

Abstracts

Les voix de dessus à la Chapelle royale au XVIII^e siècle.

Castrats, pages et faussets (1715-1792)

► **Youri Carbonnier**

The question of who sang the soprano voice at the Royal Chapel in France has long been debated among music historians. This article reconstructs the different components of this ensemble during the 18th century. From 1722 onwards, women were excluded, thus leaving an all-male ensemble to perform the highest voice in the French Royal Chapel. Those male singers (choirboys, falsettos and castrati) were never employed in secular music. Because of the presence of the castrati, this ensemble was very different from the other sacred vocal ensembles in France. Given its Italian origins, the group of castrati is fairly well documented. Recruited through the French diplomatic channel, they received high salaries and were accommodated by the court. They were trained with the choirboys, in order to be familiarised with the French singing practice. The study of some musical sources makes it possible to reconstruct the performance practice of this ensemble. Furthermore, archival documents clearly show that all these singers, especially the boys (who lived together) and the castrati (who had numerous personal connections), were very well integrated in the city of Versailles.

Réflexions sur les leçons de musique

d'après les écrits parisiens d'Antoine Bemetzrieder (1771-1781)

► **Quentin Gailhac**

This paper focuses on the Alsatian harpsichord master Antoine Bemetzrieder and his stay in Paris during the 1770s. It links the invention of a new teaching method for harmony with Bemetzrieder's progressive integration in the Parisian network of the high society. The study of his numerous theoretical writings and the reconstitution of his social networks put in perspective a pedagogical reform based on the opposition between two different approaches of the music lesson. Against the daily routine of many other masters, sometimes encouraged by the aristocratic origins of the musical lesson as a mark of social distinction, Bemetzrieder conceives a rationalistic reformation of music pedagogy as a part of a more global reform of the society as a whole.

Un critique musical et musicologue à l'écoute de son temps :

Louis Schneider et Claude Debussy (1895-1934)

► **Jean-Christophe Branger**

Louis Schneider was never part of the inner circle of devoted music critics who supported Debussy during his lifetime. While he is best remembered for publishing Debussy's statements about Pelléas in the Revue musicale after its

premiere in 1902, Schneider makes only few appearances in the *Correspondance*: only one letter from Debussy to him in 1910 is extant. Conversely, his negative review of *La Mer*, which earned him acerbic comments from the composer, makes him appear among the composer's most ferocious detractors in the literature on Debussy. Also known as the author of the first monograph on Massenet, Schneider, however, regularly and often reviewed Debussy's music favorably. He followed Debussy's work from the 1890s until the composer's death and ultimately came to be reasonably well acquainted with him. Though never an intimate, he was nonetheless the first to interview him for the press in 1895, and in 1910 he gave a talk in the composer's presence. This article, through a close examination of little-known documents, describes the relationship between both men and puts into question the image patiently assembled by the composer's panegyrists, from whom Schneider markedly cultivated his difference by refusing to fall into hagiography. His taste led him to follow composers from all horizons, from Massenet to Strauss. Debussy carefully refrained from antagonizing one of the great figures of contemporary music criticism, with a view to the greater benefits for his own career and the dissemination of his music.

« L'anachronisme le plus musical. »

L'accompagnement du plain-chant et l'idée de modalité libre en France dans l'entre-deux-guerres

► *Benedikt Leßmann*

In the wake of the first attempts to restore plainchant, its instrumental accompaniment was still a contentious issue in France during the interwar years, and modality acted as a focal point for discussion. Publications from the Solesmes circle, by Henri Potiron and Jean Hébert Desroquettes, illustrate the increasing acceptance of extended modality. At the same time, two composers discussed the problem of accompaniment in a controversial manner: whereas Maurice Emmanuel categorically opposed any kind of accompaniment of plainchant, Charles Koechlin felt drawn to its "anachronism." This dispute occurs at the same time as a wave of explicitly "modal" compositions by various composers, during the 1920s and the 1930s. Paradoxically, Emmanuel and Koechlin wrote modal music in the opposite way one might think, as Emmanuel shows greater flexibility in the use and extension of modality, whereas Koechlin stays a little more conservative and tends to associate modality with the musical past.