CHARLES MUNCH

D. Kern Holoman

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Charles Munch was born on September 26, 1891,
in Strasbourg
and died on November 6, 1968,
in Richmond, Virginia.

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In the end, I realized, I was telling this story especially to Munch's nephew, Jean-Philippe Schweitzer, and to Lita Starr, his companion of the last decades, and this book is thus fondly dedicated to them both with my deep and lasting thanks.

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The same must surely be said of the UC Davis Symphony Orchestra, which I had the privilege of conducting for more than three decades. While the orchestra members must surely have tired of hearing Munch stories and being sent to RCA Living Stereo discs, they never said as much and indeed presented a wonderful Charles Munch program in my last season, notably including his excerpts from act III of *Die Meistersinger.* Philip Daley, my longtime associate in concert management and production, supported every aspect of bringing this project to fruition.

At home the children gave me my first iPod, which, like my second, was soon filled to overflowing with the recorded legacy of Charles Munch. My wife, Elizabeth, summoned once again the wherewithal to confect a life in which research and writing mingled successfully with family, students, concerts, and events unexpected in what can only be called a Good Life.

INTRODUCTION

"Pas nécessaire!" he would often mutter to his players, skipping to the next movement.

You need spend only an hour or two reviewing the legacy of Charles Munch to learn two things: his adamant opposition to superfluous rehearsal and the corresponding spontaneity he believed essential to a living performance. No two readings would, or could, be the same.

The usual anecdote is that Munch would be leading a pick-up rehearsal of a program already well known to the players. "Anybody want to rehearse *La Mer?*" he would ask. "*Non? Bon.* I have confidence in you." This goes on as he leafs through one score after another. Finally he asks for a particular passage "just for me." "That's OK," comes a voice from the orchestra, "we have confidence in you."[1]

Nor would players object to arriving at the workplace for a rehearsal, only to encounter their colleagues leaving a canceled practice. In Boston, after Serge Koussevitzky's long and idiosyncratic reign, what seemed to the musicians a player-centric approach had immediate positive effect. "Now we can play without ulcers," a Boston Symphony Orchestra (BSO) musician told the press in so many words, and the Providence newspaper reported a few weeks into the Munch tenure that: "They're crazy about him to a man."[2] So, too, were audiences crazy about him, almost without exception, and most living composers he played and the majority of critics who heard him, though quicker to identify his foibles, had little trouble elevating Charles Munch to the ranks of the great conductors.

That every concert he led—and there were more than two thousand—deserved its unique marks of vitality was for Munch a matter of faith, the root of his understanding of the transactions that take place among composer, musician, and listener at any given moment in a live performance. One searches without much success for a Munch "sound" or, say, the "definitive" performance of the *Fantastique* (of which there are eight published recordings and several radio broadcasts in circulation). Nevertheless, even if a particular reading is too fast or too loud or not quite ready—common Munch limitations—there are always

dazzlingly perceptive passages and, what is more, viable and often haunting arguments as to what the work is actually all about.

Hence a third area of accord—from the musicians who played for him, to the composers whose work he created, to the public privileged to have heard Charles Munch in live surroundings—is that once he began to hear his own inner voice, a certain magic took wing that amounted to the very essence of music in concert. It was as though (and this is a trait shared by many, perhaps most, great recreative artists) the circumstances of public performance loosed facets of character and artistry and poetry otherwise muffled by timidity and simple disinclination to say much.

This was noted early on by thoughtful observers. To Pierre Hiégel, pondering how Munch could let himself be swept away by the music while still appearing to maintain detailed control of his reflexes, "it was almost like a sort of wizardry."[3] Francis Poulenc, not always an admirer of the Munch style, says much the same of the premiere of the *Gloria:*

> Saturday night was OK. Very good, very lovely, a success, but Munch less inspired than usual. Yesterday, by contrast, with the critics there [Sunday, 22 January 1961, the Friday night having been snowed out], a *sublime performance.* Charlie in a trance, but careful; the chorus amazing, La Addison *unbelievable,* and thus ovation on ovation. They tell me this morning that the press was excellent. Marlene Dietrich was there: kisses, photos, and all.[4]

