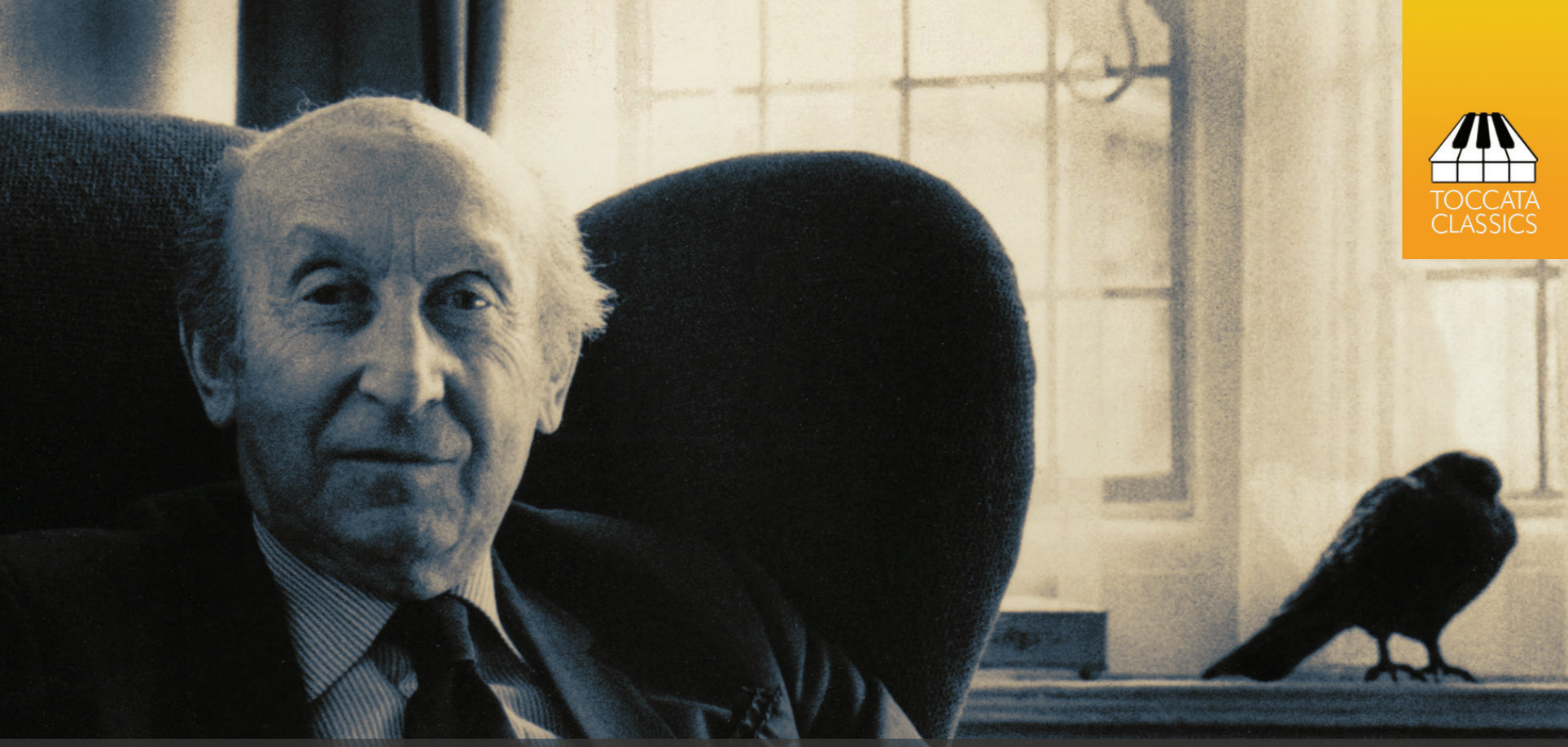


TOCCATA CLASSICS

Mischa SPOLIANSKY

ORCHESTRAL MUSIC

SYMPHONY IN FIVE MOVEMENTS
MY HUSBAND AND I: OVERTURE
BOOGIE

Liepāja Symphony Orchestra
Paul Mann

FIRST RECORDINGS

MISCHA SPOLIANSKY: A BIOGRAPHICAL OUTLINE

by Martin Anderson

In the first years of this century, the committee meetings of the International Forum for Suppressed Music would occasionally be held at the house of 'Spoli' Mills in Montagu Place, just to the north of the west end of Oxford Street, in central London. The Forum (now Centre) was set up in 2000 to give attention to the lives and music of composers working under (or exiled from) totalitarian regimes, with a particular focus on the Jewish composers who fled from, or were murdered by, Hitler. Spoli[1] was the eldest daughter of Mischa Spoliansky (1898–1985), who had been one of the most successful composers of light music in Weimar Germany, his revues including *Es liegt in der Luft*, *Zwei Krawatten* – the show that got Marlene Dietrich noticed – and *Alles Schwindel*. Like many Jewish musicians in Austria and Germany, Spoliansky became a *Hitlerflüchtling*, fleeing in his case to London in 1933, and was soon a mainstay of the British film industry. Spoli was one of those rare people of whom you could say that to know her was to love her, and we looked forward to the meetings at her house not only because of the generosity of her hospitality: the sheer warmth of her manner was a tonic in itself.

Spoli was deeply attached to the memory of her father, and as part of her efforts to keep it alive, she had commissioned the typesetting of the manuscript of a symphony he had spent many years composing – just how many was not then clear. We members of the IFSM committee – all of us supposed to be well informed in this corner of music – were astonished when Spoli brought out the score and set it down in front of us. The surprise was not only that this master of musical repartee and wit should have attempted a symphony; it became obvious as we leaved through its pages that it was a work of Mahlerian ambit and ambition and, in parts, deadly

[1] Spoli Mills (1923–2004) was given the name Irmgard, which she hated; everyone knew her as 'Spoli'.

serious intent. Moreover, all five movements, too, bore titles in English, with four (not the scherzo) having German equivalents – not always a direct translation:

I: '…and thus was man created'/'…und so ward der Mensch'
II: Ode to Love/An die Liebe
III: Humoresque: Of Laughter
IV: Of weeping (Lament)/des Menschen ganzer Jammer
V: And new life blooms from the ruins/Neues Leben blüht aus den Ruinen

They recall very directly the kind of title that Mahler sometimes gave his symphonic movements (in the First and Third Symphonies, where they were later suppressed, and *Das Lied von der Erde*, for example), suggesting that some sort of extra-musical programme might underlie the work as a whole. Someone with Spoliansky's experience of German musical life would be unlikely to employ a title like 'des Menschen ganzer Jammer' without realising that it would evoke the 'Trinklied vom Jammer der Erde' from *Das Lied von der Erde*. Might the work even have some kind of existentialist programme? It was clear that the Mischa Spoliansky we thought we knew was only part of the story.

