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# MODERN FRENCH MUSIC

BY  
EDWARD BURLINGAME HILL

*With Portraits*



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## PREFACE

THIS study of French music since the Franco-Prussian War is based upon material presented in a course given since 1910 at Harvard University. It also constitutes an expansion of lectures delivered at the Lowell Institute, Boston, in 1920, and under the auspices of the Universities of Strasbourg and Lyon in the autumn of 1921. It aims to combine as far as possible the features necessary for a student's handbook with the untechnical standpoint of the general reader. The music of each composer treated is regarded as the spontaneous reaction of his temperament upon his environment. When the nature of his personality has been established, his mode of expression becomes a logical consequent.

In the preparation of the individual biographies, I have been under constant obligation to the excellent book by M. Octave Séré, revised by M. Jean Poueigh, "Musiciens français d'aujourd'hui."

The musical examples in the text are reproduced with the kind permission of the publishers MM.

A. Durand et Fils, Enoch et Cie., J. Hamelle, and Rouart-Lerolle et Cie.

I wish also to express my grateful thanks to my colleague, Professor Walter R. Spalding, for many invaluable suggestions in connection with the manuscript.

EDWARD BURLINGAME HILL

HARVARD UNIVERSITY

*March 2, 1924*

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# MODERN FRENCH MUSIC



## CHAPTER I

### THE GENESIS OF MODERN FRENCH MUSIC

As long ago as 1905, M. Romain Rolland, in an article entitled "French Music and German Music,"<sup>1</sup> wrote as follows: "I have never been pre-occupied, in art, with questions of nationality. I have never even concealed my preferences for German music; I still to-day consider Richard Strauss the first musical personality in Europe. I am thus the freer to record the singular impression I had at the *Musik fest* in Strasbourg, of the sudden change which is being brought about in music: French art, silently, is in the act of taking the place of German art." That M. Rolland, the acknowledged partisan of Teutonic music, should thus express himself, doubtless seemed to many at the time radical in the extreme. The last clause of this quotation has often served as a pretext for discussions as to the relative merits of French and German music. It forms the introduction to a chapter identical in

<sup>1</sup> *Musiciens d'aujourd'hui*, pp. 175 et seq. Paris: Librairie Hachette et Cie, 1909.

title with M. Rolland's article in "French Music of To-day,"<sup>1</sup> by M. G. Jean-Aubry. After a lapse of nearly nineteen years, French music has assumed so different an aspect that M. Rolland's foresight seems to have been justified. For to the impartial observer, German music has suffered an obvious decline after a period of unquestioned leadership extending over a century and a half. The annals of musical history contain many similar instances of creative exhaustion. On the other hand, since the Franco-Prussian War, and to a large extent on account of it, French music has made almost incredible advances in technical mastery, originality, subtlety of expression, and above all in embodying national characteristics. Within the past fifty years the achievements of French composers have outranked all contemporary schools, with the possible single exception of the later Russians, who somewhat antedate them, and to whom in turn they are considerably indebted. French music, through its exploration of new fields of harmonic effect, stylistic adaptability, clarity and fineness of emotional discrimination, has exercised an influence upon the entire civilized musical world. If at the present moment the current of imitation is tending diversely toward Stravinsky or Schön-

<sup>1</sup> *French Music of To-day*, p. 3. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1919.

berg, the tending of musical thought in the immediate past is so inclined toward the assimilation of French methods as to present irrefutable testimony to the vitality of the movement as a whole and its permanent contribution to the musical literature of the world.

In attempting a survey of modern French music, it is essential at the outset to define, or rather to limit, the qualifying adjective. The use of the word "modern" is precarious and subject to deviation almost from day to day. To Giovanni Maria Artusi, writing in the late sixteenth century "On the Imperfections of Modern Music," it signified the music of Claudio Monteverdi, the pioneer of the dramatic orchestra and the use of "unprepared dissonance." Ten years ago, "modern French music" would unquestionably be assumed to refer to the works of Debussy, Ravel, Florent Schmitt, Paul Dukas and others of their generation. Today the same phrase would be presumed to apply to the members of the "Group of Six," including MM. Darius Milhaud, Arthur Honegger, Francis Poulenc, together with their arch-instigator M. Erik Satie. Thus "modernism" is of so fleeting a nature as almost to defy definition in terms of time. Moreover, advance in artistic development invariably coexists with the survivals of the classic, or at best of a questionable neo-classicism, so that

no period presents exclusively a clear-cut adherence to one style. The revolutionary pursues his iconoclastic aim while the reactionary deplures all but his conservative methods. Yet, if we examine French music as a whole from shortly before the Franco-Prussian War to the present time, it is possible to establish lines of esthetic cleavage pointing to the gradual abandonment of excessive dependence upon foreign models, the accompanying development of originality in musical style and thought indicating, not merely a definite progress, but a different type of musical art. In reality, French music became "modern" in direct proportion to its reflection of national traits, and its history is summed up in the unfolding of successive stages of independent expression. Bearing in mind, then, that the word "modern" is but a makeshift of relative rather than absolute value, used to suggest a progressive rather than a reactionary attitude toward musical art, we may proceed to outline the various episodes of its manifestation.

During the first half of the nineteenth century, French music, largely given over to opera, had been unduly eclectic in character. Its dominating personalities were Rossini and Meyerbeer despite the wayward but dynamic genius of Berlioz, whose worth and historic import were not recognized until long after his death. There followed a period of

revolution in public taste due to the establishment of orchestras and chamber music societies with a consequent awakening of interest in their respective literatures. Saint-Saëns, Lalo and César Franck, the pioneers of instrumental music in France, may be regarded as the direct outcome of this movement. The Franco-Prussian War precipitated a concentrated reassertion of national consciousness, affecting every field of musical activity, the comprehensive results of which will be specified later. When the bitterness of feeling after the Franco-Prussian War had somewhat subsided, musical Paris, and with it the majority of French composers, fell under the spell of Richard Wagner. With the inevitable reaction from the Wagnerian furor an enthusiasm followed for Russian music, especially that of the so-called Neo-Russian composers. In the mean time, two pioneers of progressive individuality, Chabrier and Fauré, may be termed the first "modernists," since their independent styles constitute an indubitable assertion of French traits. Almost simultaneously the pupils of César Franck, whose teaching aimed to incite a restatement of classic forms and methods in individual guise, arose to champion and extend their master's ideals. The most significant of these are Vincent d'Indy, Ernest Chausson, Henri Duparc, Guy Ropartz, Charles Bordes and Guillaume

Lekeu. At this time also we observe the beginning of that interaction between the arts which has produced some of the most characteristic French music. Bruneau, the apostle of naturalism in opera, and Charpentier who superadded propaganda for socialism to a belief in naturalism, brought French music further on the path toward complete independence of foreign methods. Similarly, impressionism in painting and symbolism in literature tempted Debussy to attain an analogous idiom in music. His music, perhaps the most typically Gallic in flavor and style of any of the later French composers, not only achieved a high expression of genius, but has exercised a world-wide influence. Since Debussy, Ravel, Dukas, Florent Schmitt, Magnard, Roussel and others deriving esthetic stimulation from various sources, have made, by virtue of their respective individualities, palpable additions to a more comprehensive expression in music of French sentiment and emotion. At the present time, the "Group of Six," together with Erik Satie, renouncing the methods of Debussy and his successors, are striving to develop by means of a radical style deriving from Stravinsky and Schönberg, a characteristic utterance in music of the contemporary spirit. Such in compressed statement has been the course of French music. It is now fitting to search for and to enlarge upon the



motives underlying the phases of transition toward "modernistic" expression.

It is at best a hazardous undertaking to establish the comprehensive causes of an art movement. Certain concrete facts may be adduced which seem of adequate fertilizing force to have brought the changes in question, but these are far from being all-sufficient. Music, in particular, is at best an elusive medium of expression, and since few critics or writers on music can even agree as to the relative importance of a single work of art, still less can they assign its causative features with accuracy or conclusive logic. The historian of music, then, can only point out reasons which seem to have persuasive weight, and trust that the impartial verdict of time may bear him out.

The specific events which seem to underlie a basic change in the spirit of French music may now be mentioned. In the first place, we have the surprising shift in popular approval from a well-nigh exclusive interest in opera toward instrumental music. It may have taken thirty years for this movement to gather momentum, but once assured it has suffered no setback. The results have been twofold: First, the Parisian musical public has permanently enlarged its viewpoint and its sense of discrimination. Second, native composers, encouraged by prospects of performance, immediately

set to work to produce a literature in the fields of orchestral and chamber music. Without this radical conversion in popular taste, the entire progressive trend of French music would have been unthinkable.

Probably the most effective factor in focussing the vague aspirations toward musical independence and in bringing about a realization of the necessity for nationalistic affirmation was the Franco-Prussian War. Despite the various disheartening aspects of financial disaster, loss of territory and the problems of reconstruction, French musicians arose to their feet with unanimous determination. On February 25, 1871, Camille Saint-Saëns and Romain Bussine, a teacher of singing at the Paris Conservatoire, founded the Société Nationale de Musique française with its unequivocal device *Ars Gallica*. The leading musicians of Paris were at once associated with them. The meetings of the Society were soon interrupted by the Commune, and were not resumed until October, 1871. The by-laws of the Society were drawn up by its secretary, Alexis de Castillon, a pupil of César Franck, whose premature death two years later robbed French art of a gifted composer of chamber music. The aim of the Society, admirably stated in its statutes, was as follows: "The proposed purpose of the Society is to aid the production and populariza-

tion of all serious works, whether published or not, by French composers. To encourage and bring to light, as far as lies within its power, all musical attempts, whatever their form, on condition that they give evidence of lofty artistic aspirations on the part of their author. Fraternally, with entire forgetfulness of self, with the firm resolve to aid each other with all their capacity, the members will unite their efforts, each in his own sphere of action, to the study and performance of the works which they shall be called upon to select and interpret.”<sup>1</sup> Bussine was the first president, Saint-Saëns vice-president, and de Castillon secretary. Among the members of the committee were César Franck, Guiraud, Dubois, Fauré and Lalo. The altruistic unanimity of the members of this Society is the more remarkable when one reflects upon the diversity of their artistic viewpoints as individuals. French music of the later progressive type owes its very existence to the National Society more than to any other single cause. Works by Franck, Saint-Saëns, d’Indy, Chabrier, Lalo, Bruneau, Chausson, Debussy, Dukas, Lekeu, Magnard and Ravel (to cite some of the more significant names) were performed at concerts of this Society, many of them for the first time. While its standards were many

<sup>1</sup> Romain Rolland, “Musiciens d’aujourd’hui,” *Le Renouveau*, p. 231.

years in advance of public taste, its educative reaction upon the latter can hardly be overestimated. However, in 1886, when Vincent d'Indy suggested the inclusion of foreign classics to the programmes of the Society, Bussine and Saint-Saëns resigned as a gesture of dissent from this radical change of policy. César Franck then became the virtual president, although he refused the formal title. At his death in 1890, d'Indy assumed his office, which he has retained ever since. Itself a pioneer in the search for works of talent, the National Society became gradually more conservative in its attitude until in 1909 a Société Musicale Indépendante was founded with Gabriel Fauré as president. While this organization can claim neither the historic nor the intrinsic importance of the older society, it has none the less accomplished tangible results in encouraging younger French composers and in bringing their works before the public. Perhaps as a result of healthy competition, the Société Nationale has of recent years become more active and liberal.

A secondary result of the Franco-Prussian War, and one that has penetrated far into both the professional and the amateur mind, has been a re-awakening to the value of French composers from Lully to Rameau and even later. Lully, the dramatic genius of the seventeenth century, and

Rameau, the leading figure of the eighteenth, despite the evidences of Italian influences in their works, were recognized as having fixed French musical style in many essentials, as well as having crystallized the dominant Gallic traits of their respective centuries. That, for instance, such representative artists as Vincent d'Indy, Paul Dukas and Claude Debussy, differing so markedly in their musical self-expression, should have spontaneously aided Saint-Saëns as editor-in-chief in revising operas by Rameau for the complete edition of his works exemplifies the universality of appeal exercised by the greatest French composer of the eighteenth century. French harpsichord music by Couperin, Rameau, Daquin and others has been made a special object of research by performers of note; among them Louis Diémer of the preceding generation, and by the conspicuously fine artist of the present time, Madame Wanda Landowska. Furthermore, a large number of musical archeologists have examined, edited and published the masterpieces of French musical literature from the times of the Troubadours and the Trouvères onward, of which more specific mention will be made later. This revaluation of the past has not been confined to music alone, for several French composers, among them Debussy and Ravel, have sought to unify the sentiments of centuries other

than their own by setting to music poems by François Villon, Clément Marôt, Charles duc d'Orléans and Tristan L'Hermite.

If these manifestations of a national consciousness are of extreme significance in analyzing the causes leading to the development of modern French music, scarcely less emphasis must be laid upon the part played by educational institutions. From the end of the eighteenth century the Conservatoire Nationale de Musique et de Déclamation (with many provincial branches) had assumed an increasingly preponderant rôle. The course of French music may, to a certain extent, be traced by its *premiers prix* from Gounod to Debussy, although certain eminent composers have attained artistic position without having received this supreme reward.<sup>1</sup> Despite the superiority of its training for instrumentalists and singers, and in musical theory, the all-embracing predilection for opera brought about a striking neglect of the study of the higher instrumental forms. This was, after all, a spontaneous reflection of the spirit prevailing before 1870, and continuing some years afterward. Even if there were a preliminary test in fugue at the annual competitions for the Prix de Rome, the culminating trial was always a cantata and has

<sup>1</sup> Vincent d'Indy, Chausson, Dukas, Magnard and Roussel were notable exceptions.

remained such to the present day. An effort to reform the curriculum of the Conservatory was defeated. While Massenet as a teacher of composition, according to statements of a pupil,<sup>1</sup> was not antagonistic towards instrumental composition, his great skill as a composer of opera would naturally predispose those in his class to follow in the same direction. It was not until the directorship of Gabriel Fauré (1905–20) at the Conservatory, however, that the young composer of non-operatic tendencies was received with genuine sympathy. With the broadening of the Parisian musical viewpoint, impulses toward a more liberal educative standpoint were inevitable. The first experiment, however, long antedated the musical conversion of Paris, when Joseph Niedermeyer, who had become enthusiastic over religious music and the inexhaustible treasures of plain chant, founded in that city in 1853 an *École de Musique Religieuse*.

Its scope was soon enlarged to include a general survey of musical literature. Saint-Saëns, with his omnivorous assimilation of musical thought, became an indefatigable teacher at this school. If relatively few composers of distinction have issued from this institution,<sup>2</sup> since the best material has almost inevitably entered the Conservatory, its

<sup>1</sup> Henri Rabaud.

<sup>2</sup> Gabriel Fauré and André Messager are the most important.

general reaction has been of irreplaceable value. It broke the ground for a broader comprehension of musical art; it became a source of inspiration for the study of religious music and more particularly of plain chant, which has been widely ramified, and it has greatly stimulated a zeal for archeological research.

Charles Bordes, a gifted pupil of César Franck, choir-master and organist at the church of Saint Gervais in Paris, after a preliminary and highly successful experiment with performances of sixteenth-century religious music by his choir, founded in 1892 les Chanteurs de Saint Gervais with the object of cultivating religious and secular choral music from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century inclusive. In the years following, the Singers of Saint Gervais took part in a series of historical concerts, in association with Eugène d'Harcourt, Paul Dukas and Gustave Doret, and also made trips through France with an educational purpose. In 1894, Bordes founded, with Alexandre Guilmant and Vincent d'Indy, the Schola Cantorum with the fourfold aim of the revival of the Gregorian tradition in the performance of plain chant, the restoration of the church music of the Palestrina period, the creation of a modern literature of religious music, and an enlargement of the organists' repertory. In 1896, the Schola became known as a



“School of liturgic chant and religious music,” and in 1900 was transferred to an old convent formerly occupied by English Benedictines, assuming the name of “Higher School of Music.” In 1905, Bordes was obliged by ill-health to live in the south of France, where he established a branch of the Schola Cantorum at Montpellier. Bordes died in 1909; Guilmant died in 1912. Since then, d’Indy has had entire charge of the organization and policies of the Schola. The educational programme of this institution presents a striking contrast to that of the Conservatory, despite many admirable features of the latter. The Schola lays especial stress upon the historical evolution of music. It attempts to familiarize its students with the entire literature of music, illustrated by historical concerts. The names of Monteverdi, Carissimi, Schütz, Lully, Charpentier, Lalande, Bach, Handel and many others are found on its programmes. It aims to produce students who are not so much experts in the technical aspects of their art as masters of the succeeding phases of musical thought through many centuries. Its pupils in composition attack in turn the problems which have confronted all composers from the motet and the monody to the sonata and the symphony. Counterpoint is taught, not as a matter of archeology, or as a dry science, but in the spirit of the sixteenth century. The res-

torations and revivals of old music which have emanated from the Schola are a consistent feature of its policy. Furthermore, the Schola may be considered in large part as a living tribute to the personality and esthetic ideals of César Franck who, as d'Indy says, may be termed its spiritual godfather. But the Schola has not only looked upon the profession of music as an art which demands a comprehensive intellectual estimate of its growth and vital principles; it has also made consistent efforts to illumine the public as to the significance of musical literature as a whole. If much of its work has been accomplished since the nationalistic sentiment has been securely established, the Schola none the less serves to supplement the more limited scope of the Conservatory.

As a natural consequent of the labors of Niedermeyer's school and that of the Schola, which may justly be called propagandist in the enlightened and legitimate sense of the word, there has been in France an immense reawakening of interest and curiosity in the historical aspect of music. These researches have increased to an extent which forbids more than a partial mention here. Thus, from 1850 to 1860 the Benedictine Monks at the Abbey of Solesmes began investigations of the Gregorian plain chant with the publication of several important volumes. M. Henri Expert, a pupil of the

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Niedermeyer School, has, from 1882 onwards, brought to light valuable historical documents, among them an anthology of French Masters of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Charles Bordes published Collections of Basque folk-songs, of French primitive religious masters, and the choruses of Clément Jannequin, the sixteenth-century pioneer of descriptive music. Pierre Aubry and Julien Tiersot have accomplished excellent work for the songs of the Troubadours and Trouvères, and the French folk-song respectively. Professor Henri Guy, of the University of Toulouse, has made an able study of Adam de la Hâle and his "Le Jeu de Robin et Marion." Vincent d'Indy, aside from a collection of folk-songs of the Vivarais, has revised and published works by Monteverdi, Rameau, Destouches and others, in the interests of the historical concerts at the Schola. Alexandre Guilmant in collaboration with André Pirro has published the archives of French organ masters in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Saint-Saëns was editor-in-chief of the complete works of Rameau. While it is impossible to particularize, the names of MM. Camille Bellaigue, Adolphe Boschot, Robert Brussel, Alfred Bruneau, M.-D. Calvocoressi, Gaston Carraud, André Cœuroy, Jules Combarieu, Claude Debussy, Paul Dukas, Jules Écorcheville, A. Gastoué, Henri

Gauthiers-Villars, Paul Huvelin, Hugues Imbert, Vincent d'Indy, G. Jean-Aubry, Charles Koechlin, Louis Laloy, L. de la Laurencie, Jean Marnold, Camille Maclair, Marc Pincherle, Henri Prunières, Roland-Manuel, Romain Rolland, Camille Saint-Saëns, G. Samazeuilh, Boris de Schloezer, Georges Servières, Julien Tiersot, Léon Vallas, L. Vuillemin, Émile Vuillermoz and many others should be recalled for their distinctive contributions to historical and critical aspects of musical art and to biography. The comprehensive thoroughness, the acute judgment and the clarity of method displayed in these searching analyses extending over a wide field of investigation and a considerable space of time are not astonishing when one considers the long-since acknowledged eminence of French criticism in literature, philosophy and the history of art, but the results are keenly indicative of progress in the intellectual apperception of the scope of music in the field of education. But intrinsically also one must observe that no country has surpassed France in the collective attainments along historical and critical lines in music during the last fifty years.

By no means an inconsiderable item in the evolution of French music has been the far-seeing vision and the genuinely patriotic spirit of various publishers of French music. MM. Choudens et Cie,

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E. Demets, Durand et Cie, Enoch et Cie, E. Froment, J. Hamelle, Georges Hartmann, Heugel et Cie, Z. Mathot, Rouart-Lerolle et Cie, Maurice Sénart and others have coöperated with composers and musical scholars to an extraordinary degree. Without their support, French music must have stagnated irrevocably.

In retrospect then, we may assign the development of instrumental music, the intensification of the national spirit caused by the Franco-Prussian War with its aftermaths of the National Society of French Music and other organizations, the re-awakening of French musicians to their musical and poetic past, the signal advance of educational institutions and the revival of historical and critical investigations as the chief causes of a constructive rebirth of French music. But musical history is not made primarily by societies nor by historical researches, no matter how valuable, nor by the activities of educational institutions as such. It is the composers, after all, who stand on the firing line of artistic advance by sheer virtue of their individual force and assertiveness, and who take precedence of all else. To comprehend the genesis of modern French music, we must follow the rise of instrumental music, and analyze the creative personalities of those who brought it about.

## CHAPTER II

### THE RISE OF INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

“NOT so long ago, perhaps fifteen years, a French composer who had the audacity to try his fortunes in the field of instrumental music, had no other means of getting his works played than to give a concert himself, and invite his friends and the critics to it. As for the public, the real public, they were not to be considered; the name of a composer, at once French and living, printed on a poster had the effect of putting every one to flight.” Thus wrote Saint-Saëns in his essay on “The National Society of Music” published in 1885 in his volume “Harmony and Melody.”<sup>1</sup> As a matter of fact, the obstacles in the path of a composer of instrumental music were almost prohibitive long before 1870. Parisian distaste for orchestral concerts constituted the normal state of affairs in the early career of Berlioz, and many vivid pages in his writings recount graphically his difficulties in obtaining a hearing. The cause was simple, since as suggested in the previous chapter, the interests of musical Paris were almost wholly centered in

<sup>1</sup> Camille Saint-Saëns, *Harmonie et Mélodie*, page 207. Paris: C. Lévy, 1885.

opera. Indeed, the Conservatory concerts founded by Habeneck in 1828, were virtually the only regular series of orchestral concerts in Paris during the first half of the nineteenth century despite certain sporadic attempts to provide others. But even if the symphonies of Berlioz were heard at the Conservatory concerts, their programmes in general were too restricted to satisfy the legitimate curiosity of individual musicians, and in 1848 François Seghers reorganized the Saint Cecilia Society, giving orchestral works by the German romanticists and even including compositions by Gounod, Reber, Saint-Saëns and Gouvy. Lack of funds obliged Seghers to desist from his enterprise in 1854, but his initiative had already encouraged Jules Pasdeloup to establish an orchestral society of Conservatory graduates in 1851 at whose concerts the education of the Parisian public was continued. The success of these concerts emboldened Pasdeloup to start afresh with a series of Popular Concerts beginning in 1861 and lasting until 1884. But Pasdeloup was little disposed to favor French composers. He said to them, "Write symphonies like those of Beethoven and I will play them."<sup>1</sup> None the less, public interest in orchestral music was aroused and invited further opportunity. In 1873, Édouard Colonne left the Opéra orchestra to

<sup>1</sup> Saint-Saëns, *Harmonie et Mélodie*, p. 209.

found with the generous aid of the publisher, Georges Hartmann, who later befriended Debussy, the National Concerts soon reorganized as "The Artistic Association," the annual series of which is now conducted by Gabriel Pierné. Colonne was an artist of broad sympathies. He familiarized his public with the important works of orchestral literature; a long list of compositions by Frenchmen shows that he recognized his obligations in this direction, but his main object seems to have been to gain an adequate recognition for Berlioz' music. This goal he ultimately attained. Colonne, furthermore, not only advanced musical taste in France, he travelled over Europe, he visited America, and he introduced many foreign conductors of distinction to his Parisian audiences.

Slightly later, Charles Lamoureux, who had already gained experience as a choral conductor of works by Bach and Handel in the Société de l'Harmonie sacrée, established in 1881 a series of "New Concerts" which he led until his death in 1910. Then the conductorship of these concerts passed to his son-in-law, Camille Chéviillard. Chéviillard in turn died in May, 1923, and Paul Paray is now the leader of the society. Beginning on classical lines, Lamoureux soon showed a leaning toward the younger school of French composers, who thereby benefited incalculably, but his princi-



pal mission appears to have been the conversion of his subscribers to the music of Wagner. Political as well as musical complications ensued, for Wagner's pamphlet "Eine Kapitulation" had not been forgotten in Paris, and his music, furthermore, was violently antipathetic to a considerable section of his listeners. In 1887, a single performance of "Lohengrin" in concert form, nearly caused a riot. The demonstrations against subsequent repetitions were so serious as temporarily to gain their end. Lamoureux was pertinacious, however, and with the support of young enthusiasts such as Emmanuel Chabrier and Vincent d'Indy finally brought his public to his way of thinking. Moreover, the reaction of Wagner's music, artistic theories and philosophy upon an entire generation of French musicians, men of letters, painters, poets and critics was so intense as to constitute an episode still worthy of examination and reflective analysis. This influence will again be touched upon in connection with the dramatic evolution in France.

It is difficult to exaggerate the consequences of these three series of orchestral concerts upon Parisian musical life. Not only did the public gain a first-hand knowledge of a section of musical literature that is rich in masterpieces, but it learned to extend its appreciation permanently beyond the confines of the opera house. What was still more

vital, French composers were now impelled to write for orchestra, since they now had the means of performance. Moreover, French orchestras are subsidized by the Government on condition that they produce a certain proportion of works by native composers — a procedure worthy of imitation by other countries. In a far less spectacular way French taste was similarly and progressively educated in the field of chamber music. The violinist, Maurin, and the violoncellist, Chéviillard, organized concerts of chamber music as early as 1852, giving as a special feature the last quartets by Beethoven somewhat to the discomfiture of their listeners. In the following year the violinist, Armingaud, founded with Jacquard a string quartet in which the viola was played by Édouard Lalo, the composer. Greeted at first by unresponsive audiences, these concerts gradually provoked interest and at last spontaneous support. Many other chamber music organizations followed, including the famous society “La Trompette,” at whose meetings distinguished foreign virtuosi have appeared, and for whose programmes some unusual works were composed, among them Saint-Saëns’ Septet for trumpet, piano and strings, and d’Indy’s Suite in the old style for trumpet, flutes and string quartet. A direct outcome in later years of the historical researches in connection with the older

instrumental music in France is the Société des instruments anciens, founded by Henri Casadesus. In short, the serious and persevering cultivation of chamber music in Paris has achieved results commensurable with those obtained in the orchestral field. Public taste has broadened, and music-lovers have become acquainted with the best in chamber music literature. Of recent years the proportion of chamber music performed and composed equals that of other large musical capitals, and in the Lucien Capet quartet, to mention one among several of high repute, Paris possesses one of the best organizations in Europe.

So comprehensive an alteration of the habits of musical Paris, and so searching a revolution in its taste, could but impel French composers toward the concert hall. With the added incentive of the National Society in discovering and fostering high endeavor, native composers began to create a literature of orchestral works, concertos and chamber music. Such a task is not the work of a few but of many, nor can it be accomplished within a short space of time. Two pioneers bridged the gap between Berlioz and those composers who were stimulated by the nationalistic revival, although the time was not ripe for the recognition of their labors, nor was their music comparable to that of

the succeeding generation. These were Théodore Gouvy and Henri Reber.

Théodore Gouvy (1819–98), after prolonged studies in Paris, Germany and Italy, composed symphonic and chamber music, and toward the end of his career turned to religious music and cantatas. He was highly praised by Berlioz, a somewhat uncompromising critic, received no little attention in Germany, Austria and Holland, and finally in France. When his first symphony was performed at Paris in 1847, L. Kreutzer, the musical critic of the "Union," wrote as follows: "With the hundredth part of the talent possessed by M. Gouvy, one has the right to be performed at all the lyric theatres, to wear the decoration of the Légion d'honneur, to be a member of the Institute, and to earn thirty thousand francs a year; but why in the deuce does M. Gouvy write symphonies?"<sup>1</sup> This critical effusion accords perfectly with the spirit of the age.

Henri Reber (1807–88), better known as a teacher at the Conservatory, and as the author of a famous treatise on harmony, is declared by Saint-Saëns to have been the first Frenchman to succeed completely in the difficult style of the symphony. He was, none the less, not appreciated by his con-

<sup>1</sup> J. Combarieu, *Histoire de la Musique*, vol. III, p. 520. Paris: Librairie Armand Colin.

temporaries who found his style superannuated.<sup>1</sup> However, in the period of transition to national consciousness, three names tower so far above their contemporaries that there is no injustice in considering them chiefly responsible for the end attained. They are Camille Saint-Saëns, Édouard Lalo and César Franck. This is scarcely the place to attempt a comprehensive appraisal of the work of these men. It is sufficient to indicate the character of their services in preparation for the modern French school.

Camille Saint-Saëns (1835–1921), a prodigy who was wisely and soundly trained, was disconcertingly prolific and well-nigh equally successful in every department of musical activity. A skilful pianist, an excellent organist and an incomparable improviser, his faculties of assimilation were almost limitless. With exceptional versatility he absorbed the methods and qualities of German and Italian music, as well as that of his own country. Lacking in warmth of temperament, in imaginative perception or genuine depth of sentiment, he came perilously near to making up for these capital defects by the amazing extent of his intuitive faculty, his Gallic wit, his vivacity, grace and the dexterous control of all the elements of his craft. With un-

<sup>1</sup> J. Combarieu, *Histoire de la Musique*, vol. III, p. 523. Paris: Librairie Armand Colin.

alterably classic predilections, he could not always cover up a neo-classic barrenness of substance by mere resource of procedure, and he seemed to chafe at times against his self-imposed restrictions. His musical personality often seemed at conflict with itself and to yearn for a more expansive human emotion. Thus, the prelude to "The Deluge" with its sensuous violin solo, the somewhat hackneyed "The Swan" from "The Animals' Carnival," the second theme in the last movement of the first violoncello sonata, the lyrical episode in the finale of the C minor symphony, or the slow movement of the fifth piano concerto based upon an oriental melody, all bear out these contradictory tendencies. But after such moments of self-indulgence, Saint-Saëns returns the more grimly to his classic obligations. As a personality, Saint-Saëns was often divertingly picturesque. His improvisatory feats, his playing of the rôle of Marguerite in the Garden Scene from "Faust" at his Monday musical evenings, despite his uncompromisingly masculine appearance, his nomadic habits which once discovered him upon an island in the Mediterranean when his advice was desired on the eve of a production of one of his operas, his composition of an entire dramatic work, orchestral score and piano arrangement in a house which possessed no musical instrument, all these are indicative of a brilliant and versatile in-

dividuality. G. Jean-Aubry has made the most just estimate of Saint-Saëns as an artist, though probably the least flattering. That he is not blind, if not unduly expansive as to Saint-Saëns' historical import, may be recognized from the following: "It would be idle to deny his merits and to look with indifference upon works like 'Le rouet d'Omphale,' the Variations on a theme of Beethoven, the piano quartet, Op. 41, the Concerto in E flat, the third symphony or even 'Samson and Delilah,' but none of them really forms a part of our emotional life or satisfies the needs of our minds completely. They already appear as respectable and necessary *documents* in musical history, but not as the *living* emanations of genius which will retail their vitality in spite of the passing of time and fashions." <sup>1</sup>

"The passing of time and fashions" has often been exceedingly disrespectful to contemporary opinion of works of art, and it is even possible that M. Jean-Aubry fails to realize how characteristic the works of Saint-Saëns are of an epoch of transition, despite his accurate summing up of their intrinsic qualities. With all their defects, the ingenious structure, the brilliance, the charm (if often superficial) the elastic grace and wit of Saint-Saëns' symphonies, the concertos for piano, violin

<sup>1</sup> G. Jean-Aubry, "Saint-Saëns," *The Chesterian*, London: J. & W. Chester. January, 1922.

and violoncello (in which Saint-Saëns joined with Lalo in subordinating virtuosity to musical contents), the many chamber music works for various combinations, actually converted Parisians into willing listeners of the classic forms. This is no small feat, when one recalls the operative prejudices of the times. Similarly, Saint-Saëns was the pioneer of the symphonic poem in France. If his four works in this form are unequal in merit, they none the less educated the public for other attempts by younger composers. Indeed, without this indispensable preparatory work by Saint-Saëns, beginning with his first symphony composed in 1852 at the age of seventeen, it is doubtful whether the later composers of instrumental music could have made their way at all. Nor can Saint-Saëns' services in behalf of musical art be dismissed here. He did much to make Bach's music known, not only by his performance of the organ works, but by a series of transcriptions from instrumental works and seldom-heard cantatas. As editor-in-chief of the collected works of Rameau, he has, in association with d'Indy, Dukas, Debussy and others, revealed to the world the commanding traits of that great French master. If he was ungenerous to César Franck, he was the champion of Liszt. If his volume, "Germanophile," is an unfortunate memorial of petty spite, and if during his



latter years he assumed a crabbed attitude toward younger composers of talent, his part in upholding the National Society should not be forgotten. With all his limitations, Saint-Saëns remains one of the last links with the classic world of music, a baffling and even a pathetic figure, in view of the absence of that conviction in utterance which produces a true classicist, and in the incommensurability of his rare technical resources and their expressive result.

Édouard Lalo (1823-92), with far less technical skill, versatility or breadth of scope than Saint-Saëns, has had a far more incisive reaction in the direction of modern French music. Born at Lille of a family of Spanish origin long since settled in Flanders, he came in 1839 to Paris where he studied at the Conservatory. To gain his daily bread, Lalo joined the Armingaud-Jacquard quartet at its organization in 1853. Having already published songs in the drawing-room style of the period, he now turned toward chamber music, but without success. Discouraged by this rebuff, Lalo ceased to compose for ten years. At last in 1867, he completed an opera, "Fiesque," in view of a competition at the Théâtre-Lyrique. It won no prize and was never performed, but Lalo utilized some of its music for other works. A few years later he turned to instrumental music with quite different results. A *Divertissement* for orchestra, several

concertos, among them the Spanish symphony for violin and orchestra, a Norwegian Rhapsody and a symphony followed, all of which were cordially received. But Lalo had never really abandoned the theatre. In 1875 he began his dramatic masterpiece, "Le Roi d'Ys," revising and finally completing it in 1887. In its first version, despite some favorable official opinion, "Le Roi d'Ys" was refused at the Opéra, but a ballet-scenario, "Namouna," was given him by way of softening the blow. Lalo had but three months in which to complete the music. He worked so far beyond his strength that he had a stroke of paralysis. He recovered, however, and finished his music with the aid of Gounod who orchestrated part of the last act. "Namouna" when performed in 1882 had but a scant success notwithstanding the applause of musicians. It was condemned in advance by the public as the work of a "symphonic" composer. Suites arranged from the ballet music, however, were disconcertingly successful in the concert hall. But in 1888 at the age of sixty-five, Lalo had a triumph with "Le Roi d'Ys" and was awarded the Prix Monbinne by the Académie des Beaux-Arts. Lalo died in 1892, leaving an unfinished opera, "La Jacquerie," which was completed by Arthur Coquard.

Lalo brought to French music an ardent temper-

ament, denied to Saint-Saëns, great rhythmical vitality, together with precision and finesse, the suppleness and clarity of expression which are among the essential French traits, an unconquerable leaning toward the exotic, and a strong vein of poetic imagination. If Félicien David, the romantic lesser contemporary of Berlioz, introduced orientalism into the concert-hall with his symphonic ode, "Le Désert," composed and performed in 1844 before Liszt had begun his series of symphonic poems,<sup>1</sup> Lalo assuredly expanded the taste for exoticism which has continued one of the most marked characteristics of later French music. The Spanish symphony, the Norwegian Rhapsody, the Russian concerto and portions of "Namouna" exhibit a picturesque tendency still further emphasized in various works by Chabrier, Debussy, Ravel, Florent Schmitt, Albert Roussel and others. Thus Lalo is the direct forerunner of a foremost feature in French music of the generation immediately preceding the present. Lalo was, furthermore, one of the pioneers in the coloristic use of the orchestra. If this trait is a natural complement of Lalo's exoticism, it follows that here again he exercised a pervading influence upon the younger musicians who came after him. Like Saint-Saëns, if in lesser degree, Lalo must also be considered as

<sup>1</sup> Combarieu, *Histoire de la Musique*, vol. III, p. 111 *et seq.*

having signally advanced the cause of chamber music at a period when it was, so to speak, still on probation. His sonata for violoncello, the A minor trio and the string quartet attest his right to pre-eminence at a critical epoch. Lalo must also be looked upon as a forerunner of the later school of song-composers represented by Fauré, Duparc, Chausson and others. His music is full of vital warmth, a sense of proportion, a rare harmonic distinction. This latter quality perhaps suggests the reason above all others for his historic position. That composers so divergent in esthetic viewpoint as Vincent d'Indy and Claude Debussy should have studied Lalo's music with obvious profit<sup>1</sup> indicates how far it possessed the basic qualities of universal appeal and emotional sincerity.

To treat the music of César Franck solely in the light of "preparation" for modern French music, invites reproof. Yet of recent years his position has become so solidified, and the qualities of his indubitable genius have been so aptly and justly set forth as to dispense with the need for reiteration. The facts of his laborious, self-denying life, the lack of recognition from his colleagues at the Conservatory and elsewhere, the inertness of the

<sup>1</sup> There is a marked resemblance between the theme of the prelude in Lalo's Suite from "Namouna" and the first theme of the first movement in d'Indy's "Symphony on a Mountain Air."

public toward his music, his habit of reserving a few scant hours each day for thought or musical self-expression despite his preoccupations of a humdrum nature, the devotion and affection of his admiring private pupils in composition, have all been amply recounted by Vincent d'Indy and others. These accounts serve to reconstruct the figure of a musician who was unique in the selfishness of his life, and in the concentration of his efforts to reveal the luminous truth of Art. His claims to be considered a classic may be acknowledged without argument. By reason of the fundamental warmth and the emotional durability of his musical ideas, he offers a marked contrast to Saint-Saëns. Yet at one time it was not uncommon in France to refer to Franck as a Belgian composer in spite of his naturalization. It is true that he showed an intellectual fervor and a sense of artistic responsibility as a rule uncharacteristic of the Gallic musician of the period. But if it be impossible to disguise the Flemish traits in his make-up, it is also useless to ignore an assimilation of qualities arising from his adopted country. It was natural that he should shape the esthetic principles of his pupils to a considerable extent. But he also affected those who never studied directly with him, such as Alfred Bruneau, Paul Dukas and Albéric Magnard.

Franck's outlook upon Art may be accurately

summarized as a gospel — instead of a *métier*. Franck's ascendancy over his pupils springs from the spiritual reaction exercised upon them through his character. He taught the moral obligations of the artist, the need for elevated standards, the consideration of quality rather than quantity in the students' tasks, emotional sincerity as an absolute prerequisite in all artistic expression, and above all faith as a primary ingredient.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, Franck steadily inculcated a disdain for immediate success, and a disregard of the public as a prerequisite for attaining durability in a work of art. But vital and constructive as were Franck's maxims for guidance in the artists' career, the fact that he bore out these principles in his own life made them the more compelling.

But it must not be thought that Franck's influence was confined to the mere moral exhortation of his pupils. His technical instruction was equally inspiring and fruitful. He was convinced that the classic forms had not outlived their usefulness, if joined to a sincerely emotional reaction on the part of the composer. Thus he once more made the fugue, and also the canon, a living medium of expression, because he reincarnated its spirit, instead of obeying merely the letter of its law as did Saint-

<sup>1</sup> D'Indy has admirably reflected these teachings in his summary of the artists' standpoint. See *Cours de Composition Musicale*, Book I, Part I, p. 3. Paris: Durand et Cie.

Saëns. He revived the chorale-prelude for organ which had virtually lain dormant since Sebastian Bach. (It must not be forgotten that Brahms and also Reger continued this revival a few years later.) Franck, with no probable knowledge as to what Brahms had accomplished in the same direction, also restored to the variation form the dignity and scope of treatment which it had under Beethoven. He also showed a liberal attitude toward the symphonic poem by his works, "Les Éolides" and "Le Chasseur Maudit." While it is customary to disparage the romantic qualities of the latter, in performance it does not suffer in comparison with any specimen of this type produced in France. But of greatest import was Franck's expansion of the so-called "cyclical" type of sonata, the chief themes of which have a common origin in melodic ideas termed "generative phrases." It is true that Beethoven more than once suggested the outlines of this method, that Berlioz had given a more concrete instance of an identical treatment in his *Fantastic Symphony*, as did Liszt more completely, if later, in his *E flat concerto*. (Brahms' *First and Third Symphonies* and others of his works also supply instances of his individual version of the same underlying idea.) But before Liszt, Franck, in his early piano trios composed in 1841, showed from the outset a different conception of the cyclical

principle. Moreover, his later development of this system is so original and logical as justly to be considered his own. It must not be forgotten, however, that d'Indy discovered palpable instances of the use of a cyclical treatment of themes in Giovanni Battista Vitali's second violin sonata (1677) as well as recurrences of the same method in sonatas by Corelli,<sup>1</sup> but these foreshadowings are not uncommon in musical history, and in this case they do not in the slightest detract from the merit due Franck for his new viewpoint of an academic form threatened with stagnation. The proof of the potentialities of this extension of sonata form is to be found in Franck's works which employ it, the piano quintet, the violin sonata, the string quartet and, above all, the Symphony, perhaps the ripest expression of his instrumental thought. Furthermore, almost without exception, although with a varying rigor of application, Franck's pupils have reaffirmed this constructive principle as a foremost article in their creed of instrumental music. Others, too, beyond the circle of Franck's pupils have accepted the basis of this handling of themes as works by Debussy and Ravel testify. The chief virtue of the cyclical method does not lie in the technical extension involved, but in the enlargement and in the

<sup>1</sup> V. d'Indy, *Cours de Composition Musicale*, deuxième livre, première partie, p. 178 *et seq.*



unification of musical expression resulting therefrom. Franck and his pupils have, therefore, added a new chapter to the history of sonata-form. In conclusion it must be stated that Franck's searching esthetic probity, and the inspiring nature of his revelation of a possible fusion between classic forms and personal musical thought have inspired not only his immediate pupils, but also many others. If the former do not perhaps constitute the most characteristic manifestation in later French music, their significance, both as to the intrinsic qualities of their works and their united efforts to continue the serious aims inculcated by their master, is too considerable not to receive a just estimate of their historical position.

The foundation of orchestras and chamber music organizations was an essential step towards distributing Parisian musical appreciation more equably over the chief divisions of musical thought. The results obtained, momentous as they were, would have been fruitless as far as the national evolution of French individuality in music was concerned had not composers come to the fore of sufficient courage to seize upon opportunity, possessing keen enough artistic convictions to stake all upon the problem of creating a native literature worthy of respect and attention. Saint-Saëns, with his long list of symphonies, concertos, chamber music and orchestral

works, popularized the sonata form and the symphonic poem, thus preparing the way unconsciously for the acceptance of works in the same fields by younger men. Lalo, with a far more ardent temperament, if less technical mastery, advanced musical expression by the innate distinction and sheer personality of his style, by his sincerely romantic flavor, his exploitation of the coloristic elements of the orchestra, his pioneer work in the song and in chamber music, as well as by his constant predilection for musical themes of exotic origin. For these reasons he was a conspicuous figure in a period of transition, infallibly to be linked with important names in the generation succeeding him. César Franck, through his elevated sense of the artist's mission, through the mystical sentiment of his musical individuality, and the unconsciously illuminating example of his life, was able to impress a worthy circle of disciples and admirers through his vital combination of eighteenth-century forms and an original musical speech.

That a musical movement must contain subsidiary figures of no uncertain merit, whose combined efforts are far from negligible, is a commonplace of all episodes in history. At the turning point in the fortunes of instrumental music several names are to be added for their contributions to the sum-total of the transitional period. Bizet's

suites drawn from the incidental music to Daudet's "L'Arlésienne," and even a lesser work "Jeux d'Enfants," show a capacity for concise instrumental expression and a substance of musical idea which must have expanded and ripened had he lived. Similarly, the overtures, suites and other orchestral works by Dubois, Godard, Guiraud, the teacher of Debussy and Charles Martin Loeffler, Lacombe, Massenet, Perilhou, Charles-Marie Widor and others must be mentioned for their collective share in the phenomenal revivifying of French instrumental music, which, save for Berlioz, had been almost inactive in the eighteenth century.

Before the course of progress in French music can be traced further, some attention must be given to certain features in the evolution of dramatic music before and after the Franco-Prussian War.

## CHAPTER III

### ' THE COURSE OF OPERA

To describe in detail the complicated and often misleading paths of operatic transformation in Paris during the nineteenth century would lead far beyond the purpose and needs of this survey. It will suffice then to present the more significant tendencies, considered especially in the light of later developments of a nationalistic nature. Opera in Paris, entrenched in the stronghold of tradition, as might be expected, responded much more slowly than instrumental music to the forces of innovation. The various types of dramatic music such as grand opera, *opéra-comique* and the ballet maintained a preponderance of French traits as well as a fidelity to the conventions of French taste in the theatre, but their progress toward independence was retarded by the eclecticism prevalent in Paris during the first half of the nineteenth century. The paradoxical epigram to the effect that the most eminent composers of French opera were Italians, as instanced by the names of Rossini, Spontini and Cherubini, was unfortunately but too plausible. Somewhat later, Meyerbeer, notwithstanding his high standing as a dramatic composer and the obvious fact of his widespread reaction

upon the operatic music of his time, attained the height of eclecticism with an idiom which fused German technical features and florid Italian vocalism with generous concessions to French traditions in the opera house. Yet during this period, Auber, Méhul, Hérold and Adam cultivated the characteristic qualities of opéra-comique with real prestige. Auber, with "La Muette de Portici," a work which has more than once fanned the embers of political revolt into flames, and Halévy, with "La Juive," can claim to have produced French grand opera of historical and intrinsic import. But even Berlioz, the indisputable pioneer of modern orchestral music, never attained operatic success in Paris during his lifetime. This was due in part to his somewhat reactionary dramatic principles and lack of insight as a librettist, in part to the prejudice of his audiences. It is even an historical fact that his life was shortened by the refusal of the Opéra to mount "Les Troyens," accentuated by the failure of a portion of this work at the Théâtre-Lyrique. Yet "Les Troyens" reduced by cuts, some of which were indicated by Berlioz himself, from five acts to three, was one of the sensations at the Paris Opéra in 1920. By its authentic re-creation of classic atmosphere, this version, at least, rightfully established its position as one of the dramatic masterpieces of all time.

If Berlioz was denied that immediate recognition in the theatre which he so eagerly desired, his virtual contemporary, Félicien David, already referred to in the foregoing chapter as a pioneer of orientalism through his symphonic ode, "Le Désert," transferred the same exotic outlook to his opéra-comiques, "La Perle du Brésil" (1851) and "Lalla Roukh" (1862), thereby initiating a similar predilection in works for the stage which has been continued by Reyer, Bizet, Saint-Saëns, Lalo, Massenet, Rabaud, Albert Roussel and others. In so doing, David aided the liberation of French opera from convention, and thus reasserted his claims to an historical position.

Shortly after the mid-century, however, a dominant figure arose, one who was destined to shape the operatic future of France along certain lines in no uncertain manner — Charles Gounod (1818–93). In 1859 Gounod produced his "Faust" (at the Théâtre-Lyrique, for the Opéra did not mount it until ten years later), a work of genius despite its too evident concessions to Italian style, and assuredly a concrete manifestation of Gallic traits and emotional atmosphere. This opera became the point of departure towards a more specific form — the French lyric drama, cultivated so distinctively by Massenet. If Gounod did not duplicate the success of "Faust" in "Romeo and Juliet" or

“Mireille,” he nevertheless gave French opera a decided impulse toward an unequivocally national flavor. In his Masses and oratorios (“Rédemption” and “Mors et Vita”), and in his motet, “Gallia,” he created a type of choral music whose reaction upon Massenet and others is conclusive. To Gounod also must be attributed upon the authority of Maurice Ravel, a definite share in the establishment of the song in France, as well as an indubitable stimulus upon the pioneers of that progressive tendency which we term “modernism.” “The real restorer of ‘melody’ in France was Charles Gounod. It was the musician of ‘Venise,’ of ‘Philémon et Baucis’ and of the shepherd’s song in ‘Sapho’ who rediscovered the secret of an harmonic sensuality which had been lost since the French harpsichordists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In fact, the musical renewal which took place with us towards 1880, has no more weighty precursor than Gounod. Fauré and Chabrier, the veritable foster-fathers of the generation of 1895, both proceed from this master. By their sides, Bizet, Lalo, Saint-Saëns and Massenet, followed by Claude Debussy participate more or less in the salutary influence of the composer of ‘Mireille.’”<sup>1</sup>

Ambroise Thomas (1811–96), a pupil of Lesueur,

<sup>1</sup> Maurice Ravel, “Les Mélodies de Gabriel Fauré.” Recorded by M. Roland-Manuel, *La Revue Musicale*, Paris, October 1, 1922.

Berlioz' teacher, had a long and distinguished career as Prix de Rome, teacher at the Conservatory and afterwards its director, member of the Institut des Beaux-Arts, and as a prolific dramatic composer. If Thomas is of far less historic import than Gounod, he gave a masterpiece in its genre to the French stage in "Mignon" (1866), followed by "Hamlet" (1868) and "Françoise de Rimini" (1882). Furthermore, Thomas was Massenet's teacher in composition and thus aids in linking the older régime to a notable figure of the later nineteenth century. Here also should be mentioned Léo Delibes (1836-91) for his incomparable ballets, "La Source" (1866), "Coppélia" (1870) and "Sylvia" (1876), in which the music not only possesses great intrinsic charm, but adapts itself to the mimetic opportunities of the action with finesse and imagination. Composers of ballets who followed, Widor, Wurmser, Messager, Vidal, Saint-Saëns, Lalo, Maréchal, Busser and Dubois could not ignore Delibes' rebirth of the ballet which was not without its effect up to the appearance of Diaghilev's Ballet Russe in 1909. If Delibes' opéra-comiques, "Le Roi l'a dit" (1873) and "Jean de Nivelle" (1880), are gracefully individual along conventional lines, "Lakmé" (1883) has made an uninterrupted appeal to the public for its vivacity and oriental color. Delibes also exercised some in-



fluence as teacher of composition at the Conservatory. One of his pupils was awarded the first prize in fugue. His successor at the Institute, Guiraud, relates that this success brought more joy to Delibes than that of all his operas.<sup>1</sup>

In the mean time, a most gifted French composer, the friend of Saint-Saëns and Gounod, who gained the Prix de Rome in 1857 as a pupil of Halévy, Georges Bizet by name, after indifferent rewards for a long struggle, produced "Carmen" in 1875. Its unusual merit was far from being recognized at once, and the consequent chagrin reacted so bitterly upon the sensitive composer that he died a few months later. Like "Faust," "Carmen" is not free from Italian procedure, nor from a subtle but clearly perceptible influence of Gounod, but its musical invention and its dramatic skill are of so high an order that the term "masterpiece" is involuntarily associated with this epoch-making work. The spontaneous inevitability of this music and the manner in which it achieves its end with the minimum of effort still astonishes the twentieth-century critic. Similarly the striking dramatic appositeness of Bizet's music for Daudet's play "L'Arlésienne," its essentially Gallic qualities of expression, place it upon the same plane of achievement as "Carmen." It is idle to discuss what Bizet

<sup>1</sup> Combarieu, *History of Music*, vol. III, p. 403.

might have attained had he lived longer. Despite the lesser traits of a series of apprentice works, Bizet remains, after Gounod, the most conspicuous figure of his period.

It was not to be supposed that so restless and mercurial a composer as Saint-Saëns could refrain from tempting his fate in the dramatic field. As early as 1872 he brought out a slight opéra-comique, "The Yellow Princess," with quasi-Japanese themes and an overture in the classic form, which met with a hostile reception. Yet in 1867 he had begun an oratorio, "Samson and Delilah," which Liszt urged him to transform into an opera, and which, when completed, he produced at Weimar in 1877. From this time up to 1906 Saint-Saëns composed eleven works for the stage on fantastic, historical or classical subjects with an entire disregard of consistency. Saint-Saëns avowed himself an eclectic in dramatic style,<sup>1</sup> as well as in instrumental music, with the inevitable results of stagnation as far as genuine dramatic advance is concerned. "Samson and Delilah" perhaps shows as much dramatic vitality as any of his stage works in spite of its vacillation between oratorio and opera styles, as the sombre opening chorus, the frankly sensuous appeal of "Mon cœur s'ouvre à ta voix,"

<sup>1</sup> "Portraits et Souvenirs," *Société d'Éditions artistiques*, p. 248. Paris, 1899.

or the moderate exoticism of the Bacchanale show. "Henry VIII," "Ascanio" and the opéra-comique "Phryné" have attained the greatest favor after "Samson." "Déjanire," based on mythology, was first performed in the restored classic amphitheatre at Béziers; "Les Barbares," text by Sardou, at a similar archeological survival at Orange. The latter work evoked a notable burst of critical indignation from Claude Debussy for its dramatic ineffectiveness and its stylistic inconsistencies. To his operas Saint-Saëns brought a mastery of musical means and the same skilful technical manipulation that is found in his instrumental music. In the long run he also proved himself incapable of a vitally dramatic emotion and at times of even an adequate musical substance. Too often, when confronted with a difficult problem, his incurable versatility and adroit presence of mind allowed him an avenue of escape into apt neo-classic imitations. These somewhat too obvious devices were often partially justifiable from the nature of the dramatic theme or its period, but the greatest operatic composers have usually been able to express all dramatic situations within the confines of their own individuality and without recourse to shallow echoes of the past. On the whole, Saint-Saëns undoubtedly advanced the cause of French opera during a period of hesitation and uncertainty, but

long before the end of his operatic career other Parisians of lesser years, to be sure, far surpassed him in dramatic conviction and in the individual solution of their problems.

Like Gounod before him, Bizet was stigmatized as a "Wagnerian," the most unflattering and abusive epithet available at the time in the vocabulary of critical reproach, because he employed a single "motive" in "Carmen," whose music is as un-Wagnerian as is possible. Despite the justifiable political rancors of 1870, aggravated by Wagner's ignoble pamphlet "Eine Kapitulation," the Parisian musical world could not continue to ignore his music. In the year after Bizet's death, Vincent d'Indy, then a young man of twenty-four, heard Wagner's "Ring of the Nibelungs" at its first integral performance in Bayreuth. In succeeding years, Henri Duparc, Chabrier, Fauré and other French musicians made pilgrimages to Germany to study Wagner at first-hand. The sheer expressive force of his music, the glamour of his orchestral sonorities, the logic of much of his dramatic procedure and the comprehensive vitality of his intellectual and philosophic viewpoint were enthralling to Gallic sensibilities.

