

Pierre Monteux (April 4, 1875 - July 1, 1964)

Monteux studied violin from an early age, entering the Paris Conservatoire at the age of nine. He became a proficient violinist, good enough to jointly win the Conservatoire's violin prize in 1896 with Jacques Thibaud. However, he later took up the viola and played at the Opéra-Comique, leading the viola section in the premiere of Claude Debussy's opera, *Pelléas et Mélisande* in 1902.

In 1911, with a little conducting experience in Dieppe behind him, Monteux became conductor of Sergei Diaghilev's ballet company, the Ballets Russes. In this capacity he gave the premieres of Igor Stravinsky's *Petrushka* (1911) and *The Rite of Spring* (1913) as well as Maurice Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloé*. This established the course of his career, and for the rest of his life he was noted particularly for his interpretations of Russian and French music.

With the outbreak of World War I, Monteux was called up for military service, but was discharged in 1916, and he travelled to the United States. There he took charge of the French repertoire at the Metropolitan Opera in New York City from 1917 to 1919, conducting the American premiere of Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov's opera *The Golden Cockerel* while there.

Then he moved to the Boston Symphony Orchestra (1919-24). He had a big effect on the Boston ensemble's sound, and was able to fashion the orchestra as he pleased after a strike led to thirty of its members leaving. He also introduced a number of new works while there, particularly by French composers.

In 1924, Monteux began an association with the Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam, working alongside Willem Mengelberg. In 1929, he founded the Orchestre Symphonique de Paris, which he conducted until 1935. In the year the orchestra was founded, he led them in the world premiere of Sergei Prokofiev's third symphony.

Monteux then returned to the United States, and worked with the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra from 1935 to 1952. In 1943, he founded a conducting school in Hancock, Maine, the childhood home of his wife, Doris Hodgkins Monteux, where Monteux was now living. There he taught such future luminaries as Andre Previn and Neville Marriner. In 1946 he became a United States citizen.

Monteux made a number of records in his life, most of which are widely admired. He himself claimed to dislike them, however, saying they lacked the spontaneity of live performances. From 1961 to 1964 he was principal conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra, before dying in Hancock, Maine in 1964. Pierre Monteux was the father of the flautist and conductor Claude Monteux.



HIGH DEFINITION TAPE TRANSFERS

Ravel:

Daphnis et Chloé

(Complete Ballet)

Pierre Monteux
conducting
The London
Symphony Orchestra
and chorus of the
Royal Opera House,
Covent Garden

Chorus Master:
Douglas Robinson



Many consider *Daphnis et Chloé*, a symphonie choréographique in three scenes to be Maurice Ravel's greatest work. The label may not really be a fair one; there were so many different Maurice Ravel's throughout his life, each with a different set of musical goals, each exploring different musical worlds, that it is not right to assign the label of life masterpiece to the top work of any one of those periods, over the top works of all the others, just because it happens to be longer, more ambitious, and easier to access. But *Daphnis et Chloé* is certainly one of the most colorfully, intricately, and in a very immediate, almost physical sense, beautifully scored works ever written; if one were to assign pre-eminent status to any of Ravel's works solely on the basis of orchestration, this ballet would, without a doubt, be the one selected for the honor. There may be no more skillfully orchestrated work in all the twentieth century repertoire (Stravinsky's work included) and whole shelves of orchestration textbooks could be eliminated without loss by simply replacing them with an astute examination of this score.

Daphnis et Chloé was composed between 1909 and 1912, after a commission by Diaghilev and the Ballets Russes, and is a setting of a scenario adapted by Mikhail Fokine from the Greek work of the same name by Longus. It was premiered on June 8, 1912. The performance was not well prepared, and few people took note of Ravel's piece. Two orchestral suites derived from the

score, however, did make a splash when Ravel brought them out just a short time after (especially the Suite No. 2, which is probably still Ravel's most often-played work).

Ravel was always far more interested in reproducing traditional musical forms and structures than he was in achieving the kind of sonic soundscapes that get rather callously lumped together as impressionist music; *Daphnis et Chloé* is, section-by-section, built along firmly classical lines (Ravel was extremely proud of the fact). Even the famous sunrise music at the opening of the third scene, with its scintillating thirty-second notes strewn about the orchestra and bright chirrup from the flute and piccolo flute and ecstatic, rising melody, has nothing in it that might be called progressive or even especially innovative in a technical sense, though certainly nothing written before it sounds even remotely like it. This was the essence of Ravel's genius: the ability to take the old and make it somehow sound completely new and different. Whether *Daphnis et Chloé* is Ravel's greatest achievement may be an irrelevant question: from the very first call of the backstage choir, distant and brought forth from an ancient world of shepherds and nymphs, to the rhythmic revelry of the final dance, it is proof on paper of Ravel's astounding capacity to fuse diverse elements into an astonishing new whole.

Ravel - Daphnis Et Chloé

Pierre Montoux - London Symphony Orchestra
Chorus Of The Royal Opera House, Covent Garden

1 Première partie - Introduction et danse religieuse 7:17

2 Première partie - Scène - Danse générale 2:42

3 Première partie - Danse grotesque de Dorcon - Scène 2:18

4 Première partie - Danse légère et gracieuse de Daphnis 2:23

5 Première partie - Danse de Lyceion - Scène (Les pirates) 4:37

6 Première partie - Scène - Danse lente et mystérieuse 4:40

7 Deuxième partie - Introduction 2:54

8 Deuxième partie - Danse guerrière 4:06

9 Deuxième partie - Scène - Danse suppliante de Chloé 5:13

10 Troisième partie - Lever du jour - Scène 5:11

11 Troisième partie - Daphnis et Chloé miment l'aventure de Pan et Syrinx 5:28

12 Troisième partie - Danse générale 4:53

Recorded by Decca 1959 at Kingsway Hal • Producer - John Culshaw
Engineer - Alan Reeve • Transferred from a 15ips tape to DSD256



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