That story began in Białystok (now in north-eastern Poland but then part of the Russian Empire) on 28 December 1898, when a third child, given the name Mikhail (diminutive 'Mischa'), was born to the baritone Pavlov Spoliansky and his wife, Barbara. Białystok had been under Russian control since the Treaties of Tilsit in 1807, and formed part of the Pale of Settlement, that part of the western fringe of the Russian Empire where, from 1791, Jews were allowed to settle; a census taken in the year before Spoliansky's birth established that the population of Białystok (some 66,000) was around 63 per cent Jewish. Pavlov had been born in Radomischl, in northern Ukraine, in 1861 – a town that was likewise two-thirds Jewish.[2] Barbara, six years Pavlov's senior, was a Varsovian. Pavlov had enjoyed twelve years of stable employment at the Mariinsky

[2] As members of the cultural elite, Pavlov Spoliansky and his family were allowed to settle in the various cities to which they moved, but most Jews, even in the Pale, were confined to the countryside, where they lived in *shtetls* and spoke Yiddish, generating a rich and vibrant cultural heritage that was entirely obliterated in the Holocaust. It is a profoundly unhappy irony that the anti-Semitic policies of Imperial Russia assembled its Jewish population exactly where, a century and a half later, they could be scooped into the maw of the Nazi killing machine.

Theatre in St Petersburg but decided that a change was due, and so took to the road as a touring artist, and it was on one of those engagements that he had met Barbara, who then shared his life on the road before they returned to settle in St Petersburg. They had had two children – Alexander ('Shura') and Lisa – when a series of performances at the opera house in Białystok brought the offer of a well-paid, fixed-term contract, and so the family settled there.

Mischa Spoliansky's autobiography[3] recounts an idyllic childhood, slowly darkened as pogroms became more and more frequent in the Russian Empire; in 1906, one three-day orgy of violence in Białystok itself left at least 80 Jews dead and as many injured, with widespread damage to Jewish businesses. Hardly surprisingly, Pavlov Spoliansky decided to move his family to relative safety in Warsaw, then also under Russian control. After a short time in the Polish capital, he received an invitation to join the opera house in Kalisz, in west-central Poland, and so the family once again upped sticks and settled there.

It was in Kalisz that the young Mischa began to discover himself as a musician, rejecting first the violin and then the cello in favour of the piano. A backstage visit during one of his father's performances opened his eyes to the enchantment of the theatre: 'here I discovered a whole new magical world. I watched the scenery being lifted and dropped and the huge gaslights reflecting the dust. It was an enchanting moment I never forgot'.[4] He had also begun to compose, writing his first piece, entitled 'Scherzo', when he was six.

But his happy life soon suffered a massive blow. At the age of seven, he was with his mother in a café when, entirely unexpectedly, she dropped dead from a heart attack. She was only 50 years of age. The bereaved Pavlov, trying to put his anguish behind him, now moved his family to Vienna, where Mischa added a third language, German, to the Russian and Polish that he already spoke. Before long, his elder brother and sister moved to Berlin, to follow up their musical opportunities there, leaving Pavlov and Mischa together – and then they too moved, first to Königsberg (the present-day Kaliningrad)

[3] All direct quotations from Spoliansky are taken from this source, as are most of the biographical details in this essay. Although the autobiography is unpublished, discussions are currently in hand to bring it to publication.

[4] Autobiography, chapter 1, 'A Brief Childhood'.

and then to Dresden, so that Pavlov, suffering from the onset of cancer of the throat, could consult a specialist, and it was there that he died. At the age of thirteen, Mischa found himself an orphan.

He was taken in and looked after by friends of his father in Königsberg, where he was beginning to make a name for himself as a pianist. But now came yet another disruption with the outbreak of the First World War, and so he travelled to Berlin, where he was met by his sister, who shared her accommodation with him. 'I think you could say that my arrival in Berlin was the end of my childhood, I was now sixteen years old, and Berlin was to become a more permanent home for me.'[5]

An apparent talent for drawing and design led to what was intended to be a three-year apprenticeship as a *couturier* with a Berlin fashion house, though the pay was nugatory. Schura, Mischa's elder brother, then came to the rescue: he played in the trio in the Café Schön on Unter den Linden, and its pianist was leaving. Mischa replaced him, earning more than ten times his earlier salary, and his career as a professional musician had begun.

His income was high enough, indeed, for him to enrol at the esteemed Stern'sche Konservatorium, a private music-school that, many years and transformations later, provided the basis of the current Universität der Künste. In those days of silent films, the major cinemas – often called 'Palaces' – had their own orchestras, and Spoliansky augmented his income by playing in the ensembles at the Ufa-Palast[6] and the Metropol. It was there that he first met Marlene Dietrich, who was playing in the second violins, and there, too, that the resident conductor allowed him to try out his compositions. After his very first engagement playing one of his own compositions in cabaret, he was asked by Friedrich Holländer and Werner Richard Heymann to join them as house composers for 'Schall und Rauch' ('Noise and Smoke'), the huge, thousand-seater cabaret located in the basement of the Grosses Schauspielhaus,[7] which was under the direction of Max Reinhardt, the most powerful theatrical producer and impresario in

[5] *Ibid*., chapter 2, 'Adolescence and Apprenticeship'.

[6] For the first ten years after it opened in 1919, the Ufa-Palast was the largest cinema in Germany.

[7] 'Gross' was correct: it seated 3,500 people, the impression of size being underlined by the absence of balconies.