Lamoureux' persistent propaganda in Wagner's behalf has been recounted in the previous chapter,

but it must not be supposed that the ultimate enthusiasm over Wagner was by any means confined to musicians and their audiences. It was well-nigh universal among artists, men of letters and philosophers. Some idea of its permeating prevalence may be derived from the fact that in 1885 the "Revue Wagnérienne" was founded in Paris, with such contributors as Verlaine, Mallarmé, Swinburne, Villiers de Lisle-Adam, Huysmans, Richepin, Catulle Mendès, Édouard Rod, Stuart Merrill, Ephraïm Mikhaël among poets and writers; the painters: Fantin-Latour, Jacques Blanche, Odilon Redon; the critics: Teodor de Wyzewa, H. S. Chamberlain, Hennequin, Camille Benoît, E. Schuré, Ch. Malherbe and others.<sup>1</sup> All the arts and even philosophy were studied from the Wagnerian standpoint. If, as Romain Rolland observes, this fanatic devotion to Wagner among literary men and painters hardly outlived the "Review" itself (it ceased publication in 1888), the musical influence of Wagner persisted almost to the end of the nineteenth century, and affected some of the strongest musical personalities. At last the Wagnerian fever abated. For it was the vainest of illusions to fancy that Wagnerian principles of music-drama could find a permanent fusion with

<sup>1</sup> Romain Rolland, "Musiciens d'aujourd'hui," *Le Renouveau*, p. 216.

the Gallic nature. With the rise of the most characteristic phase of later French music, and the reawakening to an affinity with the great French figures of the eighteenth century, the fundamental differences between the Teutonic and the Gallic conception of musical art were clearly defined once and for all. Certain features of the reaction of Wagner upon French dramatic composers must now be considered. In some cases this influence was general and almost negligible; in others, it was insistent and penetrating.

With Reyer, for instance, the influence of Wagner was almost non-existent. He was more concerned with an effort to avoid the outworn conventions of the French operatic stage, rather than to assimilate the principles of the Wagnerian music-drama.<sup>1</sup> Ernest Reyer (1823–1909), the friend and disciple of Berlioz, was self-taught during a period of official service in Algiers. His first opera, "Maître Wolfram," was produced at the Théâtre-Lyrique in 1854. He had already composed his first important work, a symphonic ode, "Le Sélam," (text by Théophile Gautier) in 1850. Next came "La Statue" (1861) and "Sigurd," not performed until 1884, long after its conception. "Sigurd" aroused some unfavorable comment on

<sup>1</sup> Julien Tiersot, *Un demi-siècle de Musique française*, p. 68. Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan.

account of the similarity of its subject with that of Wagner's "Siegfried." There is, in fact, no specific resemblance in the musical substance of the two operas. "Salammbô" (1890) founded upon Flaubert's book, Reyer's last opera, manifests most clearly his dramatic independence. Reyer's ill-developed skill in the technical matters of music prevented him from realizing in full his undeniable powers of dramatic expression. He is, none the less, of historical moment, because of his persevering attempts toward a new solution of the problem of opera. In 1866, Reyer succeeded Berlioz as musical critic for the "Journal des Debats." He had thereafter a long and able career as a writer on musical topics who always had the courage of his convictions.

With Lalo, we find again a general rather than a specific Wagnerian reaction. "Le Roi d'Ys" exhibits in the main the same qualities as Lalo's instrumental music, rhythmic variety, abundance of color, distinction of style, together with a remarkable degree of dramatic vitality, such as Saint-Saëns, for instance, never attained. The only traces of a current of Wagnerian thought lie in the closer fusion of drama and music, and in some suggestion of orchestral sonority not unrelated to that of Wagner. In its brilliancy and emotional sincerity, "Le Roi d'Ys" is second only to "Carmen" as a

monument of the epoch immediately preceding the modernistic style. Its durability is still astounding. Nor is "Namouna" far behind Lalo's masterpiece, "Le Roi d'Ys."

If Massenet's sensibility to the Wagnerian contagion was scarcely more than skin-deep, Chabrier, d'Indy and, to a certain extent, Chausson were frankly conquered both by his dramatic method, his orchestral style and even his musical thought and each in his own way endeavored to fuse the technique of the music-drama with a Gallic musical utterance. Chabrier's "Gwendoline," d'Indy's "Fervaal" and to a lesser degree Chausson's "Le Roi Arthus" are significant documents of the Wagnerian invasion in French music. All three belong, however, conclusively beyond the period of transition and will be analyzed and estimated in their proper place.

There was one dramatic individuality who maintained his course relatively untouched by the prevailing musical fashions in Paris, although he made concessions to successful tendencies; who, while not genuinely modernistic, lived and worked through several musical generations and left an unquestionable trace upon each. This was Jules Massenet (1842-1912) whose music was despised by some, imitated by many, but who, as Saint-Saëns says,



imitated no one. Massenet obtained the Prix de Rome in 1865, spent the prescribed time at the Villa Médicis and two years later saw his first piece for the stage produced at the Opéra-Comique. At first he devoted himself to instrumental music, and several orchestral suites showed an uncommon command over orchestral resources for a young musician. After the Franco-Prussian War he turned to the theatre where in succession "Don César de Bazan," and incidental music to Leconte de Lisle's drama, "Les Erinnyes," attracted attention. The sensuous oratorios, "Marie Magdalène" and "Ève," showing some kinship with Gounod, caused no little sensation. After "Le Roi de Lahore" and "Hérodiade," Massenet brought out in 1883 "Manon," founded on the tale by the Abbé Prevost, one of the most enduringly popular of his operas. Despite occasional incursion into the field of instrumental music, Massenet composed principally for the stage, alternating between grand opera and opéra-comique. His most characteristic work has been accomplished in the latter form, which under him became the French lyric drama in direct succession to Gounod. His best works are "Manon," "Werther," adapted from Goethe's novel, and a miracle play, "Le Jongleur de Notre Dame."

Massenet was always agile in adapting his point

of view to that of public taste. Thus "Esclarmonde" (1889), composed during the period of Wagnerian enthusiasm, has "leading motives," although they are not treated in the Wagnerian manner. The success of "Cavalleria Rusticana" led him to attempt a brief realistic drama, "La Navarraise" (1896). Humperdinck's "Hänsel and Gretel" inspired him to try a fairy opera, "Cendrillon."

The literary vogue of Daudet's "Sapho" and of Anatole France's "Thaïs" led him to hope for a like experience with operas founded on these books. Such a motive is not necessarily prejudicial to artistic success, for the subject of Mozart's "Le Nozze di Figaro" was chosen for identical reasons after the *succès de scandale* of Beaumarchais' comedy. But Massenet frankly sought popular approval and also financial rewards with an evident willingness to meet the public halfway. This could not but detract both from the seriousness of his aims and the steadiness of his inspiration. Still Massenet was a rapid worker, often improvising scenes of operas and completing page after page of orchestral score when ill in bed. Possessing an unerring skill as a craftsman, he was able to practise a typically Gallic economy in developing a few ideas to the maximum effect, just as he knew, to an uncanny degree, the infallible secret of obtaining

orchestral sonority with a minimum of resource. His abundant vein of melody was individual, inclined to be sugary and over-sentimental, but exceedingly well adapted to the portrayal of his feministic subjects. Massenet's dominant force was his unerring perception of values in the theatre. While he made too many concessions to Italian dramatic style, especially in his early works, his individuality is overwhelmingly Gallic. He was, however, never tempted toward innovation. The progressive tendencies in French music passed him by entirely. While a fair portion of his music is ephemeral, his manipulation of musical and dramatic means was too sure and masterly to miss its goal entirely. At his best he has risen to genuine inspiration and to a graphic depiction of human emotion as in "Manon," "Werther" and "Le Jongleur," which continue to show vitality in spite of the outcropping of new veins of musical thought. If, as Saint-Saëns said, Massenet *imitated* no one, nevertheless his musical and dramatic style, even the choice of many of his subjects proceed obviously from Gounod, whose successor he undoubtedly is. Massenet was also successful with his sensuous oratorios, and with his songs, many of which are typical of the "transition" epoch, but never reach the plane of those by Fauré, Duparc or Chausson. From Ambroise Thomas, Massenet

mastered all the tricks of counterpoint. The latter was an inspiring teacher especially on all points concerning dramatic construction. Enough pupils of his have gained distinction to form a nucleus for carrying on the Massenet traditions, but none has been able to duplicate their teacher's melodic invention and faculty for characterization with simple means. The influence of Massenet's melody and emotional atmosphere extends far beyond the list of his pupils. Debussy and even d'Indy occur as contradictory instances. Despite the transformation of viewpoints in the Parisian musical horizon, Massenet remains a figure of indisputable significance.

Just as the rise of instrumental music served to disclose artists of less than the highest position who have, nevertheless, aided the outcome considerably in terms of literature contributed, so also are there several names which should not be passed over in recounting the unfolding of dramatic advance. MM. Ernest Guiraud, Paladilhe, Th. Dubois, Charles-Marie Widor, Charles Lenepveu, Victorin Joncières, B. Godard, E. Pessard, S. Rousseau and others to be mentioned later have borne their share during an epoch of moment.

The latter half of the nineteenth century saw operatic Paris advance from a condition of semi-dependent eclecticism to that of assertive indi-

viduality. Such works as David's "La Perle de Brésil," Gounod's "Faust," Thomas' "Mignon," Bizet's "Carmen," Saint-Saëns' "Samson and Delilah," Reyer's "Sigurd," Delibes' "Coppélia" and "Sylvia," Lalo's "Le Roi d'Ys," and Massenet's "Manon" summarize this gradual but unmistakable progress. The next phase of dramatic evolution is concerned with the assimilation and final rejection of Wagner. During this episode begins the reaction upon opera of the literary movements of naturalism and symbolism; the works of pupils of Massenet, and those of several independent figures such as Dukas, Fauré, Magnard and Albert Roussel must be weighed; the revival of the ballet is also to be considered. The absorbing controversy centred in Wagner was almost identical in time with the rise of two pioneers of a more progressive self-expression, Chabrier and Fauré. To these we must now turn.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE THRESHOLD OF MODERNISM

THE unquestioned pioneer of the progressive type of French music is Emmanuel Chabrier. The startling originality of his music, his wholesale disregard of convention and his fearless self-assertion all point to the beginning of a new era of musical expression in France. It must be admitted that Gabriel Fauré was a close second in exhibiting an unmistakable trend toward an individual freedom of musical speech, and that he even antedates Chabrier in one respect. For while Chabrier was somewhat tentatively writing piano music, Fauré had already furnished more than a hint of a new conception of the song. As a matter of fact, both were pursuing innovative paths at nearly the same time. Otherwise their respective careers scarcely admit comparison since Fauré is still active as a composer, while Chabrier, stricken down by illness as he was reaching artistic maturity, accomplished his best work between 1883 and 1891.

Emmanuel Chabrier (1841-94) was born at Ambert (Puy de Dôme), in the region known as Auvergne, proverbial for the picturesque accent

and the wit of its inhabitants. Chabrier's mother was passionately fond of music, dancing and "fêtes," and it was from her that he received his emotional sensibility. His somewhat precocious musical gifts received fairly adequate if irregular instruction beginning in his seventh year. After studying in the Lycée at Clermont-Ferrand, Chabrier came to Paris with his parents at the age of fifteen, to complete his general education and to study law. For, despite his love for music, he was expected to enter governmental service. Nevertheless, he took lessons in piano playing from Édouard Wolf, who had studied with Zywny, Chopin's teacher, and soon became an astonishing if unconventional pianist. He also studied harmony, counterpoint and fugue first with Semet, and then with Aristide Hignard, a second Prix de Rome in 1852, whose worth as a teacher was greater than that of his music. But Chabrier's father was still firm in his resolve that music should remain an avocation for his son. Accordingly when Emmanuel had taken his bachelor's degree at the age of seventeen, and that of law four years later, he at once entered the Ministry of the Interior. "Here," says Chabrier, "I lost fifteen years." But these years may not have been so utterly unfertile as Chabrier imagined, since he soon formed friendships with the Parnassien poets de Coppée, Richepin, Villiers

de Lisle-Adam, and more especially with Verlaine. He also showed genuine appreciation of the painters Manet, Monet, Renoir and Sisley, many of whose canvases he possessed. Indeed, some of his most graphic musical qualities may justly be ascribed to his penetrating understanding of the new movements in poetry and painting. Chabrier is thus the first of French composers to whom the interrelation of arts was a source of inspiration. In this respect Chabrier was a forerunner of Debussy, whose association with artists in fields other than his own was particularly fruitful. Somewhat later Chabrier found intimate friends among musicians, Henri Duparc and Vincent d'Indy, the pupils of Franck, and also Gabriel Fauré and André Messager. An active member in the Société Nationale and a fervent admirer of César Franck, it is significant of his musical standing that at Franck's funeral in 1890 he was asked to pronounce the customary eulogy.

Soon after entering the Ministry, Chabrier sketched operettas in collaboration with Verlaine and Lucien Viotti. Of these only fragments remain. In 1877, Chabrier, hitherto indulgently regarded as a gifted amateur, astonished musical Paris by producing a sparkling opéra-bouffe "L'Étoile." <sup>1</sup> Cha-

<sup>1</sup> This work was later taken by an American comedian without the usual business transactions with its publishers, and with extra



brier was so ignorant of the mechanics of dramatic production that he made no piano arrangement of his score, imagining that all rehearsals were accompanied by the full orchestra. In consequence, he was obliged to act as accompanist for all the tedious preliminary study of his opera. In this, his first work for the stage, Chabrier showed his unusual capacity as a musical humorist. Two years later, Chabrier produced another operetta "L'Éducation Manquée." Although the text was unworthy of his efforts, the music showed a gain in subtlety and individuality. However, Chabrier observed that he was so preoccupied with the music of Bach, Beethoven, Schumann, Berlioz and Wagner that sympathy with a frivolous aspect of musical art was impossible. During this same year, 1879, Chabrier made a trip to Munich with his friend, Henri Duparc, to hear Wagner's "Tristan and Isolde." Its results were momentous. Duparc relates that his friend, always a jovial and talkative companion, was so deeply stirred by Wagner's music that they parted for the night without a word. A piano arrangement of the opera lent by Duparc to Chabrier was returned with page after page underscored in token of his speechless admiration. Chabrier now determined to live for music

numbers and a new title, "The Merry Monarch," was played all over this country.

alone. For several years he had been so slack in his duties at the Ministry that there had been more than once question of his being asked to resign. In 1880, he was allowed to leave his post without protest, and a few months later he became chorus master for Lamoureux who was organizing his "New Concerts." Chabrier not only trained the chorus for the memorable concert performances of portions of "Tristan" and "Walkyrie," but during rehearsals with orchestra obtained priceless lessons in orchestral effect.

It is doubtful if any composer developed with such astonishing rapidity as Chabrier. Within a few years he attained the repressed ambitions of more than a decade. In 1881, he composed a set of ten "Pièces Pittoresques" for the piano. Despite some real qualities these are hardly representative of Chabrier at his best. An orchestral suite arranged from four of these pieces met with somewhat negative results. In the following year, Chabrier went with his wife to Spain, observing, jotting down melodies, recording his impressions in vivacious letters. A few months later he surprised and delighted the audience of a Lamoureux concert with an orchestral rhapsody, "España," originally composed for two pianos. Irresistible in its bold rhythms, vivid in its emotion and authoritative in its command of orchestral resource, it was an un-

deniable proclamation of independence. Chabrier was the most talked-of composer in Paris, and "España" at once became a favorite final number on orchestral programmes. For some years Chabrier was entirely absorbed in composition. In 1885, he completed an opera, "Gwendoline," in which he strove to embody the principles of the Wagnerian music-drama without sacrificing his individuality. A lyric scene, "La Sulamite," three "Valses romantiques" for two pianos, and transcriptions of a Spanish melody "Habanera," both for piano and for orchestra, were composed in the intervals of work on "Gwendoline." Fragments of the opera were successfully performed by Lamoureux. Then followed a period of cruel torment and disillusion for Chabrier. The management of the Paris Opéra refused "Gwendoline," partly on account of its Wagnerian tendencies. It was accepted, however, by the Théâtre de La Monnaie in Brussels, the directors of which have often been open-minded as to the merits of works rejected at Paris.<sup>1</sup>

"Gwendoline" had a brilliant first representation at Brussels in 1886, but on the day of the second performance the Brussels Opéra was obliged to close on account of financial troubles. However,

<sup>1</sup> Among these are Reyer's "*Sigurd*," Magnard's "*Yolande*," d'Indy's "*Fervaal*" and "*L'Étranger*," Chausson's "*Le Roi Arthus*."

“Gwendoline” was well received in Germany at Karlsruhe (1889), under the baton of Felix Mottl, and at Munich (1890), where Hermann Levi was the conductor. A year after his misfortune at Brussels, Chabrier had a light opera, “Le Roi malgré lui,” produced at the Opéra-Comique in Paris. It seemed destined for a long run, but in a few days the opera house burned to the ground. This was too much even for the buoyant Chabrier, and for some time he was overwhelmed by discouragement. Nevertheless, “Souvenirs de Munich,” a set of quadrilles for pianoforte duet on themes from Wagner’s “Tristan and Isolde,” composed soon afterwards, attests the almost uncanny elasticity of his disposition. In 1888 he finished the “Joyeuse Marche” for orchestra, which, if on a smaller scale, is second only to “España” for its fantastic wit and ebullient vivacity. The success of “Le Roi malgré lui” in Germany encouraged Chabrier to return to creative work. He composed his most characteristic songs, the poetic chorus, “À la Musique,” and his vibrant “Bourrée fantasque” for the piano. Fortune seemed at last to smile upon him. He was recognized as a leader among French composers; he was decorated by the Government; he was sought by musical salons. Already a prey to obscure nervous symptoms, he lived in the country working ardently at an opera, “Briseïs,” which he

hoped would be his masterpiece. But his health did not improve; his condition became aggravated. The tense energy and the high pressure at which he worked shattered his nervous system. When the Paris Opéra at last mounted "Gwendoline" in 1893, Chabrier was but a shadow of his former self. Hardly conscious of the performance, at the end he had to be pushed to the front of his box to acknowledge the applause. Within a year he died of general paralysis.

Chabrier was a compelling personality. His bold self-expression in music during a period when many of his French contemporaries were either hesitant or reactionary constitutes at once his chief virtue and his most signal service to the musical art of his country. With a powerful physique, an unalterably genial disposition, abundant gaiety and humor as a companion, he brought to friendship and to art a well-nigh inexhaustible vitality. Of his piano playing, Alfred Bruneau wrote as follows: "He played the piano as no one had before him, and as it will never be played again. To see Chabrier advancing toward a frail instrument from the back of a salon ornamented with women of elegance, and performing 'España' in a fireworks of broken strings, hammers in pieces, and broken keys was a sight unspeakably droll, which also attained

epic grandeur.”<sup>1</sup> The testimony of Henry Bauer was similar: “He was not the correct pianist, nor the agile virtuoso, equal to all difficulties, oh, no! but a temperament possessed of a devil who incarnated himself in an instrument.”<sup>2</sup> Chabrier was the personification of almost boisterous vitality, of fantastic humor, alternating with poetic sensibility, verging at times on frank sentimentality such as had scarcely been witnessed in French art since the days of Rabelais. He had hoped to find an opera subject in the works of the greatest French humorist, and it is indeed a pity that Massenet composed “Panurge,” and not Chabrier. However, despite this loss, Gallic wit and exuberant emotion find abundant outlet in “España,” the “Joyeuse Marche,” the “Valses romantiques,” the “Bourrée fantasque,” and in the songs. Moreover, their example has furnished a keen incentive along similar lines to later composers, among them Satie and Ravel.

Chabrier’s defective technical training was undoubtedly a severe handicap. In submitting docilely to his parents’ wishes he lost the opportunity for that stern drill in the fundamentals which is inseparable from breadth of achievement. But his

<sup>1</sup> Alfred Bruneau, *Musiques de Hier et de Demain*, p. 30. Paris: E. Fasquelle, 1900.

<sup>2</sup> “En Hommage à Emmanuel Chabrier,” *S. I. M. Revue Musicale Mensuelle*, p. 5. Paris: Librairie Charles Delgrave. April 15, 1911.

overwhelming creative force swept him over obstacles where a timid character would have been lost. Chabrier himself recognized his limitations when he said: "I am virtually self-taught, I belong to no school. I had more temperament than talent. There are many things which one must learn in youth which I shall never reach; but I live and breathe in music, I write as I feel with more temperament than technique, but what is the difference — I think I am an honest and sincere artist."

Chabrier's estimate of himself was in the main just. The shortcomings of his musical education and the years spent at the Ministry of the Interior undoubtedly prevented the full development of his talent, but these drawbacks could not affect the value of his example, nor could they stifle the intrinsic qualities of his music. Chabrier is significant first of all for his prodigious spontaneity, the overwhelming exuberance of his musical ideas. His genius for musical humor is already apparent in "L'Étoile," and despite the slightness of its subject is keener and more subtle in "L'Éducation manquée." As he continued to compose, his musical individuality expressed itself in two sharply contrasted types of mood, one fairly bursting with energy, passion and incisive rhythms, the other tender, tranquil and at times sentimental. In the first category belong "España," the "Joyeuse

Marche" and the "Valse romantiques." In the second are "La Sulamite," the chorus "À la Musique" and the "Habanera." Often both types co-exist as in the "Bourrée fantasque" and the opera, "Gwendoline." In both Chabrier was inimitably original, with absolutely no precedent to guide him.

His first triumph, the orchestral rhapsody, "España," is Spain seen through a Frenchman's eyes, but it is none the less a characteristic expression of such typical French traits as cheerfulness, enthusiasm and striking humor. As such it is exceedingly important historically as the manifesto of a new spirit of independence, a return to an affirmation of the Gallic character and a rebuke to reactionary eclecticism. Chabrier did not acknowledge fetish worship in art. He did not feel impelled to write fugues, sonatas or symphonies. Music to him was primarily a means of subjective expression. Form and even style were of secondary importance, except as they helped him to attain his end. Herein lies Chabrier's significance as a pioneer of progress. Not the least feature in "España" was its gorgeously coloristic orchestral style, the originality of which was as unexpected as its glowing musical speech. In this respect Chabrier exhibited an evident kinship with the painters Monet, Renoir and others for whose works he had shown such penetrating appreciation. Orchestrally, also, he marks



the beginning of a new epoch. The "Joyeuse Marche," by reason of its lesser scope, does not occupy a position equal to that of "España," but its piquant wit and droll originality entitle it to a high place. Harmonically, at least, it quite holds its own with "España," and in grotesque and humorous orchestral effects it need fear no comparison with the better known work.

The novelty of the subjects Chabrier chose for musical treatment and the abrupt departure of his musical substance from classic models were alike appalling to the timid. That he did not disdain melodic vulgarity or even cheapness, provided that it served his purpose, is evident in the "Joyeuse Marche," the "Valses romantiques" or in some of his songs. But he clothed these tunes with such unexpected and brilliant harmonic and rhythmic effects as to entrance his listeners. A Parisian wit once complained of the "exquisite bad taste" of his waltzes. This phrase epitomizes the secret of Chabrier's contribution to musical humor.

In addition to his overflowing exuberance and ever-present sense of humor, Chabrier possessed a distinctive emotional sensibility. Indeed, the originality of his lyrical moods is scarcely less manifest than those with which he is commonly associated. The lyric ecstasy of "La Sulamite," the graceful poetry of "À la Musique," and the quiet intensity

of pages in "Gwendoline" reveal an aspect of his temperament in which he was quite as obviously a pioneer. This side of his individuality is clearly evident in the songs "Villanelle des petits canards," "Ballade des gros Dindons" and the "Pastorale des Cochons roses." While a severe critic might feel justified in regarding these as fairly high-class vaudeville songs, Chabrier has set witty texts with such ineffably ironic humor as to create a new type of lyric. In "Les Cigales," through a fanciful accompaniment, he has also created an atmosphere of indisputable poetry. It is true that Saint-Saëns may have preceded Chabrier in the zoölogical field with his "Carnival des Animaux" for orchestra. This work, although performed at intervals, was not published in Saint-Saëns' lifetime. Its humor, while obvious, tends often to caricature and burlesque, while Chabrier's treatment of his texts is far more subtle and enduringly original. From Chabrier's songs proceed Ravel's "Histoires Naturelles" and even "Le Bestiaire," by Francis Poulenc.

"Gwendoline" brought Chabrier face to face with several difficult problems. He was sorely tried in his search for an opera text. The symbolistic movement which later gave "Pelléas et Mélisande" to the French stage was just beginning when Chabrier was finishing "Gwendoline." *Naturalisme* as

a literary creed had about run its course, although Bruneau resuscitated it for operatic purposes some years later. Neither the *Parnassiens* nor the *Naturalistes* were "modern" in the theatre. Chabrier did not dare to write his text himself, and so entrusted the task to Catulle Mendès. The poem is thoroughly unsatisfactory, banal and colorless in language as well as ill-proportioned. The first act is inordinately long; those that follow are too short. The scene is laid in England during the Saxon times. With the rise of the curtain the Saxon men and women celebrate the coming of day. Gwendoline, the daughter of the Saxon king, Armel, recounts her terrifying dreams of the Danish pirates. The Saxon women try to laugh her fears away. All at once the dreaded Danes arrive with their chief Harald. He is lost in wonder at Gwendoline's beauty, and soon shows his enslavement. He recounts his stormy life of battle and adventure on the sea, while Gwendoline tells the Dane of their pastoral existence. He asks Armel for his daughter's hand, but the reply is evasive. Gwendoline completes Harald's conquest by singing to him with her spinning-wheel. The Danes returning find their chief in humiliating subservience to Gwendoline as her accepted lover. In the second act, preparations for their marriage are completed; the ceremony follows. Armel gives Harald a golden goblet, to

Gwendoline a dagger to kill Harald when he is in her power. When the Danes have drunk deep on the wedding evening, the Saxons are to kill them and burn their ships. Gwendoline, who now loves Harald, discovers the plot and bids him flee. For a reply he draws her into his arms, and they sing a love duet. As a wild chorus comes from the carousing Danes, the Saxon men attack them. Harald is mortally wounded; he drags himself to Gwendoline. She stabs herself, the lovers die together with a background of the blazing Danish ships.

Chabrier wished to set Mendès' poem according to the Wagnerian method. Having hitherto composed only opéra-bouffes, he was totally unprepared for the task. Since he lacked the technical skill to attain a consistently radical style, he was often obliged to fall back upon the French grand-opera tradition, or at most to approximate the early Wagnerian idiom. An elaborate overture, virtually his only attempt at sonata form, began with impressive originality and was carried through with surprising skill. The opening chorus is atmospherically appropriate, but the scenes which follow are frankly unequal up to the closing spinning-song in which Chabrier has employed an Irish melody (by Moore) with an ingeniously harmonized accompaniment. The prelude to the second

act, built on Gwendoline's motive, is a shining instance of Chabrier's capacity for realizing delicate and poetic emotion. After a less inspired bridal chorus, the bridal song is full of beauty. In the love duet, despite its intrinsically felicitous sentiment, Chabrier is unable to resist reminiscences of the second act of "Tristan." Later, d'Indy in "Fervaal" and Chausson in "Le Roi Arthus" were unconsciously affected by the same source. In the apotheosis of the dying lovers, Chabrier employs a blatant theme far below the emotional level of the dramatic situation, which also disfigures the close of the overture. Thus "Gwendoline" hardly fares better than a magnificent experiment. The indebtedness to Wagner's methods and even individual works is constantly in evidence. Yet Chabrier has, in individual pages and in certain episodes, attained a dramatic vitality which lifts "Gwendoline" above many French operas of more consistent style. It remains a monument to Chabrier's courage and his struggle against the heavy odds of inexperience and insufficient technical equipment. Yet in two respects Chabrier was beyond criticism; in his skilful writing for voices, and in his forceful, highly colored and poetic orchestral style he attained genuine mastery. As a whole "Gwendoline" is a significant document of the Wagnerian movement in France. For even in this

imperfect experiment, Chabrier revealed a higher conception of opera than that current among his compatriots, and again his example reacted upon later composers. Some ten years later, d'Indy completed an opera, "Fervaal," not only adequate but compelling in its technical handling, in which he fused far more convincingly the Wagnerian method and his own Gallic musical thought. Chausson did the same, if less successfully, in "Le Roi Arthus." With the progress of years, however, French composers were persuaded as to the futility of attempting to combine foreign methods with their own traditions of dramatic art. From that moment French opera began a steady march toward that independence which French instrumental composers had already assured.

In "Le Roi malgré lui" Chabrier was on more familiar ground, and his best traits spontaneously asserted themselves. Among many effective numbers, the matchless "Fête polonaise" and the poignant duet "Nocturne" show invention and imagination undiminished. The first act only of "Briseïs" was finished. Despite many telling passages and fresh evidence of harmonic originality, it presented a subject less in accord with Chabrier's unusual gifts. Indeed, there is cause for regret that Chabrier did not expend the time and effort given to "Gwendoline" and "Briseïs" upon works in which

his distinctive powers might have shown to better advantage.

Chabrier's piano pieces were relatively few in number. Some of these afford merely glimpses of his characteristic qualities, others exhibit his originality at its height. Thus the "Dix Pièces Pittoresques" (1880) are naturally somewhat transitional, although they also disclose definite features of Chabrier's individuality. In "Mélancholie" there is an early instance of his chromatic style quite uncontaminated by Wagnerian influence. "Sous bois" already has Chabrier's characteristic grace and charm; "Idylle" is delicately piquant, while the "Scherzo-valse" is a sort of prototype of Chabrier's volatile energy. The "Habanera" (1885), a transcription of a Spanish melody, possesses the qualities of the languorous dance enhanced by Chabrier's individual resetting in terms of his own harmonic idiom. The "Bourrée fantasque" (1891), his most mature piece for the piano, is a superb example of its composer's headlong impetuosity, full of original details, novel in its pianistic style. A sentimental and poetic interlude contrasts and unites the exuberant sections. It is, indeed, Chabrier at his best, an epitome of his humorous, bizarre and tender sentiments.

In the best of his works for orchestra, chorus, and piano, and his songs, Chabrier is already a classic in

moods of emotional vitality, ironic humor, lyrical tenderness and sentimental poetry. His musical speech was Gallic to the core, original and personal to a supreme degree. His contributions to orchestral style are not only remarkable in themselves, but are prophetic of later developments, along similar if not identical lines, by French composers. Chabrier was also a pioneer in the attainment of a specifically French harmonic idiom. In this he was closely followed by Gabriel Fauré. The source of some of his chromaticism is undoubtedly Wagner, but from these hints and independent experiments he derived a new and unmistakable manner of his own. This is illustrated by the following measures from the "Joyeuse Marche":

## Example I

## Chabrier, "Joyeuse Marche."

The musical score is presented in three staves. The top staff is for the Violin (labeled *Sva* and *K*), the middle staff is for the Piano (labeled *pp*), and the bottom staff is for the Bass (labeled *pp*). The time signature is 2/4. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The music is characterized by chromaticism and complex harmonic structures. The top staff features a melodic line with a wavy line above it, and the middle and bottom staves provide harmonic support with dense chordal textures and rhythmic patterns.



He was a precursor in the use of the whole tone scale, which Debussy, d'Indy, Dukas and others have expanded according to their own conceptions. He was also among the first to employ a series of seventh chords connected in a radical defiance of rule. The following measures from "España" may seem tame in the days of Stravinsky, or even the later Debussy, but they were startlingly novel in 1883.

## Example II

Chabrier, "España."

The image shows a musical score for a piano piece titled "España" by Maurice Ravel (though the caption says Chabrier, the notation is Ravel's). The score is in 3/8 time and features a whole-tone scale. The right hand (treble clef) starts with a series of chords marked with ^ symbols, followed by a melodic line with accents. The left hand (bass clef) starts with a series of chords marked with ^ symbols, followed by a melodic line with accents. The piece is marked *ff* (fortissimo). The score is written in a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and ends with a double bar line.

Chabrier's harmonic innovations have not only stood the test of time, but they have encouraged d'Indy, Satie, Debussy, Ravel, Florent Schmitt, Albert Roussel and others to experiment further with profit to musical art in France.

The testimony of artists embodying such diverse viewpoints as those of Felix Mottl, Alfred Bruneau, Ernest Chausson, Gustave Charpentier and Vincent d'Indy is unanimous as to the significance of Chabrier's work, although each emphasizes a differ-

ent phase of his personality. To one, it is the historical value of his music in blazing new trails; to another, his vigorous assertion of French traits of character. To others, his innovations in choice of subject, his harmonic fearlessness and coloristic use of the orchestra, and, perhaps of the greatest importance, his utter emotional sincerity. Looking back over the thirty years since Chabrier's death, we see his imperfections and his failures, but we recognize the unquenchable courage of the artist, the human qualities of the man. We realize that both have inspired more than one generation of French composers. Indeed, much of the vital originality of later French music may be ascribed to Chabrier, and his life is still conspicuous for its unswerving fidelity to creative instinct.

## CHAPTER V

### THE THRESHOLD OF MODERNISM (*continued*)

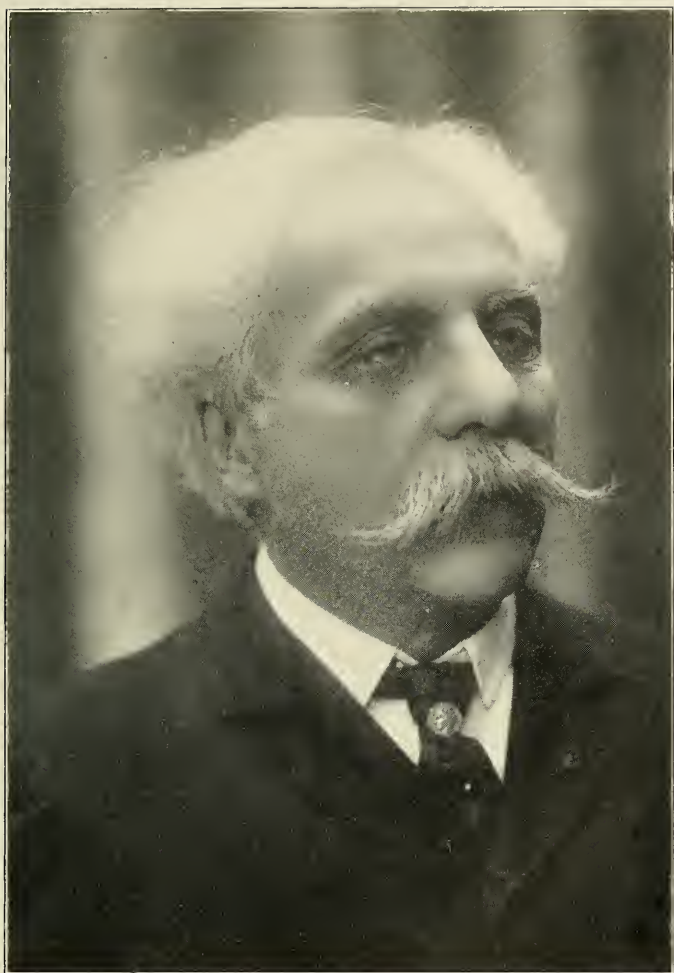
CHABRIER, through his unformulated but nevertheless militant revolt against a tame surrender to tradition, was assuredly the pioneer of liberalism in French music. This statement, however, should not obscure recognition of the fact that Gabriel Fauré is a close second as an evangelizing force toward progress. In the foregoing chapter attention was directed to the dissimilarity of their careers. Chabrier's rewards were chiefly posthumous. Fauré has lived to witness a concert of national homage in the chief hall of the Sorbonne in the presence of the President of the Republic and other dignitaries at which Parisian conductors, singers, pianists and orchestral musicians vied with one another to do him honor.<sup>1</sup> If their lives were different, so also their personalities, their musical individualities and their chosen media of creative activity bear little resemblance one to the other. Fauré has composed relatively little for the orchestra; with some significant exceptions, he has devoted himself largely to pianoforte pieces, songs and chamber music. He has no decided sense of

<sup>1</sup> The date of this concert was June 21, 1922.

humor. Even the style of the two composers was utterly at variance. Chabrier's music is assertive, direct and uncompromising. That of Fauré is, in its essence, not one whit less uncompromising. But it is not combative, it insinuates itself into the listener's heart, annuls argument, and perforce leads the mind into regions of persuasive poetry. Chabrier's work was tragically incomplete; Fauré has been able to explore the realms of his personality to the full. He has seen many of his pupils reaffirm his gospel of art according to their several lights. Since the death of Saint-Saëns, none but the most crabbed critic would deny to Fauré the highest position among French composers. But it must not be forgotten that this artist was also a pioneer whose historical import has only recently received an adequate appraisal.<sup>1</sup>

Gabriel Fauré was born at Pamiers (Ariège), in the district known as the "Midi," in 1845. His father, an inspector of schools, soon became director of a Normal School at Foix. Some years later, young Gabriel's musical gifts were so pronounced that his father decided to send him to Niedermeyer's School of Religious Music in Paris, only recently founded. Thus, when barely nine years old young Fauré began his serious musical

<sup>1</sup> See *La Revue Musicale* for October 1, 1923, a number entirely devoted to Fauré.



à Monsieur Edouard B. Hill  
Sincères très sympathiques  
souvenirs

Gabriel Hanry



studies. After a year had elapsed, the father, fearing that a long course of study would be too great a burden for his modest income, thus informed Niedermeyer. The latter was so impressed with the boy's talent that he offered to keep him free of charge. Accordingly Fauré continued his work for eleven years. The curriculum of the Niedermeyer School was not limited to religious music; it offered a comprehensive survey of musical literature from the sixteenth century onward. Fauré studied with the founder, with Dietsch — who bought the text of "The Flying Dutchman" from Wagner when he was in want at Paris, and whose music therefor won but scant success at the Paris Opéra — but more particularly with Saint-Saëns. He was Fauré's real master and introduced him to the music of Mendelssohn, Schumann and other German romanticists, too little known in Paris at the time. In 1866, Fauré became organist of the church of Saint-Sauveur at Rennes. Here he spent four years of virtual isolation in contact with the dreamy and melancholy soul of Brittany. Still Fauré's exile bore good fruit, for he composed at Rennes the greater part of his first collection of songs, some of which already bore the impress of his later individuality. Returning to Paris in 1870, Fauré had no difficulty in obtaining an organ position. But the Franco-Prussian War soon broke out, and

Fauré served throughout. It is said that he is prouder of the medal bestowed upon him for bravery in action than of the decoration of the Legion of Honor which he received later. After peace was declared, Fauré taught at the Niedermeyer School and occupied various posts as organist, finally replacing Saint-Saëns at the Madeleine. In 1877, Fauré went with Saint-Saëns to Weimar where Liszt was producing "Samson and Delilah." In subsequent years he made several trips to Germany to hear Wagner's operas.

Fauré was a charter member of the National Society of French Music, and his songs were heard at its meetings as early as 1873. In 1896, he succeeded Massenet as teacher of Composition at the Paris Conservatoire. From 1905 to 1920 he acted as director of the same institution. In 1909, upon the death of Ernest Reyer, who in turn had been elected to succeed Berlioz, Fauré became a member of the Académie des Beaux-Arts. In the same year he became president of the Société Musicale Indépendante formed by dissenting members of the National Society who thought that the policy of the latter organization had become too reactionary. After the Great War some of these members renewed their allegiance to the National Society, but the younger body still persists. In 1923, Fauré became president of the Paris section, representing



France, of the International Society of Contemporary Music.

Once launched in Parisian musical circles, Fauré had no difficulty in obtaining recognition. None of the vicissitudes which so disheartened Chabrier barred his progress. The indefinable charm of his music, the suavity and grace of his personality caused his reputation to spread as if by magic without effort toward self-advertisement. From 1874 onward, Fauré has cultivated all forms of musical composition.

Fauré's distinctive melodic invention and his highly original harmonic sense constitute his chief gifts as a composer. He is a born lyricist, and herein lie both the strength and the weakness of his artistic personality. In the large forms his constructive faculty is not always on a par with the preëminent qualities mentioned above, hence his early symphony and the violin concerto remain unpublished. Even his chamber music, with some notable exceptions, attains its position through its power of expression in spite of an occasional lack of consummate mastery over formal problems. Wherever the lyric element is predominant as in the songs, the choruses and the opera, "Pénélope," Fauré is in his element. As archeologists restore a prehistoric animal from a few bones, so the critic of the future,

without too sweeping an injustice, might reconstruct Fauré's individuality from the songs alone. Yet his piano pieces, his chamber music and certain of his dramatic works demand consideration, if entire critical justice is to be attained.

Fauré's pianoforte music as a whole furnishes the key to many of his characteristic traits. Much of his earlier work is of lesser substance than the songs of the same period. Nevertheless, it merits analysis from the historical as well as the intrinsic standpoint. During the early eighties French piano music, aside from some works by Saint-Saëns, was largely dominated by salon style. Apart from the early "Chansons sans paroles" (1863), the "Ballade" (1880), a "Thème et Variations" (1897), the "Pièces brèves" (1898-1902) and the "Neuf Preludes" (1910-11), Fauré has chosen the familiar salon types of Impromptus, Barcarolles, Valses-Caprices and Nocturnes. Some of these yield to the prevailing taste. In others, the influence of Chopin is at times ill-disguised. Yet from the outset Fauré was not content to remain within the limitations of salon style. There are passages of harmonic originality; there are moods of graceful and poetic emotion. The "Ballade," Op. 19 (1880), later published in a version for piano and orchestra, is astonishingly in advance of its time, and often foretells

the Fauré of later years. The F minor "Impromptu" (1885) is a brilliant piece with undeniable touches of poetry. The A flat "Nocturne," Op. 33, No. 3 (1884), despite its salon atmosphere, has both the characteristic Fauréan melody and his happy gift for transitory modulation. The fourth "Nocturne" has a glowingly emotional central episode. The fifth and sixth "Barcarolles," the sixth and eighth "Nocturnes," show a marked enlargement of emotional scope as well as increased freedom and subtlety of harmonic treatment. Without attempting a detailed review, it may be said that this advance in depth and variety of sentiment has continued up to the present time. Moods of reflection are more predominant, and Fauré has long since abandoned all suggestion of the salon. His later pieces, among them the ninth and eleventh "Nocturnes" and the "Preludes," illustrate Fauré's evolution. A profoundly poetic sentiment, and a delicate use of modulations which never obscure the tonal centre of gravity are among their chief traits. Fauré has foreshadowed much of later French piano music. A comparison between the dates of Fauré's piano music and that of other French composers will establish the justice of this statement.

To excel in chamber music is to place a premium

upon reticence, sobriety of effect and mastery over exacting problems of structure. To expect a composer whose strength lies in lyric melody, in subtle interpretation of his texts, in contriving a harmoniously coloristic background, to write successful chamber music would be to demand something almost paradoxical. Yet Schubert left some masterpieces in chamber music as well as in his songs; so also did Schumann. Brahms assuredly left his mark in both fields. All three, however, were manifestly affected by the chamber music of Beethoven. Fauré, on the other hand, did not attempt a neo-classic style as did Saint-Saëns, but from the outset strove rather to fuse the general principles of chamber music with his individual methods of expression. Thus he has produced some works more distinguished for their careful workmanship than their continuity of inspiration. But he has also composed others in the light of his mature experience which may well claim the right to be classed among the best of their time in France.

Fauré's first sonata for violin and pianoforte, composed in 1876, precedes Franck's more celebrated work by ten years. While it may not compare with the latter in scope of conception or depth of emotion, its sparkling gaiety, and, at times, its reflective poetry have brought it a deserved repute. Even so severe a critic as Hans von Bülow ex-

pressed his admiration for this work. Nor can one legitimately find fault with its precision of structure nor with the clarity of its development. It is preëminently original. Furthermore, in comparison with the sonata for violoncello and piano by Saint-Saëns, composed six years earlier, it is free from the neo-classic imitation of the older composer, and on this account is prophetic of a new era in French chamber music.

In the pianoforte quartet, Op. 15 (1879), Fauré shows solidity of workmanship and no little skill considering the difficult problems involved. But in spite of the grace of the scherzo and the calm sentiment of the slow movement, there is a suggestion of constraint. A "Berceuse," Op. 16, for violin and piano, and an "Élégie," Op. 24, for violoncello and piano, have the characteristic charm and depth, respectively, of Fauré's lyric invention. A second pianoforte quartet, Op. 45 (1886), gives evidence of real progress in freedom of technical treatment and in spontaneity of expression. Fauré did not turn to large forms in chamber music for twenty years when, at the instance of the American publisher Mr. Gustave Schirmer, he composed his first quintet for pianoforte and strings, Op. 89 (1906). During this interval, Fauré's musical style had broadened, his harmonic idiom had advanced in subtlety. In consequence, this quintet was

not merely able, it was authoritatively original. Through its expressive qualities and its successful attainment of novel instrumental effects it occupies a distinct position among later French chamber music works. A sonata for violoncello and piano, Op. 109 (1916), and a second violin sonata, Op. 108 (1917), are somewhat involved both in thematic development and rhythmical treatment, although both works are not devoid of interesting features. A second quintet for pianoforte and strings, Op. 115 (1921), first performed when its composer was seventy-six years old, presents an astonishing combination of youthful inspiration with the masterly treatment of experience. In a work of remarkable evenness of invention the reflective and poetic qualities of the first movement, the vivacious originality of the Scherzo and the exquisite sentiment of the Andante are extremely striking. A second violoncello sonata, Op. 117 (1922), dedicated to Charles Martin Loeffler, and a trio for pianoforte and strings, Op. 120 (1923), again show that Fauré has not said his last word in chamber music. While in this field Fauré may not have always reached the inimitable distinction of his songs, he has contributed too much to the establishment of specifically French standards in chamber music not to receive a fitting acknowledgment for his services.

As a song composer, Fauré attains to an eminence among his countrymen surpassed only in a few instances by Duparc. Indeed, it is difficult to find his superior in the recent song literature of any country. In his lyrics, Fauré stands as an unequalled interpreter of certain French traits. Gifted with unusual literary discrimination, his choice of texts almost constitutes an anthology of French poetry during the last century. Beginning with Victor Hugo and Théophile Gautier, he has set verses by Baudelaire, Leconte de Lisle, Jean Richepin, Armand Silvestre, Charles Grandmougin, Sully Prudhomme, Paul Verlaine, Villiers de Lisle-Adam, Henri de Régnier, Albert Samain and many others. Even where he has chosen verses by lesser poets, his instinct has guided him no less successfully. The essence of Fauré's gift as a song composer lies in the ingratiating originality of his melodic ideas, the masterly adjustment of his harmonic support to the mood of the poem, and the felicitous background supplied by the pianoforte accompaniment. Among his songs, there is naturally an evolution to be noted. The earliest, such as "Le Papillon et la Fleur" or "Mai," do not seem far removed from Saint-Saëns. Others in the first volume are tentative and youthfully indecisive. At least two, however, are suggestive of the Fauré to come: "Lydia," to verses by Leconte de Lisle, sensitively emotional

and charming in its touches of archaism; "Sylvia," poem by Paul de Choudens, a vivid specimen of Fauré's mercurial grace. In his second volume of songs, Fauré often recurred to a similar mood of light but never flippant sentiment as in "Nell," "Rencontre," "Notre Amour" and "Chanson d'Amour." In these his melodic resources were too great to admit a banal or ungraceful phrase, and his harmonic originality too conspicuous to fall into the commonplace. The inimitable grace of his invention is perhaps his most unvarying trait. As he continued, Fauré achieved a deeper sentiment as in "Le Secret," a mystic exoticism as in "Les Roses d'Ispahan," and a note of fundamental human emotion as in "Les Berceaux." Nor must the romantic "Nocturne" be forgotten. In setting poems by Verlaine, Fauré has exhibited an especially sensitive insight. As Verlaine excelled in subjects of a Watteau order, so Fauré seems to have transcribed the poet's impressions in music that is singularly Watteau-esque. "Clair de lune" and "Mandoline" are notable instances of this skill. To some, his songs to poems from Verlaine's "La bonne chanson" reach the apex of his lyric art. In a third volume of songs Fauré adds tragedy to the moods already noted. The setting of "Au Cimetière" by Richepin is not only a remarkable song; it is also a tense etching of a Latin race in the



presence of death. Similarly Fauré reveals unusual tragic emotion in Verlaine's "Prison," that outpouring of passionate regret for a misspent youth. In this volume also "Le parfum impérissable," "La Rose" and "À Clymène" have a certain suave beauty characteristic of Fauré's maturity. Later collections of songs, such as "Le jardin clos," "Chansons d'Ève," "Mirages" and "L'horizon chimérique," tend toward a greater simplicity of method. They give fresh glimpses of Fauré's rare lyrical faculty, with a surprisingly slight, if any, lessening of inspiration. "Diane, Séléné," from "L'horizon chimérique," is a particularly fine example of this telling simplicity.

In all Fauré has composed nearly a hundred songs. The best of these, a reasonably high proportion, show abundantly the qualities common to all the great song writers. First, his signal ability to re-create the atmosphere of his texts, thus placing him among the foremost of those who have contributed to raise French music from a condition of too imitative eclecticism to a rank of self-respecting nationalistic assertion. Second, his melodic sense, indefinably original and searching, is united to an equally individual harmonic idiom.<sup>1</sup> Third,

<sup>1</sup> "Fauré's musical invention assumes a special character which may be called 'melodic-harmonic,' for the melody seems so closely united to its subtle harmonies as to be inseparable from it. From this results an eminently seductive effect comparable to that of certain

Fauré's perception of esthetic fitness leads him to secure a typically Gallic economy of suggestion as to his accompaniments. These never fail to add the precise harmonic color, the fitting rhythmic support and, where essential, an appropriate counter-melody. Fauré's music does not reach the eminently Christian spirituality of Franck, but rather a Hellenic sensuousness of beauty for its own sake. Not without reason has Fauré been termed an Attic composer. While comparisons between the arts of different countries are unsatisfactory at best, it is not too much to say that in relation to the poetry and music of his time, Fauré, as a song composer, is as significant in his day as were Schumann, Brahms, or Hugo Wolf in theirs. The importance remains relative because differences of literary expression and of musical temperament are too great to permit ranking on an absolute scale.

Fauré has composed choruses, cantatas, religious works and incidental music for plays. With some notable exceptions his works as a whole in these fields are not as durable as in other directions. However, the cantata "La Naissance de Vénus" still keeps its place and contains many pages of glistening colors. This melodic line does not perhaps rise to such serene heights as that of Franck, it is not always as skilfully worked out as that of Saint-Saëns, but it remains none the less intimately attractive, and every soul accessible to poetry cannot fail to be conquered by its undeniable charm." V. d'Indy, *Cours de Composition Musicale*, deuxième livre, première partie, p. 428.

indubitable charm. A "Pavane" for orchestra with chorus *ad libitum* adds its characteristic Watteau atmosphere to the distinctively poetic songs, "Clair de lune" and "Mandoline." Portions of the "Requiem," especially the closing number, "In Paradisum," bring to the texts of this portion of the liturgy a gentle serenity quite at the opposite poles of musical expression from Berlioz' gigantic work. The incidental music, composed for a performance in London by Mrs. Patrick Campbell, of Maeterlinck's "Pelléas et Mélisande," better known in the form of an orchestral suite, is one of Fauré's most individual works. While it has undoubtedly been overshadowed by the greater fame of Debussy's opera, this suite should be judged on its own merits. Its chief features are a sensitive interpretation of the drama, and an independent use of modal suggestion. A "Spinning Song," of immediately captivating appeal, accompanies a scene omitted by Debussy in his opera. Despite its modest dimensions this suite occupies a secure position in French orchestral literature on account of its dramatic appositeness, its successful realization of an undercurrent of tragedy and its specific musical charm.

Fauré has composed but two works in large dramatic form, one, "Prométhée," a lyric tragedy in three acts by Lorrain and Hérold, first performed

in the classic arena at Béziers, August 23, 1900, and "Pénélope," a lyric drama in three acts by René Fauchois, produced at Monte Carlo, March 4, 1913, and at the Théâtre-Lyrique in Paris on May 10 of the same year. "Prométhée," written for special conditions, and given in the open air, surprised even Fauré's admirers, since it demanded qualities presumably foreign to his temperament. According to M. Charles Koechlin, Fauré here "realized the miracle of being Æschylean at times without ceasing to be himself." <sup>1</sup> Performances of this music in the concert hall failed to reproduce the effect of that in the open air. An examination of the pianoforte and vocal arrangement, however, confirms the justice of the enthusiasm awakened by performance in the proper setting. "Prométhée" may thus be considered a worthy forerunner of "Pénélope."

"Pénélope," while composed for the theatre and requiring stage presentation for a complete estimate of its qualities, does not require so great an effort of the imagination for its adequate comprehension. Fauré was not too fortunate in his literary collaborator, although he has turned even his defects to good account. Based largely upon the classic legend, M. Fauchois' text is painfully de-

<sup>1</sup> "Le Théâtre," by Charles Koechlin. *La Revue Musicale*, October, 1922, pp. 35 *et seq.*

ficient in action until the third act. On the other hand, each act is symmetrical in structure, the text is not only beautiful in style and choice of words, but is admirably fitted for lyric treatment. Fauré has made the most of these opportunities during the first and second act.

After an orchestral prelude, Penelope's servants, pausing in their labors, sing a spinning chorus. The insolent behavior of the suitors has reached its climax. Their patience is exhausted; they insist upon seeing Penelope. She comes from her room and reproaches them for pursuing an anxious wife with their importunities. She is certain that Ulysses still lives. They mock her hopes, and demand that she decide in favor of one of them. Penelope asks to finish a shroud for Laertes, Ulysses' father. They discover its slow progress and threaten her anew. Penelope, at the end of her resources, calls upon the absent Ulysses for aid. At this moment Ulysses enters disguised as a beggar in miserable rags. The suitors demand that he be turned away, but Penelope grants him hospitality. An old nurse, Euryclea, bathes his wounded feet, and gives him fresh raiment. She recognizes Ulysses by a scar; he commands silence. Penelope unravels Laertes' shroud. The suitors discover the deceit and demand that she marry one of them on the morrow.

