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CHARLES MUNCH

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Complete New York Philharmonic Recordings

Producer's Note

The recordings in this collection document a brief but memorable collaboration in the histories of Charles Munch and the New York Philharmonic. Munch had been scheduled to make his American debut in December, 1939, but war intervened. When he finally arrived precisely seven years later, it was to begin a three month tour throughout the United States and Canada. Although the first stop was, propitiously, Boston, New York was next on the itinerary.

Munch began a two-week stay with the Philharmonic on January 23, 1947. The response from audience, critics and orchestra alike was ecstatic. "The instant that Charles Muench [as his name was then spelled] raised his baton as guest conductor," critic Olin Downes wrote, "[...] it was evident that we had with us a superb musician and orchestra leader to boot." The backstage reception at the end of his stay was reported to have rivaled that given to Arturo Toscanini at his departure from the ensemble. Coincidentally, the next day, the Philharmonic's music director Artur Rodzinski announced his resignation due to unrelated grievances. Immediately, speculation centered on Munch as a potential replacement.

Munch appeared with the orchestra again late in 1947, and this time Columbia Records, which had the Philharmonic under contract, took advantage of his presence to make the conductor's first American recording, the Saint-Saëns "Organ" Symphony. This was the first recording of the work since Piero Coppola's pioneering 1930 set, and would remain unchallenged in the catalog for several more years.

At the end of the following year, Munch would make two more recordings with the orchestra of works by D'Indy and Mozart, both with fellow Frenchman pianist Robert Casadesus. But there would be no more collaborations on disc with the Philharmonic, for by that time Munch had already signed with the Boston Symphony to become their music director starting with the 1949-50 season. He would not appear again as guest conductor with the Philharmonic until 1965, after his Boston tenure ended, and he conducted them for the last time in 1967.

To fill out this modest discography, I have added portions of the Sunday afternoon CBS Philharmonic broadcast from the day before the D'Indy and Mozart recording session. It is complete except for a live performance of the D'Indy, and the program and commentary have been edited so as to present it as a self-contained "mini-concert". (The commentator is writer, composer and broadcaster Deems Taylor, best remembered today for his similar hosting duties in the Walt Disney film, *Fantasia*.)

Each work is significant in Munch's repertoire. He never made a commercial recording of any Mozart symphony, usually being relegated on disc to concerto accompaniments. His only other recording of Liszt was a wartime set of the First Concerto; and despite his many discs of French repertoire, he never recorded any Chabrier at all.

The transfers of the commercial recordings were made from American Columbia grey-label "six-eyes" LP pressings, which themselves were dubbed from 33 1/3 rpm lacquer masters, edited together from four-minute long takes in those last days before the introduction of magnetic tape. The broadcast came from a tape dubbing from original acetate discs.

Mark Obert-Thorn

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Saint-Saëns Symphony No. 3 "Organ"
D'Indy Symphony on A French Mountain Air
Mozart Piano Concerto No. 21
Mozart Symphony No. 35 "Haffner"
Liszt Piano Concerto No. 2
Chabrier Bourée Fantasque

Robert Casadesus, piano

Studio and live recordings, 1947-48

CD 1 **SAINT-SAËNS** *Symphony No. 3 in C minor, Op. 78, "Organ"*

- 1 1st Mvt. - Adagio; Allegro moderato (8:52)
- 2 Poco adagio (8:04)
- 3 2nd Mvt. - Allegro moderato; Presto (6:56)
- 4 Maestoso; Allegro (7:14)

D'INDY *Symphony on a French Mountain Air, Op. 25*

- 5 1st Mvt. - Assez lent (10:53)
- 6 2nd Mvt. - Assez modéré (6:24)
- 7 3rd Mvt. - Animé (7:36)

CD 2 **MOZART** *Piano Concerto No. 21 in C major, K467*

- 1 1st Mvt. - Allegro maestoso (Cadenza: R. Casadesus) (14:08)
- 2 2nd Mvt. - Andante (8:19)
- 3 3rd Mvt. - Allegro vivace assai (6:02)

From the CBS broadcast of 19 December 1948 at Carnegie Hall:

- 4 Radio Introduction - Deems Taylor (1:19)

MOZART *Symphony No. 35 in D major, K385, "Haffner"*

- 5 1st Mvt. - Allegro con spirito (5:14)
- 6 2nd Mvt. - [Andante] (4:25)
- 7 3rd Mvt. - Menuetto; Trio (3:09)
- 8 4th Mvt. - Finale: Presto (3:36)
- 9 Radio Talk 1 (3:11)

LIZST *Piano Concerto No. 2 in A major, S.125*

- 10 Adagio sostenuto assai; Allegro agitato assai (6:46)
- 11 Allegro moderato (4:47)
- 12 Allegro deciso; Marziale un poco meno allegro (6:02)
- 13 Allegro animato (1:41)
- 14 Radio Talk 2 (1:56)

15 **CHABRIER (orch. Mottl) - Bourée fantasque** (5:18)

- 16 Radio Conclusion (1:02)

Robert Casadesus (piano) (D'Indy, Mozart K. 467, Liszt)

Édouard Nies-Berger (organ) (Saint-Saëns)

Walter Hendl and Arthur Schuller (piano) (Saint-Saëns)

Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York *Charles Munch*



Producer and Audio Restoration
Engineer: Mark Obert-Thorn

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for providing source material

Cover artwork based on a
photograph of Charles Munch

Saint-Saëns Symphony
Recorded 10 November 1947
in Carnegie Hall, New York
Matrix nos.: XCO-39319/26
First issued on Columbia M-747
(78 rpm) and ML-4120 (LP)

D'Indy Symphony
Recorded 20 December 1948 in the
Columbia 30th Street Studios, New York
Matrix nos.: XCO-39925/30
First issued on Columbia M-911
(78 rpm) and ML-4298 (LP)

Mozart Piano Concerto
Recorded 20 December 1948 in the
Columbia 30th Street Studios, New York
Matrix nos.: XCO-39931/38
First issued on Columbia M-866
(78 rpm) and ML-2067 (LP)

Total duration: 2hr 12:55

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