Germany. After a year in 'Schall und Rauch' Spoliansky began to play in other cabarets, gradually becoming a lynchpin of the musical nightlife of Berlin. A self-publishing venture with Fritz Heymann, a cousin of Werner Richard Heymann, issued Spoliansky's *Morphium 'Valse Boston'*, which proved a runaway success, and brought him a rash of further commissions, from singers and publishers.

An invitation from an eccentric businessman, with a fairy-tale castle in Tangermünde, due west of Berlin, brought him into contact with the crew of a film being made there, among them two sisters, Hanni and Eddy Reinwald – and for Mischa and Eddy (real name Elspeth) it was love at first sight. Bureaucracy put up a number of hurdles to their marriage, but in time they overcome them all, and began 62 years of life together. The first of their three daughters, Irmgard (the later 'Spoli'), was born on 5 September 1923. A second daughter followed in 1925, and a third in 1931.

In 1926 Spoliansky was commissioned by Max Reinhardt to provide music for *Viktoria*, an adaptation of Somerset Maugham's play *Home and Beauty*. He attended a rehearsal and found that 'the whole play opened itself up to me and inspiration started to flow uninterrupted. Monologues, duologues, ensembles, whole musical scenes and dance sequences grew. The whole play was now dipped in music and was virtually a new form – a sort of spoken opera'.[8] The success of *Viktoria* brought him financial independence for the first time in his life, and he was able to give up his activity as a jobbing bar pianist and concentrate on composition.

The next Reinhardt commission, *Es Liegt in der Luft* ('There's Something in the Air'), premiered in May 1928, was even more successful, with the critics and public alike expressing untrammelled enthusiasm; it also launched Marlene Dietrich's career. At a party after one performance, he was introduced to George Gershwin, and the two composers hit it off instantly: Spoliansky – who had already made a Parlophon recording of *Rhapsody in Blue* – played Gershwin a couple of numbers from *Es Liegt in der Luft*, and Gershwin responded in like manner, with 'Fascinating Rhythm'. In 1929 *Es Liegt in der Luft* led also to an invitation to London from the publisher Chappell.

[8] Autobiography, chapter 5, '"Reinhard – Spoliansky"'.

No immediate commission ensued, but it did bring Spoliansky his first contact with London musical life.

Now one hit show followed another: *Zwei Krawatten* ('Two Bow-Ties') in 1929, *Wie werde ich reich und glücklich* ('How Do I Become Rich and Happy') in 1930, *Alles Schwindel* ('It's All a Swindle') in 1931 and the 'cabaret opera' *Rufen Sie Herren Plim* ('Call Mr Plim') and *Das Haus Dazwischen* ('The House Inbetween') in 1932. (A light opera, *Himmelmayer*, on which Spoliansky expended much effort, was less fortunate; indeed, it has never been performed.) By now, Spoliansky was also writing for the cinema – songs and background music. For one of those films, *Das Lied einer Nacht*, he wrote a song, 'Heute Nacht oder Nie' (entitled 'Tell Me Tonight' in the English-speaking world), that became an international hit.

But it was the end of Spoliansky's charmed life in Weimar Berlin: the premiere of his revue-operetta *Hundert Meter Glück* ('A Hundred Metres of Happiness') in 1933 was spoiled by whistles and catcalls by Brownshirts in the audience. With Hitler now *Reichskanzler*, there was no further prospect for Spoliansky in Germany, and he and his family escaped by train to Austria, where, as luck would have it, they had already rented a chalet in the Tyrol for a holiday. From there, armed with an invitation from Gaumont to write film scores, Spoliansky made his way by train to London, via Paris, with his family following shortly behind. He quickly made the kinds of contacts in the class-conscious Britain of those days to get the requisite stamp in his passport, and his new career as a film composer was soon under way.

A selective list of the films he scored over the next few decades include some of the most successful of their day: *The Private Life of Don Juan* (1934), *Sanders of the River* and *The Ghost Goes West* (both in 1935), *The Man Who Could Work Miracles* and *Forget Me Not* (both 1936), *King Solomon's Mines* (1937), *Don't Take It to Heart* (1944), *The Idol of Paris* (1948), *Happy Go Lovely* (1951), *Trouble in Store* (1953), *Saint Joan* (1957), *North West Frontier* (1959), *The Battle of the Villa Fiorita* (1965), *The Best House in London* (1969) and *Hitler: The Last Ten Days* (1973). During the Second World War he composed music for the broadcast propaganda efforts of the BBC.

Film scores apart, Spoliansky was kept constantly busy for the first two decades after the war, to the extent where, in 1967, he took a year off from composition and the theatre. But, as he wrote in his autobiography, 'Going against all the rules of nature, I find that my energy and ability to compose and perform have grown with age as opposed to dying down'[9] – and so he spent this interlude painting, producing canvas after canvas.

Germany rediscovered him, too. In 1977, the year before he turned 80, he presented and performed in a show in the Berliner Festwochen, which was so successful that it was repeated the following year. *Zwei Krawatten* was revived and established itself in the repertoire, as did *Rufen Sie Herren Plim*.

In spite of the myriad disruptions to his life, Spoliansky ended his autobiography with one simple sentence: 'I have been a very lucky man'. In a postscript, 'A Daughter Remembers', Spoli added:

> When he sat down in the mid Seventies to write this autobiography, so many memories came flooding back and he enjoyed writing them all down. […] After his two visits to Berlin for the 'Theatertreffen', my father continued to enjoy life, play the piano, spend time with his family and visit his friends in Ascona and his daughter in Munich. After a short illness he died on 28 January 1985 at home in his own bed. My mother died three years later, also at home in her own bed. Their home had been at the centre of their lives and was right until the very end.

Martin Anderson founded Toccata Classics in 2005 and publishes books on classical music as Toccata Press; he also writes on music for various publications in Britain and abroad. His degree (from the University of St Andrews, in 1977) was in mediaeval French and German, and thereafter he worked in economics for twenty years, in London and in Paris.

[9] Chapter 13, 'Working in Germany – Again'.

