

Mozart - Eine Kleine Nachtmusik and etc (1990)

Written by bluesever

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Eine kleine Nachtmusik (Serenade in G Major, K. 525) 1. I. Allegro 4:36 2. II. Andante 5:29 3. III. Allegretto 2:17 4. IV. Allegro 3:19 5. *The Impresario Overture, K. 486* 4:03 6. *Così Fan Tutte Overture, K. 588* 4:55 7. *The Marriage of Figaro Overture, K. 492* 4:44 8. *The Magic Flute Overture, K. 620* 7:35 9. *The Masonic Funeral Music, K. 477* 7:45 Columbia Symphony Orchestra Bruno Walter – conductor

This recording is a splendid tribute to a revered conductor, outstanding musicians, and a great composer. Walter and the musicians Columbia assembled for him perform these pieces with authority and commitment. Although the original recording was made more than 40 years ago, it is superior to many of the digital efforts of today, with a clear delineation of orchestral timbres that is a result of both the close-up miking favored by Columbia's engineers and Walter's attention to detail. It is a joy to hear, for instance, the lower string and bassoon parts often obscured in other performances. The one mild disappointment on the disc is the Figaro overture. Although the orchestral playing is fine, Walter's slightly too-genial pacing partly robs this quintessential Mozart gem of the sense of mischief and fun brought to it by conductors like Marriner and Bohm. Everything else is topnotch.

The familiar Nachtmusik serenade is performed with a robust earthiness which is quite a contrast to the sparkling elegance that one usually hears in this piece, proving once again there is no one way great music must be played. Of the other overtures, Impresario is an exuberant romp, Così's wonderful dovetailing woodwind parts are performed with assured virtuosity, and the Magic Flute has both insistent rhythmic drive and an air of magisterial drama.

The Masonic Funeral Music brings us into a different world, far removed from the well-known Mozart of catchy tunes and sprightly rhythms. Composed on commission for the deaths of fellow Masons, this piece reflects Mozart's increasing awareness of his own approaching end,

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misunderstood by the public and abandoned by friends, even eventually by his wife. This is the Mozart of the great G Minor Symphony (#40) and the Requiem -- somber, intense, and profound. Like the Requiem, sadness and solitude inform the opening bars, but under Walter's skilled leadership, a sense of powerful spiritual exaltation increasingly develops out of the ebb and flow of the dark instrumentation, conveying once again Mozart's enduring legacy that beauty will triumph over dissolution and death. Walter's magnificent performance of this unique masterpiece is alone worth the price of the disc. --- Jay W. Kvale (Albert Lea, MN United States)

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