

On 22 June/4 July, Tchaikovsky wrote to Nadezhda von Meck: "I have been working well the whole time; I have already prepared in rough a symphony and an overture to the tragedy Hamlet, which I have had in mind to write for a long time. In the coming weeks I shall set about the instrumentation of both works... although for almost a whole month I have been able to rise to the challenge, despite my poor state of health, yet my indisposition has not really impeded my work. At the moment it is difficult to say how this symphony will turn out when compared with my previous ones, and particularly in comparison to ours. What was previously easy and straightforward has not remained so".

"After the 29th I shall take up the instrumentation", the composer wrote to Modest Tchaikovsky on 26 June/8 July. But on 1/13 July, in a letter to Anatoly Tchaikovsky, he stated: "I am working well. I have finished the symphony and the overture to Hamlet, and set about their instrumentation. Having prepared two large-scale works I am in high spirits, because, you know, I had begun to think that I was played out, since it was initially very difficult".

"My work is now progressing terribly slowly. Time flies, old age draws near, and each moment is precious to me; but in the meantime, despite my efforts, I cannot concentrate on work. However I hope that by the end of the summer to have finished both my symphonic works", he wrote to Yuliya Shpazhinskaya on 6/18 July 1888 from Moscow.

After visits to Moscow and Saint Petersburg, Tchaikovsky returned to Frolovskoye on 12/24 July, and once again resumed work: "From tomorrow I shall work very assiduously on the instrumentation".

On 25 July/6 August he wrote to Nadezhda von Meck: "I am now working very successfully, and the greater portion of the symphony is already scored". But on 1/13 August, the composer told Vladimir Shilovsky, "I'm working terribly, because the full score of the symphony needs to be finished quickly".

Evidently, as soon as the instrumentation of the first movement and finale was complete, Tchaikovsky sent the full scores to Sergey Taneyev, who was to make an arrangement for piano duet (4 hands). Taneyev responded on 6/18 August: "I have received the first movement of the symphony and your letter, in which you wrote that you were sending the Finale".

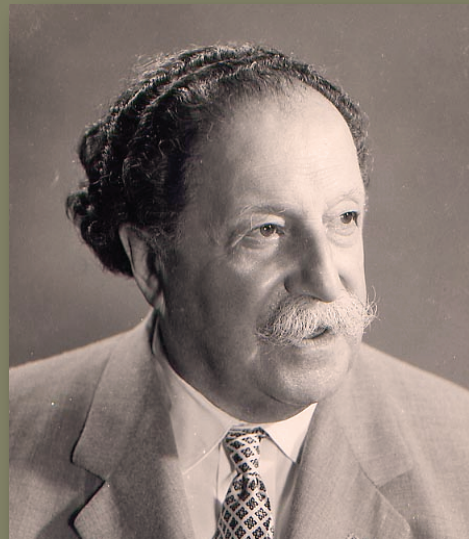
On 7/19 August, Tchaikovsky wrote to Nadezhda von Meck: "Now, as the symphony nears its end, I can view it objectively, and at the culmination of the work I must say that, thank God, it is no worse than my previous ones. This accomplishment means a great deal to me!".

After the third movement (waltz) in the fair copy of the manuscript score is the note: "9 Aug '88. Frolovskoye".

By 14/26 August all work on scoring the Symphony had been completed: "I am so pleased that my symphony is safely finished". "My symphony is ready, and I don't think I am wrong in saying that it has come out well".

While composing the Fifth Symphony, Tchaikovsky constantly doubted his powers of composition. However, after completing the symphony he wrote to Nadezhda von Meck on 24 September/6 October 1888: "Thank God that I still have the will to work. But my urge to produce is so great that even two lifetimes would barely be sufficient to carry out my all my plans".

Pierre Monteux



Tchaikovsky Symphony No. 5 in E minor, Op. 64 London Symphony Orchestra (Recorded Live)

Pierre Monteux had one of the longest musical careers in memory, exceeded perhaps only by Pablo Casals and Leopold Stokowski. He retained a youthful appearance (and a full head of black hair!) well into old age, and he was well loved by colleagues and audiences alike. He started violin studies at the age of six and then entered the Paris Conservatoire at the age of 9. He made his conducting debut in Paris at the age of 12. He was a co-winner of the first prize for violin in 1896, with the great violinist Jacques Thibaud. He served as principal violist in the Opera-Comique, and was also assistant conductor and concertmaster of the Concerts Colonne.

In 1894 he joined the Quatuor Géloso as a violist and was privileged to participate in the performance of a Brahms quartet in the composer's presence. In 1908 he became conductor of the Orchestre du Casino in Dieppe and in 1911 founded a series called the Concerts Berlioz. In the same year, he began a historic association when he was hired by Diaghilev to conduct his Ballets Russes. He led the premieres of Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloé*, Debussy's *Jeux*, and Stravinsky's *Petrushka* and *Rite of Spring*, the last of which caused a notorious audience riot.