THE UNSHAKEABLE OPTIMIST: MISCHA SPOLIANSKY IN THE CONCERT HALL

by Paul Mann

> I have always been an unshakeable optimist. I mean, what is more optimistic than purchasing a further 60 years on my Mayfair flat at my age?[1]

Mischa Spoliansky's sparklingly witty and richly entertaining autobiography is the primary source of information about a composer whose music, although popular and successful during his lifetime, has never quite received its critical due. Although he was best known for his stage musicals, film scores and, most especially, cabaret songs – his long professional association and personal friendship with Marlene Dietrich is charmingly related in the book – this recording concentrates on Spoliansky's contributions to the orchestral concert repertoire, hitherto unperformed, and played from my newly prepared editions, based on manuscripts that have until now languished in the archive at the Akademie der Künste in Berlin.[2]

My Husband and I: Overture (1967)

The album opens with the Overture to Spoliansky's last stage work, *My Husband and I* (1967) [1], which, for all its characteristic flair, was destined to remain one of the few major creative disappointments of his life. The idea dated back to 1929, when Spoliansky had seen Sheridan's *The School for Scandal* on his first visit to London. 'I was completely taken with its elegance, its wit and its absolute suitability as a

[1] Mischa Spoliansky, autobiography, chapter 13, 'Working in Germany – Again'.

[2] In this regard, I must make a number of acknowledgements: to Chris Kelly, the composer's grandson, for initiating the project and providing editorial support, to Andrea Clos at the Spoliansky Archive (Akademie der Künste, Berlin) for providing source material and responding quickly to all kinds of queries, and to Dr David Kershaw, who created the first typeset edition of Spoliansky's Symphony in 2005, and to whose scholarship the new edition owes a good deal. (I am pleased to say that David was also my professor at York University in the mid-1980s, and it has been a pleasure to become reacquainted over the course of this project.)

musical. I was carried away.'[3] It took another 30 years before he got round to working on the adaptation, writing the book as well as the music, and – as was usual for him, but rare in the musical theatre – making his own orchestrations. Finding little interest in mounting a London production, he was approached by a producer in Munich and with that, it seems, the trouble started. Perhaps translating a musical version of an eighteenth-century English comedy of manners for the German stage was more than simply a matter of language: a sense of humour can be harder to translate, and humour is a crucial element in anything to do with Spoliansky, as anyone coming to his music for the first time will soon discover. In any case, the premiere took place in 1967, in the Cuvilliestheater in Munich, directed by Trude Kolman under the title *Wie lernt man Liebe* ('How does one learn to love'), although the composer had 'pleaded'[4] for 'Mein Mann und ich' ('My Husband and I'). The production, although described by Spoliansky as 'delightful', was beset by budgeting problems, unsuitably operatic singers and met by disappointing reviews, and it seems to have been a thoroughly disillusioning experience, unmitigated by a fairly successful adaptation for television shortly afterwards. Spoliansky characteristically drove away the frustration by retreating into a new hobby for a while: 'I changed direction for a year or so and took up painting. What a joy! Getting lost in the creative process and having something to show for it in the end, that was my work and mine alone'.[5]

But the Overture is a delight, a scintillating and joyously virtuosic outburst of waltzing, fizzing like a latter-day confection of Lehár and Johann Strauss. The tiny orchestra (just a handful of winds, together with piano, percussion and strings) is deployed with enormous skill and resourcefulness, and there is something innately theatrical about the boisterous opening bars, during which one can feel the lights dimming and the curtain rising. It can only be hoped that the ill-fated show has not entirely been lost to history, and that there might soon come an opportunity for its revival.

[3] Autobiography, chapter 13.
[4] *Ibid*.
[5] *Ibid*.

***Boogie* (1958)**

Very little is known about the background to the composition of *Boogie* (1958) [2]. The work is not mentioned at all in the autobiography, and the autograph score, discovered in the archive by one of the composer's grandsons, bears no signs of a commission or dedication. It does seem that Spoliansky, in an attempt to get the piece performed, sent the score to Sir Malcolm Sargent, but, perhaps unsurprisingly, received only a cursory, non-committal response. It's difficult to imagine a conductor less suitable for a work so deeply infused with jazz and popular music. If only Spoliansky had had a hotline to Leonard Bernstein …

And, make no mistake, this is a real virtuoso orchestral showpiece. After its hilariously po-faced opening, sounding like nothing so much as a Handel overture souped-up by Sir Thomas Beecham, the music erupts into a tightly constructed, rhythmically ingenious and brilliantly orchestrated boogie-woogie, with sustained energy and invention that barely let up for the best part of ten minutes. On the page, the score itself is immensely detailed and precise, the sophisticated orchestration filled with dynamic and articulation detail – perhaps oddly, this textual rigour seems to have been one of the things to which Sargent had objected – and it makes the most of a standard-sized orchestra of woodwind, the normal brass and strings, and three percussionists, one of whom plays a drum kit. The effect is characteristically theatrical: all of Spoliansky's show-business tricks are in evidence, as if the whole thing takes place in an old-fashioned circus, with flying acrobats, unicyclists, magicians, high-wire acts, fire-eaters, clowns, jugglers and all manner of playful chicanery. It is only just before the end that the music suddenly seems to run out of energy, and deflates on a trill in the strings. The Handelian music comes back, this time apparently orchestrated by Tchaikovsky, but for all its incongruous intensity, that turns out to be just another joke, as the Boogie returns, faster and more reckless than ever, leading to a nonchalant whistle in the violins, and the final crashing unison. Every theatrical composer knows about the so-called 'button', the written-in cue for the audience to applaud, and in this case, one could imagine Spoliansky himself emerging blinking into the footlights, belatedly

taking a bow for his little masterpiece – which deserves a place in the repertoire of any orchestra able to match its composer's virtuosity.

