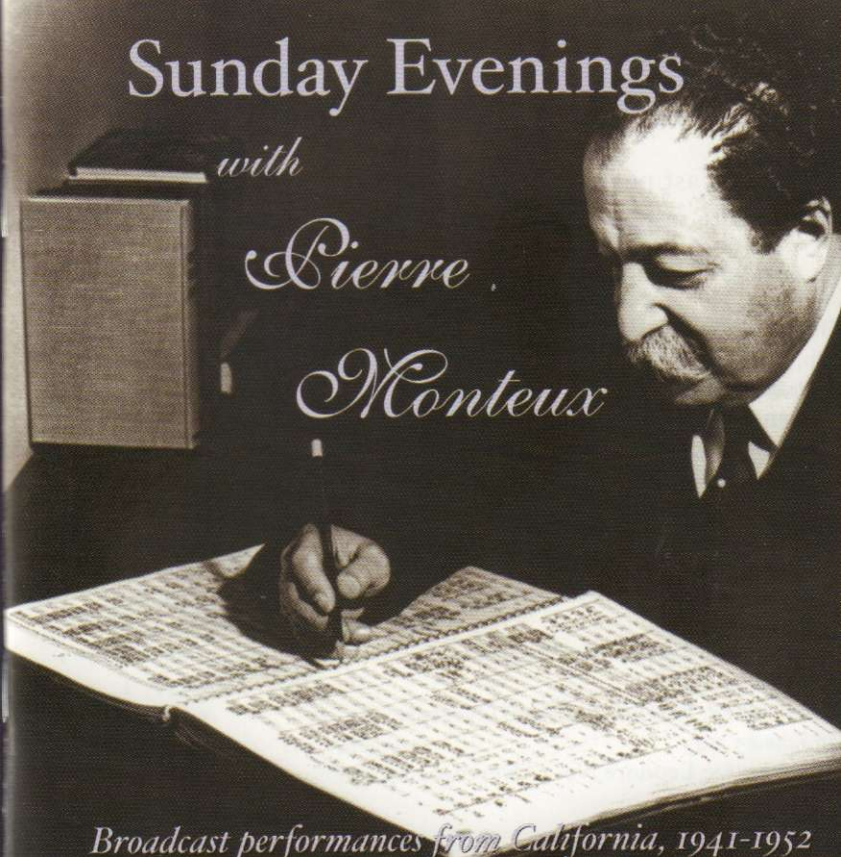


Sunday Evenings

with

Pierre

Monteux



Broadcast performances from California, 1941-1952

SUNDAY EVENINGS *with Pierre Monteux*

BROADCAST PERFORMANCES FROM SAN FRANCISCO, 1941-1952

Back in the 1940s an inspirational and engaging theme song titled "This Hour is Yours" introduced prime-time Sunday evening radio concerts played in alternation by orchestras based in San Francisco and Los Angeles. No commercials intoning the merits of Standard Oil of California intruded from the mellifluous voice of John Grover, the kindly-sounding, well-schooled and, by today's standards, rather saccharine announcer. The sponsor did, however, place an embargo on musical selections longer by a few measures than 20 minutes: Haydn's 88th, Schumann's fourth symphony and a few other multi-movemented pieces just made it under the wire. But Standard's policy, similar to that of the Ford Hour and other pleasantly populist "60 Minutes" of a more innocent time, fostered the programming of rousing overtures galore, forgotten but worthy tone poems and charming tidbits, encores and lollipops not likely to be scheduled at regular subscription concerts (Thursday nights in San Francisco for college students, Friday afternoons for "the ladies," Saturday nights for doctors, lawyers and the like). And the conductors of some of these *Hours* brought to you by enlightened if slightly cautious businessmen were, in point of fact, better pops conductors (usually on Sunday nights!) than Arthur Fiedler himself.

Winter/spring weeks of the *Standard Hour* originating in San Francisco were almost invariably conducted by the highly-regarded Pierre Monteux, veteran of the Diaghileff Ballet and Amsterdam Concertgebouw. He settled into the Fairmont Hotel for the duration and devoted his time to 1) rehearsing and conducting his heavy schedule of subscription dates and broadcasts, 2) playing viola in informal chamber music gatherings with orchestra personnel and visiting celebrities, 3) dining on oysters and other good things at Signor Mondin's Blue Fox down by the morgue, 4) walking a poodle named Fifi up California Street in plain view of strap-hanging cable car riders likely to waive at "Frisco's Frenchman" (*Time Magazine's* term) and his small black charge.

Sensing, one suspects, that world events might precipitate his departure from Europe, Monteux had accepted in 1935 a not very lucrative offer to conduct a dozen weeks or more

each season in San Francisco. He intended to resign at the end of the war which did indeed come, but that indefatigable "CEO" Leonora Wood Armsby, a composer herself and no ordinary "Friday lady" (some never stayed beyond bar 200 of the Brahms *First* finale!), had little trouble persuading Monteux to remain another seven seasons. During that time he led his California musicians on a tour stretching as far east as Carnegie Hall and Virgil Thomson's persnickety pen and solidified his San Francisco legacy, an inheritance come down to us in several dozen commercial recordings along with scores of less well-known broadcast performances offering significant departures from the heavily Franco-Russian list of his famous "78" albums. Thanks to the Standard evenings, from which this series of CDs is drawn, there is a Haydn 88, a Mendelssohn "Italian," lots of Wagner (one of Monteux's three or four favorite composers), overtures by Rossini and Weber, music by Sibelius, Messiaen, even Sousa.

Monteux's arrival on the Opera House podium for a San Francisco concert (and broadcasts, too, after the sardine-tin Studio A at NBC's Moderne headquarters downtown was abandoned) was generally preceded by his concertmaster Naoum Blinder's rather flamboyant entrance. Blinder was followed after a slight pause by a stout little man who negotiated a small military turn just behind the fifth stand of first violins, stepped carefully to the podium and then, with precise arm and hand signals as well as a regular encyclopedia of mustache twitchings, benign little gazes and slight but encouraging deviations from a rigid head-to-torso relationship, produced one after another of his highly satisfying



performances. Exhilarating they were, beautifully proportioned, full of mood projection tucked neatly into scrupulously harmonized layers of sound. Carefully enunciated but lilting, Monteux's performances laid the music's cards on the table most agreeably.

