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Subject: Pictures at an Exhibition

Posted by [Wayne Parham](#) on Tue, 31 Aug 2004 06:01:06 GMT

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I've heard it said that the first watt is the most important. Orchestral music like Pictures at an Exhibit makes me realize that while that is generally true, the first watt is still just a beginning. That all-important first watt needs several more on tap right behind it, even when using the most efficient loudspeakers. This composition is one of those works that really moves you. So much so that you can play several versions one after the other and get goosebumps with each new listen. From Horowitz's piano version to Emerson, Lake and Palmer's guitar and synthesizer version to Toscanini's orchestral version - they all enchant me. I love hearing it performed solely on the piano, but then when I hear a full orchestra play it, I am mesmerized all over again. Pictures at an Exhibition - Moussorgsky-Ravel - Conducted by Arturo Toscanini and performed by the NBC Symphony Ravel's orchestration of Moussorgsky's Pictures at an Exhibition is inspired. Ravel's style and Moussorgsky's substance combine to apocalyptic effect. It begs for volume, and is why I say the first watt is just the beginning. If you have 110dB/W/M speakers and are listening in a small room, I'd say two or three watts would be plenty. Or 100dB/W/M speakers with 20 or 30 watts. But even in the best conditions, one watt is just not enough. It leaves you wanting more. Putting all that aside, whatever it takes to fill the room will leave you breathless. If your system can provide 110dB peaks at the listening position and can reproduce the full range without strain, you're in for a real treat. One thing about the Toscanini recording is that it was done a long time ago and quality is not as good as some others. It's a shame, because it is a classic piece done by a classic composer. But another that I think is better, is the version done by the Chicago Symphony, conducted by Seiji Ozawa. Pictures at an Exhibition - Moussorgsky-Ravel - Conducted by Seiji Ozawa and performed by the Chicago Symphony Personally, I prefer Ozawa's version, both because the recording/pressing quality is better and also because I just like Ozawa's style. He starts off Promenade slower and seemingly more majestically. It gives more of the feel of wonderment and anticipation as the person experiencing it passes through the "exhibition." It just feels more emotional to me. The CD versions may be remastered and quality may be different, but I am fairly confident that the same master was used. I have both on vinyl and the records are in very good shape, well preserved and great sounding. The Ozawa record is an RCA "Dyna-groove" from 1968 and the Toscanini is also an RCA (this one, "Dyna-flex") dated 1972. But it must have been pressed from an earlier recording because Arturo Toscanini died in 1954.

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