

## **APPENDIX**



## **Biographical Sketches I: The Artists**

Artists to whose works composers respond with instrumental compositions span the entire history of Western art, from the sacred imagery of medieval times to twentieth-century creators of visual depictions in all media—in the case of my study, from Giotto to Klee. For the convenience of readers I have compiled brief sketches on each artist. These are intended to give a mere biographical scaffolding within which the work that drew a composer’s attention may be placed and understood. I have decided to list artists not alphabetically but chronologically, an order I will also follow when presenting poets and composers.

### **Giotto (1267-1337), Painter of Saint Francis**

According to one of his early critics, Giotto was known among his contemporaries as the one who “translated the art of painting from Greek into Latin, and made it modern.”<sup>1</sup> The young Giotto’s apprenticeship had taken place in a time and under masters still influenced by the figurative style and ceremonial abstraction developed after Byzantine art. According to the rules of this tradition, which had originated at the imperial court of Byzantium and taken root all through Eastern Europe, images must comply with a very precise codex of representation. The goal was not to produce the impression of reality, but to give visible expression, with the help of aristocratic symbolism, to greater-than-human and metaphysical beings. Any single scene after the biblical story followed an iconography that remained unmodified for generations and was repeated with diligence over and over again. Giotto’s teacher, Cimabue, was still part of that legacy of an elegant, precious manner of depiction. Giotto, by contrast, from his earliest known works on was moved by a different desire. His new approach, especially his preference of plasticity and dynamic composition over stasis, became a turning point in Western art, eventually triggering one of the most decisive redefinitions of its intent. A contemporary of

<sup>1</sup>Cennino Cennini, *Il libro dell’arte* (ca. 1390), quoted in Roberto Salvini, *All the Paintings of Giotto II*, trans. Paul Colacicchi (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1963), p. 97.

Dante, Giotto equaled the importance of the author of the *Divina Commedia* in representing in his art at the same time the apex of a long-prepared synthesis between the artistic styles of the Eastern and Western Middle Ages, and the cradle of the nascent tradition of Romanesque art.

Two independent influences coincided to allow this new approach. On the one hand, an early visit to Rome acquainted Giotto with the very personal language of ancient art, in which he saw “models of sobriety and composure,” with artists attempting “subtle and acute investigations into human nature and sentiments.”<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, the acquaintance with the humble saint of Assisi himself proved another potent stimulus. Giotto had first visited Assisi around 1290 and already then established a close contact with the order of the Franciscans. The “little brother” soon became one of Giotto’s favorite subject matters. While the artist depicted many other topics in the course of his life, his connection with the saint from Assisi was particularly close. He named one of his sons Francesco and one of his daughters Chiara (after Francis’s first female follower, Saint Clare), and it has been observed that “Giotto’s painting is [quintessentially] Franciscan.”<sup>3</sup> The fact that Saint Francis’s death in 1226 preceded Giotto’s lifetime by only four decades facilitated a particularly intense identification of the artist with his protagonist; also, and perhaps more importantly, it meant that no fixed iconographic tradition for the representation of this saint’s hagiography was yet in place. The fortuitous freshness of the topic thus converged with Giotto’s strong interest in a more natural style of representation.

When Giotto died in Florence, aged seventy, he was celebrated by contemporary poets of the ranks of Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio.

### **Sandro Botticelli (1444-1510) and Neoplatonic Aesthetics**

“Sandro Botticelli, a most excellent painter both on panel and wall. His works have a virile air, great judgment, and a sound sense of proportion.” So judged in 1485, i.e. during the painter’s life-time, a Florentine art agent. For centuries after his death, however, Botticelli’s art was

<sup>2</sup>Translated after Steffano Zuffi, *Giotto* (Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori Arte, 1991), p. 8. My account of Giotto’s artistic development largely follows Zuffi’s excellent introduction.

<sup>3</sup>Giancarlo Vigorelli in *L’opera completa di Giotto* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1966), p. 6, writes: “...la terretirità e la corporeità francescana è pienamente religiosa, l’uomo e ogni creatura prendono inizio e hanno fine in Dio. E infatti la pittura giottesca è medioevale, ed è francescana.”

neglected and underestimated. Only recent art criticism has returned to the original assessment, recognizing in the quattrocento artist who enjoyed such great esteem among his contemporaries a personality who brought to painting, as Baldini phrased it,

the understanding of space and perspective; the redefinition of form as the knowledge and representation of nature; and the importance of *historia*, or narrative, as the recounting of human actions. [...] Botticelli was the first painter—and, more significantly, the first of the Renaissance—for whom “the beautiful” was the ultimate aim of art. His strong, unsentimental style endowed his pursuit of beauty with that new *virilità* (vigorous or “virile” air), which was the very basis of his work and of which Michelangelo, who studied him closely, would be the main beneficiary.<sup>4</sup>

As a protégé of the Medici, Botticelli was able to benefit from the company and constant inspiration of a unique assembly of philosophers, scholars, poets, writers, and men of science whom Lorenzo de’ Medici (“Lorenzo the Magnificent”) gathered at his court.

His religious paintings are executed in a style that is as sensuous as that used for the treatment of secular topics. In fact, the similarity in his depiction of the Virgin and Venus, or the Graces of Greek mythology and the angels of biblical scenes, has drawn many comments.

### **Hans Holbein (1497-1543), Portraitist of Death’s Clients**

Born in Augsburg as the son of an artist famous in his own circles (Hans Holbein the Elder, 1465-1514), Holbein came to Basel, the stronghold of Humanism, in 1515. Throughout his life he was influenced, on the one hand, by the thoughts of Erasmus of Rotterdam and the aesthetics of his compatriots Dürer and Grünewald and, on the other hand, by impressions received, during an extensive trip through Italy, from the art of Leonardo da Vinci and Andrea Mantegna.

His output comprises many genres, notably drawings and etchings, frescoes, and genre portraits. In his early years, he drew illustrations for Erasmus’s *Praise of Folly* and made woodcuts for book illustrations, of which the Dance of Death is the most famous series. He also designed stained glass windows and metalwork, painted organ shutters, created

<sup>4</sup>Umberto Baldini, *Primavera*, trans. Mary Finton (London: Sidwick and Jackson, 1984), pp. 11-12.

altar pieces for churches and religious panels for private patrons. Among the murals, only one, *The Ambassadors* (1533, now in London's National Gallery) survive, while those created for the Great Council Chamber in Basel and for Whitehall Castle, highly praised by contemporaries, are now lost. Among the portraits, those done of the English king Henry VIII and each of his eight wives, as well as of leading humanists (including three of Erasmus of Rotterdam and several of Sir Thomas More) and of Hanseatic merchants, made his fame in the British Isles.

His style, initially German and late Gothic, changed as he assimilated Italian Renaissance principles and models. The well-known *Dead Christ* is inspired by that of Andrea Mantegna. Holbein's greatest painting, *The Madonna with the Family of the Burgomaster Meyer*, which combines the religious subject matter with his knack for portrait painting, incorporates recollections both of Leonardo's art and of Venetian altarpieces.

The extensive output of Holbein's English paintings and drawings has been praised as a collection of masterpieces in which psychological penetration and artistic economy work together. Yet this very gift of insight into individual personalities already informed his earlier works, including his ingenious depictions of generic figures, like those in the Dance of Death series.

### **Marc Chagall (1887-1984): Rediscovering the Bible**

Marc Chagall, without doubt one of the most influential artists of the twentieth century, was born (as Mose Zégall) in 1887 in Vitebsk, a provincial Russian market town that was then still alive with medieval traditions. He was raised in a devout Jewish environment, and these early impressions figure prominently throughout his work. "The earth that nourished my soul was Vitebsk," Chagall recalled in his speech at the dedication ceremony for the tapestries made for the Knesset, and Israel Yeshayahu, appraising the artist's work on the same occasion,<sup>5</sup> adds:

<sup>5</sup>*Chagall in Jerusalem*, a volume that compiles various speeches and eulogies with scholarly essays on the works Chagall created for the capital of Israel, is published as a special issue of *XX<sup>e</sup> Siècle* [sic] *Review* (New York: Leon Amiel, 1983). Allegedly part of a journal with a name that is a hybrid of misspelled French and English, this book appears utterly strange in that not one of the substantial chapters in the main body lists an author. It seems particularly peculiar that, since the chapter on the *Jerusalem Windows* is lifted verbatim from the American translation of Jean Leymarie's book—the complete text and all illustrations are reprinted—no acknowledgment is made of the original author, the translator, or the earlier publishers.

Chagall is then the greatest Jewish artist of our time, one whose Judaism anticipated his art and served him as a source of living inspiration for his creative imagination. The Jewish way of life, Jewish history, and the biblical heritage, as well as secular knowledge and powers of observation, nurtured his poetic soul. His entire œuvre, in all its richness and variations, is the fruit of these influences.<sup>6</sup>

The Jewish communities in Russia and many other eastern European countries were Hasidic. This mystic religious movement emphasizes emotional expression and the belief that all actions performed religiously are thereby holy. Chagall's youth was steeped in the rich tradition of tales and legends through which Hasidism has been handed down through the centuries; he himself frequently spoke of the sense of the marvelous and of the religious fervor of ritual that filled his childhood.

After preliminary studies in St. Petersburg he moved to Paris in 1910. Here he soon became friends with some of the leading artists (particularly Robert Delaunay, Fernand Léger, Amedeo Modigliani and Chaim Soutine) and poets (among them Guillaume Apollinaire and Blaise Cendrars). It was in Paris that he found what came to be known as his unique iconographic language, focusing on life in the shtetl with figures of tenderly embracing lovers, flowers, birds, and animals—all arranged in ways that speak about a world view (including the view of a world “upside down”) rather than of their spatial position and size in real life.

While his iconography remained amazingly unified throughout his long artistic life, Chagall passed through many styles, influenced in turn by folk art and Russian icons, Fauvism, Cubism, Orphism, and Constructivism. Yet, as Chagall scholar Jean Leymarie observes, “he used [these styles] for his own aims, reversing their original purposes by thinking of them as emerging from the internal being outward, from the seen object to the psychic outpouring. Dreams and memories stimulated an imagination unfettered by rational or realistic considerations. Guillaume Apollinaire recognized the supernatural as Chagall's natural environment; André Breton, the metaphor as his personal idiom.”<sup>7</sup>

Chagall returned to Vitebsk in 1914 and took up the position of a commissar for the arts. Despite a considerable disillusionment of which he later spoke repeatedly, the reimmersion in his beloved tradition was

<sup>6</sup>Israel Yeshayahu, “Foreword” in *Chagall in Jerusalem*, p. 12.

<sup>7</sup>Jean Leymarie, *Marc Chagall: The Jerusalem Windows* (New York: George Braziller, 1967), p. viii. Originally published as *Marc Chagall: Vitraux pour Jérusalem* (Monte Carlo: André Sauret, 1962).

influential in that it connected him with artists and scholars interested in the revival of Jewish folk culture and art in Russia. As Ziva Amishai writes in an illuminating essay on the *Jerusalem Windows*, one of Chagall's frequent contacts at the time was El Lissitzky, an artist who worked with Jewish tombstones and ritual object motifs. Another close friend was Yudovin, a student of Chagall's whose *Jewish Folk Ornament*, also including many tombstones and ritual objects, was published in 1920.<sup>8</sup>

This background, Amishai believes, explains Chagall's familiarity with Henri Guttman's *Hebraica*, a handbook surveying Jewish motifs from both ritual and folk art.<sup>9</sup>

In 1922, having exhausted what artistic options he perceived he had in his native country, Chagall returned to France, where he lived for the rest of his life with the exception of the war years (spent in the United States) and extensive visits to Israel. It was after his first trip to Palestine in 1931—an experience he called a great awakening and a revelation—that Chagall began systematically to illustrate the Torah. In subsequent years, he traveled to the Netherlands and to Spain in order to study the two very different approaches to religious painting adopted by Rembrandt and El Greco. In 1935 he visited Poland—the closest he could get to Russia now that the Bolshevik revolution had made the land of his ancestors inaccessible for him—where he was deeply moved by the religious folk art he saw in many village synagogues. During the war years, in exile in North America, his very large, very intense depictions of Crucifixions testify both to his personal pain and to the diverse influences absorbed during the preceding decade.