Very likely because Monteux's San Francisco musicians when he took over their musical care and feeding did not boast the world's most homogeneous tone and a complacently glamorous sonic personality, his "come on, boys" exhilaration as well as his extraordinary care for transparent textures were embraced by his new band as mother's milk. The result was a distinctively bright and forward sonority, not un-French and sometimes organ-like, which could not—as more than one commentator has observed—be confused with that of any other recording orchestra. That exhilaration, it cascaded as a matter of course from this portly, dapper musician who in personality was witty, contented, unflappable. His music-making reflected that personality, never the sometime anger of a Toscanini, the occasional grimness of a Cantelli, the momentary near-hysteria of a Koussevitzky. I doubt any of those stars of the conductorial firmament would have asked an orchestra to notice that "these second violins [in the scherzo of Beethoven's Ninth], they are always laughing."

Now it's scarcely news that the Depression-wracked orchestra Monteux found by San Francisco's Golden Gate 60 years ago was not an ensemble likely to be awarded three stars by some Michelinesque inspector of symphonic attractions. A local union stipulation making it exceedingly difficult to import musicians clearly hampered attempts to produce a virtuoso orchestra along classic Eastern lines. But barring occasional moments when Monteux's "scotch tape" failed to keep the intonation "stuck together," the orchestra did in fact produce numerous highly listenable and polished accounts of what their musical director requested via baton, mustache or whatever. And if the roster of principal players was not a catalog of instrumentalists devoted 1000 percent to a single sonic philosophy, it did contain several remarkable players whose solos were, to put it baldly, much more interesting than those of their impeccably-credentialed counterparts in the Boston Symphony with which Monteux was closely associated following his San Francisco tenure. Naoum Blinder was a true virtuoso, a violinist of great panache, and if he occasionally was a bit obstreperous, how much better that than a milquetoasty concertmaster! The mystic lyricism of Merrill Remington's piquant oboe could be devastatingly alluring, never was

there a more sterling trumpeter than Charles Bubb, and Walter Larew's dramatic timpani playing would have been right at home in Mengelberg's Concertgebouw. On a good night William Sabatini (from 1947 on) played his horn solos with a light and soulful stream of sound that could break a heart.

A few biographical details: Pierre Monteux was born in Paris in 1875, not far from the Opéra Comique; his parents were of Provençal Jewish and Alsatian origin. At 11 he decided he wanted to be a conductor. Three years later he was playing second violin at the Folies Bergère, learning precise dancing rhythms as well as...well, call it life. And not long after that he was engaged as principal viola of the Concerts Colonne, from which organization serendipitous happenings propelled him after a number of seasons to conductorship of the famous Diaghileff Ballet. As just about everyone knows, he conducted the first performances of Stravinsky's *Sacre du Printemps* in 1913. Following war service Monteux came to the Metropolitan Opera in 1917 as conductor of its French wing, took over the Boston Symphony 1919-24, then was co-conductor of the Amsterdam Concertgebouw with Mengelberg 1924-34 and conductor of the Paris Symphony 1929-37—for a while, naturally enough, he resided in Brussels, halfway between. Back in America, Monteux was musical director in San Francisco 1935-52, conducted the NBC Symphony's first concerts in 1937, had a long association with the Ravinia Festival at Chicago, became in the 1950s principal guest conductor of his old Boston Symphony (having never conducted it during the 25-year Koussevitzky regime), returned briefly to the Met, and at the time of his death in 1964, aged 89, had a long-term contract as chief conductor of the London Symphony.

CD One: *Beethoven*

"I've been educated with Beet-HOVEN," Pierre Monteux told an interviewer in 1955. He was still a teenager when, the violist of a touring string quartet, he participated in performances of all sixteen Beethoven quartets every season. Beethoven became at that time and remained for seven decades treasured company on Monteux's musical journey. And luckily for us he made many Beethoven recordings—including three performances each of the second and fourth symphonies.

Monteux's 1961 recording of Beethoven's Fifth with the London Symphony is a suave, jaunty, likable performance. But if you want to experience one of the most unbuttoned, youthful Fifths ever caught by microphones you have to hear the composite but indubitably integrated performance we've put together from two San Francisco broadcasts played when Monteux was, well, 71 and 75 years old rather than the somewhat advanced 86 of his London Fifth. The first movement from San Francisco (February 16, 1947) is brisk, intense, extremely light-footed; at six minutes and 29 seconds versus the seven minutes and eight seconds of the LSO (and this includes the exposition repeat) Monteux's Wild West *allegro con brio* offers a virtually unparalleled combination of urgency and ping. The finality of his *fortes* is devastating. Also not found in the Mayfairian Fifth is a black scherzo positively reeling into a no-time-to-waste *finale* (December 10, 1950). Here, in the large nutshell of the Fifth, is the essential contrast between Monteux's San Francisco Beethoven of his seventies and the London Beethoven of his eighties, a contrast not unfavorable to either (although my heart belongs a little more to the San Francisco oeuvre). The contrast is about energy versus elegance, passion versus delicacy and wit, neither necessarily excluding its "opposite." The difference derives somewhat from the tightening muscles of age (although one can find plenty of octogenarian Monteux performances with enough energy to give a mortician pause), but also has to do with Monteux's reaction to the personality of the LSO, an orchestra more glamorous in sound than the San Francisco group of his time in that city—but not an orchestra, one should add, that could upstage the San Franciscans in their many not inelegant innings.