To Marcel Landowski, architect of the Orchestre de Paris and of the overall government approach to classical music in France, "He was one of those exceptional people who understand above all the voices of the heart, who present to the audience the impression that their rhetoric is the reflection of an internal song. His musical ambition, which is to say his life's ambition, was to have the audience grasp the mysterious song hidden within the music."[5] Landowski's notion that Charles Munch was defined, in the French fashion, by his concept of *métier* is correct. I think, too, that his ideas of success and fame were a good deal humbler than we typically associate with the top-tier maestro: "To a reserved, withdrawn, and timid person," he wrote in assessment of his own career, conducting "offers the chance to realize his dreams in sound."[6]

By the time the Munch mystique had won over a community of listeners, his mere appearance on taking the stage was enough to trigger a kind of collective paroxysm of the public, the spell extended to the players by a particular grin that conveyed, at once, shared anticipation, inner contentment, and an undeniable hint of collusion as though conductor and players keep secrets that outsiders must never know. Only then would the music begin.

Though "imperfect and fragmentary" (to use the words of the flutist Michel Debost),[7] the plentiful audio and video tapes of Munch concerts coalesce into a

good composite portrait. Take, as a single example, a 1963 performance of *Daphnis et Chloé,* Suite 2, with the Philadelphia Orchestra and a chorus.[8] Here, in a favorite composition he had led several hundred times by this point in his career, one is struck by the specifics: how the sonority—the richness of the strings, the solo winds rather less prominent than in Boston—and balance are those one associates more with Philadelphia than with Munch and how the bacchanal seems defined by the way this particular chorus treats its role. As usual in a Munch performance, the tempo accelerates toward the end, but here not so much with a sharp lurch: Rather, the effect is of all the elements—volume and speed, of course, but also the way the falls become less and less distinguishable from glissandi—gathering around the chorus in its ecstasy. The roar that bursts from the public during the last chord seems a calculated component of the climax. Certainly, here and elsewhere, it was cultivated.

Charles Munch was for all intents and purposes solely dedicated to the symphony orchestra. He became a conductor in middle age, after some two decades as an orchestral violinist and concertmaster. Any structured course of study he may have lacked had been counterbalanced by then with the experience of daily life under influential conductors in accomplished ensembles. (Virgil Thomson reminds us that "the greatest interpreters of them all," in which number he included Munch, "did not come to conducting through early mastery of the conservatory routines. They bought, muscled, or impressed their way in and then settled down to learn their job. They succeeded gloriously." The French critic Claude Samuel thought much the same, suggesting that both Munch and Boulez were conductors "by accident."[9]) Munch had an elevated understanding of orchestral structure and purpose, of the things he should leave to others, and of the matters only he could control. The daily life of an orchestra was second nature to him. His sense of programming (the "confection" of programs, as it was thought of in French) was impeccable both for individual concerts and at the season level. In Paris and in Boston, when Munch was around, there was always something happening in the concert hall to attract the attention and stimulate the mind. By limiting himself, with very rare exceptions, to that venue, he was able to focus on its particular priorities and philosophies, especially where they concerned the needs of living composers and the opportunities these artists afforded to advance orchestral practice.

About the living composer he had strong personal conviction. It was a fundamental of his worldview that young composers and local ones must be heard day in and day out, and this was as true in Hungary, Holland, Israel—and Egypt—as it was in Paris of the 1930s or Boston in the '50s. He tried to put a work of his time or place on every week's program, and even in an epoch when

many good composers were still writing symphonies and concertos, that was an aggressive stance. Some of these works, like *Medea's Meditation and Dance of Vengeance* by Samuel Barber, achieved a place on his list of favorites. (He was fond of a number of American composers before he ever left Paris.) Helping the BSO choose its seventy-fifth-anniversary commissions was one of the great joys of his life, and he jealously guarded his right to conduct the premieres even for those works that arrived after his official reign was over.

