

RCA
Musique

N° 18



Pierre Monteux a été et reste encore probablement le chef d'orchestre le plus représentatif de l'école française "moderne" de direction. Il a en tout cas incontestablement joui de la popularité et de la renommée internationale la plus importante jusqu'à. Pierre Boulez. Sa carrière, exceptionnellement longue, est en effet tout à fait significative.

C'est à l'âge de 15 ans, en 1890, que Pierre Monteux à l'issue de ses études au Conservatoire, réalise ses premières expériences musicales en tant qu'altiste à l'Opéra Comique et aux Concerts Colonne. Parallèlement, son ami Lucien Capet l'incite à s'insérer dans une formation de quatuor à cordes. A l'âge de 20 ans (comme Toscanini) il est amené à sortir des rangs de l'orchestre, désigné par ses collègues pour remplacer sur le podium M. Saint-Saëns qui tenait lui-même à remplacer l'organiste — qui ne lui plaisait pas — à l'occasion d'une exécution de la 3e Symphonie.

En 1910 il fonde les concerts Berlioz au Casino de Paris... et c'est là que Diaghilev le rencontrera et l'engagera simplement pour diriger dans le cadre de ses Ballets Russes la première mondiale de *Pétrouchka*, musique de scène composée par un jeune compositeur russe nommé Igor Stravinsky.

De 1911 à 1914, il assurera avec le fameux metteur en scène, outre la création de *Daphnis et Chloé* de Ravel, des *Feux* de Debussy, du *Rossignol* de Stravinsky, celle du *Sacre du Printemps* qui, surtout, le rendra célèbre.

En 1916 il se rend à New York où il est invité au Metropolitan Opera pour diriger les ouvrages français. En 1919 il est appelé à Boston dont le célèbre orchestre est réduit à l'état de squelette — en grève — (l'ensemble souffrait de l'absence de ses musiciens d'origine allemande et de celle du Dr Karl Muck qui s'était attiré des ennuis pour avoir refusé de diriger quelque musique militaire...). En 1924, quand Monteux quitte Boston, l'orchestre a retrouvé le niveau que le Dr Muck lui avait conféré. De retour en Europe, P. Monteux commence une collaboration avec l'orchestre du Concertgebouw (Monteux, B. Walter et K. Gluck furent les trois seuls chefs d'orchestre à qui Mengelberg confia de son vivant "son" Concertgebouw de façon régulière).

En 1929 il fonde l'Orchestre Symphonique de Paris qu'il dirige jusqu'en 1938.

A partir de 1936 il prend la direction de plus en plus suivie du petit orchestre de San Francisco qu'il quittera en 1952. Ce dernier comptera à son départ parmi les meilleurs du continent américain. A partir de 1952 il parcourt le monde comme chef invité par les orchestres les plus illustres.

En 1961 il prendra la responsabilité du London Symphony Orchestra qu'il dirigera jusqu'à sa mort. C'est à son domicile à Hancock dans le Maine aux USA, où il avait fondé une école de direction d'orchestre, que s'éteindra cet infatigable chef d'orchestre, le 1^{er} juillet 1964 à 89 ans.

La direction de Pierre Monteux est sobre, élégante et énergique. Ses interprétations sont précises, claires et solidement charpentées, d'une clarté lumineuse qui s'apparente à celle d'un Toscanini, avec un équilibre des masses sonores qui rappelle un peu celui d'un Mengelberg.

Ces deux illustres collègues de Monteux possédaient ces qualités à un degré suprême : elles sont présentes chez lui dans un dosage heureux qui n'exclut jamais la chaleur et l'émotion dans l'expression.

G.Z.