Appropriately enough, CD One in this Monteux edition launched with a broadcast of the *Consecration of the House* overture; it dates from December 4, 1949. Note here a stately introduction tellingly restrained in tempo, a very serene account of that lovely interlude of calm midway along (its effectiveness heightened by the fact Monteux invokes Beethoven's *meno mosso* just at the beginning of this passage, rather than 17 measures earlier at the outset of a little staccato fugato), and a majestic delivery of Beethoven's great fugue which moves very well but never too fast along its heroic track—Monteux's speedup for the final pages while not "in the score" is absolutely in character for a Beethovenian rush-to-the-finish. How exciting to rediscover Monteux's way with this stirring piece which he never recorded. His third *Leonore* (a San Francisco broadcast dated March 30, 1952) is impressive too, so exciting in fact the whole *allegro* carries the seeds of a great ovation. The "Air de Ballet" from *Prometheus* (December 17, 1944) is a delightful breather from epic symphonies and overtures, a few minutes in a sonic fairyland populated by numerous principal players of Monteux's West Coast orchestra, among them the ebullient cellist Boris Blinder (Naoum's younger brother and an alumnus of the Paris Symphony), the Chicago harpist Virginia Morgan who wintered in San Francisco, that lively clarinetist Rudolph Schmitt, the veteran Viennese bassoonist Ernst Kubitschek, and the 18-year-old flutist Paul Renzi, a good phrase-invigorator who would, a few seasons later, become Toscanini's last first-chair flute.

CD Two: *Mozart, Gluck, Haydn*

Pierre Monteux made only one Mozart symphony recording, an autumnal pairing of the *Haffner* and 39th with the NDR Orchestra in Hamburg. While the Hamburg *Haffner* is an estimable piece of work, quite elegant in fact, I prefer the livelier and more liberally shaded San Francisco performance of March 24, 1946. Note for starters a warm and snappy first movement traveling with great vividness an echt-Mozartian course squeezed dramatically between jollity and desperation. For all its briskness, this flying *allegro* is not the least bit inflexible in pacing: a case in point would be the generous relaxation of tempo for the quiet response to the opening forte beginning bar 6. The succeeding *andante* is flowing, delicate, extremely attractive: ravishing is not too strong a word for the Beechamesque

hairpin (not literally in the score) Monteux applies to the tiptoeing sixteenths in bar 24. And note too the expressive broadening of tempo at the exposition's benedictory close, bars 33-35. Monteux's emphatic San Francisco *minuet* is pompous enough to suggest the terrifying major domo in Richard Strauss' *Ariadne* prologue; and the contemplative trio, noticeably slower in this performance, evokes old folks chattering in the corner of a Jane Austen salon—only to be startled when Mr. Minuet storms in to interrupt them. Next, a hell-for-leather finale, complete with very assertive timpani but graced by discriminating dynamics when appropriate. In contrast, the first movement of the Hamburg *Haffner* just slightly hints at the bold bar 6 tempo contrast registered in San Francisco. Well, the Hamburg Monteux has not forgotten that bar 6 is a place to be alert about expressive coloring, he's simply being more politico-musically correct. After all, this was the 1960s! The Hamburg *andante* has its charms, but bar 24 in this case would never be mistaken for the work of Sir Thomas. The near-hilarious contrast between the San Francisco *minuet* and *trio* is not repeated chez Hamburg, but in the North German finale there is a delightful mini-hesitation, a poetic shadow-pause, before the second theme.

As for the Mozart overtures from San Francisco—Monteux never recorded any of them—all are winners. The *Don Giovanni* (February 5, 1950) is full of tension and demons, the *Magic Flute* (February 3, 1952) mixes gravity and zest in an ideal balance, the *Abduction from the Seraglio* (January 21, 1945) is a model of breeziness and contrapuntal clarity: it has, like most Monteux performances, that quality of being ALL THERE at any given moment.

"Guest artist" on CD Two is the ill-fated William Kapell, a superstar American pianist in the era of Gieseking, Myra Hess and Casadesus. In Kapell's few years between fame and death (he was killed in a plane crash not far from San Francisco in 1953, barely more than 30) he was a frequent collaborator with Pierre Monteux. Short, pale, romantically handsome and a little cocky too, the demonic Kapell came to his first Monteux rehearsal wondering if this old Frenchman could conduct a certain tricky passage in Prokofieff's third concerto. It didn't take long for Kapell to realize the funny little man with the walrus mustache was not about to be tricked by that sly dog Prokofieff and they quickly became fond colleagues. Monteux, of course, was a great and much sought-after accompanist: Schnabel wanted him as collaborator in his wartime remakes of the Beethoven concertos which were

in fact done with Frederick Stock and the Chicago Symphony. A poised, ardent Kapell and Monteux are presented here in the *andante* and *finale* of Mozart's "early" A major concerto, the K414: it's a broadcast from April 23, 1950. In the *andante* the atmosphere of grieving is vividly captured in the piano's first measures; come the passionate, exploratory middle section and Kapell the turned-on carrier of Mozartian messages seems to see a vision—we may interpret it as we wish. After the witty, fiery finale a voice near the keyboard, possibly that of concertmaster Blinder, fails to conceal a spontaneous "Bravo!"

Like Wilhelm Furtwängler, Monteux found Gluck a very congenial composer—not surprising, this, when one thinks of Gluck's influence on the Berlioz with whom Monteux is so frequently associated. Majestic and urgent as well as impeccably tailored, Monteux's 1945 broadcast of Gluck's *Iphigenia in Aulis* overture suggests the consecration of a house no less mighty than that of Beethoven's great overture. Treating Gluck's music with dignity but not too much starch, Monteux as he invariably did finds just the "style" for the music at hand.

One dreams of a complete *Don Giovanni* or *Magic Flute* conducted by the drama-keen, fun-loving Monteux—and also from this wittiest of conductors a good batch of Haydn symphonies. Alas, Monteux programmed about the same amount of Haydn as the next fellow, which is not very much, and he was only asked to record 94 and 101, with the Vienna Philharmonic. No surprise that his San Francisco broadcast of the 88th (January 21, 1945) is a gem. Monteux's wonderfully expectant introduction is followed by a rousing and wistful *allegro* with several sonic one-liners. The best joke involves the suddenly exposed low E flat staccati of violas and cellos early in the development (bars 109, 111, etc.). Monteux's *largo* is passionate, and scrupulous about quiet passages being quiet indeed. Again as in his *Haffner* third movement there's a charming *minuet-trio* contrast; in this case the urbane *trio* seems to be making a slightly disdainful comment on the very busy-bodyish *minuet*. An impetuous *finale* ready to but not actually running away with the tempo closes this memorable 88th.

