

O. Morawetz, Overture to a fairy tale



Born in Czechoslovakia, Morawetz received his first musical training in Prague. While continuing his studies in Vienna, he was overtaken by the tragic sequence of events leading up to World War II: the occupation of his homeland and then the Anschluss, the annexation of Austria to Germany. For Morawetz the moment of action came when, returning home one evening, he saw the by then too familiar men in their soft hats and trench coats standing about obviously waiting for him; he kept walking, and by devious routes – a long story in itself – arrived in Toronto in 1940. Here he continued his studies, earning his Bachelor of Music in 1943 and later his doctorate. He

taught at the University of Toronto from 1946 to his retirement as professor emeritus in 1982. He is a successful composer, his music enjoying performances world-wide by some of the leading performers and conductors. Morawetz' position as a composer is somewhere right of centre; although completely aware of all contemporary trends he bases his work on traditional techniques.

The *Overture to a Fairy Tale* was commissioned by the (then) Halifax Symphony and was first heard on a broadcast by the orchestra in February 1957; later the same year it had its first public performance at the Stratford Festival by the Toronto Symphony conducted by Walter Susskind. No specific fairy tale is involved, but many could be associated with it. The elfin idea with which it commences is followed by others in varying contrasting moods – some dark, evil, and mysterious, others vigorous, all developed to an almost menacing climax, after which the forces of evil are gradually dispelled. As is to be expected in all such tales, our hypothetical hero and heroine live happily ever after. The overture is scored for a pair of flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, and trumpets, 4 French Horns, timpani, and strings and is approximately 8 minutes long.