Symphony in Five Movements (c. 1941–69)

> The pull to compose music was always there, even later in life when I was no longer being commissioned. When I was younger, and working from one commission to the next, I decided that when the time came to work less, I would start composing a Symphony. In the interim, whenever I had some spare time, I would make notes of my ideas, musical themes, phrases, anything that came to my head. I carried on over several years, until I stopped working so much. By this time, I had collected a considerable amount of material. And what was so extraordinary was that these brief sketches and outlines fitted together and had taken on some sort of form. Perhaps one day it will be performed?[6]

Well, that day is finally here. It seems extraordinary that Spoliansky's *magnum opus* has had to wait so long for a performance. Lasting almost an hour, it is a major work by any standards, but one with a style and means of expression that owe very little to the symphonic tradition in which it places itself and, for all its eclecticism, enshrines a singular and distinctive musical personality. Although entirely tonal and closely motivically argued, it doesn't behave like a symphony in any but the broadest sense, managing to remain truly symphonic in stature without making any use of recognisable traditional forms, and fulfilling Mahler's oft-quoted maxim that 'the symphony must be like the world. It should contain everything'.[7] Spoliansky embraces the whole of life, from the sublime to the ridiculous, the profound to the banal, the epic to the trivial. His Symphony bears the distinctive fingerprints of a deeply cultivated musician and man of the world, and is clearly also the work of an experienced man of the theatre. There are moments that present themselves as if in cinemascope, and others that seem intensely personal and

[6] Autobiography, chapter 13.

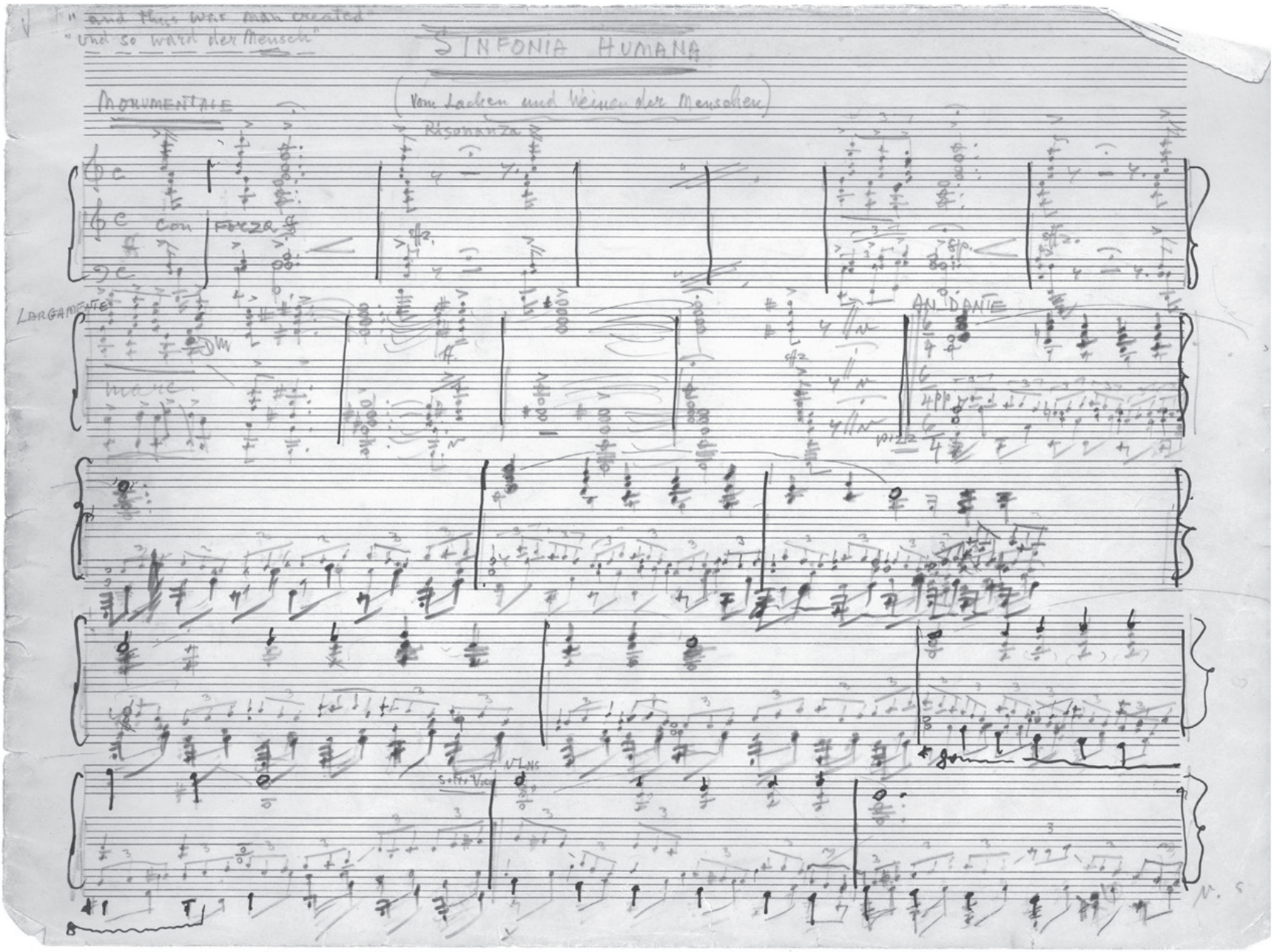
[7] Said to have been uttered in a discussion with Sibelius in Helsinki in 1907, in response to Sibelius' statement that he 'admired its strictness and the profound logic that creates an inner connection between all the motifs' (reported by Sibelius to his biographer, Karl Ekman, who published the exchange in his *Jean Sibelius: en konstnärs liv och personlighet*, Schildt, Helsingfors, 1935, translated by Edward Birse as *Jean Sibelius. His Life and Personality*, Knopf, New York, 1938, p. 190).

confessional. Composed over a period of more than 25 years, the Symphony feels like a diary, both of its composer's life and more broadly of its political times. Apart from the characteristically restrained quotation given above, and the titles he gave to each of the movements, in both English and German, Spoliansky said nothing else about it, leaving no further clues as to any intended extra-musical meaning and, as far as it has been possible to discover, making little or no move to get it performed. Everything that follows, therefore, is my own personal response to the experience of studying and conducting it.

