

## THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW

BY DARIUS MILHAUD

THE tide of music ebbs, flows, turns, and swells again with a swift-ness which disconcerts the hearer, always slow to accept a new idea. Instead of taking advantage of the flood, he watches it ebb without seeing it, and at the moment when it is spent and about to disappear, he wishes to halt it and keep it forever fixed. He who listens to music should, above all others, be indulgent and open-minded rather than rebellious, for in the end he will probably be wrong anyhow.

Our beloved Satie serves as an example, for all his life this man was ready to welcome the newest manifestations in our music. Young people starting to compose always received support and encouragement from him. Why demand that a youth of fifteen have the technique of a university professor? We should, instead, be patient until he can develop his gifts, and support him during the long period of groping and of doubt while he feels out a number of paths before choosing the road to follow deliberately.

Since the day when the Six made their debut with Satie as their idol, French music has passed through many different phases, has reacted to many contradictory tendencies. It has been the object of influences which have hurled themselves like a hurricane upon it, and have passed on, leaving a deep, significant mark.

In 1918 jazz arrived in our midst from New York and became the rage. A whole literature of syncopation grew up to convince a hesitant public. Strawinsky wrote his *Rag Time* for eleven instruments, his *Piano Rag Music*, his *Mavra*; Wiener wrote his *Sonatine Syncopée*, his *Blues*, and almost created a great public scandal by bringing a famous jazz band into a concert hall. During the winter of 1921-1922 in America, the journalists regarded me with scorn when I made out a case for jazz. Three years later jazz band concerts are given in New York, there is talk of a jazz

opera at the Metropolitan, banjo classes are organized in the conservatories. Jazz is comfortably installed with official sanction.

Here it is finished. The last works of Strawinsky owe it nothing, they return to a severe classicism and an ascetic sobriety. His *Concerto* and his *Sonate* are sure proofs of this change. The *Concerto* of Germaine Tailleferre leads back to Bach, *Les Biches* by Poulenc carries us into a vast French park, *Les Matelots* of Georges Auric is unhampered by the precedents of polytonal music on which he based the composition of his work *Les Fâcheux*.

We are dealing here with proved musicians having behind them a considerable body of work. Let us therefore follow Satie, still exploring the horizon. From behind his spectacles, with his indefinable smile he peers, forever searching, until he discovers. The young people who now approach him for an introduction to the public are the School of Arcueil. Henry Sauget, born in Bordeaux, fond of the sea, of sailors, boats, colored shells and Chopin's music, has never fallen under the spell of jazz. It is chiefly Chopin who influences him. One feels that he refreshes himself by turning over the most tender pages of Satie and Fauré. His music has a playful quality, his composition is careful. He has the breeding of a Siamese cat. The stamp of his personality is especially marked in the military opera-bouffe in one act, *Le Plumet du Colonel*. It may be said that this is badly orchestrated, but should one expect to find a boy of twenty-two orchestrating pages of perfect balance in his first attempt? All the music of this score is pleasing and that in itself is rare enough.

His colleague, Maxime Jacob, is only twenty years old. When he left high school at fifteen I showed his first attempts to Satie. How great a facility, what an over-abundance of gifts! In two or three years there followed an avalanche of sonatas, piano pieces, projects for ballets, comic operas, and so on. In all this litter how many hastily written, silly compositions there were, and what severe criticisms and violent indignation they incurred. But Satie admonished us to wait. Time has already done much, for within the last two years this youth's progress has been considerable. He has an absolutely innate sense of the orchestra. At the recent premiere of an overture by him its assured and easy orchestration made a deep impression.

Jacob is a young Jew, coming from Bayonne. Occasionally, racial inspiration urges him to the composition of psalms that reveal a true emotion. But his nature and gifts lead him to write chiefly easy melodies, real melodies like those of Gounod and even Reynaldo Hahn, not to mention Theodore Botrel. His field is, I believe, in light music, operettas and songs; he has just finished a little comic opera full of gaiety, ease and vivacity.

All this is a tomorrow about to become a today. But what of the day after tomorrow? Satie once said to me, "I wish I knew the music that the four-year-olds of today will compose." Let us not, however, be in such haste; we are getting old fast enough. Let us turn to the generation born between 1905 and 1910, who are just beginning to make themselves felt. At the premiere of his ballet *Relâche*, Satie was accosted by three young men who came to express their admiration of him. They spent the evening together. One of them, Robert Caby, never left him. Shortly after this Satie fell ill, and during the long and serious sickness which he suffered, young Caby made one of the little faithful band who put themselves at his disposal and took care of him during the weeks which preceded his death at the hospital of Saint Joseph.

Caby, Dautun and Letac are the three young men who came to seek guidance for their first steps, at Satie's side. Will the future remember their names? Their first efforts are very strange. They write absolutely atonal music, worthy of the pupils of Schoenberg, and their imaginations seem to follow the fantastic chimeras which attracted Jules Laforgue. Is it an epoch that is returning? If so, then what secret need brought them close to Satie the purist, the apostle of a spare and limpid art, whose simplicity is its loveliest ornament? A disconcerting contradiction!

The very small piano pieces of Caby, his vast projects for the theatre, the timid and thoughtful art of Dautun, his curious sonatina for piano and violin, the complex schemes and special orchestration which are the goal of Letac—are these the promise of a new phase of French music? The future will tell, and more quickly than one is wont to believe.