He took these positions, as was his habit, without much by way of polemic. On one (and, so far as I can tell, only one) occasion, the Boston Symphony released his written response to a patron who had complained about his weekly programming of contemporary music.[10] Still, the apparently docile public reception of a concerto for *ondes Martenot* and orchestra in the second week of his Boston tenure remains a thing of wonder—especially as Cyrus Durgin, dean of the local critics, had blistering things to say about Messiaen's *Turangalîla-Symphonie,* as premiered that same month by Bernstein.[11] But Bostonians became accustomed to the approach, and they stayed with it.

There were many reasons for Munch to have left the Société des Concerts after World War II, but the fundamental issue was his disagreement with the orchestra's general manager over precisely this kind of programming. Munch rode out the end of his career, it is true, with the most popular works in the French canon: the *Fantastique, Daphnis et Chloé, La Valse,* a little Bizet, a little Fauré. His early reputation, however, was as a promoter of new music, and his original passions for Albert Roussel and Guy Ropartz and Arthur Honegger gathered into an ongoing commitment toward building the European repertoire that finds him as interested as ever, in the 1960s, in promoting the new work of Poulenc, Jacques Ibert, Bohuslav Martinu, and especially the famous Second Symphony of Henri Dutilleux. He had also been, it is important to note, a primary agent in winning the French over to Brahms—fifty years later than any other culture.

Except for excerpts in the concert hall and a single *Pelléas et Mélisande* in Florence at the end of his career, Munch did not conduct opera. This was as much a matter of upbringing as anything else: The Munch children were not sent to the theater for their entertainment, and employment in pit orchestras was something that one needed to escape. He counteracted his apparent aversion to opera with his deep spiritual connection to works with biblical and liturgical texts, notably the Bach passions and cantatas.

On the podium Munch was arresting (many thought seductive) in appearance, an effect emphasized in later years by what was usually, enviously, described as the "silver thatch" of his hair. He conducts with a long, pliable baton similar to the style preferred also by his countrymen Pierre Monteux and Paul Paray. His most characteristic gesture is the enormous arc traced by the baton when the right hand moves from bent above the head to fully extended by the knee. (I like

to think of this as a "French" stroke, since Habeneck—another violinist/conductor—and his bow are pictured in the same starting position.) The left hand points, shapes, accentuates, and provides nuance in more or less the modern manner—though rather less than more. The face is a veritable catalogue of encouragement, desire, pleasure, insistence, and, when circumstances demand, apotheosis—or its infernal opposite. Debost writes of *allégresse, angoisse, fatalité,* and *tendresse,* admiring especially the willingness to be vulnerable in public.[12]

From the waist down Munch was immobile, a stance that he insisted his conducting students follow. (One of the Tanglewood students, Zubin Mehta, complained that the only thing Munch ever said to him was "Keep your feet together."[13]) For rehearsals he would perch on a stool, and in later years he occasionally sat during concerts. At his most loquacious his verbal instructions were minimal: "*Vibrez . . . Plus vite!*" and sometimes poetic: "*Et maintenant, aussi souple que les hanches d'une danseuse*" ("as supple as a ballerina's hips").[14] In central Europe these would be delivered in German, and he would always respond to German crosstalk in that language. In the United States he would mutter phrases in whatever language came first to mind. (He was quick, too, to summon a certain chauvinism to get what he wanted: "You are, after all, French." "This is the Boston Symphony.") Partly it was a matter of efficient communication in an increasingly English-speaking world by a person who had learned the language late in life. His taciturnity was also, however, a matter of theory. Conductors should be seen and not heard.

At the beginning he attracted a good deal of attention in the press for conducting from memory, still at that time considered to be a major feat. Other corners of his technique were more significant to his results, for instance the bowing habits he brought from his years as violinist in quartets and orchestras. Composers including Roussel sought him out for help with bowing, and it was through a misunderstanding of bowing strategy that he first made friends with Toscanini. He believed it was incumbent on the conductor to have thoroughly mastered a score before introducing it to an ensemble, and he was given to long, restless nights before beginning a new work with his players. There are few anecdotes suggesting legendary memory for detail but many threads of evidence that he knew his texts flawlessly and often proffered corrections to manuscript scores and sometimes suggestions for their improvement.

