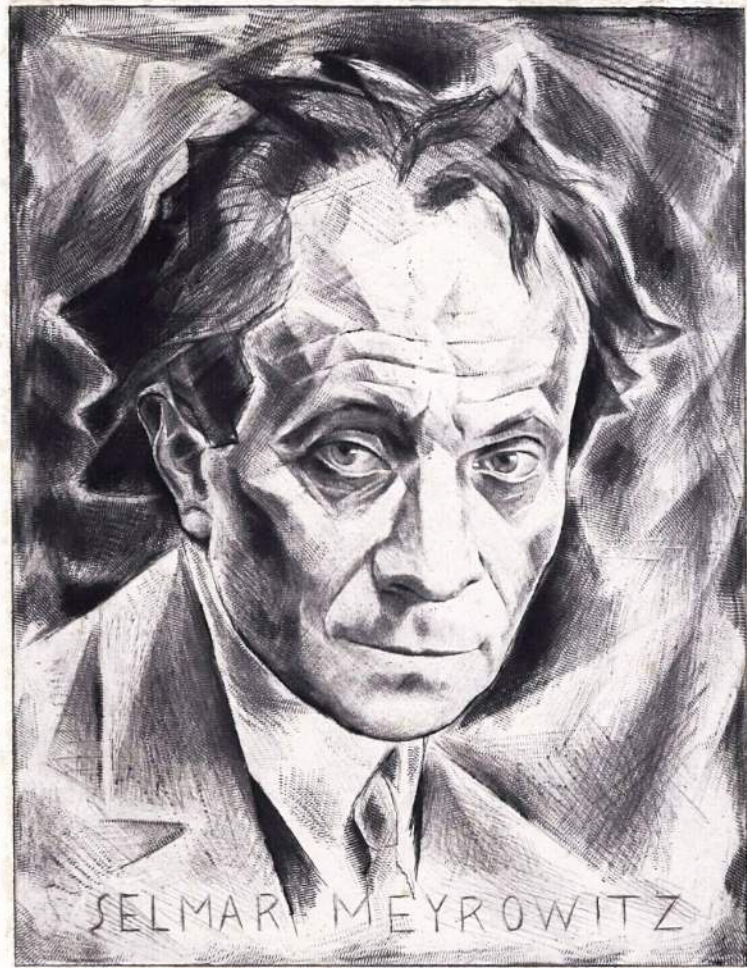


MEYROWITZ conducts LISZT

Toblach
AUSGABE

Eine Faust-Symphonie
Les Préludes



Georges Jouatte
Choeur Alexis Vlasoff
Grand Orchestre
Philharmonique
de Paris

MEYROWITZ conducts LISZT

Eine Faust-Symphonie in drei Charakterbildern, S. 108

- | | | |
|---|---------------------|-------|
| 1 | I. Faust | 22:33 |
| 2 | II. Marguerite | 17:16 |
| 3 | III. Mephistopheles | 15:52 |

with Georges Jouatte, tenor • Choeur Alexis Vlasoff

Recorded 12-15 June and 15 November, 1935

Pathé PDT 31~37 (CPTX156-I, ~157-I, ~158-I, ~159-I, ~160-II, ~161-II, ~162-II, ~167-II, ~168-II, ~169-I, ~170-II, ~171-II, ~172-I, ~173-IV)

4 *Les Préludes, S. 97* 15:18

Recorded in January 1934

Pathé PDT 8~9 (E 350234~7)

Grand Orchestre Philharmonique de Paris Selmar Meyrowitz, conductor

Produced and remastered for Toblach Ausgabe by Gene Gaudette, Urlicht AudioVisual

He is one of the last of those conductors of the Bayreuth school who were co-founders of the modern German musical life reformed by Richard Wagner. As a student, collaborator, and friend of Felix Mottl, he inherited the legacy of the great German master from his most valued apostle. ... He increasingly turned to the powerfully emerging art of microphones, conducting for radio and recordings. Soon he mastered this new field like no other; he understood how to meet the cultural requirements of radio through interesting arrangements of old, lost music, and he did such great justice to the peculiarities of transmission technology, especially the gramophone record, that he assumed [Leopold] Stokowski's place in German recording.

– P. Walter Jacob:

“Selmar Meyrowitz - Zum sechzigsten Geburtstag”, *Pariser Tageblatt*, 18 April 1935

Salomon Reinmar Meyerowitz, known throughout his conducting career as **Selmar Meyrowitz**, was born 18 April 1875 in Bartenstein, Germany. His father, Abraham Meyerowitz, was a cantor. Meyrowitz took his first musical studies at the Leipzig Conservatory from 1894 to 1896, where his teachers included composers Carl Reinecke and Salomon Jadassohn. His studies continued at the Royal Academy of Arts in Berlin from 1896 to 1898, where his teachers included composer Max Bruch.

His career path as a conductor was set in 1898, when he was appointed as assistant to Felix Mottl and solo répétiteur at the Karlsruhe Court Theatre. In 1901, he spent a year as répétiteur at the Metropolitan Opera in New York and piano accompanist for soprano Johanna Gadske, with whom he toured throughout the United States.

Upon his return to Germany, his career brought him to many of the region's leading cultural hotbeds. Further positions included solo répétiteur at the German State Theatre in Prague from 1905 to 1907, conductor of the Danzig City Theatre Orchestra from 1907 to 1909, the Komische Oper Berlin from 1909 to 1910, the Kurfürstenoper Berlin from 1911 to 1912, Munich Court Theatre from 1912 to 1913, and principal conductor at the Hamburg City Theatre from 1913 to 1918 – interrupted by his participation in the First World War. From 1917 to 1922, he began to establish himself as a high-profile orchestral maestro, making regular appearances with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra and, from 1920 to 1921, as principal conductor of the Blüthner Orchestra. Tours took him to the Netherlands, Italy, and Sweden. From 1924 to 1927, he was back in the opera pit, sharing duties with Erich Kleiber and George Szell at the Berlin State Opera Unter den Linden.