The scene of the second act is on a hill overlook-

ing the sea. On its summit are a marble column and a circular bench. The shepherds' huts are seen at the left. As usual, Penelope has come with Euryclea and other servants to twine roses on the column and to watch for a ship. The beggar has followed them. He tells Penelope that Ulysses passed several nights at his house. She fears that Ulysses had forgotten her, but the beggar assures her that he lives only to be reunited to his wife. Penelope leaves Ulysses alone with the shepherds. He reveals himself to them, and they swear to aid him in vengeance.

The third act represents the great hall of Ulysses' palace. It is dawn. Ulysses has made his preparations. Eumeos, the shepherd, tells Ulysses that he and his companions are ready. The suitors assemble, for Penelope has announced that she will marry the suitor who can bend Ulysses' bow and shoot an arrow through twelve rings. Two of them, Eurymachos and Pisander, fail lamentably. The beggar asks to attempt the same feat. The suitors jeer at him. He succeeds, and then shoots Eurymachos. Ulysses casts off his disguise and is recognized by all. Euryclea hands him his sword, and the slaughter of the suitors, aided by the shepherds, takes place. Ulysses announces that justice has been done, and a chorus of rejoicing brings the opera to an end.

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It will be observed that the first two acts consist of a succession of episodes with little action. While this is unfortunate from the theatrical point of view, it enables Fauré to give free bent to his strongest faculty, his lyric invention. He has filled these acts with so many moments of beauty and such consummate melody as to make up largely for their lack of dramatic action. The third act possesses a tense vitality of theatrical conception. The secret preparations, the expected triumph of the suitors, the recognition of Ulysses, the massacre of the guilty and the final rejoicings are depicted in music of exceptional inspiration. In spite of some justifiable criticism of the first two acts from the standpoint of theatrical effect, the opera as a whole contains some of the most beautiful music Fauré has composed. There is even a question as to whether the conventional necessity for action in opera is not exaggerated. The love duet in the second act of "Tristan," and Isolde's "Liebestod," by reason of their musical qualities, fairly eclipse much that is more obviously "dramatic." Aside from the intrinsic beauty of the music of "Pénélope," Fauré has been exceptionally happy in suggesting an Hellenic atmosphere throughout. He has accomplished this not only without sacrificing his individuality, but in even reaffirming it. Completed at the age of sixty-eight, this opera is ex-

ceeded in youthful freshness only by the second quintet composed eight years later. "Pénélope" is also notable for its entire freedom from foreign influence. This independence also places it apart, since scarcely more than a half-dozen French operas can assert this claim. Thus, "Pénélope" belongs with Bruneau's "L'Attaque de Moulin," Debussy's "Pelléas et Mélisande," Dukas' "Ariane et Barbe-Bleue," Ropartz's "Le Pays," Ravel's "L'Heure espagnole" and Déodat de Sévérac's "Cœur du Moulin."

From the standpoint of harmonic advance, Fauré deserves special consideration. He was at first not as avowedly radical in this respect as was Chabrier. Beginning less outspokenly, he has gathered momentum as he developed, and in the end progressed even further. Fauré did not reject harmonic tradition, but his individuality was sufficiently fertile in device and searching in instinct to develop and apply new solutions and original principles. In the use of ecclesiastical modes, in freer relations of chords, and above all, in subtle transitions to even distant keys without injuring the balance of tonality, he has greatly enlarged harmonic style, and stimulated Debussy, Ravel, Florent Schmitt and others to go still further. The following examples are characteristic of his harmonic style.

Fauré has communicated his artistic convictions



# THE THRESHOLD OF MODERNISM 101

## Example III

Fauré, "Aurore."

A-beil-les d'or qu'-at-tire un in - vi - si - ble miel;

*pp*

*poco a poco cresc.*

Et l'au - beau loin, ten -

*poco a poco cresc.*

dant la can-deur de ses toi - -

*f*

les, tra-me de fils d'argent le man-teau bleu du

*f*

3/4

ciel. . . . .

*p*

3/4

## Example IV

Fauré, "Nocturne."

*Andante dolce*

La nuit, sur le grand mys-tè - re, entr' -

ou - vre ses é - crins bleus: . au -

The first system of the musical score consists of three staves. The top staff is the vocal line, written in a treble clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat major). It contains the lyrics "ou - vre ses é - crins bleus: ." followed by a fermata and the word "au -". The middle and bottom staves are the piano accompaniment, written in a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The piano part features a steady eighth-note bass line and a more active treble line with chords and melodic fragments.

tant de fleurs sur la ter - re, Que d'é -

The second system continues the musical score. The vocal line (top staff) has the lyrics "tant de fleurs sur la ter - re, Que d'é -". The piano accompaniment (middle and bottom staves) continues with similar rhythmic patterns, including a prominent eighth-note bass line and a treble line with chords and melodic lines.

toi - les dans les .

*sempre dolce* *tranquillamente* *Sva*

The third system concludes the musical score. The vocal line (top staff) has the lyrics "toi - les dans les ." and ends with a fermata. The piano accompaniment (middle and bottom staves) continues with the same rhythmic patterns. The bottom staff includes performance markings: *sempre dolce* and *tranquillamente* are placed above the piano part, and *Sva* (Sforzando) is placed above the final chord in the treble clef.

Musical score for a vocal and piano piece. The top staff is a vocal line in G major (one flat) with lyrics "cieux. . . . .". The middle and bottom staves are piano accompaniment. The piano part features a wavy line above the first few notes of the right hand, labeled "Sva", and a "pp" dynamic marking in the left hand.

to a worthy group of pupils. They have partaken of his inherited traditions, his sense of proportion and style, and his delicate harmonic perceptions. Of these, Louis Aubert, Georges Enesco, Charles Koechlin, Paul Ladmirault, Roger-Ducasse, Maurice Ravel and Florent Schmitt are the most conspicuous.

Aside from his contributions to the fields of song, pianoforte pieces, chamber music, the cantata, religious music and dramatic works, Fauré has, in his long career, impersonated to a considerable extent the evolution of French music. Certain features of this development have perhaps been emphasized to a greater degree by certain groups or individuals, but his anticipation of later achievement has been steady and unvarying. This aspect of Fauré's position has been illuminatingly characterized by M. Émile Vuillermoz: "For, let us not

deceive ourselves. Fauré was not a simple precursor, a pioneer whose path was enlarged by better equipped explorers. He was a musician who, a quarter of a century in advance of the other composers, spoke freely a prophetic language with an ease, a virtuosity and an elegance which have never been surpassed. He possesses so strong a personality, in spite of his discretion, that he could escape all the influences from which his contemporaries did not always succeed in freeing themselves. In the midst of the Wagnerian epidemic, when Saint-Saëns, Franck, Massenet, d'Indy, Chabrier and Duparc did not actually succumb, but were all affected by the contagion, he remained refractory toward the virulent romantic microbe, and preserved all his intellectual independence and all his racial sanity. During the epoch when the pupils of César Franck, notwithstanding their demonstrative nationalism, were ingenuously Teutonizing our art, Gabriel Fauré, without professions of faith, without dogmas and without a catechism of industry, was the veritable guardian of our national traditions.”<sup>1</sup>

Not the least curious feature of musical history consists in the unconscious anticipation of a later

<sup>1</sup> “Gabriel Fauré,” by Émile Vuillermoz, *La Revue Musicale*, October 1, 1922, p. 14.

period. It has long been the custom to point out premonitions of romantic sentiment in the works of Sebastian Bach, as well as in those of his ill-starred son, Wilhelm Friedemann. The third movement of Sebastian Bach's sonata for violin and clavier in A major begins with a phrase which is genuine Mendelssohn. A melody in Chopin's C sharp minor Scherzo bears an astonishing resemblance to the idiomatic manner of Grieg. M. Darius Milhaud, in an article on "Polytonalité et Atonalité,"<sup>1</sup> cites a passage in a Duetto by Sebastian Bach which implies the use of two tonalities simultaneously.

If Chabrier and Fauré are by far the most fruitful figures in progress toward nationalistic independence, two other composers, widely differing in their traits, demand more than a passing mention for the prophetic qualities discernible in their music. One, Ernest Fanelli, died some ten years ago. The other, M. Erik Satie, is not only still active as a composer, but may even be regarded as a sort of esthetic foster-father of the so-called *Groupe des Six*.<sup>2</sup>

Ernest Fanelli came to the fore almost by accident. A poor and obscure musician, he earned his bread by playing in café orchestras and in occa-

<sup>1</sup> *La Revue Musicale*, February, 1923.

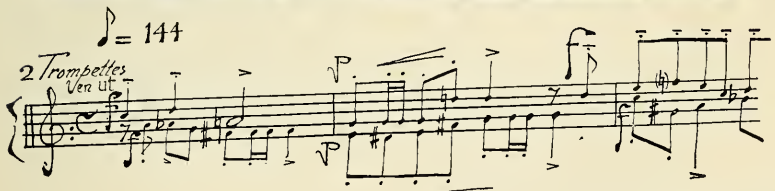
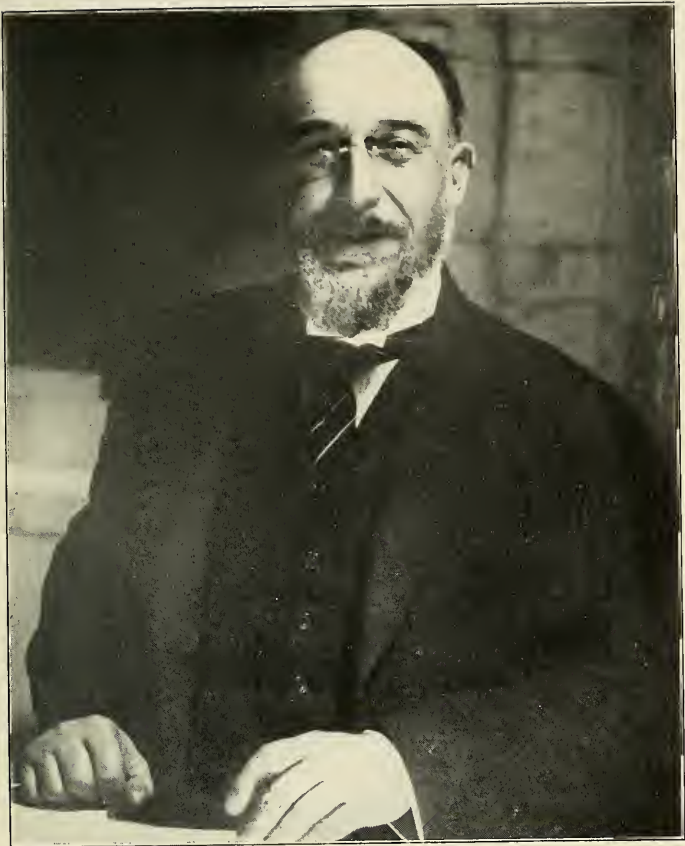
<sup>2</sup> See Chapter XIII.

sional concerts. He also increased his scanty income by acting as copyist. M. Gabriel Pierné, conductor of the Colonne concerts, was in the habit of employing him. Appearing one day to get some orchestral parts, he noticed a score upon the musician's table. It was the first part of a large orchestral work by Fanelli, based on Théophile Gautier's "Roman de la Momie," composed long ago and left to its fate. M. Pierné was sufficiently impressed by the work to perform it in January, 1912. At once, Fanelli became the centre of curiosity and attention. Other works of his were heard in 1913, songs with orchestra, a "Scène Mystique," "Humoresques," and the second part of "Le Roman de la Momie." After satisfying, if only briefly, the repressed ambitions of thirty years, Fanelli died in 1914. It must be admitted that Fanelli's music is interesting chiefly on account of its remarkable anticipations of many characteristic features of Debussy's style. The first part of "Le Roman de la Momie," composed in 1883 while Debussy was still a student at the Conservatoire, employed a variety of radical harmonic effects, including those resulting from the use of the whole-tone scale, long before Debussy himself made use of similar innovations. Fanelli also foreshadowed some of Debussy's orchestral devices which the latter hardly employed before the "Nocturnes"

(1899). The tragedy of Fanelli's career lies in the fact that he, an indubitable discoverer and a potential pioneer, was denied by fate the opportunity to develop.

Since Erik Satie is not only still busily productive, but is also an instigator of the most radical group of composers in Paris at the present time, it seems appropriate here to limit the discussion of his artistic personality to its historical aspect, reserving an estimate of his work to a later chapter. Erik Leslie Satie was born at Honfleur (Calvados) May 13, 1866. His father was French, his mother Scotch. It has been suggested that his salient humorous qualities were due to his maternal ancestor. Satie's first teacher was a pupil of Niedermeyer, and his early love of plain chant and the ecclesiastical modes may be ascribed to this source. Indeed, these first studies may well have served as a point of departure toward Satie's original harmonic style. At the age of twelve Satie came to Paris. For several years, he worked in a desultory fashion now at harmony, now at piano playing, both in the Conservatoire and outside. In 1887 he composed the "Sarabandes" which are a prophetic vision of the harmonic future. Other pieces followed, such as the "Gymnopédies," two of which were orchestrated by Debussy, and the "Gnos-siennes," based upon Flaubert's "Salammbô."





à Monsieur Burling-Hill, <sup>(Marche de Cognac)</sup>  
en amical souvenir. Erik SATIE

Paris, le 12 juillet 1922. Erik SATIE



Satie became intimate with Sar Joseph Peladan, the founder of a mystical order of painters, "La Rose-Croix." He became its official composer. He wrote incidental music for a drama by Peladan, "Le Fils des Étoiles," entitled a "Wagnèrie Kaldéenne." "Les Sonneries de la Rose-Croix" further illustrated Satie's break with harmonic tradition. He composed also "Danses Gothiques," a "Messe des Pauvres," and, above all, a "Christian ballet," "Uspud," for one personage which, strange to say, the Paris Opéra did not mount. Suddenly Satie was lost to view; he became a legendary figure. He was not forgotten, however. His pamphlets and his candidacy for a seat in the Academy of Fine Arts after Guiraud's death gave him immortal fame. He imposed upon himself a severe course of study at the Schola Cantorum under Albert Roussel. His resuscitation belongs so much to the present that for the time being he may be left at the Schola.

If Fanelli was denied any historical import in later French music, such was not the case with Satie. Debussy knew his music and profited to a considerable extent by its stimulating if somewhat eccentric originality. Similarly, the "decorative" use of harmony in "Le Fils des Étoiles" revealed its further possibilities in dramatic style to Debussy. It is also probable that Satie's manner of

treating modal harmony was also fruitful in suggestion to Debussy. While still a student at the Conservatoire, Ravel fell under the spell of the

Example V

Erik Satie, 1st Sarabande. (1887.)

Musical score for Example V, Erik Satie's 1st Sarabande (1887). The score is in G-flat major (two flats) and 4/4 time. It features a piano (*p*) dynamic. The right hand plays a series of chords and dyads, while the left hand provides a steady accompaniment of chords and dyads. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

Example VI

Erik Satie, Prelude to Act I "Le Fils des Etoiles." (1891.)

*En blanc et immobile*

Musical score for Example VI, Erik Satie's Prelude to Act I "Le Fils des Etoiles." (1891). The score is in G-flat major (two flats) and 4/4 time. It is marked *En blanc et immobile*. The score consists of two systems of music. The right hand features complex, layered chords and dyads, often with slurs and ties, creating a sense of static, layered harmony. The left hand provides a steady accompaniment of chords and dyads. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

“Sarabandes.” Later he reacted obviously to the music for “Le Fils des Étoiles.” The accompanying extracts from the first “Sarabande,” and from the prelude to Act I of “Le Fils des Étoiles,” illustrate these points clearly.

Thus, apart from any question of the intrinsic merits of Satie’s music, he has had a distinct share in the evolution of a later characteristic harmonic idiom in France. From the historical point of view alone he must be credited with a specific influence upon two prominent figures.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE HERITAGE OF FRANCK

EVEN before Chabrier was pursuing his spirited revolt against convention, or Fauré was winning converts to his scarcely less progressive musical style, another group of composers, the pupils of Franck, was affirming in practice quite a different esthetic tendency. Chabrier's violent break with tradition was necessary for his artistic self-respect. Fauré, impelled toward a less assertive originality, could even find a point of contact between his ideas and the classical forms. But the pupils of Franck adhered loyally to their master's teachings. Since he believed that the classic types of structure, the canon, the fugue, the variation form and the sonata could still serve as a medium for sincere emotion and individual expression, they were bound to imitate his example. Accordingly they unite in emphasizing solidity of structure, based on the classics, as the first duty of the artist. If, by the standards of Debussy and other impressionists they are merely reactionaries, these disciples of Franck have remained true to the dictates of their individual artistic consciences, and have never sterilely echoed the past. While this group can hardly be con-







sidered progressive in the generally accepted meaning of the word, it has produced much music of a genuinely evolutionary character. It is, moreover, representative of one phase of French musical thought. In addition, several later composers, Dukas, Albéric Magnard and Albert Roussel, despite their independent evolution, proceed to a certain extent from this conservative body of artists.

Of these, Vincent d'Indy is the most eminent, if not by his initial talent, at least by his prodigious faculty for self-development, and by the comprehensive nature of his career. For d'Indy is at once composer, conductor, teacher, biographer, musicographer, editor and keen propagandist. Fearless and outspoken, he has the courage of the aristocrat, and has frequently offended by his insistence upon the truth as he saw it. It is, indeed, one of the ironies of artistic politics in his native city that d'Indy should not be a member of the Institute of France, while lesser contemporaries are comfortably ensconced in the "fauteuils" of the Immortals.

Vincent d'Indy was born in Paris on March 27, 1852, of a family of ancient nobility in the Vivarais region. His father, Vicomte d'Indy, was at least interested in music. D'Indy was brought up by his paternal grandmother, Madame Théodore d'Indy, who had known Grétry and Monsigny, the composers of opéra-comique, and who had shown an

intelligent appreciation of Beethoven as early as 1825. As a boy, d'Indy was allowed private lessons in piano playing and harmony from distinguished teachers of the Conservatoire. At the age of fifteen, an uncle, M. Wilfred d'Indy, gave him Berlioz' "Treatise on Orchestration," which he devoured eagerly. Two years later he became acquainted with Henri Duparc, Franck's favorite pupil. The two friends soon organized a small group for the study and performance of serious works, among them Bach's Passion Music according to Saint Matthew. Duparc later called d'Indy's attention to the works of Wagner. By 1870, although he had never studied composition, d'Indy had composed piano pieces, a work for baritone and chorus, and even meditated an opera based on Victor Hugo's "Les Burgraves." The Franco-Prussian War found d'Indy at his post as a soldier, and he served throughout. He even wrote a pamphlet, now extremely rare, "The History of the 105th Battalion of the National Guard in France during the Year 1870-71."

In d'Indy's environment, the Faubourg Saint Germain, music was not considered a suitable profession for one of his social position. He therefore studied law, "not very seriously," as he himself has said, and completed about half the requirements for the lawyer's degree. With the declara-

tion of peace, however, d'Indy returned to musical study, and completed a quartet for pianoforte and strings which he wished to submit to César Franck. Introduced by Duparc, d'Indy was graciously received by Franck, who while recognizing his talent told him bluntly that he knew nothing. For several years d'Indy was one of Franck's most industrious pupils, just as he later became his most active disciple and the "continuator of his thought." He also studied the organ with Franck at the Conservatoire for two years,<sup>1</sup> and later, in order to become familiar with the musician's profession in all its aspects, he became an organist at the church of Saint Leu, and served as second kettle-drummer and chorus master at the Colonne Concerts. In 1873 he spent a fruitful month with Liszt at Weimar. He then visited Brahms to give him at Franck's request a score of the latter's "Redemption." Whatever the cause, d'Indy's interview with Brahms was short and unsatisfactory. In 1876, he was one of the few Frenchmen to witness the first integral performances of "Der Ring des Nibelungen," at Bayreuth. "There have been too many others [Frenchmen] since then," observed d'Indy in some autobiographical notes written in 1905.<sup>2</sup> However, in succeeding years to hear Wag-

<sup>1</sup> Franck's pupils all studied composition with him privately.

<sup>2</sup> *The Musiclover's Calendar*. Boston, 1905.

ner's works he visited Bayreuth again and also Munich. In 1885, d'Indy won the prize offered by the City of Paris with his choral work "Le Chant de la Cloche." In 1887, d'Indy directed the choral rehearsals for the single performance of "Lohengrin" at the Lamoureux concerts. D'Indy was one of the early members of the Société Nationale. He was its secretary for nearly ten years; on the death of Franck in 1890, he became president and still holds this position. In 1892, d'Indy was appointed member of a commission to revise the Conservatoire curriculum. The teachers, fearing sweeping and disastrous changes, took counsel among themselves and overthrew the committee. In 1896, with Charles Bordes and Alexandre Guilmant, d'Indy founded the Schola Cantorum as a "Higher School of Music." The Schola is in reality a memorial to the personality and artistic creed of César Franck, and his precepts and ideals are the foundation of its pedagogic viewpoint. Its scheme of instruction is exceedingly comprehensive. The students of composition review all styles of composition from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries. Another prominent feature is a series of historical concerts. Bordes died in 1909, Guilmant in 1912; since then d'Indy has been sole director of the Schola. In 1905, d'Indy visited the United States to conduct concerts of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, in

Boston, New York and Philadelphia. The programmes were made up of works by French composers. In 1921-22 he returned to America for a somewhat longer tour, visiting Chicago and Montreal.

D'Indy has a broad intellectual grasp and a scope of knowledge that is rare in a musician. Brought up on the German romanticists, Goethe, Schiller, Herder, Lessing and Uhland, he has found subjects for musical treatment in some of the works of these authors. His cultivation in all of the fine arts assumes encyclopedic proportions. Yet Imbert relates <sup>1</sup> that d'Indy is more moved by Assyrian or Babylonian art centuries before the age of Pericles, or by the pictures of primitive Flemish painters, than by the finest compositions of the Renaissance. As an author he has written the authoritative biography of César Franck, and a life of Beethoven which contains vital and distinctive presentations of his works. A monumental treatise on composition in collaboration with A. Sérieyx (two volumes only are published) shows a detailed knowledge of musical literature of all epochs that would be surprising even in a specialist. D'Indy has also written the texts for four dramatic works. A bibliographical list of his articles shows him to be an ardent and

<sup>1</sup> Hugues Imbert, *Profils de Musiciens*, p. 55. Paris: Fischbacher, 1888.

prolific controversialist in behalf of his convictions, and their range of subject is engrossing. In the interests of performances at the Schola, d'Indy has prepared editions of "Orféo" and "L'Incoronazione di Poppea," by Monteverdi, works by Salomon Rossi, Destouches and Sénaillé. He has revised the operas "Hippolyte et Aricie," "Dardanus" and "Zais," by Rameau for the complete edition of that composer's works, under the supervision of Saint-Saëns. When one reflects upon the length of the list of d'Indy's compositions, his constant routine as teacher at the Schola, the concerts of French music that he has conducted in provincial musical centres in France, one realizes afresh the vigor of his mentality and his genius for achievement.

As a musician, d'Indy began his studies with Bach and Beethoven, later took up Mendelssohn, Weber and Schumann, and finally absorbed Franck, Brahms and Wagner. But in the course of his teaching at the Schola, he was deeply drawn to the study of plain-chant, to the counterpoint of the sixteenth century, to the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Italian and German pioneers in the sonata form, to the fugue style of Sebastian Bach, and the sonata and variation forms of Beethoven. So vast an erudition has seldom been united in the person of a composer.

For the purpose of critical analysis d'Indy's music may be roughly divided into two categories. One comprises the chamber music and orchestral works; the other contains the dramatic work. If d'Indy is known in this country chiefly by his instrumental music, a knowledge of his operas and choral works is essential to a complete grasp both of his historical import and of the scope of his creative individuality. In his earliest orchestral works d'Indy shows here and there traces of his study of the German romanticists in music, just as his subjects betoken a like sympathy with Teutonic literature. As he advances in experience the influence of Franck is preponderant, together with obvious Wagnerian assimilations. In his later works d'Indy retains little more than the general method of Franck, Wagnerian traits have long since disappeared, and his personal idiom is in the ascendant. Such a process as d'Indy has pointed out in his "Life of Beethoven," is the normal evolution of a composer.

As a faithful disciple of Franck, d'Indy clings to his master's "cyclical" treatment of sonata form. This consists in evolving the principal themes of a work from melodic sources termed "generative phrases." While this system was clearly observable in the early trios by Franck <sup>1</sup> (1841), it was best

<sup>1</sup> D'Indy points out in his *Cours de Composition Musicale* that

demonstrated in the works of his maturity, such as the piano quintet, the violin sonata, and the symphony. If d'Indy sometimes employs this system too rigidly, as in the second string quartet, he has often demonstrated its potentiality in a masterly manner as in the sonatas for piano and for piano and violin, and particularly in the second symphony. As a true follower of Franck, d'Indy also employs the fugue, the variation form, the passacaglia and more rarely the canon as in the second movement of the third symphony. It must be noted that in using these classic forms, d'Indy gives evidence of a genuine penetration into their spirit, and not the too frequent superficial adaptation of manner found in the music of Saint-Saëns. Adherence to tradition in the matter of form does not, however, prevent d'Indy from attaining a striking and even bold melodic outline, although his themes seldom make a sensuous appeal. So also his harmonic idiom is varied and pliant according to his need. He is one of the pioneers in the use of modal harmony for dramatic suggestion, an early experimenter in the whole-tone scale, and his treatment of dissonance, if at times almost acrid in its pungency, is free from reactionary sus-

Giovanni Battista Vivaldi's second sonata for violin (1677) contains a curious anticipation of Franck's cyclical treatment. Also the same method may be observed in sonatas by Corelli and Tartini. Book II, Part I, pp. 178, 180, 183.



picion and is always appropriate to his musical thought. Thus an intellectual appreciation of the necessity for a logical and even severe exercise of structure is combined with many progressive elements in the substance of the music itself. If his music is sometimes dismissed as "cerebral," d'Indy writes almost invariably from dramatic and emotional conviction.

D'Indy's "Wallenstein" (1873-81), a trilogy of symphonic poems after Schiller's dramas, is above all the work in which the scope of his individuality is first outlined. Reminiscences of both Franck and Wagner coexist with clear evidences of original and dramatic expression. The second section, "Max et Thecla," was originally planned and performed January 25, 1874, as an "Overture to the Piccolomini." It is, therefore, not surprising that there is immaturity in this portion of the work, and even a hint of Mendelssohn. But "Wallenstein's Camp" and "The Death of Wallenstein" are imaginatively vigorous and dramatic; a rehearing accentuates at once their capacity and their promise. The "Symphony on a Mountain Air" (1886) for piano and orchestra, often called the "Symphonie Cévenole," is with the *Fantasie* for oboe and orchestra, a rare instance of the use of a folk-song as a thematic basis by its composer. It shows marked progress, both in inventive power and craftsmanship, especially in

contrapuntal combination of themes. As might be expected, d'Indy treats the folk-song "cyclically" transforming it ingeniously to suit the needs of the three movements. After a lapse of thirty-seven years since its first performance, a rehearing of this symphony affirms its genuine mastery from both the technical and the expressive standpoint.

The "Istar" variations (1896), a work both descriptive and scholastic in character, may be considered a typical instance of the fusion of the intellectual and the emotional in d'Indy's temperament. Wishing to treat the legend of the goddess Istar and her quest of her lover in "the land of No-return," as related in the Assyrian epic of "Izdubah," he finds a descriptive pretext to employ the variation form, hitherto unrelated to "programme music," and for the purposes of a graphic picturing of Istar's descent into the lower world leaving a garment or an ornament at each of seven gates, reverses the customary order of the variations<sup>1</sup> (from the simple to the complex). D'Indy is not so preoccupied with this ingenious structural device as to prevent his attaining a picturesque delineation of his subject and a highly dramatic climax. Furthermore, the originality of

<sup>1</sup> In the following year, 1897, Richard Strauss also employed the variation form in "Don Quixote" as a fitting medium of description of the adventures of the "knight of the rueful countenance" and his squire. These variations are, however, extremely free in style.

conception and the freedom of d'Indy's handling of his musical material mark a great advance in personal expression. In the "Wallenstein" trilogy, d'Indy showed unusual capacity for brilliant treatment of the orchestra. The "Symphony on a Mountain Air" contains a greater precision and dexterity in orchestral device. In the "Istar" variations his mastery attains new and significant proportions.

The second symphony in B flat major (1902-03), founded largely upon two melodic phrases presented in the introduction to the first movement, is not only d'Indy's instrumental masterpiece, but one of the noblest works of its century. Complex and even involved in structure, study is necessary in order to correlate its elaborate design. Nevertheless, force and beauty of expression are everywhere in evidence, and the dramatic conclusion of the last movement is one of the typical instances in d'Indy's music in which the mind and the heart unite in an invincible grandeur. D'Indy's employment of the "cyclical" principle in this work constitutes an argument in behalf of this device.<sup>1</sup> While the

<sup>1</sup> In the following example some features of the cyclical treatment in d'Indy's second symphony are illustrated. The phrase *très lent*, comprising the once forbidden interval of the "tritone" picturesquely termed *diabolus in musica*, is one of the two principal motives of the symphony and begins the introduction. In the "development section" of the first movement, the introduction phrase is extended as at (a). The initial motive transformed rhythmically becomes the

“cross-references” are at times complex, they are logical and aid the emotional continuity of the whole.

Some of the transformations of the “generative phrases” are as follows:

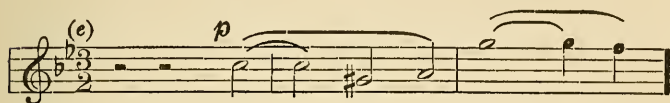
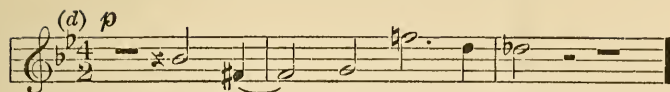
Example VII

Très lent.

D'Indy, Symphony No. 2. (1902-03.)

The musical score consists of four staves. The first staff is in bass clef, 2/4 time, with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and dynamics *pp*. It shows a melodic line with a tritone interval. The second staff is in treble clef, 3/2 time, with a key signature of two flats and dynamics *p*, labeled (a). The third staff is in bass clef, 3/4 time, with a key signature of two flats and dynamics *p*, labeled (b). The fourth staff is in bass clef, 3/4 time, with a key signature of two flats and dynamics *p*, labeled (c). It shows a more complex melodic line with chromaticism.

“subject” of a fugal episode in the introduction to the finale. The phrase at (c) is derived from the second principal motive of the introduction to the first movement as in (d). The motive (d) appearing immediately after the “tritone” phrase, becomes the “second theme” of the first movement as in (e). The figure (f) derived from (c) becomes the chief theme of the finale. The chorale which concludes the symphony has a melody derived from the phrases (c) and (b), employing virtually the same notes but with long time value. (This procedure is technically termed “augmentation.”) The phrases (c) and (f) are obtained by the reverse process “diminution” from (d) with some changes. Simultaneously with the chorale melody the “tritone” motive is employed as bass.



In d'Indy's 'third symphony (1916-18), "Sinfonia Brevis de Bello Gallico," the composer was hardly in a position to write with detachment in the midst of his country's suffering, and in conse-

quence this work as a whole cannot compare with its immediate predecessor in this form. But the humor of the Scherzo, as well as its contrapuntal virtuosity, the lofty sentiment of the slow movement and the chant of victory at the close of the Finale have too much distinction to be passed over without mention.

D'Indy has always been a lover of Nature. An oft-quoted letter <sup>1</sup> affirms the potent influence of rural scenes in quickening his musical invention. The piano pieces, "Pictures of Travel," the "Helvetia" waltzes, each named after a Swiss town, the suite, "Poem of the Mountains," all show his early and pronounced reactions in this direction. So also the song, "Lied Maritime," passages in the operas, "Fervaal" and "L'Étranger," contribute more instances of the same sort. Later d'Indy turned again toward the same vein of expression in the symphonic poem, "A Summer Day on the Mountain" (1905), and more recently in a suite, "Poem of the Shores" (1920-21). The former work, in three divisions, "Dawn," "Day" (afternoon under the pines), and "Evening," presents these familiar aspects in music of imaginative and reflective quality, yet graphic and picturesque. The "Poem of the Shores," if not manifesting so high a degree of invention, is still music of rich fancy, stimulated

<sup>1</sup> *Boston Symphony Programme Book*, for 1905-06, p. 482.

observation, sometimes humorous, sometimes lyrical and dramatic.

D'Indy's keen perception as to style and his intellectual grasp of his art find fitting expression in the concise and rigorous workmanship required in chamber-music. An early piano-quartet (1878-88) establishes his native capacity in this field. A trio for piano, clarinet, and violoncello (1887) follows the cyclical method of the "Symphony on a Mountain Air," and shares its advance in maturity of expression. D'Indy's first string quartet (1890), though able in respect to craftsmanship, is without striking individuality. The second string quartet (1897), despite an obvious abuse of the cyclical method in the last movement, due largely to the brevity of the "generative phrase," is a work of personal flavor and inventive vigor, ingeniously contrived for the four instruments, and of enduring beauty. "Song and Dances" (1898) for wind instruments is a little masterpiece, which has only failed of wider recognition on account of the relatively few organizations existent to perform it. The sonata for piano and violin (1904), a felicitous instance of d'Indy's "cyclical" treatment at its best, is not only remarkable for its consistent style and the apt development of intrinsically beautiful ideas, but takes a preëminent position in works of its class. The sonata for piano (1907), if not as

engaging in its musical material as its predecessor for violin and piano, has none the less too many commanding qualities in architectural solidity and intensive expression to be dismissed hastily. Its inordinate difficulty, however, is a hindrance to an adequate interpretation.

As hinted above, a knowledge of d'Indy's dramatic music is essential to a comprehensive grasp of his artistic personality. Moreover, from even the historical viewpoint d'Indy merits attention, since, once in the thrall of the insidious Wagnerian system of dramatic construction, he has proved in his music that he has outlived its fascination. Since his case is that of French composers in general, it became doubly significant.

Of d'Indy's four dramatic works of large scope two are nominally choral, but all have been performed on the stage. Following Wagner's example, d'Indy has written his own texts, which if not of conspicuous literary merit are at least adequate for the purpose in hand. D'Indy has also adopted the Wagnerian plan of a symphonic treatment of leading motives, but with a considerable departure from his model. The first of these, "Le Chant de la Cloche" (1879-84), was awarded the prize of the City of Paris in 1885. Its performance in the following year at once placed d'Indy in the front rank of French composers. D'Indy's text, while follow-



ing the main outlines of Schiller's poem, has gained in dramatic concreteness by being connected with the life of a bell-founder who suffers from the narrowness and jealousy of his colleagues, and who triumphs posthumously. The music is planned with concision and logic, and with a mastery of technical procedure wholly admirable in so young a composer. The choral writing is varied and fertile in resource, while the transparency and dazzling brilliance of the orchestral effects on a scale hitherto untried by d'Indy brought the involuntary admiration of his colleagues. The music, while here and there reminiscent of Franck's manner and at times bearing resemblance to passages from "Tristan" and "The Meistersingers," is none the less original in conception, and abounds in compelling episodes. Accompanying the funeral procession of the dead bell-founder, d'Indy quotes from the Catholic ritual for the dead, in strict modal harmony, with striking dramatic poignancy. This is an early instance of a device to which d'Indy resorts again in his operas "Fervaal" and "The Stranger," and which has been fertile in suggestion to later composers.

D'Indy's first important opera "Fervaal"<sup>1</sup> (1889-95) assumed frankly the style and construc-

<sup>1</sup> D'Indy's opéra-comique in one act, "Attendez-moi sous l'orme" (1876-82), may be regarded without injustice as an experimental work.

tive method of the Wagnerian music-drama. Its subject, semi-legendary in character, is the transition from Paganism to Christianity. Fervaal, a descendant of the gods, is reared in solitude by the high priest Afargard in the hope that he may one day restore his country, Cravann, to its former power. While journeying with Afargard he is attacked by bandits and nearly killed. Rescued by Guilhen, the Emir's daughter, Fervaal is restored to health, but loses his heart to his benefactress. Afargard finally persuades Fervaal to return to his country and take up his mission. Guilhen, in revenge for her scorned love, sends a horde of Saracen invaders to devastate Fervaal's country. Fervaal is chosen commander-in-chief, but his armies are defeated. Only he who has forsworn love could be chief, and Fervaal had been tempted by Guilhen. On the disastrous battlefield he meets Afargard, who believes that by sacrificing Fervaal to appease the gods Cravann may yet be saved. Fervaal hears Guilhen calling for help, slays Afargard, and rushes to help Guilhen who is nearly dead in a journey to find her lover. He cannot save her, however, and in his grief finds the solution of life in sacrifice for the loved one. Taking Guilhen's body in his arms, he climbs an allegorical mountain toward "the Light," while the chorus chants the "Pange Lingua" symbolical of the new religion of love.

Fervaal is a Gallicized compound of Siegfried and Parsifal; Guilhen recalls both Brunhilda and Kundry. Other characters are suggestive of Wagnerian characters, and various episodes have one or another of Wagner's operas as an obvious source. But the basic philosophy of d'Indy's text is in direct opposition to that of Wagner, while the exalted conclusion with its affirmation of the new religion of unselfishness is unique in operatic literature. Since "Fervaal" occupied d'Indy during six years, it is of necessity uneven. His progress in dramatic technique within the work itself is very noticeable. The music of "Fervaal" despite some reminiscences of Wagner, as in the love scene of the first act which is Tristanesque, is Gallic in its essence, and thoroughly characteristic of d'Indy's individuality. If d'Indy employs leading motives, they are not manipulated in the Wagnerian manner, and are often transformed and developed in a fashion that leans rather toward a modified cyclical treatment of d'Indy's own invention. If the sonorities of the large orchestra often suggest those of the "Ring," d'Indy therein achieves too steadily a brilliant coloristic style of his own to be denied the credit for his conspicuous orchestral mastery. To note episodes in which the music fails to reach the highest level, is to recall similar admission in most of the masterpieces of dramatic literature. The

abiding impression is that of power and beauty, particularly at the end of the third act where d'Indy's use of the plain-song, "Pange Lingua," rises to genuine sublimity. From the historical point of view "Fervaal" marks the extent of the progress in assimilation of Wagnerian principles in the ten years since "Gwendoline." It marks a stage in the realization of freedom from foreign influence which French opera ultimately achieved. When revived at the Paris Opéra in 1912, more than fifteen years after its initial performance at the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels, "Fervaal" astonished by its freshness and enduring qualities.

D'Indy's next opera, "L'Étranger" (1898-1901), also first performed at Brussels, suffers as a work for the stage from an excess of symbolism. A mysterious Stranger takes up his abode in a French fishing village. His origin is unknown, his purpose is suspected. He is feared and even hated, although he lives for others. His success as a fisherman is ascribed to an emerald ring, and he is proclaimed a sorcerer. Vita, a young girl betrothed to a dashing young officer, sympathizes with the Stranger on account of the injustice and suspicion with which he is received. Little by little she drifts from sympathy to admiration and, at last, love. When a vessel is wrecked in a violent storm, the Stranger, moved by the plight of the sailors on board, calls

for volunteers to launch a lifeboat to their rescue. None respond except Vita, who avows her love, and with the Stranger rows off to failure and certain death while an old sailor intones the "De Profundis." It has been suggested that the theme of "The Stranger" was symbolic of the life of César Franck. Whether this be true or not, d'Indy has heightened the moral and spiritual aspect of his music by the use of plain chant melodies, as he had hitherto done in "The Song of the Bell" and "Fervaal." The dramatic value of such musical symbolism is unquestionable. Like his master Franck, d'Indy is not at his best when attempting to depict evil qualities. (This shortcoming is still more in evidence in "The Legend of Saint Christopher.") Consequently, the first act of "The Stranger" suffers from this not discreditable limitation in his imagination. In the second act, however, with the on-sweep of the tempest and the heroic self-sacrifice of the Stranger and Vita, d'Indy's creative imagination became revived and his music for the scene not only supports the dramatic situation, but vitalizes it. It is an ironical comment upon artistic evolution to note that, while the music for "The Stranger" is virtually freed from Wagnerian influence, it does not manifest the inventive power or the more youthful audacity of "Fervaal."

Like "The Song of the Bell," "La Légende de

Saint Christophe" (1908-15), first performed at the Paris Opéra June 9, 1920, is conceived for the stage, although its plan and style are more appropriate for a choral work. In his text d'Indy has followed the legend of Saint Christopher. Born a pagan, of prodigious bodily strength, Christopher, then known as Auferus, had sworn to be loyal to the strongest power. Successively he served the Queen of Pleasure, the King of Gold, and the Prince of Evil. The latter confessed that the King of Heaven was his master. Accordingly Auferus wandered over the face of the earth seeking the King of Heaven in vain. At last a hermit explained what one must do to find the King of Heaven, by renouncing evil and doing good with simple devotion. He heard Auferus' confession and bade him repent. Auferus took his stand near a fierce mountain torrent, and refused in turn to help across a lover wishing to rejoin his mistress, a general and a king whose purposes were evil, but carried the Christ child across on his shoulders, and was baptized Christopher. Existing henceforth to convert sinners to the living God, he was put in prison and condemned to death. His last deed was to convert the Queen of Pleasure, and baptize her Nicea. Christopher burst asunder the red-hot armor with which he was tortured, the archer's arrows became blunt when they touched his flesh, but at last the

executioner beheaded him while Nicea prays for the repose of his soul.

“The Legend of Saint Christopher” provides a wide scope for musical treatment, with the contrasts between the courts of the Queen of Pleasure, the King of Gold, the Prince of Evil, the conversions of Christopher and Nicea, and the scene of Christopher’s death. The unworldly and guileless César Franck was unable to conceive music descriptive of evil or of base motives in “The Beatitudes.” Despite his power in orchestral suggestion, d’Indy has, to a certain extent, failed similarly in graphic musical realization of scenes of license at the court of the Queen of Pleasure, the ignoble passions of the King of Gold, and the perverted principles of the Prince of Evil. When, however, he approaches the scenes of Christopher’s conversion, that of Nicea and the martyrdom of the Saint, d’Indy rises to heights of moral eloquence and sublimity which do not find their superior in any of his works. The spiritual conviction of these episodes is almost unparalleled in musical literature. Here again, as in “Le Chant de la Cloche,” “Fervaal” and “L’Étranger,” d’Indy produces a singularly poignant effect by the use of plain-chant melodies. As in “L’Étranger” the music of “La Légende de Saint Christophe” records once more his definitive emancipation from the style or even the method of Wagner.

If in the best of his chamber music and orchestral works d'Indy exhibits a more consistently high level of workmanship and creative power than in his dramatic works, in the latter are many pages of vital musical sentiment which deserve a wider recognition. With the exception of a single performance of "Le Chant de la Cloche" in Boston,<sup>1</sup> none of his dramatic works has been given outside France, Belgium and Holland. The exceptional size and complexity of the orchestras required in these works may possibly explain this neglect.

D'Indy is to-day unquestionably the foremost representative of observance of tradition as the basis of music art. Unusually liberal in his attitude toward those of different beliefs and practice, he does not waver in his own convictions. The durability of many of his works is the best proof of his theories. If the flight of time serves to accentuate the ephemeral qualities of music, it also attests with impartiality all enduring traits. When one reflects upon d'Indy's versatility as composer, teacher, conductor, editor and propagandist, it is impossible to deny the argument which disengages itself from these comprehensive activities. To fuse, as he has done, the spirit of classic forms with many elements of progress in expression, is no vain achievement. D'Indy is a valiant crusader in Art.

<sup>1</sup> Saint Cecilia Society, under Chalmers Clifton. May 4, 1916.



## CHAPTER VII

### THE HERITAGE OF FRANCK (*continued*)

#### I

AMONG the more prominent pupils of Franck, Ernest Chausson (1855–99) is, despite the tragic interruption of his career, second only to d'Indy by virtue of the intrinsic qualities of his personality. Chausson was born in Paris, January 21, 1855. He did not turn to the serious study of music until he had obtained his lawyer's degree. He entered Massenet's class in composition at the Conservatoire in 1880. He tried for the Prix de Rome and failed. He then worked assiduously with César Franck for nearly three years. Chausson was apparently the child of fortune. Independently wealthy (he befriended less fortunate French composers), happily married, with a growing family, his house a veritable museum with decorations by Henri Lerolle, with paintings by Odilon-Redon, Degas, Besnard, Puvis de Chavanne and Carrière, where he lived absorbed in books and music, enlivened by reunions of artists and cultivated friends. Nevertheless, life was a source of torture. His geniality was a cloak to conceal his deep sensibilities and a mystic sense of duty.<sup>1</sup> A prey to indecision, lacking

<sup>1</sup> See "Souvenirs sur Ernest Chausson," by Camille Mauclair,

confidence in himself, Chausson could not follow the legal career for which he was trained, nor could he give himself up to music without misgiving. After his studies with Franck he began to acquire initiative. An early member of the National Society of French Music, he was its secretary for many years, and it was at its concerts that many of his works were first performed. Later both Colonne and Lamoureux included his compositions in their programmes. Félix Mottl, who showed such keen appreciation of Chabrier, purposed to give Chausson's opera, "Le Roi Arthus," at Karlsruhe. Chausson was emerging gradually from his habit of morbid self-depreciation, his music was advancing alike in technical skill and assertive conviction. In the early days of June, 1899, he was at his country house in Limay working at a string quartet. He went for a bicycle ride and did not return; he was found at the bottom of a hill with his head crushed against a wall.

Chausson had perhaps the most spontaneous melodic gift of all of Franck's pupils. His was essentially a lyric temperament. As in the case of Fauré, this was at once his chief virtue, and the source of his shortcomings. His music is pervaded by a gentle melancholy, often intensified to tragic

sentiment, and above all by indefinable affectionate grace. It is, moreover, music of atmosphere and fine shades of poetic emotion. With probably more initial talent than d'Indy, Chausson lacked the latter's rigorous self-discipline as well as his prodigious faculty for self-development. Like d'Indy he wrote orchestral and dramatic works and also chamber music, but unlike the latter must be considered next to Fauré and Duparc for his contributions to the field of song.

If in his instrumental music, Chausson was clearly the disciple of Franck in method and style, and even hinted occasionally at the persuasive effect exercised upon him by Wagner in orchestral sonority, he was singularly independent and personal in his songs. From the first his own melodic outline and harmonic vocabulary was evident together with an individual lyric atmosphere. His earliest songs, published before he had completed his studies with Franck, bear out these statements. In "Nanny" (Leconte de Lisle), "Les Papillons" (Théophile Gautier), one of the few vivacious songs by Chausson, "Nocturne" (Maurice Bouchor), his essential traits are crystallized, deepening in penetration and intensity as in "L'Aveu" (Villiers de Lisle Adam), "La Caravane" (Théophile Gautier), in the "Serres Chaudes" (four poems by Maeterlinck), "Les Heures" (Camille Mauclair), and in

the "Cantique à l'Espouse" (Albert Thouney) and "Dans la forêt du charme et de l'enchantement" (Jean Moréas). Chausson also composed for voice with orchestral accompaniment. If the "Poème de l'Amour et de la Mer" is somewhat uneven, its final number, "Au temps des lilas," is one of Chausson's most moving songs. The "Chanson perpétuelle," also with orchestra, is a striking realization in tone of hopeless tragedy. Throughout the later songs there is an intensification of originality and a concentration of expressive power that promised still more had Chausson's life been spared.

In Chausson's chamber music his structural capacity is at a disadvantage in comparison with his melodic invention and his sense of atmospheric fitness. An early trio (1882) is frankly tentative. The later concerto (1890-91), rather in the eighteenth-century application of the term, for piano, solo violin and string quartet, is an individual work of distinctive qualities, a clear evidence of the advance in craftsmanship and concreteness of expression made by its composer. A quartet for piano and strings (1897) belongs definitely to Chausson's maturity, and justifies a permanent place among the best chamber music works of its time. The slow movement in particular is constructed upon an expansive melody of great nobility of sentiment. The unfinished string quartet may be regarded as

a token of Chausson's progress up to the very hour of his death.

Chausson's faculty for coloristic suggestion of emotion points to the orchestra as an obvious field for individual expression. His early work "Viviane" (1882), if not without signs of immaturity and hesitation, is much more original than the trio of the same date, and is already vital in its genuine poetic fancy and its shimmering orchestral tints. A "Poem" for violin and orchestra (1896), often played by Ysaye, at once poetic and dramatic, suffers somewhat by reason of the limitations of the solo instrument. It is, nevertheless, a work of lofty sentiment. Chausson's Symphony in B flat major (1890) after thirty years of performance remains not only his monument, but also a landmark of the period in which it was composed. It is easy to point out technical shortcomings in style or workmanship, but its vitality of expression, its depth of thought and its emotional spontaneity override attempts at critical innuendo. In this symphony, Chausson has given the measure of his talent; its eloquence proves the superiority of substance in thought over mere technical aptness and assurance.

That Chausson had dramatic capacity was apparent. The incidental music for "La Tempête" and "La Légende de Sainte Cécile" established his

qualifications in this direction. "Le Roi Arthus," lyric drama in three acts, text by Chausson himself, was first performed in 1903 at the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels, which has so often been the refuge of French composers. This opera is another instance of an attempt to combine Wagnerian method with Gallic thought. Chausson himself regarded this work as an experiment in dramatic composition. The music shows at once his native ability in lyric conception, his exceptional skill in handling the chorus, and his relative inexperience. Like Chabrier and d'Indy, he could not compose a love-duet without recalling the second act of "Tristan."

With the songs, the piano quartet, the "Concert," the violin poem and the symphony in mind, one remembers that Chausson's career closed just as he was acquiring self-confidence and a mastery over technical problems that justified ardent hopes for the future. Despite his shortcomings, upon which it is futile to dwell, there remains a clear preponderance of achievement which places him without reservation among the foremost of Franck's pupils, as an artist whose qualities, more and more, claim admiration and respect.

## II

If the tragic interruption of Chausson's career brought a palpable loss to French music, the misfortunes of Henri Duparc are even more striking and indicative of at least an equal deprivation. Since 1885, Duparc's health has prohibited composition, and he lives to-day in Switzerland. Not in all the range of musical history has a composer achieved an enduring position with so slight an output as Duparc, and yet its quality leaves no doubt as to the verdict of time.

Marie-Eugène-Henri Fouques-Duparc (the more familiar condensation is due to the perspicacity of his first publisher) was born in Paris, January 22, 1848. As a boy he revealed no precocious aptitude for music; he liked it and that was all. When a student at the Jesuit College of Vaugirard, his piano teacher happened to be César Franck. It is still a mystery why Franck undertook to acquaint his pupil with some of the classics, the operas of Gluck in particular. Beethoven's Ninth Symphony greatly moved Duparc also. While studying law he began also to study harmony with Franck, and became with Arthur Coquard and Albert Cohen the first of Franck's private pupils. Duparc soon published some piano pieces, and turned both toward song-composition and orchestral works.

Among the latter, a symphonic poem, "Lénore" (Duparc was the first French composer after Saint-Saëns to essay this form), first produced at a concert of the National Society, was successively performed by all the Parisian orchestras. Duparc soon became active in the musical life of Paris. One of the charter members of the National Society, he was on especially friendly terms with d'Indy, de Castillon and Saint-Saëns. He made several trips to Germany to hear Wagner's works, and it was he who persuaded Chabrier to hear "Tristan" at Munich. Without warning Duparc was obliged by the state of his health to cease composition, and he has since lived in retirement.

Duparc destroyed a sonata for violoncello and piano, as well as a "Poème nocturne" and a "Laendler" for orchestra. He has left a small collection of piano pieces, sixteen songs, a duet, the symphonic poem "Lénore" and a nocturne for orchestra, "Aux Étoiles." The symphonic poem, dating from 1875, is a work of lucid construction, showing at once the influence of Wagner and Franck, but with no arresting individuality of musical thought. It is likely that Duparc's gifts were largely in the lyric field. His songs, however, suffice for his just fame. If Fauré, first in the field, by his long experience attained a greater variety of lyrical mood, Duparc must none the less be esteemed a



co-founder in the renaissance of the song in France. He attained a maturity of expression, an individuality of melodic line and harmonic thought decidedly in advance of Fauré. Moreover, the larger dimensions of his songs serve to accentuate their vital originality. "L'Invitation au voyage," "Phidylé," "Extase," with perhaps an inevitable trace of Wagner, "Chanson triste" and "Le Manoir de Rosamonde," remain landmarks in their felicitous reflections of their texts. Both in the accompaniments, and in an indefinable harmonic freshness, Duparc has conquered an irrefutable place in French music. In a letter, Duparc says: "My songs were not published until long after being composed, eight at first in 1894, the four others some years afterwards [1902]. When I wrote the first I had not even finished learning harmony, and all have been greatly revised and modified for publication. All that I can tell you is that the 'Chanson triste' was first composed in 1868, 'Soupir' at about the same time, 'L'Invitation au voyage' and 'La Vague et la Cloche' during the siege (1870-71). As to the others, I recall nothing definite. If dates have been given you, they are approximate and uncertain. Only one thing is definite, that my songs were all written before 1885, for since then I have been unable to compose. Many persons believe that I have a quantity of works in my portfolios. There is

nothing. I have only a few pencil sketches, which have interest only for me, and which I have kept in the hope from day to day that it would become possible for me to work. I live in the regret over that which I have not done, without occupying myself with the little I have accomplished.”<sup>1</sup> But Duparc’s songs are not to be dismissed thus. It must be recalled that Franck considered Duparc the most gifted of all his pupils in musical invention, vigor of temperament and dramatic perception. With Fauré, Duparc is the creator of the French song. The passage of years has diminished neither the personal flavor nor the rare individuality of these lyric works.

Another pupil of César Franck, Charles Bordes, like Chausson and Duparc, died before reaching his full development as a musician. But like his fellow-students he has also left a memorable trace in French music.