Pierre Monteux was and probably still is the most representative conductor of the "modern" French school. He certainly enjoyed the greatest popularity and international fame up to... Pierre Boulez. His exceptionally long career is quite significant. In 1890, Monteux was fifteen; he was through with the Conservatoire and had had a taste of actual performance as a violist at the Opéra Comique and Concerts Colonne. Meanwhile, his friend Lucien Capet advised him to play with a string quartet. One day, during the performance of his third Symphony, Saint-Saëns decided to replace the organist whom he did not like, and twenty-year-old Monteux was called upon by his colleagues to replace the conductor, as in Toscanini's case. In 1910, he founded the Concerts Berlioz at the Casino de Paris, where Diaghilev met him and took him on in the Ballets Russes; he had to conduct the première of Petroushka, music by a young Russian composer called Igor Stravinsky. From 1911 to 1914, together with the famous director, he created Ravel's Daphnis and Chloé, Debussy's Feux, Stravinsky's Nightingale and above all the epoch-making Rite of Spring. In 1916, he sailed to New York where he conducted French

operas at the Metropolitan. In 1919 he was given the Boston Symphony Orchestra; the famous body was at that time a mere skeleton — the German players had gone, the rest was on strike, and Dr Karl Muck was in serious trouble (he had refused to conduct some American military music, among other things). When he left in 1924, Monteux had put the orchestra right back into its pre-war shape. In Europe, Monteux often conducted the Concertgebouw, a privilege he shared with B. Walter and K. Gluck alone (Mengelberg would not lend "his" orchestra on a regular basis to anybody else). In 1929, he founded the Orchestre Symphonique de Paris which he kept until 1938, while beginning to conduct the small San Francisco Orchestra in 1936. By the time he left in 1952, it had become one of the best orchestras in the country. After 1952, Monteux toured throughout the world, appearing as a guest conductor with the most famous orchestras. In 1961, he was called to the London Symphony Orchestra and kept it up to the time of his death, at his house in Hancock, Maine, where he had founded a school for conductors. The indefatigable artist passed away on July 1st, 1964. He was eighty-nine. Pierre Monteux's conducting is restrained, elegant and full of energy. His interpretations have a precise, clear and powerful architecture; they are reminiscent of Toscanini by their clarity and brightness, of Mengelberg by the balance of orchestral elements. Those qualities, which Monteux's illustrious colleagues possessed to a unique degree, are happily blended in him with ever-present warmth and emotion.

STRAVINSKY

LE SACRE DU PRINTEMPS

BOSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

DIRECTION

Pierre MONTEUX

CYCLE

1

MONTEUX

operas at the Metropolitan. In 1919 he was given the Boston Symphony Orchestra; the famous body was at that time a mere skeleton — the German players had gone, the rest was on strike, and Dr Karl Muck was in serious trouble (he had refused to conduct some American military music, among other things). When he left in 1924, Monteux had put the orchestra right back into its pre-war shape. In Europe, Monteux often conducted the Concertgebouw, a privilege he shared with B. Walter and K. Gluck alone (Mengelberg would not lend "his" orchestra on a regular basis to anybody else). In 1929, he founded the Orchestre Symphonique de Paris which he kept until 1938, while beginning to conduct the small San Francisco Orchestra in 1936. By the time he left in 1952, it had become one of the best orchestras in the country. After 1952, Monteux toured throughout the world, appearing as a guest conductor with the most famous orchestras. In 1961, he was called to the London Symphony Orchestra and kept it up to the time of his death, at his house in Hancock, Maine, where he had founded a school for conductors. The indefatigable artist passed away on July 1st, 1964. He was eighty-nine. Pierre Monteux's conducting is restrained, elegant and full of energy. His interpretations have a precise, clear and powerful architecture; they are reminiscent of Toscanini by their clarity and brightness, of Mengelberg by the balance of orchestral elements. Those qualities, which Monteux's illustrious colleagues possessed to a unique degree, are happily blended in him with ever-present warmth and emotion.



"Ce Russe fou !..." : Stravinsky à Paris en 1915. Tableau de Jacques-Emile Blanche (Cliché Lauros-Giraudon)

A black and white portrait of a man with dark hair, wearing a suit and tie. He is looking slightly to the right of the camera. The background is a plain, light color.

ANALYTICAL