

## *L'indépendance musicale et dramatique (1887-1888)*

*L'indépendance musicale et dramatique* [INM] was published in Paris from 1 March 1887 until 15 January 1888. Until the 15 October 1887 issue, the title page reads: “Journal appearing on the 1st and the 15th of each month.” During the month of August 1887, issue numbers 11 and 12 were gathered in the issue appearing on the 15th of the month. All issues are about thirty pages long. From a bi-weekly publication, INM became monthly starting on 15 November 1887. “Avis aux abonnés” in the 15 November 1887 issue justifies this decision:

In order to satisfy a great number of readers who would like our subscription price to not exceed that of similar monthly journals; and also to preserve the character of our journal, to not change our original style, which indeed could not support a bi-weekly publication, we declare to our readers that the *Indépendance musicale* will appear once monthly on the 15th.

Thus, *L'Indépendance musicale* contains nineteen issues.

The Sagot bookstore took over the administration of the journal from 1 March until the end of December 1887. The “Avis aux abonnés” of 15 January 1888 states:

Mr. Ed. Sagot is, as of 1 January 1888, no longer the administrator nor supervisor of *L'Indépendance musicale*.

Issues concerning administration, announcements, etc. should be directed to the *Revue* office, at 80, rue Monge.

Then the Fischbacher bookstore took over the administration.

On the front page Ernest Thomas is identified as the “Supervisor-Editor in Chief.” If there is no trace of Ernest Thomas as a music critic, one can consult, in the holdings of the Music Section of the Bibliothèque Nationale, several of his compositions for the piano. They are polkas, vales and quadrilles composed in 1863 and 1865. As Supervisor-Editor in Chief of the journal, he mentions in “Notre Programme”<sup>1</sup> the principles governing the publication: “The title we have chosen is in short the reflection of our program.”<sup>2</sup> The journal was not linked to any publishers and did not publish advertisements.

<sup>1</sup> INM I, no. 1 (1 March 1887): 1-4.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

Although it is not stated in the journal, Joseph-Guy Ropartz is also considered as one of the journal's editors.<sup>3</sup>

As stated in "Notre Programme," the journal's aim is not to scrupulously account for all musical and dramatic performances. Among these we will make a selection: we will only mention great artistic events, we will take important works, which, because of their worth, because of the merit and the reputation of their composers, might influence the future of the art in some way.<sup>4</sup>

Consequently, the journal proceeds to an "elitist" selection and only concentrates on what it considers to be the *major* musical events of 1887 and 1888. And although its publication was very short, the journal offers to readers articles and reviews of unquestionable quality.

Each issue of *L'Indépendance musicale* includes a summary on the title page. Issues also generally contain four signed articles or three signed articles and a review, followed by an unsigned section, "Échos et Nouvelles." All contributions are printed in one column per page. Articles and reviews represent about 80 to 85% of each issue, "Échos et Nouvelles" filling the rest.

Among the articles, some represent series of studies on composers: four articles by Léonce Mesnard on Berlioz;<sup>5</sup> three each on d'Indy<sup>6</sup> and Saint-Saëns<sup>7</sup> by Hugues Imbert; and two on each of the following composers: Brahms<sup>8</sup> and Fauré.<sup>9</sup> As for Georges Noufflard, he contributed two articles on "Filippo Filippi et l'évolution de la musique en Italie."<sup>10</sup> Finally, two unsigned articles list works "premiered on the stage of the Opéra-Comique from 16 May 1840"—date of the Salle Favart inauguration—"until 25 May 1887, when it was turned to ashes by a fire."<sup>11</sup> Apart from these thematic articles, various contributions deal with different subjects: the "Berlioz Monument"<sup>12</sup> and "A Preface to Schumann's Work" by Hugues Imbert.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, a scholarly article on the Concerts

<sup>3</sup> Ropartz contributed many articles to the journal.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>5</sup> INM I, no. 16 (15 October 1887): 449-56; I, no. 17 (15 November 1887): 481-86; I, no. 18 (15 December 1887): 513-23; and II, no. 19 (15 January 1888): 1-10.

<sup>6</sup> INM I, no. 9 (1 July 1887): 263-73; I, no. 10 (15 July 1887): 304-07; and I, no. 13 (1 September 1887): 372-80.

<sup>7</sup> INM I, no. 16 (15 October 1887): 462-70; I, no. 17 (15 November 1887): 487-500; and II, no. 19 (15 January 1888): 11-16.

<sup>8</sup> INM I, no. 5 (1 May 1887): 147-56; and I, no. 8 (15 June 1887): 230-37.

<sup>9</sup> INM I, no. 14 (15 September 1887): 393-401; and I, no. 15 (1 October 1887): 425-39.

