



# A FRENCH TOUCH

*Rediscovering a uniquely French symphonic repertoire*

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SOPHISTICATION, CLARITY, MEASURE, POLISH, CONCISION... WORDS THAT CROP UP AGAIN AND AGAIN WHEN IT COMES TO FRENCH MUSIC, ESPECIALLY FROM THE FIRST HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY. BEFORE DELVING INTO THIS REPERTOIRE THROUGH THIRTY UNKNOWN AND RARELY PERFORMED SCORES, THREE CONDUCTORS SHED LIGHT ON THEIR SEARCH FOR “FRENCH SPIRIT”.



Sophistication, clarity, measure, polish, concision ... words that crop up again and again when it comes to French music, especially from the first half of the twentieth century. Before delving into this repertoire through thirty unknown and rarely performed scores, three conductors shed light on their search for “French spirit”.

Montmartre, Paris. The conductor Jean-Claude Casadesus welcomed us into the apartment where his grandfather, Henri Casadesus, rehearsed with the early-instrument ensemble of which Camille Saint-Saëns was the honorary president. From the outset, Casadesus affirmed that, “French music is one of the most beautiful, most demanding and least understood types of music.” In an attempt to define it, he likes to

quote the words that Paul Claudel used to guide composers, “Nothing in excess”, before listing a string of adjectives: “Elegance, nature, simplicity, restrained emotion, and even modesty, despite underlying passions – passions that require mastery.” What is the secret to playing French music? “Never yield to the temptation to add more,” said the conductor. “Never open the floodgates or exaggerate crescendos or tempo. Fundamentally, French music requires non-excess.”

Stéphane Denève, who was also in Paris for one of his concerts, added: “To play French music well you have to be very sensual, with an appreciation for aesthetics, and be able to enjoy all the senses. I think you also need great imagination.” Perhaps, Denève explains, because this repertoire is closely linked with other forms of artistic



# “THE SPECIFICITY OF FRENCH MUSIC IS RATHER LIKE A SIGNATURE LINKED TO OUR CULTURE - ONE THAT ALSO CREATED THE FRENCH GARDEN, EMPHASISING THE SYMMETRY OF FORM.”

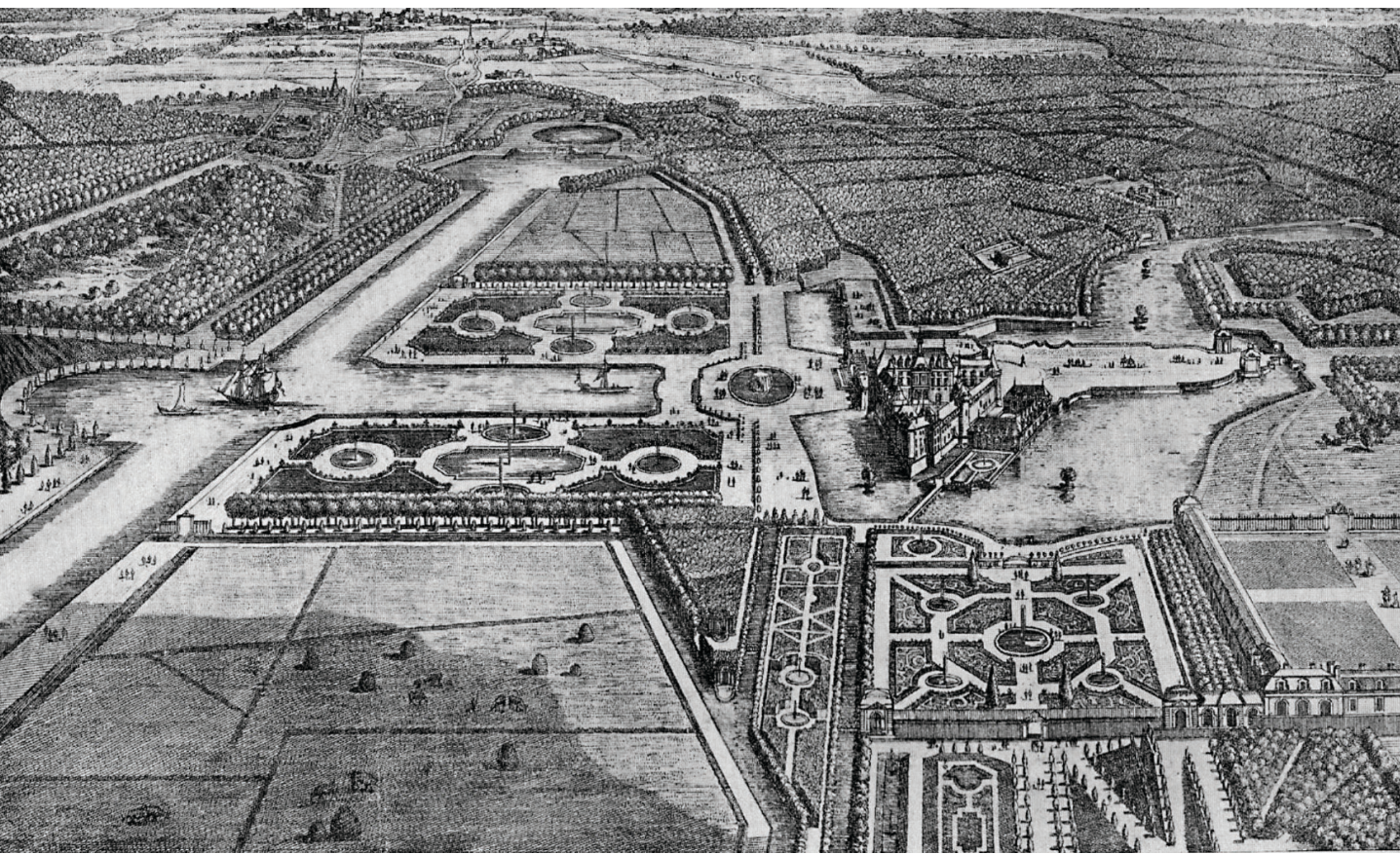
expression. The conductor also mentions the verses from Baudelaire's sonnet *Correspondances*: “Like long echoes that intermingle from afar/In a dark and profound unity,/Vast like the night and like the light,/The perfumes, the colours and the sounds respond.” For Denève, the main feature of French music “is that it usually has a close relationship with the visual dimension; that is why it often returns to colour, clarity, and transparency.” Jean-Claude Casadesus, meanwhile, believes that “French music is often linked to literature and intellect.” Conductor of the Orchestre national de Lille for four decades, he said that at the time of the *Querelle des Bouffons* [Quarrel of the Comic Actors] in the mid-eighteenth century, French music, in contrast with Italian music, was already being criticised for being too intellectual and restrained.

It is undeniable that in France, more so than elsewhere, classical music is both a product and a symbol of high culture – unfortunately, that is why some people find it daunting. We visited Yan Pascal Tortelier, former head of the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, in his London home; he recalls that music was “produced in the context of a certain elite: the sophisticated art world. It is therefore at a high cultural level, which can be seen in its refinement. In contrast, for Anglo-Saxons, music is much more accessible.” This statement fully illustrates the nature of French melody: combining music and poetry, the best example of art for art's sake at the turn of the twentieth century, it was the expression

of the bourgeois class's attempt to distinguish themselves and prolong their dream of idleness. On the contrary, the German *Lied* is deeply rooted in popular culture.

So can French music be defined in relation to others – and especially, of course, to the great Austro-German tradition? Not for Stéphane Denève, who believes that “the specificity of French music is rather like a signature linked to our culture – one that also created the French garden, emphasising the symmetry of form.” Denève, conductor of the Brussels Philharmonic, also stresses the many “European moments from the history of music”, and “the influence that composers of different nationalities have always had on each other”. Many examples speak in his favour, such as Berlioz drawing inspiration from Gluck, Weber and Beethoven, Chabrier and Chausson adoring Wagner, Massenet and Debussy idolising Schumann, or conversely, Richard Strauss completing Berlioz's *Grand traité d'instrumentation et d'orchestration modernes* [Treatise on Instrumentation and Orchestration] (carefully studied by Mussorgsky and Rimsky-Korsakov), Mahler's advice to study orchestration in *Carmen*, and Berg and Zemlinsky being inspired by Debussy. Looking at it more deeply, the revival of instrumental music that was seen in France around 1870, linked to the founding of concert societies and band associations (Pasdeloup, Colonne and Lamoureux), gathered support for the symphony: notably linked to Germanic tradition, and until then considered to be





the home of the musically sublime, this genre focuses the composer's aspirations on creating a masterpiece, not unlike the Beethovenian model. Saint-Saëns, Bizet, Lalo, d'Indy, Franck, Chausson, Dukas and Magnard all participated in this phenomenon. Later on Rousset, Schmitt, Ferroud, Honegger and Dutilleux followed them, to name a few of the composers who cultivated the symphony genre – in this context they are present in the following pages.

Despite these guarantees of sincerity, there is a prevailing prejudice that French music is nothing more than charming and decorative.

It is presented as a brilliant repertoire, albeit one that is still in its early stages, and anything but essential; in short, as a superficial art. In 1926, Charles Kœchlin was already denouncing it in the book about his master Fauré, as “that old nonsense, lightweight French, incapable of any depth!” Stéphane Denève's example is eloquent: “To conduct *La Mer* [The Sea], *Daphnis et Chloé* [Daphnis and Chloe] or the *Symphonie fantastique* [Fantastical Symphony] is like drawing with a pencil, whereas directing one of Beethoven's or Mahler's symphonies is like writing a philosophical essay! I challenge that

notion. Under the very seductive surface of French music lies a great concern for structure.” The comparison of traditions is therefore not completely meaningless, and Denève comes back to it when he speaks about rhythm: “Germanic music has, at its base, a fundamental beat to which all the musicians adhere. On the contrary, French music is based on rhythmic phrases built in a more abstract way, as successions of long and short notes. To play them in the appropriate style, you have to play horizontally, forgetting the weight of the beat, which forces synthesis. This is what allows for transparency and the

colours to reach their full potential,” explains the conductor.

This notion of colour, constantly alluded to when talking about French music – confirming its visual, even pictorial, dimension – more technically refers to harmony. For Yan Pascal Tortelier, it is that which constitutes the greatest singularity of this repertoire: “From Gounod to Dutilleux, from Fauré, Debussy and Ravel to Messiaen, there are similarities and harmonic clarity. French music is more vertical than other types of music; above all, the perfect arrangement of each sound combination is just as much of a concern as its harmonic nature. Someone like Dutilleux was particularly concerned about the vertical aspect of writing. Henri worked out his harmonies at the piano, like a veritable jeweller” says the conductor, who has recorded all the orchestral works. “There is pleasure in the harmonies in all French music, as they are pushed

to a point of rare refinement and sensuality. I also noticed that three of the most religious composers, Massenet, Poulenc and Messiaen, did not hesitate to write extremely sensual music!”

Our reflection focuses on thirty scores, most of which were composed between 1910 and 1950. Some are far from unknown: *Le Bœuf sur le toit* [The Ox on the Roof], *L’Apprenti sorcier* [The Sorcerer’s Apprentice], *Turangalila-Symphonie*, *Bacchus et Ariane* [Bacchus and Ariadne] and *Symphonie liturgique* [Liturgical Symphony] are all emblematic pieces, known to any music-lover. Yet how many people have heard at least two of them in concert? This means that conductors and programmers prefer to stick to a tried and tested core repertoire ... We must rediscover this repertoire so that concert halls can be inspired by their “French spirit”.

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# ALBÉRIC MAGNARD

(1865-1914)

*Symphonie n° 4* [*Symphony No. 4*,  
op. 21 (1911-13)]

At the heart of Magnard's relatively restrained work – only twenty-one opuses –, his four symphonies constitute an essential part of French music. Magnard's seriousness has long been mistaken for austerity; but that view overlooks his passionate expressivity and his powerful melodic air, disciplined by ample and definite structures. Possibly coming close to certain Germanic currents (Mahler and Bruckner come to mind), Magnard

proves that an alternative to the aesthetics represented by Debussy and Ravel exists in France.

