

as well as rapid and accurate coloratura, letting her sing bel canto roles such as Cherubini's Medea, the spinto-coloratura Leonora in Verdi's *Il trovatore*, the verismo Santuzza in *Cavalleria Rusticana*, and the great Wagner parts of Isolde and Brünnhilde (in concert).

Her parents were both singers, The Singing O'Farrells, and recognizing her potential, sent her to study voice in New York. She auditioned for various radio shows and was hired by CBS for chorus and ensemble work. In 1941, she got her own program, *Eileen Farrell Sings*, where she performed songs and lighter classical music. She remained with them until 1947, when she began to explore other venues, including the Bach Aria Group. She also began studying with Eleanor McLellan, who helped her hone her vocal technique, particularly helping her develop a pianissimo. In 1955, she sang for the film dramatization of singer Marjorie Lawrence's life, *Interrupted Melody* (Eleanor Parker acted the role), and the music, ranging from folk to Brünnhilde's immolation scene, showed off her power, rich voice, and versatility. In 1957, she appeared for the first time on the opera stage, as Santuzza in Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana* in Tampa, FL, and two years later, sang for the first time in London, in a recital. She made her Metropolitan Opera debut in 1960 in the title role of Gluck's *Alceste*, and in 1962, won a Grammy for her recording of Wagner's *Wesendonck Lieder* and the "Immolation Scene" from *Götterdämmerung*, conducted by Leonard Bernstein. Her relationship with Met management was an uncomfortable one, partly due to differences of personalities and her finding the repertoire they offered unchallenging, and her contract was allowed to drop in 1965. Towards the end of the decade, her voice was beginning to show signs of wear at the very top, and Farrell moved back into jazz and blues recordings, and taught music at Indiana University. She made her last record in 1993, at the age of 72. Farrell died on March 23, 2002.



A genial conductor with a particular gift for French music, Charles Münch extended the Boston Symphony's glory years (begun under the baton of Serge Koussevitzky) into the early '60s. Münch was born in the province of Alsace-Lorraine, which at the time (1891) was controlled by Germany and has long hovered between two cultural worlds. Münch himself benefited from both French and German musical training, and his first important musical posts were in Germany. Yet he came to be regarded as the quintessential French conductor, and his recordings of French repertory with the Boston Symphony remain standards by which others are judged. Münch studied violin at the Strasbourg Conservatory, where his father was a professor, and, from 1912, in Paris with Lucien Capet. As an Alsatian, he was conscripted into the German army at the outbreak of World War I. Gassed and wounded as an artillery sergeant, he nevertheless survived the war through sheer resiliency. In 1919, upon returning to Alsace-Lorraine (now back in French hands), he took French citizenship, and a violin professorship in Strasbourg. Nevertheless, his professional interests soon sent him to Germany; he studied violin with Carl Flesch in Berlin, then moved to Leipzig to take a violin professorship at the conservatory there, and then became concertmaster of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra from 1926 to 1933, during Furtwängler's tenure.

But it was back in Paris, in 1933, where Münch made his successful conducting debut in a self-financed concert with the Straram Orchestra. He conducted the Paris Orchestre de la Société Philharmonique (1935-1938) and in 1937 was named director of the Société des Concerts du Conservatoire de Paris, a post he held through World War II. Münch introduced many new works, including, in 1945, Messiaen's *L'Ascension*; he quickly became known as a conductor attentive to music's larger formal structures, as well as details of color and sonority. Despite his allegiances 25 years before, Münch refused to collaborate with the Nazis, and indeed supported the French resistance; he was awarded the Légion d'honneur in 1945.

Münch's career quickly accelerated after the war. In 1946, he made his debut with the Boston Symphony (and several other American orchestras) as a guest conductor, and he toured America with the French National Radio Orchestra in 1948. The following year, he was appointed music director of the Boston Symphony, which he took on an unprecedented tour of the Soviet Union in 1956. Münch retired from the BSO in 1962 but continued to guest conduct, and helped Serge Baudo launch the Orchestre de Paris in 1967. On tour in America with that orchestra, he died the following year.

Münch was easygoing in rehearsal, reluctant to drill the spontaneity out of an orchestra. He was particularly noted as an elegant, colorful interpreter of French music of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; his recordings of that material with the Boston Symphony for RCA are still regarded as classics of their kind. He was a strong advocate for the Franco-Swiss composers of his own generation, especially Roussel, Milhaud, and Honegger. But he also had a good touch with the conservative contemporary music of other lands, as may be heard in his few but important recordings of Martinu, Piston, and Barber. Indeed, during his Boston years Münch's commitment to American music was almost as strong as his allegiance to new French works.

While opera singers who dabble in popular music are common, those who do so successfully are rare, and those with large dramatic voices who do so are rarer still. Eileen Farrell was as authentic and natural a blues and jazz singer as she was an operatic soprano. She was in fact much more comfortable on the concert stage, on radio, and in the recording studio than in the opera house. She sang relatively few fully-staged performances and was ambivalent about opera and particularly opera house management throughout her entire career (when she taught at Indiana University, she hung a sign outside her office that read, "Help stamp out opera.") Her voice was huge, but capable of great nuances in volume and expressiveness

Wagner Die Götterdämmerung: Brunnhilde's Immolation Tristan And Isolde: Prelude And Liebestod

Charles Munch - Eileen Farrell, Boston Symphony

1 Gotterdammerung - Immolation Scene 20:13

2 Tristan Und Isolde - Prelude And Liebestod 17:42

Recorded by RCA in Symphony Hall, Boston, November 25, 1957
Engineer – Lewis Layton Producer – Richard Mohr



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