It is also worth noting the diligence with which he went about perfecting relationships with his constituents around the world. He was even comfortably resigned, for the most part, to the necessity of critics: "I have been assassinated many times, but I am still among the living."[15]

What women remembered about Charles Munch was his undeniable sex appeal—the smile and the hair, of course, but also the eyes, which to many

conveyed mischief or even outright desire. In his early middle age, he was a matinee idol. "*Ah, qu'il était beau!*" remarked one of his principal players, a half century later, with a sigh. In Boston he was fondly and often called "le beau Charles" or "Charles le beau"—Charles the good-looking. In the late 1930s *Elle* magazine polled a hundred thousand female readers, asking, with a *pudeur* appropriate to the era: "*Avec qui aimeriez-vous dîner ce soir*?" (What man would you like to have dinner with tonight?). Winston Churchill was first, and Munch was the runner-up. Jean Marais, President Auriol, Gary Cooper—and Stalin—were further down the list. Shortly after the article appeared, Munch took his teen-aged niece to the Bon Marché department store to buy a handbag, and they were swamped with excited salesgirls clamoring for a glimpse. (The niece didn't like the purse either: "Black alligator. And I was just a girl. He had his very particular ideas about fashion." Then she added: "Music sometimes bored him, but never the flattery of pretty girls."[16])

Others remember his sense of pleasure, again in the French sense of the word: games of *belote* with his musicians, naughty charades, pranks. He went to great length, for instance, to send one of his stuffier musicians a picture postcard from one of the less reputable Paris *boîtes de nuit.* After work, but only then, he enjoyed a fine meal—sometimes simple, frequently in very high style. Few came away from his table unimpressed by the cuisine and hospitality.

Still others recall demonstrations of exceptional personal warmth, how thoroughly "gentle, protective, and personally generous" he was to his musicians.[17] Players who were very young at the time tend to remember how kind he was to them during their audition, whatever its result. Often, when he was together with others from his inner circle, he would organize joint letters to loved ones conspicuous by their absence.

His financial largesse was considerable, measured by the frequency with which he waived his own fee on behalf of a worthy cause, rounded off the proceeds to next higher level, and quietly paid some unmet need of his orchestra. We will look carefully at the evidence of his quiet heroism during the Occupation of Paris. In 1950 he joined Yehudi Menuhin and Igor Stravinsky to meet the cost of a new cortisone therapy it was hoped would cure the pianist Dinu Lipatti of leukemia. His was the (largely unmentioned) lead gift to rebuilding the Shed at Tanglewood in 1956, and he left the Boston Symphony with an endowed Charles Munch Fund on his retirement.[18]

As a visually oriented person, he surrounded himself with things of beauty, from canvasses of celebrated painters to the works of master photographers and artisans. Friend and patron of Raoul Dufy, he was in part responsible for Dufy's interest in the orchestra and allowed him to sketch from the percussion section during rehearsals.[19] He collected fine porcelain and silver—and heirloom violins—and was well known by Boston antiquarians for his furtive visits to their

shops. Works of Monet and Pisarro hung in his study. He does not appear to have been widely or deeply read in literature and poetry but knew his European history well enough and a certain amount about the beginnings of the orchestra and its repertoire.

The preponderance of the evidence, then, suggests a simple but urbane, kind but courageous individual whose personality and work people found easy to like. Three American presidents, Truman, Eisenhower, and Kennedy, knew and admired him, as did government officials in France (notably including André Malraux, though Munch appears to have loathed Charles de Gaulle) and not a few kings and queens. A generation of the most influential Bostonians adored him—including, again, the Kennedys. For a man who was, so far as we can tell, oblivious to *amour-propre,* Munch was recognized with dozens of major honors and awards, including the Legion of Honor in France and near-simultaneous doctor's degrees from Harvard, Boston College, Tufts, and (later) the New England Conservatory. Proper Bostonians thought of him and addressed him as "Dr. Munch."

