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Weather.

The days and nights have been heavy and grey. One bad sleet storm offered a few moments of beauty, and, mercifully, no damage to the trees. And none to our immediate personnel. Mrs. Cabell was marooned on 32nd Street, unable to move either forward or backward, so slippery was it underfoot. She was rescued by a kindly taxi driver and safely deposited at the Bindery.

Music.

A programme by The Musical Art Quartet on Friday afternoon, January 31 is planned "To meet Monsieur et Madame Focillon", to which we are all looking forward with great pleasure.

A long and interesting article on Satie is attached to the page following. Would you be interested in having a copy of the catalogue of the exhibition at Mills College? And have you found time to read Virgil Thomson's articles which now appear in the N.Y.H.T.? They are extremely brilliant, and are, already, so it seems, having a tonic effect on the writings of other music critics.

Editor's note.

We understand that a long letter from B.S. has already gone forward this week, which, in large part, accounts for the paucity of Research Library and Collection material in this issue.

FRENCH MUSIC HERE

By VIRGIL THOMSON

MONSIEUR DARIUS MILHAUD has communicated to me the catalogue of an exhibit held recently in the foyer of the Music Building at Mills College, Oakland, Calif., for the two weeks from Nov. 27 through Dec. 11, 1940, of Erik Satie's manuscripts. These manuscripts, the property of Monsieur Milhaud, were brought by him last summer from France at some inconvenience, since the traveling facilities available at that time did not always include transportation of unlimited personal impedimenta. That Monsieur Milhaud should have made room for these at the cost of leaving behind manuscripts and orchestral material of his own for which he might have need during his stay here is evidence of the esteem in which he holds the unpublished works of the late Sage of Arceuil.

Milhaud's Satie Collection

THE CATALOGUE, which contains 105 items, mentions fourteen bound booklets that average forty pages each and fourteen paper-bound booklets that run as high as twenty-five pages each. In addition, there are the twenty-four-page orchestral score of "Five Grimaces" for "A Midsummer Night's Dream" and a score of fifteen pages of a piece called simply "Danse," dated Dec. 5, 1890, later incorporated into the longer work entitled "Three Pieces in the Shape of a Pear." There are sketches from three ballets, "Jack-in-the-Box," "Relâche" and "Mercure," and from the marionette opera "Geneviève de Brabant." Also songs. Famous ones like "Le Chapelier," from "Alice in Wonderland," and "La Statue de Bronze" and dozens of unpublished waltz-songs and other such light matter written during the eight (or was it twelve?) years that Satie earned his living by playing the piano at a small theatrical establishment called "The Harvest Moon" ("La Lune Rousse"), an enterprise of the type known as *cabaret Montmartrois* or *boîte de chansonniers*.

There are counterpoint exercises, too, and fugues and chorales from his second student days when, already forty, he enrolled at Vincent d'Indy's Schola Cantorum and for four years went through all the scholastic musical grind he had skipped in youth. And there are letters, forty-three of them, to Monsieur Milhaud, photographs, programs, clippings and accounts. Item 47 is a first edition of "Images," by Claude Debussy, with a dedication to Satie from his lifelong friend.

Satie's Importance in Modern Music

THE collection, as one can see from the above brief digest, is an extensive one. Its importance depends on what one thinks of Erik Satie as a musical figure. This writer is in agreement with Darius Milhaud and with most of the other contemporary French composers in placing Satie's work among the major musical values of our century. He has even gone so far in print, nearly twenty years ago, as to parallel the three German B's—Bach, Beethoven and Brahms—with the three S's of modern music—in descending order of significance, Satie, Schoenberg and Stravinsky.

That is a personal estimate, of course, though one agreed to by many musicians in France and some elsewhere. I should not wish to force my personal musical tastes on any one, any more than I should want anybody else's forced on me. If you love Mahler, for instance, Mahler is your oyster; and the same goes for Strauss, Sibelius, Palestrina and Gershwin. But there are certain key personalities without some acceptance of which it is impossible to understand and accept the music of the place and epoch that they dominated. And Erik Satie is one of those.

Satie's Importance in French Music

FRENCH and other Parisian music of the 1930's has been but little performed in America. (That is an old quarrel of mine with the League of Composers.) Such of it as has been performed here is usually considered to be mildly pleasant but on the whole not very impressive. This estimate is justified only on the part of persons initiated to its esthetic. And its esthetic, as was that of Debussy, is derived directly from the words and from the works of Satie, whose firmest conviction was that the only healthy thing music can do in our century is to stop trying to be impressive.

The ~~Satie musical esthetic~~ is the only twentieth-century musical esthetic in the Western World. Schoenberg and his school are Romantics; and their twelve-tone syntax, however intriguing one may find it intellectually, is the purest Romantic chromaticism. Hindemith, however gifted, is a neo-classicist, like Brahms, with eyes and ears glued firmly to the past. The same is true of the later Stravinsky and his satellites. Even "Petrouchka" and "The Rite of Spring" are the Wagnerian symphonic theater and the nineteenth-century worship of nationalistic folklore applied to ballet.

