

## PIERRE MONTEUX

### THE COMPLETE RCA ALBUM COLLECTION



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Composer / Works	Ensemble	Recording	Cat. #	CD #
<b>PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY</b>				
Symphony No. 4 op. 36	Boston Symphony Orchestra	Boston, January 28, 1959	(33) LM/LSC-2369	34
Symphony No. 5 op. 64	Boston Symphony Orchestra	Boston, January 8, 1958	(33) LM/LSC-2239	31
Symphony No. 6 op. 74 "Pathétique"	Boston Symphony Orchestra	Boston, January 26, 1955	(33) LM/LSC-1901 (2T) GCS-5	30
<b>GIUSEPPE VERDI</b>				
La traviata	Rosanna Carteri, Cesare Valletti, Leonard Warren, Coro e Orchestra del Teatro dell'Opera di Roma	Rome, June 1-11, 1956	(33) LM-6040	28/29
<b>RICHARD WAGNER</b>				
Siegfried Idyll	San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	San Francisco, January 24, 1960	(33) VIC/VICS-1102 (33) VICS-1457	38



Composer / Works	Ensemble	Recording	Cat. #	CD #
<b>Scheherazade op. 35</b>	San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	San Francisco, March 3/4, 1942	(33) RCA LM-1002 (78) M/DM-920, M (11-8384/8), DM (11-8264/8) (45) WDM-920 (49-0202/6) (45) ERC-2 (549-5011/3)	11
<b>The Tale of Tsar Saltan: March</b>	San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	San Francisco, March 4, 1942	(78) M/DM-920, M (11-8384-A), DM (11-8264-A) (45) WDM-920 (49-0202-A)	2
<b>CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS</b>				
<b>Havanaise op. 83</b>	Leonid Kogan, Boston Symphony Orchestra	Boston, January 12/13, 1958	(33) LM-2220 (33) VIC/VICS-1153	32
<b>ROBERT SCHUMANN</b>				
<b>Symphony No. 4 op. 120</b>	San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	San Francisco, April 7, 1952	(33) LM-1714 (45) WDM-1714 (49-3924/7)	21

Composer / Works	Ensemble	Recording	Cat. #	CD #
<b>ALEXANDER Scriabin</b>				
<b>Le Poème de l'extase op. 54</b>	San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	San Francisco, December 22, 1947	(78) M/DM-1270, M (12-0641/2), DM (12-0643/4)	10
	Boston Symphony Orchestra	New York City, December 8, 1952	(33) LM-1775	22
<b>RICHARD STRAUSS</b>				
<b>Ein Heldenleben op. 40</b>	San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	San Francisco, December 20, 1947	Unissued on 78 rpm	9
<b>Tod und Verklärung op. 24</b>	San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	San Francisco, January 23, 1960	(33) VICS-1457	38
<b>IGOR STRAVINSKY</b>				
<b>Petrushka</b>	Boston Symphony Orchestra	Boston, January 25-28, 1959	(33) LM/LSC-2376	35
<b>Le Sacre du printemps</b>	San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	San Francisco, March 10, 1945	(78) M/DM-1052, M (11-9164/7), DM (11-9168/71)	5
	Boston Symphony Orchestra	Boston, January 28, 1951	(33) LM-1149 (45) WDM-1548 (49-3380/4)	15



Composer / Works	Ensemble	Recording	Cat. #	CD #
<b>FELIX MENDELSSOHN</b>				
Ruy Blas Overture op. 95	San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	San Francisco, December 22, 1947	(78) 12-0657 (45) 49-0883	10
<b>DARIUS MILHAUD</b>				
Suite symphonique No. 2 op. 57	San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	San Francisco, April 14, 1945	(78) M/DM-1027, M (11-8977/9), DM (11-8980/2)	7
<b>WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART</b>				
Piano Concerto No. 12 K 414 (385p/386a)	Lili Kraus, Boston Symphony Orchestra	Boston, April 12, 1953	(33) RCA LM-1783	23
Piano Concerto No. 18 K 456	Lili Kraus, Boston Symphony Orchestra	Boston, April 13, 1953	(33) RCA LM-1783	23
<b>MAURICE RAVEL</b>				
Alborada del gracioso	San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	San Francisco, December 22, 1947	(78) 12-1107 (45) 49-0916	10

