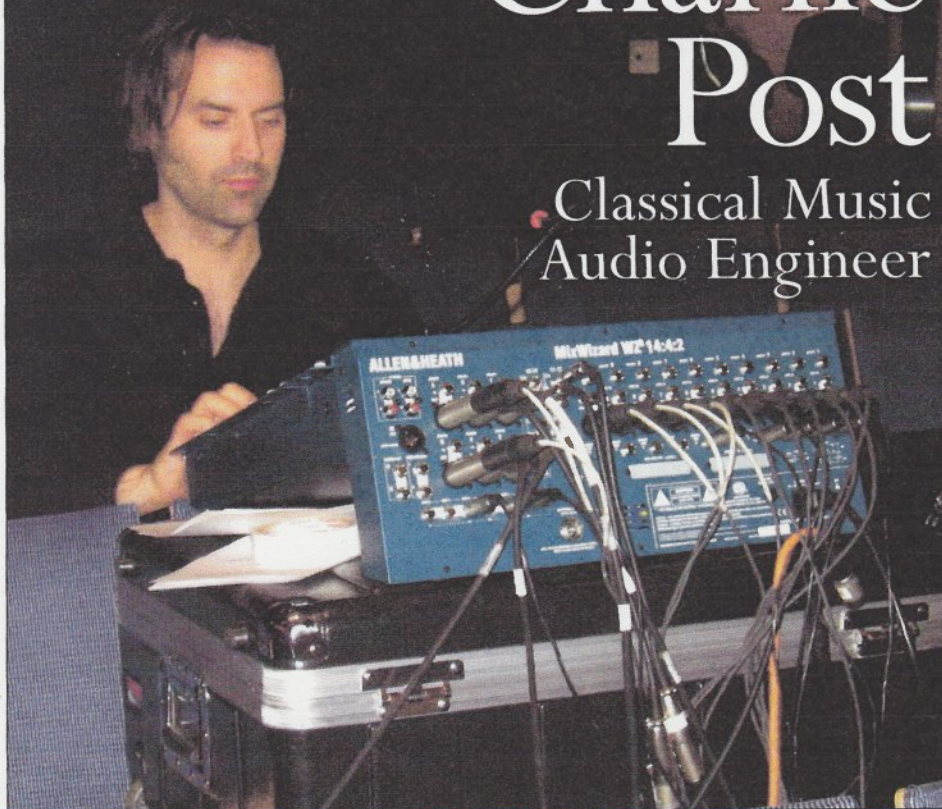


Charlie Post

Classical Music Audio Engineer



JOB DESCRIPTION:

- ▶ MIXES LIVE CONCERT EVENTS FOR FULL ORCHESTRA
- ▶ RECORDS LIVE CLASSICAL MUSIC
- ▶ EDITS AND MIXES CLASSICAL RECORDINGS

Imagine that 10,000 people are gathered at an outdoor festival to enjoy a 60-piece orchestra and your job is to make sure they hear the power and refinement they'd experience in a fine concert hall. That's just one of the challenges Charlie Post faces as an audio engineer who specializes in classical music.

Based in New York, Post spends part of each year at the Boston Symphony Orchestra's summer home, Tanglewood, in western Massachusetts. The venue features a 1,200-seat hall for soloists and chamber ensembles, as well as a *shed*—a stage with a solid back, roof, and open sides—with 5,000 seats inside and 10,000 more on the outdoor lawn behind it. While classical music engineers like Post use the same basic technology as those who work in pop, jazz, rock, and country, their goals can be quite different. "When working indoors, we're usually using light amplification that is not supposed to be noticeable," he explains. "For example, I may just need to boost a singer's diction or get a string bass to stand out in the mix."

At the outdoor shows, Post sits behind a large mixing console in a position often referred to as *front of house* (FOH), where he can hear what the audience hears. "Outdoors, you're recreating the entire orchestra [sound] from scratch," he says. "We might use 25-35 mics [positioned above the musicians]. Every show is recorded by a broadcast engineer in a booth just off the stage-right entrance, and the microphones I mix on my board out on the lawn are the same ones that go to the recorder offstage."

In order to do Post's job, it helps to have a background in both music and engineering. "The college I went to (State University of New York at Fredonia) focused

on the German *Tönmeister* [master of sound] approach," he says. "You had to be a musician and pass an audition to get into the music program." As a sound recording technology major, Post was required to take the same music classes as traditional music students, along with courses in electronics, acoustics, calculus, and physics.

After graduating, Post went directly into engineering at Avatar Studios in New York City. He also worked at the Manhattan School of Music, then became the manager of the famous Hit Factory recording studio for a few years. With help from colleague Silas Brown, he eventually got back into engineering and began doing remote recording at live events. "Silas introduced me to Tim Martyn, who is the director of audio at Tanglewood," he says. "Tim hired me to help out on a New Jersey Symphony concert and we hit it off. A few months later, one of the engineering positions at Tanglewood opened up; the 2011 season will be my fifth."

Part of the appeal—and challenge—of mixing classical music is the way the sound can go from a whisper to a scream. *The Firebird* by composer Igor Stravinsky is one of Post's favorite examples. "It ranges from just a few strings to the entire orchestra with brass, timpani, and full percussion," he says. "You go from barely audible to blasting—and you really have to learn to control the sound." That's where Post's musical education comes in handy: "I keep a printed copy of the score with me. I follow it so I can anticipate when the musicians will get louder and quieter."

Besides mixing live events, Post runs his own company, Post Productions Audio, which specializes in remote recording, audio editing, and *mastering* (preparing finished recordings for CD and other media). He also edits and engineers for the 20th-century classical label Bridge Records. "I use the score to guide my editing," he says. "It's anything from solo piano to full orchestra. But I'm doing some mixing on projects as well. Sometimes it's a little too crazy, but I'd rather be busy than not be busy at all!" **T**