Of all the influential composers of our time, and influence even his detractors cannot deny him, Satie is the only one whose works can be enjoyed and appreciated without any knowledge of the history of music. These lack the prestige of traditional modernism, as they lack the prestige of the Romantic tradition itself, a tradition of constant Revolution. They are as simple, as straightforward, as devastating as the remarks of a child.

To the uninitiated they sound trifling. To those who love them they are fresh and beautiful and firmly right. And that freshness and rightness have long dominated the musical thought of France. Any attempt to penetrate that musical thought without first penetrating that of Erik Satie is fruitless. Even Debussy is growing less and less comprehensible these days to those who never knew Satie.

Satie's Achievement

WHEN Satie used to be performed here occasionally, the works were found difficult to understand. French music in all centuries has been a rather special thing not quite like anything else. In our century it has become esoteric to a degree not currently admitted even in France. It has eschewed the impressive, the heroic, the oratorical, everything that is aimed at moving mass audiences. Like modern poetry and painting, it has directed its communication to the individual listener.

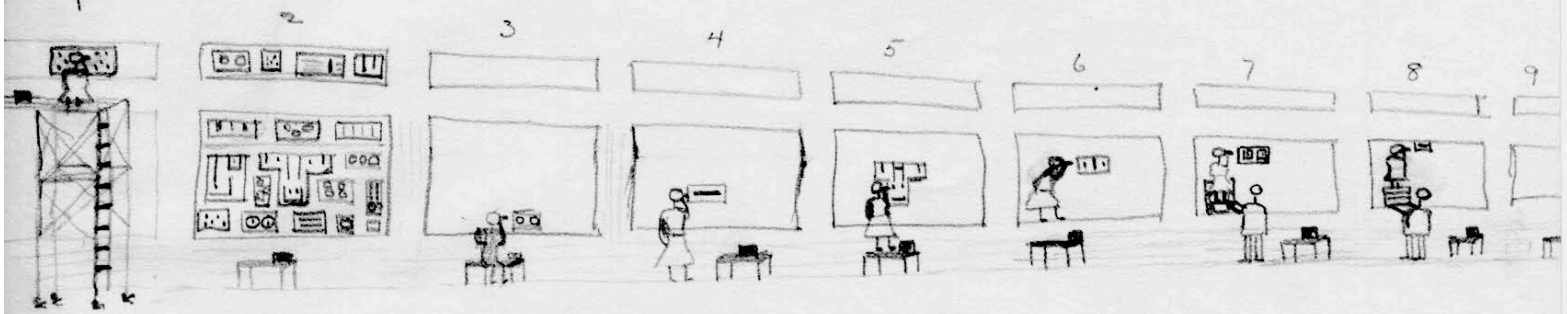
It has valued, in consequence, quietude, precision, acuteness of auditory observation, gentleness, sincerity and directness of statement. Persons who admire these qualities in private life are not infrequently confused when they encounter them in public performance. It is this confusion that gives to all French music, and to the work of Satie and his neophytes in particular, an air of superficiality, as if it were salon music written for the drawing rooms of some snobbish set.

To suppose this true is to be ignorant of the poverty and the high devotion to art that marked the life of Erik Satie to its very end in a public hospital. And to ignore all art that is not heroic or at least intensely emotional is to commit the greatest of snobberies. For, by a reversal of values that constitutes one of the most curious phenomena of a century that has so far been occupied almost exclusively with reversing values, the only thing really hermetic and difficult to understand about the music of Erik Satie is the fact that there is nothing hermetic about it at all.

It wears no priestly robes; it mumbles no incantations; it is not painted up by Max Factor to terrify elderly ladies or to give little girls a thrill. Neither is it designed to impress orchestral conductors or to get anybody a job teaching school. It has literally no devious motivation. It is as simple as a friendly conversation and in its better moments exactly as poetic and as profound.

Darius Milhaud's Inheritance

THESE thoughts occurred to me the other evening at a League of Composers' concert of recent works by Milhaud. Not a piece on the program had a climax or a loud finish. Nothing was pretentious or apocalyptic or messianic or overdramatized. The composer's effort at all times was to be clear and true. And when I saw the catalogue of the Satie manuscripts and learned how Milhaud had brought them to America at the cost of not bringing all his own; when I remembered, also, the brilliant and theatrically effective works of Milhaud's youth, "Le Boeuf sur le Toit" and "Le Train Bleu" and "La Création du Monde," I realized that after Satie's death he had been led, how unconsciously I cannot say, to assume the mantle of Satie's leadership and to eschew all musical vanity. That, at any rate, is my explanation of how one of the most facile and turbulent talents of our time has become one of the most completely calm of modern masters; and how, by adding thus depth and penetration and simple humanity to his gamut, he has become the first composer of his country and a leader in that musical tradition which of all the living musical traditions is the least moribund.



CHICAGO

CHICAGO


by

L----- B----- of the M---- C--- B-----'s.