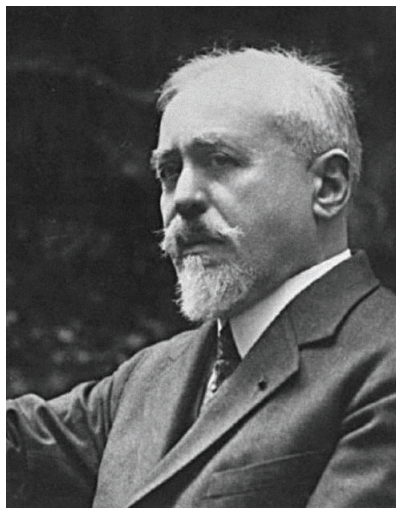
His *3e Symphonie* [Symphony No. 3] has become the best known, but the *4e*, the last significant incarnation of the Franckian tradition, is without a doubt his *magnum opus*. Whereas Magnard's first three symphonies date from 1889-96, this one was written later, between the end of 1911 and July 1913. It took the composer a lot of effort; contrary to the norm, he composed the piece directly for orchestra. The result is extraordinary. More concentrated than the *2e* and *3e Symphonies* [Symphonies No. 2 and 3], the piece is perfectly mastered; with a constant expressive power, it flexibly incorporates a classical structure and shows an impressive abundance of detail in both Magnard's writing and powerful orchestration.

The premiere of the *4e Symphonie* was given by the Orchestre de l'Union des Femmes Professeurs et Compositeurs, to whom the piece is dedicated. Apparently mediocre, the piece was reprised at the Société Nationale de Musique, on 16 May 1914, conducted by Rhené-Baton. This score was the last that Magnard wrote; a few months later, the composer died in Baron-sur-Oise trying to protect his manor from German troops.

The first movement of the piece, *Modéré* [Moderate], opens with a strange escalation from the wind section leading to an intense

phrase from the strings; the main motif that follows is the cyclic motif of the piece. After a slow start to shape the introduction, the tempo becomes more alert for the two contrasting themes, the first heroic and passionate, the second sweeping and melodious. The *Vif* [Lively] takes the form of a scherzo – it precedes the slow movement, as is often the case with Magnard. The main theme is rhythmic in essence, whereas the Trio calls upon a traditional style that the composer is fond of. The slow movement comes afterwards.

The beating heart of the score, *Sans Lenteur et Nuancé* [Subtle, Without Slowness], which is of unusual dimensions and is animated with an interior radiance, cannot be compared to anything else in French orchestral literature apart from the central section of Dukas's *Symphonie*. Three movements follow it, of a depth that is exempt from all pathos, each one containing a passionate parenthesis and seeing the return of the cyclical theme. The *Final*, vivid and impatient, opens with a spectacular evocation of the beginning of the symphony. In sonata form, it is based on two themes (the second being *Alla Zingarese*) to which the cyclical element is added, as well as a secondary motif, giving rise to a superb fugue. The impressive final development is a resounding chorale which comes to a close serenely on the cyclical theme.



## PAUL DUKAS

(1865-1935)

### *Symphonie en ut* [*Symphony in C*] (1894-96)

In spite of the conciseness of his production, Paul Dukas holds an essential position in French music. His language combines a solid classical heritage with modern tendencies close to those of Debussy. There are no unimportant works in Dukas's catalogue; he placed the bar so high when it came to his art that he destroyed a number of his pieces. His *Symphonie en ut*, which was not warmly welcomed when he conducted it at the Opéra on 3 January 1897, was established as a major score the following year by the Concerts Lamoureux.

At 30 – he composed the piece between 1894 and 1896 – Dukas demonstrated his mastery in his most ambitious work to date; carried by an irresistible impulse, a tightly designed, powerfully orchestrated theme expands in a rhapsodic way, driven by a game of contrasts and perpetual variation. There are only three movements: the score is even more animated than a scherzo. In 1904, Dukas reproached certain symphonic composers for “attributing a value to the form, independent of ideas”. In fact, the apparently classical structure of his first masterpiece stems from its development, from where its imperious force comes. On the same level as his *Sonate pour piano* [Piano Sonata] and *Ariane et Barbe-bleue* [Ariadne and Bluebeard], Dukas's *Symphonie* ranks alongside Franck's symphony



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(also in three movements), and holds its own alongside those of Bizet, Lalo, d'Indy and Chausson.

An energetic sonata form with three themes, full of brass parts, the movement *Allegro non troppo vivace, ma non fuoco* gives an impression of robustness that does not hinder its lyricism at all. The main theme of the second movement, *Andante espressivo e sostenuto*, is obviously influenced by the central movement of Schumann's *Symphony No. 2*: similar mind-blowing, high-pitched, elegiac chords produce the same harrowing impact as a “void” in the orchestra would. The following sections intensify; their drafts show that Dukas gradually developed the intermediary voices of the sound texture. After a more animated section, a return to the more distressing theme rounds off

this splendid movement. The finale, *Allegro spiritoso*, is a rondo that is overflowing with energy, in which the different motifs come together in the coda.

***L'Apprenti sorcier* [The Sorcerer's Apprentice]. Scherzo after a ballad by Goethe (1897)**

How can the disapproval that *L'Apprenti sorcier* has suffered in concert halls be explained, when it has obviously been a great success? Should Walt Disney's use of the piece in *Fantasia* (1940) and *Fantasia 2000* have meant its exclusion from the repertoire of admirable pieces of music? Composed in 1897, this symphonic poem offers family audiences the opportunity to gather together and let the orchestra shine in a pure work of art. It is hard not to be dazzled by

the perfect concurrence between the narration and the musical form, by the rhythmic energy and the brilliance of the development, by the unstoppable orchestration and the boldness of the harmonic colours. The lesson in *L'Apprenti sorcier* remained relevant at least until *The Firebird* by Stravinsky and *Jeux* [Games] by Debussy.

At its premiere on 18 May 1897, conducted by the composer himself at the Société Nationale de Musique, the piece left critics dumbfounded. Gaston Carraud wrote that, “Dukas has composed, with real mastery and with the liveliest imagination, a scherzo with a diabolic rhythm, which, whilst being wittily descriptive, remains utterly musical.” For Alfred Bruneau, “The composer displays an extremely personal opinion of the burlesque expression



[...], shaking up the themes in his extraordinary movement.” L’Ouvreuse (also known as Willy) puts it bluntly: “I very much like the broomstick’s tune!”

It does well to remember that the “*Scherzo symphonique*” [Symphonic Scherzo] is based on Goethe’s ballad *Der Zauberlehrling*: an apprentice, finding his master absent, puts a magic spell on a broom. He commands it to organise a procession of water buckets to clean the house, being careful not to cause any floods. But the apprentice forgets the word to end the spell, and snaps the broom in half... and the two broom pieces cause even more trouble! Hear-

ing his calls for help, the sorcerer reappears and takes the situation under control.

There are many themes that make up the musical discourse, notably those of the “magic spell” (a descent into the fantastic) and the “broomstick” (a comical melody on the bassoon, the star instrument of the piece). There’s an excellent treat when the theme is reprised: Dukas plays the theme in fugato to represent the broom broken in two (on the bassoon and bass clarinet)! The emergence of a grandiose fanfare symbolises that the “master’s domination” finally brings everything back to tranquillity.

***La Péri* [The Peri]. Dance poem (1911); Fanfare pour précéder *La Péri* (1912)**

In 1911, Dukas composed his last symphonic score, *La Péri*, for the dancer Natalia Trouhanova (to whom the piece is dedicated) and Diaghilev’s celebrated Ballets Russes. The story behind the “dance poem”, of which he is the author, is inspired by an old Persian tale: in his search for the flower of immortality, Iskender steals a sacred lotus flower from a Peri (a fairy in eastern mythology). The Peri dances to bewitch Iskender, who gives her the lotus back. The Peri can fulfil her destiny, to fly





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towards the light of Ormuzd, while Iskender perishes.

A disagreement between the ballerina and Diaghilev delayed the premiere of the piece, which was finally performed without the Ballets Russes. On 22 April 1912, at the Théâtre du Châtelet, Trouhanova played the Peri, choreographed by Ivan Clustine. Dukas composed an introductory *Fanfare* specially for the occasion, which was colourful and radiant. The ballet score itself, which the composer also describes as a “symphonic poem”, is a jewel of post-romanticism, on the threshold of impressionism. The two themes representing the heroes are subjected to incessant metamor-

phoses, and the orchestration has a distinctly oriental flavour.

Both the public and critics hailed *La Péri* a success. In *Comœdia*, a French cultural newspaper no longer in print, Louis Vuillemin called it a “remarkable piece”, saying: “Its constant beauty is strengthened at the same time – it has the most recent sound innovations and an obvious respect for classical structure and proportion. This piece confirms that Dukas is a lasting feature.” The irrational intransigence of the composer towards his work can be judged by remembering that he would have destroyed this score if those close to him had not convinced him of its quality. ...

Costumes for Iskender and Péri  
drawn by Léon Bakst for the original  
1911 production.



# FLORENT SCHMITT

(1870-1958)

*La Tragédie de Salomé* [*The Tragedy of Salome*], op. 50 (1907)

“When will your brilliant *Salomé* finally be published [...]? I have to confess that it has made me feel such a great amount of joy, more than any artwork has made me feel in a long time. [...] I have to tell you, I’m so proud that it is dedicated to me.” It was with these words that Stravinsky thanked Florent Schmitt for his *Tragédie de Salomé*. Based on a poem by the literary man Robert d’Humières, the score was written in 1907 for a ballet

danced by Loïe Fuller and directed by Ingelbrecht at the Théâtre des Arts on 9 November of the same year. Four years later, Schmitt reduced it by half and adapted it for a full orchestra, creating a real symphonic poem – dedicated to Stravinsky and premiered on 8 January 1911 at Concerts Colonne, conducted by Gabriel Pierné.

Daughter of Herodias, Salome seduced her uncle Herod to see the head of the prophet John the Baptist. On this theme, Schmitt paints a picture where exoticism bathed in sensuality and a brutality that reflects the darkest instincts of the human psyche are brought together. The hysteria of the rhythms such as the melodic arabesques directly suggest an eroticism that Fuller also had to translate to the stage. A sumptuous “Prélude” describes the Judean landscape surrounding Herod’s palace at sunset – the theme is played on the cor anglais and gradually taken over by the whole orchestra. The intoxicating sounds and magical arabesques in this section already make Schmitt one of the best, if not the best, of all the French Orientalists. In “*Les enchantements sur la mer*” [*The Enchantments of the Sea*], a solo soprano (or failing that, first oboe) is heard singing a disturbing chant devoid of words (it was



“gathered on the shores of the Dead Sea”, according to the score) which the other singers (or second oboe) join – here we think of Debussy’s “*Sirènes*” [Sirens] and the chorus of “*Filles d’Orlamonde*” [The Five Maids of Orlamonde] from *Ariane et Barbe-bleu* [Ariadne and Bluebeard] by Dukas. The “*Danse des éclairs*” [Dance of Lightning], which shows the beheading of John the Baptist, alternates both slow and tense passages. Finally, the “*Danse de l’effroi*” [Dance of terror] explodes with incredible violence; it was to remain unique until *Sacre du printemps* [Rite of Spring] six years later, inconceivable in its rhythmic novelty without the precedent found in this splendid tragedy.

***Antoine et Cléopâtre*. Six symphonic movements in two suites based on Shakespeare’s play, op. 69 (1919–20)**

Alongside Ravel’s *Daphnis et Chloé* and Roussel’s *Bacchus et Ariane*, the score of *Antoine et Cléopâtre* features among the greatest in French symphony music of that period. With its flamboyant impressionism combined with orientalism, it brings the conflict between two civilisations to life, as well as the tragedy of a hero ruined by passion-

ate love. Not as well-known as *La Tragédie de Salomé*, it nevertheless appears to have a tragic grandeur and an even greater force.

In 1917, the dancer Ida Rubinstein placed an order with Schmitt for some stage music for Shakespeare’s *Antony and Cleopatra*, newly translated by André Gide. After the premiere of the show on 14 June 1920 at the Opéra de Paris, played by the Orchestre des Concerts Lamoureux and conducted by Camille Chevillard, the composer arranged the score into two orchestral suites of three movements each; this new version was premiered in 1922 by the same musicians.

