

## Pierre Monteux in Amsterdam

This boxed set is dedicated to Pierre Monteux (1875-1964), and more particularly to his activities as leader of the renowned Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam.

Rather than write a biographical study of the long musical career of this great Franco-American conductor, we have decided to include an integral French translation of the book by Doris Monteux, *It's all in the music*, which was published in the United States in 1965 (by Farrar, Straus & Giroux), and which is the first translation into French to date. We should nevertheless point out that all passages by Doris Monteux have been removed, and that the translation contains only the souvenirs of Pierre Monteux himself. A further book written by Doris Monteux, *Everyone is someone*, is a very down-to-earth portrait of her husband, and a collection of his best quotations, which are almost as famous as those of Toscanini.

This book in five chapters (the initial years in Paris, the Russian Ballets, the Met and Boston Symphony, the Concertgebouw, the School for Conductors, the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, Israel) is fascinating since Madame Monteux has provided a transcription of her husband's words in which, during numerous private conversations, he recounted the main key steps and dominant events in his long life dedicated to music.

As Monteux himself states in his memoirs (pages 129 to 171 of the

American Edition), in September 1924, he received a telephone call from the secretary and major-domo of W. Mengelberg, Samuel Bottenheim, who asked if he could come to Amsterdam immediately to replace Mengelberg who was ill. Monteux could not possibly have imagined that this concert of October 9, 1924, would be the first of a long series, since between this day and October 18, 1939, Monteux would conduct no less than 184 concerts with the Concertgebouw.

In 1948, Bottenheim himself published a rare and superb history of the orchestra in three volumes (*Geschiedenis van het Concertgebouw*), which includes the entire repertoire performed by Monteux every season throughout this decade. Amongst other things, he conducted seven world premières, including Pijper's *Third Symphony* and works by Rudolf Mengelberg, Godefrid Devreese, Henriette Bosmans, and others.

We cite below for reference a list of the main works premiered in Amsterdam by Monteux between 1924 and 1934:

**1924-1925 season:** the *Rite of Spring*, *Ancient Airs and Dances* (Respighi), *Fantasia* (Vaughan Williams)

**1925-1926 season:** *Parergon* on the *Sinfonia Domestica*, several works by Korngold, Krenek's *Violin Concerto*, the *Scythian Suite* and *Third Piano Concerto* (Prokofiev)

**1926-1927 season:** *Pacific 231* and *Concertino for Piano* (Honegger), *Violin Concerto* (Szymanowsky), *Lux Aeterna* (Hanson), *Second Symphony* (Steinberg), *Padmavati* (Roussel), *Psalm 129* (Lily Boulanger)

**1927-1928 season:** *Psalm 47* (Schmitt), *Tombolene* (Devreese), *Music-hall impressions* (Pierné), *Per una favola Cavalleresca* (Malipiero)

**1928-1929 season:** *Sinfonietta* (Janacek), *Negro Rhapsody* (J. Powell), *Symphony* (Piero Coppola), *Offertorium* (Schubert)

**1929-1930 season:** *Venetian Symphony* (Lorenziti), *5 pieces for orchestra*



(Webern), *Samson et Dalila* (Saint-Saëns), *Double concerto for flute and piano* (Schulhoff)

**1930-1931 season:** *Ein hohes Lied* (Dirk Fock), *Les Indes Galantes* (Rameau), *Chants Populaires hébraïques* (Milhaud), *Lyrical Symphony* (Nabokov), *Two pastoral sketches* (Maria Casadesu)

**1932-1933 season:** *Tableaux Symphoniques* (Liadov), *Scarlattiana* (Casella), *Piano Concerto* (Tch.) *Violin Concerto* (G. Landré)

**1932-1933 season:** *Chirurgie* (Ferroud), *Concerto for Orchestra* (Malipiero), *Concert champêtre* (Poulenc), *Rebus* (Markevitch), *Les Prières* (Caplet)

**1933-1934 season:** *Ouverture pour un opéra bouffe* (Tailleferre), *Sinfonia concertante* (Szymanowski)

After the war, Monteux returned to Amsterdam: between May 20, 1948 and November 29, 1963, he conducted 76 concerts in Amsterdam and in several towns in the Netherlands such as Leiden, Nimegen, Utrecht, Scheveningen, Roermond, Rotterdam, Arnhem, The Hague and Enschede. During the tour, he gave one concert only on June 4, 1962 in Vienna, the programme of which included Pijper's *Third Symphony*, Schumann's *Concerto* with Leon Fleischer and Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*.

Any account of his activities in the Netherlands would be incomplete without mentioning the operatic performances that he conducted with the *Wagner Society*. An extremely rare and magnificent work, published in 1934, entitled *Gedenkboek der Wagnervereeniging - 50 Jaar 1884-1934*, gives a detailed account, and we learn that Monteux conducted the following works:

\* **Debussy:** *Pelléas et Mélisande* (November 10, 12, 14 and 16, 1927), with Charles Panzéra and Yvonne Brothier

\* **Bizet:** *Carmen* (November 15, 17, 19 and 21, 1928), with Marcel Journet and Jane Bourguignon

\* **Gluck:** *Iphigénie en Tauride* (November 20 and 22, 1930), with Germaine Lubin (Monteux gave another performance of this work on June 27, 1931, at the Paris Opera House, again with Germaine Lubin).

\* **Offenbach:** *Les contes d'Hoffmann* (May 26 and 28, June 11 and 12, July 2 and 3, 1932), with Eidé Noréna.

\* **Verdi:** *Falstaff* (24 and 26 November 1932), with Mariano Stabile

\* **Pijper:** *Halewijn* (13 and 14 June 1933)

\* **Lully:** *Acis et Galatée*, and **Ravel:** *L'heure Espagnole* (November 23 and 25, 1933)

In addition, during the Holland Festival of 1949, he conducted eight performances of Gluck's *Orphée et Eurydice* with the great Kathleen Ferrier (June 24, 27, 28, 30 and July 4, 8, 12 and 27).

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### The recordings

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They come from the archives of the Dutch Broadcasting houses VARA and NCRV. Three of them originate from 78 rpms (the Brahms and the Sibelius concertos, Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*).

Even though Monteux had an important activity in Amsterdam after World War II, unfortunately only few recordings exist. Regrettably, no recording was made of the Beethoven cycle he conducted in April-May 1954.

Nevertheless, out of the works released in the present set, four appear for the first time in Monteux's discography, i.e. The *First* and *Third Symphonies*, and the *Tragic Ouverture* by Brahms and Sibelius' *Concerto*.

Brahms' *First Symphony*, that Monteux conducts at the age of 88, is also the last concert he conducted in Amsterdam and one of the last ones of his long career. He only conducted eight more times: in Boston (December 20 and

21, 1963), in Israel (March 5, 7, 12 and 15, 1964), in Rome and then, for the last time, in Milan (April 12).

As far as the interview with Doris and Pierre Monteux is concerned, it was made by John Amos in May 1963, in their London hotel *Le Normandie*, in St. James Park. This document, recorded by the CBC, is one of the last interviews with Pierre Monteux, just a few days before his 88th birthday.

*René Trémine*  
*March 17, 1996*

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### Acknowledgments

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Doris G. Monteux

# TOUT EST DANS LA MUSIQUE

(It's all in the Music)

*Traduit de l'américain par René Trémine*

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