CHAP II

This chapter should be skipped by all but the most intense scholars. It will contain information of an increasingly high order on the broad subject How to Examine Textiles at the Field Museum. The author's excuse for treating the subject at length, is her feeling that the matter may here be covered in toto, as the procedure was designed to bring method (shall we say?) out of the madness of installation. Said installation was the work of one man, who was so transported by the overwhelming effect of the display that he passed over into the beyond without divulging the secret of how the textile frames were fastened in, and might subsequently be unhitched, wherefore one examines where they are.

As drawing is unfortunately not my medium, a great number of interesting details do not appear where they should. For instance, if I had let Mr. Weeks lean heavily against the step ladder at case 8 (as he did), instead of holding it with the tips of his fingers as he appears to be doing, I might have felt safer, but you would have thought I was standing on his head. - His neck is not that long, yet if his shoulders come up any further you couldn't see that he did at least have both hands on the ladder; and if his head was nearer his shoulders you might think my life was being entrusted to a little boy. The basic trouble, I guess, is that in my excitement about perspective I put the lower sill of the case too high: but that can't be helped now. - To work:-

We begin with case 2: put our heap of records on one end of the bench and back off out of the picture to get a birds eye view of a whole case and to see how really well the rags look when the glass has been removed. You are getting a better view than I did for I could only move about four feet away without bunking into a glass carrier like this  on which the glass stood to be washed by the janitor with lumbago. He washed without grooming as far down as the rope which looks like the cross piece of an "A". (I see that perspective has failed me once more and that you probably won't have guessed that everything from the top of the shirt down is mounted on a ramp which is somehow attached to the back wall just below the 3 top screens like this: - This bit of information is of no consequence until we get to case 6 -). The long bands at the bottom of the case are purple, yellow and orange and have duplicates in Boston and the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago. (We have color prints of them.)

The method of examination in cases 3, 4 and 5 can readily be followed from the diagrams. The shirt in case 5 is complete and duplicates a set of three bands at the Fogg. Now, in case 6, we return to my diagram of the ramp. At this point I decided to stand where the glass usually stands and my prowess as a contortionist was brought into play. After a certain amount of thought it seemed best to emulate early Egyptian wall paintings and let my feet be profile and my back full face (as it were). This position had all the excitement of tightrope walking and none of its freedom, for though there were many things to clutch they were all taboo unless I wished to leave my finger prints on exhibition with the other ageless relics. Also my object was not to keep in an upright position, but to examine minutely 2 silk roundels and a piece of tablet weave which were far from perpendicular. i.e.:



- 2 -

From 7 on I had help. In positions 7 and 8, Mr. Weeks leaned against the ladder because, though it lay flat against the ramp, there was practically nothing for it to stand on. ♀ was the case where everyone had to wait for me. It contained 118 scraps - nearly all good looking, but compound cloth and drawloom patterns as well as tapestry and tablet weave; and a little cotton as well as silk, linen and wool.

Now one begins all over again at case 1 and does the second story, up on a lovely scaffold complete with ladder, casters and 2 carpenters. This procedure was easy on everything but the knees, and at lunch time each carpenter got me a kneeling pad so the afternoon was spent in luxury.

Our next installment will deal with what may be done, but should not, while in a case with two dozen mummies.

SLAVIC DEVISION

"The Slavic Division" de D.O. tâche de faire de plus en plus accessible le matériel caché sous une langue barbare et continue l'analyse détaillée des livres et des articles. Les cartes s'accumulent par centaines, mais aussi chaque visiteur aura la possibilité d'être informé dans un clin d'oeil de ce qu'il peut trouver dans sa branche.

Comme exemple:

L'iconographie est maintenant subdivisée en catégories suivantes:

1. Iconographie par compositions
2. Iconographie générale. Iconographes.
3. Icones par sujets. Icones générales
4. Croix
5. Iconostas

La Russie contient les subdivisions suivantes:

1. Art
2. Coutumes
3. Histoire
4. Villes

Chaque église, chaque musée ou palais fameux par son architecture, ses fresques, ses peintures ou ses collections, sont précédés d'une carte explicative, donnant l'histoire de la construction, l'année des restaurations qui y ont eu place et des notes indiquant les monuments d'intérêt spécial.

Pour donner une idée plus claire sur le procès du développement de l'art russe, de ses différentes écoles ainsi que les influences des provinces voisines et des pays étrangers, "The Slavic Division" s'est enrichie de deux cartes géographiques :

1. La Russie Européenne
2. La Sibérie

Ces cartes seront reproduites sur trois calques pour simplifier le procès de recherches:

1. Carte portant seulement les noms de villes et gouvernements renommés pour leurs monuments d'art.

SLSVIC DEVISION

2. Carte des fouilles

3. Carte portant les noms des anciennes villes de la Russie Imperiale changés (hélas) par les Soviets comme: Stalingrad pour Ekaterinoslavl, Leningrad pour ST. Petersbourg etc.

Ces calques, légèrement encadrés pourront être placés par besoin de détail par-dessus les cartes originales.

"The Slavic Division" de D.O. a comme but ^a de devenir la place unique, où les oeuvres russes seront utilisées par les personnes ne connaissant pas la langue.

"The Slavic Division" se fait un point d'honneur de devenir ainsi une branche digne de la grande oeuvre de D.O.

Nathalie Scheffer
(signed for her by EBC)