In 1914, when war broke out, he was called to military service. He received a discharge in 1916 and travelled to the United States, where he obtained a conducting post at the Metropolitan Opera that lasted until 1919. At that point he was engaged to conduct the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Taking up the post in 1920, he walked into a labor dispute, with his musicians on strike; by the time the strike was settled, the concertmaster and 30 other musicians had left. Monteux had to rebuild the orchestra -- a difficult task, but an opportunity for Monteux to mold the orchestra according to his own taste; ever since then, the Boston Symphony Orchestra has been known for its French sound and its expertise in French and Russian repertoire. He remained in Boston through 1924, gaining a reputation as a supporter of modern music. He brought to America not only Stravinsky and the French composers, but such others as Respighi, Vaughan Williams, and Honegger.

In 1924 he began a ten year association with the Amsterdam Concertgebouw. He was a good fit with the orchestra's other conductor, Willem Mengelberg, who had a Romantic-era style, and who specialized in traditional repertoire and Dutch composers. In addition, Monteux founded the Orchestre Symphonique de Paris in 1929, and the Ecole Monteux, a coaching school for young conductors in 1932.

In 1936 he returned to the United States as conductor of the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, staying in that position through the 1952 season. During World War II he obtained American citizenship and transferred his Ecole Monteux to his new hometown of Hancock, Maine, where Erich Kunzel, Neville Marriner, and André Previn were among his students. He guest conducted and recorded extensively, and in 1961, at the age of eighty-six, accepted the musical directorship of the London Symphony Orchestra.

RCA Victor recorded him extensively in stereo, not only in Debussy, Ravel, Milhaud, Stravinsky, and the like, but also in Beethoven and Brahms; Monteux was especially noted for his performances of these composers' music, to which he brought an unusual charm and lyrical quality.

He strove for transparency of sound, precision, light and springy rhythms, and that elegance that seems particularly associated with French music.

Tchaikovsky's ideas for a new symphony probably arose during late March/early April 1888. The composer wrote about it for the first time in a letter to Modest Tchaikovsky from Tiflis, on 28 March/9 April: "in the summer I intend to write a symphony...". The day before leaving Tiflis, on 13/25 April, he wrote to Nadezhda von Meck: "... I want to spend all summer and autumn at Frolovskoye, and do a great deal of work... I am giving thought to a new symphony".

On 24 April/6 May, now at Frolovskoye, he wrote to her: "After a trip to Saint Petersburg and some visits to Moscow in connection with the conservatory examinations, I intend first of all to compose a symphony...". In a letter to Yuliya Shpazhinskaya of 23 April/5 May, Tchaikovsky outlined his schedule: "I will be in Saint Petersburg for four days... returning after Famine week, and then settle down in the village and set about my work, namely I want to write a symphony...". On 9/21 May, Tchaikovsky told her: "Today I returned from Saint Petersburg, where I have spent the last ten days... Now I can work for days on end, in peace and freedom".

In mid/late May, he wrote: "I've still not yet made a start, because I've been working on various proofs. But I can honestly say that the urge to create has deserted me. What does this mean? Am I really written out? I've no ideas or inspiration whatsoever! But I hope little by little to gather materials for the symphony". Around this time, evidently, he did begin work on the Symphony: "Now I am gradually, and with some difficulty, squeezing a symphony out of my dulled brain".

While travelling from Tiflis to Moscow, the composer had already recorded a number of themes for the new symphony in one of his notebooks, one of which is dated 15/27 April 1888. During the course of the summer, Tchaikovsky frequently had to leave Frolovskoye, besides which he took ill during June, although he continued to work on the Symphony during his illness.

The most intensive work on the Fifth Symphony was carried out between 7/19 and 17/29 June, although Tchaikovsky continued to doubt his abilities: "I am working quite assiduously on a symphony, which, if I am not mistaken, will be no worse than its predecessors. But perhaps this is just my opinion now... I may later feel that I am written out, that my head is empty, that my time is past, etc."

On 10/22 June, Tchaikovsky wrote to Nadezhda von Meck: "I must work harder in the future; I want so much to show not only to others, but to myself, that I still haven't expired... I don't know whether I wrote to you that I had decided to write a symphony. At first it was fairly difficult; now inspiration seems to have deserted me completely".

The rough draft was completed on 17/29 June. This draft of the Symphony was later sent by Tchaikovsky to Mikhail Ippolitov-Ivanov, probably in September 1888. Its whereabouts at the present time are unknown.

The surviving sketches show the gradual evolution of ideas for the Fifth Symphony. The first musical notes are significantly different from the last, and apparently comprise musical materials intended for an original version of the Symphony, which the author later rejected. The evidence suggests that the sketches for this first version were made by Tchaikovsky while he was at Frolovskoye between 9/21 May and 23 May/4 June 1888. Probably, it was this phase of composition that Tchaikovsky referred to when he described his work on the Symphony as "initially fairly difficult".

Continued

Pierre Monteux

Tchaikovsky Symphony No. 5 in E minor, Op. 64 London Symphony Orchestra (Recorded Live in Vienna)

1-Andante — Scherzo: Allegro Con Anima (E minor - E major - E minor)

2-Andante cantabile (B minor - D major)

3-Valse: Allegro moderato (A major)

Finale: Andante maestoso (E Major) — Allegro Vivace (E Minor) — Moderato Assai e molto maestoso (E Major)

Recorded by Vanguard in 1963 • May 31, 1963 / Live Recording in Vienna

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