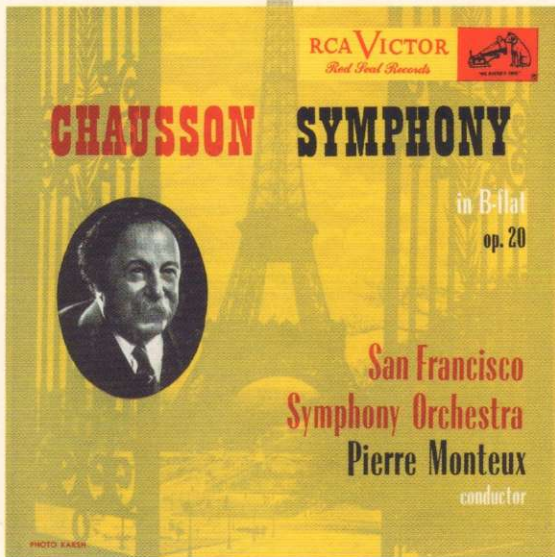


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Chausson SYMPHONY IN B-FLAT, Op. 20



Form 389653

Printed in U. S. A.

LONG **33 $\frac{1}{3}$** PLAY

Chausson SYMPHONY IN B-FLAT, Op. 20

Ernest Chausson was born in Paris in 1855. Obediently following the wishes of his parents, he studied law before turning to music under the guidance of Jules Massenet at the Conservatory of Paris. Opera and the stage — the primary interests of this teacher — did not appeal to the younger man, for Chausson's attention was aroused by the more abstract forms of expression, which had received such noteworthy treatment in Germany. The visionary who later shared Chausson's interest was César Franck, who, at the time, taught organ at the Conservatory. An enduring friendship developed between the two, and the esteem which Chausson accorded his teacher was to prove significant in the unfolding of Chausson's sensitive spirit.

Circumstances might have placed both men in the dilettante class, for neither was dependent upon music for livelihood. So lofty were their intentions, however, that they avoided the superficial and can be evaluated today as only the most superior-minded of musicians. Chausson's confidence in the potentiality of forms accounts in some way for the prolificness of his work. On the other hand, a lack of confidence in himself, combined with the preoccupation of the French for the flamboyancy of the stage, was undoubtedly responsible for the neglect of his work by the musical public. An untimely and tragic death (1899) brought to an end the work so delicately and sensitively defined by Ernest Chausson.

Chausson put to test, with his own methods, almost every conventional form of expression — from prelude to symphonic poem — from vocal solo to an unfinished string quartet. In his large orchestral works and chamber music, his sound yet refined style — so peculiar to Chausson — is revealed. There is great similarity in the styles of Franck and Chausson; a rare simplicity and an omnipresent melancholy pervade the works of both. In general structural pattern, Chausson has followed here the form outlined by Franck, a symphony of three, in place of the usual four movements. But a study of Chausson's work reveals an individuality which grew ever more conspicuous. This symphony, composed in 1890 (two years after Franck's symphony in D Minor) was one of his last compositions. It remained practically unknown in this country until in 1905 it was performed in Philadelphia by the Boston Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Vincent

San Francisco Symphony Orchestra

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Pierre Monteux
Conductor

d'Indy. The work was dedicated to Henry Lerolle, a well-known painter and friend of Chausson's.

Side 1, Band 1: First Movement

Chausson has embodied in this symphony the musical principle with which César Franck's name has been closely associated. *Cyclic form* had been used much earlier than the nineteenth century; however, not until Franck made it so significant a part of his work did it gain its more specific meaning: — the recurrence and transformation of motives or themes throughout the course of a composition. The quotation of the theme may be altered as to rhythm, melody, key, etc., but always it must be recognizable in its relation to the theme as initially presented. The principle has been used by many of Franck's followers — namely, d'Indy, Dukas, and Saint-Saëns. In the following brief thematic summary, comment will be made on the more obvious instances of the recurring themes.

The symphony opens with a slow introduction; the subject of the introduction, given out by the clarinet, first horn, and lower strings, will become even more important in the last movement. The principal theme is slow to enter, but immediately after its presentation the tempo quickens, and the theme is voiced again, this time by the full orchestra. A transitional passage leads into the second theme. (The ascending and descending staccato figure for woodwind will be used later on.) Development begins of the variants of melodies already heard, and after a short working out of the subsidiary bridge passage, the principal theme is expanded. While

the horn is still engaged with the first theme, the brasses and clarinets pick up the subject of the introduction and play it against the staccato transitional figure. A chromatic scale in thirds merges into the recapitulation, to which the composer has given added interest by changes of instrumentation. A return to the principal theme provides for a solid and brilliant conclusion.

Band 2: Second Movement

The first theme of the second movement is heard in the strings with harmonic support. A new figure, played by the English horn and clarinet, is introduced, accompanied by the strings in a triplet motive. A slight modification of the principal theme is voiced by the horns; then quietly, with a background of *arpeggio*, a beautifully expressive melody, the second theme, in played once, then again by the strings, who expand it into a climax, at the peak of which the principal theme of the movement returns, demanding the might of the fully-assembled orchestra. The volume drops to an effective piano and rises but a little before the movement is ended.

Side 2: Third Movement

Woodwinds and trumpets present an animated modification of the theme of the finale over a whirling figure played by the strings. Twenty-eight bars of introduction are heard before the principal theme is set forth by the brasses and reiterated by the strings. Suggestions of the second theme are given, and finally it is quoted by the oboe over a trill provided by two flutes. Development begins upon the principal theme of the first movement. The whirling figure of the finale is heard, then the second theme, which precedes directly a superbly constructed *crescendo*. The recapitulation involves the power of the whole orchestra, with one *crescendo* building to another, like the finest rhetorical climax. Suddenly the brasses bring in the introductory material of the first movement, but that is not to last very long. Fragments, hinting at the finale's principal theme, are placed together, and, after a final reference to the first movement, there comes a conclusion to Chausson's only symphony — an expression of the rhapsodic yet restrained — a revelation of a mind — inspired yet melancholy, and finally, a work of superbly sustained beauty.