The first suite begins with the piece *Antoine et Cléopâtre*, an enchanting introduction to the lovers. *Le Camp de Pompée* [Pompey’s Camp] describes the vigil of arms by using only brass, timpani and drums (which makes it a great piece for concert bands). *La Bataille d’Actium* [The Battle of Actium] is full of violence and heaviness, its central section depicting a frightening surge. The second orchestral suite opens with the *Nuit au palais de la reine* [Night at the Queen’s Palace], an intoxicating section and a worthy descendant of Berlioz for its evocative force. After the savagery of *Orgie et danse* [Orgy and Dance], an anxious emotion ema-

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nates from *Tombeau de Cléopâtre* [Cleopatra’s Tomb]. Speaking to Schmitt, Gide found the perfect words to describe the score’s rare power of seduction: “Natural force, scale, accuracy in the contours, and the kind of musical eloquence that is so particular to you, which seems to compress emotion instead of exaggerating it – exactly what I wanted, what I expected from you, I have found in these pages.”

***Symphonie n° 2 [Symphony No. 2],  
op. 137 (1956)***

Inside the Palais des Fêtes at the Strasbourg Festival on 15 June 1958, the French music world was about to discover Florent Schmitt's *2<sup>e</sup> Symphonie*, conducted by Charles Munch. At the age of 87, the composer delivered one of his last productions – this piece was composed two years previously. Although he died two months later, Schmitt lost none of his legendary caustic humour: “Do you not think it’s too much like a death march?” he asked after it was played. It is true that at a time of continuing postmodernism, such as Varèse’s *Poème électronique* [Electronic Poem] and Stravinsky’s *Mouvements* [Movements], Schmitt’s postromanticism, even in diluted form, may have seemed like it was from another era. His *2<sup>e</sup> Symphonie* was nevertheless well received, evidenced by the soundtrack of the recording of its premiere. In the days afterwards, critics praised it as the accomplishment of a master. “It is completely whole, its sensitivity wrapped in modesty, with the same tenderness that poured out of the soprano solo of *Psaume 47* [Psalm 47] half a century ago,” wrote René Dumesnil.

The work is strikingly balanced.

With its downplayed lyricism and understated richness of sound (there is no magic spell: the orchestra sounds clear because there is no excessive doubling), it seems to be the result of simple renunciation. It should be pointed out that the *2<sup>e</sup> Symphonie* was a unique piece of great consequence in Schmitt’s orchestral catalogue. No extra-musical theme, no suggestive or humorous title, no attempt to escape its stated genre (unlike his symphony from 1937, which was a piano concerto disguised under the title *Symphonie concertante* [Sinfonia Concertante]). Pure music, in the full sense of the word; music to contemplate and love freely.

The first movement, *Assez animé* [Quite Lively], is an energetic section with bold sequences, suddenly slowing for the second theme. The piece’s centre of gravity is its *Lent – sans excès* [Slow – Not Excessive], meditative and fervent, devoid of pathos but containing overwhelming inflections; it would be easy to see this as Schmitt’s song of farewell. Characterised by abrupt rhythms, the last movement *Animé* [Animated] shows us the composer as himself, mischievous and rugged but capable of sudden depth, and in doing so always displaying dazzling craftsmanship.





## JEAN CRAS

(1879-1932)

### *Journal de bord* [Logbook]. Symphonic suite (1927)

Jean Cras did not have a choice. Descended from an old Breton family of mariners and introduced to music at an early age, he became a naval officer *and* a composer. “I could not escape from the obligation to write the music inside me,” he declared. After receiving advice from Henri Duparc, who saw in him one of the most gifted musicians he had ever met, Cras left behind a great number of scores, some of which are among the most famous in French music.

That is the case with *Journal de bord*, without a doubt the composer’s masterpiece, written in 1927 during a campaign on board La Provence, a ship commanded

by rear admiral Jean Cras. This score, which is permeated with a magnificent fervour, takes the form of a symphonic suite in three parts, which depicts the final part of a sea voyage between 8 p.m. and 8 a.m. the next morning. Whilst Debussy’s *La Mer* brings the natural elements into prime position, *Journal de bord* depicts the ocean through the eyes of the sailor. He has a very particular interior voice: the sea, as it is contemplated by the navigator, is simultaneously the subject of his reveries and an indication as to the state of his soul. Jean Cras manages to suggest this through subtle writing in which the descriptive dimension can only be seen at certain moments and is usually muted.

The first movement is entitled *Quart de 8 à minuit* [8 to Midnight watch] (bearing in mind that in the navy the French word *quart* means a period of four hours during which one part of the crew takes control). As its programme, Cras writes these words on his score, in the way they would be written in a traditional captain’s logbook: “Large swell – overcast sky opens up with the sunset – nothing in sight.” The music is born from the intertwining of the brass and woodwind sections over a scarcely perceptible murmur of strings. The motifs appear

(repeated chords, a monotonous eastern chant from the strings) and then combine until they reach a series of climaxes, before returning to the initial calm.

*Quart de minuit à 4* [Midnight to 4 watch], a peaceful section, begins on a flute solo with an iambic motif accompanied by a simple melody. In the logbook, there is this terse notation: *T.B.T. M.T.B. R.D.P.*, which in French naval jargon means “Very good weather – Very beautiful sea – Nothing in particular.” Beside this, the word “Moonlight” is stated. Without straying from its imposing calm, the music brings the iambic rhythm to its climax (an obvious homage to Debussy), a striking painting of the roaring immensity of the sea. The movement returns to its nocturnal mood. ...

“Land ahoy, straight ahead” marks the end of the imaginary logbook. The last movement, *Quart de 4 à 8* [4 to 8 watch], depicts a return to the land of men. With an animated tempo, a cello ostinato represents the thrust of the ship. The brass section calls out proudly and a dance theme appears, expressing the joy at the end of the voyage. After a melancholic and passionate central section, the piece veers towards its end with growing elation.



# ALBERT ROUSSEL

(1869-1937)

*Le Festin de l'araignée* [*The Spider's Feast*]. Ballet-pantomime (symphonic fragments), op. 17 (1912-13)

A little gem of delicateness and full of poetry, the score of the “ballet-pantomime” *Le Festin de l'araignée* ends Albert Roussel's first period. Composed between November 1912 and February 1913 at the request of Jacques Rouché, director of the Théâtre des Arts, it is based on the story by Gilbert des Voisins, himself inspired by *Souvenirs entomologiques* [Entomological Recollections] by the naturalist Jean-Henri Fabre (1882).

In a sunny garden, a spider spins its web and watches for its prey. Ants, butterflies, beetles and mayflies go about their business, and some of them are caught in the web.

As the spider prepares to devour them, it is killed by a praying mantis. Night falls in the garden, and a glow-worm glitters at the foot of a rose bush ... Premiered on 3 April 1913 and conducted by Gabriel Grovlez, *Le Festin de l'araignée* was enthusiastically received. Not only thanks to the incredible spider's web stretched out across the stage, but also thanks to the music, whose success drove Rouché, who became director of the Opéra, to place a new order with Roussel – and that's how we came to have *Padmâvatî*.

For this entomological story, the composer was very refined in his style, which was particularly visual and with a touching amount of realism, seen in his description of the “little crowd of insects”, in his words. Shortly after the piece was played at the Théâtre des Arts, Roussel decided to add the adapted “*Fragments symphoniques*” [Symphonic Fragments] to the score. They only represent half of the original ballet music, but they cover the main movements, arranged in a series of

miniatures. In spite of its orchestral lightness bordering on chamber music, it would be a mistake to label the score as impressionist. Paul Poulenc, a friend of Roussel and also close to Debussy and Fauré, wrote to him with some insights: “*Le Festin de l'araignée* [...] should only be played by a full orchestra and [...] loses a lot less in concert than *Petrushka*, which demands movement and action. In your ballet there is more music than what we actually call music. You are more ‘evocative’ than impressionist.”

In the *Prélude* [Prelude], a gentle flute solo develops over a carpet of strings; in the sunny garden, the spider glides effortlessly over the threads it is spinning. Then it is the *Entrée des fourmis* [Entrance of the Ants], marching to display their infallible organisation; the music becomes more sluggish as the ants try to lift up a rose petal. In the *Danse du papillon* [Butterfly's Dance], the flutes are put to the test to show, cleverly, the twirling action of the butterfly's wings; but the frivolity is pushed aside for astonishment as

# “IN YOUR BALLET THERE IS MORE MUSIC THAN WHAT WE ACTUALLY CALL MUSIC. YOU ARE MORE ‘EVOCATIVE’ THAN IMPRESSIONIST.”

the capture and utter misery of the butterfly is witnessed as it is caught in the spider's web. The *Éclosion de l'éphémère* [Birth of the Mayfly] is easily portrayed with static and dreamlike music – certainly the most Debussy-like part of the score – which is full of fresh colours. The *Danse* of the insect is interpreted by the celesta and a violin solo, but the *Funérailles de l'éphémère* [Mayfly's Funeral] comes afterwards. The cor anglais and clarinet play a simple and serious melody over a beautiful harmonic tune, to which the strings respond with emotion. After the funeral march, *La nuit tombe sur le jardin solitaire* [Night Falls in the Solitary Garden], bringing back the serene calm of the beginning of the piece.

***Bacchus et Ariane* [Bacchus and Ariadne]. Orchestral suites, op. 43 (1930)**

The second of Roussel's three ballets, *Bacchus et Ariane* is considered to be one of the masterpieces of the genre, alongside Ravel's *Daph-*

*nis et Chloé* [Daphnis and Chloë] and Schmitt's *Antoine et Cléopâtre* [Antony and Cleopatra]. Composed between June and December 1930, shortly after his *3e Symphonie*, the piece was premiered on 22 May 1931 at the Opéra de Paris, conducted by Philippe Gaubert. The dancers Serge Lifar (the choreographer of the work), Olga Spessivtzeva and Serge Peretti were the stars of the stage. The story behind the ballet, written by playwright Abel Hermant, is based on the same myth as that in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: abandoned by Theseus on the island of Naxos, Ariadne throws herself into the sea; Bacchus saves her and makes her immortal by kissing her; they both dance with the fauns and bacchantes of Naxos.

The ballet *Bacchus et Ariane* was not a great success, but its music received nothing but praise. It was particularly noticed in concerts in the form of orchestral suites, one of which was premiered in April 1933 and conducted by Charles Munch, the other in February 1934 by Pierre Monteux. Each

one consists of the music from one of the acts in *Bacchus et Ariane*, without interruptions or rearrangements; a sign that the score was conceived as an autonomous piece from the beginning, even if it is faithful to the action.

Roussel's music, which is very sumptuous and written brilliantly, is noted for its wide expressive range, its harmonic roughness and its endless rhythmic life, sustained by powerful and intense orchestration. Using a system of driving motifs attached to the characters, the score is full of musical gems (for example, in the *Danse du labyrinthe* [Dance of the Labyrinth] the violins never stray from the high register to represent Ariadne's thread). In the wake of impressionism, without, however, renouncing postromantic lyricism, *Bacchus et Ariane* equally has a neo-classical feel – much more so than *Le Festin de l'araignée*.

In the first suite, we notice the Dionysiac fury of the *Prélude* [Prelude], the liveliness of the “*Danse du labyrinthe*” and Theseus's



# THE SUCCESS OF THIS PIECE COMES FROM ITS UNDERSTATED EXPRESSIVITY AND GREAT NOBILITY.

spectacular attempt to capture Bacchus. The second suite seduces further with its variety. From the sleepiness of the *Prélude* to the *Bacchanale* [Bacchanal] finale, including the mystery of the *Réveil d'Ariane* [Ariadne's Awakening], Bacchus's virtuoso dancing (accompanied by sensational flute solos that are reminiscent of those in *Daphnis*), the extraordinary sensuality of *Baiser de Bacchus* [Bacchus's Kiss], the savagery of the procession of the thiasus, the rise of powerfulness in the *Danse d'Ariane* [Ariadne's Dance] and the relentless energy of Ariadne and Bacchus, the tension never wanes.

## ***Symphonie n° 4* [Symphony No. 4], op. 53 (1934)**

The harmonic essence and the expressive kind of fury particular to Albert Roussel's style are found in one of their best incarnations in his *4e Symphonie*. Close to his *3e Symphonie*, which precedes it by four years, it never managed to achieve the same fame. Composed between 10 August and 31 December 1934, his *4e Symphonie* was premiered with success at the Concerts populaires de Pasdeloup on 19 October 1935, conducted by Albert Wolff, to whom the piece is dedicated. "The audience reacted

very warmly and the press was almost unanimously favourable," Roussel wrote shortly afterwards to Guy Ropartz.

Classical architecture, piquant harmonies sometimes flirting with polytonality, finely crafted polyphony: the *4e Symphonie* reminds us that Roussel was one of the rare composers, during Debussy's lifetime and afterwards, to propose an alternative to the impressionist airs that had invaded French music – Les Six took it to heart. The conciseness of the piece's spirit is to be admired, from the perfectly concentrated and impressive liveliness, to the raw rhythmic bones and the beautiful (but not overly affected) orchestration.