When he returned to France in 1947, he soon decided to exchange the capital for the famous light and soothing calm of the Provence, where fellow artists like Auguste Renoir, Pierre Bonnard, Henri Matisse, and Pablo Picasso had created many of their master pieces. He again took up his Bible illustrations, discontinued during the war years, and reignited his impressions of the Holy Land with visits to Israel in 1951 and 1957. The Bible illustrations, probably his largest compound work, were executed in the form of enormous etchings.

Over the years until his death in 1984, Chagall expanded his artistic medium to include ceramics, sculptures, frescos, tapestries, floor mosaics and tile murals, and stained glass.

<sup>8</sup>Ziva Amishai, "Chagall's Jerusalem Windows ...," pp. 146-182.

<sup>9</sup>Henri Guttman, *Hebraica: Documents d'Art Juif* (Paris: A. Calavas, 1930).



## Paul Klee (1879-1940), Artist and Musician

Paul Klee was born near the Swiss town of Bern in 1879. Shortly before the turn of the century, he moved to Munich, which was then an important center for avant-garde art. In 1912 he became associated with a group that subsequently became famous under the name “Der Blaue Reiter” (The Blue Rider). This brotherhood of expressionists, who aimed particularly at the development of an abstract art, insisted on musical and spiritual values in visual representation and believed in the symbolic value of color. 1913 saw Klee working in Paris, from where he traveled extensively in Tunisia. After World War I, from 1920 to 1930, he taught at the Bauhaus in Weimar. During this time, he visited Egypt in 1928 and renewed the impressions of a color scale that had so captured his imagination during his previous visit to North Africa.

In 1931 he accepted a position as professor at the Düsseldorf Academy of the Arts. This, however, lasted only until 1933, when he was dismissed by the Nazis, who termed his work “degenerate.” Klee, unwilling to compromise in any way, left Germany forever and moved back to Switzerland. Tragically however, immediately after his return to the land of his birth he came down with scleroderma, a crippling disease characterized by the progressive hardening of skin and muscles, which forced him to develop a simpler style and, after seven years of immense suffering, eventually killed him in 1940. He left a staggering oeuvre of more than nine thousand works.

Klee’s art has two prominent focal points: his “obsession” (as he called it) and lifelong preoccupation with color, and his innate talent for witty, often satirical and always fantastic line-drawings. A third artistic development resulted, during his last years, from the influence of his horrid disease. It shows a broad, flat style with increasingly heavy black lines surrounding large areas of subdued color. Not surprisingly, his subject matter during this period often revolved around death and despair, but eventually grew toward the supreme serenity of his last painting, *Still Life*.

At the height of his work at the Bauhaus, in an essay entitled “Exakter Versuch im Bereich der Kunst” (Exact experiment in the field of art), Klee declared: “What had been accomplished in music by the end of the eighteenth century has only begun in the fine arts.”<sup>10</sup> With this he

<sup>10</sup>This essay appeared in *Bauhaus: Zeitschrift für Gestaltung* II, 2-3 (Dessau: Bauhaus, 1928). The quote is from p. 17.

echoed Walter Pater's famous line, coined in view of the Renaissance, that "all art aspires to the condition of music." When referring to the great accomplishments of eighteenth-century music, Klee thought specifically of two towering figures who, he believed, influenced his art more than any fellow artists: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, the composer whom he revered as the greatest creative artist of all time,<sup>11</sup> and Johann Josef Fux, the author of one of the most influential treatises on music theory ever written, *Gradus ad Parnassum* (first published in Latin in 1725), whom he credits with having single-handedly determined the course of Western music.

Mozart also provided Klee with legitimate outlets for his tremendous sense of humor and, in his operas, with a paradigm for a way to blend the literary and descriptive—Klee's line drawings—with the coloristic, spiritual, and "absolute"—Klee's color polyphony. Fux's introduction to the principles of counterpoint (and polyphonic composition in general) stimulated Klee's attempt to apply principles of music theory to his conceptualizations of visual art. It seems that Paul Hindemith, whom Klee met at the Bauhaus in connection with a production of Oskar Schlemmer's abstract *Triadic Ballet*, may have introduced the painter to Fux's treatise, which was to become so crucial for the second and third parts of his own theoretical work, *Unterweisung im Tonsatz*.

Klee's transposition of Fux's terms and their application to pictorial composition makes a fundamental distinction between counterpoint and polyphony which, although it does not exist as such in music, serves as a potent key to the understanding of his aesthetics. As Klee scholar A. Kagan summarizes it, "He used the term 'polyphony' to describe and denote certain types of pictorial organization in depth. On the other hand, his 'contrapuntal' ideas deal almost exclusively with linear and formal organization within a single plane. [...] The specific sense in which Klee used the term 'polyphony' is derived in particular from its application in late eighteenth-century music, where separate voices are often fully independent, rather than imitative, and convey independent thematic

<sup>11</sup>For extensive documentation on this see Klee's letters in Felix Klee, *Paul Klee: His Life and Work in Documents* (New York: Braziller, 1962), specifically p. 64; also Richard Verdi, "Musical Influences Upon the Art of Paul Klee," *Museum Studies* 3 (1968): 81-107, and above all Andrew Kagan's definitive study, *Paul Klee 1879-1940: Art and Music* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1983).

content.”<sup>12</sup> On another level, the expression “Gradus ad Parnassum,” both in Fux’s treatise and in Klee’s famous painting by that title, suggests an ascent from the fundamentals to the pinnacles of art, the ascent Klee admired in Mozart when he wrote to his son Felix (on 26 December 1929) that “Mozart perfected himself.”

## Biographical Sketches II: The Poets

Interestingly, all the poets whose works I found to inspire musical transformations from twentieth-century composers belong to a single century—roughly the time between 1860 and 1960—and represent related aesthetics: Maeterlinck and Mallarmé, who became the fathers of French Symbolist drama and poetry respectively; Claudel and Perse, the two French-trained, world-traveling diplomats who aimed to capture the metaphysical, one in a devoutly Christian, the other in an agnostic context; Dehmel and, a generation later, Crane, who admired the Symbolist but strove to develop their own idiosyncratic language, in the context of and against the reigning developments in Germany and America.

### Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898) and Symbolist Poetry

Were one to tell Stéphane Mallarmé’s biography in the popular genre of “l’homme et son œuvre,” the man and his work, this story would be quickly told. His private life was one of the quietest, least jerky one can imagine, and his collected works are published in a single volume.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup>Andrew Kagan, *Paul Klee: Art and Music*, p. 160, footnote 11. Similarly, Klee’s Russian contemporary Kandinsky wrote extensively about the contrapuntal possibilities color itself offers, and about the great pictorial counterpoint achieved when color is combined with design (Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* [New York: Dover Publications, 1977]).

<sup>13</sup>In addition to the two long poems examined in the context of this study, Mallarmé’s *Complete Works* comprise four other longer poems, *Pli selon pli*, *Divagations*, *Igitur*, and *Un coup de dés n’abolira jamais le hasard*, a number of short poems from his early period, as well as some prose works. While Ravel and Debussy each set three of the shorter poems as songs, Pierre Boulez based several instrumental compositions on Mallarmé’s poetry; see his *Improvisations sur Mallarmé* (1958-9), *Don* (1962), and *Tombeau* (1962), later joined to *Pli selon pli* (1967). The subtlety of the relation between poetry and music is beautifully explored in Mary Breatnach’s important investigation, *Boulez and Mallarmé: A Study in Poetic Influence* (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1996).

Mallarmé was born in Paris in 1842, the son of a registrar. Following the wish of a family of civil servants, Stéphane was to embark on the same career, but managed to convince his relatives that an employment as a highschool English teacher, to be obtained after only a short and comparably cheap education, would equally provide him with what he needed for life. Thus Mallarmé became a teacher, moderately motivated, not overly fond of his job, neither very much respected by his students nor too gifted (or eager) to win his superiors' recommendations. His preparation for this profession was short indeed: private instruction following his graduation from school, then a year in London. Before setting out for England he had met a young German woman who worked in France; upon his return, aged 21, he married her and took his first teaching position in the highschool of Tournon, a small provincial town. Within two years, the couple had their first and only child, and Mallarmé began work on *Hérodiade* and *L'après-midi d'un faune*, his two major compositions, neither of which ended in the theatrical form initially planned, and neither of which was completed when he died at age fifty-six.

After three years in Tournon and two shorter episodes in Besançon and Avignon, Mallarmé returned to Paris shortly before his 30th birthday, to the center of French literary life. The salary from his teaching jobs at various lycées was not sufficient to raise a family, and Mallarmé soon found himself compelled to supplement his income with various literary commissions: he translated, edited, wrote textbooks for teaching English, worked for a journal, and commented for a London newspaper on the literary scene and theatrical events in Paris. Around 1877, Mallarmé established an open house for his friends every Tuesday night; these are the famous, much described "Mardis de la rue de Rome" which provided crucial inspiration for an entire generation of French poets—the generation of Paul Valéry, André Gide, Paul Claudel—as well as for many foreign writers. These evenings, whose intellectual ferment may well have been instrumental in the overall direction of *fin-de-siècle* literary developments, continued until the poet, who had fought ill health for most of his life, died in 1898.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup>For further reading on Mallarmé's life and background to his works, see Henri Mondor, *Vie de Mallarmé* (Paris: Gallimard, 1950) and Stéphane Mallarmé, *Correspondance*, vols. I-III, Henri Mondor et al., ed. (Paris: Gallimard, 1959, 1965, 1969).

## Maurice Maeterlinck (1862-1949) and Symbolist Drama

Maurice (originally Mauritius) Maeterlinck was born in the Belgian city of Ghent [Gant] on 29 August 1862. At age twelve he entered the Jesuit College in his home town; the experience of the strict and humorless fathers who instilled an endless sense of shame and sin while stifling the capacity for joy and laughter in their students was a nightmarish impression that remained with him throughout his life.<sup>15</sup> His first attempts at poetry, which fell into the time of his highschool years, were discouraged unless they were written in Latin. (His first published poem, "The Rushes," appeared in *La Jeune Belgique* in November 1883.) Having completed secondary school, he enrolled at his parents' request in the law school of Ghent University, from which he graduated with a doctorate in law in 1885. Having obtained permission for a half-year stay in Paris, ostensibly for further studies of law, Maeterlinck found himself exposed to the leading artists and writers of the time, particularly the Symbolists, among them his future mentor, Villiers de l'Isle Adam. However, a dutiful son of a well-regarded Flemish family of notaries with a family tracing six centuries, he returned to Ghent to practice law. Yet after three years he resigned from this profession to dedicate himself fully to writing. Apart from a period in Portugal, where he and his second wife settled at the outbreak of World War II, he lived for most of the rest of his life in France, where he died of a heart attack on 6 May 1949. Among the many honors he won is the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1911.

Maeterlinck's published work spans a stunning range of genres and topics. Among his early works is a volume of poetry, *Serres chaudes* (Hothouses) and a short story that is particularly interesting in the context of this study. It appeared in 1886 in the prestigious journal, *La Pléiade*. Bettina Knapp calls this narration of Brueghel's painting *Le massacre des innocents* a "transposition of art," identifying it as a case of ekphrastic

<sup>15</sup>In his confessional "Blue Bubbles" (*Bulles bleues: Souvenirs heureux* [Monaco: Éditions du Rocher, 1948]), Maeterlinck talks about "seven years of narrow tyranny," of a lugubrious and joyless existence, and constant exposure to stories of damnation, hell, burning, and corporeal punishment. "There is only one crime which cannot be forgiven, that of having poisoned the joys and destroyed the smile of a child," he exclaims resentfully in another memoir (*Morceaux Choisis* [Paris: Nelson, 1933]). He describes Sainte-Barbe as "the prison"; one wonders whether the dark and gloomy castles so ever-present in his plays are created in the image of that church of his youth, with the little boy Tintagiles experiencing an exaggerated version of the young Maurice's anguish.

prose.<sup>16</sup> Besides the aesthetic objective of the work, the young poet addresses already here one of his central metaphysical questions: the eternal riddle of how a benevolent God can permit the horrors men commit in His name, why this God seems so ultimately powerless, and how we ought to understand the exposure of innocent children as epitomizing the full extent of the incomprehensible cruelty.