<sup>10</sup> INM I, no. 13 (1 September 1887): 365-71; and I, no. 14 (15 September 1887): 385-92.

<sup>11</sup> INM I, no. 8 (15 June 1887): 238-48; and I, no. 9 (1 July 1887): 274-79.

<sup>12</sup> INM I, no. 2 (15 March 1887): 50-54.

<sup>13</sup> INM I, no. 3 (1 April 1887): 79-86.

populaires is published on the occasion of Jules Padeloup's death,<sup>14</sup> while the revival of Massenet's *Marie-Magdeleine* by Mr. Colonne at the Châtelet Theatre is the occasion to introduce a retrospective analysis of the work's performances.<sup>15</sup>

Articles and reviews are on average five pages long. Reviews are grouped in the section "Chronique des concerts" or "Chronique musicale" which reflected the best of Parisian musical life. Thus the reception of Wagner's *Lohengrin* at the Eden Theatre conducted by Lamoureux,<sup>16</sup> that of Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*, since its performance in the Salle des Menus-Plaisirs in December 1833 and its various revivals;<sup>17</sup> new performances or *premières*: *Nouma Romestan*, a comedy by Alphonse Daudet at the Odéon Theatre,<sup>18</sup> *Renée*, a realistic drama by Émile Zola at the Vaudeville Theatre,<sup>19</sup> a performance of Beethoven's *Messe solennelle* at the Paris Conservatory,<sup>20</sup> and the centennial of Mozart's *Don Juan* at the Paris Opera and the exhibition put on for the occasion.<sup>21</sup>

Apart from these sections stating "what was new" in the French capital, "Échos et nouvelles"—a section present in almost all issues—reviews musical life in the province: activities of the Association artistique d'Angers, concerts in Dijon, Valence, Lorient, at the Théâtre des Arts in Rouen, etc. This section also deals with events considered of lesser importance in the capital: the hundredth performance of Bizet's *L'Arlésienne*, a slap in the face given by Capoul to Stoullig—a critic for *Le National*—during a rehearsal at the Paris Theatre, the audition of the Prix de Rome's applicants, and Vianesi, the new conductor of the Paris Opera judged by the press.

Among collaborators to the INM, are by order of decreasing contribution: J.-G. Ropartz, H. Imbert, E. Thomas, A. Boutarel, L. Mesnard, A. Jullien and G. Noufflard. At the Paris Conservatory, Joseph-Guy Ropartz studied harmony with Th. Dubois and composition with Massenet. He also worked with Franck. He collaborated with several journals: he was critic for *La Revue diplomatique* (1887-88), editor for *L'Indépendance musicale* (1887),<sup>22</sup> then artistic director of *L'Hermine, revue critique et littéraire de Bretagne* (1889-1911). His contributions to *L'Indépendance musicale* include concert reviews in Paris and in the provinces, as well as reviews of recent publications.

<sup>14</sup> INM I, no. 13 (1 September 1887): 353-64.

<sup>15</sup> INM I, no. 18 (15 December 1887): 531-33.

<sup>16</sup> INM I, no. 6 (15 May 1887): 161-70.

<sup>17</sup> INM I, no. 11-12 (1 and 15 August 1887): 341-48.

<sup>18</sup> INM I, no. 1 (1 March 1887): 19-27.

<sup>19</sup> INM I, no. 5 (1 May 1887): 138-46.

<sup>20</sup> INM II, no. 19 (15 January 1888): 20-28.

<sup>21</sup> INM I, no. 17 (15 November 1887): 501-05.

<sup>22</sup> Christian Goubault, *La Critique musicale dans la presse française de 1870 à 1914* (Genève-Paris: Éditions Slatkine, 1984): 56.

In his *Essais de critique musicale: Hector Berlioz et Johannes Brahms*,<sup>23</sup> Léonce Mesnard begins his study on Brahms as follows:

J. Brahms had been introduced to the rather limited public receptive to serious music thanks to a very thorough work by Mr. Hugues Imbert, which was first published in *L'Indépendance musicale*. Given the original aspect of such a Master, an enlarged study won't seem superfluous.<sup>24</sup>

In fact, Hugues Imbert is “one of the rare French critics at the end of the XIXth century to show an interest in Brahms.”<sup>25</sup> A critic and music historian he was also:

so to speak, the historical writer on the major figures of the musical trend after 1870. His published studies constitute an appreciable source for the knowledge of musical life at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>26</sup>

Imbert became music critic at the *Guide musical* in 1889 and became its chief editor in 1900.<sup>27</sup> He also wrote an interesting comparative study on Rembrandt and Richard Wagner.<sup>28</sup>

Apart from his duties as editor, Ernest Thomas signed several reviews of works performed at the Opéra-Comique, as well as a volume by Camille Bellaigue, *Un Siècle de musique française*,<sup>29</sup> which covered, in large part, that theatre's repertory.

