

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.

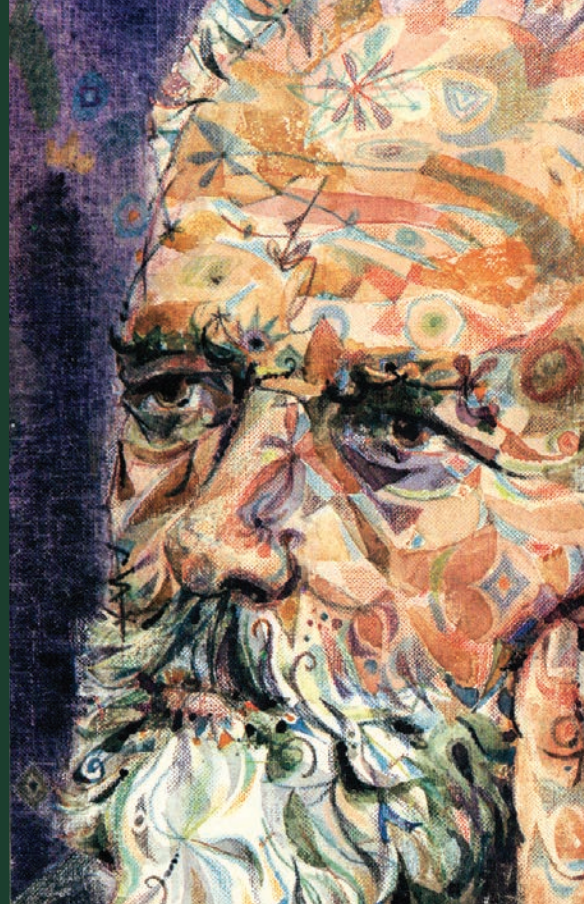
Monteux made a number of records in his life, most of which are widely admired. He himself claimed to dislike them, however, saying they lacked the spontaneity of live performances. From 1961 to 1964 he was principal conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra, before dying in Hancock, Maine in 1964.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



Tchaikovsky
SYMPHONY No.4
MONTEUX
BOSTON
SYMPHONY



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Tchaikovsky's F Minor Symphony of 1878 serves dramatically as his "Fate" symphony, much as the C Minor Symphony embodies "Fate" for Beethoven. In his various correspondences with his patroness, Nadezhda von Meck, Tchaikovsky referred to the music as "our symphony" and even "your symphony." Antonina Milyukova, an emotionally unstable former student in his composition class at the Moscow Conservatory, had entered Tchaikovsky's life with declarations of love, which deeply confused him. Given Tchaikovsky's desperate desire to conceal his homosexuality, a dutiful son's desire to please his aging father by getting respectably married, and Milyukova's persistence, Tchaikovsky capitulated to her advances. They became a married couple on July 6. What was in the composer's mind to be a strictly platonic relationship became intimate, and their union lasted just a few months. Tchaikovsky suffered a nervous breakdown and attempted suicide. He fled to France, Italy and Austria. He resumed work on the symphony towards the end of the year, completing it in Venice in January 1878. Nikolai Rubinstein conducted the first performance, which took place in Moscow in February.

Tchaikovsky disclosed the ideas and emotions which he had borne in mind while composing the symphony to Mme. Von Meck. The fury and hectic passion that suffuses the first movement embodies something of Tchaikovsky's philosophy that unites aesthetics with poignant personal emotions. A militant brass fanfare opens the symphony and recurs throughout it. "This is Fate," Tchaikovsky wrote, "the power which hinders one in the pursuit of happiness from gaining the goal, which jealousy provides that peace and comfort do not prevail, that the sky is not free from clouds – a might that swings, like the sword of Damocles, constantly over the head, that poisons continually the soul. This might is overpowering and invincible. There is nothing to do but submit and vainly to complain." The two main themes of the first movement proper are a restless, yearning string melody and a wistful, dance like theme introduced by solo clarinet. Whatever moments of consolation exist, they are driven savagely into the background by the Fate theme. The coda is stark and uncompromisingly tragic: Fate seems triumphant, almost in the spirit of Liszt's Totentanz.

"The second movement offers another tragic perspective of sadness," Tchaikovsky continued. "Here is that melancholy feeling that enwraps one when he sits alone at night in the house exhausted by work; a swarm of reminiscences arises. It is sad, yet sweet, to lose one's self in the past." A vigorous Scherzo dispels the atmosphere of gloom, the strings

playing pizzicato throughout. "Here are capricious arabesques, vague figures which slip into the imagination when one has taken wine and is slightly intoxicated," states Tchaikovsky. In the middle section, oboes and bassoons give out a rustic dance tune, while brass and piccolo offer a humorous imitation of military band music.

A brilliant flourish for full orchestra propels the urgent, nationalistic finale. Woodwinds introduce the main theme, a Russian folk song about spinster women called In the Meadow There Stands a Birch Tree. A confident, march like theme appears. After this sequence is repeated, the atmosphere gradually loses its sense of confidence. The Fate theme demolishes the festivities, a suggestion of the inevitability of personal catastrophe. But Tchaikovsky resists Fate. "If you find no pleasure in yourself, look about you. Go to the people. See how they can enjoy life and give themselves up entirely to festivity. There still is happiness, simple, naive happiness. Rejoice in the happiness of others – and you can still live." The music regains its momentum, concluding in a blaze of celebration. Led by the sure hand of veteran Pierre Monteux (1875–1964), the Boston Symphony delivers a rendition both sonically spectacular and architecturally elegant, the pathos never allowed to distort the essential Classical character of Tchaikovsky's grand symphonic design.

Ernest Ansermet (1883–1969), conductor of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, was among the first to record in their entirety all three major Tchaikovsky ballets, for London Records. Swan Lake (1876) remains Tchaikovsky's most vivid ballet score, based on Russian folk tales relating the story of Odette, a princess turned into a swan by an evil sorcerer's curse. The Act II Scene presents one of Tchaikovsky's greatest melodic creations, a haunting melody played by the oboe and picked up by tremolando strings and clarion horns. The Dance of the Little Swans, animated in brisk, light figures, features woodwinds and strings in lithe motion. Winds and solo harp set the misty tone for the Scene – Pas de Deux – then, a violin solo joins the harp for the plaintive cantilena that evolves over pizzicato figures and becomes increasingly animated, only to turn into a violin and cello duet of surpassing beauty. Pizzicato strings and percussion open the famous Waltz, a lilting melody with woodwind and deep string curlicues whose development rivals the elegant passion in any Viennese composition in the same genre.

Tchaikovsky SYMPHONY No.4

MONTEUX BOSTON SYMPHONY

1. Andante Sostenuto 17:31
 2. Andantino In Modo Di Canzone 8:11
 3. Scherzo: Pizzicato Ostinato 5:14
 4. Finale: Allegro Con Fuoco 8:44
- Total Time 39:40

Recording Info: Transferred from a 2-track tape

Recording Engineer - John Crawford

Producer - John Pfeiffer

Recorded by RCA 28 January 1959 in Symphony Hall, Boston



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