most touchingly gave utterance to its sad and mystical loveliness. In his music grief is purged of ugliness and hatefulness; it is not the dull gloom that weighs down a soul by sheer oppressiveness; rather it glows, richly and darkly, like royal metal tried in the flame.

AURORA'S WEDDING.

The music for this lovely ballet was assembled from various works of Tschaikowsky, chiefly from the "Sleeping Beauty" ballet. The action of the divertissement represents the festivities incident to the wedding of that long-dormant beauty. There is no connected story of the ballet, except as broadly indicated by the succession of scenes and dances in the ballet itself. Yet, according to the most distinguished balletomanes, Aurora's wedding represents the classical, stylized ballet at its zenith. The choreography is derived from that of the great Marius Petipa, contemporary and musical associate of Tschaikowsky; and all the great dancers, scenic artists and costumers since the first presentation of the work in 1890, have expended their talents to the full on this grateful graceful and charming work. Every great ballerina of the pre-war days of the Russian ballet has been identified with Aurora's Wedding, and it was one of the most distinguished performances of Mathilde Kchesinska, in her time the unquestioned prima ballerina of Czarist Russia. It is interesting to note that this same dancer is today the teacher responsible for the presentation of this work by Col. de Basil's Monte Carlo Ballet Russe, and she it is who has invented many of the figures used in the performance.

The present tour of the Monte Carlo Ballet Russe recalls the great revival of the ballet in 1921, under Diaghileff, when the complete "Sleeping Beauty" was presented. It is interesting to recall, too, that on this occasion there was a kind of post-humous collaboration (on one part at least) between the great masters of the classical and modern ballet music, Tschaikowsky and Strawinsky; for the latter orchestrated several sections of the music. In the present records we have an authoritative performance, by one of the world's great orchestras, under the direction of Efrem Kurtz, who is principal conductor for Col. de Basil's Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo. In this season of 1936-37, many thousands will witness the performance of Aurora's Wedding by this distinguished company and make acquaintance

with this charming music. They will discover that the music, in its own right, is filled with color and motion and charm, and that, purely as music, it has a place in the most discriminating collector's library.

THE MUSIC.

The Overture will be familiar to those who have made the acquaintance of Tschaikowsky's "The Sleeping Beauty". With pretty pomp it ushers in a proper mood of anticipation. The Polonaise, accompanying the arrival of the guests at Aurora's wedding, succeeds the overture, while on the stage a stately procession of brilliantly costumed figures appears.

The Adagio, next succeeding, with its variations, accompanies the dance of the seven ladies of honor (bridesmaids) and their escorts; the variations musically represent five fairies who come to bless the wedding, each with her separate powers and special gifts. Then follows the dance of the Blue Bird of Happiness, usually the great feature of the stage performances of the ballet. The rough-and-tumble "Dance of the Three Ivans", highly acrobatic, difficult and humorous, quickly follows. These are among the fairy tales that are danced as entertainment for the Princess Aurora.

A delightful waltz, a "pas de Quatre", succeeds them, and the final dance, a Mazurka engaging all the company, brings the ballet to its conclusion in a riot of gorgeous color and animation.



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