

LEOPOLD Stokowski CONDUCTS

MUSIC FROM FRANCE (Vol. 3)



DEBUSSY Nocturnes, Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune,  
DANSES SACRÉES ET PROFANE, LA CATHÉDRALE ENGLOUTIE,  
SOIRÉE DANS GRENADE RAVEL Rhapsodie espagnole

# LEOPOLD STOKOWSKI conducts French Music (Vol. 3)

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DEBUSSY

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4 PRÉLUDE À L'APRES-MIDI D'UN FAUNE

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7 LA CATHÉDRALE ENGLOUTIE

8 SOIRÉE DANS GRENADE

RAVEL

9-12 RAPSODIE ESPAGNOLE

LEOPOLD STOKOWSKI & THE PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA

*Biddulph*  
RECORDINGS

ADD

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WHL 013

Total timing: 76'33"  
Transfers by Mark Obert-Thorn

STOKOWSKI CONDUCTS FRENCH MUSIC - 3

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## DEBUSSY

### NOCTURNES

- |   |   |        |
|---|---|--------|
| 1 | NUAGES  | 8'45"  |
|   | recorded on 7/11/1937; first issued on Victor 15814 [M-630] (matrices CS 014371/2)            |        |
| 2 | FETES   | 5'45"  |
|   | recorded on 12/12/1937 & 9/4/1939; first issued on Victor 2034 [M-630] (matrices BS 014391/2) |        |
| 3 | SIRENES   | 11'30" |
|   | recorded on 9/4/1939; first issued on Victor 15815/6-S [M-630] (matrices CS 035421/3)         |        |
| 4 | PRÉLUDE À L'APRES-MIDI D'UN FAUNE ( <i>solo flute: William Kincaid</i> )                      | 10'48" |
|   | recorded on 27/3/1940; previously unpublished (matrix CS 047812/3)                            |        |
|   | <b>DANSES SACRÉE ET PROFANE</b> ( <i>solo harp: Edna Phillips</i> )                           |        |
|   | recorded on 4/4/1931; first issued on Victor 7455/6-A [M-116] (matrix CVE 69002/4)            |        |
| 5 | DANSE SACRÉ   | 5'04"  |
| 6 | DANCE PROFANE   | 5'04"  |
| 7 | LA CATHÉDRALE ENGLOUTIE (orch. Stokowski)   | 7'01"  |
|   | recorded on 30/4/1930; first issued on Victor 7454 [M-116] (matrix CVE 56842/3)               |        |

- |   |   |       |
|---|---|-------|
| 8 | SOIRÉE DANS GRENADE from ESTAMPES (orch. Stokowski)                   | 7'16" |
|   | recorded on 22/12/1940; unissued on 78 rom discs (matrix CS 057567/8) |       |

## RAVEL

### RAPSODIE ESPAGNOLE

recorded on 17/3/1934; first issued on Victor 8282/3 (matrices CS 82125/8)

- |    |                   |       |
|----|-------------------|-------|
| 9  | PRÉLUDE À LA NUIT | 4'11" |
| 10 | MALAGUEÑA         | 1'52" |
| 11 | HABANERA          | 2'21" |
| 12 | FERIA             | 6'18" |

LEOPOLD STOKOWSKI  
conducting the Philadelphia Orchestra

**A**long with Bach transcriptions, Wagner, the Russian Romantics and contemporary works of any provenance, the music of France formed one of the pillars of Leopold Stokowski's repertoire throughout his long career, from his first appearance with the London Symphony in 1910 (for which he programmed Debussy's *Afternoon of a Faun*) to his final public concert in England with the New Philharmonia in 1974 (which featured Ravel's *Rapsodie espagnole*). In addition, the maestro's first and last public appearances as a symphonic conductor took place in France (Paris, 1909; Vence, 1975), and it remained a favourite retreat for him in the years between, as his affection for the land and its musical voice deepened.

While Stokowski's approach towards French music of the Romantic era, as documented in the first two volumes in this series, could produce performances of profound spirituality (e.g. the Franck Symphony on WHL 011) or unbridled excitement (e.g. Bizet's "Carmen" Suite on WHL 012), it is the works of the Impressionists that the conductor's particular gift as an orchestral colourist really comes to the fore. The recordings of the first two Debussy *Nocturnes* drift more languorously than on the 1930 disc, while *Fêtes* begins at a higher voltage than in 1927. In *Sirènes* Stokowski builds the tension inexorably, ultimately finding release in a soothing, sensual balm.