CD Three: *Richard Strauss*

Considering that Richard Strauss was probably Monteux's fourth favorite composer (following Brahms, Beethoven and Wagner), he made scandalously few recordings of this composer's music, only a *Death and Transfiguration* delivered to the microphones in 1960 and released nine years later (!) and a *Heldenleben* from 1947 that led a shadow life as a record club offering until it was released to the general public 47 marketing years down the road. A special pleasure, then, to welcome here a quartet of Strauss items from old Monteux broadcasts. Perhaps the best of an outstanding lot is the *Don Juan* of January 29, 1950, a supple and steaming performance with an ecstatic violin solo by Naoum Blinder just before the second theme, and, in Strauss' haunting central episode, a remarkable oboe solo by Merrill Remington that catches ideally this passage's "strange and ominous beauty," its "autumnal richness of regret" (the quotes are from Sir Thomas Armstrong, via Norman del Mar's landmark study of Strauss). Remington, obviously with Monteux's blessing, and perhaps to some extent at his direct request, achieves his magic with a little diminuendo here, a mini-hesitation there, neither precisely indicated in the score, or with a slight departure from Strauss' legato in the direction of an intermittent staccato, all of these devices designed to foster the espressivo Strauss does indeed request. No wonder that Monteux when he returned to his old San Francisco orchestra in 1960 and was confronted by a less than stellar associate principal oboe, asked plaintively, "where is my Remington?" Compare Monteux's San Francisco *Don Juan* of 1950 with his Boston Symphony broadcast dated 1959 and we find the Eastern orchestra's first oboe treating his solo as if it were a minefield marked "Danger! Imaginative phrasing will kill you." The Boston oboe gives us the notes, rhythm and markings of the printed page, down to the last stress accent, and virtually no characterization at all. We sit helpless by the CD player, wondering if Monteux was afraid to ask for more, or did the oboist refuse to give?

Monteux's San Francisco broadcast of *Till Eulenspiegel* (March 30, 1952) winks at us via a limber, saucy performance, one of the goofier in the annals. Wallace and Gromit would be fortunate to have their adventures accompanied by such high-grade cartoon music as Monteux and his crazy-gang San Franciscans provide. The *Rosenkavalier* suite broadcast February 25, 1951 is another enchanting performance: obviously a nice Viennese rubato

came as naturally to Monteux as if he'd been born in the shadow of St. Stephen's, not a few blocks from the Opéra Comique. Lyric passages are given their due here, there's plenty of time for the music to indulge its contemplation of ecstatic things to come.

The San Francisco broadcast of *Death and Transfiguration* (April 13, 1952) provides an interesting contrast to the presently well-circulated recording Monteux made eight years later in California Hall, a reverberant venue on the edge of San Francisco's Tenderloin district: it's now the California Culinary Academy. Both performances are impressive, the 1952 offered here being notable for its youthful intensity (Monteux, of course, had just passed his 77th birthday), the 1960 for its great majesty. Although the "young" Monteux of 1952 was no stranger to slow tempos, he did tend in his truly autumnal days around 1960 to clothe his old intensity in the suit, so to speak, of a somewhat greater deliberation. The tempo difference in this case is remarkable: the 1952 version clocks in at a no-time-to-lose 22.40, while the 1960 eyes relaxedly an oncoming heaven at a little over 24.35 powerful minutes.

CD Four: *Wagner*

A conductor need not be German to be a three-star Wagnerian. Arturo Toscanini is a prime example (I, in fact, find his Wagner more convincing on the whole than his Verdi), and Pierre Monteux was a no less exciting conductor of this repertoire. Wagner overtures and scenes frequently salted and peppered Monteux's programs with the San Francisco, Boston and London orchestras taken under his wing, but he recorded only the *Siegfried Idyl* with his California band (it was released nine years after the recording date) and a trio of preludes with Hamburg's NDR orchestra on a relatively obscure label. In his two brief terms at the Metropolitan he was employed as a French opera specialist; he resigned the second time around because general manager Rudolf Bing refused his request to cross the barrier into the German wing—how things have changed in the era of James Levine!—but when he guest-conducted at the San Francisco Opera in 1954 he was given carte blanche and emerged with a contract to conduct Beethoven's *Fidelio*.

CD Four opens with a San Francisco broadcast of the prelude and "Good Friday Spell" from *Parsifal*; this music often turned up on the *Standard Hour* around Easter time and the date of this transmission is April 9, 1950. Monteux's prelude is appropriately fervid, the third act spell vibrancy-packed. The act 1 prelude to *Die Meistersinger* (November 16, 1947) is a zingy and rapturous performance all students of conducting would be well advised to hear. The catalog of delightful detail is impressive—note, for instance, the exhilarating, almost impulsive attack of the violins' running upbeat to the masters' theme in bar 36, and the welcome spotlight shone on the oboe's espressivo in the triplet-rich love scene at 108. In the act 3 suite from *Meistersinger* (April 23, 1950) Monteux's slight speedup for the solemn passage of the horns early in the prelude might disappoint some listeners, but these golden measures are phrased with great buoyancy and the prelude's pathetic element is on the whole wonderfully mined. Next is the February 11, 1951 broadcast of the *Flying Dutchman* overture, a real intensity trip: in the development section an angry sea seems to be sloshing right onto the War Memorial Opera House stage. The *Tristan* prelude from February 20, 1949 is a trace brisk should you be seeking total immersion in its tragic depths, but vibrancy is everywhere, and the attendant *Liebestod* takes its time.

