

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.

PROKOFIEV SYMPHONY No. 5



BOSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA / ERICH LEINSDORF

Gestated on the heart of World War II, Prokofiev's Symphony No. 5 is a representation of originality as well as pure expression, or in Prokofiev's own words "a hymn to free and happy Man, to his mighty powers, his pure and noble spirit." This paper focuses on discussing the relevance of this symphonic work in regards of the contrasting events on its historical context, the connection with the personal life of the composer, and the combination of compositional devices used to create a tension and ambivalence throughout the work. The compositional process of his Fifth Symphony came, as Prokofiev described, from a "pretty old" idea. He used sketched themes conceived two or three years prior to deciding their use in the symphony. "I set them down in my theme book and then put them aside. When the time came, I was ready to work very fast - I wrote the whole thing in a month, on a three-or four-line score. Then I

stopped for a month or two and took the thing up again, and in another month I finished it," says Prokofiev about the timing it took him to write such massive symphonic work. It seems like there is no place to doubt his remarkable brilliance and talent, as well as the indubitable confidence he must have had about the intention, impact, and goal that he wanted to achieve with the work. In the summer of 1944, Prokofiev had the chance to be very productive; he was kept safe at a haven run by the Soviet Union where time allowed him to complete his Eighth Piano Sonata, to compose some settings of his Twelve Russian Folk Songs, and to start "what was to be his most widely admired symphony - the Fifth." The symphony was premiered on January 13th of 1945 and was Prokofiev's last appearance as a conductor.

Prokofiev Symphony No. 5

Erich Leinsdorf / Boston Symphony Orchestra

1. Andante 14:26
 2. Allegro marcato 8:15
 3. Adagio 2:08
 4. Allegro giocoso 12:08
- Total Time: 44:15

Date of Recording: 1964 Recorded by RCA
Engineer – Lewis Layton Producer – Richard Mohr



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