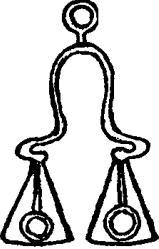


BRIEF  AND
COMMENT REVIEW

THE COMPOSER'S PLIGHT

An Interview With Arthur Honegger

TO visit Arthur Honegger one leaves Place Pigalle with its colorful Montmartre atmosphere, and after climbing four flights of stairs in a typical Parisian apartment house, enters a little work-room more than half filled by a grand piano and lined with shelves of books on all sorts of subjects. The impression is one of utter seclusion, of remoteness from the turmoil of the great city beyond the outer door, and of work.

Honegger, known to America chiefly as one of the Group of Six, has achieved a place that entitles him to consideration as an individual, a man in the foremost rank of the young composers of Europe. Born in Havre, of Swiss parentage, he is now claimed by both nations. Although in his early thirties, he has had a formidable number of compositions published and performed—chamber music, piano pieces, songs, and orchestral scores—and has written eleven works intended for stage production.

He does no teaching or playing but spends his life in composing; in fact all of the Six have small incomes which enable them to concentrate on their work.

"There is no profession in the world so unremunerative as that of composer. From an economic point of view it is hopeless. For example, a sonata represents perhaps six months' labor and the most one can hope to make would be two thousand francs (one

hundred dollars.) Do you know anyone else who works six months for two thousand francs?

"Then your works are produced, and you are expected to be in the audience. You receive two francs fifty from the Society of Authors for the rights of performance and you pay four francs government tax to enter the hall on a pass. Therefore you finish by owing yourself money."

"But a man like Fauré," I said, "must receive a sufficient royalty to live on."

"Two years ago we organized a 'Fauré fête' to raise funds to keep him, a man of seventy, out of need, because most of his best selling songs had been sold to his publishers for twenty-five francs apiece."

"Today there is surely a public for the living composer."

"Yes there is—an audience composed of the other composers, who never pay; the executive musicians, who never pay, and the friends of the composers and musicians, and of course they never pay. So there is a large audience, but they never pay. The public who pay for their tickets have not evolved beyond Wagner."

Smiling wistfully over the composer's plight M. Honegger drifted from the problems of finance to the tendencies of modern music. He places Stravinsky and Eric Satie as outstanding influences.

"Satie's influence is decidedly retrograde—1888. It is a reaction against musical experiment, a return to a classic simplicity that, in this day and age, is artificial. The Arcueil School, named for the town where Satie lives, is younger than the Six, and is composed of Desormiere, Sauguet, Maxim Jacob and Cliquet-Pleyel. Even among the Six this same influence has been at work."

Yet there are many who feel that Satie with his keen humor and raillery against so called impressionism is the leveler in this day of brutality, dissonance and noise. I wonder whether M. Honegger might not be of the opinion that Milhaud's *Polytonality* was really started in the spirit of a joke. At any rate "Back to Gounod" is the slogan of *les jeunes*; then they write a Donizetti melody in F sharp and a Mozart accompaniment in F!

"What to you is the basic element in composition?"

“The solidity of its architecture. Music is either a theme varied or one theme superimposed on another. It must not lack a definite plan, neither can it be discursive with shifting ideas. Beethoven’s construction is definite and clear. Impressionism without definite form never touches the general public. All music comprehensible to the public is simple in construction; both Mozart and Bach are complex. One must use elements that strike the listener—rhythm and the exterior form must catch and hold their interest even if the interior meaning escapes them. Dissonances do not count because the ear so soon becomes accustomed to them. The audiences seem to ‘get’ my *Horace Victorieux*, in spite of its complexities, because the exterior is simple. They are stirred by *Le Sacre du Printemps* because of its elemental rhythms and its constant repetition. But Stravinsky lacks melody, and because of his marked individuality he is dangerous to the composer who imitates him. Development must be melodic, I believe, and the secret of all successful form is freedom of melodic invention. In this Bach and Mozart stand supreme.”

By Marion Bauer

THE JAZZ FORMULA

ALTHOUGH eminent authorities are unable to arrive at an exact definition of jazz, certain characteristics appear to be essential. One is the use of novel tonal effects obtained by the employment of strange muting devices. It should be remembered that the jazz band is not a band, nor is it an orchestra; it is a sort of combination of both. The trumpets are almost always muted. Occasionally surprisingly beautiful effects are achieved, as when Mr. Whiteman’s trombonist loosely inserts the end of a large megaphone into the bell of his instrument. Derbies and tin cans are applied to the trumpets, trombones, and clarinets with amazing results. It is these variations in timbre, this experimentation in unusual tonal effects that constitute the principal contribution of jazz to the science of music.

Another characteristic is the employment of fantastic, often