

At the end of the summer Frederic Fradkin, American violinist, was engaged as concert-master, while the post of conductor went begging. Pierre Monteux, then conducting at the Metropolitan Opera House, was engaged to take charge of the Boston Symphony Orchestra for the first weeks of the season until a permanent conductor could be engaged. Just after the season had begun that man was apparently found in Henri Rabaud, Parisian composer and dignitary, who agreed to come for at least the remainder of the 1918-19 season; and he arrived a few weeks after the season had begun under Monteux.

Addressing the reassembled Orchestra at the first rehearsal of the season, Judge Cabot had said, "It takes nine tailors to make a man, but it remains to be seen whether nine trustees will make a Higginson." The trials of Monteux and then Rabaud were even more severe, because the personnel of the orchestra had changed greatly during the summer months. A fair level of competence in performance was all that might reasonably be expected in the circumstances. Yet responsible critics were soon writing that the Orchestra was now better than it ever was. Obviously, although the Armistice was signed on November 11, 1918, the war was not yet over.

Since Rabaud was unwilling to stay for more than a single season and a celebrity could not be had, the Trustees engaged Monteux for the season of 1919-20. Later he was re-engaged for two seasons and again for two more.

Meanwhile, the regime succeeding Higginson faced another severe threat. An attempt was being made to unionize the Orchestra, and the musicians were joining the Union in increasing numbers. Judge Cabot's attitude was

presumably reflected by his reported statement to a Union organizer: he would disband the Orchestra if it should be unionized.³ It was also reported that when a committee of musicians told Cabot, "We can't live any more these days on the salary you pay us," Cabot replied, "Well, gentlemen, all I can say is that you had better change your profession."⁴

There may have been some relation between the prevailing discontent of the musicians and the rapid changes in personnel. Such changes regularly bring in their train a drop in morale, in *esprit de corps*. But the dissatisfaction was more attributable to economic factors and the recent change in the orchestra's direction. Salaries which were satisfactory in 1914 were now, after the inflation brought on by the war, often quite inadequate. The alleged minimum wage was, indeed, scandalously low—\$35 a week, as against \$55 in other cities. Under the benevolent patronage of Higginson (if it had continued) there would probably have been a peaceful and satisfactory adjustment despite his steadily deteriorating financial condition. But the new corporate management could hardly be expected, without a show of force from its employees, to behave in any other way than corporate management usually does when it takes over an enterprise previously run on a personal basis. It could be expected to regard earnestly its responsibility to balance its budget as economically as possible, and to be far less concerned with the welfare of its employees.

The musicians had other complaints. They were treated "like machines." They had no committee empowered to adjudicate their grievances with the management. They

complained—or the Union did for them—that replacements were still being regularly made from foreign musicians, who, by underbidding native musicians, helped to keep wages down. That was why in practically all other major American orchestras, where the American Federation of Musicians exercised its sway, there were no “foreigners”: in order to be eligible to membership in the Federation one must at least have taken out first citizenship papers.

As Monteux returned for his first season in the fall of 1919, nevertheless, other portents were favorable. Ticket sales, which had slumped badly during the orchestra's recent travails, were rising steadily. The normal schedule of concerts and roster of soloists were announced. The personnel was almost entirely set. Monteux, announcing his intention to restore German music to the repertoire, said to an interviewer in effect, “Let's forget the war.” He was soon to display his penchant for fresh, varied, catholic programs, and to be praised for them.

Higginson died on November 15, 1919. He was greatly mourned, for he had been the first citizen of Boston and he had spread his benefactions munificently on Boston and Harvard University. Since the Boston Symphony Orchestra had been his first love it came as a shock that his will made no mention of an endowment fund for it. The orchestra was assuredly on its own.

The Union controversy waxed hotter. Judge Cabot steadily refused to deal with the musicians as a body. When the management was reminded that many of the musicians were planning to accept better positions elsewhere the reply was that, if necessary, they would be replaced with better players from abroad. The Musicians

Union, which had bowed to patriotism when Frenchmen had recently replaced Germans, now threatened to invoke the Federal laws against importation of contract labor.

Cabot's rejoinder was to announce a campaign for an endowment fund of \$2,000,000. This sum would presumably provide against an annual deficit of \$100,000, such as Cabot anticipated for the current season. He said that the deficit would be \$100,000 more if the men's demands were granted. But the men went right on joining the Union, and Cabot recognized the seriousness of the situation by addressing them at Symphony Hall. His address, resembling the classical model of union-busting tactics, apparently employed statistics freely to prove that the men were deluded in thinking their lot hard. His very statistics conceded, however, that some of the men were working a maximum of forty weeks for a minimum of \$1650 *per annum*. Cabot asked each man to indicate to the management whether he would renew his contract for another season; an adjustment of compensation, perhaps indicated in a few cases, would be made in discussion with the individual concerned, not with the group.