Composer / Works	Ensemble	Recording	Cat. #	CD #
<b>Daphnis et Chloé Suite No. 1</b>				
	University of California Chorus, San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	San Francisco, April 3, 1946	(78) M/DM-1143, M (11-9683/4-A), DM (11-9688-B/6-B)	8
<b>La Valse</b>				
	San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	San Francisco, April 21, 1941	(78) M/DM-820, M (18160/1), DM (18162/3)	1
<b>Valses nobles et sentimentales</b>				
	San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	San Francisco, April 3, 1946	(78) M/DM-1143, M (11-9681/2), DM (11-9685-A/8-A)	8
<b>NIKOLAI RIMSKY-KORSAKOV</b>				
"Antar" (Symphony No. 2) op. 9	San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	San Francisco, April 2, 1946	(78) M/DM-1203, M (12-0179/81), DM (12-0182/4)	8
<b>Le Coq d'or: Cortège de nocés</b>				
	San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	San Francisco, April 21, 1941	(78) M/DM-820, M (18160/1), DM (18162/3)	1
<b>Le Coq d'or: Introduction et Cortège de nocés</b>				
	San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	San Francisco, March 19, 1945	(78) M/DM-1252, M (12-0501/4), DM (12-0505/8)	6
<b>Sadko op. 5</b>				
	San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	San Francisco, March 3, 1945	(78) M/DM-1252, M (12-0501/2), DM (12-0503/4)	5

Composer / Works	Ensemble	Recording	Cat. #	CD #
<b>JACQUES IBERT</b>				
Escales	San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	San Francisco, April 2, 1946	(78) M/DM-1173, M (11-9907/8), DM (11-9909/10), DV-10, DV (18-0080/1), (18-0082/3) (red vinyl "Red Seal Deluxe")	8
<b>VINCENT D'INDY</b>				
Fervaa: Introduction du 1 <sup>er</sup> Acte op. 40	San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	San Francisco, January 27, 1945	(78) M/DM-1113, M (11-9508/9), DM (11-9510/1)	5
Istar op. 42	San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	San Francisco, January 27, 1945	(78) SP-16 (11-9104/5), M/DM-1113, M (11-9508/9), DM (11-9510/1)	4
Symphonie pour orchestre et piano op. 25	Maxim Schapiro, San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	San Francisco, April 21/22, 1941	(78) M/DM-913, M (11-8367/9), DM (11-8233/5)	1
Symphony No. 2 op. 57	San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	San Francisco, March 2/3, 1942	(78) M/DM-943, M (11-8441/5), DM (11-8446/50) (45) WCT-1125 (449-0161/4) (33) LCT-1125	2

Composer / Works	Ensemble	Recording	Cat. #	CD #
<b>ARAM KHACHATURIAN</b>				
Violin Concerto	Leonid Kogan, Boston Symphony Orchestra	Boston, January 12/13, 1958	(33) LM-2220 (33) VIC/VICS-1153	32
<b>ÉDOUARD LALO</b>				
Le Roi d'Ys: Overture	San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	San Francisco, March 4, 1942	(78) 11-8489	2
Symphonie espagnole	Yehudi Menuhin, San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	San Francisco, January 26/27, 1945	Unissued on 78 rpm	3
<b>FRANZ LISZT</b>				
Les Préludes S 97	Boston Symphony Orchestra	New York City, December 8, 1952	(33) LM-1775 (45) ERB-5 (549-5043/4)	22
<b>GUSTAV MAHLER</b>				
Kindertotenlieder	Marian Anderson, San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	San Francisco, February 26, 1950	(33) LM-1146 (45) WDM-1531 (49-3316/8)	18

