

Charles Munch Born: September 26, 1891 – Strasbourg, Alsace, France  
Died: November 6, 1968 – Richmond, Virginia, USA

The eminent Alsatian-born French conductor, Charles Munch (originally, Münch), was the son of the Alsatian organist and choral conductor Ernst Münch (1859–1928). His elder brother was the choir-master and professor of music, Fritz Münch. Charles studied violin at the Strasbourg Conservatory and with Lucien Capet in Paris. At the outbreak of World War I (1914), he enlisted in the German army; made a sergeant of artillery, he was gassed at Peronne and wounded at Verdun; after the end of the war (1918) and his return to Alsace-Lorraine (1919), he became a naturalised French citizen.

Having received further violin training from Flesch in Berlin, Charles Munch pursued a career as a soloist; was also professor of violin at the Leipzig Conservatory and concert-master of the Gewandhaus Orchestra there. In November 1932, he made his professional conducting debut in Paris with the Straram Orchestra. He studied conducting with Szendrei in Paris from 1933 to 1940. He quickly rose to prominence; was conductor of Paris's Orchestra de la Société Philharmonique from 1935 to 1938, and in 1936 became a professor at the École Normale de Musique. In 1938 he became music director of the Société des Concerts du Conservatoire de Paris, remaining in that post during the years of the German occupation during World War II; refusing to collaborate with the Nazis, he gave his support to the Resistance, being awarded the Légion d'honneur in 1945.

Charles Munch made his USA debut as a guest conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra in December 1946; a trans-continental tour of the USA with the French National Radio Orchestra followed in 1948. In 1949 he was appointed music director of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, which he and Monteux took on its first European tour in 1952; they took it again to Europe in 1956, also touring in the Soviet Union, making it the first USA orchestra to do so. After retiring from his Boston post in 1962, he made appearances as a guest conductor; also helped to launch the Orchestre de Paris in 1967.

Charles Munch acquired an outstanding reputation as an interpreter of the French repertoire, his performances being marked by spontaneity, colour, and elegance. French music of the 20th century also occupied a prominent place on his programs; he brought out new works by Roussel, Milhaud, Arthur Honegger, and others. He wrote *Je suis chef d'orchestre* (1954).



**Blackwood / SYMPHONY NO. 1**

**Haieff / SYMPHONY NO. 2**

**BOSTON SYMPHONY / CHARLES MUNCH**

Blackwood was born in Indianapolis, Indiana. He studied piano there and was doing solo appearances at the age of 14 with the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra. After studies at many places (including Yale University, where he earned his Master of Arts degree) in the United States, he went to Paris to study from 1954 to 1956. His teachers include Olivier Messiaen, Paul Hindemith, and Nadia Boulanger. For forty years, from 1958 to 1997, Blackwood taught at the University of Chicago, most of the time with the title of Professor. He then became Professor Emeritus at the University. He is still teaching classes.

Blackwood's initial compositions were not particularly unconventional although in them he employed polyrhythm and wide melodic contours. This early music by Blackwood has been characterized as in an atonal yet a formally conservative style. In 1980–81 Blackwood shifted rather abruptly to a new style, releasing *Twelve Microtonal Etudes for Electronic Music Media*. For these pieces, he used microtonality to create unusual equal tempered musical scales. Blackwood has explored all equal temperaments from 13 through 24, including 15–ET and 19–ET. Although Blackwood recorded most of these pieces with a synthesizer, his "Suite in 15–Note Equal Tuning, Op. 33" was performed live on a specially constructed guitar. His compositional style moved toward a late-19th-century tonality; he has likened its harmonic syntax to Verdi, Ravel, and Franck.

As a performer at the piano, Blackwood has played diverse compositions and has promoted the music of Charles Ives, Pierre Boulez, and the Second Viennese School. In addition to his solo piano performances, Blackwood is pianist in the chamber group *Chicago Pro Musica*, largely comprising members of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

Blackwood has written a very substantial treatise on music harmony, *A Practical Musician's Guide to Tonal Harmony* which "springs from studies at the French National Conservatory from 1954–1957 with Nadia Boulanger."

Blackwood is also known for his book, *The Structure of Recognizable Diatonic Tunings* published in 1985. A number of recordings of his music have been released by Cedille Records (the label of the Chicago Classical Recording Foundation) beginning in the 1990s such as *Introducing Easley Blackwood*.

In the middle of the twentieth century, Alexei Haieff was one of the rising stars among American contemporary composers, but by the end of it, he was all but completely

forgotten. Born in Siberia, Haieff arrived in the United States by way of Harbin, China, in 1931, already having received some instruction in music there. Haieff enrolled in the Juilliard School and studied with Rubin Goldmark and Frederick Jacobi; he later finished his studies with Nadia Boulanger. Haieff worked as an accompanist to singers and, for a brief time during 1946, led the Woody Herman Orchestra while it was on tour. Haieff was made a Guggenheim fellow twice and won the prize to study at the American Academy of Rome in 1947; a letter of congratulations was sent to him from no less than Randall Thompson. Haieff was an uncannily well-connected composer, and by the late '40s he could count such divergent personalities as Aaron Copland, John Cage, and Samuel Barber among his close friends. Haieff was particularly close to Barber, and in 1953 Haieff's String Quartet No. 1 was paired with Barber's Hermit Songs on a CBS LP that featured Leontyne Price and Barber's own performance of the cycle. In 1952, Haieff's Piano Concerto had won a New York Critic's Circle Award as one of the three best compositions of the year, and from there it looked like the only way forward for Haieff was "up."

However, Haieff moved into academia, first through teaching at the American Academy of Rome in the 1950s. He subsequently became a visiting music professor at SUNY Buffalo, taught at the Carnegie Institute of Technology in the early '60s, and beginning in 1968 Haieff was composer-in-residence for two years at the University of Utah. From 1970, Haieff was based mostly in Rome, although for some years he commuted between Italy and the United States. By the end of the 1970s, however, Haieff had settled permanently in Rome; when he died in 1994, Haieff and his music were already completely forgotten.

Haieff wrote in an appealing neo-Classical style that was razor sharp, clean-cut, and inspired equally by Stravinsky and jazz rhythms. Like his friend Samuel Barber, Haieff chose not to move into the realm of International Serialism that took hold in the late '50s. Perhaps in the twenty-first century, Haieff's music will enjoy a higher profile; his work is ripe for rediscovery and all of it is located in the Special Collections Division of the New York Public Library, where it was donated by his wife Sheila after Haieff's death.

# Blackwood Symphony No. 1

# Haieff Symphony No. 2

**Boston Symphony / Charles Munch**

**Easley Blackwood**

**Symphony No. 1, Op. 3 31:24**

**1 I. Andante maestoso: Non troppo allegro ma con spirito 9:09**

**2 II. Andante comodo 5:54**

**3 III. Allegretto grotesco 5:25**

**4 IV. Andante sostenuto 10:56**

**Alexei Haieff**

**Symphony No. 2 18:58**

**5 I. Maestoso - Doppio movimento 6:10**

**6 II. Andante 6:37**

**7 III. Maestoso 6:11**

**Recorded by RCA 1959 at Boston Symphony Hall**

**Recording Engineer – Lewis Layton    Producer – Richard Mohr**



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