

MARCEL DELANNOY

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Maurice Ravel said, "Marcel Delannoy is the finest composer we have in France".

That being so, why do we not hear his music? We hear plenty of Ravel, for which we are grateful, but no Delannoy.

He was born at La Ferté-Alias, Essone, France on 9 July 1898. His birth place is about 32 miles south of Paris. His home town now has a Rue de Marcel Delannoy.

At first, he studied painting and architecture at École des Beaux Arts. At the age of 20, he took up music. He was mobilised in World War I and thereafter took up being an artist but also being encouraged in his music. His greatest encouragement came from Arthur Honegger but he never attended any music school or college although he had some lessons with Alexis Roland-Manuel (1891-1966) who was also a composer of stage works and film scores and with André Gedalge.

Delannoy's first success was his opera *Le Poiner de misère* of 1927 and it was this that prompted Ravel to make his comments. Also in 1927, Delannoy contributed the final movement, a *bourée* to the children's ballet *L'éventail de Jeanne* one of the ten composers asked too do so.

He married the pianist Lisette Claveau.

In 1932 five composers were approached for a series of songs to be sung by the great Russian bass Feodor Chaliapan for the film *Don Quixote*. The 'winner' was Jacques Ibert and the other three contributors were Ravel, Falla and Milhaud.

From 1933 he wrote many film scores

- Les deux orphelines 1933
- Il était une fois 1934
- Une femme chipée 1934
- Tempête 1940
- Night in December 1941
- Volpone 1941
- Le marchand de notes 1942
- Monsieur des Lordines 1943
- La ferme du pendu 1945
- Le bateau à soupe 1947
- Malaire 1952
- Le guensseur 1953
- La Banda à papa 1956
- La terre est ronde (TV)
- Due sorelle amamo 1960

His main source of income probably came from his film scores which, to some extent, prevented his composing other music.

Delannoy wrote criticism for *Nouveau Temps*. One of his reviews was of Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time* premiered on 24 June 1941. Delannoy did not like the piece and its accompanying notes.

The association of Contemporary Music in France had Delannoy as a committee member and this organisation performed some of his works during 1940 and 1941. He became a member of *Groupe Collaboration*.

Originally he may have been influenced by Honegger in the music that he wrote and in 1953 wrote a book about Honegger. But Delannoy's music development an individual style.

His works include:

Opera Comique Le poiner de misère in three acts 1927
Bourée (L'éventail de Jeanne) 1927
La Fou de la dame 1930
Figures sonores for chamber orchestra 1930
String Quartet in E 1931
Symphony no 1 1933
Three songs for Don Quixote voice and orchestra 1933
Rhapsody for trumpet, alto saxophone, cello and piano 1934
Le Pantoufle de vair Ballet also known as Cendrillon 1935
Sérénade concertante for violin and orchestra 1936
Lyric Suite: Les trois choux de Monsieur Patacaille 1937
Phillippine, operetta 1937
Ballad for orchestra 1940
Opera- Comique Ginerva in three acts 1942
Opera Puck in three acts 1946
Ballet Les noces fantastique 1946
Tombeau d'amour voice and strings 1949
Neige for voice and orchestra 1949
Etat de veille voice and orchestra 1950
Concerto de mai for piano and orchestra 1950
Travesh 1952
Maria Goretti, radio opera 1953
Symphony no 2 for string orchestra and celeste 1954
Ballade concertante for piano and orchestra 1958
La Moulin de la Galette for orchestra 1958
La voix de Silence (song) 1958
La nuit de temps, chamber opera 1962
Venise seuil des eaux 1966
Au Royaume de la comète, ballet/cantata
L'homme danse

There are also piano works, a Rhapsody for piano and ensemble, Esquisses symphony, Intermezzo for orchestra and Le Marchand de lunettes.

The String Quartet in E dates from 1931 and is dedicated to Jean Marnold. It is in four movements. The first movement begins calmly but becomes nervous and fast. The second movement is a keyless dramatic piece marked rythmique and is full of excitement. The third movement is fascinating. It is marked funebre but its is not a wallow, but both a powerful and lyrical piece. The finale is a brilliant showpiece in E. It is extraordinarily well-written.

The Symphony no 2, Op 54 occupied the years 1952 to 1954 and was completed in Boulogne. Its unusual scoring makes it original. Its opening movement in an allegro con poesia which begins with ten bars in three time before the rest of the movement proceeds giusto. A grazioso passage in G follows before returning to the tonality of C and A minor. It is a fine movement in a semi classical style with a clarity and onward movement.

The second movement is marked andante lirico and is played con sordini. Again it is a clean, clear piece and the introduction of the celesta gives it a magical feel. The music becomes very romantic and tender and then takes on the flavour of a march.

The final is a vivace ben ritimoco and is very well-written. It is a vigorous foot tapper.

There are some original harmonies and what is also highly commendable is that each movement keeps its pace. We don't have stops and starts or interludes in a different tempo.

Nantes is culturally a Breton city, 212 miles west of Paris. It was here that Delannoy died on 14 September 1962. He was 64.

Remember Ravel who said, "Marcel Delannoy is the best composer we have in France!".

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