American families tuned in as faithfully to the Boston Symphony nationwide radio broadcasts as they had to the NBC Symphony just preceding them—and as they would, soon after, to the televised Young People's Concerts of the New York Philharmonic with Leonard Bernstein. The Boston Symphony Transcription Trust circulated performances all over the country. Introduced by the familiar patrician voice of William Pierce, they are a sometimes overlooked high point of the radio age. Countless students in the 1950s and '60s learned Munch's corner of the repertoire (Berlioz, Saint-Saëns, Debussy, Ravel) from the great RCA stereophonic recordings made in Symphony Hall, just as they learned Dvořák and Brahms from Szell, Wagner from Solti, and Mahler from Bernstein.

Charles Munch remains enigmatic on several scores. For a man who came from and was surrounded by distinguished lineages—he was related to Albert Schweitzer and Jean-Paul Sartre and had grown to adulthood at the center of Strasbourg's most gifted musical dynasty—he lived a private life of remarkable solitude. A current of sadness permeated his life, and everybody noticed that, too. "*Je suis bien seul dans la vie,*" he remarks with indescribable poignancy.[20]

After him there was neither a widow nor children, and, lacking them, little of the myth-making apparatus left behind by Toscanini (through his son, Walter, and daughter, Wanda Toscanini Horowitz) and Koussevitzky and Monteux (who were survived by spirited wives). All three of these, incidentally, adopted the United States with more enthusiasm than Munch ever did. His celebrated older brother Fritz was focused on Strasbourg, and his beloved heirs, Nicole Henriot-Schweitzer and her husband, the admiral, also had major careers of

their own. The same could be said of his three protégés, Jean Martinon, Charles Dutoit, and Seiji Ozawa, who all acknowledge their debt to him but were too occupied to go into the question in any detail.

Nor did his own personality favor the building of legends. Notoriously private, he would flee worshipful crowds and even admiring, powerful trustees by various prearrangements with his chauffeur—hoping to dine at home or with a handful of intimates and working above all to keep Mrs. Koussevitzky at bay. One journalist noted that he had devoted as much energy to avoiding publicity as he had to earning it honestly as a musician. The facts had to be pried loose from him. He did not talk much about music even to his friends, preferring to chat about fine wines and other luxuries to savor in life—a love of life, Claude Samuel remarked, that he nevertheless brought to his concerts and recordings.[21]

Once he came to the United States, this apparent reserve was accentuated by his minimal English. He had no reason to know languages beyond French and German until he was more than forty years old, and he began to use English every day only as he approached fifty. His spoken English remained halting to the end, though after the second season in Boston it would have been impossible to mistake his meaning. In an interview during the intermission of a 1967 concert with the New York Philharmonic—his last engagement there—he sounds very old indeed, with a voice made deep and gravelly by time and tobacco. You can sense when he smiles or is about to chuckle, and when the Occupation is brought up with reference to Honegger's Second Symphony, there is a marked darkening of the atmosphere as he follows every line of the interviewer's winding question. One cannot help but enjoy his inadvertently comic response: "I make in New York the creation of this symphony. . . . The Swiss peoples are not happy if you say that Honegger is a Frenchman." Of the New York Philharmonic he says, "I have the great pleasure to play with these peoples."[22]

Though he must have had to attend to an enormous correspondence merely to keep up with daily life, his personal letters are sparsely preserved, and one of his greatest admirers said in the *Boston Globe* that he was the worst correspondent he had ever met.[23] Nevertheless, there is much to be learned from his exchanges with his composer friends . . . and still more from his book-length reflections on his *métier,* called in English *I Am a Conductor* (1955). This fascinating volume suggests an author who has at the very least reflected deeply enough on his profession to have formulated a comprehensive theory of it and who—even if he worked with an associate on a manuscript that was subsequently rewritten in one or both languages—has developed a stylish ring. It also belies the notion that Munch did not think deeply about his work: "Spontaneous" and "intuitive" approaches are not thoughtless ones.