However, what characterizes the mature Maeterlinck is his impressive and varied œuvre. He published twenty-nine dramas,<sup>17</sup> translated from various languages,<sup>18</sup> wrote learned treatises in botany and entomology,<sup>19</sup> and compiled a staggering number of essays exploring questions from the metaphysical to the esoteric.<sup>20</sup> He had plans for studies about topics in the

<sup>16</sup>Bettina Knapp, *Maurice Maeterlinck*, p. 26.

<sup>17</sup>The list of Maeterlinck's plays is long. A first group—the Symbolist dramas, which will principally concern us here—was written and first published in Brussels; it comprises *La princesse Maleine*, *L'intruse*, *Les aveugles*, *Les sept princesses*, *Pelléas et Mélisande*, *Alladine et Palomides*, *Intérieur*, and *La mort de Tintagiles*. A second group, written between 1896 and 1903, comprises *Aglavaine et Sélysette*, *Ariane et Barbe-Bleue*, *Sœur Béatrice*, *Monna Vanna*, *Joyzelle*. During his middle years, his dramatic production was more widely spaced; it includes *L'oiseau bleu*, *Marie-Magdeleine*, *Le miracle de Saint-Antoine*, *Le bourgmestre de Stilmonde*, and *Les fiançailles*. The dramas of his late period (the 1940s) are *Le malheur passe*, *Berniquel*, *Candide*, *Marie-Victoire*, *Juda de Kérioth*, *La princesse Isabelle*, *Jeanne d'Arc*, *L'Abbé Sétubal*, *Les trois justiciers*, *Le jugement dernier*, and *Les miracles des mères*. Actually, Maeterlinck began writing plays at age 9 or 10. He adapted several of Molière's works, "omitting what he considered to be the monotonous romantic episodes and stressing the slapstick, beating, and satiric scenes. Friends and relatives were invited to applaud the artistry of the budding playwright. His father, however, unfamiliar with Molière's plays and fearing that unseemly words would be used, put a halt to such enterprises." (Bettina Knapp, *Maurice Maeterlinck*, p. 19).

<sup>18</sup>His translations (into French) include: from medieval Flemish: Jan van Ruysbroek's *The Adornment of Spiritual Marriage*, from German: Novalis's *The Disciples at Sais* and *Fragments*, and from English: John Ford's drama, *Annabella* (*'Tis Pity She's a Whore*) and Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.

<sup>19</sup>*The Life of the Bee* (1901) is considered a scientifically accurate essay on bee culture; another essay, *The Double Garden* (1904), deals mostly with animals, while *The Intelligence of Flowers* (1906) is a widely regarded essay on horticulture. See also *The Life of the Ant* (1930), *The Life of the Termite* (1927), *The Glass Spider* (1923), *Life of Space* (1928), and Maeterlinck's preface to Jean Henri Fabre's *The Life of the Spider* (1910).

<sup>20</sup>During the years 1927-1942, Maeterlinck published twelve volumes of essays on entomology, mysticism, science, and psychometrics. Listed by their English titles these are: *The Treasury of the Humble* (1896), *Wisdom and Destiny* (1898), *The Buried Temple* (1902), *Our Eternity* (1913), *Death* (1913; this essay was placed on the Index by the Catholic Church), *The Paths in the Mountain* (12 essays including "The Great Revelation," "Pre-Existence," "Hope and Despair," "Karma," "Macrocosm and Microcosm," "Messages from the Other Side of the Tomb," "Necessary Silence," "The Power of the

arts, speaking particularly about wanting to write on the primitive Flemish painters and on the Pre-Raphaelites.<sup>21</sup> His familiarity with this specific style of painting, in which settings seem pervaded by an atmosphere of tragic immobility, may explain the pictorial design of many of his dramatic scenes, whose tableau-like effect reinforces the impression of stasis and inevitability.

Maeterlinck's religious and metaphysical speculations are strongly shaped by his reading of the Neoplatonists and mystics, particularly by Jakob Böhme's *Confessions* and the fourteenth-century Flemish mystic Jan van Ruysbroeck. German Romantic poets (Novalis, Brentano, von Arnim, Hoffmann) acquainted him with thoughts about the inner world and the domain of the occult and death. These concerns recurred powerfully in the thoughts and works of his mentor, Villiers de l'Isle Adam. Maeterlinck was particularly susceptible to Villiers's mystical play *Axel*, the public readings of which he described as "mystery unfolding," "secret masses being celebrated in hushed tones" in front of young listeners feeling like "officiants or accomplices to some pious or sacrilegious ceremony."<sup>22</sup> Villiers's realm was the occult and the fable. He believed in the powers of Merlin the magician, in the existence of Tristan and the Knights of the Holy Grail.<sup>23</sup> Villiers was deeply invested in hypnosis, magnetism, alchemy, premonitory visions, and metempsychosis. Probably as a result of this repeated exposure, Maeterlinck compiled his historical study of occultism, *The Great Secret* (1921), which includes Vedic teachings, the secrets of Osiris and Zarathustra, the writings of the Presocratics and Neoplatonists, as well as the Kabbalists. A related study, entitled *The Unknown Host* and written already in 1914, deals with psychic phenomena such as the transmission of thoughts, extrasensory

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Dead," and "The Soul of Peoples"; 1919), *The Great Fairyland* (1929), *The Great Law* (1933), *Before the Great Silence* (1934), *The Hourglass* (1935), *The Shadow of Wings* (1936), *Before God* (1937), *The Great Door* (1938), *The Great Beyond* (1942).

<sup>21</sup>Letter to Dommartin of 8 January 1891, quoted in Marcel Postic, *Maeterlinck et le Symbolisme* (Paris: Éditions A.-G. Nizet, 1970), pp. 18-19.

<sup>22</sup>*Bulles bleues*, p. 198. Roland Mortier believes that Villiers "contributed [...] to orient Maeterlinck's taste toward the indecisive dream, the slightly vague ideal, the flowing contours, the imprecise description and [...] the somewhat languishing aestheticism of a fin-de-siècle style." ("Histoire d'une vie," in *Maurice Maeterlinck, 1862-1962* [Brussels: La Renaissance du Livre, 1962], pp. 22-23.)

<sup>23</sup>It strikes me as quite conceivable that Maeterlinck's choice of the name Tintagiles, which may show subcutaneous links to the legends around both Tristan and the Holy Grail, may have been inspired by Villiers.

perception, premonitory dreams, synchronicity, and the communication with the dead.

Maeterlinck's primary literary influence is that of the Symbolists, particularly Baudelaire, Villiers de l'Isle Adam, and Mallarmé. His theater has been described in terms that all seem to refer to the same unusual trait: a theater of silence, of stasis, of darkness, of the dream, and of death. Particularly in his early dramas he attempted to create a new form of theater. He condemned contemporary drama not only as superficial entertainment, but more importantly as a false reflection of modern man's existence. Theater, he believed, could no longer be a mere expression of particular events, a mimesis of action in the Aristotelian sense. Instead, the dramatic mode itself had to be comprehended as an ontological problem, entailing, as Linn B. Konrad puts it, "a radical questioning of the nature and function of language as an instrument of (self)-knowledge, representation and communication."<sup>24</sup> Drama was to present on stage a reality that is mostly hidden, tragedies that take place within the psyche and are determined by unknowable forces, and thus create a dimension that allows for an elevated experience of life. This aim is achieved by emphasizing myth, ritual, and gesture, by involving the world of the occult, and by de-emphasizing individualized physical presence. With regard to the latter, Maeterlinck follows the example of Greek tragedy. Where Sophoclean actors wore high wooden shoes and masks, suggesting a presence of forces that transcend ordinary physical reality, Maeterlinck tries to distance the physical presence of actors by having them appear behind a gauze veil (as in *Pelléas et Mélisande*), and even as marionettes (as in *La mort de Tintagiles* and several other plays of the time) to avoid identification on the part of the spectators and facilitate the notion of forces at play. As Maeterlinck saw it, the theatrical experience should enhance awareness and instigate a more profound understanding of life. In his drama, writes Konrad,

action as such is accorded mainly to the invisible forces of love and death, while re-action on the part of the characters is not action in the sense of active resistance, but rather a state of fear and helpless efforts to escape or attempt to understand a situation in which they are victims more than creators of their fate. [...] Maeterlinck seeks to go beyond ancient tragedy, strip the action of all contingent attributes and reach the stark spiritual tragedy of humanity's subjection to an incomprehensible and seemingly cruel fate.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup>Linn Bratteteig Konrad, *Modern Drama as Crisis*, p. 138.

<sup>25</sup>Linn Bratteteig Konrad, *Modern Drama as Crisis*, p. 162.



Works of the Belgian poet and playwright have inspired many musical compositions. Songs based on his poetry include Alexander Zemlinsky's *Sechs Gesänge nach Texten von Maurice Maeterlinck*, Arnold Schoenberg's *Herzgewächse*, Nadia Boulanger's *Cantique sur Béatrice*, Lili Boulanger's *Reflets*, *Attente*, and Ernest Chausson's *Serres chaudes*. *Serres d'ennui*. Among Maeterlinck's dramas, *Pelléas et Mélisande*<sup>26</sup> became famous through Claude Debussy's opera. The other play of Maeterlinck's that has inspired as many composers is one of his early marionette plays, *La mort de Tintagiles*. Both the Alsatian-American composer, Charles Martin Loeffler, and his Czech contemporary, Bohuslav Martinů, have written symphonic renderings of *La mort de Tintagiles*. The unusually large number of non-vocal compositions based on (rather than "inspired by," as I have intended to show) Maeterlinck confirms that his fictional works seem to carry within themselves a particular affinity to music.

The Symbolist quest for a "musicalization of prose" is well known; Maeterlinck's confession about what attracted him most in Villiers accounts even more fully for the close sisterly relationship that was developing between the two arts. In his memoirs, *Bulles Bleues* (Blue Bubbles), he writes that his mentor's prose exhibits "not only the music of sentences and images but also—which is at the highest point on the scale of human values—the music of thought. This one finds in no-one but him; it accompanies, justifies, sustains, and heightens the music of the words, which achieve here something not achieved by other writers who are almost as great as he is but more cautious."<sup>27</sup>

### Paul Claudel (1868-1955) and the Renewal of Faith

Paul Claudel, who at age 18 experienced a dramatic spiritual calling in Notre Dame Cathedral, is best known as one of the leaders (together with Bloy, Péguy, Bernanos, and Mauriac) in the French movement towards Catholic renewal. The son of a lawyer, he also read law and entered the diplomatic service. Despite an active career for his country, which included long periods in various parts of the world (as consul and

<sup>26</sup>Maeterlinck's *Pelléas et Mélisande* inspired not only Debussy and Schoenberg but also three other composers. His French contemporary Gabriel Fauré (1898) and his Finnish admirer Jean Sibelius (1905) each wrote compositions that began as incidental music for a theatrical production, but were subsequently reconfigured as orchestral suites. Cyril Scott's overture by the same title (1912) is a one-movement composition in a similar genre.

<sup>27</sup>Maurice Maeterlinck, *Bulles bleues*, p. 200.

ambassador of France, he lived until 1920 in the United States, China, and Germany, in Rome and Rio de Janeiro, after 1921 in Tokyo, again in Washington, and finally in Brussels), he found the time not only to write a large body of poetry and plays as well as essays (on biblical exegesis, among other topics). He took his poetry to be his own idiosyncratic form of conveying messages about spiritual salvation. His early drama was influenced by the Symbolism of Rimbaud, Mallarmé, and Maeterlinck. He later attempted to renew the medieval mystery play in several dramas, most notably the densely symbolic *Soulier de satin* (The Silken Slipper).

Claudé is probably the most musical of modern French poets. He has been credited with co-creating a truly impressive repertoire of musical works. His extensive assignments far from Europe, rather than hampering his artistic work, broadened it. Early in his career he had been fascinated by Greek drama and had explored its potential for a unique relationship between music and poetry. The influences to which he found himself exposed in Brazil and, even more specifically, the impressions he took home from the *kabuki* theater in Japan, enriched his expressive language.