Charles Bordes was born May 12, 1863, near Vouvray (Indes et Loire). His father was of Languedoc stock, his mother came from Ardennes. The son became a pupil of the Dominican priests at Arcueil near Paris. His father died suddenly and the family fortune was lost. Young Bordes took a

<sup>1</sup> Letter from Henri Duparc, quoted by Octave Séré in his *Musiciens français d'aujourd'hui*, p. 178.

business position in Paris at the Caisse des Dépôts. The Sunday orchestral concerts of Paris awakened his love for music. Without ceasing to work during the day he studied piano playing under Marmontel and composition with César Franck. In 1887 he accepted the post of choirmaster at a church in Nogent-sur-Marne. He began to compose songs and orchestral works based on Basque folk-songs. He also enlarged the repertory of his choir, performing a posthumous mass by Schumann, and also the same composer's Advent Song, the E flat major Mass by Schubert and religious music by Franck, d'Indy, Chausson and de Breville. From 1889-90 onwards, at the instance of the Minister of Education, Bordes began his studies of the Basque folk-songs and folk-dances. Reference has been made in Chapter I<sup>1</sup> to collections published by him. In 1890, Bordes became choirmaster of the church of Saint Gervais in Paris. His enterprise in performing sixteenth-century masterpieces of church music, his foundation of "Les Chanteurs de Saint-Gervais," his part in the foundation with Guilmant and d'Indy of the Schola Cantorum, in the organization of a series of Historical Concerts with the aid of Paul Dukas and Gustave Doret have also been recounted in Chapter I.<sup>2</sup> In 1893-94, Bordes performed church cantatas by Bach

<sup>1</sup> Chapter I, p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Chapter I, p. 14.

with the help of Guilmant. He also arranged educational tours for "Les Chanteurs de Saint-Gervais." In 1894 likewise the foundation of the Schola Cantorum as a society for religious music with its critical organ, "La Tribune de Saint-Gervais," was due to Bordes' initiative. In 1897, Bordes began monthly historical concerts at the Schola preceded by analytical lectures. In 1899, he established a branch of the Schola at Avignon. In 1901, Bordes conceived the idea of issuing "Les Tablettes de la Schola," a bulletin of its concerts and other activities, as a supplement to "La Tribune de Saint-Gervais." In 1904, he planned a new feature, the "Amis de la Schola," associate members who contributed to its support. During the following year the state of his health obliged him to live in southern France. Here he continued his educational work as indefatigably as ever. He founded a new branch of the Schola at Montpellier. Returning on November 8, 1909, from Nice, where he had been making arrangements for a concert, he stopped at Toulon to visit some old friends. He felt ill, and was preparing to rest when he died suddenly of apoplexy. He was forty-six years old.

In addition to the researches in folk-song and religious music mentioned above, Bordes edited and published *chansons* by Jannequin, Pierre Certon, Claudin de Sermisy, Guillaume Costeley,

Gascoque, Claude le Jeune and Orlando Lassus, four vocal fantasies by Jannequin, several cantatas by Nicolas Clérambault, *Esther* by Jean Baptiste Moreau, incidental music for the tragedy by Racine. He also contributed frequently to musical periodicals to within a month of his death.

In view of these multiform activities, it is difficult to imagine how Bordes found time to compose. He wrote religious music, had distinct gifts as a song composer, and also had a special predilection for instrumental or orchestral works upon a basis of Basque folk-song. Despite an evident capacity in these several fields, his development as a composer was undoubtedly hampered by his constant preoccupations of an editorial or administrative nature. As a song composer Bordes manifests an indefinable affinity with Duparc and Chausson, although no concrete resemblances can be adduced. His songs contain a delicate lyric sentiment, a felicitous reflection of his texts, and an appropriate harmonic sense. Bordes was particularly devoted to Verlaine's poems, and his settings of them are often distinctive. "O mes morts tristement nombreux," "Sur un vieil air," in which the accompaniment skilfully suggests "Plaisir d'amour," by Padre Martini, "Spleen," "Paysage vert," "Le son du cor s'afflige vers les bois," "La Ronde des Prisonniers," all to texts by Verlaine, illustrate

this sympathy as well as his musical individuality. Among other songs, "Petites fées, honnêtes gnômes" (poem by Jean Moréas), with an apt quotation in the accompaniment from Chausson's symphonic poem "Viviane," "La poussière des tamis" (Francis Jammes), "Pensées orientales" (Jean Lahor), and "Mes cheveux dorment sur mon front" (Camille Mauclair) exhibit Bordes' lyric gift from various angles.

Quite different traits are to be noted in his instrumental music. With the inspiration of his native Basque folk-song as a background, Bordes is no longer the pensive and, at times, the introspective composer of the songs. He manifests unexpectedly rhythmic vitality, a festive atmosphere and a particularly picturesque musical invention. The "Suite Basque" for flute and string quartet, the "Rapsodie Basque" for pianoforte with orchestral accompaniment present vividly this aspect of his temperament. The versatility of his interests and the breakdown of his health prevented Bordes from arriving at even an approximate development of his talent as a composer. From the songs and the instrumental works alone, Bordes must be considered a worthy pupil of his master.

Bordes' music is too little known even in France. That his work in archeological research and in his "restorations" of seventeenth- and eighteenth-

century works by French composers was appreciated and its significance realized may be seen in the tribute paid him soon after his death by Pierre Lalo. "He revived a whole race of masterpieces. First, in the memorable services at Saint-Gervais he revealed the art of the Renaissance, Palestrina, Orlando di Lasso, Vittoria and their rivals. None then suspected the beauty, the depth, the freshness and the immortal grace of the sixteenth-century vocal polyphony. Then at the Schola Cantorum were heard in succession the great Claudio Monteverdi and the rising Italian opera, its noble passion, its pathetic ardor and its moving force; Carissimi and the Roman oratorio of the seventeenth century, still grave, austere and pious, already dramatic and more suitable for the concert hall than the church; Schütz and the first splendor of German music. Then we had Lully, the originator of French opera, at once so majestic and so sober, so touching and so well-ordered, a veritable musical expression of the French tragedy, as it has been excellently defined. Then came the contemporaries of Lully, Charpentier, Dumont, La Lande, and their immediate successors such as Destouches and Campra, agreeable musicians in whom the worthy French traditions persist, heirs to a great man and forerunners of a greater. Then came the latter, Jean-Philippe Rameau, the per-

fect representative in music of the classic French genre, one of the noblest and strongest specimens of the genius of our race. Twenty years ago, all these musicians were unknown, or so ill-known that it was as if they had not existed. Their names were only more or less sonorous names, but they were vain and empty of meaning. Their works were dead, exhumed for a moment by musical archeologists. They immediately became as dust in a library. Bordes resurrected them. He made living beings of these works, no longer imprisoned in the past but mingled with the present. They were no longer distant and foreign, but close to us. He caused them to return into the current of our life and our thoughts.”<sup>1</sup>

There are in addition two other pupils of Franck, Alexis de Castillon and Guillaume Lekeu, who died before reaching artistic maturity. Their work, nevertheless, deserves an estimate of their talent. Marie-Alexis, vicomte de Castillon de Saint-Victor, was born at Chartres, December 13, 1838, and died in Paris, March 5, 1873. De Castillon showed remarkable ability at an early age as a pianist, and soon attained equal skill as an organist. He obtained permission to play on the great organ of

<sup>1</sup> Pierre Lalo, *Le Temps*, November 16, 1909; quoted by Octave Séré in *Musiciens français d'aujourd'hui*, p. 42 et seq.



Notre Dame in Chartres, and his youth was passed in the shadow of the cathedral. Having finished his general education in Paris, he entered, in accordance with the traditions of his birth, the military school at Saint-Cyr.

De Castillon became a soldier out of deference to his family, but he also continued his musical studies. Unfortunate in his teachers, he was about to give up music when Duparc, in 1868, persuaded him to study with Franck. When the Franco-Prussian War broke out de Castillon returned to the army and served throughout, being decorated after the battle of Mans. After the war, de Castillon returned to music. When the National Society was founded he was chosen secretary and drew up the by-laws of the organization. Soon his compositions found their way upon concert programmes. In 1872, his concerto for piano in D major with Saint-Saëns as soloist, was received by the audience of a Pasdeloup concert with whistles and cries lasting three-quarters of an hour. When his string quartet was performed at the National Society with Lamoureux as first violinist, the intense heat caused the E string to break three times with disastrous results for violinist and composer. Once again at a performance of de Castillon's quintet, the viola player lost his place in the middle of the first movement, and remained two measures ahead of his compan-

ions up to the end of the movement. However, a quartet for piano and strings performed by the Armingaud quartet was immediately successful. De Castillon's music was understood and appreciated from the beginning by certain artists and music lovers. The privations of the Franco-Prussian War told upon de Castillon's health, and in the winter of 1872-73 he was obliged to pass some time at Pau. He finished a Psalm, which he hoped would counteract the hostile reception of other works. Hardly had he returned to Paris when he succumbed to a severe illness of the lungs. All musical Paris was at de Castillon's funeral, Bizet, César Franck, Lalo, Duparc, d'Indy, Massenet, Paladilhe, Saint-Saëns and many others. Before this imposing assemblage, an unconscious testimony of worth, a relative was heard to observe: "Then, he really had talent!"<sup>1</sup>

De Castillon admired particularly Bach, Beethoven, Berlioz and Schumann. He was drawn particularly toward chamber music at a time when this branch of musical art was not appreciated or even understood. De Castillon had not become a master of his craft at the time of his premature death, but he was a serious artist of exalted aims, and posthumous performances of his works have established clearly the ability and the high standards of a composer of indisputable talent.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Octave Séré in *Musiciens français d'aujourd'hui*, p. 73.

Guillaume Lekeu was born at Heusy, near Verviers, in Belgium, January 20, 1870. His parents having removed to Poitiers in France in 1879, young Lekeu attended the Lycée of this town until 1888. Beethoven was Lekeu's first musical influence. In 1889 an orchestral composition by Lekeu, "Le Chant de Triomphale Délivrance," was performed at Verviers, although its composer had yet to receive his first lesson in composition. During the four years preceding, he had, however, studied and absorbed a large portion of the music of Bach, Beethoven and Wagner. In 1888 Lekeu came to Paris and later took his doctor's degree in philosophy. Among other influences was that of the poet Mallarmé. After studying harmony with Gaston Vallin, Lekeu became Franck's pupil. At Franck's death in 1890, he continued his technical studies under Vincent d'Indy. The latter urged his pupil to compete for the Belgian Prix de Rome. Although successful in the preliminary contest, Lekeu obtained only a second prize for his cantata "Andromeda" despite its enthusiastic reception a year later. However, a sonata for violin and piano, dedicated to Ysaye, was cordially received everywhere, and has made its way throughout the civilized musical world. An orchestral Fantasy on two folk-tunes of Angers had a more limited appreciation, but is now recognized as in some respects

superior to the more popular sonata. Lekeu was working at a quartet for piano and strings, when he was stricken with typhoid fever. He was convalescing satisfactorily, but died from a sudden relapse January 21, 1894.

Lekeu was of an exuberant and lively temperament, in strong contrast to the almost passionate melancholy of his music. He left relatively a large number of works, of which few were published in his lifetime, but which are now accessible through the efforts of Vincent d'Indy and Messrs. Rouart-Lerolle et Cie. As is normal with the younger composer, and not infrequent with the mature artist, Lekeu's works are unequal both in ideas and in workmanship. But Lekeu lived long enough to exhibit marked originality in melodic invention, an harmonic scheme of his own, although at times betraying an unconscious assimilation of Franck's method, and, above all, an ability to create moods of authentic emotion and substance. If the immaturity of the violin sonata is palpable, there is also the positive evidence of something to say as well as an indefinable novelty in the saying. If the familiar cyclical treatment of Franck is noticeable, there is no stereotyped application of a principle dear to all Franck's pupils. In the "Fantasie symphonique" Lekeu forsook all Franckian reminiscences, and launched into a vivid and spontaneous

affirmation of himself. This piece is above all true to atmosphere, engagingly local in color; it contains nothing tentative. Lekeu's last work, the piano quartet, finished by d'Indy, contains the most concentrated expression of its composer's individuality in its tragic, almost morbid melancholy. Despite the contrary indications of Lekeu's optimistic temperament, it seems a premonition of the artist's fate.

### III

Among the prominent pupils of Franck, two living artists have striven to carry out their master's esthetic precepts with the zeal characteristic of all his disciples. The older of these, Joseph-Marie-Guy Ropartz was born at Guingamp, June 15, 1864, of an old Breton family. Ropartz pursued his general education at the Catholic schools of Saint Vincent in Rennes, Saint Francis Xavier at Vannes, and at the Catholic university at Angers. Like Duparc and d'Indy, he studied law at Rennes. He soon turned, however, to music, studying at first under Dubois and Massenet at the Paris Conservatoire. But the real trend of his individuality was determined by his studies with César Franck. Like Franck he has cultivated both dramatic and "absolute" music. Like Franck also, he has taught unceasingly, first at Nancy, where he was appointed

director of the Conservatoire in 1894, and now at Strasbourg whither he was called in 1919 to reorganize the Conservatoire and to inculcate Gallic principles of education and musical art at a strategic point in Alsace. Both at Nancy and at Strasbourg he has for thirty years conducted orchestral concerts in which he has brought forward the older and the newer literature of his race without neglecting the classics. He has thus been a leader in musical cultivation in two important provincial centres.

Like most of his fellow pupils Ropartz has maintained his predilections for the classic forms, although he has often treated them with elasticity. Unlike them he has reverted frequently to Breton folk-songs as melodic material in symphonic or chamber music. He has thus to a considerable extent been the spokesman of the Breton, as Bordes was for the Basque race. Ropartz has composed four symphonies. The first, on a Breton chorale, gives a distinctive atmosphere to its classic plan. The third symphony in E major, which was awarded the Prix Cressent, combines a choral introduction and interludes with the familiar aspect of the symphony. Ropartz has written his own text, a mystical presentation of the ills of humanity consequent upon egotism, and the triumph which rewards the practice of a humanitarian altruism.



A Edward Burlingame Hill  
By Amiel Sorensen de la visite  
a Sherborn

7. Guy Ropark





The chorus thus gives point to the moods of the orchestral movements. Ropartz has been successful in this novel method of associating the chorus with symphonic structure, and his music has breadth of mood and vitality of expression. The fourth symphony, in C major, makes an elaborate application of the cyclical principle. Its four movements are connected in one, and the succession of episodes is somewhat disconcertingly elaborate at a single hearing. The sections which impress the most are the first and the slow movement.

Like other pupils of Franck, Ropartz has been drawn toward chamber music. His works in this field show simplicity and reticence in style, a marked skill in thematic development and in maintaining solid structural continuity. He has composed two sonatas for violin and pianoforte (1907 and 1917), two sonatas for violoncello and pianoforte (1904 and 1918-19), a trio for pianoforte (1918), and two string quartets. In these he has not infrequently utilized Breton melodies, thus imparting a distinctive flavor. Of these, the second sonatas for violin and for violoncello have a greater emotional expansiveness than the earlier works, as well as a bolder harmonic treatment.

Breton melodies have also furnished much material for smaller orchestral works by Ropartz. Such are the "Scènes Bretonnes," a suite of pic-

turesque contents, "Les Landes" and "Les Cloches des Morts" (1888), entitled "Breton Landscapes"; a Suite in four movements, "Dimanche Breton," a charmingly atmospheric sketch, "À Marie endormie," as well as incidental music for Loti's "Pêcheur d'Islande." Some of Ropartz's most characteristic music is to be found in these works, in which he has temporarily laid aside his responsibilities as a pupil of Franck. Two other orchestral works should be mentioned "La Chasse du Prince Arthur" and "Soir sur les chaumes." Ropartz has also contributed some excellent organ music to French literature for this instrument, of which a "Prelude," "Prière" and "Sortie" are worthy instances. A setting of the Psalm 136 for chorus, orchestra and organ is a work of dignity and large outline. Ropartz has also composed about forty songs of which a collection "Le Rêve sur la sable" (1914) show a sensitive lyric gift.

Ropartz's chief dramatic work is "Le Pays" (1912), an opera in three acts upon a text by Charles Le Goffic. Its plot is human and unusual. Tual, a Breton, has come to Iceland. Here his life is saved by Jörgen, an Icelandic hunter and fisherman. He is nursed back to health by Kaethe, Jörgen's daughter. Tual falls in love with Kaethe and wishes to marry her. They are far from a clergyman, and Jörgen plights the lovers with a vow of

fidelity sworn on Hrafuaga, a grewsome ice vale which none may cross. For a time Tual is happy, but irresistibly he is overcome by longing to return to the home of his youth. At last in the spring when the ice is about to break up, he hears that a vessel has arrived in Iceland from France. Forgetting his vows, he surreptitiously leaves his adopted home, ventures through the ice floes of Hrafuaga, to arrive sooner, forgetful of the penalty which he is bound to incur. He misses his footing and is at once set upon by a ravenous flock of crows who literally pick him to pieces in a few moments. The music to "Le Pays" is tensely dramatic, effective stylistically and strongly original. The orchestra reinforces the stage situations admirably by its varied and highly colored sonority. When "Le Pays" was produced at the Opéra-Comique in 1913, it was recognized that this opera was of exclusively French inspiration and owed nothing to foreign models.

For many years Ropartz has mastered his impulse to compose in order the better to devote himself to his duties as educator and conductor. Nevertheless, by his intellectual and esthetic affinities he has done much to continue the traditions of César Franck. In his fidelity to the cause of musical education, including his long service as a conductor, he is deserving of high admiration and respect.

To conclude the list of Franck's pupils,<sup>1</sup> Pierre Onfroy de Bréville (1861) has also brought his individual interpretation of Franckian tradition. Among his works are an overture to Maeterlinck's "La Princesse Maleine," incidental music for "Les Sept Princesses" by the same author, an excellent sonata for violin and pianoforte, and an opera, "Eros Vainqueur," which was performed at the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels, March 7, 1910.

If the school of Franck has sometimes been criticized for the Belgian gravity and the adoption of Teutonic methods brought into French music by its founder, there is no gainsaying that even if Franck were not typically Gallic in his musical speech, his lofty vision of art and his selfless gospel of the artist's mission awakened a ready response in the minds and perceptions of a gifted and serious group of French musicians. To have called forth the orchestral and choral works, the chamber music and songs of d'Indy, Chausson, Duparc, Ropartz, Bordes, de Castillon, Lekeu is not to have taught in vain.

<sup>1</sup> The names of A. Coquard (1846-1910) and Samuel Rousseau (1853-1904) may be added to the list of Franck's pupils. The former composed mainly choral and dramatic music; the latter divided his interest between dramatic and religious music.

## CHAPTER VIII

### REFLECTIONS FROM LITERATURE

IN pointing out the material from which Chabrier shaped his innovative and personal idiom, the part played by contemporary poets and painters was duly emphasized. For, undoubtedly, some of the sensuous mysticism of Verlaine, some of the frankly coloristic virtuosity of Degas, Renoir and Monet passed into the animated rhythms and daring harmonies of the French musician. Indeed, the analogy in style and method between the painters and Chabrier was particularly close. It was merely another instance among many in France (and elsewhere) of that palpable interaction between the arts which is still the object of experiment, and which has in the past caused so much interminable discussion.<sup>1</sup> Music, however, has always been slow

<sup>1</sup> One may recall the position held in Wagner's theory of the music-drama by the "union of arts," harking back to the Greek association of the arts of drama, music and dance; the lithographs of Fantin-Latour suggested by scenes in Wagner's operas, appearing for the first time in *La Revue Wagnérienne*; the development of Diaghilev's Russian Ballet, with the indispensable coöperation of Roerich's decorations, the costumes and scene-paintings of Bakst, Fokine and others; the original choreography, devised from the attitudes of dancers on Greek vases, used in mounting Ravel's ballet "Daphnis et Chloé." In his symphonic poem, "Prometheus," Scriabin wrote a part for a "color-keyboard" which projected a variety of color schemes on a screen in adaptation to the mood of the music. At the time of his

to avail itself of such opportunity for stimulus. The Italian Renaissance affected music long after it had left its mark upon literature, painting and sculpture. Even the interminable reverberations of the French Revolution of 1793 reached music last of all, although separated by a lesser interval than was the case in earlier artistic or political reactions. But it was partly owing to this revolution that Beethoven maintained a lifelong sympathy with democracy, for it incited him as a young man to compose music for Schiller's "Ode to Joy" which took immortal form some thirty years later in the Ninth Symphony. The July Revolution of 1830 brought forth answering symptoms of revolt from almost every field of intellectual or esthetic endeavor in Paris, and, moreover, with an almost simultaneous response. Music, literature, painting, philosophy, religion and sociology all felt its impress. While it may be difficult to select the typical insurgent of the period in literature (Balzac, Baudelaire, de Musset, Georges Sand or Victor Hugo) or in painting (Ingres, Delacroix or Courbet), it is beyond dispute that, among musicians, Berlioz is the supreme instance, and that through his qualities of temperament and mind, and in his histrionic sense of life, he may even be regarded

death, Scriabin was engaged upon a "Mystery" in which the arts were to have been united still more complexly.

as the arch-representative of the spirit of 1830. Among other manifestations of a reaction between the arts, one of the most fruitful in the evolution of French music was the immediate determination of individuality resultant from the contact of Claude Debussy with the literary symbolists, the impressionist painters and their critical adherents who met at Stéphane Mallarmé's evening receptions. This will be dealt with in its proper place. In the present chapter we must note still another such influence, that of the literary cult of *naturalisme* upon French opera.

It will be remembered that when Chabrier was searching for an opera text, *naturalisme* was already beginning to decline, and also that neither the *Parnassiens* nor the *naturalistes* were progressive in the theatre. Within a few years, however, the symbolists ventured into dramatic fields with notable results, both in the theatre and in the opera house. A champion of *naturalisme* in opera arose in the person of Alfred Bruneau, followed by Gustave Charpentier, both of whom aided the emancipation of French opera from outworn traditions and at the same time secured a signal advance toward independence of foreign dramatic procedure. The complete freedom of the French operatic stage could not dawn, however, until the mists of the Wagnerian illusion had been dispelled. Curiously

enough, both Bruneau and Charpentier were pupils of Massenet, whose influence could scarcely have been expected to be productive of innovation.

Louis-Charles-Bonaventure-Alfred Bruneau was born in Paris, March 1, 1857, of parents who were more than ordinarily disposed to sympathize with artistic pursuits. His mother was a painter; his father played the violin, and for some time was the head of a music publishing house. Bruneau entered the Paris Conservatoire at the age of sixteen, and three years later won the first prize in violoncello playing. Continuing his theoretical studies with Savard in harmony and with Massenet in composition, he was awarded a second Prix de Rome for his cantata "Geneviève" in 1881. Thereafter, Bruneau plunged into the musical life of Paris, playing in Padeloup's orchestra, and associating himself with the activities of the National Society. At first he composed chiefly for orchestra, but in 1887 his first opera, "Kérim," was produced at the Opéra-Comique. This somewhat dilutely romantic work showed musical kinship with Massenet and scarcely presaged his future individuality. The turning-point of Bruneau's career was his friendship with Zola. Filled with admiration for the tenacious courage and the utter sincerity of the man, Bruneau ended by becoming a disciple of the artist, and adopted *naturalisme* as



the foundation of his dramatic principles. A succession of operas with plots drawn from Zola's works, the texts either by Zola himself, or made with his collaboration, were brought out by Bruneau. The first, "Le Rêve," had for dominating motive the mystical power of the Church exercised upon the heroine. The second, "L'Attaque du Moulin," was the dramatization of an episode in the Franco-Prussian War as related by Zola in the volume of short stories, with other authors, entitled "Les Soirées de Médan." A third "Messidor" represents in somewhat allegorical fashion the eternal struggle between capital and labor. Other characteristic works by Bruneau are "L'Oouragan" (1901), "L'Enfant Roi" (1905), "La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret" (1907), "Naïs Micoulin" (1907), and "Les Quatres Journées" (1916).

Bruneau's purpose as an opera composer was to discard the legendary or romantic subjects so abnormally current in operatic literature, and to replace them with dramas of contemporary interest in which action and psychological development were brief, tense and convincingly truthful. He wished to do away with the empty conventionalities which had for so long dominated French opera, and to employ a musical style in keeping with the novel features of his plots. A profound admirer of Wagner, he used "leading motives" to

describe characters or dramatic symbols, but here all resemblance to Wagnerian formulas ceases. He imitated neither Wagner's "symphonic development" of motives, his treatment of recitative, nor his use of the orchestra. If his melodic material sometimes suggests his teacher Massenet, it never recalls Wagner. In short, Bruneau's musical substance was original and fundamentally Gallic. Nevertheless, his operas were at first received with open hostility. "Le Rêve" was severely criticized for the strangeness of its melodies and the crudity of its harmonies. "L'Attaque du Moulin" disconcerted its listeners, although its sincerity, simplicity and dramatic power compelled respect in some quarters. In comparison with the time-honored glamour of legendary or sentimental illusion, these graphically human dramas were adjudged sordid. In particular, Bruneau's conviction in behalf of the use of prose instead of verse for his texts grated on the ears of his audiences. But Bruneau could not be dislodged from his belief in *naturalisme* and continued in his self-appointed task. After the production of "L'Ouragan" in 1901, Gustave Charpentier, who had in the preceding year obtained an unequivocal success with his naturalistic opera "Louise," wrote in the "Figaro" as follows: "'Le Rêve,' 'L'Attaque du Moulin,' 'Messidor' are deliberate and predeter-

mined stages, created by the act of will of a spirit instinct with beauty, in which dwells a tenacious and obstinate purpose, irresistibly, harshly bent toward the summits. With each new work more grandeur appears; the study of character is revealed with more depth; the skill of the dramatist affirms its mastery; the musician enlarges his vocabulary, his gamut of melody, harmony and unexpected rhythms. The concessions motivated by education, atavism and habit, which were few in his first works, have disappeared. In 'L'Ouragan' M. Alfred Bruneau manifests his own moral reflection. The distant heavens, the sea, the long horizons that his eyes have mirrored, are unveiled for us in the first and last act. In the third act, his incisive will, his rough energy animate heroes, powerful, strong-willed and obstinate as himself, who think also to act as men. And the girl of dreams, a gracious chimera, all rose-colored among the blackness of fate, is she not the mysterious corner that M. Bruneau guards so jealously in his soul? Yes, all of Bruneau is in this drama. Ingenuous, complex, combative or tender, smiling or rough, he appears multiform in accent or in thought." As a virtual follower of Bruneau, Charpentier may seem, perhaps, to have taken too laudatory a standpoint in writing of this pioneer of *naturalisme*, but Dukas, Debussy and Combarieu, the historian, united in

recognition of the originality of Bruneau's style, and his services in helping French opera out of the rut of tradition into which it had fallen. "Messidor" has been performed in Munich, "L'Attaque du Moulin" at Covent Garden, and the Institute of Fine Arts awarded the Prix Monbinne to the latter work.

As a composer, Bruneau is preoccupied first of all with dramatic characterization. He bends his efforts in musical invention and in the manipulation of his musical material primarily to the enhancing of dramatic effect. This essential quality for an opera composer was undoubtedly developed through contact with Massenet, who possessed the *sens du théâtre* in a high degree. But as Bruneau's subjects are the antithesis of the feministic themes so dear to Massenet, so also his dramatic effects are obtained by totally opposite methods. Massenet never lost control of purely musical effect; Bruneau in his desire to emphasize drama often belittles the power of musical suggestion. Thus he, perhaps unconsciously, ranges himself with Lully and Gluck, rather than with Rameau or Mozart. Bruneau resorts to a direct and even brutal sincerity which carries weight on account of its manifest conviction. Since, however, dramatic ends are indisputably dependent upon the concrete qualities of musical thought, it must be confessed that

Bruneau's chief weakness lies in the too frequent absence of compelling force in musical invention. His ideas lack both charm and distinction. His singleness of purpose cannot be questioned, but his musical gifts seem incapable of reaching the level of his dramatic insight with persuasive completeness. The pioneer, however, can seldom attain a rounded perception of his problems. Concentrating upon a pervading need for reform, he often neglects a secondary aspect which is needful to the success of his primary effort. Despite his shortcomings, Bruneau has conceived powerful, pathetic and human scenes, and he has, indeed, been a living factor in securing a fresh viewpoint in opera, and in hastening the self-dependence of French operatic art. In regard to harmonic progress also, Bruneau belongs with those who have enlarged the scope of musical expression through a progressive and anti-conventional standpoint. His innovations, which were freely censured at first, are now recognized as having prepared the way for a more liberal solution of harmonic problems.

No estimate of Bruneau is complete without a reference to his services as musical critic. In this field Bruneau is as independent as he is fearless as a composer. A frequent contributor to many French reviews, he has had a longer career as writer on musical topics for various Parisian news-

papers. His volumes, "Music of Yesterday and Tomorrow" (1900), "French Music" (1901), a report on French music from the thirteenth to the twentieth centuries submitted to the Minister of Public Education, and "Russian Music and French Musicians" (1903), record his convictions with persistent courage and critical insight.

Gustave Charpentier is, like Bruneau, an ardent believer in *naturalisme* in opera. While he was undoubtedly impelled to this viewpoint by Bruneau's example, he differs from him markedly, both in musical individuality and in his personal characteristics. While it would be difficult to surpass the picturesque traits of Emmanuel Chabrier, Charpentier must take at least second place as a solitary and original figure among contemporary French musicians. For Charpentier, a man of the people, has been a consistent bard of democracy with a strong undercurrent of socialism.

Gustave Charpentier was born at Dieuze in the province of Lorraine, June 25, 1860. After the Franco-Prussian War, the annexation of Lorraine by the Germans drove Charpentier's parents across the French border to the town of Tourcoing. Here young Gustave began his musical studies for which he showed unusual aptitude. At the same time he worked as accountant in a factory to support him-

self. Aided by his employer he established an orchestra and a musical society. In recognition of his ability, his benefactor sent him to the Conservatory at Lille where he was awarded several prizes. At last the town of Tourcoing granted him a subsidy to enter the Paris Conservatory. Here Charpentier made unequal progress and his studies were interrupted by the prescribed military service. In 1885 he entered Massenet's class in composition, and two years later won the Prix de Rome with a cantata, "Didon." This cantata was performed at the Colonne concerts in Paris, in Brussels and above all in Tourcoing, where the composer received an ovation.

During his stay at the Villa Médicis, Charpentier wandered over the country-side observing every feature of Italian life as well as all the phases of nature. In accordance with the rules of the Institute requiring proofs of industry, he sent back to Paris an orchestral suite, "Impressions of Italy," "A Poet's Life," a symphony-drama for solos, chorus and orchestra, and the first act of his opera, "Louise." In returning to Paris, Charpentier hired a tiny room in the Montmartre quarter, and flung himself headlong into its Bohemian life. Here, as in Italy, he was a passionate student of human nature, associating with poets, musicians and painters of all types. He also became imbued with

socialistic doctrine, and sought an outlet in several songs with orchestral accompaniment, whose texts not only contained socialistic sentiments but even anarchistic allusions. Charpentier always held to a belief in the democracy of art; he was an early supporter of a certain type of "community music." Thus in 1896 he had performed in the Luxembourg Gardens a somewhat fantastic "Serenade to Watteau," for which he wrote the music. Two years later, he organized a somewhat more pretentious demonstration in the square facing the Paris City Hall, presenting a cantata,<sup>1</sup> "The Crowning of the Muse." In so doing he wished to perpetuate a long-standing custom of the Montmartre quarter, at which its prettiest girl was crowned "Muse" with symbolic ceremonies.

In the mean time, Charpentier was working feverishly at "Louise," which, in deference to his naturalistic predilections, he termed a "musical novel," instead of an opera. For this work he wrote a text in prose, following the precedent established by Bruneau. Charpentier's resources were so slender, or else so incompatible with his expenditures, that it is said he would have starved had not the friendly proprietor of a bakeshop given him unlimited credit for eggs, chocolate, milk and bread. When at last "Louise" was completed, the man-

<sup>1</sup> Later incorporated in the third act of his opera, "Louise."



agement of the Opéra-Comique agreed to produce it, although the unconventional character of the plot and music occasioned some misgivings. The first performance of "Louise" occurred on February 5, 1900, and its success was immediate. On the evening of his triumph Charpentier, as a typical Bohemian, hired all the cabs he could afford and with his friends made a parade of a considerable portion of Paris.

With reluctance one must admit that Charpentier has accomplished nothing of consequence since "Louise." His health was uncertain for several years. He worked for a long time at a trilogy of operas. While their completion has been announced, no performance has been forthcoming. In 1913, "Julien," a sequel to "Louise," was produced with slight success. It was a transformation of his early work, "A Poet's Life," with the addition of much incongruous and ill-advisedly symbolistic music. After the death of Massenet in 1912, Charpentier was elected to fill his chair at the Institute, and is thus an Immortal.

In appearance, Charpentier is a typical Bohemian, with a large bow-tie, pointed beard and the inevitable long hair. As an artist he is anti-intellectual, dislikes to discuss his "tendencies," and proclaims himself an "instinctive" musician. As a friend of the people, Charpentier has cherished

several projects for the musical enlightenment of the masses. Beginning in 1900 with a scheme to provide theatre tickets for working girls at nominal prices, he extended his creditable altruism by founding a free conservatory for their benefit.<sup>1</sup> He even hoped to establish a coöperative People's Theatre on a vast scale with hundreds of singers and dancers, which would cause Paris to forget the glories of the Athenian stage. Unfortunately, the working girls of Paris did not respond to the opportunities so generously placed at their disposal by Charpentier. They did not wish — for long — to become initiated into the technical mysteries of music. They preferred to seek their relaxation and their amusements in their own fashion.

As a composer, Charpentier has shown a consistent bent totally devoid of hesitation. He has always been a realist seeking subjects from life about him, and striving to give them the glowing light of reality. Thus his orchestral suite, "Impressions of Italy" (1892), depicts the evening serenades of young men, a procession of young girls carrying water-jars, the jingling trot of mules upon the mountain paths, the immense horizon of the Bay of Sorrento seen from the crest of a mountain, and a tumultuous carnival night at Naples. If in

<sup>1</sup> Conservatoire populaire de Mimi Pinson: the latter a slang phrase for the working girl derived from Murger's "Les Bohêmes."

this suite Charpentier's musical material is often trivial and sometimes even coarse, it is impossible to deny the sensuous vitality of these sketches and his uncommon gift for suggesting color and atmosphere by means of deftly chosen orchestral sonority. If Charpentier often betrays himself as the pupil of Massenet by his procedure in thematic development or in the manipulation of orchestral timbres, he nevertheless gives evidence of a positive individuality of his own in which charm and the capacity for poetic suggestion are ever present. In the carnival scene at Naples, Charpentier gives a graphic touch of realism by describing the clashes of rival bands. "A Poet's Life" (1889-91) is both uneven and immature, but it contains dramatic conceptions of considerable power, and episodes of luminous poetry. A young poet at the outset of his career is transported by inspiration; he reviews the dreams of his ambition. Little by little he begins to doubt his capacity to express the baffling problems of existence. At last, owning his defeat, he seeks a refuge in drunkenness and proclaims his downfall in broken accents. To-day "A Poet's Life" is perhaps chiefly interesting as an indication of a stage of development in a composer who was one day destined to conceive "Louise." Along with brilliant and effective writing for chorus there are many pages of sentimentality which contain

unsubstantial emotion. In the last act where the poet has sought a wretched dance-hall in Montmartre, the opposing dance-hall orchestras, vying with one another, furnish an inimitable realistic background to his tragic downfall.

The plot of "Louise" (1900) revolves about a simple working girl, idolized by her parents, who has fallen in love with a scrapegrace Bohemian, Julien, "a pillar of the saloon" as the hard-headed mother describes him. Julien seriously loves Louise in return and has written an honest letter to her parents asking for her hand. The parents' refusal and the continual reproaches of the poet at last drive Louise to elope with her lover. They take refuge in the Bohemian paradise of Montmartre, where Louise is crowned "Muse" of the quarter. At the height of their happiness, the mother comes to beg that Louise be allowed to return to nurse her father who has fallen ill through worry and suspense. The plea was in reality but a ruse to regain possession of their daughter. Louise, a prisoner, becomes sulky, flaunts her impenitence and threatens to rejoin her lover. At last, the father, furious at his daughter's ingratitude, drives her from the house and curses the city which has robbed him of his child.

Charpentier, who wrote his own text in prose, has contrived a simple drama of real life, full of ef-

fective contrasts, adroit observation of character and truth to human nature. It may also be regarded as a protest against the *mariage de convenance*, a socialistic tirade against the tyranny of convention and an argument in behalf of uncontrolled personal liberty. It is also an artful glorification of Paris. At the end of the first act, Louise, in tears on account of her parents' lack of sympathy in her love affairs, is coaxed into reading aloud to her father from the evening paper about the gay festivities of the spring season in Paris. In the second act, Charpentier reveals the reminiscences and philosophizing of downtrodden characters in the night life of Paris. The coal woman, the rag-picker, the old-clothes man and others soliloquize. Like Clément Jannequin, the French composer of the sixteenth century who wrote a chorus "Les cris de Paris," Charpentier has given a realistic yet indefinably picturesque touch to these scenes by utilizing in his music the actual street cries of various peddlers. In the third act, the happy lovers look out over Paris from the heights of Montmartre and apostrophize it as "a city of light and force," and invoke its blessing upon their love. Finally, at the close of the fourth act, the father, moved to despair by his daughter's obstinacy, curses Paris as the destroyer of an honest household. Apart from these secondary considerations, Charpentier has

painted a vivid picture of Bohemian life of a type that is fast disappearing in the face of cosmopolitan invasion, and withal intensely human with its insight into the eternal problems of the human heart, young and old.

The music of "Louise" shows Charpentier still as the pupil of Massenet, following his master in the economical use of musical material, in the skilful development of ideas, as well as apt in finding appropriate music for the stage situations. But Charpentier is no empty echo of Massenet; the sources of his style and method are apparent, but the results are his own. Like Bruneau, Charpentier uses "leading motives," but in a generalized sense quite apart from the Wagnerian manner. There are a few measures of fortuitous resemblance to "Die Meistersinger" in the third act, as well as some reminders of Wagnerian sonority in the orchestral part, but despite these moments "Louise" is thoroughly Gallic in its basic musical conception. Unlike Bruneau, however, Charpentier maintains a far better balance between drama and music. He can be forcefully dramatic without losing that concrete ability to depict in music which stands at the root of all successful opera. Throughout "Louise," Charpentier's musical invention is unflagging. Whether in the lyrical narratives of the first act, the adroit atmospheric suggestion in the preludes

of the second, the brilliant festivity of the third act, or the unrelieved gloom of the first part of the fourth act, Charpentier is always apposite in his musical emphasis on the dramatic situation. Even the dangerously near hackneyed "Depuis le jour" which opens the third act never fails to thrill when sung with an adequate orchestral support. Although twenty-four years have elapsed since its first performance, and despite a bewildering advance in orchestral resource shown by the composers of France, Germany, Russia, Italy, and also in England and the United States, "Louise" still holds its own by reason of its forceful sonorities, its vivid and picturesque coloristic illusion and its poetic reinforcement of stage-atmosphere. Its dominant note, both orchestrally and musically, lies in its spontaneity. "Louise" may be disfigured at times by sentimentality and over-emphasis, often excusable by dramatic exigencies or as the logical consequence of its composer's realistic tenets, but these defects are outweighed by its preponderant originality. As a record of Bohemian Paris, as a "document" for the sociologist or the student of folk-song, but above all as a poignantly human drama, "Louise" occupies an outstanding position. With the advent of symbolism and impressionism in literature and painting, and their consequent reactions on music, *naturalisme* lost

ground irrevocably as a stimulus to musical art. Charpentier has formed no real disciples, and his career appears to have been finished. With all his limitations (and he may be justly considered as the composer of only one important work), he remains second only to Chabrier as an instance of spontaneous self-expression. Chabrier's range of musical thought was wider, its scope was more diverse, and he left a far deeper impression upon the methods of those who followed him. Nevertheless, Charpentier has had his effect upon later French music. Like Bruneau, he has aided French opera to find itself, and thus his historical import is clear over and above the intrinsic merits of his picturesque individuality.

For convenience in classification several other pupils of Massenet may be mentioned here, although esthetically they have little in common with Bruneau or Charpentier except traits inherited from their master's teaching.

Gabriel Pierné, born at Metz in 1863, was awarded the Prix de Rome in 1882 as a pupil of Massenet. He was also a pupil of César Franck in organ playing, and in consequence partakes of the artistic standpoint of both his teachers. Since 1903, he has been chief conductor of the Colonne concerts. Here he has continued the work of his prede-



cessor in acquainting his audiences with the orchestral literature of all countries and epochs including a generous attention to the music of his compatriots. Previously his remarkable versatility had claimed him as pianist, organist, teacher and composer. In the latter capacity, the work for which he has had the widest recognition is an oratorio, "The Children's Crusade," which was awarded the prize offered by the City of Paris in 1903. This work is broadly and deeply conceived, and both its technical mastery and its expressive qualities entitle it to high esteem. "The Children of Bethlehem" (1907) is scarcely less admirable. Two other choral works are "L'An Mil" (1897), and "La Nuit de Noël de 1870" (1896), which represents a Christmas night at the front during the war of 1870, in which the warlike refrains of the opposing forces give way to religious celebration. Pierné has also composed industriously for the stage: "La Coupe enchantée" (1895), "Vendée" (1897), following the lines of classic opera, "La Fille de Tabarin" (1901), more advanced in tendencies, and "On ne badine pas avec l'amour" based upon de Musset's play (1910). To the foregoing should be added incidental music for a number of dramas, among them "Yanthis" by Jean Lorrain, "Izeyl" by Armand Silvestre, "La Samaritaine" by Edmond Rostand, and "Ramuntcho"

by Pierre Loti. In his incidental music, Pierné has been quick to clothe the spirit and atmosphere of his subjects with varied and appropriate musical expression. He has also to his credit pieces for piano, for harp, a large number of songs, orchestral works and chamber music among which may be mentioned a sonata for violin and piano, and a trio for piano and strings. Such versatility of interests is of necessity inimical to the highest attainment, but as a choral composer and as a conductor Pierné has rendered distinct service to the musical art of his country.

Henri Rabaud (1873) has also manifested an unusual versatility of gifts. A conductor of long experience, he conducted the concerts of the Boston Symphony Orchestra during the season of 1918-19, at a critical period in its history, when he gave proof of high capacity, and of notable brilliancy in the interpretation of French music. In 1920, he was called to succeed Gabriel Fauré as director of the Paris Conservatory, and in this difficult executive position he has shown tact and an uncommon degree of efficiency. Rabaud was awarded the Prix de Rome in 1894 as a pupil of Massenet. Some of his teacher's facility in the handling of the orchestra and in keen perception of dramatic values are evident in the pupil, but Rabaud also differs very obviously in the nature of his musical individ-

uality. He first attracted attention with a short symphonic poem, "La Procession Nocturne" (1899), after the poem by Lenau, and which has been widely performed. Though simple in plan, it succeeds through its deftness of characterization, its charm of atmosphere and its musical coherence. A second symphony in E minor tends toward the academic in style and musical substance, but its mastery of symphonic problems is pronounced. A "Divertissement" on Russian themes for wind instruments, and an orchestral "Eclogue" after Virgil, continue the graceful style of "La Procession Nocturne." An oratorio, "Job," in its perception of dramatic opportunity leads Rabaud further afield into the domain of "modernistic" expression. Rabaud is a self-avowed reactionary in instrumental music, but becomes eclectic in opera. His first work for the stage, "La Fille de Roland," at once gave him the right to consideration as a dramatic composer. In 1914, the Opéra-Comique produced Rabaud's "Marouf, Savetier de Caire," in which the boldness of its style and the scintillant dissonances of his harmonic idiom took its audience by surprise. "Marouf," taken from "The Thousand Nights and a Night," is of necessity oriental in background, and thus places Rabaud in indirect descent from Ferdinand David. Its orientalism not only passes the scrutiny of the

archeologist for its accuracy and observance of correct detail, but it appeals through its brilliancy, atmosphere, illusion, its grace and its humor. The story of the poor cobbler who suffers shipwreck and is forced to live by his wits, and who at last succeeds in marrying a rich man's daughter through the timely intervention of a genie, has been set by Rabaud with conspicuous technical mastery, fantastic imagination and abundant invention. A sparkling ballet built upon oriental material is particularly meritorious. In "Marouf," Rabaud has adorned the best conservative traditions of French opera without sacrificing his individuality in the slightest, and it was eminently fitting that at the death of Leroux, the Institute welcomed him as a member. It would, indeed, be a pity if Rabaud's exacting task as director of the Conservatory should interfere with his productivity as a composer.

Among other pupils of Massenet may be recalled the names of Xavier Leroux (1863-1919), the composer of "Astarté," "La Reine Fiammetta" and other stage works; Paul Vidal (1861), conductor, teacher at the Conservatory, composer of a symphonic poem, "La Vision de Jeanne d'Arc" and several operas; Reynaldo Hahn (1874), perhaps best known for his "Chansons grises," to texts by Verlaine, and other lyrics, has produced an

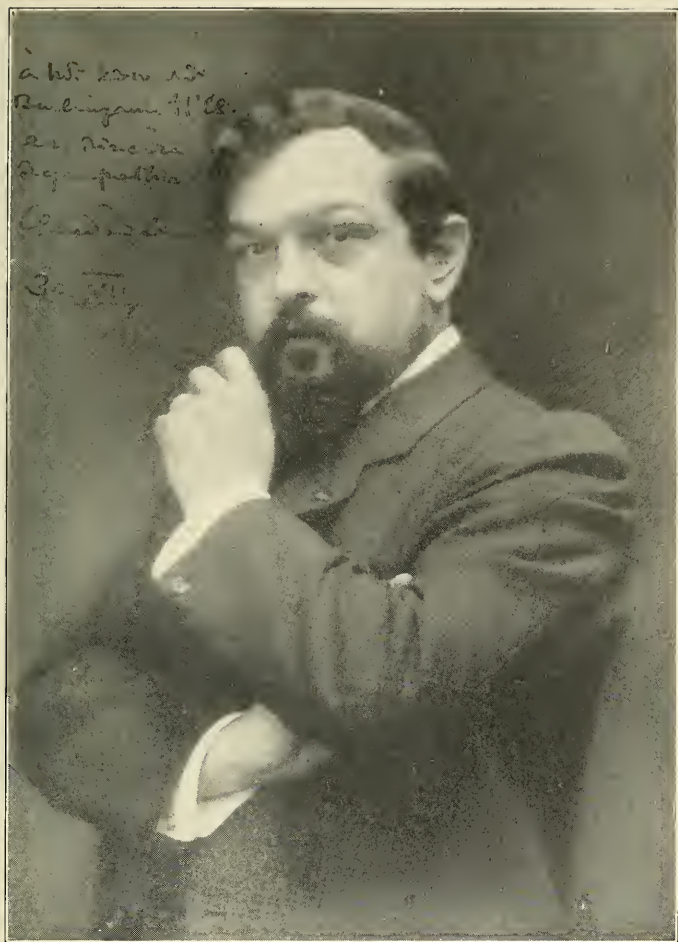
opera, "La Carmelite" (1902), and a ballet, "La Fête chez Thérèse" (1910). Julien Tiersot (1857), an active member of the National Society for several years, also a pupil of Massenet, has composed orchestral and vocal works, but he is far better known for his "restorations" of ancient music, as a collector of folk-song, as an organizer of musical societies and as an author on musical subjects. In addition, Henry Février, Ferdinand Leborne, Max d'Ollone and others should be added to the foregoing as instancing Massenet's pervading vitality as a teacher, especially in connection with opera, and emphasizing once more his distinctive place in French music.

Another young musician, who at the outset was unable to escape the influence of Massenet, if actually a pupil of Guiraud, was destined to crystallize indelibly in musical substance the traits and qualities of the Gallic mind and temperament of his generation. Claude Debussy was his name, and to him we now turn.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE KERNEL OF PROGRESS

WITHOUT exaggeration one may assert that since the time of Berlioz, the greatest genius in French music was Claude Debussy. If little direct comparison is possible between their artistic predilections, their temperaments and even their type of work, each at least may be regarded as the concrete representative of the spirit of his time, and both shaped the destinies of their contemporaries. The statement as to Debussy's genius should not tend to disparage the long line of individualities from Gounod or Saint-Saëns whose characteristics have been the object of the present survey. It does not sweep aside the distinctive achievements of each, nor does it belittle their respective contributions to the musical literature of France and of the world. In fact such collective contributions are indispensable to progress and to ultimate attainment. But there comes a moment in the evolution of musical art, or indeed any other, when one acute personality cuts the Gordian knot of technical pre-occupation with a blow at once critical and constructive. Without attempting esthetic compromise, he recognizes the defective details which have



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hindered his contemporaries and goes straight to his goal. The united consistency of esthetic attitude, technical assimilation and expressive result is supreme. Much of the limitation of an artist grows out of his environment, and is even derived from the most indubitable virtues of his individuality, which one could hardly wish changed. Saint-Saëns with all his versatility could not rid himself of the classic obsession. César Franck lived in a mystical world of his own, which on the whole one would not have wished altered. Chabrier was the incarnation of "le rire musical,"<sup>1</sup> and who would have wished it otherwise? Fauré, who has amply demonstrated his capacity for a progressive expansion in self-expression, was hampered by the confines of his lyrical outlook, yet aided tangibly in preparing for the very realization which Debussy attained. D'Indy, also possessing distinct power for self-development of a progressive type, suffered from one point of view in the inheritance of a belief in the limitless potentiality of academic forms. Duparc and Chausson were, from the nature of their gifts, upon the right path, but were tragically prevented by the accident of fate from achieving their just deserts. Bruneau had splendid courage and some insight, but lacked the musical spirit to

<sup>1</sup> See Robert Brussel, "Chabrier et le rire musical," *Revue d'Art Dramatique*, October 5 and 20, 1892.

vitalize his theories. Charpentier, not unconcerned with progress, could scarcely see beyond Montmartre. But Debussy came on the rising tide of symbolism and impressionism; he saw the futility of compromise with the academic; he was able to assimilate the steps, both technical and expressive, toward healthy progress made by his contemporaries, and expand these hints into a logical and serviceable idiom of his own. A test of Debussy's significance as a composer is to be found in the worldwide reaction of his innovations. No surer proof of the genuineness of an artist's discoveries may be had than the unconscious acknowledgment of imitation of his procedures. If to-day it is Stravinsky's or Schönberg's turn to furnish the stimulus to the young composer, there is evidence among Debussy's French colleagues of the potency of his spell. As is usually the case with all innovative geniuses, their style is evolved gradually from recognizable sources of absorption, and Debussy was no exception to this all-embracing rule.

Achille Claude Debussy was born at Saint-Germain-en-Laye, not far from Paris in the Île de France, August 22, 1862. His parents were unmusical. While visiting an aunt at Cannes in 1871, young Debussy was taught the piano by an Italian, Cerutti, who did not discern unusual ability in the boy. His father wished him to be a sailor. Debussy

made the acquaintance of Charles de Sivry, a brother-in-law of Verlaine, and a composer of operettas. De Sivry's mother, who afterwards became Madame de Mautet, was a pupil of Chopin. She became interested in Debussy, and declared that he must become a musician. She even taught him to such good effect that he entered the Paris Conservatory at the age of eleven. Here Debussy obtained many medals in various classes, but it is worthy of note that he who was later destined for such originality in harmonic style was lamentably deficient in this branch of theory as taught at the Conservatory. Upon entering Guiraud's composition class, however, Debussy made rapid progress. He brought his teacher a setting of Banville's comedy, "Diane au bois," but the shrewd musician, though perceiving the talent of his pupil, advised him to renounce originality and concentrate his efforts on winning the Prix de Rome. In the summer of 1879, Debussy made a trip to Russia in the capacity of domestic pianist to a Madame Metch, whose husband was a railway constructor. He formed a slight acquaintance with Balakirev, Borodin and Rimsky-Korsakov whose innovative and constructive qualities had at that time met with but scant recognition from their own countrymen. He did not see Mussorgsky, whose dramatic genius was later to affect his own. The most per-

manent impression which he retained was of the fantastic improvisatory art of the Russian gypsy musicians, whose performances seemed to point toward freer musical conceptions. After his return to Paris, continuing his studies under Guiraud, Debussy received the Prix de Rome in 1884 for his cantata, "The Prodigal Son."

At the Villa Médicis, Debussy had for companions the composers Pierné, Vidal, and the conductor Georges Marty, all pupils of Massenet. The director of the Villa was Hébert, a disciple of Ingres in painting, who played the violin in the same fashion as his master. Debussy used to play Mozart's sonatas for piano and violin with Hébert, but it is recorded that the latter sometimes played so out of tune that Debussy was obliged to transpose his part in order to keep up with him.

"Painters, architects and sculptors go to Rome," says Louis Laloy in his monograph on Debussy, "to listen to the lessons of its masterpieces. Musicians find silence there. Far from classes and concerts, they can at last hear their own thoughts."<sup>1</sup> Though keenly sensitive to the beauty of Italy, Debussy's stay at the Villa Médicis was chiefly

<sup>1</sup> Louis Laloy, *Claude Debussy*, p. 17. Paris: Dorbon Aîné, 1909. The conditions of the 'eighties no longer obtain in Rome since the rise of the new Italian school of instrumental composers, Casella, Malipiero, Respighi, Castelnuovo and Pizetti. Orchestral and chamber music concerts afford frequent opportunities to students.

valuable as an opportunity to formulate his individuality. From Rome he sent back to the Institute of Fine Arts in Paris the usual required "envois." They were: the first part of a setting of Heine's drama, "Almanzor," now lost; a suite, "Spring," for orchestra and chorus without text; "The Blessed Damozel," after the poem by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, for solos, chorus of women's voices and orchestra, not, however, definitely completed until after his return to Paris; and a "Fantaisie" for piano and orchestra, unpublished during its composer's lifetime, but now available in print. In accordance with the rules of the Institute some of these works were to be performed. Officials of the Institute objected to the choice of key, F sharp major, in the first part of "Spring," as being unplayable. If the learned academicians had examined the score thoroughly they would have discovered that the tonality of F sharp major was used in a relatively small proportion of the work. Debussy would not allow "The Blessed Damozel" to be performed alone, so the concert was cancelled.

During the years of poverty and struggle after his return from Italy, in which Debussy found himself slowly, he was liberally aided with financial support by Georges Hartmann, the music publisher, a co-founder of the Colonne concerts, who

had encouraged Massenet and de Castillon.<sup>1</sup> These years had formative experiences of import for Debussy. In 1889, he was greatly moved by performances of Wagner's "Tristan and Isolde," "The Mastersingers of Nuremberg" and "Parsifal" at Bayreuth. Soon after, a friend showed him Mussorgsky's opera, "Boris Godunov," in the original edition before the revisions of Rimsky-Korsakov. Its simple and direct dramatic methods were a revelation to him, and pointed the way to the future style of "Pelléas." In the following year Debussy returned to Bayreuth, but Wagner seemed over-sophisticated in comparison with Mussorgsky. The gulf between the Teutonic and the Gallic conception of dramatic art was now apparent, and Debussy remained permanently disillusioned.