Composer / Works	Ensemble	Recording	Cat. #	CD #
<b>La Mer</b>	Boston Symphony Orchestra	Boston, July 19, 1954	(33) LM-1939 (45) ERC-1939 (549-5201/3)	27
<b>Nocturnes</b>	Women of the Berkshire Festival Chorus, Boston Symphony Orchestra	Boston, August 15, 1955	(33) LM-1939 (45) ERC-1939 (549-5201/3) (33) VIC/VICS-1027 (2T) CCS-12	27
<b>Pour le piano: Sarabande</b>	San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	San Francisco, April 3, 1946	(78) M/DM-1143, M (11-9684-B), DM (11-9685-B)	8
<b>LÉO DELIBES</b>				
<b>Coppélia</b> Ballet Suite	Members of the Boston Symphony Orchestra	New York City, December 2/4, 1953	(33) LM-1913 (2T) CC-30	26
<b>Sylvia</b> Ballet Suite	Members of the Boston Symphony Orchestra	Boston, December 30/31, 1953	(33) LM-1913 (2T) CC-30	26
<b>CÉSAR FRANCK</b>				
<b>Pièce héroïque</b>	San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	San Francisco, April 22, 1941	(78) 18485	2
<b>Symphony in D minor</b>	San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	San Francisco, April 22, 1941	(78) M/DM-840, M (18246/50), DM (18251/5)	1

Composer / Works	Ensemble	Recording	Cat. #	CD #
	San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	San Francisco, February 27, 1950	(78) DM-1382, DM (12-1179/83) (45) WDM-1382 (49-1150/4) (33) LM-1065	13
	Chicago Symphony Orchestra	Chicago, January 7, 1961	(33) LM/LSC-2514	39
<b>CHRISTOPH WILLIBALD GLUCK</b>				
<b>Orfeo ed Euridice</b>	Risë Stevens, Lisa Della Casa, Roberta Peters, Orchestra e Coro del Teatro dell'Opera di Roma	Rome, June 15-26, 1957	(33) LM-6136 (CD) 09026635342	36/37
<b>CHARLES GOUNOD</b>				
<b>Faust: Ballet Music</b>	San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	San Francisco, December 22, 1947	Unissued on 78 rpm	10
<b>LOUIS GRUENBERG</b>				
<b>Violin Concerto op. 47</b>	Jascha Heifetz, San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	San Francisco, December 17, 1945	(78) M/DM-1079, M (11-9333/6), DM (11-9337/40) (33) LVT-1017 (33) LCT-1160	7



Composer / Works	Ensemble	Recording	Cat. #	CD #
<b>JOHANNES BRAHMS</b>				
Rhapsody for Contralto, Male Chorus and Orchestra op. 53	Marian Anderson, San Francisco Municipal Men's Chorus, San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	San Francisco, March 3, 1945	(78) SP-13 (11-8983/4), M/DM-1111 M (11-9500/1), DM (11-9502/3)	5
Schicksalslied op. 54	Stanford University Chorus, San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	San Francisco, April 19, 1949	(10" LP) LM-149 (45) WDM-1637 (49-3691/4)	20
Symphony No. 2 op. 73	San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	San Francisco, March 19, 1945	(78) M/DM-1065, M (11-9237/40), DM (11-9241/4)	6
	San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	San Francisco, April 4, 1951	(33) LM-1173 (45) WDM-1065 (49-1483/6)	16
Violin Concerto op. 77	Henryk Szeryng, London Symphony Orchestra	London, June 18-20, 1958	(33) LM/LSC-2281	33
<b>MAX BRUCH</b>				
Violin Concerto No. 1 op. 26	Yehudi Menuhin, San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	San Francisco, January 27, 1945	(78) M/DM-1023, M (11-8951/3), DM (11-8954/6)	3

Composer / Works	Ensemble	Recording	Cat. #	CD #
<b>EMMANUEL CHABRIER</b>				
Le Roi malgré lui: Fête polonaise	San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	San Francisco, December 22, 1947	(78) 12-0978 (45) 49-0517	9
<b>ERNEST CHAUSSON</b>				
Poème op. 25	Jascha Heifetz, San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	San Francisco, December 17, 1945	Unissued on 78 rpm	7
Poème de l'amour et de la mer op. 19	Gladys Swarthout, RCA Victor Symphony Orchestra	New York City, December 9, 1952	(33) LM-1793 (33) LVT-1038	24
Symphony op. 20	San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	San Francisco, February 28, 1950	(33) LM-1181 (45) WDM-1582 (49-3503/6)	17
<b>CLAUDE DEBUSSY</b>				
Images pour orchestre: Giges & Rondes de printemps	San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	San Francisco, March 2, 1942	(78) M/DM-954, M (11-8520/1), DM (11-8522/3)	2
complete	San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	San Francisco, April 3, 1951	(33) LM-1197 (33) LVT-1036 (45) WDM-1618 (49-3621/5)	19