Claudé's most important musical collaborator was Darius Milhaud,<sup>28</sup> his relationship with Arthur Honegger, like Milhaud twenty-four years the poet's junior, was perhaps less intense but also long, productive, and very cordial. It stretched across Honegger's entire career, beginning with the incidental music Honegger composed in 1922-24 for Claudé's famous play *Le soulier de satin*, peaking in the three works written at the height of the composer's career (the mimodrama *Jeanne d'Arc au bûcher*, 1935, the oratorio *La danse des morts*, 1938, and the song cycle *Trois poèmes*, 1939-40), and concluding with the music for the radio production of Claudé's play *Tête d'or* (1949-50). One last time Honegger paid a special homage to the cherished friend and revered poet. When André Gillet prepared his 1951 film *Paul Claudé*, in which Jean-Louis Barrault, the very impressive narrator in many performances of *La danse des morts*, read texts by Claudé in the presence of the eighty-three-year-old poet, the already ailing Honegger provided the music. In 1955 the two men died within months of each other.

<sup>28</sup>Paul Claudé (1868-1955) provided the texts and, more often than not, also substantial ideas for the musical execution to the following works by Milhaud (1892-1974): two operas (*Les euménides* and *Christophe Colomb*), two ballets (*L'homme et son désir* and *Le fête de la musique*), the mimodrama *La sagesse*, eight cantatas (*Pan et Syrinx*, *Cantique du Rhône*, *Cantate de la paix*, *Les deux cités*, *Indicatif de la guerre*, *Invocation à l'ange Raphaël*, *Cantate des psaumes*), three other choral works (*Psalm 136*, *Psalm 129*, *Psalm 126*), as well as eight song cycles and incidental music for six plays or radio productions.

## Richard Dehmel (1863-1920) and Confident Sensuality

Schoenberg's favorite poet, Dehmel, was born as the son of a forester in the eastern part of Germany. Home-schooled by his mother with the Bible as a primary text, he grew up with a profound relationship to the nature around him and God's voice within. His youthful poetry includes hymns to the Baltic-Sea island of Rügen and horror tragedies for puppet theater in the style of Weber's *Freischütz*, with nature as a dominating spiritual force. Much like his Belgian counterpart Maeterlinck, Dehmel also developed a scientific interest in nature: he gathered and examined plants, established an extensive collection of beetles and butterflies, read widely in zoology and comparative anatomy, and already as a high school student became thoroughly familiar with Goethe's scientific writings. When he was expelled from his Gymnasium in Berlin, it was for having passionately defended Darwin's prohibited theories. His other predominant interest was literature. In a *vita* written before his graduation from the Gymnasium in Danzig, he states that he has learned Greek and Latin well enough to derive great pleasure from reading Virgil and Cicero, Plato and Homer in the original, and that he considers himself confidently familiar with German literature from the Middle Ages to the present. Later, at the university, he read philosophy and natural sciences, but finally obtained his doctorate in economics. This turn to pragmatics continued in his professional activity: for many years Dehmel worked—up to ten hours a day—as secretary for the central German fire insurance. Fortunately, by 1895 he had achieved enough fame as a poet and could risk to live as a free-lance writer.

This year also brought Dehmel's major personal crisis, to which we owe the poem *Verklärte Nacht* as well as many others. He was married to a woman whom he described in a letter to his parents as someone whom he respected deeply but had ceased to love.<sup>29</sup> In this situation he met his soul mate, a woman who was herself married to an unloved husband. For four years they struggled with their conscience; then both got divorced and were finally joined in a marriage that, judging from the recently published correspondence, was uniquely blessed. During the four years of wrestling with this decision, Dehmel wrote many of his most successful poems, including the collection *Weib und Welt* (Woman and World, published in Berlin 1896) and major portions of his "novel in romances," *Zwei Menschen* (Two People, 1902). Dehmel editor P.J. Schindler relates

<sup>29</sup>Richard Dehmel, letter of 12 July 1899 to Luise Dehmel.

how the poet, soon acclaimed as the foremost literary figure in Berlin, was hailed as the one who led German literature “to strive beyond naturalism, pessimism, and socialism. Words like joy of life, to live fully, sensuality, and freedom gained new meanings. [...] A new sense of the world, a new *Weltanschauung* was sprouting: brighter, sunnier, more broad-minded than the old.”<sup>30</sup>

The critics, however, were predictably shocked by what they perceived as a “new heathen” attitude: his overt allusions to sensual pleasures in general and erotic bliss in particular. The poetry collection *Weib und Welt* was heavily censored. A year after its publication, in the summer of 1897, Dehmel was called into a Berlin courtroom to defend himself against charges of blasphemy and immorality. In his very articulate “open letter” of defense the poet argued that “to be sure, the book shows how a man, contrary to his holiest principles, abandons himself to a sensual passion, and is thereby driven by the most painful turmoil, finally to a disgraceful death. Clearly it cannot be the artist’s task to disguise or conceal the seductive charms that lie naturally within every passion. But I believe that anyone who helps the human soul open its eyes to its bestial urges serves true morality better than many a moralistic accuser.”<sup>31</sup> The judges, however, were not to be convinced, and the most sexually provocative poem in the collection, *Venus Consolatrix*, was ruled to be eliminated from unsold copies of the first edition and all further printings.

### **Saint-John Perse (1887-1975) and Hart Crane (1899-1932): Interpreting America**

The two poets whose works Elliott Carter chose for his orchestral transpositions seem to have hardly anything in common. However their poems, surprisingly, do complement one another in significant ways. The life of Hart Crane developed within the middle-class environment of his father’s successful candy business; he decided not to go to college, spent an early adulthood ruined by excesses of alcohol and crass promiscuity,<sup>32</sup>

<sup>30</sup>Schindler, *Richard Dehmel*, p. 285.

<sup>31</sup>Letter of 23 June 1897 to the Royal Court II, Berlin. Quoted in P.J. Schindler, *Richard Dehmel*, p. 126. The ensuing literary debate made Dehmel’s name famous overnight.

<sup>32</sup>As Crane’s life-long friend Waldo Frank interprets it in his introduction to the first edition of the poem, “he lived exacerbated in a constant swing between ecstasy and exhaustion. Therefore, he needed the tangent release of excess drink and sexual indulgence.” (*The Bridge: A Poem by Hart Crane*, p. xxiii.)

and took his life at age 33 (when friends described his physique as that of a prematurely aged man). By contrast, Saint-John Perse came from a family who represented the colonial nobility of the Antilles, studied law,<sup>33</sup> spent most of his adult years in the diplomatic service of France, traveled widely, and reached very significant political positions. He abhorred all intoxication other than that which originates in the spirit itself, led a largely solitary and very discreet life, married late, won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1960, and died at the age of 88. He came to America in 1940 as a refugee from the Vichy government and stayed for seventeen years, an exiled alien. Hart Crane, although allegedly religious, wrote from a position of pessimism and self-indulgence, of disgust and loathing for a life that he felt held little meaning in and of itself;<sup>34</sup> Saint-John Perse, a declared agnostic, communicated his profound belief in the positive powers of regeneration. *The Bridge*, as Yvor Winters observes, deals with the relationship of the individual American to his country, as well as with the religious significance of America itself;<sup>35</sup> *Vents* posits America as a many-faceted metaphor for general human quests and hopes of development toward the better.

Crane published only two collections of poems in his life-time, *White Buildings* in 1926 and *The Bridge* in 1930; a few single poems were added posthumously. Both cycles employ a largely overlapping symbolism, a fact that allowed Carter to state quite generically, in his score of *A Symphony of Three Orchestras*, that “many of the musical ideas were suggested by it [*The Bridge*] and by other of his [Crane’s] works.”<sup>36</sup> Perse, by contrast, published many substantial poems and poetic cycles. Spanning a creative life of more than six decades, they exhibit development on

<sup>33</sup>Like Elliott Carter, Perse was keenly interested in Greek literature, philosophy, and science. He also spent much time, both as a student and throughout his life, with anthropology and music. His personal friends included such notable poets as Francis Jammes, Paul Claudel, André Gide, Rabindranath Tagore, Paul Valéry, Richard Dehmel, the composers Satie and Stravinsky, and the secretary of the United Nations, Dag Hammarskjöld.

<sup>34</sup>“Crane’s journey is that of an individual unsure of his own form and lost to Time” (Waldo Frank, p. xxxi).

<sup>35</sup>Yvor Winters, “The Significance of *The Bridge* by Hart Crane, or What Are We to Think of Professor X?,” *In Defense of Reason* (Denver, CO: The University of Denver Press, 1938/1943), p. 591.

<sup>36</sup>Elliott Carter, “Program Notes,” in *A Symphony of Three Orchestras* (New York: Associated Music Publishers, 1978).

multiple levels, from the linguistic to the psychological and spiritual. While Crane's views are considered explicitly autobiographic in their origin, the man behind the pen-name Saint-John Perse (Alexis Saint-Leger Leger) went to great lengths not to depict himself at all in and through his poems.

### **Biographical Sketches III: The Composers**

Among the composers whose works I have examined in this study, Claude Debussy, Paul Hindemith, and Arnold Schoenberg hardly need an introduction. However, most readers will be unfamiliar with several of the others and may appreciate a quick reference to their lives, artistic developments, and *œuvres*. Once again I have decided to follow chronology while retaining in a group those who have musically responded to the same work in another medium and thus appear together, and are being compared, in the main body of this book.

#### **C.M.T. Loeffler (1861-1935) and Bohuslav Martinů (1890-1959): Chronicling a Child's Death**

The two composers who reacted with symphonic compositions to Maeterlinck's marionette drama were a generation apart. They are not known to have crossed paths in life, and while both traveled widely in the course of their lives, it is unlikely that the 20-year-old Czech composer would have been aware of Loeffler's composition when he chose the same literary source. Yet an inner affinity no doubt existed. The parallels between the two men's lives are surprising and the degree of their apparent spiritual relationship, despite a number of significant discrepancies, is striking.

Both started out as violinists; Loeffler proceeded to spend many years as a salaried orchestral musician, while the hopes set in the young Martinů's performance talents were sorely disappointed, largely owing to a dreamy nature that was in conflict with the rigidity required for instrumental studies. Both men never completed even the most basic level of compositional education. Both traveled widely and were truly cosmopolitan men; both eventually obtained US citizenship. Yet their sense of nationality and "homeland" differed significantly. The Alsatian-German

Loeffler came to hate everything German (the nationality of his family), considered himself French if anything (although he apparently never ceased to speak the language with an accent), and lived as an international citizen in his adopted home country. By contrast, the Czech Martinů was filled with homesickness throughout his life in Paris, New York, Nice, and Basel.

Both men were voracious readers with an unusually broad knowledge of the literatures of the world. Both were lovers of nature and collected themselves in extensive daily walks or rides on horseback. Both were of serene temper, with an inclination towards mystic experiences. Both married only once and had no children. Both were very private and avoided all aggressive self-advertisement of their compositions. Yet they differed considerably in terms of both the ease of writing and the practical matters connected with the life of a free-lancing musician. While Martinů must be considered one of the most prolific composers of our century ("no day without a line" was his motto since he was 20 years old), Loeffler composed relatively few works, which he revised scrupulously. Surprisingly though, Martinů lived all his life under financial strain (even his wife worked hard wherever they lived), whereas Loeffler managed to secure for himself and his wife a life that was increasingly comfortable.

The older of the two, Charles Martin Tornov Loeffler (born 1861 in Mulhouse, Alsace of German parents, died 1935 in Medfield, Massachusetts), did most of his international traveling and dislocating in his youth. While he was still a child, his writer/teacher father moved the family first to a small town near Kiev (where the boy received his first violin lessons), then to Debrecen in Hungary, and from there to Switzerland. From here, having decided to become a professional musician, the 14-year-old Loeffler moved to Berlin to study violin, where he drew much attention with his gift as a performer and in his understanding of music theory. However, restless again, he soon sought yet new surroundings, this time in Paris, where he appreciated the more elegant school of violin playing and also began studies in counterpoint and composition. Still in his teens and without a formal degree, he returned to Russia to accept a position as violinist in an aristocrat's private orchestra. Upon the death of this employer, and now twenty years old, Loeffler sailed for New York with letters of recommendation from the famous violinist Joseph Joachim, which, a year later, led to his appointment as assistant concert master of the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

Given the pace of the first twenty-one years of his life, it comes as a surprise that Loeffler remained in the same environment, and in the same position at the BSO, for the next twenty-one years. His “retirement” at age 42 followed a decision to dedicate himself solely to teaching and composing—and this he did for the remaining thirty-two years of his life, leading what Carleton Sprague Smith has called “a seigneurial existence, driving and riding thoroughbred horses and enjoying an epicurean cuisine.”<sup>37</sup> Yet when the composer described his activities as “teaching and composing,” he omitted not only those “seigneurial” parts of his life, but also another highly important component: his lifelong, daily, hour-long study, of music from plainsong to the works of his contemporaries, and of literature from the Greek and Roman classics to the Symbolists and expressionists.

