

The Boston Symphony Orchestra was founded in 1881 by Henry Lee Higginson. Its first conductor was George Henschel, who was a noted baritone as well as conductor, and a close friend of Johannes Brahms. For the orchestra, Henschel devised innovative orchestral seating charts and sent them to Brahms, who replied approvingly and commented on the issues raised by horn and viola sections in a letter of mid-November 1881.

The orchestra's four subsequent music directors were all trained in Austria, including the seminal and highly influential Hungarian-born conductor Arthur Nikisch, in accordance with the tastes of Higginson. Wilhelm Gericke served twice, from 1884 to 1889 and again from 1898, to 1906. According to Joseph Horowitz's review of correspondence, Higginson considered 25 candidates to replace Gericke after receiving notice in 1905. He decided not to offer the position to Gustav Mahler, Fritz Steinbach, and Willem Mengelberg but did not rule out the young Bruno Walter if nobody more senior were to accept. He offered the position to Hans Richter in February, 1905, who declined, to Felix Mottl in November, who was previously engaged, and then to previous director Nikisch, who declined; the post was finally offered to Karl Muck, who accepted and began his duties in October, 1906. He was conductor until 1908 and again from 1912-1918.

The music director 1908-12 was Max Fiedler. He conducted the premiere of Ignacy Jan Paderewski's Symphony in B minor "Polonia" in 1909.

During World War I, Muck (born in Germany but a Swiss citizen since childhood), was arrested, shortly before a performance of the St. Matthew Passion in 1918, and interned in a prison camp without trial or charge until the end of the war, when he was deported. He vowed never to return, and conducted thereafter only in Europe. Its next two music directors were French: Henri Rabaud, who took over from Muck for a season, and then Pierre Monteux from 1919 to 1924. Monteux, because of a musician's strike, was able to replace 30 players, thus changing the orchestra's sound; the orchestra developed a reputation for a "French" sound which persists to some degree to this day.

Alsatian maestro Charles Munch had made his conducting debut in Boston in 1946. He led orchestra on its first overseas tour, and also produced their first stereo recording in February 1954 for RCA Victor. In 1952, Munch appointed the first woman to hold a principal chair in a major U. S. orchestra, flutist Doriot Anthony Dwyer, who remained as BSO principal for 38 years.



Charles MUNCH

RAVEL - Rapsodie Espagnola La Valse

IBERT - Escales

DEBUSSY - La Mer



HIGH DEFINITION TAPE TRANSFERS

CHARLES MUNCH / BOSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

MASTERING EQUIPMENT

*Digital: Antelope Audio Eclipse 384
Antelope Audio Isochrone 10M Rubidium atomic reference generator*

Korg MR2000 DSD recorder

Weiss Saracon Sample Rate Conversion Software

Weiss POW-r Dithering Software

*Analogue: Studer 810 Reel to Reel with
Custom by JRF Magnetics & Siltech wiring
Nagra 4S custom by JRF Magnetics*

*Aria tape head pre-amp by ATR Services
Retro Instruments 2A3 Dual-channel tube program equalizer
Sontec MEP-250EX Parametric EQs*

*VPI Classic Turntable w/ Benz Wood Cartridge
Rogue Audio Phone Pre-amp*

*Power Sources: PS Audio P10 Power Plant
and Power Plant 300*

*Power Cords: Purist Audio Design, Essential Sound Products,
Speltz Anti-Cables*

*Vibration Control: Symposium Acoustics Rollerblocks,
Ultra platforms, Svelte shelves*

*Sonic Studio CD.1 Professional CD Burner
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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 naturalized 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 Pierre 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).

After hearing Münch and the BSO at their peak in these spectacular performances, one can only feel grateful that RCA took such loving care in preserving the original masters; audiophiles will appreciate the exceptionally clean sound and evergreen orchestral sonorities that are remarkably vibrant and detailed for recordings of this vintage.

During the tenure of Charles Munch, the Boston Symphony Orchestra became known for its mastery of the French repertoire. This recording contains three pieces from different French composers and demonstrates the orchestra's expertise of French classical music. The pieces are somewhat broad in scope. Debussy's impressionistic work "La Mer" demonstrates Munch's excellent control over the orchestra, capturing the work's flowing gentle tones and powerful moments as well. The album concludes with a work that would have been contemporary at the time of the recording, Ibert's "Escalaes," again, played beautifully by the BSO under the direction of Munch.

For *La Mer*, Munch emphasizes Debussy's Impressionism, the music's ethereal, transparent delicacy. The BSO responds with complete ensemble transparency and subtle phrasing, which the recorded sound captures very well. Typically, Munch is at his best when he takes a dramatic, emotionally charged approach. The dramatic, powerful approach can certainly be applied to *La Mer*, as with many conductors including Guilini and Toscanini. The Munch Debussy has the important and totally effective extra brass triplets heard clearly at the end of the last movement. These add greatly to the excitement and are rarely included - the Reiner version also has them, and it is a mystery to me why no-one else has remarked about this important point on either disc. The *La Valse* is amazing and breathtaking throughout. The opening has just the right amount of tension to foreshadow the climactic ending, but just enough to give way to the playful melody that follows. One can really hear Strauss' sound in the waltz, with a Ravel twist. The finale is fantastic and may terrify the weak of heart. The BSO is right on the heel of Munch and he's got them by the reins, giving just the right amount of tension. Munch's control and restraint that gave this piece that tension would have made Toscanini proud! A must recording, it's not just one to get, but THE one to get.

Charles MUNCH

BOSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

1-Ravel: Rapsodie Espagnole 15:11

2-Ravel: La Valse 11:28

3-Ibert: Escapes 15:29

4-Debussy: La Mer 22:40

Total Play Time: 64:48

Please Note: In the interest of preserving the superb sound quality of these historic recordings, they have been preserved in their original, pristine state for maximum fidelity. Transferred from commercially released, analog reel-to-reel tapes (some of which are more than 50 years old), the recordings themselves can be subject to certain "artifacts" which are an inseparable part of the original analog recording process, such as tape "hiss" or other defects, and these may be audible on certain music tracks. Because your CD or DVD-A was individually "burned" in order to realize superior sound quality to stamped, mass-produced versions, microscopic cosmetic blemishes may be visible. Please regard these tiny marks as evidence of the "human touch" in the care and individual attention that each and every HDTT disc receives during its very demanding manufacturing process.



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