That he was not by nature a committed intellectual means that we find him at the sidelines of the great aesthetic debates that fill the pages of the journals of

the time. He was instead a man of action and for much of his life almost limitless energy. When his world fell apart for the second time in the 1930s, pitting his two native cultures against each other, he stayed on the scene and adroitly steered, protected, and provided for an orchestra of a hundred French citizens while less overtly seeing to any number of other interests of his country and compatriots. While politicians pushed and pulled in the Middle East, Munch went to Palestine (considerably before Leonard Bernstein did) to conduct what is now the Israel Philharmonic, with whom he developed a close and ongoing relationship. Next came the Baalbeck Festival, where he was decorated by the president of Lebanon, and eventually Nasser's Cairo. He arranged goodwill tours to the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and Japan. When Boulez was at odds with the entire French establishment and making headlines every day, Munch, very obviously in physical decline, abandoned what little retirement he had achieved to oversee the organization of the Orchestre de Paris, the *orchestre de prestige* he believed was essential to his nation's artistic standing. There is every indication he did not expect to last long as founding conductor.

Here is as good a place as any to point out that a certain number of his most vexatious characteristics—incessant worrying over contractual details, for instance, even as he was accruing real wealth—have to do with his determination not to repeat mistakes of committing to arrangements he disliked. Often he failed to understand the implications of language he did not much want to read in the first place. What people sometimes thought to be evidence of boredom and routine in his daily work was usually instead real, life-threatening fatigue brought about by one of the several conditions from which he suffered and which his managers and physicians routinely, though without much success, warned him against incurring. By the same token we will have occasion, too, to encounter tragedies in his personal life that he never took the time to overcome.

To take Charles Munch as a representative of music in the mid-twentieth century is to grapple with the conspicuous internationalization of orchestral practice that took place between the 1920s and the 1970s and with the emergence of what is now generally known as the "maestro" concept of conducting. It is to observe the canonization of a part of the French repertoire—Berlioz, Debussy, and Ravel—and the loss of another, perhaps larger, portion. It is to witness any number of steps in the Franco-American experience and especially how Francophilia helped compensate for the sudden disincentives toward playing the "German" repertoire.

And it is to try to understand why, in the long run, only Monteux and Munch were recognized internationally as the voices of French music. After all, Munch had the enormous good fortune to have been raised in an elevated musical and intellectual milieu where the diet was Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, and Brahms.

Any number of conductors were working just as hard as he was on behalf of French music, some of whom—notably Paul Paray and Roger Désormière—were well established in Paris before he first took the podium there. It cannot have been indefatigability, long residence in the United States, or amusingly French personality traits, for Paray in Detroit had all of those, too.

The pages that follow address all of these questions and suggest answers for many others. In the first portion we will find Munch claiming his place at the pinnacle of the French musical establishment, then making the pivotal decision not to emigrate but to stay in Paris throughout the war and Occupation to do what he could to lead French music to its rightful place in whatever modern culture might mean. Then we examine Munch's abrupt departure to the New World and his arrival there as the major conduit in transmitting French orchestral literature forward into the postwar period, an accomplishment virtually unrivaled in the case of Berlioz, Roussel, and Honegger. Munch will give us much to think about as to an orchestra's essence and how it serves its many constituencies. As an orchestral patriarch, he had few peers indeed.

My personal involvement with Charles Munch follows three main channels. Like most others in my generation, I learned the Berlioz Requiem and *La damnation de Faust* and *Roméo et Juliette* from the Boston Symphony recordings on RCA, and he thus played a major role in my career decisions to become a conductor and to write about Berlioz. The turning point in my personal experience of Munch—from awareness to a certain form of discipleship—was my opportunity, as a very young man, to hear him conduct the *Fantastique.* When Charles Munch came to Raleigh with the new Orchestre de Paris in November 1968, several students from Duke University in nearby Durham organized an expedition to hear the concert in the Friends of the College series at North Carolina State University—a series I myself had attended faithfully for many years. On the program that night were Barber's *Medea, Daphnis et Chloé,* Suite 2, and the *Fantastique.* I went to hear the *Fantastique* and returned smitten with *Daphnis.* That was on Sunday; on Wednesday in Richmond, Virginia, Munch was found dead by his valet, having succumbed to heart failure earlier that morning.