The most fruitful impression of Debussy's apprentice period, however, came from quite another direction. As in the case of Chabrier, the real sources of his mature individuality sprang from the arts other than music. From 1885 onward the symbolist poet Stéphane Mallarmé had been gathering about him poets, painters, literary critics and an occasional musician. Gustave Vielé-Griffin, and

<sup>1</sup> Philip Hale relates that Debussy did not profit from the financial success of "Pelléas et Mélisande" in 1902. When in former years Hartmann gave Debussy money he took I O U's to save Debussy's pride. At Hartmann's death, his successors obliged Debussy to redeem these pledges. *Boston Symphony Orchestra Programme Book, 1905-06, p. 1315.*

Stuart Merrill were among the men of letters. Verlaine came occasionally and behaved like a spoilt child. Whistler looked negligently over albums at these meetings, on the watch for a chance to air his epigrams. In this assemblage of kindred spirits argument followed the recital of poems. The principles of symbolism and impressionism were freely discussed. In 1890, Debussy began to frequent these gatherings with the outcome that he conceived the idea of creating a style in music similar to the methods of impressionism. By avoiding academic "developments" of musical ideas, by relaxing some of the conventional indications of tonality, by using harmony largely as a means of coloristic effect, he obtained results strikingly analogous to those of impressionism in painting. Indeed, the entire history of Debussy's original attainment in music lies in the formulation and expansion of this original conception.

The first work in which Debussy attempted this revolutionary procedure was the now famous "Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun," suggested by Mallarmé's poem of similar title and composed in 1892. Its reception at a concert of the National Society, December 22, 1894, was somewhat equivocal, but Debussy had found his path, and was, moreover, engaged upon a far more iconoclastic demonstration of his new principles. During the

summer of 1892, in Flammarion's book-stall on the boulevard des Italiens he had chanced upon Maeterlinck's play, "Pelléas et Mélisande," recently published. It was instantly sympathetic to him, and Maeterlinck's authorization to use the play as an opera text was soon secured. Debussy spent over eight years on this work. His first sketches are dated October, 1893; the music crystallized slowly in moments of inspiration. During this time, Debussy also composed his String Quartet, several sets of songs, piano pieces as well as a highly important manifestation of his impressionistic theories, three "Nocturnes" for orchestra dating from 1899. "Pelléas et Mélisande" was produced at the Opéra-Comique, April 30, 1902, not without complicating circumstances. Maeterlinck was irritated because he had not been consulted as to the omission of several scenes from his play, also because his wife had not been cast as the heroine. In consequence he expressed the hope that the opera fail "noisily." The musicians of the orchestra were confounded by the novelty of Debussy's style. Moreover, the composer experimented with changes in orchestral effect almost to the moment of the dress rehearsal. Despite the differences of opinion in the audience, the adherents of Debussy carried the day. "Pelléas" continued to arouse acrid dissensions among the public



and musicians, but it was ultimately acknowledged that this opera had created the greatest sensation since Wagner. After the success of "Pelléas et Mélisande" Debussy continued the application of impressionistic principles to piano pieces, songs, orchestral works and the ballet. His methods varied according to the nature of the problem presented, but they remained fundamentally the same. From 1901 onward, Debussy acted as musical critic for "La Revue Blanche" and other publications, displaying keen insight, paradoxical views and originality of opinion, yet maintaining a consistent esthetic policy.<sup>1</sup> Debussy occasionally appeared as conductor of his own works, but not to their advantage. He lived a quiet and productive life up to his death, March 26, 1918, after several years of intense suffering due to an incurable malady.

Debussy sometimes voiced his opinions on music apart from his critical reviews. Interviewed by Paul Landormy in 1904 as to the traits and condition of French music, he made some illuminating remarks. "French music is clearness, elegance, simple and natural declamation; French music wishes first of all to give pleasure. Couperin, Ra-

<sup>1</sup> Debussy's articles in *La Revue Blanche* were collected and published under the title, "Monsieur Croche Anti-dilettante," by Dordon, Paris, 1921. It is said that Debussy softened some of his early opinions before republication.

meau; these are true Frenchmen." Thus Debussy reiterated the sympathy which these French masters of the eighteenth century inspire in many of his contemporaries. Debussy continued: "I am very fond of Massenet who understands the true rôle of musical art. Music should be cleared of all scientific apparatus. Music should seek humbly to give pleasure; great beauty is possible within these limits. Extreme complexity is the contrary of art. Beauty should be perceptible; it should give immediate joy; it should impose itself upon us, or insinuate itself without any effort on our part to grasp it. Look at Leonardo da Vinci, Mozart; these are great artists." In these opinions Debussy may seem to lean toward ironical paradox inasmuch as his musical idiom is technically both complex and subtle. On the other hand, his music bears out his maxims in that its beauty is "perceptible" if only the listener clear his mind of "all scientific apparatus." In fact the layman often understands and appreciates Debussy's music better than the musician because the latter stumbles over his preconceived professional prejudices.

Before the evolution of Debussy's musical individuality can be traced, or his concrete contributions to a progressive advance in musical expression can be considered, the succession of influences which he underwent must be reviewed. First there

is the pervading reaction of Massenet in the type of melodic invention, emotional background and general style, as clearly revealed in the prize cantata, "The Prodigal Son," the suite, "Spring," as well as in the early songs and piano pieces. After Debussy's return from Rome there are passing reflections in his piano music of Schumann and Chopin. There is also a suggestion of Grieg in the last movement of the String Quartet. The harmonic style, and more particularly the meditative poetic moods which Fauré indicates with such subtle precision, were a source of fruitful reflection on Debussy's part. It is difficult to fix any definite instances of imitation much less plagiarism in Debussy's music, but Fauré in these features of his style is incontestably the forerunner of the younger composer. Erik Satie, already mentioned in Chapter V as a pioneer of "modernism," played an important part in Debussy's evolution by revealing the potentialities of a freer conception of harmony. In his "Sarabandes" and "Gymnopédies," two of which Debussy orchestrated, in his "Sonneries" (or flourishes of trumpets) for the Order of the Rose-Croix, a group of mystical painters who strove to revive the Gothic spirit in a manner somewhat analogous to the Pre-Raphaelites in England, Satie formulated an original scheme of chord combination which was exceedingly stimu-

lating to Debussy. In his preludes to Sar Peladan's "Le Fils des Étoiles," a "Wagnérie Chaldéenne," Satie originated the use of harmony as a sort of decorative musical background, which led undoubtedly to the considerable expansion of this feature of harmonic suggestion in Debussy's mature music. As Debussy recognized, Couperin and Rameau helped him to reëmphasize the typical French traits of clarity, precision and stylistic economy, thus maintaining a point of contact with the past. The "Neo-Russian" composers Balakirev, Borodin and Rimsky-Korsakov exercised an indubitable stimulus upon Debussy both musically and orchestrally. It is hardly necessary to recall the reaction of Mussorgsky in connection with the simplification of dramatic style, or to reassert the powerful impetus toward a new musical style received at Mallarmé's evening receptions, culminating in the invention of musical "impressionism."

As is ever the case with genius, Debussy, having received these manifold impressions, assimilated them and made them his own through the progressive expansion of his individuality. Perhaps the most typical feature of his music, in which he typifies most obviously "the kernel of progress," lies in his harmonic style. This is at once varied, flexible and invariably adjusted to his expressive

purpose. Some understanding of the various elements in Debussy's harmonic idiom is so important in realizing the significance of his position as a composer, that a brief analysis of their nature must be attempted.

Debussy has been stigmatized as the inventor of the so-called whole-tone scale. It is often thought that he applied it indiscriminately to all his music. Nothing is further from the facts. Sir Hubert Parry<sup>1</sup> has pointed out that one of the earliest instances of the use of the chord from which this scale is formed, is to be found in the works of the seventeenth-century German, Heinrich Schütz. He employed these chords in a vocal composition to characterize "the ways of the ungodly." Liszt suggested this scale in the opening measures of his "Faust" symphony, composed in 1854. Dargomizhky in his opera, "The Stone Guest," after Pushkin, left unfinished at his death in 1869, uses the whole-tone scale freely to accompany the apparition of the stone statue in the last act. Rimsky-Korsakov and Borodin suggest the same scale in their songs. In French music itself, Chabrier gives more than a hint of the whole-tone scale in the third act of "Gwendoline" completed in 1885. Saint-Saëns founds the introduction of a witty

<sup>1</sup> *The Evolution of the Art of Music*, p. 144. New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1896.

Scherzo for two pianos (1889) on the same scale. D'Indy in the second act of "Fervaal" (1889-95) lends a mood of mystery to an incantation scene by employing the same harmonic means. Debussy himself anticipated his own later developments in a passage from his early suite, "Spring" (1887), as well as in the "Fantaisie" for pianoforte and orchestra (1889-90). Thus, Debussy is clearly not the originator of the whole-tone scale. But from these hesitating and embryonic essays he has fostered an instinct for its use that is far more searching than that of his predecessors. He employs this scale to better and more sensitive artistic purpose. He has sensed the moods in which it is appropriate. But that he also perceives its limitations and dangers may be recognized from the somewhat restricted employ it finds in his music. Following Debussy's lead in this expansion of the technical and expressive expansion consequent upon the use of this scale, d'Indy, Ravel, Dukas and Florent Schmitt and others have adapted this procedure to their own purposes.

Debussy has also surpassed his predecessors in the fertile suggestion of mood he has derived from the church modes. Herein possibly he follows the initiative of Erik Satie. That neither Debussy nor Satie were pioneers in this particular is obvious. Saint-Saëns was tempted by the resemblance be-

tween the principal theme in his C minor symphony and the "Dies Iræ" to quote the latter. Berlioz had done so before him in the last movement of the "Fantastic Symphony." In the finale of Saint-Saëns' same symphony, a "cyclical" modification of the principal theme is harmonized modally with striking effect. In opera, Gounod, Massenet, Bruneau and many others have obtained a telling contrast through alternating religious modal harmonies on the organ and a more profane idiom in the orchestra. In "The Song of the Bell," when pedantic critics of Wilhelm the master-founder cavil at his masterpiece and discredit reports of his death, d'Indy makes poignant use of a portion of the service for the dead as Wilhelm's body is brought in view. Fauré has frequently enlarged musical expression by means of modal treatment of harmonic style, both in his songs, and in his suite, "Pelléas et Mélisande." Recalling doubtless many of these familiar instances, Debussy employed a far more subtle and penetrating type of suggestion, not merely to secure a churchly atmosphere, but to attain a mood of gravity, of mystery and of unearthly character. Nor did he confine himself to a liberal presentation of modal harmony, but often blended with it a modernistic note.

If Fauré and Chabrier were conspicuously pioneers in obtaining effects full of sensuous charm

and expressive originality by connecting chords in a totally unorthodox manner,<sup>1</sup> Debussy built upon their foundations an harmonic edifice whose proportions indicate the systematized advance possible through a more liberal interpretation of basic principles. As a rule, the theorists are at least a generation behind the technical innovations of the composer. Beethoven had his chords "corrected" by Fétis; Chopin, whose harmonic idiom was not only characteristic of his genius, but served as a palpable stimulus to both Wagner and Liszt, was condemned by ignorant pedants for his "crude progressions." Wagner, undoubtedly the harmonic master of the nineteenth century, was the victim of merciless and uncomprehending criticism for his defiance of rule. Are the pedagogues more discerning than the historic figures of musical art as to the basic principles of harmony? It would seem difficult to prove this. So Debussy, who was unsuccessful in mastering the academic rules of harmony as a Conservatory student, penetrated their shortcomings as a revelation of harmonic truth, and proved in his music that violations of precept, if they advance musical expression, are not only justifiable, but may even possess intrinsic sensuous charm. He thus released composers from a theoretical bondage, and greatly broadened an

<sup>1</sup> A series of "seventh chords," often including "ninths" also.



essential medium of emotional expansiveness. If his innovations along these lines are too technical for the layman, their result is easily stated.<sup>1</sup> Debussy obtained new sources of beauty by formulating and legitimatizing exceptions to outworn precedent. In addition to the extension of a free system of chord connection, Debussy was also felicitous in an archaic suggestion of a primitive style, full of infractions of rule in its "consecutive fifths" and "octaves," but serviceable in the cause of atmosphere. In his later years, especially after the initiative of Ravel in his "Miroirs" for piano (1905), Debussy experimented in the idiom known as "polyharmony" or *polytonalité* (much in vogue to-day) in which chords or melodies from two or more keys are used simultaneously. The actual chronology of polyharmony is still somewhat obscure. M. Darius Milhaud, in an article published in "La Revue Musicale," has discovered an instance in an "Echo" by Sebastian Bach;<sup>2</sup> Mozart resorted to this curious harmonic expedience in "Eine Musikalische Spass," but obviously in order to attain a grotesque humor. There are hints of this idiom in Wagner's "Ring des Nibelungen" palliated by dramatic necessity. Béla Bartok, the

<sup>1</sup> Debussy employs sequences of "seventh," "ninth" and even "eleventh" chords with strikingly beautiful results.

<sup>2</sup> This article has previously been cited in Chapter V, p. 106.

Hungarian composer, published piano pieces in the late nineteenth century in which the two staves were often with different key signatures. Richard Strauss did much to advance the possibilities of polyharmony in "Salomé" (1905) and "Elektra" (1907), but here again the dramatic situations were his excuse. He had already reached the borderland of this system in his orchestral works "Don Quixote" (1897) and "Ein Heldenleben" (1898). But Stravinsky may be conceded to be the most consistent prophet of polyharmony despite Schönberg's labors in the cognate field of "atonality," music with no tonality system as its basis. In "Pétrouchka" (1911), "The Ceremonial of Spring" (1913) and later works he has greatly enlarged the possibilities of dramatic and emotional expression by means of warring tonalities. Debussy was undoubtedly led by Stravinsky, despite the earlier experiments by Ravel, just as Stravinsky in return had revealed in the introduction of the first act of "The Nightingale" (1910) an indubitable acquaintance with Debussy's Nocturne, "Nuages." In general, the more one considers Debussy's harmonic style, the more one is struck by its variety of scope, its elasticity and its adaptability to his expressive purpose.

But Debussy's signal expansion of harmonic horizons does not exist as an opportunity to con-

fute the theorists, nor to serve the historian as the pretext for a systematic analysis of its features. This expansion is significant, it is true, in that it clears the technical background of music of much needless and encumbering "scientific apparatus," but it is chiefly valuable because it enabled the artist to widen the boundaries of musical utterance, to enrich its substance with new shades of emotion, and thus to enter fresh fields of musical thought. Moreover, this liberation not only affected Debussy, but also reacted directly upon his compatriots and successors throughout a considerable portion of the civilized musical world. Herein lies a vital feature of Debussy's intrinsic and historic import.

To arrive at an adequate comprehension of the nature of Debussy, one must trace to some extent the successive steps in the development of his individuality. In the prize cantata, "The Prodigal Son," are to be found obvious tokens of that assimilation of environment normal to every music student. Massenet's melodic vein, his facile hints of atmosphere, are clear sources from which the young Debussy drew his inspiration. But coexistent with immaturity are potentialities of originality. There is a graphic pictorial illusion, somewhat akin to Watteau's subjects, in a vein so skilfully reflected a few years later in Fauré's songs, "Man-

doline," "Clair de Lune," and others. Azraël's air, the processional and ballet music have more than a premonition of later independence. The mastery of simple problems is achieved in a definite fashion far from the hesitancy or irresolution too often characteristic of the youthful artist. The suite, "Spring" (1887), reveals not only signs of progress, but a certain freshness of conception. The use of a chorus without text, for the first time since Berlioz' "Funeral March for Hamlet" (1848), almost as an orchestral adjunct, foretells a similar employ of a chorus of women's voices in the Nocturne, "Sirenes" (1899). It also serves as precursor for other later works, such as Dukas' "Ariane et Barbe-Bleue" (1905), Ravel's ballet, "Daphnis et Chloé" (1911), Florent Schmitt's "La Tragédie de Salomé" (1907), Albert Roussel's Third "Evocation" (1910-11), and the same composer's "Padmavati" (1914). In "Spring" also a piano is treated as an orchestral instrument with a flexibility hitherto unknown. It is true that d'Indy employed the piano as an orchestral instrument in "The Song of the Bell" (1879-84), in the scenes "Amour" and "Vision," that Saint-Saëns gave it a fairly prominent rôle in his C minor symphony (1886) and that d'Indy's "Symphony on a Mountain Air" (1886) treats the piano almost as a central figure. Debussy, at the distance of Rome, can scarcely have known

of the innovative symphonies of Saint-Saëns and d'Indy, and, moreover, his manipulation of the coloristic resources of the instrument were quite unheralded. Apart from these somewhat technical considerations, "Spring" shows an individual melodic invention, an atmosphere appropriate to his subject and an independent poetic background, all of which show an enlarged conception of his art. If these are still evidences of Massenet, there are passages like the following which foretell "Pelléas":

## Example VIII

Debussy, "Printemps," Second Movement. (1887.)

The musical score is presented in four staves. The top staff is a treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. It features a melodic line with a triplet of eighth notes. The second staff is a treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. It includes a dynamic marking *sfz* followed by a hairpin crescendo to *p*, and a triplet of eighth notes. The third staff is a treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. It includes a dynamic marking *sfz* followed by a hairpin crescendo to *p*, and a triplet of eighth notes. The bottom staff is a bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. It includes a dynamic marking *sfz* followed by a hairpin crescendo to *p*.



“The Blessed Damozel” (1887) for solos, women’s voices and orchestra, begun at Rome, but finished in Paris, contains far more pronounced indications of the future Debussy. It seems certain that the Pre-Raphaelite quality of the text stirred his imagination, and led to a more acute self-revelation. The use of modal harmony is an addition to other innovative harmonic effects, characteristic of his later style, — a rarefied atmosphere, the delicacy of the whole conception, and its impalpable musical self-expression. The “Fantaisie” for piano and orchestra (1889–90), less mature in some respects than “The Blessed Damozel,” undoubtedly did not satisfy its composer, for he withdrew it

after a final rehearsal for a National Society concert. To the critic it is valuable because it supplies unquestionable evidences of advance along certain lines. There are leanings toward the whole-tone scale; there are individual piano figures which prefigure the later piano piece, "Jardins sous la pluie" (1903); the poetic emotion of the slow movement foretells the intense sentiment of a similar section in the orchestral "Image" "Iberia" (1909). The work as a whole is held together structurally by an approximation of the "cyclical" principle of which there are more than hints in "Spring," and which Debussy employed successfully in the String Quartet (1893). There are also many detailed suggestions of growing individuality in various piano pieces and songs from 1887 to 1890, but all of these were emphatically crystallized in the "Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun" (1892) in which Debussy's impressionistic convictions were consciously embodied for the first time. Novelty in harmonic style, melodic invention, an unprecise yet vital atmosphere were combined to reveal a genuine and epoch-making personality. Individual traits are to be found in Debussy's String Quartet, the sets of songs entitled "Fêtes Galantes" (Verlaine), "Prose Lyriques" and "Chansons de Bilitis," just as portions of the "Ariettes oubliées" (1888, revised 1903) showed a marked advance over the

songs of 1890, but the Nocturnes for orchestra (1899) are in some respects unapproachable in Debussy's music for the balanced union of pictorial and musical suggestion. The separate titles "Clouds," "Festivals" and "Sirens" (in which a chorus of women's voices is appropriately used) show Debussy definitely committed to an impressionistic realization in music of subjects deftly adjusted to his imaginative perception, and in which he has coördinated fancy and a mastery of subtle musical means to an extent hitherto not attained in French music. Nor has Debussy been less uncannily apt in finding the perfect counterpart in orchestral procedure to illumine his musical ideas. Through a delicate subdivision of groups of instruments, and in combinations of these separate sections, he has explored new realms of sonority as yet unrealized in tone. The sources of these achievements may be readily discerned in embryo in pages of "Spring." The "Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun" continues these discoveries with increasing certainty, and the logical continuity of the Nocturnes along coloristic lines at once impressionistic and vital but reasserts the distinction of his orchestral innovations.

With the production of "Pelléas et Mélisande," when Debussy was nearly forty years old, the main constituents of his musical equipment, despite



some inevitable later enlargement of their scope, were virtually complete. He had gained his own radical technical qualities through the gradual individualization of his powers of expression, and in concentrating them according to his convictions. In contrast with the over-emphasis of Wagner's dramatic methods, Debussy's conceptions went to the opposite extreme. If Mussorgsky had pointed out the way, there is slight actual resemblance between the styles of "Boris" and "Pelléas" and no point of contact in their concrete musical speech. The low-scaled dramatic "values," the thin and unemphatic musical substance of this opera, caused consternation where it did not lull its listeners into slumber.<sup>1</sup> The absence of defined melody in the voice-parts and the tenuous orchestral accompaniment were wholly without precedent. Even Debussy's slight "development" of motives far exceeded Bruneau's previous departure from Wagnerian practice. The use of a type of declamation in the recitative reminiscent of the rhythm of the plain-chant of the Roman Church but added to the confusion. When, however, the acridity of discussion over "Pelléas" had somewhat subsided, it was agreed that Debussy had achieved a remarkable characterization in music of Maeterlinck's

<sup>1</sup> Romain Rolland gives a vivid account of the effect produced on Jean Christophe by this opera. See *La Foire sur la place*, pp. 91 et seq.

symbolic and shadowy drama. In fact such appealing personages had seldom been seen on the operatic stage. The guileless Mélisande, the victim of a catastrophe never explained, is discovered wandering in a deep forest by Golaud, an elderly widower. He marries her and brings her to his castle. His younger half-brother, Pelléas, is unwittingly drawn into an attachment for Mélisande which deepens irrevocably on both sides without mutual realization. Golaud, maddened by jealousy after a long strain of uncertainty, kills Pelléas, although he has no proof of his guilt. Mélisande, made ill by the shock of witnessing Pelléas' death, dies leaving a weakly infant. Baffled up to the very moment of her death, Golaud can never establish either Mélisande's innocence or guilt. This intensely human drama, filled with emotional subtleties, charged in its essence with spiritual struggle, was thus an ideal subject for Debussy's impressionistic and impalpable art.

Debussy began his music with the duet in the fourth act.<sup>1</sup> Given this hint, the analyst may possibly discover here a slightly less mature idiom than in the rest of the opera. Otherwise it is astonishing that a work which occupied its composer for more than eight years, when his personality was maturing with every composition, should have

<sup>1</sup> Louis Laloy, *Claude Debussy*, p. 28.

yet been able to achieve such uniformity in texture as a whole. As "Pelléas" contains in outline the sum of his harmonic and orchestral individuality, so does it also reach nearly all the aspects of his musical expression. With an extraordinary fidelity he has transcribed every shade of emotion, each character and each suggestion of background in Maeterlinck's drama. Now, after more than twenty years since its first performance, Debussy may still be acknowledged to have delineated Mélisande, the childlike and unconscious victim of fate; Golaud, stung by impulse to commit a rash act, overcome by remorse at the consequences of his jealous folly; the ardent Pelléas overcome by forces whose might he little suspected; the old King Arkel and Yniold, the artless child, with a magic discernment, a matchless and spiritual insight. The scenes of Mélisande greeting Pelléas; her song in the tower followed by her duet with Pelléas; Golaud's attempted intimidation of Pelléas by showing him the gloomy caverns of the castle; and the tragic termination of the fourth act, where alone Debussy rises to forceful musical utterance, are shining instances of felicitous dramatic strokes. Nothing in all operatic literature can exceed the moment of Mélisande's death. The music is almost non-existent, yet it suffices to suggest the isolation of the human soul with a poign-

ancy that is unexampled. It is no exaggeration to state that since "Tristan and Isolde" no opera had appeared in which drama and music were so intimately associated, in which the music not only revealed the characters of the drama, but supplemented in ineffable fashion their moods as well as their thoughts. Even more striking is the manner in which the spiritual undercurrent of Maeterlinck's play has been interpreted musically. Not the least element in Debussy's triumph was the minute yet flexible dissection of the resources of the orchestra to emphasize and refine upon the inner suggestion of the music with a concentrated subtlety and the avoidance of superfluity in sonority. Remarkable as Debussy's previous achievements had been in this direction, he surpassed all of them in the novel finesse of "Pelléas." Debussy never finished another opera to his satisfaction; "Pelléas et Mélisande" remains unique. He worked long over dramatizations of two stories by Poe, "The Devil in the Belfry" and "The Fall of the House of Usher," and also at a version of the legend of Tristan. Whether he would have continued the dramatic idiom of "Pelléas" is open to question. Assuredly Debussy solved the problem of evolving a musical style appropriate for the setting of Maeterlinck's drama, and the French stage is the richer by a masterpiece. Except for the general

hints toward a simpler dramatic style afforded by "Boris," upon which far too great stress has been laid, since its reaction never affected its musical material, "Pelléas" is entirely free from foreign influence. Its music is exclusively Gallic and Debussyan; this work marks the arrival of a definitive independence of French opera.

After "Pelléas," Debussy continued the application of impressionistic methods with intensified conviction to various fields of musical endeavor. His enrichment of piano literature was perhaps the most notable. Here, too, at first, the results were scarcely indicative of later attainment. Two Arabesques (1888), graceful pieces with little decisive individuality, are markedly less characteristic than "The Blessed Damozel" which preceded them by a year. Four detached pieces composed in the year 1890, "Valse romantique," "Rêverie," "Mazurka" and "Danse," evoke in slight degree the distinct personality shown in the "Fantaisie" for piano and orchestra which somewhat antedates them. The "Suite Bergamasque," also belonging to 1890, contains, however, far more definite premonitions of a later style, together with other traits which are relatively negative. The prelude exemplifies this neutrality with a curious fortuitous resemblance to portions of the "Preislied" from "The Mastersingers," almost the sole instance of a

Wagnerian reflection in Debussy's music, followed by several measures that approximate phrases in Fauré's song, "Clair de Lune," in a dangerous fashion. The "Menuet" and the final "Passepiéd" from this Suite are almost the first examples of his predilection for the manner of the eighteenth century, although colored in his own fashion and with his personal harmonic background. "Clair de Lune," now close to becoming hackneyed, is perhaps the prototype of an atmospheric presentation of an aspect of nature, in which Debussy shone during the years of his maturity. As a whole, the "Suite Bergamasque" may be regarded as an evidence of transition from a stage of relative insipidity to one of indisputable originality. A "Petite Suite" (1894) for piano duet is again far less mature than the string quartet of the year previous. It is somewhat unsubstantial, perhaps owing to the limitations inherent in pieces for this medium of expression, although it exhibits an adequate realization of its separate titles and no little concrete musical charm. After an interval of seven years, during which the composition of "Pelléas" was well advanced, "Pour le piano" (1901), "Prélude," "Sarabande" and "Toccatà" mark a long step in advance toward a later idiom. If the "Prélude" is not free from suggestions of Bach, its virile second subject is most characteristic of Debussy, and its pianistic figures

are brilliant and forceful. The "Sarabande" is not without analogies with those of Satie, in that it presents a modernized version of the classic form in free harmonization. Debussy has fused the contrary tendencies with an adroit persuasiveness. The "Toccata," which closes this set, in view of certain technical procedures reminds one of Domenico Scarlatti, the gifted son of a most distinguished father, but its musical contents again combine the spirit of the eighteenth and twentieth centuries. Throughout "Pour le piano" Debussy is obviously finding his way, not only in greater freedom of technical writing for the instrument, but in the directness and personal tinge of his musical ideas. In the "Estampes" (1903) Debussy has definitely reconciled his impressionistic aspirations with his personal idiom in piano style. The first of these "Pagodes" employing the pentatonic scale is said to have been inspired by the Cambodian dances seen at the Paris Exposition of 1900. It imitates a new and distinct type of exoticism, not without temptation for some of Debussy's younger contemporaries, and is at the same time characteristic of its creator. "Evening in Grenada" which follows constitutes another phase of exoticism. It is Debussy's first essay in a Spanish idiom, if eight years later than Ravel's "Habanera" (1895) for two pianos, later included in his "Spanish Rhapsody."

sody" for orchestra. Like Chabrier's "España," and even Lalo's "Spanish Symphony" for violin and orchestra, it is Spain seen with a Frenchman's eye, but none the less it is music of fanciful reverie full of color, engaging harmonic and musical substance. The last number of the "Estampes," "Gardens under the Rain," built on a French folk-song, "Nous n'irons plus au bois," later utilized in Debussy's orchestral "Image," "Rounds of Spring," vitalizes still more aptly a vivid impressionistic treatment of its subject with an imaginative use of his new-found pianistic individuality. At once brilliant and poetic this piece concludes a set with high promises for the future which Debussy was destined amply to fulfil.

"Masques" and "L'Isle joyeuse" (1904) continue the advance of the "Estampes." They are on a larger scale than anything Debussy had attempted for the piano; a conspicuous feature lies in their firmly knit structure and their logical development of musical ideas. "Masques," of considerable technical difficulty, portrays a fantastic and wayward mood, and abounds in rhythmic subtleties. "L'Isle joyeuse," likewise difficult, is alive with imaginative vitality and exuberant emotion. Both pieces exhibit a steady progress in pianistic originality. Two sets of "Images" (1905 and 1907) show still more skill in treating impressionistic subjects



with poetic sensibility. "Reflets dans l'eau," "Cloches à travers les feuilles" and "Poissons d'or" are particularly vivid examples of the coördination of sensitive observation and musical imagery. The analogies which these pieces present with Monet's canvases is very striking. "Hommage à Rameau," sober and austere, records impressively Debussy's admiration for the French master in a blending of the styles of their respective centuries. Again these two sets of pieces record a still further advance in fine shades of musical expression and an original treatment of the piano. "The Children's Corner" (1908) adds to Debussy's more customary moods that of mature transcription of child-life viewed with a touch of humor. "Jimbo's Lullaby," "Serenade for the Doll" and "Golliwog's Cakewalk" are especially noteworthy miniatures. In the latter piece, Debussy presents a Gallicized version of the music of negro minstrels. Two sets of preludes, each numbering twelve (1910 and 1913), contain perhaps the most comprehensive exposition of Debussy's pianistic standpoint. In some of these one feels that he almost exceeds the legitimate province of musical impressionism, but in general the dominant note is one of a vital realization of their titles. In them he touches upon various aspects of nature, "Le vent dans la plaine," "Les collines d'Anacapri," "Des pas sur la neige,"

“Ce qu’a vu le vent d’Ouest.” He achieves a vivid Spanish atmosphere in “La Puerta del Vino,” a touching simplicity in “La fille aux cheveux de lin” and “Bruyères.” There are several imaginative subjects of distinctive poetry such as “Danseuses de Delphes,” “Voiles,” “Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l’air du soir” (from Baudelaire), “La Danse du Puck,” and “La terrasse des audiences de clair de lune.” “La Cathédrale engloutie,” based on an old French legend, attains almost epic proportions. Debussy here also returns to the negro idiom in “Minstrels” and “General Lavine,” pieces of inimitable drollery. “Feux d’artifice,” the concluding number of the second book, forms a vividly impressionistic climax, concluding with a fragment of “La Marseillaise” treated polyharmonically. These preludes, taken as a whole, crown Debussy’s maturity as a piano composer, and form a summary of the technical and expressive features of his idiom. It is perhaps indicative of Debussy’s attitude toward descriptive music that the titles of these preludes are printed at the end and not at the beginning.

Six “Epigraphes” for piano duet (1915), a “Berceuse Héroïque” (1915), three pieces for two pianos, “En blanc et noir” (1916), and twelve studies (1916) partake more or less of the decline in invention, owing doubtless to Debussy’s failing

health, which other works of this period share. Here and there are flashes of his former self, as in "Yver vous n'êtes qu'un villain" (motto from a poem by Charles d'Orléans which Debussy had set for mixed voices) from "En blanc et noir." The studies, apart from any question of their musical interest, are invaluable as technical aids to master Debussy's piano music.

Thus, content at the outset with an attitude of relative conventionality, Debussy gradually evolved a pianistic style which was flexible, brilliant and poetic, but above all original. From the diverse standpoints of new technical figures, a fresh treatment of sonority through a distinctive use of the pedals and expressive effects, it was profoundly innovative. Debussy did not aspire to rival the orchestra with his piano, as did Liszt. He was content rather to respect its natural limitations. This did not prevent him from enriching the resources of the instrument along the lines of his self-imposed restrictions as no one had done since Chopin. Indeed, the analogy between their methods is direct. As in Debussy's orchestral style, his extension of *finesse* in expression was the main issue. If the criticism is made that he overdid this, the answer is to be found in the new scope of musical thought to be found in his works. If Fauré must be credited with having begun the rebirth of

French piano music, Debussy has enlarged tremendously upon Fauré's foundations. Considering French composers alone, Debussy's piano music constitutes the most genuine achievement since the days of Couperin and Rameau. When we add to this the fresh incentive towards piano composition which reacted upon Ravel, Dukas, de Sévérac, Louis Aubert, Florent Schmitt and others, Debussy's position becomes the more unmistakable.

As might be expected, Debussy passed through a similar evolution as a song composer. His first song, "Nuit d'Étoiles," composed at the age of fourteen, shows no trace of his later individuality. M. Octave Séré<sup>1</sup> records that the accompaniment figure contains the notes of Mélisande's theme, although the resemblance is probably fortuitous. "Fleur des Blés" (1878), on the contrary, manifests a sensibility characteristic of its composer. The three songs belonging to 1880 are not indicative of progress, although it is worthy of mention that in "La Belle au bois dormant" Debussy quotes the folk-song, "Nous n'irons plus au bois" which he again utilized in "Jardins sous la pluie" (1903) and the orchestral "Rondes de Printemps" (1909). Nevertheless, according to M. G. Jean-

<sup>1</sup> *Musiciens français d'aujourd'hui*, p. 141. Paris: Mercure de France.

Aubry, Debussy had already revealed his true nature. In an essay upon Debussy included in "La Musique et les Nations"<sup>1</sup> he says: "The truth is that Claude Debussy in 1879 was already Claude Debussy. I only wish for proof the song 'L'ombre des arbres dans la rivière,' which is to be found in the collection 'Ariettes oubliées,' but which was composed about 1880, and of which the distinctly Debussyan character cannot be denied." M. Jean-Aubry then cites M. Guiraud's advice when Debussy brought him a setting of Banville's comedy, "Diane au bois."<sup>2</sup> If the palpable approach of individuality may be further discerned in the songs, "Romance" and "Les Cloches" (1887), to Bourget's poems, the next collection "Ariettes oubliées" (1888, but revised in 1903), bears upon every page the positive details of an original manner at a period when Debussy was still hesitating in his piano music. Since it is well-nigh impossible to unearth a copy of the first edition of these songs, it is difficult to determine how far these signs of individuality are the result of revision. It is said that this process was mainly one of simplification as to the accompaniment. At all events, the basic conception of these songs could scarcely have been altered, and it is precisely here

<sup>1</sup> G. Jean-Aubry, *La Musique et les Nations*, Les Editions de la Sirène, p. 50. Paris.

<sup>2</sup> See the present chapter, p. 191.

that Debussy established his permanent conception of the song-form. The texts of the "Ariettes" are by Verlaine, and in "C'est l'extase," "L'ombre des arbres," "Green," and above all in "Chevaux de Bois," Debussy presents himself as a dangerous rival to Fauré for the vivid yet subtle manner in which he interprets the spirit and sentiment of the poems. Debussy was on the whole less happy in the "Cinq poèmes de Beaudelaire" (1890), although "Le Jet d'eau" and "La Mort des amants" are respectively filled with poetic and poignant sentiment. "Le Balcon," despite its moments of charm, seems unnecessarily complex and ill-coördinated. But despite the drawbacks of some of these songs they form a distinct transition to later vocal works. Other aspects of progress are in evidence in various songs which Debussy composed in 1890, but "Mandoline" to Verlaine's poem, which Fauré set during the same year, far outranks its companions through its irresistible spontaneity and its vivid picturing of the mood of its text.

With the first set of "Fêtes Galantes," chosen also from Verlaine, Debussy applied the principles of an impressionistic method to the song. The accompaniment is reduced to a minimum of suggestion, the voice part is usually a rhythmic chanting of the text rather than a concrete melody. "En

sourdine" and "Fantoques," the first all poetic sensibility, the second delightfully fantastic, are graphic transcriptions in tone of the essence of Verlaine. "Clair de Lune," on the other hand, is frankly inferior to Fauré's song in the same text composed five years previously. In the "Fêtes Galantes" as a whole, however, Debussy's conception of the song was becoming still more individualized. The "Proses lyriques" (1893), for which Debussy wrote his own texts, constitute a retrograde step from the purely musical standpoint. In respect to enlargement of atmospheric scope and of harmonic progress they maintain a steady advance. More than once they contain premonitions of the style of "Pelléas." The "Chansons de Bilitis," selected from Pierre Louys' volume of poems of the same title, return to the concise methods of the "Fêtes Galantes." "La Flûte de Pan," by its modal harmonies invokes not the atmosphere of the Church, but the pagan spirit of Greece. Impalpable yet definite, it contains the essence of Debussy's poetic insight. "La Chevelure," one of Debussy's most passionate songs, reveals an extraordinary human depth through its reticence. "Le tombeau des Niades," though full of charm, does not reach the level of inspiration so evident in the other songs of this set. In a second collection of "Fêtes Galantes" (1904) Debussy

continues the manner of the first and the "Chansons de Bilitis." "Les Ingenus" and "Le Faune" are particularly felicitous. Debussy's genuine sympathy for the earlier French poets, as well as musicians, dictated the choice of texts for the "Trois Chansons de France," by Villon, Charles duc d'Orléans, and Tristan l'Hermite. Here he reproduces the simple directness of the lyrics without entirely sacrificing the harmonic subtleties of his own musical idiom. Even more finely fibred in the union of two centuries at once remote and akin are the "Chansons" (1909) for mixed chorus without accompaniment. In each, "Dieu! qu'il la fait bon regarder," "Quand j'ai ouy le Tabourin" and "Yver vous n'estes qu'un villain" he has fused inimitably the spirit of the old French *chanson* with his own twentieth-century sensibility. The "Trois Ballades de François Villon" (1910) again realize this deft intermingling of past and present. Thus the "Ballade de Villon à son amie" is at once quaintly simple and poignant in its expression of anguish at the perfidy of his mistress. The "Ballade que Villon fait à la réquête de sa mère pour prier Nostre Dame" achieves its churchly sentiment through a discreet suggestion of modal harmony. The "Ballade des Femmes de Paris," by its infectious gaiety attains a vein of exuberance not common in Debussy. "Le Promenoir des Amants,"



poems by Tristan l'Hermite, belonging to the same year, also illustrates his firm conviction as to the inspiration to be derived from the older poets. Within the "Trois Poèmes de Mallarmé" (1913) Debussy returned to the source of his first work in the impressionistic manner. Of these "L'Éventail" is particularly adroit.

In estimating Debussy's position as a song composer, the work of the pioneers in the French song, Fauré and Duparc, should be recalled for its guidance exerted upon the younger composer. The contributions of Chabrier and Chausson also formed a patent example. The unconventionality of the one and the tragic melancholy of the other undoubtedly played their parts in the crystallizing of his lyric methods. Debussy never attempted the expansive mood so characteristic of Duparc in "L'Invitation au voyage" or in "Phydilé," both songs of large dimensions. He made no effort to record as wide a scope of emotion as did Fauré. Even the number of poets he set was restricted in comparison with those which appealed to Fauré. Thus at the outset it should be acknowledged that Debussy limited the range of vocal expression. Within a restricted circle of moods, however, he differentiated new shades of lyric emotion, and conquered realms of poetic vision which had eluded his older contemporaries. While Fauré at-

tained distinction through his masterly rendering of Verlaine's verses, Debussy none the less surpassed him at times in the searching individuality of his insight into the sentiments of the same poet. Indeed, despite some memorable exceptions, the balance is in favor of the younger composer. To the song he brought the same emotional and coloristic profit from reducing the musical background in the song to a minimum of material as also in the case of "Pelléas" and in the piano and orchestral works. But this typically Gallic economy of resource did not prohibit an intensification of lyric values which constitutes the essence of his gift as a song composer. Here, then, as in other fields he reiterated the basic esthetic dogmas of his race. In the reflection of distinctive poetic utterance from Villon and Charles d'Orléans through Baudelaire, Bourget, Verlaine and Mallarmé; in the fineness and penetrating subtlety of his musical means, Debussy stands beside those of larger emotional content through his persistent reëchoing of the national spirit.

As a rule, chamber music exercises little seduction upon the colorist. Debussy, while exemplifying the principle, also established the exception through the qualities of a few works. The String Quartet (1893) belongs to a small group of its class which have upheld the reputation of French

chamber music since César Franck. This quartet, composed after the prelude to "The Afternoon of a Faun" retains characteristics anterior to it. Still Debussy mastered a twofold problem, that of applying his ideas to stringed instruments, and of remaining independent of the classic tradition as to manner and detail. It also offered a more extended instance of his practice in respect to the "cyclical" principle, which he had attempted vaguely in the suite, "Printemps," and more concretely in the *Fantasia* for piano and orchestra. The theme of the Scherzo is derived from the chief theme of the first movement. The main idea of the trio is likewise obtained from the Scherzo theme. In the last movement an episode is constructed on an amplification of the initial theme of the first movement.<sup>1</sup> By this means Debussy unified the separate movements without a slavish adherence to method. The first movement contains some curious irregularities in the treatment of form, but these do not in reality obscure the continuity, the vigor and brilliancy of the movement as a whole. The Scherzo is scintillating, dextrous in the treatment of strings, and rhythmically engaging. The short slow movement is poignant and appealing in its melodic vein. The *Finale*, not without a hint of Grieg for a few meas-

<sup>1</sup>The processes involved are technically termed *diminution* and *augmentation*, the same notes in lesser or greater time-value respectively.

ures, maintains the high level of the work throughout. Indeed, this quartet, with that by Ravel and the second quartet by d'Indy, is one of the few conquests of this difficult medium since those of Brahms and Franck. In a Rhapsody for clarinet and piano (1910), and more especially in a "Petite Pièce" for the same combination, Debussy has treated the clarinet with sympathy and insight.

In his later years, Debussy planned "Six Sonates pour divers instruments, par Claude Debussy, musicien français." Thus he offered tribute to the French composers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and wished to affirm his kinship with them. He did not live to complete the set. Of these a sonata for violoncello and piano (1915), one for flute, viola and harp (1916) and one for violin and piano (1916-17) were published. These works were doubtless intended as a liberal interpretation of the spirit of the older sonata, rather than an approximation of the classic convention. At all events, the musical invention of these last works as a whole show the ravages of a fatal malady. The sonata for flute, viola and harp abounds in unusual and felicitous combinations of sonority. That for violin and piano displays whimsical moods sometimes approaching the archaic, often audaciously contemporaneous in musical effect. In these two sonatas at least illness could not entirely submerge the creative spirit.

Among Debussy's remaining orchestral works, the next in chronological order are the Dances ("Danse sacrée," "Danse profane") for chromatic harp<sup>1</sup> and string orchestra (1904). These illustrate their titles admirably, and only the relative disuse outside France of the instrument for which they are written prevents their being more widely known. "La Mer" (1903-05), three symphonic sketches for orchestra, constitute an opportunity for mild controversy among critics. M. G. Jean-Aubry considers "La Mer" "*une œuvre capitale.*" Despite the imaginative and forceful qualities of this work, it is open to question whether the descriptive titles of these sketches are not somewhat ambitious for a purely impressionistic method. The most successful is of necessity the least realistic, "Jeux des Vagues," in which Debussy is charmingly fantastic and highly imaginative. In the others, "De l'aube à midi sur la mer," and "Dialogue du Vent et de la Mer," despite many delightful moments and even impressive episodes, he is less convincing. In 1909, Debussy published a third series of "Images," this time for orchestra, "Gigues," "Iberia" and "Rondes de Printemps." "Gigues," rather wayward in mood, and less interesting in musical material, has made little headway in France or out of it. "Rondes de Printemps,"

<sup>1</sup> The ordinary harp is *diatonic*.

in which Debussy employs the folk-song, "Nous n'irons plus au bois," for the third time,<sup>1</sup> with all sorts of ingenious devices, is a *tour de force* of the imagination without any very substantial musical basis. It is, however, often graceful, delicately poetic, and contains passages of indubitable inspiration. "Iberia," from its title<sup>2</sup> reverts to a Spanish idiom in Debussy's individual version thereof. By its maturity of expression, glowing color and variety of sentiment it attains the peak of its composer's impressionistic practice. If at times the treatment of themes in the first portion seems over-sophisticated rhythmically, there is no gain-saying the originality of its conception as a whole. The second section, "The perfumes of the night," constitutes one of Debussy's most remarkable realizations of a mood of intense human poetry, of surpassing poignancy. The third part, "Morning on a Fête Day," is a masterly reflection of popular merry-making replete with graphic humor and fantastic vitality. If in some respects "Iberia" does not show in the same degree that sensitive coördination of musical material and impressionistic subject so evident in the "Nocturnes," it does not yield to the latter in its large outlines and the picturesque imagery of its musical thought.

<sup>1</sup> Debussy had previously used this folk-song in the song "La Belle au bois dormant" and in the piano piece "Jardins sous la pluie."

<sup>2</sup> The old name for Spain.

In 1911, Debussy composed an elaborate score for chorus and orchestra to accompany the stage presentation of Gabriele d'Annunzio's "Le Martyre de Saint Sébastien." According to M. Émile Vuillermoz, the work itself was threatened from the first with martyrdom.<sup>1</sup> The rehearsals progressed with difficulty; the choruses were placed too far from the orchestra; it was a precarious matter to adjust music and action. At the very moment of production Catholics were warned that their presence might involve excommunication. After surmounting incredible obstacles a superb performance was given. Since then, the work has failed of proper presentation. In concert-form the music suffered from the absence of a dramatic background. A suite arranged from the score fared even worse. During the summer of 1922, "Le Martyre de Saint Sébastien" was repeated at the Paris Opéra. So inadequate a provision was made for rehearsals that André Caplet, the conductor, resigned as a gesture of protest. Thus, in the words of M. Vuillermoz: "'Le Martyre de Saint Sébastien' is a masterpiece which has not yet been revealed. It is wholly to be discovered."<sup>2</sup> To write of a work which relies so much upon the intimate association of action and music from acquaintance with the

<sup>1</sup> *Musiques d'aujourd'hui*, p. 175 et seq. Paris: G. Crès et Cie, 1923.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 182.

orchestral score and piano arrangement alone is to invite error. Yet such examination discloses the mystical and exalted atmosphere of Debussy's music as well as the remarkable and original effects he drew from an ingenious treatment of the chorus. To venture further would be hazardous.

Given Debussy's dramatic sense and his elastic imagination, it was not to be supposed that he would resist the temptation to turn toward the ballet, especially with the matchless company of M. de Diaghilev in Paris. Accordingly he composed three, "Jeux," "La boîte à joujoux," and "Khamma," works not without defect, but characteristic of his best qualities. "Jeux" (1912), on an inconsequential scenario by Nijinsky, contains music that is perhaps over-elaborated considering the nature of its theme. It is none the less full of subtlety of invention, no little ironic humor, and offers much poetic and sensitive detail. "La boîte à joujoux" (1913), a ballet for children, with scenario and inimitable pictures by M. André Hellé, enters a new dramatic vein perhaps faintly foreshadowed in "The Children's Corner." In place of a mature poetic observation of child-life, however, this ballet is pervaded by a spirit, sometimes mock-heroic, often naïvely humorous, well befitting its subject. The action revolves around a box of toys whose adventures are echoed in music



where parody and poetical feeling combine in the most singular manner. "Khamma" (1912) on a scenario by Maud Allen and W. L. Courtney is a striking conception whose dramatic music is characterized by invention, forceful and poignant emotion. Khamma, an Egyptian dancer, saves her country at a time of peril from an invading army by dancing in the temple before the statue of the God Amun-Ra. She wins his favor, but dies from exhaustion while the God turns the tide of battle toward victory for the Egyptians. In "Khamma" the dramatic possibilities of the situations urged Debussy toward a new directness of expression. The surge of battle impelled him to employ "poly-harmony" to an extent hitherto untried by him. The dances are vividly illustrative of varying moods, and grow naturally out of one another. When in the gray dawn the high-priest discovers Khamma's body and blesses it as the distant trumpets proclaim victory, Debussy achieves a miracle of suggestion with the simplest means. In these three diverse works he gave fresh glimpses of his dramatic insight.

If we consider Debussy's work as a whole it is not difficult to assign reasons for his preëminence. It is due primarily to his intrinsic musical gifts — his capacity for sheer invention. To discuss in detail the limitations of his capacity in this direction

is beside the point, since it has been shown that these did not bar him from distinction in every field he attempted. His extraordinary progress in evolving a new harmonic idiom, his unflinching adjustment of style to his expressive problem, are also large factors in the results he attained, but these do not obscure his primitive musical gift. But these considerations do not wholly account for his evident genius. Sebastian Bach assimilated the entire heritage of the contrapuntal forms, the Passion Music, the church cantata and the suite from his predecessors and contemporaries, but knew how to mould them to the service of his own musical speech. Beethoven similarly expanded the framework of the classical sonata to serve his subjective ends. Wagner evolved the music-drama to suit his comprehensive purposes. Debussy was fortunately gifted with an instinct to push aside the "scientific apparatus" of music. He realized that the way to the future lay in the inherent expressiveness of music apart from academic concepts. The inheritance of the Renaissance had not passed to the French nation for nought. He reverted to its spirit, fell in line with the past ages, and then had the discernment to recognize that impressionism offered the perfect counterpart to his musical thought. He did not use impressionistic method to obscure the purport of his music,

as Richard Strauss overlaid literature on music, but rather to accentuate its essence and transfigure it. Thus, by a combination of instinct and judgment he unconsciously brought to realization "the kernel of progress." With the passing of time, the dangers of intensification of musical emotion, the pitfalls of *finesse*, the shortcomings of over-sophistication in musical procedure are increasingly apparent. Even now, a clearer estimation of the relative value of each of Debussy's works is possible than hitherto. His failures and the passages of less enduring fibre are plain. But it is so with all the greatest masters. The empty pages in the music of Bach, Beethoven, Schubert, Brahms and Wagner pile up with the decades, but the main trend of their message is as unmistakable as ever. The best of Debussy, similarly, assumes a relative but undeniable position. He may be considered a supremely representative type of Gallic art. It has been pointed out that imitation of a composer's manner is not necessarily indicative of his significance, since the mediocre are copied as well as the best. Nevertheless, Debussy's world-wide reaction upon his time is not the least of his laurels.

## CHAPTER X

### FRUITS OF IMPRESSIONISM

AMONG the French composers who have adapted the general features of Debussy's impressionistic methods to the service of their own individuality, no one has attained a higher position than Maurice Ravel. During the last fifteen years or so his position has been subject to a series of readjustments in the critical mind. At first he had to share with Debussy in the current misunderstanding as to the aims of musical impressionism, as well as in its doubtful legitimacy as a form of musical art. The death of Debussy brought a juster realization of the worth of his music. Consequently Ravel benefited in a like manner from the more general acceptance of the work of his older contemporary. With the rise to notoriety of the so-called "Group of Six," and the drastic assertions made by its members announcing the passing of impressionism and all those who practiced it, Ravel's music again received a favorable revaluation from those who were not in sympathy with the younger iconoclasts. Indeed, as a result of their revolutionary methods, Ravel, on account of his extension of the principles of impressionism, though still productive, is fast as-



i. Edward Burlingame Hill  
with revision  
Maxine Reed  
September 1966



suming in company with Debussy some of the aspects of a classic.

Amidst these fluctuations of censure and praise, it is diverting to recall a heated discussion as to the merits and defects of Ravel's music called forth by a performance of his "Histoires naturelles" in 1907. Henri Gauthiers-Villars, a critic whose acumen, breadth of view and insight are beyond question, presented excellently some of the opposing viewpoints in an article, "Pierre Lalo contra Ravel, Louis Laloy pro Ravel," appearing in the "Mercur de France" for June 1, 1907. "To our Jean Marnold, in general little suspected of adulatory hyperbole, Maurice Ravel is simply 'a musician of genius' ("Revue musicale de Lyon," May 1, 1907). The critic of 'Le Temps' (Pierre Lalo) considers this young composer 'a well-endowed plagiarist' and nothing more. The accusation of plagiarism is evidently the simplest of arguments, but one which establishes nothing. If you deny the possibility of fortuitous analogies, my dear Lalo, it must be admitted that Debussy is a vile copyist of Russian musicians (Rimsky-Korsakov wrote some ultra-Debussyan songs in 1866), and that the composer of 'Ariane et Barbe-Bleue' (Paul Dukas) servilely imitates the author of 'Pelléas,' since like him he does not resolve all his appoggiaturas and employs the whole-tone scale. As to the comprehensive

personality of Monsieur Ravel no one can be more to the point than Jean Marnold: 'From Debussy he differs as much if not more than Mozart from the chevalier Gluck, Wagner from Weber, or César Franck from Liszt.'"

M. M.-D. Calvocoressi, whose critical faculty is as acute as his gift for languages is uncommon, expresses a still more specific defence of Ravel in an article, "Les Histoires naturelles et l'imitation Debussyste," appearing in "La grande Revue" for May 10, 1907: "I do not wish to abuse the patience of my readers by indulging in long technical demonstrations, but I may be permitted a few summary indications. Examination reveals at once that no analogy as to treatment of form exists between the two musicians. M. Debussy possesses the secret of those mysterious and unanalyzable yet very definite constructions of which the 'Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun' offers a finished model. M. Ravel has never followed this example, although it is most seductive, and the structure of his works, which is much more obvious, shows a rigorous conformance to traditional principles. Above all, M. Debussy develops by means of varied repetitions, a procedure dear to the Russian masters who sometimes abuse it. But with him it is a virtue on account of the naturalness and skill with which he employs it, because one feels that it



is deliberate and not the result of weakness. In addition, neither the feeling for tonality nor for harmony in one or the other can be compared. In Ravel, the whole-tone scale with the augmented chords involved, which is an important element of Debussy's system, hardly appears at all. One finds rarely in his music the ninth chords with which Debussy has attained such admirable effects. Besides, in the harmonic standpoint Ravel proceeds very directly from Chabrier. One might add in a few words that M. Ravel's rhythmic invention is of unusual richness, and that in contrast to M. Debussy, the former composer entrusts an important rôle to his rhythms. The outline of his melodies, always characteristic, is easily recognizable, and finally in his lyric declamation of which the 'Histoires naturelles' offer a polished instance, one may observe a number of innovations, notably in the treatment of silent *e*, in the respective place of each accent, principal or secondary, which is minutely adjusted to meter and expression."