Composer / Works	Ensemble	Recording	Cat. #	CD #
<b>JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH</b>				
Passacaglia and Fugue BWV 582	San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	San Francisco, April 19, 1949	(78) DM-1340 (12-1057/8) (45) WDM-1340 (49-0763/4) (33) LM-149 (33) LM-1799 (33) LCT-1039	20/25
Weihnachtsoratorium BWV 248: No. 10 Sinfonia	San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	San Francisco, April 19, 1949	(78) DM-1340 (12-1057/8) (45) WDM-1340 (49-0763/4)	20
<b>LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN</b>				
Die Ruinen von Athen: Overture op. 113	San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	San Francisco, April 19, 1949	(45) WDM-1637 (49-3691/4)	20
Symphony No. 2 op. 36	San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	San Francisco, April 19, 1949	(78) DM-1325 (12-1004/7) (45) WDM-1325 (49-0598/601) (33) LM-1024	12
Symphony No. 4 op. 60	San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	San Francisco, April 7, 1952	(33) LM-1714 (45) WDM-1714 (49-3924/7)	21
Symphony No. 8 op. 93	San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	San Francisco, February 28, 1950	(78) DM-1450 (12-3017/9) (45) WDM-1450 (49-3017/9) (33) LM-43 (33) LM-1799 (33) LCT-1039	25

Composer / Works	Ensemble	Recording	Cat. #	CD #
<b>HECTOR BERLIOZ</b>				
La Damnation de Faust: Marche hongroise (Marche de Rákóczy)	San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	San Francisco, April 4, 1951	(45) WDM-1618 (49-3621-B) (45) ERB-5 (549-5043-B)	10
Grande Ouverture de <i>Benvenuto Cellini</i> op. 23	San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	San Francisco, January 27, 1945	Unissued on 78 rpm	4
	San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	San Francisco, December 22, 1947	Unissued on 78 rpm	10
	San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	San Francisco, April 6, 1952	(33) LM-1799 (33) LVT-1039 (45) ERB-5 (549-5044-B)	25
Symphonie fantastique op. 14	San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	San Francisco, February 27/28 & April 15, 1945	(78) M/DM-994, M (11-9027/32), DM (11-9033/8)	4
	San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	San Francisco, February 27, 1950	(33) LM-1131 WDM-994 (49-1453/8)	14
Les Troyens à Carthage: Prélude	San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	San Francisco, January 27, 1945	Unissued on 78 rpm	4

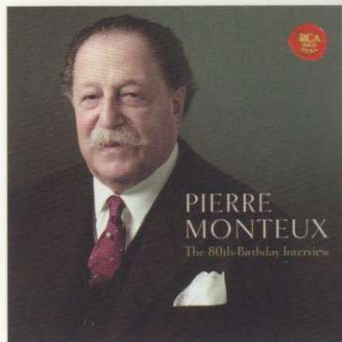


**Bonus CD**

**Pierre Monteux**

**The 80th-Birthday Interview**

Pierre Monteux interviewed by Edward Kelly  
at Town House, New York City



**Original LP: "Not for Sale" and  
"Special Disc Jockey Pressing"**  
Side A "Pierre Monteux 80th Birthday Anniversary,  
April 4, 1955"  
(Side B contained "Rosa Ponselle interviewed by  
Ruby Mercer")

Tape Transfer: Mike Piacentini  
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# PIERRE MONTEUX

## THE COMPLETE RCA DISCOGRAPHY

Stück nie zuvor dirigiert, aber er erlernte es innerhalb weniger Tage und lieferte einen höchst gediegenen Begleitpart ab. Bei der Aufnahme des Brahms-Konzerts mit Szeryng dirigierte Monteux das London Symphony Orchestra, dessen Chefdirigent er 1981 mit 86 Jahren wurde, wobei er auf einen 25-Jahres-Vertrag mit der Option auf Verlängerung bestand.