CD Five: *Wagner, Liszt*

CD Five is launched with a set of *Ring* excerpts. The "Wotan's Farewell" and "Magic Fire" of January 19, 1947 may lack a bass-baritone (Wotan's part is taken in this arrangement by assorted woodwinds and brass) but the performance calls for all the workhorse nouns of commendation in sight. Grandeur, sweep, compassion galore, Monteux and his faithful may claim them all. "Forest Murmurs" (from the same Sunday evening) comes on as a kind of pastoral *Till Eulenspiegel*, a cackly, flighty performance all a-buzz with the awakening of the forest and its exuberant creatures. Monteux, incidentally, loved listening to the birds at his rural Maine home. "Siegfried's Rhine Journey" (March 4, 1951) proceeds from the gracefully projected sadness of dawn to the matutinal mystery of a clarinet hovering cryptically about a chilly fairy tale rockscape. Monteux, in a word, is evocative. Then on a somewhat more mundane note comes the *Rienzi* overture broadcast of February 3,

1950 -- but bathe your ears in the relaxed, mellifluous sound of Wagner's rich opening pages as Monteux shapes them for his Sunday night listeners.

Monteux's San Francisco *Les Préludes* (April 16, 1950) I prefer to his Boston Symphony recording because it pulls out more expressive stops: Liszt's *dolcissimo*, for instance, is taken at its word and is very sweet indeed, and the cymbal player's *fortissimo* is translated into the most electric crashings-together of two cumbersome gold-colored objects this side of a Beecham lollipop. This *Les Préludes* would be climax enough, but it's upstaged by CD Five's finale, a *Second Hungarian Rhapsody* from 1949 with enough paprika for several dozen goulashes.

CD Six: *Berlioz*

Berlioz, of course, was one of Monteux's chief calling cards as a recording artist. He made five versions of the *Symphonie Fantastique*, one in Paris, two in San Francisco, one in Vienna, another in Hamburg. And there are two published *Benvenuto Cellini* overtures, a pair of *Troyens* preludes, and at least one full *Romeo and Juliet*. But this was only the rather crowded tip of the berg because Monteux in his concert programming offered numerous other Berlioz items. In the United States he was one of the pioneers of the great Berlioz revival which erupted in the mid-1940s, spurred, perhaps, by the release of Jean Fournet's recording of the *Requiem* made in Paris' St-Eustache during the Nazi occupation. In his San Francisco concerts Monteux offered the *Requiem*, *L'Enfance du Christ*, *The Damnation of Faust*, *Romeo and Juliet*: every season there was one big Berlioz blast. CD Six opens with a darting, dazzling performance of the *Roman Carnival* overture with an eloquent English horn solo by Leslie Schivo (December 8, 1946). The poignant, neo-Gluckian overture from *L'Enfance*—Moussorgsky must have had it swimming in his head when he wrote the first page of *Boris Godounov*—dates from an Easter broadcast March 28, 1948, this paired with the piquant, playful "Dance of the Ishmaelites" from the same oratorio: Monteux's December 21, 1947 broadcast features harpist Virginia Morgan and a pair of flutes, the lively young Paul Renzi and his sidekick Merrill Jordan whose soft, rich tone marked him as a pupil of the Philadelphia Orchestra's elegant William Kincaid. Next on this Berlioz

CD is an extroverted account of the standard suite from *The Damnation of Faust*, followed by excerpts from *Romeo and Juliet* broadcast the same evening in 1944: these are christened with a harried, appropriately violent prelude, this giving way to an expressive "Romeo Alone" leaving little doubt as to what is on the young man's mind. CD Six concludes with a tender and dangerous-sounding *Corsair* overture broadcast March 21, 1948.

CD Seven: *Mendelssohn, Tchaikovsky, Brahms*

The opening movement of Monteux's 1947 broadcast of Mendelssohn's "Italian" symphony sounds like nature music: it's all a-buzz. This *allegro vivace* is the definition of VIVACE, stealing for itself much of the whirling abandon frequently reserved for the *saltarello finale*. Monteux's passionate *andante con moto* is nicely inflected, prominently accented, and its companion inner movement while it suggests the sonic equivalent of a "sweet, young thing" is hardly less charged. The laid-back nature of Monteux's *finale* comes as something of a surprise, but then, as we suggested a moment ago, his opening movement has it in mind to upstage somewhat this *saltarello*, leaving it to reveal its contrapuntal delights with a clarity enhanced by a generous budget of time. Incidentally, this performance was broadcast from an unusual venue, the intimate Marines' Memorial Theater presently used as a subsidiary house by ACT, the celebrated repertory company. The *Ruy Blas* overture, back at the Opera House (March 27, 1949), makes up for the loss of Monteux's commercial recording which had only a short life on 78s and 45s. If Monteux's stormy *Fingal's Cave* overture (January 7, 1949) were a weather report, well then, I'm not sure one would want to venture outside. A respite is provided by the gentle second theme, warm as can be in this evocative performance.

CD Seven continues with Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet*, a specialité of the Monteux maison, in a crisp, heated performance from March 12, 1950. Note in particular the child-like quality, the touching innocence of Tchaikovsky's lovers as Monteux introduces them in the muted pianissimo violins of the second subject, beginning bar 191. Also interesting: the demonic buzzings of accompanimental sixteenth notes in the violins just after the tumultuous development (from bar 366).

Alfred Hertz, long with the Metropolitan Opera, conducted regularly in San Francisco 1915-30. Some of the beefiness of Hertz' conducting may be found in Monteux's affectionate 1949 performance of five Brahms waltzes orchestrated by "Papa" Hertz who was bald, bearded, and looked a little like the proprietor of a fantastic toy shop.