During this period of his career, Meyrowitz conducted several notable premieres, including Ermanno Wolf-Ferrari's opera *Der Schmuck der Madonna* (world

premiere, Kurfürstenoper, 23 December 23, 1911), Franz Schreker's *Der ferne Klang* (Hamburg premiere, 31 March, 1913), and Hans Pfitzner's *Von deutscher Seele* (world premiere, Berlin, 27 January, 1922).

His career took an important turn in 1928 when he became a broadcast and recording personality. From 1928 to 1933, he was frequently a guest conductor of the Berlin Radio Hour and led the then-recently-formed Berlin Radio Orchestra, and from 1929 to 1932, he worked as house conductor for the newly founded record company Ultraphon – which would be bought out in 1932 by Telefunken.

Meyrowitz's Ultraphon and Telefunken recordings were made mostly with the Berlin Philharmonic and were for the most part short works that would fit on one or two sides of a single 78rpm disc. These included several orchestral excerpts from Richard Wagner's operas along with short orchestral works and opera interludes by Mozart, Leoncavallo, Rossini, Grieg, Tchaikovsky, and Richard Strauss. Meyrowitz also provided orchestral accompaniment for singers including Joseph Schmidt, Irene Eisinger, Hermann Schey, Eva Liebenberg, Michael Bohnen, Sara Charles-Cahier, and Leo Schützendorf.

In 1933, Meyrowitz was named designated director of the Berlin State Opera – but was forced to flee to Paris in 1933 upon the Nazi's rise to power. The remainder of his career was centered in Paris. One of the highlights was the first French production of Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill's *Der Dreigroschenoper*. But the most lasting legacy was a series of recordings he made for Pathé, which received worldwide distribution on the Columbia label.

These included Hector Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*, Franz Schubert's *Symphony in b minor "Unfinished"* and music from *Rosamunde*, André-Modeste Grétry's *La Rosière républicaine Suite* in Meyrowitz's own arrangement, Richard Wagner's *Siegfried-Idyll*, and many works by Franz Liszt – including concertante works featuring pianist Eduard Kilenyi and the first recording of Franz Liszt's *Eine Faust-Symphonie*.

Pathé's orchestral recordings remain, from a technological standpoint, among the finest made in Europe prior to the arrival of tape recording technology. The surviving documentation reveals that these were made the same studio Pathé used for film soundtrack music, and the combination of the studio's dry acoustics and then state-of-the-art microphones and electronics captured unusually detailed sound that stands comparison with that achieved by Mercury Records' "Living Presence" recordings from the 1950s and early 1960s.

For his part, the highly expressive and individualistic interpretive approach taken by Meyrowitz is in many ways comparable to that of his more interpretively liberal contemporaries – for example, Willem Mengelberg, Albert Coates, and Leopold Stokowski – but with the acutely precise, rhythmically emphatic sound espoused at the time by Arturo Toscanini and Victor de Sabata. This

approach is well suited to both Liszt works featured in this release.

Les préludes, composed in 1848 during Liszt's residency in Weimar, was in its original version the overture to *Les Quatre Éléments*, a choral work with texts by Joseph Autran. Liszt adapted the work as a symphonic poem in 1854, linked with a completely different text, Alphonse de Lamartine's "Les Préludes". The symphonic poem is in four sections plus some bridge material, linked thematically by two central musical ideas and unfolding in a quasi-palindromic manner. Liszt regarded each section as a separate "prelude": love, storm, peaceful pastoral life and battle. The work has remained a popular staple of the orchestral repertoire, achieving popular fame as the theme music for the American radio serial "Flash Gordon" in the 1930s – and notoriety during the Second World War when its first theme was used by the Nazis to introduce special radio announcements and presentations.

Liszt's Weimar symphonic poems preceded the composition of *Eine Faust-Symphonie in drei Charakterbildern*, although the idea first came to him during the 1820s in Paris; the early sketches date from the 1840s, and the first version was completed in 1854, with the final choral coda, with text from Goethe's Faust II, composed shortly afterward. Liszt organized its world premiere to coincide with the dedication of the Goethe and Schiller Monument in Weimar on 5 September 1857. The symphony does not depict the story so much as it illustrates the character and transformation of each of the three central characters in Goethe's play, depicted in separate movements – Faust, Gretchen, and Mephistopheles. The final choral scene was no doubt inspired in part by the finale of Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* and is paralleled by the choral finale of Mahler's *Symphony No. 2 "Resurrection"*.

Meyrowitz remained professionally active until May 1940, when the Nazi Wehrmacht captured Paris. Meyrowitz fled to southern France. He died in Toulouse during March 1941, and while the exact cause or causes have not specifically been stated, the few biographical sketches available attribute the death to the privations of fleeing the Nazi invasion.

– Audra Fendrick

The present edition was transferred from commercial 78rpm pressings on the Pathé label and, in the case of *Eine Faust-Symphonie*, several sides from the Columbia 78 reissue (LX 8215~21), from my personal collection, all in excellent condition. Post-transfer processing was limited to declicking, a moderate amount of surface noise reduction, and re-equalization to match the Pathé recording curve.

– Gene Gaudette

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