Last, but not least unter seinen Aufnahmen mit dem Boston Symphony Orchestra sind zwei große Werke von Debussy zu nennen: *La Mer* und *Nocturnes* (die *Images* aus San Francisco sind gleichfalls herausragend). Trotz seiner Abneigung gegen den Ruf als Dirigent für französische Musik konnte (und wollte) Monteux diese Werke nicht umgehen. Als Orchestermusiker hatte er bei *La Mer* unter der Leitung des Komponisten mitgespielt; nun kamen ihm Einzelheiten von Debussys Lesart des Stücks bei seiner eigenen Interpretation zugute.

Die vorliegende Zusammenstellung beweist, dass Monteux sich niemals auf irgendeine nationale Schule spezialisierte. Er war Spezialist für Musik an sich, und er erfüllte sein gesamtes künstlerisches Tun mit tiefem Musikverständnis und makelloser Schlagtechnik, aber auch mit persönlicher Wärme, Genialität und Menschlichkeit.

John Canarina

Übersetzung: Stefan Lerche



Pierre Monteux as violist with the Quatuor Geloso and Edvard Grieg



recording of the *Symphonie espagnole*, unissued until 1993) and the incomparable Jascha Heifetz in the Chausson *Poème* (unissued until 2010) and a concerto written especially for him by the Russian-born American composer Louis Gruenberg, its one and only recording to date. The Soviet violinist Leonid Kogan made his American debut with Monteux and the Boston Symphony in 1958 playing the Brahms Concerto. RCA wanted to record Kogan and Monteux together, but not in the Brahms, which Monteux was scheduled to record later in the year in London with the Polish-born Henryk Szeryng, that recording also in this set. It was thus decided to record the Khachaturian Concerto, which Monteux had never conducted and which he learned in a few days, directing a sterling accompaniment. The Brahms Concerto with Szeryng was made with the London Symphony Orchestra, of which Monteux became principal conductor in 1961 at age 86, insisting on a twenty-five-year contract with an option to renew.

Not least among the Boston Symphony recordings are the two great scores by Debussy, *La Mer* and the *Nocturnes* (the *Images* from San Francisco are also outstanding). Even though classified reluctantly as a "French conductor," Monteux could not very well avoid these works, nor did he wish to. As an orchestral musician, he had played *La Mer* under the composer's direction; now he brought to his interpretation details of Debussy's own conception of the piece.

This set demonstrates that Monteux did not specialize in any one national school; rather, he specialized in music. To all his work he brought not only a profound musical understanding and flawless conducting technique, but also his personal warmth, geniality, and humanity.

John Canarina





carries over into the three Beethoven symphonies Monteux recorded in San Francisco, Nos. 2, 4, and 8, that benefit greatly from his benevolence. The Eighth in particular is extremely unbuttoned and ebullient.

If there is one work that is unquestionably *the* score most associated with Pierre Monteux, it is Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*, of which he led the riot-torn premiere in Paris in 1913. For the rest of his life he was asked to play it, to the point where he finally admitted he really didn't like the piece, revolutionary though it was in changing the course of 20th-century music. Like it or not, he made four recordings of it, two of which are in this set. In 1945 the San Francisco Symphony was still a second-tier orchestra, in spite of Monteux's rebuilding efforts, which were hampered by the fact that the musicians' union there insisted he engage only local musicians. Yet the San Francisco recording of *The Rite of Spring* is a stupendous performance in which the orchestra truly outdoes itself.



Pierre Monteux with Serge Koussevitzky and Charles Munch

The second recording of *The Rite* in this set is with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, made in 1951. It is perhaps forgotten today that Monteux had been the conductor of that orchestra from 1919 to 1924, after which he was succeeded by the charismatic Serge

Koussevitzky, whose tenure lasted twenty-five years, until 1949. During that time, though Koussevitzky did engage occasional guest conductors, Monteux was never invited back. It was left to Charles Munch, who succeeded Koussevitzky, to issue an invitation to Monteux, who thus returned to Boston in January 1951. *The Rite of Spring* was included on his program and was recorded by RCA Victor soon afterward. It is the best of Monteux's four recordings, one that remains a classic to this day. Along with Stravinsky's own recordings, it is surely the touchstone reading of this landmark of 20th-century music.

