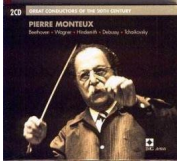


Great Conductors Of The 20th Century Vol.21 - Pierre Monteux



CD1 Beethoven - Symphony No. 2 in D Op. 36: 1. *I. Adagio – Allegro con brio* 2. *II. Larghetto*
3. *III. Scherzo (Allegro)* 4. *IV. Allegro molto*

Wagner –Tristan und Isolde:

5. *Prelude* 6. *ACT 3. Mild und leise (Liebestod)*

Hindemith - Symphony "Mathis der Maler"

7. *I. Engelskonzert (Ruhig bewegt/Ziemlich lebhaft Halbe)* 8. *II. Grablegung (Sehr langsam)*
9. *III. Versuchung des heiligen Antonius - "Ubi eras, bone Jhesu ubi eras, quare non affuisti ut sanare vulnera mea?" (Sehr langsam, frei im Zeitmass/Sehr labhaft)*

North German Radio Symphony Orchestra (1-6) Danish State Radio Orchestra (7-9) CD2

Debussy – Nocturnes for Orchestra

1. *I. Nuages* 2. *II. Fêtes* 3. *III. Sirènes (with women's choir)*

Tchaikovsky – The Sleeping Beauty, Op. 66

4. *Introduction* 5. *Prologue: No.1: Marche/N.3: Pas de six* 6. *Prologue: Intrada* 7. *Prologue: Var IV: Canari qui chante* 8. *Prologue: Var V: Violente* 9. *Act I: No.6: Valse* 10. *Act I, No.8: Pas d'action: Adagio* 11. *Act I, No.8: Pas d'action: Variations d'Aurore* 12. *Act 2 - Coda* 13. *Act I: No.9: Finale* 14. *Act II: No.13: Farandole: scène* 15. *Act II: No.17: Panorama* 16. *Act III: No.22: Polacca* 17. *Act III, No.23: Pas de quatre: Intrada* 18. *Act III, No.23: Pas de quatre: Var. II: La Fée Argent* 19. *Act III, No.23: Pas de quatre: Var. IV: La Fée-Diamant* 20. *Act III, No.23: Pas de quatre: Coda* 21. *Act III, No.25: Pas de quatre: Var. I: L'Oiseau bleu et la princesse* 22. *Act III, No.25: Pas de quatre: Coda* 23. *Act III: No.26: Pas de caractère* 24. *Act III, No.28: Pas de deux: Aurore et Désiré: Adagio* 25. *Act III, No.28: Pas de deux: Aurore et Désiré: Coda* 26. *Act III: No.30: Finale* 27. *Act III: Apothéose* 28. *National Anthems - La marseillaise (Rouget de Lisle)*

Boston Symphony Orchestra, Berkshire Festival Chorus Women (1-3) London Symphony Orchestra (4 – 28) Pierre Monteux – conductor

The Pierre Monteux entry in EMI's Great Conductors of the 20th Century series is hardly an overview of the conductor's incredibly long career; rather it's a sampling of the repertoire he regularly conducted in his last years. The earliest recording dates from 1955, when he was 80; most of the rest comes from the early 1960s, when he was crowding 90. It would be easy to

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carp at a 2-disc collection that includes no Stravinsky from the man who premiered *Petrouchka* and *Le Sacre*, or Brahms, one of Monteux's favorite composers (Monteux's recording of the Second Symphony for Philips is still one of the best). But we should be grateful that EMI hasn't overloaded the set with the French music in which he excelled, although I wish his San Francisco Chausson Symphony had been included. And we should be pleased that the first disc is devoted to representative samples of the German music that he performed exceptionally well.

The Hamburg 1960 Beethoven Second Symphony is the disc's highlight, a vibrant, dynamic performance with an urgent first movement that takes the "allegro con brio" marking seriously, and a nicely flowing, beautifully shaped Larghetto. An irrelevant oddity is how much Monteux's reading of the work resembles that of another venerable conductor who was 85 when he recorded it, Gunter Wand, who benefits from more transparent engineering and a better orchestra (the NWDR, 37 years later). The Prelude and Liebestod from Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* is given a graceful performance that's deficient in string tone and slightly lacking in atmosphere. There's also what sounds like tape print-through at the start of the Prelude. Hindemith's *Mathis der Maler* Symphony, a work Monteux often led, benefits from his obvious affection for the piece and his no-nonsense interpretation, but it suffers from the Danish Orchestra's deficiencies (weak winds and undernourished strings) and engineering that plays havoc with dynamics (solo winds sometimes rival the full orchestra in volume).

Disc 2 opens with Monteux's classic 1955 Boston Symphony recording of Debussy's *Nocturnes*, still a treat despite engineering that shows its age in a work that requires modern sound to fully project its atmosphere. There are some odd balances here too, as the female chorus in *Sirènes* is recorded far too close. A lengthy (49-plus minutes) set of excerpts from Tchaikovsky's *Sleeping Beauty* shows Monteux's proficiency in ballet music. He phrases lovingly but the pace is always lively and the rhythms bouncy. The set closes with *The Marseillaise*, from a 1962 London rehearsal. [4/1/2003] --- Dan Davis, ClassicsToday.com

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