

After his departure from Detroit and return to France, Paray continued to conduct sporadically. At the age of 91 he led a concert in Nice to celebrate Marc Chagall's 90th birthday, and at 92 he made his last American appearance, with the orchestra of the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia.

Paray never solidly established himself as a composer, although he produced a number of substantial works before his Detroit appointment. These include two full symphonies (1935, 1940), sonatas for violin and cello, the ballet *Artémis troublée* (also performed as a symphonic poem under the title *Adonis troublé*), and a Mass for the 500th Anniversary of the Death of Joan of Arc, first performed in Rouen in 1931 and recorded in Detroit in 1956. His style was traditionally diatonic, and very much in the manner of the academically-oriented early twentieth century French composers, including D'Indy and his followers. The recorded performances tended to be bracingly fast (especially the Saint-Saëns "Organ" Symphony and Franck D minor Symphony), yet Paray's phrasing was supple and witty, and the orchestra played with great precision, high energy, and light heart. For decades these 1950s recordings, particularly of Ravel and various light overtures, inspired great affection among collectors.



BALLET

HIGHLIGHTS FROM FRENCH OPERA

GOUNOD Faust: BALLET MUSIC - BIZET Carmen: DANSE BOHÈME

THOMAS Mignon: GAVOTTE - MASSENET Phèdre: OVERTURE

BERLIOZ Trojans at Carthage: ROYAL HUNT AND STORM

SAINT-SAËNS Samson and Delilah: BACCHANALE

DETROIT SYMPHONY

PAUL PARAY



In the 1950s, Mercury records established its musical reputation largely with two intense, exciting European conductors performing miracles in the American provinces: Antal Dorati in Minneapolis, and Paul Paray in Detroit. With the less potent Howard Hanson advocating American music in Rochester, Dorati took most of the Austro-German, Hungarian, and Russian repertory, with Paray treating the French literature as far more than leftovers. Paray's interpretations were generally faster and more sharply pointed than those of the period's two other great French conductors, Charles Münch and Pierre Monteux. His Mercury recordings are the high point of a long, distinguished career spent largely away from the world's most prominent podiums.

As a child, Paray studied with his father, a church musician, and at 17 he briefly served as a church organist in Rouen. France enjoyed a strong tradition of composer-organists, so perhaps it was inevitable that Paray entered the Paris Conservatory in 1904 as a composition student; in 1911, his cantata *Yanitza* earned him the Prix de Rome. Drafted during World War I, he was taken prisoner by the Germans and wrote a string quartet during his internment.

After the war, performing drew more of his attention than composing. He took a job conducting the orchestra of the Casino de Cauterets, and in 1920 made his Paris debut with the *Lamoureux Orchestra* as a last-minute substitution for André Caplet. Soon he became assistant

conductor of the ensemble, and was named its principal conductor in 1923. In 1928 Paray took over the symphonic concert series in Monte Carlo; in 1932 he became conductor of the *Concerts Colonne*, a tenure he held until the Nazis temporarily disbanded the orchestra in 1940, and then again from 1944 to 1952. During the Second World War, he fled south and conducted in Monte Carlo and Marseilles.

Paray had made his U.S. debut in New York in 1939, and it would be in America that he achieved his greatest renown. In 1952 he was named music director of the *Detroit Symphony Orchestra*, where he remained until 1963. Though not one of the world's sleekest ensembles, the *Detroit Symphony* under Paray's hands became noted for its snap and fire, especially through the recordings it made for Mercury. These LPs focused largely on French music, although Paray acquitted himself admirably with other works, including a Schumann cycle.



continued

BALLET

HIGHLIGHTS FROM FRENCH OPERA

1. Ballet Music From "Faust" 16:07
 2. Waltz from "Faust" 5:05
 3. Bacchanale From "Samson And Delilah" 7:34
 4. Danse Bohemème From "Carmen" 4:37
 5. Royal Hunt And Storm From "The Trojans" 8:48
 6. Overture To "Phèdre" 9:07
 7. Gavotte From "Mignon" 2:04
- Total Time: 53:22

Recorded March 17, 1962, using 3-track 35mm magnetic film.

All works were recorded at Cass Technical High School in Detroit, using three Telefunken 201 microphones.

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