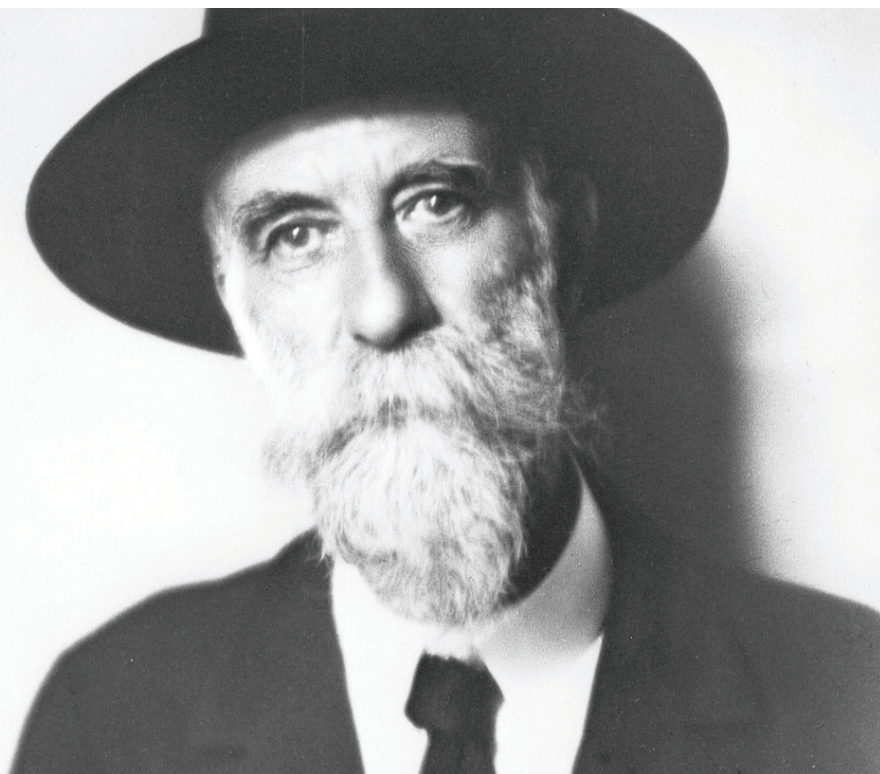
The *Allegro con brio* is introduced with a sombre *Lento*. This places on standby, in the cor anglais and bassoon solos, material that will be reused later. The first theme appears on the strings, made up of energetic and almost dislocated arpeggios that produce a violent effect, while the second theme contrasts with its lyricism. The development exploits these elements with growing intensity. The *Lento molto* is a serious reverie, written in a moving language that is typically Rousselian. Its second theme, played by the first violins, uses the same material as in the

introduction. The success of this piece comes from its understated expressivity and great nobility, which does not at all sully the grandiose return of the first theme.

The spiritual movement *Allegro scherzando* is constantly surprising. A march, subtly varied, leads to different episodes; the events – wind solos, rhythmic surprises, contrasting features – are linked together with an overarching rhythm. Even more energetic, the chorus in the *Allegro molto* is played on the oboe. Interventions from the brass section give power to the writing, which becomes more and more impetuous. As the piece concludes, it is with a certain fury that the chorus finds itself varied with a new rhythm. It is difficult not to be dazzled by the rhythmic force and the exhilarating frenzy of this section.







## CHARLES KŒCHLIN

(1867-1950)

***La Course de printemps* [The Spring Race]. Symphonic poem after *The Jungle Book* (1908-25)**

Despite the originality and richness of his production, Charles Kœchlin remains a largely unknown composer. Among the most learned artists of his time, a teacher and leading theorist, he explored the possibilities of music without worrying about trends nor eschewing avant-garde techniques. Following Berlioz and Debussy, he treated the orchestra as if he were an alchemist, creating often dreamlike

sounds that had never been heard before (his *Traité de l'Orchestration* [Treatise on Orchestration], a book on his expertise in this field, is an invaluable reference).

Kœchlin considered *La Course de printemps* to be one of his major works. This symphonic poem, which is of huge dimensions, summarises the mastery of the composer at the end of his first period. Written between 1908 and 1915 and then between 1925 and 1927, it is the second part of an impressive cycle inspired by Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book*. The cycle in question forms the heart of Kœchlin's orchestral production. Spanning four decades (1899-1940), he composed *Trois Poèmes du Livre de la jungle* [Three Poems from The Jungle Book], *La Course de printemps*, *La Méditation de Purun Bhagat*



[The Meditation of Purun Bhagat], *La Loi de la jungle* [The Law of the Jungle] and *Les Bandar-log* [Scherzo of the Monkeys], altogether producing a total running time of 80 minutes – *La Course de Printemps* represents more than a third of that alone.

The score was well received, but it unsettled people. The day after its premiere in the Salle Pleyel on 29 November 1932, with Roger Désormière leading the Orchestre Symphonique de Paris, the critic Henry Prunières mentioned “an abundant piece that could be considered excessive” and of which “the complexity of the form is extreme”. This form, explains Kœchlin, “is a stylised forest, freely stylised.” *La Course de printemps* features a young Mowgli, raised in the jungle by a she-wolf, who is friends with a tiger and a bear. Without a doubt, this hero personified the idea of freedom for the composer, the keyword of his artistic philosophy – perhaps the reason for which the piece was sometimes considered a parable of musical creation.

Written in an unclassifiable language including polytonality and atonality, *La Course de printemps* looks to the future and sometimes foreshadows the work of Olivier Messiaen or Henri Dutilleux. Interspersed with around sixty narrative stage directions, Kœchlin himself

admits that the score was conceived with a cinematographic spirit. Written in four connected parts, a fascinating sound universe unfolds. With a certain mysticism, the symphonic poem evokes first and foremost the jungle and the beings who populate it in the shadows, followed by a portrait of Mowgli who, troubled by the appearance of his desire and believing himself to be poisoned, charges into the forest. On the edge of a murky lake, he contemplates the stars and his human spirit is revealed to him: a magnificent nocturne of mystery and austerity brings the piece to a close.

***Seven Stars’ Symphony. Symphonic suite, op. 132 (1933)***

After seeing *The Blue Angel* in 1933, Charles Kœchlin developed a passion for cinema. Between July and September that year, he composed the very original *Seven Stars’ Symphony*. Each movement of the piece is a portrait of a movie star, and in some ways it is the soundtrack to an imaginary film. The score plunges the listener into the realm of cinematic art and illusion with its artistry and delightful colouring – the orchestra includes piano, celesta, harpsichord and ondes Martenot. Over the course of the following years, Kœchlin was inspired by certain movie stars,

especially women, devoting no fewer than one hundred miniatures to the actress Lilian Harvey, and other pieces to Ginger Rogers and Jean Harlow.

Partially premiered on 14 December 1944 by the Orchestre de la Radiodiffusion Française, conducted by Manuel Rosenthal, the *Seven Stars’ Symphony* enjoyed its first full premiere on 16 November 1966 in London, with Norman Del Mar at the head of the BBC Symphony Orchestra. The first movement, *Douglas Fairbanks*, is full of flourishes and (falsely Oriental) sensual melismata – their explanation is found in the subtitle: In memory of *The Thief of Bagdad*. In *Lilian Harvey*, a lively “minuet fugue” is employed; the wind section brings lightness, the strings bring lyricism and the harpsichord exoticism. Described as “pagan choral”, *Greta Garbo* begins with an eerie solo on the ondes Martenot. In a modal atmosphere, its texture is developed without going too far; Kœchlin manages beautifully to express the mystery of the Divine.

*Clara Bow et la joyeuse Californie* [Clara Bow and joyful California] is a scherzo-waltz whose gaiety and unexpected twists portray the character of the scandalous actress effortlessly; a perfect embodiment of a “flapper” (a young, modern, free woman during the twenties).



# ARTHUR HONEGGER

(1892-1955)

*Symphonie liturgique* [Liturgical  
Symphony] (1945-46)

Played on the bass clarinet, the theme of the moving *Tribute to Marlene Dietrich* is based on the letters of the actress's name; a beautiful flute and piano duet which uses the orchestra as a backdrop gives way to different variations of the theme, which is still audible. Even more tense and sometimes serious, *Emil Jannings*, subtitled "Remembering *The Blue Angel*", is perhaps referring to the tragic fate of the character Rath in Sternberg's film.

The last piece, *Charlie Chaplin*, represents more than a third of the *Seven Stars' Symphony*. Kœchlin explained that it "attempts to represent the inner character of 'The Tramp'". Again, two melodic themes come from the name of the actor; nine sequences evoke typical situations from Chaplin's films, for example, *Le sommeil du juste* [The Big Sleep], the *Berceuse du Kid* [Kid's Lullaby], *La Lutte contre un costaud* [Fight Against a Heavyweight], *Sérénade - Tango de rêve* [Serenade - Dream Tango] and the *Apothéose de Charlot* [The Tramp's Grand Finale].

"There is nothing more foolish than unrelenting barbarity in a civilisation," wrote Arthur Honegger to express the message behind his *Symphonie liturgique*, composed shortly after WWII, between October 1945 and April 1946. The humanist philosophy of the piece concerns all types of thoughtlessness: "I wanted to symbolise the reaction of modern man to the flood of cruelty, stupidity, suffering, mechanisation, bureaucracy [...] I have musically represented the conflict that is carried in all our hearts between surrendering to blind forces [...] and the instinct for happiness, the love of peace." A situation which, unfortunately, is no less relevant today.

This third symphony by Hon-

# “I WANTED TO SYMBOLISE THE REACTION OF MODERN MAN TO THE FLOOD OF CRUELTY, STUPIDITY, SUFFERING, MECHANISATION, BUREAUCRACY[...]

egger is the broadest of the five he composed, and the only one to deliver a message. Commissioned by the Pro Helvetia foundation, the piece was premiered on 17 August 1946 in Zurich with Charles Munch leading the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande. Regularly played until the 1970s – notably by Karajan, who loved playing it – this symphony powerfully seizes the listener with its eruptive writing and modernity; comforting lyricism of disarming sincerity responds to brutal violence. After Beethoven, an influence Honegger claims here, rarely has a score been seen that has been animated in such a way by opposing forces.

The titles of the symphony's movements come from Catholic liturgy, but the message is clearly meant to be universal. The movement *Dies Irae* [Day of Wrath]

offers no respite; Honegger translates it as “brutal, eternal sentiments, small tribes [...] try in vain to escape the cruel traps of destiny”. The unstopping music depicts “the inexpressible chaos of humanity”. The movement *De Profundis Clamavi* [From the depths I have called out to you] is “the meditation of man abandoned by divinity – a meditation that is already a prayer”, Honegger explains. A passage of intense and troubled hope, which is absolutely overwhelming when at the end the dove's song is played on the flute, “the promise of peace [...] in the midst of disaster”. *Dona Nobis Pacem* [Grant us peace] expresses the “growth of collective stupidity”, symbolised by a mechanical march. The movement is stretched out towards its climax, “an immense clamour [which] escapes

from a feeling of oppression”. One of the most beautiful moments in all Honegger's productions follows the extreme dissonance: an adagio of rare purity in which the flute, piccolo and violin solos soar in an unreal way, “as if the desire for peace finally brought an end to the horror of disorder.”

***Symphonie n° 4 (Deliciae basilienenses)* [Symphony No. 4 (*The Delights of Basel*)] (1946)**

In July 1946, in the wake of his passionate *Symphonie n° 3*, Honegger began a score with a completely opposing character: his *Symphonie n° 4*. Pastoral and confident, it could be described “as a derivation of Haydn or Mozart, in both spirit and form”, according to the musician. Honegger expresses the joy he felt that summer in Basel, beside



conductor and patron Paul Sacher, sponsor and dedicatee of the piece, for the occasion of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his chamber orchestra. Premiered by them on 21 February 1947, the *Symphonie n° 4* is as a consequence subtitled *Deliciae basilienses* [The Delights of Basel]. The piece succeeds in the challenge of balancing fresh inspiration, grace and transparent textures, with Honegger's great dexterity for polyphonic writing.