CD Eight: *From Brahms to Sousa*

Brahms was one of Monteux's most favorite composers—"my love and my ideal." Doubtless he would have taken Brahms, along with Beethoven and Wagner, to his desert island, where, of course, an Island Philharmonic would be waiting. In Monteux's programming as I remember it no favoritism was shown one Brahms symphony over another, but due to some quirk of fate and merchandising he made four recordings of Brahms' Second symphony and none of the other three. The coming of the Long Playing record in the late 1940s explains the second San Francisco recording which succeeded the original 78s. But then, in fairly quick succession, came Seconds (one's tempted to say Second helpings) with the Vienna Philharmonic and London Symphony, the Vienna version more introspective than the energetic, affectionate San Francisco LP with its characteristic organ-like textures, the London Second leaner and less autumnal than its Mittel Europa sibling. The lack of a Monteux First, Third or Fourth in the 1945-54 period relates, of course, to his sharing RCA's stable with such estimable runners as Toscanini, Koussevitzky and Stokowski, but the narrowing of these particular ranks did not, for one reason or another, result in commercial documentation of Monteux's love affair with the titans of the Brahmsian oeuvre.



Shortly before his death an obviously hallucinating Monteux told his student Werner Torkanowsky he must apologize to Brahms for "the way I've played his beautiful music." Well, no apology is necessary, as those recordings of the Second indicate. And other evidence is provided by airchecks of the other symphonies discoverable in audio archives. The *Standard Hour* materials are frustrating because only movements from the Brahms symphonies were broadcast, one here, one there, and not enough of them to put together a complete First, Third and Fourth. At first I was inclined to pass over the second movement of the First from San Francisco (February 1, 1951) because there are complete Amsterdam and Boston airchecks of this symphony which doubtless will be released before long. And then I heard the lovely details of this San Francisco broadcast which are not duplicated in the engaging but different *andante sostenuto*s from the Concertgebouw and Tanglewood a decade later, and I knew it must be included in this series. The log of great and integral "moments" includes the remarkably vibrant *diminuendi* of Brahms' light-stepping first violins in bars 9 and 10 (where Brahms both dots and ties their three-packs of eighth notes), the intense, steeply banked *diminuendo* as the principal oboe withdraws from its first big solo in bar 23, the passionate *sforzando* entry of the first violins two bars later, and, a few minutes later in bar 100, the first horn's scrupulous regard for the fact that the first four notes of his solo are not only *espressivo* but detached, a tension set up thereby between the poetic and the assertive. How much these felicities are due to Monteux and how much to the passions and sensitivities of concertmaster Blinder, oboist Remington and horn player Sabatini cannot be sorted out conclusively; suffice it to say that in spending a dozen or more weeks together every season conductor and first chairs shared and traded spoken or unspoken feelings as marriage partners do. My theory is that the Amsterdam and Boston hornists begin their solos *legato* out of habit, and because the effect was not unbeautiful Monteux did nothing to discourage, or Sabatini-ize, them. Postscript: Brahms' apparent ambivalence concerning slurs in the theme in question is too complex a matter to trouble us here.

Monteux did not record Brahms' *Tragic* overture, which appeared on his programs virtually every season, but CD Eight includes a San Francisco broadcast from February 20, 1949, a robust, fateful performance that fills the gap admirably. Weber's *Euryanthe* overture was another favorite, but he never recorded it. CD Eight offers a very characterful broadcast (January 29, 1950) boasting a small encyclopedia of felicitous detail: note for starters the swagger of the timpani flourish at bar 53, just before the sweet second theme emerges in this performance like a lovely young lady introduced by a chivalrous wave of the hand. Even Toscanini in his celebrated pension fund concert with the New York Philharmonic in 1945 doesn't duplicate this effect. The second theme itself Monteux phrases with great delicacy; the cello arpeggios tucking themselves under the theme at measure 70 have a particular animation reminiscent of Felix Weingartner—he and Monteux in their different ways were champions of orchestral underdogs, assorted inner or supporting parts frequently glossed over by less attentive maestri. The intention here is not to play the popular game of Toscanini-bashing (like most conductors he had his better and worse moments), but in the *Euryanthe* overture's haunting midsection Monteux absolutely out-*Pathétiques* "The Maestro" with a slower, quieter, ultra-vibrant reading, then negotiates a smoother transition to the returning *allegro*.

And next, Monteux the comedian. Exhibit A is the April 6, 1952 broadcast of Rossini's *L'Italiana in Algeri* overture, a pointed and saucy performance christened by a regular enchantress of an oboe. What a podium imp this Monteux turns out to be! But for all his ease with Rossini, not to mention his great love of Beethoven, Brahms, Wagner and Strauss, Monteux didn't forget the music of his countrymen. Ample evidence of his acuity in Gallic matters may be gathered from the *Standard Hour* broadcasts: CD Eight rescues from the vaults a 1952 performance of Dukas' *Sorcerer's Apprentice* so graphic and hilarious in its tale of unintended inundation as to suggest some comic aquatic footnote to the *Flying Dutchman*. Then in Thomas' *Mignon* overture (February 6, 1949) he catches totally the music's prettiness and nostalgia without excess symphonic sugar. The trumpety, murmurous and jagged meditations of Messiaen's *L'Ascension* (March 28, 1948) are brilliantly projected in a souvenir of one of Monteux's biggest successes with "modern" music.

Now to Finland. Monteux was as formidable a Sibelian as a zany Rossinian and his 1949 broadcast of the *Valse Triste* turns what could be a vapid vignette into a touching tone poem. Beginning at a distinctly slower tempo than many conductors select, Monteux proceeds over several minutes through profound sadness, animation, hope, extreme wistfulness, a bit of daring, finally desperation. It's an epic in a teapot. And then, to conclude CD Eight, an antidote to sadness, as snappy and mellow a performance of Sousa's *Stars and Stripes Forever* as you're likely to find anywhere. Here is the Monteux of small-town, flag-raising Maine (his home and famous conducting school were, of course, at Hancock), not the Monteux of the Grands Boulevards. Except that, come to think of it, the electric rhythm of the *Stars and Stripes* was probably learned when Monteux, a 14-year-old violinist, was prisoner—a not entirely unwilling one—in the Folies Bergères pit.

