

CD Review 25

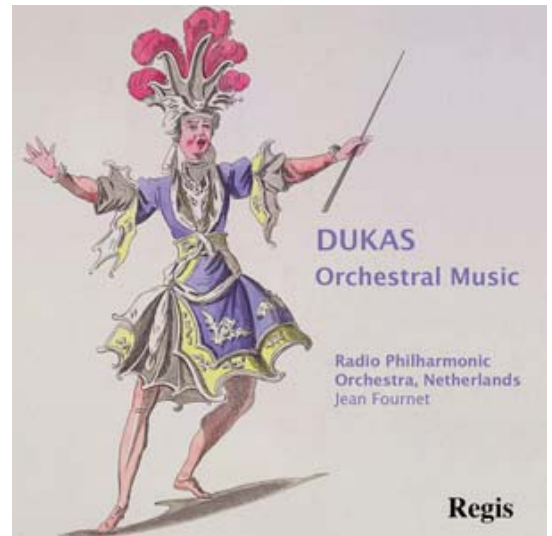
DUKAS Orchestral Music

Fanfare: La Peri
La Peri, a ballet
Symphony in C
The Sorcerer's Apprentice

Radio Philharmonic Orchestra of the Netherlands, Jean Fournet (75.00) Regis RRC1344

A most welcome CD.

It is a real pity that Dukas is only known for his Scherzo: The Sorcerer's Apprentice. The other pieces on this CD are far better works although I am not decrying the famous work; not at all.



Dukas wrote some utterly unforgettable melodies as shown in these pieces. David Drew used to contrast Dukas with the melodic nullity of Debussy.

There is no doubt that Dukas's orchestration is excellent and as good as Roussel as in his third and fourth symphonies. Dukas's work is more romantic than the impressionism of Ravel but Ravel's orchestration is also very fine as in Daphnis and Chloe, particularly.

Paul Dukas was born in 1865 and died in 1935. As a teacher his pupils included Durufle, Messiaen and Rodrigo. He edited works by early composers and the sonatas of Beethoven

The Fanfare to La Peri I have heard with more punch and excitement but the ballet itself absolutely glows in this performance. The playing is first class, the sound is very good and the conducting is top notch. Fournet was a brilliant conductor, but people do not realise this and many do not know him or remember him. That gorgeous theme on the lower strings is heavenly and Fournet does not wallow in it, but brings it out with a beauty that is so good it is almost unbearable.

Fournet was born in Rouen in 1913 and, being French, was committed to French music at which he excelled. He conducted this orchestra from 1961-1968. He premiered Debussy's Pelleas and Melisande in Japan and was an advocate of Poulenc's Dialogues des Carmelites. Both these operas have not made the grade. In fact, many musicians have criticised Pelleas and Melisande as the worse French opera ever written. Fournet died at Weesp, his home close to Hilversum in the Netherlands. His last concert was in January 2005 when he was 91.

Dukas was severely self-critical and destroyed a lot of his work including four operas, two ballets and a second symphony... but his opera Ariane et Barbe-Bleu is quite superb and hugely entertaining in the nicest way. It has emotional depths without being mawkish.

The Symphony in C of 1896 is a flawless work. Can any other symphony boast such a tremendous theme as this spine-tingling symphony. The work is glorious and has no weak moments. But it is hard to follow this amazing first movement with two more. The slow movement has no lessening of coherence or form and the finale, while not being as joyous as the first movement, works well.

Those who know this work, love it. Those who do not know it are missing a real treat!

The Sorcerer's Apprentice needs no introduction. But Fournet captures all the moods and, at times, it is sinister and frightening.

What this CD shows is the many facets of a truly great composer and a truly great conductor.

It is a must buy!

COPYRIGHT David C F Wright 2011 – This article or any part of it, however small, must not be copied, quoted, reproduced, downloaded or altered in any way whatsoever nor stored in any retrieval system. Failure to comply is in breach of International Copyright Law and will render any offender liable to action at law.