In connection with these discussions as to Ravel's obligation to Debussy, the futility of an insistence upon absolute originality is most cogently expressed by Ruskin. A passage from "The Seven Lamps of Architecture" is most appropriately quoted by Vincent d'Indy in the introduction to the second book of his "Cours de Composition

Musicale.”<sup>1</sup> Ruskin’s words are as follows: “Originality in expression does not depend upon new words; nor originality in poetry upon new measures; nor in painting, on invention of new colors, or new modes of using them. The chords of music, the harmonies of color, the general principles of the arrangement of sculptural masses have been determined long ago, and, in probability cannot be added to any more than they can be altered. . . . Originality depends upon nothing of the kind. A man who has the gift will take up any style that is going, the style of his day, and will work in that and be great in that, and make everything that he does in it look as fresh as if every thought of it had just come down from heaven.”<sup>2</sup>

While many recent developments in painting, poetry and music would seem to compel a reconsideration of some details in Ruskin’s statements, the fundamentals of his argument remain unchanged. In music in particular it remains patent that all composers, no matter how revolutionary their achievements, are under a greater or lesser obligation to their predecessors and contemporaries. Nor are Ravel nor even Debussy exempt from this binding rule. An enumeration of these

<sup>1</sup> Vincent d’Indy, *Cours de Composition Musicale*, Book 2, Part 1, p. 17. Paris: Durand et Cie, 1909.

<sup>2</sup> John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, “The Lamp of Obedience,” p. 253. London: George Allen.

influences will follow the chief biographical facts of Ravel's life.

Joseph Maurice Ravel, born in Ciboure, in the département of the Basses Pyrénées, March 7, 1875, has passed most of his life in Paris, although he now lives in the charming town of Montfort-l'Amaury, some twenty miles west of Paris. Thus environment at least cannot account for Ravel's predilection for the Spanish musical idiom which enters into some of his most characteristic works. M. Roland-Manuel,<sup>1</sup> the pupil and biographer of Ravel, relates his teacher's discovery, at the age of twelve, of the major seventh chord which he later used so distinctively. After some years of preliminary study of the piano, harmony and composition, Chabrier's "Romantic Waltzes" for two pianos aroused his enthusiasm. Later still, his acquaintance with Erik Satie and the latter's incidental music for Sar Peladan's drama, "Le Fils des Étoiles," greatly enlarged his harmonic horizon. Ravel had entered the Paris Conservatory in 1889, and Roland-Manuel tells us that he scandalized his comrades in Pessard's harmony class, while they were awaiting their teacher, by playing Satie's "Sarabandes" and "Gymnopédies." From Pes-

<sup>1</sup> Roland-Manuel, *Maurice Ravel et son Œuvre*, p. 8. Paris: Durand et Cie, 1914.

sard's class, Ravel passed into that for counterpoint and fugue given by André Gédalge, perhaps the greatest living contrapuntal teacher, who still regards Ravel as one of his best pupils. From 1897 onward he studied composition with Gabriel Fauré. In 1901, he obtained a second Prix de Rome for his cantata, "Myrrha." He might have obtained the first prize had not his already highly developed sense of ironic humor tempted him to set the insipid text of the prescribed cantata as languishing slow waltzes. This procedure awakened the suspicions of some of the jury. In the two years following, Ravel was unsuccessful in the Prix de Rome competitions. In 1905, on presenting himself as a candidate, he was summarily excluded from the preliminary test, although by this time he was favorably known as a composer in Paris through his piano pieces "Pavane pour une Infante défunte" and "Jeux d'eau," for a string quartet and the songs with orchestral accompaniment entitled "Shéhérazade." This flagrant injustice caused so general an indignation as to result in a comprehensive protest which ended in the resignation of Théodore Dubois as director of the Conservatory and the appointment of Gabriel Fauré in his stead. In 1907, the performance at a concert of the National Society of the "Histoires naturelles" for voice and piano precipitated the

violent controversy to which reference has already been made. From this time forth, however, each new work brought an increased measure of recognition to Ravel. The picturesque and dazzling "Spanish Rhapsody" for orchestra was enthusiastically applauded at a Colonne concert. A set of piano pieces entitled "Gaspard de la Nuit" were magnificently interpreted by Ricardo Viñes at a meeting of the National Society. The piano duets, "Ma Mère l'Oye," were heard at a concert of the Independent Musical Society, and were later transformed into a ballet. In the same year (1910) Ravel's opera, "L'Heure espagnole," was performed at the Opéra-Comique with a somewhat equivocal success. This reception has been more than counterbalanced by the warmth with which this opera has since been received. The "Valses nobles et sentimentales" (1911) for piano, characteristic specimens alike of Ravel's ironic humor and of his depth of sentiment, were soon heard in an orchestral version, and in turn became a ballet, "Adélaïde ou le langage des Fleurs." On March 8, 1912, a notable date in the revival of the French ballet as well as in Ravel's career, the Diaghilev Ballet Russe brought out "Daphnis et Chloé." This work emphatically set at rest any remaining doubts as to Ravel's gifts as a composer. "Trois Poèmes de Mallarmé" for voice, wind instru-

ments, string quartet and piano, and a brilliant trio for piano and strings, furnished new aspects of Ravel's individuality. During the War Ravel served his country by driving military trucks. He became seriously ill, but recovered his health in the south of France. He has appeared as pianist and conductor in Vienna, London and elsewhere. He now lives outside of Paris, but not too remotely, and devotes all his energies to composition.

Before commenting upon Ravel's music, it is essential to present clearly the influences which have aided in the formation of his individuality. The names of Chabrier and Satie have already been mentioned. To the former Ravel owes a freer conception of musical art including a radical harmonic viewpoint, and also the inspiration of his rollicking humor. Chabrier's choice of texts for his songs, "Ballade des gros dindons" and "Villanelle des petits canards," undoubtedly suggested the prevailing vein of the "Histoires naturelles." Satie's harmonic stimulus has already been referred to. So also the evident reaction of Fauré's harmonic style is tempered by the original manner in which these hints have been applied. The piano piece, "Pavane pour une Infante défunte," the song "Sainte" and the opening measures of the first movement of the String Quartet are obvious

instances of a Fauréan source. Ravel's taste for a quasi-archaic style, so noticeable in the "Menuet antique," the "Epigrammes" by Clément Marôt, and in the "Pavane" and "Le Jardin féerique," from the suite "Ma Mère l'Oye," may have proceeded in part from the example of Fauré, although, as in the case of d'Indy and Debussy, its real origin lies in the composer's sympathy for Couperin and Rameau, and in an admiration for the stylistic reticence of the eighteenth century, whose virtues are steadily emulated by twentieth-century French composers. The impressionistic methods of Debussy have had a basic share in determining Ravel's principles of composition, although significant departures from his model are abundant. It is doubtful whether, without Debussy's initiative, Ravel would have developed as he has either in respect to method or harmonic standpoint. To argue over this point is as futile as to decide what Beethoven or any great composer would have attained without his immediate predecessors. Ravel derived much from Debussy, but his personality has always manifested a line of cleavage from the latter that is more and more evident with every work, and which was present from the first. Like other composers of his day Ravel has been fascinated by the inherent possibilities of "polyharmony."<sup>1</sup> Since

<sup>1</sup>The combining of two or more tonalities simultaneously. See Chapter V, p. 106 and Chapter IX, p. 205.

the first evidences of this style appear in the piano pieces, "Miroirs" (1905), before Ravel could have been acquainted with Richard Strauss' "Salomé," it is evident that the latter work could not have played any part in Ravel's early experimentation in this idiom.

In "Daphnis et Chloé" polyharmonic treatment is increasingly in evidence. Here again Ravel could not have foreseen the extended part played by polyharmonic method in Stravinsky's "Pétrouchka," since the composition of Ravel's ballet was finished before "Pétrouchka" was published or performed. There are suggestions of polyharmony, however, in Stravinsky's ballet, "L'oiseau de feu" (1910), and there is little doubt but that the music of Strauss and Stravinsky incited Ravel to continue polyharmonic research. But the evidences of his own polyharmonic idiom were anterior to any external influence. In respect to orchestral treatment, Ravel has frankly acknowledged obligations to Balakirev, Borodine and Rimsky-Korsakov. Debussy had profited from the same sources. But as Debussy attained distinctive qualities in his exploration of orchestral resource which almost entirely obliterate the traces of his models, so Ravel has achieved an originality and brilliance so entirely personal as to surpass even the signal results of the adroit Russians.



Since Ravel is most widely known as a composer for the piano, a survey of his work in this field may serve as a starting-point. Since the problem of combining the ancient and the "modernistic" styles has always appealed to Ravel, it is not surprising to find M. Roland-Manuel writing as follows about the "Menuet antique" (1895), his earliest published work for the piano: "A curious piece in which, wilfully it seems, scholastic artifices oppose the most charming boldnesses. To the rhythmic imitations recommended to animate a florid counterpoint succeed audacious ninths and piquant seventh chords. One seems to witness the esthetic hesitations of a young artist who contemplates the austerities of classicism and the perils of progress. If a later individuality seems somewhat in abeyance, the point of departure toward a personal technical procedure seems already concretely established."<sup>1</sup> In view of these same "esthetic hesitations," it is the more remarkable that a "Habanera," belonging to the same year, and afterward incorporated in the "Spanish Rhapsody," should constitute so precocious an assertion of Ravel's maturity. This "Habanera," originally conceived for two pianos, in its free modernization of the Spanish idiom, antedates Debussy's "La Soirée dans Grenade" (1903) as well as the same

<sup>1</sup> Roland-Manuel, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

composer's "Iberia" (1909) and the prelude, "La Puerta del Vino" (1913). The slight harmonic indebtedness to Fauré discoverable in the "Pavane pour une Infante défunte" (1899) is far outweighed by its originality of mood and the depth of its emotional substance. It projects clearly a touching and profoundly elegiac sentiment. In "Jeux d'eau" (1901) the novelty of Ravel's pianistic manner becomes strikingly apparent. It has no forerunner in French or indeed any other piano literature. The frequent use of the major seventh chord confirms Ravel's predilection for this harmony in advance of Debussy, just as his employment of the pentatonic scale antedates the same master's "Pagodes" (1903). Musically its freshness of conception is inspiring, and its pervading fluidity of style constitutes a charming illustration of the whimsical motto from Henri de Régnier, "the river-god laughing at the water which tickles him." Here, too, is found an early instance of that delicately ironic humor which is a dominant Ravelian trait. The "Sonatine" (1905) exemplifies the classic sympathies of Ravel, his acceptance of the limitations of the Sonatina form, and his skill in overcoming this handicap. The conciseness and clarity of its treatment of form is conspicuous. Brilliant and expressive by turns, Ravel's stylistic perception and reticence are alike evident. In

particular the "Minuet" re-creates the spirit of the eighteenth century in twentieth-century guise. Despite the engaging qualities of the "Sonatine," the "Miroirs," composed during the same year, bear the tokens of an advance in the application of impressionistic method and in revelation of a riper personality. While not of equal value musically, the increased scope of expression, the larger moods, the greater fertility of technical resource and their harmonic independence mark a new stage of Ravel's development. Practically identical in date with Debussy's first series of "Images," they constitute a graphic argument against confounding the aims and means of expressions presented by the two composers. The polyharmonic suggestions in "Oiseaux tristes," the epic sweep of "Une barque sur l'océan," the rhythmic vitality and graphic Spanish color of "Alborada del gracioso," and the hieratic calm of "La vallée des cloches" all show Ravel in a new light. The concentration of style and the felicitous detail of the miniature sketches comprising the "Pièces enfantines" (1908) for piano duet, "Ma Mère l'Oye," bearing mottoes from Charles Perrault and Madame d'Aulnoy, are truly remarkable. These pieces will receive consideration in their orchestral version. Ravel's next piano pieces, "Gaspard de la Nuit," comprising "Ondine," "Le gibet" and "Scarbo," are a legitimate

extension of the "Miroirs." They were suggested by the prose of Bertrand Aloysius, the early nineteenth-century writer, who was so anticipatory of a later generation. While these "poems" are sufficiently difficult, both as to the technical and interpretative problems involved, as not to be generally popular among concert-pianists, their subject-matter deserves a wider knowledge. "Ondine," shimmering and poetic in atmosphere, "Le gibet," grisly with suppressed horror, "Scarbo," fantastically brilliant, exemplify moods of Ravel's maturity. If these pieces do not attain the magic sensibility of Debussy, they convey strongly etched pictures which appeal to the imagination; their firmly controlled outlines and strong harmonic backgrounds convey an ineffaceable impression of definite personality.

The "Valses nobles et sentimentales" (1911) abandon the tense impressionistic designs of "Gaspard de la Nuit" for less exacting subjects. These "Valses" are again provided with a motto from Henri de Régnier, "the delicious and ever new pleasure of a useless occupation." In them alternate irony, poetry, intimate sentiment, suggestions of moods which would be fragile were they not so precise. Full of elusive yet winning emotion, of exasperatingly clever yet melting harmonic effects, their melodic charm is perhaps their most insistent

quality. The Waltzes are unified by an epilogue containing allusions to separate numbers in a masterly summary. In these dances the somewhat impoverished waltz receives a new lease of life.

If a "Prélude" (1913) is somewhat inconsequential, the parodies of Borodine and Chabrier in a set by Casella and Ravel entitled "À la Manière de . . ." deserve especial mention for their wit and minute observation of these composers.

Since the War, Ravel has published a suite of pieces in the eighteenth-century forms, "Le Tombeau de Couperin," of which four have been arranged for orchestra. Thus Ravel returns to a favorite period, and the expression of admiration for a French master. Of these six pieces there is no denying the invention and the skill manifested in the "Prélude," the "Forlane," the "Rigaudon" and the concluding "Toccata." At the same time there are also evidences of the spiritual and emotional oppression natural in a French artist at the period when they were composed. The exuberant fancy of earlier pieces is checked, and the emotion is alternately frail or febrile. In his piano music as a whole Ravel has not continued the soft sensuous visions of Debussy. He has not reproduced with inimitable insight the delicate charm of Nature in varying moods. But he has added sentiments of his own, spontaneous records of irony, of humor,

clear-cut cameos of a classic precision, often dazzlingly brilliant, sometimes a trifle hard, but provocative to the fancy and impelling by their many-sided vitality. Debussy is the optimist and Ravel the skeptic, who despite his frequent mocking none the less reveals the human heart.

Ravel has not been a fertile composer of songs, yet the qualities of some of these are so conspicuously fine as to compare favorably with his work in other fields. His first published song, "Sainte" (1896), on a poem by Mallarmé, has a precocious maturity resembling that of the "Habanera" (1895) which forms a part of the "Rapsodie Espagnole." There is more than a suggestion of Fauré's harmonic style in the accompaniment, but the mood of the music and its treatment are individual and arresting. Two "Épigrammes" (1898) by Clément Marôt, the French poet of the sixteenth century, "D'Anne qui me jecta de la neige" and "D'Anne jouant de l'espinette," prove that Ravel searched for texts among the older poets several years in advance of Debussy. While the music of these songs is not wholly lacking in the tentative quality ascribed by Roland-Manuel to the "Menuet antique," the touches of archaism combined with a more radical harmonic idiom are personal and charming. Ravel's next songs, "Shéhérazade" (1903), with orchestral accompaniment,

mark a long stride in advance, and possess very definitely mature traits. This progress is scarcely explained by the piano works or the String Quartet composed during the interval. They constitute an inexplicable germination of personality. The first of these, "Asie," claims attention by reason of its exotic orientalism which rises to an exceedingly dramatic climax, by its closely knit musical structure and logical development, which do not in the slightest sacrifice coloristic detail and careful declamation. The bulk of the musical contents is found in the orchestral background, while the voice part is chiefly declamatory. The most extraordinary feature of this song lies in the luminosity, the vivid depiction of mood and the skilful coloring of the orchestral accompaniment. Ravel's single attempt at orchestral composition hitherto, an overture, also entitled "Shéhérazade" (1898), still unpublished, appears to have been unsuccessful at its only performance. Ravel had also orchestrated the "Pavane pour une Infante défunte" for small orchestra with adequate if not remarkable results, but the orchestral idiom of "Asie" is nothing short of masterly. "La Flûte enchantée" and "L'Indifférent" which comprise the rest of this set are charming lyrics full of poetry and individual atmosphere, but, by reason of their lesser scope, they cannot attain the position of "Asie," which re-

mains one of the most significant of French songs. "Le Noël des Jouets" (1905), text by Ravel, is a song of imaginative humor somewhat surcharged with detail. "Les grands Vents venus d'outre mer" (1906), on a poem by Henri de Régnier, has a restless and moody harmonic background that is most appropriate to the sentiment of the text. The "Histoires naturelles," also composed in 1906 on poems by Jules Renard, have for musical precedent the witty songs by Chabrier. They do not in the least recall either the musical ideas or the treatment of Chabrier. The subjects of Renard's poems are the peacock, the cricket, the swan, the kingfisher and the guinea-hen. The poems are full of imaginative and humorous touches, and they have incited humor and irony in Ravel's music. At times an imitative impressionism is pushed to the verge of realism. In the main Ravel has kept to his characteristic method, and in addition to mirth-provoking qualities these songs have also observant poetry and delicate sentiment. Ravel may have composed others of more human emotion, but these accomplish their purpose. Among them the Rameau-like gravity of "Le Paon," the tinkling wit of "Le Grillon," and the capricious temper of "La Pintade" are vividly lifelike. Even now, at a distance of seventeen years since their first performance, no imagination is needed to realize the



sensation these songs must have evoked. "Sur l'herbe" (1907), on a poem by Verlaine, is inconsequential in comparison with other songs by Ravel, but it contains harmonic details characteristic of its composer's finesse. A series of Greek folk-songs and a group of national songs offer further instances of Ravel's lyric diversity. The "Trois Poèmes de Mallarmé" (1913), with accompaniment of pianoforte, string quartet, flutes and clarinets, are Ravel's most notable songs since "Shéhérazade." It is doubtful, however, whether they will ever meet with as general appreciations as others by this composer. Like the texts which they interpret, their sentiments are rarefied, and their musical means are both complex and subtle. Ravel has obtained from this assemblage of instruments effects of great variety and coloristic range. The voice part is exacting yet harmoniously adjusted in detail to the spirit of the verses. In these songs Ravel is unmistakably himself. Before leaving the vocal music, the "Trois Chansons" (1916), for unaccompanied mixed chorus with texts by the composer, should be mentioned. They present a mingling of the ancient chanson and twentieth-century audacity in a manner at once humorous, sensitive and gay.

In his chamber music Ravel again makes amends for quantity by quality. Aside from the String

Quartet, Debussy's works in this field too often leave an impression that he adapted his ideas with difficulty to the exigencies of the style involved. Ravel, on the other hand, despite the luxuriance of his orchestral imagination and his capacity for dramatic expression, can also acquit himself with spontaneity within the narrower range. His classic predilections are in sympathy with the necessary repression of style; its plastic contours and epigrammatic detail tempt him. The String Quartet in F major (1902-03) illustrates admirably Ravel's possession of the cardinal virtues of chamber music. The first movement has scarcely its equal in all French music for a cameo-like purity of formal outline, precise yet not restricted, individual yet responsive to the classic spirit. It is true that the opening theme is harmonized in the Fauréan manner, but here all disparagement ends. The conciseness yet withal the freedom of the development section, the proof of the composer's skill and fancy, the poetic summing up of the movement are particularly worthy of note. It is well-nigh impossible to compose an original scherzo in the twentieth century, but Ravel has here attained the exception. Yet even its ingenuity of instrumental effect is surpassed by the humor of the scherzo proper, and by the melodic charm of the intervening trio. The slow movement, with its episodic references to the

first movement, is somewhat complex in plan, but its melting sentiment is appealing. The finale scarcely attains to the invention of the other movements, but it is unflinchingly spirited and brilliant. A test of the durability of this work lies in the fact that after twenty years of performance it retains its place with the quartets by Debussy and d'Indy as the finest specimens by French composers in this exacting medium of expression. An "Introduction and Allegro" (1907) for harp, string quartet, flute and clarinet is notable for the insight displayed by Ravel in writing for the harp in virtuoso style. Yet the same sympathy is evident in treating the other instruments. If sentiment is not an outstanding quality in this piece, its brilliance and charm are insistent. The Trio in A minor (1914) for piano and strings demonstrates afresh that the academic form has not only no terrors for Ravel, but that it incites him anew. It would seem that the possibilities of this time-honored combination of instruments had been exhausted, but this work is filled almost to repletion with novelty in idea and treatment. As in the String Quartet, the first movement is of aphoristic compression, yet is faithful to the spirit of the classic plan. In the first theme Ravel obtains a striking rhythmical effect by dividing the four-four measure into groups of three and five eighth notes. The second movement en-

titled "Pantomim," an Eastern dance, is a fantastic scherzo. The "Passacaille" which follows is relatively perfunctory, but the finale, in alternating five-four and seven-four time, carries all before it by its vigor, its resourceful development and its grandiose climax. That Ravel should here compose gratefully for the piano was to be expected; that he should treat the strings with equal authority is a new revelation of his consummate technical invention. As in the quartet and in the "Introduction and Allegro" Ravel here shows again a marked perception of stylistic fitness. That is to say, he has not attempted to force the instruments beyond their natural province. This is a dominant trait in Ravel's individuality, as well as a prevalent characteristic in the French nation. Ravel's latest chamber music work is an unaccompanied Sonata for violin and violoncello. To succeed in such a task, if only to a plausible degree, would tax the technical equipment of any composer. Ravel has produced a work of not only masterly ingenuity but one also possessing charm, humor and brilliance. With the handicap of but two instruments he has outlined polyharmonic effects and even sketched the exposition of a four-voiced fugue.

If we except the overture "Shéhérazade," which is still unpublished, and the ballet "Daphnis et Chloé," the "Rapsodie Espagnole" is Ravel's only

orchestral work thus conceived from the outset. But orchestral transcriptions of several piano-forte compositions achieve such spontaneity in their later form as to demand an equal attention. The "Rapsodie Espagnole" (1907), consisting of a "Prélude à la Nuit," "Malagueña," "Habanera" and "Feria," is an instance of the haunting attraction which the exotic in general, and the Spanish idiom in particular, continues to exercise upon the impressionable French composer. In this "Rhapsody," Ravel has first of all given free vent to a bewildering assortment of devices in orchestral rhetoric. He turns to all the instruments for their choicest *tours de force*. There is even a hint of the "cyclical" principle, since the motto figure of the "Prélude" reappears at the end of the "Malagueña" and in the middle of the "Feria." But the "Rhapsody" is far from being merely a collection of orchestral tricks. If it has not the primitive force of "España," its greater sophistication does not deprive it of all virtue. It charms by its persuasive version of the Spanish idiom, it rivets the listener's attention by its rhythmic and coloristic virtuosity, its alternation of sensibility and brilliance.

If, in the "Rapsodie Espagnole" Ravel astonishes by his elastic freedom in manipulating the resources of the full orchestra, in his transcription of "Ma Mère l'Oye" he has gone almost to the

opposite extreme. For while he has not denied himself any needful orchestral timbre, he has selected his instruments with a view to the utmost economy of sonority, limiting himself to the use of but two horns and requiring some of the woodwind section to play two instruments in alternation. This choice was undoubtedly dictated by the simplicity of the pieces in question. Thus Ravel's sense of stylistic fitness was again unerring. Yet for the listener the result is not one of conscious restriction but of extreme novelty and diversity of effect. These pianoforte duets for children, composed in 1908, were orchestrated in 1912. They are miniatures, employing Ravel's characteristic circumspection as to style, but they unite charm of detail with a specific gift for atmospheric description. The "Pavane de la Belle au bois dormant," recalling the eighteenth century, is a little gem twenty measures in length. "Petit Poucet," prefaced with a passage from Charles Perrault, recounts the adventure of Hop-o'-My-Thumb hoping to secure his return by strewing bread-crumbs as he went only to find that the birds have devoured them. This is a wistful, half-ironic little piece. "Laideronette, Impératrice des Pagodes," illustrates an episode in Madame d'Aulnoy's "Serpentin Vert." "She undressed and entered her bath. Immediately little idols began to sing and play in-

struments. Some had theorbos made of a nutshell, others had viols made of an almond shell. For it was necessary to proportion the instruments to their size." This movement, the themes of which are in the Chinese pentatonic scale, is a striking bit of ironic humor. Ravel has been particularly happy in causing the listener to visualize its Lilliputian characters. The fourth movement, "Les Entretiens de la Belle et de la Bête," headed by a quotation from Madame Leprince de Beaumont, presents admirably the contrast between the graceful Beauty and the grotesque Beast. The sober gravity of the eighteenth century again enters into the mood of the concluding number "Le Jardin féérique," although the close is extremely brilliant. As a whole this suite charms by its imaginative invention, and the varied and distinctive use of the small orchestra. "Ma Mère l'Oye" has been successfully mounted as a ballet. In 1912 also, Ravel orchestrated the "Valses nobles et sentimentales." In so doing he has emphasized the melodic charm, the original harmonic combinations and the varied sentiments of the original version. These waltzes have also become the basis of a ballet, "Adélaïde, ou le langage des fleurs." Similarly in 1917 Ravel made an orchestral transcription of four movements from the pianoforte pieces "Le Tombeau de Couperin," "Prélude," "Menuet," "Forlane" and

“Rigaudon.” Here again, in their orchestral form, Ravel’s affinity with the spirit of the eighteenth century is once more clearly shown. Like the preceding transcriptions, “Le Tombeau de Couperin” has been seen upon the stage. Ravel has also made an orchestral arrangement of the pianoforte piece, “Alborada del gracioso,” from the “Miroirs.” A notable feature of all these orchestrations lies in the skill with which Ravel has found idiomatic orchestral equivalents of the original pianoforte conceptions. Furthermore, from slight hints he is always able to evolve picturesque or poetic contrasts in orchestral timbre which greatly enhance the expression of the original passages.

“La Valse, poème choréographique” (1920), appears to have been conceived as a piece for two pianofortes. The score bears the following explanation: “Whirling clouds give glimpses, through rifts, of couples waltzing. The clouds scatter little by little. One sees an immense hall peopled with a twirling crowd. The scene is gradually illuminated. The light of the chandeliers bursts forth at the fortissimo. An Imperial court about 1855.”<sup>1</sup> According to Mr. Alfredo Casella: “The poem is a sort of triptych. — (a) The birth of the waltz. (The poem begins with dull rumors — as in “Rheingold”

<sup>1</sup> Translation by Mr. Philip Hale. *Boston Symphony Orchestra Programme Book*, 1921-22, p. 690.



and from this chaos gradually takes form and development.) (b) The waltz. (c) The apotheosis of the waltz.”<sup>1</sup> In accordance with its musical character Ravel has invented themes of Viennese waltz type. Some of these depart considerably from their model, especially in their greater harmonic sophistication. There has been a good deal of discussion about this work. Some critics have found it a tasteless over-elaboration of a type of composition beloved by generations — a sort of musical *lèse-majesté*. On the other hand, in his dramatic conception of the piece Ravel was committed to the Viennese waltz. It would be idle to assert that the themes in “La Valse” have the pungency of those in his other orchestral works or in the ballet “Daphnis et Chloé.” But they have nevertheless an ingratiating character, and the very harmonic subtleties, which caused offence to some, constitute a justifiable expansion of the harmonically too ingenuous Viennese prototype. “La Valse” cannot claim the originality in material of others of Ravel’s works, and moreover there is some over-complexity of development in the apotheosis section. But it is a work of large dramatic outlines, compelling musical substance and dazzling orchestral luxuriance.

During the musical season of 1922–23 in Paris,

<sup>1</sup> Translation by Mr. Philip Hale. *Boston Symphony Orchestra Programme Book*, 1921–22, pp. 691–92.

Mr. Kusevitzky performed a new orchestral version by Ravel of Mussorgsky's pianoforte pieces, "Tableaux d'une Exposition." It is said that in faithful reproduction of Mussorgsky's musical ideas and in highly colored orchestral sonorities this transcription exceeded anything hitherto attained by Ravel.

At first hand Ravel has composed but two works for the stage, a musical comedy, "L'Heure Espagnole," and a ballet, "Daphnis et Chloé." "L'Heure Espagnole," by Franc-Nohain, had been successful on the theatrical stage. Ravel's music, composed in 1907, was not heard at the Opéra-Comique until 1910. Its reception at first was equivocal, but later performances, including those by the Chicago Opera Company, have brought a juster appreciation. In it Ravel was again tempted by the Spanish musical idiom. Its situations called forth the characteristic Ravellian traits of humor, irony and poetic sentiment. Apart from a somewhat too frequent interruption of the thread of musical development in order to permit the dialogue to be heard, "L'Heure Espagnole" manifests unquestionable dramatic aptitude, and despite its exotic idiom remains a contribution to French operas of permanent worth.

"Daphnis et Chloé" (1906-11), a "choreographic symphony," in three parts on a scenario by Michel Fokine, is undoubtedly Ravel's master-

piece. While the plot is not rich in incident, it is well contrived for choreographic production. The first scene represents a meadow near a sacred wood against a background of hills. At the right is a grotto with a rock on which are apparently sculptured three nymphs. At the left a large rock vaguely resembles the god Pan. At the rise of the curtain, young men and girls enter bearing baskets with presents for the nymphs. A religious dance takes place. Daphnis appears preceded by his flocks; Chloé joins him. The young girls drag Daphnis away and dance around him. The young men dance around Chloé. The ox-herd Dorcon is particularly attentive. At the end of the dance he tries to steal a kiss from Chloé. Daphnis intervenes. A dance competition is proposed. Chloé is to reward the winner with a kiss. Dorcon dances grotesquely, the crowd greet him with laughter. Daphnis dances, is adjudged the winner and obtains the promised recompense. Lyceion tries in vain to charm Daphnis by her dancing. The noise of arms and the cries of combat are heard. Chloé prays for aid to the nymphs. Pirates burst upon the scene and carry off Chloé. Daphnis sees her sandal and faints. The nymphs descend from their pedestals and begin a mysterious dance. They discover the unconscious Daphnis and try to restore him. They invoke Pan's aid. His form becomes distinct. The

second scene represents the pirates' camp. The pirates perform a warlike dance. At its close Chloé, her hands bound, is ordered to dance. She tries to escape but is brought back. All at once mysterious elements seem present in the air, strange lights flicker here and there. The pirates are terrified. Suddenly satyrs rush in on all sides and surround the pirates. The earth opens, Pan appears, while all flee. The scenery changes to that of the first part. There is no sound but the trickling of the dew-streams from the rocks. At last the shepherds discover Daphnis and revive him. He looks about for Chloé. She appears surrounded by shepherdesses. Daphnis and Chloé fall into each other's arms. An old shepherd explains that if Pan saved Chloé it was in memory of Syrinx whom he once loved. Daphnis and Chloé then mime Pan's courtship of Syrinx. They then plight their troth before the nymphs' altar. The ballet ends with a dance of general rejoicing.

Ravel has sometimes been criticized for his predilection for musical miniatures. That this reproach is not well founded is proved by the piano pieces, "Une barque sur l'océan," "Alborada del gracioso," "Ondine" and "Scarbo," by the song, "Asie," the "Rapsodie Espagnole," the "Introduction and Allegro," the Trio, "La Valse," the Sonata for violin and violoncello, and above all by "Daphnis et

Chloé." For in the latter work he has attained large contours, breadth of mood and impressive climaxes with the same continuity of development and richness of detail as in the shorter pieces. Throughout, the music achieves a graphic delineation of character, and furthermore has a plastic quality which incites mimetic response. The episodes of Dorcon's grotesque dance, Daphnis' graceful posturings, the Nocturne when the nymphs descend from their pedestals, the barbaric pirates' dance, the beginning of the third part when the rivulets trickle from the rocks, the scene when Daphnis and Chloé represent the courtship of Syrinx by Pan, and the brilliant final dance are especially memorable for their dramatic imagination. Throughout the closing portion of the ballet, Ravel has employed striking polyharmonic effects. "Daphnis et Chloé" has received few stage presentations outside of Paris. Ravel has made two suites, taken from the score without change, except for the orchestration of a chorus, the musical value of which suffers relatively little by a transfer to the concert stage. These suites have been widely performed. In this ballet, the orchestra is again an unflinching medium for reinforcing the picturesque character of the music and in revealing its appropriateness as an accompaniment to action. A chorus without text also adds enormously to the

dramatic support of the orchestra. Another interesting feature of the production of this ballet lies in the fact that the choreography, particularly in the dances, was devised from a study of figures on Greek vases. In the unified interdependence of orchestra, chorus and action "Daphnis et Chloé" stands forth as the most remarkable ballet by a French composer.

If we survey Ravel's work as a whole, it is evident that his pianoforte pieces, songs, chamber music, orchestral and dramatic works are the fruit of a distinctive individuality. While, unlike Debussy, he has not originated a new field of expression, he has profited greatly, without undue dependence, by his predecessor's vision. While his music has not the melting sensibility of that of Debussy, it has an original and durable beauty of its own. It has evolved a personal method of harmonic treatment. It exhibits, in its precise structural economy and sympathy with classic forms, a close kinship with the great French figures of the eighteenth century. In certain aspects of humor, irony, gravity of sentiment, poetic introspection and sheer brilliancy it holds its own without fear of comparison with any contemporary effort. It may be noted that a lessening in vitality of invention may be noted in Ravel's music since the beginning of the war. A composer of sensitive and responsive

imagination may well have suffered a setback under such circumstances, especially since his health was involved. But Ravel's career is far from finished; he is still active and occupied with new works. But even if he never surpasses his previous achievements, he will remain an artist of varied accomplishments the virtues of which will rank high in the records of his generation.

## CHAPTER XI

### SOME MODERNIST TYPES

It is not always reasonable or even desirable that a composer should confine himself rigidly to the artistic methods associated with a single esthetic system. An adherence to solidity of structure may co-exist with a considerable elasticity in harmonic practice, even to the extent of accepting some of the tenets of impressionism. A strong individuality may even discover a means of reconciling somewhat contrary attitudes toward musical art. Debussy and Ravel, each regarded as ultra-revolutionary in their formative days, did not cease to admire the classic art of the eighteenth century in France. Fauré found the chamber-music forms of Beethoven and Schumann no obstacle to his individual expression. The artists under consideration in the present chapter have all faced similar problems. Dukas and Magnard have achieved independent solutions of the fusion of classical structure and freedom of expression. Florent Schmitt found a contrapuntal conception of musical style not incompatible with an impressionistic luxuriance of musical thought. Déodat de Sévérac established a point of contact between the Basque atmosphere and a somewhat Debussyan sensibility. Albert



Roussel, submitting for a time to the severe discipline of the Schola, has become a discoverer in new realms of the exotic, verging at times upon frank iconoclasm. These adventurous alliances require further comment.

## I

Paul Dukas was born in Paris, October 1, 1865. During his fourteenth year he began to take a serious interest in music. He began to compose, and he had the courage to study *solfeggio* by himself. After finishing his general education, he entered the Paris Conservatoire where his chief teachers were Dubois and Guiraud. In 1888 he was awarded a second Prix de Rome for his cantata, "Velleda." In the following year he was unsuccessful at the annual competition, and abandoned his studies to fulfil his military service. Dukas, as d'Indy informs us, "realizing that up to that time (1888) he had learned very little, had the conscience to recommence his entire musical education. He studied deeply and passionately the works of master musicians of all epochs, and by his personal effort succeeded in forming an esthetic doctrine of his own, waiting to become perfectly sure of himself before composing."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Vincent d'Indy, *Cours de Composition Musicale*, deuxième livre, première partie, p. 431. Paris: A. Durand et Fils.

While yet a student at the Conservatoire, Dukas composed two overtures, "Le Roi Lear" (1883) and "Goetz de Berlichingen" (1883). The latter was tried over by Hugo de Senger at Geneva in 1884. A third overture, "Polyeucte" (1891), based on the tragedy by Corneille, was Dukas' first work to receive public performance. It was given by Lamoureux, January 23, 1892. Dukas then aided Saint-Saëns in completing "Frédégonde," an unfinished opera by his teacher Ernest Guiraud. Dukas orchestrated the first three acts of this work, and also took part in the rehearsals and staging of the opera during the season of 1895.

Dukas' recognition as a composer dates from the year 1897. His Symphony in C major, composed during 1895-96, was performed at an Opéra concert January 3, 1897, and in May of the same year the Scherzo, "L'Apprenti sorcier," the work by which he is most known, was conducted by its composer at a concert of the Société Nationale. A pianoforte sonata in E flat minor (1899-1900) was performed by Madame Blanche Selva in 1901, and two years later M. Édouard Risler gave the first public performance of a set of "Variations sur un Thème de Rameau" (1902). Dukas had also long since turned his thoughts toward the operatic stage. In 1892, he had written the text of an opera, "Horn et Rimenhild," and had even sketched the music. In

1899, he had begun another opera, "L'Arbre de Science." Both works were abandoned in favor of Maeterlinck's "Ariane et Barbe-Bleue," the first performance of which was given at the Opéra-Comique on May 10, 1907. In April, 1912, "La Péri," entitled a *poème dansé*, on a scenario by the composer, was produced at one of a series of "Concerts de danse" given at the Châtelet by Mlle. Trouhanova. A "Villanelle" (1906) for horn and piano, composed for a Conservatoire competition, the pianoforte pieces, "Prélude élégiaque" (1909) on the name of Haydn, and "La Plainte, du loin, du faune" (1920), written for a collection of pieces entitled "Le Tombeau de Debussy," published by "La Revue Musicale,"<sup>1</sup> are among his other works.

Dukas has won an enviable position as a critic through his erudition, his keen perceptions and his analytical insight. He has contributed to many reviews, among them the "Revue Hebdomadaire" and the "Gazette des Beaux-Arts." He has also aided Charles Bordes and Gustave Doret in preparing the programmes for the Concerts d'Harcourt (1893-94). Dukas has also performed a memorable service in behalf of French music by his revisions of "Les Indes galantes" and "La Princesse de Navarre," by Rameau, for the complete edition of his

<sup>1</sup> Supplement to a Debussy number, December 1, 1920.

works, as well as a new version of the "Concerts" for violin and harpsichord by François Couperin. In 1909, he was appointed conductor of the orchestral class at the Paris Conservatoire. Three years later, he resigned this post in favor of Vincent d'Indy. At present, Dukas is engaged upon a large orchestral work based upon Shakespeare's "The Tempest."

"The presence among his [Dukas'] ancestors," says M. Séré, "of a Strasbourgian great-grandfather is singularly enlightening as to the leaning which he has always shown toward construction and form, even to the point of giving them preponderance in his works over the idea itself." <sup>1</sup> By reason of his classic sympathies, Dukas is allied to the school of Franck, although he never followed its precepts blindly. His works are relatively few in number; they are the product of reflection, of a severe artistic conscience. Yet each has a share in the composer's development, and each springs from an emotional reaction to its subject. The pianoforte sonata and the variations proceed to a certain extent from Beethoven, there is a suggestion of Wagnerian method in the symphonic outlines of "Ariane et Barbe-Bleue," as well as the manifest influence of Debussy in respect to

<sup>1</sup> Octave Séré *Musiciens français d'aujourd'hui*, p. 165. Paris: Mercure de France.

harmonic treatment and coloristic atmosphere in "L'Apprenti sorcier," the above-mentioned opera and in "La Péri." Yet Dukas cannot be accused of a facile eclecticism, since the outstanding feature of his musical individuality is a note of clearly discernible independence. He is rather to be considered as an evolutionary composer whose assimilative processes have produced a perfectly definite personality.

The overture, "Polyeucte" (1891), is the first product of Dukas' severe self-schooling. It thus represents a period of transition between the apprentice days at the Conservatoire and the period of fuller revelation of his creative power. It reflects moods of dignified tragedy, but it suffers in the technical standpoint from a too constant reiteration of rhythmic figures. At the same time this overture foretells its composer's mastery of orchestral expression. The Symphony in C major (1895-96) marks a long step in advance as to technical handling and growth of individuality. In it Dukas meets the problems of the symphony squarely without evasion or subterfuge. It shows polyphonic skill, resourcefulness in development and vitality in its musical substance. At times, however, the development of themes is a little prolix, and the ideas themselves are not of commanding character. Still as a whole this symphony gives

adequate proof of the high aims of its composer, and assumes a worthy position in the literature of its epoch.

“L’Apprenti sorcier” (1897), a Scherzo founded on Goethe’s ballad of the mischievous sorcerer’s apprentice who essayed his master’s tricks with a magic broom to his own confusion and final rescue by the sorcerer himself, is nothing short of a masterpiece. The Scherzo, promised for a concert of the National Society, was still in a state of sketch not long before the expected date of performance. Perhaps on account of this very pressure, Dukas has never been more spontaneous, or more fully in command of all the resources of his finished workmanship. The themes used in this work are succinctly stated in the introduction, and their development is unflagging in humor and brilliance. Moreover, Dukas’ orchestral virtuosity is in evidence throughout. This Scherzo makes frequent use of the chord (the so-called augmented triad) inseparable from the whole-tone scale, but Dukas’ utilization of it is wholly his own. “L’Apprenti sorcier,” still figuring on orchestral programmes in Paris, has been performed throughout the civilized musical world as a typical specimen of modern French music.

The pianoforte Sonata in E flat minor (1899–1900) is one of the few striking works of its class

since those of Brahms. As one might expect, it is built upon severely classical lines. While there are moments in the first and second movements which recall Franck and Beethoven, the dominant features of each are structural and emotional vitality. The Scherzo is novel and piquant in its brilliant figures. The finale, more expansive in its conception, contains dramatic and even grandiose episodes of convincing power. It is to be regretted that the unusual technical difficulty of this sonata has undoubtedly prevented pianists from revealing its genuinely fine qualities. The "Variations, Interlude et Finale" (1902) have for theme the little minuet entitled "Le Lardon" from the first collection of Rameau's harpsichord pieces. While these variations proceed in type from those of Beethoven's last period, Dukas has employed these in a harmonic ingenuity and a musical invention which could only issue from his ripened personality. The finale, in particular, combines the gaiety of the eighteenth century with his own heightened perceptions, and brings these variations to a brilliant close.

In the works based upon classic forms, Dukas has remained steadily faithful to their traditions. In his dramatic works he never loses control of structural continuity, but he also succeeds in infusing into his music a due regard for color and deline-

ation of character. In "Ariane et Barbe-Bleue," Maeterlinck has given a "feministic" turn to the familiar story. Ariane, the sixth wife of Bluebeard, arrives at his castle. Bluebeard gives her six silver keys which open the doors of the bridal treasures, and forbids the use of a seventh key of gold. Ariane promptly declares: "At the outset, one must disobey. This is the first duty when the order is threatening or inexplicable." Accompanied by her nurse to the underground vaults of the castle, Ariane opens the six doors and discloses ravishing jewels. A seventh door is visible. Ariane opens it and penetrating within hears a distant chant, that of Bluebeard's five former wives who are still alive. Bluebeard discovers Ariane's disobedience and tries to drag her away. She screams in terror. The infuriated peasants surround the castle and are ready to storm it. Ariane pacifies them saying that Bluebeard has done her no harm. Ariane again seeks her companions in distress, and liberates them, but they cannot cross the moat which surrounds the castle. The peasants attack Bluebeard anew; they subdue him and bind him. They give Ariane a dagger in order that she may kill him. The oppressed wives are moved by a sentimental sympathy for the tyrant. Ariane uses the dagger not to kill Bluebeard but to cut his bonds. She tries to persuade the other wives to leave Bluebeard to his fate.



They will not desert him, and Ariane departs alone.

Dukas has not chosen the slight musical framework of "Pelléas" as his idiom, but rather a modified symphonic treatment of motives aided by a dramatic use of the chorus. Thus he avails himself of his strongest qualities. But through a somewhat "cyclical" modification of his musical themes, such as d'Indy had employed in "Fervaal," he is able to manipulate his music elastically in accordance with the dramatic situations. The first act shows great diversity of musical invention and orchestral effect without departing from a coherent and logical musical style. In the second act, Dukas has made a distinctive use of the whole-tone scale to depict the caverns under the castle, and the folk-song style of the chant sung by the "five daughters of Orlamonde," who have at last found liberty, is a striking musical conception. The same resourcefulness of invention from the musical and dramatic point of view is found throughout the third act. A noteworthy instance of Dukas' instinct for structural symmetry lies in the inevitableness with which the music at the close of the opera returns to that of the opening of the first act. Dukas' capacity for vivid description of character and scene in "Ariane et Barbe-Bleue" is sufficiently distinguished in itself, but his simultaneous faculty in disposing his orchestral and choral forces

with such ordered symmetry is nothing less than masterly. This opera is not only the most commanding work by its composer, but it ranks with "Pelléas et Mélisande," "Le Pays," "L'Heure Espagnole," "Pénélope" and de Sévérac's "Cœur du Moulin" among the leading works for the stage by French composers. It is, after all, the firm command over musical means that has enabled Dukas to reach such a fortunate union of qualities.

A similar blending of plastic structure and appropriate suggestion of atmosphere is to be found in "La Péri." Here Dukas has developed an exceptional sensibility both as to musical invention and in the disposition of orchestral forces so as to reinforce the stage picture. As with the orchestral suites from "Daphnis et Chloé," "La Péri" can be performed in the concert hall and still reproduce an atmospheric illusion for the imaginative listener.

The "Villanelle" for horn and piano ably illustrates Dukas' insight into the possibilities of an instrument seldom heard in a solo piece, and its musical qualities are above those of occasional works composed in view of a competition. "La Plainte, du loin, du faune" proves that Dukas is not too reactionary to employ the devices of polyharmony with poetic effect. He has also interwoven phrases from Debussy's "L'Après-midi d'un

faune" with an ingenious and delicate elegiac sentiment.

Dukas has given the advocates of classic form and the necessity for a substratum of "structure" a fresh argument through his practice of these principles without loss of individuality. In dramatic works he has attained a vigorous or subtle reinforcement of stage action and scenic background without losing grip upon continuity of development. Withal a figure of independence, his work as composer, critic and editor maintains him in a secure position among his contemporaries.

## II

It is of doubtful critical accuracy to place Magnard among the modernists. He was drawn to the classic forms even more irresistibly than Paul Dukas, but like him was able to find their restrictions sympathetic to his personal idiom. Like Dukas also he felt the attraction of the theatre, to which he responded in an individual manner. Magnard regarded d'Indy as the most potent influence during his formative years. From the outset however he maintained a musical standpoint entirely his own. Aloof and solitary, he remained apart from most of the prevailing tendencies of his time.

Lucien-Denis-Gabriel-Albéric Magnard was born in Paris, June 9, 1865. His father, Francis Magnard,

one of the foremost journalists of his time, ultimately became editor of "Le Figaro." When young Albéric was four years old, his mother died. His father, absorbed in his profession, had little time for his son, who, except for the devotion of an aunt, grew up in the care of servants. As a young boy, he showed a lively intelligence; he was serious and a hard worker. Frankness was perhaps his most prominent trait. He had an excellent general education. After obtaining his bachelor's degree, he spent six months at the Dominican college of Saint Augustine's Abbey at Ramsgate, England. Returning to France, he took a degree in philosophy, completed his military service, and studied law. In 1886, having had some pianoforte lessons, he entered the Conservatoire where he remained two years, studying harmony with Dubois and counterpoint with Massenet. Here he became acquainted with Guy Ropartz, who in later life was his most intimate friend. Both were dissatisfied with the Conservatoire and left; Ropartz went directly to Franck, Magnard chose d'Indy as his teacher. With d'Indy he worked industriously at the technique of composition for four years, and declared later that he owed everything, musically speaking, to him. These years were fruitful alike in the maturing of his technical procedure and in his patient search for a lofty and

personal musical idiom. It is said that he prepared for his future as a composer by the docility of his work as a student.

Magnard studied fugue, musical construction and orchestration with d'Indy. His first task was to revise the "Suite dans le style ancien," composed in 1888. Under d'Indy's supervision he also composed the first and second symphonies and the one-act opera, "Yolande." After this he took no more lessons save those given by the great masters in their works. In 1892, the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels, which had already performed Chabrier's "Gwendoline" and later welcomed d'Indy's "Fervaal" and "L'Étranger," also Chausson's "Le Roi Arthus," produced Magnard's "Yolande." The opera was not really successful, but the Belgian critic Octave Maus was enthusiastic over it, and soon made Magnard's name better known in Belgium than in France. In 1893, the director of the Casino at Blankenbergh in Belgium invited Magnard to conduct a concert of his own works. M. Gaston Carraud relates that the hall was not as full at the end as at the beginning of the concert, but the Casino director, all unconsciously, had encouraged the composer.<sup>1</sup> Six years later, a similar concert was arranged in Paris by Magnard himself. It

<sup>1</sup> *La Vie, l'Œuvre et la Mort de Albéric Magnard*, p. 45. Paris: Rouart-Lerolle et Cie, 1921.

attracted no little attention, although the composer neglected the most elementary procedures to give it publicity. Paul Dukas, Pierre Lalo and Pierre de Bréville were unanimous in recognition of the significance of Magnard's music. Nevertheless for some years there were only scattered performances of his works. After founding the symphony concerts at Nancy, Guy Ropartz brought out all Magnard's orchestral works, and even performed two acts of the second opera, "Guercoeur." During his first visit to America d'Indy placed Magnard's "Chant funèbre" upon some of his programmes.

Magnard married in 1896. For some years he remained in Paris, but in 1904 he purchased a property at Baron near Senlis. Here he lived quietly absorbed in work and family life. In Paris he had been passionately fond of fencing. At Baron he practiced gymnastic exercises and took long walks throughout the surrounding country. Nature appealed to him and he never tired of observing the play of light and shade. After months of complete preoccupation with work he travelled — to Belgium, Italy, Sicily, and even Palestine. He was devoted to literature, the fine arts and philosophy. He was well-versed in the French music of the eighteenth century, he was familiar with the French authors of the seventeenth and eighteenth century. His house was a veritable museum. He

was as much at home in the art galleries of Europe as in its concert halls. He read as much prose or verse as he did music. He advised his pupils to study Rembrandt and Rubens. Few musicians had so cultivated an eye, or had so stored their minds with varied and substantial information.

Magnard was a slow worker, bringing to bear much reflection and will-power upon composition. He was constantly dissatisfied with his efforts and composed with no little suffering and discouragement. However, he judged his own music with detachment, and his letters are filled with phrases of self-analysis which in the main are just. While exteriorly he seemed rough and almost savage, his nature was affectionate, enthusiastic and even vehement. He liked few people well, but was loyal to his intimate friends.

For a time Magnard wrote musical criticisms for "Le Figaro." One of his articles on Rameau influenced Jacques Durand, of the well-known publishing firm, to undertake the complete edition of the French master's works. Another called attention to the value of the concerts given by Les Chanteurs de Saint-Gervais under the direction of Charles Bordes.

When the War broke out in 1914, Magnard, despite his age, attempted to enlist. There ensued a good deal of red-tape. He sent away his wife, his

old aunt and his daughters and with his stepson remained at Baron. During the second of September the German army passed by. On the morning of the third, a company of Bavarian cavalry, learning of his wealth, surrounded the house, seized and bound his stepson and demanded surrender. One of the Germans fired. Magnard replied, killing one soldier and wounding another. The Germans returned fire and burned the house. It is still uncertain whether Magnard killed himself or was shot by the enemy. His house was pillaged, and the plunder carried off in a wagon covered with a Red-Cross blanket. Magnard's deed was undoubtedly contrary to the Hague Conventions. But his provocation was great, and he had sworn to prevent invasion of his dwelling.

Magnard's music and personality are in unusually precise adjustment, one to the other. Early in life he had formed convictions as to the permanent value of the classic forms. To these he adhered steadfastly. His problem lay in adapting them to his instinct for self-expression. For orchestra Magnard composed a "Suite dans le style ancien" (1888-89), four symphonies (1889-90, 1892-93, 1895-96, and 1911-13), a "Chant funèbre" (1895), an "Ouverture" (1894-95), a "Hymne à la Justice" (1902) and a "Hymne à Vénus" (1903-04). In the field of chamber music he left a quintet



for wind instruments and piano (1894), a sonata for violin and pianoforte (1901), a string quartet (1902-03), a trio for pianoforte and strings (1904-05), and a sonata for violoncello and pianoforte (1909-10). In addition are the "Promenades" for pianoforte (1893), "Six Songs" (1887-90) "Four Songs" (1902) and "Twelve Songs" (1913-14), which were lost. He also composed the operas "Yolande" (1889-90), "Guercœur" (1897-1900) and "Bérénice" (1905-09).

It must be admitted that Magnard's music has never won widespread admiration. Performances of his works have been relatively few, but even so the evident seriousness of Magnard as an artist, and the lofty nature of his aspirations have impressed earnest musicians and open-minded critics. It offers persuasive argument as to the worth of his music that those who know it best are his most unshaken admirers. They are, in addition, able to interpret the relation between the composer's temperament and his self-expression. Guy Ropartz has been a persistent champion of Magnard's music, and has done much to make it better known. Gaston Carraud, composer and critic, has analyzed in the most searching and impartial manner Magnard's esthetic principles and the manner in which these are embodied in his music.

The classic outlines of the symphonies and the

chamber music do not disguise a thoroughly independent idiom. Magnard's music is severe in style, but lofty in conception. At times it is harsh and almost acrid, yet there is also a constant undercurrent of striving toward ideal beauty. His music is difficult to grasp at a first hearing. It is sometimes even repellent, but its honesty and sincerity are persuasive in the end. The first movements of his chamber-music works are often full of struggle and turbulent aspiration. Their slow movements are frequently tender, with episodes of serene calm, a witness to the inner sensibility of the composer. In place of a scherzo Magnard is apt to substitute a rustic dance, rough in character, and sometimes, as in the Trio, a modified waltz rhythm. The finales are vigorous, usually preceded by a contemplative introduction.