A word on the sources: the Spoliansky archive holds much sketch material for the Symphony, and two complete manuscript fair copies, the chronology of which is unclear, and in which significant differences of orchestration are evident. In collating these two scores, it has sometimes been necessary to make judgements about which versions the composer might have preferred, or regarded as final, and since one is often more fully orchestrated than the other, this version has usually been adopted. Occasionally, I have had to trust my own preferences and hope that I have not violated his intentions. Spoliansky also sometimes resorts to shorthand, so that a certain amount of editorial conjecture has been required. Interestingly, the archive also holds a complete short score of the work, to which Spoliansky gave the title *Sinfonia Humana (Vom Lachen und Weinen der Menschen)* ('On the Laughing and Crying of the People'). For whatever reason, he seems to have thought better of such a clearly programmatic title, and suppressed it by the time the fair copies were made, one of which is entitled *Symphony in Five Movements* (in English), and the other merely *Symphony*, retaining the original titles only for the separate movements. But even if he decided to limit the indications of a subtext to the movement titles, there are still enough purely musical clues to reward a thorough exploration of this fascinating work.

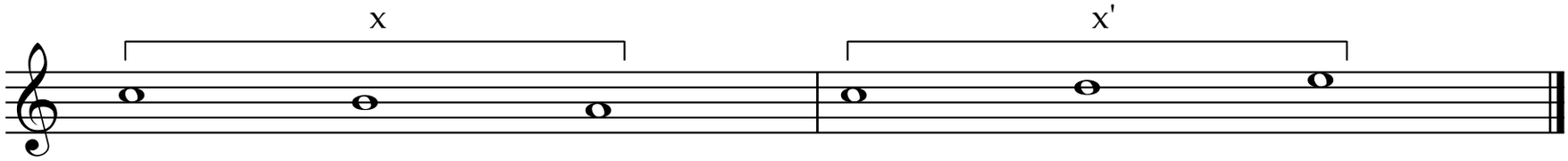
I: '…and thus was man created'/'…und so ward der Mensch'

The entire symphony is based upon a single motif (*x*), and its inversion (*x'*), deployed throughout the work in a seemingly endless range of permutations and variations. Almost every thematic element makes use of these notes somehow, and Spoliansky clearly drew upon them as a means to unify ideas that seem to have been written many years apart.



The first page of Spoliansky's draft short score of his Symphony, showing the original title (courtesy of the Akademie der Künste, Berlin)

Ex. 1



The imposing opening bars, headed *Monumentale* [3], consist of a number of rhetorical statements separated by long silences, each of which is marked *risonanza*. In the manuscripts, the instrumentation list includes a provision for 'echo apparatus', a novel idea, the practical application of which remains unclear, but it does seem that Spoliansky was somewhat ahead of his time in envisaging a mechanism that would create an artificial reverberation to 'enhance' the silences. For the purposes of the recording, we have allowed the natural resonance of the concert-hall to suffice, resisting the temptation to introduce something artificial, but Spoliansky's idea here remains intriguing. Perhaps these opening pronouncements really are meant to evoke the voice of God.

Traditional sonata form, which might be expected of a normal symphonic opening movement, is replaced here by an episodic structure which appears to move freely from one idea to the next, as if Spoliansky's deity manages to create man only as a result of trying to do various other things. At first, a rather solemn, hymn-like chorale is heard, which will reappear at the end of the movement, and as a peroration at the end of the work, but which for now is both pious, and – as a result of the *pizzicato* lower strings – gently subversive. Two further heavenly proclamations lead to a brief *scherzando*, again based on the principal motif, sparkling with harp, celesta and percussion, and the music evolves into something more lyrical and impassioned, with a darkly expressive cor anglais solo, *con amore* and *con sentimento.* The ensuing $\frac{6}{8}$ passage, which forms the dance-like core of the movement, emerges as the closest thing it has to a symphonic exposition. This alternation of the spiritual and the corporeal, of music that sings and music that dances, seems to embody Spoliansky's idea of the human condition. If God did create man in his own image, then it wasn't the vengeful, wrathful, zealous God of the Old Testament. In the final section, the hymn-like music of the opening is

reprised, the tune richly orchestrated, this time with genuine warmth and sincerity. The voice of God closes the movement, celebrating the successful creation of man with a few more mighty pronouncements.

II: Ode to Love/An die Liebe

The beginning of the second movement [4] does not immediately bear out its title. The music is brittle and busy, with clattering xylophone and chattering triplet figurations in the strings, trumpets and woodwinds. Love comes, as it often does in life, unexpectedly and arbitrarily, with a new theme in the strings heard at first against the triplet activity, but soon taking over completely. The music is now unashamedly warm, generous, and – in the best sense – sentimental, and could have sprung only from a genuinely romantic soul. The composer appears to have especially liked the passage, since it takes pride of place among those that he repeats in the finale.

A contrasting middle section ensues, a bucolic scene labelled *Pastorale* in the score, with a warm and gentle breeze drifting through the tremolando strings, and shepherds piping away in the woodwinds. The love theme continues to be developed in combination with the principal motif of the Symphony, leading to an impassioned climax. Here is Spoliansky the film composer, and it is scarcely possible to hear this music without imagining the cinematic scene to which it might be set. The music culminates in a reprise of the pronouncements in the first movement, as if the Creator were looking down upon the lovers, and bestowing his benediction, and descends into the depths of the orchestra, reaching the lowest note of the cellos, then of the double basses, fading away into silence.

III: Humoresque: Of Laughter

The central Scherzo [5] celebrates laughter as comprehensively as the second movement had eulogised love. Spoliansky's irrepressible sense of humour, as is clear from the autobiography, was always one of his most endearing characteristics, apparently beginning with the first piece of music he ever composed, a 'Scherzo', at the age of six. The mature symphonic scherzo manages not only to depict humour but also to be itself

genuinely funny, not an easy task in music. It begins with a chuckling figure in bassoons and lower strings, with a bad-tempered drummer grumpily attempting to restore the requisite symphonic seriousness.

A high-spirited (possibly slightly inebriated) clarinet player announces a new melody (but based, of course, on the main motif of the Symphony, Ex. 1), and the music is deliberately unstable, full of incongruous, offbeat accents, sudden pauses and accelerations, as if giddily unsteady on its feet. A solo violin adds a sweeter, more decorous touch, but the light-hearted party atmosphere is uncontainable, with laughter spreading infectiously throughout the orchestra, and drunken *glissandi* in the trombones (marked 'bawdy' in the score). The hilarious coda sounds like the kind of music that Haydn might have written if he had been teleported into the twentieth century and given a bit too much to drink.