In the life of Bohuslav Martinů (born 1890 in Polička, east Bohemia; died 1959 in Liestal, Switzerland), travels and relocations happened at a much later stage, and in part involuntarily. Furthermore, the pattern of unrest versus steadiness seems reversed when compared to Loeffler: thirty-three years in his home country were followed by seventeen in Paris, twelve in America, and six back in Europe. The spells in which he earned a regular salary were sketchy: three years (1920-23) as a violinist in the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra; summer teaching at the Berkshire Music Center, in Great Barrington, and at Tanglewood; only a few years at American universities (Mannes School of Music, altogether three years, and Princeton, 1948-51); and a year at the American Academy in Rome (1956-57). Having declined invitations to assume professorships in his native country before the Nazi invasion because he felt he still needed to “learn and develop,” the Communists later made his return impossible. Thus he lived as no doubt suited his nature and talent best, dedicating all his days to his compositional work and its preparation. This preparation included not only the open-minded study of his contemporaries’ works and the research he deemed immediately necessary for the task at hand (from the poetry he set to the Greek orthodox melodies for his opera, *Greek Passion*, on Nikos Kazantzakis’s novel, *Christ Recrucified*), but reading in general: Russian and French authors as well as those of other European and, later, the American tradition; drama and prose, philosophy, psychology, and even science. He was convinced that all this meant inspiration, that without his partaking in the thoughts of others, his art

<sup>37</sup>C.S. Smith, “Loeffler” in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Stanley Sadie, ed. (London: Macmillan, 1980).



would be nowhere the same. Harry Halbreich's catalogue of Martinů's works numbers 384 entries (even the "selective list" in the *New Grove* covers two columns), yet were it not for the untiring and generous commissions from Paul Sacher, the composer would still have struggled with life's necessities by the time his fame was securely established on both sides of the Atlantic.

If Loeffler earned himself the leisure and serenity in which he spent approximately the second half of his life, Martinů claimed a similar pace of complete concentration on his task during the first half of his—albeit without any similar financial recourse. When his fellow students and musician friends explored all the world had to offer, he led a quiet, completely unassuming life in which, as Halbreich stresses, creative work was only interrupted by extensive reading.

Loeffler's music was widely known particularly in those last 32 years of his life. His rewards include the honor as an Officier de l'Académie (1906), Chevalier de la Légion d'honneur (1919), Member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and an honorary doctorate from Yale University (1926). The security with which he remained outside any school and transient fashion was as much appreciated as the mastery of his craft. One judgment may stand for many:

It is not easy to imagine music more utterly free from the note of platitude and Philistinism, or from deliberate concessions of any sort, than the music of Loeffler.<sup>38</sup>

Martinů's music was honored with the Coolidge Prize (in 1932, for his String Sextet) and, in America, he was elected into the National Institute of Arts and Letters. Miloš Šafránek, writing about his life-long friend, attests that "from early youth he has been repelled by all excessive individualism" and speaks of his "inborn dislike of sentimentality."<sup>39</sup>

Many contemporaries saw Loeffler as a striking mixture of dignity and mysticism. As Gilman put it: "Even when Loeffler is most eloquently sinister, most disquietingly baleful, a rare tact, an unerring sense of measure and balance, a prophylactic humour, save him from extravagance and turgidity. [...] With all his passion for the bizarre and the umbrageous and the grotesque, we are never in doubt as to the essential dignity, the essential purity and nobility of his spirit...." And Gilman continues,

<sup>38</sup>Lawrence Gilman, *Music in Nature*, p. 213.

<sup>39</sup>Miloš Šafránek, *Bohuslav Martinů*, p. xiv.

Loeffler has the mystic's bias toward that which transcends the immediate and the tangible phases of experience, the mystic's serene conviction of the reality of the extra-sensational. His imagination ranges most freely and familiarly in that psychic borderland where the emotions become indescribably rarefied and subtly heightened—where they become more the echo and reverberation of emotions than emotions themselves, yet gain rather than lose in intensity in the process. His is of the order of mystics whose thought, while it has the penetrative power of all mystical thought, is saturated with a quality of feeling that springs from an exquisite and supersensitive intuition of the human heart, rather than from sustained spiritual aspiration. That is to say, he is akin to Rossetti and Yeats and Maeterlinck rather than to Crashaw and Blake and Wordsworth.<sup>40</sup>

Martinů has been described in largely corresponding ways. Despite their boundless richness of invention, his melodies have been credited with “Franciscan simplicity,”<sup>41</sup> and so, too, did all who knew him perceive his personality. Martinů himself expressed his attitude in the program notes to his First Symphony, “What I maintain as my deepest conviction is the essential nobility of thoughts and things which are quite simple....” He was known to have spent much time reading and pondering the Indian and Chinese wisdom teachings. As Halbreich interprets,

In the one, he treasured above all the incessant search for truth and the deeper meaning of life, as well as the application of imagination and inventiveness as a creative means of striving for a higher consciousness; in the other, the unrestricted freedom of thought, the rejection of any revealed truth and the emphasis on human relationships.<sup>42</sup>

### Arthur Honegger (1892-1955): Staging the *Totentanz*

Arthur Honegger was born of German-Swiss parents in the French port, Le Havre. Although he spent nearly all his life in France—most of it in Paris—he never gave up Swiss citizenship and considered Zurich and its particular Protestantism his spiritual home. After World War I, Honegger was briefly known as a member of group “Les six,” but he soon went his own way. His catalogue of compositions begins with works

<sup>40</sup>Gilman, *Music in Nature*, pp. 198-199.

<sup>41</sup>Harry Halbreich, *Bohuslav Martinů: Werkverzeichnis, Dokumentation und Biographie* (Zurich: Atlantis-Verlag, 1968), p. 53.

<sup>42</sup>Translated from Harry Halbreich, *Bohuslav Martinů*, p. 51.

written at the age of eighteen. His First String Quartet, composed in 1915-17, drew wide attention and remains one of his most beautiful works. His breakthrough came in 1921 with the oratorio (or “dramatic psalm”) *Le roi David*. The years until the outbreak of World War II were filled with a plethora of compositions in genres as widely different as large-scale choral works on biblical or socio-political topics (*Cris du monde*, *Jeanne d'Arc au bûcher*, *Une cantate de Noël*, *Nicolas de Flüe*) and film scores (twenty-seven between 1923 and 1939, many more during and after World War II). To one part of his audience, Honegger is known primarily for his modern but never atonal way of integrating elements of Gregorian chant and Protestant hymns. Others associate with his name the fascination with the rhythms of jazz and the glorification of the prowess of modern industrial society and rough sports (as in a triptych consisting of *Pacific 231*, his homage to a locomotive type by that name, *Rugby*, the tough contact sport, and what many believe is another work for the locomotive as an unnamed dedicatee, *Mouvement symphonique*). In their joint work on *La danse des morts*, Honegger and Claudel shared both the concern with life's ultimate meaning and the delight in the grotesque.

As if in a combination of his leaning towards archaic topics on the one hand and his fascination with the pulsations of speedy motion on the other, Honegger developed a unique treatment of the human voice. Listeners and critics, but most of all dismayed singers originally protested against the consistently counter-intuitive accentuation of weak syllables. (See, for just one instance of a ubiquitous phenomenon, the rhythmic shaping of the motto phrases in *La danse des morts*, given on page 401, with “*souviens-toi*” and “*que tu es poussière/que tu es esprit*.”) This has since become known as the “Honeggerian word stress,” accepted as an interesting idiosyncrasy capable of drawing attention to the text rather than distracting the ear. In addition, the singers, but even more the choirs, are entrusted with an unheard-of scope of expressive means within a single composition.

Finally, many of Honegger's vocal compositions capture attention with the archaicizing slant added by a speaker. Often even more literally outside the music than the narrator in Protestant oratorios, he reflects the dramatic action from an objective position.

## Ottorino Respighi (1897-1936): Assembling a Mythological Triptych

Respighi began his career as a performer. A virtuoso violinist hailed also as a very accomplished pianist, he seemed destined to follow in the footsteps of one line of his ancestry, which included several generations of practicing musicians. (Other lines of the Respighi family had produced members of the high clergy and a famous astronomer). Very soon, however, he discovered that composing was his real vocation. Among the teachers with whom he studied, at home in Bologna and abroad in Russia and Germany, Rimsky-Korsakov appears to have had the most significant influence on the young Italian, who worked with the revered Russian master during two extended visits in St. Petersburg. Respighi later attributed not only his self-confidence as a creative artist to Rimsky-Korsakov's early encouragement, but also his skills in orchestration to this master's expert teaching. Back in Italy after much traveling, Respighi settled in Rome, having won the competition for the professorship in composition at what is now the Conservatorio di Santa Cecilia. There he met Elsa, the student who was to become his wife and supportive muse. By now, his compositions were awaited with great anticipation and greeted with enthusiasm. His nomination as director of the Conservatorio at the age of 45 confirmed his official recognition as one of the leading Italian musicians of his era. During the two years he held this position, Respighi gave much thought to the long-term goals of music education in Italy and introduced numerous important improvements into the syllabus. However, since the administrative load kept him almost entirely from creative work, he resigned both the directorship and much of this teaching, to devote himself to composing and to the conducting of his compositions, a task that had begun to take him to countries all over the world.

Respighi is probably best known today for his tone poems in the style of Richard Strauss, especially the three "Roman" impressions, *Fontane di Roma* (The Fountains of Rome, 1914-16), *Pini di Roma* (The Pines of Rome, 1923-24), and *Feste Romane* (Roman Festivals, 1928). Respighi considered these three compositions, created over a long period of time, as a kind of symphonic metatriptych; his widow, writing about his life and work,<sup>43</sup> refers to the movements of the three works as to twelve panels of a large-scale depiction.

<sup>43</sup>Elsa Respighi, *Ottorino Respighi. Dati biografici ordinati da Elsa Respighi* (Milan: Ricordi, 1954), and *Ottorino Respighi: Fifty Years of a life in Music, 1905-1955*, English

Many of the genres that allow a composer to make programs explicit accompanied all of Respighi's creative life. This is particularly true for opera, among which *La campana sommersa* (The Sunken Bell, 1923-27), *La fiamma* (The Flame, 1930-33), and *Lucrezia* (1935) have proven the most successful. They are surpassed, however, by his early and uniquely compelling children's opera, *La bella dormente nel bosco* (Sleeping Beauty, 1916-21).

In his not explicitly programmatic works Respighi, an expert since adolescence at transcribing compositions of the German, French, and Italian Baroque for various ensembles, continued seeking to blend his love for the earlier tradition and his affinity with sensually inspired portrayals. It was his wife who suggested that he expand his knowledge of earlier music by studying Gregorian chant. This was fortuitous; the archaic idiom seems to have agreed with Respighi even more than the Baroque aesthetic, and expressed itself successfully in works such as the *Concerto gregoriano* (1921), the *Quartetto dorico* (1924), the *Concerto in modo misolydico* (1925), and the oratorio *Lauda per la Navità del Signore* (1928-30).