The pastoral character is established from the introduction of *Lento e Misterioso - Allegro*. Two themes are developed in a stunningly sweet atmosphere. In the middle, the piano and glockenspiel embody the bell tolling (the one in Basel, perhaps); the movement comes to a close by returning to its slow introduction. The movement "*Larghetto*" presents an exquisite polyphonic work, close to a chaconne, where a serious bassline, a theme based on a folk melody from Basel called *Z'Basel an mym Rhy*, birdsong motifs and a second theme are blended together. Far from the austerity that may have been expected, the musical discourse proves to be tender and wonderfully spirited. The final movement, "*Allegro*", is the most skilful construction of the symphony: five themes are combined progressively in a form that is somewhere between a rondo, pas-sacaglia and fugue. The complexity

of its structure is to be admired, but sonorous jubilation and celebration take precedence. After a beautiful central adagio, the polyphonic profusion starts again, even more beautiful than before, and a typical motif from *Basler Morgenstreich* (the famous Carnival of Basel) emerges, with its signature fifes and drums. A nocturne brings the piece to a close, like a "small cloud of dust that flies away", according to Honegger.

#### ***Pastorale d'été* [Summer Pastoral] Symphonic poem (1920)**

It was after his second orchestral piece, *Pastorale d'Été*, was premiered that Arthur Honegger stepped out of the anonymity of the small artistic avant-garde circles. On 17 February 1921, conducted by Vladimir Golschmann, the short symphonic poem struck with its poetry and redeeming simplicity – at its premiere it won the Prix Verley, awarded by the audience. Composed in August 1920 in Wengen, Switzerland, the piece is inspired by a holiday Honegger spent in the Bernese Alps a few weeks before. As an epigraph to the score, the musician wrote this line from *Illuminations* by Rimbaud: "I kissed the dawn of summer." Written for a reduced ensemble (single woodwind and French horn), *Pastorale d'Été* depicts a high mountain landscape in the morn-

ing, or perhaps rather the impact it has, without giving in to the picturesque (even if some birdsong can be made out among the winds, which are particularly showcased).

In the first movement of the piece, *Calme* [Calm], an oscillation of strings establishes a mild sleepiness; the French horn and oboe play a fixed theme, which is soon taken over by the strings. The central movement, *Vif et gai* [Lively and Cheerful], gives rise to a second theme, more popular and rhythmic, played by the wind section. The piece becomes animated without losing its rustic character. Upon its return, *Calme* keeps some excerpts from the central section.

Some considered *Pastorale d'Été* to be an "up-to-date" version of *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* [Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun]. Its modest dimensions, its rustic ambience and the role of the wind instruments encourage the comparison. But Honegger, then a member of Les Six, uses a more traditional language in the piece than Debussy used. Nevertheless, it should not be forgotten that shortly afterwards he composed one of his most experimental pieces, *Horace Victorieux* [Victorious Horace]. The use of simple language in *Pastorale d'Été* reflects a conscious and voluntary choice; and it is thanks to the harmony between the project and the means he applied that the piece enjoyed such great success.



# DARIUS MILHAUD

(1892-1974)

***Le Bœuf sur le toit* [The Ox on the Roof]. Cinema symphony with South American tunes (1919)**

In February 1917, Darius Milhaud moved to Brazil as the secretary of Paul Claudel, Minister Plenipotentiary of France. After arriving in the middle of the Rio Carnival, he discovered a “lively and fanciful” music whose richness struck him: “There is a lot to learn from these hectic rhythms, from these melodies that are played all night long, whose greatness comes from monotony.” Upon his return to France, between May and December 1919, Milhaud took

advantage of his discoveries: “Still haunted by the memories of Brazil, I amused myself by collecting folk songs, tangos, maxixes, sambas and even a Portuguese fado and transcribing them with a returning theme between each tune like a rondo.” This resulted in the exuberant *Bœuf sur le Toit*, threaded with the characteristic sound of the guiro (percussion instrument), and whose chorus alternates no fewer than fifteen times with different syncopated dances. Its title is an echo of a Brazilian song, *O boi no telhado*.

Milhaud’s idea was that the piece should be able to accompany



*Le Boeuf sur le toit*  
by Darius Milhaud.

any one of Charlie Chaplin's films: it is about providing an equivalent to the funny and touching character of The Tramp, a symbol of "man's unnecessary effort against his fate," in the words of musicologist Paul Collaer, Milhaud's friend and biographer. *Le Bœuf sur le Toit* kept its subtitle *Cinema Symphony*, but Jean Cocteau, the brains behind the group Les Six (to which the composer belonged), had another idea: to make the piece into a music hall show (more than a "ballet", strictly speaking). It was called *Le Bœuf sur le Toit* or *The Nothing Doing Bar*: described as a "farce", it takes place in a bar during the American Prohibition, and depicts the meeting of a

boxer, a black child, a bookmaker and a giant policeman, who was decapitated by the fan (a reference to the legend of Salome!). The premiere took place on 21 February 1920 at the Comédie des Champs-Élysées, alongside Poulenc's *Cocardes* [Cockades] and the foxtrot *Adieu New York!* by Auric. The famous trio of clowns, the Fratellini brothers (the connection between classical performing arts and the circus is one of Cocteau's ideals), was notably evoked in the set designs by Raoul Dufy, while the orchestra was conducted by Vladimir Golschmann. Milhaud's fun and colourful score was at first only thought of as a sketch. Subsequent concerts proved that its frenzy, an echo of the Brazil-

ian way of life, is based on more complex writing than it appears, sometimes crudely polytonal. Two pieces were drawn from it, one for violin and piano (*Le Bœuf sur le Toit*, "Cinema Fantasy") and one for solo piano (*Tango des Fratellini* [Fratellini Brothers' Tango]). With its frantic rhythms, open melodies and spiced-up harmonies, *Le Bœuf sur le Toit* became one of the manifestos of Les Six. In 1922, a café in the 8<sup>th</sup> arrondissement of Paris borrowed its name from the piece, becoming the symbol of the artistic effervescence of the inter-war period, bringing together Picasso, Ravel, Proust, Coco Chanel and Chaplin amid the vapours of jazz played by Jean Wiéner and Clément Doucet.



# OLIVIER MESSIAEN

(1908-92)

## *Les Offrandes oubliées* [*The Forgotten Offerings*]. **Symphonic meditation (1930)**

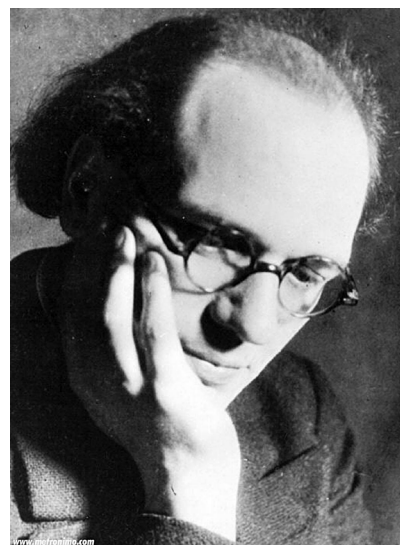
At only 22 years old, Olivier Messiaen was already in the public eye. On 19 February 1931 at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris, his first orchestral work, *Les Offrandes oubliées*, was premiered by the Orchestre des Concerts Straram, conducted by founder Walter Straram. The young musician composed it the previous summer, just after completing his studies at the Conservatory, where he was taught by Paul Dukas.

The score stands out for its new sounds, its religious inspiration and its expressive intensity. “I love the melodic colours that are so strangely subtle and, in its power, the accents of such an eloquent bitterness,” wrote Florent Schmitt. Although still marked by a certain amount of impressionism, *Les Offrandes oubliées* already had a unique tone. Messiaen’s language was far from being fixed, but some of its features were already present: modality, chants inspired by plain-chant, harmonies defined by dissonances, uneven bars, sometimes enormous or sometimes dreamlike orchestration. With Ravel still being alive, Messiaen was clearly looking towards the future.

The three connected sections of *Offrandes oubliées* successively evoke Christ on the cross, human sin

and Christ’s comforting love. “Very slow, painful, deeply sad,” it says on the first page. The young composer indicates: “Arms extended, overwhelmed with sorrow, on the tree of the Cross you shed your blood.” A long melody unfolds on the strings in unison, while the wind and brass sections alternate on stationary chords; this passage, which is unusually economical in its means, emanates a poignant sense of desolation. The middle section, which bears the words “Quick, fierce, desperate, gasping”, depicts the fall of man in a nightmarish vision: “Driven by madness and a serpent’s bite, in a breathless, unbridled, continuous race, we descend into sin as if into a tomb,” wrote Messiaen. Here some of his influences can be perceived; the strength of the writing and the rhythmic power are reminiscent of Dukas’s *L’Apprenti Sorcier*, Stravinsky’s *Le Sacre du printemps* and some pieces by Honneger and Roussel.

The last section of the triptych has only twenty-seven bars but accounts for half of its duration. “This adorable Mercy offering the bread of Life and Love. You love us, sweet Jesus, we had forgotten”, concludes Messiaen. In motionless time, “Extremely slow (with great mercy and love)”, the piece presents nothing less than a vision of eternity. Its texture is meticulously designed: a long melody rises on the first violins, supported by chords



brought to life by some second violins and solo violas fitted with mutes. An unreal serenity emanates from this conclusive section in which Messiaen saw “reds, golds, and blues (like a distant stained-glass window)”.

### ***Turangalîlâ-Symphonie* (1946–48)**

Fifteen years later, Olivier Messiaen had established himself as a rising star in French music. He received an order from Serge Koussevitzky, patron and conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra: “Create the work you want for me, in the style you want, of whatever length you want, with the orchestral formation you want ...” Between July 1946 and November 1948, the musician composed the *Turangalîlâ-Symphonie*. Derived from Sanskrit words, Messiaen explained that its title means, “Love song, joyful hymn, time, movement, rhythm, life and death, all at once.” With the cycle of melodies *Harawi* (1945) and the *Cinq Rechants* for choir (1948), the piece is the second part of a triptych inspired by

the legend of Tristan and Isolde, from which the composer retains the idea of a “fatal love, [...] which exceeds the body, and even exceeds the reaches of the mind.”

Superlatives seem very weak when confronted with *Turangalîlâ-Symphonie*. A blend of Messiaen’s universes of sound and composition, the score consists of ten movements linked by cyclic themes and is intended for an enormous orchestra, with a massive brass section and ample percussion. The ondes Martenot is added to the mix, the wailing of which sometimes dominate the mass, and a piano that “ornaments” the orchestra (according to the composer), in such a virtuoso and exposed manner that the piece is almost a *sinfonia concertante*.

After the *Introduction*, which proposes the “statue theme” and “flower theme”, movements conjuring up images of love alternate with others entitled *Turangalîlâ*; two scherzos bring each half of the symphony to a close. In particular, we notice the monumental *Turangalîlâ 1* and its four themes, the complex structure of the *Chant d’amour 2*

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AND ECSTA-  
TIC LYRICISM

...

[Love Song 2], the exhilarating *Joie du sang des étoiles* [Joy of the Blood of the Stars], the mesmerising stasis of *Jardin du sommeil d'amour* [Garden of the Sleep of Love], the richness of the *Développement de l'amour* [Development of Love] and the ending glory of the *Finale*.