IV: Of weeping (Lament)/des Menschen ganzer Jammer

After all the levity, things suddenly become deeply serious. The fourth movement 6 contains the heart of the work, and it is difficult to hear without regarding it as Spoliansky's reflection on the horrors of the Holocaust. The long opening section keens and laments, and although the music appears not to refer to any specific Jewish folklore, it is certainly possessed of that spirit.

The central section, beginning with a lone cor anglais, is marked 'Moritat', which was a song sung by a ballad singer, sometimes to the accompaniment of a barrel organ, violin or guitar, about death or murder. (The best-known example is 'Die Moritat von Mackie Messer', from the opening of Kurt Weill's and Bertolt Brecht's *Die Dreigroschenoper*.) Spoliansky's 'Moritat' is a simple tune in D minor, but with modal inflections, which is repeated a total of seven times, in ever-accumulating orchestral garb, culminating in a hair-raising quotation of the German national anthem, complete with tolling bells and deathly drum rolls. After a final climactic reprise of the lament, *tutta forza* in all four horns, the music sinks to its knees in an attitude of prayerful remembrance.

The concluding section, marked 'Chant', is a symphonic litany, hushed at first, but reaching a full-throated, despairing cry of agonised, helpless protest. In a final moment

of the darkest irony, there is another descent into the depths of the orchestra, in a parallel with the second movement: love and lamenting, both ending the same way.

V: And new life blooms from the ruins/Neues Leben blüht aus den Ruinen

Without a pause, the last movement [7] begins with a renewal of energy. There are strong echoes of the climactic passage of the first movement of Tchaikovsky's 'Pathétique' as the music repeatedly and desperately reaches out to find the strength to continue. The finale is characterised by Spoliansky's fearless juxtaposition of strongly contrasting elements, which can make for some incongruous moments, as arbitrary and apparently unmotivated as life itself can sometimes be. So it is that the intense opening section is followed by a strangely skittish little scherzo, which in turn leads to a curiously static passage which seems suspended, as if stripped of all power of action. A long, meandering melody is heard, first in the clarinets and then in the strings, which finally seems to fall off the end of the orchestra, into silence.

A sudden exasperated outburst is heard in the brass and strings, separated by marked-out silent bars, leading in turn to a reprise of the opening, and to the lamenting of the fourth movement. Spoliansky seems to be reflecting the reality almost everyone experiences: that rejuvenation is not necessarily a linear process, and is often plagued by setbacks. The resulting impasse now seems conquerable only by means of humour. And so, softly, gently and tentatively at first, the dance-like music from the opening movement returns. Although it is musically the same as on its first appearance, it sounds transformed by everything that has happened in the meantime. As it gathers energy, it reshapes itself into a reprise of the cinematic music from the second movement, as if searching also to rediscover love. The culminating God-like pronouncements this time sound profoundly cathartic.

And then something very weird happens. In the midst of the sublime, comes the banal. A trite little march theme asserts itself, the vapidity of which is only enhanced by the fact that it goes on for just a bit too long to be taken seriously. As this section reaches its complacent and long-overdue conclusion, there follow further references to earlier movements: a substantial quotation from the love scene and a brief repeat of

the drunken clarinet theme from the Scherzo. As if sensing that all these restatements of earlier music are beginning to sound incoherent, and just as the fabric of the music seems in danger of falling apart completely, Spoliansky pulls everything together with one decisive burst of energy. In the final section, marked *Tempestuoso*, with the spirit of Beethoven a late and somewhat bizarre arrival at the party, the peroration reprises the chorale from the opening movement. Cascading violins crown the warm sonority of this hard-won resolution, and the heavenly pronouncements with which the Symphony opened are heard one last time, now at one with more earthly celebrations.

'An unshakeable optimist' indeed.

Paul Mann is a regular guest-conductor with many orchestras throughout Europe, the USA, Australia and the Far East. His work as chief conductor of the Odense Symphony Orchestra in Denmark achieved considerable critical success, particularly in the symphonies of Beethoven, Elgar, Mahler, Schumann and Shostakovich; with it he made numerous recordings of a wide range of repertoire, for such labels as Bridge, DaCapo and EMI.

Photograph: Sara Porter

He first came to international attention as the winner of the first prize in the 1998 Donatella Flick Conducting Competition, as a result of which he was also appointed assistant conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra. He made his LSO debut shortly afterwards, and subsequently collaborated regularly with the Orchestra, both in the concert-hall and in the recording studio. Special projects with the LSO included the Duke Ellington Centenary Concert at the Barbican Hall with Wynton Marsalis, and a famous collaboration with the legendary rock group Deep Purple in two widely acclaimed performances of Jon Lord's *Concerto for Group and Orchestra* at the Royal Albert Hall, the live DVD and CD of which remain international bestsellers. Among his more recent recordings is the first-ever studio account of Lord's Concerto, with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, in collaboration with Jon Lord himself and a star-studded cast of soloists, and the

live recording of *Celebrating Jon Lord*, a special concert which took place at the Royal Albert Hall in April 2014 with an all-star cast paying tribute to the late composer.

This is his 24th recording for Toccata Classics. The first featured the orchestral music of Leif Solberg (TOCC 0260) and the second, third and fifth (TOCC 0262, 0263 and 0299) presented the complete orchestral music of the Scottish Romantic Charles O'Brien (1882–1968). His three-volume survey of the complete orchestral music of Henry Cotter Nixon appeared on TOCC 0372, 0373 and 0374. An album of orchestral works by Josef Schelb was released on TOCC 0426, and his recordings of Richard Flury's operas *Eine florentinische Tragödie*, with the concert *scena Sapphos Tod*, appeared on TOCC 0427 and *Die helle Nacht* on TOCC 0580, his ballet *Der magische Spiegel* and *Kleine Ballettmusik* on TOCC 0552, and his Third Violin Concerto and a number of orchestral works, some in Mann's own orchestrations, was released on TOCC 0601.

