

# International Ideals to Rule Programs, Says Monteux, New Conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra

Music of No Nation Will Be Exploited at the Expense of Another's, Declares Director in Announcing His Artistic Credo—French School Needs No Propaganda, He Avers—Admires Russians' Art and Pays His Respects to Wagner's Genius—Finds Puccini "Second-Rate"—Wants Europe to Give Hearing to American Works

By CLARE PEELER

NO two people could be imagined more different in type than Pierre Monteux, the new conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and Henri Rabaud, the retiring conductor. Except for the charming Gallic courtesy that distinguishes them both, they seem at opposite mental poles. Rabaud is tall, slender, grizzled; Monteux is short, dark, plump. Monteux is vivacious to the sparkling point; Rabaud, reserved to the utmost. The one suggests the scholar by his stoop, his dreamy gravity, the care with which he brings out his few words; the other is the man of affairs crossed with the musician, the man of family, the man who knows and loves his fellows; the man of enthusiasms that are yet balanced by good sense and that are rendered especially attractive by a most winning manner. One could not imagine M. Rabaud as making enemies; one could not fancy M. Monteux as making any but friends. The warmth and grace of the South of France, from which he derives his descent (his parents are Marseillaise) inform M. Monteux's ready smiling speech with a spontaneity all their own.

Yet is he ill described if you think him one without strong views, one who veers to the wind of others' opinion. Ask him what he thinks of "Pagliacci" or of the works of Puccini and see the devotee's indignation in his musician's eye. But if you expect any chauvinistic prejudices to narrow his kindly and broad view of life and of art, again you will be mistaken. Ask him what he thinks of Wagner's works and see what this man, French to the tips of his artists' fingers, has to say on that subject.

It was most unfortunate that the scribe's arrival had coincided, "through my forgetfulness," M. Monteux said most amiably, with that of some intimate friends who were gathered to do honor to the Boston Symphony's new conductor at a luncheon. And yet it was fortunate, too. For one gets a view, perhaps otherwise unattainable, of a man's capabilities in the line of patience and tact in dealing with others when he is measuring up to the task of keeping his friends pacified as they wait for their congratulations and their lunch, smiling on a little daughter who comes to the door with an emphatic if low-voiced, "Mais, papa, le déjeuner devient froid!" appeasing a lady who demanded him "at the telephone" for the obvious reason of conveying the same information; and giving his views on certain current musical topics, all at one and the same time. These be such times as try men's souls; and M. Monteux came out of the ordeal as amiably unruffled as when he first smilingly greeted the scribe in his hall. Nor did anything in his simple, gracious manner indicate exultation over the fact that he has won the \$20,000 prize for which half the orchestral conductors of the United States and some of Europe have been striving for months past. That he was pleased with the avenue opening before him was obvious; but no assumptions of any kind disfigured his attitude.

Two impressions remain strongly with one after a talk with M. Monteux; the one already referred to, his charm and kindness of manner; the other the catholicity of his musical outlook. Outside of reasons of personality *pur et simple*, this catholicity obviously has its rise in the versatility of his artistic experience.

As he remarked yesterday, "I suppose that I have conducted a kind of music there is to conduct." As conductor of the Colonne concerts and of the Casino at Paris, he directed the giving of symphonic and oratorio music; in the same capacity at the Paris Opéra,

the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Covent Garden, Berlin, Vienna and Budapest, he gained operatic experience, to which he added at the Metropolitan Opera House, where he has conducted French opera since 1917. As conductor of the Russian Ballet on four tours he has specialized in ballet music with notable success.

## Prefers Symphonic Form

"Of all, I prefer the symphonic form, in that it is purest music," he said. "In opera, you have what you call the accessories—not? But the symphony, it is music and only music.

"No," in response to a question, "I cannot say to you which or whose works I prefer; Bach, Mozart, Saint-Saëns, Beethoven I have played and I love all their symphonies. I like all the good music. That is why I care less for opera; because so much of the opera music caters to the popular taste, for example, like 'Pagliacci.' A-ah!"

He shuddered dramatically; then laughed at himself.

"Puccini? *Mais oui*; second rate, also. *Facile*; you know what I mean? Easy to play; easy to listen to; easy to have applauded. It is music for the public; me, I like music for the musicians."

"And shall you hold to that idea in your programs?"

"But I have not yet planned; so many things have to be considered. Only one thing is sure—the public is not the same for concert as one has for opera, and the Boston public is well used to the best. So I shall hope to give them of the very best, of all countries."

"Wagner, for instance? You like his music?"

"But yes!" His face glowed. "Yes, *madame*, immensely I like his music. I have often given it. Perhaps for a while yet, if the feeling of the public is against it for other reasons, it may not be best to do so; that is all to be ascertained. But it is great music; it will always be great music and as such it will one day again take its place."

"You gave concerts in Paris exclusively of modern music at one time, did you not?"

"Yes, and I am very fond of it in some forms; but there the conditions were different. There were five orchestras in Paris at the time, all drawing great houses. On Sunday afternoons, figure to yourself, five great orchestras played in different halls at two in the afternoon. So, one of them, you see, could make its program just only of the modern. Now, with the Boston orchestra it is different. It has what you call monopoly; so its programs must be broad; they must not only be of modern but of classic; not of French music alone, nor of Italian, nor of Russian, nor of American. There must be some of all."