On 21 February 1927, the composer and his wife were in Washington, assisting a chamber music concert in what Elsa Respighi describes as "that beautiful hall in the Library of Congress that was donated by Mrs. Coolidge."<sup>44</sup> It was on this occasion that Respighi is remembered as having talked for the first time about a new composition based on three paintings by Botticelli that he hoped to write soon and dedicate to Mrs. Coolidge, this generous sponsor of the arts without whom he and so many of his contemporaries would have had a much more difficult and less successful life. It is even possible, as Attilio Piovano surmises,<sup>45</sup> that the work was commissioned by the patron herself. During the return voyage to Italy Respighi apparently thought and talked about little else, and as soon as he was home in the Palazzo Borghese, he went to work on the three-movement composition which he completed later in the same spring of 1927. By the standard of his earlier works, but also in view of the large

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trans. G. Fontecchio and R. Johnson (Lewiston: E. Mellen Press, 1993). For my brief account of Respighi's biography, I further rely on Giancarlo Rostirolla, ed., *Ottorino Respighi* (Torino: ERI, 1985) and Raffaella de Rensis, *Ottorino Respighi*, French translation and emendation by Gilbert Chapallaz (Sion: Gessler, 1957)

<sup>44</sup>Elsa Respighi, *Ottorino Respighi: Dati biografici ordinati*, pp. 197-198.

<sup>45</sup>Attilio Piovano, "Metodologie compositive ...," pp. 209-249.

canvasses that serve as the subject matter for the first and third movements, *Trittico botticelliano* is surprising in its conciseness and its restrained scoring for small orchestra. The unusual sound body consists, in addition to the strings, of six single winds (flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn, and trumpet) and almost as many instruments in a third timbral group comprising piano, harp, celesta, bells, and triangle.

### **Elliott Carter (1908-): Sonic Quests for America**

Born in 1908 into a prosperous middle class family, Elliott Carter was expected to follow his father and grandfather in the family business. The fact that he disappointed these expectations had the disadvantage of leading to unnecessary hardship (when his family cut his allowance), but also the advantage of forcing him to develop independently of the cultural orthodoxy common in families where the arts are graciously supported. Carter's artistic interests began with Ives, Stravinsky, and Schoenberg, later to be extended to Sessions, Copland, and Scriabin. Literature and art played a large part in his conscious orientation towards the modernist movement, particularly the works of Proust and Joyce as well as the paintings of the German expressionists.

Having come to Harvard to do undergraduate studies in music, Carter soon found himself disillusioned by the conservatism of the music professors there. As a result, he focused on English literature, classics, philosophy, and mathematics, taking courses in music theory as well as oboe lessons on the side at Longy School. He did, however, return to Harvard for his Master's degree in music. Thereafter, in 1932, he went to Paris to further his studies, ostensibly at the *École Normale* but, more importantly, privately with Nadia Boulanger. In 1935, Carter returned to and settled in the United States, where he married the sculptress and art critic Helen Frost-Jones, a woman known for a similarly rebellious attitude towards artistic conservatism as Carter himself.

Carter's further career can be regarded as an intriguing variation of the typical fate of academically educated composers. Like most of them, he was employed to teach at conservatories and universities (Peabody, Columbia University, Yale, Juilliard, Cornell, and several others). Unlike most of them, however, he did not focus exclusively on the obvious, i.e. music theory and composition, but developed a serious interest in teaching non-majors, and at getting involved with subjects other than music—

Greek literature, philosophy, and mathematics—as integral parts of a liberal arts curriculum. This alone would set him apart from his musical colleagues; his reluctance to appear in concerts was a further factor. Although trained as a pianist, singer, oboist, and conductor, Carter rarely performed in public. Instead he spent much time in semi-seclusion: on grants within the United States and in repeated extensive stays in Italy (as a Fellow of the American Academy in Rome 1953-54, 1963-64, 1967-68 and at the Villa Serbelloni at Bellagio 1968, 1971). His compositions won him numerous awards, among them the Pulitzer Prize, the Critics' Circle Award, and the UNESCO Prize for his Second String Quartet; he also received nine honorable doctorates. He was elected a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1963 and of the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1969.

His large-scale works above all have aimed to expand the musical language. In this striving he can be likened to other great composers of the time, whose innovations he matched in his own way, especially Schoenberg (with regard to tonal organization), Stravinsky (with regard to rhythm), and Edgar Varèse (with regard to texture).

What characterizes Carter's mature music is best captured in two quotations from the composer's own writings. Contrasting later works with an early composition he explains:

The way of forming musical material and texture, and the type of flow and continuity were abandoned. Observe, for instance, how the main gist of [my earlier works] is almost always presented in the form of themes or melodic lines, either based on reiterative motives—a method I soon found unsatisfactory—or on long spun-out phrases, usually leading to a climax—a pattern I rarely use today. The background is filled in with rhythmic chords, figurations, and simple contrapuntal lines. Today the texture of my music is seldom that of a thematic foreground with an accompanying background.<sup>46</sup>

My music seems to be a series of crystallizations of states of mind and feelings at various times in my life, reflecting them in some way that I can no longer explain.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>46</sup>Elliott Carter, "The Composer's Choices," in *Collected Essays and Lectures, 1937-1995* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 1997), p. 212.

<sup>47</sup>Elliott Carter, "To Be a Composer in America," in *Collected Essays and Lectures*, p. 201.

### **Jacob Gilboa (1920- ) and John McCabe (1939- ): Translucent Pictures**

“A greeting from geographical and aesthetic distance,” “a new voice in the concert of contemporary music”: with these words a music critic<sup>48</sup> hailed the world premiere (Hamburg 1972) of the second part of Jacob Gilboa’s *Zeichnungen zur Bibel*, a monumental symphonic cycle that would eventually fill many evenings and took the composer many years to write. The Czech-born Israeli composer had received much attention and acclaim, during the Festival of the International Society for New Music in 1969, for his *Crystals* for five instrumentalists. In response to this success, the North German Radio commissioned what was to become the second installment of *Zeichnungen zur Bibel*. Based on a psalm from the Dead Sea Scrolls, the work is composed for soloists, children’s choir, and full orchestra. It presents itself as a song of praise with melodic, rhythmic, declamatory, and sonic elements that blend traits of traditional Middle-Eastern music with stylistic and expressive means characteristic of recent Western developments.

Jacob Gilboa was born in 1920 in Košice, Czechoslovakia. He grew up in Vienna and emigrated to Israel in 1938. There he studied first architecture at the Haifa Technological Institute and then music at the Jerusalem Music Teachers Academy and Teachers Seminar, from which he graduated in 1947. His composition teachers were two of Israel’s most prominent composers, Joseph Tal in Jerusalem and Paul Ben-Haim in Tel-Aviv. Later he also traveled to Germany to attend the Cologne courses of New Music given by Stockhausen, Pousseur, and others.

In the 1950s, Gilboa’s music was tonal, according to his biographer Ury Epstein “showing the Middle Eastern ethnic influence typical of the Israeli ‘Mediterranean’ style. After attending the Cologne new music courses [...], his work changed radically to include clusters, quarter-tones, electronics and unconventional instrumental combinations, generally deployed in miniature forms.”<sup>49</sup> His work has been aptly described as “a blend of oriental and Eastern Mediterranean idioms, basically lyrical, but

<sup>48</sup>Translated from Peter Gradenwitz, “Musik zur Bibel: Neue Werke aus Israel,” *Musica* 28/1 (January-February 1974): 22.

<sup>49</sup>Ury Epstein, draft for the entry on Jacob Gilboa in the *New Grove* 2001. Private communication, August 1998.



technically ultra-modern.”<sup>50</sup> International prizes and awards include the Israel Composers and Authors Association Prize in 1968, 1977, 1982 and 1989; the Engel Prize in 1969 and 1973; the Lieberson Prize in 1980 and the Prime Minister’s Award in 1983. Gilboa’s works have represented Israel in the annual festival of the International Society for Contemporary Music in Hamburg (1969), Reykjavik (1973), Helsinki (1978), and Amsterdam (1989).

Gilboa’s first composition to win broad critical acclaim is *The Twelve Jerusalem Chagall Windows* of 1966. Works of related interest created since then include *Horizons in Violet and Blue*, ballet scene for six players (1970), *Pastels* for two prepared pianos (1970), *14 Epigrams for Oscar Wilde* for female voice, piano, and tape (1973), *The Beth Alpha Mosaic* for female voice, chamber ensemble, and tape (1975), *Bedu: Metamorphoses on a Bedouin Call* for male voice, violoncello, flute, and piano (1975), *Three Red Sea Impressions* for violin, piano, harp, electric guitar, organ, and tape (1978). Of particular interest in the context of this study are those of his compositions that are entitled in ways suggesting ekphrasis or similar processes of interartistic relationship. These take their inspirations both from works of visual art and from poetic texts. The first category includes above all *Three Vocalises for Pieter Breughel* for mezzo-soprano, chamber orchestra, and tape (1979), *Three Strange Visions of Hieronymus Bosch* for organ (1987), *The Grey Colours of Käthe Kollwitz* for mezzo-soprano, chamber orchestra, synthesizer, and tape (1990), as well as perhaps the more cryptically entitled *Lyric Triptychon* of 1992. Into the second group falls particularly his recent *Four Gobelins for Franz Kafka* for soprano, harp, piano, violin, viola, and violoncello (1993) and, in a wider sense, “*Ce qu’a vu le vent d’Est*” for piano (1985), which plays on Debussy’s prelude “*Ce qu’a vu le vent d’ouest*,” where what the West Wind has seen derives from the well-known fairy tale *The Garden of Paradise* by the Danish poet Hans Christian Andersen.<sup>51</sup>



<sup>50</sup>Article “Gilboa, Jacob” in *Baker’s Biographical Dictionary of Musicians*, sixth edition revised and edited by Nicolas Slonimsky (New York: Schirmer, 1978), p. 599.

<sup>51</sup>For a detailed discussion of Debussy’s piece (no. 7 in book I of his *Préludes*) and its relationship to the extra-musical source see Siglind Bruhn, *Images and Ideas in Modern French Piano Music: The Extra-Musical Subtext in Piano Works by Ravel, Debussy, and Messiaen* (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon, 1997), pp. 67-74.

The English pianist and composer John McCabe was born in 1939 in Huyton, Liverpool. In his family, the arts and sciences were held high and international influences were strong. His father, of Irish-Scottish descent, was the son of a man who had once been a monk in Ireland, had accumulated a broad knowledge, and had proceeded, later in life, to write books on a wide range of subjects, from astronomy and history to religion. The immediate ancestors of the composer's mother included Finns, Swedes, Germans, and Spaniards, among them many musicians.

The overshadowing event in John McCabe's life was an accident in early childhood. Not yet three years old, he fell into a fire and was so severely burned that it took eight years before his health was fully restored. Significantly for his later musical sensitivity, complications included a temporary loss of hearing. McCabe recalls that he spent the eight years "reading, being ill, having a good time."<sup>52</sup> By the age of 10, he had written thirteen symphonies and part of an opera. After completing high school, he took up formal music studies at Manchester University, from where he graduated with a Bachelor of Music degree in 1960. At one point, like Peter Maxwell Davies three years before him, he was kicked out of composition class because he was too modern.<sup>53</sup> Subsequently, McCabe entered the Royal Manchester College of Music, where he studied composition with Thomas Pitfield and piano with Gordon Green, graduating with a performer's diploma with distinction in 1962. A little later he spent one year abroad as a student at the Hochschule für Musik in Munich. However, the teacher with whom he had most hoped to study, Karl Amadeus Hartmann, died before McCabe could fulfill his dream; the work *Variations on a Theme of Hartmann* was written in tribute to this unrealized apprenticeship.

Since his return to England in 1965, McCabe has rapidly made a name for himself as a composer, solo and chamber music pianist, and music critic. Almost from the beginning, most of his works were written on commission and well received; by 1990, his work catalogue numbered 174 compositions. Harold Truscott, writing about McCabe in *British Music Now*, describes the composer as a "traditionalist" in the best sense of that term. "He has no inhibitions about genuine tradition [...] and is sympathetic to any fresh technique that can further music and not try to

<sup>52</sup>Quoted in Stewart R. Craggs, *John McCabe: A Bio-Bibliography* (New York etc.: Greenwood Press, 1991), p. 3.