In the orchestral works there is generally less evidence of strain and uncertainty. The "Chant funèbre," not without evidences of immaturity, is nevertheless of impressive dignity. The "Overture," Op. 10, and the Third Symphony have clarity of outline and conciseness of style. The Fourth Symphony, at once more complex and more dramatic, is the ripest product of Magnard's maturity. While the features of unrest, aspirations toward ideality and rough humor are present as in earlier works, there is also a greater mastery of ma-

terial and a better coördinated expressive force. The "Hymne à la Justice," for orchestra, is particularly worthy of mention for its rugged sincerity and glimpses of sublimity. The very title furnished an apt subject for its composer's temperament.

Magnard wrote his own opera texts, though not without many misgivings and consultations with his friends. Of his three operas, "Yolande," though exhibiting dramatic capacity, was regarded by him as an experiment. "Guerceur," highly allegorical in subject, is more individual in musical substance. Both these works, however, showed the influence of Wagner. In "Bérénice," Magnard attained an original dramatic style, though he strove to deprecate this in a preface to the opera. After explaining the extent to which his text was based upon or departed from the dramas by Racine and Corneille, he comments upon his musical procedure: "My score is written in the Wagnerian style. Lacking the necessary genius to create a new lyric idiom, I have chosen among those existing that which best suited my entirely classic tastes and my traditional musical culture. I have above all sought to approach 'pure music' as closely as possible. I have reduced the recitative to its lowest terms, and I have given the declamation an emphasized melodic turn. The overture is of symphonic

cut, the duet which closes the first act in solo style. I have used the fugue in Titus' meditation, the gentle harmony of the canon at the octave in all the outpourings of love. Finally, I do not conceal from myself that the rhythm which accompanies the return of Titus in the third act has too much the character of a sonata finale. It is possible that my conception of dramatic music may be false. I apologize for it in advance to our most authoritative estheticians."

Magnard criticized himself too severely in regard to the dramatic idiom of "Bérénice." While undoubtedly he adopted, as many others have done, some of the features of Wagnerian method, he has fused these with his own manner in a fashion that is not only consistent but personal. That after "Pelléas" and "Ariane et Barbe-Bleue" a composer should return voluntarily to a union of instrumental style and the dramatic seems not only conservative but reactionary. But no other attitude was possible for Magnard's firmly entrenched convictions. Within the limitations of this standpoint, Magnard has produced a work of extraordinary conciseness and purity of style, in which he has attained a genuine vitality of expression. From the mastery of its self-imposed conditions "Bérénice" remains one of Magnard's most remarkable works. Among the songs, the Quatre Poèmes, for which

Magnard wrote his texts, are of serious lyric beauty and tragic atmosphere. They contain no thought of vocal effect for itself. Their sentiments, moreover, are of an autobiographical nature, which adds to their interest.

Aside from the influence of Wagner in the operas, no composer exercised a permanent reaction upon Magnard except Beethoven. Hardly any concrete instances of this remain. Magnard was uncompromisingly himself. During the last years of his life he was still developing. He was acquiring with each work a new command over the problems of his art, and clarified powers of self-expression. The tragedy at Baron deprived French music of a highly cultivated artist of relentlessly lofty ideals, who must inevitably have added still finer works to the literature of his race.

### III

While Albéric Magnard, like the pupils of César Franck, reached esthetic satisfaction through a reconciliation of the classic ideals of the past with his own personal expression, Florent Schmitt, on the contrary, finds that contemporary tendencies offer sufficient material without retrospect into periods other than his own.

Florent Schmitt was born at Blâmont, in the department of Meurthe-et-Moselle, September 28,

1870. Two influences are to be noted during his childhood, the distant spire of Strasbourg Cathedral and the Vosges mountains. Music had appealed to M. Schmitt from boyhood, but it was not until his seventeenth year that he resolved to devote himself exclusively to it. He studied first at Nancy and in 1889 entered the Paris Conservatoire. He studied harmony with Théodore Dubois, counterpoint, fugue and composition with Massenet and later, with Gabriel Fauré. His studies were interrupted by the prescribed military service, but in 1897 he obtained a second prize in the Prix de Rome competition, and three years later was awarded the first prize for his cantata, "Sémiramis." At Rome, Schmitt was unusually productive and composed some of his best known works including the 46th Psalm for solos, chorus and orchestra, the orchestral works, "Musiques de plein air," "Le Palais hanté," as well as a symphonic poem, "Combat des Raksasas et délivrance de Sîta," the manuscript of which was lost during the Paris floods of 1910, and the first movement of his Quintet. M. Schmitt then travelled through Germany, and like d'Indy composed a series of waltzes suggested by the towns through which he passed. He also visited Turkey and composed a symphonic poem for band entitled "Sélamlik." Shortly after his return to Paris, the customary concert of his

works was given in December, 1906, and awakened a widespread interest. Nearly a year later, on November 9, 1907, Loie Fuller danced and mimed the title rôle in "La Tragédie de Salomé," entitled a "mute drama" in two acts and seven scenes, actually the French pioneer work of the type of ballet since become world-famous through the performances of Diaghilev's company. In April, 1909, occurred the first performances of the Quintet for pianoforte and strings, which had been begun in 1905 and was finished in 1908. This work created a genuine sensation, and from this moment its composer's position was assured. Schmitt composed incidental music for performances of "Faust" at the Odéon in 1912. In 1919 appeared a "Sonate libre" for violin and pianoforte. In 1920 Schmitt again composed incidental music for performances at the Opéra of André Gide's drama (after Shakespeare) "Antoine et Cléopâtre." Orchestral suites for concert performance have been arranged from this music. He has in addition composed a large number of piano pieces for two and four hands among them two sets of "Musiques intimes," Op. 16 and 29; a suite, Op. 56, "Pupazzi"; "Musiques foraines," Op. 22; "Feuillets de voyage," Op. 26; "Reflets d'Allemagne," Op. 28; "Une semaine du Petit Elfe Ferme-l'Œil" (after Hans Andersen)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lately orchestrated and produced as a ballet in Paris.

“Trois Rapsodies,” Op. 53, for two pianos. Other works worthy of mention are “Chansons à Quatre Voix,” Op. 39, with orchestral accompaniment, pieces for violin and for violoncello with pianoforte, for chromatic harp, a “Lied et Scherzo” for wind instruments, a striking “Chant de Guerre” for men’s voices and orchestra composed for the Harvard Glee Club. In 1920, he contributed a pianoforte piece, “Et Pan, au fond des blés lunaires, s’accouda,” for the collection entitled “Le Tombeau de Debussy.” For some years M. Schmitt has written criticisms for various Parisian journals. He has served on the committee of the Société Nationale, and he was a charter member of the Société Musicale Indépendante. Since the autumn of 1921, he has been director of the Conservatoire at Lyons.

As a composer, Florent Schmitt impresses first of all by his native gift for polyphonic expression in music. He does not affect this manner as a tribute to the eighteenth century. Even if he employs the fugue as in the 46th Psalm it is not to honor a scholastic artifice, but through dramatic or emotional necessity. In fact a contrapuntal conception pervades all of his music to a greater or lesser degree, and is a spontaneous medium of musical expression. If at times this tendency causes Schmitt’s music to err in the direction of needless complexity, it is generally curbed by his equally definite instinct



for style. Harmonically Florent Schmitt has assimilated some of the general principles of Debussy's innovations, but he has accomplished this without sacrificing his individuality. While the sources of his harmonic idiom are evident, his personality is sufficiently independent to convert these hints to his own use.

As a whole Schmitt's music is notable for its exuberance, its impetuosity and its dramatic fire. If he has composed a considerable number of short pieces, he seems most himself in works of large conception, often filled with complex detail but nevertheless unified in plan. He has an extraordinary faculty for maintaining an essential simplicity in design despite the large dimensions of his works.

These characteristics are plainly visible in the first of a series of compositions upon which Schmitt's fame rests, "Étude pour Le Palais hanté de Edgar Poe," for orchestra. The basis of this "Étude" is the poem, "The Haunted Palace," one of the "lyrical improvisations" recited by Roderick Usher in the tale, "The Fall of the House of Usher." A long introduction which prepares the way for the main body of the work shows Schmitt's innate facility in contrapuntal combination, though it is over-elaborate at times. While suggesting admirably the mood and sentiment of the poem, the music also achieves a closely knit coördination of the

musical ideas and a lucid development of them. Schmitt's command of dramatic expression in the orchestra is unusually able. The 46th Psalm (the 47th in the King James' Version of the Bible) is genuinely grandiose in conception. The psalm is one of exultant praise of the Jehovah of the Old Testament — "O clap your hands, all ye people, shout unto God with the voice of triumph. For the Lord most high is terrible; he is a great king over all the earth. He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet." Florent Schmitt has set this psalm with dramatic imagination and exuberant power. He has illustrated each verse graphically with appropriate contrast of mood. The vocal writing is difficult, but astoundingly effective. Schmitt has employed a large orchestra including organ and instruments of percussion with lavish brilliance. The wealth of means at his disposal and the expansive proportions of this work have not prevented him from attaining clarity in construction. The breadth of this work, its imposing sonorities and its sheer vigor of expression have brought a new note into French choral music. The Quintet (1905-08) is equally significant for its thorough grasp and competent handling of the difficult problems involved. For Schmitt has not been content to accept the reticent chamber-music style of his teacher Fauré or the aphoristic com-

pression of Ravel's string quartet. On the contrary, he has laid out this work upon a large scale, yet he has so diversified and enriched the treatment of detail that its length is not burdensome. A commanding introduction on clear contrapuntal lines engages the attention at the outset. The movement following is astonishingly fertile in invention particularly in the "development section" where a dramatic quotation of the introduction theme is made. The slow movement is essentially lyric, if of expansive dimensions, but its contrapuntal skill is equally admirable. The finale, where a composer's power too often flags, maintains its interest to the end with an unflinching contrapuntal vitality. This Quintet is not remarkable as an exhibition of technical resource, but primarily because of the force and variety of its musical contents. It must be placed high among the very best of French chamber music. Its sole drawback lies in its technical difficulty, but since Schmitt has written idiomatically both for pianoforte and strings this obstacle is not insurmountable.

"La Tragédie de Salomé," Op. 50 (1907), for orchestra, is undoubtedly Florent Schmitt's masterpiece. It was first performed at the Théâtre des Arts, November 9, 1907, with an orchestra of twenty musicians when Loie Fuller danced and mimed the rôle of Salomé. This work is not based

upon Oscar Wilde's drama, but upon a poem by Robert d'Humières. It has also been arranged for large symphonic orchestra and in this version is known all over the civilized musical world. A prelude outlines the mood of the work. The scene is a terrace outside Herod's palace, overlooking the Dead Sea. The mountains of Moab frame the horizon. It is sunset. Soon torches illumine the scene. Herodias examines a coffer of jewels. Salomé is fascinated by them and sketches the dance of pearls. The second part begins with the enchantments on the sea. Herod is enveloped by darkness, a prey to thoughts of debauchery and fear. Herodias watches him. Mysterious lights arise from the accursed sea. Fragments of chants heard during orgies, strangled by the rain of bitumen and ashes on the terraces of Sodom and Gomorrha, breathe forth confusedly. Snatches of dances, dull clashes of cymbals, clapping of hands, sighs and a wild laugh are heard. A voice mounts from the abyss. Herod, subjugated, listens. Vapors rise from the sea, vague forms are outlined. A distant peal of thunder rolls. Salomé dances amidst the flashes of lightning. She tempts Herod. He pursues her and tears off her veils. John the Baptist appears and covers Salomé with his anchorite's mantle. Herodias interprets Herod's fury, and by a gesture delivers John to the executioner. He soon reappears

Les Angéles L. Salomé

24 Avenue Edouard Burlington Hill

Prélude

mf

très animé  
Flûte solo

Handwritten musical score for the first system. It features a flute part on the top staff and piano accompaniment on the bottom staff. The flute part begins with a series of sixteenth notes, followed by a melodic line. The piano accompaniment consists of chords and rhythmic patterns. A dynamic marking 'mf' is present above the piano part. The system concludes with a double bar line.

très enjoué avec la main

forte

Handwritten musical score for the second system. It continues the flute and piano parts from the first system. The flute part has a more active melodic line. The piano accompaniment features chords and rhythmic patterns. A dynamic marking 'forte' is present above the piano part. The system concludes with a double bar line.

Danse des valseuses

Allegro

vibrato

Handwritten musical score for the third system. It continues the flute and piano parts. The flute part has a more active melodic line. The piano accompaniment features chords and rhythmic patterns. A dynamic marking 'vibrato' is present above the piano part. The system concludes with a double bar line.

Danse des cloffines

très animé

Handwritten musical score for the fourth system. It continues the flute and piano parts. The flute part has a more active melodic line. The piano accompaniment features chords and rhythmic patterns. A dynamic marking 'très animé' is present above the piano part. The system concludes with a double bar line.

Andant

Handwritten musical score for the fifth system. It continues the flute and piano parts. The flute part has a more active melodic line. The piano accompaniment features chords and rhythmic patterns. A dynamic marking 'Andant' is present above the piano part. The system concludes with a double bar line.



with John's head upon a bronze charger. Salomé, triumphant, possesses herself of the trophy, and begins a dance. Then, suddenly disquieted, she rushes to the edge of the terrace and hurls the charger into the sea. It appears blood-red. Herod, Herodias and the executioner are struck dumb with terror. Salomé faints. When she recovers she sees an apparition of John's head, now in one place, now in another; at last they multiply on all sides. Salomé begins the dance of terror. The storm bursts. Sulphurous clouds roll up the precipice. Whirling gusts of sand come from the desert. The tall cypresses rock and crash down. Mount Nebo bursts into flames. The palace walls give way and crush Salomé.

Florent Schmitt has depicted this lurid scenario in music of unexampled vividness of exotic imagination. His gifts for construction, contrapuntal mastery, and appropriate harmonic luxuriance have fired his inventive powers to produce one of the most graphically dramatic works in the range of French music. "La Tragédie de Salomé" is the French prototype of a new species of ballet in which all the resources of scenic production, orchestral splendor, and detailed and plastic accompaniment of action combine. It stands only second to "Daphnis et Chloé" as a vitalized product of individual invention. At once the prelude announces a

mood of morbid tragedy, leading into the brilliant "dance of pearls." The second part continues and enlarges upon the atmosphere of the prelude. A particularly felicitous stroke of dramatic appositeness lies in the episode in which Schmitt uses a folksong of Aïca, collected by Salvator Peitavi on the shores of the Dead Sea. Given at first to a single voice behind the scenes, this chant, admirably harmonized, increases gradually in intensity and emotional range until it leads directly into the dance of lightning. The dance of terror and the destruction of Herod's palace form a gigantic climax to a work of many unique qualities. In this composition Schmitt's harmonic invention and his dramatic use of the orchestra reach an extraordinary level of mastery. It may be noted that in "La Tragédie de Salomé," as in "Le Palais hanté," the Psalm and the Quintet, Florent Schmitt relies entirely upon the intrinsic expressive capacity of music in itself without recourse to realistic methods.

While the foregoing works emphasize the most eminent traits of Schmitt's talent, there are others which suggest other aspects of his individuality. The "Chansons à Quatre Voix," Op. 39, for mixed chorus and orchestra reveal many agreeable ideas and much skilful treatment of the voices. Among these, "Véhémente" is vivaciously alert, "Nos-



talgique" is dreamily sentimental, "Naïve" is lyrically tender and "Martiale" is frankly gay. The duets entitled "Musiques foraines" display Schmitt's sense of humor; those after Andersen, "Une semaine du Petit Elfe Ferme-l'Œil," show considerable invention within the five-note limit of the right hand. "Le parapluie chinois," the last of this set, is especially graceful and imaginative. Of the "Trois Rapsodies" for two pianos, the third "Rapsodie Viennoise," better known in its orchestral version, transports the Viennese waltz into somewhat sophisticated surroundings with fancy and brilliance. The "Chant de Guerre" presents a compelling and dramatic mood with genuine originality and force of expression. The Suites from the incidental music to "Antoine et Cléopâtre" again record Schmitt's capacity for suggestion of atmosphere and dramatic emotion. While these pieces show less evident musical invention, they mark an advance in the realization of Oriental color, and in original departures into the field of polyharmony. The "Sonate libre" constitutes Schmitt's sole departure from orthodox structure in chamber music. It is, in reality, almost a rhapsody in two interconnected movements, discursive and free in treatment, as well as exceptionally arduous in the technical and rhythmical problems presented. Its construction while involved is not inco-

herent; the ideas are original, and there are many effective episodes. At the same time, the difficulties in the way of an adequate performance are by no means inconsiderable. "Et Pan, au fond des blés lunaires, s'accouda," the motto from Paul Fort, is an imaginative piece thoroughly characteristic of Schmitt's later manner. The pianoforte pieces, "Ombres" (1915-17), also display the dramatic qualities of Schmitt's imagination, especially the first, illustrating a verse from the "Chants de Maldoror" "J'entends dans le lointain des cris prolongés de la douleur la plus poignante." The song "Star" should also be mentioned.

Florent Schmitt is a strong and independent personality among the conflicting tendencies of his generation. By preference he has turned toward works of powerful contents, dramatic sensibility, scope of imagination, and, when the occasion demands it, of subtlety of expression. The strength of his music and his exceptional command of the basic principles of musical construction entitle him to a place apart.

#### IV

Like Albéric Magnard, Déodat de Sévérac did not live to develop the promise of his talent to the fullest extent, but like him also he left clear indications of his temperament in works full of originality.

Joseph-Marie-Déodat de Sévérac was born at Saint-Félix-de-Caraman in Lauraguais, July 20, 1873, of one of the oldest families of Languedoc and Romergue. His father was a painter of talent, a pupil of the *École des Beaux-Arts* in Paris, whose pictures received various awards for their merit. He was also extremely fond of music and directed his son's first musical instruction. After receiving his degree as bachelor of letters at the *Collège de Sorèze*, M. de Sévérac began to study law at the University of Toulouse. But he felt much more strongly drawn to music, and entered the *Conservatoire* of Toulouse. In 1896, he came to Paris just at the period when Charles Bordes, Guilmant and d'Indy had founded the *Schola Cantorum*. De Sévérac became one of its first pupils studying counterpoint with Magnard and composition with d'Indy. Here he remained for ten years, taking his diploma in July, 1907, after successfully defending his thesis, "La Centralization des petites chapelles musicales." Some of his songs and piano pieces had already been heard at meetings of the *Société Nationale*, and in 1905 a concert of his music had been given at the *Schola*. On December 8, 1909, the *Opéra-Comique* gave the first performance of his opera, "Cœur du Moulin," with evident success. In the following year his music for the lyric tragedy by *Émile Sicard*, "Héliogabale," was pro-

duced in the arena at Béziers. De Sévérac lived by preference in the south of France. His music bore the impress of the country he loved, and its greatest charm came from a certain regional verity. For some years he had been out of health, and had lived at Ceret in the department of the Pyrénées orientales. Here he died on March 23, 1921, leaving unfinished works. De Sévérac had served on the committee of the Société Nationale. He was keenly interested in folk-song and had collected, arranged and published two sets of "Chansons du XVIII<sup>e</sup> Siècle," besides those entitled "Vieilles Chansons de France" and "Chansons populaires et anciennes."

De Sévérac published the following works: "Le Chant de la terre" (1900), "Poème géorgique" in seven numbers; "En Languedoc" (1904), a suite in five movements; "Baigneuses au Soleil" (1908); "Cerdaña" (1910), five picturesque studies; "En Vacances" (1910), seven short romantic pieces; "Sous les lauriers roses" (1919), and "Le Soldat de plomb," "a true story in three tales" (for four hands), all for pianoforte; about fourteen songs, three of which have texts in the *langue d'oc*; the dramatic works, "Cœur du Moulin" (1903-08), a lyric poem in two acts; "Héliogabale," a lyric tragedy in three acts; symphonic preludes for Verhaeren's tragedy, "Hélène de Sparte"; pieces for

organ, and religious music. Among the unpublished works were: "Élégie sur la mort de Paul Gauguin," a quintet for piano and strings; two chamber-music suites, "Les Muses sylvestres" and "Le Parc au cerfs"; a symphonic poem, "Nymphes au Crépuscule"; a suite, "Didon et Enée," the manuscript of which was lost in the Batignolles-Clichy-Odéon omnibus; other orchestral pieces and dramatic works.

With the ardent temperament of the southern Frenchman, de Sévérac possessed a special aptitude for re-creating in music the atmosphere of his native Languedoc, the spirit of its folk-song, and the traits of its people. Like Charles Bordes, and even to a greater extent, he was a regional composer. Herein lies the charm of his originality. His manner of writing for the pianoforte was his own, and abounded in novel effects of sonority and color. Even in his first published work for piano, "Le Chant de la terre," a new message easily surmounts traces of immaturity. "Les Semailles," the Intermezzo ("Conte à la Veillée"), "Les Moissons" and the sparkling Epilogue at once attest the independence of his musical speech. "En Languedoc," composed but four years later, shows a considerable intensification of his original traits. "Vers le Mas en fête," vividly anticipatory of rejoicing; "Sur l'étang, le soir," a poetic interpretation of an

evening mood; "À Cheval, dans le prairie," with its incisive rhythms; "Coin de cimetièrre, au printemps," reflective and atmospheric; the scintillating "Le jour de la Foire, au Mas," realize graphically de Sévérac's command of descriptive qualities and inner emotion. "Baigneuses au Soleil" is a further exploration of new sonorities and coloristic effects upon the piano embodied in music of a rare pictorial charm. The five numbers of "Cerdaña" are a musical commentary of the composer's impressions in the Catalan province. Even the titles "L'arrivée en Cerdagne," "Les Fêtes" (*souvenir de Puigcerda*), "Ménétriers et Glaneuses" (*souvenir d'un pèlerinage à Font-Remeu*), "Les Muletiers devant le Christ de Llivia," and "Le Retour des Muletiers" illustrate the manner in which de Sévérac's musical invention was stimulated by landscape. These pieces, indefinably vital and picturesque in character, serve still further to fix the nature of their composer's individuality. "Sous les lauriers roses," dedicated "to the memory of the beloved masters E. Chabrier, I. Albeniz and Ch. Bordes," is a glowing tribute to the personalities of these three composers, and yet retains to the utmost de Sévérac's charm, coloristic imagination and dazzlingly brilliant rhythms. The humor of "Le Soldat de plomb" shows yet another aspect of this composer's talent. It is incredible that pianists

in search of new music have not awakened to the opportunity contained in these glowing and unusual pianoforte works.

In an article upon Déodat de Sévérac appearing in "The Chesterian" for May, 1921, M. G. Jean-Aubry has enlarged upon the regional aspect of de Sévérac's music. "He alone succeeded in depicting his province musically with the same intensity as Albeniz did for Spain or Manuel de Falla for Andalusia. Neither the Cevennes of Vincent d'Indy, nor the Île-de-France of Debussy; neither the Basque country of Bordes, nor the Brittany of Ladmirault; nor yet that Franco-Spanish frontier that peeps out of many of Ravel's works, are more plastic than the Languedoc of de Sévérac as it appears in his sets of piano pieces, 'Le Chant de la terre,' 'En Languedoc,' 'Cerdaña,' and 'Sous les lauriers roses,' or in his opera 'Cœur du Moulin.' Yet while he achieved this, he never stooped to the mediocre confines of musical parochialism. He made Languedoc part of French music, much as Mérimée with his 'Colomba' made Corsica part of French literature."

De Sévérac's gifts as a song writer might easily presuppose his success as composer for the stage. "Cœur du Moulin," composed at the vintage of 1903 and retouched five years later, realizes this promise. The text by Maurice Magre recounts a

simple tale. The scene is laid in a Languedoc village at the end of the eighteenth century just as grape-gathering is finished. There are choruses of rejoicing at the abundant grape crop. Marie, the wife of Pierre, a harvest worker, with a friend is carrying bread and wine to the grape-gatherers. She is troubled by a dream of the night before in which appeared Jacques, her former lover to whom she had promised constancy. Her companion tries to reassure her. Jacques has been away for years, and nothing has been heard from him. Marie's dream comes true, however. Jacques returns, examining each familiar aspect of the village, thinking only of his former sweetheart. They soon meet, and Marie confesses she has broken her word. Their former innocent love is at once revived, and they determine to elope. An old miller, Jacques' friend, has overheard their tryst. He pleads with Jacques not to destroy Pierre's illusions, and to leave the village at once. Jacques' mother is crushed by the thought of losing her son. The miller reminds her of her efforts to bring up Jacques to do good. The grape-gathering ends in a festival. There are dances and merry-making. The pleadings of the miller, the evocation of the spirits of the old mill reveal the path of duty to Jacques. He embraces his mother and leaves forever in the midst of the vintage rejoicings. This human story



is fitted for lyrical treatment. De Sévéric has characterized appropriately the choruses of the grape-gatherers, the personalities of the lovers, the earnest old miller, and the devotion to duty of the mother. Throughout the music is spontaneous, human in emotion and appealing in its intrinsic qualities. The influence of Debussy on de Sévéric has been somewhat exaggerated. It exists undoubtedly, but it does not overshadow the dramatic originality of the music as a whole. Like other works by this composer, "Cœur de Moulin" is an opera of a naïve charm and truthfulness of musical sentiment. It has its own flavor, both in the lyric passages and in the gaiety and rhythmic animation of the choruses. It is moreover pre-eminently Gallic in flavor and deserves its place by the side of "Pelléas," "Ariane et Barbe-Bleue," "Le Pays" and "Pénélope" for its share in restoring the independence of the French operatic stage. While "Héliogabale" scarcely seems to possess the distinction of "Cœur du Moulin," it must be recalled that this work was composed for special conditions and can hardly be judged impartially apart from them.

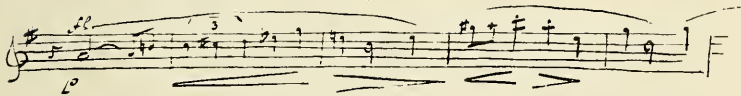
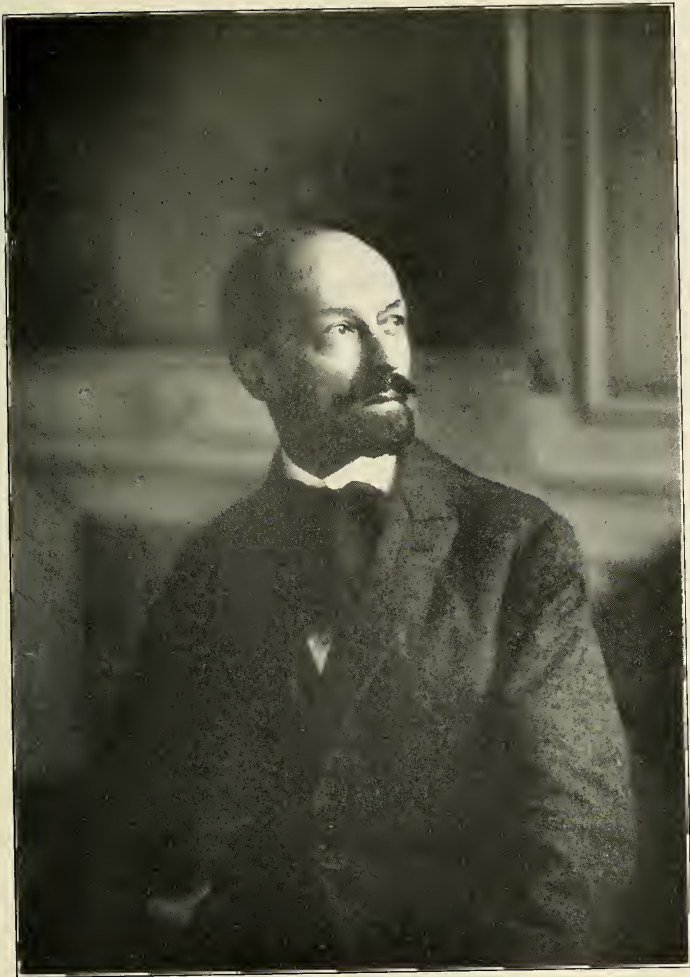
It is perhaps needless to say that Déodat de Sévéric's untimely death was a deprivation to French music. He had never ceased artistic development. He left unfinished works which may well

have increased his fame. But as it is, he has fixed scenes of Languedoc and its folk-song in graphically picturesque music of an uncommon vividness and searching truthfulness. These works will assure his reputation.

## v

Despite his arduous discipline at the Schola, Déodat de Sévérac was first of all the poet of Languedoc. Roussel received the greater part of his musical education at the same source, but this fact has not prevented his individuality from leading him far afield into a realm of highly original exoticism.

Albert Roussel was born at Tourcoing, April 5, 1869. His family was connected with industrial concerns on a large scale. Outdoor life always appealed to him as a boy, and his imagination was particularly drawn to the sea. While a student at Stanislas College in Paris, he prepared for admission into the Naval School. Like Rimsky-Korsakov, Roussel made a voyage to Cochin China as ensign on board the armored cruiser, the *Styx*. But his artistic sensibilities were awakened by the changing aspects of sky and sea, and he sought a medium of self-expression. In 1894 he resigned from the navy in order to devote himself wholly to music. After working at harmony in Roubaix,



"Pour une fête de printemps"

à Edward Buligona Hill  
en cordial hommage  
Albert Roussel



Roussel came to Paris where Gigout guided his studies in counterpoint and fugue. In 1897 he was awarded a prize by the Société des Compositeurs de Musique for "Deux Madrigaux à Quatre Voix," and in the following year he entered the Schola Cantorum where he remained until 1907. While still a student, songs, pianoforte pieces, chamber music and even orchestral works by him were heard at the Société Nationale. A symphonic prelude to Tolstoy's "Resurrection" contains the first manifestations of his later individuality. But a symphony, "Le Poème de la Forêt," first performed March 20, 1908, at Brussels, and in the following year at the Lamoureux Concerts in Paris, attracted general attention to his music. During the winter of 1909-10 M. Roussel travelled again to the East, this time in the capacity of passenger. The results of his impressions were recorded in the "Evocations," three symphonic sketches for orchestra, the highly colored exoticism of which served to define his individuality afresh. On April 3, 1913, the Théâtre des Arts mounted a ballet by Roussel, "Le Festin de l'Araignée," the characters of which are insects or worms, a work of sensitive yet humorous dramatic imagination. This ballet has been frequently performed in a concert version. A "Prélude pour une fête de Printemps" (1921) and a Symphony in B flat major through their ex-

plotation of polyharmony suggested that Roussel was entering upon a new and radical phase in his development. These assumptions of radicalism were to a certain extent contradicted when on June 1, 1923, the Paris Opéra produced an opera-ballet in two acts, "Padmâvatî," completed in 1914, at once recognized as one of the most remarkable stage works of recent years, of which the authoritative musical expression and large dramatic sense revealed its composer at the height of his powers.

Roussel has not been a fertile composer, but a large proportion of his music is significant. Aside from the works mentioned above he has published "Rustiques," Op. 5 (1904-06), a Suite, Op. 14 (1909), a Sonatine, Op. 16 (1913), and "L'accueil des Muses" (for "Le Tombeau de Debussy") for piano, twelve songs, among the chamber-music compositions a Trio, Op. 2 (1902), a Divertissement, Op. 6, for wind instruments and piano, and a Sonata, Op. 11 (1907-08) for violin and pianoforte.

In spite of his long period of study under d'Indy at the Schola Cantorum, the scholastic influence of which was supplemented by several years' service as teacher at the same institution, Roussel manifested from the outset a singularly independent personality. He could partake of and assimilate d'Indy's counsels with an evident minimum of reaction upon either his choice of forms or his manner

of musical speech. Such an aloofness is indeed rare in an epoch when most composers record with unconscious fidelity the contacts of their formative years. With some slight and early deviations, Roussel's independence has remained unalterable throughout his career. To this trait in large degree he owes his enviable position to-day. The Trio in E flat (1902) despite its personal sentiment suggests here and there traces of the Schola, but among the songs of the following year to texts by Henri de Régnier, "Le Départ" and "Le Jardin mouillé" already attest an individual vein of expression far from academic paths. The symphonic prelude to "Resurrection" emphasizes still more distinctly Roussel's break with the convention of his time. The symphony "Le Poème de la Forêt" (1904-06) with the subdivisions, "Forêt d'hiver," "Le Renouveau," "Soir d'été" and "Faunes et Dryades," conforms to the outlines of a symphony notwithstanding its titles. "Forêt d'hiver" is virtually an introduction to "Le Renouveau" which constitutes a free first movement. "Soir d'été" serves as a slow movement, and "Faunes et Dryades" as finale. Roussel here shows larger outlines of invention than in his previous works, as well as a marked capacity for sustaining moods. "Forêt d'hiver" aptly suggests the inanimate reposeful preparation of winter; "Le Renouveau" the gathering of the

forces of nature. "Soir d'été" is particularly impressive in its descriptive warmth, while the fantastic vitality of "Faunes et Dryades," contrasting ably with the previous movements, brings the symphony to a brilliant close. Occasional reminders of the methods both of d'Indy and Debussy do not diminish the genuine originality of this work. The Divertissement (1906) for wind instruments and piano is entirely characteristic of its composer, without a hint of external reaction. It establishes Roussel's personal harmonic vein, as well as an elastic treatment of structure on unorthodox lines. Its central mood is one of sprightly and sharply rhythmic gaiety alternating with episodes of a more expressive sentiment. The Sonata for piano-forte and violin (1907-08) marks the beginning of a transition to his later style. The introduction to the first movement is at once arresting in its ideas, but there are evidences of a certain constraint in the presence of an academic form which mar the movement as a whole. A piquant Scherzo has some points of resemblance with a similar movement in the B flat symphony, making due allowance for the greater boldness of the later work. The last movement of the Sonata has the rhythmic vigor so frequent in Roussel's music. The shortcomings of this Sonata do not disguise its harmonic advance and its forceful musical substance. The



Suite for piano, Op. 14 (1909), containing a "Prélude," "Sicilienne," "Bourrée" and "Ronde," does not revert to an eighteenth-century style, but is rather Roussel's interpretation of the titles in his own manner. The "Prélude" is sombre and dramatic, large in outlines and emotional scope; the "Sicilienne," grave in rhythm, is sometimes disconcertingly dissonant but effective; "The Bourrée," strident in the opening measures, is steadily vivacious. The "Ronde" is perhaps the least appealing of these four pieces. The dominating impression made by this suite is one of growing power, more concrete originality in ideas and increased precision in developing them. The breadth of scope shown in the "Evocations," Op. 15 (1910-11), at once established Roussel as an artist of matured resources. The separate titles of the three pieces are: "Les Dieux dans l'ombre des cavernes," "La Ville Rose" and "Aux bords du Fleuve Sacré." In them Roussel found his true province — the adaptation of exotic material to large poetic and dramatic uses. The first, full of disquieting mystery and episodes of penetrating sentiment, achieves a considerable dramatic power despite its relative brevity. The second of aerial delicacy, vibrating with color and light, is steadily pictorial in suggestion. The last, in which a mixed chorus (text by M.-D. Calvocoressi) plays an important part, at-

tains genuine exaltation of mood. The eloquence of these pieces is increased by the skill with which Roussel has fused the exotic material with his own traits. Furthermore their exotic illusion is greatly enhanced by his masterly use of orchestral color.

The "Sonatine," Op. 16 (1913), again proves Roussel's independent invention both harmonically and rhythmically. Without surprising expressive qualities, this brief work has too much grace and animation to be passed over. "Le Festin de l'Araignée," hastily composed, affirms at once the versatility of Roussel's imagination. The scenario is by Gilbert de Voisins. After a prelude, the curtain rises upon a garden. The spider is putting the finishing touches to her web, and is surveying the prospects as to prey. Some ants enter; they discover a rose petal and carry it away with difficulty. A butterfly enters and dances. The spider tempts the butterfly near her web. She is caught in it, struggles and dies. The spider disengages the butterfly from the web, envelops her in a shroud, and dances her triumph. A piece of fruit falls noisily from its tree. The spider is terrified. Some fruit worms wish to feast upon the fruit, but are prevented by two praying-mantes. The worms elude them, and rapidly penetrate the fruit. The mantes, irritated by the worms' trick, provoke each other to single combat. At last the

mantes are caught in the web. Again the spider dances. A moth hatches out and begins to dance. The worms crawl out of the fruit. They have become very fat. They dance with the moth. The spider now prepares to feast upon the butterfly. One of the mantes has freed himself from the web. He comes up unnoticed and stabs the spider with his "sword." She dies in agony. Night falls on the solitary garden.

Roussel has been singularly successful in devising music for this microscopic drama. Using a miniature orchestra, he has yet found the means to illustrate the action, characterize its personages with delicate and pungent humor, and yet rise to its tense moments. Among many striking episodes the delicate prelude, the spider's dance of triumph, the butterfly's dance, the tragic death of the spider and the calm epilogue are vitalized in music of unfettered invention, often acridly dissonant but an unflinching counterpart to the dramatic situations. Its ingenuity does not descend to unbecoming subtlety, nor does it once overstep its stylistic boundaries.

"Pour une Fête de Printemps" (1921) and the Symphony in B flat major (1922) would seem to imply an esthetic affiliation with the esthetic procedures of the "Groupe des Six," were it not that "Padmâvatî" (composed earlier, but performed

later) supplies the link in Roussel's evolution. Both the later works now maintain a logical sequence after the opera. In them Roussel has simply entered another stage in the consistent application of dissonance which has always constituted a primary feature of his individuality. As a progressive artist he is not content to stand still. In all probability the polyharmonic style of "Le Sacre du Printemps" was not without its reaction upon Roussel. But he has never been an imitator, and any hint has always been fertilized by his own personal predilections. This stage of his harmonic conceptions may also be seen in the pianoforte piece "L'Accueil des Muses" (1920) composed for the collection, "Le Tombeau de Debussy." Such dissonances may often seem obscure at first, but on further acquaintance they are so indissolubly part of the expressive foundation as to confute the idea that they are capricious or wilful. Judged by the standard of the "Evocations," "Pour une Fête de Printemps" seems at first undeniably radical. Its musical substance does not accord with the conventional European spring. It seems more at one with the uncertain rigors of New England. But viewed in connection with other works by Roussel, it takes its place with similar records of his individual imagination. Beginning with a mood of somewhat acrid grace (if the two words are not

frankly incompatible) it rises to a dramatic climax and subsides in reminiscences of its opening pages. Possessing a somewhat astringent beauty, once its idiom is understood this prelude has a wayward charm.

The Symphony pushes a similar idiom to even greater extremes. It is a work of daring and even repellent traits, but the independent strength of its outlines commands respectful and even submissive attention. It is impossible to deny the defiant power of certain pages, and the fearless consistency with which Roussel has argued from his musical premises.

“*Padmâvatî*,” text by Louis Laloy, the biographer of Debussy and a fellow student of Roussel’s at the Schola, aims to revive a form in high favor during the eighteenth century — the opera-ballet. It presents a plot in which there is a pretext for choreographic action, combined with the usual vocal attributes of opera. The period of the story is fixed at the end of the thirteenth century. Ratan-Sen, king of Tchitor, is at war with Alaouddin, sultan of the Mongols. One day, Alaouddin presents himself at the capital gates of his enemy. He is unarmed, and his only companion is a Brahmin. He wishes to enter into alliance with the king. Ratan-Sen receives the sultan with courtesy although he is disquieted by the presence

of the Mongol army near the city. Alaouddin in turn is obsequious, but when Ratan-Sen is about to offer a cup of wine sealing their alliance he proposes to defer the ceremony and asks to see the wonders of Tchitor. Ratan-Sen causes his warriors, his foreign slaves and even the palace dancers to appear before the sultan in ceremonial dances. Alaouddin is duly impressed but he also wishes to see Padmâvatî, princess of Singal, Ratan-Sen's wife. The king accedes to this request and causes Padmâvatî to appear on the balcony of her palace. Alaouddin is so disturbed by the supernatural beauty of the princess that he abruptly postpones the rite of alliance and leaves Tchitor. The Brahmin remains to convey his master's orders. As a token of friendship Ratan-Sen is to deliver Padmâvatî to the sultan. In case of refusal, the Mongols will at once capture the city and massacre its inhabitants. The crowd, indignant at this treason, slay the insolent emissary and prepare for a holy war.

Alaouddin is victor in the battle which follows. Padmâvatî and Ratan-Sen have taken refuge in the temple of Siva. The sultan has granted a truce until dawn. Padmâvatî wishes to offer her life to the gods. The king cannot endure the thought of the miseries to which his people will be subjected. Padmâvatî cannot purchase their peace by a crime.

She therefore stabs her husband rather than be torn from him. The priests of Siva begin funeral incantations for the king. Padmâvatî's women prepare her for the rites at which she presides. The funeral pyre flames up. Ratan-Sen's body is laid thereon. Padmâvatî leaps into the flames just as Alaouddin, at the head of his troops, forces the doors of the temple in the first light of dawn.

This intensely human plot offers extraordinary dramatic and choreographic opportunities. It demands music of barbaric directness, music which sacrifices convention in order to attain dramatic truthfulness. Roussel's invention has been equal to the occasion. By an extension of the musical style of the "Evocations" and "Le Festin de l'Araignée," employing even a bolder scheme of dissonance, he achieves an appropriate musical background. This idiom is freely polyharmonic but entirely different from the later developments of the "Groupe des Six." As in the "Evocations" the vividness of this music partially owes its force to the Hindu melodies for which Roussel has always devised an original harmonic support. The dominating feature of this music is thus its consistent exoticism which never falls into the commonplace nor relaxes its sense of dramatic fitness. For the warriors' and the slaves' dances, and for the incitements to war near the close of the first act,

Roussel has composed music of rare dramatic insight. The incantation scenes, to which the chorus adds an impressive reality, and the final immolation of Ratan-Sen and Padmâvatî, Roussel has fairly outdone himself. As a whole, "Padmâvatî" is perhaps the most striking manifestation of penetrating exotic inspiration in the whole range of French music. In short, Roussel declining to associate himself with any definite group of musicians, has progressed in his chosen field from the prelude to "Resurrection," the Divertissement, "Le Poème de la Forêt," the Suite, the "Evocations" and "Le Festin de l'Araignée," to a point where his esthetic self-possession and technical mastery have equipped him to compose works like the "Prélude pour une Fête de Printemps," the Symphony in B flat major and "Padmâvatî," which crown his career. The flexible versatility of his imagination, the mordant originality of his harmonic style, and his sedulous cultivation of a personal musical thought lead one to expect other admirable works from his pen.



## CHAPTER XII

### FIGURES OF THE PRESENT

IN analyzing the dominant tendencies of any musical epoch, the composers of the greatest scope and the most influential personality inevitably take precedence. Their work constitutes the basis of a critical framework from which the constructive characteristics of the period are deduced. There are always contemporaries of such artists, however, who, for a variety of reasons, fail to attain an equal prominence. Their professional interests from necessity may be distributed over more than one field of activity, thus lessening their achievements in any one branch. They may shun publicity, or they may have no gift for securing it. Their tastes may not lie in the direction of the latest "movement," and thus they are not sought out to the same extent as the more adventurous figures. Not infrequently a considerable injustice is done a musician of serious aims and recognized gifts owing to any of the above-mentioned causes. Yet the collective value of such artists adds a very definite lustre to the creative forces of a musical generation. They may reinforce an esthetic practice to a noteworthy extent, and help to round out

its efficacy. The present chapter aims to shed some light upon the position of a number of such composers. Such an undertaking is rendered difficult by problems of classification. Many conceivable groupings are in fact artificial, and disclose little real identification in terms of esthetic affinity.

Certain pupils of Gabriel Fauré, such as Maurice Ravel and Florent Schmitt, have built upon the precepts received from their master, and embody in their music a certain continuity of principles. But there are also others grouped with the foregoing, who were asked to contribute to the collection of pieces, "Hommage à Fauré," published by "La Revue Musicale" in October, 1922.

Among the best known of these is Louis Aubert, born at Paramé (Ille-et-Vilaine) February 19, 1877. His father, a musician of talent, gave him his first lessons in music. He soon entered the Conservatoire, and during his early years as a student was much in demand as a boy-soprano, even taking part in a Colonne concert. Young Aubert's teachers were Dièmer (piano), Lavignac (harmony), and Fauré (composition). His first attempt at composition dates from 1892. A "Berceuse" (1895) reappears in a suite for two pianos (1900) and was at last incorporated in a "Suite brève" for orchestra. From 1897, Aubert began to compose with fluency. The songs, "Rimes tendres," begun in

1896, were performed in 1900, and a version with orchestral accompaniment was given at a concert of the Société Nationale in 1906. A *Fantasie* for piano and orchestra (1899) by its clarity of construction and directness of ideas attracted more than casual attention at a Colonne concert November 17, 1901, when Dièmer was the pianist. The "Suite brève" was performed at concerts of the Exposition of 1900. Other works of this period are "La Légende de Sang" for recitation, chorus and small orchestra, the ballets "La Momie" and "Chrysothémis," both of which were staged. Aubert's next work, "La Forêt bleue," a lyrical tale in three acts by Jacques Chenevière, was performed in Switzerland and at the Boston Opera House under André Caplet, March 8, 1913. It proved to be a work of fluent melodic invention, reminiscent of Debussy at times, but nevertheless individual, and often imaginative.

A cycle of songs, "Crépuscules d'automne," sung by Madame Jane Bathori at the Société Nationale, February 20, 1909, was spoken of by M.-D. Calvocoressi as follows: "These are pages of remarkable workmanship, of fine substance and penetrating sentiment, mature and personal, in which are expressed forcibly if with emphasis, a gentle and slightly sad emotion, the realities or the dreams of the season in which the sky is gray while

the leaves are yellowing. . . . They succeed in placing their composer in a high position among the younger generation.”<sup>1</sup>

“La Nuit mauresque,” a song with orchestral accompaniment, composed late in 1910, suggests the beginning of the period which contains the “Poèmes arabes,” the pianoforte pieces, “Sillages,” and the “Habanera” for orchestra, the music of Aubert’s most mature artistic procedure. “Sillages” (1908–12) for piano, containing “Sur le rivage,” “Socorry,” and “Dans la nuit,” are pieces of dramatic and expressive contents, marking a further advance in their composer’s attainments through their brilliant pianistic style and their harmonic exoticism. This exoticism is accentuated to a greater degree in the “Poèmes arabes,” for voice and orchestra, on texts from “Le Jardin des caresses,” by Franz Toussaint. These songs maintain a definite affinity with Ravel’s “Shéhérazade,” Dukas’ “La Péri,” Roussel’s “Évocation” “Aux bords du fleuve sacré,” and Florent Schmitt’s “La Tragédie de Salomé.” An “Introduction et Allegro” for flute and piano, composed for a Conservatoire competition, far oversteps the usual limits of an occasional piece by its imaginative charm. A “Habanera” for orchestra, first performed at a

<sup>1</sup> Louis Vuillemin, *Louis Aubert et son Œuvre*, p. 41. Paris: Durand et Cie, 1921.

Pasdeloup concert, March 22, 1916, is a symphonic dance, skilfully developed, of exotic mood and a highly coloristic orchestral style. In this short score there is a dramatic concentration, an expression of poetry and human emotion, a genuine inspiration far beyond its modest dimensions. It reaches the highest qualities yet attained by Aubert. Of this work Émile Vuillermoz has written as follows: "One must read the score of the 'Habanera' to receive a lesson in taste, moderation, clarity and tact. Everything in it is so clear, so precise and so infallible that such a reading is infinitely instructive. I know composers of real talent who would gain great advantage from studying it closely in order to rid their instrumental technique of the false elegances and useless details which encumber it and render it heavy. The orchestral style is at once supple and solid. The sonority is rich, elastic and deep, with all the fluidity and finesse which our most delicate *pointellistes* seek. It is an accomplished model of its type."<sup>1</sup>

Aubert's contribution to the "Hommage à Fauré" is a simple yet charmingly fanciful little piece for piano, thoroughly characteristic in its harmonic vein and melodic treatment of a composer from whom other individual works are to be prophesied.

<sup>1</sup> Louis Vuillemin, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

A pupil of Fauré who has gained a distinctive position not only as a composer, but also as a teacher, and as an acute and penetrating writer on musical subjects<sup>1</sup> is Charles Koechlin. Charles-Louis-Eugène Koechlin was born in Paris, November 27, 1867, of Alsatian parents. When at school young Koechlin heard programmes of classical music with explanatory notes given by the pianist (and Conservatoire teacher) Charles de Beriot. At the age of fourteen he began to write down his musical ideas. He entered the École Polytechnique in 1887, but the appeal of music was stronger than that of science. Consequently, after graduating from the school, he resigned and entered the Paris Conservatoire. His teachers were Taudou (harmony), Gédalge (counterpoint), and Massenet and Fauré (composition.) At the beginning of his career he composed songs almost exclusively. Later he turned to other fields. Koechlin's most important works have, as yet, not been published. Those which have appeared in print are: "Rondels de Théodore de Banville et de Charles d'Orléans" (three sets), three collections of songs; for piano, five Sonatines, "Paysages et Marines,"

<sup>1</sup> See the articles by M. Koechlin: "La Musique, plaisir de l'esprit ou jouissance sensuelle?" "D'une mode nouvelle," "Le Cas Berlioz," "Le Théâtre de Fauré"; Paul Dupin, "'Le Mariage' de Mussorgsky," in *La Revue Musicale* for March, 1921; August, 1921; February, 1922; October, 1922; January, 1923; and May, 1923.

“Dix petites pièces,” “Douze petites pièces,” “Douze Esquisses”; among the chamber music works are: a string quartet, sonatas for flute, for violin and for viola with piano; “L’Abbaye” (first part), suite for orchestra, chorus and organ.

The chief unpublished works are: for piano, Ballade, “Les Heures persanes,” “Pastorales”; chorals for organ, two of which are with orchestra; a fourth collection of songs, also “Chansons de Bilitis.” There are also two string quartets, a suite for piano, flute, violin and viola; sonatas for violoncello, for horn, and for bassoon with piano, a quintet for piano and strings, and a sonata for two flutes, unaccompanied. In addition are to be noted: “L’Abbaye” (the second and most significant part), “Chant funèbre à la mémoire des jeunes femmes défuntés”; for orchestra, “Les Saisons,” a symphony; “Études antiques,” a suite in five movements; a Ballade for piano and orchestra, “Nuit de Walpurgis classique,” “En mer, la nuit,” “Rapsodie sur des chansons françaises”; “La Forêt paiënnne” and “La Divine Vesprée,” choreographic works.

In view of the large proportion of unpublished works, it is obviously impossible to derive a correct idea of Koechlin’s music from the printed works alone. In a comprehensive study of Koechlin’s music, appearing in “La Revue Musicale” for

June, 1923, M. Étienne Royer writes as follows: "I believe 'L'Abbaye'. to be its composer's masterpiece. This work, unfortunately in manuscript for the most part, is of a truly powerful originality in inspiration. The text which serves as an epigraph gives precise indications of its philosophic and poetic intent. 'The Ancient Abbey has disappeared, buried beneath the new forest. But often near its ruins, Man dreams of the past, of the voices heard near these stones; voices that were naïve, confident and trusting, voices that were sincere, fervent and serious, speaking the language of a real faith; voices of the ancient cloisters, voices of Primitives, voices that were very pure.' In the first part, without utilizing other resources than the texts of the sacred liturgy, the composer causes us to witness the mystery of Man's redemption. Orchestra, organ and voices reply to one another in a skilfully ordered alternation, giving to this vast symphonic fresco the necessary aspect of variety. After a short orchestral prelude, with mysterious cadences and floating rhythms, in which the call of the bell summons the faithful to prayer, The *Ave Maria* is heard, sung in unison as if by distant angelic voices. Then all the orchestral and choral resources are concentrated in *pianissimo* on the words of the Kyrie and the Requiem, symbolizing the dolorous lamentation of suffering humanity.



A calm and appeasing organ prelude replies to these plaints. It is the presage of Christ's coming. The *Ave verum*, which follows, is a masterpiece of expression and style, as is also the *O Salutaris*, in which the united chorus attacks with full sonority the words, *Da robur, fer auxilium*. This is the more effective since the *forte* had not appeared until then. The first part ends with a *Benedictus* and a *Sanctus* in a sentiment of infinite and ecstatic gentleness. The second part, conceived in a similar spirit, contains a chorale for brass instruments and an extended finale for orchestra."

"'The Abbey' is conceived, as is appropriate to such a subject, in a style the essence of which is particularly polyphonic. Koechlin gives evidence of a deep knowledge of the art of counterpoint at all periods of its evolution, from the naïve discant of the Middle Ages to the richly sonorous flowering of the masters of the sixteenth century. But the spirit of the work is entirely personal, and the means are often completely new."

While "L'Abbaye" represents the philosophic side of M. Koechlin's personality, there are other phases of his creative individuality which possess an equal interest. The ancient world appeals to him also as may be seen in "La Forêt païenne" and the "Études antiques" for orchestra. The former, composed nearly twenty years after "L'Abbaye,"

represents the system of metaphysics during classic antiquity "with its pantheistic and voluptuous character." It is a choreographic work, reproducing the sentiments of the mythological world, in which nymphs, Pan, Diana and Endymion appear. The subjects of love and death appeal also to M. Koechlin. Among these "Le chant funèbre à la mémoire des jeunes femmes défuntés," for chorus, is likewise typical. Of this work M. Royer says: "One must, I think, go back to those masterpieces of Berlioz, the 'Convoi funèbre de Juliette' and the 'Mort d'Ophélie,' to find in music the equivalent as to accents of a tenderness so sadly and so profoundly human." <sup>1</sup>

But there are still other aspects to be considered in regard to M. Koechlin's music. At first a composer of songs, the lyric faculty takes a preponderant place in all his music. A simpler lyricism is found in the "Rondels de Th. de Banville," of which three collections have appeared, as well as in the other songs. While the "Rondels" represent an earlier stage of M. Koechlin's development, there are among them many specimens of spontaneous invention, such as "Le Thé," "La Pêche," "L'Hiver," "La Lune," and "L'Eau." The piano pieces extend into still other domains of musical thought. The five sonatines, dedicated to the

<sup>1</sup> Étienne Royer, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

composer's children, are not childish in substance, but seek for the moment to re-create moods properly belonging to childhood. The sonatines are gay, pensive, vivacious and above all naïve. At times, this naïveté seems almost excessive, and beyond the bounds of communicable emotion, but at least it springs from an imaginative sensibility. Among these the third sonatine seems to embody most completely the spirit of youth. Despite occasional hints in the sonatines, the "Paysages et Marines" exhibit an abrupt contrast in method. For this composer, so responsive to many aspects of human thought, now becomes the reflective dreamer, who views a world fringed with philosophy and introspection. His subjects now mirror himself. The tenuous musical style of the sonatines has altered in accordance with its subjects. There is now not only harmonic originality in these pieces but harmonic daring to the verge of iconoclasm. Adopting some of Schönberg's procedures, but remaining faithful to his own musical ideas, Koechlin either superposes lines of dissonant counterpoint, or maintains separate "harmonic planes." If such a method recalls both Schönberg and Stravinsky, it is in fact independent of both. "Matin calme," "Le Chant du Chevrier," "Soir d'été," "Paysage d'Octobre," "Dans les grands champs" and "Poème Virgilien" well illustrate the

moods which Koechlin has chosen to depict. They suggest a music of Nature which has no counterpart in contemporary French music, sometimes difficult of immediate comprehension, but thoughtful and indubitably poetic in sentiment.

