

VICS-1027 STEREO



STRAVINSKY · FIREBIRD
DEBUSSY · NOCTURNES

MONTEUX

conducting

Paris Conservatoire Orchestra · Boston Symphony



School of Verona, Early XV Century—A Unicorn Chased to Refuge in a Virgin's Lap

Stravinsky FIREBIRD SUITE / Paris Conservatoire Orchestra
 Debussy NOCTURNES / Boston Symphony Orchestra
 Pierre Monteux conducting

Mono VIC-1027
 Stereo VICS-1027

TWO TWENTIETH- CENTURY MASTERPIECES



Pierre Monteux is indelibly associated with the music of Stravinsky, and at the same time he has a special affinity for his compatriot which makes him a Debussian conductor par excellence. It was Monteux who introduced and championed some of Stravinsky's most famous scores, including *The Rite of Spring* and *Petroushka*. And for half a century he has been considered one of the foremost conductors of the Russian composer's ballet music. In the days just before the outbreak of World War I, when Paris was the center of the musical world, Monteux, then conductor of the Diaghileff Ballet Russe, counted Debussy among his colleagues and friends. And it was Monteux who gave the American première of Debussy's *Jeux* (Games).

STRAVINSKY FIREBIRD SUITE

In 1910 twenty-seven-year-old Igor Stravinsky received his first commission from Diaghileff: to write the music for a new ballet by the company's leading choreographer, Fokine. When *The Firebird* was premièred, June 25, 1910, it caused a sensation, and Stravinsky was launched on his career.

Like the ballet, the score is a riot of color: unexpected sounds and ingenious instrumental combinations, which even today seem unexpected and in-

genious. Originally Stravinsky used a huge orchestra for *The Firebird*; nine years later, in 1919, he made a concert arrangement (used in this recording) which contains six numbers from the ballet—*Introduction*, *Dance of the Firebird*, *Round Dance of the Princesses*, *Infernal Dance of King Kastchei*, *Berceuse* and *Finale*.

For the story of *The Firebird*, Fokine adapted several Russian fairy tales together with the legend of the enchanter Kastchei: A bird of fire—half bird, half woman—is caught by Prince Ivan. Unable to keep this radiant creature a captive, he releases her and, in return, is given a feather as a charm against evil. Almost immediately, Ivan sees the princess of his dreams and falls in love. Naturally, she is held a prisoner by Kastchei, and, just as naturally, Ivan rescues her through the aid of the Firebird.

DEBUSSY NOCTURNES

Originally composed for solo violin and orchestra, the work was recast by Debussy into its presently known form—a purely orchestral composition with the addition of a women's chorus, used instrumentally. "The title *Nocturnes*," Debussy wrote, "is to be interpreted here in a general and, more particularly, in a decorative sense. Therefore, it is not meant to designate the usual form of the nocturne, but rather

all the various impressions and special effects of light that the word suggests.

"*Nuages* (Clouds) renders the immutable aspect of the sky and the slow, solemn motion of the clouds, fading away in gray tones tinged with white. *Fêtes* (Festivals) portrays the restless dancing rhythms of the atmosphere, interspersed with abrupt scintillations; there is also the episode of the procession (a dazzling, fantastic vision) passing through the festive scene and becoming merged in it . . . *Sirènes* (Sirens) depicts the sea and its innumerable rhythms; then amid the billows silvered by the moon the mysterious song of the Sirens is heard; it laughs and passes."

PIERRE MONTEUX has led virtually every great orchestra both here and abroad, and is equally renowned as a conductor of the concert literature, opera and ballet. After touring the United States in 1916 with the Diaghileff ballet, he remained here to conduct at the Metropolitan Opera. Then, from 1919 until 1924 he was conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Following a decade of activity in Europe, Monteux spent sixteen years with the San Francisco Symphony. Currently, at the age of eighty-eight, he is conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra.

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