Munch was also a central figure and certainly one of the most intriguing characters in the history of the Paris Conservatory Orchestra, or the Société des Concerts du Conservatoire. The first major dossier I studied from that archive was titled "Affaire Munch," which dealt with the long saga of his departure. The next was labeled "Guerre, 1939–45." And when *The Société des Concerts du Conservatoire, 1828–1967,* was done, I harbored, in the case of Munch, a strong sense of unfinished business—further, perhaps, of a debt as yet unpaid. I understood too little about Strasbourg and the Munch dynasty, virtually nothing about the Boston Symphony between the time of my own birth and when I

began to be aware of the broadcasts of the late 1950s, and nothing at all of what had transpired in the life of Charles Munch between the great Berlioz recordings and that dramatic week in November 1968. Too, I thought I had learned from *The Société des Concerts* something about what concert programs and, slipperier still, audio and video artifacts can tell us—and what they cannot.

I also wanted to spend more time around Boston and its orchestra in order to understand the forces at work in a historic and advanced musical culture, a place teeming with institutions of higher learning in the arts—much as I had tried to understand the same kinds of things about the Paris Conservatory Orchestra. I would come to have the same curiosity about Strasbourg later on.

The sources for this book repose for the most part in three obvious collections: the archives of the Société des Concerts du Conservatoire and the Orchestre de Paris, those of the Boston Symphony, and the composer's estate. This latter—what had not already been given away—was left in its totality to his closest relatives and the companions of his old age, Jean-Jacques Schweitzer and his spouse, pianist Nicole Henriot-Schweitzer.

The Strasbourg archivist and scholar Geneviève Honegger, a natural sleuth (unrelated to the composer), had been accorded virtually free access to the Henriot/Schweitzer collection in the late 1980s, when both were still living. Fleshing this information out with documents from the Alsatian and Swiss families involved and from various public collections, she presented what remains the most useful published resource on the conductor, *Charles Munch: Un chef d'orchestre dans le siècle* (1992), as well as the remarkable exhibition "Charles Munch: Strasbourg, Bibliothèque Nationale et Universitaire, 23 November 1992–31 January 1993; Boston, Symphony Hall, 19 February–31 March 1993."

Honegger deposited photocopies of virtually all of her sources in the Bibliothèque Nationale et Universitaire in Strasbourg. (The building lies just beside the equally grand structure that housed the Strasbourg Conservatory in the Munch years.) Here Honegger's collection complements an impressive collection of source documents, photographs, and recordings that form part of the library's Alsatian patrimony division.

The vast majority of known letters *to* Charles Munch come from his own collection, notably the dossier he labeled "Compositeurs" and into which he would slip autographs of individuals he considered major composers at the time or, interestingly, those who he thought might someday reach that stature.[24] Those who made the list included Roussel, Ropartz, and Honegger, of course, as well as Poulenc and Milhaud, but also Tcherepnin, Martinu, and others of that generation who had become his intimates. Additionally, there is a large prewar correspondence with Wilhelm Furtwängler, important for what it shows of the maneuvers of both French and German artists leading up to the Occupation.

Also among the conductor's papers is a list of early concerts kept by his wife, Geneviève (Vivette) Munch, lovingly typed on octavo-sized notebook paper. There are perhaps a hundred letters from his mother to "Concertmeister Charles Münch" in Leipzig and a few from his father, in a dossier marked "Papa." The close relationship he enjoyed with his older brother, Fritz, is richly documented, especially in pictures. Finally, the Henriot/Schweitzer collection also includes leatherbound volumes of his Boston Symphony Orchestra programs, as well as a bound collection of mint copies of his recordings.

From his wife's side of the family there is precious documentation of her father's life and work and of the formidable musical life in Villefavard, stimulated by her younger sister, Juliette Maury Ebersolt (1889–1982). Of Geneviève in adulthood there is very little—a single photograph, accounts from nieces and nephews—and nothing at all of her considerable literary estate and what must have been a large correspondence with her husband. This is attributed by the family to the inadvertent disposal of an attic's worth of old property.

I describe the formidable archive of the Paris Conservatory Orchestra elsewhere.[25] In Boston there are the season programs and press clippings for every season, plus correspondence and contractual files, the trustee minutes, press releases, and many dozens of press photographs, as well as rather good collections of ephemera and memorabilia. Additionally, there are the Boston Symphony Transcription Trust master tapes, a copy of each RCA record, and some of the original films and videos. What appears to be Munch's presentation copy of the Société des Concerts lithograph of Beethoven has been hung over an employee's desk; the handsome bronze bust that used to sit beside the microfilm reader has been installed in the upstairs lobby.