After 1952 most of Monteux's American recordings were with the Boston Symphony, including the piece that started him on his way, *Petrushka*. He always conducted ballet music at danceable tempos, keeping their origin in mind. So it is with *Petrushka*. Other highlights of the Boston recordings are the last three Tchaikovsky symphonies, works not normally associated with French conductors, but Monteux loved Tchaikovsky's music and performed it often. While his interpretations may not be the last word in Slavic anguish and melancholy, they are very tender and very exciting as required.

Early in his career Monteux was very active as a conductor of opera, including two seasons at the Metropolitan Opera prior to taking over the Boston Symphony. At the invitation of Rudolf Bing he returned to the Met for three seasons, 1953–56. As might be expected, he conducted mostly French repertoire (an exception was Gluck's *Orfeo*). He might have stayed longer if Bing had let him conduct *La traviata*, one of his favorite operas, but at the Met that piece was reserved for Italian conductors. RCA was not averse, however, to having a Frenchman conduct *La traviata*, and his affection for this score shines through this recording.

Several distinguished violinists collaborated with Monteux on records. These included San Francisco native Yehudi Menuhin in works by Bruch and Lalo (the first complete

sonority that could not be confused with that of any other orchestra, a bright and open sound that had an appealing sweetness in the strings and woodwinds and an arresting bite to the brass, a sonority enhanced by the acoustics of the War Memorial Opera House.

Especially appropriate was this sonority to another work with which Monteux was closely associated, the Berlioz *Symphonie fantastique*, of which he made five recordings, two of them in San Francisco. Monteux was able to preserve order and proportion in this score while still projecting its fantastic element excitingly. In the "Scene in the Country" there is a great flexibility of tempo, the muted horns at the beginning of the "March to the Scaffold" are menacing, while the lowest notes of the bass trombone in the latter movement produce quite a grotesque sonority. In the finale, the "Dream of a Sabbath Night," the stressing of isolated muted horn notes produces a particularly nasty sound. Monteux was very alert to the work's strange orchestral colors, either specified or implied.

While the early San Francisco recordings were predominantly of French music, it should be mentioned that Monteux came to resent being classified as a "French conductor," capable of playing only French music, which was expected of him in his later years, and which he performed incomparably. After all, he had grown up immersed in the German classics, which he knew intimately. When he was born in 1875, Debussy was thirteen years old, Ravel exactly four weeks old. Stravinsky's birth was seven years in the future.

Monteux's favorite composer was Brahms. Thus, it's ironic that, instead of recording that composer's four symphonies at least once, he recorded the Second Symphony four times, twice in San Francisco. To this work he brought a remarkably lithe and fleet interpretation, perhaps based on the fact that as a young member of a string quartet that played one of Brahms's quartets for him, Brahms had said that "it takes the French to play my music properly. The Germans play it much too heavily." This same approach





Before Monteux's engagement in San Francisco, that city's orchestra had undergone several periods of instability, with the 1934–35 season cancelled entirely because of poor financial support at the height of the Great Depression. Funds were found to resume activity for the 1935–36 season, which actually began in January 1936 with Monteux in charge at age 60.

By 1941 Monteux had rebuilt the orchestra to an extent that RCA Victor felt it was time to resume recording it. Monteux's first San Francisco recordings were made under unusual circumstances, at least for the time. Because RCA deemed the technical equipment in San Francisco inadequate, it was decided that the recordings would be made over a telephone line, the orchestra playing on the stage of the War Memorial Opera House, the recording machines running in Los Angeles. But the telephone line would only be available after midnight, which is when the first sessions took place on April 21 and 22, 1941.