Amédée Boutarel contributed to several journals, primarily to *Le Ménestrel*. From 1880 until 1914, he reviewed performances of Wagner's works and of major concerts.<sup>30</sup> Thanks to his very good knowledge of German, he translated, with his wife Eva, all of Schubert's and Schumann's lieder. His contributions to *L'Indépendance musicale* are fine analyses of German works: the *Walkyrie*,<sup>31</sup> *Tristan and Iseult*,<sup>32</sup> as well as translations of aphorisms on music by Schumann.<sup>33</sup>

Léonce Mesnard contributed to the *Renaissance musicale*, a weekly journal of criticism, aesthetics and history. He also wrote two major volumes: *Essais de critique musicale*:

<sup>23</sup> Paris: Librairie Fischbacher et Librairie Sagot, 1888.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>25</sup> Joël-Marie Fauquet, ed., *Dictionnaire de la musique française au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Arthème Fayard, 2003): 610.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Goubault, op. cit., 69.

<sup>28</sup> *Rembrandt et Richard Wagner. Le clair-obscur dans l'art* (Paris: Librairie Fischbacher, 1897).

<sup>29</sup> Critic to *La Revue des deux mondes*, Camille Bellaigue's volume was published by the Librairie Charles Delagrave (Paris) in 1887.

<sup>30</sup> Goubault, op. cit., 67-68.

<sup>31</sup> INM I, no. 2 (15 March 1887): 45-49.

<sup>32</sup> INM I, no. 3 (1 April 1887): 72-78.

<sup>33</sup> INM I, no. 10 (15 July 1887): 295-303; and no. 11-12 (1 and 15 August 1887): 338-40.

*Hector Berlioz et Johannes Brahms*<sup>34</sup> and *Un successeur de Beethoven, étude sur Robert Schumann*.<sup>35</sup>

In *L'Indépendance musicale*, he wrote four articles on Berlioz.<sup>36</sup>

Adolphe Jullien, a historian and writer on music, contributed to several journals, including *Le Ménestrel*,<sup>37</sup> *Le Français*,<sup>38</sup> *Le Moniteur universel*, *Le Journal des débats*,<sup>39</sup> *La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris* and *La Chronique musicale*. His role as a critic is seen as:

a way of sustaining his thoughts in the field of history and aesthetics. While reviewing a work's performance he strives to bring out its cultural value and its aesthetical meaning. This intellectual attitude underlies a critical discourse which is overwhelming both because of its magnitude and density.<sup>40</sup>

For *L'Indépendance musicale*, Jullien covered the reception of Wagner's operas in Brussels and discussed the problems concerning *Lohengrin*'s performance in Paris.

Editor of the *Revue wagnérienne*,<sup>41</sup> Georges Noufflard wrote volumes dealing with Wagner<sup>42</sup> as well as other composers: *La Symphonie fantastique d'Hector Berlioz. Essai sur l'expression de la musique instrumentale*;<sup>43</sup> *Berlioz et le mouvement de l'art contemporain*;<sup>44</sup> and a brochure on "*Otello*" de Verdi et le drame lyrique,<sup>45</sup> an excerpt of which appears in the journal under this title.<sup>46</sup> His previously mentioned articles on Filippo Filippi<sup>47</sup> conclude his contribution to *L'Indépendance musicale*.

This RIPM publication is based on a reprint of the journal published by Annemarie Schnase in 1968.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Paris: Fischbacher, 1888.

<sup>35</sup> Paris: Durand, Schoenwerk et Cie, 1876.

<sup>36</sup> See *supra*, note 5.

<sup>37</sup> Starting in 1869 and for more than fifty years.

<sup>38</sup> There he wrote musical *feuilletons*.

<sup>39</sup> Where he replaced Ernest Reyer.

<sup>40</sup> Fauquet, *op. cit.*, 643.

<sup>41</sup> The journal was published in Paris from 8 February 1885 until 15 July 1888.

<sup>42</sup> *Richard Wagner d'après lui-même. Développement de l'homme et de l'artiste* (Paris: Librairie Fischbacher; Florence: Loescher, 1885). *Lohengrin à Florence* (Paris: Librairie Fischbacher; Florence: Loescher et Seeber, 1888).

<sup>43</sup> Florence, 1880.

<sup>44</sup> Paris: Fischbacher; Florence: Loescher, 1885.

<sup>45</sup> Paris: Fischbacher; Florence: Loescher, 1887.

<sup>46</sup> INM I, no. 14 (15 September 1887): 401-06.

<sup>47</sup> See *supra*, note 10.

<sup>48</sup> Scarsdale, New York, 1968.