<sup>53</sup>See "McCabe — man of music," interview with John Falding, *Birmingham Post* (22 September 1973), p. 6.

stifle everything else that is good in music. Such open-mindedness can only be beneficial [...; it has helped] him to concentrate completely on precisely what he wants to say, and the best way to say it.”<sup>54</sup>

McCabe’s repertoire as a concert pianist, centered in the modern era, is admirably broad. A list of works with which the 23-year-old Manchester graduate launched his career included compositions by Richard Rodney Bennett, Elliott Carter, Aaron Copland, Peter Dickinson, Christopher Headington, Alun Hoddinott, Malcolm Lipkin, Witold Lutoslawski, Willem Pijper, Michael Tippett, and Joaquín Turina; his recordings include the complete sonatas of Haydn and the complete piano music of Carl Nielsen. His recitals and engagements to premier concertos have taken him all over the world.

While McCabe is thus able to afford staying away from the burdens that come with full-time teaching in academia, he has been active in the Association of Professional Composers and the Incorporated Society of Musicians, and has been the Director of the London College of Music during the years 1983-1990.

### **Gunther Schuller (1925- ), Giselher Klebe (1925- ), and Peter Maxwell Davies (1934- ): Imaging Mechanization**

Gunther Schuller, born in 1925 in New York City of German immigrants (an artistic mother and a New York Philharmonic violinist and violist father), was a prodigy horn player who, at 17, jumped at the opportunity to be accepted as first horn in the Cincinnati Symphony before he had even finished high school, and never returned to any formal education. His early Horn Concerto and the *Symphony for Brass and Percussion* were the first of many works with which the entirely self-taught composer celebrated his beloved instrument and enriched the literature for an otherwise less richly endowed section of the orchestra. Also during his late teens, the foundation was laid for his life-long fascination with jazz. Still in Cincinnati, he heard the Duke Ellington Orchestra live, an event that inspired him to write symphonic arrangements of the music of Duke Ellington and Count Basie for the “Pops” concerts of the Cincinnati Orchestra.<sup>55</sup> Much later, in 1972, he expanded

<sup>54</sup>Harold Truscott, “Two Traditionalists: Kenneth Leighton and John McCabe,” *British Music Now*, Lewis Foreman, ed. (London: Paul Elek, 1975), p. 151.

<sup>55</sup>For more details cf. Norbert Carnovale, *Gunther Schuller: A Bio-Bibliography* (New

this interest to include an active involvement with ragtime. It was Schuller who, as he found himself blending elements of jazz or ragtime and Western classical music in many of his compositions, coined the term "Third Stream Music." He also conducted research into the developments of both of these very American traditions. This led to his publication of a two-volume, fifteen-hundred-page history of jazz and to various editions of the music of Scott Joplin.

During two years in the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra and fourteen seasons as principal horn with the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, Schuller composed over thirty works. At the same time and at the side, he performed with a great number of jazz musicians and began his long-standing commitment to furthering an understanding for contemporary music through broadcasting programs. His teaching career, begun at the Manhattan School of Music and continued at Yale and the New England Conservatory, prepared him for what was to become a very influential ten-year presidency at the latter (1967-1977). Thanks to his leadership, the New England Conservatory became an important school in areas previously not emphasized, including contemporary music, jazz, and ragtime.

Schuller also extends his educational interest to the summer-school training of talented young composers. From 1963 to 1983 he was active in the Festival of Contemporary Music held annually at Tanglewood and, since 1985, has been the Artistic Director of the Spokane (Washington) Symphony Orchestra's "Festival at Sandpoint." Since 1980, Schuller has been an elected member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

Schuller's interest in exploring the intersections of music and the visual arts became known to a wider public when, in 1982, he reconstructed the incomplete score of *Der gelbe Klang* (The Yellow Sound), which the composer Thomas de Hartmann had written for the multi-media composition planned in conjunction with Klee's like-minded contemporary, the Russian painter Wassily Kandinsky.



Giselher Klebe, also born in 1925, hails from Mannheim, Germany. He began studying the violin at age six, receiving lessons from his violin-teacher mother, and began composing when he was thirteen. After graduation from highschool, he began formal studies in violin and viola. These were cut short by his draft into the army during the final years of

York: Greenwood Press, 1987), p. 5 and elsewhere.

World War II and subsequent imprisonment in Russia, and it was not until 1946 that he was able to resume his musical education, this time as a student in Berlin with composer Boris Blacher and Schoenberg scholar Josef Rufer. During these years he attended for the first time the famous courses for contemporary music in Darmstadt and was deeply inspired in his own compositional endeavors by the new sounds heard there. In 1949—at almost exactly the age when Davies wrote the sister composition that brought his name to general attention in England—Klebe composed *Die Zwitschermaschine*. The premiere of the work, by the orchestra of the South West German Radio under the baton of the composer and conductor Hans Rosbaud, established Klebe's name as that of a composer to be reckoned with. He went on to win internationally important prizes at the approximate rate of one a year, and was appointed professor of composition at the Musikhochschule Detmold in 1956. In 1959-62 and in 1962-63, grants for year-long stays at the famous haven of composers, the Villa Massimo in Rome, allowed him to devote all his time to creative work. Meanwhile, Germany honored him with the election in 1963 to the Free Academy for the Arts in Hamburg, in 1964 to the Berlin Academy for the Arts (whose president he became for the period 1986-89), in 1978 to the Bavarian Academy for the Arts, as well as with the highest Federal Order of Merit and many other prizes.

Klebe's early style blended the experimentation with rhythms and meters typical for Blacher with the serialism to which Rufer had introduced him. His ideal in many ways became Alban Berg, whose expressive power Klebe admired and sought to develop in his own musical language. After early compositions in a dry, rhythmically complex, and strikingly unsentimental idiom, Klebe's music very soon became simultaneously much simpler and very passionate. More recently, his style has been described (by his publishers, Schott in Mainz) as "expressively pointillist," while a reviewer commenting on Klebe's Zola-based opera, premiered in the year of the composer's seventieth birthday, characterizes the work's musical language as follows: "[It is] dodecaphonic—as always with Klebe—but one wouldn't tell from listening. Rather, despite all the gloominess [of Zola's subject matter], the composer writes beautifully conceived chords, soundscapes, and harmonic developments that, for all their occasional clashes, sound ultimately harmonious."<sup>56</sup>

<sup>56</sup>Gregor Willmes, "Vom Untergang einer Büglerin: Giselher Klebes *Gervaise Macquart* in Düsseldorf uraufgeführt," *Das Orchester: Zeitschrift für Orchesterkultur und Runkfunk-Chorwesen* 44/3 (1996): 47-48.

The catalogue of Klebe's works<sup>57</sup> comprises thirteen operas, frequently emphasizing dark and gloomy moods, in "Literaturopern" on texts by Schiller (*Die Räuber*, *Das Mädchen von Domrémy*), Goethe (*Das Märchen von der schönen Lilie*), Kleist (*Alkmene*), Balzac (*Die tödlichen Wünsche*), Shakespeare (*Die Ermordung Caesars*), and others; twenty-three orchestral compositions (including five symphonies), as well as several ballets and a wealth of vocal and chamber music in a great variety of instrumentations. And while he does not attempt to rival Schuller in terms of active involvement in non-classical ventures, Klebe has also written works for rock band (*Tim*) and for electronic realization (*Interferenzen* for four loudspeakers).



Peter Maxwell Davies ('Max' to his friends, 'Sir Peter' to others), the towering figure in contemporary English music, was born in Manchester in 1934 but has long made his home on Hoy, a smaller island in the Orkney group off the coast of northern Scotland. A precocious composer in his teens, he discovered that his formal education at Manchester University and the Royal Manchester College of Music could not teach him much. But it brought him in contact with a unique group of fellow students, which included such gifted musicians as the composers Harrison Birtwistle and Alexander Goehr, the pianist John Ogdon, and the trumpeter and conductor Elgar Howarth. Following graduation from Manchester, Davies won a scholarship from the Italian government and spent eighteen months in Rome, studying with Goffredo Petrassi. This apprenticeship, and an even shorter period three years later at Princeton, where he worked under the guidance of Roger Sessions and Earl Kim, sharpened the largely self-taught young composer's consciousness of form, style, and—he emphasizes—artistic consistency.

Between the two periods of foreign study, he taught for three years at Cirencester Grammar School, where he developed highly unorthodox methods of inspiring creative confidence in ordinary children, methods that were widely commented upon and laid the basis for his life-long dedication to education. This, however, remained the only "job" he ever held. When the thirty-year-old returned from Princeton with an impressive number of already premiered and highly acclaimed compositions in his portfolio (including an almost completed score for his first opera,

<sup>57</sup>See Michael Rentzsch, *Giselher Klebe: Werkverzeichnis 1947-1995* (Kassel etc.: Bärenreiter, 1997).

Taverner), the publishing house Boosey & Hawkes offered him an annual stipend that allowed him henceforth to focus all his energies on composing. In 1967, he became involved with Birtwistle's chamber group dedicated to performances of contemporary music, "The Pierrot Players" (later continued under Davies's leadership as "The Fires of London"). Schoenberg's melodram, *Pierrot lunaire*, gave the group its original name and determined the members of its steady ensemble; they were complemented by occasional guests and, most importantly, by a percussionist whose hyperactive role in pieces of any contents became one of the most reliable characteristics of Davies's style. During these years, until the dissolution of the group in 1987, he wrote more than half of his works for this ensemble. Most significantly, with *Pierrot lunaire* as inspiration and point of departure, Davies turned prominently to parody. Works in this genre include the famous *Eight Songs for a Mad King*, the notorious *Revelation and Fall*, the "fox-trot for orchestra," *St. Thomas Wake*, and, somewhat later, the opera from the surgical theater, *Resurrection*.

Another significant influence on Davies is that exerted from the very other end of the music-historical spectrum. From the time at Cirencester, where he first explored Monteverdi's *Vespers* of 1610, Davies developed a life-long interest in early Baroque, Renaissance, and especially medieval music. Many dozens of his compositions are based, prominently or at least partially, on plain song. What he learned from early composers like Dufay, Machaut, Dunstable, and Taverner, he sought to rework in the light of the symphonic tradition from Haydn to Mahler and Sibelius.

Finally among the experiences that shaped Davies's life and art, there are the Orkney Islands with their rough landscapes and sounds, their stories and myths, and their notable poet, George Mackay Brown. Davies's second opera, *The Martyrdom of Saint Magnus*, which goes back both to the myth of the Orcadian saint and to Mackay Brown's novel *Magnus*, is perhaps the best known of the more than seventy works included in the part of the composer's oeuvre that is entitled "Works Inspired by Orkney."<sup>58</sup> Here he could combine the topics dearest to him: his spiritual search into the nature of mystic commitment versus human

<sup>58</sup>For this and a wealth of other details bibliographical and otherwise, I point interested readers to what must be the most elaborate webpage maintained for any composer, [www.MaxOpus.com](http://www.MaxOpus.com), compiled and continuously updated by Davies's agent, Judy Arnold. For my sketch on Davies's life and works, I draw primarily on the excellent biography by Mike Seabrook, *Max: The Life and Music of Peter Maxwell Davies* (London: Victor Collanz, 1994).

betrayal, his concern for nature and its destruction by increasing pollution (with inimical substances and, almost more threatening for Davies, too much noise), his wit, his love of satire, and his dedication to the development of the creative potential in young people.

In the latter context, Davies has been the artistic director of Dartington Summer School for five years (1979-1983) and the founding director of the Hoy Summer School for Young Composers (1989-). Since the mid-1980s, he has also become ever more involved with orchestral conducting. He was the first composer in England to be honored with an appointment as “associate composer and conductor” at a prestigious orchestra, a position he presently holds with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, the Royal Philharmonic, and the BBC Philharmonic. In this capacity, he has developed intricate programs that take contemporary music—the playing and analyzing of master works and the creative reaction to them in (amateur) compositions—to schools in towns and rural communities of England and Scotland, an endeavor for which the first foundation was laid at the time and with the help of the *Five Klee Pictures*.

## Biographical Sketches IV: The Choreographers

Of the three dancers who play a role in the present context of interartistic transformation, Nijinsky and Massine grew out of the same background: the famous tradition of Russian ballet where the illustrious Diaghilev discovered them, adopted them for his Paris-based company, and formed them as creative artists. And there is even a link to the third choreographer: Martha Graham, arguably the greatest American dancer of the twentieth century, admits that she was deeply influenced by both men.