## His Friendship with Saint-Saëns

An excellent signed photograph of Saint-Saëns, on the piano that takes up all one side of the conductor's study, attracted the writer's eye just then, and we spoke of the aged composer's great attainments and his strong personality. It appeared that M. Monteux and the "Grand Old Man" of French music are intimate friends, as well as associates in art, and the younger man greatly admires the older.

"I conducted his last concert in Paris, just before the war," he remarked. "We gave his 'La Lyre et la Harpe,' and Saint-Saëns was his own organist. He was not at all satisfied with the organist chosen and he said, 'I will play the organ myself, me—but who shall conduct?' So (it was at rehearsal) a friend of mine said, 'Monteux is in the audience.' At once he demands that I come to the stand—I conduct. *Voilà!* I have conducted much of Saint-Saëns—'La Princesse Jeune,' 'Phryne,' 'Henry VIII.' But of his operas I like 'Samson

et Dalila.' It is to me his greatest work, almost pure melody."

"There has been no great musical work growing out of the war, in France at least," M. Monteux said regretfully in answer to a question. "Nor will there be for some time, I believe. Men's minds have been on other things. One writes you know, to an occasion and one cannot be equal to the occasion as it has been in France these four years."

"Have you ever composed, M. Monteux?"

All the gayety left his dark eyes and amusement dominated them. He leaned toward me confidentially, finger up.

## Own Works "In a Box"

"Yes, indeed. I have composed many things. And do you know where they are, those compositions? In a big box, tied up tight with string. And they will never see the sun, I promise you."

"But why?" it was demanded.

"Because, I tell you why; I play too much other people's music to write any more my own. Not since fifteen years ago, when I composed for the last time, have I written anything. For I believe that a man can only have one career, and that mine is to conduct. I will always be conductor."

The little daughter knocked at the door just then and was dismissed with a few gentle words and a smile.

"You find the personal equation a very strong factor in conducting, do you not, M. Monteux?" he was asked. "What is an orchestra, a democracy or an autocracy?"

He laughed.

"Both," he responded. "It must seem a democracy but really be an autocracy. You must be altogether *en rapport* with your men, but they must really look to you absolutely. Only to draw out their best from them, you understand. One does not love to give orders for the orders' sake, but only to get results."

He seemed as he spoke an epitome of that remarkable nation whose foremost quality has always been the ability to influence others, while always respecting the individuals' liberty. So one could not imagine this smiling, vivacious little man ever descending to be autocratic; but one could readily perceive how his personality could arouse in others enthusiasm for that music which so evidently rules his life.

## Admires Russian School

Presently we spoke of the Russian school and Mr. Monteux expressed his admiration for the works of Rimsky-Korsakoff, of Borodine and of Stravinsky.

"So many material difficulties have interfered with presenting Russian opera," he said regretfully. "People wonder why more are not given; but you see it needs more than the composer and the librettist; more even than the artists. Not so with the giving of their orchestral music; I look forward to that."

His eyes were bright with pleasure at the thought.

"It will be my hope to include all kinds of good music, *even American*," he added with a laugh. "France ought to hear some of your composers, by the way; you have several that should be known in Europe. Loeffler, Carpenter, four or five others are well worthy to be heard; some have been. Then I will seek out and bring over some good concert music from Italy. That is a side of her musical development that has been so much ignored, for the operatic always receives the emphasis. There are a number of young Italian composers of whom I hear good things said, as well as the older ones whose works I shall hope to bring forward."

We spoke of his departure for France on May 1, to see his aged parents. "My father is eighty-four; my mother seventy," he said, with pride and the true French touch of filial devotion. "Then



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**Pierre Monteux, Newly Appointed Leader of the Boston Symphony Orchestra; Formerly Conductor of French Opera at the Metropolitan**

after I have seen them I come to Boston, in September."

Another whispered colloquy at the door. "Have a heart," ordered the scribe to herself, and tried to make her adieux at once, though the courtesy of M. Monteux denied the slightest incommode by these conflicting claims. But first—

"Is there anything you would especially like to say for publication, M. Monteux?"

## Not Making Propaganda

"Yes," he said, unexpectedly and earnestly. "This: In playing French music I will not make French propaganda. You understand; Rabaud, Messager and I, we have been brought up in France; it is our country; we naturally love and we play the music of our country. But not to make propaganda for it; that would be stupid. French music is great enough not to need any; and you Americans know and love the French music already. I shall not play French music because it is French music, you understand, although I love it. But I shall play the best music of every nation."

And on a note so high, so broad, so free from artistic or other prejudice, it was most fitting that the interviewer with one who seems so thoroughly to represent what is finest in the French nature, musical and otherwise, should close.

## Sistine Chapel Quartet Will Visit United States Next Fall

Four soloists from the Sistine Chapel choir of the Vatican, Rome, will make a concert tour of this country next season. Alexander Gabrielle, soprano; Luigi Gentile, contralto; Izio Cecchini, tenor, and Mariano Dado, bass, will make up the quartet and Albert Cammetti, one of the preceptors of the choir, will act as accompanist. The tour will begin with a concert at Carnegie Hall on Sept. 14, and its bookings are being made by the Wolfsohn Musical Bureau. The venture has no connection, it is announced, with the proposed visit of the whole Sistine Chapel choir to this country.

## Vera Curtis Sings at Bridgeport Church

BRIDGEPORT, CONN., April 14.—Vera Curtis, who has again signed a contract with the Metropolitan Opera Company for next season, was the soloist at the United Church last night, when she sang La Forge's "Before the Crucifix." Miss Curtis is the daughter of Mrs. John Curtis of this city.