Sensuality is surely the order of the day for *Faun*, particularly in the present reading, released here for the first time. Stokowski and the Philadelphians recorded the work no fewer than six times during the 78 rpm era. The first (unissued) version, made in 1917 when Debussy was still actively composing, was taken down on three sides (two 12-inch and one 10-inch). All subsequent recordings (a 1924 acoustic, a 1927 electric remake, unissued versions from 1936 and March of 1940, and the final issued disc of December 1940) attempted to cram Stokowski's expansive interpretation onto two 12-inch sides, with mixed results. The version presented here is more broadly paced – and ultimately, more satisfying – than any of the published editions. The most likely reason it was withheld from release was the length of its sides, which ran dangerously close to the centre label area. The flute soloist in this performance is the great William Kincaid who, while growing up in Hawaii, developed his superb breath control by training as a swimmer under the tutelage of an Olympic athlete. He was engaged by Stokowski in 1921, and remained with the orchestra until his retirement in 1960, having stayed long enough to be on hand for the conductor's return to Philadelphia after his self-imposed 19-year exile. A broadcast performance of *Faun* from this series of concerts runs precisely as long – to the second! – as the

recording included here.

Amidst works like the preceding, the two *Dances* for harp and string orchestra seem like an oddly ascetic choice in the repertoire for Stokowski; and indeed, it remained his sole recording of the piece. It was probably chosen to spotlight the talents of Edna Phillips who had just become the first distaff member of the Philadelphia Orchestra at a time when most major ensembles throughout the world were still all-male affairs.

Two of the three Debussy piano pieces which Stokowski arranged and recorded with the Philadelphians are included here (the third, *Clair de lune*, will be featured on a forthcoming release). The orchestral realization of *La cathédrale engloutie* calls to mind the “fog and drizzle” of the slow movement of Vaughan Williams’s “London” Symphony. The transcription of *Soirée dans Grenade*, made during Stokowski’s final recording session with the orchestra before he took his two-decade leave, was never released on 78 rpm discs, and survives only on a rare test pressing. The work draws on the same Iberian dance forms which were to inspire Ravel in his *Rapsodie espagnole*.

During the 1920s and '30s, the Victor label practised a strange kind of ghettoization of repertoire between Stokowski and his Boston colleague Serge Koussevitzky. The Russian conducted all of Victor’s Prokofiev recordings, while Stokowski

presided over Shostakovich. Similarly in the French repertoire, Ravel “belonged” to Koussevitzky (due in no small part to their personal friendship and the conductor’s commissions), while Stokowski cornered the market in Debussy – with one major exception in each case: Koussevitzky recorded *La mer*, and Stokowski was vouchsafed *Rapsodie espagnole*. The latter turned his sole opportunity into one of the most memorable and exciting performances of the work ever put on disc.

Except for the Debussy *Dances*, Stokowski would go on to re-record each of the works here – some, several times over; all, ultimately, in stereo. However, the Philadelphia 78s bear witness to a unique conductor/ensemble relationship, one which was nearing the completion of its third decade when the last of the recordings presented here was made. Although Stokowski was said to be able to make any band “play like the Philadelphians”, the peculiar incandescence of their chemistry was never quite duplicated; and nowhere was this joint magic worked out more potently than in the works of the French Impressionists.

Produced by Eric Wen  
Transfers by Mark Obert-Thorn  
Programme notes by Mark Obert-Thorn  
Cover photograph: *4 rue Danton* by Eugène Atget

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WHL 013

# LEOPOLD STOKOWSKI

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RECORDINGS

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COMPACT  
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ADD

DEBUSSY

NOCTURNES, PRÉLUDE À L'APRES-MIDI D'UN FAUNE,  
DANSES SACRÉE ET PROFANE,

LA CATHÉDRALE ENGLOUTIE, SOIRÉE DANS GRENADE

RAVEL

RAPSODIE ESPAGNOLE

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