### Vaslav Nijinsky (1890-1950): Sublimated Sexual Ecstasy

Born in Kiev in 1890, Vaslav Nijinsky was the second son of parents who were both celebrated dancers; his father in particular was famous for his virtuosity and enormous leaps. The Nijinskys had their own dance company and performed throughout the Russian Empire. Nijinsky’s childhood was mostly spent in the Caucasus, where he danced as a small child with his brother, Stanislav, and his little sister, Bronislava. Both



siblings also grew to become famous in the field of ballet, Bronislava as one of the first woman choreographers. Vaslav's father, noticing the child's great disposition for dancing, gave him his first lessons.

At the age of nine, Nijinsky entered the Imperial School of Dancing in St. Petersburg, where his teachers, the foremost of the time, soon discovered his extraordinary talent. When he was sixteen years old, they urged him to leave school and enter the Mariinsky Theater. Nijinsky declined, preferring to fulfill the customary period of study. At the time he had already been heralded as the "eighth wonder of the world" and the "Vestris of the North". During his school years he appeared at the Mariinsky Theater, first as a member of the corps de ballet, later in small parts. After graduation in 1907 he joined the Mariinsky Theater as a soloist. His first appearance was in the ballet *La Source* with the Russian ballerina Julia Sedova as his partner. The performance and particularly his solo were received with great enthusiasm. He was declared "danseur noble" and allowed to dance all the leading parts at the Mariinsky Theater and at the Bolshoi Theater in Moscow, where he was a guest performer. His success was phenomenal.

In 1909 Serge Diaghilev, former assistant to the administrator of the Imperial Theaters, was commissioned by the grand duke Vladimir to organize a ballet company of the members of the Mariinsky and Bolshoi theaters. Diaghilev decided to take the company to Paris in the spring and asked Nijinsky to join as principal dancer. Its first performance was on May 17, 1909, at the Théâtre du Chatelet. Nijinsky took Paris by storm. The expressive power of his movements, his featherweight lightness and steel-like strength, his great elevation and incredible gift of rising and seeming to remain in the air, and his extraordinary virtuosity and dramatic acting made him a genius of the ballet.

In 1912 he began his career as a choreographer. He created for Diaghilev's Ballets Russes the ballets *L'après-midi d'un faune*, *Jeux*, and *Le sacre du printemps*. *Till Eulenspiegel* was produced in the United States without Diaghilev's personal supervision. His work in the field of choreography was generally considered daringly original and so unconventional that it aroused lively comment and many protests, especially against alleged obscenity and harsh subject matter.

From a tour to South America which the company undertook without Diaghilev, Nijinsky returned as a married man. This brought about a falling out with his mentor and lover Diaghilev, who felt he had been betrayed. As a result, Nijinsky had his first nervous breakdown. In 1919,

at the age of 29 and after only seven creative years as a choreographer, Nijinsky was forced to retire from the stage when he was diagnosed with schizophrenia. For the remaining thirty-one years of his life, he lived in Switzerland, France, and England, cared for by his wife but never fully recovering from his illness.

### **Léonide Massine (1895-1979): Liturgical Ballets**

Appraised as one of the great artists who shaped the development of modernism, the Russian dancer and choreographer Massine was born (as Leonid Fedorovich Miassine) in 1895 in Moscow. The son of a mother who sang soprano in the Bolshoi Theater Chorus and a father who played the French horn in the Bolshoi Orchestra, Massine began dancing, acting, and studying the violin all at a very early age. Beside this education at the Bolshoi he spent much time, all through his adolescence, on formal studies of drawing and painting in the private art school of the noted Anatoli P. Bolchakov, with whom he was to remain in steady correspondence until the latter's death. Finally during his formative years, he also learned to play the balalaika and developed a serious interest in Russian legends and folk music. Throughout his training in Moscow, Massine vacillated regarding his choice of a profession between drama and ballet, since his good looks and an extraordinary stage presence even when not moving or dancing had won him triumphs in many acting roles. The early training in classical dance, acting, music, and art in combination with studies of the folk idioms of his country laid the basis for many of the spiritual and interartistic themes he was to explore in the course of his life.

Massine's remarkable international career as a ballet dancer began when, at the age of 18, Diaghilev recruited him into the Ballets Russes, where he was to replace Nijinsky, who had just fallen out of favor with the impresario. Diaghilev taught Massine not only what he needed to become a truly great dancer, he also challenged him to create his first choreographies when not yet twenty years old. To that end, Diaghilev saw to it that his protégé received the best private tuition available, was constantly exposed to the best museums and most accomplished monuments of art, and frequently met—and soon collaborated with—the greatest artists of his time. “Diaghilev believed that in the fusion of music, dance, painting, poetry, and drama, in accordance with the examples of Greek

and Wagnerian theater, a more complete and cohesive expression might be achieved."<sup>59</sup>

While the more than one hundred and twenty ballets Massine created between 1914 and 1954 include all nuances of mood—from the light to the serious, from the grotesque to the sublime, from sentimental comedies to abstract symphonic ballets—there was, from the very beginning of his creative work, a steady stream of works inspired by liturgical themes. How absorbed he could find himself in sacred subject matters becomes apparent when he speaks about his “longing for a contemplative, spiritual life.”<sup>60</sup>

The very first ballet he designed, although never performed, pointed the way. The story is worth quoting in detail since it prefigures his:

One afternoon in the Uffizi, while I was looking up at Fra Filippo Lippi's *Madonna and Child*, Diaghilev said to me, “Do you think you could compose a ballet?” “No,” I answered without thinking, “I'm sure I never could.” Then, as we passed on into another room I was suddenly aware of the luminous colors of Simone Martini's *Annunciation*. As I looked at the delicate postures of Gabriel and the Virgin Mary, I felt as if everything I had seen in Florence had finally culminated in this painting. It seemed to be offering me the key to an unknown world, beckoning me along a path which I knew I must follow to the end. “Yes,” I said to Diaghilev, “I think I can create a ballet. Not only one, but a hundred, I promise you.”<sup>61</sup>

The resulting work, entitled *Liturgie* (1914), consists of a series of scenes from the life of Christ, beginning with an “Annunciation” after the Martini depiction that had provided the first spark to ignite Massine's creative powers. When, in 1936, he briefly considered resurrecting this early ballet, he spoke about wanting to draw inspiration from a series of Mantegna friezes in London's National Gallery and “create a series of rhythmic tableaux on religious themes” on music from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.<sup>62</sup> Instead, Massine embarked on the first component of what would become his “sacred triptych.”<sup>63</sup> Together with Hindemith he began the creation of *Nobilissima Visione* after Giotto's Bardi Chapel

<sup>59</sup>Vicente García-Márquez, *Massine: A Biography* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1995), p. 33.

<sup>60</sup>Léonide Massine, *My Life in Ballet*, p. 69.

<sup>61</sup>Massine, *My Life in Ballet*, p. 70.

<sup>62</sup>V. García-Márquez, *Massine: A Biography*, p. 252.

<sup>63</sup>V. García-Márquez, *Massine: A Biography*, p. 346.

frescoes, a ballet that was to be premiered on 21 July 1938 by the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo with the choreographer himself as Saint Francis.

Massine did, however, return to the basic idea of *Liturgie*. This happened in two of his last ballets, created in 1952 and 1954. The first, *Laudes evangelii* (Praises of the Gospel), was inspired by “a thirteenth-century Italian version of a Latin liturgical play dealing with the life of Christ. I was much moved by the simplicity and sincerity of the dialogue, and began to wonder whether in using it as the basis for a ballet I might not at last accomplish what I had set out to do so many years before in *Liturgie*.”<sup>64</sup> The work was produced in the fourteenth-century church of Santo Domenico in Perugia, with music based on *laude*<sup>65</sup> by Jacopone da Todi and other thirteenth-century composers. Within the work’s seven scenes,<sup>66</sup> one segment, featuring the kiss of Judas, was again inspired by a Giotto painting. The ballet was a tremendous success, so much so that for the next decade it toured cathedrals and festivals in Europe, including those of Nantes and Edinburgh. The other “sacred drama” for ballet, *Resurrezione e vita* (Resurrection and Life), was an equally spectacular triumph. It used music by Monteverdi and Gabrieli and, according to the description in Massine’s autobiography, was pictorially based on paintings by Titian and Veronese. Moreover, the stage was arranged in three revolving tiers that “allowed the life of Christ to emerge into view as if seen through frescoes,”<sup>67</sup> tying the art and music of the Baroque once again back to the aesthetics of the Romanesque era that so fascinated the dancer all through his life.

<sup>64</sup>Massine, *My Life in Ballet*, p. 239.

<sup>65</sup>The *lauda* is a form of sacred chant developed by the Franciscans. “From the very early stages of the popular movement around Saint Francis, one of the important means for expressing the new ideals of living in accordance with the teachings of Christ [...] was the singing of a new genre of vernacular spiritual song, called by contemporaries the *lauda*, Italian for ‘song of praise’. [...] The music was cast in ballad-like form, with the text focusing primarily on Christ’s suffering and on the Virgin Mary.” (Nils Holger Petersen, “Messiaen’s *Saint François d’Assise* and Franciscan Spirituality,” *Messiaen’s Language of Mystical Love*, Siglind Bruhn, ed. [New York: Garland, 1998], p.170.)

<sup>66</sup>*Laudes evangelii* consists of I: “Annunciation and Visitation,” II: “Nativity and Flight to Egypt,” III: “Entrance into Jerusalem,” IV: “Garden of Olives,” V: “Flagellation and Via Crucis,” VI: “Crucifixion and Deposition,” VII: “Resurrection and Ascension.”

<sup>67</sup>V. García-Márquez, *Massine: A Biography*, p. 345.

### Martha Graham (1894-1991): Exploring a Woman's Feelings

Martha Graham was always a little secretive about the year of her birth. Many biographies list her as "1900?"; she preferred to have the story of her life begin with her emergence as an artistic persona.

After studies in Los Angeles, she first drew attention in 1920 when she interpreted the leading role in Ted Shawn's Aztec ballet, *Xochitl*. Following several years dancing in revues, she taught at the Eastman School of Music from 1925 and had her New York debut in 1926. This launched her career.

Through the remaining three quarters of the twentieth century, she created more than one hundred eighty ballets and became the central figure of the modern dance movement. She developed an original technique involving the expression of primal emotions through stylized bodily movement of great intensity. Her concern was clearly with the expression of feeling rather than with abstract dance.

Martha Graham's influence has extended far beyond actual dance and choreography. As has been frequently observed, she has "freed the art," broadening its function and its scope. Great actors and actresses point out that she has probably been America's greatest actress, and playwrights call attention to the fact that her dance dramas are the greatest body of poetic drama in the world today, fusing dance-action with scenery, costumes, and properties. Her costumes, designed and sewn by Graham herself from the earliest ballets, have been described as liberating, augmenting, and defining the roots of the movements themselves.

Last but not least, Graham also introduced innovative stage design into her repertoire. The set that Isamu Noguchi created for her 1935 solo dance, *Frontier*, marked the beginning of a collaboration between the American dancer and the Japanese sculptor that lasted for three decades. Noguchi designed close to twenty sets for Martha Graham, including those for her series based on Greek myths: *Cave of the Heart* (1946), *Errand into the Maze* (1947), *Night Journey* (1947), *Clytemnestra* (1958), *Alcestis* (1960), *Phaedra* (1962), *Circe* (1963) and *Cartege of Eagles* (1966). Noguchi also created many sets for ballets in which Graham addressed Biblical and religious themes in a wider sense, such as *Hérodiade* (1944), *Judith* (1950), *Seraphic Dialogue* (1955) and *Embattled Garden* (1958).

Martha Graham's collaboration with contemporary composers brought her the Laurel Leaf of the Composers' Alliance, while her general

influence on all the arts was recognized by the Aspen Award in Humanities. In the Fall of 1976, President Gerald R. Ford awarded her the Medal of Freedom, making Miss Graham the first dancer/choreographer to receive this high honor. In December 1979, she was recipient of the Kennedy Center Honors in recognition of the significant contributions to the American culture through the performing arts.

While Martha Graham retired as a dancer in 1970, she continued to teach her dance technique and to choreograph for her company almost until her death at age 97.