The *Turangalîla-Symphonie* was premiered in Boston on 2 December 1949, not by Koussevitzky, who was too weak, but by his protégé, Leonard Bernstein. Following the premiere, the Boston Globe denounced the piece as “the longest and most futile music within memory”, and the Boston Herald spoke of “appalling melodic tawdriness”. Admittedly, the piece may irritate some with its mixture of elaboration and avant-gardism, of aural brutality and ecstatic lyricism (at its European premiere in late July 1950 at the Aix-en-Provence Festival, it aroused heated debates). But its power is unique. Excessive, overflowing and blinding; the score has well and truly established itself as a classic of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

***Le Réveil des oiseaux* [The Birds' Awakening] (1953)**

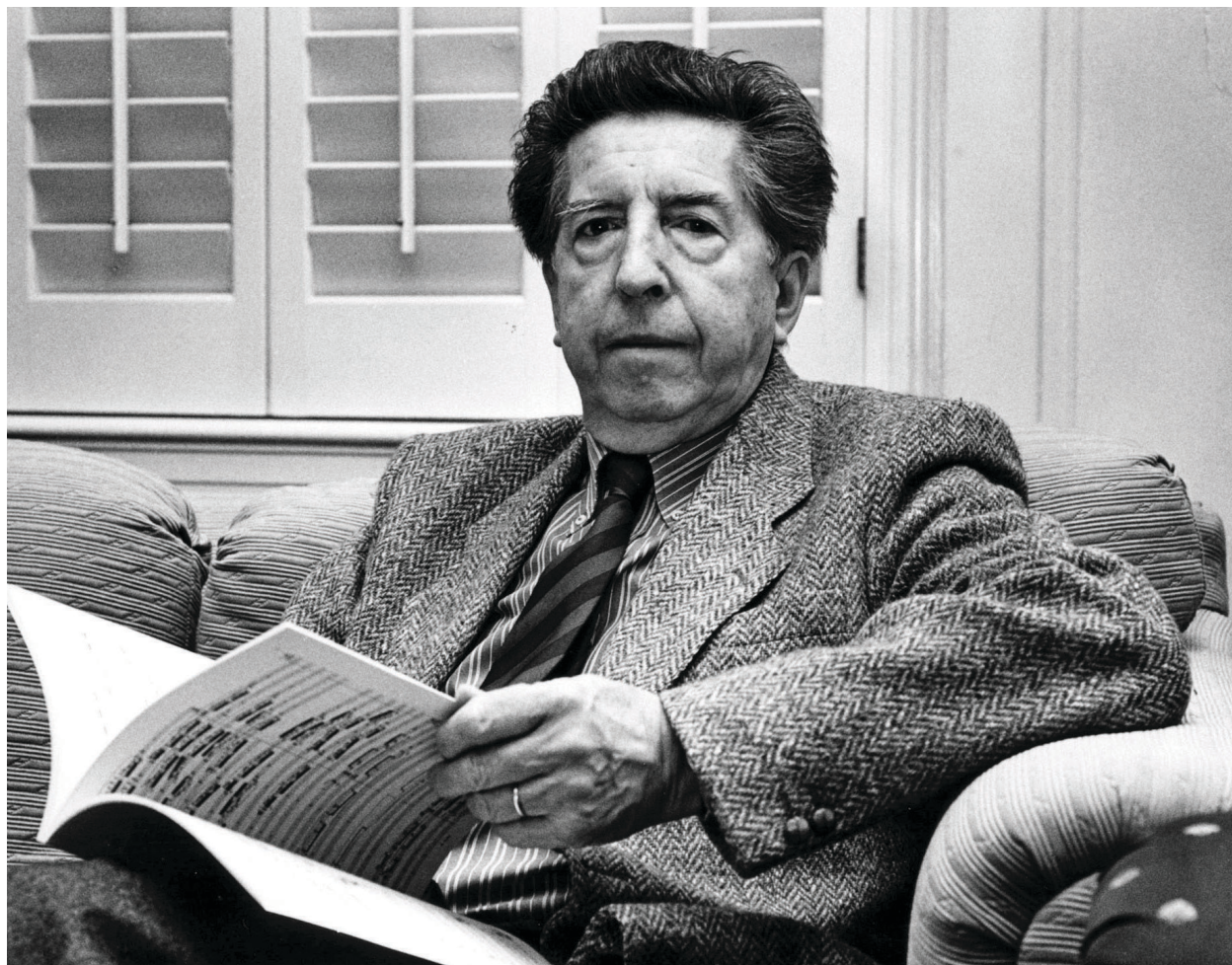
Olivier Messiaen liked to be defined as a “composer, rhythmist and ornithologist”. Fascinated by birds since he was a child, he acquired the habit of transcribing their songs and including them in his own pieces. In 1953, for the first time, he devoted an entire score to them: *Le Réveil des oiseaux*, a highly poetic work, was a piano concerto with an original conception. This piece was the only one in Messiaen's catalogue to contain only birdsongs, properly identified, “without any rhythm or counterpoint added,” stated Messiaen. It brings together the birdsongs of the Île-de-France and faithfully reproduces their rhythm of life and singing between midnight and noon, on a spring day: “This is a completely truthful work,” the composer liked to say.

The score is fairly symmetrical, structured around six piano cadences alternating with the whole orchestra, the central one being the most elaborate. Close to chamber music, the first section, *Minuit* [Midnight], introduces some birds (nightingale, owl, wryneck, warbler, lark, night-

jar). Then “4 am, dawn, the birds' awakening” arrives: a tutti intensifies until it becomes a tremendous flurry. The silence descends suddenly with the first ray of sunlight. A new section begins, “*Chants de la matinée*” [Morning Songs], which concludes with an extensive piano cadence. Finally, “*Midi: Grand Silence*” [Mid-day: The Great Silence] showcases the last songs (finches, great spotted woodpecker, cuckoo).

*Le Réveil des oiseaux* is not abstract, on the contrary – the same cannot be said of some of Messiaen's subsequent ornithological pieces: *Catalogue d'oiseaux* [Bird Catalogue] (1956–58), *La Fauvette passerinette* [The Subalpine Warbler] (1961), *La Fauvette des jardins* [The Garden Warbler] (1970) and *Petites Esquisses d'oiseaux* [Small Sketches of Birds] (1985) proved themselves to be somewhat dry at times. Dedicated to Jacques Delamain, Messiaen's ornithology teacher, the piece was premiered on 11 October 1953 at the Donaueschingen Festival, with Yvonne Loriod on piano and the SWF Sinfonie-orchester Baden-Baden, conducted by Hans Rosbaud.





# HENRI DUTILLEUX

(1916-2013)

*Symphonie n° 1* [*Symphony No. 1*]  
(1949-51)

While fully immersing his roots in tradition, Henri Dutilleux gradually entered into modernity, away from the prevailing currents of the avant-garde. Composed between 1949 and May 1951, the *Symphonie n° 1*, also his first major orchestral

work, already demonstrated his quest for a personal style. There are “few [pieces] that bring together, in such a radiant form, so much science, classicism and originality,” wrote his biographer Pierrette Mari. The score was premiered on 7 June 1951 at the Maison de la Radio, performed by the Orchestre National and conducted by Roger Désormière.

It must be said again and again what a masterpiece the *Symphonie n° 1* is, even if the subsequent achievements of Dutilleux were somewhat overlooked. Without seeking a radical break, his language is marked by “a certain atonality,

spontaneous and relative,” said the composer – an atonality that showed a clear evolution from his *Piano Sonata* (1948), recognised by Dutilleux as his first opus.

At a time when the serial avant-garde was being established, to compose a “symphony” (even though Dutilleux was unsure of the use of this term) could appear reactionary. The musician, however, sought to renew the genre, echoing global architecture. His *Symphonie n° 1* rejects pre-established frameworks – deriving from sonata form, involving developments and re-exposures – and instead leans towards organic growth and variation of the material. This work declares the concept of memory to be one of Dutilleux’s main concerns, which was brought full circle in *Métaboles* [Metabolas] (1965) and *Ainsi la nuit* [Thus the Night] (1977).

In *Passacaille* [Passacaglia], he varies a sequence of four bars thirty-five times with great fluidity. Played by the double basses, it then disperses into different instrumental groups. From the very first bars, the similarity to jazz in Dutilleux’s style is apparent (a certain nonchalance and a propensity for blue notes, probably); the influence of Bartók is also fairly clear. The *Scherzo* is a feverish and fantastic *perpetuum mobile*. Its main theme, whose notes are repeated nervously, gives it a surprising virtuosity. The section ends with the grand finale of this material, which finally reaches a conclusion with a resonant major chord.

In the “*Intermezzo*”, a melody is started on the horn before being played by the violins, and it unfolds without repeating itself. Here

Dutilleux implemented a technique that remained dear to him: that of the progressive self-generation of the material. In a climate based on anxiety and numbness, the impression of improvisation dominates. Like the initial movement, the “*Finale*” is based on a principle of variation. A powerful choral theme, taken from the “*Intermezzo*”, results in six metamorphoses and a coda. The extreme force of the lyricism is often reminiscent of Albert Roussel. After various peaks of intensity a sleepiness settles in, illustrating the “incantatory power of music” which Dutilleux was always searching for.

### ***Le Loup* [The Wolf]. Symphonic fragments (1952–53)**

Around 1952, the dancer and choreographer Roland Petit, founder of the Ballets de Paris, commissioned a score for the ballet *Le Loup* from Dutilleux. He brought the composer together with Jean Anouilh and Georges Neveux, the authors, and Carzou, the set designer. Their show was premiered at the Théâtre de l’Empire in Paris on 17 March 1953, with Petit in the title role. Running worldwide for many years, *Le Loup* was one of the most successful ballets of the post-war period.

After refusing for a long time to allow this music to be performed in concert, Dutilleux changed his mind in 2010. Strangely beautiful, his score for *Le Loup* consists of three parts (corresponding to the three tableaux of the ballet) “balanced rhythmically as different movements of a symphony would be,” stated the musician. This

results in “symphonic fragments”, reproducing the tripartite structure and representing half of the duration of ballet.

In a village square, an animal tamer is showing tricks with a wolf when a newlywed couple passes by. Feeling carefree, the young man dances with a gypsy. The tamer lets the young wife believe that her husband has been transformed into a wolf; she follows the animal, realising during the night that he is not her husband. But it is too late: she is in love. The villagers come to break up this doubly illegitimate couple. The young woman is killed in her attempts to defend the animal, who dies with her.

Seduced by this scenario renewing “in an even darker environment [...] the story of Beauty and the Beast,” Dutilleux wrote contrasting and sensual music. Neither avant-garde nor truly neoclassical, it proves to be even more accessible than his *Symphonie n° 1*, even though this was earlier. Despite the many twists and turns in the story, the composer avoided the trap of fragmentation: “I felt that the score had to form a single unit,” he explained. Even if it is interspersed with different dances, as is the law of the genre, the piece does not simply consist of a series of numbers, but is rather a symphonic poem. Certain themes provide unity, especially the fairground melody and the wolf’s beautiful lament (which is particularly eloquent, played at the high end of the bassoon).

There is no doubt today that this score deserves to be considered as a symphonic piece in itself, one to which concert halls should open their doors.





# LILI BOULANGER

(1893-1918)

*D'un soir triste; D'un matin de printemps* [Of a Sad Evening; Of a Spring Morning] (1917-18)

The somewhat anecdotal titles of *D'un soir triste* and *D'un matin de printemps* do not give a clear indication of their evocative force. It is impossible to understand these pieces when taken individually, even though they can be played separately. Despite their opposing characters, which demonstrate Lili Boulanger's two different sides, they have the same 3-count rhythm, an identical modal colour and

above all the same melodic theme. Originally intended for chamber ensembles, the two scores were orchestrated by Lili Boulanger shortly after their composition in 1917-18.

*D'un soir triste* opens with robust fifths from the strings, over which the clarinets play the principal theme. The power of the piece is already apparent; Lili Boulanger's style often comes close to that of Debussy, but this piece also evokes Ravel with its harmonic sensitivity. The writing is increasingly enriched with a sense of harmonic colour that is astonishing for a 24-year-old composer. The theme, cloaked with sincerity and a growing intensity, inspires a rich polyphonic development; the precision of her hearing must have been tremendous to achieve such a

production. What kind of evening sadness is being considered here? It is difficult to know, but it must not be forgotten that Lili Boulanger's health deteriorated rapidly after 1916 – she could not ignore the fact that she was shortly going to die, which could explain the funereal character and interiorised violence of the piece. The central section of the piece has a fantastical quality, after being introduced with kettledrums and a sombre fanfare. Before the “achingly calm” conclusion – which is equally fatalistic – the principal theme reappears in different forms, “distant as a memory”.

In a concert it seems logical to follow *D'un soir triste* with *D'un matin de printemps*; it is one of the rare moments of optimism in Lili Boulanger's repertoire. It is hard to believe that its theme, presented in the form of a lively, joyful dance, could be the same as that in *D'un soir triste*. Played on the flute, it is accompanied by lightly articulated harmonies from the strings, which are strongly reminiscent of Debussy. A calmer, “mysterious, sustained, rubato” passage begins: over a line of trills and very bold harmonies, the violins take up an ardent melody. In an impressionist setting, the solo violin plays the principal theme, ... which reappears as at the beginning of the piece, before being played in a more elegiac way and repeated on a music box before its final appearance, *tutti* and in full force.





## PIERRE- OCTAVE FERROUD

(1900-1936)

### *Foules* [Crowds] (1922-24)

Taken from the world too soon in a tragic road accident at the age of 36, the composer Pierre-Octave Ferroud remains best known for founding the chamber music society Le Triton in 1932. But the few scores he left behind are enough to convince us that his death deprived French music of a master.