The repertoire for those sessions is contained on CDs 1, 2 and 11 of this set. It is only natural that RCA chose to record Monteux in French music, and so we have Ravel's *La Valse* leading off. Monteux had recorded this work in Paris in 1930, but this performance is a great improvement both orchestrally and technically, with greater thrust and lilt, all building to an exciting climax. It is also an example of Monteux's philosophy of making records, which he did not like doing in the 78-rpm era. His feeling was that a recording should demonstrate the quality of an orchestra's playing, and if there was a mistake, so be it. Thus he tolerated the first trumpet's cracked note at the end of a short but tricky solo passage, an error that has become endearing down through the years.

The music of Vincent d'Indy is rarely heard in concert halls today; his most frequently performed work is the lovely *Symphony on a French Mountain Air*, a quasi-piano concerto in which Monteux's soloist is the Russian-born pianist Maxim Schapiro, who was active

in the Bay Area. Monteux's recording of the lesser-known Second Symphony is the work's first; there would not be another for fifty years. Of interest is the fact that it was recorded on March 2, 1942, the day Monteux became an American citizen.

A work closely associated with Monteux was also recorded at the first sessions, the César Franck Symphony in D minor, of which he had attended the world première in Paris at age 14. So popular did this recording become that the master discs deteriorated to a point of uselessness, necessitating a new recording in 1950. Monteux's definitive version of this score was realized in 1961, his sole recording with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, but, of course, all three are contained here. Monteux brings out a facet of this work that many conductors fail to notice — its great nobility.

In 1942 Pierre Monteux and the San Francisco Symphony made a recording that became an instant classic, one that was never out of the RCA Victor catalog: Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade*. It is a performance of great excitement and forward momentum in which Monteux is not as languid as some of his colleagues in the lovely third movement, "The Young Prince and the Young Princess." Here he directs a graceful 6/8 in two beats per measure, a faster tempo than normally heard when the piece is conducted "in six." It's possible that Monteux's tempo was influenced by his many performances of the score with the Ballets Russes, where the brisker tempo may have been the norm. Contributing to the recording's success was the elegant and masterly playing of the orchestra's concertmaster, Naoum Blinder, in the many solo violin passages. Also notable was the album cover depicting a sultan seated on a phonograph record, in the air as if on a magic carpet.

Bearing in mind Monteux's philosophy of recording, one can say that the ensemble transcended its limitations, and if one listens to this set chronologically, a definite improvement in the orchestra can be noticed. As heard on records, the group produced a





## PIERRE MONTEUX REMEMBERED

The chances are that Pierre Monteux would eventually have made his mark in the world of music without the special circumstances that enabled him to do so. Yet those circumstances were every assistant conductor's dream, to be called upon to take over in an emergency. In 1911 Monteux was just that, the assistant conductor of the Colonne Orchestra in Paris, as well as the orchestra's principal violist. A highlight of the season was to be the world première of Stravinsky's second ballet, *Petrushka*. As the Ballets Russes's conductor was unavailable for the preliminary rehearsals, Diaghilev asked Gabriel Pierné, the Colonne Orchestra's principal conductor, to direct them, but he was unwilling to prepare the orchestra for someone else to take over. Monteux was then asked to do so and, as an under-used assistant, he was only too happy for the opportunity.

Under the watchful eye of Stravinsky himself, Monteux painstakingly rehearsed the orchestra, impressing the composer so much that Stravinsky insisted that only Monteux would conduct *Petrushka*, for he knew the piece better than anyone. It was not long before Diaghilev appointed Monteux principal conductor of the Ballets Russes, which resulted in his leading the most notorious world première in music history two years later, that of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*, an event that truly made Monteux's name, not to mention Stravinsky's.

While he would go on to conduct orchestras all over the world, for music-lovers in the United States Monteux is best known as the conductor of the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, which he led for seventeen seasons from 1936 to 1952, and as an honored guest conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra from 1951 until his death in 1964. It was with these orchestras that he made the bulk of his American recordings.



# PIERRE MONTEUX

THE COMPLETE RCA ALBUM COLLECTION

John Canarina

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A close-up portrait of Pierre Monteux, an elderly man with a thick, grey mustache and receding hair. He is wearing a dark grey suit jacket over a white shirt and a red tie with a dark, repeating geometric pattern. The background is a solid, deep red color.

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