Paul Mann is curating, as well as conducting, a series of new works for string orchestra, *Music for My Love*, all written in memory of Yodit Tekle, the partner of Martin Anderson, founder of Toccata Classics. The first volume (TOCC 0333) featured music by Brahms (arranged by Ragnar Söderlind), Maddalena Casulana (arr. Colin Matthews), Brett Dean, Steve Elcock, Andrew Ford, Robin Holloway, Mihkel Kerem, Jon Lord (arr. Paul Mann), John Pickard, Poul Ruders and Ragnar Söderlind himself. The second volume presented music by Nicolas Bacri, Ronald Corp, Wim Hautekiet, Sean Hickey, John Kinsella, David Matthews, Phillip Ramey, Gregory Rose, Gerard Schurmann, José Serebrier, Robin Walker and Richard Whilds (TOCC 0370), and the third volume (TOCC 0504) brought music by Michael Csányi-Wills, David Braid, Martin Georgiev, Adam Gorb, Raymond Head, Ian Hobson, David Hackbridge Johnson, Robert Matthew-Walker, Lloyd Moore, Rodney Newton and Dana Paul Perna.

He has also established himself as a champion of contemporary British symphonists, recording the Ninth (TOCC 0393), Tenth and Thirteenth (TOCC 0452) and Fifteenth (TOCC 0456) Symphonies of David Hackbridge Johnson and the Third by Steve Elcock (TOCC 0400), each accompanied by smaller works, as well as the Symphonies Nos. 1 and 4 and tone-poem *Distant Nebulae* by Rodney Newton (TOCC 0459). His most recent Toccata Classics releases of living British composers featured orchestral music by Rob Keeley, including his Second Symphony (TOCC 0462), by Arnold Griller – his Violin and Trumpet Concertos and *Dances under an Autumn Sky* (TOCC 0590) – and *Airs and Dances* (a bagpipe concerto), and other works by Derek B. Scott (TOCC 0589).

The **Liepāja Symphony Orchestra** – formerly also known as The Amber Sound Orchestra – is the oldest symphonic ensemble in the Baltic states: it was founded in 1881 by Hanss Hohapfel, who also served as its conductor. The orchestral strength in those early days was 37 musicians, joined in the summers by guest players from Germany and Poland. With time, both the structure and professionalism of the Orchestra grew, as did its standing in the eyes of the general public.

After the Second World War the LSO recommenced its activities in 1947, under the wings of the Liepāja Music School, and was conducted for the next 40 years by the director of the School, Valdis Vikmanis. A new chapter in the life of the Orchestra began at the end of 1986, when it was granted the status of a professional symphony orchestra, becoming only the second in Latvia. That formal recognition was made possible by the efforts of two conductors, Laimonis Trubs (who worked with the LSO from 1986 to 1996) and Jekabs Ozolins (active with the LSO from 1987 to 2008).

The first artistic director of the LSO, as well as its first chief conductor, was the Leningrad-born Mikhail Orehov, who took the ensemble to a higher standard of professionalism during his years there (1988–91). Another important period for the LSO was 1992 to 2009, when Imants Resnis was artistic director and chief conductor. He expanded the range of activities considerably: in addition to regular concerts in Riga, Liepāja and other Latvian cities, the Orchestra also went on frequent tours abroad, playing in Germany, Great Britain, Malaysia, Spain, Sweden and elsewhere. During this period a number of important recordings were made, some of them during live appearances on Latvian radio and television.

In the early days of the LSO Valdis Vikmanis began a series of summer concerts which always sold out, and so, in 2010, the festival 'Liepāja Summer' was launched, to renew that tradition of a century before. As well as orchestral performances (some of them in the open air), the festival includes sacred and chamber music.

The Liepāja Symphony Orchestra holds a special place in the cultural life of Latvia. It received the highest national music award, the 'Great Music Award', in 2006, as well as the Latvian Recordings Award in the years 1998, 2000, 2001, 2004, 2006 and 2008. In 2010 the Liepāja Symphony Amber Sound Orchestra was granted the status of national orchestra. The current chief conductor, the Lithuanian Gintaras Rinkevičius, made his debut with the LSO in 2017.

This is the seventeenth of a series of recordings for Toccata Classics. The first featured Paul Mann conducting the orchestral music of the Norwegian composer Leif Solberg (TOCC 0260) and the next three brought Volumes One, Two and Three of the complete orchestral music

of the Scottish Romantic Charles O'Brien (TOCC 0262, 0263 and 0299). The fifth release featured music by the German composer Josef Schelb (TOCC 0426), conducted again by Paul Mann, and the sixth presented Symphonies Nos. 17 and 18 of the Finnish composer Fridrich Bruk (TOCC 0455), conducted by Maris Kupčs. John Gibbons then conducted the LSO in the first four of a series of William Wordsworth recordings, in programmes including the Fourth and Eighth Symphonies (TOCC 0480), Violin and Piano Concertos (TOCC 0526), the Cello Concerto and Fifth Symphony (TOCC 0600), and the Seventh Symphony and a number of shorter works (TOCC 0618). Maris Kupčs returned to the Orchestra to conduct an album featuring Fridrich Bruk's Symphonies Nos. 19 and 21 (TOCC 0453). Paul Mann's further work with the LSO has produced four more albums: tone-poems and the Symphony No. 15 – itself inspired by the Liepāja coast – by the English composer David Hackbridge Johnson (TOCC 0456), the Violin and Trumpet Concertos, *Dances under the Northern Sky* and the *Concerto Grosso* by Arnold Griller (TOCC 0590), a programme of music by Derek B. Scott (TOCC 0589), and another of works by the late-Romantic Swiss composer Richard Flury (TOCC 0601).

Recorded on 22–26 November 2021 in the Great Amber Concert Hall, Liepāja, Latvia
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MISCHA SPOLIANSKY Orchestral Music

***My Husband and I:* Overture** (1967)	**5:37**
1 *Allegro furioso*	
Boogie (1958)	**10:42**
2 *Maestoso – Allegro con brio (Quasi boogie-woogie)*	
Symphony in Five Movements (c. 1941–69)	**57:22**
3 I And thus was man created: *Monumentale*	12:24
4 II Ode to Love: *Animato*	7:50
5 III Humoresque: Of Laughter: *Rubato*	5:31
6 IV Of Weeping (Lament): *Pesante*	13:25
7 V And new life blooms from the ruins (Epilogue): *Andante con passione*	18:12

Liepāja Symphony Orchestra
Paul Mann, conductor

TT **73:43**

FIRST RECORDINGS