Among his music is the symphonic poem *Foules*, which Ferroud dedicated to his wife. Composed between April 1922 and October 1924, the piece was officially premiered on 21 March 1926 in Zurich, as part of the annual festival of the recent International Society for Contemporary Music, where it was the French contribution – it is possible that the piece was first played in Lyon in 1925, conducted by Jean Witkowski.

*Foules* aims to evoke “the hustle and bustle of a modern city, the gasping breaths, the beating hearts,” explained Ferroud. As is always the case with him, it is nevertheless musical logic that dominates. The sounds clearly reflect the energy of city life, but they never give way to the pic-

turesque. The theme is only the starting point of a score “designed according to an entirely classical plan”, stated the musician, like an allegro or the finale of a symphony.

Short yet opulent, the writing is often reminiscent of Florent Schmitt, of whom Ferroud was a great follower; it plays with powerful contrasts and the material force transcended by the power of the orchestra. The style is even more objective or, if you prefer, more modern. The harmony is rich and its sequences harsh; the orchestration – including celesta and piano – honours the woodwind section, and readily makes use of instrumental relays within a single unit.

The two thematic elements are varied and confrontational – one calm on the flute, the other played on the oboe – resulting in different peaks of intensity. A digression displays a new element in the style of a fugato. The piece ends with a grand finale which superimposes three of the elements. Impeccable craftsmanship, with textures developed with finesse before being violently shaken up; the predominant impression when listening to *Foules* is of relentless mechanism.

*Symphonie en la* [*Symphony in A*]  
(1930)

Similar characteristics are found on a larger scale in the symphony composed by Ferroud between May and October 1930 in Manosque. Dedicated to the American conductor and sponsor Serge Koussevitzky, who commissioned it for the fiftieth anniversary of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the piece was premiered on 8 March 1931 by Pierre Monteux conducting the Orchestre Symphonique de Paris.

Ferroud once again does not compromise when imposing his classical spirit, brutal rhythms, harmonies and variations; overall, there is a certain radicalism in his refusal to succumb to overindulgent postromanticism as much as affected impressionism. In this way, Ferroud's "objective art", as his biographer Claude Rostand qualified it, was linked to the contemporary Germanic current of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* [New Objectivity], which was principally embodied by Paul Hindemith.

This *Symphonie*, Ferroud's most important orchestral score, shows a freely contrapuntal conception in its writing. The composer fervently believed in its use: "Counterpoint is the reason that music achieves universality of language, harmony always retaining its national colour." With a traditional structure, the first movement *Vivace* uses motoric writing where the orchestra's brilliance, the irruption of silence and the general twists and turns are the main drivers of the discourse.

The *Andante: espressivo assai* is the most developed movement. In a harmonic world based on tritones, the lyricism and texture become increasingly dense until the section becomes more animated. The fullness of sound and the colours in this section are a wonderful example of Ferroud's unique style, which constantly alternates between restraint and expressiveness. The "*Allegro con brio*", based on material from the two previous movements, accentuates the forcefulness and the objective dimensions of the writing.

“COUNTER-  
POINT  
IS THE  
REASON  
THAT MUSIC  
ACHIEVES  
UNIVER-  
SALITY OF  
LANGUAGE,  
HARMONY  
ALWAYS  
RETAINING  
ITS NATIONAL  
COLOUR.”



Musical score for the first system of *Symphonie en la* by Pierre-Octave Ferroud. The score consists of multiple staves with complex rhythmic patterns, including triplets and sixteenth notes. Dynamics range from *mf* to *sfff*. Performance instructions include *Senza sord.* and *à 2*.

Musical score for the second system of *Symphonie en la* by Pierre-Octave Ferroud. The score continues the complex rhythmic patterns from the first system. Dynamics range from *ff* to *sfff*. Performance instructions include *Arco*, *Unis.*, *quasi gliss.*, and *4*.

*Symphonie en la* by  
 Pierre-Octave Ferroud.





# ANDRÉ JOLIVET

(1905-74)

## *Cinq danses rituelles* [*Five Ritual Dances*] (1938-40)

André Jolivet's first orchestral masterpiece, *Cinq danses rituelles* made its mark and became a cornerstone of French music. Composed in 1939 as a piano piece, this version was orchestrated in 1940 and premiered on 5 December 1944 at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, conducted by André Cluytens. Despite a few boos, it was very enthusiastically received. Present at the premiere, the critic Antoine Goléa expressed his shock upon discovering the piece because he had the distinct feeling that it was a major score of its era.

With *Mana* for piano and *Incantations* for flute, both of which preceded this piece by a few years, *Cinq danses rituelles* is representative of Jolivet's incantatory style, with a raw, almost brutal expressiveness, in search of a primitive force that returns music to its original strength. The piece depicts the five stages of life of ancient people, "in which the human soul has kept all of its purity," wrote Jolivet. But the composer does not stop there: "The titles [of the five pieces] correspond to different stages of social and religious life [...] of all human life. These are in fact the dances of birth and puberty, war and virility,

love and marriage, death and resurrection."

The concept of the piece led Jolivet to implement a fairly new compositional technique – the fairly clear influence of *Le Sacre du printemps* remains on the surface. Each part develops from short units that are repeated obsessively, in between stillness and frenzy, creating the illusion of improvisation. The rhythms are tormented, and the modal harmony produces dissonant chords. To translate the primitive character of the writing, the orchestration is a kind of chaos – expertly organised – that comes from the originality of timbre combinations, the use of resonance, and the physical impact of its power.

The *Danse initiatique* [Initiation Dance], in septuple time, creates rhythmic syncopations on which harmonies and an embellished melodic line are posed, leading to a climax. The *Danse du héros* [Hero's Dance] uses an aggressive ostinato of bass notes; after the central lull, it disperses through the whole orchestra towards more motoric writing with an uplifting force. In contrast, the hypnotic *Danse nuptiale* [Nuptial Dance] exudes a wonderful sweetness. It consists of the varied repetition of a simple phrase on two alternating oboes, with harmonic fluctuations.

After a climactic point, only a few fragments of the phrase remain; the flute plays it one last time. The *Danse du rapt* [Abduction Dance] is a march of persistent power, made up of aggressive melodic fragments surrounded by bursts from the strings, until it culminates in a monotonous horn chant. In a static and haunting harmonic series, the *Danse funéraire* [Funeral Dance], in quintuple time, oscillates between F and F sharp in the melody and between B and B flat in the bass. Some melodic flurries emerge, and a more generous line is established on strings. The score ends with long-held notes, drowned in deep resonances from the gong, tam-tam and harps, as a return to the fundamental sound material.

EACH PART DEVELOPS  
FROM SHORT UNITS  
THAT ARE REPEATED  
OBSESSIVELY IN BETWEEN  
STILLNESS AND FRENZY.



Dancer on the facade  
of the Théâtre des  
Champs-Élysées.



# GABRIEL PIERNÉ

(1863-1937)

***Les Cathédrales* [The Cathedrals],  
Prelude for the dramatic poem  
of Eugène Morand (1915)**

In 1915, Gabriel Pierné was called upon by Eugène Morand to compose the incidental music for his dialogue poem *Les Cathédrales*. The musician had already worked on this kind of things in the 1890s, for pieces by both Morand and Edmond Rostand. With great solemnity and patriotism, *Les Cathédrales* depicts the tragedy of the Great War. The French cathedrals, personified, narrate the harm they suffer and the suffering of the people. The performance was premiered successfully on 6 November 1915 in the newly reopened Théâtre Sarah Bernhardt, in Place du Châtelet. The actress, in

the role of Strasbourg Cathedral, literally embodied the martyrdom evoked by the piece – she had had her right leg amputated a few months beforehand.

The Prelude to *Les Cathédrales* is the first piece of a group of eight, including a “*Chanson picarde*” [Picardy Song] and *Épisode des Églises*” [Church Suite] (the score is dedicated to the conductor Camille Chevillard). This piece is one of Pierné’s darkest inspirations, close in its solemnity to the epic *L’An mil* [The Year 1000] and marked by its Franckist sound universe. A mixed choir can be added, *ad libitum*, to the orchestra. The composer creates a perfect equivalent of the set design suggested by Morand: “Sky at dusk. A devastated plain, submerged in fog and drowned in mist, a northern plain between the trenches.” A theme slowly unfolds in the bass, with the strings, contrabassoon and bass clarinet in unison: it is actually an unrecognisable deformation of *La Marseillaise*. A soldier dreams of victory: the entrance of the choir is combined with notes from the brass section – we hear very noble harmonies alongside powerful expressiveness. The elation reaches its peak, and the brass and drum sound almost

military as victory approaches. In the distance, the trumpet plays *La Marseillaise*, which this time is recognisable. “But as the days are endless, the deaths that separate us are countless,” writes Morand. “Beyond enemy lines, desperate voices proclaim their anguish from the shadows of destroyed churches.” This is the lament chanted by the chorus, *O Domine exaudi nos*. The Prelude to *Les Cathédrales* draws to a close, with Pierné offering an aural equivalent to the last words of Morand: “A bell, in the distance, tolls in the night.”

***Divertissements sur un thème pastoral* [Amusements on a Pastoral Theme], op. 49 (1931)**

“The theme does not have much more importance than the title of a book has for the book itself.” This is the quip that the conductor Hans Von Bülow is supposed to have given regarding *Divertissements sur un thème pastoral* by Gabriel Pierné. This piece, as attractive as it is skilful, is based on a folk theme, the pretext for a series of free variations; it is true that it is the diversity of styles and orchestration, both of which have an admirable finesse, that is interesting about the work rather than



the theme itself. The use of the term “amusements”, rather than “variations”, says enough about the pleasant character that Pierné intended to give the score.

In fact, *Divertissements sur un thème pastoral*, a series of colourful fragments, forms a remarkable little concerto for orchestra, at first serious and then borrowing parts from the Viennese waltz and jazz, genres renowned for being light, of which Pierné was particularly fond. Music for pleasure, written with flair. Composed in the summer of 1931, the score was premiered on 7 February 1932 by the Orchestre Colonne and conducted, of course, by Pierné, who led their development for three decades.

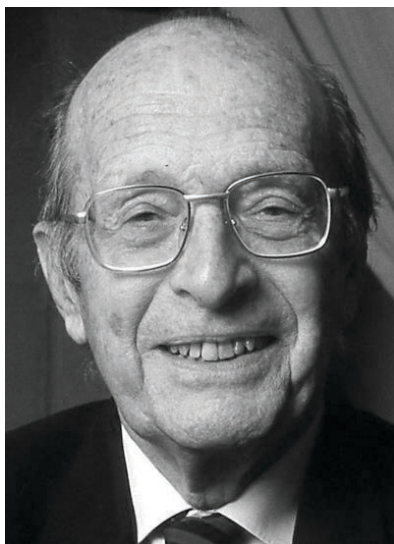
The work is made up of eleven “doubles” (a term synonymous with “variations”, which indicates their closeness to the original theme). The first two are entrusted to the double basses, then the violins. The third presents a “canonical stretto” in pizzicato. The bassoon and contrabassoon then take up the theme, followed by the horns, surrounded by virtuoso lines on woodwind followed by strings. The atmosphere becomes heavier by the time the sixth double appears, with the trombones, trumpets and tuba playing in unison. The theme

is then briefly taken over by the violins (some in harmonics) and violas, the wind section playing chromatic motifs.

After the first third, the score becomes much lighter. The eighth double is a delightful “Viennese”, a soft and languid waltz with sweet harmonies, played on strings (solo and tutti) and harp. Following a joyful *Cortège blues* [Blues Procession], a jazzy march on muted trumpets alternating with strings and woodwind; a central section develops the motifs, before the reappearance of the cortege. The piece is reminiscent of Pierné’s *Impressions de music-hall*, composed in the twenties under the influence of Les Six and Cocteau, a few years after the introduction of jazz in France. The tenth double gives pride of place to the alto saxophone, presented with a nonchalant phrase to which the dreamlike strings respond in unison. After a transition, the last double, *En forme de gigue* [In the Form of a Jig], brings the piece to a close with a great deal of flair.

The second part of the score pleased Pierné so much that he remodelled it in 1935 for a ballet; this new version was published under the title *Viennoise et Cortège-blues* [Viennese and Blues Procession], op. 49 bis.

THE ELATION  
REACHES  
ITS PEAK,  
AND THE  
BRASS  
AND DRUM  
SOUND  
ALMOST  
MILITARY  
AS VICTORY  
APPROACHES.