Consideration of Koechlin's chamber music is again inevitably limited to published works. In these he has chosen a happy and characteristically French aptitude for moulding style to suit his resources. Koechlin's conception of the forms involved is free, but in the main it obeys the classic spirit. The String Quartet in D major, a remarkably genial work, contrasts strikingly with the "Paysages et Marines" for its immediate acceptance of the natural limitations of stringed instruments. The first movement, pastoral in atmosphere and containing many rhythmic ingenuities, is admirably written for strings. A piquant scherzo also abounds in novel rhythmic devices, sustaining the interest to the end. A simple andante and a spirited finale continue the admirable workmanship of the other movements. In the sonata for flute and piano Koechlin is more expansive in sentiment. Respecting the natural limitations of the flute, he is prompt to avail himself of its true expressive capacity. This sonata is full of poetic thought and genuine charm. It is a welcome addition to a scanty literature for these instruments.

The sonata for piano and violin, more radical in its idiom, reiterates a similar stylistic perception. The richer resources of the violin invite a fuller background. A short and reflective first movement approximates the idiom of the "Paysages et Marines." A long and somewhat complex scherzo follows, original in idea and remarkably skilful in its development. A short slow movement, with the sub-title "Nocturne, grave et féérique," is intensely contemplative in mood. An animated finale, on a theme of folk-song character with a considerable elaborateness of treatment, concludes a work which is evidently Koechlin's highest attainment in the field of chamber music.

In view of the published works it is to be hoped that more music of this singularly independent artist will soon be available. The unusual scope of his creative imagination has only enhanced the possibilities of this independence. M. Émile Vuillermoz closes a study of the sonatines and "Paysages et Marines" with these words: "Music also, when it must, should be able to free itself from a geometric discipline. Composition by fifths has given us too many false masterpieces. A descriptive melody should, on occasion, be able to retrace the free undulation of a hill or a cloud. Charles Koechlin, with all the precious authority that his superior technique gives him, will have worked

efficaciously towards this rational emancipation. This artist, who pursues, far from the agitation of Paris, his admirable task as philosopher and poet, is profoundly impregnated with the wisdom of the trees which surround him. He has devoted his soul and his art to the cult of nature with so much sincere fervor that Nature, to recompense him, has confided to him some of her most precious secrets.”<sup>1</sup>

Two other pupils of Fauré deserving mention are M. Paul Ladmirault and M. Roger-Ducasse. Paul-Émile Ladmirault was born at Nantes, December 8, 1877. Precociously gifted, he began his musical education at the age of seven, studying the piano, the violin, the organ and harmony. In 1885 he began to compose. When M. Ladmirault was only fifteen, an opera by him, “Gilles de Retz,” was performed at Nantes. The composer was then in the second class at the local *lycée*. Soon after he received a first prize in harmony at the Nantes Conservatoire. In 1895, M. Ladmirault entered the Paris Conservatoire receiving instruction from MM. Taudou, Gédalge and Fauré. He left the Conservatoire after ineffectual attempts to win the Prix de Rome. Many of Ladmirault’s works have appeared on programmes of the Société Nationale;

<sup>1</sup> Émile Vuillermoz, *Musiques d’aujourd’hui*, pp. 31-32. Paris: Crès et Cie.

a considerable number remain unpublished. Ladmirault may be regarded as the interpreter of Brittany and the Celtic element in French music, as Déodat de Sévérac was of Languedoc. Among his works are: "Variations sur des airs de biniou Trécorois" (1906), "Musiques rustiques" (1907), "Rapsodie gaëlique" (1909), all for pianoforte duet; "Suite Bretonne" (1902-03) and "Brocéliande au matin" (1905) for orchestra, both taken from "Myrdhin" (1902-09), a dramatic legend in four acts (text by Madame Ladmirault and Albert Fleury); a symphonic poem, "Tristan au Morois," and an orchestral interlude "Tristan et Yseult." There are also songs, religious music and a ballet, "La Prêtresse de Koriwden."

Jean-Jules-Amable Roger-Ducasse was born at Bordeaux, April 17, 1875. He entered the Paris Conservatoire in 1892 where his teachers were de Beriot (piano), Pessard (harmony), Gédalge (counterpoint and fugue) and Fauré (composition). He studied in the latter's class from 1897 to 1903. From 1899 Fauré permitted Roger-Ducasse to take charge of his class in his absence; he also selected him to make the pianoforte arrangements of the "Requiem" and the suite "Pelléas et Mélisande." After several attempts in the Prix de Rome competition, M. Roger-Ducasse obtained the same award as Ravel, a second prize for a cantata, "Al-

cyone." In 1906, M. Roger-Ducasse entered a symphonic work with chorus, "Au jardin de Margu rite" in competition for the Prix Crescent. It won no prize, but when performed later was recognized as one of its composer's representative works. M. Roger-Ducasse has composed a "Petite Suite" (1897) for pianoforte duet, orchestrated in 1911; a String Quartet (1900-09); a quartet for piano and strings (1899-1912); "Variations plaisantes" (1907), for orchestra with harp *obbligato*; a "Suite fran aise" (1907) for orchestra; "Le joli jeu du furet" (1909), originally for children's voices with orchestral accompaniment, now transformed into a scherzo for orchestra alone; a "Sarabande" (1910) for orchestra and chorus (without text); a "Pr lude d'un ballet" (1910) and a "Nocturne de Printemps" (1915-18), both for orchestra; a large amount of pianoforte music, "Trois Motets" and other religious music, and a "mimodrama" in three acts, "Orph e" (1912-13). M. Roger-Ducasse has also other works awaiting revision. In 1909, he was appointed inspector of the teaching of singing in the schools of Paris.

The characteristics of M. Roger-Ducasse's music are: fluency of invention, clarity and polish of style, a typically Gallic verve and gaiety. He also manifests an appreciation of "modernity" in the use of dissonant harmony but not to the detriment



of his contrapuntal lines. "Au jardin de Margu rite," performed as a whole for the first time April 18, 1913, at the four hundredth concert of the Soci t  Nationale, was praised for its dramatic atmosphere and its skilful treatment of the chorus. The "Petite Suite," consisting of three brief pieces, "Souvenance," "Berceuse" and "Claironnerie," is a model of captivating directness, deft precision of effect and evident individuality. The orchestral version of the suite accentuates these qualities and adds a masterly sense of orchestral finesse. The "Suite fran aise" reincarnates in present-day guise the spirit of eighteenth-century French music through its rhythmic vitality and sparkling ideas. "Le joli jeu du furet" is the product of a graceful musical wit somewhat akin to Dukas' "L'Apprenti sorcier" (if on a lesser scale), while the "Sarabande" exhibits a grave and even poignant sentiment. "Orph e" occupies a commanding position among M. Roger-Ducasse's works on account of its dramatic insight, its plastic adaptability for action and its stylistic economy. M. Roger-Ducasse has also accomplished much for musical pedagogy by his collections of technical exercises for the piano, and over four hundred exercises in musical dictation.

A composer who, had she lived, would have been

indisputably a "figure of the present" was Mlle. Lili Boulanger. She was born in Paris, August 21, 1893; her father and her grandfather were teachers at the Paris Conservatoire. Owing to constant ill-health Mlle. Boulanger had received, up to the age of sixteen, no regular musical instruction. She played and composed with incredible precocity. Her elder sister, Mlle. Nadia Boulanger, who was awarded a second prize at the Prix de Rome competition of 1908, and who is at present a well-known teacher of music in Paris, aided her in forming musical tastes and in sharing the technical discipline which she had obtained at the Conservatoire. Her first regular study was with M. Georges Causade. In 1912, she had lessons in composition from M. Paul Vidal. In spite of serious handicaps, Mlle. Boulanger from 1909 to 1913 was able to secure the technical preparation necessary for the Prix de Rome competition. In 1913, when not quite twenty years old, she won the first Prix de Rome with a cantata, "Faust et Hélène." For the first time in one hundred and ten years of competition, the first prize was bestowed upon a woman. Notwithstanding an active prejudice against the admission of women students to the Villa Médicis, a unanimous sentiment among both jury and audience favored the award of the first prize to Mlle. Boulanger before the cantata had been one third per-

formed. After a year of active composition in Rome despite uncertain health, the outbreak of war forced Mlle. Boulanger to return to Paris. During the latter part of 1915 and early in 1916, she sacrificed her failing vitality as a member of a Franco-American committee in aid of French musicians. After months of illness she was able to take up her work, once more in Rome. From then on her forces declined rapidly. Even when ill in bed, Mlle. Boulanger continued to sketch her musical ideas in pencil. She died March 15, 1918, just ten days before Claude Debussy.

Despite an incomplete career, Mlle. Boulanger left conclusive evidence of her gifts. The prize cantata, "Faust et Hélène," several works for solos, chorus and orchestra, such as "Soir sur la plaine," "Hymne au Soleil," "La Tempête," "Les Sirènes," "Sous bois," "La Source," "Pour les Funérailles d'un Soldat," composed at the age of eighteen, the one hundred and twenty-ninth psalm, a "Prière Hindoue," a "Pie Jesu" for voice, string quartet, harp and organ, besides "Clairière dans le ciel," a collection of thirteen songs on poems by Francis Jammes, may be regarded as representative of the completed compositions. Mlle. Boulanger had also nearly finished the music for Maeterlinck's "Princesse Maleine," a lyric drama in five acts.

Mlle. Boulanger's music is precocious in the uncanny subconscious mastery of problems beyond her years, but it is more than that. Without thought of her harassed existence and her untimely death, her music compels admiration for its intrinsic qualities. Mlle. Boulanger's talent was pre-eminently lyric, but its scope included a marked ability for the realization of atmosphere, a dramatic power and a maturity of thought which were of an uncommon order. The cantata, "Faust et Hélène," offers no suggestion of having been composed under pressure to submit to a critical academic jury. In fact, it is superior to many similar cantatas with which names of distinction have attained a like reward. Its spontaneous invention, its lyrical inspiration, the mastery of its design and the genuine evocation of a dramatic mood are astonishing. "Pour les Funérailles d'un Soldat" is even more remarkable. To have conceived so sombre a picture, made the more telling by the use of the "Dies Iræ," and to have carried it through with such technical control and continuity of expression would have been creditable in a far older composer. That Mlle. Boulanger accomplished this at the age of eighteen is a feat for which there are few parallels in recent years. "Soir sur la plaine," while still unusual, possesses a lyrical charm of more normal achievement. The

songs, "Clairière dans le ciel," well exemplify Mlle. Boulanger's versatility in invention, her faculty for lyric characterization and her skill in formulating effective harmonic backgrounds. Of these, "Elle était descendue au bas de la prairie," "Parfois, je suis triste," "Si tout ceci n'est qu'un pauvre rêve," "Par ce que j'ai souffert" and "Demain fera un an" are typical specimens of Mlle. Boulanger's art, which partakes of an indisputable autobiographic pathos. The Psalm 129, composed at Rome in 1916, shows a mature intensification of the harmonic and dramatic means which were so evident in "Pour les Funérailles d'un Soldat." As others of Mlle. Boulanger's works are published, the significance of her gifts will more and more be disclosed, and the loss which French music suffered in her early death will be still more convincingly apparent.

A composer whose music, long unknown, is just becoming known in Paris is M. Paul Dupin. Now almost sixty years old, for long a subordinate employé in the office of a railroad company, he has lived in poverty and has never had the time or the means to take lessons in fugue. Rarely visiting concert halls, with an incomplete knowledge of the great masters, it seems incredible that his creative faculty could develop under such obstacles. M.

Dupin first attracted attention by his pieces for string quartet and other compositions inspired by Roman Rolland's "Jean Christophe." Besides two long dramatic works which were destroyed by the composer, there remain "Marcelle," four acts (1901-04), sonatas (for violin and piano, 1911), for piano alone (1912), a trio (1913), sonatinas for piano and violoncello (1922), for piano and viola (1922), a large number of songs, piano pieces and choruses, an oratorio, "Les Suppliantes," after Æschylus (1912), a large dramatic work, "Symphonie populaire à la gloire de la Belgique," in four acts (1914-22), and several series of canons (more than three hundred in all) for voices without accompaniment. A self-taught composer, M. Dupin has had to struggle against enormous odds to complete his technical education. In consequence his works are of necessity unequal. But the performances of portions of his "Symphonie populaire" have established his claims to serious consideration, and his fertile and skilful invention in the field of canon, so remote from contemporary musical fashion, has justified his position as an artist of worth.

There still remain a number of composers, either difficult or nearly impossible of classification, whose names and the works which have gained them

recognition should, in justice, be here included. Even an artificial grouping cannot presuppose any similarity in their artistic aims, nor can it furnish any indication as to the real nature of their individualities. M. Maurice Delage, a pupil of Ravel, has manifested his fine sense of the exotic in his "Poèmes hindous" for voice, wind instruments and piano. Other songs and a string quartet further attest his distinctive qualities. M. Roland-Manuel, likewise a pupil of Ravel, has shown somewhat similar traits in his Persian songs, "Farizade au Sourire de Rose," which are fancifully exotic; in his delicate "Idylles" for piano, and in his opéra-bouffe, "Isabelle et Pantalon." M. Roland-Manuel is also a critic of unusual capacity and illuminating insight. His pamphlet, "Maurice Ravel et son Œuvre," is a model of fastidious analysis.

From the Schola Cantorum are to be noted the names of M. Marcel Labey, for his sonatas for piano alone, for piano and violin, piano and violoncello, a string quartet and songs; M. Paul Le Flem, for a symphony in A major (1908), a symphonic sketch, "La Voix au large" (1912), a Fantaisie for piano and orchestra, music to "Aucassin et Nicolette," a quintet for piano and strings, a sonata for piano and violin, numerous piano pieces and songs; M. Gustave Samazeuilh, for an orchestral poem, "Le Sommeil de Canope," after verse by

Albert Samain, an "Étude symphonique" after La Nef, a string quartet, a sonata for piano and violin and songs. Another pupil of M. d'Indy at the Schola who has won recognition is M. G. M. Witkowski, formerly an army officer. He has composed chamber music and a symphony in D minor, but his most representative work is "Le Poème de la Maison" (1912-14), for solos, chorus and orchestra, of large design and masterly individuality.

The following composers are placed in alphabetical order because the diversity of their individualities is too great to permit any logical arrangement.

A composer of attainment and promise was M. Gabriel Dupont (1878-1914). He won the prize offered by the Milanese publisher Sonzogno with a two-act opera, "La Cabrera." Among his other works are: "Les Heures dolentes," a striking series of piano pieces, the symphonic poems, "Hymne à Aphrodite" and "Le Chant de la Destinée," and an opera "Antar," recently performed with success. M. André Gédalge (1856) obtained a second Prix de Rome in 1886. He has composed several symphonies, and is the author of "Histoire populaire de la Musique," "L'Enseignement du Chant," in two volumes, as well as a remarkable treatise on fugue. But as teacher of counterpoint and fugue at the Paris Conservatoire he has rendered a still more



important service since a large number of the more talented French composers have received his invaluable and illuminating instruction at a critical and formative period of their careers. M. Georges Huë (1858), a Prix de Rome in 1879, has composed a number of orchestral and dramatic works such as "Résurrection," a "sacred episode"; "Jeunesse," a lyric poem; "Titania," a "fairy legend" in three acts; and "Le Miracle," a lyric drama. M. Jean Huré has produced much chamber music including two sonatas for piano, two for violoncello and piano, one for violin and piano, a sonatina for violin and piano, two string quartets, and a quintet for piano and strings. He has also composed a Nocturne for piano and orchestra, a suite on Breton folk-songs and a one-act ballet, "Au bois sacré." He has also compiled a collection of Breton folk-songs. M. Raoul Laparra (1876), a Prix de Rome in 1903, is chiefly famous for his "Fantasie" for piano and orchestra, "A Basque Fête," and for his highly original operas, "La Habanera" and "La Jota." M. Sylvio Lazzari (1860), in addition to chamber music and orchestral works, has likewise attracted attention through his operas, "Amor" and "La Lépreuse." M. Georges Migot has won unusual praise for his trio, dedicated to the memory of Lili Boulanger, a quintet for piano and strings,<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Émile Vuillermoz, *Musiques d'aujourd'hui*, p. 89.

“Cinq mouvements d’eau” for string quartet, “Le paravent de laque,” originally composed for string quartet but orchestrated later, and “Hagoromo” (1920–21), a lyric and choreographic symphony, on a text by the composer and Louis Laloy, for chorus and orchestra. M. Paul Vidal (1863), a Prix de Rome in 1883, formerly conductor at the Opéra, a director of the Opéra-Comique and teacher of composition at the Conservatoire, is chiefly known by his grand opera, “La Burgonde,” and a ballet, “La Maladetta.” M. Louis Vierne (1870), a remarkable organist, has composed for his instrument, as well as chamber music, vocal and orchestral works. M. Charles-Marie Widor (1845), secretary of the Académie des Beaux-Arts, and teacher at the Conservatory, has covered all fields of composition. His best works are his nine symphonies for organ; a ballet, “La Korrigane”; the lyric dramas, “Maître Ambros,” “Les Pécheurs de Saint-Jean,” and “Nerto.” To the foregoing the names of MM. A. Bertelin, Louis Dumas, Maurice Emmanuel, Félix Foudrain, Ferdinand Le Borne, Frederic Mompou, Jacques Pillois and others may be added.

The profession of conducting, often considered incompatible with that of composing, has not prevented a number of Parisian conductors from achieving a certain distinction in the latter field.

M. André Caplet, a Prix de Rome in 1901, has composed "Inscriptions champestres," choruses for women's voices, five "Ballades françaises" with piano accompaniment; songs with orchestral accompaniment, "Forêt," "Hymne à la Naissance du Matin," "In una selva oscura" among them; and a Mass, *a cappella*, for women's voices which have secured him an indisputable position. Camille Chevillard (1859-1923), long conductor of the Lamoureux concerts, beginning as a composer of chamber music, left worthy examples of his talent in the orchestral works, "Le Chêne et le Roseau," after La Fontaine's fable, and a "Ballade symphonique." M. Philippe Gaubert (1879), a remarkable flute player, conductor of the Conservatoire concerts and at the Opéra, has composed chamber music, orchestral and dramatic works, of which a symphonic poem, "Le Cortège d'Amphitrite," after the sonnet by Albert Samain, a suite, "Jours tragiques, jours glorieux," and sonatas for flute and for violin with piano may be cited. M. Gabriel Grovez (1879), a pupil of Gabriel Fauré, for ten years a teacher of piano at the Schola Cantorum, since conductor at the Opéra-Comique and at the Théâtre des Arts, has produced a symphonic poem on a ballad by Freiligrath, a sonata for violin and piano, the piano pieces, "Improvisations sur Londres," "L'Almanach aux Images," "Trois

Valses romantiques” and many songs, including the “Chansons enfantines.” M. D.-E. Inghelbrecht has published, among other works, a “Suite ‘petite Russe’” for piano, “Deux Esquisses antiques” for flute and piano, and “La Cantique des Créatures de Saint François d’Assise” for chorus and orchestra. M. Rhené-Baton, conductor of the Padeloup concerts, which have been revived since the War, has composed variations for piano and orchestra, a sonata for violin and piano, “En Bretagne,” a suite, and the pieces, “Au pardon de Rumengol,” also of Breton inspiration, and the songs “Chansons douces,” “Cinq mélodies sur des poésies de Jean Labor,” and “Les Heures d’été,” by Albert Samain.

From the foregoing data, the varied productivity of French composers at the present time may be more fully recognized, and the fact will be apparent that many besides those of established transatlantic reputations are actively engaged in upholding the traditions of French musical art.

## CHAPTER XIII

### A GROUP OF ICONOCLASTS

BEFORE commenting upon the activities of the composers included in the so-called "Groupe des Six" whose music has incited no little discussion in recent years, some attention must be paid to the later phases of Erik Satie's career. In Chapter V the main facts of his life were outlined; his share in promoting harmonic advance, and his influence upon Debussy and Ravel were duly noted. After his studies in counterpoint and fugue under Albert Roussel at the Schola Cantorum, Satie returned to composition with fresh zest. Far from being depressed by his scholastic ordeal, he became inspired to new imaginative explorations. When in 1911 Maurice Ravel played several of Satie's earlier pianoforte pieces at a concert of the Société musicale independante, interest in his music was immensely stimulated. His pieces were published. The eminent pianist Ricardo Viñes, who had been instrumental in bringing the music of Debussy and Ravel before the public, now performed a similar service for Satie. The Parisians were astounded to realize how far Satie had anticipated certain fea-

tures of later harmonic evolution. He soon became the centre of a circle of admirers, and entered upon the most fertile and productive period of his life. Satie, freed from the mysticism of the Rose-Croix, now gave full vent to the whimsicalities of his temperament. The very titles are indicative of their fantastic contents. The "Gnossiennes" (1890), inspired by Flaubert's "Salammbô," and a "Prélude de la Porte Héroïque du Ciel" (1894) were published in 1912. In succession Satie composed the following pianoforte pieces: "Morceaux en forme de poire" (September, 1903), "Aperçus désagréables" (Pastoral, Choral, Fugue) (1908-12), both for piano duet; "Pièces froides" ("Airs à faire fuir," "Danses à travers"), (1912); "Véritable prélude flasques pour un chien" ("Sévère réprimande," "Seul à la maison," "On joue"), (August, 1912); "Descriptions automatiques" ("Sur un vaisseau," "Sur une lanterne," "Sur une Casque"), (April, 1913); "Embryons desséchés" ("d'Holothurie," "d'Estriophthalma," "de Podophthalma"), (June, July, 1913); "Croquis et Agaceries d'un gros Bonhomme en bois" ("Tyrolienne turque," "Danse maigre," "Españaña"), (June-August, 1913); "Chapîtres tournés en tous sens" ("Celle qui parle trop," "Le porteur des grosses pierres," "Regrets des enfermés"), (August, September, 1913); "Vieux Sequins et Vieilles

Cuirasses" ("Chez le Marchand d'Or," "Danse Cuirassée," "La Défaite des Cimbres"), (September, 1913). Belonging to the same period are three sets of pieces for children: "Menus propos enfantins" ("Le Chant guerrier du Roi des Haricots," "Ce que dit la petite princesse des tulipes," "Valse du Chocolat aux Armandes"), (October, 1913); "Enfantillages pittoresques" ("Petit prélude à la journée," "Berceuse," "Marche du grand escalier"), (October, 1913); "Peccadilles importunes" ("Être jaloux de son camarade qui a une grosse tête," "Lui manger sa tartine,"), (October, 1913); "Heures Séculaires et Instantanées" ("Obstacles Venimeux," "Crépuscule Matinale (de Midi)," "Affolements granitiques"), (June-July, 1914); "Les trois Valses du Précieux dégouté" (July, 1914); "Avant-dernières pensées" ("Idylle," "Aubade," "Méditation"), (August, October, 1915).

An enumeration in some detail of the unusual titles of Satie's pieces is essential in order to grasp the extraordinary range and variety of his imagination and humor. The children's pieces are not composed from a sophisticated adult point of view, they genuinely enter the sphere of childlike sentiment and style. Jean Cocteau relates in "Le Coq et l'Harlequin": "Satie said: 'I want to make a piece for dogs and I have my scene. The cur-

tain rises upon a bone.”<sup>1</sup> Thus the “Préludes flasques” approach the canine world with the same naïve observation shown in “Embryons desséchés” which deal with marine animals. In the early “Sarabandes,” the “Gymnopédies” and in the “Sonneries de la Rose-Croix,” Satie had shown a definite if somewhat wayward musical invention. The sentiments of these pieces were all of extreme gravity. These qualities were still further established in the “Gnossiennes” and in the “Prélude de la Porte Héroïque du Ciel.” During and after his studies at the Schola, Satie began to explore the apparently unfathomable resources of his sense of humor. This humor, at once ironical and serious, belongs to the category termed by the French “pince-sans-rire.” But it is also more than that. The capacity for suggesting ridicule, for sketching an apt caricature, and for genuine description are all combined in this fantastic humorist — an almost solitary figure of this type in all French music.

The Pastoral, Choral and Fugue contained within the “Aperçus désagréables” are clearly ironic in intent, besides their more obvious qualities. “Sévère réprimande,” “Seul à la maison” and “On joue” are not only whimsically delightful musically, but carry out in clairvoyant degree the sym-

<sup>1</sup> Jean Cocteau, *Le Coq et l'Harlequin. Notes autour de la Musique*, p. 15. Paris: Éditions de la Sirène, 1918.



pathetic intentions of "Véritables préludes flasques pour un chien." They are actually canine in sentiment. The "Tyrolienne turque," from "Croquis et Agaceries d'un gros Bonhomme en bois," achieves a formidable union of contrary racial traits. Its companion pieces, "Danse maigre" and "Españaña," parody with equal skill the implications of their titles. A similar humor pervades "Celle qui parle trop," from "Chapîtres tournés en tous sens." A loquacious wife overpowers her husband with words until he falls dead. The anxiety of "Le porteur des grosses pierres," in the same set, is also graphically portrayed. He staggers along with a large stone, feels it slipping until it crashes down with a noisily dissonant chord. "Regret des Enfermés" (Jonas et Latude)<sup>1</sup> discloses a more sombre background. The prisoners, separated by several centuries, have identical and persistent thoughts of freedom. An ironic harmonization of the French folk-song, "Nous n'irons plus au bois," adds a piquant humor to their meditations. Thus Satie also finds inspiration in the figures of history.

<sup>1</sup> Notes by Mr. S. Foster Damon. Jonas (Justus), born at Nordhausen, Prussia, June 6, 1493; died at Eisfeld, Saxe-Meiningen, October 9, 1555. German Protestant reformer, friend and collaborator of Luther. Latude (Jean-Henri-Masers de), born at Montagnac, Hérault, France, March 23, 1725; died at Paris, January 1, 1805. Engineer, officer, etc. To attract attention sent an infernal machine to Madame Pompadour and then warned her. Caught, and imprisoned in the Bastille, 1749-84. Severely treated. Wrote memoirs.

Like traits are to be found in other collections of pieces by this indefatigable humorist. In the "Avant-dernières pensées" and in "Les trois Valses du Précieux dégouté" he sharpens his wits by including polyharmony in his already considerable harmonic resources. Apart from the titles there is even a question that the purely musical contents of these pieces may sometimes appear vague and even inconsequent. According to Cocteau: "Satie teaches the greatest audacity of our epoch: that of being simple."<sup>1</sup> This extreme simplicity offers slight point of contact for the unwary. Once Satie's idiom is understood this simplicity fails to be disconcerting. On examination Satie's music shows a structural plan, though remote from conventional standards. With the added knowledge as to the composer's descriptive purpose, these pieces are not only diverting but exercise a certain undeniable charm through the aptness of their humorous, ironic or grotesque delineation.

But Satie did not devote himself exclusively to pianoforte music. Incited by M. Cocteau's enthusiasm for the ballet, syncopated music and the atmosphere of the music-hall,<sup>2</sup> he composed a realis-

<sup>1</sup> Jean Cocteau, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

<sup>2</sup> Note some of Cocteau's opinions on this subject as given in *Le Coq et l'Harlequin* (pp. 33, 34): "The café-concert is often pure, the theatre always corrupted." . . . "When I say of certain performances at the circus or the music-hall that I prefer them to everything at the

tic ballet in one scene, "Parade," on a scenario by Cocteau, first performed at the Théâtre du Châtelet by M. de Diaghilev's company, May 18, 1917. The scene represents houses in Paris on Sunday. A travelling theatre. Three music-hall numbers serve as a preliminary "parade" — a Chinese juggler, a little American girl and acrobats. Three managers are organizing publicity. They communicate to each other in their terrible language that the crowd mistakes the parade for the performance, and seek coarsely to make them understand. No one enters the theatre. After the last number of the parade the exhausted managers collapse upon one another. The performers leave the empty theatre. Seeing the supreme effort and defeat of the managers, they essay in turn to explain that the performance is given inside.

Satie had already shown a distinct aptitude for the realization of dramatic atmosphere in the preludes composed for Peladan's "Le Fils des Étoiles." It is not surprising, therefore, that the grotesque wit of these realistic scenes should have prompted his invention afresh. In turn the fugal prelude, the succeeding episodes of the Chinese juggler, the American girl including a "Rag-time

theatre, I do not say to everything that could be given at the theatre." "The music-hall, the circus, American negro orchestras all fertilize an artist to a degree equal to that of life."

du paquebot," the acrobats, and the final surrender of the managers with a brief ironic fugal epilogue, are vividly illustrative of the action, and highly diverting in their specific qualities. To say that this music is in perfect accord with its scenario is to acknowledge its dramatic merit.

In 1919, Satie revealed still a different phase of his personality in the composition of a "symphonic drama" for voice and orchestra, "Socrate," on texts from Victor Cousin's translation of Plato's dialogues, comprising "The Portrait of Socrates," "The Banks of the Ilissus" and "The Death of Socrates." As in others of Satie's works the style is of almost baffling simplicity. The voice declaims the text in a free but sober manner while the orchestra furnishes the background. Each section of the work has motives which supply the basis of a structural foundation, but there is little development of musical ideas as such. The music suffers from a certain monotony of mood, the outcome of an almost excessive simplicity. There is also no doubt but that Satie has contrived an interpretation of his texts that is often impressive in its dignity. The originality of his conception is manifest despite the shortcomings in its execution.

Among others of Satie's works are the songs, "La Statue de Bronze," "Daphénés" and "Le Chapelier," which manifest his wonted humor; the

pieces for violin and piano entitled "Choses vues à droit et à gauche (sans lunettes)"; four songs, "Élégie," "Danseuse," "Chanson" and "Adieu," as well as four-hand arrangements of works for small orchestra, "Trois petites pièces montées," and "La Belle Excentrique," whimsically described as a "Fantasie sérieuse," including the numbers "Grande Ritournelle," "Marche Franco-lunaire," "Valse du Mystérieux Baiser dans l'Œil" and "Cancan grand-Mondain." From this recent work it will be noted that Satie's zest for fantastic titles is unabated. He is said to be engaged at present upon a lyric drama, "Paul et Virginie."

It is not easy to characterize Satie's music as a whole, nor is it fair to apply to it the same standards used in judging other French composers. For he has attempted other aims and other methods. A paradoxical saying of Cocteau's may be quoted to advantage: "Music is not always a gondola, a race horse or a tight-rope. It is also sometimes a chair."<sup>1</sup> Satie has employed music not always for itself, but sometimes as a medium in which to express humor. His position as a humorist must remain unchallenged, even if his musical procedures may not infrequently be called in question. Nevertheless, he has enlarged to a certain extent the boundaries of

<sup>1</sup> Jean Cocteau, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

musical expression. The innocent idiosyncrasies of publishing a fair proportion of his music without key signatures or bar lines are not a genuine cause for reproach. In the long run Satie has contributed to the world's diversion. Having influenced the generation of Debussy and Ravel, he has continued as a combative esthetician to exhort the members of the "Groupe des Six" to renounce impressionistic methods in music. Despite their individual predilections and convictions, "The Six" may justly claim Satie and Cocteau as their esthetic foster-fathers. It is also reported that Satie has discovered composers of talent among a still younger generation of musicians. Apart from all consideration as to the merits or defects of his music, Satie has always exercised an indubitable influence upon those with whom he has come in contact.

It may seem of questionable utility to attempt a survey of a coterie of composers, some of whom have obviously not yet attained artistic maturity. To estimate at short range methods that are still somewhat in an experimental stage partakes necessarily of premature judgment. Separation in time from the immediate environment of a composer is the first prerequisite for an impartial weighing of his work. Even at the distance of a generation

from his death, it is possible to discern far more clearly the real drift of his work. How much more difficult is it then at present when radical tendencies, the possible forerunners of a more sweeping change in the very substance of music than at any time since the end of the sixteenth century, are involving the art of music in contradiction and confusion. Critics may continue to unearth contemporary criticisms of Beethoven, Chopin, Berlioz, Liszt and Wagner which would seem to confirm the existence of an impending anarchy, equally destructive in scope. Nevertheless, while recognizing that the musical idioms of to-day are logical consequents of the past, it must be acknowledged that conditions at the present time are analogous but not parallel. The radical currents of thought in present-day music proceed in two directions — one, that of polyharmony with superposed “harmonic” planes of dissimilar tonalities, the other of “linear music,” lines of melodic aspect combined in unorthodox counterpoint with atonal relations, that is, conforming to no fixed principle of key relationship. The musical structure of the classicists and their romantic followers through Wagner and Brahms even to Bruckner, Mahler, Reger and Strauss was governed by means of the interrelation of keys. The nineteenth-century Russians followed a similar course. The music of the French composers treated

in the present volume has, with few exceptions, been based upon identical principles. As Beethoven was himself the connecting link between the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, so Strauss, Debussy, Ravel and Albert Roussel came, so to speak, at the intersection of two epochs. To a certain extent they could foresee the future, and partake of its discoveries. With the swift evolution of musical style, Stravinsky and Schönberg are the typical representatives of the radical aspirations of to-day. The former with some deviations is the central figure in polyharmonic style; the latter cultivates dissonant free counterpoint in the atonal manner. From them may be traced the characteristics of nearly all the younger composers of the twentieth century.

The members of the "Groupe des Six" deny the existence of any fraternal organization. They insist that the very title under which they are known was due to the enterprise of an ambitious reporter. Recalling vaguely "The Five" as the nationalistic Russian composers of "The Invincible Band," Balakirev, Borodin, Cui, Mussorgsky and Rimsky-Korsakov, were so often termed, he sought to devise a unifying phrase for the young Frenchmen. MM. Darius Milhaud, Arthur Honegger, Francis Poulenc, Georges Auric, Louis Durey, Mlle. Ger-



maine Tailleferre were the composers thus linked together. M. Durey is said to have withdrawn from the fellowship of his colleagues. M. Auric and Mlle. Tailleferre have been much less productive than their associates, consequently "The Six" are virtually reduced to three. From the outset these composers have manifested individual traits and different artistic attitudes. They were united by their radicalism and their devotion to the ballet. MM. Milhaud and Honegger are the most conspicuous figures of the "Groupe." M. Poulenc, by reason of his lesser years, is chiefly a composer of promise, despite some definite attainment.

Darius Milhaud was born at Aix in Provence, September 4, 1892. He studied at the Paris Conservatoire from 1909 through 1915. His teachers were: MM. Berthelier (violin), Leroux (harmony), Gédalge (counterpoint and fugue), and Widor (composition). He was attaché at the French legation at Rio Janeiro during 1917 and 1918. He returned to France in 1919. He visited the United States as lecturer, pianist and conductor during the season of 1922-23.

He has been a prolific composer for his years. In the dramatic field are: the lyric drama, "La Brebis égarée," text by Francis Jammes, recently produced by the Opéra-Comique in Paris; music for

“Protée,” by Paul Claudel; incidental music for the dramas by Æschylus, “Agamemnon” and “The Choephoroi,” translated by Claudel. He has also composed the ballets, “L’Homme et son désir” (Paul Claudel), “Le Retour de l’Enfant Prodigue” (André Gide) and “Le Bœuf sur le toit” (Jean Cocteau). He has also collaborated with the others of “The Six” in “Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel” to a scenario by Cocteau. Among his orchestral works are two Suites, a Poem and five Études for pianoforte and orchestra, a Ballade and five symphonies for small orchestra. His chamber music includes two sonatas for piano and violin (1911 and 1917), one for two violins and piano (1914), a sonata for flute, oboe, clarinet and piano (1918), a sonatine for flute and piano and six string quartets. In addition there are the pianoforte pieces “Printemps,” two books of “Saudades do Brazil,” more than a hundred songs to texts by Francis Jammes, Paul Claudel, André Gide, Lucile de Chateaubriand, Léo Latil, Tagore, Patmore, Thomson, Meynell, Mallarmé, Rimbaud, Cocteau, René Chalupt and Morand, and a Psalm for unaccompanied men’s voices, composed for the Harvard Glee Club.

The music by Milhaud which appears to have produced the strongest impression — for “Proteus” and “The Choephoroi” — has not been given stage performance outside of Paris. Of the former work

André Cœuroy writes: "In the humorous 'Proteus,' this 'Proteus' which perhaps reveals the true Claudel better than 'Tête d'or' or 'La Jeune Fille violaine,' Milhaud's taste for music that is violent and crude, highly colored and noisy, has found a substantial nourishment. Claudel has taken pains to note with great exactness the music of which he has dreamed for his Aristophanean buffoonery. He prescribes a 'polyphonic chorus' of Satyrs, Nouveau-Cirque music for the Seals' Banquet in the first act. The second act opens upon a Nocturnal Bacchanale. The chief Satyr beats time and says: 'If we must make noise, there is no need of music. We must make the silence heard.' Here, notes Claudel, the orchestra plays on open strings, — the violins turned about, the cymbals disconnected, the brass muted. 'Very good,' continues the Satyr. 'You understood me. That's the music I like.' And when he cries, 'The night is to the Gods,' strokes struck gently on the bass drum are heard. The final and masterly grotesque chorus of sailors, sung by the Satyrs, closes this work of fancy and health. Milhaud is at home there. His ironic truculence has a precise object upon which it agglomerates in mimicking the antics of a joyous character. The tumultuous music, composed as a symphonic suite for this comic drama, possesses a richness, a vigor, a concision and a solidity which

explains the agreement of the subject and the personality who amused himself by translating it into sounds.”<sup>1</sup>

Of “The Choepori” M. Cœuroy continues as follows: “The savage roughness of Æschylus’ tragedy, adapted by Claudel for the theatre at Orange, found a splendid resonance in Milhaud’s soul. He was able to express in music the frenzy of vengeful murder, the sacred honor in the presence of baleful presages, the violence of a bloody expiation. ‘Since Florent Schmitt’s Psalm,’ remarked Henri Prunières, ‘there had been no opportunity to hear a French work of equal power.’”<sup>2</sup>

Milhaud’s earlier music was devoid of anarchical suggestion, but from 1915 onward he began increasingly to employ the polyharmonic idiom. He did not resort to this in haphazard fashion, but studied its theory both in relation to harmony and counterpoint. His article on the subject in “La Revue Musicale” for February 1, 1923, has already been referred to.<sup>3</sup> Milhaud has obviously derived his inspiration in this direction chiefly from Stravinsky, but the idiom as he uses it has evolved in a manner different from that of the Russian composer. It is a difficult matter for a critic to judge with accuracy

<sup>1</sup> André Cœuroy, *La Musique française moderne*, pp. 136–38. Paris: Librairie Delagrave.

<sup>2</sup> André Cœuroy, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

<sup>3</sup> Chapter IX, p. 205.

the various manifestations of a new musical style. Of necessity the critic must be behind the composer in grasping the expressive value of radical musical thought. It has often been thus in the history of art. Inevitably the earlier evidences of a strange idiom are more acceptable than its more pronounced and complex form. That polyharmony should be a practicable and even admirable medium of musical and dramatic effect is beyond dispute. It is a logical outcome of centuries of experiment in dissonance. But mastery of a new style is not acquired hastily. Innovative enthusiasts often overstep the boundaries of prudence and fail to discriminate between the justifiable and the ineffective resources of a novel system. After all, a lapse of time is necessary to appraise correctly the value of experiments in a new type of musical expression. While it is thus too soon to pronounce a final judgment, it often seems as if M. Milhaud had been somewhat indiscriminate in exploring the resources of polyharmony. In some cases he has been successful beyond a doubt; in others the outcome is more dubious. Thus, "La Limousine," a song from "Les Soirées de Péetrograde," describes the pausing of a Rolls-Royce with a strange burden near the Neva. While bells clang from a hundred spires, the coffin of Rasputin goes to its destiny. The accompaniment combines two and even three

tonalities with a dramatic suggestion unattainable by less harsh means. In the same collection "Monsieur Protopopov" achieves a piquant irony through a similar if more euphonious device. The first number of the two sets of pianoforte pieces, "Printemps," combines phrases from different keys with real charm. In others of the same collection the results are more negative. Two books of Brazilian dances, entitled "Saudades do Brazil," the themes of which were doubtless collected in South America, manifest a like discrepancy. The dances named Sorocabo, Copocabana, Ipanema, Corocavado and Sumaré possess a genuine individuality of expression. The piece for violin and pianoforte, also entitled "Le Printemps," employs polyharmony with a certain resourceful graciousness. So also, "The Nurse's Song," from the "Poèmes juifs" (1916) makes an immediate appeal on account of its delicacy and its emotional penetration. The first of the "Child Poems" with a text by Tagore is another instance of a convincing employ of the polyharmonic style. On the other hand, the Sonata for wind instruments and piano, despite effective episodes and moods of originality, seems unnecessarily drastic in its idiom. Nevertheless individual opinion is barely more than approximate in its reaction. The real decision rests with the future.

Of the ballets, "Le Bœuf sur le toit," para-

phrased by its author, Jean Cocteau, as "The Nothing-Doing Bar," contains more than an allusion to the problems of American prohibition. The scene is naturally a barroom with its accustomed paraphernalia, animate and inanimate. After a variety of diversions, a policeman's whistle is heard. A card with the inscription, *Ici on ne boit que du lait*, is hastily displayed. Bottles and glasses are swept away; milk is quickly distributed. The policeman enters and crudely examines all present. He tastes the milk. Moved by a bucolic spirit, he begins to dance. The bartender releases an electric fan which decapitates the policeman. He seeks his head, tries to put it on backwards and falls dead. The bartender then presents the policeman's head on a salver to an auburn-haired lady. She dances extravagantly, parodying Salomé and at last disappears. The bartender comes to the policeman's aid, pours a bottle of gin down his neck, and places his head in its accustomed place. The policeman revives. The bartender then presents a bill three yards long.

Here is a subject after Cocteau's heart. The characters all have enormous papier-mâché heads. The deliberateness of the action adds to the grotesqueness of the humor. For this ballet, Milhaud has used South American melodies with a background of syncopation not too remote from "jazz"

though without the ineffable rhythmic complications of the latter. The music, in much the same manner as that of Satie's "Parade," supports the action effectively. It is animated, discretely polyharmonic, and while less ambitious than others of Milhaud's works is not on that account less pleasing.

To close a somewhat hasty survey of Milhaud's music, it must be recalled that the composer is still young, that he possesses a fluent technique as well as an easily aroused inspiration. In consequence much music is still to be expected from him.

Arthur Honegger, considered by some the most talented member of "The Six," was born of Swiss parents at Havre, March 10, 1892. He began his musical education at Zurich. On coming to Paris, he studied the violin with Capet, and then entered the Conservatory where his teachers were Gédalge (counterpoint and fugue), Widor (composition) and d'Indy (conducting). After leaving the Conservatory he worked with industrious patience for many years to master the technique of composition. He has composed music for the masque, "Le dit des jeux du monde" (1918), by a Belgian poet, M. Meral; for the dramas, "La Mort de Sainte-Alm  enne" (1919), by Max Jacob, and "Saul" (1922), by Andr   Gide; for the Dramatic Psalm for



chorus and orchestra, "Le Roi David," by René Morax. He has also composed the ballets "Skating Rink" (scenario by Canudo), "Verité et Mensonge" by André Hellé, "Horace Victorieux" (1920-21) on a scenario by Fauconnet, and has collaborated with other members of "The Six" in Cocteau's "Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel." For orchestra there are a prelude to "Aglavaine et Sélysette" (1917), "Chant de Nigamon" (1917) and "Pastorale d'été" (1921). Honegger has also composed two sonatas for violin and pianoforte (1916 and 1919), one for viola and piano (1920), one for violoncello and piano (1921), a sonata for two violins alone, a string quartet (1916-17) and a Rapsodie for two flutes, clarinet and piano. In addition are to be mentioned the pianoforte pieces, "Hommage à Ravel," "Sept Pièces brèves," Prélude, Danse, "Toccata et Variations"; the songs, "Quatre Poèmes," six on texts from Guillaume d'Appollinaire; "Alcools," three on poems by Cocteau, and "Trois Fragments" from "Les Pâques à New York," by Blaise Cendrars, with string-quartet accompaniment.

During his formative years Honegger studied the music of Richard Strauss, Reger, Wagner, Schönberg and Stravinsky. Among French composers he preferred Florent Schmitt. In other respects his influences have been predominately French. He is

a slow and thoughtful composer, who has sought to disengage himself from the insidious influence of Stravinsky. While Milhaud was drawn rather to polyharmony, Honegger has reacted obviously to the style of Schönberg with its "linear music" employing radical counterpoint. He has not, however, always adopted the latter's "atonal" predilections as the sonatas and the string quartet testify. A characteristic, if uncomplex, instance of his idiom is to be found in the short "Pièce pour le piano," published as a supplement to "La Revue Musicale" for January, 1922. While brief, it has structural continuity; its "lines" are often dissonant, but they preserve an independent logic. It has withal an emotional simplicity and directness. The "Sept Pièces brèves" (1919-20) show an unmistakable Schönbergian drift in style but with an individual quality of mood and, at times, a decided dramatic power. The String Quartet is a somewhat baffling work because ideas of strength and of indisputable beauty are treated with solid workmanship, but with too complex developments. The first violin sonata suffers likewise from over-elaboration, but the later chamber music gains convincingly in clarity. The sonata for viola and pianoforte exemplifies this simplification of method. The structure of the first movement, while not precisely that of "classical form," adopts its general principles. The digni-

fied theme of the introduction reappears appropriately expanded in the "development section." A naïve slow movement, of considerable charm and grace, and a vigorous finale continue the stylistic and structural economy of the whole. In this sonata the "linear music" of Schönberg is still in evidence, but the work is nevertheless not deficient in individuality.

Despite his predilection for chamber music of rigorous outlines, Honegger seems still more at home in dramatic music. "Le Roi David" (1921), composed in haste and first performed in Mézières, Switzerland, is a work of considerable dimensions. It alternates vocal and instrumental numbers of varied emotional scope. It exhibits to a greater degree than the chamber music a personal invention and many conceptions of a vital nature. "Horace Victorieux," generally regarded as Honegger's masterpiece, is a "mimed symphony," based upon the narrative of Livy, and following scrupulously its different phases.<sup>1</sup> It has for subject the episode of Roman history concerning the combat between three Horatii and three Curiatii chosen to decide the strife between the Romans and the Albans. The following analysis is by M. Chalupt. "It begins with a love scene in sight of the ramparts of

<sup>1</sup> René Chalupt, "Arthur Honegger," *La Revue Musicale*, January 1, 1922.

Alba and Rome between Camilla and Curiatus, her betrothed. The day comes, the Horatii appear, the old Horatius greets his daughter; they await the decision of the Senate concerning the dispute between the two cities. A crowd gathers and excitedly awaits the entry of the heralds who solemnly proclaim the decree: three Curiatii are to battle against three Horatii. They prepare for combat, arms are received and a place is designated for each. Camilla and Curiatus exchange rapid and profound glances of farewell. The signal for the battle is given. Two of the Horatii fall and the third flees. Turning against the dispersed Curiatii, he slays them amidst the acclamations of his fellow citizens. Camilla then bursts into dolorous lamentations and hurls curses at the hero, who, angered, slays her." Here again, Honegger has manifested his large sense of the dramatic. "Horace Victorieux," even when heard in the concert-hall,<sup>1</sup> where the uncompromising character of its idiom demanded the support of scenery and action, was a graphic realization in music of its gruesome scenario. Only recently in Paris the performance of a symphonic prelude for Shakespeare's "Tempest" again reasserted Honegger's gifts for dramatic expression. Thus now entering artistic maturity, and

<sup>1</sup> Performance by the Boston Symphony Orchestra under Pierre Monteux, November 24, 1922.

in the possession of a secure craftsmanship, he is in a position to justify the promise of earlier works.

Francis Poulenc, barely in his twenty-fifth year, has already a fairly long list of works to his credit. Since two years ago he was studying composition with Charles Koechlin he may be regarded as being still in the formative stage of his career. Among his works are: a "Rapsodie nègre" (1917) for wind instruments, voice and piano, a sonata for pianoforte duet (1918), one for two clarinets (1918) and one for bassoon, both without accompaniment; six songs from "Le Bestiaire," by Guillaume d'Apollinaire, three "Cocardes" to poems by Jean Cocteau, and "Le Gendarme incompris," opéra-bouffe in one act by Cocteau and Radiguet; the pianoforte pieces, "Suite" (1920), "Napoli" (1921), "Impromptus" (1920-21) and "Promenades" (1921). Poulenc's chief qualities are vivacity, exuberance and an abundant sense of humor. Like his confrères he often employs a polyharmonic idiom, at times adventurously, at others with a more discriminating effect. His humor is to be seen in the "Cocardes" and also in "Le Dromadaire," "La Chèvre de Thibet," "La Sauterelle" and "La Carpe," from "Le Bestiaire." Among his piano pieces the "Mouvements perpétuels" and the "Promenades" are representative of his traits. His

invention is shown to advantage in the titles of the latter, "on foot," "by motor-car," "on horseback," "by boat," "by air-plane," "by motor-bus," "by railway," "by bicycle," and "by stage-coach." In these he has shown a witty and distinctive imagination.

Without implying anything to the discredit of the present attainment or to the future creative prospects of the other members of "The Six," it may suffice to mention their works. Louis Durey took up music later in life than his confrères. He has composed the following songs: "Poèmes de Verlaine et de Francis Jammes" (1914), "Offrande lyrique" (Tagore) (1914), "Épigrammes de Théocrate," "Le Bestiaire," by Guillaume d'Apollinaire (twenty-seven songs) (1919), "Chansons basques," "Trois Poèmes de Pétrone" (1921), and "Images à Crusoë," a suite for voice and orchestra on texts by M. Saint-Léger-Léger. There are also the pieces for pianoforte duet, "Carillons" and "Neige," which, while individual, show the influence of Stravinsky, "Impressions de Cirque," a string quartet, and a quartet for wind instruments. M. Durey's music shows his personal reaction to the tendencies of the day.

Georges Auric, like M. Poulenc not yet in his twenty-fifth year, has composed "Interludes" for

voice on poems by René Chalupe, songs with texts by Cocteau, Klingsor and Chinese poems translated by Roché; "Chandelle Romaine" for piano-forte duet, "Gaspard et Zoé" for a magic-lantern performance, and the piano pieces "Pastorales" (1919), a fox-trot for duet, "Adieu, New York," and a sonatine, 1922. The "Pastorales" present a variety of moods not usually associated with their title; "Adieu, New York," illustrates the young Parisian composer's reaction to "jazz," while the sonatine is simple in outline and direct in sentiment, albeit of a polyharmonic nature.

Mlle. Germaine Tailleferre has published a string quartet, some charming pieces for two pianos, "Jeux de plein air," music for a ballet "Marchand d'Oiseaux," and an excellent sonata for violin and piano.

In closing this survey of modern French music, necessarily incomplete as to the younger figures, it may not be inappropriate to retrace the main outlines of its evolution. With the sequence of events in mind, the pioneer work of Chabrier, of Fauré, and even of Satie bears a clearer relation to the whole. Their share in asserting national characteristics, the part that each played in the upbuilding of a specifically French technique and manner of expression assumes larger and more definite propor-

tions. The incentive to perpetuate traditional forms with a due regard for sincerity of sentiment which animated the pupils of Franck has a collective force which becomes more and more striking with each examination of their convictions. Even the relative byways of realistic dramatic method, to which Bruneau and Charpentier were irresistibly drawn, viewed in a secondary aspect became important achievements since the independence of the French operatic stage was hastened thereby. So other pupils of Massenet, if inclined to a moderate conception of musical art, have aided in the preservation of French traditions. We realize, in retrospect, with a new intensity the extent to which Debussy, by disregarding æsthetic hesitation and compromise, became a comprehensive liberator and thus restored Gallic art so that it might fall in line with the justly cherished French masters of the eighteenth century. We see also with reënforced perception why Ravel was qualified to continue, along his own lines, the application of impressionistic principles to music. Similarly, the careers of Dukas, Magnard, Florent Schmitt, de Sévérac and Albert Roussel, to choose representative names from the older generation, follow as a logical consequence of their respective temperaments and their assimilated influences.

With the current of radicalism, brought into



music mainly by Stravinsky and Schönberg, involving as it does virtually all the younger composers of to-day, it is plain that impressionism was bound to be discredited. Even the fundamentals of musical art seem to be menaced by a sweeping revolution. With this in mind, the later work of Satie and that of the "Groupe des Six" becomes not only explicable but even foreordained. It is not to be assumed that every episode in the evolution of modern French music necessarily represents an esthetic progress in the strict sense of the word. Vincent d'Indy has reminded us that progress in Art is a spiral. It does not proceed in a straight line from epoch to epoch. Change is inevitable, but it is only from a distance that its relative import can be correctly estimated.

Prophecy in an art is always dangerous, but curiosity always invites it. A question as to the present state of French music and as to its future naturally arises. We may readily draw conclusions for critical guidance by looking back upon French music during the nineteenth century. In its early decades, Italian opera predominated to the signal disadvantage of native art, and this condition persisted until past the middle of the century. When French composers began to write instrumental music they turned to German romanticists as mod-

els. While in the process of readjustment they became subject to Wagner. While Debussy and some of his contemporaries succeeded in restoring French music to nationalistic assertion, they could not wholly escape the lessons taught by the nationalist Russians. Dukas, Magnard, Florent Schmitt, de Sévérac and Roussel prolonged this affirmation of the Gallic spirit, but another foreign invasion was at hand. The "Groupe des Six" are eminently French in their environment, but in their general technical procedures they are as subservient to Stravinsky and Schönberg as their æsthetic forbears of a generation or so ago were to Wagner. Judging by experience, a period of assimilation is followed by one of reaction to nationalism. Therefore it seems reasonable to expect that when French composers of the present and the immediate future have profitably absorbed what foreign influence has to teach, they will once more return to a more exclusive dependence upon the living traditions of their illustrious past.

## LIST OF SOURCES



## LIST OF SOURCES

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