

PIERRE HASQUENOPH

David C F Wright

This composer is, in my opinion, a sad case. His career began with many successes and music of exceptional quality, but then he seems to have become involved in jazz and also in what can only be called nightclub music and this music is inferior as shown in his ghastly Concertino for alto saxophone and strings which is both crude and vulgar.

I want to emphasise that this essay, more than others, is, largely, my opinion.

This French composer was born in Pantin on 20 October 1922. He began to study medicine but then entered the Ecole Cesar Franck and was taught the basics by Guy de Lioncourt and was very fortunate in studying with Rene-Alix, a very fine composer of choral music, a string quartet and a fascinating Piano Concerto.

Hasquenoph then studied at the Paris Conservatory with Milhaud and Jean Rivier in the 1950s, but found his niche in radio. From 1956, he was head of the RTF Symphony, then the lyric service of ORTF from 1960, and, in 1973-1982, he was director of Chamber Music at Radio France. It was probably the influence of radio and the embracing of all kinds of music that may have lead him on to unworthy paths and cheap music.

This was both a pity and a mistake whereas his Symphony no 1 completed in 1958 and the very splendid Symphony no 2 for string and percussion, completed in 1959, are very good works. There are four symphonies, numbers 1 and 4 were both awarded the Grand Prix Musical of the City of Paris. The third symphony is for saxophone quartet and orchestra. There is a flute concerto, a concerto for orchestra, a concerto for piano and twelve strings, two ballets namely *The Butterfly Tapped his Foot* and *And thou shalt call his name... Tristan*, operas namely *Lucretia Padua* and *As You Like It*, a string trio, a string quartet, a brass quintet, choral pieces and a sonata for two pianos.

It is my view that composers who start well, such as the subject of this brief essay, and then go into nightclub and bawdy locales with its inferior music and compose in those styles, are on a certain downward slope.

From such a prominent start to an apparent decline, undermined him and a type of depression may have set in and my researchers in France inform me that he died at his own hand on 31 March 1982 at Nanterre.

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