The issue was defined by H.T.P., as Parker of the *Transcript* regularly identified himself in print. Obviously siding with the management, he wrote that the crux was not mere wages; it was unionism. To sharpen (or perhaps confuse) the issue, Fradkin, the concert-master, now joined the Union. His gesture was quite altruistic, since his salary was far above any minimum the Union might demand. Even Monteux did not escape mention in discussion of the orchestra's new *cause célèbre*. He denied a report that he was sympathetic to the present unionization attempt; and,

though not a party to the dispute, expressed disapproval of the musicians' course.

Again only a spark was needed to set off an explosion. To everyone's surprise there was a brush between Fradkin and Monteux in the conductor's room, at Sanders Theatre, Harvard, just before a concert on Thursday evening, March 4, 1920, and it was spectacularly reported in the newspapers the next morning. This was but a prelude to a more serious incident at the regular Friday matinee in Symphony Hall. After a brilliant performance of Berlioz' *Symphonie Fantastique*, "a performance," in the words of Philip Hale, "that has not been equalled here in forty years,"⁵ the conductor, recalled to the stage by enthusiastic applause, naturally bade the orchestra rise. Fradkin pointedly remained seated: this was his answer to the conductor's insolence of the previous evening and to the misconstruction which press and public had put on that insolence. Immediately after the concert the Trustees met and dispatched a letter to Fradkin formally dismissing him for violation of contract. (His refusal to obey the command of the conductor to rise was technically such a violation.) The action of the Trustees was applauded by the critics, who regarded it as axiomatic that art and unionism cannot properly occupy the same bed.

The musicians in meeting the next day voted not to play the concert that evening unless Fradkin should be reinstated. Assembled in the tuning-room prior to the concert, they were twice visited by Cabot and Monteux, who urged them not to disappoint the public in the Hall. Forty-seven of the 74 Union members first voted not to play, but eleven changed their minds under Cabot's persuasion. Fif-

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teen minutes after concert-time Cabot went on stage to tell an applauding public that "a great principle is at stake," that the concert would be played by a considerably reduced orchestra, and that the program would necessarily be changed.

Thereafter the strike followed familiar patterns, even to confusing contradictions. Many of the musicians changed their minds more than once. Fradkin urged the strikers to return to work because "the Boston Symphony Orchestra is bigger than Fradkin," and because negotiation might still serve. Cabot, too, in an apparent spirit of forgiveness, sent letters to the strikers, condoning their impulsive action and inviting each to confer with him. But his largesse had bounds. Waited on by a committee of the oldest and best-known players, he insisted that the men were free to join the Union provided only that the Union would make an exceptional ruling for the Boston Symphony Orchestra. It was the formula of the Open Shop.

When thirty-odd strikers refused to accept this formula, delivered as an ultimatum by Cabot at a rehearsal, they were dismissed. They promptly announced plans for the formation of a rival orchestra, and, with the assistance of local musicians, actually presented several popular programs at a down-town theatre. But their cause was lost. The Trustees remained firm, assisted by a united press and a citizenry which had been either cowed or inflamed by the well-manuevered debacle of the Boston police strike.

The Trustees now announced a campaign for an even bigger endowment fund so that the salaries of some of the musicians might be raised. The concerts continued on schedule, the programs "shrewdly adjusted," as H.T.P.

put it, "to the numbers of the orchestra now at Mr. Monteux' disposal." Replacements were being made from ex-members of the orchestra, from advanced students of the New England Conservatory of Music, and from outside Boston. In addition, a striker here or there was lured back by a higher salary.

The orchestra had suffered a disaster, but the super-efficient Monteux made rapid progress in rebuilding it. The public and, for the most part, the press remained loyal, ungrudgingly granting Monteux the time necessary for reconstruction. Only occasionally did a brash voice or pen disturb the prevailing harmony, as when, at the end of April, 1921, Fred McIsaac of the *American* discussed the estimated deficit of \$130,000 for the season, which the Trustees had just announced. The increase in receipts in Boston had been entirely offset by a decrease on tour because, McIsaac wrote bluntly, the Trustees had bungled the strike, got a lot of unfavorable publicity and finally increased the musicians' salaries by as much as had been asked in the first place. Even Philip Hale, who, in addition to being critic on the *Herald*, prepared the notes for the orchestra's program-book, conceded in a public address in October that Cabot had been "woefully lacking in tact."⁶

By that time, however, the worst was over. Considerable recruiting during the summer had brought the orchestra back to its normal complement, the recruits including a new concertmaster, Richard Burgin. Young blood would revivify the orchestra, the reviewers said. Subscription sales flourished. A new series of five Monday evening concerts was added to the 24 pairs of Friday afternoons and Saturday evenings, the orchestra's tours being cut propor-