CD Nine: *Russian Music*

Russian music? Monteux was typed by repertoire experts as a Rimsky-Korsakov specialist early in his recording career. Thanks to the nudge in that direction, several generations of music lovers have bathed in the exuberant colors of his *Scheherazade*, *Antar* and *Sadko*. Now we can add to the inventory a broadcast of the *Christmas Eve* suite (December 19, 1943) in which Monteux hears the music as if through the ears of a wonderstruck child, a blockbuster *Russian Easter* overture (April 13, 1952) and a *Capriccio Espagnole* (March 2, 1952) so sensuous it seems as if Monteux's orchestra was composed entirely of courtesans and snake charmers. Also from Monteux's gift pack of Russian goodies come San Francisco transmissions of Glazunov's *Scènes de Ballet* complete with discreetly erotic *pas de deux* and rousing *polonaise*, a limber "Polovetsian Dances" from *Prince Igor* (December 23, 1951) and, as souvenir of a two-week Rachmaninoff festival in February 1941 featuring the composer himself—one of this writer's earliest memories is seeing a stooped, dour-looking piece of sculpture moving toward a piano on San Francisco's Opera House stage—a *Standard Hour* "suite" from Rachmaninoff's second symphony. It begins with a militantly anti-sentimental but soaring account of the *adagio*, proceeding thence, in a backward direction, to a delightfully exuberant performance of the *scherzo*.

CD Ten: *Franck*

Like Rimsky-Korsakov, César Franck was another staple of Monteux's official discography. But even if there were several Franck Symphony recordings Monteux never made albums devoted to the *Psyche and Eros* suite and Gabriel Pierné's orchestration of the *Prelude, Chorale and Fugue*. Monteux's *Psyche* broadcast from San Francisco December 3, 1944 reveals a wonderful interpretation, on edge, all a-tingle, slightly perfumed, never rushed. The Franck-Pierné is more of a period piece, suggesting in its lyric lugubriousness some balletic *Lilac Garden*, but performed as persuasively as it was in a San Francisco studio that same December evening—Monteux had arrived in town a couple weeks earlier, completing his train journey with the usual ferry ride across the bay from the Oakland depot—it makes good listening.

No symphony is more identified with Pierre Monteux than the Franck D minor: it was to Monteux as the "Missouri Waltz" to Harry Truman. Offered here, to cap CD Ten, is the only grand-scale, more-than-23-minute symphony performance the *Standard Hour* permitted Monteux to schedule, the full Franck D minor of April 7, 1946. Coming as it did three days after he turned 71, this Franck must have been a birthday present from his sponsor. And Monteux returned the compliment with a superb performance. Monteux presided over three commercial recordings of the Franck, two in San Francisco (1941 and 1950) plus the Chicago Symphony remake dated 1961. The '46 broadcast may not be quite as full-bodied in string tone as the mellow Chicago version, but it can claim the warmth of '41 and the youthful incisiveness of '50 as well as the extra fire of a "live performance" ambience. Flutist Renzi repeats for Monteux the fluttery, almost Scriabin-like ecstasies achieved by his predecessor Henry Woempner in '41, while the occasionally messy horn work of that earlier vintage has been corrected. In sum all one can say is: Vive Franck, Vive Monteux!

CD Eleven: *Lollipops*

I'd like to call CD Eleven "Lollipops by the Golden Gate"; we've stuffed it like a Christmas stocking with musical comfort food, elite stuff from the pops repertory. Candy? Well, pretty substantial candy. First is that gem, the *Céphale et Procris* suite by Grétry, vintage 1947. Listening to Monteux' zesty performance of the opening *Tambourin* one can see that portly little figure on the podium, neat geometrical beat signalling the music's course with a rather long and decidedly friendly baton. And how the triangle sparkles! The succeeding *Minuet* highlights the delightfully forward and sinuous oboe of Merrill Remington, his sidekick the vibrant flautist Paul Renzi who recently retired after 51 years' service in San Francisco. The piping good spirits of Grétry's concluding *Gigue* find an echo of merriment in our next selection, Nicolai's overture to *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, rarely if ever played at a regular subscription concert during Monteux' tenure (or his successors') but not to be sneezed at. A crisp and ardent introduction, a chuckling allegro in this performance from New Year's Eve 1950—why, Monteux sounds like another Erich Kleiber here.

Next, severity! It's that grand dinosaur Massenet's *Phèdre* overture, which Monteux' predecessor Alfred Hertz recorded in San Francisco for Victor about 1930. It was scarcely a regular attraction in the Monteux era, already seeming a rather starchy relic, but oh how it brims with Melody! Our *Standard Hour* performance from March 1950 claims shamelessly vibrant string playing, while clarinetist Rudi Schmitt offers one of his more disciplined star turns. Notice too the organ-like sonorities dear to Monteux' ear in the rich introduction. A trip south follows with all three parts of de Falla's *Three Cornered Hat* suite, a performance dated February 24, 1946. The first two movements have recently appeared in a 1961 London Symphony recording, but while the autumnal tempos of '61 are atmospheric and attractive they miss the snap and fire of this earlier version. In two words, the '46 *Hat* is more fun.

De Falla's suite was a specialty-of-the-house at Monteux' subscription concerts, generally as a send-'em-home-happy finale, but Rossini's *William Tell* overture was reserved for pops occasions. Whatever the setting, one couldn't ask for more; witness a brisk March '52 performance with mournful but airborne cellos at the start, a neat, sizzling storm, peppy

flute work from Murray Graitzer in the succeeding pastorella, then a galloping finale taut and exhilarating enough to satisfy the fussiest Lone Ranger and Tonto, not to mention Silver the faithful steed of the radio adventure so famously adorned by Rossini's dust-scattering finale. As if to answer one blockbuster with another, our next selection is an equally brisk and pingy *Tannhäuser* overture from the preceding year. The first sepulchral measures in the winds are a tad matter-of-fact: could it be Monteux slyly conceived them as a foil for his commandingly reflective take on the next eight bars? In any event, all is more than well as the music heats up. Come the fortissimo of the pilgrims' procession Monteux creates with speed and his light, calm touch an exciting and somewhat more staccato tramp than we sometimes hear. After the overture's cymbal-heavy developmental storm (into which Tonto might have arrived if he'd made a wrong turn in radio's adventure-land) Monteux, like Kleiber père at NBC, keeps the tempo up where many maestri see cause to take their time—well, Wagner has not officially cancelled his *molto vivace*.

