



MILHAUD

SYMPHONY NO. 1

DARIUS MILHAUD

CONDUCTING THE

COLUMBIA BROADCASTING

SYMPHONY

ML 2082

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MASTERWORKS

LONG PLAYING MICROGROOVE RECORD



MILHAUD: Symphony No. 1

DARIUS MILHAUD

conducting the COLUMBIA BROADCASTING SYMPHONY

Darius Milhaud's First Symphony, here recorded for the first time, was, says the composer, "an intellectual and spiritual life-saver" for him. The eminent French musician had planned to wait until he was past fifty years of age before composing a symphony, but things were to work out differently. During the summer of 1939, as Milhaud was approaching his forty-seventh birthday, the composer accepted a commission to write a symphony for the fiftieth anniversary season of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. A short while later, as he was making preliminary sketches of the work in his native Aix-en-Provence, the Second World War broke out. This event so stunned Milhaud that for two months he was unable to do any creative work. Eventually, however, the thought of the promised symphony and the knowledge it must be finished within a short time gave him the courage to take up his pen again. The symphony was completed in December, 1939; and it was given its first performance on the second program of the Chicago Symphony's fiftieth anniversary season October 17, 1940, with the composer conducting. Milhaud later directed it in San Francisco, Saint Louis, Mexico City, and in New York City (with the Columbia Broadcasting Symphony).

Although Darius Milhaud waited even longer than Brahms to write a first symphony, he has composed prodigally in almost all other forms. His list of compositions include concerti for violin, 'cello, viola and percussion instruments, orchestral suites (including the *Suite française* and the *Suite provençale*), more than a dozen works for the theatre including the famous jazz-ballet *La création du monde*, and much chamber-music.

As a youth, Milhaud studied at the Paris Conservatoire where his teachers

were Widor, d'Indy and Gedalge. He had intended to compete for the Prix de Rome, but this idea was thwarted by the outbreak of the First World War. In 1917 Milhaud became attached to the French legation in Rio de Janeiro and served under the poet-diplomat, Paul Claudel, who in later years provided Milhaud with the texts for the opera *Christopher Columbus* and other works for the stage.

On returning to Paris in 1919, Darius Milhaud allied himself with a group of young musicians who, catching inspiration from the elder Erik Satie, were revolting against impressionism and romanticism. This much-discussed group, which came to be known as "Les Six," consisted, in addition to Milhaud, of Arthur Honegger, Georges Auric, Germaine Tailleferre, Louis Durey, and Francis Poulenc. Taking themselves far less seriously as a group than the rest of the world did, "Les Six" soon disbanded, but not before the musicians had made their mark as the *enfants terribles* of post-World War I music.

Milhaud made Paris his home until the first months of the Second World War. He managed to get out of France soon after finishing his First Symphony. He came then to the United States and soon joined the faculty of Mills College in Oakland, California.

Of all the members of "Les Six," it is Darius Milhaud who has most consistently through the years followed the tradition of the group's mentor, Erik Satie, writing music of clarity and charm and that is "as simple as a friendly conversation and in its better moments exactly as poetic and as profound," as Virgil Thomson remarked in the *New York Herald Tribune*.

Milhaud's First Symphony is in four movements. The first, a *Pastorale*, is marked *Modérément animé* and is described by the composer as being

"very melodic and quiet, with great feeling for nature." The graceful first subject is stated immediately by flutes and first violins, *pizzicato*. Woodwinds introduce the second major theme at the forty-ninth bar, following which there is a reasonably lengthy development. The second theme reappears in canon, with portions of the first newly expressed. The first subject "in a very calm and simple manifestation," with changes in orchestration, forms the *coda*.

The second movement is marked *Très vite* and, in Milhaud's words, is "rather dramatic and robust, with a fugue in the middle." The movement is composed of three "melodic elements"—the first introduced by the woodwinds, the "more lyric" second by the violins, and the "more light and rapid" third by the violins. "Under fragmentary comments of the woodwinds." The *fugue* is based on the first of the "elements."

Milhaud writes of the third movement, *Très modéré*, that "it begins with a theme like a chorale, the character of the movement deeply tender. The chorale theme alternates with a melody very expressive and clear."

The fourth movement, *Animé*, is "also a pastorale, but more vigorous and joyous than the first," states the composer. Following an introduction of thirty measures, plucked strings, harp and woodwinds introduce the principle subject which requires thirty bars for its full exposition. Strings and woodwinds now state a new subject and a development section occurs, after which still another theme, "in the manner of a folk dance," enters in the woodwinds, horns and trumpets. This is combined with material already presented as the symphony draws to its close.

Notes by MORRIS HASTINGS

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SIDE 1
(LP 1647)

Band No. 1: First Movement: Pastoral

Band No. 2: Second Movement: Vif

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SIDE 2
(LP 1648)

Band No. 1: Third Movement: Très modéré

Band No. 2: Fourth Movement: Final

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