

1911 Encyclopædia Britannica, Volume 16 — Lamoureux, Charles



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LAMOUREUX, CHARLES (1834–1899), French conductor and violinist, was born at Bordeaux on the 28th of September 1834. He studied at the Pau Conservatoire, was engaged as violinist at the Opéra, and in 1864 organized a series of concerts devoted to chamber music. Having journeyed to England and assisted at a Handel festival, he thought he would attempt something similar in Paris. At his own expense he founded the “Société de l’Harmonie Sacrée,” and in 1873 conducted the first performance in Paris of Handel’s *Messiah*. He also gave performances of Bach’s *St Matthew Passion*, Handel’s *Judas Maccabaeus*, Gounod’s *Gallia*, and Massenet’s *Eve*. In 1875 he conducted the festival given at Rouen to celebrate the centenary of Boïeldieu. The following year he became *chef d’orchestre* at the Opéra Comique. In 1881 he founded the famous concerts associated with his name, which contributed so much to popularize Wagner’s music in Paris. The performances of detached pieces taken from the German master’s works did not, however, satisfy him, and he matured the project to produce *Lohengrin*, which at that time had not been heard in Paris. For this purpose he took the Eden Theatre, and on the 3rd of May 1887 he conducted the first performance of Wagner’s opera in the French capital. Owing to the opposition of the Chauvinists, the performance was not repeated; but it doubtless prepared the way for the production of the same masterpiece at the Paris Opéra a few years later. Lamoureux was successively second *chef d’orchestre* at the Conservatoire, first *chef*

d'orchestre at the Opéra Comique, and twice first *chef d'orchestre* at the Opéra. He visited London on several occasions, and gave successful concerts at the Queen's Hall. Lamoureux died at Paris on the 21st of December 1899. *Tristan und Isolde* had been at last heard in Paris, owing to his initiative and under his direction. After conducting one of the performances of this masterpiece he was taken ill and succumbed in a few days, having had the consolation before his death of witnessing the triumph of the cause he had so courageously championed.

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