CD Twelve: *Monteux as Accompanist*

CD Twelve features three visiting pianists, one of whom, Lili Kraus, was a regular guest while the others, Solomon and Shura Cherkassky, were rare catches for Monteux' San Francisco concert schedule. Solomon is heard in a characteristically serene, witty, crystalline account of the first movement of Beethoven's C minor concerto, and dare one say it, the gramophonically documented Artur Schnabel sometimes seems bumpy in comparison. A bonus in Solomon's February 1951 performance is the elegant and rather theatrical cadenza he generally played, its author none other than Clara Schumann (for this information I'm indebted to San Francisco Conservatory professor William Wellborn). Kraus and Monteux in the Schubert-Liszt *Wanderer Fantasy* suggest this hyphenated opus' kinship with Saint-Saëns' whiz-bang second concerto. Scintillating fluff it is, played on the evening of March 4, 1951 with great panache by all concerned.

Cherkassky's acute sense of drama (that includes poetry!) is much in evidence in the first movement of Tchaikovsky's B flat minor concerto: note in his 1944 San Francisco performance the ultra-capriccioso character of the first theme of the movement's main *allegro*,

the rubato of intimacy in its lyric foil, the utmost delicacy and romantic fever with which in the development he gives birth to a new and passionate theme. Last and by no means an also-ran on CD Twelve is the Brahms double concerto, an affectionate 1947 partnership casting conductor Monteux with concertmaster Naoum Blinder and first cellist Boris Blinder, Naoum's younger brother and an alumnus of Monteux' Orchestre Symphonique de Paris. Sweet-voiced, immensely vital, here is a veritable flood of Brahmsian richness. The Blinder brothers could be theatrical fellows in their regular duties, bringing in their respective sections with bows held high, as if to lead at least a minor cavalry charge, but the discipline of their solo and ensemble work in Brahms' endearing concerto is as keen as their emotional conviction.

CD Thirteen: *Finale*

CD Thirteen begins with a joke, so to speak—a suite from Walton's sassy *Façade* that finds Monteux the versatile on comfortable ground. Back to reality next with a complete Schumann Fourth Symphony quite different in tempo (sometimes more impetuous by far) and timbre (brighter, often oboe-driven) than his fascinatingly imperial '61 version with the BBC Symphony, that one being an almost Klempererian experience (EMI Klemperer, that is, not the Budapest or Los Angeles animal). Chart in from '52 a first movement fluid, brassy and urgent, a searchingly vibrant romanze, a jolly scherzo and, to launch the finale, a mighty organistic fortress of Schumannesque sound. Those of you who enjoyed the creative Mozart *Haffner* earlier in this collection will probably take to a 1947 *Jupiter*, missing four repeats in the minuet-and-trio (don't be ashamed to live without them!) but ultra-engaging in its Fritz Busch-like breeziness: the first movement, for instance, is more buffo than Olympian.

Pierre Monteux' affinity for Sibelius, noticed earlier in a dramatic *Valse Triste*, finds another outlet in that stormy little tone poem *Pohjola's Daughter*, "road trip" music par excellence: the performance is from a leap-year broadcast February 29, 1948. Then, as if on a roll from that Sousa march back on CD Eight, New Englander Monteux concludes this enlarged collection with an idiomatic whirl through George Whitefield Chadwick's down-home *Jubilee*, a rural pre-Copland bonbon as American as the proverbial apple pie.

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As a music student in San Francisco Arthur Bloomfield, a cousin of pianists Moriz Rosenthal and Heinrich Neuhaus, attended numerous Monteux concerts, and as a member of the Stanford University Chorus in 1951 he took part in performances of Beethoven's Ninth conducted by Monteux. A longtime San Francisco music critic and food writer, he's the author of *50 Years of the San Francisco Opera* and *The Gastronomical Tourist*, and co-author of the forthcoming *Portrait of a Neighborhood*. He's currently working on a book on conductors.



Pierre Monteux became an American citizen in 1942 and made his permanent residence in Hancock, Maine, the childhood home of his wife Doris Hodgkins Monteux (1894-1984). In 1943, Pierre and Doris Monteux founded a summer school for conductors and orchestra musicians in Hancock, inspired in part by Monteux's earlier conducting classes in France. Musicians came from all over the world to Hancock to study with their beloved "Maître." Monteux once said: "Conducting is not enough. I must create something. I am not a composer, so I will create fine young musicians."

A few years after Pierre Monteux's death, Doris Monteux named Charles Bruck (1911-1995) the second music director of the school. Monteux's pupil in Paris, Bruck had enjoyed a close friendship with Monteux through the years and was uniquely qualified to carry on the traditions of the school. He served as the school's music director and master teacher for over a quarter century, becoming one of the great conducting teachers of his generation.

In 1995, Charles Bruck's long-time student and associate Michael Jinbo was named the school's third music director. Jinbo's teaching, consistently praised by colleagues and students, continues the tradition established by Monteux and Bruck, and exemplifies the musical integrity and high standards of excellence of his distinguished predecessors.

The Pierre Monteux School continues to provide training and practical experience to enable conductors to competently handle any conducting situation, and to help instrumentalists meet the many demands of orchestral playing. It offers an unrivaled opportunity to learn a large and varied repertoire over the course of its six-week program. The school's international reputation attracts musicians from across the country and around the world. Over the course of its 62-year history, the school has trained thousands of conductors and instrumentalists. Among the school's distinguished alumni are conductors Lorin Maazel, André Previn, Sir Neville Marriner, David Zinman, Erich Kunzel, Leon Fleisher and Hugh Wolff, and musicians in orchestras throughout the world.



This set is released with the kind cooperation of Nancie Monteux-Barendse and The Pierre Monteux School for Conductors and Orchestra Musicians. Information on the School follows:

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