## DANIEL- LESUR

(1908-2002)

*Symphonie de danses* [*Symphonic Dances*] (1958)

Every note in the *Symphonie de danses* is evidence of Daniel-Lesur's integrity and sincerity. He has a beautiful sense of craftsmanship that is full of knowledge and invention, such as this score from 1958, commissioned by the Direction Générale des Arts et Lettres. Taking the classical conception of the symphony further, Daniel-Lesur offers a

suite of Baroque dances (or pieces that resemble them), free of any extra-musical themes. His ambition is to “return to the physical dimension of instrumental music” – in other words, dance. And when Daniel-Lesur confirms that it “remains the strongest mooring preventing us from drifting too far from the natural”, we cannot help but see a profession of faith: that of a creator who, with cutting-edge devices, favours a craft rooted in tradition. Daniel-Lesur remains admirably faithful to his early spiritual orientations, in the era of the group Jeune France.

To create the effect of a sound prior to the lushness of the Romantic orchestra, the composer brings

together a string ensemble, four timpani and a piano. Rarely heard independently, this takes the place of the harpsichord, and complements the strings with its percussive qualities. Slow and lively parts alternate, generally in ternary form. Their motifs are short and simple, repeated more than developed: the writing attempts to reconnect with an ideal past, a past from before the classical era, even if the harmonic style belongs to the twentieth century.

Successively: the *Ouverture*, based on a violent and haunting motif; the *Pavane* in quintuple time, with unstable and a post-Fauré flavour; the *Saltarelle* [Saltarello], bouncing with fury; *Arabesques*, whose lines intersect slowly in a strange atmosphere; the *Intermède*, which borrows from the previous pieces; the *Sarabande*, almost Fauré-esque, is quiet and stripped-back; the *Badinerie* [Scherzo], is almost a study in timbres, the second more melodic part of which leads to the *Contredanse* [Country Dance], a continuum of repeated quavers with powerful harmonies, a central digression allowing the ghost of the *Sarabande* to reappear; the *Carillon*, where the piano tinkles gently; and finally the *Tambourin*, with its popular theme and twirling fugato.

## HIS AMBITION IS TO “RETURN TO THE PHYSICAL DIMENSION OF INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC” - IN OTHER WORDS, DANCE.

The *Symphonie des danses* was first broadcast by the French national public broadcasting organisation RTF on 27 November 1958, played by the Orchestre National and conducted by Pierre Dervaux. On 4 December the public premiere took place for Daniel-Lesur's fiftieth birthday, at the Salle Gaveau in Paris, with the Orchestre de Chambre de la RTF conducted by Pierre Capdevielle. The final version of the piece was performed at the Aix-en-Provence Festival on 16 July 1959 by the Société des Concerts du Conservatoire led by Manuel Rosenthal. It is dedicated to Michel-Rostislav Hofmann, translator and Franco-Russian musicologist, author of some notable publications on dance.





## LOUIS AUBERT

(1877-1968)

“A GREAT  
FRENCH  
WRITER  
WANTED  
TO BE LAID  
TO REST  
HERE SO  
HE COULD  
HEAR ONLY  
THE WIND  
AND THE SEA,  
NOTHING  
MORE.”

### *Le Tombeau de Chateaubriand* [*Chateaubriand's Tomb*] (1948)

“A great French writer wanted to be laid to rest here so he could hear only the wind and the sea, nothing more.” No doubt Louis Aubert was inspired by this epigraph, engraved near the resting place of François-René de Chateaubriand when he devoted a *tombeau* to him in 1948. It should be noted that the French term “tombeau” has a double meaning: it refers to both the gravestone itself, and to a musical composition commemorating someone’s death. Aubert’s score is therefore a symphonic poem – an evocation of Chateaubriand’s tomb, which stands proudly facing the sea on the island of Grand Bé, off the coast of Saint Malo – as well as being part of the fine tradition of *tombeaux*, the meditative pieces that are dedicated by composers. For once, a musician is paying tribute to a writer; it was the centenary of Chateaubriand’s birth that gave the opportunity to Aubert, himself born near Saint Malo.

Here, the composer delivers a unique musical seascape. *Le Tombeau de Chateaubriand*, even if it suggests the majesty of the ocean and the aspiration of man in the background, avoids the easy effects of impressionist pieces. The initial fanfare, both proud and profound, provides a base for the piece, the powerful and sombre orchestra responds flexibly to its metamorphoses. The harmony is sometimes reminiscent of Ralph Vaughan Williams and Gustav Holst, and the vast central section, which is calmer, could be associated with Honegger; the long, spellbinding sections of the score, however, belong only to Aubert. He was not very well known until this point, apart from his *Six poèmes arabes* [Six Arabic Poems]; it would be fair to give more attention to *Le Tombeau de Chateaubriand*, which is remarkably epic and far from unworthy within French symphonic composition. Heading towards the final climax the piece takes off, allowing the brass section to shine in a beautiful progressive sequence. It’s almost as though the verses of Chateaubriand’s poem *La Mer* [The Sea] are illustrated: “When from your breast, tormented by winds,/ When from the reefs and ancient shores/Emerge the sounds, the melancholic voices,/The touched soul loses itself in dreams.”

- LOUIS AUBERT** ..... 42  
*Le Tombeau de Chateaubriand*  
 for orchestra  
 3.3.3.0 — 4.3.3.1 — timb - perc - cel - 2 hp — strings [divided]  
 14'
- LILI BOULANGER** ..... 32  
*D'un matin de printemps*  
 for orchestra  
 3.3.3.3 — 4.3.3.1 — 2 perc - cel - hp — strings [divided]  
 5'  
*D'un soir triste*  
 for orchestra  
 2.3.3.3 — 4.3.3.1 — timb - 2 perc - cel - hp — strings [divided]  
 10' 30'
- JEAN CRAS** ..... 15  
*Journal de bord*  
 3.3.3.4 — 4.3.3.1 — timb - 4 perc - 2 hp — strings  
 22'
- DANIEL-LESUR** ..... 40  
*Symphonie de danses*  
 for piano, percussion & string orchestra  
 24'
- PAUL DUKAS** ..... 8  
*L'Apprenti sorcier*  
 3.2.3.4 — 4.4.3.0 — timb - 4 perc - hp — strings [divided]  
 12'  
*La Péri*  
 3.3.3.3 — 4.3.3.1 — timb - 5 perc - cel - 2 hp — strings [divided]  
 20'  
*Symphonie en ut*  
 3.3.2.2 — 4.3.3.1 — timb — strings  
 38'
- HENRI DUTILLEUX** ..... 30  
*Le Loup*  
 for orchestra  
 3.2.2.2 — 2.2.2.1 — timb - perc - pno - cel - hp — 12.10.8.7.6  
 29'  
*Symphonie n°1*  
 for orchestra  
 3.3.3.3 — 4.3.3.0 — timb
- 4 perc - pno - cel - hp — strings [divided]  
 31'
- PIERRE-OCTAVE FERROUD** ..... 33  
*Foules*  
 for orchestra  
 3.3.3.3.1 — 4.4.3.1 — timb - 5 perc - pno - cel - 2 hp — strings [divided]  
 13'  
*Symphonie en La*  
 for orchestra  
 3.3.3.3 — 4.3.3.1 — timb — strings [divided]  
 25'
- ARTHUR HONEGGER** ..... 22  
*Pastorale d'été*  
 1.1.1.1 — 1.0.0.0 — strings  
 8'  
*Symphonie liturgique*  
 3.3.3.3 — 4.3.3.1 — timb - 2 perc - pno — strings  
 29'  
*Symphonie n°4*  
 2.1.2.1 — 2.1.0.0 — perc - pno - glock — strings  
 25' 30»
- ANDRÉ JOLIVET** ..... 36  
*Cinq danses rituelles*  
 for orchestra  
 3.3.3.3 — 4.3.3.1 — 3 perc - pno - cel - 2 hp — strings [divided]  
 25'
- CHARLES KOECHLIN** ..... 20  
*La Course de Printemps*  
 4.3.3.3 — 4.4.4.2 — 2 timb - perc - pno - great organ - 2 hp — 14.12.10.8.8  
 28'  
*Seven Stars' Symphony*  
*I. Douglas Fairbanks*  
 3.3.3.3 — 4.3.0.0 — timb - 2 perc - pno - cel - 2 hp — strings [divided]  
 4'  
*II. Lilian Harvey*  
 3.3.3.2.1 — 4.0.0.0 — perc - pno - cel - harpsichord — strings [divided]  
 3'  
*III. Greta Garbo*
- 2.2.3.2 — 2.2.0.0 — pno - hp — strings [divided]  
 3'  
*IV. Clara Bow*  
 4.3.3.3.1 — 4.4.3.1 — timb - 4 perc - pno - cel - 2 hp — strings [divided]  
 6'  
*V. Marlène Dietrich*  
 2.2.2.2.1 — 4.0.0.0 — pno - hp — strings [divided]  
 3'  
*VI. Emil Jannings*  
 3.3.3.3.1 — 4.4.3.1 — timb - 2 perc - pno — strings [divided]  
 3'  
*VII. Charlie Chaplin*  
 3.3.3.3.1 — 4.4.3.2 — timb - 6 perc - pno - cel - harpsichord - 2 hp — strings [divided]  
 12'
- ALBÉRIC MAGNARD** ..... 7  
*Symphonie n°4, op. 21*  
 3.3.3.2 — 4.3.3.0 — timb - hp — strings  
 40'
- OLIVIER MESSIAEN** ..... 27  
*Les Offrandes oubliées*  
 for orchestra  
 3.3.3.3 — 4.3.3.1 — timb - 3 perc — strings [divided]  
 7' to 12'  
*Le Réveil des oiseaux*  
 for solo piano & orchestra  
 4.3.4.3 — 2.2.0.0 — 4 perc - cel — 8.8.8.8.6 [divided]  
 22'  
*Turangalîla-Symphonie*  
 for solo piano, onde Martenot solo & large orchestra  
 3.3.3.3 — 4.5.3.1 — cel — 16.16.14.12.10 [divided]  
 80'
- DARIUS MILHAUD** ..... 25  
*Le Bœuf sur le toit*  
 2.1.2.1 — 2.2.1.0 — 2 perc — strings  
 18' to 19'
- GABRIEL PIERNÉ** ..... 38  
*Divertissements sur un thème pastoral*  
 for orchestra with 78 musicians  
 3.3.3.3.1 — 4.3.3.1 — timb - 2 perc - hp — 14.12.10.8.6  
 11'  
*Les Cathédrales*  
 for ad libitum mixed choir & orchestra  
 2.2.2.2 — 2.3.3.1 — timb - 4 perc - pump organ - 2 hp — 12.10.8.6.5  
 10'
- ALBERT ROUSSEL** ..... 16  
*Bacchus et Ariane*  
 3.3.3.3 — 4.4.3.1 — timb - 3 perc - cel - 2 hp — strings [divided]  
 2 sequences : 18' and 21'  
*Le Festin de l'araignée*  
 2.2.2.2 — 2.2.0.0 — timb - 2 perc - cel - hp — strings [divided]  
 Ballet of 38', symphonic excerpts of 17'  
*Symphonie n°4, op. 53*  
 for orchestra  
 3.3.3.3 — 4.4.3.1 — timb - 3 perc - hp — strings [divided]  
 23'
- FLORENT SCHMITT** ..... 12  
*Antoine et Cléopâtre*  
 for orchestra  
 3.3.3.3 — 4.3.3.1 — timb - 5 perc - cel - 2 hp — strings [divided]  
 2 sequences of 20'  
*La Tragédie de Salomé, op. 50*  
 for orchestra  
 3.3.3.3 — 4.3.3.1 — timb - 5 perc - 2 hp — strings [divided]  
 30'  
*Symphonie n°2, op. 137*  
 3.3.3.3 — 4.3.3.1 — timb - 4 perc - cel - 2 hp — strings [divided]  
 25'



INTERVIEWS with Jean-Claude Casadesus,  
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TEXTS  
Nicolas Southon

DESIGN  
Anna Tunick ([www.atunick.com](http://www.atunick.com))

FOR MORE INFORMATION  
[Promotion.dse@umusic.com](mailto:Promotion.dse@umusic.com)  
[www.durand-salabert-eschig.com](http://www.durand-salabert-eschig.com)  
20, rue des Fossés Saint Jacques  
75005 Paris – France