I have also had the privilege of interviewing many who were close to Charles Munch, beginning with the great flutist Michel Debost and then Michael Steinberg and Margo Miller, two former journalists with the *Boston Globe.* Geneviève Honegger made all her work, published and unpublished, available to me from the start. Jean-Philippe Schweitzer and his wife (and two formidable German shepherds and a donkey) welcomed me to the breathtaking property in Louveciennes and introduced me to his fond memories of his uncle, whom he called Pia and with whom he "played cars" every morning. Likewise, Jérôme and Annie Kaltenbach graciously opened the Maury family estate in Villefavard for my study, and Agnès Schoeller, whose favorite aunt was Geneviève Munch, née Maury, shared memories of Munch and his wife in Paris, Villefavard, and Boston—including the concert in March 1937, when Munch conducted an all-Ravel program in the Salle Pleyel with Ravel in attendance: hunched over and feeble, he stood just behind her to take his bow.

Most precious of all, especially for a writer who has spent most of his career wondering what the nineteenth century actually sounded like, are the audio and

video artifacts left by Munch and his players in the twentieth. Efforts to bring this wealth of material under control include Philippe Olivier's *Charles Munch: Une biographie par le disque* (1987) and, rather more usefully, Philippe Morin's "Discographie intégrale de Charles Munch" (in *Le monde de la musique,* 1988) and James H. North's impressive *Boston Symphony Orchestra: An Augmented Discography* (2008).

Electronic databases taking shape at the Boston Symphony Orchestra and elsewhere provide chapter and verse on recording sessions and publication history. In due course we will consider less formal ways in which the Munch performances circulate. Suffice it to say here that a good portion of what appeared on 78 RPM and LP discs is now widely available in digital formats.

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NOTES ON ORTHOGRAPHY

Munch or Münch?

The diacritic in the family name is used in Europe without necessarily suggesting nationality. What is clear is that Charles Munch was born with his umlaut and that it was more or less officially dropped by common consent of conductor and constituencies on the occasion of his arrival in Boston. The first Munch recording published in the United States, a Columbia release of the Saint-Saëns Organ Symphony with the New York Philharmonic-Symphony (1948) gives "Muench" on the original jacket but "Munch" in its re-release.

The conventional explanation is that, owing to the absence of diacritics in American newspaper fonts, a decision was made in 1949, jointly with the Boston Symphony administration and its new conductor, to adopt what became the familiar Americanized orthography. ("He has dropped the umlaut," reported the *Christian Science Monitor* on September 8, 1949, just as he got to town.)

In France, on the other hand, the usual explanation is that he dropped the umlaut at the time of the Occupation, that is, beginning in 1940. (At the Gewandhaus he had been called Carl Münch.) In fact, he himself used both styles in the 1940s, gradually giving up the umlaut in his signature; he used it very clearly in 1946, well into the postwar period.

Many of his European correspondents never gave it up when addressing letters to him, and his wife always used it even when writing in English. But for all intents and purposes the new spelling became definitive in 1949. In the United States it is customary to pronounce Charles in the American fashion and the last name with a hint of umlaut so as not to rhyme with "crunch."

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ABOUT THE COMPANION WEBSITE

www.oup.com/us/charlesmunch

Charles Munch continues in an online appendix titled "Charles Munch: The Recorded Legacy." The narrative, presented in e-book form, treats the audio and video artifacts left by Munch as conductor, from his first recording in 1935 to the first recordings of the new Orchestre de Paris in 1967 and 1968. Linked to the essay (signaled with Oxford's symbol ▶) are more than 125 brief audio clips that illustrate particulars of Munch's artistic approach and achievement, as well as video clips from televised broadcasts in the United States, France, and Japan.

Additionally, the Companion Website offers the Munch discography in the form of lists of recordings by date and label, by composer, and by CD reissue; it also provides summaries of off-air CDs and DVDs.

Users may access the companion website with the username **Music1** and the password **Book5983**.

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Charles Munch

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