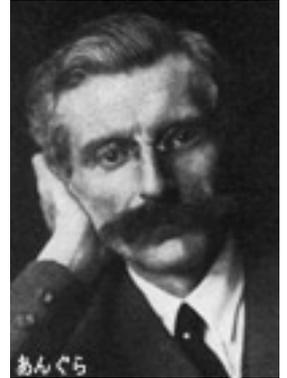


LOUIS AUBERT

David C F Wright DMus

Louis Francois Marie Aubert was born at Parama, Ille-et-Vilane on 19 February 1877. He was a Breton but unlike other composers from this area, such as Roussel and Ropartz, he did not seem to love Brittany.

He was a child prodigy at the piano and a fine singer. As a boy, he would sing Pie Jesus from Fauré's Requiem at the Church of the Madeleine. Later, he met Fauré at the Paris Conservatoire attending his composition classes. He also studied piano with Louis Dremer and harmony with Albert Lavignac (1846-1916), a highly respected teacher.



The first staging of Aubert's three act opera The Blue Forest was in Geneva on 7 August 1913. It is based on fairy tales by Charles Perrault (1628 -1703). This opera became popular for a while and was even performed in Boston. The Opera-Comique in Paris staged it in 1924.

His ballets, A Mummy of 1903, A Flower of Chrysanthemum of 1904 and A Fascinating Night of 1924 enjoyed short-lived success. There are two symphonic poems Habanera and Dryade which appeared in 1919 and 1921 respectively.

He wrote a Fantasy for piano and orchestra which looks interesting as does some of his choral pieces.

Ravel dedicated his Valse Nobles et Sentimentales to Aubert who became a teacher of piano and composition at the Paris Conservatoire. Henry Barraud (1900-1997) was one of his pupils. Eventually, Aubert became Director of the Conservatoire succeeding Florent Schmitt. This was in 1956.

Aubert composed church music, songs, ballets, incidental music and much piano music.

He also wrote popular songs especially for the singer Marie Dubas (1894-1972) whose singing style was rather like a machine gun and, among other things, she sang ghastly tangos.

Aubert was also a music journalist for several papers and magazines.

His piano music is mainly of the impressionistic school of which the most famous composer was Debussy. The music is usually not structured and do not contain themes as such, but it is merely mood music. It is atmospheric and can be desperately boring... just notes and lots of them.

When people condemn modern music because they claim that is tuneless, they seem to forget that musical impressionism is the same, although modern music does has themes and thematic material.

Take Aubert's Sillages for piano. It is a three movement work lasting about 25 minutes. The piano writing is difficult and it takes a specialised pianist to play it. There are few highlights but most of the music has no memorable content.

Sillages means the wake of a ship or boat, the slipstream or the trail left in the water by a boat or ship.

There are also salon pieces such as Two Pieces in the form of the mazurka Op 12 and a Valse-Caprice.

He wrote two books... one on orchestration in 1951 and one about Charpentier in 1956. A few years earlier, in 1952, he wrote a Symphonic Piece: Cinema.

He died in Paris on 9 January 1968. He was 90 and almost completely forgotten.

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